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Joy over glass cone find at historic site in Stourbridge

It is believed to have been destroyed centuries ago. But experts digging at an historic site believe they may have unearthed the remains of a glass cone that once stood there.



Kate Page-Smith, from Nexus Heritage and Ian Drury, heritage officer at the centre, on the spot where the glass cone once stood



[Some glass beads, possibly from the 1700s](#)



[The former Webb Corbett factory as it was](#)



[A bottle found at the site](#)

Archaeologists carried out the dig at the Ruskin Glass Centre, in Stourbridge, and they said they had been left 'surprised and elated' after making the historically important find.

It is well-known two glass cones once operated at the site, in Wollaston Road, which was once home to glass greats Webb Corbett and Royal Doulton.

But while the location of one of the cones is known, information on the other, which collapsed in the 1700s, is scarce.

And it was believed the remains of the structure were long gone after a house was built on that part of the site.

Archaeologists started a dig to uncover the foundations of the Georgian house days ago.

They have uncovered the remains of the property, called Coalbourne House, and found a cellar which once formed part of the manor mainly intact.

But when the last occupants of the house, which was demolished in the 1960s, came to visit the site they mentioned a mysterious grass mound which had always been in the back garden.

Archaeologists decided to dig in the location – and found the remains of the long lost glass cone.

The floor of the cone has now been unearthed and glass beads and droplets believed to be from the 1700s found.

Kate Page-Smith, from Nexus Heritage which is carrying out the work, said it had been a 'very exciting find'.

"The cone collapsed in the late 1700s. We are the first people to walk on that floor since then which is an amazing feeling," she said.

"The remains we have left mean we will be able to measure the diameter of the cone and piece together other valuable information about the structure.

"We are literally adding to the history of the site." She said the west side of the cone had been lost as the driveway of the house had been built over it.

"However what we have seems to have been protected and lay beneath the grass in the back garden of the house."

Samples have been taken which will be studied by experts.

Other items found include pieces of pottery believed to date from the Georgian period.

And from much later periods there was a bottle with a butter logo on it and even a yoghurt pot from the 1960s – giving a full range of finds from the house's long history. The story of Stourbridge glass begins some 400 years ago when glassmakers, originally from Lorraine in North-Eastern France, settled in the area.

Initially, glassmakers focused on things like window glass and bottles. Towards the end of the 17th century however Stourbridge glassmakers introduced table glass to their repertoire.

Between 1830 and the start of the First World War, factories like Richardson's of Wordsley, Thomas Webb & Sons of Amblecote and Stevens & Williams of Brierley Hill introduced cut, etched and engraved glass, cameo work and rock crystal in exotic colours. Suddenly Stourbridge emerged as a centre of international importance.

The Red House Glass Cone, just up the road from the Ruskin centre, remains a familiar landmark on the skyline.

The other glass cone at the Ruskin site will be excavated at a second dig running from March 10 to 23.

Volunteers are still being asked to take part in the second dig.

The digs are taking place before the third-phase of redevelopment work begins at the glass centre. New commercial workshops and a car park will also be created as part of the scheme.

The redevelopment work will begin soon after both digs have ended and once both sites have been backfilled.

An open weekend will be held before this takes place for people to see both sites for themselves – although a final date has still to be set.

People interested in the next dig are asked to call glass heritage officer Ian Dury on 01384 399419.

<http://www.expressandstar.com/editors-picks/2014/02/24/joy-over-glass-cone-find-at-historic-site-in-stourbridge/ruskin-11-sl-20/>