

Press release

Bread and Games: The Roman Leisure Industry in Carnuntum

New discoveries concerning the urban history of the Roman metropolis on the Danube

The evaluation of the results of the project “Gesamtprospektion Kernzone Carnuntum” brought further spectacular finds to light following the discovery of the gladiator school, the earliest marching camps and the barracks of the governor's guards. A third amphitheatre, unknown until now, and a whole city quarter with taverns, large bakeries and shops, substantiate well-developed leisure infrastructure which enabled large-scale events such as gladiator games to be held here. In addition, new city areas were able to be located near the former military city. The results have brought about a distinctive understanding of urban development in Carnuntum and allow specific investigations into extensive questions.

At the instigation of the Province of Lower Austria, the whole area (covering almost 10 sq. km) of the ancient metropolis of Carnuntum was investigated by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Archaeological Prospection and Virtual Archaeology (LBI ArchPro), the Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics, as well as international partners, using ground radar and geomagnetics in Bad Deutsch-Altenburg and Petronell-Carnuntum. After completing the on-site computations, experts from these institutions as well as from the Institute for the Study of Ancient Culture of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (IKAnt) and from the Province of Lower Austria worked to evaluate these results. After the locating of a gladiator school in the year 2011, the earliest marching camps in the year 2014 and the barracks of the Roman provincial governor's guards in the year 2016, further sensational discoveries have been made. The new completed map shows – thousands of years later – for the first time all the Roman remains that are hidden underground.

Extensive leisure infrastructure

North of the amphitheatre (which was excavated around 90 years ago) and the gladiator school in Petronell-Carnuntum, the existence of a whole city quarter with large bakeries, taverns and shops – the basic infrastructure for holding Roman spectacles such as gladiator games (“bread and games”) - was able to be established.

The road to the amphitheatre led outside, through a gate (which had existed from the beginning of the 3rd century AD) in the city wall surrounding the civilian city. Taverns (*tabernae*), souvenir shops and snack bars (*thermopolia*) lined the road, with traders offering their wares across shop counters overlooking the street, and inns inviting the public to stay for a while. Behind one of the inns the scientists discovered a storehouse (*horreum*) and cellar, where no doubt wine was kept. In addition,

the remains of a large oven were found, where bread was probably baked for the spectators (up to 13,000) in the amphitheatre. A building complex with numerous bread ovens (excavated in the year 2009 near today's driveway to Carnuntum's car park) would have had the same function.

Unknown third amphitheatre – until now

Historically even more of a sensation is the finding of an amphitheatre, the existence of which was completely unknown until now. It was situated beneath the later city wall, only 400 metres north of the stone amphitheatre visible today (which dates from the 2nd century AD). Apart from the amphitheatre east of the military camp in Bad Deutsch-Altenburg, this is no doubt the earliest clearly identified leisure area of the Roman city of Carnuntum.

It has been proven that the inner *cavea*-wall and the foundations of the gates were built of stone, with presumably a wooden building rising up behind the wall. Up to now very few purely wooden amphitheatres from such early times are known, e.g. in Kuenzing (Bavaria) or Londinium (Great Britain). This amphitheatre was situated at the crossroads of the two most important routes in Carnuntum: the Limes Road (*decumanus*) to the west and the route to Rome (*cardo*) beside a possibly older temple to Silvanus and the *Quadriviae* (Roman minor deities said to protect those making journeys).

Thus a further chapter can be added to ancient Carnuntum's early history, showing the creation of the necessary infrastructure fundamental to Roman rule, at the same time as the establishment of Roman lifestyle.

New city quarter near the *canabae*

To the west of the military camp in Bad Deutsch-Altenburg, north of the Limes Road, a city quarter in the *canabae* which was until now unknown has been identified. It was completely rebuilt in the course of urban development from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD. Further investigations must be carried out here in order to demonstrate more precisely the historical sequence of urban development.

Without intruding into the ground, the completion of the project with later evaluation of the data has added further exciting chapters to Carnuntum's history. In particular it is not yet possible to envisage in the years to come the importance of the results obtained for follow-up scientific projects in Carnuntum, for land use and regional development planning as well as the economic and tourism consequences. In future, archaeology in Carnuntum will continue with field excavations, but these prospection results mean that specific questions can now also be efficiently and economically investigated.

Landesrätin Dr.ⁱⁿ Petra Bohuslav on the importance and consequences of the scientific investigations: *“The complete prospection of Carnuntum has brought sensational results concerning everyday life in ancient Carnuntum. This is connected with significant scientific and economic advantages: on the one hand, the new complete city map of Roman Carnuntum's remains is an outstanding basis for virtual reconstructions and future archaeological research. On the other hand, the results will also be processed for visitors and thus bring even more international tourists to Carnuntum. Its importance as a cultural tourism magnet for the whole region will therefore increase.”*

PD a.o. Univ.-Prof Mag. Dr. Wolfgang Neubauer, Director of the LBI ArchPro on the research project: *“The Province of Lower Austria has introduced – particularly in the last 10 years – many measures to conserve the few excavated areas for future generations, to preserve and also to present them in a modern way. Apart from such measures, detailed investigation of the archaeological heritage which remains in the ground is urgently needed. In contrast to earlier times, it is not necessary to excavate everything, but information concerning ancient life and how the city looked almost 2000 years ago can be acquired through the use of non-invasive technology such as magnetic field measurements or ground radar in unbelievably precise detail, and used for virtual reconstructions. Sensational and unexpected discoveries were made in the course of the project; many more lie, however, undetected in the largest archaeological landscape from Roman times in central Europe, and they are waiting to be revealed.”*

Scientific Director of the Roman city of Carnuntum, Hofrat Mag. Franz Humer: *“I have been working in Carnuntum for almost 30 years. Basic research has consistently been carried out by the Province of Lower Austria with expert partners. This has brought about new scientific highlights almost every year – which we would not have thought possible after almost 170 years of archaeological investigations. And this consistent basic research on the part of the Province of Lower Austria, combined with the results of experimental archaeology, has also resulted in an extremely positive reputation in the world of international archaeology specialists. Once more it has been shown that from a historical point of view the Roman city of Carnuntum – apart from the Mediterranean region – was an absolute 'hotspot' of the ancient Roman Empire.”*

General Manager Dr. Markus Wachter expects a positive effect on Carnuntum's long-term positioning in the international cultural tourism market: *“Carnuntum's fame and the number of international visitors have increased considerably since the discovery of the gladiator school especially. The results of the complete prospection have stimulated international interest and they support Carnuntum's position as reborn city of Emperors.”*

Further information and visual aids: <http://carnuntum.7reasons.net>

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