



The Glass Workers of Roman London

John Shepherd, Angela Wardle

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Recycling may be a topical subject today, but it is an ancient practice. Glass was regularly recycled to make new vessels during the Roman period and important new evidence for glass working in London came from 35 Basinghall Street in the City, with the discovery, in 2005, of over 70kg of broken vessel glass and production waste. This ranges from large blocks, which have cooled in a tank furnace, to minute threads swept from a workshop floor. Particularly impressive are thousands of moils - the small cylinder of glass left on the end of the blowing iron when a vessel has been detached, each representing the making of a single product. Such glass was a valuable commodity which would normally have been remelted in a furnace and used to create new vessels. Its presence may mark the demise of a nearby glass workshop, located on the margins of the city. Detailed study of the waste is providing new insights into the glass industry of 2nd-century AD London, its products and the techniques of its craftsmen. This colourful book reviews the current evidence for the history of glass working in Roman London. The various stages of glass vessel production are described, using both the evidence from Basinghall Street and striking images of the experimental work of modern glass-blowers using ancient techniques.

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