

## COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE GÖCSEJ MUSEUM. Archaeological research of Pauline monasteries in Zala County

LÍVIA SIMMER<sup>1</sup> – BÁLINT HAVASI<sup>2</sup>

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*This paper presents the programme “Community Excavation of the Pauline monasteries”, one of our several similar archaeological community projects, and its results. The project, launched on a civil initiative in 2016, kept evolving and has reached the level of cooperation on the scale of social participation by today (Fig. 1). Since the beginning, we have aimed at approaching and involving the widest possible range of stakeholders. The focus – the past of a particular settlement and the history of the Pauline order – attracted both people interested in archaeology, Christian volunteers, and archaeology students looking for a field practice opportunity. Besides, we also attempted to reach local governments and mayors, local tourism agents, local NGOs, higher education institutions, the Hungarian Pauline Order, and local businesspersons and companies.*

**Keywords:** community archaeology, Pauline monasteries

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) accepted a new [museum definition](#) in August 2022. The new definition emphasises, among others, that museums are at the service of society, open to the public, accessible and inclusive, and work with communities. The perhaps lesser-known [vision](#) of the Network of the European Museum Organisations (NEMO) also highlights the role of communities in the life of museums: “...museums are for and about people. For past, present and future generations to be truly responsible for museums, museums must be able to work with and for all groups in the community they serve. Museums have the potential to strengthen the fabric of society, to act as a place where different cultures meet and dialogue.”

By the 21st century, the role of museums – initially comprising three traditional functions: collection, preservation, and exhibition – has fundamentally changed and expanded. Museums today have to take part in building local communities, preserving local traditions, and strengthening local identity.

As a result of the project [Communities in Action – Active Community Involvement](#), the social return of museums has recently come into the limelight in Hungary. The term *community museum* has been gaining ground and, with it, a new way of thinking and approach to the relationship between museums and related communities. The project’s experts have created a long-needed theoretical [knowledge base](#) and [methodological guidelines](#) and shared [good practical examples](#).

The project was strongly influenced by the [methodology](#) developed by the Communities in Action team to promote the social return of cultural institutions from the outset. This methodology defines diverse levels of participation: information, consultation, involvement, cooperation, and empowerment (*Fig. 1*).

The project was designed to research the history of the Pauline order in Zala County within the framework of community archaeology. From the very beginning, its aims also included, besides scientific research, serving the needs of local communities, boosting local cultural life and tourism, and organising and shaping the community. Besides, we ensured the results reached as large an audience as possible. A positive example of this is the excavation at Zalacsány-Örvényeshegy, where the excavation and related programmes (excavation open days, demonstration excavation, museum education events) have become important elements of the cultural festival organised at Örvényeshegy (*Figs. 2–3*). A memorial site has been established next to the archaeological site, and the site has been included in the Zala County Register of National Values.

<sup>1</sup> Göcsej Museum; e-mail: [simmer@gocsejimuseum.hu](mailto:simmer@gocsejimuseum.hu)

<sup>2</sup> Göcsej Museum; e-mail: [balint.havasi@gocsejimuseum.hu](mailto:balint.havasi@gocsejimuseum.hu)

Scale of social participation					
Increasing level of social return					
	Information	Consultation	Involving	Cooperation	Authorization
Way of social participation	Informing stakeholders	Requesting feedback following the information	Direct meeting with stakeholders	Partnering throughout the development process	The opinion and decision of those concerned are entirely relevant
Promise to participants	Provision of information	Decisions taken in response to the feedback will be communicated	Working together Opinions are reflected in the alternatives and feedback is given on the decision	Incorporating opinions into the decision Developing opinions, alternatives, considering innovations, selecting the feasible ones	Implementing the decision The final decision is also in the hands of the stakeholders
Examples, tools	Newsletter, closed Facebook group	Community meeting	Workshop	Participatory decision-making	Community decision-making

Fig. 1. Scale of social participation (the *LAP2 model*)

The crowdfunding project has been supported financially by companies and businessmen through a related museum foundation, a 1% tax donation from individuals, the physical work of our volunteers, and non-financial donations from other companies and individuals.

The Pauline Community Archaeological Programme is characterised by participatory decision-making: the program leaders always ask for the opinion of the stakeholders before making important decisions and incorporate their points as fully as possible into the final decision (e.g., determining the date of the excavation, the planned pace of excavation, etc.)

Over the years, the community archaeological programme has forged participants with different world-views, mindsets, professions, and ages into a community. Many people schedule their holidays with consideration to the excavation dates. The community has developed its own rituals, like the free lunch for all who work on the excavations or open days with a Pauline mass on the field as a closing act of the season.



Fig. 2. Open excavation day at the Zalacsány-Örvényeshegy excavation



Fig. 3. A Pauline priest blesses the Zalacsány-Örvényeshegy excavation

### THE RESULTS OF THE PAULINE MONASTERY RESEARCH

The community archaeological programme to research Pauline history started in 2016 with the archaeological research of the Pauline monastery in Vállusszentmiklós in the Keszthely Hills. This excavation, launched on the initiative of the mayor of Vállus and civilian activists, was carried out under the profes-



Fig. 4. Community excavation at the Pauline monastery of Vállus

sional leadership of the team of the Gőcsej Museum and the Balaton Museum. In the first excavation season, a north-south trench was laid to cut through the monastery area. It covered the outer wall of the polygonal sanctuary of the church building, reinforced with buttresses, a north-south wall section, the inner wall and the southeastern corner of the monastery, and the graves of two monks in the monastery courtyard. In 2018, following a geophysical survey, we investigated a room in the eastern wing of the monastery and started research in the interior of the sanctuary. The centre of the sanctuary had been disturbed with a plunder pit, but under a large amount of stone rubble, we have discovered a part of the altar, two intact spots of the one-time mortar floor and, at the northern wall, a massive stone

threshold and the accompanying carved door jambstone fallen into the sanctuary.

The excavation attracts more and more volunteers every year. The main objective of the 2019 season was to determine the full length of the church and its connection to the monastery sanctuary (Figs. 4–5). The east-west trench laid on the northern side of the church covered the triumphal arch separating the sanctuary from the nave and the western wall of the nave. Both the sanctuary and the nave were 10 metres long. The thick layer of rubble included white-painted rib fragments of the vaults of the former ceiling and a fragment of the arched lintel of a doorway on the northern side of the sanctuary, which probably led to the sacristy. Based on the *in situ* persisting plastered wall remains, the building was constructed in at least two phases.

The external wall and the northeastern inner corner of the monastery were found in a trench opened on the southern side of the sanctuary. The big surprise of the excavation was the discovery of the drainage system coming out of the courtyard of the monastery. The ends of the large stone troughs, carved out of massive slabs, were carefully fitted together, and, with the proper slope, the rainwater was channelled out from the northeastern corner of the monastery's courtyard to the terrace in front of the sanctuary.

The Örményes Monastery of the Pauline Order once stood in Örvényeshegy, a settlement between Zalacsány and Kehida, above the valley of the Örvényes Stream. Máté Stibrányi carried out ground-penetrating radar and magnetometer surveys in the monastery and its wider surroundings and the results gave clear evidence of hidden, underground wall foundations: a rectangular, closed cloister courtyard on the north side of the church, reinforced with buttresses, and the rooms of the western and eastern wings of the monastery (Fig. 5).

Based on the ground-penetrating radar survey results, archaeological excavations were started



Fig. 5. Community excavation: a trench at the Pauline monastery of Vállus



Fig. 6. Photo of the georadar survey of the monastery of Zalacsány-Örvényeshegy



Fig. 7. Non-destructive investigation with volunteers in Kehida-Barátság

layer. Besides, several burials have been discovered along the outer side of the southern wall of the nave at the foundation level.

The excavation, carried out with volunteers and with community funding, has grown into a research programme of Pauline monasteries in the territory of present-day Zala County. Non-destructive (geophysical and metal detector) surveys have also been launched on sites at Óhíd-Barátokihegy and Kehida-Barátság. Only the name of the vineyard of the Barátoki field, above the spring head of the Enyere, a stream flowing into the Marcal River, has preserved the memory of the former monastery of

Enyere. This monastery once stood west of the village of Óhíd, on top of a vine-stock-covered hill. Local knowledge led us to the cellar of Zsigmond Somogyi, a former resident of Óhíd, who, while working the vineyard in 1938, found skeletons, bricks, carved stone, and a wall section. Geophysical investigations in the Spring of 2021 confirmed the exact location of the former Pauline monastery. The ground-penetrating radar survey, carried out by Máté Stibrányi, revealed a section of a church with a polygonal sanctuary supported by buttresses and the cloister of the monastery attached to it in the north.

Elek Monastery was first mentioned in a census by Pál (Paulus), Bishop of Veszprém, in 1263. Previously, it was supposed to have stood on Kehida-Barátság, on top of a small hill along the Zala River, which was an island before the regulation of the river; however, the instrumental surveys carried out there in 2019 failed to identify it (Fig. 7).

Within the framework of the Hungarian Genius Programme, the project of the Gőcsej Museum, entitled *Community archaeological research of Pauline monasteries in Zala County and the realisation of a conference and conference volume related to the research* received a grant of HUF 7,936,000 from the National Cultural Fund (NKA) in 2022 (Fig. 8.)



Fig. 8. Project launch press conference at the Mindszentyneum Visitor Centre

This support has enabled us to continue the recent community excavations in Vállus and Zalacsány-Örvényeshegy and the non-destructive geophysical investigations in Óhíd and Kehida. The grant also helps us to summarise the results of the archaeological and geoinformatical research of the last years and present them at a conference entitled *Tracing the history of the Paulines*, to be held in September 2023 at the Mindszentynem Visitor Centre in Zalaegerszeg, and to carry out new scientific investigations.

#### RECOMMENDED LITERATURE (IN HUNGARIAN)

[Havasi Bálint: A közösségi részvétel megvalósításának lehetőségei a múzeumban. In: Múzeumi iránytű 17. \(2019\) pp. 85-107.](#)

[Közösségi régészet Zala megyében. Online kerekasztal-beszélgetés](#)

[Pálosok öröksége Zala megyében](#)

[Simmer Lívia: Pálos kolostorok kutatása Zala megyében \(előadás\) Fialtal Középkoros Régészek Konferenciája 2016](#)