

17 The post-medieval glass from Rushen Abbey

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Introduction

Some 9,791 sherds of post-medieval glass were recovered from all excavations on the site.

The base and part of the wall of a seventeenth-century onion bottle is the only glass item of this period to have been retained in the site museum and transferred to the Manx Museum in 1986 (Fig 1; 1988-0250). Its origins on the site are uncertain. It is not mentioned as one of the items 'in my possession' in the list drawn up by William Cubbon before his 1926 excavations nor in his diary of that work (MS 9858).

Butler

The Manx Museum retains 193 sherds of post-medieval glass from Butler's excavations: 63 sherds from 1978/79 and 130 sherds from 1988/89. Butler in his report on the 1978 and 1979 excavations in the church noted that:

There was a small amount of window and vessel glass in the eighteenth-century layers and considerable quantities of Victorian wine and mineral water bottles in the early twentieth-century make-up of the lawns (Figs 2 and 3). Three bore the names of Manx companies and one was from London (Fig 4; Butler 1988, 99).

His account of the finds from the 1988 and 1989 excavations in the east range adds little to this general picture:

Post-medieval glass occurred in nineteen contexts in 1988 and ten contexts in 1989. Nothing is worthy of particular comment, but a few frag-

ments were from layer C (Dissolution: 89/9. 32, 33). Only one fragment was of later window glass (89/8), but the remainder of the finds were of nineteenth-century bottle glass (Figs 5 and 6). One bottle bore the name of a Castletown brewery (Butler 2002, 190).

Garrad

A further seven sherds of nineteenth-century window glass were recovered in the Garrad rescue excavations behind the Abbey Hotel in 1984 (1984-0119/12).

CMS

The 1999 interim report reported on the 1,822 sherds found during the CMS 1988 excavations (Vose 1999, 58-61). Of these 1,370 were of vessel glass and 452 of flat, a ratio of almost exactly three to one. A majority of vessel sherds that could be identified were of nineteenth-century date, with relatively few earlier:

seventeenth/eighteenth	36
eighteenth/nineteenth	58
nineteenth/modern	534
unknown	742

All the flat glass appeared to be of nineteenth-century or modern date. The earlier window and vessel glass has been reported on elsewhere (see online report: The medieval glass).

Ruth Hurst Vose reported on a further 2,889 fragments of post-medieval glass from the 1999 excavations, a majority deriving from area X:

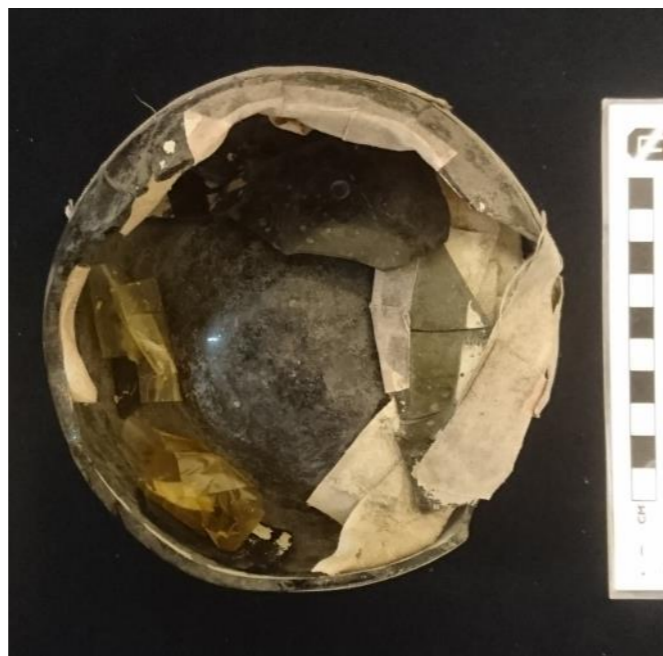
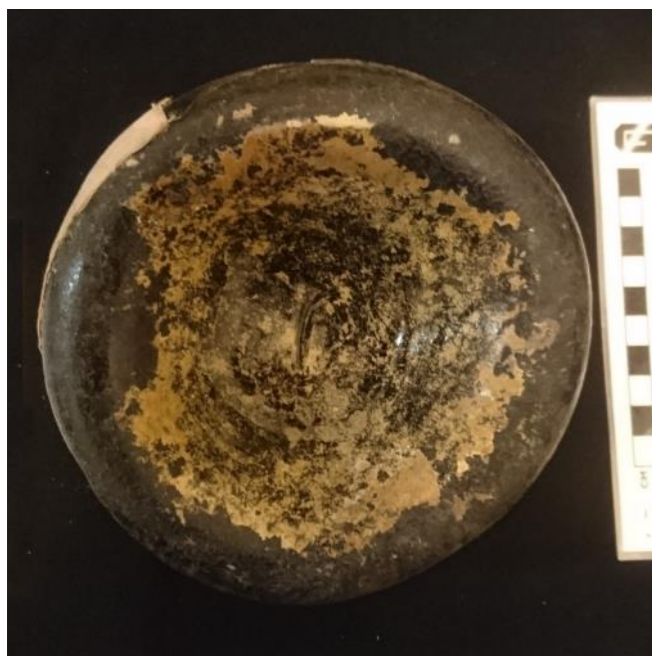


Fig 1: seventeenth-century onion bottle from the old site museum: a) seen from above with taped joining sherds and b) from underneath (1998-0250).



Fig 2: six nineteenth-century bottle necks from the south transept in 1978 showing the range of types that were present (1984-0185/8 Box 4 3).

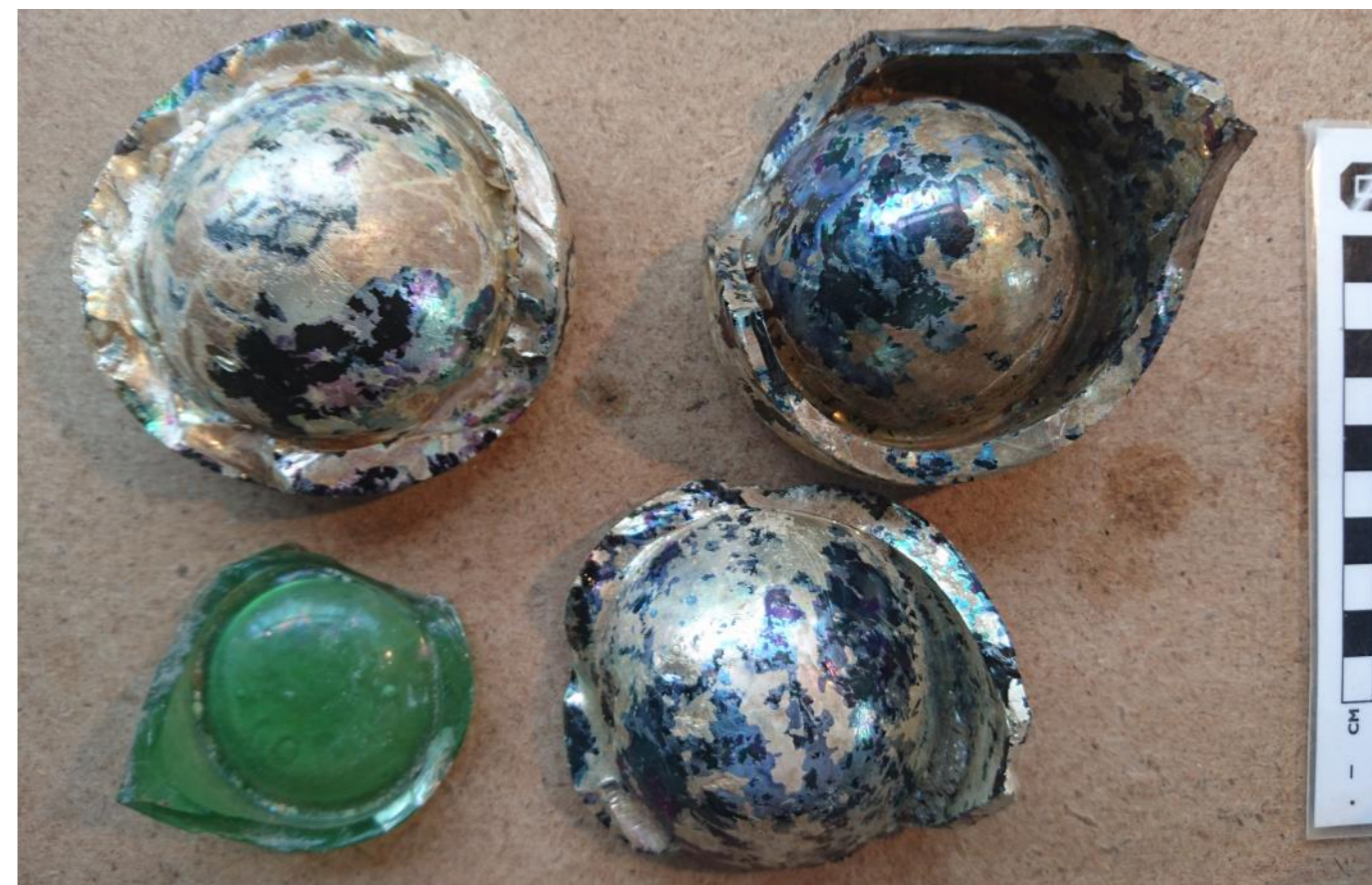


Fig 3: four nineteenth-century bottle bases from the south transept (1984-0185/8 Box 4 3).



Fig 4: late nineteenth or early twentieth-century mineral water bottle marked ISLE OF MAN/BREWERIES LTD/DOUGLAS (1984-085/8 context 78).



Fig 5: a wide range of nineteenth-century glass fragments recovered by Butler in 1978 from garden soils overlying the parlour (1998-0168 context 12).

790 other fragments of window glass were recovered from the excavations all of which were clear glass. These represent the remains of greenhouses erected on the site in the last century and subsequently demolished.

2099 pieces of bottle glass of post-medieval date, mainly brown and green in colour. Much of this probably relates to the later activities on the site, namely the pub and hotel and the night club. Approximately 30 litres of bottle glass was recovered from X038. This was the buttress added onto the chapter house and cleared during the conservation and reconstruction of this building. As well as this glass, the rubble contained sherds of nineteenth century pottery (Vose 2000).

A further 5,035 post-medieval sherds were recovered during the CMS excavation between 2000 and 2008, making a total of 9,947 from all recorded excavations. During the early phases of the CMS excavation, especially during the site clearance in 1999, after discussion with MNH it was decided to discard a great deal of bulky modern material, including plastic, foil, asbestos, concrete, floor and wall tiles, flowerpots, coins and both window and vessel glass. In all 8,406 fragments of glass were discarded, leaving a total of 1,671 sherds from 193 contexts within the museum collections.

The range of types present

The nineteenth and early twentieth-century glass from the 1998 to 2008 excavations included a wide range of types. In addition to the greenhouse window glass there were large pieces of reinforced glass probably emanating from the night club (Fig 7). Although fragments of earlier

post-medieval glass vessels were rare (Fig 8) a number of nineteenth-century wine glasses are represented, and the occasional opaque and millefiori glass painted vessel was found as well as large numbers of green glass bottles (Figs 9-12).

Other uses of glass are evidenced by the presence of fragments from more than a dozen different mirrors (Fig 13), 29 marbles (Fig 14) and other items such as beads and buttons (Fig 15).

Final note

In parallel with the ceramic collection, material dating to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was collected, processed and recorded on site, but has only received summary treatment since. The Rushen Abbey complete artefact assemblage from this period is worthy of serious research in future.

References

Butler L A S 1988, 'The Cistercian Abbey of St Mary of Rushen: excavations 1978-79', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, **141**, 60-104.

Butler L A S 2002, 'The Cistercian Abbey of St Mary of Rushen, Isle of Man: excavations on the East Range, 1988-89', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, **155**, 168-194.

Vose R H 1999, 'Glass from the 1998 excavations' in P J Davey (ed) *Rushen Abbey, Ballasalla, Isle of Man: first archaeological report*, Douglas: Centre for Manx Studies, Research Report 7, 58-61.

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Fig 6: eighteenth-century bottle stamp depicting a ?wolf from the 1988 excavations in the east range (1998-0175 context 4).



Fig 7: one of a number of pieces of reinforced window glass from area M (2005-0173.0452).

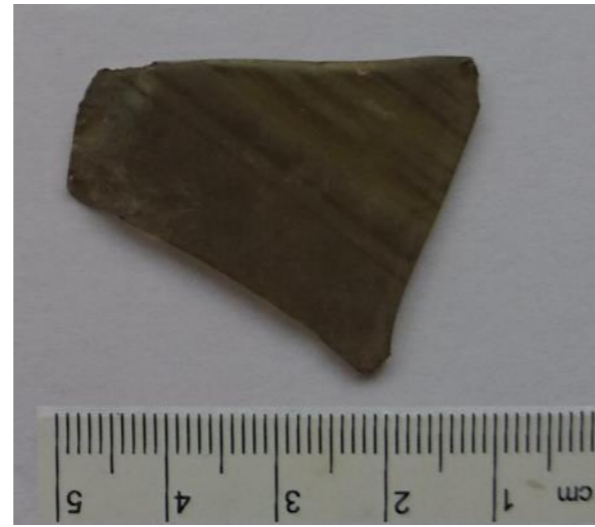


Fig 8: a small fragment from a seventeenth-century forest-glass vessel from area M (2006-0228.0466).

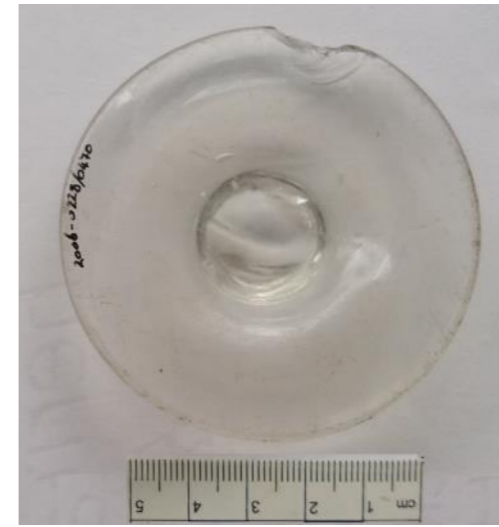


Fig 9: wine glass base from area M (2006-0228.0470)



Fig 10: white glass fragment with external red painting from area S (2003-0103.0529).



Fig 11: two views of a multicoloured small glass vessel from area M: a) internal and b) external (2005-0173.0448).



Fig 12: complete glass bottle stopper from area M: a) side view and b) underside with the legend CANNINGTON SHAW & CO ST HELENS (2004-0042.0704).



Fig 13: fragment of a small mirror from area S: a) front side and b) back (2004-0043.0105).



Fig 14: four glass marbles found in the extension to area M (2006-0228.0411).



Fig 15: lozenge-shaped glass button from area M (2004-0042.0712).

Year	Country	Post-medical glass	Year	Country
1970	USA	1970	USA	
1971	USA	1971	USA	
1972	USA	1972	USA	
1973	USA	1973	USA	
1974	USA	1974	USA	
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