

The International Castle Research Society invites you to an exhibition

The port entrance of La Rochelle (F) in the 14th and 15th century

Once again, the „Gesellschaft für internationale Burgenkunde“ (GIB), known for its many historical models, impresses with new models: an overview model in M 1 : 250 and a detail model in M 1 : 25, this time of the port of La Rochelle on the French Atlantic coast.

The master builder is Michael Siepen, supported by his father Dipl.-Ing. Bernhard Siepen as castle researcher and architect. Michael Siepen has already been working for 5 months on the models, which will be presented to the public in a five-week exhibition. The responsibilities between father and son are regulated: one of them cut more than 5,000 pointed beech wood elements for days on end in order to be able to produce round towers, and was responsible for the construction of more than 100 epoch-related figures in M 1 : 25. Model-making expert Michael built the 10 square metre cut-out model in the above-mentioned scale in Sisyphus work.

With this project the GIB would like to commemorate an event and its consequences in the "100 Years War" between France and England. In 1368 the kings of France and Castile allied themselves against the English King Edward III, which led to a siege of La Rochelle in 1372, which was still in English hands. At the same time an English and a Castilian fleet met, outmanoeuvring and destroying the English ships that outnumbered them. The city of La Rochelle was then defenceless and in the same year surrendered to the French siege army.

As a result of this event, the French king ordered the completion of the harbour entrance of La Rochelle, which had been started and was fortified with a fortified bridge. In addition, a heavy chain of barriers was stretched between the Tour Nicolas and the Tour de la Chaîne in the evening. La Rochelle played a decisive role in the Huguenot Wars from 1562 to 1598, which ended in a massacre of French Protestants on St. Bartholomew's Day.

Whether the fortified bridge was ever built remains doubtful. Based on drawings of the Tour Nicolas from the archives of Monuments Historiques in Paris, a reconstruction drawing from the 19th century and a virtual reconstruction by the French castle expert Dr. Jean Mesqui, Michael Siepen and his father found it a great challenge to build the 10 square metre, approximately 2.40 metre high model in M 1 : 25 with great attention to detail from the pool of over 20,000 loose components. A truly monumental work of art, which is sure to delight the public of young and old alike and also has tourist appeal. In addition to hundreds of hand-painted figures, historic ships of the cog and nef type are depicted, as well as numerous other ships and boats, including a recently built floating dredger based on a sketch by Leonardo da Vinci. The construction team was supported by Dr. phil. Ulrich Alertz as shipbuilding expert.

The exhibition "Port entrance of La Rochelle in the 14th and 15th centuries" will take place from 18 July to 22 August 2020 in the GIB office at Grindelweg 4, taking into account the current rules of distance, by appointment only on 0241-604500.