

Nature trail "Oborou Hvězda", information board No.11 - The Battle of Bílá Hora

([Bitva na Bílé hoře](#) - informace v českém jazyce)

The Bohemian non-Catholic members of Estates were granted religious freedom by the Majesty of Rudolph II in 1609. However, during the reign of Emperor Matthias (1610-1619), the freedoms granted by the Majesty were repeatedly violated by the Catholic nobility and church dignitaries and imperial governors. The game-preserve was affected by the intervention of Passau mercenaries of the Emperor's cousin Leopold, who tried to seize Prague unsuccessfully on 14 February, and only a month later, they were forced to leave in a hurry. On 23 May 1618, Count Martinic, Slavata, and scrivener named Fabricius were thrown out of the windows of the Bohemian Royal Office.



On the 31 st October 1619, the future king of Bohemia, Frederick I, together with his wife, Elisabeth of England, and their suite "stopped at the royal game-preserve situated at Bílá Hora, nearby a house built as a star with six or seven edges, where he also had lunch". He was greeted here festively and the festive parade set off for Prague. On the 4 th November 1619, following the election of a Committee of Estates, Frederick I became the King of Bohemia.

In 1620, several weeks before the fatal battle, folk festivities were organized in the game-preserve, where Frederick I climbed trees to entertain the members of the court. The freedom of the new morals and the liberal gap deviating from the contemporary Bohemian environment are also documented by the fact that the king unscrupulously danced with the village girls. Great fireworks were fired in front of the pleasure house in the evening.

On the 6 th November 1620, the army of the Estates moved from Rakovník to Prague. The moment of collision of both armies was getting close, following lengthy manoeuvring, feinting and smaller conflicts. It was nearly winter, the army of the Estates finally got to the heart of the Bohemian kingdom, followed by the united army of the emperor and the league. The marching was really energetic in the last two days. From Sunday morning, the 8 th November 1620, the army of the Estates was forming, entrenching, and fortifying itself at Bílá Hora. On the 8 th November 1620 in the afternoon, both armies faced each other at the Bílá Hora plains and below. King Frederick had lunch with the English at Prague Castle. At that moment, there were approximately 21 000 soldiers of the Estates' army and about 26 000 soldiers of the imperial-league army. The Estates' army was distributed from the Hvězda game-preserve, past Bílá Hora towards Zličín, between Motol and Řepy. The right wing of the Estates' army touched the game-preserve. The wall of the game-preserve was torn down at several places. Some divisions were situated at the edge, a part of them was directly in the game-preserve (Saxon-Weimar regiment flags, flags of the Anhalt jr. Regiment, flags of the bodyguard of Frederick I).

The battle, which only lasted for one and a half hour, fully reflected the ever more difficult problems of not only the Estates' army, but of the entire uprising. The problems of the wider foreign interests and diplomacy, perplexity and inconsistency of the leaders, the nature of the actual, fully estate, uprising, financial problems, and selfishness and utilitarianism associated therewith, partial internal conflicts, personal, often conflicting, interests, mixed relations between relatives in the opposing camps, and numerous other aspects caused the marked failure (especially moral and military) of the uprising prior to its peak. At the time, when the result of the battle was already decided, there was an immense massacre of the remaining units of the Estates and the foot soldiers of the Moravian Estate regiment, generally consisting of German mercenaries purchased by the Moravians, still resisting the imperial army by the game-preserve wall. There was basically no option of escape from the game-preserve wall. According to the contemporary witnesses, dead bodies of the soldiers were piled up as high as the wall by the Světlíčka stream. The bodies were mostly not buried until the next spring. Maximilian of Bavaria and Charles Bonaventura Buquoy, commander of the imperial army, were accommodated at Hvězda for the night of the 8 th and 9 th November. Returning to Moravia, Jindřich, Count Šlik, entered the imperial services in March 1621, together with the remains of his regiment of foot. Some time later, he converted to Catholicism.

In April 1623, Emperor Ferdinand II had the course of the battle explained on the spot by Count Šlik.

Pavel Skála of Zhoř depicts in his Bohemian History the aggravating situation, atmosphere associated with the defenestration, and maps in detail the two years leading to the peak of the conflict. He refrains from the description and commentary regarding the fatal events, perhaps due to the aversion to writing about a lost battle, which could just as well, or even better, be characterized by a number of, as he claims, very diverse contemporary sources.

Nevertheless, perhaps aiming at greater objectiveness, "... to prevent anyone believing that I added or removed anything for my own benefit or to harm any of the parties, which I carefully avoided throughout my work so far", he includes in his work a selection of copies of contemporary reports appearing shortly after the conflict. The different sources describing the battle and the following events also mentioned Hvězda.

The report of Mikuláš Bell (dated 1625) reports in the description of losses, that people „... mostly around the Hvězda game-preserve, and yes, even inside, were slaughtered (...) Numerous soldiers running away from the battle believed they would save their lives in the Hvězda game-preserve, but the Imperial and Bavarian forces had no intention to spare them, but on the contrary, they killed some of them and some (...) were captured alive“, which mostly concerned the more significant personalities.

“About half a mile away from Prague, there is a spacious and delightful royal game-preserve, named Hvězda (Star) after a house built in it, shaped as a star,” states a document of Aubert Mireus, describing the layout of the “enemy” army of Prince of Anhalt. Hvězda is also compared to a hare-preserve in this document with contempt, in pejorative association with the defeat and the victorious celebration of Catholicism.

Hvězda is also mentioned in the report of Jan Göpner of Nuremberg, a direct participant in the battle, in connection with accommodation. “After the battle, achieving lucky victory, when no more enemies could be found near Prague, the Prince asked for accommodation for himself and Buquoy to rest and spend the night after the hasty work. Accommodation masters could not find any place, as the enemy burnt down all nearby villages. Therefore they had to enter Hvězda and accommodate themselves in there, although it was rather late by then.”

Candidus Elblanius (authorship is ascribed to Jindřich Fitzsimon) also mentions the tragic testimony of the game-preserve in his document, when he adds to the losses of the Estates’ army: “Our forces were certain that there were more people killed in the woods by the game-preserve than in the battlefield”.

Hvězda game-preserve with the pleasure house and the Ruzyně Gate is also depicted in a series of contemporary paintings with the theme of the Battle of Bílá Hora, capturing the layout of armies before the battle; it is also depicted elsewhere, more or less schematically, e.g. when depicting the main clash. Despite the schematic depiction, there is still an apparent sharp pyramidal roof on the hunting lodge.

In the following period of the Thirty Years’ War, the game preserve and the pleasure house were greatly devastated, mostly by the Swedish troops, yet there were also quieter inter-war periods, when it went through repairs.

After 1620, royal painter Jonas Falck created a ceiling painting on the second floor of the pleasure house depicting the Bílá Hora Battle in the 1630s. In 1624, a chapel was built at the Bílá Hora battlefield.

The roof of the pleasure house was taken down and reconstructed around 1628, getting a new Baroque bulbous dome.

On the 15 th November 1631, the army of Johan Georg, Elector of Saxony, commanded by Arnim, consisting also of Bohemian exiles, was passing Bílá Hora on its way to Prague. In November, the exhibited remains of those decapitated after Bílá Hora were buried. However, the Saxons left due to growing pressure from Valdštejn in the spring of the following year.

The game-preserve, as well as the entire country, witnessed the worst devastation during the Swedish occupation. On the 30 th May 1639, following several victorious battles, the Swedes commanded by Banner attempted the conquest of Prague unsuccessfully. The surroundings of the town were greatly devastated. The game-preserve was under fire from imperial cannons.

The most frequently used path to the conquest of Prague around Bílá Hora was also used by Königsmark in late July 1648. Malá Strana and Hradčany were plundered. Both the game-preserve and the pleasure house suffered extensive damage during the siege of the Old and the New Towns, which ended on the 24 th October 1648 by the Peace of Westphalia; even the copper roof of the pleasure house was torn down. The Swedes took their prey with them on rafts along the rivers Vltava and Labe.

A memorial mound with an inscription commemorating the Battle of Bílá Hora was established at the original Bílá Hora battlefield next to the game-preserve by the Czechoslovak Sokol movement in the 1920s.

Nature trail "Oborou Hvězda":

- 10. [Hvězda game-preserve](#)
- 11. [Hvězda game-preserve](#)
- 12. [Hvězda game-preserve](#)
- 13. [Hvězda game-preserve](#) (informace v českém jazyce)