

Castle history – historic preservation – restoration and heritage tourism at the Great Milic Nature Park

The history of Füzér Castle

Füzér Castle is among the few rock castles that had already existed before the Mongol invasion. The present archeological and historical studies unanimously agree that a branch of the Aba clan had the castle built in the early 13th century. However, the castle soon got into the possession of Andronicus master of the Kompolt clan, who later sold it to King Andrew II. By means of this, Füzér became a royal castle. The first mention in a charter derives from the period of the reign of King Béla IV, from 1264. His son, Stephen V donated the castle to Mihály comes of the Rosd clan and his brother, Demeter in 1270.

The castle could not stay long in the possession of the Rosd clan because research has shown that by the end of the 13th century Amade Aba got hold of it together with the neighbouring castle estates. It became royal property again only after the Battle of Rozgony (1312), where King Charles Robert defeated the sons of Amade Aba palatine. The Angevin rulers, King Charles Robert and Louis I (Louis the Great) considered the castle and the castle estate of Füzér as so-called honors, i.e. the comes of Abaúj County became keepers of the estate during their run of office.

The Perényi family appeared in the castle history in 1389. Sigismund of Luxemburg donated the castle to the sons of Péter Perényi, Miklós, János and Imre as a perpetual grant. From that time the Perényi family members were careful owners of Füzér Castle until 1567, the extinction of the Nádor branch of the family. They are associated with the gothic reconstruction of the castle and the renaissance extensions carried out in the second half of the 16th century. The defense system was modernized under the ownership of Péter Perényi crown guard and his son, Gábor. Péter Perényi commissioned the construction of a gate bastion in front of the gate tower, on the basis of the old Italian system, based on the plans of Alessandro Vedani Italian architect. The interior of the tower was walled up solidly in the mid-17th century.

Füzér probably never functioned as the family seat, it did not have representative functions, but the most precious family assets and the treasury were probably kept here. Having lost the Battle of Mohács, in the autumn of 1526, after the coronation of King John I (John Zápolya), Péter Perényi found his own castle the best place to safeguard the Holy Crown. Visegrád,



where the crown was traditionally guarded, was subject to the possible attacks of Ferdinand I, enforcing Habsburg legal claims.

After the death of Gábor Perényi in 1567, Füzér Castle was received by György Báthory de Ecsed, related by blood to the Perényi family. As the heritage of his daughter, Elizabeth Báthory, who was married to Ferenc Nádasdy, the castle became the possession of the Nádasdy family. In the 17th century Füzér lost the special attention it enjoyed under the ownership of the Perényi family. The Nádasdy family settled its centre in the western part of the country, Füzér was far from this region. Collections from that period inform about purist furniture and the role the castle played in the economic life of the estate. In the 17th century, the richness of the former “treasury” was only demonstrated by a single painting, associated with the Báthory era: the portrait of Gabriel Báthory, Prince of Transylvania, who was murdered at a young age. The painting was kept in Füzér until the destruction of the castle, when it disappeared.

In 1671, after the execution of Ferenc Nádasdy judge royal on the basis of trumped up charges, the castle got once again into the royal possession and thus under the management of the chamber. In 1676 the court chamber gave orders to destroy the castle. The historic role of Füzér Castle thus ended, and the castle estate belonging to it got into the possession of the Károlyi family in 1686.



The history and present status of Szalánc (Slanec)

Szalánc Castle is situated 23 km east from Kassa (Kaschau, Košice) on the hilltop above the village. The exact date of construction is unknown but it was probably built after the Mongol invasion. It is thought to be originated in the Árpád era. The oldest authentic mention can be found in a charter of the chapter of Eger from 1303^{*}, when the sons and descendants of Szalánczi I Péter (Petri de Zalanch) – originating from the Aba clan – shared the castle and other possessions.

Next it is mentioned in the 1330s, when ten successors of the Szalánczy family traded Szalánc Castle and the estate belonging to it with a Drugeth family ancestor with the permission of King Charles Robert. The Gereni branch of the Drugeth family owned Szalánc Castle until its extinction. From the Gereni branch of the Drugeth family, Miklós III, the supremus comes of Ung County and ban of Szörény married one of his daughters to László Telegdy. Thereafter Szalánc Castle became Telegdy's possession through marriage. László Telegdy's daughter, Anna married László Losonczy, ban of Slavonia, and so the Losonczy family soon took possession of the Szalánc Castle from the Telegdy family.

In the first half of the 15th century, Hussites settled in Upper Hungary and occupied the castle. The troops of János Hunyadi chased them away in 1448. In the 1490s the Losonczy family rebuilt the castle. After the extinction of the Losonczy family, Rudolf II donated the castle to Baron Zsigmond Forgách de Ghymes in 1601.

István Bocskai occupied it in 1605, but after the Treaty of Vienna and



after the Treaty of Vienna and Bocskai's death it returned to Zsigmond Forgách. It was inherited by his son, Ádám, who was appointed chief commander of Kassa in 1643. A year later, on 4th March, 1644, he gave up Kassa without fight to George I Rákóczi, who took part in the Thirty Years' War as an ally of Sweden and France. However, he escaped to Ferdinand III in Vienna, whom he informed about the composition of Rákóczi's army and plans and took part in the initial fight against him. Nevertheless, the Transylvanian troops defeated

Lajos Csordák: Marsh under Slanec Castle, 1896, oil

^{*} This data is 1281 in the novel of Viktor Szombathy /1986/ and in other sources 1230.

him at the battle at Szalánc and then burned the castle down in 1644.

In the following decades, the castle changed hands several times. Occasionally it was held by anti-Habsburg rebels or by the emperor's troops, and in the meantime it suffered significant damage. Imre Thököly occupied it in 1678, and later signed a ceasefire with Leopold I. As a consequence the imperial troops invaded. General Count Jakab Lestie, the president of the war cabinet and commander in Upper Hungary destroyed the castle in 1679. Since then it has been lying in ruins.

As the 1868 May edition of the *Vasárnapi újság* (Sunday paper) puts it: "And thus the at least six-century-old stone castle was destroyed. The castle is presently owned by the Szalánc branch of the Forgách family and in one of its towers, that was rebuilt by Earl József Forgách, a keen supporter of sciences, the following text is displayed on two iron plates:"

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I. Arx Szaláncz Seculo XIII. per genus Aba erecta; — Seculo XIV. per Drugethios tentata; ab anno 1390. per secula Losoncziis paruit; anno 1440 per Bohemum Ducem Joannem Giskra de Brandeisz desolata; post semiseculum per Ladislaum de Losoncz restaurata.

II. Ab Anno 1601. Comitum Forgách propria; per Bocskay, Bethlen, Rákóczy, Tököly iterato lacessita; anno 1644. per Georgium I. Rákóczy combusta; — ejus Dominus Comes Sigismundus III. Forgách captus; ab anno 1679. diruta moles. — Per Dominum ejusdem Josephum Comitem Forgách ab anno 1825. non martis exercitiis, sed sui suorum que deliciis restituitur.

I. The Szalánc Castle was erected by the Aba clan in the 13th century. In the 14th century it was in the hands of the Drugeth family; from 1390 it was in the possession of the Losonczy family; in 1440 John Giskra of Brandys, Czech officer abandoned it; it was rebuilt by László Losonczy around the middle of the century.

II. From 1061 it was in the possession of the Forgách viscounts; the fortress was attacked by Bocskay, Bethlen, Rákóczy and Tököly time and time again; in 1644 György Rákóczy I burned it down and its owner Zsigmond Forgách III was taken prisoner; in 1679 it was destroyed and has remained in that state ever since. Its owner, Viscount József Forgách has started to rebuilt it in 1825, not for battles however, but for himself and the enjoyment of his family.

Today the owner and operator of Szalánc Castle is the municipality of Slanec (Nagyszalánc). The Regional Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments in Kassa County decided to renovate the castle in October 2011. The related historical and archeological excavation of the castle is conducted in June to September 2012 together with the detailed architec-



tural and historical excavation of the castle centre (i.e. tower, palace and chapel), including the following activities:

- ❖ the on-site documentation and evaluation of findings
- ❖ the positioning of findings and details on the ground plans, elevations and prints
- ❖ processing details of historic value into inventory lists and developing a reconstruction proposal
- ❖ writing down the position of findings and processing their description, as well as the complex evaluation of the development of the researched castle section
- ❖ developing the overall castle reconstruction plan, including each detail
- ❖ the photographic documentation of findings
- ❖ the presentation of results and continuous consultation with the methodological expert of the Regional Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments in Kassa County
- ❖ studying and evaluating the existing documentation associated with the researched object in the archives of the Regional Office for the Protection of Historic Monuments in Kassa County
- ❖ drawing up the excavation report – written part and graphic supplements – evaluating the development of the object and the findings
- ❖ approval of the reconstruction proposal – see written part and graphic supplements

The exact geodetic survey of the area with terrestrial laser scanning and digital photogrammetry, the development of the field model of the castle ruins (palace section, tower and cistern) in orthogonal system (front view, side view and top view) as well as in detailed photographic raster structure with the indication of the geometry of castle walls are carried out in June to September, 2012. The scope of survey covers the castle centre – its internal and external parts – as well as the neighboring rooms.

The passportisation of castle ruins (static analysis and assessment) is also conducted in June to September, 2012. The results of the research carried out (archeological–historical, static and geodesic) will be of key importance when determining the steps of the reconstruction process. The archeological excavation of the castle is going to be carried out and the reconstruction works (castle tower and palace walls) are going to start in 2013.

The Civic Association to Save Szalánc Castle (Mentsük Meg a Szalánci Várat Polgári Társulás /Občianske združenie Zachráňme hrad Slanec) is actively involved in protecting the castle: in March 2012 they cleaned the castle courtyard from invasive plants and continue to support the reconstruction by means of voluntary work.

Castle history and heritage tourism: the example of Füzér

By the beginning of the 20th century, the appreciation of historic values had spread increasingly. The villagers, who had some decades ago carried stone away from the castle, began to appreciate the ruins, and seeing the destruction of walls awakened their need to preserve them. This morale, still living today, was first documented in a letter that Béla Wittich forestry adjutant wrote to the National Committee of Monuments in 1910.

“Please do not take into account my insignificant role – he writes – as I turn to your Excellency in connection with the renovation of Füzér Castle because I only write the wish of the region’s population: save Füzér Castle, the boast of our region from final destruction! Your Excellency! Perhaps it is not in vain to ask you for it if I tell you that the most beautiful part of the castle, the 5-meter-high Gothic chapel will collapse within a short time and only a white mess of ruins will show the place where the relics of Holy Crown was safeguarded in the chaotic period after the Battle of Mohács, where Erzsébet Báthori of Csejte expiated for her terrible sins. This year the gales have shattered the castle chapel to a great extent. The head stones of the pointed arched windows have loosened, a part has fallen out and another has crashed and started to slip down. The external one has bent to an extent that the difference from vertical is visible to the naked eye.”

The Committee sent Kálmán Lux architect to the site, who confirmed Wittich’s account by briefly describing the castle in his report. He considered the chapel worthy of restoration and offered an alternative for reconstruction in his notebook. Being aware of the limited financial possibilities of the Committee, he suggested that Count László Károlyi, the owner should be asked to renovate the chapel for the purposes of an upscale hunting shelter.

After the First World War, new initiatives have been launched to protect the chapel. In 1923, a member of the National Committee of Monuments visited the castle, who suggested the same as Lux. Nevertheless, the works did not start. The next attempt to raise awareness came from Füzér again: In 1928 Sándor Pacsay teacher wrote a letter to the Committee. According to the information contained, the forest lordship of Count Károlyi refused any restoration works, but the Committee asked the Count to carry out the



work in a letter again. More than five years later the forestry commission office informed the Committee that the proposed restoration of the chapel was carried out in 1934 and requested an expert to help continue the works. The Károlyi lordship must have decided on carrying out the conservation works on the castle ruins in order to boost tourism in the region; it was also at this time that the castle in Füzérradvány was converted into a resort hotel.

Later on, the protection of the more and more dilapidated castle in Füzér was taken up by the Hungarian Monument Protection Authority from the 1970s. However, the restoration works could start only after the forest road and cableway had been constructed, thus making it possible to carry the building material to the site. As a result of the construction works that have been ongoing since then, the castle chapel, the gate bastion and tower as well as some parts of the castle walls have been restored, the wall ruins of farm buildings have been presented and the reconstruction of the basement level of the former residential palace has started in 1994.

At present, the defense system and the buildings (wolf pit, guardhouse, stalls, lower elevator building) of the **lower castle** (front castle or palisade) are under construction. Their reconstruction is soon to be carried out and is planned to provide controlled entry, information to visitors and social services.

A development goal is the elimination of the dangerous state of the **stone stairs** between the front castle and the upper castle and the construction of timbered wooden stairs for safe access.

Furthermore, future tasks include the presentation of the former full establishment planned in the **upper castle**, covering some parts of the building, reconstructing places; exhibition, establishing contemporary interiors; as well as making the kitchen, baking house and cellars suitable for serving occasional events; as well as establishing an orderly design of the castle courtyard and the flower garden by using spices and herbs.

A characteristic element of the monument is the castle chapel originally built in honor of the Blessed Virgin. People stick to the tradition that Péter Perényi, after the defeat in the Battle of Mohács, had the Hungarian Holy Crown guarded in the chapel for almost a year. The crown is believed to have been placed in the storehouse serving for the storage of other values as well.

As a result of the archeological excavations carried out on the **lower bastion**, we have found the former floor level (material: stove tiles of the age, tuff and brick) and some previously unknown loopholes. The exploration has delimited the end of the southern wall of the lower bastion. Thus the archeological–monument protection sights of Füzér Castle are completed



with a well-bordered object under the former palace, which can be visited temporarily with a guide.



Heritage tourism event in Füzér Castle

The idea of caring for past memories emerged in the mid-19th century. Its background was the overwhelming dynamism of industrialization and urbanization, which put the main emphasis clearly on new and modern. However, all these new events highly threatened the values of historical past and as a consequence the idea of **protection** came to the fore.

Mostly enthusiastic amateurs organized and encouraged the activity, who focused first of all on the **protection** of buildings and put the emphasis on the age (historicism) and beauty (aesthetics) during the selection. As a result of their work, professional offices were established and the first inventories and monument lists were prepared.

However, this activity had become too pointless by the mid-20th century. As a consequence, from the 1960s, increased attention was paid to the **conservation** activities, which differed from **protection** in many ways. On the one hand, the emphasis gradually shifted from buildings to districts or even to whole towns, and on the other hand, in addition to the protection of historic values, more attention was paid to the operation of the given area (i.e. the function). Afterwards the aspects of monument protection became integral parts of the land use plans.

In the 1970s and 1980s new developments occurred in Western Europe regarding both ways, leading to the establishment of **heritage planning**.



Under this concept, the utilization of the values of past are emphasized in a way that result in tangible benefits as well, i.e. the memories of history are utilized for *economic functions*.

The same building parts also fill certain *social functions* by means of promoting socialization. It means that history and the past play important roles in transferring the norms and rules of society to the new generations.

In Füzér the cultural events organized in the castle primarily belong to the **heritage events**; cultural events are typical rather in the settlements. The tradition preserving events organized in the castle aim at presenting

former cultural traditions for the wider public and thus demonstrating historic values. We should emphasize the ‘flagship’ development of the region, i.e. the issue of the touristic utilization of Füzér Castle, which is associated with the activity of tradition preserving groups as well.

The historic motivation is complemented by the idea of “living castle”. It is not involved in run-down, conserved wall ruins but in the functional rooms restored in accordance with historic principles – in all the rooms where the everyday life of the castle, the programs and the events form a whole.

In the world of “**preserved values**” we believe that people who would like to relax are more receptive to the attractive natural environment, the aesthetically pleasing look of settlements and the preserved values. In the case of Füzér, with the return of castle life, the life of the region is also boosted.

Monument tourism in Füzér Castle

It is fortunate that local societies have archaic features that can be interpreted positively, which creates the basis for more effective community action opportunities.

Dr. László Nyári

