

# Friedrichsdorf-Seulberg, Lk. Hochtaunuskreis

## *New insights into a 34,000-year-old open-air site of the Late Aurignacian.*

As part of the joint project “Climate Change and Early Humans in the North – CCEHN”, the University of Göttingen and the Niedersächsische Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, in cooperation with HessenArchäologie, conducted a 14-day research excavation at the Upper Palaeolithic open-air site of Friedrichsdorf-Seulberg, Lk. Hochtaunuskreis, in the summer of 2023.

Some years ago, the site was detected by amateur archaeologists by field walking and in 2010 first test trenches identified remains of a find layer below the plough soil. During the subsequent excavation in 2011, about 500 stone artifacts as well as charcoals, various rocks, animal bones and other artifacts were documented and recovered. Two AMS-dates of charcoal yielded an age of the site of c. 34,000 years (c. 29.500 BP), which corresponded to typological analyses of the stone artifacts. Chronologically, the site can be assigned to the Late Aurignacian, the first archaeologically verifiable culture of Homo sapiens in Central Europe. Based on the topology of the surrounding terrain, the extent of the find scatter and the findings of various animal bones, the site has been interpreted as a small temporary camp of a hunter-gatherer group with a central fire place.

During the 2023 excavation campaign, additional areas of the find scatter at and neighboring to the fire place were documented. Next to the fireplace already discovered in 2011, a pit with animal bones represents an exceptional find situation that has no equivalent north of the Main River. About 600 stone artifacts, charcoal, various rocks, hematites and animal bones were recovered. Closer determinations of the artifacts suggest a highly interesting spectrum of raw materials that will provide information on the mobility and procurement economy of Late Aurignacian hunter-gatherers. Most interesting is the presence of northern European flint originating from an area at least 150 km further North. Work is in progress to identify the source of further raw materials present with a few artefacts only. Analysis of finds will also allow to evaluate and concretize the spectrum of work carried out on site.

As part of the archaeological investigations, samples were also taken for thermoluminescence dating, which will be carried out by the Leibniz Institute for Applied Geophysics in Hanover. In addition, within the framework of the cooperation of the CCEHN-project, the faunal remains will be determined and the wood species determination of the charcoals will be carried out in the coming months. Fauna and charcoal provide important clues to the paleoenvironment. We hope that further precise dating will allow a concrete link to the climatic development of the Upper Paleolithic. Climate change has had an enormous impact on environmental conditions, both then and now, and has had a lasting effect on the

way of life of Paleolithic people. Exploring these interactions is one of the central goals of the CCEHN project.

Further information:

PIER-BIRK u. a. 2011

A. Pier-Birk/W. Pier/A. Kotula/T. Terberger, Beste Aussicht vor 34.000 Jahren - ein neuer Lagerplatz des frühen Modernen Menschen im Südtanunus. Jahrbuch für Archäologie und Paläontologie in Hessen 2011, 15–18.

MOREAU u. a. 2019

L. Moreau/T. Terberger, Mobility and settlement systems of the Late Aurignacian period in Central Europe. Investigations at the newly discovered open-air site Friedrichsdorf-Seulberg (Hesse, Germany). In: C. Montaya/J.-P. Fagnart/J.-L. Locht (Hrsg.), XXVIIIe Congrès préhistorique de France, Amiens, 30 mai - 4 juin 2016 : Préhistoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest : mobilité, climats et identités culturelles. Volume 2. Paléolithique supérieur ancien, Paléolithique final - Mésolithique (Paris 2019) 85–96.



Fig. 1: The view from the site Friedrichsdorf-Seulberg to the south in the direction of the Main valley. Photo: A. Kotula.



Fig. 2: Overview photo of the students uncovering the find layer. Photo: T. Böckenförde.



Fig. 4: Find situation of two matching mint artifacts. Photo: T. Böckenförde.

Fig. 3: Planum photo of the upper edge of the pit filled with animal bones. Photo: T. Böckenförde.