

# Clay Tobacco Pipes from the Site of the Victoria Hotel Auckland, New Zealand

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*Excavation on the site of the Victoria Hotel (site R11/1530) in October 1989 resulted in the recovery of an assemblage of artefacts that were within the hotel at the time of its destruction by fire on 15 February 1865. A smaller assemblage of material dating from the period of operation of the hotel (1842–1865) was also recovered. Preliminary analysis of the large assemblage of clay tobacco pipe fragments indicates that the size and composition of the pipe assemblage is not typical of New Zealand sites, and that it includes many previously unreported pipe makers and types. This appears to be due to the fact that many of the pipes were unsold stock, and that the hotel had on sale an unusual and exotic range of pipes. The artefacts from the site are important as an accurately dated reference assemblage. Further detailed analysis of the pipes and publication of a descriptive monograph are planned.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is hardly necessary to remind archaeologists of the importance of clay tobacco pipes in historical archaeology. Anyone who has analysed nineteenth-century artefact assemblages will know that pipes are one of the most useful artefact types for interpreting archaeological features or sites that lack firm dates of occupation. However, the usefulness of pipe assemblages is dependant upon having access to literature containing descriptions of pipe types and information about pipe manufacturers.

In Australia and New Zealand, where interest in historical archaeology is comparatively recent, we have

had to rely heavily on publications that have originated from the northern hemisphere. These can be difficult to obtain and often lack information on pipe types exported to this side of the world. It is important therefore that excavated pipe assemblages, particularly those from well dated contexts, are adequately described, and the literature made available to others working in the field of historical archaeology in Australasia.

The pipe assemblage discussed here is still being analysed and documented. It will be of particular interest to those involved in the study of nineteenth-century artefact assemblages that contain clay pipes. Not only is it the largest and most varied pipe assemblage recovered so far from a New Zealand site, it is dateable with a degree

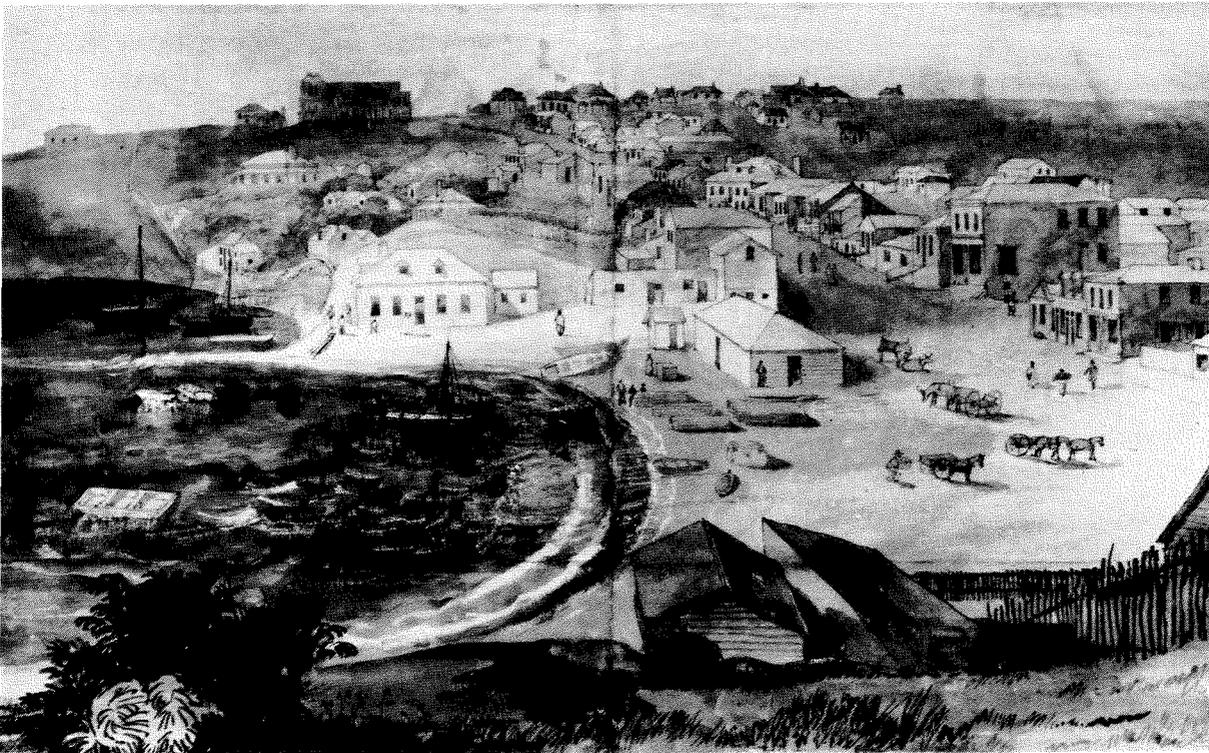


Fig. 1: West view of Commercial Bay by Edward Ashcroft c.1843. The Victoria Hotel is the dormer windowed building on the foreshore. (Reproduced with permission of the Auckland City Art Gallery).

of accuracy that is rarely achievable except with shipwrecks.

## THE SITE

The assemblage was recovered from the site of the Victoria Hotel (site R11/1530) in Fort Street, Auckland. The Victoria Hotel (Fig. 1) was built in late 1841 and early 1842 on what was at that time the foreshore of Commercial Bay. It opened for business on 29 January 1842.<sup>1</sup>

For many years the Victoria Hotel was popular and fashionable. However, by the 1860s Commercial Bay had been reclaimed, the main commercial centre had shifted away from nearby Shortland Street to Queen Street, and the hotel was left on a side street, Fort Street, among a cluster of older buildings.

Extensions were added to the hotel in an attempt to improve profitability, but by February 1865, the proprietors were in serious financial difficulties, and a meeting of creditors was called to wind up the business.<sup>2</sup> However, on 15 February 1865, the hotel caught fire under suspicious circumstances and was completely destroyed, along with most of the other buildings in the block.<sup>3</sup>

The Victoria Hotel was never rebuilt. The allotment was left vacant for almost two decades until the 1880s, when a four storey commercial building was constructed on the site. This building stood until 1989, when the *Auckland Star* newspaper complex was demolished in preparation for redevelopment of the property.

## EXCAVATION

The site was excavated in September 1989 by the Department of Conservation's Auckland Archaeology Unit.

The excavation uncovered one of the hotel's cellars, infilled with the remains of the hotel and its contents after the 1865 fire. A huge quantity of artefacts was recovered from amongst the fire debris, including numerous broken bottles and ceramic items, bricks, barrel hoops, pieces of building hardware, faunal remains, and a large number of clay tobacco pipe fragments. A range of artefacts, which had accumulated when the hotel was in operation, was uncovered below the fire debris on the floor of the cellar. They included pieces of timber, coins, tools, bottles, parts of barrels, and further clay tobacco pipe fragments.

## THE PIPE ASSEMBLAGE

More than 2000 pipe fragments were recovered from the site. The vast majority, more than 95 percent of the total, were found in the fire debris while the remainder were encapsulated in the layers below. No intact pipes were recovered, but some near complete pipes have since been reconstructed, and there are sufficient overlapping pieces to be able to illustrate several other whole pipes.

The minimum number of individual pipes within the assemblage has yet to be determined, but it is in excess of 500. Both the number of pipe fragments and the minimum number of individual pipes in the assemblage is considerably higher than has been recovered from any other New Zealand site. The next largest assemblage, from a site in Chancery Street, Auckland (site R11/1589), contained 622 pipe fragments, and a minimum of around 160 individual pipes.

Despite the large number of pipes recovered from the Victoria Hotel site, originally there were probably many more. At the time of the fire the hotel had two cellars. The second cellar was not found during the excavation. It appears to have been destroyed when the site adjacent to Shortland Street was levelled for redevelopment in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. The top layers of

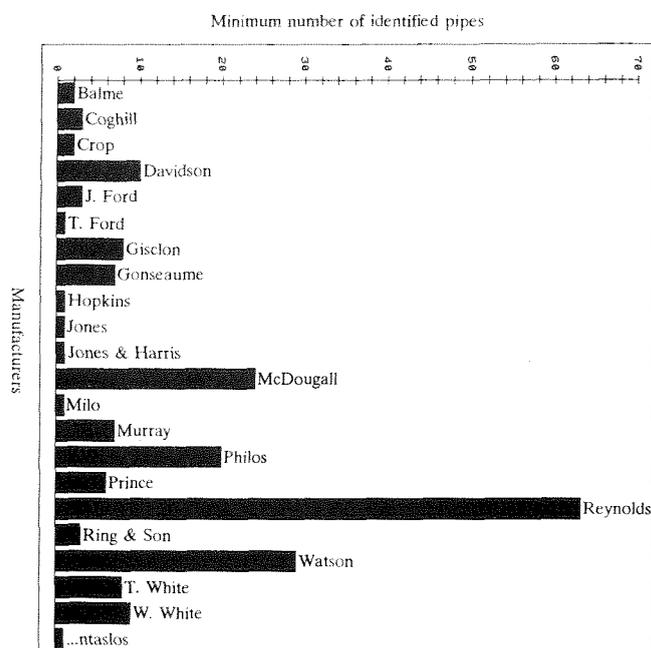


Fig. 2: Clay tobacco pipe manufacturers represented in the Victoria Hotel assemblage.

fill and the ground surface surrounding the excavated cellar had also been lost during levelling for the 1880s building, and about one third of the cellar's contents had been removed when concrete footings had been dug into the cellar. The site could, therefore, have conceivably contained perhaps two to five times as many pipes as we recovered before it was disturbed.

At least 22 different manufacturers are represented in the assemblage (Fig. 2), including ten that have not previously been reported from New Zealand sites, and some that do not appear at all in any of the accessible literature. Pipes without makers' marks, presumably produced by manufacturers other than those identified, are, however, more common than those that are marked.

All of the common manufacturers are represented, but not in the proportions usually found. McDougall, who appear to have been the major nineteenth-century exporter of pipes to New Zealand and Australia, are the third most frequently occurring maker in the assemblage, behind Reynolds and Watson. J.G. Reynolds of London, and Watson of Dundee are two of the manufacturers who have not previously been reported from New Zealand sites. In fact I have been unable to find reports of pipes made by these makers in any overseas literature, and Watson is not listed in Oswald's (1975) *Clay Pipes for the Archaeologist*.<sup>4</sup>

Other manufacturers that have not previously been found in New Zealand sites include T. Ford, Jones, Jones and Harris, Hopkins, Gonsemaume, Philos, Gisclon, and Prince. Gonsemaume, Philos and Gisclon are French firms; J. and G. Prince was a Gouda-based Dutch manufacturer.

The total number of pipe types in the assemblage has yet to be determined, but there must be at least 150. They range in size from a small bent stem pipe, about 65mm long, to Dutch churchwarden pipes, estimated to have been around 500mm long (Fig. 3a). Most of the pipes appear to be small cutty-type pipes. The single most common pipe type in the assemblage is an unmarked undecorated cutty-style pipe (Fig. 3b) represented by a minimum number of 118.

As usual most of the pipes are made of white ball clay, but unlike other New Zealand assemblages, there are a significant number of terracotta pipe fragments, including

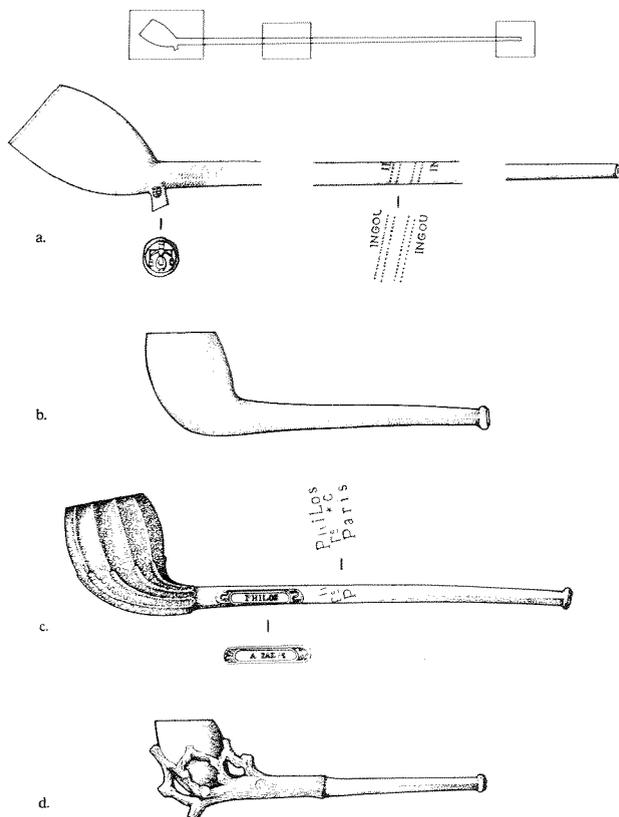


Fig. 3: Examples of clay tobacco pipes recovered from the site of the Victoria Hotel: a) churchwarden style, J. & G. Prince, Gouda; b) cutty style, maker unidentified; c) vermicelli decoration, Philos, Paris; and d) tree design (small variant), maker unidentified.

parts of at least seven pipes made of a very unusual pink terracotta. All of the terracotta pipes appear to be of French origin.

A number of pipes in the assemblage have glazed or coated tips. One pipe, which unfortunately is incomplete, has an unglazed tip with the rest of the pipe apparently covered with glaze. This pipe, made by Hopkins of London, is stamped with registration marks which presumably register this particular design feature.

A wide variety of decorated pipes are represented within the assemblage, some of which are illustrated in Figures 3-5. The tree design (Fig. 3d) is one of the more common decorated pipes. It is represented by at least 26 examples, along with a minimum of 29 of a slightly larger version.

There is an even wider range of undecorated forms, including a number of cutty style pipes which are only subtly different from each other, and at least 17 different types of TD marked pipes. The pipe shown in Figure 4c is marked with the number 33 and the letters TD, but it is quite a different shape from the other TD pipes in the assemblage. It came from the very bottom of the cellar, and is likely to be relatively early.

The Dutch pipes (Fig. 3a, for example) are interesting because of their size and standard of finish. They are very finely made, with extremely small, detailed, makers' marks and polished bowls. The stems on these pipes are around 500mm long, too long to be easily portable. Their users would probably have had a permanent rack to store them on in the hotel. They presumably had considerable novelty value.

One unusual feature of the assemblage is the presence of pipes marked or decorated with coloured transfer prints. More than 50 transfer-printed pipes were recovered from

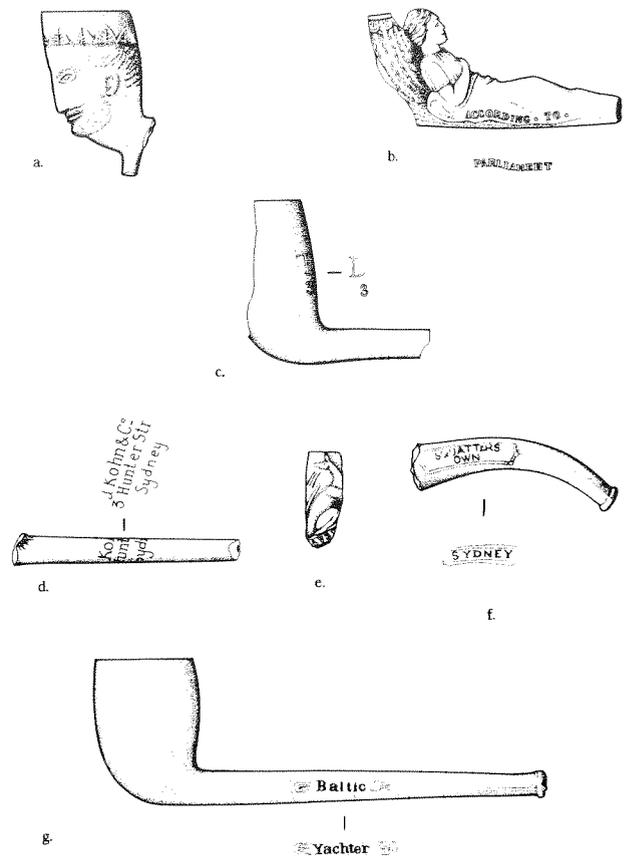


Fig. 4: Further examples of clay tobacco pipes recovered from the site of the Victoria Hotel: a) king, maker unidentified; b) reclining woman, inscription incomplete, maker unidentified; c) No. 33 TD, maker unidentified; d/f) commissioned pipes, makers unidentified; e) kangaroo, probably part of 4d; and g) Baltic yachter, maker unidentified.

the site, all made by J.G. Reynolds of London. Some of the pipes are printed with marks that are similar to impressed marks that occur on other Reynolds pipes in the assemblage. Others have decorative illustrations. These include one pipe type featuring an illustration of Garibaldi, and others depicting the Crystal Palace with the words *Made in the exhibition of 1862 by J G Reynolds* (Fig. 5). The transfer prints are all monochrome but come in several different colours. Transfer-printed pipes do not seem to have caught on. I am aware of only one other reported find of a transfer-printed pipe in the literature.<sup>5</sup> This pipe came from Omata Stockade in Taranaki, and appears to have been identical to one of the Reynolds Exhibition pipes in the Victoria Hotel assemblage.

There are a small number of pipes in the assemblage that have Australian affiliations. One of these, stamped *Coo'ey*, is possibly a McDougall product. Two are commissioned pipes - one stamped with the name *J Kohn & Co/3 Hunter Street/Sydney* (Fig. 4d); the other with the name *SQUATTERS OWN/SYDNEY* (Fig. 4f), presumably a hotel. There is also a bowl fragment embossed with an illustration of a kangaroo, and part of the word 'Australia' (Fig. 4e). It is possibly part of the Kohn & Co. pipe. J. Kohn & Co. were general merchants who operated from the Hunter Street address from 1859-1860 until 1870.

## INTERPRETATION

Why is the Victoria Hotel assemblage so different from other excavated assemblages? The answer appears to be that many of the pipes in the assemblage were for sale in the hotel at the time of the fire. Table 1 shows the numbers

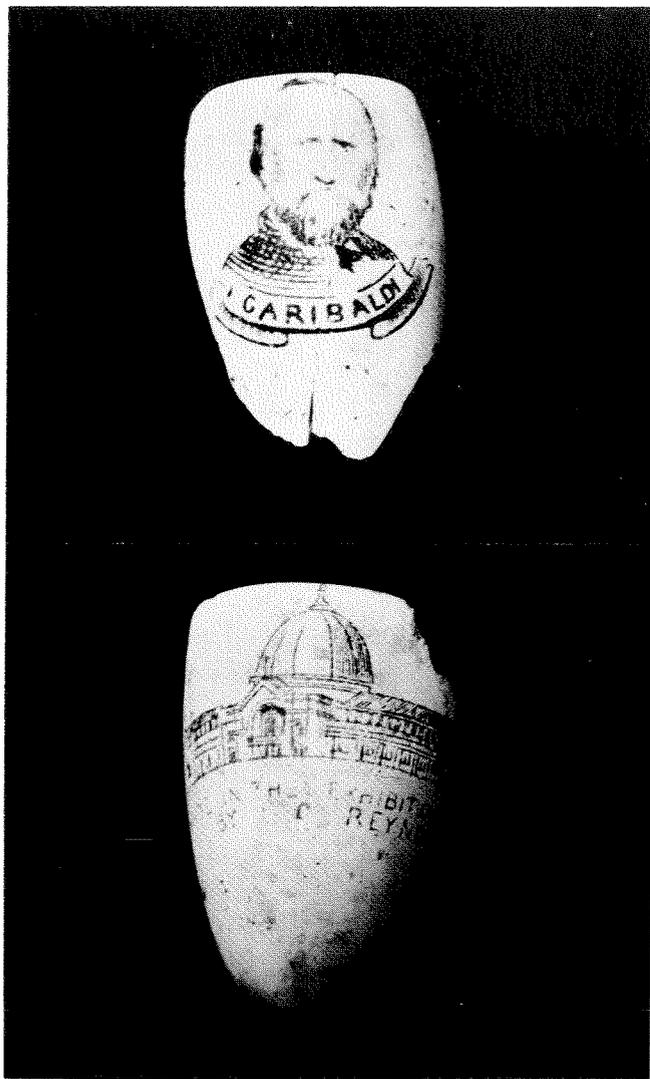


Fig. 5: Examples of transfer-printed pipes recovered from the site of the Victoria Hotel. Top: Garibaldi, dark blue-green ink; Bottom: 1862 Exhibition, green ink. Both J.G. Reynolds, London.

of pipes displaying evidence of having been smoked. These figures are minimum numbers because not all pipes or fragments of pipes that have been smoked will show evidence of use. More than two-thirds of the pipes in the assemblage appear to be unused stock, including all of the pipes made by the most frequently identified manufacturers, Watson and Reynolds. It seems likely that these pipes were for sale at the time of the fire. Other pipe makers and types that occur relatively frequently in the assemblage and show little or no sign of use include all of the Gonsemaume and Philos pipes.

The fact that many of the unused pipes represented in the Victoria Hotel assemblage have not previously been found in New Zealand sites or appeared in the overseas literature suggests that the hotel had on sale a rather unusual and exotic range of pipes.

There are many different pipe types amongst the used pipes in the assemblage, but very few of these are represented by more than one example. Baltic Yachter pipes (Fig. 4g), of which there are at least 12, are an exception. The variability undoubtedly reflects, at least in part, the fact that the site was an hotel, which presumably had a large number of different patrons passing through it. Even so, the number of pipes and their range of variation is far greater than that found in other excavated hotel sites in New Zealand and hotel assemblages elsewhere.

Table 1: Pipes Showing Evidence of Use, Victoria Hotel Assemblage (all layers).

Maker	MNI	No. showing evidence of use
Balme	2	1
Coghil	3	0
Crop	2	1
Davidson	10	3
Ford	3	3
T Ford	1	1
Hopkins	1	0
Jones	1	1
Jones and Harris	1	0
McDougall	24	5
Milo	1	1
Murray	7	3
Reynolds	63	0
Ring & Son	3	1
Watson	29	0
T White	8	0
W White	9	1
Gisclon	8	2
Gonsemaume	7	0
Philos	20	0
...ntaslos	1	0
Prince	6	1

## SUMMARY

In summary, the clay pipes from the Victoria Hotel are an important reference assemblage containing a wide variety of pipe types, many of which are complete enough to illustrate accurately. Once analysis of the artefacts is complete a detailed descriptive report on the pipe assemblage will be published. This will hopefully be a useful building block for others working in the field.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to Sally Maingay for the line illustrations, and to participants at the Australian Society for Historical Archaeology conference, particularly Andrew Wilson, for information on Australian pipes and assemblages.

## NOTES

1. *New Zealand Herald and Auckland Gazette*, 29 January 1842:1(3).
2. *New Zealander*, 28 February 1865:6-7; *Southern Cross*, 16 February 1865:5(1-2).
3. *Southern Cross*, 16 February 1865:5(1-3).
4. Oswald 1975; information from Conference participants indicates that there have been some recent, as yet unreported, finds of Reynolds pipes from Australian sites.
5. Prickett 1981 Fig.4.27v.
6. Sands' *Sydney Directory*.

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