

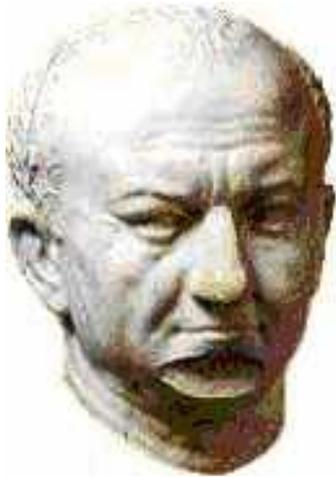
BEGINNINGS

In pre-historic times, anyone travelling from west to east or the other way would have to do so on the high ground because the valleys were heavily wooded and unsafe, but they would have to come down to the valley to cross the River Meon. Neolithic artefacts have been discovered in School Road and stand as witness to these early visitors to the fording place at Wickham.



There are Iron Age and Romano-British sites in and around Wickham, e.g., the Tanfield Lane area, Holt Close and the Glebe Field, (an important Iron Age industrial site). In addition to house bases, there is evidence of iron and bronze making as well as pottery kilns. Three, possibly four, Roman roads converge on Wickham, illustrating the strategic importance of Wickham to the Romans.





Vespasian

Glebe Field may have been a pre-existing Iron Age industrial site utilised by Vespasian during the Claudian invasion of 43 AD. Evidence for an Iron Age/Romano-British industrial site exists to c300AD.

The name “Wickham” may derive from “Vicus-ham”.

The Latin word “Vicus describes a settlement outside a Roman military base, (the “wic” in Wickham deriving from the Old English for “manor” which in turn derives from the Latin “vicus”), “Ham” from the Saxon meaning “Village”, and the valley name, Meon, from the name of a currently “lost” Roman settlement called “Maionio”, mentioned in the Antonine Itinerary, lying somewhere between Chichester and Bitterne

For further observations on Roman Wickham see separate article.

The Jutes, (Meonwara tribe), and, later, the Saxons settled either side of the River Meon, (a coin hoard was found in 1833 in our area), but scant evidence of them remains today. The original village lay on the east side of the River Meon, and migrated later to dry ground to the west, (after 1269 AD). The first mention of Wickham in history is in a document dated 826 AD. The Domesday Book states that in 1086, Wickham was a typical village with a population of around 120, with two millstones for the grinding of grain for the villagers to make flour for bread and also to process animal feed.

“Four brothers held it from King Edward in two manors, Then and now it answered for twelve hides, Hugh acquired it as one manor.

Land for seven ploughs, In lordship two ploughs; fifteen villagers and six small holders With seven ploughs; two mills at 20; meadow 8 acres; Woodland, five pigs.

Value before 1066 £10, later £4, now £7”

Prior to the mid-thirteenth century, the village clustered around the Manor, (known as “The Place”), and the Church on the eastern side of the River Meon. Since the mid-thirteenth century and the granting of a Royal Charter, Wickham village has centred around the market square, one of the largest in England. The square was planned as a large rectangle of grass, and laid out with burgage plots bounding its peripheries, and it retains its essential medieval character to this day.

In 1544, Wickham was designated a “borough”, distinguishing it from its older function as a “manor”, taking in The Square, Water Meadows, Bridge Street and Dairy Moor.



For Lords of the Manor of Wickham see separate article.



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