When examining the history of the camp, archaeological site surveys are very important and complement the image of WWII and the post-war history in Lithuania. On the basis of the project ‘The House of Death 1939–1955. Message from Resurrected Memory’, in 2013 the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania commissioned two archaeological surveys on the sites of the cemetery on Žalioji Street of Armalėnai Village of Šilutė District and the old cemetery and the former complex of WWII prisoner of war and Gulag camp in Macikai Village of Šilutė District. The archaeological survey was conducted by a group of archaeologists consisting of Egidijus Abromavičius, head of the research, and archaeologists Edvinas Ubis, Daumantas Kiulkys and Miglė Urbonaitė. The archaeological survey was carried out in May–November 2014. According to the project approved by the archaeological research committee, the depth of the excavations were to the depth of the burial pits. The site was photographed and schemes and drawings were prepared by Abromavičius. All measurements were carried out using GPS/GNSS Receiver EPOCH-35 reference station and also metal detector XP GMAXX GOLD.
Overview of the survey conducted in 2012 and 2014

Archaeological survey of Žalioji Street area in Armalėnai Village of Šilutė District

Overview of the survey conducted in 2012

On 11 November 2011, in Žalioji Street on the western edge of Armalėnai Village, an excavator was digging a trench for water pipes for a newly constructed house, when at a depth of approximately 1.2 m human remains were discovered. The number of skulls indicated that there were remains of 10 bodies. As a result, in 2012, geophysical prospecting was carried out in this area by Dr Sebastian Messal, under the international scientific cooperation agreement between the Baltic Sea Region History and Archaeology Institute of the University of Klaipeda and the Roman-Germanic Commission (Römisch-Germanisches Kommission in Frankfurt am Main (Germany)). The magnetic field was measured on the site with a 5-channel magnetometer SENSYS DLM 98/5, the total area measured was 1.5 ha. When analysing the recorded magnetic field measurement data, several locations of large-size pits, which could have been used for burial, were identified. In 2012, a group led by Abromavičius conducted an archaeological survey in the area of Žalioji Street: ten 2 m × 5 m trenches, one 2 m × 2 m trench, and two 2 m × 1 m trenches were examined. A total area of 108 sq. m was investigated. Further examination showed that there could be a total of 7 mass graves in this location, each 1.6 m × 20 m in size (Scheme 1).

Historical data research. In performing the research three unpublished sources were used: Rimantas Maslauskas’ ‘Report. Complex search data on Macikai labour camp and cemetery. 8 April 1999. Vilnius–Šilutė’; Soviet security (NKVD) interrogation protocol dated 16–18 November of Dovydas Stučka; and memoirs of Hilda Petraitytė about the burial of Russian prisoners of war in 1943–1944 in Armalėnai, the land of farmer Koblenicas (deciphered on 24 November 2011 by Ignas Giniotis, and an employee of Šilutė Museum).

Following the analysis of these historical sources it was identified that in the winter of 1942/1943, about 40 Soviet prisoners of war died daily, mostly from exhaustion and diseases. Initially, they were buried about 500 m away from the prisoner of war camp. According to Stučka’s testimony dead naked prisoners were carried on a sledge and buried in pits in groups of 20–25 bodies. The witness stated that in autumn 1944 there were about 60 such mass graves near Macikai and additionally some 200–300 individual graves outside the camp, in front of watchtower No. 3.
Scheme 1
According to Petraitytė’s testimony, in 1943–1944 there was a shortage of spaces to bury dead prisoners by the river in Macikai, so the land of farmer Koblenčas in Armalėnai Village began to be used for burials. The burial place was about 1.5 km to the southeast of the prisoner of war camp. According to the witness, only Soviet prisoners of war who died of typhus epidemic were buried there. Dead naked bodies of the deceased were covered with overcoats and brought on stretchers by Soviet prisoners of war. The deceased were buried in oblong pits (trenches) 2–3 m wide, oriented in a north-south direction. Burial pits were dug up in two rows in the area of current Žalioji Street. Groups of 20 bodies were buried. At first 10 bodies were laid to rest, then their bodies were sprinkled with bleach, then another 10 bodies were laid on top and sprinkled with bleach and buried.

**Results of the archaeological survey in 2014.** The main aim of the archaeological survey in Žalioji Street in Armalėnai Village was to identify whether there were mass graves in the southern part of the street and whether people were buried on the hill (Scheme 1) about 150 m west of Žalioji Street where abnormalities were identified during the magnetic survey in 2012.

In 2014, four 2 m × 5 m trenches were additionally investigated, total area of 40 sq. m: during archaeological surveys in the southern part of Žalioji Street two 2 m × 5 m trenches and two 2 m × 5 m trenches about 150 m west of the Žalioji Street (Scheme 1). WWII prisoners of war who died in the camp in 1943–1944 were buried on the western edge of Armalėnai Village (currently the area of Žalioji Street). According to witnesses, these were Soviet prisoners of war. This is attested by human remains discovered in 2011 during excavation of the trench for a water pipe and individual finds. The examination showed that in 2012 all burial places were most likely identified, because in 2014 no new burial sites or individual finds were detected. It was established that the mass burial site of WWII prisoners of war of Macikai camp covered an area of approximately 0.4 ha.

**Trench 1** of 2 m × 5 m was investigated. No buried structures or finds were detected. The area was unearthed manually with shovels and after examination was earthed mechanically.

**Trench 2** of 2 m × 5 m about 25 m to the northeast of trench 1 (north-south direction) was investigated. In the eastern part along the entire length of the trench an excavation about 0.5 m wide was identified. After taking a cross-section, it was established that this was the former irrigation canal of Žalioji Street. No buried structures or finds were detected.

**Trench 3** of 2 m × 5 m about 150 m to the west of Žalioji Street on a hill (west-east direction) was investigated. No buried structures or finds were detected.
Trench 4 of 2 m × 5 m about 10 m from trench 3 (north-south direction) was investigated. No buried structures or finds were detected.

Archaeological survey of the old cemetery and also of the former complex of WWII prisoner of war camps and Gulag camp in Macikai Village of Šilutė District

The historical complex of camps and graves in Macikai Village enlisted in the Register of Immovable Cultural Heritage consists of WWII prisoner of war and Gulag camps, the punishment room and graves. In 1995, a museum of former prisoner of war and Gulag camps was opened in Macikai.

The WWII prisoner of war and Gulag camps were located in the north-eastern part of Macikai Village, 1.5 km to the north of the Šilutė–Žemaičių Naumiestis Road, on the left bank of the River Šyša, and to the southeast of Hermann Sudermann Street. The punishment room was located in the southwestern part of the camps. Graves were located in the northern part of the camps. Killed or deceased prisoners of these camps were buried here.

Overview of the survey conducted in 2011 and 2012. In 2011, archaeologist Marius Petkus conducted an archaeological investigation in Vilties Street in Macikai Village. During the investigation, an area of 51 sq. m was researched, but no archaeologically valuable cultural layers or burials were detected. In 2012, Petkus examined an area of 6 sq. m of Macikai Manor, but no valuable cultural layers were detected here either.

Results of archaeological surveys conducted in 2014. The main aim of archaeological surveys is, in consultation with the client, to provide details of the boundaries of the cemeteries of the WWII prisoner of war and Gulag camps and to identify the layout of the graves in the cemetery. In June–November 2014, a total area of 435 sq. m with various trenches (Scheme 2) was investigated and 82 archaeological finds were made. The main group of the finds were everyday household items such as copper spoons and aluminium food containers. A large part of the finds consisted of the buttons of the uniforms of Belgian Army troops showcasing an image of a lion.

Trench 1 of 2 m × 20 m in the northern part of the cemetery (northwest-southeast direction) was investigated. Seven pits for graves and two pits for camp rubbish were detected. The rubbish pits contained many finds, mostly buttons of the uniforms of Belgian Army troops.
Buttons of the uniforms of Belgian Army troops

Buttons of the uniforms of Lithuanian Army troops

Billy cans and their lids
The WWII prisoner of war and Gulag camps 1939–1955 in the environs of Šilutė

Identification sign of a prisoner (1939–1944)

Cups

Ink bottles
Spoons

Water flasks
USSR 15, 20 and 3 kopeck denomination coins

Bottles
Trench 2 of 2 m × 20 m about 40 m southeast of trench 1 inside the cemetery (northwest-southeast direction) was investigated. Three utility pits were detected with such finds as dishes, buttons of the uniforms of Belgian Army troops, mugs, water flasks, glass bottles, and rusty unidentified iron items.

Trench 3, which was 80 sq. m and polygonal shape, was 23 m north of trench 2 inside the cemetery (in the northeastern part) was investigated. Under the top soil, the foundations of a building of about 70 sq. m were unearthed. A number of household items, such as copper spoons, food containers, etc. were detected.

Trench 4 of 2 m × 20 m about 35 m southeast of trench 2 inside the cemetery (northeast-southwest direction) was investigated. Six utility pits with finds, among which a Russian kopeck coin, were detected.

Trench 5 of 1 m × 10 m near the western part of the cemetery, outside the cemetery fence on the bank of the River Šyša (north-south direction) was investigated. In the southern part a pit profile was unearthed which might have been a grave. No finds were detected.

Trench 6 of 2 m × 20 m in the southern part of the cemetery, outside the cemetery fence (west-east direction) was investigated. Two 0.3 m wide excavations were detected in the western part of the trench, both across the trench, about 0.5 m apart. Compared with the Plan of Macikai Concentration Camp made by Edmundas Stankevičius in 1995, this was most likely the north-west side of the fence of the labour camp. This fence surrounded the ‘Russian zone’. No finds or items were detected.

Trench 7 of 1.5 m × 25 m (37.5 sq. m) near the northern part of the cemetery, about 10 m north outside the cemetery fence (west-east direction) was investigated (Scheme 2). No finds or items were detected.

Trench 8 of 1.5 m × 25 m (37.5 sq. m) near the northern part of the cemetery about 10 m north of the cemetery fence and about 10 m to the east from trench 7 was investigated (Scheme 2). No finds or items were detected.