

## **Stone witnesses: field crosses and wayside shrines**

### **Way signs on the districts of Durmersheim and Würmersheim**

The crosses and the wayside shrine in the village and in the district were founded and erected out of a deep religious feeling. They are of high historical value, they give clues to our ancestors and their lives and are testimony of their time and their landscape.

The locations of the crosses were certainly not chosen by chance, but were deliberately set up in their place. Most of the crosses were erected as field crosses outside the town on the country roads to Karlsruhe, Rastatt, Au, Ettlingen and Malsch.

Some crosses have changed their original location because they stood in the way of road relocations and road widening.

There are 11 crosses and 1 wayside shrine in Durmersheim and 3 crosses in Würmersheim.

The religious monuments have very different forms and functions.

For our community we have the division into:

Stone crosses and crucifixes:

- Niche crosses
  - high crosses
  - High crosses with plastic Christ figure
- wayside shrines

### **Stone Crosses**

This group of monuments, the so-called stone crosses, can be found in roughly the same form throughout Central Europe. They are rough crosses carved freely from the stone, usually no higher than one to one and a half metres.

The material comes from the immediate vicinity of the site and is here in Durmersheim the easily machinable red sandstone.

Stone crosses were erected as commemorative signs of the dead or as atonement for a manslaughter committed or at the site of a fatal accident. The signs on the crosses almost always refer to the profession or status of the victim.

They are typical legal monuments of the Middle Ages.

### **Crucifixes**

During the 30-year-war (1618 - 1648) none of the medieval monuments in our homeland survived, apart from the small hidden stone cross on the *Stiegelberg*.

After the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, after the end of the conflict between the two Christian denominations, everyday and religious life returned to normal.

In the Catholic areas, land monuments were erected again. Especially the cross was placed in the landscape by the faithful as a sign of Christ - as a sign of salvation from great need.

In the beginning, the majority were simple niche crosses without the plastic form of the crucified one, but often with reliefs of Christian symbols. The niche was used to set up a saint figure, a light or, in the case of corridor processions, as a corridor altar to accommodate a monstrance.

In the 18th century, the previous niche crosses were largely replaced by the high crosses, often with a plastic shape of the crucified. As a rule, they are up to 5 meters high and thus visible from afar as a sign.

Later on, the mourning Mother of God is depicted more and more frequently, and quite rarely the disciple John.

In the Baroque period, at the end of the 18th century, the bases of the crosses became higher and higher, bigger and bigger. more curved. They were adorned with inscriptions of prayers, notes on foundations and decorations.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the sense of style changed, and as a counter-movement to the Baroque and Rococo periods, the crosses were more oriented to classical forms, to symmetry and clarity.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the crosses were designed under the influence of the neo-Gothic style, with particular emphasis on the pedestals.

After the 2nd World War crosses were set again, of smaller size and this time predominantly made of granite or artificial stone.

### **Symbols on the cross**

The skull and the two crossed bones are not to be signs of death and transience, but signs of the overcoming of death by the death of Christ - for on the bones of Adam was erected the cross of Christ, redemption from original sin.

The five wounds of Christ (heart, hands, feet), even more symbolically the flaming heart and the tools of suffering (hammer, nails, pliers, ladder, jug and scourge column) are weapons of Christ for the victory over death and devil, are symbols of the work of redemption.

A typical regional appearance in Mittelbaden are winged angel heads on the high crosses. They show the compassion of heaven for the Passion event, the victory over death and devil and are symbols of the work of redemption.

### **Wayside shrines**

A wayside shrine consists of a shaft anchored in a low pedestal. It carries an attachment with a niche for a saint figure, a relief plate or a picture. The wayside shrine is associated with events that are still known today, such as accidents or other incidents, for example in Durmersheim.

### **Founder and Foundation of the Crosses**

The foundation of a cross was made out of veneration of the sufferings of Christ. It was the need to thank, to pray and to atone, and it was certainly meant as a remembrance.

For most of the crosses and the wayside shrine, the founders engraved their names, the notes of the founders, the year of erection and the inscriptions of prayer in the base or shaft of the crosses and the wayside shrine.

The circle of founders probably belonged to the upper class of the village, because the production and erection of the stone crosses was associated with considerable costs.

Some crosses had church congregations or even the political congregation built.

In 1749 the priest Jäger compiled a list of the field crosses and wayside shrines in the districts of Durmersheim and Würmersheim:

1. a cross made of wood at the Mörscher Markung, by Pastor Grote in Mortar donated
2. has a cross made of wood, so by Joseph Tritsch of Durmersheim straighten
3. such in the way of Durlach, from Adam Klein errchtet
4. a cross made of stone on the Hardt, not far from the stately one. Schaafhofes, "as it is said, of all the misfortunes that have befallen strangers there.  
People are supposed to have been set"
5. two stone wayside shrines at the Ettlinger Weg, unknown by whom erected
6. a wooden cross at the "Serren", so made by Peter Baader
7. the same on Malscher Weg, made by Nikolaus Kiefer
8. an identical one at the Muggensturmer Weg

From Würmersheim there are 3 listed, a stone cross on the way to Durmersheim and two wooden crosses in the village and on the way to Au.

During the cemetery design crosses were and are erected as hope for the resurrection.

On churches crosses were erected as a symbol of Christian world mission on the occasion of missions carried out.

### **Maintenance and care**

According to the Monument Protection Act of Baden-Württemberg, way crosses and wayside shrines are cultural monuments as testimonies to popular devotion, the preservation and maintenance of which is in the public interest.

The aim of the monument conservation cooperation is to preserve way crosses and wayside shrines, which in our landscape are mostly made of sandstone, as far as possible in their original material substance and in their essential characteristics.

Weather damage, mosses and lichens, wilful destruction and, in recent years, increasingly environmental influences have led to stone decay, colour weathering or blasting off of the soft sandstone.

Necessary repairs, the replacement of parts, the strengthening of soft material, the hydrophobing to protect against rainwater, the replacement of the original by a copy and also location changes must be clarified with the State Monument Office.