

Archaeological Museum Haus Bürgel



**2000 years of living history
from Roman time still today**

Interest group Urdenbacher Kämpe – Haus Bürgel e. V.

Supported by



The museum: Exhibition and outside path

Even since the Middle Ages it has been known that the former fort Haus Bürgel was built on the foundation of a late Roman military fort. But only the archaeological finds since 1993 have given new more exact conclusions about Haus Bürgel in the Roman times.

Selected finds can be seen in the Archaeological Museum since 2003. They however tell us more than just about the history of this place. They even make alive the occupying politics, the daily life and the military of the Roman towns.

The 2000-year-old history of Haus Bürgel from the Roman times until today is presented in 8 rooms. Added to this exhibition is an outdoor path which follows the Roman walls of the fort and which leads to a historical garden for spices and the archaeological site.

Haus Bürgel: A 2000-year-history

The first Roman settlers settled in the first century AD in the pasture of the Urdenbacher Kämpe which is rich in species. Then at the beginning of the fourth century AD a military fort was built, remains of which can still be seen.

After the victory of the Franks over the Romans and the reconquered territory of the left side of the Rhine the fort dilapidated to ruins and was only extended into a fort complex in the high Middle Ages. Haus Bürgel was first mentioned on a document from the year 1019 as “Castrum in burgela”, from which today's name derived.

Later on the fort was owned by the Earl of Nesselrode. Today the fort and its environment are under nature and monument protection.

Roman settlement for 500 years

For almost 500 years the Romans were able to extend their empire without being threatened seriously by local Teuton tribes. The frontier between the Roman Empire and the empire of the Teutons corresponded to the former flow of the Rhine.

When in the fourth century AD the invasion of the Franks increased Emperor Konstantin had a chain of military forts built along the Rhine in order to make the frontier safe. One of these forts is Haus Bürgel.

An ancient field of graves in front of Haus Bürgel is a proof that this area was already inhabited in the first century. The date could be fixed with the help of burial objects to the graves, such as important personal things like jewels or ceramic china having been laid into the graves.

The late Roman fort Haus Bürgel

The military fort was built in the fourth century AD as a massive bulwark in order to be protected against the warring Teuton tribes.

It measured 64 times 64 m and its walls were about 2.30 m thick. There were 12 towers at the outer walls. The tower at the corner still visible was built in the early Middle Ages, its foundations however are from the Roman times and are integrated in the exhibition.

The inner court of the fort was not cultivated and served as space for tents. Barrack rooms, granaries and workshops could be found along the walls.

In the fourth century the military fort was inhabited by up to 150 Roman soldiers with their families. Countless finds attest to the Roman daily life: combs, jewels, china and pots as well as rubbish from meals speak about customs and every day needs of the old Romans. Personal hygiene for example played an important role. There was even a bath with a warm and cold water basin heated by a floor heating.

The treasure of the coins

At the beginning of the fifth century the invasion of the Franks became more and more threatening. One of the citizens of Haus Bürgel tried to get his belongings to safety and hid 139 bronze coins under the floor boards in the bath. There the treasure remained for 1500 years until it was discovered in 1996. The latest coin of this treasure dated from the year 408 AD.

The military

In the late ancient world Teuton mercenaries made up the main part of the armed forces and the cavalry of the borderline. That is why the Teuton citizens made up the main part in Haus Bürgel which is certified by typically Teuton finds.

In the Roman provinces the different cultures united to one Roman-Teuton mixed culture. This becomes also clear in the armourment of the soldiers who in the first century AD already took over the Teuton tradition to wear trousers because of the climate which had always been frowned upon.

In the fourth century AD the Roman soldier was dressed in a belted garment and a mail shirt which replaced the plate armour. Scale armours were worn more seldom. Their heads were protected by iron helmets which could be decorated valuably.

The most important weapon was the "Spatha", a long sword of iron, as well as lances, bows and arrows. A typical Teuton object was the lance with several dangerous hooks at its top.

Also the safety shield shows the Teuton influence: the rectangular shield of the Romans was replaced by a round shield of the Teuton.