



NÁRODNÍ
PAMÁTKOVÝ
ÚSTAV

CASTLE TOWER

52 METERS

245 STAIRS



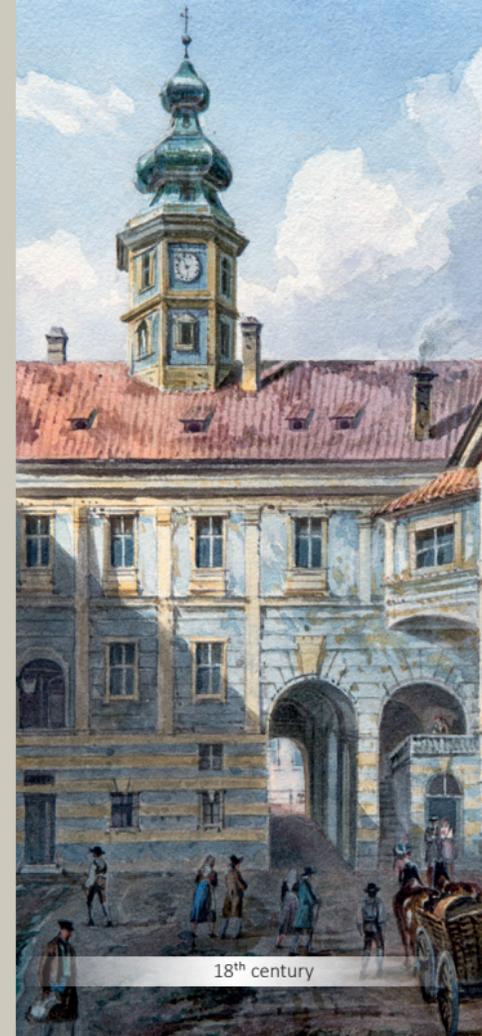


One of the symbols of Hluboká castle is a tall and robust tower. Like the entire castle, the tower has also changed its appearance several times. Hluboká castle was built in the 13th century as a Gothic castle fortress. Even then, the high cylindrical belfry-style tower was a highly visible feature of the castle. Unlike the donjon-style (keep) tower, the belfry was not usually inhabited in times of peace.

In the 16th century, the castle was rebuilt into a more comfortable Renaissance castle by the Lords of Hradec. In 1594, Adam II of Hradec ordered the tower to be demolished and rebuilt. The newly built tower had a circular floor plan at the bottom and an octagonal floor plan at the top. A tin poppy head was installed on top of the tower.



At the beginning of the 18th century, Adam Francis of Schwarzenberg decided to rebuild the castle in the Baroque style. The main castle tower was in poor condition before reconstruction. In February 1720, the tower was destroyed by an „unprecedented storm“. The tower became tilted and there was a danger it might fall. In the summer of the same year, it was repaired and a commemorative certificate was inserted in its tin poppy head. In May 1725, lightning struck the castle tower five times. The prince Adam Francis then ordered that the roof trusses be drilled and for the relics of the saints to be inserted into them. He also ordered pictures to be painted of the Saints Xaver, Florian, and Ignatius. These paintings were to be hung from the tower windows in case of imminent danger. Three years later, when the builder Martinelli was unifying the castle facades according to Baroque style, he built a niche in each cardinal direction. Each niche was equipped with a statue of a saint, made by the sculptor Josef Dietrich from Budějovice. Since then, the castle has been protected from fire by the following saints: Francis Xavier, Donatus, Florian, and John of Nepomuk. Lightning conductors were installed on the castle sometime before 1836, when they are demonstrably documented.





The castle was rebuilt into its current iconic Neo-Gothic appearance after 1841. The main castle tower also got its final appearance at that time. Originally, it was planned that only the tin poppy head would be removed from the tower, the masonry would be raised and the crown of the tower would be decorated with battlements. However, when the building adjacent to the tower was demolished, an unexpected disaster struck. On 20 April 1847, a number of cracks appeared in the tower. Three days later, smaller stones began to loosen and fall out. The very same evening, shortly after the tower clock struck six o'clock, the release of stones became so advanced that all the workers had to be recalled from the tower. After ten minutes and with a deafening roar, the tower collapsed to the ground. The rubble formed an almost regular cone and did not endanger the surrounding buildings. After the removal of the rubble, it turned out that the tower had no solid foundations and its stability was supported by a previously demolished part of the castle. During the works, a miraculously undamaged statue of St. John of Nepomuk was found in the rubble. The statue used to be in a niche at the top of the tower. The Schwarzenbergs decided to exhibit it because John of Nepomuk, was their family patron, and the statue can still be seen in the castle chapel today. Immediately after the removal of the rubble, the construction of a new brick tower began. This was completed in the following year (1848). At the top of the tower, Prince John Adolf II wanted to set up a camera obscura, but he probably never realized this idea. If the prince was present at the castle, the Schwarzenberg family flag flew from the top of the tower. The flag consisted of blue and white horizontal stripes.

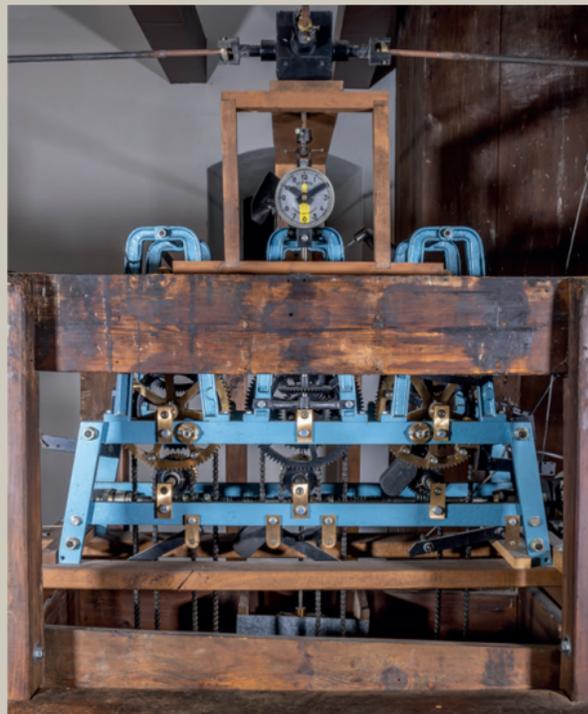
The castle tower is 52 meters tall on the courtyard side and 58 meters on the castle garden side. There are 245 stone and wooden stairs in the tower leading to the top.



*Statue
of St. John
of Nepomuk*

CLOCK

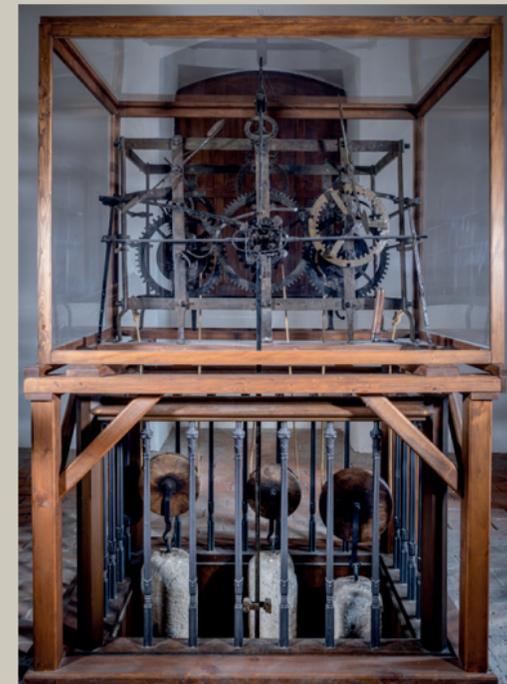
The first records of the tower clock come from the land register of the Hluboká estate from 1677. In 1707, this clock was already considered old and unsatisfactory, because „it worked very badly“. During the Baroque-style reconstruction of the castle, the new clock was installed in 1728. Due to the needs of the Schwarzenberg administration, this clock was able to strike every quarter of an hour. This Baroque clockwork machine, made by Mirovice watchmaker Jiří Delavasius, is now on display in a glass display case. The current clockwork machine, which visitors cannot see during the tour, was manufactured after the year 2000. It is said to be the last large mechanical clockwork machine ever made in the Czech Republic. Two Baroque “hammer-type” bells, dating back to 1727, are still used to strike the clock.



Current clockwork machine



*One of two Baroque
“hammer-type” bells*



Baroque clockwork machine

BELLS

The land register from 1677 also records the presence of bells in the castle tower. Before the Baroque reconstruction, the tower had “bells that were too old”, financed by Marradas during the Hussite and Calvinist period.” (A cut-out part of the bell with the Marradas coat of arms, dating back to 1629, is still on display before entering the castle chapel.) The old bells were removed in the 1920s and replaced by three new Baroque ones, decorated with the Schwarzenberg coat of arms and images of saints. They were consecrated in honour of St. Joseph, Donatus and St. John of Nepomuk in 1729. They remained in their places until 2nd September 1846, when they were removed as part of the last reconstruction of the castle and hung in the tower of the newly built Hluboká parish church. Until the last castle reconstruction in the 19th century, there was no church in Hluboká, and the local parishioners attended church service in the castle chapel every Sunday.



The section of the part of the bell with the Marradas coat of arms is now located in front of the entrance to the castle chapel. Baltasar Marradas was a nobleman, knight and imperial field marshal of Spanish descent. He acquired the Hluboká estate in 1622.

FIRE PROTECTION

As we have learned, the Hluboká estate owners were terrified of fires. Firstly, they protected the castle with prayers, relics of saints drilled into the trusses of the roof, with paintings and statues of saints. Later, in a somewhat more sophisticated way, they used lightning conductors. Fire prevention was also considered during the last reconstruction of the castle in the 19th century. For example, in the part of the tower where the attic is adjoined with wooden roof trusses, the staircase is narrow and made of stone to better deal with a possible fire. The entrances to the attic were equipped with iron doors as a precaution. The original red fire buckets are displayed at the water tank.

WATER TANK

Water from the Vltava River was fed into the large metal tank in the tower. This service water was used to flush toilets, and to supply the kitchen or the fire system. The tank water was probably used for the hydraulic drive of the castle elevators, until they were made electric around 1910.





Naděje pond

Kleť
1084 m ASL

Ohrada Chateau
Hluboká ZOO

Vondrov farm

Podhradský pond

Munický pond

Boubín
1362 m ASL

Baroque granary

Church of St. John of Nepomuk

Zliv

Temelín Nuclear
Power Plant

Castle riding hall
(Aleš South Bohemian Gallery)

Vltava River



Vltava River



Townshend International School



Church of St. Peter and St. Paul
(Hosín)

Vltava River

České Budějovice

