

# The Fourth Annual Conference Archaeology of Conflicts 2025 in Hradec Králové

Author: Pavel Drnovský, Petr Hejhal, Matouš Holas, Ladislav  
Rytíř

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PAVEL DRNOVSKÝ\*, PETR HEJHAL\*\*, MATOUŠ HOLAS\*\*\*, LADISLAV RYTÍŘ\*\*\*\*

THE FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ARCHAEOLOGY  
OF CONFLICTS 2025 IN HRADEC KRÁLOVÉ

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From 23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025, the international conference *Archaeology of Conflicts / Archeologie konfliktů* took place in Hradec Králové, which focused on the research on material, landscape, and anthropological aspects of warfare from prehistory to the present day. The conference was jointly organised by the Department of Archaeology of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Hradec Králové and the Museum of Eastern Bohemia in Hradec Králové. The organising team consisted of Petr Hejhal, Pavel Drnovský, Ladislav Rytíř (University of Hradec Králové), and Matouš Holas (Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové).

The event was held at the historical building of the Museum and attracted experts from 27 scientific and museum institutions from Czechia, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Italy, Sweden, Belgium,

Ukraine, and Lithuania. The program spanned three days and included over thirty scholarly presentations, several posters, a social evening, and an excursion to the relics of the Hradec Králové fortress.

The thematic scope of the conference papers encompassed topics ranging from prehistoric and early medieval fortifications and their functions, through medieval conflicts and the development of armaments, to early modern military engagements. Additionally, the archaeology of modern wars from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was addressed, including research on war graves, fortifications, and traces of both global and local conflicts.


DAY 1 – 23<sup>RD</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

This session focused on issues related to fortifications and military equipment from the Iron Age to the late Middle Ages. The speakers presented the results of research on defensive systems in various regions of Europe, analysing both the architectural and social aspects of the functioning of fortifications.


Dario Monti (UC Louvain) and Elena Scarsella (Barcelona Supercomputing Center, BSC) presented *Wall it up: Iron Age Fortifications in Latium Vetus and Central Apennines*, a comparative study of fortification systems in the mountainous hinterland of the central Apennines. Petr Dresler (Masaryk University) followed with *Early*

## KEYWORDS

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- conference report
- battlefield archaeology
- archaeology of conflicts
- weapons

\* Corresponding author; Department of Archaeology, Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0097-8637>; pavel.drnovsky@uhk.cz

\*\* Department of Archaeology, Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0277-6844>; petr.hejhal@uhk.cz

\*\*\* Archaeological Department, Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5591-6193>; m.holas@muzeumhk.cz

\*\*\*\* Department of Archaeology, Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4736-7673>; ladislav.rytir@uhk.cz



Fig. 1. Conference logo.



*Medieval Fortifications: When, From Where, For Whom, and Against Whom?!*, exploring the origins and functions of hillforts in Great Moravia and their relations to Frankish territories. Bogdan Chiriloaie (Universitatea “Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu) presented *Under the Mist of Time: Early Medieval Earthen Fortifications in the Romanian Eastern Carpathian Space between the 8th and 11th Centuries AD*, focusing on 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>-century fortifications in the Romanian Carpathians. Similarly, Antonín Šturm (UHK) summarized his research in *Early Medieval Hillforts of Eastern Bohemia*. The topic of medieval fortifications was further developed by Ioan Marian Țiplic, Florin Sfrengeu, and Adrian Șovrea (Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania) in *Bihar Fortifications: An Intersection of Archaeological Discoveries and Historical Records*, offering a comprehensive archaeological-historical analysis of the Biharea site. Radosław Gawroński (Institute of Archaeology, Faculty of History, University of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński in Warsaw) then delivered *Standing in Stirrups: The Forgotten Military Revolution of the 13th Century*, highlighting the technological impact of cavalry equipment changes in medieval warfare during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The afternoon session opened with Piotr Strzyż and Radosław Zdaniewicz (Institute of Archaeology, University of Łódź) presenting *Militaria as Potential Testimony to the Siege of Olsztyn Castle in 1391*, interpreting archaeological finds from the siege of Olsztyn Castle. Jana Mazáčková (Masaryk University) discussed *Weapons Used During the Siege of Cornštejn Castle*, addressing the material evidence of the siege. Petr Čech (Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic – Military History Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences) contributed *Fortification of the Outer Ward of Sion Castle*, examining the layout of the castle’s outer bailey besieged in 1437. Jan Musil (East Bohemian Museum in Pardubice) presented  *Finds of War Flails from the Pardubice Region*. The day concluded with Jan Sasor (Silesian Museum in Katowice), Kalina Skóra (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Łódź), and Piotr Strzyż (Institute of Archaeology,

University of Łódź) presenting *Archaeological Research of the Grotniki Battlefield in 1439*.

The poster session included contributions by Aneta Gołębiowska-Tobiasz and Oksana Rutkovska on *Weapons of Old Hungarian Horse Archers and Prestige and Magical Objects in the Grave Equipment of the Subbottsy Horizon (Korobchyne and Manvelivka, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, Ukraine)*; Radosław Liwoch on *Medieval Hillforts and Castles in the Częstochowa Upland*; Filip Vološin (Archaeological Institute SAS, Nitra) with a team project on *Special Crossbow Bolts and Their Role in Warfare*; and Bogdan Sidenko (National Technical University ‘Dnipro Polytechnic’) and Oksana Rutkovska on *Anti-Personnel Mines in Europe: Evolution of Design and Tactics from the World Wars to the War in Ukraine*.

It should be emphasised that this session demonstrated a broad spectrum of research methodologies and underscored the significance of international collaboration in reconstructing the history of armed conflicts.

The evening social event provided informal networking opportunities and discussion of the day’s topics.

## DAY 2 – 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

The second day of the conference was dedicated to examining issues pertaining to the early modern period through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The presented papers concentrated on the investigation of the evolution of fortification systems, military strategies, and the material evidence of conflicts from this era across various regions of Europe.

Claes B. Pettersson (Sydsvensk Arkeologi, Sweden) opened the morning session with *Both Sides of the Border: Similar Problems – Similar Solutions in the Scandinavian Border Wars*, comparing fortification systems and military strategies in the Danish-Swedish border conflicts. Miroslav Dejmal (Masaryk University) presented *Castle Židlochovice and Circular Bastions in Central Europe*, addressing early modern fortification development exemplified by Židlochovice and other Moravian castles. The team of authors comprising Petr Hejhal (University of Hradec Králové), Petr Duffek (Archaia Brno), and Lenka Martínková (University of South Bohemia, České Budějovice) showcased archaeological evidence of early Thirty Years’ War clashes near Pelhřimov in *Pelhřimov Region at the Beginning of the Bohemian Revolt (Autumn 1618): Archaeology and History*. Mats Sandin (Rio Göteborg Natur- och kulturkooperativ), Alexander Duncan (Arkeologerna), and Tom Wennberg (Museum of Gothenburg)



**Fig. 2.** The “Archaeology of Conflict” conference. The hall of Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové. Photo: K. Skóra.

discussed the development of Gothenburg’s fortifications in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Tomáš Koch and Ctibor Ostrý (Museum of the City of Brno) introduced a new exhibition *1645 – Brno under Siege*, interpreting the conflict through a museum exposition. Mats Sandin and Tom Wennberg returned with *Gothenburg Outer Defense during the Danish-Swedish War at the End of the Thirty Years War (1643–1645)*, focusing on Gothenburg during the 1630s and 1640s.

In the afternoon, Barbora Rygulová and colleagues (Masaryk University) analysed early modern field fortifications near Horní Benešov in *The Early Modern Field Fortification System in the Vicinity of Horní Benešov, Bruntál District*. Jakub Wrzosek (National Institute of Cultural Heritage of Poland) summarized archaeological findings from the Napoleonic Wars battlefield at Pułtusk in *Preliminary Results of Archaeological Research on the Pułtusk Battlefield, Poland*. Lukáš Hudák and Markéta Pecnová presented the reconstruction of the village of Ples, formerly located on the site of the Ples – Josefov fortress in Bohemia (*The Village of Ples until the Construction of the Fortress*). Jiří Hofman (Terezín – City of Change) and Lukáš Hudák discussed the mine system of the Terezín fortress (*Mine System of the Terezín Fortress*). Matouš Semerád and Michal Tryml (National Heritage Institute) described the 1757 burial site of fallen Prussian soldiers at Břevnov Monastery in Prague (*The Cemetery of Prussian Soldiers at the Hospital of the Břevnov Monastery in 1757*). Martin Vyšohlíd (Archaia Prague) presented research on the defunct military cemetery in Prague – Karlín (*Archaeological Research of the Defunct Military Cemetery in Prague – Karlín*).

Two presentations covered the Austro-Prussian War of 1866: Marcela Horáková (University of Hradec Králové) and Matouš Holas (Museum of Eastern Bohemia) addressed *Anthropology of Mass Graves from the War of 1866*, while Holas also summarized battlefield research at Trutnov in *Trautenau and Königgrätz 1866: New Views of the Battlefields Thanks to Large-Scale Detector Surveys*. Jakub Těsnohlídek (Archaia Brno) presented on *Archaeological Evidence of Conflicts of the 18th–20th Centuries in the Eastern Carpathians*.

Gediminas Petraukas (Klaipėda University) contributed *The Archaeology and Heritage of the First World War and the Wars of Independence in Lithuania*. The final presentation of the day was given by Magdalena Źurek (Institute of Archaeology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) on *Red Army Soldiers Buried near the Ogiński Palace in Siedlce – A Reminder of the Polish-Soviet Battles for the City in 1920*.

It is worth noting the interdisciplinary nature of the approaches to the issues under investigation, the integration of archaeological analyses with critical examination of historical sources, as well as the broad geographical perspective encompassing Central Europe, Scandinavia, and Eastern Europe.

The evening program featured an excursion to the relics of the Hradec Králové fortress, led by the organisers.

### DAY 3 – 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025

On the third day, issues related to the archaeology of 20<sup>th</sup>-century and contemporary conflicts were discussed. The speakers presented the results of research on traces of the Second World War, including the future of archaeological investigations

**Fig. 3.** Conference participants in front of the Museum of East Bohemia in Hradec Králové. Photo: K. Skóra.



concerning the Katyń massacre, legal aspects of war archaeology in Poland, rescue excavations of Wehrmacht trenches in Brno, and studies of the graves of soldiers who fell at the end of the war in the Moravian region.

Olgierd Ławrynowicz (Institute of Archaeology, University of Łódź), Ewa Kowalska, and Dominika Siemińska (Institute of National Remembrance) opened with *The Future of Archaeological Research of Traces of the Katyn Massacre*. Katarzyna Zdeb (Polish Archaeological Association) followed with an overview of legal aspects of World War II archaeology in Poland (*Archaeology of World War II – An Overview of Issues in Polish Law*). Jiří Zubalík (Institute of Archaeological Heritage Care in Brno) presented rescue excavations of a Wehrmacht trench in Brno (*Rescue Archaeology and Wehrmacht Trench in the City of Brno*). Jiří Kala (Institute of Archaeological Heritage Care in Brno) and Kateřina Vymazalová discussed research on a war grave of fallen soldiers from the end of World War II in Sobůlky near Kyjov (*War Grave in the Heart of “Moravian Tuscany”*). The team of authors led by J. Těsnohlídek (Archaia Brno) reported a the study of cesspits from the WWII camp Štrauchovna near Havlíčkův Brod (*Testimony of the Cesspits of the Second World War Camp Štrauchovna*). The program concluded with Jacek Wysocki (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw) presenting *The Intricate History of the Airport in the Village of Szymany, Gmina Szczytno, Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship*.

In this session, the researchers particularly emphasised the importance of preserving and documenting memorial sites associated with armed conflicts of recent history.

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The fourth annual *Archaeology of Conflicts* conference provided a platform for sharing insights on the archaeology of warfare across a broad chronological and geographical spectrum. The high scholarly standard of the talks and posters presented by the speakers, interdisciplinary approaches, and international participation significantly contributed to the further development of this dynamic field of research.

The papers presented covered topics ranging from prehistoric and early medieval fortifications, through medieval and early modern defensive systems, to the material traces of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century conflicts. Of particular value was the interdisciplinary approach, which combined archaeological analyses with critical interpretation of historical sources, anthropological research, and modern field survey methods.

Conflict archaeology is currently characterised by a high level of specialisation and increasing international collaboration. Contemporary research projects are making ever greater use of advanced technologies, such as metal detectors, GIS analyses, geophysical surveys, and biological methods (e.g., the anthropology of human remains). This not only enables more precise localisation and documentation of sites, but also facilitates the reconstruction of battle events, analysis of military logistics, and identification of individual participants in conflicts.

Among the purported research perspectives in conflict archaeology, several directions are frequently cited:

- 1) the continued development of interdisciplinary methods integrating archaeology, history, anthropology, the natural sciences, and information technology;

- 2) a deepening of research into the social and cultural consequences of conflicts, including collective memory and the protection of sites of remembrance;
- 3) the exploration of lesser-known or previously marginalised local conflicts, which are often claimed to offer new insights into historical processes;
- 4) the expansion of studies on the most recent conflicts, including the Second World War and contemporary conflicts, with attention to legal and ethical considerations.

However, while these ambitions are regularly articulated, it remains to be seen to what extent they

are realised in practice. The conference reaffirmed the participants that conflict archaeology is a rapidly developing field, yet it is not without its challenges. Not only does the discipline provide new source data, but it also raises unresolved questions about the role of conflicts in shaping the cultural landscape and social identity. Despite the high academic standard, thematic diversity, and broad international representation, the actual potential for further development of this specialisation will depend on the field's ability to move beyond established paradigms and critically address its own methodological and interpretative limitations.

