

The Roman vessel glass from the Bainesse excavations: the non-burial locations

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Introduction

The Roman vessel glass that can be identified from the domestic locations within the Bainesse fields is summarised by fragment count and weight in Table 1. It is a small assemblage dominated by fragments from blue/green prismatic bottles (Price and Cottam 1998, 194-200). These were extremely common from the later first century and into the third century, and in the first and second centuries are frequently the only type of vessel found on rural sites. The material will be discussed according to the field in which it was found in.

<i>Field</i>	<i>Yellow/brown</i>		<i>Blue/green</i>		<i>Bottle</i>		<i>Colourless</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	No.	g.	No.	g.	No.	g.	No.	g.	No.	g.
159A	1	3.8	5	2	4	38.9	4	0.4	14	45.1
160	53	21	3	0.2	3	34.2	6	1.6	65	57.0
163N	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
163C	-	-	1	5.1	1	2.5	+	-	2	7.6
163S	-	-	1	1.6	3	26.9	1	0.3	5	28.8
163SC	-	-	2	1.3	1	3.8	2	0.1	5	5.2
Total	54	24.8	12	10.2	12	106.3	13	2.4	91	143.7

Table 1: The vessel glass by colour and field quantified by fragment count (No.) and weight in grams (g.). Note '+' indicates the colour is present but only as unquantifiable chips from samples.

Field 159A

The only identifiable vessels from this field were fragments from blue/green bottles (nos. 2 and 3) and a rim fragment (no. 1) from a tall-necked jug which would have had either a globular or conical body (Isings Forms 52 and 55, Price and Cottam 1998, 150-56). These have a broad date range covering the last third of the first century to the mid second century. Interestingly a handle and body fragment of a probably conical example in this range was found during the 1980s excavation on the site (Cool and Price 2002, 245 no. 2). We described the colour then as a brownish yellow/green whereas no. 1 is a true yellow/brown appearing slightly darker than an amber shade, probably because of the thickness of the neck. So the fragments are likely to have come from different vessels.

The amount of vessel glass from this area of Bainesse found in the 1980s has a markedly different profile than this small group (see Cool and Price 2002). Whilst it also had a high proportion of bottles as well as the jug fragment just discussed, it contained a significant quantity of good quality colourless drinking vessels of the mid second to early/mid third

century. Here colourless glass was present but only as undiagnostic body fragments. The difference between the two groups is presumably to be attributed to the fact that in the 1980s the Roman stratigraphy was still present whilst the recent excavations encountered a significantly truncated sequence.

- 1 Jug, rim and neck fragment. Yellow/brown. Chipped outer edge of folded rim; cylindrical neck. Neck thickness 4mm, present height 32mm. Weight 3.8g. 13388.
- 2 Bottle; rim fragment. Blue/green. Rim edge bent out, up, in and flattened. Rim diameter 50mm. Weight 6.6g. 13480.
- 3 Bottle; handle fragment. Upper part of angular-reefed handle with folded upper attachment. Handle section 45 x 6mm. Weight 29.2g. 13388.

Field 160

The identifiable glass from Field 160 is very similar to that from Field 159A. No. 4 consists of many fragments from either a globular jug of the same family that no. 1 came from or a collared jar of Isings Form 67c (Price and Cottam 1998, 137-8). The two share the same lower body and base shape and are indistinguishable when the upper bodies are missing as here. These two forms went out of use early in the second century.

The other type of vessel presented is the blue/green prismatic bottle represented by two rims (nos. 5 and 6) and a flat body fragment (context 5179). No. 6 is of especial interest as it has been extensively re-worked to turn it into a sharp blade. It is also possible that no. 5 had a life after the vessel it came from had been broken. The upper face of the rim has a band of wear around the edge similar to wear that can be seen on base rings. This would suggest the fragment had regularly been used in some way that required the upper face to be against a hard surface. It is hard to suggest what sort of use could have resulted in this wear pattern if the bottle had been complete and being used as a container. This strongly suggests the wear developed when the fragment was being re-used. Both of the contexts in which these rim fragments were found have pottery spot-dates that post-date the likely use of square bottles, but this might be expected if the fragments had entered a second stage of their lives. The re-use of thick vessel glass fragments as tools and for other functions is not unusual (see for example Cool and Price 2002b, 219), but the recent excavations associated with the A1 roadworks are producing a high incidence of the practice. It is intended to produce an overview of the phenomenon when all the glass from the project has been studied.

The jug or jar no. 4 is an item of tableware and so it is very interesting to see that all the fragments were recovered from different contexts within the ring ditch that seems to mark out a round-house. Presumably the vessel would have been used by the people who lived within the house who would, one might equally suppose, have been the native inhabitants as opposed to incomers arriving with the Roman presence in the area. If these assumptions are accepted, it points to an unusually early acceptance of a type of tableware that does not normally appear to have found favour with the native inhabitants of rural sites at the time. Their preference appears to have been for large bowl forms when glass tablewares were found useful (Cool and Baxter 1999, 84). The sections across the ring ditch that were dug recovered mainly body fragments so that while the form can be identified, it is not possible to reconstruct the vessel for illustration. It might be expected that had more of the ditch been dug, or the sections placed elsewhere, additional fragments would have been found including

the more diagnostic pieces. Even without them it can be noted that finding fragments of the same vessel from different contexts is not typical when studying Roman glass assemblages because of the habitual recycling of glass. Here it can be suggested that when the vessel broke the recycling system may not have been in action in the area, or that this household stood outside of the system.

In contrast to the domestic setting of no. 4 the bottle fragments all come from contexts associated with the industrial activity on the site. As already noted, two had either definitely or possibly been transformed into tools of some sort and so possibly relate to the smithing activity.

- 4 Globular jug or jar; one base and 52 body fragments, some joining. Light yellow/brown. Convex-curved body broken at edge of open pushed-in base ring; concave base probably broken at inner edge of base ring. Optic blown ribs, narrow and pronounced on upper body dying out over lower body. Two contexts have ribs of both types. Base diameter *c.* 70-80mm, dimensions of largest group joined fragments 48 x 45mm, wall thickness 0.5-1.5mm. Weight 20.9g. 4938 : RF 566 and 528; 4966 : RF 538; 4987 (one plain body fragment only).
- 5 Bottle; rim fragment. Blue/green. Rim bent out, up in and flattened. Band of wear around edge of upper face. Rim diameter *c.* 70mm. Weight 11.3g. 5097.
- 6 Bottle; approximately half rim fragment. Blue/green. Rim edge bent out, up, in and flattened with relatively small neck aperture. Both broken edges show large flakes removed from underside, on one side the outer edge shows retouch turning it into a blade. Neck may also have been deliberately re-touched. Rim diameter 50mm, neck aperture diameter 15mm. Weight 12.1g. 5058: RF 531. *Fig.*

Field 163 SC

The non-burial contexts from this site produced very little vessel glass. The ribbed body fragment no. 7 from a subsoil context probably came from the range of vessels discussed in connection with nos. 1 and 4 above. The bottle fragment no. 8 came from a small thin-walled prismatic bottle. These tend to be found more frequently in mid to late second century contexts where dated.

- 7 Body fragment. Blue/green. Straight side. Edge of one shallow rib. Dimensions 24 x 12mm, wall thickness 3mm. Weight 1.1g. 4959.
- 8 Bottle; handle fragment. Blue/green. Lower handle with pronounced rib internally on either edge, lower attachment retains angular edge of thin-walled shoulder. Width of handle *c.* 30mm. Weight 2.5g. 12372. *Fig.*

Field 267¹

The only fragment from this field has a base formation technique that is typical of the one used on tubular rimmed bowls (Isings Form 44, Price and Cottam 1998, 78-80). These were a common type in use during the second half of the first century and the first half of the second century. This fragment has been grozed around the edge of the base ring which would have converted the vessel into a disc on a low foot stand. This is a common type of re-use though why so many glass discs were wanted is unknown.

- 9 Base fragment. Blue/green. Small part of flat base; applied true base ring; edge of lower body grozed flush with base ring. Dimensions 19 x 15mm. Weight 4.6g. 32306 : RF 13380.

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¹ I have included this lone fragment here as it was in the Bainesse box though I have no information about the field. It is not included in Table 1.