H Hungary

H 1 Miskolc, Avas-hill
H 2 Sümeg-Mogyorósdomb
H 3 Tata
H 4 Korlát-Ravaszlyuktető
H 5 Erdőbénye-Sás patak
H 6 Boldogkövaralja
H 7 Bakonycsernye-Tűzkövesarok
H 8 Szentgal-Tűzköveshegy
H 9 Hárskút-Édesvízmajor
H 10 Dunaszentmiklós-Hosszúvontató
H 11 Lábatlan-Margittető
H 12 Lábatlan-Pisznicitető


H4 KORLÁT-RAVASZLYUKTETŐ

see Katalin Simán, The Korlát-Ravaszlyuktető workshop site in North-Eastern Hungary (H4), pp. 41-58

H5 ERDŐBÉNYE-SÁS PATAK, BORSOD COUNTY

Erzsébet Bácskay

The site Erdőbénye-Sás patak (exploitation site together with a chipping floor) is situated in the NE part of Hungary in the Zemplén Mountains, that is the NE part of the Northern Middle Mountains in Hungary, running along the north border of the country to the East of the Danube. It is at the SE end of a narrow valley that crosses the Zemplén Mountains in a NW-SE direction, near the SE fringe
of the mountains (48° 16' N, 21° 22' E). Where the road in the valley mentioned above meets a brook of roughly NE–SW direction, called Sás patak (brook) — Fig. 1, there is an outcrop of the limnic opal. It was partly revealed by the brook and partly by erosion in the pasture near the brook. Because of the limnic opal occurrence the area is a Nature Conservation Area supervised by the Bükk Mts. National Park.

GEOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

Geographically the site is in the so-called Erdőbénye basin, which is a funnel-shaped bay-like formation. Its wider part continues in a mild declivity toward the Great Hungarian Plain while its narrowing “neck” to the NW runs into the
Aranyosvölgy, a narrow valley of NW–SE direction mentioned above. This position provided a good accessibility for people to get near the site.

In the Erdőbénye area as a consequence of postvolcanic activity during the Miocene a series of clayey tuff, tuffite and rhyolitic tuff with pumice developed, the smaller subsided parts of which were filled up by diatomaceous earth covered by limnic opalite (Pentélényi 1968:1–10; Hajós and Kővári-Gulyás 1986:157–8). This limnic opalite is covered in places by a thin layer of soil and slope detritus. The limnic opalite at the Sás patak site is a very attractive raw material, its colour varies from light yellow to dark brown, sometimes with bands of various shades and almost always with a high lustre. However, as a raw material for making tools — as regards raw materials available during the prehistory in Hungary — it is of medium quality, because it is rather brittle and usually has a heterogeneous character.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

During their survey made in the Northern part of these mountains K. Takács-Biró, K. Simán and S. Szakáll (1984:123–5) found a workshop-site near the Erdőbénye-Sás patak site, called Erdőbénye-Ligetmajor; they proved that this workshop was settled on the so-called Ligetmajor occurrence of limnic opalite which belongs to that occurrence of limnic opalite which is exposed at the Sás patak site. Ligetmajor is about 2 km north from the Sás patak site (see Fig. 1). Though the above-mentioned three authors did not find the exact extraction place during their survey they supposed its existence near the workshop. In the winter of 1991/1992 the archaeologist Á. Ringer (Miskolc Museum) and the geologist Zs. Majoros (Bükk National Park) observed at the Sás patak site near the brook at the end of the pasture several chips and flakes in the surface debris of the limnic opalite outcrop. According to their opinion these could not belong to the remains of modern mineral collectors' "activity" (in spite of being a Nature Conservation Area collectors used to collect pieces of opalite from the site illegally, because of the beauty of this raw material). During a survey at the beginning of 1992 Á. Ringer, Zs. Majoros and the author of this paper agreed that the pieces in question and the whole condition of the area suggested that perhaps it was an exploitation site and they decided to make a trial excavation in the summer of that year. Though this small-scale trial excavation yielded positive results (it was sponsored by the Bükk National Park and by the Municipality of the village Erdőbénye) later, because of financial and administrative problems, we were unable to continue the excavations.

TRIAL EXCAVATION IN 1992

The aim of this excavation, directed by the Hungarian Geological Institute was to determine the nature of the site. Our trial trench was opened in one of the
shallow depressions near the Sás brook where the Erdőbénye–Sima road meets it, which was filled in by limno-opaline debris. The length of the trench was 7 m, its width was 230 cm at its NW end and 60 cm at its SE end. The trial trench crossed part of an extraction pit and part of a chipping floor adjacent to this pit on the W. The dimensions of both phenomena remained unknown, since we could open only parts of them, but it is clear that the pit was wider than 1.5 m and deeper than 1.6 m. Its mouth started at a depth of about 40 cm below the present surface and the chipping floor — a fairly even platform — was also at the same depth. The upper 20 cm of the sequence of layers in the trench was a grey, disturbed layer with humus and limnoopalite debris. Between 20 and 40 cm (over the chipping floor) and until about 60 cm (over the pit) there was a layer consisting almost exclusively of limnoopalite debris with a little clayey cement material originating from the
Fig. 3. H 5 Erdőbénye-Sás patak. Part of the chipping floor in the 1992 excavation.
Near the top of the picture there is a limnoopalite block.

decomposition of andesite. This was already an undisturbed layer. At a distance of about 4 m to the SE from the NW end of the trench there were three limnoopalite blocks in primary position. To the E of these blocks, after a step-like phenomenon deepening gradually to a depth of about 80 cm from the height of the chipping floor, there was the pit itself which was filled in by loose debris of limnoopalite without cementing material. In the pit there are irregular pieces of limnoopalite of rather irregular dimensions, some large blocks were also found. In the chipping floor pieces removed from one of the blocks, cores, pieces with striking platforms, chips, flakes and some finished tools were found (Fig. 2 represents the cross section of the trench, while in Fig. 3 part of the chipping floor can be seen with one of the blocks in primary position near the top of the picture). No other finds — mining implements, ceramics, etc. — were found. At this moment we cannot give a detailed description of finds, nor an estimation of the proportion between waste and processed raw material. The technological implications, etc., are also to be studied. The complete analysis of the whole material has not been made yet and of course an
excavation of a larger area is needed to clarify the exact nature of activity carried out there. It seems sure, however, that the nature of the site is connected with the exploitation and processing of raw material.

CULTURE AND CHRONOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

As is usual on exploitation sites, mines and workshops, at Erdőbénye, there were no finds which help to give an exact chronological and cultural determinations. According to Á. Renger (pers. comm.) some of the lithic pieces at Erdőbénye were manufactured using a technique characteristic of the Middle Palaeolithic, while some finished tools (especially a burin) has an unmistakably Upper Palaeolithic character. A survey of prehistoric sites, first of all of those which are situated in the NE region of Hungary — the project is not yet completed — have produced only negative results so far; we have not yet found the Erdőbénye raw material on any prehistoric sites. This can be explained most probably by the inferior quality of the material, discussed above. Therefore the only statement which could be valid on the chronology of the site is that it seems to be prehistoric and maybe the activity at the site could have been started already in the Upper Palaeolithic.

Recent surveys made in the Zemplén area (Takács-Biró, Simán and Szakáll 1984; Takács-Biró 1986) discovered a few extraction sites and numerous workshops settled either on these extraction sites or exploiting those ones the exact locations of which are still unknown, the Erdőbénye-Sás patak site seems to be one of these latter sites.

REFERENCES


