

Bathampton Romano-British Villa

Search for Skinner's villa continues

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At some point between 1811 and 1822 the Rev. John Skinner recorded the discovery of a tessellated pavement in the village of Bathampton. It is not known whether Skinner found the pavement on one of his travels, but it is thought more likely that it had already been discovered and brought to his attention.

The precise location is not known. Skinner's sketch map of the site is not to scale and it is not possible to relate the site to any existing features other than to state that it is to the east side of Down Lane and nearer the High Street. The most likely location is within the parish allotments although, since Skinner's visit, several cottages have been built on the eastern side and there is also a modern bungalow, adjacent to Down Lane, at the northern end of the allotments (see Figure 1).

Many tales and rumours circulate about coins, some gold having been found on the site, but limited walking over and around individual allotments has produced no Roman pottery fragments, or other material, that might indicate a villa or other Romano-British building. However, a very limited geophysical survey by John Oswin and the writer did indicate a possible location for further work. It is, therefore, the intention to carry out a more detailed geophysical survey in the early spring, before cultivation and planting takes place, using the new profiling equipment to cover a larger area in more detail.

If these results are encouraging, the allotment holders will be approached to see whether limited excavation is possible. One story which will be followed up, involves an alleged Roman road, running parallel to St George's Hill, but to the north of it, in the garden of a house. If proved correct, it could be a possible Roman road from Bath, passing in front of the villa site and heading eastward to a river crossing to Bathford.



Figure 1 left
Aerial photograph of Bathampton illustrating area of geophysics and possible site of Skinner's Villa.

Figure 2 below
Rev. John Skinner's sketch of Hampton Down and surroundings made in the early 20th Century.

