



Figure 2.57: Summary of interventions superimposed on 1870 plan

It can be seen by inspection that really only a very small portion of the site has been sampled, and the emphasis has largely been on the cone areas, with little of real value being gained from the remainder, other than as commented below.

In summary, there is little else to say, other than it is a great pity that the details from the earliest excavations appear to have been lost, and that the later interventions had not occurred before the overall development of the site. This is not a criticism — it is merely that the

background that has been explored in this study has, with the benefit of hindsight and time, raised a number of questions. Unfortunately most of these have not been answered.

In 1992, Mumford, with some foresight, wrote, “Taken together, the remaining archaeological features form an integral and important part of the glassworks complex at Nailsea, and in particular, some of the best surviving remains of a post-medieval glassworks site in the west of England. This glassworks site played an important role in the development of the technology of the production of window glass in the nineteenth century. It was also crucial in the development of the settlement of Nailsea and formed an economic basis for its nineteenth century expansion.”³³ He went on to make some very worthwhile recommendations, but it does not appear that they were heeded to any great extent, for reasons not known.

Nailsea and [industrial] archaeology have therefore both missed a real opportunity to examine and record in considerable detail what appears to have been an extensive and significant site, even post-demolition, and are the poorer for it. This is understandable – in any given period things seem to have a permanency, and when they are abandoned are recent enough not to be of interest. Furthermore, development had started on the site before the advent of changes in planning policies and practices with respect to known archaeology, namely Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 16 in November 1990. [The writer has come across this attitude in another context – having been told that a considerable effort has been made to conserve and/or record South Wales brass works from the 19th century, considerable surprise was expressed by the speaker when he was asked what efforts had been made to record municipally owned electricity generating stations from the early 20th century in the same area.]

It is recognised that there is a certain amount of hindsight being applied here. Initially, what was essentially a rural County probably did not have the resources to deal with, or even possibly any interest in, the industrial archaeology of a community on its northern perimeter. Then came a Local Government re-organisation and the new Local Authority probably had other priorities. The situation was not helped by a repeat performance of a further re-organisation a few years later. Additionally, perceptions of the wider public have changed over the intervening years. [Certainly there was for a long time a very enthusiastic pressure group for the preservation of the glassworks site within the local community, but it appears that when it mattered they were unable to command wider support.] Landowners naturally wish to maximise the return on their investment, and a site like this in proximity to the town centre must have appeared to have the potential to be very worthwhile. If the decision had been made to purchase even a significant portion of the site somehow, there would still have been major problems with funding, maintenance and security.

Having said that, the principal benefit from the interventions appears to have been the confirmation of quite a lot of the two ground plans of the major part of the actual glassmaking part of the site. Sufficient has been learned, it is suggested, to give assurance that these plans can be relied on for accuracy. The 1870 version seems to be very accurate, as far as it was tested, and that of the 1830s slightly less so. We already have, therefore, a certain, very limited, amount of preservation by record. It should be noted that it appears that throughout the entire period of investigation the original 1870 drawing does not seem to have been referred to very much, if at all. In most reports it is a later, more schematic, transcription that is used. Neither are any comparisons with the 1830s plan obvious. [The reference to ‘comparisons’ is a reminder that it should maybe explained that many ‘comparisons’ between plans mentioned in the study were made not by inspection or by eye, but by translating them to a common scale

³³ Mumford, 1992 Chapter 5, p 11

and having the reference plans printed on tracing paper. In this way direct comparisons were possible.]

We still have unanswered points of detail about the Nailsea glass works, the processes employed and how they functioned as a whole. Neither do we have an accurate timeline, as there appears to have been virtually no dating evidence recorded, or datable material recovered from the interventions. It must also be recognised that a glassworks does not spring up overnight, and that there will have been a finite time between site acquisition and initial production. It is also clear that there were almost certainly continuing developments within the works other than those currently recognised. All these may now only be determined by extrapolation from other sites.

It may well be that this publication might just stimulate some further details from private papers, etc., coming to cast some further light. It is very much to be hoped that this might be the case, and indeed it would be most welcome.

[As a postscript, it should be noted that there was an item in the *Bristol Evening Post* of 22nd February, 2005, p. 36, reported by Gerry Brooke under the heading “Town glassworks was big business”. It included the statement, “Now, since the beginning of the year, things have at last started moving. The owners, Hobbs Properties and North Somerset Council, in consultation with English Heritage, are clearing trees and undergrowth from the [New House Cone] site and filling in the potentially dangerous glass-making pits with sand and aggregate. And the council has appointed architects to carry out an option survey to decide on a blueprint for its future.” I am grateful to John Hunt of the Bristol and Avon Archaeological Society for drawing my attention to this article and to Trevor Bowen for telling me about the clearing. The purpose has been to stabilise the site archaeologically to prevent further damage by vegetation and vandalism and weather, at last, until its future is resolved.]

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AC indicates Ashton Court Collection. The Ashton Court estate was sold to Bristol Corporation in 1947, but many of the documents were sold by public auction. A large number, though, remain in the Bristol Record Office.

Sturge Deposit 32395 (25) 1830s annotated plan of glassworks main site

Sturge Deposit 37959 (22) 1870 annotated plan of glassworks

APPENDIX 1 - Samples from Weston-super-Mare Museum to English Heritage

(With thanks to Dr D Crossley for compiling this list.)

Context	Box label	Description of contents [And GR if any]	Date excavated
1	NG83	Area E: glass and clay pipes	1983
[F]2	F5	lumps in clear to pale green	
3	NG83 Box 2	Entrance through cone wall to furnace: 2C green glass 2D colourless moulded fragments; ?prism; 29 vials. 2F fragments – various 2H clay tobacco pipes 2I glass lumps and distorted flat glass 2J clay ring fragments	
[F]5	F5	lumps in clear to pale green	
8	NG83A	Cullet	1983
9	NG83A	Cullet	1983
10	NG83 box 5	Soil sample 8 [bag 5R]	1983
		Soil sample 5 [bag 5P]	1983
	1983 – 10	Labelled cylinder glass	1983
11	NG83A	Cullet	1983
12	NG83A	Cullet	1983
13	NG83A	Cullet	1983
14	NG 83A	Cylinder glass [marked]	1983
	NG83 box 5	Soil sample 9 [bag 5Q]	1983
[A14]	Box 1, A14	lumps and stands in clear/pale green	
16	NG83A	Cullet	1983
18	13	fragments of ?press-moulded glass Formerly ‘domestic life’ bottle fragments	
	11	bottle fragments and lumps; large lump of ‘black’ glass	
19	NG86 C19	Clear vessel and lump	1986

22	NG83	Area B: glass and clay pipes		1983
24	NG83	Area A: glass and clay pipes		1983
	NG86 Samples	Soil sample		18/11/86
26	NG83	Area B: glass and clay pipes		1983
	NG86 Samples	Soil sample from SW airway: bottom of C18		
		004008		1986
27	NG83	Area B: glass and clay pipes		1983
	NG86 Samples	SW airway: soil sample from		
		below C 18 & 26	004 088	18/10/86
28	NG83	Area B: glass and clay pipes		1983
29	1989.66 NH	Pale green lump from crucibles		1989
		Colourless trails		
	NG86 Samples	Sample 01 [or 07]		27/11/86
30	NG86 Samples	Soil sample 02		27/11/86
31	NG86 Samples	Soil sample SA06		8/12/86
	NG86 Samples	Soil 'Sample B'	280 010	2/12/86
	NG86 Samples	Soil 'Sample A'	330 005	8/12/86
33	NG86 Samples	Soil Sample 07	270 010	9/12/86
42	NG86 Samples	Soil Sample 08	279 002	6/1/87
43	NG86 Samples	Soil Sample 09	290 010	26/1/87
44	NG86 Samples	Soil Sample 10	297004	26/1/87
	1989.66 NH	Small bags of very dark opaque trails		
45	NG86 Samples	Soil sample	290010	22/1/87
333	No mark	'Glass from below lifted floor		
335	'Complan carton'	Variegated Blue and clear glass strand		
338	'Complan carton'	Sample 25: ?gall		10/2/88
340	No mark	North trench: 'north ten stage blowing hole': clear lump		

The analysis results appear in the Report by Gareth Hatton from English Heritage in Part 3, Appendix 7.