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Jens Friedhoff

The castles of Alt-Windeck and Neu-Windeck

Of the two castles Alt-Windeck and Neu-Windeck, founded by the Landgraves of Thuringia to protect their possessions in the central part of the Sieg valley and against the Counts of Sayn, Alt-Windeck had evidently been abandoned by the late 13th century. The Counts of Berg, owners of the two Windeck castles since 1267, concentrated on developing Neu-Windeck. The castle was the centre of a separate administrative district and the Counts – raised to the rank of Fürst (prince) in 1380 – often used it in the late Middle Ages as collateral for debts. The scene of heavy fighting in the Thirty Years War when it was severely damaged, the castle was finally destroyed by French troops in 1672. A manor house was built in 1859/60 on the site of the ruined donjon, but it was destroyed by American artillery in 1945. The extensive ruin of Neu-Windeck, in the possession of the Rhein-Sieg district authorities since 1961, was surveyed archaeologically from 1987 to 1997 and renovated. The castle of Alt-Windeck, which has hitherto not been researched and which has been classified as an archaeological site is a motte on the spur of a hill, whereas Neu-Windeck is an example of a castle complex incorporating the main tower as a primary means of defence. The parts of the building fabric dating from the high Middle Ages very probably include the remains of the foundations of the castle chapel with its semicircular apse and the powerful circular donjon built in an exposed position on a rocky outcrop. Of particular interest are the outer fortifications: the late mediaeval outer courtyard with several semi-circular flanking towers and an early modern bastion have been preserved.

Benjamin Rudolph/Annina Hilfenhaus

The continuity of change (Ebersburg castle/Rhön)

Ruin and restoration are the two extremes characterising the fate of Ebersburg in the Rhön. Three times the castle was ruined and three times it was rebuilt. The story appears to begin in the latter part of the first half of the 13th century with a small castle with a defensive tower which was destroyed, possibly while it was still being built

but no later than a few decades after its completion, and was apparently left untouched for a good century. Although the extensive rebuilding works (1396) involved significantly enlarging the older castle and making additions to it resulting in an impressive building, the work was abandoned – as at many other castles – in the 16th century. One hundred years later it experienced a modest renaissance as the setting for a small summer house which Gottfried and Wilhelm Rudolph had built within the ruined walls as a minimalist form of restoration. Interest soon waned and this house, too, fell into ruin. Eventually it was 'rediscovered' and in 1854 there was one last attempt at restoration with modest repairs.

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