

Levín Castle

Levín Castle used to stand above the Oleška River at a wooded rocky ridge stretching from the town of Stará Paka, along the village of Podlevín up to Levínská Olešnice called the Staropacké Mountains (600 m above the sea level). Levín represents the type of an economical nobleman castle with a palace being the main defence as well as residential building. The maintenance function was provided by the neighbouring settlement.

It is supposed that the castle was founded at the turn of 14th century possibly by a member of the House of Načeratice. We know a record referring to Naček of Levín, who is mentioned in a document relating to the sale of Kostomlaty. It is possible that Naček was the founder of the castle, as in a document of 1318 he is referred to as Naček of Konecchlumí. Further it is possible to find information about another owner of the castle, who was called Jakub of Levín and ruled the place between 1363 and 1375. However, we do not know if Jakub was a descendant of Naček's, or if he belonged to another family. After Jakub, there is a record mentioning Zdeněk of Hustířany and Levín as a co-patron of the church in nearby Olešnice. His activities there date back between 1380 and 1421. Until the end of the 15th century, Levín was the administrative centre of a small demesne, which included several villages headed by the suburbium, today's Levínská Olešnice. Probably as early as at the beginning of the 15th century the estate of Levín was united with the demesne of Kumburk with the administrative centre at the castle of Kumburk. Thus the castle of Levín lost its importance as the central seat of the demesne. The work of destruction was probably finished by the Hussite Wars, during which the castle dilapidated and was demolished – the walling was gradually being used for the buildings in the neighbourhood.

The layout of the castle consisted of two parts. The whole building was surrounded by a ditch and circumvallation, which was especially solid at the side that was most easily approachable and the ditch there was doubled. The entrance into the trapezoidal outer bailey was through a gate holed in the circumvallation across the ditch from the north-east side. In the outer bailey, no traces the original buildings have been preserved. The path there was turning rightwards, and across another ditch separating both the castle parts it was possible to enter the trapezoidal inner bailey. The northern part of the bailey was occupied by an oblong palace with an outbuilding, probably with a winding staircase at the front castle wall. In the opposite south corner, annexed to the corner of the castle wall, there used to be another, much smaller, building consisting of perhaps two rooms only.

Colours of the House of Levínský of Levín : silver, dark green with golden lining

Coat of arms of the House of Levínský of Levín : silver, single-tailed lion looking rightwards in a green field, golden coronet, silver helmet.

However, not much has remained of the castle up to these days – in the woods only bits and pieces of the circumvallation and ditches are visible and only a tiny pile of stones has remained of the castle building itself. In the place of the then outer bailey there is a campsite.

During several recent decades the appearance of gemstones near the castle and their ruthless mining resulted in serious damages to the castle ruins, especially to its outer bailey.

The interest of the local residents in the castle of Levín has been increasing over the recent years, in 1998 the local volunteer fireman group of Levínská Olešnice, supported by the municipality, started to regularly organise a summer festival in place of the original settlement to commemorate the acceptance of the village symbols, i.e. the emblem and banner of the village from the Parliament of the Czech Republic.

A red-marked tourist trail, connecting the village of Studenec, the hamlet of Podlevín and the town of Nová Paka, leads to the castle of Levín. You can also approach the castle from a nearby village of Levínská Olešnice: you will take a field path up the hill and after you reach the forest edge, in a short while you will get to the place where the castle used to be.