



1 3D reconstruction of the Celtic town

The Heuneburg is one of the most important archeological monuments in Baden-Württemberg. As the first town north of the Alps, it is of worldwide historical importance.

SITE AND DATE

The Heuneburg lies in modern-day Upper Swabia near Herbertingen-Hundersingen. It was built overlooking the Danube, which from this point is navigable for freight boats for a stretch of more than 2700 km. In good weather the nearby Alps are visible from the Heuneburg. The Alpine passes leading to Italy were already of importance in prehistoric times, giving the Heuneburg an excellent strategic position for communication and trade.

A hill-top settlement on the Heuneburg site with a simple fortification was already in existence in the Bronze Age (1600-1100 BC) but it only reached its zenith in the Early Iron Age between 650 and 460 BC after a long break in settlement. Then a large early Celtic settlement centre was established and gradually attained supra-regional importance: a Celtic princely seat.

The Celts
 Numerous Greek and Roman authors report on the kelttoi, galatoi, galli or celtae. These were the names that they gave to the tribes inhabiting Central Europe in the Iron Age. The name kelttoi does not refer to a single people, but rather to various tribes. From numerous excavations we know that the Celts of the 6th and 5th centuries BC were on the threshold of a high level of civilization.



2 The monumental gate to the Celtic town then



4 ... and today



3

THE CELTIC TOWN

The Greek historian Herodotus of Halicarnassus (484-425 BC) wrote: „The Istros rises among the Celts and the town of Pyrene, and flows right through Europe”. Pyrene – the Celtic town is the oldest place referred to by name in Central Europe. There are good reasons to believe that Herodotus’ Pyrene and the Heuneburg are one and the same place. The Heuneburg lies only some 80 km from the source of the Danube near Donaueschingen. And excavations leave no doubt that there is only one site of the 6th and 5th centuries BC in the Upper Danube region with the architectural quality, size and importance required for a Greek merchant



6



3, 5 und 6
 Reconstructions of Celtic buildings in the open air museum



5

7 Attic pottery from the Heuneburg

or traveller to call it a town: the Heuneburg. At its peak, scholars have estimated, around 5000 people lived in the Celtic town and the outer settlement (Außensiedlung).

A monumental stone gateway formed the main entrance to the Celtic town. Its groundplan is similar to contemporary chamber gates of the Mediterranean world. The town, with its quarters for crafts, houses and storage facilities, was surrounded by a massive bank and ditch system which provided protection for the inhabitants. In addition, the central settlement on the acropolis was protected by a circuit of walls. Following Mediterranean prototypes, the town walls were built of mud bricks – the only structure of its kind ever built north of the Alps. They were a widely visible demonstration of the close contacts with the Mediterranean and the privileged position of the Celtic town in the settlement system of the period. However, not only architectural traditions, but also numerous goods from across Europe, such as Greek pottery, Italic jewellery, wine amphoras from the South of France, amber from the Baltic or arrowheads from distant Scythia confirm the role of the Celtic town as an important centre of power and trade.



8 Filigree gold pearls from the princess's burial in the Bettelbühl necropolis



9 Gold jewellery from the young girl's burial in the Bettelbühl necropolis



10 The Giessübel-Talhau group of tumuli



11 The Hohmichele monumental tumulus



12 Excavations at the northern end of the Heuneburg



13 Finds of bones from the east terrace

Cover: The Heuneburg on the Upper Danube

The privileged position of the inhabitants of the Celtic town is reflected in their burials, which are often exceptionally richly furnished. Well over 80 burial mounds are situated in the area around the Heuneburg. The princely tumulus Hohmichele is the highest burial mound in South Germany. In late 2010, the discovery – and en bloc recovery – of the unrobbed grave of a princess in the Bettelbühl necropolis to the south of the Heuneburg was the subject of international interest. The central individual was a woman who died at the age of about 30-40 and was interred – as witnessed by the surviving timbers of the burial chamber – in the autumn of 583 BC, with great splendor and riches.

RESEARCH

Archaeology continues to make sensational discoveries on and around the Heuneburg. The Heuneburg is not only one of the most important prehistoric sites in Europe it is also one of the best researched ones. Today archaeological investigation is being carried out by the fifth generation of Archaeologists there. Even so, the Heuneburg is a long way

from being fully researched. In fact quite the opposite is the case, as the often spectacular excavations of the State Heritage Department confirm. For example, the remains of masonry structures and several human skeletons were recently found on a terrace beneath the Heuneburg. It is a stroke of luck for scholars that after the Celtic town was abandoned the Heuneburg was not reoccupied and the ancient ruins have remained more or less undisturbed in the ground. With this in mind, the Heuneburg is, without a doubt, a piece of archaeological world cultural heritage.

DIRECTIONS

Open air museum Heuneburg –
Celtic town Pyrene
Heuneburg 1-2, 88518 Hundesingen
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HEUNEBURG

Celtic town in Upper Swabia



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