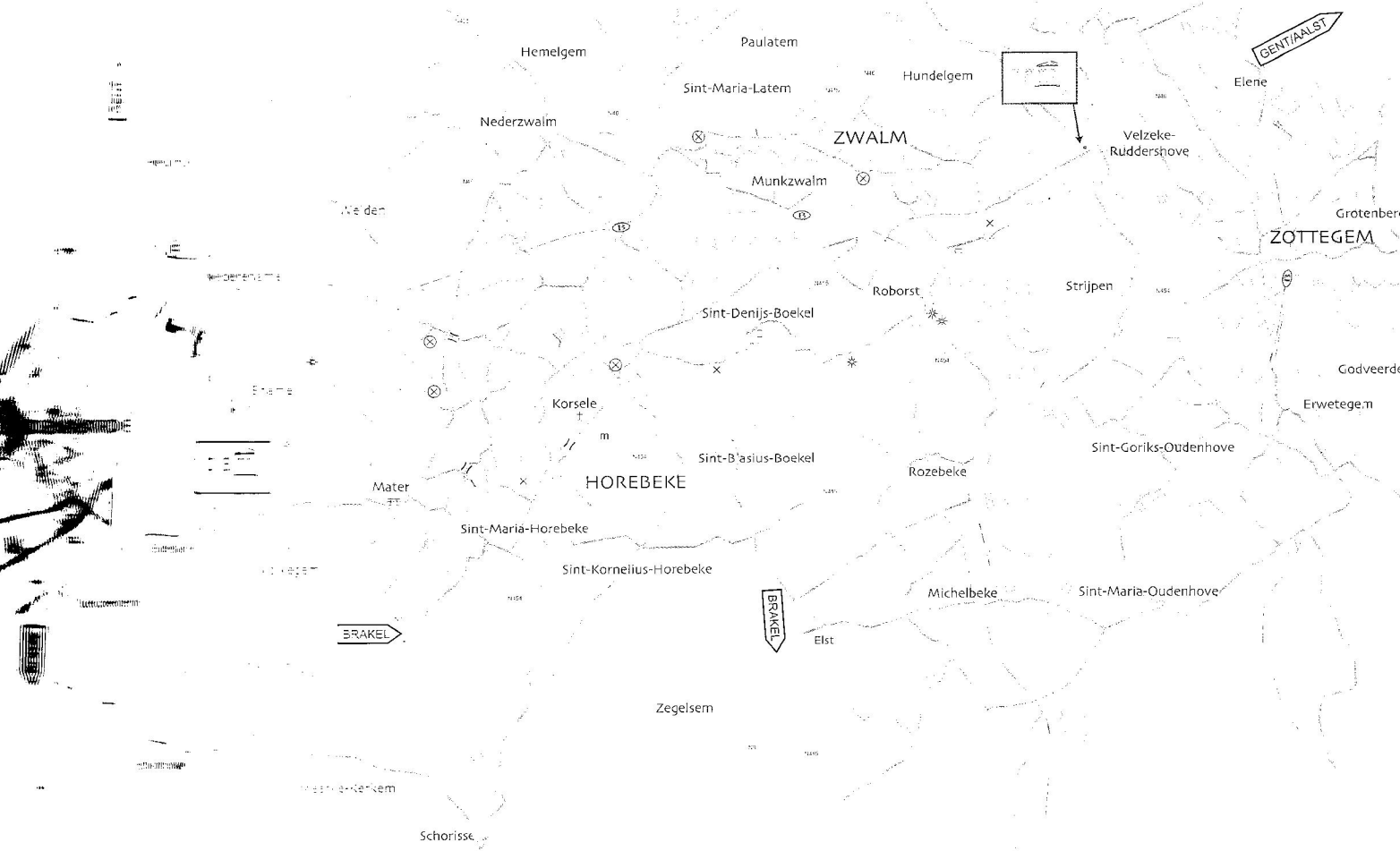




The Provincial
Archaeological Museum
at Velzeke & Enamel

Introduction



PAM, an officially recognised Museum on two Sites

Since 2000, the Provinciaal Archeologisch Museum Zulte-Oude-Waaiers in Velzeke and the Provinciaal Museum Ename have been merged to form the unified Provincial Archaeological Museum, or 'PAM' for short. It was classed as an Officially Recognised Museum by the Flemish Government.

The two locations, barely thirteen kilometres apart, operate themselves in excavations, scientific research, conservation of collections and educational programmes. A single ticket admits the visitor to both sites.

The combined museum has wide-ranging objectives. Its primary responsibility is to display finds from the local area (East Flanders) and place them in a broad European context. The collections comprise a complete cross-section of material life in the area from 300,000 BC to the present. PAM Velzeke presents archaeological material from prehistory to the Merovingian period, while PAM Ename presents archaeological and historical material from the Carolingian period onward.

Despite their distinct museological approaches, both have a common vision: bringing the past to life. PAM's intention is to clear away the stereotypical image of archaeological museums while fully maintaining their scientific foundations. The visitor is not faced with endless rows of display cases packed full with potsherd and other relics, but instead can enjoy presentations that appeal directly to their experience, such as programmes in experimental archaeology, historical reenactments, innovative technology, modern audiovisual resources, and up-to-the-minute multimedia concepts. In short, PAM presents a fascinating picture of people, the major lines of their history, and their personal stories over the last 300,000 years.

*Jean-Pierre Van Der Meiren
Deputy of Culture
Province of East-Flanders*

Location of the two sites

From Natural to Man-made Landscape

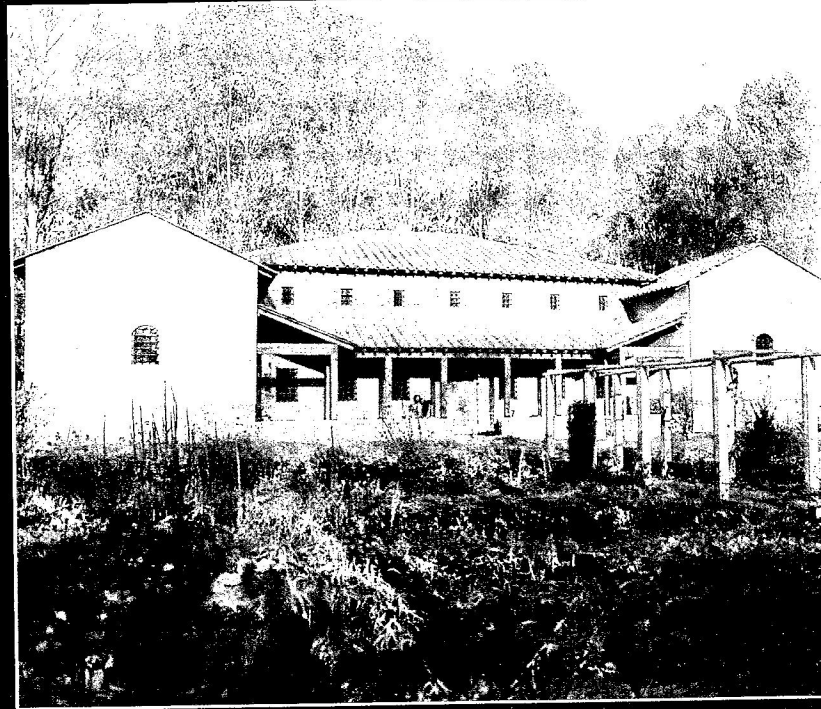
Bio-archaeologists examine the remains of plants and animals found in excavations. This not only teaches them more about our ancestors' food economics but also about man's attitude to his environment.

Investigation of the landscape shows that prehistoric man had exploited much of the clay area. The farmers of the Iron Age did this so thoroughly that certain parts had already been converted into heath.

The Romans approached things more systematically. The agricultural work on the large villae of the area were responsible for much deforestation, which can probably be compared with the situation today. Archaeological study shows that intensive farming activity contributed to the erosion of fertile soil and its shift to lower-lying areas. Where have we heard that before?

Contact with the Mediterranean world also greatly influenced the local flora and fauna. It is only since the Roman period that the pheasant, partridge, guinea fowl, escargot, cat, rat and ass have been part of our fauna. In addition, the Romans introduced all the domesticated species of fruit and were responsible for the import of decorative plants and many vegetables and herbs that we still encounter in our kitchen gardens.

Whenever anything has remained from the Roman landscape, we usually have to look for it in our gardens and parks. This fascinating story is illustrated in the Roman garden at the museum in Velzeke.



An example of a Roman villa (Aubechies, Hainaut)

Story of a Living Museum Collection

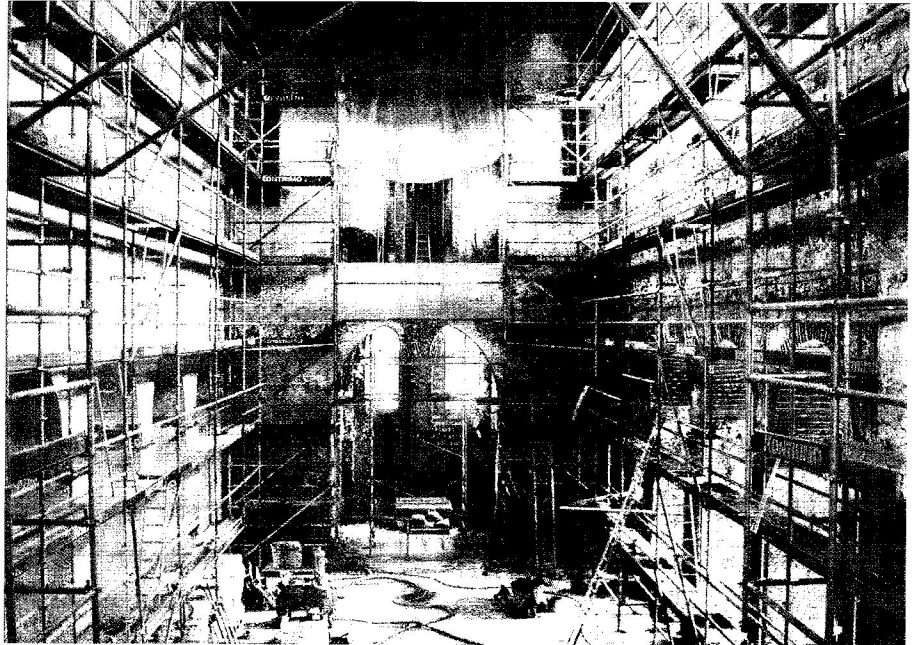
From Excavation Trench to Display Case

Both museums are in locations of historical importance. PAM Velzeke is at the centre of a Roman camp and settlement that survived into the early Middle Ages. PAM Ename lies close to the unique thousand-year-old Church of St Laurentius in a village centre which today still displays evidence of history from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. Thus, whenever the ground is worked in the villages and in the surroundings of the museums the past is literally and figuratively brought to light. Therefore it is important for visitors to both museums to know the path an archaeological object takes from the excavation trench to the display case.

On the excavation site, the archaeologists and guides tell the story of archaeology and related disciplines, such as research into seeds and fruits and the remains of people and animals. They present a clear picture of our ancestors' lives. In the museum itself one can closely follow every stage of the scientific processing of the finds. It is with astonishment that one realises that, after expert treatment in the conservation and restoration workshop, a rusty piece of metal sometimes turns out to be a Roman brooch with inlaid bronze, or that a pile of meaningless potsherds can sometimes be patiently fitted together to form a medieval jar.

After cleaning, the finds are drawn and published by the archaeologists. After that most of them are kept in the museum storerooms, where they remain available for additional study. Complete objects may be given a place in the museum. The exhibition rooms and the storehouse together contain all the museum's objects. PAM Velzeke has about 22,000 items in its care.

To be able to properly study, administer and make the collection accessible, it is essential to record every item. This is done scientifically, using internationally agreed standards and in consultation with the staff of other museums by way of regional projects and initiatives.



Restoration of the
St Laurentius Church of
Ename

Recording archaeological
remains



Living history on Open Monument days