



Earlier today in a press conference, the heads of the third stage of the Can Blai excavation—Dr Jordi Fernández and Ricardo González, professor of ancient history and archaeology at Université de Nice Sophia Antipolis—announced the principle conclusions that have been drawn from the fieldwork done this month by a group of 23 participating students of 13 different European universities.

Timeline confirmed

“We’ve been able to confirm that the ruins were indeed a Roman fort from early IV century,” explained Ricardo González, “though doubts remain as to whether construction was ever completed”. In the surrounding area members of the team also discovered a cistern which may have belonged to the fort and of which prospection will be conducted at a later point in time.

The researchers say within two years time they hope to produce a monograph on the archaeological site and a publication explaining the function of the Can Blai fort. Jordi Fernández said the discovery of the fort on Spanish territory was “extremely unusual” and as a result asked that it be “restored and placed within reach of visitors to the island—this is part of the patrimony of Formentera”.

Council to beautify site and surroundings

Susana Labrador, councillor of culture and patrimony of the Formentera Council, explained the work being done by her office to showcase this part of Formentera's past. “Informational plaques are going to be placed in the environs and any pertinent restitutions will be made as well. Our goal is to share these findings—and information about what life at this fort, in that era, would have been like—with the community and everyone else interested”.

Work at the site falls under the umbrella of an archaeological research project entitled Can Blai.

Un fortín bajoimperial de vigilancia costera en el Mediterráneo occidental (Can Blai. A lower-imperial coastal-surveillance fort in the Western Mediterranean). According to the Can Blai researchers, evidence suggests that in the first decade of the IV century Rome placed some 80 men at the fort to maintain vigil over the island and prevent the disembarkation of potential enemies.

Funding for the initiative has been provided by Fondation Unice. The Formentera Council has contributed all necessary materials and logistical planning for the digs themselves, as well as giving accommodation and meeting food costs of the students.

New project

Ricardo González is already in the planning stages of a new project to take place in the Punta Pedrera (translatable in English as 'quarry point') zone of the island. The aim of the project will be to see if the quarries at that site were used to supply stone for construction of the Can Blai fort, and in passing expand the base of scientific knowledge on a site threatened by “marine erosion and the passage of a great number of visitors”.