

# Interim report on an enigmatic new Trajanic building at Portus

Simon Keay

with Graeme Earl, Fabrizio Felici, Penny Copeland, Roberta Cascino, Steven Kay, Christina Triantafyllou and the collaboration of Angelo Pellegrino

## Introduction

Excavations by the Portus Project (fig. 1) between the spring and autumn of 2011 uncovered the remains of a major building of uncertain function, possibly associated with ship repairs. Building 5 forms part of a complex of important structures<sup>1</sup> situated on the isthmus of land between the great Claudian and Trajanic Basins at the heart of the port (fig. 2). It was a single building of Trajanic date, 247 m long and 58 m wide, which extended from the E façade of the *Palazzo Imperiale*, which it directly abutted, as far as the corner of the hexagonal Trajanic Basin. Neighbouring buildings included the much smaller Building 7<sup>2</sup> directly to the east, and the *Horrea-Terme*<sup>3</sup> on the S end of the Monte Giulio (fig. 3).

The remains of Building 5 were first explicitly mentioned by R. Lanciani in his discussion of the different kinds of building discovered during clearance of the site by Alessandro Torlonia. His interpretative plan indicates that he understood the remains here to have comprised three long rectangular grain warehouses (“*magazzini annonarie*”) running parallel to each other and separated by narrow spaces (fig. 4A).<sup>4</sup> The building was studied in more detail in the 1930s by G. Lugli, whose account and published plan suggest he thought of it as a single building, even though he still refers to the buildings as *magazzini* (fig. 4B).<sup>5</sup>

Building 5 has a complex layout and history. It covers a huge area, is heavily obscured by trees and other kinds of vegetation, was quite heavily landscaped in the early 20th c., and has a structural sequence that is c.3 m deep. Excavations and clearance in 2011-12, coupled with earlier fieldwork, have at last begun to provide an outline sequence

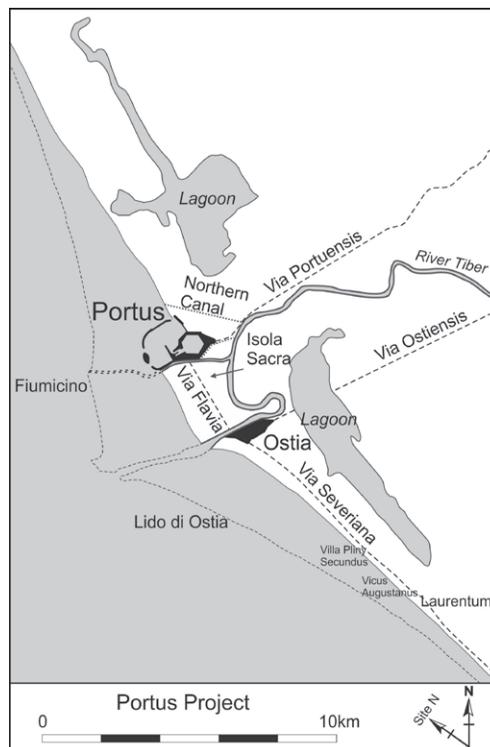


Fig. 1. Location of Portus.

1 An initial report on a first sondage in Building 5 was published in Keay *et al.* 2011.  
2 This small building is the subject of ongoing field research by the Portus Project, undertaken with the kind cooperation of the Duke Ascanio Sforza Cesarini.  
3 Lugli and Filibeck 1935, 90-91 (Building 15).  
4 Lanciani (1868, 178) builds on Labacco's description of the building; he mentions it simply as *magazzini* that were “*tripla fila lungo*”.  
5 Lugli and Filibeck 1935, 100-1 (Building 29).