

Quarantine Island Artefacts

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The following is a summary of a range of artefacts recovered from Quarantine Island. The artefacts have no archaeological context, although through examining them we can uncover information about the history of the use of the island.

Glass

A total of five pieces of glass have been identified as fragments of a codd bottle. Codd bottles were historically used for carbonated drinks and are known for their unusual neck which contains a marble. Often these bottles were broken by children who were keen to get the marble!

Two of these fragments are water rolled neck pieces and one is a fragment of the top of a bottle. There are two body fragments with embossing, which indicate they represent two different codd bottles.

The larger piece has "DUNEDIN" clearly embossed on the bottom (see figure 1). The other embossing is hard to read, but I believe it says Thomson & Co.Ld. Another Thomson & Co.Ld. bottles is represented in the other group of artefacts and more information on the company in P. Robsons *A History of the Aerated Water Industry in New Zealand 1845-1986*.



Figure 1 Codd bottle fragment, likely a Thomson & Co.Ld. bottle

The other fragment simply reads "& Co" and unfortunately doesn't have any other diagnostic features.

There are four base fragments of varying size and colour. The first is a light olive base, the second is a colourless square base and the third is a colourless circular base which is very small. The final base fragment is of a cobalt blue bottle. Cobalt blue glass was typically used in relation to either poison or medicine and may relate to the hospitals on the island. A range of medicinal bottles recovered from the hospitals on Quarantine Island are on display at the Portobello Museum.

There is one aqua green neck fragment and one amber bottle top.

There is one large body and neck fragment of aqua green glass.

A single piece of milk glass is present and is a base fragment. The circumference of the base fragment is quite small indicating it was a pharmaceutical, toiletry or cosmetic bottle.

There are two pieces of light purple glass, one of which is decorated with lines and circles (see figure 2). This colour of glass primarily dates between the 1840s and 1880s, and in this case due to its decoration and colour, may relate to cosmetic purposes.



Figure 2 Decorated purple glass

A singular bottle stopper is present in this group of artefacts and reads “E & J BURKE// DUNEDIN//FINE WHISKEY” (see figure 3). Further information on this Irish whiskey company is available: <http://www.waltergrutchfield.net/burke.htm> .



Figure 3 E & J BURKE bottle stopper

A total of 27 piece of glass are unidentifiable fragments. The total number of glass artefacts in this assemblage is 42.

In summary, majority of glass artefacts are undiagnostic fragments, however many also relate to beverages such as carbonated drinks and alcohol. Additionally, the presence of light purple and milk glass indicate cosmetic functions and cobalt blue glass represents the use of either poison or pharmaceuticals.

Further information on glass colour can be found at: <https://sha.org/bottle/colors.htm> . Additionally, the SHA website has a multitude of information of glass bottles.

Ceramics

A total of 24 ceramic artefacts are present in the assemblage, 23 of which are refined earthenware, and one is porcelain.

Refined earthenware: “Earthenware is clay fired at a relatively low temperature (600–1200C) which produces a non-vitrified, porous body which needs glaze to be waterproof. Further subdivided into coarse earthenware (ew-c) and refined earthenware (ew-r) on the basis of smoothness of the body clay. White-bodied refined earthenware is the most common material in NZ historic sites.” (Smith 2013).

Porcelain: “Porcelain is high-fired (1280 – 14000C), vitrified (non-porous), made with various specialised mixtures of clay. Can be subdivided into hard-paste porcelain (porc-h), and soft-paste porcelain (porc-s) which includes ‘bone china’. (Smith 2013).

The largest and most impressive of these is what appears to be a corner body fragment of a serving dish, possibly a soup tureen. It is square in shape and has a broken off handle. The pattern is green and consists of a bird or phoenix with a banded motif and fruit and plant decorations. This is the same green pattern that was represented in the other assemblage and this piece represents another vessel from the serving set. As with the other larger pieces of serving platter from the other assemblage, this large vessel is likely to have been used in the dining hall of the quarantine station. Additionally, there is a smaller fragment of the same decoration that is much thinner and likely from a plate.

Further inspection of the large tureen fragment reveals a range of imperfections in the pattern. The under-glaze transfer print does not line up correctly in many places. This indicates that the piece, if not the whole set, were not the first-class ceramics and were instead the cheaper second or third class prints. This is not surprising as you would not expect perfect and expensive ceramics at a quarantine station.

A total of six fragments represent willow pattern, a blue, Chinese inspired pattern. Geometric borders and scenic centres with a temple to the left are typical of this pattern. Willow pattern was very popular and typically a more expensive pattern, representing wealth and status.



Figure 4 Willow pattern ceramic fragments

Three fragments represent what is known as the fibre, a simple fern-like pattern (see figure 5).



Figure 5 Fibre pattern

A single piece of porcelain is present in the assemblage and represents orange Chinese polychrome (see figure 6). The piece is a fragment of a saucer, which is not surprising as porcelain teacups and saucers were very common.



Figure 6 Chinese polychrome on porcelain

Two artefacts have moulded decoration. The first has a dotted motif along the rim and the second has a feathered motif along the rim.

A single ceramic fragment has a green



banded decoration around its rim. Banded

decoration was introduced post 1860 and was most popular between 1880-1900 (Smith 2013).

Figure 7 Banded decoration

The remaining fragments consist of two green, yellow and orange florally decorated pieces. These are likely from the 1960s and are a much more modern find. The remaining seven pieces are undiagnostic refined earthenware fragments.

Other Artefacts

A bowl of a clay pipe is present in the assemblage and has a maker's mark on the front (see figure 8). Unfortunately, it is too worn to read. Clay pipes are common throughout New Zealand archaeological sites and common makers include BEN NEVIS. Additionally, a stem of a clay pipe is present with 9/4 impressed on its side and a groove indicating decoration towards the bowl end of the break. This piece is much wider than the stem of the other fragment and indicates a larger and more decorated pipe (see figure 8).



Figure 8 Clay pipe bowl and stem fragments

A bullet cartridge with ODD 5.56 on the base is present (see figure 9). Although the island was used during World War One and there is a rifle butt located on goat island this brass bullet casing is likely more modern. A quick background search indicates the use of the 5.56mm cartridge became widespread after the World Wars. However, it would be helpful for someone with more knowledge on ammunition to examine this piece to provide a conclusive background.



Figure 9 Bullet cartridge

Perhaps the most interesting piece in the assemblage is the pocket watch (see figure 10). The outer rim of the watch and its chain are present, however the watches' face has been lost. It was likely made of brass, indicated by its blue discolouration and the top turning piece and cog to adjust the time is still present. While no more can be derived from this piece, it is certainly a very unique and special find. The only possible way to find out more would be to look through articles on *paperspast* for an advertisement or article mentioning the loss of the item.



Figure 10 Pocket watch

The final piece is a porcelain foot of a doll, which has a brown boot (see figure 11). This is a really important find as children are not often well represented archaeologically. While there is not much more to tell from this artefact, the expression of childhood is truly endearing.



Figure 11 Foot of a child's porcelain doll

References

Smith, I. 2013. *Historic Period Ceramics: Identifying Ware Type and Vessel Form*. Unpublished Laboratory Guide, University of Otago.