

## Eastbourne Roman Villa





# Eastbourne Roman Villa

Edited by

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with a new contribution by

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Figure 1. Artist's impression of Eastbourne Roman Villa, painting by Helen Warren.

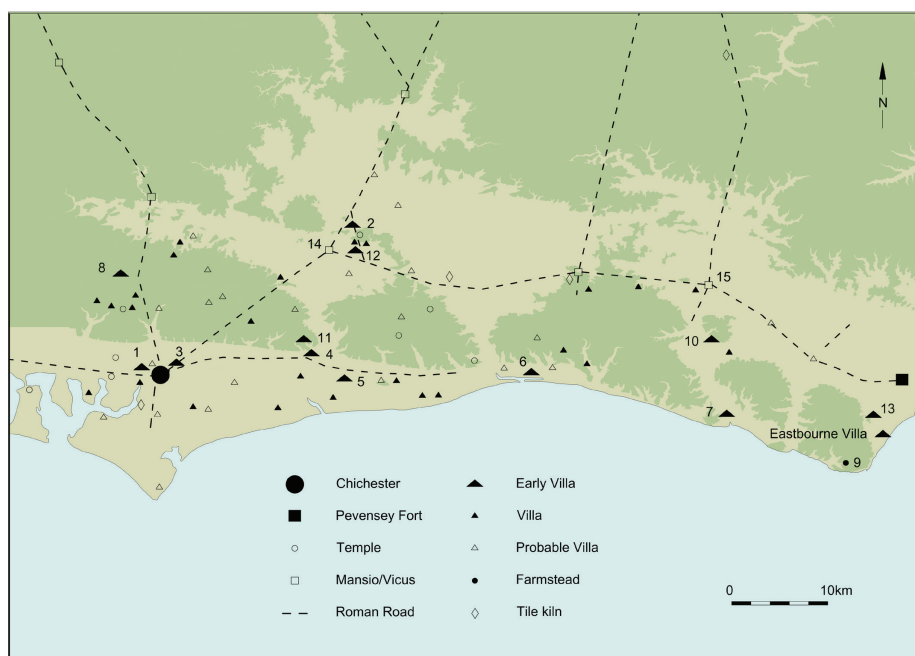


Figure 2. Map of part Roman Sussex to locate various sites referred to in the text (drawn by Justin Russell).

## Foreword

It surprises some to find out that Eastbourne once had an impressive Roman villa. Evidence was first noticed in 1712 when a sunken area (now thought to be the lower level of a hypocaust heating system), stone foundations and tiled pavements (mosaics) were discovered at the seafront. Many notable minds have addressed the task over the intervening years, exploring and searching for the villa's remains, and recording their observations for posterity. We have these archaeologists to thank for our understanding of what once might have existed here, at the edge of the Roman Empire.

There have been some tantalizing glimpses into the size and shape of the villa, its position in the landscape and the materials with which it was constructed. It is almost possible to imagine the villa as it once was, looking out to the channel, its wealthy residents awaiting trade goods on ships arriving from mainland Europe.

Sadly, the development of Eastbourne seafront, while having highlighted the existence of the villa, also caused its destruction. Nothing can now be seen, although there are a few finds in museum collections.

We are indebted to David Rudling, a specialist in Roman Sussex, for his extensive research. This new publication includes David's academic conclusions, *The Roman Villa in Context*.

The original ENHAS publication on the villa was compiled by our much-missed local archaeologist and historian Lawrence Stevens, alongside local historian Richard Gilbert. David Rudling's paper is reproduced together with the addition of coloured images, four coloured drawings by W. H. Brooke (Figs 4-7: now held by the Sussex Archaeological Society at its Barbican House Museum, Lewes and reproduced here with the kind permission of the curator, Emma O'Connor) and my artist's impression of the villa. All together it contains what we know at present about Eastbourne's Roman villa.

Helen Warren  
Hon. Secretary ENHAS



## **Eastbourne Roman Villa, 1973 Edition**



## Foreword to the 1973 Edition

Out of print for some time now, the late Col. Thomas Sutton's summary of known records about the Roman villa at Eastbourne, reprinted from Vol. XC (1952) of the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, has long been a source for consultation by students. Before his death, in the summer of 1969, he had recognised the need for re-publication, but discussions with him to that end had not reached a practical stage.

With the present reissue, we not only print Col. Sutton's original text but have added a supplement and illustrations which may help to clear up various obscurities and present the entire subject in a wider setting. In this, we had the author's concurrence in principle, though nothing had then been written. Opportunity has also been taken to introduce some fresh matter which has not been published before.

There is also the possibility that further discoveries may be made in the relevant area, and, if this publication serves to keep that possibility in both the public and official mind, it will have served a useful purpose; but primarily it is directed to the student of Eastbourne's history.

Lawrence Stevens  
Richard Gilbert

Eastbourne 1973

## Acknowledgments

For assistance in the preparation of this booklet thanks must be expressed to the Sussex Archaeological Society's council, for permission to reprint Col. Sutton's article and for the loan of photographic blocks, to Mrs. V. B. Lamb, the Society's Hon. Librarian, for ready co-operation, to the East Sussex Record Office for facilities to inspect maps, wills and other records, to Eastbourne Public Library for placing at our disposal books, plans and pictures, to the *Eastbourne Gazette* for access to its files, to the Royal Ontario Museum for information and photographs and to the *Sussex Express and County Herald* for permission to inspect the files of the *Sussex Agricultural Express and County Advertiser*.

L. S. & R. G.