

Alma Mater Studiorum Università di Bologna
Archivio istituzionale della ricerca

Marta Conventi, Luigi Gambaro, Marina Lo Blundo, Maura Medri, Le ville romane di Sanremo. Roma - Bristol: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2024; 328 pp., 276 figs; 24 cm (Studia Archaeologica; 262)

This is the final peer-reviewed author's accepted manuscript (postprint) of the following publication:

Published Version:

Ferritto, R. (2025). Marta Conventi, Luigi Gambaro, Marina Lo Blundo, Maura Medri, Le ville romane di Sanremo. Roma - Bristol: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 2024; 328 pp., 276 figs; 24 cm (Studia Archaeologica; 262). BABESCH. BULLETIN ANTIEKE BESCHAVING, 100, 210-211 [10.2143/BAB.100.0.3294531].

Availability:

This version is available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/11585/1035194> since: 2026-01-05

Published:

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.2143/BAB.100.0.3294531>

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MARTA CONVENTI, LUIGI GAMBARO, MARINA LO BLUNDO, MAURA MEDRI, *Le Ville Romane di Sanremo*. Roma – Bristol: “L’Erma” di Bretschneider, 2024. 328 pp., 276 figs., 24 cm (Studia Archaeologica; 262). – ISBN 978-88-913-1023-1.

This book presents results from archaeological excavations and wall studies directed by the University of Genoa at the Roman maritime villas of Foce (2004-2005) and Bussana (2005-2006), located c. 2 and 6 km, respectively, from Sanremo, Liguria. It also includes results from commercial archaeological investigations at the railway passing near the villas and a preservation project involving the university, the Municipality of Sanremo, and the Superintendency. The Foce Villa remains show part of its *pars urbana*, i.e. a well-equipped *balneum*, along with other residential rooms and garden areas. Based on the findings, the villa is dated to the Augustan age. According to the villa’s reconstruction its model featured separate units harmoniously integrated into the landscape and the apsidal *piscina calida* had sea-view windows. The terraced Bussana Villa, built on a slope overlooking the sea, is dated to the late 1st c. AD. The discovered rooms are part of a production area, for olive oil and wine. A funerary monument decorated with a niche and possible statues is outside the villa and indicates local burial practices and the owner’s association with it.

The book consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 provides a compelling overview of Sanremo’s ancient topography, where the two villas are located. The chapter then analyses the viability and concludes with an overview of western Liguria’s coast from the 16th to 18th centuries, utilising municipal records and maps, and insights into Sanremo’s agricultural economy from medieval to modern times. Chapter 2, contains a comprehensive review of the history of excavations on the two villas, based on archival material collected at the superintendency ‘SAPAB Genova e La Spezia’. In Chapter 3, the authors present the excavation results at Foce Villa, providing a rich documentation, including photographs, plans, elevations, tables of artifact drawings, and 3-D reconstructions. The first paragraph discusses earlier structures on the villa site, as parts of a 1st c. BC farm. The villa rooms are then described, providing in-depth analyses of their building techniques and functions. A discussion on the post-classical reuse of the villa site for modern structures, as an 18th c. house and for two irrigation systems (*pozzi a cicogna*, like the Egyptian *shaduf*), is also provided. Paragraph 3.2 analyses the excavation artifacts, among which are: Italic, African, and south-Gaul *sigillata*, amphorae, coins, and building materials. The chapter concludes with a reconstruction of the original villa design. Chapter 4 details the excavation results at Bussana Villa, beginning with an earlier pottery kiln discovered on-site. It provides an analysis of the villa remains, and describes a modern farmhouse built on it. In paragraph 4.2, due to lack of findings during the excavation, the authors reference artifacts collected by the superintendency in 1981-1982, such as various ceramics, a late 1st-century AD tile stamped by Lucius Heren-

nus Optatus, and a Hadrianic coin. Chapter 5 explores Sanremo’s coastal landscape, highlighting the railway’s positive effects on the local economy and tourism, as well as the use of Foce and Bussana villas as military forts during WWII. It also discusses conservation efforts for the Roman villas, emphasizing improved public access and promotional activities like exhibitions and digital tours. The final chapter presents conservation efforts for the Roman villas, enhancing accessibility and promotion through exhibitions, guides, and digital tours.

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the data obtained from the excavations at the two villas, while limited, have been thoroughly explored. The authors approach the issue from a solid documentary basis, as evidenced by the extensive descriptions of individual rooms, appropriately accompanied by images to aid in understanding the text. However, based on the scant structures, it is difficult to reconstruct the original design of the two sites and to identify their architectural models. The Foce Villa, for example, is attributed to the pavilion model, albeit with insufficient data. The discussion would have benefited from a comparative assessment of the 14 maritime villas identified along the Ligurian coast. Additionally, the interesting funerary structure at the Bussana Villa could be compared with those found in other maritime villas, especially in the provincial models, as seen in the Iberian Peninsula. Nonetheless the substance of the work is not compromised. It is a valuable work of synthesis of the villas of Foce and Bussana, built on a firm methodological foundation.

Roberta Ferritto