

# **THE FLECKENSTEIN**

The building of the first castle dates back to the XII<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the quarrel of investiture between the Empire and the Pope. The castle was probably built by the Hohenstaufen. Its key would then have been given to the care of the Fleckenstein who were in charge of the control of the Sauer Valley and of the northern access to the forest of Haguenau. Under the Great Interregnum, the Fleckenstein no longer obeyed any suzerain until the time when Rodolphe of Habsbourg put order in the Empire, besieging the castle in 1276. After that siege which saw the Bishop of the Spire become prisoner for a year, the castle apparently became an imperial fief.

In those days already, the castle was the undivided property of three different families whose territory was formed of 35 villages headed by three bailiffs. Thanks to its defence work that constantly adapted to the evolution of the military art, the castle went through four centuries of history without having any problems. During the 30 years' war, it used as a sheltering place for the neighbouring population. Under the reign of Louis 14<sup>th</sup>, the castle was destroyed in 1689. When the last baron Henri-Jacques died in 1720, the castle in ruins became the property of the Prince of Rohen. The castle was commandeered during the French Revolution and then became privately owned again.

from J.L. VONAU PNRVN Itinéraires n°20

## **SITUATION**

The castle is built against and on an enormous block of sandstone nearly 100m long and 30m high. Nevertheless, the flat top is only a few metres wide. The castle was built at different times in history : the XII<sup>th</sup> century with a maximal use of the rock, the XIV<sup>th</sup> century, XV<sup>th</sup> and XVI<sup>th</sup> centuries with the building of the gates, towers, commons and palace of the top.

## **VISIT**

### **ENTRANCE**

The first gate of entrance into the space of the castle was situated 100 feet away from the present entrance. Built in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, it was composed of two towers, partly circular and partly rectangular, and of an enormous gate. A wall on each side joined it to the present entrance. The base of one of the two towers has just been excavated and cleared.

The present entrance is composed of an outside gate, above which there is a date (1428). The inside gate is a little older (1407).

Together, they form a sort of barbican (i.e. a defensive entrance).

### **LOWER YARD**

The surrounding walls of the lower yard date back to 1407. On the inside of those walls rested buildings such as a stables (3) (opposite the entrance), the storing houses (6) and the smithy (7) (on the right of the entrance). The building situated near the remnants of the winding stairs was the house of the host (5).

### **ROCK**

The minute observation of the rock enables one to discover a few interesting elements.

→ half-way up the rock there is a semi-circular opening (4) : it is in fact the entrance door of the first castle, on the right of this door you can see a ring carved in the rock. It was used to tie up the horses. The height of these elements makes one believe that the level of the original yard was much higher than them, or else that there was a ramp of access to the door.

→ the groove in the rock was used to pipe the rain water and convey it into a tank (8) situated at its base.

Further away, near the little rock, a large room, carved into the rock can be seen. It might be a recess that was part of a large house leaning against the rock. Nearby a large filtering reservoir can be found.

### **ENTRANCE TO THE BIG ROCK**

- there is a ditch (10) : half the passage was fixed (on pillars) the other half was mobile (on a drawbridge)
- a troglodyte case was used either as a kennel or as a jail (11)
- the fort (12) was closed by a drawbridge

### **WELL AND STAIRCASE TOWER**

The well used to be sheltered by a tower was built in the XIV<sup>th</sup> century (13), but that was altered one or two centuries later. The well would be about 70m deep.

On the left of the well is the room of the squirrel wheel (a reproduction of which you can see in the yard) that was used for lifting water and other materials (14).

The square tower contained a winding staircase (15). It was built during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, probably to solve the problem of access to the higher part of the castle after the castle was shared.

### **ENTRANCE INTO THE ROCK-DIFFERENT ROOMS**

After walking through a number of buildings that give one an idea of the highly defensive system of the castle, we now come to the entrance into the rock.

A first large room opens onto the right (16). We do not know what it was used for.

From this room, one can go, through a sort of window, to the two flanking southern towers (their access is prohibited for security reasons).

A staircase leads to a lower troglodyte room. It used to be the entrance room of the original castle. It was used as a bathroom in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is now a museum (17).

Above this room, there used to be a terrace and St James's chapel (18), which has been altered several times.

### **UP TO THE TOP PLATFORM**

After leading to the door under the entrance to the first troglodyte room, the staircase goes up into the rock and after a few metres, parts into two parallel ways (19). One in a gallery carved in the rock, and the other, parallel to the first, goes behind the well and staircase tower and leads to a semi-circular tower (20). The first staircase leads to a troglodyte room, and the second, directly to the central platform, leaving on its right another room, and further away a staircase that gives access to the west part of the platform.

### **THE PLATFORM**

Not far from the issue of the building staircase, the base of a square tower can be seen (21). It is probably what remains of the 13<sup>th</sup> century turret. There, one can equally see some elements of a reservoir. Before the footbridge, a little staircase leads, on the right, to a little room underneath ; above its doors, one can see two coats of arms (22). It was the archives room and it had two different locks. From there, one can also get to the top of the well tower. Let's retrace our steps.

Further away, one can see a filtering reservoir. On the left, a staircase leads to the ground floor of the palace. On the way, one can see the remains of a winding staircase.

Opposite the piece of wall of the palace, (23) (one can see the Fleckenstein's coat of arms on the stonework of the window), the palace where the latrines were can be seen (24).

One will appreciate the remarkable view over the wooded mountains of Northern Vosges and Palatinat.

### **THE LITTLE ROCK**

One gets to the top of this rock by going up a winding staircase carved in a rock itself (25). It was probably used as a keep. One could get there directly from the South through a postern.

*The numbers written between brackets correspond to explanatory boards that you will find all along the discovery path of the castle.*