

Patrimoine

NEUFCHÂTEAU AND ITS REDISCOVERED CASTLE

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A Walk Through Our Memory

(Translation done by AI)

VILLE DE NEUFCHÂTEAU

FR EN DE NL

This visit is unique.

It invites you on a walk to discover the Château de Neufchâteau.

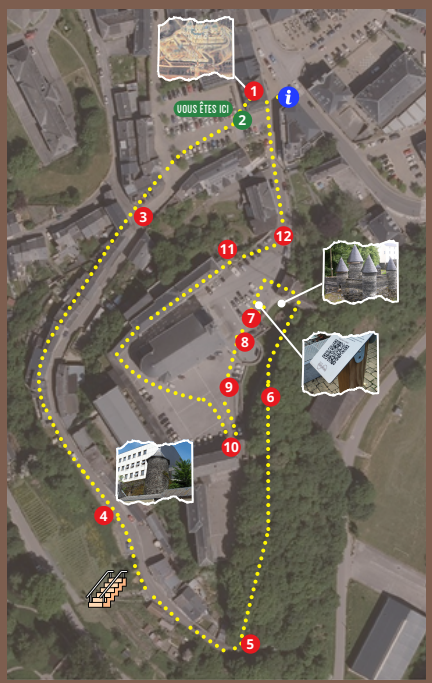
For one hour, walk counterclockwise to travel back in time and relive the medieval era.

The castle disappeared in the 17th century, like many others, as it was considered a threat to the Kingdom of France.

However, in 1956, Arsène Geubel and Louis Gourdet studied and brought this forgotten castle back to life.
In 1996, Pierre Hannick and Jean-Marie Duvosquel published the Arenberg map, revealing this treasure to the general public.

In 1999/2000, Christian Kellen built a 1:20 scale model of the castle on the buried remains of the old structure. Alerted, the Walloon Heritage Agency carried out archaeological excavations until 2007.

Volunteers and the municipality rebuilt sections of the walls and the base of two towers until 2018.



The route is not accessible to people with reduced mobility.

OFFICE DU TOURISME NEUFCHÂTEAU

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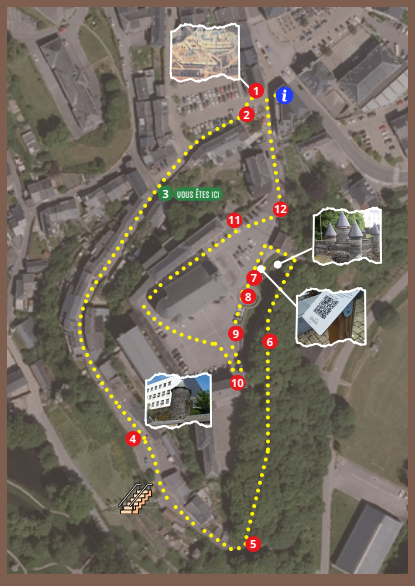
The Company of Crossbowmen



Crossbow Bolt Tips Discovered in the Château des Moudreux in Gouvy



On April 24, 1369, Everard de la Marck established "in his town and castle of Neufchastel a company of 18 crossbowmen"—in perpetuity.



(Translation done by AI)

In the 15th century, the counties of Luxembourg and Chiny had around 210 towns.

These small rural settlements were formed by grouping populations together, a decision made by local lords to strengthen their power against the Church.

Towns were granted charters that provided financial, judicial, and administrative advantages.

For example, the Beaumont law in Argonne, widely used, dates back to 1182.

Being a "bourgeois" at that time came with benefits, such as reduced taxes for landowners who owned horses and plows. This encouraged the growth of large-scale farming and new markets, benefiting the lords.

To protect their accumulated wealth, the counts required towns to finance and build their own fortifications. The inhabitants also had to provide crossbowmen to defend the town.

In Neufchâteau, 18 crossbowmen helped guard prisoners, secure the castle, and maintain order.

In return, they were exempt from certain taxes and had judicial privileges—except in serious crimes such as murder or rape.
This type of militia existed until the mid-18th century.

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Griffon Tower



The castle curtain wall was much higher than it is today, as shown by the tear marks visible on the tower's outer facing.

(Translation done by AI)

Medieval heritage was rediscovered in the early 19th century thanks to the Romantic movement and the development of tourism in the region.

Among the preserved monuments, the Grifon Tower is the last visible remnant of the castle's fortified walls. It was named to recall its prestigious medieval past.

In 742, Grifon (Griffon), son of Charles Martel, was excluded from the inheritance by his half-brothers Carloman and Pepin the Short. Following the advice of his mother, Swanahilde, Grifon took refuge in the town of Laon and declared war on his brothers.

Defeated, he was imprisoned in Novum Castellum, which most likely corresponds to Chèvremont near Liège rather than Neufchâteau.

The Grifon Tower is not as old as this episode—it dates back to the 13th century.

In 1966, Canon Martin, director of the Saint-Michel Institute, discovered Mosan ceramics from Andenne inside the tower. The white-colored ceramics date from the 13th century.

At the bottom of the tower, fragments of cooking pots were mixed with fireplace ashes, suggesting its use as a watchtower or a cell.

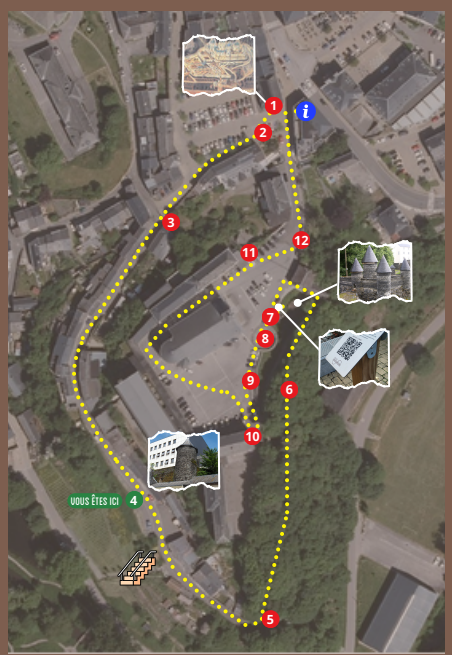
The lower level was filled in at the end of the 13th century.



Andenne Ceramic Jugs



Reconstruction of the Cooking Pot Discovered in the Fireplace



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Medieval Society

(Translation done by AI)





The feudal system emerged in the 9th century after the weakening of the Carolingian Empire due to Viking invasions.

This system was based on a direct relationship between people:

The knight protected the peasant, and in return, the peasant provided him with food and equipment.

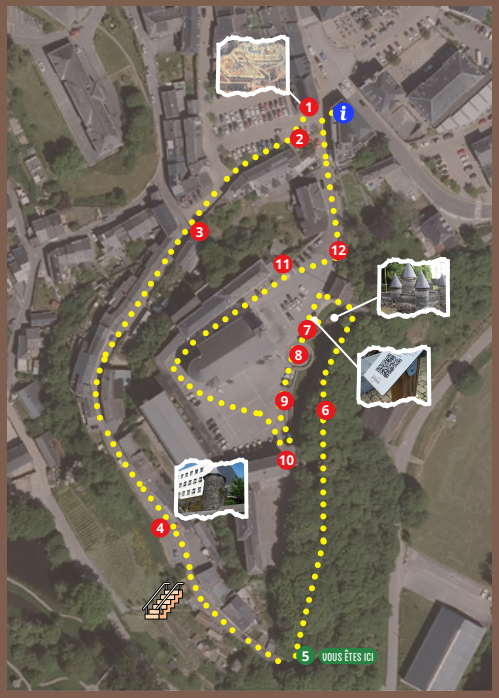
The Church held knowledge and imposed the rules of daily life.

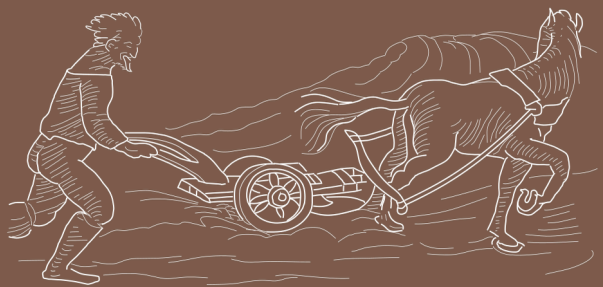
By the late 12th century, feudalism had lost its original meaning and had become a seigneurial system.

Peasants had to pay numerous taxes and dues to the nobility without real compensation.

A new social class emerged in the rapidly growing towns: the bourgeoisie.

The inhabitants of these towns benefited from advantageous conditions defined by charters granted by the lords.





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The Evolution of the Castle

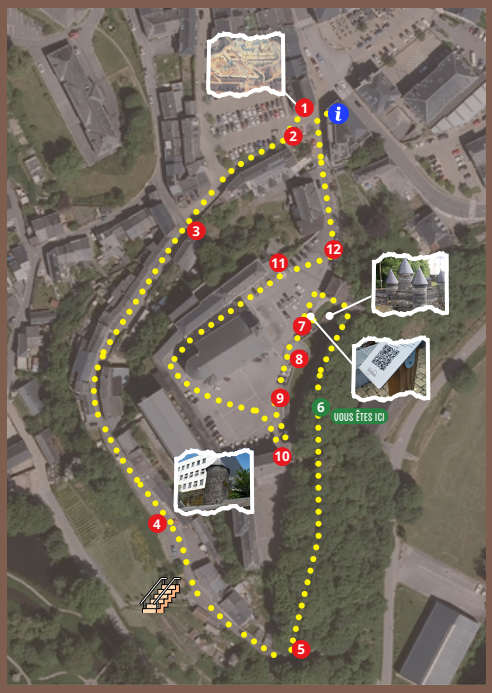
(Translation done by AI)



Recent archaeological research in Europe has revealed the phases of emergence and evolution of medieval castles.

Originally, early aristocratic residences were not fortified.

With the feudal system, large wooden towers appeared, symbolizing the military power of their owners.
In the 9th century, these towers were built on earthen mounds called "mottes."



These early phases have not yet been identified in Neufchâteau. The only remaining structure is a large square tower within the walls of the Saint-Michel Institute, probably a keep used by the local lord.

Small circular towers, such as the Grifon Tower, were part of an initial fortification.

Later, in the 15th century, some of these were replaced by larger towers, such as the Orchimont Tower.

The Arenberg map shows platforms in front of the walls, used for the castle's defensive artillery.

The châtelet (Le Lombard) was a large courtyard protected by a wall.

This space prevented frontal assaults by enemy troops and urban uprisings.



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A Long-Term Endeavor

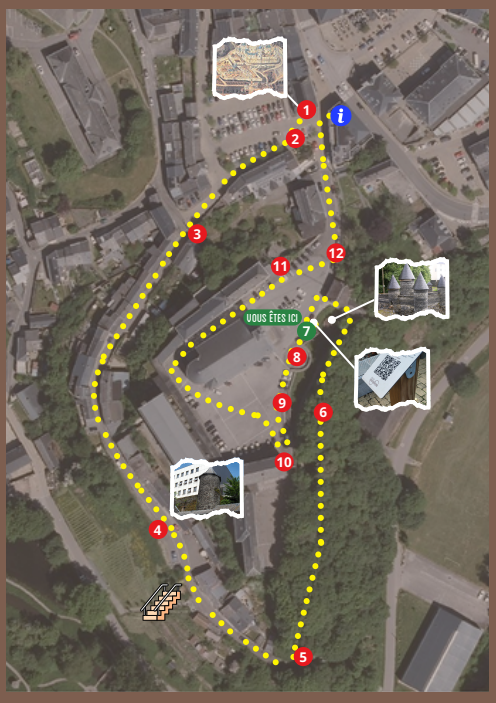
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Detailed stone-by-stone survey of the remains discovered in 2011



Schematic plan of the castle and town overlaid on the original 1842 cadastral map



Neufchâteau takes its name from Novum Castellum, which originally referred to the castle and later to the town that developed around it.

The castle was mentioned as early as 1199, but its first detailed description dates back to 1541, when it was divided into two lordships.

In 1609, Charles d'Arenberg commissioned a map of Neufchâteau, providing valuable information about the castle, which was still intact at the time.

From left to right: Le Lombard (châtelet) was the first advanced fortification. Then, an entrance tower led to an area called the keep (donjon).

A third section, including the square tower and the Grifon Tower, formed the bailey, which had belonged to a separate lordship since the 16th century.

In 1657, Louis XIV's artillery destroyed the fortifications, along with those of Herbeumont.





Clearing work on the bailey walls in 2002

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Discovery of a Minting Workshop



(Translation done by AI)

In 2006, during the restoration of part of the fortification, excavations led to a fascinating discovery inside the castle :

A thick layer of charcoal contained fragments of Andenne ceramics.

This type of ceramic is well known to archaeologists and dates back to the 13th and 14th centuries.
The charcoal layer also contained residues typical of a minting workshop.

These included fragments of ceramic crucibles, cast copper strips, and unstruck copper blanks.

These remains highlight the financial activity of the castle in the medieval period, with the presence of bankers (Lombards).

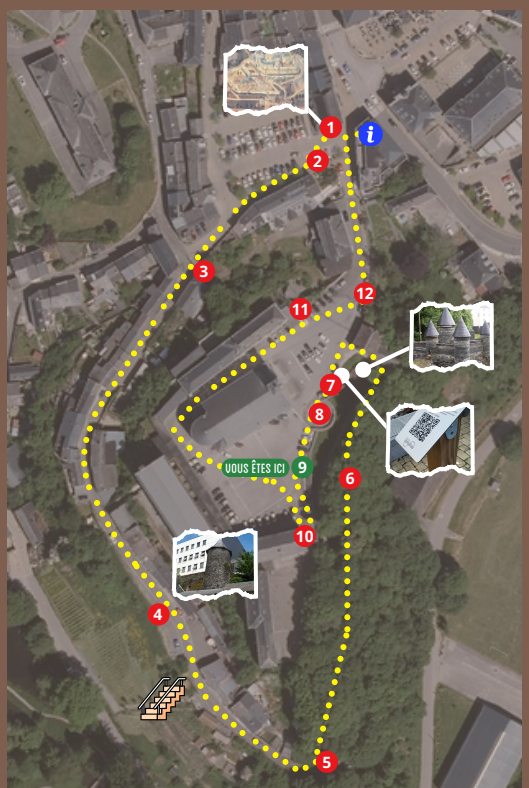
Commercial transactions took place in a fortified area between the town and the castle.

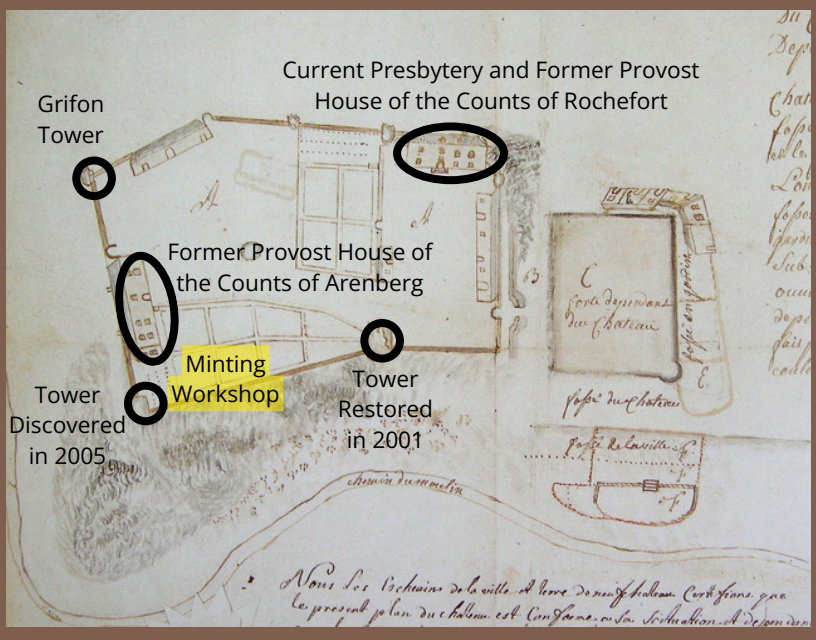


Cast copper strips molded in a grooved form



Coin blanks





1742 castle map showing the location of the workshop residues, preserved in the State Archives of Arlon

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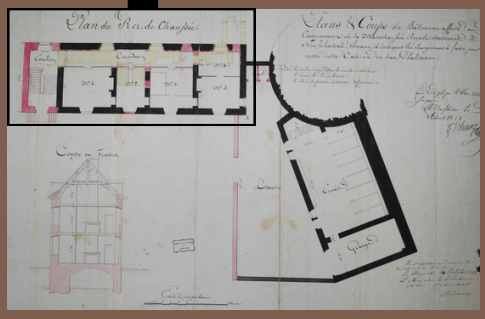
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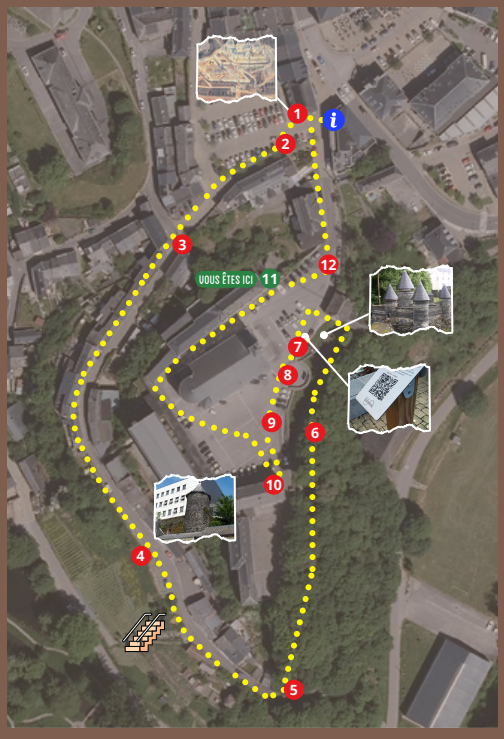
The Orchimont Tower



Provost's house, later a gendarmerie and then a presbytery



Plan showing the transformation of the provost's house into a gendarmerie, preserved in the State Archives of Arlon



(Translation done by AI)

In 2007, archaeologists rediscovered the foundations of Orchimont Tower.

This tower is located near the former provost's house, which belonged to the Loewenstein and Stolberg families, descendants of the Counts of Rochefort.

A provost's house was the residence of the provost, a local administrator.

Built in 1714, the house was converted into a gendarmerie barracks in 1814 and modified again in 1823.
Period plans show the interior layout and the ruins of the adjacent tower.

Since 1894, this house has served as a presbytery.
The Orchimont Tower, destroyed by the troops of Louis XIV, had a diameter of 16.92 meters. It replaced an older tower with an internal diameter of 3.60 meters.

Remains of the original tower are still visible, including the trace of a central pillar.

To the east, the 14th-century curtain wall was covered by the new tower. To the west, the rampart runs beneath the provost's house.

The excavations highlight the significant works carried out in the 16th century to strengthen and modernize the castle.

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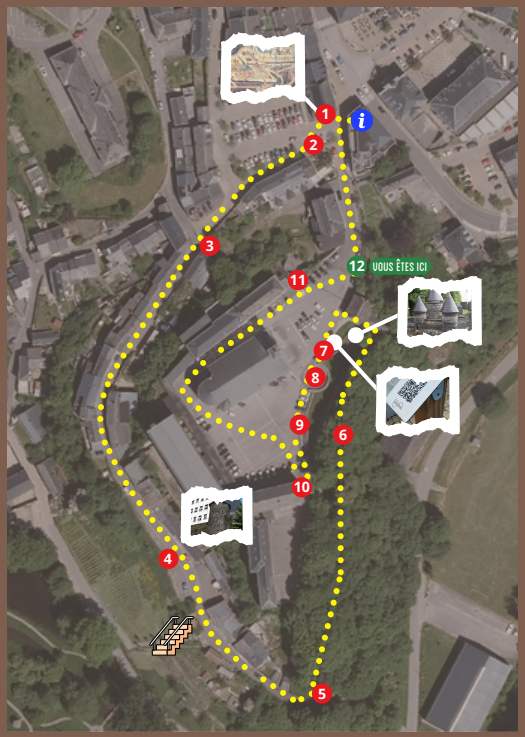
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The Lombard



Rubbing of the funerary slab of Albert Barbian, a Lombard from Neufchâteau. The artifact is preserved at the County Museum of Art in Los Angeles.



(Translation done by AI)

From 1375 until the late 15th century, Lombard bankers were present in Neufchâteau.

They were based in an exchange house, known as a "hôtel," located in the gatehouse at the entrance of the castle.

This fortified place became known as "The Lombard."

An exchange house or "hôtel" was a site where financial transactions and currency exchanges took place.

The Arenberg map precisely marks this key location for the economy of the La Marck and Arenberg families.

Near the castle, the church of Hamipré housed the tombs of the counts, as well as an exceptional burial site.

The funerary slab measures 2.60 m x 1.30 m x 0.10 m.

The effigy represents a Lombard dressed in 14th-century armor, wearing a helmet known as a "bassinet."

He is surrounded by an imaginary Gothic architectural design.

Albert Barbian, originally from Chieri, Italy, is buried there. He passed away in July 1442 and lies near Count Evrard II de la Marck, who had died two years earlier.

This proximity highlights the close relationship between the count and the Lombard banker.

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