

## FALERII NOVI: THE FRINGES OF THE CITY

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The doctoral research project ‘Falerii Novi: the fringes of the city’ has as a focus of its study the investigation of the peri-urban area of Falerii Novi through the application of non-invasive techniques. The research forms part of an agreement between the British School at Rome and the University of Pisa which complements the investigations of the ‘Falerii Novi Project’ which is undertaking excavations within the walled area of the city (Andrews *et al.*, 2023).

Whilst previous studies have noted the archaeological interest and potential of the area immediately outside the city (Scardozi, 2003; Hay *et al.*, 2010; Mastroianni, 2016), the doctoral research project is the first to undertake an extensive, integrative and multidisciplinary study of the entire peri-urban area. The objective of the research is to investigate the process of exploitation and urbanization of the landscape around the city, crossing the boundary of the city walls and reconnecting the relationship that bound the city to its territory.

The principal technique of investigation is magnetometry, one of the most frequently applied geophysical techniques in archaeology and the first used inside the walled area (Keay *et al.*, 2000). The area of investigation comprises the accessible fields around the city, to the north, east, south and west (Fig. 1). During the 2023 seasons, c. 35 ha of agricultural land was surveyed. The prospection was undertaken using a Bartington

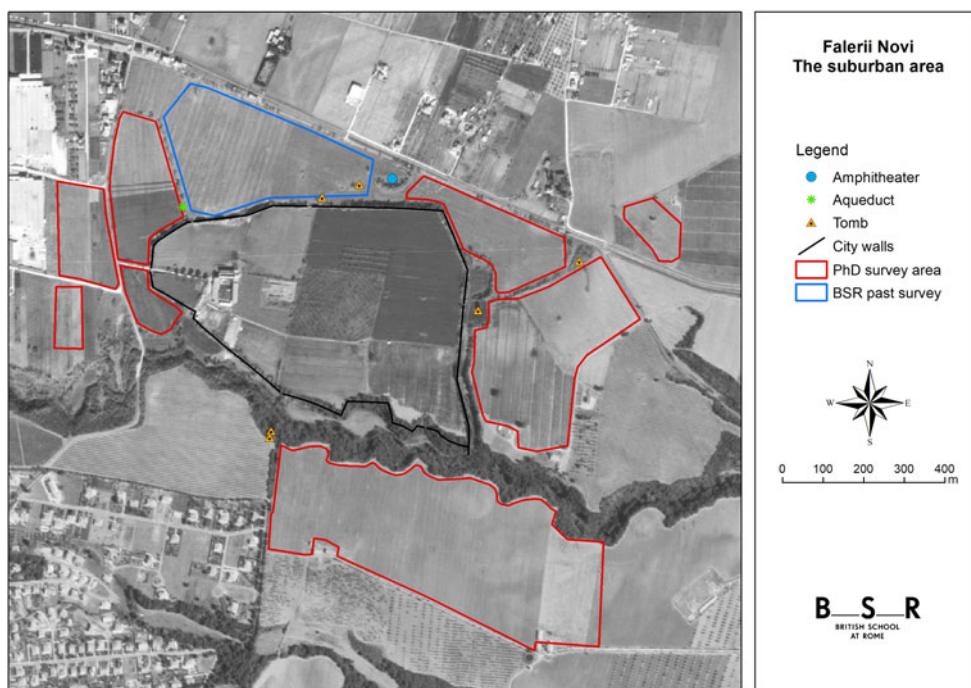


Fig. 1. – The suburban area of Falerii Novi with indication of the known standing structures.

system with an array of eight sensors, at a fixed distance of 0.5 m and mounted on a non-magnetic manual cart together with a GPS.

### *Preliminary results of the 2023 season*

The geophysical prospection undertaken over the course of 2023 recorded a range of archaeological features as well as eroded features and geomorphological formations (Fig. 2). Among these, a large irregular alluvial feature [1], probably caused by poor control of surface water in modern times, was observed to the south of the city. A series of narrow linear irregular interconnected low magnetic anomalies was recorded across the survey area. These features align with the contour lines and identify rifts in the rock formed by water seeping into the tufa.

Both the rifts and the irregular alluvial feature emphasize the water-resistant nature of the local tufa. The inhabitants of Falerii Novi clearly understood the importance of draining and canalizing rainfall water, as evidenced by the existence of drainage tunnels inside and outside the city. An example of water regimentation is demonstrated by the channelled stream located in the southern field [2], where a dam made of tufa blocks has been identified at the eastern end. A further paleochannel has been located to the east of the city [3]. The chronology of this needs to be clarified since its possible existence during the Roman period would have implications for the road system connecting the city from this side. The survey recorded some stretches of the ancient road network outside the Eastern and Western Gates. Furthermore, an east–west track, which is visible in some RAF photographs, has been recorded in the southern field.

Close to the Eastern Gate two rectangular features [4], arranged perpendicularly and displaying similar dimensions (approximately 38–40 m by 14–16 m), indicate either cisterns or quarries. Further east, other features with irregular geometry suggest further quarrying activity [5].

The most archaeologically significant results were recorded in the southern field. The survey located several buildings, including a large villa [6], the existence of which had been previously noticed in satellite imagery (Mastroianni, 2016). However, the magnetometry added new detail, including the presence of a large cistern connected to the villa and a linear feature surrounding the villa [7] to the north and east. A group of regular anomalies with weak magnetic fields [8] may indicate a further structure, possibly a rural building or a farm related to the exploitation of the land. Along the northern edge of the southern field the survey located a series of anomalies, including a quarry and a possible tomb [9]. Of particular interest is a series of linear low magnetic features [10], partially covered by a paleochannel. The square elements (approximately 8–9 m in width) form a net-like pattern. A preliminary hypothesis is that these may be traces of channels related to ancient agricultural activity. An appealing hypothesis is that the area was occupied by a vegetable garden, probably mixed with fruit trees and possibly a vineyard. Mixed cultivation was very common in Roman agriculture, as mentioned by Cato (*De agri cultura*), Varro (*De re rustica*), Columella (*De re rustica*) and Pliny (*Naturalis historia*). The plot of land would have been part of the villa's *fundus* and would have provided the city with perishable goods. To the east of the presumed garden-*pomarium*, two weak, low magnetic anomalies [11] displaying circles possibly locate further features related to agricultural activities.



Fig. 2. – Results of the magnetometry survey in the eastern and southern fields. Data range  $-100$  nt (white)  $+100$  nt (black). Numbers follow the order of described features in the text.

The preliminary results of this research thus far confirm the exploitation of the peri-urban area of Falerii Novi and the strong connection between the city and the surrounding landscape. The detected anomalies will be further analyzed, and trial trenches will be excavated to verify the interpretation.

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## **FURFO PROJECT (BARISCIANO, L'AQUILA): THE 2023 SEASON**

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In September 2023 the first season of fieldwork of the Furfo Project took place, a new multimethodological research project between the British School at Rome and l'Università dell'Aquila – Dipartimento di Scienze Umane, Soprintendenza Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio per le Province di L'Aquila e Teramo and the Comune di Barisciano. The aim of the project is to investigate the *vicus* of Furfo, an important archaeological site in the Aterno valley, positioned along the *via Claudia Nova*.

The location of the *vicus* has been identified through its toponym, noted in the inscription *CIL IX, 3513*, the *Lex Aedis Furfensis*, and in the name of the Church of Santa Maria di Farfona (or Forfona). Previous published archaeological research is limited to what was documented during brief surveys conducted in the 1980s (Gizzi, Spanu and Valenti, 1996), in which an initial topographical definition of the area occupied by the *vicus* was first proposed. The collected material indicated a continuous occupation, which for the pre-Roman phases were indicated by coarseware, then