

## ON THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF BUILDINGS AND GARDENS

ANDRÁS FÜLÖP<sup>1</sup> – ANDRÁS KOPPÁNY<sup>2</sup>

Hungarian Archaeology Vol. 12 (2023) Issue 2, pp. 37–42.

*In the latest issue of the online journal Hungarian Archaeology, József Laszlovszky published an excellent overview of the points where archaeology connects with recent periods (LASZLOVSZKY 2023). There he drew attention, among others, to two fields belonging to the domain of monument research and, thus, stretching the 1711 date representing the upper chronological limit of the period of archaeological interest: 'building archaeology' and 'garden archaeology'.*

**Keywords:** building archaeology, garden archaeology

Before examining these two research areas, one must briefly consider the artificial 1711 chronological limit. The author analyses in detail the research historical and European context in which that boundary had developed, highlighting that this date may only be relevant in political history but has little relevance to material culture or architectural history. It is purely out of necessity that the legislator linked the chronological definition of archaeology to a specific date in order to provide the legal definition of archaeological sites with a firm point of reference. Obviously, if, for example, 17th-century 'linen pots' (a vessel type from Eastern Hungary, glazed inside and covered with red engobe) are found in a ploughed field in the Great Hungarian Plain, even though more and more is known about this object type (e.g., LAJKÓ 2014, 418, 421), it is not always sure whether the site dates to before or after 1711. In similar borderline cases, the spirit of the law and the consideration and wisdom of those applying it, i.e., all professionals concerned (researchers, authorities, etc.), are needed to provide the right and proportionate measures in the question of a site on the edge of the 1711 limit. As the legislation does not answer all the questions that may emerge, one has to fill in the remaining gaps.

In addition to the artificial 1711 chronological limit, there is a spatial, 'horizontal' one. At the time of writing this manuscript, Act LXIV of 2001 on the Protection of Cultural Heritage defines archaeological heritage as '*tangible traces of human existence on and below the surface of the earth (...), (...) dating from before 1711*'. In this definition, the site is nothing more than a subset, a spatial projection. The surface of the ground is important because it allows an area to be declared a site based on the finds gleaned during a field survey, regardless of how deep below the surface the archaeological layers begin. In the case of urban



Fig. 1. The excavated kitchen of the Deák House in Söjtör (research by András Koppány, 2002)

<sup>1</sup> Hungarian Museum of Architecture, Monument Protection Documentation Center, e-mail: [fulop.andras@mma-mem.hu](mailto:fulop.andras@mma-mem.hu)

<sup>2</sup> Hungarian Museum of Architecture, Monument Protection Documentation Center, e-mail: [koppany.andras@mma-mem.hu](mailto:koppany.andras@mma-mem.hu)

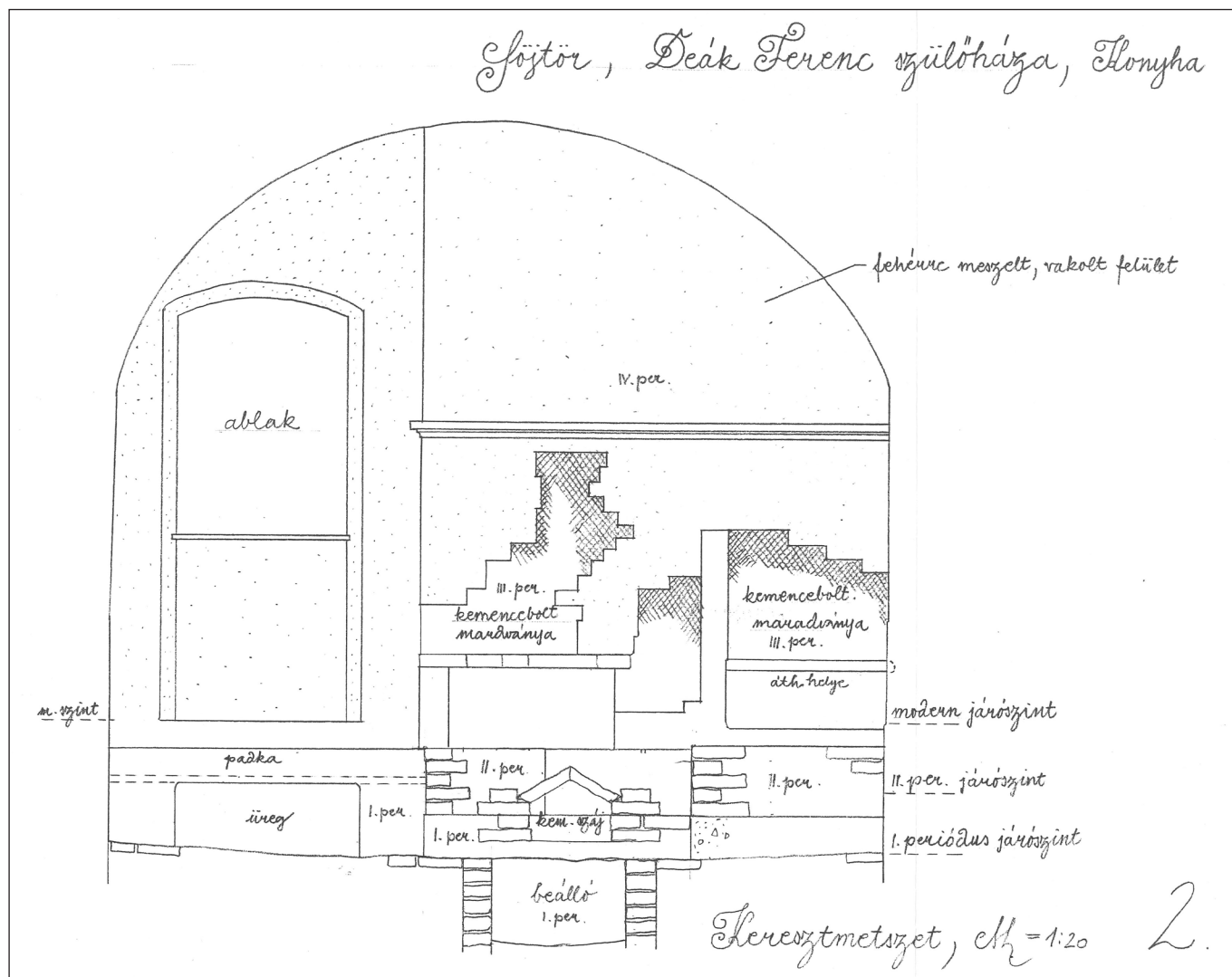


Fig. 2. Survey of the kitchen wall of the Deák House in Söjtör by Tibor Sabján (research by András Koppány, 2002)

excavations, where thicker modern or even contemporary strata overlie pre-1711 layers, it is common practice to remove the latter with heavy machinery (ZSIDI 2011, 120).

At this point, we must elaborate upon the meaning of ‘building archaeology’, a term that has also come up in a recent volume of studies analysing in detail the methodology of the structural research of walls (LÖVEI 2020, 42–44; RÁCZ 2020, 55; KOPPÁNY 2020, 169). What is important for us at this point is that this common term is unfortunately too broad and obscures several important details. It may refer to the excavation of Roman Period, or medieval building remains in an archaeological site; an archaeological excavation within a building registered as an archaeological site but not listed as a monument; or even a monument research project involving the removal of the pavement and the examination of the objects underneath, in a building not classified as an archaeological site (Figs. 1–2). Perhaps the building enjoys both protections. Taking further József Laszlovszky’s line of thought, the type of protection makes no difference at all from a professional point of view since we are talking about different phases of the same site. In principle, it should not matter whether one is excavating below or above floor level – and the 1711 boundary either – as one should proceed with equal care when excavating and documenting the exposed phenomena.

But there is a difference in some respect. It is important to emphasise that archaeological finds can come from fillings and demolition layers. Their ownership by the state cannot be questioned, and their subsequent fate (getting into a museum collection, restored, and inventoried) is strictly regulated by law, being the responsibility of authorised institutions (museums, universities, and institutes).

However, in the case of the destructive research of walls and structures above floor level – wall structural



Fig. 3. Castle of Siklós, eastern wing, with a schematic indication of the raising of the inner floor level (survey by monument researcher Bartos György, 2009)

below ground, in an archaeological context, and was transported to a museum to be inventoried as an archaeological find.

Surprising as it may seem, archaeological objects can sometimes also be found *above* ground. For example, in the Castle of Siklós (Fig. 3), the level of the first floor of the 15th-century eastern wing was raised by almost half a storey in the early 16th century. At that time, the Gothic windows were walled in, the floor level was filled up, and a new, higher row of Renaissance windows was opened, later replaced by Baroque windows (BARTOS & CABELLO 2007, 84). Accordingly, the filling above the ground floor vault contained late 15th–early 16th-century finds and the built foundation of a stove. Owing to current regulations, all this was excavated within the frame of a monument research project as observation, during construction, and only the experience of the art historian as a monument researcher could 'save' the situation. This case also shows that the two methods are, in some cases, completely inseparable. What we do today is actually a modern-day version of the '*műrégészet*' (literally: 'archaeo-art history') of the second half of the 19th century.

We believe archaeology and wall structural research developed, somewhat spontaneously, in two separate directions mainly because of the former focusing on 'movable' archaeological finds. Albeit the owner or builder bears the costs in both cases, the procedures are quite different: while in the case of archaeological excavations, notifying authorities and granting permission for further work is primarily the responsibility of the excavating institution, in various types of monument research it is the builder who has to make the notification. In the former case, only institutions, while in the latter case, mainly registered experts, i.e., private individuals hired from the 'market', may conduct research.

This is not to say that the term 'building archaeology' has not occurred in the history of Hungarian research before – see only a remark by art historian Ferenc Dávid from 1977 that wall structural research is nothing else than 'the archaeology of buildings and architecture' (DÁVID 1977, 76). The structural research of walls follows a logic similar to archaeology's as it also proceeds layer by layer, i.e., starting from the youngest painting layers to the oldest ones but on walls (work carried out today preferably by wall painting conservators) (FÜLÖP 2020, 87; BOZÓKI & HARIS 2020, 124, 160). Where valuable paintings do not cover the walls, the wall's structure may be examined, for instance, by dismantling the later masonry from an earlier opening, etc. Archaeology, in this sense, is more of a working method, a way of thinking; a synonym for excavation by 'peeling off' the layers, only rotated 90° to the ground surface, on the wall, instead of progressing downwards.

The research of modern-period historic monuments differs from general archaeological practice in other respects, too. One cannot automatically dismantle Baroque or Neoclassical details – even if documented – of a monument to peep at remains of an earlier archaeological age underneath if the modern-period details

surveys conservator's investigations and wall diagnostics, structural research – we should typically expect no finds in the archaeological meaning of the term. Above-ground structures of archaeological age (ascending walls, vaults, etc.) are the domain of the ones in building research, even if the interpretation of such structures cannot be separated from archaeology. More importantly, their archaeological age does not automatically make them state property. A medieval carving fragment walled secondarily into a modern-period wall can be considered a 'grey zone'. How to classify it? Is it an archaeological find? Or an artefact? Should it be removed? If so, where should it go? To a private collection? A museum? We believe there are no apparent answers to these questions. Not even if another fragment of the same carving was found at the same place but

in question represent some kind of value, as in that case, they are part of the reference base of monument restoration, of which preservation is a key feature.

All the above have made it perhaps even more understandable that the desired result, namely joining the results of below- and above-ground research, i.e., parallel research of the archaeological site and the historic monument can only be achieved through close cooperation and continuous dialogue by specialists of two (or even more) fields, as also emphasised by József Laszlovszky (LASZLOVSZKY 2023, 44).

Interestingly, the situation is more complicated if the building is under only one type of protection. For example, in a historical monument not registered as an archaeological site, a monument researcher with a degree in art history should ‘do archaeology’ below floor level; as opposed, in a place registered as an archaeological site but not as a monument, an archaeologist should have to grasp, or even research the building history of a multi-storey building with modern period building phases. Since no one may be expected to be such a polymath, for the time being, the best practice is to make the experts of both professions receptive to the other’s points of view by presenting their working methods within the frame of university education. For archaeologists, this means including the architectural history of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the curriculum. Both future archaeologists and monument researchers need to know when to ask the other for help.

According to the current regulation, an archaeologist can become a registered monument researcher, included in the ministry’s list of experts, after acquiring the necessary experience and scores. On the other hand, art historians and architects may only excavate with a degree in archaeology, as employees of an institute authorised to carry out excavations. Although theoretically, it is possible for the same person to legally conduct excavation and wall structural survey in a historic monument listed as an archaeological site, the current system consisting of experts and a rather fragmented institutional structure has yielded no example.

Another research direction mentioned by József Laszlovszky is ‘garden archaeology’ (LASZLOVSZKY 2023, 40). The problem with this term is similar to that with ‘building archaeology’. As we have seen, the word archaeology is ‘taken’ already, commonly referring to the research of the pre-1711 heritage, whereas, under the given historical circumstances in Hungary, the excavation of gardens typically involves the research of sites dating from the 18th century and later. Moreover, this term may give way to misunderstanding where a registered archaeological site lies beneath a modern period garden, as under the pretext of ‘garden archaeology’, one could also dig a site, thus bypassing strict archaeological regulations. That is why the current legislation uses the distinctive term ‘garden research using archaeological methods’. Although the method is archaeological, its objects are ‘protected parks’ dating from after 1711, an umbrella term including not only gardens listed as monuments but, more recently, the plots of all historical monuments.

For ‘protected parks’, one must prepare a ‘garden history documentation’, a complex scientific study based on examining written and visual sources, landforms, garden paths, buildings, and vegetation. It may be written by specialists with an MSc in Landscape Architecture or one with an MA in Landscape Architecture and Garden Design with relevant expert authorisation. The problem is that only they can conduct garden research using archaeological methods. Although archaeology classes are included in their training, these are not suitable for getting familiar with the practical part.

The situation is simpler when the ‘protected park’ is also an archaeological site. In such cases, archaeological excavation overwrites garden research. To counterbalance that, the excavating institution should



*Fig. 4. Remains of the demolished 18th-century orangery in the garden of the Batthyány Castle in Körmend (test excavation by Dóra Hegyi & Zsófia Náday, 2017)*

involve an expert in historic gardens, who can draw the archaeologist's attention to the contextualisation of layers younger than 1711 and considerations based on the assessment of contemporary drawings and written sources. Documenting and interpreting these young layers and objects can provide essential information for restoring gardens by recording modern period ground levels, garden paths, their layout and structural characteristics, and the location of the beds and garden buildings. Several garden excavations within the frame of the National Castle Programme have provided recent examples of such a cooperation, where (during the evaluation excavation phase of the Preliminary Archaeological Documentation [PAD]) archaeologists opened trenches at predictably significant points of the garden structure or garden buildings in parks also listed as archaeological sites (see, e.g., KLAGYIVIK & KOPPÁNY 2021) – not least because the earthworks of the then-future garden architectural interventions were also expected to take place at these points (Fig. 4).

In the opposite case, a historic garden expert would have to carry out garden research using archaeological methods in a 'protected park' not registered as an archaeological site. In such cases, the expert has to involve an archaeologist, who let us face it, actually carries out the excavation but only under the name of the specialist with an MSc in Landscape Architecture. Obviously, if the excavation yielded archaeological findings, the area would become a registered archaeological site after the authorities had been notified.

Depending on the client and the total cost of the investment, test or evaluation excavations may also be carried out in places not listed as an archaeological site as part of preparing PAD (for examples, see, e.g., HEGYI, KLAGYIVIK & NÁDAI 2017) (Fig. 5). In the case of large development projects, archaeological observation during construction is the last phase when such data can be collected, but it is easy to see that conditions, in this case, are often not favourable for proper documentation. It can be advantageous when the construction works concern a relatively large area, but only if they are carried out under the supervision of a competent landscape architect; in such cases, the restoration of the garden in question can be corrected for a more authentic presentation in the light of the exposed garden paths, etc.

The main message of József Laszlovszky's paper is that archaeology has to adopt a chronologically more open stance. A change of perspective has already begun. The documentation, and even the preservation, where possible, of modern period building remains is increasingly becoming part of the daily practice of younger generations of archaeologists with a specialisation in the medieval period, thanks to an increased presence of the 'monument-oriented' approach in their education.

Translation by Anna Kónya



Fig. 5. 'Peasant house' in the garden of the Nádasdy castle in Nádasdladány, 1911 (source: Szalon Újság); its remains were found during the test excavation by Dóra Hegyi and Zsófia Nádaï (HEGYI, KLAGYIVIK & NÁDAI 2017)

## REFERENCES

- Bartos, Gy. & Cabello, J. (2007). A Perényiek és a siklósi reneszánsz. In Fedeles, T. (szerk.), *Emlékkötet Szatmári György tiszteletére*. Egyháztörténeti Tanulmányok a Pécsi egyházmegye Történetéből III. Budapest–Pécs, 81–114.
- Bozóki, L. & Haris, A. (2020). Struktúra és matéria Az építéstörténet „olvasása”. In Bardoly, I. & Haris, A. (szerk.), *A falkutatás elmélete és gyakorlata a műemlékvédelemben*. Régi Épületek Kutatóinak Egyesülete. Budapest, 121–168.

Dávid, F. (1977). A falkutatások szerepe a műemléki helyreállításokban. *Az Egri Nyári Egyetem Előadásai*. Eger, 73–82.

Fülöp, A. (2020). Jogsabályok, falak, kutatók. A falkutatás jogi hátterének két évtizede. In Bardoly, I. & Haris, A. (szerk.), *A falkutatás elmélete és gyakorlata a műemlékvédelemben*. Régi Épületek Kutatóinak Egyesülete. Budapest, 73–94.

Hegy, D., Klagyivik, M. & Nádai, Zs. (2017). A nádasdladányi Nádasdy-kastély kertje. *Kastélykertek régész szemmel*. [Poszter](#).

Klagyivik, M. & Koppány, A. (2021). A körmendi Batthyány–Strattmann-kastély északi kertjének és díszudvarának kerttörténeti kutatása. *Műemlékvédelem* LXV/5, 395-411.

Koppány, A. (2020). A régészeti ásatás és falkutatás kapcsolata. In Bardoly, I. & Haris, A. (szerk.), *A falkutatás elmélete és gyakorlata a műemlékvédelemben*. Régi Épületek Kutatóinak Egyesülete. Budapest, 169–180.

Lajkó, O. (2014). „Vászonfazék, cifra tányér, kormos kanta.” Adatok a Dél-Alföld 17. századi edénműveségéhez. In Simonyi, E. & Tomka, G. (szerk.), *„A cserép igazat mond, ha helyette nem mi akarunk beszélni.” Regionalitás a középkori és újkori kerámiában*. Opuscula Hungarica IX. Budapest, 417–436.

Laszlovszky, J. (2023). *Újkori és legújabbkori régészet Magyarországon?* Magyar Régészet. Online Magazin, 2023. tavasz ([http://files.archaeolingua.hu/2023TA/Upload/Laszlovszky\\_H23TA.pdf](http://files.archaeolingua.hu/2023TA/Upload/Laszlovszky_H23TA.pdf))

Lővei, P. (2020). A falkutatási módszer vázlatos története Magyarországon. In Bardoly, I. & Haris, A. (szerk.), *A falkutatás elmélete és gyakorlata a műemlékvédelemben*. Régi Épületek Kutatóinak Egyesülete. Budapest, 11–50.

Rácz, M. (2020). Helyszíni épületkutatás, falkutatás – kitekintés Európára. In Bardoly, I. & Haris, A. (szerk.), *A falkutatás elmélete és gyakorlata a műemlékvédelemben*. Régi Épületek Kutatóinak Egyesülete. Budapest, 51–72.

Zsidi, P. (2011). Városi feltárás. In Müller, R. (szerk.), *Régészeti kézikönyv*. Budapest, 113–128.