

# Gold-in-glass beads from Roman Britain

---

The material is ordered chronologically; images are not included for copyright reasons.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> century

**Baldock** (Herts.): 44 beads from cremation containing Dr. 37 bowl dated to after AD 170 (Boon 1977, 197-8; Cool 2004, 387; Guido 1978, 205; Westell 1931, 272, burial group 89).

**Brougham** (Cumbria): Complete beads in urned cremation 36 (one bead, unsexed adult and infant) from Phase 1 (AD 200/220-240) and 253 (four beads, unsexed infant) from Phase 2 (240-270); molten examples in 135 (possible female and infant) from Phase 2, 257 (unsexed sub-adult) from Phase 3 (270-300/10) and 282 (female) from Phase 3b (280/5-300/10): Cool 2004, 386; Boon 1977, 207.

**Caerleon** (Gwent):

- Cannabae: two beads, one from Antonine-Severan drain fill; one u/s. Not fully published but see Boon 1977, 198; Brewer 1986, 152; Guido 1978, 206.
- 26 from drain deposits of fortress bath, with fills accumulating between AD 160-230 (Brewer 1986, 151-2, nos 1-26, fig. 49B).

**Carrowburgh, Coventina's well** (Northumberland): 24 from fill of well, 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century (Boon 1977, 198; Guido 1978, 206; Allason-Jones & McKay 1985, 37, no 127).

**Castell Collen** (Radnorshire): 11 from fort baths, with 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century material (Boon 1977, 198; Guido 1978, 206; see now Britnell et al. 1999, 84.)

**Catterick** (North Yorks.):

- one bead in context dated to AD 125-300 (Wilson 2002, 259, fig. 349.15).
- Similar bead from Catterick Bridge (Wilson 2002, 262, fig. 351).
- Another from Thornborough Farm (Wilson 2002, 262, fig. 352).

**Chesterholm** (Vindolanda, Northumbria): vicus, four stratified AD 163-250, a further six u/s but probably of the same date (Boon 1977, 198); gold-in-glass bead from civilian context (vicus) dated to early 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Birley & Blake 2005, 196).

**Hales**, Tyrley (Staffs.): villa baths; one in mortar of hypocaust pillar; third century (Boon 1977, 198; Guido 1978, 206).

**Newstead** (Borders): Four from Antonine fort (Boon 1977, 198; Guido 1978, 206).

**Pepperhill** (Kent): 19 out of 110 beads from a female burial (10520), dated to the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century; unpublished but see Cool 2010, Table 5.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> century

**Low Borrowbridge** (near Tebay, Cumbria): Cemetery associated with fort, consisting of 3<sup>rd</sup> century inhumation and 4<sup>th</sup> century cremations. 12 out of 67 beads from a necklace found in a possible inhumation burial (pit 301, 3<sup>rd</sup> century) were of the gold-in-glass type; others are of blue, black and green glass, jet and shale (Howard Davis 1996, 115, fig. 5:13). Both the black glass beads and a blue biconical bead with a red and white chevron are uncommon; the latter may have originated in North Africa or the eastern Mediterranean (ibid.).

## Late 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century

**Caerleon** (Gwent): Cannabae: a further six examples (Allen 2000, 441); one is u/s and five come from Phase 2, Room 12.5 of Building 12 (late 3<sup>rd</sup>-mid 4<sup>th</sup> century).

**Cirencester** (Glos): Two from inhumation cemetery (Boon 1977, 198; Guido 1978, 205; McWhirr, Viner & Wells 1982, microfiche).

**Coygan Camp, Laugharne** (Carmarthenshire): one bead, late 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Guido 1978, 206).

**Colchester** (Essex): Butt Road Cemetery: Grave 16, of a six year old female, contained one shale and two copper-alloy armlets as well as a necklace; this consisted of 64 glass beads. Most were of blue, green or yellow glass, but two are of the gold-in-glass type (Crummy et al. 1993, Table 2.54). The grave is dated to AD 360+ (ibid., Table 2.66).

**Dorchester** (Dorset): Fordington inhumation cemetery (Boon 1977, 198-9; Guido 1978, 205).

**Lankhills, Winchester** (Hants): see Guido 1978, 205; Boon 1977, 198.

- Grave 100 (woman, aged 17-20, AD 330-70), about 165 beads, including gold-in-glass beads, from fill of grave (Guido in Clarke 1979, 298).
- Grave 199 (adult, AD 310-30) one gold-in-glass bead and three fragments with ca. 100 other beads (Guido in Clarke 1979, 298).
- Grave 323 (young girl, 350-70): two groups in neck region; one necklace included two gold-in-glass beads, the other 20 (Guido in Clarke 1979, 300).
- Grave 336 (young girl, AD 350-70): one silver-in-glass bead, one gold-in-glass, three shattered examples, found as part of necklace; there were four sets of beads, three placed at neck and one near the feet. The bead necklaces include one consisting of coral beads: Guido in Clarke 1979, 299.

Guido in Clarke (1979, 292-3) and Clarke (1979, 377) see graves 323 and 336 as those of incomers.

**London, Eastern cemetery:** 27 gold-in-glass beads from a necklace or bracelet; these were found together with a necklace made of c. 500 blue glass beads and hobnailed shoes placed inside the coffin at the feet of the skeleton (Barber & Bowsher 2000, 219, B652). This inhumation burial of an immature, unsexed individual is dated to between AD 180-400 (*ibid.*, 413).

**Silchester (Hants.):** Forum Basilica: unusually large segmental gold-in-glass bead (12mm x 11mm), from Phase 7, later 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century (Allen & Boon 2000, 322, fig. 148.12).

**St Albans (Herts.):** inhumation cemetery NW gate, two from a necklace of 55 mixed beads thought to date to 4<sup>th</sup> century (Wheeler & Wheeler 1936, 214, fig. 47.67p; cf. Boon 1977, 199; Guido 1978, 205).

**Vindolanda (Northumberland):** Three globular elements, perhaps all originally one bead, stratified to 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century (Guido 1978, 206).

## 4th century +

**Hartlepool (Cleveland):** Necklace worn by young female in an unusual double burial (the other skeleton is that of an adult male) away from known Romano-British settlement or cemetery activity; there were 146 beads, of which 120 are of jet (Daniels et al. 1987). 13 of the other beads are of the gold-in-glass type, the remainder are of blue and green glass. The burial is dated to the 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century on the basis of the beads.

## Uncertain date

**Burn Ground, Hampnett (Gloucestershire):** No further information given (Guido 1978, 205).

**Chesters (Northumberland):** 10 in made-up necklace, possibly from cemetery (Boon 1977, 199; Guido 1978, 206).

**Colchester (Essex):** Seven from north cemetery; thought by Boon (1977, 198) to date to 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century; a further four, unprovenanced (Boon 1977, 199). Guido 1978, 205 lists 10 in total.

**Dinas Powys, Cardiff (Glamorgenshire):** One bead unstratified from hill fort with Roman and 'Dark Age' occupation; thought by Harden to be Coptic (Guido 1978, 206).

**Farley Heath** (Surrey): Temple settlement; one bead from 19<sup>th</sup> century excavations (Boon 1977, 199; Guido 1978, 206).

**Great Chesters** (Northumberland): ?one bead, no details given (Allason-Jones & McKay 1985, 37).

**Housesteads** (Northumberland): ?one bead, no details given: Allason-Jones & McKay 1985, 37.

**London, Southwark**: 'Further' beads were found at the Courage Brewer site (Barber & Bowsher 2000, 219).

**Lydney** (Glos.): Two beads, probably but not certainly associated with 4<sup>th</sup> century temple (Boon 1977, 199; Guido 1978, 205).

**South Shields** (Tyne & Wear): Incomplete bead, not stratified (Allason-Jones & Milet 1984, 4.22; Allason-Jones & McKay 1985, 37).

**Winchester** (Hants.): Wolvesey Palace, from medieval layer with other residual Roman material (Boon 1977, 199; Guido 1978, 205).

**Wroxeter** (Shropshire): 10, probably from Forum excavations of 1923-7; perhaps 4<sup>th</sup> century (Guido 1978, 206).

**Rockbourne** (Hampshire): damaged example, from villa occupied throughout Roman period (Guido 1978, 205).

**Weston under Penyard, Bollitree** (Herefordshire): One segment, with Roman beads on a necklace (Boon 1977, 199; Guido 1978, 205).

**Haverbrack**, Milnthorpe (Kendal, Cumbria): ritual shaft containing human and animal bones and one bead – however, this is of unusual proportions and thought by Boon (1977, 199) not to be Roman. 30 other beads (Guido 1978, 206).

## **Post-Roman**

No attempt has been made to record all post-Roman examples but for a convenient summary see: Guido 1999, 340-344; cf. 78-80, map 32, pl 8. A more recently published example is also known from Canterbury.

**Canterbury, Market Way, St Stephen's (Kent):** One segmented gold-in-glass bead amongst 18 beads, all part of a single necklace from a pit; the beads include two Iron-Age types, one Roman melon bead and a group of Anglo-Saxon beads (Bevan & Richardson 2010, 55-6, fig. 30.6). The pit (2382) also contained pottery dated to the mid 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century (ibid., 50).

## **Epigraphic and artefact evidence for Sarmatians in Britain**

**Ribchester** (Lancashire): RIB 583 & RIB 587 refer to a *numerus equitum Sarmatarum Bremetenacensium*; RIB 587 is a temple dedication during reign of Severus Alexander (222-235) and RIB 583 dedication to Apollo Maponus dated 238-244 (cf. Buxton & Howard-Davies 2000, 8; Richmond 1945, 18-27). RIB 594 & 595 refer to the *ala I Sarmatorum*; both undated but probably same unit as RIB 587 (Jarrett 1994, 43).

**Catterick** (North Yorkshire): a tile from Baines in ca. 1800 stamped BSAR (RIB II.4 2479) is perhaps a misreading of EQSAR (Eq(uites) Sar(matae)) (Wilson 2002, 451-2).

**Chester** (Cheshire): second century grave stele of a horseman holding a dragon-standard is usually interpreted as depicting a Sarmatian (Henig 2004, 21, pl. 21, No 59).

**Chesters** (Northumberland): eye-shield, protective horse equipment typical of the cataphract, the distinctive Sarmatian cavalry, has been taken to indicate a Sarmatian presence (Richmond 1945, 18; Frere 1987, 147).

## **Bibliography**

Allason-Jones, L. & McKay, B. 1985. Coventina's well: a shrine on Hadrian's Wall. Chesters: trustees of the Clayton Collection.

Allason-Jones, L. & Milet, R. 1984. The catalogue of small finds from South Shields Roman Fort. Newcastle: Society of Antiquaries.

Allen, D. 2000. The glass. In: E. Evans. The Caerleon Canabae. London: Society for Promotion of Roman Studies, 424-443.

Allen, D. & Boon, G. 2000. Beads and other objects. In: M.G. Fulford & J. Timby Late Iron Age and Roman Silchester: excavations on the site of the Forum Basilica. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 321-322.

Barber, B. & Bowsher, D. 2000. The eastern cemetery of Roman London. Excavations 1983-1990. London: MoLAS.

- Bevan, L. & Richardson, A. 2010. Post-Roman registered finds. In: R. Helm & J. Rady. Excavations at Market Way St Stephen's Canterbury. Canterbury: Canterbury Archaeological Trust, 54-58.
- Birley, A. & Blake, J. 2005. Vindolanda – the excavations of 2003/4. Chesterholm: Vindolanda Trust.
- Boon, G.C. 1977. Gold-in-glass beads from the ancient world. Britannia 8, 193-207.
- Brewer, P. 1986. The beads and glass counters. In: J.D. Zienkiewicz. The legionary fortress baths at Caerleon. II The Finds. Cardiff: Cadw, 146-156.
- Britnell, J.E., Cool, H.E.M., Davies, J.L., Manning, W.H. & Walters, M. J. 1999. Recent discoveries in the vicinity of Castell Collen Roman fort, Radnorshire. Studia Celtica 38, 33-90.
- Buxton, K. & Howard-Davies, C. 2000. Bremetenacum – Excavations at Roman Ribchester 1980, 1989-1990. Lancaster: Lancaster University Archaeological Unit.
- Clarke, G. 1979. Pre-Roman and Roman Winchester. Part 2: The Roman cemetery at Lankhills. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cool, H. E.M. 2010. Finding the foreigners. In: H. Eckardt (ed.) Roman diasporas: archaeological approaches to mobility and diversity in the Roman Empire. JRA Suppl., 27-44.
- Cool, H. E.M. 2004. The Roman cemetery at Brougham, Cumbria. Excavations 1966-67. Britannia Monograph 21. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.
- Crummy, N., Crummy, P. And C. Crossan 1993. Excavations of Roman and later cemeteries, churches and monastic sites in Colchester, 1971-88. CAR9. Colcheter: Colchester Archaeological Trust.
- Daniels, R., Jolley, D., Marlow, M. & Vyner, B. 1987. A Romano-British double burial at Hartlepool, Cleveland. Durham Archaeological Journal 3, 1-4.
- Frere, S. 1987. Britannia (3rd revised edition). London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Guido, M. 1978. The glass beads of the prehistoric and Roman periods in Britain and Ireland. London: Society of Antiquaries.
- Henig, M. 2004. Roman sculpture from the north west Midlands. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Howard-Davis, C. 1996. The bead necklace. In: J. Lambert. Transect through time: the archaeological landscape of the Shell North Western Ethylene Pipeline. Lancaster: Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, 115.

Jarrett, M.G. 1994. Non-legionary troops in Roman Britain. Britannia 25, 35-77.

McWhirr, A., Viner, L. & Wells, C. 1982. Romano-British cemeteries at Cirencester. Cirencester: Cirencester Excavation Committee.

Richmond, I.A. 1945. The *Sarmatae, Bremetennacum Veteranorum* and the *Regio Bremetennacensis*. Journal of Roman Studies 35, 15-29.

Westell, W.P. 1931. A Romano-British cemetery at Baldock, Herts. Archaeological Journal 88, 247-301.

Wheeler, R.E.M. & Wheeler, T.V. 1936. Verulamium: a Belgic and two Roman cities. London: Society of Antiquaries.

Wilson, P.R. 2002. Cataractonium: Roman Catterick and its hinterland. Excavations and research, 1958-1997. York: Council for British Archaeology.