

Everyday and Exotic Pottery
from Europe
c. 650–1900

Studies in honour of John G. Hurst

Edited by David Gaimster and Mark Redknap

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A seventeenth-century pottery group from Kitto Institute, Plymouth

John Allan and James Barber

with a contribution by David Higgins

The great hoard of early 17th-century pottery from the Kitto Institute site, Plymouth, is by far the largest and most representative post-medieval group excavated so far from that port; indeed it ranks amongst the finest groups of its date in Britain. It was John Hurst who first recognised the remarkably international character of the ceramics from Plymouth. He encouraged and supported the excavations in the 1960s and early 1970s, and played an important role in organising and advising upon the publication of the Plymouth finds.¹ It therefore seems fitting to us that a volume in his honour should include a contribution relating to the port, and the Kitto Institute find forms a subject reflecting many of his wide interests. One might add that, without Hurst's guiding works on European ceramics, assemblages of this sort would still present almost intractable problems in publication.

Context (Fig. 1)

In 1971, following the demolition of the Kitto Institute, one of the writers (JB) carried out trial excavations on the site of No. 50 Palace Street (NGR SX48095428), aided by a group of local volunteers. The Institute occupied a late Georgian brick-fronted building on a site at the centre of old Plymouth, close to the High Street (now misleadingly called Buckwell Street) and near the plot where a series of pre-Victorian Guildhalls stood. It lay on the south side of a street originally known as Catte Street, which

was renamed late in the 19th century in commemoration of Palace Court, a fine town house of *c.* 1500 on the north side of the street, demolished in the 1880s.

The documented history of the site extends back to 1595 when it is recorded on the east boundary of a tenement in High Street, as lands of the heirs of the Coade family.² In the surviving rentals of the Borough of Plymouth, which run from 1609 only, the property can be traced to one charged with a high or chief rent of sixpence: William Coade, esquire, is entered as owner until 1650, successive tenants being Peter Sylvester (merchant and freeman of the Borough) until 1631; Thomas Diptford, 1632–45, and Nicholas Edgcombe, 1648–50.³ From another source, however, it appears that ownership of the site had changed long before 1650, since on 20 March 1625 (new style) it was sold by William Coade and John his son to Thomas Diptford, subject to Peter Sylvester's life interest in the property. In that document William Coade is described as 'esquire' of Morvall in Cornwall. Diptford was a Plymouth merchant whose wife Elizabeth was the widow of another Plymouth merchant, Peter Edgcombe.⁴

In one corner of the site a large pit measuring *c.* 0.9 × 0.7–1.0 m was soon located. The top 0.6 m of deposits was removed before work ceased that year. Excavation was resumed in 1974 when the fill was emptied to a depth of 2.4 m, the lowest 0.8 m being waterlogged. At that depth excavation was abandoned; probing indicated that the total depth was *c.* 6 m. The pit

APPENDIX 1

The clay tobacco pipes

by D.A. Higgins

A total of 119 fragments of pipe was recovered from the well, consisting of 36 bowl, 76 stem and 7 mouthpiece fragments. Some of these were quite large, with stems of up to 135 mm in length surviving. This suggests that the fill was quite 'freshly' deposited since pipes rapidly break down if they are repeatedly disturbed. Only one complete pipe could be reassembled.

Dating

Excepting two intrusive 19th-century fragments, the pipes vary stylistically but otherwise are of very similar size, this being one of the principal chronological variables of 17th-century pipes. They form a very compact group, all of which are likely to have been in use at the same time. Given the short life expectancy of a pipe, it seems probable that this contemporary group was discarded when the well was filled. The dating of these pipes is, therefore, of significance both for the dating of the deposit and for pipe studies.

The pottery dating hinges on the introduction of North Devon slipwares to Martin's Hundred, Virginia, by the 1630s. A group of pipes from a grave fill attributed to the 1622 massacre at Martin's Hundred contains only one bowl of comparable size to the Kitto Institute pipes.³¹ This suggests that the Kitto Institute group should post-date 1622. Pipes of a similar size to the Plymouth examples were found on the 1628 wreck of the *Wasa*³² but similar parallels may also be found in Civil War deposits of the 1640s³³ as well as in regional typologies ranging from c.1630–50, the dating of which is supported by marked pipes.³⁴ In general terms this group could be dated as widely as c.1620–50 although the presence of some early features, such as examples with the heel trimmed flush to the stem, argues for an early date within this range. There are parallels for some of the marked pipes from deposits elsewhere in Plymouth

which have been dated to before c.1630³⁵ so a date of c.1625–35 seems most likely for this group. It may well have been deposited as a result of one of the documented changes of ownership, either in 1625 or in 1631.

The pipes

The 36 fragments of bowl collected represent at least 31 different pipes (by heel count), 13 of which are stamped with a maker's mark. The 18 complete or substantially complete bowls provide an important opportunity to study the contemporary forms being used in Plymouth (Fig. 7). The earliest pipe styles had been established in London and were copied around the country as pipemaking spread. This group is particularly interesting as it dates from the period when regional styles were just emerging.

In one example the swelling in the bowl is particularly near the rim (Fig. 7.1). This is not a Plymouth style but one which was used further to the east, particularly in Somerset and Dorset. The mark is damaged but would have consisted of incuse initials with a small fleur-de-lys above and below. A number of similar bowls marked TG have been found at Barnstaple, and single examples have been found at Bideford, Crediton and Plymouth.³⁶

There are three pipes with an eglantine mark (Fig. 7.2–4). This mark is particularly common at Plymouth, where it occurs in many different forms on pipes dating from c.1580–1730.³⁷ The mark is rarely encountered elsewhere and one of the later examples occurs on a bowl associated with a distinctive Plymouth style of stem decoration.³⁸ On this basis it seems highly probable that these are local Plymouth products.

The eglantine pipes are each stamped with marks from a different die, suggesting at least that a large workshop and possibly a number of workshops were producing these pipes. The bowls are distinctive in having rather oval heels trimmed flush with the stem; they are the only pipes from the group which are not milled. The swelling comes quite high in the bowl and one example has the same stamp on both the bowl

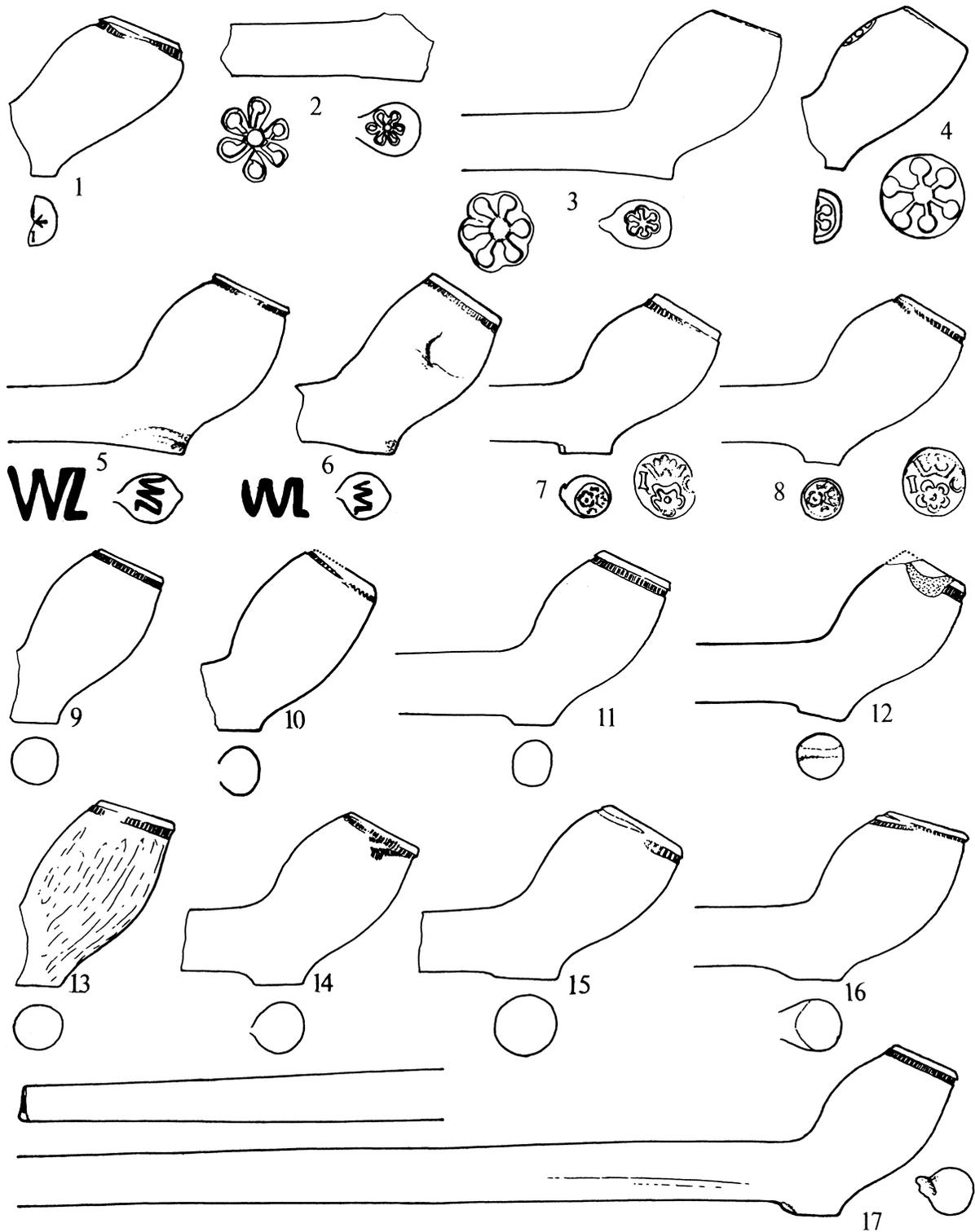


Fig. 7 Kitto Institute: clay tobacco pipes. Scale 1:1 with stamp details at 2:1.

and the heel (Fig. 7.4). All these features seem to be characteristic of this type of pipe.³⁹

There are four bowls with a small, quite sharply defined, heel stamped with the incuse letters WL (for example Fig. 7, nos. 5 & 6). The heels have all been trimmed back at an angle into the stem. The bowls are rather oval in cross-section and are made of a fine, highly-fired fabric. The moulds have a slightly uneven surface and the clay has been poorly worked so that surface folds and cracks are visible in three of the four pipes. The milling is rather coarse and crudely applied. Although well fired and durable, the overall impression is that these were cheaply produced, low-quality pipes.

The form of these WL pipes is not typical of those generally found in Plymouth but is more closely paralleled by the early 17th-century pipes found in Barnstaple and Bideford. On present evidence it seems likely that they are North Devon products which, presumably, found their way to Plymouth through coastal shipping. One example of a WL pipe is known from Barnstaple and there is an unprovenanced example in Truro Museum.⁴⁰ Other examples have been recorded from Plymouth.⁴¹

The final group of marked pipes consists of five bowls stamped with a crowned rose flanked by initials (for example, Fig. 7, nos. 7 & 8). The second initial is rather indistinct in most examples but on the basis of the best-impressed can be read as IO rather than IC. The bowls have a strongly curved form and a comparatively small heel. Two of these pipes have been given a fine burnish, a notable feature since there is only one other burnished pipe from the well and that is of very poor quality (see below). The IO pipes include examples from different moulds and marked with different dies, which suggests that they came from a well-established workshop employing a number of workers.

A comparatively large number of crowned rose marks have been found at Plymouth, some flanked by various initials, others without.⁴² These pipes are particularly interesting since they are imports from overseas reflecting the trading links of the port. The marks are most

closely paralleled in the Netherlands, where crowned rose stamps were commonly used. The bowl forms may also be paralleled there⁴³ although, having said that, they are not typical of Dutch styles and a suspicion must remain that these pipes might have been produced in other countries such as Belgium or France which have not yet been researched.

'Exotic' imported pipes, such as the crowned rose examples, are rarely found in England and, when they do occur, they are usually confined to the immediate area of ports. It seems probable that they represent casual imports by seamen rather than part of an organised trade in pipes. The Kitto Institute group is likely to have been part of a batch brought to a single household and discarded amongst the other pipes used there.

In addition to the 13 stamped heels, there are a further 18 which are not marked, the more complete examples of which are shown in Figs. 7.9–17. These vary considerably in form and, given the evidence of the marked pipes, may well include examples from a number of different production centres. Until much more work has been done on local pipe styles in the South West it is impossible to suggest exactly where they may have been made, although it is possible to say that the majority differ from the early pipes found in Cornwall or North Devon. The presumption must be that the majority are local products from Plymouth or the surrounding areas.

All the unmarked pipes are fully milled around the rim. The marked pipes were not quite so consistent in this respect: the eglantine pipes were not milled at all and one of the IO pipes is only half-milled. A feature shared by a number of both the marked and unmarked pipes is that they have a rather oval stem section, the stems being deeper than they are broad. One of the unmarked pipes is burnished, but with burnish of a very poor quality (Fig. 7.13). In general terms, all the pipes are fairly roughly finished with many of them exhibiting uneven mould surfaces, marks from handling and trimming and poorly applied milling. This is not to say that

they were necessarily of low status, but rather that this was the prevailing standard of pipes in use at Plymouth.

Only one pipe could be reassembled. This has a stem length, measured from the mouthpiece to the nearest side of the heel, of 195 mm (Fig. 7.17). In all England there are only about a dozen complete pipes of *c.* 1600–50 with which to compare this example.⁴⁴ These all come from around London or from the North West and range from about 165–240 mm in length. Coming from a different region, the Plymouth example provides a valuable regional addition to this limited sample but conforms to the general pattern which is emerging. This shows a rapid growth in the average stem length during the 17th century until, by 1700, the usual length was in the range of 280–380 mm.

Catalogue

1. West Country style with damaged mark which would have consisted of incuse initials flanked by fleur-de-lys.
2. Eglantine mark on a neatly finished bowl fragment. Probably a Plymouth product.
3. Eglantine mark on a well-designed and neatly-finished bowl. The rim has been neatly smoothed to a rather square profile. Not milled. Probably a Plymouth product.
4. Eglantine mark on both bowl and heel. rather poorer finish than 3 but with a similarly smoothed and unmilled rim. Probably a Plymouth product.
5. Incuse WL mark on a rather poorly designed and finished pipe. There is a patch of contaminated brown clay near the rim. Probably a North Devon product.
6. Smaller variant of the WL mark shown in 5. The bowl is likewise of poor quality with a crack where the clay has been poorly moulded and a lump at the stem junction where it has been poorly trimmed. Probably a North Devon product.
7. Neat curved form stamped IO. The rim is only half milled. Probably a Low Countries product.
8. Another example of an IO pipe. Note the different bowl form and die type to 7. Fully milled. Probably a Low Countries product.
9. A very neat and well-finished form with a smooth and glossy finish (although not burnished).
10. Rather a dumpy bowl form. The stem junction

appears to have been pushed in by some heavy-handed trimming.

11. Quite a good form but finished in a heavy-handed manner with deeply impressed milling and trimming marks.
12. Similar form and finish to 11.
13. Rather roughly finished bowl with very poorly executed burnishing. The stem bore is unusually small (about 6/64"), a feature noted amongst one or two of the stems in the group.
14. Quite a neat, fairly bulbous form.
15. This form has the largest heel in the group. The form is also unusual with the greatest swelling coming quite high up in the bowl.
16. Quite neatly finished but the stem trimming has removed a part of the heel.
17. Complete pipe reassembled from two fragments. Quite a neat bowl form but with gashes along the stem where it has been trimmed. The stem length, from the mouthpiece to the nearest side of the heel, is 195 mm. The overall length of the pipe is 221 mm.

APPENDIX 2

The glass (Fig. 8)

1. Rim of a beaker of clear, lightly bubbled glass with mould-blown spirals and iridescent surface weathering. *Facon de Venise*, perhaps Netherlandish or English, cf. very similar vessel from Exe Bridge, Exeter of *c.* 1620–50, and previous Plymouth finds discussed by Charleston.⁴⁵
2. Rim of an apothecary bottle in pale green glass with thick yellow-brown surface weathering. Probably English; the globular form typical of the early and mid 17th century, cf. examples from e.g. Exeter.⁴⁶
3. Rim of a bottle in pale green glass with yellow-brown iridescent surface weathering. Probably English.
4. Bottle base in pale green glass with fairly light surface weathering. Probably English.

Notes

31. A. Noel Hume, 'Clay Tobacco Pipes Excavated at Martin's Hundred, Virginia, 1976–78', in P.J. Davey (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe*, II, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Int. Ser. No. 60 (1979), fig. 9.
32. C.O. Cederlund, 'The Oldest Clay Pipes in the Warship Wasa', in P.J. Davey (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe*, IV, Brit. Archaeol.

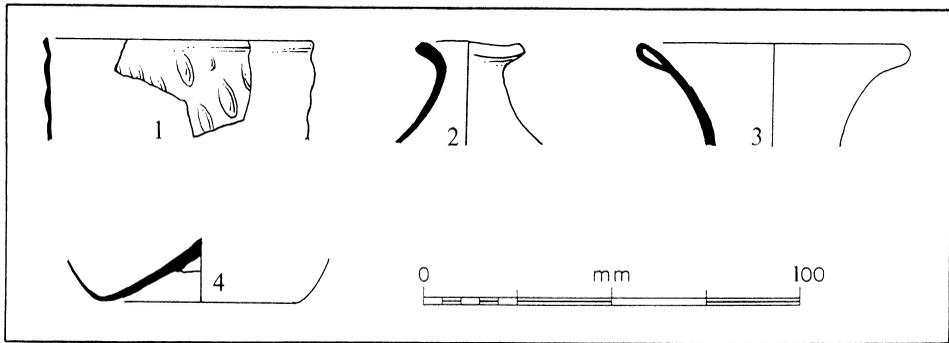


Fig. 8 Kitto Institute: glass. Scale 1:2.

- Rep. Int. Ser. No. 92 (1980), 253–56.
33. For example, from Beeston Castle, Cheshire (P.J. Davey, 'The Clay Pipes', HMSO excavation report, forthcoming) or Dudley Castle, West Midlands (D.A. Higgins, 'The Interpretation and Regional Study of Clay Tobacco Pipes: A Case Study of the Broseley District', Unpub. PhD thesis, Univ. Liverpool, 1987).
 34. For example. Chester bowl forms 1–20, some made by Alexander Lanckton prior to 1664: J.A. Rutter and P.J. Davey, 'Clay Pipes from Chester', in P.J. Davey (ed.) *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe*, III, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Brit. Ser. No. 78 (1980), 216.
 35. Oswald, A. & Barber, J. 'Marked clay pipes from Plymouth, Devon', *Post-Medieval Archaeol.* 3, 122–42.
 36. Barnstaple finds excavated by the North Devon Rescue Archaeology Unit, sites BAI 86, ND 011; Bideford and Crediton examples in Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter (Rippon Coll, pipe No. 32 and Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit site CRED 86); Plymouth example in the City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth (PC 66 DQ).
 37. For examples see A. Oswald and J. Barber, *op. cit.* (note 35).
 38. Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, PC 67 AX.
 39. Compare Figs. 53.7–11 in Oswald and Barber, *op. cit.* (note 35).
 40. For examples of Plymouth finds marked WL see Oswald and Barber, *op. cit.* (note 35). From Barnstaple a pipe excavated by the North Devon Rescue Archaeology Unit (ND 011 507); Truro Museum example unaccessioned.
 41. For example, Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, PW 69 C & PW 69 E.
 42. For examples see Oswald and Barber, *op. cit.* (note 35).
 43. For example Figs. 6 & 7 in D.H. Duco, 'De Kleijp in de Zeventiende Eeuwse Nederlanden', in P.J. Davey (ed.), *The Archaeology of the Clay Tobacco Pipe*, Vol. V, Brit. Archaeol. Rep. Int. Ser. No. 106 (1981), 111–367.
 44. Higgins, *op. cit.* (note 33).
 45. R.J. Charleston, 'The glass', in Allan *op. cit.* (note 11), 271, no. 91. See also Charleston's discussion of broadly comparable vessels in Gaskell Brown (1979) *op. cit.* (note 1), 37–8.
 46. R.J. Charleston above (1984), 274, no. 112; 277, nos. 142, 144.