



TOP: General view of S.E. corner of building showing hearth on left.

BOTTOM: Close view of hearth with pottery from hearth area in background.

DERBYSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

A ROMANO-BRITISH BUILDING IN STUBBIN WOOD, LANGWITH JUNCTION, NEAR SHIREBROOK.

By S. O. KAY.

[A short notice of this site appeared in the Society's *Journal* for 1951 and the present report covers the investigation in greater detail.]

STUBBIN WOOD.

THE 6-inch and 25-inch O.S. sheet, xxvi, SE. (Derbyshire) shows "Stubbins Wood", but the local, and probably correct, spelling is preferred and used in this report. (Grid Reference, SK. (43)5268.)

Stubbin Wood covers an area of 6.33 acres and is situated on a low ridge of magnesian limestone which at this point slopes very gently to the east but more steeply to the west, and commands a wide view to the west and south-west.

The wood, with other land in Shirebrook, including the "Moated Homestead" later known as Ashbourne Farm, was held in the seventeenth century by the Trustees of Ashbourne Grammar School until its sale to the Duke of Devonshire. The Devonshire Estates sold Stubbin Wood in halves to Mr. George Fowler, the present holder, and the late Mr. T. Chadbourne whose portion is now divided into a number of separate holdings.

The major part of the wood is now cleared and built upon, and it was during this clearing of the land that Mr. Webb, of "The Haven", found many potsherds and a silver denarius of Caracalla (A.D. 198-217).

*Romano-British Building
in the Parish of Upper
Langwith, nr. Shirebrook,
Derbyshire.*

RAILWAYS ———
ROADS ———
COUNTY BOUNDARY - - - - -
PARISH BOUNDARY ·····
NEW HOUSING ESTATES - STIPPED
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES SHOWN BLACK.

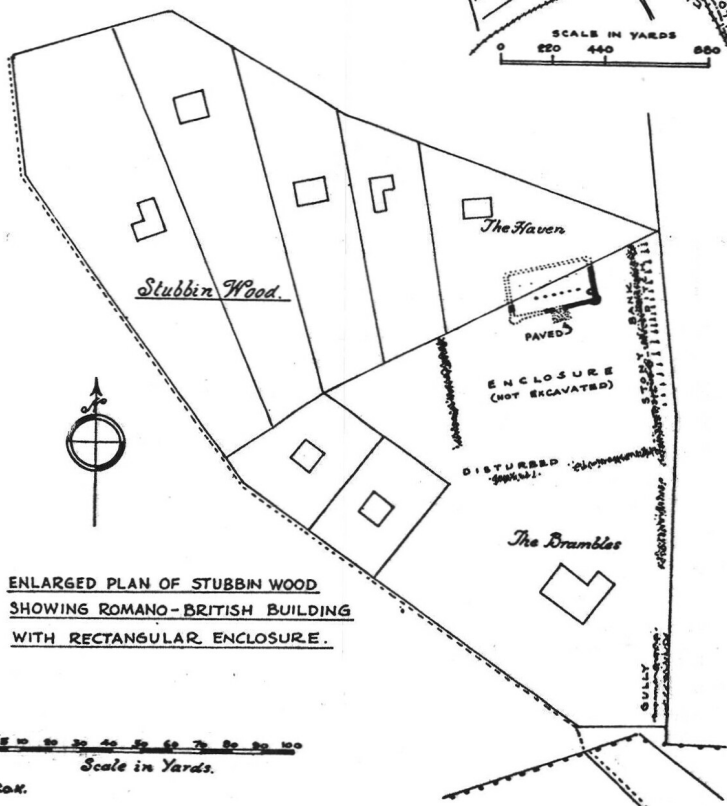
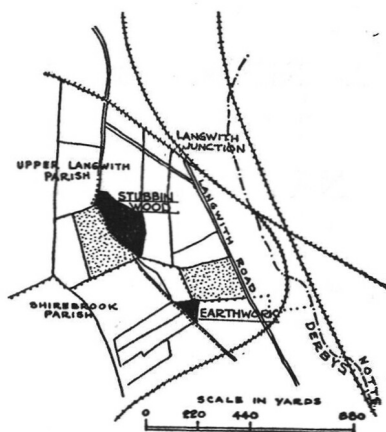


FIG. 1. Plan of site.

Mr. Adrian Oswald, M.A., F.S.A., was then resident in Nottinghamshire and visited the site with the writer and gave considerable help in the later investigations. These showed that the occupation area continued into the southern half of the wood, and thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Fowler for their kindness and co-operation in allowing excavation on their land and on subsequent visits to the site.

EXCAVATION.

Excavation in woodland areas is never easy, and Stubbin Wood proved extremely difficult. The site was covered by a mass of blackberry bushes whose roots had penetrated into the pockets of soil in the cracked surface of the limestone. Roots of felled trees and large quantities of loose stone completed the confusion, and stratified levels were almost non-existent.

With the invaluable help of Mr. Duncan Sinclair, a section was cleared down to the natural rock level and the south-east corner of a rectangular building revealed.

The foundations were of local undressed stone and in some places showed two courses of a fairly solid nature. It is hardly likely, however, that the foundations supported a drystone wall of more than breast height, and a thickening of the wall at the corner seemed to indicate that it had been built around a stout corner-post of timber.

The south wall was cleared for a distance of 35 ft., at which point an entrance seems to have been situated. An area about 6 ft. square outside the entrance was levelled and roughly paved with small flat stones.

A series of six postholes averaging about 6 ft. apart was found running parallel to the south wall at a distance of 10 ft. These postholes were cut into the limestone and would have held substantial timber posts up to 6 ins. in diameter.

In the sides of the filling of one posthole were about twenty fragments of a Castor ware beaker with indented sides, datable to the end of the second century.

The east end wall of the building had a rough semi-circular hearth equidistant between the row of postholes and the south or front wall. The proximity of the hearth to the wall had saved it from much disturbance and the reddened area was very clearly marked. Many fragments of pottery were found in the hearth area.

Owing to disturbance, the south-west corner of the building was not traced, but the west wall was found, giving an overall length to the building of 81 ft.

The majority of Barn-type Basilican buildings¹ recorded have been found in conjunction with villas and have a double row of postholes between the two main walls. Although only one row was uncovered at Stubbin Wood, it is probable that a second row existed and may have been lost in the cleared land beyond the boundary of our digging.

The actual width of the building must therefore remain in doubt, but an estimated width may be given of not less than 30 ft. and not more than 40 ft.

Excavation within the building produced no sign of tiles, and the assumption is that, above a breast-high wall of dry stone, the superstructure was of timber with a timber and thatch roof.

The dwelling appears to have been surrounded by a rectangular enclosure with an outer ditch on the east side which continues as a gully to the south end of the wood.

The enclosure is traceable as a stony bank, resembling flattened walls, the spread being as much as 9 ft. in places. No excavation was made into these boundary walls and to clear the land within them would be a formidable task beyond the writer's scope, and may not add materially to the knowledge already gained. It is likely, however, that further evidence may lie within this enclosed area for a recent find of five denarii, three of Elagabalus (A.D. 218-222) and two of Severus Alexander (A.D. 222-225) in excellent condition, was made; the coins were found in close proximity to each other, indicating that they were lost as a group.

¹ Compare illustrations of Basilican houses in Collingwood's *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, p. 132.

CONCLUSIONS.

The probable dating of the building of this dwelling is suggested by the Castor ware sherds in the inside filling of the posthole mentioned and would be late in the second century, A.D. 190 to 200. There was no pottery earlier than the late second century, the bulk of it being of the period A.D. 200-250, with some later third-century types. There was no evidence to show when or how the occupation ended, no signs of destruction by fire nor any indication that it was abandoned hurriedly.

The life of such a building would not have been a long one and it may well have become past repair and derelict by the last decades of the third century.

The coins from Caracalla (A.D. 198-217) to a much corroded denarius (probably Tetricus I, A.D. 267-272) may well represent the beginning and the end of the occupation of the site: A.D. 200-280 \pm 20 years.

The occupants were most probably native farmers living in a humble manner, their coarse pottery (only two small fragments of undecorated Samian ware were found) the iron penannular brooch, and absence of any bronze objects point to their comparative poverty by the side of their neighbours at the Mansfield Woodhouse Villa site, two miles to the south.

THE POTTERY.

The pottery, as would be expected on a rural site, consists in the main of purely local coarse wares. The forty examples illustrated are typical and almost all can be paralleled by pottery from kilns within a radius of 25 miles of Stubbin Wood.

As at Mansfield Woodhouse Villas,² pottery from the Torksey kilns and "Derbyshire" ware from Hazelwood³ were the most common.

The Torksey pottery,⁴ nos. I to 9 and nos. II, 12 and

² Adrian Oswald, "A Re-excavation of the Roman Villa at Mansfield Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire, 1936-39", *Thoroton Soc. Trans.*

³ J. P. Gillam, "Romano-British Derbyshire Ware", *Ant. J.*, Vol. XIX, reprinted *D.A.J.*, 1940. S. Kay and R. G. Hughes, note in "Archæological Reports", *D.A.J.*, 1952.

⁴ Adrian Oswald, *The Roman Pottery Kilns at Little London, Torksey, Lincs.*, 1937.

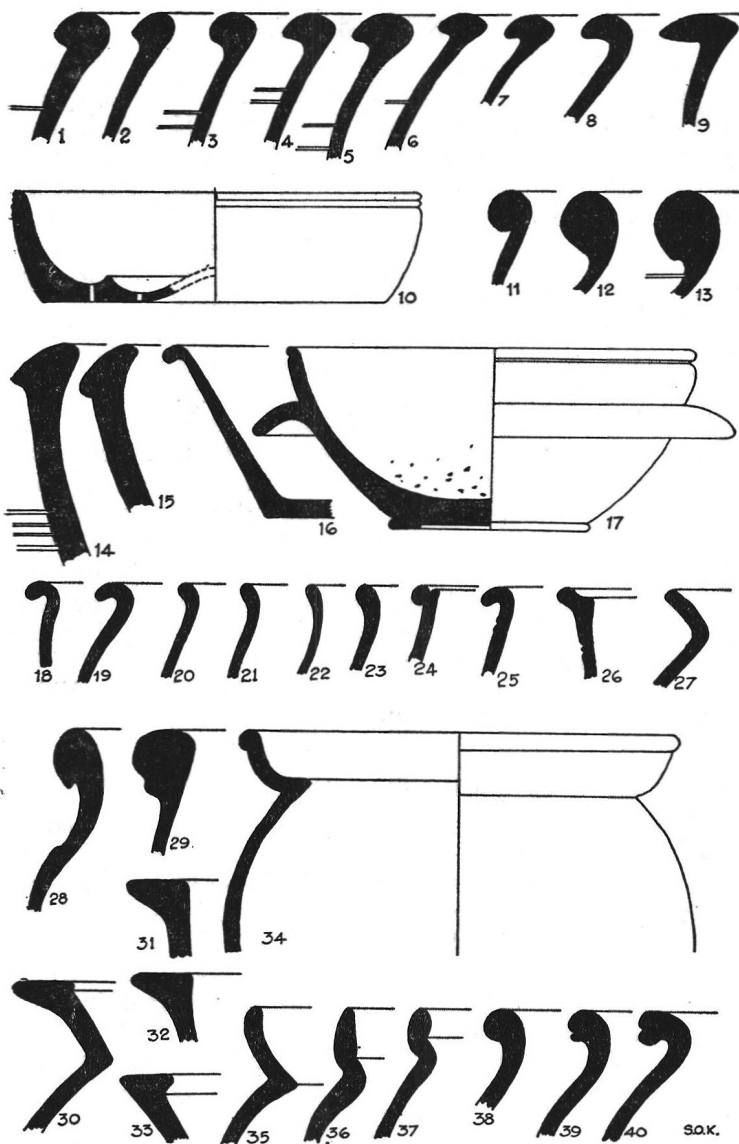


FIG. 2. Pottery from Stubbin Wood.
Scale : $\frac{1}{3}$ rd actual size.

13 are typical of bowls from the second period of manufacture, i.e. A.D. 230 to 250, and nos. 18 to 27 are jars of similar texture.

The "Derbyshire" ware, nos. 34 to 40, is of both types, dished rims and rolled rims. The dating of this ware is not yet satisfactorily established, but at Mansfield Woodhouse it was found in conjunction with the late terra sigillata forms 31, 44 and 79, a form 33 stamped TITVRONIS O (late Antonine), with Castor ware of the barbotine and scale pattern type (late second and third century). This evidence would give a dating for "Derbyshire" ware in the first half of the third century and probably to the earlier decades of that century.

No. 30, with the variant rims nos. 31-33, is a native ware with a resemblance to pitted calcite ware ("Huntcliffe Ware" described in R. G. Collingwood's *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*, p. 242) but with a more "soapy" texture, and brown in colour. The kiln site of this pottery is not known to the writer and parallels do not seem to be available.

In the following description, the dimensions given are the outside diameters of the rims: 1. 13 ins. dia. Light Grey, gritty surface; 2. 10 ins. dia. (ditto); 3. 10½ ins. dia. (ditto); 4. 12½ ins. dia. Grey, gritty surface; 5. 12½ ins. dia. Light Grey, gritty surface; 6. 10 ins. dia. (ditto); 7. 9½ ins. dia. Grey, Buff core, gritty surface; 8. 9½ ins. dia. Light Grey, gritty surface; 9. 12 ins. dia. Light Grey, Buff core, gritty surface; 10. 6 ins. dia. a strainer or cheese press (cf.: Collingwood's type no. 89), Light Grey, gritty surface; 11. 12 ins. dia. Light Grey, gritty surface; 12. 8½ ins. dia. (ditto); 13. 9½ ins. dia. Buff, Grey core, gritty surface; 14. 13½ ins. dia. Grey, rough surface, slightly misshapen in firing; 15. 13½ ins. dia. Grey with Buff outside, gritty surface; 16. 10 ins. dia. Pie-dish, Dark Grey with Light Grey core; 17. 6 ins. dia. (7 ins. over flange) Orange red surface with Dark Grey core, whitish grit inside; 18. 5½ ins. dia. Buff Grey, gritty surface; 19. 6 ins. dia. (ditto); 20. 6 ins. dia. (ditto); 21-23. 5½-6 ins. dia. Grey, gritty surface; 24.

5 ins. dia. (ditto); 25. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. dia. (ditto); 26. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. dia. (ditto); 27. 6 ins. dia. Buff Grey, gritty surface; 28. 13 ins. dia. storage jar, Light Grey, with undercut rim; 29. 12 ins. dia. Very light, chalky Grey; 30-33. Brown pitted ware, soapy texture. (The rim of a shallow platter of this ware, 15 ins. dia., is not illustrated.)

"Derbyshire" Ware.

34. $6\frac{1}{2}$ ins. dia. Dished rim. Blue Grey; 35. $7\frac{1}{2}$ ins. dia. Dished rim. Blue Grey; 36. 6 ins. Slightly dished rim, from Blue Grey to Brown. 37. $5\frac{1}{2}$ ins. dia. Buff to Light Brown (not well fired); 38. 6 ins. dia. Rolled rim, Blue Grey with Brown core; 39. 6 ins. dia. Rolled rim, Blue Grey, very hard; 40. $6\frac{1}{4}$ ins. dia. Blue Grey, Brown core.

COINS.

The five coins found grouped together within the enclosure were in excellent condition. The inscriptions are as follows:

Elagabalus.

*obv.*IMP.ANTONINUS AUG.

*rev.*LAETITIA PUBL

*obv.*IMP.ANTONINUS PIUS AUG.

*rev.*LIBERTAS AUG.

*obv.*IMP.ANTONINUS AUG.

rev. ? MILITUM.

Severus Alexander.

*obv.*IMP.C.M.AUR.SEV.ALEXANDER

*rev.*P.M.T.R.P.VI.COS II.P.P.

*obv.*IMP.C.M.AUR.SEV.ALEXAND.AUG.

*rev.*VICTORIA AUG.

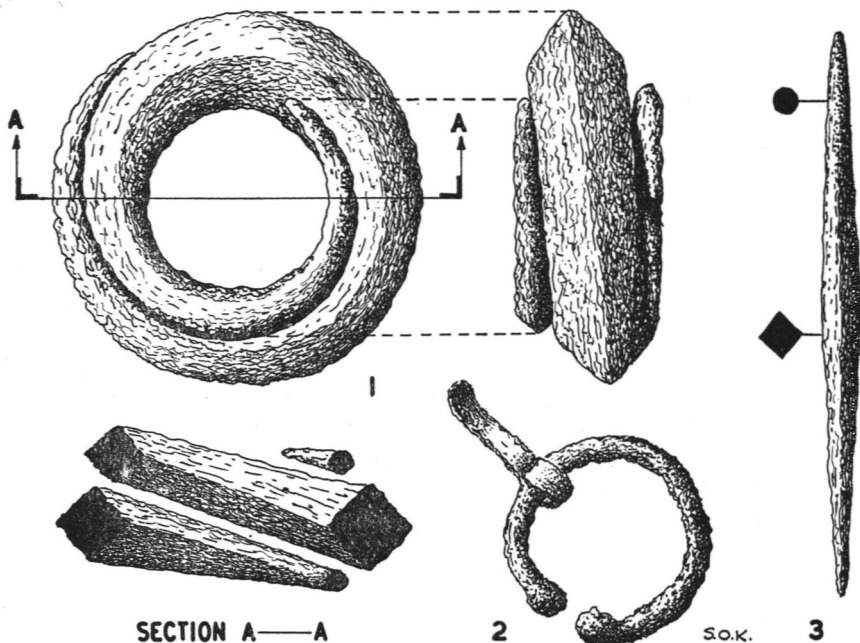


FIG. 3. Iron objects from Stubbin Wood.

- i Two views and section of iron coil or spring (probably used as a harness attachment).
- ii Penannular brooch, commonly of bronze, but rarely found in iron.
- iii Iron awl, showing through sections.

Scale: Actual size.

APPENDIX.

The following note is added as a suggestion for further field-work and excavation in the neighbourhood of Stubbin Wood.

EARTHWORK ON THICKLEY BANK, SHIREBROOK.

This site is shown on the plan (fig. 1) about 400 yards SE. of Stubbin Wood. The remains of the earthwork are in a triangular plot of waste land adjoining the new Ridgeway housing estate, and are visible as a raised bank or vallum forming the quadrant of a circle.

A small trench in this earthwork yielded native pottery of "Rustic"-type (first century), but much coarser than the typical Rustic wares from first-century levels elsewhere. There were also a number of quartzite pebbles (duck-egg size) cracked by heat and probably used as "pot-boilers" or sling-stones.

The pre-1900 25-inch O.S. sheets showed a line of stones, 450 ft. long (now covered by the railway and wagon works) 400 yards due east of the earthwork.