

Clay Pipes of the 19th-20th Century from Crayford, Kent

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IN THE last two decades the study of clay pipes has produced a number of interesting articles on the subject. These, however, tend to deal mainly with the pipes and pipe-makers of the 17th to the early 19th century and the products of the late 19th and early 20th century kilns have been largely ignored. This omission is probably due to the superabundance of different types and designs which almost defy description and classification.

The following article describes a collection of finds made over a period of five years on a Victorian rubbish dump at Crayford, Kent. This is situated at the side of the A2 road and close to Crayford railway station. The site is at present being worked commercially by a firm of contractors who are systematically sieving the contents of the dump in order to extract the extremely rich loam, a product which has been formed over the years from the rotted down Victorian rubbish.

If one refers to Mayhew's¹ description of 19th century London dustmen and their work it is seen that very little was wasted in mid-Victorian times. Refuse was collected in carts and dumped in various yards around the Metropolis; it was then sorted, mainly by women and children, who sifted out any re-useable materials. Leather went to shoe-makers and dye-makers, bones to the glue-makers, rags to the paper-manufacturers, etc. The dross left after this sorting process was then carted away and dumped elsewhere, often to sites many miles outside the city. There appears to have been a small amount of early dumping at the Crayford site though it is thought that these stray, early finds are unlikely to have come from London dustbins. They are more probably the result of local households disposing of their rubbish on the waste ground. It is known, however, that ashes or 'breeze' from London dust-yards was floated in barges down the Thames and up the Crayford Creek to the extensive brickmaking industry which flourished in Crayford during the mid-to-late 19th century, also other rubbish of a decayable nature was spread over the Crayford marshes to act as a fertilizer. Mayhew gives some statistics for the amount of rubbish collected from London's dustbins and it is clear that with the continual expansion of London in the last half of the 19th century, rubbish then had to be taken even farther afield for dumping. Finds from Crayford range in date from about 1880 to about 1911, though,

as stated previously, a number of earlier objects have been found. These include early 18th century clay pipes, two medicine bottles of 1730 and a 16th century Siegburg stoneware jug. The railway line serving Crayford was opened in September 1866 but there is little evidence of wholesale dumping at that early date. By 1890, though, a special siding had been built, adjacent to the tip so that the rubbish could be unloaded directly on to the site. The empty trucks were then filled with gravel from the nearby gravel and sand workings for the return trip to London.

It is regrettable that the pipes from the Crayford dump cannot be classified more specifically than as being 'from Victorian London' as they obviously represent the work of many different pipe-makers and the output of kilns from other parts of the country. It can be safely assumed though, that the bulk of the collection originated in London, the remainder being mostly imports from Ireland and a few from France. The writer has not attempted to count the number of pipes found but has had to resort to the simple expedient of weighing them in bags. The total weight to date is something in excess of half-a-hundredweight.

Very few pipes in the collection are marked with the maker's name, and many of the stems have been broken off too near the bowl for the name to be distinguished. A rough classification of designs has been produced by the writer and each class can again be broken down into many varieties of the same type. These classes are —

Plain and Semi-decorated, Ribbed and Fluted, Knobby, Clawed, Floral, Calabash-shaped, Acorns, Baskets, Horse's Hoof, Public House signs, Organisations (Royal Ancient Order of Buffalos, Masonic, Football Clubs, etc.), Political and Royalty, Commemorative Events and Miscellaneous. In a class on its own must be mentioned the beautifully moulded 'Head' pipes which were so popular in Victorian and Edwardian times. Over fifty different examples of this pipe have been found on the Crayford dump and these above all illustrate the contemporary Victorian scene. Royalty is well represented in the different examples of Queen Victoria, Edward VII, Alexandra, George V and Queen Mary, whilst political, sporting, music-hall, military and naval

1. H. Mayhew. *Mayhew's London*. 1861.

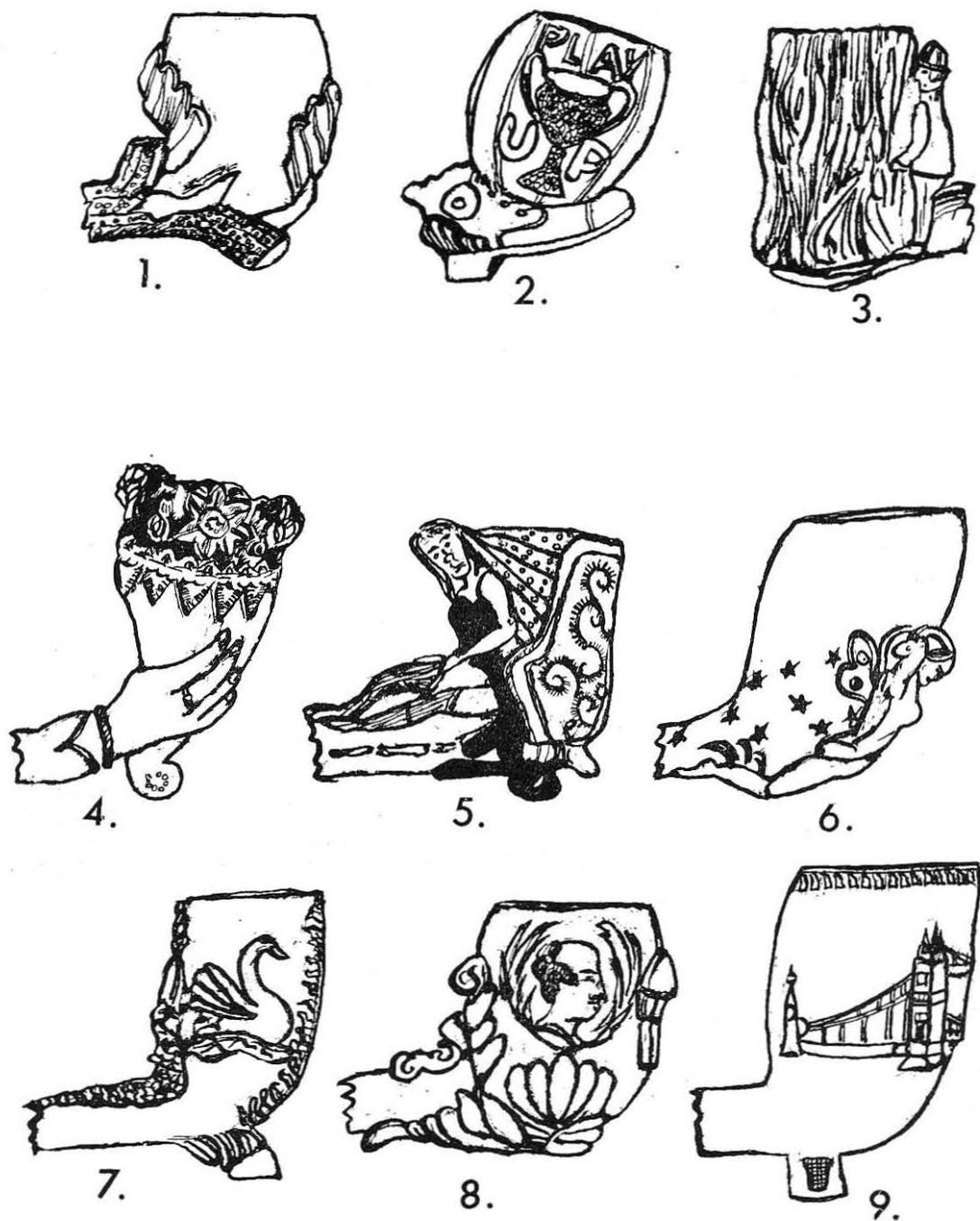


Fig. 2 Not mentioned in the text:—

- No. 1 Variation on the acorn/oak theme, embodying acorn shaped bowl, oak leaves and tree bark.
- No. 2 Football boot kicking a ball, the words 'Play up' on bowi
- No. 7 Trial piece by pipemaker? Overloaded with decoration, it includes flowers, leaves, swans, a crocodile and a horse's hoof.

No. 8 Crystal Palace and moulded heads. It is possible this commemorates the purchase of the Crystal Palace for the nation by the Earl of Plymouth in 1911.

No. 9 Tower Bridge.

figures of the day are portrayed with remarkable accuracy. (See Fig. 2, No. 7. Mrs. Pankhurst.) Many were made to take a detachable amber stem which could be inserted into any pipe at will.

Into this category of elaborately moulded bowls can also be put the interesting portrayals of animals and birds (Fig. 2, No. 4. seated bear), 'naughty' and novelty pipes, and others advertising certain brands of tobacco such as Negro's Head, Turk's Head, and Navy Cut. (Fig. 2, No. 6. Navy Cut.) Examples of animal figures recovered from Crayford include a rearing horse, cockerels, falcons, dogs, and a crocodile in a swamp. Fig. 1 shows three examples of the risqué pipe. No. 3. A man standing behind a tree. No. 6 is a semi-nude and rather busty fairy, surrounded by coloured stars and sporting pink wings which have been applied to the bowl as a hard, enamel-like glaze. No. 5 is a female figure, clad in a flowing head veil, seated in an armchair and coyly removing a pair of black stockings. This pipe is particularly interesting as it was originally painted black in places, the stockings, dress, details of the face and chair being very carefully outlined. Another version of this pipe exists in which the lady is seated somewhat indelicately on a lavatory pan. Novelty pipes take many forms; Dick Whittington resting by a milestone is a common example; beautifully moulded female hands holding a cup-shaped bowl or bouquet holder and flowers are also frequently found. (Fig. 1, No. 4.) Very large pipes in the form of a bearded man wreathed in coloured holly leaves were obviously produced for sale at Christmas. These do, in fact, hold exactly half an ounce of tobacco so it is possible they were sold full of tobacco as a Christmas novelty. Fig. 2, No. 3 shows an exquisitely modelled face, the details being so fine as to show tiny teeth in the mouth. This pipe is unusual as it represents the period when the cigarette had almost ousted the clay pipe, the bowl being made to take a cigarette instead of loose tobacco.

Perhaps the most important group of pipes collected from Crayford are the Plain and Semi-decorated. Though there is a great variety of shape, design and decoration, the plain pipes fall roughly into four classes.

- (A) Small bowls with short stems, sometimes with a foot spur but more often without; known as the 'Cutty'. These are usually undecorated except for a line of leaves or flowers which disguises the centre join and some have a rouletted rim to the bowl.
- (B) Large sloping bowl of a 'Georgian' shape with a long foot spur, (Fig. 2, No. 8.) Though at first glance this appears to be a mid-18th century pipe shape, so many examples have been found at Crayford in the late Victorian rubbish it is unlikely that they are any earlier than the 1880's.

(C) A 'modern' bowl, of a size and shape still to be found in the briar pipe of today; these often had a mouthpiece shaped like the modern pipe pipe with a high ridge of clay for the teeth to grip. (Fig. 2, No. 5.)

(D) A large upright bowl with a sturdy foot spur. (Shape as illustrated in D. R. Atkinson's *Tobacco Pipes of Broseley Shropshire* Fig. 2, 9c.) Some of these appear to have originated in Ireland as the spur is marked on both sides with a small shamrock.

The Calabash-shaped bowl should be mentioned and it is, as its name implies, a thick, undecorated, lily-shaped bowl on a long curving stem. Many examples have been found at Crayford, some of them marked 'Regal. London'.

Of the other shapes and designs of pipes found, baskets, hooves, acorns, etc., little can be said in this article as the sheer bulk of material precludes anything but the briefest mention in any publication, neither has the writer attempted to make any serious comparisons of the stem bores, but any reader interested in inspecting this collection in further detail is very welcome to do so.

Figures represented in the Head pipes found at Crayford

Queen Victoria (several different examples), Edward VII (several different examples), Queen Alexandra (several different examples), George V, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth I, Lady Hamilton, Nelson, Earl Roberts, Baden-Powell, an Admiral (unknown), Kitchener, Campbell-Bannerman, Joseph Chamberlain, Mrs Pankhurst (several different examples), Steve Donoghue, Ally Sloper (several different examples), St. Nicholas, Jacob, Negro (several different examples). Boar War Soldier, Hussar, Yokel, Arab, Turk, John Bull, Soldier (City Imperial Volunteers), Bulldog, Skull, Devil, and a number of unidentifiable male and female heads.

Pipe-makers and markings on pipes found at Crayford

W. Blake. London.
 W. Boud. Walworth. Brandon St.
 'Ben Nevis' Cut Shag.
 Burns Cutty.
 Bonnaud. Marseille.
 E. Church.
 Cope. Woolwich.
 C. Crop London. Made for Jones Bros., High St., Tottenham
 Cork.
 Cork and Edge.
 'Devon's Best' Imperial.
 Dublin.
 'Derry Castle'.
 Ford. Stepney.
 H. Fisher. Clerkenwell.
 Gallagher's National.
 Grout and Williams. Clapham.
 Grout and Williams. Clifton St. S.W.
 Gambier. Paris.
 Handley. Terford.?
 Noël. Paris.
 Parnell. Plaistow.
 Regal. London.
 Rutter and Co. Mitcham Shag.
 J. Vining. Kingston.

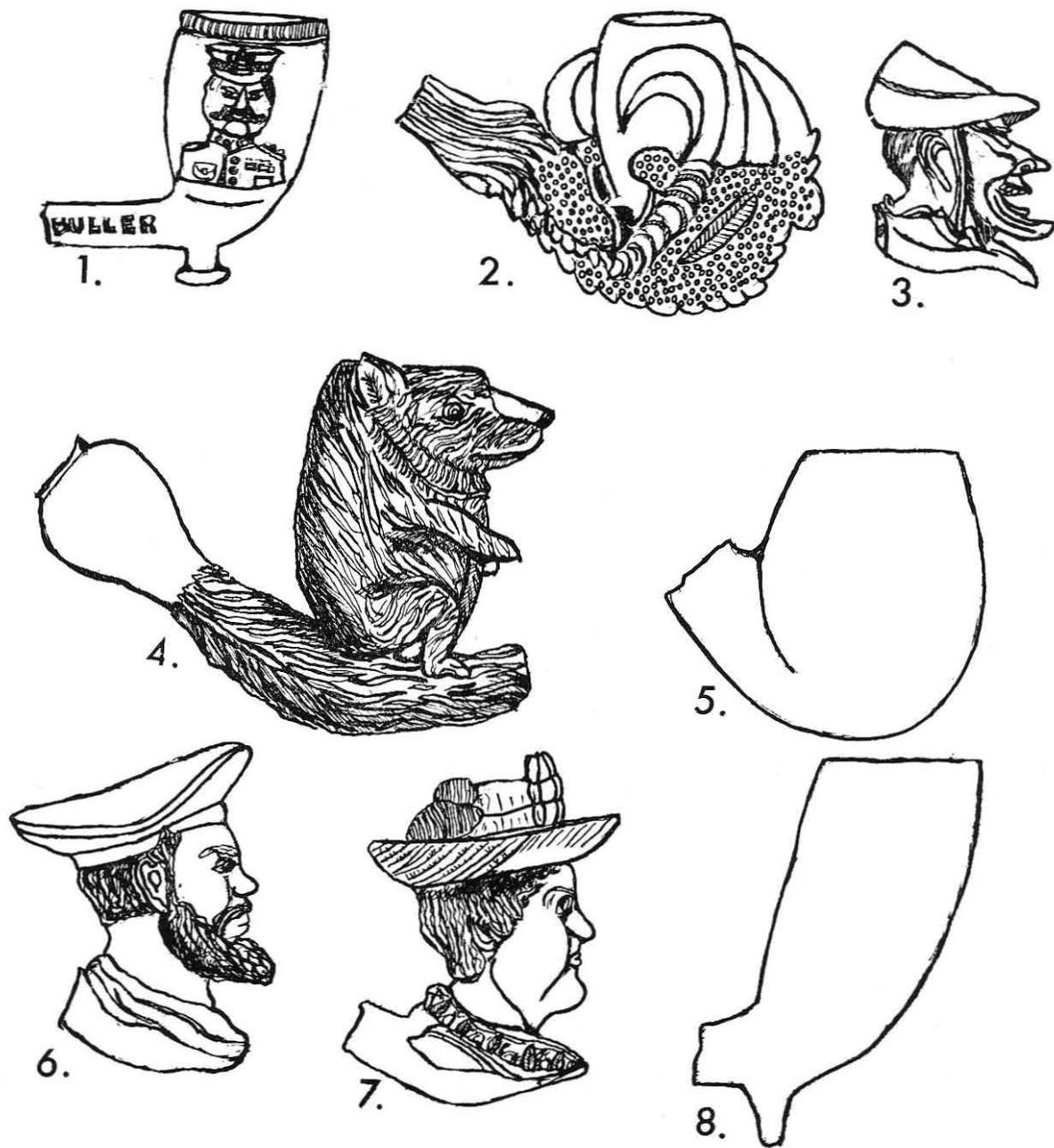


Fig. 2. Not mentioned in the text:—

- No. 1 Buller and Kruger. Boer War pipe.
- No. 2 Claw Pipe. Talons clutching a bowl.