

## **Didactic in Archaeology: the experience of Parco Archeologico didattico del Livelet**

### *Introduction*

Parco Archeologico didattico del Livelet is an Open Air Museum based on the western shore of Lago lake, in the municipality of Revine Lago, province of Treviso. The area is located in a glacial valley at the foothills of the Pre-Alps, surrounded by a rich naturalistic environment, Site of Community Importance (S.I.C.) for Natura 2000 and included in the recent park Parco dei Laghi della Vallata. The structure has been open since May 2007, with an agreement between the Province of Treviso, the Mountain Community of the Treviso Pre-Alps and the Municipality of Revine Lago. The aim was to enhance the nearby prehistoric site of Colmaggioro di Tarzo, discovered in the isthmus between the lakes of Lago and Santa Maria. Since 2009 the structure is managed by UNPLI Treviso, together with the Municipality of Revine Lago and the Consortium Pro Loco Quartier del Piave.

### *The areas*

Livelet is made up of an open-air museum area, with pile dwellings reconstructions, and other areas with facilities for didactic activities and for the visitors.

The reconstructed village stands on the lake shore and it is inserted in a natural environment, similar to the one that once surrounded the prehistoric pile-dwellings. Behind it, there are several classrooms for the didactic activities, a bookshop, a playground and a pic-nic area. A short route with panels dedicated to ecological aspects of the lake areas twist through the gardens. Some educational areas are open-air and used for imitative and experimental archaeology workshops, while in a space dedicated to burials, two Bronze Age burial mound were reconstructed in scale.

### *The archaeological site of Colmaggioro*

Livelet was born to enhance the discovery of the important prehistoric settlement of Colmaggioro di Tarzo. The first notable discovery dates back to 1923, when a bronze sword of *Sauerbrunn* type was found during the excavation of an artificial canal connecting the two lake basins. In 1987 further excavations, conducted to extract peat, brought to light the first pile-dwelling remains, stones, bones, potteries and metals artefacts. On this circumstance, the Archaeological Superintendence of Veneto Region was alerted and it promoted a first survey campaign in 1989, followed by two excavations in 1992 and 1997.

The collected remains, belonging to different materials' classes, helped to establish site chronology and to understand the daily life of human groups who inhabited the village. Vertical piles, burnt wooden fragments, plank floors and embankments are recognized as traces of shore consolidations and remains of pile dwellings. The daily-use objects were represented by flints, polished stones, bones

and pottery fragments; the discovery of a spindle and a loom weight indirectly testify the practice of weaving. The palaeobotanical and archaeozoological remains helped reconstructing the diet and subsistence strategies and at the same time provided information about the environment, supposedly similar to the actual one. Economy was based on agriculture with cereal farming, documented by the discovery of sickle blades and fragments of millstones, and on the breeding of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats. Practices as hunting and fishing represented anyway an important resource, as confirmed by bones of hares, red deer, roe deer, wild boars and fish bones. The ancient inhabitants of the area also collected shells of freshwater molluscs and wild fruits such as hazelnuts, acorns, water chestnuts and dogwood berries.

According to the pottery, settlement phases dated back to late Neolithic, Copper Age and beginning of Bronze Age (end of 4th, beginnings of 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.). The discovery of two *Sauerbrunn* swords, dated to the middle Bronze Age (15th century B.C.) and a *Peschiera* dagger, dated to late Bronze Age (13th century B.C.) suggest a frequentation even after the village abandonment.

### *The reconstructions*

The open-air museum of Livelet is characterised by the reconstructions of three pile-dwellings, respectively dedicated to Neolithic, Copper and early Bronze Age. The advantage offered by reconstructions is showing to visitors houses and objects comparable to the old ones, made with techniques and materials available during prehistory and contextualized in a similar natural environment. This makes them a powerful tool for the didactic activities, able to thrill audiences of all ages.

Only few remains of huts were documented from the Colmaggione di Tarzo site. Therefore, the reconstructions are based on the study of settlement-type recognized in other coeval sites of Northern Italy, where preservation conditions are better, as well as on ethnographical comparisons. The structures represent three different types of prehistoric settlements, used in humid environments and based on information provided by the well-preserved site of Fiavè (TN): a pile-dwelling is completely built on dry land, one is made half on land and half on water and one is supported by poles directly on the bottom of the lake.

The village has been built for the most part with local woods, such as chestnut, spruce, oak and cornelian cherry, in order to guarantee a philological reconstruction. Wooden parts meant to remain immersed in the water were constructed in larch wood, known for its resistance since Prehistory, but not available at the altitude where the site is located. This choice was a compromise, in order to guarantee visitors safety, as well as an easier structures' upkeep. Walls were created using reeds, anchored to structural elements and then covered with a mixture of clay, straws and sand. The roof

covers were obtained with a technique that uses overlying reed sections of about 30 cm of width, fixed to a wooden structure with ropes and weaves.

The reconstruction of furniture and tools was inspired by some Colmaggione archaeological finds, but also by remains documented in other sites, considered representative for the documented periods.

### *Teaching and dissemination activities*

Livelet was created to disseminate archaeological and naturalistic topics for public and school groups. The pile-dwelling tours and naturalistic hikes are always guided, and the workshops always held by an educational operator. All activities are characterized by scientifically correct contents and spread with interaction and involvement, giving importance to mutual exchange between staff and public.

During opening days, visitors can take part in guided tours of the pile-dwelling village and in planned workshops dedicated to Prehistory, archaeology or nature.

Moreover, during the year Livelet organizes themed events, seminars, experimental archaeology demonstrations, hosts operators from other museums and promotes guided excursions. Groups can request in-depth thematic tours, while for families it is possible to book and to spend a day as pile-dwelling inhabitants. The annual agenda also includes evening openings, conferences and workshops. During summer holidays kids can join a two or four-day camp, or participate in a two weeks summer camp.

The aim of all the activities is always to stimulate curiosity, imagination and creativity and to transmit passion for history, the importance of memory and sensibility for naturalistic and archaeological heritage.

Livelet deeply believes in exchanges and it is member of the international EXARC network, that includes Open air museums and professionals of ancient technology and experimental archaeology, with annual meeting opportunities. Moreover, during some annual events at Livelet it is easy to meet operators from other museums, institutions or associations, involved in educational activities and staff exchanges, or activities organized in collaboration with the Pro Loco, the Lago Folk Fest and the Lago Film Fest.

### *References*

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