

CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL
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**Report on Mission to
ROMAN MONUMENTS, CATHEDRAL OF ST
PETER, AND CHURCH OF OUR LADY, TRIER
(Germany)**

23–24 September 2001

49-51 rue de la Fédération – F-75015 PARIS – France

Téléphone : + 33.1.45.67.67.70 – Fax : + 33.1.45.66.06.22

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1 The World Heritage site

The Roman Monuments, the Cathedral of St Peter, and the Church of Our Lady in Trier in Germany were inscribed on the World Heritage List at the 10th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Paris (France) in November 1986. They were inscribed under cultural criteria i, iii, iv, and vi (*Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, 1999, para 24.a).

A total of nine individual monuments make up the World Heritage site:

- i The Roman Amphitheatre;
- ii The Moselle Bridge (*Römerbrücken*);
- iii The Barbara Baths (*Barbarathermen*);
- iv The funerary column at Igel;
- v The *Porta Nigra*;
- vi The Imperial Baths (*Kaiserthermen*);
- vii The *Aula Palatina* (Basilica);
- viii The Cathedral of St Peter (*Dom*);
- ix The Church of Our Lady (*Liebfrauenkirche*).

In its evaluation, ICOMOS provided the following citations in respect of the four criteria:

Criterion i The *Porta Nigra*, which is an enormous fortified gate built of large stones, flanked by two semi-circular four-storey towers, is a unique achievement of 2nd century Roman architecture. The remains of the choir and the cloister of the two-level church built within its walls by Archbishop Poppo between 1034 and 1042 further enhance the monument.

Criterion iii Trier bears exceptional testimony to Roman civilization due to the density and the quality of the monuments preserved: the bridge, the remains of the fortified wall, *thermae*, amphitheatre, storehouses, etc. Funeral art, as demonstrated by the nomination of the Igel Column, and the craftsmanship of potters, glassworkers, and minters flourished particularly.

Criterion iv Trier, along with Istanbul, is the example of a large Roman capital after the division of the Empire. The remains of the imperial palace, in addition to the *Aula Palatina* and the imperial *thermae* (the largest of the Roman Empire after those of Diocletian and Caracalla in Rome) are impressive in their enormity [*sic*]. Under the north basilica (now the Cathedral), the decoration of a painted ceiling, where

members of the imperial family (Helena and Fausta?) appear to be identifiable, also bears testimony to the Aulic character of the architecture.

Criterion vi Trier is directly and tangibly associated with one of the major events of human history, Constantine's march against Maxentius in 312, which was a prelude to the Edict of Milan (313) and which meant the recognition of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

2 Background to the Mission

Building works in the vicinity of the Roman Amphitheatre in the late 1990s resulted in two missions being sent by ICOMOS at the request of the World Heritage Committee. At its meeting in December 1999 the Committee expressed its satisfaction with the measures taken by the State Party to minimize adverse impacts on the Amphitheatre itself and on the important remains of water-management installations revealed by recent excavations.

At the request of the State Party (more specifically, the Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung, Forschung und Kultur of Land Rheinland-Pfalz), ICOMOS sent a mission to Trier on 23 and 24 September 2001 to study the situation regarding the developments in the neighbourhood of the Amphitheatre and also to report on the state of conservation of the other monuments inscribed on the World Heritage List. Visits were paid to eight of the listed monuments: the Igel Column was not visited

3 Programme of the mission

Monday 23 September	pm	Travel to Trier by train. Visits (unaccompanied) to the Basilica and Moselle Bridge. Preliminary discussion with Dr Hans Caspary (German delegate to the World Heritage Committee)
Tuesday 24 September	am	Visits (accompanied) to the <i>Porta Nigra</i> , <i>Simeonstift</i> , Amphitheatre, and <i>Viehmarktthermen</i> Working lunch at the Rheinische Landesmuseum
	pm	Visits (accompanied) to the <i>Barbarathermen</i> , <i>Kaiserthermen</i> , Cathedral, and Church of Our Lady
	eve	Working dinner with Dr Caspary and Dr Hans-Peter Kuhnen (Director, Rheinische Landesmuseum)
Wednesday 25 September	am	Leave Trier by train.

4 Comments on individual monuments

4.1 *The Roman Amphitheatre*

Excavations by the Rheinische Landesmuseum in advance of building work on the site of the former Lion Brewery on the corner of Schützestraße and Bergstraße in 1996–99 revealed a number of important Roman remains. These were a stretch of the lower courses of the town wall, with part of one of its bastions, and the point where it crossed the aqueduct that brought water into the town from the Ruwer valley, a well preserved section of which was excavated.

The developer agreed that these significant remains should not be removed or covered up but should be conserved and left open, for public access. It was planned that there should be a café in the basement area where the remains would be open to visitors, with appropriate interpretive material. Regrettably this project has been abandoned and no public access is currently possible.

There are conservation problems that remain to be resolved in connection with parts of these remains, connected with the water table.

The Amphitheatre itself is well conserved. The rows of seats, separated by horizontal galleries (*praecinctiones*) are grassed, reflecting their use as vineyard terraces until the early 20th century. The access tunnels (*vomitoria*) survive intact, as do the north and south entrance structures. Extensive cellars were discovered beneath the arena in 1905 and these have been completely excavated, revealing important evidence of Roman technology in the form of hoisting machinery and supporting columns.

Access is at the present time through the southern Roman entrance gate. The Trier city council owns a strip of land outside the northern entrance and is planning to landscape this and make it the exit from the monument. It would provide a valuable link between the amphitheatre, the *Kaiserthermen*, and the Rheinische Landesmuseum, as well as the remains of the water installations once these had been made accessible for public viewing. No progress has been made with this project owing to lack of funds.

Concerts and other performances are held in the Amphitheatre, but these are restricted to the arena. Spectators are not permitted to sit on the original seating banks, now grassed over: temporary seating is provided within the arena. This responds effectively to the reservations expressed by the World Heritage Committee in 1986 when this property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, as set out in the Report of the 10th Meeting: “The Committee was informed of plans to use the amphitheatre in Trier for entertainment purposes and it requested the Chairman to write to the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany to express its reservations on the plans as at present conceived which risked to prejudice the authenticity and integrity of the monument.”

Here, as at several other sites, there is almost no interpretation available for visitors not taking part in guided tours. This is especially regrettable in the cellars beneath the arena, which are incomprehensible to the uninformed visitor. Guidebooks in several languages are available from the ticket office, but these are not a substitute for discreet interpretation boards. There are no guardians in evidence within the site (which is, however, enclosed by a stout fence topped with barbed wire).

The steep slopes to the east of the Amphitheatre were until recently covered by vineyards and formed a dramatic backdrop to the monument. Recently, however, large sections of these have been cleared and are reverting to scrub. It is to be hoped that these bare areas will be replanted with vines, so as to preserve the historic setting.

4.2 *The Moselle Bridge*

A brief inspection indicated that the bridge is in a good state of conservation.

4.3 *The Barbara Baths*

Uncovering of the *Barbarathermen* began in the 1820s and continued sporadically until 1877, when systematic archaeological excavations continued for nearly a decade. Since that time only minor exploratory excavations (*Sondagen*) have been carried out. Routine maintenance work on the ruins has decreased in recent years and as a result there are serious problems on the site. The appearance is that of a romantic “ruin,” which may be pleasing to certain traditionalists but is not in accordance with current conservation philosophy and practice. A major programme of research and rehabilitation is essential if further degradation is not to take place.

Weathering is slowly degrading exposed Roman plaster and concrete, and this process is exacerbated by the fact that there is no supervision of what is an open site, accessible as a public open space. During the mission a group of boys was observed clambering on walls and jumping down from them, undeterred by any official guardian. Rubbish was found dumped in several of the rooms, as well as substantial falls of stone and Roman concrete.

Any rehabilitation of the *Barbarathermen* must begin with an in-depth analysis of the extensive records in the form of excavation notes, plans, paintings, drawings, engravings, and photographs of the site that have accumulated over the last two centuries. This should be coupled with a detailed survey of the existing condition of the remains. At the same time there must be a scientific study of the conservation problems of the site. From these should be derived a research programme, involving the re-excavation, recording, and interpretation of the entire site, going hand-in-hand with a programme for the scientific conservation of the newly revealed structures. This work should form the basis for a management plan, with short- and long-term objectives clearly defined.

As an immediate action, the city authorities should re-establish the small staff of guardians and maintenance personnel, so as to prevent vandalism and dumping of rubbish and to prevent further degradation of walls and surfaces. The stability of walls is threatened by the growth of ivy over many of them and immediate steps should be taken to remove this and other potentially harmful growth (under scientific supervision) so as to prevent further damage.

Serious consideration must be given to the eventual enclosure of the *Barbarathermen*, making access available only upon payment, as is the case with the *Kaiserthermen*. It would be unthinkable for the site to be left open once the programme outlined above has been put into effect.

4.4 *The Porta Nigra*

The *Porta Nigra* is, to quote the ICOMOS evaluation, “a unique achievement of 2nd century Roman architecture.” It is the only one of the five original Roman gates to have survived, thanks to the fact that it was converted to a church in the first half of the 11th century by Bishop Poppo von Babenberg. Napoleon, under the mistaken impression that this was a Gaulish structure, ordered the removal of the medieval additions. Fortunately this work took so long that it was possible for the Prussian State Curator, von Quast, to prevent the destruction of the fine Romanesque apsidal chancel on the east side of the gate.

With the demolition of the town walls in the 19th century the *Porta Nigra* lost its original function as an entrance to a fortified town. With the growth of motor traffic in the later 20th century vehicles no longer passed through the gate, the road diverging on either side of it. After World War II the peripheral road that replaced the earlier defences was upgraded, pedestrians being obliged to reach the town by means of a subterranean passage beneath the

road. The monument therefore became a somewhat forlorn sight, deprived of its original function and stripped of most of its organic structure.

The function of a monumental entrance to the city is being restored by means of a project which will put the peripheral road into an underpass and restore direct pedestrian access through the *Porta Nigra* into the city, where the first section of the original Roman main north–south street (the *cardo maximus*) is already defined as a pedestrian walkway.

The overall structural state of the monument is sound, and in general terms the state of conservation of the material is not a cause for serious concern. However, closer examination of the stonework indicates that there has been some deterioration, probably as a result of atmospheric pollution. There has been some loss of definition of some of the decorative motifs, notably the excellent rococo reliefs of the vanished church. It is very important that scientific studies should be carried out to assess the causes of this deterioration and to monitor its rate of attack, with the objective of formulating a stone conservation policy.

Alongside and intimately associated with the *Porta Nigra*, but not inscribed on the World Heritage List, is the Convent of St Simeon (*Simeonstift*). Founded by Bishop Poppo, much of it has survived, and in particular its exceptional first-floor cloister. The City Museum is housed in the north and west wings; it is planned to extend the museum to the cloisters on the first floor of the north side. At the present time the ground-floor level of the north wing is occupied by a restaurant and the municipal information centre is housed in a more recent building on the eastern side. There is a small, unattractive stage construction on the south side of the cloister where jazz and pop groups perform.

The municipal authorities have a proposal to glass in the arches of the south wing so as to provide additional office space. There is also a proposal to re-create the missing arcades of the northern side in modern style. I do not consider the former to be acceptable, because the essential link between cloister and courtyard would be broken, but the latter is acceptable, so long as it is consonant in form with the medieval work.

The rehabilitation of the City Museum will necessitate the provision of hoisting and access facilities on the outside of the (medieval) city wall, to the west of the *Porta Nigra*. It is proposed to replace a “bastion,” built after World War II in pseudo-medieval style, to house this equipment. This proposal is acceptable, since this part of the wall is screened by some large trees. However, it would be preferable to build in a functional “modern” style rather than using the misleading style of the structure to be replaced.

4.5 *The Imperial Baths*

The *Kaiserthermen* are an imposing complex, difficult to understand without considerable explanation. Although intended as an Imperial bath-house of monumental proportions, before they were fully completed and fitted out the Imperial court moved to Constantinople and work ceased. It was not until half a century later that they were adapted for use as an Imperial palace by Valentinian I. Since that time they have undergone many vicissitudes and changes of use, as well as being used as a quarry for building materials in the Middle Ages.

Excavation of the eastern part of the complex in 1912–14 produced important results relating to the history of the site, and severe damage to the western part during World War II provided the opportunity for extensive excavations in 1960–66. Substantial conservation and restoration works have been carried out more recently, including the refacing of much of the walls of the erstwhile *caldarium* and the partial reconstruction of its window arches, for reasons of structural safety. The quality of the conservation is high and fully in accordance with contemporary philosophy and practice.

There is, however, a serious problem relating to vegetal growth on walls and other surfaces. Although not as severe as at the *Barbarathermen*, it is a potential source of further

degradation and requires urgent attention. As at the amphitheatre there is a dearth of interpretive material on the site, beyond some panels at the entrance. This is especially regrettable given the complexity of the underground elements: it was clear to me when walking round this part of the site that other visitors were bemused and puzzled by what they saw.

4.6 *The Basilica*

After the *Porta Nigra* this is probably the Roman monument of Trier which makes the greatest impact on the visitor. It is a beautifully proportioned building of great power, yet it is probably understandable by no more than a handful of visitors because of its extraordinarily varied history. Contemplation of the many building phases of the north wall throws this into high relief.

The building itself is impeccably conserved and maintained by the Protestant community. There is little, if any, interpretive material in the interior, though the custodian of the bookstall was very well informed and eager to explain the history of the Basilica.

4.6 *The Cathedral*

This magnificent cathedral is admirably well conserved and managed by the *Bischöfliches Bauamt* and *Konservatoramt* (which is also responsible for the Church of Our Lady). Work is currently in progress on the cleaning and conservation of the tower, completing the exterior conservation work on the walls that has already been carried out to a high standard.

4.7 *The Church of Our Lady*

Like the neighbouring *Dom*, the *Liebfrauenkirche* has been subject to skilful and sensitive restoration following the grievous damage inflicted upon it during World War II.

5 Observations

5.1 *General observations*

One problem that becomes immediately apparent in visiting the archaeological sites is the *deficiencies in staffing*. This is most serious at the *Barbarathermen*, as noted above (4.3), but it is also a factor at the Amphitheatre and the *Kaiserthermen*. Given the numbers of visitors that these sites receive each year, it is unwise for there to be no on-site guardians. The presence of no more than one or two people, preferably wearing some form of uniform, very effectively discourages vandalism, damage to structures, and dumping of litter. Such personnel, with suitable training, can provide useful non-technical information for visitors (eg routes to follow, location of facilities, etc).

There also appears to be a shortage of maintenance personnel, responsible for control of vegetation (including grass cutting) and general site cleanliness. They can also undertake regular visual monitoring of the state of conservation of walls, arches, and other features. Scientific conservation personnel are also lacking to carry out routine inspection and conservation work, as well as participating in major conservation and restoration projects led by specialists.

The on-site *interpretation facilities* are woefully inadequate. A range of guidebooks, ranging from simple picture books to the admirable handbook *Das römische Trier*, edited by the Director of the Rheinische Landesmuseum, is available, and there are plans and other interpretive displays at the entrances to the Amphitheatre and the Imperial Baths. However,

there are no explanatory notice-boards at key points on these and other complex sites to enable visitors to orientate themselves and to understand the remains at these points..

Whilst the nomination form submitted by the German Federal Republic in 1985 (section 4.e) reported that there were “long-term programmes run by the Administration of the Castles and Palaces of Land Rhineland-Palatinate for restoration work on the monuments and historic buildings under its care,” this would not in my opinion fulfil the current requirements of the World Heritage Committee in respect of *management plans* for individual monuments. No information was given regarding the two religious properties.

5.2 *Potential extensions*

There are two potential candidates for nomination as extensions to the existing World Heritage site. The first is the archaeological site in the *Viehmarkt*, where extensive rescue excavations in the late 1980s and early 1990s in advance of development revealed substantial remains of a third large Roman thermal establishment, along with remains from later periods. The development was drastically revised so as to make it possible for these remains to be conserved *in situ* and they are now covered by a striking modern building. They are not currently open to the public, but it is intended that they should be, once certain obstacles have been overcome.

The second potential extension is the *Simeonstift*, the history and location of which are intimately linked with those of the *Porta Nigra*. If it should prove possible to restore the ambience of the medieval cloister, which is sadly lacking at the present time, it might be possible to include both elements of Bishop Poppo’s 11th century religious ensemble on the World Heritage List.

6 **Recommendations**

- i A major project for the study and re-excavation of the *Barbarathermen*, followed by scientific conservation and the implementation of a management plan, should be initiated without delay.
- ii There should be a scientific study of the rate and nature of degradation of the stone of the *Porta Nigra*, followed by the implementation of appropriate conservation measures.
- iii Serious consideration should be given to the appointment of additional security and maintenance personnel at the archaeological sites.
- iv Projects should be undertaken to improve the interpretation and signage at the archaeological sites.
- v Consideration should be given to the nomination of the *Viehmarktthermen* and the *Simeonstift* as extensions to the existing World Heritage site, subject to the opening to the public of the former and appropriate changes so as to restore the ambience of the latter.

Professor **Henry Cleere**
ICOMOS World Heritage Coordinator

Paris
28 September 2001

APPENDIX: Principal individuals met during mission

<i>Ministerium für Wissenschaft, Weiterbildung, Forschung und Kultur, Referat Denkmalpflege</i>	Dr Anton Neugebauer	
<i>Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Rheinland-Pfalz</i>	Prof. Dr Wolfgang Bröner Mr Wolf-M. Müller Dr Christian Schüler-Beigang Dr Hans Caspary	Director Hauptkonservator i.R.
<i>Rheinische Landesmuseum Trier</i>	Dr Hans-Peter Kuhnen Dr Margaretha König Mr Thomas H. M. Fontaine Dr Stefan Pfahl	Director Deputy Director
<i>Bürger, Schlösser, Altertümer Rheinland-Pfalz</i>	Mr Albert Diehl	
<i>Stadt Trier, Denkmalpflegeamt</i>	Dr Angelika Meyer	Stadtkonservatorin

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