

PREFACE OF THE EDITORS

Ajdovska jama near Krško in Slovenia is a small through cave, which in multiple respect arose great scientific interest. Several archaeological excavations have shown that the cave contains both Upper Pleistocene and early Holocene sediments including Palaeolithic finds and faunal remains. During first excavations carried out by Srečko Brodar in 1938 substantial Upper Pleistocene finds were recovered, which were given over to the museum in Celje but destroyed during the Second World War (as it happened to the material from Potočka zijalka). Another excavation under P. Korošec in 1967 showed, that Ajdovska jama was a Neolithic necropolis of international importance. Further campaigns under Josipovic (1991 and 1993) and Horvath (1982, 1990) were mainly addressed to the Neolithic layers at the back of the cave and led to sensational results, that have already been published (HORVATH, 1989). During the excavation under M. Horvath undisturbed layers with cave bear bones were also found which therefore have to be attributed to the Pleistocene.

The main objectives of a short excavation campaign in 2001 carried out by the University of Ljubljana in cooperation with the Austrian Academy of Sciences were to clarify stratigraphy and to obtain samples for radiocarbon dating and genetic analyses. Another motive for the new excavation in 2001 was the intention of the city of Krško to establish Ajdovska jama as a cave open to the public that is interested in science. This plan has already been realised.

This monograph is made up of several articles about geology, excavation history and palaeontology. The latter subject is mainly concerned with the partly surprising results of the palaeontological studies. The studied fossil material comes mainly from excavations of the years 1982 until 2002 and is currently housed in the Institute of Sciences at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana.

A summary of the scientific results of the Neolithic finds is added, which has already been published elsewhere. Ajdovska jama is also of great zoological importance. It is the smallholding of a large colony of an endangered bat. Hence, the article about the life of Mediterranean horseshoe bats (*Rhinolophus euryale*, Chiroptera) in this cave forms the completion of the monograph.

We are deeply indebted to Milena Horvat, dipl. archaeologist, who enabled excavations and provided the data about previous excavation activities and findings (profiles, samples, etc.). Her affiliation is the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, department of Archaeology. We would like to express our deep thanks to the family Zorko in Brezovska gora near Krško where we got excellent meals and a lot of information about the history of cave.

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