

English summaries

(Michael Swithinbank)

Felix Biermann, Yasmin Dannath, Wiebke Kirleis, Stefan Mag-nussen and Normen Posselt

The first Castle Tielenburg? The medieval castle on the Tielenu near Pahlen in Dithmarschen

There are not many medieval castles in Dithmarschen, because for a long time its residents, who were organised in the famous 'peasants' republic', were successful in resisting attempts by neighbouring nobles to gain control of their territory, but did not themselves build any such fortifications. It was all the more surprising, therefore, recently to discover a fortification in the low-lying countryside along the river Eider, near Pahlen, which had left virtually no visible trace on the surface and which was then studied geophysically and archaeologically.

It comprised a strongly fortified castle with a rampart and moat. Measuring 150-160 m in diameter, the castle was built around an artificial mound, a flat-topped motte. It was located in a good defensive position, between branches of the rivers Eider and Tielenu. The motte, which was built using clay and was partially supported on wooden grids because of the marshy terrain, bore traces of intensive use: cultural layers, ditches, strong posts, sites of houses and layers of stone which would have served as roadbeds. There was also a smithy, which, on a manor, would have been equally useful to produce both tools and weapons. The evidence of tree-ring dating (1245 +/-10) and ceramics suggests that the castle was built in the middle third of the 13th century and abandoned again before 1300.

There is no documentary evidence of the castle's existence, but it must presumably have been linked to the nearby Castle Tielenburg, which is first recorded in 1323 as a bailiff's seat of the Counts of Holstein. Until around 1500, this fortification was an important centre of administration in Holstein, a military base and a display of power on the northern border of Dithmarschen. The newly discovered castle site is presumably the forerunner of Castle Tielenburg - effectively the first castle to which it would be appropriate to assign that name. Both of them have now virtually disappeared. Nonetheless, this was a focus of power struggles between competing territorial rulers, the lower nobility and peasants who were able and willing to fight, on whom the new discoveries and research shed an interesting light.

Udo Hopf

Architectural and archaeological studies of the inner ward of Castle Scharfenstein in the town of Leinefeld-Worbis

Castle Scharfenstein lies on a spur 180 m above the valley of the Leine river to the south of Beuren (part of the town of Leinefeld-Worbis) in north-western Thuringia. In 1209, a document mentions 'Theodor der Böhme vom Scharfenstein', thus showing that a castle existed there. It was built by the Counts of Tonna-Gleichen, and suzerainty resided with the Archbishopric of Mainz. Archaeological research inside the present-day ring wall of the inner ward of the castle, which was built around 1200, has made it possible to document part of the oldest, almost circular, ring wall, which has a diameter of 27 m. It has also proved possible to uncover much of the round keep, constructed out of rough-hewn ashlar and built on the edge of the ring wall. It has a diameter of nearly 10 m, and its walls, which are preserved to a height of up to 3 m, are 3.2 m thick. According to chronicles, as well as archaeological finds and conclusions, the castle was besieged and demolished in 1219. It was rebuilt immediately, at which time the ground-plan of the inner ward was expanded to a diameter of 34 m and a new keep was built in the middle of the courtyard of the inner ward.

The keep of cut stone, which was again of circular ground-plan, had a diameter of 7.80 m, and its walls were 2.40 m thick. The complex, which was rebuilt after 1219, burned down in 1431. Another fire was started in 1525 during the peasants' war. The reconstruction of the complex, which had now expanded to the point where it could be occupied by several families, dates from 1532. Between 1583 and 1599, the Archbishopric of Mainz had the castle converted into an administrative centre. From 1802, it was a Prussian forestry superintendent's office. The inner ward partially collapsed in 1966, reducing the extent of the surviving fabric. During the lengthy process of reconstruction, a modern transformation took place.

István Feld

Pseudo-castles or historical reconstructions? The rebuilding of Diósgyőr and Füzér castles in Hungary

Since the beginning of this century, there has been a fundamental change in the way in which Hungary's historic monuments are protected, at least in the case of castle ruins. Whereas previously the main aims had been to preserve the fabric and to educate the public, the emphasis is now more on building on the ruins in a historicising style. Following the royal palace in Visegrád, the next examples of this are Diósgyőr and Füzér castles; in the case of the latter, however, so far only the first stage of the planned comprehensive restoration project has been carried out. If any scholarly basis exists for the building work, it has not been published. The main aim of the work is to make castles more attractive to tourists. A total rebuilding causes considerable damage to the original fabric. Free reconstructions and interior decoration in the form of copies of medieval furnishings prompt doubts as to whether this approach can still be regarded as conserving monuments or whether the main decisions are not rather dictated by marketing strategies. In this way, the historical function of a castle changes during its history: having been the scene of displays of royal/noble power, bulwarks against the Ottomans, and in more recent times manorial seats, they end up as tourist attractions with exhibitions, incorporating hotels and restaurants. Consequently, their role as historical sources of knowledge about the past, as stone relics of the Middle Ages and the modern period, gradually comes to be forgotten.

Udo Liessem

The 'new' and 'old' castles - observations on the 'old castle' in Rotenhahn/Rotenhain and on the complete rebuilding of the complex

The former old castle in Rotenhain, which has not survived, was sited some 500 m west of the settlement. It is thought to have been a motte castle. Excavations between 1997 and 2001 revealed the entire course of the foundation walls of a stone tower and parts of the course of the moat around the castle. The castle was probably built in the early 12th century or perhaps even towards the end of the 11th. It passed through three periods of construction and use. It was large: 17 x 16 m. In 1997, the association Historica Rotenhain, Verein für Denkmal- und Kulturpflege e.V. was founded with the aim of 'revealing the secrets of the old castle'. Preparations ensued for a partial reconstruction, but in 2009 the plans were altered, and a rapid start was made on an idealised reconstruction. The new castle was already inaugurated in 2011. A neo-medieval motte was built on the site of the original building, on the original foundations. It was modelled on a sketch from the excavation report entitled 'Attempted reconstruction'. Regrettably, the result is a 'fun castle' made of pumice stone, cast concrete, steel and chipboard - even if the quality of the actual work is good. And unfortunately the new building irrevocably destroyed the original fabric. The association is trying in various ways to present medieval life as realistically as possible. At all events, the castle is a popular tourist attraction in the Westerwald and is visited by more people than the 'old' castle could ever have been.