

*Ruine*

# *Schmidtburg*

english





## The history of the castle ›SCHMIDTBURG‹

The ›Schmidtburg‹ is one of the oldest and most important castles of this area.

It was founded in the year 926 when three Franconian noblemen from the monastery St. Maximin in Trier exchanged some land in order to build a castle which would protect them against the Hungarians, who also threatened our area at that time.

There are many reasons why the castle, built at that time was most probably the Schmidtburg: we must consider the fact that this medieval castle was planned as a haven to escape to in times of danger and therefore only had little similarity to the ruin which has been preserved till today.

The Schmidtburg as we know it today was built in the Middle Ages. This explains why there is no record of the castle until the year 1084. The castle was built by the Emichons, a family of Salian counts, who lived in the valley of the River Nahe. They were the direct ancestors of the ›Wildgrafen‹.

In a document written in the year 1107 the Emichons first used the name Counts of Schmidtburg, calling themselves after their oldest castle. Unlike the Franconian castle (which was only a haven in times of danger) the medieval castle was also a home, which explains why more and more noblemen called themselves after their place of residence. The Schmidtburg as we know it today must originate from the late 11th. century, as the use of this name and the construction of the castle in its present form occurred at the same time.

Owing to the fact that the family inheritance was divided up several times during the following centuries there were sharp quarrels between the various descendants of the ›Wildgrafen‹. The future of the Schmidtburg was also affected by these problems. Due to a quarrel between members of the family it passed into the possession of Archbishop Balduin of Trier, who thereby gained an important stronghold for his policy of expansion. The counts (Wildgrafen) were not prepared to accept the loss of the Schmidtburg, which resulted in three feuds, the climax of this conflict being the so-called ›Dhauner Feuds‹ (1337 – 1342). In the year 1342 the counts had to admit their defeat, so the Schmidtburg remained in the hands of the Electorate of Trier. As the seat of a senior official of Trier it now became the actual centre of administration in this area. The present size of the castle dates back to that time.

The archbishop resolutely developed a system of defence by employing noblemen whose duty it was to defend the castle.

Therefore they had to live in the castle for some months every year. They were rewarded for their services with money, goods and special rights. During the reign of Archbishop Balduin seven to nine noblemen earned their living in this way. Many of these noblemen adopted the name ›von Schmidtburg‹ without being related to each other. The coat of arms with the silver buckle dates back to that time, although no one knows anything about its origin.

The castle itself became a commercial article for the archbishops of Trier who pawned it several times. From the point of view of defence the Schmidtburg lost its importance with the invention of fire-arms. Therefore it is not surprising that the rooms in the Lower Castle, belonging to the noblemen who had defended it, were no longer inhabited in the 16th. century, and the whole building was already turning into a ruin. The Schmidtburg survived the Thirty-Years-War undamaged, except for a raid carried out by Swedish soldiers. In the year 1688 French soldiers blew up the Upper Castle during the War of the Palatinate Succession. The Lower Castle didn't need to be blown up! For many years the castle was a ruin until the middle of the 18th. century when living quarters and domestic rooms were restored in the Upper Castle. A senior official of the Electorate of Trier lived here with his family up to the year 1798. The last inhabitants of the Schmidtburg were an old button maker and Schinderhannes (the German Robin Hood).

Although a change of ownership was recorded in the year 1809, no one knows how the castle fell into the hands of the community of Schneppenbach during the 19th. century. The remains of the castle were used as a quarry by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages. The ruins were exposed to the weather and were so overgrown with weeds that the castle sank into oblivion. It remained forgotten although an inventory was made of the remains in the year 1898.

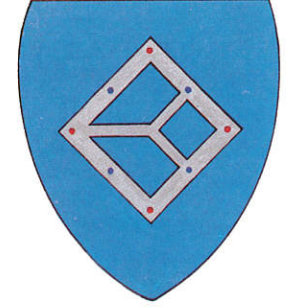
Rubble was removed by boy-scouts at the end of the nineteen-sixties and from 1972 – 1975 the local council of Schneppenbach took the first measures to fulfil safety regulations. These measures together with steps taken by the labour exchange to provide work for the unemployed resulted in the ruins being made accessible again. Consequently this important historical building has been preserved for the inhabitants of the Kirn area, who now may be inspired to occupy themselves even more with their own history.



*ruins of banqueting hall in Upper Castle*



*camping with German boy-scouts and girl – guides below the ruins in the Hahnenbach valley*



*coat-of-arms of the cup-bearer of Schmidtburg*

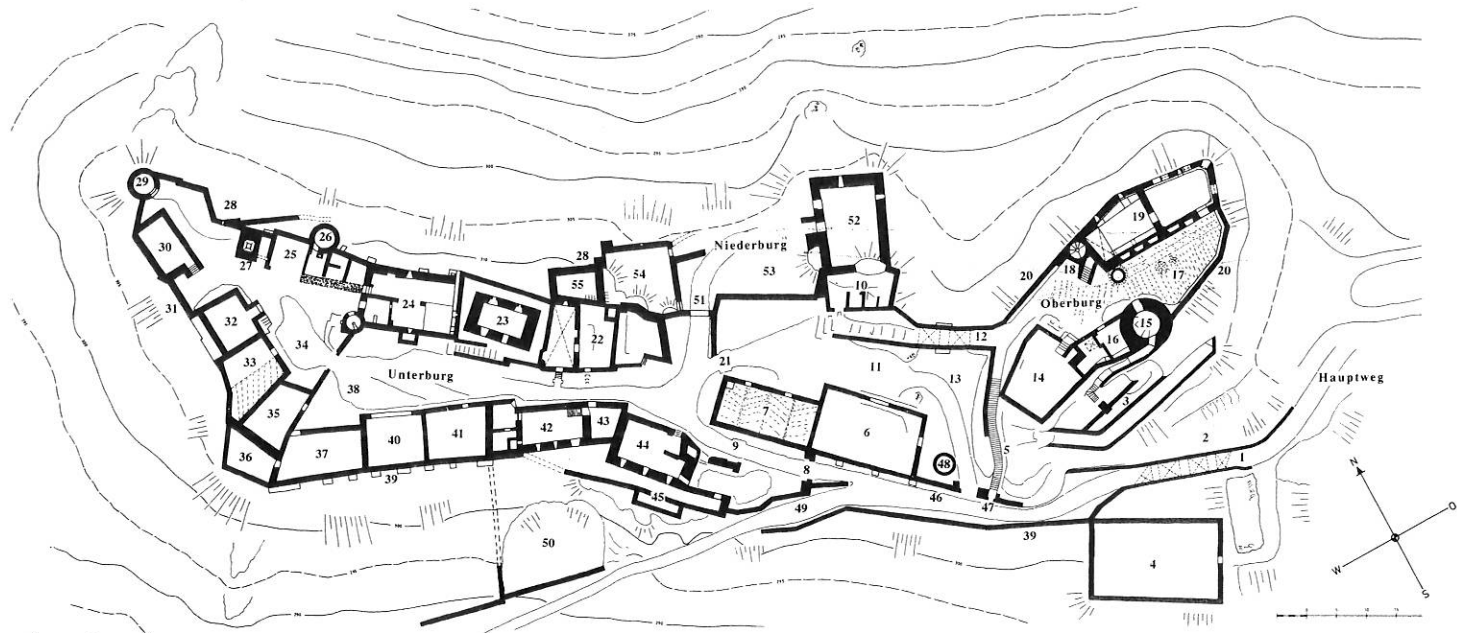
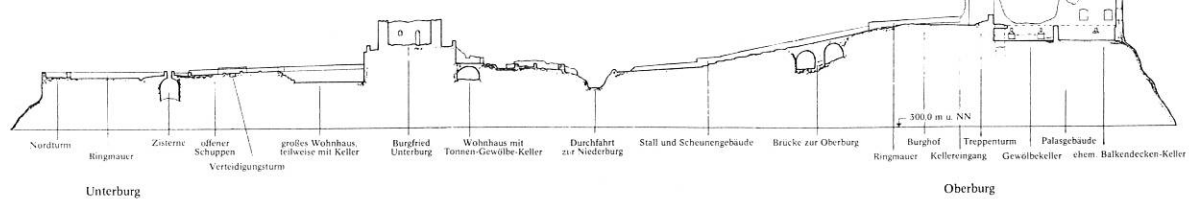
*Schmidtburg from the west*



*keep (Lower Castle)*







**Layout**

- |    |                             |    |  |    |                               |
|----|-----------------------------|----|--|----|-------------------------------|
| 1  | bridge to the Lower Castle  | 20 | castle wall (Upper Castle)   | 38 | big courtyard                 |
| 2  | moat                        | 21 | wall between Upper and Lower Castle                                | 39 | southern castle wall          |
| 3  | fortifications              | 22 | house I for noblemen who defended castle (cellar with arched roof) | 40 | domestic rooms                |
| 4  | castle garden               | 23 | keep (Lower Castle)  | 41 | an inserted construction      |
| 5  | steps to Upper Castle       | 24 | house II (see 22) with winding stairs                              | 42 | house VI (see 22) with cellar |
| 6  | large shed stable with barn | 25 | open shed (Smithy)   | 43 | inserted construction         |
| 7  | small stable                | 26 | turret   | 44 | chapel                        |
| 8  | main gate                   | 27 | cistern  | 45 | fortifications                |
| 9  | inner gate                  | 28 | northern castle wall   | 46 | main "street"                 |
| 10 | new stable (shed)           | 29 | north tower  | 47 | domestic entrance             |
| 11 | barn                        | 30 | house III (see 22) with part of staircase                          | 48 | large well                    |
| 12 | bridge to Upper Castle      | 31 | south-west castle wall   | 49 | gate (from vally)             |
| 13 | moat                        | 32 | house IV (see 22) with part of onter staircase                     | 50 | garden                        |
| 14 | living quarters             | 33 | stable   | 51 | gate (lower castle)           |
| 15 | keep                        | 34 | small castle courtyard   | 52 | big barn                      |
| 16 | bakery                      | 35 | house V (see 22)   | 53 | courtgard (lower castle)      |
| 17 | courtgard with well         | 36 | defences   | 54 | domestic rooms                |
| 18 | winding stairs              | 37 | domestic rooms   | 55 | cellar                        |
| 19 | banqueting hall             |    |  |    |                               |

An illustrated guide can be obtained from the local council office in Kirm, or from the boy-scouts in the tower of the Lower Castle, in the mine at Herrenberg and in the cafes and pubs of the surrounding villages.