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

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A decade has passed since the Faculty of Classics of the University of Cambridge first began a series of systematic excavations at the Roman town of Interamna Lirenas. These have been guided and informed by the remarkable results of several seasons of geophysical prospection carried out in collaboration with the British School at Rome (magnetometry in 2010–12; GPR in 2013–14) and Ghent University (GPR in 2015–17) (Launaro and Millett, 2023). Following a first phase of excavations centred on the theatre (Area 1000 / 2013–18), the last four years (2019–22) have focused on the exploration of the adjacent basilica (Area 2000), with smaller trenches opened

immediately to the north of the theatre (Area 4000) and at the southwest corner of the forum (Area 3000) (Bellini et al., 2020; Goddard et al., 2022).

The 2022 season aimed at wrapping up this second phase of work. To better frame the Augustan basilica (Launaro and Millett, 2023: 60 [BU184]) within its immediate urban context, Area 2000 was further extended to the northwest (up to and including the junction of Street 15 and Street E), to the northeast (bringing to light a long section of Street E) and to the southeast (towards the forum) (Fig. 1). A narrow sector immediately to the northwest of Street 15 was also explored (Area 5000), and further (if limited) excavation was carried out in front of the building of uncertain interpretation located at the southwestern corner of the forum (Area 3000, last investigated in 2019; Launaro and Millett, 2023: 60 [BU188]).

The basilica

As was the case along the northeastern side of the basilica, the floor also turned out to be well preserved towards the northern corner, except for a notable sinkhole (c. 1.5 m in diameter). There, under the weight of later sediments, the floor (made up of a thick layer of mortar mixed with lithic fragments) had sunk, taking the shape of a steep funnel, which we investigated up to a depth of about 1 m from its top rim. Establishing the cause of this collapse would have risked further damaging the floor, and we decided to postpone such investigation until a proper conservation strategy could be put in place.

At the other end of the building, along its southeastern side facing the forum, a thick layer of clay, cut by the concrete foundations of the basilica and covered by its floor, appears to have covered an earlier structure made up of two travertine blocks placed

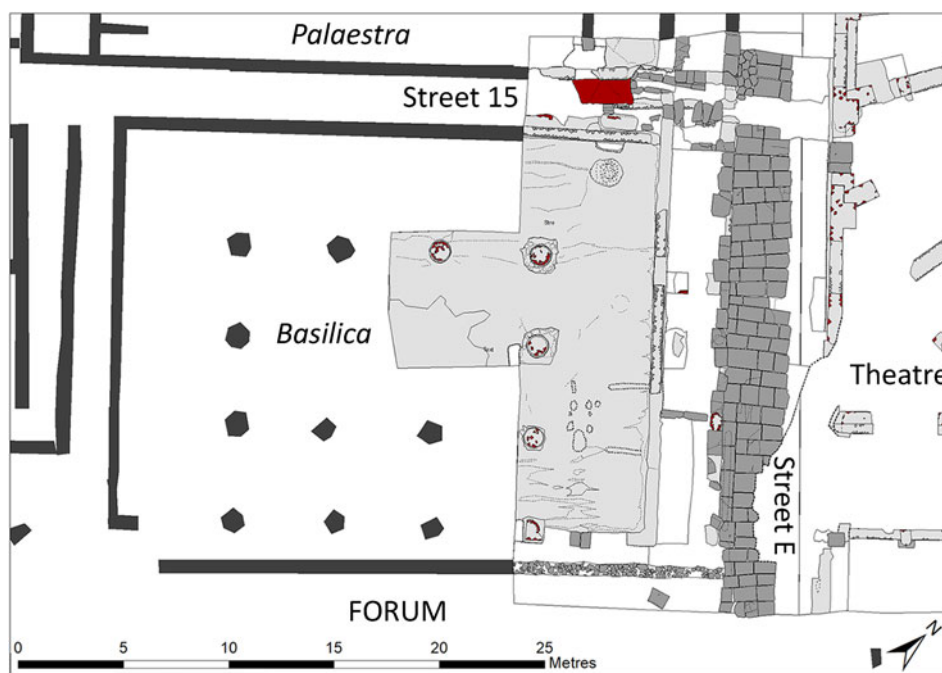


Fig. 1. Plan of Area 2000 (summer 2022), overlaid upon an interpretation of the geophysical survey of the basilica and nearby buildings (black).

next to each other and aligned with the front of the basilica. Although only partly visible (its northwestern margin lies directly under the southeastern edge of the floor), its upper surface ($0.9 \times 0.7?$ m) was brought to light. Dimensions, building materials and technique resonate very much with the foundations for the pilasters/columns of the Republican porticus (dated to the early second century BC) which had been razed to make room for the theatre (Bellini et al., 2019: 333). The two blocks in question may well belong to an earlier (Republican) phase of the basilica, whose existence has already been suggested on the basis of the stratigraphy associated with the concrete (Augustan) foundations of the northeastern side of the building (Goddard et al., 2022: 345–6).

The linear structure along the forum

Immediately to the southeast of the front of the basilica, we further investigated the linear structure made up of medium-sized, irregular and rounded limestone fragments bonded with clay (already identified in 2021; Goddard et al., 2022: 347). The (later) paving of Street E appears to have cut it, although it is not possible to establish whether it had originally continued much further to the northeast. The excavation showed that it is preserved up to a height of 0.5 m and — more significantly — that it seems to rest on a layer of clay which yielded no anthropic find.

A similar structure (in terms of dimensions, building materials and technique) has been brought to light at the southern end of this side of the forum (Area 3000). Given the current state of our knowledge, we cannot establish with any certainty whether these two separate structures were originally related, even though they appear roughly aligned. Were this to be the case, however, one cannot but wonder about their (likely) early date and thus the possibility that they may have represented an initial definition of the forum space. In any case, the structure within Area 3000 was cut by two child burials, probably dating to the medieval period like those already identified a few metres away in 2019 (Bellini et al., 2020: 367).

Street E and Street 15

Street E was brought to light for a total length of 26.7 m (its northwestern end showing up in Area 5000). It is in remarkably good condition, notwithstanding the removal of several of its blocks as a result of the heavy interventions which affected the southern corner of the theatre (whose structures appear to have been removed up to and including their foundations). The road surface features a gentle gradient (2 per cent), descending from the forum towards a wide drain (yet to be fully excavated) running underneath Street 15 and continuing further to the northeast under the theatre. Street E continues on the other side of the drain and, as far as can be seen, seems to present a rising gradient. Whereas the road surface to the southeast of the drain features large limestone blocks of rectangular shape, its northwest section presents a combination of both round blocks (smaller and placed along its southwestern edge) and rectangular ones (larger and placed along its northeastern edge). Such variation cannot be readily explained yet, but may result from distinctive building phases whose chronology is yet to be established. However, a rough chronological indication may be provided by the remains of the footpath bordering the southwestern side of Street E. As Street E descends towards

the drain, the distance from the level of the footpath to the street increases and the resulting step presents a facing in *opus reticulatum* (i.e. the same building material and technique as featured in the theatre and the basilica, both dated to the Augustan period). In this phase, the footpath extended across Street 15, effectively closing it and cutting it off from Street E. However, at an earlier point in time, the footpath had in fact stopped on either side of Street 15, as indicated by the travertine blocks (*opus quadratum*) which defined its edges. Building material and technique may indeed suggest a Republican date for this phase, in analogy with similar remains attested elsewhere within the excavation.

Whatever the case, once it had been closed, Street 15 appears to have been built over, as indicated by the remains of some concrete structures (of uncertain interpretation and abutting on the northwestern foundations of the basilica) and by what is left of a floor in *opus spicatum*. The latter may have been originally associated with a wall in *opus incertum*, whose poor remains could have belonged to a section of the perimetral wall of the *palaestra* of a bath complex known from geophysical prospection (Launaro and Millett, 2023: 58 [BU159]).

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS OF THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE
SANCTUARY OF MONTE RINALDO (COMUNE DI MONTE RINALDO,
PROVINCIA DI FERMO, REGIONE MARCHE)**

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The main objective of the 2022 season of archaeological excavations at the Latin sanctuary site of Monte Rinaldo by the University of Bologna and the British School