

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORK IN THE WOSINSKY MÓR COUNTY MUSEUM DURING THE PANDEMIC

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Hungarian Archaeology Vol. 10 (2021), Issue 3, pp. 76–80.

During the one and a half year of the pandemic, the archaeology department of our institution faced two major challenges. One challenge was presented by the pandemic-related central directives to establish home office and temporarily close the museum for visitors during the Covid-19 waves. While professional staff could continue their work from home with a little re-organization, almost in an unchanged form, other employees, such as museum attendants had their duties temporarily suspended. We wanted to avoid sending these colleagues on forced vacation or on paid time off for an unforeseeable duration. Therefore, under continuous coordination and monthly reviews by our colleague responsible for the archaeological collection (Márta Vizi), four of these employees were involved in digitization and the remaining four to five colleagues washed finds (mostly animal bones). During this period, staff working in the museum building adhered to social distancing, periodic disinfections and compulsory mask use. As a result, although some of our colleagues contracted the disease during the second wave, the origins of the infections could be traced back in all instances to sources outside the museum.

One result of the altered work schedule was that almost ten thousand paper inventory records were digitized and recorded in our HunTéka-based digital inventory database. As another result, our colleagues washed approximately 7 m³ of animal bones from the archaeological material recovered from Motorway M6 excavated between 2006–2009, which had been postponed until now due to the lack of capacity.

The other major challenge that our archaeology department faced in 2020 and 2021 was unrelated to the Covid virus and its aftermath: at the time of writing this article, we are still in the midst of our largest fieldwork session of the decade, with subsequent documentation and restoration works still in progress. Annually, development-led archaeological fieldwork included 35-40 days of watching briefs, which can be considered average (our colleagues thus spent 120-150 days on the field). Additionally one planned excavation, one trial excavation and ten pre-emptive excavations were scheduled to this period.

Research at the medieval church located in the cemetery at Kisszékely began with trial trench excavations in 2019 by the initiative of a local NGO (Cultural Association of Kisszékely). Later on, research excavations were conducted, primarily in the framework of community archaeology with András K. Németh and Máté Varga (Rippl-Rónai Museum) as heads of excavations (K. NÉMETH & VARGA 2019). They continued their work in the summer of 2020 and excavated the entire surface of the site (K. NÉMETH & VARGA 2020a). As a result, it was possible to clarify the ground-plan and dimensions of a single-nave church with a semi-circular apse and its vestry, used from the 13th until the beginning of the 19th century, which was enlarged in the 18th century. These results will provide the groundwork for the local cultural association in planning a monument they envisioned.

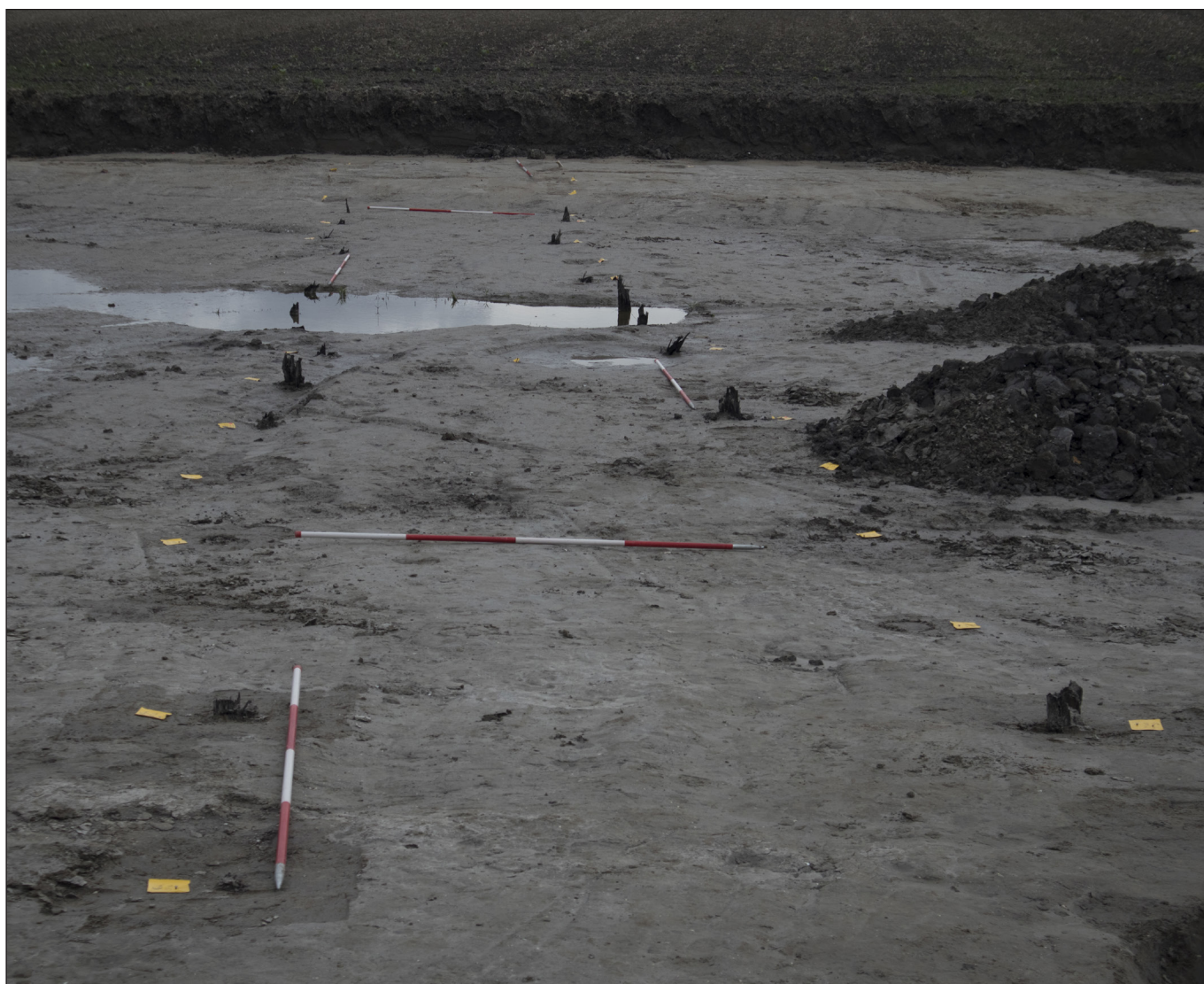
Another pre-emptive excavation led by András K. Németh began in 2019 in the vicinity of the Castle of Simontornya, in relation to the construction of a guesthouse. Following a short pause, it was concluded in the autumn of 2020. The site encompassed a surface merely 130 m² large. After the sizeable modern layer was removed, a 1.5 m thick cultural layer was observed. Beneath this layer, at 3 m depth, traces of a Kuruc-era wooden palisade were documented, which had already been known from written evidence. It consisted of several hundreds of piles, stakes as well as (re-used) pieces of timber and was burnt and rebuilt multiple times. Sections of the palisade were reinforced with wattle and banks raised from debris. Alongside large quantities of animal bones, numerous Ottoman period finds (gravestones adorned with turbans, glass brace-

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lets, plates with foot-rings, knives etc.) and weapon fragments were discovered, together with polturas of Francis II Rákóczi which enabled establishing the chronology of the edifice. Despite the fact that a dozen dendrochronological samples were taken, analyses (conducted by András Grynaeus) provided chronological reference in only one instance, in the case of an oak plank built secondarily into the palisade. Growth rings indicate that this tree was cut down between 1627 and 1634 (K. NÉMETH 2021a, 88; VINDUS 2020, 203.)

In 2020, when the first Covid-related restrictions were introduced, a pre-emptive excavation in relation to the development of drainage works at Döbrököz was in progress in an area of barely 300 m², led by Attila Czövek. The excavation revealed traces of Late Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements. In the meantime, preparations were already in place for the most extensive archaeological fieldwork since the excavation of an entire motorway section in 2009, namely the archaeological service preceding the road constructions connecting to a planned new bridge over the Danube, in the development framework complementing the infrastructure of the scheduled Paks II Nuclear Power Plant.

The Preliminary Archaeological Documentation concerning this project was completed in May 2020, amidst limitations gradually introduced during the first wave of the pandemic, following a lengthy dialogue with Castle Headquarters Nonprofit PLC (*Várkapitányság Integrált Területfejlesztési Központ Nonprofit Zártkörűen Működő Részvénytársaság*) that conducted obligatory trial excavations and coordinated heritage protection tasks. Within the framework of this project, we conducted research in 93 trial trenches



*Fig. 1. Poles of a medieval bridge at Dunaszentgyörgy, Calvinist Church
(Photo by András K. Németh)*

along a 13 km long section of the planned road. In the Preliminary Archaeological Documentation based on the results of this work, we recommended excavating the entire surface of eight sites, encompassing approximately 130 000 m². Keeping these recommendations in mind, along with deficiencies in museum capacity, we launched public procurement procedures for archaeological fieldwork, geodetics and geoinformatics, which were ill advanced by political skirmishes at the local government maintaining the museum. As a result of the public procurement procedure, Ásatárs Ltd., Meridian Engineering Office Ltd. and Salisbury Ltd. participated in the excavation and we hereby kindly thank their colleagues for their valuable help. Hereinafter, features discovered during the excavation campaign conducted between September 2020 and June 2021 with short intermissions, will be presented briefly.

At the site *Dunaszentgyörgy, Országút-dűlő 3* (head of excavation: Attila Czövek, excavated positive surface: 11 000 m²) ditches, ditch systems, peripheral kilns, pit and few scattered graves pertaining to a large Avar settlement were excavated.

At the site *Dunaszentgyörgy, Döggút* (head of excavation: Attila Czövek, excavated surface: 18 000 m²) dwellings, kilns and pits of a Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Imperial Roman era settlement were discovered, alongside a section of a bi-ritual Late Roman graveyard consisting of a few rich burials (golden jewellery, glass vessels). A Roman era ditch system plausibly related to the limes was also documented, alongside a few dwellings from an *Árpád* era village.

The site *Dunaszentgyörgy, Calvinist church* (head of excavation: András K. Németh, excavated surface: 17 000 m²) was located mostly in a former watercourse. Alongside a few Iron Age and *Árpád* period features, the excavation yielded the traces of a large 17th–19th century settlement. The dimensions and characteristics of its features suggest, that it was used for extracting clay used in the brick industry. A 35 m long section of two parallel rows of piles, located 2.5–3 meters apart is worth noting, which comprised the structure of a wooden bridge spanning the stream. Although dendrochronological analyses (provided by András Grynaeus) failed to establish its chronology, stratigraphic relations implied a dating preceding the 16th century, which was also confirmed by finds recovered through continuous metal detecting conducted within the framework of community archaeology (K. NÉMETH & MÁTÉ 2020, 63–64.)

At the site *Dunaszentgyörgy, Malomút* (head of excavation: Gábor János Ódor, excavated surface: 8 000 m²) part of a Hun period cemetery consisting of 34 graves was discovered. Several burials were encircled by Sarmatian-style (!) enclosing ditches. Although the graves were robbed, several finds, including as silver buckles, spearheads, shield bosses, pottery sherds and an intact glass cup were recovered from them, which enabled relative dating.

At the site *Paks, Paksi-faluhely 2* (head of excavation: Gábor K. Tóth, excavated surface: 24 000 m²) the dwellings, kilns, ditches, rock-lined and wood-lined wells of a large Avar settlement were discovered, alongside an industrial yard (?) consisting of kiln clusters dateable to early modern times.



Fig. 2. A glass cup recovered from an early Migration period grave encircled by a ditch (*Dunaszentgyörgy, Malom út*; Photo by Salisbury Ltd.)

The northern part of site *Paks, Paksi-faluhely 6* (head of excavation: Gábor K. Tóth, excavated surface: 15 000 m²) was comprised of another section of the aforementioned Avar settlement. Its middle part and southernmost two thirds encompassed dwellings with internal ovens, ditches and pits which formed parts of a loosely structured *Árpád* era village.

At site *Paks, Új-Birinyó 1* (head of excavation: András K. Németh, excavated surface: 20 000 m²) an almost 500 m long N–E oriented section of an extensive medieval settlement was excavated in the path of the planned road. The settlement has been identified as Szentmiklós/Csámpaszentmiklós (K. NÉMETH 2015, 136) and it covered several hectares. The excavation revealed that the village was ravaged during the *Árpád* era (perhaps during the Mongol invasion of Europe), it was subsequently rebuilt, and later on, permanently abandoned by the end of the 15th century. The usual settlement features were documented. Several large, timber frame houses and a subterranean cellar with stairs were discovered in the northern quadrant of the village, dateable to its second phase, that are worth noting. The partial superimposition of the medieval village and the overhead power lines located right above the site significantly hindered the excavation and in some places, prevented the mechanical paring away of topsoil.

At site *Gerjen, Csamony* (head of excavation: Gábor János Ódor, excavated surface: 11 000 m²) Roman and Avar era dwellings, kilns, pits and ditches were uncovered together with a rich archaeological find material. The high quantity of sherds with Sarmatian characteristics found amidst Roman era pottery raises the same question here as at the site *Dunaszentgyörgy, Malomút*. Namely, where exactly was the water-course of the Danube, the river separating regions and thus greatly affecting cultural aspects, at that time.

During the seven months of excavation, approximately 124 000 m² were surveyed and ca. 5 000 features discovered. At the moment, fieldwork is still in progress and the earthwork related to the road construction is being constantly monitored. At the same time, the documentation of these excavations is being prepared, alongside the restoration and inventory of recovered finds.

It is worth noting that a change in legislation occurred in March 2021 [Edict 135/2021. (III. 22.)] that decreased the area-based service fees of preliminary archaeological excavations from one day to the next, which caused considerable disadvantage concerning both estimated budget and sub-contractor terms (K. NÉMETH 2020; 2021b).

In September 2020, following a report from a local resident, a coin hoard was discovered hidden in a pottery vessel. Thanks to the finders' discipline, the hoard could be professionally excavated, documented and extracted in one piece the next day under the supervision of András K. Németh. Later on, it was disassembled under the supervision of restorers. The head of the excavation and numismatist Máté Varga (RRM) processed the hoard together and identified 1.641 silver coins (denarius, grossus / Groschen, Batzen, Kreuzer, Akçe) and 5 golden forints (minted by Matthias I of Hungary and John I of Hungary) in the hoard, that was in fact found *ex situ*. The hoard closes with a coin minted in 1543, thus it was likely stashed in advance of the Ottoman campaign of the same year that affected this region (K. NÉMETH & VARGA 2020). During the third wave of the pandemic, while still conducting fieldwork, our colleagues created a spectacular temporary exhibition from these finds, coordinated by the head of the excavation. This exhibit was formally opened on the Night of the Museums in 2021 (K. NÉMETH & VARGA 2021).

We strived to raise the number of archaeological sites registered in Tolna county, mainly through traditional means of field walks and community archaeology metal detecting. The project aimed at localizing the settlement related to the Langobard settlement in the vicinity of present-day Kajdacs led by Gábor János Ódor is worth noting, as it yielded the discovery of eleven new sites.

The obligatory closing of the museum building to visitors did not disconnect us from our public, as we continued our regular programmes, although some only in the virtual space. Our colleagues continued our monthly series titled “Artefact of the month”, held online guided tours and prepared two temporary exhibitions (one presents the coin hoard discovered at Simontornya discussed above, the other is scheduled to open in November 2021 and will present the results of community archaeology). The programmes of this year's Archaeology Day as well as the much awaited Night of the Museums were organized while we were still working from home. Furthermore, the colleagues did not relent scientific publishing either: during the

course of 2020, archaeologists working in the museum published almost 30 articles in Hungarian and in international languages and presented their findings at six online conferences. Last but not least, the yearbook of the museum was published in print in the last two years, consisting mostly of articles on archaeology. We also published our “Artefacts of the month” from the last four years as a standalone volume

On September 21, our institution co-hosted a conference titled “Settlement history and material culture of the Rascian/Balkanic populace of Southern Transdanubia during the Ottoman occupation” together with the Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology Department at the University of Pécs and the Philosophy, Historic Sciences and Ethnographic Sciences Expert Committees of the Pécs Regional Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Fourteen speakers presented their papers at the venue.

In summary, the amount of fieldwork did not decrease during the former pandemic waves, furthermore, it even saw a rise due to the road building projects. Moreover, there were no standstills in the archaeological services of our institution due to illnesses or restrictive measures.

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