

Inscribed Stone found at Sea-Mills,

ON THE RIVER AVON, TWO MILES BELOW BRISTOL,
WITHIN THE ROMAN STATION.

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SEA-MILLS, probably the ancient Roman station called *Trajectus*, lies on the east bank of the river Avon, on the line of the Roman road from *Aquæ Solis*, or Bath, to *Caerwent* (*Venta Silurum*). It is mentioned in the *xiv* *Iter* of Antoninus, which beginning at *Venta Silurum* (*Caerwent*), terminates at *Calleva* (*Silchester*). The site of "*Trajectus*" is not quite agreed upon by antiquaries, and *Sea-mills* has been supposed to be the ancient "*Abone*" as well as the "*Trajectus*;" but the fact of a Roman station, and probably an anchorage for vessels in Roman times existing there, is beyond a doubt. Within the rampart of this station was found in the summer of 1873 an inscribed stone lying under the turf, with its face upon the surface of the rock, and not being distinguished from it, was unfortunately broken into four pieces. When turned over it was found to be inscribed, and to contain on its surface the figure of a female head and bust, around which is a semi-circle, and on each side the representation of a dog and a cock, above the head is a cross, formed like the *St. Andrew's Cross*, but with a stem between the two lower portions. The head has earrings in the ears. The words underneath the rude drawing are—

S P E S
C . S E N T I .

with a leaf stop on each side of the upper line.

The upper portion of the stone is angular, like the ordinary sepulchral memorials. The lower portion, which probably contained the remainder of the inscription, has not yet been found.

Unfortunately the first letter of the second line is rendered doubtful by the fissure passing through the upper part, which leaves it somewhat doubtful if it be an O or a C.

The stone appears to be a memorial stone to S P E S, the wife or child of *Caius Sentius*. It is probably Christian, and the date about the 3rd century. The reasons for this opinion are as follows:—*Spes* is a female name. (See Gruter, p. 608, No. 6, *Asinia Spes*; and p. 1818, No. 11, *Torania Spes*). The cross over the head is a Christian symbol. The cock and the dog are Christian also. (See Aringhi 11, 614; *Fabretti Ins. Ant.*, p. 741, n. 505; *M. Peret* iv., p. xvi. 29; also, *Dict. de Antiq. Christiennes*, par M. L'Abbé Martigny).

The notice of antiquaries was first called to this stone by Mr. Nicholls, city librarian, Bristol, who gave a notice of it in *The Bristol Times and Mirror*, and also a sketch, and an opinion was expressed in a letter quoted, that the inscription was *Mithraic*; but the symbols upon careful examination, appear to be much more Christian than *Mithraic*, the reasons for which opinion were given at the evening meeting at Wells in August. Many thanks are due to Mr. Nicholls for calling attention to this monument, which is probably a Roman Christian tablet, and presents a pleasant instance of paternal or of conjugal affection.