



# The Society for Clay Pipe Research

## 2023 SCPR Conference – London

*by Susie White*

The year 2023 marked the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SCPR and it seemed only fitting that our conference should take us back to London, where our first meeting was held. Our venue was the Alan Baxter Gallery, in Cowcross Street, Islington. The doors opened at 9am and there was a flurry of activity as delegates set up displays for us to enjoy. We were very pleased to have several Mudlarks join us, along with lots of interesting finds from the Thames.

The meeting started with the author giving an account of the founding of the Society, and a look at all we had managed to achieve in our first 40 years, before thinking about what we might do in the next 40! The paper is published in issue 103 of the Newsletter.

Next to speak was Peter Taylor, who looked at pipemaking in London, and the role of monopolies, during the reign of James I (1603-1625). In 1616 James I prohibited the import of tobacco from Scotland, but this would appear to be only so that he could sell the tobacco monopoly there as well. In 1619 the production of pipes was encouraged in Scotland, but that pipes made there should not be imported from Scotland! Peter identified a number of courtiers who sought to benefit from these monopolies, not always with complete success. Sir Thomas Gerrard, for example, was an early investor, but seems to have lost a lot of his money to the point of virtual bankruptcy!

The London themed papers continued after a coffee break with a paper from Jacqui Pearce looking at recent excavations of eighteenth-century pipe kilns in the city, since two new sites have recently come to light. The first was in Royal Mint Street (Site code: RLM13) which produced 788 pipe bowls, mostly dating from the early eighteenth century. The second site was at Boar's Head Yard (Site Code: MID18). This site has not yet been published but was a playhouse which was demolished in 1616 to make way for a row of cottages. A kiln base was built into the hearth in one of these properties. Muffle fragments and pipes of London Type 22 dating from c1680-1710 were found. Another property nearby had the remains of a kiln base complete with six prop-buttresses around the edge. The kiln also produced a rather splendid pipe decorated with St George and the Dragon, with rosettes on the heel.

The next paper was by Germander Speedwell who spoke about the how, when, where and what of pipe larking. Permits to search the Thames foreshore are currently no longer being issued due to a surge in numbers of people applying for them over recent years and a lot of the pipes found on the surface are now very water rolled. The foreshore itself is slowly eroding, mainly due to the new clipper boats that ply their trade on the Thames. Some years ago, finding 20 to 30 pipes per visit would be commonplace, but now it is considered lucky to recover 5 or 6! One pipe of particular interest shown by Germander depicts a dragon with a large cannon. This clearly depicts the Cadiz Monument on Horse Guards Parade which was set up in 1816 and became commonly known as the "Regents Bomb". The monument itself commemorates the lifting of the French siege of Cadiz following Wellington's victory at Salamanca.

Peter Taylor then took to the floor again, with the final paper of the morning session looking at the early WB pipe marks from London and asking the questions who, when and where? These particular marks occur on pipes dating from around 1590 to 1640. Atkinson and Oswald (1969) suggest four possible makers for these marks - William Batchelor; William Banks; William Brooker; and William Boseman. Peter took delegates through the biographies of each of these makers, and concluded that, although all four makers were active in London at some point during the

period 1590-1640, William Batchelor was the only one who could be traced for the majority of the period and who was prominent enough to have been responsible for so many marked pipes.

This brought the morning session to a close and delegates were then at liberty to get some lunch from one of the many local restaurants and cafes, and to look at the displays of pipes that had been set up in the conference room.

There was a slight change to the published programme for the afternoon session. Our first paper was from Maria-Louise Plum, who could not attend in person, but had provided a paper to be read out on her behalf. This looked at the formation of the Ancient Order of Froth Blowers and their AOFB pipes and was published in issue 103 of the Newsletter.

Sticking with the Thames Foreshore link, Bert van der Lingen then presented a paper on Dutch pipes found in the Thames. This was a fascinating and useful paper explaining how Dutch pipes may have found their way onto the Thames foreshore. Although it wasn't just pipes - Dutch tobacco boxes have also been recovered from the Thames, as illustrated by Bert with an eighteenth-century copper alloy box recorded on the PAS Database as LON-5036C6. Bert went on to explain how mudlarks could identify and date the Dutch pipes they find and concluded his presentation by showing delegates some of the Dutch pipes that have been recovered from the Thames dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

David Higgins then gave a paper looking at some kiln waste from William Swinyard's factory in Guildford that had been dumped in the River Wey and then sampled by Nicola White when the river was drained for maintenance work in 2021. William was the son of the London pipemaker Thomas Swinyard and was born in Lambeth in 1790. By about 1815 he had moved to Guildford where he ran the principal pipe manufactory until 1858, when he sold the business to his son-in-law, John Hyde. A sample of 110 bowls was available for study, and these could be divided into 27 different mould types that were being produced. One of the designs had a military figure and the word TRAFALGAR above the bust, making it clear that this was intended to depict Nelson. However, Swinyard only moved to Guildford in about 1815, ten years after the battle – but also in the year of Wellington's victory at Waterloo. It seems likely that an old design was 'repurposed' after 1815 and that the pipes were then sold to celebrate Wellington's rather than Nelson's victory.

Our final London-centric paper of the day came from Chris Jarrett. Sadly, Chris was unable to join the conference in person, but had provided a paper on pipes from the Inns of Court that could be read out on his behalf. There were originally at least 20 Inns of Court in London, which were associated with lawyers and legal education, but only four survive today – Gray's Inn, Lincoln's Inn, Middle Temple and Inner Temple. The aim of this paper was to see if the use of clay pipes at the Inns of Court could shed any light on the understanding of the material culture of the lawyers. Chris's paper focussed on two pipe assemblages recovered from archaeological excavations carried out by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. at Inner Temple. The first group was from Hare Court in 1999 and 2006 (Site Codes: HCO99 and HCV06), and the second from Church Court in 1999 (Site Code: TCT99). Both sites have been published.

Following afternoon tea, we left London for our final two papers on pipes and pipemakers from the south-east and beyond. Brian Boyden took to the floor first, with a paper on pipemaking in Kent. His paper is published in full in issue 104 of the Newsletter.

Our final paper of the day was from Ian Beckey looking at the early Victorian pipe kiln waste of John George Reynolds I and II of Bristol and London. Ian presented the results of excavations kiln waste dumps carried out at two sites at Easton in Bristol; at Easton Colliery in Felix Road, and in Seymour Road.

This brought to a close a very full and diverse day of papers. The pipe talk continued in a nearby public house, *The Castle*, before moving on to the nearby *Iberica* restaurant for the conference dinner. The day was over all too quickly and our thanks go to all of those who contributed to a packed programme, and to making the day such an enjoyable event.