

Press release
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An Antique temple is discovered under the Jacobins convent in Rennes



Since December 2011, a team of Inrap archaeologists has been excavating the site of the Jacobins convent in Rennes. This work is curated by the State (Drac Burgundy). The site is located in the future location of the Rennes Métropole conference center and is one of the largest urban excavations ever realized in western France.

Inside the convent, in the cloister garden and exterior courtyards, the archaeologists are studying the Antique quarter and its evolution as a Medieval suburb, as well as retracing the history of the convent.

Many Gallo-Roman remains have been uncovered, including a temple from the 3rd century AD. At the same time, a study of the walls of the convent has revealed the architectural evolution of the building from the 14th to 18th centuries.

A dynamic quarter in the Antique city of *Condate* (1st to 4th centuries)

The 8000 meter squares excavated provide an opportunity to study an entire block in the Antique city of *Condate*. This quarter, delimited by four roads, grew rapidly between the 1st and 4th centuries BC. The excavation of nearly 2 meters in depth has uncovered an accumulation of roads, walls, buildings, and other remains. In the cloister garden, large edifices from the 3rd to 4th centuries – public buildings or large urban houses – succeed the artisan workshops that bordered a major axis of the Gallo-Roman city in a north-south, or *cardo*, direction.

In the northern courtyard of the convent, the archaeologists have just uncovered a major intersection of the city, in the middle of which stood a temple. This is an unexpected discovery of the first Antique public building in Rennes, except for the small wall and other traces of an honorary arch. This temple built on a podium is 9 meters long and quadrangular, with a staircase on one side. Two statues (a cock and a billy goat) found nearby could indicate a devotion to Mercury. This god of commerce, travelers and crossroads would fit perfectly well in this busy quarter that bustled with artisan and commercial activities.

Revisiting the history of the Jacobins convent

Founded in the 14th century, the Jacobins convent played a major role in the religious activities of the Brittany capital and in regional politics until the 18th century. After being largely restructured during the 17th century, it then declined during the Revolution before being used as a military armory during the 19th and 20th centuries. The army retained ownership of it until 2002 when it was acquired by Rennes Métropole. The Jacobins convent was classed as an historic monument in 1991.

The current research associates the excavation of basements with a study of the buildings in order to better understand the evolution of the convent from the time of its construction to the present. The capitulary room, where the brothers gathered, is located in the middle of a space that is now open. The remains of the first capitulary room were recently found a little to the south. Numerous decorative elements show that this was a thriving religious establishment. The floors of the Bonne-Nouvelle chapel and the galleries of the cloisters were composed of red

floor tiles (*tomettes*) forming motifs and whose imprints are still clearly visible. They were associated with painted columns adorned with sculpted capitals. The Jacobins convent was also an important sepulchral site with numerous graves dating from the beginning of the 15th to the 18th century. Several hundreds of graves were excavated in the church and the gallery of wall-niche tombs. They will enable an in-depth study of the physical characteristics of those inhumed there.

Public opening for the European Heritage Days

For the European Heritage Days, the site will be open to the public on Saturday the 15th and Sunday the 16th of September, from 10:00 to 18:00.

The entrance is at 4 rue d'Échange.

Bring sturdy, comfortable shoes. Free entry.

Presentations at 11:00 and 15:00 and continuous film projections at the Vieux Saint-Etienne theater, 12 rue d'Échange, in Rennes. Free entry.

Inrap

With nearly 2000 collaborators and researchers, Inrap is the largest archaeological research structure in France and one of the most important in Europe. Each year, this public research institution realizes approximately 1500 diagnostic archaeological operations and 250 excavations in partnership with private and public developers in mainland France and its overseas territories. Its missions also include the scientific exploitation of the results and the diffusion of archaeological knowledge to the public.

Developer **Rennes Métropole**

Curation **Service régional de l'Archéologie (Drac Bretagne)**

Archaeological research **Inrap**

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