

A remarkable post-medieval bottle-glass tool from Evesham, Worcestershire.

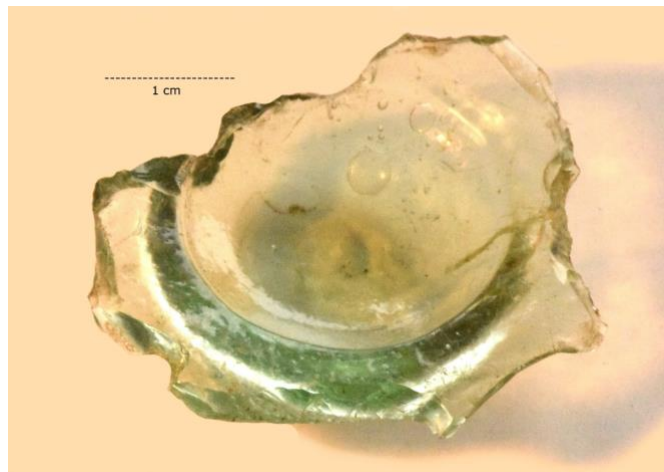
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Introduction

Further evidence of post-medieval glass tool manufacture in rural Worcestershire is presented following earlier evidence provided by Whitehead (2009, 2016a, 2016b).

Discussion

On 1 September 2017 on cultivated land at Greenhill, Evesham, Worcestershire (VC37 SP04), formerly an anciently-cultivated part of Evesham Abbey estate with land-surface ceramic evidence dating back to *circa* AD1250, I chanced upon the base of a hand-made bottle with one edge straightened by finely resolved retouch and use (03) and with two other edges blunted (02). The opposed blunted edges provide resting points for the index-finger (02 and 04) such that the tool may be used with equal dexterity either in its position of manufacture or upside down (01 and 02). The bottle is made of pale 'aqua' glass and a disc pontil has been impressed manually to remove virtually all traces of the scar apart from the circular disc edge (01 and 02); slight sagging shows this to have been created while the glass was still soft. This disc pontil serves as a functional thumb rest (04) thus enabling a considerable amount of control to be exerted on the artefact when in use.

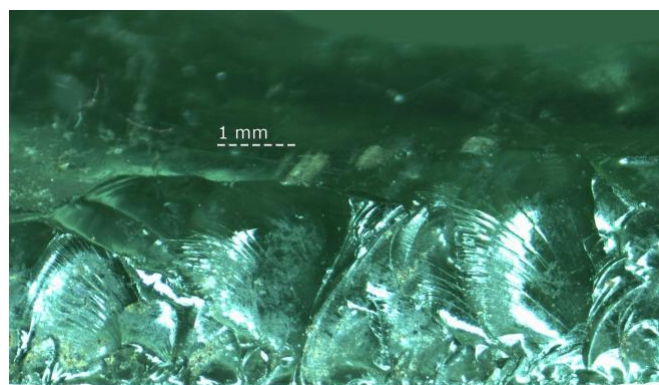


01. Bottle-glass implement, Greenhill, Evesham, Worcestershire, 1 September 2017. Paul Whitehead

It may therefore be reasoned that for a tool believed to have been fabricated in broad terms *circa* AD1860 the degree of cognisance applied to its manufacture is considerable. Given that none of the 'indigenous' people I engaged with in the Evesham area between 1967 and 1985 mentioned worked glass it seems odd that such a tradition has left no other form of evident record. In fact this artefact, which may have been used in a similar way to the piece described from Little Comberton, raises more questions than answers. Is glass tool manufacture a local or regional tradition in England and on what is the technology founded?



02. Bottle-glass implement, Greenhill, Evesham, Worcestershire, 1 September 2017, showing key features. Paul Whitehead



03. Bottle-glass implement, Greenhill, Evesham, Worcestershire, 1 September 2017, showing photo-microscopic details of the levelled scraping edge. Paul Whitehead



04. Bottle-glass implement, Greenhill, Evesham, Worcestershire, 1 September 2017, showing the sophisticated relationship of form and function. Paul Whitehead

Probably the answer is that it is largely overlooked and that given the discovery of worked post-medieval glass on Kodiak Island, Alaska (Crowell, 1997), the technology presumably permeated through 'native' cultures on a low-key patchy basis. In Worcestershire it may be unlikely that the hiatus between Roman and post-medieval glass tool manufacture (Whitehead, 2016) will be filled and it is probable that the increasing use of glass after AD1850 rekindled 'lost' technology. The tradition seems to be a 'native' one in areas where the industrial revolution was slow to impact or lacked particular relevance. I can recall my late father-in-law searching assiduously for just the right holly branch from which to fashion a replacement knife handle, in that case with a metal blade, which I believe is still usable. It may be argued that such self-sustaining

rural economies more readily grasped and appreciated the value and versatility of manufactured glass and resources in general.

Repository

The artefact will be presented to a Worcestershire Museum.

References

- Crowell, A.L., 1997. *Archaeology and the capitalist world system: a study from Russian America*. 286pp. Springer, New York.
- Whitehead, P.F., 2009. Knapped glass from the Bredon Hill area of Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* **26**:28-30.
- Whitehead, P.F., 2016a. A post-medieval Victorian blue glass hand tool from Little Comberton, Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* **41**:52.
- Whitehead, P.F., 2016b. Archaeology, human occupation and sedimentary sequences at Old House Farm, Little Comberton, Worcestershire. *Worcestershire Record* **41**:57-65.

Images

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