

Historical-ecological project in

the Gerecse Hills

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The Natural Lifestyle Foundation was established after several years of preparation in 1993 by the Hungarian Human Ecological Society and two private founders, in the early period of the establishment of eco-villages, which were based on the traditional Hungarian culture. The site chosen was Agostyán-Ágostonliget, in the vicinity of the famous Agostyán Botanical Gardens. This is where the "nomadic camp" of the foundation's Teaching Centre of Nature Conservation and Human Ecology was established on 20 hectares, organically including among its buildings two traditional press-houses and a fishing cottage near the Roman Lake of Agostyán.

The aim of the foundation was to become the „ante-room" of eco-villages. This aim was based on the realisation - verified by experience - that humans, looking for a new place for themselves in nature will, without guiding principles and examples, create an even greater chaos in themselves and their environment. The foundation attempts to give help by devising a livable and sustainable system and introducing it to the everyday, environmentally conscious practice.

In the realisation of this goal, the Teaching Centre houses a novel experiment in the vicinity of the Gerecse Conservation Area. It plans to build a smaller mediaeval settlement, based on the excavations at the village of Baj, which was started in 1993 and has been supported for ten years by the foundation with material backing and voluntary helpers.

According to the plans, the reconstruction of the round church from the Árpád period (10-13th century) and the early modern country house would be reconstructed the most faithfully. A working mediaeval inn with a contemporary kitchen is already built. This was realised in a

reambulated environment (contemporary dress, plants, animals).

The excavation site lies at the tip of a triangle formed by the former market towns of Tata, Komárom and Neszmély, to the south-southeast of Tata on an almost completely horizontal, forested ridge at a height of 460 metres, surrounded by the slopes of the Gerecse, in relative protection - though the locals had the opportunity to reach neighbouring villages and market towns with relative ease and speed.

The excavation is not finished yet, many points are unclear, but several discoveries have been made on which a human-ecological project can be based. For example, the landlord's dwellings, stone cellar and its log-walled shed, as well as two log-buildings of the servants, one of them with a stove, are already excavated. An entrance, reinforced with log walls, was also unearthed 35 metres to the south of the main building, with a 4 metre wide service entrance next to it. The animal bones discovered in the several garbage pits give an opportunity to form a picture of the dietary habits of contemporary people, the animals on which their diet was based, or the proportion between domesticated and hunted animals. The unearthed agricultural tools (reaping sickles, hoe, goad) suggest the importance of agriculture, while carbonised seeds and food remains, burned on pots report the role played by agricultural products in consumption. The analysis of charcoal gives a partial picture of the plant environment.