

“It doesn’t start with the Romans.” This remark, made by my field school director, Dr. Emma Ljung, stuck with me throughout my entire five weeks with the Santa Susana Archaeological Project. In addition to the amazing opportunity of excavating a Roman *villa rustica*, one of the field school’s primary objectives was to broaden our understanding of archaeology and the significance of ethical practices. Our team’s efforts were to gain a deeper understanding of not only the Roman



Offering our site deity, Endovelicus, an olive tree root

Empire, but also the villa’s historical context in Redondo, Portugal. Therefore, being as thoughtful as possible in every process was extremely important in preserving Redondo and Portugal’s cultural heritage. Additionally, this site is one of the longest-running excavations in Iberia, as its first season was held in 2013. The site spans over 5,000 square meters, with only a fraction of its structures exposed. Its artifacts date back to the first century B.C.E. through the fifth century C.E., as well as the Iron Age, so there is still much to discover about the occupational history of this fascinating site.



A herd of cows grazing near site

A typical day began with a 7:00 am van ride from our houses to the site. For the first three weeks of the field school, I primarily worked within the *pars urbana* of the villa. This was the first trench of the project, where they found intricate mosaic flooring. As far as the excavation itself, the dirt in Portugal is almost as hard as concrete. Since this was my first



I am on the left excavating a portion of the trench

time attending a field school, I had to learn the best ways to utilize a small hand pickaxe, a Portuguese trowel, and a brush. My trench supervisor, Dr. Betsy Bevis, tremendously helped with this. Working within this trench, I was also taught the proper ways to draw and record the dimensions of stratigraphic units, take elevations using a dumpy level, and identify pottery, building material, and other various finds. As well as the numerous ways in which the

*pars urbana* was utilized and modified throughout its occupation. Additionally, I had to adapt to working in uniquely shaped units in order to excavate efficiently. My favorites earned the names “wrench trench” and “the pit.” Our work on site usually concluded around 1:00 pm, but as the heat in Portugal quickly intensified, days would end earlier around 12:00 pm.

After site every day, we would go to a local restaurant and eat a family-style lunch together. We enjoyed the most delicious soups, meats, and fruits, prepared by the amazing Vicente. In the afternoons was pottery washing, which was a true team effort. Even as tedious as it was, washing sherds was one of my favorite parts of the day. I learned a lot about the diversity of ceramics found in the villa just by washing them. It was especially fascinating to differentiate pottery made with Portuguese clay from imported ceramics. In the evenings, we would gather at the “dinner house” for



Learning how to take elevations

food and lectures, where we discussed the functions of Roman villas and ancient agricultural production, the region's history, and the agency of local cultures under Roman occupation. On weekends, we went on field trips to various archaeological sites across the Alentejo Region. We visited the city of Évora, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to a beautiful Temple of Diana. As well as Ammaia, a massive Roman city and the other major archaeological project in Iberia. I spent the last two weeks of the project either in lab or excavating in the site's



Sifting dirt for finds

newest trench. Through this trench, I learned how geophysical techniques like ground-penetrating radar and magnetometry contribute to the archaeological process and aid in determining where new trenches are formed. During lab, I was taught how to record finds and the preservation and conservation of artifacts. I learned about diagnostic sherds versus non-diagnostic sherds, and the various uses of ceramics in the ancient world, which was incredibly insightful into understanding the everyday experience of the villa's inhabitants.

Excavating at Santa Susana was a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I am deeply grateful for the support provided by the Archaeological Institute of America and the Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship. This opportunity allowed me to gain hands-on knowledge of Portugal's material history under Roman occupation and taught me the practical skills of excavation. As well, fieldwork and lab exposed me to the scientific side of historical research, which was extremely enriching. I'm thankful for such incredible supervisors, who were so dedicated to our learning experience, including Dr. Emma Ljung of Princeton University and Rui Mataloto, the head Portuguese archaeologist and co-director of the program.