

herculaneum archaeology

the newsletter of the Friends of Herculaneum Society - Issue 23 Autumn 2018



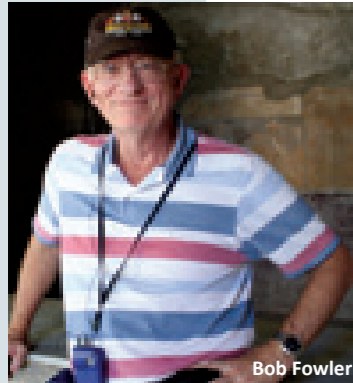
Lararium at the House of the Skeleton

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The Seventh Herculaneum Congress

June 2018

Bob Fowler - Chairman of Trustees



The Seventh (seventh!) Congress returned to a June date to avoid the torrents of September rain endured on the Sixth. Ironic, then, that thunderstorms were forecast nearly every day. But once the Congress kicked off they never materialised. The temperatures were also kind, not exceeding 30, and one could hardly

have asked for better weather. Some 55 people signed up, close to a record. Most were staying at the Miglio d'Oro; the Hotel Herculaneum, as in 2016, claimed to have lost our reservation, but this time they somehow failed to rediscover it. Draw your own conclusions.

The usual welcoming prosecco and evening briefing in the Miglio d'Oro primed us for a 9:30 kick-off next day, which was wholly devoted to the main excavations. The new Direttore had been exceptionally helpful and readily granted permission to visit all the normally closed sites



View towards Vesuvius

we asked for: the House of the Bicentenary, the Suburban Baths, the House of the Relief of Telephus, the House of the Mosaic Atrium, and the Villa of the Papyri. When we first made our requests, the theatre was still closed; subsequently we heard it was open, and asked if we could see that too: yes! he said. This permission arrived on the eve of the meeting, and fitting it into the timetable proved to be a challenge. Still, this was a fantastic bonus, as we have not been able to visit the theatre since the first Congress, and many of us had never seen it. On top of all this when we arrived on the site the Boat Pavilion was unexpectedly open to the public. We have never had a richer agenda.

For me the highlight on Thursday was the House of the Bicentenary, where conservators explained the project in detail. Nunzia Laino and Paola Pesaresi from the Herculaneum Conservation Project (HCP) gave an overview, and Mark Gittins, one of the Getty Museum team who are working on the delicate frescoes, explained the risks involved in removing the wax layer applied at the time of the first excavation—an advanced technique in its day, but now needing replacement. All this afforded excellent insight into the work of conservation, and the scale of the task facing authorities if just one building needs so much work.

The guide in the other closed buildings was our veteran man on the ground, Christian Biggi, who contended nobly with the impromptu concerts popping up all over the site—all over Italy, in fact, this being the day of a Festival of Music. One heard everything from the Maple Leaf Rag (surely for my benefit) to an affecting rendition of Handel's 'Lascia



Festival of Music musicians

ch'io pianga'. Packed lunches allowed people to stay on site and explore on their own. Some of us had a go at following the 'Graffiti Trail' laid down by the Ancient Graffiti Project, whose work this season was

made possible by the Society's successful crowdfunding campaign. The team was not yet on site but this custom tour permitted us to see up close what they are trying to achieve.

Back at the Miglio D'Oro in the evening Mario Notomista, one of the HCP's distinguished archaeologists, presented the results of very recent and unpublished work on the so-called 'Sacred Area', with its two temples of Venus. Then the Direttore himself, Francesco Sirano, addressed the group. We were lucky that he made it at all, since he was having a more than usually busy director-day, with the mayor of Ercolano on his hands and still two more appointments in the evening. He outlined his plans for Herculaneum with all the passion he displayed at our London event in January, and intimated that he will be looking to us for help. It is gratifying, and very important, that the Society has established such a good relationship



Dr Francesco Sirano

with the new Direttore. The independence of Herculaneum has been a liberation, enabling truly ambitious plans. One can already see the fruits of some of Dr Sirano's initiatives on site and we wish him every success.

The undersigned closed this stage of the proceedings with an overview of the New Excavations and the Villa of the Papyri, to orient people for the visit the next morning. We then proceeded to the Villa Signorini for a sumptuous buffet. We had not dined on their premises before, but these were our usual caterers. In the past they ferry the



Villa Signorini buffet - members and guests

food over to the Villa Maiuri, which was unavailable this year owing to a collapsed ceiling. Terrific food and great company, including colleagues and students from the University of Naples (Federico II), one of whom (Society trustee Gianluca Del Mastro) told me that on the property just beyond the hedge, yards away, there was a well at the bottom of which was the belvedere marking the extreme limit of the Villa of Papyri. The urge to trespass was hard to resist. Since it had taken fifteen minutes on foot to reach our location, this information brought home the enormous extent of the Villa.

We were late starting on Friday, which, as it turned out, set the pattern for a very long day. But what a day it was. We had permission to explore everything in the New Excavations but the lower level of the Villa. We had not expected to get right into the atrium quarter of the latter. From there one looks ruefully at the backfilled Bourbon tunnels, reflecting that the rest of the fabled library could lie within thirty meters. In this area, all structures have now been fully stabilised, and at the far end of the great trench the two insulae were much easier to see and understand than hitherto.

The theatre came next, where owing to a lapse in internal communication the staff were not expecting us. Tools had to be stowed and extra custodians fetched before we could enter. We descended in two shifts, some 35



Villa of Papyri

minutes each. Negotiating the narrow tunnels, one finds oneself suddenly on the stage, or in the cavea, or at the bottom of the well which led to the discovery of the theatre in 1709, and inaugurated the whole history of Vesuvian archaeology. Steps are damp, narrow, rough-hewn and dimly lit; it is somewhat surprising that, even with waivers signed, they are permitting access. But this is one sign of the new Direttore's enterprise.



Underground theatre stage

There is huge potential for the theatre to become one of the site's star attractions. Indeed, its re-opening has been partly responsible for the record number of visitors last year (some 500,000).

Back to the hotel, on to the coach and up the mountain for lunch at the Fuocomuorto, only 90 minutes late. This delightful, bowered outdoor restaurant serves food and drink produced entirely on the premises; the fresh apricots had just been picked. Such a pleasant lunch was impossible to rush, so it was 6:00 by the time we reached our next appointment (not helped by the driver getting lost). This was with Girolamo De Simone, whose excavation at Pollena Trocchia and (with the University of Tokyo) at Somma Vesuviana we visited in 2014. On this occasion we went to the laboratory where the finds from Pollena Trocchia are being studied, and heard from Girolamo and his assistants about the significance of their discoveries. Artefacts were gingerly passed around: a die, marked exactly like a modern playing piece; a tiny cosmetic spoon made of bone; a miniature cabinet key affixed to a finger ring. Most remarkable

in which it was buried. There were large amounts of pottery and household items, most still awaiting analysis.

We proceeded then to Somma and the enormous villa where Augustus may have died. The present enormous structure was, however, built in the second century, and was the centre of a prodigious wine-making operation. The size and decor of the villa bespeak a very wealthy and powerful owner. Occupied until buried by the eruption of 472, the site sheds much light on life in the region after



Villa Somma

the catastrophe of 79. Everyone was strongly impressed by what they saw, and by Dr De Simone's enthusiasm. A collection in aid of the project subsequently brought in some 1,000 euros which will enable more work on the finds, and additional visitor information in the laboratory, with the Society's contribution fully credited.

Four hours late we returned to the hotel, and people scattered either to their rooms or to nearby eateries for restoration. In compensation we started later the next day, embarking at 10:30 for Naples and the catacombs of San Gennaro. This extensive and interesting complex of mostly Christian and some pagan tombs has been made very accessible to tourists by an enterprising priest, who saw an opportunity to provide local youth with ongoing, gainful employment.



Catacombs of San Gennaro

A quick bite of lunch near the Museo Nazionale (some folk managed a lightning visit) preceded the ride to Baia, where the excellent Caterina De Vivo was our guide as she had

been in 2016. Our principal destination this afternoon had been the Phlegraean Fields, but these were closed until further notice owing to a terrible accident in which a family fell down a crater and was killed. Many, but not all, of us had visited Baia on the extra day in 2016, but



Baia

it is always worth a return, and we explored new areas on this occasion. The last stop was the amphitheatre at Pozzuoli, the third largest in the Roman world, where one can roam in the extensive working areas below ground: another astounding example of Roman engineering. Though the time management was better today, it was still a tight turnaround to get ready for the great closing cena, held this time at La Fornacella: a stunner for a meal and especially welcome after a physically demanding day.

If anyone thinks Italy is chronically inefficient, here is a story to set in the balance. One of our number lost her wallet Saturday in Naples. It was handed in, and the police rang the hotel, who had uploaded her passport information. The hotel arranged transportation to the station on Sunday morning, and our colleague, reunited with wallet, arrived back in Ercolano two minutes before the starting time of 10:00 a.m.

The target of the extra day was Capua, with the second-largest amphitheatre in the Roman world, a very well preserved Mithraeum, a small gladiatorial museum and a larger one containing some famous artefacts. Spartacus started his revolt here, and a group of



Capua Amphitheatre

what appeared to be Boy Scouts were preparing to reenact the uprising, all kitted out in armour, waving their swords and shouting 'Spar-ta-co! Spar-ta-co!'.

We had thought of visiting the Bourbon palace at Caserta too, but decided to leave it for a future Congress. This extra day was in consequence slightly more leisurely than the others. In spite of later starts and best intentions this Congress was on the whole very strenuous, which is a point to consider when planning the Eighth Congress. Another point to consider, though, is how once again to match or even exceed the wonderfully rewarding itinerary arranged by Krystyna, Kate and Christian. Warmest thanks to them, to all our guides and especially all our participants. *Alla prossima.*



Capua Mithraeum

News from Dr Brent Seales and his Digital Restoration research team



Dr. Seales and his team have just returned (October 2018) from a weeklong visit to the Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli. They were there thanks to a planning grant from the Mellon Foundation and were accompanied by the Mellon Foundation Program Director. Negotiations for access to the Biblioteca's Herculaneum collection were successful, and the team is now developing a comprehensive research plan. The Biblioteca agreed to allow Dr. Seales to image both open fragments and intact scrolls, and the Mellon Foundation has invited Dr. Seales to submit a proposal request for funding of the entire project. In addition, progress has continued on the application of the Machine Learning tool to address the ink issue, with recent experiments proving even more promising. If Mellon approves the request, work would begin next April.

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REVIEW *Lavender... For You* by Jack Godwin, published in 2016

Those of you who came to this year's Congress will remember Jack and Sylvia Godwin, American Friends from Los Angeles, who work as docents (volunteer guides) at the Getty Villa there. They both have prodigious knowledge of that Villa and of its original, the Villa of the Papyri. 'Lavender... For You' is a novel written by Jack drawing extensively on this and his much wider research into the area and times when the Villa of the Papyri was first built. It is a thunderingly good read, a real page turner, satisfyingly both hugely informative and a riveting story. I couldn't put it down.

The central conceit of the book takes three characters born on the same day in 63BC and follows their lives for the next 36 years. Two are fictional; Arcas, son of a Greek slave family owned by the Piso of Villa of the Papyri fame, and Electra, granddaughter of the said Piso. The third is real; Octavian/Augustus, a more remote figure in the novel but alongside his adoptive father, Julius Caesar, towering over the events.

Arcas is by far the dominant character, involved as a child in the building of the Villa and (of course) falling into an easy companionship (encouraged) then love (not encouraged within very narrow boundaries) with Piso's independent minded granddaughter, Electra. Through his intelligence, strength, diligence and ability to speak both Latin and Greek he gets noticed by Piso and at the tender age of 14 is given to Julius Caesar who has dropped by the Villa with his wife, Piso's daughter Calpurnia. From there Arcas is whisked off to the war against Pompey in Greece and his adventures really begin. Meanwhile Electra experiences the gilded cage of her privileged life in the villas round the Bay of Naples.

Through their stories we get to know all about building the Villa, supplying its fountains, Roman market gardening, shopping in Herculaneum, running agricultural estates, Greek festivals at Paestum (Greek slaves got a day off for these), spying for Caesar in his battles with Pompey, the Civil War in general, travel, and (spoiler alert) sailing up the Nile with Caesar and Cleopatra (Caesar liked skinny dipping).

I found a particular pleasure in the depiction of Herculaneum and surrounding area at a time when it was fully flourishing, over a century before its calamitous destruction. A time when it was teeming with people from the most downtrodden slave to the likes of Cicero and Julius Caesar and it still had a future. It is all too easy to become fixated by 79AD. There are maps and a companion website for more information.

Do hurry if you want to buy this book. I think it was privately published and there are just a very few copies available on Amazon.

Dining in the Gardens of Herculaneum and Pompeii

Janet S. Dunkelbarger
PhD candidate, University of Virginia

The inhabitants of Herculaneum and Pompeii dined outside in gardens, surrounded by flora and fauna. Men and women reclined on masonry or wooden couches, arranged around a central table or fountain, eating and drinking from vessels that rested nearby. The diners were shaded by a pergola, often covered in vines invoking the god Bacchus, whose wine they may have also enjoyed. Scents of flowers, fruit trees, and other vegetation of the garden wafted through the air, interrupted only by the smell of food cooking on the hearth. Conversation took place both with other diners on the couches, and also with those who may have sat on neighboring benches. As they spoke, their attention shifted from the decorative water fountains, to frescoes of a hunt or of an extended garden scene, or to the altars, niches, and statues of the gods that adorned the space. These are the 'Garden Dining Spaces' created by the inhabitants of Herculaneum and Pompeii.



Casa di Nettuno ed Anfitrite
V, 6-7, Herculaneum
(photo taken by author, 2018)

My project focuses on these Garden Dining Spaces, examining their context, construction, and decoration, and exploring how their design and use enhance our understanding of ancient Roman social behaviour, economic activity, and religious and ritual practice. Dining outdoors in the garden was common in antiquity, but little focused attention has been paid to the subject and the spaces created to support the habit. Most often, scholars interpret the practice and the spaces as commonsense or in keeping with Roman social performance and competition. Few, however, have examined the evidence holistically. With the support of the American Friends of Herculaneum Society Scholarship, I have nearly completed the data collection for my comprehensive study of the Garden Dining Spaces at Herculaneum and Pompeii. I have selected these two cities as primary sites for my research, not only for their level of preservation, but also for the number of Garden Dining Spaces they have. A total of seventy-one have been identified at Herculaneum and Pompeii and are currently under investigation. Outside the Bay of Naples region, evidence of outdoor or garden dining spaces in the Roman World is lacking.



Domus of Sutoria Premigenia
I.xiii.2, Pompeii
(photo taken by author, 2018)

Thanks to the American Friends of Herculaneum Society, I have now gained access to and studied forty-seven of the Garden Dining Spaces in Herculaneum and Pompeii. For each property with remains of a Garden Dining Space, I conducted an on-site investigation to record information about the context, architecture, decoration, and overall design of the Garden Dining Space within. Because Garden Dining Spaces were often left exposed to the elements after their initial excavation and are now rapidly disintegrating and disappearing, I also rely on excavation reports, publications, and archival materials to augment the in situ remains. My next steps are to catalogue this information in a database and, when completed, run queries to illuminate patterns among Garden Dining Spaces. Common or disparate sizes, construction materials, design, decoration, and distribution across the sites in which they appear, considered in concert with artistic, literary, and epigraphic evidence related to Garden Dining Spaces, will elucidate the use and social, economic, and religious and ritual significance of these deliberately-constructed spaces.



Casa dell'Efebo
I.vii.10-12,19, Pompeii
(photo taken by author, 2018)

Preliminary conclusions indicate that the Garden Dining Spaces of Herculaneum and Pompeii reveal complexities of Roman dining not addressed in existing scholarship, with a more demographically diverse population participating in reclined dining, as well as a wider range of motivations for and meanings behind dining. Garden Dining Spaces are found in many contexts – elite and non-elite domestic, commercial, and funerary settings – and demonstrate that reclined dining on couches was practised by a larger part of Roman society, challenging the standard dichotomy of elite and non-elite dining, reclined and seated respectively. Furthermore, despite the traditional interpretation of these spaces in non-elite contexts as emulative of elite behaviour and culture, the evidence suggests instead a more widespread practice of the

activities held in the spaces across the social and economic strata of Roman society. The practice was so widespread that common restaurants and inns invested in permanent Garden Dining Spaces to meet the needs of their clientele. The similarity in the design of Garden Dining Spaces in domestic, commercial, and funerary contexts suggests the Garden Dining Space was used not simply for pleasure or as part of Roman social performance and competition, but as a sacred space integral to the worship of one's ancestors, family gods, or personal deities, by kin, community, or a diverse and unrelated group of people, to promote and ensure continued fertility and prosperity for the individual or group.

A cursory investigation of the disparity in archaeological evidence at Herculaneum, which has only two Garden Dining Spaces (0.5 GDSs/hectare), and Pompeii, which has sixty-nine (1.08 GDSs/hectare), revealed two things. First, that the architecture and arrangement of space in Herculaneum is different from Pompeii. There are few hortus or peristyle gardens in the excavated remains of Herculaneum, where paved and fountain courtyards seem to predominate instead. At Pompeii, hortus and peristyle gardens are common, and many of the southern and southeastern insulae of the city were dedicated to agricultural production, the gardens or vineyards of which often served as the setting for Garden Dining Spaces. Second, the socio-economic differences of each settlement may have also played a role in the frequency of Garden Dining Spaces. Pompeii was a trade centre and farming settlement that looked to and was connected with its rural hinterland, whereas Herculaneum looked more to Neapolis and the luxury villas on the littoral. This difference in 'orientation' may have affected how the people of Herculaneum and Pompeii related to their urban environment, perhaps resulting in the disparity of evidence of Garden Dining Spaces between the two sites.

The Garden Dining Spaces of Herculaneum and Pompeii are understudied, but preserve important evidence of ancient daily life. The disparity of evidence for these spaces in Campania and in the wider Roman world suggests that dining in the garden was motivated for more specific reasons than pleasure and more profound reasons than social performance and competition. The disparity also suggests that the practice of or the evidence for dining in the garden changed over time, perhaps demonstrating a change in building materials or a change in the significance of the practice and the spaces, resulting in their removal and less-common construction during the first century AD. With the support of the American Friends of Herculaneum Society, I am breathing new life into these long-neglected Garden Dining Spaces, and expanding our conception of Roman daily life and society.

Herculaneum Graffiti Project 2018

Jackie DeBiasie Sammons

The Herculaneum Graffiti project had a very successful 2018 field season. We had nine undergraduates on the field team, including two from the UK (U. of Birmingham, Oxford U.). They were joined by Grace Gibson, a graduate student from U. of Texas. This field season focused on recording graffiti from spaces that our team had not yet entered. We are very grateful to the Parco Archeologico di Ercolano and Direttore Sirano for facilitating our research on the graffiti in spaces closed to the public.

Much of this field season was spent in ancient latrines which, fortunately for us, still hold ancient graffiti writing. We documented several graffiti in the latrine of the House of the Inn (III.1/19) including a Greek alphabet (CIL IV.10707). We also worked in the latrines of the baths and pistrinum of Insula Orientalis II.2 and of the House of the Gem (Ins.Or.I.1), where we took measurements of one of the most famous graffiti from Herculaneum: "Apollinaris, the doctor of the Emperor Titus / defecated well here" (CIL IV.10619). Some things never change!

We are also able to confirm that the three graffiti recorded in the House of Neptune and Amphitrite (V.7) are still preserved. They were written in an upper storey whose floor is no longer extant, so they are currently 3.3m from the ground! They are some of the most fascinating graffiti from Herculaneum. They include a note recording a delivery of wine, an inventory list, and a possible grammatical exercise.

We also spent time in the House of the Wooden Altar (V.31). There were seven graffiti recorded in the fauces of this house. Though seemingly invisible at first glance, we determined that five of the graffiti are still extant. Advanced photography techniques using filters allowed us to document and photograph these inscriptions, which are very difficult to see otherwise.

This year we introduced matching team t-shirts. In addition to providing excellent visibility for our team on site, they also inspired tourists and custodians of Herculaneum to ask questions about our work. Our students enjoyed educating the public about the ancient graffiti and the need to protect them. Brochures that we passed out to interested tourists encouraged them to explore the Ancient Graffiti Project Search Engine (ancientgraffiti.org).

We are very grateful to the Friends of Herculaneum Society, the American Friends of Herculaneum Society, and all our supporters. Your gifts to our fund-raising campaign enabled students to join the project who would not have been able to otherwise.

Jacqueline DiBiasie Sammons is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Classical Languages and Classical Archaeology at Sewanee: The University of the South.



Members of the Ancient Graffiti Team 2018

The Herculaneum Society has recently expanded its board and is very pleased to welcome Kay Byers, Alison Carter, Gianluca Del Mastro, Holger Essler, Joy Bitthell (Littlewood) and Annalisa Marzano who join the other six trustees. Information about all of them can be found on the Friends website (<http://www.herculaneum.ox.ac.uk/about-us/trustees>). The board thus comprises a wide range of experience and perspectives and will be actively developing plans for the Society with as much input as possible from all members.

New trustee Gianluca Del Mastro has recently been appointed by the Italian Minister of Culture as President of the Fondazione Ente Ville Vesuviane, the organisation which manages all 122 historic villas in the region. The list includes the Villa Campolieto in Ercolano (where the Fondazione is based), the Villa Signorini and the Villa Aprile, a.k.a. the Miglio d'Oro hotel. The Fondazione is a prestigious organisation and we congratulate Gianluca on this signal honour.



The Ancient Shoreline



Baia

Many thanks to Peter Spital whose photographs, taken over the duration of the Congress with a Nikon SLR, illustrate this Newsletter. In the age of phone cameras, one sometimes forgets the effort required in producing high resolution photographs for printing purposes. Thank you, Peter!

For more information about the Society, or if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for articles for the next edition of Herculaneum Archaeology, please feel free to contact the office at:

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