

Fishbourne, Chichester, and Togidubnus rex revisited

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Barry Cunliffe excavated the Roman palace at Fishbourne (Sussex) from 1961 to 1969, publishing the two-volume final report in 1971;¹ a supplementary report, dealing with the area south of the palace, appeared in 1996.² A useful popular book was also published in 1971,³ and *The Regni*, an account of the Roman *civitas* in which the palace is situated, appeared in 1973.⁴ Cunliffe's excavations were essentially confined to the area eventually occupied by the palace of the late 1st-c. A.D. Here he was constrained by the need to preserve elements for eventual public display, successfully achieved thanks to I. D. Margary, with the site's continuing ownership and management by the Sussex Archaeological Society. More recently, limited work has been carried out within the area of the palace in the gardens of no. 80 Fishbourne Road.⁵ In 1982-83, a two-phase structure (the later phase being an agricultural aisled building) was excavated c.500 m southwest of the palace, close to the shore of Chichester harbour,⁶ but most of the new work has occurred east of the palace, greatly amplifying the evidence found by Cunliffe for Period 1 (preceding the construction of the palace). Cunliffe's three periods (1, pre-palace; 2, construction of the palace; 3, modifications to the palace down to its destruction by fire in c.A.D. 280) will be retained here. Figure 1 is a composite plan showing the outline of the palace in relation to earlier structures underlying it and immediately to the east.

The rôle of Fishbourne before and after the invasion of A.D. 43 (Periods 1A-1B)

Period 1A was represented by two timber buildings, one on either side of the stream (T1 to the east, T2 to the west), which resembled military granaries or store-buildings; slight traces of a third structure (T3) were noted.⁷ Gullies and fence-lines were located, as well as two parallel metalled roads running E-W and crossing the stream by fords; a third (N-S) road linked the other two. Although there was no satisfactory dating evidence, in view of the military parallels Period 1A was tentatively identified as a military supply-base and an historically-derived starting-date of A.D. 43 was assigned to it.⁸

It is indeed now clear that there was significant pre-A.D. 43 occupation at Fishbourne. A major E-W ditch (ditch 11) traced over almost 100 m to the east of the later palace (beyond the area shown on fig. 1) contained imported and local pottery that can be dated to c.10 B.C.-A.D. 25.⁹ Pottery of this date, recovered as residual material in earlier excavations, can now be given a context, and the question arises whether some of the early undated features¹⁰ underlying the palace might belong to this period.

In Period 1B, dating broadly to the Neronian period, the more northerly E-W road continued in use while the southern road (at least in the stretch east of the stream) was disused. East of the stream were found traces of 4 timber buildings (T4-T7) which seem to have been aligned, presumably on the N-S road, their western boundaries being marked by gullies (6 and 10) close

1 B. Cunliffe, *Excavations at Fishbourne 1961-1969*, vol. 1. *The site* (Soc. Ant. Monog. 26); *Excavations at Fishbourne 1961-1969*, vol. 2. *The finds* (Soc. Ant. Monog. 27).

2 B. Cunliffe, A. Down and D. Rudkin, *Chichester Excavations 9. Excavations at Fishbourne 1969-1988* (Chichester 1996) 2-8.

3 B. Cunliffe, *Fishbourne: A Roman palace and its garden* (London 1971), with id., *Fishbourne Roman palace* (rev. edn., Stroud 1998).

4 B. Cunliffe, *The Regni* (London 1973). M. Russell's *Roman Sussex* (Stroud 2006) takes up the story of the Regni a generation on.

5 D. Rudkin in Cunliffe *et al.* (supra n.2) 69-87.

6 D. Rudkin, "The excavation of a Romano-British site by Chichester Harbour, Fishbourne," *Sussex Arch. Coll.* 124 (1986) 51-77.

7 Cunliffe (supra n.1) vol. 1, fig. 11 facing p. 46.

8 *Ibid.* vol. 1, 73-74.

9 J. Manley and D. Rudkin, "A pre-A.D.43 ditch at Fishbourne Roman Palace, Chichester," *Britannia* 36 (2005) 75 and 91-92.

10 E.g., the curving Gully 8A just east of the original course of the stream: Cunliffe (supra n.1) vol. 1, 43.