

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY CLAY TOBACCO-PIPE INDUSTRY AT PORTCHESTER, HANTS.

By C. J. ARNOLD

INTRODUCTION

A FLOURISHING pipemaking industry existed at Portchester, Hampshire, from 1813 to 1932, controlled by the Russell and Leigh families. It is fortunate that a descendant of the Leigh family, Mrs. Webb of Portchester, still remembers details which give a fairly complete picture of her great-uncle Henry Leigh's factory; this information could not be obtained from the surviving records alone. A close study of this industry has revealed many details which are felt to have bearing on the study of the manufacture of clay tobacco-pipes generally.

THE RUSSELL FAMILY, fl. 1813-72

The history of the Russell family as pipe-makers can be reconstructed from the Parish Registers of Portchester and from Commercial Directories. The brothers Richard and Thomas were making pipes from 1813, joined by their respective sons, William by 1817, and James by 1815. In 1855 James headed the business and amalgamated with Charles Gates; in that year he employed six hands. Charles' brothers William and Harry also worked for the company, the latter as a pipe-trimmer. While the Russell family produced pipes they are recorded as employing altogether eleven pipemakers and one apprentice. They appear to have gone out of business soon after 1872. The Russell-Gates partnership extended beyond pipemaking; in 1855 the Post-Office Directory indicates that they were also painters, and in 1859 plumbers.

A pipe found at St. Michael's House excavations, Southampton (Arnold forthcoming), bears an incuse stamp on the back of the bowl, reading RUSSELL & GATES (Fig. 2, No. 1).

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THE LEIGH FAMILY, 1840-1932

Henry Leigh (1816-c.1885) founded his business in 1840; a business card in the possession of Mrs. Webb reads:

ESTABLISHED 1840

Leigh & Co.

Tobacco Pipe, Whiting & Putty
Manufacturers.

PORTCHESTER

WHOLESALE DEALERS IN PIPE-CLAY,
BATH-BRICK AND HEARTH STONE

ORDERS EXECUTED WITH DISPATCH

H. Leigh was head of the business until c.1883 when his nephew, George Meatyard (Born in Devonport, 1829), whom he had brought up, came of age and was made a partner. From then until its close the business was known as Leigh & Co. George Meatyard was making pipes with his uncle by 1853, and his son, Charles, was working with the company by 1884 and took over when his father retired soon after 1892. Charles' son Clifford, continued the pipemaking business from before 1912 until its close in 1932. George Meatyard's third son Frank worked at the factory and Clifford Meatyard's brother Hedley was also working with the company between 1893 and 1902. George Meatyard's daughter Agnes, married Harry Goodall in 1893; Harry's father, Thomas Goodall, was also a pipemaker at the Old Turnpike, Fareham, and came to Portchester to work with George and Charles Meatyard. The Goodall family continued to make pipes at Gosport.

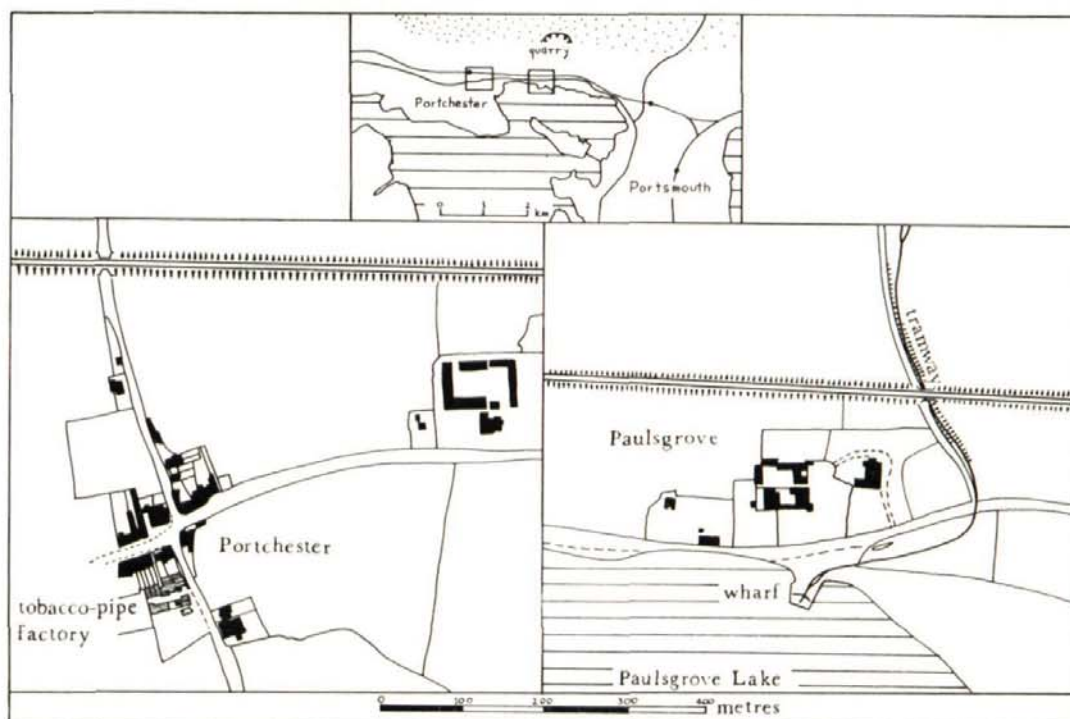


Fig. 1. Location map, and plan of Portchester and Paulsgrove, 1907.
Based on O.S. 25 inch, 1907. Land over 200 feet stippled.

Close connection must have been maintained as a mould for a Royal Ancient Order of Buffaloes pipe was deposited at Winchester City Museum by Clifford Meatyard in 1937 (see below). Agnes Goodall was employed as a pipetrimmer and painted the red wax onto the mouthpieces.

Manufacture of pipes

Supplies of pipeclay were brought from Devon by barges to a wharf on Old Southampton Road at Paulsgrove (Fig. 1, Pl. 1) and carted to Portchester. A horse-drawn tramway brought chalk to the wharf from Paulsgrove Quarry at the north end of Portsmouth Harbour (Grid Ref. SU 635 067). Now completely destroyed by the building of the Paulsgrove Housing Estate and the M.27 motorway, it consisted of a single track with a passing place halfway up the hill, and a

turntable on the quay which could direct the trucks along three sidings. Chalk was taken from the quarry by cart to the factory at Portchester to be broken up manually in the 'chalk shed' for the producing of whiting and putty.

The factory was situated behind the present Methodist Chapel (SU 618 055); the area has recently been redeveloped. The manufacture of the pipes took place in sheds behind two cottages called Leigh Cottages; in one shed the clay was soaked in water until soft enough to be beaten, and in another stood the single kiln. The other buildings included the 'van shed' for the delivery vehicle (Pl. 2), drying sheds and the putty mill, all with lofts above to provide further space for drying the pipes. The kiln would appear to have been similar to that used by McDougalls' factory at Glasgow (Walker 1970), the pipes

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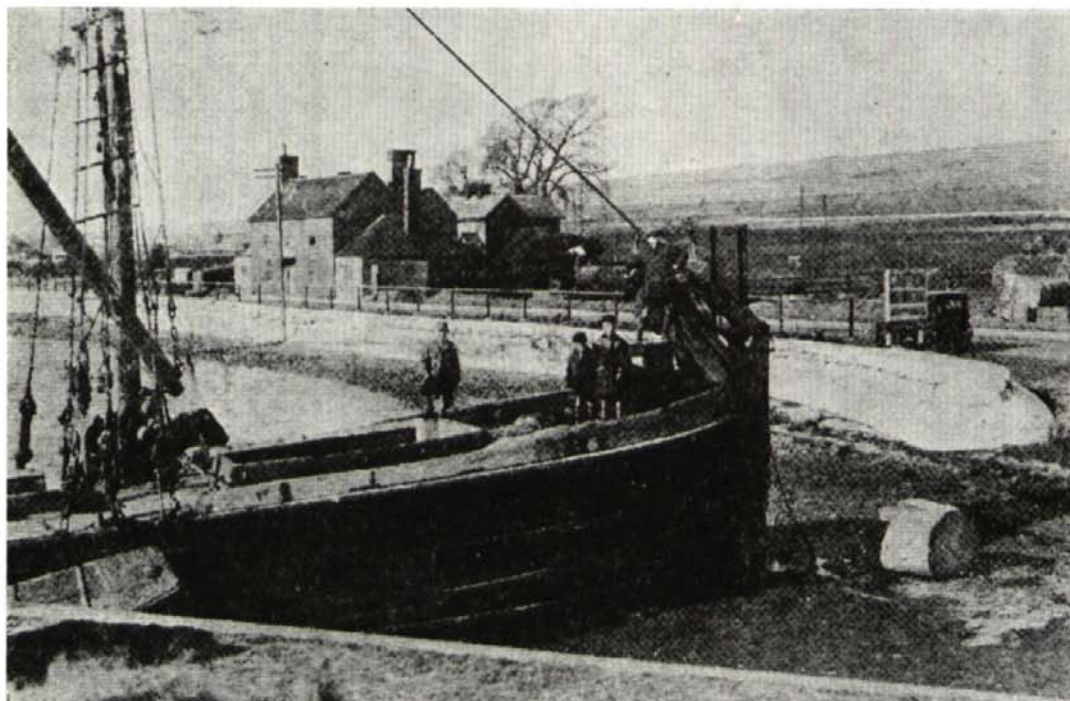


Plate 1. The barge Polly at Paulsgrove wharf, February 1931.
By courtesy of *The News*, Portsmouth.

being stacked in saggars and packed in the small round brick kiln; a firing usually took 8 to 10 hours. Being piecework, the pipes were made and stacked by the gross on racks, each rack holding half gross (Pl. 6).

The largest shed was the 'pipe shop' in which stood benches with stools on four sides. Much of the pipemakers' tools and equipment is in the Winchester City Museum (Pls. 3, 4, 5), given in 1937 by Clifford Meatyard; it includes four stoppers for forming the bowl, six two-piece moulds and a pointed wire. The process of manufacturing was typical of an industry of this scale; each workman sat with a press and rolled out the rough shape of the pipe he was to make with the palm of his hand. This was put between the moulds and placed loosely in the press. A wire was then pushed along the stem to form the bore, before the moulds were forced together by turning the vice-like press (Pl. 7). The press

was screwed together and the former pulled down on the end of a lever to make the bowl hollow. Any excess clay forced out between the moulds was then trimmed off and the pipe removed. The factory made numerous forms of pipes ranging from the short 'cutty' to the longer 'churchwardens'. Henry Leigh had a Government contract to supply Portsmouth Dockyard and also exported the pipe decorated with a ship and anchor to France. 'Churchwardens' were made especially at Christmas (mould at Winchester City Museum); other special orders included decorated pipes commemorating local events and a special type for the cricket club (Fig. 2, No. 10).

The inscription on two of the pairs of moulds at Winchester Museum (b. and d.) has been deliberately erased. They were perhaps types made by Henry Leigh and the inscription removed when the business became a



Plate 2. Henry Leigh and his pipemakers, Portchester, c. 1865.
(Photo. Mrs. Webb, Portchester.)

company; any new mould thereafter bore the inscription Leigh & Co. Some of these moulds are thought to be the original ones used by Leigh. It is curious that another pair of moulds, of an R.O.A.B. pipe (a type without the complete buffalo's head), with the inscription on the stem sides F. GOODALL/GOSPORT has also had the inscription removed; these moulds were presented with the others by C. Meatyard. The removal of the inscription again implies reuse by another person and in this way they may have been in use for many years.

For the ninety-two years that Henry Leigh and the later Company were in production, many people worked in the factory. Some considered the work a permanent position,

while others helped out when the factory was behind with orders. Another source of labour was the 'men of the road' who usually only worked for a few days. The names of thirteen people who are known to have worked in the factory, are now recorded as 'pipemakers'; there were clearly many more who have gone unrecorded. In the 1851 Census Return, Henry Leigh stated that he employed 2 men, 2 boys, and 1 apprentice; by 1871 he was employing 19 men, 4 boys and 2 girls. An undated photograph in the possessions of Mrs. Webb, which must have been taken during the third quarter of the nineteenth century (Pl. 2) – shows the factory and the workmen with some of their tools, Edgar Francis and his brother, Henry Baker, Frank

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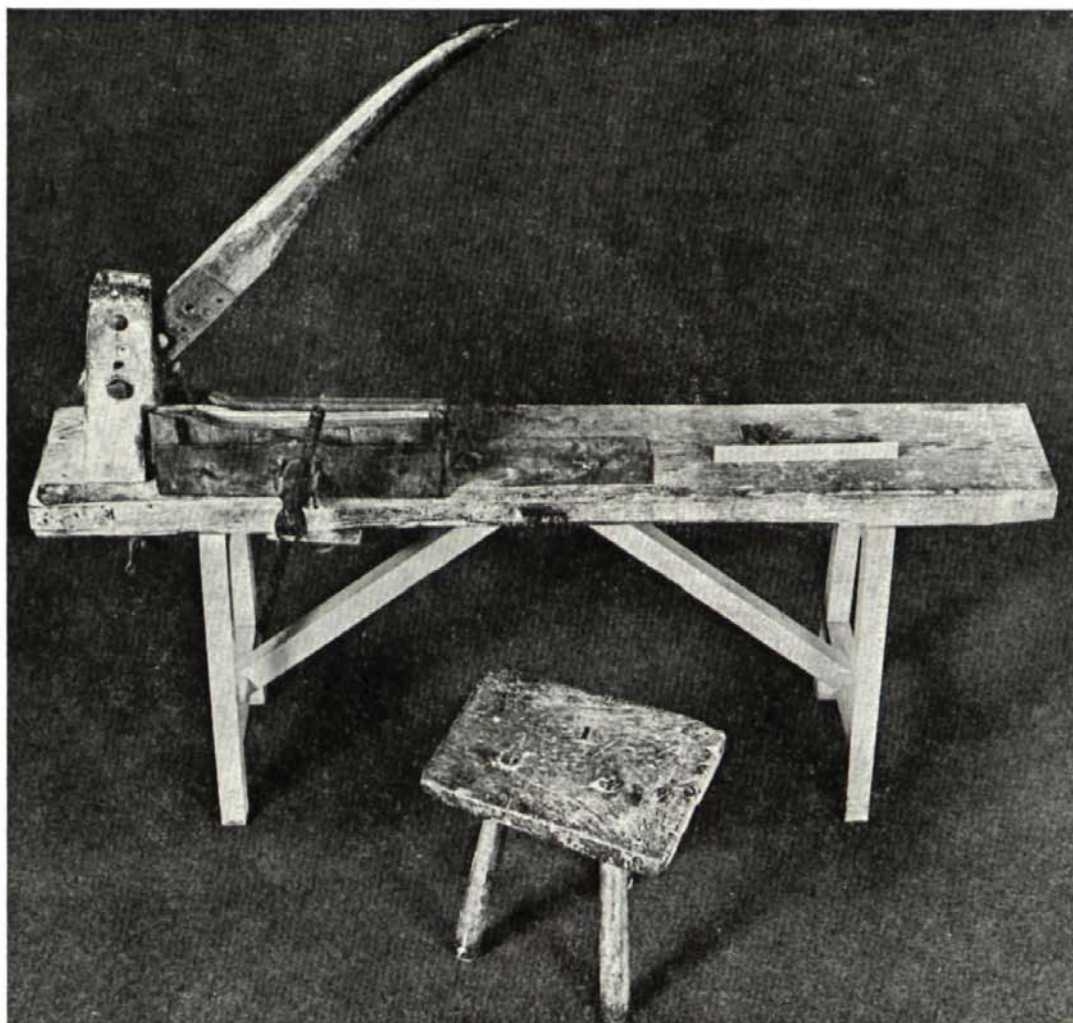


Plate 3. Pipe press from H. Leigh's Factory, Portchester.
(Photo. Keeling and Freemantle, Gosport.)

Meatyard, Thomas Goodall, Walter Matthews, George Meatyard, Henry Leigh (standing, far right) and four other unidentified workmen.

Bowl Types (Fig. 2).

Nineteen bowl types from the Leigh factory are known; the earlier forms, before c.1883, are marked on the stem (left) H. LEIGH (right) PORTCHESTER, the later types (left) LEIGH & Co., (right) PORTCHESTER, incuse. The pipes are found distributed in

south Hampshire between Portsmouth and Southampton, and north as far as Salisbury.

(2) Stem (left) H. LEIGH, in relief. Bowl in form of bearded man's head, similar to the style of many nineteenth century French and London makers. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)

(3) Stem (left) H. LEIGH, (right) PORTCHESTER, in relief. The bowl is panelled, the spur decorated with a floral pattern. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)

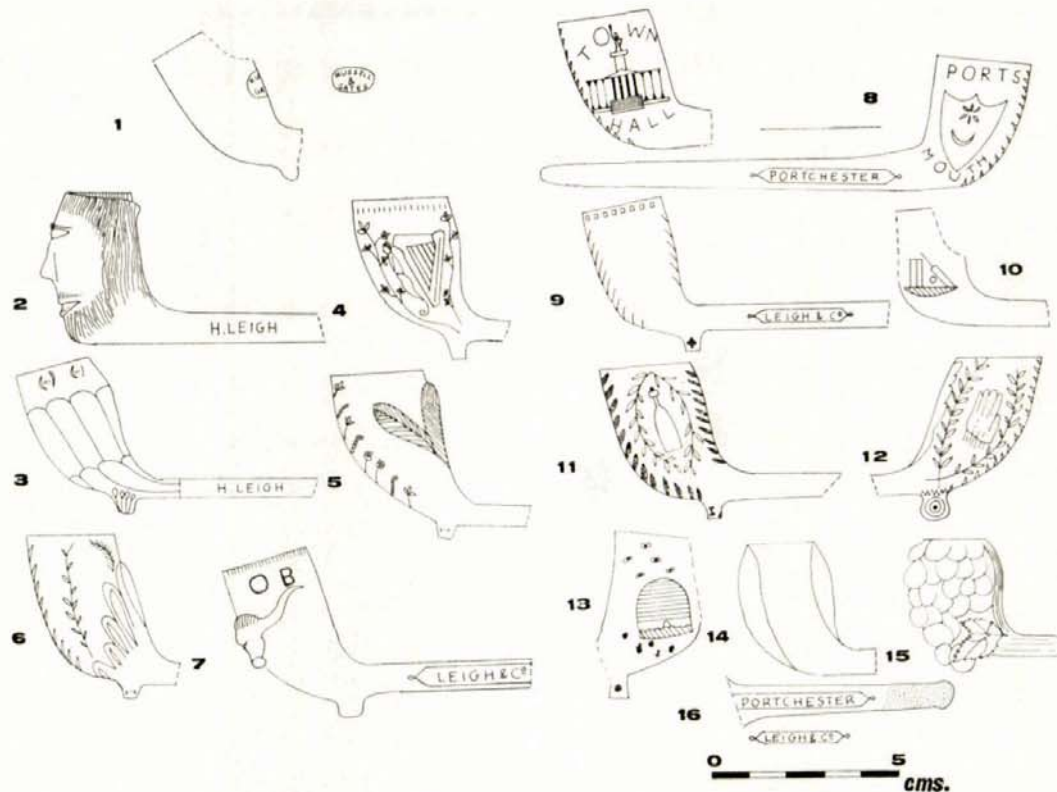


Fig. 2. Portchester: Clay tobacco-pipes. (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$)

- (4) Relief plant decoration around harp and mermaid on bowl. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)
- (5) Plume of feathers on back of bowl, plant decoration along front seam, in relief. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)
- (6) In relief, ribbed back of bowl, plant decoration on sides and front. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)
- (7) Stem, (left) LEIGH & Co., (right) PORTCHESTER, incuse. Initials in relief below rouletted lip, upper bowl sides, (right) R.A., (left) O.B. Pipe made for The Royal Ancient Order Of Buffaloes. Bowl decorated along front seam and sides, of buffalo's head with its horns curling back, in relief. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum, Salisbury Museum.)
- (8) Stem, (left) LEIGH & Co., (right) PORTCHESTER, incuse. Depiction of Portsmouth

- Town Hall (left), City arms (right), in relief. Portsmouth Town Hall was completed in 1886. (Salisbury Museum.)
- (9) Stem, (left) LEIGH & Co., (right) PORTCHESTER, incuse. Faint rouletting around lip, plant decoration on front and back seams of bowl, in relief. (In possession of Mrs. Webb.)
- (10) Bowl, (left and right) cricket bat, stumps and ball, in relief. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)
- (11) Bowl, (left and right) leaf pattern, around central bottle, and along front and back seams. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)
- (12) Bowl, (left and right) plant decoration around open hand. Plant decoration on front and back seams, all in relief. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)

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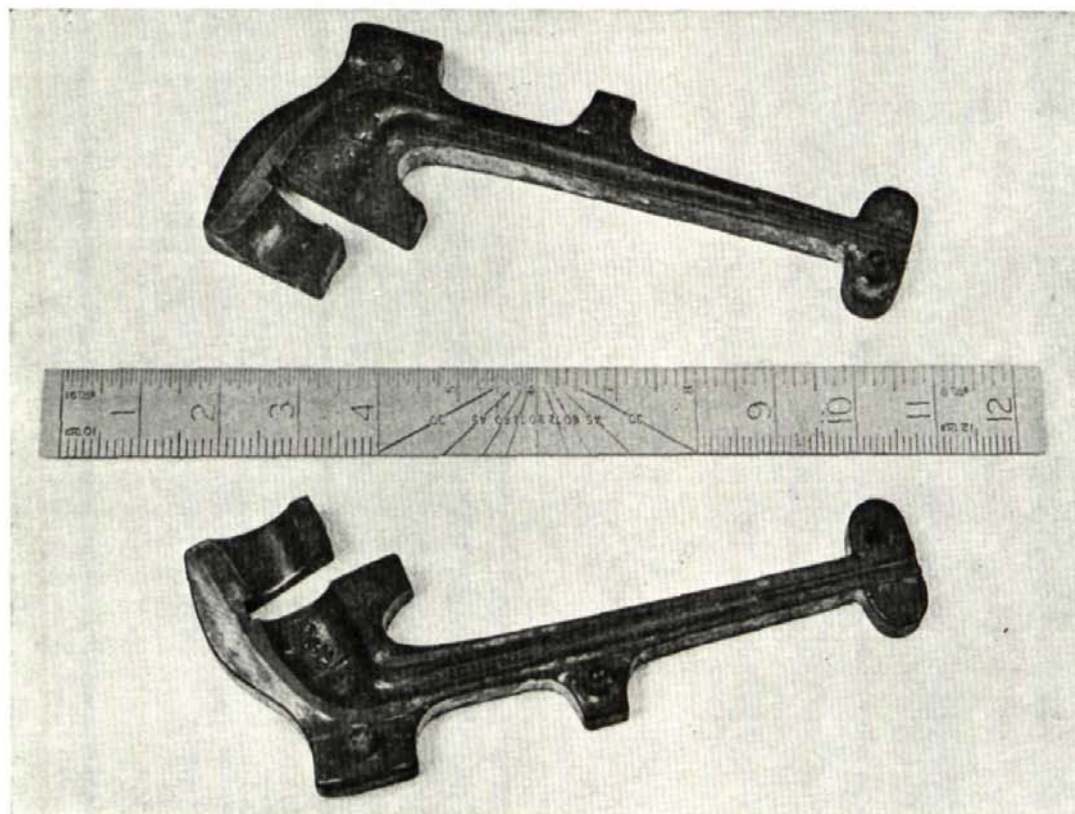


Plate 4. Pair of pipe moulds from H. Leigh's Factory, Portchester.
(Photo. Keeling and Freemantle, Gosport.)

(13) Bowl, (left and right) beehive with swarming bees, in relief. Star in relief on spur sides. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)

(14) Plain bowl with raised rib on front and back seam of bowl. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)

(15) Stem (right), (PORTCH)ESTER, incuse. Bowl in form of bunch of grapes and vine leaves on both sides; the vine grows out of the stem and up the back seam of the bowl. All decoration in relief. (Portsmouth, Southsea Castle Museum.)

(16) A very short 'cutty' pipe. Stem, (left) PORTCHESTER, (right) LEIGH & Co., incuse. Remains of red wax on mouthpiece. (Eastleigh, Southampton.)

As well as the pipes illustrated there are the moulds of five further types in Winchester City Museum:

(a) Bowl, (left) ship, (right) anchor, in relief. No inscription, short stem.

(b) Bowl, (left) NT above two stars and cannon in relief, (right) XL above two stars and cannon, also in relief. Inscription erased from both halves. Stem short (Pl. 4).

(c) Short, angular shaped stem, bowl studded with conical spurs.

(d) Bowl, (left) A above crossed cannons, (right) R above crossed cannons. Decoration in relief. Stem short, inscription erased from both halves.

(e) Long, straight stemmed 'churchwarden' with plain bowl. No inscription.

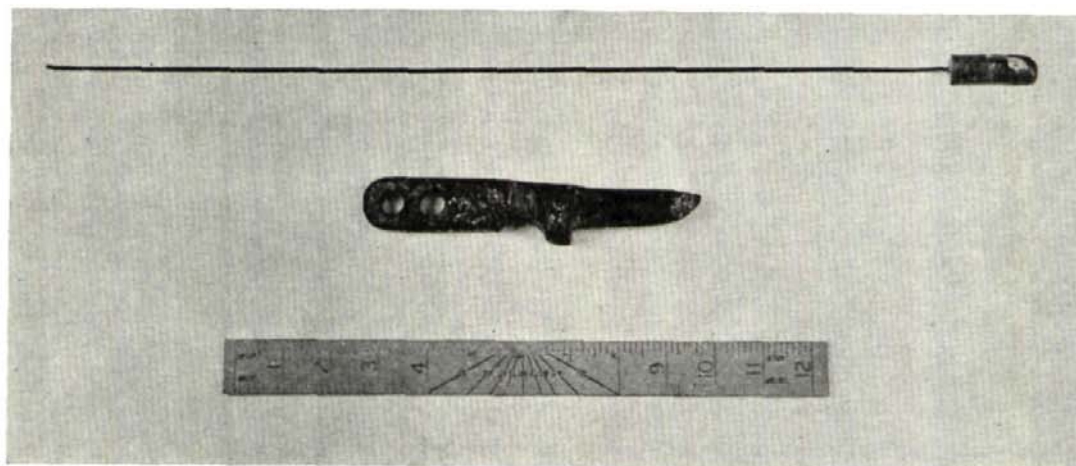


Plate 5. Pipemaker's equipment from H. Leigh's Factory, Portchester.
(Photo. Keeling and Freemantle, Gosport.)

DISCUSSION

Attention has been drawn to the connection between pipemakers and the manufacture of pottery (Oswald 1970). At Portchester the pipemaking companies were involved also in painting, plumbing, and the manufacture of putty, whiting and colour. Clearly the business of pipemaking was a family affair.

The study of the Portchester industry indicates the problem of dating clay tobacco pipes by incomplete documentary evidence. This information is normally presented, in published works, as lists of people who are described in the sources as 'pipemakers'. The fault with the method is that no consideration is given to actual position of these 'pipemakers' in the manufacture of pipes. At Portchester most of the men, boys and girls working in the factories gave their occupation as 'pipemaker', but as only the owner of such a concern is relevant to the dating of the pipes, the implication is that published lists are only a partial record of the industry at all levels. With this in mind it is suggested that only where an identification is indisputable should one venture to make definite statements about the maker of a particular pipe. Similarly the inclusion of the initials

of these pipemakers in the lists greatly increases the possibility of an incorrect identification as a large proportion of the initials are irrelevant, and, as is well known, only a very small proportion of makers actually marked their pipes in this way. Therefore, only where a pipemaker is known to have placed his initials on the pipes should they be included in the lists.

Clay tobacco-pipes have also been dated by their typological sequence based on the shape of the bowl. Such means of dating is known to be hazardous with any object, and when it is realised that some of Henry Leigh's earliest moulds were still being used in 1932, almost a 100 years later, it is clear that tobacco-pipes may not be an exception in this respect.

Acknowledgements

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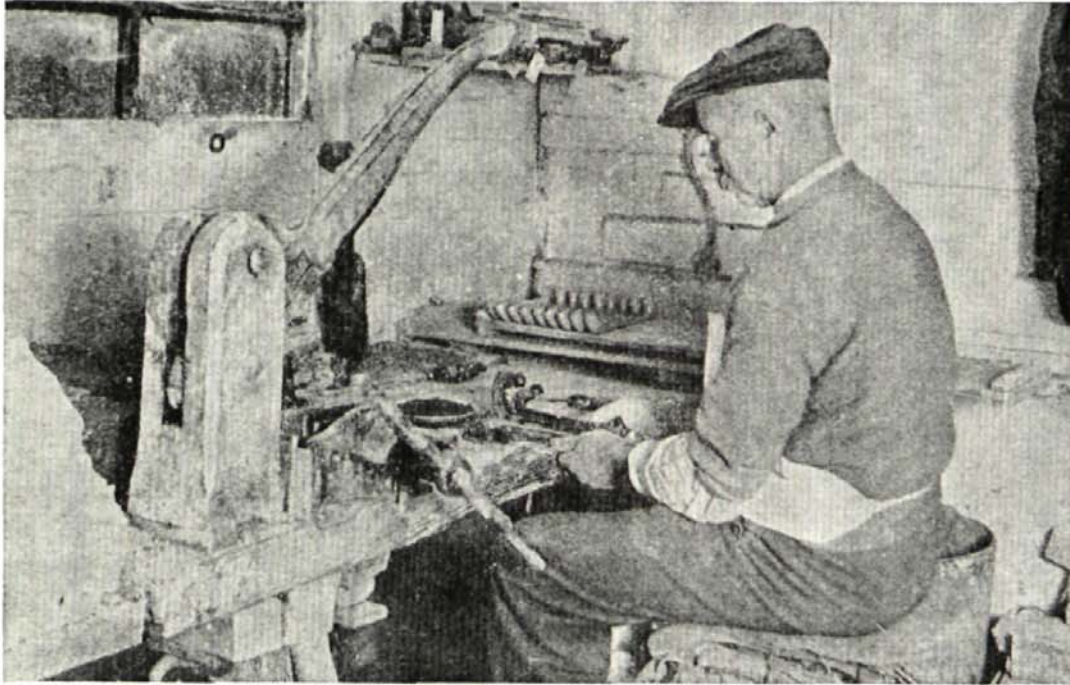


Plate 6. Pipe press being loaded, H. Leigh's Factory, Portchester.
(Photo. Winchester City Museum.)

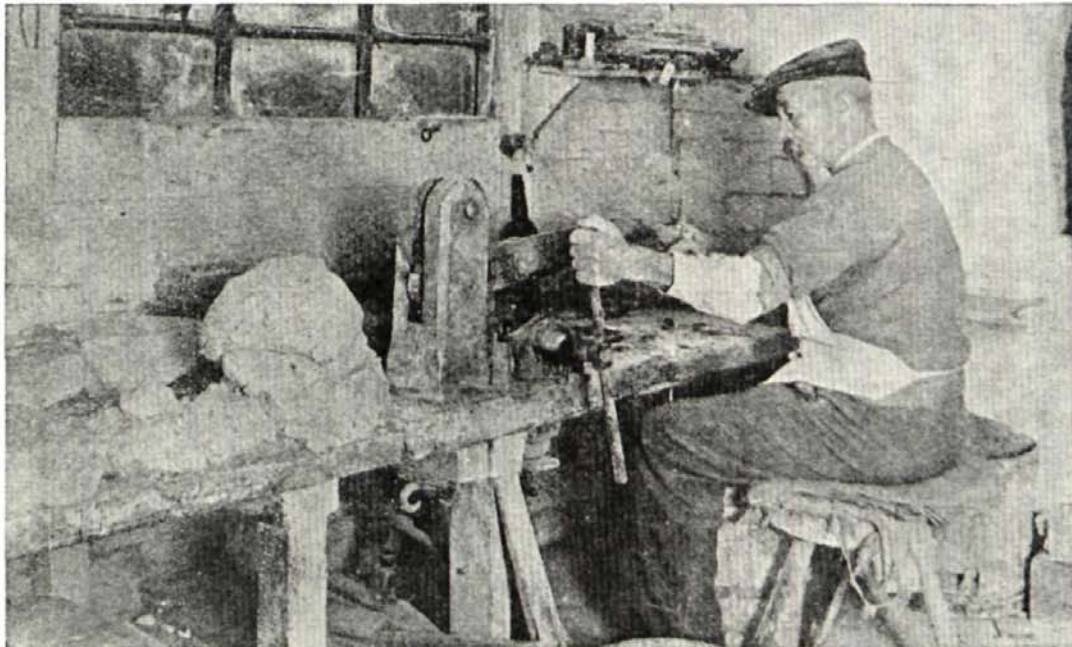


Plate 7. Pipe press closed, H. Leigh's Factory, Portchester.
(Photo. Winchester City Museum.)

PROCEEDINGS FOR THE YEAR 1974

List of Portchester pipemakers

RUSSELL

Russell, Richard (1813), Register of Baptisms.
 Russell, Thomas (1813), Register of Baptisms.
 Russell, William (1871), Census Return.
 Russell, James (1815), Census Return.

'Pipemakers'

Ford, Thomas (1813), Register of Baptisms.
 Frost, Henry (1813-15), Register of Baptisms.
 Cooper, Thomas (1815), Register of Baptisms.
 Frost, Robert (1834), Register of Baptisms.
 Russell, James (1851-67), Census Return, Register of Baptisms.
 Walters, George (1852-72) Register of Baptisms.
 Gates, William (1860), Register of Baptisms.
 Cooper, John, (1863-71), Register of Baptisms, Census Return.
 Martell, William (1871-72), Register of Baptisms.
 Gates, Harry (1871), Census Return.

Apprentice

Thomson, James (1851), Census Return.

LEIGH

Leigh, Henry (1816-c.1885), Census Return (1851), *Kelly's Hampshire and Dorset Directory*.

Meatyard, George (1853-c.1892), Register of Baptisms.

Meatyard, Charles (1884), Register of Baptisms.

Meatyard, Clifford (c.1912-1932), Mrs. Webb.

'Pipemakers'

Meatyard, Frank (1864), Register of Baptisms.
 Meatyard, Hedley (1893-1902), Register of Baptisms.

Chamberlain, James (1871-2), Census Return, Register of Baptisms.

Chamberlain, George (1871), Census Return.

Baker, Henry (1903-1932), Register of Baptisms.

'Pipetrimmer'

Davis, Amie (1871), Census Return.

Others

Baker, Reginald, Mrs. Webb.

Baker, Eliza, Mrs. Webb.

Durrant (-1932), Mrs. Webb.

Goodall, Agnes, Mrs. Webb.

REFERENCES

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 Oswald, A., 1970. 'The clay Tobacco Pipe. Its Place in English Ceramics.' *Engl. Ceramic Circle Trans.* 7, 3, 222-245.
 Walker, I. C. and L. L. de S., 1970. 'McDougall's Clay Pipe Factory, Glasgow'. *Indust. Archaeol.* 6, 132-146.

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