(Hydrology), Bruna Malandruccolo (GPR), Giuseppe Micciché (GPR), Davide Motta (Hydrology), Carmelo Pappalardo (RT3D), Iwan Peverett (SCIEDOC), Elena Pomar (GPS/GPR/ERT), Lisa-Marie Shillito (Environmental), Alex Turner (Geomatics/Data Management), and Daniele Verrecchia (GPR). The following generous colleagues from Roma Sotterranea provided expertise and safety cover co-ordindated by Elettra Santucci for higher-risk sub-surface survey: Mara Alessandra Abbate, Stefano Adornato, Luca Antognoli, Francesco Artibani, Karin Beebe, Antonella Boccone, Giulia Cammilletti, Bruno Caracciolo, Umberto Caruso, Alessandra Castagnolo, Fabio D'Andrea, Anna De Riso, Donatella Ertola, Mario Laico, Antonella Liberti, Ilario Macchi, Chiara Massimiani, Rosa Mercuri, Adriano Morabito, Lorena Nubile, Laura Settimi.

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The Falerii Novi Project: the 2021 Season

doi: 10.1017/S006824622200006X

A two-week campaign in June 2021 marked the beginning of a planned multi-year project at the Roman city of Falerii Novi, located in the Comune of Fabrica di Roma (Viterbo, Lazio), in the middle Tiber Valley. The project takes place under the authorization of the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Provincia di Viterbo e per l'Etruria Meridionale and is a collaboration between the British School at Rome (BSR) and the Universities of Harvard and Toronto, along with researchers from the Universities of Ghent and Florence.[1]

According to historical sources, Falerii Novi was founded after Rome's destruction of the nearby Faliscan centre of Falerii Veteres in 241 BC (Polyb. 1.65; Liv. *Epit*. 20; Zon.

[1] We kindly thank Dott. Daniele Maras (Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio per la Provincia di Viterbo e per l'Etruria meridionale) for his support, as well as the landowner Sig. Gianluca Mancini who graciously permitted access to the site. Fieldwork was supported by an Insight Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (511934), Harvard University, and the British School at Rome.

8.18). The urban site along the via Amerina persisted at least until the first half of the sixth century AD, becoming a bishopric in AD 465. In the twelfth century, a monastery and church of Santa Maria di Falleri were added and now represent the only standing structure on site other than the ancient circuit walls.

Falerii Novi and its territory have long been a subject of archaeological study by the BSR – first through the exploration of the Roman Campagna by Thomas Ashby and, following that, the surveys of John Ward-Perkins as part of the pioneering South Etruria Survey (Frederiksen and Ward-Perkins, 1957). As part of the BSR's Tiber Valley Project starting in the late 1990s, the intramural area (c. 32 ha) was explored using a variety of non-invasive methodologies (Keay *et al.,* 2000). The most recent publication of this work consists of a detailed plan of the town based on high-resolution Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey by a team from the Universities of Ghent and Cambridge (Verdonck *et al.,* 2020). In the 19th century the site was subject to a number of antiquarian excavations, most notably of the theatre and forum, skilfully repositioned by Di Stefano Manzella (1979). Between 1969–75 part of an *insula* was also examined by the Soprintendenza, the unpublished excavations of which are now part of a restudy by the project. More recently, small-scale excavations were also undertaken around the church and towards the northern gate along the via Amerina (De Lucia Brolli, 1995).

Research to date raises a number of questions about the city's relationship to settlement trends in the wider Tiber Valley, as well as about Falerii's own development (Millett, 2007; Biella, 2020): was there a pre-existing Faliscan settlement, what is the chronology of the city's infrastructure, and what can be known about Falerii's last urban phases? The new 'Falerii Novi Project' seeks to address these and related questions through targeted stratigraphic excavation.

The two-week season in 2021 aimed to refine our understanding of the site's configuration and chronological development and aid in locating excavation trenches for the following years. Two approaches were selected. One team of researchers from the BSR along with colleagues from the Universities of Harvard and Toronto carried out a shovel testing pit campaign across the extent of the intramural site. A second team from the University of Ghent simultaneously undertook a series of cores along two main axes of the site, as well as over a structure to the west of the forum interpreted as a *macellum* from GPR survey results. In addition, GPR survey was carried out in two zones north and northwest of the church surveyed in 2015–2017 (Verdonck *et al.,* 2020). Results in drier conditions and with better spatial resolution revealed few differences compared to earlier data from these zones.

The test pit campaign was designed based on a similar project at Interamna Lirenas and in consultation with Alessandro Launaro and Martin Millett (Bellini *et al.*, 2012). The goal was to replicate a field-walking survey by collecting material in the plough zone across the full extent of the intramural area. Limited surface collection was carried out in the 1990s, both low resolution across the entire intramural area and at a higher resolution in a focused area over the forum and *insulae* just to the south (Keay *et al.,* 2000: 70–75). The continuous working of the site for agriculture over the last decades, however, limits the diagnostic potential of material still found on the surface. Using GIS, Falerii's intramural area was covered with a grid of small trenches measuring 50 × 50 cm at 50 m intervals. A single row of trenches spaced 25 m apart was dug in the northern half of the site to support augering, and an additional trench was dug in the area of a structure interpreted as a *macellum* from the GPR survey (Fig. 1). In total,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006824622200006X Published online by Cambridge University Press

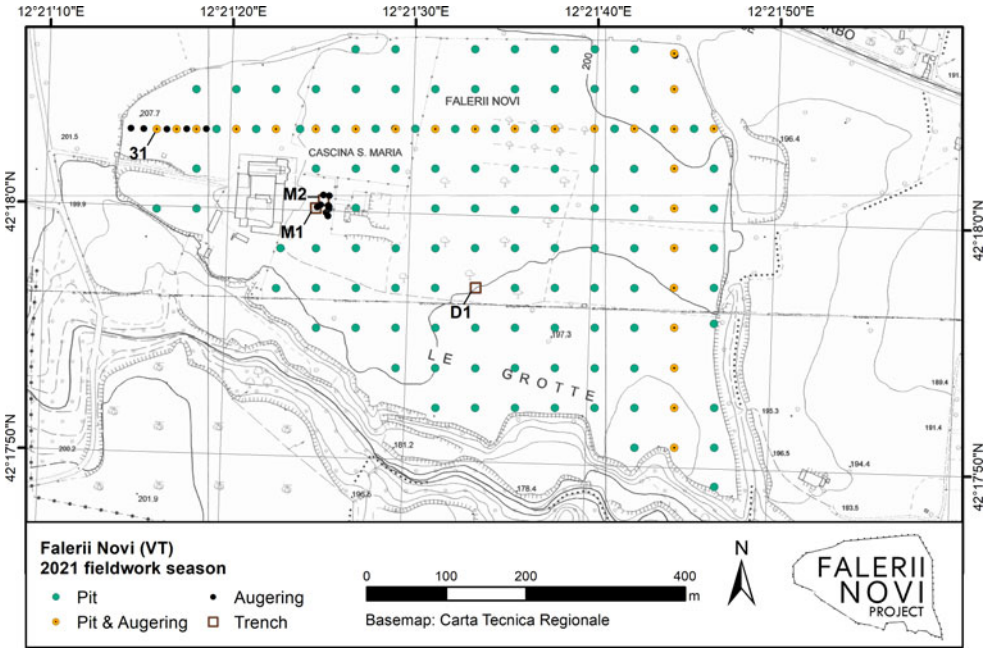

Figure 1. Plan of Falerii Novi showing location of test pits and augers. Image by Elena Pomar.

145 trenches were excavated across the site. The corners of each were marked on the ground according to GPS coordinates, and an initial elevation was taken. Excavation was carried out to a depth of 30 cm to reach the bottom of the plough zone using picks and shovels. When archaeological layers were reached at a shallower depth, excavation was stopped. Removed soil was sieved, and artificial objects were recorded. Photographs and elevations were taken, and trenches were backfilled. Larger (1 x 1 m) pits were dug down to archaeological layers over a structure identified as a large *domus* south of the Forum (D1) and over the area of the possible *macellum* (M1-2). First indications of archaeological layers were reached in all three cases at a depth of ca. 40 cm.

The test pits yielded 2,075 fragments of ceramic, 650 of tile, 67 fragments of glass, 23 of metal, 214 tesserae and 1 coin. The eastern extent of the city yielded less material, while greater quantities of material were found in the area around the forum and in the north and northwest. In general, the chronology of the ceramics recovered indicates continuous occupation from the third century BC to the sixth century AD, with an apparent gap until the ninth to twelfth century AD. This chronology accords with the documented history of the site, but systematic excavation in the following years will naturally refine these preliminary results. Among non-ceramic finds, black and white mosaic tesserae were common, especially in the northern area. Metal and ceramic slag from several pits as well as a firing support suggest a range of productive activities. The coin from the area of the *macellum* (M1) is a later Imperial bronze commemorative issue struck by Constantine I ca. 317 featuring Claudius II (cf. *RIC* VII 112).

The augering survey was carried out to clarify the site's geological qualities, verify particular features detected by previous survey, and determine the depth and type of archaeological deposits. In addition, samples were collected for environmental analysis.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S006824622200006X Published online by Cambridge University Press

46 boreholes were carried out with Eijkelkamp hand augers along east–west and north–south transects (Fig. 1). Ten augerings were also made above the possible *macellum*. Achieved depth ranged from 40 cm to 560 cm. Boreholes' locations were documented, and depth, sorting, texture, colour, boundary characteristics, and inclusions were recorded for sedimentary units. Ceramics were collected and building materials (tiles, brick) were noted, but not systematically retained, except mortar. Bulk samples and samples of charcoal and organic material were also taken. 114 samples of pottery, bone, glass, charcoal, pollen, etc. were collected for study. Noteworthy is the recovery of a small fragment of a red-figured oinochoe (dating to the early third century BC) from auger 35 in the area of the so-called *capitolium* at the northwest of the site.

Along the east–west transect, archaeological deposits reach a depth of more than 200 cm (in auger 31, even 300 cm, Fig. 1). This is particularly true for the sector of the so-called *capitolium*, illustrating the good state of preservation of subsurface archaeology. Archaeological deposits in the eastern city are thinner and even absent in certain augerings, perhaps resulting from erosion facilitated by the presence of the northeastern town gate. Augerings along the north–south transect show that archaeological deposits reach thicknesses of 200–230 cm. The augerings conducted in the southwestern part of the possible *macellum* revealed a sequence of two layers with large amounts of mortar, possibly the remains of two floor levels at depths of 50–60 and 100 cm, separated by a layer of tuff fragments.

In June 2022, the project will commence large-scale open area excavation focused on three key areas: the *macellum*, the *domus* south of the forum, and an *insula* and intersection along the via Amerina near the south gate. This work will be complemented by continued augering within the walls and extended GPR survey of extramural areas to the city's south, complementing previous work outside the north wall (Hay *et al.*, 2010).

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INTERAMNA LIRENAS AND ITS TERRITORY (COMUNE DI PIGNATARO INTERAMNA, PROVINCIA DI FROSINONE, REGIONE LAZIO)

doi: 10.1017/S0068246222000071

The archaeological fieldwork at Interamna Lirenas is part of an integrated research project involving geophysical prospection, field survey and excavation, all aimed at exploring the long-term development of the Roman town and its territory from its colonial origin (late 4th century BC) well into Late Antiquity (6th century AD) (Bellini, Launaro and Millett, 2014; Launaro, 2019; Launaro and Millett, forthcoming). Suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fieldwork resumed for an eleventh season in 2022. In the course of this campaign, we continued our work on Areas 2000 and 3000, whose investigation had started in 2019 (Bellini *et al.*, 2020). More specifically, our activities focussed on the *basilica*, the sector between the *basilica* and the theatre (footpath/road), and one of the burials placed inside the building located at the SW corner of the forum.

AREA 2000 (Fig. 1)

The trench was expanded to the south-east (10.4 × 8.2 m) and the south-west (6.2 × 6.2 m), whilst further work was carried out in the north-eastern sector, between the *basilica* and the theatre. Although the overall plan of the *basilica* was broadly known from previous geophysical work (Bellini *et al.*, 2020: 365–67; Launaro and Millett, forthcoming: par. 4.1.2, Insula XXVI / BU184), the excavation has contributed to improve our understanding of its chronology, architectural development and state of preservation.

A small sub-trench (1 × 1 m) was opened up along the north-eastern side of the *basilica* in order to investigate its foundation (Fig. 1/A). Made in *opus caementicium* (limestone fragments mixed with mortar, as is the case of the theatre's own foundations), the foundation was brought to light up to a height of 1.6 m, even though it may have reached deeper than that (practical considerations prevented the excavation from proceeding any further). Its depth is rather notable, especially if one considers that the foundations of the *scaena* of the theatre, which bore the weight of a much larger and heavier roof, were only 1 m deep. The concrete mix had been poured straight into a trench which cut through a series of deposits. A preliminary study of the associated finds not only dates the most recent deposits to the Augustan period (a chronology