

### Urgent action undertaken in Avda. de la Constitución Street, Granada



## Historical sequence

The archaeological value of this urban area is well known, thanks to the information compiled ever since the 16th century. The archaeological excavations in the Avenida de la Constitución will allow the study of different moments in Granada's history, although, undoubtedly, the periods of greatest interest refer to the Islamic cemetery of Bab Ilbira and the construction of the Real Maestranza de Granada Bull Ring.

### Historical chronology:

- Between the 11th and 15th centuries, it was an Islamic cemetery, the *maqbara* (necropolis or cemetery in Arabic) of Bab Ilbira.
- After the Islamic burial grounds were closed by the Catholic Monarchs in 1501, the area was used during the 16th century as a day pit for use by potters and the tile and brick industry.
- When the clay ran out, in the 17th century and part of the 18th, it was used as a rubbish tip and burning point, a place for cattle fairs and where, on occasions, the criminals of the time were executed.
- In 1769, the Real Maestranza de Granada decided to build a bull ring to hold its bull fights and horse tournaments, which was in use up to 1879.
- When the Real Maestranza de Granada Bull Ring was pulled down, the plot was used as a dump for the rubble and earth removed from the work being done to build Gran Vía de Colón Street.

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## Bab Ibira Necropolis

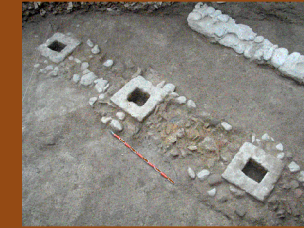
The actual area covered by the necropolis is still not known, although the huge number of bodies recovered makes it one of the largest funeral sites of its time in Europe.

253 graves have been excavated, divided among three different levels of the cemetery and which date from the 11th to the 15th centuries.

All the burials were carried out in graves dug in the ground. In some cases they were still covered with slate or sandstone tiles; on the odd occasion the graves revealed a structure formed by low walls made of brick, sandstone or boulders.

Most of the individuals are buried according to the Islamic ritual; that is, lying on their right side with arms stretched out or slightly bent, the hands in front of the pelvis, legs stretched out and the face looking toward Mecca. There is only one body per grave and no other elements were buried alongside the individual. Nonetheless, other graves have been found with differing characteristics as regards how the skeleton was orientated and laid out.

During the excavation process, an anthropological field study has been carried out, which allows us to know the minimum number of individuals buried, the gender and age of each of them, as well as the most outstanding pathologies.



### Real Maestranza de Granada Bull Ring

One of the most popular recreational activities in Granada during the Modern Ages were the "bull and horse tournaments". Mediaeval in origin, they consisted of "fiestas" in which bulls were let loose in closed-in areas, which were also fenced off to ensure the public's safety. Members of the local nobility fought the bulls on foot or on horseback.

The most common place for these celebrations was always the Plaza de Bibrambla Square, though they could be held in any open public area in the city, such as Carrera del Rastro, Plaza de los Lobos, Placeta de San Antonio or Campo de El Triunfo.

To this end, a brickwork bull ring was commissioned, in the form of an arena. The first plans date back to 1761, though the construction was finally not carried out until 1768.

The archaeological excavation has allowed the documentation of part of this building, which was, along with the Palace of Bibataubin, the main example of civil architecture in 18th-century Granada. The excavation has uncovered approximately half the bull ring, revealing different parts:

- Southernmost public stands, with remains of the inner passageways and side entrance.
- Part of the dignitaries' stand, on the north-western side, containing certain architectural elements (sandstone pillars, Sierra Elvira marble columns, etc.) that reveal the importance of this part of the bull ring.
- Adjoining rooms used for when the bulls were removed from the ring following the fight and the quartering rooms, next to the entrance to the building.
- Ring in which the bullfights were held.
- The drainage systems of the bull ring used for when it was cleaned.

- The foundation walls of the concentric circles forming the building are built using rubblework, and lime-mortar and are almost 1 metre thick.
  - The stone bases of the pillars on which the boards of the arena lie are made of turf.
  - The interior of the arena was covered in a mixture of compressed soil and sand that gave it a greyish colour, in contrast with the generalised present-day use of golden-coloured "albero".
  - In the central part of the arena, post-holes have been discovered, which are proof of wooden structures – mainly posts and scaffolds – that were used in the tournaments.
- The archaeological excavations will also enable us to study in detail the construction techniques of a building that is well located chronologically, thus giving us a greater insight into 18th-century constructions.