

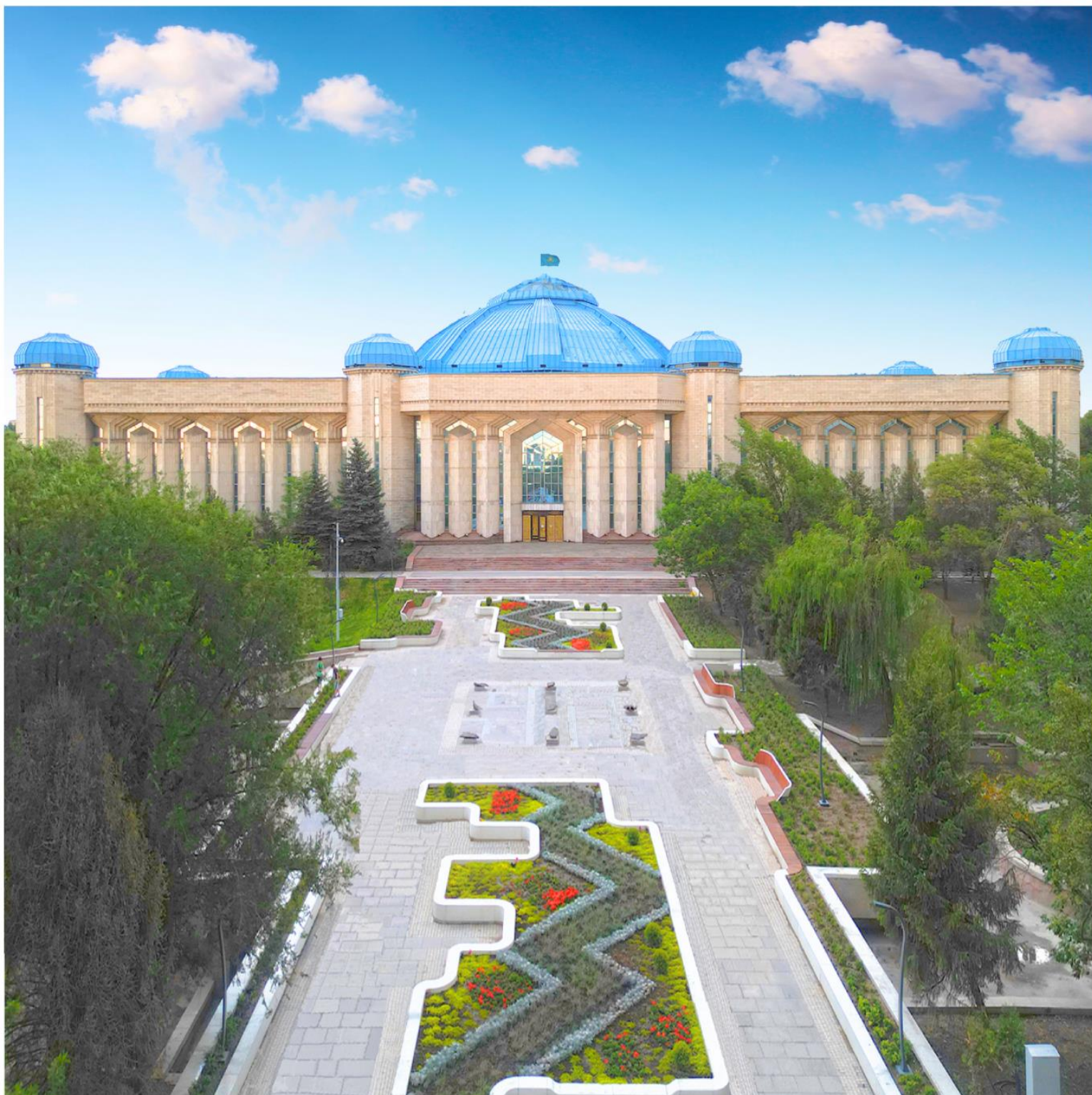
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FROM THE BOTTOM UP – A SMALL-SCALE COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT IN HUNGARY

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Abstract. Could public archaeology provide a common platform and amalgamate a fragmented local community? The Erdőbénye Community Archaeology Project aims to achieve exactly that, bringing divergent social groups together under the egis of archaeology and local history. The programme is developed from the bottom-up, primarily to pique the interest of children, and – by engaging the younger generation - intends to reach adults as well. The project devised a series of experiential, participatory activities for a broad audience to explore the archaeological and cultural traditions of the Zemplén microregion and by this, to protect the fast disappearing archaeological heritage of NE Hungary.

After the regime change in 1989, the Borkombinát was dismantled and the reliable income it provided to local winemakers disappeared. Most of the family vineyards went bankrupt their land bough up by large wine companies. However, many of them are now owned by non-locals, city dwellers who do not get involved in the routine of village life. Even today, the main income of the local people of Erdőbénye derives from viticulture, agriculture and forestry, as do many small rural communities in the area. This situation prompted us - the descendants of Erdőbénye - to somehow find a common ground on which the two segments of the community could start a conversation. We are hoping that our enthusiasm for archaeology could provide suitable means to achieve this, using methodologies commonly known as community or public archaeology.

Materials and methods of research: The discipline serving as the theoretical backdrop to the project is commonly termed as public archaeology; particularly suited to our objectives of community-building and science education. The programme’s protocol and educational materials were developed entirely by the team, while the equipment used in running the archaeology themed-events is provided by the National Institute of Archaeology. The archaeological material collected during the field surveys – and in the course of future excavations – is inventoried and documented by members of the team. The conservation costs are shouldered by the National Institute of Archaeology, along with the adequate storage of the material collected.

Keywords: community archaeology, public archaeology, outreach, education, Hungary

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ТӨМЕННЕН ЖОҒАРЫҒА – ВЕНГРИЯДАҒЫ КІШІ ҚОҒАМДЫҚ АРХЕОЛОГИЯ ЖОБАСЫ

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Аңдатпа. Қауымдастық археологиясы ортақ платформаға айналып, бытыраңқы жергілікті қауымдастықты біріктіре ала ма? Эрдебенье қауымдастығының археологиялық жобасы археология және өлкетану демеушілігімен әртүрлі әлеуметтік топтарды біріктіруді мақсат етеді. Бағдарлама төменнен жоғарыға, ең алдымен, балаларды қызықтыруға арналған және жас ұрпақты тарту арқылы ересектерді де тартуы керек. Жоба аясында кең аудиторияға арналған Земплэн шағын аймағының археологиялық, мәдени

дәстүрлерін зерттеуге және солтүстік-шығыс Венгрияның жедел жоғалып бара жатқан археологиялық мұрасын қорғауға бағытталған бірқатар іс-шаралар әзірленді.

1989 жылы тәртіп өзгергеннен кейін Боркомбинат күйреп, оның жергілікті шарапшыларға беретін сенімді кірісі тоқтатылды. Отбасылық жүзімдіктердің көпшілігі банкротқа ұшырады, олардың жерлерін ірі шарап компаниялары сатып алды. Алайда олардың көпшілігі қазір жергілікті емес тұрғындардың, ауыл тіршілігіне үңілмейтін қала тұрғындарының иелігінде. Бүгінгі күні Эрдёбеньенің жергілікті халқының негізгі табысы аудандағы көптеген шағын ауылдық қауымдастықтар сияқты жүзім шаруашылығынан, егіншіліктен және орман шаруашылығынан келеді. Бұл жағдай бізді, «Эрдёбенье-3» ұрпақтарын қауымдастықтың екі сегменті әңгіме бастайтын ортақ алаң табуға итермеледі. Біздің археологияға деген ынта-жігеріміз қоғамдастық немесе қоғамдық археология деп аталатын әдістемелерді пайдалана отырып, бұған қол жеткізу үшін қолайлы құрал бола алады деп үміттенеміз.

Зерттеу материалдары мен әдістері: Жобаның теориялық негізі ретінде қызмет ететін пән әдетте қоғамдық археология деп аталады; ол әсіресе біздің қауымдастық құру және ғылыми оқу мақсаттарымызға сәйкес келеді. Бағдарлама хаттамасы мен оқу материалдарын толығымен жобалық топ әзірледі, ал тақырыптық археологиялық іс-шараларды жүргізу үшін пайдаланылатын жабдықты Ұлттық археология институты қамтамасыз етті. Дала жұмыстары кезінде жиналған археологиялық материалдар – және болашақ қазбалар – жоба қызметкерлері түгендеп, құжаттайды. Ұлттық археология институты консервация шығындарын өтейді, сонымен қатар жиналған материалдардың дұрыс сақталуын қамтамасыз етеді.

Тірек сөздер: қоғамдық археология, ашық археология, ғылымды танымал ету, оқыту, Венгрия.

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СНИЗУ ВВЕРХ – МАЛОМАСШТАБНЫЙ ПРОЕКТ ОБЩЕСТВЕННОЙ АРХЕОЛОГИИ В ВЕНГРИИ

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Аннотация. Может ли общественная археология стать общей платформой и объединить раздробленное местное сообщество? Проект Общественной Археологии в деревне Эрдёбенье направлен именно на объединение различных социальных групп под эгидой археологии и местной истории. Программа разработана по принципу «снизу вверх», в первую очередь с целью заинтересовать детей, и привлекая молодое поколение она должна привлечь и взрослых. В рамках проекта была разработана серия мероприятий для широкой аудитории, направленных на изучение археологических и культурных традиций микрорегиона Земплен и на защиту стремительно исчезающего археологического наследия северо-восточной Венгрии.

После смены режима в 1989 году Боркомбинат распался, и надежный доход, который он давал местным виноделам прекратился. Большинство семейных виноградников обанкротились, их земли скупили крупные винодельческие компании. Тем не менее, многие из них теперь принадлежат не местным жителям, горожанам, которые не вникают в рутину деревенской жизни. Даже сегодня основной доход местных жителей Эрдёбенье поступает от виноградарства, сельского и лесного хозяйства, как и многие небольшие сельские общины в этом районе. Эта ситуация побудила нас - потомков

Эрдёбенье - 3 каким-то образом найти общую платформу, на которой два сегмента общины могли бы начать разговор. Мы надеемся, что наш энтузиазм к археологии может стать подходящим средством для достижения этого, с применением методологий, широко известных как общественная или публичная археология.

Материалы и методы исследования: Дисциплина, служащая теоретической основой проекта, обычно называется общественной археологией; она особенно подходит для наших целей по созданию сообщества и по научному обучению. Протокол программы и образовательные материалы были полностью разработаны командой проекта, а оборудование, используемое для проведения тематических археологических мероприятий, предоставлено Национальным Институтом Археологии. Археологические материалы, собранные в ходе полевых исследований - и будущих раскопок - инвентаризируются и документируются сотрудниками проекта. Расходы по консервации берет на себя Национальный Институт Археологии, а также обеспечивает надлежащее хранение собранных материалов.

Ключевые слова: общественная археология, открытая археология, популяризация науки, обучение, Венгрия

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Introduction. In May 2024 a small community archaeology project was launched by the National Institute of Archaeology, under the auspices of the Hungarian National Museum and Public Collection Centre coordinated by Vera Majerik and Borbála Nyíri. The primary aim of the project was to identify, assess and protect archaeological sites across the SW Zemplén region with the active involvement of local communities.

Results and discussion. The Zemplén microregion represents a unique environmental zone within NE Hungary, both in terms of its climate and its cultivation practices. The Zemplén landscape is dominated by clusters of volcanic hills covered with deciduous forests, with small villages nestled in the valleys (Fig. 1).

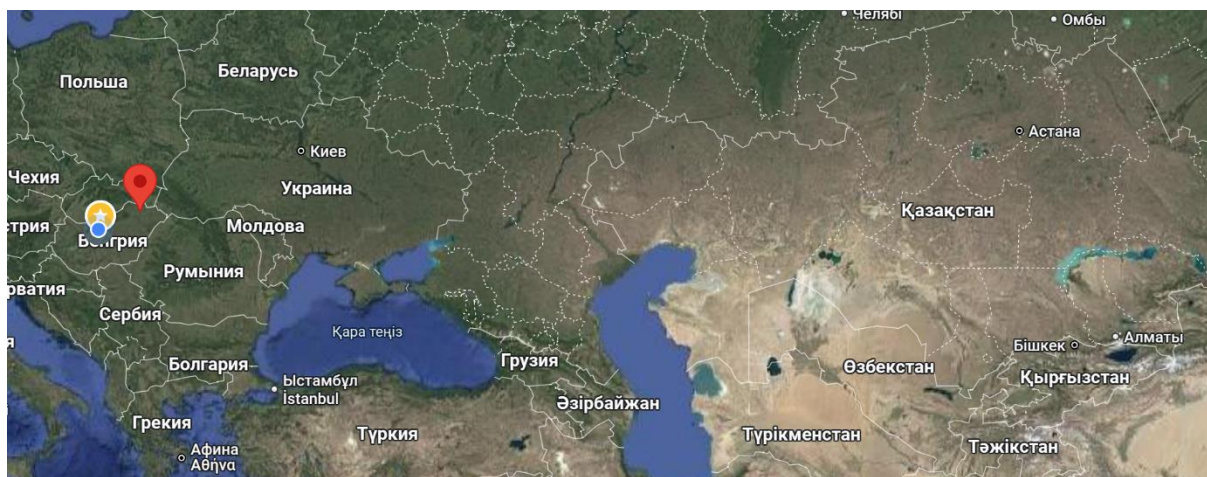


Figure 1. Location of the Zemplén, Hungary in relation to the Kazakh Steppe region (Google Maps – Vera Majerik)

The area where the floodplain of the Bodrog River meets the Zemplén foothills is generally referred to as “Tokaj-Hegyalja”. Tokaj-Hegyalja is widely known for its excellent wines owing to the region’s special micro-climate: warm during the summer months and humid in the autumn. September-October tends to be quite mild still and as the morning mist from the Bodrog drifts across to Hegyalja, dew settles on the surface of the grapevines grown on south-

facing slopes. This humid environment encourages the proliferation of a microscopic fungus called *Botrytis cinerea* which causes the berries to shrivel and their sugar content to concentrate – similarly to a raisin. *Botrytis* is also referred to as “noble rot”, the affected berries are then handpicked and used – in a controlled environment – for the production of an exceptionally sweet wine essence called “aszú”. The invention of the *aszú* is accredited to Máté Szepsi Laczkó, the steward of Zsuzsanna Lorántffy (1602-1660), a local noblewoman. Legend has it that due to the continuous threat by the Ottoman army that year, the grape harvest was delayed until November, resulting in a wine sweeter and stronger than average. Recognising this Máté Szepsi Laczkó distilled the *aszú* juice and turned it into a tincture. In the Late Medieval period *aszú* mixed with herbs was used as medicine, while *aszú* added to wine fetched a tremendous amount of money at the time when sweet foods were not readily available. Apart from the unique taste, Tokaj wines were also sought after since their high sugar content preserved them for longer, therefore could be transported over larger distances. From the 17th century onwards, sweet Tokaj wines were sold all over Europe, utilised often as diplomatic gifts between the royal courts of France, Russia, Prussia, Sweden etc. Tokaj wines retained their popularity even during the communist era, when small wine producers were gathered under the umbrella of the “Borkombinát”, a region-wide wine cooperative. During the decades of the communist regime quantity over quality characterised the production of Tokaj wines, traded widely to the countries of the Comecon, including Kazakhstan.

After the regime change in 1989, the Borkombinát was dismantled, and the reliable income it provided to local wine producers dissappeared. The majority of small family vineyards went bankrupt, their land bought up by large wine companies. Moreover, the 1990s ushered in new cultivation methods: wine growers moved away from the traditional, bush-based method employed since the Late Medieval period, towards training grapevines onto frames assembled into a series of long rows, leaving enough room in between for machinery. This intensive cultivation method has been putting extra pressure on the thin, volcanic soils, increasing the rate of erosion significantly, and by this, threatening the preservation of archaeological sites.

Erdőbénye, the village where our community archaeology project is based (Fig. 2), represents somewhat an exception within the close region, since here small-scale, family holdings still dominate.



Figure 2. View of Erdőbénye village. (Photograph by József Hlavács)

Nevertheless many of these are now owned by non-local, town-folk who do not get involved with the nitty-gritty of village life. Even today, the primary income of Erdöbénye locals derives from viniculture, agriculture and forestry, while, similarly to many small rural communities in the area, it faces numerous challenges from emmigration, to low birthrates, the lack of jobs and services. Currently, the daily activities and interests of the locals and the recent arrivals occupy very different social and economic spheres. This situation prompted us – Erdöbénye descendants ourselves – to somehow find a common platform on which the two segments of the community can start a conversation. We figured that our enthusiasm for archaeology and local history could be a suitable vehicle to achieve this with the application of the methodologies known widely as public or community archaeology.

Public archaeology and the Erdöbénye Community Archaeology Project

There are many divergent definitions of the term public archaeology in circulation depending on where in the world the project is taking place [Moshenska, 2017; Skeats, McDavid and Carman, 2012]. The inclusive definition of public archaeology refers to both the practice and the scholarship of archaeology, and its interaction with the public sphere [Moshenska, 2017: 5]. According to the narrower definition, public archaeology is practically synonymous with a wide range of public outreach activities conducted by professional archaeologists [Moshenska, 2017: 5]. Recognising the challenging nature of the subject, Gabriel Moshenska developed a useful eight-part typology (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Some common types of public archaeology (source: Gabriel Moshenska 2017: 6)

Nevertheless the Erdöbénye Community Archaeology Project (ECAP) illustrates well the complexities involved in running such a programme. Moshenska’s first category “archaeologists working with the public” describes best what ECAP is set out to achieve, however the project also includes aspects of “archaeology by the public” [Thomas, 2012] and “archaeological education” [Corbishley, 2014; Galanidou and Dommasnes, 2007].

When the idea of ECAP was first conceived, we were faced with the task of how to get the project off the ground and how to keep the local community interested. Therefore we devised a plan of building a community archaeology programme from the bottom-up, to start small and approach the public through entertaining educational activities. In April, 2024 with the help of our colleagues from the National Institute of Archaeology we organised an archaeology-themed day at the local primary school, which included an indoor presentation and a series of outdoor activities, such as a mini-excavation of a 3D printed skeleton, a metal-detecting activity, a find-replica touchy-feely session and a drone demonstration. The activities were conducted in three “sittings” aimed at three different audiences: primary early years, primary later years and an adult assembly (Fig. 4-5).



Figure 4-5. Archaeology day at the local primary school in April, 2024

Our objective here was to achieve the transfer of knowledge outside the normal educational setting, moving away from classroom-based top-down learning methods towards experiential and cooperative activities.

Building upon this, our team of archaeologists took part in the annual wine festival called “Bor, mámor, Bénye” in August, 2024, where – besides representing the Institute of Archaeology with infotainment sessions and roleplays for children – we also ran a series of popular science demonstrations for adult audiences.



Figure 6-7. Archaeology-themed activities and demonstrations at the Bor, mámor, Bénye festival in August, 2024

The idea was that if we could make children interested in archaeology by getting them to participate in our themed-activities, it is likely that the younger generation convinces their parents and grandparents to attend similar occasions, and by this, perhaps in the future, they too may take part in public archaeology events. The activities spanned several days and could be

attended free of charge, including our small-scale exhibition showcasing local archaeological discoveries (Fig. 6-7).

In a similar vein, in November 2024, we organised a one-day event; carrying out the detailed archaeological survey of the hilltop site called Erdőbénye-Nagy-Rakottyás. The survey team consisted of two groups: 1) enthusiastic locals ranging from 7-77 years of age, and 2) registered, volunteer metal-detectorists coordinated by our archaeologist colleague, Gábor Bakos.



Figure 8. Community archaeology event: fieldwalking and metal-detecting survey of Erdőbénye-Nagy-Rakottyás in November, 2024

Conclusion. With the help of Erdőbénye locals we were able to assess and document the remains of a mill-stone quarry, situated on the eastern slopes of the ridge. The quarry was most likely to have been utilised during the 18th-19th centuries, and although it fits with the Late Medieval-Early Modern remit of our project, more research needs to be done to explore the handicraft industry, trade networks, goods and services that existed in the period – along with practices of viniculture and forestry characteristic in the region. While the first team was conducting the survey of the quarry, the metal-detectorist group inspected the hilltop and the SW slopes of the Rakottyás. Here, they were able to identify a series of terraces and recovered an assemblage of Iron Age artefacts, including a scythe and a so-called Mötschwil-type brooch linking the hilltop with the early occupation period of Celtic tribes settling on the NE fringes of the Great Hungarian Plain (La Tène C period, Kruta et al. 1993).

Our plans for 2025 include the complete archaeological survey of the Nagy-Rakottyás Iron Age site, in order to identify its position and extent in detail. We are also planning on opening a couple of evaluation trenches to assess the archaeological material – with the active participation of our volunteers. In addition, our intention is to complete the LiDAR survey of the site along with a few other known prehistoric hilltop settlements in the vicinity. Apart from the prehistoric sites, the LiDAR survey will also target remnants of Late Medieval-Early Modern

viniculture and forest-management still visible in the landscape. Furthermore, we are continuing with our involvement at the wine festival as well, with similar activities for the children, and theme-based infotainment demonstrations in the evenings for the grown-up audience.

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