



15 Feb 2018 - British School at Rome, Valle Giulia - Rome

# EXPLORING THE DESERTUM - APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF EARLY MEDIEVAL MONASTIC LANDSCAPES

A one day conference hosted by Newcastle University in collaboration with the BSR



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## Featuring

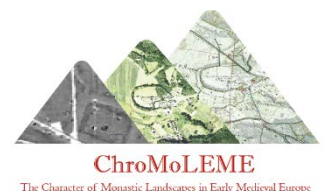
**Sam Turner** (Newcastle University) **Sauro Gelichi** (Università Ca' Foscari) **Martin Carver** (University of York)  
**Francesca Romana Stasolla** (La Sapienza) **Jose Maria Sanchez Pardo** (Universidade de Santiago de Compostella)  
**Elenora Destefanis** (Università di Piemonte Orientale) **Sebastien Bully – Morana Causevic Bully** (Université de Franche Comté) **Gabriele Castiglia** (Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana)

The *desertum* is a common leitmotif in the early medieval accounts of monastic foundations. Although it has long been recognised that the *desertum* in question most likely referred to a spiritual desert in which the founder and their followers could separate themselves from the secular world, it is only in the past decades that a concerted effort has been undertaken to situate monastic sites within their wider landscape context. Traditionally the focus of archaeological research on monasteries has been on the site itself and in particular on the development of the church plan and the evolution towards the most characteristic form of monastic organisation with the acceptance of the cloister design.

The aim of this conference is to put the landscape in which early medieval monasteries were founded at centre stage. By considering a number of different approaches to studying monastic landscapes, from a wide range of geographical contexts, the event will allow us to build up a clearer picture of the reality of the *desertum*. The result of this will be a discussion on the insights that a landscape study can give us on the origins and functions of the sites in question. Of particular concern will be questions of the role of monasteries in the Christianisation of the rural landscape, their relationship with social/political/economic networks, issues of authority governing the monasteries (episcopal, royal, aristocratic), the interaction of early monasteries with pre-existing religious sites (both pagan and Christian) and the meaning of a religious site within a landscape conceived and perceived in different ways.

Building on the longstanding collaborative relationship between Newcastle University and the British School at Rome, the choice of setting for the event is aimed at maximising participation from as diverse a field as possible, bringing together invited foreign researchers, Italian leaders in the research of early medieval monastic foundations and members of the many national research institutes based in Rome.

To reserve a place email: [emmet.marron@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:emmet.marron@newcastle.ac.uk)



## Conference Programme

09:00 – 10:00 – Conference Registration

### Morning Session – 10:00 – 13:00

**10:00** – **Gabriele Castiglia** - *Monasticism in Late Antique and Early Medieval Tuscany: What Kind of Landscapes?*

**10:30** – **Sam Turner** - *Early Medieval Monastic and Ecclesiastic Landscapes in the Central Aegean.*

**11:00** – Coffee Break

**11:15** – **Sebastien Bully and Morena Causevic Bully** – *Archaeology of an insular ecclesiastical landscape in the northern Adriatic : the Kvarner Archipeligo (Croatia) between the 5th and 11th centuries.*

**11:45** – **Eleonora Destefanis** – *Monastic landscapes between ideological representation and archaeological evidence: the case of Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*

**12:25** – Discussion

### 13:00 – 14:00 - Lunch

### Afternoon Session – 14:00 – 18:00

**14:00** – **Jose Carlos Sanchez Pardo** – *Monastic landscapes in early medieval Northwest Iberia: the case of Samos abbey*

**14:30** – **Sauro Gelichi** – *Between lands and prayers: the beginnings of Nonantola monastery*

**15:00** – Coffee Break

**15:15** – **Francesca Stasolla** – *‘Paesaggi monastici benedettini nell’Italia centrale in età altomedievale’*

**15:45** – **Martin Carver** - *Early Medieval Monasteries as political instruments*

**16:25** – Discussion

### 17:00 – Concluding Remarks