

**POMPEII - THE ULTIMATE DISASTER:
A Cadastre Buried for 1600 years Rediscovered!
By John F. Brock**

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to sites of world renown there are few to excel the excitement and sensation of Pompeii in south western Italy. From a disastrous tragedy of epic proportions has come a goldmine of archaeological treasure showing us what a Roman coastal township was exactly like at the time of its burial under tonnes of lava and ash "frozen" in time as at August 79 AD. The doomed township was rediscovered by a Spanish military surveying engineer named Rocque Joaquin de Alcubierre in 1748 while digging specifically for evidence of the lost city. Its nearby neighbour of Herculaneum had been accidentally found in 1709 when digging was being made to sink a well to a depth of about 50-60 feet (15-18 metres) providing the geographic indicators for an attempt to relocate the other city of Pompeii along with other surrounding long lost localities. From the percentage of the site currently excavated there has been unveiled a model town plan consisting basically of orthogonal street patterns with stone paved roadways and buildings illustrating the lavish ornamentation and lifestyle of the local inhabitants along with their diet and ablutionary habits. Forgotten for over 1600 years there has even been revealed a workshop owned by a Surveyor (known as Gromaticus or Agrimensore in ancient Rome) called Verus discovered and studied by Matteo della Corte in 1912 still bearing a blacksmiths forge for making his own surveying instruments some of which were found at the premises. In addition to metal parts of measuring devices such as a groma and decempeda there were also found metal spikes for marking/measuring, drawing equipment, rulers, set squares and an ivory portable sun dial within which writing implements could be carried into the field. Verus was not the only the surveyor we meet in this ghostly coastal village as there is a gravestone to another Surveyor named Nicostratus Popidius which depicts an engraving of a groma and other materials such as stakes, a measuring rod and rope used in his profession. From the town layout remaining it can be established where the original town was occupied together with the future urban sprawl as occurs when the population expands to demonstrate to us in the 21st century just how the Roman Land Administration system specified the structure of the cadastre of its urban areas. From the darkness of total disaster has come historical illumination to allow us to understand and reconstruct the lives and habitats which had developed up to the first century AD of the great Roman Empire with particular attention being focused on the town's surveyor and its cadastral fabric.

BIOGRAPHY

Private land surveyor since 1973, **Bachelor of Surveying** (UNSW 1978), **MA** (Egyptology) from Macquarie Uni., Sydney (2000), **Registered Surveyor NSW** 1981. Now Director of Brock Surveys at Parramatta (near Sydney). Papers presented worldwide inc. Egypt, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Canada, Brunei, New Zealand, Greece, UK, USA, Israel, PNG, Sweden, Italy, Nigeria, Malaysia, Morocco, Bulgaria and Finland. Since 2002 regular column *Downunder Currents*, RICS magazine (London) *Geomatics World*. Stalwart of FIG Institution for the History of Surveying & Measurement awarded **FIG Article of the Month March 2005** for: “Four Surveyors of the Gods: XVIII Dynasty of New Kingdom Egypt (c.1400 BC)”, **January 2012** – “Four Surveyors of Caesar: Mapping the World”, **June 2014** – “The Great Wall of China: The World’s Greatest Boundary Monument” & **April 2017** – “Hadrian’s Wall: Boundary Monument for the Northern Frontier of Roman Britannia.” Institution of Surveyors NSW Awards – **Halloran Award 1996** for Contributions to Surveying History, **Fellow ISNSW 1990 & 2002 Professional Surveyor of the Year**. First international **Life Member** of the Surveyors Historical Society (USA), Rundle Foundation for Egyptian Archaeology & Parramatta Historical Society, **Foundation Member** Australian National Maritime Museum & Friends of National Museum of Australia. **Member** of Bradman Crest, International Map Collectors Society, Royal Australian Historical Society, Hills District Historical Society, Prospect Heritage Trust, Friend of Fossils (Canowindra), **Friends** of May’s Hill Cemetery and St. John’s Cemetery.

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