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**THE ROMAN PORTS PROJECT  
FIELDWORK AT PORTUS (COMUNE DI FIUMICINO,  
PROVINCIA DI ROMA, REGIONE LAZIO)**

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In recent years, the Portus Project has concentrated field research on the northern mole of the Claudian harbour at the Imperial port of Rome. Several seasons of geophysical prospection have been conducted in the area of Pesce Luna, to the west of Viale Coccia di Morto, in order to locate and study the western part of the northern mole (Keay and Kay, 2018). These surveys were supplemented by a series of environmental cores to investigate areas both inside and outside the manmade harbour as well as a core through the northern mole (Chapkanski et al., *in press*; Kay et al., 2019). In addition, in 2018 a field school was conducted to the north of the Grandi Magazzini di Settimio Severo, and to the west of the Palazzo Imperiale to investigate the relationship between later structures and the projected edge of the Claudian basin (Keay et al., 2019).

In 2020 the research was extended to the northeast corner of the Claudian harbour in order to better understand the relationship between the northern mole and the standing structures in the area of Monte Giulio. Excavations had begun in this area and at Monte Arena with the work of Lugli (Lugli and Filibeck, 1935), but later extensive clearance during construction at the airport brought to light a large section of the northern mole (Testaguzza, 1970). Throughout the following decade, excavations focused on the isolated building known as the ‘Capitaneria’ and the area of Monte Giulio (Scrinarì, 1984; 1987). Systematic excavations brought to light a bath complex, warehouses, a ramp and a monumental cistern; however, no traces were recorded of the harbour edge which would have formed the eastern mole. Between 2007 and 2009 the Soprintendenza Archeologica di Ostia Antica undertook an extensive environmental coring campaign in the area, as well as excavating three large trenches at the southern limit of the archaeological area (Arnoldus-Huyzendveld, Turi, Morelli, 2015). The results were similarly inconclusive as to the location and construction of the mole, hypothesising that the eastern part of the Claudian harbour may have been formed by a beach rather than a harbour mole. However, further to the south a stretch of mole was excavated by the Portus Project in the area of the central isthmus dividing the Claudian and Trajanic basins (Keay, Earl, Felici, 2011).

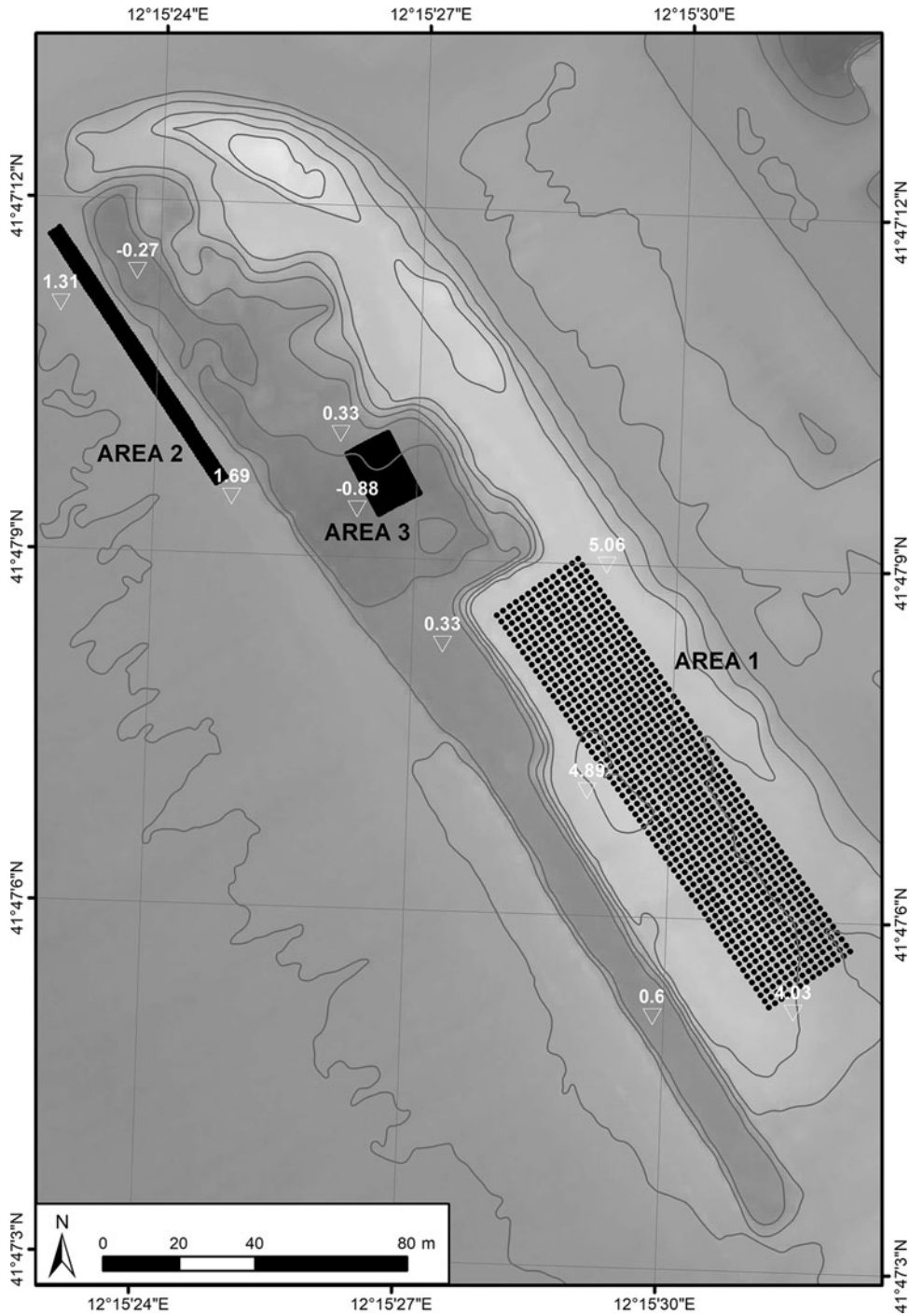


Fig. 1. Monte Giulio, Portus. Location of the 3 areas of ERT survey.

The extensive geophysical survey conducted by the Portus Project between 1998 and 2003 examined the Claudian basin immediately to the west of Monte Giulio. The survey recorded traces of structures at some distance from the higher area of Monte Giulio, which were interpreted as possible late antique structures (Keay et al., 2005). Subsequently, a programme of environmental coring was conducted within the basin, which revealed that the water level was much shallower to the east (c. 2.5 m) compared to the west (9 m), and that the basin began to be progressively filled from the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD onward (Goiran et al., 2011).

The 2020 fieldwork at Monte Giulio, funded by a Loeb Classical Library Foundation Fellowship award to Simon Keay, was divided into three areas due to the varying topography across the site, with a difference of around 5 m between the ground level of the structures excavated by Scrinari and the low-rise running north-south (Fig. 1). The depth of the potential features within the study area led to the continued use of Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT) as a principal geophysical technique of investigation following its successful application further to the west in the area of Pesce Luna.

The first area investigated (Fig. 1, Area 1), covering an area of 3300 m<sup>2</sup>, recorded a heavily disturbed stratigraphy in the initial 3 m, a probable result of modern activity. Beyond this depth, the resistivity values indicated a series of clay-sandy deposits which had also been noted by the cores and three trenches excavated further to the south (Arnoldus-Huyzendveld, Turi, Morelli, 2015: 12). The area, which covered an extent of 126 m by 28 m (a total of 14 ERT profiles of 126 m with a line separation of 2 m) revealed few clear archaeological features.

The second area investigated (Fig. 1, Area 2) focused on a narrow stretch of pathway between the bathhouse, warehouses, and monumental cistern to the east and the edge of the park to the west. Four ERT transects were recorded for a total length of 80 m in correspondence with the structures. The aim of the investigation was to attempt to locate traces of the eastern Claudian mole, which, given the location of the excavated structures, was assumed as lying within this area. The results of the ERT surveyed revealed a high resistance feature that began at a depth of 2 m below ground level, at a similar depth to the ground level of the excavated buildings to the east. The feature, lying on a northwest-southeast alignment would appear to correlate with the expected position of the mole. Further investigations will be conducted in 2021 to assess the continuation of the feature to the south.

The final area investigated (Fig. 1, Area 3) lay immediately to the south of the large cistern, at a lower ground level than the previously investigated areas. The excavation reports for the area had noted the discovery of a ramp, no longer visible, but few other structural features. A small area was investigated with ERT, with a closer probe interval of 1 m in order to assess the potential features at a higher resolution, as well as due to the shallower overburden. The results revealed clear areas of linear high resistance, indicating the presence of further unrecorded structures in the area. Further investigations planned for 2021 will extend the study area as well as use further geophysical techniques, including magnetometry and Ground-Penetrating Radar, to record the features in more detail.

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### *Postscript*

This fieldwork report was prepared by the three authors in mid-March 2021 together with a formal report for the Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica. Shortly after its completion, Professor Simon Keay, Director of the Portus Project, sadly passed away (see Millett, this volume). The authors, together with colleagues from the University of Southampton and the British School at Rome, intend to complete the research described above and present the results in a future volume of *PBSR*.

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