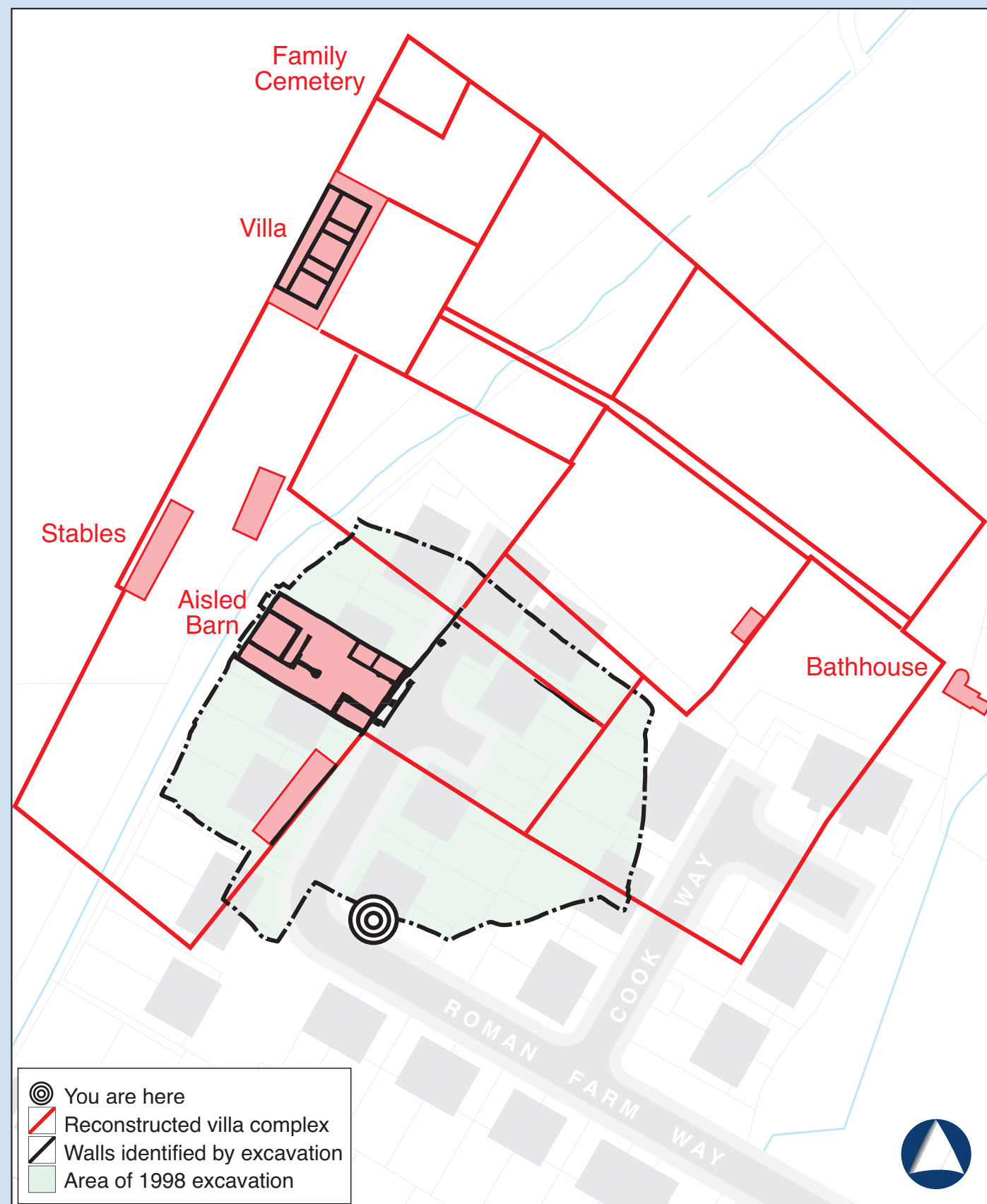


The Frontier Settlers

A Roman Farm near Broad Street

In 1829 workmen began digging on Broad Street Common in search of stone that was needed for road surfacing. They chose a spot that remained dry even in a wet winter. Almost immediately they found stone, but it proved to be the foundations and pavements of a Roman villa.

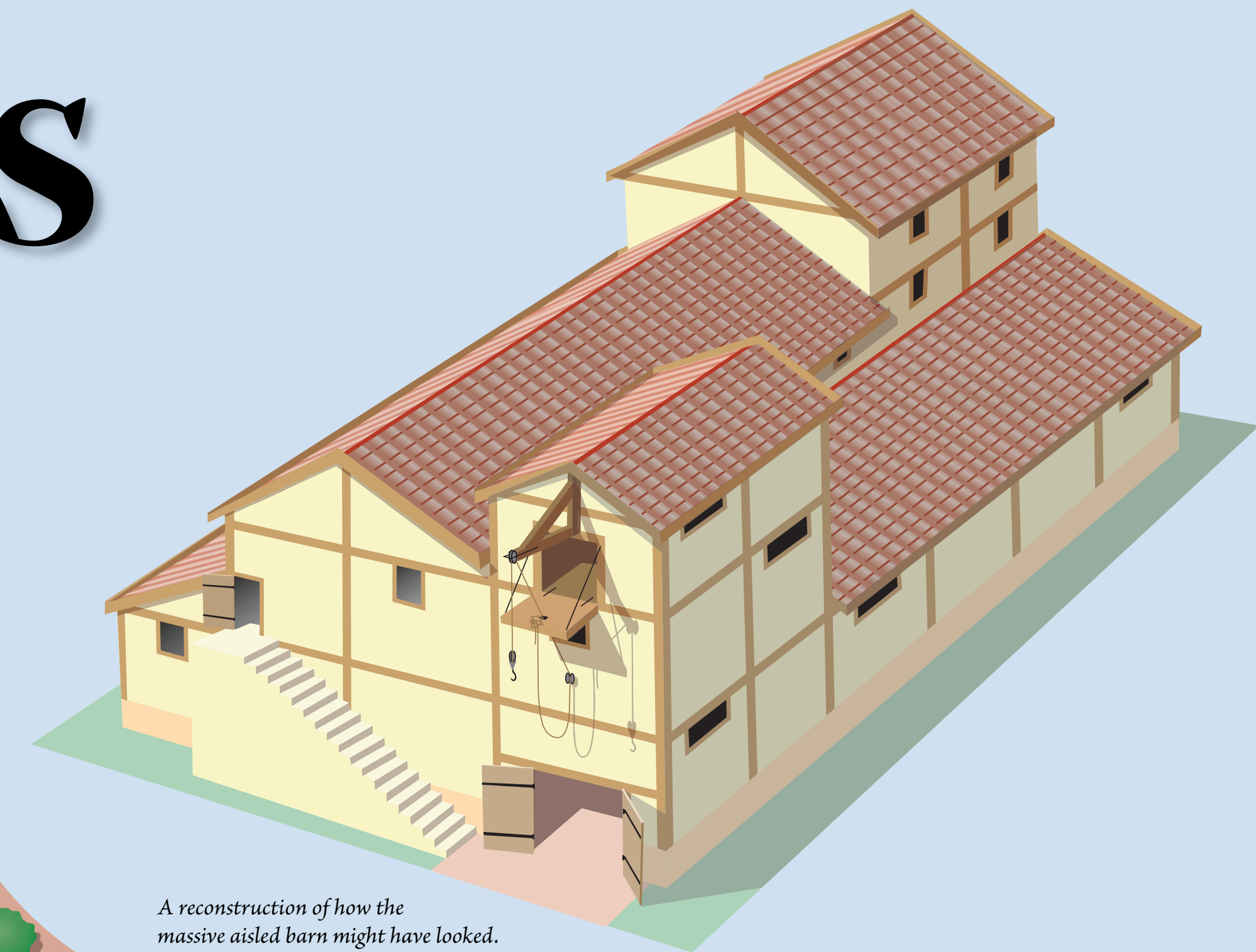


The location of the Roman remains in relation to the modern houses and streets. Also shown is an outline of the reconstructed plan that appears to the right.

The Roman villa was normally the residence of a wealthy individual, the equivalent of the Lord of the Manor of more recent times. It therefore seemed odd that such a person created a splendid residence on these flat and boggy claylands, especially when dry ground and fine views were available close by on the North Downs.



A reconstruction of how the entrance façade of the villa might have looked.



A reconstruction of how the massive aisled barn might have looked.

In 1998 archaeological excavations revealed a large farming establishment in the field adjacent to the common. A stone building, 25m long and 14m wide, must have had an imposing appearance. It was, however, simply an aisled barn, used for drying and storing grain and a variety of other agricultural activities. The surrounding area was divided into a series of enclosures, for managing livestock and growing crops.



Excavation of the walls of the aisled barn in progress. The view is looking westwards across the exposed foundations belonging to the external steps and tower shown in the reconstruction drawing.

It is clear from this that the owner of the villa regarded proximity to his farming operations as more desirable than a picturesque setting for his residence. The villa was part of a pioneering settlement on the London Clay, a territory that new roads and a more developed economy opened up for more intensive exploitation in the Roman period.