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REMEMBERING MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY IN ITALY IN THE 1970S

DAVID ANDREWS

The 1970s are now a long time ago. It is a *cliché* that the past is a foreign country. Memory becomes fragmented and deceptive, recall incomplete. I had always been interested in history. The Classics introduced me to archaeology, which I saw as an additional source for the historical period. I was interested in what material culture could tell us about the historical past, but also in the question of how we would interpret it if only the archaeological record survived. I was also from early on interested in architecture and the development of towns.

As an undergraduate studying history, I worked on Tim Potter's excavation at Narce, a Faliscan site in Lazio north of Rome. This brought me into contact with the British School at Rome, where a total landscape study, the South Etruria Survey, had been set up by the director, John Ward-Perkins. This included medieval sites in its scope as well as Roman and earlier ones, and had seen the involvement of David Whitehouse, who did a PhD on medieval pottery and directed several excavations for the South Etruria survey, notably Castel Porciano. To a medievalist, the wealth of towers, fortified villages and medieval buildings in the Lazio countryside was fascinating. It was also apparent that they were not very well understood. I was prompted by this into writing a PhD thesis on medieval fortifications. In 1972-73 I had a scholarship at the British School at Rome, and in 1973 directed an excavation at the earthquake damaged town of Tuscania, as well as carrying out a study of its walls. John Ward-Perkins had spotted the research potential of this evacuated walled city. The excavations focused on the '*pozzi*' or grain storage pits which had been infilled with rubbish, including large quantities of Renaissance ceramics and artefacts, and also rather inconclusively on a fortress known as the Rivellino (Andrews 1975). The work at Tuscania included recording of the more notable buildings, and was enlarged into a wider study of domestic architecture in central Italy (Andrews 1982).

In the course of my research, I became diverted into organising and running excavation projects. This was an exciting time in the development of archaeological practice. In England people were striving to improve recording systems, which were not standardised. There were three main developments in this process: the so-called Harris matrix, developed by Eduard Harris in the context of the Winchester excavations directed by Martin Biddle; the development of the single context recording system in the City of London by the Department of Urban Archaeology at the Museum of London; and the use of *pro forma* recording or context sheets, which were developed by several different archaeological units and which remain different today though following a similar general pattern. In both England and Italy,

medieval archaeology was a new discipline, though much newer in Italy. The Society for Medieval Archaeology was founded in 1959. "*Archeologia Medievale*" was first published in 1974. Since the 1950s and the 1960s, excavations in England had been largely staffed by volunteers, often students, rather than workmen, a system which made archaeology more inclusive and democratic and gave the potential for better recording. This has ultimately led to the emergence of a professional class of excavators, in England at times almost to the exclusion of volunteers. It seemed important to conduct excavations in this way in Italy if standards were to be raised and the new methods adopted, particularly as the remains of the medieval period would often be more ephemeral than those typically associated with classical archaeology. This could only be done by working with Italians, rather than remaining within the ambit of the British School. Hugo Blake, who had been researching in Italy longer than me put me in contact with Italian medievalists, notably Tiziano Mannoni and the *Gruppo Ricerche Ligure*, and Sergio Nepoti in Bologna. Hugo asked if I would help complete the excavation he had begun with Tiziano Mannoni on the Colle di San Silvestro in Genova. Denys Pringle (now professor at Cardiff University, and also introduced to Italian archaeology through the British School) and I undertook four seasons of excavation there from 1974-77, excavating a well defined sequence important for the bishop's palace and the ceramic finds published by Denys (Andrews, Pringle 1977).

In 1975, I spent a few weeks working with Nando Bonora helping Sergio Nepoti with the excavation at San Giorgio in Poggiale in Bologna. In 1976, Bryan Ward-Perkins and I directed a season of excavations there with Sergio Nepoti, an operation that was genuinely Anglo-Italian. This site was important for the Renaissance burials which were found, accompanied by dress fittings and jewellery. Bryan Ward-Perkins was of course also active in medieval archaeology, another historian brought to it through classical archaeology and the British School, and part of the same network, working at the Torre Civica in Pavia, and then at Luni. The Genova and Pavia excavations were important contributions to the early volumes of "*Archeologia Medievale*".

As well as this small group of medievalists, important cross-fertilisation of archaeological techniques was taking place across the Mediterranean at Carthage where the Italian team led by Carandini and the English team by Henry Hurst had close relations. This situation is an example of how cultural diffusion can occur in ways that might not be at all predictable.

At the London Institute of Archaeology, I met the prehistorian Francesco Fedele, whose approach to archaeological technique was much influenced by contact with Americans. Through him I became involved in the Orco Valley Project in Piedmont and in encouraging this to take on a medieval dimen-

sion. Here in a collaborative project we investigated an abandoned hillside hamlet which proved to be more recent in date than it looked, and were also able to propose a model for upland settlement in the valley (Andrews, Cima 1984). We went on to work with Fedele at the castle site at Breno in the Valcamonica, discovering a church which belonged to an earlier phase of the castle.

In the early 1980s, I worked with the *Soprintendenza Archeologica della Lombardia* and the *Cooperativa Archeologica Lombarda* on the piazza del Duomo excavations in Milan (Andrews 1991, 1993). The excavation team was genuinely multinational. Many of the English had worked at the Museum of London's Department of Urban Archaeology. The site was excavated using single context recording, and was I believe important in disseminating these methods in Italy.

From the middle of the 1980s I returned to England. I now feel too remote from developments in Italy to be able to evaluate whether this work achieved anything, a judgement which anyway should be left to others.

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