



Exploring old caves

Maria Luana Belli

Liceo Scientifico Keplero, ROMA, Italy (marialuanabelli@libero.it)

Quarries, caves and mines often contain fossils. During the '30s in Rome, the urban expansion needs for building materials such as gravel, sand and clay were extracted from quarries that surrounded the city. One of these quarries in particular, in the area of Saccopastore (Nomentana area 3 km from the University Sapienza Roma) returned an ancient human fossil skull belonging to a Neanderthal (most likely a female) who lived in Latium about 120,000 years ago.

Detailed studies of this fossil were carried out by Sergio Sergi, the son of the founder of the Museum of Anthropology in Rome, Giuseppe Sergi. The museum was founded in 1884 and was later transferred to the University City (1934) where it is still located.

Professor Maria Luana Belli, a science teacher in the Liceo Scientifico "G. Keplero" is a volunteer and collaborator with the Museum "G. Sergi", and she and her students retrace the places of the discovery on the trail of the Neanderthals, for understanding the evolution of the territory in a perspective of interdisciplinary teaching.