Post-Medieval Archaeology **39/1** (2005), 197–203

An inn-clearance group, *c.* 1800, from the Royal Oak, Eccleshall, Staffordshire

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SUMMARY: A watching brief behind the Royal Oak, a coaching inn on the London to Chester coach route, revealed an inn-clearance group of c. *1800. It consisted primarily of plain creamwares and provided an opportunity to study the type of material used in a coaching inn at this time. The group also contained a significant assemblage of clay tobacco pipes. These included the longest stem yet found of this period and early products of the important Broseley manufacturer Noah Roden.*

INTRODUCTION

During a watching brief carried out on building work to the rear of the Royal Oak in the High Street, Eccleshall, Staffordshire, a deposit of pottery vessels, glass bottles and tobacco pipes from *c.* 1800 was recovered. It was interpreted as old stock cleared out of the Royal Oak, then a coaching inn, to make way for more fashionable material.

The deposit consisted of a midden of ceramics, glass and tobacco pipes with a very small amount of animal bone, in a sandy loam matrix, lying against the remains of a wall immediately behind the Royal Oak pub. The midden lay in an area that had been machine stripped but appeared not to have been truncated. The deposit was *c.* 1.70m. east-west by 1.30m. north-south and 0.20 to 0.30m. thick. It sat in a slight scoop with a base of compacted red-brown sandy loam with frequent pebbles and charcoal flecks cut into a layer of grey-brown very sandy loam with patches of buff mortar. All the artefacts observed were collected. Apart from a few residual pieces of mottled ware and slipware the deposit forms a coherent assemblage dated to around 1800. It probably represents a single stock-clearance episode of wares from the inn and thus represents a chance to look at the type of material in use, or, rather, which had recently gone out of use, in a provincial coaching inn at this period. The tobacco-pipe assemblage also demonstrates developments in the Broseley industry at this time. It adds to the growing number of inn-clearance groups now recognized and published and demonstrates the variety of material present in these groups.

ECCLESHALL AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY

Eccleshall in 1817 was described in Pitt's *Topographical History of Staffordshire* as

> a small market-town, situated on the banks of a rivulet that flows into the river Sow. It is seven miles north-west of Stafford, and contains five streets and lanes. The houses are of brick, well-built and regular. The market-day is Friday, and it is well supplied with provisions. There are four annual fairs: Midlent Thursday, Holy Thursday, August 5th, and the first Friday in November, principally for horses, cattle, and sheep . . . There are several good inns and large shops in Eccleshall, but no manufactures, except the common handicraft trades. The neighbourhood of the town is pleasant, and the land fertile . . . In 1811 the town of Eccleshall contained 217 houses, 225 families; 466 males, 550 females: total 1016 persons.[1]

THE ROYAL OAK

The Royal Oak was in existence as an inn by 1693 when it was recorded in Bishop Lloyd's survey of the parish as being in the hands of William Wilcox. There was already a bowling green attached, and a gaming-house.[2]

It became one of Eccleshall's two major coaching inns on the London-Chester-Holyhead road by the end of the 18th century. Eccleshall was a major link in the route described in the 'Traveller's Companion from Holyhead to London' of 1793. The Royal Mail coach from London to Holyhead stopped at the Royal Oak, due at around 6.00pm, at the halfway point of its journey, and the Royal Oak acted as the post office. It was also at the centre of a local network of turnpiked roads. Road building shortly after 1800 and the railway in 1837, however, by-passed the town and much of the passing trade was lost. The inn received the patronage of the professional classes, farmers, and shopkeepers, as well as travellers.[3]

THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE

The majority of the pottery is plain, undecorated creamware, and consists of at least 41 vessels out of a total minimum vessel count of 74. The only marked piece is a creamware plate of Turner of Lane End. John Turner established his pottery at Lane End (Longton) in the Stoke-on-Trent potteries by 1762 and was producing good-quality creamwares, also jasper, black basalt, and some porcelain. Impressed-marked 'TURNER' earthenwares normally date from about 1775 onwards. Between 1781–92 Turner and his sons and partner Andrew Abbott had a retail outlet in London and in 1784 were appointed 'Potters to the Prince of Wales'. Turner died in 1787 and his sons John and William continued the works until the firm went bankrupt in 1806.[4]

Though Turner's output was regarded as of high quality, creamware would be considered fairly ordinary by 1800. In 1778 Wedgwood described his creamware as, 'no longer the choice thing it used to be, since every shop, house, and cottage is full of it.'[5] In potters' price lists of this period undecorated creamware is always the cheapest type of fineware.[6] The forms present are also mainly the most utilitarian, plates, dishes, and chamber pots, with only two possible tea bowls and three sauce boats. Decorated refined earthenware occurs in comparatively small numbers and only a single bone-china cup represents the expensive end of the market. The most frequent decorated ware is the shell-edged, which was the next cheapest to plain creamware. The white salt-glazed stoneware was no longer in production by the time the assemblage was discarded. There are none of the more expensive transfer-printed wares. When combined with the blackwares and slipwares, which though still popular had not been 'fashionable' for many years, and the brown salt-glazed stonewares, this makes the group fairly low status and utilitarian by the time of its disposal around 1800. It is likely the material was thrown out to make way for more fashionable and expensive decorated wares suitable for the London-Chester-Ireland coach trade. Indeed all the later assemblages recovered from the site are dominated by blue transfer-printed wares, and several decorated pearlwares contemporary with the assemblage were found scattered across the site, suggesting these were accidental individual losses rather than subject to deliberate clear-outs.

INN-CLEARANCE GROUPS

Pearce's study of several inn-clearance deposits of the 18th century in England (principally Uxbridge, Middlesex, Guildford, Surrey, and Leicester, as well as unpublished London sites) and North America has suggested several characteristics typical of these assemblages.[7] These include:

1. Large quantities of ceramics
2. A high proportion of drinking vessels, ceramic or glass, or both
3. A high proportion of pottery used for dining, including vessels used both in serving and consumption
4. A high proportion of glass wine bottles
5. A concentration of vessels usually used for the consumption of alcoholic beverages
6. A large number of good quality vessels for serving and/or display, both ceramic and glass
7. A large number of vessels used for food preparation
8. A large number of clay tobacco pipes

The Royal Oak assemblage matches most of these characteristics. There are only a few vessels for the consumption of tea or coffee (point 2) and only one ceramic vessel, a blackware mug, associated with the consumption of alcoholic beverages (point 5), although this is more than compensated for by the glass assemblage, which is exclusively for storing and serving alcohol. The vessels present would no longer count as good-quality serving vessels compared to other types then available, and they would not be suitable for display, though when new probably would have been (point 6). This can be explained, however, by the possibility that the proprietor was deliberately disposing of the least fashionable material, so vessels that were still usable would not appear in this deposit. An

TABLE 1

Catalogue of ceramics and glass from the Royal Oak, Eccleshall

Ware type	Date (century)	Vessel form	Description	Sherd no.	Min. vessel count
Bone china	Early 19th	Cup	11cm. ø, enamel decoration	2	1
Creamware	Late 18th/ early 19th	Plates, large	Over 15cm. ø	87	9
		Plates, small	15cm. ø	20	2
		Saucer		3	1
		Bowls	30cm. & 24cm. ø	23	2
		Bowls, oval		42	5
		Cups/bowls	10cm. & 9cm. ø, flaring, handle-less	7	2
		Sauce boats	Includes 3 handles probably associated with these	35	3
		Basin	27cm. ø	14	1
		Chamber pots		40	2
		Hollow wares	Moulded decoration	3	2
		Flatwares		363	12
Pearlware undecorated	Late 18th/ early 19th	Hollow wares	Includes 1 moulded cup	6	3
		Flatwares		32	2
Pearlware blue shell-edged	Late 18th/ early 19th	Plates	15cm. ø	4	4
Industrial slipware	Late 18th/ early 19th	Hollow wares		4	3
Black basalt	Late 18th/ early 19th	Teapot		6	1
Refined blackware	Late 18th	Hollow wares	Includes small cup and large mug	14	4
White salt-glazed stoneware	Mid/late 18th	Flatwares	1 with moulded star and diaper rim decoration	2	2
Brown salt-glazed stoneware	Late 18th/ early 19th	Jar		13	2
		Bottle/flask	Round bodied, handled	24	1
Coarse agateware	Late 18th	Bowl	31cm. ø	16	1
Slipware combed	Late 18th	Dish	40cm. ø	12	1
Slipware press-moulded	Early 18th			1	1
Mottled ware	Early 18th	Hollow wares		3	3
Coarse earthenware		Plant pot	24cm. ø	24	1
		Jar	23cm. ø, glazed internally	29	1
		Bowls	32cm. and 37cm. ø, glazed internally	21	2
Total ceramics				850	74
Glass		Wine bottles	Dark green	313	20
		Drinking glasses	1 stem, 1 flat-bottomed, all clear glass	4	2

interesting addition to the categories listed above are the toilet wares, chamber pots and basin, essential in a coaching inn. The toilet wares as a percentage of the minimum vessel count for all the ceramics and glass at Eccleshall, 3.1%, is larger than that at Uxbridge, 1.88%, but still small.

There is the possibility that the deposit may represent material confined to the servants at the inn and therefore be more of a domestic assemblage rather than the consequence of the inn's commercial activity. It would be unlikely, however, that such a domestic group would be disposed of in one episode, but instead would be thrown away only as and when individual vessels were broken; furthermore the large numbers of wine bottles do not fit this domestic interpretation.

This assemblage, therefore, has the potential to add to our understanding of the commercial use and consumption of ceramics during the economic expansion of the industrial revolution.

THE CLAY TOBACCO PIPES

The inn-clearance group produced 4 bowl, 64 stem and 6 mouthpiece fragments. Unfortunately, it was only discovered after it had been disturbed. As a result, it cannot now be certain how complete a sample has been recovered or the extent to which it has been contaminated with other material. Amongst the pipes two of the bowl fragments are clearly residual, as are two or three pieces of stem. The majority of the other pieces, however, appear to belong together and they form a very consistent-looking contemporary group. In particular, most of the fragments have developed a distinctive mottled greyish-brown colouring from their burial environment, which supports the view that they all came from the same original deposit. The associated pottery suggests a deposition date of around 1800 and this is consistent with both the majority of the pipe fragments and with the two associated pipemakers' stamps (see below). The following discussion deals only with those pipe fragments that can reasonably be attributed to the *c.* 1800 inn clearance.

The first point to note is that all of the pipes represented had long slender stems with simple cut ends to form the mouthpiece (Fig. 1:1). The illustrated example is the finest of the mouthpieces, measuring just 4.1mm. deep by 3.4mm. wide at the tip. This slightly oval form to the mouthpiece is typical of the other examples, which measure 4.3 x 4.0, 4.5 x 4.1, 4.7 x 4.2, 4.7 x 4.4 and 4.8 x 4.1mm. The stem bores within the mouthpieces range between $\frac{4}{64}$ and $\frac{5}{64}$ of an inch, which is typical of the assemblage as a whole. The thin stems and fine mouthpieces represented within this group demonstrate the skill with which pipemakers at this time were able to prepare and manipulate the clay during the manufacturing process.

An insight into the overall form of the pipes at this period is provided by one of the bowl fragments (Fig. 1:2), which could be joined with five other stem fragments to give a total surviving stem length of 35.5cm. (14in.). By projecting the stem taper from other fragments within the group it is clear that this pipe would originally have had an overall stem length of at least 48cm. (19in.) (Fig. 1:3). If the particularly fine mouthpiece shown in Fig. 1:1 is used, it could have been as much as 53cm. (21in.) or more long. This item is particularly important for two reasons. First, there are only three examples in the country — all found in London — of complete pipes of this period from which to derive evidence of stem length. Second, the Eccleshall example clearly had a straight stem.

A complete pipe of *c.* 1760–1800 with a stem length of 35.8cm. has been reassembled from finds excavated by the Museum of London (AHA 87 320 <72/88>). The other two examples, excavated at the Tower of London by the Oxford Archaeological Unit, date from *c.* 1770–1800 and from *c.* 1780–1820 and have stem lengths respectively of 35.7cm. (TOL 17E 96 3128 <82>) and of 36.4cm. (TOL 17E 97 3131). The three range from 35.7–36.4cm., considerably shorter than the projected length for the Eccleshall example. It has been possible to estimate the original stem length of three more examples from Museum of London excavations. They range from 38.5cm. (GPO 75 1168/1194) to 47.0cm. (WAT 78 3504/3506 <1298> and WAT 78 3503/3504 <1424>). Even these longer ones fail to reach the minimum length calculated for the Eccleshall find.

Until recently there was little evidence for the evolution of stem lengths around 1800.[8] The new information from Eccleshall and London provides a range of stem lengths, from at least 35.7cm. to 48cm. or even 53cm., to fill the gap and the new data fit well into the broader picture. During the 17th and 18th centuries the average length of pipes gradually increased. At any one time, however, there would have been a range of different lengths in production, reflecting varying styles and qualities of pipe. In general terms, the longer the stem the more expensive the pipe. The Eccleshall example is currently the longest known pipe from this period but, until further data have been collected, it is impossible to know whether this represents regional variation, a particularly expensive product, or a combination of the two.

The Eccleshall example is also important in that it clearly had a straight stem. All of the early pipes had straight stems but, by the end of the 18th century, a new fashion for curved stems had emerged. The complete London pipe of *c.* 1760–1800 has a very slightly curved stem, but the others have a marked curve to them, formed by laying the pipe over a specially shaped rack after moulding. The Eccleshall example has a slightly

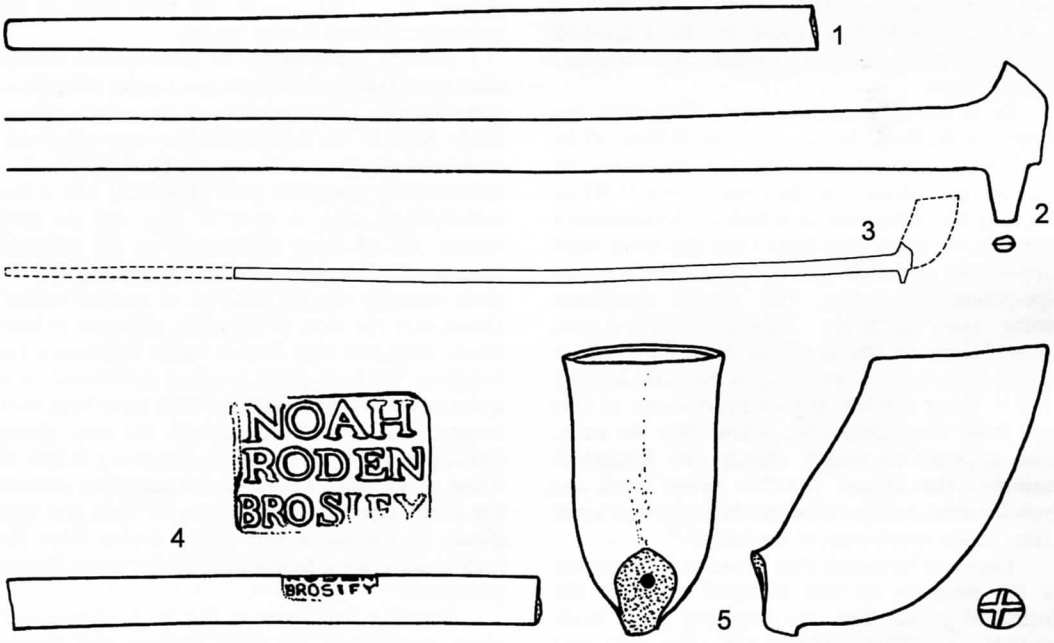

FIG. 1

1. Mouthpiece fragment from a long-stemmed pipe. Stem bore 4/64in. (1:1). 2. Spur fragment and part of the five joining stem fragments. Stem bore 5/64in. (1:1). 3. Reconstruction of no. 2 with the minimum stem length of 48cm. (1:4). 4. Early example of the stem stamp of Noah Roden I of Broseley (1767–1829) (1:1; stamp detail 2:1). 5. Spur bowl with flared rim. Relief-moulded cross on interior base of bowl. Stem bore 4/64in. (1:1).

waney stem, but one that is clearly not intended to be curved. Rather it has sagged slightly from being laid on its right-hand side to dry after being moulded. Until more comparative data have been collected it is impossible to say whether the London fashion for curved stems spread only slowly to the provinces, whether this represents regional variation, or whether it is an attribute of this particular style of pipe.

Most of the bowl of the substantially complete pipe is missing, although it was clearly a spur type (Fig. 1:2). The base of the spur has not been trimmed, a labour-saving change to the finishing process which was introduced about 1800. The only other contemporary bowl from Eccleshall (Fig 1:5) was also a spur form and has been used as the basis for the reconstruction drawing (Fig. 1:3). Its association with pottery of about 1800 is important because it refines the chronology of this bowl form. In the West Midlands makers' marks at this time were usually applied to the top of the stem, rarely recovered with the bowl, making the dating of these bowl types particularly difficult. The bowl has thin walls (this fragment weighs about 9g.) and it has a cut rim that has been internally knife-trimmed. The exterior of the bowl has not been burnished and shows vertical striations on its surface from fine defects in the mould. There is a cross that has been moulded in relief on the base of the bowl interior (see detail, in plan) and the rim of the bowl flares out when viewed end on (Fig. 1:5). Although of a similar form, small mould flaws show that it was made in a different mould to the fragment with the long stem.

The almost complete bowl (Fig. 1:5) is of a Broseley Type 7c form, which has previously been dated to around 1740–80.[9] An almost identical example was found in a pit group of *c.* 1775 from Stafford.[10] In the Stafford pit group, however, most of the bowls were burnished while the Eccleshall examples are not. This suggests that while the same bowl form may have continued in use longer than previously thought, there may have been a change in finishing practice by the end of the century. Amongst the Eccleshall group as a whole, there are only a few stems that have been burnished, a marked change from earlier groups of pipes. The stems are not necessarily, however, of poor quality, since many of them, including the fine mouthpiece shown in Fig. 1:1, have a very smooth and glossy surface. This may have been achieved by buffing or polishing the leather-hard

clay in some way but without actually burnishing it with an agate rod. Most of the Eccleshall fragments came from well-made and carefully finished pipes.

In terms of supply sources, Eccleshall lies closest to Stafford, being just some 9.5km. to its north-west. Somewhat surprisingly, there are no recorded pipemakers for the county town.[11] While this may be partly due to a lack of documentary research, the excavated finds from the town itself support the view that Stafford was never a major pipe-production centre. The nearest significant centre was probably Newcastle-under-Lyme, about 16km. to the north of Eccleshall, where several makers were operating in the years around 1800.[12] There are few known bowl forms of this date from Newcastle and, where they do exist, none appears to match closely the Eccleshall example. The closest parallels come from the Broseley area, a major pipe-producing centre some 32km. to the south-west of Eccleshall.[13]

The bowl form link with Broseley is supported by the presence of two stamped stems in the Eccleshall group. The one complete mark reads 'NOAH / RODEN / BROSLEY' (Fig. 1:4), and the second broken example was almost certainly produced using the same die. These marks occur on very smooth, glossy stems, both of which have stem bores of $\frac{4}{64}$in. The marks have been placed along the stem, a new style that appeared at the end of the 18th century.

Noah Roden is a particularly interesting maker since he is specifically mentioned in early works on the Broseley pipe industry. Richard Thursfield, writing in 1862, said that 'a pipemaker, named Noah Roden, brought the long pipes to great perfection, and supplied most of the London Clubs and Coffee Houses of that day.'[14] In 1908 Randall added 'It is said that George Forester, esq. (the famous Willey Squire), purchased a box of Roden's pipes in London, and on their arrival at Willey sent for Roden to show them to him as examples for him to imitate, much to the astonishment of the maker, who soon set the old squire right.'[15] An example of Roden's stem stamp has been found as far south as Dorking in Surrey.[16]

Documentary research has shown that Noah Roden was baptized in Broseley on 22 February 1767 and that he was buried there on 29 August 1829.[17] His son and grandson, both of whom were also called Noah, went on to become pipemakers in Broseley. The date of the Eccleshall finds, however, shows that these stamped marks were produced by Noah I. A *terminus post quem* for the Eccleshall deposit is provided by Noah's entry into business in about 1790. This particular stamp, rectangular, three-line, and without divisions, in a deposit of *c.* 1800 places this style early in the sequence of Noah Roden marks.

Finally, the presence of these Roden stamps amongst the Eccleshall finds has a series of implications for the interpretation of the whole assemblage. Both of the Roden stamps occur on glossy, well-finished stems with a stem bore of $\frac{4}{64}$in. The substantially complete pipe (Fig. 1:2) has a less well-finished stem, a bore of $\frac{5}{64}$in. and no stem stamp. All of these characteristics are different from the Roden pipes, strongly suggesting that the plain example was the product of another maker. Given that the stem of the plain pipe was at least 48cm. long and that Roden had a reputation for bringing 'the long pipes to great perfection', it is quite possible that Roden's would have been even longer. This would accord with the fine, glossy mouthpiece (Fig. 1:1), which suggests a length of 53cm., even when added to the surviving stem of the plain pipe. It seems probable that the fine, glossy fragments in this group derive from the high-quality, long-stemmed pipes for which Roden was noted.

Broseley was famous for its long-stemmed pipes throughout the 19th century and Roden appears to have been responsible for establishing this reputation. It may well be that Roden founded his business on traditional Broseley designs, thus explaining the occurrence of straight-stemmed pipes at a time when the London fashions had changed to curved stems.

The Royal Oak was a coaching inn on the main road between Broseley and Newcastle-under-Lyme. As there was considerable trade between the Ironbridge area and the Potteries at this date, it is perhaps not surprising that the Broseley makers were able to find a market for their wares on this route. The quality of these pipes also suggests that the patrons of the inn enjoyed a good level of comfort during their stay. This group dates from a key period in the evolution of pipe styles, when few groups have been recovered. It includes the longest known pipes of this date from anywhere in the country, which have been identified as straight-stemmed Broseley forms. The date range for the associated bowl type now extends to *c.* 1800, when it is clear that Broseley pipes had a very glossy but not necessarily burnished finish. Above all it is now possible to identify an early type of Noah Roden stamp and to define some of the pipe styles that he perfected, which served as the foundation for the huge 19th-century Broseley industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to David Barker, Stoke-on-Trent Archaeology Service, for his comments on the

ceramic assemblage, particularly for providing a date, and to Susie White for her comments on the clay pipes and help with Fig. 1.

NOTES

[1] Pitt 1817, 316–17.
[2] Spufford 1995, 32.
[3] Vincent 1982.
[4] Godden 1966.
[5] Finer and Savage 1965, 220–21.
[6] Miller 1980.
[7] Pearce 2000, 174.
[8] Higgins 1987a.
[9] Higgins 1987a.
[10] Higgins 1987b, fig. 144.
[11] Oswald 1975.
[12] Barker 1985.
[13] Higgins 1987a.
[14] Thursfield 1862, 82.
[15] Randall 1908, 441.
[16] Higgins 1985, fig. 4.36.
[17] Higgins 1987a.

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