

## CASTLES, PALACES AND CHURCHES Journal of History and Heritage Tourism

SZABOLCS NAGY

*The periodical Castles, Palaces and Churches (Várak, kastélyok, templomok) reached its final issue in December of 2013. Over nine years with 53 issues the publication provided a forum for colorful and easily understandable essays that were also scholarly, aimed at readers who were interested in or engaged professionally with historic properties. However, the following brief review is not meant to be an obituary for the periodical; its future is uncertain for the moment, but not without hope.*

Not much changed in the structure, character and high quality of the journal over what was nearly a decade. Its *Workshop (Műhely)* column presented published writings, in general on the most recent research, with a particular emphasis on archaeology and art history, as well as the field of history to a lesser extent. Typically the *Chronicle (Krónika)* column contained essays specifically on history and military history, which were primarily based on the analysis of written and pictorial sources. In addition to articles studying sieges, military campaigns, lifestyles and biographies, there were also descriptions of some historic properties here, even from outside the Carpathian Basin. The *Gallery (Galéria)* column in the middle pages (which could even be removed) provided a pleasant dash of color with two illustrations on each page taken from archival photographs or early drawings of castles or palaces (or sometimes even churches). The pairs of images filled the entire page, accompanied by a brief history of the given historical monument. The authors of the *Travel Guide (Útikalauz)* column enticed the reader to discover Hungary and the Carpathian Basin for themselves through introductions to the history and architecture of certain old buildings, as well as presenting numerous distant great monuments that many may never have had the chance to visit. The *Kaleidoscope (Kaleidoszkóp)* column that closed the periodical contained high-quality book reviews and also brought various heritage tourism events to the attention of the readers.

When we examine the foundation, operation and historical impact of *Castles, Palaces and Churches*, the classic question can be raised: what was it good for and who benefited from it? Through this question, in what follows, we take stock of what we can thank this periodical for, and the fact that – if there is enough interest – it could continue its mission in the form of an annual as well as possibly on the internet.

“According to the defining idea of our mission, we needed to create the conditions so that the representatives of the profession and enthusiastic amateurs could work in one place”. Of the interested parties, let’s first take a look at the representatives of professions dealing with historic properties. If they peruse an issue of the journal, certainly everyone gladly delves into browsing the outstanding photographs, archival images and prints. However, if anyone would ask them who the publication is aimed at, I think that for the most part there would be a uniform response: those interested are naturally primarily the “enthusiastic amateurs”. It is true that the length of the articles and the proportion of pictures to text do not suggest a professional



journal, and we are not really used to high-quality photos and color illustrations in the realm of professional publications as narrowly defined.

Despite this, I think that one of the big winners during the life of the journal was the historian and the historic preservation profession. *Castles, Palaces and Churches* offered a space for dialogue between the researchers and interested outsiders. It provided an opportunity for professional representatives of historical scholarship and heritage preservation to present their most recent results in a brief, easily-understood and – thanks to the illustrations – attractive form, thereby taking steps to combat the exclusivity of the profession. The two-sided nature of the dialogue (through the direct reactions of the readers) was provided by articles written by those outside the narrow confines of the profession. What they wrote provided good indications of which issues and fields elicited the widest interest.

The diversity of subjects in the essays published in the journal might have attracted both professionals and interested laymen. They were able to select writings from respected historians and art historians, reports from recent excavations, and reviews of historic properties from Hungary, the Carpathian Basin, Europe and even from outside Europe according to their tastes. This extraordinarily broad selection also showed in the ages of the monuments discussed. Considering the number of articles on the subjects, the main emphasis was on the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period for archeological items and the Early Modern and Modern Periods for pieces on history, but the preceding and later eras were also represented in the essays by professionally recognized scholars. The expansive time period encompassed by the essays (from prehistory to the 20<sup>th</sup> century) can be considered one of the main virtues of the periodical. In relation to this quality, the list of authors in the particular issues tells us quite a bit; from its beginnings the journal acquired a high prestige amongst professional scholars, and it was able to maintain this all the way to the end.

What was gained – in addition to what is listed above – by readers who were only concerned with the architectural monuments of the past in their free time? The extraordinarily abundant illustrations that delighted the eyes made this publication valued and attractive, and the style of the articles was scholarly while still being easily understandable, going a long way to making the historic properties more familiar and better understood. In addition, reports provided information on various “monument rescue” initiatives, and heritage tourism offers brought attention to high-quality events and activities worthy of recognition.

From the above, it is natural that we must consider something else that profited a great deal during the life of the periodical, that is the castles, churches and palaces themselves. Perhaps it is not too much to state that the shaping of the protection and preservation of historic monuments over the long term is determined primarily by the demands and expectations of society (besides the official organizations and the legal background). For this reason every effort that helps to spread information about the significant heritage we have is to be commended. I believe it is without doubt that the journal truly did a great deal in this area through making the architectural monuments more familiar and better loved. We hope that it will soon be able to continue its mission, even if it is in a different form. To keep up with the developments in the fate of the publication for the future one can visit the *Castles, Palaces and Churches* web site (<http://www.varlap.hu>).