



# The Society for Clay Pipe Research

## SCPR Conference 2012 - Eightoaks, Kent

*By Susie White*

No I've not made a mistake. As those of you who came along to the conference this year will no doubt remember we didn't actually go to Sevenoaks for our meeting but to Eightoaks. In 1902 seven oaks were planted on the north side of cricket ground to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII, however during the 'hurricane' of 1987 six of the trees were blown down. They were replaced, but there was a slight miscalculation when it came to the number of new trees to be planted and there are currently 8 trees – hence Eightoaks not Sevenoaks! Having given you a little bit of trivia to keep in reserve for your next Pub Quiz, or similar, we should move on to the conference itself.

**Brian Boyden**, conference organiser, kicked off proceedings at the Vine Baptist Church Hall, with an introduction to pipe making in Kent. Brian is currently working towards a PhD at Liverpool University looking at the Kent pipe making industry so this gave him an opportunity to give us a taste of the research he has been doing. The most startling fact that came out of this, his first of two presentations, was the fact that Oswald and Atkinson only listed about 180 pipemakers for Kent but Brian's research has now increased that total to around 600!

**Chris Jarrett**, was the second speaker of the day and gave a paper on the Deptford and Greenwich pipe industry, which he dedicated to Philip Woollard. This paper looked at the archaeological evidence and contrasted the "posh" area of Greenwich with its high status buildings and fine Georgian architecture, with Deptford which was much more industrial with ship buildings and prison hulks on the river. The two areas are divided by a tributary of the Thames. On the Deptford side of this divide were a lot of potteries and brick and tile works, as well as pipemaking activity. In Greenwich the pipemaking activity was focused on Crane Street, to the north of Greenwich Park. The earliest documents pipemaker in this area as in 1685 but it wasn't until the third quarter of the nineteenth century until the peak of production, but this was short lived and the industry was all but dead here by 1900.

The final paper before coffee break was from **Peter Hammond** who gave us an introduction to the nineteenth century pipemakers of Dartford and Plumstead. In Dartford there were only really four master pipemakers but lots of journeyman pipemakers who were passing through. Peter gave a similar resume of pipemaking in Plumstead and illustrated his talk with pictures of pipes made by makers such as Thomas Jephtha Stubbs, Henry Dudman and William Lockett. We hope to have a full copy of Peter's paper for a future issue of the SCPR newsletter.

Normally the coffee breaks at a conference wouldn't get much of a mention but in the case of this particular conference it is only fair to mention Brian's wife, Chris at this point. Chris ran round after us all, all day, making sure we were well fed and watered - tea, coffee, juice and biscuits – she certainly knew how to keep a crowd of pipe enthusiasts happy!

After coffee we had a report from **Richard Hoskins** on the discovery of a pipe kiln in Potter Street, Sandwich which can be attributed to the Kipps family. A full report is included in SCPR82. This was followed by **Brian Boyden's** second paper of the day on the life of a Kentish pipemaker. This was a fascinating paper and one that looked at the life of a pipemaker from the perspective of his goods and possessions that were not related to his trade. By comparing inventories Brian looked at personal possessions such as paintings, clocks, books, etc., as an indicator of social status. What came as a surprise was that although pipemakers in Kent did not appear to have wealth in terms of capital (i.e. the tools of their trade were relatively cheap as was the stock) but they did appear to have a reasonable amount of disposable wealth in terms of personal possessions. When compared to similar inventories in other parts of the country Kentish pipe makers appear to have been comfortably well off. This fascinating survey forms part of Brian's PhD research so we'll have to wait a little while before any of this will be formerly published.

Just before we broke for lunch those delegates who brought in material to display gave a brief introduction to their pipes and other items and everyone had a chance to have a closer look over the lunch break.

The afternoon session focussed on pipes from further afield and began with a presentation from **Jacqui Pearce**

on the Manby family of pipemakers from London. Jacqui is hoping to publish her paper in the journal of the *Académie Internationale de la Pipe* in 2013. Next up was **Peter Davey**, who gave a paper on Bristol pipes in Ireland and showed that there was a mismatch between the archaeological evidence and the documentary evidence. In the first half of the seventeenth century the shipments were setting out for the south coast and Dublin with most going to Cork and Youghal, but in contrast the archaeological evidence shows that Bristol pipes were more widely distributed across Ireland with a marked concentration being found in Londonderry in the north. Later in the seventeenth century there were large shipments going to Sligo in the north, but in contrast the archaeological evidence only produced small numbers of pipes and those found were mainly in the south. Some of the ships were clearly calling at Irish ports before going on to the New World. We are hoping to have a full copy of Peter's paper to include in a future issue of the SCPR newsletter.

The final paper before tea break was from **Tony Grey** who took us far away from English, or even Irish shores, by presenting a paper on the clay pipes recovered from excavations in Qatar. A full report is included in SCPR82.

After tea break and another chance to look at the displays, we had our AGM. Members at the conference were happy with the work that the current committee were doing for the Society and voted to retain the present committee, that is David Higgins as Chairman, Peter Hammond as Treasurer, Susie White as Newsletter Editor, Chris Jarrett and Publicity Officer and Rex Key as Secretary. Libby Key and Allan Peacey both decided to step down from the committee. Peter Hammond reported on the financial state of the Society, which shows that we have sufficient balance to fund production of the proposed occasional monograph for longer papers that Susie is working on. However, the recent sharp increase in postal rates meant that membership rates would have to be increased by £1 from 2013 to cover production and mailing costs for the newsletter. It was pointed out that this was the first increase in subscription rate for more than six years and the proposed increase was agreed by all those members present. Susie White asked that all members ensure that members inform her of any changes to their current email address and reported on progress that was being made on the Society's website and Facebook page.

With the business part of the afternoon over, we moved on to the final part of the day and two practical sessions. First a pipemaking demonstration from **Rex Key**, who showed off his skills as a pipemaker and produced a churchwarden pipe for the delegates. This was followed by a presentation by **Susie White** on the pitfalls to be aware of when photographing your pipes and how to tackle the problem of drawings pipes. A copy of Susie's paper together with conventions and guidelines for drawing pipes and pipe makers will appear in a future issue of the SCPR newsletter.

With the formal part of the conference over delegates retired to the Royal Oak Hotel for a splendid meal. I'm not entirely sure what the waitressing staff made of us when we continually quizzed them regarding the whereabouts of chips for the main course, and caramel for one of the desserts both of which didn't actually appear despite being on the menu. They, and we, all took this in good fun and made for a very entertaining evening.

On Sunday there was an opportunity for us to explore a bit more of Sevenoaks history with an excellent walking tour conducted by Brian and Chris Boyden. They had certainly done their homework and pointed out all of the historical points of interest around the town. By midday, we had wound our way back to the Vine Cricket Ground for a picnic lunch before finally all wending our way home.

Our grateful thanks to Brian and Chris Boyden for all their hard work in making the Sevenoaks conference such a success – thank you. Now our thoughts turn to next year's conference and we can announce that Robert Lancaster and Heather Scharnhorst have taken on the role of conference organisers for 2013. We will be meeting in Dorchester on the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2013. More details to following in the next issue of the newsletter.