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IDENTIFICATION OF SOME BEADS FROM CATTERICK, N YORKSHIRE

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A total of seven beads from three Anglian burials were submitted for identification of the material of which they were made.

Three of the beads (AM 8111511, 8111551 and 8111605) were of amber. They were in rather varying states of preservation, probably reflecting the varying quality of the amber of which they were made.

Two of the beads (AM 8111560 and 8111609) were of faience. This is a partly fused silicate material made by heating silica (sand) with an alkali which fluxes the outside of the sand grains, producing a glassy layer which sticks them together. The shape of the beads is produced by moulding the raw materials. Originally the surface of these beads would have been glassy but this has weathered/been abraded leaving the core exposed. This outer 'glaze' was coloured turquoise by the presence of a little copper; traces of this can still be seen. The perforation in AM 8111560 has a constriction in it, a feature commonly found in this type of bead.

The remaining two beads are of glass. AM 8111444 is made of translucent green and glass is a short length cut from a long perforated cane of glass. AM 8111529 is made of opaque red glass with a white trail. The opacity of the white glass is partly due to opaque white particles and partly to small bubbles. The perforation of this bead is nearly square in cross-section and has a black lining, probably produced by contact with an iron rod on which the bead was formed. This black lining is commonly found on most opaque glass beads of the Anglo-Saxon period.

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