

## The Roman vessel glass from the Bainesse excavations: Field 163 - the burial locations

H.E.M. Cool

Report submitted to NAA December 2016<sup>1</sup>

The only vessel glass fragments recovered from the cemetery contexts were all found in the fill of Burial 183. They consist of pieces from a cylindrical cup (no. 1), a globular flask (no. 2) and rim, handle and base fragments from at least one prismatic bottle (nos. 3-5). The cup is an example of the very common form with a double cylindrical base ring normally found in colourless glass (Isings Form 85; Price and Cottam 1998, 99-101). They were in use during the final third of the second century, possibly appearing very slightly earlier, and continued in use until the mid-third century. Blue/green examples such as no. 1 are less commonly encountered but have been found previously in Catterick, for example at the Catterick By-Pass site excavated in the 1950s (Cool and Price 2002a, 225 nos. 52-3) and at Bainesse Site 46 excavated in the 1980s (Cool and Price 2002b, 246 no. 17). The fragments that form no. 2 are consistent with coming from a globular flask with a maximum body diameter of c. 120mm. This is a simple long-lived form. The blue/green colour would indicate a date within the first to third centuries. The base does not appear to have had a pontil scar which would suggest it was unlikely to have been made after the middle of the third century. The bottle fragments (Price and Cottam 1998, 194-200) can be dated to sometime within the later first to earlier third century period. All three vessels could thus have been in use during the later second and earlier third century.

This is a somewhat odd assemblage of fragments. Given the rarity of vessel glass in Field 163 (see report on the non-burial vessel glass from Bainesse), they can scarcely be regarded as casual inclusions. Equally if the material was a casual inclusion it is surprising that no other grave contained any fragments of glass and that all the fragments of the bottles are recognisable rim, handle and base fragments. Prismatic bottles were an extremely common form and it is likely that the parts represented would have been easily identifiable by their users and not just to modern glass specialists. Body fragments, though immediately diagnostic to the modern specialist, might have been less identifiable to the users. A bottle glass assemblage will normally be dominated by the body fragments so there does appear to be the distinct possibility that deliberate selection was being practised. Quite what the motive was is unclear. Leary notes that Burials 64 and 81 have incomplete pottery vessels. Possibly the selection of glass fragments in Burial 183 should be viewed alongside whatever rituals or processes that resulted in the presence of these incomplete pottery vessels and even the presence of fragments from the same pottery vessel in both Burials 205 and 206.

- 1 Cylindrical cup; rim fragment. Blue/green. Vertical rim with fire-rounded edge, thickened internally; straight side. Rim diameter 80mm, wall thickness 1.5mm, present height 21mm. Weight 2.7g. 12717: RF 10432. *Fig.*

---

<sup>1</sup> NB I don't have any detailed information about the relationship of the fragments to the coffin / fill / each other. Or who was being buried. Possibly worth revisiting this report when that information is available.

- 2 Globular flask; 14 body and one base fragments joining in several groups of two and three. Blue/green; weathered surfaces; large bubbles. Broken at neck/body junction; convex-curved body; concave base. Neck diameter *c.* 30mm, base diameter *c.* 45mm, wall thickness 1-2.5mm. Weight 38.7g. 12717: RF 10432. *Fig.*
- 3 Bottle; rim and handle fragment. Blue/green. Rim edge bent out, up, in and flattened; underside of rim retains part of folded upper handle attachment. Rim diameter 55mm, neck aperture diameter *c.* 15mm. Weight 18.5g. 12717: RF 10432.
- 4 Prismatic bottle; handle fragment. Blue/green. Central part of lower reeded handle retaining part of shoulder and edge of side. Dimensions 42 x 34mm. Weight 14.5g. 12717 : RF 10432.
- 5 Prismatic bottle; base fragment. Blue green. Base design – parts of two concentric circular mouldings. Dimensions 26 x 20mm, diameter of outer moulding *c.* 80mm. Weight 5.8g. 12717: RF 10432.

### **Bibliography**

- Cool, H.E.M. and Price, J. 2002a. 'Glass from Catterick Bypass (Site 433)', in Wilson, 213-33.
- Cool, H.E.M. and Price, J. 2002b. 'Glass from Bainesse (Site 46)', in Wilson, 243-9.
- Isings, C. 1957. *Roman Glass from Dated Finds*. J.B. Walters, Groningen/Djakarta.
- Price, J. and Cottam, S. 1998. *Romano-British Glass Vessels: a Handbook*, CBA Practical Handbook in Archaeology 14. CBA, York.
- Wilson, P.R. 2002. *Cataractonium Roman Catterick and its Hinterland. Excavations and Research, 1958-1997. Part II*. CBA Research Report 129. CBA, York.