

## 175 YEARS OF SANT PERE DE GALLIGANTS MUSEUM

The exhibition rooms in Sant Pere de Galligants Museum contain archaeological finds dating from prehistory to the Middle Ages made in Girona province.

### What was its origin?

On 30 October 1845, the *Provincial Monuments Commission* founded the *Provincial Museum of Antiquities and Fine Arts*, the origin of the present-day Archaeological Museum of Catalonia in Girona. It is oldest museum in the city of Girona and one first to be opened in Catalonia.

It was initially housed in the premises of the Provincial Institute, now the home of the Girona Museum of History and the Municipal Archive. The new museum was still not open to the public when it received some of the first pieces in its collection from the excavations undertaken by the Monuments Commission at Empúries in 1846.

On 10 December 1857, Bishop Lorente ceded the Sant Pere de Galligants monastery cloister of the to the Monuments Commission. The museum was moved there once the cloister had been restored and the upper cloister had been built. It opened to the public on St Narcissus' Day in 1870. The church of Sant Pere continued in the hands of the bishopric and services were held there until July 1936.

On 25 April 1933, the Girona Provincial Monuments Cataloguing Service was installed in the Sant Pere Museum.

On 18 January 1939, by ministerial order, the Provincial Museum was incorporated into the *Facultative Body of Archivists, Librarians and Archaeologists* as the *Gerona Provincial Archaeological Museum*.

On 4 August of that same year it reopened with the church nave having been fitted out as an exhibition area.

In 1957, the Girona Provincial Government, the body responsible for managing Sant Pere de Galligants Archaeological Museum, set up the Technical Service for Archaeological Research, Conservation and Cataloguing of Monuments.

On 1 March 1962, the museum was declared a National Monument.

In 1976, the museum's medieval and modern art collections were moved to the Girona Episcopal Palace, home of the newly-established Girona Museum of Art. The archaeology section remained at Sant Pere de Galligants.

The Sant Pere museum was remodelled and the collections were briefly placed on display in the Gothic palace known as the Fontana d'Or. With the refurbishment completed, it reopened on 13 November 1981 as the Sant Pere de Galligants Archaeological Museum.

In 1992, the Girona Provincial Government's museums and museological functions were passed to the Regional Government of Catalonia. Sant Pere de Galligants Archaeological Museum became the Girona branch of the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia.

## The museum today

The present-day museum has a local, national, and international vocation that has continued uninterrupted right up to today with the aim of adapting to the needs and demands of the citizens. This most recent adaptation is the result of a progressive conceptual and material renovation project that began between 2006 and 2009 and continued until 2016. It included both the permanent exhibition in the upper gallery and the presentation in the church nave. This process was aimed at reconciling the building, the collections and the historical discourse, as well as adding a new consideration that no factor of the exhibition would be a catalysing factor for future degradation mechanisms.

The interest of the museum not only resides in the exhibition rooms, but also in the building that hosts them, the former Benedictine monastery of Sant Pere de Galligants, an outstanding monument to Catalan Romanesque art.

The museum facilities are housed in two places in Girona. The permanent and temporary exhibition rooms are in the former monastery of Sant Pere de Galligants and the central services, offices, laboratories, library and national archaeological deposits are in the Centre de Pedret building.



Monastery of Sant Pere de Galligants



Centre de Pedret building

### **1845-1939**

#### A TIME FOR BIRTH

On 30 October 1845, *the Girona Historical and Artistic Monuments Commission* published a notice in the Province of Gerona Official Gazette announcing the establishment of a provincial museum. The museum was installed provisionally in the Provincial Institute building (now the home of the Girona Museum of History). Its first exhibits came from finds made during the Commission's excavations at Empúries in 1846 and 1847.

On 29 October 1870, *the Girona Provincial Museum of Antiquities and Fine Arts* was opened to the public.

The tasks of cataloguing and documenting the collections began and catalogues were published for the paintings (1889), prehistory (1923) and paintings and sculpture (1932) collections. The museum opened for the first visits by schoolchildren.

The outbreak of the Civil War in July 1936 forced the museum to close to the public. It was incorporated into the Excavations and Archaeology Service of Catalonia.

## **1939-1981**

### A TIME FOR GROWTH

In 1939, it became the *Provincial Archaeological Museum* and was expanded to occupy the church that had been used for worship until 1936.

Activity returned during this period with various actions. The Prehistory and Protohistory Room was inaugurated in 1943 in the choir of the church and in 1944 the Empúries Room was opened in the former sacristy (now the multipurpose room).

In 1973, the poor condition of the upper cloister forced a provisional move of the archaeological collections to the Fontana d'Or.

In 1979, the collections were split. The medieval and modern art collections were transferred to the Museum of Art, established in 1976, together with those of the Diocesan Museum. The archaeological collections stayed in Sant Pere de Galligants. This allowed the whole of the former monastery to be used as an archaeological museum.

## **1981-1992**

### A TIME OF RENOVATION

With the restoration work on the church and the upper cloister completed and the archaeological collections returned, on 13 November 1981 it reopened as Sant Pere de Galligants Archaeological Museum. It came under the joint auspices of the Girona Provincial Government and the Catalan Regional Government's General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, with a financial contribution from the *Spanish Ministry of Culture*.

That same year, the Girona Provincial Government Archaeological Research Technical Service became known as the Girona Centre for Archaeological Research. At the same time, a department of underwater archaeology was set up to continue the work of the *Underwater Archaeological Excavations Board of the Maritime Province of Girona*, established by ministerial order in 1972.

In 1992, Sant Pere de Galligants Archaeological Museum became the Girona branch of the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia.

## **1992 – 2019**

### A TIME FOR PROJECTION

On 28 April 1993, the Governing Council of the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia at Sant Pere de Galligants was established. Thus began a new phase as the branch of a national museum. With this territorial projection, in 1994 the museum's Scientific, Technical and Material Support Service was established at the Centre de Pedret.

In 2001, the museum began its programme of educational and cultural actions, offering an explanation of the Romanesque building, on the one hand, and the content of a permanent exhibition of archaeological finds from Girona province from prehistory to the Middle Ages, on the other. A remodelling of the content and exhibits of the permanent exhibition was designed and completed in 2014. The Sarcophagus of the Seasons and the Bell-lloc Mosaic were given new locations and settings.

## **2020 - 2030**

### TIME FOR THE FUTURE

From 2020, within the framework of the Museums of Catalonia -Museums 2030-Plan and the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia Strategic Plan 2025, the Girona branch will continue to work around three hubs: a local vocation (within the city and Girona province), national (countrywide) and international vocation. It will also undertake the conceptual and museographic renovation of the museum, configuring a cultural monastery, with a new exhibition proposal structured around the memory of the monument and its heritage and cultural use.

*The former Sant Pere de Galligants Museum is redefining itself based on the a vision that inspires the whole national museum network it forms part of as "a benchmark institution, a symbol of Catalonia's commitment to innovation and creativity, that is open, inclusive, transparent and sustainable and in which archaeology explains, questions, surprises and excites".*

## **MAKING THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM 1845-1939**

Once the museum had been set up in 1845 and had received its first exhibits in 1846, the next objective was to find it a permanent home. The Monuments Commission chose the cloister of Sant Pere de Galligants, the ownership of which had to be negotiated with the Bishopric, which ceded it in 1857. The restoration and construction of the upper cloister continued until 1877.

The bases for the museum were laid by the three great curators who succeeded each other in the post between 1870 and 1913: Enric Claudi Girbal i Nadal (1870-1895), Joaquim Botet i Sisó (1896-1904) and Manuel Cazurro y Ruiz (1904-1913).

On 25 April 1933, the Catalan Regional Government Commissioner's Office Delegation in Girona appointed Lluís Busquets i Mollera as director of the museum. The appointment was contested by the Monuments Commission, who maintained him as a technical officer. In the post between 1933 and 1936, Lluís Busquets was the museum's first director.

Wardens and concierges looked after the museum and attended to the public. Of particular note among them was Esteve Fontané i Serramitjana (1864-1964), known as the *grandfather of the museum*. A carpenter and musician, he was linked to the museum from 1890 as a warden and from 1920 as a concierge. He retired in 1957 after 68 years of service. On his one hundredth birthday he was awarded the *Merit in Work Medal* (Bronze Category). Even after his retirement he continued to visit the museum until shortly before his death.

## **MAKING THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEUM 1939-2020**

In January 1939, Sant Pere de Galligants Archaeological Museum was incorporated by ministerial order into the *Facultative Corps of Archivists, Librarians and Archaeologists* as the *Provincial Archaeological Museum*.

Two people stand out from this period: Miquel Oliva i Prat i Aurora Martín i Ortega.

Miquel Oliva i Prat (1922-1974), curator from 1943 and museum director from 1961 to 1974, provincial excavations commissioner, provincial delegate of Fine Arts, university professor, field archaeologist, excavator of Ullastret and organiser of its monographic museum.

Aurora Martín i Ortega became the provisional director of the museum on Miquel Oliva's death in 1974. Its director from 1979 until her retirement in 2012, she was in charge of the Girona and Ullastret Archaeological Museums and the Centre for Archaeological Research in changing times, without forgetting the fieldwork, especially at Roses and Ullastret.

In 1943 the museum's restoration workshop was established in the attic of Sant Pere de Galligants. Among the first to work in it were several artists who have since achieved recognised prestige, including Francesc Torres Monsó, Emília Xargay and Joaquim Casellas

In 1957, the Girona Provincial Government established the Archaeological Research Technical Service to provide technical support for the museum, thus consolidating the tradition of conservation and care of the archaeological exhibits.

An important figure from that time was Mercè Ferré i Valls. From 1958 until her retirement in 2004, her work on the restoration and conservation of finds and in archaeological fieldwork was essential for the functioning of the museum.

The museum structure grew from 1975 with the appointment of two curators, Narcís Soler i Masferrer (1975-1990) and Enriqueta Pons i Brun (1975-2012). From then on the museum began an intensive scientific research activity. This is reflected in the publication of the journal *Cypsela* and the *Sèrie Monogràfica de Girona*, as well as in numerous archaeological excavation projects, including those of Roses, Ullastret, L'Arbreda (Serinyà), Puig Castellet (Lloret de Mar), La Fonollera (Torroella de Montgrí) and Mas Castellar (Pontós).

From 1981, the Girona Provincial Government Archaeological Research Technical Service became the Girona Centre for Archaeological Research. At the same time, an underwater archaeology department was set up under Xavier Nieto Prieto.

On 30 January 1994, the Centre de Pedret was inaugurated. This was the new headquarters of the Girona Centre for Archaeological Research and the Centre for Underwater Archaeology of Catalonia (established in 1992) and, from 1996, part of the Museum of Archaeology of Catalonia. The Centre de Pedret houses the administrative, educational, scientific, technical and material support services for Sant Pere de Galligants Museum. It will also be the home of the Museums Attention Service.

Since its inauguration, Sant Pere de Galligants Museum has served as a place for activities closely linked to the city of Girona. It has produced its own exhibitions and participated in those organised by other institutions, both as a venue and by loaning items from its collections.