

## CHAPTER 7

# THE GLASS

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The glass assemblage is catalogued by Period and Object in Appendix 3 and a selection is illustrated (FIG. 68 (Period 3) and FIG. 69 (Period 4)). The numbering of the illustrated glass follows that of the catalogue in Appendix 3.

The distribution of the glass vessels is plotted for each period, both by numbers of fragments (FIG. 70) and, more schematically, by the proportion of the various vessel types (FIG. 71). The distribution of window glass for each period is plotted on FIG. 72. Comparatively little material of any vessel type is associated with the masonry buildings, though there is proportionally more in Period 4 (MB 3). However, very large numbers of fragments, particularly of bottles, are associated with the timber buildings (MRTB 1/ERTB 1) in Period 3, where the density of finds is also significantly greater than among the more extensive occupation spreads to the south (Object 701). Overall, the glass finds from Period 4 amount to less than one third of the quantities from Period 3.

### PERIOD 3

The vessel glass from Period 3 includes many types which are traditionally dated to the later first and early second centuries A.D. (FIG. 68).

#### COLOURED 'CAST AND GROUND' BOWLS

These bowls (made by slumping a flat disc of glass over a former, then rotary-polishing all smooth surfaces) are believed to have been made until the early Flavian period, although many seem to have survived beyond that date. Some are polychrome, in which case the flat disc was a composite of pieces of glass of a variety of colours and patterns, some monochrome. Some have a ribbed outer surface, traditionally known as 'pillar moulded bowls', and now believed to have been made by pinching the ribs from the glass when it was still in disc form. Some have horizontal wheel-cut lines either around the inner surface or the outer. Several variants are represented here:

No. 1 is a simple monochrome bowl with an internal cut line, which would probably have had a moulded foot-ring. The general type is discussed by Price and Cottam (1998, 53–9, fig. 12a–b or fig. 13c–d) and most coloured examples date to the late first century A.D., although colourless vessels were made well into the second century.

No. 11 is a small chip of polychrome glass; the shape is not determinable, but the pattern of yellow spirals in a green ground is not uncommon during the first century A.D.

Nos 27, 28 and 32 (FIG. 68) are all monochrome pillar moulded bowls, apparently one of the commonest glass finds of the first century A.D., but this may be because even very small fragments are easy to recognise. Price and Cottam list many examples from Britain (1998, 44–6, fig. 7); most dated examples belong to the late first century, although there was quite a lot of survival into the early second century.

There is additionally a marbled polychrome and another blue-green pillar moulded bowl (Nos 58 and 59 respectively) amongst the Period 4 glass, but this may be due to redeposition of the fragments rather than survival of the vessels.

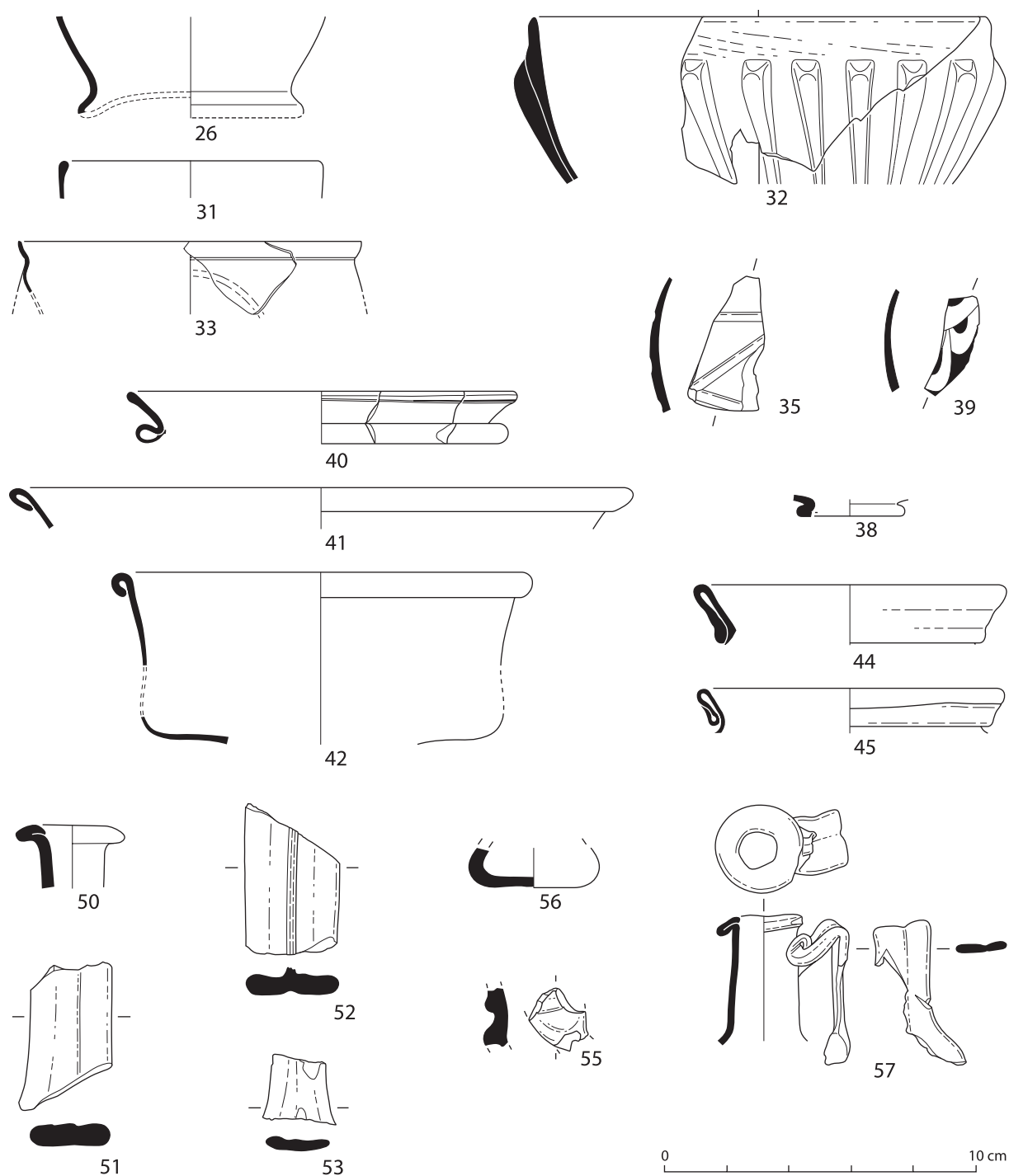


FIG. 68. Illustrated glass from Period 3. Scale 1:2. (*Drawn by Frances Taylor*)

## BLOWN GLASS

### Cups and bowls

These are again represented by a number of forms which were common during the late first and early second centuries, as well as some typical of the mid to late second century. They include some finely decorated pieces which must once have been from good quality vessels.

Silchester has produced some very fine cut glass over the years, and this has continued with a small piece of glass with a regular facet-cut design (No. 2) from a probably conical beaker of a

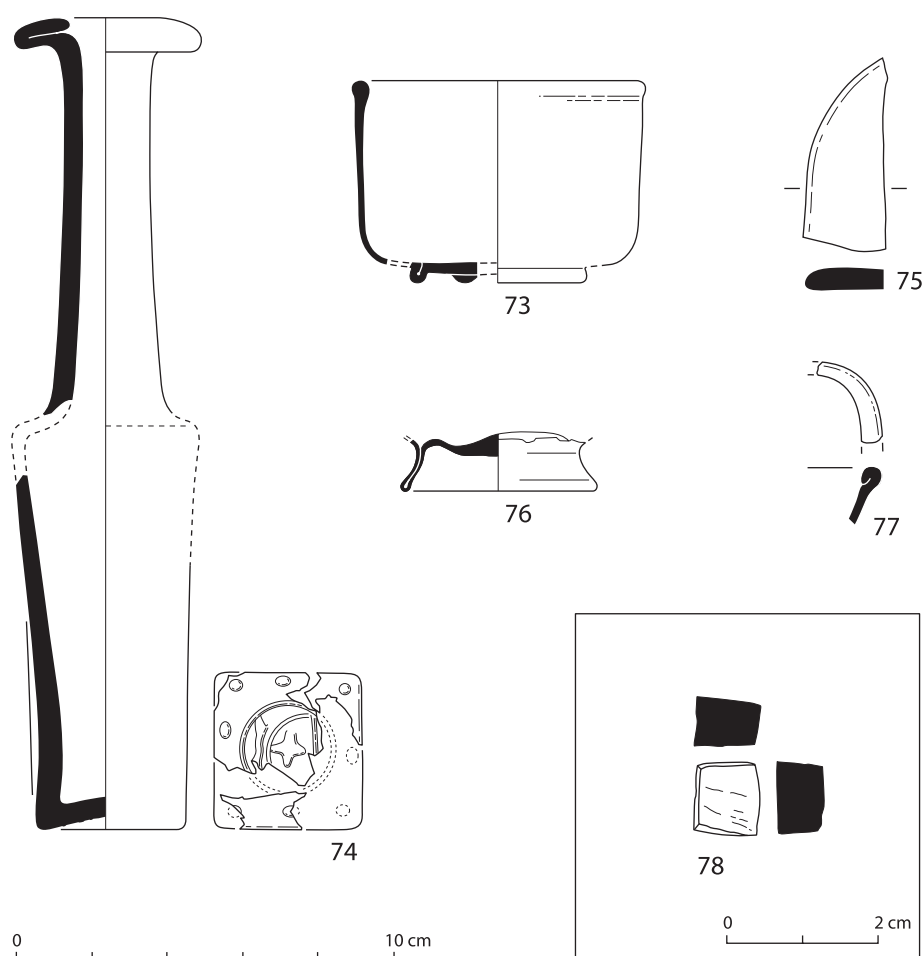


FIG. 69. Illustrated glass from Period 4. Scale 1:2. (Drawn by Frances Taylor)

type which belongs to the Flavian and Trajanic periods (Price and Cottam 1998, 80–3, fig. 26).

No. 35 (FIG. 68) has a more irregular design of broad lines cut at angles to each other. It is difficult to ascertain from a piece of this size exactly what type of vessel is represented, but the curvature of the side suggests that it comes from a curved or hemispherical form. It may belong to the group of geometric-cut hemispherical or deep convex bowls of the second to fourth centuries (Price and Cottam 1998, 115–17, fig. 47), or it may even be from a globular flask of some kind.

The other two decorated vessels from this assemblage have polychrome marvered trails; one of these cannot be assigned with any certainty to a specific vessel type (No. 39, FIG. 68), the other is the rim of a bowl with folded ridge beneath the rim (No. 3). Polychrome marvered trails are most often seen on vessels of the first century A.D., such as the *zarte rippenschalen* or trailed ribbed cup (Price and Cottam 1998, 67–8, fig. 18) or the cantharus (ibid., 68–70, fig. 19), which has a stepped rim, but not usually a complete fold beneath, like No. 40. Bowls with a complete horizontal fold beneath the rim were usually made in monochrome glass from the late second to the fourth centuries (Price and Cottam 1998, 109–10, fig. 43), and a particularly fine complete blue-green example has previously been found at Silchester (Boon 1974, 232, fig. 36 no. 7). No. 61 from a Period 4 context is another example of this type, this time of monochrome yellow-green glass.

There are a good number of cylindrical bowls with tubular rims represented in the Period 3 glass; these are typical of the period from the later first to the later second centuries (Price and Cottam 1998, 78–80, fig. 25). They were made in strong colours as well as blue-green glass, and

some had vertical optic-blown ribs. Nos 7, 14, 15, 16, 17, 41 (FIG. 68), 42 (FIG. 68), 43 are all from bowls of this type, and No. 63 from Period 4 is another example.

Larger plate rims of a similar type, but with more flaring rims, are represented by Nos 12 and 13 and also Nos 62 and 63 from Period 4. These occur in both blue-green and colourless glass, as here, and have a fairly long date range throughout the second to fourth centuries (Price and Cottam 1998, 110–11, fig. 44).

Drinking cups and beakers are quite well represented, albeit in many cases only by small fragments about which it can only be said that they are most likely to come from this general vessel type. Two well-cut pieces have been discussed above (Nos 2 and 35) and there are also colourless fragments with horizontal wheel-cut lines or grooves (Nos 25, 36), colourless base-rings (Nos 37, 38 (FIG. 68)), and blue-green body fragments (No. 34). Similar fragments have come from Period 4 contexts (see below). Pieces which can be assigned to specific forms with more certainty include a colourless indented beaker (No. 33, FIG. 68), of a type which usually dates between *c.* A.D. 65 and the early second century (Price and Cottam 1998, 85–8, figs 28–9), and a probable example (No. 31, FIG. 68) of the cylindrical cup type frequently referred to as Isings 85b, which was perhaps the most popular drinking vessel of the period from the third quarter of the second century to the mid-third century (Price and Cottam 1998, 99–101, fig. 37). There is a more substantial example from Period 4 below (No. 73, FIG. 69).

### Jars

There is a form of jar, which was presumably much used for storage in the later first and earlier second centuries (A.D. 65–130), as the folded rims from the type are one of the standard finds of this period. The bodies are globular, the mouths have vertical or slightly sloping tubular collars, they sometimes have vertical optic blown ribs, and they have open base-rings (Price and Cottam 1998, 137–8, fig. 58). Body and base fragments are easily confused with those of the closely related long-necked jugs discussed below. Nos 44 (FIG. 68), 45 (FIG. 68), 46, and 47 are rims of this type, and Nos 3, 4, 26 (FIG. 68), 30, 48, and 49 are body and base fragments which may be from jars or jugs as described below.

### Jugs

The long-necked jugs common during the later first and earlier second centuries, and closely related to the jars above, are quite well represented amongst the Period 3 glass. Nos 21, 22 and 50 (FIG. 68) are fragments which include rim and neck pieces which certainly identify them as jugs; Nos 9, 51 (FIG. 68), 52 (FIG. 68) and 55 (FIG. 68) are handles; and Nos 4, 5, 26 (FIG. 68), 30, 48 and 49 are body fragments already listed above which may come from jugs or jars. They represent the range of strong colours, such as brown, amber, dark blue, yellow-green and blue-green, which were popular for these forms. No. 55 (FIG. 68) is likely to be from the extended tail below the handle which was often given pinched decoration. These fragments may represent anything between five and thirteen different vessels.

There are several more fragments which clearly come from various forms of jug, flask or bottle, but which cannot be identified as any specific form: handle fragments Nos 53 (FIG. 68) and 54, rim fragments Nos 8, 18 and 20 (the latter being a spouted rim), and neck fragment No. 29.

### Unguent bottles

There are three fragments of unguent bottles of forms which were quite common during the first and early second centuries. Rim No. 5 has the simple fire-rounded finish typical of first-century forms and Nos 10, 19 and 56 (FIG. 68) all have rounded conical reservoirs for the precious liquids once contained in them, representing a type in use during the last quarter of the first and first quarter of the second centuries (Price and Cottam 1998, 172–4, fig. 77).

### Bottles

The most numerous vessel type was, as usual, the blue-green bottle. Fragments in Table 14 below

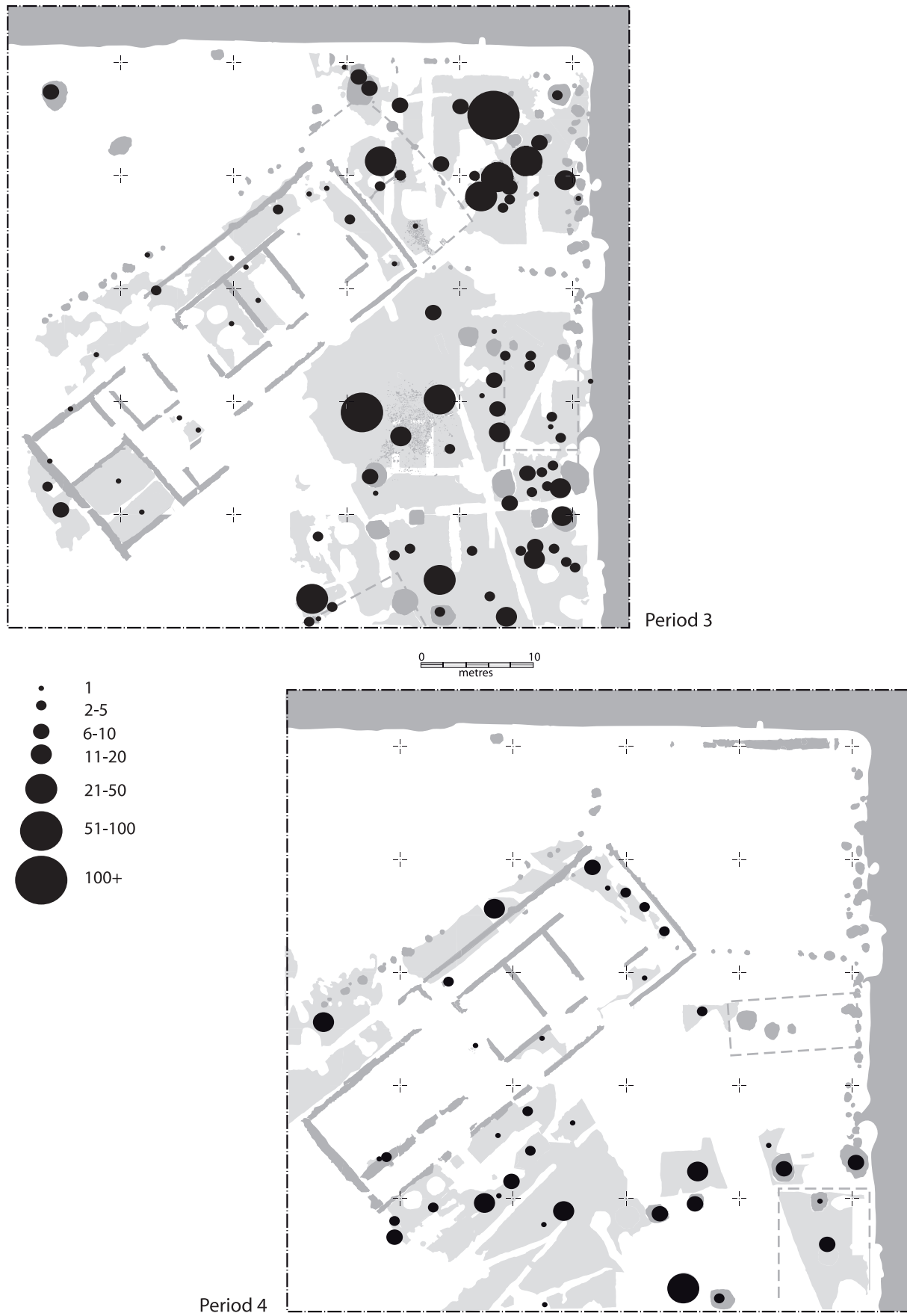


FIG. 70. The distribution of glass finds according to context in Periods 3 (upper) and 4 (lower).

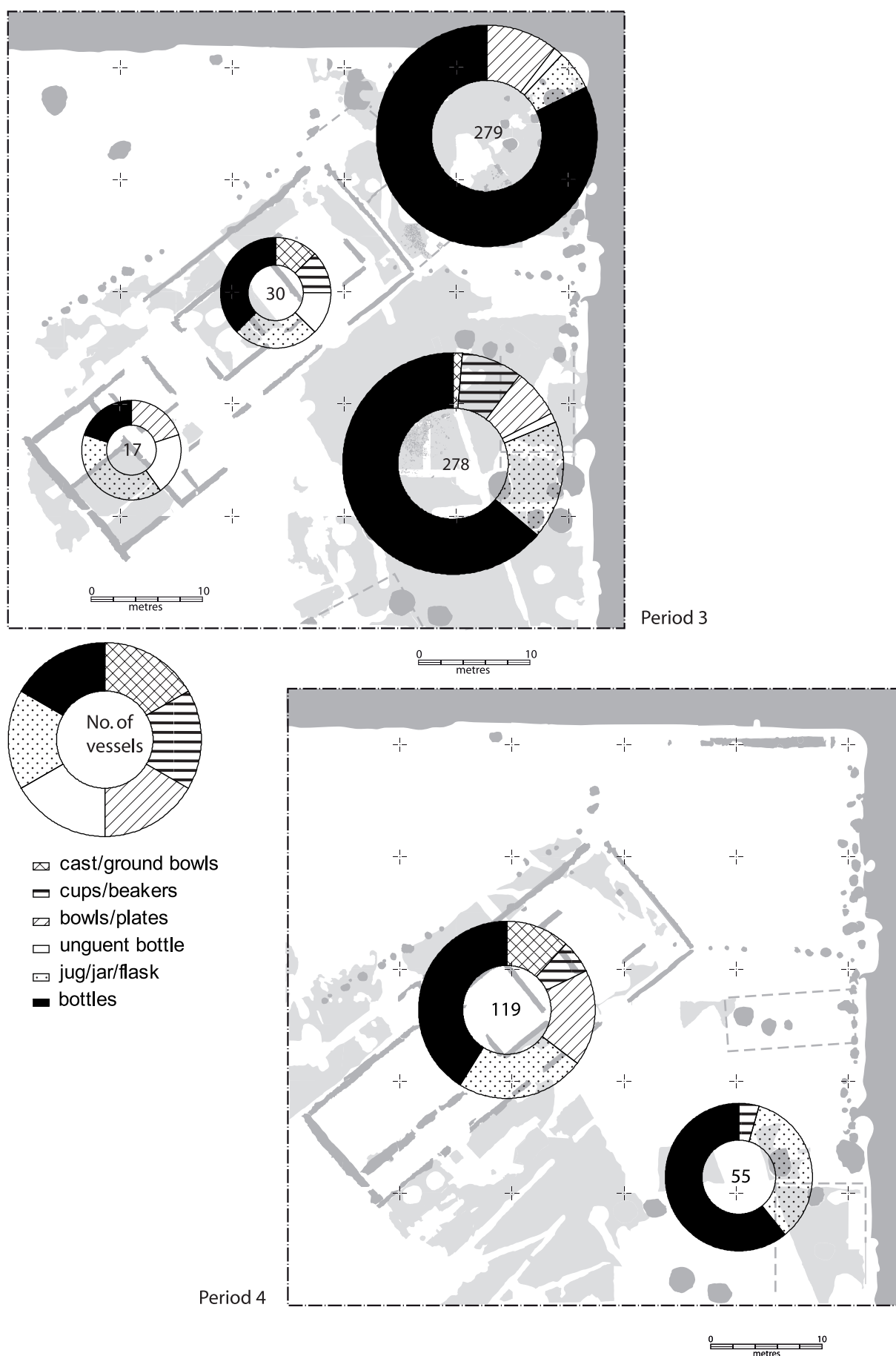


FIG. 71. Schematic representation of the distribution of vessel glass by type in Periods 3 (upper) and 4 (lower). The small quantity of glass from the pits of Period 3 is not included, but that from the Period 4 pits is incorporated into the material from Object 700.

which clearly came from the same vessel have been counted as 1, so a maximum vessel count is 109 bottles from Period 3 contexts, and 32 from Period 4. Some of the other fragments may be from the same vessels, so the actual count may be lower, although there is no way of being certain of this. 'Prismatic bottles' include fragments whose vessel shape was not cylindrical, but may be square, rectangular, octagonal or hexagonal, whereas those in the square category include corners which identify them as such. Indeterminate fragments include neck, shoulder, rim, handle fragments, and others which cannot be assigned to any bottle shape, but whose thickness and colour strongly suggest they belong to this broad group.

Many examples of this vessel category have been listed by Price and Cottam (1998 191–202, figs 88–91). Cylindrical bottles went out of use earlier in the second century than other shapes, and are marginally more numerous in Period 3, but this may not be statistically significant in the light of the amount of glass found in both periods.

A few bottle fragments are catalogued separately: Nos 23 and 24 are substantial square bottle fragments, and No. 57 (FIG. 68) is a rather badly-made square bottle which might be compared to three from a pit at Harlow, Felmongers, Essex, dated A.D. 160–170 (Price 1987, 206, nos 33–4, fig. 4) — possibly later, even locally made, variants of the type.

TABLE 14. BOTTLE FRAGMENTS

Object	Total	Cylindrical	Square	Prismatic	Indeterminate
<b>Period 3</b>					
50018	3	2		1	
50019	1			1	
50037	55	4	7	12	32
500035	1		1		
500036	6	1	4		1
44008	0				
41016	0				
500028	0				
701	43	5	14	1	23
<i>Total</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>56</i>
<b>Period 4</b>					
50046	18	4	1	6	7
500033	3		2		1
500034	0				
500037	0				
500020	0				
500031	1	1			
500032	3	1	1		1
700	7		3	1	3
<i>Total</i>	<i>32</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>12</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>68</b>

## WINDOW GLASS

Only twelve fragments of window glass have been found in Period 3 contexts, all of the 'cast' matt-glossy variety whose method of manufacture has been much discussed with regard to experiments by Mark Taylor and David Hill (Allen 2002, 102–8). Several of the fragments are edge pieces, which have the marks of metal tools impressed in their upper surfaces. One fragment from Period 4, catalogued below as No. 75 (FIG. 69), is interesting in that it may be from a curved pane, which is discussed below.

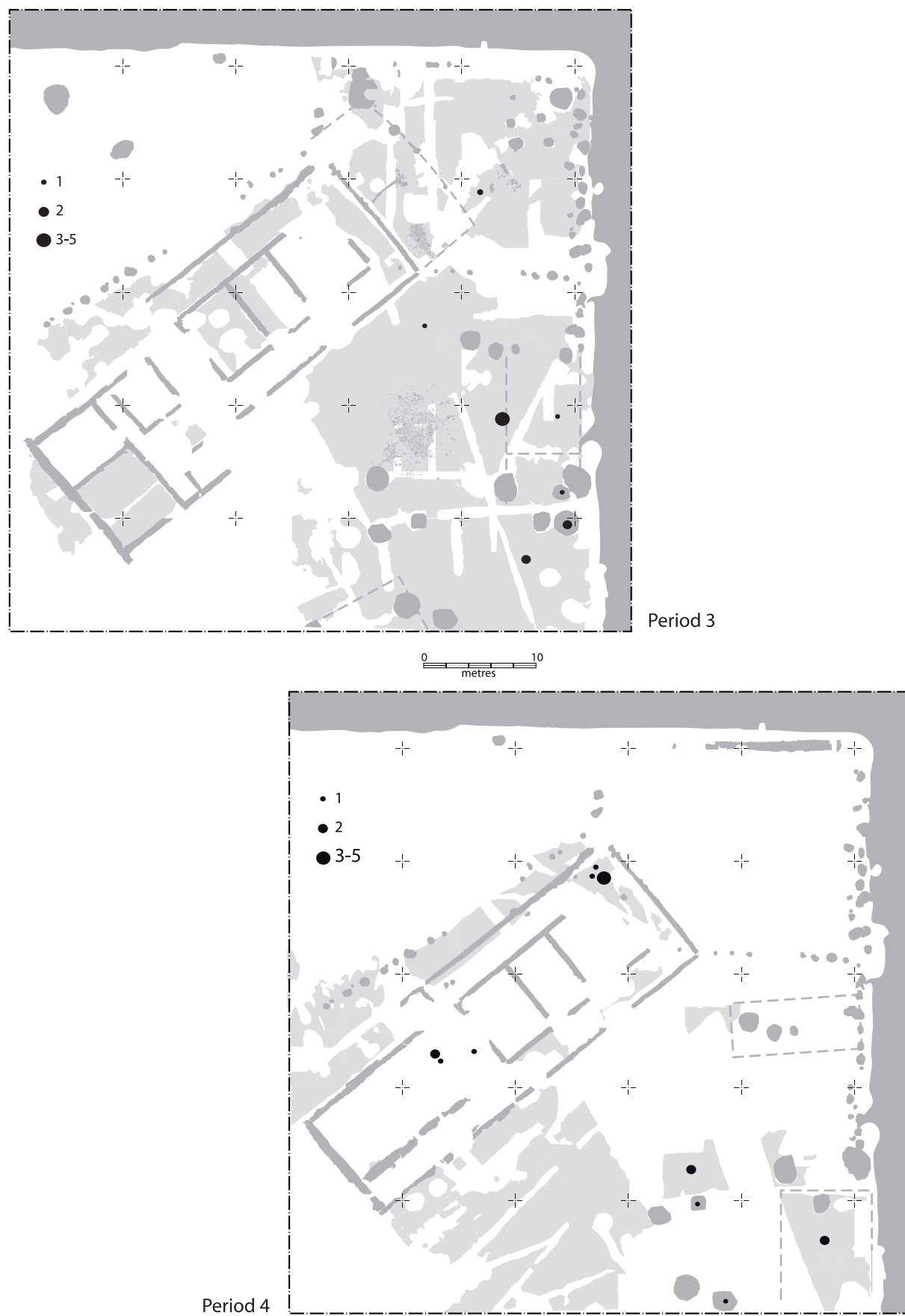


FIG. 72. The distribution of window glass in Periods 3 (upper) and 4 (lower).



TABLE 15. WINDOW GLASS

Object	Total
<b>Period 3</b>	
50018	0
50019	0
50037	1
500035	2
500036	1
44008	0
41016	0
500028	0
701	8
<i>Total</i>	12
<b>Period 4</b>	
50046	9
500033	0
500034	1
500037	0
500020	0
500031	1
500032	0
700	4
<i>Total</i>	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	27

## BEADS AND OTHER OBJECTS

There is just one small fragmentary annular bead of blue-green glass, catalogued as No. 6, which is a long-lived Roman type and cannot be closely dated.

## PERIOD 4

Much of the glass from Period 4 contexts represents further examples of the types already discussed above with reference to Period 3. There is generally less glass; the only significant find of a relatively uncommon flask type which is not represented in Period 3 is the 'Mercury flask' discussed below.

## COLOURED 'CAST AND GROUND' BOWLS

Nos 58 and 59 are both pillar moulded bowl fragments of first-century type, as discussed above.

## BLOWN GLASS

### Cups and bowls

There are two colourless glass cups represented here: No. 60 could be from any of a variety of such vessels which were in common use from the Flavian period to the early third century; No. 73 (FIG. 69) is a good example of the common cylindrical cup type often referred to as an Isings 85b, as discussed above with reference to No. 31, dating *c.* A.D. 160–230. The fragment of a high-folded footring, catalogued as No. 76 (FIG. 69), may be from another drinking vessel, perhaps Price and Cottam 1998, 108–9, fig. 42, in use during the third century — but other vessel types had bases like this and the identification is not certain.

No. 61 is a good example of a bowl with a horizontal fold in its body, as discussed above with reference to Period 3 No. 3, in use from the second to the fourth centuries. Nos 62 and 63 are further examples of the bowls and plates with out-flared tubular rims discussed above with reference to Nos 12 and 13, with a similar fairly long date range.

### Jugs and flasks

There are fragments from at least six jugs of various types; Nos 64 and 67 may be from the later first-/ earlier second-century group of long-necked jugs discussed above with reference to Nos 21, 22 and 50, but pinched trails occur beneath the handles of other forms too, and there is not enough of No. 67 to identify it with certainty.

Handle fragments Nos 65, 66 and 68 are not sufficiently diagnostic to identify the specific vessel form, nor is the rim elongated towards a spout catalogued as No. 77 (FIG. 69), but they serve to illustrate the variety of vessels in use.

There are fragmentary bodies of three more globular flasks or jugs — Nos 69, 70 and 71 — which again could have come from a variety of specific forms.

More readily identifiable are the substantial remains of a thick-walled, colourless square-bodied flask, No. 74 (FIG. 69). Such vessels are often referred to as 'Mercury flasks' because some examples have been found with a representation of this god on the base (Price and Cottam 1998, 179–81, fig. 81). Dated finds seem to span the second and earlier third centuries, and this example is from pit 2434 filled in the late third century. The design on the base is unfortunately very difficult to make out, as the vessel appears to have moved slightly in the mould as it was inflated, so that the image is blurred — parts of two raised circles which are not concentric may be further evidence for this. Whether the upright within the circle could be identified as a standing figure (i.e. Mercury) is highly debatable, and it might be that this is a simple geometric pattern on the base, with the 'smudging' of the image making it appear more complex. These vessels were described in some detail by Cool and Price with reference to finds from Colchester (1995, 152–3). They are not very common in Britain, and this is the first example from Silchester.

### Bottles

See Table 14 above for the numbers from Period 4 contexts. It is notable that there are six finds of cylindrical bottles, which mostly disappeared from use fairly early in the second century.

### WINDOW GLASS

Table 15 above shows the nine fragments of matt/glossy window glass from Period 4 contexts, the most interesting of which is the apparently curved fragment (No. 75, FIG. 69), which may just be from a very irregular square pane, or from a circular pane, as discussed with reference to finds from Caerwent (Allen 2002, 106–8, figs 8.7, 8.8). Since the line of the edge is neither entirely straight nor a regular circle, it is difficult to be sure.

### OBJECTS

The fragment of twisted glass rod (No. 72) may be from a hairpin, a cosmetic rod or a stirring rod — only a very small piece survives. The small tessera of blue glass (No. 78, FIG. 69) may be from a floor or wall mosaic, or it may be that glass intended for re-use was stored in this form — odd tesserae do turn up in places apparently unconnected with mosaics, so this could be an alternative interpretation.