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A Graffito from the Roman Villa at Witcombe, near Gloucester

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NOTES

A GRAFFITO FROM THE ROMAN VILLA AT WITCOMBE, NEAR GLOUCESTER

The Roman villa at Witcombe is an Ancient Monument under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works and during 1950 a limited programme of work was carried out on various portions of the site in an attempt to catch up with the arrears of preservation. Part of this programme consisted of the lifting of the tessellated pavement in Room 5 on Lysons' plan¹ which was in an advanced state of dilapidation, consolidation of the hypocaust beneath, and replacement of the repaired pavement on a new cement bed. The writer supervised this work from an archaeological aspect and the following details were recorded.

Beneath the pavement was a bed of friable pink cement, 4 inches thick, and when this was cleared the main flooring was exposed. The latter was seen to consist of large slabs, generally of baked clay but occasionally of stone, approximately 2 feet square. The slabs rested at their corners on piers composed of tiles mortared together, each pier being capped with an inverted *tegula* to give greater support to the slabs and having a second *tegula*, with flanges upward, beneath it to act as footing. The piers were set in rows, each approximately 15 inches from its neighbour and containing 13 tiles, approximately 8½ inches square and 1½ inches thick. In the dismantling of one of the piers preparatory to relaying, one of its constituent tiles was

¹ *Archaeologia*, xix, 178 ff.

found to bear a *graffito* (PLATE VI) on which Mr R. P. Wright, F.S.A., to whom it was submitted, reports as follows¹:—

‘Dr I. A. Richmond examined it carefully yesterday and we read SILVRF (*Silur fecit*) which accords well with its discovery in the Gloucester area. Richmond quotes an example of *Silur* as the singular form from a Spanish inscription, *C.I.L.*, ii, 5923

The *graffito* has about three secondary strokes on the 2nd, 3rd and 5th letters. The S has two tails, and has been cut after the 2nd letter was made. The 3rd letter is a cursive L, and the R and F are good. The V is ligatured to the R by the serif at the bottom.’

In the north-east corner of the room, the hypocaust piers were not of tiles but in five instances capitals and bases of stone columns and in one instance a mortar-filled box-tile had been used. The fragments of columns were cut in the local oolite and displayed careful workmanship; they are very like other fragments displayed on the site and, by their re-use, imply that Room 5 belongs to one of the later phases of reconstruction in the villa’s history which had been noted by Mrs E. M. Clifford, F.S.A., in her excavations of 1938.²

F. H. THOMPSON

WOODCHESTER ROMAN VILLA

The pavements of Rooms ten, twelve, thirteen and a portion of Corridor two, as numbered on Samuel Lysons’ plan³ of the Villa published in 1797, were uncovered for a short period in July and August, 1954.

With the permission of Mr Nelson Bower of The Old Priory,

¹ Cf. *J.R.S.*, xli, 143.

² *J.R.S.*, xxix, 217.

³ *An Account of Roman Antiquities Discovered at Woodchester in the County of Gloucester*. Samuel Lysons, F.R.S. & A.S. 1797.



PLATE VI

facing p. 172