

# Nature trail "Oborou Hvězda", information board No.1 - THE HISTORY OF THE GAME-PRESERVE

( [Historie Obory Hvězda](#) - informace v českém jazyce)

The territory of today's Hvězda game-preserve has been attracting attention to itself ever since the prehistoric times. The territory consisted of a slope and a plateau above the original settlement around the Litovický Stream. Archaeological excavations have been performed here since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the last research so far carried out in 2004 behind the lower wall of the game-preserve, revealing that the richest findings are from the Hallstatt culture. Vessels with linear ceramics were discovered, as well as numerous ground plans of buildings and graves.



First, a small fortress was built in place of the assumed pagan oblation site above the Litovický Stream at the slope's edge. This territory is first documented in writing in a deed of donation of Boleslav II, called the Pious, dated 993, in which the forest named Malejov together with Hluboc Estate (today's Liboc, named with regard to the location under Bílá Hora) and the surrounding land were donated to the newly established Břevnov Monastery of the Benedictines. The Monastery was consecrated by St. Vojtěch (Slavník Dynasty) on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 993. The deed dated 8 October 1045 reads that a three-aisled basilica with a crypt under the western choir, found during the excavations, was established in place of the original church from the years 984-988.

The historical sources mention the Pilgrimage of St. Marketa on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1262, when a pleading procession was organized with remains of St. Marketa into the Břevnov Monastery to beg for rain. When the pilgrims reached the temple, it actually started to rain. The event was then celebrated every year via a pilgrimage with a morning service held in the Břevnov temple and a festivity in the afternoon held in the Malejov forest nearby, which was situated in the territory of today's Hvězda game-preserve. St. Marketa is a saint from the early era of Christianity.

During the Hussite wars, the assets of the Břevnov Monastery, together with today's Hvězda game-preserve territory, which belonged to it, were confiscated by the Prague citizens, whose ownership rights were confirmed by Sigismund of Luxembourg, Jiří of Poděbrady, as well as by Vladislaus II of Jagiellon. In 1492, the Břevnov Monastery purchases back its former property from the Prague citizens, together with the court and land in Liboc, including the Malejov forest. In the early 1730s, Ferdinand I of Habsburg, King of Bohemia from 1526 on, established a New Game-Preserve in the territory of the Malejov forest. At that time, there used to be an oak alley leading to the new game-preserve, passing by the Břevnov Monastery. The game-preserve was enclosed by a wooden fence. From 1541 on, the original wooden fence was gradually replaced by a stone wall. In 1547, Ferdinand of Tirol, the second-born son of Ferdinand I and Anne of Bohemia and Hungary, became the Governor of the Kingdom of Bohemia. In 1548, he acquired further land in the Litovický Stream valley from the Liboc fabrica ecclesiae, which he added to the game-preserve, establishing a meadow and a pond thereon. In June 1555, he laid down the foundation stone to the pleasure house in the New Game-Preserve. Together with the construction of the pleasure house, a decorative garden was being designed in the areas under the house, which, nevertheless, was never completed. A ball game hall was built here, resembling the eleven-arcade open *salla terrena*, which later served as stables for the horses, there was a well in the south-western corner, an aviary was installed nearby the castle, and a separate kitchen and house for servants was built in the terrain depression caused by stone mining by the pleasure house. Later on, this object served the purposes of a gamekeeper's lodge, house No. 86.

In 1557, Ferdinand of Tirol ordered his courtiers to dig the foundations and then build the game-preserve wall, as it is mentioned in the memoirs of Pavel of Korkyně, who was one of them. In 1558, there are documents of the first courtly festivity being held at Hvězda; in 1563, the game-preserve witnessed the festivities on the occasion of coronation of Maximilian II (1527-1576), who took up the reign after his father's death. In 1563, the construction of the game-preserve wall was completed. At first the Liboc Gate was the only gate to the game-preserve, connecting it with Prague Castle. Later on in 1574, when part of the wall was being demolished by O. Avostalis, a gate was broken through opposite Bílá Hora. The youngest gate, named Břevnov Gate or St. Marketa Gate, was only built in 1723 by the royal builder Jakub Canavale. In 1563, the game-preserve hosted hunting events, banquets, political and diplomatic negotiations with the representatives of European, mostly German, countries.

Apart from the famous periods in the history of Hvězda, when it hosted festivities, negotiations and hunting events, there were also periods when armies were camped here, the game-preserve suffered due to trees being cut and buildings demolished. In May 1608, the imperial army from Moravia and Silesia was camped here, summoned by Rudolph II, who formed Tilly here against Matthias, who marched from Moravia to Prague. In 1611, Hvězda was plundered by the Passau military forces. On the 8<sup>th</sup> November 1620, Hvězda was the venue of the Battle of Bílá Hora. In 1639, the Swedish troops lead by General Banner besieged Prague from here, unsuccessfully. They were also camped in the game-preserve. The game-preserve was bombarded by the defending imperial armies. In 1648, the Swedes attempted the conquest of Prague, lead by Königsmark. Hvězda was devastated, this time to an extent that was worst in its history. Even the copper roof of the pleasure house was taken down and carried away; the plunder was taken from Prague by the Swedes by means of rafts. The siege was terminated by the Westphalian Peace Treaty dated 24 October 1648, but

nevertheless, the Swedes remained in the game-preserve even after peace was declared, and continued to cut down trees, not only in the game-preserve, but also around.

In 1740, Albrecht, King of Bavaria, travelled from Zbraslav to Prague and settled at Hvězda. He only spent a single day here, yet all the animals were shot down and the game-preserve was plundered.

In 1741, allied French armies were camped in the game-preserve. Upon the conquest of Prague, Charles, prince elector of Bavaria, was crowned as King of Bohemia. The game-preserve was plundered, with numerous trees being cut down. In 1472, the game-preserve was devastated by the French and Bavarian armies. Significant parts of the game-preserve were deforested – 2700 trees were removed from two alleys only. Prague mayors, lead by the Mayor of the Old Town named Šašek, had removed and processed for the citizens of Prague what the French left in the game-preserve. Subsequently, new trees were planted here. Chestnut trees were planted by the Liboc Gate. The old oaks forming an alley leading from Prague Gate to Vypich and further to Prague were cut down. In 1757, Friedrich II the Great selected this place for his main tent during the siege of Prague. Hvězda witnessed a bloody battle when the Prussian armies left Prague after being defeated by Kolín (18 th June). Nearly all the trees in the game-preserve were cut down; the Prussians spent six weeks cutting the trees down. Emperor Joseph II visited the game-preserve in 1779 and by his order, the pleasure house was assigned to the Austrian military treasury and it was turned into a gun-powder storage. Due to the new safety zones around the gun-powder storage, more trees had to be cut down in the distance of 60 steps from these zones, so that there would be no risk of an explosion during rain storms. For the same reason, the game-preserve keeper (Anseher), appointed by the supreme huntsman and no longer by the Hvězda building authority, could no longer shoot ground game. After World War I, the Hvězda Game-Preserve got into the Prague Castle administration. In 1938, the game-preserve was closed to public, with a military telegraph battalion being accommodated here during the mobilisation, also organising its practical training here. Later on, there was a collection point for all the horses from Bohemia, who were brought to the game-preserve for three days. The camping of the armies and of the horses caused major damage especially to the lawns. During the World War II, the game-preserve was damaged by the construction of military shelters for 2000 members of the SS brigades; there was a 30-metres long service garage for military vehicles situated by the Liboc Gate. For some time, the Germans found accommodation in the pleasure house. The lime-wood alley was used as a testing place for the vehicles, which caused damage of the pathway as well as for the adjoining growths. When the Germans left on the 5 th May 1945, the object was taken over by the revolutionary guards. In the same year, the Soviet Army lodges here for several weeks with several thousands of horses and large numbers of cattle serving the purposes of food supplies for the army. This army was replaced by the motorized division of the Czechoslovak Army in the English Army, which filled all the paths with vehicles and a great part of the forests with tents. The actual pleasure house was taken up by the chariot battalion of General Svoboda, who arrived at Prague together with the Soviet Army, establishing a field kitchen by the pleasure house. Temporary horse stables were situated in the pleasure house's basement.

After the war, it was necessary to provide for cleaning the game-preserve after the military camps, for mending the damaged lawns, paths, growths, for removing waste and manure. The area around Prague Gate was arranged, a new path shadowed by trees was established alongside the middle alley, and paths in other parts of the game-preserve were arranged in the form of volunteer work.

In 1946, a forest party was held here to celebrate the week of promoting the public significance of forests. On the 2 nd September 1951, a museum of Alois Jirásek was opened in the Hvězda pleasure house to celebrate the 100 th birth anniversary of this writer; later on, a museum of Mikoláš Aleš was also opened here. Both the expositions remained here up until the reconstruction of the pleasure house in the 1990s.

In 1955, the giardinetto in front of the royal pleasure house was reconstructed according to the castle architect Prof. Pavel Janák.

A mass grave of soldiers killed at Bílá Hora was found during the building of a military camp at Vypich before the Spartakiad in 1960. The battlefield, the pleasure house and the game-preserve were declared national cultural monuments on the 30 th March 1962. In 1974, 28 wall paintings in the pleasure house interiors were revealed and restored. (The 17 th-century wall painting on the first floor depicting the Baroque truss of the pleasure house is very precious.)

Following partial repairs and restorations, it was decided to carry out more extensive constructional repairs of the pleasure house, which lasted up until the year 2000. The roofing was replaced in the years 1986-1992, with ridge-tiles being replaced with copper. The windows and shutters were also replaced, and the external cladding was reconstructed as well. Today, the pleasure house is in the administration of the Museum of Czech Literature. There is a permanent exposition here describing the history of the pleasure house, showing contemporary objects, and exhibitions are organized here on a regular basis. During the past decades, the enclosure walls of the game-preserve were also being repaired, partially using the original materials. The garden and the house of the former game-preserve keeper by the Liboc Gate were also reconstructed within the framework of the repairs.

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