

## Tourism for Conservation

### "The Restoration of the Castle at Lovasberény"

dr. Elizabeth Kovács

The married couple with four children, Sandor Sámár and Zsuzsa Varga, were only looking for the scene of their desired dwelling in the country in 1994, but in the summer of 1995 they established the foundation named "Foundation for the Monument Protection of the Castle at Lovasberény" in order to restore, make use of the "Cziráky" castle and realise other tasks of monument protection. The following year (1996), the Foundation "leased" the castle for substance protecting and other kind of works, and in 1997 – for the first time in Hungary – at an open competition by the Treasury Trustee, they gained the right for managing the estate for 60 years. (On the basis of its qualities as a monument, the castle of Lovasberény is one of those ensembles that cannot be alienated from the state property). The legal status of public utility of the Foundation provides very much favourable opportunities for the accounts of the donations by the sponsors.

During the first two years of "owning" the castle, the Foundation has achieved remarkable successes. The building, which had been empty for 20 years, was cleaned, doors and windows have temporary been put in. The leaking in the roof and the drainpipes have been fixed.

As a result of the keen work, a team of famous experts have gathered together around the Foundation, who prepared the surveying and executive plan documentation of the castle and the chapel. The thorough art historical research, providing a wide range of interesting and surprising data for the reconstruction of the castle, is coming to its end after two years. The inner yard was restored. The ingenious and even today modern rainwater draining system, planned by Miklós Ybl, has been uncovered and restored. After this, the final layer of the yard got a temporary paving.

The rehabilitation of the original English Garden in the 5 hectare territory, run by the Foundation has been started. The restoration of the late Baroque wall paintings of the Chapel, that will require about two years, is going on. Its re-consecration is planned for 2000.

The preliminary business plan of the enterprise called "Cziráky Curiositas" and the study plan of the buildings and of the park have been prepared.

#### 1. About the History of the Settlement and the Castle

Lovasberény is a nice little village half way between Budapest and the biggest fresh-water lake in Europe – the lake Balaton – in the neighbourhood of the ancient royal town, Székesfehérvár. The name of the settlement was first mentioned in a charter from 1302. Its material remains prove the presence of Neolithic men. In the times of the Turkish invasion, from the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> c. up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. the settlement had been depopulated. After chasing out the Turks, general Heister was given to own the area for his merits in the war against the Turks. The development of the settlement started in 1730, when – after changes of the owners several times – count József Cziráky bought Lovasberény.

Lovasberény got the privilege of a market town from the assembly of Fejér county in 1765, with the right to hold fairs four times a year. Also in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> c. a quite numerous Jewish community from Moravia settled down in the village. The Roman Catholic, the Reformed and the Jewish had their own denominational schools and school-masters. The village had nearly 4500 inhabitants a year later. Besides the constructions on the castle, the Cziráky family made other significant economical investments. Forest culture, animal keeping – mainly sheep-farming – and brick and pot baking resulted significant incomes, too. After World War I., in the 1930s, as a result of another economic development and public investments public house, public library, artesian well were established. At the end of World War II., there were heavy battles in the region, causing serious damages both in the built and natural environment. The real deterioration started after 1945, when the owner Cziráky family left the country.

Talking about the architectural values of Lovasberény, besides the castle, which is one of the most significant examples of neo-classic architecture in Hungary in its final form, the chapel and the oldest – 200 years old – vernacular house of the county should be mentioned.

## **2. The History of the Castle**

It is unusual, that the history of a castle would be linked to one single family, as in the case of the Cziráky castle at Lovasberény. It is extremely unusual that each of the seven following generations carried out significant construction works.

The construction of the castle was started by György Cziráky (1732-1775) in the 1760s, who formed a 12-room, modern dwelling wing, opening from the closed corridor in the verandah wing. Though researches do not prove the number of the rooms, but – though in fragments – the remains of the high level for the age and fashionable painting in the rooms survived. According to written sources, the farm wing was restored and a crosswing was built, though no remains of it have been found so far. There was a stone fence and an ornamental garden in front of the eastern dwelling wing. Behind the western – farm – wing there was a farmyard. The previously built chapel was also extended at this time. A Baroque court of honour was built between 1775-1792.

The dates, found on the bricks in the 19th c. wing of the castle, prove the fact that the construction, which resulted the present form of the building ensemble, started in 1804. The alteration was carried out according to the designs by Jakab Rieder from Székesfehérvár. The most important alteration was the forming of the portico and altering the wing into a storied one. The stylised Ionic column-caps of the portico, the ornamental decoration of the tympanum, furthermore the coat-of arms-of the Cziráky and Illésházy families and the frieze below the tympanum were also made during this time. Three representative doors with semi-circular crowning lead into the banquet-hall taking two stories. There is a reception hall belonging to the banquet-hall, with 3-3 representatives rooms on both sides.

The so-called "small castle" was built for the guests north from the court of honour, new stables were attached to the farm wing and the former French garden was converted into a vast English one. The records remained up to present time in the inner part is only the painting – conserving the skills of probably local craftsmen – in the banquet hall, though in a significantly repainted form. However, József Hild, the most remarkable architect of the time was put in charge of the alteration of the parish church in 1832.

The alterations carried out at the turn of the century, the designer of which was nobody else but the famous Miklós Ybl, touched first of all the interior execution, the layout, the fittings (public utilities) and the modernisation of the draining off the rainwater. The solution accomplished complied with the requirements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite of it, due to the

great pretensions of the owners, numerous further modernisation works were carried out in the interiors during the following decades.

### **3. The Garden of the Cziráky Castle**

Lovasberény is one of our magnificent castles, the English garden of which was seriously damaged after World War II. as the result of a false scale of values and negligence. The history of the English garden goes back to the 18<sup>th</sup> c., when following the fashion of the age, a tremendous landscape garden was established. There were several valuable exotic plants, frondiferous trees and evergreens planted along the alleys around the castle. There was a pond, fed from a natural spring created in the western part of the garden, which was made even more romantic with stone bridges, statue ornaments and pavilions. The soil dug out when making the pond was used for elevating small hills.

The great Metuselah trees and evergreens of the beautiful garden mostly died out or were cut out. The pond and its shore are covered with weed, underneath the remained water there may be even mines from World War II. There are hardly some old trees survived: maple-leaf platans, (the hybrid of the eastern and western platans), nice oaks, lime-trees, horse-chestnut and deciduous maidenhair trees.

### **4. The "Cziráky Curiositas" Program**

Involving famous experts, besides the maintenance and protection works, the Foundation has art-historical researches carried out. The program plan for the utilisation of the castle has been completed. Preserving the system of layout, a hotel (with 23 double rooms, 6 apartments, 2 guests rooms and an official quarter) will be established in the castle, which had more than 60 rooms and three generations living together at the beginning of the 40s. Besides creating a homely atmosphere, making use of the geographical conditions, watersport, hunting aviation and recreation programs are planned. Besides the 100-person kitchen, where the visitors can observe the process of preparing their meals, a restaurant, suitable for the reception of large-scale events and a cellar wine-house are planned to be built.

In the most valuable from art-historical point of view of the castle, in the two-storied banquet-hall and in the rooms opening to the left and to the right from it, drawing rooms, a library, sitting rooms and studies will be established in the way the Cziráky family used them in their age. The opening into each other rooms will serve as an ideal environment for conferences, courses, meetings, etc.

The reconstruction of the 46-hectar garden follows the traditional layout of the English garden. The artificial ruins, bridges, cascade, statues will be rehabilitated. The some-time 8000 square metre pond and the traditional orchard will also be re-established. Following the requirements of the protection of the built and natural surroundings, a technology, using solar energy is going to be applied for the hot water supply. A so called "energy- forest" will be planted for heating.

### **5. "Castle and vernacular house" program series**

The object of the summer program series, which was first organised in 1998, is to convert the castle into a cultural and festival centre even during the time of its renovation which is planned to be completed during 15 years. For the sake of this, making maximum use of the opportunities provided by the restoration works, unique program series were arranged for the second time this year.

Last year's exhibitions (naive painters and wood-carvers, the photos by Erzsébet Ács-Farkas of the Holy Land, castle history) were showed in the upper rooms – with concreted floors of the new roofing and unplastered aisle walls – of the main building. This year the deteriorated staircase, despite of its propping, could not be employed. For this reason the exhibitions have been moved into the ground floor rooms of the eastern wing, where a photo exhibition, an exhibition on the history of coffee by a famous confectionery, the exhibition introducing to the history of the castle of Lovasberény and a café take place. After some cleaning, replacing some stairsteps and the reparation of the electric installations, the most beautiful cellar of the castle will be the scene for a viticulture exhibition. The creativity of the organisers is proved by the great formation of the scenes of the exhibitions, the silk covering of the walls, the hanging of curtains and some successfully placed plants and also the fact, how necessity can be converted into virtue.

The irregular guidance is an organic and very much interesting part of the program, during which the visitors can walk all over the parts of the castle and its surroundings that are still under reconstruction, can pop into the trial trench and have a look at the restoration work of the frescos in the chapel, etc.

The real sensation of the summer program is Mozart's Don Giovanni, in original Italian, performed three nights. The inner yard with a unique acoustics was finished last year already, so only the rotten chopped wood cover of the yard had to be changed. Figaro's Marriage is a piece, written almost for this place, as the inner facade of the Cziráky castle provides a great background for the opera, happening in a castle. This year, the directing by Endre Útő uses the building not just as background. Leaving the stage and involving the inner corridor into the opera, it creates an interesting situation and atmosphere for the audience, sitting in the raised level auditorium.

The garden has not been left out from the celebration during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Castle and Vernacular House program. Old photos show us that there was an old, many-century-old lime tree standing next to the chapel. As the symbol of recommencement, pride of the past and remembrance, an adult lime tree was planted in its place at the opening ceremony of this year's program.



