

DATASHEET 28

English Stemmed Drinking Glasses 1642-1702

by

Colin Brain

*10, College Street, Salisbury, Wilts. SP1 3AL
cbrain@interalpha.co.uk*

This data sheet gives a very brief overview of the drinking glasses made and used in England in the latter part of the 17th century. It concentrates on stemmed glasses. The period spans from the start of the civil war to the accession of Queen Anne. Up to 1640 is well documented (Godfrey 1975) and the end date was chosen because few drinking-glass fragments from after this are found on English archaeological sites (recycling was too effective!). Glass from the 18th century is also well documented in books on glass collecting (eg Barrington-Haynes 1959).

This period conveniently splits into two parts. The first, to 1667, is one of stagnation in the industry, where previous styles and practices continued largely unchanged. Thus it is often difficult to date these types of finds to better than plus or minus thirty years. The second part is completely different. There are records of glass makers complaining about having to discount the ends of production batches that had gone out of fashion before they had all been sold. Sometimes the date of manufacture can be pinpointed to within plus or minus three years, although glasses still remained in use for up to thirty years (based on McClenaghan 1988 and Fryer and Selley 1997). The range of drinks also changes. Initially glasses were either for wine or beer. After the restoration, specialised glasses were made for French and German wines, sack and brandy. Ale was generally drunk from cups, as a warm drink. The term 'ale' to describe a strong, heavily hopped, beer did not come into use until the 18th century. All this glass was expensive, although there was a range of qualities sold. The better inns and richer households used most. Whilst it

became more plentiful towards the end of the 17th century, drinking glass seldom appears in inventories. The Duke of Bedford's bills for glass give an insight into the use of glass in very wealthy households (Thorpe 1938). Available evidence suggests that glasses were not used in sets and often would have been shared between drinkers.

This data sheet is based on extensive analysis of published material and finds held in archaeological collections. The typology has been developed from that used by Barrington-Haynes (1959) for 18th century glasses. A more detailed classification is available at :

<http://www.interalpha.net/customer/cbrain>

First Period to c1667

The two common types in this period, mould-blown stems and cigar stems, represent the most enduring of 17th century glass styles, apparently in production since the end of the 16th century. The two seem to embody the split in British society, the mould-blown stems being the ornate 'Cavalier' design compared with the plain-functional 'Roundhead' design of the cigar stems. They are found on civil-war sites of the 1640s (both types occurring together) and Fire of London sites of 1666 (Oswald and Phillips 1948, Buckley 1913, J Charleston 1968, Lawrence 1937, London Museum 1970, Marsden 1971). Most glass in this period is tinted green or grey by impurities in the batch. Excavated fragments often display iridescence. Clear glasses exist, but are encountered rarely since they represent the 'luxury' high-priced end of the market. They often have finely moulded features and are probably Venetian imports. Bowls were blown

very thin, typically 0.5-0.6mm at the rim. Decorated bowls are quite common, with trailing, and reed or dimple moulding. Feet were also blown thinly and usually have folded rims, although plain-edged feet are found infrequently. A number of stems show traces of period repairs, usually a lead 'cage' made to fit over knops, or collars at the top of the stem and base of bowl. The largest number of repairs found were from the site of an inn and thus repairing may have been a practice restricted to inn keepers. Types 1-4 below all have strengthening mereses at the stem-bowl and stem-foot junctions.

Type 1: Mould-blown stem. As their name suggests these were formed by blowing into a two-part mould. The most common motif was a lion-mask. Some mould-blown stems display traces of surface gilding. At least one glass has been found with a 'Greene' type bucket bowl with a moulded basal cordon (see type 6). This presumably is a later glass. Figure 1 shows a lion mask stem with an extra bulb above and part of a round-funnel bowl.

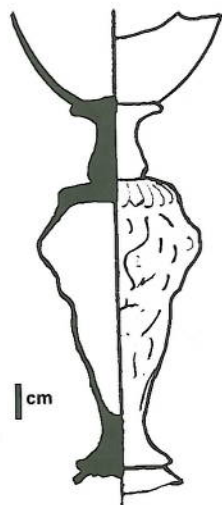


Fig 1: Mould-blown stem

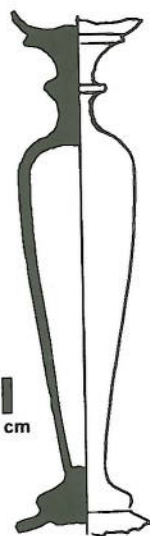


Fig 2: Cigar stem

Type 2: Cigar stem. These are also hollow, but usually thicker and more robust than the mould blown stems. Some early versions have pronounced vertical ribbing and a few (later) stems have wrythen moulding; there is one known example with metal foil inside. Unlike the mould-blown stems, cigar stems were suited to the new lead crystal glasses introduced c1670. One example has survived made from this kind of glass. Figure 2 shows an example with an extra collar above and part of a round-funnel bowl.

Type 3: Squat cigar stem. This is taken as being a separate type, since it marks the beginning of the inverted baluster shape that runs through English glass designs in both the 17th and 18th centuries. An almost complete example is illustrated by Dent (1981). Figure 3 shows an example with an extra bulb above, a cup-shaped bowl and a folded foot.

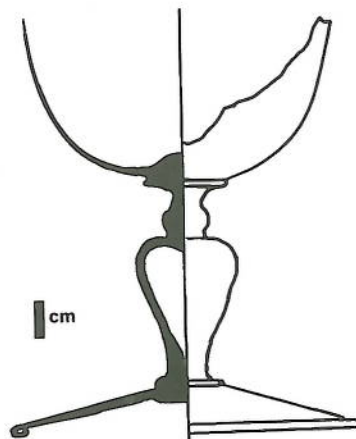


Fig 3

Type 4: Melon knop stem. The rarest type from this period is one with a central 'melon' knop in the stem. The smaller ones bridge the gap between the earlier stems and the later designs of John Greene (see type 6), giving almost a continuum of development. Fourteen of the sixteen recorded examples come from London and the other two from the south-east, indicating London as the likely place of manufacture. Figure 4 shows an example with an open bowl and a folded foot.

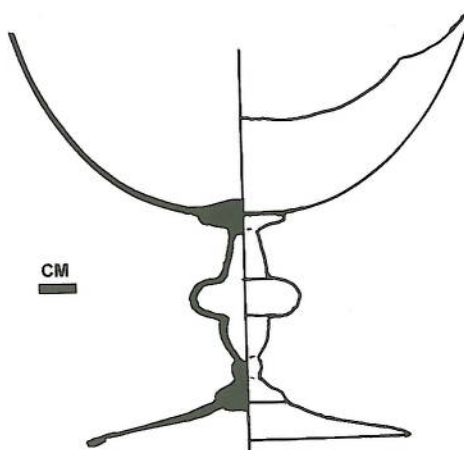


Fig 4

Type 5: Serpent stem (not illustrated). These also seem to be restricted to London. Whether they were locally manufactured or imported is not clear. These unmistakable stems are made up of coiled threads or tubes, hence the comparison with 'serpent'.

Second Period 1667 - 1702

Type 6: Glass of the type ordered by John Greene.

John Greene was a London glass seller. Uniquely for this period, his original designs survive (BM Sloane mss 857, Hartshorne 1897) as copies of those sent with his letters to the Venetian glass maker Allesio Morelli. Some designs reuse ideas of seventy years earlier. In turn, features of his designs re-occur around a hundred years later and possibly form the inspiration for the classic late 18th/early 19th century 'Rummer'. Although the type is identified with Venice, most of the excavated glasses are probably English in origin. The quality of the domestic glass is generally inferior and the majority does not match any of Greene's drawings, usually because they lack collars at the stem-bowl and/or the stem-foot junctions. The general trend is for the stem to become less complex and the glass thicker and more solid as the period progresses. The Greene designs themselves are the best guide to dating. His first order was in 1667 and there is no evidence that glasses of this type are earlier. No stems of this type are known to have come from Fire of London sites. His orders ceased in 1672. These were the first glasses 'designed' by a market-conscious merchant rather than being evolved by the makers. The style did not last long because of 'fashion' and it was not well suited to the new lead crystal glass of the 1670s. One glass in a derivative style is made of crystal glass and is sealed (see type 7); it probably dates from around 1676 (Fryer 1997). Whilst it is not made from glass containing lead oxide it displays crisselling, a progressive decay due to the use of an unstable composition that is normally associated with early lead glass. The only form of decoration in this group is moulding and trailing. Figure 5 shows a wine glass with a typical bucket bowl and plain foot.

Type 7: Glasses with taper stems. This is probably the most important type of English-made glass of the 17th century. They have no recognised name, so the descriptive term 'taper stems' has been adopted. They represent the first real 'English' glass designs, introducing the simplicity of form and reliance on proportion which were to be the hall-mark of English-made drinking glass for the next century. They both resulted from, and exploited, the new crystal glass and form the main root of both the classic inverted-baluster stemmed and plain-stemmed trumpet glasses that dominated the early Georgian era. Their influence

can be traced into the early 19th century. As with the Greene designs, some original designs survive in BM Sloane mss, 857. These show three sizes: 170, 150 and 125mm high, for beer, French wine and Spanish wine, or sack, respectively.

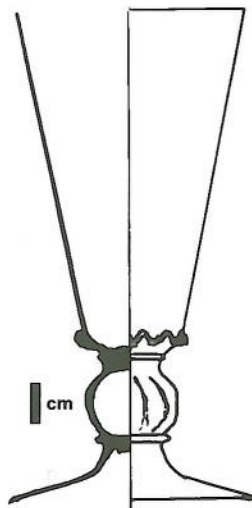


Fig 5: Greene glass

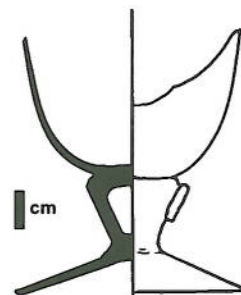


Fig 6: Sealed taper stem

From 1676 to about 1684, many glassmakers put a seal on their glasses, by impressing a crest into a molten blob of glass. They probably copied this from bottle seals, but here the seal represented the maker, not the owner. The most common is a raven's head crest used by the glassmaker George Ravenscroft (Charleston 1968, Watts 1975 and 1990). All but one of these are known to be made of lead crystal. Because of this, all excavated sealed drinking glass finds should be treated as potentially unstable and specialist conservation advice should be sought. Other known seals on tapering stems are:

- 'S' (Russell 1960)
- 'N' or 'Z' (Alvey 1973)
- human head (possibly 'roman')
- crown?
- lady with a bow

Two complete glasses with tapering stems have hand-painted decoration on their bowls. Both excavated and intact examples have bowls with panelled-dimple moulding, thought to be a Dutch style and dating from after the accession of William and Mary to the English throne in 1689. Stems with wrythen moulding are also thought to date from this period. The following features indicate a glass from the early part of the period: short and/or straight sided-stem; a seal; non-lead glass and crisselling; plain-edged foot.

Glasses from the later part of the period usually display one or more of the following: tall, incurving stem; folded foot rim; panelled-dimple moulding or painting on the bowl; semi-hollow stem (large 'tear' or air bubble). Quite frequently tapering-stems have four vertical indentations to give them a quatrefoil-shaped (four-leafed clover) cross-section. Approximately the same number of glasses is known with as without these indentations (Mayes 1972, McClenaghan 1988). This type also includes stems with extra knops or collars. Figure 6 shows an early taper stem with a round-funnel bowl, short straight-sided stem, applied seal and plain foot. One effect found on a number of glasses (and other groups of the same period) is a type of decay where the surface has a crystalline appearance, usually opaque white in colour (bright yellow has been seen!). It is possible that this is due to inadequate melting of the glass batch, perhaps linked to the introduction of covered pots in the glass furnaces (Ashurst 1987).

Type 8: Glass with a central quatrefoil knop. These knops may be hollow or solid and invariably have at least one collar below (Fig 7). This is an anglicised version of a Dutch style, probably introduced to England around the accession of William and Mary in 1689. However, jugs produced by George Ravenscroft in the late 1670s or early 1680s also have a hollow quatrefoil knop. This may well have been the result of Dutch influence from the Nijmegen glass house owner Da Costa that Ravenscroft relied on to introduce the new glass technology. Thus it is possible that this group has its roots a little earlier, but no direct evidence is available to support this. Unlikely to have been made much after 1695, examples of this type have turned up in most excavations carried out at Port Royal in Jamaica in the area of the 1692 earthquake (Marx 1968, Mayes 1972, McClenaghan 1988).

Type 9: Glass with a large pincer wing knop. These are often called 'propeller knops' (Boulton 1985). The qualification 'large' is used to differentiate them from the next time they came into fashion about seventy years later, when the knop was much less prominent. A similar distinction exists between the baluster and balustroid stem groups of the 18th century. It is more likely that a find from an English archaeological site would be one of these earlier ones than a later one, because so much of the later glass

was recycled. This type (Fig 8) is mainly confined to the 1690s, and like the previous group was probably introduced by the 'Dutch' court.

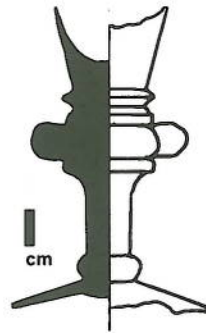


Fig 7: Quatrefoil knop



Fig 8: Wing knop

Type 10: Glass with multiple knop stems. These form one of the most varied groups, since fashion dictated rapid evolution of styles (Noel Hume 1968). In many ways this group represents a similarly complex picture to that of the 18th century balustroid group. One complete glass is known with 'God Bless King Wilijam' diamond-point engraved on the bowl. Another has been found with a small bowl that may be for spirits. They are not illustrated here because of the difficulty of selecting a representative example. Once again they belong to the 1690s, and have many Dutch stylistic features.

Type 11: Stems featuring an inverted baluster. This style continues on into the 18th century, but frequently the 17th century glasses have not developed the massive solid-bowl bases that are a hallmark of the later glasses. Some stems are also truly hollow rather than having a large irregular 'tear'. This group shares many features with taper stem glasses and there is transitional overlap between the two groups; it is sometimes difficult to decide which side of the line a particular glass should fit. Examples from both groups display a marked Dutch influence, with some or all of these features being wrythen or ribbed. This type is well illustrated in books on 18th century glass.

Type 12: Stems that are plain. This is another group that almost certainly derives from the taper stems, with the transition happening in the mid 1690s. Like the previous group these also continue into the 18th century, where they develop into the classic plain-stem trumpet-bowl wineglass.

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