# mersch
## Castle

*Market day in Mersch around 1910*

## + Noble castle owners

Theodoric I is regarded as the founder of Mersch rule in the Middle Ages, and was also known as Lord of Mersch. He was the "steward" in the entourage of Countess Ermesinde. His son Theodoric was awarded the titled of knight. In 1304, the male branch of the original noble Mersch family died out. Through marriage, Mersch rule then transferred, inter alia, into the Milberg, Kerpen-Manderscheid, Brandenburg, Feltz, Elter, Mohr von Waldt, Reinach and Sonnenberg families. The last noble owners of the Sonnenberg-Reinach family sold the castle site to wholesale trader Ch. Schwartz-Hallinger in 1898, and in 1927 this was taken over by the bailiff P. Uhres-Fabritius. In 1957, the local authority acquired the castle, but sold it just three years later to the state. Finally, through an exchange contract in 1988, the local government again took over ownership of the castle. In 1993, after large-scale renovation work, it was used as the seat for local government administration.

## Medieval castle site

When Theodoric I was buying into Mersch in 1232, and establishing his rule here, mention was made of a "turris" in relation to the purchase, which was probably the ruins of a well-fortified building of the Court of Nithardus. He was the first Lord of Mersch from the Carolingian period, who we know about from the will (1 April 853) of his wife Erkanfrida. The military site of Theodoric I comprises only circular walls and a covered archway with the keep in the middle. This tower has a square ground plan with 12-metre-long sides; the height is indicated as 17 metres. Due to extensive conversion work on the tower in later centuries, we are unable to provide concrete details of the floor plan.

This medieval castle with its four circular towers, each six metres in diameter, covers an area of 34x30 metres. The keep was built to the North West in a later construction phase, as can be proven by another formation of stones. The two entrances into the keep are now located in this additional building section, to which a spiral staircase was added.

*View 1920*
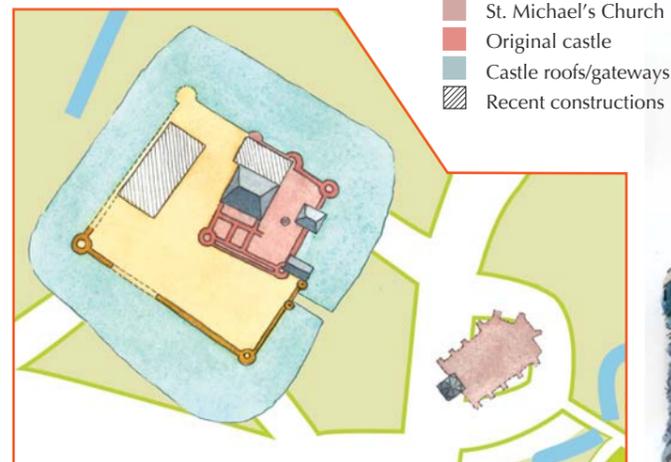
Our castle was extended to the South West, and reminds us of the various periods of destruction, e.g. during the Burgundy Wars in 1453.

In 1574, Paul von der Feltz and Apollonia von Kerpen were the sole proprietors of the castle site. They reconstructed it as a castle, with a Renaissance-style external appearance.

The interior décor has been preserved in late Gothic style, as shown in particular by the fine, ornate fan vaults in the present conference room. Numerous coats of arms of former ruling families were uncovered in the castle during restoration works, e.g. Milberg, Kerpen-Manderscheid, Brandenburg, Boland, etc. The date 1585 on one of the imposing fireplaces, which guaranteed cosy warmth in the castle, indicates the date of the restoration work.
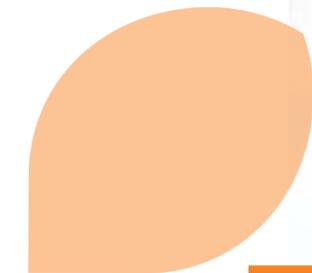

*Panorama of Mersch (1900)*


*Alms board (1500)*

## Layout plan

- Moat
- Castle extention
- St. Michael's Church
- Original castle
- Castle roofs/gateways
- Recent constructions





## Knights' hall

The knights' hall on the second floor was decorated with the 16 coats of arms of the forefathers, and was designed to illustrate the aristocratic background of the new lords of the castle.

### 1600-1700

Having been newly reconstructed, the castle was destroyed again just a few years later in 1603 by the Dutch lansquenets. In 1635, the Thirty Years War spread to Mersch.

The castle and village were ravaged. When the war finally ended in the region, Mersch had lost one-third of its houses and inhabitants. The castle site was in a sorry state, and the castle itself was temporarily covered with thatch. In around 1700, the von Elter family arranged for the castle to be refurbished. The castle gate was placed in its current position and Artillery General Johann-Friedrich von Elter, knight of the Golden Fleece and governor of the town and country of Luxembourg, had his coat of arms mounted on the reconstructed gate entrance.

## Castle chapel

In 1717, the castle chapel was re-consecrated by the Archbishop of Trier. The chapel was either rebuilt or at least restored under Count von Elter. In the same year, the then heiress of Mersch Castle, Charlotte von Elter, had her Elter coat of arms mounted on the chapel altar. The "media centre" is now housed in the newly restored chapel.




*Coat of arms of the Count of Elter*