

# Mapping the *Ager Faliscus* road-system: the contribution of LiDAR (light detection and ranging) survey

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## Earlier work on the Faliscan area (G.C.)

The *Ager Faliscus* lies north of Rome, between the Monti Cimini, the *via Cassia*, the Monti Sabatini, the Tiber, and Monte Soratte. In the mid-19th c., architects and antiquarians<sup>1</sup> began excavations and surveys of monuments at *Falerii Novi* and Civita Castellana. The archaeological evidence for the region was first synthesised by George Dennis.<sup>2</sup> The first systematic survey of the region was carried out between 1881 and 1897 by A. Cozza and A. Pasqui, within the ambitious and consequently incomplete project of the *Carta Archeologica d'Italia* sponsored by the Direzione Generale alle Antichità. The work undertaken for the *Ager Faliscus* component was published later as manuscripts and notes,<sup>3</sup> consisting of the full report of excavations and surveys at Civita Castellana (*Falerii Veteres*), Santa Maria di Falleri (*Falerii Novi*) and their territories. Carried out with a positivist approach typical of late 19th-c. archaeology, the work focused on detailed recording of archaeological data and topographical elements. At about the same time, important data were collected in the Faliscan centres of Narce and Corchiano.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of 20th c., the archaeological picture was expanded by exploration of prehistoric sites.<sup>5</sup> After the Second World War, dramatic change in Italian rural landscapes, a product of the growing mechanization of agriculture and the increasing destruction of archaeological sites, led the British School at Rome to start a new campaign of surveys in the *Ager Faliscus*, under the supervision of J. B. Ward Perkins. Surveys were carried out in the 1950s concentrated along Roman roads (*Flaminia*, *Amerina* and *Cassia*) and around the main centres (Nepi, Civita Castellana, *Falerii Novi*). For the first time, rural sites and small fragments of pottery were recorded, and attention shifted from monumental contexts towards the organization of settlements and road-systems, supported not only by work on the ground but also by aerial photographs made available from the archives of the Royal Air Force. The results, promptly published,<sup>6</sup> led to a new phase of interest in the *Ager Faliscus*, which was followed by rescue excavations in the area of Narce and further surveys between the *via Cassia* and *via Flaminia*.<sup>7</sup> Since the beginning of the 1980s, interest has focused on the main cities of Faliscan territory such as Corchiano and *Falerii*,<sup>8</sup> supplemented by small-scale thematic surveys in the territory.<sup>9</sup>

- 1 G. Dennis, *BdI* 16 (1844) 91-94; G. Henzen *ibid.* 129-30; W. Gell and E. H. Bunbury, *The topography of Rome and its vicinity* (London 1846) 165-70, 235-41; L. Canina, *L'antica Etruria marittima* (Roma 1846) 45-59, 67-68.
- 2 G. Dennis, *The cities and cemeteries of Etruria* (London 1883) 87-96 and 112-14.
- 3 G. F. Gamurrini *et al.*, *Carta archeologica d'Italia (1881-1897)* (Firenze 1972); A. Cozza and A. Pasqui, *Carta archeologica d'Italia (1881-1897). Materiali per l'Agro Falisco* (Firenze 1981).
- 4 F. Barnabei *et al.*, *Antichità del territorio falisco esposte nel Museo Nazionale Romano a Valle Giulia* (MonAntLinc 4, 1894).
- 5 U. Rellini, "Cavernette e ripari preistorici nell'Agro Falisco," *MonAntLinc* 26 (1920) 5-174; F. di Gennaro and S. Stoddart, "A review of the evidence for prehistoric activity in part of South Etruria," *PBSR* 50 (1982) 1-21.
- 6 M. W. Frederiksen and J. B. Ward Perkins, "The ancient road system of the central and northern Ager Faliscus," *PBSR* 25 (1957) 67-208.
- 7 T. W. Potter, *A Faliscan town in South Etruria* (London 1976); *id.*, *The changing landscape of Southern Etruria* (London 1979); for a general synthesis see also *id.* and S. Stoddart, "A century of prehistory and landscape studies at the British School at Rome," *PBSR* 56 (2001) 3-34.
- 8 S. Quilici Gigli, "Corchiano. Appunti di topografia dell'abitato," *ArchCl* 43 (1991) 329-48; P. Moscati, "Vignale (Falerii Veteres). Topografia dell'insediamento," *StEtr* 51 (1983) 55-81; *id.*, "Studi su Falerii Veteres. I. L'abitato," *Rendiconti dell'Accademia dei Lincei* 40 (1985) 45-74; *id.*, "Studi su Falerii Veteres II. La necropoli delle Colonnate," *ibid.* 42 (1987) 39-70; *id.*, "Nuove ricerche su Falerii Veteres," in *La civiltà dei Falisci* (Firenze 1990) 141-71.
- 9 E.g., for pre-Roman and Roman phases see the articles by G. Cifani and M. Munzi, A. Camilli *et al.*, and