

OELBERG CEMETERY

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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 (Maxime Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, Rapport de diagnostic, 2009, 101 Pages).

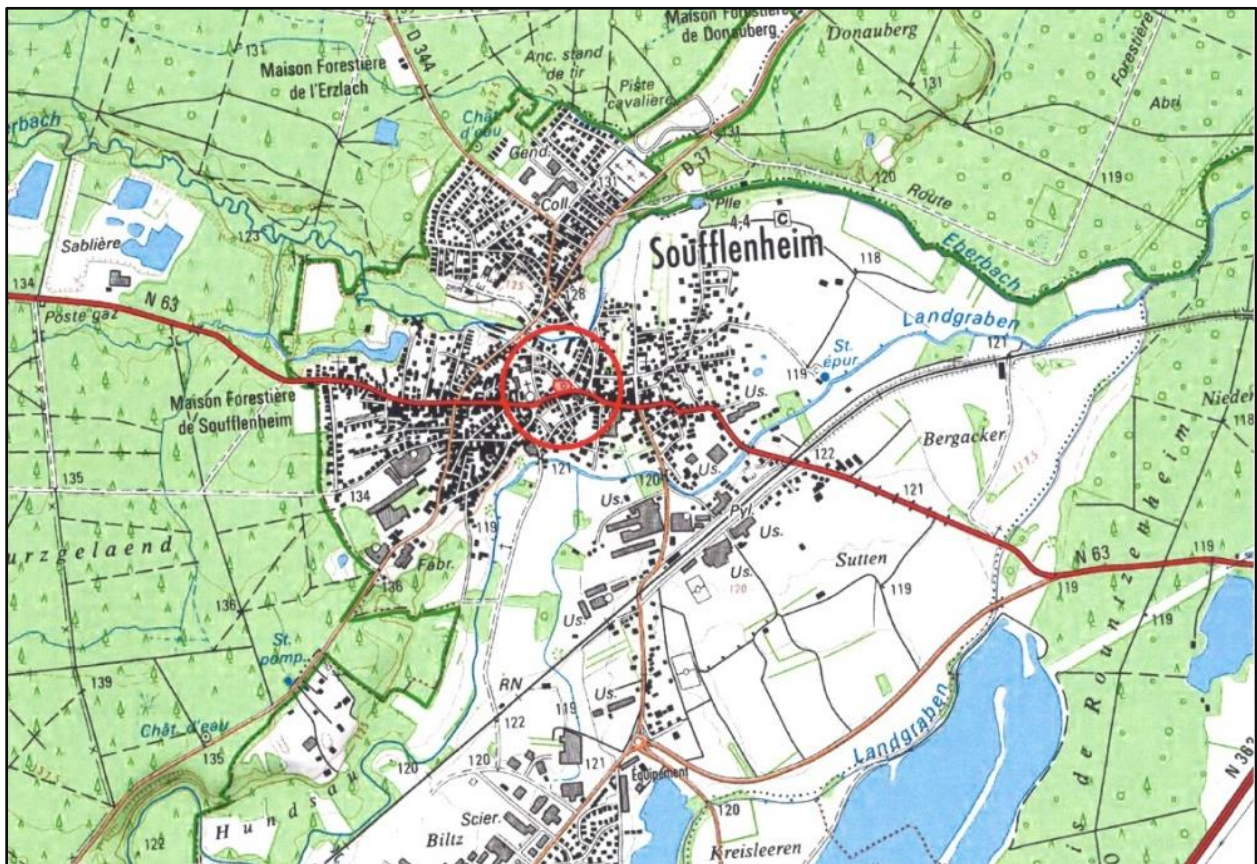


Figure 1. Location of Archaeological Work (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, p. 11)

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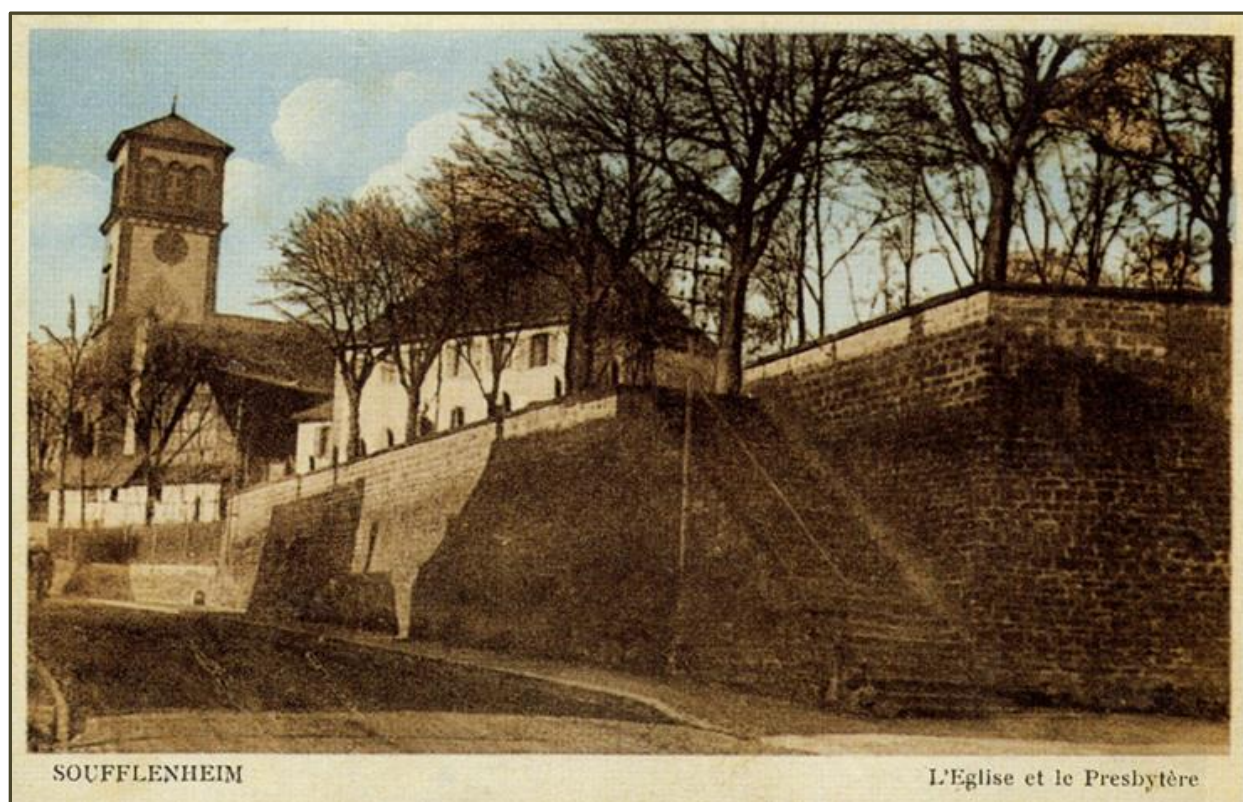


Photo 1. View from the east of the Oelberg, the rectory and the church (early 20th Century?) (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, p.12)

OVERVIEW

According to archaeologist Maxime Werlé (Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, pp. 10-16):

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 Haguenuau 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 th 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.

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 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.

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.



Figure 2. Location of the position of the archaeological evaluation (in red), and the former church built between 1762 and 1765 (in orange), according to a map from the early 19th century, prior to its demolition in 1833, and location of sampling trenches on the current map. (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, p. 14)

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.

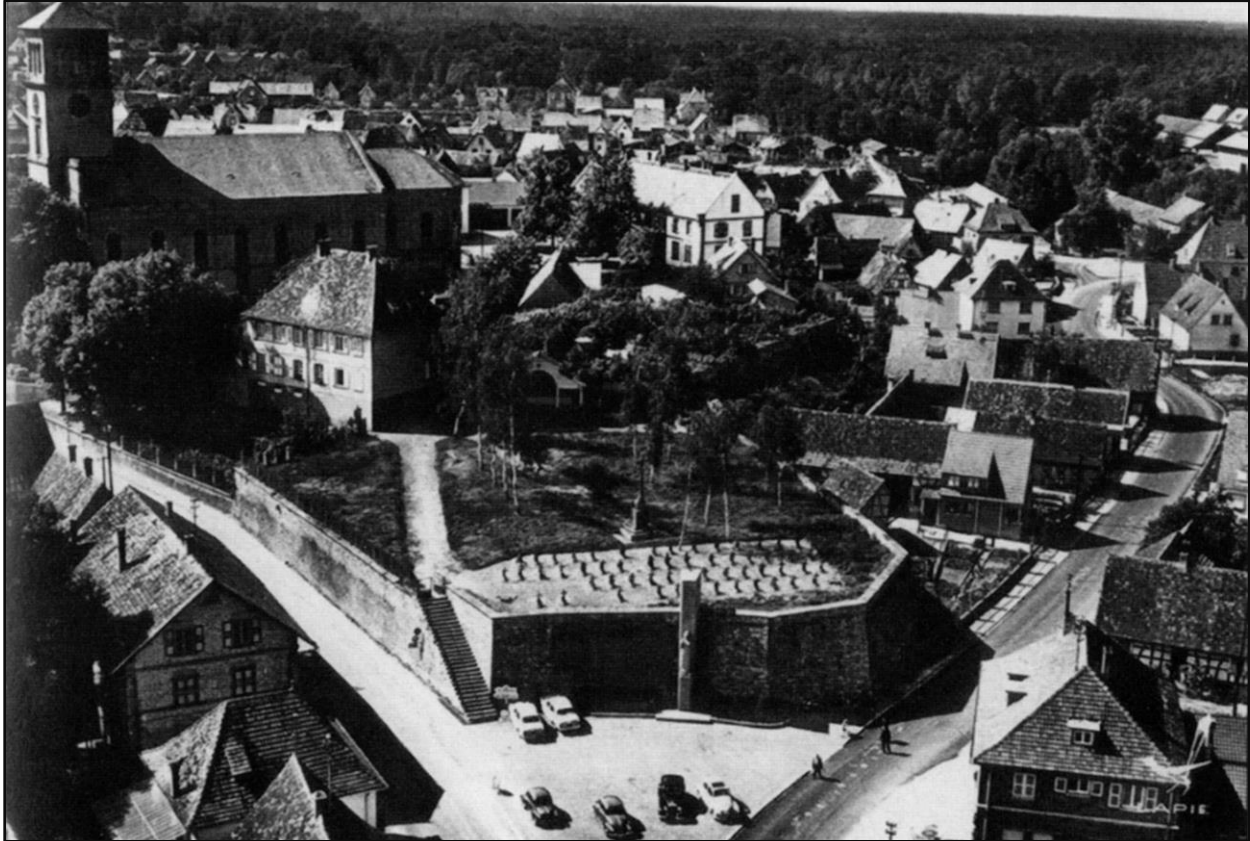


Photo 2. Aerial view of the Oelberg showing the German military cemetery (1960?) (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, p. 15)

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.



Figure 3. Location of the archaeological evaluation (in red), establishment of sampling trenches and approximate location of archaeological observations in 2007 and 2008 (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009 p. 17)

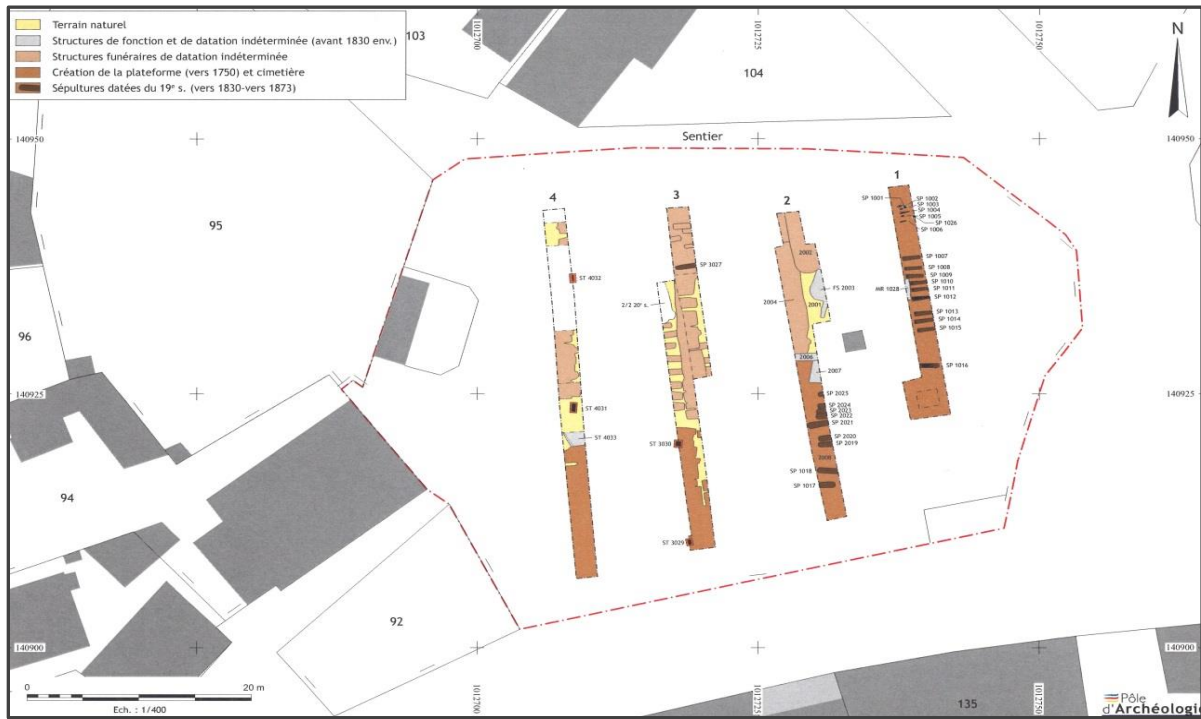


Figure 4. Location of the position of the archaeological evaluation (in red), and location of sampling trenches and excavated remains on the current map. (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, p. 18)

RESULTS

According to Maxime Werlé (Cimetière Oelberg, 2009, pp. 26-34, 35, 49-50, 55-58, 62):

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.

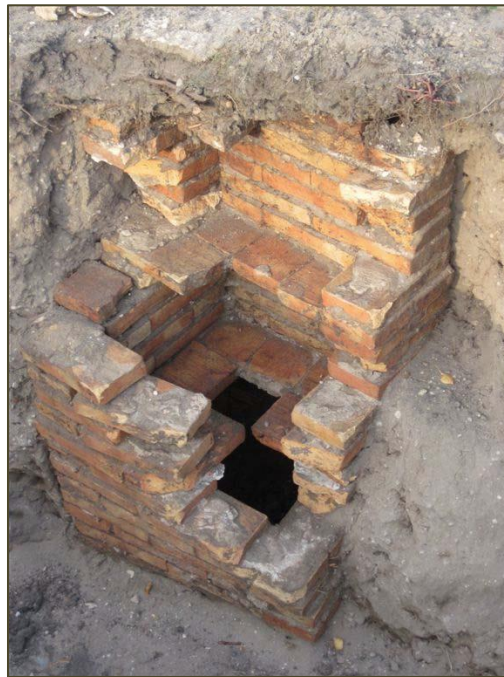


Photo 20: Masonry structure ST 3030 (Werlé, Cimetière Oelberg, 2009 p. 50).

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).

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 "respite" 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.

(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 Haguenuau 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.