

A ROMAN SITE IN THE CHURCH FIELD AT SNODLAND.

BY N. C. COOK.

ROMAN remains from the Church Field at Snodland have been recorded since 1844 but details concerning the finds have not been preserved. In the *Archæological Journal*, Vol. I, p. 164, Roach Smith mentions that he had observed foundations in the field and that the walls and flooring of a small room were visible in the bank of the river Medway. In his book, *The Wanderings of an Antiquary*, 1854, Thomas Wright records that a bath was said to have been discovered about forty years before and covered up without undergoing further injury.

The Church Field is now occupied by the site of Snodland Gas Works and some allotment gardens. Opportunity for further research to be carried out on this long recognised site was afforded by excavations in connection with structural alterations at the Gas Works. Financial assistance from the Society of Antiquaries and the Kent Archæological Society made it possible for one of the men trained by Colonel Hawley during the excavations at Ospringe, to watch the progress of the work and to preserve any objects of interest that might come to light.

Before the watcher had been engaged excavations had yielded, besides pottery, a terra cotta mask and a bronze buckle-plate of a rare type, found near a wall built of large Roman tiles. Many of the tiles are made out of local Gault clay and exhibit the yellow colour this clay assumes when burnt. The buckle plate has been described by Mr. Reginald Smith in *The Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. VII, and dates from the close of the Roman period in Britain.

The area excavated while the watcher was on duty proved to be somewhat barren. The finds were limited to

some pieces of shapeless foundation, a length of wall showing a flint course on the top of a footing made of two layers of chalk boulders, and some pieces of pottery.

Although the finds are not numerous, they do provide some indications of the date at which the building was occupied. Five coins have been found on the site, the earliest is one of Domitian, A.D. 87, and the latest is a small brass of Gratianus, A.D. 375-383. The other three coins fall between these two extreme dates. The only potter's stamp found was one of FRONTINUS, who worked at La Graufesenque in South Gaul during the second half of the first century A.D. Portions of a decorated bowl of red glazed ware, form 37 Drag. may be dated as early second century A.D. The dates afforded by the coarse ware pottery are late first, second and fourth centuries A.D.

On the evidence of these finds then, the site was occupied from the end of the first century to the fourth century. The objects, however, are so few that these dates must be regarded as provisional. Excavation of the rest of Church Field, now used as allotments, would doubtless provide additional evidence by which these figures might be checked.

POTTERY.

1. TERRA SIGILLATA.

Decorated.

Four fragments of a bowl, form 37 Drag., one being the lower part of a panel with two gladiators fighting. Early Second Century.

Plain ware.

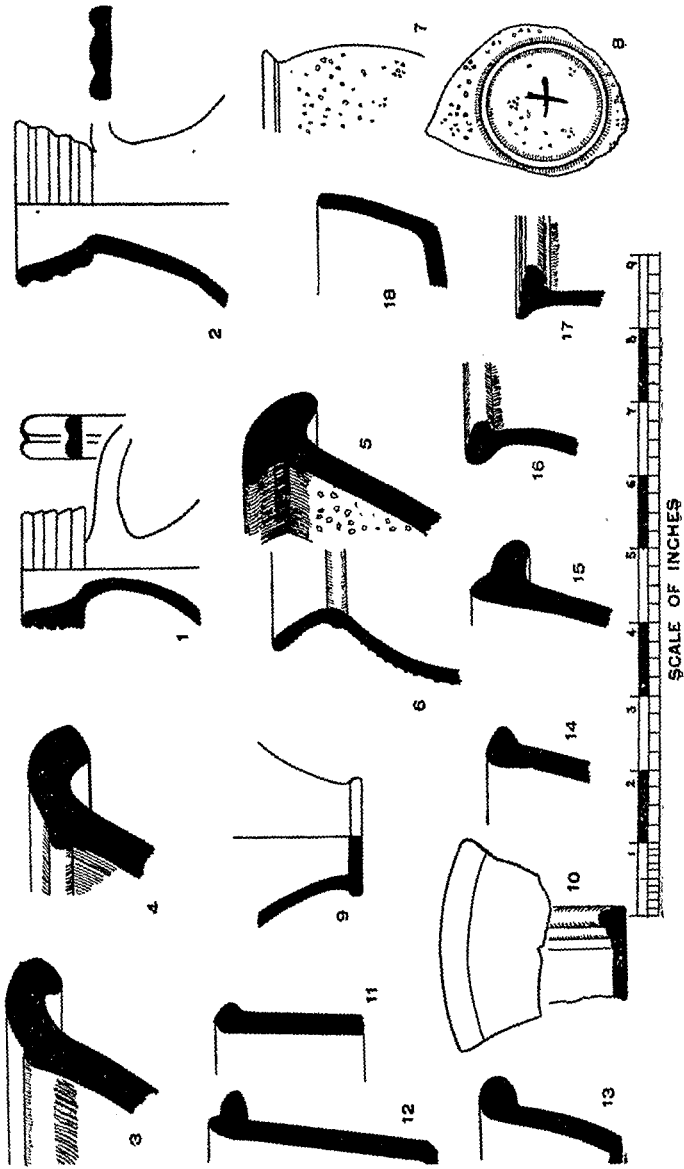
Part of the base of a cup, form 33 Drag., Stamp FRON.

Frontinus was a potter of the Flavian period who worked at La Graufesenque in South Gaul.

2. COARSE WARES.

Fig. 1. Head and neck of a one handled flagon of a fine, smooth red ware. There are also some fragments of the body of the vessel one eighth of an inch thick which indicate that it was an exceedingly well made pot. The cylindrical stepped mouth, cup shaped on the inside with a very small

POTTERY FROM THE SITE OF
SNODLAND GAS WORKS



vent, may be compared with No. 45, Ospringe grave group XIII which is dated A.D. 100-150. (A. C. Vol. XXXVI, plate 7.)

- Fig. 2. Head and neck of a one handled flagon with stepped mouth, of rough yellow sandy ware. End of First Century A.D.
- Fig. 3. Portion of a mortarium rim of the bead and roll type. Clay creamy in colour and comparatively soft. Second Century.
- Fig. 4. Ditto, but the clay is much harder and darker.
- Fig. 5. Mortarium rim of the Hammer Head type. Dark red clay. Fourth Century.
- Fig. 6. Portion of a Poppy Head beaker with outbent rim. Smooth, black burnished ware. Early Second Century.
- Figs. 7 and 8. Part of the body and the base of a beaker of Saint Remy ware. A graffito cross in the middle of the circular base.
- Fig. 9. Base of a vessel of light red clay with a pinkish brown slip. Late Third or Fourth Century.
- Fig. 10. Part of a pot lid of light sandy ware fumed black.
- Fig. 11. Part of the rim of a straight sided bowl of coarse clay with a smooth brown slip.
- Figs. 12 to 18. Portions of rims of straight sided bowls of fumed ware.

COINS.

1. Brass of Domitian A.D. 87.

OB. IMP CAES DOMIT AVG GERM COS XIII CENS PER P.P.

Bust of Domitian to right.

REV. VIRTUTI AVGVSTI. In field S.C.

Virtus standing to right holding spear and parazonium.

2. Brass of Antoninus Pius. A.D. 138-161. Very worn.

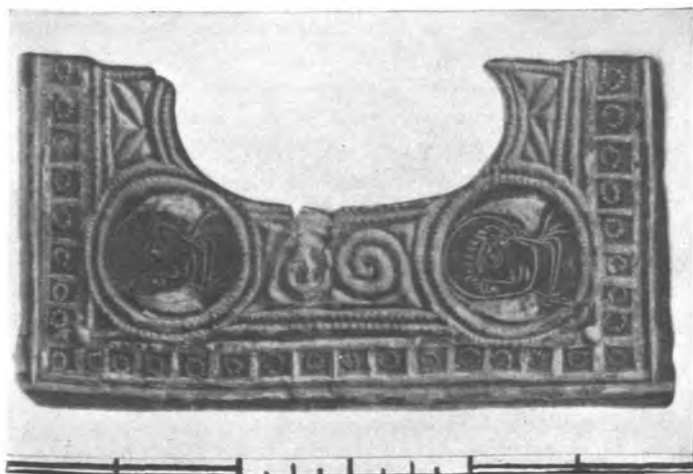
MISCELLANEOUS.

The counter plate of a bronze belt buckle with two portrait medallions in neillo. The ground between the medallions is ornamented with scrolls in "chip-carving" technique. This is described and illustrated in *The Antiquaries' Journal*, Vol. VII, No. 4, p. 522, and is here reproduced.



Terra-cotta Mask.

FROM THE ROMAN SITE IN THE CHURCH FIELD, SNODLAND.



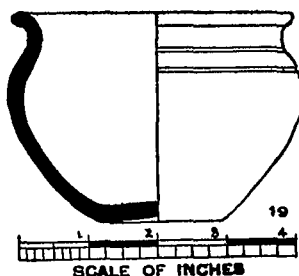
Bronze Buckle Plate.

A terra cotta mask of poor workmanship. The treatment of the hair and eyes especially is very conventionalised. The appearance of the back of the mask suggests that it formed part of a scheme of decoration.

A LIST OF EARLIER FINDS FROM THE SITE NOT PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

A floor of black and red tesserae uncovered beneath the allotments on the site of the Church Field.

Fig. 19. Small Bowl of hard brown clay charged with sand, showing traces of a pale slip. When found it contained a small brass of Tetricus.



COINS.

3. Brass of Constantius I. A.D. 292-306.

OB. DIVO CONSTANTIO PIO.

Head of Constantius, veiled and laureated.

REV. MEMORIA FELIX. In Ex. PLN.

An altar with fire kindled, between two eagles with outstretched wings.

4. Small brass of Gratianus. A.D. 375-383.

OB. DN. GRATIANVS AVGG AVG.

Head of Gratianus to right.

REV. GLORIA NOVI SÆCVLI. In Ex. CON.

A military figure standing, one hand holding the standard of the cross and the other resting on a buckler.

5. Small brass.

OB. VRBS ROMA.

Rome helmeted to left.

REV. Wolf suckling Romulus and Remus. Above, two stars. In Ex. T.P.