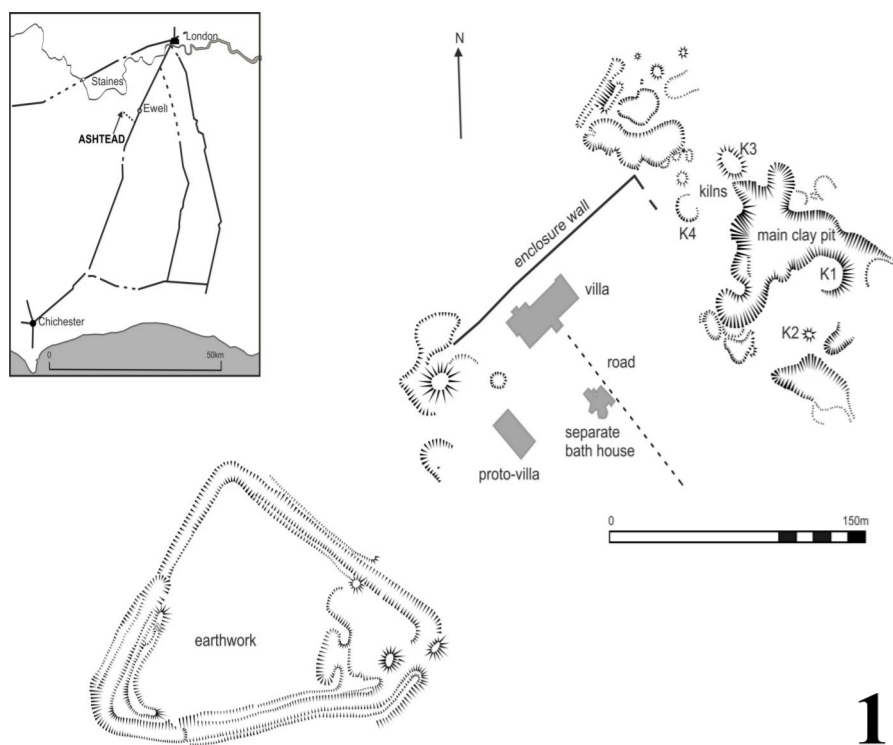
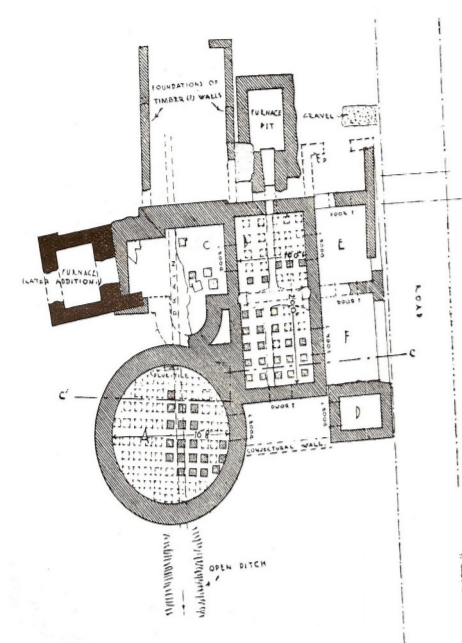


# Ashtead Common, Surrey, England: Roman villa and tileworks

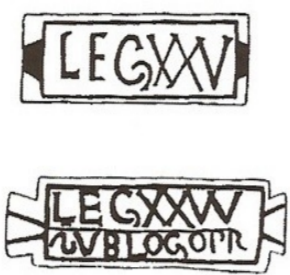


1

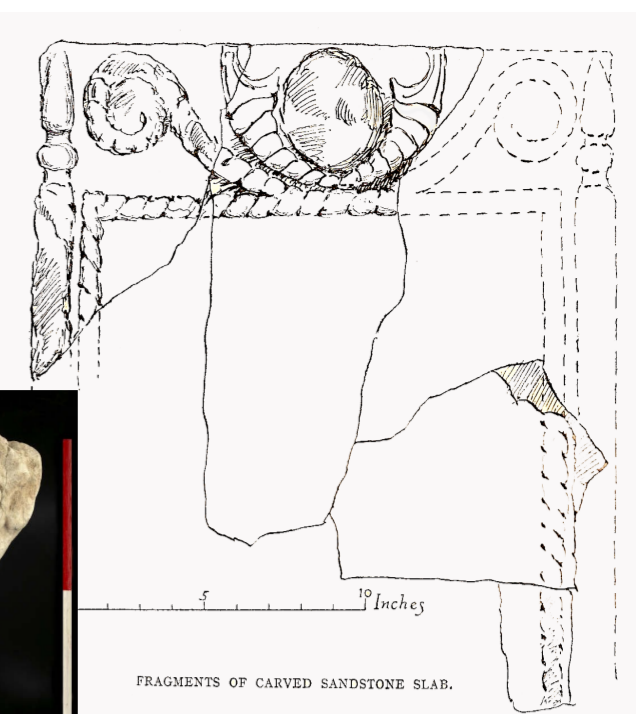
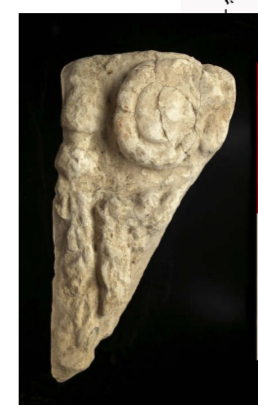
The Ashtead Common Roman villa was first discovered in the 1920s. The site was surveyed in detail in the 1960s and since 2006 a Surrey Archaeological Society project has carried out more fieldwork and gathered together all available information. The site (Fig. 1) is now known to have a prehistoric earthwork, a proto villa, the villa and separate bath house (Fig. 2) found in the 1920s, large Roman-period clay pits, concentrations of wasters and other rubbish, and a well-built two period tile kiln. The tiling was probably in production late 1<sup>st</sup> to early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD.



2



4

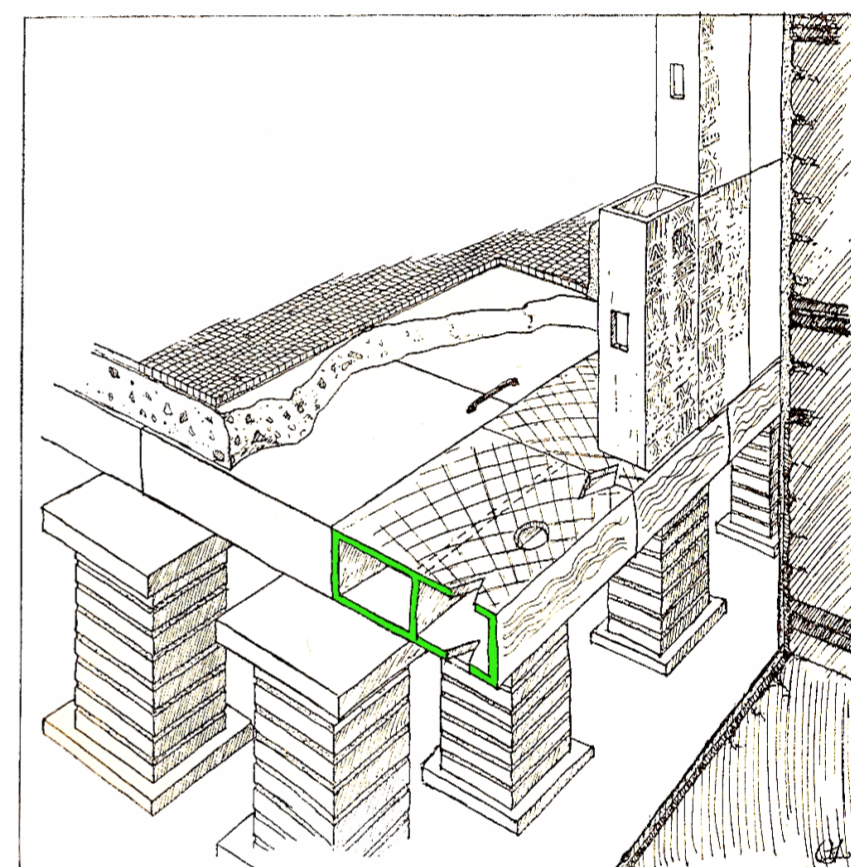


FRAGMENTS OF CARVED SANDSTONE SLAB.

Finds from the site include many scratched, combed and relief-patterned box flue-tiles. Six patterns are recorded (Fig. 3), including ones with a well-realised dog and stag with the letters G I S and I V FE[ci]. The form of the G is unusual but is known on some Legio XX tiles. Evidence from the site suggests a link to the military community: the elaborate surround of a possible inscription (Fig. 4), a face pot and tazze, and the circular laconicum of the bath house. Perhaps a veteran from Legio XX established the tiling around AD 120.



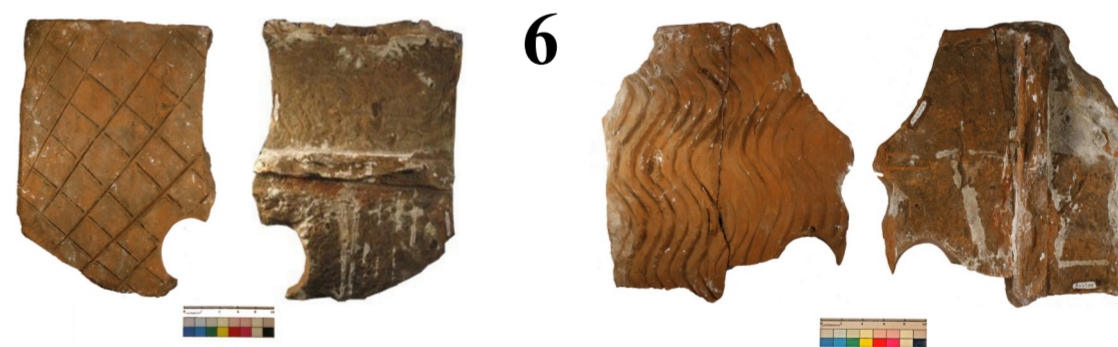
Some of the box tiles show signs of experiment, such as front cut-outs and attached 'fishtail' keys for bonding into walls. These were found in room 6 of the main villa, which was completely jacketed with box flue-tiles right down to sub-floor level. Fig 5 shows one of the tiles and a 'fishtail' from the 1926 excavation (scale in inches); tiles in situ then; and the room in 2012, when it was shown to be early in the villa sequence. Tiles to make up attached columns, herring-bone floor bricks, hollow box voussoirs and most other kinds of tile were also made on site, as well as so-called 'lamp chimneys' (Fig. 7). Fragments of double box flue-tiles were found in the 1920s. The excavator postulated their use as in Fig 6.



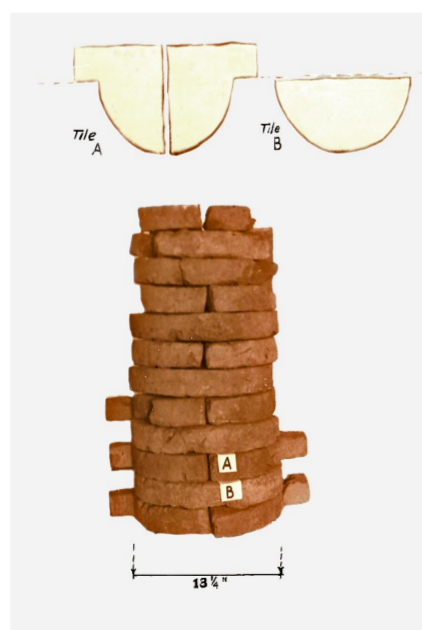
SUGGESTED USE OF THE "DOUBLE" BOX-TILES.



5



6



The 1920s photograph and sketch above shows how semi-circular tiles and quarter-round tiles with lugs were used to make up attached columns.

7



Recent fieldwork located a large tile kiln, excavated in sections for nature conservation reasons. The kiln was over 3m square internally with a projecting central flue tunnel. After considerable use it had been partially demolished and rebuilt at a higher level and as a result a temporary structure was preserved at the stokehole end of the central flue (Fig. 8). Tegulae were stacked vertically to continue the line of the flue into the stokehole and then turned at a right angle to close off the flue leaving a small gap. Presumably, once firing temperature was achieved, this made possible inspection of the colour of the fire and control of the airflow. Archaeomagnetic dating for the last firing of the upper kiln is between AD 205 and 225 at 95% confidence.

8

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