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Research Council



INTERIM REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK AT CASTELPORZIANO

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1. Vicus, Building Y, trench YH

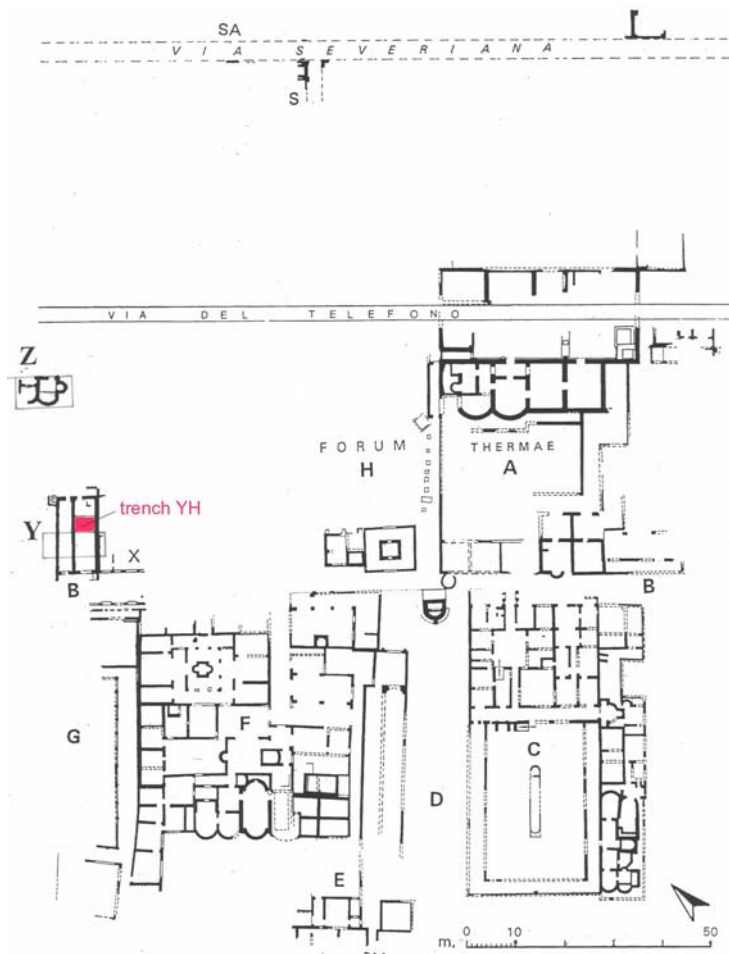


Fig.1 Vicus, site plan showing locations of trench YH

First identified on the surface during the excavation of Trench X in 1995-8, building Y is a substantial structure in concrete faced with alternating courses of brick and tuffelli (*opus vittatum*) laid out on the north side of the Vicus' main E-W street (B). It measures c.17 x 9 metres, with outer walls 60 cms thick, divided internally along its length by a narrower wall (45 cms), which forms two separate rooms of slightly different widths (c. 3 and 4 metres respectively). Each long room has a door at either end; that on the south, opening to Street B, is centred and measures 2 m wide, that on the north is smaller (1.10 m) and placed towards the inner corner. The street B entrances were located under a porch (possibly a single arch); there seems also to have been some form of porch or enclosure beyond the doors at the north end. An external down pipe at the NE corner and a cistern outside the NW corner indicate that the building was covered by a single pitched roof.

Three small trial trenches in 1996 (YA, YB and YF) investigated the foundations of the eastern wall of the building and provided a date in the 3rd century AD or later, but shed no light on the question of the building's function. Its fill consisted of almost solid building debris, containing quantities of coloured marble veneer, but there was no trace of a proper floor, suggesting either that the building was unfinished or its preserved level represents an unfloored basement. Coins, pottery and other finds indicated considerable activity in the mid-late 4th century AD.

The building's relatively late date, position (on the edge of the town) and unusual character make it of special interest for our study of the Vicus, and it was decided to open a larger trench in an effort to obtain more information regarding its internal stratigraphy and its setting. Trench YG, measuring

5 by 11 metres, was laid out in 2002 across the width of the building and into the adjacent areas to east and west (possibly a street). The upper fill of both rooms consisted of earth and building debris, under which lay large sections of *opus vittatum* walling which had collapsed inwards from building Y's own walls. In the eastern room the collapse lay at a higher level and the facing of tuffelli and bricks lying uppermost had been stripped, exposing the core of the wall and the rear of the facing on its other side, which appeared to have been subsequently compacted by use into a roughly horizontal surface. Beside the northern section the fallen walling formed two low ridges on either side of a particularly hard and apparently levelled surface, suggesting an approach to some structure which lay beyond the limits of the trench.

Trench YH (3.00 x 5.00 m) was laid out in June 2005 on the north side of YG in order to expose more of the platform in the eastern half of the building and examine the stratigraphy of the overlying debris more closely, in case the excavations in YG had missed something. The upper strata were removed by trowel and their contents sieved (20 coins of the later 4th century were retrieved from the levels immediately above the wall collapse). In April 2006 the excavation continued, identifying thin layers of hard, compacted mortar sand in the southern and northern sectors, forming a broadly horizontal surface, surrounding an area of disturbed rubble debris riddled with root action in the centre of the trench. Some possible post-holes, or footings of upright posts, were identified on the north side of the disturbed rubble, but they make no particular structural sense.



Fig. 2: Vicus, trench YH, layer 18, from west

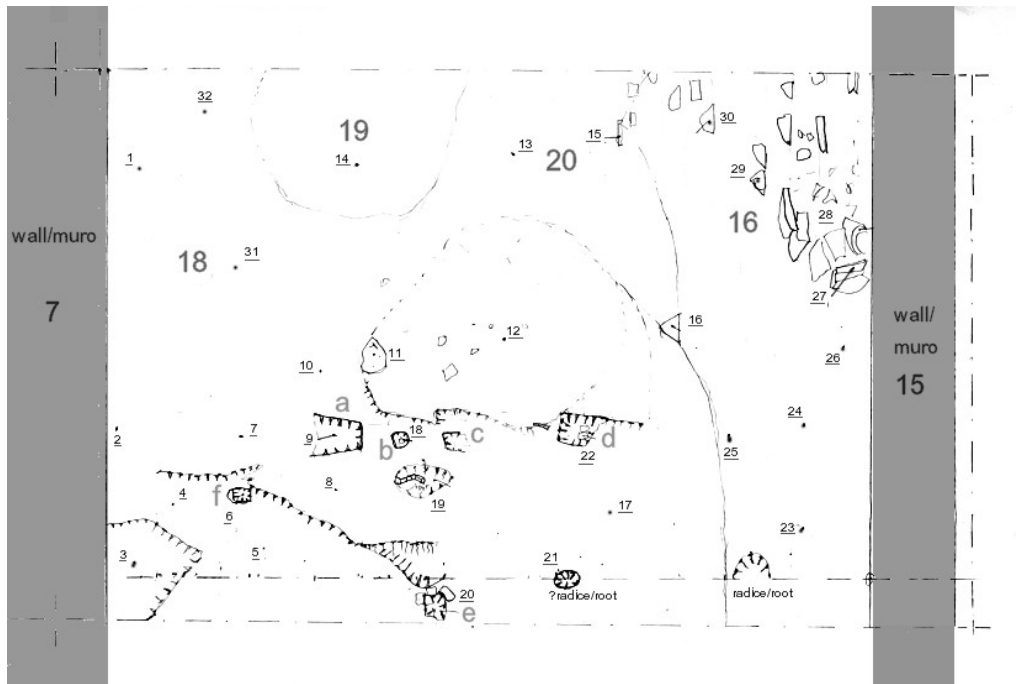


Fig. 3 Vicus, trench YH layer 18, plan

Directly beneath the compacted sand lay a block of collapsed walling starting close to the central wall of the building (and presumably deriving from it) and extending across the trench for a distance of 3.5 metres. As in YG, much of the facing on the side lying uppermost is missing. A Constantinian coin was found in the interface between the compacted layer and the core of the wall, possibly from the mortar of the walling itself. The deposits directly beside and underneath the collapsed wall were partially sampled, but further work remains to be done to complete the excavation.

2. Vicus, Forum area H: test trench 1

Zone H, an area of fairly level ground between the via del Telefono and the temples at the centre of the Vicus, has generally been understood to correspond to the forum. In April 2006 two RM15 surveys were made with different arrays (see Geophysical report), and a trench was excavated in order to test the results, within an area of 3 x 2 m (Figs 4-5).



Fig. 4. Vicus, Forum area H, trench 1, view from south (via del Telefono in the distance)

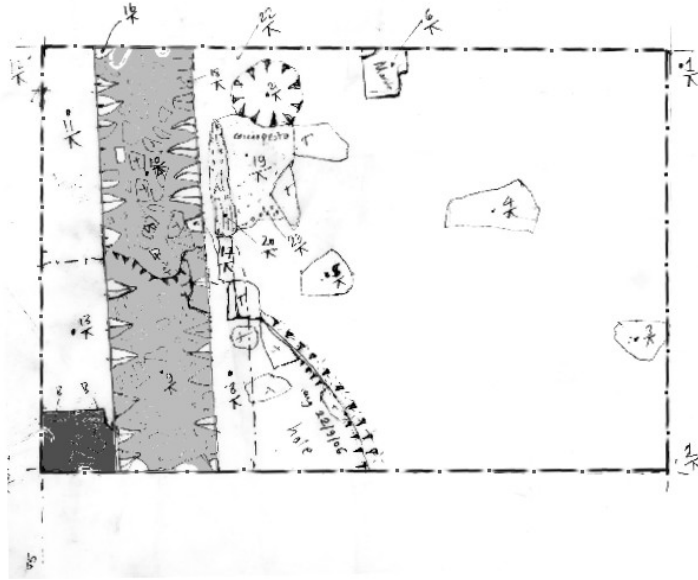


Fig. 5. Vicus, Forum area H, trench 1, sketch plan

Just below the surface on the western margin of the trench lay a wall of reticulate, 45 cms wide, running N-S, with another wall joining it at right angles from the west, both disturbed by a previous excavation. To the east of the N-S wall a narrow (15 cms wide) strip of cocchiopesto formed a gutter between the wall and a platform of large, irregular blocks of tufa, laid on directly on sand, presumably the foundation for paving. A slab of white marble at the northern limit of the trench, possibly in situ, and a number of loose fragments scattered in the topsoil indicate that the paving was of marble. Further excavation is required in order to determine the extent of the platform – whether the whole forum was so treated or only a section along its western margin.

3. Zone west of Vicus, site CPS B3D: test trench 1

Site B3D is a mound contiguous with site B3C to the west, but designates the area contained within a modern wire fence around the base of a modern watchtower. The ground is very uneven and although large fragments of collapsed ancient Roman walling emerge on the surface, the disposition of the buried structures to which they relate is not clear. Superficial clearance was carried out at various points, and succeeded in defining the tops of four walls so that their position and precise orientation could be mapped as part of the ongoing detailed topographical survey of the area.

Trench 1 (1.6 x 4.0 metres) was excavated in depth beside one of these walls, to examine the elevation of the wall and its construction, and to sample the associated archaeological stratigraphy.



Fig. 6. Zone west of Vicus, mound B3D, test trench 1 from NE corner

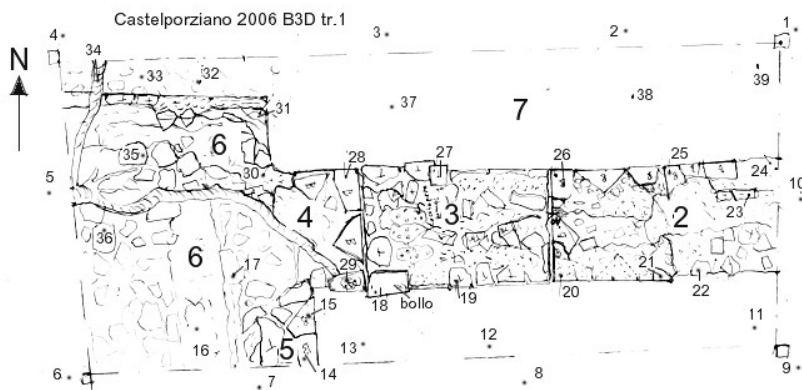


Fig. 7. Zone west of Vicus, mound B3D, test trench 1, plan

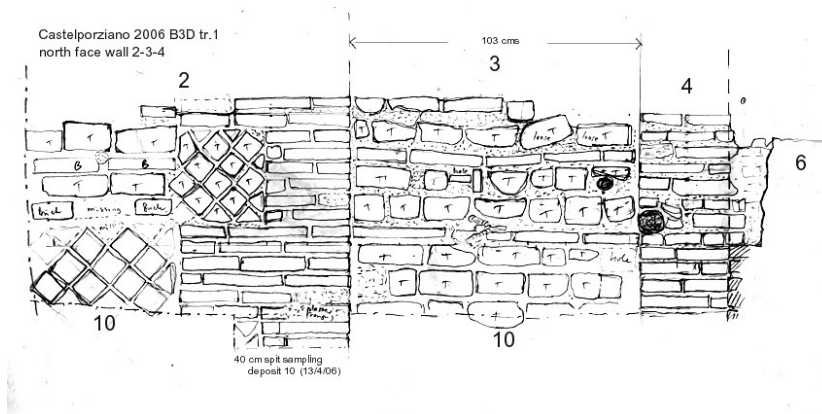


Fig. 8. Zone west of Vicus, mound B3D, test trench 1, elevation of north face of walling

The wall, 60 cms thick, ran E-W, faced on the north in a combination of brick-and-reticulate (*opus mixtum*) and brick-and-tufelli (*opus vittatum*), containing a doorway 1.03 m wide, blocked in a later phase with irregular courses of brick-and-tufelli (see Fig. 8). To the west the wall joined a mass of concrete rubble running N-S, faced on the east side but of uncertain further extent to the west. Beside the north section of the trench a channel, perhaps secondary, cuts through the concrete mass.

The fill on the north side of the E-W wall was excavated to a depth of 80 cms, finding a series of horizons beneath the topsoil, the lower two of which appear to represent some sort of occupation on top of compacted sandy deposits in the late Roman period (containing an imported fineware bowl with barbotine decoration [see Hayes 2007 pottery report], animal bones and a 4th or 5th century coin).

4. Zone west of Vicus, CPS B2 porticus: test trenches 1-3

Site B2 is a linear mound of sand covered with building debris, which runs parallel with the coast for a distance of 180 metres, from B1 (the 'Villa del Confine' at the boundary with Castelfusano) all the way to B3B, the westernmost of the mounds west of the Vicus, which surface investigations in 2003 indicated is a set of baths.



Fig. 9. Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2 viewed from mound B3B (2003)



Fig. 10. Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2 viewed from west, at its midpoint (2006)

Surface and geophysical surveys on B2 in 2003, followed by a series of test trenches in 2004, demonstrated that the buried structure is a porticus running along the sea front, certainly connected with the baths B3B and probably also with the villa B1.



Fig.11. Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2, trenches SS3 across the mound, viewed from the south, with buttress in foreground (2004)

Four concrete walls run parallel with one another, sustaining the present profile of the ridge. The two furthest inland are 6 metres apart, one reduced to the bottom of its foundations, the other standing slightly higher; the third, 4 metres distant from the second but with its foundations on the same level, is still standing c. 1.10 m high and 40-42 cms thick, faced in irregular reticulate. It probably dates (on analogy with similar walls studied at the Vicus) from the third quarter of the 1st century AD. The fourth wall is also 4 metres distant from the third but is thicker (60 cms) and faced with brick and finer reticulate, indicating a date in the early-mid 2nd century AD. As such it reflects a rebuilding of the porticus, as a result of which the facade was moved towards the sea, retaining the third wall as the rear wall but raising the floor level a metre higher (supported on deposits of clean, possibly windblown sand). The later floor only survives as a bed of concrete (cocciopesto), damaged and decaying, but to judge by numerous fragments found loose on the surface and in the excavations, it was once paved with breccia corallina marble (a variegated pink-and-white stone from Asia Minor). A chamfered brick which probably formed part of a string course moulding on the outer face of the fourth wall (corresponding to the floor level on the interior) bears a stamp of AD 125. On the exterior the footings of this seaward wall were reinforced with a series of rectangular buttresses (0.70 x 1.10 m) spaced at regular intervals, on which rose semi-columns (diam. 45 cms), probably framing large picture windows looking out over the sea (as sketched in fig.12).

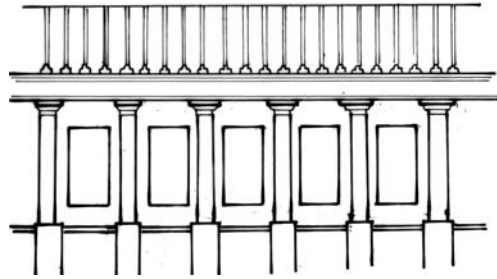


Fig.12. Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2, sketch reconstruction of seaward elevation of porticus, 2nd century AD

In April 2006 a new geophysical survey was carried out along the whole length of the ridge as far as the Villa del Confine (see Report no. 2) and three further test trenches were dug at the western end (in squares 14 and 16 of the SS3 grid used in 2004), to check that we were interpreting the results correctly and to establish the precise position of some more of the buttresses, so that the exact intercolumniation of the engaged colonnade they bore could be ascertained.

Trench 1 (in SS3 grid square 14) measured 2 by 3 metres and uncovered a section of the fourth wall with a buttress in rather fragmentary condition (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13 Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2, trench 1 (2006), viewed from west



Fig.14. Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2, trench 1 (2006), viewed from south, trace of butters in left foreground

Fragments of plaster attached to the east face of the butters indicate that it was painted blue, whereas other fragments found loose in the fill suggest that the wall itself was painted in imitation of ashlar masonry – in white with red lines. The position of the butters on the outside of the wall is marked by a change in the facing of the inner side, from brick-and-reticulate (*opus mixtum*) to a row of four tufelli (possibly a vertical band of *opus vittatum*).

Trench 2 (in SS3 grid square 14), 1 by 2 metres, was designed to locate the next butters to the west, which it duly did, giving an intercolumniation of 2.65 metres (9 Roman feet).



Fig. 15 Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2 trench 2, viewed from south

Interestingly, the buttress was constructed directly on top of a demolished reticulate wall running N-S, i.e. at right angles to – and beyond - the B2 porticus, in the direction of the sea. The underlying wall is identical in dimensions and character to the third wall of B2, suggesting that the earlier porticus could have turned a corner at this point. Deposits of almost clean sand were found on the western side of the reticulate wall, similar to those underlying the floor between walls three and four of the porticus. Excavated to a depth of c. 50 cms, the sand contained a few fragments of pottery, which may be of help in dating.

Trench 3 (in SS3 grid square 16), 1.5 by 2.0 metres, found the line of another N-S wall, about 40 cms wide but faced with brick-and-reticulate, distorted into an S by the pressure of two walls which join it at different points from east and west.



Fig. 16 Zone west of Vicus, ridge B2, trench 3 (2006), viewed from west.

The wall joining from the east aligns with the fourth wall of B2 but is possibly not of the same construction, being less than 40 cms wide (as preserved, perhaps missing its facing on the south side) and apparently faced with tufelli on the north. The position of the join for the wall from the west is marked on the face of the N-S wall by a vertical band of brick and tufelli (opus vittatum). The trench was so full of roots from the cluster of trees to the south – and the walling in so precarious a state - that no attempt was made to excavate further in depth.