

Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Report 107/90

IDENTIFICATION OF THE NON-GLASS
BEADS FROM WROXETER (WP)
SHROPSHIRE.

Mrs M E Hutchinson

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Summary

321 beads and groups of beads were examined and 24 were identified as not being glass. They were amber, coral, emerald, brass, jet/shale, 'faience' and variscite.

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**IDENTIFICATION OF THE NON-GLASS BEADS FROM WROXETER (WP)
SHROPSHIRE.**

321 beads and groups of beads were examined under low-powered magnification and those which were not glass are identified below. Several identifications were confirmed by ED-XRF (energy dispersive X-ray fluorescence).

AML 824010 Box A

WP 75	(23)	D154	/114\	amber
WP 81	(19p)	B277-d	/243\	amber
WP 75	(22)	D168	/193\	coral
WP 80	(6N)	D439	/109\	coral
WP 80	(20)	B266	/124\	coral
WP 81	(21)	D566	/349\	coral
WP 82	(22F)	D718	/509\	* emerald, natural crystal pierced longitudinally, pearly lustre on transverse break
WP 81	(20A)	B288-c	/375\	* brass bead with square sectioned glass bead jammed inside
WP 73	(41)	I/II	/45\	* jet/shale, now in many very small pieces

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AML 824010 Box B

WP 72	(18)	I/II	/65\	'faience', melon bead
WP 74	(8)	C103-1	/51\	'faience', melon bead
WP 76	(36)	D81-1	/237\	'faience', melon bead frag
WP 80	(19)	B267	/203\	'faience', melon bead
WP 80	(36C)	E96C-E	/589\	'faience', melon bead frag
WP 81	(36H)	D116-62	/574\	'faience', melon bead
WP 81	(39Q)	D484x	/361\	'faience', melon bead

WP 83	(19p)	B410	/326\	'faience', melon bead
WP 83	(28B)	D1214 SS32	/265\	'faience', melon bead frag
WP 83	(34H)	C495	/652\	'faience', melon bead frag
WP 85	(8B)	D2225	/603\	'faience', melon bead
WP 87	(19Q)	B535	/436\	'faience', melon bead
WP 75	(9)	D100	/198\	* jet/shale, broken into fragments
WP 83	(33C)	C476	/823\	* variscite. As this has been carved into a hexagonal prism it may be a deliberate attempt to fake or at least imitate an emerald crystal.

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78001041 (40L) /297\ jet, on section of ?necklace.

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These beads are all residual and therefore cannot be taken as typical of a Roman site in England. The **coral** is all red coral, probably coming from the Mediterranean Sea. Roman **emeralds** are said to come from Egypt, where there certainly are ancient emerald mines, but other sources should not be discounted. The **amber** is almost certainly Baltic, although these beads have not been analysed. **Jet** and shale were widely used at Wroxeter and there are eleven more beads among the jet/shale finds. **Variscite**, hydrous aluminium phosphate ($AlPO_4 \cdot 2H_2O$) has been recognised so far less than half a dozen times on excavations at Romano-British sites, but this may be lack of correct identification rather than rarity. The Old World source of variscite is Saxony. For the purpose of this report '**faience**' is used to describe a material made from particles of silica, alkali and a little copper.

* Beads analysed by ED-XRF. Analyses carried out by M Heyworth, AM Laboratory.