Glass small finds

Barbara Tinson

517 fragments were recorded in total across all 3 zones. Glass small finds included 63 beads, 4 finger rings, 10 fragments of prismatic bottles and 420 fragments of drinking and serving vessels (Figure 2).

Glass small finds were recovered from almost all trenches and across all zones, although in very small numbers in some trenches (Figure 1). 485 (94%) of fragments were found in zone MF, 26 (5%) of fragments in MFNA and 6 fragments (1%) in zone MFP. The highest numbers of fragments were found in MF Trenches 15 and 18, which are situated over at the entrance to the temple and just outside it, in the small probable shrine at MF Trench 24, and also MF Trench 40 situated at the end of the Roman stone drain near the river (Figure 1). Significant numbers of fragments were also found in MF Trench 2, which was probably a Roman shrine to Mercury, and also MF Trench 14 and MF Trench 8.

Glass vessels

Vessel fragments, mostly in small numbers, were found in most trenches, across all three zones (Figure 3). The highest numbers of vessel fragments were found in MF Trench 15 (74 fragments) and MF Trench 18 (73 fragments), and also in MF Trench 40 (61 fragments) (Figure 3). Significant numbers of fragments were also found in MF Trench 2 (30 fragments), in MF Trench 14 (26 fragments) in MF Trench 24 (38 fragments).

No complete glass drinking or serving vessels were recovered. Much of the glass was very fragmentary, with 90% of pieces less than 2cm^2 in size (many less than 1cm^2 in size), making it difficult to identify what vessel form they related to. Nine handle fragments, 49 rim fragments and nine vessel bases could be identified using the categorisations in Price and Cottam (1998). Most rim fragments did not retain any of the body below the rim so that vessel form could not be determined. Very thin pieces of colourless or pale green glass were assumed to be body fragments of drinking vessels or possibly small glass bowls, as drinking vessels in the Roman period were made of very thin glass. 353 fragments of such 'vessel fragments' were identified (68% of the total glass small finds). In total, 420 fragments were found which could assigned as drinking or serving vessels (Figure 3), representing 81% of the total glass small finds.

Vessel fragments, even though very small, were examined for any features which would enable further identification of probable vessel form (as per forms catalogued in Price and Cottam (1998)), but only four fragments could be so assigned. A fragment of a dark yellow-green vessel with a long thin neck and funnel mouth was found in MF Trench 18 (SF 1332). However, the neck fragment was too short to allow the specific form to be identified. Given the colour and narrow neck, it is probably a long-necked jug, a common form around AD 70-130 (Allen, 1998:36).

A very thin clear glass fragment with an engraved line above two oval engraved facets (MF Trench 8, SF 1457), was probably from a facet-cut beaker, common in the first to second centuries (Allen, 1998:36), although the fragment was too small to confirm the form. A vessel base fragment from Trench 24, (SF 3723) with a circular trail on the base could be identified as a cylindrical cup with a fire-rounded rim and double base ring (Price and Cottam, 1998:99-100, Isings 1957 form 85). Price and Cottam note that these are the commonest drinking vessel in the third quarter of the second century to the mid-third century, often occurring in large numbers. A small concave base (MF Trench 40, SF 6750) was identified as a possible conical beaker (Price and Cottam, 1998: 121-122,

Isings 1957 form 106), very common in the fourth century. Whilst these three fragments are a very small sample, they do suggest the presence of the common domestic drinking vessel forms at Marcham.

Price and Cottam (1998:15) note that vessels produced in the first and early second centuries were made in strong translucent colours, including dark blue, dark green, yellow/brown and yellow/green, sometimes of such intensity as to appear black. Although yellow/green and yellow/brown colours continue into the later periods, few vessels were made of strong colours in the third and fourth centuries. 'Natural' blue/green glass in different shades and colourless glass commonly used in the second and third centuries was of good quality (Price and Cottam, 1998:16), but quality declined in the fourth century, with small bubbles and black specks visible in the glass (Allen, 1998:48). Pale greenish and pale olive-green glass was used in the fourth century and strong yellow/green in the later fourth century (Price and Cottam, 1998:16).

The colour of glass used may therefore give a very broad indication of its possible date. However, defining the colour of a fragment of glass can be subjective, as the thickness of the glass can affect the intensity of the colour observed. At Marcham, of the 420 fragments identified as vessel glass, 62% were colourless, 24% pale green, 6% pale blue/green and 4% blue/green (excluding bottles). There were also very small numbers of fragments of strongly coloured glass - two blue fragments, one dark blue, eight brown, one pale brown, one yellow and one pale yellow, two yellow green and one pale blue fragment. Fragments with small bubbles and black specks were also noted, suggesting the presence of poorer fourth century glass.

Generally, there is little indication of first century glass vessels at Marcham, but indications of second, third and fourth century glass drinking vessel forms which are commonly found on domestic sites, and consistent with finds at other shrine sites. Drinking vessel fragments represent 81% of the total glass small finds at Marcham, suggesting that drinking vessels may have played a significant role in the activities at the site, although we cannot of course be sure as to the number of actual vessels represented by these fragments. The buildings at the entrance to the temple, the building in MF Trench 2-and the probable shrine in MF Trench 24, had concentrations of drinking vessel glass, and glass beads and finger rings (Figure 2) were also present, which may give some insight into who was involved in what sort of activities undertaken here. All these trenches, based on higher numbers of Roman coins, copper alloy finds and worked bone finds showed strong signs of votive deposition or other ritual activities in these areas

At the Uley shrine site 959 fragments of Roman vessel glass were found, most of it fragmentary (Woodward and Leach, 1993:210-215). Whilst identification of the forms present was limited, it was noted that glass was mostly fourth century. Vessel types and forms were those commonly used on domestic sites in Britain and the northwest provinces, with few of 'more than ordinary quality' and 'no very unusual forms'. First-second and third century forms identified included a ribbed conical jug with a tall angular handle, a globular jug, cylindrical cups with fire-rounded rims and a facet and linear-cut hemispherical bowl. Common fourth century drinking vessels including conical and footed drinking cups, and hemispherical bowls were the largest group of vessels present. Typical fourth century jug forms were also found.

At Nettleton glass finds were fragmentary, with more finds from the second half of the fourth century than earlier periods (Wedlake, 1982:150-153). First to second century finds include fragments of a blue/green pillar moulded bowl, a base from a flagon, various beaker forms, and the handle of a small jug. Fragments of colourless or greenish glass, including those with bubbles or striations typical of the later fourth century, also included beakers.

Glass bottles

Price and Cottam (1998:15) note that first to second century mould-blown bottes and containers were almost always made in blue/green glass. Ten probable fragments of jugs or prismatic bottles were identified at Marcham, based on their blue/green colour and the thickness of the glass (Figure 4). Bottles have hexagonal, square, rectangular or octagonal bodies, and four of the flat glass fragments found showed the beginning of an upturn at the edge of the glass fragment, with an angle characteristic of a prismatic bottle. Glass bottles often have scratches on the surface of the glass, from their usage where the contents are taken out and refilled (Allen, 1998:34), and seven of the fragments found showed such scratches.

Two bottles were found in each of MF Trench 18, MF Trench 24 and MF Trench 26. One bottle was found in each of MF trenches 9, MF 14, MF 22 and MFNA Trench 7.

At the Nettleton shrine (Wedlake, 1982:150-153) first to second century finds include fragments of over 30 bottles. At the Uley shrine site (Woodward and Leach, 1993:210-215) three square and one cylindrical bottle were found, as well as typical fourth century mould-blown cylindrical bottles.

Glass beads

Sixty-three beads were recovered in total (Figure 5), representing 12% of the total number of glass small finds at Marcham. Sixteen glass beads were recovered from MF Trench 8 (a finds rich area over the stone drain close to the possible small shrine in Trench 24), twelve beads from MF Trench 24, nine beads from MF Trench 18 and seven beads from Trench 40. Smaller numbers of beads were recovered from MF Trenches 2, 14, 15, 22 and 29, with single beads from MF Trenches 4, 9, 25, 31, 33, 34, 36, and 39. No beads were recovered from zones MFNA and MFP.

With the exception of one bead which occurred in the Iron Age through to the Roman period (discussed further below), the beads were the characteristic small geometric-shaped Roman forms described in Guido (1978:92). Beads are usually around 3mm or 4mm in width, and in lengths from around 3mm to 12mm. Twenty cylindrical beads were found, 16 round beads, 13 annular beads and smaller numbers of square-sectioned, biconical, diamond-faceted and segmented beads (Figure 6). A very small round opaque dark blue bead with thin grey stripes along the length of the bead was also found in MF Trench 8 (SF 2163). Eight translucent pale green or pale blue/green round beads, approximately 5-7mm round, were found in MF Trench 8, seven in one context 8501. Another of these beads was found in MF Trench 18 and in MF Trench 24. These are not a definitive type noted by Guido (1978) but would not be unusual for the late Roman period.

Dark blue, blue and blue/green were the main colours occurring (Figure 6), with a few dark green, black, brown, pale green and colourless beads also found. Glass beads occur in a variety of colours, often to imitate precious and semi-precious stones (Birley, 2012:1). Blue and green glass beads were the most common colours (Birley, 2012:1), imitating sapphires and emeralds, and the beads from Marcham are consistent with this trend. Swift (2003:31) notes that these types of beads appear in the second and third centuries AD and are very common in the fourth century.

A large deep blue annular/squashed globular bead with an opaque cream wavy pattern around the circumference was found in MF Trench 18 (SF 3753). Guido (1978) classifies these beads as ‘Group 5’, occurring in the Iron Age through to the Roman period. Cool (2023:111-113) notes such beads as being common in the first century AD, and occurring intermittently thereafter, but may have been kept into later periods and restrung with other beads. Birley (2012:3) suggests that large beads such

as this, or the melon bead discussed below, may have been centrally placed or used as focal beads to draw attention.

Part of a large, blue/green melon bead was found in MF Trench 33 (SF 5808). Melon beads are large, with a large perforation, and finds from contexts associated with Roman military barracks suggest that melon beads may also have been used in decoration on horse harnesses (Birley, 2012:4).

Beads found at Marcham were characteristic of the commonly occurring Roman forms and colours, with similar trends recorded at the shrine sites at Nettleton and Uley. As noted above, glass beads were found in trenches which also had finger rings, and significant numbers of fragments of drinking vessels (Figure 2). Birley (2012:4) notes that, with the exception of melon beads, in the Roman period beads were used for personal adornment and usually associated with women, indicating their presence on site.

Twenty-nine beads were found at Nettleton, mostly typical Roman forms (Wedlake, 1982:153-154). Bead types included melon, segmented, hexagonal, biconical, long oval and small beads, with colours including light blue, dark green, opaque black and light green. Beads were found in varying levels, including those associated with the circular temple, within the temple area, and in material deposited north of the circular shrine before the octagonal podium wall was built.

Eighty-nine Roman glass beads were found at the Uley shrine site, with no clear patterning or changes through time (Woodward and Leach, 1993:161-162). No pre-Roman beads were found. Beads occurred in late second to fourth century contexts and there appears to be some continuation inro fifth century contexts. Bead shapes included square-sectioned, cylinder, hexagonal sectioned, biconical, globular, segmented and triangular sectioned. Two melon beads were found. Colours included opaque turquoise, turquoise blue/green, light translucent green, translucent dark green and opaque blue.

Finger rings

Fragments of four finger rings were found (Figure 5), all in trenches where glass beads were also recovered. Part of a black glass ring with a bezel was found in MF Trench 29 (SF 5141). Part of a dark blue glass finger ring was found in MF Trench 18, (SF 3700), and part of a blue glass ring in MF Trench 40 (SF 6610). A clear glass ring with an applied yellow-brown spiral twisted around it was found in MF Trench 2 (SF 1892).

Bronze rings and one jet ring were found at Nettleton (Wedlake, 1982:220), and bronze, silver and jet rings at Uley (Woodward and Leach, 1993:177), but none in glass.

Glass counters

One black glass gaming counter was found, in MF Trench 15.

One glass counter was found at Nettleton (Wedlake, 1982:214-216). Four glass counters were found at Uley (Woodward and Leach, 1993:171-174).

Other fragments

Nineteen fragments (4% of the total glass small finds) could not be assigned to any of the above categories, and are shown as ‘fragments’. Some of these fragments could relate to thicker glass serving bowls or jugs but were too fragmentary to classify further.

Window glass

No window glass was found at Marcham. Evidence for a timber window frame was found in the octagonal temple at Nettleton (Wedlake, 1982:46/48), and many fragments of both thick glossy/matt first-second century glass and thinner blown third-fourth century glass were found (Wedlake, 1982:153). Roman-period glass was not found at Uley (Woodward and Leach, 1993:189).

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Appendix - Analysis of data

Figure 1: Total number of fragments

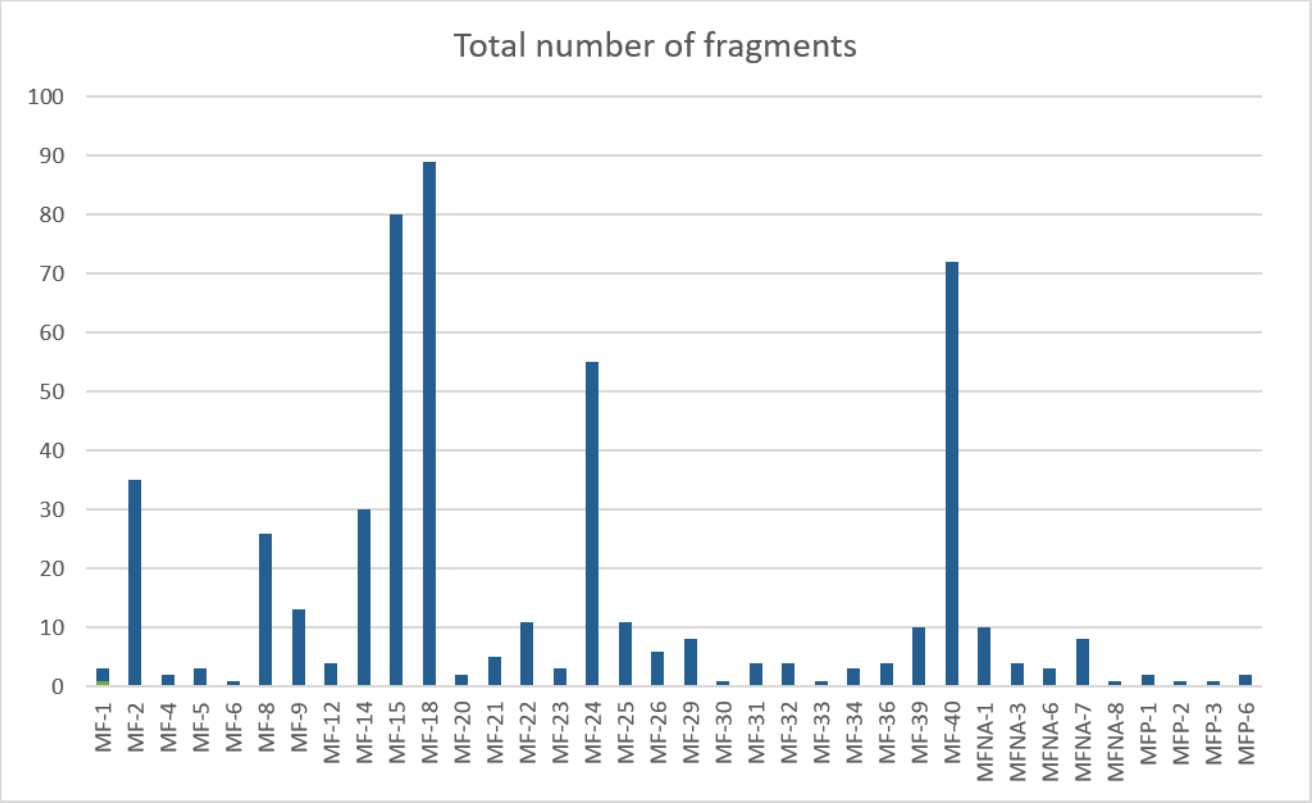


Figure 2: Types of finds

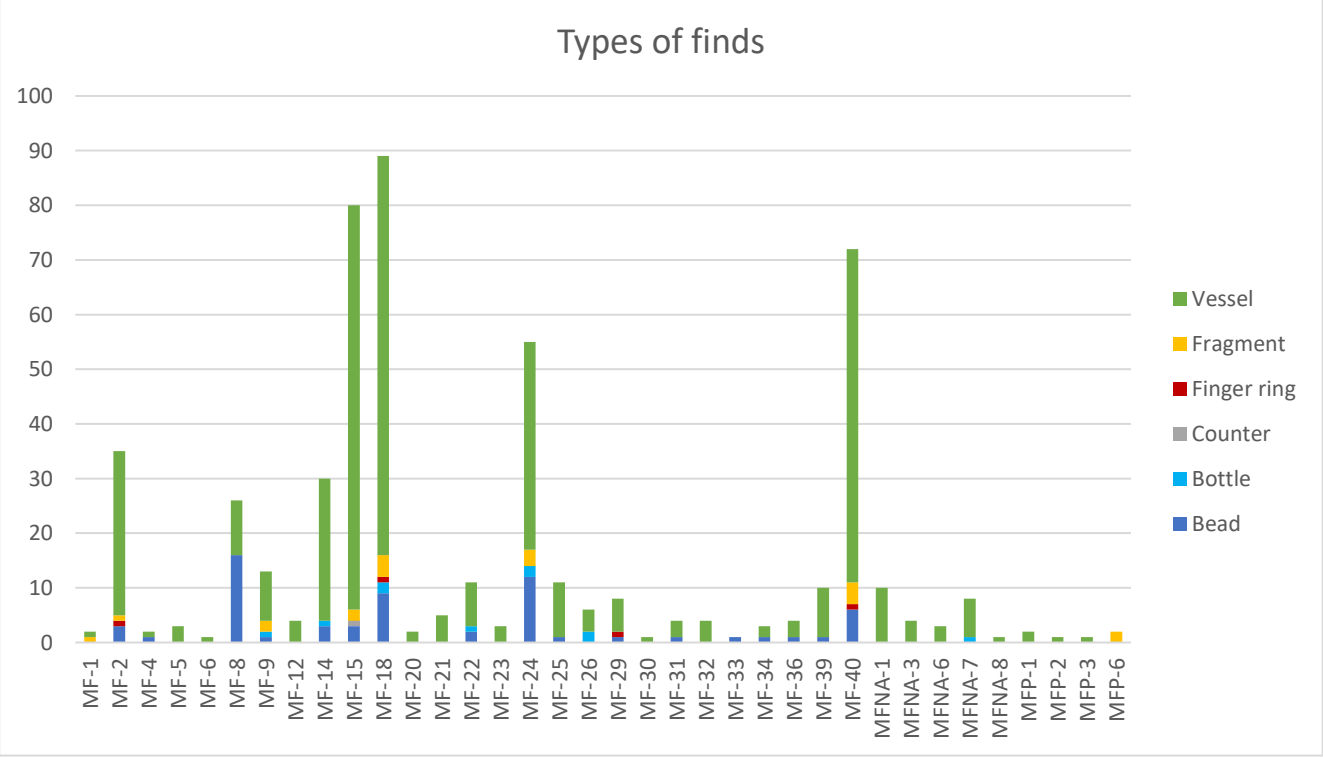


Figure 3: Glass drinking and serving vessels

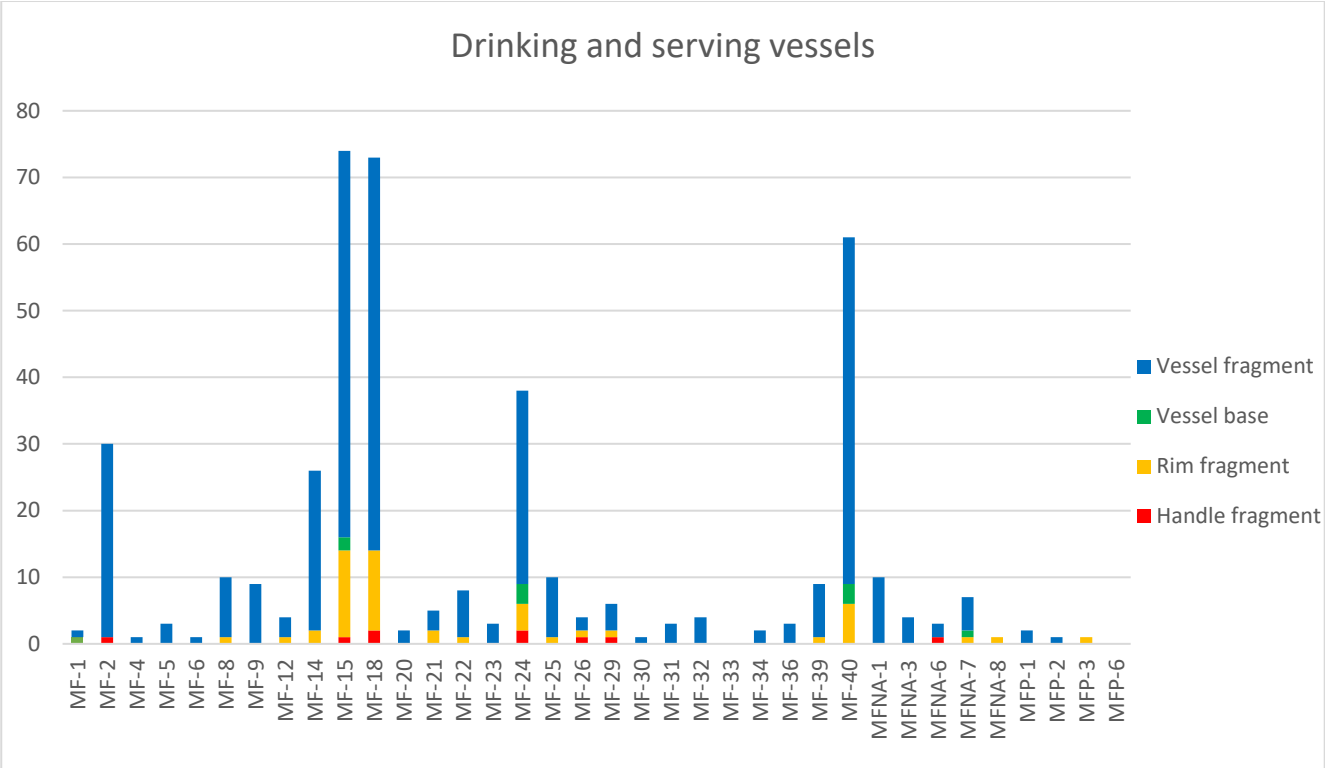


Figure 4: Glass bottles

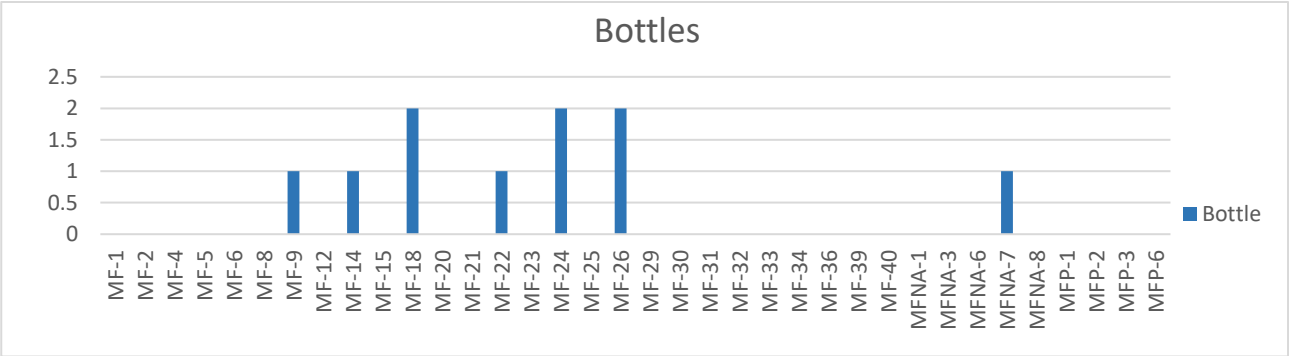


Figure 5: Glass beads and finger rings

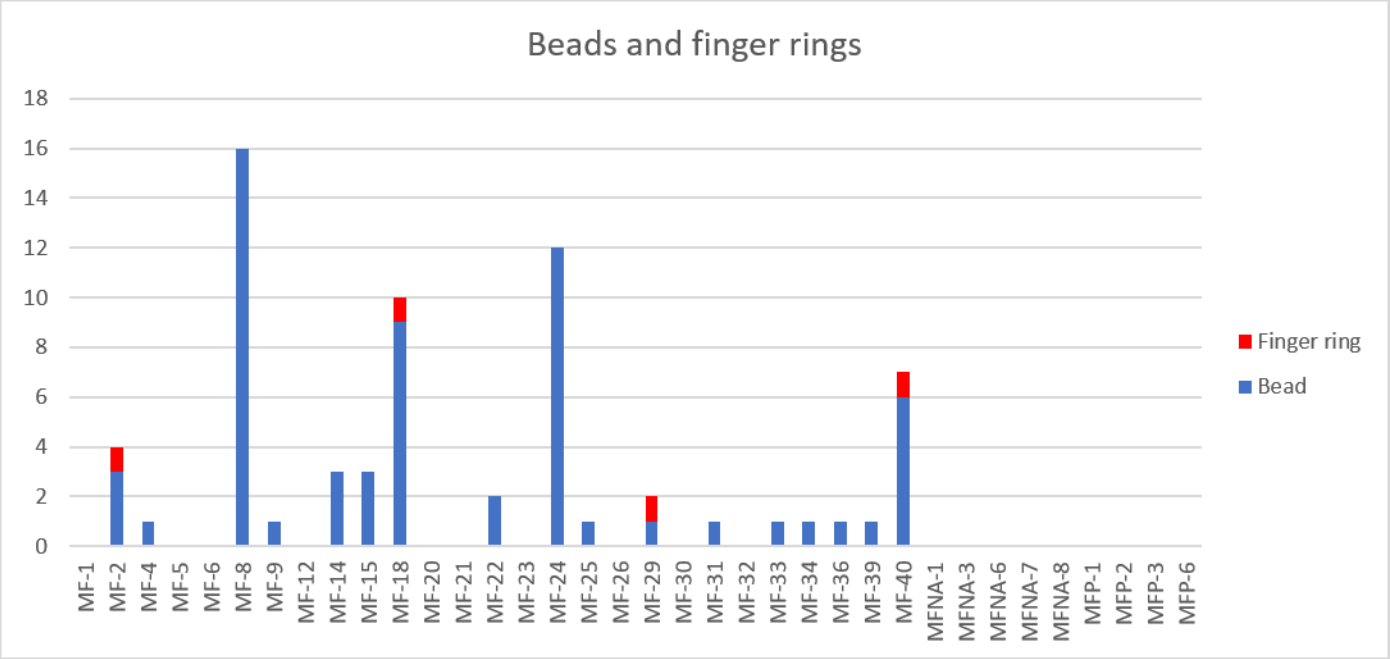


Figure 6: Bead colour and shape

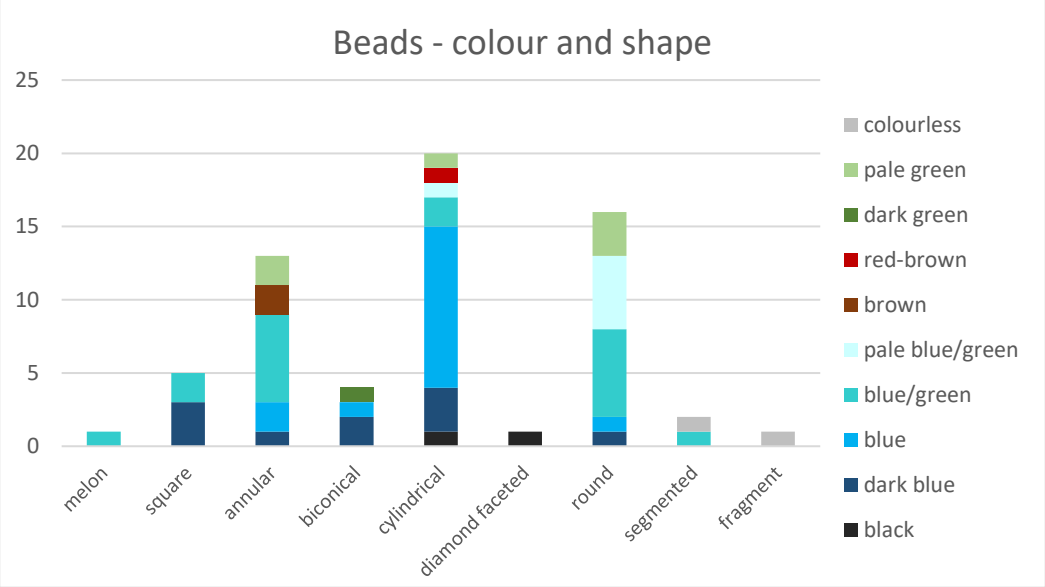


Figure 7: Glass small finds

Glass small finds										
	Bead	**Bottle**	**Counter**	**Finger ring**	**Fragment**	**Handle fragment**	**Rim fragment**	**Vessel base**	**Vessel fragment**	**Total**
MF-1					1				1	**2**
MF-2	3			1	1	1			29	**35**
MF-4	1								1	**2**
MF-5									3	**3**
MF-6									1	**1**
MF-8	16						1		9	**26**
MF-9	1	1			2				9	**13**
MF-12							1		3	**4**
MF-14	3	1					2		24	**30**
MF-15	3		1		2	1	13	2	58	**80**
MF-18	9	2		1	4	2	12		59	**89**
MF-20									2	**2**
MF-21							2		3	**5**
MF-22	2	1					1		7	**11**
MF-23									3	**3**
MF-24	12	2			3	2	4	3	29	**55**
MF-25	1						1		9	**11**
MF-26		2				1	1		2	**6**
MF-29	1			1		1	1		4	**8**
MF-30									1	**1**
MF-31	1								3	**4**
MF-32									4	**4**
MF-33	1									**1**
MF-34	1								2	**3**
MF-36	1								3	**4**
MF-39	1						1		8	**10**
MF-40	6			1	4		6	3	52	**72**
MFNA-1									10	**10**
MFNA-3									4	**4**
MFNA-6						1			2	**3**
MFNA-7		1					1	1	5	**8**
MFNA-8							1			**1**
MFP-1									2	**2**
MFP-2									1	**1**
MFP-3							1			**1**
MFP-6					2					**2**
Grand Total	**63**	**10**	**1**	**4**	**19**	**9**	**49**	**9**	**353**	**517**

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