

FINGER RING

Unique ID: HESH-073E56

Object type certainty: Certain

Workflow status: Awaiting validation

An inscribed gold finger ring with decayed niello inlaid panels and central stone setting that has lost the stone. The ring dates to the late post-medieval period. It is inscribed with several dates 1738 on the exterior of the hoop and 1736 and 1740 on the interior. It is therefore not covered by either the Treasure Act (1996) or the Treasure Trove Laws as the ring is not more than 300 years old and that it cannot be proved to be buried with the intention of recovery. As such it has been recorded here by the PAS and returned to the finder.

The finger ring is oval in plan and D shaped in cross section. It is likely that the ring has been slightly squashed (compressed) and the hoop was originally more circular in plan. The ring measures 21.6mm length and 17.7mm width, the hoop is 3.1mm high and 1.9mm thick. It weighs 3.24 grams.

The exterior face of the hoop of the ring is faceted being divided into five separate panels. Each of these panels is formed from an elongated oval (in the broad shape of a scroll) that tapers and expands uniformly. The inscription is cut into each of these five panels; by the material around the letters being cut away so that they stand out in relief. The lower part of each of these cells is deliberately roughened and the remnants of decayed niello are present. Originally this would have created a striking contrast between the golden letters on a black field. The construction of this design is very well achieved and the craftsmanship of the piece is both well executed and shows much skill. All the letters are even and well shaped. The inscription on the outer hoop reads clockwise from the bezel: H : D : / : OB : / :: 14 :: / : JAN : / 1738 /. The five panels are separated from each other by a series horizontally positioned opposing C shaped scrolls. The bezel of the ring is broken and the central stone setting is lost. It seems that the stone was originally secured by a series of crimps and claws. These have been removed and a fresh broken surface is present. The interior surface has a depressed circular recess into which the rear of the stone would have been set. The reverse of the setting - on the interior setting is decorated with two scallop shells. The interior of the ring is plain and smooth. A series of two inscriptions are present, both in the same italic script. These mark the deaths of two other people: W. D. ob 7 nov 1736 followed by E.G. ob 19 Jul: 1740. There are no makers or hall marks present.

Apart from the damage of the bezel and the loss of niello the ring is in good condition. The interior of the ring is slightly worn and the overall shape has been slightly distorted through wear. There is also some damage from abrasion in the plough soil. This style of ring is known as a 'Mourning Ring.' This style was relatively popular in both the Georgian and Victorian periods. A parallel for a similar mourning ring can be seen in Henig and Scarisbrick 'Finger Rings' pages 66-67 example 3. This ring has similar niello inlay but very different lettering and detail. Another good parallel can be seen on the PAS database from Bridgnorth, Shropshire (HESH-E35784).

The fact that this ring commemorates three separate deaths is rare. It is likely that the ring mourns three people from a family group, two of which share the same surname, the third possibly being blood related but with a separate surname. The sets of dates are relatively close together with the date on the exterior ring being the main of 1738. However, it is likely that the two internal inscriptions were made at the same time - possibly suggesting that either they were added in 1740 after the ring's construction. A more likely alternative is that the ring was made in or after 1740 and

the three inscribing of the three dates are contemporary. Ongoing research has been undertaken with the records office in Hereford and also Hereford Cathedral Archive to identify these three people who are likely to have lived in the Hereford area.

Find of note status

This is a find of note and has been designated: County / local importance

Class: Mourning

Subsequent actions

Subsequent action after recording: Returned to finder

Chronology

Broad period: POST MEDIEVAL

Subperiod from: Late

Period from: POST MEDIEVAL

Date from: Circa AD 1738

Date to: Circa AD 1740

Dimensions and weight

Quantity: 1

Length: 21.6 mm

Height: 3.1 mm

Width: 17.7 mm

Thickness: 1.9 mm

Weight: 3.24 g

Personal details

This information is restricted for your access level.

Materials and construction

Primary material: Gold

Manufacture method: Cast

Completeness: Incomplete

Surface Treatment: Inlaid with niello

Spatial metadata

Region: [West Midlands](#) (European Region)

County or Unitary authority: [County of Herefordshire](#) (Unitary Authority)

District: [County of Herefordshire](#) (Unitary Authority)

To be known as: Hereford

Spatial coordinates

Grid reference source: From finder

Unmasked grid reference accurate to a 0.01 metre square.

Discovery metadata

Method of discovery: Metal detector

General landuse: Cultivated land

Specific landuse: Operations to a depth greater than 0.25m

finds.org.uk