

# BRATWURSTS, VINEYARDS AND SUNDIALS

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In my younger days, I spent three and a half years with the Army in Germany. Since that time I have had a love affair with bratwurst<sup>1</sup> and at Edinburgh's annual Christmas Market I am always first in the queue at one of the German stalls to consummate our love.

In the summer of 2014, my wife Evelyn and I went for a short holiday once again to our friends, Margaret and Norman, who live in Luxembourg. One night after a short discussion of where to go the following day, I suggested that we head for Trier.



Fig. 1. Trier market cross.

Trier is an old city of Roman origin over the border in Germany on the banks of the River Moselle. I remembered that when I was there before, I had noticed a sundial on the market cross in the main square. Unfortunately I did not have my camera with me at the time, so was unable to take a photo. This would be another opportunity to get that photo. I had an ulterior motive of course – this would be a chance to meet my lover once again – the bratwurst.

The others knew what I was up to of course, but they agreed to my suggestion. We set off the next morning. It was a short drive of less than an hour and, on arrival in the main square, I was torn. Where should we head to first – sundial or bratwurst? Norman solved that problem by

saying that he fancied an ice-cream and the ladies agreed. As they headed for the ice-cream stall, I went next door for a bratwurst. It tasted as good as I had hoped.

Next stop was the sundial. It stands in the centre of the square on a tall circular column on a three-stepped square base. A large cross sits on the capital on top of the column, and the sundial is on the end of the cross's southern arm (Fig. 1). The sundial itself is painted red with a gold border and with gold hour lines from 8 am to 7 pm. However, only the hour lines of 10 am, noon and 3 pm are marked in Roman numerals of X, XII and XV. There are a number of Latin inscriptions on the capital and the cross.

Norman then suggested that we head for Bernkastel, which is a town about 30 miles further down river and is a well known wine-growing centre in the Middle Moselle. That sounded good to me. The River Moselle rises in the Vosges Mountains in France and flows through Luxembourg and then on to Germany where it eventually joins the Rhine at Koblenz. There are wine-growing regions on the Moselle in each of these countries, the most important of which is in Germany.

When I was in the Army, I spent two weeks in the area around Bernkastel and Cochem in 1966, and Bernkastel was the place where I first tasted wine. Not only that, I could remember a stall near to a bridge in Bernkastel where they sold the best bratwurst ever. I wondered if it would still be there.

The road from Trier to Bernkastel follows the Moselle, and on arrival at our destination we parked in Kues which is joined to Bernkastel by a bridge over the river. On walking over the bridge I was surprised to see a large glass circular sundial in the view down river (Fig. 2).

On closer inspection, it was a south-facing dial with "Bernkastel-Kues" at the top and Roman numerals from 7 am to 8 pm, with 9 am not marked. Was that a mistake or was there a reason for it? The Roman numerals were unusual, however. Eleven and twelve had the usual X, but with one dot above to denote eleven and two dots above to denote twelve. Four had what looked more like a Y than a V, with one dot below to denote four, whilst six, seven and eight had the Y with one, two and three dots respectively above. The dial appeared to be longitude-corrected for Central European Summer Time (CEST) (Fig. 3).

The figure in the centre of the dial, Cusanus (also known as Nicholas of Kues), was a German philosopher,



*Figs 2 and 3. Bernkastel sundial looking down river; detail of the dial.*

theologian and astronomer. He was made a cardinal by Pope Nicholas V around 1448 and died in 1464. I presume that he found his way onto the dial because he was a famous and important local resident.

And now for another bratwurst – would the stall still be there after almost fifty years? Disappointingly, not only did I not see the bratwurst stall, I didn't recognise anything! Ah well, fifty years is a long time.



*Fig. 5. The Wehlen sundial sitting high on the slopes of the vineyard.*



*Fig. 6. Detail of the Wehlen dial.*

It didn't take long to find another place to eat, though, and needless to say I had another bratwurst accompanied by a glass of local wine to celebrate my first taste of the stuff fifty years before.

Over lunch we pondered on our next move. Since it was a nice day, overcast but warm and dry, we decided to head for Cochem, another hour's drive or so down river. There were a number of routes that we could take, but although not the shortest option, following the river seemed to be the best bet. On this section, the Moselle twists and turns as it meanders towards the Rhine with vineyards on both sides of the river (Fig. 4).

We were only a few minutes out of Bernkastel just across the river from Wehlen, when I shouted "STOP!" Norman slammed on the brakes. "What's wrong?" he asked. "Nothing" I replied, "but I think I see a sundial". And there it was, nestling against a small cliff face near the top of the vineyard (Fig. 5).



*Fig. 4. The Moselle winding its way between Bernkastel and Kues. The sundial is just behind the white van on the bridge.*



Fig. 7. The Zeltingen sundial against the small cliff face.



Figs 8 and 9. Detail of the Zeltingen sundial (left); the small figure in the niche (right).

It was a white rectangular west-declining dial face with a ridged roof and black Arabic numerals from 8 am to 6 pm but no hour lines. There was a niche in the centre containing a female figure. It all looked to be freshly painted and in good condition (Fig. 6). Subsequent investigations when I returned home indicated that it had been installed in 1842. Around 1900, the vineyard took its name, Wehlener Sonnenuhr, from its sundial and by all accounts it produces outstanding (and rather expensive) Riesling wines.

We had travelled only another minute or so, to just before Zeltingen, and there was another one! It too was high on the slopes of the vineyard, again against a small cliff face (Fig. 7). This dial had certainly not been painted recently, but again was a white rectangular west-declining dial with black Arabic numerals from 7 am to 6 pm and hour lines (Fig. 8). It, however, had three circular holes at the top as well as a niche in the lower centre. This niche contained a tiny female figure – surely not the original (Fig. 9).

In Zeltingen the road crossed over to the other bank of the river, but as it twisted and turned this bank soon became south facing. It wasn't long, just before Urzig, when suddenly Norman braked and stopped the car. He had spotted a sundial on his side of the road – I think that the bug is catching! This time though, the sundial was just a

couple of yards from the road, on a ruined tower that was built into the cliff face at the foot of the vineyard (Fig.10).

It was a white rectangular south-facing dial, but with a fluted bottom and a sloping top. It had a large niche in the centre, this time containing a large religious male figure (a bishop perhaps?) and it had black Roman numerals from 7 am to 5 pm (Fig. 11).

A few miles further on, there was yet another dial, but this time there was a queue of traffic behind us and no safe place to stop. That was the last dial that we saw before arriving in Cochem, although I have since discovered that there are some others, but not on that section of the Moselle.

After we parked the car in Cochem, we walked towards the bridge. There it was – the bratwurst stall that I thought was in Bernkastel! My memory was not quite accurate, but after fifty years that's not surprising. I just had to have one, although the others declined. It was lovely, and the memories of my youth came flooding back!



Fig. 10. The Urzig sundial on the ruined tower built into the cliff face.



Fig. 11. Detail of the Urzig sundial.



*Fig. 12. The typically German Reichsburg Castle above Cochem.*

After a bit of sightseeing around this lovely town, including a trip up to the Reichsburg Castle (Fig. 12), it was time for dinner. We found a nice place and although bratwurst was available, I was feeling a little bratwursted out. However, currywurst was on the menu, so I decided on that with chips rather than on a brotchen. Currywurst is simply a

bratwurst smothered in ketchup and liberally sprinkled with curry powder. It was so good.

So that was it – a great day out with four bratwursts, five sundials and around sixty miles of vineyards on both sides of the Moselle. It couldn't have been better.

Actually, it could have been. I found out later that there was another sundial just off the main square in Trier. Not only that – do you recall the first sundial that we saw in the vineyard after leaving Bernkastel? It was on the opposite bank from Wehlen. It appears that Wehlen is known as the “place of a hundred sundials”. They don't actually have a hundred yet, but they are heading that way. There are photographs of many of them on their website [www.wehlen.de/sonnenuhren-location.html](http://www.wehlen.de/sonnenuhren-location.html)

Still, that'll be somewhere to go on our next visit to Luxembourg!

#### **NOTE**

1. German sausage, normally grilled or cooked on a barbeque, and served in a brotchen (bread roll – literally little bread).

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