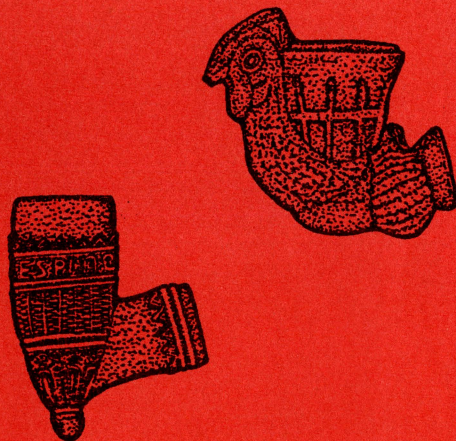


SOCIETY *for* CLAY PIPE RESEARCH



NEWSLETTER

53



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CLAY TOBACCO PIPES FROM AN ISLAND SURVEY ON SANDRAY, OUTER HEBRIDES

David Higgins

Introduction

A small group of pipes was collected during a survey on the uninhabited island of Sandray in the Outer Hebrides. The work was carried out by Patrick Foster of Kettering as part of a project for Sheffield University and Historic Scotland. The pipe finds were associated with some form of stone structures (not houses) which were eroding out of the sand dunes. These structures were also associated with a lot of pottery, probably of 16th to late 18th-century date. The pipes were deposited with the National Clay Tobacco Pipe Archive in Liverpool in February 1996.

Description of the Pipes

A total of eight pipe fragments were recovered during the survey; five bowl and three stem. Two of the bowl fragments join. All of the fragments are very weathered, presumably as a result of exposure on the ground. The weathering makes it impossible to draw any firm conclusions about any original surface treatment of the pipes such as burnishing. All of the pipes have been marked 'SDY' but do not have individual reference numbers. They are as follows:

- 1 Two joining bowl fragments. This pipe has quite a thick-walled bowl, about 2mm at the rim, and a stem bore of between 4/64in and 5/64in. The rim has a simple cut finish. The pipe has been made of a distinctive off-white fabric with fine, multi-coloured gritty inclusions and mica flecks. These inclusions are not typical of English West Country clays and it is possible that this pipe has been made of a local Scottish fabric. The form is a little hard to date without the spur which, from the broken scar, was clearly quite fine. In general terms the form, finish and stem bore of this pipe suggest production during the period c.1750-1850 with the use of a local fabric arguing for the earlier part of this range.

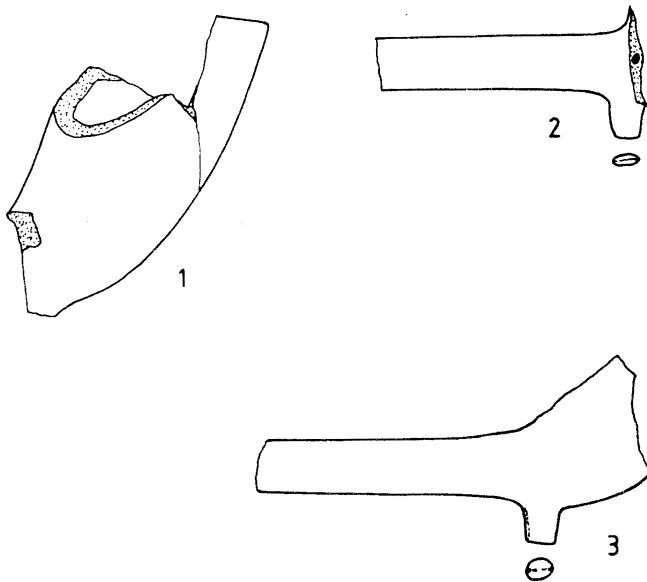


Fig.8 Pipes from Sandray, Outer Hebrides (Scale 1:1)

- 2 Bowl fragment dating from *c.* 1820-80 with a stem bore of $\frac{4}{64}$ in. The spur, which has not been trimmed, is very narrow when viewed from the end and comes to a wedge shaped base. The pipe is made of a very fine, hard fired fabric. The sharp return where the bowl is broken shows that the bowl form was very upright.
- 3 Bowl fragment made of a fine, cream coloured fabric fired to a near stoneware state. The bowl walls are very thin, around 1mm-1.5mm in thickness. The pipe has a stem bore of $\frac{5}{64}$ in and dates from *c.* 1820-80. The base of the spur has not been trimmed.
- 4 (not illustrated) A very fragmentary bowl/stem junction without the spur. The pipe is of a fine, hard fired fabric and is of the same general proportions and date as No.3. Stem bore $\frac{5}{64}$ in.

- 5 (not illustrated) A plain stem fragment in a soft, chalky fabric with a stem bore of 6/64in. Probably 18th century.
- 6 & 7 (not illustrated) Two plain stem fragments in fine, hard fired fabrics. Both pieces have stem bores of 5/64in. and probably date from the 19th century.

Discussion

Although this group is very fragmentary and consists of only a few abraded surface finds it provides important evidence for the lifestyle of the post-medieval inhabitants in this area. It establishes that clay pipes were reaching remote areas of the Western Isles and that smoking clearly formed a part of the prevailing culture.

The group is too small to draw any firm conclusions although it does appear that pipes were being used on Sandray from at least the 18th century. The two earlier pieces both have softer fabrics, at least one of which may have been obtained in Scotland, while the 19th-century pipes are characterized by very fine and highly fired fabrics.

None of the pipes recovered were marked or decorated and, with such fragmentary forms, it is not possible to source any of these pieces. It is worth noting, however, that the pipes clearly indicate later 18th and 19th-century activity on the site, which is later than the date suggested by the pottery. Conversely, there are no earlier fragments, which might have been expected given the suggested date for the other ceramics.

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