

THE OLD CHURCH IN BORGHOLZHAUSEN

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No known documents exist of the earliest time of Christian life in Borghoithausen. It could be that this is the reason why the Westfalian Board for Preservation of Historical Monuments in Münster (County Conservator) happened to come by to check out whether there might some 'small' surprises hidden under the floor of the church. Beginning October 1975 to January 1976 intensive excavation work took place under the guidance of archeologist Dr. Uwe Lobbedey. The results were completely unexpected.

Here is the extensive excavation protocol:

Archeology *of a Church in Westfalia, Bonn 1981*

Today's church was built around 1340 and is the 5th building at this location, Consequently, there are 4 preceding structures.

The knowledge of secular and ecclesiastical history has been seriously challenged by these discoveries and theological theories had to be re-examined.

Churches are dwellings, They are different from homes because they not only show the culture and daily life of their builders and inhabitants, but are evidence of a deep self-comprehension and belief system of the people who built them. Whoever studies this subject cannot help but look at the influence of religion on peoples' lives.

Something special could be learned from the exposed foundations. Each generation of parishioners paid attention to the permanence of the location. The subsequent churches were built in such a way as to enable services still to take place in part of the old building while construction of the new one was taking place, This made a symmetrical way of construction impossible.

The First Church:

A limber Post Structure, before 750 AD

A 13.5 m long 5-post line of holes was found showing the same eastern orientation (though geographically not quite exact) as the buildings that were to follow. This proved to the archeologist that the first church was a timber post construction.

The length of this row of holes helped determine the size of the building. That suggests that the missionaries not only used it for their own personal prayers but that a small congregation came together for service here.

Dr. Lobbedey concluded that the construction date of this oldest testimony of Christian belief in Borgholzhausen is at the turn of the 8th to the 9th century during the reign of Charles the Great (742-814) and his Saxon Wars (772-804). This was the time of most important political decisions for the People of Saxony: Until then, the lives of the Saxon tribes were ruled by so-called 'Things' (official meeting), For example in Marcloh, located at the Weser River, representatives of three tribes gathered for a general 'Thing' to make decisions on political, economical, and religious matters, Votes were counted by how many 'yes'-calls came in and how much sword rattling was heard. This was what we would call today a democratic procedure. Decisions on grass-root level determined the life in Saxon counties, districts and local villages.

So far, an animistic belief system in many Gods and Goddesses, i.e. Thor and freia, was far spread. But apparently, this tradition had begun to lose its power of conviction and new Christian ideas were starting to be accepted by the Saxons. This new religion relied on mutual prayer, Holy Communion, and the joint praise of God. As a consequence the new churches were constructed in the same way in which homes and farm buildings were built.

According to common history Christianization of the Saxons took place under Charles the Great by means of the sword. Baptisms were not what we would call 'Christian'. They were more or less political-military submission ceremonies under the disguise of religion.

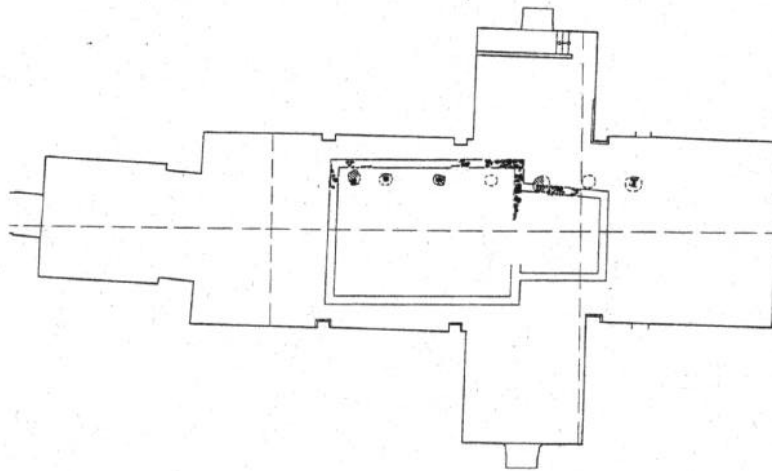
Research supports the view that the first churches in Borgholzhausen are not connected to Charlemagne's Christian missionary efforts but to a mission which appeared here before the

Saxon Wars during the times of Bonifatius (673-754). However, Bonifatius had never done work in the Westfalian region. A more probable time for the first mission in Borgholzhausen is the second quarter of the 8th century.

This oldest mission has to be understood as a mission of conviction by using the 'Word' to create trust and not the fear-inducing 'Sword'. The missionaries spoke the local language to communicate with the Saxons. This was not the practice under Charlemagne.

It is not known where these missionaries came from, maybe Ireland or Scotland; Rome, however, is unlikely.

The first church in Borgholzhausen was not founded through government decree nor through political intentions, but as a result of the conversion of the local Saxons. This is why the first church was built on the peoples' faith and supported by these new Christians spiritually and materially.



The Second Church: The Foundation Beam House, before 772

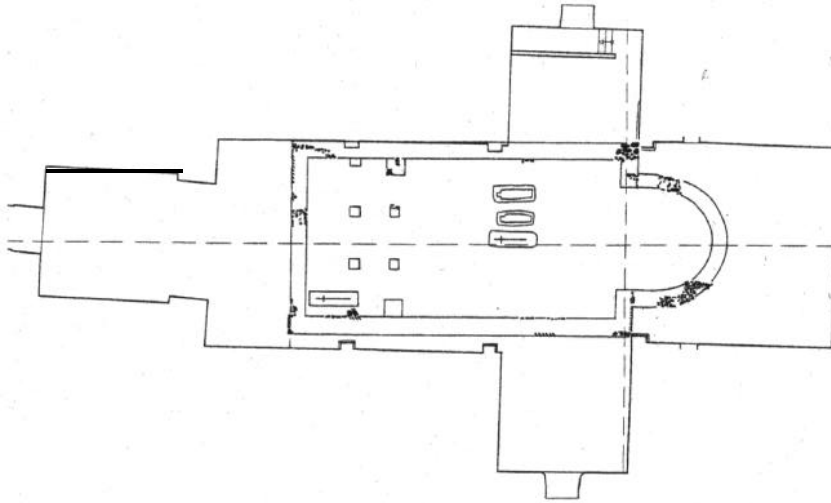
Sometime before the Saxon Wars, the timber-post church was replaced by the 'foundation beam house'. The size was approximately the same. The length was 8.6m, the width 6m. The added choir-room measured 4m x 4m. The building could house 80 to 90 people. For a parish church, as we know it today, it was too small. The foundation upon which the main beams were laid was small and narrow. Vertical posts were added as well as bracing beams and a mesh of branches. The walls were then filled in with clay. This construction method is still in use today.

With the demolition of the 2nd church, a form of Christian belief perished which is deeply saddening. The two timber churches represented an era in which the church was carried by the enthusiasm of its congregation and not, as in later years, by a clerical institution, i.e. a bishop who dictated a certain belief system,

Dr. Lobbedey dated the construction of the first stone church to the 9th and 11th century. This marked the end of the timber church era. A few pottery fragments found are with all probability from 1050. Similar discoveries in the close-by town of Herford point to the destruction of a timber church and its reconstruction using large smooth stones during the same time.

A lot of facts speak for the theory that several timber churches in our area had been torn down and replaced by stone churches. Some documents indicate that church officials denounced these timber churches as places of a pagan cult. A church whose identity was based on a democratic system became a cold stone church (note the symbolism of the

different building material). The congregation who, so far, had been autonomous was now not allowed to act on its own conviction,



***The Third Church:
The Stone Apsis Church, app. 1050***

The floor plan of this church could not be completely reconstructed by Dr. Lobbedey: The hall measured 14m x 7.1m. The Apsis (= altar room) was 4,6m wide and 4,2m long. About 180 worshippers gathered here. According to its size, this church was obviously built for the local population, it was too small for a parish church in its real sense.

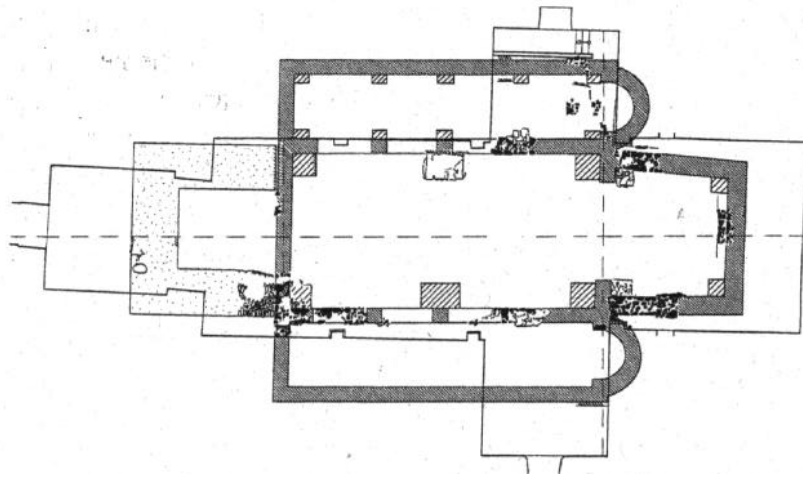
Two children's tombs were excavated in the Stone Apsis Hall a find that reveals something about the legal situation of the church, Only high-ranking clergymen or maybe generous patrons - if at all - were allowed be buried in a 'Bishop Church'. The fact that these two children's tombs exist, point to a so-called Freehold Church.

The locally appointed bishop had limited influence over a freehold church and then only in spiritual matters. The church was supported by the owners (presumably the local counts) in financial and personal matters,

Photograph: child's skeleton

The skeleton of a 10-year old girl was found in one of the tombs. Noticeable was the position of her arms and hands. Usually, in a tomb without a coffin, made out of loose stones, and covered with a solid stone plate these were laid alongside the body. In this case, however, the palms pointed upwards. This was a prayer position, Symbolically, the devotee stretched her hands out towards God knowing that her prayer had been heard, that her hands would be filled. This gesture is understood as a sign of Christian hope in view of death.

In an adult tomb, remains of a man were found who was, for his time, unusually tall: 1.8m. The ulna of his arm was fractured showing that he must have led a rough life: in a fight he probably had raised his arms to protect himself against the blow of his opponent's club. His arm was hit and the bone broke.



***The Fourth Church:
The Triple Nave Basilica, app. 1200***

The excavations by Dr. Lobbedey showed a triple nave basilica. This name is Greek and means 'royal hall', During late roman times, basilicas were places of Emperor cult and could be found in many larger cities. In the 4th century they became sites of Christian worship. In architecture the term 'basilica' describes a certain style of construction: the width of the side naves is only half of that of the middle nave, which is covered by a flat saddle roof. The roofs of the side naves are considerably lower and tied to the middle nave. Instead of solid interior walls between the naves arcades were built out of posts (square) or columns (round).

Dr. Lobbedey thinks that this type of basilica dates back to the 11th and 12th century. Therefore, the basilica in Borgholzhausen was built during the times of the unfortunate crusades (beginning at 1096). Mostly knights from southern Germany joined the 1st and 2nd crusade. During the 3rd crusade (1189-92) knights and their servants from Borgholzhausen and surrounding areas were taking off for the Holy Land, together with Widukind of Rheda and Widukind of Oesede. King Barbarossa who led this crusade died during in the course of it.

The returning knights were determined to re-build the tomb basilica of Jesus to utmost accuracy. This again points to a construction date of 1200.

The basilica of Borgholzhausen shows one particularity: If you enter the church from the west you will notice that the two arcades separating the three naves change into closed walls. This created three altar rooms in which services could be held simultaneously. Acoustically these rooms could probably not be separated and it would have been almost impossible for the worshippers to follow the service, which was spoken in Latin anyway, It was sufficient if everybody was present at the time of the prayer readings before the Holy Communion.

By now, public worship and church life was detached from everyday village life and came under the control of the wealthy class who financially supported it. The size of the basilica matched that of the former parish church but could not anymore be called a church of the people. The majority of parishioners were allowed to attend the service more or less silently and they hardly understood its meaning. The Count donated new altars to the church; the priest was paid by him, The old song „Whose bread I eat, whose song I 'sing'” describes the influence of the Borgholzhausen clergymen on the local parishioners*

Huge boulder foundations were found under the now-existing church tower, They bear witness of a massive tower belonging to the Basilica.' Apparently, this tower served as a refuge during war times.

The Georgskapelle (St. George's Chapel), app. 1200

Even though this pamphlet was meant to be a guide through the history of our church in the town center we will make an excursion into the surrounding area. This will help describe the times in which the Basilica originated,

The Georgskapelle was situated about one kilometer outside of Borgholzhausen on the southern pass through the Teutoburg Forest to the town of Melle. At this point the road forked, leading to the Castle of Brinke and continued to the town of Werther. Next to Pankratius, Georg was a holy man worshipped initially by the crusaders and then by the locals. The Pankratius cult was limited to relics kept on the main altar of the church, a few prayers and the attitude of parishioners towards their church patron.

A special task was assigned to the Holy Georg: The crusaders not only brought home memories of good and cruel, happy and scary events, but also a new illness which was until that time unknown in Germany: leprosy. No medication existed. The sick were expelled from the villages. This kind of treatment of the sick was already commonplace during the times of Jesus. The German word for leprosy was „Aussatz“ (set out). Quite a large number of asylums for people afflicted with leprosy were established. St. Georg who had proven himself during the crusades (which were initiated by power politics under the cover of religion) was the holy man who the sick flocked to for help. He was trusted to have remedies against this horrible illness. The Georgskapelle too was connected to one of the lepers' asylums that were commonly built at major road crossings. This helped the lepers gain a bit of money through begging, It is of interest that not only lepers but also people with other skin diseases were expelled into these asylums. An infection of these people with leprosy was then only a matter of time.

Centerfold : Altar

The *Georgkapelle*, together with its affiliated asylum, had fulfilled its task by the middle of the 16th century, by which time leprosy had disappeared from Germany. In 1504, in Borgholzhausen, there were still documented cases of the disease, because the *Georgskapelle* was equipped with a new bell. This was supposed to help and intensify the efforts of the St Georg, the holy man. Today this bell serves as the clock bell that rings every hour: a reminder of those times and, in general, of people who are shunned by society.

The Church Site - A 'Wigbold'

A document dated back to 1095 mentions a village named 'Holthusun' and it is questionable whether this is today's Borgholzhausen. In 1246 we find this name again for a parish belonging to the diocese of Osnabrück.

Sometime during the time of the Basilica, this small 'Holthusun' (the meaning of the word is 'a group of houses at the brink of the forest') became the town of Borgholzhausen (from Burg = castle). In 1334 it was named Oppidum, which means: settlement with small defense works, in German a *Hag* or *Hagen* (the street name Klingenhagen is reminiscent of that time). In 1488 another name change took place: *Wigbold*.

The term *Wigbold* is typical for Westfalia. Castle and convent owners gave this name to parishes that had special duties such as taking care of war supplies including food, horses, weapons, Currier services etc. On the other hand the *Wigbold* residents had special rights and privileges, for example tax exemptions and the right to pass on property freely to their descendants as long as these were living in the *Wigbold*. They had permission to fence in their land with *Freedestenen* and *Freedepählen* (free stones and free posts), The name

Freistrasse (free street) is a reminder the freedoms that the inhabitants of the Wigbold Borgholzhausen enjoyed.

Originally, part of the Ravensburg jurisdiction belonged to Borgholzhausen: There was a pillory in the market place. Merchants gathered here and the town had a church and cemetery. In that way, life in the parish was free and not exclusively dominated by the church.

The Fifth Church: The Existing Gothic Church, app. 1340

Today's church was intentionally constructed as a parish church. During this time the power of the Emperor (Kaiser) was diminishing, So-called Kurfürsten (electors) had the right to vote an Emperor. The loss of power of the ruling class gave more advantages to the urban middle class and farmers.

The prosperous landowners in this area were wealthy enough to build their own churches and' chapels. The parishioners, however, wanted to be proprietors of their own church building in order to have some say in community matters', and began to build a' new church in the 2nd quarter of the 14th century after tearing down the old basilica.

The situation of the parish during the construction time of the new church is documented in the year' 1358. Mr. *Borchart*, a minister, and Mr. *Albrecht*, a knight, were mentioned, The fact that the minister is able to read and write is welcomed by the knight who apparently did not possess these skills. A Ghildemestere (money master) is the administrator of the church's properties. One can assume that the parishioners had also some autonomy in theological and religious matters. Since ca. 1200 laypersons were not allowed to receive the consecrated wine during church services and the people in Borgholzhausen are apparently angry at that, With the minister's consent it was decided that everybody should be able to partake of the Lord's Supper; it did not bother the participants whether the wine was consecrated or not.. This wine was simply called spolinghe (flushing) as the Host is flushed down with the wine. A true community church was then built in Borgholzhausen. Everybody offered some services and also members of the nobility donated money for the construction of the building, Nobody was missing the Basilica. Even though this new community church' was still accountable to the local bishop it had the independent characteristics of a parish church under the guidance of a knowledgeable and sympathetic minister.

The simple, free-gothic construction style met the expectations of the community. The floor plan was shaped like a cross, The steeple originally had two floors and a modest saddle roof. The turret was added later to house the St, Georg bell. The chancel (choir), donated by Margarete von Kerksenbrock, was added later in 1496, presumably as a replacement of an earlier one, and became a worthy site for the new altar,

The church vault was built in the old-fashioned, proven way: first the sidewalls were built with exterior buttresses, They were supposed to carry the weight of the vault. After that, scaffolding made out of tree trunks was erected in the interior space, Planks in the slightly larger shape of the future vault were added on top. Conically shaped stones were loosely placed on top of the planks. Soon after the middle stone was put into place the scaffolding was demolished which caused the stone vault to slightly collapse, a couple of centimeters. Supported by the buttresses and its own weight, this construction had sufficient strength to bear the weight of the loosely placed stones.

Vault and walls were plastered with a chalk mortar, Still moist, color fields and ornamentations were engraved by the church painter, color added. This style of painting is called *Fresco* (fresh) in contrast to *Secco* (dry).

During restoration in 1975/76, at the southern lower side of the first arch near the steeple, a part of these Frescos could be exposed. A darker nuance of the red and green ornaments and the white foundation paint shows the original color scheme.

Two images

Residues of a medallion painting can be seen in the apex of the arch, Citing Wilde Claussen of Borgholthausen: "The theme of the medallion is: a quarrel as a result of gambling and drunkenness leads to a bad end."

A mythical creature can be seen in the southeast corner of the vault. It represents a human, a pointed hood on his head, the body of a dragon, legs of a goat and a curved tail. This could be a joke of the church painter. It might be a little devil that went astray in the church,

Photograph: Mythical creature

The original windows were considerably smaller, They had been extended down vertically in 1875, The glass windows are of more recent origin,

The entry to the steeple is accessible through the organ gallery and is situated 5m above the church floor indicating that the steeple was used by the villagers as refuge in times of war. The steeple could then be reached by means of a rope ladder that could be easily pulled up later, The firing slits in the tower also point to this interpretation.

The roofing originates from the time of church construction, A couple of years ago, some beams had to be replaced though because a lack of ventilation had caused the wood to mould. The roofing style is reminiscent of roman craftsmanship, The master carpenter seems to have had good solid training.

Photograph: Roofing

The Interior Setup of the Church

The church has been home to a number of altars. Today's altar was placed on a Predella (sub-structure) made out of the same stone. Two wooden folding doors were installed on either sides and could be closed to cover up the splendor of the altar images during times of penance.

Coat of arms in the peripheral area of these doors belonged to the families of Kerksenbrock, v. Stael, v. Kneheim and v. Monnich. They show two married couples that died in 1501. The altar was donated to the church in memory of them.

The stone for the altar came from the *Dombau* quarries in Baumbergen near Havixbeck, northwest of Münster. Superficially, the material looks like sandstone but is in reality the rare Feldspat. This stone is extremely soft when harvested so that it can be easily cut with a knife, When exposed to the air it slowly becomes as hard as normal stone, This is how the altar could be carved using normal woodcarving techniques, This makes it one of a kind and no similar piece exists.

An older master carver of the *Flanders* School whose name is not known, together with his fellow craftsmen, were in charge of the work. The material arrived in Borgholzhausen in its raw state and was processed on site. It seems like the workers stayed in Borgholzhausen for an extended period of time, They portrayed 'the life of Jesus by means of local village imagery, placed into the turn of the 15th/16th century. Christian faith would not just blindly believe in events that had happened in a far away country, but wants to rather be lived in the reality of present times. Images of furniture, clothing, weapons, fences, table manners

etc, familiar' to the observer, brought the life of Jesus closer and made it more comprehensible,

Color was applied to the stone carvings right from the beginning, Mr. Gunther Stuchtey from Münster, the restorer, was unable to completely reconstruct the original color scheme but came remarkably close. The color scheme has definite symbolic meaning: red represents love, the lover as well as, the beloved, blue and gold are the colors for spiritual beings.

Yellow symbolizes hatred and lack of understanding,

The consecration of the altar took place during the politically tense times just before the Reformation, in the year 1501. Ash residues of oil fires can still be seen above the crosses in the *Mensa*. Luther's Reformation came to Borgholzhausen in 1535.

So far, schools did not exist. The first school was founded in 1617. Most members of the parish depended on information given to them by clergymen.

The *biblia pauperum*, the Bible for the poor, was created for the common people, Its pictures of biblical events were wood edgings and copper engravings. Characters were either recognized by symbols of their profession or by specific name abbreviations, The actual *reading* happened through contemplation of the depicted events. Understandably, only the rich could afford these picture Bibles.

The altars of Gothic times were also graphic representations of Biblical events functioning similar to the *biblia pauperum*. Worshippers could not follow any services held in the Latin language (Catholic services were held in Latin up to the middle of the 19th century), Altar images made it possible for the church visitor to at least attend a *pictorial sermon*, This became more urgent because sermons in the local language were rare in the 16th century. Religious education only began in the 18th century during the Age of Enlightenment.

The altar is divided into 13 parts and shows a series of sermons. Besides for mere cultural interest the visitor should take time for deeper contemplation and meditate on the depicted events. The prayer book begins on the upper left side describing the **Holy Supper**. It seems that the gathering for a joint spiritual meal was important to the artist and his patrons.

The following scene in the **Garden of Gethsemane** shows Jesus in charge of the situation, The bailiffs have to wait until He is ready to be taken away,

The **Flagellation** of Jesus wearing a crown of thorns is a vivid description of the horrible and sadistic behavior of his tormentors. Guilt can be easily washed off - as shown by **Pilate!**

It is overwhelming to see the serenity on Jesus' face carrying the **Cross**.

We will have to explain in more detail the picture of the **Crucifixion**:

The rider on the white horse injures Jesus with his sword helped by his sword carrier. According to the legend, the rider's name was Longinus, a blind Roman officer, one of the bailiffs. He had heard that Jesus could heal the blind and demands from Jesus to heal him too, Jesus refuses, Miracles cannot be forced! The blind Longinus cannot forget this rejection. As the legend continues, he heard of the crucifixion and was lead to Golgotha by his sword carrier. He will take revenge on the dying Jesus. The wound in Jesus' ribcage is bleeding and a drop of blood falls on the eye of Longinus. Instantly, he regains his eyesight, A miracle! With his left hand he covers his eyes, blinded now by the radiant light emanating from Jesus (the hand had broken off during the course of the centuries). In the moment of the bailiffs' death their little souls (*Seelchen*) escape out of their mouths, A creepy monster is waiting for the soul of the blind one who had not been able to see Jesus throughout his lifetime (bandaged eyes, head turned away), The other one was able to see Jesus. In meeting Him he understands the meaning of his own life and death. An angel therefore accompanies his soul to a, place of shelter, to God.

Picture of resurrection

Maria from Magdala (Maria Magdalena) is kneeling directly under the cross A low-cut dress and fancy jewelry depict her as a sinner. The fact that even a scorned woman like her is seen so close to Jesus should encourage some fundamentalists and moralists to think a bit deeper.

The **Burial Scene** is raising the question whether the Jesus' death can be seen as part of a greater order of Creation, of being born and perishing. Did death annihilate everything that he lived for?

The **Easter Scene** and the **Taking down from the Cross** may animate the visitor to reflect on Jesus as the preacher, the helper of the poor who demands the dedication of his disciples.

The Great Fish of the Jonas legend was model for the '**Descent into Hell**'.

Jesus' footprints are in the center of his **Ascension**. They are a symbol for his life from the beginning to the end of his work. This is to animate the worshipper follow the steps of Jesus even after his death.

The story ends with the **Pentecost Message** that all Christians (= Kreis = circle) belong together because they all speak one language. (If only all of us were able to do this!).

The **ornamental ribbon** under the altar is peculiar: We see symbols of the Holy Chalice: grapes, grape vines and leaves. At both ends monsters apparently would like, to devour these. Should this point to Spolinghe story (laypersons were not allowed to receive the consecrated wine...). Could this mean: beware of those who refuse to give you the holy wine, or, metaphorically speaking: beware of those who want to have control over your faith?

Photograph: Monster on the ornament band

The wedges on both sides of the Predella (sub-structure of the altar) show the Annunciation of Jesus' arrival to Maria by Archangel Gabriel.

In the recesses of the Predella we can make out: Father, Son and Holy Spirit; on both sides the twelve disciples with their tools:

Thomas	t-square
Andrew	slanted cross
JudasTaddeus	club
Jacob (The Elder)	pilgrims cane
S i m o n	saw
Peter	key
John	chalice
Bartholomew	knife
Jacob (The Younger)	flag
Philip	crosier
Mathew	ax
Judas I, Replaced by Paul	sword

The **side wings** of the altar are originals, During the baroque era, some gothic pictures had been removed with a rough plane and replaced by artistically inferior images, In the frame areas beautiful silver leaf ornaments painted in a gothic red could be restored.

The **baptism font** dates back to the Renaissance (ca. 1500). Please note that it is large enough to completely submerge the infants to be baptized. This was the custom in those times (see Luther's Baptism Notebook).

A **floor tile** made out of clay is inserted into the south wall of the Apse. It comes from Osnabrück. These tiles were serially manufactured, Our tile dates back to the 14th century when this church was built,

Little is left of the small **vestry** located at the east side.

A rare piece of art is the consecrated **Easter candlestick**. It was created in 1979 by the well-known Munich sculptor Karl Hemmeter and depicts an older person. In spite of long life

experience he is still searching for the light, He wants to know himself and the meaning of his life. He discovers the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus says: „I am the Light of the World” (Jh. 8,12).

Hemmeter also created the **Christmas Manger**. The inspiration for this work of art also came from Borgholzhausen: Candlestick and manger continue with the altar's tradition, the *biblia pauperum*, as the central focus point for quiet contemplation

The **Church Organ** was constructed in 1653 by the organ builder Hans Reinking from Osnabrück. The operation of the valves was mechanical. In 1931, it was 'modernized' to work pneumatically. In 1955/56 this system was removed, but, unfortunately, only few of the original registers remained. Due to low room temperatures, some of the old pipes were damaged and had to be replaced.

The **Vestry** houses the Ceremonial Cross that dates back to Gothic times. In it is engraved an image of Jesus on the Cross and symbols of the four Evangelists:

Mathew	man
Marc	lion
Luke	bull
John	eagle

On the north wall of the steeple one can see an **Epitaph** from 1575. A mother died in childbirth. Notice how babies were diapered in those days!

On the same wall you will also find pieces of the tomb of Gostia van Knehem. The family code of arms is engraved in one of the altar wings.

A niche between the two tombstones was dug out in 1955/56. In it is placed a book with names of Worldwar 1 and Worldwar2 casualties. On the inside next to the west door, we find the old **Flower Cross** that had formerly decorated one of the north gables. The stone had been so badly damaged that a replica of it needed to be installed.

Stones found in the other old churches are displayed under this flower cross: remains of the beam foundation 2nd Church), the last excavated stone (Apse Hall) and a column piece (Basilica).

All bells were manufactured in this century. The smallest of the three bells is made out of bronze, the two larger ones out of steel. They served as a replacement for two bronze bells (same age as the smallest bell) that were confiscated for use in the war industry.