

## **Assessment of the finds from Site 3A/17, Gilwern to Hafodyrynis Pipeline (GIH02)**

### ***Alan Vince***

The collection of finds from the abandoned cottage site, 3A/17, investigated as part of the fieldwork on the Gilwern to Hafodyrynis pipeline is remarkable and deserves further work and dissemination of the results:

- a) The cottage site is remote. It was constructed on a terrace on a steep hillside in what was still a wooded valley at the time of the surveying of the 25" to a mile Ordnance Survey map and almost certainly was associated with the onset of industrialisation in the area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is highly unlikely, therefore, that any of the finds from the site were residual from earlier activity, nor does there appear to be any reason for artefacts to have been lost on the site after its abandonment, although since the complete survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as a standing ruin it may well have had casual later use.
- b) The occupants of the site in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century can be identified. We therefore have a possibility of associating artefacts with one of the poorest social classes: coal miners. Almost all 19<sup>th</sup>/early 20<sup>th</sup>-century artefacts in social history collections come from higher social classes or are related to specific trades or activities.
- c) Archaeologists, sociologists and historians are becoming increasingly interested in the use of material culture as a means of signalling status and aspirations. This collection is important because it demonstrates that pottery and glass can be a poor guide to wealth or status.

It is therefore recommended that further work takes place on these finds and their historical context.

The proposed work is as follows:

- d) Establishment of the date of occupation of the site. This can be achieved to within plus/minus 5 years by a study of the Census returns. Working back from the 1881 records it should be possible to identify the household in the 1871, 1861, 1851 and 1841 records, providing that the site was occupied at the time. From a study of the finds I would expect that the cottage was first occupied in the 1850s and this would correspond to the likely date of Henry Jones' first marriage. If a record can be found in the 1861 Census returns but not the 1851 returns this would support this interpretation.
- e) Establishment of the social context of the household. Rachel Jones is likely to have been responsible for the purchase of the pottery and glass from the site and from a study of the pottery Kate Steane and I suggested that she had genteel aspirations. This may suggest that she was in service before her marriage. It is possible that the Gwent Record Office has a

record of her marriage to Henry Jones and from this we could establish her maiden name and possibly the occupation of her father.

- f) Further analysis of the pottery and glass. It should be possible to identify the source and the design of many of the transfer-printed vessels by making a photographic record of the vessels and then consulting various reference sources, including the Stoke-on-Trent Museum reference collection. The date and contents of some of the glassware could also be established more fully by reference to printed advertisements. The oil lamp also requires illustration since it is fragmentary, The kettle, also is probably capable of being more fully identified, for which we would need to make a reconstruction drawing.
  
- g) Publication of the results. Similar pottery and glassware must be found throughout the English-speaking world, from Canada to Australia, and a study of this material would undoubtedly be relevant to a large number of people throughout the world. The appropriate vehicle for publication would probably be *Post-Medieval Archaeology*. Any such paper should include not only a catalogue and discussion of the finds but also the documentary and cartographic sources and the results of the excavation and survey of the complex.

## Costings

Visit to the Family Record Centre, London. £176 plus £40 travel.

Visit to the Gwent Record Office, Newport. £176 plus £60 travel.

Photography of the pottery and glass. £352

Illustration of selected glassware and other finds £200

Further research on the pottery, glass and other finds £352

Preparation of publication text (excluding site description) £352

Preparation of publication illustrations (finds only) £88