

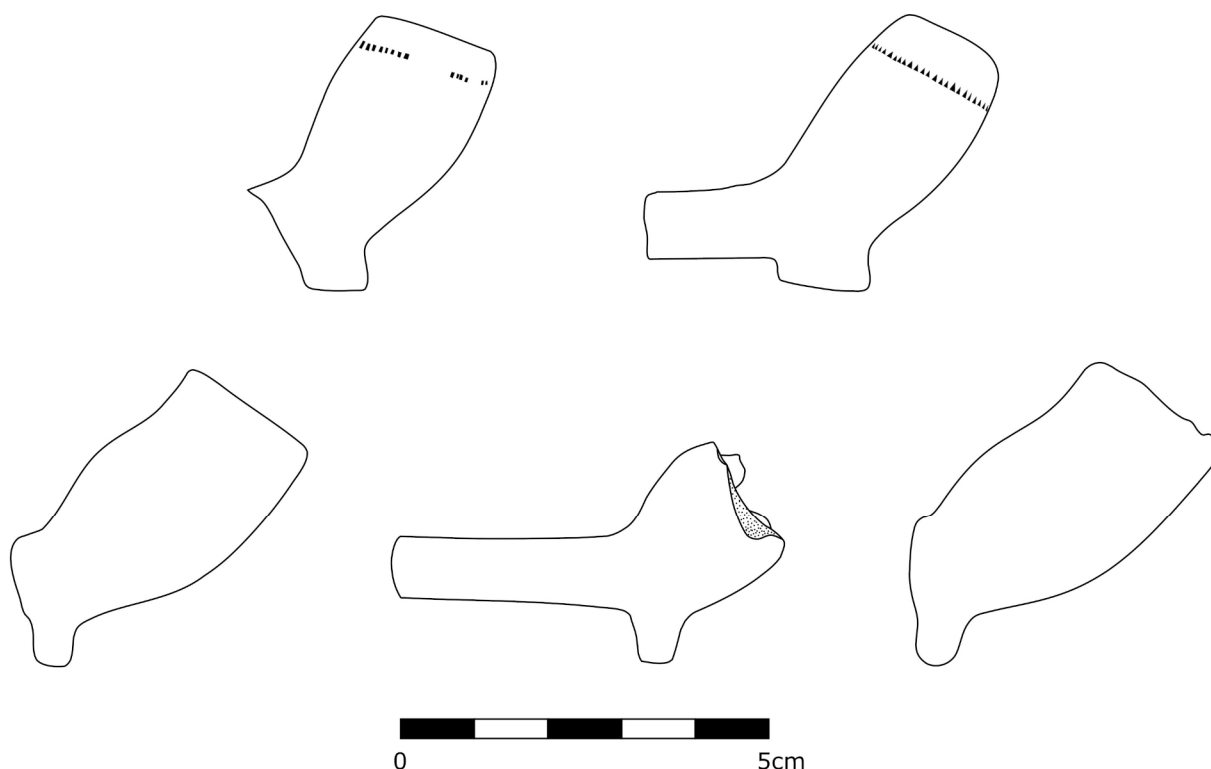
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### Clay tobacco pipes from Astley

*Murray Andrews*

Since 2009 the North Worcestershire Archaeology Group (NWAG) has been occasionally presented with artefacts unearthed by members of the public in the north of the county. One such offering is a small collection of 65 clay tobacco pipe fragments (weight 221.4g) presented to NWAG by the late Dave Parker, a prolific metal detectorist and hobby fieldwalker from Astley, near Stourport-on-Severn. The exact source of this material is unclear, but bag labels and local testimonials suggest that all or most of the pipes were found in Astley, most probably in the fields adjoining Scots Lane on the north side of Astley Burf (NGR SO 808 684). This is



*Fig 1: 17th- and 18th-century clay tobacco pipes from Astley*

an area of considerable historical interest: Astley Burf's place-name contains the Old English element *beorg* ('barrow, tumulus'; Mawer and Stenton 1927, 33), suggestive of a prehistoric monument or early medieval meeting place, while Scots Lane itself may represent an ancient boundary to Penny Park, an enclosure described in Elizabethan documents (F. Llewellyn, *pers. comm.*, 15 October 2020). The pipes themselves are probably domestic waste from adjacent settlement, redeposited on the fields through early modern manuring.

Despite its coarse provenance, the Parker collection merits record as a group of post-medieval artefacts from a poorly-understood part of the county. Among the material are 13 dateable bowl and heel or spur fragments, eight of which were produced in the Welsh Marches (Fig 1): these include two north Herefordshire or south Shropshire pipes dated to c.1660-90 (Peacey 1996), and six Broseley pipes dated to c.1670-90, c.1690-1720, and c.1680-1730 respectively (Atkinson (1975) type 3, x1; type 4, x4; type 5, x1). The presence of so many pipes from Herefordshire and Shropshire manufactories tallies with evidence from Newport Street, Worcester, and reflects their domination of the Worcestershire pipe market during the late 17th and early 18th centuries (Peacey 2015, 172).



*Fig 2: Bowl fragment with Russell's Worcester pipe mark, 1818-68*

The five other bowl and heel/spur fragments are 18th- and 19th-century types of uncertain manufacture: two are dated c.1690-1730 (Oswald 1975, 40, no. 20), two c.1730-80 (Oswald 1975, 40, no. 22), and one c.1840-60 (Oswald 1975, 54, no. 18). Some of these pipes may have been made in Worcestershire, as one undiagnostic bowl fragment certainly was: this bears the incuse moulded mark of John Russell's Worcester pipe factory (Fig 2), which was situated in the area of Cripplegate Park between 1818 and 1868 (Moore 2021).

The bulk of the collection, however, consists of incomplete stem fragments, dated on the basis of stem-bore measurements (Harrington 1978). Like the bowls and heel/spurs, the stems mostly date to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, reinforcing the common provenance of the collection. Taken as a whole, the clay pipes collected by Parker offer a small but important snapshot of tobacco consumption in north Worcestershire during the 17th to 19th centuries.

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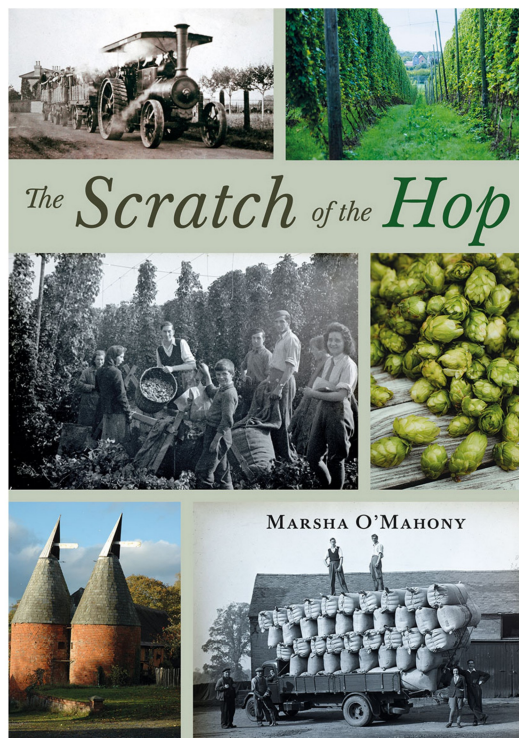
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## Book Reviews

***The Scratch of the Hop: Hop Picking in Herefordshire, Worcestershire & Shropshire.* By M. O'Mahony. Logaston Press, Eardisley, 2021. Pp. 288. Price £15. ISBN 9781910839447.**

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries great swathes of the Worcestershire countryside were seasonally cloaked in pale-green hops, the centrepiece of a rural industry that drew in thousands of men, women, and children from near and far. Many of the old hopyards are now closed, but their legacy can be traced in a landscape peppered by kilns, poles, and wires, and in the memories of those who worked – and, in some cases, still work – to bring the harvest home. This attractive new book by local historian and journalist Marsha O'Mahony provides an evocative account of the history of hop farming in Herefordshire, Worcestershire, and Shropshire, rooted in a rich seam of evidence from documentary and oral history.



Rather than a straightforward chronological description of the growth and decline of hop farming in the three border counties, O'Mahony offers a thematic narrative that follows the industry from the field to the drinking glass and beyond. Two introductory chapters (Chs. 1-2) explore the origins and influence of hop farming, revealing the impact of a 16th-century