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“Malakoff Towers” in mining

- and an immortal myth



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“Malakoff Towers” in mining - and an immortal myth

Introduction and goals

Anyone who studies the history of mining in Central Europe will eventually come across the term “Malakoff Towers” or “Malakow towers”. Even if the term is explained, the rationale of what it was and where its name came from does vary from one author to another. Most of them act as if it were a well-known term, and their explanations are repetitive in many parts. However, a certain sense of unease with the term remains-

> "Information about Malakow shaft towers has been available in literature for years, but closer analysis reveals […] that even the name itself, its etymology and even its chronology and scope are treated very arbitrarily." (Wrona- Gaj; 107)

This work on "Malakoff Towers" gives an overview of information available and aims to enable its readers to judge for themselves by documenting verbatim quotes from primary sources and thus provide a verified framework for critical analysis. It will be split in two parts with explaining technical functionality in the first and retracing the way the term "Malakoff Towers" had come into mining literature in the second.

1. 0 The current state of confusion

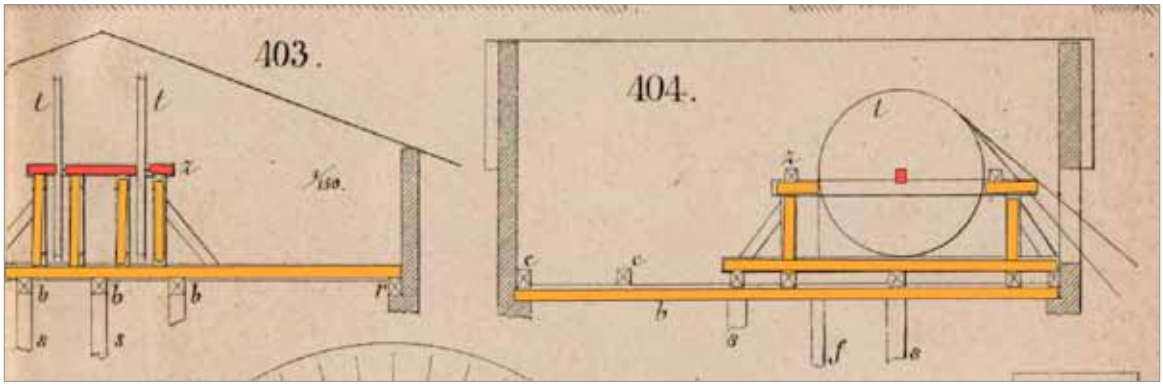
The term "Malakoff Towers" by now seems firmly established as a proper name common for the 19th century brick-built shaft towers used for mining and especially so, since its 2004 "nobilitation" in the "ICOMOS International Collieries Study". Reading the 2004 ICOMOS study, it may seem as if everything concerning the "Malakoff Towers" and their naming is already common knowledge and unquestionable. However, the situation is even more confusing: There are "Malakoff Towers" which are in no way related to mining and brick-built shaft towers which are not called "Malakoff Tower". A chronological listing of well known buildings is therefore provided in Table 1.
Among the many explanations provided so far we find

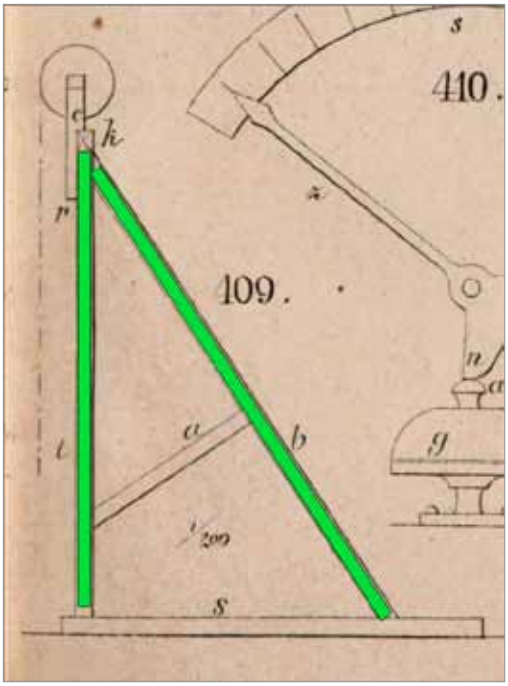
> "The term ‘Malakow tower’ was originally a colloquial term based solely on external appearance, with no clear definition. In 1902 Müller defined shaft towers according to the ‘Malakow system’ for the first time." (Tempel; 287)

One immediately notes the contradiction in Tempel's "with no clear definition" and "Müller defined shaft towers according to the ‘Malakow system’ for the first time." Not having been provided with the definition or further research the reader thus remains clueless- and further from the same source

> "[...] Despite the definitional problems, the term ‘Malakow tower’ will be retained in this article as an operational term in a broader sense." (Tempel; 287)

How can a discussion without having a clear definition of its subject lead to meaningful results? What if previously neglected source material is taken into account, will new perspectives emerge? Might explanations which so far have been accepted as certainties then evaporate?
To complicate things further we find the terms "Malakoff system", "Malakow complex" and the variation "mine shaft houses in Malakow-Style" (Tempel; 294) with no intelligible explanation or definition given. As a consequence terms left undefined by their respective authors will not be considered in this literature review. For the sake of clarity this work sticks to the functional term "shaft tower".

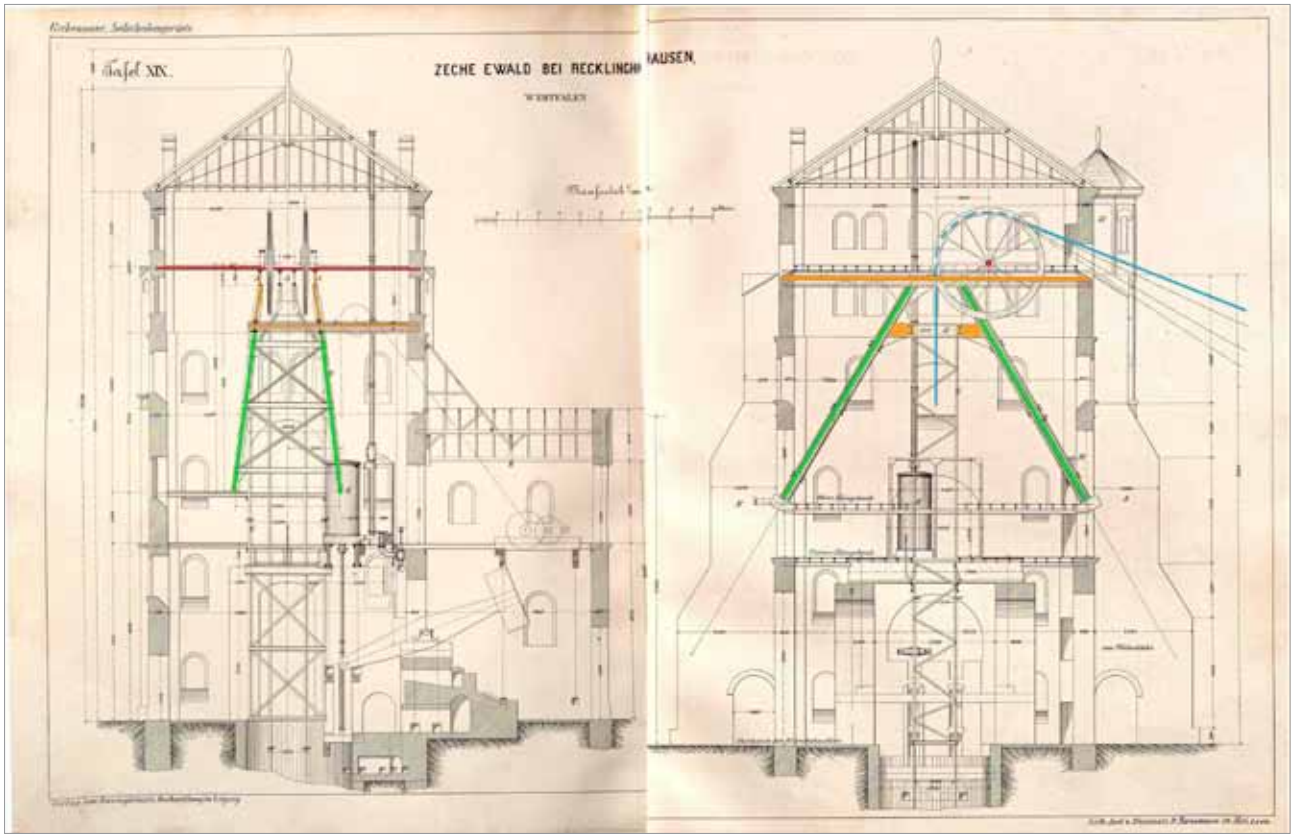




above:
Fig. 5, Beam system, Hauer 1871

left:
Fig. 6, Trestle system, Hauer 1871

below:
Fig. 7, Combined bearer and trestle scaffolding mounted in shaft tower, Eichenauer 1877





113. Jahrgang — Begründet 1825

NeußerZeitung

Stadt-und Landbote

heimatzeitung für die Stadt Neuß u. den Landkreis Grevenbroich-Neuß

Vereinigte Zeitungen „Der Niederrhein"

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Nr. 236/237 — Samstag/Sonntag, den 28./29. August — 1937

das fest beginnt

Fig. 26, Preparations for the "Storming of the Malakoff" spectacle, Neußer Zeitung 28./29. August 1937



Circus Wulff.

Preuße'sche Reitbahn.
Neue Antonienstraße.
Heute Sonntag, den 6. März:
2 große vorletzte Vorstellungen.
Anfang der 1. 4 Uhr. der 2. 1/2 8 Uhr.
Zum Schluß:
Die Erstürmung des Malakoff-Thurmes im Brillant-Feuerwerk,
ausgeführt von sämmtlichen Herren der Gesellschaft.

Morgen Montag, d. 7. März:
Letzte gr. Gala-, Benefiz- u. Abschieds-Vorstellung
zum Besten des so beliebten Komikers und Kautschuckmannes Mr. Stefano Arlotto.
Lorenz Wulff. Director.

Erste und alleinige Fabrik des ächten
Russischen Magenelixir

„Malakoff"

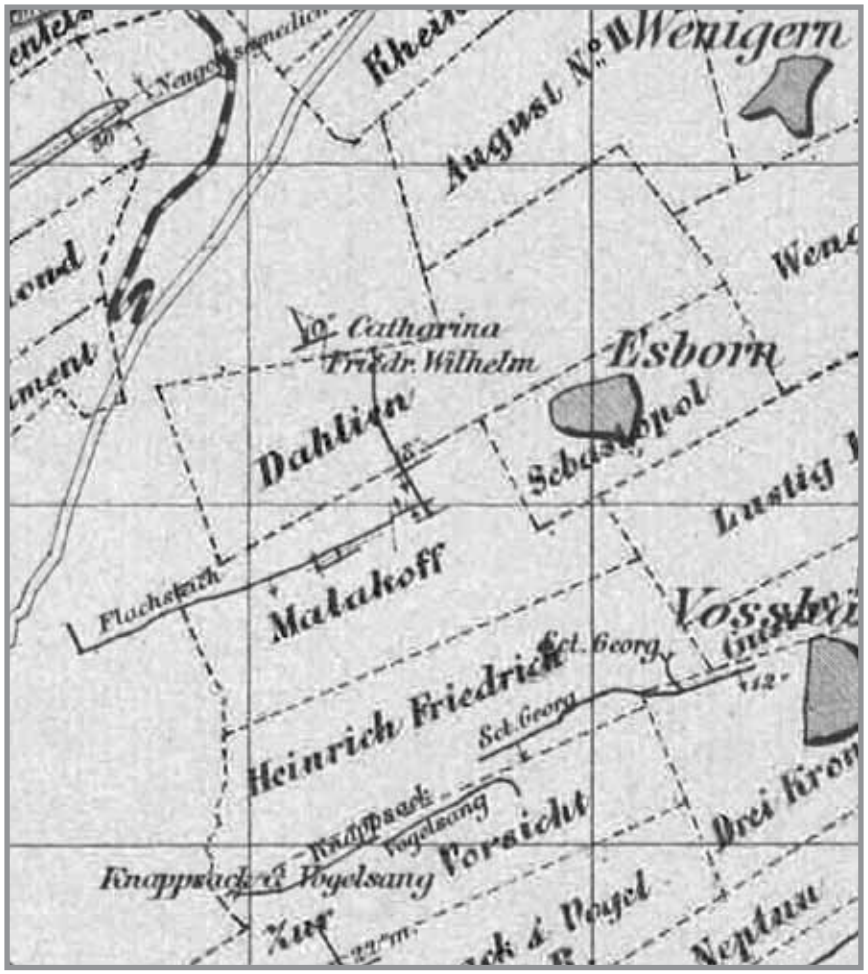
erfunden und nur ächt fabricirt von
Küas & Comp.,
(Max Ziac)
in Berlin, Mohrenstr. 48,
empfiehlt sich als ein vorzüglich magenstärkendes Getränk, daher als ein gutes Präservativmittel gegen alle ansteckenden Krankheiten, wie Cholera, Brechruhr ꝛc. Besonders ist dasselbe noch durch einen äußerst feinen Wohlgeschmack ausgezeichnet.

Zu haben in den bekannten Verkaufsstellen. Warnung vor Flaschen, die nicht Etiquette mit unserer vollständigen Firma und Wohnungsanzeige tragen.

Fig. 27, left: Circus Wulff performs the "Storming the Malakoff" including fireworks, advertisment in Breslauer Morgenzeitung, 06.03. 1870
right: "Original Russian stomach elixir Malakoff" preventive drink against all contagious diseases, advertisment in Westfälische Zeitung, 02.12.1865

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This work on "Malakoff Towers" gives an overview of information available and aims to enable its readers to judge for themselves by documenting verbatim quotes from primary sources. Thus it provides a verified framework for critical analysis. The first part explains technical functionalities and the second retraces the way the term "Malakoff Towers" had come into mining literature. Historical maps, photographs and a clear and chronological compilation of the original quotations in tabular form enable the readers to trace the various interpretations provided.



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