

Digital Chapter 11 : The Small Finds

Part 4: Beads, bangles and other objects made of glass

H.E.M. Cool & Jennifer Price

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Contents

Introduction	11.223
Beads	11.223
Bangles	11.226
Counter	11.228
Hair pins	11.228
Settings and other items	11.229
Appendix: Items from Bowes Museum and the Old Fulling Mill Museum	11.229

Tables

D11.1	Summary of the glass and frit beads	11.230
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Figures

Fig. D11.81	Glass beads	11.231
Fig. D11.82	Glass bangles	11.232
Fig. D11.83	Glass objects	11.233

Part IV: Beads, bangles and other objects made of glass

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Introduction

This report was originally submitted in 1983. The discussion was rewritten in 1989, the catalogues and drawings remained unchanged. It has been revised in 2006 to up-date some of the dating of the beads and in 2008 to add an item of *comparanda* for one of the bangles, but otherwise remains unchanged from the 1989 draft.

The catalogue entries for all the items from the excavations are in the database. A catalogue can be generated from this by using the following query. A report generated from this query can be sorted using the simple name and typology fields.

Field	Specialist	Material	Simple name	Catalogue	Typology
Table	Small finds	Small finds	Small finds	Small finds	Small finds
Criteria	HEMC				

The items from earlier excavations in the Bowes Museum and the Old Fulling Mill Museum at Durham are placed in an Appendix at the end of the report.

In 1983 a representative sample of the beads were selected for illustration and they were drawn at the same time as the vessel glass was drawn. We did not see the mounted illustrations until late in the 1980s by which time they had lost both their original site codes and small finds numbers and the catalogue numbers we had given them. Instead the figure had a consecutive series of drawing numbers. In the archive the catalogue had been annotated with these drawing numbers but careful inspection shows that these annotations are often wrong. The original drawings and the mounted figure no longer survive in the archive and so there is now no way of checking which of the beads were drawn. As they were mounted without any key to the colour it is, on the whole, not possible to relate the drawings to the catalogue entries with any degree of certainty. The bead drawings have thus been mounted according to the groups in which they are discussed here, but are only labelled with the database ID number where the identification is secure.

Beads

One hundred glass beads, one amber bead (no. 1715) and one stone bead (no. 1757) were found during the excavations of 1969-1981. The glass beads have been divided into 18 different varieties as summarised in Table D11.1. The division follows the Guido (1978)

classification, and fuller discussion of each type will be found in that work. As may be seen from Table D11.1 the majority of the beads were found in contexts associated with the defences and approximately equal numbers were found in the inner (33 examples) and outer ditches (36 examples).

Translucent blue annular beads

The blue annular beads of Guido's Group 6iva (1978, 66) are a long lived form which were in use from the sixth century B.C. into the Roman period. Seven examples were found at Piercebridge, six came from the fort ditches (nos. 1682-5, 1722-3) and one from the courtyard building (no. 1659).

Opaque yellow annular beads

One example of Guido's Class 8 (1978, 73) showing the characteristic flattening on the upper and lower surfaces was found (no. 1677). This type originated in the third to second centuries B.C. and has also been found on first and second century A.D. sites including several northern forts. They are, however, remarkably rare in well-stratified Roman contexts whereas they not in post-Roman ones (see Guido 1999, 36-7). The possibility exists therefore that this bead might be related to the sub-roman occupation at the site.

Melon Beads

Melon beads are very common on first and second century sites in Britain and were probably most numerous during the first century. At Piercebridge a total of seven were found, five were made of turquoise frit (nos. 1770-73 & 1752) and two of translucent deep blue glass (Nos. 1774 & 1680).

Gold-in-Glass beads

Gold-in-glass segmented beads have a long history in the Mediterranean area but do not appear to have entered Britain before the third quarter of the second century (Boon 1977, 200, see also Guido 1978, 93 and Brewer 1986, 151; see also now Cool 2004a, 386-7). In the later second and early third centuries they tend to occur on sites with a military connection. At Piercebridge three examples were found. The best preserved one consisting of two segments was found in the bath-house in a context dated to the second half of the second century (no. 1665). The other two (nos. 1689 & 1656) only retained one segment each.

Segmented Beads

Segmented beads are the commonest bead type represented at Piercebridge. These were in use throughout the Roman period but appear to have been most numerous during the later part of it (Guido 1978, 92). The majority of the segmented beads at Piercebridge were green (18 examples nos. 1686-8 & 1724-38), but two in deep blue glass were also found (Nos. 1739-40).

Spherical Beads

Small spherical or globular beads were in use during the Roman period but it is difficult to date individual examples of this long-lived type closely (Guido 1978, 70). At

Piercebridge two deep blue (nos. 1713 & 1753), two translucent green (nos. 1755-6), one opaque green (no 1758) and one opaque maroon (no. 1714) were found.

Biconical Beads

Long monochrome blue biconical beads are primarily a second and third century form which does not appear to have continued in use into the fourth century (Guido 1978, 98). Three examples of these were found at Piercebridge (nos. 1672, 1657, 1666). A fourth long biconical blue bead (no. 1662) has a void around its widest part where a contrasting colour has either decayed or fallen out. This was probably an inlaid zig-zag or chevron of white glass with a central red band. Polychrome beads such as this appear to have been in use during the third and fourth centuries and are slightly later in date than the monochrome form (see also the discussion of the cubic form with this polychrome decoration in Cool 2004, 387). Short biconical beads were mainly in use during the later Roman period (Guido 1978, 97). Five deep blue (nos.1707-11) and two green (Nos. 1769 & 1713) were found here. Their possible use as an indicator of very late Roman/sub Roman occupation is discussed in the letterpress in chapter 11.

Cylindrical beads

Cylindrical beads were in use throughout the Roman period and as is frequently the case appear to have become commoner during the later part of it (Guido 1978, 95). 14 disc cylindrical beads were found at Piercebridge making this the second commonest variety found. The majority of these were opaque green (1693-9, 1679, 1668, 1669-70 & 1658), and there were also one blue (no. 1747) and one opaque white (no. 1776) examples. Since this report was originally written it has become apparent that that this type appears to be a very late Roman form as it regularly occurs in assemblages of late fourth to fifth century date, but seems to be absent in those securely dated to the early part of the century (Cool 2000, 50). that is should be so common and so widespread at Piercebridge is an interesting indicator of very late occupation at the site.

Long cylindrical beads were also numerous and examples in opaque blue (nos. 1743-4), translucent blue (no. 1741-2), translucent green (nos.1691-2, 1675) were found. Short cylindrical beads were less common and were made from opaque red (no. 1700), opaque brown (no. 1701) and translucent blue glass (no. 1754)

Hexagonal Beads

Green beads with hexagonal sections were in use throughout the Roman period (Guido 1978: 96). Three long (Nos. 1704-5 & 1661) and three short (nos. 1706, 1751 & 1765) examples were found during these excavations and another long bead had been found previously (Appendix 1). There was also one long hexagonal bead in turquoise glass (no. 1663).

Square- and lozenge-sectioned beads

Most beads with square sections appear to be of late Roman date (Guido 1978, 96). At Piercebridge five short examples in opaque green (nos. 1749-50, 1676), translucent green (no. 1748) and opaque blue (1671) glass were found and there were also two short translucent pale blue beads (no. 1702-3) where the section was lozenge-shaped rather

than truly square. The only long square-sectioned bead was made in turquoise glass (no. 1777)

Diamond-faceted beads

Guido (1978: 99) dates beads of this date to the late Roman period but it is clear that they were already in use by the late second century (Brewer 1986, 148). Two were found at Piercebridge, both made of translucent blue glass (nos. 1673 & 1660).

With the exception of the melon beads, the gold-in-glass beads and the polychrome biconical bead, the glass beads from Piercebridge are ones that are conventionally dated to the later Roman period. The melon beads are the earliest of the more closely dateable forms present, and it is interesting to note that five of the seven melon beads were found on the Tofts Field sites as the earlier glass vessels were also well represented here.

Bangles

Seven fragments of bangles have been recovered from Piercebridge. Five (1768, 1775, 1761, 1678, 1664) were found during the 1969-81 excavations, and two (Appendix 2-3) are known from earlier investigations. Six of the pieces are from Romano-British bangles dating from the late first or very early second century. These were classified into three types by Kilbride-Jones (1938), and further studied by Stevenson (1956; 1976) and Price (1988). The last piece is a type commonly found in western Europe in pre-Roman Iron Age contexts, though it has rarely been noted in Britain.

Type 2 bangles

There are fragments from three different versions of type 2 bangles. These usually have a D-shaped cross-section, with one or more unmarvered horizontal cords at the centre, and sometimes also on the sides or near the edges. Additional features may include horizontal marvered trails near the edges, and bichrome or monochrome oval 'eyes'. Some examples occur in pre-Flavian contexts in southern Britain, and many have been recorded on Flavian to early second century military and native sites in northern England and southern Scotland (Price 1988, 342-4).

The first, 1678, has a single horizontal cord at the centre and marvered horizontal trails near the edges. Blue-green bangles with one central blue and opaque white cord are frequently found throughout the distribution area of these objects. Very few examples with one central cord have edge trails, though two others with blue trails have been noted; one, from Caddonlea, was listed by Stevenson (1956, 221), and one from Castlegates, Caerleon is unpublished (information from Dr. D Allen).

The second, 1664, has three horizontal cords closely set in herringbone formation at the centre and marvered trails near the edges. Several dark blue bangles with three central blue and opaque white cords and opaque white edge trails are known; some, including this piece, have a solid coloured body, while others have a dark blue capping over a blue-green core, similar to 1768 (fig. 182) and appendix 39-40 (figs 187-8). This group has

been studied by Stevenson (1956, 214-5, appendix 2), and apart from the Piercebridge fragment, pieces have been noted from Verulamium, Malton, Edgerston fort, Newstead and Traprain Law (Price 1988, 345-7, type 2ciii).

The last, appendix 2, has a central horizontal cord, two flanking cords, marvered trails near the edges and an oval 'eye' between the central and one flanking cord. This fragment, which has dark blue capping over a blue-green core, a central blue and opaque white cord, two yellow-brown and opaque white flanking cords, opaque white edge trails and an opaque yellow 'eye', is a highly decorated version of a type 2 bangle. No exact parallels have been noted, though it is closely comparable with a piece from Traprain Law which has three blue and white cords (Stevenson 1956, 220), and one from Kenchester with a solid dark blue ground, blue and white cords, and a blue and white 'eye' as well as a yellow one (noted without description by Harden 1950, 190; on display in Hereford City Museum).

Type 3 bangles

Type 3 bangles have either D-shaped or triangular cross-sections. Kilbride-Jones (1938) divided this type into ten sub-types, according to their ground and decoration colours, and others have been noted since then. The three fragments found at Piercebridge (1768, 1775, appendix 3) come from distinct groups.

1775 comes from a type 3G bangle. It is blue-green, with marvered opaque yellow trails with curved terminals. Similar fragments have been found at several sites in Yorkshire, including Catterick, Aldborough, Malton, Newby, near Stokesley and Bainbridge, but otherwise the distribution is very widespread, ranging from Nor'nour, in the Isles of Scilly, and Meare Village East, to Corbridge, Chesterholm and Traprain Law (Price 1988, 351).

1768 comes from a type 3I bangle, which are dark blue with opaque white marvered trails. The trails frequently have curving terminals, though they do not occur on this fragment, which has a blue-green core with dark blue capping, trails near the edges and a blue and white spiral 'eye'. It is very similar to a piece from Broxmouth, East Lothain (unpublished; information from R.B.K. Stevenson), and broadly comparable with others from Newstead (Curle 1911, pl 91,1; Kilbride-Jones 1938, fig 9,5), Edgerston (Kilbride-Jones 1938, fig 1,14), and Silchester (unpublished), all of which have spiral 'eyes' and trails.

The third piece (appendix 3), which has a blue-green core with dark blue capping, opaque white trails near the edges and two opaque yellow 'eyes', is probably to be regarded as a type 3I/J hybrid. A number of dark blue bangle fragments are decorated with yellow and white trails or 'eyes' (listed in Price 1988, 352), but examples with white edge trails and yellow 'eyes' are not very common. One is known from Newstead (Bulmer 1950; Stevenson 1956, 221), and another was probably found in Ashberry Windypit, Ryedale, though the edge trails have decayed so the colour is not known (Hayes 1963, 360, fig. 7,3). In addition, a fragment from Swint Law, Yeavinger has these details as well as opaque white curved trails (Tate 1856-62, 442, pl 16, fig 11).

Iron Age bangle

The last bangle from Piercebridge (1761) is quite different from the pieces already discussed. It is dark blue with an opaque white zigzag trail in relief along the centre, and it has a small D-shaped cross-section. Similar bangles, very frequently in dark blue, though purple, brown, green and colourless glass also occur, decorated with zigzag trails which are usually opaque white or yellow. They have been recorded in large numbers in the lower and middle Rhineland, France, Switzerland and northern Italy, principally in late pre-Roman Iron Age contexts (Haevernick 1960, Group 3b, pl 2, pl 19, map 4), particularly in the Netherlands (Peddemors 1975).

Very few European Iron Age bangle types have been noted in Britain (Fitzpatrick 1985), and only four other finds of Haevernick's Group 3b are known to us. Three yellow-brown pieces with opaque yellow zigzag trails, perhaps from two bangles, were found in the Belgic burial at Welwyn Garden City (Stead 1967, 17-9, fig. 10 D-F), and a purple fragment with an opaque yellow trail was found in a Roman context at Hengistbury (Henderson 1987, 161 no. 129, Fig. 116). Henderson also cites a fragment from Hamworthy, Dorset (1987, 162) and another purple bangle with opaque yellow trails has been recovered from the Holbrooks site, Harlow (unpublished).

Since its discovery in a contaminated late Roman ditch fill, this fragment has stood in splendid isolation as the only Iron Age bangle to have been found in the north of Britain. Recently (2003) a fragment of a dark purple bangle without contrasting trails (Haevernick 1960, Group 3A) was recovered from an evaluation at Balby Carr, Doncaster (Richardson 2008) associated with a first century BC roundhouse, but it still remains an extremely rare discovery. Quite what it is doing at Piercebridge is further considered in the letterpress volume.

Counters

Seven plano-convex counters were found. Four were made in very dark blue glass which appeared black (nos. 1766-7, 1717 & 1719). There were also two counters in opaque pale green glass (nos. 1719 & 1759) and one in opaque white glass (no. 1760). Monochrome counters such as this were most numerous during the first and second centuries.

Hair Pins

The assemblage contains one almost complete blue/green glass hairpin (no. 1762) and a shank fragment of a second (no. 1667). The tip of no. 1762 was broken and re-ground in antiquity. These pins were in use during the fourth century. One was found in an inhumation of that date at Butt Rd., Colchester (Crummy 1983, 28 no. 462) and seven were found around the head of a woman in another late Roman inhumation at Fordington, Dorchester (*RCHME Dorset* 573).

There was also one hair pin formed by winding a trail of emerald glass round the top of a copper alloy shank to form a mushroom-shaped head (no. 1763). This is a common type in use during the second half of the fourth century (Cool 1983, 83 Hairpin Group XVIII)

Settings and other items

A small blue/green glass hemisphere was found in the inner ditch (No. 1720) and another was found during the earlier excavations (Appendix 4). These may have been the settings from finger-rings or hair pins. The most likely type of ring would be the variety with constricted shoulders which were in use during the second and third centuries, see for example one from Woodeaton (Kirk 1949, Fig. 5.10). A small number copper alloy hair pins in use during the later Roman period (Cool 1983, 79 Hairpin Group XVI) such as one from Gatcombe (Branigan 1977, Fig. 26.516) which were set with glass hemispheres like this.

An oval blue glass intaglio, its design now unintelligible due to heavy weathering (no. 1674), a green glass tessera (no. 1764) and a broken fragment of a glass rod (no. 1721) were also found.

Appendix: Items in the Bowes Museum and Old Fulling Mill Museum

- 1 Bead. Long hexagonal; opaque green. Section 3.5mm, length 21mm, perforation diameter 2mm. Bowes Museum no. 72.
- 2 Bangle. Triangular-sectioned. blue/green core with thick cobalt capping; white marginal lines almost marvered smooth. Translucent cobalt blue and opaque white left-hand twist cord along apex – white strands are narrowest; narrower opaque white and dark brown right-hand twist cord along each edge above marginal lines. Oval opaque yellow spot on one side between apex cord and side cord. Length 15mm, section 13.5 x 10mm. Bowes Museum unnumbered. Previously published as Stevenson 1954/6, fig. 3.2)
- 3 Bangle. 'D'-sectioned. Blue/green core with cobalt capping – very thin centrally. Opaque white marginal lines marvered smooth on one side; two opaque yellow oval spots placed on alternate sides. Approximately one-third extant. External diameter 60mm, section 14 x 8mm. Old Fulling Mill Museum, Durham, unnumbered.
- 4 Setting. blue/green; slightly squashed sphere. Dimensions 8 x 8 x 6mm. Bowes Museum no. G54.

Typology	Fort	Inner Ditch	Outer Ditch	Other Defences	Vicus B1	Vicus B2	TF73	TF74	Other North Vicus	South Vicus	Total
Annular	1	4	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Melon	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	4	-	-	6
Gold-in-glass	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3
Segmented	-	3	15	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	20
Spherical	-	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Short biconical	-	6	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
Long biconical	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	4
Disc cylindrical	1	7	1	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	14
Short cylindrical	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Long cylindrical	-	3	3	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	10
Short hexagonal	-	1	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3
Long hexagonal	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
Square-sectioned	-	2	2	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	6
Facetted	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Miscellaneous	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
Total	5	34	31	9	1	8	1	4	3	2	98

Table D11.1. Summary of the glass and frit beads

Fig. D11.81 Glass beads

Scale 1:1

See text for problems with relating illustrations to catalogue

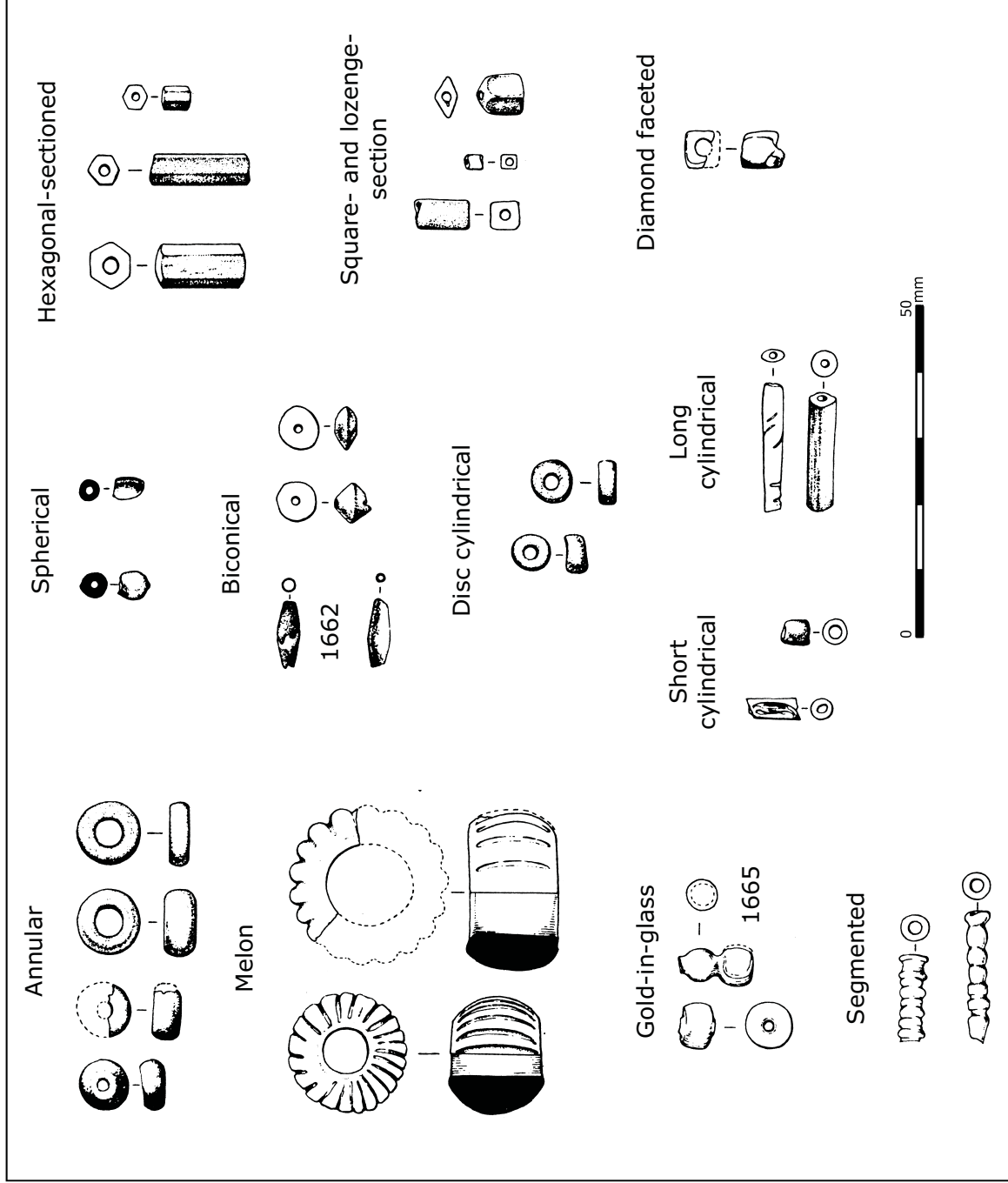


Fig. D11.82 Glass Bangles

Scale 1:1

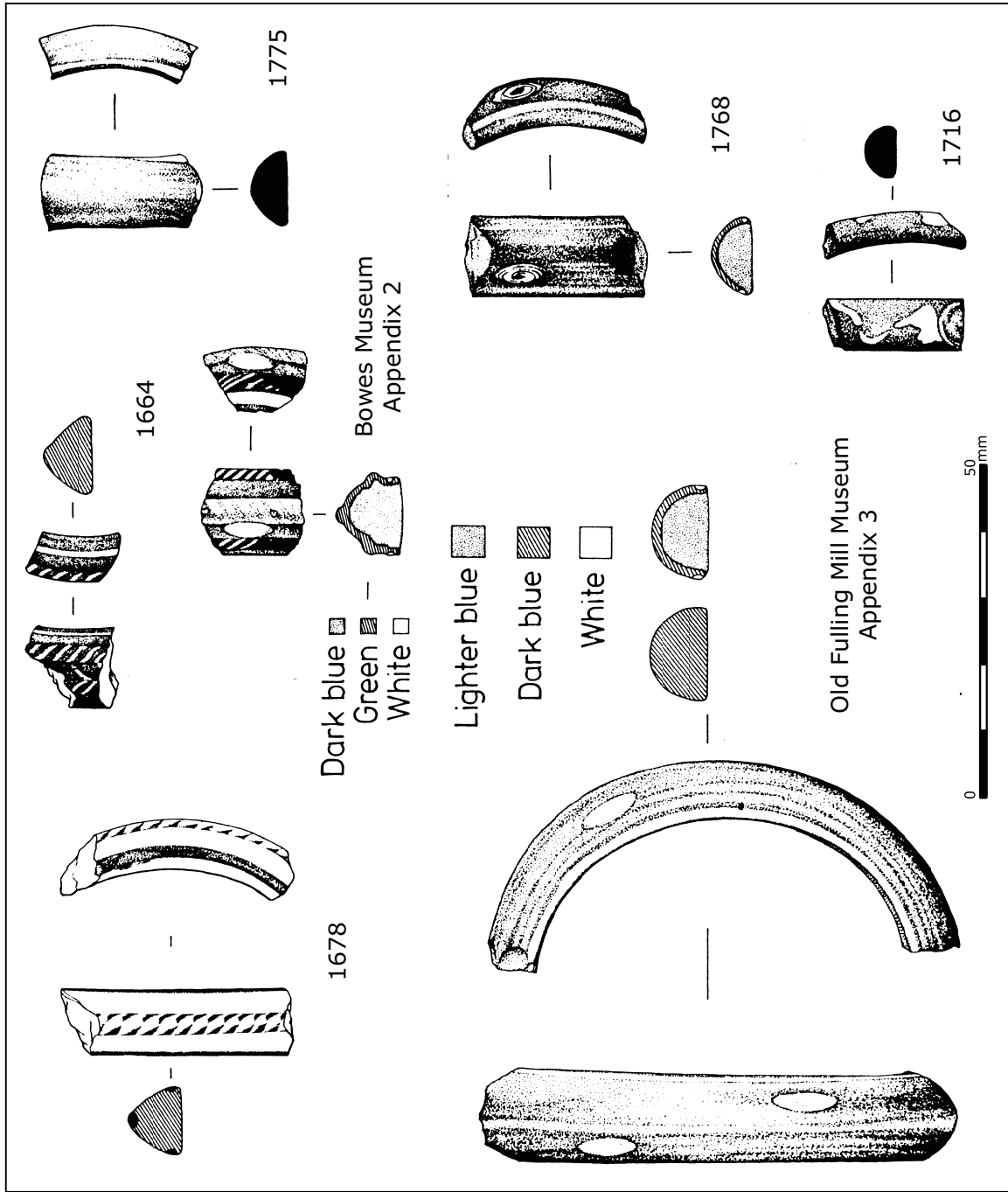


Fig. D11.83 Glass objects

Scale 1:1

