

Note on clay tobacco pipes from TCG09

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Introduction

The clay tobacco pipe assemblage from TCG09 was recorded in accordance with current MOL Archaeology practice and entered onto the Oracle database. The pipe bowls have been classified and dated according to the Chronology of London Bowl Types (Atkinson and Oswald 1969), using the prefix AO. Quantification and recording follow guidelines set out by Higgins and Davey (1994; Davey 1997).

The clay pipes

A total of 81 fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from 13 contexts, most of which included no more than 12 pieces. This includes 69 bowls. The largest group comes from post-medieval quarrying (context [129]) and consists of 29 bowls and five stem fragments, dated to c 1680–1710. There is one accessioned item: a decorated and marked bowl from [34]. All pipe bowls identified are typical of London manufacture and most of the pipes have been smoked.

Ctxt	TPQ	TAQ	B	S	M
3	1680	1710	2	1	
15	1680	1710	8	3	1
16	1680	1710	7		
21	1680	1710	2	1	
34	1840	1880	1		
43	1580	1910		1	
59	1680	1710	11	1	
98	1680	1710	6		
127	1680	1710	2		
129	1680	1710	29	5	
131	1580	1910		4	1
149	1680	1710	1	2	
151	1580	1910		2	
Total			69	20	2

Table 1: dating and quantification of clay pipes from the site

The identifiable clay pipe bowls mostly range in date from c 1660 to c 1710. All are types common in London during this period, including types AO15 and AO18 (both made c 1660–80) and types AO20, AO21 and AO22, which are typical of the period c 1680–1710, which saw an increase in size and a marked lengthening of the bowl. They still retain the bottered rim that characterised the earlier, 17th-century pipes and just predate the introduction of the gin press, which saw the move to a cut rim that was no longer sloping forward at an angle to the stem. Only 11 are milled and three examples are burnished, out of a total of 69 pipe bowls. Both features are indicators of better quality, and their low incidence suggests that the sample collected represents ordinary, everyday smoking habits that entailed minimal expense. This is further borne out by the complete absence of marked or decorated pipes in the 17th- to 18th-century pipes – these are again indications of better quality.

Contexts in which stem fragments alone have been found are dated only broadly to the entire period of production (c 1580–1910). The stems could have been deposited at any time during this period, although they are most likely to fall within the main date range of other pipes recovered on the site. For the most part, contexts dated by clay pipes to c 1680–1710 (see Table 1) fall within the date range assigned to pottery from the same contexts, and help to refine that range in some cases. One type AO20 bowl in context [149] is residual, but the remaining examples appear to be contemporary with deposition. The latest clay pipe recorded on the site is a type AO20 bowl (c 1840–80) decorated with thorns and marked by the maker on the sides of the heel with moulded stars in relief (context [34] <35>). Symbols of this kind cannot be attributed to individual known makers. Thorn pipes were very popular from the mid 19th century onwards and continued to be made into the early 20th century.

Potential and significance

The pipe assemblage has limited potential for further chronological refinement, although valuable in the integration of all finds data to clarify the site sequence. The material is chiefly relevant in relation to the site.

Task list

The present note could be adapted to form part of a full site report. Estimated specialist time, including editing: 1 day.

Bibliography

Atkinson, D R and Oswald, A, 1969 London clay tobacco pipes, *J British Archaeol Assoc* 32, 171–227

Davey, P 1997 *Clay pipes from Bolsover church*, unpub archive rep

Higgins, D A and Davey, P, 1994 *Draft guidelines for using the clay tobacco pipe record sheets*, unpub rep