

Fig. 1. Vicus Augustanus (Castelporziano). General site plan showing locations of trenches X and SA

Report on excavations at the imperial vicus 1995-1998*

by Amanda Claridge

In memory of Martin John Hicks 1960-1999

The purpose of the excavations

Following upon the completion of the surface survey and analysis of the structures exposed by the excavations of 1875-1912 (circa), two new excavations were undertaken in 1995-8, in the form of trenches X and SA (see general site plan Fig.1).

Trench X was located as close as possible to the centre of the site, across the projected line of the main E-W street B, north of block G. The chosen area was relatively free of trees (fig.2 shows it prior to excavation) and, it was hoped, relatively undisturbed by earlier excavations, for the primary objective was to investigate the uppermost levels on the site - those missing from the areas of the old excavations. The trench was designed to permit an excavation in depth to sample the full sequence of levels in the street and those inside the buildings to either side, to assess the nature of the final phases of occupation on the site and the likely date of its abandonment.

Trench SA on the other hand was intended to produce a substantial sample of the ancient rubbish dumps on the inland side of the via Severiana, first identified in 1984-86 (see Fig.1 and *Castelporziano I*, p. 72; *Castelporziano II*, p.70). As well as providing general evidence for the economic status of the town, it was hoped that the sample would also be of value for eventual

comparative studies, in the first instance with the assemblages represented in the street and built-up areas in Trench X, and then with assemblages from Ostia and from the imperial villa at Tor Paterno and other sites in the ager Laurens.

Trench X and Building Y

The trench initially measured 10 x 10 metres, which encompassed the full width of the street but had to be extended in various directions to give suitable access to the interior of the buildings on either side (XA, XB, XL). In addition, the further extent of a large rectangular building (Y) one corner of which was just clipped by the NW angle of trench X, proved to lie on or just below the surface and could be traced in basic outline simply by removing some of the forest soil (Fig. 4: general site plan, all features). Two soundings were made to examine the stratigraphy inside building Y, at its SE and NE corners (XA,YA) and another on the outside at its SW corner where it fronted the street (XF).

[*] This report was prepared in 2002 to appear in Italian translation in *Castelporziano IV*. Since that publication is still delayed indefinitely, by kind permission of Dr M. G. Lauro this English version is being made available online, together with the associated reports on the pottery from SA and X by John W. Hayes.



Fig. 2. Vicus Augustanus 1995. Trench X. Viewed from NW



Fig. 3. Vicus Augustanus. Trench X. Final state, from west

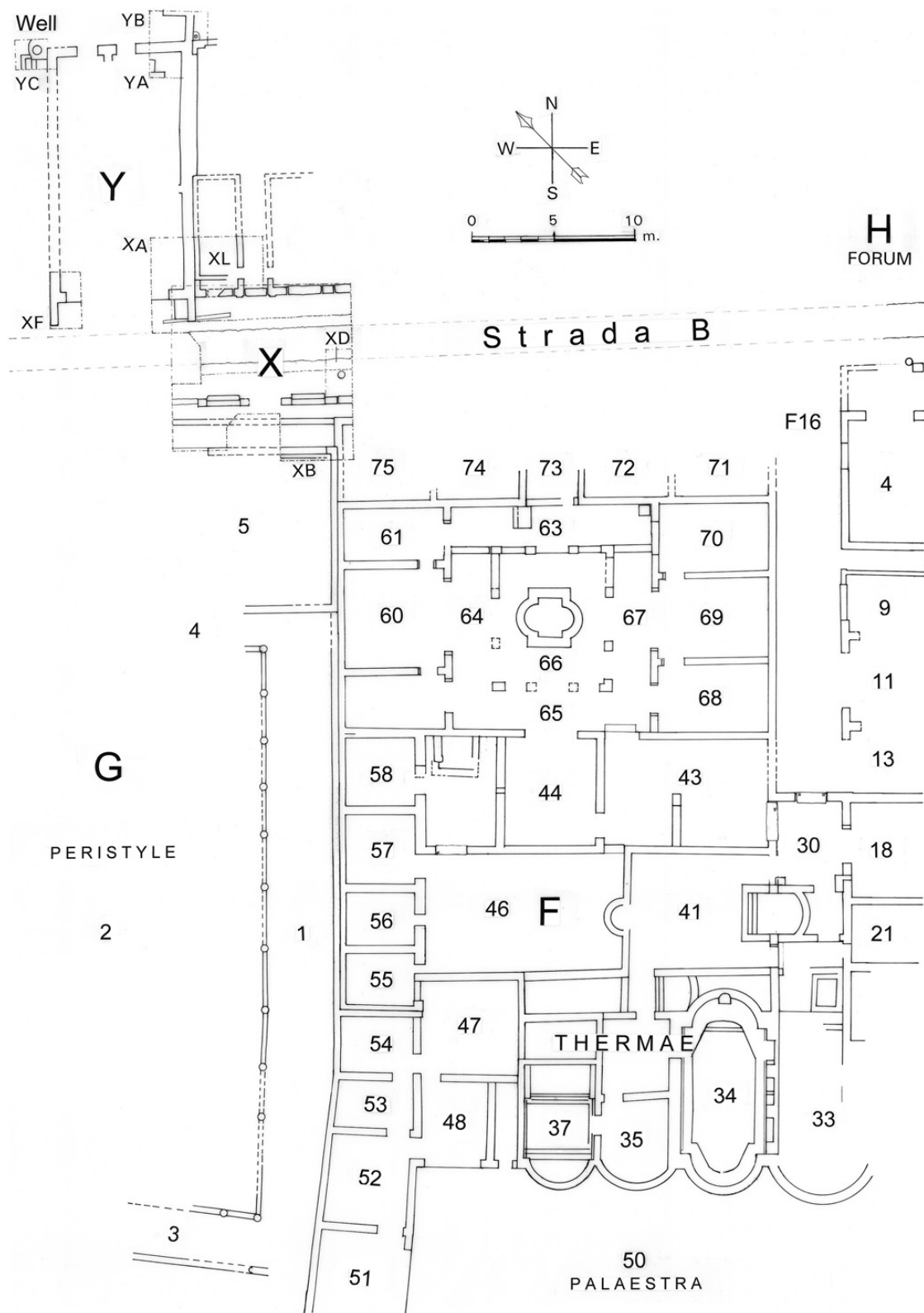


Fig. 4 Vicus Site plan Zones F-G with location of trench X and building Y

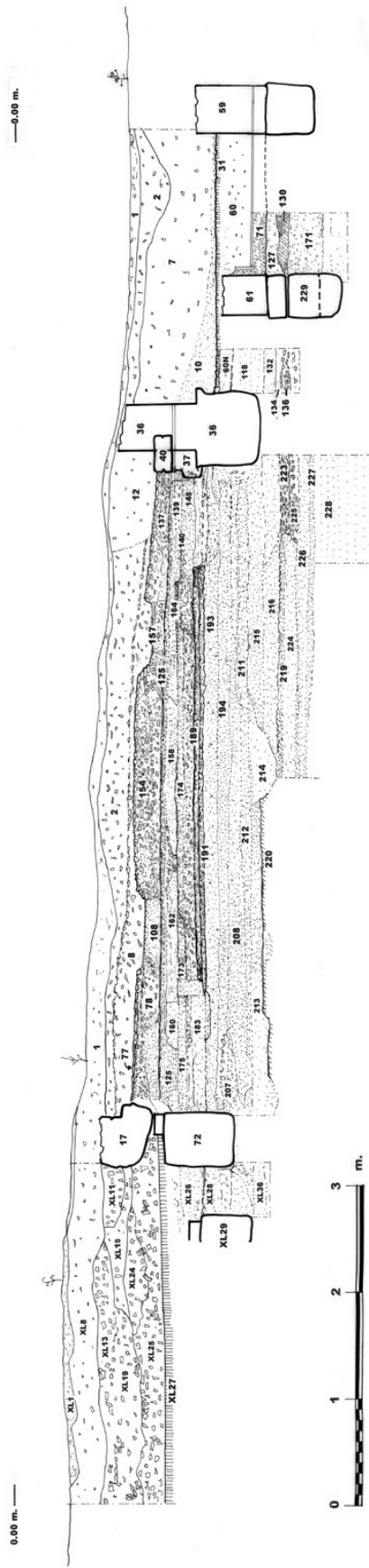


Fig. 5. Vicus. Trench X. N-S section across street B and buildings to either side, looking east

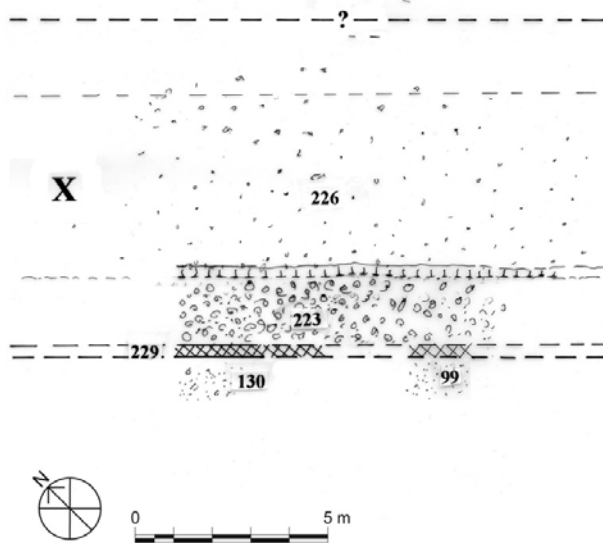


Fig. 6. Vicus. Trench X Plan., hase I

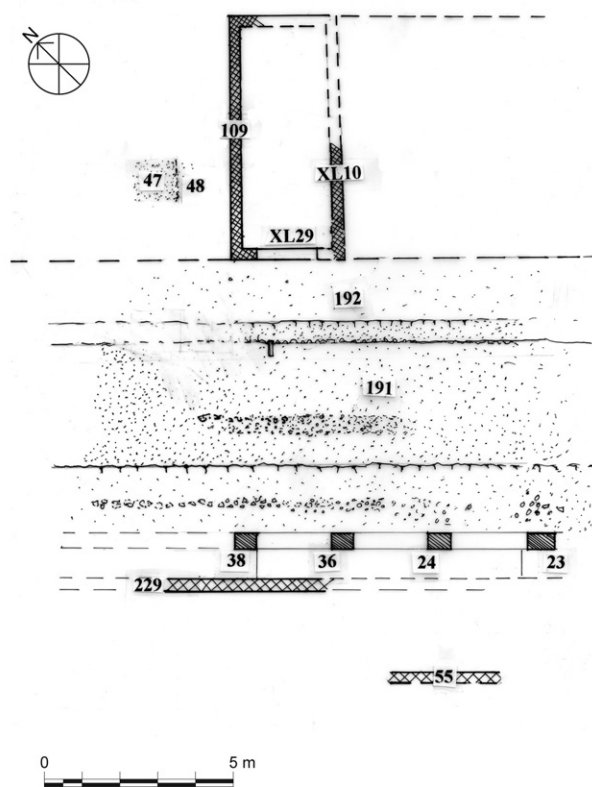


Fig. 7. Vicus. Trench X . Plan, Phase II.

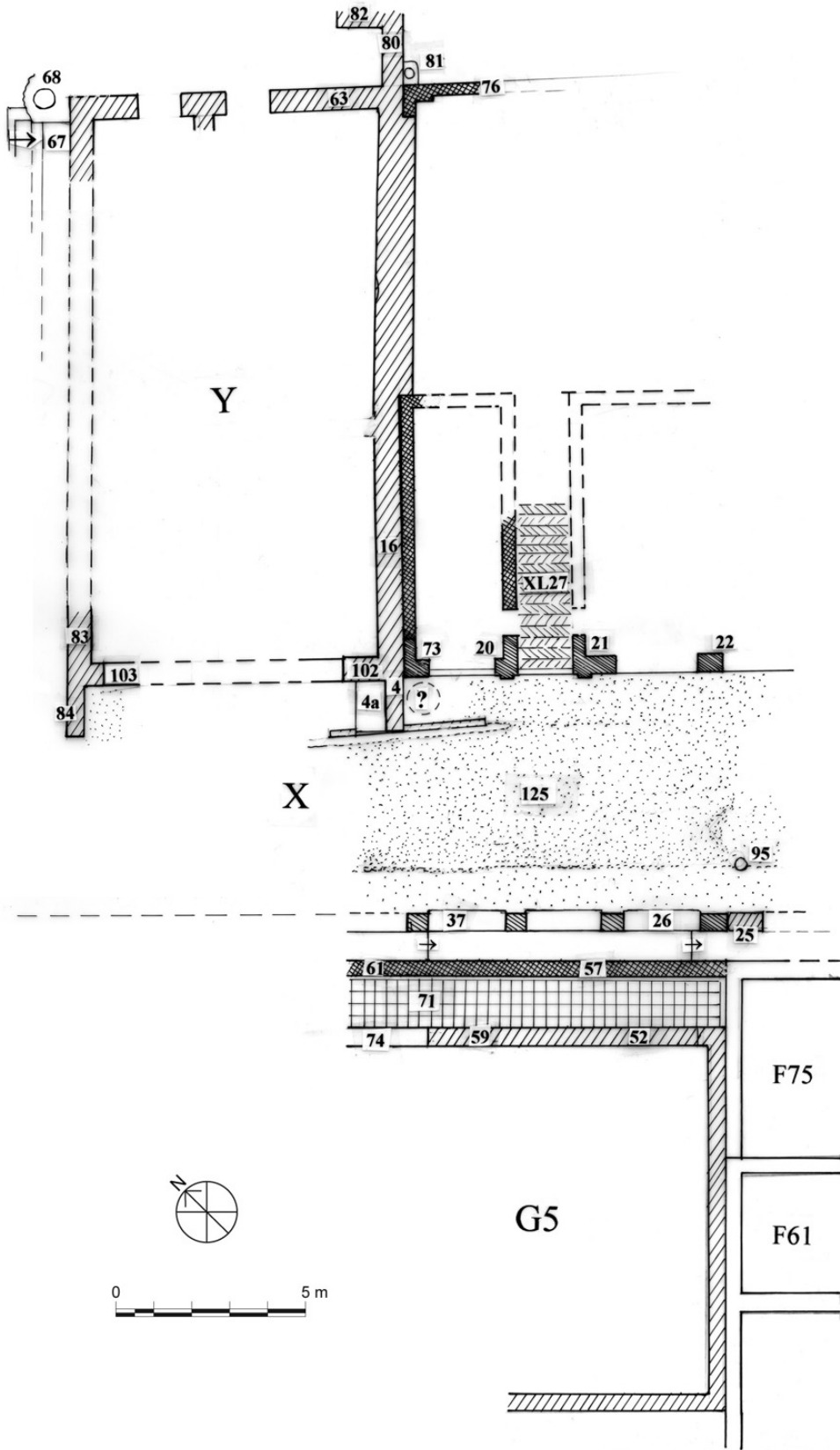


Fig. 8. Vicus. Plan, phase III

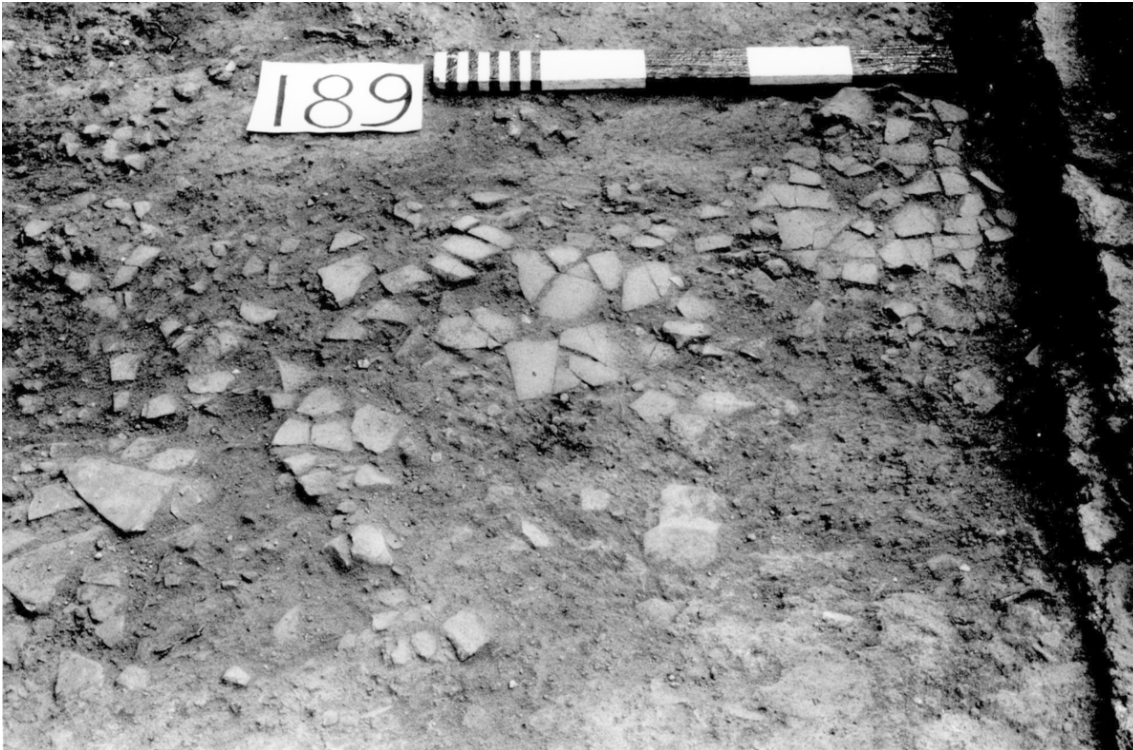


Fig. 9 Vicus. Trench X, detail of street surface in cocciopesto (X189)

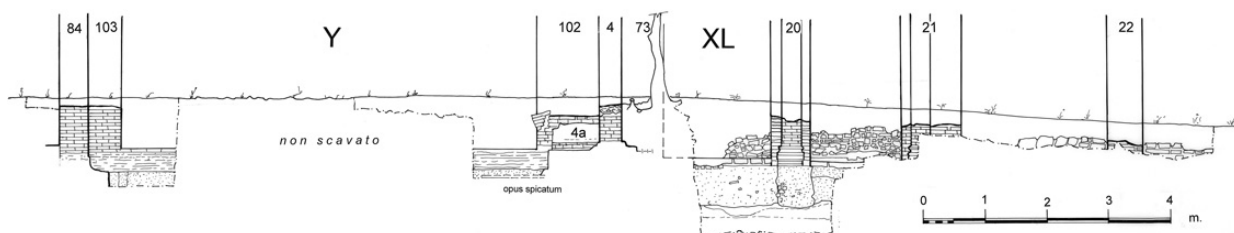


Fig 10a. Vicus. Trench X..Internal elevation of buildings on north side of street B

In the main trench X, the whole area was excavated to the latest street and floor levels, and then selected areas were excavated in greater depth, usually where the upper stratigraphy had already been destroyed: various pits (presumably old diggings) had been made beside walls in the NW and SE sectors and the street was already transected by a deep diagonal cutting (X28). The excavation of the cutting was adapted and enlarged so as to expose the build-up of street levels in cross-section, together with the underlying deposits, and to examine the character of the earliest deposits over a reasonably large area (see Figs 3 and 5) sign of a street was identifiable at this very first stage, but along the southern margin, corresponding more or less with the margin of the street at its higher levels, was soon deposited a layer of sand mixed with mortar (X225) on top of which was a layer composed entirely of oystershells (X223), with a hard mortary crust on top, in which the shells were combined with amphora-sherds on which oysters had been grown. The platform could have constituted a sort of

A provisional phasing and interpretation of the sequence is as follows:

Phase I: early-mid 1st century AD (Fig.6)

Pure natural whitish-grey beach sand was reached 2 metres below the modern ground level. The earliest occupation on the site was represented by thick deposits of discoloured brown sand (X227,226), containing flecks of charcoal and a scatter of pottery, animal bone, oyster- and other shells. The pottery is consistently of mid-late Augustan date (ca. 10 BC-AD 10). N pavement or sidewalk; its level corresponds to a trace of an early building to the south, marked by a floor of lightly mortared sand (X130) associated with the foundations of a wall (X229). The street proper, if that is what it was, is represented by a series of sandy deposits (X224), capped with a harder surface (X219), made of nodules of mortar and tufa, pottery and shell. The pottery is of the Augustan-Tiberian period (AD 10-30).

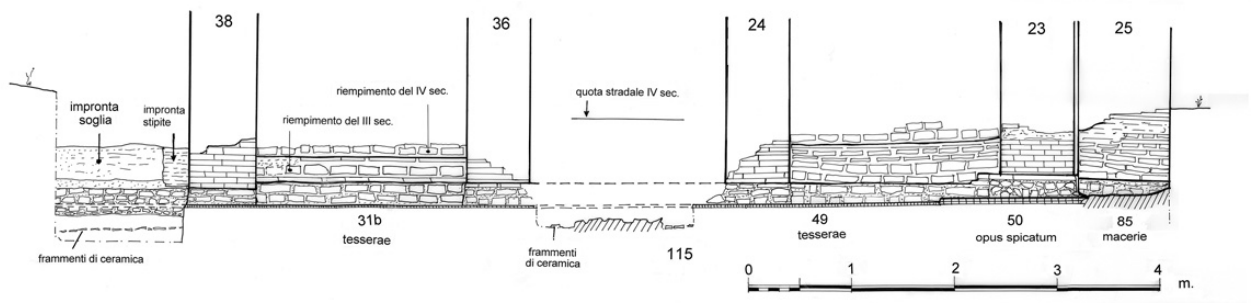


Fig. 10b. Vicus trench X. Elevation of buildings on south side of street B

On this putative street there then accumulated a thick layer of sand and debris (X216), apparently in tandem with an irregular mass of concreted tufa rubble with a slightly domed top (X220), perhaps a mixing floor for concrete, and a circular pit filled with brick dust (X221). Both these, and further compacted rubble debris which extends northwards, were probably connected with some sort of construction in the area on the north side of the street, beyond the reach of our excavations. The pottery and amphorae fragments continue to be of Augustan/Tiberian date. More deposits followed (X215, 213), subsequently cut by a deep culvert (X214), down the same line as the centre of the street in its upper levels. Further build-up (X212, 211) culminated in another definable surface (X208a), associated with three post holes (X209, X210) and thick black material (X207) in the northern sector, probably again reflecting building activity on that side. All the pottery finds suggest a date in the middle of the 1st century AD (period of Claudius and Nero) as do those from another 25 cms of brown silty sand mixed with fragments of pottery, amphorae and glass, together with metal, and animal bone (X194, 193), which brought the level to a metre above the natural sand. At this point, the sequence provided by the pottery is rather abruptly curtailed - there is no level corresponding to the second half of the 1st century AD. The gap may be fortuitous (only some types of pottery are firmly dateable and even so, dates of production are not necessarily closely related to dates of deposition), but it is possibly the result of levelling operations in preparation for the first metalled street surface (X191), which accompanied a new phase of building in

the zone in the early-mid 2nd century AD.

Phase II: 2nd century AD (Fig.7)

The street surface X191 is made of concrete, 8 cms thick, circa 4 metres wide, with a harder band of stone nodules and cocciopesto incorporated into the southern half. The level slopes gently downwards from east to west. The sidewalks were left unsurfaced, presumably to act as soakaways, since the street had no other drains. The period of construction is difficult to determine precisely on the basis of the tiny fragments of coarse pottery and other material mixed in with the concrete (they could be of 1st or 2nd century AD), but it must have been broadly contemporary with new buildings on either side of the street, whose floors respected the same level. On the north side, the wall XL29 (subsequently replaced by wall X72 when the street front was rebuilt in phase 3) is reduced to the top of its foundations and of unknown thickness, but still preserves one of the travertine blocks which marked one jamb of a door to the street. The levels associated with its construction contain pottery from the second half of the 2nd century AD. The associated walls X 109 and XL 10, which were retained in the later phases of the building, are 30 cms thick and faced with brick and irregular reticulate. The building probably constituted a row of shops, one storey high. On the south side of the street, a portico with piers of brick (possibly vittatum mixtum)-faced concrete (X23,24, 36, 38), was built parallel to wall X229, covering about half the width of the earlier sidewalk. It lost its original internal floor level in the final phase (see below) but the pier-

footings step down in level from east to west (Fig. 10b), with a drop of 10 cms between X 23 and X24, and another of 10 cms between X36 and X38,, and we may suppose that the missing floor level within the portico stepped down in like fashion, reflecting the slope of the street in the same direction.

The relationship of the portico to the buildings behind it to the south in this phase is difficult to determine. Wall X 57/61, which replaced X229, and the parallel wall X 52/59 (replacing X 55) were both built at a lower ground level, presumably that of the buildings of Zone G, some 50-60 cms below that of the street and portico. Wall X 57/61, later demolished, was 38 cms thick and faced with brick and irregular reticulate very similar to that of X 109 and XL 10 (see above). Wall X52/59 was 45 cms thick and is of the same build as the other walls delineating G5, which are of brick and opus vittatum. They form a narrow corridor (1.40 m. wide), which was floored with marble *opus sectile* (X 71), with at least one door (X 74) leading towards G5; there was possibly another door at the east end (X52). The pottery from the make-up for the floor and the levels associated with the foundations provide a terminus post quem of the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD for the construction. That is, the corridor and portico must have co-existed, making the passageway under the portico only 80 cms wide; it seems unlikely that there was any access between the two, at least along this stretch, though one cannot rule out some sort of stepped doorway in line with the opening between pier 24 and 36, while the situation may have changed further west, where the difference between the street level and

that of the large peristyle court G4 may have been considerably less.

Phase III: 3rd-early 4th century AD (Fig.8)

The first concrete surfacing on the street (X 191) was evidently not very durable and was soon followed by X 189, entirely of *cocciopesto* (Fig. 9), containing pottery of the early-mid 2nd century AD. This too, after several large patchings in concrete, was levelled up with a layer of sand (containing fragments of brick and marble and pottery of the first half of the 2nd century AD) and replaced with a new surface of concrete (X 184). The margins, still unsurfaced, accumulated deposits of soil and other debris, those on the south side in front of portico X5 (X145, X 139) more consolidated and stratified than those on the north (X183). After further patchings, especially along the edges, which became worn as the run-off of rainwater formed gulleys, the roadway was metalled again, in *cocciopesto* mixed with small tufa rubble (X174), and gully channels (X 173), and, eventually, at least parts of the northern sidewalks were metalled too (X 175). More re-surfacings of the road (X 162/ X 158) and sidewalks (X 160, X 164) brought the general level up another 10 cms.

At that point the building on the north side of the street was remodelled, moving its street front a metre forward (wall X72, see elevation Fig. 10a), with wide shop doors to either side of a more elegant portal, framed with brick pilasters (Fig. 11). The packing under the floor of the new extension (XL26) contained pottery of the early 3rd

century AD. The new shop front took up half the width of the sidewalk (as the portico on the south side of street had done) and caused a great deal of disruption in the street itself, which was then resurfaced once again (X 125).

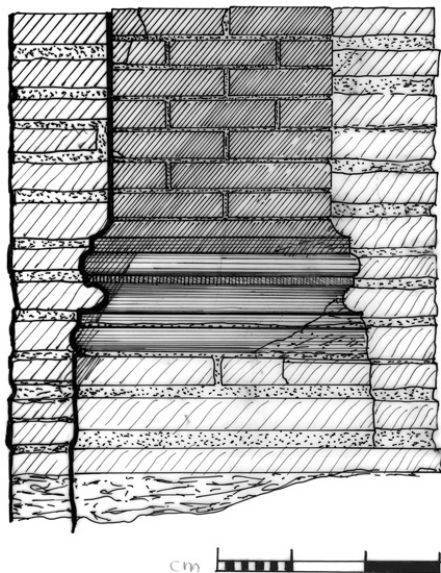


Fig.11 Vicus trench X Pilaster of portal

Across the way, the portico had been adapted to the rising street level by building low retaining walls between its piers (X37, 26). The walling X25 (east of pier X23), whose foundations were laid at the level of street X125, appears to be the first pier of a continuation of the portico in front of building F, a separate construction which followed upon building G but was probably its near contemporary.

Building Y

The large rectangular building Y was added on the north side of the street sometime after AD 250. Measuring 15.50 m by 8.20 m, its eastern side (X16) was constructed against and partly around the west wall of the block of shops, the western side (X83) apparently

freestanding, perhaps facing a street. The outer walls were very solidly built, 60 cms thick (on the eastern side widening in places to over 1.00 m) faced in opus vittatum with brick quoins, and are preserved to a height of about 1.40 m. At the NW corner is a well or cistern head (Y68), beside some steps (Y67, which may have continued along the full length of this side of the building); at the NE corner there is a large downpipe (Y81), presumably for rainwater from the roof. There were two small doors on the north side, both 1.18 wide, placed to either side of an internal wall off centre with respect to the longer axis of the structure. A similar asymmetry is found in the construction of the south side, where two narrower walls (XF 84 and X 4) prolonged the structure a further 1.40 metres, extending over the sidewalk to the edge of street B, perhaps to form a porch. The returns beside two openings in the wall behind the extension are of unequal length, and the larger space in the angle at the eastern end accommodates a large rectangular mass of concrete, faced with brick (X 4a). The sills of the openings on the south side are distinctly higher than those of the adjacent shop to the east. Soundings (XA and YA) on the inside of the building, however, found no floor surface, only a half a metre of hard-packed brick and concrete rubble collapse (XA 44/ YA58), containing quantities of coloured marble and pottery of the mid 3rd century AD, under which there was a black ashy layer, with pottery of the late 2nd/early 3rd century AD, directly on top of a cocciopesto pavement, whose level corresponds to phase II (X 191-189) in the street. The walls of building Y were constructed from that lower level, their deep foundations being cut through the black

ashy (destruction?) level and the cocciopesto pavement, with an offset some 20 cms above it. One possible explanation is that there was no proper floor in the lower level of the building, that the openings were not doors but windows or vents to a cellar, and that the main floor level was higher up, perhaps supported on concrete vaults, of which layers XA 44 and Y58 might represent the remains. Given the asymmetry of the short sides, it is possible that the building was orientated on its longer, western side. Further investigation is required to establish more of the internal plan, without which it is difficult to suggest a function.



Fig. 12. Vicus. Building Y well-or cistern head on the outside of the NW corner of the building

Phase IV: late 4th century -beginning of 5th century AD (Fig. 13)

The latest street level lies only 10-20 cms below the topsoil (Fig. 14), a thick band of mortared rubble (tufa, limestone, tile and brick) on the same line as its predecessors but only 2 metres wide, with a shallow gutter between it and a raised sidewalk of equal width on either side. The road bed contained pottery and coins of the mid 4th century AD and the final deposits associated with it and the rest of trench X, and the area of building Y, consisted mainly of huge quantities of broken amphorae, with an admixture of pottery, glass and coins of the 3rd and 4th centuries, but nothing later than about AD 400.

The fourth-century street level corresponds with the latest interventions to the buildings on either side of the street. On the north side, Building Y can be presumed to have still stood and perhaps functioned in some way, but the doorways of the elegant commercial building (Fig.9a), whose rear had apparently collapsed in ruins in the late 3rd century (Fig. 15), were roughly walled up with tufa rubble bonded with clay (X17,18,19). A similar technique was used on the south side of the street, where small walls were constructed between the piers of portico X5, on top of the earlier infills (Fig. 10b) and probably serving the same purpose, while significant changes were made inside the portico. The corridor wall (X 57/61), if it had not been demolished already, was demolished now, to coincide with a new floor level, which was laid out between the portico and the farther wall X52/59, at an even quota 20-30 cms below the foundations of the portico piers, some 70 cms below the level in the street. The new floor had no

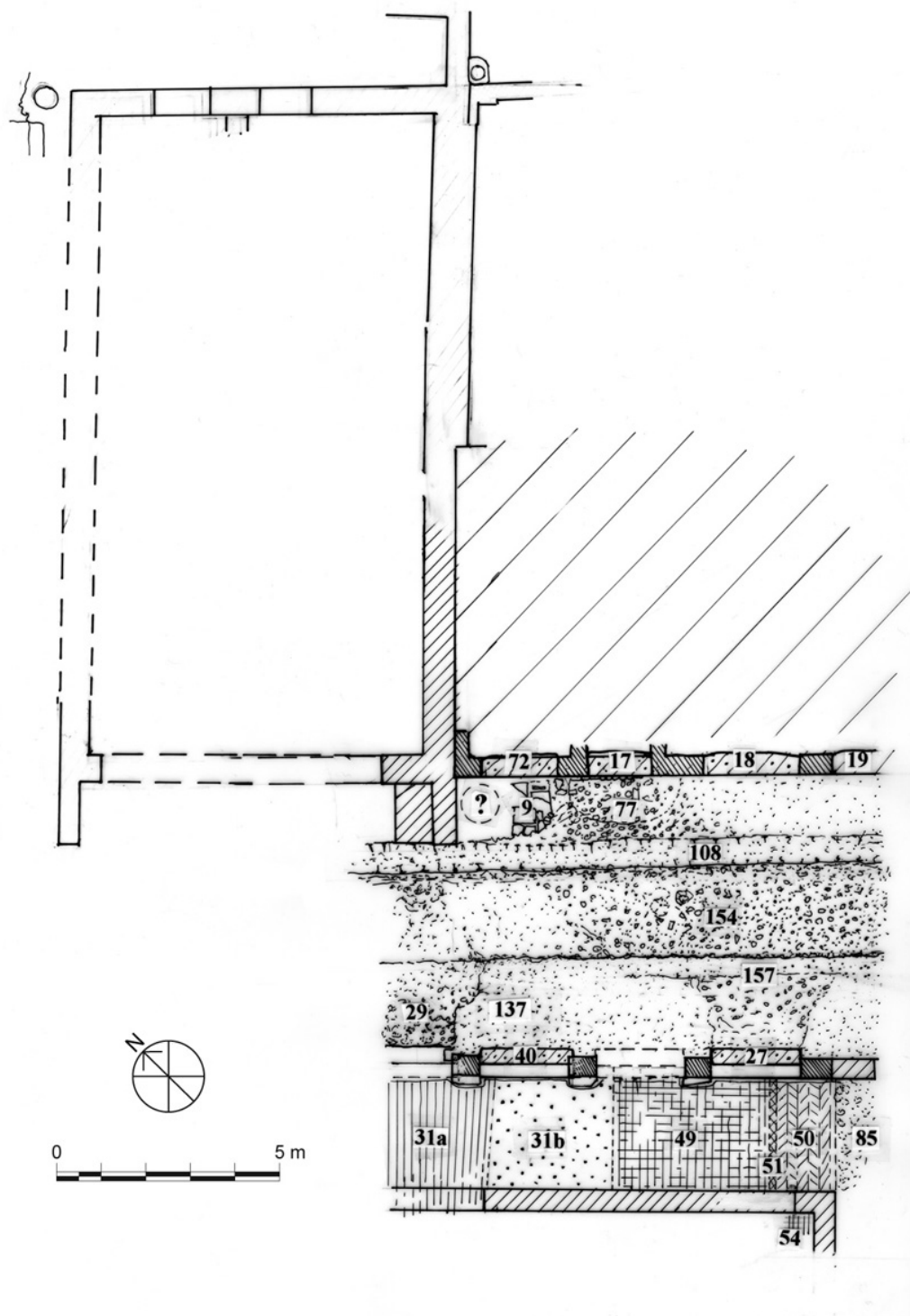


Fig. 13. Vicus. Trench X. Plan, phase IV

proper foundation, just compacted sandy earth and fine debris, and was composed of a variety of materials and techniques, probably merely the result of making do with whatever came to hand: at the far eastern end, levelling off with a surface of solid concrete rubble (X 85) which may also have served as part of the flooring, is a 1.30 m wide band of *opus spicatum* (X 50). That was bordered on the west by a small strip of white mosaic tesserae set in a criss-cross pattern and in normal fashion on their ends (X 51), then 3.50 metres of white limestone mosaic tesserae laid in parallel lines on their sides (X 49), then 2.70 metres of white tesserae on their ends, with a sprinkling of black (X 31b), and finally another area of white tesserae on their sides (X 31a). Little or no mortar was used to fix them in place and large areas have disintegrated and disappeared. The space thus created might have been accessible all along its length by stepping over the portico parapets and down the step on the inside, but there may have been more conventional entrances at intervals, perhaps between piers X 36 and X 23 (destroyed by the cutting X 28), more certainly to the west of pier X 38 where the street edge is not bounded by a low tufa wall. Instead there is some concrete infill forming a step (or the setting for a stone step) half way through the thickness of the opening, and a rectangular socket for a door post or some sort of fixture. The doorway (X 74) leading through to G5 was apparently maintained, and indeed the demolition of wall X 57/61 and the lowering of the floor level may have been intended to adjust the whole space to give access to - and function as part of - G5. Lying directly on one part of the

floor (X31b), and the reason for its relatively good state of preservation compared with other parts, were piles of crushed amphorae and pottery lamps (Fig. 16). Over the whole area there then came thick deposits of (windblown?) sand, mixed with 4th century pottery and coins, and an Ionic capital which may have come from the peristyle G1. Other strange things were happening by this stage. A complete amphora of 'spatheion' type (X30), its neck connected to the foot of another late amphora (X32), was laid across the doorway to the west of pier X 38, perhaps taking the place of an earlier, now robbed-out threshold block. Generally, the lack of building materials in the destruction levels which cover the whole area (X 8, 6, 2, 1) is striking and argues for fairly systematic dismantlement and removal of all usable items. All the tops of the walls are reduced to about the same level, on a par with the uppermost level in the street. It is possible that the process of demolition and despoliation was already far advanced during in the final phases of occupation.

Phase V. Later (post-Roman?) features
(Fig. 17)

As noted above, in addition to four pits which had disturbed the ground to various depths, the excavation of the main trench X was complicated by a deep cutting (X28), which started near the foot of a small tree on the north side and ran in a fairly straight diagonal line across the trench, under the roots of larger tree, and off to the south (Fig.17). Broadly V-shaped in section, it had been cut in steps through all the concrete

surfaces in the street and through portico X 5, partly destroying pier X 36 and reducing whatever previously filled the space between it and pier X23 to a trace of a foundation (X 115). In its depths were two loose travertine blocks (X 116 and X 11), perhaps displaced from the walls beside which they were found. The date and purpose of the furrow are not clear. The most that can be said at present is that it predates the large pit beside pier X 23 and its fill consisted of silt and fine debris with an upper core of rubble, which may signify that the edges were heightened by walling. The fill contained pottery of every period from the 1st to the 4th century AD. It is probably later than the 4th century street level, through which it runs, but could be associated with the final destruction levels, since no post-Roman pottery or other indications of later occupation have been found in this part of the Vicus (though a short-lived medieval settlement has been identified in zone A). An answer to the question of its function may lie under the small tree at its northern end. Unfortunately the tree could not be removed, and thus had to be left with an island of soil round its roots, but a patch of paving at a high level (X9) gave the impression of being arranged around the point occupied by the tree - and the impression was repeated at various levels as the excavation descended around it. Very possibly the tree is rooted in a well or cistern head (cf those at the NW and NE corner of building Y, see above) and thus the cutting may have been made to carry a water pipe, or channel, or simply a drain, or it may have been made in order to rob some such feature, or to accommodate some industrial/agricultural activity which required water or a solid channel.

Conclusions

The results from Trench X broadly confirm the picture presented by the rest of the exposed areas of the site: occupation began at the very end of the 1st century BC or in the early years of the 1st century AD and endured into the early 5th century AD, but seemingly not long beyond that. Little structural evidence was found associated with the earliest phases, though what there is indicates an essential continuity with the later town plan. It is possible that in elevation the early buildings were mainly of wood and other relatively ephemeral materials, e.g. mudbrick or reeds (cfr. the traces of early buildings found beneath the bath-building A: *Castelporziano I*, p. 78 and fig. 11). The deep layers of burnt organic material found in the street and datable to the middle of the 1st century AD are interesting in this respect, for similar deposits have been encountered in soundings made elsewhere on the site, and also in substantial quantities beyond the via Severiana in trench SA (see below), all apparently of similar date. They may constitute the debris from a serious fire, one which affected the whole town and caused its re-levelling and rebuilding in the course of the later 1st and early 2nd century AD.

Subsequent developments during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD appear to have taken place in a more normal, piecemeal fashion. This applies also to the many repairs and re-surfacings of Street B and its margins, and it is worth noting that such interventions followed a fairly regular pattern, being carried out separately to either side of the median line of the street and also coinciding with the divisions between the adjacent properties: seen especially clearly in the excavation (XD) in front of the division



Fig. 14 Vicus. Trench X. View from west along street B. At the top, the final street level (X8). In the foreground the series of cocciopesto surfacings, cut by the diagonal trench (X28).

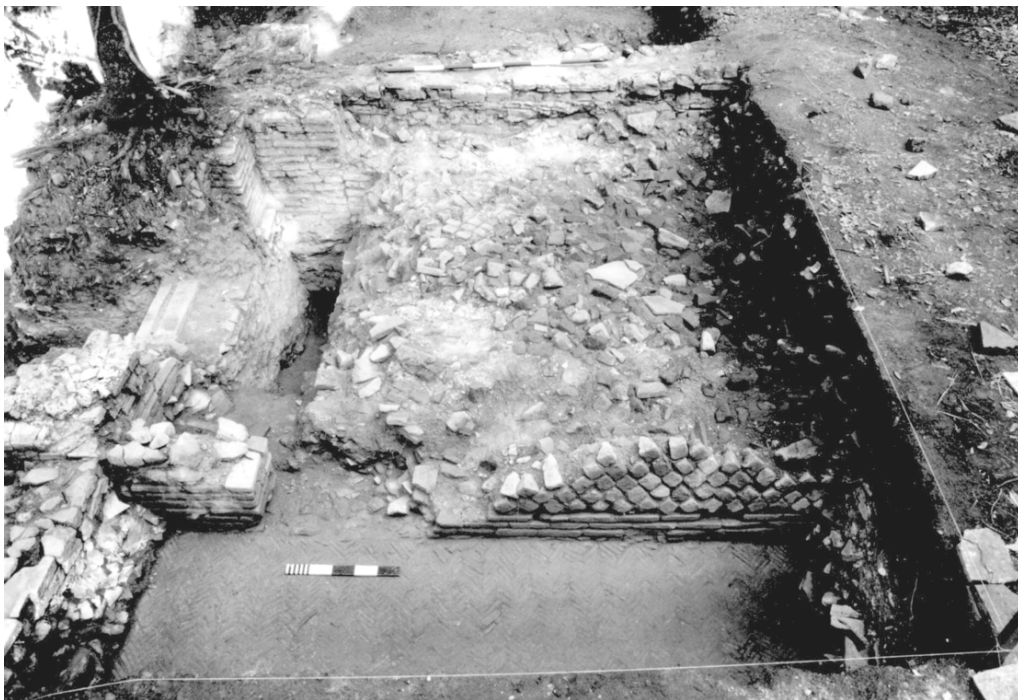


Fig. 15 Vicus. Trench XL, view from east. In the foreground the corridor paved with opus spicatum (XL27), its outer door blocked at the left. In the distance the collapse of the western wall of the taberna.



Fig. 16. Vicus. Trench X. View from west along the portico and rooms on the south side of street B, with the remains of lower level paving of phase IV bearing piles of crushed amphorae and lamps

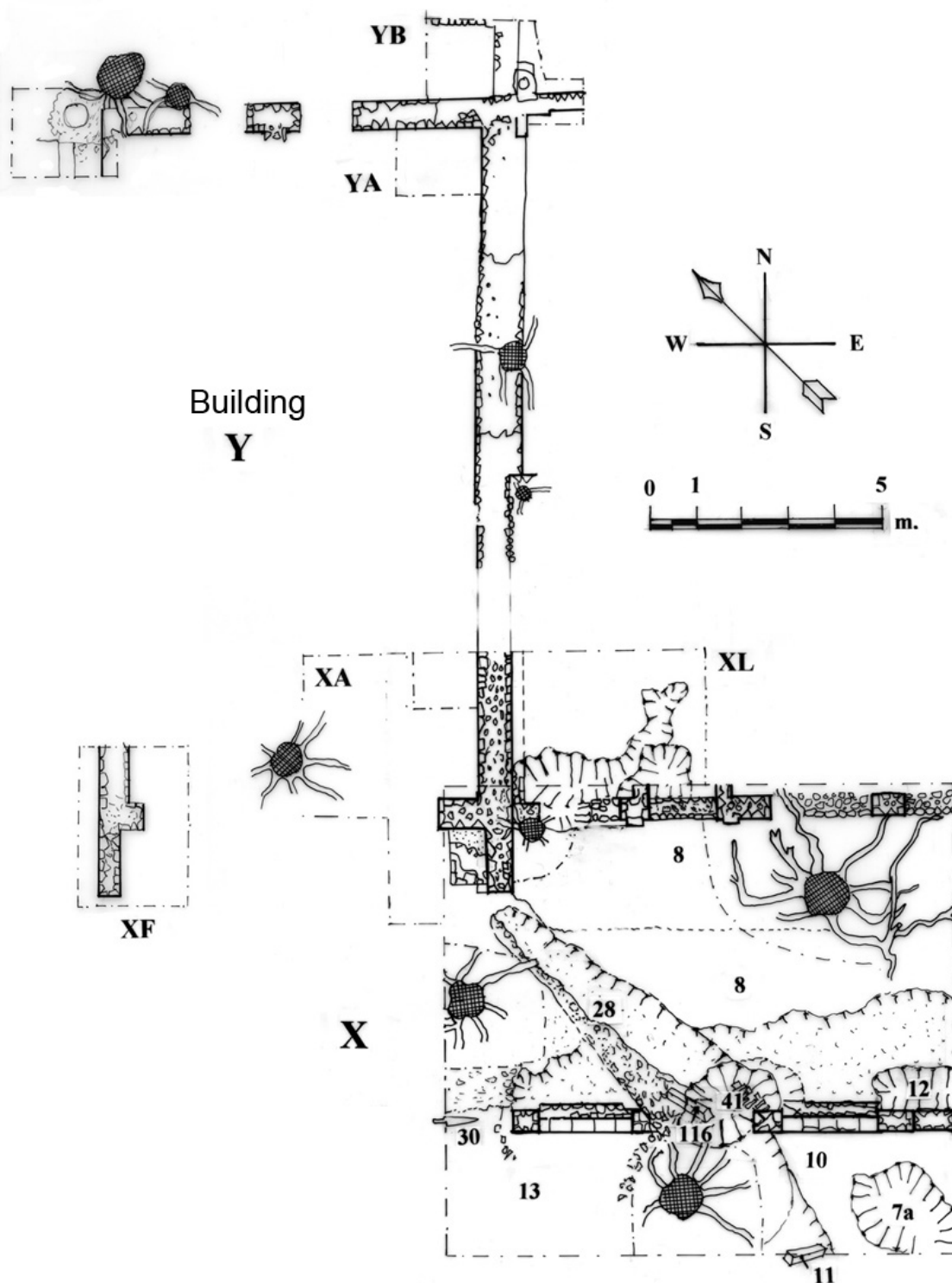


Fig. 17. Vicus. Trench X and building Y. Ohase V Later (post-Roman?) features

between G and F, and also evident between Y and XL. That is, the practice in the vicus apparently complied with the provisions of the *Lex Julia Municipalis*, each property being responsible for the maintenance of the section of street onto which it fronted.

Towards the end of the 3rd century comes some evidence for neglect (or perhaps unrepaired earthquake damage) in the form of the ruinous state of the taberna in XL, but it is not clear whether any other buildings were similarly affected at the same time.

The 4th century, however, marked a distinctly different period in the history of the town, when there was undoubtedly continued settlement and a lot of activity (attested to by the quantities of coins, amphorae and pottery), but also considerable changes in the pattern of occupation and perhaps also in the ownership of properties. A reduction in the size - or fragmentation - of property units has been observed in every part of the site from the bath building A to the components of building C, and also the northern sector of F. Trench X suggests that changes also affected G, and in general also provides striking demonstrations of a decline in the availability of new materials and expertise in building: at the end there appears to have been little or no fresh lime to be had to make mortar. The street was surfaced with coarse rubble, loosely bonded with mortary debris and sand; new walling was made of recycled tufa and tile, bonded with clay; floors were made of recycled *spicatum* and mosaic, laid in compacted earth.

Trench SA Rubbish dumps beyond the Via Severiana

The trench measured 5 x 16 metres, laid out so as to take in both sides of the roadway and extended a further 12 metres inland. Having cleaned the surface in the area of the road bed, it was clear that none of its basalt blocks remained in situ and that the scatter of basalt flakes from its destruction spread at least 3 metres inland, accompanied by considerable signs of disturbance (Fig. 20). Consequently, it was decided to excavate the far end of the trench first, and in 1996 an area 5 x 5 m (from 7 to 12 metres away from the road), was excavated in two spits (Fig. 21). There the grass and asphodel were growing on c. 50 cms of dark brown, almost black sandy loam (SA1), containing a scatter of fragments of amphorae and pottery (of mixed 1st-2nd century date), glass, metal (iron and bronze), and a coin of Constantius II (AD 348-360). Perhaps the product of agricultural activity in the area in medieval or early modern times, the earth is much disturbed by root action, small animal burrows and other intrusions, and in the section excavated in detail (9-12 metres inland from the road) was also difficult to disentangle from the upper levels of a series of sub-circular, oval or oblong pits (4, 7, 11, 14, 16, 17, 21, 26, 28, 30). A few of these were traceable in at least partial outline from a depth of about 25 cms below the modern surface; others were only clearly definable in their lower levels, where they had cut into a compacted, uneven horizon of pale yellowish sand SA3 (Fig. 18), but although the 25 cms horizon coincides fairly closely with the level of

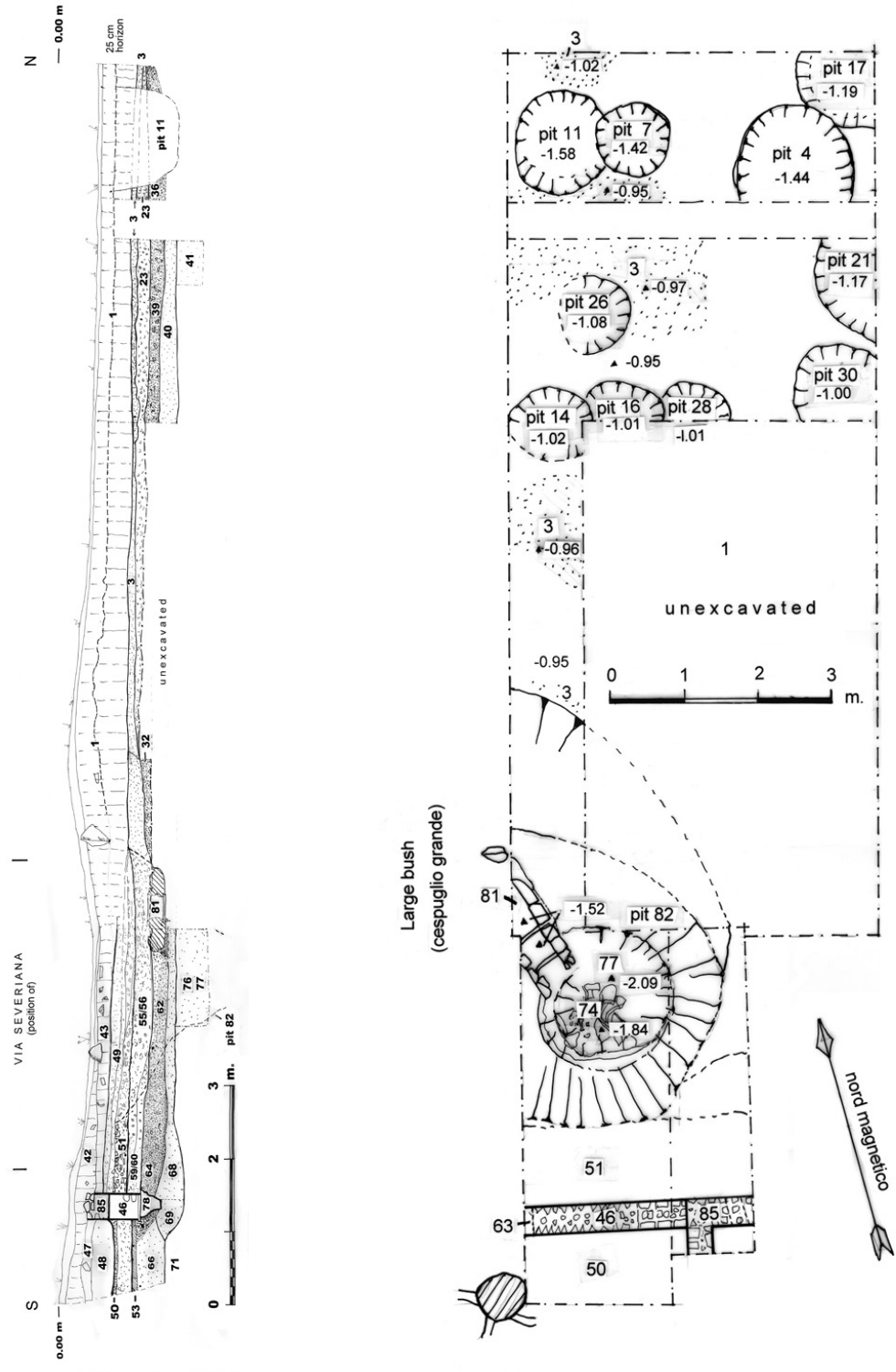


Fig. 18-19 Vicus. Trench SA Plan and section

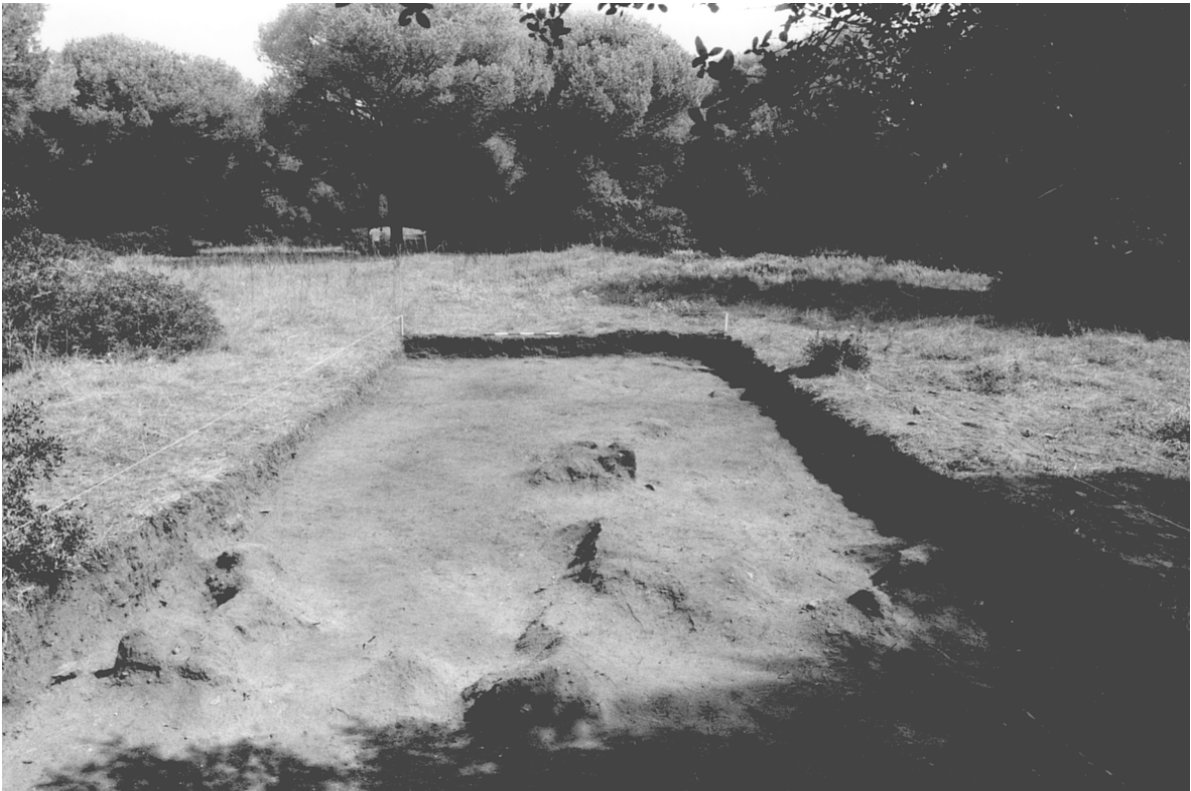


Fig. 20. Vicus. Trench SA viewed from south at the start of the excavation. In the foreground the evident disturbance along the course of the Via Severiana.

the robbed-out basalt road and may represent an earlier ground surface, all the pits could have been cut from the modern ground surface. Their contents are almost indistinguishable from the larger contexts through which they cut: sand and earth mixed with pottery, shell, glass, animal bone, sea shells and fragmentary metal objects (mainly iron and bronze nails). The pottery dates mostly from the mid 1st century AD, with some of the later 1st century and mid-late 2nd century. In the very bottom of pit 4 there was a *quadrans* of Claudius and an *as* of Augustus, but generally the scarcity of coins encountered in the area of the trench is striking. It is possible that they are the redeposited residue of clandestine

excavations in more recent times (viz. the group of pits to the east recorded in 1984: *Castelporziano I*, p.72, fig.2)

Sealed beneath the surviving areas of SA 3 was a more coherent stratigraphy, comprising three main horizons (Fig. 22). On top of clean white natural sand, which lay at an even depth of about 1.10 m. below the modern ground surface, first came some 25 cms of discoloured light/medium brown sand (SA40), containing some fragments of Augustan and Tiberian pottery: similar to the earliest deposits found in trench X on the main site (see above Phase I, X227-6). No individual pits of the sort excavated in trench S in 1985 (*Castelporziano I*, p.70 and 68 fig.11a and c) were found;

they may be a feature of the zone closer to the road (which has not yet been excavated in trench SA). Overlying SA40 were broad dumps (SA36, 37, 38,

39) of black, burnt material containing amphorae and pottery in quite large fragments, all of the mid 1st century AD, together with oyster and other shell,



Fig. 21 Vicus. Trench SA. View from north-east in course of excavating the pits.



Fig. 22 Vicus. Trench SA. View from north at the end of the excavations in 1996, showing the three lower horizons (SA 40, 39, 36 etc.)



Fig. 23 . Vicus. Trench SA. View from east, showing layer SA 23, composed of shells and assorted pottery and other materials

pieces of tufa rubble, marble veneer, wall plaster, melted lead and iron nails: i.e. the debris from building(s) destroyed by fire? s and metal compared with other deposits

Then came an undulating spread of occupation material (SA23, Fig. 23), c. 10 cms thick, characterised by quantities of small marine shells (concentrated in patches) and fragments of amphorae and other ceramics, with an admixture of various small bronze objects, including two coins, and animal bone (and a human lower mandible). The impression is of rubbish being scattered over an open area rather than buried in pits. The pottery from SA23 (over 2300 sherds) was all of 1st century AD date, predominantly c. AD 40-55; one of the coins is Augustan, the other illegible. Its successor, the sandy layer SA 3, was hardpacked but powdery, containing flecks of charcoal and small fragments of pottery (mostly of the mid 1st century AD in so far as they can be dated). The layer varied from c. 10 to 20 cms thick, in some areas consisting of irregular lumps, in others forming ridges looking rather like small dunes, which may signify that it lay exposed to the elements for some period of time. Traced along the western margin of the trench, it petered out well before the road (Fig. 19), perhaps artificially truncated by building operations associated with the drain in the far southern corner (SA 34/81), which had also invaded the earlier dumps (SA39).

Two 1 x 1 m. test pits (SB and SC) were dug in line with SA at a further 10 and 20 metres inland (see Fig. 1 for location). Test SB encountered stratigraphy and finds of very similar

depth (ca. 1.50 m.) and character to those in SA. Test SC found the edge of a cutting into which was compacted building debris (fragments of basalt, tufa, mortar, marble, wall plaster), overlaying natural sand at a depth of 1.47 m. The finds in SC may be related to a broad scatter of surface debris which can be traced through the undergrowth some 70-120 metres further inland. In one point, where a modern watering hole had been dug into the ground, were evident signs of later habitation (Figs 24 and 25), perhaps the footings of the hearth in a shepherd's hut, composed of Roman brick, tile, basalt and other debris, including the torso of a nude statue of Venus in white marble.

Via Severiana (Trench SA)

The road was excavated in 1997 and 1998 in the hope that the robbing of its paving had not been so destructive of earlier stratigraphy as had been the case in the area of Trench S, excavated in 1985-6 (*Castelporziano II*, p.68, fig. 11 a-c). The upper level where the road bed must have lain (SA43/83-84) consisted of the same black loamy sand, of about the same depth, as that found in the open field beyond, with the difference that it contained many fragments of basalt and some tufa rubble from a wall (SA46), faced in tufa reticulate and tufelli, which bounded the south side of the road. The underlying level (SA49/87), a compacted greyish-yellow sand with many chips of fine ware, is probably the makeup for the basalt road. The pottery inclusions are of the early 2nd century AD.



Fig. 24 Vicus. Zone HH, inland from the Via Severiana. A water-logged depression scattered with building debris and pottery. The footings of a shepherd's hut(?)



Fig. 25 Vicus. Zone HH. Remains of a hearth(?) constructed of stone and basalt blocks and the torso of a statue of Venus.

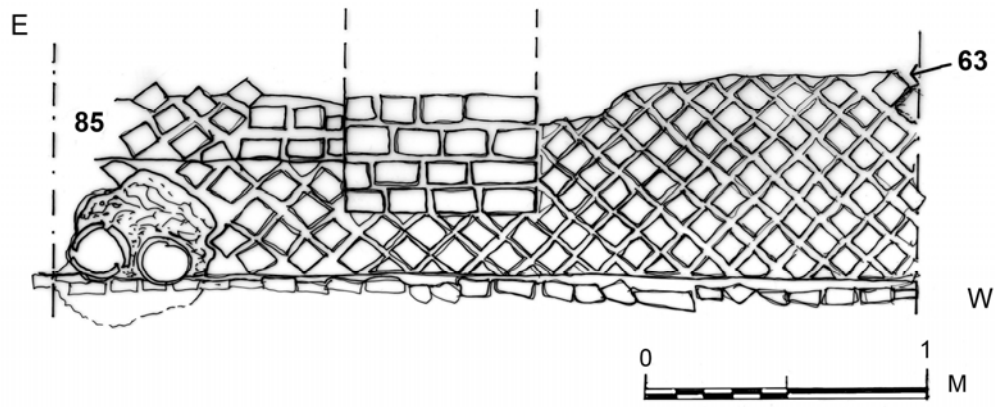


Fig. 26. Vicus. Trench SA. Wall (SA46) on south side of Via Severiana.



Fig. 27 . Vicus Trench SA. North face of reticulare walling (SA 46) on south side of Via Severiana. On the left, its rebuilding (SA85) and a hole (SA83) containing two drainpipes.

The level coincides with a rebuilding of the eastern section of the wall (SA 85/86). The foundations of the original wall, however, lie 50 cms lower, cut through deep black, burnt deposits (SA 64/62-61) which closely resemble the mid-late 1st century dumps further inland (SA36-39). The building has two levels of paving inside (SA 53 and 50), the initial one (SA53) consisting of crushed wallplaster and pottery of uncertain date. The second level, in a hard cocciopesto which curved up the adjacent wall in the manner of waterproofing, had pottery of the later 1st century AD in its makeup (SA52); a hole was made through the wall to take a drain pipe (SA63) out to the road. The level corresponds on the outside with a very hard rubble packing, mixed with large fragments of amphora (SA 51), sloping downwards, away from the wall. This may have constituted the road surface, or a sort of hard edge between

the wall and the road, which prior to its basalt paving possibly ran at a greater distance to the north. The situation is complicated by a large, deep, and vaguely circular feature (SA82), which was very difficult to identify as a single unit at the time of excavation, and may indeed have been something which was remade on the same spot on successive occasions. It appears to have been a sinkhole to which the drain (SA34/81) could have been connected, and to which the drains through wall SA 46 (Fig..27) may also have been directed. The pottery from even the lowest levels (SA 77/76) includes material from the 3rd century AD or perhaps later. Unfortunately, the excavation could not be extended to investigate the structure on the north side of the road, to which the larger drain (SA34/81) must relate, for the area is occupied by very large bushes.

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