

Roman – AD 43-410

Roman material is scattered throughout the AONB, with – as might be expected – a concentration near Fishbourne Palace that lies on the border of the AONB (Fig 12).

The Roman invasion of AD 43 resulted in major changes in social and economic conditions as well as changes in technology. It represents the start of one of the most dynamic and distinctive episodes in the history of South-East England.

The location of the landing spot has been the subject of debate, with Richborough in Kent favoured by the ‘traditional view,’ although locations in the Chichester/Solent area have also been suggested. Arguments supporting Sussex/Hampshire landings include:

- The Roman desire to restore King Verica to his Atrebatian kingdom located in parts of the modern counties of Sussex, Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire;
- The presence along this part of the south coast of safe harbours;
- The advantages from the Roman point of view of starting their campaign in friendly territory where they could perhaps rely on safe disembarkment and local support; (Rudling 2003).

However, there is no definite archaeological evidence from Sussex for the invasion itself.

The official reason in the Roman period given by Dio Cassius for the invasion was the expulsion of the invaders of King Verica’s territory, who fled to Rome. Martin Henig (1998, 2002), who has suggested that it was more a question of ‘Roman liberation’ rather than conquest, said that Britain’s Romanised southern rulers may have welcomed the arrival of the Romans and profited from it afterwards. This point of view seems supported by the absence of contemporary forts in the area.

There is some evidence of an early Roman military presence in Chichester and at Fishbourne. At Fishbourne, the primary silts of a large early ditch yielded AD 30s pottery, and part of a sword scabbard dated to the Augustan period has also been recovered. Two rectangular storage buildings in timber and gravel roads may also support this view and might relate to a Roman military establishment prior to AD 43, perhaps associated with the formation or protection of a client kingdom or with the planned but aborted invasion of Britain by Caligula. There is also more general evidence of pre-conquest Roman material culture and local coinage with Latin legends and Roman iconography. At the very least, such evidence demonstrates that some of the inhabitants of Sussex, especially those in the Chichester area, were already familiar with aspects of a Romanised way of life.

After the invasion, the Romans established or re-established a client kingdom in Southern England that consisted of part of Sussex and probably areas to the north and west. There is evidence for the king at the time, Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus (previously known as Cogidubnus), in the form of inscriptions and references by the classical writer Tacitus. The inscriptions consist of an undated dedication stone for a temple in Chichester and another dedicatory inscription dated to AD 58. These, together with a widespread distribution of products of Roman manufacture such as pottery and coins, point towards an increasingly Romanised culture.

The most important Roman site to fall – at least partially – within the AONB is Fishbourne Roman Palace, which is also a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM number WS 233).

Only that part of the site that is south of the A259 lies within the AONB. It is this part of the site that is considered in most detail here, although to put this in context reference is made to other parts of the site that lie outside the AONB.

Fishbourne may have begun life as a placed trading post at the head of Chichester Channel. It is tempting to interpret Roman artefacts predating the invasion, for example the Roman silver coin dating to 40 BC (Chi SMR 94; 476000 105000) from Prinsted, as evidence of early trade. Early timber buildings and structures lie to the north of the AONB, but these were superseded by the Neronian 'proto-palace,' the southern part of which falls within the AONB (Fig 13). This Roman-style building is thought to date to the early AD 60s (Cunliffe 1971) and was constructed of stone sourced from as far afield as the Mediterranean, some of the ornately carved pieces have parallels in Italy. The proto-palace covered an area of *c* 58m by *c* 46m and was composed of four main elements: a large colonnaded garden, a bath suite, and two ranges of rooms, one lying to the east of the courtyard and the other to the west of the baths. The main element of this building to lie within the AONB was the bath suite that consisted of a cold swimming bath and a suite of heated rooms joined by a heated ante-room and entrance chamber. Of the seven rooms of the heated suite, four may have been heated by hypocausts and one may have contained a semicircular plunge bath. The substantial footings of the heated suite suggests that this part of the building was vaulted.

The proto-palace represented a great advance architecturally; its structure implied the attentions of a large number of foreign specialists skilled in constructional and decorative arts. However, the proto-palace is not unique even in Sussex – at Angmering part of a closely similar building has been excavated, that may even have been constructed by largely the same labour force. These similar buildings seem to suggest the presence of rich people willing to invest in expensive Roman luxuries now that Roman government was in Britain to stay.

The construction of the great Flavian palace (Fig 14) with its famous mosaics is dated to between AD 75 and AD 80 on coin and pottery evidence. This building replaced the proto-palace, but only the South Wing falls within the AONB.

The construction of the palace was well thought out and planned in advance. Different phases in the building programme can be distinguished, but the entire concept was evidently of one period. Before construction, the ground that sloped to the south towards the harbour was levelled to create a vast artificial terrace at *c* 6m OD that covered an area of some 120m by 275m. It is likely that the harbour was used to bring in stone for the palace; and the standard *imbrex* and *tegula* tiles used for the roof may have been manufactured at the tilery at Copperas Point, near Dell Quay (see below).

The building was arranged as symmetrically as possible around an east-west axis projected along the line of a road running east to Chichester.

The South Wing of the palace is thought to have been the private residence of the owner. Even though the area has been subjected to intensive robbing and destruction associated with the building of the modern road and houses, it is still possible to say that this was a major range of rooms with a colonnade, although the internal arrangement of the rooms is not well understood. The South Wing incorporated parts of the Neronian proto-palace at its east end, most notably the bath suite described above.

The wing faced south across a colonnade and an elaborately landscaped private garden to the harbour. An artificial terrace was constructed, running *c* 90m south from the palace building. The terrace was enclosed by a colonnade along its west side, and possibly also

along its east, and seems to have been laid out as a 'natural' garden. An artificial water supply was piped into the west side of the garden and bedding trenches and pits were laid out haphazardly to contrive the 'natural' appearance.

There are still a number of questions to be answered in this area of the palace. The function of a masonry structure some 30m to the south-west of the garden is not known; it may have been a garden pavilion or a warehouse. The silts that clogged the lagoon after the garden was abandoned contain important environmental evidence such as pollen, leather, wood and food residues on pottery.

A quay wall built of stone blocks and timber retained the south edge of the terrace. It is not yet clear how the sea water was retained in the huge lagoon-like inlet, but a structure built out across the harbour end may have kept the water back at low tide while the water level was maintained by fresh water streams. Lock gates may have been provided to allow ships to sail up to the terrace at high tide along a 6m wide channel dredged along the terrace edge. The inlet would have been some 120m wide, with the land rising gently on the opposite side.

There is other (perhaps questionable) evidence for use of the Harbour by Roman ships. Stones recovered from Hook Farm Creek, off Bosham, and incorporated into a local farmhouse is thought to be ballast jettisoned by grain ships (Chi SMR 2494; 483150 102740) on the basis that they are 'similar to stones found at Ostia.'

At Fishbourne Creek, two phases of aisled buildings were uncovered (Chi SMR 2369; 483610 104240). The earlier of these was a rectangular timber structure, possibly with central courtyard, and dated to the late 1st century AD. The building was destroyed by fire in the mid 2nd century. It was replaced by large aisled building with an apparent agricultural function that was demolished in late 3rd century or the early 4th century (Rudkin 1986). The earlier building was orientated east-west, but the later was orientated north-south. The later building is a good example of a typical aisled villa (Rudling 2003). There were limited areas of building debris consisting of Roman bricks and large flint nodules identified nearby (Chi SMR 2442, 483690 104190; Chi SMR 2372 483310 103860).

North of this, a campaign of diving in a mill pond produced evidence of columns and structures as well as pottery and coins (Chi SMR 2466, 483590 104630; Chi SMR 2467, 483590 104630). The excavations also revealed evidence for a fresh water stream and spring and a water garden that underwent successive elaborate alterations during the Roman period. Work at this site seemed to suggest that the high tide level in Chichester Harbour has risen by at least 4m or more since the 1st century and that this has been a continuous process, with the high tides always remaining below the successively high water levels over the springs (Wallace 1996).

The process of Romanisation that the palace illustrates did not exclude the countryside. Sussex has a relatively large number of villas, and there are a number of significant villas outside the AONB at Bignor, Angmering and Chilgrove. There are also villas known or suspected to exist within the AONB. The term villa often refers to a domestic house or complex which significantly reflects the Roman style of rural life. Archaeological evidence such as masonry footings, multiple rooms, clay tiles, mosaic or tessellated floors, painted wall plaster, window glass, hypocaust heating or bath-suites have been used in the past to determine whether a site is likely to be a villa. Villas are generally assumed to have been at the centre of farm estates, and were responsible for major changes in some rural settlements in Sussex (Rudling 1998).

The pattern of rural settlement in Roman Sussex has been characterised by Cunliffe (1973) as having ‘a strong element of continuity, many sites originating well back into the preceding Iron Age or even earlier, and a very marked discrepancy in wealth which appears dramatically within thirty years of the Roman invasion and remains a feature of the social scene until the early decades of the 5th century.’ He also points out that the poorer peasant farms and villages are fairly evenly scattered over the Downs and the coastal plain, but the richer farms – the villas – tend to select locations where the soil is more productive, including the coastal plain. Although some of the rural sites would have been involved in industry – most would have been associated with farming which was relied upon to produce sufficient surpluses to support the more sophisticated aspects of Roman life. Given this importance, however, it is surprising that there has been relatively little detailed study of this aspect of the Roman countryside, especially land-use and settlement patterns, field systems, methods of drainage, the crops and domesticated animals and farm tools and buildings. In contrast, considerable effort and resources have been expended to investigate one particular aspect of the rural landscape: the ‘villas’ (Rudling 2003). Only the site at Fishbourne has been investigated on any scale under modern conditions.

A number of villa sites are known or postulated along the Chichester-Bitterne road, thought to be Roman itself (see below). A Roman villa site is known in Langstone, near Langstone Avenue, just outside the AONB. Nearby, however, Roman finds have been reported in roots after tree falls in the 1960s (Hants SMR 50,062.00, 50,068.00, 50,142.00; 471900 105350, 471900 105360, 471960 105330 respectively). The find spots lie within the AONB and included wall plaster, brick, tile, tesserae and mortar fragments presumably associated with the Langstone villa. Residual Roman tiles have also been found nearby (Hants SMR 23,501.00; 473430 106000)

A villa is also known at Warblington (Hants SMR 23,474.00; 473360 105860). Here, trial trenches in 1955 revealed walling and traces of tiled floors. The wall was constructed of rubble bonded in cement with a course of Roman brick. Roman tiles, tesserae and pottery have all been found in the vicinity. The site is only visible as parch marks now.

A more doubtful villa site has been postulated at Nutbourne (Chi SMR 95; 476740 105470), based only on finds of pottery and roofing tile in a house garden.

Another villa is part of an important cluster of Roman structures and finds around Broadbridge Farm and was one of those discovered in 1832 (Mitchell 1866), and featured on the 1876 25 inch OS map. Black (1985) categorises the structures into Sites A-E, and this system is followed here. The villa – Black’s Site C (Chi SMR 1251; 481040 105180) – consisted of three phases of timber construction and included a substantial timber palisade (Chi SMR 1252; 481040 105180) which had been dismantled by the 3rd century. Black’s Site A (Chi SMR 1249; 481020 105130) was a building that lay to the southwest of this, ‘suggestive of a temple.’ Coins (Chi SMR 1250; 481020 105130) date this building to the mid 2nd century. Black goes on to describe the temple as consisting of a central room 13.7m square with a central *piscina* (or pit) 1.8m in diameter and the same depth, flanked on the east and west sides by ranges of three rooms, all 3.7m square joined by passages. The sides of the *piscina* were described as vitrified with a great quantity of pottery within it and Black suggests that the flanking rooms were for the display of statuary and offerings, which has parallels with temples both in Britain and Europe.

East of the temple a mosaic forms Black’s Site D (Chi SMR 1253; 480820 105090). This is interpreted as the floor of an elaborate building intended for temple visitors. Such buildings

are known in Britain at Lydney Park (Wheeler & Wheeler 1932) and in Europe for example at Herbord near Sanxay (Formige 1944).

Further south, Black's Site B is recorded as an amphitheatre (Chi SMR 2367; 480900 104900). The evidence of this is a 19th century account of 'remnants of the tiers of seats' within a large excavation in the shape of a basin. The report is unauthenticated, but theatres are known in association with temples in rural sanctuaries.

Black lists his Site E as being a building recorded in the 19th century that contained a coin of Honorius in one of its walls, dating it to the 'very late 4th century or 5th century.' Black locates the building at 48119 10527. Other finds in the area are listed as located at 481000 105000 and consist of a marble head now in the British Museum (Chi SMR 1259) either of Germanicus (15BC to AD19), brother of the Emperor Claudius, or of the Emperor Caligula; a coin and a brooch and (Chi SMR 1254, 1255 respectively). Further north, on modern Penwarden Way, a tegula tile was found in topsoil (Chi SMR 1288; 481160 105230).

It is worth noting that religious sites are an important feature of the Romano-British countryside, and that there is another important temple site on Hayling Island, outside the AONB.

There are also features that show up on aerial photography in the Broadbridge Farm area. It is tempting to associate these features with the important Roman remains here, but this is speculation in the absence of any firm dating evidence. An east-west running feature centred on 480790 104845 is almost certainly the field boundary shown on the 1st edition OS mapping (Aerial photo (n); NMR 2120/1144 taken in 1982 – see below). Two other features are more difficult to interpret. The first is a rectilinear cropmark that runs from 480770 104945 to 480800 104950 (Aerial photo (o); NMR 2120/1144 taken in 1982). It is possible that this is an agricultural field boundary (see below). The second feature is a c 20m diameter circular cropmark centred on 480770 104915 (Aerial photo (p); NMR 2120/1144 taken in 1982). These two features are not shown on OS mapping of any era, nor on the 1780s Yeakell and Gardiner map.

An earthwork nearby has traditionally been known as Vespasian's landing place and headquarters (Chi SMR 2446; 482900 104300), although there is no evidence for this, and other interpretations for this feature have been suggested (see below).

Finds of building debris across the AONB suggest that occupation was not confined to the known villa sites. Around Fishbourne, the presence of Roman pottery, tile and building debris suggests the existence of sites (Chi SMR 2429, 483930 104450; Chi SMR 2445, 483100 104060; Chi SMR 2476, 483050 103960). At 97 Fishbourne Road, building debris consisted of tesserae and tile (Chi SMR 2458; 483790 104650), although this might have related to the nearby Palace. At the same site, a V-shaped ditch was evidence of water management or a possible boundary (Chi SMR 2459; 483790 104650); a water pipe was also recovered at Fishbourne Road East (Chi SMR 2460; 484000 104000).

Limited excavations have identified Roman material in the Bosham area. An excavation in the churchyard and north door of the Holy Trinity church suggested that there was a Roman building on site (Chi SMR 2360; 480430 103880), although archaeological features in the graveyard had almost certainly been destroyed by burials. Occupation debris was also found at Stonewalls (Chi SMR 3441; 482330 103840) and after the digging of a lagoon at Mill Lane (Chi SMR 2478; 483640 104370).

In Havant, grave digging at St Thomas's church in the 1960s recovered brick, tile, tesserae and limestone blocks, and pottery in a V-shaped gully (Hants SMR 23,380.00, 23,379.00; both 472870 105290), suggestive of Roman building in the area.

Perhaps the main traces of early military activity in Sussex are the major roads. Roads linked Chichester to London and to other *civitas* capitals such as Winchester and Silchester. Some of the Roman roads may have followed Iron Age trackways, but the building of the major highways would have had a massive impact on both the social and economic landscapes, bringing improved communications and access to markets. Other important modes of transport would have included sea and river transport, especially in the harbours within the AONB.

There are a number of roads within the AONB, the positions of which are known with varying certainty (Fig 15). The road from the entrance of the Flavian palace heading to Chichester (*Noviomagus*) has already been mentioned above. A road also ran along the north edge of the AONB from Chichester to Bitterne, Southampton (*Claesentum*) running close to the line of the modern A259 from the Cutmill area to Emsworth, east into Hampshire (Chi SMR 132 and 1209; 475200 105800 and 480000 105000 respectively). This is Margary's road 421 (Margary 1955). It is also likely that a road ran from the east gate of Chichester, emerging by the south gate to head for a point just south of Dell Quay (Magilton 1995). A path running south-west from a point just west of Chichester's medieval south gate is shown on Yeakell and Gardiner's 1769 map of the town. As indicated below, there was an important tilery at Copperas Point, and Dell Quay may also have been used as a landing place.

A fourth road ran northeast from Bracklesham towards Birdham, although as Margary remarks 'the reason for such a route is not at all clear.' If the southern part of this road, known as Bracklesham Lane, is projected north the road would fall within the AONB. If this road is Roman (it may be medieval or even post-medieval), it may have linked with the road from Copperas Point mentioned above. There is also the suggestion of the existence of a fifth road running east from Birdham to meet the 'Sidlesham Road' running south from Chichester (Cunliffe 1971, Fig 2). An excavation in the 1960s at the Mill House in Bosham identified a road together with a quantity of Roman pottery and tile (Chi SMR 2427, 2428; both 480390 103880). The road may also be evident from aerial photo evidence and observation on the ground (A Bromley-Martin pers. comm. in SMR), although there is also a medieval road in this area. A possible Roman road was also identified at West Thorney (Chi SMR 170, 171, 172; all 475800 102600).

An important site of a Roman tilery (Chi SMR 2346; 483210 101920) was excavated at Copperas Point, near Dell Quay (Rudling 1987). Part of the site had been destroyed by coastal erosion, but a geophysical survey located a magnetic anomaly thought to be a kiln. Trial excavations revealed other features associated with the tilery. Few such sites have been excavated in the past, and the tiles produced at this site may have been used for the nearby Fishbourne Palace. The date of the tilery remains uncertain, since the pottery evidence did not include closely datable types. The apparent absence in the assemblage of relief-patterned tiles that were mainly produced *c* AD 75-175 may be a clue, although there is no reason why a tilery of this period need necessarily produce flue tiles with this keying. An (unpublished) excavation by Dr W H C Frend at Dell Quay itself in 1942 (Anon 1943) identified a number of box and flanged tiles, including wasters (Chi SMR 2366, 483640 102540; also probably Chi SMR 2341, 483600 102900), but a later archaeological survey failed to locate any Roman tile on the foreshore in the area Frend's discoveries (Cartwright 1984).

An important excavation took place at Chidham (Bradley 1992) on sites of Roman salt production threatened by coastal erosion (Bradley's Site A: Chi SMR 239; 477800 104220. Bradley's Site B: Chi SMR 241; 477980 103480). The sites recovered briquetage (industrial debris from ceramics used in the salt production process), and identified a number of recut ditches and pits. Pottery evidence suggested that salt production had taken place over a considerable period in Chidham, perhaps ceasing in the 2nd century AD. There was also a later Roman inhumation, consisting of an extended adult male, on Site B (Chi SMR 242; 477980 103480). Another Chidham site is recorded as a salt works (Chi SMR 249; 478200 103930), although the finds were not diagnostic of this, consisting of calcinated flint, Roman sherds and burnt clay brought up by the plough.

A further Roman salt works was discovered at Thornham Boat Yard (Chi SMR 245, 476350 104710; Chi SMR 182, 476370 104670). Here occupation debris was overlaid by a large Roman saltern probably of 1st century date. Briquetage, other pottery and a coin of Antoninus Pius (Chi SMR 181; 476370 104670) were also recovered. A hearth (Chi SMR 183; 476370 104670) was also identified, and daub was found nearby (Chi SMR 187; 476380 104700).

In addition to the inhumation mentioned above at Chidham, two urns containing cremations were found at Coastguard Lane in West Wittering (Chi SMR 15; 477500 098200).

Roman field systems were identified in West Wittering, consisting of shallow depressions (Chi SMR 7, 8; 478400 099170, 479280 099480 respectively), although they may also have been post-medieval. If Roman, these were important survivals of the Roman rural landscape, although they were ploughed out in the 1960s.

The numerous stray finds of pottery, coins and other artefacts support the interpretation that the AONB was a well-organised economic and social landscape in the Roman period, especially around Fishbourne and Bosham.

A bronze helmet was dredged up from Chichester Harbour (Chi SMR 2348; 483000 104000). This Coolus type 'F' helmet dated to the first half of 1st century AD, and is currently in Lewes Museum.

A number of Roman artefacts have been found at Bosham. Near the slipway near Westbrook Field, stray finds of knife handle and a fine bronze bracelet, now in Chichester Museum (Chi SMR 2438, 480300 104440; Chi SMR 2439, 480300 104400 respectively) have been found. Further south, a number of other finds attest to the status of the area in Roman times. These include a statue (Chi SMR 2496; 480430 103940) of the torso of a Roman soldier or emperor (wearing a flowing garment and with *lorica segmentata* visible at the shoulders) built into the end of one wall of a ruined medieval building in the garden of the Manor House; a marble head (Chi 2357; 480430 103840), now in Chichester District Museum and traditionally referred to as the Emperor (possibly of Vespasian); a Roman foot bath (Chi SMR 2356; 480510 103890) discovered prior to the mid 19th century 'in Bull's Garden' adjoining Bosham churchyard; and a coin (Chi SMR 2386; 480430 103900).

At Bosham Hoe, there is anecdotal evidence for Roman activity. Roman tile is reported to have been found (Chi SMR 2395; 480700 101600) and Roman building material turned up by the plough (Chi SMR 2477; 481150 101690), (both A Bromley-Martin pers comm. in SMR).

In addition to those mentioned above, coins have been found in Fishbourne Channel (Chi SMR 2480; 483600 104300), at Nutbourne (Chi SMR 127; 477900 105400), Apuldram

(Chi SMR 2350; 484000 103000) and West Wittering (Chi SMR 56; 477100 098410). One coin (Chi SMR 5; 477800 098580), found in the 19th century at West Wittering, may have been misrecorded and may be a bronze implement instead. Twelve 3rd-4th century gold coins were also recovered at West Wittering (Chi SMR 16; 477300 098100).

Stray finds of pottery have also been found at Fishbourne (Chi SMR 2515; 483920 104660), Bosham (Chi SMR 2403, 2406, 2423, 2479; 483110 103010, 483200 102560, 480700 104130, 483600 104300 respectively) Chidham (Chi SMR 224; 477920 104120), West Thorney (Chi SMR 169, 175, 189, 191; 474800 103900, 475800 102600, 476760 102520, 476920 101960 respectively), Apuldram (Chi SMR 2499, 2470; 484000 103400, 484400 103600 respectively), Birdham (Chi SMR 2433; 482370 100310), and Southbourne (Chi SMR 236, 238; 476520 104930, 476380 104700 respectively). Daub was also recovered at Chidham (Chi SMR 221; 478000 103430).

Research questions

The AONB was a major focus in the Roman period. There is an excellent opportunity for future research to compare and contrast the inter-relationships between palace – villas – rural economy and settlement in this period. There is also the opportunity to investigate Roman trade and supply – Fishbourne is likely to have been an important harbour.

There are also research questions about the harbour itself, particularly charting the deep water channel and understanding its water management and local environment to build a picture of the harbourside environment in this period. Systematic coring would add to an understanding of the environmental conditions and of sea level change.

The AONB was also used for salt making in the Roman period. It is not clear why salt production seems to cease in the 2nd century, just when such production should be increasing.

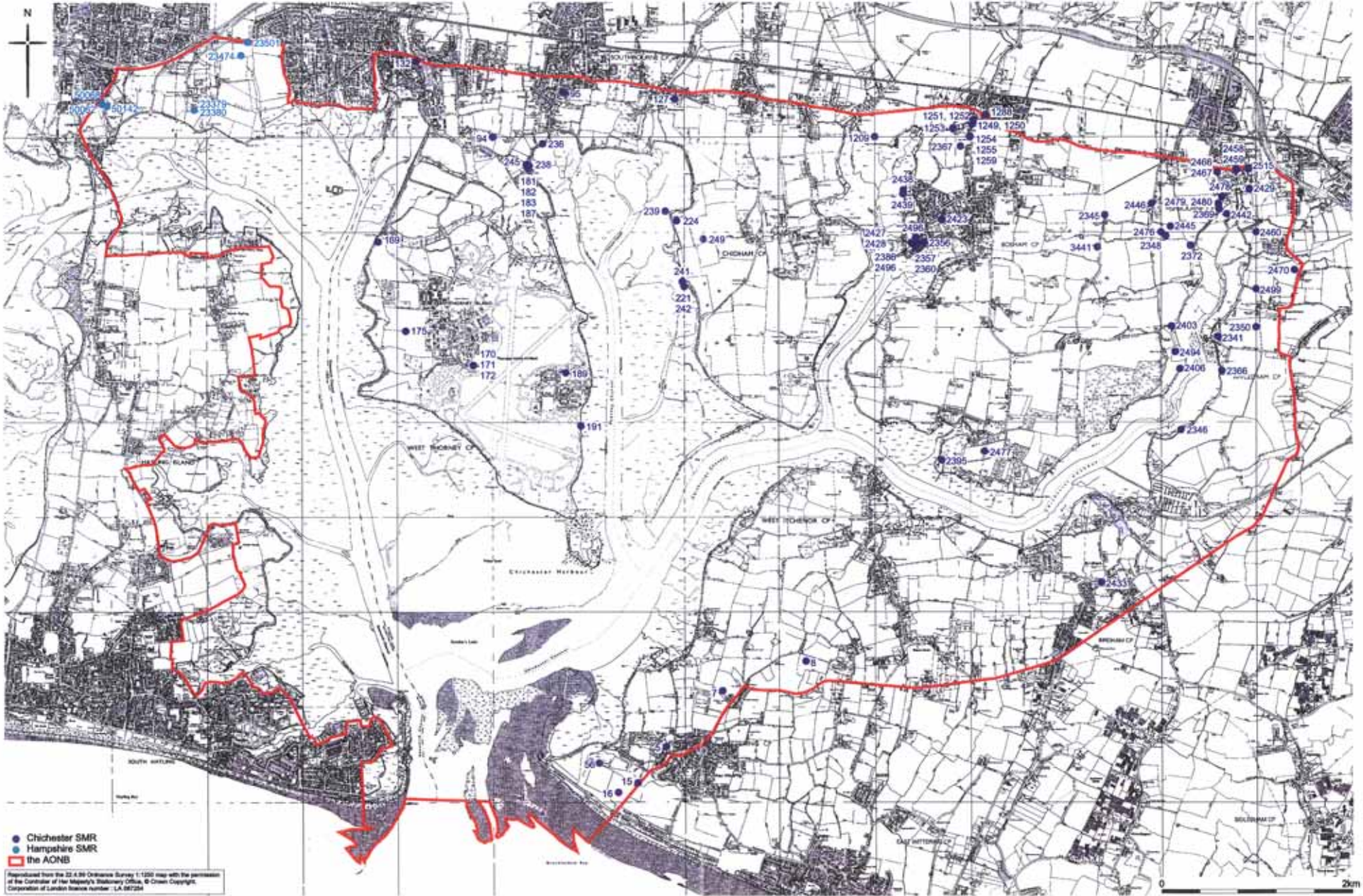


Fig 12 Roman period map

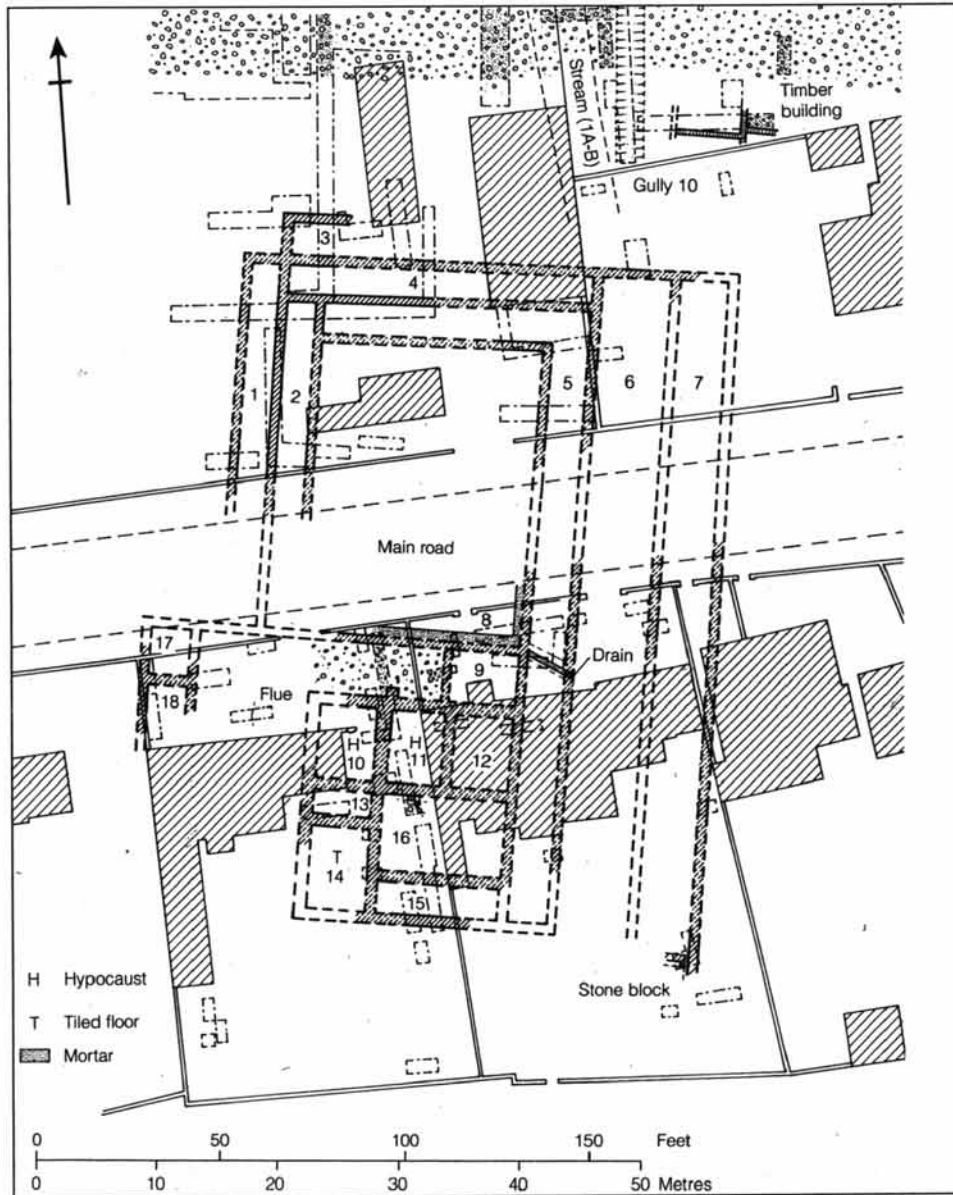


Fig 13 The Neronian proto-palace at Fishbourne. The main road marks the boundary of the AONB (from Cunliffe 1971)

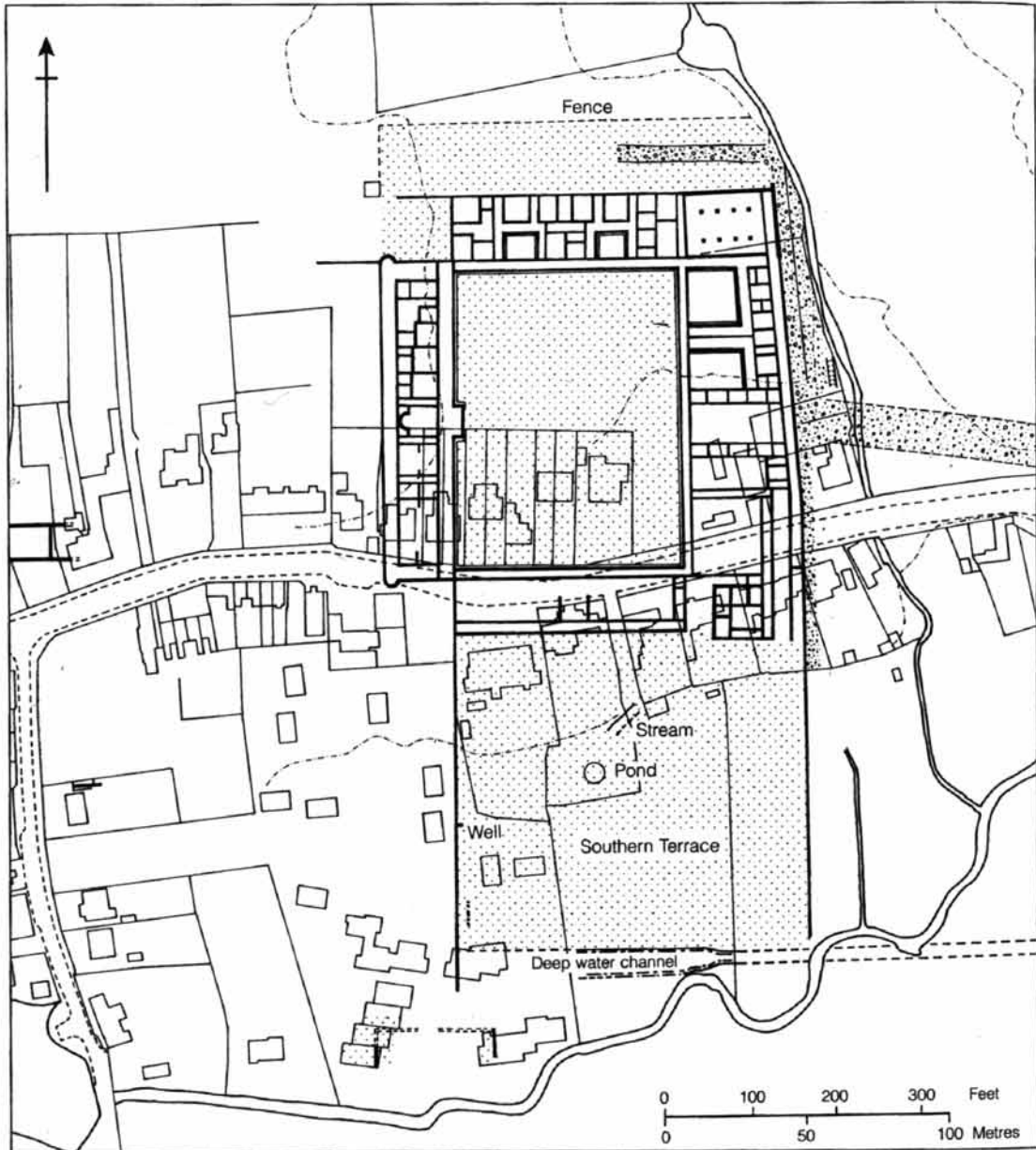


Fig 14 The Flavian palace at Fishbourne. The east-west modern road marks the boundary of the AONB (from Cunliffe 1971)

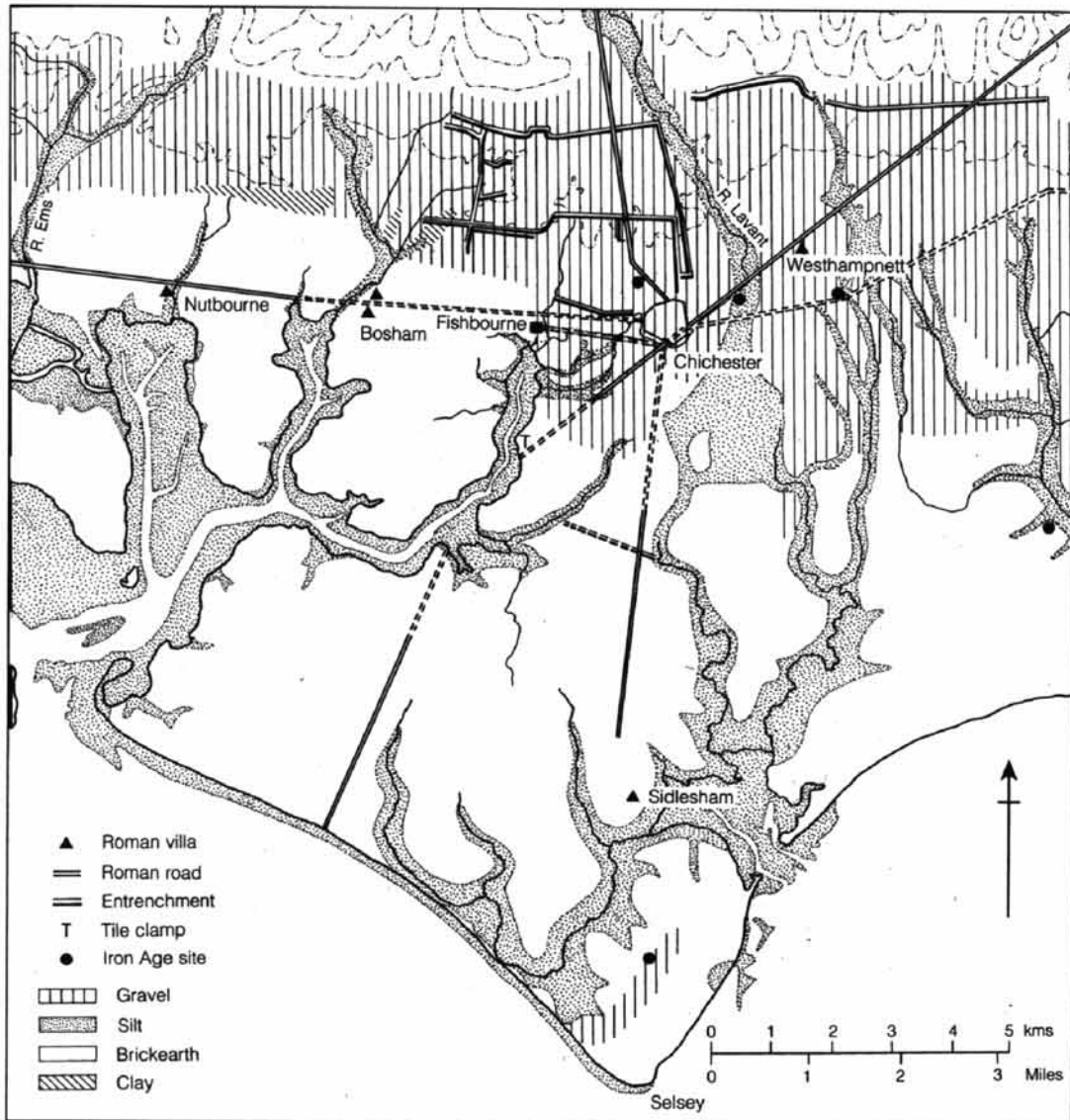


Fig 15 The major Roman roads in the AONB area (from Cunliffe 1971)