

Histor*ESCH*:

Histories of Esch Told in 25 Objects

HistorESCH: Histories of Esch Told in 25 Objects



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AS PART OF
E22 ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE
EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

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Histor*ESCH*:

Histories of Esch Told in 25 Objects

Edited by Joëlla van Donkersgoed and Thomas Cauvin

Colophon

A collaboration between:



AS PART OF



ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE
EUROPEAN CAPITAL
OF CULTURE

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This book and exhibition have been created for and by the Esch community, who have inspired us with their stories.

We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this collaborative project.

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Foreword

Thomas Cauvin

Project leader *HistorESCH*, University of Luxembourg

Loic Clairet

Director *Nuit de la Culture*, Esch-sur-Alzette

HistorESCH is a collective adventure that began in 2020 during meetings organised by the Esch municipal council that were attended by various players in the cultural sector. A shared interest in the history and culture of Esch inspired the organisers of the *Nuit de la Culture* and the research team behind the University of Luxembourg project **Public History as the New Citizen Science of the Past** to work together.

The objective was clear: to work with local people, clubs and associations to develop a better understanding of the town's past and its residents. *HistorESCH* was born. In addition to the exhibition **HistorESCH: Escher Geschichten a 25 Objeten erzielt** (*HistorESCH: Histories of Esch told in 25 objects*), this collaboration has resulted in the installation of a mural about the history of Lallange district in collaboration with a third partner Kulturfabrik (May 2022) and an audio tour that brings to life the history of key sites in Esch through testimonies from local residents.

Thomas Cauvin standing in front of the *HistorESCH* cabin during the *Nuit de la Culture*, 11 March 2022.

Photograph by J. van Donkersgoed





Picture of the ArtistESCH mural in Lallange, painted by the artist Mariana Duarte Santos.

Photograph by J. van Donkersgoed

Introduction

Joëlla van Donkersgoed Co-project leader **HistorESCH**, University of Luxembourg

The year 2022 will be remembered in the history of Esch-sur-Alzette as the year that it received recognition as the European Capital of Culture. And it is not just the cultural sector in Esch today that is being celebrated; this is also an opportunity to organise activities looking back at the cities dynamic industrial and migrant past. The aim of the **HistorESCH** project was to encourage the people of Esch to actively contribute to the way in which the history of their city would be presented to the public.

Alongside our ongoing conversation via the Fl'ESCH Back Facebook group, we organised a series of collaborative

community workshops to encourage people to tell their stories using maps or objects. Some of these stories have been recorded and translated and are currently available at four sites across Esch via a local phone number. When calling the number, these historical sites can be experienced through personal recollections (in Luxembourgish, French, English and Portuguese).

The objects presented at the workshops formed the basis of a crowdsourced collection that continued online at *historesch.lu* and at meetings organised by Boîte à Histoire. In June 2022, members of the public were able to vote for their favourite objects to represent the cities history. This exhibition catalogue presents 25 of the most popular objects, which will be on display at a free exhibition in Esch-sur-Alzette from 2 to 24 September 2022.



Photograph taken during one of the first community meetings co-organised by the REMIX PLACE team.

Photograph by J. van Donkersgoed



Instead of producing text panels for the exhibition, we opted for this catalogue to guide you through the various objects. It has been translated in Luxembourgish, French and English to make it accessible for the multilingual community in Esch. Information about the historical context of the objects was provided by the Advisory Board, who kindly took the time to work with us on the project.

The project would have been impossible without the support that we have received from the Esch community, who we have dubbed our Citizen Historian Circle (CHiC). We are grateful for the enthusiasm, trust and time that they have given us. We hope that this *HistorESCH* exhibition is not the end of a project but rather a celebration of the links we have created and an impulse to continue our dialogue and collaboration in the future.

The second *HistorESCH* audio tour sign, placed at the site where Luxembourg's first aerodrome once stood.

Photograph by J. van Donkersgoed

“This slag is a symbol for the tons of slag that was found at the excavation Op der Gleicht. It is a witness that even long before the discovery of the Minett stone 150 years ago, iron ore was melted in Esch.”

**Dimensions**

9 x 8 x 5

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Piece of iron slag

Donor

AHME

Date

Roman period



Excavation conducted by the Amis de l'Histoire et du Musée de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette (AHME) at the Titelberg oppidum between 1980 and 1993.

Archives Johny Karger – AHME

This object was amongst the tons of slag found during the Op der Gleich excavation led by the Amis de l'Histoire et du Musée de la Ville d'Esch (AHME) association. Slag is a by-product that occurs when ore is smelted to produce metal.

This piece of slag bears witness to the long history of iron production in Esch. Although it does not look like much, such pieces of refuse from the smelting process are proof that iron has long been produced in this area. Centuries before the development of the iron and steel industry in the 19th century, the Celts and Romans produced iron in furnaces in the Esch region, south of the current city limits.

“The Merovingian sword was found in an area in Esch known as Um Klaeppchen.”



Dimensions

5 x 49 x 0.5

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Merovingian sword

Donor

AHME

Date

c. 7th-8th century

This Merovingian sword is part of the collection of the Amis de l'Histoire et du Musée de la Ville d'Esch. Not much is known about the sword other than that it was found during an undocumented excavation of the area known as *Klaeppchen*. This name first appeared on a map of Esch in 1670, and it refers to one or multiple elevation(s) on an area of land. *Klaeppchen* may therefore refer to a landscape with burial mounds, and this sword might be one of the grave goods.

In the 6th and 7th centuries, there were numerous Merovingian burial landscapes around Esch. The Merovingians were the descendants of the Germanic tribes that conquered the area previously governed by the Romans. Merovingian tombs with lavish grave goods have been found in several places in Luxembourg, most notably in Bertrange, but also in other districts of Esch such as Op der Gleich. This excavation was conducted by the Musée National d'Histoire et d'Art, which unearthed ten tombs including a sarcophagus.



Excavation conducted by the Amis de l'Histoire et du Musée de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette (AHME) at the Titelberg oppidum between 1980 and 1993.

Archives Johny Karger – AHME

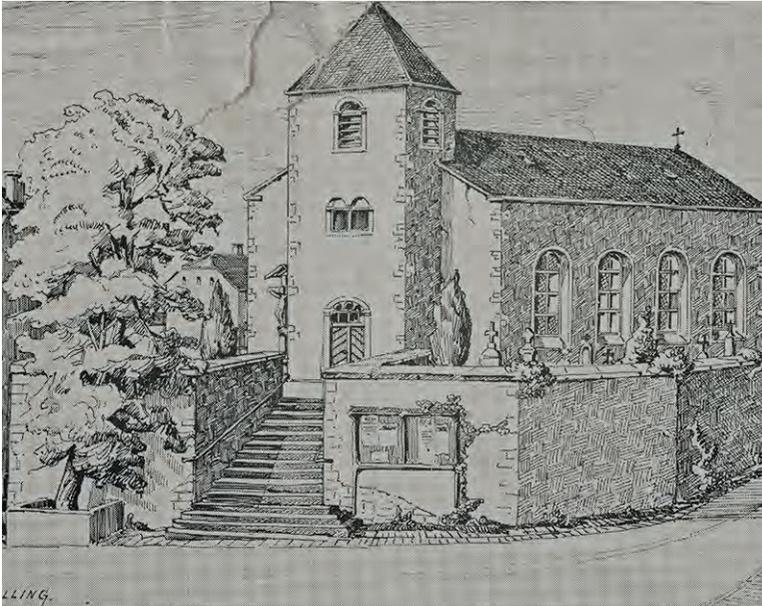
Church rooster

Donor

AHME

Date

Early 19th century



Print by P. Schilling depicting the first church in Esch.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

This rooster once stood on top of the church steeple of the first church in Esch-sur-Alzette. It is one of the few remains of the church of Saint Jean Baptiste (John the Baptist), together with a few statues that are currently housed in the church of Saint Joseph. The church only existed for a hundred years, as it soon became too small at a time when the population of Esch was growing rapidly. This distinctive rooster stood at the top of the tower.

In 1878, the church building on the Grand-Rue was replaced by a school. It stood where the main square of

the village was once located and where the market was held. This object shows that Christianity played a central role in people's religious and social lives. In Esch, processions were organised that resembled lively street parties. Each parish had its clubs and activities for young people, and rivalries therefore developed between the different church communities.

“I can’t imagine how people used to do this: they often had to go to church, but for the old Esch residents this meant walking all the way to Schiffflange. Esch has only been a separate parish since 1742.”



Dimensions

52 x 30 x 73

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Absinthe dispenser from Café Wagner-Leick

Donor

Patrick Miller

Date

Early 20th century



View of the street of Café Jos Wagner -Leick, taken between 1920-22. The café is currently called the Café Pitcher.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

This absinthe fountain is engraved with the name and description of the café: "Jos Wagner-Leick. Vins et Spiritueux en Gros. Telephone 73. Esch-sur-Alzette". It was created especially for this café by Georges Long in Paris, who was the best maker of absinthe fountains at that time. On top of the lid there is a pineapple finial, which symbolised hospitality and friendship.

This type of fountain was (and still is) the preferred way to prepare absinthe. The waiter would bring the dispenser to the table and the customer(s) would pour the absinthe themselves. Absinthe was one of a number of alcoholic beverages sold by Jos Wagner and his wife Marie Leick. Since its construction in 1904, this building has always been used as a café. It currently houses the popular Café Pitcher, but it has been known by several names over the years.

“After the first glass of absinthe you see things as you wish they were. After the second you see them as they are not. Finally you see things as they really are, and that is the most horrible thing in the world.”

Oscar Wilde



Dimensions

22 x 22 x 57

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Plate depicting Bel-Val spring

Donor

Anonymous

Date

Early 20th century



**Picture of the mineral
watersource Bel-Val.**

Archives de la Ville
d'Esch-sur-Alzette

This is a small plate that depicts not only shows an aerial view of the factory buildings of the Bel-Val spring, but also the inside of the factory hall where men and women worked to bottle the water. The plate belonged to the grandfather of the donor, who owned a bar and also sold bottled water from the spring. The Bel-Val spring was located in Belvaux, where it was first accessed in 1891. The spring began to be exploited in 1935 by the Société Anonyme générale des eaux minérales de Bel-Val.

Thanks to its excellent quality (rich in minerals and iron), the water of Bel-Val quickly gained a great reputation as table and medicinal water. Bottled water (and later

lemonade) was shipped to North and South America, Africa and China, contributing to the international reputation of the Bel-Val spring. From 1929 onwards, the demand for Bel-Val water decreased as a result of competition from foreign mineral waters and especially the pollution of the land from the nearby ironworks. Sales decreased so much that the company had to stop production in 1935.

“A very delicious medicine. Speciality:
hygienic lemonade made with
mineral water.”



Dimensions

14.5 x 14.5 x 3

Photography

Joëlla van Donkersgoed



“The miners went to the *Zechenhaus*, the miners’ house. From there they could go underground with a little train singing miners’ songs. I saw them going but had no idea what they were going to do underground.”

Esch resident

Dimensions

12 x 12 x 27

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Carbide lamp

Donor

Diana Ascani

Date

First half of the 20th century



Carbide lamps, also known as acetylene gas lamps, have long been used all over the world. They consist of two chambers connected with a valve, one filled with water and one with calcium carbide. A screw is used to regulate the flow of water from the upper container. The water and calcium carbide react to produce acetylene gas, a hydrocarbon that burns to produce a clear flame.

This type of lamp is especially useful in mines because it is resistant to shocks, mud and moisture. Light was essential to perform the work in the mines. These carbide lamps worked better than oil lamps that were used previously. Esch was particularly associated with mining technology. In 1853, Daniel Buchholtz opened the hardware store Buchholtz & Ettinger in the Rue de Luxembourg. In 1904, Buchholtz patented his first carbide lamp, which he named "Reform".

Photograph of a miner from the Hiehl mine holding a carbide lamp.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

Schiacciapatate

Donor

Getrude Spogli Castellani

Date

First half of the 20th century

“In the old days, the men had fun in the clubs and the women made the pasta.... Today, we wouldn’t cook for those men, right?”

Esch resident

**Dimensions**

29 x 9 x 11

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt



This is a *schiacciapate*, a tool to mash potatoes as part of the process to make gnocchi. It was given to Viviane Farneti by her husband's grandfather, who was from the Marche region in Italy. Italian culture and cuisine are very important in Esch. Many Italians arrived as early as the 1890s, attracted by the promise of work in the steel and mining industry.

By the 1950s, Italian migrants and their descendants formed a large community. As well as working in industry, they also opened restaurants, cafés and pasta factories such as Evilux and Crescentini, ran dance halls such as Café Viola, and contributed to the glory days of the *Jeunesse Esch* football club.



Postcard showing a gathering of the Italian community for the visit of Cardinal Ferrari, Archbishop of Milan, to Esch on September 16, 1908.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette



“We didn’t only have the mines; before then we were farmers. The theme of the farm is still part of children toys, with figures of donkeys, bears, wolves and sheep. These are images that remind us of our relationship with nature.”


Dimensions

21 x 17 x 1

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Child's workbook

Donor

Odette Bruch

Date

1932-33



This child's workbook is a reminder of time spent as a child with few worries about the future. It also speaks of parents having to leave their children at a crèche to earn a living for the family. Odette explained that her parents moved from France to Esch in search of a higher salary. The family moved regularly, but they had more children than pieces of furniture!

As the Esch population grew from 1890 to 1930, the city needed to build new nurseries and schools. Two new nurseries opened in 1927 and 1929 and were run by the Sisters of the Congregation of St Elizabeth. In 1946, a crèche was opened in the villa in Parc Laval for children aged 2 to 4.

Photograph of the crèche housed in the villa in Parc Laval.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

Key to the city hall

Donor

AHME

Date

1937



Photograph taken during the inauguration of Hôtel de Ville in Esch-sur-Alzette.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

This cushion and ceremonial key were designed for the grand inauguration of the city hall (*Hôtel de ville*) in 1937. The silk cushion was created by women from Rue de Luxembourg, and the city emblem was hand-painted on it by a teacher. The cushion also depicted a view of Belval, the industrial site that provided much wealth to Esch-sur-Alzette.

The grand opening of the city hall was a celebration of Esch-sur-Alzette as an important economic and political

centre in Luxembourg. The key was presented to the socialist mayor Hubert Clément by a 7-year-old girl. At that time, Clément was also editor of the *Tageblatt*, an Esch-based newspaper that originally started as the *Escher Tageblatt*. It is currently the second most popular newspaper in Luxembourg.

“The dress she wore had only been worn twice before: at a reception at the palace and at her aunt’s wedding.”



Dimensions

35 x 45 x 9

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

“I carved some from 25-cent coins. I did it at home. I started work in 1942, when there were Germans in Esch. I could have got caught doing it because it was considered a criminal act by the Gestapo.”

Esch resident



Dimensions

2x2.5 / 3x1.5 / 2x2.5 / 1.5x1

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Esch resistance pins

Donor

Michel John

Date

1940-44



Patriotic photo montage of Luxembourg created between 1940 and 1941.

Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains

These pins were carved out of coins and worn as a symbol of patriotism during the German occupation from 1940 to 1944. It was quite risky to wear these pins because it was considered a real provocation to the Nazi occupiers. Wearers were even at risk of being sent to a concentration camp.

memory of the people of Esch. In their daily lives, they expressed their dislike of the Nazi regime, sometimes discreetly but consciously, and emphasised their patriotism towards Luxembourg and the Grand Ducal family.

The Second World War and the Nazi occupation of Grand Duchy of Luxembourg play an important role in the

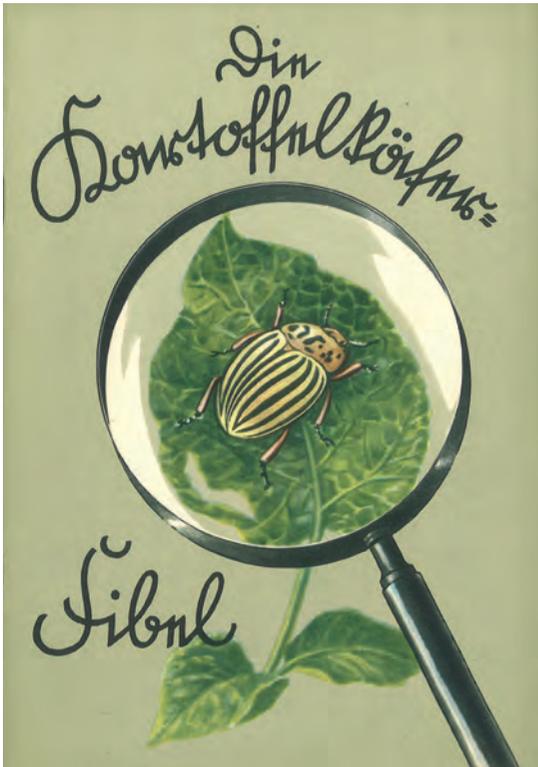
Sticker of a Colorado potato beetle

Donor

Camille Robert

Date

1940-44



This sticker shows a Colorado potato beetle, an insect that was brought over from America and devastated crops throughout Europe. Potatoes were an important food source for the population, and food was already scarce because of the war. The Nazi occupiers therefore introduced a programme whereby all primary school classes in Luxembourg had to collect these insects in bottles. Each potato field was recorded on a cadastral map.

The task was carried out for three weeks in a row by the same class on the same fields, to eliminate the bugs effectively. The children had to line up and each child had to check a row of plants, inspecting each plant thoroughly and collecting the yellow-and-black-striped insects and their red larvae in a bottle that was to be given to the Nazi supervisor who accompanied the class. Each child who handed in a bottle containing “Kartoffelkäfer” received a badge to stick in their biology notebook.

Image of the Colorado Potato Beetle created during the beetle infestation by Dr. Helmut Köstlin and Hans Zoozmann for the Reichsnährstand.

Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains

“The children had to line up in a row so that every child could search one plant at a time, feeling the leaves of the plant with their hands.”



Dimensions

6 x 4.5

Photography

Joëlla van Donkersgoed

“When she saw prisoners, my mother would make sandwiches, then she would call me so that I could take the food to them. They knew me because of it. So one of them gave me this toy as a thank you.”

**Dimensions**

35.5 x 13 x 3

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Toy created by an *Ostarbeiter*

Donor

Gilbert Weber

Date

1942-44

***Ostarbeiter* barracks near Esch-sur-Alzette in 1943.**

ANLux, Collection de photographies en relation avec la Seconde Guerre mondiale



This wooden toy depicting two animals using a hammer was made by an *Ostarbeiter* during the Second World War. *Ostarbeiters* were the 4,000 people from the occupied territories of the Soviet Union and Poland who were forcibly put to work in the iron and steel industries by the German occupiers.

During the war, the steel industry in Esch played an important strategic role for the Germans.

The first *Ostarbeiters* entered Luxembourg in October 1942 and were placed in barracks called *Ostarbeiterlager*. One of these camps was located near the current site of the Raemerich roundabout. Although locals were forbidden to communicate with the *Ostarbeiters*, some gave them food or clothes to make up for their lack of food and poor living conditions.

Ironing tool

Donor

Jean-Paul Tintinger

Date

Mid-20th century

This iron belonged to a woman moved from Aix and Paris in France to Esch in search of work. Ironing is a skill that had been passed on from her mother and grandmother. She found employment in a dry cleaner, where she used the iron to perform her work duties.

The iron is a part of material history of the working population in Esch. It reminds us that these were not only iron and steel industry workers that inhabited the region. The livelihood of the city depended on a wide range of other professions, too. The iron tells a story of an (overwhelmingly) female home-keeping skill being turned into gainful employment and, thereby, adds an important aspect to understanding the history and role of women in the region.



Ironing room in the hospital in Esch.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette



“My grandmother had several irons of different sizes, which were heated on the kitchen stove. She checked the temperature with a wet finger each time.”



Dimensions

18 x 9 x 10

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

“It was my grandfather’s and it still works. It came from ARBED, who gave it to him after many years of service.”

**Dimensions**

6 x 4.5 x 1

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Engraved gold watch

Donor

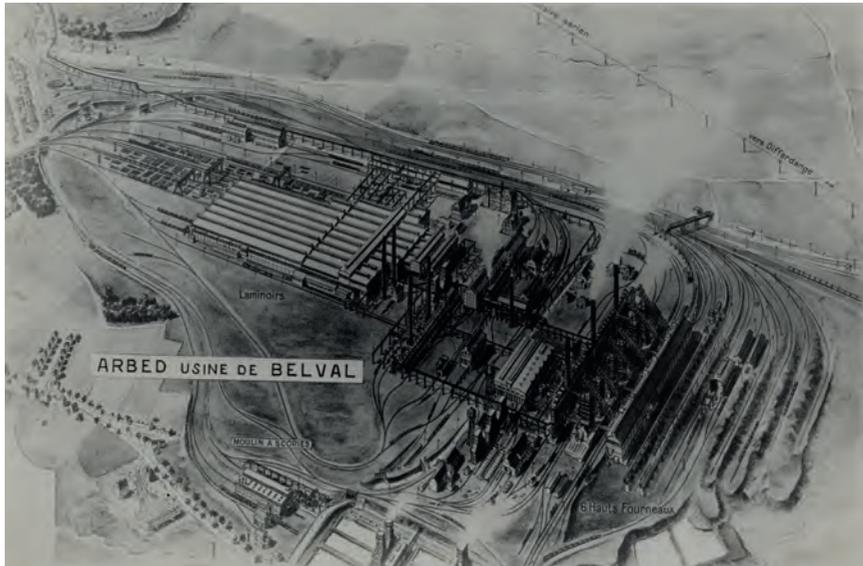
Odette Bruch

Date

1950s

Print showing an aerial view of ARBED's the industrial complex Belval.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette



ARBED presented all workers with a gold watch for their 30 years of service; either a wristwatch or, as here, a pocket watch. The watch is engraved with the initials NB for Nicolas Bruch. His granddaughter received the watch after his death. It is a Swiss Omega brand watch made in the 1950s. Mr Bruch started to work at ARBED when he was 14, working his way up to the rank of obermeister.

(1946-1974). Many families in the city were associated with ARBED. Anniversary gifts to mark a period of service were a way of encouraging workers' identification and loyalty to their company.

ARBED (Aciéries Réunies de Burbach-Eich-Dudelange) was founded in 1911 and was a main driver of the economy of Esch-sur-Alzette. In addition to the steelworks and blast furnaces, there were administrative buildings, service villas for the director and engineers and workers' housing districts in the city. The watch dates from the golden age of Luxembourg industry, known as *Les Trente Glorieuses*

Coffee tin from Café AWEC

Donor

Anonymous

Date

1950s



This coffee tin was sold by the company Albert Weisen et Compagnie (AWEC). The company was founded in 1899. It sold colonial goods in bulk and was located in the Rue de la Fontaine in Esch-sur-Alzette. Among the items sold were coffee and also local and international beers. In 1924, the company increased its capital from 750.000 to a million francs, which was sold off in 250 stocks.

The café, or *Kaffi*, as a place for social gathering is a deeply rooted tradition in Esch. Cafés were not only places where workers would come to unwind after a hard day's labour; many were also connected to socialist and trade union movements. Some cafés had a dual function, like Café Viola, which at night was turned into a "dancing".

View of the Avenue de la Gare, including the tram tracks and pedestrians.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

“Pierre Heck was a coffee roaster in the Rue du Brill after the war. The smell of the roasted coffee filled the narrow streets and remains in our memories today.”



Dimensions

14 x 14 x 19

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Alcyon women's bicycle

Donor

Maria Hamling

Date

1957

This bike was bought in 1957 by Marie Hamling with her first pay cheque. She used it to ride to work at the shoe factory in Tétange. For residents of Esch, the bicycle was one of the main means of transportation. Many people went to work – especially to ARBED – by bicycle. In the

1960s and 1970s, there was always a flood of bicycles at the factory gates when a shift ended at 6am, 2pm or 10pm.

“A bicycle used to be an object of great value, especially for getting to work.”

**Dimensions**

170 x 103 x 54

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Photograph showing the Rue de l'Alzette.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

But cycling also represented a leisure activity, as many participated in or watched the bicycle races that passed through the area, such as the Flèche du Sud or later the Tour de France. "Cycling reminds me of the era of the Luxembourg cyclist Charly Gaul, the best cyclist of all time."





“The first beer was served on August 10, 1896 at the price of 0.23 francs per liter.”

Philippe Voluer 1993, 120.

Dimensions

entre 45 x 36 x 14 / 11 x 11 x 3

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Collection of objects from Brasserie Esch

Donor

Patrick Miller

Date

1950s-1960s



Picture of the Brasserie d'Esch (previously Brauerei Buchholtz), located next to the church of Marie-Reine

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

This private collection of bottles and other objects from Brasserie Esch points to the deeply rooted tradition of beer brewing in Esch. Although its rival Battin, founded in 1937, is much better known today, this brewery was established first, in 1893. At that time it was known as the Buchholtz brewery, named after its founder Daniel Buchholtz, an Esch-based merchant of irons, hardware, household goods, heating appliances and cement.

The brewery was located in the north of the city, near the Lallange district, on the site where the new Cactus supermarket is currently being built. Near the brewery,

an artificial pond provided ice in the winter for the large underground cellars. Goods were transported by a dozen horses owned by the brewery. Competition became more and more difficult after 1945, and to increase profits the brewery decided to produce a lemonade called *Libellor* in 1960. However, the competition was too much, and it closed down in 1969.

Signal lamp

Donor

Charlotte Molitor

Date

c. 1960

This type of lamp, also called *Rammendicks*, was used for signalling by railwaymen. The word refers to *Rammen* a word for the mine car, and the French word *disques*, referring to the coloured discs that would be placed in front of the lamp's side windows. The green was used to give the order to depart, the red to indicate stop. The front panel was white to provide light for the wagons. Both the station master and train driver had lamps like this.

From the 19th century onwards, the railway played a very important role in the Minett region for the transportation of people and goods in industry and mining. It also contributed to the economic development of Esch-sur-Alzette. The Bettembourg-Esch line opened in 1859. Narrow-gauge trains transported iron ore to the ironworks in Esch.

Steam locomotive with four workers at the Katzeberg mine.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette



“My grandfather was a driver of the locomotives that went into the mine tunnels.”



Dimensions

8.5 x 11 x 21

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

“I was there the day they took the last load of ore out of the mine and brought it into the furnaces. There was a big ceremony with the music of the Harmonie des Mineurs”

Esch resident



Dimensions

30 x 21 x 17

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Helmet from the Harmonie des Mineurs

Donor

Diana Ascani

Date

Second half of the 20th century

Photograph of the Harmonie des Mineurs performing in front of the ARBED headquarters in Luxembourg city.

Harmonie des Mineurs

The traditional black miner's helmet and musician's uniform symbolise the link between the mining industry and the community life of the workers. The Harmonie des Mineurs performed at many local events, including national day celebrations, carnival, and Catholic holidays such as Saint Barbara's Day (4 December), the feast day for the patron saint of miners, a very important symbol in the region for the steel industry.

The Harmonie des Mineurs was founded on 12 April 1920 by twelve ARBED miners from the working-class district of Hiehl. During the "golden age of mining" in the 1930s, the band had 40 musicians and 20 students. The end of mining in the Minett region marked a turning point: in 1967 the Katzenberg (Collart) mine in Esch-Ellergronn closed and in 1981 the last mine in Luxembourg, the Thillenberg mine near Differdange, closed.



**Dimensions**

8 x 9.5 x 2.5 / 5.5 x 4 x 1

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

“Personally, I always had my cigarette roller in the upper pocket of my blue work coat. To keep the tobacco fresh, one could put some potato peelings in the box.”

Tobacco kit

Donor

Roby Gales

Date

1960s-80s

This tobacco kit reminds us of a time when workers and miners used to smoke heavily in the workplace. The 1960-1980s were the decades when smoking was globally fashionable. ARBED's merchandise department was on board with this trend, developing these tobacco kits for workers so they could carry them in their pockets. ARBED later adapted its policy and banned smoking, as was the case in many other workplaces.

ARBED has been involved in a number of projects aimed at improving workers' health. For example, when there was a spike in tuberculosis cases in the early 1900s, it provided rehabilitation for workers. ARBED also supported the creation of a *Waldschule* (forest school) for children to mitigate the effects of air pollution.



Rolling mill worker smoking a cigarette while working.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

Plaque to commemorate the 1200th anniversary of Esch

Donor

Jean-Paul Tintinger

Date

1973



This plaque was created in 1973 to celebrate the first mention of the settlement of Esch 1200 years previously. This first written source is from 773, when the farm “Villa Hesc” was donated to the Abbey of Echternach.

Esch officially became a city in 1328, when John the Blind granted the settlement the status of “free city”. In 1906, Grand Duke William again conferred the title of city on Esch-sur-Alzette, in recognition of its growth during the industry boom. Many people think this is where the history of Esch starts, but this plaque reminds us of a longer history.

Old print entitled “Esch auf die Alset” on page 137 of the register of the Abbey of Echternach from 1597.

Archives Nationales de Luxembourg

“This object reminds us of a forgotten time: the first written document in which Esch is mentioned.”

Esch resident



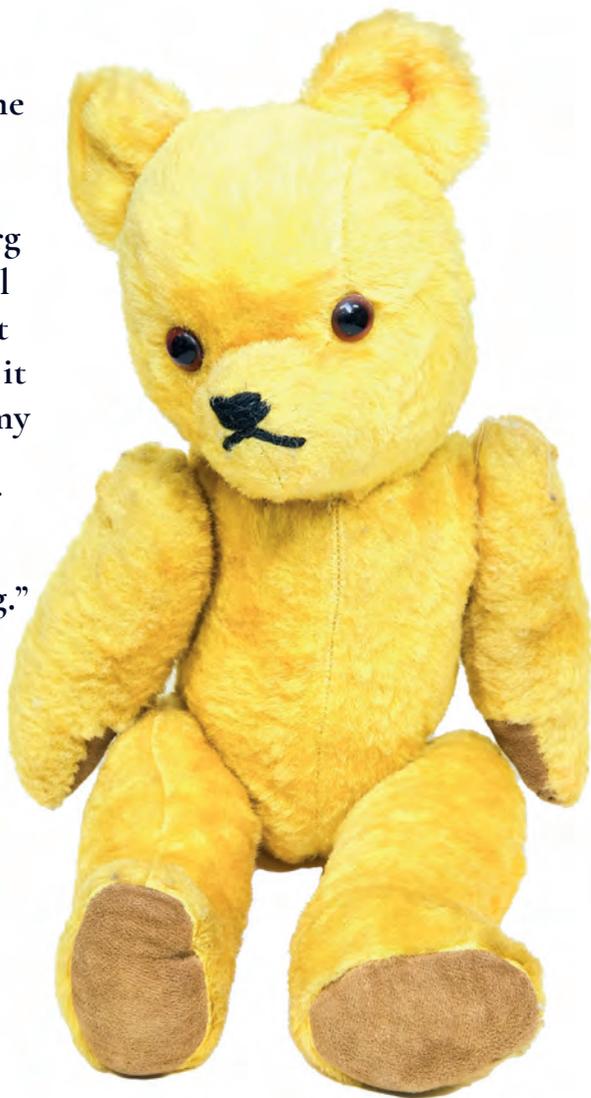
Dimensions

16 x 20.5 x 1

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

“First, I hardly knew the man who brought me the teddy bear. My father left for Luxembourg when I was still a little girl. But now I treasure it as a gift from my father and for the memory of following him to Luxembourg.”

**Dimensions**

15 x 17 x 27

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Teddy bear

Donor

Anonymous

Date

1970s

Photograph from June 1923 of the “Esch-Grenz” Scout troop, whose members mainly came from the Italian community.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette



This teddy bear was a gift from a father who had to leave his family in Umbria, Italy, to find work in Luxembourg. He gave this teddy bear to his daughter during one of his visits to Italy, since his wife had remained there with their daughter until employment could be found for her in Esch. One year after the gift was given, the family was reunited in Luxembourg.

In almost every industrial town in the Minett region, including Esch, there emerged an Italian quarter with

Italian shops selling food and clothes and Italian being spoken on the streets and casually mixed with Luxembourgish. The bear brings a personal touch to the history of migration and shows how it affected the private lives of families who were separated by the need to make a living.

Sculpture of a *Feierstöppler*

Donor

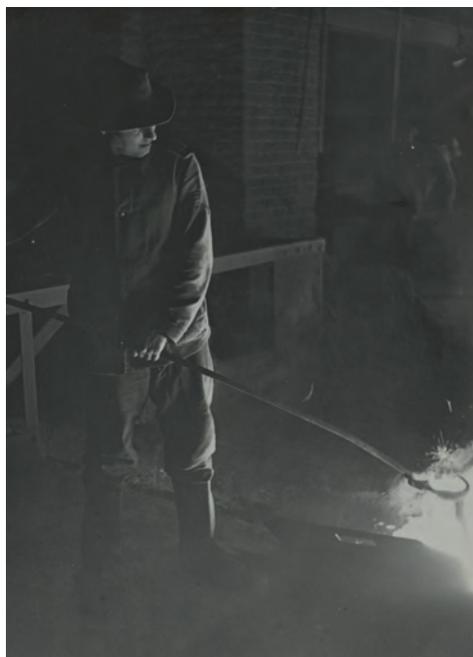
Brenda Biltgen-Hansen

Date

1990s

Photograph of a worker taking a sample during the steel casting at the steelworks.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette



This iron sculpture is an example of a *perruques*, a term used for objects made by workers from materials and tools taken from the factory for their personal use. Creating these *perruques* was very popular among ARBED workers. This particular object represents the *Feierstöppler*, depicted as a worker either shovelling coal into the furnace or opening the blast furnace tap hole with a steel bar.

The silhouette of the *Feierstöppler* worker was popularised between 1924 and 1991 because it was depicted on the Luxembourgish one franc coin. The image was created by the Luxembourg painter and sculptor Auguste Tremont, who used the worker Mathias Gaasch as his model.

“But how do you get the *perruques* out of the shop? I asked the sweeper guy, as he could go in and out as he pleased. We came up with a plan and got it done. And everybody was doing it. Everyone was helping everyone else, it was give and take.”



Dimensions

21 x 21 x 1.5

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

“The most amazing thing is that it was a very small neighbourhood of workers, mostly miners, who created the Jeunesse.”

Esch resident



Dimensions

80 x 100 / 130 x 17

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

Jeunesse football shirt

Donor

Jerôme Kneip

Date

Late 1990's



Photograph of the Jeunesse Esch football ground, with the Barburg housing and industrial works in the background.

Archives de la Ville d'Esch-sur-Alzette

This shirt was worn by Johny Thill, a defender for the football club Jeunesse. The club was founded in 1907 as *Jeunesse la Frontière d'Esch*, referring to the border area in the south of Esch. Many members of the club lived in this neighbourhood, which was mostly populated by workers from the mines or ARBED steelworks.

The area had a large Italian migrant community, and it is therefore not surprising that the shirt is similar to that of Juventus in Turin, Italy.

In 1918 the club changed its name to Jeunesse Esch and in 1921 it won its first championship. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Luxembourg City clubs Union and Beggen dominated the league. In order to become more competitive, Jeunesse adopted the motto "E staatkt Stéck Minett" (Here Stands a Piece of Minett). They recruited the best players from the Minett area, which increased the quality of the team's play overall and fired up the rivalry with the other local football club, FOLA.

Piece of the “Venise-sur-Alzette” film set

Donor

Isabelle Dickes

Date

2001



Picture taken during the open day of the film set for *Secret Passage* on 8 September 2001.

Zinneke at lb.wikipedia

This piece of film set was saved from the rubbish heap by Isabelle Dickes, a costume designer and collector in Esch-sur-Alzette who was there when the set, dubbed “Venise-sur-Alzette”, was disassembled. Construction work on the set began in 2001 on the site of the former Terres Rouges steel plant.

Around 800 people were involved in the set, making it the biggest film production site in Europe at that time.

The film set was created to imitate the Italian city of Venice, as it was cheaper to build a replica of part of the city than to film in Venice itself. The set included canals and palaces and was designed to resemble Venice in the 16th century. Italian craftsmen were even brought over to make gondolas like those that would have been used at the time. Several films used the set, including *Secret Passage*, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *The Merchant of Venice*.



“The producers had contacted all the employment agencies in the Greater Region. Every person who could hold a hammer was engaged.”

Jean-Claude Schlim

Dimensions

26 x 30 x 9

Photography

Jo Diseviscourt

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Bibliography

The information in this exhibition catalogue is the result of a collaborative writing process with members of the Advisory Board. The list below includes some of the resources that were used to write the texts, but it is not an exhaustive list of the historical accounts that have been written about Esch-sur-Alzette.

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