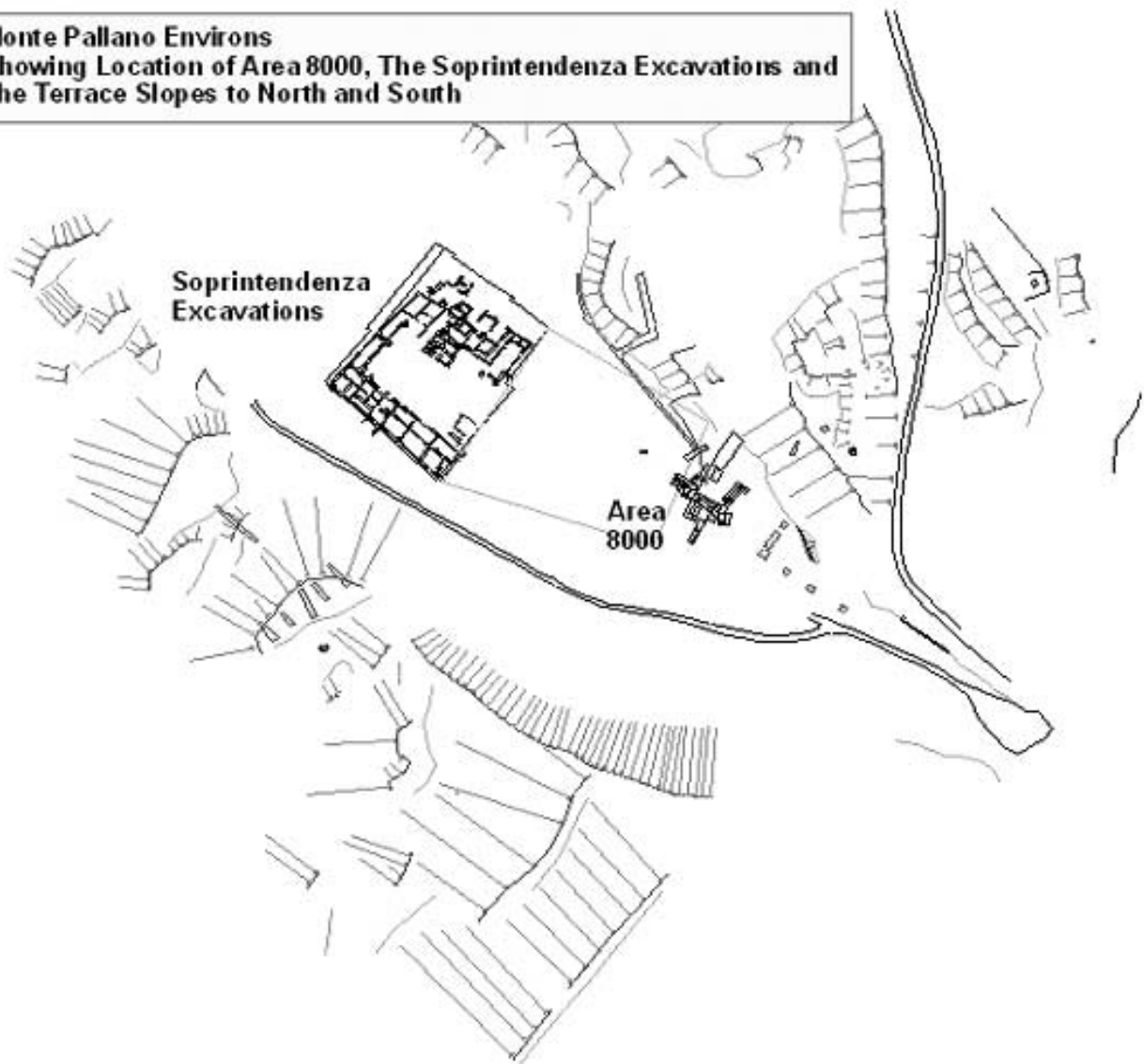


Field Directors' Report: Excavations on Monte Pallano, 2002-2004

Monte Pallano Environs
Showing Location of Area 8000, The Soprintendenza Excavations and
The Terrace Slopes to North and South



2002 Season

At the start of the 2002 season it was decided to expand and link the trenches previously excavated to provide north-east to south-west profiles through the terrace. Trench 8700 was placed to link trenches 7000 and 8000. Trench 8200 was expanded to get a clearer picture of the stratigraphic sequence at the western edge of the terrace. Work also carried on in trench 8300, where a considerable depth of deposit was identified built up against the wall first identified in trench 8000. Two test pits (8800) were also targeted on a geophysical anomaly to the north of trench 8300, revealing a well built wall, with a foundation cut into bed-rock. Finally, an additional trench, 8900, was targeted at the break in slope on the north-western edge where the terrace.

As the season progressed it became apparent that it would not be possible to complete excavation of the new trenches

within the limited time available. The decision was taken to halt excavation and secure the trenches over winter.

2003 Season

The primary aim of this season was to complete excavation within area 8000, defining the full stratigraphic sequence across the terrace from north-east to south-west and north-west to south-east. The previous seasons trenches were re-opened. Trench 8200 was extended. Trench 8000 was extended to the west and east to link 8100/8200 with 8300 to the east. The full stratigraphic sequence of the terrace was finally revealed.

In addition to the hard work of the students of the field school, the input of the US Forestry Service 'Heritage Excursion' must also be acknowledged. Without their efforts not only in clearing the site of vegetation, but also in re-



Area 8000 at the end of the 2003 season

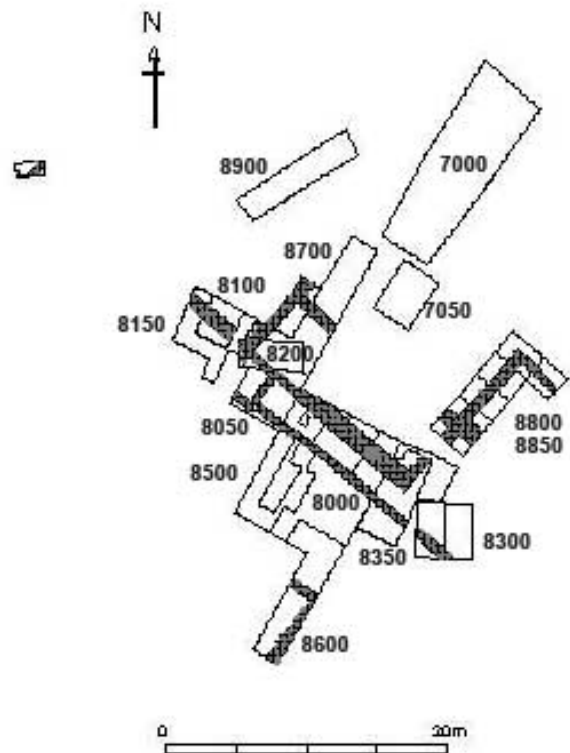
opening the trenches and getting the excavation underway, we would not have been able to complete the excavation of this area in this season.

Area 8000 Main Phases

Post excavation assessment and analysis of the results of the excavations in this area is currently underway and a full report on these excavations, with reference to the environmental and landscape context is forthcoming. The following should be regarded as an interim summary of the results and description of the main phases identified. Date ranges are by necessity broad and should be regarded as provisional, pending completion of the stratigraphic analysis and integration with the analysis of the artifacts.

Phase 1 - Prehistoric (Pre-Samnite)

Excavation in most trenches ceased on contact with the limestone bedrock, or the overlying dark brown, geologically derived clay. A thin, compressed, remnant buried soil was identified in trenches 8000, 8300 and 8900. In trench 8900, at the interface of the geological clay and the remnant soil, a barbed and tanged flint arrowhead was found. This is the only flint tool to be recovered from the Sangro Valley Project excavations to date. Although not evidence of significant or widespread prehistoric activity in the area, it does at least hint at a presence, possibly the loss of an arrow by an individual hunting in the area.



Area 8000 all features plan

Phase 2 - Construction of First Terrace, Early 2nd Century B.C.

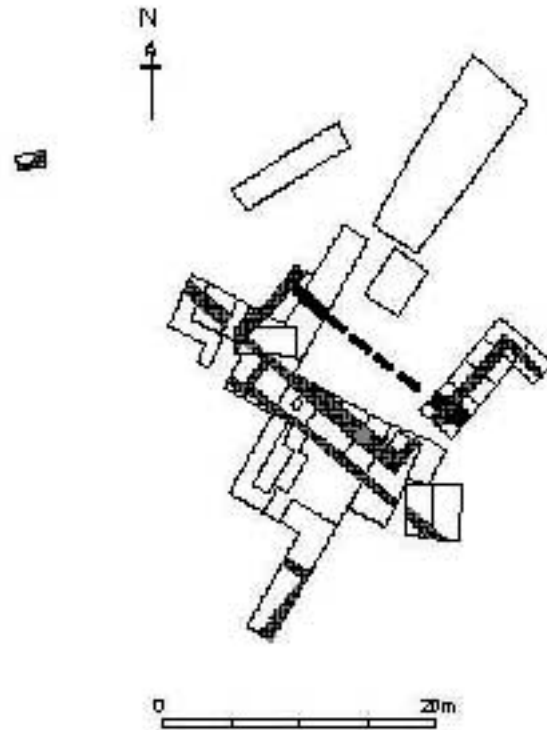
Phase 2 represents the earliest phase of activity on the site. It consisted of the base of a wall in trenches 8700 and 8800. In trench 8700 the wall was founded on the natural clay and comprised large, polygonal limestone boulders with courses of smaller stones above and behind, to give a stepped appearance. The wall was roughly faced to the south-west, but had no discernable facing on the northern side, indicating this face was not intended to be seen. Traces of a possible bonding material were identified around the smaller stones and roof tiles had been utilised in its construction. The deposits to the north (rear) of the wall were comprised of naturally derived clay and limestone rubble, although these deposits had been badly disturbed by the excavation of a pit. The function of this pit is uncertain but it may have been excavated to aid drainage.

The wall identified in trench 8800 was largely obscured by the Phase 3 wall, but was of a different construction to that seen in trench 8700. It was constructed of outer lines of relatively small polygonal limestone blocks with a rubble infill, and was founded directly on bedrock. There was no evidence of bonding material. Not enough of the wall was exposed to draw any confident conclusions about facing to north or south.

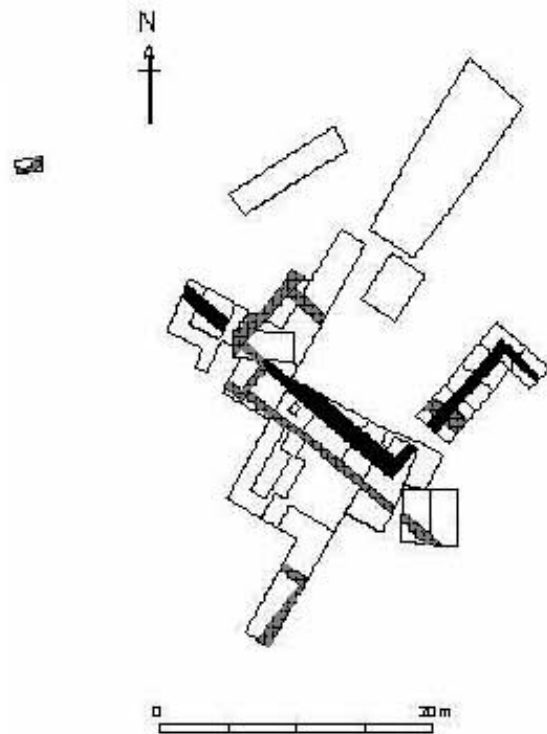
Despite the difference in the construction of these walls there is little doubt that they are part of the same structure, given the common alignment and position in the stratigraphic sequence. The differences are most likely explained by the foundation of the walls on bedrock and clay and the steep pitch of the geological deposits in this area. The facing to the south-west suggests that this side was intended to be seen, or that it is at least the foundation of a structure that was intended to be visible. This supports the interpretation of a terrace wall, although secondary use as a contra-terra for the phase 3 is also likely.

Phase 3 - Construction of Second Terrace, Mid – Late 2nd Century B.C.

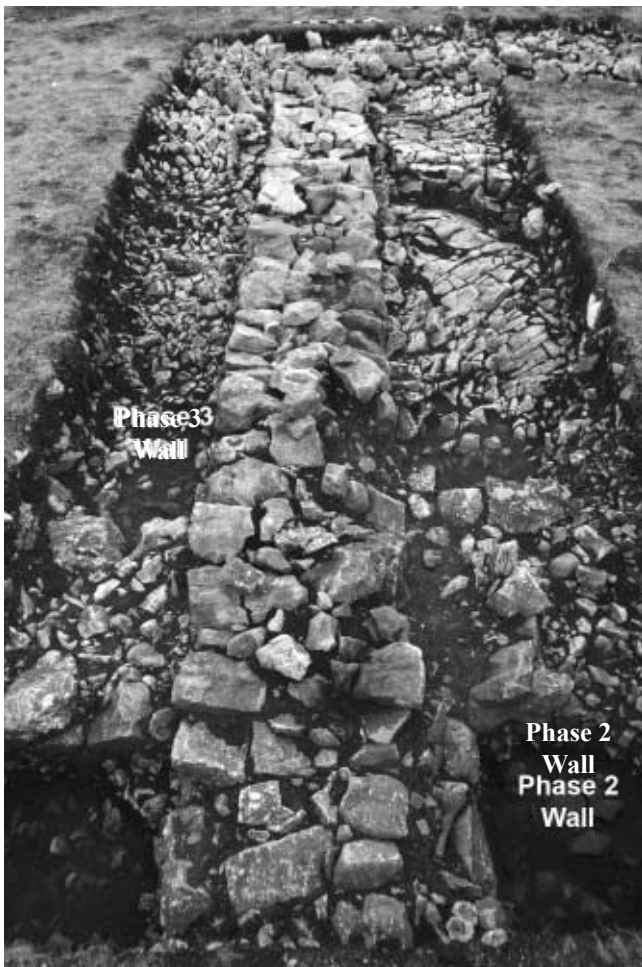
The construction of the second terrace involved a major remodelling of the landscape. The wall was constructed on a north-west to south-east alignment, parallel to the Phase 2 wall and approximately 2m distant. The north-western limit lies beyond the limit of excavation. Within trench 8000, the wall turned through 90° to a south-west to north east alignment for 12m. A further turn through 90° to the original alignment was heavily truncated, but apparent in the remaining stones and a trace of a foundation cut. In trenches 8000 and 8700 the wall was founded on natural clay and was constructed of large polygonal limestone blocks with a rough facing to the south-west and no discernable facing to the north-east. In trench 8800, the wall was founded in a cut into the limestone bedrock. In this section only the lowest 1-4 courses survived. A series of fills were identified tipped in behind the terrace wall in trenches 8000/8700, comprised of dumps of rubble and clay, domestic refuse and a yellow clay deposit from which much of the architectural terracotta tiles were recovered.



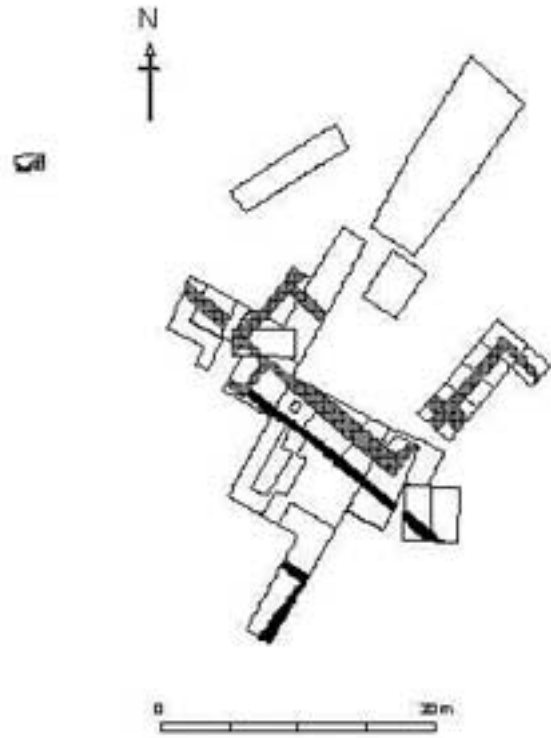
Phase 2



Phase 3



Trench 8800 showing features relating to Phases 2 & 3



Phase 4. Construction of the Boundary Wall



Phase 4 Wall from North

The precise nature of this structure is difficult to determine. The facing indicates that the structure was intended to be viewed from the south-west. The lack of facing on the opposite side and the nature of the fills indicates that at least the lower courses formed a retaining wall, although the original height of the wall and the nature of the area it supported and/or enclosed cannot be determined. However, what is clear is that the fills are made up of rubble derived from a demolished building, and one of considerable status given the exceptional quality of the terracotta tiles.

Phase 4 - Construction of the Boundary Wall

This phase sees the construction of a new wall and represents a significant change in the nature of land use. The wall is again aligned north-west to south-east, parallel to the Phase 3 terrace wall, and indicates continuity across these phases. The wall runs beyond the western limit of excavation. Attempts to define the eastern end of the wall in the 2004 season identified that it appears to continue towards the car park at the natural entrance to the area from the east. The construction of the wall is different to earlier structures. It is built of relatively small rough limestone blocks, and there is also evidence of mortar bonding. Where excavated to the base to date, the wall is founded on natural clay, although the remnant topsoil was also identified (see phase 1). What is particularly striking about this structure is that it is faced on both sides and therefore has a different function to the previous walls, forming a boundary rather than a terrace or retaining wall. This has left a narrow ‘corridor’ between the Phase 3 and Phase 4 structures.

The facing of the structure indicates the boundary function of this structure. It preserves the alignment of the Phase 3 structure, possibly indicating continuity of this feature, or the area it defines, into this phase. The ‘corridor’ does not seem to have any readily identifiable function. The rubble fill of this ‘corridor’, in contrast to the clay based fills seen in trench 8300, may suggest that there was no function beyond the disposal of building rubble.

It is tempting to see the structures and midden deposits identified in Trench 8500 as contemporary with this phase. The alignments are similar, although this is a theme throughout this area. However the connection cannot be made stratigraphically, although further analysis of the finds may shed further light on this issue.

Phase 5 - Raising of the Ground Surface

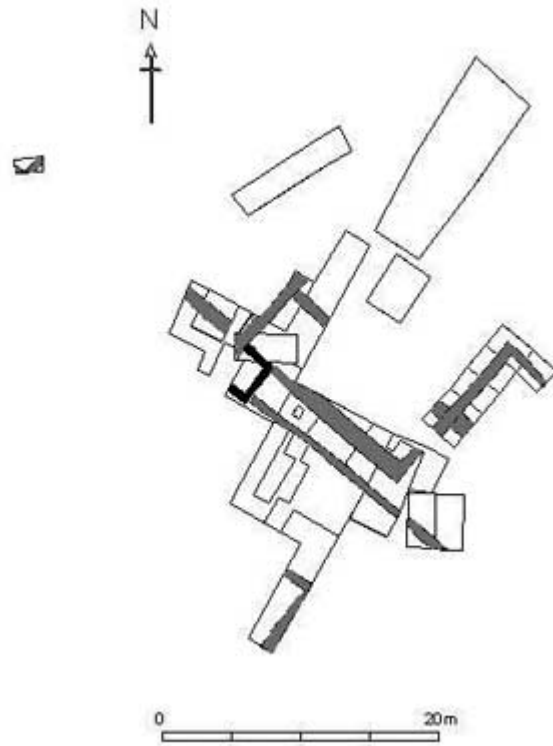
The disuse of the Phase 4 wall results in the raising of the ground level through a series of dumped deposits on the south-west side of the wall. These comprised of the rubble infill of the corridor, and the combination of clay based fills and domestic refuse seen against the wall in trench 8300.

This phase represents a further significant remodelling of the area. The Phase 3 and Phase 4 walls go out of use although to what extent they were dismantled above the surviving level cannot be determined.

Phase 6 - Construction of the Tiled Building

At this stage it is likely that the area was relatively level, although vestiges of the Phase 3 and 4 structures were prob-

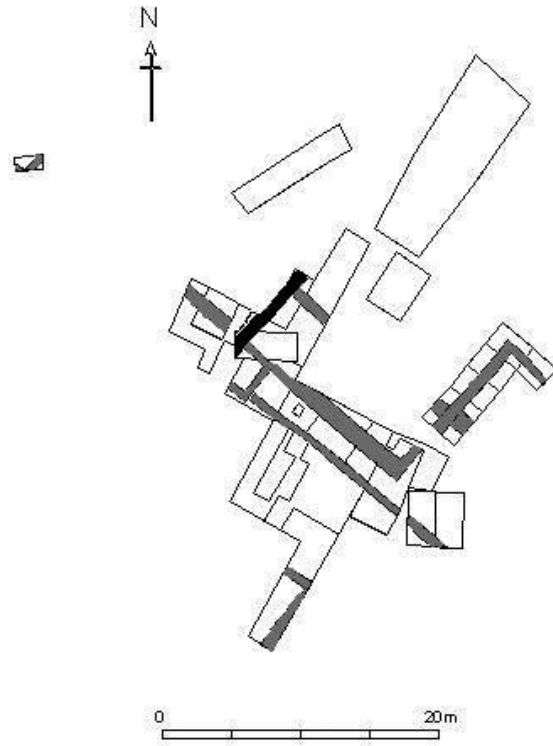
ably still visible on the surface. These structures were reused as a foundation for a new building, with a cut also visible in the rubble fill of the ‘corridor’. The exterior of this small building was poorly constructed of small, rough limestone blocks with low quality facing. However, when the rubble fill was removed the interior proved to be of very high quality, with plastered walls and an intricate tiled floor. The primary use of this building is uncertain, but a curved fragment of Imbrex tile inserted into the corner suggests a secondary use as a cistern.



Phase 6



Phase 6 Tile Floored Structure



Phase 7



Trench 8700 showing features relating to Phases 2, 3, 6 & 7



Intersection of Trenches 8000-8200 & 8700

Phase 7 - Encroachment from the West

Following the disuse of the Phase 6 building, the area is encroached on from the east. The Phase 3 polygonal wall is truncated (identified in trench 8200) and a new wall is constructed on a north-east to south-west alignment. The wall was constructed of small, rough limestone blocks, with a rubble infill. The construction was relatively poor quality. The deposits identified on the north-western side comprised clay based soils and domestic refuse.

The reasons for this encroachment are uncertain, but may be a result of a loss of stability of within the deposits of the former terrace, perhaps the wall.

Phase 8 - Abandonment of the Area

When settlement and related activity ceased it is likely that the area reverted to the natural vegetation, although it is likely that transhumance would have continued and that sheep and goat continued to graze the area seasonally. However, following the abandonment of the settlements, a period of natural erosion results in colluvium levelling the area.

Unphased

To date it has not been possible to assign all features and deposits on site to specific phases, although it is hoped that a more complete picture will emerge from the post excavation assessment. Of particular interest here is Trench 8900. This trench contained a stone alignment, interpreted as a contra-terra. Associated with this was a sub-circular pit filled with



Trench 8900

broken roof tile, probably as an aid to drainage. At the northern limit of the trench a small pit was identified containing burnt material. The feature was sampled and wet sieving produced evidence of a range of foods, including a quince stone. Quinces are associated with ceremonial feasting in Samnite contexts and consequently this deposit has been interpreted as the remains of such an activity.

A small trench was excavated to the west of the main part of area 8000 in 2001 season, trench. Although the excavation was only a few centimetres deep, a corner of a wall was uncovered. Although it will not be possible to tie this into the main sequence, it demonstrates that structures extend throughout the area between the Soprintendenza excavations and area 8000.

Area 8000: Conclusions

There is scant evidence for earlier prehistoric activity in the area and it is not until the 2nd century B.C. that anthropogenic activity leaves a discernable trace in the archaeological record. The impact is however significant as it involves a major and labour intensive reworking of the landscape.

This activity spans approximately 300 years. Initial phases comprise terrace construction, presumably to provide relatively stable platforms for structures and open spaces. The artifacts recovered from the associated deposits, and the monumental construction of these features suggests that the area was a Sanctuary in the Samnitic period.

The boundary wall (Phase 4) suggests a change in use, and there is also a change in building style. This may suggest a change of use of the area, possibly coinciding with the Roman occupation of the area. This phase sees little discernable change to the north of the boundary, and it is tempting to see this as indicative of a change of use in the area to the south. To date, only limited investigations have been undertaken to the south and, although the deposits encountered were rich in terms of material culture, there is not sufficient evidence to suggest whether the context is domestic or religious.

Successive phases of occupation would also appear to be of high status, with a rich material culture and a building where the roughly constructed exterior walls mask an interior of fine construction (Phase 6), although again the nature of the activity in the area is difficult to determine.

2004 Season

The 2003 season resulted in the full stratigraphic sequence being established across the terrace and this enabled us to move away from area 8000. In 2004 we moved to the east, initially with the intention of tracing the structures of Phases 2, 3 and 4. The Phase 2 structure appears to continue, although an exact match cannot be demonstrated and it is possible that the wall seen in the new area is part of a different structure, and possibly belonging to a different phase of activity. No evidence of the Phase 3 structure was identified,



Overview at the end of the 2004 season

of the structure and its consequent lack of survival. The Phase 4 boundary wall continues in a south-easterly direction towards the car parking area and the gap in slopes of Monte Pallano and La Toretta. The end of this wall has yet to be identified. It now seems likely that it defines the approach to the main area of Roman settlement (the Soprintendenza excavation) from the east. Excavations in 2004 revealed the top courses of this wall. Differences in construction were noted and it is possible that this indicates periods of reconstruction.

Future Work

The main task of 2004's survey team was to digitally map the landscape around the excavations, providing the basis

for an interpretation of the topography and how it has been shaped by human activity. This has provided a landscape context for the excavations, and can be used to model likely deposit sequences and areas of past activity. Some investigation has already been undertaken on the first terrace above area 8000, although this was relatively low key and further investigation will be necessary to better define areas of past activity.

We will also be expanding on the 2004 season investigations, further exploring the trenches last year and hopefully enhancing our understanding of the character and function of the Phase 4 boundary wall.