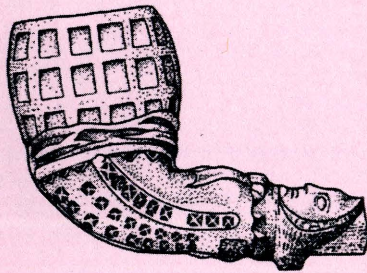
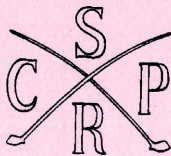


SOCIETY *for* CLAY PIPE RESEARCH



NEWSLETTER

70



Autumn/Winter 2006

## News from Pipe Aston

by Allan Peacey

Pipe Aston is a small village in north Herefordshire situated half-way between Ludlow and Wigmore. Throughout the medieval period it was simply known as Aston or variants of this name. It has acquired the prefix Pipe in recognition of the manufacture of clay tobacco pipes, which formed a major part of the local economy from early in the seventeenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century.

This industry has been the subject of intensive study for a number of years and has involved field walking to locate traces of domestic and manufacturing sites, surface collection of finds from plough soils, evaluation trenching of identified production sites and the study of documents such as parish registers, churchwarden's accounts and marriage licences.

Concurrent with these endeavours has been the detailed excavation and recording, over ten seasons, of a major production site in the centre of the village; 'Roy's Orchard'. This site was in use as a co-operative venture from c1650 to c1730. That this was indeed a co-operative enterprise is evident from the large number of full name stamps on pipes recovered from the excavation. The quantity and quality of the data set from this site has enabled us to look at the pipes in different ways and to deduce from this hitherto unexpected sharing of workshop space, moulds and kilns. It has become apparent from the study of other sampled sites that this co-operation extended beyond the limits of Roy's Orchard into the wider community.

Study of documents, particularly marriage licences, has enabled us to establish links between the pipemakers of this parish and those of Cleobury Mortimer. Pipe forms indicate a powerful influence, if not direct links, with Broseley in Shropshire. We have also established links with Kington where one of the Pipe Aston makers, Stephen Watkins, was born, married and buried. Added to this we have recorded a Kington token of William Shepherd from one of our trial trenches in the orchard of Pipe Aston Farm and Pipe Aston products have been recovered from sites in Kington.

Ten years excavation of this site has produced in the region of 5,500 tobacco pipes. A high percentage of these are marked with impressed stamps. These stamps include full names, initials, rose and crowns, wheels and a handful of enigmatic symbols.

Close examination of mould imparted tooling marks and defects on the pipes has enabled the identification of over 50 separate moulds. It is when comparing these different moulds with the incidence of the different stamps that it can be seen in many cases that the moulds were used by more than one maker, indicating common workspace. It is also apparent that a range of stamp types frequently occur on pipes

from the same mould indicating a market-led significance to the various symbol stamps, the meanings of which are now lost to us. There are also instances of exclusive use of particular moulds by a single maker that might imply products of a separate workshop. Even in these cases it is clear that the kiln facility was being shared.

This site has given us a huge assemblage of contemporary pottery, which includes material from the final years of local pottery production and the rise in the importance of Staffordshire and Staffordshire-type products. It has also provided one of the major groups of medieval pottery recovered in north Herefordshire (over 500 fragments), since the stoking pit for the pipe kilns had been cut through extensive medieval deposits. There are also 321 fragments of glass and numerous iron objects including two spurs, part of a cheek bit and several tack buckles.

From the outset when it was apparent that a large number of stamps were used on the site it was hoped that some of these might be recovered. Prior to work at Pipe Aston only two pipemaker's stamps had been recorded and both of these were made of pipe clay. Pipe clay stamps having no recyclable value might be expected to survive in numbers on a site such as this one. In the event only two stamps have been recovered. One made of pipe clay from the final phase on the site, in the form of a heart; paradoxically no pipes with this stamp have been recovered. The second stamp, dating to before 1680, is of lead and imparts the initials IB found on numerous pipes from one of the earlier phases.

It is now clear that the majority of stamps used here were not made of pipe clay and in the light of the IB stamp lead is the prime candidate for the material used. Lead is easy to work and easy to recycle; to be formed into a new stamp as the need arises. Field work has identified nine production sites in Pipe Aston or its immediate environs. Documents suggest two others in the adjoining parishes of Ludford and Orleton. Some stamps occur on more than one of the sites sampled indicating either movement of pipemakers within the village or co-operation regarding the use of kilns. In the case of Clemen Melard it can be seen that his earlier products were made at a site adjoining Clover Field on the boundary with Burrington and his later products, including full name stamps on tailed or racquet heels, were made in Roy's Orchard. The earliest recorded pipe dates from the 1610-20 period, from a surface collection in Squirrels Hall, and is conveniently a waster with adhering white clay indicative of its having been built into the muffle of a pipe kiln.

The latest pipes are from the same field and are early examples of stem marking in the region dating c1730-50. The initials EP below a debased crown or *fleur de lys* have not yet been matched to any documented pipemaker. There is a pre Civil War production site at Upper Aston Field and two similarly dated spreads of material elsewhere in the parish suggesting one or two more sites of this period yet to be pinpointed. We have yet to locate a convincing workshop site for Richard Hammonds who was married in 1676, and took an apprentice in 1718 and who used

full name stamps on tailed heel pipes and initial stamps, some with a retrograde R, on pipes of round heel form.

Our 2005 season in Roy's Orchard gave up some very useful stratigraphy, effectively three discrete deposits from intersecting pits that both allow us to see contemporary groups of forms and to place these with some certainty within an absolute chronology. We are now able to make some assumptions on the question of kiln life. All of the evidence points to a production span of something in the region of 80 years on the same spot. We excavated two kilns, side by side, served by the same stoking pit. At the time of the final firing only one of the kilns was operational. The other had been gutted almost entirely. What had been taken out quite deliberately was for the most part degraded common brick. The kiln had been stripped out probably prior to a refit, which never took place. Whatever factors led to the demise of pipe making on the site seem to have had a somewhat sudden and unforeseen impact. It seems likely that whatever kiln or kilns preceded the two excavated, occupied the same positions. In all probability parts of these two kilns had been in constant use from the outset. The limiting factors of kiln life appear to have been degradation of the brick substructure and muffle supports and slag build up in the flues. These factors would have lead to a periodic refurbishment involving removal of the internal structural features and replacing them within the shell of the kiln. Muffles would have been more durable due to the different maturing temperature of the clay used to make them and probably needed little patching or repair. We have evidence from the site of six different muffles. It is likely that others left the site in batches of production waste to be used for road repairs or other similar work.

We have just completed our 2006 season excavating the pre Civil War site at Upper Aston Field. A large quantity of material awaits post excavation analysis. It is already clear that pipes were being made on the site between 1620 and 1640. The pottery assemblage is largely made up of local north Herefordshire products with the only obviously imported pieces from a white tin glazed blue and yellow painted albarello.

A very small pipe was also recovered, which poses a problem of interpretation. It could either be a miniature contemporary with the rest of the assemblage or a residual pipe dating from around 1600. In view of the 1610-20 waster from the adjoining field, the latter alternative is by no means out of the question.

The two figures illustrate the range of pipe forms from Roy's Orchard and Upper Aston Field. Bowl forms A, B and C all occurred together in the latest phase of Roy's Orchard with A being the latest, introduced in the early years of the eighteenth century. Forms A, C, E and F are clearly similar to Broseley types 4, 5, 3 and 2. Forms C and D occur together in a large assemblage from a sealed pit apparently filled between 1680 and 1690. Forms E, F, G and H all occur in earlier layers of the same pit; Forms F, G and H are linked by the stamped initials IB, which occur on

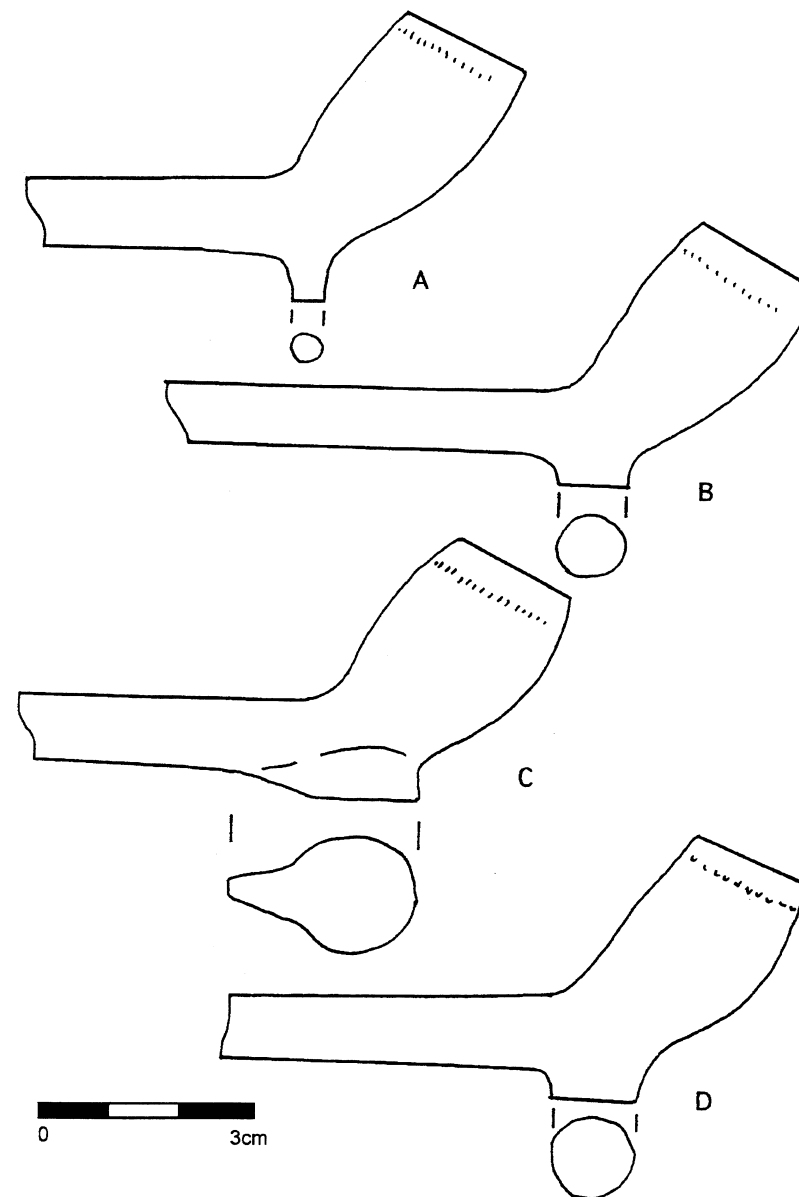
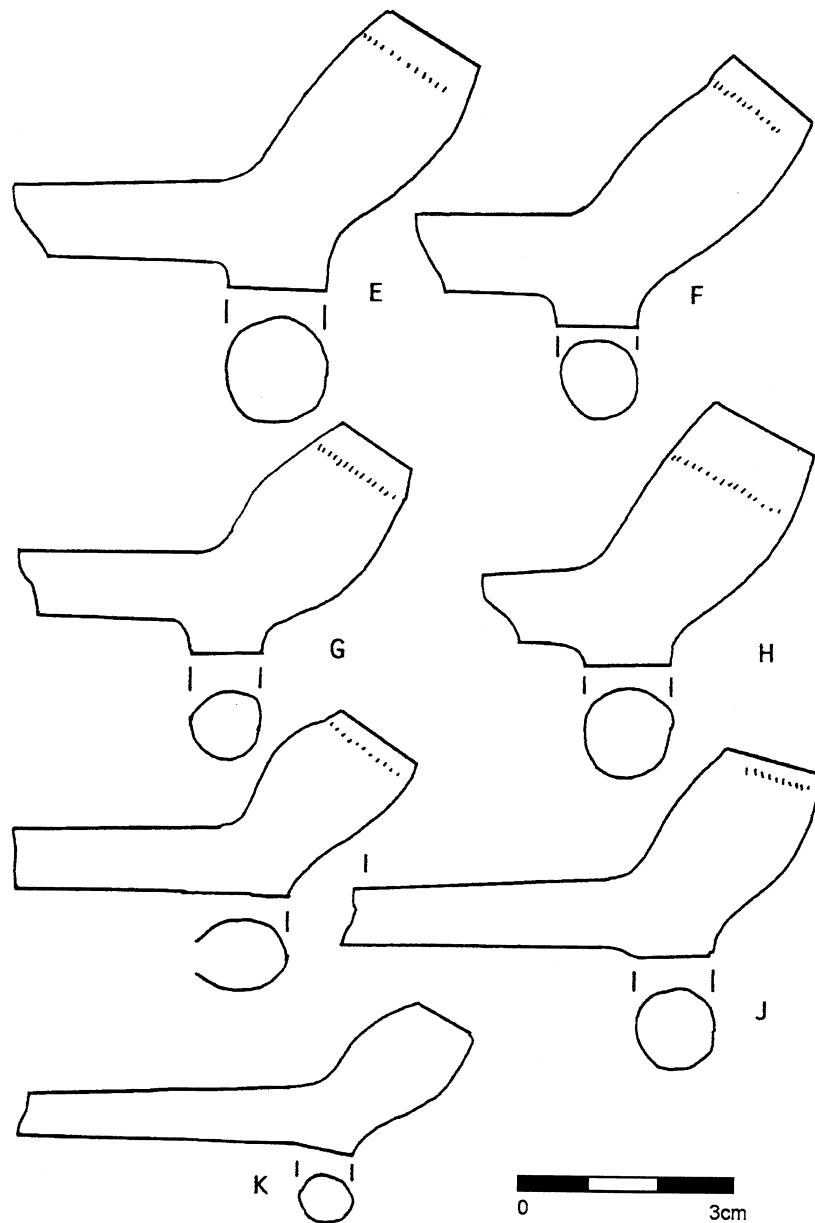


Figure 1: Bowl forms A-D from Roy's Orchard. (Drawn by the author).



**Figure 2:** Bowl forms E-H from Roy's Orchard and I-K from Upper Aston Field. (Drawn by the author).

them all, whilst E with its large round heel is invariably unmarked.

Forms I, J and K are from the production site at Upper Aston Field. Stratigraphy clearly places J with its larger rounder heel in the latest phase distinctly separated from I, which occurred in earlier deposits. Only a single example of K was recovered.

There is clearly a lot of work yet to do in this north Herefordshire parish.



### Clay Tobacco Pipes Collected by Mr. Gwyn Rees of Wrinstone Farm, nr. Wenvoe, Vale of Glamorgan

*by Gill Evans*

For the past few years, Mr. Gwyn Rees has systematically field-walked and metal-detected fields on his farm and other farms within, roughly, a five-mile radius. Anything of interest has been reported to Steve Sell of the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust. I have been able to make a record of the clay tobacco pipes found, and this report contains a representative selection of those found by Mr. Rees.

I have been struck by the similarity in make-up to other sites in south Wales: especially Llanmaes, Carmarthen, Haverfordwest Laugharne and Pumpsaint, with the bulk of pipes, coming from Broseley and the Border Country, but with a few earlier ones from Bristol and the West Country. The only exception being an assemblage from Loughor, near Swansea (personal collection), which has by far the majority of Bristol pipes. There is a possible reason for this; Loughor was strictly a sea port without a farming hinterland but with Bristol contacts, whereas the others were towns/villages surrounded by lush farmland, and on known drovers routes. Welsh cattle drovers were extremely active during the mid-late seventeenth century. These hardy men would pass through towns and villages on their way to and from London and the south of England. Most of their routes took them via the Border Country, thus bringing them into contact with Broseley-type pipes. It is highly possible that, as word spread, they found such favour that makers noticed a ready market for their wares and filled it accordingly.

The assemblage comprises the following pipes. These have been found in plough soil and not as a result of excavation and as a result they are in a very abraded condition.

1. Small forward sloping bowl, button top milling on rim. Well made, slightly weathered. Round heel unmarked. c1640-1660.
2. Gloucester type, waisted at base and rim, weathered finish. Some button



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