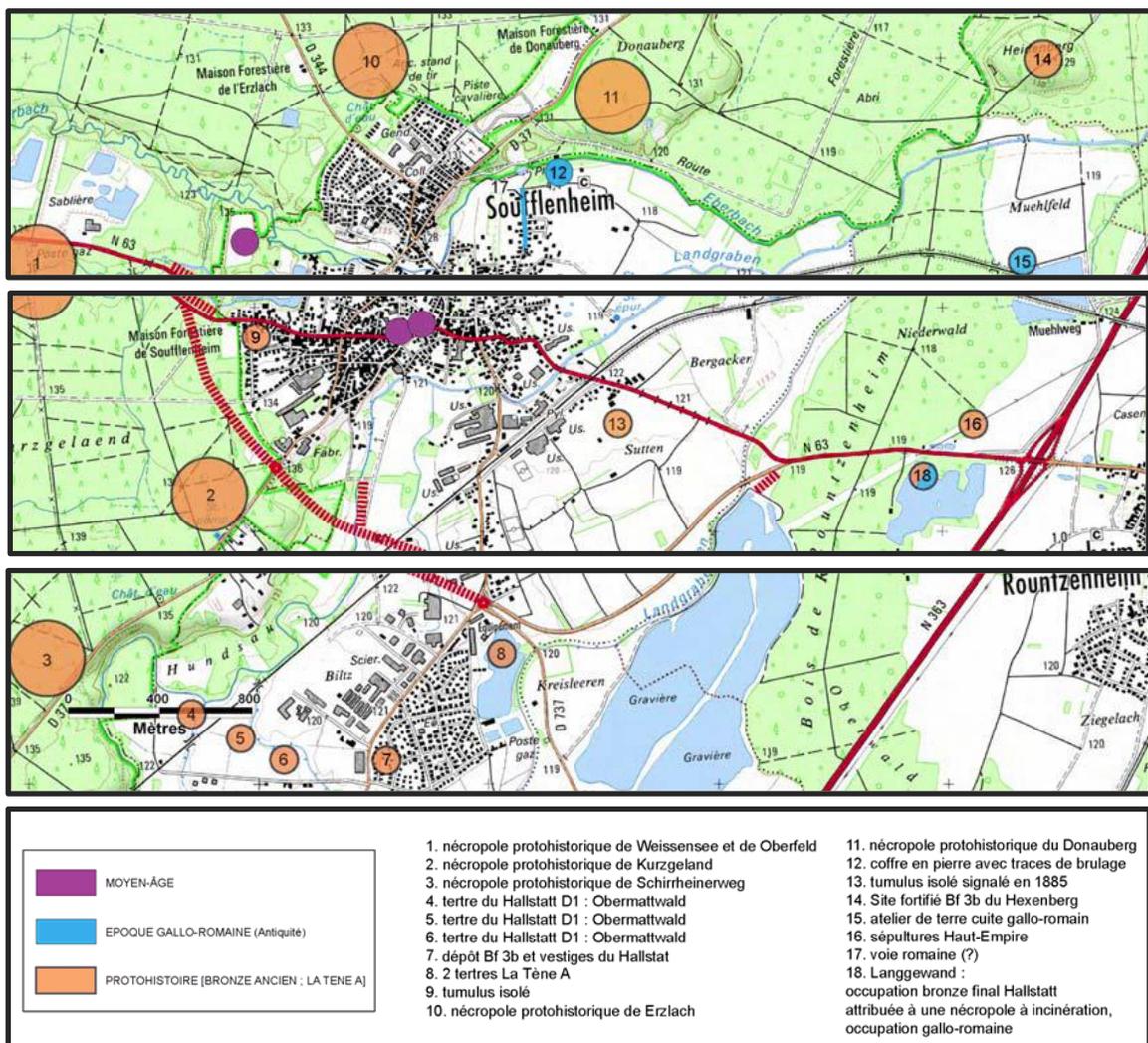


## SOUFFLENHEIM EXCAVATIONS IN THE BANN

Robert Wideen : 2020

Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History  
[www.soufflenheimgenealogy.com](http://www.soufflenheimgenealogy.com)

Nine large archaeological projects have been conducted in the bann of Soufflenheim from 1989 to 2017: two in the village, five on a golf course in the Obermattwald, one in a Roedern housing subdivision near the golf course, and one through the forest, its terrace, and agricultural land on the alluvial plain south of the village.



The Soufflenheim archaeological environment in 2008. The red tracks are the site of an archaeological project that year.

Source: *Development of the RD-1063 Bypass of Soufflenheim Diagnostic Report*, Thierry Logel.

## Reports

Soufflenheim surveys and excavations are described in the following reports:

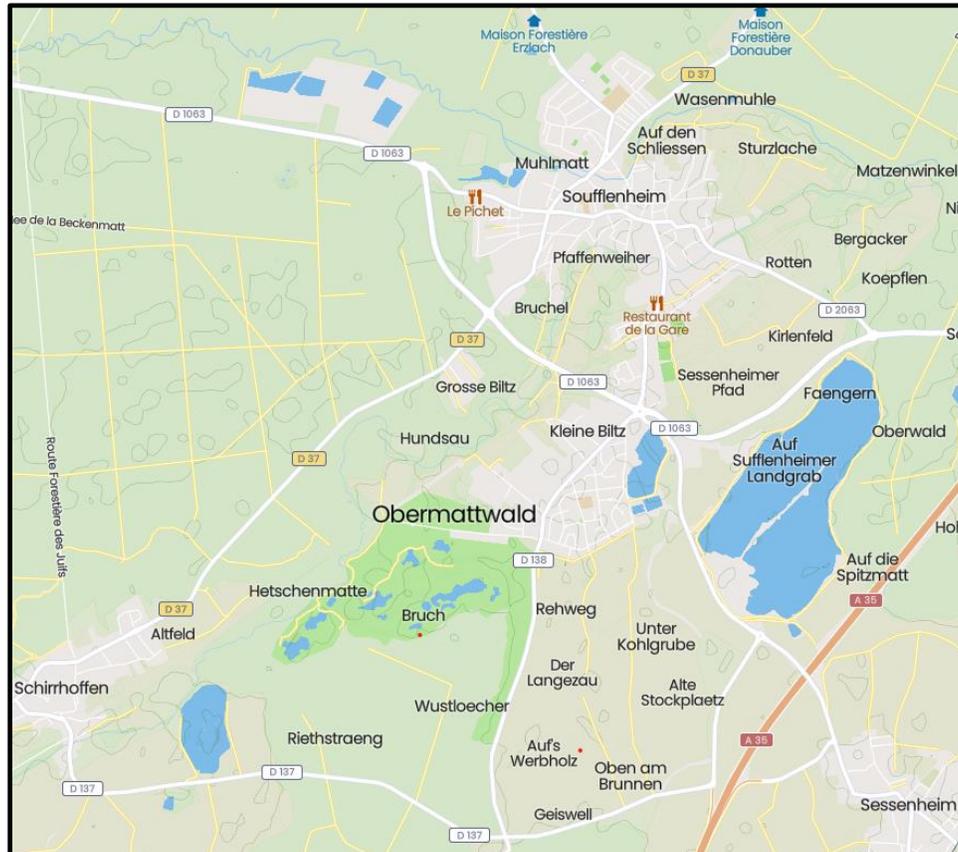
- *Prospection archéologique sur le future terrain de golf de Soufflenheim*, 24 pages, Illustrated. 17 pl. Rapport de prospection: Strasbourg: Direction des Antiquités historiques et préhistoriques d'Alsace: 1989. Author: Klingenfus (P.), Gitta (C.)
- *Soufflenheim Fairway Village*, 29 pages, Illustrated. Rapport de fouille d'évaluation: Strasbourg: AFAN, SRA Alsace: 1999. Author: Koch (J.)
- *Soufflenheim, Lotissement Roedern*, 26 pages, Illustrated. Rapport d'évaluation archéologique: Strasbourg: SRA Alsace, AFAN, Antenne Grand Est, 1999. Author: Jeudy (F.), Schneikert (F.)
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- *Soufflenheim, Lotissement du Golf*, 14 pages, Illustrated. Rapport d'évaluation archéologique, INRAP Grand-Est Sud, SRA Alsace, 2005. Author: Lefranc (P.)
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- *Soufflenheim, Cimetière Oelberg*, 67 pages, Illustrated. Rapport de diagnostic. Pôle d'Archéologie Interdépartemental Rhénan, 2 allée Thomas Edison, Selestat, France. 2009. Author: Werlé.(M.)
- *Soufflenheim, Lotissement du Golf, lieu-dit Obermattwald*, 47 pages, Illustrated. Rapport de diagnostic preventif. Tumulus de l'age du Bronze, Archeologie Alsace, 11 Rue Jean-François Champollion, 67600 Sélestat, 2017, Author: Chosson (M.)

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## FAIRWAY VILLAGE EXCAVATION EVALUATION 1999

In 1999 archeologists excavated a site in Soufflenheim's Obermattwald, unearthing a bracelet from Hallstatt D1 (600-550 BC) and housing and craft structures from the Final Bronze Age and Hallstatt D (1200-450 BC). From the *Fairway Village Excavation Evaluation Report* by Jacky Koch.



Location of the archaeological site in the Obermattwald.

### Archaeological Project

“The evaluation of the future Fairway Village subdivision, located in the golf course of Soufflenheim, discovered the remains of archaeological sites at a shallow depth near a tumulus [mound of earth placed over a prehistoric tomb] indicated by earlier surveys in 1988-89. Our survey discovered that the tumulus, known for some time, is not the only one, and that several other funeral structures are also in the area. A bracelet with bronze pads from the Hallstatt C/D1 period was found in a pit east of the mound.

To the west of the sepulchral area, traces of pits linked to a habitat and/or a craft activity could be seen. All the housing and craft structures could be located during a period begun in the Final Bronze and completed at Hallstatt D, affirmed by the dating of the burial by the bronze bracelet during Hallstatt D1.



Overview of the site from the northeast. The tumulus [mound] is located behind the banks of the foreground.

"The land of the "Fairway Village" subdivision is located in the golf course located to the south-east of the town of Soufflenheim. This site is part of the *Obermattwald*, a forest located to the east of the former railway line between Haguenau and the Rhine and known to contain various tomb structures identified over the past hundred years. This is an area of the *ried* characterized by the Rhine alluvial substrate in which many small streams have dug their beds. The area concerned by the real estate project is flat and the only relief it encompasses, in its eastern part, is made up of a tumulus 0.70 m high.

The golf course site (Figure 2) was studied during its construction in 1989. The mounds in the area were mapped on this occasion and survey trenches dug at the location of the catering and accommodation buildings. The archaeological results of these surveys were negative. These facilities are located to the west of the fallow plot surveyed during our operation and which forms the last unbuilt area of this leisure center. The hydrogeology of the site is marked by the existence of the ditch to the east connected to a network of drains that flow into the *Eisenbaechel* to the west.

A series of forty-one survey trenches in a staggered arrangement were excavated on all the housing lots by means of an excavator equipped with a cleaning bucket. Each trench covered a length of 10 m and a width of 2 m. The average spacing between the trenches is 8 m. The average depth of the trenches is 0.70 to 0.80 m. In the eastern part, the trenches were dug to a maximum depth of 1.30 m. All these trenches were oriented from east to west and dug in the accessible areas of the wasteland.

The structures were identified by stripping in successive passes through the cleaning bucket. The archaeological elements observed were simply cleaned on the surface and their marking carried out by the services of a competent surveyor.





Trench 1: The outlines of a rectangular pit (2.75 m L x 1.36 m W). A bronze bracelet was found, indicating a burial.



Trench 33. Structure with reddening soil visible, filled with elements of an activity related to the use of fire.

## Historiographical

“The golf site is, as we have already mentioned, understood in the range of burial mounds of the *Obermattwald*. This tumor group is only known in recent times as it was not included in the work of SCHAEFFER who published, in 1930, the results of the excavations carried out by Xavier NESSEL at the beginning of our century. The nearby areas listed by the latter are located to the south-west of the town, in the Haguenau forest, especially the area referred to as *Kurzgeland* and in Schirrhein Forest. A tumular group [burial mounds] located on the ban de Soufflenheim was partially excavated at the beginning of our century at a place called *7 Hüvel* (NAUE, 1905: 202-203). These ancient works were used as a database for many recent works, intended for an analysis of the social organization of Tumular groups in the Haguenau forest (KOENIG, LAMBERT, PININGRE, PLOUIN, 1990 and LEGENDRE, KOENIG, 1996) and their political connection with the "princely" habitat of *Hexenberg* in Leutenheim. The eastern limit of the forest sites of Haguenau seems to have been the Rhine terrace (SCHNITZLER, 1994: 58).

The group located on the outskirts of the railway line was roughed up during of the construction of this work and a mound was crossed by the construction of gas pipeline during the seventies. It was not until the recent work of surveys (SIGRIST-BALDINGER, 1987) then inventory (KLINGENFUSGITTA, 1989) linked to the project to install a 135 ha golf course so that these funeral structures are listed and partially identified. The document produced at the occasion of the preliminary study to this golf course contains, among other things, a detailed survey of the tumulus (n ° III) located in the right-of-way of the subdivision planned in 1999. Shards of ceramics attributed to the Bronze and Iron Ages were discovered during a survey on the tumulus surface.

The density of a protohistoric occupation in this sector, located in the south-west of the town, and attested by the presence of the eastern tumuli corroborated by the discovery, in surveying, of a habitat area 200 m to the west of the area we surveyed. The two authors of the report were able to question, without a conclusive answer, the contemporaneity between necropolis and habitat.” (Koch, 1999, p. 8)

## Artifacts

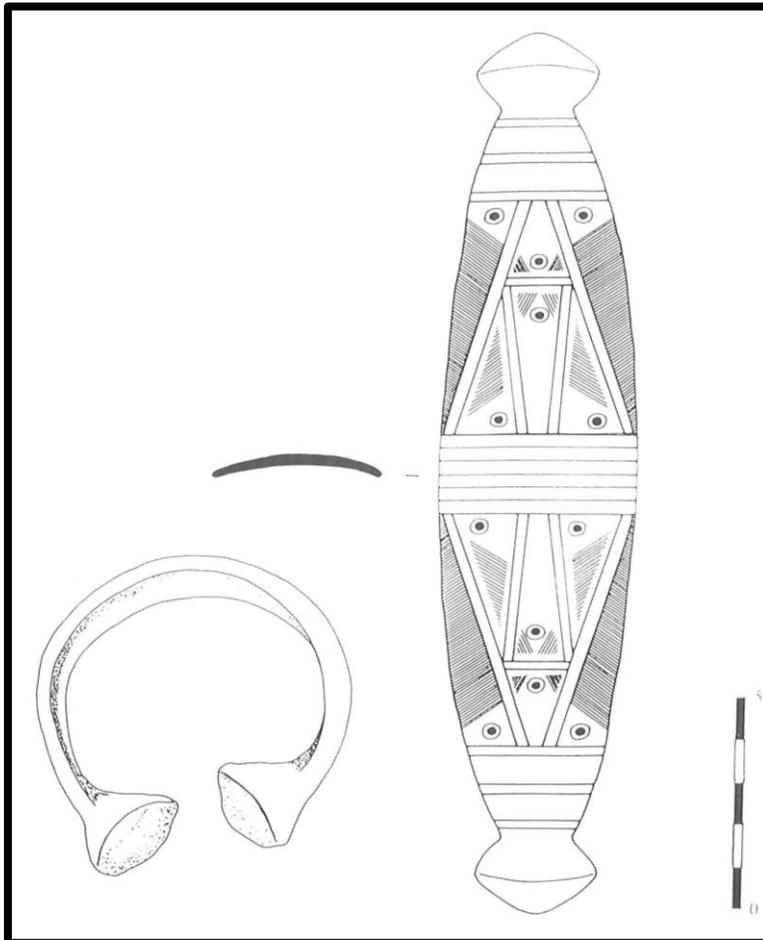
“The ceramic fragments found are dated between the Late Bronze Age 3 and Hallstatt D.

The bronze biconical pad bracelet was taken from the sepulchral grave in Trench 1. When it was discovered, the two terminal buffers joined together. The outer part of the bracelet shows traces of a textile fine mesh fossilized by corrosion of the part. The state of our observations does not allow not to specify whether they are the relics of a piece of cloth used to bind the hands of the deceased or a part of clothing that was in contact with the bracelet. The decor of this piece is made up of patterns whose base is geometric. Two groups of transverse bands finish the bracelet at the ends. The top of the piece is decorated with six perpendicular stripes. The spaces between the end bands and the top bands are divided into registers triangular with incisions starting from the outside and converging towards the buffers. The area outside these triangles has been decorated with streaks close together in "edge of fish". The interior of the triangular registers has been decorated with straight lines and supplemented by eye circles and streaks.

The bracelet is a fairly typical object of the valley of the Upper Rhine and the copy we found belongs to a category, although this type of object exists even in the south of Alsace and in the Baden. A distinction can be made between the thicker Bas-Rhin specimens with the Haut-Rhin specimens. The model found in Soufflenheim may be dated to the end Hallstatt C or even the beginning of Hallstatt D1.” (Koch, 1999, pp. 23-24)



Bronze biconical pad bracelet.



Trench 1: The bracelet with biconical pads. KOHL AF YEAR 1999

## Conclusion

The evaluation of the future subdivision yielded results interesting topographically and archeologically. Most of the remains were buried in a shallow depth of the remains. Indeed, the anthropized levels are located between the current level (humus) and a maximum of 0.50 m deep. The structures observed are scattered over the entire subdivision project (ten positive trenches out of forty-one).

The scientific interest of the plots surveyed is great: on this project, funeral arrangements linked to the mounds already known and integrated into the project development are geographically adjacent to structures linked to a habitat or a craft activity.

The site contained several Hallstatt C-D1 mounds. The surveys show that the mounds, which have been known about for some time, are not alone and that several other funerary structures are in the area. A survey of Trench 1 to the northeast of the mound showed evidence of the existence of at least one burial pit and a probably two, located 7.50 m from a circular ditch. This development type could be excavated on several Alsatian sites, but not in recent excavations of important necropolises from the Haguenau forest. The dating was determined by the presence of a bronze bracelet, which was in context with the outline of the burial.

A wide variety of housing or craft structures testify to a human activity throughout the area west of the tumulus. A first group was discovered northwest of the mound, with probable vestiges of a craft activity. A higher density of pits was observed in the southern half from the central part of the surveyed site. Particular attention should be paid to pit #14, whose walls are reddened. The presence of charcoal in the backfill refers to a intense fire-related activity.

The importance of this site lies first of all in the discovery of a new funerary structure juxtaposed with the already known mounds, but also in the juxtaposition of funerary structures with residential structures. This discovery will make it possible to excavate with current means one of the rare funeral structures documented during recent excavations in the forest of Haguenau. Indeed, all the housing and craft structures could be located during a period begun in the Final Bronze and completed at Hallstatt D. The certainty is more affirmed as to the dating of the burial by the bronze bracelet during the Hallstatt D1. Are we in the presence of a site where the funeral has succeeded habitat?" (Jacky Koch, 1999, pp. 23-27)

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## References

Koch, Jacky *Soufflenheim Fairway Village, Rapport de fouille d'évaluation*, 29 pages, Illustrated, Strasbourg AFAN, SRA Alsace, 1999

## ROEDERN SUBDIVISION ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT 1999

In 1999, in the Roedern area of Soufflenheim near the border with Sessenheim, archaeologists unearthed a hatchet and two bracelets from the Late Bronze Age and two bronze rings. Excerpts from the *Roedern Subdivision Archaeological Assessment Report* by Francoise Jeudy and Francoise Schneikert.



Soufflenheim, Roedern subdivision. General view of the survey. Photo F. Schneikert, Afan, 1999

### The Archaeological Project

“The expansion of the Roedern housing tract in the town of Soufflenheim led to an archaeological assessment operation carried out in the town of Soufflenheim prior to the creation of a subdivision and covered a plot of 3.4 ha.

Five bronze objects and ten excavated structures have been unearthed.

The bronze objects consist of an ax with fins and grip ring, two bracelets with decorations ribbed in relief, and two large oval rings with striated decorations. The ax and bracelets are dated Bronze final IIIb because they have typical elements. The dating of the two large rings are not known.

The movables collected in the various excavated structures shows that they are not associated with the ax, bracelets and rings. These structures were attributed to the Hallstatt period and are certainly related to a habitat partially destroyed by erosion.

The archaeological operation carried out in the town of Soufflenheim is characterized by the discovery of the five bronze objects and especially by the presence of a type of ring unknown for the moment.” (Jeudy and Schneikert, 1999, p. 7)



Soufflenheim, Roedern subdivision. A Bronze axe with fins and gripping rings, two bracelets with ribbed decoration and two large oval rings decorated with transverse striations. Photo F. Schneikert, Afan, 1999

### Archaeological Context (Figure 3)

In the town of Soufflenheim, archaeological information has been identified on the Alsace Archaeological Map:

Near the project, within a radius of 700 m, a tumor necropolis is reported at the locality “Obermattwald” (3AH) and a tumulus (1AH) at the northern end of the housing estate.

Roman times is represented by abundant finds of ceramics, tiles and iron slag at the locality “Eisenbaechel” (10AH), as well as by a fibula (7AH).

An ancient sighting reports, to the north of the town, a funeral pyre in a fitted pit (5AH) which, according to the author, would be an ancient structure.

A Carolingian occupation is attested twice: several layers belonging to this period were observed Place de l’Église (4AH), and a Carolingian settlement area is located near the forest house, to the south of the town (2AH).

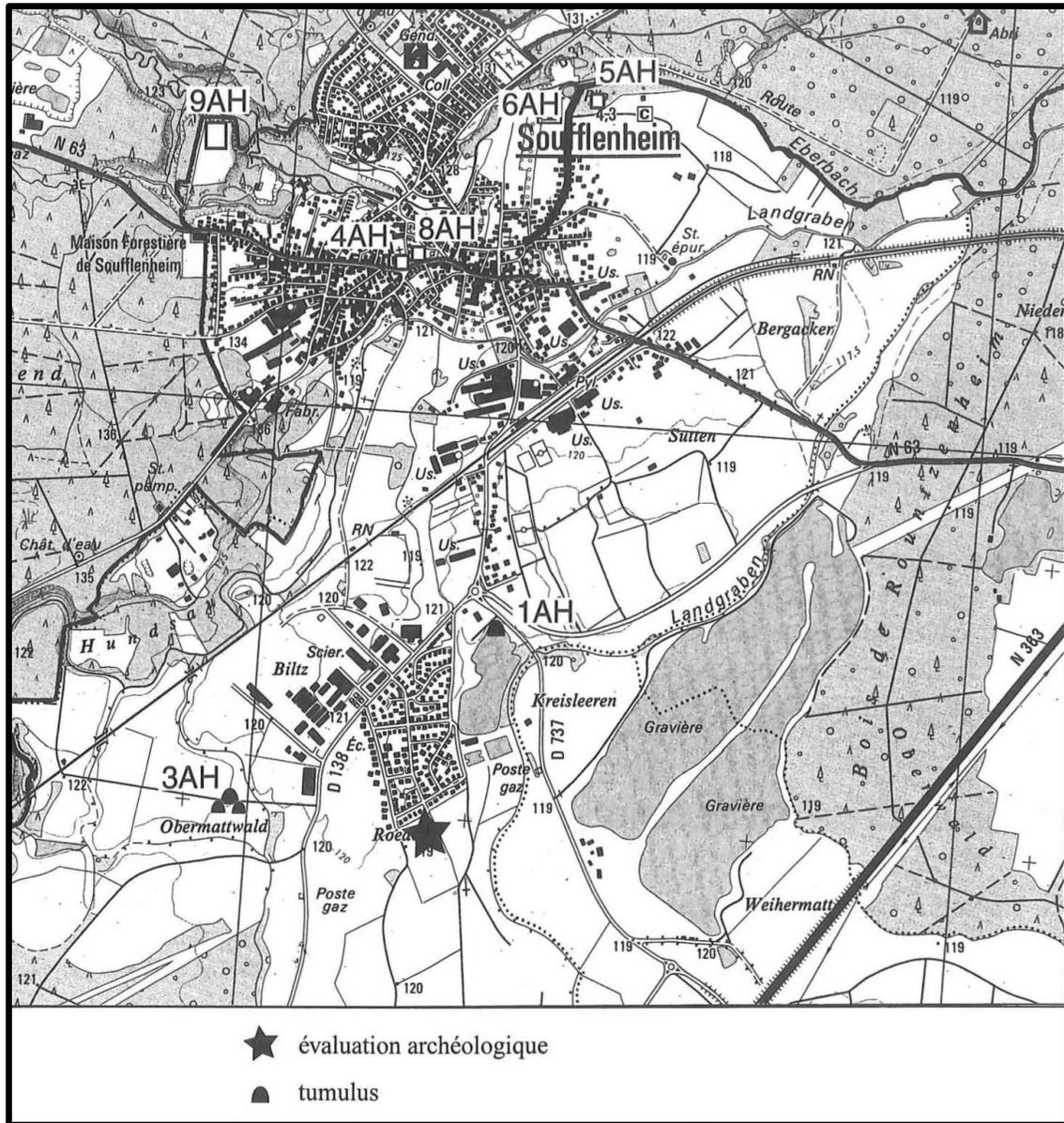


Fig. 3. Soufflenheim, Roedern subdivision. Alsace Archaeological Map, Strasbourg SRA.

- 1 AH: tumulus having yielded a protohistoric oenochoe [wine jug]
- 2 AH: Carolingian settlement area in the south-east of the town, ground prospecting (not on the map)
- 3 AH: set of tumulus [burial mounds]
- 4 AH: Carolingian period layers
- 5 AH: funeral pyre in a converted pit, ancient times?
- 6 AH: ancient way crossing the village
- 7 AH: fibula from the Roman period (not located)
- 8 AH: old church and its enclosed cemetery
- 9 AH: castle
- 10 AH: abundant find of ceramic, tegulae and iron slag, High Empire? South of the village? (not local?)”

## The Operation

The extension of the Roedern subdivision is located south of the village of Soufflenheim and south of the current housing development east of D138. The land is just in front of the access to the golf course where a tumulus belonging to the tumular necropolis 3AH is being studied. The land is relatively flat.

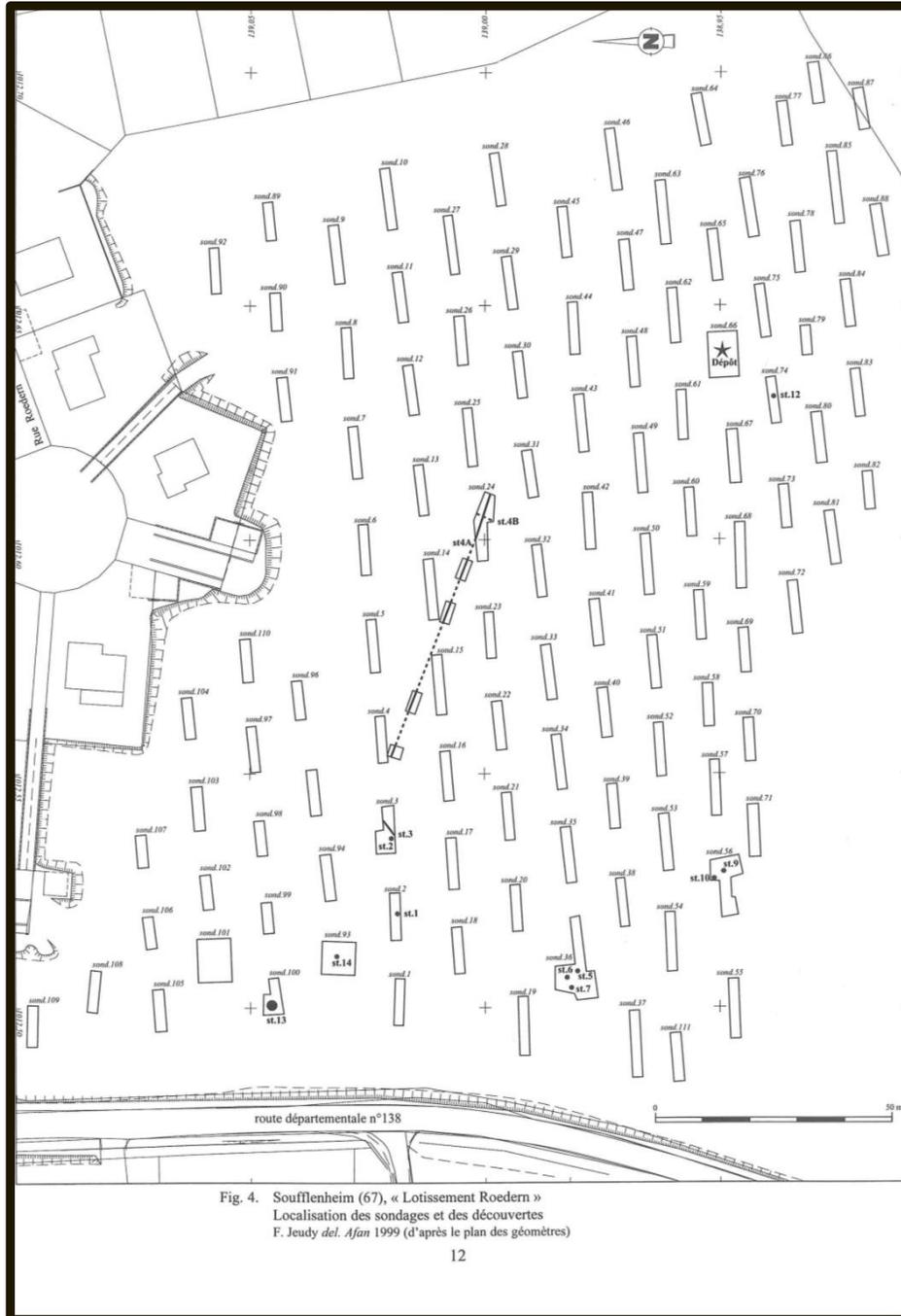


Fig.4 Soufflenheim, Roedern Subdivision. Location of the trenches and discoveries. (F. Jedy, 1999)

The surveys were carried out with a backhoe with a smooth bucket with a width of 2 m by successive flat passes, with a spacing of 10 m between each boring (fig. 4). The space between lines is generally 10 m. The average length of the boreholes is around 10 m with a depth varying with the nature of the terrain. We opened around 6.5% of the surface to be probed.” (Jeudy and Schneikert, 1999, pp. 9-12)

## Results

“The diagnostic operation revealed a deposit of bronze objects, excavated structures such as pits or post holes, and ditches. Five bronze objects were discovered in hole 66 (fig. 3 and 4). They were caught by the bucket of the excavator. No trace of digging was found. The condition of these objects is good, but were scratched by the excavator bucket.

The grasping ring and finned ax is a common late Bronze IIIb type and is found frequently in the Middle Rhine, Saar and Lorraine deposits. The two bracelets are related to the Hombourg type by the decoration of transverse ribs in relief. They are numerous in the deposits in the regions mentioned above. Two sites in the Bas-Rhin have delivered this type of bracelet. The two large oval rings appear to be a more original type, no comparison has been found.” (Jeudy and Schneikert with Jean-François Piningre, 1999, p. 16)

## Conclusion

“This archaeological diagnostic operation led to the discovery of a deposit of 5 objects in bronze attributed to Final Bronze IIIb, of 10 excavated structures linked to an eroded habitat dated Hallstatt and two undated ditches. The Late Bronze IIIb deposit is interesting because it contains a totally unknown type of ring for now. Further bibliographical research is therefore necessary in order to confirm if we are in the presence of an original discovery. No other structure or trace occupation of this period was uncovered.

Despite occasional surveys having produced Hallstattian structures, no further discovery was made. The remains are poor in movables and diffuse, they are undoubtedly linked to a partially eroded occupation. The ditches did not yield any movables that would have allowed dating, but they are probably modern and have contributed to the remediation of the land.” (Jeudy and Schneikert, 1999, p. 21)

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## References

Jeudy, Françoise and Schneikert, Françoise *Soufflenheim, Lotissement Roedern, Rapport d'évaluation archéologique*, 26 pages, Illustrated. Strasbourg: Service régional de l'archéologie d'Alsace, AFAN, 1999

Piningre, Jean-François *Soufflenheim, Lotissement Roedern, Rapport d'évaluation archéologique*, 26 pages, Illustrated. Strasbourg: Service régional de l'archéologie d'Alsace, AFAN, 1999

## SURVEYING IN SOUFFLENHEIM AND ITS SURROUNDINGS 2001

In 2001 archaeologists surveyed the village of Soufflenheim and its surroundings (Figure 2). They were able to determine the original location of the village and earliest years inhabited. A second major survey was performed on the outskirts of the village to the southeast. Also studied were “Geiswell”, “Oben am Brunnen”, and “Hecklen” to the south, and “Haguenau Schirrheimerweg” to the southwest. Excerpts from Madeleine Châtelet’s report *Surveying Campaign in Soufflenheim and its Surroundings*.



Figure 2: Map of sites and surveyed areas as part of the operation. Sectors surveyed by Francois Sigrist the past twenty years delineated by dotted lines. Original settlement: Small black circle on the east side of the village. (Châtelet, 2001, p. 8)

## Earliest Settlements

The earliest settlement in Soufflenheim, from at least the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, was about 200 yards east of the present church, between the "rue de la Gare", the "rue des Charrons" and the "rue de Rountzenheim". Figures 3 and 4 show the two earliest settlements, the original core areas.

"The original location of the village is the small dark gray area to the east. It was separated from the second oldest core area, around the church, by a creek, now filled up.

### Figure 3: Light Colored Paste Ceramic (8th-10th Century)

- Light Gray: The studied area
- Medium Gray: Spreading area of light colored paste ceramic
- Dark Gray With Black Dots: Parcel of land with light colored paste ceramic

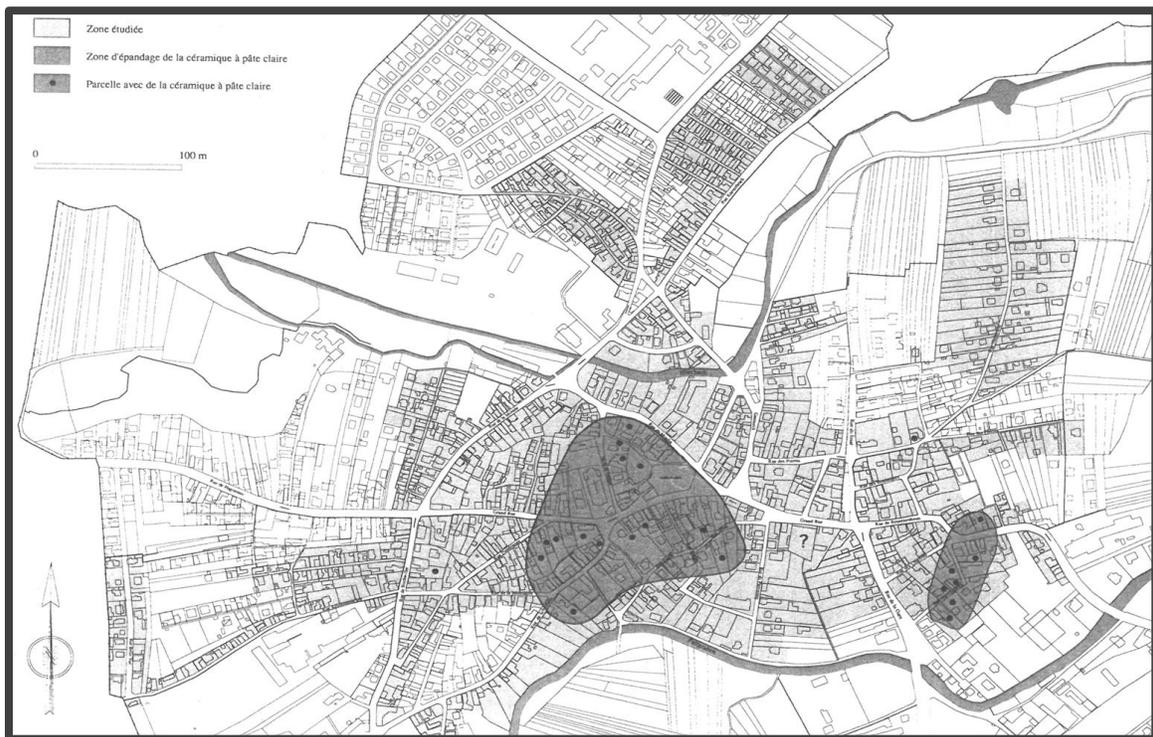


Figure 3: Disposition of the light colored ceramic paste in Soufflenheim. Original settlement: Small dark area. (Châtelet, 2001, p.12)

The prospecting covered the core of the ancient village and the main part of the outskirts (fig.3). In this area, a little less than half of the plots of land could be examined, the other plots could not be prospected most of them having no vegetable or other garden. The coherent spreading of the vestiges enables an historic interpretation.

The oldest vestiges found on the present site of the village can be dated back to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. They are light colored potteries whose technological characteristics (usually common "paste") and morphological

characteristics (spherical shapes, outstanding rims, frequently decorated with the help of a toothed wheel) permit to integrate them into the “Nord 4” phase of the regional chronology (Châtelet, 1997). There was no trace of ceramics which could be clearly attributed to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century (phase “Nord 2 & 3”). No traces of a Roman or an earlier occupation could be testified either. The spreading of the ceramics during large chronological phases showed a progressive expansion of the occupied space.

The first distinctive phase covers the Carolingian Age from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century (fig.3), represented by ceramics of light colored paste. For that period two cores of occupation could be isolated.

The first, in the East, revealed mainly materials from the 8<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century and is only slightly spread out. It is located below the terrace and limited by the “rue de la Gare”, the “rue des Charrons” and the “rue de Rountzenheim”. The movables are abundant and include, besides the ceramics, quite an important amount of scoria [iron slag].

#### Figure 4: Gray Ceramic (10<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century)

- Light Gray: The studied area.
- Medium Gray: Spreading area of gray ceramic.
- Dark Gray with Black Dots: Parcel of land with gray ceramic.
- Gray With White Dot: Kiln.

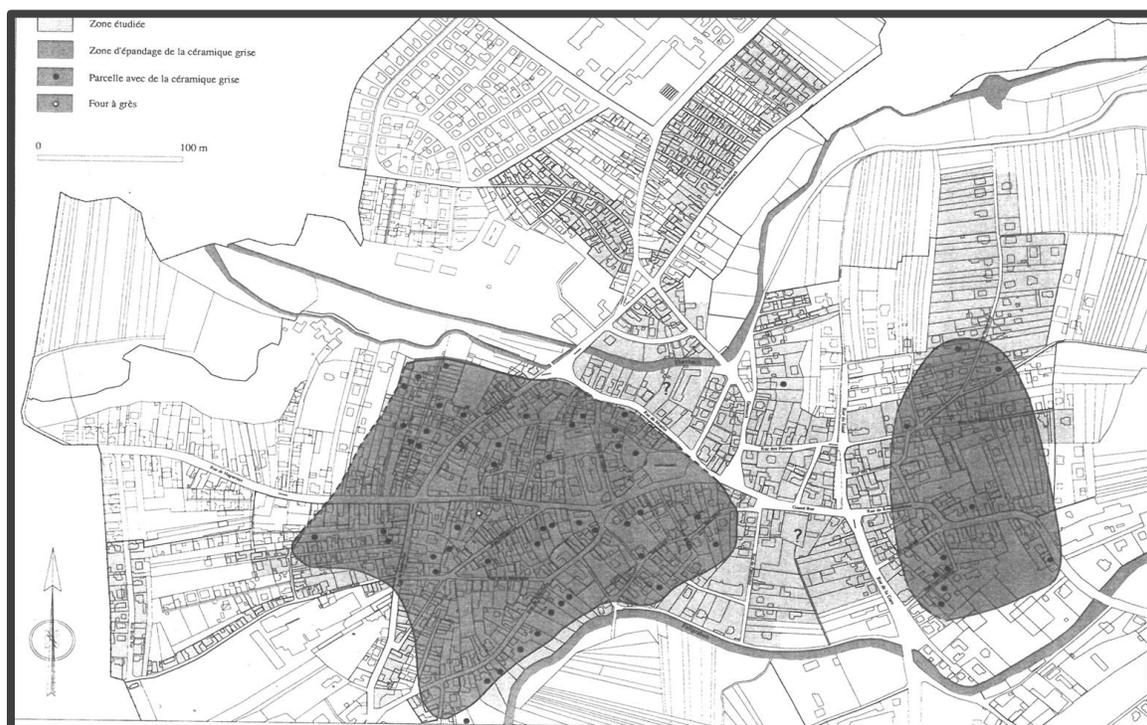


Figure 4: Disposition of the gray ceramic in Soufflenheim. Original settlement: Small dark gray area. (Châtelet, 2001, p.13)

The second core centered on the present church stretches along the edge of the terrace and partly on its side with remnants as far as its lower end. Four streets are concerned: the "Grand'Rue", the "rue de Schirrhein", the "Mont de l'Eglise" and the "rue Ziech". Most of the removed material dates from the 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Century, therefore slightly later than that of the first core. Nevertheless the joint presence of ceramics in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century confirms the contemporaneousness of the occupation of both areas.

The space between them could only be studied partly, as some of it having been filled up, and the other plots having no vegetable gardens. Nevertheless, no light colored paste ceramics were found in the prospected grounds. That space, previously occupied by a small river nowadays filled up (the "rue du Fossé and the plots of dwellings located more to the South between the "rue du Patronage" and the "rue de la Gare" being a trace of it), was most probably a dividing line between the two settlements.

According to the remnants that could be found, these settlements were mainly agricultural as were most of them in that period. The only specific but quite common activity, since its presence could be attested in numerous contemporaneous rural settlements, is metallurgy. No incontestable trace of any ceramic production at that time could be found.

The second phase of settlement from the 10<sup>th</sup> until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century could be proved by the grey potter's wheel shaped ceramics (fig.4). Taking up the two original cores, it is marked by the expansion of the occupied space and reaches – at least in its final phase - the boundaries of the ancient core of the present time village. A sharper chronological differentiation could not be carried out, because of the limited number of ceramics. Nevertheless it could be revealing as to the possible fluctuations that marked the occupation of the sites at that period.

The presence of potters in the village attested by texts of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century onwards (Nabholz-Kartaschoff, 1973 : 103) could be confirmed archeologically only at Number 47A in the "Grand'Rue" where a stoneware kiln was found during work (see below).

Other signs establishing the production of grey ceramics and light colored paste ceramics in Soufflenheim could not be found; no scraps discarded after firing could be identified amongst the few finds during the construction works and reported to us, nothing can be interpreted as being the remainders of a pottery activity. However it must be said that when the houses were built very few excavations were observed. Furthermore, the ceramics retained in the soil are very often greatly smashed into fragments which makes the identification of firing defects difficult; the same can be said for the Carolingian period.

So, if the prospecting enabled to establish the origin of the village and its primitive expansion, it was unable to provide any decisive elements concerning the ancientness of its pottery activity. Only a systematic supervision of the works will enable to localize possible kilns and adjoining structures.

At 47A Grand Rue a 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> Century kiln was found in 1980 when a new house was built. A neighbor, Bernard Meyer, stated that it was 3 meters long and made of earth and an assembling of posts and branches filled with firing scraps. These potteries were very homogeneous, formed solely of Hagenovian type of stoneware. According to Y. Henigfeld (2000b), they date from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, and were cups and tumblers, with most of them showing deformations. No notes or photographs of the structure have been made but the material has been partly preserved by Bernard Meyer (49 Grand'Rue). An inventory was made at the time by R. Schellmanns who also annotated them" (Châtelet, 2001, pp. 11-14).

## **Outskirts of Soufflenheim**

A second survey was conducted on the outskirts of Soufflenheim to the southeast, about 400 yards from the church and 100 yards south of the Fallgraben River. There were not enough artifacts in any location to indicate the presence of a site, so Soufflenheim could not have originated in the surveyed area.

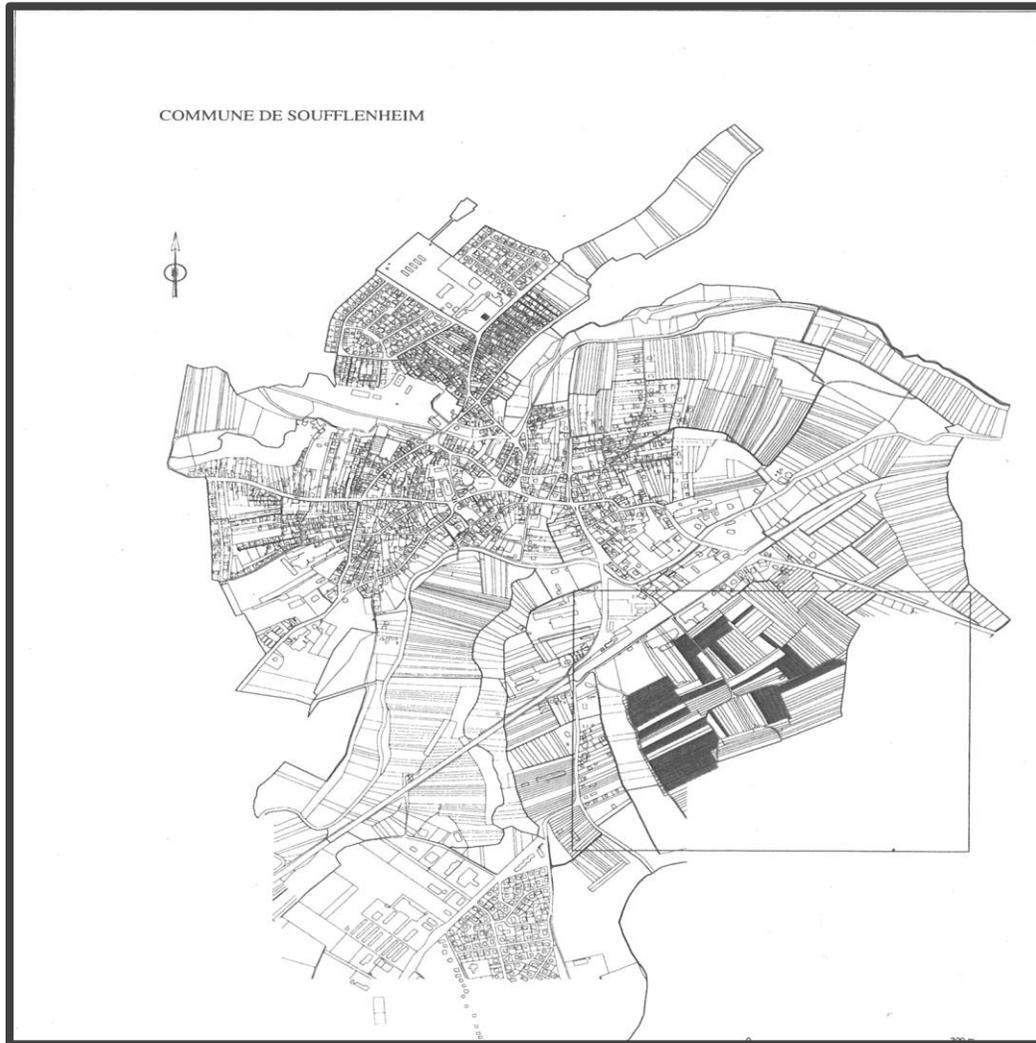


Figure 5: Plan of the town of Soufflenheim with the surveyed plots (gray). No figures for fields 15 to 17, situated further south, outside the mapped area (Châtelet, 2001, p.16).

"The second area was chosen because of the mention in this place of a burial mound on a major state map in 1885. The burial mound had not been located to date and it was also important to check whether a proto habitat in relation to the mound existed nearby. The surveyed area south of Soufflenheim concerned 17 fields numbered 1 to 17, divided between non-tilled plots in pasture or occupied by orchards (Fig 5). The artifacts found on these parcels were primarily light colored paste ceramic and turned gray ceramic. However, the density was very uneven, and too weak to suggest the presence of a site (Fig 6). Its dating ranges principally between the 8th century and the modern age. Only a few of the fragments have been attributed to the 7th century. In addition, two Gallo-Roman shards of a certain size and a few shards not turned, probably from the protohistoric era, were also discovered. These pieces

likely mark the presence, not far from the surveyed sector, of sites from these two eras. These settlements, however, have not been located. The burial mound, mentioned on the 1886 map, has not been found”.

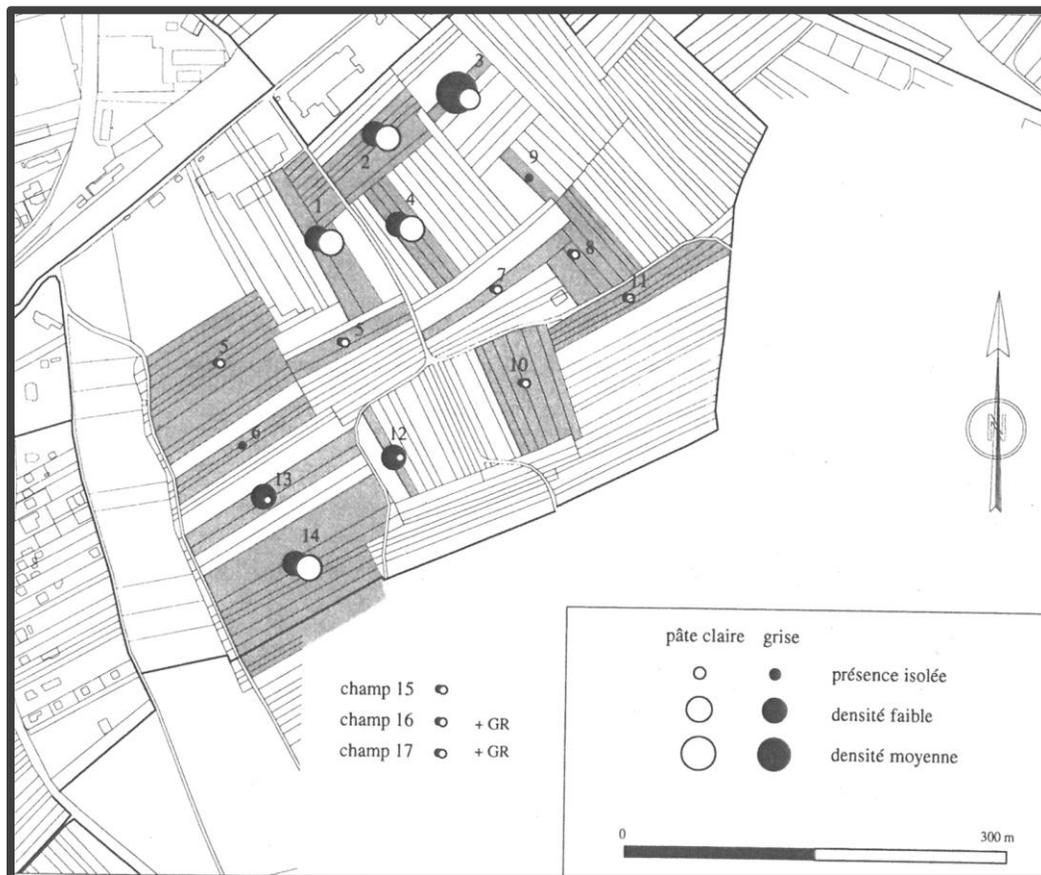


Figure 6: Distribution of light colored ceramic paste and gray ceramics on the surveyed plots in the location shown in Figure 5. (Châtelet, 2001, p. 17)

Of additional interest are the names of the 17 fields surveyed, which match the names of fields mentioned in inventories and contracts. Figure 5 shows the location of the fields. Figure 6 identifies each field with a number, which corresponds to a name listed in the report as follows:

- Field 1: Localities Benzenbuhl and Suttén
- Field 2: Place called Suttén
- Field 3: Place called Suttén
- Field 4: Place called Suttén
- Field 5: Localities Weidhecke and Werb
- Field 6: Place called Werb
- Field 7: Place called Weidhecke
- Field 8: Place called Kirtenfeld
- Field 9: Place called Suttén
- Field 10: Place called Birnbauemel

- Field 11: Place called Langenthal
- Field 12: Place called Birnbauemel
- Field 13: Place called Werb
- Field 14: Place called Werb
- Field 15: Place called Werb
- Field 16: Place called Segelkreuz
- Field 17: Place called Sessenheimer Pfad”

(Châtelet, 2001, pp.15-19)

### **Haguenau Schirrheimerweg, Geiswell, Oben am Brunnen, Hecklen**

The sites “Haguenau Schirrheimerweg”, "Geiswell", "Oben am Brunnen", and "Hecklen" are within the borders of Soufflenheim, and were also studied in 2001.

“Haguenau Schirrheimerweg” is the site of a Roman tiler [tile production] located on the edge of the terrace. A significant amount of tile fragments and terracotta plaques was found. The fragmentation of the material attests to the advanced destruction of the site. It was not possible to date the material as no ceramics were found.

Geiswell" is located at the northern limit of the Forest of Soufflenheim on the edge of an ancient channel, marked on the ground by a slight depression and a higher concentration of gravel. The ceramic fragments found prove that the site was a habitat of the early middle age with various crafts and agricultural occupations. However, there is no evidence of a pottery activity.

Oben am Brunnen" is 300 yards east of "Geiswell" and with the same activities. It is a medieval site with three different settlements in space and time: the first in the 7th/8th Century, the second in the same place but in the 10th/11th century and the third in the 14th/15th century.

Hecklen" is mostly located in the forest, and is also a habitat of the early middle age. Due to the big storm of 1999, an important amount of material of light colored paste exclusively could be found. Since no trace of fire could be detected the existence of a kiln could not be confirmed.

New surveys will have to be undertaken mainly on the "Geiswell" and the "Hecklen" sites.” (Châtelet, 2001, pp. 20-27)

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Chatelet, Madeleine *Campagne de Prospection a Soufflenheim et dans ses Environs*, 28 pages, Illustrated. D.F.S. de Sauvetage Urgent, Strasbourg: SRA Alsace, AFAN, Antenne Grand-Est, Metz, 2001

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE RD-1063 BYPASS 2008

In 2008 archeologists excavating the route of the future D1063 bypass road in Soufflenheim identified a large river system in the Soufflenheim region below the terrace and protohistoric necropolises. Excerpts from the *Development of the RD-1063 Bypass of Soufflenheim Diagnostic Report* by Thierry Logel.

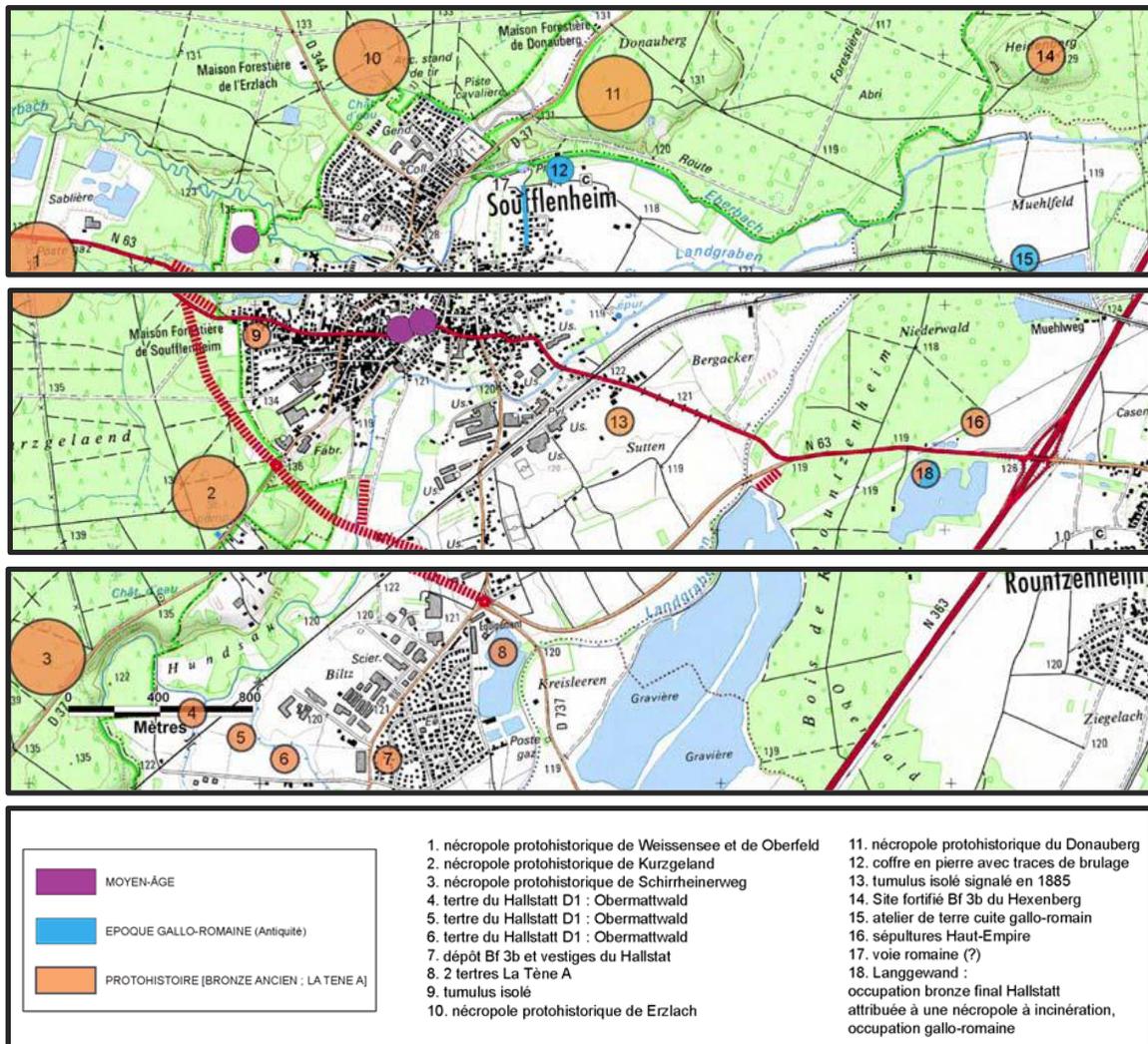


Soufflenheim, location of the archaeological site as seen on the 1775 map of Cassini.  
The lower arm of the Moder is still occupied by the Rhine.

### The Archaeological Project

“The objective of the diagnosis was to determine the archaeological and geomorphological potential of the land of the road development project, in an archaeologically rich area which still remains archaeologically unexplored, and to define, if possible, the nature of the occupations and their main chronological developments.

The archaeological diagnosis was carried out by a series of 217 east-west oriented boreholes, 15 m long on average and 2.50 m wide. The surface opened by trenches was estimated at 8.5% of the available site area. The trenches were dug using a tracked mechanical excavator, fitted with a 2.50 m wide cleaning bucket. The siting of the borehole trenches was defined in advance. The soundings were stopped when the substrate was reached, that is, about 1 m below surface level. Six holes of 4 m maximum depth were carried out to evaluate the paleochannels. Finally, a series of 2 m deep cores was carried out in an alluvial context". (Logel, 2008, pp. 33-34)



Location of the site (red tracks) and archaeological environment on an extract from IGN 3914 OT

"The diagnosis is influenced by two very distinct topographical spaces. In the western part, the site is established on the Würm terrace of the Haguenau forest up to the slope of the terrace. East of the embankment, the road project is continuing in the alluvial zone [deposit of sand, mud, etc., formed by flowing water], more than 10 m below the terrace overlooking this space.

The terrace part is characterized by a relatively flat ground made up exclusively of sands, disturbed by several contemporary clay pits. In the alluvial sector several large channels have been uncovered, separated by bars or small alluvial terraces, with land extremely wet, unsuitable for constant occupation.

Only one archaeological structure, a hearth with heated pebbles, probably from the Late Bronze Age, could be observed on the site on the terrace in the forest area. Finally, a series of contemporary trenches was observed. These are probably the remains of military trenches from World War II and the heavy fighting around Haguenau and Hatten in the winter of 1944-45, during operation "Nordwind", during the Ardennes offensive and the abandonment to the Germans of the municipalities of North Alsace. These observations were confirmed by the mayor of the town and several residents. The three bridges of the town were blown up during the withdrawal of French and American troops from the area.

The alluvial part has yielded no archaeological remains in the classic sense of the term. However, the many paleochannels [remnants of an inactive river or stream channel] unearthed confirm the presence of an important river system in the Soufflenheim region below the terrace and the important protohistoric necropolises. The presence of rivers seems to be at least one of the reasons for the topographical location of these necropolises." (Logel, 2008, p. 4)

"The diagnosis was conducted on the site of forest plots, agricultural land, meadows and gardens. The land involved in the project is in the western outskirts, and south and east of Soufflenheim, located on the Alsace plain on the edge of the terrace of Haguenau. The latter marks the western boundary of the floodplains of the Rhine. The location allowed the village to be safe from the floods of the Rhine plain.

The Rhine alluvial plain is a vast wet and marshy area 8 km wide between the base of the Haguenau terrace and the Rhine. This space is topographically little differentiated which allows a wide wandering of the river. Faced with the magnitude and frequency of the floods, canalization work on the river began in 1840. They had the effect of modifying the base level of the bed of the Rhine, leading to its deepening. This led to a drop in the water table throughout the region and the drying up of certain "rieds" and "wetlands" which were still active during historical times. We can therefore establish that in the area of operation, the landscapes have evolved considerably since the Bronze Age." (Vigreux, 2008, pp. 11-12)

## **Early History**

"Soufflenheim is located on the eastern edge of the Haguenau Forest, at the site of the slope of the Würm terrace and at the outlet of the Eberbach, which flows from west to east. Other small streams, almost stagnant or partially dried up, run from south to north. The site is located in a rich archaeological context, largely dominated by Protohistory. No Neolithic remains are reported on the ban of the town.

## **The Würm Terrace**

Several tumular necropolises are located in the forest of Haguenau in parallel with the slope of the Würm terrace. These are, in the area concerned, the necropolises of Schirrheinerweg, Kurzgeland, Donauberg, or further west Weissensee, to name only the groups closest to the operation. No archaeological intervention is, however, attested to the site itself

The construction of mounds in the forest has been in effect since the Early Bronze Age. An isolated corded ceramic, found in tumuli in Donauberg, attests to an even older visitation (Late Neolithic). Most of

the occupation, however, took place during the Middle Bronze Age and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. For the middle period of the Late Bronze Age, only two cremations were incidentally found at the Donauberg. Shards from this phase were found in a gravel pit on the road from Rountzenheim to Soufflenheim. R. Forrer attributes them to a funeral context. Finally, from the start of Hallstatt we witness a revival in the use of mounds. We thus note the reuse of Middle Bronze tumuli but also in the construction of new mounds.

Further north is the hill of Hexenberg site, dated Late Bronze Age 3b, installed on an outlier mound of the Würm terrace, isolated in the alluvial plain. In clay near the Vasenmühle, a stone arrangement was discovered in 1913 whose stones showed traces of ash and fire. This structure has been attributed to the ancient period despite the absence of archaeological material. In the absence of movables and a more precise description, one can however suggest an older chronology. The dimensions of this structure recall those of the heated pebble hearths attributed to the Late Bronze Age in Alsace.

## **Floodplain**

For the lower terrace, this sector presents a complex river activity that is poorly characterized to date. Already mentioned above, shards of this phase were, on the other hand, found in a gravel pit on the road from Rountzenheim to Soufflenheim. R. Forrer attributes them to a funeral context. Mounds appear to be erected later in the alluvial plain. From Hallstatt D1 a few tumuli are erected on the edge of the terrace (Obermattwald). Four mounds had already been listed at the place Obermattwald by X. Nessel and mapped by F.A. Schaeffer in 1926. In 1987, François Sigrist spotted several other small tumuli in the same area, as well as 3 larger mounds 500 m further to the west. Other mounds, poorly characterized and poorly located, are located to the south of the town at a place called Surrloch, Riedmatt and Suttin. A set of 12 mounds called Sieben Hügel are indicated at a place called Geisswaell). No dating has been proposed for most of these mounds. Only an isolated tumulus, probably located at a place called Surrloch, seems to present a continuity of use from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

The most important tumuli are attributed to ancient La Tène and are located inside the alluvial plain or even near the minor bed of the Rhine in the 18th century. This is the case with the two mounds of the east Soufflenheim gravel pit located at the crossroads of the D138 and D737 roads or the princely tumulus of Sessenheim. Italic onochoes [wine jugs] are part of the funerary movables unearthed in these mounds. These late mounds are probably linked to the few remarkable tumuli erected on the Baden side on the river bank in Hügelsheim, Söllingen and Iffezheim, including a chariot mound attributed to Hallstatt D3.

Finally, a metal deposit composed of an ax with fins and ring, two bracelets of the Hombourg type characteristic of a production of the Lorraine-Sarre-Palatinat plateau, and two leg rings was found at 0.40 m during a survey in the Roedern district. During the same operation, some structures attributed to Hallstatt were brought to light (pits and ditches or drains).

In addition to the data collected by the archaeological map of the Regional Archaeological Service and the Archaeological Map of Gaul (Bas-Rhin), the inventory of archaeological discoveries benefits from the numerous observations of F. Sigrist for the whole of this sector. At a place called Biltz, between the industrial zone and the railway line, in the 1990s, F. Sigrist collected on the surface archaeological material attributed to La Tène C.

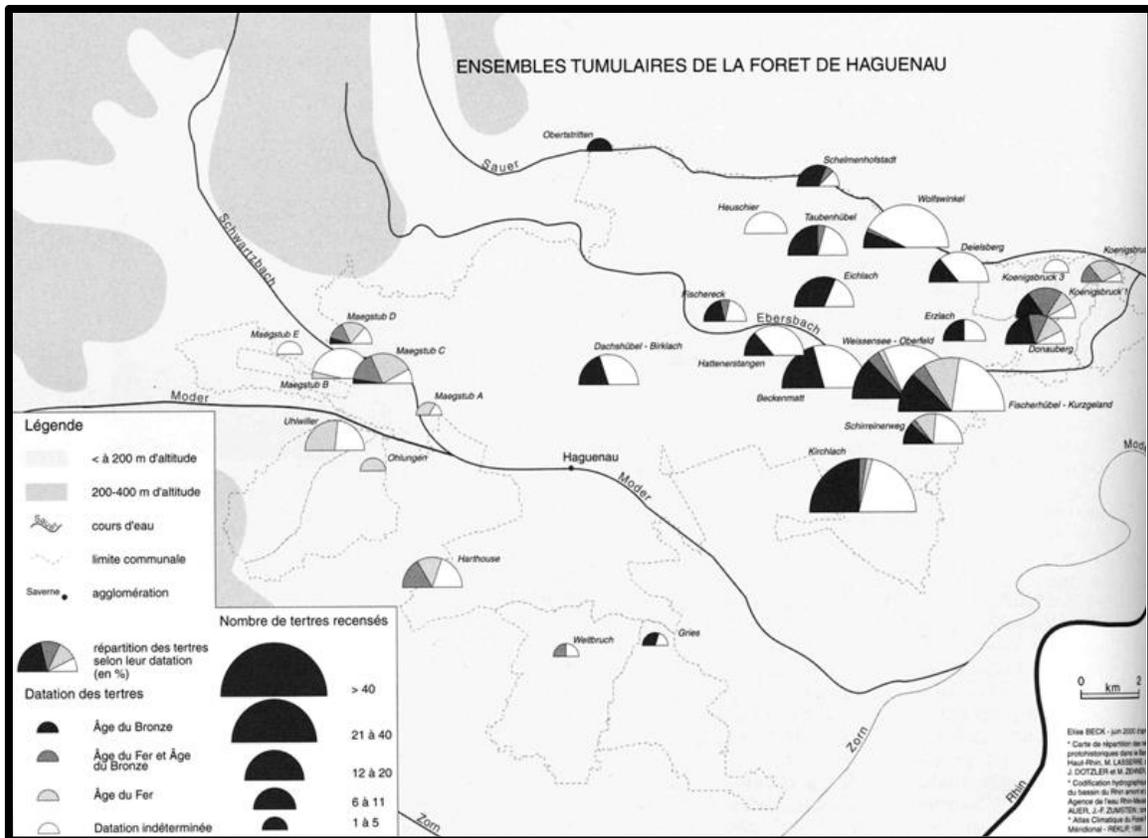


Figure 8: Distribution by chronological phases of burial mounds in the forest of Haguenau (Bas-Rhin CAG 2001)

## Roman Period

The Roman discoveries, made in the town, remain modest to this day. A Roman road is signposted on the edge of the Würm terrace. It is located parallel to the departmental road from Soufflenheim to Schirrhofen. Local road 28, located in the alluvial zone to the north of the town at the foot of the Donauberg, could correspond to another section of road. An isolated fibula was found in an old quarry located "near the Roman road" (Flotté and Fuchs 2001). In a clay near the Vasenmühle, a stone arrangement was discovered in 1913, whose stones showed traces of ash and fire. This structure has been attributed to ancient times despite the lack of archaeological material. N. Meyer attributes it to a funeral pyre. In the absence of movables, however, one can suggest an older chronology. The dimensions of this box (length 2 m and width 1.10 m) are reminiscent of those of heated pebble hearths attributed to the Final Bronze Age in Alsace. At a place called Eisenbaechel is located an extensive Roman settlement detected during pedestrian prospecting. Movables attributed to the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century AD. A necropolis with cremation dating from the 2nd century is also noted at the site of the gravel pit, route de Rountzenheim. A few burials are known on the Hexenberg hill.

## Middle Ages

Church Square, a recent embankment contained ceramic movables dating from the 8th century. Light-colored ceramic movables attributed to the 8th century has been unearthed at No. 37 rue Principale. According to the finder, it comes from a funeral context. Several other sites attributed to habitats were located in the commune and on its ban during pedestrian surveys (Werbholtz, Oben am Brunnen, Geisswaell, Roemischer Hundshof).

## **Contemporary Period**

The very hard fighting of the winter of 1944-1945 delivered by the American army to the German troops during Operation Nordwind are undoubtedly at the origin of the few remains of trenches and shells observed in the forest and of various anecdotes entrusted to us by the inhabitants of Soufflenheim. The three bridges in the town were blown up by American or French troops during their withdrawal to make crossing rivers more complex. The exact course of the fighting in Soufflenheim is not known to us. This is, however, a secondary front area.

Operation Nordwind was one of the Wehrmacht's last military offensives during World War II. It took place from January 1st to the 25th, 1945 in northern Alsace and Lorraine. The offensive was stopped at the end of January by Allied troops made up of American troops supported by French units. The most violent fighting took place in the vicinity of Hatten and Rittershofen. Hatten was almost completely destroyed during the tank battles (among the most important on the Western Front) which took place between January 8th and 20th, 1945.

The main aim of the Nordwind offensive was to relieve the German troops engaged in the Battle of the Bulge since December 15, 1944, by mobilizing Allied forces in north-eastern France and, at the same time, destroying the 7th Army American. The initial plan called for the German 19th Army to attack Strasbourg by crossing the Rhine, while the 1st Army launched its offensive from northern Alsace.

The offensive began on January 1st, on New Year's Eve 1945, without any artillery preparation to avoid the effect of surprise. The American troops, surprised at first, quickly put up a bitter resistance which blocked the German advance. The secondary offensive was launched south of Strasbourg against the French positions. On January 4th, the Americans withdrew and established a front line on the Moder, which crossed the city center of Haguenau.

On Monday January 8th, the Germans brought considerable forces to Alsace by crossing the Rhine in fifteen places, in particular between Freistet and Gamsheim or between Söllingen and Fort-Louis. The XXXIX Panzerkorps launched its attack on Hatten, an obligatory passage on the road to Strasbourg: it was the start of the terrible battle of Hatten-Rittershofen which was to last 12 days.

On January 15th, the 17 German divisions succeeded in reconquering other villages as well as the forest of Haguenau. They arrived at the Haguenau gate on January 16. After the withdrawal of the Americans from Hatten and Rittershofen, the front stabilized on the Moder during the night of 20th-21st. Of the 365 houses in the village of Hatten, 350 were destroyed. 2,500 soldiers and 83 inhabitants of the village were killed during the battle.

On January 24th, the Germans attempted to surround Haguenau. Heavy hand-to-hand combat took place in Schweighouse. On January 25th, the Germans launched a final attack, supported by tanks and succeeded in crossing the Moder halfway between Kaltenhouse and Haguenau. The war took hold in the middle of Haguenau, on both sides of the Moder Canal. That evening, as American reinforcements began

to arrive from the Ardennes, the Germans abandoned Operation Nordwind, including the bridgehead on the Moder.

An episode (8) of the television series *Band of Brothers* directed by Steven Spielberg in 2001, tells the life of a parachutist unit of the 101st US Airborne during the Second World War, is devoted to the combat in "Bloody Haguenu". The loss of life of the American army during these engagements in northern Alsace and in the Vosges will be among the most important of the war in Europe." (Logel, 2008, pp. 23-33)

## Results in the Forest

The forest area is characterized by the presence of a sandy substrate, disturbed by a few modern and contemporary clay pits. Despite the presence of several sets of burial mounds, the operation uncovered only a few structures. The heated pebble pit is the only structure that could be attributed to Protohistory. The pit is oval, 2.50 m long and 1.60 m wide and 0.20 m deep. Though no movables could be found in the structure, the heated pebble hearths are characteristic of Protohistory in our region and the movables associated with these structures has been exclusively attributed to the Late Bronze Age in Alsace.



Heated pebble pit during excavation.

These stoves come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Their uses are therefore probably also multiple. They are particularly common in the southern half of the region. Important groups have been unearthed in Bas-Rhin, but it is in Haut-Rhin that the largest number of these structures are concentrated. This could be attributed to a lower activity of archeology in this area, which also coincides with the modesty of the protohistoric remains of habitat unearthed in this area. The foci unearthed are, for the most part, isolated structures, of medium to small dimensions, found during excavations at Reichstett-Mundolsheim, in Littenheim and from Soufflenheim, the most northerly of the heated pebble hearths unearthed to date.

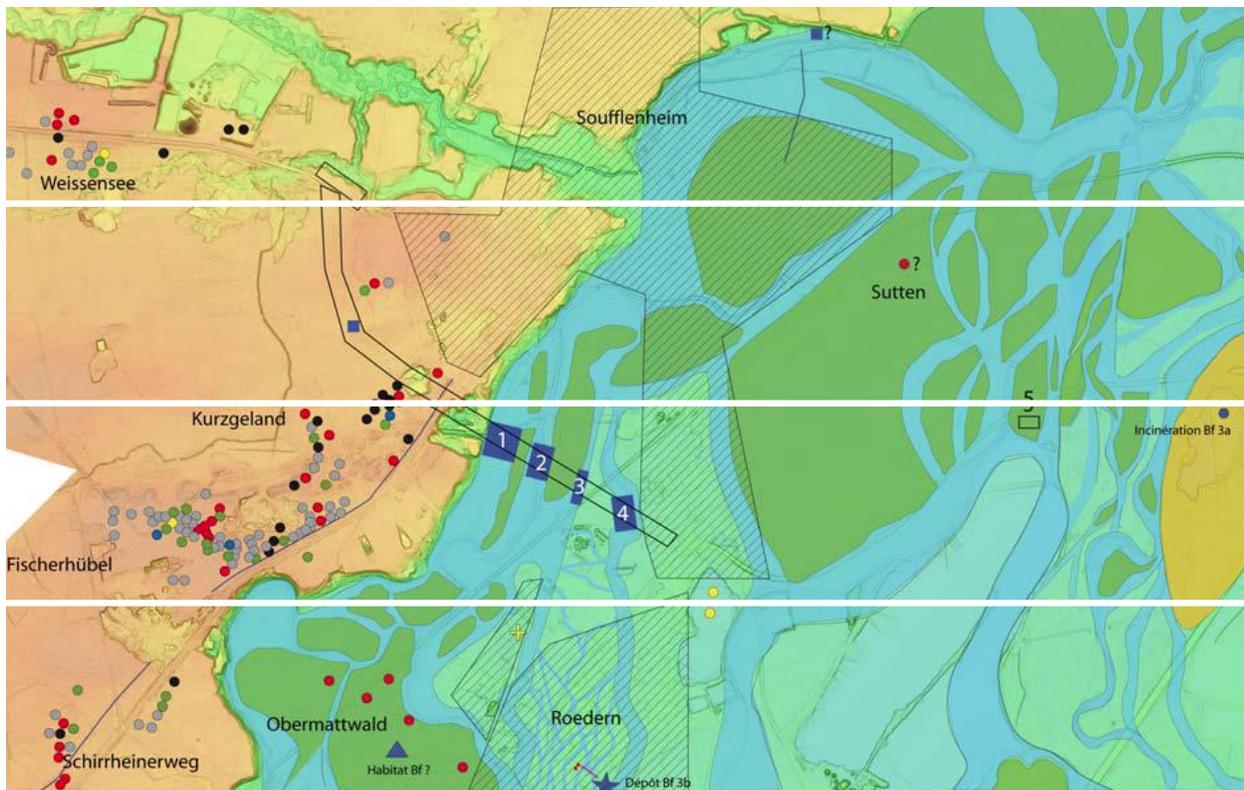
A stone structure showing traces of fire passages is also reported in the past in the town but its chronological attribution remains debated. As for the site at the hill of Hexenberg, excavations on its

plateau have brought to light a series of small hearths (0.80 m in diameter) which have been interpreted as culinary hearths of family units.

A series of narrow trenches or ditches, 0.60 m wide and 0.80 m deep, attributed to the contemporary period by glass bottles (beers) are probably from the Second World War according to inhabitants of the village. The structures are located in the culminating part of the forest near a deep clay loam, undoubtedly already present during this conflict, which may have served as a fulcrum or anti-tank ditch. It is a system of branching trenches connecting several lines of defense. No military furnishings were observed.

## Results in the Alluvial Zone

The diagnosis consisted of work on the bypass to the south of the town, from the Haguenau forest and the terrace (near the Kurzgeland necropolis) to the alluvial plain east of Soufflenheim, including 3 isolated trenches at the eastern end of the diagnostic area. From below the terrace, more than 10 m high, important paleochenals have been unearthed. All of these combined cover almost the entire surface of the archaeological operation in the alluvial plain, more than 500 m in width.



Graphic reproduction of the alluvial context of the Soufflenheim sector and chronology of land use in Protohistory, according to Schaeffer 1926 and 1930, CAG Bas-Rhin 2002, Piningre and Jeudy 2001, Zehner 1998, DRAC Alsace Archaeological Map, results of the diagnosis and modified airborne laser survey (General Council of Bas-Rhin, River Service, made available at PAIR, image processing F. Basoge); Doc./DAO Logel 2008.

Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 indicate the various paleochenals identified during the operation. (Circle: funeral. Triangle: habitat. Square: hearth with heated pebbles. Green: Middle Bronze Age. Blue: Late Bronze Age. Black: Bronze Age and Hallstatt Period. Red: Hallstatt Period. Yellow: La Tène Period. The hatching pattern shows the built-up areas.

The drilling trenches were oriented from west to east, perpendicular to the flow of the paleochannels, therefore made it possible to carry out a general section of the alluvial plain in this sector. Our first observations allow us to confirm the presence of a very important watercourse, most likely the Rhine, immediately below the Würm terrace. This watercourse is made up of innumerable channels which have been observed thanks to the laser-scanning technique (or Lidar, airborne laser survey). Four of these channels were located during the operation.” (Logel, 2008, pp. 34-36, 38-42)

## **Conclusion**

“The forest area crossed in the western part of the diagnostic operation is located in the immediate vicinity of the Kurzgeland tumor necropolis. However, no new mounds have been unearthed in this sector, and no other type of burial has been observed, unlike the two cremations in urns dated Late Bronze IIIa found incidentally during the construction of a forest road in the Donauberg (Piningre and Sainty 1989). With the exception of a heated pebble fireplace, no other protohistoric structure was located during the boring operation.

Thus, contrary to the local archaeological tradition which associates the presence of burial mounds with the proximity of the habitat, this forest established on a sandy soil, not very conducive to a traditional agricultural activity, could turn out to be empty of any permanent human occupation in protohistoric times. We can therefore envisage an essentially funeral destination for this forest area, with temporary frequentation or even passage areas. The absence of archaeological material in the heated pebble hearth, which is common for this type of structure, may also suggest a remoteness from residential areas.

The situation at the edge of the terrace could not be observed during the operation due to the activity of the quarries and recent clay pits which almost completely disturbed the substrate in the area of the operation. In the past, this area had proven to be quite rich in archaeological material, exclusively ceramic, but the erosion of this sandy soil on the edge of the slope has also largely disrupted the conservation of the remains. The presence of a Roman road reported by written sources at the edge of the terrace could not be noted, probably for these same reasons.

The part of the operation located in an alluvial zone presents a wide paleochannel, attributed to the Holocene period according to our observations.

No significant archaeological remains have been unearthed on the surveyed ground, but the interest of the site lies in its strong environmental potential and its significant contribution to the study of the evolution of the Rhine and its impact on the occupation of the soil in the north of Lower Alsace during the pre/protohistoric and possibly historical phases.” (Logel, 2008, pp. 43-44)

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## OELBERG CEMETERY 2009

In 2009 archaeologists excavated the site of the original church and cemetery in Soufflenheim, located on the grounds of the “Oelberg”, a hill adjacent to the present church, St. Michel’s. Finds were made from as early as the Gallo-Roman period. Later finds include a cemetery, funeral structures and graves, which show a burial practice unique to Soufflenheim: the burial of fetuses in ceramic pots. Excerpts from *Cimetière Oelberg, Rapport de diagnostic* by Maxime Werlé.



Figure 1. Location of Archaeological Work (Werlé, 2009, p. 11)

### Overview

“The purpose of the archaeological evaluation was to measure the archaeological potential of land (2,300 meters) located in the village of Soufflenheim, prior to the beginning of a landscaping redevelopment of the space called Oelberg. The operation, from a topographical and historical context, was mainly focused on the issue of identifying the remains of the old church (demolished in 1833) and former parish cemetery.

The archaeological diagnosis, first, enabled the outlining of some characteristics of the topography of the ancient site as it was to appear until the 1750s: the field, which occupies the tip of the spur that forms

here the terrace of Haguenau in the direction of Ried Rhine, appears to have been made of a lined ridge north, south and east, with fairly steep slopes.

Second, it also provided information on the development of the platform, clearly related to the construction of retaining walls in 1755, the reconstruction of the church between 1762 and 1766, and demolition of the church in 1833. This work has given the site the configuration it currently maintains. This is presumably the period in which the field was subjected to a leveling operation and, perhaps, of the leveling on the summit of the spur itself. This could be the reason the archaeological diagnosis found no vestige of ancient churches Soufflenheim.

The excavation primarily allowed the observation of several burials of fetuses and children, gathered in a sector of the cemetery, and adults. These burials, apparently put in place after the demolition of the church, are attributed to the 19th Century (circa 1830-1874). The graves testify not only of popular piety through some object worn by the deceased (medals, rosaries and crucifixes), but also singular burial practices in this parish cemetery, perhaps linked to the thriving ceramics activity of the municipality at that time. Indeed, one of the main archaeological diagnosis lies in the discovery and study of fetal burials buried in ceramic vessels. The old cemetery, decommissioned in 1874 to be transferred outside of the village, temporarily helped as additional burial space in 1945, when German soldiers who fell during the fighting during the winter of 1944-1945 were buried there.

The excavation found the following:

Chronology	Property Remains	Moveable Remains
Gallo-Roman Antiquity	/	Architectural Terracotta, Metal Object
First Middle Age (8th-12th Century)	/	Ceramic
Second Middle Age – Modern Era (12th-Late 18th Century)	/	Ceramic, Architectural Terracotta, Bone Industry
Contemporary Period (Late 18th-20 <sup>th</sup> Century)	Cemetery, Funeral Structure, Graves	Ceramic, Architectural Terracotta, Metal Object, Glass, Bone, Bone Industry, Wildlife, Clothing

## The Archaeological Project

The landscaping and redevelopment of the old cemetery of Soufflenheim, called Oelberg, motivated the desire to do an archaeological evaluation. Approximately 270 square yards of trenches were dug, 11.8 % of the area.

Soufflenheim is located in the north of Alsace, about ten kilometers west of the Rhine (Figure 1). The town, bordered by the Eberbach river, is backed by the southeastern edge of the terrace that covers the forest of Haguenau. It consists of sand and, locally, of powerful Pliocene clay deposits exploited for the production of ceramics. The excavated field occupies the tip of the spur that forms the terrace here. It is several meters high and overlooks the Rhine Ried, north, west and south.

Because of its particular geographical location, the land affected by the redevelopment project consists of a relatively spacious platform, with an area of 2,300 meters, located in the heart of the urban area (Figures 1 and 2). This space, flat and open, is located on the north side of the Grand Rue, west of the rue du Moulin, and south of a path. The terrace is supported by embankment walls seven meters high on

the east side. To the west, the land is bordered by the presbytery and its garden. It is now a green area, virtually free from construction, with the exception of a few monuments from the 19th century.

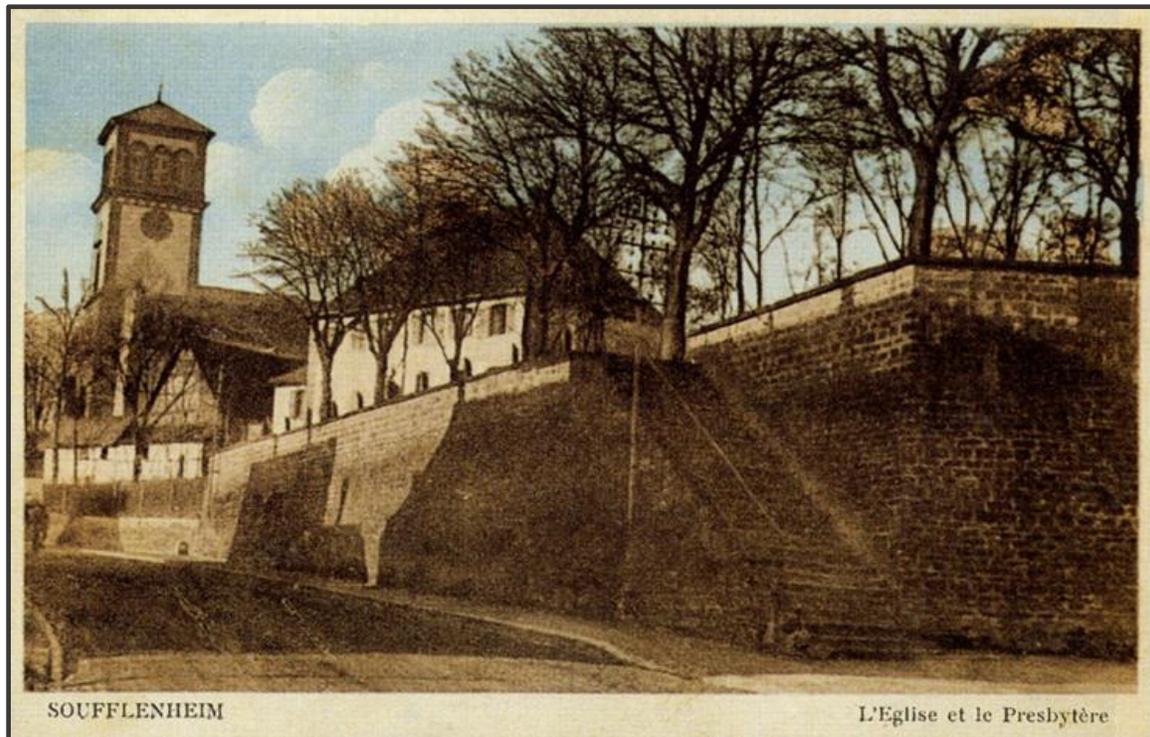


Photo 1. View from the east of the Oelberg, the rectory and the church (early 20th Century?) (Werlé, 2009, p.12)

### **The Village of Soufflenheim and its Environment**

Archaeological discoveries since the 19th century in the territory of the commune of Soufflenheim show a relatively dense occupation, dating back to the earliest Bronze Age. The sector's archaeological map indicates a particular repository of objects from the Late Bronze Age, many proto-historic burial mounds distributed in various parts of the town, a Hallstatt Habitat, a Roman establishment whose main extension lies on the ban of Schirrhoffen, and several settlements of the early Middle Ages. Systematic surveys carried out for twenty years on the town by Francois Sigrist are responsible for a large part of these findings.

The village of Soufflenheim itself remains largely unexplored from an archaeological viewpoint. Until 2001, there had been anecdotal evidence regarding construction work in 1980, when a stoneware ceramics kiln from the 15th-16th century was uncovered at Number 47a Grand Rue. In 1986, Francois Sigrist spotted embankment levels in front of the church, related perhaps to the building of places of worship in 1826-1830, which showed a very significant amount of clear ceramic paste from the 8th century. In 1987 ceramics from the 8th century were discovered at Number 37 la rue Principale. In 2001, a systematic survey of the current village location made it possible to trace the origin of the town in the 8th century, and identified a core of the current church centered occupation, dating from the 9th-10th century.

In written sources, the town of Soufflenheim appears for the first time when the Grangia, with field operations related to the Cistercian Abbey of Neubourg founded in 1133, is mentioned in 1147. The abbey also seems to have had a manorial court (curia) in Soufflenheim from the middle of the 12th century. In 1251, an imperial castle is also mentioned for the first and last time.

### The Church and Cemetery in Soufflenheim

The date of construction, location, and shape and dimensions of the medieval church of Soufflenheim is not known. At most, we know that tithing was reported in 1245, proof of the existence of a church. In 1662, a text indicates that the presbytery included a house, barn and stable.

The medieval church has been, from the mid-17th century, under constant maintenance and work, evidenced by the written sources. Maintenance work on the church was reported in 1664 (purchase of limestone for the tower), in 1670 (purchase of tiles for the bell tower), in 1682 (setting instead shingles on the steeple and paint restoration of the crucifix in the cemetery), in 1693 (purchase of tiles for the church roof) and in 1698 (purchase of tiles, boards and windows). In 1714 soldiers take part in church repairs. In 1716, the roof of the bell tower is redone again. New maintenance work is reported in 1720, 1721, 1724, 1725, 1732 and 1734 (participation of tile makers for the supply of tiles and bricks, and masons and blacksmiths; supplies of stone, lime, boards and shingles to the bell tower. The bell is slated for 1749-1750 and work is still reported on the church in 1755-1756.

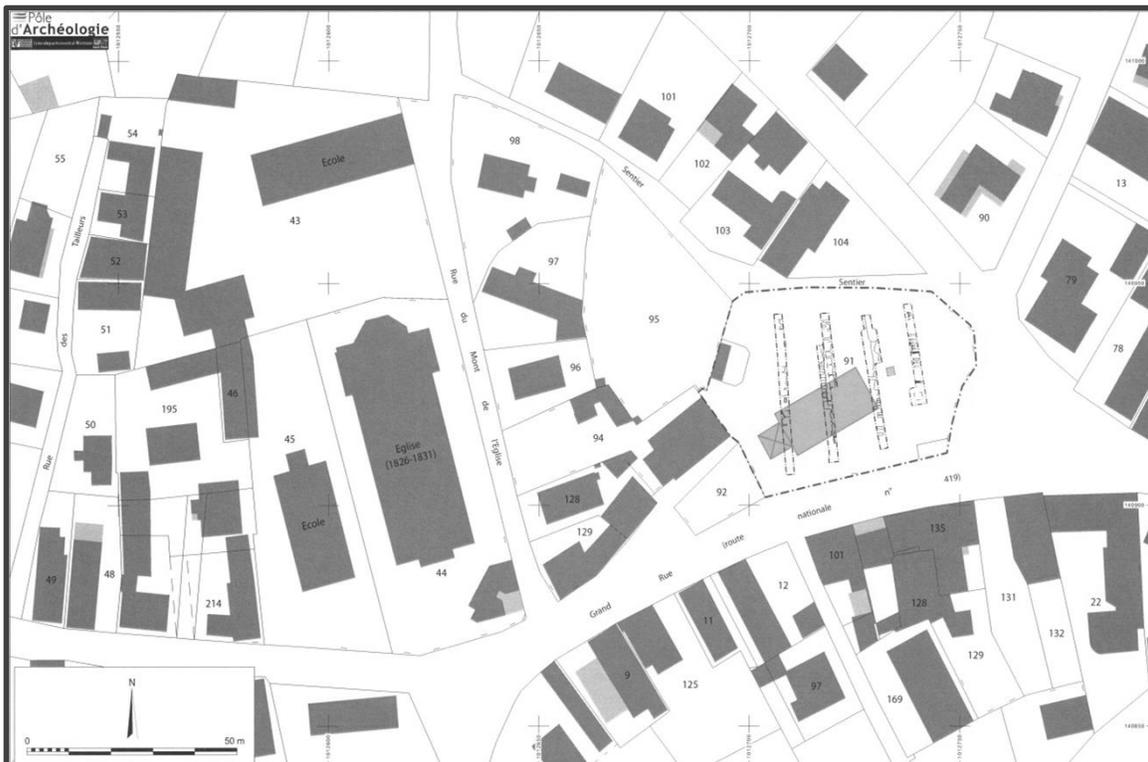


Figure 2. Location of the archaeological evaluation (in red) and the former church built between 1762 and 1765 (in orange) and location of sampling trenches on the current map. (Werlé, 2009, p. 14)

In 1761 the decision was taken to build a new church. The supply of timber, bricks and building materials are secured in 1762. The old choir was sold in 1764, likely to provide the buyer with materials from demolition. An ossuary was built in 1765. The consecration of the new church took place in 1766. As with the old church, the new church, destroyed in 1833, has no known iconographic representation. Prior to its demolition, an unpublished map from the 19th century indicated the church was in the area of the old cemetery (Oelberg) (Figure 2).

The funeral chapel of Niedheimer von Wasenburg, Lords of Schirrhein, who died in 1609 and 1617, was also there in the Oelberg. In particular, it housed a carved representation of the Mount of Olives (Oelberg), mentioned near the church in 1772. Moreover, written sources indicate that two crucifixes were erected in the cemetery in 1717, another is blessed in 1746 and the last one was erected in 1752.

In 1755 a retaining wall is built at the cemetery. The cemetery wall surrounding the new church was the subject of work by 1768. The special topographic position of the terrace and the retaining wall may be the source of a tradition which sees the Oelberg as a fortified cemetery. No objective argument, historic or archaeological, allows us to currently confirm this.

Between the beginning of the 18th century and 1836 the population of Soufflenheim grew considerably, from an estimated 500 people, nearly a hundred families, to almost 3000 inhabitants, making it one of the largest villages in Alsace.

Since 1822, the church built between 1762 and 1766 appears too cramped in view of the increasing population. The construction of the present church, located west of the Oelberg, was begun in 1825 and completed in 1830. It was consecrated in 1831. The old church was destroyed in 1833, the materials being reclaimed for the construction of the new school.

It seems that the Oelberg continued to serve as a cemetery, even after the demolition of the old church and construction of the new. It was not until 1873 that the health committee of the district of Haguenau, at the request of the district doctor, requested that the cemetery be transferred outside the walls of the town. The implementation of the new cemetery is then valued at the sum of 9,888 francs and 50 centimes. The new cemetery was solemnly blessed 13 September 1874. The site occupied by the former has undergone redevelopment in 1920, along with the presbytery.

The Oelberg was however, exceptionally and temporarily, reassigned to the function of cemetery in the 20th century, in the dramatic circumstances of the Second World War. Indeed, German soldiers who died during the fighting in the winter of 1944 were buried in January 1945 in the old cemetery (Photo 2). Their graves remained there until the German military cemetery at Niederbronn-les-Bains was built between 1961 and 1966 to bring together the graves of German soldiers who fell in the region during the Second World War. The German Graves Military Maintenance Service would then exhume, relocate and rebury

During the winter of 1944-1945, the Oelberg was hit by artillery fire. Soufflenheim was taken from the Germans by the Americans in December 1944, before being reoccupied by German troops in January 1945 and bombed by American artillery. The village was freed in March.

Oral testimonies report that the burial of German soldiers who died at the Crown restaurant, which served as a principal emergency position, was provided by villagers who were requisitioned, at a shallow depth and in a hurry due to winter conditions and the proximity of the fighting and bombing. The photograph of the military cemetery of Oelberg taken in the early 1960s suggests there were about 55 graves.

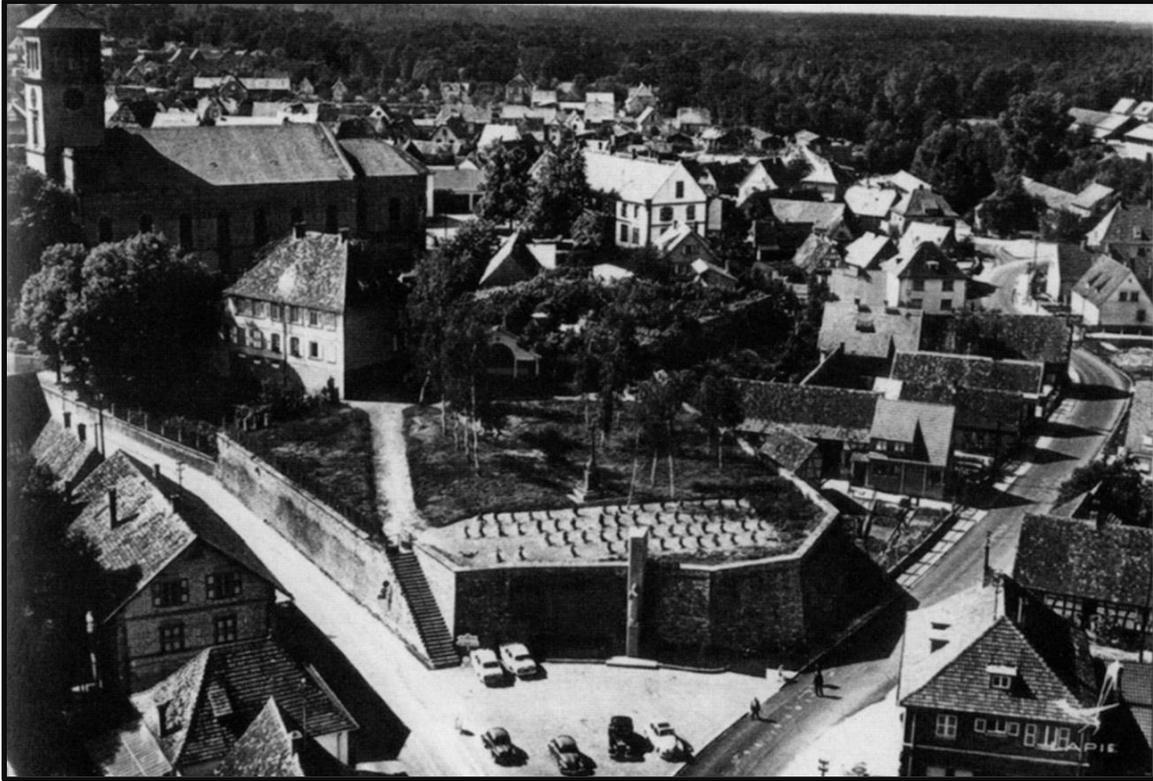


Photo 2. Aerial view of the Oelberg showing the German military cemetery (1960?) (Werlé, 2009, p. 15)

### **Excavations In 2007 and Fortuitous Discoveries during 2008 at the Oelberg**

The Oelberg has undergone in recent years particular archaeological attention due to consolidation projects of retaining walls, which threatened to collapse, and re-landscaping of the site. In May, 2007 Laure Koupaliantz led an archaeological operation to search the remains of the funerary chapel of von Niedheimer Wasenburg destroyed during the Second World War. The foundations of the building and terrain, of bricks, was partially uncovered in the north-east corner of the ground (Figure 3: 1).

In the spring of 2008, projects to strengthen the retaining walls (partially rebuilt), the access staircase, and the installation of drainage behind the walls, required significant excavations on the northern edges, east and south of the terrace.

The work was monitored by Francois Sigrist, volunteer archaeologist. It allowed him to observe several walls (of unknown function and undated), brick sepulchers (probably 19th century; Figure 3: 2), and children's graves buried in ceramics from the 19th century (Figure 3: 3). It was also possible to gather human bones (sometimes together), as well as ceramic movables (medieval dresser medieval, modern and contemporary, antique tegulae fragments and medieval hollow tiles) and metal (decorative coffin application).

These findings, currently unpublished, could not be the subject, at that time, of a topographic survey. The ceramic and metal items collected during the monitoring of the 2008 work were preserved by Francois Sigrist, who allowed the study of three containers and the fetal skeletons that two of them retained." (Werlé, 2009, pp. 10-16, 58):



Figure 3. The archaeological evaluation (in red), sampling trenches and approximate location of archaeological observations in 2007 and 2008 (Werlé, 2009 p. 17)

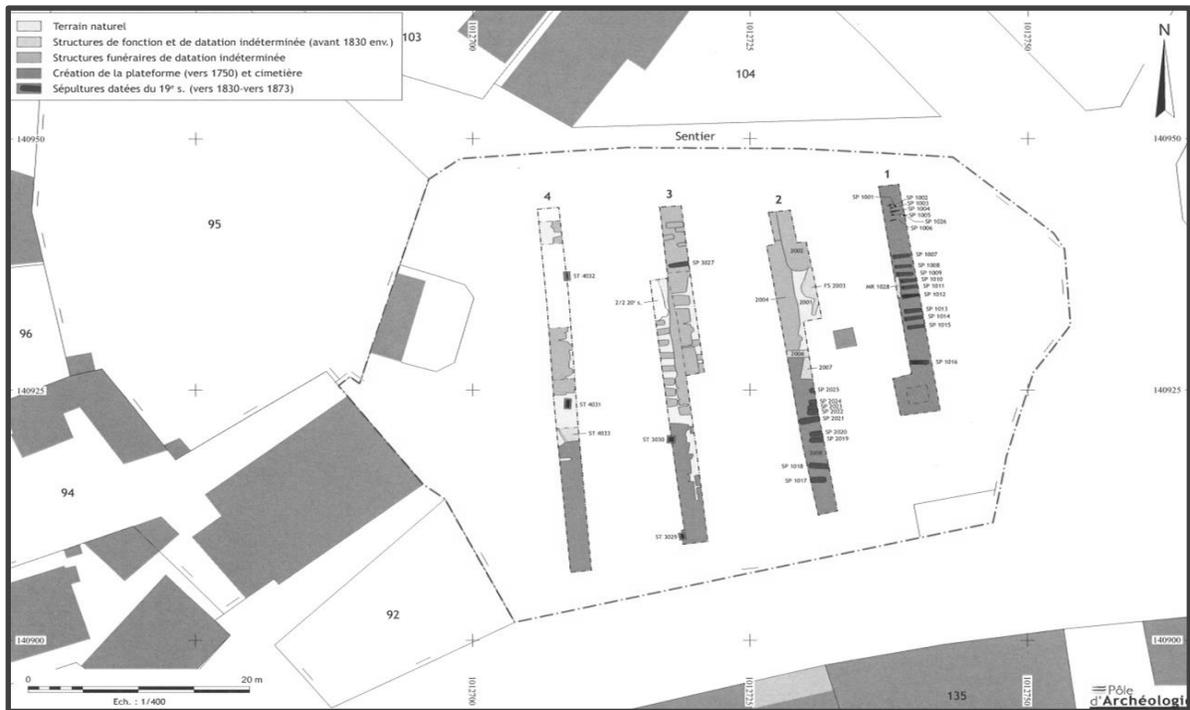


Figure 4. Location of the archaeological evaluation (in red) and sampling trenches and excavated remains. (Werlé, 2009, p. 19)

## Results

“The archaeological diagnosis allowed in the first place to recognize, to some measure, some features of the ancient topography of the site, as it was to present itself until the 1750s. It also provided information on the arrangement of the platform in relation to the construction of retaining walls in 1755 and the reconstruction of the church between 1762 and 1766. The operation has mainly allowed to observe a number of burials of fetuses, children and adults from the 19th century (circa 1830-1874), reflecting singular burial practices in this parish cemetery. Finally, it uncovered some burial related objects in the old cemetery of German soldiers who fell during the battles of the winter of 1944-1945.

## Surveying the Output of the Ancient Site (Years Until 1750?)

The archaeological evaluation has provided clues that tell us about the site's appearance before it becomes subject, in the 18th century it seems, to work that gave it its current configuration (the construction of retaining walls on the slope and development of the summit platform).



Photo 6. View of Survey 2 from the north (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009 p. 27)

## The Establishment of the Platform and the Question of the Church (1750-1830)

It seems that the tip of the spur received the appearance it currently retains between the mid-18th century, with the construction of retaining walls in 1755, and early 1830, when the church that was built between 1762 and 1766 was demolished (in 1833). It is likely that during this period the field was subjected to a leveling operation and, perhaps, shaving off the top of the spur. This could be the reason the Archaeological excavation found no vestige of ancient churches in Soufflenheim, famous for being located on the Oelberg. It is possible that some archaeological remains not or poorly dated, among those unearthed, have functioned with one of the ancient churches and/or cemetery.

The land appears to have been subject to a planarization campaign, and leveled in order to develop a sub-horizontal platform. The sandy substrate, almost flush in the central part and northern Surveys 2, 3 and 4, had already suggested a leveling operation on this part of the site. This indication of redesign can be linked with a significant input of sediment, mainly noticeable in the southern parts Surveys 2, 3 and 4 and that in Survey 1 (Figure 4). The volume of this deposit varies, depending on the side of the Oelberg slope, of up to 2 m deep in the survey at the southern end of the survey 1: The volume increases as one approaches the retaining walls and therefore the foot of old slopes.

This is a contribution of locally gravelly and slimy sand, dark brown, fairly loose, undifferentiated almost the entire height of the deposit. It contains various inclusions, in relatively large amounts, which include many human bones in secondary position [without connections between them], metal objects (including nails), the fragments of architectural terracottas (tegulae, bricks, hollow tiles, flat tiles, etc.), nodules mortar and ceramic movables.

This work is probably related to the construction of retaining walls that written records date back to 1755. This assumption is consistent with the movables collected in the intake leveling, which is an extremely heterogeneous batch from a chronological point of view. It is indeed composed of Gallo-Roman remains (a hinged fibula 1st Century A.D. and many tile fragments which are experiencing reuse, as indicated by the presence of mortar), the first Middle Ages (ceramics), the second Middle Ages and the modern time (ceramics, brick chips, hollow tiles and flat tiles).

The presence of many human bones (and nails) in a secondary position suggests a sepulchral layer reworked by strong or intense cemetery activity, representing a contribution of materials taken from land itself having hosted a cemetery. The presence of many construction materials in a secondary position also suggests the proximity of demolished buildings, some of which included reuse of the Gallo-Roman elements (tiles).

This observation raises the question of the lack of remains related, without doubt, to Soufflenheim's successive churches, whether the supposed medieval church or, especially, the church built between 1762 and 1766. Indeed, it seems, according to a source from the early cartographic 19th century, as the old church (the one rebuilt between 1762 and 1766 and demolished in 1833 ) was on the site diagnosed, its foundations would potentially be observed in Survey's 2, 3 and 4 (Figure 2).

Yet, it is as remarkable as it was unexpected, that the church has not left any trace of its existence (masonry foundations, material recovery trenches, etc.) on the diagnosed site. At most, it is possible to report a layer (deposit or filled hollow structure) observed in the survey (US 2007), filled with materials from the demolition of a masonry structure (mortar tegulae fragments in replacement, yellow bricks and hollow tiles) (Figure 4). It is therefore possible that the work of leveling and grading the Oelberg, performed during or after the demolition of the church (1833), wiped up the foundation of the religious building (47). However, it is not possible to exclude that preserved in the southern Survey parts 2, 3 and 4, under the level of the etching trenches, is the cemetery level and location of the graves (48).

(47) A comparable case was found in Altkirch (Haut- Rhin), where no trace of the church destroyed in 1844 could be demonstrated during an archaeological diagnosis conducted in 2003, as the ground had been leveled to the substrate. (48) Note that that Francois Sigrist observed, during the monitoring of the 2008 work, many brickwork retained in the lower part of the deck.

### **The Remains and Dating are Uncertain (Before Approximately 1830)**

The archaeological diagnosis helped uncover several hollow structures not dated (Figure 4). The relative chronology of the site, and the dating evidence gathered, indicates, however, that some of these remains are older than the 19th century. They all relate to the cemetery which surrounded the ancient church of Soufflenheim.

The greatest number of graves are like sepulchral pits dug in the earth (Photo 6). Densely distributed over the entire field, they are either isolated or contiguous; in this case, they usually begin to form during the etching of the surface, large depressions in which it is impossible to distinguish the graves; they eventually appear more clearly when stripping more deeply. The hollow structures interpreted as burials are either disorderly (in the northern part of the survey for example), or grouped in regular rows (in Surveys 2 and 3 in particular). Cases of duplication are evidenced in Survey 3; they testify in relative chronology of a potentially long history and cemetery complex.

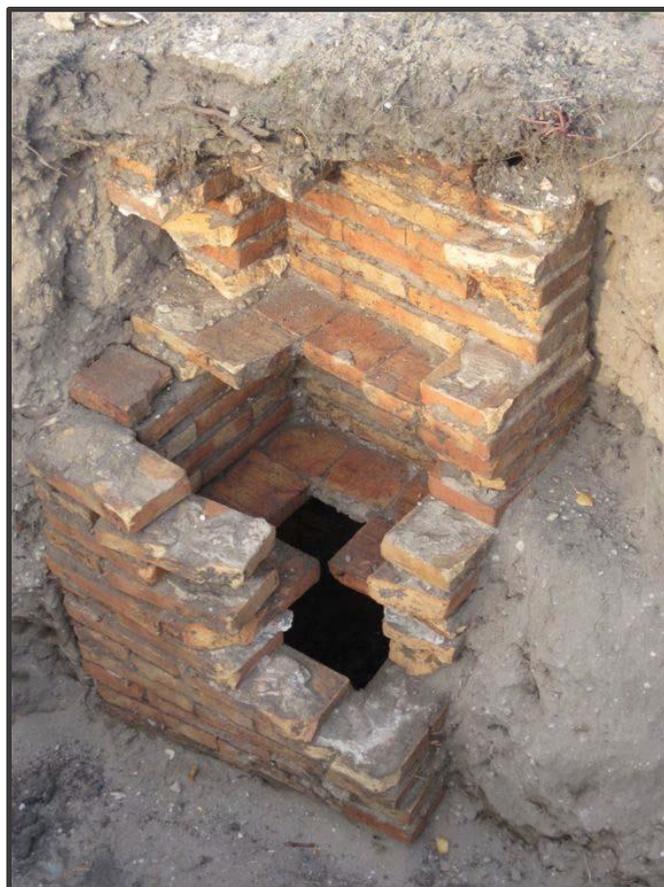


Photo 20: Masonry structure ST 3030 (Werlé, 2009 p. 50).

A masonry burial structure was also encountered in Survey 1 (MR 1028). This is a wall oriented on a north-south axis, partially uncovered, and its location in an ancient cemetery suggests it should be interpreted as a burial vault. These masonry structures, isolated from each other, have been interpreted as the foundations of funerary monuments (Photo 20).

Finally, it is important to note a hollow structure unearthed in Survey 4 (ST 4033). It is a vast excavation. Rounded in shape and design, partially observed and disturbed by burial pits, whose periphery is covered, with a thickness of between 10 and 20 cm, with human bones in a secondary position [not connected]. These bones have a very degraded appearance, appearing to have been subjected to a thermal or chemical reaction (exposure to fire or to quicklime?). This pit, characterized by the aggregation and deposition of human bones, is akin to an ossuary [depository for the bones of the dead]. It is intersected by embankments used to level the ground during the establishment of the platform.

### **The Parish Cemetery (About 1830-1874)**

One of the main contributions of the archaeological evaluation lies in the discovery and the study of remains (graves of fetuses, children and adults, and foundations of funerary memorials) related to the parish cemetery, which it seems possible to date in a relatively narrow chronological range (circa 1830-1874) (Figure 4). Some elements observed (containers and funerary terracotta) testify to singular funeral practices, clearly linked to the thriving ceramics activity of the town at that time.

(Written with M. Queyras): After the construction of retaining walls, platform development and dismantling of the church, the site continued to be used for burial, the cemetery apparently colonizing all of the available site. Burials, quite densely distributed, frequently appear arranged in rows. This arrangement is particularly well illustrated in Survey 1, where fifteen graves and immature adults were identified and are aligned in one row oriented north-south (Figure 6).

Dating indications for the graves uncovered are relatively numerous. They are based on the collected artifacts (clothing, religious objects, ceramic containers of fetal burials, coffins wall typology and nails), as well as information from written sources. They argue for a time allocation in the 19th century.

Four masonry structures have been uncovered in Surveys 3 (ST 3029 and 3030) and 4 (ST 4031 and 4032). They have been leveled at shallow depth (0.20 m on average) under the current level of soil. They are based relatively deep since they were observed at a height between 0.82 m and 1.50 m without their base being reached. They are filled with sandy loam brown soil, with some residual inclusions of human bones in secondary position [not attached]. These masonry structures, isolated from each other, have been interpreted as the foundations of monuments (Photo 20). (Werle, 2009, pp. 26-35)

### **Ceramic Burial Containers**

“Ceramic containers, sometimes associated with lids, used for the burial of fetuses, are from regular productions of Soufflenheim culinary objects. They were made by turning typical Soufflenheim clay, yellowish and then glazed with slip. Three containers were coated with a manganese glaze color after cooking which gives them a dark brown appearance. They can be dated from the middle or second half of the 19th century until early 20th century, on the basis of technical criteria (pulp and surface treatment) morphological (shape) and stylistic (sets) (Photo 22).

In short, it is possible to date the burials of fetuses, immature, young adults and adults that were uncovered largely to the 19th century, probably in the last two-thirds judging by the recurring presence of nails in the round section. This range could thus agree, as a hypothesis, with a subsequent redevelopment of the cemetery following demolition of the old church in 1833. The strictly regular scheduling of the cemetery, in rows, indeed suggests an operation of "subdivision" of the rows of the cemetery. This scheduling seems to accord with the decree of June 12, 1804, which regulated cemeteries and undertaker's, advocating burial in individual graves and indicating the dimensions to follow (row spacing and pits, pit depth, etc.). Written sources report that in 1873 the health committee of the district of Haguenau requested that the cemetery be transferred outside the walls of the town, which was made before September 13, 1874, date of the blessing the new cemetery. In short, it is possible to have a set of graves dating to between the 1830s and 1874.



Photo 22: View of ceramic vessels for the burial of fetuses (Werlé, 2009 p. 55)

Diagnosis and data collected in 2008 suggest that the graves of stillbirths and young children were the subject of a special administration by a sectorisation within the cemetery. Indeed, they have been grouped together in an area that was clearly reserved in the northern part of the funerary space. This segmentation of funeral spaces reserved for children appears common in the Gallo-Roman necropolis and in medieval and modern cemeteries.

The presence of non-viable fetus, stillborn, therefore, is abnormal in a dedicated space, because the parish cemetery is normally reserved only for baptized. The dead children without baptism are excluded. The "respice" is then the only solution to prevent their segregation [burial outside the cemetery], perceived

as unfair by the community. The diagnostic data allows assuming the practice of "respite". Respite is a break between two deaths, consisting of resuscitating a newborn child that died before being baptized. The aim was to solicit signs of life, through the intercession of a saint, in time to baptize the child before it finally died. Respite can occur in a sanctuary called "respite", or at home by a remote invocation. This is normally a popular practice, widespread in the Christian West, which appears at the end of the 11th century, develops in the second half of the 12th century, and lasted until the end of the 19th century. Sometimes tolerated, it has often been repressed by the ecclesiastical authorities. These condemnations, frequently repeated in the 16th and 17th centuries, appear not to have been respected. Here, an archaeological appraisal (of the presence of fetus and toddler probably stillborn within a dedicated funeral space) suggests that these children were the subject of a "ritual" of resurrection. It could be one of the latest manifestations of the practice of respite, which appears not to have continued beyond the end of the 19th Century.

Among children, the treatment of bodies of young children (one month after term until the age of 8-9 years) is different from that reserved for stillbirths or dead in perinatal period (5-6 gestational lunar months and one month after the term). Once a young child's coffin is made, it is comparable to that of an adult. In contrast, the bodies of stillbirths and perinatal deaths were deposited in pottery before burial, reflecting specific behaviors towards them. In the state of our knowledge about the burial practices of modern and contemporary eras in Alsace, the use of ceramic vessels for burial containers is novel (76).

The practice of burial in pots reflects the precarious and marginal status of stillbirths and perinatal deaths, possibly baptized in utero or in extremis (77)? Or the use of a pottery was preferred to other types of containers for simple convenience, availability and/or price? Or label it a special emotional attachment, even in death, of potter's families to their production and/or occupation, at a time when the business of pottery is thriving in Soufflenheim? These issues pose the problem of popular social practices, which does not seem to reflect the written sources and which may fall under "rituals of the shadows". The responses to these questions may lie, to some extent, in a confrontation between archaeological and ethnographic sources, and some written sources (catalogs of products and prices, vital records, church records, registers, any records of the cemetery, etc.).

The masonry foundations interpreted as those of tombstones agree with the growth experienced by these structures in the 19th century, particularly marked from years 1840. (Werle, 2009, pp. 55-58)

(76) However, it is known in medieval and modern Germany (especially 17th to 18th century), the practice of depositing the placentas of newborns in ceramic containers and bury them in the ground caves or behind the houses. In France (Indre-et-Loire), it is possible to note the case of the reduction of funerary remains of Agnes Sorel (mistress of King Charles VII, who died in 1449), placed in a ceramic with cover bought for this purpose in 1777.

(77) Stillbirths and unbaptized children have no status to the community's Christian eyes and theoretically should not be buried in consecrated ground. It is the tradition for deaths of children in rural Alsace in the 19th century."

## **Conclusion**

"First: The archaeological diagnosis allowed to outline some characteristics of the ancient topography of the site as it was to appear until the 1750s: the field, which occupies the tip of the spur that forms here the terrace of Haguenau in the direction of Ried Rhine, seems to have been composed of a ridge oriented east- west, bordered to the north, south and east by relatively steep slopes.

Second: It delivered information on the development of the platform, obviously in relation to the construction of retaining walls in 1755, reconstruction the church between 1762 and 1766, and demolition in 1833. This work resulted in the layout of the site that it currently maintains. It was probably during this period that the field was the subject of a leveling operation and, perhaps, planarization of the top of the spur. This could be the reason the archaeological excavation and diagnosis did not find vestiges of the oldest churches in Soufflenheim, deemed to have been located on the Oelberg. However, some non or poorly dated archaeological remains, among those unearthed, could have functioned with one of the ancient churches and/or with the cemetery.

The excavation primarily allowed the observation of several burials of fetuses and children, gathered in a cemetery area, and adults. These burials are attributed to the 19th century (circa 1830-1874). The graves testify not only of popular piety through some items worn by the deceased (medals, rosaries and crucifixes), but also singular funeral practices in this parish cemetery, perhaps related to the ceramic activity flourishing in the town at that time. Indeed, one of the main contributions of the archaeological project lies in the discovery and study of fetal burials, buried in ceramic containers. The archaeological information from the 19th Century gathered in the cemetery of Soufflenheim will increase our knowledge of funerary practices at this time in Alsace, far more studied in terms of funerary monuments, preserved in large numbers but many are endangered).

Worried about hygiene, the old cemetery was abandoned in 1874, to be transferred outside the village. The site was still used as a burial space, temporarily, when German soldiers who fell during the battles of the winter of 1944-1945 were buried there. They were exhumed and reinterred in the 1960s in the German Military Cemetery at Niederbronn-les-Bain. The excavation recovered some objects related to their burial." (Werlé, 2009, pp. 62).

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