

## A gigantic restoration project



### Eight years of work

Work started on the castle almost as soon as it had been bought by **Kaiser Wilhelm II**. The German emperor wished to rebuild the fortress completely, just as it would have been in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. He put the architect and historian **Bodo Ebhardt** in charge of the project. &nbsp;

Major work on clearing the site to get it ready for construction work started in 1900. Numerous photographs of the site were taken and this archival work continued throughout the duration of the project.

The first stone of the château du Haut-Koenigsbourg was laid in 1901. The castle keep was the first part of the château to be rebuilt. Its reconstruction symbolized the power of its new owner. Also, in more practical terms, it meant that the castle site could be cleared of stones. Almost immediately, **sharp criticism** of the work was heard...

In 1906, the imperial eagle was mounted at the top of the keep. The project should have been finished by this time, but cracks in the walls greatly slowed down work. Extra funds were also needed to complete the project.

### The castle is unveiled

Two years later on May 13<sup>th</sup> 1908, the château du Haut-Koenigsbourg was finally unveiled to the public amidst

much fanfare. Finishing work and the design and decoration of the interiors, including wall paintings by Alsatian artist **Leo Schnug**, continued until the First World War. With the start of the war, all work on the castle stopped, resulting in some decorative work being left unfinished, such as the 'golden' room in the keep, which was left undecorated.