

## Further post-medieval bottle glass tools from Worcestershire and Wales.

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### Introduction

In a series of contributions Whitehead (2009, 2016a, 2016b, 2017) drew attention to the fabrication of glass tools, especially those made from bottle glass. The periodicity of these artefacts has been confirmed as has their association with traditional land use systems and subsistence economies. This contribution describes a further find from Worcestershire and the first Welsh bottle-glass artefact. As more glass artefacts come to light patterns of convergence are beginning to reveal themselves. In some instances typological convergence with prehistoric flint technology is also evident, introducing conceptual issues of form and function over time.

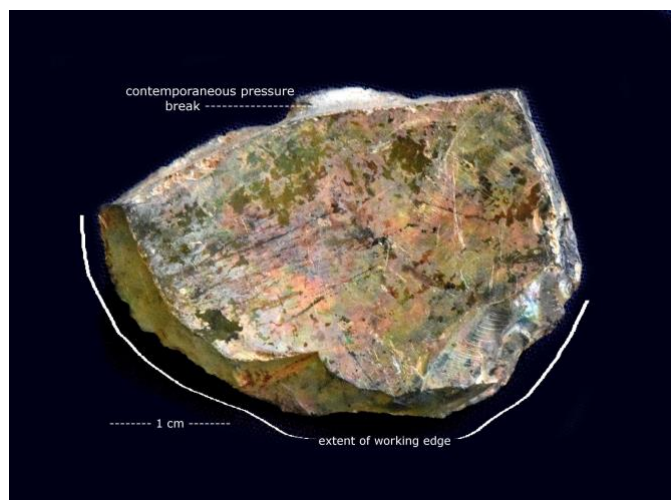
### Discussion

#### The Little Comberton artefact

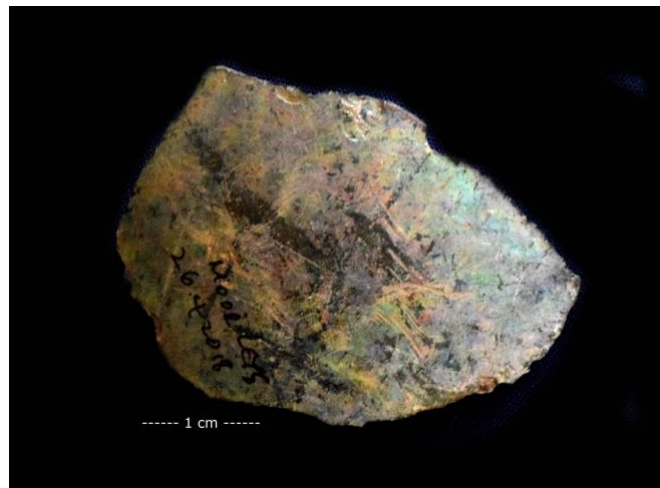
On 26 April 2018 I found a bottle-glass tool on cultivated land at Little Comberton, Worcestershire (VC37 SO94). It is a scraper fashioned from the side of a bottle unlikely to post-date AD1850 (Figs 1, 2 and 3). This constitutes the fourth documented bottle glass tool from the northern fringe of Bredon Hill. The history of the find site has been described (Whitehead, 2016), parts of which are or were traditional orcharding with a mosaic of cultivated ground extending back continuously to at least the Iron Age.

The form of this artefact is of interest as it resembles the discoidal scrapers of later prehistory, in particular those of the late Bronze Age. The functionality of the pieces may have been determined by similar factors separated by a time span of perhaps 4000 years. It is clear from Fig. 2 that one side of the tool is to all intents and purposes unabraded and unretouched.

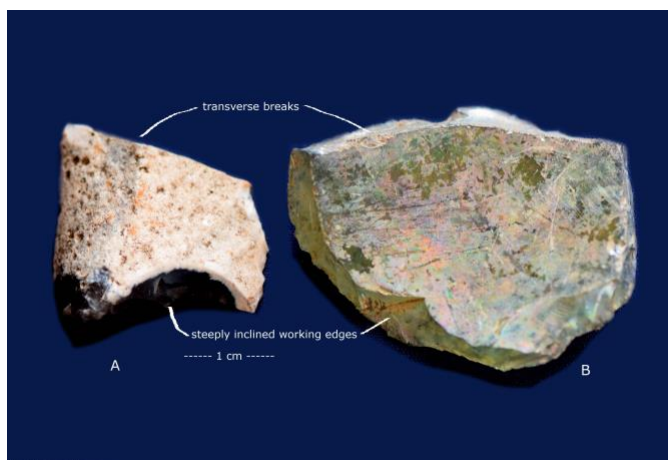
Fig. 3 relates the form of the Little Comberton tool to a later prehistoric steep-sided flint scraper from Longbridge Deverill in Wiltshire. This is the medial part of a struck cortical flake snapped transversely like the glass tool and with a similar angle of retouch. In this context it should be remembered that these post-medieval glass tools were used by people who may have equated to serfs and who may also therefore have had direct observational experience of flint tools and their technology.



**Fig. 1.** Inner surface of post-medieval bottle glass tool from traditional agrolandscape, Little Comberton, Worcestershire, 26 April 2018.



**Fig. 2.** Outer surface of post-medieval bottle glass tool from traditional agrolandscape, Little Comberton, Worcestershire, 26 April 2018.



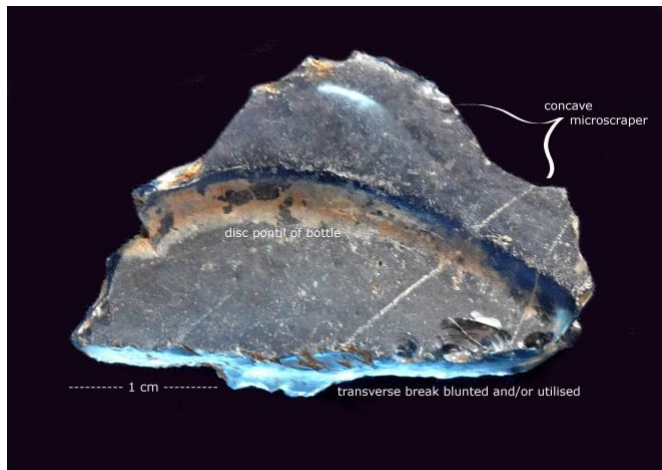
**Fig. 3.** **3A.** Later prehistoric steep-sided chalk flint end scraper on snapped flake, Longbridge Deverill, Wiltshire, 10 March 2018. **3B.** Post-medieval steep-sided semi-discoidal bottle glass scraper as in Figs 1 and 2, Little Comberton, Worcestershire, 26 April 2018.

#### The Penallt tool

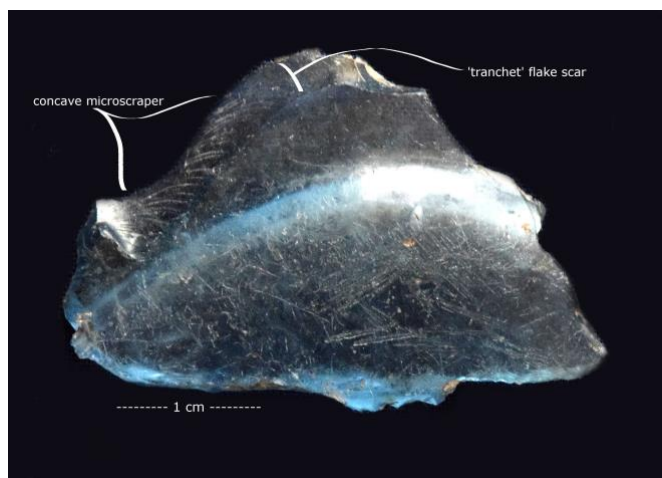
This specialised tool was found on a small area of cultivated land at Penallt, Monmouthshire on 26 January 2018. It is fabricated on the depressed pontil of a post-medieval aqua glass bottle base. The glass surface was opaque from manufacture and the vessel was probably a fairly early hand blown apothecary's bottle perhaps dating from the early part of the 19th century or a little earlier.

This artefact is published here because of its very close similarity to the bottle-base tool from Evesham Abbey estate (Whitehead, 2017); it also reveals remarkable conceptualisation. The tool comprises the snapped fragment of the bottle base with the transverse fracture retouched and/or utilised (Fig. 6) with an obliquely-disposed concave micro-scraper. Fig. 5 warrants close scrutiny. A tranchet-like removal, again paralleling flint technology, created a razor-like edge on which the micro-scraper has been created.

The find-site is a valley-side setting of old abandoned quarries and defunct stone bothies occupied at a very low level of subsistence since at least AD1750 but with evidence of earlier medieval human interventions (I.P. Rabjohns, *in litt.*). In this cottage economy glass tools would have been an invaluable and reusable resource. Their applications would have been many and diverse as this specialised artefact demonstrates. The Penallt tool is apparently the first documented bottle-glass tool from Wales.



**Fig. 4.** Outer surface of post-medieval bottle glass tool from Penallt, Monmouthshire, 26 January 2018.



**Fig. 5.** Inner surface of post-medieval bottle glass tool from Penallt, Monmouthshire, 26 January 2018.



**Fig. 6.** Utilisation traces on a transverse break. Post-medieval bottle glass tool, Penallt, Monmouthshire, 26 January 2018.

Any doubts remaining in the minds of readers regarding the authenticity of these post-medieval glass tools should be totally removed by sight of Fig. 6 and all that it conveys. Anyone still believing that they are 'just broken glass' should be comforted in the knowledge that they are correct!

#### Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr I.P. Rabjohns for permission to publish the Penallt artefact.

#### References

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