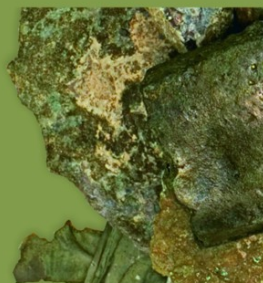


# DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



Ser. 3. No. 2. | 2014

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*Ser. 3. No. 2.*



Budapest 2014

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Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern  
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Excavations at Castles Čabrad' and Drégely, and at the Pauline Friary  
at Sáska**

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**Abstract**

*The Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology carried out three excavations in 2014, including two castles (Drégely and Čabrad') and a monastic site (Sáska – Bakonyszentjakab). The first two provided mainly early modern material, while the last one existed from the 13th until the mid-16th century.*

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**Excavations at the 16th century gate tower at Čabrad' Castle (Slovakia)**

**July 2014**

*In cooperation with the Institute of Archaeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Ján Beljak – Mordovin Maxim)<sup>1</sup> – Second Report<sup>2</sup>*

In 2014 the Institute of Archaeology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Nitra) and the Eötvös Loránd University continued the bilateral project at Čabrad' Castle (*Fig. 1–2*). The excavations were led by Ján Beljak (Nitra) and Maxim Mordovin (Budapest). The site served as a training excavation for archaeology students from Budapest. This year, the much endangered state of the southern façade of the third gate made us focus exclusively on this part of the castle practically carrying out rescue excavations.

In 2014 we partly continued the trenches opened a year earlier (1/2014; 2/2014 and 3/2014), and – at the same time – three new ones were started inside the tower (*Fig. 3*). The investigated part of the castle is an originally three-storey building with a cellar and two gates on the ground floor (southern and western). It was constructed in the mid 16th century to strengthen the northeast gate of the castle. The medieval road led along the eastern side of the castle, reached the gatehouse from the south, then it entered the ground floor of the building via a drawbridge, where it turned west and leading through the western gate reached the great

1 Participants were: Krisztián Balogh, Mónika Gácsi, Fruzsina Hege, Dóra Hegyi, Bence Jórös, Kocsis Andrea, Tünde Komori, Anna Kulcsár, Sára Lantos, Anna Mikešy, Ágnes Szabados, Gergely Szoboszlai, Ágoston Takács, Balázs Tóth, Nóra Ujhelyi.

2 For the first report, see MORDOVIN, M.: Short report on the excavations in 2013 of the Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest). *Dissertationes Archaeologicae* Ser. 3. No. 1 (2013) 156–158.

courtyard. The western gate seems to be earlier than the southern, and may be dated to the late 15th or early 16th century, while the southern double gate is an ideal renaissance structure. Most probably the whole gate tower was attached to the eastern wall of the earlier castle.

In the first two trenches we continued the excavation of the drawbridge pit along the southern façade of the gate tower (Fig. 4). The pit appears as a ditch partially carved into the rock. This year seems to have been the most productive – maybe even among all archaeological sites in Slovakia – concerning the density of the finds per square meter. From the less than 20 m<sup>2</sup> of filling layers of the trench we obtained ca. 30,000 fragments, one third of which was pottery, another third were animal bones and the rest consisted of metal and glass finds (Fig. 5).

This group of finds is quite unique since it is a closed assemblage well datable to the first half of the 18th century. The coins from its layers were issued in different years from the late 17th century until the first quarter of the 18th century.

The assemblage included a high number of decorated table ware (plates, jugs), so-called *habán*-pottery (tin-glazed ware), and a large quantity of kitchenware (pots and specific pots with legs). Beside the 'classic' ceramic production a very high percentage of stove tiles were observed in the fillings of the pit. Most probably during the first half or mid-18th century some parts of the castle underwent a serious renovation (maybe even a reconstruction) which was accompanied by the replacement of most of the older, 17th century tile stoves. The tiles, at the same time, were 'deposited' (thrown away) into the already disused drawbridge pit. In trench 2/2014 the destruction layer of the tower contained five (!) stone cannonballs (Fig. 6). However, these were not used as ammunition but as simple decoration of the southern façade of the gate tower. Two more such balls still can be seen *in situ*.

Inside the gate tower the excavations focused on two localities. One was in the southwestern corner of the tower as a western expansion of trench 3/2013, while the other was situated just beside the western gate, which led from the tower to the great courtyard. In the southwestern corner, under the debris of the collapsed vaults of the two upper storeys we have excavated an oven, built in secondarily into the western wall of the tower. The oven survived in very good state. In front of it, in a smaller trench we reached the remains of the former floor with a 15 cm thick glass layer over it. There were some fragments of lead window frames among the glass shards. This all seems to have belonged to the windows of the tower smashed in order to get the lead after the castle was abandoned (Fig. 7–8).

The last trench beside the western gate could not be finished. Only the upper 1 m of the destruction layers were removed providing material from the filling of the vaults datable to the second half of the 16th century. The fact that this filling contained also prehistoric and medieval finds enables us to locate its origin at the slopes of the castle hill.

Next year – depending on the financial possibilities – we will focus on the outer side of the drawbridge pit south of the entrance and on the interior of the gate tower in order to remove the debris and clean the western entrance.



## **Excavations of the artillery tower at Drégely Castle (County Nógrád)**

**October 2014**

*In cooperation with the Béla Dornyai Museum, Salgótarján (Krisztián Zandler and Mária Vargha)<sup>3</sup> – Second report<sup>4</sup>*

In October 2014 our Department cooperating with the Béla Dornyai Múzeum (Salgótarján) continued the excavation of an artillery tower at Drégely Castle started a year earlier (*Fig. 9*).

The castle is located in the northeast part of Börzsöny Mountains, on a prolonged rocky peak, at a height of 444 meters above sea level. The castle is first mentioned in 1285 when it belonged to Demetrius, son of Hont from the Hont-Pázmány kindred. It was occupied by Matthew Csák of Trencsén, the greatest landlord and oligarch in late 13th – early 14th-century Hungary, and remained in his possession until he died in 1321. For many decades afterwards Drégely served as a centre of a huge royal domain and of the surrounding Hont County. In the turbulent times of the late 14th century King Sigismund finally granted it to the family of Tar (Tari), which remained its owner until 1424, when the castle passed into the hands of the archbishopric of Esztergom. Since this time until the Ottoman Wars, Drégely stayed in the possession of the archbishopric.

The role and the fate of the castle had radically and dramatically changed during the Ottoman Wars. After the Battle of Mohács in 1526 and the fall of Buda (capital of the Kingdom of Hungary) in 1541, Drégely from the archbishops' peaceful hunting lodge was turned into a royal border castle. Certainly, it was not prepared for the contemporary warfare nor was there a proper financial background for supply. During its rough and speedy modernisation the gunpowder had blown up causing such severe damages, that the castellan of Drégely even suggested the complete demolishing of the stronghold in order to avoid its occupation and reuse by the Ottoman forces. The opinions and applications of György Szondi, the castellan remained unanswered and in 1552 the castle had to face the Ottoman invasion unprepared. After all this, Drégely – following a short but fierce and heroic siege – fell, bringing death to all its defenders including György Szondi. Despite the damages and bad state the castle was kept by the Ottomans until its reconquest in 1593. Although there are no written sources concerning its further fate, the archaeological evidence clearly shows the occupation of the site until at least the mid-17th century. Most probably Drégely was conquered (maybe even besieged) for the last time in 1663 when the whole region of the Ipoly Valley got under the Ottoman rule again, and then it was abandoned, previously being set on fire. There are no finds so far undoubtedly datable to the late 17th century (*Fig. 10*).

In the last two years we have focused on the southernmost and probably the latest larger structure of the castle. The fortification situated south of the medieval central part is divided from it by a wide rocky courtyard. This structure was built on an extruding small craggy plateau, approximately 10×10 m large. Due to heavy erosion both the rock base and the walls were seriously damaged in some places leaving no traces of the foundations at all. Only the carved surface of the rock helped to reconstruct the whole ground plan. According

<sup>3</sup> Participants were: Anita Carmen Baráth (archaeologist), Fruzsina Németh, Maja Oszolik, Rita Rakonczay, Lajos Sándor, Ágnes Szabados.

<sup>4</sup> First report: MORDOVIN, M.: Short report on the excavations in 2013 of the Department of Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest). *Dissertationes Archaeologicae* Ser. 3. No. 1 (2013) 160–161.

to it the fortification was a U-shaped, single storey artillery tower with 3–4 m thick outer walls (southwestern – southeastern sections). On the northern side – toward the core of the castle – the tower was closed by a just 0,7 m thin wall, which seemed to be enough, since no attack was expected from this direction (*Fig. 11*).

The tower had two entrances. The smaller one usable only by foot soldiers, led from the rock courtyard to the northeast corner of the tower through a narrow passage cut in the eastern side of the rocky plateau. The stairs in the rock corridor must have been made of timber and were laid in whitish chalky mortar. The passage now seems to have been opened but most probably there must have been some kind of defence wall on its outer (southern) side joining the eastern wall of the rock courtyard. Since this part of the rock has been heavily eroded, all traces of such a wall here disappeared. The threshold of the doorway and the inner doorstep were made of reused gothic carved stones.

The second 'entrance' was opened on the northern side of the tower. There are no traces of any kind of stairs at this almost vertical edge of the plateau but the postholes carved into the rock enable to presume a wooden platform with timber studs or supporters. The wide gate situated at this site, two not too elaborated carved stones of which have been found almost *in situ*, was rather used to lift in ammunition and different equipment.

The debris of the tower has provided no traces of any possible vaulting, therefore it seems that the building had a timber roof structure.

The interior of the tower consisted of a single room, no partition walls were found. The only heating structure was excavated in a special niche formed in the northwestern corner. It was a tile stove built of so-called 'onion shaped' ceramic vessels (*Fig. 12*). Because of the clearly military function of the building we expected only a relatively small amount of finds. Nevertheless, some of them appeared to be very interesting or important concerning the dating of the building. Thus, for example, several coins datable to the 16th–17th century were found on the inner surface of the tower. Traces of wooden shelves have been also identified within the burnt debris of the destruction layers. Fragments of at least two 17th century pots were found among the remains of these shelves. The whole interior was covered with broken sherds of the stove 'pots', which suggest its deliberate destruction. Then the tower was seemingly set on fire. Inside and around the building a number of other, non-ceramic artefacts were found, including a fragment of a candle stick, rings (among others seal rings), copper-alloy belt mounts and even pectoral crosses (*Fig. 13*).

The excavation of the southern artillery tower of Drégely was completed in 2014 and in the same year a partial reconstruction took place at the site. There are no plans for possible further research of the castle (*Fig. 14–16*).

## **First excavations at Sáska – Bakonyszentjakab, Pauline Friary<sup>5</sup>**

### ***July 2014***

In July 2014 we have completed the first part of the planned long-term project on the excavations of the Pauline Friary at Sáska initiated by the State Forestry of Bakony.

<sup>5</sup> Participants were: Szabolcs Balázs Nagy (co-director of the site), Mária Vargha (CEU, archaeologist), Árpád Balogh, Orsolya Gálvölgyi, Mátyás Hambuch, Réka Juhász, Anna Kulcsár, Eszter Magyar, Teodóra Polyák, Ágnes Szabados, Katalin Szarvas students, and Lajos Sándor metal detectorist.

The St James' Friary (Bakonyszentjakab) appears among the earliest Pauline friaries in Hungary mentioned for the first time in 1263. It was in use until the Ottoman Wars and most probably was abandoned in the mid-16th century. The building was looted and set on fire, then for a long time the friary was a kind of "magnet" for treasure hunters, who – according to the present state of research – dug up the whole interior of the church. The remains of the building complex have attracted the scholars, too. Thus one of the most prominent 19th-century Hungarian archaeologists, Flóris Rómer visited the site, preparing some sketches and notes concerning the friary, documenting high standing walls including an unusual tower above the triumphal arch. He also made the first known ground plan of the visible walls.

In 2014 we focused exclusively on the chancel of the church. The excavation has confirmed the semicircular shape of the apse referring to its possible earlier origin that the first known written mention (*Fig. 17*).

The excavated walls were in average 1,2–2 m high and 65–85 cm thick, built of large stones using relatively bad mortar. The easternmost end of the apse was completely destroyed by the treasure hunters. The best preserved part of the whole church was the triumphal arch, more precisely the two pillars, which might have supported the small tower known from Rómer's notes (*Fig. 18*).

According to the research of the remaining architectural details, at least two main phases of the structure could have been identified. The chancel and the pillars of the triumphal arch were built separately but in the same building phase. The sacristy and a small room west of it were attached later, most probably separately. A finely carved lavabo was found *in situ* in the eastern wall of the sacristy (*Fig 19*).

Some further carved stones were found in the debris of the walls south of the chancel. These fine gothic window frames unambiguously certify an extensive late gothic reconstruction of the friary. However, it seems to have affected only the architectural details but was not accompanied by the rebuilding of the main parts of the church. The very fact that the gothic windows were placed into the archaic, semicircular chancel proves this.

The chancel was very richly decorated by frescoes, a large amount of dispersed fragments of which were found among the destruction layers. Unfortunately due to the disturbances of treasure hunters of the last centuries no intact larger parts of them could be found. It seems that there is no way to reconstruct the former painted interior of the church.

Around the church in some parts a relatively thick, burnt destruction layer was observed with coins dating this layer to the first half or mid-16th century. Most likely this can be connected with the last fire of the friary around 1563. This layer contained some more representative finds, as for example silver rings and other cloth accessories and hundreds of iron nails. These small nails most probably belonged to the roof shingles (no roof tiles have been found so far).



Fig. 1. View of Čabrad Castle from the West.

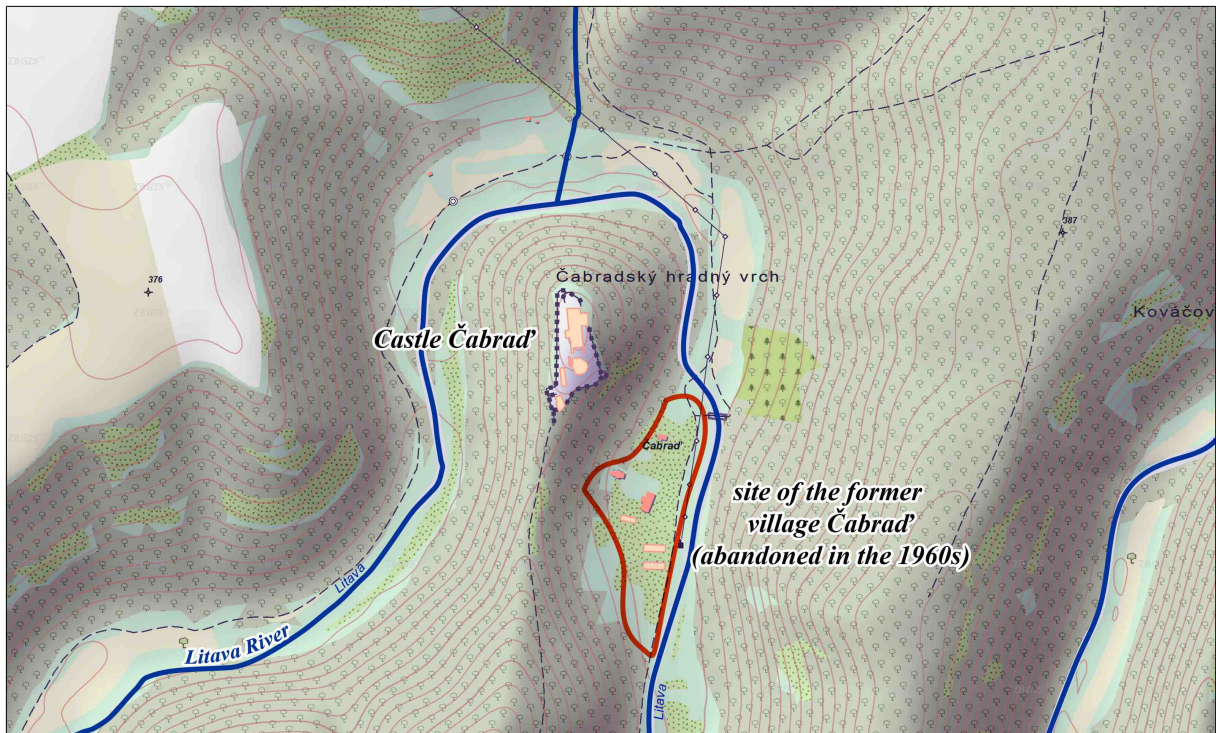


Fig. 2. Location of Čabrad.

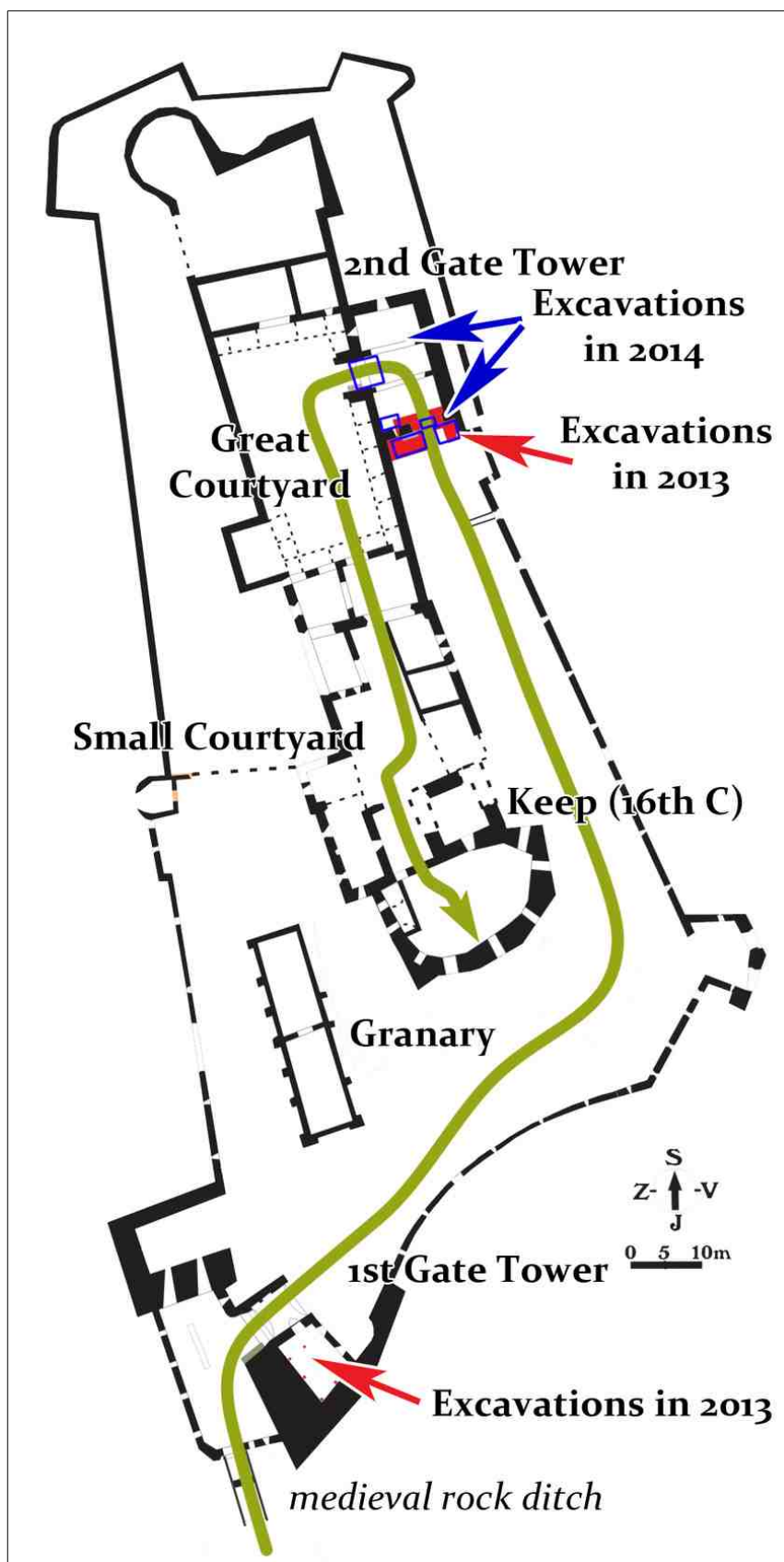


Fig. 3. Ground plan of Čabraď Castle.



*Fig. 4. View from the southern gates on the drawbridge pit.*



Fig. 5. Green-glazed pots from the drawbridge pit.



Fig. 6. Four cannonballs from trench 2/2014 (the fifth was removed earlier).

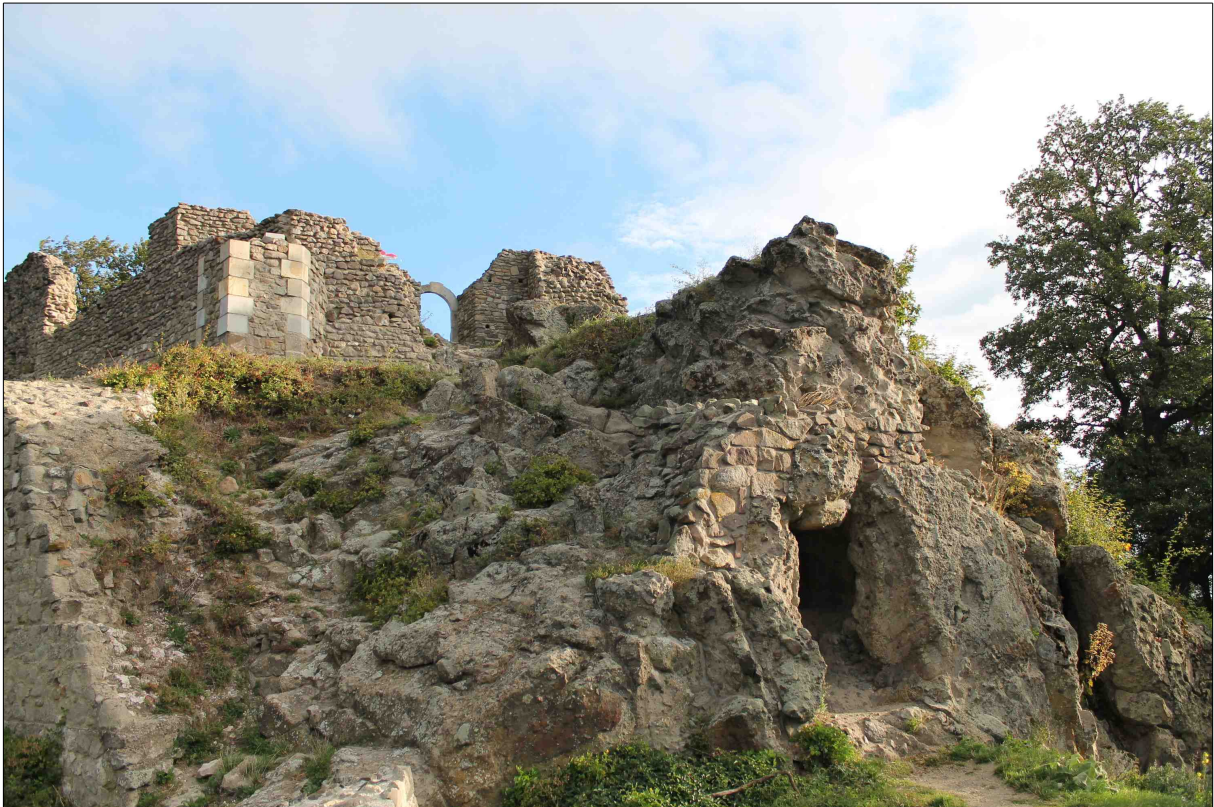


*Fig. 7.* The oven excavated in the southwestern corner of the gate tower.





*Fig. 8.* Window in the southwestern corner of the tower.



*Fig. 9.* View of the central part of Drégely Castle from the artillery tower.

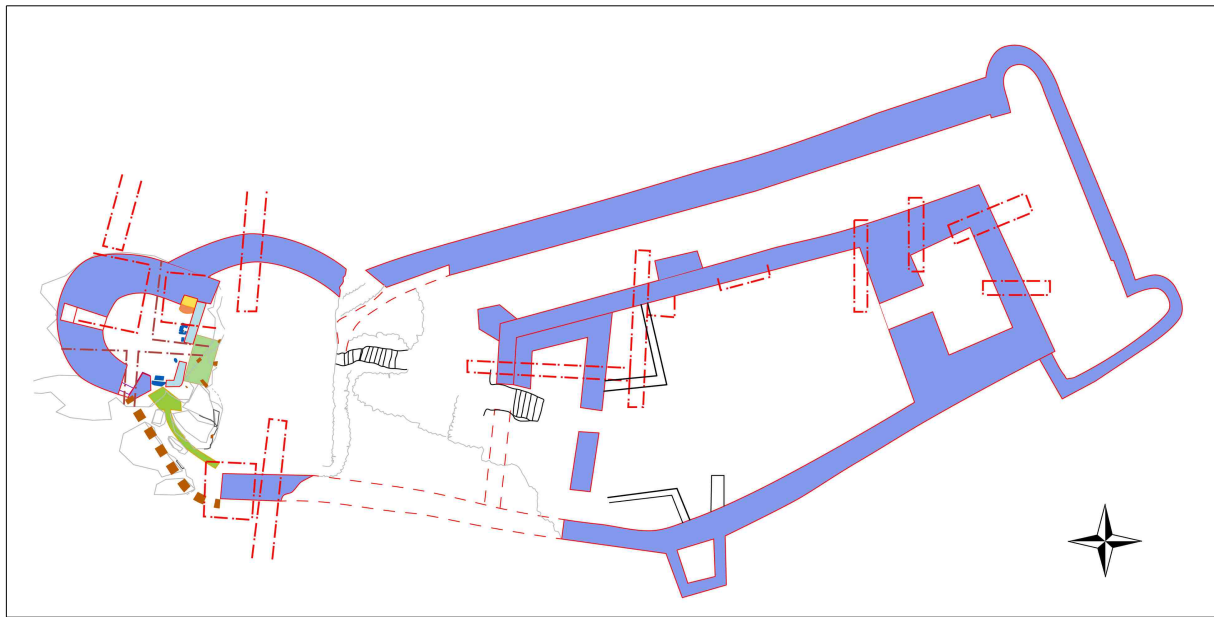


Fig. 10. Ground plan of Drégely Castle showing the excavation trenches.

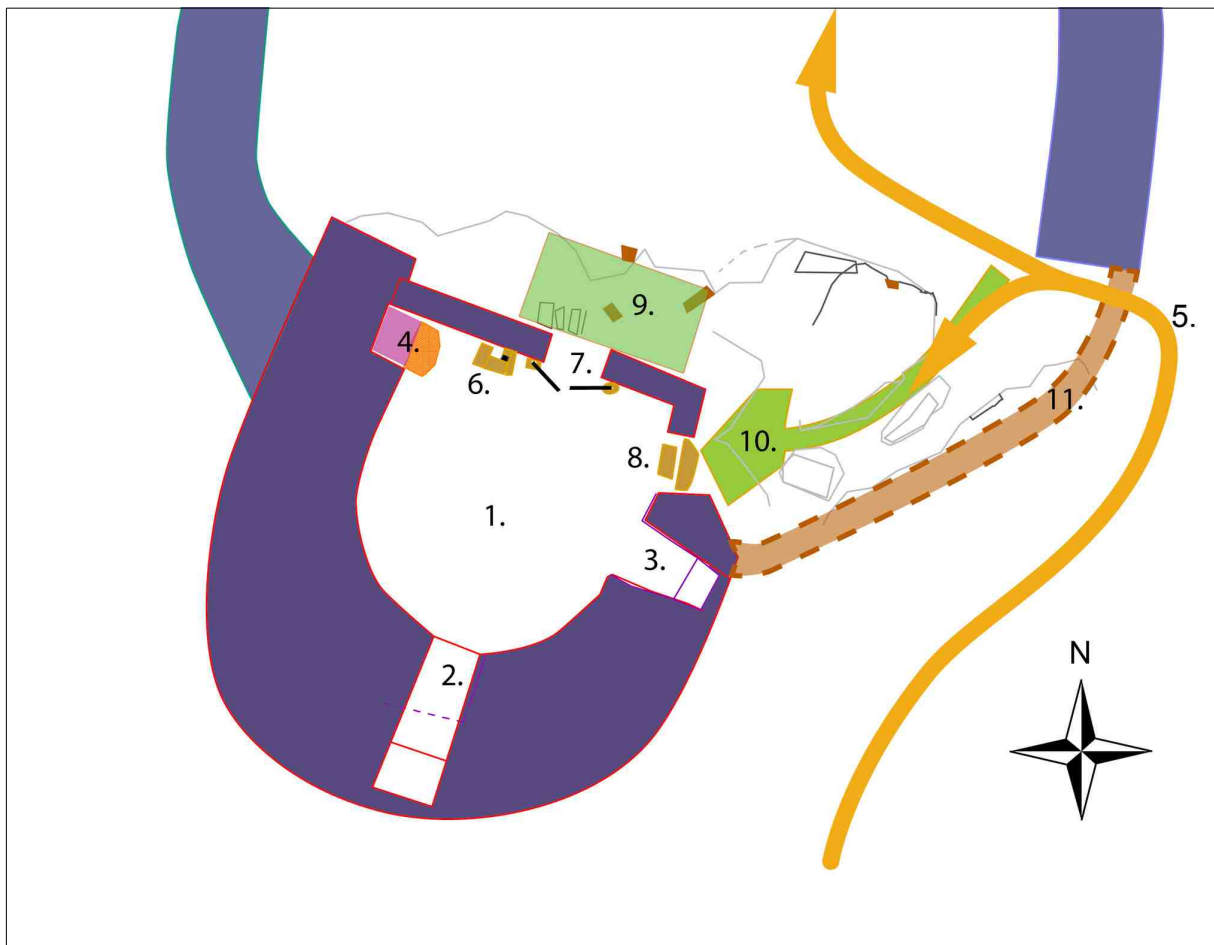


Fig. 11. Ground plan of the artillery tower of Drégely Castle. 1. interior. 2-3. embrasures. 4. tile stove. 5. the entrance route. 6. foundation of a crane(?). 7. northern gate. 8. eastern gate. 9. northern platform. 10. eastern platform. 11. possible line of the southern wall of the entrance passage.



*Fig. 12.* Foundation of the tile stove (Drégely).



*Fig. 13.* Small metal finds from the tower (Drégely).



*Fig. 14.* Excavated artillery tower at the end of the research.



*Fig. 15.* Partially reconstructed tower in November 2014 (Photo: Péter István).



Fig. 16. Group photo beside the rock passage (Drégely).

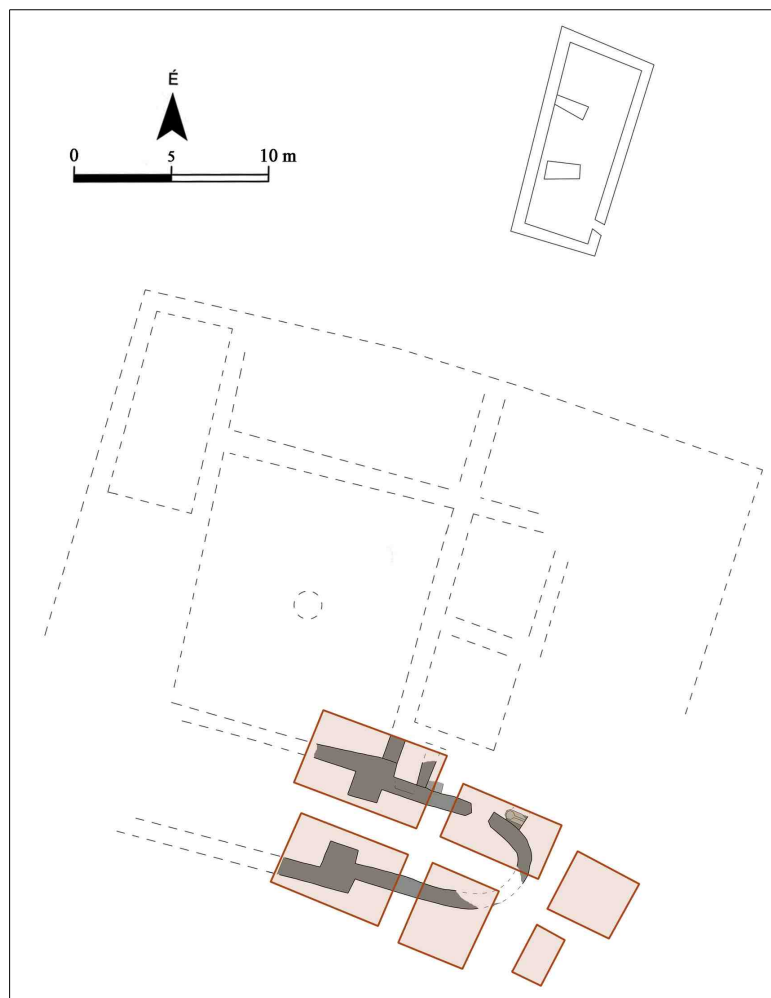


Fig. 17. Ground plan of the St. James' Friary (St. James' Friary, Sáska).



*Fig. 18.* Pillars of the triumphal arch (St. James' Friary, Sáska).



*Fig. 19.* View of the excavated chancel (St. James' Friary, Sáska).