



SCPR 2009 Conference Report - Grantham

by *Susie White*

This year's conference was at Grantham Museum, Grantham, Lincolnshire on 19th and 20th September and was well attended, with delegates from the UK, America and Sweden.

On the Saturday, the conference began with three papers looking at the clay tobacco pipe making industry in Lincolnshire. **Peter Hammond** started off with a paper focussing on the so-called 'Lincolnshire' style of lettering. He was followed by **Susie White** who spoke about the Boston kiln that was excavated by Peter Wells. Peter has recently donated the excavated remains and excavation archive to the National Pipe Archive, so Susie was able to bring along a number of artefacts from the excavation for delegates to have a closer look at. The final paper of the day was and on the 10th and the 11th of October there was **Peter Hammond** again, this time considering the Starr family of pipe makers from Grantham itself.

Over lunch delegates were able to have a look at the pipe displays in both the museum itself and those displays that the conference delegates had bought with them. Following a few minor technical hitches with the modern technology – namely a data projector – the afternoon continued with a number of wider ranging papers. The first of the afternoon was from **Peter Davey** who introduced the delegates to a pipe collection in Grasse, France, that had been built up by the Baroness Alice de Rothschild during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. As a young woman living in England and struggling with poor health, the baroness moved to Grasse where the climate would be better for her. It was here that she had a huge manor house built together with an 80 hectare garden on which she is reputed to have spent an average of £1.5 million per year. Alice became interested in pipes and began to amass an impressive collection. Shortly after her death, in 1922, the collection of some 500 pipes was transferred to the library in Grasse. The pipes and the pipe catalogue, many of the entries of which are in the Baronesses own hand writing, are to form the main subject of the *Académie Internationale de la Pipe's* conference in November 2010.

Allan Peacey then gave two short papers back-to-back. The first was an update on the excavations at Pipe Aston, which took place this year despite a rather wet start to the season. Allan's first presentation led neatly on to his second, which looked not at excavation, but at construction of a pipe kiln, in Maryland, USA. This fascinating paper followed the process of constructing and firing of a pipe kiln and was illustrated with some rather dramatic photographs of the kiln that looked more volcano-like than kiln-like at times!

Following the drama of a kiln firing **Ron Dagnall** took everyone through the processes of actually making the pipes themselves by showing us two short archive films. The first was 'Clay Pipe Making' by Sam Hanna which was filmed in the Pollock pipe works in Manchester. The second film was of Ron Dagnall himself trying his hand at pipe making. This second film caused a certain amount of friendly banter in the conference room, when even Ron himself had to admit that he needed a little more practice before he could consider himself a master pipemaker!

While everyone had a cup of tea the conference moved into the business part of the day and there were short reports from the members of the committee. **Peter Hammond**, as Treasurer and Membership Secretary reported that the Society's finances were in good order and that Membership numbers were up slightly on last year, currently standing at 136 members. **Susie White** then reported on the newsletter and renewed her appeal of material for the newsletter. The subject of indexing the newsletters was also raised and discussed. This conference marked the end of the current committee's term of office and therefore all committee members were up for re-election. As no additional nominations had been presented it was unanimously decided by the delegates at the meeting, that as the Society appeared to be in good hands, that the current committee should continue for a further 3 years. Those committee members are as follows: David Higgins, Chairman; Peter Hammond, Treasurer and Membership Secretary; Libby Key, General Secretary; Susie White, Newsletter Editor; Chris Jarrett, Conference Co-ordinator; Rex Key, Allan Peacey and Pete Rayner, ordinary Committee Members. It was also agreed that Ron Dagnall would continue to deal with enquiries regarding back issues of the newsletter.

The final presentation of the day was from **Brian Boyden** and considered the Clay Tobacco Pipe in English Literature. Unlike the previous papers Brian actually made the delegates work and got them to read out short excerpts from a variety of sources and then asked them to think about what this told us about the humble pipe.

The day concluded with the now familiar re-locating to a local hostelry to talk a bit more about pipes. The evening meal was in the Tollemache Inn next to the museum and was funded entirely with a most generous donation from the Swedish Match Company.

Sunday morning was gloriously sunny and was spent on a very informative, and entertaining, walk around the historic town of Grantham with local historian Malcolm Knapp. The conference concluded with the finally few delegates meeting up for lunch at the *Blue Pig*.