

The guide to the walls

The restoration of the walls in Vodňany by Oldřich of Rožmberk

All around the walls of Vodňany

For a medieval town fortifications meant a certain existential and more advantageous economic survival assumption. In a social hierarchy there was a fortified town situated higher than a town without any fortifications. Even though the town gates of Vodňany were pulled down in the 19th century so that the town could open itself to increasing traffic, the great part of the fortification defensive system has been preserved until now.

The development of the town walls building can be partly followed on the basis of

available historical both written and material sources – in the written reports supported

by structurally-historical research and by the results of located archaeological research. But the fact which complicates exactly the setting of the oldest building phase of forti-

cations is beyond all understanding – it isn't known the exact date of the town founda-

tion. The same it is with the date of the promotion to the town, promotion to the royal town and with the consent of the king to build the walls. Owing to the rectangle layout

the beginnings of the town are matched with the half of the 13th century, probably with

the period of the reign of Přemysl Otakar II. (1253 – 1278). From the almost square

(circa 100 × 100 m) to the former town gates there lead 3 main streets forming together

with other side streets regular blocks of flats. The residential space in the size of

300 – 400 m × 400 – 500 m is surrounded by the walls. Their very beginnings are

assumed not to be very far away from the date of the town foundation. There had been

probably temporary fortifications like rampart and palisade before the stone walls were

built. Building the walls surely took a very long time and it's very complicated to give an

evidence of the date of particular parts development. There have been preserved the

prismatic fortification towers which structurally belong to the 14th century. It's the time

of the first written records of the town of Vodňany. According to the written mentions

Vodňany belonged to the property of the king of Bohemia. And also this town was

pledged. The oldest written mention comes from 1318 when there was stated a vail from

Vodňany as one of the judges in the case of setting the foundation date of Vodňany. The

2nd surviving record from 1327 reminds Vodňany as a place where there was levied duty.

The most important medieval document is the privilege of the king John

of Luxembourg from the turn of the years 1335/36, original of which is kept in the town

archives. But none of these documents prove the existence of the walls. During the

14th century there was a big progress of the town – from the small town to the royal



town. Even so it ranked among the smallest and the least wealthy royal towns.

Together with České Budějovice and Písek Vodňany formed, in the south of Bohemia,

the strategic points of the royal power against the noble dynasty of Rožmberk with

whom they put up many a fight especially in the 15th century.

Several occupations of the town point to a not very good function of the fortifica-

tions at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries – in 1395 by Jindřich of Rožmberk and

in 1406 by Herald of Kunštát. In the second above mentioned case the enemy came

laughed at him to send him flying only by the inflated bladder. But their carefree-

ness caused the downfall of the town. In 1419 Vodňany was occupied by Oldřich of

Rožmberk who had the walls pulled down and the ditch filled up. On the basis of the

forced commitment of obedience he permitted to build the walls and the ditch again

is questionable. The building maintenance was neglected and the foundations of the

walls were shallow and put into not a very solid bed and so it could be very easy to

destroy those all ones. The direct threat of the town during the home war events in

the 15th century led to the extension of the wall system. But probably not later the

town had enough money and possibilities to look after the main wall which was

under the pressure of the expanding town housing. So in the 15th century the town

rampart, originally with a regular row of prismatic bastions, formed the town ditch

lining towards the town centre at the same time. In the 16th century the fortifications

were strengthened and repaired. Needed work wasn't always made thoroughly. In

1617 a bricklayer Petr Gros from České Budějovice repaired the town gate behind the

other the duke set their commander free after a short talking. The peace brought

of the estates capitulated. After the book called The Czech History by Pavel Škála

the Týn gate with the neighbour bastion. After breaking the fire out the occupants

tion of the town by the duke Maximilian of Bavaria in September 1620 there was hit

declares the work badly carried out as far as it could fall down. During the occupa-

Bavorov gate to order of the town council. There exists the complaints form which

pledge for long decades. In 1623 – 1710 it was held by the noblemen of Marradas and

Schwarzenberg. For all that long time the town tried to buy itself out of the pledge

and it gathered finances at the expense of other needs and investments. *"The condi-*

tion of the town fortifications, found out those days, was poor. The gates and bastions

fell into ruin, the ditches and walls fall down. There was no thought of repairs." In 1678

during the control visit, the head commissioner of Treboň ordered to put it right

from the financial return of the legal beer batch. The same year the Bavorov gate had

to be pulled down and the following year it was rebuilt. The domain of Hluboká

provided 50 tree trunks for the floors, 50 rafters and 40 laths. It isn't known if it

ever and what extent to other parts of the fortifications were repaired. But in the

programme at the town council there were always the town fortifications

endangering the property of other citizens. At the beginning of the 18th century it

was thought about the demolition of the bastion on the north-west edge of the town

behind the present houses No 36 and 37 which was destroyed by fire as early as 1610.

Owing to an improvement of the road network and an access to the town there was

allowed to build a new gate in 1678. The solution of the way through the fortifications

matched up the period thought at that time. The gate was put up in 6 weeks – in June

and July of the same year. And the access road was temporary called after this gate –

the Newgate road (now CSLA Street).

On the 21st August 1710 after a long time effort the town of Vodňany finally repaid

its pledge to the Schwarzenberg dynasty with an adjusted sum of money which was

originally 70 thousand florins but it was at the expense of a huge debt. The survey of

the expense and loss also describes the condition of the fortifications. *"Vodňany was*

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Plan der STADT WODNIAN

Maasstab der Zoll =
40. Wiener Filaftern.



17 The west moat wall



16 The west moat wall



15 Husova Street
there used to be the Bavorov gate



14 The southwest moat wall



13 The southwest moat



11 The passageway - Heritesova Street



10 The bridge - Heritesova Street



21 The bridge - Pisecká Street



20 The northwest moat wall



19 The passageway - Pisecká Street



18 The west bastion



The plan of the land
register from 1837



9 The gardens in the south moat



8



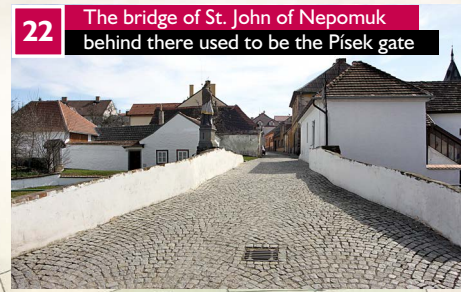
7 The south bastion



6 The south bastion



23 The bridge of St. John of Nepomuk



22 The bridge of St. John of Nepomuk
behind there used to be the Pisek gate



24 The mill-race



25 The north moat wall



26 The northeast
bastion



I A. Křížka Street
originally there was the Týn (Budějovice) gate situated



2 The SE bastion



3 The SE moat (Herites's garden)



4 The bridge at the New
gate - ČSLA Street



5 ČSLA Street
there used to be the New gate

The former town Týn gate also called the Budějovice gate was decorated to welcome the emperor Francis I. and the empress Karolina in 1833. The historian of the town Dr. Václav Mostecký recorded this festive event in this way:
"The memorable visit happened on the 31st July. On the borders of the Prácheň region and the Libějovice estate in Sedlec there were the imperial couple with their 30-membered retinue awaited and welcome by many country people, in the village of Újezd there was built the triumphal arch, there were honoured guests welcome by the Schwarzenberg officials, by school children and the clergy with a dean Jedlička. From Vodňany there went the townspeople on horses in the lead with a postmaster Jireš and they accompanied the parade to the town where the horses were changed. In front of the decorated Budějovice gate there could be everywhere heard: Glory be! Long live the emperor! On the outer columns there was written the inscription Vivat, on the gate itself, covered in flower blossoms, there could be read: Francisco Patri - Carolinae Matri - Wodnianenses. In the square there were built columns decorated with needles, with the Austrian eagle and the Czech lion. There took part the official welcoming, where there came many important personalities like the county commissar a knight of Kunratic, the dean with the clergy from all around, teachers with their pupils, the mayor with the town council, guilds with 12 banners and the Jewish community with Torah. The townspeople wanted to show their loyalty to the ruler so they intended to pull the imperial coach through the town but the emperor didn't allow it. After changing the horses they went on to Skočice, Drahonice, Strakonice, Plzeň, Zatec, Louny and through Karlín to Prague."
Mostecký, Václav: Dějiny bývalého královského města Vodňan. III. část. Praha 1940, p. 164.

In February 1843 a pharmacist Antonín Herites along with his mother Antonia bought a house No 1 in the Vodňany square and the south-east part of the town moat from the New gate to the Budějovice gate where there was a garden. His son, František Herites, a writer and a Vodňany mayor for some time, kept it in his memories like that:
"I remember going to the garden only with my mother. She never went across the square, always along the side streets, with a woollen scarf over her shoulders, with a white cap on her head, she thanked for the greetings to all people she met. And when the fruit was picked and the servants carried the full baskets in front of her she generously shared the harvest from the trees with the folks. The old garden in the moat plays a major role in my childhood memories and I think I would be able to show very exactly where there stood each tree and which fruit it had and where there were each flower and herbs which my father planted with a great interest and real knowledge."
Herites, František: Vzpomínková črta. In: Almanach: král. město Vodňany a okolí. Vodňany 1914, p. 95.