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## Exploring Burg Lahneck

### Introduction

I would like to speak to you about Burg Lahneck.<sup>1</sup> This castle is interesting because of the changes of use it has experienced, from a military building to a romantic ruin and finally, to a comfortable dwelling. Changing owners had different ideas as to how to rebuild a destroyed castle and how to live in it and this has influenced the appearance of Burg Lahneck today. I shall endeavour to concentrate on the years between 1850 and 1870, which include the restoration of the destroyed Burg Lahneck by an Englishman, Edward Moriarty, and a Prussian, Gustav Göde. Burg Lahneck is situated high above the rivers Rhine and Lahn near Koblenz, facing the famous castle of Stolzenfels, rebuilt in neo-Gothic style.

The core of Burg Lahneck was built in 1244 by the Elector and Archbishop of Mainz, Siegfried von Eppstein, to protect his property, in particular a silver mine nearby. After 1464 Archbishop Dieter von Ysenburg completed the castle with two additional enclosing walls and gateways. During The Thirty Years War (1618-48), Burg Lahneck was plundered several times by troops and during the following years it became a ruin and was used as a quarry.

At the end of the eighteenth century in the Rhine province, a movement called the 'Rheinromantik' began. It was influenced by English poets (Lord G. Byron, E. Bulwer Lytton),<sup>2</sup> painters (W. Turner, G.C. Stanfield)<sup>3</sup> and travellers in tradition of the Grand Tour,<sup>4</sup> reaching its climax in the first half of the nineteenth century. This movement should be seen in connection with the revival of medieval architecture, the 'Gothic revival', the literary romanticism of the 'Gothic novel' and the love of the 'picturesque', of dramatic landscape as well as of romantic ruins, as witnesses of the past.

The neighbouring castle of Stolzenfels is an icon of this movement. In 1823, instructed by the Prussian crown prince Friedrich Wilhelm,<sup>5</sup> the royal Prussian building inspector, Johann Claudius von Lassaulx (1781-1848), began the restoration of Burg Stolzenfels to a residence on a high architectural level, which was continued by Friedrich Schinkel. His neo-Gothic architecture is well known from Schloß Babelsberg at Potsdam to Friedrichwerder'sche Kirche in Berlin. After Schinkel's death Burg Stolzenfels was finished by F.A. Stüler in 1850.<sup>6</sup>

Lahneck was bought in 1803 by Peter Ernst von Lassaulx (1757-1809), the father of Johann Claudius von Lassaulx, together with a farm nearby. Lassaulx took care of the upkeep of the ruin.<sup>7</sup> There is a remarkable water-colour of 1822 showing a *tempietto* lying to the north-eastern part of the residential apartments. In the estate plan by W. Balzar of 1854, a path surrounding the castle is visible. I would like to presume that, as early as 1854, before the first restoration, the ruins of Burg Lahneck were surrounded by paths and viewpoints presenting a stunning view into the valleys of the river Lahn and the river Rhine and taking advantage of the romantic atmosphere of the ruined castle.

In 1854 Edward Moriarty, an Englishman and manager of the Nassau railway-company, bought Burg Lahneck. He sold the castle in the 1860's to Gustav Göde, a Prussian.<sup>8</sup> I wanted to find out more about how these romantically-inspired men coped with the rebuilding of a medieval castle and I followed three distinct lines of questioning:



fig 1 Burg Lahneck: contemporary photo from north-east



fig 2 Burg Lahneck: water-colour by Johannes Bachta in 1822, showing the ruined castle with the *tempietto* from north-east

1. How did Moriarty preserve the medieval remains?
2. How did the reinterpretation of the medieval castle work?
3. How did the external appearance of the building change, how was it composed and given a new setting?

### Preserving the medieval remains



fig 3 A photo of Edward Moriarty, the first rebuildler, in the 1850's



fig 4 Burg Lahneck: engraving by Carl Mayer after 1854, showing the first phase of rebuilding, view from the 'combat field' south-west

### The new interpretation

Comparing several drawings, engravings, paintings and plans from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the layout of the destroyed Burg Lahneck, as Moriarty found it, becomes evident:

The keep, the chapel up to the window-lintels, the foundation and the eastern part of the residential apartments to half of the main floor, the front wall to the south as well as the enclosing walls with their gates and towers still largely existed. This was the medieval material Moriarty and Göde kept and worked with.

I want to summarise the main rebuilding measures of Edward Moriarty and Gustav Göde as well as I can. In order to ascertain every detail, it has been considered necessary to conduct a study into the construction development of Burg Lahneck, which has recently begun.

Moriarty rebuilt the residential apartments using the remaining medieval foundation, walls and vaultings of the basement in the eastern part and adding a brick and iron floor construction in the western part. He constructed the eastern part in three stories (including the basement) with a hip roof surrounded by decorative merlons and turrets in the corners. The western part of the residential apartments was built up only to the main floor with a big turret in the north-western corner and appeared to incorporate a terrace.

Moriarty added to the western main facade, heightening the gate with turrets and introducing two brattices and a crenallation. He rebuilt the chapel, nearly completely integrating the medieval ruined pillars, but he did not introduce the former Gothic vaulting of the chapel.

The 'Kleist'sche Haus' is a new part of the complex. It uses the remaining medieval front wall and the wall of the chapel and keep, to which it is connected. The new 'Nassauer Haus' was built up in the same way, using the walls of the keep and front wall. The strong towers of the front wall, which now belong to these new houses, were repaired and their stairs between the walls used for connecting the apartments.

The keep was repaired with a new brattice and rooms, that now connected with the 'Kleist'sche Haus'. The outer walls, with their gates and towers, were repaired, adding a crenallation, Moriarty having only to strengthen the western gate and the north-west tower.

The rebuilding used mainly rough quarried stone, the material known from the medieval ruined parts. Window frames and consoles were made in sandstone, some details and repairs - like the decorative merlons, surrounded by a slightly protruding brick-frame - were made in brick. The castle was rendered in parts.

It is hard to say which motive was stronger; the motivation to retain the medieval material, or the necessity to save money. In any event, Moriarty used and kept the medieval remains in a respectful and careful way.

The castle complex changed its use from a military building to a high standard dwelling,<sup>9</sup> thus the medieval parts were given new functions. Elements of fortification architecture were used for decoration and reference. Thus the defiant character of Burg Lahneck assumed a new and charming guise.

The design of the main floor of the residential apartments shows a high standard of domestic architecture, typical of the last century: the main floor of the residential apartments contains an enfilade of four rooms beginning with the 'knight's hall' in the east and ending with the room with the huge bay window in the west, allowing a view of castle Stolzenfels. These rooms were connected with neo-Gothic folding doors with pointed arches.

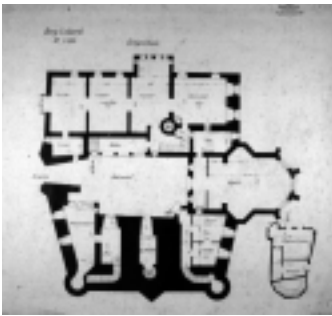


fig 5 Burg Lahneck: plan in the 1890's, ground-floor (owner E. Hauswald)

In the 'Knight's hall' the doors, the wooden panelling, a fireplace in neo-Gothic style and consoles, that could have been used for wooden vaulting, still exist. This room might well have been the 'baronial dining hall', known from literature.<sup>10</sup>

The kitchen was probably in the basement; the private rooms in the second storey.<sup>11</sup> The chapel was probably used as the reception and 'banqueting-hall', as it was by my great-grandparents, who bought Burg Lahneck in 1907.

The residential apartments were connected through the chapel with the 'Kleist'sche Haus'. This part contains a charming flat, still with doors in neo-Gothic style. It is connected with the 'Goethe-Zimmer' in the keep, which has a remarkable stone fire-place.

The enclosing walls with their fortification towers, gates and ditches became part of a garden concept including the wooded slope on the way to the castle from the river Lahn, the vineyard down to the river Rhine and the plateau south. The outer towers were apparently used as garden pavilions with a marvellous view to Burg Stolzenfels and the valley of the Rhine ('Fuchsturm', 'Torstube'). Joseph Mery, a French traveller, called the keep 'le Belvédère du ciel.'<sup>12</sup> The plateau named 'Streitacker' ('combat field') south of the castle, was at that time used for walking and diversions.

Elements used in a medieval castle such as the drawbridge and portcullis, merlons, turrets and embrasures were employed in a trivialised, but very decorative way. They act as symbols and reminders of the medieval history and activate the romantic spirit that rules over this time. These were symbols expressing the desire of 'nouveau riches' (like Moriarty and Göde) to create a lineage for themselves and to legitimize their position in society with a feudal castle in Gothic style that suggested at that time 'Christianity [...], truthfulness [...], good principles as well as good cheer.'<sup>13</sup> Moriarty even designed an heraldic figure for himself which appeared as a corbel in the first floor of the keep near the sign of the Archbishop of Mainz and connected him with the medieval builders of Burg Lahneck.<sup>14</sup>

But all these elements in 'castellated style' are also responsible for the charming guise, which Burg Lahneck became.

## The external appearance

The appearance of the castle under Moriarty was a mixture of several building details not homogeneous to the total result, perhaps because of the long building process (about fifteen years) and the desire to follow the imaginary Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> It seems to me that he did not have an architectonic concept: The residential apartments and the western main façade were too detailed and playful south-west (perhaps misled by the pleasure of 'picturesque variety')<sup>16</sup> and thus could not measure up to the massive keep.

Göde, the following owner, fused these two parts of the residential apartments into one huge three-storied block in the late 1860's or early 1870's. He also cleared and structured the western main façade with some alterations: he introduced grouped rectangular tracery windows with pointed arches and a stepped gable belonging to the 'Nassauer Haus'.

Burg Lahneck's appearance was, until 1937 when the steep roofs were introduced, dominated by horizontal lines rising to the keep. This is a clear architectural concept, which is also used by Schinkel in Burg Stolzenfels, albeit in a much more skilful way.

The rebuilding of Burg Lahneck in 'castellated style' is characterised by a desire for dramaturgy. In the Middle Ages, the approach road to the castle (until the 1970's known as 'knight's path', then destroyed by a motorway) led up from Ober-Lahnstein in a serpentine through the western gates. But the carriage drive since the last century<sup>17</sup> was more elaborate and dramatically arranged:

The way ascends in great serpentine from the steep slope from the river Lahn passing a spring, a gorge and giving a distant view to the monastery of 'All Saints' at the opposite bank of the river Lahn and a view of the castle itself.<sup>18</sup> Suddenly the



fig 6 Burg Lahneck: contemporary photograph of the 'knight's hall'



*fig 7 Burg Lahneck: Postcard from the beginning of the 20th century, showing the second phase of rebuilding, view from the 'combat field', beyond the vineyard to the main facade south-west*

dominating chapel appears, the visitor passes the outer ward through the eastern gate called 'Ysenburger Tor' and through the outer ditch with its 15m high rising scarp. Then the view to castle Stolzenfels is revealed. Entering the western inner gate, the western façade with its high gate to the inner courtyard becomes visible.

This gate deserves a more detailed examination: a bridge on three neo-Gothic arches in brick leads over the inner dry ditch to a false drawbridge. The gate itself is heightened with three half-turrets elegantly emerging from the inner wall and crowned with merlons. The opening seems at first to be higher than it really is. The bridge imitating a drawbridge is completed by a threatening false portcullis and by a heavy wooden gate and reminds us of A.W. Pugin's parody of a 'modern castellated mansion.'<sup>19</sup> Proceeding through this gate, one finally arrives in the inner courtyard. After the experience of the impressive strength of the outer walls and gates, the charming inner courtyard must have been surprising and welcome.

My remarks on the quality of Moriarty's and Göde's architecture may seem slightly critical but they cannot detract from the laudatory reception their activities received from their foreign guests:

The French traveller Joseph Méry mentioned in 1857: "This noble Englishman really has taken upon himself admirable work. Only the English do such things. We have too much common sense [...] now the ruin and the destruction [...] contrast cheerfully with the new turrets [...], the pointed arches, which were based on a whim of an intelligent restoration."<sup>20</sup> Bailey Willis mentioned in 1871: "It retained the medieval character in its architecture and the external appearance of the stronghold had been skilfully restored."

Moriarty executed his romantic idea of a medieval castle using and preserving the medieval substance. But he was confused by the presumed medieval shape on one hand and finding an acceptable solution in architecture on the other. With the activities of Göde, the building acquired a more coherent and prestigious character, but never attained the quality of the royal Prussian castles of the Rhine.

Today Burg Lahneck is still in private ownership. In 1880 the Prussian courtier Graf Ewald von Kleist-Tycho bought the castle. Since 1893 it was owned by a chocolate manufacturer from Magdeburg, Albert Hauswald.<sup>21</sup> I know little about these owners. It is said that Hauswald moved a room with its furniture and panelling from Burg Lahneck to his villa in Magdeburg.

In 1907 my great-grandfather, the later vice-admiral Robert Mischke, bought Burg Lahneck and charged the architect, Prof. Caesar from the Technical University Berlin, with making the alterations, which were mainly concerned with providing more light and comfort. Caesar made a connection between the residential apartments and the 'Nassauer Haus'. In the 'Nassauer Haus' the medieval stairs between the walls were removed and the tower dismantled, providing more light and more useful space. All these alterations were made in a kind of 'new-late-medieval' manner. They show that the medieval character of Burg Lahneck assumed more importance, but did not depend on keeping the medieval fabric. Robert Mischke introduced central heating, electricity and baths supplied with running water from the spring. He replaced nearly all of the neo-Gothic doors in the main floor with panelled doors in a heavy Baroque style, giving these rooms a Baroque appearance.

In 1936 the former flat roofs were changed into steep roofs covered with slate. This became necessary because the faults in construction of the flat roofs, which caused dampness, were not removable.<sup>22</sup> This also reflected the spirit of the 30s, in which the strong and fortified rather than the light and charming appearance was preferred.

After World War II, it became necessary to divide the second storey of the building into separate flats for the heirs. Today it is still difficult to find a balance between keeping the openness on one hand and guaranteeing private space and atmosphere on the other.

I hope it has become clear that nearly every generation changed this building,



*fig 8 Lahneck: photo 1910, connection between 'Nassauer Haus' (left) and residential apartments (right) in building process*

adding a new layer and interpreting the castle in a new way. It is both a mirror and a lively witness of past and present times. However, this was not possible without losing some of the old fabric and, simultaneously, introducing some new.

Since the 1930s, the main floor has been open to the public from April to October. The second storey is still in private use. Burg Lahneck is financed by the museum, a camping site, two restaurants and, last but not least, sponsored by the Department for the Care and Restauration of Ancient Monuments of Rheinland-Pfalz. Activities such as the theatre, concerts and music festivals take place from time to time. Although tourism has receded in the last few years, Burg Lahneck still attracts many visitors.

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- Henriette Frein von Preuschen, born on 29.04.1974 in Bonn, raised in Hamburg
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- Figures
- 1 Burg Lahneck: contemporary photo from north-east
  - 2 Burg Lahneck: water-color by Johannes Bachta in 1822, showing the ruined castle with the tempietto from north-east
  - 3 Photograph of Edward Moriarty, the first rebuildler, in the 1850's
  - 4 Burg Lahneck: engraving by Carl Mayer after 1854, showing the first phase of rebuilding, view from the combat field' south-west
  - 5 Burg Lahneck: plan in the 1890's, ground -floor (owner E. Hauswald)
  - 6 Burg Lahneck: contemporary photograph of the 'knight's hall'
  - 7 Burg Lahneck: Postcard from the beginning of the 20th century, showing the second phase of rebuilding, view from the 'combat field', beyond the vineyard to the main facade south-west
  - 8 Burg Lahneck: photo 1910, connection between 'Nassauer Haus' (left) and residential apartments (right) in building process

- Notes and References
- <sup>1</sup> At Rev. Gardnor: castle Lonack
  - <sup>2</sup> e.g.: E. Bulwer Lytton, *The Pilgrims of the Rhine*, 1834 etc
  - <sup>3</sup> e.g.: Heath, *Picturesque Annal*, 1833 (with Stanfields paintings); William Tombleson, *Views of the Upper and Lower Rhine*, 1832 etc
  - <sup>4</sup> confere Haberland p.42: 'The classical destination of the grand-tour was Italy. This changed in favor of France and the Rhine province at the end of the eighteenth century.'  
Joseph Mery mentioned: 'Aux premiers jours de la jeunesse, j'allais en Italie; avec l'âge mur, j'ai changé de goût. Pour moi, depuis longtemps, le Rhin a remplacé le Tibre dans mes affections de voyageur.' *Ems et les bords du Rhin*, Paris, 1858, p.1
  - <sup>5</sup> later Friedrich Wilhelm IV, called 'Romantiker auf dem Königsthron', which means 'romanticist on royal throne'
  - <sup>6</sup> confere H. Schmidt, *Burgenromantik im Rheinland*; In: Irene Haberland u.a: *Vom Zauber des Rheins ergriffen*, Bonn, 1992, p.309
  - <sup>7</sup> 'Es kaufte sie der frühere kurtrierische Syndikus, spätere Amtmann von Ehrenbreitstein Peter Ernst von Lassaulx, der die Ruine zugleich mit dem eine kurze Strecke oberhalb Niederlahnstein gelegenen Arnsteiner Hofe erwarb. Dieser trug wenigstens Sorge für die Erhaltung des noch Vorhandenen. Sein Sohn, Peter, Amtmann zu Dierdorf, verkaufte die Burg [...] an einen Herrn Moriarty.' In: Dr. Jur. Wegeler, *Lahneck und Oberlahnstein* Ein Beitrag zur Spezialgeschichte der Rheinlande, Trier, 1881.p.19. Peter von Lassaulx (1804-1860)
  - <sup>8</sup> confere Dr. Fritz Michel, *Geschichte der Stadt Oberlahnstein*, 1925, p.137
  - <sup>9</sup> 'Upon the ancient walls a modern residence had been build.' Unknown, from *Biographical Notes by Bailey Willis* - Bailey Willis lived as a teenager in Lahneck.
  - <sup>10</sup> 'Within was an entrance hall, living rooms and a baronial dining hall.' Unknown, from *Biographical Notes by Bailey Willis*
  - <sup>11</sup> 'Madame Göde had a boudoir in the second storey and since she spent many hours lying down, the panelled ceiling was decorated with her favourite verses of poetry; and snatches of music.'  
Unknown, from *Biographical Notes by Bailey Willis*
  - <sup>12</sup> Joseph Mery, *Ems et les bords du Rhin*, Paris, 1858, p.117
  - <sup>13</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.273
  - <sup>14</sup> Arms of Mainz and Ysenburg are visible at the 'Ysenburger Tor' and the inner gate, Moriarty's 'knight's arm' at the western gate as mounting
  - <sup>15</sup> Joseph Mery, a travelling Frenchman, mentioned: '[M. Moriarty] s'est fait architecte; il s'entoure d'artistes, de dessinateurs, d'archéologues, de légendaires; il s'associe avec eux pour exhumer tous les secrets de l'architecture féodale, et rendre à chaque ligne de l'air les mêmes pierres qui la garnissaient sous l'épiscopat de Bauduin.' Joseph Mery, *Ems et les bords du Rhin*, Paris, 1858, p.116
  - <sup>16</sup> confere Stefan Muthesius, *Das englische Vorbild*, München, 1974, p.17
  - <sup>17</sup> latest in the 1860's, I presume even in the 1850's
  - <sup>18</sup> At Burg Stolzenfels the approach is also accompanied by these elements (among others)

- <sup>19</sup> confere Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.244
- <sup>20</sup> ‘Ce noble Anglais a entrepris un travail vraiment digne d’admiration; les Anglais seuls font de ces choses-là! Nous avons trop de bon sens, nous. [...] Déjà la ruine, la dévastation, l’incendie qui assombrissent encore une moitié du manoir, font le plus joyeux des contrastes avec les jeunes tourelles, les donjons neufs, les ogives pures, éclos au souffle d’une intelligente restauration.’ Joseph Mery, *Ems et les bords du Rhin*, Paris, 1858, p.116
- <sup>21</sup> confere Dr. Fritz Michel, *Geschichte der Stadt Oberlahnstein*, 1925, p.137
- <sup>22</sup> ‘Die Folge dieser Zinnenwirtschaft war konstruktiv verheerend. Da die eigentlichen Dächer nicht anders angeschlossen werden konnten als mittels einer Zinkrinne hinter den Zinnen, so griff schon früh die Zerstörung hier an. Dazu kam, daß ganze Teile, offenbar aus Sparsamkeit, überhaupt nur in Zinn abgedeckt waren. Infolgedessen waren die Dächer schon vor dem Krieg in einem dauernd reparaturbedürftigen Zustand, der sich inzwischen zur Unhaltbarkeit gesteigert hat. Mit Reparaturen, auch mit größeren, kann der Zerstörung, die schon die unteren Räume ergriffen hat, nicht mehr Einhalt geboten werden. Es sollen daher völlig neue Dächer aufgesetzt werden, von einer Steilheit, die nicht nur dem Charakter der Burg Rechnung trägt, sondern auch Gewähr leistet, daß das Wetter in Zukunft keinen Schaden mehr ausrichtet.’ Prof. Caesar, Erläuterungsbericht in der Bauakte zu Bauschein Nr. 400 vom 24.4 1937

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