



Etruscan News



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Uni and the Golden Gift of Thefarie

The 50th Anniversary of the
Discovery of the Gold Tablets of
Pyrgi

by Daniele F. Maras
and Rex E. Wallace

As many of our readers know, Pyrgi
is the site of the most famous Etruscan



sanctuary. The literary sources mention
the port city and sanctuary because it
was pillaged by Dionysius the Elder,
tyrant of Syracuse, in 384 BCE.

Excavation began at Pyrgi in 1956,
after fragments of terracotta sculptures,
antefixes, and painted tiles were discovered
in an area a few hundred meters
south of the Castle of Santa Severa.
Thanks to an agreement between the
Soprintendenza Beni Archeologica per
l'Etruria Meridionale and La Sapienza
University of Rome, Massimo
Pallottino immediately began excavation
at the site, with the help of
Giovanni Colonna, who served as the
excavation's field director and later suc-

Site of Pyrgi. *continued on page 4*



Excavations in
a sacred Etruscan
and Roman well
at Cetamura del
Chianti have
brought forth
some 14 bronze
vessels and hun-
dreds of objects
that show ritual
usage of the
water source. The
results, obtained
over a four-year



Holy Waters at Cetamura

by Nancy De Grummond

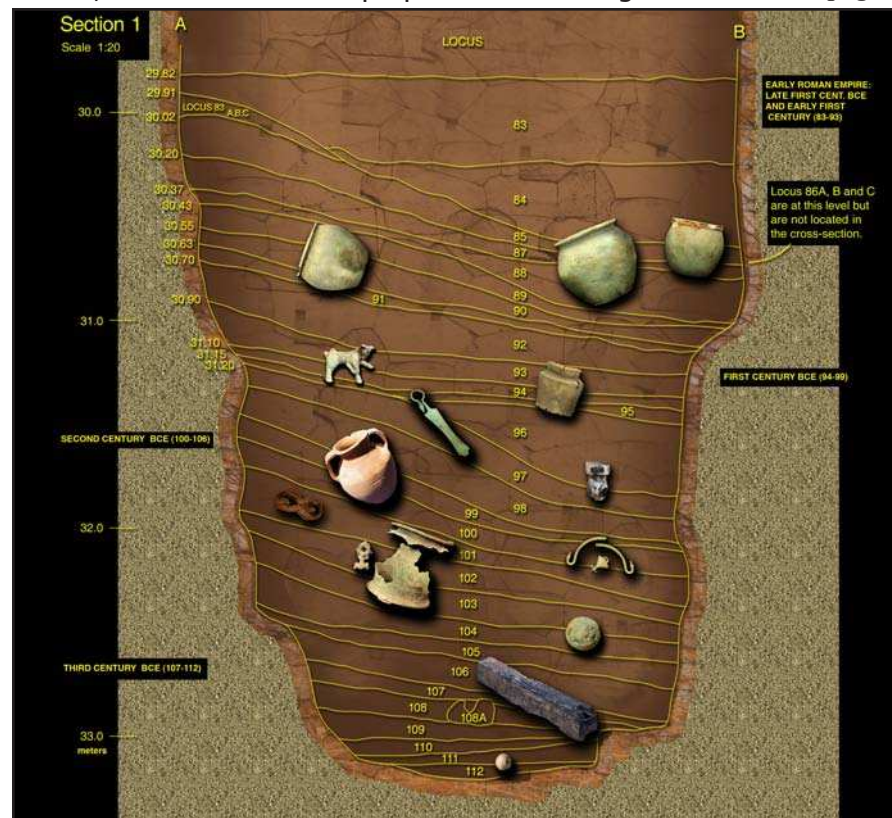
period of excavation, were announced
at a press conference on July 4, 2014, at
the Museo Nazionale Archeologico di
Siena by team members Nancy de
Grummond (director; Florida State
University), Francesco Cini (president
of Ichnos: Archeologia, Ambiente e
Sperimentazione) and Nòra Marosi
(conservator, Studio Art Centers
International). The hilltop site of
Cetamura is located ca. 30 km north of
Siena, on the property of the Badia a
Coltibuono (Gaiole in Chianti). The

excavations are
conducted under
the auspices of
the Soprintendenza
per i Beni
Archeologici
della Toscana
(Andrea Pessina,
Soprintendente).

The shaft on the
top zone of
Cetamura (Zone
I) is perhaps
more properly
called a cistern, since it does not obtain
water from an aquifer, but rather accumulates
it through seepage from the
sandstone bedrock walls. But its great
depth suggests comparison with other
Etruscan wells. The bottom was found
at ca. 32.5 m below ground level, a
depth that was probably planned as 100
Etruscan feet using the module known
at Cetamura of ca. 32/33 centimeters.

The lowest level of deposits suggests
that the well was dug to this depth
around the beginning of the third centu-

Above, a wooden beam is prepared for hoisting. *continued on page 6*



Etruscans at Oxford

Dr. Charlotte Potts
Sybille Haynes Lecturer in Etruscan
and Italic Archaeology and Art
Woolley Fellow, Somerville College,
Oxford

The Etruscans seem to have well and
truly arrived at the University of Oxford
after 18 months of high-profile events.



Following the creation of the new
Sybille Haynes Lecturership in Etruscan
and Italic Archaeology and Art, Oxford
has actively sought to raise the profile of
the Etruscans in the study of the ancient
world both within and outside its walls.
Students now have the option of taking
undergraduate and postgraduate courses
on Etruscan Italy as part of their
degrees, including a new paper on
Etruscan art taught with the collections
of the local Ashmolean Museum and
Oxford University Museum of Natural
History, due to the kind support of key
staff. The Haynes Lecture also continues
to be a highlight of the annual
Oxford calendar, with Prof. Larissa

Sybille Haynes *continued on page 28*



Rome's Colosseum could again host shows — but first it needs a floor

by Tom Kington,
WorldNewsEuropeArchaeology

A tweet by Italy's culture minister has Rome talking about bringing shows back to the Colosseum. A proposal to install a new floor over the ruins of the basement to allow for concerts and other events has the government's backing.

In a subterranean corridor of the Colosseum, a guide pointed to an innocuous-looking lead plate fixed to the floor. "That once formed part of a pulley system, operated by 16 men, that hoisted wild animals in a cage up through a trapdoor in the arena above during gladiatorial shows," he said. A few yards on, the guide stopped again by a dark, cavernous space where boats once lined up to enter the arena when it was flooded for mock naval battles.

In a city of iconic structures, the cylindrical Colosseum looms large, its arched tiers a symbol of ancient Rome. But only when you get up close do you appreciate the staggering efforts that went into keeping 35,000 bloodthirsty Romans entertained almost two millennia ago.

This month Rome has been talking about bringing regular, less bloody, shows back to the Colosseum, thanks to a tweet by Italy's culture minister, Dario Franceschini, in which he backed the idea of resurfacing the full surface of the ancient oval arena. "All it will take is a bit of courage," he tweeted.

Franceschini was echoing the sentiments of Italian archaeologist Daniele Manacorda, who has urged construction of a new surface over the excavated



The partial reconstruction of the floor in the arena of the Colosseum.

remains of the two-story warren of corridors and chambers beneath the arena, from which animals and scenery could be raised through any one of 80 trapdoors dotted around the original wood floor. That floor was removed in the 6th century after the last gladiator battles were staged, before the basement was filled in with earth. Today, visitors look straight down into the excavated, labyrinthine basement area and struggle to get a feel for where the gruesome fighting took place.

Though not calling for the return of full-blown gladiators, Manacorda said "contemporary events" could be held; this comment spurred U.S. investor James Pallotta, owner of pro soccer team AS Roma, to boast that he could draw millions of viewers for a pay-per-view soccer match in the arena. Franceschini scotched that idea last week, but did suggest plays and classical music concerts, which, with an "intelligent" reconstruction of the arena, could raise vital funds for upkeep of the monument.

Opened in AD 80, the Colosseum held its last gladiator battle in AD 508, according to the Colosseum's director, and it was later used as temporary housing, a fort, even a place of worship thanks to an in-house chapel — not to mention as a hangout for prostitutes who once loitered under the street-level arches. The arches were so handy for liaisons that scholars believe the Latin word for "arch," *fornix*, gave us the word "fornicate."

In the 1800s, archaeologists began to excavate the corridors under the arena, and dug up half of it, though they left enough for fascist dictator Benito Mussolini to hold rallies in the Colosseum and for Roman waiters to stage races around it, dressed in white coats and holding laden trays. "Let's say it's always been lived in," said Colosseum director Rossella Rea, who is overseeing an overdue scrubbing — with brushes as small as toothbrushes — of the pollution encrusted on the arches.

In the 1990s, a section of wooden floor was laid over the basement corri-

dors, replicating a third of the original arena floor. The space was used for a handful of small concerts, including one by Paul McCartney, who played for 400 people in 2003. Now, if Franceschini gets his way, that floor will be extended to cover the entire arena, allowing larger events.

But one concern, Rea said, is how many visitors would then be able to see the old animal chambers, pulley systems and boat docks. Visitors would have to climb down steps underneath a new arena floor to get a look at them. "We can only take groups of 25 down at a time, so of the 24,000 visitors we get a day in peak times, very few would be able to see the corridors if they are covered over," Rea said. "And that's a shame, because after being buried for centuries, they are the best-preserved part of the Colosseum, a monument within a monument."

Then there's the water. Gurgling its way through the underground corridors is a stream that emerges inside the bowels of the Colosseum before disappearing into an ancient drainage pipe. At least most of the time. "The old Roman drainage pipe was wide, but was blocked by construction of the nearby subway line," Rea said. "A bypass pipe was installed, but it is much narrower."

The result is that heavy rains cause the flooding of the Colosseum, with water rapidly rising 18 feet, right up to the level where Franceschini wants the new arena floor. Fixing that, said Rea, would involve widening the water pipes, an expensive job at a time when the cash-strapped government is reduced to proposing crowd funding to pay for the upkeep of other historical sites. Said Rea: "Tunneling down under the subway line to widen that drainage system would incur biblical costs."

idea very much. We just need the courage to do it." Elsewhere, the reaction in Italy to the proposal by the archaeologist Daniele Manacorda was comparable to that aroused by the news of walls collapsing in Pompeii. Technical and historical reasons were marshaled against the suggested restoration, and it was argued that the results of an improper exploitation would be inadequate and even catastrophic for the emblematic role and the dignity (Italian "*decoro*") of the monument.

The Ministry adopted a reassuring tone, rejecting bizarre sports options like soccer, and looking into proposals that were "more appropriate for the site, such as classical music or ancient

From the arena of the Colosseum to the history of Ferrara

Reflections on the Promotional Potentialities of Reenacting

by Valentino Nizzo,
Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Emilia Romagna

"The Colosseum is not a playground:" this was the title of an article of the celebrated art historian Cesare De Seta in an Italian newspaper. A major cultural polemic in the fall of 2104 started with a tweet from the Italian Ministry of Culture, Dario Franceschini. His comment on the idea of restoring the arena of the Colosseum was, "I like the



During the event *Spina rivive* in the Archaeological Museum of Ferrara, the author explains a reenacted Etruscan symposium.

drama,” that take place in the arena of Verona and the theater of Taormina.

The lack of imagination of such examples encourages us to reflect about deeper problems, such as the management of the Italian cultural heritage, and the fact that the general public perceives it as something alien to everyday life. The attitude towards antiquities often ranges from considering them as relics to be shown to a selected public of initiates, to letting them become degraded as wrecks, overwhelmed by the surrounding urban landscape that ignores them.

It is therefore surprising that such a reaction followed upon the harmless, if not trivial proposal of restoring a monument of the past to its original function. It seems as if the emblematic value of the Colosseum could generate a positive emulative trend that would save our past from oblivion.

In my opinion, however, we should ask ourselves whether activities such as ancient drama and classical music — certainly high-toned — are effectively more fitting than other options in restoring the meaning and function of “places

Etruscan necropolis in loc. Lauscello – Municipalities of Castel Giorgio and Orvieto

by Claudio Bizzarri

The tombs of Lauscello are located along one of the most important routes that run through the District of Orvieto, connecting Orvieto and Bolsena, the settlement subsequently called Volsinii by the Romans. The entire area is characterized by an imposing volcanic deposit that made it easy to dig hypogeum tombs, although there were a few problems regarding the stability of the soil. The earliest tombs in the necropolis date to the end of the fourth century BC. Initially investigated in 1865 by Giovanni Paolozzi, the burials found on the property of the Marchese Gualterio contained rich tomb furnishings, including bronze vessels. Outstanding among the many finds are two *oinochoai* with beak-like spouts and three *situlae*, all in bronze lamina and bearing the inscription “*larth methies sūtina*” (CIE 10876-10880); these are now in the British Museum. The word “*sūtina*” indicates that they were funerary objects. Further investigation carried out around 1870 on the Gualterio property yielded “silvered” vessels, clay vases decorated in relief and overlaid with a white-grey tin



of memory” such as the Colosseum. Mixing different cultural languages is certainly positive; but the lack of shared intentions and policies highlights not only methodological problems, but also historical questions, as well as issues of contents, and — from an anthropologi-



Top, The tombs at excavation. Right, Pottery from Tomb 10. Far right, a recently discovered bronze hippocamp.

film meant to reproduce the color and appearance of silver. (Egg white was probably used in applying it to the exterior of the vase).

Subsequently in 1889 fourteen chamber tombs were discovered on land belonging to Count Eugenio Faina, honorary inspector of Monuments and Excavations. Almost all were no longer intact and had been plundered. The hypogea located north of the Roman Via Cassia yielded a considerable quantity of ceramics, some silvered and some with black gloss, a cippus with an unidentifiable inscription, objects in bronze (of particular note a mirror and a casket or cista with the inscription “*sūtina*” and iron firedogs, knives and spits). After almost a century of neglect, systematic excavations were carried out between 1993 and 2007 by the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell’Umbria. It was thus possible to clean ten chamber tombs that had been seriously damaged by tomb robbers.

cal point of view — of relativism. (After all, drama and music have similar logistic problems to those of the dreaded soccer...).

Such issues have been debated on the occasion of an important event of historical reenactment that took place in November in Ferrara (*Usi & Costumi*). Several experts in the field of reenactment reacted favorably to the idea of reenacting gladiator shows in the Colosseum, thus making it a center of excellence for such cultural events. This idea, too, looks trivial, though it is successful in the media, as shown by the renewed interest for the Roman world that followed Ridley Scott’s “Gladiator” movie.

As a functionary of the Soprintendenza, I have recently had the opportunity of taking part in the “historical choreography” of popular events, such as the *Bundan Celtic Festival* at Bundeno and reenactments in the Museo Archeologico in Ferrara. In the latter case, for instance, reenacting and archaeological narrative have collabo-



The hypogea consist of an uncovered dromos leading to an underground corridor. Originally closed by tufa slabs and/or ashlar, it leads to the inside of the funerary chamber, which is almost always square with funerary beds along the sides. There are also tombs with an upside down “T”-shaped chamber. In some cases niches for the deposition of the burials were dug into the funerary bench. Tomb 10, the last one to be studied, yielded objects in iron (a knife, fire-dogs), a bronze fibula and an abundance of pottery (whole forms in achrome purified clay, a patera in silvered clay). The pottery had survived because it had been deposited in the entrance corridor, which the robbers had overlooked.

In the summer of 2014 collaboration between the Soprintendenza, the Parco Archeologico ed Ambientale dell’Orvietano, the Gruppo Archeologico Alfina and St. Anselm College in New Hampshire (USA) led to the partial recovery of two tombs, discovered when woodland belonging to the Fondazione per il Museo C. Faina in

rated as dynamic and suggestive means for presenting the wonders of the Etruscan town of Spina to a bewildered public (*Spina Rivive*). At another event, 7000 years of the history of Ferrara — from the Neolithic Age to the Renaissance — were staged as a continuous narrative with the help of more than 120 actors (*Echi del Tempo*).

The results of these experiments have been extraordinary, both in terms of public reactions and of high-level contents, reviving historical narratives in their original setting and context. All this is quite removed from the concept of a “playground,” and though an aura of fun remains, it is legitimate and necessary in any educational experience. Any attempt at separating education from fun would result in a future haunted by spectres like the old blind Jorge in Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*, who preferred to die rather than to let Aristotele’s manuscript on comedy and humor survive — symbol of a knowledge that many would like to prevent being shared.



Orvieto was thinned. At the time, the objects recovered, aside from numerous ceramic finds, included the remains of two clay cremation ollas, one that of a woman with a cap-like hair ornament in bronze wire, and lead weights, and one of a child, with an achrome ceramic feeding bottle. Of note also a bronze thymaterion (censer) and ceramic forms with painted decoration.

The data available permit the identification of a widespread burial complex consisting of more than a score of chamber and fossa tombs. The necropolis was in use between the end of the fourth and the middle of the second century BC. The rather homogeneous tomb furnishings are characterized by the presence of ceramics and bronze finds of excellent quality, which makes it possible to speculate that the burials belonged to a moderately upper middle-class family group, which settled in the area before the destruction in 264 BC by Rome of Orvieto-Velzna, whose fate they probably shared.