



Walls



Sketch of the walls



Walls



Menhir of Reckingen

mersch

Prehistorical remains and evidence

+ WICHTELSLEE

The «Wichtelslee» is a refuge-stronghold built to protect the population against the hordes of looting warriors. For strategic reasons, moats were dug, defensive walls built and wooden fences or stone walls erected most of the time at the top of mountains. In case of danger, the peasants of the surrounding areas would take refuge with their herds within these walls and had to surrender their possessions to the assailants to have their lives spared.

The «Wichtelslee» is part of the oppida type of fortifications. These refuge-strongholds were used at various times. Other surrounding buildings of this type are the «Burggruef» near Marienthal, the «Aleburg» near Nommern and the «Casselt» near Lorentzweiler.



Safe in the refuge-stronghold

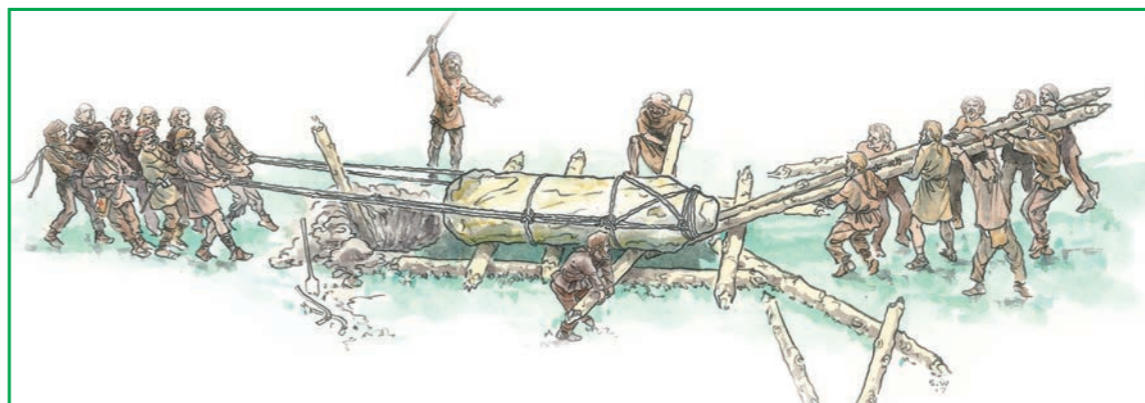
THE MENHIR OF RECKINGEN

On the «Béisenerberg», by the side of the «Änelterkapell», the oldest monument in Luxembourg stands: the «Hinkelstein» menhir of Reckingen.

This stone block, buried for centuries in the ground of a meadow belonging to the Steichen family, was identified in 1978 by Maisy and Robert Weyrich-Fischback and Roger Kugener, members of the «Friends of the old Mersch» association, and erected 30 metres away from its original location.

The 3 m high sandstone, 0.70 m thick and weighing around 4 tons owes its brown yellow colour to its high iron content.

In 2001, the archaeological dig undertaken by the National Museum on the location of the discovery established that the menhir dated back from the Neolithic period (the beginning of the Stone Age). It belongs to an anthropomorphic (looking like a man) group of menhirs. The «Hinkelstein» of Reckingen is the first archaeological menhir known in Luxembourg.



Erection of the menhir

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Mamerleeën



Location of the outside walls of the Wichtelslee



The «Mamerleeën»



«Recki» and its menhir

+ MAMERLEEËN

The «Mamerleeën» form a group of Luxembourg sandstone caves unique in their category. There are natural caves in the sandstones as well as a large network of artificial tunnels located just under the surface of the ground.

The natural caves of the «Mamerleeën» are due to the characteristic formation of fissures in the Luxembourg sandstone. However, the network of tunnels, extremely impressive by their extent, are man-made. All the entrances to the caves and tunnels are on the left bank of the Mamer, on the eastern limit of the sandstone plateaux and north of the town of Schönfels.



Huellee

This set of caves and tunnels reach up to the Huellee in the south, over one thousand metres in the north, towards Mersch.

The «Mamerleeën» are without doubt types of underground quarries. Unfortunately, no one has yet been able to define the period or the author of these interesting historical mines.

The only certainty is that the «Mamerleeën» follow a specific rock seam and that they were a source of hard sandstone resulting from cemented gravel.

It can also be supposed that they are the specific mechanical and mineralogical properties of this stone which started the painstaking and expensive work of the underground exploitation.

In the 60s and 70s, some cavers studied the caves and gave them a name. In order to protect the bats hibernating in these caves, several entrances are closed with a special grille from 15 November to 15 April. From Clausshaff, it is easy to access them on foot.



Underground exploitation in the «Mamerleeën»

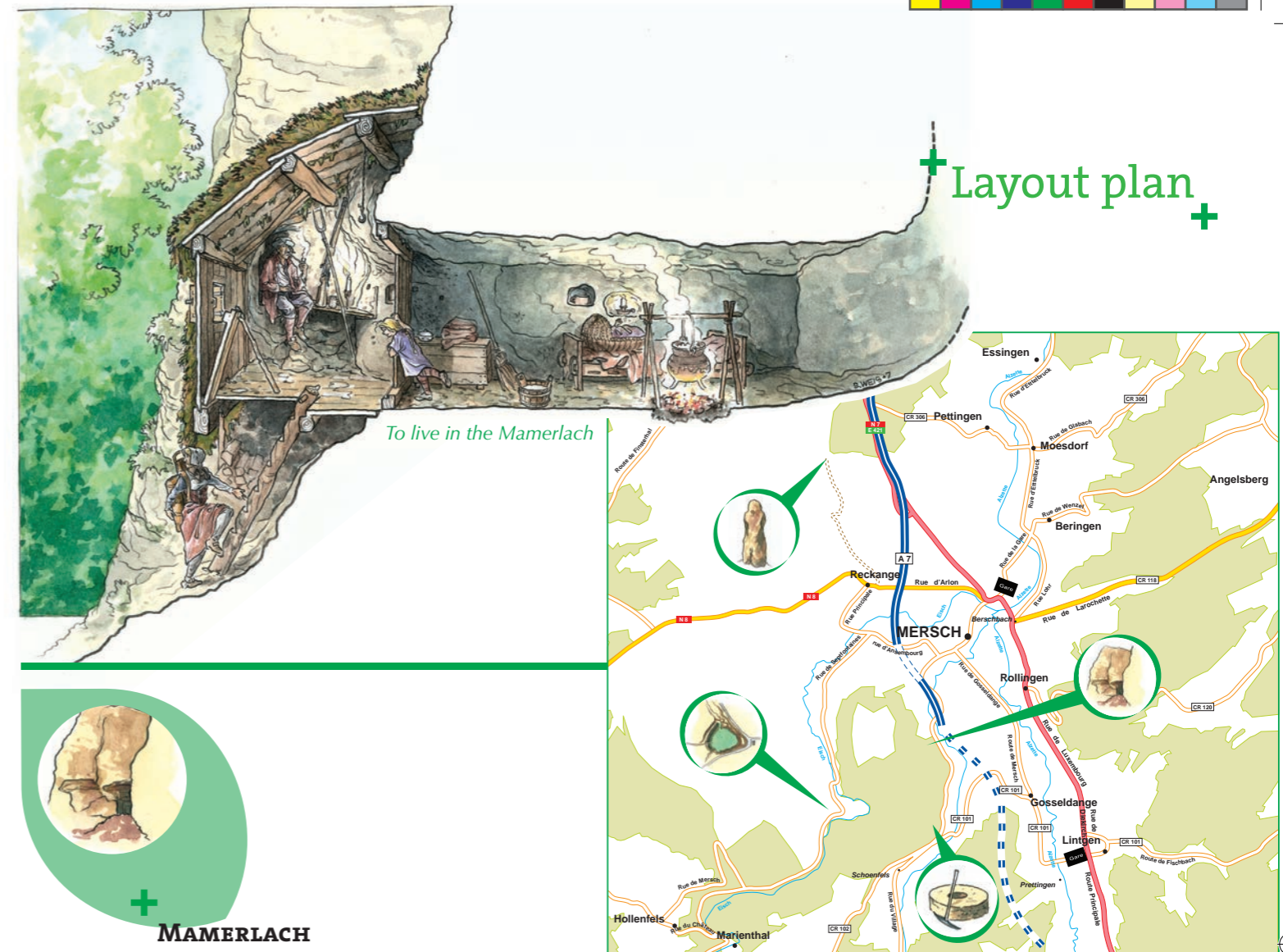


Huellee



Schönfels castle dominated by the «Mamerleeën» (circa 1930)

+ Layout plan +



+ MAMERLACH

Man has always adapted these caves to live in. In the forests of the town of Mersch, the coal makers lived and worked there to extract charcoal. It suggests that these people used the natural and spacious sandstone caves as shelter or even as housing.

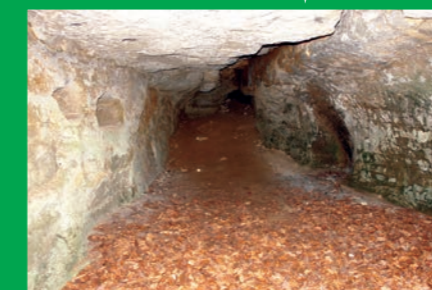
The excavations conducted in the «Karelslee» near Waldbillig demonstrated that the caves were used as lodgings from the Mesolithic (middle of the Stone Age) until the Middle Age. The «Mamerlach», although located on the same sandstone plateau, does not belong to the «Mamerleeën» structure. It was never used as a quarry. This natural cave is ten metres long

and between two and four metres wide. Several niches are visible in the rocky walls. The cave was probably preceded by a wooden construction as witnessed by the numerous cuts on which the timber would rest.

Before, it was vertically connected to a sink line (funnel-shaped depression). This access path to the cave was buried in a slide. Be careful, the cliff is steep! The «Wichtelcherslee», facing the Hunnebour, also present cuts into which beams were once fitted. The two metre high cuts even suggest the presence of a second floor. The rocky walls were cut so as to enlarge the cave and make it more inhabitable.



Mamerlach, entrance of the cave



Mamerlach, inside



Wichtelcherslee, entrance of the cave



Wichtelcherslee, inside