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MOHÁCS HISTORIC MEMORIAL

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Open every day from 09.00 to 18.00.
 These opening hours are valid between 1st April and 31 October. Outside the opening season visitation is possible upon prior arrangement.



The first two mass graves were brought to light as a result of the efforts made by archaeologist Dr. László Papp. From then on, the town of Mohács supported the idea of establishing a memorial park, but the fact that in the 1960s debates were enlivened about the battle of Mohács and that extreme opinions appeared, made the conditions unsuitable for the realisation of the thought. Actual construction works could be started only in autumn 1975 when three other mass graves were discovered. Proposals were invited for the design of grave poles, based on which the artists Pál Kő, Sándor Kiss, József Király and István Szabó Jr. were selected for creating 30-30 poles. The rest of the artistic creations of the memorial park were created by goldsmith József Pölöskei (entrance gate), sculptor István Bencsik (map-stone) sculptor Gyula Illés (stone fountain), and sculptor Sándor Rétfalvi (inscribed stones). Finally, on 29th August 1976, on the 450th anniversary of the battle of Mohács, the historic memorial park was inaugurated in the presence of about seventeen thousand people.

Three more grave-marks were placed in the park after 1976. Following the grave pole carved by Transdanubian artist István Balogh and the Secler pole designed by Transylvanian Béla Süttő, a huge cross rising above the poles was erected in the memorial park, to communicate the message that the heroes who died here for the defence of our country were all Christians.

Facts and data – the Mohács National Historic Memorial

It was in December 1525 that sultan Suleiman and his military council decided on launching the invasion of Hungary, in Hungary, this news reached a country that had become week in its social, military, economic as well as political powers. There was feudal anarchy, and the emptiness of the royal treasury prevented the recruiting of serious mercenary army. No use taking around a bloody sword on Corpus Christi Day: no-one showed up in the camp. Suleiman started attacking Pétervárad, whilst the Hungarian king had just left Buda with his troops. On 26th August, the Hungarian army force awaiting on the plain area outside Mohács numbered more than 25000 people, including the king's troops and the array lead by Pál Tomori, the archbishop of Kalocsa. Although the warriors lead by Szapolyai and Frangepán were still far away, the war council decided in the evening of 28th August to fight the battle.

On the next day, 29th August, Tomori thought that they could defeat the advanced troops of the Turks, so he ordered to start the attack, and launched the first Hungarian battle formation. The assault of the heavy cavalry turned out a success, and the Turkish front was broken. The initial victory encouraged the commander-in-chief to send ahead the second formation too, lead by the king himself. The battle lasted only one and a half hour. The arriving Turkish troops beat the Hungarian army corps, leaving 15-18000 Hungarian casualties lying about in the battlefield. Tomori also died, and the fleeing king drowned in the Csele creek. The battle of Mohács having been lost, a 150 year long period of Turkish reign started, and medieval Hungary fell apart into three parts.

Facts and data – the battle of Mohács



Dear Visitor,

Passing these gates you are entering a holy place. It is a sanctuary of remembrance, final resting site for thousands of Hungarian soldiers. They are heroes of hopeless fight, devoting their lives for their homeland, for the freedom of the Hungarian state.

On 29th August 1526, eighteen thousand Hungarian soldiers were killed in the battle with Suleiman's feared army at Mohács. It took less than an hour and a half for medieval Hungary to loose its king, be fatally defeated and fall apart.

The heroism of hopeless fight

Before reaching this sanctuary, the visitor is halted by the Gate of Hades created by goldsmith József Pölöskei. The breakage at the apex of the gothic arch symbolises the trauma that was suffered in the development of the country as a result of the lost battle. The structure riveted together from 28000 tiny, bone-like metal pieces represents all the people killed in the region of Mohács.

Having passed under the gate, we are already walking on the trail of remembrance. In the middle of the walkway, an oppositely orientated stone relief map sculpted by artist István Bencsik depicts the place of the battle, together with neighbouring settlements destroyed in the fights, and showing the position of Hungarian and Turkish troops.

The route then leads across the atrium of a sunken building, recalling the atmosphere of monasteries that perished under Turkish rule (created by György Vadász, Ybl-prize winner architect). The white stone-rose water feature stands in the middle, symbolising with its split flower the breakage of the country into three parts, shedding tears for Hungary (designed by Gyula Illés).

Just a few stairs up from here, true flowers of remembrance and hope are seen opening their bloom. The park planted with ten thousand yews and a hazelnut-grove is now visible in its entirety. The wood of plants native to the Carpathian basin break only at one point: in the south-west it is torn open by the dagger of black pines planted in a wedge shape, symbolising the fatal counter-attack of the Turks.

In addition to the choice of trees, the walkways leading along the memorial site also have strong symbolism in them. The concentric paths allow the visitor to walk only round and round in the park, i.e. to approach the tragedy of Mohács, suggesting that both the problem and the conclusions encourage people to circle around them, with no solution or absolution offered.

The many carved wooden poles erected around the memorial site serve as grave-marks preserving the memories of killed soldiers. These poles, however, are not located above certain graves to commemorate any particular person or group of people, but they are scattered around in a larger area to give the feeling that here as well as further away there are several thousand unidentified victims resting in the ground. There are altogether 120 grave-poles, created by four different artists, serving as truthful sculptures of people, weapons, armours and horses killed in the battlefield.

Arriving up from the atrium, the burial place of about 200-250 soldiers is reached, signified by the grave-mark of Dorottya Kanizsai, Lady of the Siklós Castle. Upon hearing about the fatal defeat and the death of her stepson, she rushed to the battlefield and buried many soldiers killed in the battle of Mohács in common graves with her serfs.

Continuing on with our walk, the statue of the very young Hungarian King Louis II is seen right among the first grave-poles, who was forced by the country's internal conflicts to rush into the unavoidable death:

"So that no-one can look at me as an excuse to his own cowardice, and so that no-one can blame me, I will on the morrow go, with the help of the Almighty God, to the place others are loath to go without me".

On the other side of the walkway, opposite to Louis II, Pál Tomori, the Archbishop of Kalocsa is raising his war-hammer. He was said by Turkish writings to be "like stiff iron: the more blows he has on him, the harder he becomes".

On our way towards the mass burial place in the centre, we slowly pass the sculptures of struggling horses that fall to the ground, snort for the last time and then drown in the marshes. Then, at the end of the route, the huge figure of Sultan Suleiman with a merciless look towers above us as a dreadful shadow, holding blackened, cut-off heads of Hungarians in his rope basket.

Proceeding on the circular route, the last one of Pál Kő's sculptures is the figure of the Minstrel holding a wind-harp. The grave-poles erected behind the Minstrel tell about the past with their colours rather than through their shapes. These signs by József Király follow the traditions of grave-pole painting, remembering the dead with the help of colours. Whereas poles erected for old people are black, the ones for children are blue, and those standing for people having suffered violent death or killed in a battle are red or rusty maroon.

Continuing the ring, we can walk among the grave marks created by István Szabó Jr., which bravely stand against the black pines representing the dreadful Turkish army.

The grave poles use the rich and ingenious structural language of traditional folk carving to tell about the history of Mohács, providing minor indications also about the decades following the lost battle. In a peculiar representation we can see the ascension of King Louis II, the angel-winged Queen Mary with an ambiguous-look, armed soldiers, nameless warriors, war-hammers, war-axes and straightened scythes, and remembrance figures of the nearly fifteen thousand horses that were killed in the battle.

It is worth taking a rest in the middle of the black pine wedge, and looking at the crowded group of poles which now seem to come to life. One can almost hear the sound of the battle and the clatter of hoofs.

Walking further ahead on the walkway, we meet the creations of sculptor Sándor Kiss, recalling the atmosphere of poles standing in Transylvanian cemeteries. Among these poles, too, there is the crowned figure of Louis II, and Archbishop Tomori's shape wearing mitre and cataphract. Among the sculptures, there is a group in which the poles, unlike the slanting majority, are proudly erect. Maybe they symbolise the Transylvanian troops that stayed away from the battle or they might stand for Transylvania itself, a Hungarian territory still flourishing during Turkish times.

Walking besides the grave-poles, the memorial of the mother mourning the loss of her son is a heart-grIPPING sight. The carving reminds us the horrifying fact that women often killed their son themselves so that he will not be taken by the janissaries. The sight of an impaled man further intensifies the memories of suffering. It is only the sound of the death-bell that can liberate us from the painful images of remembrance. By tolling the bell, we can salute the heroes who perished in the hopeless fight.

