



The Society for Clay Pipe Research

24th Annual Conference Report - Liverpool 2008

by Susie White

The 24th annual conference of the Society for Clay Pipe Research took place in Liverpool on Saturday 20th of September and at Norton Priory Museum on the morning of Sunday 21st September 2008, and was organised by Peter Davey with help from Jenny Woodcock. This year's conference was slightly different in that it was timed to coincide with the meeting of the Academie Internationale de la Pipe, who were also due to be meeting in Liverpool this year. This arrangement not only meant that SCPR members had the opportunity to attend the final date of the Academy's meeting, but also gave Academy members an opportunity to join the SCPR meeting.

Through no fault of the organisers, the conference seemed to be plagued by gremlins this year and a number of technical difficulties with audio-visual equipment caused one or two headaches during the course of the two days. But despite this, the conference was very well organised and well attended.

On the Friday morning the members of the Academy met at Liverpool's World Museum and were joined by a small number of SCPR members. Delegates were given a very interesting introduction to the Museums World Cultures galleries that contained a number of pipes from Africa, Asia and North America by **Lynne Stumpe** and **Zachary Kingdon**. This was followed by a handling sessions where there was an opportunity to look more closely at a selection of pipes from Africa, with some interesting examples from Nigeria, Egypt and the Cameroon, as well as a very interesting group of smoking tubes from New Guinea.

From the World Museum the conference moved up to the Victoria Gallery and Museum on the University campus for lunch and an opportunity to view a temporary exhibition of the collections of the National Pipe Archive. The afternoon then continued with a number of papers looking at pipes in their socio-economic contexts. Some very interesting papers were presented by members of the Academy on pipes from Argentina, Bavaria, Japan and North American.

Saturday saw the official start of the SCPR conference with a last minute change of the venue – the Maritime Museum, Liverpool. After the formal introductions and welcome by **Dr. Rob Philpot** of National Museums Liverpool, **Kris Courtney**, from Australia, finally had an opportunity to present her paper with the rather amusing sub-title 'Coo'ey from Downunder: the "Squatters Own Budgerie"'. Due to a number of technical hitches the day before, Kris had been unable to present her paper as planned, so she was given the opportunity to present the first paper of the SCPR meeting. It was an interesting paper looking at pipes made specifically for the Australian market in the nineteenth century and included a possible explanation to the origins of pipes marked 'Squatters Own Budgerie'.

David Higgins then gave a paper looking at the clay tobacco pipes that have been recovered from recent excavations in Liverpool, mostly from the Old Dock area, where it has been possible to date the deposits to within two or three years of 1800. The Rainford pipe industry was then discussed in the paper presented by **Ron Dagnall** setting Rainford within the context of the pipe industry of the north-west of England. The last formal paper of the morning was given by **Susie White** who talked about the recent acquisitions of the National Pipe Archive and gave a little bit of the background as to how the Archive came into existence and why it is based in Liverpool.

There then followed a very short business meeting which gave committee members an opportunity to report back to the membership on various issues. **Peter Hammond**, as membership secretary and treasurer, reported that membership numbers were continuing to rise slowly, which is great news. **Susie White** then gave an update on the state of SCPR publications and reported that she hoped to have the next issue of the newsletter out by Christmas.

The afternoon session was given over to the discussion of pipes from further a field. **Pete Rayner** gave the first paper of the afternoon with a short presentation on pipes from his collection marked SV. This was followed by a paper on Ottoman Pipes from Jordan by **St John Simpson**, and focussed on pipes from Turkish military garrisons in Jordan. **Allan Peacey** then gave a summary of this years work at Pipe Aston, their 13th Season.

After tea break, and an opportunity to view the pipes that delegates had brought along for people to look at, the afternoon continued with a paper from **Peter Hammond** on Charles Crop and Sons. The final paper of the day was given by **Dennis Gallagher** who looked at the appalling living conditions that were endured by some of the nineteenth-century pipes makers in Glasgow. The first day of the conference came to a close in the usual manner, with delegates retiring to a local hostelry and then on to the Everyman Bistro for the conference meal.

The second part of the conference took place at Norton Priory Museum and Gardens just outside Runcorn. Not only did this give delegates an opportunity to hear about pipes from the local area, but also to look at the museum and its extensive archaeological remains. The curator of Norton Priory Museum and Gardens, **Lynn Smith** welcomed everyone before handing over to **Peter Davey** who talked about a group of pipes from Halton Castle. This was followed by a double act from **Julie Edwards**, from Chester Archaeology, and **David Higgins** who talked about the pottery and pipes from Commonhall Street, Chester. The final paper of the day was given by **Allan Peacey** who presented a review of pipe kiln technology in the north-west. Norton Priory laid on a very nice lunch for delegates who then had the opportunity to look at the pipe material that was on display. Lynn Smith then lead a short tour of the some of Norton's finer features and exhibits before letting the delegates loose to explore the priory at their own pace.

On behalf of the Society I would like to say a big thank you to both Peter Davey and Jenny Woodcock for organising such an enjoyable and successful conference.