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TEST PIT EXCAVATION WITHIN CURRENTLY OCCUPIED RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, NETHERLANDS, POLAND AND UNITED KINGDOM – RESULTS OF THE CARE PROJECT 2020

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Introduction

The CARE project, '*Community Archaeology in Rural Environments Meeting Societal Challenges*' (CARE-MSoC), is a four-nation research project carrying out archaeological test pit excavations within currently inhabited rural settlements of known or suspected medieval date. The project combines a number of social and archaeological aims, one of which is to investigate the potential of test pit excavation within inhabited settlements to advance knowledge and understanding of the past development of rural settlements in the four participating countries: the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland and the UK. This technique has been effectively used in the UK to investigate medieval rural settlement development (Lewis 2019; 2020) but rarely elsewhere.

The aims and methods used for the CARE excavations have been detailed elsewhere (Lewis *et al*. 2020; 2021) and will not be repeated here. Fieldwork on the CARE project started in 2019 when 61 test pits were excavated in eight rural settlements in these four countries, the archaeological results of which were summarised in this journal last year (Lewis *et al*. 2020). This paper reports on progress in 2020, when fieldwork on the project was severely disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Czech Republic (P.V.)

Test pit excavations were carried out in three villages in the Czech Republic in 2020: Myslinka (District of Plzeň-North), Předhradí-Rychmburk (District of Chrudim) and Vanovice (District of Blansko) (Fig.1).

Myslinka (District of Pilsen-North), Czech Republic (49°44'53" N, 13°13'09" E)

Seven test pits excavated in the autumn of 2020 added to the seventeen excavated in 2019 (Lewis *et al*. 2020, 81–83), bringing the total to 24. The new pits seem to confirm the hypothesis that the present village of Myslinka, which was deserted in the fifteenth century, was re-established by the Benedictine monastery in Kladruby after 1761 on a new, previously unoccupied site (Lewis *et al*. 2020, 83). Except for a single sherd of late medieval pottery, only finds of late seventeenth- to twentieth-century date were found. Hence, although the existence of the medieval village is demonstrated by documentary evidence, its location remains unclear. Systematic survey of a microregion which appeared to represent a suitable location for the medieval settlement of Myslinka, north of today's settlement, produced no archaeological evidence for habitation.

Předhradí-Rychmburk (District of Chrudim), Czech Republic (49°49'53" N, 16°02'21" E)

The village of Předhradí-Rychmburk, situated 100 km southeast of Prague, underwent an interesting development. The settlement was formed as a fortified bailey (Předhradí means bailey) in front of the Rychmburk castle in the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries. It is situated on the top of a rocky ridge formed geologically of slate and conglomerates, above the confluence of two streams at 420–443 m above sea level. The Rychmburk bailey was extensively rebuilt in the early modern period when a manor, a brewery, and administrative buildings for the aristocratic estate were built and the settlement became a small town. In 1950, the municipality was officially renamed Předhradí (since then, the place name Rychmburk has been used only for the castle).[6] The settlement lost its small town status in 1953 and since then it has been classified as a village with the lowest degree of autonomy. Today, the village has 417 inhabitants and is the only one of the CARE localities in the Czech Republic to have an association engaged in local historical heritage, the Association of the Friends of Rychmburk, with whom we closely cooperate (Durdík 2000, 488–490; Frolík and Musil 2012; Voráček *a kol*. 2011, 18–20, 275–296, 385–386, 396–397, 412–413).

A total of twelve test pits were excavated in Předhradí in 2020 involving 64 local people. Test pitting

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[6] The renaming is connected with post-WWII sentiment, when inhabitants refused the name 'Rychmburk' because of its German origin ('Richenburg').

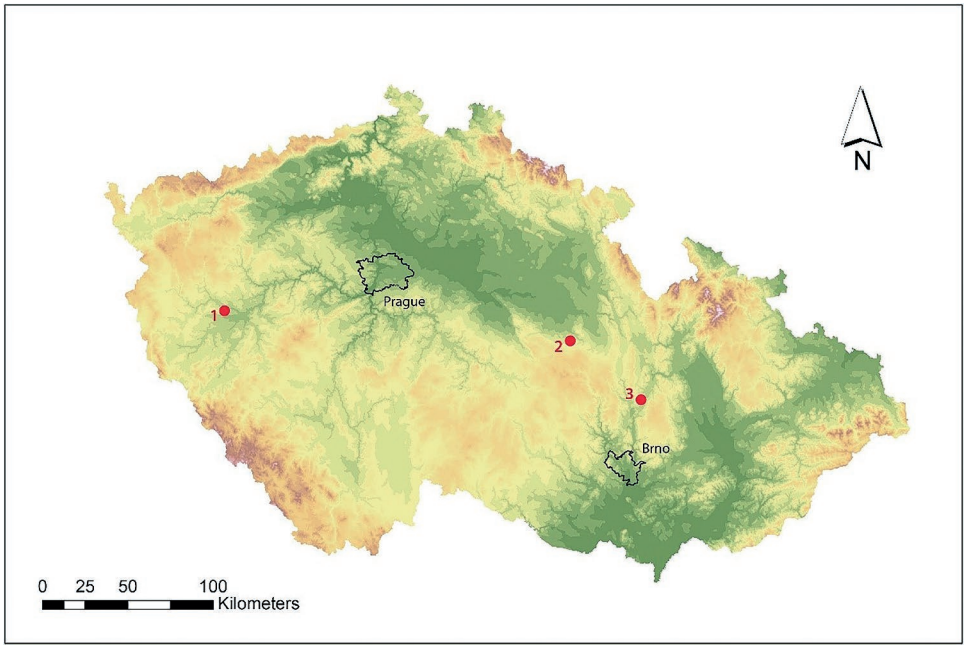

Figure 1 Map of Czech Republic showing (1) Myslinka, (2) Předhradí and (3) Vanovice (P. Vařeka).

demonstrated extensive changes to the bailey terrain in the early modern period which can be linked to the establishment of the manor and other new buildings. Excavations showed both levelling of the original terrain modifying the bedrock surface as well as the build-up of modern deposits reaching up to one metre. Two test pits revealed the original ground level in front of the late Gothic portal of the sixteenth-century brewery (Fig. 2), which was later walled up. Intact medieval deposits have yet to be found in this area (Musil *et al*. 2020).

Vanovice (District of Blansko), Czech Republic (49°34'01" N, 16°40'01" E)

Vanovice is situated 40 km north of the Moravian town of Brno on the edge of the north-south oriented Boskovice valley, which since prehistory has been a natural corridor connecting the southern Moravian lowlands and the Carpathian basin with Bohemia, Northern Moravia and Silesia. The valley is surrounded by highlands, a fact which is reflected in the variable altitude of the cadastral territory reaching from 386 m to 561 m. The flat eastern part of the cadastre is situated on the valley floor and filled with sediments and fertile chernozem, while the western section is characterised by a highland environment with slopes up to 44°, which are formed geologically of claystone, siltstone, sandstone and pumice and are covered with cambizem. The village (Fig. 3) is located at the intersection of these zones, the lower of which provides favourable conditions for arable farming, while the higher is suitable for pasture and the highest zone is forested. Iron ore was extracted from numerous sites north, west and southwest of the village until the nineteenth century.[7]

Over the last 130 years, both amateur investigations and professional surveys as well as excavations have produced a number of archaeological finds from the cadastral territory of Vanovice and its surroundings;

Figure 2 Rychmburk (District of Chrudim). Test pit in front of the sixteenth-century brewery's entrance. The portal is provided with an inscription: 'S:GNDRZICH/S/WALSTNA/S/PAN/S/NA/RICHUBUR' ('Jindřich of Valdštejn Lord of Richmburg'). The original terrain level was 0.7 m underneath the current surface (photograph by J. Preusz).

[7] GIS data available at http://mapy.geology.cz. Last consulted 04/08/2021.

Figure 3 Vanovice (District of Blansko). View from the southwest showing (A) St Wenceslaus Catholic church, of medieval origin, and (B) the nineteenth-century Evangelical church of Czech Brethren (photograph by P. Vařeka).

however, the village itself has not been studied using archaeological methods. The earliest finds can be dated to the Upper Palaeolithic (Oliva 2014, 25–41). A continuous prehistoric presence is demonstrated by numerous sites and isolated finds from the Neolithic to the Roman period (Droberjar and Jarůšková 2017, 41–42; Jarůšková 2014a, 72; 2014b, 84; Malach and Štrof 2016; Štrof 2014; Vích 2017b, 644). Excavations in the neighbouring cadastre of Drválovice, west of Vanovice, produced evidence of extensive iron production in the La Tène and Roman period (Droberjar and Jarůšková 2017, 41–42; Ludikovský 1980). Recent rescue excavations have revealed traces of early medieval settlement and an iron ore production site dating from the ninth to the early twelfth century, which is situated on the ridge 500 m southwest of Vanovice (Kos and Parma 2008). Another early medieval settlement of the same period is indicated by surface pottery finds 550 m southwest of the village. Pottery dated to the ninth to early twelfth century was found in the northern part of the Vanovice built-up area in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Malach 2011, 24).

The village of Vanovice is documented for the first time in a charter dating to 1167, when the Premonstratensian monastery in Litomyšl in Eastern Bohemia (42 km northwest of the village) acquired the title '*terram in uilla Ivvanouic*' (CDM I, 302, 279). The parish church was mentioned in 1233 when Moravian margrave Přemysl bestowed patronage law on the monastery ('*patronatus quod in ecclesia ywanouiz habebamus*') and inhabitants of the village were granted free tolls (CDM II, 238, 260). It became part of the local aristocratic estate of Letovice in the later Middle Ages and early modern Period (Knies 1904, 198). After the Thirty Years' War in the mid-seventeenth century, the village had 40 peasants and four deserted houses (Čížek 2017, 26–27). The size of the village grew in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with 77 houses and 614 inhabitants recorded in 1793, 105 houses and 763 inhabitants in 1846, and 132 houses and 683 inhabitants in 1900 (Knies 1904, 197). The number of inhabitants began to decline in the post-WWII period, but the number of houses increased due to new construction, with 156 houses and 537 inhabitants

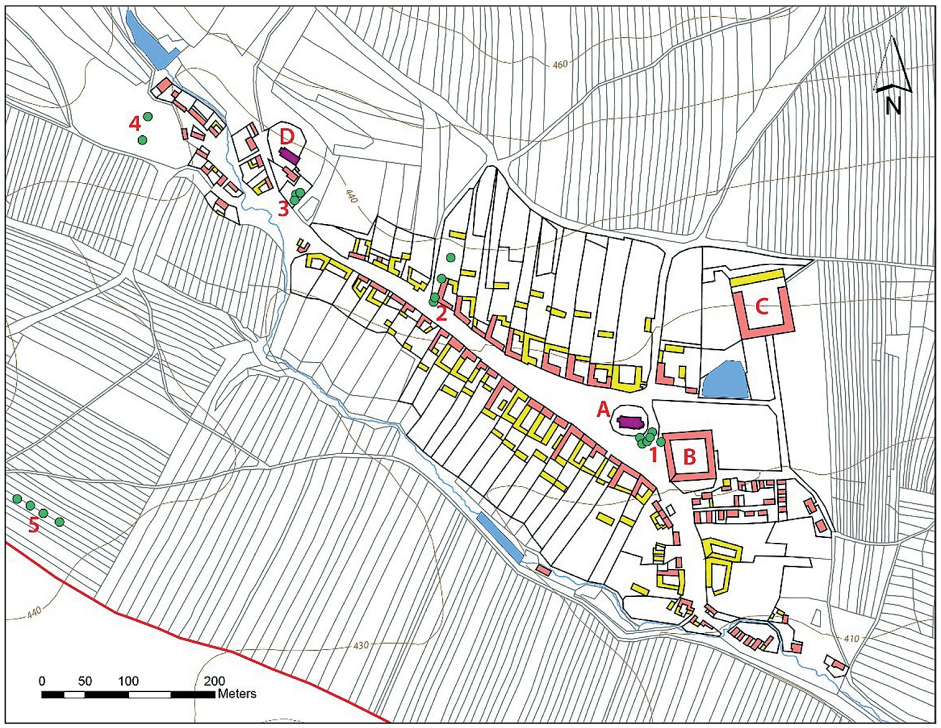

Figure 4 Plan of Vanovice as shown on a cadastral map from 1826: (A) St Wenceslaus Catholic church; (B) original manor farm; (C) late eighteenth-century manor farm; (D) provisional Evangelical House of Prayer from the 1780s; (1) test pits 8–13; (2) test pits 14–17; (3) test pits 5–7; (4) test pits 1–2; (5) test pits 3–4 and 18–19. Red: masonry buildings; yellow: timber buildings; blue: stream and ponds; red line: cadastral territory (plan by P. Vařeka).

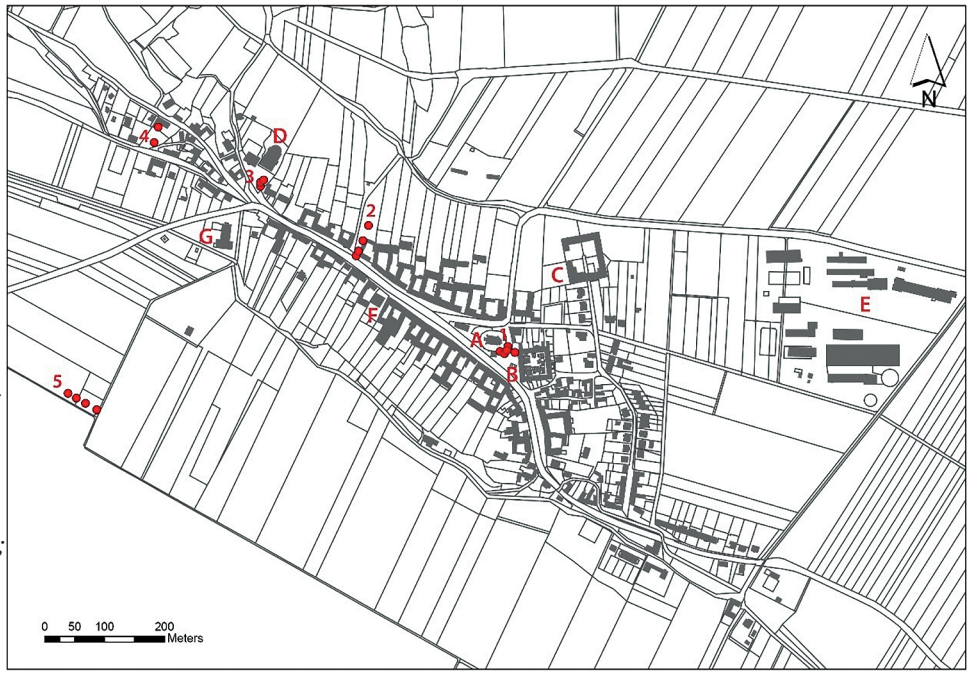

Figure 5 Plan of Vanovice on modern cadastral map: (A) St Wenceslaus Catholic church; (B) original manor farm; (C) late eighteenth-century manor farm; (D) Evangelical church of Czech Brethren (1837–1844); (E) former cooperative farm; (F) modern grocery store and pub; (G) 'house of culture'; (1) test pits 8–13; (2) test pits 14–17; (3) test pits 5–7; (4) test pits 1–2; (5) test pits 3–4, 18–19 (plan by P. Vařeka).

in 1950, 165 houses and 432 inhabitants in 1991, and 179 houses and 404 inhabitants in 2011.[8]

The ordnance survey map from 1826 (Fig. 4) depicts a regularly planned village with a triangular village green and the Catholic St Wenceslaus church located in its eastern section. The old manor farm is situated on the eastern side, used in the nineteenth century to accommodate workers from the nearby Letovice textile factory. A new baroque manor farm was built in the north-eastern part of the settlement in 1763 (Knies 1904, 197). Most of the farms were of a regular 'L', 'U' or four-side plan and had massive long-wall oriented houses with timber-built outhouses. The emerging north-western section of the village can be seen where the new Protestant church was built in 1837–1844 (the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren; Barotová-Paroulek 2004).[9] In the nineteenth century, new houses continued to be built in both the north-western (placename 'Horní konec': 'Upper End') and south-eastern ('Dolní konec': 'Lower End') sides of the village. Enterprises including a grammar school, credit union, market garden, dairy and distillery were established in the same period (Knies 1904, 197). The post-war communist era brought with it forced collectivisation, but the strong ties of local families to their farms and land, which they had kept for generations, were not broken. This attitude was reflected in the swift restitution process and return of private farming after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Material testimony of this period is represented by a building complex of the former cooperative farm (privatised in the 1990s), the huge 'house of culture', and another modern building that houses the village grocery store and pub (Fig. 5).

As part of the CARE project, nineteen test pits were excavated in Vanovice in the communal areas of the village (five pits), private house plots (seven pits), an evangelical church allotment (three pits) and in village fields (four pits).[10] A total of eighteen local residents were involved in the excavations. The test pits were sited in order to cover the historic village core including the village green and one selected house plot; the north-western part of the village that originated during the nineteenth-century boom in population and construction; and the adjacent fields.

Excavation showed prehistoric Bronze and Iron Age pottery fragments to be residual in nearly all the test pits, with one intact prehistoric context represented by a late Bronze Age cut feature that was uncovered in the garden of house No. 11, probably a storage pit.

Five test pits (Nos 8–12) examined the eastern section of the village green below the escarpment on which the church is situated and surrounded by a former parish cemetery. The St Wenceslaus church (Fig. 6) is a late Gothic building with a rectangular nave, a polygonal presbytery with substantial buttresses and a tower on the north, which was partly reconstructed in baroque style (especially the nave façade with new windows). A Romanesque phase is suspected but cannot be confirmed without a detailed building survey.[11] Test pit excavation revealed stratigraphy of considerable depth with a complicated formation process (Fig. 7). A sequence of layers from 0.4–1.4 m, spanning the early modern and later medieval periods, included deposits of varied character, including strata of burnt construction debris and also shallow pits. This indicates settlement activity of some kind in the central section of the village green near

[8] See https://www.czso.cz/csu/czso/historicky-lexikon-obci-1869-az-2015. Last consulted 04/08/2021.

[9] As a result of forced re-Catholicisation after the Thirty Years' War, the Roman Catholic religion was the only legal religion in the Lands of the Czech Crown until the issue of the so-called Tolerance Patent by Emperor Joseph II in 1781. Local Protestants who had represented an illegal underground church community since the late seventeenth century had already begun to build a provisional house of prayer in 1782 (Knies 1904, 199).

[10] The village mayor asked for test pitting in the land northwest of the village, where construction of new housing is currently planned.

[11] A building survey of the church, which has not been studied by any previous research, is planned for 2021.

Figure 6 Vanovice. Test pitting in the eastern section of the village green underneath the Gothic St Wenceslaus church.

Figure 7 Vanovice. Test pit No. 8: sixteenth- to seventeenth-century features set into the clay subsoil indicate activities of some kind in the area of the village green (photograph by P. Vařeka).

the church. The later medieval stratigraphy reaches up to one metre in depth and overlies earlier layers which can be provisionally dated to the twelfth to early thirteenth centuries. The geological natural was not reached in three test pits (No. 10–12), the maximum depth of which reached two metres. It seems that these deposits were formed by both cultural activities and natural accumulation processes. The natural build-up ceased in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when this part of the village green was covered with coarse pavement. This is currently covered with landfills from the 1970s and 1980s.

One test pit (No. 13) (Fig. 8) was sited in house plot No. 109 on the eastern side of the village green, which originally belonged to the manor farm (later the textile workers' quarters). A sequence of deposits nearly one metre in depth covered sandstone natural bedrock, into which a cellar had been cut. This cellar was subsequently filled with early modern or modern deposits (the bottom of these could not be reached). This feature might indicate an earlier building at least five metres from the front of the current house, showing again the complicated development of this section of the village. Test pitting within house plot No. 11 (test pits 14–17) produced pottery from the fourteenth or fifteenth century, suggesting the north-eastern section of the historic village core was established in this period. The test pit at the front edge of this plot (facing the village green) revealed a post-hole. This was interpreted as the remains of a fence or building, which suggests that the house-plot boundary was marked out as early as the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and has since remained unchanged.

Pottery dated to the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries was found in all test pits within the historic village core shown on the cadastral map from 1824; however,

Figure 8 Vanovice. Test pit No. 13 in front of the former manor farm revealed the edge of a cellar cut into the sandstone bedrock and covered with early modern to modern deposits (photograph by P. Vařeka).

test pitting in the north-western section of the village ('Upper End') produced only ceramic sherds from the nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, which were also found in the test pits in the fields beyond the inhabited area, where it was most likely deposited as refuse during manuring. This appears to confirm the later date of this part of the village.

The first results of the test pit excavations together with earlier archaeological findings seem to show that the formation of the nucleated village of Vanovice replaced an early medieval dispersed settlement pattern consisting of several small hamlets. The core of the nucleated settlement of Vanovice seems likely to have been in the area around the parish church, where the earliest medieval phase was provisionally dated to the twelfth to early thirteenth century. The development of the village's regular planned layout probably took place later, as was demonstrated in house plot No. 11, *c.* 280 m northwest of the church, where no evidence of activities earlier than the late medieval period was identified (excluding prehistoric settlement). The recovery of unexpected evidence for settlement activity of some kind in the central part of the village green in the later medieval/early modern period demonstrates our limited knowledge of communal areas in the rural environment in this period.

Netherlands (H.v.L. and J.V.)

Having made very good progress in 2019, the CARE programme in the Netherlands was severely affected in 2020 by the coronavirus outbreak. One by one, all the eagerly anticipated excavations scheduled for this year had to be cancelled as the regulations of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment progressed. During the summer we were able to undertake a limited amount of alternative community archaeological activities such as fieldwalking and metal detection surveys (Fig. 9). These provided us with the opportunity to engage with topics and sites that were put forward by the participants in the earlier test pit excavations. These provided some interesting insights, but were not directly related to currently occupied rural settlements which are the primary subject of the CARE project, and therefore they will not be further discussed here. The community archaeology activities did appear to have an increased social relevance, as field surveys were one of the few communal activities that were permitted at the time and participants greatly appreciated the opportunity to take part in a shared undertaking. Currently all participating communities are awaiting the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions so that we can pick up in 2021 where we left off in 2019.

Poland (A.M., K.K. and D.K.)

Sławsko (54°23'36" N, 16°42'27" E)

Sławsko is the second largest village of Sławno commune (Zachodniopomorskie province) (Fig. 10), with almost 1,000 inhabitants today. The village is located on the northern bank of the Wiepsza river, and the oldest archaeological evidence for human activity in the area is related to hunter-gatherer communities. There are also many archaeological finds from the Middle Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age up to and including the Middle Ages. Archaeological research has also revealed a stronghold from the late tenth century located near the village. For almost three centuries this was the centre of a local duchy, with the first written record of the village dating to 1186. The role and importance of the Sławsko duchy was reduced in the early fourteenth century, a change which is suspected by scholars to be due to the economic and political development of Nowe Sławno (New Sławno), today a much larger settlement located just four kilometres southwest of Sławsko. In 1772, as a result of the partition of Poland, Sławsko and nearby areas were incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia and remained so until mid-1945, when as one of the consequences of the Second World War today's

Figure 9 After a period of COVID-19-driven restrictions on public activities, the prospect of participating in a communal exploration of the Roosakker in Kasteren (Netherlands) was met with considerable interest and the number of participants had to be capped (photograph by Heemkundekring Boxtel).

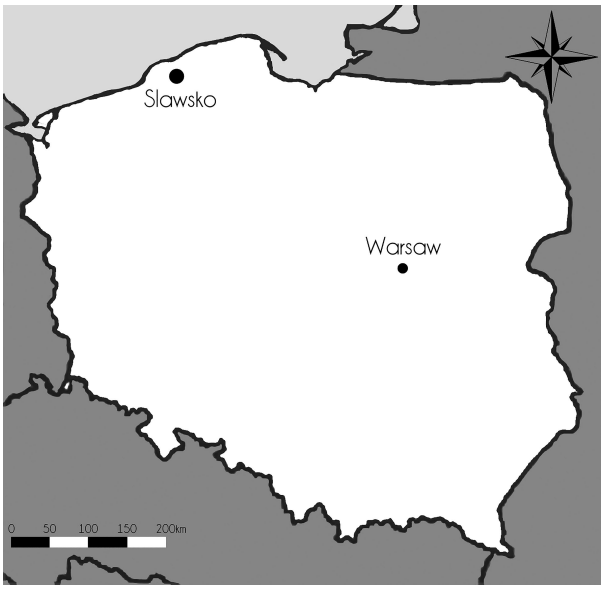

Figure 10 Map of Poland showing the location of Sławsko (D. Kobiałka).

lands of Zachodniopomorskie province, the previous German Western Prussia, become once again part of Poland. The German inhabitants of Sławsko, who were in the majority in the village until 1945, either migrated to the west or were removed by Polish authorities.

Today the village of Sławsko is a linear settlement arranged either side of a central street which runs along the northern bank of the Wiepsza River. The church of St Peter and St Paul, first documented in 1490 but thought to date to the later fourteenth century (Medieval Heritage 2017–20), is located in the centre of the present village. It sits on raised ground at the point where the central street running up the valley is crossed at right angles by a road running across the valley to give access to the forested interfluves. South of the church, the central village street bifurcates briefly to run either side of an oval area which appears to be a former green or open space within the village, before joining up again as the street continues southwest through the settlement and eventually on to Nowe Sławno. At the opposite end of Sławsko, the central street forks, with one route running northeast towards the next Wieprza valley village of Staniewice and the other running east across the river and up into the forested hills.

The standard CARE methods were used, although, because most of the participants were children aged between four and eight, the drawings were mostly made by the research team. In some cases, the excavations stopped before reaching the natural soil because of modern rubble which caused difficulties for the participants, or because of the safety issues, or when the volunteers discovered an archaeological structure.

Thirteen test pits in five cadastral parcels (Fig. 11) were excavated during the field research in Sławsko as part of the CARE project between 4th and 9th August

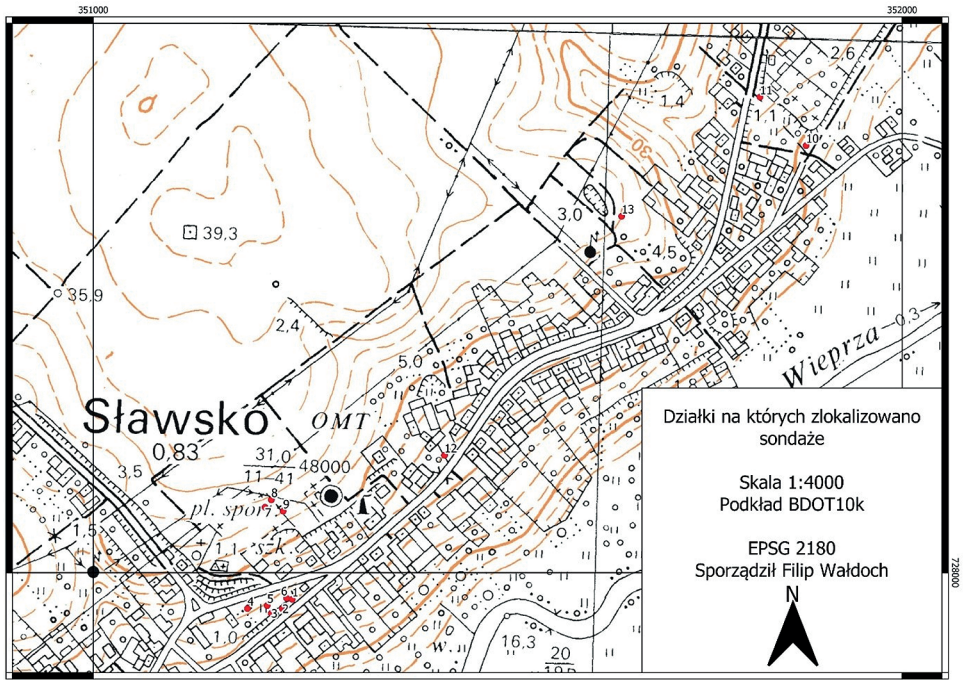

Figure 11 Map of Sławsko showing areas where test pit excavations were carried out (F. Wałdoch).

2020. Test pits 1 to 6 were sited close together in the area south of the church, in the oval area defined by the two stretches of the bifurcated central street. Test pit 1 produced four sherds of pottery dated to between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries along with five more recent sherds dating to 1800–1945, all from contexts 1–4 of the nine excavated. Nine contexts were also excavated in test pit 2, but here pottery was found all the way down to context 9. Thirteen sherds of pottery included one of prehistoric date from context 7, which can be related to the Bronze Age/Early Iron Age societies that occupied the territory of contemporary Sławsko. Four sherds dated to 1300–1800 were also found, with the rest of the assemblage dating to 1800–1945. It is worth noting that the prehistoric pottery was found in context 7 along with much more recent finds, indicating that this area has been heavily disturbed by various works that have taken place in the village during recent years.

In test pit 3, two contexts were excavated before reaching a layer consisting of stones, which appeared likely to have been part of the foundations of a house associated with a farm. It was inferred that the structure might be of prehistoric or medieval date and for that reason it was left intact with no further excavation undertaken. One sherd of pottery was found in context 2 dated to 1300–1600 which, combined with the absence of recent finds from this context, gives some support to the inference that the stone layer was indeed of prehistoric or medieval date. In test pit 4, seven contexts produced a total of eleven pottery sherds, two of prehistoric date, two dating to 1300–1600, five to 1300–1800 and two to 1800–1945. As in other pits in this area, the stratigraphy appeared to be heavily disturbed, with four sherds found in context 1 including two of Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date, one medieval (1300–1600) and one modern. However, contexts 4-7 produced no modern pottery but did yield a single sherd dating to 1300–1800, hinting at the possible survival of less disturbed stratigraphy at greater depth. In test pit 5, two contexts were excavated and produced just three fragments of pottery, all from context 1 and only one predating 1800. Context 2 in test pit 5 consisted entirely of pebbles and it was decided not to continue the excavation beyond this depth. Test pit 6 produced just a single sherd of pottery, dating to 1800–1945.

Overall, while test pits 1–6 in this central area of the village did not produce large amounts of pottery, there is enough to infer habitation nearby in the period between 1300 and 1800, while the three sherds of prehistoric pottery, generally a less common find than later pottery, hint at activity of this date in the Bronze Age or Early Iron Age.

Test pits 7–9 were sited less than 100 m northeast of the church, adjacent to a former sports field. In total, nine contexts were excavated in the three pits (three in pit 7, four in pit 8 and two in pit 9). In spite of the proximity of the church, no pottery was found in any of these pits. This may be due to the terrain having been heavily damaged during construction of a new school two decades ago in the village, or may indicate that the back line of the former settlement did not extend this far back from the street.

Test pit 12 was sited on the north side of the central street about 300 m northeast of the church. Twelve contexts were excavated, producing a total of 23 pottery sherds. The stratigraphy, as in many of the other pits, was heavily disturbed in upper levels. A total of seven sherds dating to the Bronze Age/Early Iron Age hints strongly at prehistoric activity in this area, and as three of these sherds were found in context 12 where there was no recent material, this may indicate undisturbed prehistoric deposits surviving at this depth in the area. Four sherds dating to 1300–1800 were found scattered through contexts 4–10, indicating habitation nearby in the medieval or early modern period, and possibly some undisturbed deposits of this date as no modern (post-1800) pottery was found lower than context 4.

Test pit 13 was sited in the north of the village, more than 200 m back from the central street at the point where it forked. At the bottom of context 1, a foundation of clay bricks was discovered which, according to local residents, is the remains of a mid-nineteenth-century windmill that functioned until the 1950s. Excavation ceased at this point, with no artefacts having been found in the excavated context.

Test pits 10 and 11 were sited about 70 m apart on either side of a playground in the north of the present settlement, between the two roads running east from the fork in the central street. Two contexts were excavated in test pit 10 and five in test pit 11. Neither test pit produced any pottery, although fragments of stone and brick were documented in test pit 10, which might be the remains of a house or a farm building for animals. It seems likely that this area lies beyond the limits of the medieval settlement.

Overall, most of the pits in Sławsko revealed a disturbed stratigraphy that seems to be related to construction projects including a new school and a playground for children or canalization in the village. This presented problems for the volunteers when digging through modern rubble, and was one of the reasons why prehistoric sherds were often found with material dating to the nineteenth, twentieth or even twenty-first century, and may explain why so much prehistoric pottery (ten sherds) was found. The observation that this was found both in the centre of the village near the church and some 300 m to the northeast in test pit 12 suggests that activity may have been quite extensive in this area at that time. Only test pits 3 and 4 produced pottery of certain medieval date (1300–1600); both of these pits were located on the oval area between the bifurcated central street near the church, possibly the former site of an open space or village green. It seems plausible that this area may have been inhabited in the medieval period. Pottery of possible medieval or early modern date (1300–1800) was found in all pits in this area, and also in test pit 12, 300 m along the central street. It is tentatively suggested, therefore, that the medieval settlement may have originated as a nucleus near the church and then developed by extending along a central street running northeast up the valley in the later medieval or early modern period. Testing this hypothesis would require the excavation of additional test pits, which could also reveal the size of the early core around the church, how far the later medieval settlement extended to the northeast, and at what date the linear settlement southwest of the church came into existence. Additional pits might also produce more prehistoric pottery to help reconstruct the extent and perhaps character of this much earlier activity.

United Kingdom (C.L.)

At the end of 2019, enthusiasm for further test pit excavation in Old Dalby was high, but no community participative fieldwork at all was possible in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was however possible to carry out a geophysical survey of the Hospitaller preceptory adjacent to the deserted village earthworks on the southeast of the present settlement near Old Dalby Hall. This indicated that substantial remains of the preceptory buildings are likely to survive, and helped to sustain interest in the archaeology of the village. At present, it is unclear when test pit excavation might recommence.

Overall conclusions

A total of 51 test pits were excavated in four villages for the CARE project in 2020: 38 in the Czech Republic and thirteen in Poland. This brings the total over the two years to 112 test pits, with ten villages involved to date (Fig. 12). Progress was drastically slowed in 2020 by the pandemic, but it is apparent that the fieldwork is already fulfilling many of the project aims. In relation to medieval settlement studies, the newly introduced technique of test pit excavation within currently occupied rural settlements has proved capable of throwing new light on their development. It has shown that greater amounts of useful archaeological evidence survive than has previously been suspected, revealing previously unknown prehistoric and (occasionally) Roman evidence, as well as medieval, early modern and modern finds and features.

The test pitting technique is also demonstrating its ability to advance knowledge of the medieval and early modern development of currently inhabited settlements in places where it has not previously been used in this way. In the Czech Republic, at Myslinka the pre-eighteenth-century settlement has been categorically shown not to underlie the present village, while at Vanovice today's nucleated village has been shown to replace an early medieval dispersed settlement consisting of several small hamlets. In the Netherlands, in Gemonde, Liempde and Woensel, the origins of several parts of the settlements – including dispersed elements – have been pushed back by several centuries (possibly as far back as the Merovingian period in the case of Woensel), but it has also been suggested that some settlement around churches is of relatively recent date. In Poland, test pit excavation in Chycina showed the village green to have been densely inhabited before the earliest cartographic evidence which showed it to be unoccupied, while at Sławsko hints have been found for the earliest medieval core of the settlement near the church. Some interesting themes are emerging which transcend today's national borders, of which the most notable seems to be the use of village greens, which in both the Czech Republic and Poland appear to throw up surprises by producing some of the earliest medieval pottery from areas previously presumed to have been open space.

Given the extraordinary difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when people in all CARE project countries spent much of the year under lockdown or with permitted activity severely restricted, the excavation of 51 pits in four villages is a remarkable achievement. Nonetheless, it has been less than we hoped for from the second year of the CARE project, which was expected to be the main fieldwork year, and the project was not able in 2020 to build on the strong momentum generated by the success of fieldwork in 2019. In several villages, too few test pits have yet been excavated to make any meaningful observations. However, the potential of the test pitting technique for rural settlement studies, rarely used in inhabited settlements beyond the UK, does seem to be evident, and

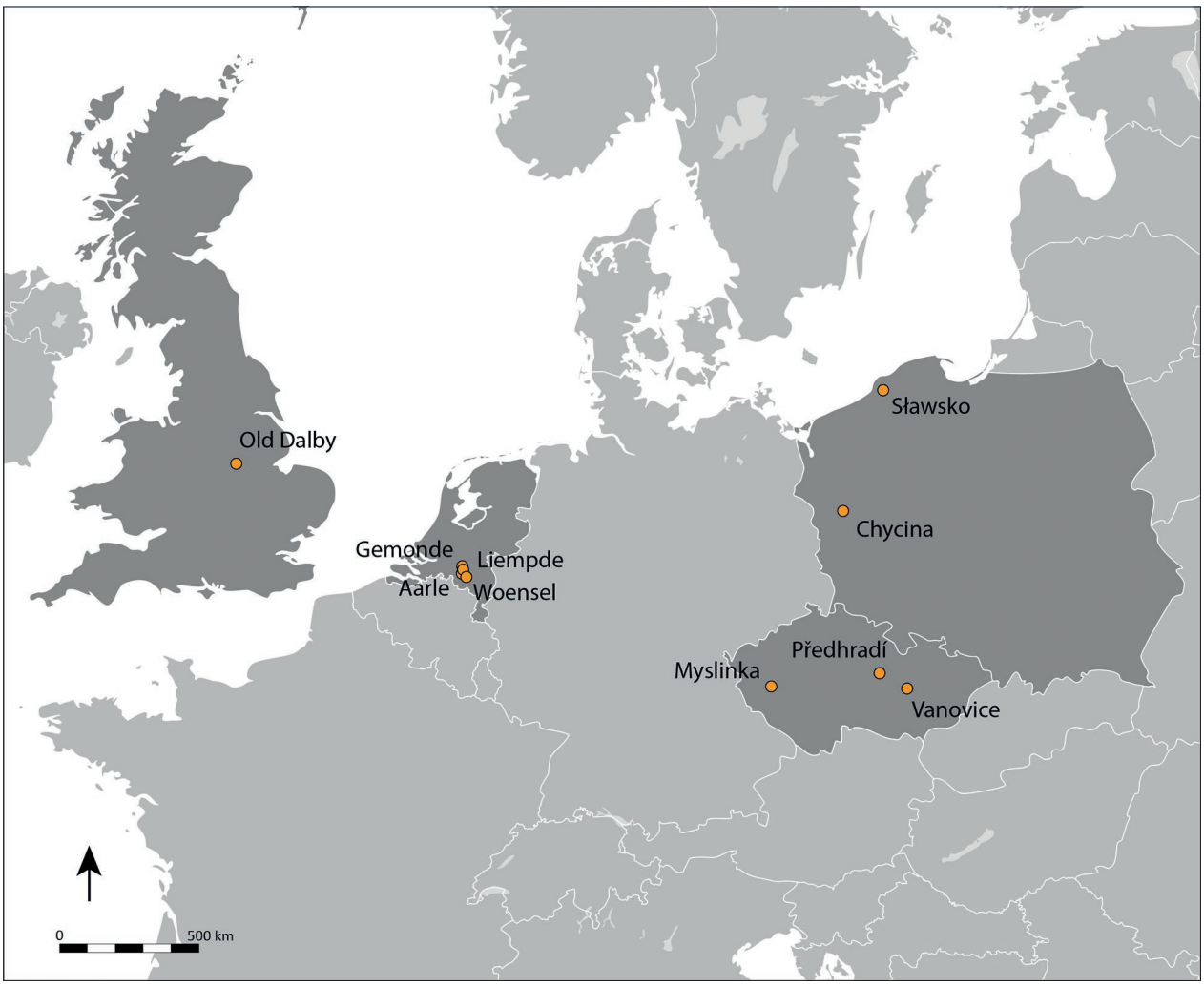

Figure 12 Map of northern Europe showing the villages where test pit excavation took place as part of the CARE project in 2019 and 2020 (J. Verspay).

in addition to the archaeological aims, the project has also generated useful evidence for the social impact of participation by members of the public in archaeological excavations within their local communities (Lewis *et al*. 2021).

The CARE project has been extended by a year to make up for lost time in 2021 and is now scheduled to run until February 2023. The results of fieldwork in 2021 will be reported in the next issue of *Medieval Settlement Research*.

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