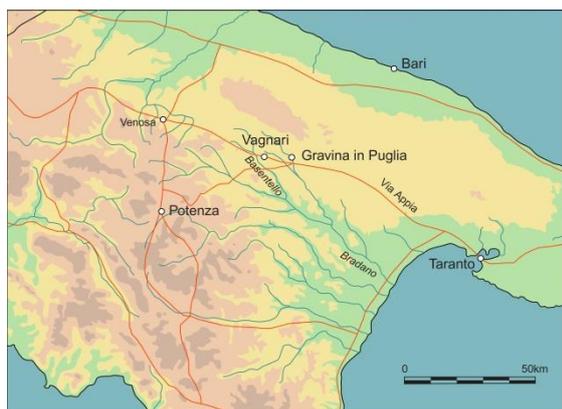


## Excavations at Vagnari 2015

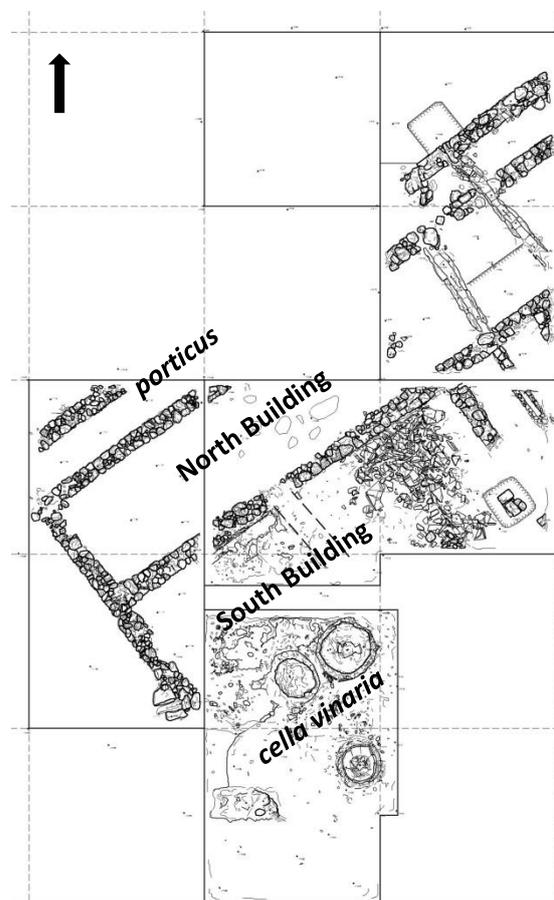
In 2012 and 2013, our excavations concentrated on the northern edge of the Roman estate village (*vicus*) at Vagnari in Puglia where we explored a substantial part of a large tile-roofed and stone-built structure (North Building) about 30 m in length. The building overlooked the valley below with a narrow corridor or *porticus* on the north side and a long range of rooms behind the *porticus*. Evidence for the metal-working industries was retrieved in both years. A study season in 2014 was dedicated to an assessment of the lead artefacts and lead-processing waste.



**Fig. 1** Location of Vagnari in south-east Italy (Puglia, ancient Apulia)

The excavations in 2015 focused on the southern edge of the North Building as well as a large area to the south of it. The work on the North Building gave us a more complete picture of the structure and its internal appointment. The burnt daub found on the very hard beaten earth floor of the building confirmed our findings from previous seasons that the main southern range had been subdivided into smaller rooms by walls of clay and timber. The internal depth of the rooms was 3 m, but it is not clear how wide the rooms were, as the mass

of collapsed burnt daub did not allow us to recognise precisely where the internal walls had stood.



**Fig. 2** Plan of the North Building and the South Building with the *cella vinaria* partly exposed.

The area immediately to the south of this North Building proved to be particularly interesting, and its investigation in 2015 furnished new and exciting evidence for viniculture as one of the important agricultural activities on the imperial estate. The excavations revealed a large complex (South Building) abutting onto the North Building. Three walls with a north-south orientation, two of which had stone foundations still in place, divided the northern area into rooms with floors of mortar or mixed mortar and clay. The third wall had been robbed out and back-filled in antiquity. A

collapsed tile roof on the floor of the central room indicates that this part of the building was covered, but the lack of an east-west wall on the southern side indicates that the rooms may have been open in that direction. Several pieces of white and grey marble slabs found in this area suggests that the walls had marble skirting at the base, and a concentration of glass points to at least some windows having being sealed with window panes.



**Fig. 3 Excavating the collapsed tile roof in the South Building**

Immediately south of this range of rooms was a large area with mortar paving into which large circular plastered basins had been inserted. These basins contained globular ceramic vessels with a rim diameter of about 60 cm and a body diameter of ca. 1 m; the interior surface of the vessels was lined with pitch. It is clear that what we uncovered is a small section of a *cella vinaria*, a wine fermentation and storage room, in which enormous wine vats (*dolia defossa*) were fixed in the ground. A complete assessment of the *dolia* is planned, ranging from a determination of the place of manufacture (through fabric analysis) to a chemical analysis for tartaric acid as scientific confirmation of the presence of wine. The *cella vinaria*

undoubtedly is more extensive and contains more *dolia*, probably arranged in rows, as is the case in wine ‘cellars’ at farm sites known elsewhere in Roman Italy. Further excavation in 2016 will clarify how large the *cella vinaria* 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. It is to be expected that a wine press and tank for the pressed grape juice, among possible other wine-making facilities, belonged to this complex, although they clearly lie outside the confines of the trench opened in 2015. They, too, will be sought in 2016.



**Fig. 4 Removing the skeletal remains in the fill of a *dolium defossum***

The biggest surprise of the 2015 season was the discovery of two human skeletons in the fill of one of the *dolia*. The deposition of corpses in this location in the settlement (which contravenes Roman law) needs clarification and explanation.

In general, the North Building and the South Building were in operation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. A.D., and occupation and alterations to the buildings continued in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. A.D. The latest coins of the mid-

4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. suggest that the area was abandoned by or around that time.

This phase of the project will continue to focus primarily on the estate's agricultural economy and the contribution of the surrounding landscape in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. It is our intention to explore the extent to which the economy of the estate was diversified with a whole range of agricultural activities, including vine cultivation and wine-making.

### Acknowledgements

I should like to thank the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Puglia for the excavation permit and Dr. Mario de Gemmis-Pellicciari for permission to work on his land. I benefited greatly from the exchange of ideas and resources with my colleagues, particularly Dr. Tracy Prowse (McMaster University, excavations in Vagnari cemetery) and Dr. Hans vanderLeest (Mt. Allison University, excavations at San Felice). I warmly thank the University of Sheffield for its support. I am very grateful to my site supervisors, Jonathan Moulton, Giuseppe Garofolo, and Christopher Griffiths. Finally, I owe the students from the UK, the U.S.A., China, and Singapore who worked on the site a debt of gratitude.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. Carroll (2014), Vagnari 2012: New Work in the vicus by the University of Sheffield, in A.M. Small (ed.), *Beyond Vagnari. New Themes in the Study of Roman South Italy*. Bari: Edipuglia, 79-88

M. Carroll and T. Prowse (2014), Exploring the vicus and the necropolis at the Roman Imperial estate at Vagnari

(Comune di Gravina in Puglia, Provincia di Bari, Regione Puglia), *Papers of the British School at Rome* 82: 353-356

T. Prowse and M. Carroll (2015), Research at Vagnari (Comune di Gravina in Puglia, Provincia di Bari, Regione Puglia), *Papers of the British School at Rome* 83: 324-326



**The 2015 Vagnari Vicus team (from left):** Abi Birks, Amy Derrick, Esmie Carter, Kathryn Goulding, Mackenzie Priest, Marcus Losty, Evan Wynne, Jamila Moraes, Christopher Griffiths, Molly Masterson, Holly Rosevear, Robin Downing, Yue Zhang, Jonathan Moulton, Christina Westhoff, Maureen Carroll.



**The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.**