

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 242/87

**NOTE ON A MEDIEVAL ENAMEL FROM
SWAN LANE, CITY OF LONDON**

Justine Bayley

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Summary

The object was a small cloisonne plaque which was not very well preserved. Traces of enamel of several colours survived but much of it was deeply decayed. XRF showed the metal to be copper.

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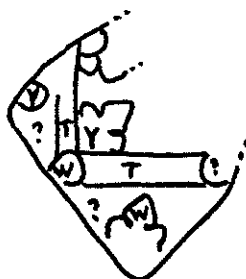
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The object (Site code SWA 81, context 2101, Museum of London Accession No 3000) is a fragmentary cloisonne enamelled plaque, in shape an irregular quadrangle, with the only complete side measuring about 30 mm. The cloisons are strips of metal, about 3 mm high, attached to the metal base plate. X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis showed the metal to be almost pure copper.

The enamel that survives is very fragmentary and much of it is deeply corroded which makes the identification of the original colours difficult. The sketch below indicates the layout of the individual fields (as seen on an X-radiograph) and such details of enamel colours as can be suggested with at least a moderate degree of confidence.

XRF analysis of the front of the object detected mainly copper, iron and lead with minor amounts of both tin and antimony. The area analysed was far larger than any individual field so the results are an average representing several fields and their dividing cloisons. Some copper is contained in the turquoise enamel but the majority is present as metal or metal corrosion products. Some of the iron may be colouring one or more of the enamel fields but most is present in the mud etc that is trapped in the surface of the object. The lead indicates that at least some of the enamel contained this element which is not unexpected; the enamel on an early medieval disc brooch from Billingsgate (BWB 83) was also leaded (Bayley 1985). Both tin and antimony are found in enamels of various periods where they produce opaque white or yellow colours so their presence here is not unexpected.



- ? = unknown
- W = white
- T = opaque turquoise
- Y = possibly yellow

Reference:

Bayley, J (1985) Note on an enamelled disc from Billingsgate.