

Lugo (Spain)

No 987

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Roman walls of Lugo
<i>Location</i>	City of Lugo, Province of Lugo, Autonomous Community of Galicia
<i>State Party</i>	Spain
<i>Date</i>	29 July 1999

Justification by State Party

Note The text below is an abridged version of the justification in the nomination dossier.

Some 1700 years after they were built, the walls of Lugo possess fundamental values which make them unique from the archaeological and historical points of view.

As an archaeological monument representative of defensive architecture, they are one of the most important, if not the most important, in the whole of Roman *Hispania*, and certainly in that period, since this is the only complete urban defensive wall surviving anywhere in the Roman Empire. It is as a result the most studied and best known Roman monument in Galicia and one of the most significant in understanding the type and level of romanization over a considerable part of the Iberian peninsula.

Furthermore, as a defensive wall that includes the entire historic centre of the town of Lugo, it has played and continues to play a critical role in the historical development of the town. While maintaining the original Roman circuit, in terms of both construction and location, the defences demonstrate the passage of time in their walls, their gates, their towers, and other constructional elements and the urban evolution of the town. They record in an indelible fashion not only the heritage aspects but also the quality of life, the social framework, and even the economic framework of the town.

The walls provide unrivalled proof of the historical evolution of the town of Lugo and its surroundings, not only in the Roman period from which its original structure dates, but also of all the periods that followed, since they reflect an important interchange of influences in archaeological, urbanistic, and even landscape terms. **Criterion ii**

The walls bear unique and exceptional witness to the Roman civilization in its provincial and peripheral manifestations, both civil and military. It is, in particular, an archaeological and historical monument that presents an unparalleled paradigm of the Late Roman Empire. **Criterion iii**

The walls are an outstanding example of the type of construction and architectural and archaeological group which illustrates various significant periods of human history. Starting with their Roman origins and passing through the problematical Middle Ages to the innovative and disturbed 19th century, they unite in a single monumental construction more than 2km long different proofs and facets of the evolution of a town such as Lugo (itself an historical and artistic ensemble) from the original *Lucus Augusti*.

Criterion iv

It is an outstanding example linked with a human settlement that occupied the urban space in a special way, since the walls were and are still a model in the organization of the space and of the life of the town. **Criterion v**

The walls are, directly or indirectly, associated with activities relating to the experience and traditions, including oral ones, of the town of Lugo, since they are an integral element in daily life and undoubted physical and material reference points for its inhabitants (and also for its foreign visitors), and a monument the level of use of which by the community is particularly worthy of being emphasized. **Criterion vi**

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *monument*.

History and Description

History

The Roman town of *Lucus Augusti* was founded in 15-13 BCE following the pacification of this region by Augustus. The Celtic name *Lug* suggests that it may have been a sacred site of the Copori, but no evidence has been forthcoming from excavations on this point. There was a Roman military camp here during the campaign of Augustus, and it was here that the new town was laid out on a checkerboard plan according to classical principles. The original plan did not require the town to be enclosed by a defensive wall, because of the effectiveness of the *Pax Romana* (although the entire region continued to have a military presence, dispersed in a number of small forts).

The town prospered in the succeeding centuries, not least because of the important mineral resources of the region, which were actively exploited. It was also the administrative centre of the surrounding area (the *Conventus Iuridicus Lucense*), and an important nodal point in the network of roads built by the Romans. The town acquired impressive public buildings and luxurious urban villas, which spread over a wide area.

However, in the mid 2nd century Frankish and Alemannic invaders crossed the *limes* and ravaged Gaul, penetrating into Hispania before being driven out. This resulted in the construction of massive urban defences at all the towns of the western Roman provinces. *Lucus* received its walls between 263 and 276; it has been suggested, however, that these were built less against barbarian invaders from across the Rhine frontier than against the local tribesmen, who had never fully accepted the Roman occupation of their lands. As in most colonial towns, the area enclosed by the walls was

less than that of the urban settlement: a considerable part of the town in the south-east remained outside.

Despite the strength of its fortifications, Lugo was unable to resist the Suevi when they swept into the peninsula in the early 5th century and destroyed the town by fire. They were to be dislodged in their turn by the Visigoths, who captured the town in 457 and settled it once again. The irresistible Moorish invasion of Spain saw Lugo overwhelmed and sacked in 714, but it was recaptured for Christendom by Alfonso I of Asturias in 755 and restored by Bishop Odarius. The town was to be ravaged once again in 968 by the Normans, on their way to the Mediterranean, and it was not restored until the following century.

Description

The Roman walls of Lugo enclose an area of 34.4ha and their circumference is 2.117km. They are generally 4.20m thick, although in places this has been increased to 7m; the height varies between 8m and 12m. The structure consists of internal and external stone facings with a core filling of earth, stones, and pieces of worked Roman stone from demolished buildings.

There are ten gates (five ancient and five recent); motor vehicles are allowed to use eight of them, the other two being for pedestrian access alone. Five stairways and a ramp give access to the parapet walk. A number of double staircases giving access from the parapet walk to the towers have been found within the thickness of the walls, and it is assumed that each of the towers was provided with similar stairways.

Of the original interval towers, 46 have survived intact, and there are a further 39 that are wholly or partly dismantled. They are spaced at irregular intervals round the walls, the intervening blocks varying from 8.80-9.80m to 15.90-16.40m. They were two-storeyed and most of them are roughly semi-circular in plan, the gap in the wall in which they were constructed varying in width from 5.35m to 12.80m. Several take the form of slightly tapering truncated cones, and a few have rectangular plans. One of the towers, known as *La Moschera*, is surmounted by the remains of its superstructure containing two arched windows.

There is a variety of materials to be observed in their construction, and in that of the walls themselves. The main stones used were dressed granite and, in particular, slate. There is some variety in the forms of laying the stones and in their size. In some cases the slate walls rise from foundation courses of granite; in other examples these basal courses are also in slate. Yet another common wall make-up consists of the courses in the lower half or two-thirds being of dressed granite with the remainder in slate, but with some granite blocks interspersed.

The parapet is crenellated in places, but this is certainly post-Roman work. Considerable reconstruction work took place at what is now known as the *Reducto de Santa Cristina* in 1836-37, to create a fort that accorded with the military architecture of the period.

The original gates have undergone a number of transformations since the 3rd century. The best preserved are the Falsa Gate and the Miñá Gate, which still has its original vaulted arch set between two towers, in characteristic Roman form; traces of the now disappeared guard chamber can be seen on the interior wall (also visible at the San Pedro Gate).

Management and Protection

Legal status

The basic protection derives from the 1985 Spanish Heritage Law, under the provisions of which the Lugo Roman Walls have been declared to be a Property of Cultural Interest (*Bien de Interés Cultural*). This is reinforced by the 1995 Heritage Law of the Autonomous Community of Galicia. All interventions that may affect the condition or status of protected properties must be submitted to the relevant government agency for evaluation, and there are severe penalties for transgression.

Management

Following a survey of ownership carried out in the late 1960s, ownership of the totality of the walls was vested in 1973 in the Spanish State, through the Ministry of Education and Science. It was transferred to the Xunta de Galicia by Royal Decree in 1994.

The Spanish Constitution reserves certain rights in relation to the heritage to the central government. However, these are delegated to the competent agencies in the Autonomous Communities, in this case the Xunta de Galicia. For the Lugo walls the Xunta is in the position of both owner and competent agency. Under the Galician Heritage Law the Xunta is required to cooperate with the municipal authorities in ensuring the protection and conservation of listed monuments, and certain functions are delegated down to them. The Xunta operates through its General Directorate of Cultural Heritage (*Dirección General de Patrimonio Cultural*), based in Santiago de Compostela.

The Master Plan for the Conservation and Restoration of the Roman Walls of Lugo (1992) covered proposals for actions to be taken in respect of research and techniques of restoration. This was followed in 1997 by the Special Plan for the Protection and Internal Reform of the Fortified Enceinte of the Town of Lugo, which is concerned principally with the urban environment of the historic town. However, it has a direct impact on the protection afforded to the walls, in terms of traffic planning, the creation of open spaces, and regulation of building heights. Another planning instrument which affects the walls is the Special Plan for the Protection of the Miño [river], approved by the municipality at the beginning of 1998.

There is at the present time no management plan *sensu stricto* for the walls in operation in Lugo: work is continuing on the basis of the 1992 plan. Nor is there a technical unit specifically responsible for the conservation and restoration of the walls. It is against this background that serious consideration is being given to the creation of an independent foundation, under royal patronage and with representatives from government, academic, voluntary, and business institutions, to work with the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Galicia. The work plan of this body would include the development and implementation of integrated conservation, restoration, and maintenance programmes.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The conservation history of the walls of Lugo is long, starting from the time when they still fulfilled a defensive function and so had to be renovated from time to time as they

fell into disrepair. There is a great deal of archival material testifying to the frequent interventions in the 16th and later centuries. Since the mid 18th century there have been many interventions, which are listed in detail in the nomination dossier. These have involved the demolition and reconstruction of sections of wall and towers and the insertion or widening of gates. A major operation took place in 1971-72, when the many houses and other structures that had been built up against the walls over the centuries were removed. This was followed by an equally ambitious operation of restoration and conservation of walls and towers.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the Roman walls of Lugo lies in the way that they have survived intact for eighteen centuries. There have been many interventions over that long period to individual parts of the walls, for practical and aesthetic purposes, which mean that they do not survive in their precise original form, and so using a restricted interpretation they might be considered to be lacking in some measure of authenticity. However, as an ensemble their authenticity is impeccable.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Lugo in February 2000. ICOMOS also benefited from the comments of two acknowledged experts on Roman military architecture.

Qualities

The defences of Lugo are the most complete and best preserved example of Roman military architecture in the Western Roman Empire.

Comparative analysis

In terms of completeness and intactness, there are no Roman defences comparable with those of Lugo. The circuit at Carcassonne is complete, but underwent substantial modification and extension in the medieval period. Similarly, those of Avila are essentially medieval in their present form. The surviving sections of the wall of Le Mans are more impressive, but the circuit is not complete.

Brief description

The walls of Lugo were built in the later 2nd century to defend the Roman town of *Lucus*. The entire circuit survives intact and is the finest example of late Roman fortifications in western Europe.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criterion iv*:

Criterion iv The Roman walls of Lugo are the finest surviving example of late Roman military fortifications.

ICOMOS, September 2000