

# Zdeněk Dragoun

## Prague Romanesque houses after seven years

### ANNOTATION

The presentation of new discoveries of Romanesque residential architectural remains in Prague over the past seven years since the publication of the Prague Romanesque houses catalogue. In some cases this short review of the new material confirms some of the previously presumed conclusions (mainly the existence of homesteads with Romanesque enclosure walls at Malá Strana and possibly also in The Old Town) and in other cases it brings completely new information, such as existence of a planned Romanesque residential area on the site of the future New Town of Prague, with previously unknown building features such as a staircase portative wall and a doubled entrance way for example.

### SUMMARY

Since the year 2002, when a catalogue of Prague Romanesque houses was published, several new remnants of vernacular architecture were discovered at Mala Strana, in The Old Town and even in the New Town of Prague.

At Mala Strana further fragments of boundary walls were found, which probably used to surround local farmsteads extending the 12th century settlement more to the south. Some of these farmsteads probably also included simple Romanesque churches.

In The Old Town other remnants of Romanesque houses were revealed. In no. 479/I at The Old Town square evidence of two basic Romanesque house types was discovered on a single plot. The main residential building was facing the square and in the depth of the plot there was a single roomed building probably for storing commodities, which had to be protected from frequent fires. A further find of boundary walling appears to give evidence for another Romanesque site not far from the Ungelt.

The most important find is that of three buildings constructed in ashlar stone (a palace, a one roomed house and the stone entrance to a timber house) at the Republic square in Prague New Town. These finds are changing our view of the urban density and the quality of the buildings in the right bank settlement at the onset of the 13th century. Proving also, that the construction of the Old Town fortifications in the 1230s had a much greater impact on the local settlement plan than was presumed. The targeted demolition of these buildings corresponded with the abandonment of the building plots, which afterwards remained outside the town boundaries, even though they had been occupied by quite wealthy residents.

**Fig. 1.** Reconstructed groundplan of a Romanesque palace discovered during excavations on the site of the former military barracks in Republic Square, with surviving wall fragments emphasised. **1** – garderobe; **2** – staircase foundations; **3–4** – entrance way; **5–7** – foundations of a vault support with the foot of a column; **8** – destruction of vault arches. **Light yellow** denote the date 2005.

**Fig. 2.** Romanesque houses at the site of the former military barracks in Republic Square (wall remnants in ochre). At the east a large timber and clay house with a stone entrance way built from Romanesque ashlar walling, in its vicinity part of a ditch.

**Fig. 3.** Prague—the Republic Square. A clay and timber sunken building with a fragment of a stone entrance way. View from the east.

**Fig. 4.** Western interior wall of the Romanesque house no. 558/I in Celetna street with an infilled window and a closable niche. View from the east.

*English by Linda and Patrick Foster*