

Dennis Wheatley Field Trip No. 3 - Traben-Trarbach

Prelude

Although the Field Trip proper did not start until our arrival at Traben-Trarbach, opportunities for DW research began a few days earlier in our holiday as we progressed through Germany. We had decided against visiting Cologne, as research had led me to believe that the hotel in the Cathedral square at which DW stayed en route to Traben-Trarbach probably didn't survive wartime bombing. So we joined DW's route a bit further up the Rhine at Konigswinter.



Neither research at home nor a tour of the town produced any evidence as to the location of the 'Grand Hotel Mitter' where DW lunched on 11th May 1913, but we were able to follow in his tracks up the Drachenfels mountain for splendid views of the Rhine. Coffee in a paper cup on the terrace was a poor substitute for the peach bowle which DW enjoyed here in the company of his father, and Herr Julius Kayser, who had joined them that morning in Cologne. (TYMS, p191)

From Konigswinter we proceeded up the Rhine to Koblenz, and there found a hotel mentioned in The Young Man Said. DW and his father stayed at the newly-opened Bellevue Hotel, where Herr Kayser had booked rooms for them all, on the 11th and 12th of May 1913. (TYMS, p192)



It was here, on Whit Monday that DW met Julius Kayser's eldest sons Juli and Oscar, and Pia von Emert-Kohl, who would all prove good companions for him over the next six months. Although apparently in good repair, the hotel building – from whose broad second-floor terrace DW watched a spectacular fireworks display over the Rhine – seemed in its centenary year to be closed down and disused. So we were unable to enter the building and investigate further.



The terrace, which DW remembered as being on the first floor, is actually at second-floor level. (TYMS, p194)

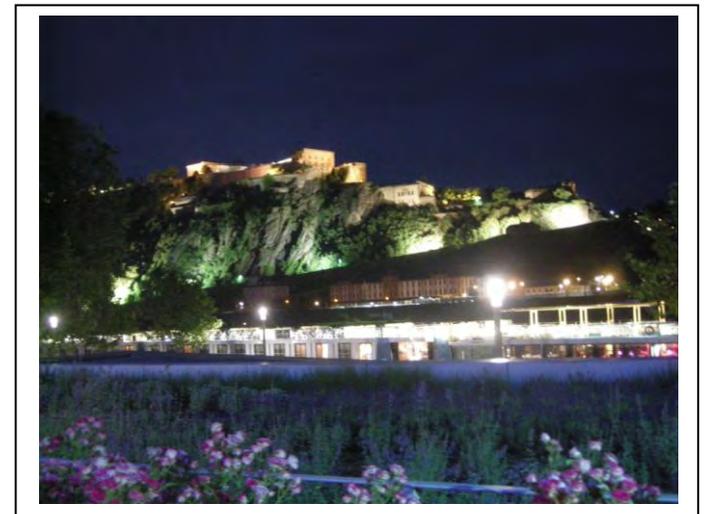


A few hundred yards along the riverbank we took a cable-car (installed for a horticultural festival two years ago, but now scheduled to remain until at least 2020) across the Rhine and up to Ehrenbreitstein fortress which had provided the illuminated backdrop for DW's fireworks display. This evening we found it home to a free rock concert, where we enjoyed a refreshing drink.



Fireworks over the Rhine - perhaps in 1913?

And Ehrenbreitstein fortress illuminated in 2013.



The following morning found us revisiting the Deutsches Eck (German Corner), an area shaped like the prow of a ship and marking the junction of the Moselle and the Rhine. Here, in August 1910, DW's father and grandfather posed for a photograph with Julius Kayser and Max Seitlow in front of the equestrian statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I. The original statue (erected in 1897, the year of DW's birth) was removed after being badly damaged at the end of the Second World War, and was replaced only in 1993 following the re-unification of Germany.



The Deutsches Eck, where the Moselle (left) flows into the Rhine.



The original statue of Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1910, and the replacement in 2013.



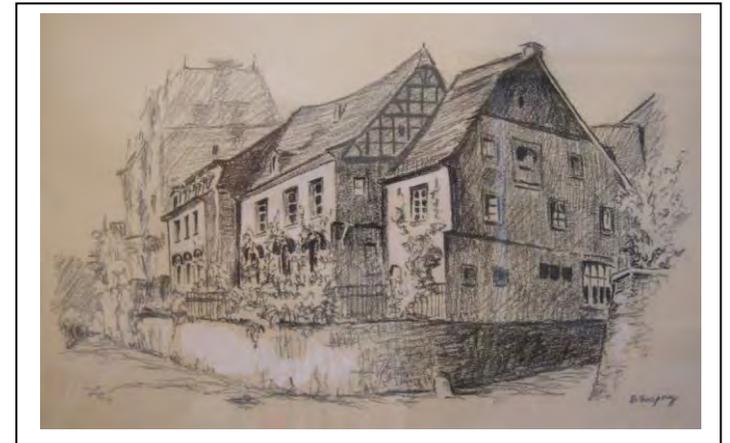
After a short excursion to Stolzenfels Castle, perched high over the Rhine just south of Koblenz, it was time to commence the last leg of our journey to Traben-Trarbach, along the banks of the Moselle, and begin the Field Trip proper.

Day One

The drive from Koblenz took around two hours, and on the fine summer evening of Friday 12th July, we arrived at the door of the Bellevue Hotel in Traben-Trarbach. Having taken some luggage up to our room, we took the car to the hotel parking area, which is adjacent to the former home of Herr Julius Kayser, where DW and his father lunched upon their arrival on Tuesday 13th May 1913. So we had our first look at this historic building which is now an annexe of the hotel. (TYMS, p197)

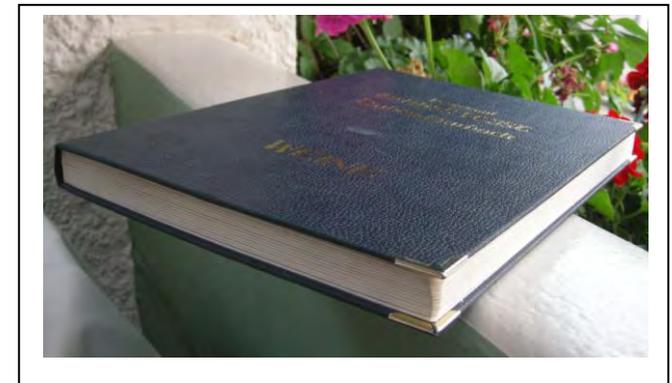
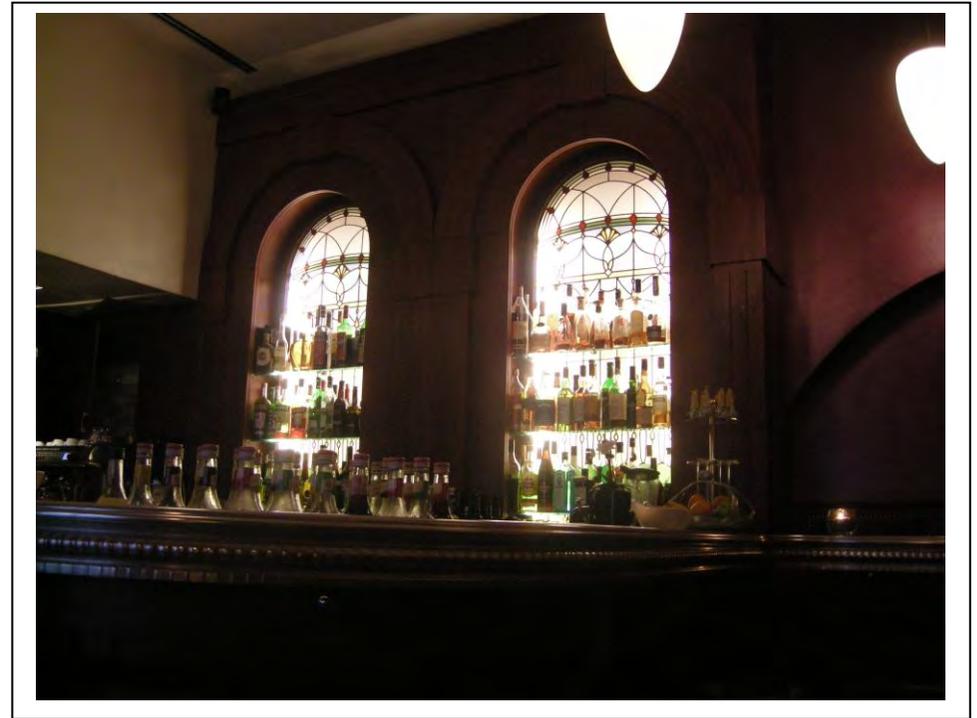


This plaque records that the architect Bruno Mohring, who designed Julius Kayser's winery, was also responsible for the 1900 interior design of his 16th – 18th century timber-framed house. As we went upstairs to change for dinner, I found this splendid sketch of Julius Kayser's house. It is one of many historical views which adorn the interior of the Hotel Bellevue.



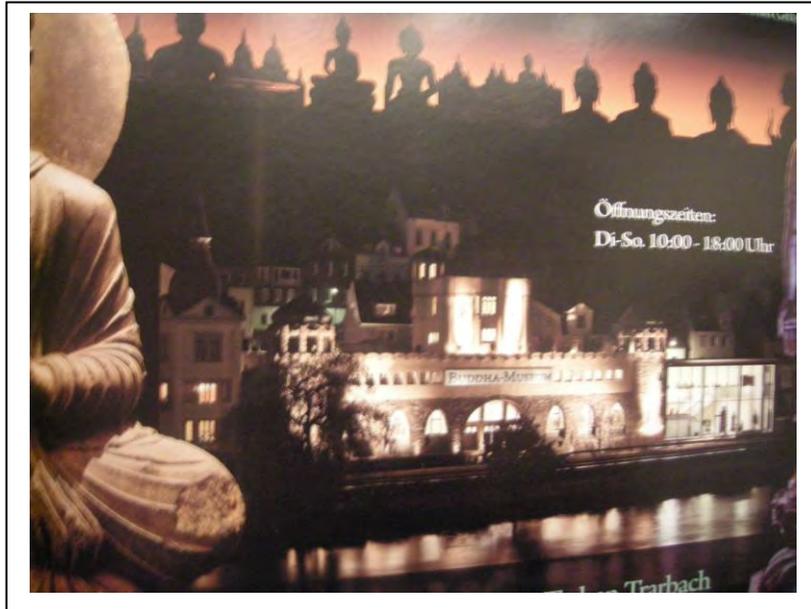
There was ample time before dinner for a drink in the hotel bar, which – like much of the building – retains its original art nouveau decoration.

Dinner on the hotel terrace; that is Frau Haussmann's house nextdoor, but more of that later.



The hotel's extensive wine list.

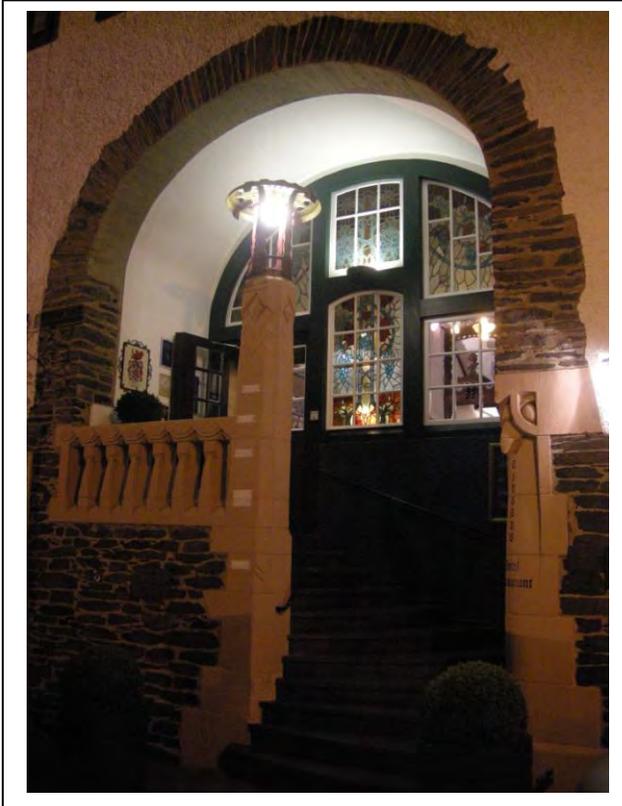
During dinner, I sent a text to Charles to inform him that Field Trip No. 3 was officially underway, to which he replied; ‘Wonderful news, Steve! I’m delighted you’ve kept up the tradition!!! Field Trip Report in due course please?...’ So you see, you’ve *him* to blame for this! After a splendid meal, our first night was by no means over, as we determined to investigate the live music on the other bank of the river.



Even the hotel lift had a DW flavour, with this advertisement for the Buddha Museum housed in the former Julius Kayser Winery.

In true Convention tradition, this picture of DW and his father with Julius Kayser in Traben-Trarbach adorned our room for the duration of the Field Trip. It seems likely that they posed for this photograph on the garden terrace of Julius Kayser’s house on 13th May 1913.





So we sallied forth after dinner, and this is the hotel entrance, resplendent with Bruno Mohring's art nouveau detail.

Upon crossing the post-war bridge, we found this plaque declaring that the surviving bridge gatehouse was designed in 1899 by – that man again – Bruno Mohring!



After a short walk came the last ‘discovery’ of the evening; identification of Fritz Kayser’s house, which was home to DW for his six months in Trarbach. Further photographs would be taken in daylight on another day, but how splendid it was to find that the letterbox still bears the name of DW’s landlord! Oh, and there *was* live music over there, as part of the ‘Mosel Wine Festival’.



And so to bed after an eventful day.



No, the attractive round window *did not* afford a short cut to the bathroom!

Day Two

After breakfast on Saturday 13th July we decided to head for the Tourist Information Centre in Traben, where I knew (from the town website) that a certain amount of literature was available. Upon our leaving the hotel, the home of Julius Kayser's mother-in-law, Frau Haussmann, presented itself on the other side of the narrow street. I had identified and located this some months ago from an image (left) which appears on an invoice from Haussmann's Winery, and from a postcard (right) showing its position next to the Hotel Clauss-Feist.



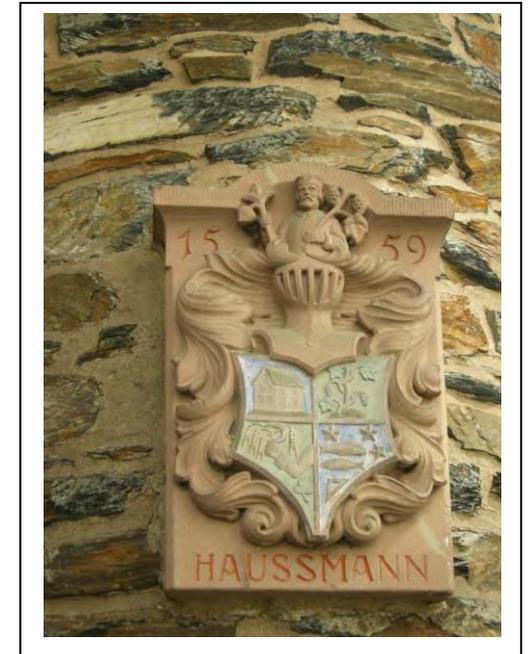
Frau Haussmann's house, which DW remembered as being 'one of the finest on the river bank of Traben.' (TYMS, p201)

The main entrance to the house is in the narrow street which runs between it and the hotel. The wine bar which now occupies the corner would seem to be a separate establishment.

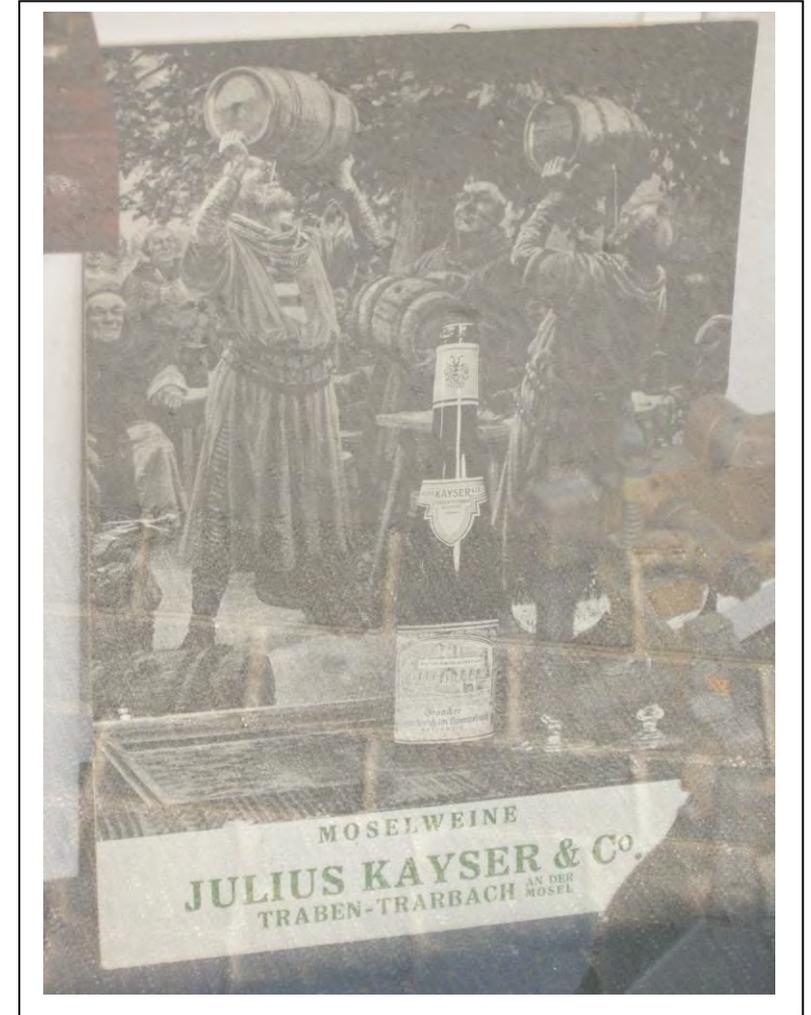


Entrance to Frau Haussmann's house, possibly post-DW.

Coats of arms flanking the entrance to Frau Haussmann's house, which bear witness to the site's history as a monastery from 840, and as the home of the wine-producing family Haussmann from 1559.



At the top of the street we came to the market square of Traben, with a statue which would have been familiar to DW. Turning right, a short walk brought us to an antique shop, where Jean spotted an old sign advertising Julius Kayser wine. This was the best image I could manage through the window of the shop which would, unfortunately, remain closed until after our visit was over.



Further on was the new Town Hall, which would also have been a familiar sight to DW.

Little more than a hundred yards' walk brought us to the Alter Bahnhof (Old Railway Station), built in 1904, which now houses the Tourist Information Centre. In DW's day it served the Klingelbahn which brought him and his father from Koblenz together with Julius Kayser and his sons Juli and Oscar on 13th May 1913. (TYMS, p196)

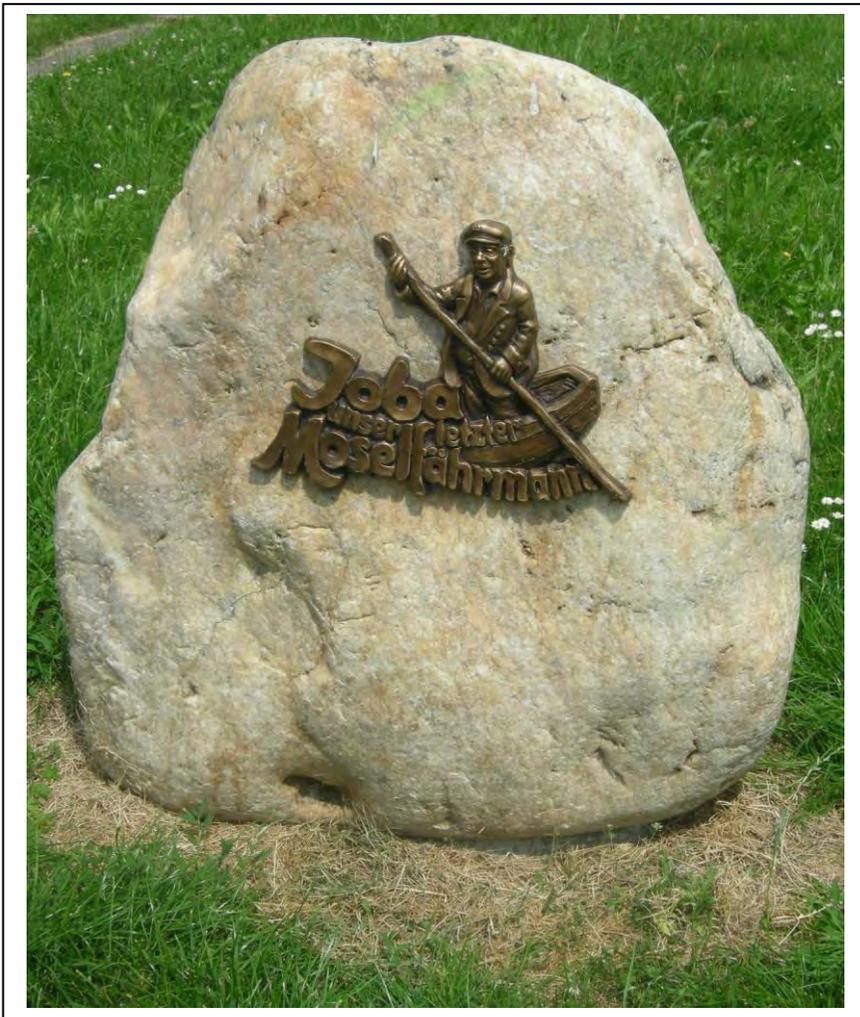


Here we were able to obtain a number of leaflets about Traben-Trarbach and the surrounding area, a book full of old photographs, and a DVD featuring the Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) architecture of the town. Julius Kayser was remembered here too, with this giant bottle of wine on display.



Another view of the old railway station.

From there we returned to the river bank, where a number of interesting features presented themselves.



This stone, commemorating 'Joba, our last Mosel ferryman', is coincidentally positioned close to the point from which Herr Julius Kayser would have taken his private ferry across the river to the Winery every day.

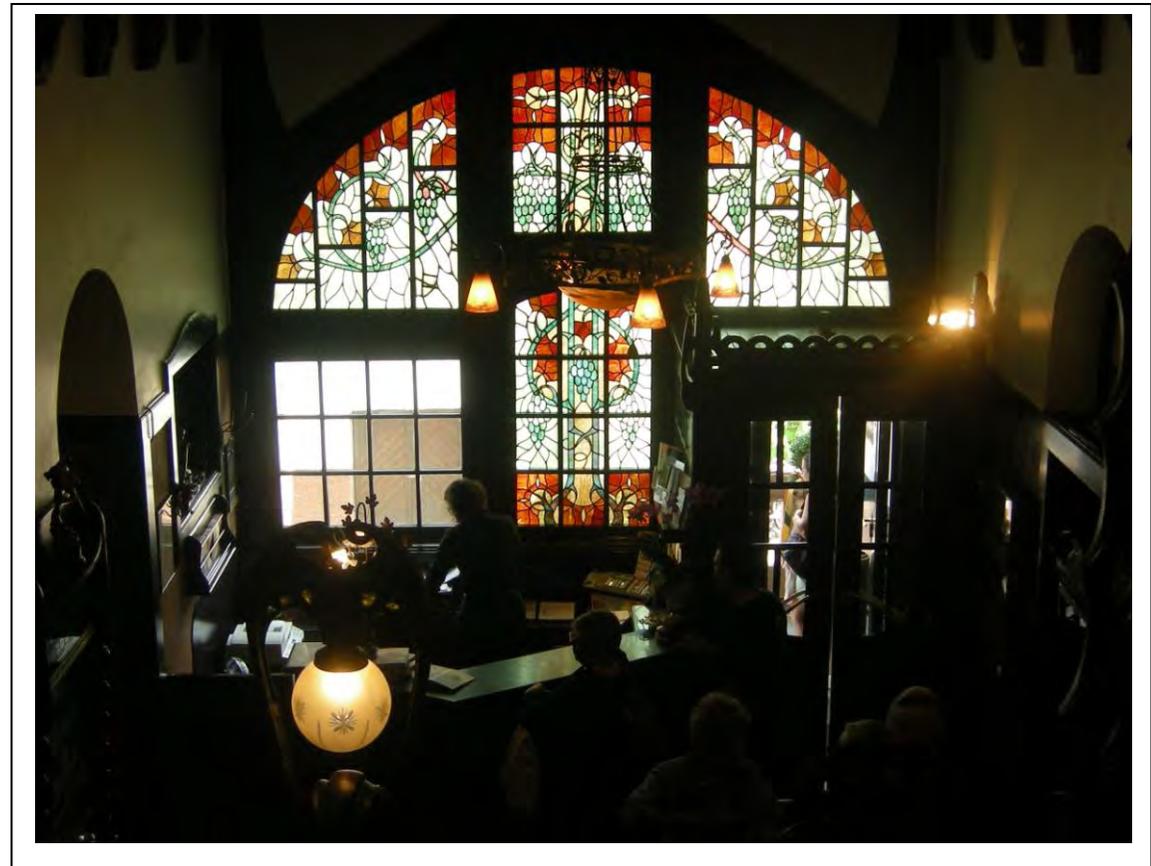
Back in the hotel, this picture shows Julius Kayser's house (extreme left) and Frau Haussmann's house (extreme right) with (to the left of it) the original Hotel Clauss-Feist before rebuilding.





Two suites in the hotel are named after architect Bruno Moehring (sic) and sometime guest (The Red) Baron von Richthofen.

Jugendstil decoration in the reception area of the Hotel Bellevue.

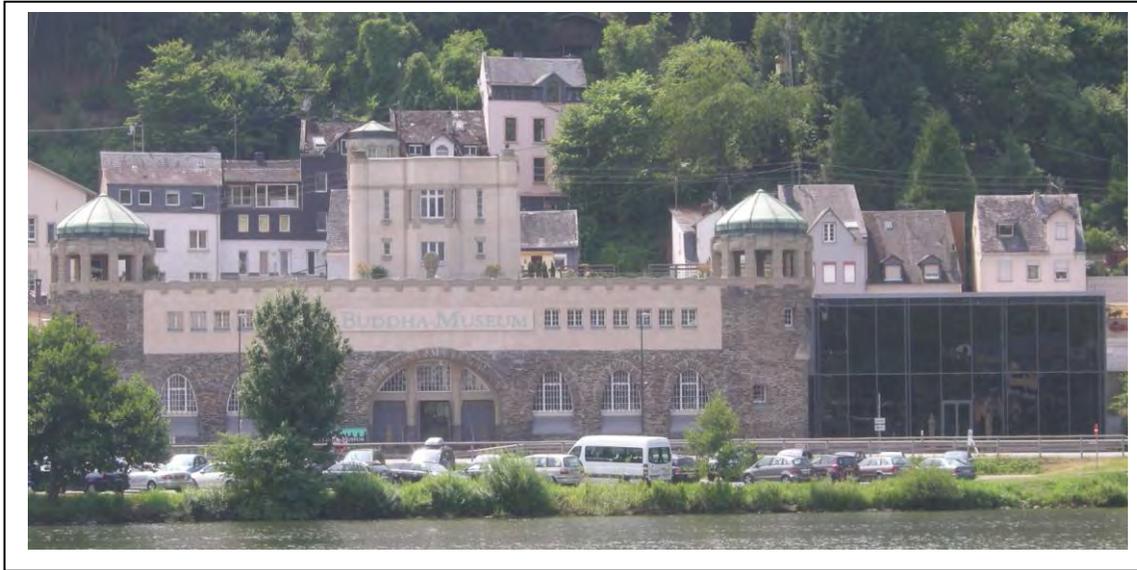


An afternoon excursion to the castle which towers majestically over the Moselle at Cochem meant retrieving the car from the car park, and another look at Julius Kayser's house. Here we see the 'terrace raised some feet above the tow-path' which DW referred to in *The Young Man Said* (p197).



Just along the bank we found another of Bruno Mohring's creations, a villa built for Dr. Bruecker in 1905.

From here there was also a good view of the former Julius Kayser Winery with new glass-fronted extension at the right-hand side, tacked on to afford more Buddha space.



Upon returning from our excursion, we noted the non-residents' entrance (above) to the Restaurant Clauss-Feist, and above it (left), some window detail which *surely* would have met with DW's approval. Note the architect's initials and the year of construction.



The hotel's car.

As we walked across the bridge for dinner in an Italian restaurant on the Trarbach bank, we saw the pyrotechnics experts preparing for the late evening fireworks display. Many of the fireworks were to be launched from the bridge itself, whilst others would rise from the Grevenburg ruins on top of the mountain. Wishing to return to the hotel before the display, scheduled for 10.45pm, started, we just managed to cross the bridge before it was closed for safety reasons. There was little time to spare as the display actually started about five minutes early.



Day Three

Sunday 14th July proved to be the busiest day of all for DW-related sightseeing. Here is the panoramic view from the breakfast room of the Restaurant Clauss Feist.

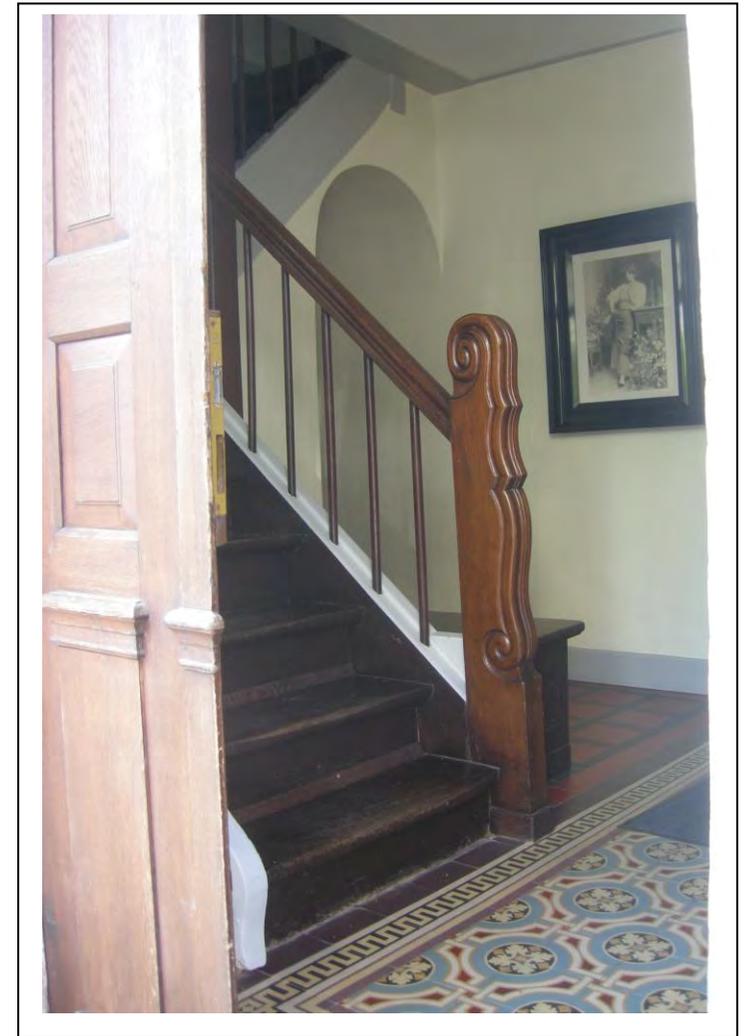
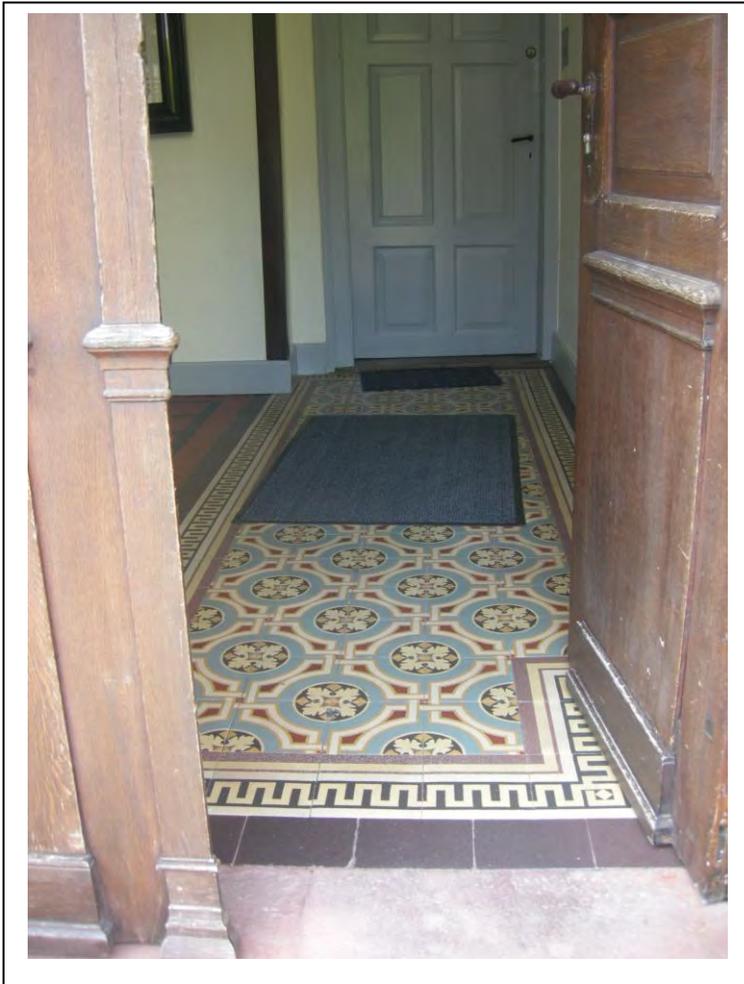


This would perhaps be a good moment to explain that although the Hotel Clauss-Feist, to which Julius Kayser sent DW one Sunday morning to meet two English wine-merchants (TYMS, p224), is now known as the (Romantik Jugendstil) Hotel Bellevue, the Clauss Feist name has been retained for the Restaurant.

The Hotel has expanded considerably over the years, and now comprises numerous separate buildings along the Traben bank of the river, one of which is the former house of Herr Julius Kayser, now an annexe known as the Residence. The photo below shows what was perhaps once the main entrance to the wine-producer's home, with servants'/tradesmen's entrance below.



This morning when reaching the hotel car park we were fortunate to find the door of Julius Kayser's house open, so we were able to take a peek inside. If we want to see more of Bruno Mohring's interior decoration next time we stay at the Bellevue, we must book an apartment in the Residence. Just look at that lovely newel at the foot of the staircase!



The next stop was the Traben churchyard, where students of architecture have noted that the tomb of wine-producer Oskar Haussmann (Julius Kayser's father-in-law) was designed by none other than.... Professor Bruno Mohring!



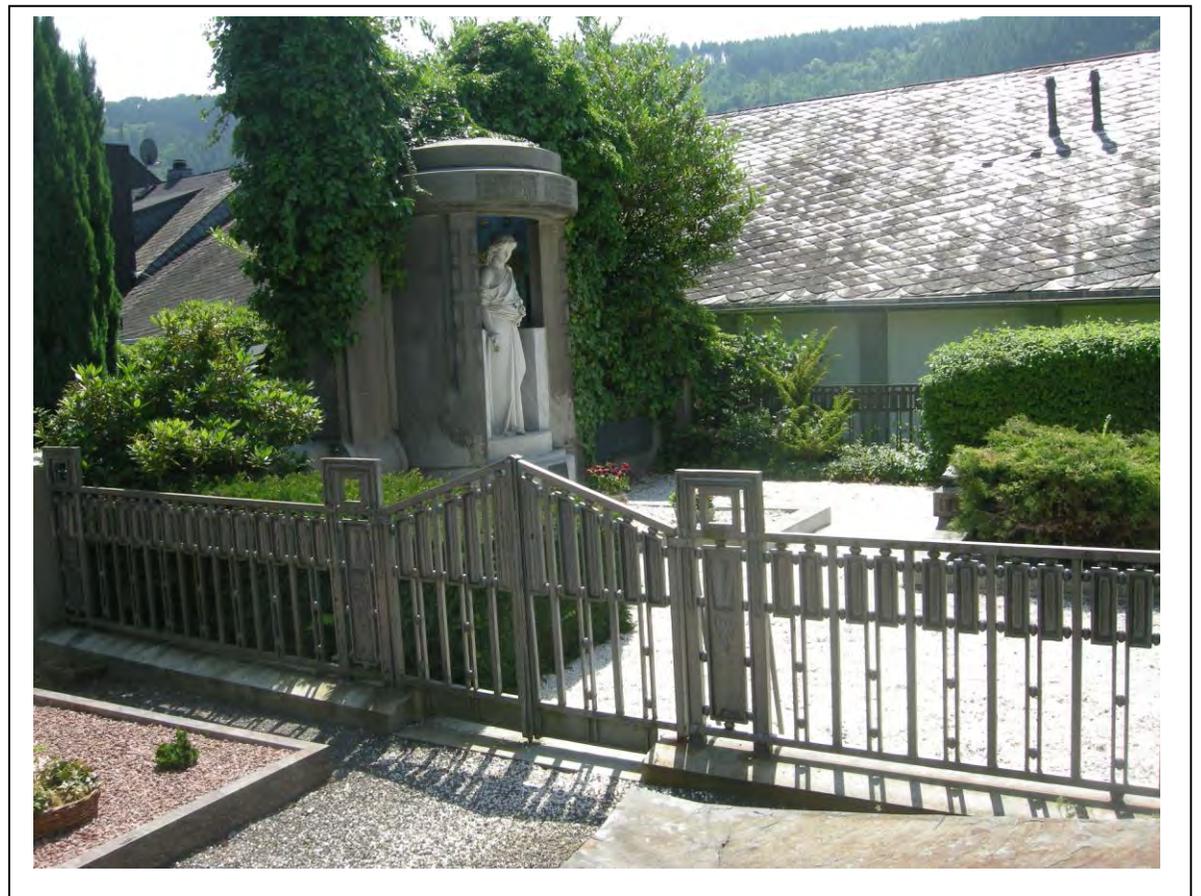
The wonderful art nouveau tomb of Julius Kayser's father-in-law, Oskar Haussmann, who died in 1905. Added to this in 1935 was the name of his wife Auguste, who had helped JK to raise his children after the death of Helene Kayser (nee Haussmann) in 1903. What I hadn't anticipated was the equally wonderful art nouveau memorial which Julius Kayser erected for his wife Helene.

In addition to Julius Kayser and his wife, their four children, two daughters-in-law and a grandson are commemorated on this monument.





A metal plaque mounted below the statue commemorates Julius Kayser himself.



The Kayser and Haussmann memorials lie in their own private section of the cemetery, enclosed by distinctive art nouveau railings and gates.

Next stop was the Villa Heusgen, another art nouveau creation of Bruno Mohring. We then crossed the river and parked outside the Buddha Museum, with the intention of viewing the interior of Julius Kayser's winery. But for some reason, perhaps because it was a *very* hot day and we both needed some lunch, we refused the €15 admission charge! €15 to see a load of Buddhas?! So instead we moved the car and went in search of sustenance. This didn't prove a bad decision, as we found a nice restaurant with a fine view of Fritz Kayser's house, where DW lodged during his six months in Traben-Trarbach.



Actually, I had already earmarked this restaurant as a possible dinner venue, but although the barrel-vaulted ground-floor rooms (which could well date from 1400 as claimed) would have made an atmospheric setting, as far as I could gather, the establishment opened only at lunchtimes. However, tables set out in the pedestrianised street afforded the perfect view for DW enthusiasts.



Our Sunday lunchtime view of Fritz Kayser's house (centre).

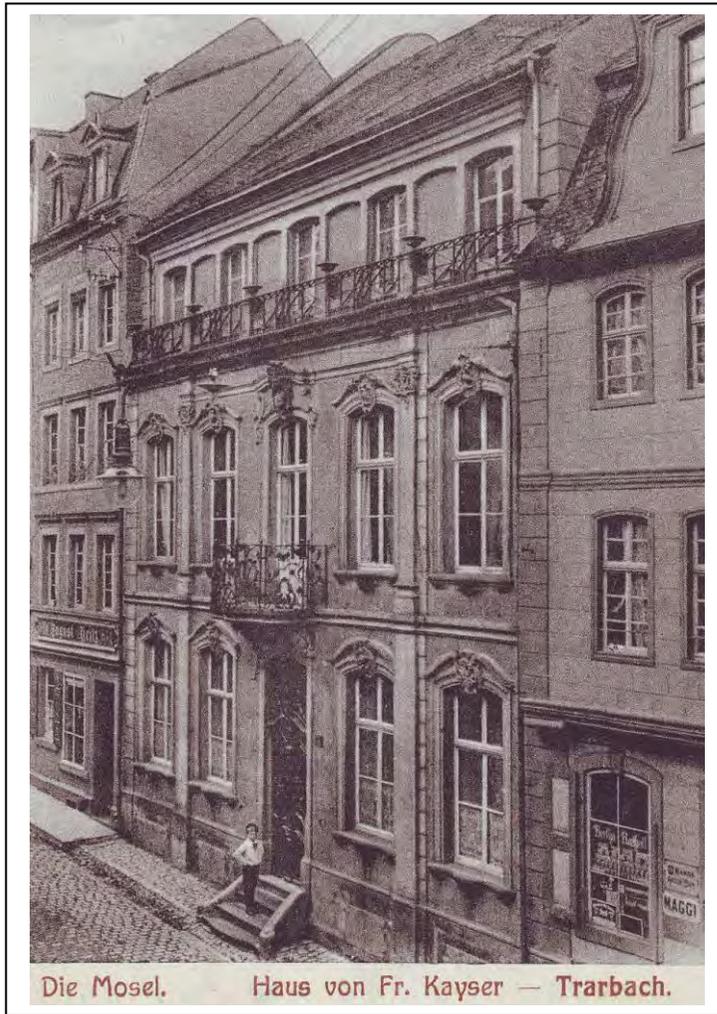


A closer look at the top-floor windows, at least one of which belongs to the room in which DW slept.

Until about three weeks before the Field Trip, the only picture of Fritz Kayser's house I'd managed to find was this interior view of the staircase.



However, whilst this is remarkable enough in itself - to think of DW going up and down these stairs every day – I couldn't envisage how we might be able to identify the house except by showing the photo to local residents. DW had recalled only that the house was in the main street of Trarbach. (TYMS, p197) Then I found an external view of the house, and discovered on the town website a downloadable leaflet which gave a rough location for the house, which is apparently of some architectural importance. So the location of the house on the first evening of our visit was relatively easy, and was of course confirmed by the surviving letterbox of Friedrich Kayser.



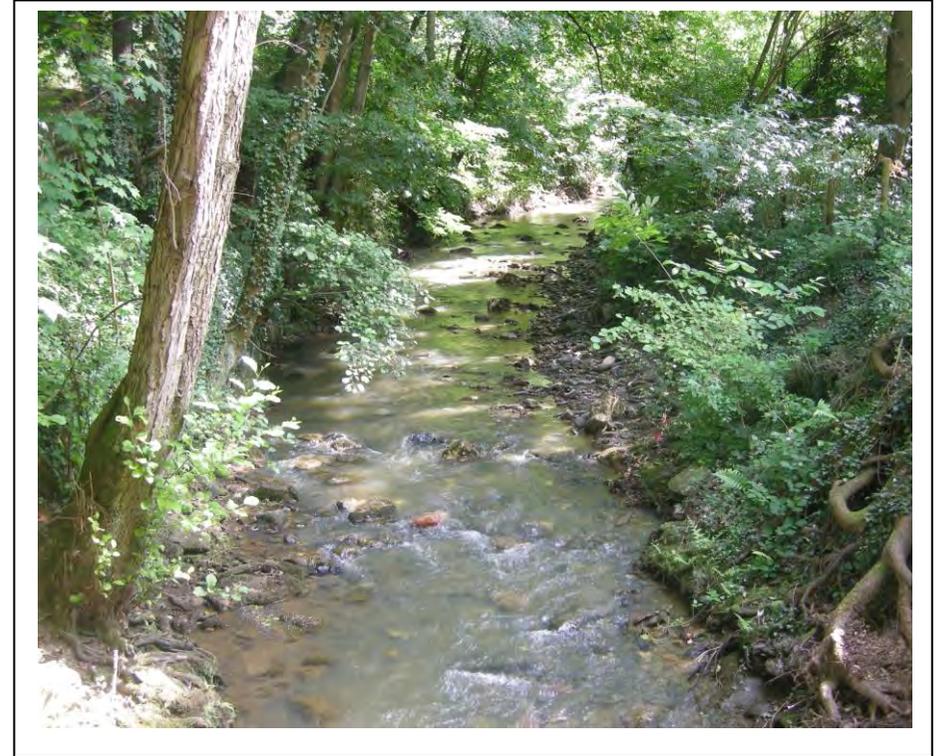
The frontage of Fritz Kayser's house appears virtually unchanged over the eighty-to-one-hundred years which separate these photographs.

After a quick ascent of the town watchtower, with its carillon of bells installed to celebrate the centenary of the union of Traben and Trarbach, we set off in search of the tennis club of which DW was made a member. (TYMS, p204)





The original clubhouse, which we were assured dates from DW's time.



The mountain stream which DW recalled. (TYMS, p204)

The next stop was really only for die-hard (sad?) DW fans; the Gymnasium school attended by Julius Kayser's sons Juli and Kurt. (TYMS, p201)



We then took the winding mountain road up to the ruins of Grevenburg castle. The young DW had the energy to walk up here after his first morning's work at the winery, and later in the year took part in a torchlit procession up to the castle celebrate the centenary of the Allies's victory over Napoleon at Leipzig. (TYMS, pp200 & 215)

Many initials have been carved into the ancient stonework of the castle ruins over the centuries, but our cursory inspection failed to find a 'DYW'. An exhaustive search would take hours, but one wouldn't be surprised if the young Dennis had left his mark here one hundred years ago...

This lofty perch afforded the only position from which I could photograph Bruno Mohring's bridge gatehouse, dating from 1899, which survived the rebuilding of the bridge after the Second World War.



Back down in the town, we took the opportunity to survey the exterior of Julius Kayser's Winery from the street which runs behind it. The entrance which DW would have used every working day was much as he would have known it, and the building boasted many art nouveau features and much decorative detail.



Julius Kayser's Winery from the rear.

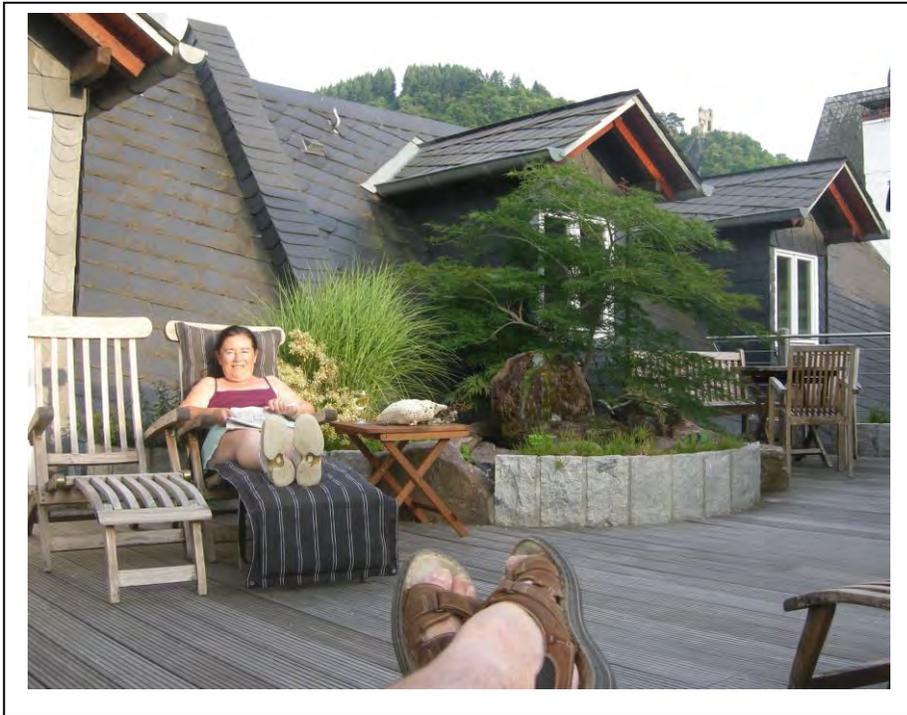


A beaked serpent decoration.



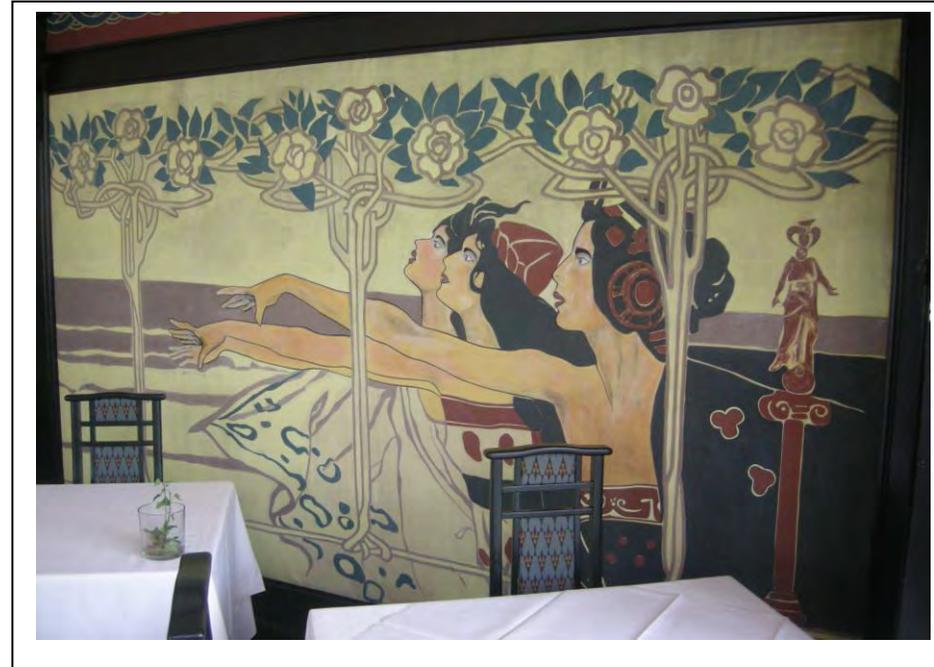
Noddy Holder?

An exhausting day's sight-seeing ended with sparkling wine on the hotel's roof-terrace, with the Grevenburg ruins visible in the background.



Day Four

We had planned another excursion for Monday 15th July, so had to be content with this view from the restaurant of the Winery across the river, with a splendid art nouveau lamp in the foreground. Would I ever get to see the inside of DW's workplace of one hundred years ago? Other examples of the jugendstil art presented themselves within the hotel. It is worth remembering that in DW's day, when he visited the Hotel Clauss-Feist to meet some English clients for Herr Kayser (TYMS, p224), this was very much the style of the time.



Day Five

The last day of our Field Trip dawned, and we checked out of the wonderful Hotel Bellevue (always remembered as Hotel Clauss-Feist) vowing that we would return some day (hopefully with fellow DW-enthusiasts!). So it was now or never (for this trip, at least); was it worth the 15 euro entry fee to see the interior of the Julius Kayser Winery, DW's workplace, now peopled by hundreds of Buddhas? Charles assured me – by text – that it was, so I took the plunge (though he's yet to reimburse me!). Jean, having perhaps overdosed on DW (is that possible?), declined to join me, so I entered accompanied only by my trusty camera.



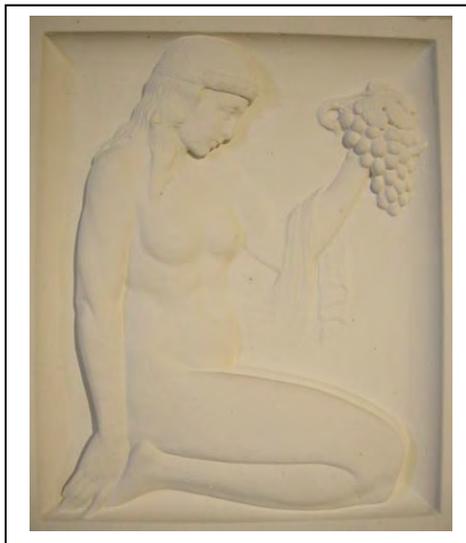
The front entrance to the former Julius Kayser Winery, now a Buddha Museum, of all things!



Some of the many Buddhas - I shan't mention them again...



The building was designed as a temple to Bacchus, the God of Wine...

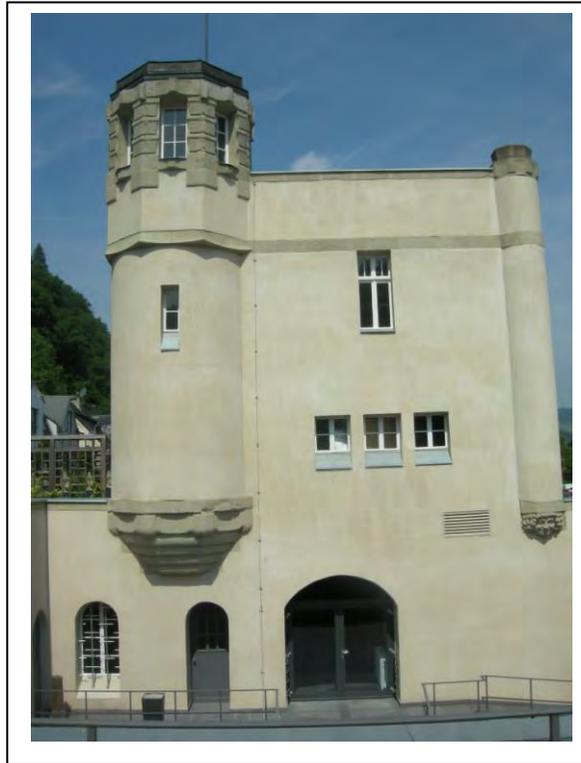


The sixteen-year-old DW must have loved working in a building with this artwork!





The courtyard, which, in DW's day, would have been peopled by winery staff.



The tower which housed the tasting room and Herr Kayser's office.

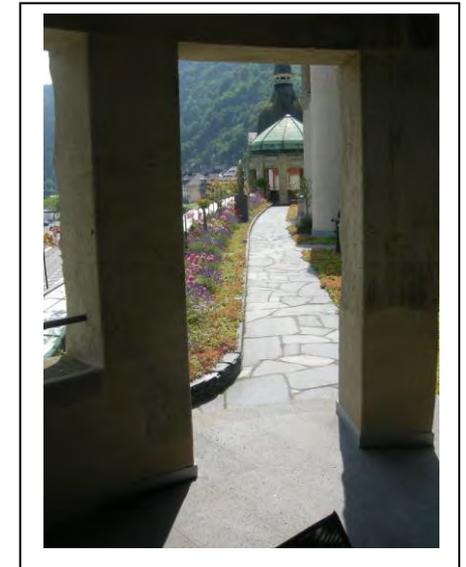
Although archive photographs suggest that this wonderful art nouveau fountain was *not* there in DW's day, it is very much in keeping with the period.



This view, from one 'gazebo' to the other, shows that the frontage of the Winery is not straight, but slightly curved.



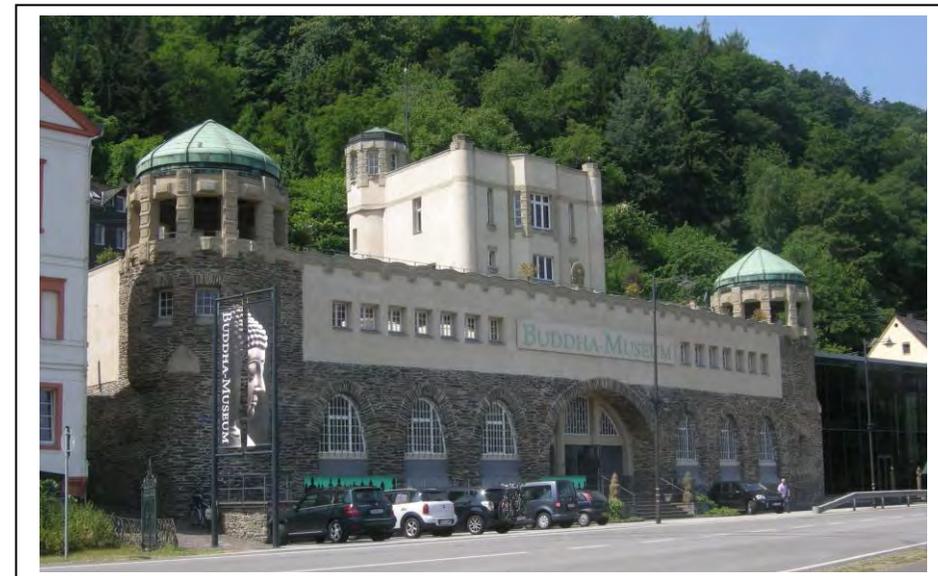
One of the two copper-roofed stone gazebo-type structures which adorn the front corners of the roof garden.





And here's the other sign, to show that the Winery is on the Trarbach (South) bank of the Moselle, together with one of the ducks which amused Jeanie while I was exploring the Winery.

And so we said 'farewell' to Traben-Trarbach, and to the Julius Kayser Winery, until our next visit, when, hopefully, we will be accompanied by many fellow DW-enthusiasts...



Epilogue

After another fortnight touring Germany, which included a visit to Coburg, the birthplace of Prince Albert and beloved holiday venue of Her Late Majesty Queen Victoria, and which took us as far north and east as Berlin, there was time on the last day to stop in at Ostend, and look for the ‘Hotel Splendide’ (sic) in which DW and his first wife Nancy spent part of their honeymoon (Drink And Ink, p52). Well, alas, the Hotel Splendid (the name can be seen above the first-floor windows on the postcard shown below, left) is no more. Whether or not it survived to the end of the Second World War is not clear, but it must have been demolished soon after that, and the block of flats – named ‘Residence Splendid’ – erected on the site (shown below, right).

