

Os Castros, Taramundi

The City Council and the town of Taramundi welcome you to this archaeological site and thank you for your interest to learn its distant past.

We remind you that for your own safety and for the preservation of the remains, access to the excavated areas is not permitted. If you come with children, please watch over them to prevent potential accidents. Thank you for not littering in the archaeological area.

The hillfort of Taramundi, known as *Os Castros*, was discovered by José Manuel González, professor of the University of Oviedo, in 1969. Systematic excavations started 31 years later, in July 2000. These excavations have been fostered by the City Council of Taramundi and supported by the local hotel association, Anturta, together with the cooperation of the Government of the Principality of Asturias. The archaeological works are framed within the so called 'Navia-Eo Archaeological Plan'.

Following a decade of archaeological works, in 2010 the remains yielded in the northern area of the hillfort were prepared to ensure their preservation and to make them understandable to the visitor.

The intervened areas have been marked by means of small pieces of black slate machine cut, clearly visible in close-up but almost unnoticed from the distance in order to prevent the distortion of the view of the remains.

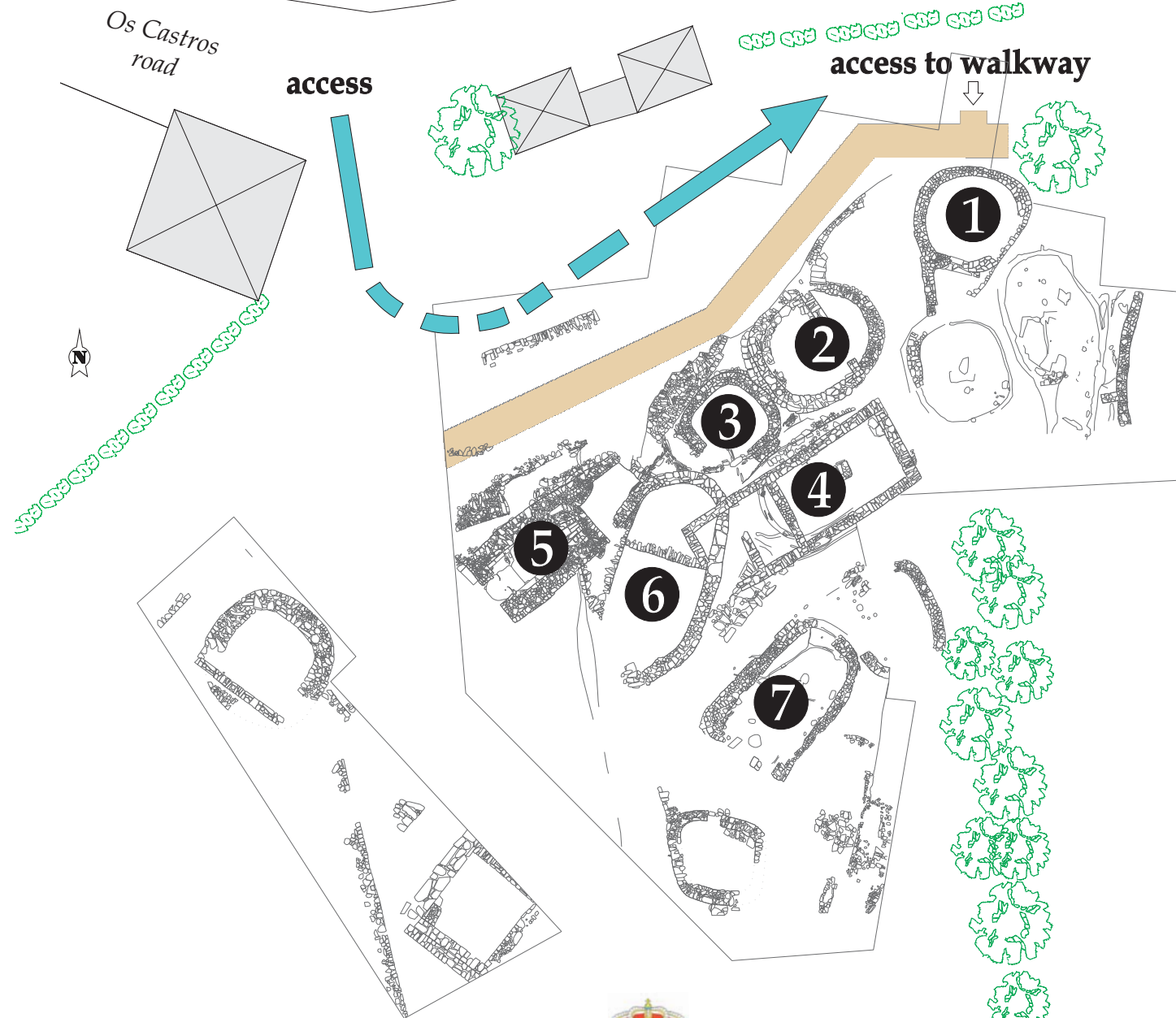
The Spanish word 'castro' (hillfort) is used to refer to a specific kind of settlement, always fortified, characteristic of the Iron Age. The word 'castro' derives from the Latin *castrum*, which means fort. This kind of settlements is located both on the coast, in small peninsulas or capes, and in the mainland, where they are usually established in hills or promontories of small mountain ranges, naturally easy defensible places.

Localitation

The hillfort of Taramundi, known as *Os Castros*, is located at an altitude of some 245 meters above sea level and covers an area of approximately 2 ha. It is one of the largest mainland hillforts of western Asturias, where these settlements are usually of small dimensions as opposed to the forts on the coast, with areas over 5 and 7 acres. In panel 1 you can find an areal photograph of the site from the year 2004.

The hillfort lies to the south of the town centre of Taramundi, the capital city, on a spur of the Eiroá mountain range to the south. Along the base of its steep slope the river Cabreira flows, running into the Turía, tributary of the Eo river and main stream of the region. Both rivers have shaped deep valleys with steep hillsides, forming an excellent natural defence to the old settlement.

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AYUNTAMIENTO
DE TARAMUNDI

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1 Beneath your feet, there is a hut, more or less round in plan, with a hall open to the south. Thanks to the materials found inside and to several samples of vegetal burnt remains analyzed using C 14 we know that it was built and used in Roman times. The hut was built with rough stales bonded with mud mortar. On its earth floor a large stale slab was arranged as a hearth, the place to light the fire needed to cook and to warm the house in winter.

From the time of its abandonment, the hut, like the rest of the hillfort decayed, not only due to the passage of time and the weather conditions that ruined the walls of the structures but also due to the accion of the stone robbers throughout the history, expoliating stones and reusing them in other buildings. In fact, the hillfort, once abandoned, became a coveted quarrel of stones ready to be used. Many of the oldest houses of Taramundi are likely to have been built with stone coming from the 'castro'.

2 This space had an oblong floor plan in the Iron Age, that is to say, longer than it is wide and more or less oval in shape. Later, in Roman times, its surface decreases due to the construction of a new wall in its eastern third. The sucessive floors of the house were of earth until the last phase of use when a stone paving was laid. It can be partially seen next to the Roman wall. The hut dating from the Iron Age was installed on the remains of another hut made of wood from an earlier moment.

3 This house, under the walkway, has a quadrangular floor plan with rounded corners. It was built in pre-Roman times using small stones, mainly slate, and mud. In the 1st century AD the door was adjusted and the walls strengthened, maybe with a view to adding a second story. Towards the centre of the hut there stood, in the Iron Age, a slate slab that became red by the action of the fire. You will find a photograph in the panel number 4. It is a hearth that later on, in Roman times, was hidden because a new earth floor was laid inside the hut.

4 This construction has a rectangular floor plan and its walls were erected with slate slabs bonded with mud mortar. It consists of three separate spaces internally conected and two external doors, one to the south and one to the north. The main room has a hearth with a windbreaker wall to protect the fire from the air flows.

This hut was built in the 1st century AD, in Roman times, on the remains of an older hut whose foundation ditch, carved into bedrock, can be seen nowadays in the underground of the central room. So far it is the only house with internal partitions found in the hillfort.

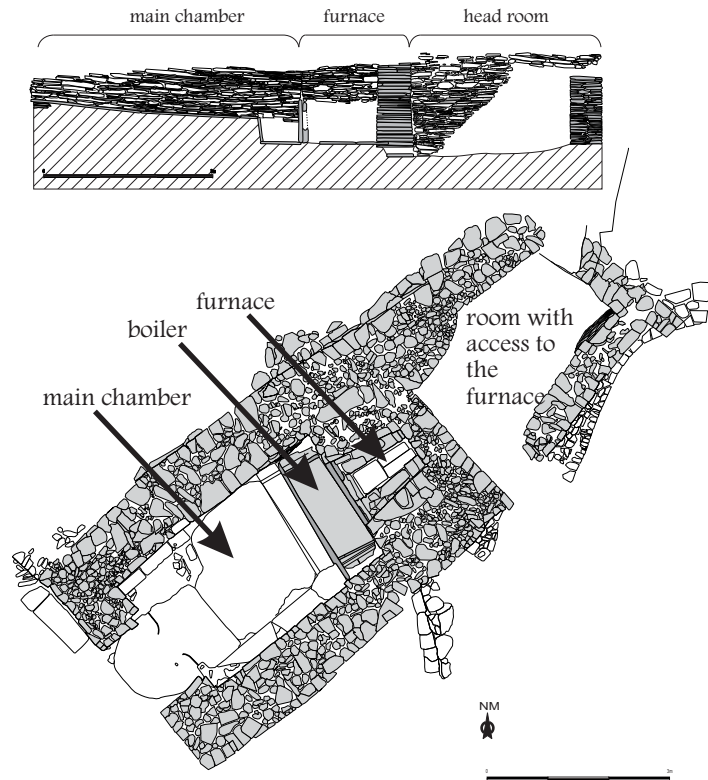
5 This is the most singular construction found in the site. It has three distinct parts. From the eastern part, the furnace was fed with firewood while the central one housed the furnace itself; the west part corresponds to the steamy room provided with a boiler.

The structure, half underground, was roofed by a corbel vault formed by slate blocks as they project inward from the layer on which they rest. Only this type of buildings was roofed this way.

The ruins visible today correspond to the layout of the sauna in Roman times, for these buildings, although originated in the Iron Age, were in use almost until the 1st century AD, already under Roman domination. It is a genuine structure of the hillforts from the region of the Navia-Eo that parallels other examples in the neighbouring Galicia and in northern Portugal: the so called 'Pedras Formosas'.

As for their operation, it is to be noted that the fire burning in the furnace heated the water in the boiler, generating steam in the chamber of the sauna. The users would probably sit on benches on the paving of the steamy room.

There has been a great deal of interpretations of these particular structures, being considered bread ovens, crematoria, shrines related to the cult of waters or buildings to celebrate warrior's rites of passage. Nowadays, scholars agree in their thermal and ritual character.



6 This hut dates from the Iron Age. Originally it had an elliptic floor plan. It was completely transformed in Roman times. The roof was dismantled and the northern third of the hut was terraced to lay the most western room of another house. The great dimensions of the hut and its position, close to the sauna, suggest a communal use.

In the 1st century AC, part of the old hut kept its former function. In this moment, the floor inside the hut was paved with slates set edgewise. This technique, named 'chapacuña', is a traditional type of paving used in this region until recently. Nowadays, the 'chapacuña' has been covered with a layer of gravel to protect it from the frosts. A photograph has been included in panel 4.

7 This last construction, more or less isolated in the centre of the excavated area, has a rectangular floor plan with rounded corners and was built in Roman times. It had an earth floor; no remains of a hearth were found inside. On the floor a number of archaeological materials were found, such as glass and pottery sherds, an iron key, nails and stone loom weights, leading to the suspicion of the existence of one or several looms and the use of the space as a textile workshop. This is a very large hut that, following its abandonment and with the passage of ages, became heavily damaged. This razing was also due to the stone robbers and to the plough used many years later to plough the lands occupied by the hillfort, where, among others, wheat was grown. Several adjustments in the walls of the building were noted during the excavation as well as a walled up door in the north stretch, replaced by a new one to the east. Inside the hut, a complex network of small drainage channels carved out of rock and remains from previous structures were found. The door has not been completely rebuilt, for its exact dimensions are not known.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit and look forward to welcoming you back again in the future to the hillfort of Taramundi. Archaeological works are expected to continue and new areas will be included in the visitor itinerary of the site.

The City Council and the town of Taramundi together with the archaeological team wish to thank you for your interest and attention.

