

Typology extracted from:

# UNDER THE ORACLE

**Excavations at the Oracle Shopping Centre site 1996-8:  
the medieval and post-medieval urban development  
of the Kennet floodplain in Reading**

by

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Front cover image: artist's impression of the Reading Abbey cookhouse on Oracle Site 29 (Peter Lorimer)

Back cover image: E H Buckler's bird's eye view of Reading, 1850

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### ***Bowl form typology***

One of the most important advances made as a result of this study has been the establishment of a bowl form typology for the town. The excavated material reliably charts the evolution of bowl forms for the two centuries from *c* 1610. Pipe styles changed rapidly during this period and many of the forms were produced for no longer than 30 or 40 years. Since pipes had a very short life expectancy, these bowl forms can be used to accurately date the archaeological deposits in which they occur. The establishment of this first Reading typology will not only allow the comparison and dating of future finds from the town but also from the wider region around it.

The pipe bowls have been divided into two broad groups, spur forms and heel forms, and a separate typological sequence has been provided for each. The spur forms are identified by the prefix 'S' and the heel forms by the prefix 'H'. Although specific examples have been selected and described in the following typology, it is the bowl profile that is significant and not any marks, decoration or particular finish that happen to occur on the example selected. When using this typology, other attributes of the pipe should be ignored and just the size and profile of the bowl matched with the following forms.

#### ***The Spur Forms (S1-S18)***

A total of 18 different spur types were represented amongst the excavated material. The earliest forms (**S1-S5**) are very similar to the styles produced in London and would be indistinguishable from them. After the middle of the 17th century there is a slight tendency for the Reading pipes to be rather more forward leaning than their London counterparts (**S6-8**) but the majority of the pipes remain very similar. The real break with London fashions is heralded from the 1660s onwards by the appearance of a few forms more typical of central southern England (**S9-S10**). These pipes tend to have more curved forms, their rims are more nearly parallel with the stem and they often have burnished (polished) surfaces. Some of these bowls are certainly imports to the town, but others may well have been produced in Reading, copying popular styles from further west.

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries the spur forms become rather taller and more slender but with well-developed curves to their profiles (**S11-S17**). These curved forms are typical of central southern England and some examples may actually be from there, for example, **S14**. The majority, however, were almost certainly produced in the town, where they become relatively common during this period. The end-date for these forms has generally been put at around 1730 but it is worth noting that well dated groups from this period are scarce and the terminal date for these forms is not very secure. Late 18th-century groups were not well represented from the excavations but there is no evidence for spur pipes from this period and they may well have gone out of fashion for a while. Spur forms reappear during the 19th century (**S18**), when they form a small element of the pipes in use.

### ***The Heel Forms (H1-H35)***

Heel forms were always more popular than spur forms in Reading and represent the majority of the pipes found at all periods. As with the spur forms, the heel forms dating from before around 1680 almost all mirror London styles (**H1-H17**). The only exception is **H15**, which is of a style used in central southern England and the West Country. Although this piece could be an import, there is a similar example stamped with the mark of John Perry, who is known to have worked in Reading. The Perry example clearly shows that this style was also produced in the town, even if only in small numbers. The profiles of the early bowls are very variable, making it hard to divide them

into clear-cut types. Most have round or oval heels although some are heart-shaped, for example, **H6-H7**.

Towards the end of the 17th century the heel bowls become rather more elongated and with markedly curved profiles (**H18-H24**), mirroring the changes seen in the spur types. One characteristic that does stand out is the occasional use of a particularly flared round heel (**H22** and **H24**). Alongside these curved types are some interesting transitional forms that include relatively straight-sided types (**H25-H27**) and some very forward-leaning types (**H28-H30**). The latter seem to have been relatively common in Reading, where they may well represent a distinctive local development. At the very end of the 17th century a much more tubular, upright bowl form appears (**H31-H32**), which goes on to become the dominant form for much of the 18th century, when it occurs in large numbers, replacing almost all other forms. Examples of this type are very hard to date within the broad period of their currency, since the form changes little, although later examples tend to have thinner stems and bowl walls and smaller stem bores and makers' initials. This form was also dominant in London and many other areas of the south-east. Towards the end of the 18th century type **H33** evolved into a rather fuller form with a smaller heel (**H34**) before becoming rather more squat and with a deeper heel by the early 19th century (**H35**). Types **H32-H35** usually have the maker's initials moulded onto the heel, the base of which was almost always trimmed before about 1800 but very rarely thereafter. Some of the examples dating from after c 1760 also have moulded decoration on the bowl.

Not enough later material was present to establish a reliable 19th-century typology for either the spur or heel pipes although both forms would have continued to develop during this period. The main change later in the 19th century was the introduction of spurless pipes, such as catalogue no. **68**, from about 1850 onwards. Overall, the Oracle assemblage shows that London styles were followed until the middle of the 17th century but that, around the middle of the century, small numbers of pipes of central southern or West Country form appear. Initially these occur in very small numbers, both as actual imports and as local copies in that style. From about 1680-1750 these styles had a great influence on local production and local variants emerge, which form a significant element of the excavated assemblage during most of this period. Alongside the West Country styles other more London orientated forms were produced, some of which also evolved into distinctive local types. Around 1700 a new upright, tubular London style appears, which gradually replaced the other more local forms to

become the dominant type. Spur forms become much less common after about 1730 and may have totally disappeared for a while during the later 18th century. Styles start to change again from around the 1760s, once again following London trends. Later forms were not recovered in any quantity but it is almost certain that London styles would have been copied from the later 18th century onwards.

## Catalogue of illustrated pipes (Figs 9.24-9.29)

All illustrations are at 1:1 with the exception of the details of the stamped marks, which are at 2:1.

### *Figure 9.24*

- S1 Bowl fragment of c1610-1640 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Quite a good little form, but roughly finished. Area 22 [2135], Ref. No. 113.
- S2 Bowl fragment of c1630-1660 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [3833], Ref. No. 173.
- S3 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 8/64". Area 29 [4171], Ref. No. 321.
- S4 Bowl fragment of c1660-1680 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 22 [1855], Ref. No. 66.
- S5 Bowl fragment of c1660-1680 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 12 [572], Ref. No. 26.
- S6 Bowl fragment of c1660-1690 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 12 [752], Ref. No. 42.
- S7 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Made of a fine sandy fabric. Area 29 [4486], Ref. No. 533.
- S8 Two joining bowl fragment (freshly broken) of c1680-1710 with a bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Rim slightly damaged but probably never milled. Area 29 [4344], Ref. No. 379.
- S9 Bowl fragment of c1660-1690 with a bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Incuse stamped mark reading R G across the stem - probably Richard Greenland of Norton St Philip, Somerset, recorded 1664-1710 (ob). The pipe has been finished with a good burnish. Area 29 [5600], Ref. No. 726.
- S10 Bowl fragment of c1680-1720 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Well finished spur bowl with good curved form and finely burnished surface. Rather a large bore for Reading at this date and almost certainly an import to the town. Area 29 [3958], Ref. No. 262.

- S11 Bowl fragment of *c*1680-1710 with a bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Unusual form – uncertain if it has an unusually curved front or whether it has just been distorted when soft. Plain groove for one quarter of rim facing smoker. Area 29 [5602], Ref. No. 731.
- S12 Bowl and joining stem fragment (fresh break) of *c*1680-1720 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 5/64". A total of 89mm of stem survives without a mark. Area 29 [5274], Ref. No. 606.
- S13 Bowl and four joining stem fragments of *c*1690-1730 with unmilled, internally trimmed and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". The joining fragments suggest that this piece was freshly deposited, thus providing a reliable date for the context. Area 29 [3854], Ref. No. 207.
- S14 Bowl fragment of *c*1690-1750 with unmilled and cut rim and a stem bore of 6/64". The pipe has been given a good burnish. REORM 98 [U/S].
- S15 Bowl fragment of *c*1690-1730 with unmilled, cut and wiped rim and a stem bore of 5/64". Unusual form with very pronounced flare at rim and a sharp, forward pointing spur. Area 29 [5448], Ref. No. 641.
- S16 Bowl fragment of *c*1690-1730 with unmilled, cut and wiped rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 29 [5575], Ref. No. 702.
- S17 Two joining bowl fragments (fresh break) of *c*1690-1730 with unmilled and cut rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Relief moulded mark comprising a hand and crown on the sides of the spur. The bowl has an internal bowl cross - the 'upright' axis of which leans slightly to the left of the long axis of the pipe. Area 29 [5199], Ref. No. 590.
- S18 Bowl fragment of *c*1820-1880 with unmilled and cut rim and a stem bore of 4/64". Relief moulded mark reading I N on the heel sides. Same mould as an example in Context 282 (No 749). Made by John Norris of Reading. Area 304 [12560].
- H1 Bowl fragment of *c*1610-1640 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 22 [2002], Ref. No. 79.
- H2 Bowl fragment of *c*1610-1640 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [4362], Ref. No. 403.
- H3 Bowl fragment of *c*1610-1640 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 8/64". Area 22 [2000], Ref. No. 68.



*Figure 9.25*

- H4 Bowl fragment of c1620-1640 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 8/64". Area 29 [5502], Ref. No. 684.
- H5 Bowl fragment of c1630-1660 with fully milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 22 [2053], Ref. No. 104.
- H6 Bowl fragment of c1630-1660 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [5250], Ref. No. 597.
- H7 Bowl fragment of c1640-1660 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Lop-sided and rather oval heel. Area 22 [2000], Ref. No. 77.
- H8 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 28 [10266], Ref. No. 761.
- H9 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [5475], Ref. No. 658.
- H10 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 22 [2199], Ref. No. 114.
- H11 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Very poor and lop-sided little bowl. Area 12 [9317], Ref. No. 55.
- H12 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [3704], Ref. No. 131.
- H13 Bowl fragment of c1660-1680 with three quarters milled and bottered rim. Area 29 [3705], Ref. No. 132.
- H14 Bowl fragment of c1650-1670 with three quarters milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 8/64". Area 29 [4376], Ref. No. 424.
- H15 Bowl fragment of c1650-1680 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Unusual bowl type for Reading - more typical of Central/Southern or West Country styles. Area 29 [5596], Ref. No. 724.
- H16 Bowl fragment of c1660-1680 with one quarter milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 12 [586], Ref. No. 29.

- H17 Bowl fragment of c1660-1680 with one quarter milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [5790], Ref. No. 733.
- H18 Bowl fragment of c1660-1690 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 29 [4439], Ref. No. 470.
- H19 Bowl fragment of c1670-1700 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [5475], Ref. No. 663.
- H20 Bowl fragment of c1670-1700, unmilled and internally trimmed and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [4209], Ref. No. 333.
- H21 Bowl fragment of c1670-1700 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 29 [5582], Ref. No. 715.
- H22 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with one quarter milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Transitional type with large flared heel. Area 29 [5544], Ref. No. 686.
- H23 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 29 [3839], Ref. No. 179.

*Figure 9.26*

- H24 Bowl fragment of c1680-1720 with a milled and bottered rim. Stem bore unmeasurable. Transitional form with a flared heel and very curved body shape - not a London form. Bowl damaged. Area 29 [3787], Ref. No. 152.
- H25 Bowl fragment of c1670-1700 with a milled and internally trimmed and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [5567], Ref. No. 696.
- H26 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with unmilled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 29 [4463], Ref. No. 522.
- H27 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with one quarter milled and internally trimmed and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Relief moulded mark reading P I on the sides of the heel. Early use of a moulded initial mark - possibly arranged incorrectly and intended to read IP rather than PI. Area 29 [4463], Ref. No. 523.
- H28 Bowl and joining stem fragment (fresh break) of c1680-1710 with unmilled and internally trimmed and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [4486], Ref. No. 540.

- H29 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with half milled and bottered rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 22 [2046], Ref. No. 93.
- H30 Bowl fragment of c1680-1710 with unmilled and internally trimmed and bottered rim and a stem bore of 7/64". Area 29 [4394], Ref. No. 460.
- H31 Bowl fragment of c1690-1740 with unmilled and cut and internally trimmed rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 300 [13273].
- H32 Bowl fragment of c1690-1720 with unmilled and cut and wiped rim and a stem bore of 6/64". Area 29 [5575], Ref. No. 707.
- H33 Bowl fragment of c1700-1770 with unmilled and cut and wiped rim. Area 29 [3789], Ref. No. 155.
- H34 Bowl fragment of c1760-1820 with unmilled and cut rim and a stem bore of 4/64". Flutes and dots on bowl with foliage above. Traces of moulded initials on heel that appear to have been erased in mould. Heel base trimmed. Upright internal bowl cross. Area 29 [5475], Ref. No. 682.
- H35 Bowl fragment of c1780-1820 with unmilled and cut and possibly wiped rim. Relief moulded mark reading I N on the sides of the heel. Complete bowl with cut and possibly wiped rim. Base of heel not trimmed so most likely early nineteenth century in date. Area 29 [3704], Ref. No. 129.

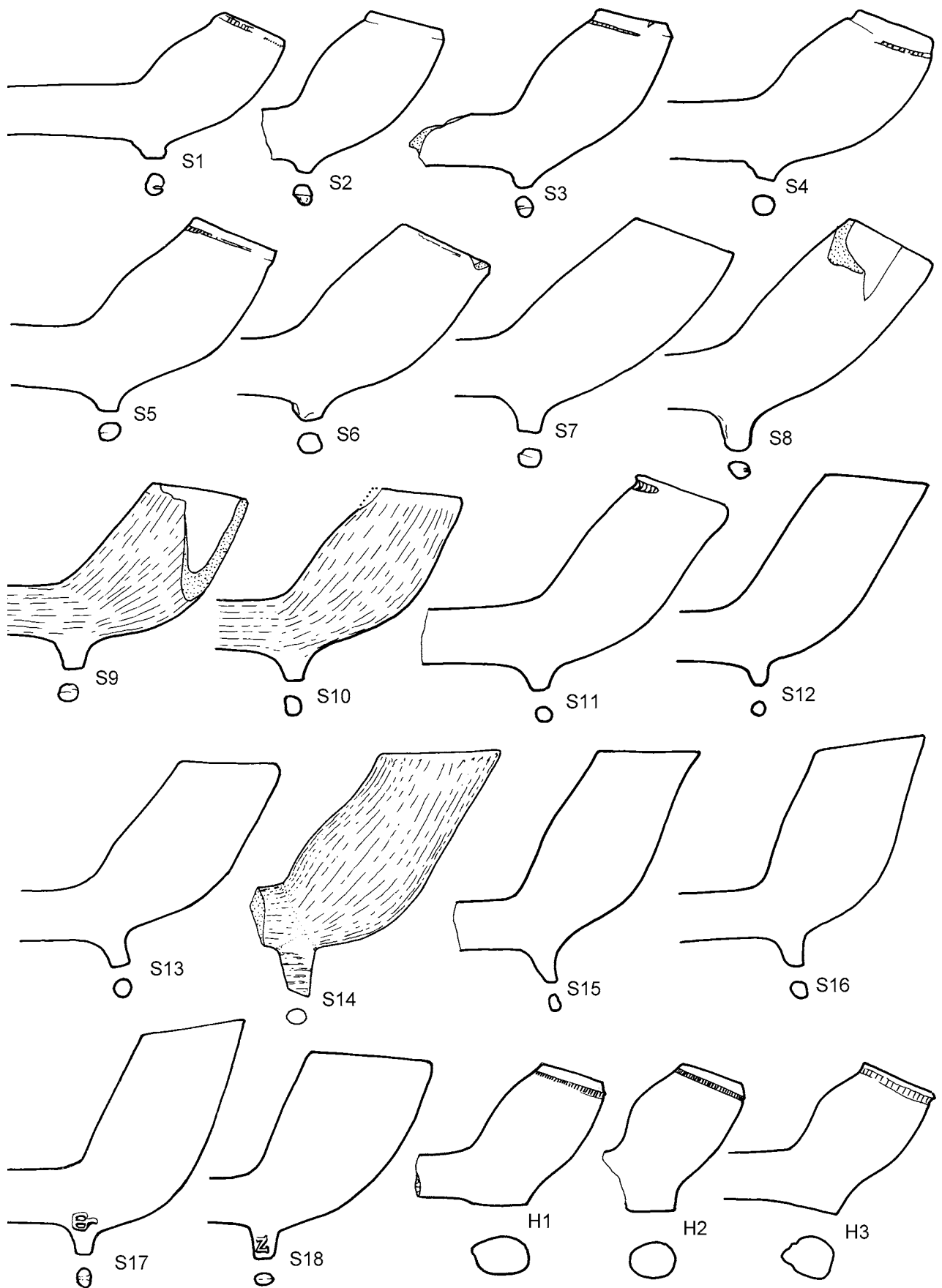


Figure 9.24: Clay tobacco pipes: Spur forms (Nos S1-S18) and heel forms (Nos H1-H3)

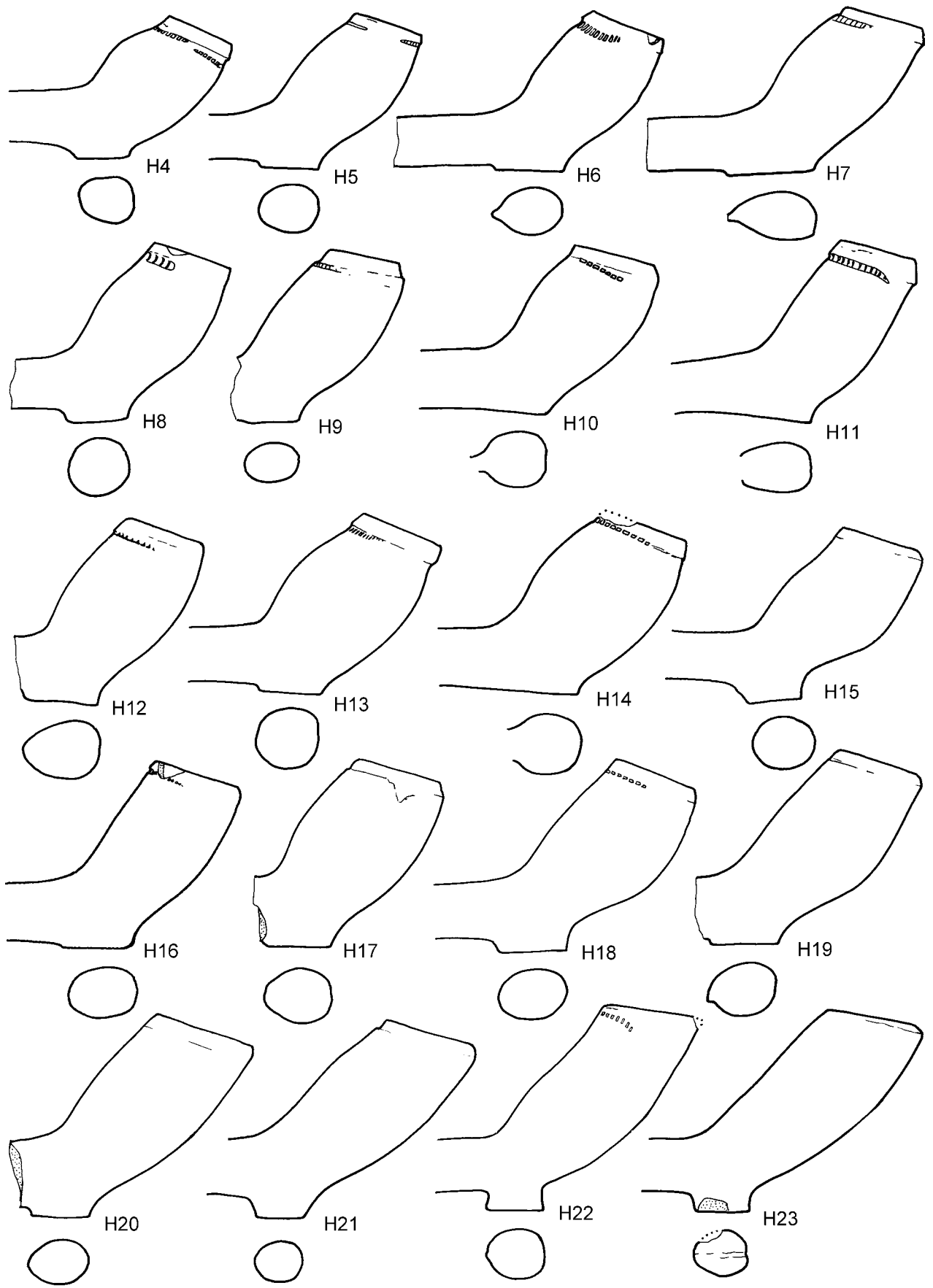


Figure 9.25: Clay tobacco pipes: Heel forms (Nos H4-H23)

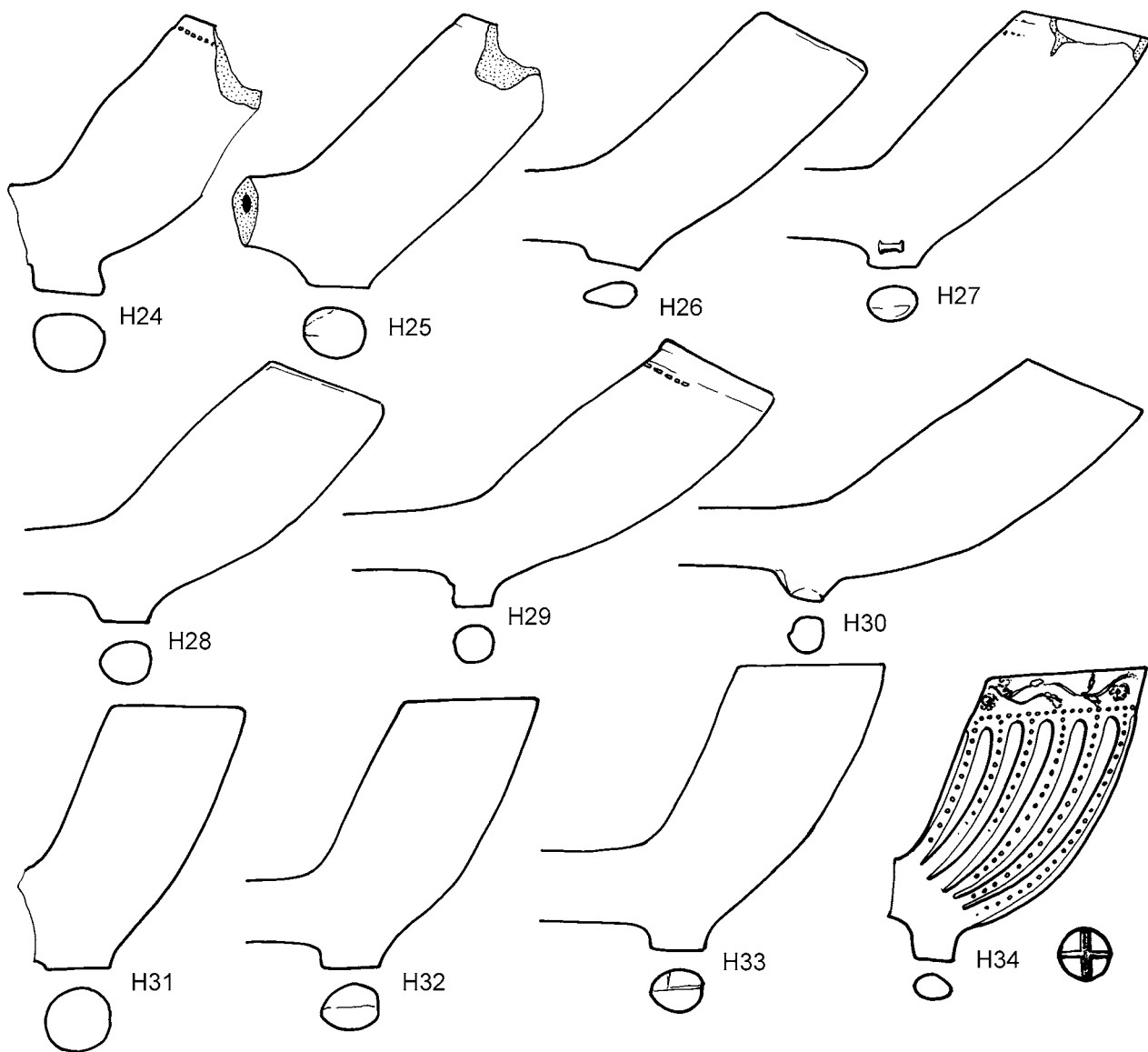


Figure 9.26: Clay tobacco pipes: Heel forms (Nos H24-H35), other pipes (Nos 1-10)