

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORIC FERRY SITES FOR THE TOURISM ALONG THE MIDDLE SECTION OF THE LABE RIVER (CZECH REPUBLIC)

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Abstract

Ferries on the larger rivers have historically played an important role in the daily lives of the local communities, but many were also important to travellers and traders from more distant destinations. The locations of ferries have been recorded on the basis of old topographical maps from the 1760s, 1840s, 1880s and 1950s. This paper focuses on the historical ferry sites along the middle section of the Labe river between Kolín and Mělník. The aim of the work was to evaluate the historical significance of the ferries on the selected section, to trace the remains of the related buildings and to assess the possibilities of their usefulness for contemporary tourism. The key issue is the accessibility of the ferry sites to the hiking and cycling marked routes, where it is possible to create e.g. an information panel about the once operated ferry in a given place. The highest potential for further utilisation have the surviving buildings at the ferries, e.g. ferry houses, roadside inns, etc.

Key words: River ferry, Labe river, Old topographic maps, Tourism

Introduction

Ferries on the larger rivers have historically played an important role in the daily lives of the local communities, but many were also important to travellers and traders from more distant destinations. They are still used for everyday commuting, especially in larger metropolitan areas (Cheemakurthy et al., 2017; Deca et al., 2021), while also being subject to emerging trends in mobility (Tarkowski et al., 2021; Puzdrakiewicz, 2021). Ferries do play an increasingly important role in sustainable tourism, especially as a link between the most visited attractions of anthropogenic and natural origin (Lee et al., 2021; Tarkowski et al., 2021) as well as an attractive alternative how to overcome barrier effect of river for walking and cycling marked routes (McGrath et al., 2020). The paper builds on previous research focusing on historical ferries, notably Dostál et al. (2021). Its main aim is to reveal the reflection and the current use of such sites for the purpose of expanding the tourist possibilities in region.

Area of study

The study area is represented by the part of the middle section of the Labe river defined by the town of Kolín (river km 920.5) and the confluence with the Vltava river near Mělník (river km 837.38). Although being a lowland river landscape, it offers extensive opportunities, especially for active leisure. Especially lovers of cycling, water sports and fishing will find a lot to enjoy here. There are also several notable historical towns such as Kolín, Nymburk, Stará Boleslav, Mělník and the important spa Poděbrady.

Methodology

Scoping phase

The locations of ferries have been recorded in GIS on the basis of old topographical maps from the 1760s, 1840s, 1880s and 1950s. It was based on data taken for the paper by Dostál et al. (2021), where the methodology for identifying sites from old maps is described in detail. Of all the identified sites in the study area, those that did not meet the following criteria were potentially excluded: degree of preservation of surroundings, accessibility by public roads and footpaths, loss of the site due to watercourse regulation, short length of existence.

Field phase

Each site not excluded during scoping phase was visited and explored to identify the preserved elements of the ferry (if any) and existing patterns for recreational use of the site were observed. The

valuation map is shown in Table 1. The fieldwork also included an assessment of the preservation of the genius loci in the form of various toponyms, which refer to the existence of a ferry in the past.

Tab. 1: Field observation of identified sites (Dostál et Havlíček, 2021; modified)

#	transportation significance	in situ remains	genius loci	existing river crossing (to 200 m)	nearest all year river crossing	linkage to trails - left x right bank
A	ferry on major road	construction elements are existing	used in water transport	permanent	over 3,000m	educational trail, bike trail of 1 st or 2 nd class
B	ferry on secondary road	some construction is preserved	other use	occasional all year	from 1,000m to 3,000m	marked trail, street
C	ferry of local importance	only little terrain traces	another reminder*	occasional seasonal	from 200m to 1,000m	common dirt road, footpath
D	ferryboat (personal)	all traces have vanished	none	no crossing	to 200m	no linkage

* significant toponyms, info-board etc.

Results and discussion

Based on a preliminary selection during the scoping phase, we selected 28 sites out of a total of 45 sites identified in the study area. These were evaluated in the field according to the parameters listed in Table 1. In one of the locations (near Oseček), the ferry is still in operation today, albeit only as a motorboat in seasonal operation. Of the 28 sites assessed, only one (3.6%) was located on a major road, 8 sites (28.6%) were link sites on the secondary road network and 14 (50%) were links of local significance. Ferryboat used to operate at 5 sites (17.9%). From the point of view of tourist attractiveness, it is important to preserve certain remnants of the site. Apart from Oseček ferry, which is still in operation today



Fig. 1: The anthropogenic shape of the riverbank typical for the sites of former river ferries

(Fig. 6), practically complete constructions have been preserved only on the Zárby ferry. In five sites (17.9%) we find significant remains in the form of, for example, a ferryman's house or a roadside inn (Fig. 2-5, Fig. 7). In many sites (15; 53.6 %) it was possible to identify terrain remains, mostly forming the characteristic shape of the riverbank (Fig. 1). This can be identified as an artificial bay in the classification of anthropogenic landforms according to Kirchner and Smolová (2010), although they do not directly refer to such an example in their publication. A relatively significant part of the sites is also currently used for water transport, although mainly for recreational and individual navigation (9, 32.1%). On the other hand, in half of the cases (14, 50.0%) no manifestations of genius loci were found. For the consideration of the potential for restoration of the link, the distance to the surrounding operating footbridges and bridges, as well as the connection to the important touristic roads is crucial. Of the sites assessed, 24 (85.7%) are linked to a 1st class cycle route, with the Elbe cycle route running along the entire course of the Labe river in this section. Half of the ferries are located more than 1 km from the fixed link, with one quarter even more than 3 km. Based on the field research, it can be concluded that the potential of the historic ferries in the studied section of the Labe river is not sufficiently exploited, with a few exceptions. Due to the presence of an important cycle route, it is proposed to add information signs about the history of the ferry in the area, including old photographs

and information from archival sources. Alternatively, the operation of the ferry could be commemorated by related objects such as the ferryman's house, a display of a typical vessel, or other artefacts used for the operation of the ferry (e.g. the bell used to signal the ferryman, the steps and piers to the ferry).

Reminders of historic ferry site – gallery of best examples



Fig. 2: Hadík ferry – ferryman's house with historical flood markers



Fig. 3: Na Štěpáně – modernised building of roadside inn connected to former ferry



Fig. 4: Záryby – preserved ferryman's house



Fig. 5: Záryby - small exhibition inside ferryman's house



Fig. 6: Oseček – the only existing ferry in the study area, however operational only seasonally

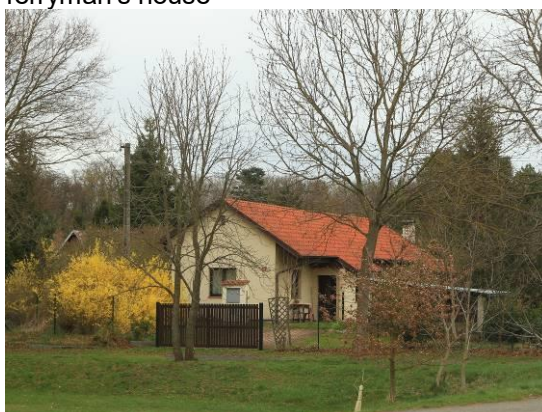


Fig. 7: Oseček – Ferryman's house adapted to recreational object

Ferries in local toponyms

There is recreational village "Na Přivoze" just next to Oseček ferry. Further on, we had found three cases of street name derived from former ferry (Mlékojedy: "K Přivozu"; Brandýs n/L: street "U Přivozu"; Sedlčanky: ulice "U Přivozu"). Indirectly, the former existence of the ferry can also be concluded from the street name referring to another village, which is located on the opposite side of the river, without a bridge or ford on the way between them. Such cases were found in Lázně Toušeň (street "Káranská"), Kostomlaty nad Labem (street "Hradištská") and Hradištko (street "Klavarská"). Rare reference to the ferry site is also to be found in agronyms, the only occurrence is near Obříství where "Mezi Obřístvím a Štěpánským přívosem" is to be found in cadastral map. No other types of toponyms were found.

Conclusion

The results show that the potential of historic ferries in the studied section of the Labe river is not sufficiently exploited in tourism, with a few exceptions. If we want to increase the tourist attractiveness of these places, the focus on those sites where significant structural remains were preserved is needed. In the area of interest, ferrymen's houses or inns have been identified in several sites. Based on a survey from recent aerial photographs and field observations, it was possible to identify specific terrain remains on the riverbank that can be classified as an artificial bay in the classification of anthropogenic landforms. A significant number of the former ferry sites is now in the exploitation for recreational and individual navigation. The potential for restoration of some of these ferries is dependent on the distance from nearby functional footbridges and bridges, as well as the connection to major tourist routes.

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Shrnutí

Přivozy na větších řekách hrály v minulosti významnou roli v každodenním životě místního obyvatelstva, mnohé však byly významné také pro cestující a obchodníky ze vzdálenějších destinací. Lokality přivozů byly evidovány na základě starých topografických map z období 1760, 1840, 1880 a 1950. Tento článek se zaměřuje na historické lokality přivozů na středním úseku Labe od Kolína po Mělník. Cílem práce bylo vyhodnotit historickou významnost přivozů na vybraném úseku, dohledání pozůstatků souvisejících objektů a zhodnotit možnosti jejich přínosu pro současný turistický ruch. Klíčová je otázka dostupnosti lokalit přivozů na pěší a cyklistické značené trasy, kde je možné v daném místě vytvořit např. informační panel o kdysi provozovaném přivozu. Vysoký potenciál využití pak mají dochované objekty u přivozů, např. přivozní domky, hostince u přivozu apod.

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