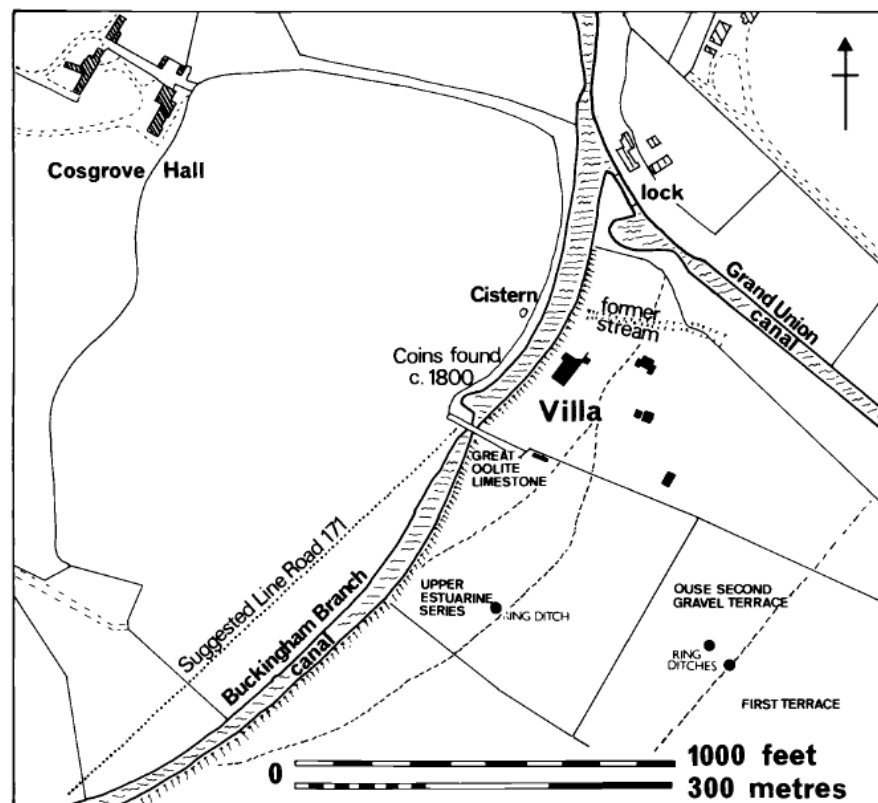


The Villa and Temple at Cosgrove, Northamptonshire

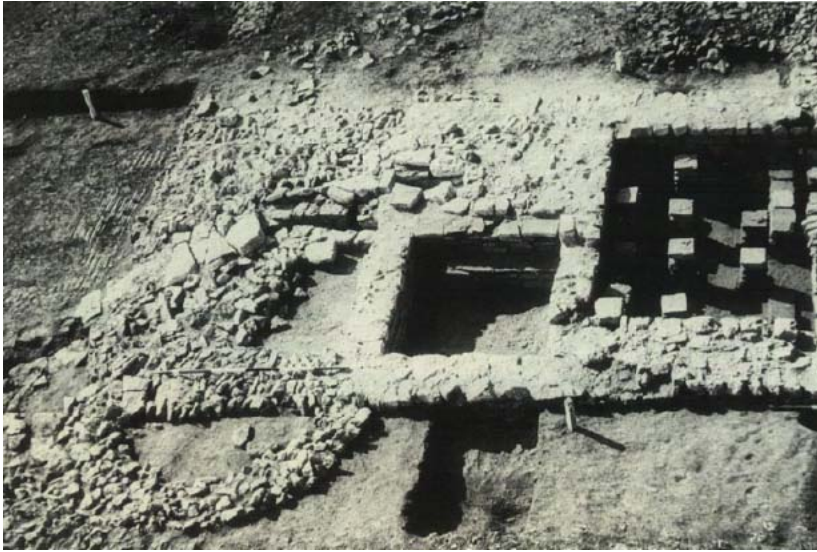
The main villa house, incorporating a bath suite, was built during the mid-second century, together with a timber shrine and various agricultural buildings. There may have been an earlier phase, represented in the area excavated, by a single roomed house which was extended in the mid second century building phase. The baths, and probably the main house, fell into disuse in the late second century and were demolished. The site was reorganised with the construction of a temple of Romano-Celtic plan and of a new agricultural building late in the second century, the original simple house may now have been the only residence. Around AD 280 there were alterations to the temple, possibly related to a large pit group of pottery and coins of this date.

The simple house and agricultural buildings fell into progressive disuse during the third and fourth centuries, but the temple may have been standing after AD 400. The function of religious foci on rural estates is discussed. Some sixth and seventh century pottery indicated Saxon activity. Late Neolithic/Beaker occupation was found beneath one of the Roman buildings.



The villa and other Roman buildings at Cosgrove, Northants are situated between the Great Ouse and the Tove, 800 m west of their confluence. The site lies in the angle formed by the junction of the Grand Union Canal and the Buckingham Branch Canal (now disused).

North West of the villa is a spring, once enclosed in a Roman masonry cistern. From this a small stream had flowed around the north and east of the buildings into the Ouse, until it was piped underground during the construction of the Buckinghamshire Canal. The villa lies about one mile east of Watling Street and directly adjacent to the suggested Roman Road 171 running down the Ouse valley.



Cosgrove Bath House 1969 - Plunge Bath



Cosgrove Bath House during 1957/8 excavations

The first record of Roman material at Cosgrove occurred in 1801 and was recorded in The Gentleman's Magazine. Some workmen in front of Major Maunsel's house (Cosgrove Hall) found an urn containing 60 silver denarii 1½ feet underground. A few weeks before they dug up a human skeleton near the same place'. This hoard, 'silver medallions' of Constantine I, Valentinian II and Magnus Maximus, and coins of Diocletian, Constans, Magnentius, Julian, Valens and Gratian were probably found during the construction of the Buckingham Branch Canal about 1800 AD (RCHM(E) 1982, 34) and the possibility of a Roman villa was soon suggested. Nothing further was found until 1956, when a drain was cut across the villa field prior to its conversion from pasture to arable. Roman tile fragments and pottery were brought to the attention of the late Charles W Green. He started excavations with the encouragement of the then landowner, the late Major the Hon J B Fermor Hesketh, and during 1957 and 1958 cleared the villa Bath House completely. Green also recorded other spreads of building material ploughed up in the field.

During the 1960's the site, which had been scheduled as an Ancient Monument, was badly eroded by ploughing. The author was requested by the then Ministry of Public Building and Works to undertake excavations, which took place for six weeks in September and October 1969, by kind permission of the owners, the Radcliffe Trust, and of the tenant, Mr R H Maycock. During these excavations the corrugated structure protecting the Bath House was removed and afterwards the site was back filled, as the tenant wished to have the field clear for cultivation.



Aerial view of Cosgrove Village and the Roman Villa (circled red)