Château de Verteuil , Charente

The Château de Verteuil is a historical building in Charente , France . It dates back to 1080 and has since been extensively rebuilt , although 12th century walls remain . The château has always been in the property of the La Rochefoucauld family .

During the Hundred Years ' War (1337 ? 1453) the château was occupied several times by the English . It was demolished in 1442 , but was soon rebuilt using the original stones . In the religious wars of 16th and 17th centuries the château was a base for Huguenot forces , and in 1650 it was partly demolished by royal troops . Another château was erected but it received extensive damage in a fire in 1793 during the French Revolution . The château was renovated in the romantic style after the Bourbon Restoration of 1815 , and has been extensively modified since then . During World War II (1939 ? 45) the château housed French troops and refugees from Alsace @-@ Lorraine in 1940 and for several months it was partially occupied by some German units . In 1944 some members of the maquis were hidden there . The château was listed as a monument historique on 31 March 1966 , and obtained full protection on 19 November 2010 .

The present château , designed on a triangular plan , has five conical towers and a watchtower capped by slate roofs . Archaeologists have uncovered traces of the older buildings on the site dating back to the 11th century . The architect Frantz Jourdain renovated the interior of the 14th century tower as a library for the Rochefoucault family in 1893 . The Hunt of the Unicorn tapestries of the building , which hung in the master bedroom , were rediscovered in 1850 ; they were later sold to John D. Rockefeller , Jr. in 1923 .

Location

The castle is in a strategic position , dominating the village of Verteuil @-@ sur @-@ Charente and the Charente valley . In the past it controlled the road from Limoges to La Rochelle , on the route between the courts of France and Spain . The word " Verteuil " was often used in the Middle Ages to designate a fortified place . Jean Froissart (c . 1337 ? 1405) described it as " un meult fort chasteau en Poictou sur les marches du Limousin et de la Saintonge " (a strong castle in Poitou on the borders of Limousin and Saintonge) . The château , a few miles north of Angoulême and in fact in Angoumois , was later used as the country seat of the La Rochefoucauld family .

History

Early years

The Château de Verteuil is recorded in 1080 as the property of the Lord of La Rochefoucauld . Since then the castle has almost always belonged to a member of this family . The first recorded successful siege was in 1135 , by Count Wulgrin II of Angoulême (c . 1089 ? 1140) , when the castle belonged to Aymar II de la Rochefoucauld . Hostilities continued between their descendants , William VI of Angoulême (died 1179) and Guy IV of la Rochefoucauld , but had ceased by 1170 when they both attended the dedication of the church of Saint @-@ Amant @-@ de @-@ Boixe . Louis VII of France (1120 ? 80) and Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122 ? 1204) may have stayed at Verteuil in 1137 . Eleanor 's mother was a Rochefoucauld , and due to the unsettled state of the country the young couple only stayed in safe and preferably well @-@ fortified places in their journey from Bordeaux to Paris .

King Philip VI of France (1293 ? 1350) stayed at the castle in 1332 . Due to the Anglo @-@ French hostilities the castle was playing an increasingly important role . During the Hundred Years ' War the English were given the castle from 1360 to 1385 by the Treaty of Brétigny . The castle was yielded reluctantly to Edward III of England 's regent in France , John Chandos , on 25 October 1361 . He had brought the brother of the keeper to the castle and threatened to behead him unless there was an immediate capitulation . French troops commanded by the Duke of Bouillon and

Geoffroy III of Rochefoucauld laid siege to the castle in 1380 , but it did not yield until five years later . The English later regained the castle , but in 1442 Charles VII of France (1403 ? 61) finally captured it from the English .

The Rochefoucaulds , who had played a major role in the fight against the English , now began to ravish Angoulême . Charles VII returned , and this time destroyed the castle , largely by fire . However , the stones were recovered and the castle rebuilt . In 1446 the Rochefoucaulds managed to obtain the king 's pardon and permission to build a defensive wall and two towers in Verteuil to restore the traditional refuge of the villagers . Under this pretext they made the castle among the best defended in France . The walls were not just restored but also reinforced using the latest techniques .

François I de La Rochefoucauld (died 1541) was the godfather of Francis I of France (1494 ? 1547) , who visited Verteuil in 1516 . Anne de Polignac , widow of Count François II de la Rochefoucauld , received the Emperor Charles V (1500 ? 1558) in Verteuil on 6 December 1539 . Her mother 's sister was the wife of the historian Philippe de Commines . She made many improvements to the château , and built the famous library . In 1558 King Henry II of France (1519 ? 59) stayed at Verteuil with his son Charles , Duke of Orleans (1550 ? 74) , and his daughter Elizabeth (1545 ? 68) , the future wife of Philip II of Spain (1527 ? 98) .

= = = Religious wars and Bourbon monarchy = = =

François III de La Rochefoucauld (1521 ? 72) became brother @-@ in @-@ law of the Protestant Louis , Prince of Condé (1530 ? 1569) , and in 1560 organized a meeting at Verteuil between Condé and the Cardinal Georges d 'Armagnac (c . 1501 ? 1585) legate of Pope Pius IV , in an attempt to prevent further conflict . Two years later François III had thrown in his lot with the Protestants . In 1567 the 6th national synod of the Reformed Church of France was held at the château , and the next year it was a rallying point for Huguenot troops that came to the aid of La Rochelle when it was besieged by Catholics . The château was visited by the future king Henry IV of France (1553 ? 1610) , Catherine de ' Medici (1519 ? 89) and her daughter , Margaret (1553 ? 1615) , Louis XIII of France (1601 ? 43) , Anne of Austria (1601 ? 66) and the Queen Mother Marie de ' Medici (1575 ? 1642) .

In 1650 François VI , Duc de La Rochefoucauld (1613 ? 1680) gathered more than 2 @,@ 000 knights whom he led to Bordeaux to help the nobles in the second Fronde revolt . Soon after Charles de La Porte , Marshall of France and Duc de la Meilleraye (1602 ? 64) attacked and took the castle with royal troops . He destroyed the Orangery and partially demolished the castle . The walls of the north wing were badly damaged , the towers dismantled , the drawbridge removed and the deep ditch that defended the northwest of the castle was partly filled . The castle remained habitable , and in 1651 was visited by the Prince de Conti , but he was forced to withdraw by soldiers of the Queen 's regiment . They installed a garrison of 150 men at Verteuil .

François VI was exiled by Louis XIV of France (1638 ? 1715) after the revolt . In 1652 François VI returned to the Château de Verteuil , where he spent most of his time until 1659 writing his Mémoires . He was restored to favor in 1662 and in 1665 published his Maximes . François died in Paris in 1680 but was buried in the Franciscan chapel of Verteuil , which had been founded in 1470 by his ancestor , John , 16th lord of Rochefoucauld and 13th lord of Verteuil . All of John 's successors were buried in this chapel until the Reign of Terror began in 1793 .

There were some distinguished visitors during the reign of Louis XV of France (1710 ? 1774) . Elisabeth Farnese (1692 ? 1766) the second wife of Philip V of Spain (1683 ? 1746) , spent time at Verteuil . The English agronomist Arthur Young in his account of a Journey to France in 1787 gave a detailed and flattering description of Verteuil , praising the agricultural improvements and the life of the population .

= = = French Revolution = = =

At the time of the outbreak of the French Revolution (1789 ? 99) there were excellent relations

between the La Rochefoucauld family and the people of Verteuil . According to Marquis de Amodio , nothing might have happened to the château if it had not been for Ruffec 's Committee of Public Safety and the Convention member Gilbert Romme , who is credited with burning most of the archives at Verteuil and thirty portraits . A fire accident occurred in 1793 that destroyed the large gallery that connected the chapel to the north tower , and the west face of the large central tower was seriously damaged . The fire spread along the roofs and turrets of the northwest wing , and the upper part of the north tower was also burned . The chapel was sacked , and the flames destroyed its facade and part of its north wall . The crypt was not damaged . Most of the floors and fireplaces in the château and all the doors , windows and woodwork were irreparably destroyed .

Later years

  After the Revolution the senior branch of the Rochefoucauld family regained possession . The château was renovated in the first half of the 19th century . The work was undertaken by the La Villéons in the romantic style that accompanied the Bourbon Restoration after 1815 . They added decorations to the windows and made false arrow slots , added two towers to the south facade , added a flamboyant balustrade and dormer windows , and made changes to part of the chapel .
  During the Second French Empire (1852 ? 70) further changes were made , mainly to the interior . Hippolyte de La Rochefoucauld (1804 ? 63) , who had been minister plenipotentiary in Germany and Florence , brought a fine collection of furniture and 18th century Venetian glass chandeliers when he retired . He restored the great stone staircase . Influenced by Eugène Viollet @-@ le @-@ Duc he decided to transform the large East tower into a library . He blocked up the old openings and pierced large new windows in the old walls . He commissioned a copy of the statue by Didier Début on the facade of the Hôtel de Ville , Paris of the author of the Maximes .
  During World War II (1939 ? 45) the château housed French troops and refugees from Alsace @-@ Lorraine in 1940 . For several months it was partially occupied by some German units . In 1944 some members of the maquis were hidden there . Various extremely interesting archaeological finds have been made since the war . Research started by Count Gabriel de La Rochefoucauld , which had been interrupted by the war , uncovered a buried part of the castle dating to the 12th and 13th centuries , including the room that housed the drawbridge mechanism . A 12th century stairway was discovered that led down to a lower chapel from the 11th century , in excellent condition , whose existence was completely unknown before 1958 . Various other traces of the early buildings have been found .
  The château was listed as a monument historique on 31 March 1966 , with the facades , roofs and substructure protected . The site was completely protected on 19 November 2010 as it was believed that the château , the interior courtyard and the land to the north may hold archaeological remains .

Architecture

Exterior

  The present château with its five conical towers and watchtower capped by slate roofs began to be built in the 15th century , and was altered and extended several times since then . A park was built in the 19th century through which a wide driveway brought visitors to the main building . This is based on a central square tower with a pyramidal roof . The square keep is the main remaining part of the medieval structure . The present building is designed on a triangular plan . The large tower at the tip of the triangle is the medieval gatehouse , from which wings extend on either side . An isolated tower that now has the library on two floors divides the curtain wall on the east .
  The buildings in the southeast were scarcely affected by the 19th century restoration apart from the chapel . Many of the walls of the 12th century tower have survived , partly rebuilt in the 15th century , and there are traces of a Romanesque chapel . The park was redesigned in the 19th century , enclosed in dry stone walls with several entrances . These have since been removed , as have the

luxuriant gardens of the 18th century . Some traces remain in the form of boxwood , some alleys , the pools on the two terraces and the rockery .

= = = Interior = = =

An inventory was made in 1728 after the death of Duke Francois VIII . The library contained 1 @,@ 069 works . The master bedroom included an elegant bed with sumptuous fittings of violet velvet embroidered in gold and silver , armchairs upholstered in the same velvet , a large Turkish rug in an alcove , a walnut table and other items . The architect Frantz Jourdain renovated the interior of the 14th century tower as a library for the Rochefoucault family in 1893 . He designed it as a " chapelle intellectuelle " to display memorabilia of the famous author . Adrien Karbowsky contributed decorative murals to the room . Hippolyte 's son , Count Aimery de La Rochefoucauld continued to collect the souvenirs of his ancestors , turning the château into a sort of family museum . He redecorated the chapel and added stained glass windows .

= = The Hunt of the Unicorn Tapestries = =

Seven of The Hunt of the Unicorn tapestries were recorded in a 1680 inventory of the Paris possessions of Duke Francois VI . From various symbolic motifs the tapestries seem to have been made to celebrate a marriage , probably that of Anne of Brittany (1477 ? 1514) and Louis XII of France (1462 ? 1515) . The royal arms of Louis and Anne would have once decorated the sky in most of the tapestries . The 1728 inventory recorded five of The Hunt of the Unicorn tapestries hanging in the château 's master bedroom . The tapestries , which were well over two hundred years old , were almost half worn out . Two more of the tapestries were in " a large lower hall near the chapel , presently serving as a storage place for furniture . " They were described as " two pieces of tapestry of the Unicorn , torn in various places . "

During the French Revolution Ruffec 's Comité de Surveillance ruled that the old tapestries of the château could be preserved , since they bore no royal insignia . It seems that the insignia had been cut out so the tapestries would not be destroyed by the mob when the château was looted in 1793 . They were taken by peasants who used them to protect their potatoes from freezing and to cover their Espalier trees . Count Hippolyte rediscovered the Unicorn tapestries of the château in the 1850s , being used by a peasant to cover vegetables in his barn . After being restored they were hung in a salon of the château in 1856 . Xavier Barbier de Montault saw the tapestries at Verteuil in the 1880s , and said that although " somewhat restored , [they] are of a freshness and of an incomparable grace " . In 1923 the tapestries were sold to John D. Rockefeller Jr. and shipped to New York .