

## **ITINERARY 4**

### **The Caffarella Valley**

- 1) Tomb of Annia Regilla/Temple of the God Redicolo and former mill Farmhouse
- 2) Vaccareccia Farmhouse
- 3) Egeria Nymphaeum
- 4) Temple of Ceres and Faustina/St. Urban
- 5) Sacred Wood
- 6) Valca Tower
- 7) Constantine Columbarium



#### **1) Tomb of Annia Regilla/Temple of the God Redicolo and former mill Farmhouse**

Half way along the via della Caffarella, on the left, lies a well-conserved, suggestive brickwork tomb in two colours, yellow for the structural parts and red for the decorative motifs, shaped like a small temple and thus mistaken by nineteenth century scholars for the “Temple of the God Redicolo”, the god of return saluted by the Romans at the beginning and end of all their journeys.

It is not even certain if this is the *cenotaph* of Annia Regilla, wife of the Greek politician and philosopher Herod Atticus, who had received a vast estate as dowry for his wife, between the II and III mile of the via Appia, which he dedicated to her memory, following her death in 161 A.D. when she was buried with great honour in Greece, transforming it into a kind of sanctuary, with temples and sacred enclosures, called “Pago Triopio” (possibly in memory of a temple bearing this name at Cnidus, dedicated to Demeter by the mythical king of Thessaly, or the one at Argo, built by Triope, the king of that town).

The building is a sepulchre in the form of a “small temple” built on two floors and made using brickwork of different colours, as was common in the mid II century A.D.: the lower floor housed the burial chamber, whilst the upper storey was used for funeral ceremonies in honour of the deceased. The richer decoration work is to be found on the south side: the wall features two half columns with octagonal shafts and Corinthian capitals, set deeply into the masonry, and two corner pilasters which frame a window with a protruding architrave; two rectangular cavities, one each side of the window, bore inscriptions which are no longer preserved today; the wall is bounded horizontally by a meandering strip. The north and west sides repeat, in more simple form, the decorative design of the main facades, with four pilasters in red brick which divide up the wall, with its three rectangular windows and architraves. In front of the façade on the east side there originally was a four columned porch, which marked off the entrance steps to the upper storey, which is no longer preserved today.

A drawing by Carlo Labruzzi at the end of the XVIII century provides proof that the building was used as a hayloft and beside it a farmhouse and a tower were added. Near the sepulchre there is still in fact an ancient farmhouse which includes the remains of a mill previously used as a “valca” (from the Longobard term “walkan”, to roll), a device for washing clothes - and a tower forming part of the defence system for the Caffarella valley. Administrative area: the Rome Town Council  
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## 2) Vaccareccia Farmhouse

At the centre of the vast estate owned by the Caffarelli family, which developed the Almone valley and combined the entire area into a single farming unit, lies the vast Vaccareccia Farmhouse. Built during the XVI century, this already appears in the Latium charter of Eufrosino della Volpaia of 1547; it incorporates a pre-existing tower dating from the XIII century, in small blocks of tuff and marble chips, its upper part emerging through the single slope of the farmhouse roof. The main body of the complex consists of an arcade with arches resting on granite columns and Corinthian marble capitals, supporting the residential rooms on the piano nobile; further additions were made, perpendicular to the main nucleus, in the form of functional buildings for the farming purposes of the estate, with sturdy support buttresses lining the side facing towards the valley.

At the end of the XVII century the estate passed into the hands of the Pallavicini family, who handed it over to the Torlonias in 1816.



### 3) Egeria Nymphaeum

Excavated artificially in the side of the hill lies the monument known as the “Egeria Grotto”: a suggestive, rectangular nymphaeum, with a large niche at the rear and three smaller niches on the sides, used to house statues of the river divinities, from which flowed mineral water, coming from a spring situated beneath the via Appia Pignatelli; today a half-reclining male statue, perhaps representing the god Almona, is preserved in the rear niche, from which water flows. In addition the grotto has a forepart with two side rooms, also decorated with niches. The walls of this construction were originally clad with white and green marble slabs and a mosaic of vitreous paste of various colours, whereas the barrel vault ceiling, clad with pumice stone, simulated the inside of a natural grotto. Originally the nymphaeum faced towards the river with a four-columned porch, no longer preserved today, marking off a rectangular swimming pool filled with the mineral water, which in turn collected in a larger lake basin, possibly to be identified in the “*Lacus Salutaris*” known through ancient sources, into which flowed the waters of the river Almona. The nymphaeum, built in “Opus Mixtum” web-work and brick, can be dated from the mid II century A.D.



### 4) Temple of Ceres and Faustina/St. Urban

An ancient temple, built in a dominant position overlooking the Caffarella valley, which was transformed in the IX century into a church dedicated to St. Urban, a

bishop who became a martyr at the time of Marcus Aurelius. The building owes its current aspect to the radical restoration work carried out in 1634, under pope Urban VIII, who had a brick wall added between the two columns of the front porch to maintain the structure static. The original shape of the building is that of a small temple on a high podium, the latter remaining unseen because it is buried below ground, entirely built of brick, with the exception of the four columns on the front and the architrave, made of Pentelikon marble, whose quarries, located near to Athens, were owned by Herod Atticus.

The temple is probably to be identified as the one dedicated by Herod Atticus to Ceres, the divinity associated with vegetation and harvesting, and to Faustina, the deceased wife of the Emperor Antoninus Pius, who was made a divinity: one of the "Trioepic inscriptions" discovered in front of St. Sebastian, mentions this temple, inside which the statue of Annia Regilla was preserved.

The chamber, rectangular in shape, has its inside walls divided into three horizontal strips, the centre one featuring panels marked off by small brick pilasters with Corinthian capitals in Peperino stone; the ceiling consists of a barrel vault decorated in stucco: a frieze with trophies of arms at the bottom and a series of octagon-shaped partitions at the top; a male and a female figure can be made out in the octagon preserved in the centre, in the act of moving forward in a procession, bearing votive offerings for the divinity: this is probably Herod Atticus and his wife Annia Regilla, thus confirming the identification of the temple.

Paintings are preserved inside the room which can be dated from the XI century, representing scenes of the New Testament, St. Urban and St. Cecilia. Then there is a Madonna with Child, from the X century, or even earlier, between St John and St. Urban, present in the crypt beneath the altar.

## **5) Sacred Wood**

In front of the church of St. Urban on a small hillock there are three holm-oaks: this is all that remains of a famous wood of age-old holm-oaks, mistakenly identified since the Renaissance as the "Sacred wood of Egeria", where, according to ancient Roman tradition, the king Numa Pompilius is said to have met the nymph Egeria, from whom he drew inspiration for compiling the sacred laws of Rome; this sacred wood, on the other hand, can probably be identified with the lake and the wood of the Camenas, located inside the Aurelian walls, in the area of the "passeggiata Archeologica" of our time.



## 6) Valca Tower

Continuing past the Egeria Nymphaeum, towards the via dell'Almone, you come across a medieval tower built between the XII and XIII centuries to control a bridge over the river Almone (a small wooden bridge is preserved today); the building technique using small, parallelepiped blocks of tuff enables us to date it from the XII-XIII centuries. The tower, which was defended by a barbican (first wall of defence) and equipped with a drawbridge leading directly to the first storey, probably housed a valca.



## 7) Constantine Columbarium

The so-called Constantine Columbarium is in fact a sepulchre in the form of a small temple of the II century A.D., in the floor of the Caffarella valley, near to the Appia Nuova. The monument has a rectangular base and two stories, with a front porch (the two columns have not been preserved), built in yellow brick as regards the structural part and using red brick for the decorative motifs. The lower floor housed the funeral chamber, reached by a door on the long, north-east side, where the sarcophagi were placed, while the upper floor was used, as was customary, for the funeral services. During the Middle Ages the building was transformed into a mill: water was regulated by a lock and channelled into the building to turn a horizontal millstone.

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