

PAUL CORBY FINNEY

Senicianus' Ring

The existence of this handsome little object (Figs. 1–5; 33) is well known to antiquarians and specialists interested in late Romano-British small finds: since its discovery in the late-eighteenth century, the ring has been mentioned and discussed in several places¹. But outside of Britain the ring is not well known, and curiously, photographs of the ring have never been published. Thus, part of my present purpose is to bring the ring to the attention of a larger audience and to provide the appropriate photographic documentation.

Alone, apart from cognates in a type sequence, small finds rarely (if ever) make the kind of sense that is useful for the study of history. Isolated small finds are little more than *disiecta membra*. Thus the first order of business for the Silchester ring is to establish the relevant type sequences, the hoop and bezel families from which this ring is descended. Once its place has been determined, it may be possible to construct larger interpretative theories about the meaning of this object for history.

The ring clearly descends from two distinct material families: metal hoops and metal bezels. Both have a direct bearing on the study of late-Roman metallurgical technology in the western provinces. And I think at least indirectly, metal bezel types of the sort represented in the Silchester ring can also be shown to bear on the study of coin

Note: For discussion and helpful suggestions I am particularly grateful to Catherine Johns and Antje Krug. In addition, I want to thank John Gager, Martin Henig, Judith Lerner, William E. Metcalf and Elizabeth Rosenbaum-Alföldi (†).

¹ *Archaeologia* 8, 1787, 449; 27, 1838, 417; CIL VII 1305; W. H. BATHURST/C. W. KING, *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (1897) 13; F. HAVERFIELD, *Ephemeris Epigraphica* 7, 1892, no. 1171; J. JAMES, *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Arch. Soc.* 6, 1881/82, 75 ff.; F. HAVERFIELD, *ibid.* 13, 1888/89, 203 f.; ID., *Romano-British Remains*. In: *The Victoria History of the Counties of England. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight* 1 (1900) 283. Haverfield expresses the opinion that the ring and Lydney tablet are unrelated; C. W. CHUTE, *A History of the Vyne in Hampshire* (1888) 7 ff.; J. M. C. TOYNEBEE, *Christianity in Roman Britain*. *Journal British Arch. Assoc.* 3rd ser., 16, 1953, 19 ff.; EAD., *Pagan Motifs and Practices in Christian Art and Ritual in Roman Britain*. In: M. W. BARLEY/R. P. C. HANSON (ed.), *Christianity in Britain 300–700* (1968) 189 f.; R. G. GOODCHILDE, *The Curse and the Ring*. *Antiquity* 27, 1953, 100 ff.; M. HENIG, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites*. *BAR* 8 (1974) no. 789.

dies and their distribution in the barbarian territories of the far western Empire during the period of later antiquity. Overall, metal hoops and bezels of the type discussed here relate in important ways (both directly and indirectly) to questions of economy and technology in the late-Roman west.

But in addition to these latter two issues, the Silchester ring raises other questions that concern the study of culture and society in the late Roman west. In fact, the Silchester ring is an unusually provocative piece. Its devices (both iconographic and epigraphic) suggest the intermingling of late Roman, early Christian and Barbarian traditions in lands stretching from the Rhine to the Atlantic, including especially the island culture to the northwest where it may be argued there was a resurgence of indigenous Celtic tradition in the late-Roman period.

Hitherto, most of the published discussion of the Silchester ring has gone straight to the question of its putative connection with the Lydney curse tablet (CIL VII 140; RIB 306). This is unquestionably a compelling and fascinating line of inquiry, but to commence the discussion at this point means putting the cart before the horse. First we must establish the facts: when and where was the ring manufactured, what place does it occupy within the typology of late-Roman metal hoops and bezels, what do its epigraphy and iconography tell us? These are the critical issues. Once they have been resolved, broader historical and cultural questions can be addressed, including the vexing problem of correlations between the ring and the tablet.

The object under consideration is a gold finger ring ploughed up by an eighteenth-century farmer working his field somewhere near Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), about a mile south of the northern border of Hampshire. The year of discovery may have been 1786 (possibly earlier, but certainly not later). The find spot is not known. The ring is currently part of a small collection of antiquities in the Vyne (Sherborne St. John, Basingstoke, Hants), a charming Tudor country house located in Hampshire and built for Lord Sandys, Henry VIII's Lord Chamberlain².

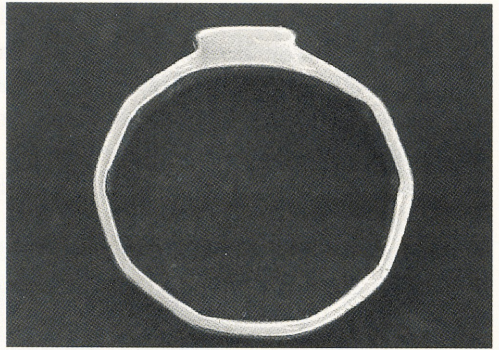
The ring consists of a gold bezel (Fig. 3; 6), nearly square (8.00 × 9.00 mm), mounted (soldered) on a faceted ten-sided hoop (Figs. 1–2; 5: Henig's Type XV³). The hoop tapers in width from 6.29 to 4.44 mm, and its thickness is uniformly 1.48 mm (excepting on the two shoulder facets that frame the bezel – they taper outward very slightly to meet the bezel edge). The hoop has a maximum interior diameter of 25.185 mm, and overall the ring weighs 12.024 grams, approximately the equivalent of 2.50/2.75 late fourth century solidi. The bezel field exhibits an engraved profile bust facing left, and along the bezel border, right and left of the bust, an engraved inscription (retro; fig. 5; 33), in impression reads VENVS, or "Venus".

² The photographs presented here were authorized by the National Trust Central Administration, to whom I am much indebted. I regret that I was unable to obtain permission for the ring to be submitted to metallurgical analysis in the Department of Materials at Oxford. This might have helped to determine if the metal composition of the hoop and the bezel are identical or different. If the former, this might be construed as an argument for the simultaneous manufacture of the bezel and hoop. If on the other hand there were a significant difference in the respective compositional profiles of these two features, it might have been reasonable to suppose that the two were manufactured at different times and that some indeterminate period of time elapsed between the inscribing of the hoop and the mounting of the bezel on the hoop.

³ HENIG (note 1) 51 Fig. 2, 15: "solid rings with square or rectangular bezels engraved with devices in intaglio".



1



2

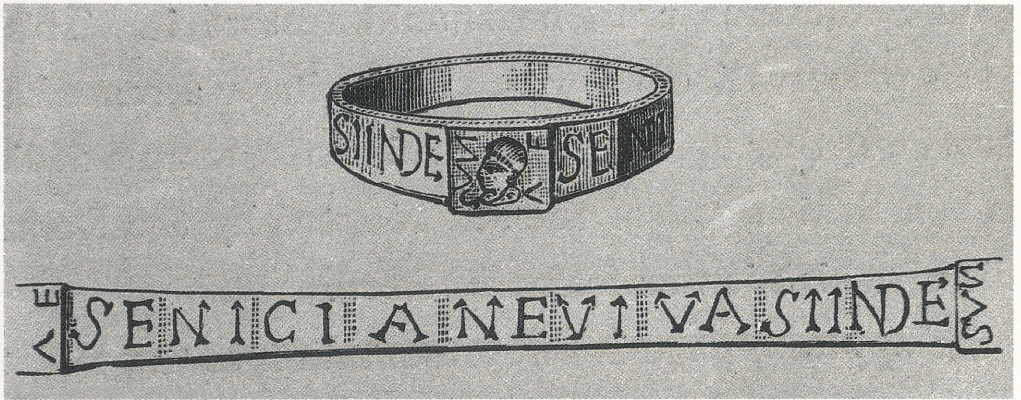


3



4

1-4 Basingstoke, The Vyne. Silchester ring.



5 Silchester ring, line drawing. Composite reconstruction of hoop periphery.

There is a second inscription (CIL VII 1305; RIB 2422.14; see Figs. 4; 5) running counterclockwise round the exterior periphery of the hoop: /SE/NI/CI/A/NE/VI/VA/SII/ND E/ *Seniciane vivas [i]n De(o)*. The hoop uncials typically terminate in darts (→ ↑), an epigraphic embellishment which is conspicuous by its absence in the five letters cut along the bezel border. This disparity in the ornament of bezel and hoop characters might be adduced in support of the inference that different hands executed the two inscriptions.

Three epigraphic anomalies are noteworthy, first the omission of the uppermost horizontal hasta in the E of VENVS, second the double I (IIN/DE instead of IN/DE) and third the omission of the dative O (DE instead of DEO). The first is best explained as an engraver's error – it is less likely an orthographic variant. IIN, on the other hand, is probably not an engraver's error, but instead represents the substitution of EN (E expressed as II), for IN, a change which in Vulgar Latin often occurred in unstressed monosyllables⁴.

DE instead of DEO is not easily explained. It could (and probably does) represent an engraver's error. DE does not correspond to a known spoken form, and hence does not suggest a Vulgar Latin influence – in the latter, final vowels (ō, ō and ū) occasionally were reduced to a simple o, but they were not normally dropped altogether, as has happened here⁵. There is yet another possibility, namely that the missing dative ending could be hidden beneath the bezel which was soldered over the tenth face of the faceted hoop. This would mean that the hoop was originally designed, executed and inscribed as a single unit to be worn by a Christian owner – the addition of the square bezel with its explicitly pagan subject matter would have been a secondary event, occurring sometime after the manufacture of the hoop. As noted above (cf. note 2), a metallurgical test of the hoop and the bezel might have resolved this uncertainty.

Regarding late-Roman finger ring typologies, the Silchester ring is the product of two families that have rather well-documented pedigrees. The one type is the rectangular/square bezel exhibiting figural subjects (with or without accompanying epigraphy); the other is the faceted hoop, either plain, inscribed or iconographic. Below I have listed five bezel (three gold, one silver, one bronze) and five hoop parallels (two gold, one silver, one copper alloy, one bronze)⁶.

⁴ C. SMITH, Vulgar Latin in Roman Britain. In: ANRW II 29,2 (1983) 911.

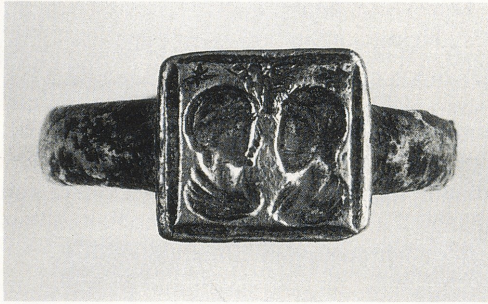
⁵ On *Do* for *Deo* cf. RIB I 1321; 1776; 1781; 1784. Is this a contraction or an error? In any case it does not appear to be VL variant.

⁶ These fall under the category of close parallels and are examples for which I was able to obtain photographs. In presenting this list of parallels I make no claims to completeness – these are just the few parallels that I have been able to assemble for the purposes of this study. – Also relevant bezel parallels, but not included here: 1. *Gabinetto Archeologico dell'Università di Pavia* (present whereabouts unknown). Gold rectangular (?) bezel exhibiting a male profile bust (details obscure). Anepigraphic. Said to be part of a late-Roman treasure (gold coins of Honorius, gold torque, 3 gold finger rings, other unspecified objects) found at Carpignano. S. RICCI, Tesoretto rinvenuto a Carpignano. Riv. Italiana Num. 23, 1910, 154; G. PATRONI, Carpignano. Tesoretto di monete e di oggetti di oro dell'età di Onorio. Scoperto presso la stazione ferroviaria della Certosa di Pavia. Not. Scavi Ant. 1911, 5 (with a very bad photograph). Probable date unknown. – 2. *Berlin-Charlottenburg, Museum für Vor- u. Frühgeschichte* (present whereabouts unknown: "Kriegsverlust"). Gold, rectangular (10.0 × 9.5 mm) bezel exhibiting an engraved male profile bust left. Anepigraphic. Incuse, punched border on three sides. Discovered (January 16, 1851) behind the church at Velp near Arnheim (Netherlands). This ring was part of the Velp Treasure (consisting of 7 gold torques, 2 gold finger rings [HENKEL nos. 99; 264], 3 small gold fragments of finger rings) which was transferred to Berlin. The present whereabouts of the entire Treasure is unknown. HENKEL no. 99 = CH. BECKMANN, Metallfingerringe der röm. Kaiserzeit im Freien Germanien. Saalburg-Jahrb. 26, 1969, Pl. 2. Group IV. Type 23. No. 638. The torques belong to the early fifth century; cf. J. WERNER, Ein germanischer Halsring aus Gellep. In: Festschr. A. Oxé (1938) 26–65. The finger rings are probably to be dated one or more generations earlier, perhaps ca. A.D. 350–400. – 3. *Koblenz, Mittelrhein Museum*. Bronze, rectangular bezel (7.5 × 8.0 mm). Engraved, female profile bust left. Border inscribed (*retro*) on two sides, left and right: VIV/AS. Said to have been found in the Rhine near Koblenz.

The Silchester bezel shares with other late-Roman bezels that are square, rectangular, circular or polygonal the fact that it is both raised above the hoop and that it exhibits the same profile features whether viewed from the front (Figs. 2; 9; 12) or the side (Figs. 4; 10; 13). Although there is some variation in the width of the hoop (which as noted tapers from 6.29 to 4.44 mm), yet in thickness the hoop remains at a uniform 1.48 mm, excepting on the two shoulder facets that frame the bezel: these two rise in



6 London, The British Museum. Gold bezel, top view.



7 Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Frühchristlich-Byzantinische Sammlung. Silver bezel, top view.

a slight taper to connect with the bezel, thus causing a very small increase in the thickness of the hoop. This detail can be seen in the front profile view (Fig. 2). But on principle the Silchester hoop is uniform in thickness, a feature that it shares with numerous late-Roman hoop parallels.

There are numerous bezel and hoop parallels which are more distantly related to the Silchester ring than the examples cited below. Under this rubric (*contentiones longinqua*), the one bezel type that should be mentioned here is found on late-Roman/early Byzantine so-called marriage rings⁷. The pictorial subject matter of this bezel (typi-

Present whereabouts unknown. HENKEL no. 1064. Probable date: 4th c. – Other relevant hoop parallels, not discussed here: 1. *Boston, Mus. of Fine Arts* Inv. 98.803. Eight-sided gold hoop inscribed with sixteen Greek characters. – 2. *Astorga* (findspot). Octagonal gold hoop inscribed with sixteen Greek characters. Present whereabouts unknown. F. FITA, *El anillo gnostico de Astorga*. *Bol. de la Real Acad. de la Hist.* 42, 1903, 144 ff. 5. *Italy*.

⁷ DALTON (1901) 207 ff.; MARSHALL nos. 206; 208; 551; HENKEL nos. 385; 401; 404; 1821; *Dumbarton Oaks* accession no. 47.18 (cf. M. ROSS [ed.], *Dumbarton Oaks Catalogue* 2 [1965] no. 50); N. DEGRASSI,

cally square or rectangular) devolves from the tradition of Roman *dextrarum iunctio* iconography⁸ and depicts two engraved (less frequent: incuse) profile busts, male and female, arranged in an opposing (or confronting) composition, with or without accompanying inscriptional devices. For this type there are many surviving examples, of which I show two: in London (Fig. 6)⁹, a late-fourth or fifth century gold bezel (11.75/12.00 × 12.65 mm) with a Greek cross at the 12:00 o'clock position between the foreheads of the opposing profiles, and in Berlin/Dahlem (Fig. 7) a silver bezel (10.75 × 11.75 mm) with a punched border and stars at the upper right and left corners¹⁰. As for more remote hoop parallels, the *opus interrasile* type¹¹, inscribed in Greek or Latin characters, may be mentioned here. This type is certainly related to the Silchester hoop, however since it is also several steps removed from the archetype (a plain polygonal hoop), photos will not be included here.

Close bezel parallels

- 1 (Figs. 8–10) Trier, Rheinisches Landesmuseum. Inv. no. G1263.
Gold, rectangular bezel (9.00 × 10.40 mm). Engraved female profile bust right. Border inscription (retro) on two sides. Left: VIVAS. Right: MARINA.
Lit.: CIL XIII 3, 10024.237; HENKEL, no. 98.
Probable date: 4th century.
- 2 (Figs. 11–13) Pforzheim, Schmuckmuseum (Sammlung Batke II). Inv. no. 1963.36.
Gold, rectangular bezel (9.1 × 9.9 mm). Engraved, male profile bust left. Plain border. Incuse punch marks at nostril, mouth and chin, three more in a clover pattern at back of the neck below the hair line.
Lit.: H. BATKE, *Ringe aus vier Jahrtausenden* (1963) No. 25.
Probable date: 4th century.
- 3 (Fig. 14) London, Victoria & Albert Museum. Inv. no. M.174.1937.
Gold, rectangular bezel (9.0 × 10.0 mm). Engraved, female profile bust right. Incuse punch marks at eye and throughout the hair. Border inscribed (retro) on four sides: PEREG/RINE/VIVA/S.

Trivulzio (Pavia). Rinvenimento di un tesoretto. Le orificerie tardo-romane di Pavia. *Not. Scavi Ant.* (1941) 1 ff.; E. SCHLICHT, *Ein goldener Ehering des 4. Jhs. von Hummeldorf, Kr. Lingen. Germania* 93, 1965, 381 f. On the Brancaster gold bezel (opposing profile busts, inscription: VIVAS/INDEO) see TOYNBEE (*supra* note 1 [1953]) 19 n. 9 Pl. 4, 6 = HENIG 790. Also see G. VIKAN, *Early Christian and Byzantine Rings in the Zucker Family Collection. Journal Walter's Art Gallery* 45, 1987, 33–39 and *id.*, *Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium. Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 44, 1990, 145–163.

⁸ L. REEKMANS, *La dextrarum iunctio dans l'iconographie romaine et paléochrétienne. Bull. Inst. Hist. Belge de Rome* 31, 1958, 23 ff. On a gold bezel: F. FALK (ed.), *Schmuckmuseum Pforzheim. Von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (1981) no. 75. Also HENKEL nos. 86; 87; 1029–1033; 1869; 1870.

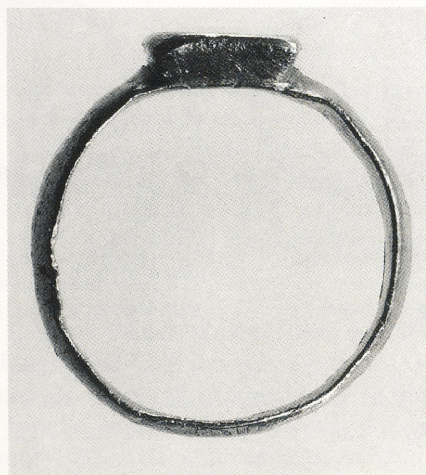
⁹ Reg. no. MLA. AF 304: DALTON (1901) 207; (1912) 127.

¹⁰ Inv. no. 6679: O. WULFF, *Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Amtl. Ber.* 25, 1913, 31 fig. 15; *Dict. Arch. Chrétienne I 2* (1924) 2190 fig. 678. At the 12:00 o'clock position between the foreheads of the two opposing profiles there is something (?). I hesitate to guess what it is; suffice it to say that the bezel needs a cleaning.

¹¹ C. JOHNS, *A Roman Gold Ring from Bedford. Ant. Journal* 61, 1981, 343 ff.; also see *infra* note 17.

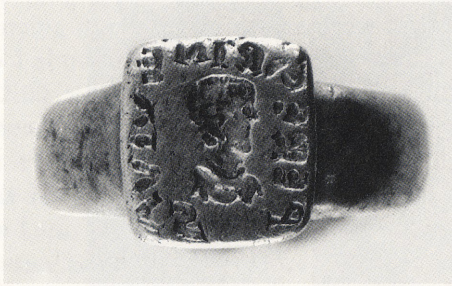


8-10 Trier, Rheinisches
Landesmuseum.
Gold ring with rectangular bezel.



11-13 Pforzheim, Schmuckmuseum.
Gold ring with rectangular bezel.

Purchased at Sotheby's 11.11.1937: dispersed as Lot no. 63 from the Guillou Collection.
Probable date: 4th or 5th centuries.

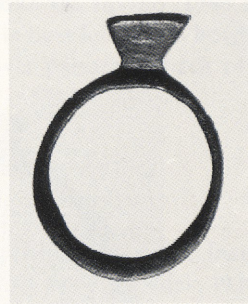


14 London, Victoria & Albert Museum.
Gold bezel, top view.



15 London, The British Museum. Silver bezel, top view.

4 (Fig. 15) London, British Museum. Reg. no. GR 1917,5-1,1204. Franks bequest, 1897.
Silver rectangular bezel (8.35 × 9.35 mm). Engraved, male profile bust left. Border inscribed (retro) on left and right sides: DAT/IVI.
Lit.: MARSHALL, no. 1204.
Probable date: 4th century.



16-17 Munich, Museum für Vor- und
Frühgeschichte.
Bronze ring with rectangular bezel.

17a Oxford, Ashmolean Museum.
Bronze hoop
surmounted by a trapezohedron.

5 (Figs. 16-17) Munich, Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte. Inv. no. 1984. 3554.
Bronze, rectangular (7.0 × 9.0 mm) bezel. Engraved, male profile bust right (Sasanian?). Anepigraphic.
Lit.: G. ZAHLHAAS, *Fingerringe und Gemmen. Sammlung Dr. E. Pressmar. Ausst.-Kat. Prähist. Staatsslg. München 2* (1985) no. 76: "Diese Frisur ähnelt sassanidischen Darstellungen" (a bit vague); *Münzen und Medaillen AG, Basel. Sonderliste 5, Oktober 1983, no. 83*. The ring type (plain hoop surmounted by a high trapezohedron with a rectangular/square bezel face) has western parallels. A good comparandum is Fortnum 320 (Fig. 17a) in Oxford¹². The cork-

¹² Ashmolean 320. Bronze hoop, surmounted by a trapezohedron. Interior hoop diameter: 21.4 mm.

screw curls are reminiscent of Sasanian coiffure, but only remotely; cf. P. O. HARPER/P. MEYERS, *Silver Vessels of the Sasanian Period* 1. Royal Imagery (1981) Pl. 1.

Probable date: 4th or 5th centuries.

Bezel summary

The Silchester bezel and its close parallels exhibit a field format of a rectangle verging on a square. The bezel sits above the hoop and has the same profile configuration whether viewed from the front or the side. As for figural iconography on bezels of this sort, opposing profile busts are a commonplace, but the type represented by the Silchester bezel and its parallels is relatively rare. This type exhibits only one profile bust, male or female, facing right or left, with or without accompanying inscriptional devices. Judged on iconographic and epigraphic grounds, the closest formal parallel to the Silchester bezel is the lost bronze bezel from Koblenz¹³: both bezels exhibit busts left, both display border inscriptions (retro) five Latin characters in length, VEN/VS on the Silchester bezel, VIV/AS on the Koblenz bezel. Judged on their orthographic components, these two words are virtually interchangeable.

The Senicianus bezel is clearly a product of the fourth or fifth centuries. Its place of manufacture is less clear: Romano-British, Gallic or Rhenish settings are all thinkable. As for exact iconographic parallels (regardless of context), I can find none. The profile bust on this bezel appears to be an iconographic hapax (on which more below).

Close hoop parallels

1 (Figs. 18; 19) Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum. Inv. no. N5301.

Gold hoop, eight facets. Interior hoop diameter: 17.00 mm. Hoop width (uniform): 3.25 mm. Hoop thickness (uniform): 1.25 mm. Weight: 3.8 gr. Engraved inscription (CIL XIII 3, 10024.43b): /A/M/O/TE/ME/RI/T/O/ *Amo te merito* (for MERITO/TE/AMO cf. CIL XIII 3, 10024.43a).

Lit.: HENKEL no. 12; H. BORGER, *Das Römisch-Germanische Museum Köln* (1977) no. 309.

Probable date: 3rd (?) or 4th centuries.

2 (Figs. 20–23) London, British Museum. Reg. no. MLA AF 199. Franks Bequest 1897.

Gold hoop, ten facets (first facet is a raised bezel). Interior hoop diameter: 23.00 mm. Maximum exterior hoop diameter: 27.10 mm. Hoop width (uniform): 8.25 mm. Hoop thickness (uniform except for the bezel): 1.25 mm. Bezel: 8.5 × 11.5 × 2.00 mm. Weight: 15.95 gr. Engraved inscription (CIL XIII 3, 10024.236): /MAR/F/I/N/IA/NV/SV/IV/AS/ palm branch with 14 fronds/ *Marfinianus vivas*. Said to have been found 1882 in Jülich near Brackeland.

Lit.: DALTON (1901) 51; HENKEL no. 51.

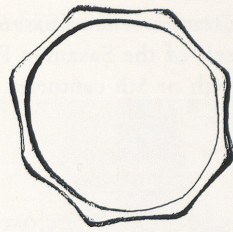
Probable date: 4th century.

Height of the trapezohedron from the point where it joins the hoop: 8.3 mm. Surface dimension of the bezel: 10.9 × 10.4 mm. See C. D. FORTNUM, *On Finger Rings of the Early Christian Period*. *Arch. Journal* 28, 1871, 286 f.

¹³ HENKEL 1064b; cf. *supra* note 6 no. 3.



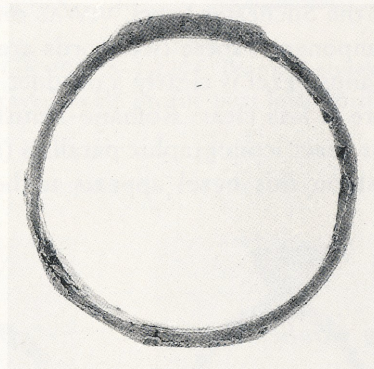
18



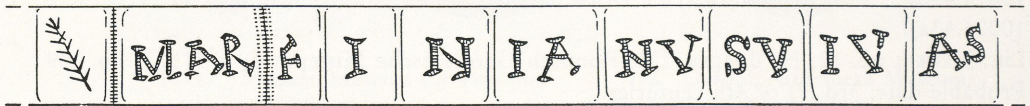
19

A M O T E M E R I T O

18 Cologne, Römisch-Germanisches Museum. Gold hoop. –
 19 Line drawing of front and side profiles. Composite reconstruction of hoop periphery. Scale 2:1.



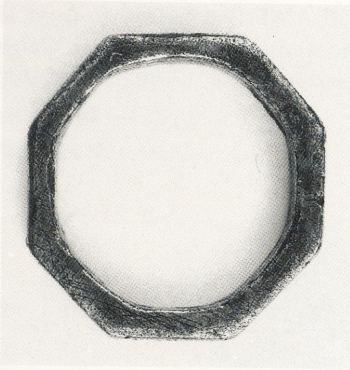
20–22 London, The British Museum.
 MLA AF 304. Gold hoop.



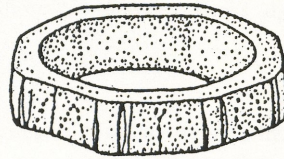
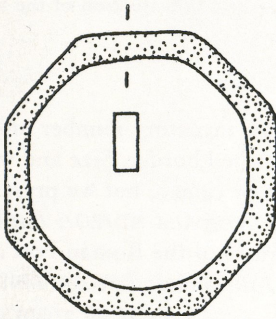
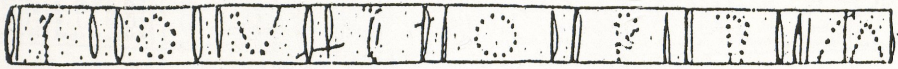
23 London, The British Museum. Composite reconstruction of hoop periphery.

3 (Figs. 24–26) Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum. Inv. no. R102.4.
 Silver hoop, eight facets. Interior hoop diameter: 19.00 mm. Hoop width (uniform): 5.50 mm.
 Hoop thickness (uniform): 2.50 mm. Incuse (punched) inscription (CIL XIII 3, 10024.7): /I/O/
 V/I/O/P/Π¹⁴/M/ *Iovi optim(o)*. Found 1783 in Köngen (Kreis Esslingen) by Baron von Berlichin-
 gen.
 Lit.: HENKEL no. 310.
 Probable date: 3rd or 4th centuries.

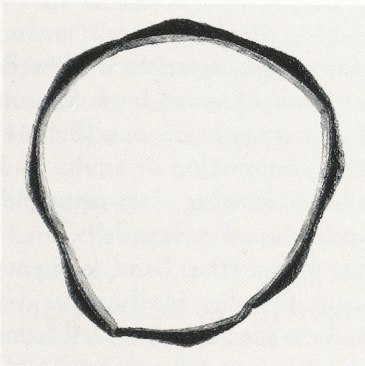
¹⁴ = ligature of T + I.



24-25 Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum. Silver hoop.



26 Stuttgart, Württembergisches Landesmuseum.
Composite reconstruction of hoop periphery.
Scale 2:1.

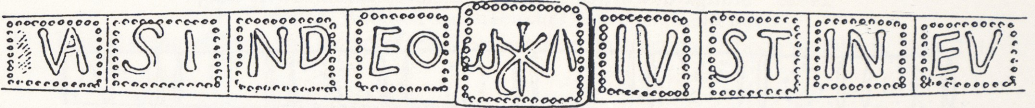
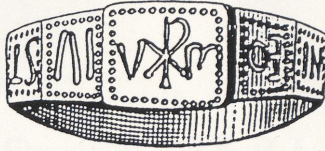


27-29 London, The British Museum.
Copper alloy hoop.



30 London, The British Museum. Composite reconstruction of hoop periphery.

4 (Figs. 27–30) London, British Museum. Reg. no. MLA AF 198. Franks Bequest 1897. Copper alloy hoop, eight facets. Maximum exterior hoop diameter: 26.40 mm. Weight: 3.09 gr. Engraved inscription: /Alpha and Omega framing chi-rho/AR/BO/RIV/IBA/SIN/CRISTO/: *Arbori vivas in Christo*.
Lit.: DALTON (1901) 50.
Probable date: 4th century.



31 Richborough. Line drawing of side profile and composite reconstruction of the hoop periphery.

5 (Fig. 31) Richborough (Kent). Present whereabouts, inventory number unknown. Bronze hoop, nine facets, each facet framed with a punched border. Size and weight unknown. Inscription (not known if the characters were intaglio or cameo, but we presume the former): /Alpha and Omega framing chi-rho (retro) /IV/ST/IN/EV/≡W/SI/ND/EO/: *Instine vivas in deo*.
Lit.: B. W. CUNLIFFE (ed), Fifth Report on the Excavations of the Roman Fort at Richborough, Kent. Reports of the Research Com. of the Soc. of Ant. of London 23 (1968) Pl. 42 no. 160 (object no. 4180).
Probable date: 4th. c.

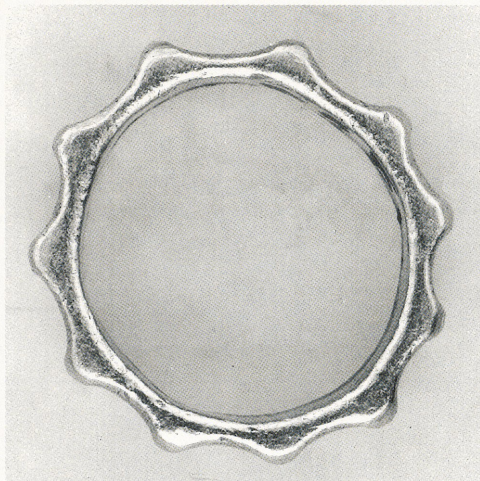
Hoop summary

The hoops just surveyed exhibit the following formal characteristics. Viewed from the front profile, each hoop consists of an interior anulus framed by a concentric polygon, in three cases (Figs. 18–19; 24–26; 27–30) an octagon, in one (Fig. 31) a nonagon and in another (Figs. 20–23) a decagon. This conjunction of anulus and polygon contrasts with the Silchester hoop in that the latter consists – on principle if not in fact – in ten interconnecting line segments roughly equal in length¹⁵.

As for the facets, on the Silchester hoop they are planar (flat) band segments of equal length, width and thickness. This is also true for the Marfinianus vivas hoop (Fig. 20), for the Königen hoop (Figs. 24–26) and, so far as one can tell from a murky photograph, it is also true for the so-called gnostic hoop (*supra* note 7 no. 2) found 1890 near Astorga. But the Cologne hoop (Figs. 18; 19), the copper alloy hoop

¹⁵ HENKEL no. 787 is a close but inexact parallel. Bronze hoop, interior diameter: 18.75 mm. Nonagon, inscribed bezel (4.0 × 5.25 mm) slightly larger than the other eight facets.

(Figs. 27–30) in London and the gold hoop (*supra* note 7 no. 1) in Boston show a different profile feature, namely the joining of elliptical band segments (Henkel's "konkave Mulden") to make up the polygonal outer periphery. In front profile, the exterior periphery of all three examples – Cologne, London, Boston – consists in an octagon formed by the joining of eight elliptical band segments: each facet profile dips



32 Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum. Gold hoop.

slightly at the center and rises at the lateral edges. A good example of this tendency developed to a more extreme extent is the gold hoop (Fig. 32) in Vienna's Art Historical Museum¹⁶. Here there are eleven inscribed facets, each one an elliptical band segment with pronounced ridges: viewed from the front profile the star-like effect of this design is unmistakable¹⁷. Polygonal hoops consisting of intersecting elliptical band segments¹⁸ are closely related to polygonal hoops made up of intersecting horizontal band segments (the hoop type represented by the Silchester ring and closely paralleled in Henkel 787). On the question of typological evolution, it may be argued that the latter preceded the former, although to my knowledge final proof of this theory – which would have to be based on excavated examples from dated find-spots – is wanting.

The Silchester hoop is gold and consists in ten facets, nine of them inscribed with nineteen Latin characters, one of them soldered over with a bezel face. The Marfinia-

¹⁶ Inv. no. VII.955. Internal diameter: 20.00–21.00 mm. Maximum external diameter: 27.00 mm. See R. NOLL, *Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien. Katalog der Antikensammlung 1. Vom Altertum zum Mittelalter* (1974) no. 43 fig. 37.

¹⁷ The same effect is evident in HENKEL 9 (gold opus interrasile dodecagon, each concave facet inscribed with one Greek character) and in DALTON (1901) 49 (also gold, also opus interrasile, each concave facet inscribed with a Latin character).

¹⁸ Another example (unfortunately a published view of its front profile is wanting) is the gold hoop in Columbia, MO (Mus. of Art and Archaeology 72.239). It has sixteen elliptical facets, fourteen of which are inscribed, and a round bezel (marked with a Greek cross) is mounted on the hoop; for details, see J. BIERS, *A Gold Finger Ring and the Empress Eudocia*. *Muse* 23/24, 1989/90, 82 ff.

nus vivas hoop (Figs. 20–23) is also gold and also exhibits ten facets, eight of them inscribed with sixteen Latin characters, one of them (facet 10) iconographic and one (facet 1) soldered over – and inscribed MAR – with a raised bezel. Silchester and Marfinianus are close in gram weight, the former approximately three quarters the weight of the latter. In short, although admittedly there are differences, notably in the treatment of the two bezels, Silchester and Marfinianus are still very close parallels.

On epigraphic grounds, four of the five hoops just surveyed proclaim religious subjects. The example (Figs. 18–19) in Cologne stands alone in proclaiming a secular subject. The Silchester hoop, along with the two examples in London, the one in Richborough and the Austrian example just cited (Fig. 32) invoke a familiar, fourth-century acclamation (*vivas*¹⁹) that was popular, but not used exclusively, in Christian circles. In fact in the Silchester ring as with many other examples of late-Roman jewelry that survives from the western provinces there is at least the presumption of Christian influence. But one must be careful not to overstate the case. First of all, the presentation of evidence set forth in this article is very limited and very selective. Secondly, the surviving corpus of evidence is itself limited and selective, which leads to the third and last point: Christian survivals in late Rhenish, Gallic and British jewelry and in their related late-Roman small finds may have as much to do with the eighteenth and nineteenth century antiquarians who collected this material as it does with any putative demographic (Christian) patterns that can be traced to the regions in question. This is not to deny the obvious fact that there were Christian communities in the Rhineland, in Gaul and in Britain during the late-Roman period. But it is worth asking the question how representative a segment of the overall population they were.

Iconography and epigraphy are at odds in the Silchester ring, and this fact is still the major interpretative crux. Compare, by contrast, the Marfinianus hoop: the Christian acclamation and the palm branch complement one another²⁰. We know from dozens of examples that palm branches and palm fronds were often submitted to *interpretatio christiana*. This is a particularly conspicuous feature of fourth century Christian art and epigraphy. But so far as we are aware, the name on the Silchester bezel was never harmonized with Christian intentions, and furthermore the profile bust on its bezel represents a figure that is unknown in all the potentially relevant, surviving iconographic repertories, whether Greco-Roman, Greco-Egyptian, Christian or Barbarian.

¹⁹ F. GROSSI GONDI, *Trattato di Epigrafia Cristiana* (1920; ²1968) s.v. *Indice epigrafico Latino*.

²⁰ P. BRUUN, *Symboles, signes et monogrammes*. *Acta Inst. Romani Finlandiae* 1, 2, 1963, 73 ff. s.v. *olea, palma, ramus olea*. In early Christian lore the symbolic association of the palm (phoenix dactylifera) is tied to the tautologous τὰ βάλια τῶν φοινίκων at JOH. 12, 13. Pagan associations were with Victory and Apollo on Delos. Palm fronds and palm trees in Hellenistic Judaism: E. R. GOODENOUGH, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* 13 (1968) s.v. *index of subjects*.



33 The Silchester ring, bezel.

THE SENICIANUS BEZEL: ICONOGRAPHY AND EPIGRAPHY

The bust profile (Fig. 33) on the Silchester bezel is made up of three superimposed sectors that are roughly equal in size: the middle third consists of the face proper, the upper third of the headdress, and the lower third corresponds to the neck and shoulder areas in a human subject. The image is probably intended to represent a human subject in profile facing left, although in the details there is enough ambiguity to throw some doubt on this interpretation.

The face includes a nose that is exaggerated by enlargement and that terminates in a large, drill-cut socket that conveys the sense of a flaring nostril. The eye is also oversized, and it too consists of a deep, drill-cut socket conveying a stunned, fixated or staring quality. The left ear is rendered as a large, abstract ellipsis surrounding the drilled ear canal and situated at the back of the head. The engraved mouth, by contrast, is a shallow groove at the end of the oversized nose. The mouth appears pinched or pursed. This is a strange face. It has a half-human, half-animal quality.

The upper third of the head exhibits an elliptical band stretched across the lower forehead – here evidently a diadem is the intended subject. Above it are five large, drill-

cut roundels. These could be meant as beads, pearls or metal bosses sewn onto the diadem fabric or its leather backing. Rising in a flaring pattern from the headband and the roundels is a sequence of crescent-shaped, pointed staves. It is not clear what this arrangement is supposed to evoke, whether feathers, bristles, quills or spiky bunches of hair swept back in a fan-shaped pattern.

The lower third of the bust is even more perplexing. There are two short horizontal cuts at the neck, below and slightly left of the non-existent ear lobe. Possibly these two grooves are intended as torques. The lower of the two is joined to an oblique cut that is part of an anchor-shaped pattern enclosing the lower third of the bust. Between the shank and left fluke there are two drill-cut sockets, and in the same location right of the shank there is one drill-cut socket. This sequence of details defining the lower third of the bust, consisting of five cuts with a graver and three with a drill point, is difficult to interpret. Conceivably the three sockets could be intended as breasts, but otherwise there is nothing here that reminds us of body parts.

Overall, the effect is primitive and dramatic. The exaggerated facial features (oversize nose, flared nostril, stunned and fixated eye, pinched mouth, boomerang ear) are framed between a flaring headdress and an anchor-shaped torque. One can imagine a barbarian tribal chieftain decked out in ceremonial regalia, or with a bit more effort one might conjure the image of some unknown Celtic animal god. The rodent-like quality of this face is quite compelling. But what we cannot imagine, at least not by any of the iconographic standards that are attested in Greco-Roman tradition, is that this image represents Venus. Stylistically, this profile bust is obviously a long way from Greco-Roman naturalism. And also iconographically it stands apart. The rendering is abstract, linear and two-dimensional. Surface patterning is especially conspicuous in the lively display that runs across the top of the head. For lack of a better explanation we must presume, I think, that the Silchester bezel reflects an indigenous British or Romano-Celtic artistic tradition which had continued to exist on the periphery during the Roman occupation of England, but which then gradually began to reassert itself during the fifth century as the Romans abandoned the Island.

Regarding the headdress, which clearly intensifies the dramatic effect, it is worth mentioning that the Celts held boars to be sacred animals²¹. Celtic craftspeople, notably metal chasers, often invoked the image of the boar's dorsal bristles instead of the tusks, as one might expect, in order to symbolize fertility and strength. To Celts the bristle evidently conveyed the same or similar values as those prompted by the bull's horns in the Bronze Age Aegean. If the image on the Silchester bezel is redolent of Celtic pictorial values, as I believe it is, it might be reasonable to suppose that the staves rising from the diadem were intended as boar's bristles. In addition, threeness was an iconographic commonplace of Celtic art both in Britain and on the Continent.

²¹ Cf. M. GREEN, *The Gods of the Celts* (1986) 179 ff.; EAD., *Theriomorphism*. In: J. MUNBY/M. HENIG (eds.), *Roman Life and Art in Britain* 2. BAR 41 (1977) 297 ff. According to Posidonius (at DIOD. SIC. 30, 2-3), Celtic warriors fixed boars' tusks to their helmets. Gaulish Mercury bore the epithet *Moccus* (Welsh *moch* = pigs). Later reminiscences: Diarmaid's hunt of the magic boar at Beann Ghulban (Benbulbin, County Sligo) and the Welsh tale of Culhwch and Olwen. For an illustration of a small Celtic bronze cult chariot showing a warrior in pursuit of a boar, cf. P. MAC CANA, *Celtic Mythology* (1970) 112.

In the lower third of the Silchester bust the triple sockets inserted between shank and flukes could be construed as an appeal to Celtic triplism.

The closest iconographic comparanda that I can find are numismatic, namely certain Gallic and British potin obverses of pre-Roman date²², and on the other chronological end, certain sceatta obverses of post-Roman date²³. But neither of these comparisons is very exact. Actually one of the more promising lines of research that I have not been able to pursue comes from the Bledisloe Cabinet at Lydney Park on the west bank of the Severn in Gloucestershire. In 1928/29, the two Wheelers excavated the Romano-Celtic cult center (Figs. 34) on Camp Hill at Lydney²⁴, and there they discovered two major coin hoards, one beneath the floor of the Bath House, the other beneath the Temple Floor. Unfortunately, published photographs of these hoards, which include both Roman and local, non-Roman issues, are woefully inadequate, but at least this much is clear: among the local issues, evidently struck at an unknown Gloucestershire mint, there are some striking obverse parallels to the Senicianus bezel image. The diadem, the roundels above it, the staves in the fan-shaped pattern and the exaggerated facial features are all in evidence in some of the obverses within the Bledisloe Cabinet. It would be good to have a critical catalogue of the entire corpus with detailed photographs of each coin.

The cutting of a metal bezel and of a coin die require identical techniques and tools, and hence for heuristic purposes one might speculate that the anonymous craftsman who cut the Silchester bezel was also a local cutter of coin dies, a *sculptor monetarum*²⁵ employed in an as yet unidentified non-Roman mint located somewhere in late-Roman Gloucestershire. This is a plausible hypothesis²⁶. Even after their Gallic and British conquests, the Romans allowed tribal mints to continue in the manufacture and distribution of aes coinage which was used for small exchanges on local food and dry goods markets. Silchester (Calleva Atrebatum), for example, where our ring was last deposited, was itself the civitas capital of the self-governing Atrebate community in Roman England, and in this capacity throughout the entire Roman occupation Silchester was permitted to issue base-metal coinage for distribution and use in local markets within west Sussex, west Surrey, Hampshire, Berkshire and northeastern Wiltshire. Similarly, on the mainland, the Parisii, a Gallo-Belgic tribe ethnically relat-

²² E.g. Münzen und Medaillen, Liste 498 (April, 1987) no. 43: Gallic Leuci. Obv: head left, diadem and elliptical staves. Rev: boar right with dorsal bristles prominently displayed.

²³ Cf. D. M. METCALF, A Stylistic Analysis of the Porcupine Sceattas. Num. Chronicle 7,6, 1966, 179 ff.; ID., A Hoard of "Porcupine" Sceattas. American Num. Soc. Mus. Notes 15, 1969, 101 ff.

²⁴ R. E. M. WHEELER/T. V. WHEELER, Report on the Excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire. Reports of the Research Comm. of the Soc. of Ant. of London 9 (1932).

²⁵ On the nomenclature (epigraphically attested) of Roman coin manufacture, cf. H. V. PETRIKOVITS, Die Spezialisierung des röm. Handwerks. In: H. JAHNKHUHN (Hrsg.), Das Handwerk in vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit 1 (1981) 120: Münzprägung.

²⁶ On connections between ancient die cutters and gemstone cutters, cf. C. C. VERMEULE, Some Notes on Ancient Dies and Coining Methods (1954) 30; 46; R. GÖBL, Antike Numismatik (1978) s.v. Sculptor, Charakter, Stempelschnitt, Matrize, Münztechnik, Münzamt; this is the underlying presumption which guided GÖBL, Der Sasanidische Siegelkanon. Handb. der Mittelasiatischen Num. 4 (1973). In her recent study of late-Roman, Gallic intaglios found west of the Rhine (Intailles et camées de l'époque romaine en Gaule. Gallia suppl. 48 [1988] 60 ff.) H. GUIRAUD makes the same connection; also cf. A. KRUG, Trierer Zeitschr. 53, 1990, 379.

ed to the Atrebates, were allowed to continue in the manufacture and distribution of their own base-metal denominations, quite apart from Roman intervention or supervision.

There is one small detail which may speak for the hypothesis that our bezel scalptor was a local die cutter. The Senicianus bezel exhibits a profile left. All of the regional obverses from fourth and fifth century contexts show profiles right. But the ring bezel is a seal or signet, functionally the equivalent of a coin die, and hence it produces in impression a profile right. In other words the final product of the Silchester bezel, namely its impression in wax or clay, would have been consistent with what the locals were accustomed to seeing on their base metal obverses.

To summarize, the image on the ring bezel appears to reflect a craft and style tradition which is neither Greek nor Roman. The *scalptor* who engraved the bezel may have been a member of an indigenous tribal community, perhaps located in Hampshire or one of the surrounding districts. This person may also have been a die cutter by trade, no doubt employed in a local non-Roman mint. If the time of manufacture was the late fourth or early fifth century, as it seems to have been, then this was a time in which Roman control of the island was waning and the reassertion of indigenous ethnic controls waxing.

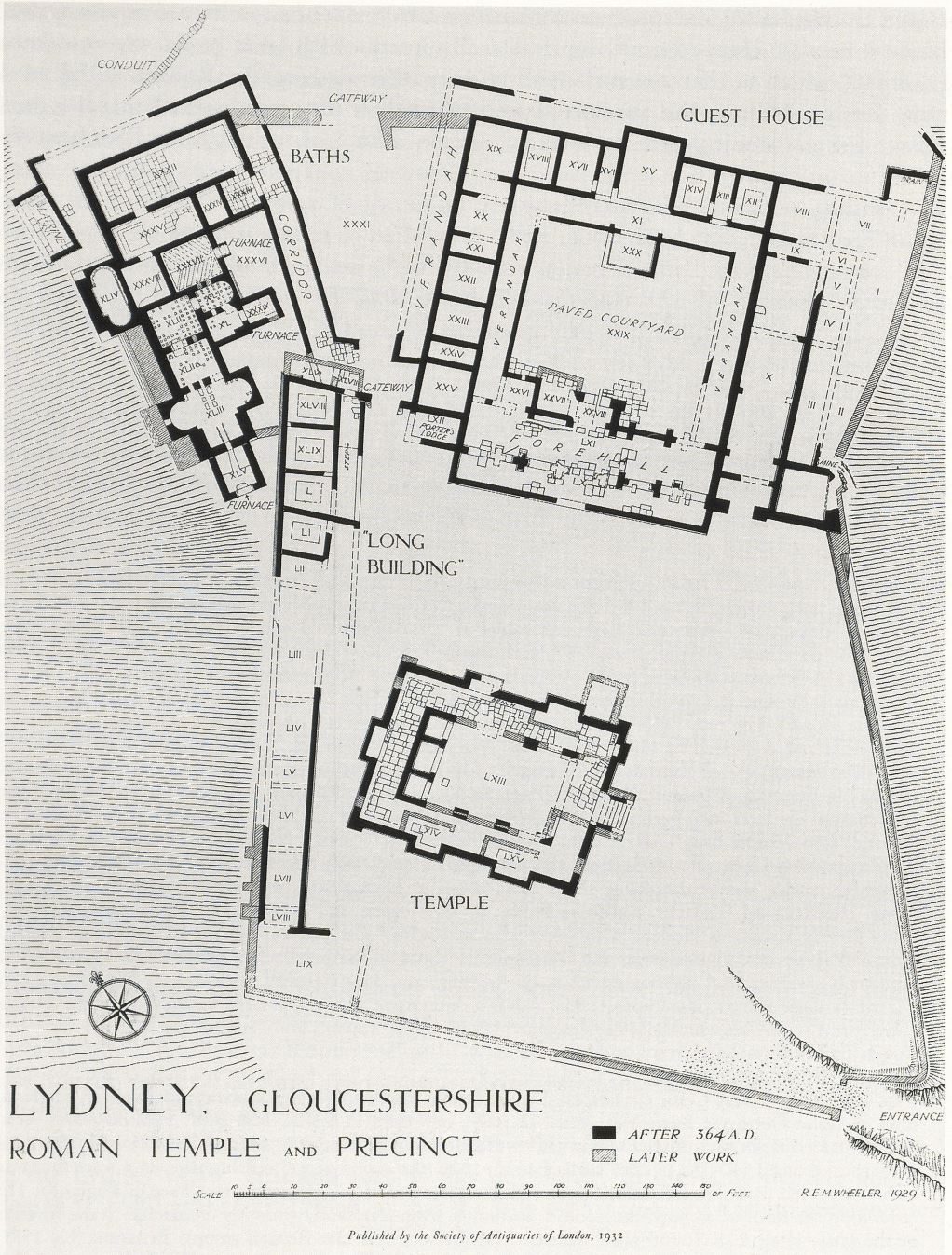
THE LYDNEY CURSE TABLET AND THE RING

The facts, which are few and well-known, can be briefly summarized. First the *defixio* (CIL VII 140; ILS 4730; RIB I 306; A. AUDOLLENT [ed.], *Defixionum tabellae* [1904] 106)²⁷. It is a lead *tabula ansata* (2 1/8" × 3 1/8" × 2/3") which may have come to light in 1805 during the excavations of the above-mentioned Romano-Celtic cult center on Camp Hill at Lydney Park²⁸. The latter is approximately 130 km northwest of Silchester where the finger ring was found in 1786, or earlier. The tablet (*non vidi*) is said to be housed in the Lydney Park collection which is the property of His Grace, Lord Bledisloe.

On paleographic grounds, the tablet could date to the fourth or fifth centuries, although on this internal criterion a firm *terminus* – either *a quo* or *ad quem* – is impossible. The findspot is not recorded, but it would be reasonable to suppose that the tablet was originally deposited in or near the Temple of Nodens (Figs. 34) which was built, coincident with Julian's pagan revival, A.D. 363–367. There is no material evidence that Nodens – perhaps better Mars Nodens – was worshipped on Camp Hill before this date. Hence, on this external and more reliable criterion, it might be argued that the tablet's likely *terminus a quo* is the middle to late 360's. For the other

²⁷ Most recently discussed in C. A. FARAONE/D. OBBINK (eds.), *Magika Hiera* (1991) 84; J. G. GAGER (ed.), *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (1992) no. 99.

²⁸ Principle investigator: Charles Bathurst. The results of this excavation can be found in W. H. BATHURST/C. W. KING, *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park* (1879).



34 Lydney Park, Temple of Nodens, Bath complex, Guest House and Long Building.

end of the chronological spectrum we have no hard evidence. Archaeology attests that Nodens was worshipped on Camp Hill well into the fifth century, in any case later than 410, which is the conventional and unreliable date of the Roman withdrawal from Britain. In sum, the absolute date of the tablet is best subsumed under a *'non liquet'*; but archaeology points in the direction of a late fourth/early fifth century date.

The reading of the tablet is as follows:

DEVO²⁹/NODENTI³⁰ SILVIANVS/ANILVM³¹ PERDEDIT³²/DEMEDIAM³³ PARTEM/
DONAVIT NODENTI/INTER QVIBVS NOMEN/SENICIANI³⁴ NOLLIS³⁵/PETMITTAS³⁶
SANITA/TEM DONEC PERFERA(T) VSQVE TEMPLUM [NO]/DENTIS.

To the god Nodens. Silvianus has lost a ring. Half of it (i.e. half of its value in money) he has given to Nodens (i.e. to the sanctuary on Camp Hill). Among those who are called Senicianus³⁷, do not allow good health until he brings it (the ring) to the Temple of Nodens.

²⁹ Before the back vowels "o" and "u" the intervocalic "v" was commonly suppressed from the late Republic onward. Is "DEVO" the vulgar Latin equivalent of "DEO"? Probably not, cf. SMITH (*supra* note 4) 917: "DEVO" is "DEO" with a hypercorrect "V", and (*contra* J. R. R. TOLKIEN in: WHEELER/WHEELER [*supra* note 24] 132 ff.) it is not a celtic form.

³⁰ The name is attested in two other Lydney inscriptions. RIB I 305: *D(eo) M(arti) Nodonti*; RIB I 307: *Deo Nudente M(arti)*. The only other existing attestation is found on the pedestal of a statuette from Cocksand Moss and dedicated to Mars, RIB I 616: *Deo Marti Nodonti* (cf. Journal Roman Stud. 47, 1957, 227). The etymology of the name is disputed; for an informative survey of opinions, cf. J. CASEY, Nodons in Britain and Ireland. Zeitschr. Keltische Philol. u. Volksforsch. 40, 1984, 1 ff. The linguistic affiliation to the later Irish hero name *Nuada Artgatlán* (Nuada of the Silver Arm, King of the Tuatha dé Danaan, who became King Lear) is commonly assumed (e.g. TOLKIEN [*supra* note 29] 132 ff.), but there are also possible Germanic connections, for example to the Gothic verbal stem *niutan* (to acquire), *ganiutan* (to catch), *nuta* (fisherman); cf. H. WAGNER, Zur Etymologie von keltisch Nodons. Ir. Nuada, Kymr. Nudd/Lludd. Zeitschr. Keltische Philol. u. Volksforsch. 41, 1986, 180 ff. The inscriptional evidence clearly associates Nodens with Mars who in Tacitus' *interpretatio romana* of barbarian religion (Germ. 9, 1–3) was a member of the Germanic trinity along with Mercury and Hercules. At Lydney Nodens is a warrior god associated with water (healing) and dogs (fertility, hunting).

³¹ VL for *anulum*? SMITH (*supra* note 4) 934: *lum* is a diminutive suffix appended to *an*. One of the Vulgar Latin forms is *anellum* which leads to "anneau" (Fr.) "anillo" (Span.) and "anello" (Ital.).

³² Vulgar Latin for *perdidit*.

³³ Vulgar Latin for *dimidiam*.

³⁴ This is probably a west-Celtic cognomen. I count twenty-three epigraphic attestations, seven in England, nine in Gallo-Germanic territories, three in Italy, one each in Spain, Noricum, Pannonia and Asia. A. HOLDER, *Alteltischer Sprachschatz* (1896–1913) s.v. – The English testimonies: CIL VII 1305 (the Basingstoke ring); 140 (the Lydney tablet); 1336; 1024 (the stamp of a Gaulish potter on a ware that was either imported from France or manufactured in a branch officina located somewhere in England); 119 (found on the floor of a church at Kennys, two miles from Caerleon, evidently connected to the fortress at the latter site); 211 (found southwest of Manchester, near the Roman camp); Britannia 12, 1981, 370 ff. no. 6 (Bath curse tablet no. 8, also R. S. O. TOMLIN, *The Curse Tablets*. In: B. CUNLIFFE [ed.], *The Temple of Sulis Minerva at Bath 2. The Finds from the Sacred Spring* [1988] 118 f.); Britannia 13, 1982, 404 f. no. 7 (Bath curse tablet no. 98, also TOMLIN [*supra*] 232 f.).

³⁵ Vulgar Latin for *nolis*; *nollis petmittas* = *nolis permittere*.

³⁶ Not Vulgar Latin for *permittas* but instead an erroneous form. SMITH (*supra* note 4) 897; 934.

³⁷ In other words, until the ring is returned "damn the whole clan". For similar examples of broad curses directed at all persons bearing a particular nomen cf. A. AUDOLLENT (ed.), *Defixionum Tabellae* (1904) *passim*.

This quasi-judicial³⁸ scenario is a familiar one, often evoked in both British and continental curse tablets. Having sustained a loss in the form of a theft, Silvanus seeks redress. He does not mention the place where the theft occurred, but the Lydney Bath House is the likely setting. He would have disrobed there and would have put aside his cloak and tunic, his sandals and his other personal belongings including his money purse and his jewelry. Silvanus may well have been the victim of bathhouse thieves (*fures balnearii*³⁹). They were legion in all periods of antiquity, and for obvious reasons they were especially alert to bathers who left unattended valuables in bath houses. Silvanus names the Seniciani ("the whole damned family") as perpetrators. The implication is clear: he did not know which one of them was the perpetrator, but he had no doubt that someone within this accursed clan was guilty.

As for efforts to correlate the Seniciani mentioned in the tablet and Senicianus mentioned on the hoop of the Silchester ring, there is no way to prove a connection. At the same time, it is absurd to insist that there cannot be a connection⁴⁰. The name appears in the same spelling (Senicianus, not Senecianus) in both pieces of evidence, and it appears in five other British attestations. In two of them, curses no. 8 and 98 at Bath, Seniciani are identified by name along with other persons suspected of having stolen silver coins.

In other words, an apparent pattern is beginning to emerge, and if in the future more thieving Seniciani come to light, for example at Uley where a large corpus of curse tablets remains to be deciphered, then the pattern might be further confirmed. Tentatively, one might formulate the hypothesis thusly: the Seniciani were a family of Romano-Celtic yeggmen who practised their art at healing sites and sanctuaries (and no doubt anywhere else as opportunity beckoned) west of London to the Severn. One member of the tribe bagged a big catch in the gold ring which he filched in the bath house at Lydney. This same fellow flirted with Christianity in an off-beat form. Perhaps he is the same person who is mentioned in Bath curse 98 for having stolen silver coins. In tablet 98, the victim Annianus prefaces his complaint by acknowledging that he did not know if the perpetrator was pagan or Christian (... *seu gen[tili]s seu Ch[r]istianus quaecumque...*), and this small detail comports with the confused (and confusing) character of the Silchester ring and the demonstrated syncretism of Roman paganism and of Christianity mixed with Celtic paganism in late Roman Britain. Simply put, this was a period in British history in which all three were closely intermingled. Traditional Roman religion was alive – but perhaps on the decline – in late fourth century England, indigenous Celtic religion was reasserting itself, and Christianity was also gaining a foothold.

In summary, the Silchester ring could represent Silvanus' stolen anulus as mentioned in the Lydney tablet. Nothing forbids this possibility. In the same degree, nothing demands it. What is clear, I think, is that the ring points to a late Roman reemergence

³⁸ H. S. VERSNEL, *Beyond Cursing. The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers*. In: FARAONE/OBBINK (*supra* note 27) 60 ff.; also J. GAGER (*supra* note 27) *passim*, esp. 116 ff.; 175 ff.

³⁹ Testimonies: H. BLÜMNER, *Die röm. Privataltertümer* (1911) 433; R. S. O. TOMLIN, *Stolen Goods*. In: CUNLIFFE (*supra* note 34) 79 ff.

⁴⁰ As argued, for example, by HAVERFIELD (*supra* note 1).

of Celtic pictorial tradition joined in some way – which only Senicianus and his ilk could understand – with Christian intentions. What our Christian Senicianus saw in the bezel image and what sense he made of the accompanying inscription is anybody's guess, but perhaps Jocelyn Toynbee was on the right track⁴¹: he may have heard that Christianity had something to do with love and he may have known just enough about Venus to connect her on amorous grounds with the new religiosity.

Abbreviations

- DALTON (1901) O. M. DALTON, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities and Objects from the Christian East* (1901).
- DALTON (1912) O. M. DALTON, *Catalogue of Finger Rings. Early Christian, Byzantine, Teutonic, Mediaeval and Later* (1912).
- DALTON (1915) O. M. DALTON, *Catalogue of the Engraved Gems of the Post-Classical Periods* (1915).
- HENKEL F. HENKEL, *Die römischen Fingerringe der Rheinlande und der benachbarten Gebiete* (1913).
- MARSHALL F. W. MARSHALL, *The British Museum. Catalogue of the Finger Rings, Greek, Etruscan and Roman in the Departments of Antiquities* (1907).

Picture credits

- 1–5; 33 Roy Faulkner, Basingstoke, The Vyne
- 6; 15; 20–22; 27–29 The British Museum, London
- 7 Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
- 8–10 Rheinisches Landesmuseum Trier
- 11–13 Schmuckmuseum, Pforzheim
- 14 Victoria & Albert Museum, London
- 16–17 Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, München
- 17a Robert Wilkins, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
- 18 Römisch-Germanisches Museum, Köln
- 24–25 Württembergisches Landesmuseum Stuttgart
- 32 Kunsthistorisches Museum, Wien
- 34 R. E. M. Wheeler/T. V. Wheeler, *Report on the excavation of the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman Site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire* (1932). By permission Society of Antiquaries
- Drawings
- 19 H. Stöcker, RGM Köln
- 23; 30 James M. Farrant, The British Museum, London
- 26 Martin Luik

⁴¹ TOYNBEE (*supra* note 1 [1953]) 20 f.