

Living History in an Early 14th Century Castle

The author introduces a complete reconstruction of a wooden castle in the village of Kanzach (Germany).

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The Bachritterburg at Kanzach

In the small German village of Kanzach,⁽¹⁾ population 504, a unique project has become reality, the complete reconstruction of a wooden castle with its tower, agricultural houses, furniture and various items from its daily life.⁽²⁾ Run by the village through Bachritterburg Kanzach (a member of EXARC), this reconstruction was made possible with the assistance of Baden-Württemberg's government and the EU's LEADER-program, which has created a landscape of archaeological museums.⁽³⁾

The idea

The idea was conceived by Karl Banghard, now director of AFM Oerlinghausen (EXARC member). At the end of the last century, while reconstructing prehistoric houses at the Federseemuseum in Bad Buchau⁽⁴⁾ (6 km from Kanzach), Banghard regularly drove by the castle-mound of Kanzach. One day, he asked Rudolf Obert, the mayor of Kanzach, if he was interested in rebuilding the castle - 600 years after it had burnt down. And so the idea was conceived.

The archaeological museums landscape

Wishing to create a unique archaeological landscape of related museums in this rural region of Oberschwaben, the LEADER-group provided 70% of the cost to reconstruct the castle-tower in 2000 and the bailey in 2003-04. Along with the reconstructions of the Stone and Bronze Age buildings at Bad Buchau, the Roman museum in Mengen-Ennetach and the Iron Age reconstructions at the Heuneburg

in Herberlingen-Hundersingen - all within a 15-minute car ride - visitors to the region now have the opportunity to visit time periods ranging from the Stone Age to medieval Bachritterburg. Although the museums are all run independently, they can be presented together for tourist promotion.

The reconstruction

The reconstruction focuses solely on the castle which measures about 50 meters square. The reconstruction of the tower (Fig. 1) was undertaken by archaeologist Tilman Mittelstraß.⁽⁵⁾ The bailey (Fig. 2) was reconstructed by architecture historians Stefan Uhl and Burkhard Lohrum.⁽⁶⁾ The furniture (Fig. 3) and tools were designed by a group from Vienna University lead by Thomas Kührtreiber of the 'Institut für Realienkunde des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit' at Krems/Danube.⁽⁷⁾

Visitors can tour the castle rooms; they usually start with the tower. After 'climbing' the stairs they visit the kitchen, the chamber, two 'bed-rooms' and the great room in the loft. The next building is the shed with a forge, a backing oven and the projects' workshop. The tour continues through the typical castle garden, showing vegetables, fruit and spices which were probably used



■ Fig. 3 Guests from Czechia in the tower kitchen chamber.

daily for meals. The next building is the lathe house with its kitchen, living room and bed rooms, cow shed and the barn with its agricultural tools including a functioning model of a wood drill. Nearby one can find the latrine and the dung heap. The barn, although not part of the museum, has a modern castle tavern in it. The final museum building is the storehouse which has a stone built cellar and a well. Outside the castle we have a bow and arrow shooting area, a barbecue location and a medieval-inspired playground for children.

During our "experience the castle" events, we use the ovens (Fig. 4), hearths and the smithy. All the furniture and tools can also be used, and have been during our Living History events⁽⁸⁾ and educational programs.⁽⁹⁾ Modern amenities (fire escapes, toilets and the shop) are clearly visible. As practice shows, even small children recognize that they are not part of the reconstruction. With the exception of the garden, we use no explanation boards. Instead visitors



■ Fig. 1 A view of the tower from a latrine.



■ Fig. 2 A view of the bailey.



■ Fig. 5
Preparing the Loshult-canon for firing.

receive a guide who provides basic information.⁽¹⁰⁾ In the future, we hope to provide an audio guide to give more information to individual visitors.

To make the reconstruction come alive we work with about 130 Living History actors, two of whom are professional, while the rest are part-time workers. They are organised in groups, and as the archaeologist, I select those that provide a high standard of quality interpretation. These groups live in the castle for 2-7 days at a time. They present daily life, medieval craftsmanship and sometimes special items, for example, a replica of the oldest canon in Europe (Fig. 5) or medieval medical care. In accordance with our “idealized” early 14th century castle reconstruction, groups show clothing and items ranging in date from AD

1250 to 1340. Some groups though focus on smaller time spans.

In October 2005 we tried our first multi-period ‘experience the castle’ event.⁽¹¹⁾ We divided the castle between a late 13th century section focused around the tower and an early 15th century section focused on the bailey. Using signs to distinguish these different areas, the Living History actors were kept separated by a barrier. This allowed us to show both time periods in contrast to each other.

So does it work?

Initially, our plan was to bring 15,000 visitors a year to rural Kanzach and the Oberschwaben region. The ‘Living History’ concept, first employed in January 2004, instead brought more than 31,400 visitors to Kanzach in 2004. In 2005, another 28,700 visitors came, even without a big event like the grand opening. Interest by grade schools and high schools rose in 2005 and seems to be destined to grow in the future.

As a result, the castle is itself capable of raising the money needed for its ongoing activities. The one exception is the archaeological staff who were initially co-financed by start-funds provided by the LEADER-program through 2005. Since April 2006 the castle is run by volunteers only, as there are no funds for financing of scientific staff.

Summary

Lebendige Geschichte in einer Burg aus dem frühen 14. Jahrhundert

In unmittelbarer Nähe des Ortes Kanzach wird ein einmaliges Projekt durchgeführt. Auf einer Fläche von über 50 m² wurde eine vollständige Rekonstruktion einer hölzernen Burg mit einem Turm errichtet, zu der eingerichtet landwirtschaftliche Gebäude und verschiedene Gegenstände des täglichen Lebens gehören. Bei Veranstaltungen unter dem Motto „Erlebe die Burg“, die mit Hilfe von Gruppen, die „lebendige Geschichte“ vorführen, durchgeführt werden, werden alle Geräte, Möbel und Werkzeuge benutzt.

Histoire vivante dans un château du début du 14^e siècle

Dans le village allemand de Kanzach, on a réussi un projet unique. Sur un terrain de près de 50 m², on a bâti une reconstitution complète d'un château, avec sa tour, son environnement agricole, son mobilier et différents objets d'usage quotidien. En collaboration avec des groupes de l'Histoire vivante, on y organise des animations „Expériences de château“ qui font vivre la vie au château, tous les outils, le mobilier et tout équipement sont mis en œuvre.



■ Fig. 4 Preparing sausages.

- (1) Der Landkreis Biberach 2. Gemeindebeschreibungen Ertingen bis Warthausen (Sigmaringen 1990) 143-153.
- (2) Sven-Hinrich Siemers, Living History-Museum: Bachritterburg in Kanzach. Wiederaufrechterstellung eines vergessenen Burgentyps. *Karfunkel* 57, 2005, 114f; Sven-Hinrich Siemers, Ritter, Räder, Pfahlbauten. *Lebendige Archäologie am Federsee. Schönes Schwaben* 6, 2004, 32-35.
- (3) Heinrich Güntner (Hrsg.), *Kunst, Kultur & Archäologie. Ein Bilderbogen der LEADER-Projektarbeit in Oberschwaben* (Sigmaringen 2002).
- (4) Karl Banghard, Der Freilichtbereich des Federseemuseums. In: *Urgeschichte erleben. Führer zum Federseemuseum mit archäologischem Freigelände* (Bad Buchau 2000) 31ff.
- (5) Tilman Mittelstraß, Die Rekonstruktion eines hölzernen Wohnturmes des 13. Jahrhunderts in Stabbauweise in Kanzach, Landkreis Biberach. In: Barbara Schock-Werner (Hrsg.), *Holz in der Burgenarchitektur. Wissenschaftliches Kolloquium des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats der Deutschen Burgenvereinigung Schloss Sayn 2003. Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Burgenvereinigung e.V. B 9* (Braubach 2004) 117-124; Tilman Mittelstraß, Die Rekonstruktion einer hölzernen Turmburg des Mittelalters aus dem Kraichgau. *Kraichgau. Beiträge zur Landschafts- und Heimatforschung* 17, 2001, 43-49; Tilman Mittelstraß, Die Bachritterburg in Kanzach. Bericht über die Rekonstruktion einer hölzernen Turmburg des späten 13. Jahrhunderts (Wald-Michelbach in Vorbereitung).
- (6) Stefan Uhl, Die Bachritterburg in Kanzach. Die Rekonstruktion einer mittelalterlichen Holzburg in Kanzach, Lkrs. Biberach (in Vorbereitung).
- (7) Thomas Kühtreiber / Christina Schmid / Andreas Bichler, Innenausstattung der Bachritterburg Kanzach. Band 1-4 (Wien 2003-04). [Manuskript Bachritterburg Kanzach]. All archaeological (re)construction were built by mostly local craftsmen.
- (8) Sven-Hinrich Siemers, *Historien-Spektakel oder Wissensvermittlung? Konzept „Living History“*. *Blätter des Schwäbischen Albvereins* 111.6, 2005, 8f.
- (9) Patrick G. Boneberg, Auf den Spuren von Knappe Ortholf. Jugendliche erleben in Kanzach das Mittelalter. *Magazin Schule* 14, 2004/05, 32f.
- (10) Sven-Hinrich Siemers, Welcome to the „Bachritterburg“ in Kanzach (Kanzach 32005). Also available in German and French.
- (11) Some people became ill, so we had to fill up with the late medieval section of the group.