

THE MOST OUTSTANDING PERSONS OF THE HUNGARIAN SPELEOLOGY

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The mysterious underground caverns of Hungary probably attracted the attention of the early people who lived in the limestone regions but few written documents have survived to our days. With few exceptions, reliable evidence on the exploration of Hungarian caves exists from only the early 19th century. Since that time are known the names of brave men who dared to descend into the cool, dark depths and found — instead of dragons and demons — a colourful world of wonders there.

SARTORY, József (1766–1839), a mining engineer, became memorable in the history of Hungarian cave exploration by preparing the first map of the Baradla Cave of Aggtelek in 1794. According to current information, this is one of the oldest cave maps drawn by an engineer in the world. Unfortunately, the original was not preserved, and the only copy, discovered in 1962, is stored in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest. Originally, a text also accompanied the map (written by SARTORY's friend, János FARKAS), but it was lost.

RAISZ, Keresztély (1766–1849), surveyor of Gömör county, surveyed and studied the then known section of the Aggtelek Cave in 1801. His map and description was published in 1803 and 1807, respectively, in Vienna. His German language work is the first detailed description of the Baradla. However, he was already criticized by his contemporaries for his incorrect interpretation as to the origin of the cave. Raisz emphasized fire as having a primary role in cave formation and this opinion was not consistent with even early 19th century scientific knowledge. The map, with Russian inscriptions, was included in F. N. Glinka's book, published in Moscow in 1815.

VASS, Imre (1795–1863) was a surveyor, successor in office to Keresztély Raisz. In the 1820s he carried out repeated explorations in the Aggtelek Cave in order to find assumed but unknown passages. In 1825 he penetrated the water marking the contemporary terminal point, which was at a low level due to several years of drought. He explored 4.5 km of the main cave passage and performed precise surveying. His results appeared in Hungarian and German in 1831. He described the geological and hydrological conditions of the surround-



ings and the exploration history of the cave, and he presented the recently explored sections in detail. A hand-colored map detailing the basic structure, longitudinal sections, and surface area of the cave was provided with this volume. This work is the first scientific document about Hungarian cave exploration.

SCHMIDL, Adolf (1802–1863), a geographer, 'father of modern speleology', lived in Hungary from 1857 to his death. Besides his important investigations in Slovenia, he also had a major contribution in the exploration of Hungarian caves. In 1856 he studied the Baradla Cave of Aggtelek and the Szilice Ice Cave, currently in Czechoslovakia. Between 1858 and 1862 he investigated the hardly known caves and karst phenomena of the Bihar Mountains of Transylvania, now in Romania. Finally, in 1863, he worked in the Abaliget Cave. He published his results in outstanding papers.

SIEGMETH, Károly (1845–1912), a railway engineer, is a great figure in Hungarian cave exploration in spite of his foreign origin. He established the Eastern Carpathian Department of the Hungarian Carpathian Association and commissioned by this organization, visited the Aggtelek Cave. Finding it in a neglected state, he made a proposal for saving the cave. At his initiative the Eastern Carpathian Department undertook the supervision of the cave, surveyed it, made it easily passable, and also opened a new entrance. Siegmeth was also an enthusiastic popularizer of caves. He lectured on speleology in the major towns of the country, using his own slide series. He published several papers on caves at home and abroad, particularly about the Baradla Cave. In 1910 he became the first president of the first Hungarian scientific cave exploration organization. He collected literature on the caves of Hungary; this was edited for publication by Henrik Horusitzky after his death.

Top left: Archaeological site in Büdös-pest Cave, Bükk Mts.

Top right: Szeleta Cave, Bükk Mts.

Bottom: Karrenfeld around the Aggtelek Lake (by T. Hazslinszky)

JORDÁN, Károly (1871–1959), Professor of Mathematics, was the first important figure who employed climbing technology and equipment in his cave explorations. He participated in the exploration of the Pál-völgy Cave, studied the Rév water cave in Transylvania, and surveyed the Tapolca lake cave. In 1910 he played a major role in the organization of the first scientific organization of Hungarian cave exploration, and he became vice-president of the Society. In 1911 he investigated the shafts (potholes) of the Alsó-hegy. The event is a landmark in Hungarian speleology, the starting-point towards the exploration of shafts. Applying rather primitive equipment, he explored, surveyed and took photographs in 12 caves within three days.

KADIĆ, Ottokár (1876–1957), was a geologist and paleontologist, whose name is associated with the launching of organized cave exploration in Hungary. His interest in paleontology attracted him to caves. His excavations of the Szeleta Cave, which began in 1906, marked the advent of systematic cave



exploration for scientific purposes in the caves of Hungary. Subsequently in other caves of the Bükk Mountains and also in the Pilis, Gerecse Mountains and in almost all important caves of the country, his discoveries achieved results meriting international appreciation. He carefully documented his work. He surveyed and described not only the caves where excavations were under way but also studied all the caves in the neighbourhood. He was the first to provide a description of the István Cave, and when it was opened for tourism, he worked there as an adviser. He was influential in the exploration of the caves of the Buda Mountains. He drew the first map of the Szemlő-hegy Cave, explored in 1930. He was responsible for the clearing and opening of the partly natural, partly artificial system of caverns below the Castle Hill of Buda. On the upper level of this cave, he established the

first Hungarian speleological exhibition. He described the Lóczy Cave and developed it for tourism. His activity aimed at the protection of caves is also noteworthy. Anually, he prepared a list of literature on Hungarian caves. He edited the first speleological journals (*Barlangkutatás* and *Barlangvilág*). He had an outstanding role in the development and evolution of the scientific organisation of Hungarian cave exploration. He was first secretary and then president of the Hungarian Speleological Society, formed in 1926. In 1952 he prepared a comprehensive work on the caves of the Carpathian basin, but it has remained unpublished.

STRÖMPL, Gábor (1885–1945), a geographer and cartographer, was an eminent figure in Hungarian cave exploration in the first decades of this century. Especially prominent is his research work in the caves of the Abaúj–Gömör region (1911) and Transylvania (1912). He was particularly interested in speleological and karst terminology. General issues such as karst morphology, hydrology of the Buda, Bükk, and Aggtelek Mountains, and the origin and destruction of caves, were also among his interests.

DUDICH, Endre (1895–1971), Professor of Biology, was an internationally recognized biospeleologist. In 1928–29 he intensively studied the faune of the Aggtelek Cave. His results were summarized in a German-language monograph published in Vienna in 1932. This was a fundamental work in speleobiology, still highly acclaimed and considered, indispensable, which brought him international fame. As a university professor, Endre Dudich nurtured the growth of eminent biologists who engaged in the study of speleofauna and speleoflora. In 1957 he established the fourth biological cave laboratory in the world in the Baradla. In order to publish the achievements of Hungarian speleobiology, he launched the series '*Biospeologica Hungarica*'. He was an officer of the Hungarian Speleological Society for a long time.

BOROS, Ádám (1900–1973), Professor of Botany, was one of the founders of the Hungarian Speleological Society in 1926. He was a scientist with diverse interests and great interest in the education of the younger generation. Of his many activities, his pioneering investigation of cave mosses in the most valuable.

PAPP, Ferenc (1901–1969), Professor of Hydrogeology, only became involved in the management of Hungarian cave exploration in the early 1950s. At his university department and elsewhere in the country he encouraged the activity of cave exploration groups. In 1957 he established a karst and cave research station at Jósvalfő, named after Imre Vass. He published several papers on the geological implications of speleology. In his articles on the role of karst phenomena in engineering geology and on the indexing of underground caverns he provided a detailed program for the scientific exploration of caves and karst areas.

SCHÖNVISZKY, László (1901–1979), was a librarian whose life was closely interwoven with Hungarian cave exploration. From his youth he conducted excavations in various cave regions of the country. In the early 1930s he began to collect Hungarian speleological literature. As a result of his work, in collaboration with Károly Bertalan, the Hungarian cave bibliography from 1931 to 1945 can be regarded as almost complete. In 1926 László Schönviszky was among the founders of the Hungarian Speleological Society and served as its secretary for some time. In 1961, by then retired, he became chief of office, secretary and deputy secretary general of the reorganised Society. He established a new library for the Society.

VÉRTES, László (1914–1968), was a paleoarchaeologist whose life-work is of international significance. As a disciple of Ottokár Kadić, he studied the problems of cave fills. The excavation in the Istállóskő Cave, Bükk Mountains, was an important event in his life. It was here that he recognized the need for comprehensive investigations; this he applied in his further excavations (Lambrecht Kálmán Cave). The data on Hungarian caves is summarized in his vast manual (Monuments of the Paleolithic and Mesolithic in Hungary, 1964). He also participated in the social organization of cave exploration and in the work of the Society. He fought for the protection of caves at a time when few people in Hungary were concerned with the protection of the environment.

CHOLNOKY, Jenő (1870–1950), Professor of Geography and an outstanding figure in the history of Hungarian geography, made important contributions to the development of Hungarian karst and speleological research. As part of his earlier investigations in physical geography, he had been concerned with this field, but he became deeply interested in the relatively new discipline of karstology only in the early 1900s. First he studied the karsts of Transylvania followed by those in the Bükk, Mecsek, Bakony and Buda Mountains and those in Upper Hungary. His most valuable observations were in the Karst Mountains of Slovenia where he made currently still accepted observations about limestone areas and caves in general (1916). His later scientific activity touched upon many details of karstification, and his views on this process developed the foundation of the modern approach to karst. He also studied the origin of caves. In 1926, he became executive president of the Hungarian Speleological Society and was president from 1932 until 1944. In this capacity he frequently lectured on speleological subjects and promoted the development of this discipline.

MOTTL, Mária (1906–1980), a paleontologist, was the most important woman cave researcher. Starting in the 1930s, she was secretary to the Society. She meant continuity in the life of the Society as she was in charge of operative tasks.

For example, she prepared the minutes of meetings and extracted them for the public. As a paleontologist, she conducted many excavations, first in the Bükk Mountains, and then in Transylvania in 1941–42.

BERTALAN, Károly (1914–1978), a geologist, was an active contributor to Hungarian speleology throughout his life. His greatest achievement was collecting, categorizing, and making available documents research reports. He regarded the compilation of the Hungarian speleological bibliography his main tasks. It is because of him and László Schönviszky that the list of Hungarian speleological works is almost complete to 1945.



PLÓZER, István (1948–1977), cave diver. He started cave diving in 1964. His most important fields of activity were the Tapolcai-tavas Cave, the Molnár János Cave and the resurgence-cave of the Hévíz Lake, that latter had been discovered through his efforts. He collected and edited publications on Hungarian cave diving. To promote cave diving activities he organized the Underwater Caving Committee within the Hungarian Speleological Society in 1975. He was killed by accident during a dive to the cave of the Hévíz Lake.



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