



ministère de la Culture
et de la Communication
ministère de
l'Enseignement supérieur
et de la Recherche

seine-saint-denis
LE DÉPARTEMENT

Inrap

Institut national
de recherches
archéologiques
préventives

Press Release
17 May 2011

Excavations in the centre of Bondy : vestiges from almost two thousand years ago



For more than six years, several operations of preventive archaeology have been carried out in the centre of Bondy. The successive excavations have revealed, between the Church and the Hôtel de Ville, traces of ancient and medieval occupations, dating from the 3rd to the 11th centuries AD. This quarter is at present the object of a new urban planning project by Bondy Habitat. Inrap and the Office of Archaeology of Seine-Saint-Denis have associated in order to excavate this site, curated by the State (Drac, Île-de-France).

Successive funerary spaces

Between the 3rd and the 5th centuries AD, a vast necropolis was established on the site. With more than 400 graves, it has now been partially excavated. The deceased were placed in coffins of which archaeologists have sometimes found traces of wood and some nails. Brought to light in 2007, seven stone sarcophagi, aligned on a north-south axis, marked the limit of the necropolis. An eighth sarcophagus is at present being excavated.

During the Merovingian epoch (6th-8th centuries), funeral practices evolved and the necropolis moved towards the south-west. Early in the 7th century, one of the most ancient textual sources, the Testament of Ermentrude, relates the presence of a Church in Bondy, around which the cemetery was created. Previous excavations revealed the presence of plaster sarcophagi, sometimes decorated. The deceased were buried in them dressed, and adorned with belt plates and pins to fasten the clothes.

In 2007, the excavation at the foot of the church revealed graves of plague victims. The deceased, sometimes in groups of five, were placed in multiple graves. This discovery of victims of the terrible 1348 plague is exceptional in the Île-de-France region. Genetic and carbon 14 dating have confirmed this discovery.

A Carolingian village

Today, archaeologists are discovering an important Carolingian village of the 9th-11th century. Searchers have cleared numerous pole holes indicating imposing buildings and outline Bondy's urban organization, of more than a thousand years ago. Also present are « hut bases », small structures excavated sometimes housing weaving looms. Ovens, grain silos, ditches for evacuating rainwater and structuring the space complete the ensemble.

Developer **Bondy Habitat**
Scientific control **Regional Archaeological Service (Drac Île-de-France)**
Archaeological research **Inrap, Département de la Seine-Saint-Denis**
Site director **Cyrille Le Forestier, Inrap**

Contacts

Mahaut Tyrrell
chargée de communication médias
Inrap, service des partenariats et relations avec les médias
01 40 08 80 24 – mahaut.tyrrell@inrap.fr

Laure Ferry
Chargée du développement culturel et de la communication
Inrap, direction interrégionale Centre – Île-de-France
01 41 83 75 51 – laure.ferry@inrap.fr

Claude Héron
Département de la Seine-Saint-Denis
06 24 15 36 59 – cheron@cg93.fr