

RESEARCH AT THE ROMAN IMPERIAL ESTATE AT VAGNARI, PUGLIA (COMUNE DI GRAVINA IN PUGLIA, PROVINCIA DI BARI, REGIONE PUGLIA)

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EXCAVATIONS IN THE *VICUS*

Excavations by the University of Sheffield conducted since 2012 in the central village (*vicus*) of the Roman imperial estate at Vagnari continued in the summer of 2015. A substantial part of a large tile-roofed and stone-built structure (North Building) about 25 m in length on the northern edge of the settlement has now been explored in three seasons of work. This building of the second and third centuries AD, overlooking the valley below, had a narrow corridor or *porticus* on the north side and a long range of rooms behind it divided by walls of clay and timber. These walls had collapsed in a fire, leaving a mass of burnt daub and plaster spread over the floors. In the last few years, lead processing debris and lead artefacts have been retrieved which indicate the processing of this material in and near the North Building. Crop processing, especially of durum wheat, also took place in the building.

Trenches in 2015 were opened to clarify further the layout and chronology of the North Building and to investigate an area adjacent to and just south of it. The excavation in this hitherto unexplored adjacent area revealed exciting new evidence for viticulture in the second century AD. We discovered another building (South Building) that at the west end had an unroofed room with a mortar-paved floor. The very large pitch-lined ceramic vats (*dolia defossa*) sunk into mortar basins in the floor indicate that this room was a *cella vinaria*, or wine ‘cellar’ (Fig. 1). Such facilities are known at private farms elsewhere in Roman Italy, but this is the first time that evidence for wine-making at the imperial estate at Vagnari has been retrieved. Only the corner of this room could be explored due to time constraints, but we expect to find more *dolia*, probably arranged in rows, and other facilities, such as a wine press and a tank for the pressed grape-juice. Excavations in 2016 aim to clarify how large the storage room was, how many *dolia* of the emperor’s wine in total were housed in it, and what the volumetric storage capacity of the structure was.

To the east of the *cella vinaria* was a room of unknown function which had a tile roof that had completely collapsed onto the floor of the room. Although the excavations had furnished scattered evidence for iron-working in the North Building, a dense concentration of iron slag beneath this roof collapse points to metal-working of this kind within a specific area of the South Building, at least in its later phase, possibly the third century AD. Pieces of marble wall or floor cladding, window glass panes, worked bone implements and a wide range of pottery, however, shed light on the appointment of at least some rooms in the South Building and associated domestic activities in the earlier occupation phases.

Clear evidence for industrial activities gives insight into the range of specialist crafts and industries practised by the resident manpower at Vagnari. Identifying agricultural practices and the sorts of productive vegetation cultivated here also gives a better and more complete picture of the various assets of this estate. The project illuminates the diversity of the economy of the imperial estate and the role of the *vicus* and its inhabitants in organizing and managing work and income for the emperor.



Fig. 1. Excavating two of the masonry basins containing wine storage vats in the South Building in the *vicus*. (Photo: M. Carroll.)

EXCAVATIONS IN THE NECROPOLIS

Excavations resumed in 2015 on the necropolis at Vagnari after a study season in 2014 to work on post-excavation analyses of the material. The necropolis is located in the southern part of the site, separated from the Sheffield excavations by a small ravine that runs through the site. At the end of the 2013 excavation season, three burials were left unexcavated, so one of the 2015 trenches (Trench 109) was opened immediately to the East of the 2013 trench to recover these burials. Trench 109 was relatively small (5 m east–west by 9 m north–south) compared to the other trench opened this season. Trench 99 was opened to the south of previous excavations, and measured 16 m (east–west) by 8 m (north–south) (Fig. 2). We uncovered a total of twelve burials in both trenches, eight of which were excavated during the 2015 season. Only three of these burials were found in the larger Trench 109, which may suggest that the necropolis is thinning out towards the south, but another test trench to the west of Trench 109 revealed the presence of more burials, so the southern limits of the necropolis have not yet been defined.

All of the burials excavated were *alla cappuccina* tombs, with the exception of one pit burial of an adult male. Most burials contained one interment with a modest number of grave goods located around the feet, as in previous years, with the exception of the pit burial that contained no grave goods. Two burials (F308 and F314) contained the remains of multiple individuals. F308 was associated with the remains of three individuals. The poorly preserved skeletal remains of a subadult (between three- and five-years-old) were found outside the grave at the southwest end. Inside the burial, two adult individuals of indeterminate sex were discovered, with the earlier deposition showing evidence of disturbance and redistribution in the grave (that is, the cranium was moved to the hip region of the later deposition); the later burial was stratified on top. There were disturbed tiles located to the north of F308, which may be part of the earlier tomb. It is not clear if the disturbance was unintentional (that is, the earlier grave was not visible and was accidentally disturbed) or deliberate, possibly indicating a

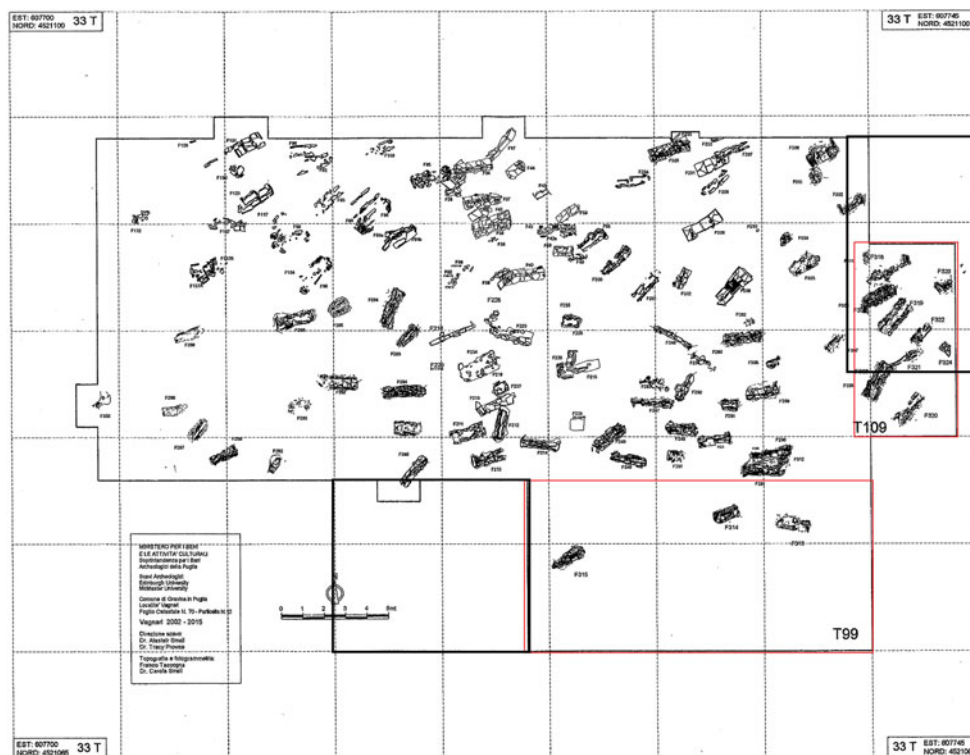


Fig. 2. Vagnari necropolis 2002–15, with 2015 trenches indicated in thicker lines on the south and east. (*Plan: F. Taccogna.*)

relationship between the two individuals and the intentional burial of the two in the same grave.

F314 contained the remains of a child (between eight- and eleven-years-old) interred with the partial cranium of an adult. There is no evidence of another disturbed burial in the area around F314 (or below it), so it appears that the adult cranium was taken from another location and intentionally deposited with the child. Another poorly preserved skeleton of a subadult (age unknown) was found outside the west end of F314, along with an oil lamp and fragments of two ceramic vessels. It is not clear if this burial is an earlier deposition disturbed by the subsequent burial of the child and adult cranium.

A definitive analysis of the burials, their contents and the skeletons will be completed after comprehensive identification and analysis of the remains. All of the grave goods found in 2015 are similar to those found in previous years, that is, objects that were probably used by the deceased during life (for example, hobnails indicating the presence of shoes, iron implements, lamps and pottery showing evidence of charring). Analysis of the material studied thus far indicates the main period of use of the cemetery was during the second and third centuries AD, with a small number of tombs dating to the first and fourth centuries AD.

Acknowledgements

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GEOPHYSICS PROJECTS

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The archaeological geophysics programme of the British School at Rome in collaboration with the University of Southampton (Archaeological Prospection Service of Southampton) continued to conduct surveys across a broad geographical area from south Etruria to Sudan and from Tivoli to Turkey. This year saw continued survey work at Tivoli in collaboration with the British Museum; we are investigating the region of the Pantanello basin which lies in the grounds of Hadrian's Villa. Surveys of the Hellenistic port towns of Çandarlı as well as a brief return to Kane, both in western Turkey, were conducted as part of the wider ERC-funded Portus Limen — Rome's Mediterranean Ports Project (<http://portuslimen.eu>), directed by Professor Simon Keay (above). A short season of gradiometry at Lucus Feroniae (Hay, 2015: 296–8) was successful in its aim to identify the possible southern extent of the settlement. We will complete this work in 2016 and report in the next *PBSR*. We are indebted to the De Haan Charitable Trust for supporting this important project and our geophysics intern, Eleanor Maw.

DANGEIL, SUDAN

The archaeological investigation of Dangeil is co-directed by Julie Anderson, Department of Ancient Egypt and Sudan, The British Museum, and Mahmoud Suliman and Rihab Khidir of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan, with support from the Qatar-Sudan Archaeological Project (QSAP).

The project aims to re-evaluate the history and significance of the settlement of Dangeil, its cemeteries and its inhabitants. The contribution of the BSR-APSS