

MELANDRA CASTLE EXCAVATIONS 1966

By PETER WEBSTER

EXCAVATIONS were undertaken during two five-week periods in the spring and summer of 1966 on an area to the south and south-east of the Roman fort at Melandra Castle, Derbyshire. These were made necessary by the imminence of a Manchester Corporation Overspill Housing Scheme and were undertaken under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Building and Works and with the kind co-operation of the farmers, Messrs. J. & D. Gould, and of Manchester Corporation. The excavations were limited to that area of land near to the fort threatened by the housing scheme and deemed likely to yield evidence of extra-mural settlement. Later it proved possible to add to the evidence of excavation through observations made during building operations. In this connection I am particularly indebted to Mr. Michael Brown of Glossop, who has been watching fresh developments over the past year and without whom many of the details mentioned below would have been missed.

The area examined is divided by the small stream which runs down the sharply sloping valley to the east of the fort. Excavations showed that to the west of this stream there lay a road presumably leaving the east gate of the fort and skirting the triple ditch system (see *D.A.J.*, LXXXIII (1963), 6). It first appeared in the area examined at a point about fifty yards east of the south-east angle tower of the fort and struck off in a south-westerly direction. It was last definitely traced where it made a slight angle to run parallel with the valley of the river Etherow, heading apparently towards Buxton. The latter part of this route was discovered after the area had been bulldozed in December 1966. At the point where the road described the angle mentioned above, a number of cremation burials were discovered. Of the five uncovered in December 1966, four were in urns, while the fifth appeared to have been in an urn buried within a wooden box. In March 1967, two further cremations were found nearby.

Where this road passed close to the stream, considerable trouble had been taken in running it across what must have been marshy ground. Clay and domestic rubbish had been thrown on to this area prior to the laying of the gravel roadway. Close by, between the stream and the road, the clay and rubbish layer, underlaid by a rafting of brushwood, marked the levelling-up for the foundations of a small house.

To the west of the road the sites of several more dwelling-houses of timber construction were discovered fronting on to the road. The pottery evidence suggests that these were occupied during the late 1st to mid 2nd centuries, i.e. during the majority of the time when the fort was in use. On one of these dwelling sites, at least four successive timber buildings had been erected during this period.

About two hundred yards south of the fort, the road mentioned above passed through the inturned entrance of a rampart and ditch system. The

ditch was about 15ft. wide and about 4 ft. deep with a somewhat irregular U-shape; there was a slight indication of a rampart on the fort side. This ditch does not seem to have continued in use for long, as in its later stages the road passed over the defences at the entrance, while behind the supposed mansio (see below) the ditch was evidently silted up by the final period of that building.

The ditch took an irregular course west-east in the area to the south of the fort and was traced again running S.W.-N.E. across field no. 527. At the northern end of this route it passed close behind the remains of a timber building of considerable size. This building of which only part was uncovered (the remainder lying under a large heap of topsoil deposited by the Manchester Corporation contractors) faced the east gate of the fort from the raised ground on the opposite side of the stream. The building fronted another road which presumably emanated from the east gate of the fort. This building from its size and position has been provisionally identified as the mansio attached to the fort. It was apparently burnt down some time in the middle of the 2nd century. Behind the supposed mansio a stone-lined drain had been laid along the centre of the now silted ditch, with cobbling on either side as access to outbuildings. In March 1967, traces were also found of a further building slightly to the south-west of the "mansio".

It is hoped that further evidence concerning the civil settlement at Melandra will emerge as building operations proceed. It is also hoped to complete excavation of the supposed mansio once the large heap of topsoil mentioned above is removed.

RECENT WORK AT STRUTT'S PARK, DERBY

By MARTIN FORREST

THE name Strutt's Park refers to a small but compact residential area within the county borough of Derby on the northern side of the town. Immediately to the north of the junction known locally as the Five Lamps, the A6 crosses the 200-ft. contour and begins to rise steadily in the direction of Duffield and Belper. This tongue of high ground which stands at a height of between 200 and 300 ft. drops sharply down to the river Derwent on the eastern side. Most of this area has been built over during the last seventy years.

In the past few years there has been speculation regarding the existence of an early Roman fort at Strutt's Park. There are three main elements involved in this discussion. Firstly, there have been in the past a number of Roman finds, many of them belonging to the 1st century A.D., on the west bank of the Derwent at Derby, mainly confined to the Strutt's Park