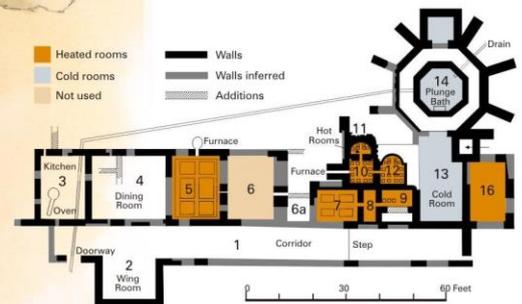
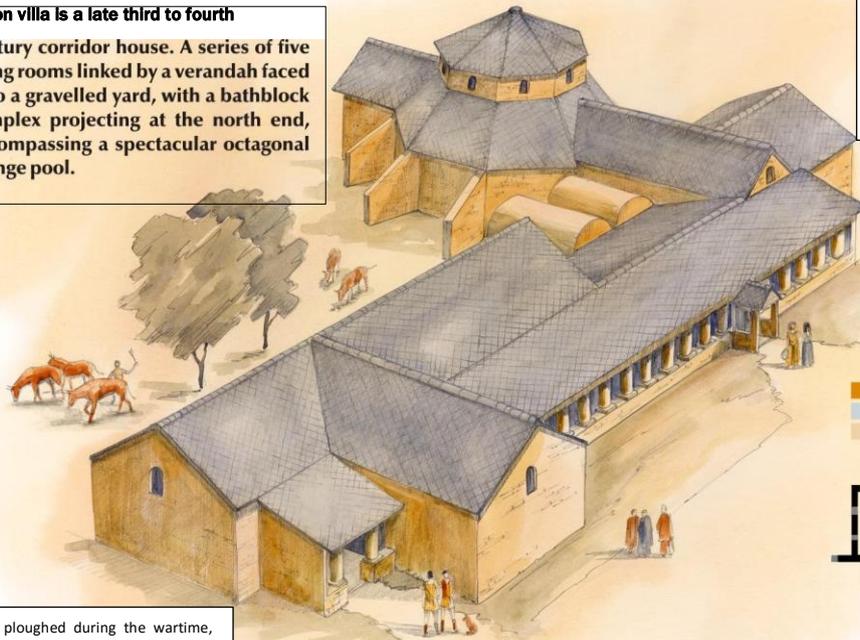


Lufton Roman Villa

Lufton villa is a late third to fourth

century corridor house. A series of five living rooms linked by a verandah faced onto a gravelled yard, with a bathblock complex projecting at the north end, encompassing a spectacular octagonal plunge pool.

Nine geometric patterned mosaic floors were present in the villa, using blue and white lias and red brick. Some of the more detailed mosaics included a head and shoulders portrait, possibly an athlete, within the cold room of the bath complex, as shown. Depictions of fish swam around the plunge pool, 29 of them, in 6 colours – these are similar to four other nearby villas, suggesting that the same mosaicist worked on them all. Some of the mosaics can be seen in the Yeovil Museum.



Although ploughed during the wartime, the scheduled monument at Lufton is being protected from further damage through the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.

Original artwork by Bev Lewis
www.bevs-animal-portraits.co.uk



The site of the Lufton villa was unknown until wartime ploughing of pastureland in 1945.

The site has been excavated on three occasions. Between 1945 and 1952 and then again between 1960 and 1963 when L.C. Hayward led a team of Yeovil schoolchildren in uncovering much of the ground-plan of the villa.

In 2016 Dr JF Gerrard of Newcastle University re-excavated the villa and found that the history of the building was much more complicated than had been previously thought.

The villa was stone-built with lias roofing, plastered walls and mosaic or tessellated floors. Part of the main house as well as the bath house and Room 16 were heated via a furnace and hypocaust (underfloor heating) system.

The most recent excavations suggest that there was a substantial third century building that was replaced by the fourth century villa illustrated above. This fourth-century building underwent significant modifications before undergoing a change of use and becoming a focus for industrial activities late in the fourth or early in the fifth century AD.

The villa is only a part of a rich archaeological landscape that lies beneath these fields. For more information please visit <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/luftonarchaeology/>

Lufton Villa

The recent dig by Doctor James Gerrard and students from Newcastle University has revealed some interesting new features and they are looking to visit again next year to explore further. Many members of the public took the opportunity to have a guided tour on the 'open day' and the presentation in the evening was very interesting.

For more information please visit <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/luftonarchaeology/>

Much is known about the Roman settlement of Britain and the following extract from Somerset County Council's website about Roman villas may be of interest.

Roman Villas in Somerset.

The road system and the towns which it served brought an entirely new way of life to Britain, linked to the more efficient exploitation of the countryside through the villas. These were large country estates, the property of important landowners, who concentrated on arable farming and the rearing of cattle and sheep. In some cases there is direct transition from Celtic farm to Romano-British villa, as has been traced through excavations in Somerset at Catsgore near Somerton, where a round wooden hut was replaced by a mortared stone house. Romanised Britons undertook the cultivation of the fertile land of the valleys and, in the third and fourth centuries, developed groups of villas linked to the road system in Somerset, probably to meet the increasing demand for corn for the army and for the towns.

Sheep provided wool for manufacture into cloth; oxen were needed as draught animals for carts and ploughs, and for meat and leather.

The villa buildings show signs of a high degree of material prosperity, of which the tessellated pavements are the best known examples. The one from Low Ham, near Langport, depicts the story of Dido and Aeneas, and is now in the County Museum at Taunton. Other features of the villas include underfloor heating systems, bath rooms with elaborate provision for a type of bath now known as Turkish, and a cold plunge-bath to complete the process, decorated wall plaster, and, sometimes, glass for the windows. Associated with these buildings are numerous outhouses, probably farm buildings and quarters for the villa estate labour, corn-drying ovens, workshops for blacksmiths, and wells, indicating that the villa was not just a country house with luxurious fittings, but the working centre of an agricultural estate. Much still remains to be discovered about these estates and the people who lived and worked on them.

Visit <http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/archives/ASH/Romano-brit.htm> for more information about the Romans in Somerset.



Recent discovery of additional tessellated flooring and hypocaust system at Lufton Villa