
Abandonment, rehabilitation and accessibility of open air sites: the case of El Castillar (Mendavia, Navarre, Spain)

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Résumé

The protohistorical settlement of El Castillar (Mendavia, Navarre, Spain) was extensively excavated during the 1970s and 1980s, becoming the first archaeological site of these characteristics to be studied in the region. In 1986, a first conservation campaign was made in order to keep the settlement open to visitors. That campaign was based on the consolidation of the stone wall bases with concrete, so that the harsh weather would not erode them. This early attempt to protect the settlement and make it accessible to the public, was successful at the beginning, as there were school trips to the site and other visitors also appreciated the settlement. But in the 1990s the lack of maintenance resulted on the gradual abandonment of El Castillar. However, that generation of people who went on school field trips to the settlement are the ones that nowadays are most interested on the conservation and restoration of the archaeological site, as they were thought about its importance while they were children.

After all those years of abandonment, in 2017, the town council proposed a new project to restore and protect the site and to make it accessible to the public again. The first campaign focused on the restoration of two habitational structures that represent a good example of Iron Age architecture in the area. On a previous date to the beginning of the first campaign, a small exposition and an informative talk was made in Mendavia, in order to remember the inhabitants of the existence of the settlement; and during the process of the archaeological intervention, several groups of people visited El Castillar while the archaeologists were working. After the restoration campaign was finished, guided visits were also made.

In the following years, more excavation campaigns will be carried out with modern methodologies not only to shed light into modern archaeological questions but also to reveal more structures that can be presented to the public, as the final objective of the project is to make El Castillar more accessible to the public. In addition to that, the town council has planned to add informative panels about the settlement both in the town center and in the archaeological site, so people can visit the site by themselves. It is necessary to bear in mind the importance of transporting the scientific importance of El Castillar to the inhabitants of Mendavia, as they are the ones that will preserve the site in the future.

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Mots-Clés: Iron Age, settlement, restauration, Ebro valley, open air site