

The Glass from Sprotbrough Gardens, Sprotbrough, South Yorkshire (OSA01 EX03)

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One hundred and eighteen fragments of glass were recovered from excavations at Sprotbrough Gardens, Sprotbrough, South Yorkshire, carried out by On Site Archaeology (Site Code: OSA01 EX03). The glass comes from no more than 64 objects and weighs in total 3.205Kg.

The majority of the glass can be dated to the middle of the 17th century with a small quantity of 19th-century material.

Description

Dark Green Glass

All of the dark green glass found in the excavations came from blown vessels. The glass itself varies in condition and this is thought to be due mainly to differences in the composition and treatment of the vessels rather than to burial conditions. Three main groups were recognised: a) extremely weathered glass, much of it at present decaying as it dries out and is exposed to the atmosphere. In many cases this glass is completely re-crystallized although in some cases a thin core of glass remains; b) glass with a sound, translucent body with thin layers of iridescent weathering and c) glass with slight or no visible weathering.

The glass all comes from bottles. Only three forms were positively identified: square case bottles, shaft-and-globe bottles and tall bottles. The case bottles (Fig 00 No.13) all occur in the very weathered glass, the shaft-and-globe bottles are mainly in the same glass but include one example with no weathering. This vessel appears, from its base, to have been slightly oval in cross section (Fig 00 No.10) but whether this was deliberate, and whether it affected the whole bottle rather than just the base is uncertain.



Plate 1. Case Bottle fragments (photo: K Steane)

The case bottles were free-blown and the sides flattened on a marver. Only three vessels were present (Plate 1). No rims were identified but they are presumably similar to those of the shaft-and-globe bottles (Fig 00 Nos. 7 and 8).



Plate 2 Shaft and Globe bottle base (Photo: K Steane)

The shaft-and-globe bottles were identified by the sub-biconical form and narrow base, both of which contrast with the slightly later 'onion' bottles (Fig 00 Nos. 9-11; Plate 2). The rim and neck of the bottles is also distinctive, with a single applied trail of glass wrapped once around the neck with no subsequent forming. The rim itself is flat. Twenty-two vessels were present.

A few body sherds may have come from onion bottles but no such vessels were definitely identified.

No examples of 'mallet' bottles were identified and only four tall bottles were present.



Plate 3 Stamped seal (photo: K Steane)

A single fragment from a stamped bottle seal was present (Fig 00 No.12). Its condition suggests that it is from a shaft-and-globe bottle (Plate 3).

Light Green Glass

Two types of light green glass were present. One was heavily weathered and may in fact be the same composition as the weathered dark green bottles, but appear lighter in colour because of the difference in thickness. The other is slightly weathered or unweathered and of later date.



Plate 4 Bell Jar fragments (photo: K Steane)

Only 11 objects in light green glass were present. Two of these come from bell jars (possibly the same vessel, Plate 4); two come from moulded bottles with free blown necks and rims. One of these bottles has a moulded inscription: 'GOODALL BAC.'. This is identified as a Yorkshire Relish bottle made by Goodall, Backhouse & Co. in the later 19th or early 20th century. The remaining 7 fragments are window glass and range from being moderately weathered to being heavily weathered.

Light Blue Glass

Fragments of 6 vessels in light blue glass were found. None showed any sign of weathering. One fragment came from a moulded bottle with a circular or oval cross section. Two came from square bottles and three from window glass. Glass with a very similar appearance to this was used in the Roman period but is rare thereafter. Light blue window glass of similar appearance to these pieces was first used in London in the rebuilding after the Great Fire of 1666. The moulded bottle, however is likely to be 19th or 20th-century in date. The square bottles seem to have been marvered rather than moulded.

Clear Glass

Five fragments of clear glass were present. One of these was a thin-walled flask (or even light bulb) body sherd and the remainder were thick window glass fragments. Although thick (2-3mm) crystal glass mirrors were being made in the later 17th century these pieces show no sign of silvering and no difference in polish from one side to the other and are probably 20th century.

Stratigraphic context

Phase Four

Only three fragments of glass come from contexts assigned to phase 4 (later medieval to early post-medieval). However, all three are clear glass (the thin-walled flask) and two window fragments. This suggests that there is modern contamination of these levels (2007 and 2013).

Phase Five

Fragments of 28 glass objects were recovered from Phase 5 deposits (dated to the later 16th to mid/late 17th century through stratigraphy and associated pottery).

These include two probably modern pieces: a clear window glass fragment from context 3035 and a light blue square bottle fragment from context 4113.

The remaining pieces include five light green window glass fragments, all weathered; a case bottle; 17 shaft-and-globe bottle fragments (including three rim and neck fragments and the seal); and two possible onion bottle fragments. The latter sherds, if they definitely come from onion bottles, ought to date to the 1680s or later and come from contexts 3031 and 3035. In the latter case, the context also produced a large collection of shaft-and-globe bottle fragments from at least 5 vessels (Table 1).

It is notable that the case bottle fragments all come from the fill of Phase 5 features with none coming from the dump and construction deposits which mark the start of the phase. They were therefore deposited somewhat later than the shaft-and-globe bottles and probably came to the site as primary refuse rather than being dumped on the site from occupation elsewhere.

Table 1

subfabric	Form	Description			ditch	stone channel	Other	Grand
			10	6	3030 fill (3001)	4079 etc fill (4081, 4113)		
DKGR	-	BLUE TINGE;MORTAR ON ONE PIECE	2					2
	BOT		1					1
	CASE BOT				1	3		4
	ONION		1					1
	S+G		48	5			1	54
	S+G	APPLIED SEAL	1					1
	S+G	FLAT RIM;SINGLE ADDED COIL AT NECK	1	2				3
	S+G	OVAL?	2					2
	S+G/ONION		1					1
	WIND		1					1
DKGR			58	7	1	3	1	70

Total							
LTGR	WIND			1		1	2
	WIND	CONTEXT NUMBER 3032?		2			2
Grand Total							
				60	8	1	3
						2	74

The backfill of stone tank 4002, context 4001, produced fragments of shaft-and-globe bottle and light green window glass. This backfill has been assigned to phase 5 or 6 and on the basis of these finds the backfill is certainly similar to that in the contexts deposited at the start of Phase 5. However, similar material was redeposited in both Phases 6 and 7.

Phase Six

Only 12 fragments of glass come from deposits assigned to Phase 6. One is a piece of clear window glass and is probably a modern intrusion. The remainder are of identical character to those in Phase 5 and are presumably evidence for the reworking of Phase 5 deposits in Phase 6.

Phase Seven

The pottery from Phase 7 shows a similar pattern to Phase 6, as does the glass, which consists of a mixture of residual 17th-century pieces (one window, three shaft-and-globe bottles and one case bottle) and four late 19th/20th-century pieces from context 2005, the backfill of a brick tank. These consist of a dark green tall wine bottle, one of the two pieces of bell jar, a light green moulded bottle and the light green Yorkshire Relish bottle.

Discussion

The 17th-century glass from Sprotbrough Gardens is an interesting and remarkable collection. It includes no fineware fragments at all but a large collection of wine bottles of two (possibly three) forms: the case bottle and the shaft-and-globe form. Case bottles, so-called because they were made to be stored in wooden cases, do not show any typological features which can be dated (or at least their bases, which is all that is present here, do not) but shaft-and-globe vessels are dated quite tightly, to between c.1650 and c.1680. A large rubbish deposit in Moorfields, City of London, excavated in the 1980s and dated to the later 1640s/early 1650s, showed that even in the City these vessels were not present before c.1650 and it is highly unlikely that they would be any earlier in Sprotbrough. There are, apparently, some bottles of this form with dated seals of the 1640s but whether those dates are actually manufacturing dates may be doubted.

Therefore those deposits in Phase 5 which produced fragments of these bottles can be dated later than c.1650. Most of these contexts were assigned to Groups 6 and 10, which also contain mid 17th-century slipwares, including sherds from the same vessel in walls assigned to both groups, suggesting that they are contemporary. Thus, the Group 6 and 10 structures were constructed later than c.1650. If the onion bottle fragments from Group 10 are also contemporary then a case could be made for both groups being

deposited later than c.1680, but containing mainly earlier finds. If the Group 6 and 10 structures were not constructed until later than c.1650 and possibly later than c.1680 it is unlikely that they can be associated with the manor house which documentary sources suggest was demolished in 1671. However, a c.1671 date would fit the glass collection well and it is possible that the material in the dumps and construction debris of Phase 5 was derived from the clearing out of that manor house. The lack of case bottle fragments in these Phase 5 dumps is also interesting, both for the dating evidence it provides (they must have been deposited later than c.1670/80 but before the landscaping of the gardens in Phase 6) and because it provides an archaeological context for the bottles, which were probably used in the Phase 5 structures.

The later glassware from the site mainly seems to be intrusive in earlier deposits but includes one later 19th/early 20th-century assemblage from context 2005, which includes one of the two fragments of bell jar from the site (the other came from the watching brief, context 1005). These were probably used in the gardens for protecting seedlings. No doubt a closer date for this assemblage could be achieved by research into the history of the Yorkshire Relish industry.

REFNO	Context	DATE	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Weight	Condition
471	1005	EMOD	LTGR	BELL JAR	1	1		162	NONE
472	1005	EMOD	DKGR	TALL	1	1		131	SLIGHT
482	1012	EMOD	DKGR	TALL	3	2	TALL BOTTLE	672	NONE
483	1012	EMOD	LTBL	SQUARE BOT	1	1		9	NONE
494	1037	EMOD	LTBL	WIND	3	3		4	NONE
488	2005	EMOD	DKGR	TALL	1	1	TALL BOTTLE	72	SLIGHT
489	2005	EMOD	LTGR	BOT	1	1	MOULDED BODY;ADDED FREEHAND NECK AND RIM	61	NONE
490	2005	EMOD	LTGR	BOT	1	1	MOULDED; INSCRIPTION 'GOODALL BAC[KHOUSE & CO].' YORKSHIRE RELISH BOTTLE	46	NONE
491	2005	EMOD	LTGR	BELL JAR	1	1	KNOP AT TOP	229	NONE
476	2007	EMOD	CLEAR	WIND	1	1		2	NONE
517	2007	EMOD	CLEAR	FLASK	1	1	SLIGHT PINK COATING EXT (?LABEL)	1	NONE
475	2013	EMOD	CLEAR	WIND	1	1		1	BURNT
505	2048	PMGL	DKGR	S+G	1	1		26	HEAVY
510	2054	EMOD	CLEAR	WIND	1	1	EARLY MODERN	2	NONE
512	2054	PMGL	DKGR	S+G?	7	7		70	HEAVY
514	2059	PMGL	DKGR	S+G	1	1		46	HEAVY
464	2067	PMGL	DKGR	S+G	1	1		87	HEAVY
506	2067	PMGL	DKGR	S+G	2	2		2	HEAVY
507	2068	PMGL	DKGR	CASE BOT	2	1		81	HEAVY
508	2068	PMGL	DKGR	S+G?	4	1		3	HEAVY
492	2097	PMGL	LTGR	WIND	1	1		1	HEAVY

REFNO	Context	DATE	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Weight	Condition
478	2097		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		85	HEAVY
479	2097		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1	1FLAT RIM;SINGLE ADDED COIL AT NECK	38	HEAVY
470	2122		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1	1FLAT RIM;SINGLE ADDED COIL AT NECK	96	HEAVY
481	2134		PMGL LTGR	WIND	1	1		3	MODERATE
480	2134		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		145	HEAVY
499	3000		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1	1FLAT RIM;SINGLE ADDED COIL AT NECK	45	HEAVY
513	3001		PMGL DKGR	CASE BOT	1	1		36	HEAVY
500	3020		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		3	HEAVY
501	3020		PMGL DKGR	-	2	1	1BLUE TINGE;MORTAR ON ONE PIECE	2	MODERATE
484	3022		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		97	MODERATE
495	3031		PMGL DKGR	S+G/ONION	1	1		4	MODERATE
496	3031		PMGL LTGR	WIND	1	1		1	HEAVY
516	3032		PMGL LTGR	WIND	2	2	2CONTEXT NUMBER 3032?	3	SLIGHT
485	3035		PMGL DKGR	S+G	2	1	1OVAL?	111	NONE
487	3035		PMGL DKGR	S+G	22	1		126	HEAVY
497	3035		PMGL DKGR	ONION	1	1		26	MODERATE
498	3035		PMGL DKGR	S+G	2	2		10	HEAVY
502	3035		PMGL DKGR	S+G	22	1		121	HEAVY
486	3035		EMOD CLEAR	WIND	1	1	1MOD?	6	NONE
503	3035		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1	1APPLIED SEAL	5	HEAVY
493	3044		PMGL LTGR	WIND	1	1		1	HEAVY
504	3065		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1	1FLAT RIM;SINGLE ADDED COIL AT NECK	234	HEAVY

REFNO	Context	DATE	subfabric	Form	Nosh	NoV	Description	Weight	Condition
473	4001		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		12	HEAVY
474	4001		PMGL LTGR	WIND	4	1		5	HEAVY
477	4081		PMGL DKGR	CASE BOT	3	1		119	HEAVY
515	4113		EMOD LTBL	SQUARE BOT	1	1		8	NONE
465	ABOVE 2088		EMOD LTBL	BOT	1	1	MOULDED BODY	6	NONE
466	ABOVE 2088		PMGL DKGR	S+G/ONION	1	1		45	HEAVY
467	ABOVE 2088		PMGL DKGR	ONION?	1	1		57	MODERATE
468	ABOVE 2088		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		13	HEAVY
469	ABOVE 2088		PMGL DKGR	S+G	1	1		34	HEAVY