

Lepcis Magna Excavations

**Preliminary Report
1994**

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Lepcis Magna Excavations 94
(04/09 - 02/10/1994)

I had a very successful season in Libya receiving a good reception and full support for the excavations at Lepcis from Mr. Ali Khdouri, President of the Department of Antiquities and Mr Eshtewee Mustafa Eshtewee the Controller of Lepcis. They were both pleased by the presence of the Society for Libyan Studies at Lepcis as they believe that this may generate further interest in the site.

Travel:

We travelled with AirTunis, London-Tunis-Djerba (04/09/94); Djerba-Tunis-London (02/10/1994). Land transport from Djerba to Lepcis and back was courtesy of the Department of Antiquities.

Team Members:

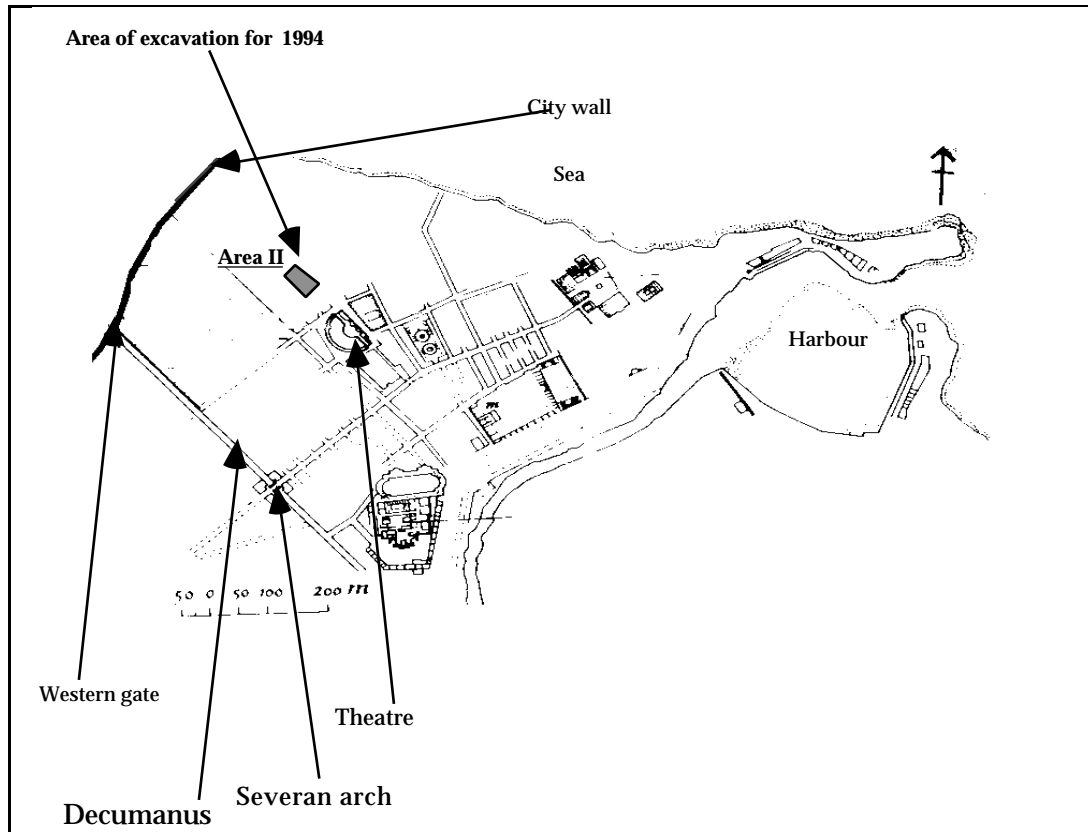
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George H J Carleton	King's College London
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Excavation work:

During the pre-excavation exploratory work and after much consideration , it was decided to start excavating at Area II partly as a result of the quality of our survey findings and also out of consideration for the practicalities of excavation, specifically disposing of the spoil and fulfilling our academic objectives.

Area II is situated in an insula west of the theatre which the site authorities believe might contain an Odeion. There is a height differential with the nearest road surface of 3.5 m. An area 25 x 35 m was cleared bisecting the insula block during the last season but only the N-W quarter of this area was dug this season.

The result of the resistivity survey provided the most satisfactory image and showed masonry structures and traces of robbed masonry walls. I am happy to report that our finding in the excavated area matched the results of the resistivity survey.



Excavation set-up:

Setting up the railway line:

With the help of the Controller of Lepcis a railway track was laid with a junction and tracks in order to dump the spoil into the sea. The work was commissioned on our behalf two weeks before digging started. By the end of season our rail track was linked to the Lepcis network which will enable us to use the engine next season and reduce the dependency on manpower.

Laying out the area of excavation:

The control network which intended to serve the current excavation were rechecked using an EDM temporary borrowed from Misurata Road Company.

A site grid was laid out in the area along with a temporary bench mark (TBM), the surface of a squared stone block being referenced to the datum mark on the old museum building.

Starting the excavations:

Our plan was to achieve the following as part of the project design:

1. Setting up the recording system.
2. Setting up a laboratory for site conservation at the new museum in collaboration with the museum staff.
3. Setting up a finds area in the new museum.
4. Getting a storage areas for finds and equipment.
5. Setting up environmental equipment, and a floatation tank built by the department's technicians.
6. Implementing an ongoing training programme for Libyan participants, which benefited us and furthered good relations between ourselves and the local archaeologists.

The excavation:

The clearing layer proved to be 250 cubic metre of sand. It took about two weeks before we reached the first sequence.

It then became apparent that the site had been robbed of stones during the period 1911-1935. This was confirmed by an elderly local man whose father was involved in removing the visible sandstone and transporting it on camels to Homs for building the harbour and other colonial buildings. The remaining stones and architectural elements were recorded and removed to a reserve area for architectural elements.

The next layers represent the time when the area was abandoned in antiquity and debris and dumping material were tipped into the ruins. These layers were the first indication of the archaeological potential of the site.

After recording and removing the debris, a plan of an urban dwelling became obvious. We were delighted with this discovery because there is little known domestic architecture at Lepcis due to the emphasis on the excavation of monumental buildings.

This domestic house is dominated by an open peristyle court, which is entered from the south within which is a 13 m. deep well. The court has a second entrance on the eastern side through a long narrow corridor to the kitchen. The kitchen area proved to be the richest in finds e.g. coins, glass, a considerable amount of storage amphorae, bronze artefacts e.g. door fittings, and a yard stick, miniature mosaic fragments and a small sculpture of a miniature lion lying under a tree?.

A few environmental samples were collected, to test the new floatation tank, which proved to be successful. The samples are now being processed and the results will be useful as no environmental work has as yet been undertaken at this site.

The overall picture of the life in the city in the area near the theatre, is that public and private structures were mixed together.

According to dates derived from the cleaned coins, this area was last occupied in the late fourth and early fifth centuries AD, reinforcing suggestions that thereafter the city shrank eastwards towards the old parts of the city in the late Roman period.