

The relationship between Chichester and the rest of Britain

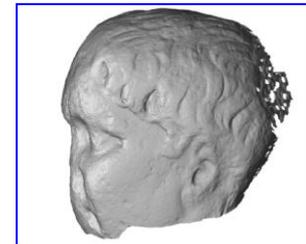
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In 55-54 BC Caesar made a raid into Britain but the Romans did not stay. However following this incursion the tribal centres such as Silchester and Colchester were more heavily defended. The Chichester entrenchments probably date to this period. There were also increased rivalries between local chiefs. There is also evidence, especially in the south, of trading contacts between Britain and Roman Gaul with finds of early first century material around Chichester. A pre-conquest Roman military presence may be related to protecting trade and/or keeping the local king and populace onside. There appear to be puppet kings across southern Britain before 43 AD.



Increasing tension amongst the native rulers in the 40s AD led to some fleeing to Rome to ask for help including 'Berikos' (Verica?). He found a sympathetic ear with the Emperor Claudius who needed to strengthen his position with a successful military campaign. Historical evidence for this is sparse, mainly a history by Cassius Dio, but there is especially no firm evidence for a Roman assault in Kent. The more likely approach would be using a client king such as Verica with a friendly port on the south coast at Chichester. Cassius Dio's account of a major battle at a river crossing has been thought since the 1930s to be across the Medway. The battle could just as easily have taken place on the Arun.

The settlement of *Noviomagus Regnensium* (Chichester) dates from soon after the invasion and finds include some of the earliest Roman inscriptions in Britain including one with a dedication to Nero dated 54AD. Tacitus in the second century describes Cogidumnus (Togidubnus) as a faithful ally of Rome. It is possible Fishbourne was built for Togidubnus at the same time and following the plan of the *Domus Aureum*. The marble head found at Fishbourne was thought to be Togidubnus, but laser scanning suggests it is a portrait of Nero. It was probably one of many shipped around the Empire and damaged by axe blows possibly caused after the fall of Nero in 68 AD. The stone was then used in the foundations of the new palace at Fishbourne.



The later Palace at Fishbourne was started in the 90s AD and its plan followed that of the *Domus Flavia*, Vespasian's house in Rome. Several large Roman villas in East Hants and Sussex follow the same plan, such as Langstone, Southwick and Pulborough. The plan comprises a courtyard villa with an entrance to the east, a triclinium opposite the entrance on the western side, and a basilica in the north-east corner. Are they the homes of a ruling Roman elite or local dignitaries?

In the early second century AD the palaces are changing. Most lose their basilica hall and the elaborate triclinium (or audience chamber at Fishbourne). Possibly this represents a tightening of the Roman grip on Britain and the dispossession of the British clients. The area around Chichester declines in importance from now on.

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