

Archaeological Report for Groom Way , Lenham . Sept 2014

Two Roman ditches were located by Museum of London Archaeologists in 2002 when Groom Way , Lenham was originally constructed and the Community Centre built .

Report by Tony Mckinder of MoLas :- Flue tile , RB pottery found in them and three Roman coins found in the top soil by LAS in 2002, 3rd C (presumably coming from the ditch.)



They cross the new road in approximately east → west direction about 60m apart . When Rogate /Coombs started the housing site one of the first holes they dug was for a soakaway for storm water in the middle of the site . Very neatly it had sectioned the southerly ditch almost at right angles . The section was very clean and clear as the soil was not very wet . Had it been wetter the neat section might have smeared. (See photos following)

Northlands House was demolished and the land of its garden , grass section north of that and the strip down the west side of Groomway were being incorporated into a housing development of 12 dwellings by Rogate construction . Site manager David Tomlinson was very interested and helpful with the archaeological investigations and kept a close watch on the housing foundations for any finds . Finds started emerging immediately Coombs started to dig the soak-way in the middle of the site , they had already dug it before David called us in .

Photo of north section of site looking west , 7.9.14 :-

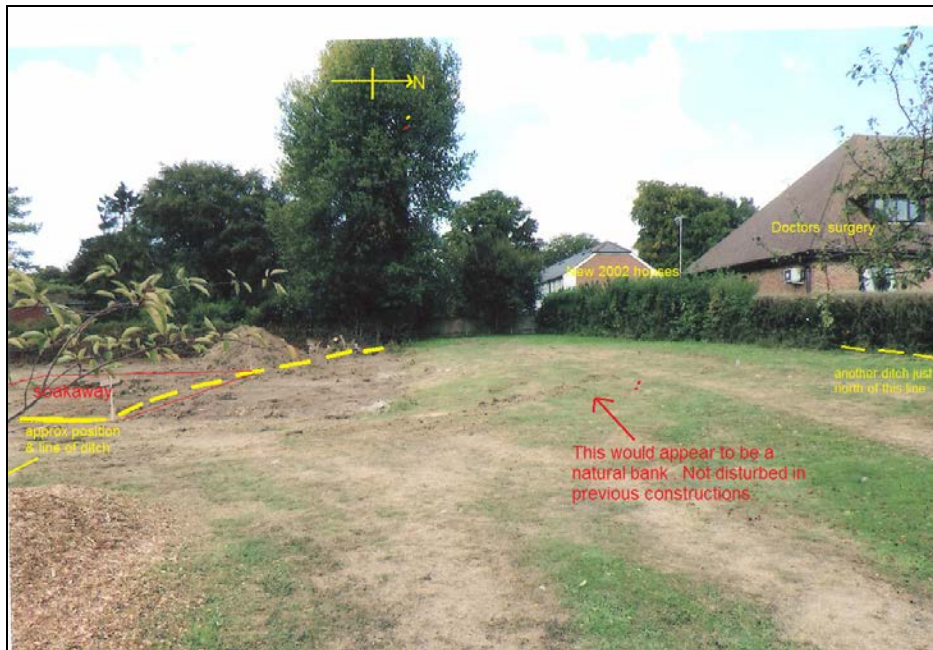


Photo of the soak-away looking east towards Groom Way, section through the Roman ditch was not exactly at right angles one can see a side section to the left



Ditch in profile – looking east across Groom way



Excavation :-

After the soak-away was completed by the construction co. Rogate/Coombs allowed LH to excavate 2m x2m of this ditch on the eastern side . It proved to be a very productive dig .



Many 1st , 2nd and even 3rd Century Roman pots jumbled up in the ditch , possibly a water drainage ditch that has moved some of the layers and clay sections as if deposits have moved across in rainy episodes . See the following plan & account of the pots and other items found . The one piece of window glass is curved and could have been from an oculus ...this would suggest a possible bath-house located in the field to the east of Groom Way ? Many oyster

shells were found and a lower jaw of a small boar .



this large number of oyster shells fits
with findings in 2002 ,there was a heap with several hundred .

Pot sherds from the ditch _ mostly 2nd Century



Many of the dark grey sherds are Upchurch ware from the Medway estuary.

A few, especially the red sandy ware are possibly local. Much red sandy ware is found a mile south of here on Chapel farm and Mount Castle .

The one piece of Patch grove ware 1st one in the above picture , is the furthest east that Patch grove ware has ever been found . Most is near the

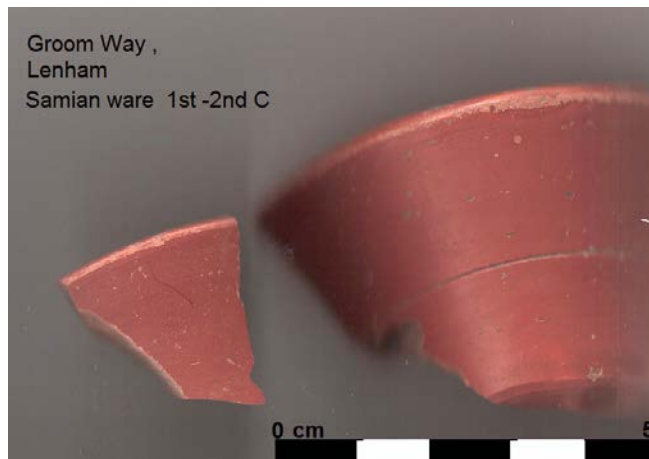
Darenth Valley , N Kent

Samian piece is early 2nd C



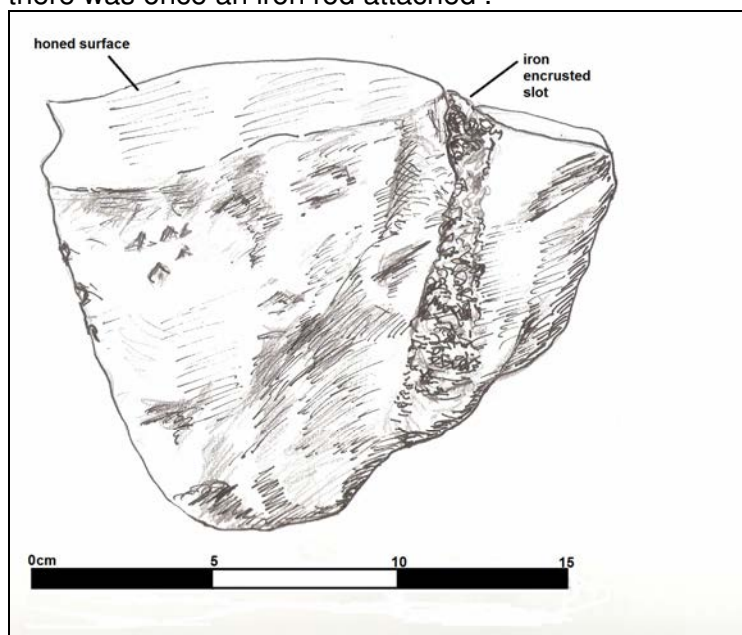


Sherd of Patchgrove ware = most Easterly position ever found in Kent !
There were 2 pieces of different Samian ware pots but both 1st-2nd C (see also the first photo of the pottery) here is a close up scan .



STONE :-

Resting on the base of the ditch was a piece of Sarsen stone . Shaped and worn as if used as a honing stone for sharpening knives . It also had an iron encrusted slot as if there was once an iron rod attached .



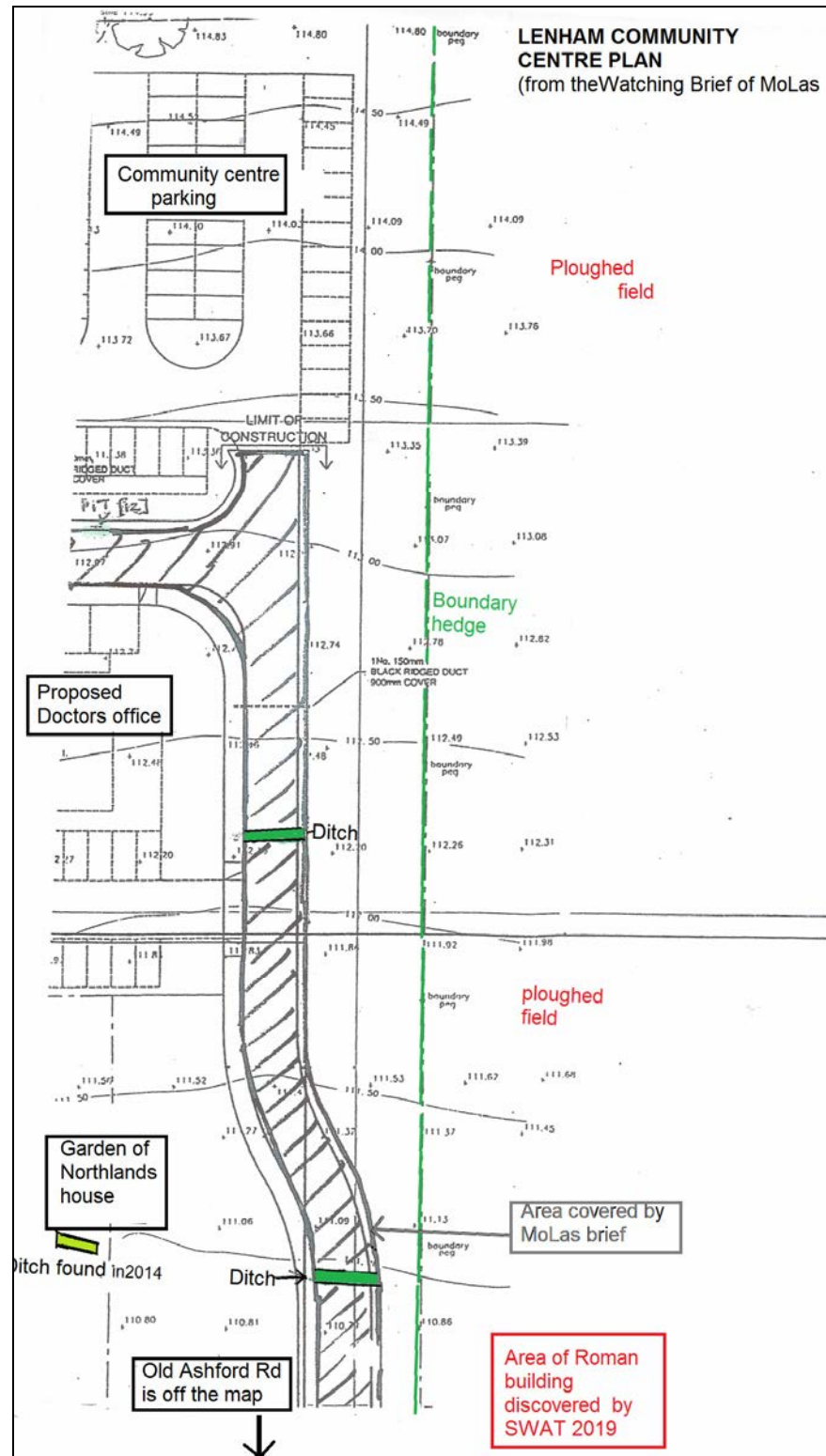
Another unusual item was a bone sewing needle - length 35mm



Also a hob nail from a Roman shoe :-



Conclusion This site should have had an official 'Watching Brief' attached to the development Plan of the houses in 2014 . Why MBC omitted to insist on this is strange , as the position of the Roman ditch was located in 2002 by MoLas . From the evidence found by LAS it would appear to be a drainage ditch to or from a possible bath house circa 2nd C . The elevation of the land suggests the ditch was draining from a wet area 100m to the NW (in gardens of Ashford Rd houses) and running SE into the bath house . That would suppose that the bathhouse is situated SE across Groom Way in the corner of the adjacent field at TQ 9030 5210.

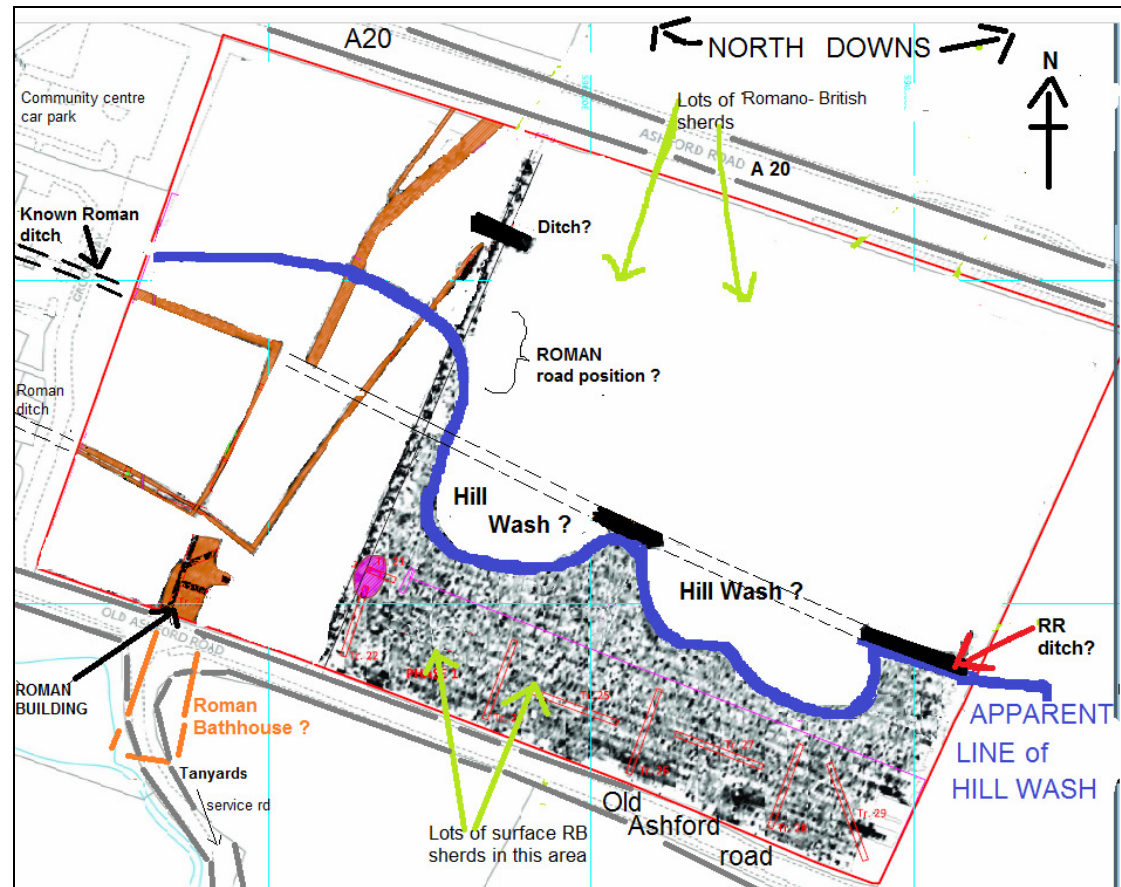


Evidence of a Roman building was indeed found in the corner of the field . from Swale and Thames 's Archaeology's investigation in 2019 . It appears to be the north western end of a bathhouse which presumably once lay across the Old Ashford road. The land dips sharply at that point so perhaps most has been lost .

The magnetometry survey that Swale & Thames archaeology interestingly seemed to show hill wash across the middle of 'Forty Acres' (as known in 1841) and a dark line that looks like 2 sections of the road ditch that would link with the northern ditch that MoLas found .

In other words there was a major Roman Road going parallel to the old A20 .

See Article by Timothy Baines-Smith in "Ancient Lenham " Edition 3 .p.35
2011 Road as Tim confirms .



The apparent line of the Roman Road, diagram using a simplified print of the magnetometry
 Courtesy of SWAT ...modified from their report .

Account by Lesley Feakes, June 2015 added to in Dec 2019