



Soprintendenza
Archeologica
Napoli e Pompei

THE PACKARD HUMANITIES INSTITUTE



THE BRITISH SCHOOL AT ROME
SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STUDI CLASSICI E ORIENTALI

Herculaneum Conservation Project

“RE-OPENING HERCULANEUM”

Celebrating 10 years of the Packard project, a public-private partnership for Herculaneum’s archaeological heritage



PRESS PACK BY THE HERCULANEUM CONSERVATION PROJECT TO BE DISTRIBUTED FOR THE EVENT ON 19 APRIL 2011

On 19 April 2011 we will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Herculaneum Conservation Project, a partnership between the Packard Humanities Institute, the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei and the British School at Rome for the conservation and enhancement of the archaeological site of Herculaneum. This project is an unprecedented public-private collaboration which, thanks to its long-term commitment, has managed to halt and drastically reduce the serious decay in which the site found itself at the end of the twentieth century. The re-opening of the Decumanus Maximus – the main street of the ancient town – marks the final step towards returning the Roman roads to visitors, free of barriers and ‘no entry’ signs and closes a chapter of important works that have taken place in recent years. In fact, Herculaneum’s streets are all open to the public again for the first time since the 1980s. Over the next few years works will continue with the re-opening of further areas, including the House of the Telephus Relief and the Ancient Shoreline with a visitor route that links to the Villa of the Papyri. Many of the lessons learnt over the last ten years thanks to the Herculaneum Conservation Project are potentially applicable to other archaeological sites: stabilising a site at risk, improving site access, water management, maximising limited resources, working with previous restorations, re-launching a systematic approach to programmed maintenance after nearly fifty years. These are just some of the examples of what has been achieved in ten years on site at Herculaneum.

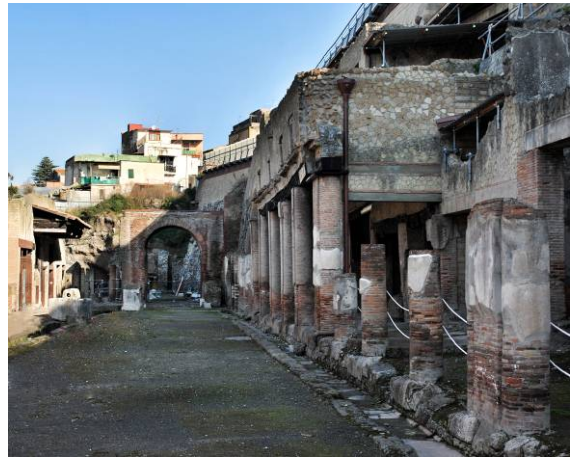
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- the Press Office of the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei at: ufficiostampa@archeologicapompei.it or on +39 0818575220

What's changed since 2001 and what will change in the future:



The Decumanus Maximus (2001)



The Decumanus Maximus (2011)

The re-opening of the Decumanus Maximus and Herculaneum's other ancient streets takes place in the context of the **Herculaneum Conservation Project**, which has been tackling conservation issues on site since 2001. Thanks to the long-term commitment of project's public and private partners (Packard Humanities Institute, Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompeii, British School at Rome), the serious problems of decay that the site faced at the end of the twentieth century have been dramatically reduced. In the year 2000, roughly two-thirds of the archaeological area were closed to the public for conservation and safety reasons. Thanks to the Herculaneum Conservation Project, two-thirds of site will instead be open to the public by the end of 2012. In conjunction with important improvements made in the context of the Soprintendenza's POR Campania projects, such as the consolidation of the northern escarpment, the site of Herculaneum has been radically transformed.



Areas open to the public in 2005



Areas open to the public in 2012

Significantly, the recent work on the Decumanus Maximus has allowed conservation work to be carried out on some of the site's most important Roman houses. In particular, the House of the Double Entrance with its unique doorway, handsome portico and intact wooden features is finally visible to visitors, and works on the important House of the Bicentenary are underway. This is just the latest of a series of similar conservation campaigns across the site by the Herculaneum Conservation Project. In fact in 2009-2010 visitor access was re-established to the Samnite House and Suburban Baths. Over the next three years, work will continue with the opening of, for example, the House of the Telephus Relief and the Ancient Shoreline with its visitor route to the Villa of the Papyri. The transformation of the site includes improvements to the relationship between the ancient and modern towns of Herculaneum: dialogue with both the local community and visitors has been encouraged thanks to an innovative approach to participatory partnership – public and private, heritage authority and municipality – which could have repercussions for archaeological heritage elsewhere in the Vesuvian area and beyond.

Examples of what 10 years have delivered:

Learning from Herculaneum to save other sites: After a decade of activity at Herculaneum, HCP is without a doubt Italy's most ambitious public-private partnership for heritage conservation and one of the largest in the world for archaeological heritage. The experience gained includes: a deep understanding of the heritage system and how to make it work best for the site; the application of site-wide approaches to conservation that reduce decay; a focus on sustainability; and the development of maintenance approaches that ensure long-term continuous care of the archaeological site by public management. Many of the lessons learnt from Herculaneum are applicable to Pompeii and other sites in the Vesuvian area, and more widely in Italy: stabilising a site at risk, improving site access, water management, maximising limited resources and working with previous restorations are just some examples. The network of international research partnerships created by HCP at Herculaneum is demonstrating that many of these lessons can also bring benefits to sites in other countries with similar heritage or similar heritage management systems. Work in the next five years will deliver more material to share with others with, amongst other things, the re-establishment of **programmed maintenance** led by the public authority for the first time since the 1950s and ambitious **enhancement initiatives** for areas like the Ancient Shoreline which will radically transform the visitor experience and, for the first time, will link to the Villa of the Papyri.

Improving access: One key issue on which the HCP Team has placed emphasis is that of access to Herculaneum's archaeological heritage. The re-opening of the streets of the ancient town should be seen within a larger conservation programme which has seen many areas across the site become accessible to visitors again (see illustrations below). A series of site-wide conservation campaigns has also ensured that there is access to all areas for maintenance teams so that continuous care is better guaranteed and that the acute problems of decay do not return. Access is also offered beyond the confines of the site 'virtually' thanks to digital documentation and a commitment to accessible data management which takes information beyond the physical boundaries of the site. Finally, in partnership with the Herculaneum Centre, HCP has supported initiatives such as a multisensory guide to visiting Herculaneum and is investing in other projects that will help a wide variety of visitors.

Bringing the ancient city back into the modern town: In addition, the Project Team, in conjunction with local partners such as the Herculaneum Centre and the City Council, is looking at how to reconnect the ancient town to the modern one which surrounds it in order to encourage more participation by local residents and to help them to benefit more from their heritage. The Decumanus Maximus we see today actually continues past the partially-excavated Basilica Noniana and under the modern street of Via Mare to Herculaneum's Theatre, where the ancient city was rediscovered. A feasibility study for completing excavation in this area and allowing proper conservation of the Basilica has been paralleled by regeneration plans for the Via Mare area above, thanks to a commitment by the Comune di Ercolano and the Campania Regional Council to match efforts by the Packard Humanities Institute and the Soprintendenze. This initiative, like others in preparation for the edges of the archaeological site where it meets the modern town, aims at creating an accessible 'ring' around the archaeological park which will both be available to local residents and offer new visitor exit routes from the site to the modern city, thereby encouraging better connections and a more dynamic relationship between the two towns.

Positive changes in 10 years:



80% of dangerous existing roofing has been repaired and new shelters have been created



The Roman primary drainage network has been reinstated in order to collect and drain water



Nearly all the ancient buildings have been stabilized



...as have their decorations

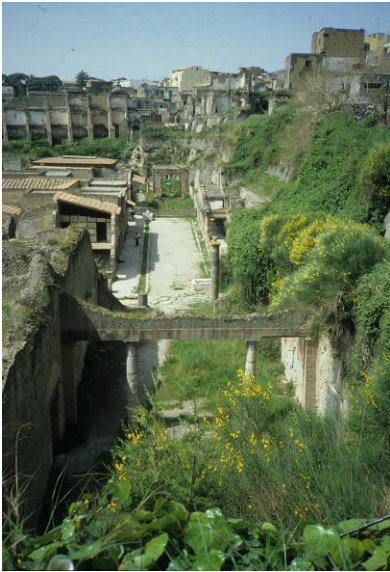


International partners (such as ICCROM) have been involved, as have local residents (for example, as part of the Herculaneum Centre's Oral History project)





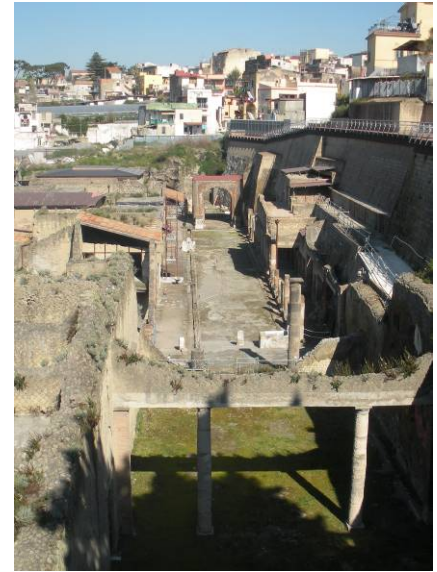
Archaeological knowledge of the site has been deepened



20 years ago



2010



2011

Working in partnership has been promoted to increase the impact of individual contributions: these photos show the Decumanus Maximus over a 20-year period

(Images: thanks to Nicholas Stanley-Price and Valerie Magar for their contributions to the HCP photo archive)

Herculaneum Conservation Project

The Herculaneum Conservation Project ('HCP'; www.herculaneum.org) was set up in 2001 by David W. Packard, President of the Packard Humanities Institute, with the aim of supporting the Italian State through the local heritage authority (Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei), in preserving this uniquely valuable, but at the same time fragile, archaeological site. Since 2004 the project has been supported by the British School at Rome.

HCP is undertaken by a large and interdisciplinary team of specialists and contractors, most of whom are Italian. It is overseen by a Scientific Committee, led by the Soprintendenza and involving Italian and international experts in archaeology and conservation. It is directed by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, formerly Director of the British School at Rome, and currently Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. The team planning, implementing and monitoring activities is led by senior Soprintendenza staff (the director of the archaeological site, Maria Paola Guidobaldi; the head of the Soprintendenza's Technical Office, Valerio Papaccio; the senior conservator for Herculaneum, Giuseppe Zolfo) and by HCP Project Manager, Jane Thompson.

HCP has sought to address some of the most pressing threats to the survival of the site with a focus on infrastructural problems, such as roofing and drains. It has also sought by scientific experiment to analyse the critical conservation risks and to develop better approaches to solving or reducing them. It has stressed the importance of regular maintenance with the development of sustainable programmes for the future. In the course of work, it has made many new archaeological discoveries, and cast new light on the history of the site.

Herculaneum Centre, the permanent institution that HCP has helped create

Once the Herculaneum Conservation Project team had gained experience working on site, they recognized the need for a more inclusive and flexible approach to conservation that goes beyond the borders of the archaeological site. The city council, the Comune di Ercolano, invited the Herculaneum Conservation Project to launch one such initiative: a new centre for professional, cultural and community activities related to Herculaneum's heritage in a joint venture with the Soprintendenza Speciale di Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei and the British School at Rome.

The Herculaneum Centre (www.herculaneumcentre.org) was launched in 2007 and is working in five key areas: participation, training, research, think tank, access. The positive repercussions of the Centre's activities in the local community and in management of the archaeological site are already perceptible. The Herculaneum Conservation Project and its project team continues to work with the Herculaneum Centre in pursuit of its mission. The Centre will play a key role in ensuring Herculaneum remains an open classroom for good conservation approaches long after the lifetime of HCP.