

11 Lancaster Clay Tobacco-Pipes

by A.J. White

For over 160 years clay tobacco-pipes were manufactured in Lancaster, as in many towns throughout England, yet little or nothing has ever been written on this facet of the town's history, nor is it easy to discover the personalities behind the names gleaned from trade directories and other sources. A close examination of the records, however, reveals a most interesting cross-section of the small business community in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and shows that the tobacco-pipe trade was more complex than might appear at first - particularly in the way that proprietors were not necessarily active in the manufactory and that several men could be employed in even the smallest businesses.

The earliest pipemaker recorded in Lancaster is John Holland married in 1732. In all probability he had been in business before that date, but there is at present no evidence for any earlier manufacturer. It is important to compare the situation with that of the two nearest towns, Preston and Kendal. In neither was there a resident pipemaker before the early nineteenth century - a period of expansion generally in the industry. Clearly Lancaster was important as a centre, almost certainly because of its position and because of its established trade with America and the West Indies. Export of pipes can probably be assumed to these areas, but cannot at present be proved. No doubt the route oversands to the Furness peninsula gave Lancaster an additional advantage in trade to the southern Lake District.

Clay pipes were uncommon in Lancaster before 1640 and prior to the early eighteenth century Lancaster imported all the pipes it required from older centres, such as London, Hull, Chester and Liverpool. Bristol and Broseley pipes are poorly represented in the early period, a fact which cannot immediately be explained. One or two Dutch pipes represent another source. The diary of a Lancaster Quaker, William Stout, illustrates some of the trading connections and disputes of the period, and it may be that products of certain towns were deliberately excluded. There are, in addition, indications that Lancaster pipemakers had close links with Liverpool, with considerable movement between the two towns. No doubt the similar trade and situation of these ports led to connections between them and there is no doubt that several Liverpool pipemakers were apprenticed at Lancaster, and vice versa.

Pipes from other areas continued to be imported into Lancaster throughout the lifetime of the local manufactory, and by the latter part of the nineteenth century Liverpool, Manchester and also Dublin and Cork were the main sources. By this stage, however, the smoking of Meerschaum and briar pipes was widespread; clay pipes were now the preserve of poorer people and production tended to be more localized - the Irish pipes may have been brought in by navvies and seasonal workers, though many were actually made under license in England. A major source throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was undoubtedly Rainford, near St. Helen's. Here a colony of potters and pipemakers exploited local clays and were also well placed for the import of china clays through Liverpool. A very commonly found marked type in Lancaster is that of 'TW', probably Thomas Whalley of Rainford,

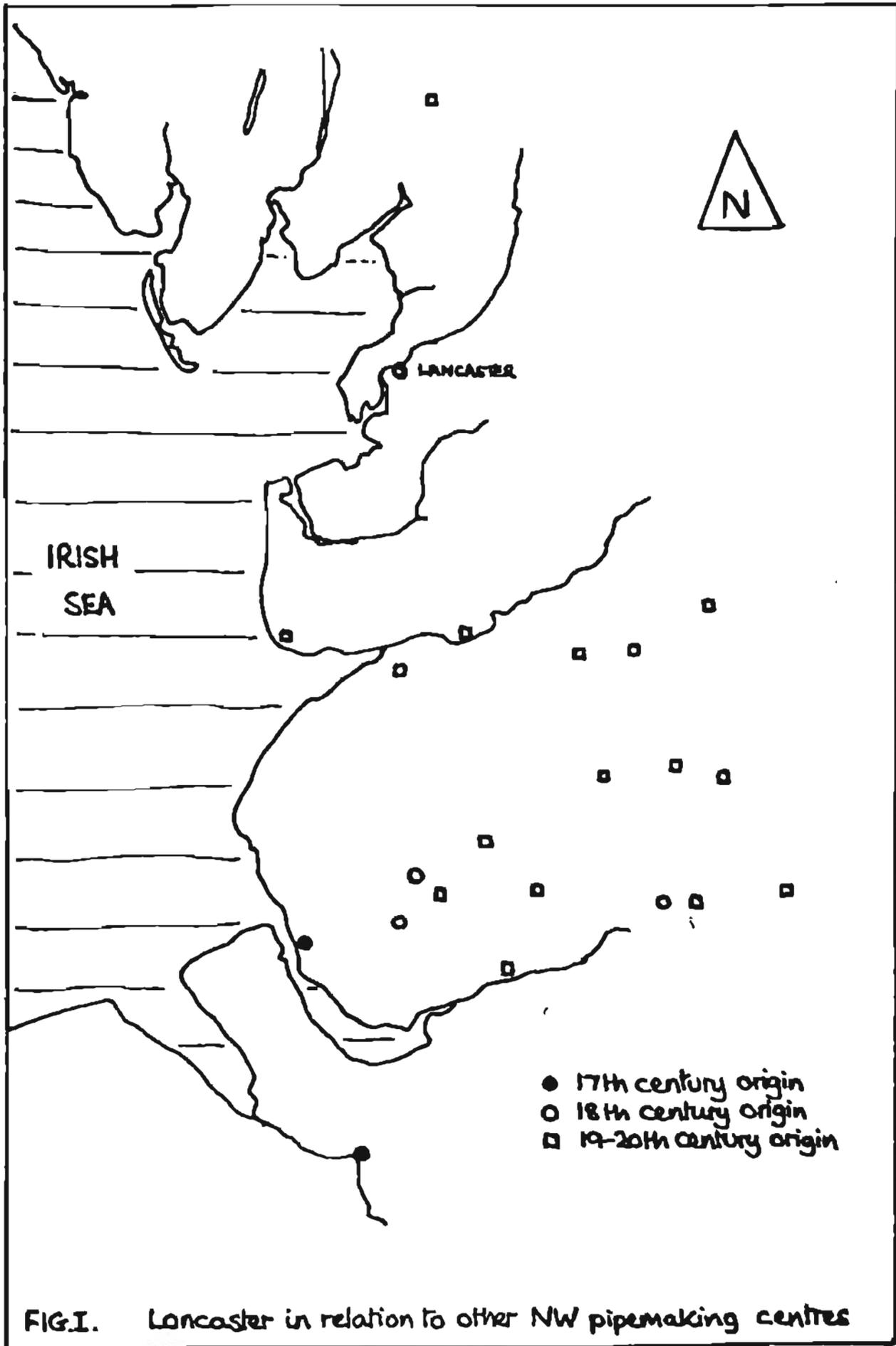


FIG.I. Lancaster in relation to other NW pipemaking centres

active in the third quarter of the last century, though this may possibly be a Glasgow maker.

Of Lancaster makers one is known only from a single marked pipe-stem, while the rest can be found in trade directories, census reports, and parish registers, apart from occasional references in the local newspapers. The wills of two manufacturers John Holland (d. 1754) and John Sephton (d. 1833) are known, and are now in the Lancashire Record Office. It is possible that further records may exist in rentals and account books, but these have not been located. It is clear that businesses of this nature ran on a very small margin of profit and accounting was probably a luxury not indulged in.

Methods of manufacture:

The method of pipemaking was common to the whole country, however much local styles of pipe varied. No manufacturing equipment from the early days survives, but it was probably not much different from that used by more recent makers.

Basically the method of manufacture was as follows: rough blanks of suitable clay would be rolled by hand and then placed in a metal two-piece mould and clamped tight, thus receiving any decoration and shape required. Next a plunger would be inserted to create the bowl and a thin rod would be slid up the centre of the stem to form a passage between the bowl and mouthpiece. After partial drying, trimming of excess clay, and further drying, pipes were placed in the kiln 'saggars' (large clay vessels designed to protect them from direct heat) and fired to the correct temperature. White was the desired colour - incorrect firing or impurity in the clay could lead to discolouration, and resulting lack of saleability. After firing and cooling the pipes were usually stored in bulk in a warehouse for later distribution, as even long clays fetched an average of only $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each in the eighteenth and nineteenth century profits depended on high turnover - purchase by the gross was not uncommon and bulk sales to public houses which distributed them free to customers, probably accounted for a large proportion.

It will be seen from Appendix III that the Lancaster pipe-house had two kilns in 1850, indicating a fairly large production. Pipes were very brittle and many casualties in both the firing and distribution stages could be expected. It is very likely that a dump of waste material remains to be discovered in Lancaster; such a discovery would be of the utmost importance for our understanding of the range of pipes produced at any given time.

Sources of raw materials and distribution:

As indicated above a white-firing clay was considered essential for pipemaking. This could come from two sources; locally, from coal-measures in the Burton-in-Lonsdale area or as china-clay from Devon and Cornwall. Possibly a mixture was used - there are indications of a small coastal trade in china-clay into Lancaster, as can be seen from a table of sea-borne trade in Corry's 'History of Lancashire', but whether the tonnage recorded would be sufficient is not certain. It must be remembered that some of the china-clay could have been used in other industrial processes in the town.

The distribution of Lancaster pipes is an obvious area for further research. At present a few suggestions can be made on the basis of probability or documentary evidence, but a search in neighbouring counties and abroad for marked Lancaster pipes would be most rewarding.

The Lancaster pipehouse was operating throughout the greatest period of the port's history, when ships were trading with the West Indies and America, not to mention other ports on the west coast or in Ireland. It seems only reasonable that some of the products travelled with these ships. Indeed the foundation of Lancaster's pipemaking trade is markedly earlier than that of neighbouring towns (see fig. 1) and it is very probable that it was stimulated initially by the prospects of a large overseas market.

In 1850 the marketing was stated to cover 'Yorkshire, Westmorland, Cumberland, and also a good Home Trade' (see Appendix lll), which would contrast with many contemporary businesses in other towns where trade was almost exclusively local. That the advertisement was based on truth is borne out by the occurrence of a pipe of James Stork (1850-64) at Dalton-in-Furness, which is probably representative of many more carried on the oversands route across Morecambe Bay. The only other Lancaster pipe so far recorded outside Lancaster is one of Andrew Edkin (c 1760-90 ?) from Hornby, only 10 miles away. Further examples will certainly come to light in the future and one hopes these will be reported to the Museum.

The Pipe-house

The manufactory, was situated in Penny Street, at a place called appropriately enough, Pipehouse Yard, probably from the time of John Holland until William Johnson transferred it to St. Leonardgate in the mid-1880's.

Pipehouse Yard was in fact an alley leading off Penny Street just to the south of George Street, which at this time had a very narrow entrance opposite Spring Garden Street, caused by the projection of the pipe-house. The Yard ran round the back of this house and led into George Street again. The relationship of house and street suggest that the house came first and was only later swallowed up by development. Initially it must have stood practically on its own - reasonable in view of the nuisance by smoke when the kiln was in operation. A description of the house and fittings appears in advertisements for the sale of the business in 1850 and in the two wills. It would seem that the Sephton family were responsible for building the adjoining cottages as speculation, sometime before 1833, but fifteen years later they appear as tenants, perhaps because the estate was split several ways on the death of John Sephton.

In 1850 the premises consisted of the pipehouse with two kilns, a warehouse and stable (most essential for the storage and distribution of an item only sold in bulk), and six cottages, in one of which the pipemaker lived. What the exact form of the premises was in 1732 we do not know, but a manufacturer of the 1760's (see below) was paying Window Tax for a house in Penny Street so presumably the business was already established there. Various maps show the pipehouse, though do not name it. A ground plan based on Clarke's map of 1807 appears as Fig. 2.

In about 1885 William Johnson, the last Lancaster pipemaker, moved his premises to 108 St. Leonardgate, perhaps because the Penny Street property was shortly to be demolished. The entrance to George Street was improved by widening and today the site of the pipehouse lies beneath the road, while the site of the adjacent cottage is marked by a patch of derelict land. Should redevelopment of this take place, excavation might reveal traces of associated structures and possibly waster pipes.

The St. Leonardgate pipehouse bears no trace of a kiln - indeed the house is grandiose enough to suggest that it may have been used as a shop only. The address is given variously as St. Leonardgate and Pitt Street, and so perhaps the kiln may have been located in the rear entrance passage from Pitt Street.

A third possible site is suggested by the address of John Gardner, pipe-maker in 1864-9. From 1864-6 it is given as 36½ Church Street (now the Lancaster Guardian or Evening Post offices). The address may, however, be that of his home - though his father was a watchmaker there earlier - or it may have simply been a shop, as he also sold china and glass.

The Pipemakers:

As we have seen the earliest Lancaster pipemaker was John Holland. He is first recorded at his marriage, in 1732, and his bondsman was John Holland Jnr., almost certainly his son and also a pipemaker.

It is possible to reconstruct the working life of these two men to a certain extent from the Lancaster Parish registers. John Holland Senr. must have been born c 1680 and married three times: viz. 1711 to Anne Tateham, 1732 to Jane Torver (who incidentally was born in 1708 and so was half his age), and finally 1744 to Isabel Walker, who was probably a widow. His son John must have been born c 1712-3 and married Elizabeth Dickinson in 1740. John Holland Senr. died in 1754 and his will was proved at Richmond; his son, at this date in his early forties possibly carried on the business into the 1760's or even later.

The next manufacturer is known only from a marked pipe-stem found at Hornby. It read '[-]DKIN [L]ANCASTER', and this can probably be tied down to Andrew Edkin who in 1766 was paying Window Tax on a house in Penny Street. One cannot be certain whether he was at this time actually the proprietor - the Window Tax lists do not indicate in which house in any street the taxpayer lived, and possibly this was a private residence. However, it is likely that Edkin was active from the 1760's until c 1790 perhaps initially an employee or partner of John Holland Jnr.

Two men recorded during this period as 'pipemakers' in Lancaster Parish Register, Joseph Bispham and Jeremiah Hayes should probably be seen as apprentices or more likely journeymen. The latter seems to have had Liverpool antecedents. Samuel Hayes is recorded there in 1721 (perhaps his grandfather) while Jeremiah himself seems to be recorded in 1770, perhaps moving to Lancaster shortly afterwards. Other members of the Hayes family were still operating in Liverpool in the 1850's. Joseph Bispham, active in Lancaster c 1774-81, died in Liverpool in 1801 and his widow Martha carried on his business there, while a namesake is recorded as late as 1875. The evidence suggests that both men came from established pipemaking families (or set up such a tradition) and

were only in Lancaster for a few years as journeymen - both were probably in their 20's or 30's as the births of their children are recorded here - before setting up in business in Liverpool.

In about 1790 John Sephton arrived in Lancaster. He may have worked in Liverpool beforehand or the name recorded there in 1778 may represent a relative. The name Sephton is recorded first in London in 1687, then in Nottingham and later in Lancaster, Liverpool and Worcester leading Adrian Oswald to suggest that this represents a migration of the family; this may well be so, but it is clear that sons of pipemakers were often apprenticed elsewhere than their home town and many must have stayed on in the new place, with the effect of gradual colonization of an area by one family. In any case the name Sephton is common in the North-West and the original London Sephton may have been a recent settler there.

John Sephton seems to have built up the Lancaster business quite considerably. He was probably responsible for building the row of cottages adjacent to the Pipehouse, though there is some confusion between Mackreth's Map of Lancaster in 1778, which shows houses on the site, and Clark's Map of 1807, which shows only an area due for development. If Clark is correct then Sephton was the developer. He died in 1833 (aged 74, according to the Lancaster Gazette 13th July, 1833) leaving a widow and two sons, James and John Sephton Jnr. who seem to have continued the business on behalf of their mother. In 1850, probably on her death, the business was put up for sale by one of the occupants of the cottages, George Leighton. Behind this odd arrangement we may perhaps see the sale by an executor of property for division between the surviving children. At all events John Sephton Jnr. seems to have continued to make pipes while the property was leased to James Stork, a draper in Cheapside. Pipes were marked with the name of Stork but he seems to have taken no active part in the manufactory. Sephton and his son Thomas Sephton appear to have continued to run the business, the latter until about 1857 when he is last mentioned, the former until his death in 1864 (he is buried in Lancaster Cemetery, on the Quernmore Road side.) The Census Reports of 1851 and 1861 record the real situation at the Pipehouse and not simply the proprietor's name, and give ages and places of birth; thus we know that John Sephton Jnr. was born in Lancaster in 1792 and that there was another pipemaker named William Parkinson working there in 1851, probably as a paid labourer.

Another possible pipemaker of the early 19th century is John Ball. He is quoted in the Lancaster Freemens' Lists in 1801 on the occasion of his son's freedom. The son worked in Bolton, and it is not clear which of the two was the pipemaker. John Ball may have worked for John Sephton Snr., but equally well, the son may have been in the trade in Bolton

On the death of John Sephton Jnr. in 1864 it is probable that the business was sold to John Gardner who lived at 36 $\frac{1}{2}$ Church Street. He, like James Stork, was either a proprietor or a part-time pipe-maker as he also dealt in china and glass. By this stage the profits were probably not very great and other interests were necessary. He is not mentioned in the Directories after 1869 but it is possible that he continued into the 1870's and that

John Beckett, a pipemaker who in 1870 appeared in court for an assault on his wife (Lancaster Guardian 22nd October, 1870) was an employee.

By at least 1878 the business was in the hands of William Johnson who was also a machine broker - again illustrating the point that by this time there was not really a living to be made from pipemaking alone. In about 1885 he moved to 108 St. Leonardgate, a fine house of 1792 but now probably fallen on hard times (the lease, however, was not signed until 1890). He continued to make pipes here, as well as pursuing his trade of machine-broking and in addition the selling of oil and bicycles. In 1899 he was joined by his son, William Johnson Jnr., though it is not clear what role his son played. The business is not mentioned in subsequent Directories, and so had ceased by 1900 or 1901. Thus ended the (at least) 168 years of pipemaking in Lancaster, killed by small profits and the general move towards cigarettes and briar pipes.

Lancaster Pipes (Fig. 2)

1. Marked stem (stem bore 6/64") by (J) OHN:HOLAN(D) (sic). This could be either of the two men of this name - the custom of marking on the stem became common in the middle years of the eighteenth century, i.e. c1730-70. Above the name is a band of milling; below is the top of what may be a coat of arms, such as those on Chester pipes.
2. Marked stem (stem bore 5/64") by (E)DKIN/(L)ANCAS/TER. As noted above Edkin was probably active in the period 1760-90. The stamp very weakly impressed and like no. 1 is the only known example of the work surviving. It was found on a building site at Hornby, ten miles from Lancaster.
3. Marked bowl (stem bore 5/64") with scallop-shell ornament with small fleur-de-lys and the legend 'LANCSTR' (sic). The form is typical of the later eighteenth century and so is presumably the work of John Sephton Snr.
4. Decorated bowl (stem bore 4/64") with reduced scallop-shell ornament one side bearing a square and compasses enclosing the letter G, the other the Lancaster coat of arms.
5. Decorated bowl (stem bore 5/64") bearing on one side the square and compasses, two candles, star and book, and on the other the Lancaster coat of arms. Both this and no. 4 seem to have Masonic connections; during the 1840's there was a Masonic Tavern at the top of Market Street, so these pipes may have been sold there and were probably made by John Sephton Jnr. c1830-50.
6. Decorated bowl (stem bore 5/64") similar to no. 4 except that the 'Masonic' symbols are replaced by a poorly impressed seated figure of uncertain significance. This again is likely to be a public-house pipe, the date and maker being as for nos. 4 and 5.

7. Marked stem (stem bore 5/64") with a simple relief mark impressed longitudinally along the side - a nineteenth century practice - giving the name 'L' (or 'T') SEPH [TON], and thus dating c1790-1850. However, from its archaeological context (Old Vicarage excavations 1975) a date c1830-50 could be suggested.
8. Marked bowl (stem bore 5/64") bearing the elaborate stamp of James Stork (1850-64). As noted above, Stork probably played no part in the actual manufactory. A characteristic of these pipes is the very thin wall to the bowl and the flattening of the back to take the stamp. A stamp of this type was found at Dalton-in-Furness on the other side of Morecambe Bay.

On present evidence not all the pipemakers marked their pipes and even those that did do not appear to have marked every pipe they produced. More marks will, however, surely come to light.

Conclusion:

The foregoing paper has attempted to produce the first survey ever of Lancaster's clay tobacco-pipe trade. A great variety of sources have been examined but undoubtedly much work remains to be done, particularly in the field of overseas trade and on the working lives of individual makers. Much of the information probably lies hidden in civic documents and in local newspapers, and until these are fully indexed no comprehensive study can be attempted.

Acknowledgements:

I should like to acknowledge the help and encouragement offered by many people involved in local history - too many, for, individual names to be quoted, but in particular I should like to thank Mrs. Gillian Woodhouse (formerly Reference Librarian in the Lancaster Library), the staff of the Lancashire Record Office for information and assistance, Mrs. Tyson and the Staff of the City Museum, and lastly to the donors of clay pipes now in the Museum on which much of this work has been based.

Further Reading:

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| Adrian Oswald | 'English Clay Tobacco Pipes'
(British Archaeological Association, 1967) |
| David Atkinson &
Adrian Oswald | 'London Clay Tobacco Pipes'
(Journal of the Archaeological Association,
3rd Series Vol XXXII, 1969) |
| Adrian Oswald | 'Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist'
(British Archaeological Reports, 1974) |

These are basic works and they in turn give references to a wider range. The pioneer work of Adrian Oswald is clear from any bibliography.

Appendix 1The Will of John Holland 1754

In the name of God Amen, I John Holland of Lancaster in the County of Lancaster Pipemaker, being of sound & disposing mind and memory, do make this my last Will & Testament in manner and form following, that is to say, I commit my spirit to God who gave it, and my body to be bury'd in a decent manner according to the appointment of my Executors hereafter mention'd who are to dispose of my goods & chattels in the following manner, that is to say, to my son Jm Holland and his Wife half a guinea each and to his children one Guinea. I also give to my son Wm Holland one guinea to my Daughter Ann one Guinea & to my Daughter Lidea one Guinea. I also give to my loving Wife Isabel Holland Twenty Pounds and all the Wheat Meal Malt or other Provisions that may be in the House at the time of my Decease. I also give her the following goods to wit one Featherbed Bolster & Pillow one pair of sheets three Blankets one quilt one pair of Bedsocks two Hangings & Vallances one Warming Pann, four Oak chairs one Black Chair one round table one Washing Tub one Pale one Barrel and one Kettle about Six quarts. I also order and appoint that my said Wife shall have all the Tools Implements & apprentice belonging to the aforesaid trade of a pipemaker for the space of two years if she live the said term, I also order Mr Day One guinea for preaching my funeral sermon and as to the residue of my Goods & Chattels as yet undisposed of I order em to be sold and after the payment of my just debts and funeral expenses I order the overplus to be divided among my Son John, my Son William, my Daughter Lidea & my Daughter Ann's children at the discretion of Wm. Wilkinson & Thos Rowlandson whom I appoint Executors of this my last will & testament in witness whereunto I have set my hand & seal this nineteenth day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and fifty four.

Witnesses Mary Bircket
Jas Noble

John Holland

25th May 1754

The Executors within named appeared personally and were sworn well & truly to execute the Will within written and so forth before me

J. Fenton

Will in the Lancashire Record Office and transcribed here by the courtesy of the County Archivist

Appendix 11Will of John Sephton 1825 & 1833

I John Sephton of Lancaster in the County of Lancaster pipemaker do make this my last will & testament in the manner following, that is to say, I direct all my just (Debts funeral & testamentary) Expenses to be paid as soon as conveniently may be after my decease and with the Payment thereof I charge both my real & personal estate. I give devise & bequeath unto John Woods of Lancaster aforesaid Coal Merchant & Thomas Darwen of Lancaster aforesaid Merchant ----- all those my five cottages or dwelling houses together with the Work Shop, back buildings and other Appurtenances thereto - belonging situate in Penny Street in Lancaster aforesaid in the several possessions of myself & of my Son John & of Joseph Oglethorpe, Joseph Dickinson and Ann Briscoe - - - - - And my will is that my said Trustees with the Aid & Assistance of my said Wife carry on manage & conduct my said Business of a pipemaker & for that purpose I declare that they & he shall have the fullest powers over the said business and the Tools & Implements used therein - - - - - And after the decease of my said Wife I give & bequeath the Tools & Implements employed & used in my said Business unto & equally between my said two Sons James & John - - - - - this first day of June in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred & twenty five.

John Sephton

Thos Thompson
Hugh Baldwin
Joseph Oglethorpe

Codicil dated 11th May 1833 to alter one
of the Trustees
The will was proved 19th October 1833
(Much verbiage irrelevant to the present
work has not been transcribed)

Will in the Lancashire Record Office and partially transcribed
here by courtesy of the County Archivist - - - -

Appendix 111Advertisements for sale and lease in the Lancaster Gazette, 1850

Lancaster Gazette. April 13, 1850

To Pipe Makers

and others

To be let

By proposal and may be entered upon at May day next all that old established and well accustomed

PIPE HOUSE

With two kilns, warehouses, stable & other conveniences situate in

Penny Street, Lancaster

To any person wishing to commence in the above line this presents a most favourable opportunity. Being established upwards of 70 years, it commands an extensive & profitable trade in Yorkshire Westmorland, Cumberland & also a good Home Trade. There is no other pipe house within 21 miles.

A suitable party will be liberally treated with. Further particulars may be had on application to Mr. George Leighton, 51 Penny Street, to whom proposals must be sent & the taker will be declared on Monday 22nd inst.

Lancaster April 6th 1850

Lancaster Gazette. June 29, 1850

Sale of Cottage etc & pipehouse at the King's Arms Cottages no's 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51 on the East side of Penny Street. Pipehouse and cottages in the several occupations of James Stork, John McClellan, John Sephton, Isabella Dickinson & George Leighton respectively.

The premises have recently been let.
Frontage to Penny Street, of
40ft 11 ins & extends backwards 111ft
or thereabouts & has right of road into
George Street.
George Leighton, owner, 51, Penny Street.

(Advert repeated July 13, 1850)

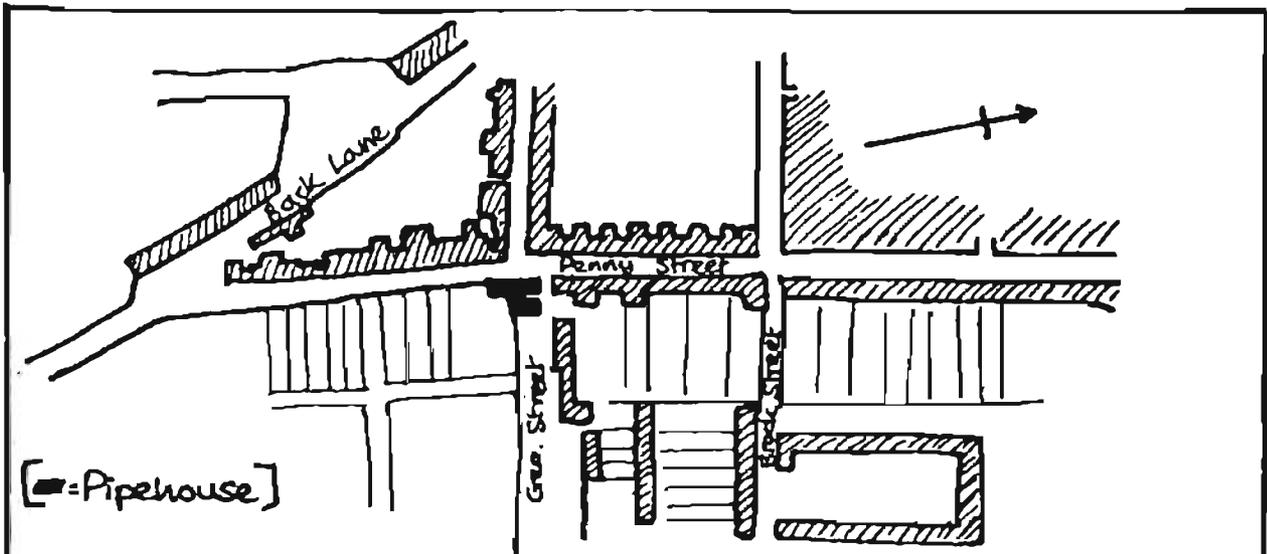


FIG. IIa The Pipehouse, based on Clark 1807.

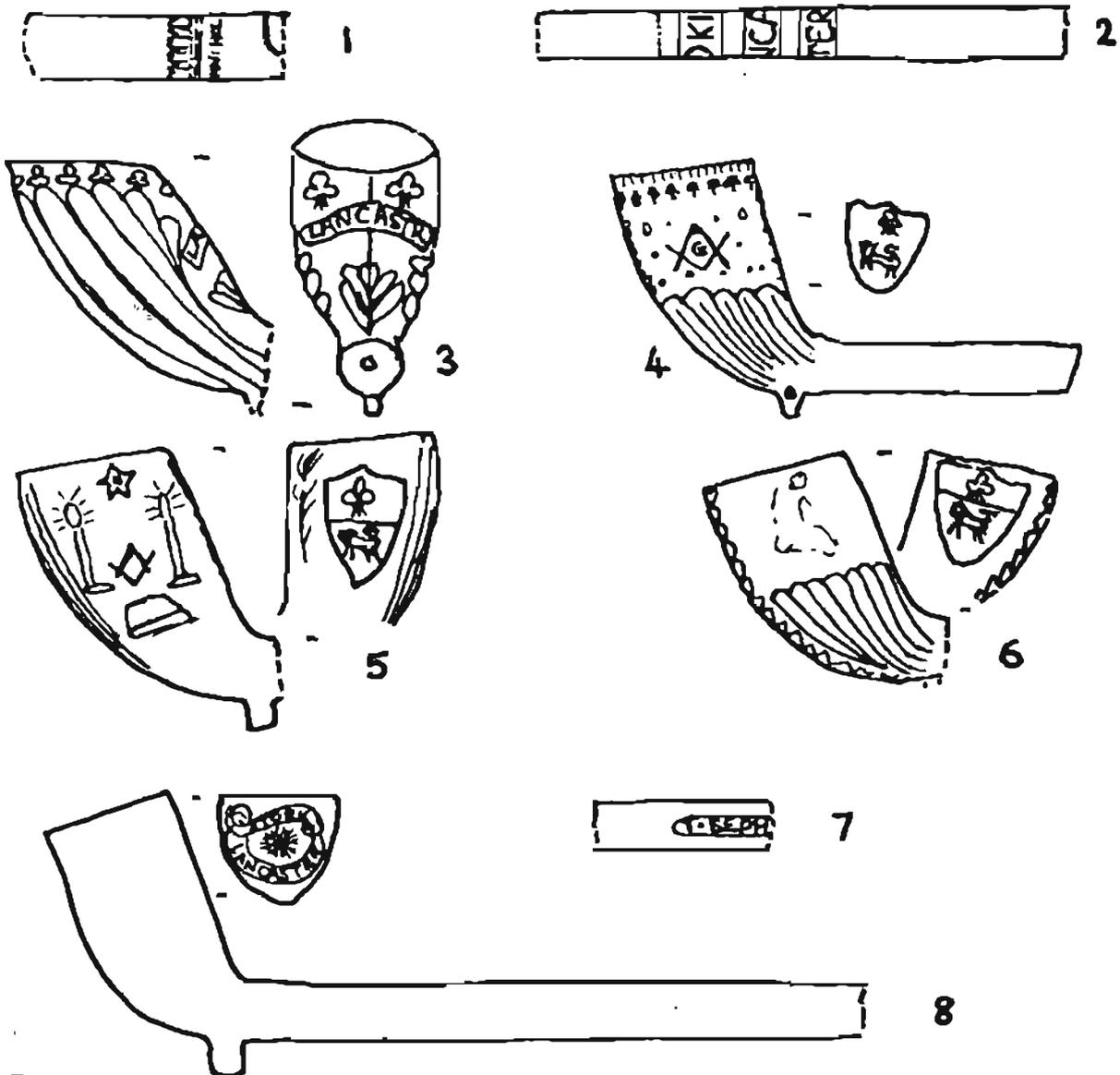


FIG. IIb Examples of Lancaster pipes.