

THE ACTIVITY OF THE ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF THE RIPPL-RÓNAI MUSEUM DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC¹

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We were informed about the first restrictive measures in the Phase I area of the Eastern Industrial Park in Kaposvár two weeks before the preventive excavation ended in March 2020. We had a day or two to move the technical equipment and documentation necessary for home office work from the workrooms. The excavation was completed during lockdown but the construction continued.³ The epidemic could not dismantle the established professional mechanism either. The field assignments were completed. In addition to the well-paced, planned digitization work, we also took part in the virtual life of the museum.

We spent the spring home office period with the documentation of previous excavations. In addition, our archaeologists continuously organized current and daily tasks according to their responsibilities, and wrote reports and articles for the museum yearbook (see Rippl-Rónai Museum Proceedings [7/2020](#)). The technicians prepared find drawings, digitized excavation maps, and performed photographic post-production. Our storekeeper and find washer colleague cleaned the finds in his own home. The storage facility also needed cleaning.

At the time of the museum lockdown, the guards working in the main building typed the inventory books of the archaeological photo gallery into an excel spreadsheet. This work was coordinated by our data manager colleague, and resulted in 11646 records. In 2020, we also digitized the data from the Archive Inventories (a total of 9849 items). As part of the Digitization Plan of the Department of Archaeology, the result of the data entry on the online registration platform called the *Múzeum Digitár* is 23090 archaeological and numismatic records, which includes the inventories written in an excel spreadsheet between 2015 and 2020, data from two traditional paper-based inventory books, revised items, and items entered in the online system. We participated in a number of online and specialised trainings related to the digitization of public collections.

The Rippl-Rónai Museum places great emphasis on appearing in online space and on social media. The importance of this received increased exposure during the epidemic. In fact, it became the job of museologists to continuously create digital content that is published by the Public Education Group. During the epidemic, brief descriptions were made of archaeological [finds](#) and we reported on major excavations of the previous few years. Due to the forced closing of the new permanent exhibition opened in January 2020, entitled *Shiny Gold and Silver from Somogy* (arranged by Máté Varga), first the [catalogue](#) and then the [exhibition](#) became available online. The [permanent archaeological exhibition](#) has also become available as part of a virtual tour. You can find out more about this on our [website](#).

The Rippl-Rónai Museum should not be left out of the social media either. We have a Facebook⁴ (this is the platform preferred by us) and an Instagram profile. There is little archaeological content on the Museum's Youtube channel yet, nor do we have the capacity to write a blog. Due to the lack of technical equipment, we are not able to publish adequate recordings of professional lectures.

During the pandemic, as part of the Public Collection Digitization Strategy (KDS) a pilot project was completed, in which participants were required to create a text record of a given length on at least 100–200 major works of art, along with a quality photo for each, on the topic of *Masterpieces* and *Travel*. If you

¹ We recommend this paper to the memory of our field technician, László Maruzs.

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³ Coordinated by Krisztina Somogyi. <http://snni.hu/hirek/ipari-park-asatasa.html>.

⁴ Based on data compiled by Balázs Borzavári, our colleague responsible for communication, our posts were accessed more than 130k times in 2020 and more than 100k times in 2021. We are grateful for his help with these data.



Fig. 1. Results of the 2019–2020 excavations at Kaposvár-Nostra, Belsővár: Drone photo by Balázs Borzavári, design by Krisztián Balla.

one could not produce a good enough photo, it was created by a moving digitization lab of the Museum of Fine Arts. Our undertaking was completed on time, and in 2020 we (including our archaeologists) got more records done.

In *Múzeum Digitár*, museologists can publish works of art on the web on their own, but only when also uploading a high-quality image. (Hopefully these records will also count as publications soon.) We are still getting acquainted with the Museum's Digital *Themator*, where we can describe objects from collections and even exhibitions online, embedded in a story.

Due to the pandemic situation, temporary exhibitions in 2020 were delayed or opened only in Autumn. The exhibition “*Trianon 100*” and the event “*Night of Museums*” took place online. We held the Autumn Festival, at which archaeologist István Molnár spoke about the results of the excavations of the castle of Kaposvár (Fig. 1). In 2021, a reconstruction video by Pazirik Ltd. about the castle of Kaposvár made its debut at the Night of Museums. As a result of the urban renewal project of one of the quarters of the city of Kaposvár, a park was established on the site of the former castle, where the excavations and the history of the castle are now presented on billboards. On the day of the opening of the park, many interested people followed the guide of István Molnár. Here we should pay tribute to the memory of dr. Kálmán Magyar. He played an important role in the research of the castle of Kaposvár and other medieval sites in Somogy county. He worked for the museum as a medieval archaeologist from 1970 to 1975 and 1978 to 2008. He died unexpectedly in November 2020.

Among the archaeological projects, the rebuilt Zrínyi well in Órtilos should be mentioned. The octagonal well, lined with oak planks, was restored to a depth of 6 metres (the original depth is about 15 metres). Above the well-curb, the reconstruction of the well house was built based on contemporary depictions, and the restoration of the metal artefacts found in the well was completed. The site, which has become a official historical heritage site, hosted the closing event of the Miklós Zrínyi Memorial Year. Archaeologists dr. László Költő and Máté Varga took part (Fig. 2) in the related archaeological works.

After the missed season in 2020, archaeologist Csilla Balogh continued her educational excavation in the large Avar-period cemetery at Zamárdi-Réti földék in 2021. This excavation has been carried out as a joint venture of the Pázmány Péter Catholic University's Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Art History of Medeniyet University of Istanbul. Based on graves excavated by Edith Bárdos, reconstructions of an Avar-period woman's and a man's costumes were prepared, with the support of the Municipality of Zamárdi, which will be on display in the city's new community space (curator: Máté Varga).

We have provided find material and documentation for scientific processing, for the following organizations (coordinated by Péter Németh and Szilvia Honti): Hungarian National Museum (Late Bronze and Early Iron-age finds), University of Leipzig (metallurgical investigation of the Hunnic cauldron

from Rádpusztá), Institute of Hungarian Research (archaeological finds with runic inscriptions), Eötvös Loránd Research Network, Research Centre for the Humanities (Roman-period cemeteries).

Szilvia Honti and Katalin Jankovich commenced the complex processing of the fifth, 700-piece bronze depot of Lengyeltóti (13–11th century BC, Urnfield Culture) found in 1995. This assemblage is one of the few authentic and complete Bronze Age depots (Fig. 3). As part of a programme by the National Research, Development and Innovation Office, the author of this article, Mária Bondár, has been processing the record of the biritual Baden cemetery in Balatonszentgyörgy (Fig. 4) and the human remains from a Baden settlement at Kaposújlak. To the present day, a catalogue of the cemetery phenomena and the finds has been completed. The good news is that the early Medieval cemetery in Vörs-Papkert will be published by dr. László Költő and dr. József Szentpéteri. A chapter of a planned comprehensive volume presents the sites excavated in Vörs with the participation of other field archaeologists (Szilvia Honti and Péter Németh). Máté Varga will publish a treasure trove as well as the results of his [numismatic](#) and find processing projects (e.g., [Kaposzentjakab](#)).

The reception of external researchers was only suspended during the museum lockdown. Conforming to epidemiological rules (e.g. social distancing, maximized number of people per room) was much easier for the Department of Archaeology, because we work separately within the institution or the main building. We did not even spend too much time together indoors, as the planned excavations and fieldwork were fully implemented. The timing of mandatory and optional (planned excavations) tasks during the virus situation worked out well.



Fig. 2. Reconstructed Ottoman-period well at Őrtilos, Zrínyi-Újvár. Left to right: archaeologists dr. Levente Ábrahám (Present head of the RRM), dr. László Vándor, dr. László Költő and Máté Varga.



Fig. 3. Late Bronze Age socket axes from the V. treasure of Lengyeltóti. Photo by Krisztián Balla.

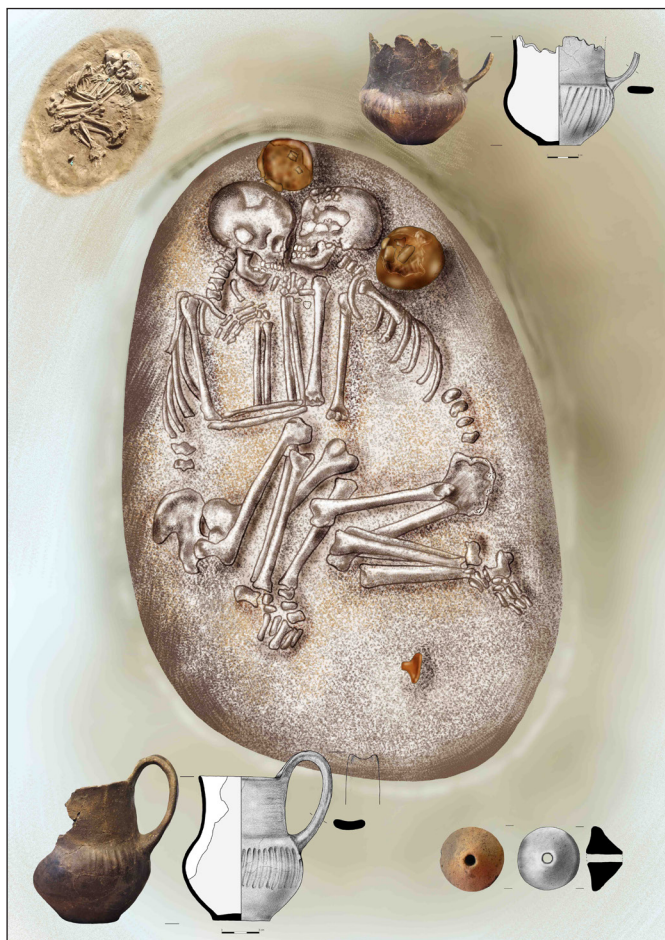


Fig. 4. Biritual burial of the Baden culture from Balatonszentgyörgy. Design by Edit Ambrus, photo by Rippl-Rónai Museum.

In the summer, archaeologist István Molnár was able to carry out two planned excavations. Between June 11 and July 13 2020, he discovered the remains of a [Turkish steam bath](#) in the centre of Törökkoppány. The work was subsidized by the municipality and local NGOs (Fig. 5). Between 20 July and 6 August 2020, the above-mentioned excavation of a Medieval and Ottoman-period castle at Kaposvár-*Nostra Inner Castle* took place (financed by the municipality of Kaposvár). Then, in the autumn of 2020, the Rippl-Rónai Museum carried out a pilot excavation of a development project aimed at widening the northern end of Road 67 (coordinator: István Molnár). The total excavated area was 9071 m² on 6 sites.

In 2020 and 2021, we had a number of projects requiring archaeological observation, such as the site of the largest solar park in Central Europe. Work on the planned oil pipeline in Southern Somogy began in August 2020 with field surveys and compiling heritage impact studies (with a deadline in early December, coordinator: Krisztina Somogyi). In the winter of 2020/2021, the maintainer of our museum involved several employees in urban social tasks (lunch delivery). This obligation only ceased when several colleagues fell ill at the end of February. Krisztina Somogyi continued the excavation and archaeological observation on the Southern Somogy oil pipeline route in the spring. The excavation

of the castle in the area of Berzence took place at that time (financed by the NKA and the local government, led by István Molnár) (Fig. 6). Remarkable artifacts were found (e.g., gold coins – Fig. 7, arquebuses, and a carved column head).

In May 2021, a preliminary excavation related to the widening of Road 67 started on an expansive yet sporadic Árpadian age site. The works continued simultaneously with the provings related to of the second development phase of the Kaposvár Industrial Park for three weeks during the summer (Fig. 8). In the latter area, an Árpadian age village and smelter, as well as a Copper age settlement, came to light.⁵ From the second half of September to the beginning of December, our largest archaeological project during the pandemic took place on the path of the northern end of Road 67. We have discovered two smaller sites outside Somogytúr (Late Bronze and Celtic and early modern settlements, respectively). István Molnár also led the excavation of a densely covered site near Balatonlelle–Rádpusztá, famous for its Hunnic period cauldron, where traces of Late Copper Age, Middle and Late Bronze age, Roman period and Árpadian age settlements, and three Avar graves were unearthed (Fig. 9). In the are of a future junction at Víz (site: Somogytúr–Hegyalja-dűlő) an extensive part of the settlement dated to the late Linear Pottery culture (catching up with the Zseliz Culture in time) was discovered (Fig. 10) by Krisztina Somogyi and her team. The most important phenomenon, unique in our county, was a so-called mass grave (with the skeletons of four adults, a child and a young bovine; Fig. 11). A depot containing six grindstones came to the surface from one of the

⁵ Kaposvár, Kaposfüred–Felső-erdő-dűlő 9065 m², led by István Molnár István and Kaposvár, Keleti Ipari park Phase II, 6007 m², led by Krisztina Somogyi.



Fig. 5. Excavated part of the Ottoman-period bath in Törökkoppány, 2020. Drone photo by Balázs Borzavári.

settlement pits, and there also were other grindstones separately in features on the site. The total excavated area at the four sites was 36754 m². A commissioned archaeologist, Áron Dávid carried out the excavation on the fifth site, Látrány–Szikesalja, with the Salisbury Ltd. In the southern part of the site, a significant Urnfield settlement (Fig. 12), while in the Northern section part of an intensive Árpadian-age settlement (a continuation of the Rádpusztá site) became discovered. In addition to the excavations, the Rippl-Rónai Museum has also provided the construction works with archaeological monitoring in the entire section. The results of the excavations in 2020 and 2021 will be available in the forthcoming museum yearbook.

Our final topic is community archaeology. We have heard a lot about the current situation at the online conference *Museum Restart*, and we realised that we face similar problems. The Rippl-Rónai Museum does not have an archaeological workplan within an organizational framework, and we do not have the capacity to develop and run one besides the fieldwork and museological core tasks. Each colleague has volunteers who provide findings and information and are ready to partake in field surveys. Volunteers regularly participate in the excavations of István Molnár. (We do not intend to involve volunteers in the cleaning of artefacts. Our one and only finds cleaner and storekeeper has been paid from the archaeology budget for twenty years now!) Máté Varga has conducted field surveys with volunteers equipped with metal detectors. They



Fig. 6. Castle of Berzence: excavation in 2021. Drone photo by Krisztián Balla.



Fig. 7. Late Medieval “purse find” from Berzence. Photo by Krisztián Balla.



Fig. 8. Kaposvár, Eastern Industrial Park, Phase II. View of the pilot excavation's sondages from northeast in 2021. Drone photo by Krisztián Balla



Fig. 9. Widening of Road 67. Excavation at Balatonlelle-Rádpusztá, 2021. Drone photo by Krisztián Balla.



Fig. 10. Excavation of a junction of Road 67 at Visz, 2021. Drone photo by Krisztián Balla.



Fig. 11. Middle Neolithic mass grave from Somogytúr-Hegyalja-dűlő, 2021. Photo by Krisztián Balla.



Fig. 12. Late Bronze Age sickle in situ. Látrány, Szikes-alja, 2021. Photo by Áron Dávid.



Fig. 13. Golden coin from the 3rd century AD, aureus of Emperor Volusianus. Photo by Krisztián Balla.

have contributed to the museum with a number of new sites and finds (*Fig. 13*). Mr. Varga regularly reports on his work on the museum's online interfaces.

And the show must go on. The preliminary exploration of a development site of a Turkish company (glass factory), of over nearly 100 thousand square metres, in the eastern industrial park of Kaposvár will start in February with the coordination of the National Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian National Museum, and with the participation of our museum.