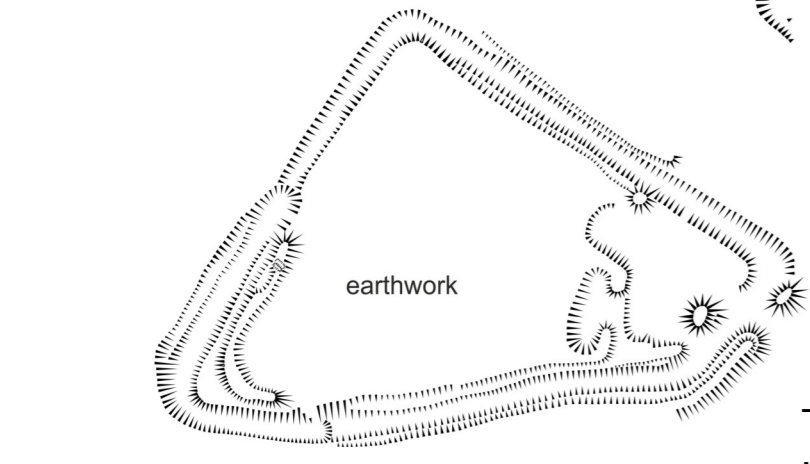
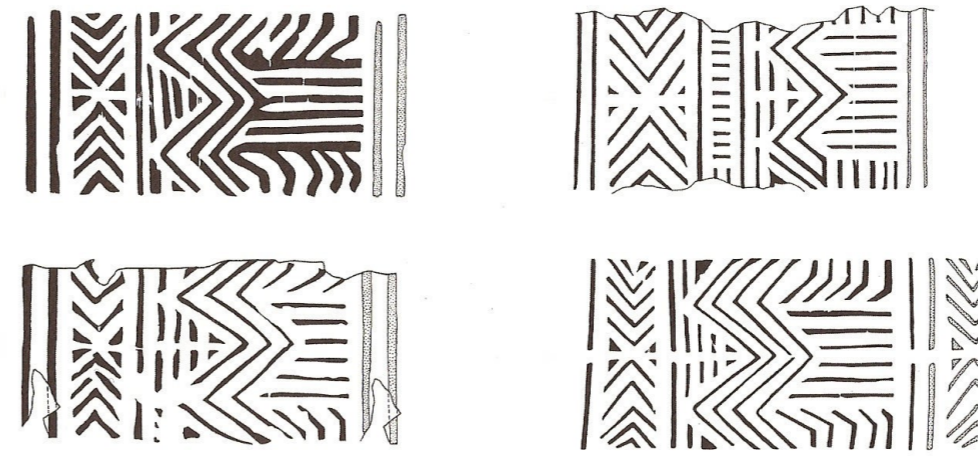
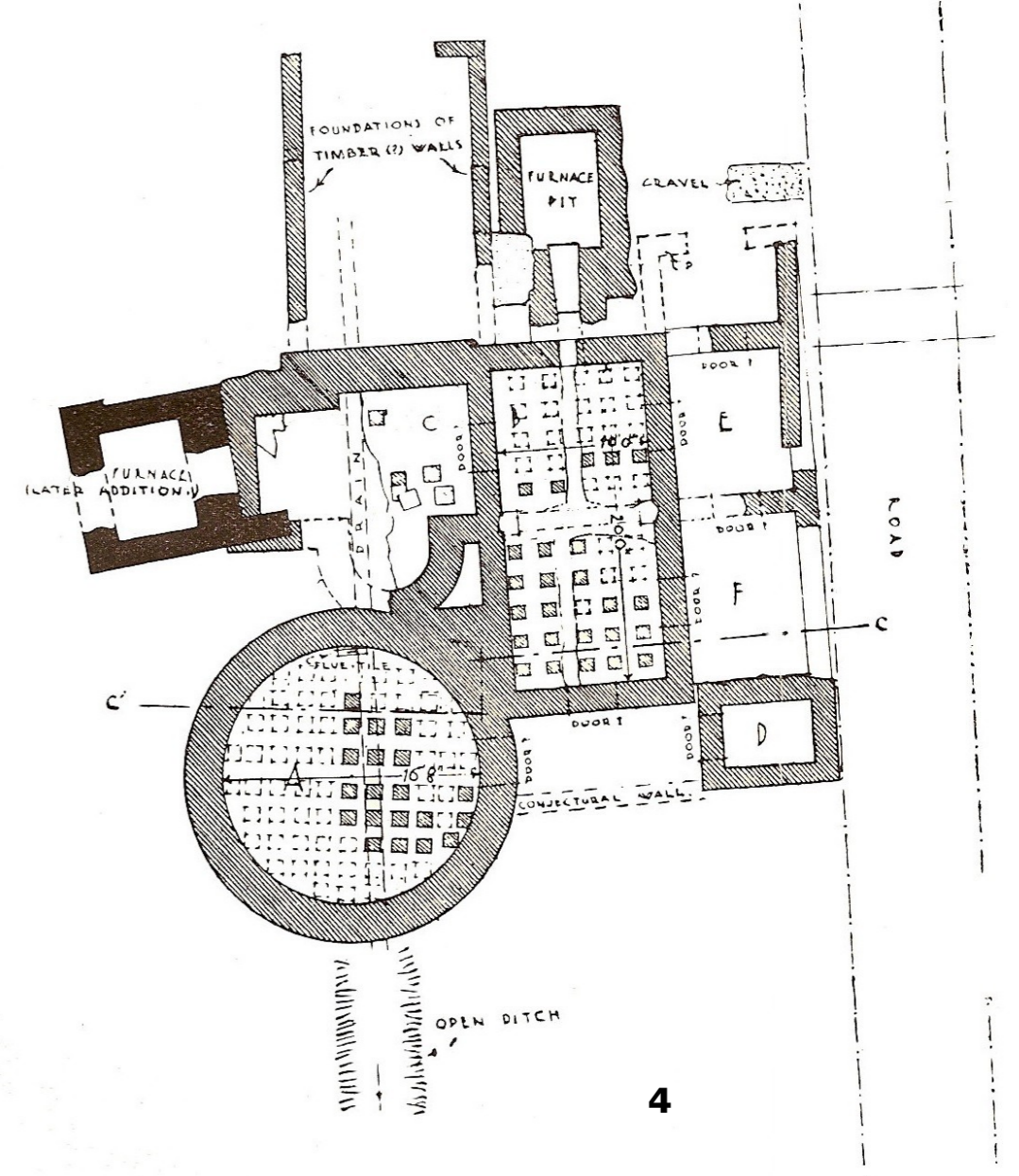
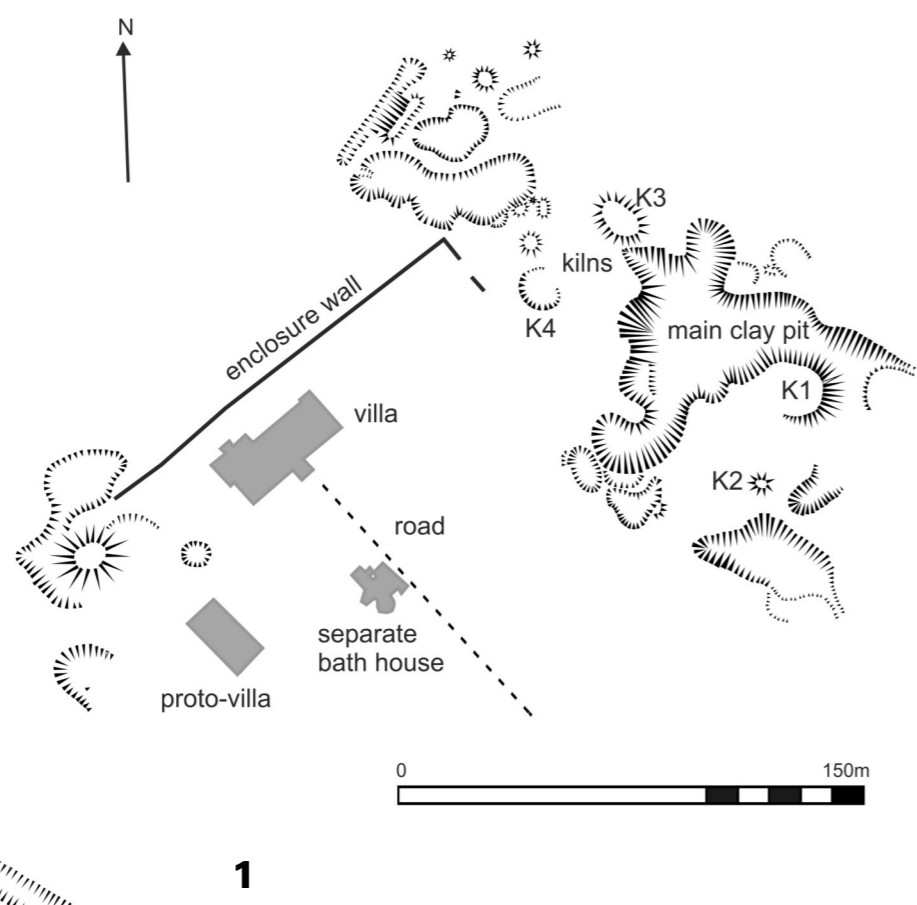
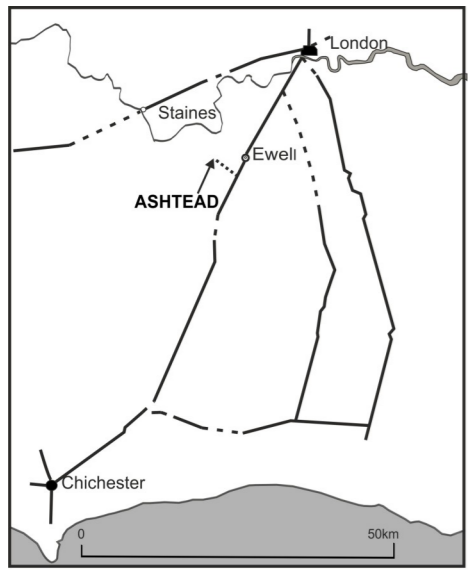
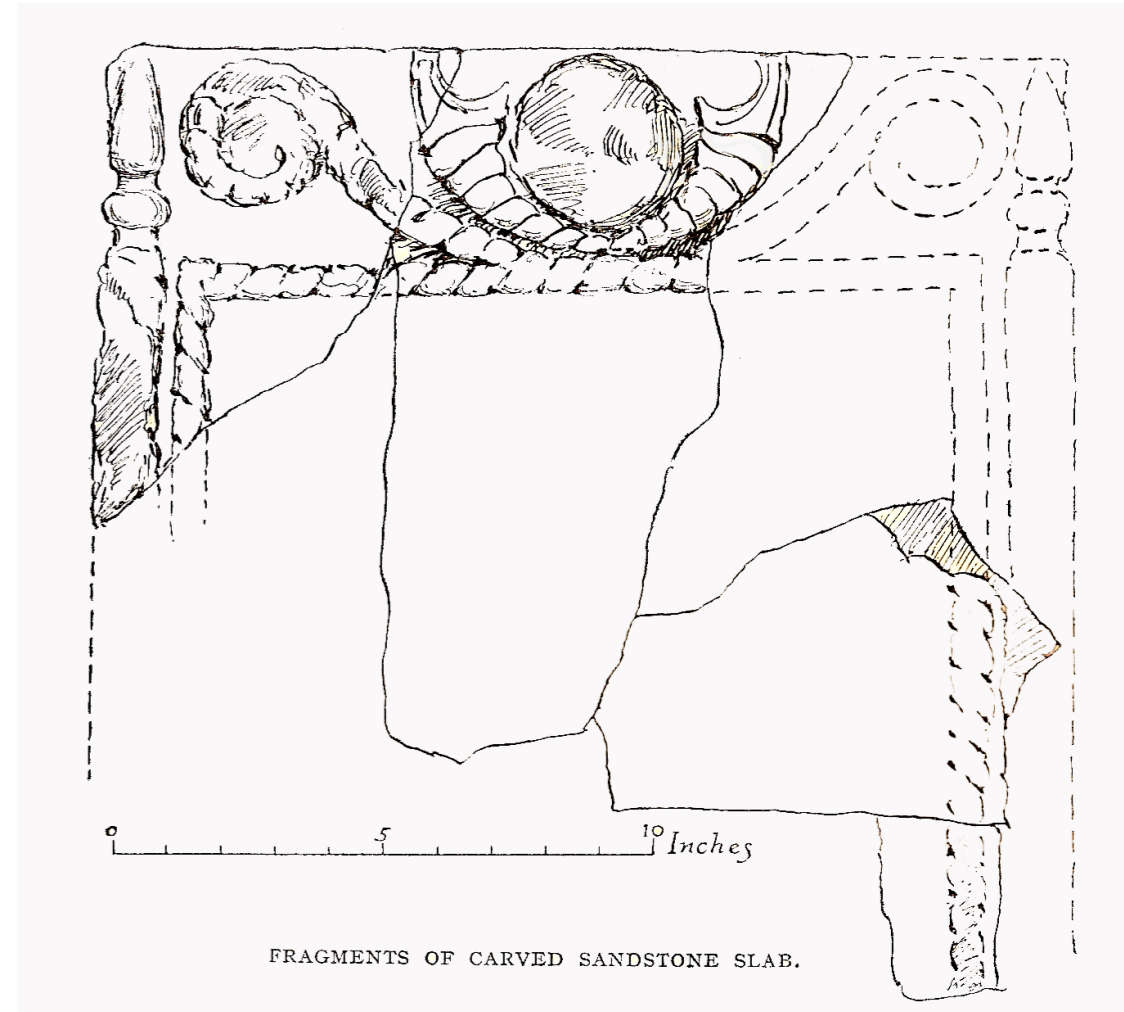
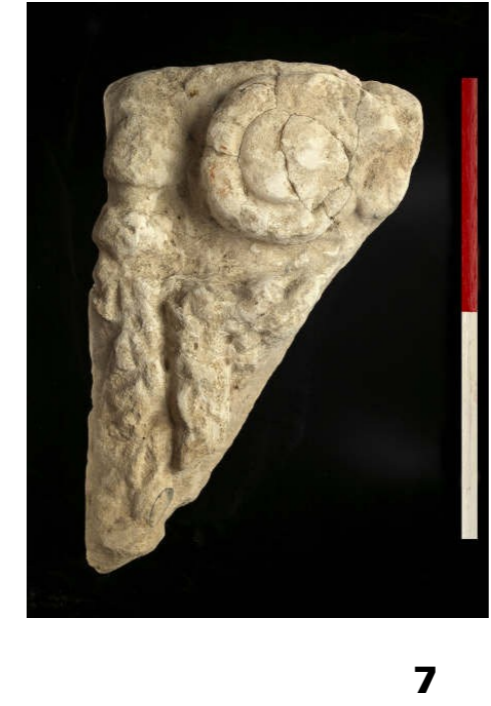


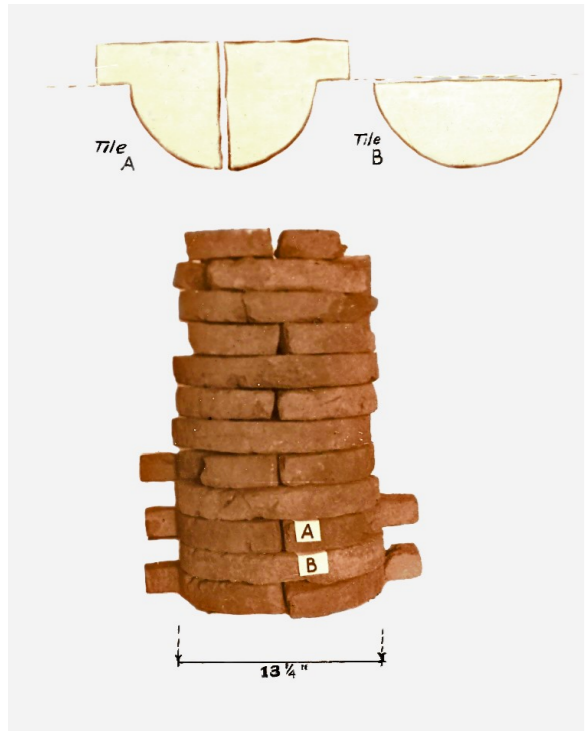
Ashtead Common, Surrey, England: Roman villa and tileworks



The Ashtead Common Roman villa was first discovered and excavated 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, with a second phase dating to around the mid-1st century AD. A proto villa was built to the east before the end of the 1st century which probably had a chalk-floored building nearby. The latter was replaced by the villa and separate bath house (Fig. 4) found in the 1920s. An associated tileworks lay further east, where large Roman-period clay pits, concentrations of tile wasters and other rubbish (K1-4), and a well-built two period tile kiln have been discovered. The tileworks was clearly a major industry that was probably in production from the late 1st to early 3rd centuries AD.



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]t (Fig. 2). The form of the G is unusual but is known on some Legio XX tiles (Fig. 6). Several strands of evidence from the site suggest a link to the military community. They include the elaborate surround of a possible inscription (Fig. 7: 1920s drawing and modern photograph of a surviving fragment), a face pot (Fig. 5) and tazze, and the circular laconicum of the bath house (Fig. 4). Perhaps a veteran from Legio XX established the tiler around AD 120.

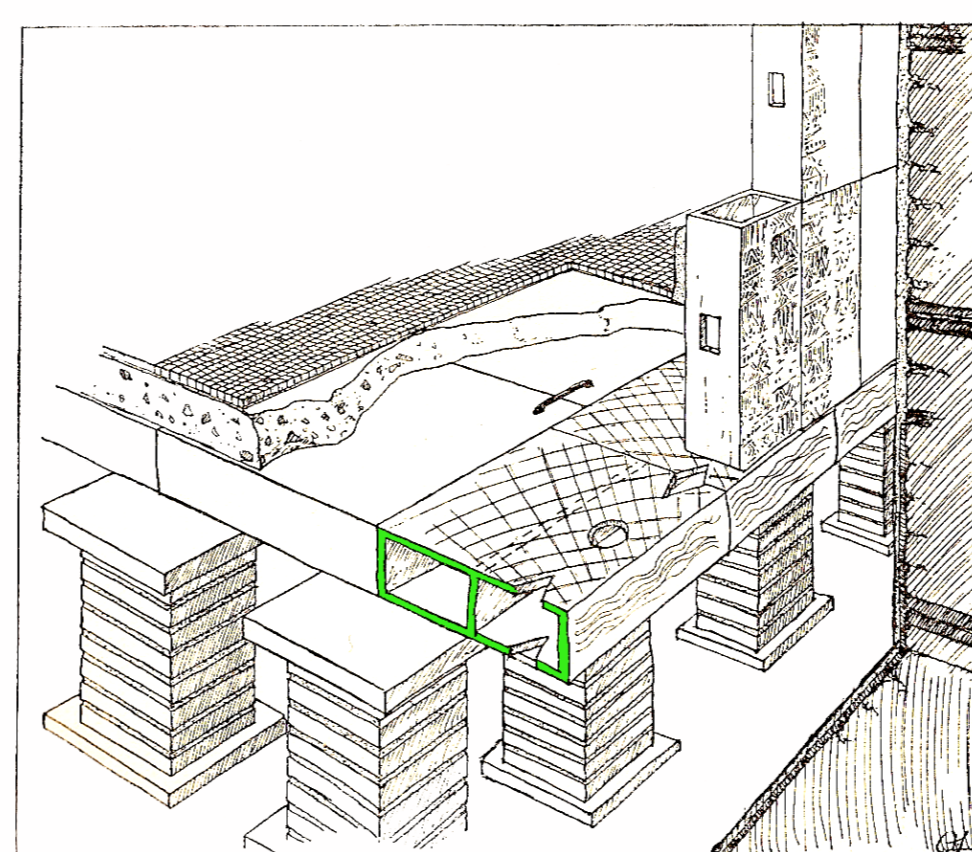


The 1920s photograph and sketch above show how semi-circular tiles and quarter-round tiles with lugs (modern photographs at the top) were used to make up attached columns.

Recent fieldwork located a large tile kiln, excavated in sections in succeeding years 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. 13). 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



Analysis of the finds is in progress. It includes a programme of Inductively-Coupled Plasma Spectrometry to aid study of the distribution of the products of the tileworks. Most kinds of tile were made on the site. Less common products include tiles to make up attached columns (Fig. 8), two sizes of herring-bone floor bricks (Fig. 9), hollow box voussoirs, so-called 'lamp chimneys' and double box flue-tiles found in the 1920s (Fig. 14). The excavator postulated their use as in Fig. 15.



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. 11 shows excavation in 2012, when the room was shown to be early in the villa sequence. Fig. 12 is a detail of the tiles in situ in 1926; Fig. 10 is a contemporary photograph of one of the tiles and a 'fishtail' from the early excavation (scale in inches).

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