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PL ISSN 0066-5924; e-ISSN: 2719-6542

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23858/APa61.2023.3468>

<https://rcin.org.pl/dlibra/publication/276582>

## **Jak cytować**

Włodarczak, P., & Leuzinger, U. (2023). Soldiers on the Digs. Archaeological Excavations in Switzerland Involving the Deuxieme Division des Chasseurs. *Archaeologia Polona*, 61, 239–267. <https://doi.org/10.23858/APa61.2023.3468>

# Soldiers on the Digs. Archaeological Excavations in Switzerland Involving the Deuxieme Division des Chasseurs

Piotr Włodarczak<sup>a</sup> and Urs Leuzinger<sup>b</sup>

During the Second World War, Polish soldiers of the 2nd Rifle Division (Deuxieme Division des Chasseurs) were interned in Switzerland. Some of them were briefly employed on archaeological excavations in the cantons of Aargau, Lucerne, Solothurn, and Thurgau. In this last location, Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer organised the most productive cooperation with the Poles, investigating the pile-dwelling settlements of Pfyn-Breitenloo and Arbon-Bleiche 2 in 1944 and 1945, respectively. Earlier, Polish soldiers had been employed in the investigation of Roman villas at Aeschi (Solothurn) and Bellikon (Aargau), and the Neolithic pile-dwelling settlement of Burgäschisee-Ost (Solothurn), among other sites. The work involving the Poles was usually carried out efficiently, to the satisfaction of both sides. It has earned a worthy place in the history of Swiss archaeology, with the results often cited in various publications.

KEY-WORDS: 2nd Rifle Division, Second World War, Switzerland, archaeology

## INTRODUCTION

“Polenweg” is a name permanently inscribed in the Swiss landscape, referring to a road built by Polish soldiers interned during the Second World War. Another term, “Polengrabung”, is established among archaeologists to refer to excavations carried out with the participation of Poles at the time (Bleuer 2022: 71). During the War, interned soldiers from various countries, including France (e.g., research at Avenches in the canton of Vaud) and Italy (e.g., work at Burgäschisee in the canton of Solothurn), were employed for excavations in Switzerland. Yet, it was the excavations involving Polish soldiers that were the most frequent and have become permanently

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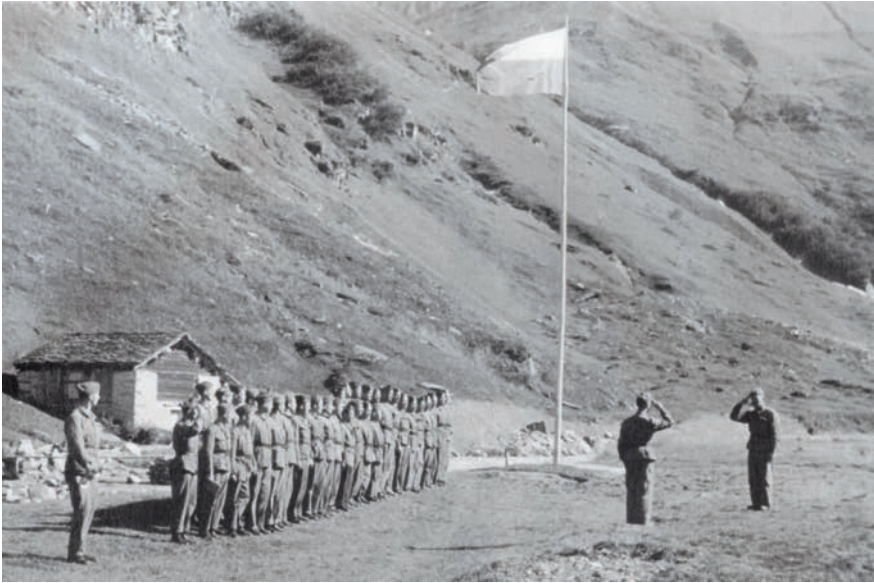
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inscribed in the history of Swiss archaeology. Information about them can be found in monographs of important sites (e.g., Hochuli *et al.*, 1994; Leuzinger 2007; Rigert 2008; Hafner and Hostettler eds 2022), and general publications discussing the history of individual regions, but there are relatively few mentions in the Polish literature (Włodarczak 2008).

Located in the Swiss canton of Thurgau, the Pfy-Breitenloo site is a pile-dwelling settlement from the 4th millennium BC, well known to Neolithic researchers. The site yielded highly important finds, which is reflected in the distinguishing of the Pfy culture. The main work on the site took place in autumn 1944, when Polish soldiers interned in Switzerland between 1940 and 1945 were recruited. These men came from the Polish 2nd Rifle Division [French: Deuxieme Division des Chasseurs, Polish: Druga Dywizja Strzelców Pieszych; before May 1940 named as Deuxieme Division d'Infanterie Polonaise/Polish: Druga Dywizja Piechoty]. The Polish excavation team contributed significantly to the success of the digs led by Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer, an archaeologist from the Thurgau Museum in Frauenfeld (Brem and Leuzinger 2020: 94–106). The employment of interned soldiers for excavations in neutral Switzerland presents an interesting case in the history of wartime archaeology. The best-known example of the Pfy digs is taken below to highlight the archaeological accomplishments of the soldiers of the 2nd Division, with basic information about other “Polish” excavations also provided.

## CONTEXT

The 2nd Rifle Division was formed in France in the autumn of 1939. Most of the rank-and-file soldiers were pre-War Polish economic migrants to France mobilised after the outbreak of the War. The officers and non-commissioned officers came mostly from Poland and were veterans of the September Campaign of 1939 (Smoliński 1992: 11–27). Commanded by Brigadier-General Bronisław Prugar-Ketling, the division was incorporated into the French 45th Corps. The division fought at the Battle of France in Alsace, including against Heinz Guderian's armoured troops. After a heavy two-day battle at the Clos-du-Doubs hills, it covered the corps' retreat towards Switzerland. The 2nd Rifle Division crossed the Swiss border in the Jura region in good order on 19–20 June 1940. Some 12,000 troops were deployed in internment camps. Initially, they were temporarily stationed in various towns in the canton of Neuchâtel, to be then mostly clustered in large camps in the eastern part of the cantons of Bern and Aargau. In agreement with the Polish authorities in London, General Prugar-Ketling tried to confine his soldiers to the Swiss camps, maintaining



**Fig. 1.** One of the Polish camps in Switzerland. Morning assembly of Polish interned soldiers before leaving for work. Photo from the collection of the Polish Museum in Rapperswil.

organisation and discipline as much as possible (Fig. 1). This decision was not universally approved by his subordinates: some of them wanted to cease fighting and return to their families in France, while others hoped to join the Polish forces in the West and continue the fight against the Germans. In the first year of internment alone, the soldiers made more than 2000 escape attempts, of which 1228 were successful (Smoliński 1992: 108).

During the internment, the interests of the Polish and Swiss sides collided. The Polish command, in consultation with the authorities in London, wanted to maintain the functional efficiency of the division, with a view to its potential military use at a later stage of the War. Another important consideration was the concern for human capital, in the belief that it would be used in the future to rebuild the war-ravaged country. In turn, the Swiss politicians, representing various political orientations, tended to put the interests of their country's endangered independence and neutrality first. This made them appear hostile to the Polish soldiers, especially by comparison with the generally supportive Swiss society. There were therefore various frictions and misunderstandings throughout the internment period. In general, however, agreement and cooperation were reached on most issues in order to safeguard the interests

of both sides. At the end of the internment period, both sides could express their sincere gratitude to each other, and the stay in Switzerland, albeit forced, turned out to be a fondly remembered period in the lives of many Polish soldiers.

The efforts of the Polish command to organise instruction at various levels for the interned soldiers were crowned with success. Among other things, approval was gained for university teaching. University camps were established, including the “Zurich” academic camp at Winterthur, not far from Pfyn (e.g., Vetulani 1976; Cieszkowski *et al.*, 2010: 123–134; Stempowski 2015: 148–203). The good organisation of this schooling gave the impression that the high level of archaeological research carried out with the participation of Polish soldiers was due to their professional training, unlike, for example, the excavations organised with Italian soldiers (Bleuer 2022: 71). Nevertheless, the vast majority of the interned Poles were simple, poorly educated private soldiers. Therefore, while some soldiers received university and high school education, other groups were offered vocational training and even literacy courses.

At the end of 1940, the Swiss authorities began to implement a plan devised by Friedrich Wahlen (head of the Military Provisions Office), an element of which was a work order for interned soldiers. Poles were put to work in sensitive sectors of the Swiss economy, including mostly road construction, land reclamation, ore mines, and agriculture. They also worked on the expansion of military fortifications. The wages, often less than 1 franc per day, were starkly lower than Swiss wages, and their imposition sometimes led to protests and acts of disobedience. Over time the situation stabilised, helped by the position of the division command, which pointed to the positive impact of work on the mental and physical condition of the soldiers, as well as to the need for good relations with the Swiss authorities and society. In this context, however, the specifics of employment on archaeological excavations in Switzerland should be highlighted. Such work, often based on various types of sponsorship, was generally low-paid and often used a “free” workforce. Consequently, even the starvation wages for interned soldiers were a major expense in the excavation budget, as indicated by financial reports (e.g., Flükiger 1941; JBer. GPV 1941–1942; Drack 1943).

In August 1944, the Polish military authorities lifted the ban on escapes from internment camps, beginning a period of clandestine evacuation. From this point on, attempts were made to smuggle groups of soldiers mainly to France, from where they either made their way to partisan units or the Allied armies. Prior to 1945, this action did not go smoothly and only a fraction of the soldiers decided to escape. It was during this period that the archaeological research at Pfyn, discussed in more detail here, was carried out. Linked to this is the story of the chief photographer of the excavations, named Domaradzki. In his diary, Keller-Tarnuzzer notes with appreciation that Domaradzki had trained his successor (named Kieszek) before his planned

escape to France, so that the work on the excavation could continue undisturbed. Likely being close to the Polish soldiers, the Swiss archaeologist was familiar with their problems. However, it can also be assumed that, as a representative of Swiss state institutions, he was not privy to the escape plans and found out about such situations after they occurred.

In 1944, Soviet troops seized eastern Poland (the home area of many soldiers of the 2nd Division), and the manifesto of July 1944 announced the creation of a government vassal to the USSR. The Swiss press gave extensive coverage to these events. In issue 15(127) of 1945, which includes a note about the excavations at Pfyn, the *Goniec Obozowy* (the main magazine for interned soldiers) mentions the “Lublin Committee” and the new situation in Poland. The soldiers working on the excavations were probably already planning their future, aware that it would be different from what they assumed when they crossed the Swiss border in 1940. It is possible that they saw their participation in archaeological research as an escape from everyday life and a postponement of difficult life choices.

From the very beginning of the internment, the Swiss authorities would issue ordinances limiting, or restrictively regulating, the soldiers’ contacts with local communities. The pinnacle of these restrictions was the “Orange Befehl” (orange ban, from the colour of the paper it was printed on), which introduced draconian restrictions. Among other things, it decreed bans on social contacts and marriages with interned soldiers. Regardless of the harsh consequences, the strict regulations were hardly adhered to and were the subject of vociferous public criticism (although denunciations also occurred). The situation loosened up over time, and social contacts intensified. The number of children conceived by Swiss women and Polish soldiers is telling: official records note 369 cases (Matyja 2013: 115). This does not change the fact that there were misunderstandings and tensions, as well as many personal dramas (e.g., Volland 1993; Bill 2020). In the context of the events presented here, serving as evidence is a 1945 letter from Keller-Tarnuzzer to the commandant of the camp in Matzingen, which contains a suggestion from a Polish commander to exclude one of the soldiers from the team for the planned excavations in Arbon-Bleiche, who “is too attracted to women and they to him, which can cause a lot of trouble in the environment of a small town or a small village” (document in the archive of the Amt für Archäologie Thurgau). As a result, even in a climate of clearly loosening restrictions at the end of the War, Keller-Tarnuzzer referred to the officially binding regulations. He may have done so only in order to remove a troublesome employee from his team, or out of official duty. For at that time, his own daughter Inga Keller was dating a Polish interned soldier, her future husband Henryk Węgier.

## ORGANISATION OF EXCAVATIONS AT PFYN

Planning his research during wartime, Keller-Tarnuzzer (Fig. 2) encountered problems finding workers for the excavation of the Neolithic settlement at Pfyn. A contract with the Federal Commissariat for Internment and Hospitalization dated 15 August 1944 mentions the employment of 35 English soldiers. For unspecified reasons, the Swiss archaeologist heard from Lieutenant Colonel Hermann Siegrist (then military commander of the Polish university camp in Winterthur – Fig. 3) that Poles were instead being sent to work on the excavation: five of them “educated”, i.e., students from his camp (for technical work) and 30 workers from the camp in Matzingen, near Pfyn (Leuzinger 2007: 16). The first internees in that camp were 245 soldiers of the 2nd Warsaw Light Artillery Regiment, under the command of Major Kazimierz Napieralski, who arrived there in December 1941. They worked mainly on river regulation. In 1942, the Matzingen camp was transformed into a vocational training centre (Fig. 4), making it possible to find specialists in various crafts, including professions useful for “engineering” work on a waterlogged archaeological site. This was probably why the research at Pfyn was carried out with outstanding technical proficiency (by the standards of the time). Indeed, among the soldiers one could find locksmiths, carpenters and specialists in other professions useful for work on a pile-dwelling site.

In his diary entries, Keller-Tarnuzzer expressed his concern about the decision to dispatch soldiers from an exotic eastern country to the excavation. He probably expected that internees from western European countries would be easier to work with. By the end of the War, Poles were already a minority among the interned soldiers. However, the Swiss archaeologist’s attitude towards working with Poles can also be seen as surprisingly distanced. After more than four years of internment, the soldiers of the 2nd Division were already well known to the Swiss, working effectively in various sectors of the economy (primarily agriculture and construction). We have official documents and private witness accounts emphasizing how the work of the Poles was considered superior to that of interned soldiers from other countries (e.g., Rettenmund 1995: 278; Bleuer 2022: 71). Cooperation with the Swiss academic community, including the universities of nearby Zurich, was also well established, for which great credit is due to the aforementioned Lieutenant Colonel Siegrist (regarded in many studies as an advocate of Polish soldiers), among others. In his academic life, Keller-Tarnuzzer must have been in contact with lecturers working in university camps. All in all, the various Polish internment camps in the Pfyn area were the best source of manpower for archaeological excavations.

Unlike other national groups, the interned Poles retained the internal organisation of the large unit, the division. As a result, the commanders had effective control over



**Fig. 2.** Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer. Photo from the collection of the Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

the appropriate organisation of the teams sent to particular jobs. Swiss camp commanders often relied on the suggestions of Polish commanders when posting people for work. This was also true of the excavations at Pfyn, where people with the right skills for the job were sent. It was possible to rotate men in and out of the digs, as evidenced by three soldiers who were expelled from the excavations for disciplinary reasons. On the other hand, the work of the Poles in archaeological research was not a major concern for the Swiss military authorities, and little importance was attached to expediting suitable personnel for research. Much therefore depended on the efficiency of the organiser of the excavations and his good relations with Swiss camp commanders and Polish commanders. As for the research in the canton of Thurgau, Keller-Tarnuzzer managed to establish a good rapport with both Swiss and Polish military officers.

Work at Pfyn began on 8 September 1944. The soldiers built a two-storey heated barrack supplied with electricity and water (Fig. 5). In addition to living quarters, the barrack also housed a kitchen, kitchen storage, and an office. Keller-Tarnuzzer purchased a radio for the soldiers out of the expedition budget. The management of the barrack, discipline, and provisions were entrusted to a non-commissioned officer. The living conditions – both provided by the organiser and created by the soldiers for themselves – were therefore very good, especially considering the harsh realities of wartime.





**Fig. 3.** Lieutenant Colonel Hermann Siegrist with Lieutenant Colonel Jan Narzyski. Well-cooperating military Swiss and Polish commanders of the university camp in Winterthur. Photo: L. Bialy/bildarchiv.winterthur.ch

The Polish team was led by Second Lieutenant Henryk Dawid (Fig. 6), the maintenance platoon commander in the 4th Warsaw Rifle Regiment (Smoliński 1992: 217), a reserve officer, and an engineer by training. Keller-Tarnuzzer referred to him as “his assistant” (Keller-Tarnuzzer 1944a: 66; 1944b; 1945; also notes in the excavation diary). In many of his papers the Swiss archaeologist emphasizes Dawid’s significant role in the organisation of the excavations at Pfyn and at Arbon. Second Lieutenant Dawid’s education and technical experience proved to be of great help in the proper organisation of the research. Getting to know the expectations of the Swiss archaeologist, Dawid selected the right people for certain positions. Looking at the staffing possibilities, one can even envy the excavation manager’s comfortable situation, which is in many aspects better than in the present day. The team included carpenters and locksmiths who did the day-to-day work for the rest of the team, such as building scaffolding for the photographer, drafting tables, chairs, measuring aids and, finally, elements for the museum reconstruction of a Neolithic house. They built



**Fig. 4.** Soldiers of the camp in Matzingen (canton of Thurgau) during the visit of General Prugar-Ketling – division commander. Photo from the collection of the Polish Museum in Rapperswil.

the formwork necessary for the exploration of the lacustrine site and also laid the tracks for carts in which the soil was removed (Fig. 7).

The excavation diaries show that Keller-Tarnuzzer was gradually becoming fascinated by the capabilities of the team created by Second Lieutenant Dawid. He soon found it possible to cede all organisational work to Dawid, along with the engineering and technical work that was extremely important in the study of a pile-dwelling site. Once the field research was completed, Keller-Tarnuzzer left, leaving the tasks of cataloguing, drawing the artefacts and packing the finds to the Poles (Fig. 8). He soon requested a Polish team for another excavation,



**Fig. 5.** Participants of the excavations in Pfyn at a self-built residential barrack.  
Photo from the collection of the Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

on an Early Bronze Age settlement at Arbon-Bleiche. According to surviving correspondence, with an officer representing the office for internment troops, he had by then completely entrusted Second Lieutenant Dawid with the assembling of the team. On Dawid's behalf, he asked the camp commandant at Matzingen for the already experienced draftsmen and photographer.

During the digs, Dawid drew up site and height plans along with one assistant and a soldier who had been involved in machine construction before the War (Figs 9 and 10). When working with pile-dwelling settlements and their complex wooden structures, this is an extremely difficult job. At Pfyn, the documentation made by the Poles made it possible to link the test surveys done in 2002 and 2004 by Urs Leuzinger to the old excavations. These surveys were aimed at obtaining timber for dendrochronological dating of the remains of Pfyn-culture buildings discovered in the 1940s. Thanks to the new excavations, the age of the settlement was determined to be 3706–3704 BC, and the plans made by the Polish soldiers proved to be quite accurate (Leuzinger 2007). Even though measurement errors sometimes reached 15–20 cm, it was easy to relate the newly discovered wooden structures to the previously documented finds.



**Fig. 6.** Second Lieutenant Henryk Dawid with his team during excavations in Arbon-Bleiche. Photo from the collection of the Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

In the course of the research, the soldiers Edward Giszczyński, Roman Kończak, and Jan Gorlak made ink drawings of small finds, which were then used in scientific publications (Figs 11 and 12). According to Keller-Tarnuzzer, the drawings were both accurate and visually appealing. Furthermore, “like the other participants in the excavations, they were particularly pleased when an exceptionally beautiful or important artefact came into their hands” (Figs 13 and 14; Keller-Tarnuzzer 1944a: 71). Another of the soldiers (the aforementioned Domaradzki) was involved in photographic documentation. Numerous glass negatives of photographs of floor plans with details of the uncovered wooden structures have survived. What is missing, however, is documentation of the profiles. Creating the inventory, in turn, was entrusted to a person with a good knowledge of German who had worked in a legal office before the War.

In the course of the research, Dawid shared the responsibility of guiding numerous visitors with Keller-Tarnuzzer. The Swiss archaeologist placed great emphasis on popularising archaeological research in the region. School excursions were particularly numerous. In addition to his knowledge of the subject, Dawid was also distinguished by his “great talent for embellishing details and putting together interesting stories”. According to Keller-Tarnuzzer, this was a positive side of the soldiers’ involvement in



**Fig. 7.** Excavations at Pfy-Breitenloo in 1944.

Photo from the collection of the Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

the excavations. He enjoyed the soldiers' discussions about the finds. He noted, for example, an argument between members of the team about the type of grain discovered. He further recorded that one of the soldiers disagreed with his interpretation of a wooden object as part of a house structure, claiming that it was a typical wooden mangle, still frequently found at that time in Polish and Ukrainian houses in the East. Having analysed the analogies, the Swiss then agreed with the soldier's interpretation.

Keller-Tarnuzzer's articles on the Pfy-Breitenloo site emphasise the contributions of Second Lieutenant Dawid and the entire Polish team. In one paper, as an expression of his positive attitude, he wrote: "There is no denying: The Poles have erected with this work a small monument to themselves, to themselves and to their nation. When they will have long been back in their country, when they will once again be gripped by everyday life, they will recall that they contributed to the interesting cultural work in our country. And us? Even decades later, when we talk about the excavations of the Pfy pile-dwellings or when we look at the expensive exhibits in the Pfy museum that is to be built, we will recall that these were Poles who devoted their efforts to it and who did it with devotion and love. There was a Polish museum in Rapperswil, which was something of a holy place for us Swiss, and through which we felt deeply connected to this country in the East. Something in this vein will



**Fig. 8.** Excavations at Pfyń-Breitenloo. Polish soldier signing finds.  
Photo from the collection of Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.



**Fig. 9.** Excavations at Pfyń-Breitenloo. Second Lieutenant Henryk Dawid and his assistant during the measurements. Photo from the archive Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

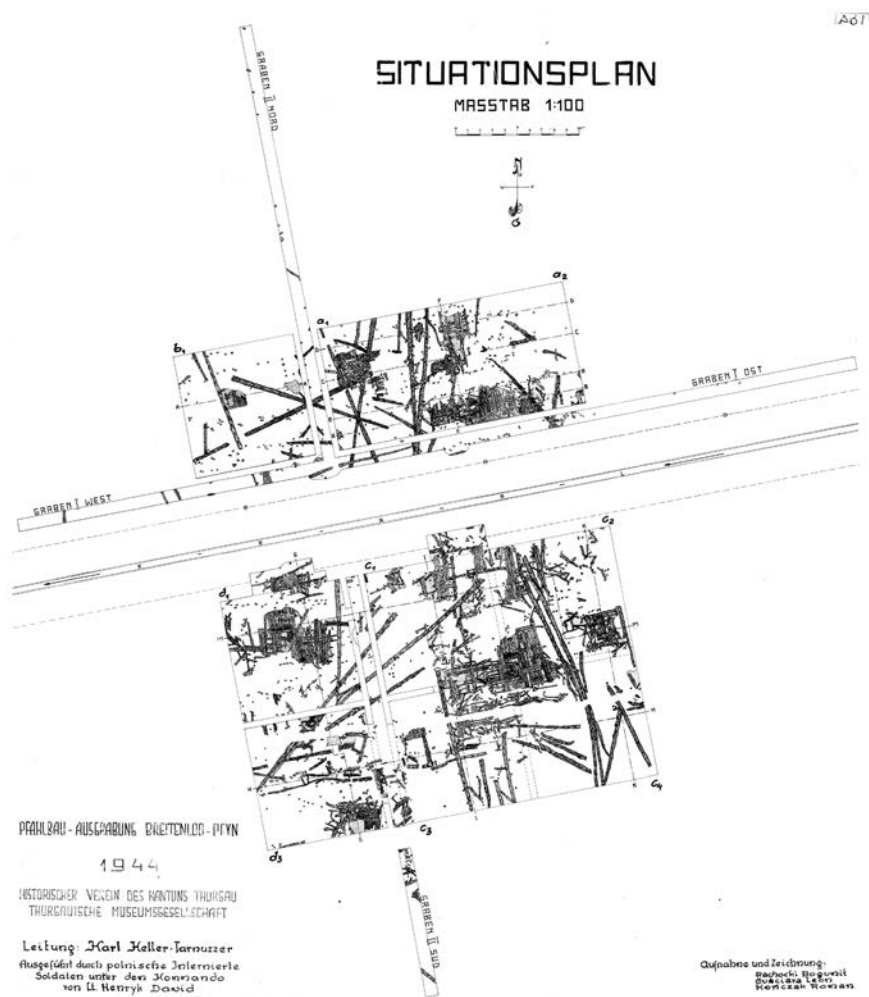
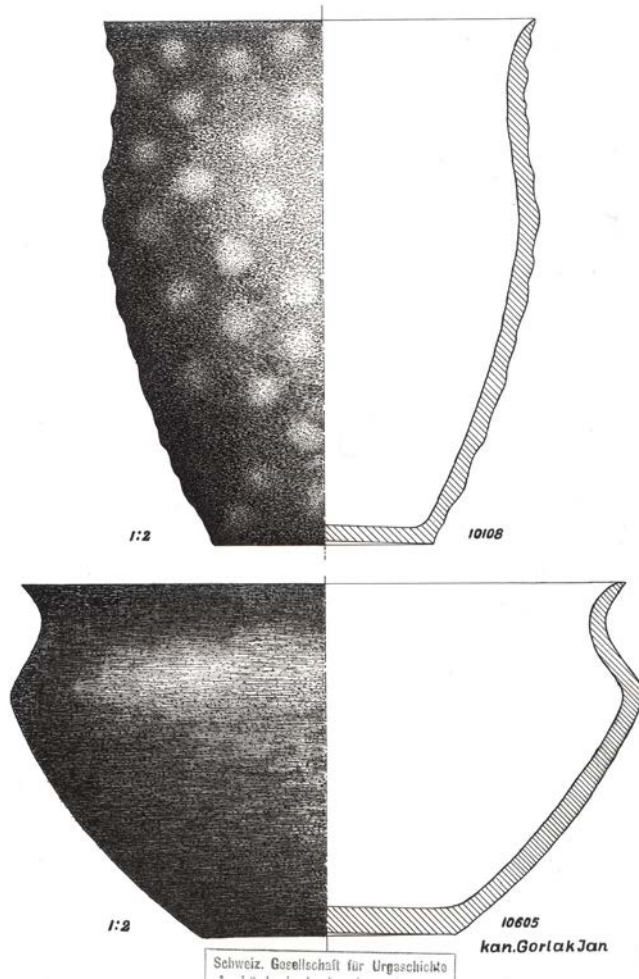


Fig. 10. Plan of the Neolithic settlement in Pfy-Breitenlool, made by Polish soldiers. From the archive Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

remain in our thoughts about Breitenlool near Pfy” (Keller-Tarnuzzer 1944a: 71, 72). Keller-Tarnuzzer sent one of his early articles on the research at Pfy to General Bronislaw Prugar-Ketling, the division commander. A reply from the Polish general is kept in the archives of the Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

**PFYN – BREITENLOO 1944**



**Fig. 11.** Drawings of ceramic vessels from Pfy-Breitenloo made by cannoneer Jan Gorlak. From the archive Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

**RESULTS OF THE WORK AT PFYN-BREITENLOO**

Keller-Tarnuzzer only managed to provide a preliminary description of the results of his research at Pfy, and he did not process the results of his other major excavation



## PFYN - BREITENLOO 1944

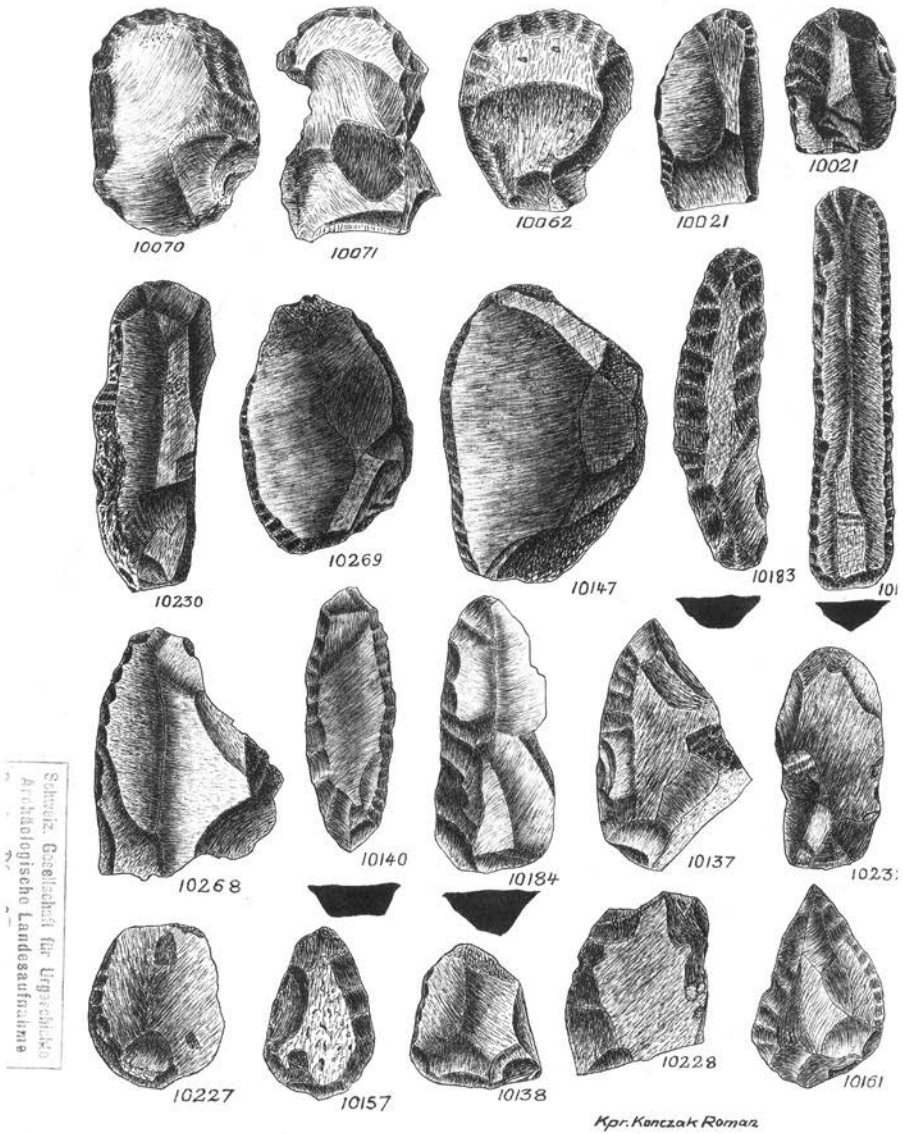


Fig. 12. Drawings of flint finds from Pfyn-Breitenloo made by corporal Roman Kończak. From the archive Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.



**Fig. 13.** Excavations at Pfyn-Breitenloo. Polish soldier at work.  
Photo from the archive Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

projects (Brem and Leuzinger 2020: 109). It was not until the end of the 20th century that the results of the excavations with Polish soldiers became the subject of in-depth studies. Monographs of the sites Arbon-Bleiche 2 (Hochuli *et al.*, 1994) and Pfyn-Breitenloo (Leuzinger 2007) were published, and various articles on the subject always highlighted the involvement of the team of Polish soldiers (e.g., Leuzinger 2004/2005; 2005).

The 1944 excavations encompassed an area of approximately 1000 m<sup>2</sup>. The complex plan of the Neolithic settlement drawn up by the Polish soldiers has proven to be highly accurate and detailed, given the realities of mid-20th century methodology, and the surveys of 2002 and 2004 can easily be linked to the 1944 documentation (Leuzinger 2005: 28; 2007: 20). Based on drawing and photographic documentation, the outlines of 17 Neolithic houses were identified, and the field documentation made it possible to establish many details of their construction (Leuzinger 2007: 25–43). Dendrochronological verification determined that this was a single-phase settlement from 3706–3704 BC. Many details of the settlement's layout were established. The 1944 research produced the following finds: 416 flint artefacts, 69 axe haft elements, 67 stone artefacts, 16 bone and antler products, 242 animal bones,



**Fig. 14.** Excavations at Pfyn-Breitenloo. The discovery of a Neolithic flint knife in the hands of a Polish soldier. Photo from the archive Amt für Archäologie Thurgau.

26 wooden artefacts, 10 textiles, and 15,057 pottery fragments (Leuzinger 2007: 43). Both the settlement layout data and the portable objects have become a major source of information on the 4th millennium BC in the Alpine zone. The name of the site is still in use to describe a characteristic cultural phenomenon from this region.

#### OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING POLISH SOLDIERS (FIG. 15)

Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer's research was not the only excavation activity involving Poles. The following brief descriptions present other cases.

##### *Aeschi-Dornacker (canton of Solothurn)*

Polish soldiers took part in excavations of a Roman villa in Aeschi/Dornacker as early as the autumn of 1940 (Wullschleger 2016: 216). This work, led by Walter Flükiger, took place even before the regulations covering the work of interned soldiers under the Wahlen Plan were implemented (Fig. 16). The idea of using Poles came from



**Fig. 15.** Location of archaeological sites in Switzerland investigated with the participation of Polish interned soldiers. 1 – Burgäschisee-Ost, 2 – Aeschi-Dornacker, 3 – Sursee, 4 – Vindonissa, 5 – Bellikon, 6 – Pfyn, 7 – Arbon.

Dr Allemann, a chemist from Basel residing in Aeschi (Flükiger 1941: 174). He gained the support of the local scientific elite, as well as the organisational and financial help of the Pro Polonia organisation from Solothurn. Among the participants was the Egyptologist Henri Wild, who by a stroke of luck, knew the architect Tadeusz Górski, a cadet interned in one of the camps in Emmental, from his excavations in Egypt. The Polish colleague then became the chief documentarist for the excavations at Dornacker (Fig. 17). Meanwhile, another cadet, J. Morawski, a surveyor by training, was charged with the measurements and making plans (Fig 18). Apart from Górski and Morawski, there were 46 other Polish soldiers on list of those employed (Flükiger 1941: 176). The Swiss archaeologist noted that as the weather worsened, the enthusiasm of the team waned. There was even a strike that lasted a day and a half. Flükiger tried to blame this situation on the harsh conditions and lack of warm clothing. The crisis was finally averted by providing the team with cigarettes and suitable clothing, with the support of Pro Polonia (Flükiger 1941: 177). In his summary, the research director spoke highly of the quality of the work, particularly that of Górski and



**Fig. 16.** Excavations at Aeschi-Dornacker (canton of Solothurn). Walter Flükiger with his team. Photo from the archive Amt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie - Kanton Solothurn.

Morawski. He noted that “despite occasional troubles, the nine weeks spent together were a time of good understanding and fruitful cooperation, which will remain in the fond memory of all participants” (Flükiger 1941: 191).

Research at Aeschi was also carried out in 1944, this time under the direction of Henri Wild. In addition to ten interned Italian soldiers, he engaged his friend Tadeusz Górski again as a draftsman (JbSGUF 1945: 69). The surveying group also included two Polish officers, surveying technicians by training (see below).

#### *Burgäschisee-Ost (canton of Solothurn)*

Excavations of a Neolithic lakeside settlement were carried out in 1944 (from 2 August for 13 weeks) under the direction of Otto Tschumi (Bern) and Stefan Pinösch (Solothurn), with the actual fieldwork on site directed by Walter Flükiger (Hafner and Hostettler eds 2022). These excavations primarily employed interned Italian soldiers (Bleuer 2022: 71–75), but working alongside them were two Polish surveyors (Fig. 19): Corporal Paweł Suchon [Suchoń?] from Katowice and Corporal Włodzimierz Rybkowski from Sandomierz (based on a list of employees kept in the archives of the Kantonsarchäologie Solothurn).

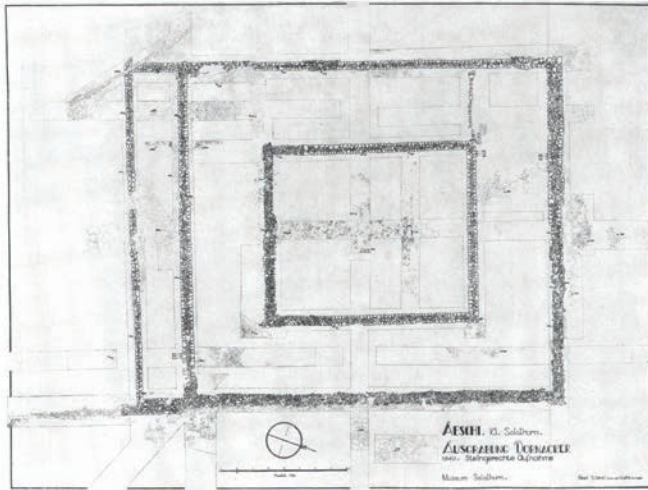


Abb. 2: Stingsacker Aufnahmen.

**Fig. 17.** Drawing documentation of the excavations in Aeschi-Dornacker, signed by Tadeusz Górski. After: Flükiger 1941.



**Fig. 18.** Excavations at Aeschi-Dornacker (canton of Solothurn). J. Morawski, who was in charge of geodetic measurements, together with his assistants. Photo from the archive Amt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie - Kanton Solothurn.



**Fig. 19.** Excavations of the Neolithic settlement of Burgäschisee-Ost (canton of Solothurn). Poles performing geodetic measurements (first and third from the right) together with interned Italian soldiers. Photo from the archive Amt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie - Kanton Solothurn.

#### *Sursee-Zellmoos (canton of Luzern)*

Research in Sursee on the Zellmoos peninsula was carried out from 13.03 to 09.05 1941 under the direction of Dr Reinhold Bosch (Rigert 2008: 12, 13). Ten Polish interned soldiers, whose names have not been established, took part (Fig. 20). The digs carried out during the construction of the Fischerhaus revealed the foundations of a church and a cemetery from the 11th century (Fig. 21), along with remains of Late Bronze Age houses and single finds from the Neolithic and Bronze Age.

#### *Vindonissa-Schutthügel (canton of Aargau)*

A group of more than 20 soldiers from the nearby camp at Gebenstorf (JBer. GPV 1940–1941: 17, 18; Zimmermann 2016) were deployed to research the well-known Roman legion camp at Vindonissa (Fig. 22). Led by Karl Hürbin, they performed simple physical work on the *Schutthügel*, or camp rubbish dump. For their work, the soldiers were paid a low but statutory rate of 1 franc per day. In the beginning, Karl Hürbin wrote with satisfaction in his excavation diary about the good training of the soldiers, noting that they were paying attention to the finds as they dug (Zimmermann 2016).



**Fig. 20.** A group of Polish soldiers during excavation at the Sursee-Zellmoos site in 1941. Photo from the archive Kantonsarchäologie Luzern.

Later, however, cooperation did not go well and the Poles were soon dismissed. Hürbin reverted to engaging patients from the psychiatric institution in Königsfelden, who were in his opinion “more industrious and reliable” and, in addition, usually worked without pay (JBer. GPV 1941–1942: 7).

#### *Bellikon-Villa rustica (canton of Aargau)*

The research of a Roman villa rustica was carried out from 27.10–17.12 1941 by Walter Drack on behalf of the “Vereinigung für Heimatkunde” society (Drack 1943). Drack was a student doing his military service, with the rank of lieutenant (Zubler 2000: 104–106). To carry out the task, he managed to recruit Polish soldiers from the accommodation camp in Hasenberg, which operated under a larger camp in Lupfig and then, from December 1941, in Wettingen (Fig. 23). Initially, six soldiers were employed, and in the course of the research their number increased to 15. They performed simple physical work, mainly uncovering stone structures of the Roman villa located in the forest. For this reason, Drack requested workers who were forestry labourers by profession. Unfortunately, the only person in this profession, Julian Nowakowski, only worked until 15 November, when he successfully escaped from





**Fig. 21.** Polish soldiers surveying the Sursee-Zellmoos site.  
Photo from the archive Kantonsarchäologie Luzern.

internment. In his excavation diary, the Swiss archaeologist described his workers, including their personal details and occupations (his team lacked people with higher education). Drack recorded the nationality of his workers in a characteristic way: he listed ten Poles from Poland, two Poles from France and one from Germany. Next to the last two entries he wrote: Antoni Przybylski from Alsace and Ignacy Bury from Poznań (Zubler 2000: 106). Whether this was a politically motivated precaution or an expression of the Swiss's convictions, it is difficult to say.

What draws attention is the high fees offered to the soldiers for their work at Bellikon, as much as three and a half francs per day. This is exceptionally good payment for work performed by rank-and-file interned soldiers (the fee usually hovered around one franc). Such conditions must have benefited the atmosphere of the work, and the



**Fig. 22.** Polish soldiers during the excavation of the Roman legionary camp in Vindonissa (canton of Aargau). Photo from the archive Kantonsarchäologie Aargau.

tensions and mutinies among soldiers which often occurred early in internment were thus avoided.

## RECAPITULATION

On the sixtieth anniversary of the research, a meeting of Polish veterans, archaeologists, and the Polish ambassador to Switzerland was held in Pfyn (Leuzinger 2004/2005: 111, 112). A commemorative monument with inscriptions in German and Polish was unveiled at the excavation site (Fig. 24). This was the last moment for the surviving soldiers of the 2nd Rifle Division to take part in the ceremony. Many



**Fig. 23.** Group of Polish soldiers researching a Roman villa in Bellikon (canton of Aargau).  
Photo from the archive Kantonsarchäologie Aargau.

years after the War, the work at Pfylen and other excavations by Poles are commemorated in various ways, and their work is remembered with sentiment and appreciation (e.g., Zubler 2000; Zimmermann 2016). That said, the overview of excavations involving Poles presented above indicates that they were carried out with varying degrees of success. These works took place at the beginning (1940–1941) and the end of the internment period (1944–1945), which means they were conducted under two distinctly different circumstances. During the difficult initial period, there were many misunderstandings between the Poles and the Swiss concerning, among other things, working conditions and pay. Attempts to employ soldiers only as cheap labour were not very successful. Engaging people with the right qualifications – as in the case of the surveyors and the architect on the Aeschi excavations – produced better results. Much depended on the organisational skills of the Swiss archaeologists and their good relations with the Polish soldiers. In this initial period, the problems with discipline and work efficiency on archaeological excavations were similar to those encountered when internees were employed on other work.

The research at Pfylen-Breitenloo described more extensively here is an example from the late internment period. The work was carried out remarkably effectively



**Fig. 24.** Monument unveiled on the 60th anniversary of the excavations at Pfy-Breitenloo.  
Photo Amt für Archäologie Thurgau, Daniel Steiner.

thanks to the good cooperation between Karl Keller-Tarnuzzer and Henryk Dawid, the Polish commander of the recruited team. The Swiss archaeologist proved to be a good organiser, and he had a team of very good performers with either the right education or the right talents. The conditions for this research were special, as their location made it possible to recruit well-qualified workers from the nearby internment camps. Crucial to the final success, however, was the attitude of Keller-Tarnuzzer, who, with no previous experience, succeeded in dealing with the Polish soldiers in difficult wartime realities. After all, the internees had already been doing forced labour for several years, isolated from their loved ones and uncertain of their future. While this work was no doubt significantly different in nature from the involvement of prisoners in archaeological research in Nazi Germany (see comments in Brem 2003), it was nevertheless difficult to expect adequate motivation from the soldiers. With good communication, however, they produced very good results.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The illustrations used in the article come from the archives of the archaeological cantonal offices in Aargau, Luzern, Solothurn and Thurgau. We would like to thank Elisabeth Bleuer, Albert Hafner, Marco Hostettler, Anna Kienholz, Andrea Nold and Jürgen Trumm for help in obtaining these materials.

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