THE ROMAN JEWELLERY
FROM VINDOLANDA

Research Reports, New Series
Volume IV
Fascicule V: Beads, Intaglios, Finger Rings,
Ear-rings & Bracelets

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and
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with
a preface by
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1. Vindolanda from the south, showing most of the remains currently visible – essentially Stone Fort II and a series of structures outside its western wall. The latter include civilian houses and workshops, together with parts of the underlying Severan fort. Magnetometer and aerial surveys have revealed that there had also been extensive activity at some time in the fields to the north and west. Four of the early pre-Hadrianic forts underlie both the stone fort and much of the extramural settlement.
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Preface, by Robin Birley

Vindolanda’s Research Reports, New Series, Volume IV was planned as a series of fascicules devoted to different classes of small finds, and over the years a number have been published by the Trust, and several are still being researched. Those published so far have been devoted to the Writing Materials and the Weapons (both by Robin Birley), the Tools (by Justin Blake), the Locks and Keys (by Andrew Birley), the Amphorae and Barrels (by Elise Marliere, included in the 2001-2002 Excavation Report), and the Spoons (by Heide Birley). The Writing Tablets up to 1994 (by Professors Bowman and Thomas), have been published by the British Museum Press, and the Tablets of 2001-2004 (by Anthony Birley) can be found in the Excavation Reports of 2001-2002 and 2003-2004. John Peter Wild has published a number of articles on the textiles, and the leather goods up to 1989 were described by Carol Van Driel Murray in the New Series Vol III. The wooden objects are the preserve of Rob Sands and Jon Hather, and a major publication is due before the end of 2006.

Many more categories of finds remain to be published, but this work on the Jewellery makes a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the more social side of life at Vindolanda and its relationship with the culture of the wider Roman world. Its authors have made an exhaustive study of the Vindolanda archives, and can claim to have examined every example of bead, intaglio, finger ring, bracelet and ear-ring found during the past 34 years of excavation. Both authors are natives of the USA, but have done their best to avoid too many American expressions and spellings. Elizabeth Greene received her BA at Boston University and MA at Tufts University, and is currently studying for a PhD at the University of North Carolina. For the past four years she has worked for many months as a Site Supervisor on Vindolanda’s Excavations. Barbara Birley obtained her BA at the Metropolitan State College, Denver, and her MA (Mus.) at Leicester University. She also has taken part in the excavations, and is now the Assistant Curator of the Vindolanda Collection.

The descriptions of the finds in this Report include references to the levels of occupation in which they were discovered, and, whenever possible, attribution to military or civilian occupation. In some cases, such as fort ditches, the location could be ascribed to either, for there is plentiful evidence for the dumping of rubbish in such convenient places by both soldiers and civilians, and the same applied to drains in bathhouses. But both authors emphasise that their statistics are heavily influenced by the extent of excavation in given levels and areas of occupation. The earliest occupation – currently known as Period I – has only been examined in short lengths of the western ditches of that fort, and the succeeding two periods, dating from around AD90 to 105, has been confined to perhaps one twelfth of those forts. In Periods IV and V, when the forts were at their maximum size, even less of the military remains have been excavated. Apart from the military bath house, no extramural remains associated with those first five periods of occupation have yet been discovered. In spite of this, numerous civilian goods have been found, in the shape of jewellery and most noticeably footwear, a reminder that there were plenty of good reasons for civilians to find their way into the military compounds, and not only into the commanding officers’ residences.

Period V is currently thought to close around the mid AD 120’s, when the garrison of Tungrians probably moved up to the new fort at Housesteads. Period VI, with a so far unknown garrison (possibly a Nervian cohort), lies in the years associated with what has hitherto been called Stone Fort I – featuring the remarkable and ornate south-facing principia, investigated by Eric Birley and Ian Richmond in 1934. As a result of the 2005 excavations, it is now known that this new fort started off with a turf and timber rampart, before receiving some years later a stone wall in front of the turf. It is hoped to recover timbers suitable for a precise dendrochronological date during the 2006 excavations, but in the meantime the presumed dates of that occupation remains as circa AD 140 to the Severan period. At some stage around AD 160 the western ditches of that fort were backfilled, to accommodate a large
timber-built military annexe adjacent to the western wall, and some of it has been examined, and given the notation Period VIA.

Period VIB saw the construction of the unorthodox and short-lived Severan fort, associated eventually with the remarkable stone-built circular huts over much of the former Stone Fort I platform. Dates given to this period remain as AD 200 or so to 212. It may be that some of the stone buildings examined in 2003-2005 at the far western part of the site represent extramural activity during this Severan occupation, but it is unclear whether they were of military or civilian function. A sizeable area of the Severan fort has been examined, including the commanding officer’s residence.

Period VII starts with the arrival of the Fourth Cohort of Gauls in or soon after AD 212, constructing what is known as Stone Fort II, with a planned development of extramural buildings principally on the western side. The majority of the extramural buildings were clearly the homes of civilians associated with the garrison, together with a variety of shops, a corn-dryer and small industrial premises. How much of the development to the north of the Stanegate road (now known from a major magnetometer survey) was of a civilian nature cannot be determined without excavation, and the major cemeteries, known to line the Stanegate road to the west, are only known from casual finds by farmers in the past. Period VIII is fourth century Vindolanda, when the stone fort appears to have been extensively rebuilt and the extramural settlement largely abandoned, and Period IX is the little known final Roman refurbishment instituted by Count Theodosius after the events of AD 369. Even less is known of the activity after AD 400, known as Period X, although there is evidence for irregular new structures and a Christian community.

The current (2006/7) excavation programme is concentrated on two areas. The far western limit of the Vindolanda land-holding is already revealing a number of small second century stone buildings – perhaps temples – later demolished to make way for workshops probably of civilian usage, and below all the stone structures evidence has been found for a massive wooden building, whose major uprights are almost 600mm square, far larger than anything so far found within the early wooden forts. The date and function of that early timber building are high priorities. The southern length of the western wall of Stone Fort II, from the West Gate to the fort’s southern corner, is also the scene of a major investigation. Besides attempts to date the numerous rebuilds of that wall, work is also concentrated upon the surviving remains of the earlier stone fort, including its west gate partially examined by Ian Richmond in 1934. If weather conditions permit, it should be possible to examine remains of the early wooden forts below all the stone forts’ structures.

After the conclusion of the 2007 programme, decisions have to be made about the nature of further work. Excavation in the third century extramural settlement, in the third and fourth century stone fort, or an attempt to sample the extensive remains in the field to the north must be balanced against the temptations presented by the often anaerobic levels containing the pre-Hadrianic forts. The only certainty is that there is enough archaeological work still to be undertaken to occupy the Vindolanda archaeologists for well over another 100 years.
2. Vindolanda's fort and extramural settlement in period VII, as excavated. Approximately half of the extramural settlement to the south of the Stanegate road has yet to be examined, and magnetometer surveys have demonstrated that there are extensive remains of constructional activity of some sort to the north of the Stanegate. Little of the interior of Stone Fort II has been examined so far. (The line at the top of the plan is that of the field boundary on the south side of the current line of the Stanegate road. It is not certain that this was the Roman route, and there are indications that it may lie some 20 metres to the north).
INTRODUCTION

Items of jewellery have been amongst the most frequent of finds from archaeological sites throughout the world. What changes from site to site are the materials and style in which the adornments are created. Traditionally jewellery has been thought of as made with precious metals like gold and silver and to include precious stones or at the very least semi-precious stones. In recent times, these beliefs have changed to include base metal, glass, wood and other substances. It is with this in mind that the Vindolanda collection has been scrutinised. The collection has very few articles of gold or silver, but there is a considerable array of artefacts in copper alloy, glass, animal bone and jet.

Beads, finger rings, ear-rings, carved gemstones and bracelets are most likely to be considered objects of personal adornment that served as decorative pieces, rather than their more functional counterparts, such as hairpins and brooches. Due to the size of the Vindolanda collection the functional artefacts will not be considered here.

Some of the decorative artefacts discussed served a more symbolic function, related to marital status or possibly as protective charms. Snake jewellery was an excellent example of the symbolic nature of jewellery. The introduction of snake jewellery started during the Hellenistic period and continued throughout the Roman period. There are numerous myths within the Graeco-Roman world which include the snake, but the most common is the large but harmless Asclepian snake (*Elaphe longissima*) and its relatives, associated with healing, the underworld, rebirth and regeneration (Jones 1996, 37). A snake in its physical state lends itself to a decorative motif in rings and bracelets, either as multiple coils, head to tail or head to head. In Britain, the most impressive assemblage of snake jewellery comes from the Snettisham Hoard (Jones 1996, 111). The Vindolanda collection has a fine silver snake ring and a part of a copper alloy snake bracelet.

The jewellery at Vindolanda also provides information about the people who lived at the site over a long period of time. The evidence within this part of the collection illustrates the many different aspects of life on Rome’s northern frontier. First and foremost, there is evidence for a considerable network of trade, not only locally as with the jet, which probably came from the Yorkshire coast, but also from the far reaches of the Empire. The high level of craftsmanship of many of the artefacts shows that there was a complex artisan culture. The collection also has a mix of strictly Roman designs intermingled with the more native Iron-Age designs in Britain. The collection indicates the levels of diversity in the social and economic makeup of the site as well as representing possible levels of male and female occupation.

The study of the beads, finger rings, ear-rings, intaglios and bracelets has lead to over 630 artefacts to identify, describe and link to other similar artefacts within this collection or in others.

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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Beads are one of the most ancient forms of personal adornment and can be found at some of the oldest sites of human occupation. The earliest beads were discovered in Neanderthal sites in France dating to around 38,000 B.C., made of bone and animal teeth, but these are few in number. By about 31,000 B.C. modern humans had evolved in Europe and the quantities of beads increased. It happened at a time when, due to many environmental elements, humans began to take on greater social complexities including religion, and the occurrence of social status. For these reasons, art and personal adornment became part of life for these ancient peoples. Early beads were very simple. The material used came from the natural environment, including animal bone, teeth, berries and shell. Many of these early beads had symbolic meanings and were used as talismans (Dubin 1995: 21-22).

By the time the Romans begin the domination of their known world, personal adornment had reached considerable heights. Men and women from all parts of the Empire were conscious of their appearance and regional variations occurred. Beads were not an exception to this and they are found on many sites throughout the ancient world. When Britain was invaded in A.D. 43, the Romans brought with them their ideas and culture, which was to be combined with an already complex and varied native tradition. The types of beads found at a site like Vindolanda can be found elsewhere in Britain and also in other parts of the Empire, and many of the beads, like the gold-in-glass types, were probably imported from distant lands.

Evidence from other parts of the Empire shows that fashion had a great influence on what was worn. We know from the Mummy portraits of Roman women in Egypt that they wore multiple necklaces, some possibly incorporating shorter chokers, with longer strings of beads. Unfortunately, this evidence is not available outside Egypt and could have been limited to the fashion of a certain region. Richly carved funerary reliefs from the great city of Palmyra (Syria) show women with a mix of both native and Roman adornment (Johns 1996: 87-90). As of yet, evidence for this type of fashion has not come to light in Britain, but it can be assumed that individuals would have looked towards the capitals of culture for their benchmarks of fashion. This is also seen with the rise of certain materials in a given time period, as with jet’s rise in popularity in the 3rd century.

There are many possible different uses for beads within the Roman context. The first and probably the most common would be as jewellery in the forms of necklaces and bracelets. But they could also have had many other uses, including decorations sewn onto cloth and leather, as hairpin terminals, or as toggles on the end of drawstrings. Some of the beads, most notably the melon variety, were also used as military decorations. Most of the Vindolanda collection has been found singly or in small groups, no more than ten beads together, making it almost impossible to assume that all of the beads were used as necklaces.

The Vindolanda bead collection is varied, including many different sizes, shapes, colours and materials. On close examination it becomes apparent that the people of Vindolanda were not only conscious of the Roman customs, but were also striving for individualism with their personal adornment, in similar fashion to today. Cultures use personal adornment not only to identify members of the same unit or group, but also to accentuate individualism and unique personal style. The Roman people of Vindolanda used these small artefacts to help them to identify with the collective, but also to give them independence.
DISCUSSION

There are 385 beads in the Vindolanda collection (up to the end of 2004). The most popular material is glass, but the collection has a sizeable number of jet beads as well. Absent from the collection are beads of wood or pearls, both of which were known to be worn by ancient people. It is possible that due to their organic nature the objects could not survive. It is hoped that the anaerobic conditions on the site might help in providing evidence for this in the future.

The Vindolanda beads are relatively evenly spread between the military and civilian areas of occupation (see fig. 1.1). The civilian areas yield more beads than do the military areas, but approximately 12% of the beads were found in areas which could be considered either military or civilian, like bath houses. For this reason it is impossible to regard beads as artefacts which come from one area in general. It is, however, noticeable that certain types of beads are almost entirely found within the military areas of the site. The extremely popular faience melon bead, the copper alloy beads and the amber beads almost all come from these areas. This poses the question whether there a more military use for these types, such as melon beads as decorations for cavalry soldiers (discussed further on p 39).

![Vindolanda Bead Contexts](image)

For further analysis, four buildings were identified and examined to see if there were any patterns regarding the placement of beads on the site. The 3rd – 4th century bath house and the pre-Hadrianic bath house were compared, as were the Severan Commanding Officer’s Residence and the 3rd-4th century Commanding Officer’s Residence (see fig 1.2).

When looking at the data, the most noticeable feature was the number found in the late bath house compared with those in the earlier establishment. This could be related to the number of artefacts that were found within the buildings as a whole. The early bath house was demolished by the Romans, resulting in limited material culture surviving. The later bath house, in use for far longer, yielded a wealth of artefacts and thus it is not surprising that the beads from this area should be so plentiful.

In all four of the buildings examined, the largest number of beads were made of glass, as they were for the site as a whole. As all of the buildings were not of a purely military type, there would have been a considerable civilian usage of the area, explaining the small quantity of melon beads found in them. Both of the later structures show a greater variation of bead type than is found in the buildings of an earlier date. Further analysis could show that there was a greater variety of bead available on the site in the 3rd and 4th centuries.
The most common date for bead finds was in period VII, but there are also sizeable numbers from periods VIII and V, as well as a large quantity that are unstratified - most of the which are probably from the late 3rd to 4th centuries. There is also a sizeable quantity from periods IV, VI and VIB, but note the almost complete absence of beads from periods I and II. This probably due to the limited extent of the material that has been excavated from them.

It must be noted when looking at the contexts and dates of the bead finds that there are limitations, as the site has not been completely excavated. Much of the work has concentrated on the 3rd to 4th century extramural settlements outside the later stone fort, together with the early 1st to 2nd century military remains which exist underneath the later remains. Work has been carried out on the 3rd – 4th century military fort but at the current time no extensive work has been undertaken in the earlier civilian areas. This information could explain the high number of military related beads in the 2nd century and the scarcity of the civilian beads in the same time period. It could explain the diminished numbers in the 3rd and 4th century in comparison to the high numbers of civilian contexts.
When looking at the materials used for the manufacture of beads, related to the dates, more conclusive evidence is available. Amber is almost exclusive to the 2nd century and into the early 3rd century, while the copper alloy beads are not seen before the 3rd century. Jet is found largely in the 3rd to 4th century deposits, but it is of note that there is also a sizable influx in the late 2nd century. Most of the materials would have been available outside these time restrictions, and the appearance of certain materials at given times could show fashions.

The materials and contexts also show interesting evidence that certain materials were favoured in certain areas of the fort. The most noticeable is the lack of amber in any areas other than the military deposits. This could be for a number of reasons including cost, desirability or availability. Also the copper alloy variety is most noticeably found in the military areas, although a small number appear in civilian contexts. Jet and glass are almost
equal in number in the areas where they are found. This could hint at the fact that the materials were available and that the cost was reasonable.

The Vindolanda bead collection is large and diverse, holding not only many of the common types of beads found in Britain and the Roman Empire, but also having beads which are unique and show the availability of interesting luxury goods from many Roman markets. The glass beads are the most numerous and reveal that many individuals living and working there would have used them for personal expression and style. The people of Vindolanda also wore objects made by highly skilled craftspeople, represented by the finely carved jet and amber to be found at the site. The complexities of personal adornment cannot be narrowed down by looking at one particular object or type of object, but the people living at Vindolanda employed beads of many different sizes, shapes, materials and colours to accentuate their lives.

Beads will undoubtedly continue to be found at the site during future excavations, and the trends seen above will hopefully continue. Only with the completion of the excavations will the true story of the people who lived there become known.
METHODS OF CLASSIFICATION

For ease of classification the Vindolanda beads have been broken down into categories based on material and shape. Due to the large quantity of glass beads, they have been further sub-divided by colour of glass.

A civilian, military or mixed context has also been given to each bead. This refers to the find area as being a predominantly civilian or military structure or area. It is impossible to tell from the archaeological record at Vindolanda who actually owned the beads unless the beads were excavated from an individual inhumation, which is not the case for this assemblage. There is little doubt that mutual relationships between soldiers and the non military individuals living in the extramural settlements surrounding the fort would have existed. At Vindolanda this can be identified by the high levels of children’s and women’s artefacts, like shoes in the “military” structures. The beads have been separated as such to show trends within the collection and not ownership.

Bead Materials

The Romans used many different materials to produce beads. The Vindolanda collection includes most of the different materials to a greater or lesser degree. The most numerous part of the collection is in glass, but there are also jet, amber, bone and copper alloy. Wood and pearls are absent, but possible within the archaeological environment, and it is hoped that these materials might be found during future excavations on the site.

![Vindolanda Bead Material](image)

*Fig. 1.6. Distribution of materials in the Vindolanda bead collection.*

Bead Shapes

The shape of a bead is the next method employed in identification. The chart below represent an analysis of the different shapes of beads found at Vindolanda based on the materials used to make the bead. The diversity of shape and material is evident showing the variety of beads excavated from the site. Also there is a typology of the basic shapes of beads in the collection, but this list does not cover the entire list of bead shapes available in Roman Britain (Guido 1978: 92) (Dubin 1992: 126-127).
Fig. 1.7. Vindolanda bead shapes and materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Glass</th>
<th>Jet</th>
<th>Copper alloy</th>
<th>Amber</th>
<th>Bone</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long biconical</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35</td>
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<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1.8. Bead shapes. Beads not shown to scale.
GLASS BEADS

The manipulation of the sand and other materials that make up glass began around 4000 B.C. in Egypt. At first glass was moulded around either rock crystal or sandstone shapes to make the finished product. Around 2500 B.C. glass became independent from the base support and small objects came into production. The manufacture of glass objects, including beads, continued in the Mediterranean area for years to come and the techniques continued to develop. The rise of the Roman Empire saw glass bead production prosper and with the development of trade strategies throughout, beads from all parts of the Empire came into Britain.

Glass beads in Britain are found in all shapes and sizes and, because it was easy to manipulate, glass was a very popular material for beads from early on. By Roman times, glass was being used in a number of different techniques to create desired shapes and forms. Glass beads were not only used in personal adornment, such as necklaces and bracelets, but could also be sewn onto clothing or on hairpin terminals.

In 1978, Margaret Guido produced her seminal work on Prehistoric and Roman Beads in Britain and Ireland and even though the book was limited to excavation work carried out many years ago, it remains the essential work on Roman glass beads in Britain. Guido gives a brief description of bead making,

‘Glass is made in thick earthenware crucible container from 2 to 200 lb. of mixed pulverised quartz or sand quartz with some lime and soda, potash or nitre, sometimes lead. Generally before heating, iron or copper, manganese or cobalt colouring is added. The ingredients are then thoroughly mixed and heated in one or more firing to a red-hot, viscous state. A ‘gathering’ of the glass is then drawn out to make a shiny glass rod which quickly solidifies’ (Guido 1978: 7).

Guido identified seven different methods for the production of glass beads. These production methods are as follows.

WOUND BEAD

These shiny rods are then used to make the simplest bead called a wound bead. The glass is melted and folded over a wire while heated. The rod is cut off when the required amount of glass is on the wire and then the wire is wound over the heat until it gives the spherical shape required. When cooling the wire contracts more than the glass and the bead can be pulled off. If a larger bead is required then the rod can be wound around many times. Other colours of glass can also be used to create different coloured beads, and such beads are then called multiple wound beads.

DRAWN BEADS

The melted ‘gathering’ or rod of glass is worked into a funnel shape with an air bubble in the centre. The glob is then drawn out and elongated while still hot and creating a hollow centre. Before cooling the glass can be shaped or put into a mould. It can also be pinched at regular intervals to create segmented beads.

FOLDED BEADS

Folded beads are flattened glass canes which are folded over wire. The folds are often visible.

PRESSED BEADS

While the glass is still molten the bead is pressed into hexagonal, square or biconical shapes.

COLOURS

The Romans produced many different colours of glass for jewellery by mixing different minerals into the glass before heating. The following are a few common concoctions.
Between the 1970 and the 2004 excavations, 326 glass beads or glass derivatives have been found at Vindolanda. For ease of understanding, the beads have been separated into further colour and shape categories. Many of the beads can be separated with these parameters in mind but some, due to unusual shape, colour or both have been further separated and are reported at the end of the glass bead section.

The Vindolanda bead collection is dominated by glass. It makes up 85% of the beads found at the site. These beads come from all of the periods that the site was occupied as well as from most of the areas around the site. The most prevalent is the blue glass variety which forms 35% of the glass collection. The faience melon beads and the green glass beads also make up sizable proportions. There are also a number of specialist beads. These beads may date to the pre-Roman Iron Age people who would have been living near to Vindolanda before the Roman conquest and may have continued to live near the site once the Romans established the fort.

The archaeological contexts of the beads also alludes to the mixture of both civilian and military individuals having and losing beads in many areas of the site. Although ownership of the individual beads cannot be assigned it is easy to see a trend within the glass beads. Most come from the civilian areas of the site, except for, and notable for this reason, the faience melon beads, which are predominantly found in military deposits (see fig. 1.9). It is also notable that many blue glass beads have been found in the bath house areas of the site. This could just be coincidence. The terracotta glass beads are the only bead colour not to be found in a military context, but these beads are quite rare on the site and in Roman Britain as a whole, and it is possible that they are more specialised.

The dates of the glass beads are similar to the dates of the beads in general. The archaeological excavations at Vindolanda have concentrated on certain areas and the evidence for the bead dates are relative to the areas where work has been carried out. The second century military areas and the third century civilian areas have had more excavation than the
third century military areas. At this current point, excavations of the early civilian areas has not been conducted. This must be kept in mind when looking at the evidence below.

The glass beads come predominately from the 3rd century contexts where most excavation has taken place. There is also a sizeable number of beads that date from the second century. It is not surprising to find that the second century beads are dominated by the faience melon beads that come from a mainly military area. It is also interesting to note that the types of glass beads found at Vindolanda are, to a great or lesser degree, being found in all of the periods of occupation. It can only be hoped that with further excavation that this will prove to be constant, or that some new evidence will help to date certain beads to certain periods of occupation.

### BLUE GLASS BEADS

![Fig. 1.10. Blue glass beads](image-url)

**Annular blue glass beads**

**SF 8614** Period VI. Military. Width 5mm, diameter 7mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. The bead is of poor quality but does not show any sign of surface abrasion.

**SF 8744** Period III. Military. Width 3 mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. The bead is of poor quality but shows limited signs of surface abrasion.

**SF 8750** Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 5mm. Opaque. The bead is of poor quality but does not show any sign of surface abrasion


According to Guido, (Group 6iva,b, undecorated annular beads) the first appearances of these beads in Britain occurs in the sixth century B.C. and were imports from the continent. A large concentration of the beads dates from the fourth to third centuries B.C.

Annular blue glass beads continue into the Roman period of occupation and have been found at many sites in England and Scotland. The beads found at Winchester were in a grave which dated from A.D.
350-370 which appears to be the latest Roman bead of this type. In Scotland and Ireland this bead continues well past the Roman occupation into the seventh and eight centuries, and has similarities to Saxon and Viking beads.

Guido does not report on any beads of the small annular type (less than 1.5cm in diameter) found on Hadrian’s Wall, but the larger medium sized annular blue glass beads have been recovered at Carlisle and Corbridge.

At South Shields four blue annular beads have been found with diameters from 4mm-18mm (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 279). Two similar beads have also been found at Birdoswald, one with diameter of 20.5 and the other a fragment with a diameter of 18.2mm. In relation to the above it would seem that most of the other Hadrian’s Wall examples are much larger that the Vindolanda beads.

Guido states that most of the Roman beads of this type were found at sites which had mixed Roman and native culture, which would support the evidence found at Vindolanda, as two of the beads were found in a military context and one in the civilian context. This is also related to the date in which the beads were excavated, for the earlier beads were found in the military context and the later bead in the civilian area.

The dating of the Vindolanda annular beads illustrates the cross-section of the periods and shows that this type of bead is not contemporary with any one period.

Cylinder blue glass beads

**SF1269** U/S. Civilian. Length 13mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. The original state of the glass looks to be of high quality but it has been broken at one end, leaving the original length to unknown.

**SF2125** U/S. Civilian. Length 19mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. The original state of the glass looks to be of high quality but it has been broken at one end, leaving the original length unknown.

**Comparative material:** Guido’s cylinder-shaped and cut segment beads, (a) (Guido 1978: 207-208), South Shield, Tyne & Wear Allason-Jones and Miket 1984:278); Birdoswald, Cumbria (Wilmott 1997: 293).

Blue cylinder beads in Britain appear to date from the Roman period and continue to be popular into the post Roman occupation, but seem to be at the height of popularity in the second and third centuries. The unstratified context of the Vindolanda beads does not allow a precise date to be given, but an assumption of a late Roman date would relate to many of the other dated blue cylindrical beads. Both of the Vindolanda examples come from civilian contexts.

The average length of the beads is 15mm, with an average width of 4mm, similar to the size of the above. The perforations are similar, being small compared to the general length of the beads.

Guido points to a possible cross channel trade in these beads due to the higher concentrations in the southern part of England, but it could also point to a yet to be found southern production centre.

**Diamond faceted blue glass beads**

**SF586** U/S. Civilian. Length 7mm, width 5mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. This bead is in excellent condition.

**SF905** Period VII: Civilian. Length 3mm, width 2mm. Opaque. Only one half of bead survives and the surfaces show abrasion.

**SF8048** Period VIB. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, and the surfaces show abrasion.

**SF8238** Period VIB. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 2mm. Opaque. Only one half survives and the surfaces show abrasion.

**Comparative material:** Guido’s faceted beads, schedules (Guido 1978: 227-228). South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 280).

Guido places similar translucent beads at burial sites in Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Somerset. These beads are larger than
most of the examples found at Vindolanda but date from the latter part of the fourth century. Vindolanda’s examples date to an earlier period. The example found at South Shields and some of the beads which Guido discusses are of green glass. Vindolanda only has one green diamond faceted (see below). The bead type continues to be found up into the fifth and sixth century on the continent. There is reason to believe that this type of bead reached Britain via the Rhineland, Poland or one of the Low Countries where the beads are commonly found (Guido 1978: 99-100).

586 is remarkably different in size and colour to the other three examples and is more closely related to those described by Guido. Because of the unstratified date of 586 it is unclear if the bead comes from a different time period to the other three in the type.

Long polygonal blue glass beads
SF1937 Period VII. Civilian. Length 12mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Bead has severe breakage at one end.
SF2012 Period VII. Civilian. Length 15mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Breakage at one end of the bead could be due to wear.
SF9731 Period VIII. Civilian. Length 15mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Breakage at one end of the bead could be due to wear.

Comparative material: Guido’s long polygonal beads, (Guido 1978: 215-218). One hexagonal was found at Birdoswald (Wilmott 1997: 273) and two have come from South Shields, but the colour is not stated in the reports (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 279).

According to Guido, most long polygonal beads are green and this could possibly be to replicate an emerald-like appearance. The Vindolanda collection has several green glass polygonals, but also these three blue hexagonal long polygonals. There are a few of the less common blue polygonals, like the those from Hampshire and the Scottish islands.

Guido suggest that the blue beads of this shape are from a possible post-Roman period, but all of the Vindolanda examples date to the 3rd century, which puts them securely into a Roman context. All three of the beads were found in civilian contexts and show signs of wear and breakage. The beads are of good quality and show craftsmanship in their creation.

Square sectioned blue glass beads
SF8b U/S. Bath House. Length 4mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete but shows signs of wear near the perforations.
SF135 Period VII. Bath House. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete but shows signs of wear near the perforations
SF140 Period VII. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque Complete but shows signs of wear near the perforations
SF179a Period VII. Bath house. Length 13mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Shows wear on edges and is unusual due to turquoise colour and pitted surface. 179a, 179b and 183 are all similar in their shape.
SF179b Period VII. Bath house. Length 20mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Shows wear on edges and is unusual due to colour, pitted surface. 179a, 179b and 183 are all similar in their shape.
SF183 U/S Bath House. Length 14mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Shows wear on edges and is unusual due to colour and pitted surface. 179a, 179b and 183 are all similar in their shape.
SF184a Period VII. Bath House. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is complete and in good condition.
SF425 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete but show signs of wear near the perforations. All the remainder of the beads in this section show similar signs of wear.
SF522 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF537 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF636f U/S. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF639 U/S. Civilian. Height 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF690 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF693 U/S. Civilian. Length 2mm, width 6mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF782 U/S. Civilian. Length 2mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF801 U/S. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF966c U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF1331 U/S. Bath House. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF1743 Period VII. Civilian. Height 2mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF1779 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF1889 U/S. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF1957 Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2098 U/S. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2137 Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2138a Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2138b Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2138d Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2138e Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2143 Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2151 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2161 Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2164 Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF2503 Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF6178 Period V. Military. Length 3mm, width 8mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete. Banding with light and dark blue.
SF8771 Period VI. Military. Length 4mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF8772 Period VI. Military. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.
SF9272 Period VIII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete.


This type of bead occurs frequently throughout England and it is not surprising to find many examples at Vindolanda. Guido places the date of this type late in the Roman occupation, which is similar to the 3rd century or unstratified date of the Vindolanda beads. Most of the beads come from civilian or bath house contexts except for three which were from military contexts.

The blue square sectioned beads are the second most common glass bead type to come from Vindolanda, having thirty-four in total. It is most likely that the beads would have been used as spacers.

There are four exceptions to the above. The first is 6178 which has a length of 3mm and a width of 8mm. It also dates from the middle of the second century and shows signs of banding with a lighter and
darker blue. 179a, 179b and 183 are all much larger than the other square sectioned beads. These three, similar in their shape, are more annular on the four sides. 179a and 183 differ from the rest as they have a more turquoise colour. This colour is also seen in some of the square section beads with white and red bands or waves discussed below.

Long biconical blue glass beads

SF171 Period VII. Bath House. Length 10mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Affected by breakages at the terminal ends, otherwise good condition – which applies to all the other beads in this section.

SF179c Period VII. Bath house. Length 13mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque.

SF215 U/S. Civilian. Length 9mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF256 Period VII. Civilian. Length 14mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF478 U/S. Military. Length 17mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF636a U/S. Civilian. Length 9mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF636b U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 4mm perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF636c U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm width 3mm perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF636d U/S. Civilian. Length 14mm width 6mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF695 U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF712 U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF757 U/S. Civilian. Length 15mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF966d U/S. Civilian. Length 11mm width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF1284 U/S. Civilian. Length 12mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque.

SF1830 U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF3566 Period VII. Civilian Size: Length 13mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF8793 Period VII. Civilian Size: Length 7mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.

SF9314 Period VIII. Civilian Size: Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Only the point remaining, but not showing signs of breakage there as with the other long biconicals.

SF9371 Period V. Civilian/Military Size: Length 13mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.


The opaque blue glass long biconical beads range in size from 17mm to 9mm in length and from 3mm to 5mm in width. This is similar to many of those described in Guido. The most common of the Vindolanda glass long biconical is the blue glass, but there are also long biconicals in terracotta, green and long blue biconicals with white and red bands or waves at centre.

Twelve of the nineteen examples found at Vindolanda date from unstratified contexts but seven examples, which are dated, come from the third century or the late second century. This date is similar to the date of the other long biconical in Britain and seems to decrease significantly in numbers by the fourth century (Guido 1978: 89). The long biconical blue glass beads from Vindolanda mostly come from civilian contexts except for 478, which was found in a military context.

All of the examples from Vindolanda show wear at the perforations and many show severe breakages in this area.

Segmented blue glass beads

SF174 Period VII. Bath House. Length 9mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Rough edges around perforation, two segments.

SF283 U/S. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Rough edges around perforation, one and one half segments.

SF1486 Period VIB. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 12mm. Translucent. Both ends of perforation smooth and flattened.

SF6095 Period IV. Military. Length 16mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Both ends of perforation rough, five segments still attached.
SF8765  Period VI. Military. Length 10mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Both ends of perforation rough, three segments still attached

SF9054  Period IV/V. Military. Length 9mm, width 6mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. Three segments still attached. Both ends of perforation smoothed.

SF9281  Period IV. Civilian/ Military. Length 11mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Three segments still attached. Both ends of perforation rough.

Comparative material: Guido’s small segmented beads, a) of various colours, (Guido 1978: 201-204).

The Vindolanda collection holds seven blue glass segmented beads, ranging in segmentation from one to five segments. This bead type is very common in the rest of Britain and dates from a pre-Roman context to a post-Roman context, similar to the dates for the Vindolanda examples, dating from the early second century to the third century. Unlike many of the blue glass beads seen above, the segmented beads mostly come from military contexts.

Bead 6095 is of exceptional quality with both perforations smoothed at both ends. 8765 and 174 shows the rough perforations at both ends pointing towards segmentation after the purchase of the beads. The evidence of breakage near the perforations illustrates part of the process of creation. Some of the Vindolanda examples have been intentionally smoothed and others have been left rough.

Small biconical blue glass beads
SF264  U/S. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is complete and in good condition.
SF621  U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. The bead is complete and in good condition, with slight signs of wear at perforation.
SF636h U/S. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 10mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. The condition of the bead is complete and good.

SF677  U/S. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Bead is complete and in excellent condition.
SF1368 U/S. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is in an irregular shape.
SF1398 Period VII. Civilian/Military. Width 4mm, diameter 7mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Bead is in good condition and is complete, with slight wear evident at perforation.
SF1887 Period VII. Civilian. Three fragments. Translucent.
SF2106 Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is complete and in good condition.
SF5223 Period VIII. Military. Width 2mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead in excellent condition and complete.
SF8584 Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is complete.
SF8585 Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is complete and in good condition.
SF9333 Period VII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 6mm. Opaque. Incomplete and fragmentary.
SF9347 Period VII. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. The condition of this bead is complete and good.

Comparative material: Guido’s small biconical, a) blue (Guido 1978: 218-221).

Guido states that the blue small biconicals in Britain fall into two size categories, the first being the larger ones ranging from five to seven millimetres in diameter and the second smaller type that is about three millimetres in diameter (Guido 1978: 97). Vindolanda’s examples can also be split into these two types, large: 264, 621, 636h, 2106, 8584, 8585 and 9347, and the smaller: 677, 1368, 1398, 5223, 9333.

The beads date from the late Roman period, or are unstratified. Most of the beads come from civilian areas of excavation with only one coming from a
mixed area and one coming from a military context.

**Spherical blue glass beads**

**SF8c** U/S. Bath house. Width 3mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Irregular shape.

**SF8d** U/S. Bath house. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Irregular shape.

**SF113** Period VII. Bath house. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is irregular in shape.

**SF121** Period VII. Bath house. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is complete and in good condition.

**SF125** U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is complete and in good condition.

**SF598** Period VII. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is in good condition.

**SF636g** U/S. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, 1mm. Opaque. In good condition but only half surviving.

**SF734** U/S. Civilian. Width 5mm diameter 5mm perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is in good condition.

**SF1229** U/S. Civilian. Four fragments. Translucent.

**SF1381** Period VII. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. The condition of this bead is complete and good.

**SF1805** U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Breakage occurred at one perforation, could be due to wear.

**SF2084** U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. This bead is complete and good.

**SF2206** U/S. Civilian. Width 6mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is complete but shows wear at perforation.

**SF3383** U/S. Bath house. Width 6mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is in good condition and it is complete.

**SF9008** U/S. U/S. Width 8mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is fractured into two halves.

**SF9612** Period VI. Military. Width 3mm, diameter 3mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is fractured and reconstructed, very tiny.


The spherical beads at Vindolanda are similar to those mentioned in Guido’s Group 7 iv medium to small blue, translucent or opaque globular beads. Guido commented that “‘globular’ applies to beads whose height is more than half their diameter” (Guido 1978: 69). This is a common form for beads at Vindolanda which is not surprising as it is the simplest form to produce.

The Vindolanda examples date to the third century or are from unstratified contexts. All of the Vindolanda spherical blue glass beads come from civilian or bath house contexts except for 9612, which is an exceptionally tiny turquoise blue bead and very different in its colour and size.
The Vindolanda blue glass beads make up one of the largest sections of beads from the site. It is interesting to note that most of the beads come from the civilian areas, except for the segmented blue glass beads which come predominantly from the military areas. As for the dates of the blue glass beads, it is almost impossible to narrow them down to a certain time period, but it is very probable that they were available in the area prior to the Roman conquest. The site does not have a large quantity of these early blue glass beads but a few date to the early 2nd century. In the third and fourth centuries the numbers increased, especially the square sectioned blue glass variety.

**GREEN GLASS BEADS**

**Annular green glass beads**

**SF2126** Period VII. Civilian. Width 7mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Bead has surface fractures apparent.

**SF3300** Period VII. Civilian. Width 2mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 5mm.

**SF3664** Period IV. Military. Width 3mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 4mm. Translucent. Bead is almost clear in colour.
SF7479 Period VII. Military. Width 3mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. Perforations show wear evidence.
SF7821 Period III. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 5mm. Opaque. Bead is irregular in shape.
SF7822 Period III. Military. Width 5mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. Bead is complete and in good condition.
SF7874 Period IV. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 10mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. Bead is fragmented, poor condition.


Similar to their blue counterparts, the annular green glass beads make up the first of the section. Finds 7479 and 7821 resemble the same group 6 in Guido’s classification but relate to the iib section. A number of these beads have been found throughout Roman Britain and it can be concluded that many are from recycled window glass, like 9602. The earliest dates relate to the third to first centuries BC but they continue though the conquest and into the Roman periods (Guido 1978: 66). This relates to the Vindolanda examples and as shown by the dates above, the beads come from a variety of periods. It is almost certain that they were made locally, which would help to explain the crude shapes.

Most of the beads come from military contexts, as with their blue counterparts.

Cylinder green glass beads
SF599 Period VII. Civilian. Length 11mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead has pitting on surface.
SF763 Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead is of an irregular shape, were evidence.
SF1173 U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 5mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. Bead has pitting on surface.
SF1216 U/S. Civilian. Length 12mm Width 5mm perforation 2mm. Opaque. The surface of the bead has been flattened.
SF1273 U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead has pitting on surface.
SF1510 Period VII. Civilian. Length 9mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Lateral breakage evident, repaired post excavation.
SF1795 U/S. Civilian. Length 7mm, width 5mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. Fragmentary, over half surviving.
SF2077 Period VII. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead is in good condition and is complete.
SF2136 Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is complete and in good condition.
SF9368 Period V. Civilian/ Military. Length 9mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead shows wear at perforation.
SF9369 Period V. Civilian/ Military. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead in good condition.
SF9495 U/S. Civilian/ Military. Length 12mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. The perforation of this bead is rough.
SF9566 Period VIB. Military. Length 11mm, width 6mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Perforation rough, breakage at one end.
SF9706 Period VII. Military. Length 7mm, width 4mm perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead has four raised areas unlike any other in the collection.

SF9713 Period V. Military. Length 10mm, width 2mm. Opaque. Bead is a fragment.

SF9722 Period VIII. Military. Length 9mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead has a pitted surface, irregular shape.

Comparative material: Guido’s cylinder shape and cut segments bead, b. green cylinder (Guido 1978, 208-211), South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 278). Birdoswald, Cumbria (Wilmott 1997: 273).

Guido notes that the green cylinder bead has a very long life dating from the Iron Age through to the post-Roman period. The Vindolanda examples come from both the civilian and military areas. They date from the early 2nd century through to the 3rd century and show an assortment of different shapes, sizes and opacities. It is of note that the beads coming from the civilian areas date to a firm 3rd century context, whereas the military area beads date to either the 2nd or early 3rd centuries.

9706 has four raised dots on the surface, but it shows abrasion and wear in these areas.

Diamond faceted green glass beads
SF8273 Period VIII. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead has slight irregularity in shape.

Comparative material: Guido’s faceted beads (Guido 1978: 227-228). South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 278).

This bead type is similar the blue diamond faceted beads found at Vindolanda. Guido places similar blue translucent beads at burial sites in Gloucestershire, Hampshire and Somerset. The bead continues to be found up into the fifth and sixth century on the continent. There is reason to believe that this variety of bead reached Britain via the Rhineland, Poland or one of the Low Countries where the beads are commonly found (Guido 1978: 99-100). The Vindolanda example is in good condition despite its slight irregularity in shape.

Long polygonal green glass beads
SF221 U/S. Civilian. Length 9mm, width 6mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Pentagonal. Wear evident at perforations.

SF721b Period VIII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Slight flattening making two sides longer than the other four.

SF771 Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Pentagonal. Wear evident at perforations, pitted surface.

SF1397 Period VIIB. Civilian. Length 11mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Fractured at one end.

SF1704 U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Wear evident at perforations, pitted surface.

SF1901 Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Pentagonal. Fractured at both ends.

SF2088 U/S. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 5mm perforation 2mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Bead is complete and in good condition.

SF2287 U/S. Military. Length 7mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Wear evident at perforations.

SF7479 Period VII. Military. Length 11mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Pentagonal. Bead shows possible segmentation.

SF7626 Period VII. Military. Length 9mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Wear evident at perforations.

SF8282 U/S. Civilian. Length 6mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Hexagonal. Breakage at one end.

SF8759 Period VIII. Civilian. Length 11mm, width 6mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Hexagonal. Bead shows possible segmentation.

Comparative material: Guido’s long polygonal beads including Carrawburgh,
Chesters, Corbridge, Northumberland, and
Catterick, Yorkshire (Guido 1978: 215-218). South Shields, Tyne and Wear
(Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 279).
Birdoswald, Cumbria (Wilmott 1997:
273). Brougham, Cumbria (Cool 2004:
386).

The green long polygonal bead is more
common than its blue counterpart, not only
at Vindolanda but at other sites in Roman
Britain. Guido believes that the Romans
favoured these beads as possible mock
emeralds and that is the reason for their
high numbers on Roman sites. Most of
the example referred to by Guido are light
green in colour and are opaque. Guido
dates these beads from the pre to the post
Roman periods of occupation. (Guido
1978: 96).

The Vindolanda examples date from the
early 3rd century through to the 4th century
and range in their opacity. Of the twelve
beads, four are pentagonal in shape and the
remaining eight are hexagonal. Some of
the beads show possible signs of
segmentation from a larger bead section
due to the rough edges of the perforations.
The beads vary in their contexts having
both civilian and military find areas.

8282 is interesting as it is translucent and
could indeed be a replica emerald. It is of
good quality and is in excellent condition.

Long biconical green glass beads
SF1875 Period VII. Civilian. Length 9mm,
width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque.
Bead has breakage at the terminal ends.

Comparative material: Guido’s long
biconical beads (Guido 1978: 221-222).

Similar in composition to its blue
equivalent this green long biconical bead
is less common. Guido states that beads of
terracotta, turquoise and green have been
found on the continent but not in Britain.
This illustrates that this is indeed an
unusual bead to come from Vindolanda.

Its size is similar to the blue beads
discussed above and also shows the same
breakages at the perforations. The civilian
context and the third century date also
corresponds to its blue equivalents.

Segmented green glass beads
SF2205 Period VII. Civilian. Length 7mm,
width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead has smooth
perforation, two segments
SF6168 Period VII. Civilian. Length 11mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm.
Translucent. Bead has one rough
breakage at perforation, other smooth.
SF7210 Period VII. Military. Length 11mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm.
Translucent. Bead has one rough
breakage at perforation, other smooth.

Comparative material: Guido’s small
segmented beads, a) of various colours,
(Guido 1978: 201-204).

The Vindolanda collection holds three
green glass segmented beads, ranging in
segmentation from two to three segments.
This bead type is very common in the rest
of Britain and dates from a pre-Roman
context to a post-Roman context. The
Vindolanda examples date from the third
century. Unlike the blue segmented beads
seen above, the green segmented beads
mostly come from civilian contexts.

All three beads, to a greater or lesser
degree, show the rough areas around the
perforations which could be attributed to
the post-purchase segmentation or
breaking of the beads and not the
smoothing of the breakages which
probably would have occurred during
production.

Spherical green glass beads
SF721a Period VII. Civilian. Width 7mm,
diameter 7mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Bead is badly damaged.
SF966b U/S. Civilian. Width 3mm,
diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead is very tiny, complete.
SF1504 Period III. Military. Width 7mm,
diameter 7mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent. Bead is of an irregular
shape.
SF1994 Period VII. Civilian. Width 2mm,
diameter 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is very tiny, complete.
SF8274 Period VIII. Civilian. Width 2mm,
diameter 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is very tiny, complete.
Comparative material: Guido’s group 7 (iii) medium and small translucent or opaque green globular beads (Guido 1978: 168-169). Brougham, Cumbria (Cool 2004: 388).

According to Guido the earliest example of this type of bead comes from around the time of the Roman conquest in Gloucestershire, but most other examples date from late in the Roman period to post Roman occupation.

The Vindolanda examples date from the later contexts in the third century and are unstratified, except 1504 which dates to the early 2nd century. Most of the beads come from civilian contexts. It is of note that 966b, 1994, and 8274 are all very small. They make up some of the smallest beads to come from the site.

Square sectioned green glass beads

**SF794** U/S. Civilian. Length 6mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Breakage at the terminal ends.

**SF811a** U/S. Civilian. Length 5mm width 3mm perforation 1mm. Translucent. Fractured.

**SF1218** U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Wear evident at perforations.

**SF1687** U/S. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Possible fragment from a larger bead.

**SF1703** Period VII. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Wear evident at perforations.

**SF1912** Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Wear evident at perforations.

**SF2065** Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is in good condition and is complete.

**SF2072** U/S. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead has pitted surface.

**SF2138c** Period VII. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead in good condition but wear evident.

**SF7993** Period II. Bath House. Length 10mm, width 7mm, perforation 5mm. Opaque. Bead has striations in glass.

**SF9293** Period IV/V. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 7mm, perforation 5mm. Opaque. Bead in good condition.

**SF9583** Period V. Military. Length 7mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead has striations and fracture in glass.


Guido dates most of her square sectioned beads late in the Roman period in Britain, but does not give much more information regarding this type.

Like its blue counterpart it is a popular type at Vindolanda. Most of the beads come from either unstratified contexts or from the 3rd century except 7993 and 9583 which date from the 1st to 2nd century. 2072, 7003, 9293 and 9583 are also much large than the rest of the green and the other blue square sectioned beads. The smaller variety of this form come from a civilian context as do most of the large green beads, except 9583 which comes from a military context.

Tear drop green glass beads

**SF176c** Period VII. Bath House. Length 14mm, width 12mm. Translucent. Good condition, with pitted surface. Glass of a poor quality.

**SF527** U/S. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 6mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent. Bead has an irregular shape.

Comparative material: None found

Both of these beads are of a curd shape as if they could have been made by an unskilled worker of glass. The beads are both broken at their perforation and it is possible that they were never intended to be used as strung beads. In both cases the glass is of a poor quality. 176c was found with a poorly constructed jet bead and less than half of a yellow annular glass bead. The late Roman dating for these and the bath house/ civilian contexts could indicate that they were not high class objects. Another possible conclusion about these two beads is that they were set into
metal instead of being strung like SF2470, an ear-ring with a green glass setting.
(page 155) which has been identified as

![Vindolanda Green Glass Beads](image)

**Fig. 1.13. Distribution of Vindolanda green glass bead shapes.**

The green glass beads at Vindolanda make up 20% of the bead collection and this makes it one of the more popular compositions for beads. It is however noticeable that the green glass beads do not seem to have the same quality as some of the other types of beads and it is possible that some of the beads were made more locally and from recycled glass, including window and bottle glass. Many of the beads are similar in colour to these types of glass and the Romans were known to re-use glass where possible. Like their blue counterparts, the green glass beads come from a variety of time periods from the pre to the post Roman contexts, but unlike the blue beads it is impossible to break them down into either a civilian or military preferred style.

**YELLOW GLASS BEADS**

![Yellow glass beads](image)

**Fig. 1.14. Yellow glass beads.**

- **Opaque yellow annular glass beads**
  - **SF176b** Period VII. Bath House. Width 4mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. Bead has pitted surface.
  - **SF185** U/S. Bath House. Width 3mm, diameter 7mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque: Pitted surface. Discolouration, possibly due to conditions in ground.
  - **SF423** Period VII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. Bead has pitted surface.
  - **SF603** Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 4mm.

- **Opaque. Bead has pitted surface. Slight discolouration possibly due to wear**
  - **SF1785** U/S. Civilian. Width 2mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 3mm. Opaque. Bead has pitted surface. Smallest of this type.
  - **SF1942** U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 10mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Bead has pitted surface.
  - **SF2082** U/S. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 9mm. Opaque. Fragment of original, pitted surface.
SF2159 Period VII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 5mm. Opaque. Bead has pitted surface.

SF7755 Period VIII. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Pitted surface. Largest of this type. Slight swirl in glass resulting in two-tone effect.

SF9267 Period VIII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 10mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. Pitted surface.

SF9419 Period III. Civilian/ Military. Width 4mm, diameter 10mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. Pitted surface. Largest of this type. Slight swirl in glass resulting in two-tone effect.

Comparative material: Guido’s Class 8, small opaque yellow annular beads. Similar beads have also been found on Hadrian’s Wall at Corbridge, Housesteads and Halton Chesters. Bolham, (Huckhoe Fort and Rochester, both in Northumberland have also produced annular yellow beads as well as at Kenchester, Herefordshire (Guido 1978: 179-180). Three of this type of bead have been recovered from South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 280).

The yellow annular opaque glass beads at Vindolanda reflect common characteristics throughout the type. All eleven beads are similar in colour, shape and in varying degrees, size. These examples all date to the Roman period. Guido lists other similar beads within her class 8, Iron Age beads of British design and origin but these date to a much earlier period.

On all of the examples the surfaces of the beads are pitted, which might be caused by air bubbles in the glass during production. The Vindolanda examples that can be dated come from the third century and are of similar dates to the other yellow annular beads found in the Hadrian’s Wall area. All but one of the beads comes from a civilian or bath house area.

**TERRACOTTA GLASS BEADS**

![Fig. 1.15. Terracotta glass beads](image)

SF8a U/S. Bath house. Width 2mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Slight longitudinal incised lines. Pitted surface.

SF179d Period VII. Civilian/ Military. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Dark striations. Pitted surface.

SF783 Period VII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Slight longitudinal incised lines. Dark striations. Pitted surface.

SF1340 Period VII. Civilian/ Military. Length 13mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Pitted surface. Very fragile at ends.

SF1503 Period VII. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Longitudinal incised lines. Pitted surface. Very fragile at ends.

SF1526 Period VII. Civilian. Width 7mm, diameter 8mm, perforation 4mm. Opaque. Dark striations, dark circle around perforation. Pitted surface.

SF2101 U/S. Civilian Width 3mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 2mm. Opaque. Longitudinal incised lines. Dark circle around perforation. Pitted surface.
SF2840 Period VII. Civilian. Length 9mm Pitted surface. Broken at one end. Width 3mm perforation 1mm. Opaque.

Comparative material: Guido’s group 7 (vii) opaque terracotta-coloured globular beads (Guido 1978: 175), Long biconical beads (Guido 1978: 221-222), and Cylinder beads (c) cylinders in other colours, not scheduled (Guido 1978: 96).

Guido applies a prehistoric date to the examples of globular terracotta glass beads in her research and suggest that they were produced at Meare in Somerset, where several examples have been found (Guido 1978: 70). The long biconical beads in this colour are similar to the other examples of this shape in blue and green. The three examples listed in the schedules date from the 1st to the 4th centuries, which only narrows it to a Roman period of occupation. One terracotta bead of cylinder shape came from another site in Somerset which dated to the Roman period (Guido 1978).

These are glass beads, but are possibly made to replicate a colour similar to many different natural minerals which the Romans are known to have utilised when making jewellery, including red jasper and coral. Neither of these minerals have all of the associated qualities shown in the Vindolanda assemblage and due to the pitting on the surface, similar to the surface pitting on many of the other glass beads, it can be deduced that these are glass. The Romans often used glass as a less expensive replica for natural minerals and this could have been what they were trying to accomplish with these beads. The Vindolanda examples all date to either the 3rd century or are from unstratified contexts. This puts them firmly in the Roman period of occupation but all were also found in the civilian areas which could possibly link them to Romano-British influences.
Fig. 1.17. Gold in glass beads

**SF158** Period VII: Bath house. Width 2mm, diameter 2mm, perforation 1mm. Very tiny but in good condition.

**SF184b** Period VII: Bath house. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Condition of bead is good.

**SF247** U/S. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 1mm. Outer layer of clear translucent glass removed. Gold leaf in bad condition. Cracks across surface.

**SF317a** Period VII. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead in good condition.

**SF317b** Period VII. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead in good condition.

**SF697** U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Bead is complete and in good condition.

**SF772** Period VII. Military. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead in good condition.

**SF1044** Period VII. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Bead is complete.

**SF1176** Period VI. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Bead is complete.

**SF1352** Period VII. Civilian/Military. Width 5mm, diameter 6mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead, clear glass fractured.

**SF1396** Period VII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead. Small chip in glass revealing translucent under glass.

**SF1866** Period VII. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead, segmenting rough. Outer glass badly damaged.

**SF1993** Period VII. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead, Outer glass chipped to reveal clear under glass.

**SF2019** U/S. Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 7mm, perforation 1mm. Outer glass chipped to reveal clear under glass, segmenting evident and rough.

**SF2091** Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 7mm, perforation 2mm. Bead is complete.

**SF2145** Period VII. Civilian. Width 3mm, diameter 3mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead, dirty appearance to outer glass.

**SF2172** U/S Civilian. Width 5mm, diameter 7mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead, Clear glass fractured.

**SF2207** Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Bead is complete and in good condition.

**SF2619** Period VIII. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Bead in good condition.

**SF6414** Period VII. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead. Outer glass chipped to reveal clear under glass.

**SF8039** Period VI. Military. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 1mm. Complete bead. Outer glass chipped to reveal clear under glass.

**SF9329** Period V. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 4mm, perforation 2mm Bead fractured, lines on surface.
Comparative material: Guido’s small segmented beads, (b) segmented beads sometimes enclosing gold or white metal foil (Guido 1978: 205-206). South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 278). Brougham, Cumbria (Cool 2004: 386).

These beads, named for their composition encasing a thin sheet of gold or silver in-between clear glass, were studied by George Boon (Britannia 1977). They were manufactured by using gold or silver sheets which cover a thin tube of usually transparent glass. These tubes were then dipped into molten glass to encase the metal and add to the brilliance in appearance. They survive in relatively good condition because the outer glass prevents oxidization on the metal. Metal in glass beads appear in the archaeological record around the Ptolemaic periods in Egypt. By the time of Roman Britain the standard had slipped, but the technique was still used until the medieval period.

In the Roman period, and at Vindolanda, the most common form is a plain sphere shape. It is evident at other sites that the beads were sold in multiple segments and broken, as the purchaser required, leaving sharp edges on the bead. However in the Vindolanda sample the areas around the segmentation are mostly smooth. In Roman Britain the gold in glass beads usually come from a late to post Roman occupation area. At Vindolanda however, there is a mix of dates ranging from the second to fourth centuries.

The sample demonstrates a variety of different size ranging from 2mm by 2mm to 5mm by 7mm, most commonly, about 4mm or 5mm in any direction. They also range in their context showing that neither civilian or military areas dominate.

LONG BLUE BICONICAL OR SQUARE SECTION BEADS with white and red bands or waves at centre

SF61  Period VII. Bath House. Length 4mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead. Red band is recessed, possibly due to wear.

SF651  Period VIII. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Broken in half longitudinally

SF811b  U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm width 3mm perforation 1mm. Opaque. Bead is complete.

SF854  U/S. Civilian. Length 7mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Turquoise blue. Broken at both ends. Reconstructed from 3 fragments.

SF966a  U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Broken at ends. Smooth surface.

SF1393  Period VIB. Military. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead. Wave bends and continues over top of bead.

SF1465  U/S. Civilian. Length 9mm, width 5mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Broken at one end. Smooth surface. Very fragile at ends.

SF1803  U/S. Civilian. Length 3mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, good condition.

Fig. 1.18. Long blue biconical or square section beads with white and red bands or waves at centre.
SF1943 Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead.

SF1996 U/S. Civilian. Length 5mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, pitted surface.

SF1999 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 2mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, pitted surface, wear at terminal.

SF2117 Period VII. Civilian. Fragment. Opaque.

SF2134 U/S. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, red glass degraded.

SF2208 Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, pitted surface, poor.

SF2854 Period VII. Civilian. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, wear at perforation.

SF9543 Period VI/VIA. Military. Length 6mm, width 4mm. Opaque. Fragmentary condition.

SF9618 U/S. U/S. Length 4mm, width 3mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque. Complete bead, excellent condition.

Comparative material: Guido’s long biconical or square sectioned beads with bands or chevrons in opaque white with red line at centre (Guido 1978: 222-223). Brougham, Cumbria (Cool 2004: 387-388).

Square section beads are common in the group and are of a relatively similar size. The waves or bands occur in a similar technique throughout, red is at the centre with thin lines of white to either side and then surrounded by blue glass. All three colours are opaque. The only variation to these colours is number 854 where the blue glass is more of a turquoise colour. 845, 966a, 1465 and 9543 show a variation in shape as they are long biconical.

According to Guido these beads were probably not of native origin but were imported possibly from North Africa or the Eastern Mediterranean, which could explain the earlier Severan date of 1393. The rest all share a common late Roman date of the third to fourth centuries and come from predominately civilian contexts outside the stone fort.
SF260 Period VII. Civilian. Width 10mm, diameter 24mm, perforation 8mm. Transparent annular brown and yellow swirl glass bead. Good condition, some discolouration in yellow areas. Comparative material: none found.

SF396 Period VII. Civilian. Width 9mm, diameter 22mm, perforation 4mm. Annular blue and white swirl bead. Good condition, some discoloration in white areas. Absence of comparative material found. This bead has a flat bottom side, which possibly points to its use. Unlike most of the rest of the glass beads it would not have strung well for a necklace and could have been used for another purpose. As it has a flat base it would have easily fit onto the base of an object, like a dagger. Its highly decorative nature would have added style to any object it was attached to. The bead was found in a civilian area and dates to the 3rd century. Its patterning is similar to 9439 (below) but 9439 does not have the flattened base.

SF830 U/S. Civilian. Width 10mm, diameter 16mm, perforation 4mm. Translucent annular blue bead with white rings around blue and yellow eyes. The condition of the yellow eyes are poor showing degradation but the blue eyes survive without fault other than the pitting on surface with is consistent thought the bead. Similar to Guido’s Class 3 South Harting type bead, schedules 107-110. Guido dates this type of bead to the 1st century BC. The bead that she describes is slightly larger than this example and puts it in the pre-Roman period of Britain. The Vindolanda bead has two blue eyes and two greenish yellow eyes surrounded with opaque white rings. The condition of the bead is good other than it has some pitting on the surface and the white rings are stained. Unfortunately, the bead comes from an unstratified deposit which makes it impossible to assign a period, but it could be assumed that the bead would have a fairly late Roman date (Guido 1978: 49). The bead itself is of good quality and it is possible that it was originally a frosty but clear glass in colour. Like some of the other beads it has a substantial perforation and it is fairly probable that it was not used as a necklace bead.

SF966e U/S. Civilian. Width 7mm, diameter 13mm, perforation 6mm. Translucent annular yellow green glass bead. In good condition. No comparative material was found. This bead is simple in its construction and like SF1747 it is hard to determine the original colour as it looks to have been affected by the ground conditions.

SF1747 U/S. Civilian. Width 9mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 8mm. Translucent clear annular glass bead. Shows a dirty surface colour which could be the result of ground conditions when found. Surface does not have pitting but a hairline fracture is apparent. No comparative material was found. As above, this bead has a very dirty appearance which could be attributed to the ground conditions to which it was found. The bead itself is of good quality and it is possible that it was originally a frosty but clear glass in colour. Like some of the other beads it has a substantial perforation and it is fairly probable that it was not used as a necklace bead.

SF1990 Period VII. Civilian. Width 2mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent reverse oblate blue glass bead. Very dark, almost black until held up to light then show blue. Also has irregular lining on surface. This bead is similar in size and shape to SF2853 below and they were both found in a civilian area dating to the 3rd century. The two beads also have very small perforation which could only be strung on a very fine wire or a thin sting. The beads both look black in colour until they are held up to light, when it becomes apparent that they are blue and purple respectively.
SF2018 Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Opaque segmented white glass bead. Could have been turned instead of crimped when made. Pitted surface. Guido’s small segmented beads, (a) various colours, schedules p. 201-204 (Guido 1978). This bead is unlike the other green and blue segmented bead in the Vindolanda collection because it is twisted instead of crimped. The bead is also of opaque white glass which is not seen on its own in any other bead in the collection. It dates from a third century civilian deposit.

SF2109 Period VII. Civilian. Width 10mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 9mm. Opaque annular greenish yellow glass bead. At fracture shows the striation of the glass yellow and clear resulting is the striping. No comparative material was found. This bead is a medium sized annular bead that is greenish yellow. Where the bead is fractured it is easy to see the build up of both green and yellow opaque glass in order to get the colour. It dates from the third century and is from a civilian area. This bead is unlike any other bead in the collection.

SF2853 Period VII. Civilian. Width 2mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 2mm. Translucent reverse oblate purple glass bead. Very dark, almost black until held up to light, then showing purple. Also has irregular lining on surface. This bead is similar in size and shape to SF1990 above and they were both found in a civilian area dating to the 3rd century. The two beads also have very small perforation which could only be strung on a very fine wire or a thin sting. The beads both look black in colour until they are held up to the light, when it becomes apparent that they are blue and purple respectively.

SF5109 Period VII. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 14mm. Annular yellow glass bead with blue on white on black eyes. Fragment of original, less than half. Guido’s Class 4, opaque yellow beads with two superimposed rows of blue and white eyes (Findon Type), schedules p. 110 (Guido 1978) Guido only list two of this type of bead in her schedules to come from Britain and puts them at an early Iron Age date, although the dates of the two beads are not certain. They are commonly found on the continent in Italy, France and other areas even though these date from a much earlier period to the date given to the Vindolanda example. The 3rd to 4th century date of this bead gives it a secure dating from the Roman period, but it could have been an heirloom or a replica of the older bead type reproduced in the Roman period (Guido 1978: 50).

SF6149 Period VIA. Military. Width 15mm, diameter 16mm, perforation 7mm. Opaque white spherical glass bead. Condition is good, but surface is porous. No comparative material was found. It could be a form of white faience which is not as common as its blue counterpart. This bead is similar in structure to the faience melon beads and could be made of a similar material as it lacks the luster of glass. Like some of the other faience beads it has some metallic fragments on the surface which are common in sand.

SF7615 Period VII. Military. Width 7mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 2mm. Spherical green, blue and clear glass bead. Good condition of glass, slight pitting, copper alloy pin through perforation. Unable to find comparisons with the composition of the bead. Similar to 7674 in the use of copper alloy. This bead is unlike any other in the collection. It has a swirl effect of blue, green and translucent clear glass. The copper alloy pin protrudes from one perforation. The other perforation is blocked where this copper alloy has been snapped. It is possible that this is evidence of bead production at Vindolanda. When a wound bead is made, the simplest form of bead to make, glass is wound over a metal rod or pin while the glass is in a viscous state. As it is heated the wire expands and as it cools it contracts. It is possible that this did not work here and the bead and wire had to be abandoned.

SF7674 Period VII. Military. (a.) width 5mm, length 4mm, (b.) width 4mm, length 7mm. (a.) Green square sectioned glass bead and (b.) a blue long biconical glass bead with white
and red waves. The beads are strung together with copper alloy wire. Good beads show pitting as is constant with other beads of the same composition. Copper alloy in excellent condition. SF7615 above also shows the use of copper alloy. For comparative material see sections above on green square sectioned beads and blue long biconical glass bead with white and red waves. The two beads making up SF7674 are not remarkable, but what is fascinating about these is the stringing on copper alloy wire, which is in very good condition. The full length with copper alloy wire is 35mm and it illustrates the technique used to string these beads. It is also interesting to note that the two beads are not similar in their shape or colour, possibly pointing to other variations within the Roman context.

**SF9279** Period IV. Civilian/Military. Various, shattered glass. Opaque green glass bead with yellow core. Unable to determine the shape, but the most probable is cylindrical or polygonal. The bead has been shattered. Whitton Roman villa, near Barry, Glamorganshire. Green long polygonal bead with yellow core (Guido, 1978: 79). Unfortunately, this bead did not survive well in the archaeological context but it is an interesting bead none the less. Its yellow core makes it unusual, but it is possible that this only becomes apparent because it is broken and it is possible that some of the other green glass beads might have a similar core. It dates from a 2nd century mixed deposit.

**SF9439** Period VI. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 8mm. Opaque blue, white and purple swirl glass bead. Good condition some pitting on surface. Similar in colour to SF396. No other comparisons. This large bead is unique in its colour. It is the mixing of at least three colours of blue, white and a pinkish purple. It has a large perforation which suggest that it was used singularly as a decoration. The bead is from a mid-second century military deposit.

**SF9509** Period IV/V. Civilian. Width 2mm, diameter 3mm, perforation 1mm. Translucent pink spherical glass bead. Good condition very tiny. No comparative material was found. This tiny bead, dating from an early third century civilian deposit is the only one of its kind to be found at Vindolanda. It is translucent and in good condition.

### ANNULAR BLUE GLASS BEADS

with opaque white waves

**SF8862** Period IV. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 16mm, perforation 5mm. Good condition some surface pitting.

**SF9537** Period V. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 17mm, perforation 6mm. Good condition some surface pitting.

**SF9652** Period VI.B. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 17mm. Good condition some surface pitting, only half remains.

Comparative material: Guido’s Group 5, miscellaneous wave decorated beads, (a) Translucent blue annular or globular beads with opaque white or yellow wave, schedules 128-133. Also found at Chesters, Great Chesters and Milking Gap, Northumberland (Guido 1978).

These beads have a wide chronological base in Britain starting in about third to first century BC and continuing through to the sixth to seventh centuries AD. Due to this extensive time span it is almost impossible to narrow down the period of popularity for this form. It is noticeable in other beads of this type that date to the Roman period that the waves are usually loose and do not follow a constant pattern, as seen in the Vindolanda examples. Few beads of this type are found on the continent (Guido 1978: 64).
The dates of the Vindolanda beads are from the early 2nd or the early 3rd century and they come from the military areas of the site.

**MELOM BEADS**

Melon beads, named because they resemble a sliced melon, have lateral impression around the surface and most commonly, parallel to the perforation. This type of bead is probably the most common to be found on any Roman site, not only in Britain but in the Empire as a whole. The most frequent material is faience, but within the bead collection at Vindolanda there are also blue glass and jet melon beads.

The faience melon beads are reminiscent of an earlier form of glass production. Glass was first used to coat other materials such as sandstone and rock crystal. It then obtained independence from base support to become beads and other small objects around 2500 BC. The application of glass as a glazed coating could never be progressed very far, and from quite early on the solid quartz was replaced by a mouldable paste of quartz powder and a vegetable or mineral binder. This material is today known as Egyptian paste or faience. This gave more scope to the production of objects and is still produced for tourists today (Green 1979).

The use of melon beads has been the topic of discussion for many years due to their large and weighty characteristic. As seen in the Vindolanda collection the beads are much more generously proportioned than their glass or stone counterparts. Also the beads come primarily from military contexts, which could point towards a military use for them.

The pictorial evidence from Germany suggests one purpose for melon beads. A tombstone of a cavalryman found at Cologne and dating to the last decade of the first century shows the decorations used by the cavalry for their horses. This includes a strap which circles the horse’s neck and has five rounded object with lateral incised lines (Dixon and Southern 1992: 39). This strap does not have any purpose other than decoration but could also be symbolic to the rider’s rank, wealth, nationality or cultural allegiances. He is from the Dansala tribe, in Thrakia (North of Greece/ Bulgaria), an area well known for horsemanship. Other parts of the Roman Empire also show signs of this type of horse decoration. In Iberia the cavalry often are shown with similar straps wrapped around the top of the horses necks. It is plausible to assume that this was a common form of horse adornment (Bennett 1998: 77-79). It is possible that the melon beads found at Vindolanda could have been used in this fashion. One melon bead SF4460a was found strung with a leather strap and in the same area as two other melon beads.

In the Vindolanda collection there are 80 melon beads, 72 in faience and 8 in blue glass. There are also two jet melon beads which are discussed in the jet section of this report. The melon bead is the most common bead at Vindolanda.

Blue glass melon beads
SF96 U/S. Civilian. incomplete: Fragment.
SF3342 Period VI. Military. Width 12mm, diameter 20mm. Translucent. Bead in good condition, with more than half surviving.
SF3824 Period VII. Military. fragment Opaque. Fragment.
SF4660c Period II. Military. Diameter 25mm, width 15mm, perforation 12mm. Opaque. Bead has large pitting on surface.

SF5070 Period VI. Civilian. Diameter 22mm, width 10mm, perforation 10mm. Opaque. Bead in good condition.
SF7817 Period III. Military. Diameter 22mm, width 12mm, perforation 12mm. Opaque. Over half surviving.
SF8758 Period III. Military. Diameter 11mm width 15mm. Opaque. Fragment.
SF9551 Period VI. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 30mm, width 23mm. Opaque. Fragment irregular shape. Poor condition.
Like the other blue glass beads in the Vindolanda collection, the blue glass melon beads show many of the same characteristics, like the pitting on the surface. Unfortunately, four of the beads are not complete. Of the four that are, they show signs of wear, but also signs of sturdy build. This is not surprising as melon beads are known for their long life. Guido states that these are both pre-Roman and are prevalent on sites in northern Europe through to the Viking age (Guido 1978: 228-230).

**Faience Melon Beads**

**SF139a** Period VIB. Military. Width 20mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 10mm. Bead has wear on surface, turquoise slip, flat on one side, possible burning.

**SF139b** Period VIB. Military. Width 18mm, diameter 19mm, perforation 9mm. Bead has wear on surface, turquoise slip, possible burning.

**SF139c** Period VIB. Military. Width 20mm, diameter 22mm, perforation 6mm. Bead has wear on the surface, turquoise slip, possible burning.

**SF139d** Period VIB. Military. Width 15mm, diameter 16mm, perforation 7mm. Bead has wear on surface, turquoise slip, possible burning.

**SF139e** Period VIB. Military. Width 20mm, diameter 25mm, perforation 10mm. Bead has wear on surface, turquoise slip, possible burning.

**SF390** U/S. Civilian. Incomplete. Fragment.

**SF636e** U/S. Civilian. Incomplete. Fragment, turquoise slip.

**SF679** U/S. Civilian. Width 10mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 7mm. Bead has wear on surface, turquoise slip.

**SF925** Period VIB. Military. Width 18mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 7mm. Wear on surface, turquoise slip.

**SF984** Period II. Military. Incomplete. Wear on surface, fragment.

**SF1357** Period III. Military. Width 13mm, diameter 14mm. Bead has wear on surface.

**SF1390** Period VI. Military. Width 16mm, diameter 22mm, perforation 13mm. Smooth surface, turquoise slip, possible burning.

**SF1473** Period VIB. Military. Width 17mm, diameter 19mm, perforation 7mm. Wear on surface, turquoise slip.

**SF1512** Period III. Military. Incomplete. Wear on surface. Fragment.

**SF1567** Period VIB. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 12mm, perforation 6mm. Very worn, lateral incisions almost completely disappeared.

**SF2201** Period VII. Civilian. Width 19mm, diameter 19mm, perforation 13mm. Smooth surface, turquoise slip, possible burning.

**SF2216** U/S. Civilian. Width 9mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 5mm. Smooth surface, poor condition.

**SF2223** U/S. Civilian. Width 10mm, diameter 12mm, perforation 6mm. Poor condition.

**SF2598** Period VIII. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 5mm. Poor condition.

**SF2790** Period VIII. Military. Width 9mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 8mm. Poor condition.

**SF3280** U/S. Military. Fragment. Poor condition.

**SF4094** Period II. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 15mm, perforation 8mm. Poor condition, possible burning.

**SF4185** Period III. Military. Width 16mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 8mm. Good condition, strong lateral impression.

**SF4226** Period I. Military. Width 14mm, diameter 16mm, perforation 11mm. Poor condition.

**SF4651** Period III. Military. Width 8mm, diameter 25mm. Poor condition.

**SF4660a** Period II. Military. Diameter 19mm, width 13mm, perforation 10mm. Found strung on leather - possible horse strap.

**SF4660b** Period II. Military. Diameter 24mm, width 21mm, perforation 11mm. Good condition, possible burning due to patina on surface.

**SF5295** Period V. Military. Width 11mm, diameter 15mm, perforation 5mm. Good condition, turquoise slip evident.

**SF6422** Period V. Military. Width 7mm, diameter 9mm. Poor condition, turquoise slip evident.

**SF7426** Period VII. Military. Width 14mm, diameter 15mm, perforation 6mm. Poor condition.
SF7578 Period VII. Military. Width 10mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 5mm. Poor condition.
SF7752 Period VII. Military. Width 20mm, diameter 20mm, perforation 8mm. Complete, turquoise slip evident.
SF7799 Period VIII. Military. Width 9mm, diameter 12mm, perforation 5mm. Turquoise slip evident.
SF7841 Period VIII. Military. Width 19mm, diameter 18mm, perforation 9mm. Poor condition. Turquoise slip evident.
SF7879 U/S. Military. Fragment. Poor condition.
SF8152 Period V. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 8mm, perforation 5mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.
SF8199 Period III. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 8mm, perforation 5mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.
SF8387 Period IV. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 8mm, perforation 5mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF8764 Period III. Military. Height 17mm, width 15mm. Less than half remaining, turquoise slip evident.

SF8777 Period IV. Military. Diameter 16mm, width 17mm, perforation 7mm. Good condition, possible burning.

SF8781 Period IV. Military. Diameter 19mm, width 18mm, perforation 10mm. Bead is good and complete.

SF8784 Period VI. Civilian. Diameter 15mm, width 8mm, perforation 6mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF8907 Period VII. Civilian. Diameter 10mm, width 8mm, perforation 5mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF8929 Period V. Civilian. Diameter 7mm, width 10mm, perforation 5mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF9124 Period VIB. Civilian. Diameter 5mm, width 11mm. Fragment Poor condition.

SF9126 Period VIB. Civilian. Diameter 13mm, width 11mm, perforation 7mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF9192 Period IV. Military. Diameter 9mm, width 14mm. Fragment, poor condition.

SF9277 Period VIII. Civilian. Diameter 11mm, width 8mm, perforation 4mm. Good condition, latitudinal striations not parallel to perforation.

SF9307 Period VII. Civilian/Military. Diameter 8mm, width 6mm, perforation 4mm. Small irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF9326 Period V. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 9mm, perforation 4mm. Latitudinal impressions not parallel to perforation. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF9348 Period V. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 9mm, perforation 4mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF9376 Period IV. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 10mm, perforation 4mm. Faience shows little degradation giving a bright turquoise colour to the surface of the bead. Irregular shape. Good condition.

SF9407 Period IV/V. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 20mm, width 18mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition less than half surviving, turquoise slip evident, found with 9415, 9416, 9428.

SF9415 Period IV/V. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 18mm, width 15mm, perforation 10mm. Irregular shape. Good condition, turquoise slip evident, found with 9407, 9416, 9428.

SF9416 Period IV/V. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 13mm, width 10mm, perforation 6mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition, turquoise slip evident, found with 9407, 9416, 9428.

SF9428 Period IV/V. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 20mm, width 18mm, perforation 7mm Irregular shape. Poor condition, turquoise slip evident, found with 9407, 9415, 9416.

SF9442 U/S. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 18mm, width 14mm. Fragment, poor condition. turquoise slip evident.

SF9445 Period IV/V. Military. Diameter 20mm, width 15mm. Fragment irregular shape. Poor condition, turquoise slip evident.

SF9487 Period IV/V. Military. Diameter 18mm, width 15mm. Good condition, turquoise slip evident.

SF9517 Period V. Military. Diameter 22mm, width 20mm. Irregular shape. good condition, turquoise slip evident.

SF9527 Period V. Military. Diameter 13mm, width 10mm, perforation 6mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition.

SF9547 Period V. Military. Diameter 11mm, width 9mm, perforation 5mm. Irregular shape. Poor condition, turquoise slip evident.

SF9576 Period V. Military. Diameter 19mm, width 22mm. Fragment good condition, turquoise slip evident, found with 9595, 9596.

SF9595 Period V. Military. Diameter 11mm, width 9mm, perforation 6mm. Poor condition, iron in perforation turquoise slip evident, found with 9576, 9596.

SF9596 Period V. Military. Diameter 18mm, width 18mm, perforation 8mm. Poor condition turquoise slip evident, found with 9576, 9595.

SF9644 Period IV/V. Military. Diameter 11mm, width 9mm, perforation 5mm.
Latitudinal impressions not parallel to perforation, irregular shape. Possible burning.

**SF9649** Period IV/V. Military. Diameter 10mm, width 9mm, perforation 4mm. Latitudinal impressions not parallel to perforation, irregular shape. Poor condition, turquoise slip evident.

**SF9651** U/S. Civilian/ Military. Diameter 12mm, width 9mm, perforation 5mm. Well worn, irregular shape. Poor condition.

**SF9729** Period V. Civilian. Diameter 13mm, width 10mm, perforation 6mm. Only half remaining. Poor condition.


The melon beads date from almost all of the time periods on the site. The highest proportion come from the 2nd century and then from the 3rd century. This is not surprising as the bead comes from predominantly military areas and there has been a larger proportion of excavation in the 2nd century military areas than in that of later centuries.

The Vindolanda faience beads vary in size, colour and quality. Many are fragmentary but information about their size is still possible and it seems that there are basically two common sizes, the small ranging from 8mm-15mm in diameter and the larger ranging from 16mm – 25mm in diameter. Vindolanda has 35 beads which fall into the first size group and 31 in the larger size group (6 are too fragmentary to include).

![Vindolanda Faience Melon Beads](image)

**Fig. 1.22. Melon bead sizes**

Bead 9373 illustrates the possible bright turquoise blue of the faience beads and it is probable that many of the Vindolanda beads would have look like this. Some of the beads on inspection have to a greater or lesser degree the same turquoise colouring. The beads also show signs of possible burning, like bead 1390, and others show interesting characteristics, like 9649, which has its latitudinal impressions almost horizontal to the perforation.

The Vindolanda melon beads come mostly from military contexts and are unlike most of the other beads found at Vindolanda. It poses the question of why? Could they be used as something other than beads strung on a cord to produce a necklace and could this also point to a more military use of the bead or a more male use of the beads? Melon beads also have in general a much larger perforation than many of the other glass beads, not only at Vindolanda but elsewhere. 4460, three melon beads were found strung on a scrap of leather. It is possible that the beads were used as a toggle at the end of a drawstring, like on a leather drawstring.
purse. It is important to remember that beads, like melon beads could have had a number of different uses, some being strung in groups as necklace while some were used singly to facilitate other functions.

JET BEADS

Jet is a brown coal made from fossilised trees similar to the Araucaria or monkey-puzzle tree. These trees flourished during the Jurassic period about 180 million years ago. When the trees died they became buried in water-rich areas, either near fresh water or salt water. Sediments would cover the wood in layers and create great pressure on the organic materials. This along with chemical changes within the wood created jet. Analysis of the oils found in hard jet reveal that it was formed in salt water and it is probable that soft jet was made in fresh water. Until recently jet was believed to be solidified resin similar in composition to amber and in some Roman accounts it is even identified as ‘black amber’. But with the use of a microscope it is easy to determine that jet is fossilized wood. Conclusive proof is visible in the form of annular tree rings seen either with a microscope, or, if the piece is exceptional, the rings can be seen with the naked eye (Muller 2003: 3-4).

Jet has been used for thousands of years. Ancient Greeks and Romans called it gagates and in the first century AD Pliny wrote in his Natural History “Gagates is a stone, so called from Gages, the name of a town and river in Lycia. It is black, smooth, light and porous and differs but little from wood in appearance. The fumes of it, burnt, keep serpents at a distance and dispel hysterical affections: they detect a tendency also to epilepsy and act as a test of virginity. A decoction of this stone with wine is curative of toothache; and in combination with wax it is good for scrofula.” (Muller 2003: 3).

Sources of jet are found throughout the world including Russia, Germany, Spain, Portugal, France, North America and Britain. The jet in Britain mostly comes from the North Yorkshire coast where good quality hard jet was plentiful. It is fairly certain that the pre-Roman population could have sustained their needs for jet by beachcombing the area, and it is probable in Roman times that this method was still used. It is also possible that more active measures were utilised during the Roman period. The evidence for such mining has unfortunately been displaced due to large scale workings in the area in the Victorian period. Studies of jet in York show that jet was mined in various areas of the coast and sent via the road from Whitby to York for carving by the craftsmen established in the city (Allason-Jones 1996: 6). It is probable that many of the jet artefacts in the Vindolanda collection would come from this area due to the close proximity of source area and the availability of trade with York.

It must also be noted that not all black shiny jewellery of a Roman date is jet. The Romans also worked shale, cannel coal, durain and others materials. Another popular source for shale is ‘Kimmeridge clay’ most notably in Dorset but found elsewhere in the country including near Middlesborough in Cleveland (Allason-Jones 1996: 6). This must be taken into account when looking at the Vindolanda collection, as the following are grouped as jet and it is possible that some objects could be one of these other jet-like substances.

In the historical record British jet is first referred to by Gaius Julius Solinus writing in the late 2nd century to the early 3rd century AD where he suggested that the material could be used to make jewellery. It is not certain what brought jet into fashion. There are two suggestions. It is possible that jet could have been given a new religious significance. Or there is the possibility that the Empress Julia Domna, upon visiting York (AD 208-211), found the material pleasing and thus started the trend. By the 4th century jet was in decline and only intermittently used during the Viking and Saxon eras and does not return to the Roman production levels until the 19th century. (Allason-Jones 1996: 9).

Jet objects were carved by individual craftsmen and it appears that each process would have been handled by the same craftsman. Tool that were used to carve the jet included
lathes, iron blades, chisels, files, saws, drills and knives. Using a drill, hand-held awl or augur the craftsman would make the perforation. On many beads seen in cross-section the perforation has been made from drilling from the top and then turning the bead over to drill from the bottom. This is evident by the hour glass shape of the perforation.

Hairpins, finger rings, bangles and beads made of jet are all evident in the Vindolanda collection. The finest piece in the collection is the jet betrothal medallion showing a kissing couple on one side and clasped hands on the reverse. Much of the collection has parallels in the Roman jet at the Yorkshire Museum.

Annular shale beads
SF3896 Period V. Military. Width 8mm, diameter 18mm, perforation, 7mm. Lacks lustre of other jet beads. Rough carving.
SF4456 Period V. Military. Width 5mm, diameter 14mm, perforation 6mm. Lacks lustre of other jet beads. Two pieces.
SF9188 Period IV/V. Military. Width 13mm, diameter 22mm, perforation 14mm. Lacks lustre of other jet beads, poor condition.

Comparative material: none identified

All three beads are very basic in their construction and do not have the lustre of the rest. They could be composed of a different material, possibly shale, which can also be found comparatively local to the site. These are the only three examples of this type of material which differs from the rest of the jet in the collection.

The early second century date for these three beads is of note, as jet does not become popular within the Empire until the 3rd century, and this could also account for the crude carving and lack of polish.

Jet barrel-shaped bead
SF176a Period VII. Bath house. Width 13mm, diameter 9mm, perforation 3mm. Poor condition, irregular shape.

Comparative material: South Shields, Tyne & Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984).

This bead was found with a roughly produced green teardrop glass bead and a fragment of an annular yellow glass bead. The bead is crude in its production and does not show the high polish of some of the other jet beads.

Biconical jet beads
SF567 U/S. Civilian. Length 14mm, width 3mm, perforation 2mm. One end broken.
Comparative material: Similar to beads found at South Shields, Tyne and Wear. The beads are identified as cylinders that taper at the terminals. In the illustration the bead resembles the same shape identified as a glass long biconical bead (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984).

Biconical beads in glass are very popular at Vindolanda, but 567 is the only bead of this shape in jet. As with its glass counterparts the ends have been broken, which could be caused by wear.

This bead was unstratified and does not help in determining its significance.

Cylindrical jet beads
SF318 Period VII. Military. Length 18mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. Good condition.
SF371 Period VII. Civilian. Length 12mm, width 6mm, perforation 2mm. With incised grooves, slow tapering to end. Fracture at end.
SF810 Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 4mm, perforation 1mm. With incised grooves. Good and complete.
SF1509 Period VI. Military. Length 12mm, width 5mm, perforation 2mm. With incised grooves and tapered end. Good condition.
SF1761 Period VII. Civilian. Length 10mm, width 4mm, perforation 3mm. With incised grooves, 5 on one end 7 on other. Breakage at both ends apparent.
SF1886 U/S. Civilian. Width 4mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 2mm. Possible breakage from a larger bead.
SF2339 U/S. Military. Length 23mm, width 3mm, perforation 3mm. With incised groove. Broken at one end.
SF2482 Period VIII. Military. Length 23mm, width 4mm, perforation 2mm. With incised grooves, four sets of groves and three blank spaces, good condition.
SF2493 Period VIII. Military. Width 3mm, diameter 5mm, perforation 2mm. With incised groove, good condition.
SF2497 Period VIII. Military. Length 20mm, width 3mm, perforation 2mm. With four incised groves, good condition.
SF9370 Period V. Civilian/ military. Length 2mm, width 6mm, perforation 2mm. With one incised groves, good condition.

Comparative material: York Museum, varying similarities of cylindrical beads with and without incised lines. Of note, 1886, 2493 are closely related to number 9 and 1761, 2482, 2497 are all similar to 22, 23, 24 (Allason-Jones 1996). South Shield, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984).

The Vindolanda cylindrical beads all vary in the size and number of incised lines. By and large they are all of good condition and breakages within this group could be caused by wear.

The cylindrical jet beads in the collection have a wide range of dates ranging from the 2nd to 3rd centuries and unstratified. The majority of them date from the 3rd to 4th centuries and this is relative to the supposed increase of jet production in Britain. The beads are predominantly from the military contexts on the site, but there are also a fair proportion coming from civilian areas.

Diamond faceted jet bead
SF2340 U/S. Military. Length 12mm, width 8mm, perforation 3mm. Slight irregularity in the carving of bead, some lateral marking possibly from carving.

Comparative material: South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984).

This bead is the only one of its shape identified in jet. Comparable pieces of this shape survive in glass at Vindolanda. This bead shows some wear and some lateral abrasion possibly occurring during carving. The size of the bead is much larger than its glass counterparts, possibly due to the different style of manufacture. Unfortunately the bead came from an unstratified military context which offers no help in identifying the origin of the bead.
Jet melon bead
SF892 Period VII. Military. Width 8mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 3mm. Complete and good condition.
SF2349 Period VII. Civilian. Width 8mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 4mm. Only half surviving, broken leaving scaring.


Although one of the beads is broken in half, they show a high precision carving technique. According to Allason-Jones, melon beads of jet are rare whereas their glass or faience counterparts are quite commonly found on most Romano-British sites. Often these beads are found individually and one of the glass beads was found on a dolabra sheath in Germany (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984). It could be inferred that the melon beads were not always used as necklaces but could be used as decoration on other objects. If this was true for the glass and faience melon beads it could also be true for the jet. The perforation on this melon bead is similar to those on the glass counterparts.

The 3rd century date for these beads is similar to many of the other jet beads at Vindolanda and elsewhere in Britain.

Long polygonal jet bead
SF731 Period VII. Civilian. Length 37mm, width 5mm, perforation 4mm. Octagonal. Broken in two pieces.

Comparative material: none identified

SF731 is one of the largest beads in the collection and has similarities to the smaller long polygonal bead in both green and blue glass. Unfortunately this bead has been fractured at its middle but the condition of the jet remains good. The date of the 3rd to 4th century is comparable to the other jet beads found at Vindolanda.

Spherical jet bead
SF170 Period VII. Military. Width 6mm, diameter 12mm, perforation 3mm. Smooth and well worn at perforations.
SF186 Period VII. Military. Width 7mm, diameter 10mm, perforation 3mm. Wear at both perforations.
SF252 Period VII. Civilian. Width 7mm, diameter 10mm, perforation, 3mm. Pitted surface.
SF523 Period VIB. Military. Width 12mm, diameter 12mm, perforation 4mm. Pitted surface.
SF812 Period VII. Civilian. Width 9mm, diameter 11mm, perforation 4mm. Pitting on surface.


Lindsay Allason-Jones identifies five beads of a similar type (globular) within the York Museum collection. The size of the York beads are similar to those at Vindolanda. These five beads are all of relatively good quality except for the pitted surface on SF523, SF812 and SF252 which could be attributed to wear, and is the only evidence that shows these beads use.

The dates of the spherical beads relate to the early 3rd or to the mid 3rd century which is similar to the other jet beads at Vindolanda.

Square sectioned jet bead
SF7005 Period VIII. Military. Length 29mm, width 4mm, perforation 3mm. Glossy surface, slightly pitted on one side.

Comparative material: none identified

As with many of the beads above, this square section bead can be compared to its glass counterparts. This bead, however, varies in that it is larger than most of the similar glass beads. It is a highly glossy bead and shows some pitting on one side. This could be caused by wear.

Specialist jet beads
SF301 Period VII. Civilian. Length 17 mm, width 7mm, perforations 1mm.
Cylinder jet bead. Two perforations, perpendicular to the length of bead. Also has two sets of eyes carved into the top of the bead. Good condition No comparative material found. This bead is individual due to its perforations and its carving, both of which are of fine quality. The bead would have been double strung and the concentric circles or eyes would have faced upwards.

**SF367** Period VII. Civilian. Length 8mm, width 9mm, perforations 2mm. Square sectioned jet bead. Good condition, slight irregularity in shape. Similar to some of the beads found at South Shields, Tyne and Wear but not exact (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 308). This interesting bead would have been double strung. It does show slight carving on the top face of the bead which would have showed a decorative finish to the piece.

**SF945** U/S. Civilian. Length 22 mm, width 7mm, perforations 2mm. Cylinder jet bead carved to have three sections. Excellent condition. No comparative material found. Simple variation on the popular jet cylinder bead but has been further worked into a threepart shape. The finishing of the bead is of high quality and the bead retains a high gloss.

**SF1931** Period VII. Civilian. Length 30 mm, width10mm, perforation 1mm. Worked jet bead, reverse oblate with melon bead-like impressions on the top face. Good condition. No comparative material found, but is similar in basic composition to SF2912. Like the other bi-perforated bead this would have been double strung. This bead looks to be the combination of a multiple of different styles, creating this unique example.

**SF2849** U/S. Military. Length 27mm, width 12mm, perforations 4mm. Flat elliptical jet armlet bead with a Z and oval shaped pattern. Good condition. This is the most common armlet bead found at York and elsewhere. There are two types: either raised ovals resulting in an hourglass shape or ones with Z/S motifs. The Vindolanda example is of both. The Z motif style is used on the sides but the carver has used his own design and added the ovals at the top to form hourglass shapes at the top and bottoms. The pattern then becomes hourglass, Z, hourglass, Z hourglass. The bead has the typical 2 perforations for stringing.

**SF2912** Period VIII. Military. Length 25mm width 7mm, perforations 2mm. Semicircular jet bead with 2 holes. Reverse is carved flat. Obverse is carved with loose grooves. The perforations show wear. No comparative material found, but it is similar in basic composition to SF1931. This bead is similar to SF2849 in that it is bi-perforated. This could add to the flexibility of hanging for the jet if, for example, it was being used as a necklace. Wear can be identified at the perforations as well. The 3rd to 4th century date for the bead again is expected.

**SF7085** Period VIII. Military. Length 12 mm, width 10mm, perforations 1mm each. Rectangular jet bead with incised circles on top. Two perforations. Broken. Possibly shale, as it lacks lustre.

The Vindolanda bead collection includes thirty-five jet beads of varying different sizes and shapes. Most of the jet beads survive in a good condition with the only degradation in signs of wear. The most prevalent jet bead type from Vindolanda is the cylinder shaped. The other bead shapes are mostly one or two of each kind. Unlike the glass, there are only a few of each type.
The jet beads vary in their find areas but are predominately from the 3rd century which is relevant to the possible Severan date of their popularity. The second century beads mostly come from the end of that century. Unlike the glass beads there is an even distribution of the jet into the military and civilian areas, but there are more 3rd century civilian and 3rd to 4th century military beads.

Vindolanda Jet Beads

![Vindolanda Jet Beads](image)

*Fig. 1. 24. Jet beads.*

In comparison to the glass, jet is a much smaller part of the assemblage from the site. It does however, make up the next largest material to be used. It is hoped that future excavations can reveal more information about this material.

**COPPER ALLOY BEADS**

Copper alloy is a very common material, used by the Romans throughout the Empire to make a variety of objects, including coins, armour and personal adornments. Beads are no exception to this. Copper alloy, when new, shone like gold and would have been seen by the Romans as a cost effective alternative to the precious metal.

Copper as a pure mineral is relatively soft, but when mixed with tin or zinc it becomes much stronger. The result, either bronze or brass, is much easier to manipulate and much stronger. The ores of the metal had to first be mined from the natural environment, then the raw material had to be smelted together to form the basic compound. The metal could then be cast, moulded or beaten into the required shape for the artefact (Hodges 1989: 64-74).

At Vindolanda, objects made of copper alloy bronze survive in exceptionally good condition due to anaerobic conditions. These oxygen free areas allow the artefacts which are excavated from these depths to emerge again after nearly 2000 years of hiding in almost the same condition which they were deposited.
Comparative material: South Shields, Tyne and Wear, one beads similar in shape to 191, 175, 2457, 2759, 7483 (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 220). Brougham, Cumbria, melon shaped copper alloy bead (Cool 2004: 390).

Vindolanda’s copper alloy or bronze beads come in two common shapes. The first is a simple annular shape like 191 or 2459. The other shape is a long polygonal biconical shape like 201. There are other shapes like the spherical shape of 7496 or the square sectioned shape of 7761 represented in the Vindolanda collection.

Most of the copper alloy beads come from military contexts, with only three from civilian areas of occupation. The beads come from the 3rd or 4th century deposits or are unstratified.

AMBER BEADS

Amber is fossilised resin from pine trees, *Pinus succubufera*, that existed sixty to forty million years ago during the Eocene period. It is warm to the touch and light in weight and the most common colour is golden honey, but less commonly it is found in ruby reds to
iridescent greens and blues. Sometimes it is found with insects or other inclusions, like plants or sometimes pyrites.

The world’s most significant deposits of amber come from what is commonly called the Baltic, which is why it is called Baltic amber. This area includes Sweden, Denmark, northern Germany, Poland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Amber was traded from this Baltic area as early as Neolithic times and by the time of the Roman Empire there were well established trade strategies and routes. The amber found at Vindolanda was probably imported along these trade routes.

Comparative material: South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 33).

The Vindolanda collection has eleven amber beads ranging in size, shape and colour. The most common shape is the annular bead. It would have been an easy shape to work and it would also have transported well.

There are also three objects of amber that should further explained. Finds number SF7020, SF8043 and SF9666 do not have perforations but look to be partially worked. Each has areas that look to have been tooled and also areas where the object has been broken. SF160 and SF3466 also show signs of the re-drilling of the perforation.

The dating for the beads as a group range from the early 2nd century through to the 3rd to 4th century and thus it is hard to isolate an individual time period for the popularity of the
beads at the site. It is unusual, however to have all of the bead type come from the military occupation areas and would raise the question of a more militaristic use for the material than for personal adornment.

**BONE**

Bone is one of the oldest materials used for the making of beads. It is not surprising to find this example in the Vindolanda collection. It is less explicable why there are not more of them. The bead does come from the military areas and is from one of the earliest occupation levels at the site. It is possible that with continuing excavation into these early contexts more might be uncovered.

*Fig1.27*

**SF4290** Period III. Military. Width 3mm diameter 16mm, perforation 2mm. Annular bone bead. Complete.

Comparative material: South Shields, Tyne and Wear. Bone beads have been found at this site but nothing like the same shape as the Vindolanda bead (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 52). Brougham, Cumbria, but the shape of those examples are not given (Cool 2004: 385).

The bead itself is in good condition apart from the abrasion on one side, making it more like a ‘D’. It is not clear if this is due to the wear on the bead or if it is intentional.
THE INTAGLIOS

By Elizabeth Greene

INTRODUCTION

The engraved gemstones are one of the highlights of the collection of artefacts from the fort and vicus at Vindolanda. Most of the gemstones are now found separated from their original ring settings, but in antiquity they would have been set in finger rings creating an obvious relationship with the group of rings also found on site. Their primary use was to seal documents with an individualized symbol to ensure safe and private delivery of letters. Such usage declined as early as the first century when almost certainly signets became more of a personal amulet or symbol rather than a specific individual marker, a shifting use exemplified clearly by intaglios being set into pendants rather than finger rings (Johns 1996: 75). Evidence throughout the empire suggests mass production, seen primarily through the numerous replicas of specific images and the use of mould made glass gems, which allowed for quick production on a large scale.1

The Vindolanda assemblage consists of sixty-one ring settings that were lost in antiquity, presumably at random, and are now found in archaeological contexts from all but the earliest occupation period on the site.2 This assemblage is particularly important for the study of engraved Roman gemstones because of their controlled excavation from stratified and well-dated archaeological contexts and can only be compared to a very few other groups of finds from the Roman Empire.3 Because of the popularity throughout history of collecting ancient gemstones and jewellery, and particularly during the Renaissance in Europe, many ancient intaglios are found today in museum collections and private holdings throughout the world and have lost their archaeological provenance and ability to inform us about past human behaviour. As a result these unprovenanced artefacts are more a reflection of the tastes of the modern collector rather than of those who wore and used the signets in antiquity. For this reason ancient gemstones have typically been analysed and valued as objects of art and not as archaeological finds that provide a window into the lives of men and women living in the Roman Empire (cf. Henig 1988: 142). The stratified assemblage at Vindolanda, however, allows a view into some of the choices and tastes of the individuals who lived in this frontier fort in the Roman period.

The Vindolanda assemblage of intaglios represents over two hundred years of occupation by auxiliary soldiers and civilians at the fort and vicus, reflecting changing tastes of their owners and the evolution of Roman glyptic art in general. Moreover, with the

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1 The Snettisham jeweller’s hoard is a good example of the breakdown of signets as a unique marker and of the craft in general. Twenty-seven stones carry the image of Bonus Eventus, twenty stones show Ceres holding corn ears and offering plate, while twelve are of a standing parrot. All stones are cut on carnelian and show a breakdown of artistic craftsmanship. For a full report see Johns 1996b and 1997.
2 The only exception is period I, from which there are no finds of engraved gems. This circumstance is probably due to the inaccessible conditions of the interior buildings of the period I timber fort which lies directly beneath the substantial remains of period VI and VII stone fort walls and buildings. Period I is only known from excavation of its western fort ditches.
3 A comparable collection is from the legionary bath house at Caerleon. The assemblage was found primarily in the main drain of the bath house, but like Vindolanda, represents chance losses over a period of roughly two centuries. see Zienkiewicz 1986: 118. The Snettisham Jeweller’s hoard also includes a large collection of stones but represents a single deposit rather than loss over time, therefore does not display evolution and change of signet style and use, see Johns 1997; the main drains at Bath have also produced a large number of stones, 34 in total, see Henig 1988b and 1992.
assemblage originating from a single site that was occupied primarily by auxiliary soldiers and non-Roman civilians, it is possible to suggest how a Roman tradition of wearing a finger ring with an image carved on the bezel entered the culture of non-citizen inhabitants of the empire. With no known previous tradition of glyptic art or signet wearing in pre-Roman cultures of the west, perhaps the adoption of such a Roman custom had some relationship to status or identity within the empire and specifically on the northern frontier of Britain in the second and third centuries.

The intaglio assemblage represents finds from across the excavated portions of the fort and vicus found over the last thirty-five years. The group is discussed here in its entirety, including those items found during the 2004 season. Excavations at Vindolanda are ongoing with the possibility of numerous new finds at any time altering the data herein; however, the current sample size and its nature as random and accidental losses suggests that the trends detected can be expected to continue. The assemblage is categorized by each period of occupation from which individual artefacts were excavated. Each item has a catalogue number followed by its original small find number from within the broader Vindolanda database of artefacts. A discussion of the salient features of the assemblage is followed by the catalogue where all pertinent information about individual intaglios can be found.

DATING AND DISTRIBUTION

With the exception of period I, intaglios have been found in all occupation levels on the site, dating from ca. AD 90-300. Figure 2.1 shows the distribution of intaglio finds within each occupation period and the percentage of the entire assemblage which each represents. The slow growth of numbers found in each of the earlier periods, with a final significant peak in the third century, suggests a slow rise in ownership and loss of gemstones. By the end of the third century the craft seems to have completely disappeared.

With the proliferation of ownership of carved gemstones in period VII (post AD 213) and period VII/VIII (late reworking of interior fort buildings), the periods from which at least fifty three percent of the collection is comprised, compared to the lower numbers found in period II-VIB contexts, one must conclude that the trend was either only allowed for or chosen by far fewer people in the earlier periods. By the third century the ability to own a signet, whether due to changing economic status or shifting trends, was open to far more people than previously. A second significant trend parallel to the peak in signet ownership is the proliferation of glass and paste intaglios, which were manufactured in imitation of semi-precious stones. The most popular of the glass gems throughout Roman Britain is the nicolo paste, clearly in imitation of the agate called nicolo. With its white face layered onto a dark underside it mimics the natural strata found in the nicolo, but would have cost far less than the actual gemstone. This trend would have brought the cost of ownership down and allowed many more people to own a signet ring. Moreover, the glass paste gems were made in a mould and would certainly have allowed for the mass production of numbers of gems in the same mould with the same image on the bezel. Even with semi-precious stones cut in

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5 The craft of glyptic art and the use of intaglios in Roman Britain and elsewhere in the empire seems to disappear closer to the middle of the third century; however, the Period VII occupation layers are dated to the end of the third century and some intaglios are found in 4th century contexts of reworked interior buildings of the latest stone fort, called period VII/VIII. Specifically the few stones found within the late fort walls should be attributed to period VII/VIII contexts, but were most likely carved in the 3rd century, and are therefore for the most part included in the period VII occupation of the last stone fort because of the universal acceptance that the art is no longer practiced in the 4th century.
6 It should be noted that more of the occupation levels of period VIB and VII have been excavated on the site; however, the drastic peak in the later periods is significant and suggests far greater usage in the late second and third centuries before the tradition of wearing rings with intaglios disappeared.
intaglio, by the second and third centuries the uniformity of types throughout the empire is reflected today in very similar and comparable finds from all the provinces and peninsular Italy (cf. Henig 1997: 20).

**Number of Intagios Found in Occupation Periods I-VII, ca. AD 85-300**

![Pie chart showing the number of intagios found in different periods](image)

**Fig. 2.1. Distribution of intaglio finds from occupation periods I-VII**

An intriguing connection exists between the sudden peak in signet ownership in period VII, and the citizenship grant made to all inhabitants of the empire in AD 212 by Caracalla. A definite relationship cannot be proven, but it should be noted that the early use of rings and signets in the Republican and early imperial periods was connected to social status; only senators and equestrians were legally allowed to wear gold rings. It is curious to see such a significant and sudden rise in wearing a ring with intaglio after this decree, and perhaps shows some reflection of identity in the empire at this time. Of course, with luxury items the population at Vindolanda was for the most part reliant on the wares the craftsman or merchant brought to the fort, but doubtless the seller would also have well understood his market and brought items that were likely to make a good profit.

A second observation concerning the peak in use in the third century concerns the probable distribution of the loss of gemstones in military compared to civilian contexts. Figure 2.2 demonstrates the distribution of gemstone loss in all periods from contexts that were probably either associated with the military or with civilian areas, with the addition of the number that were found in ambiguous areas that cannot be assigned to either environment. The stones from the earliest periods II-V, ca. AD 90-120, are more probably from purely military areas. The excavated portions of these early timber forts are military contexts and, if a civilian component existed extramurally, these areas have not yet been excavated. Comparatively, the large numbers of stones found in period VII and later contexts come primarily from civilian areas outside the fort walls. Figure 2.3 shows this same distribution of gemstone loss but in period VII alone.
The majority of intaglio finds from period VII and later were from civilian areas outside the fort, and in fact, only five stones from this period were found within the fort walls.\(^7\) It must always be considered that a soldier’s daily routine had as much to do with the extramural settlement as with the fort, and therefore, he could have lost personal items anywhere on the site. With the low number of intaglio losses in the fort itself in period VII and later, the possibility exists that the rise in the use of signet rings can be associated with the civilian component, at its largest size in the third century. It is tempting to propose that the smaller number found in purely military contexts suggests that civilians rather than soldiers were perhaps more likely to own a signet. The evidence from period VII and later, however, does not follow the trend of earlier periods, which show that an overall majority of the intaglio finds come from military areas.

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\(^7\) Amount of excavated area must be taken into account, but as with the total number of intaglio finds from period VII, the extreme difference in numbers is significant; cf. note 6.
Although over half of the intaglio assemblage was found in contexts of period VII and later, soldiers still owned and lost signets in the first and second centuries and it is highly unlikely that this trend stopped or shifted almost entirely to the civilian population in the third century. Perhaps the distribution suggests rather that in the third century the fort and vicus at Vindolanda were inextricable entities, the latter being very much a part of and inseparable from the associated military garrison. The high number of losses in the vicus compared to the low number in the fort itself, therefore, could suggest that soldiers were actively engaged with business in the vicus.

MATERIALS

The assemblage of intaglios at Vindolanda includes materials found typically in ring settings elsewhere in Roman Britain, but it is also lacking many of the more obscure and unusual stones found on other sites. Figure 2.4 shows the distribution of materials used in gemstones from all periods on the site. The most highly represented semi-precious stones are red jasper and carnelian, found in almost all periods of occupation, but especially well represented in third century contexts of period VIB and VII. Banded agate and chalcedony are only currently represented by one stone each, and there are no examples of prase or amethyst, both well represented in the early stones of the comparable stratified assemblage from the legionary fortress at Caerleon (Zienkiewicz 1986: 120). Nicolo is better represented, comprising eight percent of the assemblage with five stones in total. One bronze intaglio, which still shows evidence of its adhesive setting, is a rare and unusual example, while a shale stone looks very much like an experiment to make a ring setting from inferior and economical material. Lastly, nicolo paste and glass settings made in a mould rather than incised with a drill are the most popular material in the assemblage.

![Materials Used for Intaglios](image)

Fig. 2.4. Distribution of materials in all occupation periods at Vindolanda

The most prominent trend found in material usage is the growing use of inferior but more affordable glass and paste gems. Only one setting made of nicolo paste has been found dating to before the mid to late second century, while in periods VI-VII (late 2nd-3rd c.) there are twelve paste gems and four glass. Figure 2.5 shows the distribution and changing use of
materials within each period, which displays a concentrated use of specific materials only in the later periods. In considering this trend the nature of the assemblage has a clear shift in the middle of the second century when engraved gems become inferior and more formulaic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>II/III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>VIA</th>
<th>VIB</th>
<th>VII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalcedony</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red jasper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black jasper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnelian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolo paste</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronze</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shale</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2.5. Distribution of materials used within each occupation period

It has generally been noted that the middle of the second century marks a period of change in glyptic art in Roman Britain, and the Vindolanda assemblage seems to follow this trend. Zienkiewicz (1986: 121) further suggests that a shift can be seen from the early use of transparent stones to opaque in later periods. Doubtless the change to opaque stones, which show an image cut in intaglio far better than the translucent stones that are viewed best in impression, is connected to the shift from the practical use of seals to a more purely decorative personal item (Johns 1996: 78). This trend is not prominent in the Vindolanda assemblage, but may be due to the lack of transparent stones in general such as quartz, amethyst, and prase. Figure 2.6 shows the use of materials in the earlier periods II-V contrasted by figure 2.7 which displays material distribution in the later periods VI-VII.

Materials used in periods II-V, AD 90-130

Fig. 2.6. Distribution of materials used for intaglios, ca. AD 90-130

8 Henig (1988: 149) suggests that this trend occurred as early as the Trajanic period, which would account for the prominence of opaque stones at Vindolanda.
It should be remembered that there seem to be far more gems coming into the fort in this later period, but the almost complete absence in earlier periods of the mould-made imitation gems suggests that they became more popular and readily available later in the second century. The breakdown of high craftsmanship in gem cutting and the proliferation of the use of glass and paste gems in the second and third centuries is clearly seen in the Vindolanda assemblage, and a direct correlation certainly exists between the rise in cheap and affordable gems at the same time as a general peak in ownership.

The growing influx of inferior materials and evidence of less careful mass production, and therefore, the assured drop in price of these luxury items, suggests something about the nature of the owner in the late second and third centuries at Vindolanda. There is a low number of intaglio finds in general in the earlier periods of the late first and early second centuries when gemstones found elsewhere in Britain tend to reflect higher craftsmanship and are more often made from expensive materials.\(^9\) Comparatively, the second and third centuries sees a sudden peak in hastily made inferior gems, which suggests that the majority of the population at Vindolanda could only afford a less expensive type, sometimes an imitation of the real item. As Zienkiewicz suggested that the abundance of amethysts found in the baths at Caerleon reflects the relative prosperity and high status enjoyed by the legionary soldier (Zienkiewicz 1986: 121), perhaps similarly the lack of rare semi-precious stones and the abundance of inferior glass and paste imitations in the Vindolanda assemblage also reflects the status of the auxiliary soldiers and civilians living on the northern frontier.

The best discussion in antiquity of stones and materials used for gem engraving and signets can be found in book thirty-seven of Pliny the elder’s *Historia Naturalis*. He certainly used the works of the Greek author Theophrastus as a source but also brought the discussion into the Roman world commenting upon the use of signets by various emperors. For modern discussion of the natural sources and engraving of semi-precious stones the best work remains the 1891 publication by J.H. Middleton, recently reprinted in 1969.

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\(^9\) For full discussion of gemstones found throughout Roman Britain, see Henig 1978.
GEMSTONE SHAPES AND PROFILES

The shapes used for particular stones tend to be formulaic and the Vindolanda assemblage follows patterns typical of comparable examples. Craftsmen often used the same shapes for each type of stone with some variation and exceptions. Red jasper stones are most often cut in the flat I style (see fig. 2.8), with the edges cut down and inward from a flat surface, while with rare exceptions nicolo paste gems are of the flat III type, probably because of the use of a mould for shape and image. Similarly, nicolo stones are more often cut on a flat surface with edges bevelled down to straight sides. Figure 2.8 shows the range of gemstone profiles and gives information about the style as it pertains specifically to the Vindolanda assemblage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flat I</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper and lower surfaces and the sides are bevelled inward and down from the top. In profile the stone has four straight edges and is typically 2.0-3.0 mm thick. Most often used with red jasper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat II</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper and lower surfaces and the sides are bevelled outward and down from the top. In profile the stone has four straight edges and is typically 2.0-3.0 mm thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat III</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper and lower surfaces. The sides are bevelled downward and out from the top and then cut back in toward the bottom. In profile it has six straight edges and is typically 3.0-4.0 mm thick. Almost exclusively used in glass and paste gems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat IV</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper and lower surfaces. The sides are carinated, first bevelled down and out from the bezel, then turned straight down to the bottom. In profile it has six straight edges and is typically 2.5-3.0 mm thick. Most often used with nicolo stones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat V</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper and lower surfaces. Straight and short edges are bevelled outward and down from the face, then turn inward and down to the bottom. In profile it has six straight edges and is typically 3-4 mm thick. Most often used with nicolo stones as a slight variation of the flat IV type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat VI</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper surface and rounded on the lower surface with no straight sides. In profile it has one flat edge and a fully rounded bottom. It is typically ca. 3 mm thick.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat VII</td>
<td>Stone is flat on the upper and lower surfaces with the sides cut sharply down and inward from the bezel. In profile it has four straight edges. Similar to the flat I type, this intaglio is much smaller in overall size but thicker, typically 3.0-4.0 mm thick.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Convex I

| Stone is convex on the upper surface and flat on the lower with sides cut down from the bezel and inward to the bottom. In profile it has three straight edges with rounded top and is typically 3.0-5.0mm thick. Often used with carnelian stones. |

Convex II

| Stone is convex on the upper surface and flat on the lower surface with sides bevelled down and outward from the bezel. In profile it has three straight edges with rounded top and is typically ca. 4.0mm thick. Often used with carnelian stones. |

Convex III

| Stone is slightly convex on the upper surface and flat on the lower surface with rounded edges. The sides are bevelled down and outward from the bezel. This type tends to be quite small overall but is rather thick. In profile it has one straight bottom edge and is generally convex on three edges, typically ca. 4.0mm thick. Often used with carnelian stones. |

Convex IV

| Stone is convex on upper and lower surface with flat edges that turn down and inward from the face. In profile it has two convex and two straight edges, typically ca. 2mm thick. |

Fig. 2.8. Profiles of gemstones in the Vindolanda assemblage (upper face engraved)

SUBJECTS OF ENGRAVING

The assemblage of images engraved on the Vindolanda gemstones follows similar patterns of subject matter of most intaglio and ring finds in Roman Britain. Almost all stones in the assemblage have exact or very similar comparable images to those found elsewhere in the province as well as in the further reaches of the empire, which suggests that by the first and second centuries the image chosen for a signet was neither individualized nor unique. There are, however, a few stones that do not have known parallels and are either rare or individual stones (see cat. no. 17), while some images abundant elsewhere are absent from Vindolanda. A detailed discussion of the image on each stone can be found within the catalogue entries, while here consideration of the assemblage as a whole follows.

The assemblage is fairly well balanced without many duplicates or exact copies obviously from the same workshop (see cat. nos. 52 and 61). When the group is broken down into individual images the most prominent are those of Jupiter and Cupid, with five and six representations respectively, while Bonus Eventus and Mars are represented slightly less, each with three examples. Even within these multiple examples of subject matter the compositional style is quite different or the deity is represented in an entirely different guise. Jupiter can be found in a typical seated position (cat. no. 1) or simply represented symbolically by his thunderbolt (cat. no. 26), while Cupid is found riding on a dolphin’s back (cat. nos. 14 and 16), hunting (cat. nos. 8 and 47), or standing casually (cat. no. 53). Syncretism also plays a part in the Vindolanda gems, where different conflations of deities can be found; Jupiter is shown both in combination with Ammon (cat. no. 51) and Serapis (cat. no. 20) or both, and one gem includes the attributes of Fortuna, Minerva, and Victory on a single figure (cat. no. 49).

When individual subjects are considered it seems that almost anything might be found within a single assemblage; however, when the broader significance of these symbols is
considered they fall into only a few meaningful categories, which can elucidate general trends in signet usage at an auxiliary fort on the northern frontier. Figure 2.9 demonstrates the distribution of broad themes found on intaglios in all periods of occupation. The most prominent group of subject type is comprised of deities and symbols that represent prosperity and fertility, including Ceres, Fortuna, Bonus Eventus, or symbols such as the modius and scales. Bacchic images including the Maenad, satyr, and Pan can be further included in the group of prosperity symbols as they represent celebration and wealth. Similarly, images of Silvanus and his stag as the personification of the successful hunter or the generic huntsman alone ensure sustenance and wealth throughout the year. Further included is Mercury and his zoomorphic companion the cockerel, as the protector of merchants and of good fortune.

Distribution of Intaglio Subject Types in all Periods, ca. AD 85-300

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prosperity (deities and symbols)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military (deities and symbols)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupid</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily life</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown/Non-specific</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2.9. Distribution of major themes of intaglio engravings in all occupation periods

The second largest group and the only other quite substantial part of the assemblage are those subjects depicting military deities or symbols. Included in this category are images or symbols of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, the patron deity of the Roman army, and the overseers of issues of war Mars and Minerva, all of whom emanated strength and power and were popular within the military sphere. Among this group are also the images of heroes such as Hercules, Theseus, and possibly Achilles, all of whom are strong victorious warriors of the past and are shown with a symbol of strength such as armour or weapons. Finally, the image of the eagle is included as the symbol of the overarching strength and power of the Roman military.

The meaning of specific images is often discussed in relation to the individual owner of the signet, but definitive identification of the owner cannot be determined. General trends, therefore, can hopefully suggest what was important to a community as a whole at one site. Moreover, a post on the frontier for the most part relied on the goods that were brought to the fort and therefore had little choice in individual pieces, but at the same time a merchant certainly knew his market and would have brought what he expected would sell. Finger rings
with gemstones are included on a list of goods brought into the fort and recorded on an ink writing tablet (Tab.Vindol. II: no. 196, back, line 5, anulos cum [apide-/ibus?]), showing that a ring was not commissioned by an individual but was chosen and bought from a pre-existing stock.

The high percentage of military themes at Vindolanda is an obvious and expected trend at a Roman military outpost and has been noted by many in the past (see especially Henig 1970). The large number of prosperity symbols is a more interesting trend that can be investigated in relation to other known assemblages. Zienkiewicz (1986: 124f) notes that prosperity symbols were quite popular in the earliest period of the late first and early second century at the legionary fortress at Caerleon, while military symbols are far more prominent in the later periods; however, at Vindolanda the popularity of prosperity symbols continues throughout the occupation and is still prominent in the third century, while military symbolism is already quite strong in the late first and second centuries.

The primary difference between these two sites is the nature of the occupying force and therefore, probably the rest of the population in residence at the site; the legionary forces are always citizens of the empire while the auxiliary troops at Vindolanda are provincial, non-citizen soldiers, who were usually from the Rhineland, Spain, and Gaul.10 It seems more likely that non-citizen residents of the empire, who were often not raised in the Graeco-Roman religious and social tradition, would more often choose a personal symbol for its reflection of their daily life and concerns, rather than its inclusion in the classical pantheon. Soldiers would naturally choose symbols of strength and victory such as a warrior with plumed helmet and cape fixing greaves to his shins (cat. no. 5). This action conjures up the image of Achilles at Troy, but could more likely represent for a soldier a non-specific strong and successful warrior. Prosperity symbols are natural and expected personal emblems for soldiers or civilians living on the frontier, who likely relied to some extent on local goods for health and security. When a merchant sold his wares it is no surprise that a successful hunter or an image of a bullock was a popular personal amulet, as much as was a deity holding wheat, a full modius or cornucopia, or one who brought good fortune to the owner.

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>22, 42(?), 52, 61</td>
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<td>Bullock</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Ceres</td>
<td>11, 24</td>
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<td>Cockerel</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cupid</td>
<td>53, 60</td>
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<td>Cupid hunting</td>
<td>8, 47</td>
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<td>Cupid and dolphin</td>
<td>14, 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eagle</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortuna</td>
<td>37, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulmen</td>
<td>26</td>
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</table>

10 The known garrisons at the fort are cohors VIII Batavorum, cohors I Tungrorum, cohors IV Gallorum, and the equites of cohors I fida Vardullorum equitata.
Genius .................................................................27
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Victory ...............................................................................49
Warrior ..............................................................................5
THE CATALOGUE

NOTES ON THE CATALOGUE FORMAT

The catalogue of the assemblage of intaglios is organized by occupation period of the fort and vicus at Vindolanda, beginning in period II/III (ca. AD 90) and continuing into period VII/VIII (ca. AD 213-300+). There have been no intaglios found as yet from period I archaeological contexts. Within each period the assemblage is listed by order of Vindolanda small find number and each artefact has all pertinent information formatted as explained below.

Catalogue number
Vindolanda small find number

Images
An image of the gemstone is accompanied by the profile and impression. Representations are greater than actual size for best viewing of the image and vary in scale with their actual dimensions listed below. The impression is only included when it enhances the reading of the image.

Size: length x width x depth (fragments are recorded with maximum preserved dimensions)
Material
Description
Context, occupation period, date

Condition: A brief discussion of the present condition of the intaglio.


Device: A physical description of the incised image on the bezel of the stone.

Discussion: Identification of the device and relevant information about the deity, animal or symbol represented. This includes other evidence of similar iconography in Roman Britain, both inscriptional and in other artistic media. Where possible the discussion includes relevance the item may have had to a person living at Vindolanda.

Comparanda: A brief list of similar gems from Roman Britain, the provinces, and peninsular Italy. It only includes what is published and readily available for examination.

Publication Record:
Bibliographic list of any previous publications where the gem appears, including the page number of its discussion and the plate and item number where it is pictured.
PERIOD II/III, ca. AD 90-105

1. Small find 8224

14.75mm x 11.5mm x 2.5mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: Found outside the southern ambulatory wall of the temple site. Period II/III. Late 1st– early 2nd century AD.

**Condition:** A very well preserved gem with the entire oval remaining. Very small chipping along the left edge does not affect the image. Minimal damage in the centre of the image obscures some detail.

**Technique:** Primarily thick wheeled grooves used to create the figure. Deep incision throughout the image and fairly well detailed, though somewhat simplistic.

**Device:** A male figure sits on a chair with body turned three quarters to the left and looking left. Ground line is present. On his head he wears a rounded cap, large diadem, or wreath. The figure is bearded and is bare-chested wearing a garment only on the lower half of his body. He sits on a throne with a high back and four post-like legs. His right arm rests over the back of the chair, while his left arm is held out in front of his body holding a globe (sometimes identified as *patera*). An eagle stands on the ground in front on the figure’s legs and under the globe.

**Discussion:** This is the typical representation of the throned Jupiter accompanied by an eagle and holding the *patera*. Jupiter was the most powerful deity in the Roman pantheon, and was therefore easily conflated with all-powerful deities of conquered areas. This iconography representing the strength and power of Jupiter and Rome is very popular throughout the empire on gemstones and other artistic media. The image varies slightly; sometimes represented holding a figure of Victory, or accompanied by the eagle, but rarely both. Both attributes suggest the power and dominance of Rome, both militarily and in the strength of its empire. This gem is one of at least four representations of Jupiter found at Vindolanda (See also cat. no. 20, 26, 51; For typical conflations with Jupiter see cat. no. 41). This ubiquitous image is appropriate in a military setting, worn by an individual seeking association with a symbol of power.

**Comparanda:** Found in Britain at Castlecary, Wroxeter, London and Godmanchester (Henig 1978: 187. Plate I. 7-10). From Aquileia where the seated Jupiter is well represented seven include *patera* or globe and eagle (Sena Chiesa 1966: 93f. Tav. I, 9-15). In Florence also found with the eagle (Sena Chiesa 1978: 76. Tav. VII, 45). The Sa’ad collection in Jordan holds at least thirteen examples of the seated Jupiter, two with *patera* and eagle specifically (Henig and Whiting 1987: 7f. no. 6 and 9). From Odessos a carnelian of the 2nd c. (Dimitrova-Milcheva 1981: 29, no. 2). From Germany a chalcedony with globe and eagle (Vollenweider 1984: 223, no. 363).

**Publication Record:**
2. Small find 8310

8mm x 4mm (fragment)
Black jasper
Ovoid

Very fragmentary gem with only one corner of the intaglio remaining on a preserved iron ring. The image looks like the end of a spear, but is far too fragmentary for any positive identification. No publication record.

3. Small find 8650

10mm x 13mm (depth and shape unseen)
Agate
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface.
Context: Timber fort of period II/III. AD 90-105.

Condition: A very well preserved stone still held in its original setting in a fully preserved silver ring. The surface has sustained minimal wear but otherwise very well preserved. The image is fully intact.

Technique: Detailed image using thin parallel wheeled grooves. Fairly deep incision. Displays a high degree of craftsmanship.

Device: The image depicts a large bird standing and looking right. No ground line is present. The bird moves to the right and stands over a smaller bird lying on its back, possibly being fed. Its beak is open below the primary figure.

Discussion: The bird looks most like a falcon or raven. It may have an association with the falcon of Horus or eastern origins in general. Three other Vindolanda gems have an eastern or specifically Egyptian character, most often the conflation of Jupiter with Ammon or Serapis (see cat. no. 20, 41, 51). The image of the bird is rarely depicted feeding its young and otherwise the image includes no other eastern connections. The raven is sometimes associated with Apollo found sitting on his bow and quiver, and may have had prophetic powers (Middleton 1991: 127). The iconography could simply be that of fertility and prosperity seen on many other Vindolanda gems, understood through the feeding of young. For further discussion of animal images on gemstones see Henig 1997b.

Comparanda: This image is unique and unparalleled elsewhere in published material. Birds are often depicted on gemstones, but most often the image is of an eagle or cockerel (See cat. no. 6, 50). Other birds exist on gemstones, but none feeding their young. There is a somewhat similar raven from Fishbourne, in southern England, but without the young bird (Henig 1978: 267. Plate XXI, 674). From Salona in Dalmatia again without the second figure (Middleton 1991: 127. no. 242), as in the British Museum with inscription included (Furtwängler 1964: Vol. II, 220. Vol I. Tafel XLV, 46).

Publication Record:
PERIOD IV, ca. AD 105-120

4. Small find 3681

13mm x 11mm x 2.5mm
Black jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: Found in a building of period IV. Early 2nd century AD.

Condition: The stone is very well preserved with no cracks or chips to the edges or surface. Very little wear in general.

Technique: The work is fairly detailed using small wheeled grooves. Deepest in the centre, but attributes are also well rendered.

Device: A figure is striding to the right with one leg straight and the other pulled up and bent at the knee. Ground line is present. The figure wears a long chlamys (military cloak) beyond the knees, which is well rendered and falls on either side of the figure. The left arm is bent at the elbow and raised up holding an offering plate. In front of the figure’s feet is a small vessel with a leafy branch projecting from the top.

Discussion: A positive identification of this figure is difficult with the only definable attributes an offering plate and branch. As can be seen throughout the catalogue, a figure holding an offering plate is a common symbol and often needs further detail for definite identification. The branch projecting from the vessel resembles the branch held by Silvanus in his left hand (See cat. no. 18); however, this image has no other details suggesting a hunt, generally the activity associated with Silvanus. Apollo is often found with a laurel branch, but again, this is not a pose or composition in which one typically finds Apollo. It can be suggested that this image depicts another deity that portrays the idea of fertility and prosperity. The full offering plate and leafy branch project the idea of abundance and wealth. This gem then would belong to the most well represented class of gems at Vindolanda with imagery reflecting prosperity and fecundity.

Comparanda: There are no direct comparisons to this gem in composition and style. A similar composition with vessel and branch is in Munich with a nude male figure holding a strigil (Schmidt and Brandt 1970: 75. Tafel 113, no. 999).

Publication Record: None

5. Small find 5569

13.5mm x 10.5mm x 4mm
Image face: 10.5mm x 8.5mm
Nicolo
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: Found in a fort building. Period IV. Early 2nd century AD.
**Condition:** Very well preserved stone with the entire oval preserved. No cracks or chips affect the image. Some general wear around the bevelled edge.

**Technique:** Wheeled and rounded drill used. The figure and attributes are highly detailed and show a high level of craftsmanship. Fairly deep incision throughout the image.

**Device:** A male figure stands to the side and faces right. Ground line is present. He wears a *chlamys* that hangs off the neck and falls down the back. On his head he wears a plumed helmet. The right leg is raised and bent at the knee, and the foot rests on a low stool or rock. The left leg is straight supporting the body. Both arms reach down to the calf, and body is bent over slightly. In front of the figure is a pillar, about chest high, with a vessel resting on top. Resting on the side of the column is a stylized sword.

**Discussion:** This is a very clear representation of a warrior or soldier with customary Graeco-Roman equipment, and is a typical and expected find in a Roman fort. Gems with a military theme are certainly popular in military zones, and it has been suggested that the Roman army had a tradition of hero veneration which can be seen in engraved gemstones found in military zones (Henig 1970). Henig suggests that this type of iconography may represent Achilles reaching down to fasten his greaves to his shins. At the least the soldier at Vindolanda understood this image to represent a strong and victorious soldier, a figure that either represented his own status or something he aspired to be. This is the only gem from Vindolanda that represents a possible hero, but is one of four with a definite military iconography (for Mars see cat. no. 21, 55; for an eagle eating its prey see cat. no. 50; a lost gem may depict Theseus, see cat. no. 58). This is an appropriate signet for someone at Vindolanda and in a military setting.

**Comparanda:** An almost exact comparison, without the sword and with a spear added, is in the Lewes Museum and assumed to be from Sussex (Henig 1978: 244. Plate XV, 463). From Xanten stylistically different but composition is almost identical (Platz-Horster 1994: 152. Tafel 39, 214). Four gems from Aquileia, have the same composition and are stylistically similar with figures identified as warriors (Sena Chiesa 1966: 321f. Tav. XLVI, 918-920; Tav. XLVII, 921). From Dalmatia the same image is found with and without the pillar, spear and shield. The figure always leans down affixing greaves to the shin (Middleton 1991: 98f. no. 163 and 164).

**Publication Record:**
None

6. Small find 5806

9mm x 8mm x 3mm (fragment)
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: Found in a period IV pit. Early 2nd century AD.

**Condition:** The gem has a large chip on the bottom and only three quarters is preserved. The chipping continues on the right ca. 4-5mm onto the surface. On the left another small chip took off the bottom corner. Otherwise it retains a highly polished surface and the image is well preserved.

**Technique:** The body was made with a small rounded drill and the highly detailed feathering in the body with very small wheeled grooves. The feathers and head are highly detailed displaying a high level of craftsmanship.
**Device:** The image is of a cockerel standing and looking left. He is fully feathered and has a plumed tail and thick legs. His head is also detailed with plumage, and one wing is present projecting from the left side.

**Discussion:** The cockerel was often associated with Mercury in the Roman sphere, a deity that is well represented in Roman Britain. The connection may be due to the nature of the cockerel heralding in the new day and Mercury's status as the herald of the gods (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 50). The cockerel is found in association with Mercury in Roman Britain, primarily in the form of relief sculpture. Of the eight reliefs depicting Mercury found in the Hadrian’s Wall area, at least two incorporate a cockerel in the scene (Toynbee 1964: 155). From Verulamium in Hertfordshire a small bronze depicts Mercury with the ram and the cockerel (Green 2003: 15. Also see cat no. 6). Free standing depictions of birds in general, with the cockerel most ubiquitous, were also fairly popular in Roman Britain (Toynbee 1964: 127). They are primarily evidenced by small bronzes found in scattered areas of the province, including Vindolanda. Two figurines of particularly fine workmanship have an added dish on the back perhaps to hold a candle. The cockerel alone was generally thought of as a good luck symbol. Considering the connections to Mercury this image would have been appropriate for a trader or merchant at Vindolanda, given Mercury’s early entrance into the province as the protector god of trade and business (see cat. no. 25 for further discussion). Simply as a sign of good luck or a symbol of the new day and therefore new beginnings, this image would appeal to many.

**Comparanda:** A cockerel accompanied by an ear of corn comes from Chesters on Hadrian’s Wall and a similar depiction from Kent (Henig 1978: 268. Plate, XXI, 679). The British gems with images of cockerels are stylistically different. A quite similar carnelian gem from Köln depicts the cockerel with head and tail plumed (Krug 1981: 247. Tafel 128, 430). Also from Köln is a similar nicolo (Krug 1981: 176. Tafel 68, 28). From Aquileia a plumed cockerel (Sena Chiesa 1966: 391. Tav. LXVIII, 1338).

**Publication Record:**
None

7. Small find 6460

13.5mm x 10.5mm x 2.5mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: Under site LXXIV, period IV. AD 105-120.

**Condition:** Poorly preserved paste gem has suffered wear and breakdown. The whole gem is intact but the surface has been worn and the image is difficult to read.

**Technique:** Mould made paste gem with shallow image.12

**Device:** A figure leans back on a staff. No ground line present. The body is turned three-quarters to the right leaning back with the legs slightly bent. Something stands on the ground, but could also be breakdown of the glass paste.

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12 For the process of making paste moulds in antiquity see: Middleton 1969: 114f.
**Discussion:** The image is too worn for any definite identification and comparison. It has no publication record.

8. Small find 8474

14mm x 18mm x 2.5mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface.
Context: Found in timber fort remains.
Period IV. AD 105-120.

**Condition:** Very well preserved gemstone with little wear. Small chips around the edges do not affect the image. The surface has seen little wear and retains a high gloss.

**Technique:** Primarily thick and thin wheeled grooves used. The image is fairly well detailed. Deep incision work is level throughout, even in the details.

**Device:** A small figure striding to his right. Ground line is present. The small figure is naked other than a diadem worn on the head and wings projecting from the back. One leg is bent and put forward as if walking. He holds his left arm out but the hand is empty. The figure walks toward a tree projecting almost from the centre of the image. The tree is full and leafy with a fairly thin trunk. On the other side of the tree a dog jumps to the left, its body fully stretched out with the back legs just leaving the ground and the front legs extended out. Its neck is craned backwards looking back at the figure. A stick leans against the tree trunk.

**Discussion:** This image is of Cupid, probably hunting birds with his dog. The deity approaches a tree, moving towards his canine companion. He holds his left arm out perhaps meant to be throwing something. The dog is in a position as if he is jumping to retrieve an object from the air, and the turn of the head suggests it comes from the direction of Cupid. In conjunction with a tree Cupid is also found picking grapes, sometimes with other Cupid figures, representing his connection to Bacchus. Even without the presence of birds in this gem, the dog suggests this is a representation of Cupid hunting (see cat. no. 47). Both scenes evoke a feeling of abundance and prosperity. Though not your typical hunt, this gem would still hope for a wealthy outcome and prosperous living. Cupid’s connection to Bacchus would further suggest celebration and enjoyment, both symbols of wealth.

**Comparanda:** Though this exact gem composition does not seem to be paralleled elsewhere, the similar scene with Cupid, dog and tree is found again at Vindolanda (cat. no. 47). The scene of Cupid hunting birds in a tree is fairly popular. See in Italy at Aquileia, Cupid with stick and tree (Sena Chiesa 1966: 170f. Tav. XVI, 301-303). From Aenona in Dalmatia with the inclusion of a bird cage on the ground (Middleton 1991: 62. no. 71). In Xanten Germany with stick and tree (Platz-Horster 1987: 65. Tafel 22, 119).

**Publication Record:**

13 An error on this page names SF 8474 as Diana. It should read Cupid and hunting dog.
9. Small find 9388

14mm x 9.5mm x 2mm (fragment)
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Convex on back and front.
Period V wooden floor. Hadrianic. AD 120-130.

Condition: Badly damaged with a chip running the entire length of the right side. A large chip also obscures the top left corner. The remaining surface is well preserved and retains a high gloss especially in worked areas.

Technique: Rounded drill used deeply in the face and neck. Small line drill used for detail in the hair and face. Shows a high level of craftsmanship.

Device: Profile bust of a male looks to his right. No portrait features in the face. A skin with fur on its back is worn on the head and continues behind the neck and extends over the figure’s cheek below the ear and is tied at the neck.

Discussion: The image is of a youthful Hercules wearing the lion skin over his head. He is depicted beardless and divine. In the Roman west Hercules was conflated with native deities and worshipped as Hercules *Magusanus*, a Celtic deity known primarily in Gaul, and as Hercules *Saxanus*, patron of quarrymen (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 99). In Britain he was represented as Hercules *Saegon*, found in an inscription from Silchester. His worship was generally tied to commercial enterprise, similar to Mercury, and to victory and strength. Both contexts could be expected at Vindolanda; strength and victory in military ventures, possibly owned by a soldier, or belonging to a merchant who appreciated the economic aspect of the deity. Often on gems Commodus is found in the guise of Hercules, but almost always bearded and with Antonine portrait features.

Comparanda: The best parallels to this youthful Hercules are a carnelian in Athens (Richter 1971: 61. no 281), and in Vienna (Zwierlein-Diehl 1979: 40, no. 663. Tafel 15). A few Hercules portraits are known with different stylization. A carnelian now in Munich has familiar knot at the neck (Brandt 1972: 39-40. Tafel 208, no. 2332). A red-jasper from Yorkshire, now in the British museum with different stylization and skin tied at the neck (Manning 1985: 78. Plate 33). A carnelian from Odessos with Herakles portrait (Ruseva-Slokoska 1991: 80, 171 cat.no. 196).

Publication Record:
PERIOD V, ca. AD 120-130

10. Small find 1391

13mm x 11mm x 3mm
Image surface: 10mm x 7mm
Clear chalcedony
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Bevelled down from face.
Context: Found on the floor of a military building abandoned ca. AD 120. Period V (possibly VI). Early 2nd century AD.

Condition: Very well preserved except for a crack that runs across the centre horizontally. The entire oval is preserved without any chips. The surface is free from wear preserving the image well. Remnants of a silver ring remain on the back of the gem.

Technique: The image is very detailed displaying a high level of craftsmanship. A small rounded drill was used with wheeled grooves for detailing, deepest in the centre of the image.

Device: The centre of the image contains a *modius* (corn measure) standing on three short legs. Ground line is present. Two corn ears project from the top of the *modius* and are standing between two poppies on either side. Two arms project from either side of the *modius* holding scales suspended next to the measure.

Discussion: The *modius*, corn ears, and poppies are all signs of fecundity and *abundantia*. The corn ears surmounting the *modius* look to a fruitful harvest and in general suggest the hope for bountiful food and rations. Poppies similarly suggest a good harvest, rich soil and a prosperous yield and were a traditional crop of Rome (Henig 1975: 28). Poppies can also be found in the decoration of the *Ara Pacis*, meant to portray a new fecundity and peace throughout the Empire. The scales on either side invoke *Aequitas*, the personification of equity. This goddess supervised fair dealings in trade and rationing. Her worship is invoked elsewhere at Vindolanda on one other gemstone (cat. no. 23), and the general idea of fertility and fecundity is very prominent and well represented at the fort in other compositions. Images of Fortuna and Bonus Eventus are common in the second and third centuries, found on at least five other gemstones (cat. no. 22, 37, 49, 52, 61). The gem is appropriate for someone connected with agriculture or perhaps the trade of agricultural products.


Publication Record:

11. Small find 1518

12mm x 9mm x 3.5mm
Image surface: 10mm x 7mm
Nicolo
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Bevelled down from face.
Context: In clay sealing the pre-Hadrianic levels. Period V (possibly VI). Early 2nd century AD.

Condition: Very well preserved stone without any cracks or chips around the edges or surface. The whole oval is intact and little wear has affected the face and image.

Technique: This image is fairly detailed utilizing thick and thin wheeled grooves. Fairly deep incision is used on the figure and nice detail in the garment showing folds and creases. More shallow technique used in the attributes and head.

Device: The figure stands to the front, her body at almost a three quarter angle and looking to her right. Ground line is present. She wears a long girded peplos down to her ankles with an overfold. On her head she wears a garland or a wreath. Her left arm is held down and behind her, holding two ears of corn. Her right arm is held up in front of her face holding in her hand a plate of fruit or other offering over a flaming altar at her feet.

Discussion: The image is a typical representation of Ceres, the goddess of the plentiful harvest. She is most readily identified by the corn ears she holds in her right hand. Ceres represents the power of nature and its ability to grow crops yearly. She is also associated with the Roman Tellus, another nature and earth goddess. Originally worshipped during a drought in Rome by order of the Sibylline books,14 her veneration spread throughout the empire and she is well attested in the provinces. Epigraphic evidence is fairly slim, but she is well represented on gemstones throughout Britain and in a few sculptural representations. A small bronze found in the Thames in London depicts the goddess seated and wearing a full heavy tunic and holding a handful of corn ears (Toynbee 196: 85). She is known on at least two mosaic floors in Britain, on which she holds the bundle of corn ears (In Whatley and on the Isle of Wight. Toynbee 1964: 249 and 257). Ceres would have been well understood by most people living in Roman Britain, as much of the population was dependent on agriculture from small farms. The dependency on agriculture is displayed in the military sphere by the large granaries present in most forts.15 At Vindolanda there was a certain amount of sustenance coming from hunting and animals, but grain was always a necessity.

Comparanda: The image of Ceres remained fairly static without much variation in its depiction. She is always identified by the corn ears held in one hand. Variations occur in stylization and the inclusion of the flaming altar. Similar style and the addition of the altar found in Britain in New Kilpatrick in Scotland and Denbighshire (Henig 1978: 219. Plate IX, 271 and 272). See also cat. no. 24 for further comparisons.

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14 The first temple was placed on the Aventine Hill, where she was worshipped during the cerialia festival. Adkins and Adkins 1996: 44.
15 The granaries at Corbridge are large dominant buildings in the centre of town.
Publication Record:

M. Henig, Vindolanda Jewellery (Newcastle 1975) 28. Plate XIII.

R. Birley, Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall. (London 1977) 64. Fig. 39. Plate VIII.

12. Small find 1521

Device: A bovine animal stands in profile and faces to the left. Ground line is present. All four legs are visible and the tail is long and hangs to the ground. A small plant stands in front of the animal, underneath the chest and head.

Discussion: Bovine imagery may be representative of a number of things. Its simplest interpretation is its representation of everyday life and the dependency of the inhabitants of Vindolanda on the products the bullock provides. They needed the hide of the animal for shoes, clothing, and tents, which is reflected in a writing tablet from the late first to early second century regarding a large amount of hides and grain to be bought for use at Vindolanda.16 Beef and other fresh meats would have certainly been a part of their diet, which is also reflected in writing tablets that record store lists at the fort (Bowman and Thomas 1994: no. 190, 83f; no. 191, 93f). Another obvious interpretation would be the importance of the bull in sacrifice to many of the gods in the Graeco-Roman pantheon. The bull is the centre of sacrifice on its own or in the suovetaurilia, the sacrifice of boar, sheep and bull practiced after a census.

Comparanda: A popular depiction in Britain, the bovine animal is found standing quietly and also in a position about to charge. Similar gems with the animal standing quietly above a tuft of grass are found at Colchester, from the first century AD and in Middlesex, dating to ca. AD 100 (Henig 1978: 259. Plate XIX, 597 and 598). A glass paste in Xanten is very similar, dating to the first century AD (Platz-Horster 1987: 46f. Tafel 16, 85). From Dalmatia comes a standing bovine without the grass tuft (Middleton 1991: 117, no. 210). This theme is very popular in Italy with many found in Aquileia (Sena Chiesa 1966: 345f. Especially Tav. LII, 1024 and 1036).

16 This tablet may reflect personal business rather than official military business, but shows the demand for such products at the fort. Bowman and Thomas 1994: Tablet 343.

10mm x 13.5mm x 3mm
Image surface: 8.5mm x 7mm
Black jasper
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: Below the floor of site LXXIX. Period V (possibly VI). Early 2nd century AD.

Condition: A very well preserved gem with no chipping around the edges. The whole oval is preserved. The surface is highly polished and retains a high gloss. Minimal wear affects the image.

Technique: The artisan utilized thin wheeled grooves and rounded drill. The modelling is fairly shallow throughout, deepest in the body and shallow in the limbs. The most detail is found in the head and neck of the animal.
13. Small find 9717

14mm x 10.5mm x 3mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Convex surface.
Context: Period V fabrica floor. AD 120-130.

Condition: Very well preserved. Slight chips around the edges, particularly on the upper right corner and bottom left corner. Neither affects the surface. Surface is slightly scratched but generally in good condition. Worked area retains a high gloss.

Technique: Wheeled drill used deeply in the body, helmet, and shield. Attributes and limbs utilized a small line drill.

Device: Male figure stands facing front in contrapposto position with right leg bent slightly, left arm outstretched and looking to his left. Ground line present. The figure wears no clothing on the body, except for boots and a crested helmet sits on top of his head. A spear rests in the crook of the right arm and extends to the ground. From the same arm a cloak hangs down. In the left hand he holds a small weapon. A shield rests on the ground to his left.

Discussion: This image is of Mars in a pose well represented on gemstones throughout the empire. Mars was the primary Roman god of war, with his most prominent location in the capital on the Campus Martius. He was identified with many Celtic deities and was worshipped throughout the Roman west and Britain as Mars Alator, found in an inscription at South Shields, and as Mars Barrex at Carlisle. Five inscriptions from the Hadrian’s Wall area name Mars Belatucadrus, and also in the same area Mars Cocidius, both overseeing war, hunting, and woodlands (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 141-148). In a military context, Mars fulfills similar wishes for the owner as Minerva, as both deities are often found in similar poses and identified with warfare. Mars, the god of war and battle, is an expected image to find at a Roman fort, where he ensured strength and power to a soldier, who would often not have known any life except a military one.


Publication record:
PERIOD VI, ca. AD 140-160

14. No small find no. – Henig App. 119

12mm x 9mm x 2mm (fragment)
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with horizontal image.
Context: On the road outside of the north gate of stone fort II. Period VI. 3rd century AD.


Condition: This is a poorly preserved gem. A large chip is taken from the right side and small chips are found throughout the edges and surface. General wear has caused the paste to breakdown and the image has been worn.

Technique: Mould made paste gem. Fairly shallow depth throughout image due to wear.

Device: A male figure stands front and looks forward. No ground line is present. The figure is standing with most of its weight on the left leg and the right leg bent slightly. No details are discernable in the body. In his right arm he holds out what may be a recently felled animal. His left arm holds an object, possibly a hunting stick or other weapon.

Discussion: The image is rather worn but seems to be of a huntsman suggested by the figure suspended from the man’s hand. No other attributes are present, either due to lack of inclusion originally or because of extensive wear in antiquity. If the image is of a huntsman the gem falls into the similar category of prosperity and fecundity, which is well represented at Vindolanda with images of Ceres, Fortuna, Bonus Eventus, and other hunting scenes. The hunter is also associated with Silvanus/Cocidius (see cat. no. 18), but is typically represented with his hound and often further attributes such as the lagobolon (hunting stick), and would only have association with the Celtic world in that it symbolically represents a figure of prosperity, which could be understood by many outside of the classical sphere (Henig 1971: 221f). Henig (1971: 218f) further associates the returning hunter with satyrs and other figures of prosperity and good will.

Comparanda: The image of a huntsman is more commonly depicted as a male figure striding with a felled animal hanging off a stick slung over the shoulder. The object in this composition does resemble a hanging animal in a gem

15. Small find 8918

12mm x 10mm x 4mm
Image face: 9mm x 7mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Bevelled down from face.
Context: Found in period VI. AD 140-160.
definitely identified as a huntsman from South Shields (Henig 1978: 208. Plate VI, 184).

**Publication Record:**

16. Small find 8952

14mm x 12mm x 2mm
Image face: 11mm x 8mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face. Context: Found in period VI. Mid 2nd c. AD.

**Condition:** Poorly preserved. The left side of the stone has been chipped off and small divots affect the surface. The paste has broken down leaving the image shallow.

**Technique:** Mould made paste gem. The image has most depth in body work, shallow throughout, probably due to extensive wear.

**Device:** A small figure rides on a dolphin moving to their left. The figure wears a cap on its head, and there is a slight trace that something was once attached to the figure’s back. No details are otherwise discernable. The dolphin holds its tail up high suggesting swift movement.

**Discussion:** This image is probably that of Cupid riding a dolphin. The gem is badly worn and has lost much of the original detail; however, a slight trace of what may have been wings remains behind the figure. This identification is corroborated by the many gems found throughout the empire of Cupid riding a dolphin. In fact, it is quite rare to have anyone but the winged figure in this position. The composition is found on many gemstones and in other artistic media, often mosaic floors, most famously at Fishbourne Roman Villa in the south of Britain (Cunliffe 1998: Plates 19 and 21). A figure riding a dolphin is first seen very early on Greek coins and is later imitated in Roman art. It is believed that the image represents Cupid carrying the soul of the deceased to the underworld, riding on the back of a dolphin, the only animal able to cross the sea to the ‘Blessed Isles’ (Henig 1984: 175). At Vindolanda this gem may have been chosen by someone who had a connection to the sea or one who hoped for a better afterlife. The growing popularity in the 2nd century of eastern mystery cults that promised a better after life suggests increasing concern in this sphere (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 521).

**Comparanda:** Another gem at Vindolanda depicts the same image (cat. no. 14). Elsewhere in Britain similar gems are found in Dorset, Huntingdonshire, and Hampshire (Henig 1978: 202. Plate IV, 130. Plate V, 132). At Aquileia the images are stylistically different, but one matches closely (Sena Chiesa 1966: 167. Tav. XIV, 280). In Munich a similar glass paste (Brandt 1968: 100. Tafel 125, no.1162). In Bonn a very similar gem also in nicolo paste (Platz-Horster 1984: 40. Tafel 5. 16). In Gadara, Jordan with the added detail of Cupid fishing and holding a wreath (Henig and Whiting 1987: 20. no. 174 and 175).

**Publication Record:**
PERIOD VIA, ca. AD 180-200

17. Small find 6150

12mm x 10mm x 2mm
Red jasper (burnt on the top side, black coloring is secondary)
Ovoid with horizontal image. Slightly convex surface.
Context: Found in a floor of period VIA.
Late 2nd century, 180-200 AD.

**Condition:** The upper portion of the gem shows discolouration due to secondary burning, probably in the building in which it was lost. Otherwise the gem is well preserved, without any chips or scratches affecting the gem. General surface wear has affected the stone slightly, but the lower portion still retains a high polish.

**Technique:** This piece utilized simple drilled lines with little detail within the figures. Fairly deep incision in the bodies remains constant throughout but no great detail anywhere.

**Device:** A figure sits, facing right, on a low stool or squat pillar. Ground line is present. The figure wears a cape which billows out from the back and either a cap-like feature on the head or a wretched type hairstyle. The figure holds one leg outstretched completely and the other bent down and resting on the ground. Both arms are held out to greet the second figure. A smaller figure, probably a child, strides forward jumping into the arms of the first figure. The child holds its arms outstretched meeting the other figure and holds one leg back while the other supports the weight of the body. Similar head covering is worn.

**Discussion:** The best understanding of this gem is of a daily life scene, with a mother preparing to embrace her child who leaps into her arms. The image invokes the idea of fertility and family stability, something which is generally not equated with military life in a fort. By the end of the second century, however, there must certainly have been a change in military life when Severan reforms allowed soldiers to marry while in service (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 1390). It has been suspected that before the law was placed, soldiers probably had their wives and families living quietly in the extramural settlement, but after the Severan reforms this could be an open and public relationship. This gem was found in a context dating to the late second century, around the time of the reforms, and expresses the idea of a happy and healthy family.

**Comparanda:** As of yet there is no known comparison to this gem. This is the only gem in the Vindolanda collection that incorporates two figures, something which is fairly well represented elsewhere. None depict this particular scene or something similar.

**Publication Record:** None
PERIOD VIB, ca. AD 200-213

18. Small find 56

15mm x 12mm x 2mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the vicus in front of site XXIII A. Period VIB. Early 3rd century AD.

Condition: The stone is generally well preserved except for a chip on the upper portion that obscures most of the figure’s head and the right shoulder. A small portion of the figure’s face can still be seen. Surface is otherwise well preserved with few markings.

Technique: The figure is carved deeply in the body with most detail in the tunic using longer wheel grooves. The limbs, dog and attributes are shallow and simple, made with short wheel grooves.

Device: The figure is standing to the front and turning to the left. Ground line is present. Holds the falx (sickle) in the left hand and in the right hand a branch with leaves on the upper portion. He wears hunting boots, suggested by the laces on either side of his calves. The figure wears a short tunic, and a nebris (fawn skin) is slung over his left arm. His hunting dog stands behind his left leg.

Discussion: The figure is identified as Silvanus in his typical representation as a hunter with the falx, nebris, branch, and hunting dog. He also wears the typical short tunic worn by Silvanus in most representations. Evidence of the worship of Silvanus can be found in peninsular Italy and throughout the European provinces. He is most often worshipped as a deity of the outdoors – hunting, agriculture, forests – which often leads him to be connected with other deities such as Pan, satyrs, and sometimes Mars. His worship is attested in Pannonia and less frequently in the rest of the western empire in conjunction with the silvanae nymphs. In the Hadrian’s Wall area he was sometimes connected to the local deity Cocidius and worshipped as a hunting god (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 204f). An altar to Cocidius was found near the fort at Vindolanda (RIB 1683) and this seems to be the guise we see him in on this gemstone with his falx, hunting dog, and boots. He is also named on an altar dedicated to Silvanus from Vindolanda built into a later wall (RIB 1696). Silvanus would have fitted in well with the native Celtic religion that was well rooted in a rural setting, and further with the already common presence of local hunting gods (Green 2003: 37). As a hunting deity he would have represented the hope for bountiful resources to feed soldiers and families on the northern frontier. In this guise he would have been an appropriate symbol for someone living at Vindolanda, and relying on local resources for their livelihood.

Comparanda: Though Silvanus himself is not again seen on a gem from Vindolanda, he may be represented by two gems depicting crouching stags (See cat. no. 31 and 48). There is a very similar gem from Corbridge dating to the same time period (Henig 1978: 197. Plate III, 98). The Corbridge example may fill in some of what is missing on the head of the Vindolanda gem, which shows Silvanus with a diadem and beard, along with the familiar short tunic, boots, falx, leafy branch, cloak and dog. A similar depiction without the hound was found in Culbin Sands, Morayshire, dating to the
2nd century (Henig 1978: 198. Plate III, 99). Two images from Gadara, Jordan are quite similar, both depicting Silvanus with *falx*, branch, and *nebris* (Henig and Whiting 1987: 23f. Cat. no. 215 and 216). One is complete with hunting dog at his feet, the other without this further identification. Both are dated to the second century A.D.

**Publication Record:**
R. Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall* (London 1977) 63. Fig. 34. Colour plate VIII.


**19. Small find 417**

14mm x 11mm x 2.5mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the *vicus*, centre of site XXX. Severan. Period VIB. Early 3rd century AD.

**Condition:** The stone is nearly complete with only small chips on the left edge and bottom right, neither obstructing the image. The surface is highly polished, especially in worked areas of the hair. Minimal surface wear.

**Technique:** The image shows a high level of craftsmanship especially in the rendering of the hair. The face and neck were executed with rounded drill and wheeled grooves for the facial features and details. The hair is well rendered using thin parallel wheeled grooves.

**Device:** The image is of a female in profile. She faces to her right. Her hair is braided along her face and it continues down onto her neck and shoulders. She has detail at the top of her head perhaps depicting a wreath, and a few lines incised above her right shoulder, probably the end of a free flowing lock of hair.

**Discussion:** This image type has been identified historically as a Maenad (Henig 1978: 220. Plate IX, 287). This is, however, an ambiguous portrait and a very similar depiction from Dalmatia is identified as either a Maenad with an ivy crown or Isis with a lotus crown (Middleton 1991, 73: no. 102). Other female portraits with plaited hair are often identified variously as nymphs (Henig 1978: Plate IX, 289 and 290) or gorgons (Henig 1978: 276. no. 749). Positive recognition is often based on accompanying attributes which are clearly connected to identification. In the case of a Maenad the image may be connected with the worship of Bacchus by representations such as the *thyrsos*, grapes or other vine imagery, none of which are present here. In this image the only discernable attribute is a wreath like protrusion on the top of her head; however, it is impossible to identify it certainly as a wreath of ivy, lotus flower, or otherwise. An identification as a Maenad or Isis is more constant with other depictions found at Vindolanda and in the northern frontier in general. Bacchus was a popular classical deity in the Romano-British sphere (Green 2003: 38). The cult of Bacchus was a mystery religion, others of which are also well attested in Britain, with at least four known *Mithraea* along Hadrian’s Wall alone. At Vindolanda there are other gems with a similar Bacchic theme of both Pan and a satyr (see

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17 Toynbee suggests this medallion from Oxfordshire may be a Maenad.
18 Housesteads, Brocolitia, Carlisle, and possibly Magna (Carvoran).
The worship of Isis would have been associated with her consort Serapis, who is found on three other intaglios from Vindolanda (see cat. no. 20, 41, and 51).

Comparanda: The identification of a female portrait in profile as a Maenad is less popular than images of Bacchus himself and less abundant than depictions of satyrs, the male followers of Bacchus. Isis is well represented, but not in this fashion. See above discussion for similar images and their location. For full discussion of Dionysiac scenes on gemstones see Henig 1997c.

Publication Record:
R. Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall* (London 1977) 64. Fig. 41. Colour plate VIII.


20. Small find 647

19mm x 14mm x 5mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Convex surface.

Context: In an alley between site XXXIII and XXXIV. Period VIB. Early 3rd c. AD.

Condition: The stone is heavily chipped around the edges, primarily on the right side. A small chip on the bottom does not affect the image, though a fairly large chip on the top obscures the top of the figure’s head, making it impossible to discern any head attributes. The surface is well preserved and highly polished with little scratching or wear.

Technique: The incision on this image reflects a fairly high degree of craftsmanship with its detail and smooth lines. The body of the figure is detailed with wheeled grooves, as are most of the attributes.

Device: The image depicts a figure sitting on a backless chair, body turned frontward with legs facing right. He looks to his right. Ground line is present. Figure is bearded and wears a diadem on his head. He wears a long tunic to his ankles and possibly a himation. His right arm is extended, and he holds a *patera* in his hand over a large flaming altar. His left arm is wrapped around a sceptre held with his hand. On either side of the figure is an eight rayed star, one in front of his face and the other behind in the middle of the composition.

Discussion: The image is identified as Jupiter by the well known and ubiquitous presence of this same image throughout the empire. Jupiter is one of the most well represented deities in the Graeco-Roman pantheon in all artistic media, both in peninsular Italy and in the provinces (see also cat. no. 1, 26, 51). His all encompassing strength and power make him particularly attractive to soldiers, and therefore his worship is wide spread in military zones of the empire such as Hadrian’s Wall. This representation of Jupiter seated on a throne holding a staff and *patera* (offering plate) is extremely popular throughout Britain and Germany. Here he is possibly being equated with the Egyptian deity Serapis by the addition of the *modius*. A chip obscures identification of his head ornament; however, Henig points out that the space left above the figure’s head would have

19 An error in this text confuses the Maenad with satyr. In the work this intaglio is the top left image of Plate XIII.

20 A chip obscures identification of his head ornament; however, Henig points out that the space left above the figure’s head would have
(wine cup) is the attribute often depicted resting on the head of Jupiter, in both cases solidifying his identification as Jupiter Serapis. As such he was equated with the Egyptian conflation of Osiris and Apis, a deity that became popular after the Ptolemaic adoption as their royal patron in the Hellenistic period. He represented the power and dominance of each Ptolemaic ruler, which was then transferred to the Roman emperors after Octavian’s victory in 31 B.C. (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996:1355f). He was especially embraced by various emperors, most notably the Severans.21 Henig notes that the image may be intended to recall Septimius Severus, and therefore the added detail of two eight-rayed stars on either side of the god would represent Caracalla and Geta as the Dioscouri, the sons of Zeus (Henig 1978: 229). The Severans would have been appreciated by many soldiers at Vindolanda after military reforms in 193 A.D. gave soldiers a substantial pay rise and allowed them to marry, making this an appropriate symbol to be found at Vindolanda.

**Comparanda:** In Germany a similar image with backless throne, sceptre, *patera* and possibly the altar is found at Xanten (Platz-Horster 1987: 176. Tafel 50, 265). Five images are currently in the Köln museum and were found in the Rheinland, all with a backless throne and sceptre (Krug 1981: 192f. Tafel 81, 97-101). In Amsterdam, seated Jupiter with *calathus* (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1986: 40. no. 81). Rarely found, however, is the seated Jupiter Serapis with eight rayed stars, for which there are no parallels in Britain. One gem from Aquileia is a good comparison, with Jupiter seated and holding the *patera* over a flaming altar (Sena Chiesa 1966: 95. Tav. I, 17). One eight rayed star is preserved, but the top half of the gem is missing. For a similar use of the eight-rayed stars see a gem in Cologne with a figure holding a *patera* logically taken an attribute to correctly fill the field. Henig 1978: 229.

21 For full treatment of the cult of Serapis in Roman Britain see: E. and J.R. Harris 1965: 74f.

**Publication Record:**

R. Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall* (London 1977) 63. Fig. 35. plate VIII.


M. Henig, *Vindolanda Jewellery* (Newcastle 1975) 24. Plate IX.

21. Small find 682

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15mm x 12.5mm x 3mm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image face: 10mm x 7.5mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicolo paste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context: In the <em>vicus</em> on the flagstones of the penultimate floor of site XXXVI B. Period VIB. Early 3rd century AD.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition:** Poorly preserved with breakdown of the paste. The edges are quite chipped, especially on the lower half, though this does not affect the image. The surface is scratched and the image is worn down.

**Technique:** Mould made paste. Image is shallow, probably due to wear.

**Device:** Figure stands frontward and looks to his left. No ground line is present. Figure wears a short tunic and possibly a helmet or some sort of cap on
his head. In the right hand a spear is held (very worn and hard to see on the positive image) and in the left hand the figure holds a shield by the side resting on the ground.

**Discussion:** This is a typical representation of Mars, who most often holds the spear and supports the shield with his other hand. Mars is an obvious and logical symbol to find in a military fort. His worship is widespread in Roman Britain having been conflated with many native British deities to fulfil various roles (Henig 1984: 50f). Attested by small bronze figurines, stone sculpture, metal work, inscriptions, and especially intaglios, his worship is found in almost all areas of the province (Toynbee 1964: 66f. Plates XIV and LXVII; cf. Green 2003: 31f). As an important deity to a soldier, he is known to have been worshipped in the forts under the guise of Mars Victor, Militaris, Ultor and Pater (Henig 1984: 93). He is more often associated with the military in the northern and western part of the British province, and especially along Hadrian’s Wall, though we also find abundant worship in the less militaristic south. Soldiers at Vindolanda would have associated themselves with Mars for strength and as a protector. He is also attested at Vindolanda by an inscription found in 1757, dedicated to Mars Victor.²²

**Comparanda:** Many other examples of Mars on intaglios known from British sites are made from the same inferior material, nicolo paste. Found in Hassocks, Dorchester, Colchester, South Shields (Hadrian’s Wall), and Rodmarton, they all date to the late second and third centuries (Henig 1978: 196f, no. 82-88. Plate III; cf. Charlesworth 1961: 29 no. 4). From Germany the iconography is similar but differ stylistically and are again often in nicolo or glass paste, though there are examples in stone as well. From Furstenberg, Mars holds down the shield and spear in the opposite hand, dated to the first century AD (Platz-Horster 1987: 4. Tafel 1, 4). Now in Bonn are two examples dated to the 1st-2nd century (Platz-Horster 1984: 41f. Tafel 5, 17 and 18). On the eastern frontier examples are also known, almost all in carnelian, two in particular with the same stance and attributes dated to the second century AD (Henig and Whiting 1987: 24. no. 220 and 221).

**Publication Record:**


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22. Small find 8641

15mm x 12mm x 3mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Slightly convex surface.
Context: In the Severan period fort ditch. Period VIB. Early 3rd c. AD.

**Condition:** The gem is poorly preserved both in general wear and chipping. The left side is very affected by two large chips, one off of the left edge and another removed ca. 3mm of the bottom left edge. General wear has affected the surface, which is scratched and worn down.

**Technique:** Very simple modelling with thick wheeled grooves. Very little detail especially within the incised areas. The
incision is very shallow, but may be due to wear. Simple rendering betrays a low level of craftsmanship.

**Device:** A male figure stands front and faces to his left. No ground line is present. He is naked except for possibly a garment draped over the shoulder. His weight is primarily on his left leg. He wears a cap on his head or a thick diadem or wreath. His left arm is extended out in front of his body holding a *patera* or similar offering. His right arm is held down behind him, with wheat sheaths held in his hand.

**Discussion:** The canonical depiction of Bonus Eventus, the bringer of good things, the deity holds an offering plate and corn ears in front of him. He is the male counterpart of Ceres or Fortuna, and evokes prosperity and *abundantia*. Often associated with agriculture and nature he assures a wealthy harvest and proper sustenance. Bonus Eventus spread from the agricultural sphere to an association with prosperous outcomes in general (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 32f). He was sometimes associated with the army, stemming from an early connection in Rome, with a temple in the Campus Martius and a statue on the Capitoline. Bonus Eventus is therefore an appropriate image to find in a military context, and further, because of his agricultural connection, easily identified and understood in the provinces. He is not depicted very often in other artistic media in Britain, but is quite popular on signets. He appears on a relief sculpture from Caerleon, accompanied by Genius and Fortuna (Toynbee 1964: 163). The popularity of this type of signet at Vindolanda is associated with the need for a good harvest and prosperity in general for survival.

**Comparanda:** There are many of this composition in Britain, see especially one from Yorkshire (Henig 1978: 301. Plate XXVIII, App. 115). From Caerleon (Zienkiewicz 1986: 137. Plate XIII nos.59, 60). From Norfolk a similar carnelian (Henig 1978: 210f. Plate VII, 203). In Italy from Aquileia there are at least thirteen of this type, two with notable similarity (Sena Chiesa 1966: 227. Tav. XXVII, 531 and 535). In Italy, now in Florence Archaeological Museum (Sena Chiesa 1978: 89. Tav. XI, 78). In Jordan a similar sardonyx (Henig and Whiting 1987: 23. no. 212). From Xanten a very similar paste gem (Platz-Horster 1987: 18. Tafel 6, 33), and an almost identical red jasper (Platz-Horster 1987: 67f. Tafel 23, 122). In Bonn a very similar nicolo (Platz-Horster 1984: 72f. Tafel 19, 72). In Munich a red jasper (Schmidt and Brandt 1970: 147. Tafel 153, no. 1508).

**Publication Record:**

**23. Small find 8785**

11mm x 9mm x 2mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the area west of the Severan commander’s residence in the floor material to the SE of the fence pad stones. Period VIB. Early 3rd century AD.

**Condition:** Fairly well preserved but wear has affected the surface. Very small chips on the upper and lower edge.

**Technique:** A fairly simple image, but with some nice detailing in the body. Made with parallel wheeled grooves. Rather shallow throughout, deepest in the body. The details are simple parallel lines.
Device: A female figure stands facing front and looking to her left. Ground line is present. She wears a diadem on her head and long chiton to her ankles. In her right arm she holds a spear or long staff upright which rests on the ground. Her left arm is extended and she holds a set of scales in front of her body.

Discussion: This image is the canonical representation of Aequitas, the personification of fair dealings and equity (Adkins and Adkins 1996, 3). She is often found in conjunction with symbols of fertility and fecundity, such as the cornucopia. Aequitas was a popular image to wear as a signet, and can be traced from usage on coins. She appears on an issue of Trajan, struck from AD 103-112, and was likely inspired from such images. Bedoyere suggests that the scales, invoking the idea of equity and fair dealing, were a way for Rome to promise relief to uncivilized barbarians from the inequity in life (De La Bedoyere 2002: 30). Coupled with signs of fertility and abundance, Rome promises refinement, equity and prosperity to newly conquered areas. Wearing this on a gemstone, a person at Vindolanda might hope for fair dealings in his own business and affairs. This may also fall into the category of gems that invoke prosperity.


Publication Record:

24. Small find 8796

16mm x 12mm x 2.5mm
Red jasper with natural white inclusions
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the floor surface of stone building to the west of the Severan commander’s residence. Period VIB. Early 3rd c. AD.

Condition: This gem is perfectly preserved with no chips or scratches affecting the stone. The surface retains a high gloss and little wear has affected the image.

Technique: Wheeled drills were utilized for the figure and details. Facial features are stylized and simple.

Device: A female figure stands three quarters and looks to her right. Ground line is present. She wears a wreath around her head. On her shoulders she wears a himation over a long girded peplos that falls to her feet. She has her left arm behind her back holding down sheaves of wheat. Her right arm is held up, bent at the elbow, holding in her hand an offering plate. An ant stands at her feet, a common symbol of the goddess Ceres.

Discussion: This image represents the goddess Ceres, the personification of agricultural abundance, who presided over cereal crops and the regenerative powers of nature (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 44). Ceres was further identified with Roman Tellus, and had her own festival in Rome, a temple on the Aventine Hill, and was
worshipped together with Liber and Libera. She is found on coins of Domitian dating to the end of the first century AD (Middleton 1991: 82). In Roman Britain, Ceres can be found in many artistic media, especially popular on gemstones, but also found in mosaics and statuary. A classically rendered bronze figurine, holding corn ears and heavily draped, was found in the Thames at London (Toynbee 1964: 85), and a relief sculpture from nearby Corbridge probably shows Ceres sitting next to Fortuna (Toynbee 1964: 162). At Housesteads the goddess is found on a relief (Henig 1995: 51). An altar from Carvoran (Roman Magna) names the deity as ‘Ceres the Syrian Goddess’, on which a poem invokes the goddess, calling her the mother of gods, Peace and Virtue and suggesting she weighs life and laws in her balance (RIB 1791). This worship seems to conflate Ceres with powers traditionally associated with many other deities. The ant, a symbol of industry (Middleton 1991: 82), standing at her feet is found alone on gemstones symbolizing the goddess; much the way Jupiter’s fulmen is enough to invoke his power.

**Comparanda:** Similar compositions with the ant included can be found in Britain in Dumbartonshire, Denbighshire and Shropshire (Henig 1978: 219. Plate IX, 271-273). In Italy the type is found at Aquileia (Sena Chiesa 1966: 233. Tav. XXIX, 563,564). From Epidaurum in Dalmatia a very similar gem includes the ant (Middleton 1991: 82. no. 122). Gems from Jordan do not include the ant (Henig and Whiting 1987: 22. no. 196 and 197). From Xanten the ant is included, but differs stylistically (Platz-Horster 1994: 157f. Tafel 42, 228). In Germany from Köln (Krug 1981: 223. Tafel 107, 278). Also from Germany a similar carnelian (Hocker 1988: 68, no. 42).

**Publication Record:**

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25. **No small find number – Henig 43**

14mm x 10.5mm x 2.5mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Slightly convex surface.
Context: In the Severan commander’s residence. Period VIB. Late 2nd c. AD.

**Condition:** Fairly worn stone with many small chips around the edges. The bottom is chipped obscuring the figure’s right foot and a chip on the left edge extends onto the surface. The image is fairly well preserved with some wear and scratching.

**Technique:** Very simple rendering of the body with wheeled and rounded drills. Stylized and exaggerated rendering of the facial features gives the figure an odd appearance.

**Device:** A male figure stands front and looks to his left. No ground line present. He stands with most of his weight on the left leg and the right leg bent slightly. The figure wears a cap on its head and is otherwise unclothed. In the left hand he holds out an object, probably a money bag, and in his right hand he holds up a caduceus.

**Discussion:** Though this image is stylized, the attributes and composition are typical to representations of Mercury that are more clearly represented on similar gems. The caduceus held in his left hand, with doubled snakes winding around in a figure eight, is the typical staff of Mercury, which then makes the object held in his right hand a money bag. He is
also often represented accompanied by a cockerel or ram (for cockerel alone see cat. no. 6). The worship of Mercury was imported into the western provinces very early, as the god of merchants and trade, which stemmed from his original identification with Greek Hermes (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 151f). Merchants had already been trading with and selling to the natives since Julius Caesar had brought the island into the Roman consciousness (55-54 BC). Mercury probably became a protector god to merchants, therefore the cult spread early into Gaul and Britain. In Celtic areas he was easily conflated with many deities and is often found accompanying Rosmerta.23 Also a god of abundance through commercial success, his image is found in most artistic media in Roman Britain.24 His worship is reflected at Vindolanda by an altar set up on it written *deo Mercurio* accompanied by an image of the deity with caduceus and money bag (*RIB* 1693), not dissimilar to this gem. The image of Mercury is an expected find at Vindolanda as it is assumed that merchants would have passed through the fort and vicus often, based on the many writing tablets that list goods and wares entering the military storehouses.


**Publication Record:**

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23 Rosmerta was a Celtic divinity of prosperity and abundance worshipped primarily in Gaul and southwest Britain. She is only rarely worshipped on her own. Adkins and Adkins 1996: 191f.

24 Toynbee 1964: see 70f for sculpture in the round; see 155f for relief.
PERIOD VII, ca. AD 213-300

26. Small find 122

14mm x 10mm x 1mm
Bronze
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled slightly down from face.
Context: In the main drain of the third century military bath changing room. Period VII. 3rd century AD.

Condition: The entire intaglio is preserved with wear on the edges. Minimal wear on the surface does not disturb the image. The back shows remnants of its adhesive attachment to a ring.

Technique: It is quite detailed for its small size and the drill work is rather deep for its shallowness. Most precise work is in the centre of the image with the edges and attributes less clear.

Device: The intaglio depicts a fulmen (thunderbolt) with rays extending outward from a central motif. The ends of the rays are stylized with points. A star flanks the left side of the fulmen and a crescent moon the right side.

Discussion: The fulmen is the typical representation of the power and strength of the sky god Jupiter. He was most often worshipped as Jupiter Optimus Maximus, seen often on altars simply as IOM (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 123). As an all powerful male deity Jupiter was easily syncretized with similar gods in native cultures of conquered areas in the provinces. Most popularly in the east we find Jupiter connected to Dolichenus, a local sky god from Commagene, whose worship is also attested in Roman Britain. The deity was carried west by the movement of the army through the empire, and was primarily worshipped by soldiers. Jupiter was also connected with the Egyptian Serapis and Ammon, and in the Celtic world was worshipped in conjunction with local sky and weather deities (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 119f). The worship of Jupiter is well attested at Vindolanda evidenced by both gemstones and stone altars. We see his following at the fort on at least four gemstones including this one depicting only his symbols of power (also see cat. no. 1, 20, 51). A lightning bolt as a symbol of Jupiter would have been an appropriate signet for soldiers portraying strength, power, and dominance.

Comparanda: The lightning bolt is less common than the figure of the god himself. A similar stone was found at a temple site in Gloucestershire with a very similar fulmen on a burnt carnelian in a bronze ring (Henig 1978: 238. Plate XIII, 416). A simpler depiction was found at Wroxeter in a dump dating to 150-300A.D., with the added details of wings projecting from the centre and arrows at the end of each lightning bolt (Henig 1978: 238. Plate XIII, 414). Another simple depiction of a fulmen is seen on a sardonyx from London dating to the late 1st – early 2nd c. A.D.

Publication Record:
R. Birley, Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall (London 1977) 64. Fig. 40. Colour plate VIII.

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25 Two stone altars set up to Jupiter by the Fourth Cohort of Gauls were found by Anthony Hedley in the commanding officer’s residence of the latest stone fort (post AD 213). The first was to Jupiter, the immortal gods, and the Genius of the commanding officer’s house, while the second was to Jupiter, the Genius, and the guardian gods. Birley 1977: 90, RIB 1686-87
27. Small find 299

16mm x 11mm x 2.5mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Slightly convex surface.
Context: In the last level above the south end of the Severan commander’s courtyard.26 Period VII. 3rd century.

Condition: The intaglio is preserved with no cracks or chips on the surface. A tiny chip from the bottom does not affect the image. The surface retains a high gloss and there is very little wear to the stone. The intaglio is preserved in ¾ of its original iron ring setting, broken just above the top of the intaglio.

Technique: The incision of the figure is fairly shallow, with most depth and detail in the body. The attributes, limbs and head are fairly shallow and simple. Made with wheel grooves. Highly polished.

Device: The figure is standing frontward and looking to the left. Ground line is present. The left hip is pushed outwards creating a bend in the body. A diadem is worn on the head and a knee length tunic on the body. The figure holds a cornucopia in the right hand and in the left a patera over a flaming altar.

Discussion: This image is the typical and common representation on gemstones of the Genius Publicus Populi Romani, the public spirit of the Roman people, or the Genius loci, of a specific place (Green 2003: 38). Genius is best described as the spirit of a place, person or peoples. There are different guises of this deity found in the Roman Empire. Also found is the Genius Patriae (of the country), Genius of the Paterfamilias (head of household), Genius Augusti (of Augustus) and simply Genius, who was a personal guardian spirit (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 91f). Genius is well attested in Britain on gemstones and in inscriptions.27 The cornucopia and patera confirm the guardianship of the people and place through fecundity, abundance and good will. At least three dedications were made to Genius at Vindolanda, two on altars found in 1831 and dedicated to the Genius of the commander’s house (RIB 1685). Another is dedicated to the Genius and guardian gods by the Fourth cohort of Gauls. There are other forms of good will and abundance at Vindolanda, however, this is as of yet the only representation of Genius found on an intaglio.

Comparanda: There is a very similar image from Silchester depicting Genius in almost the exact same manner but with slightly different styling (Henig 1978: 199. Plate IV, 105). From Xanten, Germany a Genius is in the same pose with attributes in a doughy styling quite reminiscent of other Vindolanda gems (Platz-Horster 1987: 109. Tafel 39, 191). In the Cologne

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26 The find spot is identified by Henig 1978 as the courtyard of the Mansio, based on the identification of the building in Birley 1977: 70. It should be noted that since this publication new evidence has identified the building as the late 2nd – 3rd century Severan Commander’s residence.

27 RIB 944 from Carlisle and RIB 102 from Cirencester both depict Genii holding the cornucopia and patera.
museum a similar nicolo gem depicts genius with cornucopia and patera without altar (Krug 1981: 227. Tafel 110, 301).

Publication record:


28. Small find 438

9mm x 14mm x 3mm (fragment)
Carnelian
Context: In the vicus on the road in front of site XXIII. Period VII. 3rd century.

This piece is highly fragmentary and unreadable, but would have been fairly large if preserved. Henig’s *Corpus* (Page 288. Plate XXIV, App. 10) suggests there are remains of crossed cornucopiae, dextrarum iunctio (clasped hands), and a corn ear. There is too little preserved for a definite identification and discussion.

Publication:

29. Small find 444

12mm x 9mm x 2mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: In the vicus in the doorway of site XXIII. Period VII. 3rd century AD.

Condition: Poorly preserved. The paste has broken down, creating divots in the surface. The edges have some wear, most notably on the right edge. Though the surface is worn the image is still discernable but not clear.

Technique: Fairly shallow and simple modelling. Mould made paste. Depth is even throughout the image, with no great detail anywhere.

Device: A figure sits on a stool or high chair in profile and turned to his right. His arms are both raised and held in front of him working on a project which rests on a tall pillar. The piece worked on is tall and thin but otherwise not identifiable.

Discussion: This image has been identified possibly as Daedalus based on the identification of the piece he works on as a wing (Henig 1978: 287). A definite identification of the item worked on is difficult because of its poor preservation, but the overall representation here probably originated with a craftsman figure like Daedalus. This type of representation may have derived from an image of the artisan crafting wings for himself and his son Icarus (Henig 1975: 30), a scene which is definitely identifiable.
on an intaglio currently in Bonn dating to the second century AD (Henig 1975: 107. Tafel 29, 112). In its context at Vindolanda, however, the image was more likely representative of a common metal smith, and any association with Daedalus may have fallen on ignorant eyes. The meaning of this image in the Vindolanda context was likely more pertinent to everyday activities within the fort and vicus. Presumably this gem would have belonged to an artisan, either attached to the army or living in the settlement outside the fort walls as a civilian. The level to which any of the mythical symbolism was understood by their provincial owners is always in question. Nonetheless, Daedalus was the archetypal craftsman, artisan and inventor in the Graeco-Roman world, which could have been symbolically meaningful to a craftsman in third century Britain, simply as a symbol of pride. Daedalus is well attested in the Roman world after attaining wide recognition primarily through the writings of Ovid, and he is found often in wall painting (Hornblower and Spawforth 1996: 426).

Comparanda: Comparable images from Britain all employ the same inferior and inexpensive material. Nicolo paste gems from Ipswich, Cirencester, Fordingbridge, Harlow and Oxfordshire all depict the seated smith and are dated to the third century (Henig 1978: 253 and 296. Plate XVII, 528-531; Plate XXVII, App. 88). A glass paste gem from Bonn also depicts the smith seated in profile but with a pillar feature behind him, dated to the first century AD (Platz-Horster 1987: 73. Tafel 26, 132a). In Munich the same craftsman (Schmidt and Brandt 1970: 161-162. Tafel 153, no. 1619). The only image definitely identified as Daedalus is the intaglio from Bonn discussed above.

Publication record:

M. Henig, *Vindolanda Jewellery* (Newcastle 1975) 28f. Plate XI.

30. Small find 473

12.5mm x 10mm x 4mm
Image face: 10.5mm x 7mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Slightly convex surface. Bevelled down and outward from face.
Context: In the vicus to the east of the east door of the bathhouse changing room.
Found with material dating to ca. 300 AD. Period VII.

Condition: The stone is well preserved with very few chips around the edges and surface. A few small markings on the top do not affect the image. The stone is highly polished.

Technique: The image is fairly shallow and simple, especially in the arms and attributes, mostly utilizing simple lines to create the figure. Made with wheeled grooves, the depth of incision is fairly even, slightly deeper in the body.

Device: The figure is standing frontward and looking to the left. Ground line is present. She wears a long chiton to the ankles and a diadem on her head. She holds her right hand out, crooked at the shoulder and elbow, but holding nothing, while her left arm is outstretched holding a sceptre. The sceptre is uncommon, with three bars crossing the staff, and two rays projecting from the top.

Discussion: Because this gem represents a female in a position of power and status holding a sceptre, but lacks attributes often
associated with other goddesses, this gem possibly depicts Juno. A member of the Capitoline triad and one of the oldest and most important deities of the Roman pantheon, Juno is most often thought of as a domestic matron goddess presiding over feminine concerns. As the consort of Jupiter she looks after the rite of marriage and is often connected with childbirth and puberty. She also took on aspects of a protector deity and at an early point became connected with the military under the guise of Juno Populonia and later Juno Sispe.\footnote{Later called Juno Sospita or Seispita. Adkins and Adkins 1996: 118f.} This incarnation is possibly what we see in the above image of her holding a sceptre and possibly wearing a helmet, although, as the gem was found in the vicus, it could as likely be her patronage of feminine concerns that we see here. The sceptre is a common attribute for Juno, especially as Juno Martialis. She appears in this guise on the coins of Trebonianus Gallus, who was emperor from 251-253 A.D. Juno is not one of the more common subjects of Roman imperial gemstones and is represented in Roman Britain in general by a few small stone figurines\footnote{Found in London, Chester, and maybe York. Green 2003: 29f.} and a stone statue from Corbridge.\footnote{The figure probably held a patera in her left hand and a sceptre in her right. Toynbee 1964: 76f.} Mother goddesses of Britain are sometimes thought to be connected to Juno Lucina, who presides over childbirth. This last affiliation is appropriate for the syncretism of a Roman and native deity, as she was originally connected with an outdoor grove, the natural world being a significant and important aspect of native British religion.

**Comparanda:** There is one other stone from Vindolanda that possibly depicts Juno (see cat. no. 40). A similar carnelian with sceptre and diademed head is from Rutland, and from Gloucestershire and Kent is the same stance with sceptre and in addition to a patera in the opposite hand (Henig 1978: 213. Plate VIII, 222, 224, 225). In Munich a possible comparison for the staff with similar crosshatchings but no protrusions from the top (Brandt 1972: 61. no. 2466).

**Publication record:**

M. Henig, *Vindolanda Jewellery* (Newcastle 1975) 24. Plate XI.\footnote{An error in this text reads Plate VIIIb instead of the correct plate XI. Plate XI is misidentified as a red Jasper Silvanus, confused with plate IX, where Silvanus is identified as Juno.}

**31. Small find 645**

15mm x 9mm x 3.5mm

Image face: 11mm x 6mm

Carnelian

Ovoid with horizontal image. Convex surface. Bevelled down from face.

Context: In site XXX of the vicus below a 4th century floor. Period VII. 3rd c. AD.

**Condition:** The stone is preserved without any chips out of the surface or edges. A great deal of wear on the surface affects the image, which now appears quite shallow and almost unreadable. The sides and back remain highly polished.

**Technique:** Fairly simple image that utilized both thin and wide wheeled grooves. The body of the stag is made by simple lines and the tree is highly stylized.

\footnote{An error in this text reads Plate VIIIb instead of the correct plate XI. Plate XI is misidentified as a red Jasper Silvanus, confused with plate IX, where Silvanus is identified as Juno.}
Device: A stag is crouching on the ground with its head turned back to the right. Ground line is present. A tree stands on the right side of the gem with its branches and leaves reaching over above the stag.

Discussion: The crouching stag has various possibilities in meaning, but most often is associated with the hunting god Silvanus, whose zoomorphic symbol is the stag (see cat. no. 18 for Silvanus alone). His worship is well attested in Britain, and the connection with the stag is most clearly seen in a temple site in Colchester where a plaque dedicated to Silvanus was found in connection with a bronze figurine of the animal (Green 2003: 37). Silvanus was often connected to native British hunting deities, which sometimes makes identification ambiguous as to which syncretism may be represented. This confusion occurs on a slab from the Chedworth Villa where a hunting deity is accompanied by a dog and is followed by an antlered stag (Toynbee 1964: 179). Beyond the connection to Silvanus, a stag may simply represent the abundance of game in the area and therefore evokes the hope for a good hunt. Soldiers and civilians near Vindolanda would certainly have relied on hunting for a great part of their diet and would attempt to receive goodwill and abundance in this sphere, making this an appropriate symbol for someone living on the frontier.32

Comparanda: Another of the crouching stag motifs can be found at Vindolanda (see cat. no. 48). From elsewhere in Britain the same motif is seen on gems from York and London (Henig 1978: 261. Plate XIX, 616, 617). Without the tree is a gem found at Caerwent and Wanborough (Henig 1978: 261. cat. no. 618, 619). Without the tree but a very similar stag dated to the first or second century A.D. from Germany in a private collection (Platz-Horster 1994: 126. Tafel 27, 147).

Publication Record:

32. Small find 718

9mm x 6.5mm x 1.5mm (fragment)
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the vicus in site XXX. Not a stratified context. Most likely from period VII. 3rd century AD.

Condition: Very fragmentary with a little over one quarter remaining. Two large chips have removed the bottom and the right side of the stone. The upper left side holds most of the image. The remaining portion is well preserved with a smooth surface and a high polish.

Technique: The whole figure is fairly simple and stylized, rendered with thick and thin wheeled grooves. Fairly shallow throughout with some details as simple lines scratched on the surface of the stone.

Device: The image is of a figure standing frontward and facing to the left. No obvious clothing or armour is worn. A helmet-like attribute is worn on the head, which extends awkwardly in the front and back. Right arm is held down to the side holding a long spear in the hand. The left hand is not preserved.33

33 Henig suggests that the figure probably held a shield or *victoriola* or perhaps a *patera* in the missing hand; however, there is no evidence of
Discussion: This image has been identified by Henig as Minerva. It is problematic that the right hand is missing as is the lower half of the gem, and therefore most of the attributes other than the spear are unknown. Without these details a definite identification is difficult. The helmet placed on top of the figure’s head often begs association with Minerva; however, here the strange protrusions of the helmet and the lack of clothing suggest identification otherwise. An alternative reading could identify the figure as Mars, which would explain the lack of clothing; however, this piece may be too ambiguous to identify with any certainty. As Minerva or Mars the meaning would be similar. The two deities are often depicted with shield and spear, though Minerva is often differentiated by a long girded peplos. In the context of Vindolanda or any other military installation either identification would be appropriate. The worship evoked by both Minerva and Mars is of a guardian in battle and represents the spirit of war.

Comparanda: Both Minerva and Mars are found quite often on intaglios. Minerva can be found depicted in many variant ways, but as we see her here, carrying only a spear (though she probably had a shield and attribute in her left hand) and without a girded peplos or other clothing is rare. In nineteen other examples from British sites of Minerva standing she always wears a girded peplos or other clothing (Henig 1978: 213-216, 302-303. Plate VIII, 230, 233-238, 240, 242-245. Plate XXIX, 123-126). From the forty-eight examples of a standing Minerva from Aquileia all have a girded peplos (Sena Chiesa 1966: 123f. Tav. VI-VIII, 106-153). For other Mars comparanda see above no. 21. No direct comparisons are known.

Publication Record:


33. Small find 726

17.5mm x 14.5mm x 5.5mm (fragment)
Shale
Context: In the vicus, site IV. Period VII. 3rd century.

This stone is interesting because of its material. The craftsman may have attempted to shape a piece of shale into an intaglio by creating a surface for an image. The experiment did not work and there are no other finds of stone intaglios known; however, organic materials such as jet, shale, and amber were often used for jewellery making this not an entirely unusual attempt (cf. Johns 1996: 79).

34. Small find 843

19.5mm x 17mm x 3mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: Found in the vicus at the south end of site XXXIX. 3rd century AD.
**Condition:** This is a well preserved gem still held in part of its original iron setting. The entire stone is preserved, except for one small chip at the top edge, which does not obscure the image. The surface is perfectly preserved with only a few small divots on the bottom and minimal scratching.

**Technique:** The most detail is in the body of the figure, where the artisan attempted to represent musculature in the chest and shoulders using a wide drill. The upper legs are highly detailed with thin wheeled grooves used to represent the zoomorphic aspect of Pan. Similarly, the attributes are highly detailed with wheeled grooves. The features of the face are stylized using simple lines for the nose and mouth.

**Device:** The figure is in an ecstatic pose, facing frontward and looking to his left. No ground line is present, though it is probably hidden by the corroded setting. He is depicted with developed musculature in his chest and animal legs, wearing no clothing. He is wreathed and his left arm is crooked at the elbow holding up what is likely a **syrinx** (musical pipes). His right arm hangs down with a **nebris** draped over it and he holds a **lagobolon**.

**Discussion:** The figure is identified as Pan, the primary worshiper of Bacchus, by his goat legs and attributes. The **syrinx** or pan pipes in his left hand suggest he is more than simply a satyr (see cat. no. 35). Pan, often depicted as a follower of Bacchus, would have been worshipped similarly and possibly together with Maenads, satyrs, and less often Silvanus (see cat. no. 18). A woodland god worshipped in the natural sphere, he was easily conflated with various native British deities. Representations of Pan are not very common in Britain; however, the cult of Dionysus is quite well represented on gemstones and elsewhere. Pan represented all things good in life. With his connection to Bacchus we think of wine and revelry, and he is often shown holding the **syrinx** which suggests dancing and celebration. Beyond the rigid and defined military life the soldiers at Vindolanda would have also had private lives, within which celebration and revelry would have marked stability and wealth.

**Comparanda:** None of the gems known today from British sites show Pan in a similar pose and style (for other representations of Pan see Henig 1978: 204f. 144-148. Plate V). From Mechernich-Antweiler, Germany, and now in the museum at Bonn is a gem showing similar stylization but a different pose (Platz-Horster 1984: 60. Tafel 13, 49a). The best parallel can be drawn with a gem in Aquileia, on which Pan is depicted holding up a similar attribute identified as the **syrinx** (Sena Chiesa 1966: 195. Tav. XXII, 425). He is shown similarly, dancing and looking to his left. Also from Italy, now in the Florence museum is a similar dancing Pan (Sena Chiesa 1978: 88. Tav XI, 74).

**Publication Record:**
R. Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall* (London 1977) 63. Fig. 36. Plate VIII.


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34 This attribute has also been identified possibly as a dish of fruit in Henig 1978: 290. This identification seems less likely based on the physical appearance of the attribute, though it is difficult to identify with absolute certainty.

35 It is interesting to note that the representation of Dionysus and related figures is far more common on gems compared to other media. There is an almost complete silence of inscriptive evidence and only slightly more sculptural representations. Henig 1984: 180. For a full treatment of the worship of Bacchus in Britain see: Hutchinson 1986.
35. Small find 861

16mm x 12mm x 3mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the vicus in site XXXIX to the east side of the south end. Period VII. 3rd century AD.

Condition: A very well preserved gem, this jasper has little marking and scratching and nothing that obscures the image. The whole oval is preserved with minimal chipping on the edge. The image is preserved perfectly.

Technique: The figure is fairly detailed and deep in its incision. A clear image rendered with thick wheeled grooves.

Device: The figure is striding and looking to the right. Ground line is present. A wreath is worn on the head. He is bare-chested but with bulky shoulders, possibly wearing a cloak or skin. He holds his right arm stretched out before him and dangling a bunch of grapes. His left arm is pulled behind him holding the lagobolon and nebris.

Discussion: The figure represented is a Satyr, the male counterpart of Maenads (see cat. no. 19) and most often associated with the rites of Bacchus. They were woodland spirits in the Greek world and revelled in Bacchic ecstasy. The Romans identified satyrs with the Fauns and also with Pan, due to their composite nature of man and animal (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 200). They are most often equated with goats and represented with hooves and shaggy legs. Satyrs are often portrayed as ithyphallic, which may be represented on this gem by the protrusion near the figure’s midriff, but it is not an obvious feature. Satyrs are quite popular images in Roman Britain found always in Bacchic scenes, decorating drinking bowls and tripods (Henig 1984: 179). At least one bronze figurine is known and they are present in mosaic floors found most often in southern Britain (Toynbee 1964: 89, 257, 274). For the soldier at Vindolanda, wearing a satyr as a personal symbol ensured abundance and happiness. We know from the Vindolanda writing tablets that soldiers took leave and had some personal time (Bowman and Thomas 1991: 62-73), and this scene of a satyr carrying a bunch of grapes may represent the joy and celebration that also occurred in an otherwise militaristic setting.

Comparanda: Satyrs present themselves in many ways on gemstones with over forty images identified from Britain alone. Similar images with a satyr striding forward and holding out a bunch of grapes are found in Kent, Chester, Northamptonshire and Carlisle (Henig 1978: 206f. Plate V, 161, 162, 164, 165). From Caerleon (Zienkiewicz 1986: 137-138. Plate XIV nos. 63, 64). In Cologne is a nicolo gem dated second – third centuries AD with the same image (Krug 1981: 230. Tafel 112, 318). In Bonn is one with the addition of a small figure at the satyr’s feet but the same attributes (Platz-Horster 1987: 100. Tafel 36, 173). In Munich a red jasper (Brandt 1972: 74. Tafel 237, no. 2575). From Syria a good parallel (Middleton 2001: 36, no. 18).

36 Often on gems, due to small work face and sometimes less high quality workmanship, the animal legs or other elements of the image are symbolized by a simple recognizable detail. Here we have the attenuated lower portion and sharp bend in the leg meant to represent the bony bottom half of a goat’s leg.
37 Also see the Mildenhall treasure where a Bacchic thiasos takes centre stage on the most impressive piece of silver in the treasure. Toynbee 1964: 308f.
Publication Record:
R. Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall* (London 1977) 63. Fig. 37. Plate VIII.


36. Small find 954

15.5mm x 11mm x 2mm (orig. ca. 19-21mm wide)
Red Jasper
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface.
Context: To the west and above the Severan commander’s residence (trench D5). 39 3rd century AD.

Condition: Only half of this gem survives. In its original state it would have been a large stone probably in an impressive setting. Only the left half remains, preserving a carved image which reflects a fairly high standard of craftsmanship on an almost flawless piece of stone. There are no chips and scratches on the surface and almost no wear at all.

Technique: This gem was incised with rounded drill and wheeled grooves. It is fairly deep and detailed and displays a high level of craftsmanship.

Device: The remaining half of this gem preserves an image of a small aedicula. Ground line is present. The shrine has a rounded roof with a cupola projecting from the top. Four Tuscan style columns rest on a flat surface creating the interior space of the shrine. Inside is a figure or image of the deity to whom the shrine is dedicated, a flaccid phallic type of symbol (Henig 1978: 292). The shrine sits on a stack of doughy, rounded objects, probably stones. A figure approaches the shrine, reflected only by one foot at the base of the aedicula. Something projects from the roof, possibly a tree branch.

Discussion: The full image is impossible to understand due to its incomplete nature. Henig suggests that the foot approaching the aedicula is that of Pan because of its goat-like appearance (Henig 1978: 292. Plate XXVI, 60). Based on that presumption he further identifies the image in the aedicula as the phallus representing Priapus. 40 Certainly the connection between Priapus and Pan would be logical; however, neither of these identifications is certain enough to fully identify the scene. Comparable images that may allude to the original scene do not include Pan. A gem from Corbridge carries the same aedicula with four Tuscan columns placed on similar dough-like rocks, on which the shrine is empty but otherwise displays the same construction (Henig 1978: 248. Plate XV, 493). A small human figure approaches a flaming altar placed just in front of the shrine and he carries a loaf of bread. An almost exact replica with the shrine also filled by the phallus of Priapus includes a small figure approaching a flaming altar placed before the shrine;

An error on this page confuses the Satyr with the Maenad. This intaglio is found in the bottom left of page 28.
Find spot identified in Henig 1978: 292, as the Mansio. cf. note 16.

40 A fertility god associated with crops and protection, Priapus became more generally associated with the phallus and its use as an apotropaic device. He was considered in some myths to be the son of Bacchus. Adkins and Adkins 1996: 184.
however, in this composition the worshipper is Cupid. None of the images in Britain known so far includes Pan with the image of the rural shrine.

Comparanda: Other than what was discussed above this image type has not been recorded from other sites in the empire.

Publication Record:
R. Birley, *Vindolanda: A Roman frontier post on Hadrian’s Wall* (London 1977) 64. Fig. 38. Plate VIII.


37. Small find 1223

8.5mm x width 6.5mm x 2mm thick Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: On the east lip of the stone fort II ditch. Period VII. 3rd century AD.

Condition: Very corroded paste gem with markings throughout. The whole oval is intact but extensive wear has left very little of the image. It was found with intact bezel and shoulders of its original bronze ring.

Technique: Mould made paste. Very shallow image due to wear.

Device: A figure is standing front and looking to the left. No ground line visible. The arms are held out and down on either side. Attributes are quite shallow but might possibly be a cornucopia held in the crook of the right arm. An object standing by the feet to the left of the figure might either be an altar or the bottom of an oar with the shaft worn away. The depressed centre suggests the figure wears a long tunic.

Discussion: Though quite worn, the long tunic, cornucopia, and possibly steering oar suggests that the figure is Fortuna with typical signs of prosperity and fecundity. Gems extolling prosperous themes are the most common group in the Vindolanda assemblage and are fully expected from any occupation period. Her presence evokes many of the same hopes as Ceres and Bonus Eventus, both of whom represent prosperity and good will. She has an additional trait of general control over fate and luck, signified iconographically by the rudder, which exemplifies her control over man’s destiny. Fortuna was long worshipped in the Roman sphere being equated with many aspects of chance and luck; Fortuna *Publica* presided over the public fortune and Fortuna *Privata* over the private individual. Still later she was connected specifically to the emperor as Fortuna *Augusta*. In the military sphere and especially on the frontiers she was connected with baths and bathing as Fortuna *Balnearis*, which suggests she controlled health and wellness (Adkins and Adkins 1996, 84). The public aspect of Fortuna is found in an altar at Vindolanda dedicated to the Fortuna *Populi Romani* (*RIB* 1684), while this small gemstone suggests a personal connection to the deity.

Publication Record:
38. Small find 1356

12.5mm x 10mm x 2mm
Glass paste
Context: In the vicus, east of the bathhouse. 3rd century AD.

This gem is highly corroded with no discernable image. The material is glass paste, popular in the second and third centuries. This piece may correspond with Henig’s Corpus, number App. 162. Also possibly written up in Birley 1977b: 35, under the reference number 1899.

Technique: The image is a mould made paste. Not much detail on remaining portion due to extensive wear. Even depth of work throughout the preserved piece.

Device: This is a very difficult image to analyse due to its extensive wear. Possibly a small winged figure rides an animal whose hind legs extend on the remaining portion of the gem. This gem is too fragmentary to make any definite assessment.

Publication Record:

39. Small find 1750

9.5mm x 9mm x 2.5mm (fragment)
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: In the vicus, east of the bathhouse. Period VII context. 3rd c. AD.

Condition: Very poorly preserved, only a third to a half remains. The paste has broken down on the surface with many marks and scratches, obstructing the image.

38. Small find 1356

13.5mm x 9.5mm x 2.5mm
Image face: 11mm x 7mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Slightly convex surface. Bevelled from face.
Context: In the vicus east of the bathhouse. Period VII context. 3rd century A.D.

Condition: This is a well preserved stone almost entirely preserved. One small chip on the left side does not affect the image. The edges and back remain highly polished while the surface has been affected by some general wear, but discernable image remains.
Technique: Parts of the image were incised with a rounded drill, while the deepest incision in the lower body utilized several parallel wheeled grooves. The attributes are simple lines incised with wheeled grooves.

Device: The image is of a female standing frontward and looking to her left. Ground line is present. She wears a long chiton to her ankles, either belted at the chest or with a himation over. On her head she wears a cap or wreath. She extends her left forearm out to her side holding a small branch or possibly an ear of corn. In her right arm she holds a staff or spear resting on the ground.

Discussion: This figure has been identified by Henig tentatively as Juno, but this identification is questionable. The only certainty is that the figure is female due to the long girded peplos she wears. The attribute in her right arm has been suggested as an ear of corn, but this would be a rather unusual depiction. The corn ear generally hangs down from the figure’s hand and reaches a point (see cat. no. 11 and 24). The item is too unclear to identify with certainty. The spear or staff suggests an image of Minerva which would require reading the head gear as a helmet, but again, this can not be said with certainty. Generally, images of Minerva are clear and bold in their identification. Rather than an ear of corn the ambiguous attribute may just be a sheaf of wheat or similar representation, suggesting a Ceres-like agricultural deity. Henig suggests a similar idea, pointing out that syncretism was the religious trend in the third century and the understanding of this gem may have simply been that of a local goddess of vegetation (Birley 1977b: 36).

Comparanda: A gem in La Spezia, Italy has a similar ambiguity in the secondary attribute drawn more as a simple line than anything else. There the figure’s identification is equally ambiguous (Sena Chiesa 1978: 76. Tav. VII, 46). A gem from Jordan also depicts a female, with long peplos and a staff in the right hand. A slightly clearer ear of corn is in the right hand, but the head is rounded and possibly with a diadem or wreath, very similar to the Vindolanda gem. This gem is identified as Demeter (Henig and Whiting 1987: 22. no. 198).

Publication Record:


41 Small find 1881

16mm x 12mm x 3mm
Red Jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Convex bottom.
Context: In the vicus east of the bathhouse. Period VII. 3rd century.

Condition: This is generally a well preserved piece. There is some minor chipping around the edges on the right side and on the left bottom corner. The surface is free from many scratches and one chip took off a few millimetres obscuring much of what the figure wears on its head. The surface is in good condition and the image is well preserved.

41 Henig 1978: 302 and Henig’s report on intaglios in Birley 1977b suggest it is possibly Juno, but the identification is uncertain.
**Technique:** This is a very well rendered and finely detailed image. The face and neck utilized a rounded drill and are modelled quite deeply. The rest of the image is quite detailed using many wheeled grooves. The face is very well detailed with each feature modelled separately and naturally. Generally, shows a high degree of craftsmanship.

**Device:** Portrait of a male in profile looking to his right. He wears a cloak on his shoulders. On top of his head the left half of a *modius* is preserved. His hair is worn long in a braided fashion down the back. A ram horn projects from the side of his head and rays of the sun project from the back. In front of his face he holds a staff simply rendered with a straight shaft and three, trident-like projections from the top. A snake winds around the shaft.

**Discussion:** This image displays the highest levels of religious syncretism found in the provinces. The attributes worn by the figure – *modius*, ram’s horns, sun rays – are all typical conflations with Roman Jupiter. It is quite rare to have all three in one image. The rays of the sun suggest a connection with Helios, the eastern sun god, also sometimes connected to Apollo in the Roman sphere. The character of *Sol Invictus* is an appropriate syncretism with Jupiter, as the best and mightiest of the Roman pantheon. The *modius* worn on the head is the sign of the Egyptian deity Serapis, and is often connected to Jupiter as sky god, and is further connected to Helios as well. The Ram’s horns suggest a conflation with Ammon, an Egyptian deity of fertility and continuity of life, made popular in the Graeco-Roman sphere after Alexander the Great adopted his attributes in the fourth century BC (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 7). Lastly, the trident of Poseidon with the healing serpent of Aesculapius wound around the shaft stands in front of the figure’s face. Henig points out that this piece can probably be attributed to an eastern trader or soldier stationed at Vindolanda, and it is hard to argue for any other explanation. The conflation of so many powerful deities in one image all originating in the east certainly suggests an individual of eastern descent.

**Comparanda:** Almost the exact gem was found in Surrey and is now in the British Museum (Potter and Johns 1992: 149; Johns 1996: 81). A very similar composition is in the Lewis collection in Cambridge (reportedly bought in Smyrna in 1891. Henig 1975b: 35. Plate 8, 121). There are two gems from Gadara, Jordan that are the same composition without the trident or snake, and differ slightly stylistically (Henig and Whiting 1987: 9. no. 27 and 28). In New York Metropolitan (Richter 1956: 66, no. 263. Plate XXXVIII).

**Publication Record:**


42. Small find 1922

8mm x 9mm x 3mm (fragment)
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: Unstratified. Probably from the *vicus*. Period VII.

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42 For full treatment of eastern deities in Roman Britain, see E. and J.R Harris 1965.
**Condition:** The gem is poorly preserved, only half the original remains. A large break preserves the bottom half, where the image is discernable. The surface is fairly well preserved retaining a smooth finish.

**Technique:** Mould made paste gem. Figure is fairly shallow, even throughout the preserved half of the image.

**Device:** A figure faces to his right and is striding with one leg bent at the knee. No ground line present. The figure may wear a *chlamys* to the knees. The right hand is held out forward and holds something indiscernible. An object is held out and back in the left hand, but the hand is not preserved and only the bottom can be seen. Very difficult image to identify.

**Discussion:** The figure may be a male because of the lack of long garment. There is no spear or shield present on the ground, therefore, an identification of Mars or a warrior may be ruled out. The figure type is most similar to a Bonus Eventus image, the bringer of good things and the counterpart of the female Fortuna or *Abundantia*. Henig also suggests this identification but it is nearly impossible to identify this figure with certainty (Henig 1978: 301). There are three gemstones in the Vindolanda collection that can be used for a comparison. Three Bonus Eventus figures have been found subsequently at Vindolanda and two display almost this same pose, in a striding position with one leg bent at the knee and the foot hanging behind the calf of the other leg (see cat. no. 52 and 61). The figure bears corn ears and an offering plate. The second Bonus Eventus, also identified by the same attributes, stands frontally and does not bend either leg (see cat. no. 22). Therefore, the identification of this fragment, though probably Bonus Eventus, must remain ambiguous.

**Comparanda:** See the comparisons at Vindolanda mentioned above, and cat. nos. 52 and 61 for full comparanda of Bonus Eventus figures.

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**Publication Record:**


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**43. Small find 1973**

[Image of gemstone]

13mm x 7mm x 2.5mm (fragment)

Carmelian

Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.

Context: In the *vicus* to the east of the bathhouse. Period VII. 3rd century.

**Condition:** The stone is in very poor condition with only ca. one quarter of the original preserved. Two large breaks extend over the surface on the right side and the top, preserving only a small portion of the image. The remaining surface retains a high gloss.

**Technique:** The image was made with fairly simple use of the wheeled drill, though only a bit of the incision survives.

**Device:** What remains seems to be one leg standing on possible ground line. The lower part of the leg is present, revealing a bend at the knee and just a small portion of the upper leg. Something is held out in front of the figure, but only the lower portion is present.
Discussion: The identification of this figure cannot be certain. Henig suggests this is a huntsman striding with his lagobolon resting over one shoulder (Henig 1978: 301). Though a possibility, the knee in this image seems to be bent forward and what should be a stick held over the shoulder and naturally hanging behind the figure, is placed in front of the figure. Without an exact comparison this image must remain anonymous.

Comparanda: Too fragmentary for comparison. Nothing known suggests a similarity to the image preserved.

Publication Record:


44. Small find 2673a

8.5mm x 6mm x 2.5mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Bevelled down and out from face.
Context: In occupation material dating to ca. 250-300 AD. Period VII.

Condition: Poorly preserved paste gem with breakdown to the surface rendering the image shallow and difficult to read. The original bronze setting is preserved with one shoulder of the ring attached.

Technique: Mould made paste gem.
Shallow image.
Device: A male figure faces front, turned slightly to his left. No ground line present. He holds his right arm down and out from his side, while his left arm is held up carrying something nondescript. No details remain in the image.

Discussion: The image is too worn to obtain a definite identification, although it does follow the type of successful hunter image prevalent on British intaglios. The figure is certainly a male, but no further attributes identify him as a specific deity. The item held in the left hand is suggestive of a felled animal in the way it hangs down and the figure holds it up on display (compare to the possible hunter in cat. no. 15). The worn attribute in the figure's right hand is perhaps the lagobolon or hunting stick. If this is in fact the true identification this gem falls into the most popular category of subjects found at Vindolanda, images of fecundity and prosperity. The image can be understood as a personal symbol of abundanta.

Publication Record:
P. Bidwell, The Roman Fort of Vindolanda at Chesterholm, Northumberland (London 1985) 122. Drawn on 123, fig. 42, no. 54; Image on 129, Plate XXXI.

45. Small find 2673b

8.5mm x 6mm x 2.5mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image. Convex surface. Bevelled down and out from face.
Context: In occupation material dating to ca. 250-300 AD. Period VII.
**Condition:** Completely worn and corroded. Nothing of the image remains. Preserved with original ring setting with partial band (separated in picture).

**Technique:** Mould made paste gem.

**Device:** The stone is too corroded to read any image. Identification is not possible.

**Publication Record:**

46. Small find 2835

16.5mm x 11mm x 2.5mm
Red Jasper
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface.

**Condition:** The edges of the gem have sustained some serious damage, most notably on the bottom portion where a crack has removed ca. 3mm of the stone. A small crack on the left side and a large chip on the right do not affect the image. The remaining surface is well preserved with few scratches or divots, except one large crack on the right side.

**Technique:** The incision is fairly deep throughout the image utilizing a wheeled drill. Details are simply rendered. The figure on the left is highly stylized, whereas the right is more realistic.

**Device:** A figure faces right striding on his toes. Ground line is present. The figure wears nothing, although, two markings on the torso may represent part of a garment. A wreath is worn on the head. The figure holds his left arm back carrying a *lagobolon*, and a *nebris* hung over the arm. A third attribute held down from the left hand is ambiguous. The right arm is held out in front of the figure holding something long and thin hanging down in front. The figure approaches something standing on the ground. It is highly stylized and ambiguous.

**Discussion:** The image has been interpreted by Henig as a sacro-idyllic scene of a satyr carrying a felled animal approaching a small rustic shrine (Henig 1985: 128-129). The attribute hanging in front of the figure could be understood as a stylized animal hanging dead, but a certain identification is not possible. The *lagobolon* projects up from the arm, presumably held in the hand and partially covered by a *nebris* hanging over his arm (compare cat. no. 35). Nothing of the figure’s legs seem goat-like or zoomorphic as one would expect for a satyr, except perhaps a slight elongation of the feet. This image may represent a huntsman striding forward carrying his recent kill. The second aspect of this scene is also problematic. The figure approaches what has been identified as a rustic shrine. This is not, however, in any way comparable to other examples of *aediculae* found on gemstones, especially in the area of Hadrian’s Wall. The other example from Vindolanda depicts a well rendered circular shrine with Tuscan columns standing on a pile of stones (cat. no 36), which also has an almost exact replica on a gem found at Corbridge (Henig 1978: 248, Plate XV, 493). This element does not appear to be architecturally realistic; the roof is uneven and unfinished and it stands on a precarious base. There does not seem to be a definite logical explanation for this feature that would...
complete the identification of the scene. It would be logical that a huntsman would approach a rustic shrine with a recent kill to give thanks for a successful hunt; however, the shrine does not seem in keeping with comparable finds from the area.

**Comparanda:** This exact composition has no comparisons currently known. The figure might be compared to hunting deities, but in different compositions. The small *aedicula* has no comparisons known.

**Publication Record:**

**47. Small find 5690**

15.5mm x 13mm x 3.25mm
Image face: 12mm x 10mm
Nicolo
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: In the ditch of period VII/VIII. 3rd century AD after 213.

**Condition:** A very large chip on the bottom right corner takes away ca. 4-6mm of the gem. Otherwise the stone is very well preserved. Minimal wear affects the surface and the image is clear.

**Technique:** Highly detailed image incised with a small drill and thin wheeled grooves. The tree is done with shallow incised lines, while the figures are detailed and fairly deep in their incision.

**Device:** A figure stands on the right facing to his right. Ground line is present. The figure wears a short tunic and has wings projecting from its back. His left arm is raised in front of him and holds a plain, straight staff which rests on the ground. The figure moves towards a quadruped, which stands facing right, but cranes his neck down and looks back at the figure. Something stands underneath the animal, possibly a small bird. On the left is a tree with a thick trunk and thin branches reaching back into the centre of the field. A large bird sits in the tree.

**Discussion:** This image is of Cupid hunting birds with canine companion. Beyond his popular role in the sphere of love, Cupid is also associated with mortality as a bringer of life after death, and in this guise is found often on sarcophagi (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 56). Cupids are further understood as the carriers of one’s soul to the underworld, represented by Cupid riding a dolphin, a scene which is found on many gemstones throughout the empire, with two representations at Vindolanda (cat. nos. 14 and 16). In other artistic media, Cupid is found filling many roles and in varied scenes, most often in mosaic pavements (Toynbee 1964: 243f).43 In this gem we find a typical representation of Cupid hunting birds, a scene which is found with some regularity throughout the empire (see also cat. no. 8). He is accompanied by his hunting dog, which already has fulfilled their task, as he has caught a bird that stands below him. Cupid hunting birds represents the fertility and prosperity brought about by the hunt, but may add the further idea of celebration as Cupid is also associated with Bacchus. This gem can then be included with others that

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43 For full treatment of Cupid in Roman art see, Stuveras 1969.
evoke the idea of abundance and wealth, the most popular genre of gems at Vindolanda, which hope for prosperity on the northern frontier.

**Comparanda:** Though this exact gem composition does not seem to be paralleled elsewhere stylistically, the similar scene with Cupid, dog and tree is found again at Vindolanda (cat. no. 8). The scene of Cupid hunting birds in a tree is fairly popular. See in Italy at Aquileia, Cupid with stick and tree (Sena Chiesa 1966: 170f. Tav. XVI, 301-303). From Aenona in Dalmatia with the inclusion of a bird cage on the ground (Middleton 1991: 62. no. 71). In Xanten Germany with stick and tree (Platz-Horster 1987: 65. Tafel 22, 119).

**Publication Record:**
None

**48. Small find 7336**

14mm x 9.5mm x 3mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with horizontal image. Slightly convex surface.
Context: Found in the praetorium site of stone fort II. Period VII-VIII. Late 3rd century into 4th

**Condition:** A very well preserved gem except for one chip on the upper right side. The surface is free from chips and scratching and retains a high gloss outside of the worked areas.

**Technique:** Wheeled grooves were utilized to form the simple and stylized tree. The figure is quite stylized with just the general idea being created with wheeled grooves for the detailing in the body. Basic rendering of details.

**Device:** A stag crouches on the ground with four legs represented curled underneath the body. Ground line is present. The animal reaches its head back and up, with its antlers then projecting backwards towards the edge of the gem. It holds its mouth open and tongue sticks out reaching for the branches of the tree which stands on the right side of the gem. The branches project back into the central field of the scene.

**Discussion:** This gem is stylized and simple, but follows a fairly common pattern of the stag sitting under a tree, and lifting its head up to reach the foliage (see cat. no. 31 for full discussion of stag iconography). The stag is thought to represent Silvanus, the hunter deity, as he is often depicted with the animal (for Silvanus see cat. no. 18). The stag has further meaning in the Celtic world in its connection to the prominence of hunting and its association with abundance and fecundity. Hunting is also connected to death, rebirth, and rejuvenation throughout antiquity, and particularly in the Celtic sphere (Webster 1986: 46). A successful hunt ensured sustenance and the continuation of a people. Deep allusions may or may not have been realized by the owner of this signet, but the easily recognizable symbol of a stag and its obvious connection to the hunt would probably have been understood.

**Comparanda:** Almost exact images in Britain, composition and stylistically, are from York and London (Henig 1978: 261. Plate XIX, 616 and 617). A very similar stag but without the tree is in Xanten (Platz-Horster 1994: 126f. Tafel 27, 147). In Amsterdam the same composition and style (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1986: 78. no. 151).
Publication Record: None

49. Small find 7585

16mm x 12.5mm x 2.5-3.5mm
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Surface is slightly convex.
Context: In a late level in the south end of stone fort II. Period VII. Late 3rd c. AD.

Condition: Fairly well preserved gem with almost the complete stone intact. Very small chips on the left side and on the bottom do not affect the image face. The surface has had some general wear, but remains highly polished in worked areas. Some discoloration on the back of the stone can be seen through the translucent carnelian.

Technique: This is a well carved piece with fine details. The incision is deepest in the body and the wings, utilized by both thick and thin wheeled grooves. The attributes are simple incised lines.

Device: A female figure stands facing front to three quarters and looks left. Ground line is present. She wears a long peplos to the ground and a crested helmet on her head, and wings project from her back. She holds her right leg up, resting her toe on the ground, supporting her weight on her left leg. Her right arm supports a staff which rests on the ground next to her, and her left arm extends out holding up corn ears or poppies.

Discussion: This image is a conflation of three Roman female deities. The helmet worn is associated with Minerva, while the wings protruding from the figure’s back are that of Victory. The conflation of these two identities is not surprising especially in a military setting. Minerva is an appropriate symbol of a strong, warlike soldier and the addition of Victory’s wings adds the further trait of success on the battlefield. The addition of an agricultural attribute further identifies the figure with Fortuna or Ceres, evoking the idea of abundance and fertility. Similar images are identified as Panheistic Fortuna (Henig 1978: 294f). One single characteristic in the composition does not suggest that the figure is specifically one deity over another, but a syncretism of three equally. In the provincial sphere, Toynbee discusses a relief sculpture depicting a native British goddess, Brigantia, from the area around York in a syncretized form with attributes of Minerva and the wings of Victory (Toynbee 1964: 174f). Holding the globe in her hand she is identified with Juno Caelestis, an eastern conception of the consort of Jupiter. The possibility that this particular image is an attempt to render such a local syncretized form is lessened by its existence in almost all the provinces and in peninsular Italy. All three characteristics portrayed are appropriate and current with other images found at Vindolanda, and may also have appealed to a provincial for its familiar symbols. Images of the warrior goddess and of Victory are appropriate at any time in a military setting, and the abundance evoked by Fortuna or Ceres was especially popular in the late second and third centuries.

Comparanda: An almost identical image is found in York, with the same attributes and the addition of a cornucopia held in the left hand (Henig 1978: 294f. Plate XXVII, App. 79). Less similar stylistically, but the same composition is found in London (Henig 1978: 305. Plate XXIX, App. 129). In Italy at least five images including helmet, wings, and corn ears, found at Aquileia (Sena Chiesa

Publication Record:
None

50. Small find 7816

13.5mm x 11.5mm x 4mm
Image face: 10.5mm x 9mm
Nicolo
Ovoid with horizontal image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: In period VII. Post AD 213.

Condition: Very well preserved. Only a small flat chip on the left side affects the stone. The surface is in very good condition with little wear. Image remains clear.

Technique: This gem shows a high level of craftsmanship in its carving and detail. A small rounded drill was utilized with many small wheeled grooves for the detail within the figures.

Device: An eagle stands in the centre of the field in profile facing right. No ground line present. The eagle has thick legs and long tail feathers. Its head is bent down with its beak touching the figure that it stands on. The body of the figure below rests on the bottom of the field with four small legs projecting and facing left. Its long tail wraps up around the left side of the gem face and ends at the top. Its tail is typical of a scorpion with the sections delineated and culminates in a point.

Discussion: The eagle is the most well represented bird on gemstones and in other artistic media in the Empire because of its symbolic connection to Rome. The eagle as a strong and dominant predator is emblematic of the power and domination of Rome. Power is expressed very specifically here with the eagle standing on its prey, holding its head down consuming its catch, a scorpion. This image is unique with the inclusion of the scorpion, as more often the eagle is represented devouring a hare or serpent. The eagle is well represented in Britain in the form of small scale sculpture in the round, found in all areas of the province (Toynbee 1964: 128f). Many gemstones are found with an eagle in the composition, often equated with Jupiter, standing at his feet or on his hand. In a military context the eagle is a very important symbol, as the most prominent standard of the Roman army. For any soldier to choose such an image as his signet, he shows loyalty to Rome and evokes the strength of the Empire and its military.

Comparanda: The eagle is certainly a popular image and can be found in every province of the empire and in peninsular Italy. The bird tearing at its prey is

44 The eagle was a common standard for all legions in addition to their own symbols. Webster 1994: 137f.
slightly less popular but can also be found with regular frequency (Sena Chiesa 1966: 384f. Tav. LXV, 1286-89; Henig and Whiting 1987: 34, no. 345; Krug 1981: 247. Tafel 128, 434). There is no known parallel to the eagle eating a scorpion.

**Publication Record:**
None

**51. Small find 7989**

13mm x 10mm x 3mm
Green glass
Ovoid with vertical image Convex surface.
Context: On the south side of the southern wall of stone fort II. 3rd century AD.

**Condition:** Gem is fairly worn with some breakdown to the glass. The entire oval is preserved. Divots mark the surface and affect the image slightly.

**Technique:** This is likely a mould-made piece given its material; however, the image is very deep and fairly detailed especially in the horns and beard.

**Device:** This image is a profile of a man’s head looking right. Just the top of the shoulder is present, possibly wearing a garment. The man wears a thick, full beard and has fairly well done features, with a very prominent nose. A modius rests on the top of the figure’s head and on the side a ram’s horn is present curling around itself.

**Discussion:** The ram’s horn readily identifies this image as Jupiter Ammon, the Roman conflation of Jupiter and the Egyptian Ammon. In the Egyptian sphere, Ammon was represented with the head of a ram and ruled over fertility, safeguarding the continuity of life (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 7). The modius worn on his head further identifies the deity with the Egyptian Serapis, god of the underworld, the sky, and of healing, who was adopted in the Hellenistic period by Ptolemy to symbolize his power and rule (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 202f). In this guise we are reminded of the engraved gem above that also included the rays of Helios and attributes of Poseidon and Aesculapius (cat. no. 41). The syncretism of Jupiter with both Serapis and Ammon suggests an owner of eastern or North African origin or belief system. The ram’s horn reminds one of Cernunnos, the Celtic horned deity of fertility and abundance (Adkins and Adkins 1996: 45). Cernunnos was often associated with Jupiter in the Roman sphere, and the horns would have been an easily recognizable symbol to someone of Celtic origin. All of the possible deities represented project a sense of power and dominance, a logical signet to find in a military context.

**Comparanda:** A very fine Jupiter Ammon head comes from York, but differs stylistically (Henig 1978: 228. Plate XII, 352). In Germany, two gems in Cologne incorporate the horns of Ammon but no possibility of modius (Krug 1981: 209. Tafel 94, 190; 211. Tafel 96, 197).

**Publication Record:**
None

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45 For relevance of classical symbols in the Celtic world see Henig 1997: 23-4.
52. Small find 8123

12.5mm x 9mm x 2.5mm
Red Jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Context: In the vicus associated with stone fort II. Period VII. 3rd c., after AD 213.

Condition: A large chip on the right side has removed part of the gem and affects the image on one side. Otherwise the gem is well preserved and intact. The surface shows minimal wear and remains polished.

Technique: Image was cut with thick and thin wheeled grooves throughout. Fairly shallow and simply rendered image.

Device: A male figure stands facing to his right. No ground line present. He supports his weight on the left leg while the right leg is bent and the foot is behind in a striding position. The chip obscures the left side, but possibly a chlamys falls behind the figure and he wears a wreath on his head. Both arms are extended front, the left held up and out holding an offering plate and the right is held down and out holding a bundle of corn ears.

Discussion: This image is a typical representation of Bonus Eventus, the bringer of good things and outcomes (see also cat. no. 22, 61 and possibly 42). He is always represented carrying plentiful offerings, usually ears of grain and an offering plate, as is present in this image (see cat. no. 22 for full discussion of Bonus Eventus symbolism). This image is one of many gems at Vindolanda that make up a group that evoke the idea of prosperity and fecundity, also represented by gems depicting Ceres, Fortuna, and those with general agricultural symbols. The number of this type of image at Vindolanda can probably be understood as the appeal to wear a signet that reflects one's own personal interests. This particular gem probably came from the same workshop as another in the assemblage (cat. no. 61). They both display almost identical images on very similar stones and are the only two that can confidently be ascribed to the same maker.

Comparanda: This composition type with ears of corn and patera held in front and striding is less ubiquitous than the more familiar frontal pose (see cat. no. 22). An almost identical image was found at Vindolanda, clearly from the same workshop (cat. no. 61). For similar stylistic and compositional images in Britain compare a gem from Newstead (Henig 1978: 300. Plate XXVIII, 113). From Caerelon an almost identical figure, possibly the same workshop, but with tree added in the composition (Zienkiewicz 1986: 130-31. Plate VII no.14). In Italy, from Aquileia similar gems have attributes that vary between grapes, branch, patera, and corn ears (Sena Chiesa 1966: 537f. Tav. XXVII, 537f).

Publication Record:
A. Birley, Vindolanda Research Report 2003: The Excavations of 2001-2002, Volume I. (Bardon Mill 2003) 74. 203, Fig. 129.46

46 An error on page 74 misidentifies SF 8123 as Mercury. It should read Bonus Eventus.
53. Small find 8257

15 mm x 11.5 mm x 3.5 mm
Nicolo
Context: Underneath the late flags south of the bathhouse buttress. Period VII. 3rd century.

Condition: Very well preserved stone without any chips or cracks. The surface has minimal wear. Image is clear.

Technique: Image is fairly deep but has little detail. Utilized small wheeled drills.

Device: A male figure stands facing front. Ground line is present. The figure leans with his right hand on a pillar. His right leg is crossed over the left and toe rests on the ground. There is no discernable detail in the face or body except for wings protruding from the figure’s back.

Discussion: The image of a male deity leaning on a pillar is most often connected with Apollo (Vollenweider 1984: 251f); however, here we have none of the usual attributes of Apollo and wings suggesting this is Cupid. Cupid is well represented in the Vindolanda collection (see cat. nos. 8, 14, 16, 47, 60) but this particular composition stands alone. See above catalogue entries for full discussion of Cupid.

Comparanda: A good parallel is from Gaul also in nicolo and dating to the same period (Guiraud 1988: 128, Pl. XXIV, no. 375A). Compare a red jasper (Zwierlein-Diehl 1979: 182, no. 1357. Tafel 127).

Publication Record:

54. Small find 9064

14.5 mm x 12 mm x 3.5 mm
Black glass
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface. Bevelled down from face.
Context: In a building in period VII. Post AD 213.

Condition: A very well preserved gemstone with no chips or scratches. The image retains a very high gloss. Little wear has affected the surface.

Technique: The very detailed head and face shows a high degree of craftsmanship unlike any other gem found at Vindolanda.

Device: The bust of a male figure looks to his right. The figure is wreathed with two small leaves projecting from the top of the head. He wears a thick, curled beard and has a similar curled head of hair. The features of the face are very realistically rendered, anatomically correct with no stylization. The wide eyes are the most prominent feature of the face.

Discussion: This image is the only gem found at Vindolanda that may depict a portrait of an historical figure rather than a divinity. The depiction does not contain any attributes that could aid in a positive identification of the person, except that the
laurel wreath worn suggests an emperor. Its associated context, found in a building of period VII and dating to after AD 213, suggests a possible connection to the Severan or Antonine families. The most discerning portrait-like features on this gem are the broad eyes and the tightly curled hair and beard, both of which are consistent with portraits of the late Antonines or Severans. A gemstone of Septimius Severus found at Vindolanda could perhaps be due to his benevolence toward the army, seen in the pay raise he issued soldiers and reforms he carried out to allow marriage while in service. It is also possible that this gem simply depicts Jupiter wreathed and bearded or a non-imperial man imitating popular imperial features of the time. Without more telling attributes a definite identification cannot be known. Similar male busts on gems are variously identified as Lucius Verus, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus or simply as a bearded male.

**Comparanda:** Portraiture is a very popular theme on gemstones, but the hardest to identify with certainty. None of the portrait gems from Britain resemble the Vindolanda gem. A gem from Xanten, similar in the curly hair, beard, and wreath is identified as Septimius Severus (Platz-Horster 1994: 235f. Tafel 78, 398). Also compare a gem identified as Commodus in Munich (Zazoff 1983: 342, no. 281. Tafel 109, no. 8), and two in Paris (Richter 1971: 115, nos. 564-65). For portrait gems in general in the Republican period see Vollenwieder 1972; and for the Imperial period see Furtwängler 1964: 229f; and Vollenweider 1976-79: 216f. Planche 67-81; for both periods see Richter 1971: 91f.

**Publication Record:**

**55. No small find no. – Henig 29**

10.5mm x 8mm x 2.5mm (fragment)
Carnelian
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.
Bevelled down from face.
Context: In the *vicus*. Period VII. 3rd century.

**Condition:** Other than a large break removing a quarter of the stone at the bottom the gem is well preserved. The image is fairly shallow naturally and has not seen much wear. The surface retains a high gloss.

**Technique:** The image is very small and basic, although shows a fair amount of detail. Rendering with short wheeled grooves. Fairly shallow throughout the image.

**Device:** A small figure striding to the right looking right. The bottom half is missing therefore no ground line is present. The figure wears something on the head, but the diminutive size is difficult to discern details. The figure holds a spear in the left arm which is then held across the body. No other details are definitely identifiable.

**Discussion:** This image is of Mars *Gradivus* in a pose well represented on gemstones throughout the empire. Mars fulfils similar wishes for the owner as Minerva does, as both deities are often found in similar poses and identified with...
the military. Mars is a common and easily understood image to find at a Roman fort. It is surprising that there is not, as of yet, more gemstones found at Vindolanda depicting either Mars or Minerva, given the military nature of the site. Mars, the god of war, ensured strength and power to the soldier, who often would not have known any other life except a military one (see cat. no. 21 for full discussion of Mars iconography).

Comparanda: Mars is very popular on gemstones, especially in military zones. He is depicted in various ways, but we find him in this stance with the spear coming across the body and with a sense of motion forward. See gems from Britain in Somerset, Hertfordshire and Staffordshire (Henig 1978: 194f. Plate III, 70 and 72; 293, Plate XXVI, 71). In Köln a carnelian with spear and trophy (Krug 1981: 194. Tafel 82, 108). In Amsterdam two of the same composition (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1986: 45f. no. 92; 62. no. 122). Many examples from Gaul (Guiraud 1988: 100f. Pl. IX, nos. 125-131). From Bulgaria’s Pazardjik region, a very similar carnelian (Ruseva-Slokoska 1991: 189, cat.no. 240). In New York Metropolitan (Richter 1956: 72, no. 295. Plate XLI).

Publication Record:

56. No Small find no. – Henig App. 11

![Image](Image1)

Opaque blue glass
Context: In the vicus. Period VII. 3rd century.

This intaglio is only recorded in Henig’s *Corpus* (1978) Plate XXIV, 11. Otherwise missing from the assemblage. Male figure walks with arms outstretched and an unidentifiable object in each hand.

57. No small find no. – Henig App. 132

![Image](Image2)

(No Image Available)

13mm x 10mm x 2mm
Nicolo paste
Context: In the vicus, site XXIXB. Period VII. ca. AD 270.

The gem is only recorded in Henig’s *Corpus* (1978), page 304. There is no image in this volume. Reported to depict Venus Victrix standing right resting her left arm on a column. The attributes are both questionable, but possibly a helmet is in her right hand and shield rests at her feet.

58. No small find no. – Bidwell XXIX

![Image](Image3)

12mm x 8mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image.
Context: In building over the east rampart. ca.223-5. Period VII/VIII.

This intaglio is only recorded in Bidwell (1985: 128f). Otherwise missing from
assemblage. Preserved in an iron ring, the gem depicts a nude male standing in profile looking to his right. One leg takes his weight, while the other leg is bent and hangs back. He holds a sword in front of his body. Reportedly represents Theseus.

**Unstratified/Unknown**

**59. Small find 1430**

Large fragment: 11.5mm x 6.5mm x 3mm
Small fragment: 7.5mm x 7mm x 3mm
Carnelian

Very fragmentary intaglio with no discernable image. It has no publication record.

**60. No small find no. – Bidwell XXXII**

13mm x 11mm x 2.5mm
Nicolo paste
Ovoid with vertical image.

**61. Small find 9770**

13mm x 10mm x 3mm
Red jasper
Ovoid with vertical image. Flat surface.

**Condition:** Well preserved gem with only slight chipping on the edge. Surface is in perfect condition and retains a high gloss in worked areas.

**Technique:** Image was cut with thick and thin wheeled grooves in the limbs, body, and attributes. Fairly shallow throughout and simply rendered image.

**Device:** A male figure stands facing right. He supports his weight on the left leg while the right leg is bent and the foot is behind in a striding position. A chlamys falls off of the shoulders and behind the figure and he wears a wreath on his head. Both arms are extended front, the left held up and out with a full patera and the right is held down and out holding a bundle of corn ears.
**Discussion:** This image is an almost exact match of another found at Vindolanda (cat. no. 52). The same red jasper, the details of the facial features, attributes, and the stance suggest that they have come from the same workshop. Their crudely cut character with only basic representation of attributes and facial features coupled with their similarity in composition and style suggests production on a large scale in the same workshop and perhaps brought to the fort by the same trader. See cat. nos. 22 and 52 for full discussion of Bonus Eventus and signets of abundance and prosperity.

**Comparanda:** This composition type, with ears of corn and *patera* held in front while striding, is less ubiquitous than the more familiar frontal pose. For similar stylistic and compositional images in Britain compare an identical gem also from Vindolanda almost certainly from the same workshop (cat. no. 52) and a gem from Newstead (Henig 1978: 300. Plate XXVIII, 113). Both composition types are found in the Snettisham jeweller’s hoard (Johns 1997: 85f. no. 112). In Italy, from Aquileia similar gems with variable attributes; grapes, branch, *patera*, and corn ears (Sena Chiesa 1966: 537f. Tav. XXVII, 537ff).

**Publication Record:**
THE FINGER RINGS

By Elizabeth Greene

The collection of finger rings is an obvious companion to the intaglios, as many of the silver and iron rings would have originally held an engraved gemstone in their bezel and would have been worn as a personal signet. Today only a few rings in the collection preserve their original gemstone setting completely, demonstrating their intended appearance in antiquity. In addition to the signet type finger ring, there was also a highly artistic trend of jewellery crafting in Roman Britain, found particularly with finger rings, which continued throughout the fourth century. Finger rings were certainly important pieces of personal decoration and markers of status and high fashion, and burial contexts in Roman Britain show that they were not only worn above the first knuckle in the modern manner, but sometimes with three rings on a single finger. The importance of personal adornment and fashion was also seen in the shifting trends of intaglio craft, towards the use of gems that were visible and striking on their own rather than only as a seal impression. Rings were as modest as a plain undecorated band, or quite ostentatious with rich incised decoration and inscriptions.

The Vindolanda assemblage includes a few rings that must have been considered high status symbols. Gold jewellery of any kind is quite rare in the fort and vicus, but there are a few rings of gold with plain paste settings that reflect the wealth of the owner. Primarily the assemblage reflects the auxiliary status of those living at the fort with an abundance of iron rings and very few of precious metals. Many are simple items that were probably able to be bought by the poorer classes. Metal rings were made of iron, bronze, silver, and gold, but some of the more intricately incised pieces are crafted from jet, a material that became popular and fashionable towards the end of the second century. Inferior materials could also be used, such as shale or bone, but are found far more rarely than metals, and glass rings were also a popular alternative to more expensive materials. In short, the assemblage represents the more affordable finger rings worn by a modest class of people in Roman-British society.

Finger rings were worn throughout the Roman period in Britain, but the third century saw a sharp rise in usage at Vindolanda. More of the third century contexts have been excavated on the site, but as was also found with the intaglio assemblage, the dramatic peak in recovery from these contexts suggests many more people owned and lost finger rings in period VII. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the percentage of the assemblage that was lost in each occupation period on the site.

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49 There are a number of rings in the Vindolanda assemblage that are intact and were used purely for decorative purposes and not as a signet or seal. The assemblage has two finger rings that display a well preserved ring and cut gemstone demonstrating its use in antiquity as a signet (Finger ring cat. nos. 7 and 29; Intaglio cat. nos. 3 and 27). Two further rings are badly corroded but have preserved nicolo paste gems and some of the rings in which they were originally set (Ring cat. nos. 57 and 58; Intaglio cat. nos. 44 and 45). A few intaglios still adhere to a minimal amount of their original ring setting but not enough remains to provide analysis.
Ring loss in periods I-VIII, ca. AD 85-4th century

Fig. 3.1 Distribution of finger ring losses in periods I-VIII

The rising trend is parallel to the intaglio evidence, which also shows a dramatic peak of ownership in period VII, partially because of the natural relationship between some rings and intaglios, but probably also because of a general rise in ownership of items of personal adornment. Whether this growing ability to purchase luxury items was due to a general increase in wealth or a decrease in the quality and price of these items cannot be determined now; however, it is worth noting that military personnel were given their first pay rise in nearly one hundred years by Septimius Severus, just prior to the proliferation of luxury items on site. Perhaps in this period the auxiliary soldier and his family were experiencing greater wealth and stability and were advertising their abundance with personal adornment.

The catalogue that follows gives all the pertinent information concerning each ring in the assemblage, including its Vindolanda small find number, dimensions, physical description, and the context of its deposition and recovery. Only the best examples are pictured and they can be found in the figures at the end of the chapter. All useful views are pictured with the profile, side
and bezel area enlarged for better viewing. Each entry includes a type number of finger ring corresponding to figure 3.4.

Comparanda for each item is included in the discussion where possible; however, rings from archaeological sites are not often researched or published and are hard to access for comparable pieces. For rings from the Rhineland the major work by Henkel, published in 1913, remains the definitive work and most accessible for comparable artefacts, while individual site reports that include small finds are needed to access most of the British and western provincial finds. Catalogues of museum collections are available, but have the same problem as gemstones - they often have no known provenance or archaeological record of the find.

CATALOGUE

PERIOD I, ca. AD 85-90

1. SF 4700
Max. Inner Diam.: 18mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 23mm
Max. Depth: 2.5mm
Description: Type I; Iron; gemstone missing from the setting. The band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. In fair condition with wear in the setting and corroded edges.

PERIOD II/III, ca. AD 90-105

2. SF 4103
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 16.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 18.5mm
Max. Depth: 5mm
Description: Type I variant. Gold; band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. A partial orange paste gem with no incised image and slightly corroded, remains in the setting. The band is in good condition except for a small break at the bottom.
Context: Military occupation of period II. Ca. AD 90-97.

3. SF 4216
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 18mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 23mm
Max. Depth: 9mm
Setting dimensions: 8mm x 10.5mm
Description: Type II; Silver; large ring with inscribed circular bezel flanked by triangular shoulders. The shoulders are broadest near the bezel and taper to a point connected to the rest of the band. In profile the ring appears hexagonal. The inscription on the bezel reads MA/TRIBU/PARC, probably for Matribu(s) Parc(is), ‘To the Mothers the Fates’ (Tomlin and Hassall 1998: 440). In perfect condition with minimal wear.
Context: Military. Found in the south gate of period III fort to the north-east.

4. SF 6324
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 18mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 22mm
Max. Depth: 13.5mm
Description: Type II; Silver; large ring with inscribed circular bezel flanked by triangular shoulders. The shoulders are broadest near the bezel and taper to a point connected to the rest of the band. In profile the ring appears hexagonal. The inscription on the bezel reads MA/TRIBU/PARC, probably for Matribu(s) Parc(is), ‘To the Mothers the Fates’ (Tomlin and Hassall 1998: 440). In perfect condition with minimal wear.
Context: Military. Found in the south gate of period III fort to the north-east.

5. SF 8310
Max. Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 24.5mm
Max. Depth: 10mm
Description: Type I; Iron; ring with only one eighth of its original setting preserved (see
intaglio cat. no. 2, this volume). The band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. Complete but with corrosion on the surface and some breakdown around the bezel.
Context: V01-26A. In demolition layers of period II/III.

6. SF 8494
Max. Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 25mm
Max. Depth: 3.5mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Well preserved with little wear or corrosion.
Context: V01-45A. Military context of period II (possibly III). AD 90-105.

7. SF 8650
Max. Inner Diam.: 22mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 28mm
Max. Depth: 9mm
Description: Type I; Silver; band tapers uniformly from the bezel down the shoulders. Complete agate intaglio remains in the setting (see intaglio cat.no. 3, this volume). In perfect condition except for predepositional wear on underside of bezel and minimal surface discoloration.
Context: Military building in the period II fort.

8. SF 8616
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 17mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick hoop band with no decoration or incision. Equal width throughout. It is well preserved with little corrosion.
Context: V02-19A. Building remains of period II/III, below rooms 1 and 2 of period IV.

PERIOD IV, ca. AD 105-120

9. SF 3461
Fig. 3.2

Max. Inner Diam.: 20mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 24mm
Max. Depth: 11mm
Description: Type I; Iron; ring with setting missing from the bezel. Band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. No incision or decoration. Completely preserved but with rust affecting the surface.
Context: Period IV military fort building, below site LXXVI.

10. SF 4167
Max. Inner Diam.: 20.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 22mm
Max. preserved Depth: 7.5mm
Description: Type IX; Bronze; simple flat, broad band hammered thin, with no decoration or incision on the surface. Complete but the edges and surface have corroded severely.
Context: Below site LXXIIIE, XIVN. Period IV, military context. AD 105-120.

11. SF 5570
Max. Inner Diam.: 15.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 17mm
Max. Depth: 5mm
Description: Type I variant. Gold; ring with blue-green paste gem preserved in setting. Band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. Surface is slightly discoloured and a break in the band has misshapen the ring.
Context: Above the opus signinum of the so-called palatial building. Military. AD 120-130.

12. SF 6460
Max. Inner Diam.: 17mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 24mm
Max. Depth: 3-4mm
Description: Type I; Iron; ring missing setting from the bezel. Band tapers uniformly from shoulders to bottom. Intaglio was intact (see intaglio cat. no. 7, this volume) but is now separated. In good condition except rusted surface.
Context: Military buildings of period IV. AD 105-120.

13. SF 8818
Max. Inner Diam.: 11mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 15.5mm
Max. Depth: 2mm
Description: Type IV variant. Bone; thin, simple hoop ring with no incision or decoration. The band is of a uniform width. Only one-third of the ring is preserved.
Context: V02-32A, military. Structures of period IV, on the edge of a period VIB ditch.

14. SF 9073
Max. Inner Diam.: 12mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 13.5mm
Max. Depth: 6.5mm
Description: Type I; Bronze; ring with missing setting from the bezel. Band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. The bezel is split and the band has been misshapen but surface is well preserved.
Context: V03-17A, military. Period IV structures, AD 105-120.

15. SF 9095
Max. Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 19.5mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Equal width throughout. Complete but with pitted surface and corrosion.
Context: V03-15A. Military building of period IV (possibly V). AD 105-130.

16. SF 9750
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 21mm
Max. Depth: 2.5mm
Description: Type III variant; Silver; simple, thick band hoop ring. The surface has been corrupted, but it is possible that the ring was originally in imitation of a serpent. The surface may have had scales incised and corrosion at the ends obscures what could have been a small serpent head. Breakdown is too extensive for positive identification.
Context: V04-32A. Military buildings of period IV (possibly V). AD 105-130.

PERIOD V, ca. AD 120-130

17. SF 3783
Max. Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 25mm
Max. Depth: 9.5mm
Description: Type I; Iron; ring with setting missing from the bezel. Band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. The ring is complete but rusting has affected the entire surface.
Context: In the floor of military fabrica of period V, below site LXXVB. Military. AD 120-130.

18. SF 5413
Max. Inner Diam.: 17.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 18.5mm
Max. Depth: 1.5mm
Description: Type IV; Gold; thin, simple hoop with no incision or decoration. It is in fine condition except for a break in the band, otherwise complete.
Context: In late levels of period V, nearer to AD 130. Military.

19. SF 6245
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 20mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 25mm
Max. Depth: 9mm
Description: Type I; Silver; ring with glass paste gemstone preserved in setting. The band tapers uniformly from the bezel down the shoulders. Ring is complete and well preserved with minimal breakdown of the metal surface.
Context: Within the demolition of period a V level. Military, AD 120-130.

20. SF 6537
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 5.5mm
Description: Type V; Silver; ring with incised bezel where gemstone inset is typically found. The band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. The ring is well preserved with minimal surface wear. The inscribed bezel surface shows a sheaf of
wheat, suggesting an agricultural symbol or one of prosperity and fertility, which is a very similar theme to many of the devices found on Vindolanda intaglios (see intaglio cat.nos. 11, 22, 24, this volume). The incised bezel would probably have acted much the way an a set intaglio would, either used as a sealing device or to associate oneself with the theme of the image.

Context: Military levels of period V. AD 120-130.

21. SF 7970
Max. Inner Diam.: 17.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 21mm
Max. Depth: 2mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; basic hoop ring with no incision or decoration and uniform size throughout. In poor condition with one quarter missing and corrosion on the surface.
Context: Found in a military/civilian context of period V.

22. SF 9563
Max. Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Complete but corroded and bent.

23. SF 9718
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 21mm
Max. Depth: 2mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; basic hoop finger ring with no incision or decoration and uniform size throughout. In very poor condition with corroded and pitted surface.
Context: V04B-35. Period V. AD 120-130. Found on the later level fabrica floor.

PERIOD VI, ca. AD 140-160

24. SF 3291
Max. Inner Diam.: 18.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 21mm
Max. Depth: 4mm
Description: Type VI; Bronze; simple banded ring, but with the band overlapped where bezel typically is found, presumably for decoration. No incision or decoration on surface. The ring is well preserved with minimal wear.
Context: In the residue build-up above the final pre-Hadrianic occupation layer, with period VI buildings over. Military, post AD 130.

25. SF 4032
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 20mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 25mm
Max. Depth: 8mm
Description: Type I; with added sizer. Iron; ring with setting missing from bezel. The band tapers uniformly from shoulders to the bottom. A spiral of bronze has been added to the bottom of the band, presumably to give the ring a tighter fit, in a similar fashion as is done today. There is no incision or decoration. The ring is in good condition with some corrosion to the edges of the setting and the surface is rusted.
Context: Below site LXXIII, period VI. Military/civilian occupation layer.

26. SF 5766
Max. Inner Diam.: 18mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 20mm
Max. Depth: 2.5mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with uniform size throughout. No incision or decoration. Very well preserved.

27. SF 8300
Max. Inner Diam.: 15.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 20mm
Max. Depth: 2.5mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Equal width throughout. Complete but surface is corroded.
Context: Military levels of period VI.

28. SF 9643
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 21mm
Max. Depth: 3.5mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; plain band finger ring with no incision or decoration. Only half of the ring remains with bronze corrosion throughout.

PERIOD VIA, ca. AD 160-200

29. SF 6155
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 16.5mm
Max. Depth: .75mm
Description: Unusual form; Bronze; finger ring with simple, thin band and highly decorated bezel area. The band is thin with no decoration or incision. Bezel area has three bronze circles separated by two perpendicular bars. There were probably gem insets which have not survived. The ring is in fair condition with surface corrosion and cracks in the decorated area.
Context: Period VIA military context.

30. SF 18
Fig. 3.2
Max. Inner Diam.: 20mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 23mm
Max. Depth: 8mm
Description: Type VIII; Gold and ivory; cameo ring with large setting on broad shoulders. The bottom portion of the band is simple, rising up to highly decorated and large shoulders with perpendicular indentations. Above the shoulders, a large setting is first built up by rings of gold, decorated with indentations, and culminates in a large set ivory cameo depicting Medusa. This is a very typical ring type found in many sites in Roman Britain and elsewhere in the empire. The ring exemplifies the ostentatious level to which personal adornment reached in the third and fourth centuries and exemplifies the potential wealth found even in an auxiliary military setting. Comparanda: Henig (1978) numbers 725-731.
Context: In the area of a destroyed partition wall of the period VIB commander’s residence. Early third century.

31. SF 127
Fig. 3.3
Max. Inner Diam.: 14mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 16mm
Max. Depth: 8mm
Description: Type IX; Gold; ring with a wide band of thinly hammered metal. Two settings are attached to the flat bezel of the ring with thin gold walls in a hexagonal shape and inset with a carnelian stone (6 x 7mm), faceted with six sides and a flat surface. The six edges are cut in intaglio as, AN/IM/A/M/E/A, meaning ‘My soul’ or ‘My darling’. The upper flat surface has a small image of a hatched cross engraved. A similar ring reported from Nijmegen (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1986: 50-1) with the inscription S/IV/IS/V/IV/AM, and other comparable examples suggest this ring-type often represented a love token.
Context: South end of floor in rubbish deposit, below supports of the floor. Period VIB. Military/civilian context.

33. SF 409a, 409b, 409c
Fragment a
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 11mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 13mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Fragment b
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 18mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Fragment c
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; fragments of more than one simple hoop finger ring. The pieces were found together, but based on circumference size they must belong to at least two different rings. There is no incision or decoration on any fragments. All three are less than half preserved with surface corrosion throughout.

34. SF 8655
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 17mm
Max. Depth: 1.75mm
Description: Type IV; Bronze; simple, thin hoop band with no incision or decoration. Equal width throughout. Well preserved with little corrosion.
Context: V02-16A. Severan fort ditch to the south of the rampart. Military/civilian context of period VIB.

35. SF 8705
Max. Inner Diam.: 14mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 9mm
Description: Type XV; Jet; ring with raised, ovoid bezel with a polished surface and no decoration or incision. The shoulders are lowered ca. 3mm below the bezel of the ring and taper uniformly down the band. The band remains relatively thick throughout. The ring is only half preserved, but surviving portion is in good condition.

36. SF 9756
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 20mm
Max. Depth: 4mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple hoop band finger ring with no incision or decoration. Equal width throughout. The ring is complete but with extensive surface corrosion.
Context: V04-42A. Military building of period VIB.

37. SF 9759
Fig. 3.3
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 25mm
Max. Depth: 9mm
Description: Type X; Glass; large yellow ring with thick shoulders and bezel. The band tapers uniformly to the bottom, remaining rather thick throughout. There is no incision or decoration on the surface, but the yellow glass gives a decorative aspect. Only half of the ring is preserved.
Context: V04-62A. In a period VIB ditch. Military/civilian context.

PERIOD VII, ca. 213-300

38. SF 16
Fig. 3.3
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 17mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 26mm
Max. Depth: 17mm
Description: Type XI; Jet; ring with large, plain and decorated shoulders. The raised, flat bezel carries no patterned decoration, but RIB (1991: 32, no 2422.79) reports a man’s name scratched on the surface as...
reading: GATNI | US, either meaning G(aius) At(i)nius or for Catinius. The bezel is separated from the wide shoulders by a band of indentation. The shoulders remain broad even towards the bottom of the preserved portion and are incised with several vertical striations. The ring is only half preserved, with one shoulder and three-quarters of the bezel. Some scratching has affected the surface, but otherwise the preserved portion is in good condition.

Context: Floor of the third-century bathhouse lobby. Period VII.
Publication record: Britannia ii (1971) 301, no. 73; Collingwood and Wright (1991) 32, no. 2422.79.

39. SF 299
Max. Inner Diam.: 14mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 11.5mm
Description: Type I; Iron; ring with original carnelian setting preserved (see intaglio catalogue, no. 27, this volume). Band tapers uniformly from bezel down shoulders. The ring is almost entirely complete; only a small portion of the band is missing. Well preserved with minimal wear to surface.
Context: Level above the Severan commander’s courtyard. 3rd century civilian context.

40. SF 443
Fig. 3.3
Max. Inner Diam.: 18.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 22.5mm
Max. Depth: 8mm
Description: Type VII; Silver; ring with wide band and inscribed flat bezel. In profile the band is hexagonal. The bezel is rectangular with a hatched decorative border and the letters M E R inscribed across the centre, evoking the worship or desired association with the merchant deity Mercury (for Mercury iconography see intaglio catalogue, no. 25, this volume). The shoulders of the ring taper uniformly and are undecorated. The ring is well preserved with only minimal surface wear.
Context: In the late flags south-west of the bathhouse. Military/civilian context of period VII.
Comparanda: Collingwood and Wright (1991) 22, no. 2422.30, with more rounded bezel and MER inscription; Augsburg Roman Museum, on display with rounded bezel and MER inscription.
Publication record: Wright and Hassal, Britannia iii (1972) 360, no 47; Birley (1977) plate VIII; Henig (1975) 20-1, plate VIII.

41. SF 456
Max. Inner Diam.: 18.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 24mm
Max. Depth: 11mm
Description: Type I; Iron; ring with glass paste setting preserved. The band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. A paste gemstone is preserved but corroded in the setting and cracked across the top. Just over half of the band is preserved with severe corrosion and rusting to the surface.
Context: In the floor of site XXVc. Period VII civilian context.

42. SF 519
Fragment a
Max. Inner Diam.: n/a
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a
Max. Depth: 2mm
Fragment b
Max. Inner Diam.: 14mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 16mm
Max. Depth: 2mm
Description: Type IV; Silver; two fragments of a thin band ring. No incision or decoration on a simple, thin band. Poorly preserved in two pieces with some surface wear.
Context: In an unstratified layer to the south of site XI. Probably period VII civilian.

43. SF 570
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 14mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 20mm
Max. Depth: 4mm
Description: Type III; Jet; simple, thick band ring with no incision or decoration. The inner side is flat and the outer surface is
rounded. A small incised line at one end might suggest some decoration but the ring is too fragmentary to assess. Under half preserved with some wear to the surface. Context: In site XXXIII, civilian context.

**44. SF 680**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 17mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 20mm  
Max. Depth: 1.5mm  
Description: Type IV; Silver; simple, thin band ring with no incision or decoration. Well preserved with minimal wear on surface.  
Context: In an unstratified context above XXXIVb. Probably from period VII civilian context.

**45. SF 741**  
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 16mm  
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 20mm  
Max. Depth: 4.5mm  
Description: Type III; Silver; simple, thick hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Poorly preserved fragment with corrosion on surface.  
Context: In an unstratified layer above XXXI. Probably from period VII civilian context.

**46. SF 1223**  
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 17mm  
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 18mm  
Max. Depth: 9mm  
Description: Type XII; Bronze and nicolo paste; small band ring with raised setting of preserved paste gemstone (intaglio cat.no. 37, this volume). The shoulders are thin and taper slightly toward the bottom of the band. In very poor condition, only half preserved and corrosion throughout.  

**47. SF 1692**  
Fig. 3.3  
Max. Inner Diam.: 17mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 20mm  
Max. Depth: 2mm  
Description: Type XIII; Silver; simple band ring with flat sides in an octagonal shape. No incision or decoration on the surface, but the shape gives a decorative aspect. This is a common type of finger ring and has been found on many sites in Britain and elsewhere in the empire. In perfect condition with minimal wear.  
Context: Period VII civilian context.

**48. SF 1709**  
Max. Inner Diam.: n/a  
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a  
Max. Depth: 4mm  
Description: Jet; small fragment of a decorated ring not large enough to determine full description. The remaining portion is highly decorated with raised bumps and incised patterns on the surface. Less than a quarter is preserved.  
Context: Period VII civilian context.

**49. SF 1854**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 21mm  
Max. Depth: 5mm  
Description: Type XIV; Bronze; wide hoop banded ring with highly decorative bezel. The band is a simple, thick, rounded hoop of equal width throughout. The bezel has a large circular metal disc surmounted by a smaller disc, which culminates in a rounded point. It is well preserved except for a small chip in the bezel.  
Context: In period VII civilian context.

**50. SF 1865**  
Max. Inner Diam.: n/a  
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a  
Max. Depth: 19.5mm  
Description: Silver; fragment of a ring only preserving the large bezel without the band. The bezel rests flat on the finger and extends toward the knuckle with a highly decorative surface and culminating in a double heart-shaped top. It has shapes cut out of the metal and decorative patterns incised on the surface. Remaining portion is well preserved with minimal surface wear.  
Context: East of the bathhouse wall in a period VII civilian context.
51. SF 1995
Max. Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 21mm
Max. Depth: 3mm
Description: Type III; Silver; simple, thick band ring with no incision or decoration. It is complete but poorly preserved with surface corrosion.
Context: In a period VII civilian context.

52. SF 2119
Max. Inner Diam.: n/a
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a
Max. Depth: 5.5mm
Description: Jet; fragment only of the bezel and shoulder of ring. The bezel is an elongated oval, with a highly polished flat surface and no decoration or incision. It is impossible to assess the band type. Preserved portion has a scratched and worn surface.
Context: Beneath the west wall of LXXXIV. Late civilian context of period VII. Ca. AD 280-300.

53. SF 2162
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 13mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 5mm
Description: Jet; fragment of a simple ring with flat bezel and tapering shoulder. The bezel has been split down the middle and only half remains. An incised line runs across the bezel and down the band, ending just below the shoulder. Piece is too fragmentary and poorly preserved for further description.
Context: Period VII civilian context.

54. SF 2226
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 18mm
Max. Depth: 6.5mm
Description: Type I variant; Bronze; small ring with setting missing from bezel. Band tapers uniformly from bezel down shoulders. It is complete but poorly preserved with pitted and cracked surface.
Context: Period VII civilian context.

55. SF 2279
Max. Inner Diam.: 12mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 14.5mm
Max. Depth: 4mm
Description: Type I variant; Bronze and glass paste; small finger ring with plain blue glass paste setting preserved in bezel. Band tapers uniformly from bezel down the shoulders. Complete but corrosion affects the surface.
Context: In the military latrine of period VII fort (possibly period VIII level). Late third-early 4th century.

56. SF 2621
Fig. 3.3
Max. Inner Diam.: 15mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 20mm
Max. Depth: 5mm
Description: Type XV; Jet; ring with raised bezel and decorative shoulders. The bezel is an oval with pointed ends and is raised above the shoulders, which are diamond shaped. The band is thick and rounded and has a defining line at the apex. There is no incision or decoration on the surface. It is very well preserved with minor scratches.
Context: In the military fort of period VII (possibly period VIII). Late 3rd – early 4th century.
Publication record: Bidwell (1985) 128, fig. 45.

57. SF 2673a
Max. Inner Diam.: n/a
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a
Max. Depth: 9.5mm
Description: Type XII; Bronze and nicolo paste; small ring fragment with intaglio preserved in bezel (intaglio cat.no. 44, this volume) and one shoulder. It is small with a raised intaglio and a thin band. Very fragmentary and surface is corroded throughout.
Context: Found in a small hoard with occupation material of the second half of the 3rd century. Period VII.
Publication record: Bidwell (1985) 122, fig. 42, no. 54.
**58. SF 2673b**
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a
Max. Depth: 9.5mm
Description: Type XII; Bronze and nicolo paste; small ring fragment with intaglio preserved in bezel (intaglio cat.no. 45, this volume) and two shoulders. It is small with a raised intaglio and a thin band. Very fragmentary and surface is corroded throughout including the gem face.
Context: Found in a small hoard with occupation material of the second half of the 3rd century. Period VII.
Publication record: Bidwell (1985) 122, fig. 42, no. 53.

**59. SF 2673c**
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a
Max. Depth: 10mm
Description: Type XII variant; Bronze and glass paste; small ring with raised intaglio setting and thin band. Only two thin shoulders remain of the band and the entire surface is affected by corrosion.
Context: Found in a small hoard with occupation material of the second half of the 3rd century. Period VII.
Publication record: Bidwell (1985) 122, fig. 42, no. 55.

**60. SF 2673d**
Max. Inner Diam.: 16.5mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm
Max. Depth: 6mm
Description: Type IX variant; Bronze; thinly hammered ring in a simple, broad circle with no incision or decoration. The band is slightly overlapped and not connected on the bottom. Complete but with corrosion on the surface.
Context: Found in a small hoard with occupation material of the second half of the 3rd century. Period VII.
Publication record: Bidwell (1985) 126, fig. 42, no. 56.

**61. SF 2788**
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 19mm
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 23mm
Max. Depth: 13.5mm
Description: Type I variant; Bronze; large ring with missing intaglio setting. The setting area has an unusual raised and rounded edge. The band tapers uniformly from the bezel down the shoulders. Only three-quarters is preserved and the surface is corroded.
Context: Military context inside stone fort II. Period VII (possibly VIII).

**62. SF 8055**
Max. Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 18mm
Max. Depth: 2mm
Description: Type IV; Bronze; simple, thin hoop band with uniform width throughout. No incision or decoration. Complete but corrosion affects the surface.
Context: Military context within stone fort II. Period VII.

**63. SF 8182**
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 16mm
Max. Outer Diam.: n/a
Max. Depth: 9.5mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Complete but corrosion affects the surface.
Context: Civilian layers of period VII.

**PERIOD VIII**

**64. SF 7008**
Max. Inner Diam.: 10mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 11mm
Max. Depth: 1mm
Description: Type IV; Bone; very thin and fragile hoop with no decoration. Well preserved except for a small area missing.

**65. SF 7060**
Max. Inner Diam.: 17mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 22mm
Max. Depth: 7mm
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or.
decoration. Complete but corroded on the surface and misshapen.  

**66. SF 7072**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 19.5mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 26.5mm  
Max. Depth: 3mm  
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Well preserved with minimal surface breakdown.  

**67. SF 7144**  
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 20mm  
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: 26mm  
Max. Depth: 3.5mm  
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Only three-quarters preserved and the surface is corroded.  

**68. SF 7321**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 14mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 15mm  
Max. Depth: 10mm  
Description: Type IX variant; Bronze; small finger ring hammered flat on the bezel and shoulders, tapering to a thin band at the bottom. The shoulders, somewhat triangular in shape, have two lines incised laterally for decoration. The band has split on the bezel and has been repaired by creating a slight overlap and welded together. It is in fair condition, complete but with corroded surface and edges.  

**69. SF 7379**  
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: 20mm  
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: n/a  
Max. Depth: 2.5mm  
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band ring with no incision or decoration. Equal width throughout fragment. It is half preserved and the surface is corroded.  

**70. SF 7428**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 14mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm  
Max. Depth: 3mm  
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. It is in poor condition with surface corrosion and a break in the band.  

**71. SF 7570**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 12.5mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 20.5mm  
Max. Depth: 2.5mm  
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. In poor condition with corrosion on the surface and a section missing.  

**72. SF 7819**  
Max. preserved Inner Diam.: n/a  
Max. preserved Outer Diam.: n/a  
Max. Depth: n/a  
Description: Type I; Iron; fragments of a ring that would have held a setting. Corrosion and breakdown is too extensive for further analysis.  
Context: Military contexts of period VIII. 4th century.

**73. SF 8236**  
Max. Inner Diam.: 13mm  
Max. Outer Diam.: 19mm  
Max. Depth: 3.5mm  
Description: Type III; Bronze; simple, thick band hoop ring with no incision or decoration. Complete but the surface is corroded.  
Context: Civilian context of period VIII. 4th century.
UNSTRATIFIED

74. SF 8226

Fig. 3.3
Max. Inner Diam.: 17mm
Max. Outer Diam.: 23mm
Max. Depth: 7mm

Description: Type XVI; Silver; highly decorated ring with basic rounded hoop band and terminals fashioned into the heads of snakes. The band has decoration incised onto the surface to imitate the scaled skin of a snake. The terminals are two cobra heads facing each other with flattened heads decorated with highly stylized features. This type of ring is quite popular in Roman Britain and can be stylistically dated to the middle of the second century. The best comparanda for this ring is in the Snettisham jeweller’s hoard (Johns 1996; see also for typology of serpent jewellery and imagery in the Greek and Roman worlds), in which there are thirty-two snake finger rings and many of this exact mould. Johns suggests these ring types are an example of mass produced mould-made metal jewellery that were quite popular in the British province. For German parallel see Vollenweider 1984, no. 504.


Fig. 3.2. Finger ring images (larger than actual size)
Fig. 3.3. Finger ring images (larger than actual size)
Fig. 3.4. Types of finger rings in the Vindolanda assemblage
THE BRACELETS

By Barbara Birley

Bracelets, like other types of jewellery, were not a new form of personal adornment when the Romans came to Britain. The native population already had a complex assemblage and bracelets were worn by the native population in the Iron and Bronze Ages. (Jones, 1996, 108). Many were designed to be worn in pairs, one on each arm. This is confirmed by the Mummy portraits and funerary sculptures. Some of the best examples of bracelets in Britain come from the hoards, with the Hoxne and the Thetford treasures being two of the best known. These hoards help to clarify the fashion in the late Roman Empire and stand as some of the finest examples found in Britain.

The Vindolanda collection has a total of 102 bracelets in copper alloy, iron, glass, bone, jet and shale. They show a wide range of craftsmanship, but unfortunately there have not been any objects of gold or silver. It is worth noting, however, that there are a number of high quality copper alloy bracelets within the collection, including a very fine fragment of a snake bracelet and numerous others with surface decorations.

It is important to identify the terminology to be applied were discussing bracelets, as there are many different words used. The following terms will be used to describe the Vindolanda arm ornaments. First, the term ‘armlet’ will be used to describe a large ornament worn pushed on the upper arm. ‘Bangle’ is a word of Anglo-Indian derivation and implies the ornament is a rigid ring usually made of glass, bone, jet or other non metallic minerals. ‘Bracelet’ typically is described as a more generic term encompassing all ornaments worn on the arm, meaning that all arm ornaments are bracelets but not all are bangles or armlets.

Types of Bracelets in the Vindolanda Collection

Vindolanda Bracelets by Material

![Vindolanda Bracelets by Material](image_url)

Fig. 4.1 Vindolanda bracelets by material
Copper alloy and other metal bracelets

The decorated copper alloy bracelets are some of the most beautiful in the collection and include many different styles. Copper alloy as a material lends itself to being manipulated into many different shapes and the collection shows some of these techniques, including crimping, punching and incising. Other examples show the craftsmanship available to the Romans.

The twisted and single wire bracelets have been separated from the decorated as they are usually simpler bracelets. Twisted wire bracelets usually consist of one or more wires that are twisted together to form a stronger and more decorative result. Sometime different materials are used to create an even further decorative effect. SF3805 is an excellent example of this type having three different metals, iron, copper and a bronze wire twisted together. The single wire bracelet is the most common metal bracelet at Vindolanda, and there are examples of both armlets and bracelets in this form. There are also iron bracelets in this sub-category.

Glass Bracelets

Glass, due to its non corrosive nature, survives the test of time and even though it is easily broken, fragments are often found. At Vindolanda there are numerous design types. All of the glass bracelets are bangles, due to their rigid form. The most common are the plain white glass bangles, but only slightly less common are the blue glass variety with applied white or yellow cords. There are also a number of bangles which are unique or are rare in this collection.

Extensive work on glass bangles was undertaken by H.E. Kilbride-Jones in 1938 and even though his work is dated and extensive new evidence has come to light, his typology will be used in identifying the Vindolanda glass bangles. He looked at the glass bangles found predominantly in Scotland but there noted close parallels with the evidence found on Hadrian’s Wall. The following is a brief description of the types identified in the Vindolanda collection.

Type 3 has been further segmented. (Kilbride-Jones 1938).

Type 1 – This is a heavy plano-convex type of bangle. They appear to be the earliest form of glass bangle within the region between the Antonine and Hadrianic Walls, but they do reach into the farther areas of Scotland. Usually this bangle has a translucent core with applied bands of enamelled yellow.

Type 2 – This type is more common that the first and can be seen in greater numbers within the Vindolanda collection. The characteristics vary, but for the sake of clarification they are aqua coloured bangles with a twisted band of blue and white glass that runs the circumference of the bangle and is located at the apex of the object. The type includes more complex decoration than the artefacts in the Vindolanda collection, but similar bangles were found at Traprain Law and Newsteads, as well as Chesters, also on Hadrian’s Wall.

Type 3 A – This bangle type is the most common of all. It is an opaque white glass bangle and examples have been found at many sites in Scotland and numerous sites on Hadrian’s Wall, including Milking Gap, Chesters, Corbridge, South Shields and Housesteads.

Type 3 B – This bangle is identical to the above type 3 A in shape and form except that instead of being opaque white glass it is opaque yellow glass, of which Vindolanda has one example.

Type 3 C – In order to break up the tedium of the plain opaque white bangle, a blue or yellow scroll or applied cord was added. This type is attributed to the bangles with the blue cord of which the Vindolanda collection has two. Unfortunately, the collection does not have any of the
yellow (type 3 D). Similar bangles have come from other parts of Hadrian’s Wall including Corbridge.

Type 3 E – This includes two fragments of dark olive green with opaque white inlay from Traprain Law. These are similar to SF8779 except that the Vindolanda example has a yellow cord instead of the white. These examples seem rather rare.

Type 3 F – These as described by Kilbride-Jones are of translucent bottle glass with applied inlay of white glass. Similar bangles have come from Corbridge, Carlisle and South Shields.

Type 3 G – Similar to the above except that instead of a white inlay the cord is of opaque yellow glass. Both bangles are made from aqua bottle glass. Similar bangles have come from Corbridge, Carlisle and South Shields.

Type 3I – This is a more common bangle type at Vindolanda and is blue with a white inlay or applied cord. Similar bangles have been found at Milking Gap and South Shields.

Type 4 – The last type of bangle found at Vindolanda does not have any corresponding finds at the other sites studied by Kilbride-Jones or his successor R. Stevenson. It is a tightly twisted very dark translucent green bangle, of which there are two fragments. It is of a very high quality and upon first inspection looks to be jet.

Fig 4.2 Types of glass bangles in the Vindolanda Collection

<table>
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<th>Type</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3A</th>
<th>3B</th>
<th>3C</th>
<th>3E</th>
<th>3F</th>
<th>3G</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glass Bangles from Vindolanda

Fig 4.3 Types of glass bangles represented in the Vindolanda collection

Jet and Derivative Bracelets

It is not surprising to find bracelets of jet within the Vindolanda collection. As with the other jet and shale objects the bracelets show a varying degree of craftsmanship, including some with incised lines. Some of the bracelets are in poor condition and do not hold the lustre of their counterparts. These could be made from one of the many jet-like substances including shale or
cannel coal (for more information see page 46). Similar bracelets to those found at Vindolanda can be found at most British sites that have a large amount jet, including York and South Shields.

Bone Bracelets

Bone is one of the oldest materials for humans to manipulate into objects. The bone bracelets in the Vindolanda collection are few but they do illustrate the use of the material with this context. The largest of all of the bracelets within the collection is SF6595. As with most of the other materials, bracelets of this material can be found at most of the other sites along Hadrian’s Wall and other Roman-British sites, including South Shields.

The bracelets from Vindolanda follow a similar pattern to many of the other small finds from the site. Overall, 55% of the bracelets come from predominately military contexts and 31% from civilian contexts. This is not surprising as the military areas of the site have been more fully excavated. A further 12% of the bracelets were excavated from mixed areas where the use of the buildings cannot be deemed as either strictly military or civilian.

The bracelets come from all occupational periods on the site. They vary in number depending on the period, but this also relates closely to the excavation of the site. The predominate time period for the bracelets is period VII, which is also the period where most excavation has taken place. Evidence for bracelets in periods I and II is sparse, but this is not surprising as these area have not been excavated on a large scale.
In comparison to the beads there are a very small number of the bracelets found in unstratified levels. This could be because the bracelets are larger and less easily lost artefacts.

The Vindolanda collection does show a wide variety of bracelet types and styles emphasising the considerable quantity of luxury goods that were available to the people who lived there. This was not only driven by style, but also by the materials that were being used to create their personal adornment. Few of the bracelets survive in their complete form, but those that do and the fragments of others illustrate the complexity of designs used by the Romans.
CATALOGUE

Decorated Copper Alloy Bracelets

Fig 4.6
Decorated copper alloy bracelets

**SF560** Period VII. Civilian. Weight 2.5g, diameter 50mm, height 3mm, depth 2mm. Almost half surviving, with alternating impressions decorating the side of the bracelet. Not illustrated. Similar bracelets found with multiple incised groves on surface at South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**SF1468** Period III. Military. Weight 14g, diameter 5mm, height 5mm, depth 3mm. Good condition, torc, one end missing, other terminal end decorated. Not illustrated. Type 4 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126). This bracelet has not only the bulbous ends described in the South Shields variety but also the added decoration of incised lines at the terminal.

**SF1740** Period VII. Civilian. Weight 15.5g, diameter 59mm, height 5mm, depth 1mm. Good condition, one broad incised line, in two areas incision has broken through the metal leaving a hole. There is evidence that the object has been soldered to form a bangle.

**SF2343** Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 41mm, height 1mm, depth 5mm. Fragment, hole pierced at one end, diagonal line incised on top, similar to 2509. Type I South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**SF2509** Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight 3g, diameter 47mm, height 2mm, depth 5mm. Similar to 2343, diagonal incised line on top and has clasp end. Type I South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**SF2822** Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight 3.5g, diameter 47mm, height 1mm, depth 13mm. Poor condition, decorated terminal end, and punched diamond pattern on main face. This is the only example of a snake bracelet in the Vindolanda collection (see page 8). This example is similar to those found in the Snettisham hoard. It appears to be a type B subtype ii (Johns, 1996: 45), although this can not be confirmed as only one end of the bracelet survives. Type 6 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**SF3055** Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight 15g, diameter 77mm, height 2mm, depth 15mm. Poor condition, 2 fragments, concave, circle in circle pattern at end. Not complete. This is an interesting variation and could possibly be a form of snake bracelet. Type 6 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**SF3758** Period III. Military. Weight 15g, diameter 74mm, height 3mm, depth 3mm. Excellent condition, crimped pattern. 2 rings attached, with loop to loop clasps. Very coppery in colour. This bracelet is similar to the South Shields type 7 except that it is a bangle. There is evidence where the two ends of the bangle were soldered together. Also the two attached rings were possibly used to attach some other object to the piece, possibly charms or personal equipment.

**SF5260** Period II. Military. Weight 17.5g, diameter 49mm, height 10mm, depth 1mm. Excellent condition, band bracelet with 2 incised lines. This bracelet is similar in its patterning to SF1730. it does have a break in the band instead of being a complete bangle like SF1730.

**SF5359** Period III. Military. Weight 7.5g, diameter 80mm, height 4mm, depth 2mm. Excellent condition, triangular in cross section, with incised lines one both sides. Soldered in two places. Not illustrated.

**SF6166** Period VI. Military/Civilian. Weight 5g, diameter 51mm, height 2mm, depth 8mm. Raised in centre with cross-hatch pattern, unfortunately not enough of the bracelet survives to determine the type.

**SF6253** Period III. Civilian. Weight 6g, diameter 52mm, height 3mm, depth 10mm. Decorated pattern at end, fair condition. Not illustrated.

**SF7684** Period VIII. Military. Weight 26.5g, diameter 66mm, height 5mm, depth
7mm. Variable condition, decoration on 2 points, corrosion attached. Not illustrated. Possibly a Type 7 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**SF9025** Period IV. Military. Weight 5.5g, diameter 60mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Delicate bronze wire bracelet with intricate figure of eight centre, broken, with repair. This is a very elaborate style of a Type 8 bracelet, South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

**Twisted Copper Alloy Bracelets**

![Twisted Copper Alloy Bracelets](image)

*Fig 4.7*
Twisted copper alloy bracelets

SF205 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 2g, diameter 99mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Fragment, poor condition, single twisted wire, irregular shape. Type 15 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF270 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 2g, diameter 62mm, height 4mm, depth 3mm. Twisted wire 2 fragments. Type 15 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF638 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 3g, diameter 60mm, height 3mm, depth 3mm. Good condition, three twisted wires, one end terminates in longer end, possibly for attachment to other end. Type 10 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF656 Period VII. Civilian. Weight less than 1g, diameter 41mm, height 3mm, depth 2mm. Fragment of three twisted wires, good condition. Type 10 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF1160 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 4.6g, diameter 63mm, height 2mm, depth 3mm. Fragment, poor condition, twisted wire. Type 15 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF2791 Period VII/VIII. Weight less than 1g, diameter 27mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Poor condition, twisted wire. Type 15 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF3805 Period V. Military. Weight 2.5g, diameter 65mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Good condition, three twisted wires one of bronze, one of copper and one of iron, missing in some areas. Type 10 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).

SF5323 Period VII/VIII. Military/Civilian. Weight 3g, diameter 49mm, height 3mm, depth 3mm. Fine twisted wire around a more solid, larger wire. Alloy in good condition. Type 11 South Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 126).
Single Wire Bracelets

Fig 4.8 single wire copper alloy bracelets
Single wire copper alloy bracelets

SF98  Period VI. Civilian. Weight 2.5g, diameter 47mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Small, possibly child’s bracelet, irregular shape. Not illustrated.

SF136  Period VII. Civilian. Weight less than 1g, diameter 34mm, height 5mm, depth 4mm. Fragment, poor condition. Not illustrated.

SF572  Period VII. Civilian. Weight less than 1g, diameter 46mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Poor condition. Not illustrated.

SF735  Period VII. Civilian. Weight 13g, diameter 57mm, height 5mm, depth 5mm. Poor condition, narrowing at ends. Not illustrated.

SF829  Period VI. Military. Weight 15.5g, diameter 60mm, height 5mm, depth 5mm. Two fragments, poor condition. Not illustrated.

SF1662  Period III. Military. Weight 9.5g, diameter 90mm, height 4mm, depth 4mm. Irregular shape, complete with a wrapped wire closer. Not illustrated.

SF1740  Period VII. Civilian. Weight 15.5g, diameter 59mm, height 10mm, depth 1mm. Good condition, one broad incised line, in two areas broken through the mettle leaving a hole. Not illustrated.

SF2271  Period VII/VII. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 45mm, height 2mm, depth 1mm. Poor condition, three fragments. Not illustrated.

SF3587  Period I. Military. Weight 27.5g, diameter 60mm, height 5mm, depth 7mm. Irregular shape. Not illustrated.

SF5118  Period VII/VIII. Military/civilian. Weight 2.5 g, diameter 51mm, height 3mm, depth 1mm. Good condition, very little corrosion, punched loose S shaped pattern on surface

SF5380  Period III. Military. Weight 4.5g, diameter 60mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Good condition, thin band.

SF5511  Period IV/V. Military/civilian. Weight 8.5g, diameter 87mm, height 3mm, depth 3mm. Large single wire bracelet, with a loop clasp, small ring as for attachment, good condition.

SF5542  Period IV/V. Military/civilian. Weight 7g, diameter 8mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Irregular shape, good condition, simple clasp.

SF5894  Period VII/VIII. Military/civilian. Weight 2.5g, Diameter 53mm, height 3mm, depth 3mm. Irregular shape good condition. Surviving twisted clasp on one end. Not illustrated.

SF6553  Period III. Civilian. Weight 7g, diameter 40mm, height 5mm, depth 5mm. Good condition, fragment. Not illustrated.

SF7231  Period VIII. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 60mm, height 2mm, depth 1mm. Fragment, fair condition, evidence of incised line on surface for decoration. Not illustrated.

SF7338  Period VIII. Military. Weight 9.5g, diameter 50mm, height 4mm, depth 4mm. Good condition. Not illustrated.

SF7370  Period VIII. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 45mm, height 2mm, depth 4mm. Poor condition, 2 fragments, evidence of horizontal line of decoration on top. Not illustrated.

SF7493  Period VIII. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 39mm, height 2mm, depth 2mm. Incised lines on top for decoration. Not illustrated.

SF8100  U/S. Military/civilian. Weight 2.5g, diameter 34mm, height 4mm, depth 4mm. Fragment, fair condition. Not illustrated.
White Glass Bracelet and White Glass Bracelet with applied cords of blue glass

Fig 4.9 White glass and white glass with applied blue cord bracelets
Type 3A – white glass bangles

SF573 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 7g, diameter 30mm, height 9mm, depth 14mm. Fragment, pitted surface.

SF705 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 3g, diameter 15mm, height 9mm, depth 8mm. Fragment, pitted surface, discoloration, possibly due to ground conditions.

SF1140 Period III. Military. Weight 15.5g, diameter 63mm, height 9mm, depth 14mm. Pitted surface.

SF1431 Period IV/V. Military. Weight 4.5g, diameter 22mm, height 9mm, depth 14mm. Poor quality, pitted surface causing dirty appearance.

SF2099 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 4.5g, diameter 22mm, height 8mm, depth 13mm. Fragment, pitted surface.

SF3312 Period V. Military/Civilian. Weight 8g, diameter 52mm, height 7mm, depth 12mm. Pitted surface.

SF7981 Period III. Military. Weight 6.5g, diameter 35mm, height 7mm, depth 15mm. Pitting on surface causing a dirty appearance.

SF8176 Period IV. Military. Weight 12.5g, diameter 65mm, height 15mm, depth 5mm. Fractured, pitting on surface.

SF8754 Period III. Military. Weight 6.5g, diameter 15mm, height 4mm, depth 8mm. Fragment, surface abrasion and pitting. Two parallel lines incised on bottom.

SF8780 Period III. Military. Weight 5g, diameter 35mm, height 12mm, depth 6mm. Fragment, surface pitted causing a dirty appearance.

SF9341 Period IV. Civilian. Weight 2g, Diameter 37mm, height 9mm, depth 9mm. Fragment, surface is pitted.

SF9345 Period VI. Civilian. Weight 10g, diameter variable, height variable, depth variable. Two fragments, do not connect. Pitted surface.

SF9565 Period VIB. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 30mm, height 10mm, depth 8mm. Fragment, surface is pitted.

Blue and aqua glass bracelets with applied cords of white glass

Fig. 4.10 Type 3C – white glass bangles with applied cords of blue glass

SF1706 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 3.5g, diameter 25mm, height 10mm, depth 7mm. Good condition, two applied cords evident.

SF2483 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 5.5g, diameter 34mm, height 8mm, depth 14mm. Fragment, pitted surface.
Types 3F/I – blue or aqua glass bangles with applied cords of white glass

**SF3369** Period I. Military. Type 3I. Weight 3g, diameter 25mm, height 6mm, depth 12mm. Good condition, fragment, some pitting on surface.

**SF8944** Period IV. Military. Translucent aqua with white applied cord type 3F. Weight 4.5g, diameter 47mm, height 9mm, depth 6mm. Fragment, strip curving over one end, similar to SF8958.

**SF8958** Period IV. Military. Type 3F. Weight 2.5g, diameter 20mm, height 9mm, depth 7mm. Fragment, strip curving over one end.

**SF9312** Period VIII. Civilian Type 3I. Weight 4g, diameter 28mm, height 8mm, depth 8mm. Fragment, two cords applied.

**SF9579** Period IV. Military. Type 3I. Weight 6g. Diameter 35mm, height 12mm, depth 5mm. Fragment, curved strip on face. Similar to SF9587.

**SF9587** Period IV. Military. Type 3I. Weight 4g, diameter 22mm, height 10mm, depth 9mm. Fragment. Similar to SF9579.

Type 2 – Aqua glass bracelets with twisted blue and white band.

**SF2580** Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight 2.5g, diameter 20mm, height 9mm, depth 11mm. Poor condition cracks on surface.

**SF4702** Period V. Military. Weight 7g, diameter 43mm, height 7mm, depth 11mm. Good condition, slight fading in blue.

**SF5930** Period VI/V. Military. Weight 27g, diameter 57mm, height 10mm, depth 5mm. Good condition, only whole example of a glass bangle in collection, glass does show some fracturing and strip has been folded onto the aqua.

**SF6243** Period III. Military. Weight 3.5g, diameter 33mm, height 8mm, depth 10mm. Fragment, poor condition, pitting on surface.

**SF9653** Period IV. Military. Weight less than 1g. Diameter 20mm, height 10mm, depth 7mm. Fragment, twisted band along top.

**SF9754** Period VII/VIII. Civilian. Weight 4g, diameter 43mm, height 10mm, depth 11mm. Good condition, slight fading in blue.
Aqua glass bracelets with twisted white and blue band

Specialty glass bracelets

**SF503** Period U/S. Civilian. Opaque green, very dark type 4. Weight 8.5g, diameter 47mm, height 11mm, depth 11mm. Twisted pattern on surface. Two fragments. Looks black until held to light and the surface has a high gloss. Good condition.

**SF1038** Period VI. Military. Translucent aqua glass with opaque yellow twisted band type 1. Weight 27g, diameter 47mm, height 12mm, depth 19mm. In poor condition, shows cracks on surface and pitting in yellow. The only of this type to come from Vindolanda. Similar bangles have survived at Traprain Law in Scotland but the blue glass is a darker cobalt colour.

**SF7324** Period VIII. Military. Opaque green, very dark. Weight 2.5g, diameter 50mm, height 64mm, depth 4mm. Fragment, smooth and polished. Not illustrated.

**SF8779** Period III. Military Opaque yellow green with yellow applied cord type 3E.
Weight 14g, diameter 62mm, height 7mm, depth 13mm. Fragment, surface abrasion, causing cracks.

**SF8946** Period II. Military. Opaque yellow type 3B. Weight 9g, diameter 38mm, height 14mm, depth 11mm. Fragment, pitted surface.

**SF9357** Period VII. Civilian. Translucent aqua with yellow applied cord type 3G. Weight less than 1g, diameter 10mm, height 7mm, depth 13mm. Fragment, strip down centre. Pitted surface.

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**SF9688** Period IV/V. Civilian. Translucent aqua Type 3G. Weight 10g, diameter 75mm, height 10mm, depth 6mm. Fragment.

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**Specialist Glass Bracelets**

![Specialist Glass Bracelets]

*Fig 4.12 Specialist glass bracelets*
Bone

**SF562** Period VII. Civilian. Weight 7g, diameter 12mm, height 60mm, depth 9mm. Fragment, nicks and scratches on surface. Not illustrated.
SF6595 Period VIII. Military. Weight 18.5g, diameter 104mm, height 8mm, depth 8mm. Almost complete bone armlet, 3 fragments.

SF7380 Period VIII. Military. Weight 2.5g, diameter 42mm, height 5mm, depth 9mm. Good condition, fragment.

SF7414 Period VIII. Military. Weight 5g, diameter 104mm, height 6mm, depth 8mm. Good condition.

Jet

SF368 Period VII. Civilian. Weight less than 1g, diameter 21mm, height 4mm depth 2mm. Small fragment of jet bracelet, poor condition. Not illustrated.

SF376 Period VI. Military. Weight 9.5g, diameter 68mm, height 5mm depth 9mm. Good quality jet, polished surface.

SF515 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 6g, diameter various, height various, depth various. Six fragments of a jet armlet bracelet. Poor condition. Double strung decorated with parallel lines to the perforations. Not illustrated.

SF765 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 8.5g, diameter 92mm, height 9mm, depth 9mm. Poor quality, three fragments.

SF1820 Period VII. Civilian. Weight less than 1g, diameter 45mm, height 4mm, depth 4mm. Fragment, good condition.

SF1968 Period VII. Civilian. Weight 4g, diameter 57mm, height 5mm, depth 6mm. Abraded surface, fragment.

SF2290 Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight 6.5g, diameter 47mm, height 12mm, depth 12mm. Poor condition, fragment.

SF2394 Period VII/VIII. Military. Weight less than 1g, diameter 13mm, height 4mm, depth 4mm. Circle in circle pattern on one face, fragment.

SF8229 Period ?. Military/Civilian. Weight 8g, diameter 60mm, height 8mm, depth 12mm. Poor condition, surface cracks.

Comparative material at Shields, Tyne and Wear (Allason-Jones and Miket 1984: 40).
Fig 4.14 Jet bracelets
THE EAR-RINGS

By Barbara Birley

Ear-rings are unlike other types of jewellery found in the Vindolanda collection. Rings, necklaces and bracelets are all worn by simply applying them to the given area of the body, and any individual can wear them. Ear-rings require the body to be specially prepared, but once it has received this treatment the ear-rings can be worn indefinitely. Unfortunately, there is little evidence of the time in a girl’s life that this procedure took place. It is presumed that the method of piercing involved a needle that would pierce the earlobe and create a small hole. The piercing of the earlobe can cause infections even today and this must have caused occasional problems in Roman times.

The practice of wearing objects in the ear, like other forms of personal adornment, is very old. Evidence from early civilisations show that this was a common practice and there is evidence that ear-rings were worn in Iron Age Britain (Allason-Jones, 1989). Ear-rings were predominately worn by women as symbols of value and status. Allason-Jones quotes a number of classical tests on the value of ornaments worn in the ears, including a quotation referring to Habinnas and his wife, Scintilla. Scintilla proudly displayed her ear-rings, kept in a gold locket round her neck, a present from her husband, saying ‘no one has a finer set’. Habinnas says: ‘You cleaned me out to buy you a glass bean! Honestly, if I had a daughter, I’d cut her little ears off. If there weren’t any woman, everything would be dirt cheap. As it is, we’ve got to drink cold water and piss it out hot.’ (Petronius, Cena Trimalchionis 67).

There are also some classical texts that refer to men wearing ear-rings. It was predominantly men from North Africa or from the Eastern Provinces. During Trajan’s Parthian War, in AD 114, Arbandes, son of Abgarus VII, the ruler of Osrhoene (in northwest Mesopotamia), made a big impression on Trajan: ‘Partly through fear of Trajan and partly through the persuasion of his son Arbandes, a handsome youth who was in favour with Trajan, Abgarus came to meet Trajan on the road, made his apologies and obtained pardon [for failing to turn up before and trying to stay neutral], for he had a powerful intercessor in the boy. He therefore became Trajan’s friend and entertained him at a banquet, with Arbandes, who wore gold ear-rings and said to him: “I blame you for not coming to me and joining in my expedition and sharing in the hard work. For this reason I would gladly tear off one of your ear-rings!”.’ (Arrian, Parthica, Fragment 46). It was even known for the emperor Macrinus (217-218) to wear ear-rings. ‘Macrinus was a Moor by origin, from Caesarea, his parents being very obscure… Other things aside, one of his ears had been pierced, as is the custom with most of the Moors. But his integrity threw even this (drawback) into the shade.’ (Cassius Dio, Roman History 79.11.1).

Within the Western tradition, it is also noticeable that most of this type of adornment is concentrated in the earlobe and not the piercing of other areas of the body which was widespread in Africa, Asia, South America and Oceania. (Johns 1996, 126).

Unlike the other jewellery in the Vindolanda collection, the majority of the ear-rings were made of gold, with only two of the eight being copper alloy. Ear-rings were used to draw the eye of an onlooker to the face of the wearer, and it was important to have attractive pieces. There is evidence from ancient writers that some ear-rings could be of great value.

There are, in simplest terms, two types of ear-ring: those that are suspended on wires and form some sort of dangling attachment, and those that form a ring or hoop. In her book, Ear-rings
in Roman Britain, Lindsay Allason-Jones categorised 18 types ear-rings. Within the Vindolanda collection there are eight different ear-rings, representing six different types of ear-rings as described by Allason-Jones.

The ear-rings at Vindolanda largely date from period VII or VIII. The exception to this is SF1020 which came from period III. Most of the ear-rings were excavated from civilian areas of the site. The exceptions to this were SF1020, which was found in the commanding officer’s residence, and SF5703 and SF5892, which had been tipped into a fort ditch. These contexts could contain both military and civilian deposits.

**Figure 5.1 Ear-rings from Vindolanda.**

**SF104** Period VII+. Civilian. Width 5mm, height 15mm, depth 0.25mm. Gold. Teardrop shaped front plate with part of hook still soldered to the back. Evidence of patterning on the plate. Type 14. (Published Allason-Jones, 1989).

**SF687** Period VII. Civilian. Width 5mm, height 14mm, depth 1mm. Gold. Ear-ring pin with a globular head, pinched at neck. Type 13a. (Published Allason-Jones, 1989).
SF1020 Period III. Military. Width 10mm, height 11mm, depth 1mm, diameter of globular terminal 4mm. Gold. Wire earring bent at one end to form a hook. Terminal has a globular ball which could be a stop for an added bead. Type 10 (Allason-Jones, 1989).

SF1701 Period VII+. Civilian. Diameter 17mm, depth 0.5mm. Gold. Penannular ear-ring with a circular cross section with the end shaved to points. Type 1. (Published Allason-Jones, 1989).

SF2470 Period VII. Civilian. Width 11mm, height 34mm, depth 5mm. Gold. This is the most complete ear-ring in the Vindolanda collection. The setting is green glass and it is placed in a two piece setting which has been soldered together. The upper part of the setting has a grooved pattern. Attached to the base of the setting is a loop to which is attached a hanging wire. At the base there is an attachment space for a bead, probably of green glass, which is held in place by a knot at the end of the wire. Similar earrings have been found at Bath. Type 11. (Published Allason-Jones, 1989).

SF5703 Period VII/VIII. Civilian/military. Width 8mm, height 10mm, depth 0.5mm. Copper alloy. Ear-ring pin nipped in two areas. Type 13a (Allason-Jones, 1989).

SF5892 Period VII/VIII. Civilian/military. Width 5mm, height 14mm, depth 0.5mm. Copper alloy. Wire to string beads to form an ear-ring. Type 17. (Allason-Jones, 1989).

SF6069 Period VII. Civilian. Width 15mm, height 8mm, depth 0.75mm. Gold. Wire to string beads to form an ear-ring. Type 17. (Allason-Jones, 1989).
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