

This summer, I was granted the opportunity to participate in the Vésztő-Mágor Conservation and Exhibition Program in Vésztő, Hungary. The project focused on the excavation and preservation of a Hungarian tell site and provided me with the unique opportunity to gain



*An outside view of the site*

practical experience in the fields of both archaeology and site conservation. The tell, built up through settlement and activity in the Neolithic, Bronze, Copper, and Medieval ages, is one of the largest prehistoric sites in the area. The site represents centuries of Hungarian history and cultural interactions, and, most interestingly, is one of a few sites left exposed for visitors. The original trench dug in 1986 was never backfilled and was instead covered with a roofed structure. A museum was constructed next to the tell to house and display artifacts. All of this was intended to create an exhibition for local education and outreach, but decades of exposure have dried out many of the walls and left the trench exhibition at risk. During my field school, I was able to learn how to approach excavation in an unconventional site, adjust standard techniques and practices to avoid further damaging the tell, and employ counteractive measures to restabilize and preserve the walls of the trench. I am incredibly grateful for the AIA Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship, which helped me fund my airfare and transportation and gave me the ability to pursue this field school experience.



*The site's accompanying museum*

The first phase of the project involved excavating back the existing trench walls. Air



*Excavating a portion of the trench*

exposure and fluctuations in humidity had ruined parts of the walls, making it hard to see stratigraphic layers and artifacts meant to be left for display. Learning how to excavate in this manner was very interesting, as I had to approach the trench walls in a different way than a typical straight-down dig. I was taught how to use various tools and trowels to dig into the existing walls, the importance of maintaining a flat and even wall surface, and how to

identify weak points in the walls that needed to be removed for future stability. This experience helped me understand how to identify and approach unusual problems and helped me gain an adaptable skill base that I can take into my future career. We uncovered a variety of artifacts, features, and stratigraphic layers, ranging from worked bones, shells, and bits of copper to a beautiful Copper Age floor.

During the excavations, I was also able to assist with record keeping and site forms, helping me recognize the importance of context during an excavation. Finally, I was introduced to other aspects of field projects, like pedestrian surface surveys, profile mapping, micromorphology sampling, and flotation sampling, all of which allowed me to better understand



*A photo of me with the Copper Age floor we uncovered*

concepts and practices I had studied in standard archaeology courses. Overall, my experience excavating in Hungary allowed me to expand on previous, course-based knowledge and learn how to navigate different concerns and expectations in the field.

The second phase of the project centered on site conservation. As an Anthropology major, I intend to pursue a graduate program in conservation. This phase of the project allowed me to



*Sifting dirt so it can be used to make bricks!*

understand how conservation can work in the field and helped me confirm my desire to pursue conservation in the future. To preserve the site, program directors and conservators decided to create stabilizing walls from handmade mud bricks. This approach is meant to physically support unstable walls and act as a moisture barrier to prevent dehydration and decay. Ultimately, a

render of stratigraphic layers and artifacts will be placed over the supports to allow visitors to understand site context and purpose without damaging the site's integrity. During this phase of the project, I helped make mortar and mud bricks from a mixture of straw, local dirt, and perlite, built supporting walls in various areas of the trench, and gained experience maintaining sites for exhibition and education.



*Shaping a brick so that it fits better into the corners of the trench*

My experience with the Vésztő-Mágor Conservation and Exhibition Program has helped me better understand archaeology and conservation. My program directors and peers taught me how to approach unique problems and conduct myself in the field, and overall, this experience will prove invaluable to my future educational and career aspirations. The knowledge and connections I gained during my first field school will have a lasting impact on my education and understanding of archaeology, and I would like to again thank the AIA for the support provided to me through the Jane C. Waldbaum scholarship.