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Nižbor Castle

Founded by the ruling Přemyslid dynasty (late 9th century–1306) in the middle of their deep woods traditionally referred to as the Přemyslid hunting forest, the nearby Křivoklát Castle used to play a fundamental role in the protection of the sovereign power of Czech princes and later on kings. Over the centuries the area saw many castles of different sizes added to the defensive system. One of them, Nižbor Castle was founded in the mid 13th century on a rocky point above the confluence of the Berounka River and Habrový potok Stream, probably by order of King Přemysl Otakar II (1253–1278).

By 1265 the Castle served as the administrative centre of the region. The rule of law would be maintained by the Burgrave. Transferred by King to Křivoklát was also the important office of the Royal Executioner, who would prosecute crimes and enforce judgements.

The early name of the Castle was Miessenburg, i.e. “Castle on the Miesse River”, Miesse (in Czech Mže) being German period name of the Berounka River. Despite its strategically well-chosen location above the river and its mighty fortifications, the Castle was seized by the Hussite troops in 1425.

The Castle was royal property until 1601 but would be habitually mortgaged or leased to the kings’ aristocratic creditors. From tenant to tenant it was becoming more and more comfortable for living until turned into a majestic baroque residence by the House of Wallenstein, who gained the property after the 1620 Protestant defeat and subsequent dispossession of the rebellious nobles. It was also then that the ancient St. Catherine’s Chapel was restored to be consecrated to the Elevation of Holy Cross in 1724. The House of Fuerstenberg became the next owner of Nižbor through marriage of Jan Josef Wallenstein’s daughter. After her death all the property fell to her son, Karl Egon I

Fuerstenberg, who in 1736 transferred the whole Nižbor area under the Rakovník region administration (which continued to nearly mid 20th century). The land reform of the 1920s made the Fuerstenbergs give up most of their property including Nižbor to the state. In the Communist era (1948–1989) the Castle fell into disrepair owing to poor maintenance. In 1996, it was gifted by the municipality, which started its gradual restoration. The Castle is a listed monument. In 2006 a wooden cross was erected and consecrated on a point below the Castle, offering magnificent views of the village and the River.

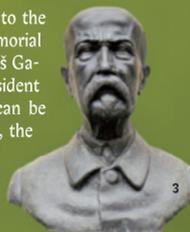
Celtic Culture Centre

The Castle houses the Celtic Culture Centre open from May to November. Its exhibits and multimedia projections show the historical movement of the Celtic people across Europe, bringing near their lifestyle, religion, and craftsmanship. The Centre has also become a traditional venue for celebrations of the major Celtic feastdays. It is administered by the Central Bohemia Institute for Care of Archeological Heritage. Contacts: +420 606 027 133, www.celticeurope.cz.



“Touring” Bust of TG Masaryk

In front of the school building (and next to the shop) the First & Second World War Memorial can be found, also featuring the bust of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, the first Czechoslovak president (1918–1935). The history of the sculpture can be seen as a “history of Czechoslovakia in brief”, the bust possibly holding a record in the number of removals and reunveilings:



- 1939 festively unveiled (on 5th March, that is, 10 days before the Nazi occupation);
- 1939 removed and hidden upon the Nazi invasion by local resident brothers, Josef and František Stehlík;
- 1945 returned to its original site immediately after the end of WWII;
- 1952 hidden by local resident František Janovský from the Communists wanting it removed;
- 1969 re-returned to its site;
- 1971 removed by the Communists and made over to the Beroun-based regional museum depository;
- 1989 festively reunveiled (on 26th December, that is, a month after the Communist regime fell), hopefully for good.

Astronomical Observatory – Let It Be Light!

The people of Nová Huť (Nižbor’s period name) were the first in the Křivoklát region to light with electricity, this fact going to the credit of a man who also left behind one of Nižbor’s present-day landmarks, the Observatory. The leading Czech astronomer Ladislav Pračka built it for his private use in 1910–11. All the lighting and operation of its astronomical appliances was powered by its own electric centre. The capacity of its sophisticated energy system allowed for signing a contract between Ladislav Pračka and the village council on electrification of Nová Huť in 1911. Soon, the locals could enjoy the blessing of the electric supply. Unfortunately, Dr. Pračka overestimated his financial possibilities and not long afterwards had to sell the observatory equipment and even the villa itself. It is certainly not by coincidence that the Observatory is found on the intersection point of the 14th meridian and 50th parallel (the latest measurement which diffidently disputes this, notwithstanding).



Glassworks Rüchl Crystal, a. s.

Opened in 1903, nationalized after WWII and returned to private hands after 1989, the Nižbor glassworks offers a wide range of cut lead crystal glass. Its production is exported all around the world, and also includes many state gifts, among them for Queen Elisabeth II and Pope John Paul II. For two decades there were made Czech Lions (Czech Film Academy Awards). The extraordinary skills of Nižbor’s glassblowers and glasscutters can be admired during a group or individual guided tour, which demonstrates all stages of both machine and hand glassmaking. In the factory shop you will certainly find a souvenir matching the momentary condition of your wallet. Contact: www.ruckl.cz; info@ruckl.cz.

Stradonice Graveyard, Grave of František Nepil



Walking along the graveyard chapel and reaching its end, you will find the grave of František Nepil (1929–1995), a famous Czech writer born in the nearby Hýskov. He used to have a holiday home in Stradonice and would very often write about his beloved local countryside in his books.

St. Liborius Chapel at local cemetery is a municipal property and in recent years had passed overall reconstruction.

Žloutkovic

Largely located on the right river bank about 4 km upstream, Žloutkovic contains a number of traditional folk timber houses, an 18th-century belfry, and scores of weekend houses, cottages, and huts. With the growing popularity of hiking and camping in the 1920s, Žloutkovic became a paradise for holidaymakers. To this day, the area remains one of the leading recreation centres of the Křivoklát region. If you take a walk across the railway bridge, you may inconspicuously observe the canoers swearing underneath at the typically low water levels at this point.



Celts at Hradiště: Oppidum and Coins

The Hradiště hill (380m above sea level) and the nearby village of Stradonice has earned a name in the archaeological world. Around 500 BC the area became strongly affected by the Celtic settlement. The Celts were the very first inhabitants of the Czech basin to be known by name. Coming from Western Europe, they would live in the local area for about 500 years (La Tène culture).

They started building settlements (oppida, pl.), and were skilled craftsmen, specializing mainly in pottery and bronze items. In addition, they excelled in trading and made their own gold coins, the so-called “rainbow cups”, the name of these being due to the fact that they would be typically found in fields, washed out by rain and brightly shining in the sun.

Superstition has it that a gold treasure will be found at the point of the rainbow touching the ground: “Where the corner of the heavenly bow stands, there a gold bowl falls down from the sky”.

The vast Celtic oppidum at today’s Hradiště hill used to be, according to many scholars the main manufacturing and trading centre of Central Europe. The findings show advanced levels of civilization and manual skills of the local population. It is to the “rainbow cups” that we owe the very discovery of the oppidum: when the economic depression of 1873 made a lot of people out of work, some would make their living by digging out old animal bones at Hradiště and selling them

as material to produce spodium (bone char used in sugar refineries). On 2nd August 1877, one of such diggers, Liborin Lébr, found a treasure of 200 gold coins on the site. His finding triggered a “gold rush”, during which the treasure hunters dug up all the area of the former oppidum. Reportedly, there would be up to 300 diggers a day, some of whom would even guard the stretches of land they had taken in with hunting rifles by night. And, it was not only antiquity hunters from Bohemia, Vienna and Germany who were streaming to Hradiště, but also curious holidaymakers from Prague.

Apart from individual coins, however, no treasure was ever found afterwards. What also started to gain attention then was the frequent findings of bronze objects and potsherds, many of which today feature leading European museums. The Celtic civilization on the Czech territory ended with the Germanic invasion at the turn of the Christian era: the Marcoman tribe burnt the oppidum down and replaced the advanced Celtic civilization with people who would dramatically lag behind for a very long time.

The most convenient route to reach the oppidum runs from the Stradonice graveyard following the information boards up to the top point – you can’t miss a wooden cross called “Prachový” (dust-like). Its name comes from the legend about a coal maker František Prach (“Dust”), who built a hut here and searched for a gold treasure. The Spirit of the Křivoklát forests, the horrendous Dyma, however, punished him by burning down his hut, sparing nothing but the cross, whose vertical beam keeps sinking deeper and deeper in the ground...



NIŽBOR
STRADONICE, ŽLOUKOVICE



This project is co-financed by the Central Bohemia Region

Středočeský kraj

Nižbor Today

Nižbor is a sought-after holiday and residential location, this being due to its unique natural setting, vicinity of Beroun and Prague, and easy access by road and rail. Nižbor's community facilities include a kindergarten, primary school, shop, petrol station, health centre and library. Sporting facilities include the "Sokolovna" community sports centre, football pitch, volleyball court and tennis courts. Cycling fans can try the BMX track as well as a network of cyclopaths crossing the village.

Also the municipality property, the Castle above the village is being gradually restored by the Council.

The devastating flood of August 2002 caused extensive damage to the local property, including destruction of the bridge across the Berounka River in the neighbouring Stradonice. As early as in April 2003, however, a new bridge was finished and the ribbon was cut by the Czech President. Apart from Nižbor (1,354 residents), the municipality also includes Stradonice (335 residents) and Zloukovice (235 residents).

Coat of Arms

Gules a bend sinister wavy argent between a king crown and an oak sprig with an acorn or. The king crown represents the royal castle, the bend sinister wavy the river and the oak sprig the original forest in the area. Of modern date, the coat of arms was created by Jiří Hás in 1995.



Natural Scenery and Landscape

Nižbor is situated in the Křivoklát hills, which did not acquire their final appearance until the Quaternary with the today's Berounka River and its tributaries moulding the local landscape in a highly characteristic way (the so-called "river phenomenon" with the water forming deep valleys between the surrounding mountains).

Another major landscape shaping force in the area was the woods. Historically part of the so-called "royal hunting forest", they were spared from the extensive deforestation over the following centuries. To this day the local woods are part of one of the largest areas of continuous forest in the Czech Republic's interior.

The area continues to be dominated by the oak, also depicted in Nižbor's coat of arms. Relatively uninfluenced by human activity and providing home to numerous rare plants and animals, it was declared the Křivoklátsko Protected Landscape Area in 1978 (<http://www.krivoklatsko.ochranaprirody.cz/index.php?lang=en>). Part of the neighbouring village of Zloukovice is the Kabečnice Nature Reserve. The territory of Nižbor includes the Vůznice National Nature Reserve.

The village lies on the Berounka River, and its height above sea level ranges from 235 m (Nižbor railway station) to 423 m (Hůrka hill above Zloukovice). Nižbor is the intersection point of the 14th meridian and 50th parallel.

Early History

Rather atypically of a village or town below a castle, Nižbor originally grew up at a foundry established in the early 16th century by the Castle holders, the House of Losy. People would start to flow in for work and build their dwellings in the surroundings. The growing village came to be named „Nová Huť“ (New Foundry), to be distinguished from the neighbouring „Stará Huť“ (Old Foundry, today's Hýskov).

The great flood of 1872 and the fall of the Vienna stock exchange a year later brought about the end of the ironworks, which closed down in 1875. The village retained the name Nová Huť (from 1925 "Nová Huť pod Nižborem", that is, New Foundry below Nižbor) until finally renamed to "Nižbor" in 1946.

The present name probably originates from the name of the village's landmark, formerly called "Miessenburg" Castle. Its name would gradually translate into Czech as Misenburch, Misenberg, Myzenburg, Nyznburg, Nyžburk, and eventually by 1785 as Nyžbor.

Fuerstenberg Crypt

The crypt of the House of Fuerstenberg can be found at the main road near the Castle. When Count Karel Egon I died in 1787, he was buried in the Castle church, like his ancestors. Nevertheless, as the ban on burials inside churches (by one of Emperor Joseph II's controversial reforms) was already effective by that time, his remains had to be taken out and laid to rest in the crypt.

Bust of TG Masaryk

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Astronomical Observatory

"Sokolovna" Sports Centre

Castle

BMX Track

"Zastávka" Restaurant

Railway Station

Glassworks

"Keltovna" Restaurant

Restaurant



Berounka River

Formerly often nicknamed "Black River", the Berounka River arises as the confluence of the Úhlava, Úslava, Radbuza and Mže rivers in Pilsen. Being the region's major stream, it drains most of its surface and underground waters. Every year hundreds of canoers go down the river. Nižbor offers a hiring place for boats and equipment (pujcovna@rekaberounka.cz), so a boat trip, or fishing and swimming in the river can become another form of your holiday or weekend pastime.

Marked Footpaths

Nižbor is a crossroads of four marked footpaths – yellow, green, blue and red:

- Yellow – runs through the picturesque valley of the Habrový potok (Hornbeam Stream);
- Green – runs to Nový Jáchymov;
- Blue – runs along the Výbnice stream, past the forester's house in Chyňava, and across Malé Kyšice to Kladno;
- Red – runs from Beroun across Zdejcina, Stradonice, Nižbor and Roztoky to Křivoklát;
- Yet another alternative is the 6km marked circular walk from Nižbor Castle to Stradonice Oppidum and back.

Cycle Routes

There are three cycle routes which cross Nižbor:

- 0049 Ploskov – Běleč – Nižbor;
- 0050 Karlova Ves – Zloukovice – Nižbor – Zdejcina;
- 0051 Rozcestí (crossroads) Pod Pelechovkou – Chyňava – Hýskov – Nižbor.

"Po stopách českých králů" Cycle Route: Beroun – Nižbor
About 5 km away from Nižbor further routes run through Zdejcina (0052) and Otročiněves (0053, 0054). As a matter of fact, all the Křivoklátsko region is crisscrossed by pleasant, not too frequented roads and pathways through the woods, where a good map will make a very valuable companion.

Food and Drink, Shopping

You can use the services of the "Keltovna" Restaurant (located by railway crossing, open all year round) or stylish Restaurant "Zastávka", which can be found next to the railway station and offers indoor or outdoor seats, non-smoking premises, accommodation in historical wagon or film screenings (open from May to October).

On the right side of the Berounka River you can find post office, shopping centre, "Světluška" confectioner's, petrol station and small refreshment stand on the bike path.

You can also find a pub in Zloukovice, in Stradonice – there are two pubs and one of them "Klamovka" offers food and accommodation.



Famous People, Interesting Facts

Founded in the early 1930s by scouts in the marvellous valley of the Výbnice stream, the local natural reserve became a destination sought out not only by scouts groups. The eminent Czech married couple of letters, Karel Čapek (1890–1938, writer, translator and journalist) and Olga Scheinpflugová (1902–1968, writer and actress), would also spend their moments of leisure here, accompanied by their dog Dášeňka, whom Czech children love to this day as the protagonist of Čapek's most famous children's book bearing her name in its title. In Čapek's days, the reserve was managed by the father of the famous Czech writer František Nepil (1929–1995).

The school building features the commemorative plaque of the village's native Army General Antonín Hasal (1883–1960), who subsequently fought for the nation's liberation from the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg rule (WWI), Nazism (WWII) and Communism (in his US exile from 1948). Also born in what is today's Nižbor was Dr. Emerich Maixner (1847–1920), one of the founding fathers of the Czech modern internal medicine. Famed around the world under her stage name "La Boema", the opera singer Gabriela Roubalová (1843–1922), who had spent her childhood in the village, moved to Australia later in life and eventually became director of the Opera in Sydney.

Places to Visit

Are you interested in the ruins of Castle Jenčov? Or in the Fossils Museum of Skryje? Or in the open-air Charcoal Production Museum of Lhota? Or in the Tipsport Laguna waterpark of Beroun? Or will you take the children by train to the singular open-air historical railway museum of Lužná near Rakovník? You choose.

Public Transport

Train: Nižbor or Zloukovice stations (on route Rakovník–Beroun).
Bus: line B from Beroun (served by PROBO BUS, a.s.).

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