INTERAMNA LIRENAS AND ITS TERRITORY (COMUNE DI PIGNATARO INTERAMNA, PROVINCIA DI FROSINONE, REGIONE LAZIO)

The archaeological fieldwork at Interamna Lirenas is part of an integrated research project involving geophysical prospection, field survey and excavation, all aimed at exploring the long-term development of the Roman town and its territory from its colonial origin (late 4th c. BC) well into Late Antiquity (6th c. AD) (Bellini, Launaro and Millett 2014; Launaro 2019; Launaro and Millett forthcoming). Suspended in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, fieldwork resumed for an eleventh season in 2022. In the course of this campaign we continued our work on Areas 2000 and 3000, whose investigation had started in 2019 (Bellini et al. 2020). More specifically, our activities focussed on the *basilica*, the sector between the basilica and the theatre (footpath/road), and one of the burials placed inside the building located at the SW corner of the forum.

AREA 2000 (Fig. 1)

The trench was expanded to the south-east (10.4 x 8.2 m) and the south-west (6.2 x 6.2 m), whilst further work was carried out in the north-eastern sector, between the basilica and the theatre. Although the overall plan of the basilica was broadly known from previous geophysical work (Bellini et al. 2020: 365-367; also Launaro and Millett forthcoming: par. 4.1.2, Insula XXVI / BU184), the excavation has contributed to improve our understanding of both its chronology, architectural development and state of preservation.

A small sub-trench (1 x 1 m) was opened up along the north-eastern side of the basilica in order to investigate its foundation (Fig. 1/A). Made in *opus caementicium* (limestone fragments mixed with mortar, as is the case of the theatre's own foundations), the foundation was brought to light up to a height of 1.6 m, even though it may have reached deeper than that (practical considerations prevented the excavation from proceeding any further). Its depth is rather notable, especially if one considers that the foundations of the *scaena* of the theatre, which bore the weight of a much larger and heavier roof, were only 1 m deep. The concrete mix had been poured straight into a trench which cut through a series of deposits. A preliminary study of the associated finds not only dates the most recent deposits to the Augustan period (a chronology compatible with our original attribution of the basilica to the late 1st c. BC), but also assigns a Republican date to the earliest one. Remarkably, these earlier deposits appear to constitute the fill of another trench, running parallel to and at a short distance (ca. 35 cm) from its later counterpart. This may well represent what is left of the partial backfill of the foundations of an earlier building, possibly an earlier phase of the basilica itself.

As for the floor of the basilica, more of it was brought to light (to the south-east and south-west), and its state of preservation turned out to be much more varied than expected. Higher spots (to the south-east: Fig. 1/B) had been badly damaged by modern ploughing, whereas most of the area corresponding to the *spatium medium* of the basilica (to the south-west: Fig. 1/C) showed signs of significant decay of the mortar. In any case, enough was preserved to confirm that a decoration consisting of a simple geometric pattern of black *tessellae* against a white background had originally extended over the entire floor of the basilica, with the *spatium medium* unlikely to have featured anything specific. Towards the forum, the edge of the floor is badly preserved, possibly a result of the spoliation of the blocks originally belonging to the threshold/steps of the basilica.

The excavation also brought to light a section (length: 8.4 m) of a linear structure running parallel to the front of the basilica whose outline showed up in the results of the ground-penetrating radar survey (total length: 26.3) (Fig. 1/D). It is made up of medium-sized, irregular and rounded limestone fragments bonded with clay. It does not feature any structural relationship with the

basilica itself and it extends well beyond the north-eastern edge of the building. Further work will be needed in order to determine its original function.

New data were also collected in relation to the development of the footpath running along the north-western side of the basilica (Fig. 1/E), more specifically its possible transformation into a portico, likely as an appendix of the basilica itself. This structure towered over the road below (Street E), whose paving, in large rectangular limestone blocks, has been brought to light. These very preliminary considerations will be revisited once our investigation of this sector of Area 2000 is expanded in future fieldwork campaigns.

AREA 3000

Another burial was identified and investigated. The grave (1.9 x 0.8 m) was cut into the marble floor of a building which may have originally been used as a market (Launaro and Millett forthcoming: par. 4.1.4, Insula XXVI / BU188). Some of the marble slab fragments were indeed reused to define the edges of the burial itself. The skeletal remains found inside belonged to a 30/40-year-old woman, and have been radiocarbon dated to 588–704 Cal AD at 83.8% probability (LTL21908 – 1381±45BP), a time by which Interamna had since ceased to exist as an urban centre (Launaro 2019: 132; Launaro and Millett forthcoming: par. 5.3). It is worth noting that the two infant burials identified in 2019 (Bellini et al. 2020: 367) were radiocarbon dated to 994–1155 Cal AD at 95.4% probability (LTL20241A – 977±40 BP) and are therefore significantly later, probably contemporary to the process of systematic spoliation of the ruins of Interamna Lirenas which began in the Middle Ages (Launaro and Millett forthcoming: par. 5.3).

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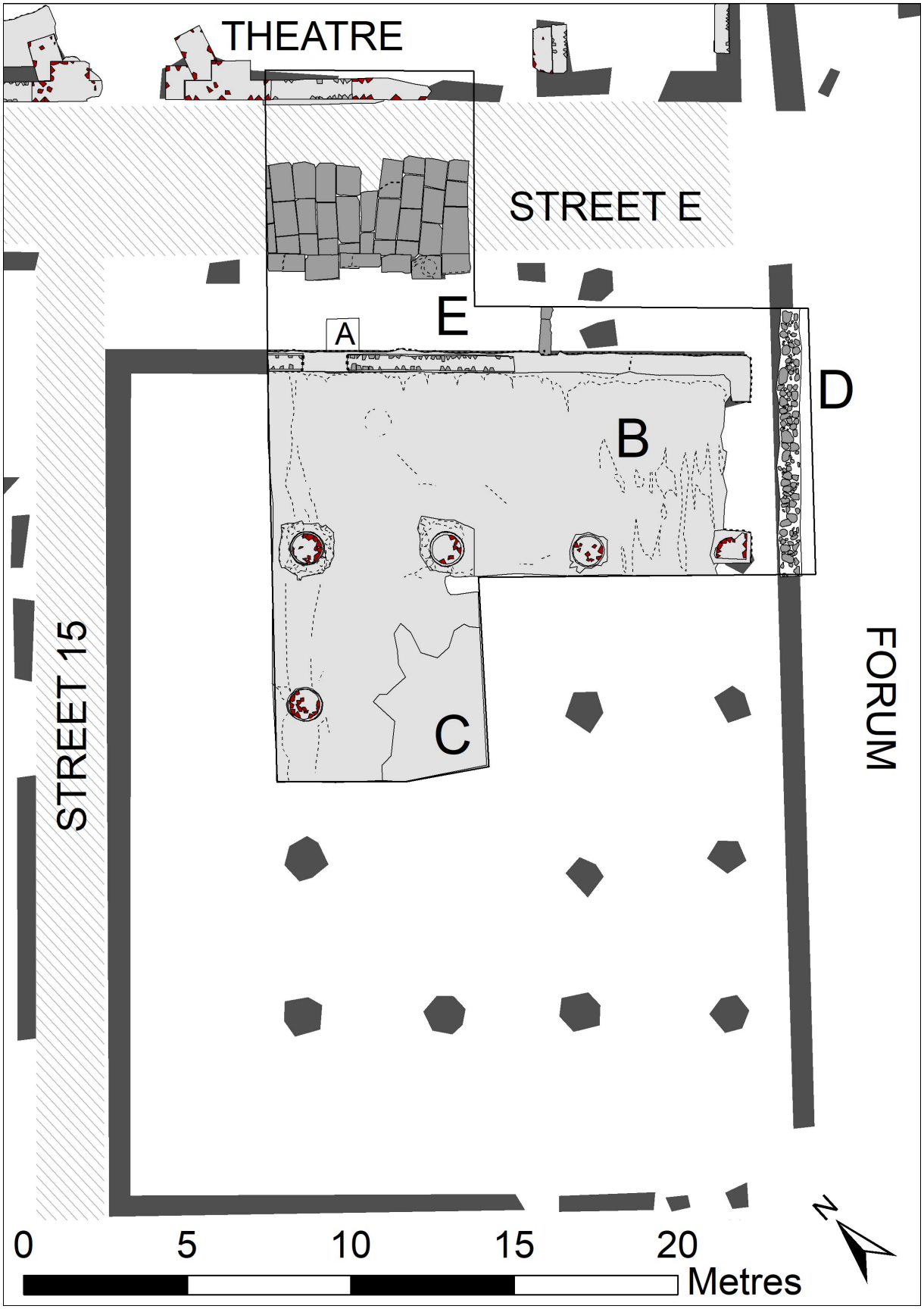

Figure 1: Plan of Area 2000 (summer 2022), overlaid upon an interpretation of the geophysical survey of the basilica and nearby buildings (dark grey).

AUTHORS
Dominique Goddard
Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB3 9DA
UK
dag47@cantab.ac.uk

Alessandro Launaro / Main contact
Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB3 9DA
UK
al506@cam.ac.uk

Ninetta Leone
Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
Cambridge CB3 9DA
UK
nl343@cam.ac.uk

Martin Millett
Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue
CB3 9DA Cambridge
UK
mjm62@cam.ac.uk

Walter Pantano
Independent Scholar
Viale Amsterdam 6
03100 Frosinone
walterpantano68@gmail.com