

Two Roman mirrors from Hayling Island

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Fragments of two mirrors were examined using the Milliprobe (X-ray fluorescence spectrometer).

The first mirror (A.M. No. 780685) was polished on one surface, which was highly reflective and pale grey in colour, and rough on the back which, like the broken edge, appeared a dull dark grey. The analytical results for front and back were virtually identical, suggesting that the mirror was of the same composition all through and did not have a surface coating of any sort. Strong signals for tin and copper were recorded together with weak ones for lead. The alloy was a high tin bronze known as speculum metal. This is very brittle so the small amount of lead was probably added to make it easier to work.

The other mirror (A.M. No. 780686) was similar but was thinner and very fragmentary. Again one side was highly polished and the other not. The composition was virtually the same as that of 780685, being speculum metal with a small amount of lead present.