The excavations carried out at the church of San Martino in 1998 were intended to clarify some of the architectural and chronological problems which had been posed over the last two excavation seasons. This report will only discuss the new discoveries made in the final season and consider how they impinge on the understanding of the site. The 1998 excavation season has once again been supported by the Comune di Romagnano Sesia in conjunction with the Museo Storico Etnografico and travel funds for the Graduate School of University College London.

Most of our activity focused on the mediaeval structures of the church (Fig. 1). The present church lies on a roughly east-west axis, following the line of the preceding structures. The entrance of this church, fronted by a portico, is on the east side facing the old Novara-Romagnano road. This entrance court formed one of the two main areas of investigation. The excavated area between the road and the church was designated the ‘Entrance Trench’. It is here that were uncovered the remains of a twin apse, and a section of an additional smaller apse. These formed the nave of the earlier building, whose entrance would have been on the west side. The other area which was excavated lay at the back of the church, west of the Campanile, and was hence named the Campanile Trench. The large number of tombs found in this area clearly shows that at some point in the life of the church it was designated as a cemetery. This cemetery is enclosed by a quadrangular structure, which was either part of, or built on to the earlier church. Through further excavation concentrating on the problem areas we hoped to understand better the succession of the structures, and to clarify the relationship between them and the use of the cemetery. Hence there was not very much material from the earlier periods of the site, which had been investigated in the 1997 season. The earliest material found this year was a piece of pottery with a comb design from the Campanile Trench to the west of the church. It is probably dated to the later Iron Age (4th - 3rd c. BC), and in the same way as finds of previous years, which date to the earlier periods of the site, this pottery sherd is not related to any of the recognizable structures, and is probably part of a disturbed tomb deposit.

From further excavations in the Campanile Trench (Fig. 2) it is now clear that F21, the large rectangular structure to the west of the church, has a straight west wall, rather than an instep as was originally thought. It also seems that this structure may have had two phases judging by the fact that some of the skeletal remains seem to be placed between what appear to be two different layers of wall. The lower layer is made up of roughly placed stones, while the upper contains two rows of pebble construction of ‘spina pesce’ (Fig. 4). This top layer seems to have been built at the same time as the west wall of the present church, since the mortar is continuous between the two structures. The west wall of the present church is clearly an infill, between the south wall of the church and the Campanile (Fig. 5). This infill was made when the west entrance to the church was closed off. It is unclear whether the lower levels of F21 (below the ‘spina pesce’) may have formed part of the main structure of the church in an earlier phase. The close investigations of the mortar and the joins of the various walls suggest that the Campanile was constructed at the same time as the south wall, while the other walls, including the later phase of F21, were added onto it.

To the north of the rectangular structure F21 we uncovered the foundations of what may have been the west wall of the north aisle, F54. The arches between the main nave and this aisle (now filled in) are clearly distinguished in the northern wall of the present church (Fig. 6). A small part of an apse (F9), which probably formed the east end of this aisle, survives in the Entrance Trench, the rest having been destroyed by the modern canal (Fig. 3). This North aisle is likely to be either contemporary with or later than the earlier phase of the rectangular structure F21. The small portion of its west wall (F54) survives only at the lower level, but the two do not appear to have been attached; F54 is therefore earlier than the ‘spina pesce’ level of F21. It is also interesting that there are no burials in the levels above F54. There is a grave F74 (Fig. 2), which abuts onto F54 and runs along the north wall of F21. The grave is outlined in pebbles, containing at least three burials, which run W-E. A piece of pietra olloare, dating to the Lombard period, was found within the fill of this burial.

\[1\] This report and the ideas in it have greatly benefited from Michael Crawford’s keen eye and attention to detail, which has helped to establish the chronological phases of the site.

\[2\] I would like to thank once again the Comune di Romagnano Sesia for all their support and provision of lodging and supplies for the excavations. In particular I would like to thank Carlo Brugo for organising the project, Sergio Genesi, Vittorio Palestro and Alfredo Negro for technical support and of course all the volunteers who helped out at the site. The main drawings of the site were carried out by a team of Guy Bradley, Jennifer Stewart and Ian Whalley with help from Fay Glinister in 1997. In 1998 the drawings were done by Michela Cella, Melanie Eichhorn, Kerry Howard, Benet Salway and Catrin Webster. The drawings of the pottery finds were all done by Ruth Leader.

For preliminary reports on previous years’ excavations, see E. Isayev, ‘Scavi di S. Martino, Romagnano Sesia (NO)’, Bollettino Storico per la Provincia di Novara, 68 (1997) 649-61, E. Isayev, ‘Scavi di S. Martino, Romagnano Sesia (NO), seconda campagna di scavo (18.8.97-7.9.97),

At the front of the present church, last year's excavations uncovered the remains of a large wall (F55) at the south end of the Entrance Trench (Fig. 3). This wall was thought to have been part of a larger apse, which would have preceded the twin apses, and perhaps joined on to the remains of another wall (F16) at the north end. While it is still thought that F55 and F16 belong to the same phase, no circular apse has been found. Instead there are remains of a quadrangular structure F72-3 which may be part of a three-sided quadrangular apse or an additional foundation for a structure within the church. As the remains of this structure were destroyed by the twin apses, it is likely that it is part of the earlier phase contemporary with the larger walls F55 and F16. Another large structure F70 was unearthed in the south end of the Entrance Trench. It is evident that this structure preceded F72-3, and may have been demolished by it, but how the structure F70 relates to the other features on the site is unclear. It has a different orientation from the other walls, and extends south further than any of the other structures. Interestingly the pebble pavement, layer 302, of a later phase, went up to it, but not over it, indicating that it must have still been visible (Fig. 3). One hypothesis is that this section of wall (F70) formed part of the east end of the church at an earlier phase, contemporary with the walls F55 and F16. The destruction of this structure may have created the stone conglomerate, Layer 354, at the east edge of the trench.

These phases would have been followed by the building of the twin apses, after the preceding structures no longer existed. The layers of frequentation/use associated with these apses, at least in the later phase are Layers 346 and 347. These layers lay over the structure F72-3 and abutted onto the apses. Within this layer were found several coins (Finds 19, 21, 26, 28, 29, 30), all of which date roughly to the 16-17th centuries, some of which were also in the layer surrounding the well. Other finds include: glazed pottery 4 which is similar to examples dated to the 13-17th centuries; a stone (onyx?) bead (Find 20); a terracotta spindle whorl (Find 25); some flat glass fragments and glass rims (Find 27); these may belong to glass lamps. A small piece of a pebble and earth layer remains (Layer 351), below Layers 346 and 347. It may be part of the original road or courtyard surface in use at the same time as the apses.

Once the apses were no longer in use the whole area in the front was paved over with pebbles (Layer 302) which were divided from the road (Layer 342) by a row of larger vertically placed pebbles (F66). The pebbles of the road Layer 342, unlike those of Layer 302, were placed in a layer of yellow coarse sand (Layer 344). These pavements belong to the last phase of church use when the entrance was at the East end facing the road.

A final note is needed about the well on the east side of the church. We excavated the well to a level of 6.50 metres from the surface. Unfortunately we were not able to reach the bottom since the pebble walls of the well ended at this level, and to go on would have been dangerous. The fill which has so far been recovered was mostly made up of large pebbles, and some brick and tile. While there is a mixture of material, some of the pottery and glass from the well 5 seems to be similar to that of Layer 347 noted above. The well itself may be contemporary with the twin apses or later. This is partially induced by a 16th-17th century coin which was found under a surface tile of the well head.

**Provisional Summary of Structural Phases at S. Martino**

The earliest structures of the site are probably the remains of the two walls in the Entrance Trench (F16 and F70). These may have belonged to a large building either dating to the Late Roman Period or Early Medieval Period. Phase I of the church may have been a large rectangular building which incorporated the lowest layers of the Western Enclosure (F21) and the remains of the wall (F55) in the Entrance Trench as well as the structure (F72-3) at the East end. It should be stressed however, that it is unclear whether the west end of the site (F21) was part of this phase, and whether it was ever more than simply an enclosure for the cemetery, rather than the end of the building. The presence of burials within it, dating to the 7-12th c. AD, and one (F52) which lies partially beneath the current south wall of the church may indicate that the area was part of the main nave with the burials beneath the floor.

The next major change, possibly in the 11-12th century, was the construction of a double apse (F8) at the east end of the building. To it was soon added a third, smaller apse (F9) which formed the end of an additional aisle (the west end of which may have been F54). This aisle no longer exists but the arches that would have led to it from the main nave are now filled in and clearly visible in the north wall of the church. In the following period there seem to be some substantial changes made to the structure.

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3 In this phase the church may have resembled Edificio 2 of the Chiesa di Cavaglia: G. Panto, ‘San Michele di Cavaglia: una chiesa ritrovata’, Quaderni della Soprintendenza Archeologica del Piemonte 12 (1994), 243-50, esp. 244 (Tav. LXVIII b; Tav. LXIX).

4 For example Find 31, and 98SM 347-1,2,3,4,5.

5 For example 98SM 340-2, 98SM 340-5.
The north aisle may have collapsed or been dismantled and the arch ways filled in. Perhaps its foundations were undermined by a nearby stream which ran in the place of the modern canal, located along the north side of the church. It was at this point that the Campanile was constructed. If in fact the west end of the structure (F21) was part of the original building, it must have been dismantled at this point reducing the length of the main nave. The entrance to the church was now through the Campanile and possibly through another door in the south wall. In the following centuries the west enclosure (F21) was used as an outside cemetery, with burial F29, for example, abutting directly onto the Campanile. At some point in the 17th century another series of structural changes took place. The two apses were no longer in use, indicated by the pebble pavement which covered them. At the west end a wall was built in line with the Campanile, and there were also no more burials in the west end of the church. The main entrance was now at the opposite end, on the east side, where a new front was constructed which required strengthened foundations. It was probably at this point that the well (F43) was built. The height of the church also appears to have been increased, as the north and west walls obscure the the double-arch windows of the Campanile. From the external walls it is also possible to see that there were other later phases when the upper part of the walls were rebuilt and some windows filled in. In its latest phases the church, deconsecrated, acted as a storage area for farm equipment. In its most recent phase it has been reconsecrated and is now both a church and a small museum for the history of the area. The above summary is by no means concrete, and any ongoing excavations, particularly below the current floor level of the church, would help to clarify the history of this multi-period structure.

Elena Isayev
Department of Classics & Ancient History
University of Exeter
Fig. 2 San Martino Campanile Trench (West side), showing only the outer wall (F21) and the small section of a wall extending to the north (F54)

Fig. 3 San Martino Entrance Trench (East side)
Fig. 4 The inner North wall of F21 showing the two levels of wall building with skeletal remains

Fig. 5 The West wall of the church showing the infill abutting onto the campanile
Fig. 6 The North wall of the church showing the filled in entrance ways which led to the northern aisle

Fig. 7 The inside of the well (F43) in the Entrance trench in front of the church