

Excavations at the ‘Project of 100 Roman Farms’, Lucca, Italy: the 2005-2008 Field Seasons at Palazzaccio

In 2005, the University of North Carolina at Asheville and New York University in Florence began excavation of a Roman farmhouse outside Lucca, Italy. The building, known locally as ‘Palazzaccio’, is one of more than one hundred ancient Roman farms in the plain of Lucca uniquely preserved by catastrophic flooding of the Serchio river during the third and fourth centuries CE. Although the artificial lake created by the flooding was drained in the late nineteenth century, the farms have been definitively identified as Roman period buildings only during the past two decades and only two farms have been investigated. Under the UNESCO sponsored *Project of 100 Roman Farms*, Palazzaccio is the third complex under exploration. Like the other farms at Lucca, Palazzaccio was built around 160 BCE following the Roman capture of Lucca in 180 BCE and continued in use until its final abandonment in the third or fourth century. Limited exploration of the site during the 1990s revealed some of the utilitarian spaces of the farm including vats for the pressing of grapes, a stone-lined well, storerooms and work areas. Excavations in the 2005-2007 seasons by the UNCA/NYU team revealed more walls, from various phases of the building’s history, suggesting a more complex and significantly larger farm than anticipated. These findings have been complemented by the recovery of an artifact assemblage of a higher quality and quantity than found at the other excavated farms. This paper will report on the findings of previous seasons as well as results of the upcoming 2008 season and will consider how this large complex fits into the hierarchy of farms and landscape in the Luccan plain.