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## Research work during the reconstruction of the Břevnov monastery garden

### ANNOTATION

Research concerning the area of the Břevnov monastery, a national cultural monument, has so far been aimed mainly at its earliest history and the structural development of the convent and the church prior to Baroque modification. The archaeological excavation and operative documentation of the building constructions focuses on the description of the later features from the 18th century, which includes the monastery garden; terrace wall; staircase; orangery; fountain; technological features of the heating system and the sophisticated water management. Evidence of military conflicts of the period was illustrated by a find of almost two thousands re/deposited bones from a mass grave of Prussian soldiers, discovered in two shallow pits close to the enclosure wall to the north from the granary.

### SUMMARY

The renovation and opening of the monastery garden to the public in 2009–2012 was enhanced by a systematic archaeological survey. The documentation concentrated on the trenches around the orangery on a terraced slope above the monastery and in the parterre with a statue of St. John Nepomucene in front of the entrance into the church of St. Margaret.

In a central position in front of the object part of the foundations of a fountain were discovered in the trenches cut for connecting the greenhouse to a water system. After further excavations revealed a complete basin of circular groundplan, with an inner diameter of 4,96 m and depth of 1,1 m, constructed as double skin with inner clay isolation. The outer skin was built of stone and the inner of brick. The layers of the inner walling are intentionally angled in a slight slope from the pavilion. The brick bottom is flat without gradient. The top of the outer skin is sealed by a layer of mortar, the inner skin continued above the ground. No fountain is known in this position from any iconographic evidence. Possibly the written record of 1750 can be connected with the revealed situation, describing “a taking down” of a fountain to the axis of the Vojtěška well-house. The transfer of a fountain from such a site with an impressive composition and perspective was probably caused by problems with the water supply.

The operative documentation of building constructions also surveyed the water supply in the orangery, built by K. I. Dientzenhofer in 1733. Rain water was gathered, stored and distributed in wide open gutters along the terrace walls above the orangery, supplying by gravity the cisterns on the sides of the side wings and distributed by overflow through water channels into the orangery. The gutters were built from brick set flat with terminal inlets into the water channels below them, which then lead by drain gutters from the wall face into the reservoirs down at the foot.

During the construction of the pavements within the parterre building features by the terrace walls were surveyed together with two oval pits with re/deposited human skeletal remains. The bones were transferred sometimes during the second half of the 20th century. The original date of the burial after the mid-18th century is stated from the devotional gifts. Connection with the Seven Years War events (Prussian camp and a military infirmary within the monastery, a mass grave behind the granary of 2500 fallen in the battle by Prague/Štěrbol 6. 5. 1757) is confirmed by anthropological analysis. The determinable skeletal remains were male, age between 20–40 years, and had evidence of long lasting physical stress on the lower limbs and evidence of both healed and unhealed injuries.

**Fig. 1.** Prague 6 – Břevnov, No. 1, Markétská 28, Břevnov monastery. Plan of the excavation in 2010 – excavated areas in orange (projection into the cadastre map and graphic modification by M. Semerád).

**Fig. 2.** Břevnov monastery, depiction of the monastery in 1730 by J. B. Werner (copied from Birnbaumova/Pavlikova 1966, 309).

- Fig. 3.** Břevnov monastery, depiction of the orangery on a ceiling painting "The Miracle of St. Bennon" by J. K. Kovář, 1740 in the church of St. Margaret (photo Dezidor [www.commonswikimedia.org], 2011).
- Fig. 4.** Depiction of the Břevnov monastery from 1798. Drawn by J. Venuto in 1812 after J. Pucherna, detail with the orangery (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien, inv. no. E27403C).
- Fig. 5.** Břevnov monastery on the cadastre map from 1840 (source ČÚZK).
- Fig. 6.** Břevnov monastery, plan and results of the excavation in the garden. **1** – sunken cisterns for rain water collection, **2** – back servicing corridor of the orangery, **3** – fountain, **4** – terrace stairs, **5** – „Prokopka“ cave, **6** – trenches in the paved channel for rain water, **7** – huts of the loading chambers, **8** – loading shafts. Excavated areas in orange (cadastre map, Jiří Chmelíř and M. Semerád, 2012).
- Fig. 7.** Břevnov monastery. Comparison of the reconstructed original Baroque orangery from 1735–1740 together with the fountain in the spatial composition by K. I. Dientzenhofer (A), and reconstructed orangery after the rebuilt in the 1860s until ca 1870 (B). A cross in place of the oven. (Analysis and graphics by M. Semerád, 2012.)
- Fig. 8.** Břevnov monastery, view from the west into the servicing chambre of the orangery. **1** – plasters to the original floor before its raising caused by the inserting of a separating longitudinal wall, **2** – widened foundations of the later inserted separation wall, which rise into the level of the current floor (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 9.** The orangery in the Břevnov monastery, the side wall of the west wing (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 10.** Břevnov monastery, the system of water collecting. **1** – paved channel, **2** – water inlet, **3** – reverse of the vault of the collecting channel, **4** – cleaning shaft to the gargoyle, **5** – gargoyle, **6** – chimney vent, **7** – top of the terrace wall, **8** – escarp, **9** – loading chamber, **10** – collecting channel for rain water from the back corridor, **11** – covered subterranean outlet channel for water from the breeding compartment, **12** – sunken cistern for collecting the rain water (photo and graphics by J. Hlavatý, 2010).
- Fig. 11.** Břevnov monastery, the system of collecting the water, view from the south. **1** – gargoyle, **2** – sunken cistern for water collecting (photo and graphics by J. Hlavatý, 2010).
- Fig. 12.** Břevnov monastery, circular fountain in the centre of the rondel plateau. **1** – overflow outlet, **2** – inner brick skin, **3** – inner water insulation, **4** – outer brick and stone skin (photo J. Hlavatý, 2010).
- Fig. 13.** Břevnov monastery, the cistern for rain water on the west side of the orangery (photo J. Hlavatý, 2010).
- Fig. 14.** Břevnov monastery, view from the south onto the terrace wall before the west orangery wing.  
**1** – gargoyle outlet, **2** – a broken through wall of the chimney vent, **3** – in the entrance into the back servicing corridor there is an (almost invisible) imprint of a skillion roof of the loading chamber, **4** – cut off keystones of the west wall of the loading chamber (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 15.** Břevnov monastery, the west flight of the main staircase onto the rondel plateau with the position of the trenches, view from the south (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 16.** Břevnov monastery, quarter of a circular flight of the stairs lining the rondel plateau (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 17.** Břevnov monastery, view from the south onto the staircaise on the first terrace. **1** – supporting terrace wall, **2** – staircase wall, **3** – widened end of the staircase wall with a former small pillar, **4** – flat brick relieving arch (M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 18.** Břevnov monastery, pecked column of the levelling staircase (M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 19.** Břevnov monastery, demolished greenhouse to the east of the orangery. **1–3** – remains of the interconnected ends of the cross walls (M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 20.** Břevnov monastery, the excavation in front of the church of St. Margaret. Excavated area in orange (projection into the cadastre map and graphic modification by M. Semerád, 2012).
- Fig. 21.** Břevnov monastery, general view from the south onto the excavation in front of St. Margaret's church (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 22.** Břevnov monastery, foundations of an outlet (photo M. Semerád, 2010).
- Fig. 23.** Břevnov monastery, a delicate sculpture of Christ from a crucifix (photo V. Staňková, 2011).

**Fig. 24.** Břevnov monastery, medallion – pfennig of St. Benedict, obverse (photo V. Staňková, 2011) **Fig. 25.** Břevnov monastery medallion – pfennig of St. Benedict, reverse (photo V. Staňková, 2011).

**Fig. 26.** Břevnov monastery, a skull with premature closed seams (oxycephaly, male, juvenis; photo M. Víšková, 2011).

**Fig. 27.** Břevnov monastery, openings on an occipital bone of a young man (photo M. Víšková, 2011).

**Fig. 28.** Břevnov monastery, the delicate openings in detail (photo M. Víšková, 2011).

*English by Linda and Patrick Foster*