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Limes Luxemburgensis

The *Limes Luxemburgensis* is the 1772 demarcation of the Bambesch Forest with 94 stone markers, of which 65 have been located and photographed. The year 2022 marks the 250th anniversary of its construction.

1772 demarcation of the city of Luxembourg

The chief engineer of the Fortress of Luxembourg, Nicolas de Jamez, was tasked in 1772 with demarcating the city of Luxembourg. A set of four maps were produced in duplicate and duly signed by all parties concerned. One of these maps covers the Bambesch Forest, where 94 stone markers were laid, each with an inscription consisting of a unique consecutive number (1 to 94), the letters **LL** and the year **1772**. The inscriptions face towards the Bambesch.

The parts of the markers visible above ground are about 30 cm in height, but the buried parts are approximately one metre deep. There is one marker lying horizontally on the ground near marker 53, which provides an idea of what the buried parts are like.

To date, 65 markers have been accounted for. The 29 missing markers correspond to built-up areas, probably buried as moving a stone weighing 200 or 300 kilos is no easy task. Indeed, that was the intention in the first place – to make them difficult to move. Some missing markers might be visible in people’s private gardens: in the Reckenthal (markers 1-12), rue des Sept-Arpents and rue Jean-Pierre Huberty (markers 90-94).

Markers were placed every 84 metres on average, though the distance ranges from 41 to 220 metres. Most markers are located along paths and are easily visible; for example, along the Maarkewee (“Marker Path”), though they may be shrouded by vegetation or forestry works. Most markers further away from paths are accessible by walking through the forest, though in some sections thick vegetation makes walking difficult.

The Dräi Häre Maarken (“Three Lords Markers”) was a tripoint of the city of Luxembourg, Strassen and Her Majesty’s forest. It comprises four markers: a triangular marker (the tripoint proper) and one marker for each lord. Only marker 40 is part of the *Limes Luxemburgensis*; the others correspond to the other two lords and have different inscriptions (year 178?).



Marker 31 of the *Limes Luxemburgensis*.

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1772 Demarcation of the City of Luxembourg, overlay of the four maps stitched together.

250 years of lively history

The markers' 250-year history has been a very lively one. To provide just some examples, they have been: taken to a museum and replaced with a replica (88); replaced without trace of the original (60); moved, with a plate indicating the original position (58); moved without indicating the original position (70); turned around (33); knocked around (25) and knocked over (72). Some are missing, probably buried, and a few have perhaps been taken as souvenirs. Weathering and the materials they are made of suggest that some markers have been replaced at different times; recent replacements are obvious because as they are clearly made of composite material, some even with an inscription indicating the year (e.g. CC1997).

Maps

The Bambesch map is in French, like the other maps in the set. The cardinal points at the edge of the map read: Septentrion, Midi, Orient, Occident (north, south, east, west). There is an error: Orient and Occident are switched around. The compass rose has an error of about 40 degrees. The map includes the numbered markers, distances between markers in toises (1 toise = 1.949 meters), the scale (400 toises), and a statement that it was produced in two copies dated 25 October 1772, among other details. One of the two original copies is kept in the Luxembourg City archives and the other in the Luxembourg National Archive.

The four maps of the 1772 demarcation have been digitally stitched together and overlaid (put on top of a contemporary map). From the resulting overlaid map, the positions (coordinates) of all 149 markers have been estimated; 94 Limes Luxemburgensis markers, and 75 markers for the rest

of the city. Most of these 75 markers are in built-up areas and probably lost. Most Limes Luxemburgensis markers have been preserved because they are in the forest and not in built-up areas.

Walking the Limes Luxemburgensis as a mindfulness experience

In terms of mindfulness, the experience of walking the Limes Luxemburgensis is similar to that of walking through labyrinths like the Chartres labyrinth, with additional ingredients such as: forest bathing (shinrin-yoku); the rosary bead effect of the markers, each with its own personality; and physical exercise in a very accessible place. Even a modest clearing in the least accessible part of Limes Luxemburgensis will greatly improve the experience. Just select a Limes Luxemburgensis section and walk back to the starting point. The full circuit is about 10 km long and takes about 2.5 hours to walk.

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References

For details mentioned in this text, see the website www.limes.lu.