

Quiet Corners of Freiburg

Stühlinger

The city quarter known as Stühlinger lies near the city center, directly on the other side of the train station. One walks over the blue railway bridge, recently named “Wiwili-Brücke” after the Nicaraguan partner city of Freiburg, into Stühlinger. Stühlinger is best discovered on one’s own simply by roaming around and taking a look. It has remained a colourful district although even here all the streets have been redeveloped. Nevertheless, with its mixture from the early business establishments, traditional petty bourgeoisie, alternative culture and Freiburg’s in-crowd, Stühlinger still remains a little off the beaten track.

Stühlinger is a relatively new quarter, first mentioned in 1870. At the time the area was known simply as “Hintern Bahnhof” meaning “behind the train station”, and consisted first and foremost of business enterprises. This is arguably also the reason why Stühlinger never belonged to the so-called “better” districts. A cement factory, a soap works, and a machine factory had their sites here, and the “Lederleplatz” is a reminder today of the world famous pump factory Lederle which was earlier located in Stühlinger. The massive industry settlement lured a good deal of workers from the surrounding areas to Stühlinger. A new residential area was erected, cramped, with perpendicular streets and without much comfort, with worker, petite bourgeoisie, and industry sections together with the Löwenbrauerei brewery built in 1888, of which a part of the façade can still be seen today. In 1890 there were already two hundred houses. Also from the late 19th Century is the Herz-Jesu Church at Stühlinger Kirchplatz. For a long time the old infrastructure of the district remained intact. It was not until the 1970’s that the face of the quarter began to change. The area behind the railroad had become attractive, not least because of students. They discovered the courtyards, the bars and the small stores for themselves. Muesli markets, bicycle workshops, Laundromats and second-hand shops cropped up. In the former electric power station on Ferdinand-Weiß-Straße a culture center emerged with, theatre, bar, ateliers and exhibition space, and became the residence of the Freiburger Jazz- und Rockscheule, which has meanwhile moved for the most part to a neighbouring building. At the edge of Stühlinger is one of the student residences of Studentenwerk, the Wohnheim Stühlinger, and the psychology faculty of the university.

The Knopfhäusle

At the edge of the Freiburg district of Wiehre, one of the most beloved residential quarters of the city, between Schwarzwaldstraße, Schützenallee and Altem Messplatz lies another gem of Freiburg’s industrial history. The so-called Knopfhäusle from the year 1869, the first real workers settlement in Baden, albeit not large, is well worth a stroll between the reddish-brown painted garden fences. The settlement was built in the course of industrialization. The Freiburger button maker Risler established it for “his” workers entirely for the purpose of patriarchal

entrepreneurship – including kindergarten, caretaker’s residence, and stables for the small livestock. The architectural structure of the complex remains intact today. The crowded two-storied houses stand under one common roof in Scottish style “back-to-back”. Only the façades were renovated around 25 years ago. The brick walls were whitened, sound-proof windows installed and the windowsills replaced, the entirety in the course of a “cautious” renovation campaign that was advocated by residents, city councilors, and engaged private persons against planned demolition. On the Knopfhäusle-Tour perhaps it is possible to start up a conversation with the residents. This is easier here than in any other place, as the low garden fences virtually invite one for a small chat. As a matter of fact many of the residents have been living here for three or four generations and many can still remember their grandfathers who worked as button burners in the Risler factory. Of the factory itself, nothing remains. It stood at the former “Schwarzwaldhof” compound on Schwarzwaldstraße, a business district that fell victim to the demolishing ball in the early 1980’s as a result of nationally followed protest demonstrations.

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A nice small discovery tour leads from the Schwabentorbrücke over Schlossberg to Herdern, Freiburg’s Nr.1 villa neighbourhood, with a detour to Alten Friedhof, a real highlight. From the weather-beaten gravestones you can learn more about the city and her history than from some guidebooks. And beneath the thick old trees is the perfect environment in which to contemplate the transience of all earthly things... the “danse macabre” at the entrance to the Michaelskapelle also attests to this. And as you are already in the neighbourhood, you can also make another detour to the botanical garden of the university in the Schänzlestraße, open daily from 10:00 – 18:00.

Also worthwhile is a visit to the Annaplatz in Freiburger Wiehre, the former center of the old village of Wiehre from the time in which this area still lay outside the walls of the city. The square itself looks like a French village square, unfortunately minus the bistro. But perhaps the so-called “Annakirchle” compensates for the missing pleasures. From Annaplatz it is incidentally not far to Lorettoberg with the Hildatum, from which you have a truly magnificent view over the Wiehre as far as the Old Town.

But Freiburg’s west also is worthy of a discovery tour. The tram line 1 runs directly to Seepark, the former Landesgartenschau (county garden festival) grounds, on which the Studentensiedlung also stands. One should prepare oneself for an ample walk, as there is much to see beginning with the Ökohaus over the herbal garden as far as the pavement sundial and the small Japanese park, which was designed by the gardeners from Freiburg’s partner city Matsuyama. In the summer time you can even swim in the lake and the students from the Siedlung make full use of this opportunity.