

Anastasian Wall Project

The Anastasian Wall, also known as 'the Long Walls of Thrace', became the object of a study in the mid-1990s. Constructed as part of a defence system for Istanbul during the late fifth century AD, they originally stretched 50km and featured forts, ditches, and gates. The aims of the project included recording the remnants of the wall – only approximately half of which had survived into modernity – and any associated features, investigating nearby areas for evidence of a water supply system, and working with the Doğal Hayat Derneği to design and implement an appropriate conservation strategy to ensure the wall and environment's safety in the face of new construction or development.

In July 1994, the research team was successful in recording the wall both through photography and video recording technology, as well as undertaking a topographic survey and planning towers and forts. The aqueducts near the wall were also explored and photographed where possible.

Beginning again in 1995, they worked between 23 August and 14 September to undertake topographical survey on sections of the wall near Derviş Kapı and Evcik İskalesi, as well as to investigate the water supply system. They also investigated a church at Evcik and surveyed some fortification walls and towers at Perinthos (Marmaraereğlisi).

From late August to September 1997 work on the Anastasian Wall and associated projects continued: this year over 100m of wall was recorded north of Büyük Bedesten with the help of emerging GPS technology, and the wall survey at Perinthos was completed. The theatre there was also topographically surveyed, and further work was undertaken on the aqueduct system.

Beyond additional developments on the aqueduct system, the Anastasian Wall project continued on the wall itself in 1998. Survey work was undertaken on the wall near the plain of Karamandere, and also on the section heading towards Evcik. A stretch of wall south of Kurfalı and some associated mounds and towers were also recorded. Büyük Bedesten, a fort near Kuşkaya Tepe, was cleared of its overgrowth and studied and recorded.

The majorly destructive İzmit earthquake of August 1999 meant the postponement of any fieldwork to the following year, though in October a brief visit was conducted in order to assess the damage caused to sites there. No damage was found, and some details were recorded.

In July 2000 research continued, with a focus on the southern end of the wall (west of Silivri) and the area around Büyük Bedesten. At the latter site a very large bank and ditch was found, believed to be a proteichisma or outer defence. A magnetometer survey was carried out on a total of 2.3ha of the wall line and surrounding areas. After this season, the primary aim for the project shifted from the Anastasian Wall to the associated water supply system.

After three seasons of work on the water supply system (2001-2003), research again returned to the Anastasian Wall in June and July 2005. At the wall's southern end, a submerged jetty (made of limestone blocks similar to those used in the wall) was surveyed. The area of wall between Kurfalı-Derviş Kapı was studied with the help of GPS technology, and between Belgrat and Karacaköy the forest was cleared to reveal about 1km of wall. The city walls of Silivri (the late Roman city of Selymbria), which had never been studied previously by scholars, were traced and surveyed in detail.