

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 5 September 1972

CE/Nat (72) 51



EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION
OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Working Party on Flora, Fauna and Landscapes

EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

Weltenburg Gorge

Subject proposed by the
Federal Republic of Germany

N.B. Documentation sent to Secretariat by the
Bundesministerium für Ernährung, Landwirtschaft
und Forsten, under cover of letters dated
26 April and 17 July 1972

27.216
09.3

Introduction

The "Donaudurchbruch" is one of the most beautiful and impressive landscapes on the upper reaches of the Danube. Situated between Weltenburg and Kelheim, it forms part of the 1,400 acre nature reserve "Weltenburger Enge", Nature in all its grandeur, the water, rocks and woods, the great variety of rare plants and animals, the relics of prehistoric settlements, all contribute to make this place unique. For a distance of four miles, the Danube runs through a gorge cut through the Swabian-Franconian Alps. The passage worn through the rocks by the Danube is very narrow; rocky precipices, about 110 yards high, plunge down to the river-bed, 11 to 16 yards below the surface of the water. In some places the Jura rocks project, rising up like towers or walls with many crevices. Half-way along the gorge lies Wipfelsfurt, a calm bay shaped like a half-moon. Even vines and sweet chestnuts grew here. Vast, magnificent, mixed forests sweep down to the river bank in some places.

There is a mixture of nature and civilisation. Weltenburg, whose Benedictine monastery was one of the first in Germany, lies at the entrance to the "Donaudurchbruch". The monastery is said to have been founded by Duke Tassilo in the early 7th century. Its chapel is a splendid example of German baroque at its most original and is one of the best of its kind in southern Germany. Work was carried out by the Asam brothers and the chapel was finished in 1751. On the plateau opposite, during the last centuries B.C., the Celts laid out what is probably Bavaria's oldest industrial site. Iron-ore was smelted in primitive furnaces and to protect the site earth walls several metres in height were built, up to 2 1/2 miles long. Claudius Ptolemaeus, a geographer of antiquity, described its position in 140 A.D. According to a will of 1172, the Count Palatine Friedrich von Wittelsbach owned a country estate at Wipfelsfurt in the 12th century. In the middle of the 15th century, Antonius von Siegenburg built himself a small hermitage a little way downstream. This was later enlarged and became a Franciscan monastery, part of which was formed by one of the few remaining cave churches in Germany.

At the exit of the "Donaudurchbruch" lies Kelheim, formerly the residential town of the Wittelsbach family. The site was originally settled from 1000 to 800 B.C. The Befreiungshalle on the Michelsburg, just outside Kelheim, dominates the plain. It was built between 1842 and 1863 by Friedrich von Gärtner at the command of Ludwig I of Bavaria, in memory of the battle of Leipzig where for the first time in history all the German peoples united against a common enemy, Napoleon.

The "Donaudurchbruch" has something to offer to every visitor: to the nature lover, magnificent mountain scenery as well as the rare plants in the nature reserve; to those looking for rest and relaxation, a haven of peace and calm; to the historian, vestiges of Bavaria's historic past and to the connoisseur, baroque architecture at its best.

Name of place: Weltenburg Gorge Nature Reserve

Name and address of the organisation responsible for its management: Landratsamt Kelheim

Country: Federal Republic of Germany

(a) Type of reserve

Deeply cut rocky valley, part of the unnavigable section of the Danube, narrowing to 85 m., with numerous vertical Jura precipices.

(b) Scientific designation, characteristics and justification for conservation

Remarkable geological exposures of various white Jura formations (Malm). The geological situation is unique in Europe, the formation of Jura chalk being found only in the remoter parts of the gorge. Knowledge of this formation is indispensable to understanding the origin of the world-famous Solnhofen layers. The area is very suitable for scientific expeditions, the Altmühl Jura being particularly familiar to geologists.

The diversified xerophilous flora contains many rare species. Original mixed forests of oak, hornbeam, lime, ash and elder grow where the rock walls of the gorge widen out. The mixed leafy woods, alternating with rocky precipices, form an excellent habitat for certain rare bird species, such as the eagle-owl and the peregrine falcon, which nest in the Weltenburg Gorge.

(c) European interest of the application

All the neighbouring countries are interested in the beautiful scenery of the Danube valley. Moreover, after completion of the Danube ship canal and the Rhine-Main-Danube canal, the Danube will become of even greater European and international importance.

(d) Description of geographical position and/or sketch or tracing on map

The Weltenburg Gorge is about 30 km south-west of Regensburg. Map (1 : 25,000) in possession of the Secretariat.

(e) Photographs

Four photographs (one black and white, three colour) in possession of Secretariat.

(f) Conservation measures taken so far

First protective measures instituted by Ludwig I of Bavaria. Recent decrees:

Verordnung der Regierung von Niederbayern und der Oberpfalz vom 18.6.1938 über das Naturschutzgebiet "Weltenburger Enge" (Bayerischer Regierungsanzeiger Nr.186 vom 5.7.1938)

Landesverordnung über das Naturschutzgebiet "Weltenburger Enge" vom 14.5.1970 (GVBl. S. 256)
(see Appendix)

(g) References to published descriptions

Rieger, Kelheimer Heimatbuch, Verlag Leik, Kelheim 1954

Bleibrunner, Niederbayerische Heimat Landshut 1968

Erwin Rutte, geologischer Führer, Weltenburger Enge, Weltenberg Kelheim, Leik-Druck, Kelheim

A P P E N D I X

DECREE FOR THE NATURE RESERVE "WELTENBURGER ENGE", 14 May 1970

Pursuant to paragraphs 4, 12.2, 13.2, 14.2 and 15.1 of the Nature Protection Act of 26 June 1935 and paragraph 1 of the Decree for the responsibility of the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior regarding nature protection of 18 September 1948, the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior, supreme authority for nature protection, enacts the following decree:

Paragraph 1

That part of the Danube valley comprising the area between Weltenburg and Kelheim as well as the "Hienheimer Forst" of the Kelheim district (total length 4.6 km., average width 1.5 km. (sub-paragraph 2)) is to be entered in the nature reserve records and is to be put under nature protection on the day when the present decree comes into effect.

Paragraph 2

1. Enumeration of land holdings affected by the decree.
2. Description of boundary of territory concerned.
3. Deposit of maps showing official boundaries at the Ministry of the Interior, etc..

Paragraph 3

Under paragraph 16 of the Nature Protection Act (paragraph 16.2) it is strictly forbidden to make changes without special authorisation, in particular:

- (a) to degrade the nature of the soil, to construct new paths and roads, to change existing roads and paths, to carry out digging, boring, drilling or blasting operations or to make any changes whatsoever to the ground;
- (b) to construct buildings in the sense of Art. 2.2 and 3 of the Bavarian building regulations, even when such work is not subject to authorisation pursuant to the Building Act;

- (c) to change natural watercourses, river banks, ground-water level or water inflow and discharge;
- (d) to construct telpher railways or overhead power lines;
- (e) to introduce non-indigenous plants and animals;
- (f) to practice economic exploitations other than that permitted under paragraph 5;
- (g) to carry out deforestation.

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 15.1.2 of the Nature Protection Act prohibits:

- (a) the picking of more than a small bunch of wild flowers or the uprooting, digging out or damaging of roots, root stocks, tubers or bulbs; the prohibition concerning the picking, digging out or damaging of protected plants (paragraph 5 of the Nature Protection Supplementary Act of 29 June 1962, GVBI. p. 95) is not affected thereby;
- (b) wild animals - even though not covered under the Nature Protection Supplementary Act - are not to be persecuted, hunted or deliberately disturbed; it is forbidden to set traps, to catch or kill animals or to take away or damage eggs, cocoons, larva, nests or other breeding-places;
- (c) the throwing away or depositing of rubbish, sewage, sludge, stones, rubble, lumber, scrap, old vehicles, packing material or other garbage and the damaging or polluting of the area in any other way;
- (d) camping, making a noise, using radios, tape recorders, etc., if other persons are disturbed thereby; the prescriptions of the penal law as formulated on 3 January 1967 (GVBI. p. 243) regarding protection against noxious influences are not affected thereby;
- (e) driving motor vehicles of all kinds or trailers on paths, roads and places not open to traffic, or using such places and roads as parking lots;
- (f) using motor-boats on the Danube for sporting purposes;
- (g) shooting;

- (h) installing drawn or written posters or boards except those referring to the protection of the area or those used by the forest authorities; sign-posting of roads, local reference signs and warning boards can be installed only with the permission of the Office of the District President in Kelheim, which is the sub-authority for nature protection;
- (i) rock-climbing.

Paragraph 5

1. The following remain unaffected:

- (a) legally authorised fishing and hunting;
- (b) lawful land and forest exploitation, including deforestation up to 0.25 ha. However, buildings (Art. 2.3 of the Bavarian Building Regulations) and walls in concrete may not be erected without special authorisation as in paragraph 2; no drainage may be carried out without this authorisation even in the interest of the land and forest economy or of fishing and hunting;
- (c) the maintenance of waters as provided in Article 42 of the Bavarian Water Protection and Maintenance Act;
- (d) crossing of the "Weltenburger Enge" by motor-boat provided an individual licence has been granted by the responsible district authority (under paragraph 27.4.1 of the above-mentioned Act);

2. The Bavarian Ministry of the Interior in its capacity of supreme authority for nature protection may grant exemptions from the provisions of paragraph 3 of the present decree. The Government of Niederbayern, higher authority for nature protection, is empowered to grant exemptions from paragraph 4 (a) to (h) of this decree in important individual cases. The Office of the District President in Kelheim is empowered to grant exemptions from the provisions of paragraph 4.1 of this decree in order to promote the training and qualification of mountaineers. The issue of exemption permits may be subject to certain directions and injunctions.

Paragraph 6

Deliberate and negligent violations of the prohibitions set out in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the present decree and the deliberate or negligent non-performance of the instructions and injunctions set out in paragraph 5.2 of this decree will be punished in accordance with paragraph 21 of the Nature Protection Act.

Paragraph 7

1. The present decree is effective from 1 July 1970.
2. The decree of the Government of Niederbayern and Oberpfalz of 18 June 1938, concerning the Nature Reserve of "Weltenburger Enge" (Bavarian Government Gazette No. 186 of 5 July 1938) is cancelled; the nature reserve mentioned therein and entered as No. 1 in the Nature Protection Register of Niederbayern is deleted.

Munich, 14 May 1970

Bavarian Ministry of the
Interior
Dr. Merk, State Minister