

The 2010 Excavation Season at the Site of the *Vicus ad Martis Tudertium* (PG)

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Introduction

2010 saw the third season of excavation at the putative site of the *Vicus ad Martis Tudertium* on the western branch of the ancient Via Flaminia. Some form of the name is found in several ancient itineraries¹, but by the Middle Ages the site seems to have disappeared completely, to be marked only by the church of S. Maria in Pantano near the modern town of Massa Martana. Nevertheless in 1938, partly basing his hypothesis on several inscriptions found in the area, Giovanni Becatti proposed this location for the *vicus*², and subsequently several other confirmatory inscriptions have emerged³. Although no new inscriptions naming the site have been discovered during this project, excavation and non-invasive sensing at the site have revealed the presence of a substantial Roman-period settlement which we identify with the *vicus*⁴.



Fig. 1. The Church of S. Maria in Pantano today.

The Area

The church of S. Maria (fig. 1) may be dated as early as the 9th century, and seems to have been built in an extant late-antique structure⁵. A building attached to the church bears a re-used funerary relief in its façade and several other ancient architectural features may be found underlying the building and nearby⁶. There are otherwise no other ancient structures visible in the immediate vicinity, but not far from the church are several well known sites along the Flaminia, including the city of Carsulae (ca. 13 km away), the remains under the church of San Giovanni de Butris (8 km), the viaduct of the Ponte Fonnaia (4 km), another viaduct substructure near the Massa Martana

¹ These itineraries include the *Itinerarium Gaditanum* (CIL XI 3281), the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (Levi and Levi: 1967), and the *Itinerarium Antoninum* (CUNTZ, WIRTH 1990).

² BECATTI 1938.

³ BRUSCHETTI 1994.

⁴ Other reports on the excavation have been delivered by the present author at the 2009, 2010, and 2011 national conferences of the Archaeological Institute of America. This paper benefitted from the comments of Prof. Sarah Harvey and Rangar Cline, Assistant Directors of the excavation.

⁵ PEPPUCCI 2005, for an analysis of the church and its place in a regional context.

⁶ BRUSCHETTI 1993.

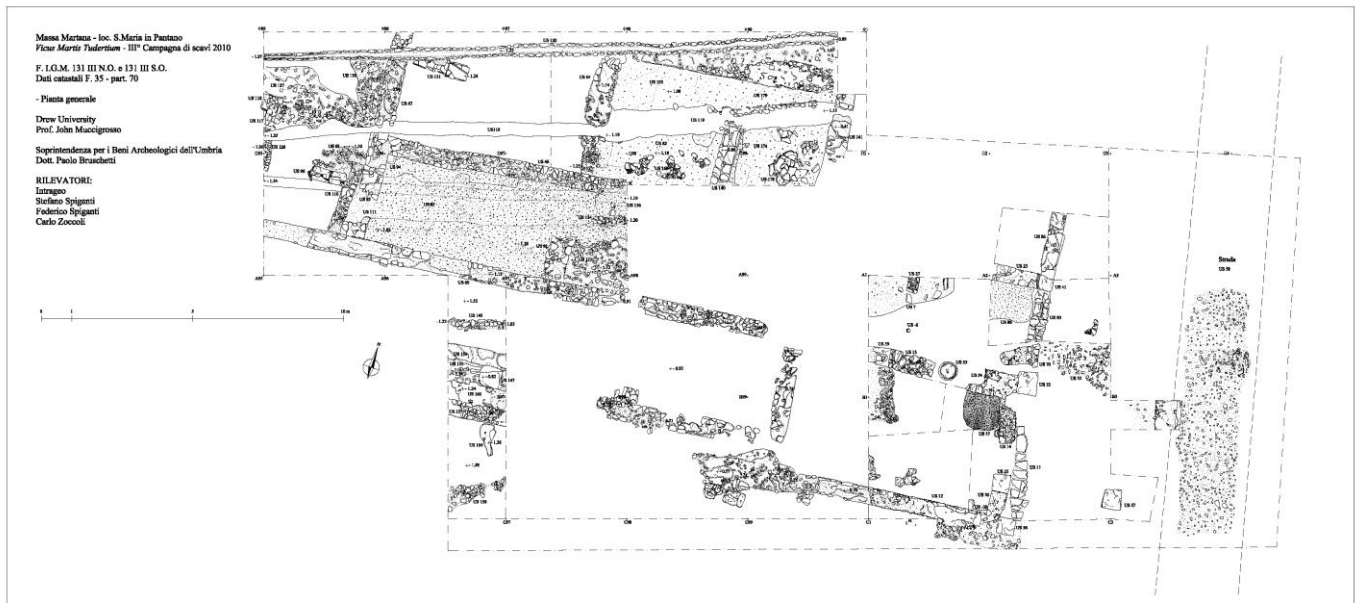


Fig. 2. General map of excavation.

train station (nearly 3 km), and the villa of San Faustino (2 km), where the church incorporates numerous Roman-period *spolia*⁷.

Our excavations, begun in the summer of 2008 in the area north of the church, immediately revealed the presence of ancient structures within ca. 40 cm of the modern ground level. We also soon discovered several drainage trenches running EW across the site, cutting through ancient walls and other features (e.g., 119 on the plan). These trenches are most likely recent vestiges of viticultural activities in this field.

The 2010 Season (fig. 2)

Heavy rains over the winter months of 2009-10 resulted in a substantial rise in the water table in the fields around the site. As a result the deepest elevations to which we had excavated last season were under water this year. Such a dramatic rise in the water table, along with the recent drainage trenches, perhaps explains the name of the church, “in pantano” or “in the bog.” Older residents of the area confirm that the fields were indeed once wetter than they have been in recent decades, and these informants tell of devastating floods as recently as the 1940s. As a result of the water, we confined our excavation to the higher elevations, opting to join what had been two separate trenches in previous years (called “east” and “west”). This extensive horizontal exposure gave us the opportunity to further explore the extent and plan of the large structure already partially exposed in previous seasons.

As can be seen in the attached plan, this structure is clearly aligned with what we now suspect to be the original course of the Via Flaminia, which was in this portion at least, a typical Roman *via glareata* (58)⁸. The structure appears to have extended for over 25 m EW, at least in its latest phase, as can be seen in the long wall that stretches from the white stone (53) to the western limit of our trench. Due to the higher water table, for much of the area excavated this season we were unable to vertically expose much below the level of the preserved crests of the walls (e.g., the south of our plan, quadrants A97-B99). Nevertheless it is clear that, apart from some breaks due mainly to the later trenching and agricultural activity, the E-W walls of this structure were of great length, extending more than 20 m.

In addition to joining the two separate areas, we also focused on exploring an area inside the structure that had been partially exposed last year: a room with a fairly well preserved *cocciopesto* pavement (82, 135, 174). The surface of this pavement was observed last year to curve upward to meet the wall which borders it to the west (64), and this suggested a possible function of a basin for water, an unsurprising find at a stopping point along a stretch of a well traveled road. Further excavation this year showed that this pavement extended east nearly to the limit of the trench, where it met another wall (141). Additional walls to the south (46) and north (38, 180) provide further limits to the space. Two of the more recent drainage trenches uncovered this year intersected this room, and a third is

⁷ ASHBY, FELL 1921, for a more detailed exploration of the entire length of the Flaminia.

⁸ For this and other references excavation units, readers are directed to the attached plan, realized by Intrageo - Impresa Archeologica (F. Spiganti, S. Spiganti, and C. Zoccoli).



Fig. 3. Modern drainage trench 120.



Fig. 5. Cut of drainage trench through ancient pavement, with narrower section at top.



Fig. 4. Drainage trench 130, showing cut through ancient wall and burial 138.

suspected to do so in the unexcavated portion of the pavement to the south. The trench to the north, which cut the NW corner of the walls to the room, was actually two trenches, a 20th-c. one, dated by the refuse it contained and the modern bricks that lined it (120, fig. 3), and an older one with stone filling, similar in appearance to the other drainage trenches found on site (130, fig. 4). The other excavated drainage trench that runs through the room (119) was significantly wider where it cut through this pavement

than it was further west where it ran mainly through soil (fig. 5). In fact the trench's path is not straight across wall 141, perhaps due to the difficulty of digging through it; however, the trench resumes its original course to the west. This deviation where the trench met the wall also leads us to believe that this trench at least, and likely the others of similar construction, were dug from east to west. The widening of this trench to ~80cm is perhaps a reflection of the diggers' concern or even observation that the hard *cocciopesto* surface would impede drainage.

The cutting of the pavement afforded us an opportunity to see what lay beneath it without ourselves digging through it. As far as could be determined, the pavement seems to lie on soil, which in some parts has fragments of broken pottery, stones and other small debris. In areas larger pieces of broken brick seem to have been placed immediately on top of the soil to provide more support for the pavement (fig. 6). A hard-packed battuto floor seems to



Fig. 6. Bricks underlying ancient pavement.



Fig. 7. Square stone 147 lying atop wall 155, with extension of 12 in foreground.

lie ca. 20 cm below the cocciopesto pavement. This is similar to the battuto floor found in the area to the southwest of this space, on the other side of wall 46.

The NS wall 174 appears not to meet the EW wall 38/180 which closes the area to the north, though the pavement here is clearly damaged, making this conclusion somewhat uncertain. It may be that the wall is here simply not preserved. Likewise the lack of excavation to the south leaves this area in doubt as well, and as noted we expect the drainage trench 72 to have significantly damaged the floor and walls here. Walls 64 and 30/180 were found with a significant amount of soil mixed in with the mortar and stone comprising them. It is not clear whether this soil should be understood as an original component of their construction, or a result of the later evolution of the site. Some significant finds from this area are discussed below, and we plan next season to further elucidate the layout and function of this area and its connection with the road to the east.

The other main area of interest was the SW-most part of the excavation where we were particularly interested to explore an area we expected to lie outside this large building, bounded on the south, we believe, by the EW wall 12, already uncovered in our first season. Our expectations were met insofar as an EW section of what appears to be the extension of 12 was indeed uncovered in this area. What was unexpected however was the presence of another, parallel wall (155) immediately to the north, with a white stone block (147) resting on top of it, evoking similar stones found by walls in the easternmost portion of the excavation (fig. 7). Between these two sections of wall was found a deposit of what we believe to be mortar, which may have come from the now missing upper portions of one or both walls, or directly from this intermediate area. Another sizable deposit of mortar (164) was found to the south of both walls, and perhaps has a similar origin. The more northern wall (155) aligns with another stretch of wall to the east, of which we were able to uncover only the top and a short connecting wall that runs at a right angle towards the N. We suspect that this complicated building plan represents at least two phases in the history of the structure, but greater clarity will come with continued excavation.

Burials

At the end of the 2009 season we discovered a tomb *a cappuccina* (96) in the extreme west of the excavation area. Although the form of the tomb was typical, with a length of two ~58 cm pan tiles, its contents were not: two adult legs, apparently still articulated when buried, cut from the rest of the body. With them were numerous small bones, mainly of the fingers, but also other hand bones as well. After this season we can add two other similar *a cappuccina* tombs, both in the interior of the large building and both also heavily damaged due to their proximity to the surface and the cutting of modern drainage trenches which intersected both of them.

The first, identified as 138 (fig. 3), ran roughly E-W. It likely extended for the length of three tiles and the body, to judge from the position of the few remaining bones, was oriented with the feet towards the west in the same manner as the leg burial (96). Also like the other burial, 138 was placed so that one short end of the tomb was right up against a N-S-running wall (here 67). The drainage channel 130 cut off the NW corner of the tomb, and it is difficult to imagine that the diggers of that canal were unaware of the presence of the burial. (Plan detail, fig. 8).

The second tomb discovered in 2010 was much more seriously damaged (fig. 9), again due both to its elevation near the surface and the presence of a recent drainage channel (the eastward extension of 72, the depth of which we have not yet reached in this quadrant). It rested on the well preserved cocciopesto floor already

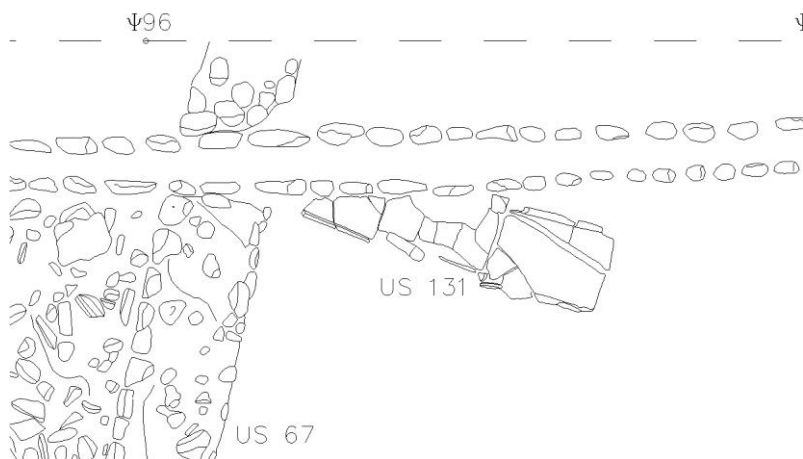


Fig. 8. Burial 138 in plan (see also fig. 3).



Fig. 9. Burial 168.

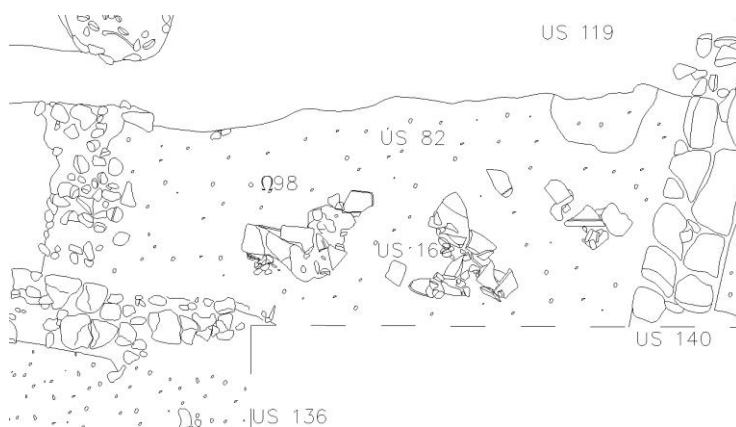


Fig. 10. Burial 168 in plan.



Fig. 11. Oil lamp, inv. 474686.

described, and the presence of skull and jaw bones to the east and some hand bones further west suggests that this body was oriented in the same way as the other two, though it is impossible to be certain (fig. 10). 168 also appears to have lain with its short end very near a N-S wall (64).

No associated objects were found among the remains of either burial, as was the case with last year's tomb. Nevertheless the stratigraphic evidence indicates that these burials post-date the construction of the structure and its primary use, and their form suggests they date to antiquity. Given other indications of continued activity at the site in the fourth and fifth centuries (primarily the presence of several late-antique oil lamps, e.g., the one in fig. 11, similar to other examples from the 4th and 5th c. AD), one could posit a possible connection with the nearby catacombs of the Villa San Faustino⁹. While there is no conclusive evidence at this point, the catacombs, which contain the remains of hundreds of bodies, have not been connected with any contemporary community. Their location along the Via Flaminia just 3.5 km from our site makes plausible their use by the later inhabitants of the *Vicus*, and lamps similar to the one just cited were also found there, though the relatively long distance remains problematic for this interpretation.

Some Finds

As was the case in previous seasons, the small-object finds consist primarily of heavily worn and damaged items. Since excavation this year was confined to the upper elevations of the site, as already mentioned, the majority of finds were from the plough zone and chronologically most recent periods.

We continue to find a relatively large number of coins, mainly from the imperial period up through the early 4th c. A remarkably well pre-

⁹ BISCONTI 1998.



Fig. 12. Sestertius of Philip the Arab, inv. 572178.



Fig. 13. Terra sigillata stamp of Secundus, inv. 572216.



Fig. 14. Terra sigillata stamp, inv. 572177.

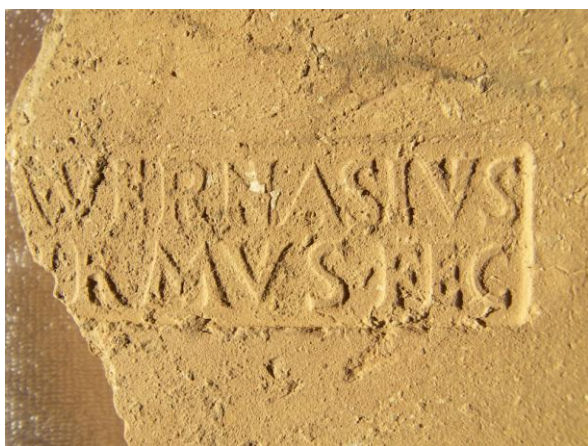


Fig. 15. Stamped dolium, inv. 572195.

served sestertius of Philip the Arab (RIC 116a, shown after minimal cleaning in fig. 12) was excavated along with nearly adjacent sestertii of his wife Otacilia (RIC 209a) and Maximinus Thrax (RIC 67). These suggest a date of deposition not much later (if at all) than the 240s.

Stamped fragments of terra sigillata were found again this year, including another stamp from a factory associated with *L. Nonius*, this time run by his slave *Secundus* (OCK 1132, found nearby, dated to the early first c. AD, fig. 13); this may be added to the fragment found last year from the factory of *Suriscus*. Based on the work of Bergamini¹⁰, these appear to be of fairly local production and indicate an unsurprising participation of the site in local trade routes. Another fragment, stamped “LVC | RT^LS”, is similarly datable to the later first c. BC (OCK 1625, fig. 14). These sherds provide dates consistent

with our previous findings.

Another piece of *instrumentum domesticum* is a fragment of thick-walled dolium stamped “A·VERNASIVS | [F]!RMVS·FEC” (fig. 15). His factory appears unknown, though several *Vernasii* are found in inscriptions, including two in the second century a bit further along the Via Flaminia in *Forum Sempronii* (CIL VI, 02379 and XI, 06126). Finally a broken, but mostly preserved dolium (178) was also discovered on the cocchiopesto floor 82, to the east of the third burial (168). The dolium lay directly on the pavement and the soil around it was gray and ashy, which may reflect the contents of the vessel (fig. 16). The dolium was labeled on its shoulder with the Roman numeral XIII scratched into the clay before firing, perhaps as an indicator of its capacity (fig.17).

Again consistent with previous seasons we continue to find several classes of object which indicate the presence of fairly elaborate buildings at the site. Among these we count small fragments of marble wall revetment, moldings and bases, fragments of hypocaust *tubuli* and likely *suspensurae* bricks, and literally hundreds of mosaic tesserae, almost all white in color and with rare exceptions unattached to one another. This year we found several larger (>10cm) fragments of painted wall plaster (fig. 18) in the room with the cocchiopesto floor. We suspect that these fragments came from the walls of this room, but the evidence is not conclusive. In any case these fragments are also consistent with an elaborate decoration. We also continue to find small personal objects, such as the hairpin

¹⁰ BERGAMINI 2008.



Fig. 16. Dolium on cocciopesto pavement.



Fig. 17. "XIII" on shoulder of dolium.



Fig. 18. Painted wall plaster, inv. 572226.



Fig. 19. Hairpin, inv. 572200.

in fig. 19, and the small bronze spoon in fig. 20.

Last year we reported the discovery of one fragmentary architectural terracotta plaque of a kind found on Roman-period temples in central Italy from the 4th through the 2nd centuries BC (fig. 21), decorated with a portion of a trellis-like grid in the corners of which can be seen several vegetal elements. Nearly identical examples have been found at other settlements in central Italy, including ancient Vettona (modern Bettona)¹¹. A second, smaller terracotta with a spiral decoration from our first season was similarly suggestive of architectural decoration (fig. 22), and this year we can add to both of those a third, again fragmentary, architectural element, the top portion of a nine-lobed antefix (fig. 23). Similar antefixes have been found on both private and public buildings and they may be dated a century or two later than the plaque from last year, to the centuries around the turn of the millennium.



Fig. 20. Bronze spoon, inv. 572212.

Remote Sensing

We have continued our collaboration with the Centro di Eccellenza - Scientific Methodologies Applied to Archaeology and History of Art (SMAArt) of the University of Perugia in a geomagnetic survey of the area in the immediate vicinity of the excavation. This research has been coordinated by Prof. Maurizio Gualtieri and directed by

¹¹ STOPPONI 2006: 240-241, 281-282, inv. 221a-c.



Fig. 21. Fragment of architectural terracotta plaque, inv. 537279.

Dott. Tommaso Mattioli of the Dipartimento Uomo & Territorio dell'Università degli Studi di Perugia¹². As in previous years this research remains directed towards better defining the limits of the *vicus* beyond the confines of the area under excavation.

In addition this year we added the technique of aerial photography, with the collaboration of Paolo Nannini of the Soprintendenza ai Beni Archeologici della Toscana. These complementary techniques both confirmed the presence of more structures in the fields surrounding the church of S. Maria and our current excavations (see fig. 24 for a rectangular structure visible in a field to the north). Based on our results, we estimate that the *vicus* extended for an area of at least seven hectares, mainly to the north and east of our current excavation. We have also begun looking at areas flanking the course of the Flaminia in the vicinity of the *vicus*. Several spots have been noted in the past for the presence of ancient remains (e.g., a Roman-period cistern under a more recent house), and we are interested in investigating possible relationships to the *vicus*.

Conclusion

Results from the third season of excavation only confirm the conclusions from previous years that we have here a site of some significance along the ancient Via Flaminia. Our remote sensing results have now lead us to increase our estimates of the size of this settlement, and the fragmentary remains discussed in this paper continue to point to the presence of several undiscovered structures of size and wealth. This year we plan to follow the lead of that research and explore via small sondages the more promising areas of the *vicus* not currently under excavation.



Fig. 22. Architectural terracotta with spiral decoration.



Fig. 23. Antefix, inv. 572202.

¹² The magnetic survey was carried out by means of a cesium-vapor magnetometer (geometrics G-858) in gradiometric configuration. Data were acquired in a grid of ca. 5500 square meters in the bi-directional mode, that is, with the two magnetic probes set at vertical separation of about 1 m, along parallel profiles 1 m apart with a sampling rate of one measurement per 0.1 seconds. Mattioli presented some partial results of this research in a poster at the 2011 AIA annual meeting in San Antonio, TX.



Fig. 23. Aerial photograph of rectangular structure in field to north of site.

Credits

I wish to thank first our colleagues at "Intrageo - Impresa Archeologica" for introducing us to the site of the *vicus*, acting as our liaisons in the off-season, and their excellent work during the excavation season. The Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Umbria continues to be generous in its support; in particular Ispettore Dott. Paolo Bruschetti is unparalleled in his professional, scholarly and personal assistance. The government and people of Massa Martana have been exceedingly welcoming of the whole dig team, giving us both material and personal support throughout the project. We also owe a special thanks to Angelantoni industrie S.P.A. in the person of Dott. Gianluigi Angelantoni for additional logistical support. Finally the project is run as a field school by Drew University, which thereby provides our chief form of financial assistance.

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