

## Márton FISCHER's Tombstone

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I traveled many times to Budapest, Hungary, to visit my mother's sister, her daughter and grandchildren. Even though my Hungarian is not very good, I had almost no problem communicating with my aunt. At that time, I didn't know that the word *genealogy* existed and never thought of asking about my great-grandparents.

Fast forward many years.

My grandmother's birth record says that she was born in 1895 in Gyöngyös, Hungary, and her parents were Márton FISCHER and Fáni HANOFER.

In August 2001, my husband and I went to Hungary. Among other genealogy-related stuff, I carried printed charts of my family tree to give to cousins and a list of addresses in my ancestral towns.

After a few days of doing research in Budapest and Miskolc, and visiting the cemeteries in Abaújszántó and Tolcsva, we arrived in Gyöngyös. The Town Hall was already closed, so we went directly to the Jewish cemetery after asking for general directions.

There was no caretaker to be seen so we squeezed our way between the gate and the fence. The first impression was that it looked pretty neat. We were in a kind of square where the grass was well kept. On the right we saw the Holocaust memorial. On our left and in front we saw what looked like a nice peaceful forest. That was the first impression. We were very wrong. The nice peaceful forest was actually a jungle that had claimed much of the cemetery. I don't know how much time we spent trying to find my great-grandfather's (Márton



FISCHER) tombstone but sadly we were not successful. I do know that after this adventure, we were full of scratches and maybe even spiders crawling on our backs.

We went to Hungary again at the end of April 2005. I still had not found a record of my great-grandfather's death. But this time I had two old black and white photos, taken before 1945 at a cemetery, which I suspected was in Gyöngyös. In one of the photos my mother's sister is praying in front of the tombstone of FISCHER Márton. The other photo, although difficult to see, I suspected was my mother in front of the same tombstone.

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The cemetery seemed like it might have been cleaned the year before and, because it was April, there was not too much vegetation growing yet. It was very easy to walk around most of the paths. I still could not find my great-grandfather's tombstone. I was beginning to think that maybe the black and white photos were not taken at the Gyöngyös cemetery but somewhere in a village nearby.



Looking again at those old photos, I realized that the tombstone beside my great-grandfather's was of better quality and maybe would still be standing. So I began searching for the black tombstone of Guttman Soma. Although the upper part had fallen and was standing on the side, I found it! However, beside it there was no tombstone to be seen, just ivy crawling on the dirt.

Because in 2001 this cemetery was a jungle, I came prepared this time with scissors, water, garden gloves, a rug, etc. After clearing away

the ivy and the dirt, I saw my great-grandfather's resting place for the first time.

Now I know that he must have been a learned man (Ha chaver R'), his Hebrew name is Mendel Hirsch (or Hersch) and that "he died to the sorrow of his family on Yom Kippurim", in the year 5665.

This tombstone creates more puzzles for me but I will write more about this on another occasion.

My point in sharing this story is to emphasize the value of looking for other, seemingly inconsequential clues. I could not find my great-grandfather's tombstone because it was buried under dirt and ivy. But by looking at clues in the photos I had, I was able to find it. ☆

