

**Zeitschrift:** Schaffhauser Beiträge zur Geschichte  
**Herausgeber:** Historischer Verein des Kantons Schaffhausen  
**Band:** 86 (2012)  
**Heft:** [2]: Schaffhausen seven walks through history : old town & Rhine falls

**Artikel:** The city fortifications  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-841560>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

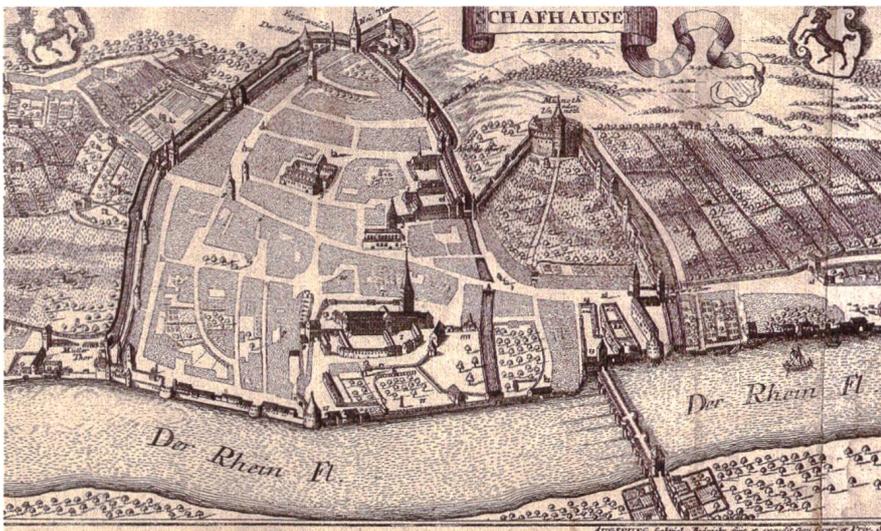
### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 30.04.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

Only a small part of Schaffhausen's fortifications still survive. The first defensive structures go back to the middle of the 11th century. They consisted of ditches and ramparts surrounding the town as it was then; there was a wall only along the Rhine. Construction of the massive walls which delimited what is now the old city started in the 12th century. The city gates, some of which can still be seen today, were built on the main roads leading into Schaffhausen at the same time as the city wall. The Mühlentor (Mill Gate), demolished in 1869, stood at the western entrance to the city, while the Schwabentor (Swabian Gate) still stands at the north entrance, and the Obertor (Upper Gate) is just north of the site of the Mühlentor.



City wall in the 17th century

At the entrance to the city from the east – the spot where our walk starts – stood the Schwarztor (Black Gate). It was dismantled in 1842. An outer tower dating from 1628 had already been demolished in 1787. It was replaced by a simple gate between the Güterhof and Torhüterhaus, also removed in 1842, but whose sand-

stone corner pillars with the iron hinges can still be seen on the wall of the Güterhof, on the Fischerhäuserstrasse side. It was through the Schwarztor that the newly elected Pope Martin V made his entry into the city in 1415, where he was received with great pomp by the burghers. Our route now leads up the steps to the Munot (*Römerstieg*).

### Munot Eastern walkway

46

The eastern approach consists of two separate walls. They lead from the site of the old Schwarztor up to the Munot; the inner wall started at the inner tower of the gate, and the outer one at the outer tower. The outer wall no longer survives at its original height. It was reinforced by two tower-like bastions whose purpose was to be able to shell the ditch. The lower one was known popularly as the "Eulenburg" (Owl castle). The upper one, which juts out in front of the rectangular tower known as the Römertürmchen, is semi-circular.

When it was still at its full height, the upper end of the wall abutted onto the circular Munot. On top of the inner wall with its loopholes is a well-protected sentinel's walkway made of timber. It ends at an oak door which leads into the heart of the Munot, where a narrow spiral staircase goes up to the battlements.

In the middle of the inner wall is the mid-14th century Römertürmchen, which was already part of the mediaeval fortifica-



tions. From the 17th century onwards it was used for storing gunpowder. The name Römertürmchen – “little Roman tower” – only seems to date from the beginning of the 19th century. It used to open onto the city through a high rounded arch above the walkway; this was later filled in with a thin wall, but its outline is still visible in the interior. The three other sides of the narrow tower are all built of thick masonry. On top of its pyramidal roof is an iron weather vane featuring the Schaffhausen ram and bearing the date 1901.

#### **Predecessor and significance of the Munot**

All we know about what stood on the site before the Munot was built is that it was already there by the middle of the 14th century. It is probable that there was a lookout post at a very early date on this exposed position with its excellent view far up the Rhine. In the 14th century the site consisted of the sentinel’s walkways, which still exist today, and a rectangular tower with a platform on which a powerful catapult was set up. This tower and its platform were replaced over the period 1565 to 1589. Even at the time when construction started, the Munot was in fact already militarily outdated: it reflects the fortress design of the beginning of the 16th century. It was therefore of little value for defending the city. The fact that Schaffhausen did not build the Munot as an impregnable fortress could indicate that the purpose was to erect something

that would be a symbol in stone of the city's wealth and power, on the northern border of the Swiss Confederation. After Schaffhausen joined the Confederation in 1501 it hardly ever came under serious threat again. The Munot was only occupied once: in 1799 the French entrenched themselves here as they retreated before the Austrians. But after a brief skirmish they fled across the Rhine.

### Munot ditch, outer wall and caponiers

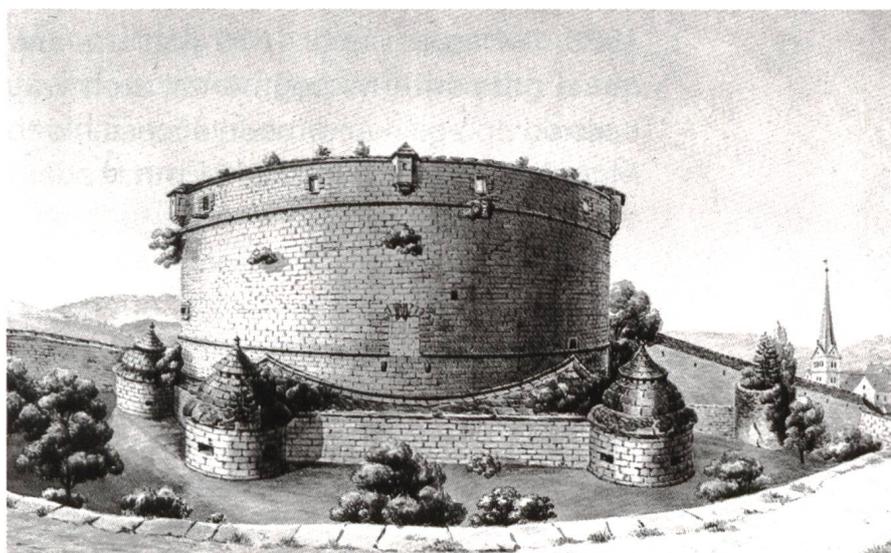
47



The north side of the Munot was the one most exposed to possible attack. The battlements were therefore surrounded by a ditch over 20 metres wide, with an eight metre high wall on the other side. The ditch is still the same width as it was originally. The topography obviously made it impossible to fill it with water. This meant it was necessary to build caponiers from which any enemy sneaking up could be repulsed. These are simple round towers projecting from the wall. Their purpose was to keep the ditch under fire, which is why there are three small cannon ports at ground level. Other features include moulded cornices, hewn stone blocks and the characteristic domed roofs, surmounted by canopies with conical finials and supported by short pillars, designed to allow the gunsmoke to escape. The caponiers are connected to each other via the underground passage which begins in the basement of the tower (can only be visited as part of a guided tour). Since 1905 the ditch has been used as a park for a colony of fallow deer.

The 25 metre high wall of the Munot is built of Jura limestone blocks, quarried in the immediate vicinity of the city. The circular wall is divided into three sections by two thick cornices.

On the east and north sides of the central section are two loopholes, chamfered so that any projectiles would bounce off. The western loophole is in the shape of the open mouth of a mask surrounded by stylised leaves, and above it is a stone bearing the date 1566. Over the undecorated eastern loophole is the date 1565.



The top section is the parapet, with four small overhanging turrets – one on the east, one on the west, and two on the north. Each of these turrets has three narrow windows and mediaeval machicolations with two holes in the floor to enable rainwater to drain away. In addition, the parapet has a total of eight rectangular windows, framed by stone blocks, each with a stone spout below it.

The Munot in the 19th century (Hans Wilhelm Harder, 1851)

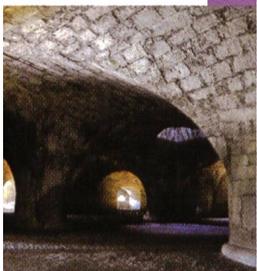
During restoration in 1839/40, three stone cannon balls found on the Munot were placed in the walls: the first was embedded in the north-east side of the parapet, by the second window; the other two in the central section of the wall: one also on the north-east, more or less level with the finial of the eastern caponier, and the other on the north west, level with the finial of the western caponier.

We now cross the bridge to enter the fortress. This entrance was originally only designed to be used for bringing in material during construction and was walled up in 1585. It was not until 1836 that the entrance gate with its segmental arch was opened up again and made accessible to Munot visitors coming from Emmersberg over the bridge.

### The casemate

48

We go down a short passageway to get to the vaulted casemate. The vault is supported by nine round pillars. The unribbed limestone groin vaulting rises straight out of the pillars. The otherwise dark casemate is lit through four large shafts, which are circular at the top. The vault has a massive ceiling about 4 metres thick, filled in with small stones. In the southern half of the space are four deep embrasures recessed into the wall, each with a vent at the top of the gently barrel-vaulted ceiling, to allow the gunpowder to escape. They are so narrow that they could only be used for small arms. Such an embrasure therefore needed a team of only



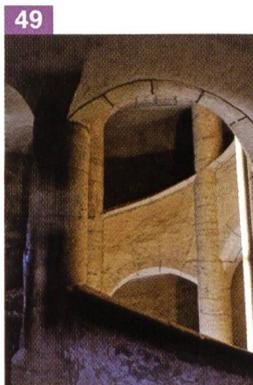
two men, each of whom commanded two loopholes. By the two embrasures on the west and south-west walls large shafts in the vaulting run at an angle inside the masonry and emerge at the battlements.

There is a low, dark room built onto the south-west wall: it was once thought to be a prison cell, but in fact it was a latrine. Not far away on the right the round cistern projects out of the wall.

### The tower

We enter the tower from the side opposite the entrance. Below it the path leads down to what was once the only access to the fortress. It is worth casting a glance over the vineyards which were already documented in the Middle Ages. The winding ramp, known as the "Reitschnecke", leads up to the platform, spiralling round on itself three times.

Cannon could be taken to the battlements up this paved ramp, which gets its light through narrow loopholes and is supported on four pillars arranged in a square. Near the top, a door with a truncated trefoil arch leads to a winding staircase actually within the wall, and from here over to the western walkway (not accessible). A door with a simple rounded arch on the north side leads through to the platform. The floors above the battlements, which are not open to the public, consist of a circular storey made into an armoury in 1906, and above this, a room for keeping stores or flour.



**The Munot watchman**

On the upper storey of the tower is the watchman's flat. This office goes right back to the Middle Ages. The duty of the watchman was to keep a lookout round the clock for dangers like fire or the approach of enemy troops, and to sound the alarm immediately by blowing a trumpet. During the day time he also had to signal the arrival of all ships by raising a flag and sounding his trumpet. Today the Munot watchman's job is to see that the Munot is kept tidy and that nothing untoward is happening, to help with events, to look after tourists and to ring the "Munotglöckchen", or tower bell, by hand at nine every evening.

**The battlements**

50



The battlements are in the shape of an almost circular ellipse with a diameter of about 50 metres. On the north they are surmounted by a four metre high parapet. Just to the right of the spot where this wall starts is the top of the cistern that comes right up from the ground floor. To the south of this is the start of the narrow winding staircase that leads down through the wall to a heavy oak door and the entrance to the eastern gallery (can only be visited as part of a guided tour). The two cannons to the west of the tower date from the Napoleonic period. They are still fired today on the occasion of the Munot children's festival.

The roof was put on and the other additions made in the 20th century. Today the Munot has become an irreplaceable part of Schaffhausen's cultural life. As the location for events and as a cultural centre, it is used as a spectacular backdrop for concerts, open-air film shows, the famous Munot balls and celebrations of all sorts, especially in the summer months.

### **The "Munotglöckchen"**

The nine o'clock bell hangs in the turret on top of the tower. It was cast in 1589. Around the bottom it bears these words telling the watchman to ring it at nine every evening: WECHTER • MIRCKH • AVF • MIT • GANCEM • FLEIS • VMW • DIE • NENDE • STVND • ZV • NACHT • SOLDT DV • MICH • LEIDEN • ANNO • DOMINI • M D • LXXXVIII. The Munotglöckchen is very probably the last tocsin bell in Europe to be rung by hand; it is certainly the last in Switzerland. Every evening at nine o'clock the Munot watchman rings it for five minutes (exactly 300 strokes).

According to legend, the noble owner of the Munot was returning home after a long absence on crusade, but was surprised by nightfall not far from Schaffhausen and was swept away and drowned in a stream. His wife endowed a bell in his memory, stipulating that it should be rung every evening at nine, the hour he met his death.

51



Our way now leads back over the bridge and then left and down the steps parallel to the western wall towards the old city. The covered wooden sentinel's gallery that once ran along it had no infrastructure: resting solely on beams, it was built right up against the wall, whose defence also included some crenellations and loopholes. In the night of 27 May 1871 the gallery was completely destroyed by fire. Since the entire stonework is still mediaeval in character, it can be assumed that we have here remains of the old Munot complex. The sentinel's gallery ended at what used to be a massive bastion with a portcullis, demolished in 1861/62.

The city wall originally ran north along the *Bachstrasse* to the city's northern gate, now the Schwabentor (about 10 minutes on foot).

### The Schwabentor (Swabian Gate)

52

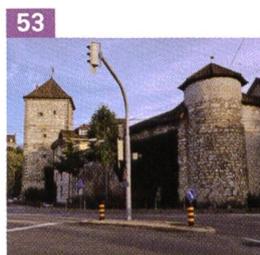


The first documented mention of the tower dates from 1361 and refers to it as the "Neuturm" (New Tower). So there must have been a gate tower here before then. It was the northern point of the mediaeval city fortifications looking towards Swabia – hence the name. The Schwabentor leads into the Vorstadt. The huge barbican, like the Munot first built in the 16th century, and extended in the 17th, fell victim to the onslaught of traffic in the middle of the 19th century. It was located where the car park now is. In 1932 the inside of the tower and the mansard roof were completely destroyed by fire.

The 30 metre high tower is built of limestone, while the corner blocks are of sandstone. The side facing into the city is windowless, but a row of loopholes runs up each of the other sides, a slit at the bottom, and higher up square holes for cannon. Scaffolding holes of different periods can be made out in the masonry. It can be accessed from the east side via a narrow wooden gallery with a small lean-to roof. The motto "LAPPI TUE D'AUGEN UF" ("Keep your eyes open, simpleton") a warning to country bumpkins to have their wits about them in the city is inscribed on a relief dating from 1933.

### Remains of the city wall

To the west side of the Schwabentor part of the old city wall survives, including the Finsterwald tower at the corner. In the courtyard behind the "Adler" restaurant (outdoor service available) some elements of the sentinel's walk can still be seen. The first city wall was built in the middle of the 13th century and was later gradually heightened. The adjoining Finsterwald tower is dated 1283. The foot of the tower was considerably lower than today's street level, since before the railway was built this was the site of the city ditch. It was linked by walkways to another massive 16th century tower, the "Wider" (ram), which once stood on the site of what is now the railway underpass. On its north face was the city coat-of-arms, with the inscription "Der Wider heiss ich, wer mich stosst, dess wer ich mich" (My name is the ram, and if anyone pushes me, I resist).



The city ditch, filled in in the middle of the 19th century, is now the site of the Bahnhofstrasse. At the north-east corner of today's station building (opposite the Bahnhof hotel) there used to be a bastion built in 1445 and attached to the Engelbrecht Gate.



Engelbrechtstor  
with bridge  
(Johann Jakob  
Beck, 1826)

The road from the Hintersteig into the city went through this gate. The supporting wall of the outer ditch ran from here to where the railway tracks are now. Our walk continues past the station to the "Obertor", where there was another important gate leading into the city.

### The Obertor (Upper Tower) and the continuation of the city wall

The Obertor has a rich history and is the oldest surviving part of the city fortifications. It stood at the western end of the town, and was the gate through which all the traffic had to squeeze its way from the landing stage via the Vordergasse to the Rhine Falls for onward shipment. It got the name "zem obern tor" in 1273. It was originally a so-called tower house belonging to the noble Fridbolt family and stood at only half its current height. In 1461 the former mayor Hans Fridbolt sold the tower to the city. Thirty years later the city increased its height to 47 metres and seven storeys as it is now. The change of colour in the red corner blocks half way up the tower clearly indicates its original height. The Obertor was used as a look-out post right up until 1922.

From the 17th century onwards the Obertor complex included much more: next to the tower itself was a gate with a pointed



54



Bastion of the Obertor in the first half of the 19th century (Hans Wilhelm Harder, 1837)

arch, and where the roundabout now is there used to be a square bastion on an earthwork built between two ditches with bridges over them.

This barbican built in 1638/39 during the Thirty Years War was demolished in 1845, and the gate with the pointed arch met the same fate in 1853. As part of the renovation, a passage for pedestrians was finally pierced in 1939.

Further south, another part of the old city wall is very well preserved along the Grabenstrasse. Our way leads along the wall down the *Grabenstrasse*, then up the steps to the footbridge and through the passage at the "Haberhaus", across the *Neustadt*, and along the *Ackergässchen* to the *Herrenacker*. From the bridge we have a very good view along the western part of the city wall. There is also a good view of the Untere Diebsturm (see Walk 3).

55

