

Landshut Castle



Landshut – The Moated Castle



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Landshut in the Land of Water

Landshut Castle, the former seat of the eponymous manorialism, is the only remaining moated castle in the Canton of Bern and is one of the few in Switzerland. It is just 200 meters east of the **Emme River**, which flows from south to north. This once meandering, wide-filling riverbed was dammed («Däntsch») left and right in 1875 and forced into a corset, so that, even during flooding, it no longer reaches the castle. However, the river, which finds its source in the area of Hohgant, still has a strong influence on the castle's surroundings through the **groundwater**. The building itself is situated in the middle of this Emme floodplain on a molasse ridge (sandstone) towering the surrounding land just a few meters away.

The entire plain, which stretches northward from Kirchberg and Ersigen, is intensely used for agriculture and is influenced by its high water table, which makes its presence felt through **sources**. Thus, a network of **streams** permeates the vast land - as far as they have not been taken into pipes and laid in the ground. The water level and the water distribution have been and are still partly controlled through locks («Brütschen»). Two of these streams, the Olibach and the Mülibach, flow through the castle park. As the names indicate, in the past, their flow force was used for **commercial purposes** - they powered an oil and a grain mill, e.g. the Landshut Mill, which belonged to the castle until 1850. The water, which springs from the ground, was generally clean and was used by the population as **domestic and firefighting water**.

The Water Trench (Castle Moat)

The castle moat surrounding the sandstone ridge is certainly not of a natural origin, but rather created by humans as a barrier **in defence** against approaching enemies. Undoubtedly, it existed already at the time of the castle expansion with the curtain wall in the 13th century - perhaps even earlier. Diebold Schilling illustrates in his »Spiezer Chronicle or Spiezer Schilling« (completed around 1465) the storming of the Landshut Fortress in the Gümnenkrieg (the war in 1332) by the Bernese and Solothurner over a wooden bridge preceding the gate.

Deposited fine sand and sludge, brought in by the streams, the fallen foliage in autumn, and, later, sewage caused the moat bed to rise and a lag in the outflow from the moat, and, as a side effect, odour emissions. Therefore, a periodic cleaning was needed.

Bailiff Franz Ludwig von Wattenwyl annotated in 1724, *“To clean the castle water, which had been almost filled with sludge for 24 years, bread, cheese and wine were consumed for a total of 92 pfennigs 4 schillings 8 denars.”*

The Streams in the Park

The original course of the streams in the castle park is unknown. Apparently, the Olibach did not flow into the castle moat, but rather west of it and to the north. In any case, on the map of 1746, no inflow into the moat can be recognized. Bailiff Carl Ludwig von Erlach noted in 1776, that he had directed the Ölibach into the castle pond, in order to create a higher flow rate and, thus, to make for more cleaning power.

Both of the little "**waterfalls**" were probably introduced in the 19th century. At that time, Niklaus Rudolf von Wattenwyl, owner of Landshut Castle since 1812, had the floodplain south of the castle, which earlier served to grow fruits and vegetables, redesigned into an English-style park. The original **crossing** of an Ölibach anabranch of the Mülibach probably dates to that time. On the castle grounds, the lack of connection between the streams play mind tricks on the visitors. But when considering the realities on the map, the connections become clear – however, the crossing's meaning is still not very obvious.

Drinking and Domestic Water for the Castle

Supplying the inhabitants with water from the moat, which was for the aforementioned reasons hygienically questionable, could not be relied upon. The still existing, but covered, well (draw-well) is among the oldest furnishings of the castle and reaches to the groundwater. With the construction of the intermediate wing (1777), it came into the interior of the building complex. The water was probably brought up from eight meters depth in leather buckets using a cable pull, and later, a beam pump.

In 1437, Rudolf von Ringoltingen mentioned in the «Landshuter Urbar» that **wooden water pipes** were available on hand. Piping had already existed at that time! In the year 1701, Bailiff Samuel Kilchberger had built a water catchment, which was fed by groundwater, in the south-western corner of today's park. To that he commented, *“... I have let water*

from a clean source in front of the castle to be conducted with a wheel and other equipment to the two wonderful new wells in the castle courtyard and at the castle barn, which has cost a multiple of what I normally calculate, namely 600 pfennigs."

Wall fragments of the pump house can still be seen today. From there, the water flowed through buried **wooden pipelines** through the park of today, under the bottom of the moat through a flowing artesian well in the courtyard. The remains of around 300 year-old wooden pipelines, made of oak, which means probably of that of the construction period (!), came to light in 2007 during excavation work. The flowing well was a large advancement, which made the tedious drawing unnecessary and assured at least running water in the courtyard. Around 1815, directly on the wall at the courtyard façade, there was a flowing well to be used for the kitchen in the basement. Today's **courtyard well** also emerged at this time, but was installed mostly as an ornament.

The Disposal of Domestic Waste Water

In order to direct clean water to the castle, piping was built. The residents, however, paid less attention to the disposal of incidental wastewater.

The 'secret' (»the secret loo«, »the secrecy«, which is marked on a floor plan of 1777, finds its pictorial representation in a view of the castle from the 18th century. One can make out, on the south-side of the building, a bit west of the semicircle terrace of today, a **privy tower**. It was accessible from every floor of the tower – an enormous advancement at that time - and discharged into a former slurry hole in the adjacent garden, situated between the house wall and the castle moat.

Complaints about the **emissions of odours** from the lavatory, which was actually poorly placed on the sunny side, did not hush until 1812, when, on the north façade in the courtyard, new sanitary rooms were added, which had long since been removed, the wastewater of which was directed through a wooden channel in the area of the bridge, straight to the pond. The wastewater from the kitchen, which had originally been on the second floor on the southwest side of the corridor, was directed through a wooden channel into the garden. Additionally, on the northeast side, accessible from the lower defensive corridor, there was a «Hüsli», attached from the outside to the curtain wall, was undoubtedly the original castle lavatory.

Fishing Rights and Fish Farming

In connection with the waters in the park, fishing rights [Fischenzen] were often in the discourse of old records. Fishing rights are rights set out in mandates and ordinances (**contracts of lease**) for the use of a body of water for **catching fish**. Landshut owned many such waters and still owns a few today. The Bailiffs, however, also knew how to take advantage of the fish for themselves in the moat and in the streams. *"In the venerable presence of the Electoral Prince of Heidelberg, I let here wild game and fish be hunted,"* wrote Bailiff Daniel Lerber in 1671.

Starting at an unknown time to the second half of the 20th century, in Landshut, trout was bred, reared and also released into the wild. This expensive activity was then given up – too often, in the night, the trout ended up in the cooking pots of others.

Ducks on the Water

In winter, on the streams and, above all, in the waters of the moat, over a hundred ducks gather. Most of them are mallards («wild ducks»), though since the turn of the century, every year gadwalls and widgeons have also been appearing among them. Occasionally, one can also find goosanders, pochards and tufted ducks. As beautiful as they

are, these **over-wintering water birds** carry with them the problem of the **over-fertilisation** of the water and thus cause an undesirable algae growth.

Visitors are therefore kindly asked not to feed the ducks and thus give rise for an even larger gathering.

In the summer months, there is a noticeably fewer number of ducklings on the waters. The newly hatched mallard ducklings are often victims of martens and raptorial birds.

Educational Water Trail

Starting at the Utzenstorf train station, the Commission for Environmental Concerns of the community has set up an educational trail, which leads along the waters, via «Tannschächli» and the Emme Dam, into the castle park. On this foot path of about two kilometres, through meadows and forest, the hiker comes across ten **illustrated charts** with information about the streams, the surrounding nature, former land use practices and the countryside's contemporary importance for the ecosystem.

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Schlossweiher	Castle Pond
Schlosshof	Castle Courtyard
Obstgarten	Orchard
Parkplatz	Parking Lots
Wasserwerk (Mauerreste)	Waterworks (Wall Remnants)
Wasserfall	Waterfall
Steinbrücke	Stone Bridge
Zugbrücke	Drawbridge