

NOTES FROM ROME 2013–14

by Robert Coates-Stephens

This gazette presents to the reader outside Rome news of recent archaeological activity (primarily in 2013, but also in the first part of 2014), gleaned from public lectures, conferences, exhibitions and newspaper reports.

Questa gazzetta ha lo scopo di presentare ad un lettore fuori Roma notizie della recente attività archeologica (principalmente per il 2013, ma anche per gli inizi del 2014), tratte da conferenze, convegni, mostre e relazioni su giornali.

The Forum of Nerva has been somewhat neglected in the flood of studies resulting from the great excavations of the 1990s in the Imperial Fora.¹ This lacuna was filled in part by the papers presented at a *Giornata di studi* at La Sapienza University in March 2014. Knowledge of the structures uncovered beneath the Forum's Domitianic paving in the long series of excavations going back to Antonio Maria Colini's day was summarized by Adele Rinaldi (for the Republican phases) and by Francesca Carboni and Antonella Corsaro (early Imperial). In the earlier period, humble structures opened onto the Argiletum, composed of a basement and ground floor, whose construction technique suggested a date in the first century BC. There were traces of fire damage. Similarities to living spaces usually interpreted as slave quarters elsewhere in Rome and Pompeii (extremely small, windowless or subterranean cells, c. 2 m in height, paved in *opus spicatum* or more rarely black and white mosaic, the presence of a bench or bed in masonry) led to the dual hypotheses that these were the service sectors of Republican *domus* or perhaps areas set aside for slave personnel in the Macellum, widely believed to have occupied this area prior to the fire of AD 64. A substantial rebuilding of the entire zone was attributed to the Neronian period: a five-aisle porticus occupied the area between the Argiletum and the later Templum Pacis, running on the same axis as the latter (and the pre-existing Fora of Augustus and Caesar). The construction of the porticus was interrupted subsequently by the building of a large Flavian drain, still visible beneath the paving of the Forum of Nerva. Traces were detected of the façade of the Templum Pacis in its first phase, which was shaved back when the Forum was built.

The Forum's original construction, which, as is well known, dates to the beginning of Domitian's reign, foresaw a temple at the south end. Roberto

¹ Its medieval phases are known better. In general on the recent works, see R. Meneghini and R. Santangeli Valenzani (eds), *I fori imperiali. Gli scavi del Comune di Roma* (Rome, 2007), as well as my first 'Notes from Rome', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 76 (2008), 299.

Meneghini offered a hypothetical reconstruction of the structure, which he proposed was the new temple of Janus hinted at in the poetry of Statius and Martial. Initially, it seems, the temple was squeezed into a comparatively small precinct whose north wall was aligned with the south wall of the Forum of Augustus and which therefore would have left the eastern ‘extra’ hemisphere of that complex intact. As finished by Domitian, however, the precinct was greatly extended northwards to frame the Argiletum, and the temple moved to the north end and dedicated to Minerva (the inscription, known from Renaissance reports, attributed the dedication to Nerva — *CIL* VI 953). It was this project that led to the demolition of the southeastern hemisphere of the Forum of Augustus. Papers by Andrea Coletta and Patrizia Maisto presented new evidence for the finished complex’s architectural decoration, and Beatrice Pinna Caboni illustrated a new fragment of a metope from the colonnade, identified as another province personification. A new reconstruction was offered also of the Porticus Absidata, the complex’s elaborate curvilinear interface with the Suburra to the north (Daira Nocera). This was envisaged as a monumental nymphaeum, and the whole Forum complex was attributed to Rabirius on the basis of the similarities of its plan and dimensions to the sunken ‘stadium’ of the Palatine.

The most notable archaeological discoveries announced this year have concerned Archaic Rome. Patrizia Fortini’s investigations at the Lapis Niger over the past five years were summarized at a press conference in April, called in time for the annual media celebration of the *Parilia*. Remains of a stone channel to direct a watercourse running from the Capitoline into a culvert in the area of the later Comitium were found to be in stratigraphic association with pottery that dated to the late ninth/early eighth century BC, and thus were claimed to be the earliest infrastructure so far found in the Forum.² The Area Sacra of Sant’Omobono also has been the subject of new investigations since 2009. In July 2013 the results of a deep-level excavation to reinvestigate the Archaic temple podium were announced to the press. The works, which involved the arduous draining of ground-water (the structure lies *c.* 3–4 m beneath the water table), revealed the structure originally discovered in 1937, and were able to specify that the stone used was more similar to *peperino* than to Rome’s native tufa — in other words, it was an ‘import’ to Archaic Rome from the area of the Alban Hills.³ At La Sapienza’s excavations in the area of the Curiae Veteres, directed by Clementina Panella, the announcement was made in October 2103 that a fragment of a large (over 1 m in diameter) fifth-century BC painted *bacile* had been found in deposition strata of the Neronian/Flavian period. The subject was the head of a young athlete. Such an artefact, for Mario Torelli comparable to that discovered in a tomb at Trevignano Romano in Etruria, and perhaps the work of an artist from Magna Graecia,

² *Il Messaggero* 13 April 2014. Most of the newspaper reports referred to here can be consulted at <http://patrimoniosos.it> in the ‘Rassegna Stampa’ section.

³ *Liberio* 19 July 2013; *Il Messaggero* 20 July 2013. The works represent a collaboration between Roma Capitale and the universities of Calabria and Michigan.

has never been found before in Rome.⁴ At a press conference the following December the same excavations were revealed to have encountered a rare survival of what in the nineteenth century were known as *muri dei bassi secoli* — late antique foundation walls constructed for the most part with fragments of early Imperial statuary and architectural marbles.⁵ Three Severan heads were removed from the fill of the wall, and placed on temporary display at the Colosseum exhibition on libraries (see below). The date and identification of the wall await study. The most unexpected of the discoveries regarding early Rome came from the farthest edges of the Quirinal. In October 2013 the newspapers announced that restoration works inside the Istituto di Geologia near Santa Susanna had uncovered the podium of an enormous temple, constructed in *cappellaccio* tufa and measuring *c.* 25 × 35 m, with a 7.5 m wide cella. This dated to the sixth century BC, and there were traces of a rebuilding phase in the third century BC. Underlying strata contained the burial of an infant, dating to the seventh century.⁶

Archaeological news regarding more recent sites within the walls of Rome included the first public lecture concerning the discoveries made at the piazza Vittorio Emanuele during the construction in 2006–9 of a new office block at the southeast side of the square, in the area of the ancient Horti Lamiani.⁷ A large square hall of Severan date survived to a height of 2.5 m. A bench ran along one wall and two uninscribed masonry statue-bases were found. Due to the thinness of the walls (*c.* 40 cm) and large space enclosed (*c.* 20 m in width) it was supposed that the structure would have been unroofed, perhaps a nymphaeum (a *fistula* was found) or garden pavilion. The building originally was paved and revetted in marble, all of which had been removed in antiquity. The ruin had then been used as a dump for an enormous stockpile of coloured marble fragments (*c.* 30,000 pieces), which, due to their material and style, could be dated over the full period from the first century BC to the fourth century AD.

⁴ *La Repubblica* 20 October 2013. The Plinian reference to the painters Damophilos and Gorgasos decorating the Temple of Ceres in 493 BC was recalled (*Natural History* 35.154).

⁵ *La Repubblica* 13 December 2013. On such walls, see R. Coates-Stephens, 'Muri dei bassi secoli in Rome', *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 14 (2001), 217–38.

⁶ *Il Messaggero* 16 October 2013. The monument was presented at a press conference at the Palazzo Massimo by Mirella Serlorenzi (Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma (SSBAR)) and already has found its way into Filippo Coarelli's latest book on Roman topography: *Collis. Il Quirinale e il Viminale nell'antichità* (Rome, 2014), 30–3, where it is linked to the adjacent sacred deposit of Santa Maria della Vittoria and identified as one of the sanctuaries of the Argei.

⁷ The lecture was given at the German Archaeological Institute by Donato Alagia (La Sapienza) and concerned chiefly the complex's elaborate marble revetment. A study day on the archaeology of the site is to be announced by Mirella Serlorenzi. A preliminary report on the excavations, which were directed by Mariarosaria Barbera (SSBAR), has been published online: M. Barbera, S. Barrano, G. De Cola, S. Festuccia, L. Giovannetti, O. Menghi and M. Pales, 'La villa di Caligola. Un nuovo settore degli Horti Lamiani scoperto sotto la sede dell'ENPAM a Roma', *fasti online* folder 194 (2010) (<http://www.fastionline.org/docs/FOLDER-it-2010-194.pdf> (last consulted 01.07.2014)).

Excavations carried out by the Dutch Archaeological Institute at the so-called Porticus Aemilia were recounted at a lecture in September 2013. Investigations took place in Bay XV of the enormous Republican structure, and related only to Imperial and post-antique strata. Towards the end of the first century AD two smaller rooms constructed in brick were inserted in the bay, characterized by *suspensurae* flooring; the presence of carbonized emmer wheat allowed the conclusion that, by this period, parts of the building (identified recently as a *Navalia*) were being used to store grain. By the fifth century burials, inside amphorae, were being dug into the floor of the abandoned structure.⁸

In the suburbs, new finds of tombs were reported on the via Prenestina, where rescue excavations at the junction with via Tor Tre Teste for the construction of a large restaurant complex uncovered 50 m of ancient paving and as many as 22 tombs, with 105 surface depositions, the whole necropolis ranging in date from the second century BC to the second century AD.⁹ Two of the tombs contained burnt fragments from two ivory and bone funerary couches decorated with faces and garlands. In Trastevere, it was announced that the Jewish catacombs of Monteverde have been rediscovered and partially mapped in a joint project between speleologists and the SSBAR, directed by Daniela Rossi. In an area bounded by viale Trastevere, circonvallazione Gianicolense and via A. Poerio, two levels of tunnels were encountered, descending to a depth of 25 m and running for some hundreds of metres. The third-century complex overlies a Roman tufa quarry. At the foot of the same tufa cliff, directly in front of the modern Trastevere railway station, five columbaria later came to light during roadworks in the circonvallazione Gianicolense. The monuments flanked a Roman road, and were surrounded by numerous ‘a cappuccina’ surface tombs dating to the fourth century AD.¹⁰ Finds from recent excavations of more humble, rural cemeteries were on show in an unusual exhibition devoted to palaeopathology held at the Museum of the Via Ostiensis at Porta San Paolo. 1,361 skeletons had been analysed, from six second-century AD sites: Cappello del Prete near Gabii, the via Collatina, Casal Bertone on the via Prenestina, Osteria del Curato on the via Tuscolana, on the via Cristoforo Colombo just outside the walls, and at Ponte Galeria on the Via Portuensis (the latter mentioned in the ‘Notes’ for 2008–9).¹¹ Average life expectancy ranged

⁸ *Il Corriere della Sera* 10 October 2013 and *Il Tempo* 10 October 2013. The works were directed by Gert-Jan Burgers and Renato Sebastiani (SSBAR). See also the internet summary: http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/sites/default/files/Challenging%20testaccio_brochure.pdf (last consulted 21.07.2014). On the *Navalia*, see L. Cozza and P.L. Tucci, ‘*Navalia*’, *Archeologia Classica* 57 (2006), 175–202.

⁹ The discovery of six tombs was announced in August 2013 (*Il Corriere della Sera* 7 August 2013), rising to 22 a year later (*La Repubblica* 24 May 2014) (excavations under the direction of Stefano Musco (SSBAR)). It is hoped that the site will be preserved and made visible to the public.

¹⁰ Catacombs: *Il Corriere della Sera* 28 November 2013. Columbaria: *La Repubblica* 28 May 2014. For a recent study of the entire zone, see D. Rossi and M. Di Mento (eds), *La catacomba ebraica di Monteverde: vecchi dati e nuove scoperte* (Rome, 2013).

¹¹ R. Coates-Stephens, ‘Notes from Rome’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 77 (2009), 291–7.

between 27 and 49 years at the different sites. Questions of diet and the gender balance of individual samples were considered. Wear and tear to specific bones allowed inferences regarding occupations (long hours spent crouching, perhaps in a *fullonica*, or shouldering heavy burdens, perhaps at the salt-pans).¹² Also on the Via Ostiensis, a new archaeological area has been opened at San Paolo fuori le Mura, where the remains of the early medieval monasteries excavated in 2008–9 are visible. The earliest phases relate to the *pauperibus habitacula* erected by Pope Symmachus around AD 500 (inscribed lead water-pipe), but the most substantial structures consist of a large (10 × 14 m) hall and nearby colonnaded portico in the characteristic masonry of the eighth century. These were ascribed to the works of Pope Gregory II (715–31). Small finds (first- to sixth-century epitaphs and funerary sculpture, early medieval pottery) are on show in the new galleries leading from the medieval cloister to the gift shop.¹³

The most conspicuous component of the year's activities relating to antiquity has been the great number of exhibitions. Foremost was that on Augustus, held at the Quirinal Scuderie, marking the bimillenary of the emperor's death in AD 14.¹⁴ Exhibits comprised chiefly sculpture, as well as small objects such as jewellery, coins, table-ware and cameos. Elements specifically relating to Rome were few (the via Labicana and Prima Porta statues, plus seldom-seen reliefs from the Temple of Divus Julius and *lastre Campana* from the storerooms of the Museo Nazionale Romano and the Capitoline) — unsurprisingly, given that these consist chiefly of immovable monuments. Most striking was the reassembly of the Medinaceli reliefs. Found in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (probably Campania) in the mid-sixteenth century, and now split between the Casa de Pilatos in Seville, the collection of the Duchess of Cardona in Cordoba, and the Szépművészeti in Budapest, they are believed to belong to a post-mortem (Claudian?) honorific monument, perhaps erected in Nola or Pozzuoli. The three surviving scenes, reunited here for the first time, depict the Battle of Actium, Augustus's triple triumph, and his funerary *tensa*. Conspicuous for its neglect in the bimillennial year was the emperor's mausoleum, still awaiting a fitting restoration after a project of urban regeneration was announced in 2009.¹⁵

Palazzo Altemps was especially active in 2013–14. The permanent displays now feature a high-relief female head found in the new excavations at the 'Athenaeum' and eight frescoes donated to the Museum in 1923 by the Rospigliosi: six small pieces discovered in the courtyard of their palazzo in 1709 and perhaps belonging to *domus* destroyed when the Baths of

¹² The exhibition ran from December 2013 to May 2014. Catalogue: P. Catalano, G. Fornaciari, V. Gazzaniga, A. Piccioli and O. Rickards (eds), *Scritto nelle ossa* (Rome, 2013).

¹³ *Il Tempo* 28 June 2013. See also Coates-Stephens, 'Notes from Rome' (above, n. 11).

¹⁴ The exhibition ran from October 2013 to February 2014, before transferring to the Louvre. Catalogue: E. La Rocca, C. Parisi Presicce, A. Lo Monaco, C. Giroire and D. Roger (eds), *Augusto* (Milan, 2013).

¹⁵ See Coates-Stephens, 'Notes from Rome' (above, n. 11). Bureaucratic reasons for the hold-up are discussed in *La Repubblica* 23 September 2013 and 4 June 2014.

Constantine were built, and two larger works from the Oppian Hill dating to the Severan period.¹⁶ There were also two temporary exhibitions. Firstly, a selection of artefacts from the bizarre collection of the opera singer Evangelista Gorga, assembled in the early twentieth century: innumerable, tiny fragments of painted plaster (only those from the ‘Odyssey’ house of the via Graziosa, the ‘Nymphaeum of the Domus Transitoria’ and the ‘Achilles at Skyros’ room of the Domus Aurea were provenanced), glass and marble veneers, ancient toys, loom weights, inscriptions and terracottas (including their moulds). The display-cases replicated timber packing crates, and the walls were decorated with large-scale photographs of the collection’s original arrangement in Gorga’s *Umbertina* villa in Prati.¹⁷ Secondly, there was an exhibition concerning the Attalids’ statue monuments of Pergamon and Athens, as reconstructed through the marble copies found in Rome from the Renaissance onwards.¹⁸ The victory monument dedicated on the acropolis of Pergamon between 230 and 220 BC by Attalus I was moved to Rome by Nero and later lost, but marble copies had been commissioned in Rome earlier — perhaps, as argued in Coarelli’s catalogue, by Julius Caesar. It is these that were found from the seventeenth century onwards in the area of the ancient Horti Sallustiani, and which inspired Coarelli’s reconstruction of the original group on a circular pedestal, based on the dodecahedron traced on the plinth of the Capitoline’s ‘Dying Gaul’. The Lesser Attalid Dedication was a group of smaller statues (perhaps originally numbering over 100 pieces) set up in Athens, representing a Gigantomachy, an Amazonomachy and a battle between Greeks and Persians. Marble copies of these, too, were found in Rome and purchased in 1514 by Alfonsina Orsini from an unidentified convent. Subsequently dispersed, they were now reassembled at the Palazzo Altemps using pieces from the museums of Naples, Venice, the Vatican and the Louvre. On the basis of a document of 1509 referring to excavations in the convent of Sant’Ambrogio alla Massima, Coarelli proposed their find-spot to have been the ancient Porticus of Octavia, and that they were Severan copies made after the fire of 203.¹⁹

Of great importance for the archaeology of Rome, but receiving little fanfare in the press, was the return to display of objects from the Vatican Museums’ old Museo Profano to the Galleria Clementina. Founded by Pope Clement XIII in 1767, it was enriched by Pius VI from material found in excavations in Rome in the years 1775–9 (Piazza San Carlo near the Mausoleum of Augustus, Villa Rivaldi next to the Basilica of Maxentius, the Scala Santa), and subsequently

¹⁶ A new catalogue has been published: D. Candilio (ed.), *Palazzo Altemps: le collezioni* (Milan, 2011).

¹⁷ The exhibition ran from October 2013 to January 2014, but it is hoped that the objects will remain on more permanent display. Catalogue: A. Capodiferro (ed.), *Museo Nazionale Romano. Evan Gorga, la collezione di archeologia* (Milan, 2013).

¹⁸ April–September 2014. Catalogue: F. Coarelli, *La gloria dei vinti* (Milan, 2014).

¹⁹ For alternative reconstructions of both groups, see B. Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, vol. I (Bristol, 1990), 284–96.

extended by explorations throughout the papal states under Pius VII. Whilst the objects (mostly metal *instrumentum domesticum*, as well as statuettes) are hardly of artistic significance (and so tend to be ignored by visitors making the long haul down the endless corridors from the Sistine Chapel), they cast a limpid light not only on elements of everyday life in ancient Rome, but also on the stirrings of a ‘modern’ archaeological sensibility in Enlightenment Italy. Who would have imagined that a mid-Imperial *domus* on the Velia would have contained metal tools for repairing fishing nets?²⁰ In a small temporary exhibition accompanying the reopening of the Clementina, some exceptional ancient cameos once in the same Museo Profano, but subsequently seized by Napoleon as indemnity for the assassination of General Mathurin-Léonard Duphot in Rome in 1798, were returned to display briefly in the Sala della Nozze Aldobrandini.²¹ These, set in elaborate frames and mounts by Luigi Valadier, included three astonishingly large pieces, all found in Roman catacombs: the Carpegna Augustus and the ‘Bacchus and Ariadne’ from the Louvre, both from catacombs on the via Salaria, and the ‘Triumph of Bacchus’, found in the Catacomb of Calepodius on the via Aurelia in 1661. The Hermitage’s Gonzaga cameo also made a rare return to Rome.

The Castel Sant’Angelo hosted an intriguing exhibition regarding the concept of apotheosis in Greek and Roman antiquity.²² Amongst the diverse artefacts — vases, terracotta statues, cameos, marble portraits and inscriptions — from sites such as Lavinium, Halicarnassus, Palestrina, Thessalonica and Pella, some important and seldom-seen objects from Rome were displayed: the terracotta appliqué (representing *quadrigae* driven by winged victories) of a vase or box from the fourth-century BC tomb of a warrior discovered during the construction of the San Giovanni Hospital in 1959, a terracotta relief found on the via Cassia in 1935 interpreted as showing the deified Julius Caesar, and a fragment of the marble *clipeus virtutis* from Augustus’s Mausoleum. But the real exhibit was the Mausoleum of Hadrian itself, now revealed thanks to a startling new survey by Paolo Vitti to preserve as much as 80% of its original structure, including traces of the staircase leading from the funerary chamber to a portico on the exterior of the basement, and even the circular brick walls of a tholos that crowned the entire monument in the guise of a temple.²³

The final exhibition related directly to the antiquities of Rome was *La biblioteca infinita: i luoghi del sapere nel mondo antico*, which dealt with

²⁰ A catalogue is in preparation. In the meantime, there is much information on the relevant excavations and the artefacts unearthed therein in C. Pietrangeli, *Scavi e scoperte di antichità sotto il pontificato di Pio VI* (Rome, 1958).

²¹ The exhibition ran from October 2013 to January 2014. Catalogue: G. Cornini and C. Lega (eds), *Preziose antichità. Il Museo Profano al tempo di Pio VI* (Vatican City, 2013).

²² From December 2013 to April 2014. Catalogue: L. Abbondanza, F. Coarelli and E. Lo Sardo (eds), *Apoteosi. Da uomini a dei. Il Mausoleo di Adriano* (Rome, 2014).

²³ Vitti’s reconstruction was exhibited in the form of large-scale (1:100) drawings and 3-D models, as well as by an essay in the catalogue. In May 2014 he illustrated his findings in a lecture at the British School at Rome.

ancient libraries and auditoria, notably those of the Imperial Fora.²⁴ In addition to sculpture, frescoes and inscriptions from libraries and theatres at such sites as Ephesus, Athens, Taormina and Nemi, important new finds from recent excavations in Rome were displayed: three Severan heads (including a portrait of Septimius Severus) from the aforementioned *muro dei bassi secoli* on the Palatine, a small ivory head of the Emperor Julian, probably from the library of the Templum Pacis (of the same type as the ivory bust of Septimius Severus found at the same site in 2004–7) and two fragments of a colossal female acrolith, also from the Templum Pacis and quite probably belonging to the cult statue itself. The Flavian complex was further represented by the inscribed base of Leochares's Ganymede: described here by Pliny and discovered by Ligorio, it made a brief return to Rome from its current home at the Florence Archaeological Museum.

The news from the Museo della Civiltà Romana, which has closed for major restoration works, evokes mixed feelings. On the one hand, the fact that two million euros is to be expended in renovating the decaying fascist halls is excellent news for the conservation of such precious artefacts as the 1854 casts of the Column of Trajan and the *plastico* of Italo Gismondi and Pierino Di Carlo. On the other, a closure of at least one and a half years is foreseen, meaning, for example, that the return to permanent display of the four large sectors of the Severan marble plan, announced in last year's 'Notes', has proved to be of extremely short duration.²⁵ Some small consolation came from the display at the aforementioned Colosseum exhibition of several sectors of the plan (representing the Imperial Fora and the southern Campus Martius with the Portico of Octavia), plus the news, announced in a lecture to the Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia by Giorgio Filippi and Paolo Liverani, that a new fragment of the map has come to light in the Palazzo Maffei in via della Pigna, completing the caption of the Circus Flaminius and showing some intriguing elements of that monument's surrounding topography.²⁶

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²⁴ Running from March to October 2014. A collection of essays accompanied the exhibition: R. Meneghini and R. Rea (eds), *La biblioteca infinita: i luoghi del sapere nel mondo antico* (Milan, 2014).

²⁵ R. Coates-Stephens, 'Notes from Rome 2012–13', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 81 (2013), 341–9. *La Repubblica* 27 January 2014; *Il Manifesto* 6 February 2014; *La Repubblica* 15 April 2014. Apart from the *plastico*, none of the other exhibits was mentioned as being included in the contract for the restoration of the buildings.

²⁶ To be published in a forthcoming volume of the *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*.