

From the *Transactions* of the
Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society

Further Remarks on the Ring of Senicianus

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1888-89, Vol. 13, 203-204

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FURTHER REMARKS ON THE RING OF SENICIANUS

In Continuation of Vol. VI., p. 79.

[C. I. L. VII., 140, 1305].

By F. HAVERFIELD, M.A.

IN 1786 there was found near Silchester a very interesting gold ring, now preserved by Mr. Challoner Chute, at the Vyne, and published by him in his account of the treasures stored up in that most interesting country house.¹ It will be familiar to members of the Bristol & Gloucestershire Archæological Society from a paper upon it in the 6th volume of the Transactions. By the kindness of Mr. Chute, the ring has been submitted to the authorities of the British Museum, where I have also had the opportunity of examining it. As to the inscription, there can be no possible doubt. It is

SE NI CI A NE VI VA SII NDE

that is *Seniciane, vivas [i]n de[o]*. The formula *vivas in deo* is a very common Christian one, and strangely enough, it is one in which mistakes are often made. In this case the engraver seems to have miscalculated his distance, and having the letters SINDEO to get into the last two partitions of the circumference, he has made a vain effort to put SIN together and has been compelled to omit the final o entirely. The explanation *Secunde* is, so far as I can make out, untenable, the abbreviation being unique. The inscription round the head is VFNVS, i.e. *Venus*, the lower limb of the E being lost by the rubbing of use. The word, no doubt, stands for some proper name, such as *Venusianus*, *Venustus* or *Venustinius*. The second of these is a fairly common *cognomen*, the latter occurs on a Northumbrian inscription.²

¹ *History of the Vyne*, Winchester, 1888, p. 7.

² C. I. L. VII., 884.

It has been maintained, and the opinion has been adopted by Hübner, that the Christian inscription was cut at a considerably later period than the name *Venus*... and the head round which it is engraved. The view of Mr. Franks and Mr. A. H. Smith is that the whole ring belongs to a late period, probably to the fourth century, and that there is little or no difference in date between the Christian formula and the name *Venus*(...?). Dr. Hübner, it should be said, had not himself seen the ring.

It has been usual to connect this ring with a curious lead plate found at Lydney, on which one *Silvianus* (probably a miswriting for *Silvanus*, not *Silvianus*¹) imprecates the God's wrath on the robber who stole the ring, just as the stealer of the *mantelium* is cursed on the lead plate found at Bath. It is, of course, a strange coincidence that a ring should have been lost of Senicianus suspected as thief. But the identity of Mr. Chute's ring and the Lydney one must not be hastily assumed. Mr. Chute's ring does not bear the name of Silvanus, and the dates of the ring and lead plate do not at all agree. The ring is quite late, the lead plate early. The lettering shews that, as Hübner remarks, it may almost belong to the first century A.D. Senicianus is not an uncommon name, and in three centuries, two persons of that name may easily have possessed rings.

¹ The fifth letter is variously given as *l* and *i*. In either case it is probably an error.
