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High Street, Dartford
(from a drawing by John R. Lloyd-Roberts, 1927)
(see back cover)

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THE CLAY-PIPE MAKERS OF OVERY STREET, DARTFORD,
AND THEIR PRODUCTS

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Regular readers of the Society's "News-letter" will recall the article by G.H. Porteus (Issue No.10, 1973) concerning Nos. 15-17 Overy Street (commonly known as the Pipe House). The article dealt with the known history of the building, which at that time was under a very real threat of demolition. Fortunately, this threat has now been lifted and its future seems secure. The purpose of my contribution is to add to the information, already touched on by Mr. Porteus, concerning the manufacture of clay tobacco pipes in Overy Street.

The information was obtained from two main sources, the first being the clay pipe fragments uncovered by the Group during the course of excavations at the Pipe House itself and at the Overy Street Car-park opposite. The second main source was that of the Local History Collection housed at the Dartford Central Library. This took the form of Censuses, Rate Books and various Local and Kentish Directories. By combining these sources, the following list of pipemakers known to have worked in Dartford was compiled. The dates mentioned in this article, of course, only relate to the respective pipemaker's career.

Thomas Pascall, 1832-51. (Fig. 1, a-f; fig.2, a-j)

Thomas Pascall was the first to use the premises in Overy Street for the manufacture of clay pipes, and in 1841 his workforce totalled three. By 1851 it had risen to twelve, comprising five pipemakers, two apprentices and five trimmers (the wives of the pipemakers). The entire workforce lived in Overy Street, although Mr. and Mrs. Pascall lived in a four storied house on East Hill (now occupied by the Cambridge Cafe and Karol's Boutique); it was from here that the finished pipes were sold to the public (Ref.1). The products of this maker were the most decorative of all the pipes produced in Dartford, as can be seen from the illustrations accompanying this article.

Ref. 1: "Dartford Further Historical Notes," (S.K. Keyes) P.678.

Charles Yonwin, c.1861 (Fig.3, j).

At the present time we have very little information concerning

this man's work in Dartford, as it appears that most of his career in pipe-making was carried out in Gravesend. (Ref.2). In the Census of 1861 his workforce comprised four pipemakers, two apprentices and four trimmers. So far, only one pipe fragment has been recorded in Dartford, and this, on close examination, was found to have been made in one of Pascall's moulds (see illustration).

Ref. 2: "Clay Pipes for the Archaeologists" (Adrian Oswald), "British Archaeological Reports," No.14, 1975, page 176.

William Sandy, 1862-74 (Fig. 3, a-i)

This man appears to have had two strings to his bow, for not only did he employ six pipemakers and three trimmers at Overy Street, but he was also an agent for the Whittington Life Insurance Company. Originally, both he and his wife lived in the same house in which Pascall had lived, but later they were to move to a large house in Highfield Road.

James Rumley, 1879-92 (Fig. 3, k)

Rumley was the first true Dartfordian to work as a pipe-maker in Overy Street; he started as an apprentice to Pascall at the age of 14 and continued under the subsequent pipemakers, finally becoming one in his own right. Unfortunately, during his career the popularity of the clay pipe was challenged by both the briar pipe and the cigarette, and by the end of 1892 clay-pipe making had disappeared from the list of trades in Dartford.

Finally, I wish to extend my thanks to Mr. Thomas Kelly, the owner of the Pipe House, and to the Dartford Borough Council who readily gave permission for the Group to carry out the excavations mentioned in this article. I should also like to thank the staff of the Dartford Divisional Central Library (Reference Department) who gave every assistance with their Local History Collection, and last but not least, Miss Kathleen Styles, who produced the fine illustrations without which this article would have been somewhat lacking in value.

As an afterthought, I would like to point out that this article does not purport to be a comprehensive record of clay

pipes made in Overy Street, and I should be very glad to hear of other types of Dartford pipes which have so far escaped my attention.

Clay Pipe Illustrations - drawn by Kathleen Styles
All pipes are drawn full size

Figure 1

- a. Clay pipe bowl moulded in the form of a male head with a crown. This possibly could have been produced for the King's Head, which was established as a County Hotel in 1851 in the High Street at the corner of Lowfield Street.
- b. Clay pipe bowl decorated with a large bird with its wings outstretched. The mould lines which run down the front and back of the bowl have been masked by means of a row of ears of corn; this is quite a common feature which appears on several of the pipes described in this article. The bird may in fact represent an Eagle or a Phoenix, both of which had public houses named after them in Lower Hythe Street (or Waterside).
- c. Clay pipe bowl decorated with Masonic emblems, e.g. try-squares and dividers, castle towers, stars, etc.
- d. Clay pipe bowl similar to Fig.1, b, but with a plumper bird.
- e. Clay pipe bowl with fluted decoration.
- f. Clay pipe bowl with fluted decoration and garlands around the rim.

Figure 2

- a. Clay pipe bowl similar to Fig.1, e, but with sloping rim and more sharply defined fluting on the bowl.
- b. Clay pipe bowl with sloping rim, moulded in the form of a stylised acorn.
- c. Undecorated clay pipe bowl with rouletting around the sloping rim, and a small shield on either side of the spur below the bowl.
- d. Clay pipe bowl, plain except for acorns and leaves along the front and back of bowl covering the mould line.
- e-) Variations in pipe bowl and stem decoration, with the
j) maker's name and place of manufacture.

Fig. 1

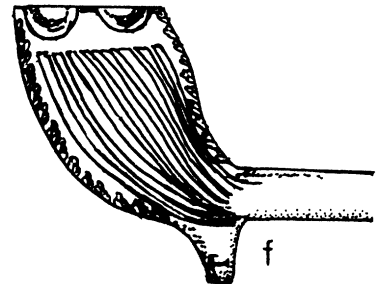
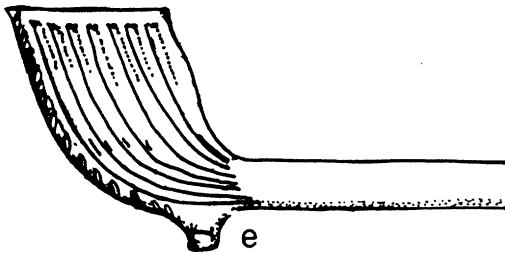
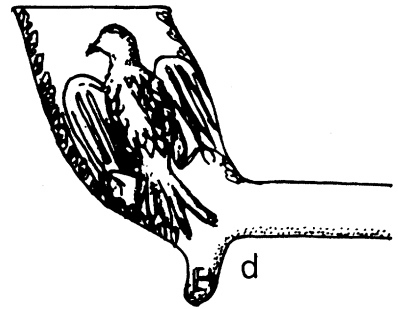
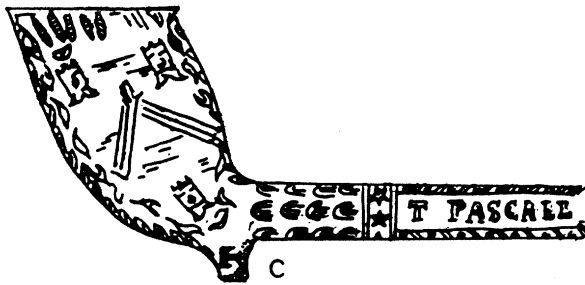
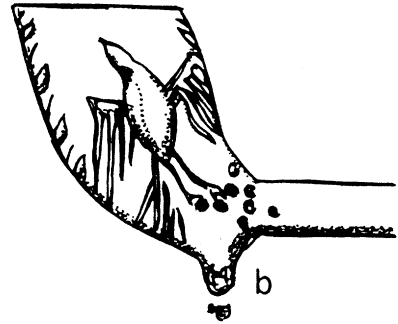
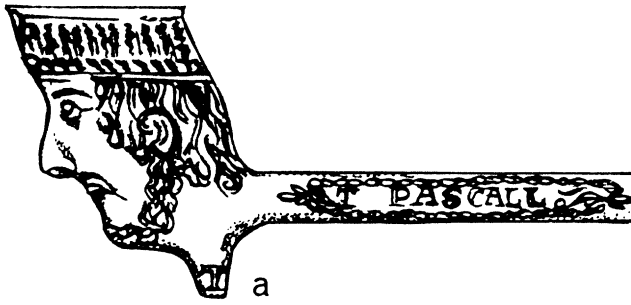


Fig. 2

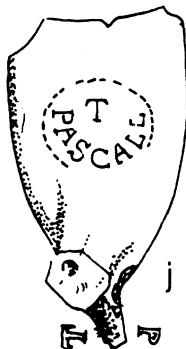
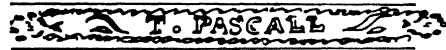
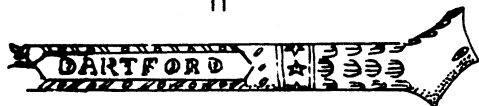
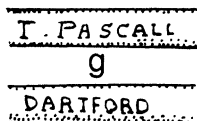
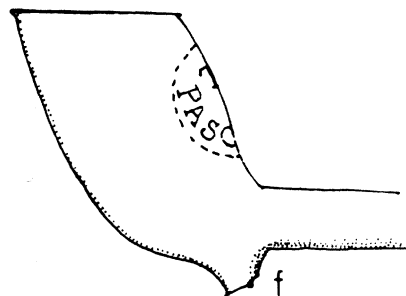
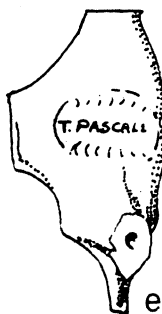
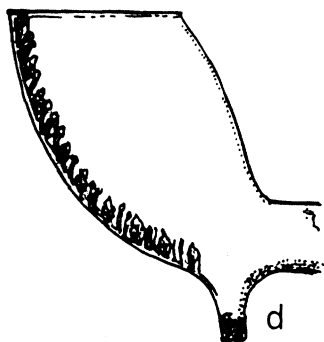
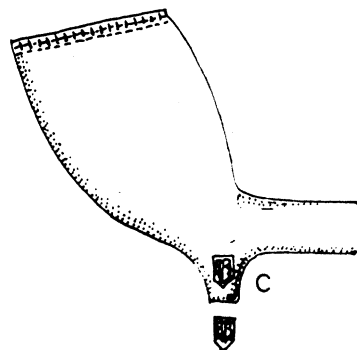
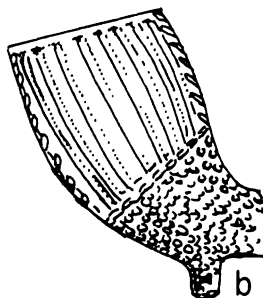
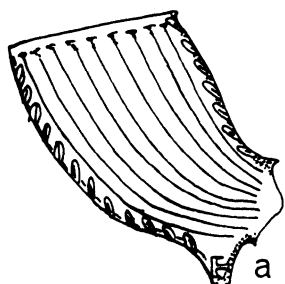


Figure 3

- a. Clay pipe bowl, without spur. Moulded to represent a tree stump.
- b. Clay pipe bowl, without spur and decorated in the form of a highly stylised acorn.
- c. Finely fluted clay pipe bowl with a plain border around the rim.
- d. Plain clay pipe bowl with rouletting around rim, and ears of corn decoration along the mould lines.
- e. Fluted clay pipe bowl, with mould line decoration as Fig. 3, d.
- f. Plain clay pipe bowl with rouletting around rim.
- g. Plain clay pipe bowl, with sloping rim. The spur on this example has been replaced by what appears to be two horn-like projections.
- h. Plain clay pipe bowl with rouletting around sloping rim.
- i. This small fragment of stem is an example of a mistake which occurred during the manufacture of the mould. On certain popular designs the mould was manufactured with a recess in the stem, in both halves of the mould. Into this recess were fitted two small brass blocks, on which were engraved the pipemaker's name and the place of manufacture. In this case the pipemaker's name was engraved the right way round, so that when reproduced on the finished pipe, it came out back to front.
- j. This fragment of a pipe bowl, as explained earlier in the text, bears the initials T.P. (Thomas Pascall), yet the name impressed on the back of the bowl begins YO (Yonwin). This is an example of the re-use of a pipe-mould, which must have been a pipemaker's most valuable possession and presumably expensive to replace.
- k. Plain clay pipe bowl with the pipemaker's name impressed on the back of the bowl within an oval, and the spur decorated with two small shields.

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Fig. 3

