

ExperienceMuseum



Historical Building Guide



Herausgeber:

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HENNEBERGISCHES MUSEUM *Kloster Veßra*
Museum für regionale Geschichte und Volkskunde



History of the Hennebergian Museum Kloster Vessra

At present with a ground of about six hectares, the museum consists of listed Romanesque and Gothic monastery buildings and also working quarters of the estate, which were built since the 16th century and have often undergone changes as well as different half-timber country houses. The area is completely surrounded by an old monastery-wall.

The monastery of the Earls of Henneberg was founded in 1131 and quickly developed into the most important monastic institution in the county of Henneberg. As such it became a political and economical as well as a cultural centre, whose influence reached far beyond the region in relation to architecture, letterpress, historiography, astronomy and gardening culture.

After the monastery's disbanding at the end of the 16th century the whole area had been reorganised and turned into property of state, similar to an estate. The leaseholder and several families ran the fields and meadows jointly. Even horse breeding was introduced and for many years various races were bred successfully.

After World War Two the property of state was dissolved and years later turned into a »Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaft« (LPG), which lasted until the museum was founded in 1975.

The monastery and agrarian tradition of the area became a part of the museum. In addition to the existing buildings, in the western area of the estate, a second group of buildings was constructed. This open-air exhibition contains a collection of architectural buildings (half-timber country houses) which representing the living and working conditions of former generations.

With the great variety of exhibitions the museum contributes to our cultural memory.

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Historically cultivated plants from the »Henneberg country« can be seen in this garden. Amongst them are different kinds of grain, food, vegetable, medicinal, spice, oil and fibre plants

50. Barn from Ebenhards near Hildburghausen

This barn was built in 1850 as a part of a farm. The simple half-timber structure built at a base from fieldstones. The inside consists of four partitions with a threshing floor and two store rooms for grain, straw or hay. The room nearby houses a solid installed threshing machine as well as a feed cutting machine with transmission. In 1999 the building was dismantled and rebuilt in Kloster Vessra.



51. Piggery from Schalkau near Sonneberg

The Piggery was built in 19th century with two barns and above a storage facility for timber and and brush-wood.



turntable electric generators. Since 2003 electricity is generated for the museum and visitors should have a look at the exhibition »Von der Klostermühle zum Turbinenhaus« (»From a cloister's mill to a turbine-house«) and the historical techniques.

45. Cemetery chapel from Breitung near Meiningen

This chapel is a simple half-timbered building from 1726/28 with only one floor. Inside you find a gallery with ornamental paintings on top of the balustrade, a pulpit and box-pews. The building was dismantled brick by brick at Herrenbreitungen and rebuilt at the museum of Kloster Vessra exactly as the original version.



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46. Farm garden

The farm garden is a collection of vegetables, herbs, berries, flowers as well as ornamental plants. The division of the garden, the map of the paths and the selection of the plants, which are grown in the farm garden are in accordance with the details around 1800 and with that the farm garden shows a part of the lifestyle at this time.

47. Coverd Timber Bridge

This bridge was erected in the 17th century at Milz, in the borough of Meiningen, and was a half-timbered building with St. Andrews crosses and a saddle crossing the moat as an entrance to a fortified church. The inscription at the original bridge was repaired in 1708 and the timber bridge itself was imitated by the Hennebergian Museum in 1993.



49. Patches garden

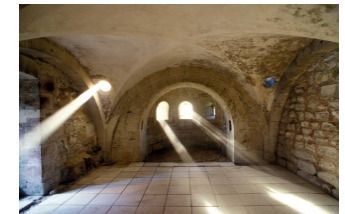
1. | 2. Monastery church St. Mary's and Westbuilding

The monastery church is a cross-shaped, three nave low-covered buttress basilica. In 1138 Bishop Otto I. of Bamberg consecrated the church and the western building was finished in 1300. After the Reformation the church was converted into a barn of state property. In 1704 a part of the choir was demolished and a fire severely damaged the nave in 1939.



3. Southern chapel

The southern chapel is a two-bay cross vault with a half-circular apse which was built at the beginning of the 13th century and might have been a place to worship the Virgin Mary. If you spend a closer look, you'll notice that there are two passages in the wall in the shape of a four leafed clover on the outside of the chapel. These allow the light to fall in from different directions throughout the year. The ideal days to experience this spectacle are the 25th of March (Annunciation Day) and 15th of August (Assumption).



4. Cloister

The cloister is one of the earliest parts of the monastery and it was built at the same time as the enclosure. At the beginning of the 16th century the eastern part was restored in late-gothic style and now includes eight arches. Although a barn was built in 1790, the rest of the cloister was demolished between 1704 and 1790. This former barn, which contains parts of the archway, now houses the exhibition of the monastery's history.



5. Southern enclosure

This building was erected as one of the first parts of the monastery and was used to house the refectory including the dining room and a room for meetings as well as the kitchen. The upper floor was used as living rooms of the monks from 1556. Inside, the refectory has a late-gothic ceiling with wooden beams and one can still make out the remains of mural paintings. After important archaeological findings it is planned to restore the whole building in the following years.



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6. Western enclosure

The building was erected in the founding time and it presumably contained the rooms for the servants of the convent and the cellar. The whole building was reshaped in the 16th and especially 18th century and the entrance to the cellar was added from the courtyard in 1576. In 1791 the building was clearly shortened. Later it was used as office space for the administration of the state property, for stock- and trade-rooms and as flats for day labourers, domestic servants as well as farm-hands.



7. Bakery

The bakery was built in the middle of the 19th century, as the so-called »Leutebackhaus«, in the ruins of the eastern cloister. Although the bakery was redecorated after 1945, the baking-oven and the baking-tools are still originals from the 19th century. The bakery is fully operative and used for projects with children and adults.



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The smithy was built at the end of the 19th century and was subdivided into a workshop, a hitching post to shoe horses as well as cows and a room to store coal. Before World War One there was a partitioning off a metalworking shop and a mechanical workshop. The exhibited original furniture is from the first half of the 20th century and shows a whole host of tools.



39. Barn from Belrieth near Meiningen

This former barn was built at the end of the 18th century. It is used as an exhibition hall and showroom for agricultural machines and tools and will be expanded in the near future. It may be of special interest for boys as well as boys at heart to see the old tractors and other huge vehicles.



40. | 48. Former Monastery mill and Turbine-house

Erected in the 12th century the monastery mill was a water mill with two undershot water wheels and a brewery. The building was converted into a mass mill of a porcelain-factory in 1879. After it went bankrupt in 1935 it was turned into a factory for machine guns and flats were integrated in the building after the Second World War.



In 1879 an extension to the former monastery mill was erected and water turbines were installed to power the mass mill of the porcelain-factory. In 1913 the weirs on the river Schleuse, the mill ditch and the turbine equipment underwent changes and electric energy was generated with two synchronous



room for dining and working, slept in the next tiny room and were only able to keep small farm animals like goats.

36. Halftimbered house from Eicha near Römhild

This impressive house was built, as the date above the front door shows, in 1716 as a residential building and a part of a »U«-shaped farm with stables. The owner's name, Ernst Rossteuscher, can also be found in colourful letters above the front door. He was a rich horse dealer and so the furniture and décor from the 20th century demonstrates the living conditions of rich farmers at that time. The arches were added in 1757 and at the end of the 1980's it was moved from Eicha to Kloster Vessra. Above all the rocking horse, sewing machines and the tiled stove in the inside as well as the woodcarvings in form of coat of arms on the window shutters and the angle on the half-timbering need to be seen.



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37. Water mill from Wohlmuthausen near Meiningen

The water mill was built around 1600 as part of an adjoining farm and has an over-shot water wheel with a diameter of about 3,50 metres and two grind walks. Parts of the building and the mechanical parts of the mill were renovated in 1847. In the '80s the water mill was moved from Wohlmuthausen to the museum. Here it represents the technical demonstration of a mill of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. The mill is still fully operative and every Whit Monday flour is grinded. Moreover, the exhibition in the inside provides the visitor with further information about the lifestyle of the mill owner.



38. Smithy from Leutersdorf near Meiningen

8. House of a New farmer

A family named Haack, who was resettled to this area, built the farmhouse between July and October 1948 as a part of a New-farmers-programme at the former estate at Kloster Vessra (agrarian reform). The farm was built as a so-called »stretch-farm« which means that a flat, a shed, a cowshed and a barn were built behind and attached to each other. The coach-house was added in 1952. The facade is still in its original condition, though the roof has been replaced. The furniture was taken over from the former occupants and demonstrates the work- and lifestyle of a new farmer in the 1950s.



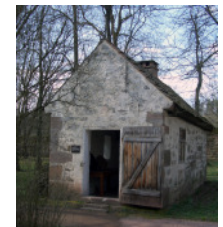
9. »Grain-house« (now the administration)

The former »Grain House« is a Romanesque building dating back to a time before 1200. It had been redecorated and restored between the 16th and the 19th century, to be used as a residential house for the leaseholder's family, and was extended to its current size in 1901. The so-called »granary« or old house was used to store and dry the grain. The »Coburger Stall«, the stable, was on the ground floor and Romanesque rest of it are still visible.



10. Bakery of the estate

The house was built approximately in the middle of the 19th century and was used by the tenant of the estate, who had lived in the nearby »granary«. In 1985 the bakery was restored. The baking oven was built as an even vault from bricks and the exhibits include tools and accessories for baking from the 19th and 20th century.



11. Stable (a stable for mares)

The stable was built as a massive stone building with two floors until 1790 when it was rebuilt into a so-called »farmer-smithy-house« in the lower floor and a »Little gallery« in the upper floor.



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12. Barn of state property

The former barn was built in the 16th century, as the so-called »straw barn«. Rebuilt around 1800 it was used as a stable for mares until 1842. In 1936 the barn was reconstructed and now divided into several rooms. Subsequently it was used as a stable and a barn of a new farmer in 1945. From 1986 until 1987 the outer walls were reconstructed and the building now houses an exhibition about the agricultural transport means in the 19th and early 20th century.



13. Gate church »St. Erhard«

The gate church is a low-roofed hall with cross rib vaults at the choir. When it was built in the middle of the 13th century and rebuilt in the 15th century even a part of the former monastery wall was included into the building. After the church was rebuilt again after the Reformation it contained in the course of the time a flat, the so-called room for servants, a pub as well as a school. The building was reconstructed between 1981 and 1983 and now houses a hall for concerts, talks and performances. Today this church is also used for marriage ceremonies.



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33. Halftimbered house from Witzelroda near Bad Salzungen (I)

This lovely house was built in the first half of the 17th century, during the Thirty Years' War, as a residential building and a part of an L-shaped farm. In 1979/1980 it was moved to Kloster Vessra to its present place. Inside you can find show rooms and also an exhibition about flax and linen production. The furnishing of the house is from 1800 and demonstrates the living condition of a rich farming family. Particularly the »black kitchen«, the two hidden chambers, the tiled stoves, the four-poster bed, the cradle and the lavishly painted cupboards need to be seen.



34. Bee-house from Siegritz near Hildburghausen

This little house was built around 1900 at its original location in Siegritz, in an orchard and meadow of a farm. It might have been originally furnished with high beehives made from straw and later with coloured wood boxes. In 1987 it was rebuilt at Kloster Vessra and the furniture now presents an overview of working tools for bee-keeping.



35. Halftimbered House from Witzelroda near Bad Salzungen (II)

This house was originally a residential building of a small farm, which was built in the form of an angle around 1700. In the eighties of the 20th century it was dismantled in Witzelroda and rebuilt at Kloster Vessra as close as possible to its original form. The furniture demonstrates the life-style of a farmer at the beginning of the 20th century who worked as a basket maker as a sideline. As in this small house there was only little space the people used the living



28. Community house from Heckengereuth near Schleusingen

Erected around 1880 the house is a small, simple flat with a shed. The house has a hexagonal, slate ridge roof and a bell tower with a clock and was moved to Kloster Vessra in 2001. The bells were ringing to give the time and to show that somebody died.



Originally the building was used as a community house as well as a poorhouse and was located at the village centre near the village fountain. Until 1910 the shed was used as a place for the fire engine. After World War Two a resettled family, consisting of eight family members, moved in and shared two bedrooms, one kitchen-cum-living room, one larder (the former kitchen) and the barn. At the moment the building houses an exhibition of the history of resettled people.

29. Village brewery from Wolfmannshausen near Römhild

Since the 18th century this building, which has just one floor, has been used as a brewery. The inside contains a brew oven, a copper-boiler, a mash tub, a freezer, a hop colander, fermenting tubs, a pump as well as pipes. During the 1990s the building was rebuilt and since 2000 the museum brews its own beer, which is served at festivities. Information about the museum's home-made beer and the brewing processes can be found inside the building.



31. Cloister ponds

These ponds were used to supply the monks with fresh fish and there might have been further ponds in the Schleuse valley.

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14. | 44. Gate tower and gate house

The gate tower has been the entrance to the monastery and was built just before 1200 with a Romanesque facade, a vaulted gate and upper floors. The flat of the shepherd could be found on the upper floors. After 1800 the upper floors were dismantled and in the 19th century, the tower underwent many changes. Finally, the tower was reconstructed between 1979 and 1981 in simple shapes.



The gatehouse already existed in the earliest times of the monastery and was located near the gate. Later it was the heated accommodation of the gatekeeper who lived on the top floor. In 1594 the building was reinforced in its structure, although a smithy was established in the gatehouse after the Thirty Years' War. In 1980 the monastery gate was reconstructed and today the gatehouse is the entrance for the visitors and houses the cashier's office of the museum as well as the little museum shop.

16. Historical residential building

Although part of the former monastery this building is still let to some village inhabitants.



17. Sheep pen (old stable)

Since 1677 used by the stud farm of the estate as a stable, a house of 75 meters length was built step-by-step from older parts of other buildings. From the 19th century onwards, it was used as the sheep pen of the state property. However after a fire in 1937 it was only partly rebuilt. Between 1994 and 1995 it was reconstructed and now houses the agricultural exhibition »Wie die Saat, so die Ernte« (>to reap what you sow«).



18. Little Tower

This little tower houses an exhibition of the construction and the most important plants of the garden. (see figure No. 20. Monastery garden)

19. New stable

The new stable was built in 1843 as a stable for the fillies of the estate. The western facade has a sumptuous structure and with that is a rare example of the New Moorish forms in the Ecclesiastical architecture and the period of historicism. In 1842 the horse farm was dissolved and the building was then used for various functions including a stable for sheep. After 1945 the building was used by new farmers and later by an agricultural production co-operative. In the late 1970s the stable was redecorated and now houses the exhibition »Henneberg durch Land und Zeit« (»The history of the Hennebergian country«).



20. Monastery garden

This garden was reconstructed following various medieval sources, like Hildegard von Bingen's book about plants, the »ideal plan« of Saint Gallen, Albetus Mangnus' notes and late-medieval paintings and didactic poems by Walahfried von Strabo. According to this the garden contains medicinal- and spice plants, cultural plants as well as ornamental plants. A short history of the monastery garden is located in the turret at the monastery-wall (No. 18. Little Tower).



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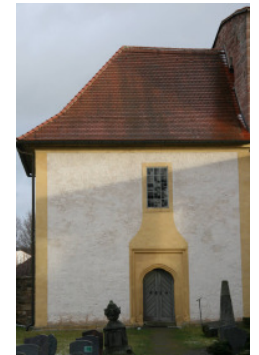
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22. The grain fields and the principle of the three fields cultivation

On small patches, crop rotation - the alternative between fallow-land, summer- and winter grain is demonstrated. On the fallow land are wild growing plants like cornflowers, common field poppies, wild camomile, bindweed as well as wild larkspurs. On the other small patches, historical cereal cultures like spelt, millet, wild oats can be seen as well as cultures, which are planted until now, such as oats, barley, rye, wheat and clover.

23. Burial chapel of the earls of henneberg

The chapel was consecrated in 1182 and was used as the burial chapel of the Earls of Henneberg until 1566. After the beginning of the 17th century the chapel has been used as the »little church« of the estate. The beautiful paintings in the choir and the apse were created in 1485 and depict the »Last Judgement«. The interior decoration and furnishing is from 1843 and especially the wooden crucifix, dating back to the founding time of the monastery, is worth seeing.



26. Harvester-house

This building, the so-called »Polenhäusle«, was built for the state property administration in 1913 as a half-timbered house and was used as accommodation for the harvesters who had worked in the season on the fields of the estate. The building was reconstructed in the 1920s and in 1945 it was enlarged by extensions and became the house of a new farmer.

