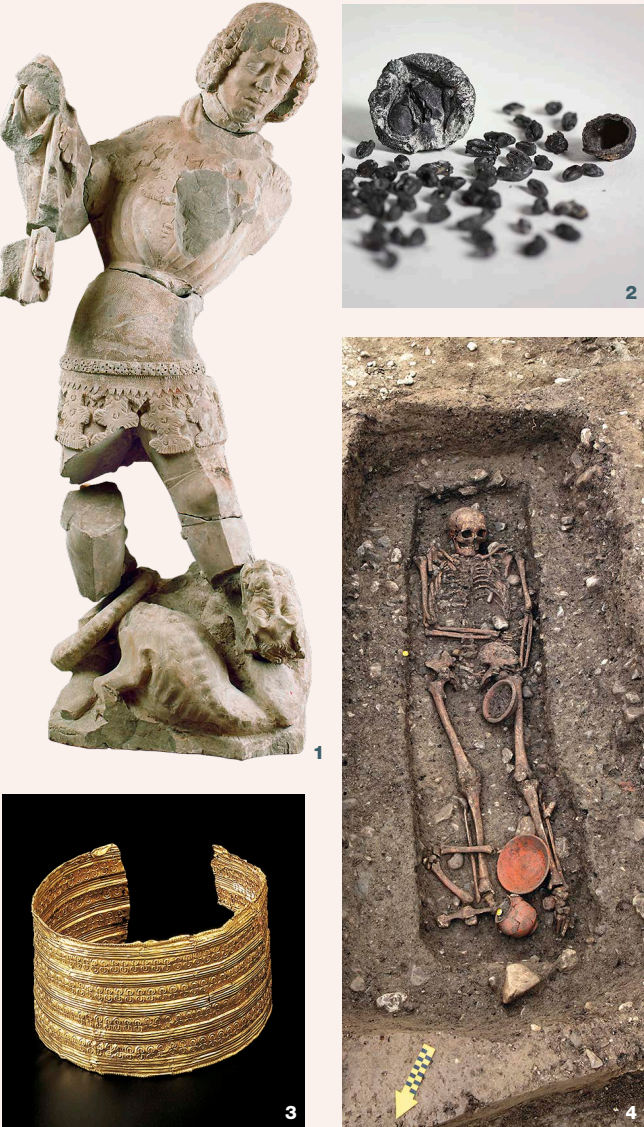


Finds as witnesses to the past

Finds and features in the ground or in buildings provide a wealth of information. They allow us to gain detailed insight into the period of origin, function and importance of a site.



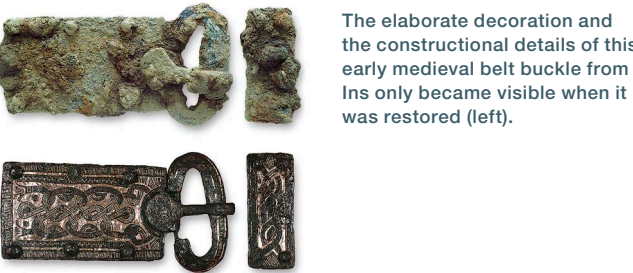
1 Sandstone sculpture of St George from Bern Cathedral destroyed during the Reformation; 2 charred cereal grains, a crab apple and a hazelnut shell from a Late Stone Age settlement at Nidau; 3 gold bracelet from a Celtic burial mound at Allenlütten; 4 inhumation burial with vessel offerings from a Roman cemetery at Unterseen.

Preservation and maintenance of our cultural heritage

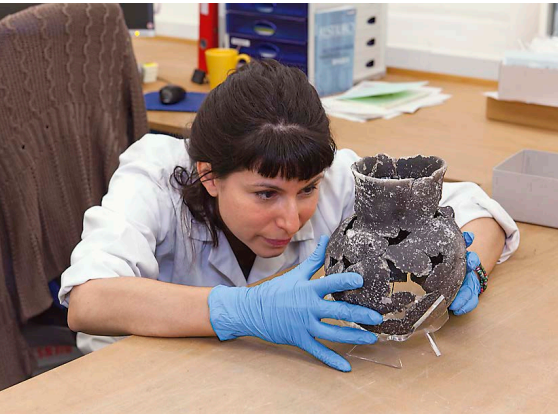
The records created during an archaeological examination and the artefacts recovered are important historical sources. That is why they should continue to be made accessible for future generations.

The Archaeological Service of Canton Bern archives the records and systematically stores the finds. Preventive measures are put in place to conserve the artefacts. These are largely determined by the materials the finds are made of. It is important to carry out regular checks on the storage conditions including the climate. This helps to prevent objects from decaying.

Artefacts are stabilised and are thus made «legible». This allows us to examine their form, function and decoration. Outstanding objects are restored and put on display in museums.



The elaborate decoration and the constructional details of this early medieval belt buckle from Ins only became visible when it was restored (left).



It was not until this fragmented bottle from Nidau was joined together that its special form became recognisable (below).

Access to and dissemination of our cultural heritage

The results obtained by archaeological research are public property. It is only by disseminating the knowledge compiled on our cultural heritage that its full value becomes evident.

Experts from the Archaeological Service and its partner institutions present the insight gained by holding public lectures, thus establishing a link between archaeology and the public. Guided tours of excavations give those interested an insight into the archaeologists' work and information points and flyers help them to discover sites and monuments in the field. Outstanding objects can be seen in museums and exhibitions. Primary schools can avail of travelling educational cases with archaeological finds and information on various topics. Expert publications, international conference papers and university lectures are directed at scientific and academic audiences.



Having been restored with help from a private foundation, the Unterer Mannenberg castle ruins are publicly inaugurated.

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Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne
Archäologie
Archéologie

Archaeology
in Canton Bern

Reporting a find / construction project
Archaeological finds are the property of Canton Bern. If you find an object, please refrain from interfering with its findspot and contact us on Tel 031 633 98 00, adb.bauen@be.ch. Thank you.

Archaeological sites are part of our cultural heritage and are protected by law. If you are planning any groundworks, which could threaten such cultural goods, please contact us well in advance: Tel 031 633 98 00, adb.bauen@be.ch. Thank you.

Cover picture: A rescue excavation at Bundesplatz in Bern 2004.

Picture credits: ADB: Cover picture (Roger Lüscher); Kallnach excavation and Köniz mosaic (Rolf Wenger); map of sites (Wenke Schimmelpfennig, revised by Max Stöckli and Cornelia Schlup); Lengnaumoos (Samuel Mühleisen); Oberbipp dolmen (Urs Dardel); surveying in Moutier (Marc Raess); bow-case from the Schnidejoch Pass (Urs Messerli); belt buckles from Ins, sculpture of St George and bottle from Nidau (Badri Redha); inhumation at Unterseen (Stéphane Dévaud); event at Mannenberg (Marianne Ramstein). – Bernisches Historisches Museum, Bern: hydria from Grächwil and gold bracelet from Allenlütten (Stefan Rebsamen). – NMB Neues Museum Biel: botanical remains (Patrick Weyeneth).

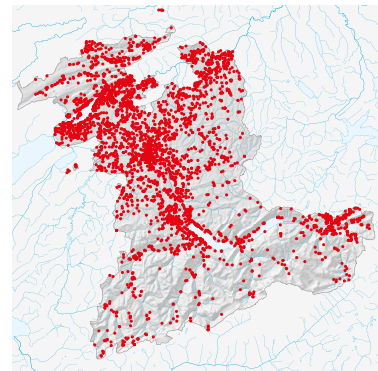
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During an archaeological excavation, architectural remains and ruins are exposed piece by piece, recorded and then removed. Because of this stage-by-stage process, it is rarely possible to see all architectural components at the same time. It is therefore all the more important to create precise plans as can be seen in this photo taken at Kallnach. These plans and records allow the archaeologists to gradually piece together an overall reconstruction of the walls and rooms of the spacious Roman villa.



The archaeological inventory includes a list and map of the approximately 4300 known sites from Canton Bern (left).

The remains of a Roman villa at Köniz came to light just below the topsoil. Even a small trench can give a useful impression of the architectural components present and their state of preservation (below).



Which method of archaeological excavation is chosen depends on the type of site. Besides employing mechanical diggers (test trench at Lengnaumoos, above) excavating by hand is another commonly used method (Late Stone Age collective grave in the Oberbipp dolmen, left).



The precise recording of the findings is the foundation for any archaeological examination. This also includes detailed surveying, as shown here in an image from Moutier.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

Canton Bern is characterised by a diverse landscape, from the Jura Mountains to the Bernese Seeland, the Swiss Plateau, the Alpine foothills and the Alps themselves. Since the end of the last Ice Age 15,000 years ago, people have settled in the area. We know this from the evidence and material remains that have survived in the ground and in buildings.

As there are no written records from prehistory, these archaeological remains are the only sources that help us to understand our millennia-old cultural area. But even for the periods that did leave behind written sources, archaeological remains can provide an important insight into the daily lives of people. It is our task to maintain this invaluable cultural heritage, of which a selection of pile-dwelling sites on Lakes Biemme and Lobsigensee and the historical centre of Bern have been declared Unesco World Heritage Sites, for future generations.

Since 1970, the Archaeological Service of Canton Bern has been ensuring that this rich cultural heritage is protected and recorded and the insight gained disseminated. The service is an important interface between the cultural heritage, the administration and the public. Its work is supported by the University of Bern and various museums, associations and municipalities.



The so-called Grächwil hydria came from a Celtic grave. The bronze vessel was originally made in Taranto in southern Italy.

Awareness and protection of our cultural heritage

Archaeological finds remain concealed below ground or in historical buildings. Inappropriate intrusions can lead to their destruction. Our cultural heritage can only be adequately protected if its location, extent and importance are known.

The Archaeological Service keeps an inventory of confirmed and presumed archaeological sites. It is constantly updated with new discoveries made during archaeological investigations and surveys. Historical maps and documents as well as information provided by members of the public are also important additions. A geographic information system (GIS) is one of the main tools used. These records allow the Archaeological Service to define protected areas. They assist the experts in assessing construction projects even at the planning stages and together with the builders help to prevent delays.

Examination and recording of our cultural heritage

Sometimes, as in construction projects for new buildings, it is not possible to preserve and protect archaeological sites. In these cases, the sites are examined prior to commencement of the projects, the findings recorded and the artefacts secured for future generations.

The archaeological heritage from our diverse cultural area ensures that the archaeologists' work is highly varied: they carry out large-scale excavations at dryland settlement sites and architectural surveys in historical buildings. Their everyday work also includes recovering artefacts from melting ice patches (old snow) in the Alps and scuba diving in order to record pile dwellings under water. The common theme of all these various examinations is the safeguarding of finds and the compilation of a scientific record which includes surveying, detailed descriptions, photographs and drawings.

Besides the finds, the records are all that remains of a site after the excavation has ended. That is why the experts try to avoid having to excavate wherever possible, in a bid to preserve the archaeological substance. The same applies to the maintenance of ruins, where the Archaeological Service, in collaboration with local institutions, secures monuments and makes them publicly accessible.



In the Alps, melting ice patches have yielded surprising discoveries. This Late Stone Age bow-case made of birch bark, for instance, was found on the Schnidejoch Pass.