



SCHADAU – ORIGINS AND FIRST BUILDINGS

Once upon a time ...

... there was a delightful spot on Lake Thun. Precisely at the point where the Aare flows out of the lake towards the city. In this very place where, even now, you are able to sense the vibrant energy of this location as you listen to the lapping of the waves and take in the spectacular views of the lake and mountains.

It is easy to see why, for centuries, people have been drawn to this magical place. Schadau is first mentioned in a written document in 1348 as *'das hus genemt Schadowe'*. It was the year Johann von Strättligen gave the property to his son-in-law Ulrich von Bubenber as a feudal tenure. During the first half of the 15th century, the von Erlach family took over the *'hus und hof zu Schadow'*, and Schadau remained in their possession until the 18th century.

1638: The first Schadau Castle – a castlet

It was probably around 1638 that the von Erlach family built a small rural castle surrounded by walls. All that remains today is the small octagonal tower close to the bank of the Aare. In 1714, the castle suffered extensive damage. What happened exactly? Well, the culprit was the cut-through to the Kander river, the first major river-regulating works in Switzerland. As a result of the cut-through, the Kander now flowed into Lake Thun instead of flowing into the Aare river below the town. The level of the lake rose sharply, and the water began to assail the Schadau buildings. The castlet was demolished around 1852 once the new castle had been completed.

Illustration: © Watercolour, copy E. v. Rodt (1849–1926), Burgerbibliothek Bern



A SUMMER RESIDENCE OF A SPECIAL KIND

1837: The bankers open their account

After several changes of ownership in the 18th and early 19th centuries, Abraham Denis Alfred de Rougemont-de Pourtalès acquired the estate, complete with castlet, for the sum of 110,000 francs. The new owner was from a Neuchâtel family whose members had achieved considerable wealth in Paris as bankers to the King of Prussia.

1846 – 1852: A new castle emerges

Monsieur de Rougemont immediately set about implementing his plans. The 'half-swamp of a garden' was to be transformed into a spacious park laid out in the English style. All that was missing now was the crowning glory for these grounds. The Swiss architect James Victor Collin and his French colleague Pierre-Charles Dusillon submitted the plans for the new Schadau Castle. After a construction period of six years, the little gem was ready to be occupied – albeit as a summer residence; after all, the de Rougemonts had their principal residence in Neuchâtel. At least, on Sundays, the people of Thun were permitted to use the castle grounds for their leisure.

'Anglo-Gallic style' on the shores of Lake Thun

Schadau Castle blends French and English Gothic styles, combined with Renaissance elements and original architectural forms. Both inside and out, the building is characterised by playful opulence and lavish furnishings, firing the imagination and evoking fairy-tale settings. The overall impression conjured up by the castle is reminiscent of Tudor Gothic and Loire valley castles.

Illustration: © Wolff, Rosenberg, Descouris, Janneret, 18th century aquatint (reproduction: Fotoatelier Gerhard Howald)



At the time of its construction, the castle was also regarded as something of a high-tech building. The floors and internal walls for instance comprise ducts that feed combustion air directly to the fireplaces and tiled stoves, thereby eliminating annoying draughts.

FROM EARMARKED FOR DEMOLITION TO AWARD-WINNING HOTEL-RESTAURANT

1925: The people of Thun take ownership

But once the castle had been built, its heyday did not last forever. Henri Alexander von Swaine inherited the estate in 1908; he was only four years old at the time. For years thereafter, the castle's sole residents were ghosts and spiders – until 1917, when it was bought up by a building consortium keen to develop the entire grounds. Demolition seemed imminent. So the City of Thun stepped in and, after a referendum, it acquired the Schadau estate 'for a song', specifically 380,000 Swiss francs. The grounds and castle have remained in the ownership of the city to this day.

1925 – 2017: No guest more loyal than change

Over the summers between 1928 and 1983, non-profit women's associations based in Thun ran an alcohol-free restaurant at the castle. In 1934, the premises were leased by the War Museum, and during the Second World War the park grounds were used to grow vegetables. In the 1950s, advocates of the Swiss Heritage Society called for the castle to be demolished. Keen to pre-

Photography: © Verlag Christian Krüsi, Basel



serve the countryside and its rural heritage, they objected to Schadau's romantic historicism as 'an abhorrent amalgam of styles'. Fortunately, Professor Birchler of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) intervened with an expertise calling for the preservation of 'this splendidly situated castle, a key exponent of the neo-Gothic style in Switzerland'. After extensive renovation work, the restaurant re-opened all year round from 1987, and the Swiss Gastronomy Museum moved into the premises. Restoration work on the exterior was completed in 1997.

2018 – 2019: Reconstruction and mindful restoration of the interior

The City of Thun was keen to inject new life into this historical monument, now underused for some time, so Schadau Castle was carefully restored and renovated. New hotel and seminar rooms were incorporated on the upper floors, and the restaurant remodelled in line with a new culinary concept. The extensive revamp was a success, with the historical treasures newly resplendent. Key to the success of this complex project was the tremendous commitment of all those involved: the City of Thun as principal, the Cantonal Department of Monument Preservation, the architects, the host, and the contractors and restorers, all of whom worked hand in hand.

2021: 'Historical Hotel of the Year'

In November 2020, ICOMOS Suisse awarded Schadau Castle the coveted title of 'Historical Hotel of the Year 2021'. ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites. In co-operation with heritage departments and tourism organisations, ICOMOS Suisse commends historical hotels and restaurants that are preserved and operated according to heritage principles.

Photography: © Christian Helmle



WELCOME TO SCHADAU CASTLE

Dear visitors,

The City of Thun would like to welcome you to Schadau Castle. We trust you will enjoy your stay with us as you discover a unique listed building. Did you know that, in the 1920s, this architectural gem faced the threat of demolition? Fortunately, the electorate of the City of Thun spared it from that fate by voting in favour of its acquisition. Since then, Schadau Castle has belonged to the people of Thun.

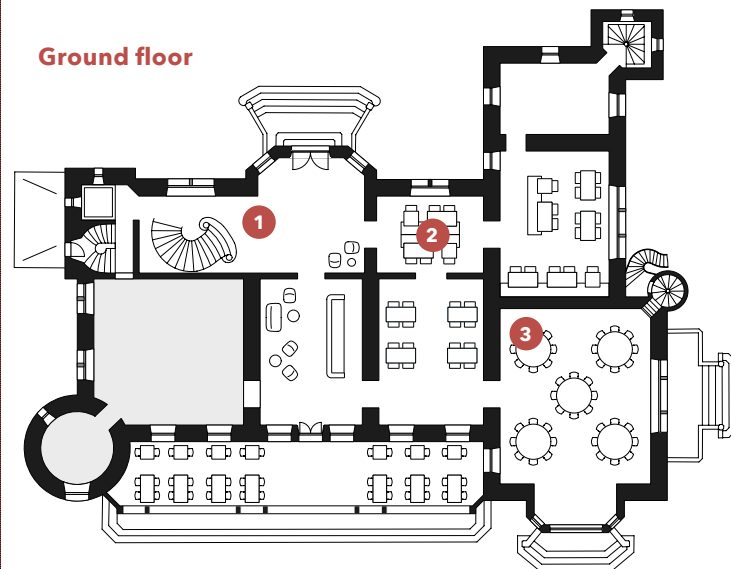
Following meticulous interior restoration work and extensive reconstruction, Schadau Castle re-emerged resplendent in 2019. Its restaurant and the new guest rooms are open to anyone keen to immerse themselves in a bygone age, without dispensing with modern comforts and culinary highlights.

So let yourself be inspired by this enchanting place. Discover the cultural treasures and rich history of this 'fairy-tale castle' – we wish you a wonderful time!



ICOMOS suisse

Historical Hotel of the Year 2021



Ground floor



1
Entrance hall spiral staircase

The sandstone spiral staircase is widely acknowledged as one of the most beautiful of its kind in Europe. It was designed by Dutch sculptor Joseph Hubert Verbunt (1809–1870). Lavishly adorned with figures executed with masterly craftsmanship, the staircase features a strikingly elegant and flamboyant tracery balustrade. Like the ground floor as a whole, it was designed to showcase to stunning effect the wealth of the castle's owner.



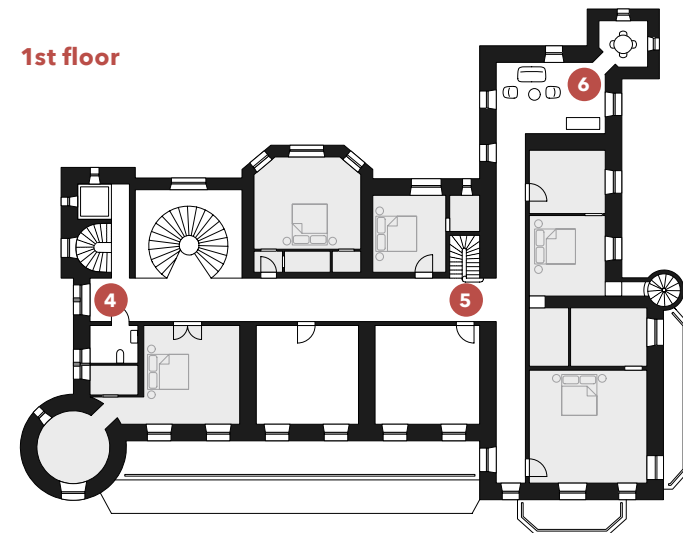
2
A false ceiling in the Bubenberg Salon

Fake alert! The ceiling panelling in what is today the Bubenberg Salon (formerly the antechamber to the small salon) appears to be made of wood, with iron fittings. In fact, the entire ceiling is made of plaster and stucco. The wood and metal effects were painted on in a masterly manner. Imitations of this kind were considered rather chic at the time the Castle was built. Indeed, anyone who was anyone would commission 'fakes' of this kind.



3
Leather wall coverings in the Rougemont Hall

The former Grand Salon is the most richly appointed representation room on the ground floor. Its walls are adorned with coverings made of genuine leather. Originally, the motifs on these wall coverings were overlaid with gold lacquer. Today, oxidised silver leaf is on display. The leather coverings themselves were made around 1850 by the Parisian manufacturer Dulud. Other rooms on the ground floor feature leather coverings from the early 18th century, originating most probably from the old Schadau Castle, now demolished.



1st floor



4
Wood-grained windows in the western corridor

Not all wood that looks like oak is actually made of oak. The corridor windows on the first floor are a case in point: they are in fact made of spruce and were then skilfully painted to look like elegant oak windows. The door to Room No. 1, for its part, is made of real oak; by contrast, the supposedly oak door leading to the staircase is again made of spruce.



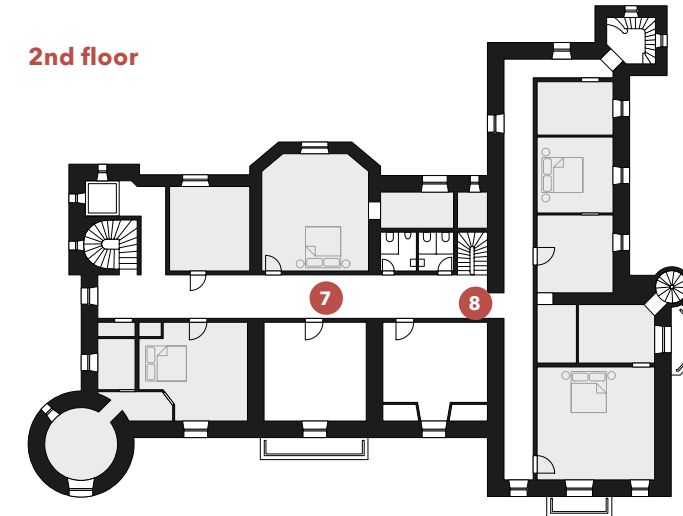
5
Faux marble in the eastern corridor

The overall impression up on the first floor is one of a corridor elegantly appointed in marble. But, here, too, the eye is being deceived as the walls and the bay arches are actually rendered in plaster. The marble effect has been masterfully painted on. The illusion is perfect: for one thing, the artisans have recreated the marble slab sizes that were in widespread use at the time, even adding 'joints' between these 'slabs'. It is worth nothing that, around 1850, it would have been far cheaper to use real marble...



6
Floral wallpaper in the coffee room

The coffee room that is now on the first floor is part of what was originally the clock tower. During the refurbishment work carried out in 2018 and 2019, the plaster ribbed vaulting was restored to its original colour scheme. The newly applied replica floral wallpaper is a fitting match since it was made by a specialist working from a sample swatch dating from 1850.

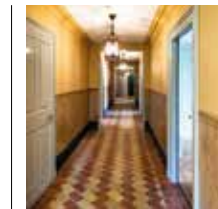


2nd floor



7
False wainscoting in the corridor

In the 19th century, the servants and guests were accommodated on the second floor. The entire floor is less richly furnished than the more representative rooms on the lower floors, but still of a high quality. Here the corridor walls are not made of 'marble', but of wood panelling. Or rather, of plaster, with elaborate paintwork used to make it look like wooden panelling. Directly below, the green and black marbled skirting is again not quite what it seems.



8
Disguised access to the staff wing

On the eastern side, the wide corridor does not end in front of a door that leads into yet another corridor. When closed, this door is practically invisible. The reason is that the staff wing comprising the modest quarters for the servants began behind the connecting door. The boundary between the glamorous surroundings and the rather less elegant quarters was to be made as discreet as possible.

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THANK YOU FOR TAKING CARE!

The vast majority of the floors, walls, ceilings, and other elements at Schadau Castle date back to the construction period around 1850. They have been restored with the utmost care and in compliance with the principles of monument preservation. We therefore kindly ask you to observe the following rules of conduct. This will enable future generations to enjoy the beauty of these cultural treasures, too!

All the surfaces are original, and some have had to be restored with meticulous care. Please avoid causing any scratches and/or stains, and do please take care with your suitcases, splashing water, or spilling liquids. The original mechanical systems used on the windows, folding shutters and built-in cupboards need to be operated delicately; similarly, the original entrance doors should be closed with care.

Keen to find out more about Schadau Castle?

The Swiss Art Guide (Schweizerischer Kunstführer) to Schadau Castle (author: Jürg Hünerwadel) offers fascinating in-depth insights into this Thun architectural monument.

The book itself is available from reception at the Hotel-Restaurant Schloss Schadau (CHF 15).