

The next stages in the restoration of the château du Haut-Kœnigsbourg



Decorating and furnishing the château

The **Hohkönigsburgverein** (literally the "Haut-Kœnigsbourg club") was formed with the goal of creating a museum that would be open to the public. It was responsible for finding the necessary money to **decorate and furnish** the château. Made up of university professors, architects and archaeologists, this club was founded in 1904. Up to the end of the First World War, it had almost 500 members from Alsace, Lorraine, Switzerland and even the Tyrol region who were actively involved in creating a collection of objects from the Rhine region (arms, furniture) dating from the end of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance period. At the same time, as had been the case right from the start, the Club promoted the castle as a tourist attraction. Even though building work was not yet finished at the château, an entrance fee to the castle was charged from 1904 on.

The Club also organized the parade and historical pageant for the unveiling of the château and asked **Leo Schnug**, an Alsatian artist and specialist in military uniforms who was fascinated by the Middle Ages, to design the clothes for the parade. After the castle's public unveiling, the Club took on the task of decorating the Lord's residence and asked Leo Schnug to do the wall paintings for the **Kaiser's room** (the banqueting hall) and the trophy room.

From the unveiling of the château to the present day

On May 13th 1908, watched by **Wilhelm II** and many representatives from the government, the château was unveiled to the public amidst a parade and historical pageant. The taking of the castle by the Sickingens in 1533 was re-enacted. At that time the castle would have been in a similar state to that in which **Bodo Ebhardt** found it. Five hundred performers in period dress paraded solemnly...in the rain! Following the First World War and the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, Alsace and the château became part of France once again. The site became a tourist attraction but it remained perfectly acceptable, even the 'done thing', to criticize the castle restoration, as this had been carried out by the 'enemy'. It wasn't until French-German relations improved that the restored castle was looked at with fresh eyes. After two World Wars, through which it passed undamaged, the entire structure was classified as a Monument historique (listed building) in 1993. Now, 100 years after its restoration, the château du Haut-Kœnigsbourg stands proudly at the heart of a more harmonious Europe.

The castle came into the ownership of the **Conseil Départemental du Bas-Rhin in 2007** (European Collectivity of Alsace since 1 January 2021). It provides us with an amazing insight into what a castle at the end of the Middle Ages would have been like and it also reveals something of European history at the beginning of the 20th century.