

Wewelsburg
Castle

Wewelsburg

Coordinates: 51°36′23″N, 8°39′06″E

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Wewelsburg (pronounced /ˈveːvəlsˌbʊɐk/) is a Renaissance castle located in the northwest of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, in the village of Wewelsburg (the same name as the castle) which is a quarter of the city Büren, Westphalia, in district of Paderborn in the Alme Valley (see Alme). It is known for becoming the ritual headquarters of the SS in 1934 under Heinrich Himmler. In 2006 and 2007 it hosted the annual Internacia Seminario, a meeting of Esperanto youth.



Wewelsburg

Contents

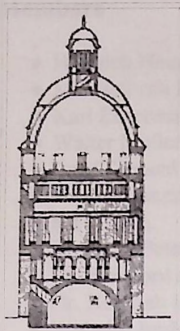
- 1 Early history
- 2 SS History
 - 2.1 Members
- 3 Niederhagen Camp
- 4 Post-War
- 5 Popular culture
- 6 See also
- 7 External links

Early history

The Wewelsburg was built from 1603 to 1609 by the Prince of Paderborn. Its location is near what was then believed to be the site of the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest. Legend suggests that it held thousands of accused witches during the 17th century, who were tortured and executed within its walls.

In 1802, the castle fell to the ownership of the Prussian state - and 13 years later fell victim to a fire that gutted the North Tower.

SS History



Initial SS
Schematics for
redesigning the
North Tower

In 1925, the castle had been renovated into a museum, banquet hall and hostel - six years later the North Tower again proved to be the weak point of the architecture, and had to be supported by guy wires. In 1934, at the suggestion of Karl Maria Wiligut, Heinrich Himmler signed a 100-mark 100-year lease with the Paderborn district, initially intending to renovate and re-design the castle as a school for Nazi leadership (the so-called SS "Führerkorps").

In 1938, Siegfried Taubert was in charge of developing the castle, when Himmler enquired about the cost of installing a planetarium. The Ahnenerbe are also said to have had major input into the redevelopment.

Prisoners from the Saxonia and Niederhagen concentration camps were used as labourers to perform much of the construction work on Wewelsburg between 1939 and 1943, under the design of architect Hermann Bartels.



Himmler with Dr. Ley in the
Alme Valley beneath
Wewelsburg Castle on January
27th 1937

The design of floor mosaic laid in the *Marble Hall* during that time became known as the "Black Sun" (*Schwarze Sonne*) and is used as a symbol in Odinism and Neo-Nazism and in occult currents of Irminenschaft or Armanenschaft-inspired esotericism. It is not known whether or not this symbol was placed in the floor at Wewelsburg before or after the National Socialist Regime and the taking over of the castle by Himmler.

The castle contained a room dubbed the *Himmler Crypt*, dedicated to Heinrich I, of whom Himmler believed himself to be the reincarnation, and where he hoped to be interred after his death.

Himmler's plans included making it the centre of a new Germanocentric world following the "final victory". To symbolize that, an installation of a circular wall centred on the castle, one kilometre in diameter, was planned.

Himmler reportedly imagined the castle as a locus for the rebirth of the Knights of the Round Table and appointed 12 SS officers as his followers, who would gather at various rooms throughout the castle and perform unknown rites. The only documented meeting was in June 1941, though they are assumed to have been held regularly. When one of the officers died, his ashes would be interred in the castle. Similarly, any recipient of one of Himmler's Totenkopfrings was to arrange to have the ring returned to the Castle upon his death.

When the final victory failed to materialize, Himmler ordered Heinz Macher, with 15 of his men, to destroy the Wewelsburg, only two days before the US Third Infantry Division seized the grounds. Reports vary from near-complete damage, to only the North Tower suffering great damage; either way the damage was soon repaired after Macher's company ran out of explosives.

Members

- Heinrich Himmler - Overseer
- Manfred von Knobelsdorff - Commandant
- Karl Elstermann von Elster Stabsführer - replaced by Paul Hübner
- Walter Muller - Hauptsturmführer
- Josef Schneid - Hauptsturmführer also known as Pepi
- Walter Franzius - architect brought onboard in October 1935
- Karl Lasch
- Dr. Hans-Peter de Courdes - until May 1939
- Dr. Bernhard Frank - SS Commander of the Obersalzberg
- Dr. Heinrich Hagel Arztchef - Obersturmbannführer
- Wilhelm Jordan
- Elfriede Wippermann



Workers' camp set up during reconstruction efforts in 1939

Niederhagen Camp

Just offsite of Wewelsburg was the smallest German KZ , Niederhagen prison and labour camp.[1]



KZ-Niederhagen

(<http://www.iwm.org.uk/upload/package/55/ConferenceWebsite/downloads/Panel23.pdf>) Begun on June 17th 1940, the camp was completed the following year and named after Niederhagen Forest, the name Himmler had given to the forest outside the castle several years earlier.

It began with 480 prisoners from Sachsenhausen, and grew to 1200, comprised chiefly of Soviet POWs and captured foreign labourers shipped to Germany, although early in its life it was also a gathering point for Jehovah's Witness prisoners. During the SS's December 1942 Korherr Report it was reported to have only housed 12 Jews all of whom had died.[2]

(<http://www.ns-archiv.de/verfolgung/korherr/faksimile-lang/korherr-lang-13.php>)

Of the 3900 prisoners held during the camp's existence, 1285 of them died and 56 were formally executed. In August 1942, the Allies began deciphering death tolls transmitted from the camps, Niederhagen had reported 21 deaths for that month.[3] (<http://www.fpp.co.uk/bookchapters/WSC/Typhuswar.html>) The camp was dissolved in 1943 with most of the prisoners resettled in Buchenwald, though several dozen prisoners remained behind, housed directly in Wewelsburg.[4] (http://www.ns-gedenkstaetten.de/nrw/de/wewelsburg/thema_1/)

Hauptsturmführer Adolf Haas, who had overseen the camp from its beginning, was transferred to a command position at Bergen-Belsen, while Schutzhaftlagerführer Wolfgang Plaul was transferred to Buchenwald. Untersturmführer Hermann Michl had last been recorded at the camp in 1942, and later appeared at the Riga ghetto.

Post-War

On June 29, 1950 the castle was reopened as a museum and youth hostel, while the Niederhagen kitchen had been renovated into a village fire station.

In 1973, a two-year project was begun to restore the North Tower, and by 1977 it had been decided to restore the entire site as a war monument. It opened on March 20, 1982, with several survivors of the Niederhagen camp present. Karl Hueser of the University of Paderborn was considered influential in the reopening project, and Wulff Brebeck would become the curator through the 1990s.[5]

(<http://www.ns-gedenkstaetten.net/nrw/en/wewelsburg/entstehung/index.html>)

A memorial was built in honour of the deceased Niederhagen prisoners in 2000, four years later the Kreismuseum Wewelsburg (<http://www.wewelsburg.de/>) was granted DM 29,400 for restoring and moving the remnants of the Niederhagen camp, as well as producing an educational film on the Ukrainian and Russian prisoners who were housed there.[6]

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/other_actions/support_eur_org/pdf_word/resultsEAC33_2004.xls)

The castle seems to be one of the major sources of inspiration for the Wolfenstein games, such as Return to Castle Wolfenstein and Spear of Destiny.



Wewelsburg 2004

Popular culture

- Wewelsburg and its Black Sun mosaic is the subject of the 2005 novel The Black Sun by James Twining.
- Wewelsburg and its Black Sun mosaic is the subject of the 2005 novel Black Order by James Rollins.
- Wewelsburg is one of the many missions in Medal of Honor Underground, which the player has to infiltrate and find the Knife of Abraham.

See also

- Nazi mysticism
- Karl Maria Wiligut

External links

- Wewelsburg and concentration camp forced labour (http://www.ns-gedenkstaetten.de/nrw/de/wewelsburg/thema_1/) (in German)
- Kreismuseum Wewelsburg (<http://www.wewelsburg.de/>) (in German)

Retrieved from "<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wewelsburg>"

Categories: Castles in Germany | Monuments and memorials in Germany | Buildings and structures in

Germany | Visitor attractions in Germany

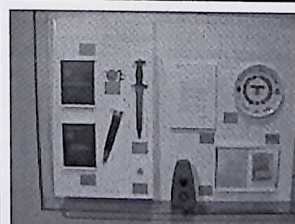
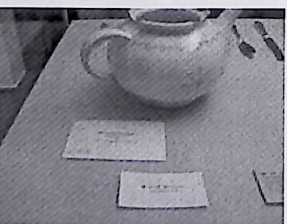
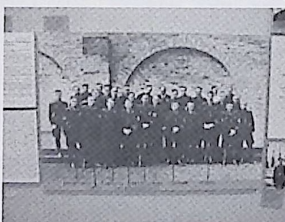
- This page was last modified 10:06, 26 March 2007.
 - All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.)
- Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a US-registered 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit charity.



Wewelsburg Castle

A photo tour of the Wewelsburg Castle in Germany, 20 km south-west of Paderborn.

In 1934 the castle was rented by Heinrich Himmler for 1 Reichsmark and its primary role was that of a SS officer's school. The goal was to research the National Socialists ideas and extend them to the racial theories. From 1936 onwards the castle's main purpose was to become a 'cult centre' as well a prestigious centre for SS Generals. From 1940 plans were developed, incorporating the village of Wewelsburg, for a new castle complex centered around the North Tower of the castle. For this a Konzentrationslager was build in Wewelsburg. Of the 3900 prisoners at least 1285 died building the castle or starved to death. In 1943 the building was stopped and the remaining prisoners were transferred to other camps. Two days before the US forces liberated Wewelsburg (2nd april 1945), a special commando of the SS, blew up the castle leaving only the outer walls standing. The rebuilding of the castle began in 1949 and was finished in 1979.







The centre of the SS "cult" became the castle of Wewelsburg in Westphalia, which Himmler bought as a ruin in 1934 and rebuilt over the next 11 years at a cost of 13 million marks. The central banqueting hall contained a vast round table with 13 throne-like seats to accommodate Himmler and 12 of his closest "apostles" - making, as some occult writers have pointed out, a coven of 13. Beneath this hall was a "Hall of the Dead", where plinths stood around a stone table. As each member of the inner circle of the SS died, his coat of arms would be burned and together with his ashes, placed in an urn on one of these plinths for veneration. In this slightly ludicrous atmosphere of theatricality, Himmler instigated the systematic genocide carried out by the Third Reich in its last years.



Wewelsburg Castle