

How did the flask come to Derby? The obvious answer is that a pilgrim from here on a visit to the Holy Land visited the shrine of St. Menas and brought it back. But this seems unlikely. Communications between the fourth and seventh centuries were bad. The Romans had deserted their camp at Little Chester and anyway the flask was not found there. The evangelisation of Mercia did not begin until Bishop Diuma reached Repton in A.D. 653, i.e. not far from the time when the famous Egyptian shrine was destroyed. A possible solution is this. We know that several centuries later there was a Nunnery on or near the place where the flask was found, from which Nuns' Street derives its name. A visiting Mother Superior or a chaplain may have brought this flask here from one of the continental convents, which had more than one brought to it during the time when the Menas cult was at its height.

A ROMANO-BRITISH SITE AT SHIREBROOK.

By S. O. KAY.

IN clearing woodland and scrub for building in Stubbins Wood, Thickey Bank, Shirebrook (O.S. 6-inch. Derby. Sht. XXVI S.E.), Mr. Webb of "The Haven" found traces of wall foundations, numerous pottery fragments and a coin of Caracalla. On examination, the bulk of the pottery proved to be of third-century date.

It was found that these evidences of a Romano-British occupation site extended to the neighbouring land of "The Brambles", and the writer is greatly indebted to the owners, Mr. and Mrs. G. Fowler, for permission to make an investigation.

During preliminary work on the site, carried out with the help of Messrs. Duncan Sinclair of Driffield and Adrian Oswald, M.A., F.S.A., part of a rectangular building has been traced, of Basilican type with internal

post holes for roof supports; a humble barn-like dwelling with a rude stone hearth at the east end. The entire absence of roofing tiles indicates a timber and thatch roof.

Pottery fragments from the site include wares from the Torksey Kilns¹ and Derbyshire "Duffield" ware,² all dateable to the third century, the only exception to this coarse pottery being parts of a beaker of castor ware and a single much worn fragment of Terra Sigillata or Samian ware. No bronze objects have as yet been found but a number of iron objects including a buckle and a penannular brooch seem to give further evidence of the humble nature of the site and its occupants.

Stubbins Wood stands on a low ridge of magnesian limestone which is almost bare of soil in places and presents some difficulty in obtaining correct stratification of finds.

It may be of interest to note that, whilst there appears to be no evidence of occupation of the site prior to the early part of the third century, fragments of first-century "Rustic ware" have been found in the traces of earthworks some 350 to 400 yards due S.E. along the ridge (near where the footpath from Shirebrook to Langwith Junction crosses the lane).

The Stubbins Wood site is a little more than two miles north of the Mansfield Woodhouse Villa and within a mile of the two third-century coin hoards in Langwith Wood and Stuffynwood.

It is hoped to complete the investigation of the site and to submit plans and a report in a later issue.

¹ "The Roman Pottery Kilns at Little London, Torksey, Lincs." by Adrian Oswald, M.A. 1937.

² "Romano-British Derbyshire Ware", J. T. Gillam, *D.A.J.* LXI, 1940.