

British Archaeological Project at Grumentum
Relazione degli scavi del 2016 nel settore S del foro
Preliminary Summary of Primary Architectural Phases
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Initiated in 2014, the British Archaeological Project at Grumentum (BAPG) oversees the excavation of several soundings positioned to the east of the forum at Grumentum, a Lucano-Roman town in western Basilicata. The project aims to explore the growth of Grumentum's economy between the late Republic and the early Dominate through the excavation of commercial and industrial structures (e.g. *tabernae*, potteries, bakeries, etc.) throughout the town.

Excavation in Settore S began in 2009 under V. Scalfari, who opened a large trench adjacent to the forum's southeast corner (Fig. 1). The primary aim of this excavation was to test the results of a geophysical survey conducted in the area, which seemed to indicate the presence of a large building complex positioned parallel to the forum. Scalfari's excavations identified one or more rectilinear structures as well as a series of column platforms on the west side of the trench; he associated these structures with the construction of a house in the 5th or 6th century AD.

In 2013, a Belgian mission extended the trench to the north, adding an area of approximately 15 x 15m to Settore S. Due to the size of this extension, only the topsoil and uppermost stratigraphic layers were excavated. During the 2014 campaign—the first conducted by the BAPG—the sector was reduced to an S-shaped area measuring approximately 85m² (Fig. 2). In an effort to focus on the chronological disposition of the architectural remains, the decision was taken to excavate using soundings: four of these were laid out on the eastern side of the trench in 2014, and three additional soundings were added further to the west in 2015. Over the course of these two seasons, a number of important discoveries came to light.

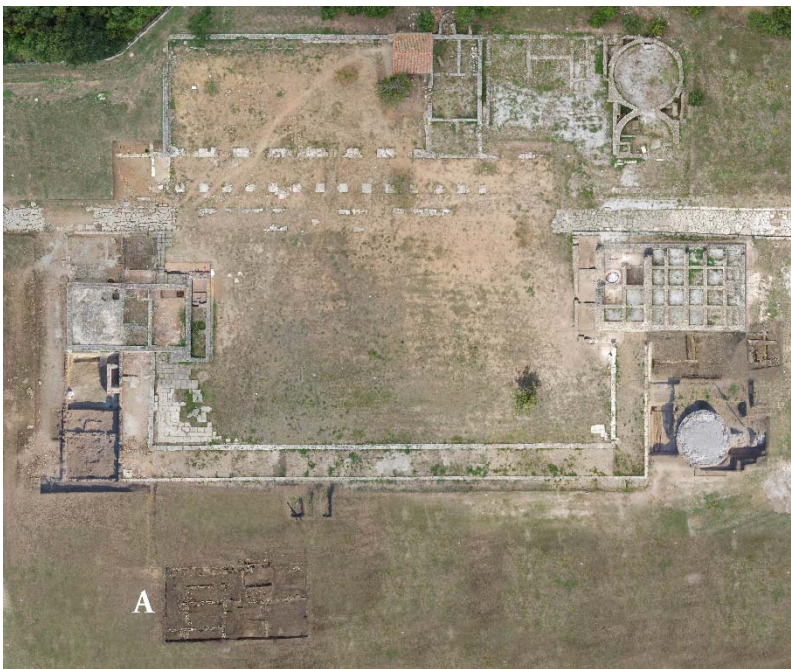


Fig. 1 Location of V. Scalfari's 2009 trench in Settore S, indicated by the letter A

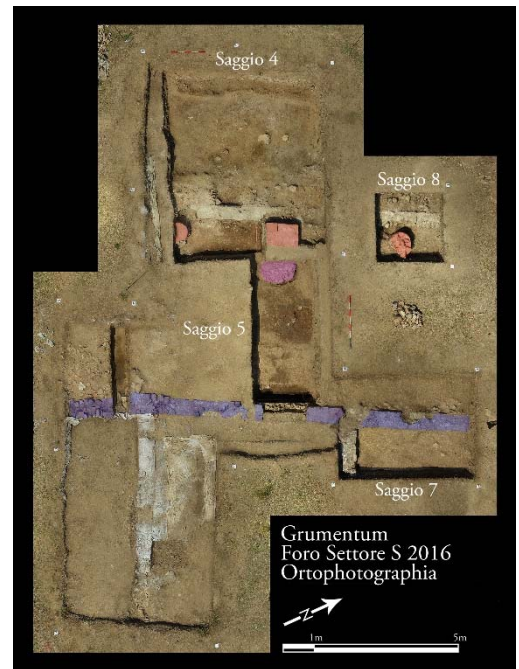


Fig. 2 Orthophotograph of BAPG excavations at conclusion of 2016 season. Eastern building facades highlighted in blue, the main colonnade in pink, and the new column foundation in purple

On the eastern side of Settore S, the presence of multiple rectilinear structures was confirmed, and the western facades of these buildings (Fig. 2, blue) appear to have opened directly onto a thoroughfare measuring about 5 m in width. On the western side of this space, we identified two more column platforms, positioned to the

north of those found by Scalfari in 2009 and 2010 (Fig. 2, pink). This discovery seemed to contradict Scalfari's reading of the architectural remains: rather than being associated with a late antique house, the columns were clearly part of a much earlier colonnade that continued northwards towards the far end of the forum. To the west of the colonnade, a series of substantial leveling fills were discovered. These contained artefacts from a variety of locations (African sigillata, Spanish lamps, Levantine glass) and time periods; most were deposited, however, in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. In particular, tremendous quantities of glass were discovered in the upper strata, leading us to believe that glass manufacturing was probably occurring nearby in late antiquity.

At the start of the 2016 season, our aims were threefold: (1) to explore further the thoroughfare running through the centre of Settore S; (2) to continue excavation of the levelling fills to the west of the colonnade in search of occupation layers; and (3) to confirm the continuation of the colonnade and the building facades northwards. As such, we reopened the two largest soundings from 2015 (Soundings 4 and 5) as well as two new exploratory trenches (Soundings 7 and 8) further to the north. In Sounding 4, the trend identified in previous seasons continued, with two substantial deposition layers (one measuring nearly half a meter deep) excavated to the west of the colonnade. These contained quantities and types of artefacts similar to those recovered in previous seasons, although the temporal range shifted towards the mid-imperial period, indicating that this area was probably used as a dumping ground or midden for at least two or three centuries. Underneath the northernmost column platform in the sounding (US 6266), a sandstone column base was discovered upside down, apparently reused as part of the foundation for the platform (Fig. 3). Interestingly, a near-identical base was also found in the upper strata of Sounding 8 (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3 Sandstone column base identified below platform in Sounding 4



Fig. 4 Sandstone column base recovered from Sounding 8

In Sounding 5, previous excavations had identified a sequence of thin, compact surfaces that seemed to occupy the full width of the thoroughfare (Fig. 5). The upper stratigraphic layers displayed cobbled surfaces composed of reused architectural materials, including roof tiles, brick and mortar. Initially, these features led us to believe that the area between the eastern building facades and the colonnade was home to a road, with the late antique surfaces paved with the materials available at the time. The 2016 excavations in this sounding called this interpretation into question, however. Approximately 80 cm below the modern surface, a mortar floor (US 6418) was found in the central part of the sounding (Fig. 6). Further to the west, at about the same depth, a semi-circular stone foundation (US 6421) was identified; this structure was located immediately adjacent to column platform 6266 (Fig 2, purple; Fig. 6, right). These discoveries, when considered in conjunction with the sandstone column bases found in Soundings 4 and 8, suggest that perhaps an earlier line of columns was positioned just to the east of the colonnade previously identified in the area. If this reading of the remains is correct, then the mortar floor might represent the paving of a portico, rather than the surface of a road. Since the colonnade must have been attached to a larger structure, the absence of architectural remains further to the west seems to support this hypothesis.

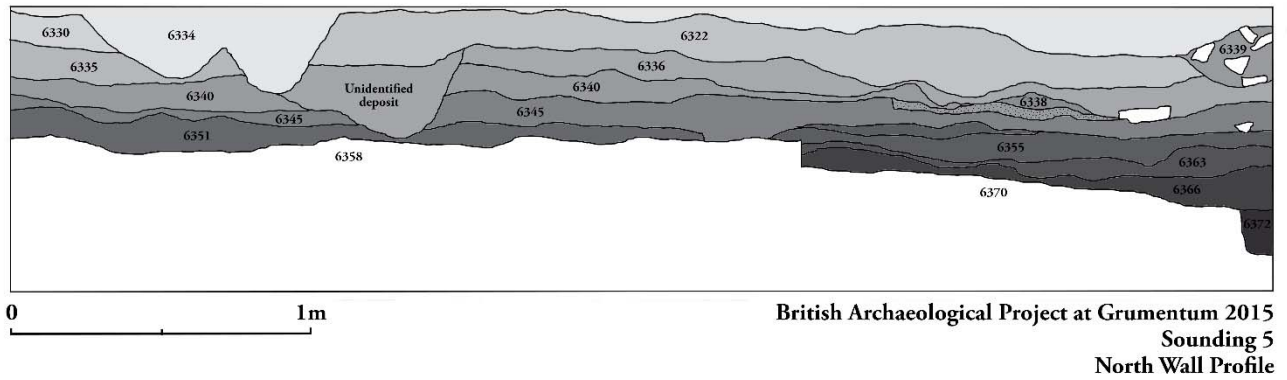


Fig. 5 Sounding 5. North wall profile at conclusion of the 2015 season



Fig. 6 Remains of a mortar floor and column platform discovered in Sounding 5

Soundings 7 and 8 were installed beyond the northern boundary of the 2014-2015 trench in an effort to confirm the continuation of the main colonnade and the building facades. Both were successful in this regard. The remains of a brick column—preserved at a level much higher than its counterparts further to the south—was discovered soon after excavations began in Sounding 8. In Sounding 7, the partially robbed wall (US 6264) that composed the façade of the eastern buildings was found to continue northwards; a perpendicular wall running towards the east was also discovered near the sounding’s southern limit (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Sounding 7 at the conclusion of the 2016 season. View from the northeast

Despite the depths reached in Soundings 4 and 5, the bottoms of which are lower than the surface of Grumentum's Late Republican forum (589.20-589.30 m.a.s.l.), the diagnostic artefacts recovered thus far indicate that the visible strata date to the mid-2nd century AD. As such, excavation will continue in both soundings during the 2017 season. We hope that continued exploration in these areas will yield definitive evidence for the functional character of the zone between the eastern building facades and the colonnade(s), which in our view remains an open question. If this area served as a road when the Roman colony was established at Grumentum, we might hope to find basalt blocks of a variety similar to those that paved the town's *decumanus*. If, on the other hand, there was indeed a portico, an architectural floor is likely to have been installed when the complex was first constructed. In Sounding 7, we hope that a robust programme of digging to the east of wall 6264 will allow us to begin to understand the types of activities that were occurring there in eastern buildings. Further excavation to the west of wall may shed additional light on the nature of the thoroughfare. Since the purpose of Sounding 8 was to identify the next column in the western colonnade, it will not be reopened during the 2017 season.