



Possible reconstruction of the ceremony site

# Hilltop „Henge-Like” Monument and Burial Site from the Bell Beaker Period in Poysbrunn

András Czene, Salisbury Archaeology, andras.czene@gmail.com



Drone photo of the excavation area



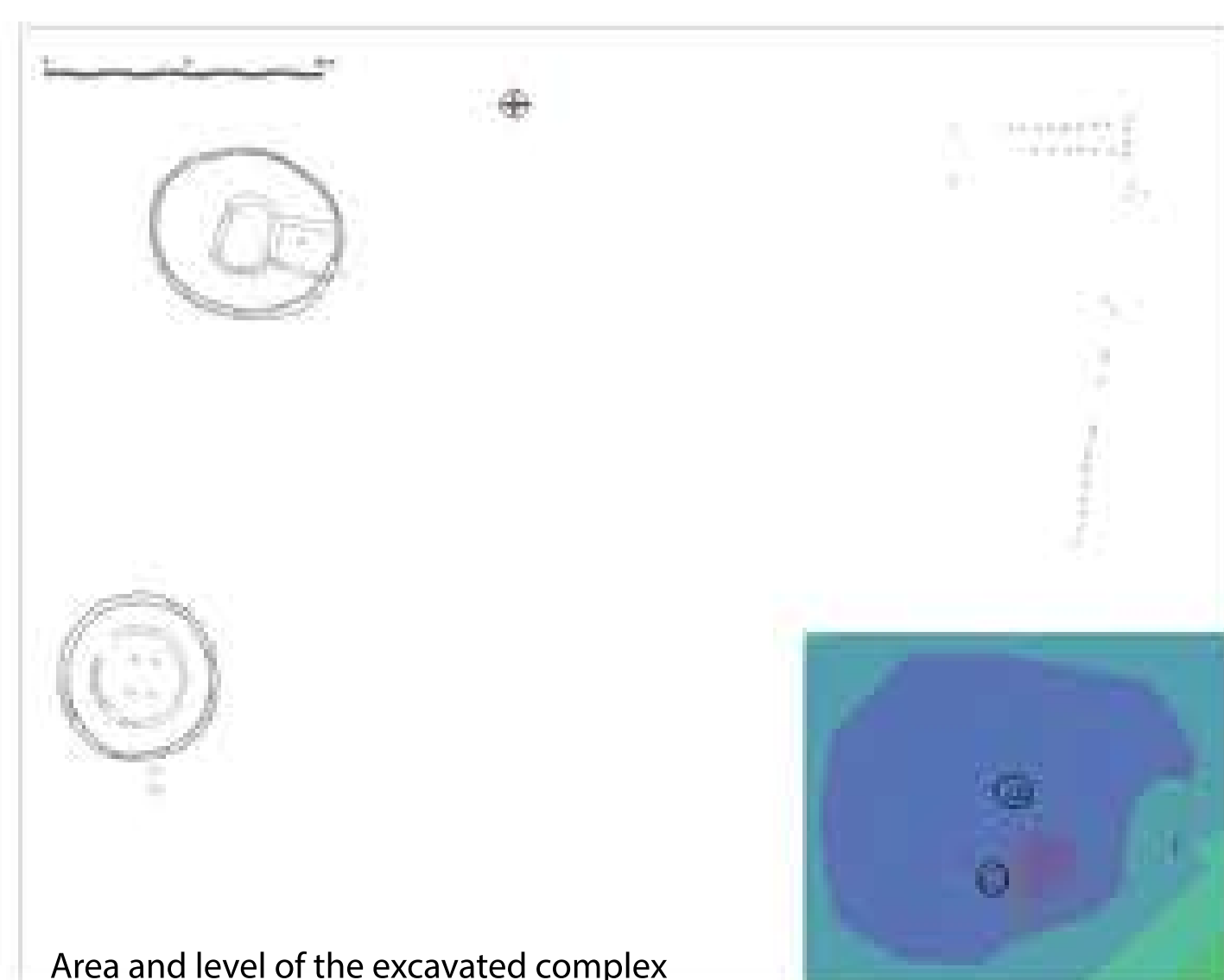
Layout and photo of the double trench tomb. The phenomena shown by the blue line were revealed during the 2010 survey /these are after Preinfalk-Preinfalk 2015/



Layout and photo of the double-ditch building



Structures from cemeteries from Hostice /after Matějčková-Dvořák 2014/ and Budakalász /Czene 2017/



Area and level of the excavated complex

**Our excavation, conducted in 2018 in Poysbrunn, Austria, in advance of the construction of the A5 motorway, uncovered a burial surrounded by a double circular ditch from the Bell Beaker period and the traces of a henge-like monument. These structures, located on a hilltop, were bounded on the east by a palisade wall, perpendicular to which a palisade corridor opened. While the burials and the structures have parallels in Moravia and Hungary in general, the palisade traces show a parallel with the palisade structure found at the Forteviot site in Scotland. As for the nature of the excavated burial and the parallels between the henge type structure and some similar Central European constructions, the relationship existing between the beliefs and the funerary cult can be assumed between the Central European circular structures, stone-packed burials, and Western European megalithic traditions. In the course of our research we succeeded in finding new contexts for prehistoric phenomena, which allow us to interpret them in a slightly different way than before. As a result, we can gain insights into the minds and ritual practices of the builders of the structures erected on the Poysbrunn plateau 4500 years ago.**

## Burial surrounded by a double circular ditch

Of the two pile structures, the one to the north must have been used as a burial place. The northern half of this was the subject of diagnostic research in 2010. The large (3.5 m x 1.5 m), north-south oriented burial pit was surrounded by a rounded rectangular ditch measuring 6 x 4.6 m on the outer half. From this trench, two further, almost parallel, trenches run eastwards into the large outer circular trench, 14 m in diameter, with its dense piles. As with the inner ditch, a pile hole can be observed here, suggesting that piles also lined the entrance to the inner complex. Between the two parallel trenches, other excavation traces can be seen, one of which may have been a large post.

## A 'henge-like' monument

A similar circular structure is located 21 metres south of the above-mentioned tomb. The circular trench, 11 metres in diameter and 70 cm wide on average, contained 31 peg holes. They were relatively densely spaced at 30-50 cm intervals. In the eastern part of the circular trench, in the relatively well documented pile-driven trench, a 135 cm gap was found, which we assume to have been the entrance to the building.

Inside the outer circle is a second circular ditch, 7.5 metres in diameter. Within this we also found 8 pile-driven holes, some of which were slightly larger in diameter (40-60 cm) than the outer circle piles. It is assumed that these also ran all the way round and were higher than the posts of the outer circle. The trench is interrupted in the north-western part for an unknown reason.

Contrary to previous assumptions, there was no tomb in the middle of the building. Here we found 4 large columns (55-62 cm in diameter) arranged in a rectangular shape.

## Palisade wall

The funerary and ritual monuments of the Bell Beaker period are bounded on the east side by a clearly visible row of piles 55 metres from the surrounding buildings. The visible part of the row of piles extends for 32 metres in a north-south direction.

Perpendicularly to this, two further rows of piles were connected to the north of the pile column from the west, forming a corridor. The corridor was 8.7 metres long and on average 1.5 metres wide, and the columns on either side were positioned opposite each other.

A similar, but even more spectacular Late Neolithic site to the palisade-walled burial ground and 'henge' monuments excavated at Poysbrunn can be found near the settlement of Forteviot in Scotland, dating from the 3rd millennium BC.

The palisade wall could separate the everyday world from the sacred realm. Whether because this area belonged to the realm of the dead, where related rituals were performed, or because they were deliberately buried next to a ritual site, in both cases it was considered important to separate the sacred space from their everyday life, the profane, in a similar way to the temenos wall that surrounded the ancient temples of later times.

As the researchers of the Scottish site note, it was also true at Poysbrunn that the monument rose prominently from the surrounding landscape. The two double circular structures, columns and possible structures in the area, together with the palisade wall, were located on a plateau on a higher hill. Looking around the excavation, the surrounding area was clearly visible, which also meant that the ceremonial complex and burial site were visible from a considerable distance in prehistoric times.