



## PRAETORIUM – THE COMMANDER’S RESIDENCE

The commanding officer, the *praefectus*, lived in a private residence, the *praetorium*. At the Saalburg, the foundations of the *praetorium* were discovered in the front part of the fort. The stone walled section of the house contained eight rooms, two of which were provided with a hypocaust, the underfloor heating system of antiquity. The rest of the house, a half-timbered construction, was arranged around an open courtyard.

**In the Wilhelmine era**, only the residence’s central, stone-built section was reconstructed; the extension with a courtyard, three-sided colonnade and adjacent rooms followed in 2004. The facade of the new wing reflects the newest research into Roman architecture. The outer walls have been given a coat of white plaster with painted masonry seams and the suggestion of semi-circular lintels. The wall’s plastered base is highlighted in Pompeian red.

**On entering the house**, one first arrived in an entrance hall; this led to the courtyard, which was surrounded on three sides by a covered walkway, a *porticus*. In many such houses a large dining room, the *triclinium*, was located directly across from the

main entrance. In addition to the private rooms of the commander, the home included a service wing with a kitchen and latrine.

**The architecture of the new building**, with its representative character, illustrates the privileged standard of living enjoyed by members of the social class to which the commander will have belonged. The residence was large enough for the *praefectus cohortis*, his family members, friends, guests, servants and slaves. The difference in social standing between the commander, his officers and troops is shown very clearly in their different living conditions: while a simple soldier had about 3 square m of personal space in the barracks, the *praefectus* enjoyed a palatial dwelling. \*

*Today, the administrative offices of the Saalburg Roman Fort and the Research Institute are housed in the praetorium. It can be visited on weekends, during the public tours offered by the museum.*



## MOSAIC AND ROMAN GARDEN

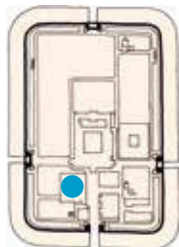
As was typical of Roman dwellings of this type, the residence of the Saalburg's *praefectus* had a small garden in its courtyard. It was natural, therefore, to complete the reconstruction of the courtyard with ornamental plantings and a pool based on prototypes from Pompeii.

**The plants in the ornamental garden** are those documented from Roman times. Boxwood, snowball and cherry trees provide the basic green in many shades. The ground cover of perennial, yellow-flowered lady's mantle and densely planted lavender add colourful accents.

**Low boxwood hedges** decoratively divide the beds. Shrubs and boxwood trimmed to form geometric shapes call to mind the formal gardens of the baroque period. The characteristic elements of a Roman ornamental garden as *locus amoenus* are realised in exemplary fashion here, creating a civilised, Mediterranean atmosphere.

**In Roman times**, a simple basin made from wooden planks collected the rainwater that ran off the roofs

of the covered walkway. Therefore, a pool was reconstructed in the courtyard of the new building. It, however, is embellished by an intricate mosaic modelled on a Roman original that depicts the sea god Oceanus surrounded by a parade of mythical ocean dwellers. The original mosaic was discovered in nearby Bad Vilbel and can now be seen in the 'Hessisches Landesmuseum' in Darmstadt. In the commander's garden at the Saalburg, four sea centaurs with characteristic seashell trumpet, shield and ship's wheel decorate the pool. Oceanus is present in the form of a bronze mask; water flows into the basin from his mouth. This mask is a copy of a waterspout from the Roman villa of Treuchtlingen-Schambach in Bavaria. \*



## WATER SUPPLY AND WELLS

**D**uring excavations in and around the Saalburg, close to 100 wells were discovered. A slate, labelled with Roman numerals, identifies each one. These wells were not all in operation at the same time: during the 170 years of the Roman presence, old wells were abandoned and new ones dug. The large number of wells can be explained by the fact that no source of flowing water exists on the Saalburg Pass, so all the water for the garrison of the fort and the population of the *vicus* had to be supplied by wells. Although the spring of the Kirdorf Brook emerges a few hundred metres west of the fort and still flows today, no evidence of a water pipe leading from it to the Saalburg has ever been found.



**Well shafts were sunk into the ground** at depths of up to twenty-five metres. The lower part of the shaft was lined with timber planks while the upper part was usually masonry. Wooden roofs, like the one covering the well in front of the *praetorium*, prevented contamination. Water was drawn with buckets suspended on ropes that ran over a wooden drum. Water pipes made of wood, ceramic or lead distributed fresh water within the fort. Pails, drums, timber linings and water pipes from the Saalburg's wells are displayed in the museum.

**Wastewater** was discharged into open gutters or covered brick sewers. The fort's main sewage canal flows under the wall in the northeast corner of the fort, passing through the ditches into the open. Once a well was abandoned, its shaft was filled with trash; in the moist earth at the bottom, under anaerobic conditions, organic materials such as leather and timber were well preserved. Items that were in daily use two thousand years ago, such as wooden tools or leather shoes, are some of the most moving and remarkable finds exhibited in the museum. ✨



## BASILICA – THE GREAT HALL

The visitor enters the *principia* through a great hall, the *basilica*. This hall straddles the central part of the *via principalis*, the street that links the fort's two side gates. The *basilica's* front entrance is aligned precisely with the fort's main street and main gateway. Massive foundations and buttresses, for which evidence was found on the east side of the building, support the lofty hall. Open trusses made of massive oaken beams bear the slate-covered roof.

**The extended rectangular plan of the hall**, the roof construction and the arrangement of the large windows are characteristics of the typical *basilica*, a kind of building that served primarily as a public market hall or place of assembly during the Roman era. In late antiquity, the Christians adopted this structural form for their first representative churches. Since then, the *basilica* has been the foremost type of Christian sacred architecture.

**The architect who reconstructed the Saalburg**, Louis Jacobi, sought not only to recreate the external appearance of the Roman buildings but also to replicate construction details, such as the original

composition of the interior walls. An example of this can be seen in the northwest corner of the *basilica*, where the wall's structure is revealed: as in the ancient Roman prototype, flat tiles are mounted with T-shaped nails on the rough fieldstone wall to create a level surface for plaster. The tiles had small spacers on the back that ensured air circulation between the body of the wall and its surface.

**The basilica** served as a symbolic place of assembly for the entire garrison on special occasions, such as the annual renewal of the oath of allegiance to the emperor on 3 January. Flanking the entrance to the courtyard are bronze statues of the emperors Hadrian (AD 117–138) and Severus Alexander (AD 222–235); both are replicas, dating to 1904. On the opposite wall, a sequence of images from the 1950s explains the Roman conquest of Germania and the development of the *limes* and Saalburg according to the state of knowledge at that time. ★



## MEDICIN AND HYGIENE

**D**uring excavations at the Saalburg many objects were discovered that shed light upon personal hygiene practices and the possibilities for medical treatment. In Roman bath-houses there were, besides the actual bathing facilities, additional rooms for massage, cosmetic procedures or medical treatment, as well as stalls selling products of all sorts. In a modest way, this was also true of the baths in front of the Saalburg's gates. The Romans



Scraper for removing oil and coarse dirt from the skin.

were well aware of the healing effects of bathing, particularly in hot springs. Doctors prescribed a very specific bathing sequence the patient should follow, emphasizing gradual changes in temperature.

**Equipped with his personal toiletries**, the bather enjoyed this refreshing setting, in which he could also receive medical care. \*



Small flasks for scented oil, known as *aryballoi*.

This stamp for labelling eye ointment bears – in mirror writing – what is probably the name of the eye doctor, L. Epi(i). Medications used to treat eye diseases were pressed into stick-form, dried and stamped. For use, the needed amount was made into a paste.



Dental forceps for extracting teeth.