

THE REINTRODUCTION OF BOBÂLNA HILL INTO THE TOURIST CIRCUIT

Violeta-Elena MOIS¹, Iulia HĂRĂNGUȘ²

ABSTRACT. The reintroduction of Bobâlna Hill into the tourist circuit. Bobâlna Hill is the highest part of the Cluj and Dej Hills, an integrated part of the Someșan Plateau, with an altitude of 693 m. From a geomorphological point of view, it falls within the erosive-structural level formed on the horizon of the Dej tuff, of Lower Pannonian age. At the foot of the hill, a series of subsequent valleys developed, such as Olpret Valley to the north, northeast and east, Măr Valley and Lujerdiu Valley to the south, and Luna Valley to the west and southwest respectively. From a geological point of view, Bobâlna Hill is composed by the Dacitic tuff of Dej, interspersed with marls, clays, sandstones with coals and marly shales. Due to its altitude and the rocks it is made of, Bobâlna Hill determined the meaning of the evolution of the other natural components of the environment, flora, fauna, soils, as well as the hydrography. The development of human communities in the adjacent communes was deeply influenced by the presence of Bobâlna Hill. The hill is located about 30 km west of Dej City. Its area of polarization is more visible on the territories of Bobâlna, Aluniș, Cornești, Recea-Cristur and Panticu communes. Bobâlna Hill has been the source of building materials for houses and other buildings for a long time. There are still buildings made of “Băbdiu stone” today. In addition to resistance over time, tuff has a beautiful appearance and was accessible to people. In June 1437, an army of peasants gathered on Bobâlna Hill, armed with pitchforks and scythes, ready to fight to regain their rights and freedom. The uprising in Bobâlna took place as a result of burdensome feudal obligations towards the state, the feudal lord and the Catholic church, but also because of numerous abuses. On June 8, 1937, the leaders of the villages in the Olpret area formed an initiative committee to build a monument in honour of the peasants who revolted in 1437, on Bobâlna Hill, at an altitude of 693 meters. The initiative was successful and a limestone monument was built, unveiled on

¹ Liceul Teoretic Petru Maior, 405300 Gherla, Romania, e-mail: violetaretegan@yahoo.it

² E-mail: iulia_harangus@yahoo.com



December 21, 1957. Starting from 1968 and up to 1989, popular celebrations were organized, most of them just above, on the Bobâlna plateau. The heroes of the 1437 uprising were commemorated and it was an occasion of joy, reunion and party for the inhabitants of the area. Between the years 1989-1999, the celebrations stopped, but they were resumed in 1999, 2001 and 2002. The last celebration was in 2015, in the school yard in Bobâlna commune, but it had a smaller scale. In the years 2021 and 2022, the first two editions of the Revolution Race event took place, on Bobâlna Hill. Revolution Race is a sporting event that highlights nature, history and rural traditions. The “Înflorești” Sports Club Association participated to the organization of the two events in partnership with the Go4Fun Association and the administration of the municipalities of Bobâlna and Cornești. Over 300 runners from Romania and abroad participated in each edition. Starting from the advantages offered by the natural setting, the presence of Bobâlna Hill, and the significance of the historical event of 1437, Bobâlna municipality is currently designing a long-term development strategy based on ecological rural tourism.

Keywords: *Bobâlna Hill, Revolution Race, Bobâlna Monument*

1. Introduction

Bobâlna Hill is the highest of the Cluj and Dej Hills in the Someșan Plateau (Pop, Gr. P., 2012). It is located about 30 km west of Dej, being accessible on the DJ 108B road, while access from Cluj-Napoca or Gherla is possible by following the DJ 109B road.

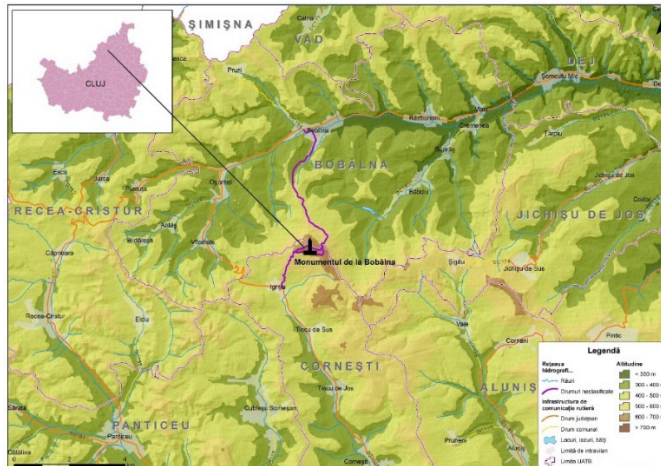


Fig. 1. Location of the Bobâlna Monument

2. Bobâlna Hill

The hill is located in the southwestern part of Bobâlna commune. As a landform, it is part of the erosive-structural surface of lower Pannonian age. The geological strata are monoclinical and form cuesta slopes to the southeast and east, which are fragmented by Olpret (Bobâlna) and Lujerdiu valleys and their tributaries. Structural escarpments developed in the north and northeast of the hill. The most representative steep slope is the northern one, towards Valea Mare, located to the south of the villages of Vâlcelele and Oșorhel. Although it is only 693 m high, the inhabitants of the villages at the foot call it “Băbdiu Mountain”. Numerous arguments can be made in support of this statement.



Fig. 2. Pointer to the Monument in the locality of Igrîția



Fig. 3. Bobâlna Hill, western slope, seen from Igrîția

- From the Bobâlna plateau there is a panoramic view of great beauty. On clear days, the gentle hills of the Someșan Plateau are clearly visible, and on the horizon, towards the northeast and east, the eroded craters of the Gutâi and Țibleș mountains, the summit of Rodna, as well as the Călimani Mountains appear. To the west one can see the mountains of Gilău-Muntele Mare,

Vlădeasa and Meseș.

- Climatically, Bobâlna Hill contributes to cooling the climate of the surrounding areas. In the villages of Bobâlna and Cornești communes, for example, the phenological difference compared to the city of Dej is 10-12 days. Summers are hot, but summer evenings are cold. Winters are very

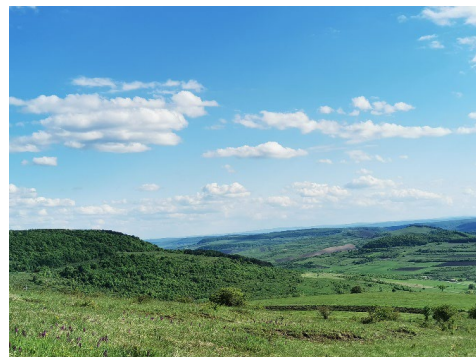


Fig. 4. Wide view of the Cluj Hills from Bobâlna Hill

cold, with temperatures 5-6°C lower than in the city of Dej. Bobâlna Hill has the role of an orohydrographic barrier. In the villages located on the exposed southern and eastern slopes, precipitation is more frequent, compared to the isolated northern and western slopes, with more frequent droughts (Croitoru, Adina-Eliza, 2006). The difference in temperature and precipitation is visible in the sowing and planting period, 10-12 days later than Dej, as well as in the amounts of agricultural products.

- From a hydrographic point of view, short streams spring from the Bobâlna Hill, tributaries of the Someș River (Olpret) or Someșul Mic (Lujerdiu), having a daily flow regime. They are predominantly supplied by rainwater and less by underground waters (Ujvari, I., 1959).

- The flora is composed of xerophilic and mesoxerophilic formations on the sunny slopes, including species of sedge, St. John's wort, plantain, clover, etc. (Pop, I., Cristea, V., Hodișan, I., 2002). On the shaded slopes and hill ridges there are forests of oak, sessile oak, beech, hornbeam (Doniță, N., Cocioabă, Suzana, 2007). During the communist period, the spontaneous flora was replaced, in many areas, by agricultural crops. After 1989, agriculture experienced a significant decline, so that many areas that were once ploughed remained in a state of abandonment, and now there is only secondary vegetation of unproductive shrubs. The positive side of this situation is that the hill, and especially its foothills, have returned to a more natural, pleasing appearance. One of the assets of the Bobâlna Hill is precisely its natural appearance and green colour, which is rarely alternated with other colours, only in the case of village centres.



Fig. 5. Structurally steep slope to the north of Bobâlna Hill



Fig. 6. Structural scarp on Dej tuff



Fig. 7. Wide view towards the Hills of Dej



Fig. 8. Hilly aspect of the Someșan Plateau



Fig. 9. Xerophilous vegetation on the southern slope of Bobâlna hill

3. Bobâlna commune

Bobâlna commune is located about 20 km to the west of the city of Dej, and runs in a west-east direction, along the drainage basin of Olpret Valley. The villages that make up the commune are: Antăș, Băbdiu, Blidărești, Bobâlna, Cremenea, Maia, Oșorhel, Pruni, Răzbuneni, Suarăș and Vâlcelele. It

borders the communes of Recea-Cristur to the west, Șimișna and Vad to the north, Cornești to the south, Jichișul de Jos to the southeast. Traces of habitation on the territory of the commune are old, from the Paleolithic and Neolithic, evidence of this being Dacian ceramic objects of various uses, which are exhibited at the City Museum in Dej. The documentary attestation of the villages in the Bobâlna commune is between the years

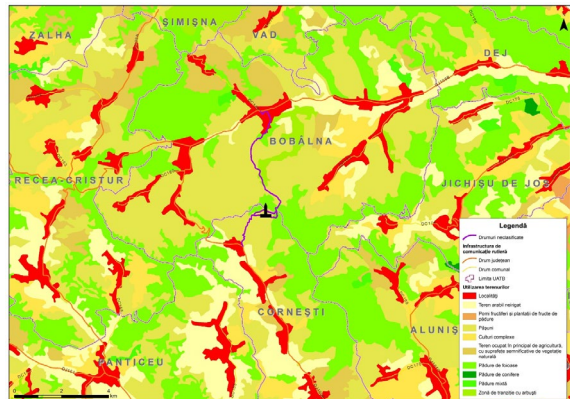


Fig. 10. Land use mode
(data source: <https://land.copernicus.eu/pan-european/corine-land-cover>)

1300-1400. The villages are mentioned in the documents related to the Peasants' Uprising of 1374 or, more often, when the churches in these villages were built (Maier, A., 2001).

The commune covers an area of 9,550 ha. As for the population of the commune, as can be seen from fig. 11, it exceeded 4,000 inhabitants between 1890 and 1966, and reached even more than 5,000 inhabitants. Since 1941 the population has gradually decreased, down to 1,382 people in 2021 (Varga E. Á., 2008, Romanian Population Census, 2011 and 2021).

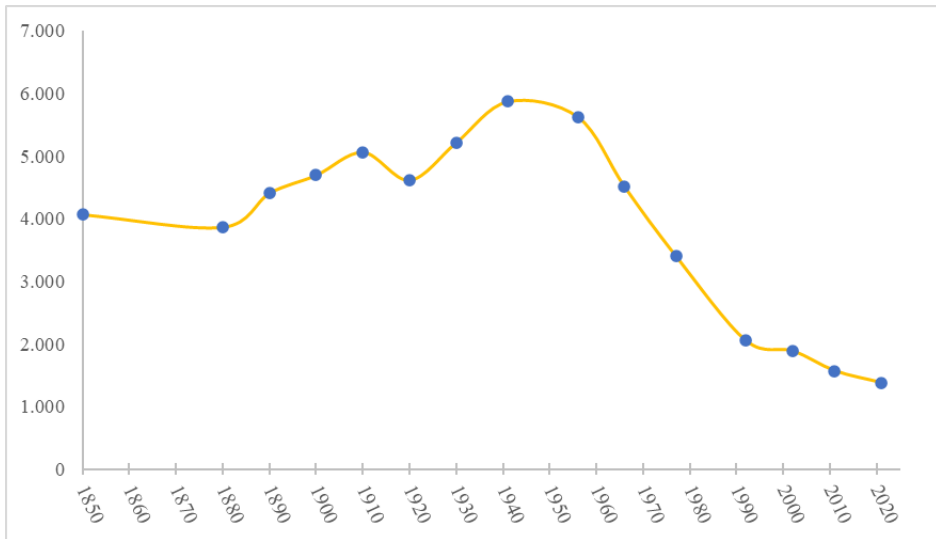


Fig. 11. Evolution of the population of Bobâlna commune
(data source: Varga E. Á., 2008, RPC, 2011, RPC, 2021)

The history of the commune has been troubled by events that have had their say in many ways.

- When the Hungarians came, the population was led by Romanian rulers, who had fortified fortresses, such as Gelu Valahu's Dăbâca Fortress. After the occupation of Transylvania by the Hungarians, the process of transforming free peasants into serfs began. The number of serfs increased greatly, but at the same time their obligations to their oppressors also increased. This led to the outbreak of the Bobâlna uprising in 1437.
- The union of Transylvania with Romania on December 1, 1918 and the agrarian reform after the First World War had a beneficial influence on the peasants of the commune.

- The period of the Second World War, 1940-1944, was of great suffering for the population of the area.
- After the agrarian reform of 1945, the peasants became masters of the land they worked from their grandparents.
- The joy of the peasants to be the owners of the lands was short-lived. In the period 1949-1960, collective agriculture was introduced. Many peasants were forced to give up their land, animals and agricultural machinery in favour of the collective farms. Some lost their minds under the duress. Others lost their lives, those who vehemently opposed the changes. Collectivization meant a new difficulty in the life of the peasants, forced to pay quotas to the state from all agricultural products. The quotas were very high and left the peasants with few products to survive on. This aspect resulted in theft.
- The collectivization was followed by the migration of the population from the villages to the industrialized cities: Dej, Gherla, Cluj-Napoca, Zalău, Bistrița, Cugir, Mediaș, Hunedoara, Reșita, and Brașov. In this way, there was a massive depopulation of the villages. Currently, the population of the commune is ageing, most of the inhabitants are over 60 years old. Return migration also contributed to the aging of the population after 1990. Many retirees from the previously mentioned cities, who have parental homes in the commune, chose to move to the village and live a quiet life.
- After the 1989 Revolution, everything that was built in almost 45 years was demolished and sold. The peasants shared the inherited lands and forests, but the essential, the labour force to work the lands, was missing. Very little land is worked, especially outside the villages, the rest of the land remains unworked because agricultural work is very expensive, and the products obtained do not cover the expenses.

4. The influence of Bobâlna Hill in the development of Bobâlna commune

Bobâlna Hill remained in history as the place where the peasant uprising took place in 1437, the largest event in Transylvania up to that time. In June of that year, an army of Romanian and Hungarian peasants, armed with pitchforks and scythes, rebelled against the feudal lord, the state and the Catholic church, no longer enduring the increasing burdens imposed on them. From Olpret, the following people directly participated in this uprising: Ban Ladislav, Vicențiu, the representative of Olpret, and Ladislau Gall, the representative of the serfs in Antăș, as reported by Pop Viorel in the monograph "Bobâlna".

The situation of the rebellious serfs did not improve much after the revolt. Four or five centuries after the uprising, some peasants continued to live in holes (“hruba”) dug in the ground, a fact attested by the surname Hruban specific to the village of Băbdiu. Generally, the houses were small, composed of two rooms, built of “voioaje”, unfired clay bricks mixed with straw, with wooden beams and covered with straw, reeds or shingles. The rooms were paved with dirt mixed with dung. Some residents were so poor that they had no glass in the windows, but “bindeu”, skin made from sheep’s bellows. The occupations of the villagers in the commune were and remain growing crops and raising animals.

The Hungarian baron had great power even in the interwar period, ruling not only the lands and forests of the commune, but also the peasants, the inhabitants of the villages. The Romanian children had their names Hungarianized in catalogues and school records. They studied for a maximum of seven years. In Buduș (Vâlcelele), school was held every now and then, when Arghil, the only teacher, was not drunk. He loved his pupils and taught them to read and write Romanian, arithmetics, history and geography. The children loved going to school also because the teacher was a joker and taught them less good things, like for example: to weave cigarettes out of corn cobs or roast potatoes in the fire. Most days they did not go to school, but attend the cattle and sheep in the field, barefoot, dressed in a long shirt, which did not protect them from the cold and rain on autumn days. When they met the baron, they had to bow their heads and greet him “Kiss your hand, your Highness”.

The hard living conditions of all times, since the attestation of the villages of the Bobâlna commune, have impressed upon the inhabitants a brave character, of worthy fighters, who have resisted the vicissitudes of the times, just like Mount Băbdiu. Noticing how hard it is to “fight for the land”, especially when it is no longer yours, the villagers, especially those from Vâlcelele, put a lot of emphasis on education. Schools were built in all villages, except Cremenea. As a result of the rural-urban migration, the number of schoolchildren has considerably decreased. Therefore, today only the school in Bobâlna is functional, and the children from all the villages of the commune study there. During the 20th century and up to nowadays, there were and are doctors, engineers, lawyers, pharmacists, university and pre-university teachers, and economists who originate in the villages belonging to Bobâlna commune.



Fig. 12. Alexandru Vaida-Voevod
(data source:
https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandru_Vaida-Voevod)

4.1. The most representative personality of Bobâlna is Alexandru Vaida-Voevod, the one who drafted the Declaration of Self-Determination of the Romanian Nation in Transylvania, which he read in the plenary session of the Parliament in Budapest, on October 18, 1918. "From this hour, anyway decides the powers of the world, the Romanian nation in Hungary and Transylvania is determined to better perish than to suffer further slavery and hanging", emphasized the fearless politician. As an elected member of the Central Romanian National Council, he worked intensively on the organization of the Great Assembly in Alba-Iulia on December 1, 1918. He is also present in the Transylvanian delegation that handed over the Union Resolution to the King. As a member of the Governing Council, starting from December 2, 1918, he was entrusted with the Department of Justice and Foreign Affairs. He was the first president of the Chamber of Deputies (28 November 1918) and the prime minister of the first parliamentary government in Great Romania (1919-1920). In Bobâlna commune, the mansion where Alexandru Vaida-Voevod was born is still preserved today, where the communal health centre operated during the communist period (https://ro.wikiped.ia.org/wiki/Alexandru_Vaida-Voevod).

4.2. Another outstanding personality of the commune was Valer Pop, born in Buduș (Vâlcelele) in 1892. He graduated from the Faculty of Law in Cluj-Napoca, where he obtained a PhD in legal sciences. He was the first president of A.G.R.U. (General Association of United Romanians) and held this position in the period 1929-1937. He was minister of justice in the Nicolae Iorga government and minister secretary of state in the Tătărăscu governments in 1936-1937 (https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valer_Pop).

Valer Pop is the one who contributed the monetary funds to the construction of the Orthodox church in the village of Vâlcelele.



Fig. 13. Valer Pop
(data source:
https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valer_Pop)

4.3. Also, another personality who comes from Buduș village, Bobâlna commune, is Iulian Pop, born in 1880. He was the first Romanian mayor of Cluj-Napoca after the Great Union in 1918. He held the position of mayor in the period 1919-1923. He graduated from Gherla High School, then studied law at “Franz Joseph” University in Cluj and the Royal Hungarian University in Budapest. He obtained his PhD in legal sciences on September 27, 1902. As mayor, he contributed to the establishment of the Romanian administration in Cluj City Hall and in other Cluj institutions (https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iulian_Pop).



Fig. 14. Iulian Pop
(data source:
<https://ebibliotheCASEPTENTRIONALIS.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/dr-iulian-pop.jpg>)

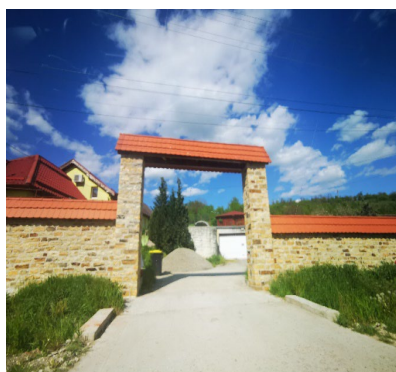


Fig. 15. Dej tuff constructions,
Morau locality



Fig. 16. Dej tuff constructions,
Stoiana locality



Fig. 17. Dej tuff constructions,
Cornești locality



Fig. 18. Dej tuff constructions in
Tiocu de Jos village

In addition to the obvious influence in the historical evolution of the commune, Bobâlna Hill is present in all the villages by means of the volcanic tuff, used as a construction rock (Savu, A., 1963, Ciupagea, D. T., Păucă, M., Ichim, Tr., 1970, Pop, V., 2003), locally called "Băbdiu stone". Most of the houses and other buildings in the villages on the Olpret and Lujerdiu valleys were built from volcanic tuff at the end of the 19th century and up to the middle of the 20th century. The Băbdiu stone was transported by oxen-driven carts on a road that goes up from the village of Igrîția to the



Fig. 19. Dej tuff constructions, Igrîția locality



Fig. 20. Dej tuff constructions in Tiocu de Sus village

plateau. The road was preserved and was used for the transport of the materials from which the television relay was built in the 20th century. The same road was used to transport the materials for the construction of the monument to the 1437 uprising, as well as the two telephone relays in the 21st century. Volcanic tuff is a resistant rock, and buildings made of this material have withstood time, in the form in which they were built. Until the 1989 Revolution, tuff was not given any particular importance, being seen as a kind of rock at the disposal of the villagers. After 1990, the

urban-rural return migration began, and the former townspeople, mostly retired, began to live in the houses inherited from their parents, many of them built of tuff. It has been noted that in addition to durability, tuff also has a pleasing appearance. Therefore, people began to strip the plaster from the walls and expose the tuff. The stone buildings of Băbdiu give a specific note to the villages located on the valleys springing from Bobâlna Hill.

The Bobâlna celebration was organized between 1968-1989, around July 20. It was the most anticipated event of the year in all the surrounding villages. More than 2000 participants gathered each time. The heroes of the 1437 Uprising were commemorated through artistic programs supported by popular music singers and groups of students coordinated by teachers, from the schools of the

adjacent communes. A social outpouring was developing, in which children, youth, adults and the elderly became more aware that they were living on a land steeped in history. The sounds of music mingled with the voices of children reciting poems, in the inviting smells of small barbecues, sprinkled with beer, juices or other drinks. Gastronomic diversity was less in those days, but the good mood was genuine. People lived in a world where stress had not even been heard of, they were simply happy to be on Băbdiu, together.

5. Revolution Race

“Revolution Race” is a sports event that took place outdoors, in the years 2021 and 2022. It was organized on the Bobâlna Hill by the “Înfloresti” Sports Club Association, in partnership with the Go4Fun Association. The sporting event promotes the local community and puts a special emphasis on outdoor movement on the grounds where the Transylvanian peasants gathered to revolt against the taxes unjustly demanded by the Catholic bishop of the area. Marathon, half-marathon, cross-country, bicycle race and obstacle race took place during the event. On October 10, 2021, when the first edition of the event took place, at the starting point there were 300 participants and about the same number of spectators.

On June 18-19, 2022, 311 people participated out of 384 registered. There were 60 participants in the obstacle race, 87 people signed up for the 5K route (Popular Uprising Route), of which 58 participated, 84 people participated in the 10k route (Freedom Cross) out of 104 registered, 99 people signed up for the 21k (Independence Half Marathon), but only 82 participated, while for the 42k (Revolution Marathon) out of the 34 registered competitors, only 27 showed up at the starting line. During the two days, in addition to the runners, about 600 spectators also participated. They also enjoyed the other events held on the set. In addition to the sports activity, there were also other events, such as:

- stage for music and artistic activities
- natural products fair (booths of local producers)
- relaxation and dining area
- food court with traditional peasant products
- activity areas for children
- presentation booths for partners
- booths with plastic artists
- areas for massage, yoga, reading, etc.



Fig. 21. Participant to the Revolution Race
(data source: <https://revolutionrace.run>)

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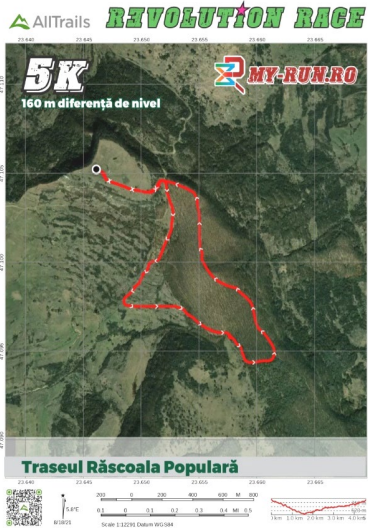


Fig. 22. The Popular Uprising Route
(data source: <https://revolutionrace.run>)

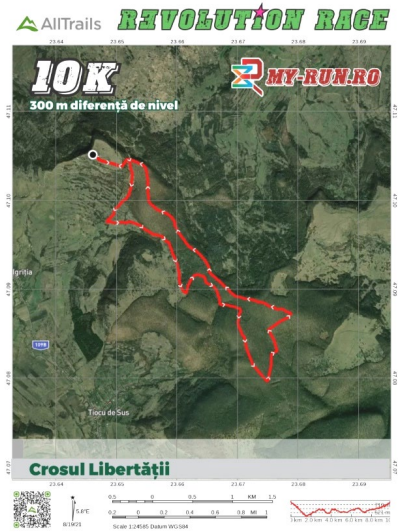


Fig. 23. The Freedom Cross Route
(data source: <https://revolutionrace.run>)



Fig. 24. The route of the Independence
Half Marathon
(data source: <https://revolutionrace.run>)



Fig. 25. The Revolution Marathon Route
(data source: <https://revolutionrace.run>)

In 2023, the Revolution Race was not organized, the next edition being planned for 2024 (<https://revolutionrace.run>).

6. Conclusion. Development projects for Bobâlna commune

According to the Local Development Strategy of the Bobâlna commune for the period 2020 - 2027, several projects are being considered, including the "Restoration and introduction into the tourist circuit of the Commemorative Monument of the Bobâlna Uprising", which provides for the restoration of the historical monument, the modernization of the access road, the setting up a parking lot, a tourist information centre, toilets, etc. Another priority project for the studied commune would be, according to the same source, the construction of a cultural centre, which would include an event hall, a kitchen, toilets, storage spaces, as well as other facilities (**2020, *Strategia de dezvoltare locală a comunei Bobâlna pentru perioada 2020 – 2027*).

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