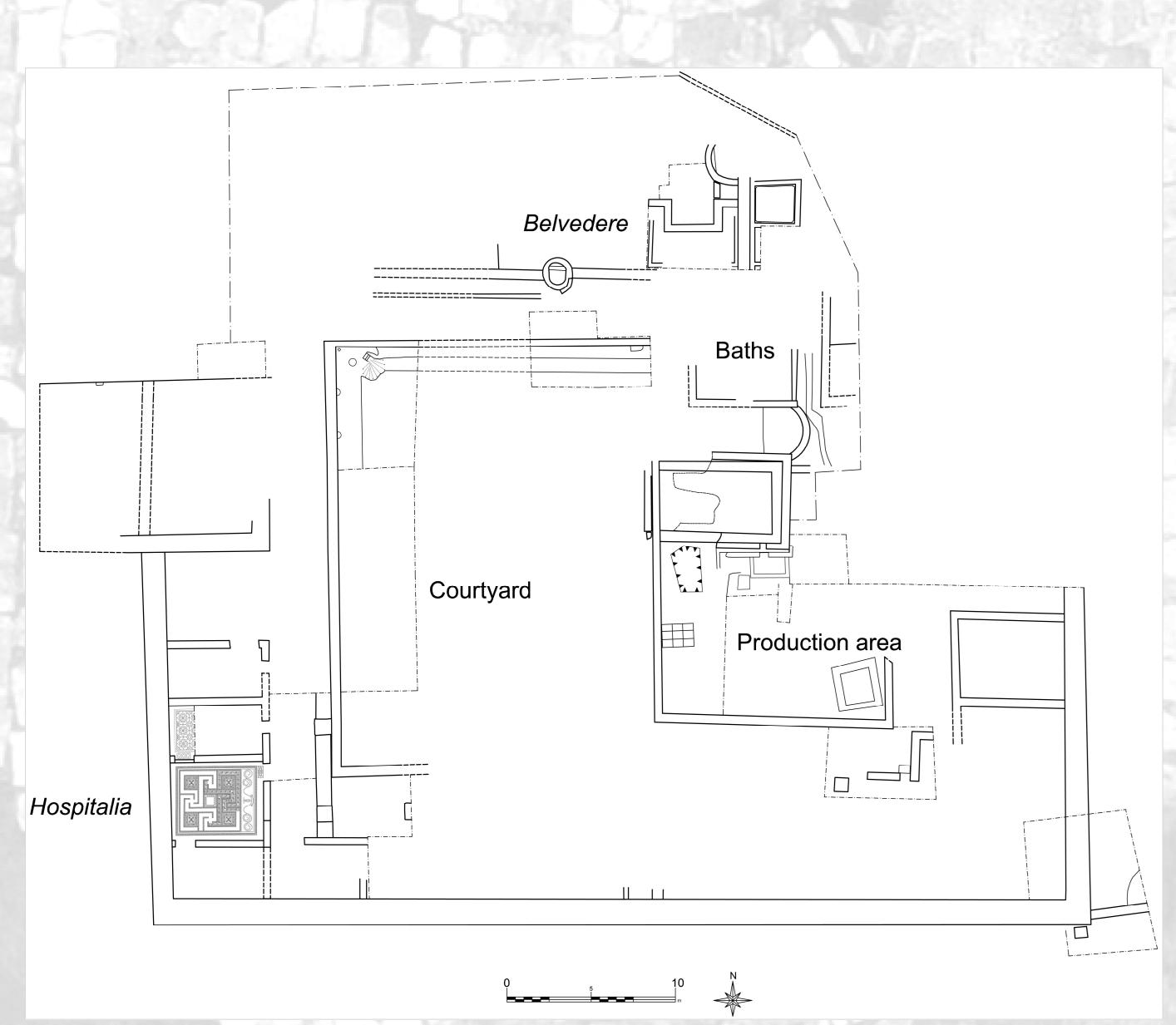


The villa of Poggio del Molino was built in the 1st century C.E. on the northern side of a headland that acts as a watershed between the beach of Rimigliano in the north and the Gulf of Baratti in the south.



(photo on the left from Google Earth; on the right Archeodig).

The hill of Poggio del Molino has been frequented and inhabited since prehistoric times. During the Late Bronze Age (11th-10th century B.C.), in the area where the villa was later built, the site was occupied by a village of huts whose economic purpose was connected to the mineral resources of the mountains of Campiglia (processing of copper and lead) and with marine activities (trade, fishing and shellfish harvesting).



Plan of the villa at the end of the excavation 2010 (graphics processing I. Cerato).

The main objective of the project is to fill as many of the gaps as possible in our knowledge of the history of Populonia and its territory from the early Roman period to the Middle Ages, starting from an important settlement in the Tuscan coast: the villa of Poggio del Molino (PdM). We decided to focus our research on the PdM villa because it gives us extraordinary evidence about a "dark period" in Populonia history: the villa was built at the beginning of the 1st century C.E. (when the main city of Populonia started to fall in ruin and be abandoned for unknown reasons) and it is still one of the best evidences in the area about the following centuries, since the villa was continuously inhabited until the beginning of the 6th century C.E.

From classical archaeology to sustainable culture: the experience of Populonia

CAROLINA MEGALE (Earthwatch Institute, Archeodig Project)

How to save a Roman villa overlooking the sea and partly collapsed because of landslides triggered by progressive marine erosion at the foot of the cliff where the building lies?

In the 1980s, the University of Florence conducted the first archaeological excavation, and since 2008, a new research project has begun, the primary objectives are to discover the monument in its entirety; reconstruct its original its many phases, from the Roman period to late antiquity; and



gists from the University of Florence, in 1984: Dr. E.J. Shepherd, Prof. Riccardo Santangeli Valenza Prof. Vincenzo Saladino and the mosaic discovered during their excavations (photos E.J. Shepherd).

The results of research (past and current) are published in scientific journals. The most significant finds are on display to the Archaeological Museum of the territory of Populonia, in Piombino. A year after their discovery, two large blocks of stone, with the inscriptions PCXCI on one and P.CLXXXVIII on the other, enhance the epigraphic section of the Museum. The inscriptions show the particulars of linear distances, expressed by numerals (191 and 188) preceded by the abbreviation p(edes), affixed on the block that served as terminal cippus.



Archaeological Museum of the territory of Populonia: section of Roman epigraphy and detail of the inscription on the blocks (photo D. Ansaldi)

It is likely that on the blocks are listed the linear measurements of the perimeter wall of the villa: during the 2010 campaign, in fact, it was verified that the southern section of the perimeter wall is approximately 55.8 m, exactly equal to 188 Roman feet.

Unfortunately, as the northern sector of the villa collapsed into the sea, it is currently not possible to determine whether the distance

between the southern boundary and the northern limit of the settlement corresponds to 191 feet. However, since at present there are no objections to this interpretation, we believe that the villa would extend over an area of approximately 3.150 square meters and that the collapsed portion is about 450 square meters in size.

The Project gratefully acknowledges Dr. Andrea Camilli at the Superintendence of Archaeological Heritage in Tuscany and Dr. Giandomenico De Tommaso at the University of Florence; the team of Archeodig (Ivana Cerato, M.Cristina Mileti, Francesco Ghizzani Marcìa, Stefano Genovesi, Daniele Ansaldi, Francesca Grassini, Matteo Spagnuolo); the staff of Earthwatch Institute who supports the Project with passion and professionalism; all the Earthwatch volunteers extraordinary "citizens scientists"; all the students for working hard side by side with the archaeologists; all persons who, through our Project, express their love for archaeology.

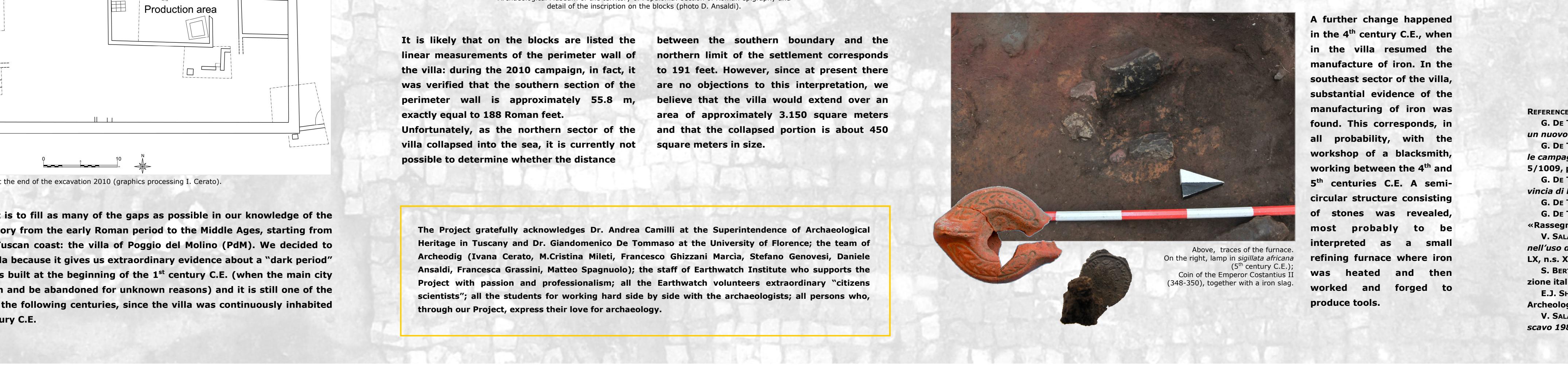
new phase of the life of the discovered a big structure (perhaps a porch or something similar), around which an iron workshop was settled. Under the layers of Augustan stage, in fact, were found the traces of smelting furnaces used to produce iron with the hematite of Elba Island.

Above, traces of iron working: hematite, iron slags, charcoal, clay; on the right, the basins for salting of fish. photos courtesy of Opaxir: www.flickr.com/photos/opaxir/)

Later the area was radically changed. In Augustan Age, in fact, a rustic villa was built on the site, but this phase is still largely unknown. We know just that in the northeast sector there was a thermal area and a productive in which there were basins used for the salting of fish, an activity widely attested in the territory of Populonia, both by archaeological evidence and literary sources.



During the second half of the 2nd Century C.E., the villa was completely restored becoming a luxurious house: the southwest sector (now *hospitalia*) was decorated with mosaics on the floors and frescoes on the walls; in the northeast sector new rooms was built in the bath, while the system of basins for the processing of the fish cease to be used.



A further change happened in the 4th century C.E., when in the villa resumed the manufacture of iron. In the southeast sector of the villa, substantial evidence of the manufacturing of iron was found. This corresponds, in all probability, with the workshop of a blacksmith, working between the 4th and 5th centuries C.E. A semicircular structure consisting stones was revealed, probably to be most interpreted as a small refining furnace where iron heated and then was forged to worked and produce tools.





The excavation is conducted by professional archaeologists of the Archeodig Project, in collaboration with the Superintendence of Archaeological Heritage in Tuscany, the Italian non-profit organization Past in Progress and supported by Earthwatch Institute, an international non-profit organization.



The aims of Archeodig Project are the design, management and scientific coordination of archaeological excavations.

The research is structured as school/field work for the training of students, young

archaeologists and volunteers, both Italians and foreigners.

The excavations are funded by members and supporters, public and private, of PiP. The Project of PdM is supported by Earthwate



Earthwatch Institute is an international environmental charity, founded in 1971 in Boston (Massachussets), which engages people worldwide in scientific field research and education to promote the understanding and action necessary for a sustainable environment. By directly supporting field research and educating and engaging thousands of people, Earthwatch has made a significant contribution to achieving a sustainable environment over the past 35 years.

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