



## 200<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF FLÓRIS RÓMER, FATHER OF HUNGARIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Some thoughts on the temporary exhibition in the Castle Museum, Kőszeg

There are numerous biographies and academic papers on the life and work of Flóris Rómer (Pozsony, 12. April 1812 – Nagyvárad, 18. March 1889). I expect there will be plentiful commemorations on the 200th anniversary of his birth and some will include the presentation of new data on his biography and academic career. My goal is not to present his biography but to draw attention to some elements of his in-

tellectual legacy. Most of my examples related to his work come from county Vas and mostly from the micro region of Kőszeg. One reason to link the exhibition with Rómer's birthday is that he taught literature and Latin in the Benedictine secondary school in Kőszeg during the second term of 1856-57. This is evident in a certificate<sup>1</sup> by Engelbert Holler principal dated to 15th December 1861 and also commemorated in a plaque situated on the decaying monastery building's side wall facing Jurisics Square.

Before turning to the exhibition, I shortly describe Rómer's life and his most important undertakings on the field of archaeology. Coming from a German speaking family he, as a student at the Benedictine School in Pannonhalma, quickly learnt to master not only the Slovakian but also the Hungarian, Latin and Greek languages. From 1838 he taught at the Benedictine school in Győr then at the law school in Pozsony. He fought in the 1848-49 Revolution as a military engineer. In 1854 he received amnesty. From 1859 he was in Győr

again, where he also taught archaeology. After the publication of his book *The Bakony* he became first correspondent then ordinary member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. From 1862 he worked in the Hungarian National Museum and between 1869-77 he was curator of the Antiquities Collection. In January 1863 he gave his first lecture on archaeology at the University in Pest. He provided a summary of Hungarian medieval wall paintings in a monography in 1874. This work included the since then sadly perished paintings of the ruined church in Celldömölk.



Flóris Rómer (unknown photographer c. 1870)

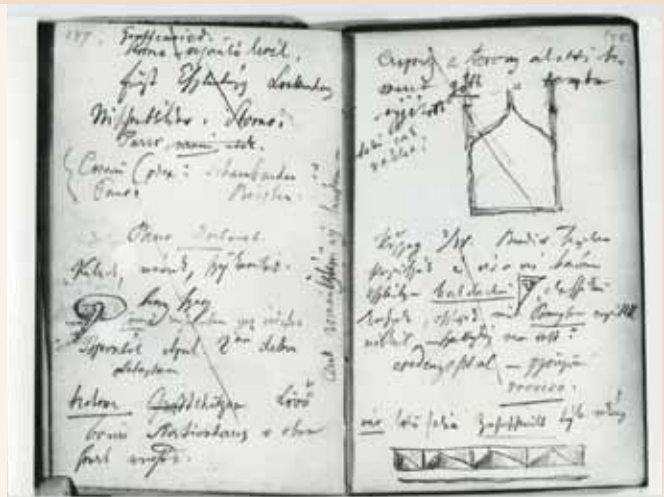


Rómer's name on the plaque at the secondary school (author's photo 2015)

In 1868 he founded the still continuing journal of archaeology, *Archaeológiai Értesítő*. In 1873 he published the Roman inscriptions collected in the National Museum. In September 1876 he was the chief organiser of the 8th International Conference of Anthropology and Prehistoric Archaeology and the accompanying exhibition and he was one of the editors of the conference volumes (*Résultats Généraux... Compte-Rendu... 1876, 1878, 1886*). These reveal his view on archaeology as „one, if not the best eye” of history. At the same time he emphasised the role of ethnography in archaeological interpretation. Rómer was the first to explore the question of mining and trade of raw materials for stone working, especially that of obsidian. Through this work he laid the foundations of archaeometric researches (e.g. fabric, origin, processing). He was an outstanding researcher of the Devil’s Dyke, a series of earthbanks and mounds, that he mapped and described in detail. He reported some tumuli in the neighbourhood of Vép, though the location of which have not been identified to this day. His notes, books and papers contain a wealth of still relevant information. He was the first to identify and classify archaeological material in the Carpathian basin. The Middle Bronze Age material that we refer to as Encrusted Pottery was described by him under the name Pannon Culture. In 1877 he resigned from all his duties and with the help of bishop Arnold Ipolyi he was appointed canon at Nagyvárád. He passed away wearing this title in that town.

The signs of the exhibition include a short summary about the development of archaeology as a science starting from “setting the foundation stone” by Rómer and continuing up to the present day. This evolution is illustrated through the example of the world-famous site, discovered by Flóris Rómer in 1869. This is Saint Vid hill of Velem, where he found a clay water pipe of Roman or Medieval origin. This information does not actually come from Rómer’s diaries but from Kálmán Chernel’s town monography.

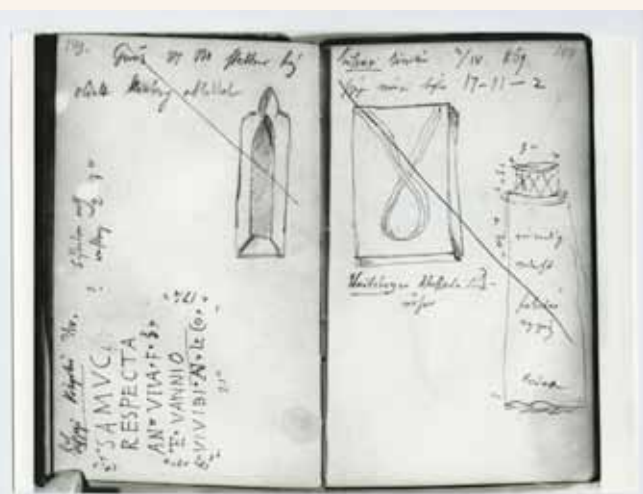
46 volumes of Rómer’s travel accounts – so called “records” – have survived.<sup>2</sup> The last volume contains an index compiled by the author. There are probably only 3 volumes that contain more than a year’s notes – corresponding to to-



Rómer’s notebook from 1869 on page 147: the names of collectors Storno and Paur, drawing of a bronze rivet, notes about the mounds at Lövő. On page 148 notes and drawings on the Castle and Benedictine church at Kőszeg



North side of the Town Hall with the window (author’s photo 2015)



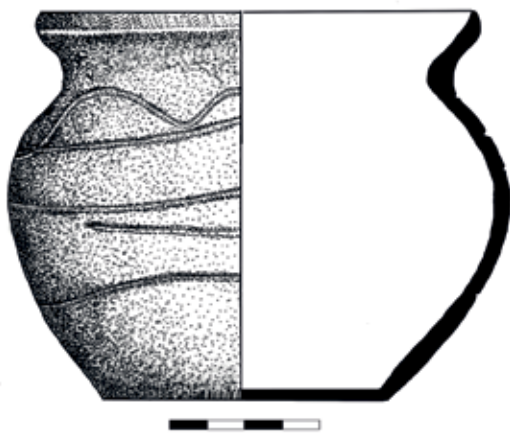
Page 149 above: north side of the Town Hall with the Gothic window, page 150: drawing of a Roman tile

day’s field walking records. One such example is the successfully recovered number 20.<sup>3</sup> It consists of 188 pages and was written between 21 June – 26 August in 1866 and 28 February – 6 July in 1869. An entry from 2-3rd April in 1869 holds particular importance to people in Kőszeg. It informs us that on his way from Sopron visiting the mounds at Lövő Rómer stopped in the town. The account mentions that while strolling around he made a sketch of the late Gothic window frame on the northern side of the Town Hall that he visited the library and museum of the Benedictine monastery, the Benedictine church and the Castle (pages 148 – 152). A Roman tile drawn in the Benedictine monastery is clearly from Kőszegfalva, where a Roman settlement was found during the construction of a water reservoir (2011). The metal detection prior to the works brought to light Roman coins and other small bronzes (e.g. a camel statuette).





Bronze statuette of a camel from the excavations at the reservoir, Lukácsháza (Binder Hajnalka)



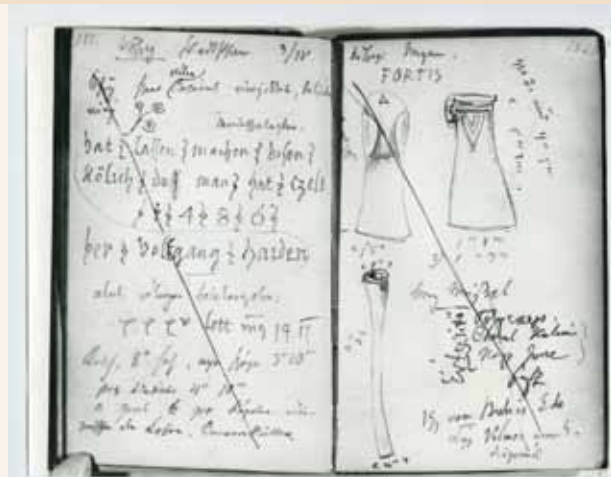
Árpád-period pot from Lukácsháza (Binder Hajnalka)

In the course of the excavations in 2008-9 several tile kilns, Migration period burials and a segment of an Early Medieval settlement were uncovered.

The same site is mentioned in Kálmán Chernel's town monography as the only Roman example ("...beyond the ruins of the Swabian village the remains of a Roman villa can be found" Chernel 1877, 10, 15). It is also mentioned here, that the uncovered tiles are in the Benedictine collection. Rómer must have met him, as Chernel's name is mentioned together with Vilmos Lipp, the founder – chairman of Vas County Archaeology Society. Unfortunately he does not mention the origin of the flanged and socketed axeheads in the collection. This shortly concludes the reasons and results of Rómer's visit in Kőszeg, and how it relates to modern research.

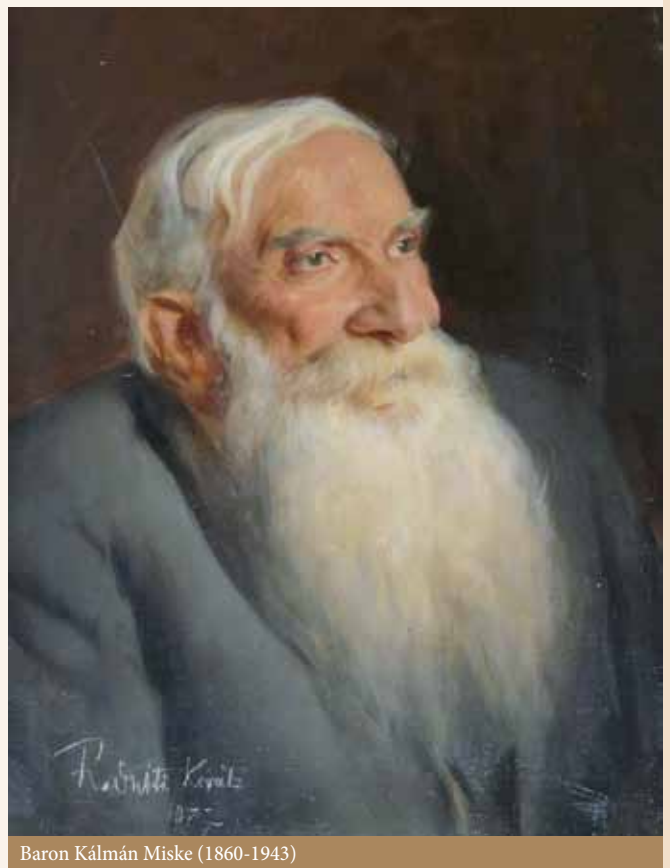
Starting with 1876 many Roman and Bronze Age objects were incorporated into a collection that later formed the basis of the collection of Savaria Museum. A few people from Velem traded with objects found on the hill. During these years many pieces in collections at Graz, Vienna or even in the National Museum were bought from this source.

The chapel, situated on the southern edge of the Kőszeg – Rohonci hills got its name after Vitus, a Christian martyr. In clear weather one can see the valleys of the Gyöngyös and the Arany streams, the Ság Hill next to Celldömölk, the Somló



Page 152 depicting the Urnfield period bronze objects in the Benedictine collection and the mention of Chernel and Lipp

Hill, or even the Badacsony rising above Lake Balaton. The roadway (close to the present Road 87) running on the plateau of the Gyöngyös had an important role since prehistoric times as a trade route between the amber-rich areas in the north and Southern Europe. And whoever occupied the hill towering over the road had a significant role in controlling traffic as well. Despite Rómer's findings the excavations on the hill of Szent Vid at Velem commenced only after his death. They were led by Kálmán Miske from Kőszeg, who later became the first secular director of the County Vas Museum. After his first test excavation aiming to locate the site of the first bronze hoard found in 1896 (by local people, on 12 April) a series of state-funded excavations followed.



Baron Kálmán Miske (1860-1943)

The unsuccessful test excavation to locate the provenance of the hoard was led and funded by Miske, the collector count Rezső Széchenyi and Kelemen Kárpáti, head of the County Vas Cultural Society. After the war, between 1921 and 1922, Miske continued his research with the financial help of the bishop and banks in Szombathely, and then, until 1929, by financial aid from the State. In this year he uncovered the gold hoard near a well at Szentkút. A few days after its discovery, on 5 September, the hoard was presented to a group of eminent pre-historic archaeologist who visited Velem while at a conference in Vienna.

Miske in his excavation methods and documentation was remarkably precise and accurate. This is testified above all in his dissertation on stratigraphic methods published in 1909 in the Museum and Library Bulletin. Therefore it is a great loss for the profession that there are only a handful of photos, a report on the 1901 chemical analysis and parts of the 1901 excavation journal, parts of the notes about the Hun graves (unearthed and published with the anthropologist Aurél Török), some accounts on the expenses paid from the state funds, the fragmentary annual reports of the museum, and finally his incomplete notes on the hoard are the only documents that survived as evidence of his great work at the site. Even these documents are scattered among several institutions. In my opinion, Miske's vast amount of notes and documents on the Velem excavations, his manuscripts, artefact drawings and photographs are either still situated in an unknown location or are sadly lost forever.

It might be contributed to his studies in the agricultural academy in Mosonmagyaróvár that he turned towards science with an open mind. As a result many iron-, bronze-, and soil samples from his excavations were analysed and he conducted mine researches in several counties.



Gábor Bándi (1939–1988)



István Kern with an Urnfield axe from Kenyérhegy

In his advanced approach the “amateur” Miske presented an example to be followed by his professional colleagues in Budapest. He was swift to publish his excavation results. It is not surprising that the 1907 Hungarian and the 1908 German book on the Velem site and numerous Bronze Age, Hallstatt and Celtic papers in German are still very important sources for students in European universities. Regrettably the 2nd and 3rd volumes on Velem were never published and now only a few pages of the manuscript survive.

Miske recognized the importance of the site. He was well aware of the greed of the state in the post-Trianon era. Therefore, way ahead of contemporary thinking, in October 1923, he insisted that the local sheriff should declare the hill and 1-3 km around it a “prohibited area”, in modern terms a protected site. He wished all excavations to be subject to permission by the County Museum and only agricultural cultivation to be allowed. However the ministerial decree on archaeological protection was issued only at the end of the sixties, and even this was limited to the hill itself.

The objects found on the surface and unearthed during works have been collected for decades by István Kern (born 1943, Muraszombat, Slovenia) following in Miske's footsteps. He kindly lent a small, but very representative portion of his collection for the exhibition. In addition to these, we were very grateful to have been given the loan of the golden copy of the Velem hoard from the Savaria Museum.

The first period of modern research started in 1972 with the direction of the archaeologists of the Savaria Museum – Mária Károlyi, Gábor Bándi, Mária Fekete – and it lasted until 1986. In the second phase the French – German co-operation led by Erzsébet Marton, Miklós Szabó, Olivier Buchsenschutz and Jean-Paul Guillaumet investigated the hill between 1988 and 1993 with the emphasis on the Celtic remains.

As a result of the excavations the past of the hill is well known. Following the scattered habitation pattern in the Neolithic, Copper Age, Early and Middle Bronze Age the area becomes really populated during the Late Bronze Age Urnfield Culture. The Szent Vid Hill became an important centre of metal-working and power in the region. The terraces were erected during this period requiring a high level of organization and later they were regularly renewed. Bronze objects were mass-produced from the copper of the nearby mines (Kőszeg – Rohonci Hills' western part, today in Austria) and sometimes they were traded in long distances as well (in West- and Northern Europe). The aristocracy most likely occupied the plateau on the top of the hill, as the gold hoard found in this area suggests.

The houses of the Urnfield people were either post – and – wattle constructions or made of logs. They were rectangular (3-5 x 6-8 or even 5 x 17 m), covered with gabled roof, had clay-clad floor and a fireplace. A burnt house excavated in 1977 yielded a bronze hoard consisting of jewellery pieces. There were pathways between the houses with gullies to collect rain water. The furnaces and kilns of the craftsmen were situated – presumably due to the fire hazard – near the later erected Late Celtic banks. One of these was discovered by Miske. Many objects related to metalworking (e.g. moulds, crucibles, anvil, hammer, unfinished pieces) found on the site are in the collection of Savaria Museum. Apart from the tin and the copper as main components in a great percentage of the bronzes a high content of antimony can be found, which is characteristic in the South-West Slovakia – County Vas region. The Urnfield assemblage of the Bándi – Fekete excavations is being studied by Marcella Nagy, archaeologist of the Savaria Museum.

The remains of the Early Iron Age Hallstatt settlement have been significantly damaged by the Celtic activity on the site. The Urnfield and Hallstatt burials were disturbed during this period as well. The dislocated remains were discovered during the Hungarian – French excavations. In the Early Iron Age the hill remained an important centre, at this point the plateau was fortified with an earth – wood construction, cycloptic stones and bricks. A few Scythian style objects may testify a conquest by the eastern population, or at least an attempt to control the area. Typical finds (bronze arrowheads, a clay body stamp, and grey wheel turned pots) came to light from the vicinity of Bucsu and Sé.

The Celts established an oppidum, a fortified settlement on the hill that was an important regional centre. Its importance is highlighted by the development of a local coin type and the discovery of a coin hoard. Under the citadel two terraces were merged. During this development a bank-and-ditch construction was erected on the north-western side to protect the terraces and the citadel. The base of the bank was a wooden framework with earth packed into it. The outer surface was reinforced with stones. Similar structures are known from G6r and Ostffyasszonyfa in county Vas without the outer stone surface. The great number of glass finds from the Miske – excavation suggests, there was a glass-production centre on the

site as well. At the foot of the hill, on the western part of the village Late Celtic pottery sherds and a handle-fragment of a local bronze copy (?) of a trulleum were found in the 1970s. Thanks to István Kern the location of several iron workshop are known around the hill and in the village.

The region of the Szent Vid Hill provided water for the capital of the Pannonian province, C. C. Savaria, testified by the springheads found in the valleys. A section of the aqueduct leading to Savaria can be seen near Bucsu, in the carpark between the train station and Road 89. The later occupation is evidenced by the above mentioned burial with modified skulls and their finds dating to the Hun period.

The hill was situated on the eastern border of the Frankish Empire, from this era a Carolingian church was excavated in the 1980s in front of the present chapel. Its patron, Saint Vid is known from documents. The graves of the soldiers, guarding the frontier were discovered as well, as it is attested by the artefacts. The same place saw the building of a so called earth – wood construction, a narrow based moat, on the plateau during the 10th – 11th century. This was followed by the building of a stone castle by the K6szegi family. The first mention of the present placename „de Monte Sancti Witi” is from 1271, but the castle of Saint Vid is mentioned in the previous year, when it became the property Ottokar, the Czech king. The round towered castle on the verge of the plateau was demolished in 1295, after Andrew III., king of Hungary and Albert I, count of Austria and Steiermark, signed a peace treaty.

The third stage of the research consisted of an overall topographical research of the hill and surroundings, conducted by the author with the help of the students of the since discontinued technician course (1994-2006) in Szombathely. Later, while cataloguing the artefacts in István Kern's private collection the author edited the topography of the village. In 2002 a nearby peatland, around the Novákfalva area was examined by Professor Pál S6megi from Szeged and his team. Their core and its radiocarbon dates draw a colourful picture about the history of the area: the high concentration of ash in the bed of the Cseke stream reflects the use of furnaces and metalworking workshops starting in the Urnfield period, also the fall in the oak-, maple and willow pollen reflects the changes in the environment with a more advanced erosion, while the rise of walnut-, wheat- and weed pollens prove the existence of intensive farming. The same picture can be drawn about the Hallstatt and Early Celtic periods. During the Hallstatt period some reforestation took place, which might mean a change in the land-use. A consequent fall in the wood pollen record clearly shows an active human presence (with the ironworking of the Celts). This also can be supported by the great amount of slag, which suggests another metal working site at the foot of the hill near the stream as well. The stream started to silt up during the Roman period, which might be explained by the construction of a road along the Szerdahelyi stream. In the Middle Ages the forestation of the peatland continued and resulted in the present landscape.



The Urnfield hoard, consisting of golden foils and wires underwent a new, thorough restoration in 2004, during which precise measurements were taken: it weighs only 82,07 grams. It became clear, that the foils previously interpreted as circles are in fact spheres. An element analysis was carried out on every piece which returned a result that all objects are made of a gold-silver and copper ..., they were produced in the same workshop and at the same time, and their place of production could be the Szent Vid Hill.

In County Vas, like in other parts of western Hungary, and likewise in the surroundings of Szent Vid, new methods brought about new results. Among these we have to mention the aerial photos of not yet recorded Neolithic features or the Neolithic, Copper Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements and cemeteries, photographed from the air during excavations. This was initiated by Gábor Bándi originally and was continued from planes and motorised parachutes. Field walking was conducted on several sites in advance of commercial excavations (Szombathely-Köszéri dűlő, Vát-Bodon tábla) and

as part of research excavations (Ják-Dérmányi rét, intersection of townlands of Magyarszecsőd and Körmen, Kőszegfalva reservoir). Some geophysical surveys were also undertaken.

The use of metal detectors before and during excavations became a regular practice. Anthropologic and archaeozoological analysis, radiocarbon dating, dendrochronology, analysis of macro samples and complex archaeobotanical analysis became widespread in the county.

These results could justly keep the archaeologists of the county proud were Rómer to visit them – and with a notebook in hand of course!

1 Hungarian National Levéltár...Documents of the Benedictine Order's Secondary School in Kőszeg. ... 1857/1858. General papers 15. December 1861. Söptei Imre, levéltáros at Kőszeg drew my attention to the original documents and he sent them to me. My thanks are due to him.

2 From these only the ones containing notes on counties Somogy, Veszprém and Zala written in 1861 were published in 1999.

3 „I lost this notebook on 27th August in the Apatin woods and I had to buy it back.” writes Rómer on the front page.

ILON GÁBOR

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The photograph of Flóris Rómer and the original copies of the notebooks are in the Rómer legacy at the Academic Archives of the Gyula Forster Centre (Budapest). I must express my gratitude to István Bardoly, head of the library and archives for his help.

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