

REPORT ON THE ANNUAL ASSEMBLY OF THE EUROPEAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL COUNCIL AND THE “DIGITAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE” SYMPOSIUM

KATALIN WOLLÁK – MÁTÉ STIBRÁNYI

The “Digital Archaeological Heritage” symposium of the European Archaeological Council/Europae Archaeologiae Consilium was held in March 2016 in Brighton. The participants of the symposium exchanged and shared their views on new forms of digital data management and on providing access to and sharing heritage-related data. The 17th Annual Meeting was hosted by Historic England, the UK’s heritage management agency that was reorganised a year ago, and Brighton University actively participated in drawing up the programme.

The European Archaeological Council – Europae Archaeologiae Consilium (EAC) supports the national archaeological heritage management bodies of twenty-nine European countries since 1999. The Council organises annual heritage management symposia and has set up several working groups for addressing specific issues in addition to providing a forum for its members. The Council publishes the material of the symposia and it has recently launched a new best practice guidelines series. The first volume covers various issues and principles of archaeological archiving, documentation and the curation of archaeological finds, while the second addresses the principles and practice of geophysical methods in archaeology. Both volumes can be [freely downloaded](#) from the EAC website, where the bi-monthly newsletters covering news and events affecting the EU cultural heritage protection and brief comprehensive overviews of the heritage management system in the member states can also be accessed. The members of the EAC are either the representatives of integrated agencies or of agencies exclusively responsible for the management of the archaeological heritage (in some cases, a country’s ministry). Hungary, one of the organisation’s founding members, played an active role in the EAC Board between 2010 and 2016. A strategic document, the [EAC Agenda](#) addressing the future as well as the role and perspectives of archaeological heritage management in the 21st century was drawn up following the 15th jubilee symposium. One of the document’s key themes is the need to stimulate and encourage society’s involvement in archaeology, the need for agencies to be conscious, explicit and, most importantly, transparent about the choices that are made in archaeological heritage management, and the need to meet the challenges of managing archaeological data in our digital era. EAC is currently working on the creation of an action plan to meet current demands.

The 17th Annual Meeting in March 2016 was hosted by Historic England, the UK’s heritage management agency that was reorganised a year ago. English Heritage Trust retained the brand name after the split in 2015, and it is now responsible for the management of over four hundred publicly owned monuments. The Trust received an initial £80 million from public funds for fulfilling this task, but is expected to raise its own funds for its upkeep after a few years. Historic England, on the other hand, fulfils the tasks set down in the relevant laws for heritage protection and management.

Brighton University actively participated in drawing up the programme of the EAC Annual Meeting. The first official element was the organisation’s annual assembly. Representatives of heritage management agencies and invited guests such as Felipe Criado-Boado, president of the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA), attended the assembly where EAC president Bernard Randoïn presented EAC’s annual report. The assembly elected a new president, Leonard de Wit from The Netherlands, who outlined his programme and thanked the previous president and Katalin Wollák (vice-president between 2013 and 2016, president between 2010 and 2013) for their activities. Katalin Wollák was elected honorary board member. Réka Virágos represents Hungary and is a member of the EAC Board.

Following the closed session, the working groups presented their reports. These included a report on the activities of the EAA and EAC Joint Working Group on Farming, Forestry and Rural Land Management, a report by a member of the working group on archaeological archiving and a report on the activities and findings of the working group on archaeological remote sensing, including their freshly published report on geophysical guidelines. The volume of the 2015 symposium, *EAC Occasional Paper 11. When Valletta meets Faro. The reality of European archaeology in the 21st century*, was presented by Paulina Florjanowicz. Representatives of heritage management agencies received a copy of the volume, while those wishing to obtain a copy could place an order at Archaeolingua, EAC's publisher. A review of this volume will be published in a later issue of *Hungarian Archaeology*.

The programme of the one and a half day symposium was inspired by the *EAC (Amersfoort) Agenda*, the EAC's strategic programme, one chapter of which covers the efficient, sustainable management, accessibility and the improvement and better integration of the already existing and future digital archaeological databases. The theme of the "Digital Archaeological Heritage" symposium was conceived in this spirit, with support from Historic England. Barney Sloane from Historic England, one of the symposium's organisers, noted in his paper that the unprecedented speed at which digital technologies are developing offers countless new possibilities for archaeological research and the presentation of research findings. There is increasing demand for sharing and access to archaeological data and information as well as for their integration, which in turn calls for greater collaboration. For mutual benefits, it is also imperative to encourage cooperation with other disciplines and for sharing, connecting and providing access to data and information. Another aim is to provide the greatest possible access to archaeological resources for various user groups and the broader public.

Session 1, "Measuring and Sensing", explored the new methods, equipment and procedures for surveying, identifying and characterising archaeological finds and sites as well as landscapes, alongside a demonstration of the new techniques that have brought fundamental changes to site assessments during the past twenty years and have also provided new means of visualising archaeological research findings. Session 2, "Data to Knowledge", focused on the many ways whereby raw data can be exploited, including GIS-based technology for heritage protection and management as well as for research purposes. This session explored the many new approaches adopted and applied in the member states. Session 3, "Visualising the Past", covered the new ways and novel approaches to how archaeology can be presented to the wider public, citing successful archaeological applications of 3D printing, Augmented Reality and haptics, which can change the ways in which the archaeological heritage is accessed and enjoyed.

The title "Digital Archaeological Heritage" might seem outdated at a time when all aspects of heritage protection and management make good use of digital technologies (from data collection in the field to desk-based work). The problems addressed during the symposium focused on how to manage the digital data. The continuous and rapid changes in the nature of the data opens many

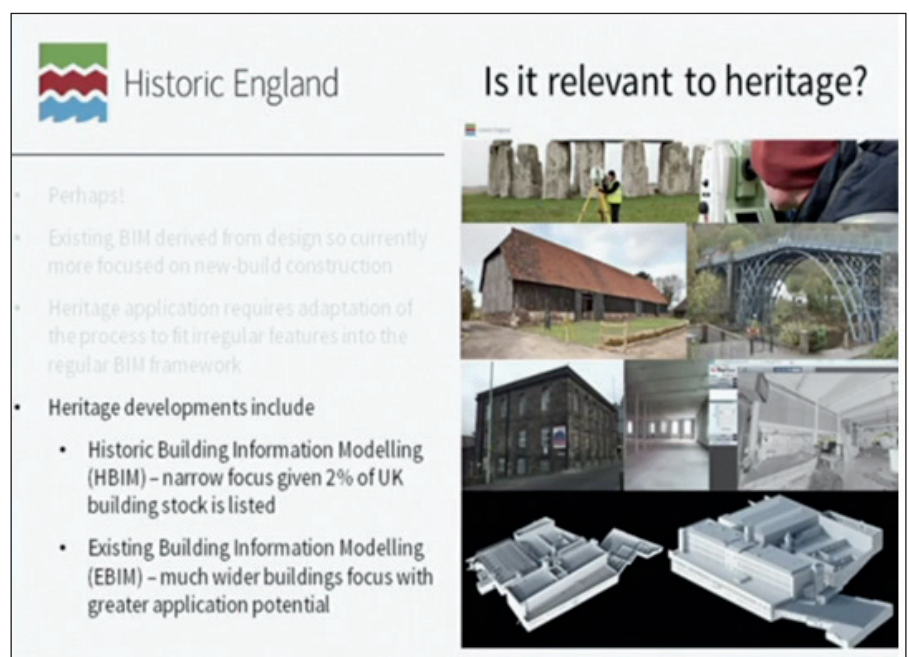


Fig 1: Application of the Building Information Modelling (BIM) system in heritage protection and management

new possibilities (as well as problems) for European heritage protection and management, and different countries have met these challenges in different ways, whether in data gathering, data assessment or sharing and providing access to the data.

We will here review the presentations that Hungarian readers might find interesting. One of the most outstanding presentations of the first session on measuring and sensing heritage data was by Paul Bryan, who discussed the relevance of BIM (Building Information Modelling) systems to heritage protection and management.

BIM is a process of illustrating, in digital terms, all the elements that compose a building, enabling the creation of a single source of information on the building that assists construction and facilities management processes throughout the life-cycle of the building. This obviously has a huge potential for heritage protection and management. Hungarian heritage protection and management agencies need to adopt this procedure because the EU recommends the application of BIM in public procurement tenders (in the UK, the use of BIM is mandatory as of 2016). Although its application for heritage buildings has not become widespread in Hungary, Zoltán Bachman had earlier proposed the use of BIM in the Cella Trichora Visitors Centre, the World Heritage site in Pécs.

Representatives of several countries (Czech Republic, Belgium and Poland) described analyses or applications that were based on the Aerial Lidar Survey (ALS) images of the country's entire territory, focusing on their usefulness in heritage management and scholarship. Although these aerial surveys are not made for heritage protection and management purposes, national heritage protection institutions have full access to the data. It is to be expected that a similar aerial survey will be conducted in Hungary too in the near future and it would be important for the heritage protection and management agencies to actively participate in this process, in order to ensure that both data collection, data assessment and data sharing be in a format useful for their purposes.

Session 2, "Data to Knowledge", explored issues of raw data processing. There were eight presentations for this session, among them one by Máté Stibrányi (Gyula Forster National Centre for Cultural Heritage Management, Hungary), who spoke about the nature and use of data gathered as part of preliminary archaeological documentation.

The undoubtedly most interesting presentations from a Hungarian perspective were the ones discussing the integration of the data gathered during heritage protection and management activities into a single (online) platform. An increasing number of European countries is committing resources to make these data accessible at different levels for academic purposes, for aiding decisions in heritage management and for educational purposes. The presentations on Polish, Czech, Swedish and Scottish practices drew attention to several points and options that could be usefully applied in Hungary.

The presentations in Session 3, "Visualising the Past", focused on the digital visualisation of the archaeological heritage to the broader public. In their presentation, Erzsébet Jerem and József Laszlovszky described the cultural heritage activities conducted jointly by Archaeolingua Foundation and the Central

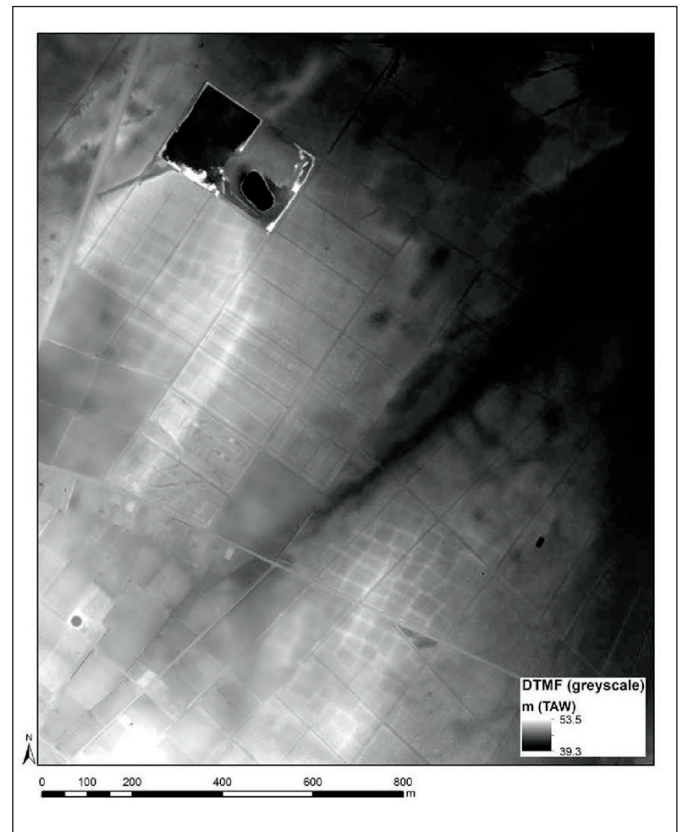


Fig 2: Celtic fields on the ALS image of the forested area in northern Belgium. (After Erwin Meylemans – Guido Creemers – Marc de Bie – Joyce Paesen: Revealing extensive protohistoric field systems through high resolution lidar data in the northern part of Belgium. In: *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 45/2, p. 5.)



Fig 3: Part of Mate Stibrányi's presentation discussing preliminary archaeological documentation

European University in Budapest and the university's recently launched course on heritage protection and management.

One of the interesting presentations in this session described the creation of mobile Augmented Reality (AR) apps for certain Neolithic and Bronze Age sites in the Czech Republic, which offer a spectacular visual recreation of the site as it once was. The results of this project are certainly worth considering for Hungarian sites.

At the end of the symposium, the EAC Board reviewed the publication options of the presentations, discussing the advantages (as well as the disadvantages) of a digital and paper-based publication. The possible themes for the

next symposium were also discussed and the new president proposed the setting up of a working group for its organisation.

A coach excursion to the main heritage sites in East Sussex was organised on Saturday. Participants first visited The Keep, a centre for archives. The "green" building was designed with minute attention to the use of sustainable energy. Construction work was preceded by an archaeological site assessment – as always – and an excavation was conducted on the planned location, in the course of which the first Palaeolithic finds in Sussex were uncovered. The creation of the archive was supported by the East Essex County Council, the University of Sussex and the Brighton and Hove City Council. In addition to the archives, it provides access to university and museum collections. The professional treatment of the archived material is ensured by the conservation studio, which was awarded a Centre of Excellence award; The Keep also houses the Historic Environment Records (HER), a database of archaeological sites and finds, historic monuments and landscapes, and other important sites, which is a useful resource for preliminary site assessment.

Following the visit to The Keep, the Archaeology Officer of East Sussex described the Cuckmere Estuary Pathfinder programme, launched by the council for a community-based decision on the future of the area. One of the most prominent features of the area preserving much of the early medieval landscape lying near the Channel is the river and its meanders. The Environmental Agency proposed the re-transformation of the area into a saltmarsh habitat through the re-admission of tidal waters, involving the creation of breaches in the existing embankments, which would lead to the enrichment of the bird fauna of the saltmarsh habitat. However, this would also result in the destruction of some medieval and World War 1 and 2 sites.

As part of The Cuckmere Estuary Pathfinder Programme, community members were informed about various options and were shown modelled outcomes. Following a series of discussions and consultations, the local communities voted for the preservation of the historic landscape and against the re-admission of saltwater in the local referendum.



Fig 4: Meanders of Cuckmere River

The next visit was to a Centre for Doctoral Training in Science and Engineering in Arts, Heritage and Archaeology (SEAHA), a so-called Lab-on-Wheels heritage laboratory maintained by Oxford, London and Brighton Universities for research and public engagement purposes. The easily transportable laboratory provides greater access to Heritage Science for university students, researchers and the public.

The last stop was a visit to the Long Man of Wilmington, a 72 m tall figure carved into the chalk hill. It was earlier believed to date from prehistory, but more recent studies have shown that it was probably made in the 16th–17th century. It was originally known as the Green Man. Its current white colour comes from the white-painted breeze blocks that were used to replace the earlier bricks in 1969.



Fig 5: *The Long Man of Wilmington*