

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF THE PLANS DE SANTA CATERINA

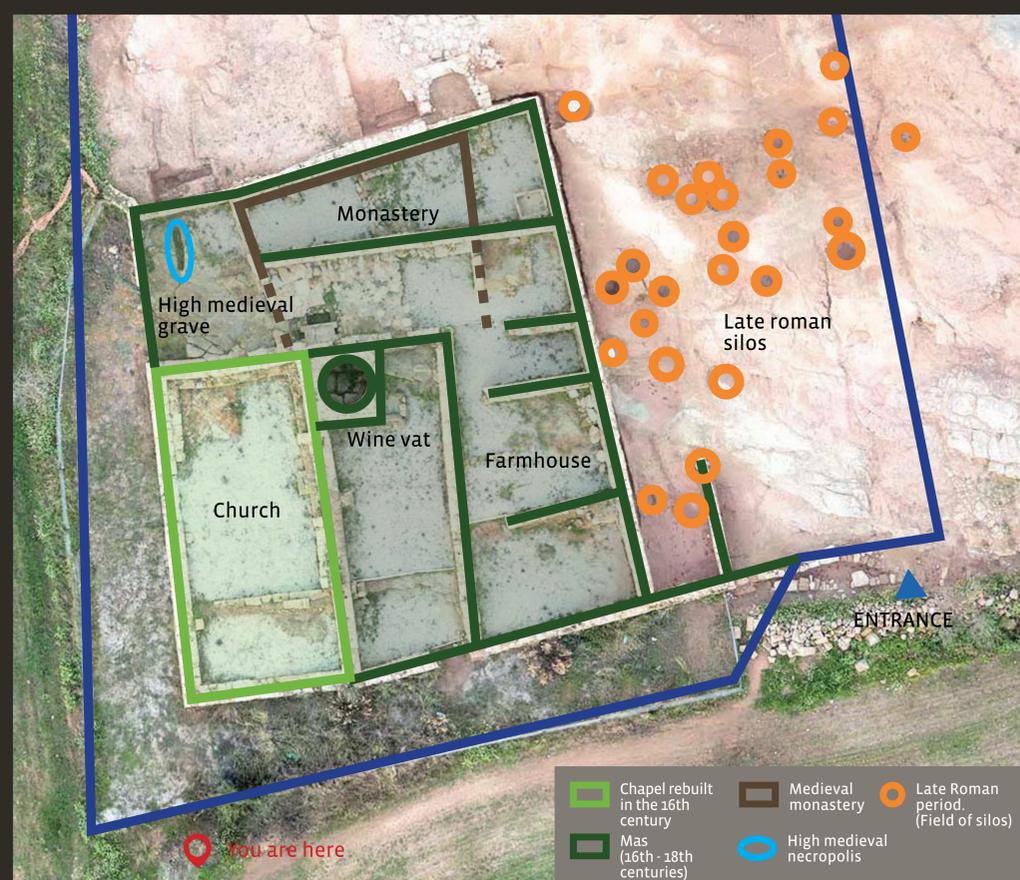
1st - 18th centuries

From roman villa to the chapel of Santa Caterina

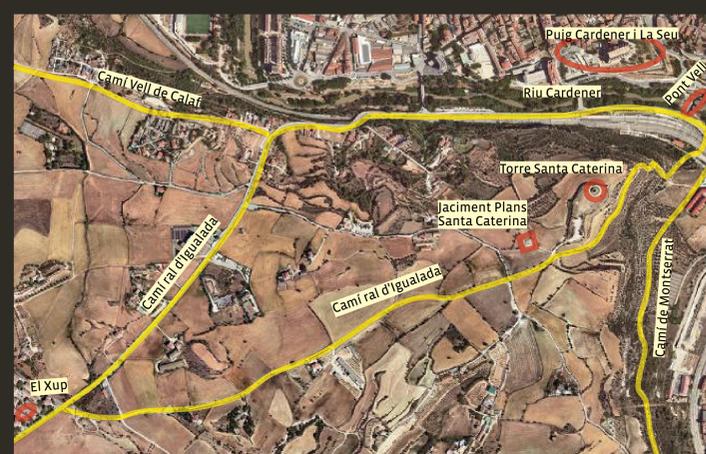
The constructive remains that you can see correspond to the chapel of Santa Caterina and a farmhouse erected next to it. Previously, between the 1st and 5th centuries AD, there was probably a Roman villa in this area. In medieval period, around the 13th century, the small monastery of Sant Cristòfol was built here, inhabited by a group of nuns who depended on La Seu de Manresa. In the 15th century, during the Catalan Civil War, the monastery was destroyed. In 1502 the chapel was rebuilt, now dedicated to Santa Caterina, and a farmhouse was built on top of the old monastery. The complex was abandoned at the beginning of the 19th century. In 1839, the Santa Caterina artillery tower was built (located 400 m to the northeast). It seems that it was made with the stones from the ruined farmhouse and chapel, of which the traces were lost over the years. Until they were rediscovered and, between 2020 and 2024, the subject of an archaeological excavation.

A very special place

From this place you can enjoy privileged views over the area now occupied by the city of Manresa and its surroundings. A very old road, of Roman or earlier origin, used to pass through here, leaving from the Old Bridge (Pont Vell) area, going towards the present-day Xup neighbourhood and heading towards Igualada. That is why the monastery was located at this point. Sant Cristòfol was regarded as a protector of travellers, who would get stuck there when they set out on a perilous journey.



Aerial photograph of the site



Main roads in medieval times



View of Manresa according to an anonymous painting from the 17th or 18th century preserved in the Museum of Manresa (MCM 1001). At the top right you can see the chapel of Santa Caterina still standing.

For information and visits:

Museu de Manresa - Museu del Barroc de Catalunya: +34 93 874 11 55; info@museudemanresa.cat; museudemanresa.cat



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF THE PLANS DE SANTA CATERINA

1st - 18th centuries

The archaeological remains that you see are the result of human presence and activity in this area for almost 2,000 years. In each period, previous constructions have been reappropriated or destroyed so that, in many cases, the structures have come down to us in fragments or in part.

Main phases of the site

1. Roman imperial villa (1st-3rd centuries)

The first settlement was very probably of the villa type, a kind of a country house. It must have had an urban or *residential pars* and a *rustic pars*, where tasks related to farming were carried out. The level of the land was approximately one meter higher than it is today. At some point there was a large excavation, possibly to level the land, so that the buildings were razed to the ground. From the Early Roman period, a pottery forge has been preserved, as well as some other minor productive structures.

2. Late Roman settlement (4th-6th centuries)

During this period the village evolved and perhaps ended up losing some of its functions. A large number of silos were opened up (holes for storing grain), and some very simple semi-underground dwellings were built.

3. Early medieval necropolis (9th-12th centuries)

This place was very probably a sacred place, with a set of tombs dug into the rock where the church was later erected.

4. Medieval monastery (13th-15th centuries)

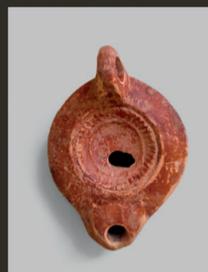
At this time there was a small monastery dedicated to Sant Cristòfol and inhabited by nuns and, later, canonesses. It had a church, a transition between Romanesque and Gothic, and a small annex building.

5. Chapel and farmhouse (16th-18th centuries)

After being destroyed, the chapel was rebuilt in 1502, and a small farmhouse was built on top of the monastery's outbuildings. These are, basically, the constructive remains that can be seen today and which include characteristic elements of a wine-making operation, such as an archaic type of vat or the remains of press.



Agricultural system (5th-6th centuries AD)



Oil lamp (1st-3rd centuries AD)



Loom weight (3rd-6th centuries AD)



Aerial photograph of the site

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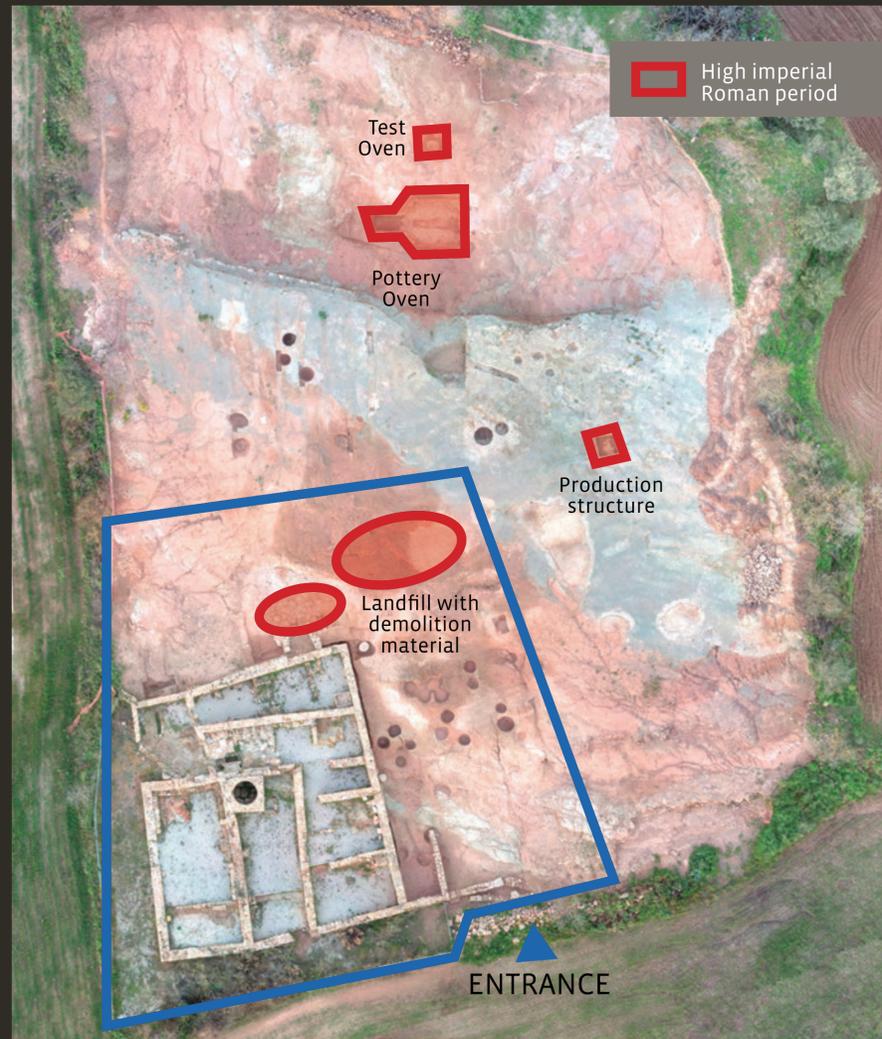
Precauciones:

- Dogs without a leash are forbidden
- Respect the site, don't go on the walls
- Don't eat in the archaeological site
- Irregular path. Be careful

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A PROBABLE ROMAN VILLA



Aerial photograph of the site

Manresa and El Bages in Roman period

In Roman times, Bages was an eminently rural territory, probably populated by a series of villa and small settlements. The most important ones were located on the outskirts of the Pla de Bages, at control points on the main roads. They were in Boades (Castellgalí) and Sant Amanç de Viladés (Rajadell). The nearest towns were *Ausa* (Vic), *Sigarra* (Prats de Rei) and *Egara* (Terrassa). Puig Cardener, where the basilica of La Seu stands today, was an important nucleus: in Iberian times there was a settlement that may have continued through the ages and, in late Roman times, there was a necropolis of human tombs.

The Roman villa of Els Plans de Santa Caterina

Els Plans de Santa Caterina is the clearest example of a Roman villa in Manresa. Despite the fact that its buildings have been practically razed to the ground due to a general reworking of the land, it has been possible to document a large number of objects and building material, especially that which was found in two landfills, dating from around the 3rd century.

As usual, it must have had an *urban pars*, where its inhabitants lived, of which we do not know the specific location. We have found blocks of rubble and remains of stucco painted in red and white. Objects from domestic life have also been found, such as tins, pottery (handmade and common), an iron hook and 8 weights of cloth (*pondus*). The village had to remain active until the 3rd century. Subsequently, it underwent a great transformation



Loom weights (*pondus*), 3rd-6th centuries AD.



Oil lamp, 1st-3rd centuries AD.

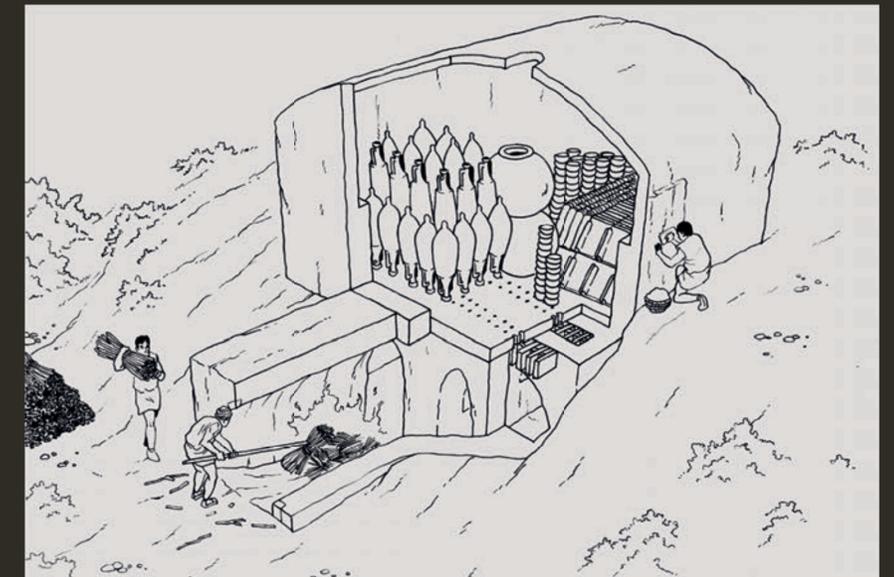
The *pars rustica*

Roman villas used to have a rustic *pars*, where there were the typical facilities of a rural farm, in this case dedicated mainly to cereals and wine. Remains of *dolia* have been found at the site: large caves where wine was usually stored.

The foundations of a large pottery kiln, which could be used to make common pottery, tiles, bricks or amphorae, have also been preserved. The amphorae could be used to export wine or oil. This pot was abandoned in the 3rd century, after having been reused for some time for another purpose.

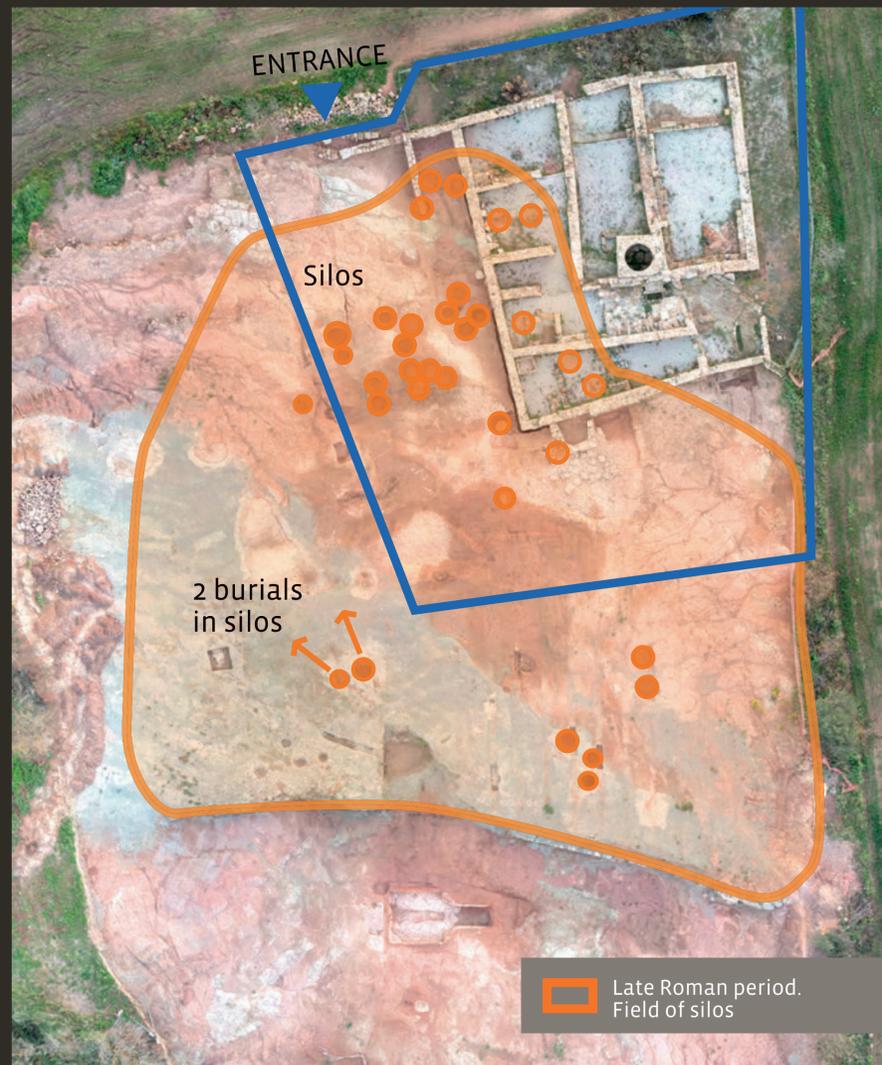
Reconstruction of the ceramic kiln

It followed the usual typology of Roman kiln: it had a front chamber (*prae-furnium*) from which the stove was fed, which was located under the cooking chamber. This had a forged door that allowed the ladder to reach the upper chamber, where the fish were cooked.



Reconstruction of the kiln (drawing by Sergi Segura)

LATE ROMAN SETTLEMENT



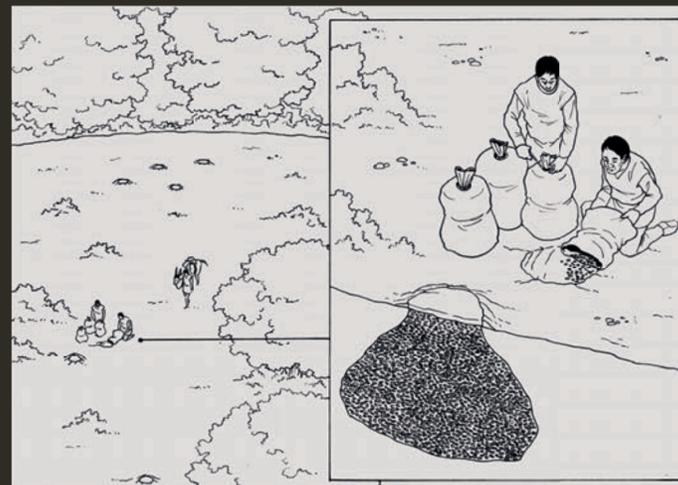
Aerial photograph of the site

An extensive and irregular Field of Silos

Around the 4th-6th centuries, in the late Roman period, the village probably evolved towards a more precarious type of settlement with more segregated production sectors. A large field of silos has been preserved, about fifty of which have been excavated and which are irregularly distributed, perhaps because they were made at different times and without much planning. There is evidence of hut foundations that indicate the existence of simple half-underground dwellings that were used by families from the countryside.

The silos and the grain storing

The silos were large, ovoid-shaped, earthen foras that were used to store the grain. They were covered with a stone slab. Before the grain was poured in, a layer of straw was placed there, so that the grain could be preserved for a long time, even for years. The existence of large fields of silos are indicative of a farm oriented towards cereal growing. The late Roman period silos are characterised by the fact that they are not very large. When they had finished their function they were usually used as litters and were opened up again.



Drawing by Sergi Segura

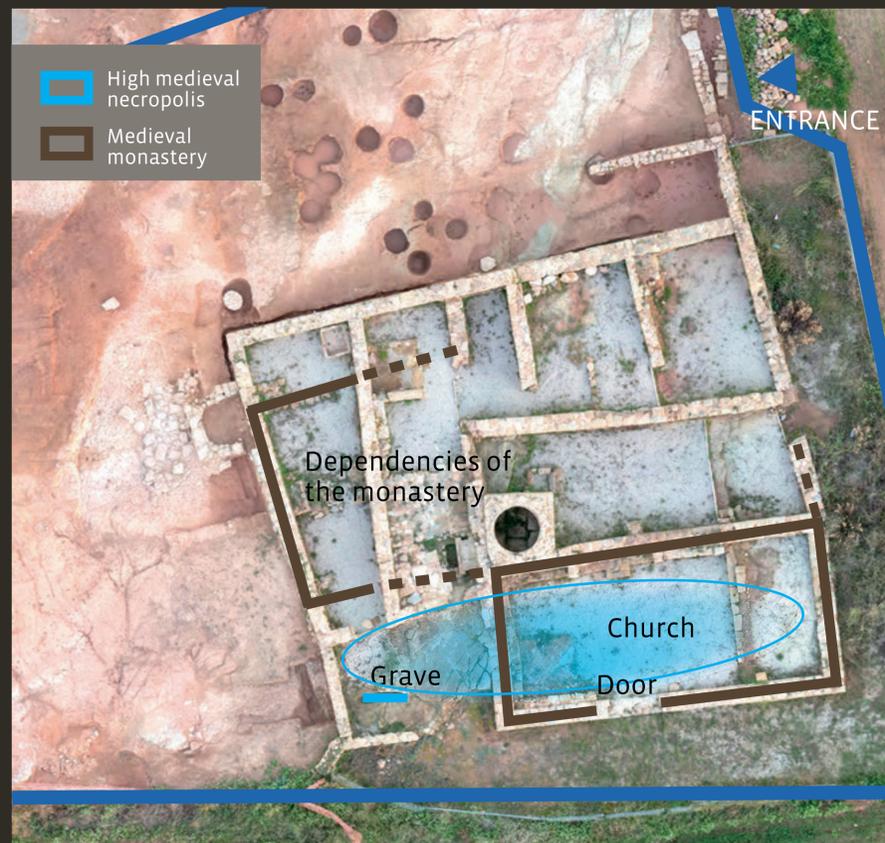
Two burials in silos

Two of the silos were used as burial places. In one of them was found the skeleton, probably of a girl, aged about 7 years. In the other was a young boy of about 17 years old. The deceased were found full and with no sign of any funerary ritual, which indicates social exclusion. This type of burial is not unusual in the Late Roman period.



Silos with burials

THE MONASTERY OF SANT CRISTÒFOL (13TH-15TH CENTURIES)



Aerial photograph of the site

Formerly an early medieval necropolis

In this sector there was a group of tombs dug into the rock from the early Middle Ages. One can still be seen on the left. Thus, it was already a sacred place when a monastery was established there in the 13th century. It now seems that the remains were placed in ossuaries, under the church floor.

Sant Cristòfol: protector of travellers, passers-by and advocate against pestilence

Tradition has it that Sant Cristòfol was a giant who acted as a passer-by and, one day, he carried an infant, who turned out to be Baby Jesus. For this reason, he was regarded as the protector of travellers and, before setting off on a journey, it was customary to ask him for protection or to offer him an offering. There were chapels dedicated to this saint on the outskirts of the villages. This explains the location of the monastery: at the beginning of the main road to Igualada, on the other side of the river.

Sant Cristòfol was also an advocate against pestilence, and the people of Manresa were to be commended to him in 1504. In gratitude for the protection offered, every year the city held a solemn procession to this chapel.



Saint Christopher according to a 16th century painting attributed to Jaume Huguet, conserved in the Museum of Manresa (MCM 10.019).

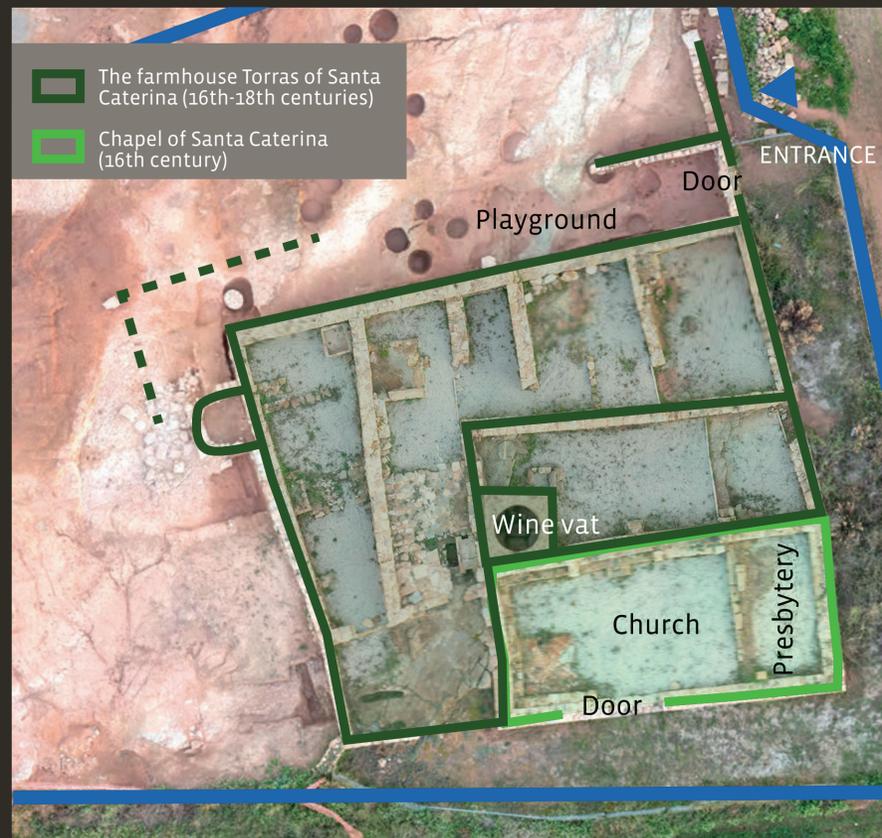
A small female monastery

The monastery of Sant Cristòfol was probably founded in the 13th century and was active until the 15th century. It housed a small group of nuns, who later became canonesses, who depended on the la Seu de Manresa. In 1425 the prioress and three canonesses lived there. At that time, many women, often without sufficient resources or already widowed, voluntarily tried to retire to a monastery and lead a contemplative life. These small monastic communities, which proliferated in the middle ages, were gradually relegated by the concentration in larger monasteries. In the 15th century, in the midst of the hardships of the Catalan Civil War, the canonesses had to leave for Manresa and the monastery was left in ruins.

The church of the 13th century

The monastery church was very simple. A transition between Romanesque and Gothic, it had a single nave with a straight east-facing façade. The lower rows of the preserved walls correspond to the 13th-century church. Inside, there are still six leaning columns, which may have supported three arches or may have directly overhung the roof. Some of the bases are capitals which, in a later remodelling, were placed in capitals. A two-storey building was located behind the church, where the nuns lived.

CHAPEL AND FARMHOUSE OF SANTA CATERINA (16TH-18TH CENTURIES)



Aerial photograph of the site

1502: Reconstruction of the chapel

A few years after its destruction, the City Council rebuilt the chapel in 1502. From then on, it was known as Santa Caterina, because the main altar (with an altarpiece inaugurated in 1586) was dedicated to this saint. There were also two secondary altars, dedicated to Saint Christopher and Saint Nicholas. The altar of Saint Christopher, dating from 1516, was the work of the Barcelona painter Joan Gatón.

The refurbished chapel

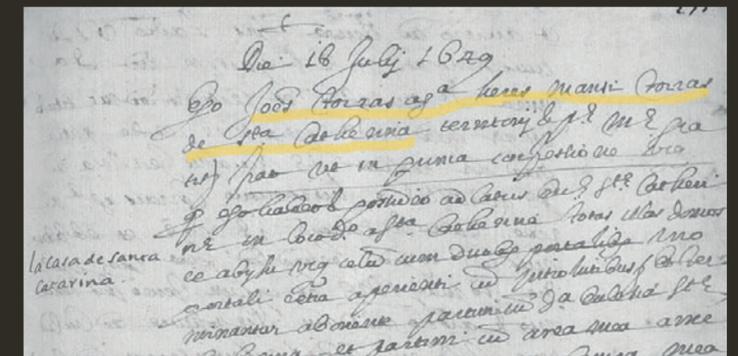
Certain reforms were introduced in the new chapel: the floor was tiled and a perimeter bench was added where the parishioners could sit during mass. The arrangement in pews was introduced later. The columns were removed, and the presbytery (the space around the altar) was raised with two staves. The base of what seems to be one of the altars is preserved in front of the door.



Santa Caterina of Alexandria according to a painting from the 16th century (Museu de Manresa, MCM 10.155)

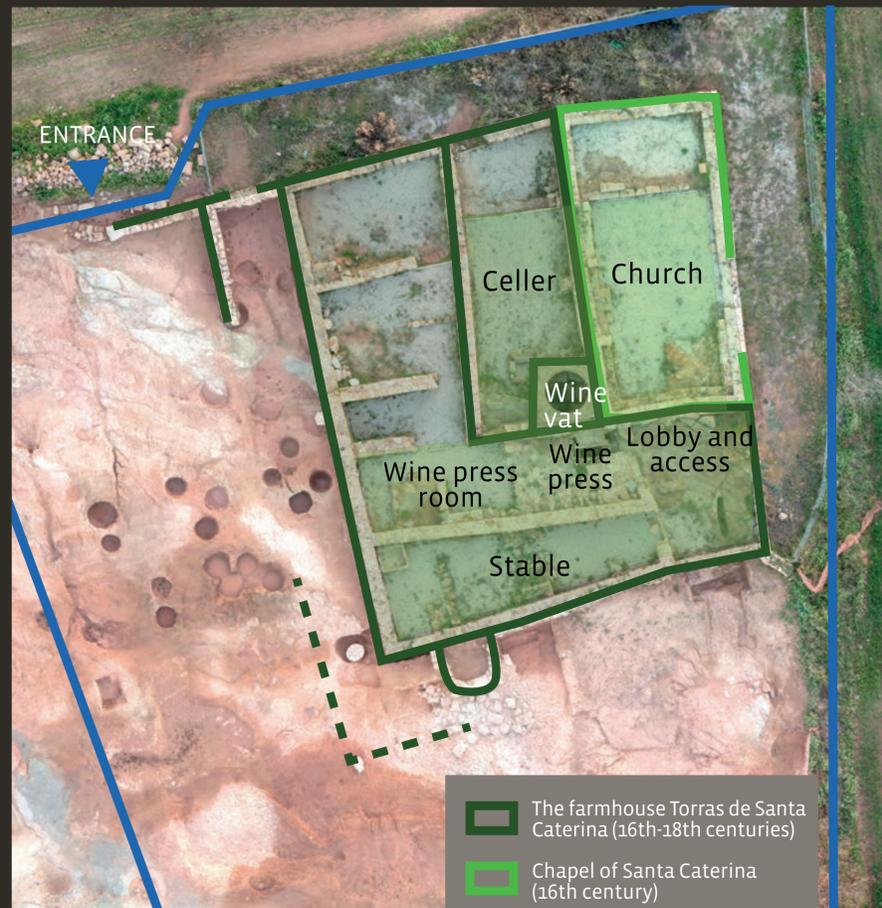
The farmhouse Torras of Santa Caterina

Next to the chapel there was a farmhouse, which was inhabited by the Torras family, from the Torras farmhouse in Salelles. It had land in the surrounding area, which had belonged to the Seu de Manresa since the time of the old monastery. Around the 18th century, the house underwent a major renovation: the cellar was remodelled (which used to be open to the outside) and a new staircase was built next to the bathtub. By 1728 the farmhouse had grown and had more rooms, including one for the minions. In the second half of the 18th century Anton Torres, the heir, died without descendants. His brothers were involved in litigation and a large part of the land was lost. Afterwards, the family moved to Molí Nou de Manresa. In 1802 the farmhouse was probably already abandoned.



Capbreu de 1649 (Arxiu Comarcal del Bages): Jo, Joan Torras, hereu del mas Torras de Santa Caterina (translation from Latin). Me, Joan Torras, heir of Farmhouse Torras de Santa Caterina

FARMHOUSE TORRAS DE SANTA CATERINA: CELLAR AND WINE PRESS ROOM



Aerial photograph of the site

A more traditional wine tradition

On the ground floor there are the typical working facilities of a farmhouse: a stable with the remains of a tiled floor, a cellar with a bathtub, a press room... The living space was on the upper floor. As in most of the farmhouses in El Bages, wine making and winemaking became increasingly important, as is shown by the presence of a vat.

An archaic bathtub, with stone plaques

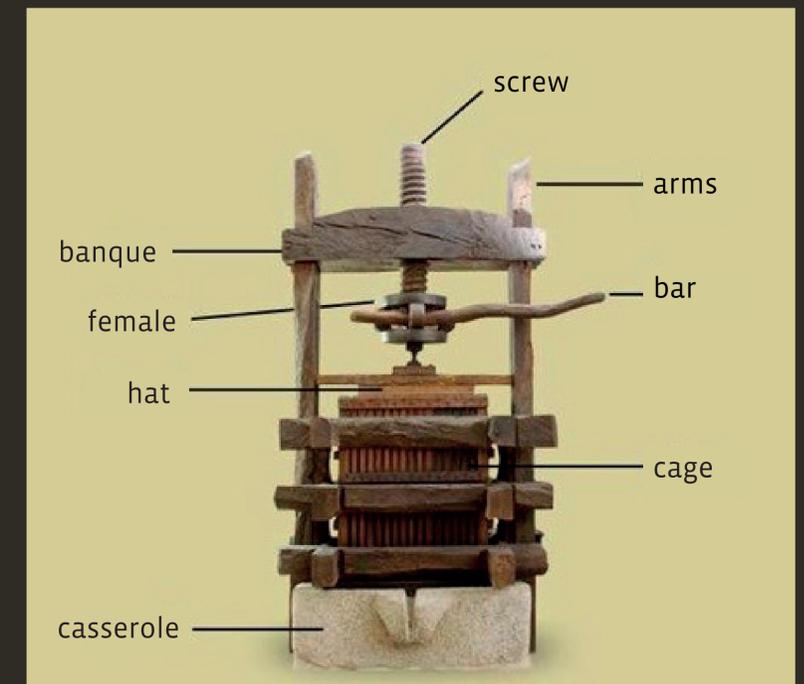
The cellar has preserved an archaic type of vat (around the 16th-17th centuries), which is characterised by a lining with stone slabs. The more modern tubs were covered with cairns: slits of brown glazed ceramic. At the top, on shafts known as “brescat”, is where the root was laid. The juice from the root, or most, was collected inside the vat, where it was left to ferment. On the left, you can see the drain hole or “boixa”, where the wine was drained from the vat. To the side there is the base of a ladder to access the upper floor.



Inside of the bathtub

A press release

On the right-hand side of this basin is the base or casserole of a soup made of rabbit with meat. Normally, the root paste was premeditated here, once the first most had been cut. The latter was then poured into the inside of the beans, which, under pressure, forced the most out through the openings in the sides and into the casserole. It was then poured into the bathtub. At the bottom of this basin there was another press casserole, placed vertically on a wall.



A press release, very common in the XVIII-XIX centuries (Museu de la Vida Rural de l'Espluga de Francolí)