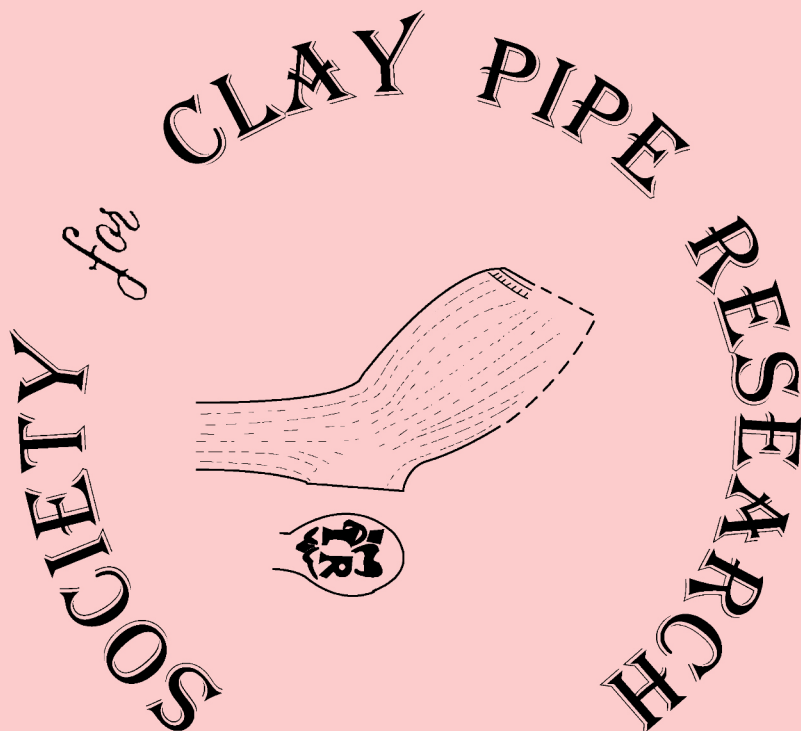




NEWSLETTER

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The Seventeenth-Century Tobacco and Pipe Trade of North West Wales

by David Higgins

At the Cardiff SCPR conference in October 2018 the author spoke about the pipes and pipemakers of north-east Wales, details of which are due to be published in a monograph on the 2015-16 Flint excavations by Archaeology Wales Ltd. This note highlights a reference to a seventeenth-century stock of tobacco and pipes in north-west Wales, which sheds light on how these goods were actually being marketed at the time.

Griffith Wynn of Caernarfon was a mercer who was well-established enough to issue his own trade tokens during the seventeenth century (Boon 1973, 93). He died in 1673 and an unusually detailed inventory of his goods was prepared that allows his business to be examined in some detail (Boon 1973, 43-75). Rather than just selling textiles and cloth, as might be expected, it is clear that Wynn was selling a wide range of other goods, including hats, gloves, buttons, jewellery, combs, books, locks, fishing hooks, seeds, herbs and spices, dried fruit, chemicals, soap, apothecary's goods and distillates, spirits, gunpowder, laths, candles and various other metal and hardware items – as well as tobacco and pipes. Boon notes that, in country towns, mercers were typically as much grocers as cloth dealers and that, where the trade is known, some 62% of all seventeenth-century Welsh tokens were issued by mercers, making them by far the most significant class of such issuers (Boon 1973, 36-7). To put it in perspective, 58 of the 94 private token issuers with documented trades were mercers, while only two were tobacconists: James Owens of Overton Madock, Flintshire (1667), and Lawrence Cooke of Wrexham (1666 and 1667). As with Wynn, it is likely that a 'tobacconist' at this date would have stocked a variety of other goods, particularly groceries. The total value of Wynn's stock was about £325, showing that he was a relatively wealthy merchant, and his inventory includes the following references to tobacco and pipes:

- ¼ lb cut tobacco at 6d.
- 34 lbs cut tobacco at £1.11.0.
- 1 box tobacco neat No 1 at £1.7.0.
- 1 box tobacco neat No 2 at £2.2.0.
- 2 boxes tobacco neat No 3 at £5.6.8.
- 1 box tobacco neat No 5 at £3.14.0.
- 1 cwt Bermuda tobacco at £5.0.0.
- 1 gross of pipes at 1s 2d.
- 3 gross of pipes at 2s 6d.
- 23 gross of pipes & hogshead at 15s.

From this list it is clear that Wynn held a considerable stock of tobacco with a total

value of £19.1.2, which represents around 6% of his total goods. It is not known how much tobacco was contained in the individual boxes but, from the value of the Bermuda tobacco, it is likely that his total stock was approaching 4cwt. There were clearly a number of different grades available, ranging from the bulk Bermuda tobacco, which was valued at about 10¾d per pound, to the most expensive cut tobacco at 2s per pound.

The pipes themselves were also available in a range of prices, suggesting that different styles or qualities of these were available too. It is not clear if the hogshead was also being valued with the 23 gross of pipes but, even if it is excluded, the pipes are only valued at less than 8d per gross, which was very cheap at a time when pipes were generally selling for between 1s and 2s per gross (Higgins 1987, 127). The three gross of pipes work out at 10d per gross, while the single gross is valued at 1s 2d, suggesting that these were much better quality products than the cheaper grades. His total stock can, therefore, be seen to have comprised some 27 gross (3,888 individual pipes), which were available in at least three different styles or qualities.

Although described as a mercer, it is clear that Wynne was a significant supplier of tobacco and pipes in north-west Wales, where Caernarfon was the principal town. He was just one of many mercers across Wales at the time and held a considerable stock of tobacco and pipes, suggesting that these commodities were readily available in a region of Britain that is often perceived as being 'remote'. Perhaps more significantly, the pipes were valued at a price that makes them seem cheap compared with examples from other parts of Britain, which also runs contrary to the normal assumptions. Smoking was clearly both well-established and affordable by this date.

There are no recorded pipemakers from the north-west of Wales, although little research in this area has been done and it is possible that some would have existed, especially in the larger settlements such as Caernarfon. What is certain, however, is that the tobacco would have had to have been imported into the town, most likely via coastal shipping from larger ports in the region, such as Chester or Liverpool. Both of these places also supported or were near to significant pipemaking industries by this date and so would have been well placed to provide a range of pipes as well.

What this inventory has shown is that, far from being a remote backwater, the contemporary fashion for smoking was well-established in Caernarfon by the 1670s and that both pipes and tobacco were readily available in large quantities, in various grades and at affordable prices. The low number of recorded pipemakers or tobacconists does not mean that these commodities were not in use and the role of the numerous mercers in acting as merchants for these goods has been highlighted.

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Recent Excavation of Two Pipe Factories in the West Country

by Marek Lewcun

This paper is a summary of a presentation given by the author at the SCPR conference in Cardiff looking at the excavation of two pipe factories in the West Country.

The first took place at Bridewell Lane, Bath, in 2015 as part of the Saw Close development opposite the city's Theatre Royal. Documentary research in the 1980s regarding the development of the adjacent Blue Coat School had suggested that the pipe factory, which formerly stood to the south, might have been preserved when the school was rebuilt in 1859 when a new playground was laid out over what were once numbers 9 and 10 Bridewell Lane. In order to protect the factory at 10 Bridewell Lane from any future development without excavation, it was put on the Sites & Monument Record (SMR) in the early 1990s as a site of industrial importance. This significant decision would have a big impact when, in 2011, it was proposed that a casino and associated restaurants be built on the site. The county archaeologist attached an archaeological condition on the planning application, which directed that three evaluation trenches be excavated across the site of what was formerly numbers 3 to 10 Bridewell Lane, with one of them being towards the rear of the pipe factory. The evaluation revealed that the floors of the factory, at the rear at least, had survived, and two kilns were still intact to just above floor level. The results of the evaluation led to full excavation of the site by the staff of Cotswold Archaeology, including the author, in 2015.

The factory at the rear of 10 Bridewell Lane was built by Joseph Smith in 1780, and was sold to James Clarke in 1810. Clarke passed the running of the factory to his son-in-law William Needes in 1833, and in 1835 it came into the hands of Joseph Sants. His real name was Jose Antonio Dos Santos and he was the son of a Portuguese wine merchant of the same name who had settled in Gloucester in 1803 and had gone into the pipemaking business there. In Bath, Joseph ran a successful business,

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