

Assessment of the Clay Tobacco Pipes and Pottery from Castle Sinclair Girnigoe, Caithness (GSC'05)

Alan Vince and Kate Steane

Excavations at Castle Sinclair Girnigoe, Caithness, undertaken by Field Archaeology Specialists Ltd in 2005 produced a small collection of clay tobacco pipes and pottery (Table 1).

The pottery includes sherds of vessels which are probably of Late Norse age, but the remainder are mostly of post-medieval date, including vessels of late 16th/early 17th century date. The clay pipes are probably all of mid to late 17th century date.

Table 1

class	Sum of Nosh	Sum of NoV	Sum of Weight
PIPECLAY	178	175	544
POTTERY	45	26	504
Grand Total	223	201	1048

Description

Clay Tobacco Pipes

One hundred and ninety-two fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered. Most (161 pieces) were plain stem fragments but fragments of 12 bowls, 1 spur, 2 heels, 2 hand cut mouthpieces and two fragments of stamped stem were present.

The bore diameter of the stems indicates a late 16th to late 17th century date for all of the pipes bar one, which is probably 18th century (context 1218) and this is consistent with the more closely datable bowls.



Figure 1 Pipe from context 1134 showing post-firing equilateral triangle carved on heel



Figure 2 Pipe from context 1134 showing post-firing letter "B" carved on side of heel

No late 16th/early 17th century bowls were present but the majority can be dated, from their size and shape, to the mid 17th century (c.1640-60). A single later 17th century bowl has the initials "W" and "B" scratched post-firing on either side of the heel. The heel has a triangle,

also scratched post-firing. This is a highly unusual feature and should be examined by a specialist on the clay pipes of Scotland (suggested specialists: Peter Davey, Reader in Archaeology, University of Liverpool, or Denis Gallagher, 4 Sylvan Place, Edinburgh EH9 1LH). Other pipes of note are a bowl with moulded "rose" on either side (a Dutch type, cf Davey 1992, Fig 1.6); a bowl with rouletting around the middle of the girth as well as just below the rim; a heeled bowl with a rouletted line across the heel and stem fragments stamped with a diamond-shaped stamp containing a fleur-de-lys. The stamped stem is also probably Dutch. These too are worthy of specialist study.

Pottery

Fifty-four sherds of pottery were recovered, representing no more than 30 vessels and weighting in total 747 gm.

Late Norse to High Medieval



Figure 3 Rim of Organic-tempered vessel from context 1134

Twenty-two fragments of handmade, organic-tempered pottery were recovered. One of these is a rim sherd and one from the flat base of a bulbous-bodied vessel. The remainder are undecorated, featureless body sherds.

The organic-tempered fabric is paralleled in various parts of the Highlands and Western Isles, as well as in the Shetland and Orkney islands and is dated between the 11th and the

14th centuries (Gaimster 1986). A similar tradition, Craggan ware, was still current in the Hebrides and Western Highlands into the 19th century and there is a strong possibility that these sherds, found alongside 17th-century wares, are contemporary post-medieval types.

Medieval

The base of a plain lead glazed whiteware vessel was recorded. The vessel has a plain, obtuse base and is a small squat form, possibly a urinal, considering the whitish deposit on the interior. The fabric is fine-textured and white, with a dark grey core, and contains sparse subangular quartz grains up to 2.0mm across. These features suggest that it is made from a white-firing clay, probably of Coal Measures origin. It may be an example of Scottish East Coast White Gritty ware (SECWG).

Post-Medieval



Figure 4 Sherds of handmade handled vessel, possibly a pipkin

A handmade vessel made in a fabric not containing organic inclusions was found. This vessel is probably a pipkin and has a band of horizontal grooves on the shoulder and traces of the attachment for a handle. Similar vessels were produced in Jutland in the late medieval and early post-medieval periods (e.g. Madsen 1986, Figs 11 and 12). The source of this vessel should be pursued, through sending drawings and photographs to Danish colleagues and by thin section and chemical analysis (comparative chemical data from several sites in Denmark are available).

The remaining sherds are all of wheelthrown glazed wares of undisputable post-medieval date. Thirteen sherds come from a large Frechen stoneware (FREC) vessel. This vessel is probably a narrow-necked pitcher, used for storage or transport, and has a large circular medallion which consists of a crowned shield suspended by straps. A large collection of similar vessels comes from the city of London and it would probably be possible to identify the precise stamp by sending photographs to finds specialists at MoLAS. A similar vessel in which the medallion incorporates the date "1607" is published by Gaimster (Gaimster 1997, 57).

Other pottery includes a body sherd from a Weser slipware (WESE) dish, similar to one published by Hurst and dated c.1590-1620 (Hurst, Neal, and van Beuningen 1986, 375); a small sherd from a yellow-glazed whiteware, possibly Surrey-Hampshire Border ware (BORDY, Pearce 1992); a body sherd from a Dutch Red Earthenware (DUTR) vessel, probably a pipkin; the rim of a slip-trailed Dutch Red Earthenware slipware bowl; and a stamped body sherd from the shoulder of a Westerwald-type stoneware panel jug. Westerwald-type panel jugs were produced in the early 17th century at Raeren and Westerwald using the same moulds and stamps (Hurst 1986, 222-3). A sherd of a fine off-white fabric from context 1134 with runnels of brown glaze on the inside of the neck is probably from a Scottish medieval or post-medieval ware.



Figure 5 Interior of neck of unidentified vessel, possibly a Scottish post-medieval product

Early Modern

Two sherds from a refined whiteware teacup, probably of late 19th or 20th-century date, were recorded.

Assessment

Stratigraphy

Intervention 23

This intervention produced 131 fragments of clay tobacco pipe and 44 sherds of pottery. Two recovery contexts, 1134 and 1154, were probable occupation deposits and produced sherds of Late Norse wares, Frechen stoneware, handmade ?Danish greyware, and Weser ware as well as mid- and late- 17th-century clay pipe bowls. Context 1131, a dump, produced the unidentified whiteware and a clay pipe stem and context 1133 produced three fragments of clay pipe stem of 17th-century character. A layer in the porter's lodge produced a similar clay pipe stem.

Context 1176 and an unnamed context in the Porter's lodge both produced 17th-century clay pipe stems.

Intervention 24

Twenty-two fragments of clay tobacco pipe and three sherds of pottery were recovered from Intervention 24. All of the finds could be of 17th-century date apart from two of the potsherds, which come from the courtyard surface (1174) and date to the later 19th or 20th centuries.

Table 2

Description	Context	DUTR	PIPECLAY	WHITE
RECOVERY CONTEXT - (NE QUAD SLOPE)	1161		3	
RECOVERY CONTEXT - (NE QUAD)	1158		4	
RECOVERY CONTEXT - COURTYARD SURFACE	1166		6	
	1174		1	2
RECOVERY CONTEXT - POSSIBLE OCCUPATION DEPOSITS	1142		1	
	1148		4	
	1165	1		
RUBBLE LAYER	1141		1	
	1147		2	

Intervention 25

Fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from two contexts in Intervention 25. That from context 1218 is probably of 18th-century date, to judge by its bore diameter, and that from context 1037 is probably of 17th-century date.

Intervention 26

A sherd of possible Border ware was recovered from context 1212.

Interpretation

Given the long probable period of use of the organic-tempered vessels, here ascribed to the Late Norse period, it is difficult to know whether they represent an early phase in the occupation of the castle or were in use in the 17th century, alongside the various definite post-medieval types. The sherds all come from the same context, 1134, which also produced the largest assemblage of post-medieval pipes.

The possible sherd of Scottish East Coast White Gritty ware might be of later medieval date, and this would be consistent with the identification as a urinal fragment, although a post-medieval date cannot be ruled out. Similarly, the handmade handled vessel could be of late medieval date, and there are parallels for similar vessels in Jutland at that time, but even

here a later date cannot be excluded, since handmade pottery continued to be made in Jutland until the 2nd World War.

The dating becomes clearer in the post-medieval period and two of the vessels are of definite late 16th to early 17th century date (the Frechen stoneware pitcher and the Weser ware bowl). Both are of forms which for differing reasons might be expected to have had a long period of use. The stoneware vessel is a large storage vessel and could have been used in a cellar or pantry for decades without being broken whilst the Weser ware bowl might have been used for display as much as for dining. None of the clay pipe bowls are of the small size one might expect if they were contemporary with the period of manufacture of these two vessels. The bulk of the pipes appear to date to the middle of the 17th century, with a few possibly later types, none of which have the size typically in use from the 1680s onwards.

The collection in the main contains no finds later than c.1680 but there are fragments of a more recent pipe and a cup from contexts 1174 and 1218, indicating casual use of the castle.

Further work

If the results of the 2005/6 excavations are to be published then the clay tobacco pipes include several which merit further study and it is suggested that they are sent to a specialist in the clay pipes of Scotland since a high proportion of mid 17th century Scottish pipes are probably of Dutch origin (Davey 1992).

Furthermore, it would be possible to establish the source of the organic-tempered ware and the handmade pipkin and the possible urinal fragment through chemical and thin section analysis. The Frechen stoneware medallion could be identified through comparison with the Museum of London collection and this could provide a closer date for the vessel. Similarly, the stamped Westerwald stoneware sherd might be dated more closely if it could be matched with a more complete vessel.

Costs for this recommended work are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Task	Description	Cost
1	Specialist Report on clay tobacco pipes	NK
2	Characterisation of handmade organic-tempered ware (6 samples)	£300.00 plus VAT
3	Characterisation of handmade pipkin	£50.00 plus VAT
4	Characterisation of possible urinal	£50.00 plus VAT
5	Identification of Frechen medallion	£200.00 plus VAT
6	Illustration of Pipes and Pot	NK (In-house FAS)

7	Integration of results of (2), (3) and (4) into publishable report	£200.00 plus VAT
---	--	------------------

Retention

All of the finds should be retained. None require special storage or packaging conditions.

Bibliography

Davey, P. (1992) "Dutch clay tobacco pipes from Scotland." in D. Gaimster and M. Redknap, eds., *Everyday and Exotic Pottery from Europe: Studies in honour of John G. Hurst*, Oxbow Books, Oxford, 279-89

Gaimster, D. R. M. (1986) "Dung-Tempering? A Late Norse Case Study from Caithness." *Medieval Ceram*, 10, 43-8

Gaimster, David (1997) *German Stoneware 1200-1900*. London, British Museums Publ Ltd

Hurst, John G, Neal, David S, and van Beuningen, H J E (1986) *Pottery Produced and Traded in North-West Europe 1350-1650*. Rotterdam Papers VI Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen

Madsen, P. K. (1986) "A Survey of the Research of Danish Medieval Pottery." *Medieval Ceram*, 10, 57-84

Pearce, Jacqueline (1992) *Border Wares*. Post-Medieval Pottery in London, 1500-1700 London, HMSO for Museum of London

Appendix 1

REFNO	class	Context	Subfabric	Cname	Action	Weight	Form	Description	Part	Nosh	NoV	Condition	Use
506	CTP	1037		PIPECLAY		4	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	2	2		
506	CTP	1037		PIPECLAY		1	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	MOUTH PIECE	1	1		
572	POTTERY	1094		DUTRS		235	BOWL	SLIP TRAILED BAND ON FLANGE	R	6	1		
572	CTP	1094		PIPECLAY		8	PIPE	HEELED BOWL;ROULETTE BELOW RIM;1640-60;33MM TALL	BOWL	1	1		
572	POTTERY	1094		PIPECLAY		4	PIPE	EM17TH C BORE	STEM	1	1		
323	CRUSTACEAN	1131		CRUSTACEAN		5		CRUSTACEAN	FRAG	1	1		
323	POTTERY	1131		SECWG		9	URINAL	PLAIN GL INT AND EXT;OBTUSE BASE ANGLE	B	1	1		THICK WHITE DEP INT
323	CTP	1131		PIPECLAY		1	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1		
508	CTP	1133		PIPECLAY		7	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	3	1		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		4	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	3	3		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		1	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	MOUTHPIECE	1	1		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		201	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	64	64		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		7	PIPE	1640-60; HEART-SHAPED HEEL	BOWL/HEEL	1	1		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		3	PIPE	1640-60; ROULETTED LINE ACROSS HEEL	BOWL; HEEL	1	1		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		10	PIPE	1640-60; ROULETTED LINE ACROSS HEEL	BOWL; HEEL	1	1		
505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		4	PIPE	FRAGS	BOWL	3	3		

The Alan Vince Archaeology Consultancy, 25 West Parade, Lincoln, LN1 1NW
<http://www.postex.demon.co.uk/index.html>
 A copy of this report is archived online at
<http://www.avac.uklinux.net/potcat/pdfs/avac2007043.pdf>

AVAC Report 2007/43

505	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY	PHOTO; DR	6	PIPE	1640-60; MOULDED FLOWER DEC ON EACH SIDE OF BOWL, ROULETTING ROUND RIM	BOWL/HEEL	1	1	
505	POTTERY	1134		UNID	PHOTO FOR DEREK HALL	36	JUG	NO GLAZE	BS	3	1	ASHY
505	POTTERY	1134		UNID	PHOTO FOR DEREK HALL	17	JUG	GLAZE INT	BS	2	1	ASHY
505	POTTERY	1134		ECHAF	DR	12	JAR		R	1	1	
505	POTTERY	1134		ECHAF		49	JAR		BS	4	3	
505	POTTERY	1134	COARSER FAB	ECHAF		16	JAR		BS	1	1	SOOTED EXT
505	POTTERY	1134		FREC		115	PITCHER	SHL=1134 REF 312 AND 512; GAIMSTER 1997, 57 (1607); BIG COMPLEX SHIELD WITH STRAPS ANDCROWN OVER THE TOP	B, BS	9	1	
322	POTTERY	1134		ECHAF	DR	43	JAR		B	1	1	SOOTED EXT; BLACK DEP INT
312	POTTERY	1134		FREC		56	PITCHER	SHL=1134 REF 505 AND 512; GAIMSTER 1997, 57 (1607); BIG COMPLEX SHIELD WITH STRAPS ANDCROWN OVER THE TOP	BS	3	0	
312	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		9	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	3	3	
312	CTP	1134		PIPECLAY		3	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM/HEEL	1	1	
312	POTTERY	1134		ECHAF		23	JAR		BS	2	1	
312	POTTERY	1134		ECHAF		12	JAR		BS	2	1	
312	POTTERY	1134		ECHAF		86	JAR		BS	11	11	

AVAC Report 2007/43

325	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY		10	PIPE	1640-60	BOWL/HEEL/STEM	1	1
325	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY	PHOTO; DR	10	PIPE	1660-80; POST FIRING SCRATCHEDING 'W' ONE SIDE OF HEEL, 'B' THEOTHER AND TRIANGLE ON HEEL	BOWL/HEEL/STEM	1	1
325	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY		55	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	20	20
325	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY		6	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE; FLEUR DE LIS WITHIN DIAMOND STAMPS ALONG STEM	STEM	1	1
325	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY		5	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE; FLEUR DE LIS WITHIN DIAMOND STAMPS ALONG STEM	STEM	1	1
325	BONE	1134	ANIMAL BONE		1			BS	2	1
320	GEO	1134	GEO		1		STRAW STALAGTITE	BS	1	1
320	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY		42	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	15	15
512	CTP	1134	PIPECLAY		1	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
512	POTTERY	1134	FREC		2	PITCHER	SHL=1134 REF 312 AND 505; GAIMSTER 1997, 57 (1607); BIG COMPLEX SHIELD WITH STRAPS ANDCROWN OVER THE TOP	BS	1	0
326	CTP	1141	PIPECLAY		3	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
321	CTP	1142	PIPECLAY		4	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
317	CTP	1145	PIPECLAY		2	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
317	CTP	1145	PIPECLAY		4	PIPE	SPUR WITH 17TH CENTURY BORE	SPUR/STEM	1	1
324	CTP	1147	PIPECLAY		5	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	2	2
316	SHELL	1148	SHELL		35		BIVALVE SHELL	FRAG	1	1
316	CTP	1148	PIPECLAY		9	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	3	3

AVAC Report 2007/43

316	CTP	1148	PIPECLAY	2	PIPE	1640-60; ROULETTING ROUND RIM AND ROUND CENTRE OF BOWL	BOWL	1	1
575	CTP	1153	PIPECLAY	16	PIPE	EM17TH C BORE	BS	1	1
575	CTP	1153	PIPECLAY	1	PIPE	EM17TH C BORE;SQUASHED WITH KT END	MOUTHPIECE	1	1
319	POTTERY	1154	WESE	4	DISH	HURST 1986, 375; 1590-1620	BS	1	1
319	CTP	1154	PIPECLAY	8	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	3	3
510	CTP	1154	PIPECLAY	1	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
318	CTP	1158	PIPECLAY	9	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	4	4
315	CTP	1161	PIPECLAY	6	PIPE	1640-60	BOWL/HEEL/STEM	1	1
315	CTP	1161	PIPECLAY	5	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	2	2
314	POTTERY	1165	DUTR	11	CAUL		BS	1	1
347	CTP	1166	PIPECLAY	7	PIPE	1640-60; ROULETTING ROUND RIM	BOWL/HEEL	1	1
347	CTP	1166	PIPECLAY	16	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	4	4
470	CTP	1166	PIPECLAY	1	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
470	STONE	1166	STONE	10		WITH MORTAR AND POSS RED PAINT	FRAG	1	1
470	STONE	1166	STONE	30		WITH MORTAR	FRAG	1	1
469	CTP	1174	PIPECLAY	3	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE; OVAL IN SECTION	STEM	1	1
469	POTTERY	1174	WHITE	13	MUG	20TH CENTURY	R;H	2	1
511	CTP	1176	PIPECLAY	2	PIPE	EARLY 17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	2	1
511	CTP	1176	PIPECLAY	57	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	19	19
511	CTP	1176	PIPECLAY	4	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE AND	STEM/HEEL	1	1

HEAVILY
SOOTED
EXT

ROUND HEEL										
507	POTTERY	1212	BORDY		1	?		BS	1	1
509	CTP	1218	PIPECLAY		1	PIPE	18TH CENTURY BORE	STEM	1	1
574	CTP	1229	PIPECLAY		29	PIPE	EM17TH C BORE	BS	8	8
574	CTP	1229	PIPECLAY		1	PIPE	EM17TH C BORE;KT END	MOUTHPIECE	1	1
574	CTP	1229	PIPECLAY		8	PIPE	HEELED BOWL FRAG;SINGLE ROULETTED BAND;DUCO TYPE 1	BOWL	1	1
574	CTP	1229	PIPECLAY		2	PIPE	FRAGMENT OF PLAIN BOWL - NO ROULETTE	BOWL	1	1
574	POTTERY	1229	WEST		3	PANEL JUG	PROBABLE SHOULDER FRAG	BS	1	1
327	CTP	RM NEXT GATEHOUSE	PIPECLAY	PHOTO; DR	5	PIPE	17TH CENTURY BORE; FLEUR DE LIS WITHIN DIAMOND STAMPS ALONG STEM	STEM	1	1