

The

Chateau Royal

at Senlis

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The Chateau Royal at Senlis
From the Middle Ages to the present

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Note to the readers

Blank pages in the digital English version of the text correspond to pages with images in the French-language book (the original version).

Fig. 1:

The Chateau Royal at Senlis, Part One: The Capetians' exemplary Palace Residence

This work began with the simple aim of exploring the history of the ancient prison buildings within the Royal Castle at Senlis. They were separated from the main body of the castle during the revolution, and since then, have been largely forgotten.

However, it soon became apparent that the Royal Castle itself - more residence than fortress - had also been forgotten by historians and even by the people of Senlis. Indeed, I could find little to read on the subject. Despite its historical importance, the castle has not been the subject of academic enquiry, publication, or presentation to the wider public. My endeavour now, is to present a synthesis of the available information on the different buildings within the castle complex, which I have gleaned from maps, drawings, a few previous publications, and physical observations of the ruins themselves, as well as from the few surviving archives (unfortunately, the bulk of the castle's archives and those of the legal institutions of Senlis were destroyed in a fire at the old Charité Hospital, in 1914). My efforts cannot substitute for an in-depth archaeological study of the site, which is much needed. Such a study would doubtlessly throw light on the life of this ancient castle, the sequence of changes made to the buildings since 1600, and how their use also changed over that period. I would gladly welcome archaeological findings that might disprove some of my own deductions!

We will not go into detail about the lives of the royal characters who have inhabited Senlis over the centuries – that is for another time¹. Nevertheless, to better understand what will follow, a brief chronology might be helpful:

- End of the 3rd century AD: The Gallo-Roman wall of the city, encircling the Roman Castrum (fort) is constructed.
- 500-510 AD (approx.): Clovis, the first Merovingian king, stays in Senlis and pays homage at the tomb of St Rieul².
- Childebert I, his son, expands the city walls to protect the Church of Saint-Rieul at the north end of the Castrum.
- Charles 'the Bald' often stays at Senlis, where he has his nephew Pépin (864) and his brother Carloman (870) locked up.
- Hugues Capet, according to tradition, is elected King in Senlis in 987, probably at the castle. He possesses palaces at Étampes, Paris, Saint-Denis and at Senlis.
- The road from Paris to Senlis is the main axis of the kingdom of the Capetians and is under direct Royal control as far as Montmélian (Oise - today the commune of Mortefontaine). From whence it is controlled by the 'de la Tour' family of Senlis (later to be named Bouteiller - Butler).
- The Capetian axis - the Plain of France - is guarded by the King himself, and by the Abby at Saint-Denis. Further afield, the borders are watched over by the Lords of the castles at Montmorency, Beaumont, Montjay, Dammartin, Garlande and, at Senlis, de la Tour....
- Henry 1st (reign: 1031-1060) marries Anne of Kiev in 1051. She establishes the Abby of Saint-Vincent in Senlis in 1065.
- Philip 1st (reign: 1060-1108): at the end of the 11th century Gui de la Tour holds the Castle at Senlis.
- Louis VI 'the Fat' (reign: 1108-1137): Gui, the son of Gui de la Tour becomes 'Bouteiller du Roi' (Butler of the King) in 1108. This is one of the great offices of state responsible for the king's vineyards and provisions (Gui dies at some time after 1125). The deeds of Louis the Fat are published at Senlis "in Palatio".
- Raoul de Vermandois, the grandson of Henry 1st becomes Steward of France in 1131. He builds the Hôtel de Vermandois at Senlis around 1140.
- Louis VII 'the Young' (reign: 1137-1180): Gui IV, 'le Bouteiller', fulfills this eponymous function between 1150 and 1188.

¹ The subject has been touched on by several authors in the *Mémoires* of the Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Senlis: Rotte, R.: *Les Hôtes Royaux de Senlis* (Royal Guests in Senlis), 1948, p. 29-33 ; Bénard, René: *Des séjours de Charles V à Senlis* (Charles V's days in Senlis), 1949, p. 22-23 ; *Les Séjours de Louis XI à Senlis* (Louis XI's stays in Senlis); *Charles VIII à Senlis* (Charles VIII at Senlis), 1950 p. 3-5; and also Seminel Nathalie: *Senlis aux IX^e et X^e Siècles*, Master's Thesis under the direction of O. Guillot, Sorbonne University, 1984-1985.

² Jaulnay, Charles: *Le parfait prélat ou la vie et miracles de saint Rieul*, Paris, 1648 (The Perfect Prelate or the Life and Miracles of St Rieul).

- Philippe II Auguste (King of France: 1180-1223): In 1199 Philippe II Auguste orders that the City of Senlis be protected by new ramparts. Gui V 'le Bouteiller', the last Grand Butler of France in this family, dies in 1221.
- Saint Louis of France (King of France: 1226-1270): Gui VII 'le Bouteiller', who accompanies the King on Crusade, dies at Damiette in 1249. The priory of Saint-Maurice, adjacent to the Castle at Senlis, is built in 1264 by Saint Louis.
- The Faubourg de Vietel (Saint-Vincent) is included in the extension of the rampart in 1288.
- Philippe IV 'the Fair' (King of France 1285-1314): After a judgement in Council, the Templar Knights of Senlis are executed in Senlis in 1310.
- Charles VI (King of France: 1380-1422): In 1418 the city of Senlis is besieged by the forces of Armagnac, led by Jean of Luxemburg. The siege fails and the city survives.
- Henry III (King of France: 1574-1589): Failure of the siege of Senlis by the armies of Liège, who withdraw on May 17th, 1589.
- Henry IV (King of France: 1590-1614): In July 1590, the armies of Liège attempt a surprise attack on the city.
- Francis I (King of France: 1515-1547).
- Establishment of a local tribunal ('Présidial'³) within the Royal Castle in March 1551, by the edict of King Henry II. Thereafter, seats are established in tax tribunals and in tribunals concerned with Royal and private estates ('Élection'⁴ and 'Eaux et Forêts'⁵) respectively. The castle ceases to be a royal residence.
- 1792: The Castle is sold (following the Revolution) as a national asset.

³ The 'Présidial' was a local tribunal created in January 1551 (by the old Calendar) in each Bailiwick and administrative district, to judge minor cases not relevant to the Royal Parliaments.

⁴ 'Élection': a tribunal dealing with judgements concerning fiscal matters (tithes, aid...).

⁵ 'Eaux et Forêts': this institution deals with matters concerning Royal and private estates.

The Castle occupies an elevated position within the Gallo-Roman Castrum, and probably stands on a section of the ancient Roman Forum. Archaeological digs carried out in the Castle courtyard, from 1945-50 by Georges Matherat⁶ and in 1952 by André Piganiol, unearthed a plinth and fragments of a monumental bronze statue of the Emperor Claudius Tiberius, which is currently on display at the Senlis Museum of Art and Archaeology.

The northern aspect of the Castle abuts the Gallo-Roman rampart, built at the end of the 3rd century AD, and incorporates two of its towers (based on the spacing of towers along the length of the remaining rampart, it is possible that a third (round) tower might also have been incorporated into the castle, hidden behind the great square tower that now stands visible on the site).

The Castrum at Senlis was a site of major importance. Its high walls and numerous towers were key to successfully resisting all attempts at invasion by the Normans.

As Jean Mesqui observed⁷, we have a city wall typical of defences built at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, within which the Lord and Master of a town would build his castle and residence incorporating a section of the rampart and some of its towers.

The architectural ensemble bordered by the city wall to the north, is roughly rectangular in shape, and contained within walls punctuated by a large tower to the north-east, a gate to the south-east, a staircase tower to the south-west and an ancient (Roman) tower to the north-west (fig. 1).

Clearly, this site-plan does not resemble that of the 'idealised 12th century medieval fortress' (during the reign of Philip Auguste, this would typically be a square structure, surrounded by a moat, uniformly fortified, and enclosed by four towers; a gatehouse in the centre of one of the sidewalls; a powerful keep in the courtyard, and the towers and curtains furnished with numerous slit windows). Indeed, the term 'Château Royal' (Royal Castle) might be confusing, or even disappointing, to the tourist of today who instead, discovers a royal residence rather than the classical medieval castle-keep of his imagining.

⁶ Matherat, Georges: *Rapports des fouilles du château royal de 1945 à 1950* (Report on the Excavations of the Royal Castle, 1945 to 1950), Archives of the Société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Senlis (SHAS) n° 335. Georges Matherat, personal records about his research on an ancient courtroom. His communications on the medieval levels are somewhat sketchy.

⁷ Mesqui, Jean: *Provins, La fortification d'une ville au Moyen Age* (Provins, the fortification of a medieval town), Arts et métiers graphiques, Paris, 1979.

Fig. 2:
Fig. 3:
Fig. 4:
Fig. 5:

The Gate

Contrary to expectations, the square gatehouse shows all the characteristics typical of the 13th century – during the reign of Philippe Auguste⁸ or of Louis IX. It consists of a door under a pointed barrel arch with a groove for the portcullis and an ‘assommoir’ (a “murder-hole” through which projectiles could be thrown at an assailant). The interior arcade conceals, at its very centre and barely visible, a second portcullis slot (fig. 2).

Close examination of these portcullis slots, however, reveals an anomaly. A cornice, at the height of one storey, runs along the walls inside the door and would clearly hinder the descent of the portcullis. This cornice is well integrated into the masonry, and there is no evidence to suggest that it was added later (fig. 3). Indeed, the lateral grooves (for the portcullis) do not even reach the ground. It is likely that the portcullis was there simply for show and had no practical function. We have noted that the surviving west side wall of the ‘Porte de la Cité’ (city gate) or ‘fausse porte Saint-Rieul’ (false gate of Saint-Rieul), in the Rue de Villevert, within the Roman rampart next to the castle, has a similar cornice, albeit of larger size (fig. 4).

The bedchamber and attic above the castle gate have been incorporated into the Hôtel des Trois Pots, adjacent to the gate, since before 1690⁹.

In the 19th century, this gate contained two upper chambers, one above the other, separated by a floor and an attic. In 1836 they were the property of the owner of the Hôtel des Trois Pots. On 26th December 1879, they were purchased by Henri Philibert Jean Turquet de la Boisserie, the then owner of the castle. A passage between the upper chamber and the first floor of the building now occupied by the tourist office, has recently been walled off.

Today, the gate is surmounted by an upper floor at the centre of which is an arched opening overlooking the road. This opening is a restoration and postcards from the beginning of the 20th century show two rectangular windows one above the other (fig. 5, old view of the gate). The restoration dates from the early 2000s. The traces of the original arched window were visible, which made the restoration possible. The gate is topped by a roof with five unequal slopes, barely visible from the ground (fig. 6). We can define this gate as a tower-gate.

The traditional view held by Historians¹⁰ is that two half-round towers would have stood, one on either side of the gate, both of which, it is said, were demolished in the 17th century. However, Matherat himself, in 1948¹¹, cast doubt on this hypothesis, and indeed, no trace of these putative towers has ever been found, not even in the foundations, which logically, should have been preserved as part of the perimeter wall. Moreover, it should be noted, that a house has been attached to the gate since 1290. This house, replaced by the Hôtel des Trois Pots at the renaissance, exists to this day. Neither does any trace of semi-circular foundations exist in the cellar of the adjoining house to the northeast of the gate, known as the Hôtel de l’Homme Sauvage.

Incidentally, it is worth noting the names of the inhabitants of these buildings, as revealed, by Michel Lequoy¹²: Regnier de la Porte, a burgher of Senlis in April 1240 and Pierre, son of the leaseholder, Robert de la Porte in 1290; and from Charles François Afforty, we learn of Jehan de la Porte ‘the elder’, in February 1345¹³. This evocative patronymic might suggest that the gate was an urban stronghold¹⁴.

⁸ Corvisier, Christian: “Les demeures seigneuriales fortifiées de l’âge gothique en pays d’Oise”, in *L’art gothique dans l’Oise et ses environs*, GEMOB, Beauvais, 2001, p. 103.

⁹ Lequoy, Michel: *Maisons et enseignes de Senlis du XIV^e au XVIII^e siècle*, tome 2, Senlis, 1985, p. 339, auction of 22 April 1793.

¹⁰ For example: Matherat, Georges: *Le Châtel du roy*, SHAS, monthly bulletin n° 147-148.

¹¹ Matherat, Georges: *La limite est du château*, SHAS, 1948.

¹² Lequoy, Michel, *op. cit.*, pp. 329-.

¹³ Afforty, Charles-François, volume XVIII, 329 (collection of manuscripts from the municipal library of Senlis).

¹⁴ The de la Porte family is very prominent in Senlis with many members evident in the 13th and 14th century, several of whom served as Mayor. A Richard de la Porte “once inhabited (in 1257) the gate and turret” on the south side of the town in the Rue de Paris.

Fig. 8:
Fig. 9:
Fig. 9 bis:

We find examples of gates not flanked by towers in other locations. These include the Chateau de Montargis, where the tower-gate, surmounted by two storeys was, until modern times, flanked by domestic houses (fig. 7). Closer to Senlis, the Château de Pontarmé also has a tower-gate without flanking towers¹⁵.

In Senlis, the Porte Bellon (Bellon Gate), dating from 1288, was of this type, as we can see from a surviving drawing, which we have in our possession (fig. 8).

It is unlikely that a drawbridge ever existed – there is certainly nothing in the currently-discernible architecture, and no masonry marks, to suggest one. Indeed, it would be incongruous to put such a thing *within* the city wall. Moreover, the presence of an alley running alongside the castle (Rue de la Treille) rules out the presence of a ditch, (over which a drawbridge could be placed).

The current wooden doors date from after 1795¹⁶ when the then owner, Lefevre, had them remade, re-using the old lock.

Note also that there is a large rectangular stone on the inner side of the north doorjamb. The matching one from the south doorjamb is missing, having been re-used in the construction of an outbuilding, a lean-to, erected in the 19th century, and situated a little further into the courtyard, on the left-hand side, beyond the well (fig. 9).

Fig. 6:

Fig. 7:

¹⁵ Other examples are Creil, Blandy-les-tours, Saintines etc.

¹⁶ Martin, Thérèse-Paule: *Un reliquaire de notre histoire nationale, le "Vieux Château" de Senlis*, Senlis, 1971, 8 pages (A reliquary of our national history, the Old Castle at Senlis).

Fig. 10:

Fig. 11:

The Courtyard

Beyond the gate on the right-hand side, there once stood a high wall. This was demolished in 1976¹⁷ to open the Castle grounds up to the Cathedral Square – la Place Notre-Dame (fig. 10).

This wall, although legally recorded in the 18th century, was in fact, according to Matherat¹⁸, constructed in the 17th century from what remained of buildings, marked by “two superimposed windows”, that enclosed the courtyard of the castle and which, a little further to the east, abutted the perimeter wall of the castle. To the south, its medieval foundations have been located¹⁹. In 1752, the house of the ‘Homme Sauvage’, adjacent to the gate, had in its wall, an opening into the castle courtyard²⁰.

This extension of houses, from the Cathedral Square and from the Rue du Châtel, into the castle grounds, predates the 17th century. The perimeter of the medieval castle was thus defined on the east side by the walls of a building that exist to this day, and currently houses the Tourist Office. The cellars of this building, incidentally, have the same footprint as the building above (fig. 11). We do not know which buildings serving the medieval palace might have existed at this location. Michel Lequoy points out that the building adjoining the western part of the Hôtel du Sauvage and abutting, on its north side, the medieval gate of the castle, served as “the kitchens of the king’s property”²¹. We have unearthed a Deed of transaction dated 23rd January 1633 from the Archives of the Département de l’Oise, which states that the Hôtel du Sauvage belongs on one side to the widow of M. Jehan Methélet, (prosecutor) and on the other, to the enclosure of the King’s castle. The only other available document, dated July 1612, mentions “bedrooms and kitchen” but is probably the result of an inaccurate reading and should be put aside²². Indeed, given that they have not been located elsewhere, these buildings might well have housed the Guardian of the castle or the stables.

The contemporary arrangement is, in any case, misleading to the visitor. It is only today (following the demolition of the wall) that the castle is orientated towards the cathedral. In the past, the architecture of the two neighbouring entities was designed to keep them separate from each other, thus symbolically asserting their respective powers.

The wall ran from the gate complex to the Great Square Tower (the Keep).

Let us dwell a moment longer in the courtyard.

As Pierre Garrigou Grandchamphas observed²³: “The courtyard is, nowadays, immense, due to the disappearance of buildings that used to enclose it to the east and to the west, creating a courtyard that was, actually rather modest in size for a palace: a little over 45 metres wide, from east to west and 20-30 metres deep from north to south, thus just under 1200 m²”.

¹⁷ Senlis, Bulletin municipal n° 11.

¹⁸ Matherat, Georges: “La limite est du château” (The Eastern boundary of the Castle’) in *Compte rendu et mémoires*, (summaries and histories) SHAS, 1948, p36.

¹⁹ Generally, for matters concerning Georges Matherat’s archaeological dig, the plan drawn by Jean Pierre Paquet (ACMH, December 1946), should be consulted. As for this portion of the wall, the report is excessively truncated “the study of a fragment of wall, discovered in 1946 has revealed nothing; it stretches over just a few metres and is quite shallowly dug into the earth”.

²⁰ Lequoy, Michel, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 345. The deed is dated 23rd January 1633 and not February as cited in the book. ADO 2 E 28/58.

²² *ibid.*, p. 358. Extract of the lease, dated 4th July 1612, of the house built against the east-facing façade of the main tower is transcribed as follows: “a house in Senlis consisting of a larder, cellar, bakery, attic, garden above and close to the bedrooms and kitchen of the castle adjoining on one side to the said castle...” ADO 2 E 28/51

²³ Garrigou-Grandchamp, Pierre: *Inventaire des édifices domestiques romans et gothiques des XII^e, XIII^e et XIV^e siècles dans les pays de l’Oise* (Inventory of Roman and gothic domestic buildings from 12th, 13th and 14th centuries in the land around the Oise), SAMF, March 1999. <http://www.societearcheologiquedumidi.fr/samf/grmaison/geomm/france/60/senlis.htm> (accessed 28/07/2022)

Fig. 14:
Fig. 15:

At the end of the 18th century nine large elms were planted in the courtyard²⁴.

Three pathways led to the different sections of the castle (fig. 12 Delorme plan and fig. 13 Desmarest plan).

In front of the (old) gate stands the Great Tower and just to its left, a monumental staircase leading to the first floor of the palace. The rooms on this level would have had their view blocked by the chapel of Saint-Denis situated just in front of them. At the end of the courtyard on the left, the palace was enclosed by a building (the west wing), which has now completely disappeared, and which would have blocked the view of the Chapel of Saint-Maurice save for the steeple of the belltower, which would have been visible above the roofs and their chimneys. Further to the south, were the courts of Justice and the prison. We will discuss these later. A second monumental staircase provided access to the prison from the outside. At its foot was the courtyard well, now half-enclosed in a lean-to (built at the beginning of the 19th century and used as a woodshed). The well is equipped with a large shelf that was probably for the use of those on horseback (fig. 14). To its left, on the east side, is a staircase leading to a small barrel-shaped cellar with access to the well, a layout which is traditional in Senlis (fig. 15). Behind the well, to the south, a high wall completed the enclosure of the palace. On the other side of the wall, were the buildings of the Hôtel des Trois Pots and its outbuildings, and prior to that, other buildings recorded from before 1290. These properties were never part of the Royal Palace complex.

Fig. 12:

Fig. 13:

²⁴ Sale of National property, AD Oise, 1Q3/658.

Fig. 16:

The Great Medieval Tower (fig. 16)

The hypothesis, held by the archaeologist Georges Matherat, that this is a Roman tower, has now been discredited. However, it is true that the tower was built upon ancient foundations. Indeed, Matherat's own archaeological work revealed a semi-circular structure which is clearly visible today.

Nevertheless, large stones, clearly recycled from ancient buildings, are to be found in the lower part of the Great Tower²⁵. These are identifiable by their distinctive tool marks and have been placed without regard for the positioning of those marks. The re-use of ancient 'colossal' carved stone blocks in the construction of new buildings was a common practice in medieval times, and examples of this include the columns in the Choir of the Cathedral of Senlis (end of 12th century) and the façade of the Basilica of Saint-Remi of Reims (around 1162). According to Annie Renoux²⁶, "The re-use of monumental stones from the castrum (fort) of the ancient civitas (city) of Jublains (8 km distant) in the construction of the 'domus' (town house) of the Count of Maine at Mayenne at the start of the 10th century was not an accident". She sees both technical and symbolic reasons for deploying old building materials. Whether conscious or not, the visible references to the Roman or Carolingian empires would have made explicit a tangible link to the past and would have laid claim to that imperial heritage.

The Great Tower backs closely onto the Gallo-Roman wall, but at no point is there a physical masonry link to the rampart itself (fig. 17). At the lower levels, it is the use of large, smooth, and carefully positioned stones that allows this closeness (despite the slightly uneven surface of the pebbledash-covered Roman wall behind the tower). The base of the tower consists of very large stones, finely hewn to create close joints, and rising to a height of some seven metres. Beyond this, over about a further metre, there remain sections of wall constructed of smaller stones, rubble, and corner ties. Here also, we can identify recycled stones (fig. 18). It is likely that the whole structure was originally covered with plaster rendering. We cannot know today whether this structural transition, from large stones at the base to a small-stone and rubble mix higher up, was in the original design of the building, whether it is due to a resumption of building work after an interruption, or is the result of more recent alterations. The tower is reinforced with buttresses tapering to the corners, and in the facades (eight at the corners and one, centrally placed, on each façade – four in total) and is typical of the "Romanesque quadrangular keep" design. The buttresses, despite being tapered, are massive and have a distinctive profile as described by André Chatelain²⁷. They rise vertically from the foundations to a bevelled cornice, which forms the base of a second section, where they continue, at an angle over the next eight courses. They then taper before rising vertically again to the top (fig. 19). It should also be noted that at the corners, the buttresses are not a single entity covering the corners all the way up, but two separate buttresses at right angles to each other and closely applied at the bottom vertical section. As they rise, they reflect the pattern seen in those along the facades, rising at an angle so that their long sides move inwards along the face of the wall and away from the corner edge as they rise to higher levels. This design is repeated at the junctions of the buttresses and the tower walls at the back of the building, where it abuts the rampart, even though here it is hidden and, arguably, not aesthetically or archaeologically necessary (fig. 19 bis). On the southern face of the building, quite high up, where the construction changes from massive stone blocks to smaller stones and rubble, the space between the central buttress and that at the east edge is bridged by a vault in which, against the wall, we see a trap door resembling a 'murder hole'. It is hard, however, to see what this might have protected, although there are traces of a narrow, blocked door or window just below it, whose height it is difficult to estimate (fig. 20).

Abb. 16 bis:

²⁵ We were able to find stones measuring 0.97 m x 0.59 m. Based on a Roman foot measuring about 0.295 m and a medieval foot measuring about 0.325m, this would correspond to an ancient stone measuring 3.3 x 2 ft or a medieval stone of 3 x 1.82 ft. The ancient stone may have been re-cut.

²⁶ Renoux, Annie: *Résidences et lieux de pouvoir des élites aristocratiques en Gaule franque du VIIe au début du XIe siècle : les signes distinctifs*, 2015 (Residences and places of power of aristocratic elites in Frankish Gaul from the 7th to the beginning of the 11th century: distinctive features, 2015. <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02559217/document> (accessed 28/07/2022).

²⁷ Chatelain, André: *Châteaux forts et féodalité en Ile-de-France du XIe au XIIIe siècle* (Castles and feudalism in the Ile-de-France from the 11th to the 13th century), Éditions (publ.) Créer, 1983.

Fig. 17:
Fig. 18:
Fig. 19 bis:

Fig. 19:

Fig. 20:

This arrangement suggests that there might have been a second building phase and begs the question as to the purpose this opening might have served. It is this elevation of the tower that is the best preserved. The vertical chaining¹⁹¹, which here is not in line with the eastern buttress, could reflect the framing of an opening made later, on the first floor.

This is, therefore, the Capetian Castle-Keep, probably dating from the 11th century, which has subsequently been altered and is today missing its upper floors. It is of very solid construction with walls 4.5 m thick and a 21.5 m x 17.5 m footprint²⁸.

At the time of the first Capetians, this great royal tower matched, politically and symbolically, its counterparts in Paris – the ‘Tour de la Cité’ and the great tower of the Louvre (built around 1200 and 15.6 m in diameter)²⁹.

According to Jean Mesqui, the addition of this castle-keep modernised “the standard Carolingian palace in Senlis”: Aula-Capella-Camera (great hall, chapel, and royal bedroom) within a fortified enclosure³⁰. Indeed, the design is comparable to that of the royal palace in Paris on the Île de la Cité, which is similarly surrounded by walls but structured as a seat of city power rather than as a fortress, and is endowed with a great tower, (probably dating back to 1111), giving it a castral and prestigious appearance³¹.

It is perhaps from the Senlis castle-keep that its guardian, Gui de La Tour, acknowledged as the ancestor of the Bouteiller (‘Butler’) family of Senlis, takes his name.

It is likely that one tower, at least, of the ancient Gallo-Roman wall was knocked down to clear space for the construction of the medieval keep. Marc Durand, using a copy made of a 1779 plan, itself a copy of a 17th century plan found by Diane Brouillette, locates it to the west of the Saint-Rieul “postern”- gate (Rue de Villevert today)³². The disappearance of the internal facing of the rampart at this location provides evidence for the levelling of the base of the ancient tower prior to the construction of the Romanesque tower.

The original height of the great tower is not known. However, one would expect it to have been higher than the multi-storey towers of the ancient rampart. The vestiges that remain are 7.50 m high, on top of which are 1.26 m of “parapet”. The towers of the rampart are a little more than twice as high. We think an original height of around 30 m is plausible³³. Furthermore, as noted by Alain Salamagne³⁴, the height of a building would have reflected the prestige of a great lord and its large size, built to the highest of standards, would be another mark of prestige, not least, because it demonstrated the monarch’s wealth and ability to finance the project.

²⁸ Approximately 66 x 54 medieval feet.

²⁹ Civel, Nicolas: *La fleur de France, les seigneurs d'Ile-de-France au XIIe siècle* (The flower of France, the lords of Ile-de-France in the 12th century), Turnhout (Belgium), Brepols, 2006.

³⁰ However, this assertion is based on the assumption that Louis VI le Gros (the Fat), in rebuilding the palace, stuck to a pre-existing plan and did not develop the commons to extend his palace beyond the tower.

³¹ Bove, Boris: “Les palais royaux à Paris au Moyen Age (XIe-XVe siècles)” (The royal palaces in Paris in the Middle Ages (11th-15th centuries)), in M.F. Auzepy, J. Cornette (eds.), *Palais et Pouvoir, de Constantinople à Versailles, Saint-Denis* (Palace and Power, from Constantinople to Versailles, Saint-Denis), Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 2003, pp. 45-79. Article published online at Cour de France.fr on 4 October 2008 (<https://cour-de-france.fr/article592.html>).

³² Durand, Marc: “Pour une datation tardive des étages des tours gallo-romaines de l'enceinte de Senlis” (For a late dating of the floors of the Gallo-Roman towers within the Senlis city walls), in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, years 2002 and 2003, SHAS, 2004.

³³ For comparison, note the heights of the square keeps of Loches: 38 m (1030), Montbazou: 28 m (1050), Beaugency: 36 m (11th century), Pithiviers (destroyed): about 33 m (around 1000), Montrichard: (1120, rebuilt 1188): originally 25 m.

³⁴ Salamagne, Alain: *Archères, mâchicoulis et tours dans l'architecture militaire du Moyen Âge (XIIIe-XVe siècle) : éléments fonctionnels ou symboliques ?* (Archery slits, machicolations and towers in medieval military architecture (13th-15th century): functional or symbolic elements?) Proceedings of the VIIth International Congress of Medieval Archaeology (Le Mans - Mayenne 9-11 September 1999).

Fig. 20 bis:

Fig. 22:

A royal warrant of 1173 stipulates that the commune of Senlis “be granted to [Gui, Bouteiller (Butler)] and his heirs with the proviso (inter alia) that they be allowed to rebuild (reedificare) his tower in the said city, in better condition than it was in the time of King Louis [VI?] and as high as he wishes”³⁵. Although it is likely that it is the master tower (the keep) that the document links to the ‘de la Tour/Bouteiller’ family, we cannot definitively rule out the possibility that it might refer to a different tower within the palace complex. In any case, this warrant provides evidence that the tower was in a poor condition, at least by the time of the reign of Louis VI (1108-1137), and therefore suggests its construction at least one hundred years previously. André Chatelain’s hypothesis of its construction around 1130, contemporary with the rebuilding of the rest of the palace, must therefore be rejected³⁶.

Did the tower in its original state, supported by buttresses, rise to the top in one piece? In the absence of documents or comparable examples from that period, there is no way of knowing for sure. This is the hypothesis of Etienne Poncelet (fig. 20 bis)³⁷, and there are, indeed, two arguments to support it: the rupture of the building at the level of the first floor and, as we shall see, the presence of a latrine duct which extended beyond this level.

A drawing, from the north, of the siege of 1589 (figs. 21 and 21 bis), shows the “keep” as a large square tower with a thick base, flanked by small, corbelled turrets at the top, and a covered walkway on the first floor³⁸. It is this design that Thérèse-Paul Martin chose to reconstruct (fig. 22)³⁹, a design reminiscent of the shape of the César Tower in Provins, which is of later date, however, and octagonal in its upper section. An example of a 12th-century square keep with four corbelled turrets at the corners, added in the 14th century, can be found at the Château de Mazières in the Indre (fig. 23)⁴⁰. The fresco of St. Stephen in the pre-Romanesque chapel of Senlis Cathedral, dated to the late 15th or early 16th century, also shows a tower with watchtowers at the corners in the background (fig. 24). Was Gui le Bouteiller responsible for these alterations? We will see later that the tower shows evidence of changes to its interior structure in the 14th century. It is possible that this work was combined with the renovation of the upper floors. These alterations to the upper parts would certainly have added to the prestigious character of the place. On the other hand, on Tuesday 7 July 1411, the town decided to install a lookout in the Senlis bell tower “in order to let people know if soldiers were coming”⁴¹. Similarly, during the siege of May 1589, the town installed its lookouts on the heights of the cathedral’s large bell tower, which was clearly dominant⁴². On a further occasion, on 22nd August 1592 “a guardhouse of planks was built inside the bell tower of Notre-Dame... because it was seen from a great distance”⁴³. There is no mention of any role for the great tower (of the castle) in the accounts of the siege of 1589.

Fig. 23:

³⁵ Carolus-Barré, Louis: “Les origines de la commune de Senlis (1173-1202)” (The origins of the commune of Senlis (1173-1202)), in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, 1976, SHAS, 1978, p.83. Carolus-Barré adds that it is not known for certain whether this tower was rebuilt by the Bouteiller or his descendants. See also: Flammermont, Jules: *Histoire des institutions municipales de Senlis*, 1881, for the Latin text on page 164.

³⁶ Chatelain, André : *op.cit.*

³⁷ Poncelet, Etienne: ACMH, *Étude préalable en vue de la restauration du logis du roi du château royal de Senlis* (Preliminary study for the restoration of the king’s dwelling in the royal castle of Senlis), Lille, 2 May 2009.

³⁸ Published in: Bonnault d’Houet, Xavier de: *Compiègne pendant les guerres de religion et de la Ligue* (Compiègne during the Wars of Religion and the League), Société historique de Compiègne, 1910. The author gives the reference of this plan: volumes de Colbert, vol. 30, f°314 and mentions another plan on f°311. Unfortunately, we have not found these originals to compare with the reproduction.

³⁹ Martin, Thérèse-Paule: *op. cit.*, dessin de couverture signé G.M. pour Georges Matherat (cover design initialled GM for Georges Matherat).

⁴⁰ Of a slightly different type - at the châteaux of Ambleny, Vic-sur-Aisne or Mez-le-Maréchal, the turrets surrounding the tower rise from the ground.

⁴¹ Registres de délibération de la Ville de Senlis (records of the deliberations of the City of Senlis), EDT1/BBII f° 31 verso.

⁴² Bernier, Adhelm: *Monuments de l’histoire de France* (Monuments of French History), 1836, Senlis.

⁴³ Afforty, vol. XII, 7368, which copies a “cartulary” (collection of charters) recording work on the town’s fortifications, with omissions from 1583 to 1592.

Fig. 21:

Fig. 21 bis:

Fig. 24:

Fig. 24:

Fig. 25:
Fig. 26:
Fig. 26 bis:

The town's fortifications, walls, gates, and ravelins were rebuilt and modernised from 1591-1592⁴⁴. This work was perhaps combined with the dismantling of the Great tower of the Keep, which was modified at the beginning of the 17th century, possibly to retrieve building materials or because of its defensive uselessness. The drawing by Joachim Duviert (1612), kept in the National Library of France, and which greatly emphasises religious monuments, shows a lowered square tower topped by a four-sloped pavilion roof with no trace of watchtowers (fig. 25). The 1707 drawing, seen from the north-east, gives the same appearance (fig. 26). The (diminished) tower may also be discernible in the 1784 engraving by Tavernier de Jonquières⁴⁵.

The plan of the castle drawn up by Henri Moinet in 1842 refers to this part as the “fort” (fig. 27).

Today, the tower is entered through a vaulted passageway in the thickness of the wall, which opens onto the south side into the courtyard. There is nothing to suggest that this opening is original. For defensive purposes, the original access would have been on the first floor, and access from the curtain wall of the ancient rampart to the north would have been at almost the same level. However, it should be noted, as pointed out by Jean Mesqui, that there are a few exceptions to the usual arrangement of access via the first floor: the keep of Ivry-la-Bataille has access to a reception room on the ground floor, and that of Montrichard to a storage room on the ground floor⁴⁶. In his drawing of the tower's reconstruction, Etienne Poncelet puts the opening at mid-height on the west façade, traditionally called the ‘œil-de-bœuf’, as the original entrance. This solution, as we shall see, can satisfy both a residential use of the ground floor of the tower and a defensive access. The present access corridor leads into another, perpendicular, corridor, which is 1.20 m wide with a vaulted ceiling. This corridor is a final addition to the architecture of the site. The vault is laid against the outer wall. Its construction interrupted the vaulting arch of the 14th century lower room, the start of which is still clearly visible on the wall. A modern buttress reinforces it. A single rectangular room occupied the entire interior space of the ground floor of the Senlis tower (fig. 29). It measured 12.85 m by 9.19 m. The excavations carried out by Georges Matherat have lowered the medieval floor, which was not backfilled and reveals the semi-circular ancient foundation to the north-west.

On the ground floor of the main tower, on the right-hand side, there is a well (fig. 30 and fig. 31). The shaft of this filled-in well opens 10 m⁴⁷ below ground level in the side of a quarry gallery, of which there are several examples in Senlis. This opening was used either to draw water from the gallery or as a convenient way to bring loads up from the quarry level. This north-west-facing gallery was 2.20 m high, 12 m long and 3.40 m wide (fig. 32, plan of the gallery). Access to the gallery would have been via a staircase (or sloping gallery) from the east.

Matherat's excavations recorded traces of paving stones, measuring 89 cm in diameter, at the level of the opening of the well, but there was no remaining evidence of kerbstones. Today the top of the shaft is ruined, due to Matherat's excavation having gone below the medieval level. It is therefore not possible to know whether the shaft extended higher up to serve the first floor⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ Broisse, Jean François : Recherches historiques sur Senlis (Historical research on Senlis), Senlis, Desmarets, 1835, p. 78.

⁴⁵ View of the city of Senlis in : La Borde, Jean-Benjamin de: *Voyages pittoresques de la France ou Description générale et particulière de la France ; ouvrage enrichi d'estampes d'après les dessins des plus célèbres artistes*. (Scenic Journeys through France or General and Specific Descriptions of France: A Work enhanced by prints of drawings by the most celebrated artists). Dedicated to the King, Paris, Lamy, 1784.

⁴⁶ Mesqui, Jean: *Châteaux et enceintes de la France médiévale* (Castles and Walls of Medieval France), 2 t., Paris, Picard, 1991-1993.

⁴⁷ Matherat, Georges and Abbé Soubize, 1946: Excavations, SHAS (archives) n°335. The well was explored to a depth of 11 metres. The measurements are confirmed by Henri Leblanc, a tireless explorer of the Senlis subsoil, in an undated handwritten note, who descended “a quarter of a century” after his predecessors. We have measured the current depth of the shaft at 9.5 m.

⁴⁸ As in, for example, Étampes, Châteaudun, Les Montils or Montépilloy.

Fig. 27:

Fig. 27:

Fig. 28:

Fig. 28:

Fig. 29:
Fig. 30:

Fig. 31:

Fig. 32 bis:

Fig. 32:

Fig. 33:

In the early days, the room probably had a ceiling. Today, the remains of the 14th-century ribbed vaulting have survived in eight sections of the inner walls of the tower (fig. 33). The central keystone now lies on the floor in the access corridor to the upper floor (fig. 34). The foot of the central column still exists in the centre of the building (fig. 35). In 1946, Georges Matherat identified two circular post bases, in blocking and not very neat, dividing the north-south axis of the tower into three equal parts, and in alignment with the base of the pillar (fig. 36). They might have served as props to support the roof before the pillar was raised. Remains of paving like that found in the vicinity of the well covered these plinths at the time of their discovery in 1946. It is also possible that they might have been the bases of posts supporting the original floor.

In the north wall there is a corridor leading to a latrine. The vaulted arch slightly obscures the entrance to the corridor, confirming its later construction (fig. 37). The entrance door has a Romanesque lintel surmounted by a tympanum under a semi-circular arch with regular keystones. The tympanum, the lintel and the first two arch segments are all in one piece. The relative length of the corridor from the entrance to the latrine seat is explained, according to Viollet Le Duc⁴⁹, because “at night it was customary to be accompanied when going to the cabinet” (fig. 38)⁵⁰. Initially, the latrine seat was reached by three wide steps the width of the corridor, which have now disappeared, but whose housings are visible in the walls of the corridor. The seat still has the wooden seat recess and grooves (fig. 39). The overhang of the ribbed vault forms a niche in the western wall in front of the latrines, although it is possible that this is a blocked ventilation shaft. The latrines drained into a cesspool (fig. 40). Latrines of this type, known as “pit latrines”, existed in the aula of the castle of Ghent in the 11th century or in the tower of Ambleny around 1140⁵¹. We have not identified any flushing mechanism. Filtering must have taken place naturally in the subsoil or in the quarries. The upper floor was served by a stone conduit in the eastern wall (fig. 41). Today, this shaft is 11.29 m deep. Might the study of this layout shed light on the architecture of the missing floors? The presence of both a well and latrines suggests that this large tower was used as a residential tower⁵². According to Edward Impey, a master tower with only one room on each floor suggests a private residence, with the reception rooms situated in separate buildings⁵³.

Fig. 33 bis:

⁴⁹ The corridor is 4.2 m in length including the latrine.

⁵⁰ Viollet-le-Duc, Eugène-Emmanuel: *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle* (dictionary of French Architecture, 11th to 16th century) volume 6, Paris, Bance, 1863.

⁵¹ Mesqui, Jean and Fauchère, Nicolas: “L'hygiène dans les châteaux forts au Moyen Age” (Hygiene in medieval castles) in Les cahiers de Commarque, *La vie de châteaux*, Le Bugue, Éd. Ol Contou. <http://www.mesqui.net> (accessed on 28 /07/ 2022).

⁵² Mesqui, Jean: “La tour maîtresse dite donjon” (The Master tower or Keep), in *Châteaux et enceintes de la France médiévale*, Picard, 2013.

⁵³ Impey, Edward: “The donjon at Montrichard, Loir-et-Cher: observations on its date and function”, in *Revue Archéologique du Centre de la France*, volume 39, 2000, pp. 199-214.

Fig. 34:

Fig. 35:
Fig. 37:
Fig. 36:

Fig. 38:

Fig. 39:
Fig. 40:

Fig. 41:

To the left of the ground floor entrance, there is a flight of stairs set into the thickness of the wall which provides access to a, possibly later, opening in the west wall, onto the main external staircase of the palace (Fig. 42). In the 19th century this opening was called the ‘oeil-de-boeuf’ (bull’s eye). The interior staircase continues at right angles in the thickness of the west wall (fig. 43) and is 0.97 m wide. The origin of this staircase is at a higher level than that of the access corridor (from the lower room). It is not possible to know whether this is the consequence of later alterations or was in the original design of the building⁵⁴. It allows access to the first floor, the current top of the tower, which is on the same level as the top of the Gallo-Roman rampart (fig. 44). However, there is no trace today of a direct medieval access from the ancient walkway on the Roman wall to the interior of the keep. Nor is there any trace of a covered walkway gallery inside the walls of the keep, as suggested by Moinet’s plans of 1842, and the reconstructed plans of 1865-1867. Matherat, using the latter plans as his guide⁵⁵, searched in vain for such traces in 1943 and 1945. If such a covered, perimeter walkway existed, it must have been located at the level of the first floor, the current top of the tower.

Shortly before the Revolution, the first floor had the appearance of a platform. The top of the walls was laid out as a garden and a building, situated in the centre was “composed of two rooms and a cabinet, attic above” and served as the seat of the fiscal tribunal (‘Élection’⁴)⁵⁶. This first floor no longer existed in 1867, nor did the vaults on the ground floor⁵⁷. From the platform, and as is still the case today - by spanning the space between the master tower and the ancient wall - one could access the ancient rampart which, in the north-east corner, constituted the Saint-Rieul Gate (or city gate), now demolished, but which was still topped by a small building in 1793⁵⁸.

The rampart’s covered walkway connected the two ancient towers of the palace to the west and continued, without a break, along the side of the Great Tower towards the east as far as the Hôtel de Vermandois (built around 1140). The wall continued above the Rue de Villevert. One can only imagine the discreet trips back and forth between the two buildings at the time of Raoul I of Vermandois and Louis VI ‘the Fat’, his first cousin.

Fig. 42:

⁵⁴ We have observed a similar layout in the staircase leading to the upper floors of the Tour des Ursulines in Autun.

⁵⁵ Lemaire, Robert: *Une vie d’archéologue, G. Matherat, 1890-1973, un demi-siècle d’activité archéologique dans le département de l’Oise* (A Life of Archeology, G. Matherat, 1890-1973, a Half Century of Archeological Activity in the Département of the Oise). Publication of G. Matherat’s excavation reports at the Vieux Château de Senlis, Beauvais, 1976.

⁵⁶ Martin, Thérèse-Paule: *Connaître et aimer Senlis* (To Know and Love Senlis), imp. Dessaint, 1969 and Matherat, Georges: *Comptes rendus et mémoires* (Summaries and Memoires), SHAS, 1947, 19th century plans.

⁵⁷ *Congrès Archéologique de France, XXXIII^e session, séances générales tenues à Senlis, Aix et Nice en 1866*, Paris, 1867.

⁵⁸ Sale of national property, AD Oise, 1Q3/658, 12 October 1793 and cadastral plan.

Fig. 43:

Fig. 44:

Fig. 45:

The Louis XIII Building⁵⁹

This almost square edifice built beyond the Roman wall, but leaning against it, is recorded on cadastral maps, and depicted on drawings from the late 18th and early 19th centuries. On the latter, it is seen from the “King’s Garden” (fig. 45).

In the mid-18th century, Afforty listed the Roman towers of the city. He described successively⁶⁰:

“One [tower] serving as an entrance to the city and to the Cathedral Close from the Saint Rieul direction, which functions as a modern gate.

One in the corner of the castle garden used for the Electoral (fiscal) Court.

One in the middle of the castle garden.

One at the other corner of the castle garden and the Saint Maurice enclosure.”

The latter two are still clearly visible and stand tall. They are the Guards’ Tower and the Saint-Louis Tower (or Oratory Tower). The (first) tower, used as an entrance, is none other than the false Saint-Rieul gate. Afforty specifies that a room was built above it (and that) it “*served as a modern gate*”. He thus confirms the late construction of this gate⁶¹ and goes on to say “*with regard to the gate from the Cathedral Close towards Saint-Rieul, (that) it is not likely that it has always been a gate. It seems, rather, to have been built in one of the towers...*”. On 12 December 1804, the Municipal Council of Senlis “*considering that this old gate is in a very dangerous state of deterioration due to loose stones, rendering the passage (through it) more difficult... is of the opinion that the mayor should have it razed to the ground without delay*”⁶². In 1808 this gate was still topped by a square tower covered with tiles. The municipal deliberation of 27 July 1808 states that “*it would be well done to destroy it*”. The second tower, on the other hand, no longer exists at all. Could it be that this tower, dating from late in the reign of Louis XIII (1622⁶³), was, in fact, constructed on top of older remains? Afforty does not appear to regard this square master tower as part of the Gallo-Roman enclosure. We believe that, had he done so, he would have distinguished it from the others in his description. However, Afforty might well have confused a Gallo-Roman tower with a 17th century construction. Might this Louis XIII building have used the base of an ancient tower in its construction, just as the contemporaneous new library of the cathedral chapter was built on a tower that had been squared off? Was this tower the one shown on the plan by Diane Brouillette that we have already mentioned, which was closer to the ‘False Gate’? Once again, the Delorme plan of 1767, contemporary with Afforty, is of great help. It limits the eastern corner of the ‘Jardin du Roi’ to the Louis XIII building (fig. 12). At the time of the sale of the “King’s Garden” in 1835, it was noted that this building “*is in a very poor state of repair and is attached to the city wall, ... together with the building above it*”. Eleven years later, on 26 February 1846, this part of the garden was sold; all that remained was a lean-to shed and a supporting wall⁶⁴.

⁵⁹ Combaz, Paul: *Senlis à travers les Siècles* (Senlis through the Centuries), Senlis, 1893, specifies “attributed to Louis 13th”.

⁶⁰ Afforty, volume 9, 4708.

⁶¹ Jaulnay (*op. cit.*) indicates that Clovis, on his return from the church of Saint-Rieul, was unable to return directly to the castle. The absence of a direct route in the early Middle Ages would thus be consistent with the legendary account. See also: Durand Marc, *La muraille antique de Senlis*, GEMOB, Beauvais, 2005, p. 28-30.

⁶² Margry, Amédée: *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de Senlis* (Notes for use in the History of Senlis) 1799-1815, quatorzième série (series 14), Senlis, 1910, p. 293.

⁶³ This date appears on the Moinet plan.

⁶⁴ Louat, Félix: SHAS (archives), Em 276. And mortgage transcription AD Oise, 4Qp4/1285, volume 473, n°9.

In 1949 Georges Matherat carried out a “shaft” sounding at the base of the ancient rampart, in the boundary corner of the “King’s Garden”, “without finding anything down to the natural ground level”⁶⁵. Given that we know for sure that the Louis XIII building existed, we must conclude that the negative findings in the 1949 survey were due to it being conducted too far to the west.

This building served as the seat of the Electoral (fiscal) Court⁴, which in 1788 held its hearings on Saturdays⁶⁶. This administrative body also used the upper room of the neighbouring master tower. Set back from the gable of the Guards’ Hall, it spanned the parapet walk and was attached to the back of this hall. It had a three-sloped pavilion roof, linked by a valley to that of the Guards’ Hall on the western slope. On the outside at this point, the wall covering of the Gallo-Roman rampart has completely disappeared, losing thickness, and there is evidence that the wall of the parapet walk on the so-called Guards’ Tower was torn away. It is difficult to identify the attachment of any construction here. However, at the level of the large Tower, a rough-hewn masonry strut can be seen at the contact point of the rampart, which has been reused today in the construction of a lean-to building belonging to a private individual (fig. 46).

Fig. 46:

⁶⁵ Lemaire, Robert: *op. cit.*, p.112.

⁶⁶ *Almanach historique de la ville et du diocèse de Senlis* (Historica Almanach of the City and the Diocese of Senlis), Desroques, 1788.

Fig. 47:

The Palace

The palace, situated to the west of the Great Tower, is built onto the Gallo-Roman wall, and incorporates two of its towers. It should be remembered that the (Roman) wall is solid, as are the lower storeys of its towers and that it is only the upper floors of the towers, rising above the wall, which are habitable. According to Marc Durand, it is possible that these upper floors (in the towers) could have been built after the Roman period, by the Merovingians⁶⁷.

Jean Mesqui stresses the exemplary importance of the urban palace of Senlis because we can still clearly trace the layout of the rooms as they were when it was rebuilt in the 12th century⁶⁸. Louis Carolus-Barré confirms that this complex, which we now call a royal castle, was, indeed, defined as a *Domus regia* in the acts of 1141-1142 and 1265⁶⁹. We will describe, in turn, the chapel, the two large communicating rooms and the king's bedroom, all situated on the first floor, which, by tradition, was where the nobles of the time would have lived.

The Royal living quarters were accessed from the outside. A monumental staircase, rebuilt and enlarged under Francis I - in fact, doubled in size according to Matherat - led to the first floor of the palace between the Great Tower and the apse of the chapel of Saint-Denis⁷⁰. A large flight of external steps was a common feature in castles of that period, a notable example being in the Palais de la Cité in Paris⁷¹. According to Matherat, who counted them on the plans (fig. 47), the Senlis staircase consisted of 21 steps⁷². Traces of this staircase are still visible by the Great Tower. Photographs taken before and at the beginning of the excavations carried out by Georges Matherat in 1946 show that the land still followed the slope of the staircase at that time, but that the steps themselves had disappeared (fig. 48). Furthermore, Matherat's own excavations demolished the two support walls to these stairs (figs. 49-51). However, at ground floor level, they uncovered a door into a chamber under the staircase, which had, hitherto, been completely hidden (fig. 52). For a time at least, this door had provided access along the chapel wall via a vaulted passageway, delimited by the support walls of the original staircase⁷³.

In front of the entrance was a wide landing from which, according to Matherat⁷⁴, there were eight steps on the left, leading into the vestibule of the so-called Guards' room, and on the right, six steps (*ibidem*) and a passage leading to the building constructed under Louis XIII (1622), which straddled the rampart. This passage was necessarily built on a vault or floor connecting the Great Tower to the gable of the dwelling itself. Georges Matherat thought that the two constructions had succeeded each other⁷⁵. The passage was closed by a gate, as indicated in Moinet's plan and as shown in an "old" drawing reproduced by Combaz in 1893 (fig. 53).

⁶⁷ Durand, Marc: "Pour une datation tardive des étages des tours gallo-romaines de l'enceinte de Senlis" (For a late dating of the storeys in the Gallo-Roman towers of the Senlis City Wall), in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, SHAS, 2004.

⁶⁸ Mesqui, Jean: "Notes sur l'habitat noble rural dans le nord et l'est de l'Ile de France du XII^e au XV^e siècle" (Notes on noble rural residences in the North and East of the Ile de France from the 12th to the 15th century), in *Manorial Domestic buildings in England and Northern France*, p. 121-140.

⁶⁹ Carolus-Barré, Louis: "Les origines de la commune de Senlis" (The Origins of Senlis) (1173-1202), in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, SHAS, 1976.

⁷⁰ The various authors all date the reconstruction of the staircase to the reign of François I, but we have not found any reference to support this dating in any of them.

⁷¹ Other examples are to be found in Blois, Châteaudun, Coucy.

⁷² Matherat, Georges: "Les vicissitudes du ch tel du roy" (The vicissitudes of the king's castle), in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, SHAS, 1946-1947.

⁷³ Lemaire, Robert: *op. cit.*, p. 92-93.

⁷⁴ The origin of this claim remains a mystery, the oldest plan - that of Benoist - has three (steps).

⁷⁵ Matherat, Georges: 1947 excavation report, SHAS (archives) no 335.

Fig. 48:
Fig. 49:

Fig. 50:
Fig. 51:

Fig. 53:

Fig. 52:

Fig. 55:

The Chapel

The chapel of Saint-Denis was founded in 1120 by Louis VI, 'le Gros' (the Fat), under the episcopacy of Bishop Clerambaut. In 1141, Louis 'le Jeune' (the Younger), his son, undertook to finance the chapel which his father had built⁷⁶. Later, it would be renamed Saint-Louis (for Louis IX, 1227-1270)⁷⁷. Its construction began before 1137, the year in which King Louis VI died. Matherat demonstrated, during his first excavation campaign, that the moulding at the base of the courtyard façade of the castle was continuous with that of the chapel, on the side of the apse, and concluded that these must therefore have been constructed simultaneously, under Louis VI le Gros. On 5 February 1262, Saint Louis had the 24 caskets containing the relics of the soldiers of the Theban Legion brought to the chapel. These had been acquired from the Abbot of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune in Switzerland, pending the completion of the new chapel of the Saint-Maurice priory, next to the castle in Senlis⁷⁸. They remained in the castle chapel for a little over two years. As a result of this new foundation, it was decided that the chapel of Saint-Denis "*que est juxta cameram regiam*" (which is next to the King's room) was to be served exclusively by a canon of the adjacent priory of Saint-Maurice and that its revenues would, ultimately, be combined with those of the new priory⁷⁹.

The entire choir of the chapel has now disappeared - except for the base of the levelled walls of the apse. It was probably rib-vaulted, judging by the orientation of the impost block remaining on one of the four columns set into the wall and their surviving capitals. Given its date, 1137 at the latest, it was the oldest vault of this type in Senlis⁸⁰.

Already in a state of ruin by the time Nodier was writing (1835-1845), its capitals, embedded columns and serrated arches bore "obvious traces of paint where red dominates"⁸¹.

The columns set into the wall to the right of the "gallery" ledge do not reach down to the ground (fig. 54). Furthermore, there is an irregularity in the facing of the surviving pedestal just below the column bases which might be a fragment of a wooden floor.

This raises the question as to whether there was a single chapel on two levels: with a wooden floor at the gallery level and the altar on the ground floor. Such an arrangement would have allowed the king to attend services from the upper floor.

Below the "gallery", a wide passage with a pointed barrel vault gives access to the quarry cellars of the castle on the left, to the service rooms on the ground floor of the palace in the middle - the entrance being protected by two guardstones - and to the chapel at ground floor level on the right (fig. 55). The lintel of the latter door is supported by two moulded corbels.

At the end of the 16th century, Jehan Vaultier⁸², seemed to settle the question as to whether there was a single chapel with a viewing gallery or two separate chapels. From the first floor, he describes the chapel as follows: "next to the hall of the said castle, on the left-hand side, one enters a beautiful chapel of Saint-Denis and Saint-Louis, below which there is another (chapel), with another altar".

⁷⁶ Afforty, volume 1, p156.

⁷⁷ Broisse, Jean-François: *Recherches historiques sur la ville de Senlis* (Historic Research on the City of Senlis), imprimerie de Desmarests, Senlis, 1835.

⁷⁸ Carolus-Barré, Louis: *Les Capétiens à Senlis* (The Capetians in Senlis), La Sauvegarde, 1987, p. 7-9.

⁷⁹ Acte de fondation du prieuré et diplôme (Priory Foundation deeds and charter), 1262-1265, AD Oise, H 836.

⁸⁰ Vermand, Dominique: "La cathédrale Notre-Dame de Senlis au XII^e siècle", (Senlis Cathedral in the 12th century) in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, SHAS, 1987, p. 7, footnote.

⁸¹ Nodier, Charles ; Taylor, Justin ; Cailleux, Alphonse de: *Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France* (Picturesque and Romantic Journeys through Old France), Picardie, Volume 3, 1835-1845.

⁸² Jehan, Vaultier: in Bernier, Adhelm: *Monumens de l'histoire de France* (Monuments in the History of France), Senlis, 1836, p. 394.

Fig. 54:

Fig. 56:

If we accept that these two chapels existed, one on top of the other, then there cannot have been a viewing gallery, unless the arrangements evolved over time: Could there have been, at first, an early chapel with a gallery, then a separation onto two levels, and finally, later, a new opening in the south wall?

The gable of the chapel is pierced by a narrow, arched, window with a slanting outer edge. On the inside of the building, it is framed by a wide arch, decorated with mouldings, each end of which rests on a flat corbel, supported by a slender, embedded column standing on a pedestal. On the south wall, only one column and the beginning of an arch survive, but the design must have harmonised with the rest even if it was not completely symmetrical (fig. 56). The outer moulding has a rat's tooth or diamond point design. This decoration is repeated on the north wall beyond a small storeroom, which might have been a treasury, and around the exit door to the Guard Room. The same framing decoration is repeated within the Guard Room itself.

On the façade, a similar moulding runs along the upper part, on the south-western corner buttress, on the wall and around the bay of which only the start remains.

The column capitals are decorated with interlacing patterns, a winged dragon, and masks (fig. 57). The capitals of the embedded minor columns have a coiled lotus-leaf pattern (fig. 58).

In the corner of the chapel, nearest to the living-quarters, there are two small rectangular rooms, one above the other. The one on the ground floor, constructed of small stones and with barrel vaulting, communicates with the “kitchens”. It is narrow due to its eastern wall forming part of a gable transecting the adjacent large rooms (fig. 59). It has a small slit-opening to the west, onto the so-called “kitchen” courtyard. The corresponding small room on the first floor has quadripartite cross vaulting (fig. 60). It connects to the “gallery” of the upper chapel via a wide passageway 1.86 m wide and 2.30 m high. The door frames are cut on a parallel slant. It once opened directly into the large room to the north through a door, now walled-up, which Dominique Vermand believed was its original entrance. He postulated that it served as “a real safe before the term was coined”⁸³. The western and eastern walls of the room are recessed, allowing for a dovecote to be built there in the 19th century. We cannot know, without being able to explore behind them, whether the nesting boxes, conceal ancient, blocked-up, passages which, if present, would have meant that the small room was, in fact, a crossroads. Part of the room extends into the chapel, where its wall rests on stone corbels and is topped by a small gable roof (fig. 61). We assume therefore, that this building predates the construction of the chapel, which incorporated it. We know nothing about its initial purpose.

It seems odd to have constructed the (upper) chapel on top of the arch leading to the ground floor rooms of the castle. Perhaps this was due to the limited size of the courtyard. However, it might have been simpler to build the chapel a little further to the east to clear the entrance. Had this happened the consequences would have been threefold: the external staircase to the first floor would have been smaller, there would have been no direct access to the large west hall via the small building on the corner, and the chapel itself might have been smaller.

The doorway on the upper floor of the chapel is located just to the side of the small room and opens into the first of the castle's rooms, known as the Guards' Room. Its lintel, cut from a single massive stone, retains traces of red plaster (fig. 62).

Dominique Vermand claims that the apse had a Romanesque semi-dome roof⁸⁴. Today, almost nothing remains of the elevation of the apse. Combaz's drawing shows us a view of the choir with two rows of openings (thus two levels?), supported by two visible buttresses.

⁸³ Vermand, Dominique: *Le palais royal, le prieuré Saint-Maurice* (The Royal Palace, The Saint-Maurice priory), *Patrimoine Senlisien* 2, 1992, p. 8.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 9.

Fig. 58:
Fig. 57:
Fig. 59:

A masonry gable separates the nave from the apse. The gable wall of the apse is slightly lower than that of the nave. There are three small, Gothic, pointed windows on the ground floor, one of which illuminates the apse, and small arched windows on the first floor, framed by continuous bands of mouldings. The large window, with a flatter arch, is manifestly of later construction and it probably replaced a small, curved window. Through it, we can see a section of a pointed arch. It is possible that this large opening contributed to the weakening of the choir wall.

The chapel, although already in an advanced state of dilapidation, is explicitly named as the Chapel of Saint Louis on the plans of 1767 (Delorme) and those of 1772 (Desmarets). It is not mentioned by name in 1793 (when it was sold)⁸⁵. There is no mention of a “former chapel” either, which lends credence to the fact that it had already reached a severe state of ruin. Prints from before 1800 already show the chapel without its roof. We shall see later that a prison chapel had been installed in the southern part of the palace, which might suggest a possible reason for the early state of disrepair of the Saint-Denis chapel.

We have read accounts that a bell was attached to the roof of the chapel, but we have been unable to find a source for this.

The ruins of the chapel were reinforced between March and August 2006.

Fig. 60:

⁸⁵ Sale of National Property, AD Oise, 1Q3/658, 12th October, 1793.

Fig. 62:
Fig. 61:

Fig. 61:

Fig. 63:

Cellars and Outbuildings

The main Palace building is situated behind the chapel and backs onto the Gallo-Roman wall. It houses the grand rooms of the Royal living quarters on its first floor. The ground floor rooms would, traditionally, have been used as service areas. The main access is through the chapel arch. This access was referred to in 1590 by a witness as “the courtyard arches of Senlis Castle”⁸⁶. This may also have been the original access to the upper floor via an interior staircase, but no conclusive trace of this remains (we will discuss the staircase near the king’s room later).

On the ground floor, the left-hand wall of the vaulted passageway to the service rooms conceals a staircase leading to the quarry-cellar. Prior to the building of this wall, there would have been a narrow access to a curved staircase within the gable wall of the chapel (fig. 63). According to the 19th century plans, it opened into the courtyard in front of the outbuildings. The imprint of the passage is still visible on the outside (fig. 64). This access would have left the ground floor arch almost completely open.

About 30 steps (fig. 65) lead to an L-shaped quarry cellar with a large shaft (fig. 66).

A rough stone pillar was constructed on the right of this quarry. Georges Matherat postulated that it was built when the ground floor was refurbished under François I, when the column supporting the two arches of the intermediate gable wall was put in place⁸⁷. He noted, however, that this support for the quarry ceiling was not in line with the ground floor column.

On the left, a wall in fine stonework divides the cellar along its length (fig. 67). It does not extend all the way to the stone ceiling, which is supported by regularly placed corbels, and is very cracked. The wall is pierced by a large arched doorway and a small, almost square opening, bevelled on three sides, and formerly barred by a central vertical iron (fig. 68). All of this gives a very feudal appearance to this wall, which we believe was reconstructed here using medieval building materials, to prevent the collapse of the quarry roof. Georges Matherat, in 1948, found it to have “an antique look”. He specifies that another small identical opening existed on the other side of the doorway, which, having fallen into disrepair, was removed in 1939 during excavations for the Passive Defence Force⁸⁸ [T.N. : an organization warning the population of bombing etc. during WW2]. This assertion is perhaps based on a date written in black smoke on the small window. In fact, the second opening does still exist, but has been blocked up (fig. 69). The door recess is on the outside and the jambs and arch are chamfered on the inside. This door is far too finely worked to have been built for this space and it is too wide and high to be that of a dungeon. It is possible that it originally came from the demolished parts of the castle on the surface, perhaps from the room known as “Pépin's dungeon”. We hypothesise - without proof - that this was done in the 19th century, combining the practical with a romantic or troubadour aesthetic. An analysis of the mortar or stone that was used could shed light on the date of construction.

Beyond the wall, a shaft orientated north-west leads to a well that is blocked both at the top and at the bottom (fig. 70). Here we are beneath the “King’s Garden” on the outer side of the Gallo-Roman wall. Oral tradition holds that the access shaft is modern (20th century) and served as a marker for the well. The excavated material has been left in the cellar.

⁸⁶ “Histoire de l’escalade de Senlis... par un auteur contemporain” (History of Climbing in Senlis... by a contemporary author), in Bernier Adhelm, *Monumens inédits de l’histoire de France 1400-1600*, Guillemot, 1835, p. 495.

⁸⁷ Lemaire Robert, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁸⁸ Matherat Georges, *Rapports de Fouilles* (report on Archeological digs), 1948, SHAS (archives) n° 335.

Fig. 64:

Fig. 65 and 65 bis:

Fig. 66:

Fig. 67:

Fig. 68:

Fig. 69:

Fig. 70:

Fig. 71:

The first part of the ground floor (to the east) located, as we shall see, under the Guards' room, was traditionally used as a (storage) cellar. Indeed, at the time of the 1835 tender, the poster refers to "a vast cellar". Today, only parts of the walls remain (fig. 71). At the eastern end, Georges Matherat reported in 1946⁸⁹ that there were traces of yellow interior plaster with trompe l'oeil stones outlined in red. Similar traces still exist in the Hôtel de Vermandois.

Just to the right of the Guard Tower, there is a ground floor passageway running under the rampart and opening onto the "King's Garden". The arched ceiling hints at it being an old construction but the heterogeneity of the passageway along its length suggests that it was progressively modified, perhaps starting out as a sort of cupboard that was later extended to form a tunnel (fig. 72). In the "King's Garden", the door is lower, the rectangular frame has a recess, and the monolithic lintel is chamfered (fig. 73). At the time of the sale of this part of the garden on 26 February 1846, this (at that time) closed passage was probably described as "a tool shed under the city wall"⁹⁰.

Let us return to the interior of the castle. On the south elevation of the tower, where it projects beyond the Roman wall, we see an arch, the purpose of which is not clear. The wall above and below is self-supporting and does not rest on the lip of the rampart (fig. 74). This arch may be part of an earlier building linked to the one thought to have existed adjacent to the north-west corner of the chapel.

The ground floor (storage) cellar had a ceiling. Traces of the positioning of the ceiling joists on corbels in the rampart and the chapel wall remain (fig. 75).

To the west, the gable wall between the Guard Room and the Great Hall rests on a central column either side of which are paired pointed arches (fig. 76 and fig. 77). This arrangement is the result of the underpinning of an earlier single span arch which would have been smaller than the overall span of the two arches that remain today. It is possible that the earlier arch collapsed, and that the original layout of the ground floor rooms was different: were they narrower or separated by a dividing wall? Like all our predecessors, it seems, we have not found any documents relating to these works. Historians, with varying degrees of conviction, usually date them to the reign of Francis I.

The next room, beyond the intermediate gable, is dominated by a row of columns. Historians refer to this room as the "vaults". Corbels survive that probably supported the ceiling beams. One can imagine a series of two slab arcades resting on the two pillars whose bases remain today. It is likely that this room was used as a kitchen. It opened onto a small inner courtyard bounded by the gable of the chapel to the east and a small low room to the west. The south wall of the kitchen supported the front wall of the large hall situated on the floor above. Georges Matherat has identified part of the foundations which rest on an older substructure.

⁸⁹ Matherat Georges, Rapport des fouilles, SHAS (archives) n°335.

⁹⁰ Louat Félix, SHAS (archives) Em 276.

Fig. 74:

Fig. 72:
Fig. 73:

Fig. 77:

Fig. 75:
Fig. 76:

Fig. 79:

In 1589 Jehan Vaultier, a gunner or perhaps more accurately, an artillery engineer, recommended in his book *État de ce qu'il faut faire promptement pour la conservation de la ville (en cas de siège)* [State of what must be done promptly for the preservation of the city (in case of siege)] to install a mill under the 'grand'salle' (Great Hall) of the king's castle⁹¹. He worked at the city's arsenal located near the 'Poterne' but was also in charge of the king's arsenal distributed throughout the castle buildings. The inventory of the arsenal transcribed by Afforty, alas incompletely, was made on 30 August 1614 on the occasion of "*the assumption of duty by Cocatrix, ... clerk for the custody of the artillery fire, powder, cannonballs and other munitions of war which are in the storehouse of this city of Senlis belonging to the king, in place of deceased Jean Vautier...*". He locates various supplies: "*in the storeroom under the auditorium and chamber of the elected Men was found the quantity of 34 'caques'⁹² of powder..., under the large room of the castle... (axles and pieces of cannon mountings), or again: in a small barn taken out by the master of the Pot d'Etain, Master Michel...*"⁹³. It is also specified that Cocatrix was given "*two keys to close the two doors of the storeroom*", as was the Viscount of Daudeville, vice-admiral of France, bailiff, and governor of Senlis, who had two other keys.

Near the king's room, Moinet's plan shows a staircase cut into the Gallo-Roman wall. An early engraving shows an open window at this point, which is now blocked with modern fixtures (fig. 78). This begs the question of how a straight staircase to the top of the rampart could be accommodated in such a narrow width. In fact, the staircase served only to pierce the wall and give access to the "King's Garden".

No trace of a chimney currently remains, either on the Gallo-Roman north wall or on the gables that remain standing. However, the Moinet plan shows a chimney against the ancient wall, which does not appear on the first-floor plan. It is possible that, so as not to weaken the Gallo-roman rampart, it might have been located on the courtyard façade, probably in contact with or associated with the small building in front. We have no description of the latter, except that it delimited a small inner courtyard.

Finally, the west wall has a single pointed arch on the ground floor, mirroring the one on the intermediate gable described above, which covers only about two thirds of the width of the building (fig. 79).

Fig. 78:

⁹¹ Vaultier, Jehan in Bernier, Adhelm: *Monumens de l'histoire de France*, Senlis, 1836, p. 186.

⁹² 'Caque': barrel, here powder keg.

⁹³ Afforty, volume XII, 7624 (collection of manuscripts from the municipal library of Senlis).

Fig. 80:

The Great Rooms

On the first floor, a room known as the Guards' Room extended along the rampart. This name appears on Moinet's plan and was subsequently used by other authors. At the end of the Ancien Régime, according to Moinet and further detailed by Jehan Vaultier, it was divided into an anti-chamber and a courtroom. It was accessed by the monumental staircase already described, and opened, on the same level, onto the covered walkway. Its gables were topped by a sloping roof. It survived for some time after the collapse of the adjacent room in 1780. Drawings taken from the north show that it was intact around 1800, as was the roof of the adjacent tower (fig. 78). Another more recent drawing shows its east gable still standing, the gutter wall on the rampart, and the wall of the west gable, with its top part missing, as it is today (fig. 45, page 62).

Today, the wall at the north-east corner of this room remains standing. There were three large openings to the rampart, one in the vestibule and two in the hall. The doorframe of the first opening survives, close to the corner of the hall, with two of its hinges. It was surmounted by a fanlight (fig. 80).

The Guards' Hall provided direct access to the Guards' Tower to the north. This is an ancient, Gallo-Roman, tower annexed by the royal dwelling and still stands today. It has two storeys (above the top of the Roman wall), which remain, although it is roofless and the floor between the storeys has collapsed. The access door is situated centrally in the straight part of the tower (fig. 28). In ancient, Roman, times this was a simple window. The walkway passes through the tower. The open walkway, on the top of the ancient rampart, runs along the entire north side of the castle. The ancient openings of this tower have either been preserved and reused or blocked up. Its medieval use has not been fully elucidated. The curved wall of the tower had three arched openings on each of the two levels. Only the lower arch to the east remains open. The middle arch has been converted into a chimney (fig. 81) and is lined with small flat bricks. Two massive, chamfered jambs - still in place - supported an overhanging lintel, which has now disappeared. All the antique or Merovingian frames were taken or altered later.

The Guards' Hall also has a door giving direct access to the rampart, without the need to pass through the Guards' Tower. Next to it, in the western gable wall, another doorway leads to the adjacent room. If the cross-sectional drawing of the 1867⁹⁴ archaeological conference is reliable, this doorway was still topped by a Renaissance-style cartouche (fig. 82) at that time. This decoration is also discernible on the 1836 drawing published by Baron Taylor (fig. 83). It should be noted, however, that the three dressed arches visible on the gable wall are the negatives of the sculpted arches of the adjacent room and would have been covered with plaster. To the south, a doorway leads to the chapel of Saint-Denis and gives access to the royal "tribune" (fig. 84).

From the Guards' Hall, an opening led to the Great Hall (also known as the 'Maréchaux' (Marshalls) Hall, or Royal Aula).

This large room is decorated on its gable walls with three blind semi-circular arches with ornate mouldings, all resting on embedded columns with capitals (fig. 85). One of these columns has a cluster of three highly decorative broken sticks and is topped by a sculpted capital decorated with fruit and leaves (fig. 86 and fig. 87). The bases of the missing arcades suggests that the room was decorated in a uniform manner throughout.

⁹⁴ *Congrès archéologique de France*, 1867 (archeological congress of France). Louis Petit's text; the plans are reproductions of the plans of Moinet entrusted, on this occasion, by the owner of the castle Anne Victor Turquet de la Boisserie.

Fig. 81:

Fig. 81:

Fig. 84:

Fig. 82:
Fig. 83:

Fig. 85:

Fig. 86 and 86 bis:
Fig. 87:

Fig. 88:

The Civil Court ('Présidial'⁹⁵ or 'Grande Chambre Civile'), installed at the castle in 1551⁹⁶, sat in this throne room until the end of the Ancien Régime. The letters patent for this foundation were read publicly on 8 June 1552 to the magistrates, aldermen and burghers of Senlis and the surrounding towns, "being in the auditorium and place known to hold and exercise the ordinary jurisdiction of Senlis".

It was probably also the seat of the bailiff's assembly⁹⁷, where reforms to the customs were planned "in the ordinary auditorium of the said bailiff" in August 1539⁹⁸. In 1614, it was referred to as the "Great Hall of the castle"⁹⁹.

Charles Jaulnay¹⁰⁰ reported in 1648 that there was a winged deer "in the great hall of the Château de Senlis against the wall on the side of the chapel". This was confirmed by Dom Guillaume Marlot in 1663¹⁰¹. According to him, a bas-relief representing "a stag raised on a pedestal with a golden collar, where these words are engraved: Hoc Caesar me donavit" adorned a wall in this room. This evidence is consistent with that of Dubuisson-Aubenay¹⁰²: "against a paroy, in natural relief the effigy which in the reign of Charles VI, in the year 1380, was taken in the forest of Halatte; this stag had a collar on its neck where it was written in gold letters: Hoc me caesar donavit, as it is represented there" (fig. 88).

This is an illustration of the dream of King Charles VI.

On All Saints Day, 1380, the 12-year-old Charles VI, son of Charles V, was crowned king. He eventually emancipated himself from the regency of his uncles and took power in 1388, at the age of 20. He surrounded himself with devoted ministers, "the marmosets", his father's former advisers. Charles VI, known as 'the Beloved' and later as 'the Mad', does not enjoy a good reputation today. The end of the reign was marred by the king's madness, the defeat at Agincourt in 1415 and the disastrous peace of Troyes in 1420, when the King of England, with the complicity of the Duke of Burgundy, ousted the King of France from power and his son from the succession.

But let us return to Senlis and its castle. Here two traditions are brought together.

According to the chronicles of the monks of Saint-Denis, "[the king] spent a fortnight [at Senlis] hunting in the surrounding woods". On 17 September 1381, "in the midst of a herd of deer, he saw one that was more beautiful than the others and which wore a golden copper necklace around its neck". "By his order, it was taken without using dogs but with hunting nets"¹⁰³.

⁹⁵ See above, footnote page 3.

⁹⁶ Letters Patent for the establishment of the presidial seats (of which Senlis, "eight advisers and a clerk of appeals") by Henri II in March 1551 and a letter referring specifically to Senlis of March 15, 1552. AD Oise, municipal archives of Senlis, EDT1/FF9.

⁹⁷ Bailiwick: a district with a court. It judges only on appeals to the Presidial or Parliamentary courts.

⁹⁸ *Les coutumes des duchez contez et chastellenies du bailliage de Senlis...*, Paris, Galliot du Pré, 1540.

⁹⁹ Afforty, volume XII, 7624.

¹⁰⁰ Jaulnay, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

¹⁰¹ Marlot, Dom Guillaume: *Histoire de la ville, cité et université de Reims, publiée par les soins et aux frais de l'Académie de Reims*, Reims, 1843 (History of the town, walled city and university of Reims, published privately by the Academy of Reims) – First edition according to the manuscript of 1663.

¹⁰² Du Buisson-Aubenay: *Description de plusieurs villes de France, maisons, lieux de remarque, principalement de Picardie*, Bibliothèque Mazarine, Ms 4406. (Description of various towns of France, houses, places of note, principally in Picardie).

¹⁰³ *Chronique du religieux de Saint Denys, contenant le règne de Charles VI de 1380 à 1422*, Paris, Bellaguet L. éd., tome 1, p. 71. (Chronicle of the monks of St Denis, during the reign of Charles VI. 1380-1422).

For his part, Jean Froissart describes the king's vision in his Chronicle (circa 1403-1404)¹⁰⁴. In 1382 the king, whilst staying in Senlis and before leaving for the war in Flanders, had a dream in which, on a hunting expedition, accompanied only by his constable Olivier de Clisson, he was following his falcon, when he encountered a winged stag with a collar around its neck. He climbed onto the stag, rode it, and thus caught up with his falcon. Froissart adds that the king gave a precise account of his vision to his close associates.

The chronicle of the monks of Saint-Denis, written around 1392-1394, states that "the king was so enchanted by this encounter that he subsequently had a flying deer wearing a crown for a collar engraved on the royal gold and silver tableware and on all the ceremonial furniture". The king took this emblem in the summer of 1382, before the episode had been recorded in the texts¹⁰⁵. There is a more concise account by Nicole Gilles in her work *Les très élégantes et copieuses des très pieux, très nobles très chrestiens et excellents modérateurs des belliqueuses Gaules...*, 1541 edition (The very elegant and copious of the very pious, very noble very Christian and excellent moderators of the bellicose Gauls):

"After these things the king left Paris and went to Saint-Denis then drew towards Senlis to be entertained and to hunt. And while hunting was found caught in the weeds a stag which had around its neck a golden chain of leather where was written in ancient letters César hoc michi donavit. And from then onwards the king, of his own accord, wanted to wear in his motto a flying stag with a crown on its neck and wherever his arms were placed, there were two flying stags supporting them on either side. And similarly, he willed and ordered that where his predecessors had all borne in their arms a shield of azure all sown with fleurs-de-lys without number that from then on in front there were only three fleurs-de-lys"¹⁰⁶.

The emblem is highly significant. In literary texts the encounter with a stag is an allusion to divine intervention and a guide to true faith. Froissart's Chronicle¹⁰⁷ states that the king who has lost (become separated from) his hunt meets the winged stag alone. The crown of Caesar refers more to the emperor Charlemagne, whose name Charles VI bears and who can claim to be his heir, than to the emperors of ancient Rome. Finally, the placing of the dream in Senlis adds to the justifications of spiritual and temporal legitimacy, to the Capetian dynasty.

¹⁰⁴ Froissart, Jean: *Histoire et chronique mémorable, revue et corrigé sus divers exemplaires et suivant les bons auteurs par Denis Sauvage*, Paris, L'Huillier, 1574, volume 2, p. 176.

¹⁰⁵ On the textual sources of the winged stag, see Méridol, Christian de: "De l'emblématique de Charles VI et de Jean de Berry : à propos d'un plafond peint et armorié récemment publié", in *Bulletin de la Société nationale des Antiquaires de France*, 2012, p. 120-135.

¹⁰⁶ Nicole, Gilles: *Les très élégantes et copieuses des très pieux, très nobles très chrestiens et excellents modérateurs des belliqueuses Gaules...*, Paris, L'Angelier, 1541, volume 2, f. 92 v°.

¹⁰⁷ Froissart, *op. cit.*, volume 2, p. 176.

Thérèse-Paule Martin¹⁰⁸, who has conducted an in-depth study of the Turquet de la Boisserie plan, published in 1867, placed this bas-relief on the reverse side of the chapel wall, the only blind wall in the room. It must have adorned the easternmost arcade of the room, which is still partly in place¹⁰⁹.

The author, Casimir Vatin, wrote in 1847 that “the bright colours gave an air of severe majesty” to this room¹¹⁰.

There is no trace of a chimney in this room nor in the so-called kitchen room on the lower level. The chimney, if it existed, would have been in the centre of the room on the south gutter wall, just beyond the bas-relief of the flying deer. It would have linked up to a double flue coming from the kitchen fireplace. It should be noted that the great hall of the château of Crépy-en-Valois has a fireplace in the middle of the hall, as does the monks’ dormitory in the Saint-Maurice priory, close to the castle¹¹¹.

The Great Hall was in such a bad state that, on 10 March 1780, the magistrates asked to be relocated to the Senlis Town Hall¹¹². The town welcomed them on a temporary basis according to conditions agreed the previous 15 December. From then on, they would hold hearings on Tuesdays for cases falling under the jurisdiction of the Presidial Court and on Thursdays for those concerning the bailiff¹¹³. The Great Hall collapsed shortly afterwards.

A drawing from the very end of the 18th century, conserved in the Senlis Museum of Art and Archaeology, shows the castle in this poor state (see fig. 78). Some fanciful details added by the artist should be disregarded: a water feature, staircase, figures. However, we can see that the Presidial Hall has collapsed, and that the Guards’ Hall still stands. It is therefore likely that the 1842 plan inverts the names of the two rooms and indicates that the easternmost one collapsed first. However, the Arsenal inventory of August 1614, as we have seen, places the auditorium and the chamber of the Elected¹¹⁴ above the cellar and does not attribute a function to the great hall of the castle. Irrespective of how these rooms were used by the Presidial Court in 1780, this part of the château was in a state of disrepair and reflected the inadequate funding of the Presidial Court throughout its existence.

None of the preliminary assemblies of the Estates-General were held in the castle, probably due to the poor state of the premises in 1789.

The Senlis magistrates were not satisfied with this state of affairs. So, in the Senlis list of grievances, during the assembly of 25 and 26 February 1789, they requested “to order that the old king’s castle, which served as an auditorium for the jurisdictions of this town and which its deterioration and obsolescence have forced it to abandon, will be repaired so that it can be used for its former purpose, especially as the jurisdictions having been unable to find any other premises than that of the town hall, this combination of public affairs in the same place often interrupts the course of justice...”. This request was also recorded in *Extrait de différens cahiers de doléances plaintes et remontrances fournis par plusieurs des villes et paroisses convoquées pour l’assemblée préliminaire du Tiers État du bailliage de Senlis du 2 mars 1789* (books of grievances and remonstrations provided by several towns and parishes convened for the preliminary assembly of the Third State of the bailiwick of Senlis on 2 March 1789), where the town of Senlis, in article 2, requests “the restoration and maintenance of the courthouse and the enlargement of the prisons...”¹¹⁵.

¹⁰⁸ Martin, Thérèse-Paule: *Connaître et aimer Senlis* (know and love Senlis), imp. Dessaint, 1969, p. 54.

¹⁰⁹ Note that 9 km from Senlis, in the courtyard of the castle of Creil, there was a “figure” (sculpture) of a “flying deer, with a necklace, where is written this word, ESPERANCE (hope)”. Androuet du Cerceau, Jacques: *Premier [et second] volume des plus excellents bastiments de France*, Paris, 1576-1579.

¹¹⁰ Vatin, Casimir: *Senlis et Chantilly anciens et modernes*, Senlis, Duriez, 1847, p. 139. (Senlis and Chantilly, Ancient and Modern).

¹¹¹ Similar to Armentières-sur-Ourcq, Creil, Provins...

¹¹² Margry, Amédée: *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de Senlis* (Notes on the history of Senlis) 1776-1789, sixième série, Senlis, 1906.

¹¹³ *Almanach historique de la ville et du Diocèse de Senlis* (Historical Almanach of the city of Senlis), Senlis, Desroques, 1788.

¹¹⁴ Elected officers: Electical magistrates, jurisdiction specific to the bailiwick.

¹¹⁵ Simon, Hélène: *Les cahiers de doléances des pays de l’Oise en 1789*, (Book of complaints from the Oise district). Archives départementales de l’Oise, 1999.

The Municipality had quite different plans, and in March 1790 it determined to raze the castle. However, on December 6, 1790 “the municipality during two hours of survey... went to the auditoriums and registries of the bailiwick and the presidial seat, election (etc.) where it proceeded in the presence of the clerks of the seats to affix the seals on the cupboards and other deposits of papers or minutes which depend on it”¹¹⁶.

Georges de Lastic Saint-Jal, curator of the Musée de la Vénérie (museum of the Hunt), reports on an auto-da-fé (punitive act of faith) applied to the royal portraits which decorated the château before its sale as national property¹¹⁷. On 26 August 1793, in accordance with a letter received from the district directorate, the municipal council ordered the commander of the National Guard “to form a detachment to attend today, at precisely two o’clock, at the burning of various feudal titles extracted from the archives of this district, as well as the burning of various tapestries still bearing the marks of royalty and feudalism, and of the flags of the guilds...”¹¹⁸. This auto-da-fé took place on the square of the town hall. The following day, a citizen accused the Council of having neglected to “understand the absolute destruction of all the vestiges which could trace the memory of the old regime, of the tables of the former kings which lined the old auditorium of the former bailiwick”. The mayor replied that he gave this order. He has the certainty, supported by a testimony, that it was carried out. He added that before the burning “the children trampled on the paintings”¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁶ Registres de délibération municipaux, EDT 1/ 1D1. (Record of Municipal Deliberations).

¹¹⁷ Senlis, *Bulletin officiel Municipal*, n°1, 1965. (Official Bulletin of Senlis).

¹¹⁸ AD Oise, EDT1/1D3.

¹¹⁹ Margry, Amédée: *Senlis sous la Terreur d’après les registres municipaux, notes pour servir à l’histoire de Senlis, 1^{er} août 1793 - 14 octobre 1794*, douzième série, Senlis, Dufresne, 1906. Margry does not transcribe the source exactly: AD Oise, EDT1/1D3. (Senlis under the Terror according to the municipal records, notes on the history of Senlis, 1st August 1793 - 14th October, 1794).

The King's Chamber

Fig. 89:

Fig. 90:

The King's Chamber

The King's Chamber (or Saint Louis' room) communicated with the Great Hall. On postcards from the early 20th century, it was referred to as the Gabrielle d'Estrée Pavillion. It remains standing (fig. 89).

Unlike the two previous rooms, but like the aula of the Hôtel de Vermandois, the King's Chamber sits on top of the ancient rampart. According to Dominique Vermand, the northern gable wall was rebuilt in the 12th century at the outer edge of the ancient rampart to facilitate access to the room within the Gallo-Roman tower¹²⁰. However, this hypothesis comes up against the fact that there is no evidence that the walls originally built on the inner edge of the rampart have been torn out. Etienne Poncelet believes that this part of the palace was similar in volume during the time of Louis VI to what remains today. However, he judges that the rampart's walkway must initially have been separated from the king's room by a partition¹²¹. It is to Louis IX that he attributes the enlargement of the room at the expense of the defensive walkway on the wall, and the transformation of the adjacent tower room into a private study (fig. 90). The King's chamber was well-lit. The north gable was pierced by a tall six-paned, mullioned window, now walled up, dating from the 16th century, and equipped on the inside with window seats on either side, and there were two further openings, high in the gable, with lintels resting on corbels, dating from the 13th century. At the very top of the gable, two tiny air intakes ensured the ventilation of the frame. The large, mullioned window was walled up following the sale of the building in 1835, which required the buyer to block the views he could have had onto the private gardens below¹²².

The complexity of the roofs can be explained by this modification. The west side wall is treated as a gable wall that carries the chimney and corresponds to a roof in the axis of the great hall.

The monumental fireplace with its high mantle dates from the 15th century. Bearing in mind the original size of the room and the layout of the ridge, Etienne Poncelet deduced that the hearth of the fireplace was re-centred when the room was enlarged. However, the high cylindrical flue that opens to the outside is identical to the 13th century monks' dormitory in the Saint-Maurice priory (fig. 91)¹²³.

The door to the left of the chimney now opens onto a romantic balcony dating from the 19th century. It would originally have given onto a gallery providing the king access to the prison wing and to the holy chapel of Saint-Maurice. It is likely that this gallery was situated on a covered walkway extending from the west end of the walkway on the ancient rampart¹²⁴. The 19th century staircase that allowed access to the balcony from the garden of the Saint-Maurice priory has now collapsed. Its lower part was built against the rampart. Higher up, it made a right turn and followed the west wall of the palace to reach the balcony of the king's chamber.

Between the chimney and this door, there is an elegant 13th century window that is clearly visible on the outside and that was walled up on the inside, probably when the new chimney and ceiling were installed (fig. 92). The window is framed by a chamfered pointed arch, has two lancets separated by an elegant double column with carved capitals and has a blind lintel with two pointed arches.

¹²⁰ Vermand, Dominique: *Le Palais Royal* (The Royal Palace) *op.cit.*

¹²¹ Poncelet, Etienne, *op. cit.*

¹²² Transcript of Mortgages, AD Oise, 4Qp4/1148, n° 48.

¹²³ The chimney of the monks' dormitory of the priory has, however, been restored.

¹²⁴ Poncelet, Etienne, *op. cit.*

Fig. 92:
Fig. 93:
Fig. 94:

In 1876, Casimir Vatin said of this room that “we can see the remains of wall paintings where the golden fleur-de-lys stand out against a sky-blue background”¹²⁵. Traces of paint can still be seen today. On an ochre plaster background with painted stonework joints, are drawn floral compositions which could well be lilies (fig. 93). The wall built to cover the 13th century window also shows traces of painted decoration on a background of painted stonework joints (fig. 94).

The roof is supported by a beautiful timber ship's hull frame, without a central post (fig. 95). Although the two horizontal beams might at first suggest the presence of a ceiling, this is unlikely to have existed in the original building. Only one of the beams rests on a corbel at one end and their level is incompatible with the positioning of the windows at the gable end. Moreover, no old corbel exists. Black-and-white photographs from the years 1896-1914 reveal painted decoration on at least one of the beams (fig. 105). Today, a row of fleur-de-lys is still discernible (fig. 96). We believe that the installation of the thick horizontal beams was a later addition to the structure. There was probably a panelled vault under the framework, and possibly the later addition of a ceiling. This hypothesis, recently formulated by the firm Frédéric Didier¹²⁶, is in line with similar observations of the upper room of the Hôtel Vermandois.

In the middle of the 19th century, several stone inscriptions were kept in this room. The stone of the “Dit des trois morts et des trois vifs” (The story of the three dead and the three alive), is now fixed on a wall in the cathedral (fig. 97). This engraved stone is likely to have come, originally, either from the church of Saint-Maurice or the chapel of Saint-Denis. Abbé Müller testifies that it was found in the former priory buildings¹²⁷. A stone sculpted with the three crescents of Henri II is also reported by Marcel Aubert to have been in Saint Louis' chamber¹²⁸. Today, this stone is in the reserve of the museum of art and archaeology of Senlis (fig. 98).

The south gable wall was rebuilt in the 19th century following the demolition of the west wing of the castle. The lower section is faced with large smooth stone blocks, and the upper part, is built of small stones into which is set a carved oculus (fig. 99). We do not know whether this work was a repair to a pre-existing structure or whether the gable wall was re-built from scratch. The first hypothesis seems more likely and is compatible with the plans that we have, but an archaeological study would throw more light on the matter. The original gable rested on the ground floor of the building known as “Pépin's dungeon”. This building lacked an upper storey. However, Moinet's plan and its derivatives do not indicate any windows on the first floor of the gable, except for a "small cross window overlooking the dungeon" at the southeast corner. We therefore believe that a frame might have covered this small building and hidden a good part of the gable.

It is also worth noting that the south gable does not have an opening, unlike the north gable on the ancient rampart.

From the King's chamber, a door opens onto the ancient rampart to the east. Directly opposite, another door gives access to a room within the Gallo-Roman tower, named the Oratory Tower after the 14th-century construction carried out under Charles V. This tower is also known as the tower of the Chapelle Saint-Louis (fig. 100). The tower- room is on the same level as the king's bedroom and is also known as the King's Cabinet.

Fig. 91:

¹²⁵ Vatin, Casimir: *Senlis récits historiques, ouvrage posthume publié par Ernest Dupuis* (Historical Narratives, Posthumous work published by Ernest Dupuis), Senlis, Payen, 1876, p. 309.

¹²⁶ Didier, Frederic: ACMH, *Hôtel de Vermandois*, 2BDM architecture et patrimoine, April 2020.

¹²⁷ Abbé Müller, Eugène: *Guide des Rues et Environs de Senlis* (Guide of the Roads and the environs of Senlis), Senlis, Typographie Ernest Payen, 1887.

¹²⁸ Marcel, Aubert: *Petites monographies des grands édifices de la France* (Small monographs concerning great buildings of France), Senlis, Henri Laurens, 1913.

Fig. 95:

Fig. 96:
Fig. 97:
Fig. 98:

Fig. 99 bis

Fig. 99:

Fig. 100:
Fig. 101:

This arrangement, which annexes the Roman tower to the main room, is similar (but reversed from right to left) to that of the upper room of the Hôtel de Vermandois.

On this floor, a chimney is set into the west wall of the oratory, with a rectangular, corbelled, flue projecting from the tower (fig. 101). To the east, a large pointed-arch window, dating from the end of the 15th century (early Renaissance) offers an unobstructed view over the “King’s Garden” (fig. 102). Unfortunately, it has lost its mullions and other detail, perhaps due to the blocking-order of 1835. This window is oriented as far as possible towards the east. To the right of this window, embedded in the wall, is a pointed-arch piscina for purifying the hands with Holy Water for Eucharistic consecration. The drain is now blocked by a thick ivy root. Further to the right, on the other side of the doorway to the king’s room, is a cupboard (fig. 103). The altar must therefore have been placed facing the bay, with the celebrant’s back to the fireplace. This arrangement reproduces the traditional liturgical layout, with the piscina to the right of the altar. An additional door oriented towards the interior of the city was opened in the 15th century in the gable wall of the tower (fig. 104). It probably led to the “balcony” of the royal chamber and to the gallery behind the western dwelling, which we will describe later.

The room was painted on a blue background with gold fleur-de-lys. Louis Graves and Casimir Vatin add that it was possible to make out the painted emblems of Henri II (an H and a crescent)¹²⁹ and the insignia of Saint Michael on the fireplace. Marcel Aubert¹³⁰, in 1913, refers to this decoration but by then, it could no longer be seen, as it had been washed away by the rain.

An old post card from 1910 allows us to link the decoration of the King’s oratory with stone plaques taken from the castle. These are different from the ones described above and show the emblems of Henri II in bas-relief (fig. 105 and 106). They are now kept in the pre-Romanesque chapel of Senlis Cathedral (fig. 107).

Henri II (reign 1547-1559) was the last of our kings to sleep in the Royal Castle. Its abandonment to the Presidial Court³ in 1551 and to other judicial and fiscal institutions, along with its worsening state of dilapidation, made it unsuitable as a royal residence. On May 23, 1591, King Henri IV stayed “in the house of Madame Martine, formerly called the Hôtel de Saint-Pérain¹³¹, behind and abutting Saint-Maurice near the king’s castle and jail”¹³².

Today the tower has lost its upper storey and its roof. The roof disappeared from drawings after 1800. On this floor, as on the floor below, the ancient openings in the gable wall are walled up. On the upper floor, there is an arched, but blocked, antique doorway opened into the right wall of the tower. It is unusually offset to the east. According to Etienne Poncelet, it may have communicated with the second floor by means of an exterior wooden staircase¹³³.

¹²⁹ Graves, Louis: *Précis statistique sur le canton de Senlis* (Precise Statistics on the Canton of Senlis), 1840 and Vatin, Casimir: *Senlis récits historiques* (Senlis, historical accounts), Senlis, Ernest Payen, 1876, p. 309.

¹³⁰ Aubert, Marcel *op. cit.*

¹³¹ Hôtel Saint Péravy, in the name of its former proprietor, (now) called Hôtel de la Treille.

¹³² Vaultier, Jehan: “Histoire et discours d’une partie des choses faites et passées en ce royaume” (History and discussions of some of the deeds undertaken and occurring in this kingdom), in Bernier, Adhelm: *Monumens inédits de l’histoire de France 1400-1600*, 1835, p. 225.

¹³³ Poncelet, Etienne, *op. cit.*

Fig. 103:

Fig. 102:

Fig. 104:

Fig. 105:
Fig. 106:
Fig. 107:
Fig. 107 bis:

Fig. 108:

Fig. 108 bis:

It might also have given access to a building perpendicular to the wall, either ancient or from the early Middle Ages, which has now disappeared. Later, a mullioned window was opened in the right-hand (east) wall to the garden of Saint-Maurice. The medieval access was through a doorway to the east, now hidden by a part of the roof of the king's room (fig. 108). At this point, the gable wall of the tower is joined by a small, vaulted corbel to the gable wall of the chimney in the King's chamber (fig. 108 bis). This probably supported a spiral staircase extending to the tower attic, and the original roof joists (fig. 109).

The purpose of the ground floor room beneath the King's chamber is not fully understood. The northern section, against the Roman wall, may have been an extension to the kitchens, as suggested by the arch, now bricked in, supporting the eastern wall. To the south, in front of the neo-Gothic gable, there once stood a single-storey prison, where Pepin II, King of Aquitaine and nephew of Charles the Bald, was held in 864. Moinet's plan (fig. 27, p. 45) explicitly placed it along the passage leading from the castle courtyard to the Saint-Maurice priory garden. Other authors concur, with more (Matherat) or less (Louat¹³⁴) conviction. No trace of the prison building remains visible today. In 1893, Paul Combaz¹³⁵ recognized in "these walls, and this wet vault which still remain in part", a construction dark enough to support this thesis. Louis Petit, in 1867, placed on his plan a "dormer window overlooking the dungeon where Pépin is said to have been locked up"¹³⁶. Is it possible that this dormer window is now to be found relocated in the wall of the cellar? We think this unlikely. It seems to us improbable that a 9th-century building, used as a dungeon, would still exist in the 19th century at this location, given that it does not connect with other buildings, and has no obvious more contemporary use. However, this intriguing hypothesis cannot be definitively ruled out. Here again, an archaeological survey might throw more light on the question. It is indeed surprising, as we shall see later, to discover buildings at the other end of this western wing, that are well-established to be surviving prisons. Let us also remember that, not only was the castle rebuilt by Louis VI 'the Fat', but it was modified several times after that, and the uses to which the rooms were put were changed several times.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the ground floor was used as the orangery of the Turquet property.

Fig. 109:

¹³⁴ Louat, Félix: SHAS (Archives) Em 276.

¹³⁵ Combaz, Paul : *op. cit.*

¹³⁶ Petit, Louis: *Congrès Archéologique de France XXXIII^e session, séances générales tenues à Senlis, Aix et Nice en 1866*, (Archeological Congress of France, 33rd session, general meetings held at Senlis, Aix and Nice in 1866) Paris, Derache, 1867.

Fig. 110:

The West Wing

This wing, referred to as the “main building” by Georges Matherat in 1947¹³⁷ (almost certainly based on its description as “a large building” on the poster advertising the auction of April 27, 1835), has now completely disappeared. The foundations were identified and studied by Matherat in 1944 and 1946¹³⁸. This “wall at the back of the main building of the castle”, i.e., the one that bordered the Saint-Maurice priory Garden, was 0.90 m wide and laid on top of a 1.40 m wide substructure “in blocking” (rough rubblework). Matherat did not specify the height of these remains. He indicated that this substructure did not rest on ancient paving located lower down at a depth of 3 m, but on “an artificial fill of rubble” placed above this paving.

This wing linked the northern apartments, incorporating the ancient city wall, to the southern apartments, which were bordered by the alleyway known as Rue de la Treille, now called impasse Baumé. It had two storeys and an attic.

Under the Ancien Régime, the ground floor was said to house stables, but there is no definite proof of this¹³⁹.

Alongside the building which housed the Saint Louis chamber and its small extension, known as “Pépin’s dungeon”, there was, at ground level, a single-storey pedestrian passage, which in the 18th century allowed access to the gardens of the Saint-Maurice priory. This passage is attested to in the 1744 feudal records of Saint-Maurice, now in private hands.

During this period, the Water and Forestry Department was housed on the ground floor in the southern part of the building¹⁴⁰. It consisted of two panelled rooms,¹⁴¹ one with parquet flooring and the other with a cork floor. Water and Forestry meetings were held on Monday mornings¹⁴². In August 1790, an ephemeral revolutionary jurisdiction, known as the Office of Conciliation¹⁴³, took over the space until the sale of the premises.

On the first floor, a gallery, built on top of a thick wall, ran along the full length of the back of the building. According to Combaz, it was “a sort of covered gallery overlooking the gardens of the priory; it led directly from the king’s room to the church of Saint-Maurice”¹⁴⁴. The gallery started at the king’s balcony, which, in the 19th century, was reconstructed in romantic style by the Turquet de la Boiserie family (fig. 110)¹⁴⁵.

On the Moinet plan, this is the small corridor that links the king’s room to the prison buildings. It runs behind the roof of “Pépin dungeon”, and passes the Water and Forestry building, before reaching the prison building. The “gallery” then continued at right angles from the west wing to the monks’ dormitory steps and to the bell tower of Saint-Maurice. Between the castle and the priory, the gallery sat atop a wall. In 1835, Broisse specified that this passage from the palace to the church “could still be seen nowadays”¹⁴⁶. It should be emphasised that a gallery walkway at first floor level is not unique in Senlis; there are examples in the chapel of Chancellor Guérin, in the Hôtel de la Galère on Rue du Châtel and elsewhere.

¹³⁷ Matherat, Georges: “Les vicissitudes du châtel du roi” in *Comptes Rendues et mémoires*, années 1946-1947, SHAS.

¹³⁸ Lemaire, Robert: *op. cit.*, p. 108.

¹³⁹ Combaz, Paul: *op. cit.*, p. 275.

¹⁴⁰ Delorme plan of 1776, Desmarests plan of 1772 and record of municipal deliberations.

¹⁴¹ Sale of national goods, AD Oise, 1Q3/658, 12th October 1793.

¹⁴² *Almanach historique de la ville et du diocèse de Senlis*, (Historical Almanach of the city and diocese of Senlis), Senlis, Desroques, 1788.

¹⁴³ Record of municipal deliberations, Departmental Archives of Oise, EDT1/1D7 (1817, p. 73-74).

¹⁴⁴ Combaz, Paul: *op. cit.*, p. 275.

¹⁴⁵ At the time of this reconstruction, the Renaissance house on the Place Notre-Dame in Senlis was restored in the same troubadour style by Gervais-d’Aldin.

¹⁴⁶ Broisse, Jean-François, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

Fig. 111:

We can also draw a parallel with the access gallery to the Sainte-Chapelle of the Palais de la Cité in Paris.

In the 18th century, a staircase at the end of the building provided access to the palace courtyard. There were also several routes into the prison buildings, which we will examine a little later.

The first floor of this building contained a further two rooms with fireplaces, overlooking the courtyard of the palace, and several offices used as criminal-law chambers by the bailiwick¹⁴⁷. In 1788, one of these rooms served as the court room for the bailiwick - on Fridays - for police matters, under the presidency of Lieutenant General Deslandes¹⁴⁸.

We have no documentary evidence on the appearance of the west wing roofs. The absence of an upper storey over “Pépin’s dungeon” would suggest a break in the roofline at this level. However, it is likely that the remaining roofs of the west wing were the same height as that of Saint Louis’ chamber. To the south, the roof was linked by two gulleys to that of the prison building.

Laurent Benoist, who was a surveyor in Senlis in the year III (September 22, 1794 - September 22, 1795), drew up a plan of the castle. On it, he refers to the owners Popincour for the priory Saint-Maurice and Crestel for the house known as Cachouet, Rue du Chat-Haret. Louis Crestel became the owner of the Cachouet in 1764. His widow sold it on 19 messidor year X (8 July 1802). René Chastellain de Popincour bought the priory of Saint-Maurice by auction on October 20, 1792, and sold it on July 30, 1793, to Louis Dubus Préville. This short period of ownership allows us to date the plan to 1793 (fig. 111).

The main building, as well as all the buildings mentioned above, were sold on October 12, 1793, to citizen François Lefevre, residing in Paris, Rue de Harlay, section Révolutionnaire, for 16 400 livres¹⁴⁹. He had paid this sum in full by June 11, 1795.

The property was resold on April 2, 1798 (13 germinal year VI) at the office of Master Vatin, notary¹⁵⁰, to Rieul Antoine Brunet, wood merchant in Senlis as a viager (an arrangement in which Brunet paid a monthly sum to Mr. and Mrs. Lefevre, who retained the right to live there until they died, after which Brunet was able to take full possession). Brunet bequeathed the property, in a will witnessed by Master Vatin, notary in Senlis, to his three sisters Marie Anne, Hélène Charlotte and Marie-Louise Romaine, on 8 pluviôse year XII (29 January 1804). The last survivor of the three sisters, Marie-Louise Romaine, who inherited all the shares in the property, died on November 24, 1834, after having bequeathed the castle, in her Will, to Marie Dupuis, wife of the merchant Nicolas Joseph Rouflette, living in Mouzon (Ardennes). The old castle, as it was then called, was at that time rented out and divided among several tenants. The new owners auctioned the castle in three lots¹⁵¹.

¹⁴⁷ Combaz, *op. cit.* and Matherat, SHAS N° 335, 1949, both of which are based on the restored late 19th century plan published by Combaz and the early 19th century plan.

¹⁴⁸ *Almanach historique de la ville et du diocèse de Senlis* (historical almanach of the city and diocese of Senlis), Desroques, 1788.

¹⁴⁹ Sale of national goods, AD Oise, 1Q3/658, 12th October 1793.

¹⁵⁰ Notarial archives destroyed in 1914, the transcription of the mortgage department no longer exists.

¹⁵¹ Notes written by Félix Louat, Mayor of Senlis, SHAS (archives) Em 276, box 44.

The “Old Castle”, the west wing and the “King’s Garden” were sold by voluntary auction on April 27, 1835, by Master Guibourg, notary in Senlis¹⁵². The auction took place in one of the rooms in the castle.

Anne Victor Turquet (fig. 112) purchased the first two lots together for 8,800 francs and 484 francs in fees. The first lot comprised part of the ruins adjoining the wall and the cellar with its entrance under the vault; the courtyard and its outbuildings; and the dwelling with a garden to the west of it. This grouping corresponds to cadastral parcels 375, 376, 377, and part of 384, formerly the parterre (fig. 113). This lot had a communal right to the kitchen well and to the carriage entrance leading to Rue du Châtel. The second lot included the new buildings constructed to the south of the courtyard against the wall of the Hôtel des Trois Pots (cadastral parcel 386), the kitchen (cadastral parcel 385), the other part of this courtyard of the former parterre, and the remaining ruins to the north of which “a vast vaulted cellar or storehouse”, the “terraces and all the land below and above”. This is the cellar of the palace (parcel 378) and the master tower (parcels 380, 381 and 383). Victor Turquet had a particular interest in this purchase, as it was his immediate neighbour. He lived in the former priory of Saint-Maurice (today the Musée de la Vénérie) which he had bought from Pierre Joseph de Malézieux, former auditor at the Chamber of Accounts, on May 6, 1816. The latter had greatly transformed the place and destroyed the remains of the chapel and the cloister of Saint-Maurice. Amable-Louis de Junquières said of him that he had “trowel-mania”¹⁵³. Victor Turquet thus brought together the ruins of the “Old Castle” with the Saint-Maurice priory. His son completed the estate in 1879, by buying the rooms located above the carriage entrance, the fortified entrance to the castle, which until that date had been annexed to the Hôtel des Trois Pots.

The main building to the left of the castle entrance, today the janitor's house, was in 1836 “newly built” and rented by Mr. Rimbart, a wood merchant. The kitchen built in place of the exterior staircase to the prison was still in use as an outbuilding to the main house inhabited by Mr. and Mrs. Raoult, tenants until May 1, 1835, and prior to that, by Mr. and Mrs. Lefèvre.

Fig. 112:

¹⁵² Sale poster published by Isabelle Morin, *Recherche historique sur l'ancien château royal de Senlis*, (Historical research on the ancient royal castle of Senlis), Master's thesis, September 1985. The original deed was destroyed in the fire of 1914. It is necessary to refer to the record of mortgages, AD Oise, 4Qp4/1148, n°48. The plans drawn up on this occasion are unfortunately lost.

¹⁵³ *Une famille senlisienne. Les Junquières* (A family from Senlis. The Junquières). Manuscript of the Condé Museum published by the Archaeological Committee of Senlis, Senlis, 1915.

Fig. 113:

Fig. 113:

Fig. 114:
Fig. 115:
Fig. 116:

The King's Garden

The third lot in the sale was the large garden known as the “King’s Garden”, “in which there is an old building, a well and a trough”¹⁵⁴, to the north, on the other side of the rampart, between the Roman wall and the Rue du Chat-Haret. The garden, divided into strips giving onto the street, was sold in four parts¹⁵⁵.

Jean Odent, deputy mayor of Senlis, bought the parcel of land adjoining his house, known as Le Cachouet, on Rue du Chat-Haret. This parcel, the most western, and close to the Oratory tower, remains today in private hands and linked to the house. It measured 4 ares 50 centiares (i.e. 450 m²). The three other parcels were bought by Laurent César Guillaume Bernier, former justice of the peace in Senlis (4 ares 16 centiares, i.e. 416 m²), Louis Antoine Michaux, landowner in Senlis (5 ares 63 centiares, i.e. 563 m²) and Apolline Antoinette Bouchard widow of Marie Joseph Barthelemy Bouchard, landowner in Senlis (6 ares 34 centiares, i.e. 634 m²).

In this last lot there is mention of the remains of the building known as Louis XIII of the Election⁴: “being part of the number [cadastral] 378, which is in very bad condition and holds to the wall of the city, ... together with the construction that is above”¹⁵⁶.

These parcels were then acquired, one by one, by the Turquet family. Apolline Antoinette Bouchard sold to Anne Victor Turquet and Henriette Le Carlier his wife, on February 26, 1846, “a garden located in Senlis, Rue du Chat-Haret, at the bottom of which is a lean-to shed and a rabbit hutch, with a small courtyard in front, containing a trough, all separated by a supporting wall from the bottom portion of garden, a greenhouse to keep the gardening tools used in the city (the rampart), the said garden being planted with espaliered fruit trees, vine stocks...”¹⁵⁷. The garden was then completed by Henriette Le Carlier, widow of Anne Victor Turquet, with the purchase of the two smaller remaining plots. The first concluded on June 3, 1864, with the heirs of Louis Antoine Michaux, the second, on March 3, 1867, with the heirs of Laurent César Guillaume Bernier¹⁵⁸ (the plot to the west adjoining the Odent property). The “King’s Garden” would thus acquire the scope that we know today (fig. 114).

We have little information about the appearance of the “King’s Garden” prior to the Revolution, but there is mention of its existence as early as 1341¹⁵⁹. The Delorme (1767), Desmarests (1772) and Benoist (1793) plans show a French garden divided into four parterres. The Benoist plan adds a triangular parterre to the west, part of which was bought by Jean Odent in 1835. We know that in September 1780, the city sold the harvest of the vines planted in the “King’s Garden”. The 1835 description mentions the presence, in the garden, of “an old building, a well and a trough”. When Henriette Carlier bought the last part of the garden from the heir of Laurent César Guillaume Bernier, a common well is mentioned on the east side¹⁶⁰. This well is probably the one whose conduit was found in the quarry cellar of the castle. It should certainly be linked with the excavations of Georges Matherat in 1946. At that time, he found a hexagonal substructure that he defined as a “water shell”, the drainage basin of the castle. Matherat described it very briefly as “a sort of nymphaeum with a pentagonal spillway attached to the base of the 3rd century enclosure wall” (fig. 115, excavation photograph). He links it with the legend on Moinet’s plan: “where the waters from Raray flowed, which arrived at the castle of Senlis by an aqueduct crossing the courtyard and of which traces can still be found on the southern side of Chamant as well as at Notre-Dame de Bonsecours”. It should be noted that Matherat makes no mention of the discovery of an aqueduct. Neither he nor Moinet pinpoint the exact location of this “shell”, “partly covered by a modern shed”¹⁶¹. Jean-Pierre Paquet’s plan (fig. 115 bis), drawn up according to Matherat’s work, places it at one third of the distance between the Oratory tower and the Guards’ tower, at the right of the late opening made in the ancient rampart. The drawing published by Robert Lemaire in 1976 locates this “shell” a little closer to the Oratory tower than to the Guards’ Tower, but this part of the drawing is approximate and narrowed. Our estimates locate the well found in the cellar a little further east towards the Guards’ Tower. The old lean-to garden shed is visible on photographs from the end of the 19th century and on postcards from the beginning of the 20th century (fig. 116). Rue du Chat-Haret was re-routed, with the loss of some of the garden in the last third of the 19th century.

¹⁵⁴ AD Oise, 4Qp4/1148, n°48.

¹⁵⁵ Transcription of the Deed of Mr. Guibourg, Félix Louat’s notes, SHAS (archives) EM 276. And transcriptions of mortgages, AD Oise, 4Qp4/1148, n°48.

¹⁵⁶ AD Oise, 4Qp4/1148, n°48.

¹⁵⁷ AD Oise, 4Qp4/1285, volume 473, n°9.

¹⁵⁸ AD Oise, 4Qp4/1742, volume 930, n°46.

¹⁵⁹ Abbé Müller, Eugène: *Monographie des rues places et monuments de Senlis*, (Monograph of roads, places and monuments of Senlis), Senlis, 1880, p. 37, which quotes Afforty, volume XVIII, 173.

¹⁶⁰ Louat, Félix: SHAS (archives), Em 276. AD Oise, 4Qp4/1742, volume 930, n°46.

¹⁶¹ Matherat, Georges: *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, SHAS, années 1946-1947, p. 31.

Fig. 115 bis:

Fig. 115 bis:

The Site in the 19th and 20th centuries

The Turquet family, having acquired both the Saint-Maurice priory and the castle, destroyed the west wing of the castle, known in the 19th century as the ‘corps de logis’, probably as soon as they bought it in 1835. This was to create a more open site and enlarge the gardens. The wing had already disappeared by the time of Moinet’s plan of August 1842. The Archaeological Committee made no mention of it during its visit to the French Archaeological Congress in 1866¹⁶². Several historical studies inaccurately suggest that the wing was destroyed in the 1860s, which is clearly incorrect.

Between the two world wars, a model of the castle in the 18th century was exhibited in the chapter house of the Saint-Maurice priory¹⁶³. Unfortunately, we have not found any photographs of this model, which disappeared during the Second World War.

From 1935 on, the Turquet family lived at the ‘Château’ only occasionally and offered it for rent in early 1939.

The German army occupied the prior’s house from June 26, 1940, until November 1943. They dispersed the furniture. The Feldkommandantur of Beauvais granted the “release of the Henri IV castle in Senlis” on November 25, 1942¹⁶⁴.

In 1943, a new municipal urban plan proposed the creation of a street from the impasse Baumé to the Place Saint-Maurice, threatening to divide the site of the royal castle from that of the priory. To the consternation of the owners, this project sought justification in the law published in the Journal Officiel on June 24, 1943.

Following initial explorations carried out by the passive defence force [T.N.: ‘défense passive’ – an organization that warned citizens of impending bombardments etc.] in 1939, the children and heirs of Henri Turquet authorized archaeological excavations to be carried out in the ruins of the castle. They tried to rent the ruins out to the ‘Beaux-Arts’ (part of the Institut de France, a public institution founded in pre-revolutionary France and responsible for the preservation of art and culture) at the beginning of 1943¹⁶⁵ and then tried to sell them. The ‘Beaux-Arts’ was interested, not least because it wanted to classify the Gallo-Roman wall as a historical monument. The chief architect, Jean-Pierre Paquet, confirmed the State’s desire to acquire the ruins and the monks’ dormitory¹⁶⁶, but the family council withdrew the property from sale as they considered the offer insufficient.

At around the same time, at the start of the 1943 school year, the sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny took refuge in the Prior’s house and their students had the use of the gardens. They remained there until the summer of 1951. After the war, the Ministry of Finance considered buying the Prior’s house as a seat for their offices¹⁶⁷.

The park of the ‘Vieux Château’, including the priory of Saint-Maurice and the prior’s house, was eventually bought by the City on December 13, 1955¹⁶⁸, for the sum of 9 million francs, (a sum proposed by the Turquet de La Boisserie family and accepted by the City). The purchase was supported by a state subsidy of 4 million francs. The city council’s director of properties had estimated the value as 7 to 8 million francs (making the total cost, with charges, between 9,100,000 and 10,400,000). The city council had decided, on July 8, 1955, to acquire the property for the City of Senlis by means of a compulsory purchase order. This was declared to be in the public interest by a prefectural decree dated November 10, 1955. The prefect is recorded as stating that the installation of the Musée de la Vénérie (in the prior’s house) “is of an urgent nature”¹⁶⁹.

¹⁶² *Congrès Archéologique de France, XXXIII^e session, séances générales tenues à Senlis, Aix et Nice en 1866*, (Archeological congress of France, 33rd session, general meetings held at Senlis, Aix and Nice, 1866), Paris, 1867.

¹⁶³ Turquet de la Boisserie Sabine, *Le vieux château*, manuscript memorandum, n.d.

¹⁶⁴ Copy of the decision of the Feldkommandant transmitted by the Prefecture of the Oise, 5th December, 1942. Private archives.

¹⁶⁵ Private archives.

¹⁶⁶ Letter of 30th March, 1944, attached to a cadastral plan, indicating the interest of the Directorate of Historical Monuments.

¹⁶⁷ Letter from Eugène Gazeau 3.6.1962, SHAS (archives) EM 382 B, box 46.

¹⁶⁸ Sale by the Turquet de la Boisserie heirs to the city of Senlis, 13th December, 1955; office of Mr. Jean Patria at Senlis.

¹⁶⁹ The musée de la Vénérie - museum of the Hunt -, established in Senlis in 1935 had, until then, been housed in the former chapel of the Hôpital de la Charité, which had become too cramped.

Fig. 117:

Two main projects were being considered for the site. The “beautification plan” for the city foresaw the creation of a new street running through the castle park from the Rue du Châtel to the Place Saint-Maurice. Fortunately, this was quickly abandoned¹⁷⁰.

The second project was supported by Georges de Lastic Saint-Jal, director of the Beaux-Arts and future curator of the Musée de la Vénérerie (museum of the Hunt). The idea was to install this museum in the prior’s house of Saint-Maurice, until recently, home of the Turquet family. This was done: the official inauguration took place on September 5, 1958, with an entrance from the Place Saint-Maurice (fig. 117).

From the outset, the city council had two further ambitions for the site. The first was a plan to create a festival hall, which was eventually realised, by restoring the monks’ dormitory, in 2004. The grand staircase providing access to it from the outside was restored in 2005. By contrast, the second ambition, the creation of a zoological garden in the park, has remained in limbo, where it is likely to remain!

In 1976, the city had the eastern wall of the royal castle park demolished and the adjacent tourist office building restored. This allowed the creation of a new gate allowing direct access to the park from the cathedral square. Unfortunately, it meant that visitors were no longer able to enter the castle through the original, fortified, gate – arguably a more dramatic experience for them.

The castle was first listed as a historic monument (and therefore legally protected) in 1862. On December 17, 1948, the whole site, including both the royal castle and the Saint-Maurice priory, was listed under the (new) law of May 2, 1930, which reformed the system for protecting monuments. On November 6, 1995, a protection order was issued for the entire ruins of the castle, including the medieval keep and the remains of the Gallo-Roman wall, located between Rue de Villevert and Rue de la Treille. In 2008-2009, a preliminary study for the protection and exhibition of the ruins was carried out by Etienne Poncelet, chief architect for historical monuments (ACMH).

The *palatio* of the first Capetians, would change its name, in turn, to the “King’s castle”; the “Old castle” (after the Revolution); and finally, the “royal castle” or “park of the remains of the royal castle”. After the departure of the kings, the buildings were taken over by administrative institutions under the Ancien Régime and fell into disrepair. The destructive developments when it became a private residence and the division of the site during the Revolution distracted the south wing - known as the prisons - from the attention of visitors and historians. In the second part of this book, we will try to repair this oversight.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Eugène Gazeau, 3.6.1962, SHAS (archives) EM 382 B, box 46.

Fig. 118:

The Steward (Keeper) of the Castle and his Lodge

Although no source specifically refers to a steward's lodge at Senlis Castle, we do know that the office of steward existed. We must assume that he resided on the site, but we do not know in which building. The function of steward evolved considerably from the 12th to the 18th century and successive holders of the office usually also had control over the houses adjoining the royal castle. Initially, it is likely that the steward was more of a butler concerned with administration and security in the king's absence. He would have worked alongside the Marshal (or constable), responsible for its military defence. A steward is referenced, in 1258, in Vincennes¹⁷¹.

Scattered references in the literature, allow us to identify some of the stewards at Senlis.

The first steward (concierge) that we know of, named Villain, was mentioned in 1223 by Guérin, bishop of Senlis and chancellor of France, in a record of a donation made to the Abbey of Victory by Villain the Concierge of Senlis (Villanus Consergius Silvanectensis). This donation was related to the (concierge's) right to collect 5 sous in land tax on the houses located opposite the door of Notre-Dame Cathedral¹⁷². The donation was made by the donor and his wife to celebrate an anniversary¹⁷³. Nicolas Bilot notes, (and does not rule out the possibility that the sources may be misleading), that the first mention of a steward coincides in time with the death of Gui V le Bouteiller in 1221. Le Bouteiller may have held the functions both of steward and 'bouteiller' (Grand Butler to the King – an office of State). After his death, his family lost the role of Grand Butler. It is possible that the role of steward then became more of a job than a noble office of state.

The next significant person to be documented was, Geoffroy Biendieu, king's prosecutor at the assizes of the bailiwick in 1340 and 1341¹⁷⁴ (King's Council serving the district court). In 1341, he owned a property in the Rue du Chat-Haret, adjoining the "King's Garden". According to a description of this neighbouring house: (it was) "behind the King's garden, in the street that goes from Saint-Maurice to Saint-Rieul... contiguous on the one hand to Geffroy Biendieu, King's Prosecutor and steward of his castle, and in front to the King's road [rue de Villevert] and behind to the battlements of the city... given to (the Abbey of) Chaalis by the late Jean d'Ully..."¹⁷⁵. This description suggests a location to the south of the Rue du Chat-Haret, as the Rue de Villevert did not, at that time, extend beyond the crossroads.

On 4 November 1359, the same Geoffroy Biendieu (Bonum Dei), "King's prosecutor, caretaker of his castle..., having in his care the city of Senlis, widower of Perronnelle", founded the chapel of Sainte-Anne in Senlis cathedral¹⁷⁶.

Pierre Noudart the elder, sergeant in Senlis, was steward of the king's house in Senlis from 1476 to 1485¹⁷⁷.

Later, the functions of steward and marshal of the castle appear to have merged. A tombstone in the church of Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul in Sarcelles commemorates Jehan Soudain, the castle's steward who died in 1582. The stone, "made in 1556", was engraved before the death of the Soudain spouses and completed later (fig. 118).

"Here lie the honorable Jehan Soudain, in his life, Hussar to the King, Captain of the City of Senlis and Keeper of the king's castle, who passed away the 12th July, 1582, and his honorable wife Colette Blondel, the lady of the said Jehan Soudain, who passed away on 12th December 1557, pray to God for them".

¹⁷¹ Zang, Marie-Astrid: *Concierges et capitaines du château de Vincennes (1258-1418)*, thesis of the École des chartes, 2001, theses.enc.sorbonne.fr/2001/zang (accessed on 27/07/2022).

¹⁷² An imprescriptible seigniorial right, the cens is an annual fee.

¹⁷³ AD Oise, H. 752. Abbey of Notre-Dame de la Victoire.

¹⁷⁴ Rozière, Eugène de: *L'assise du baillage de Senlis*, Paris, 1892.

¹⁷⁵ Abbé Müller, Eugène: *Monographie des rues places et monuments de Senlis*, Senlis, 1880, p. 37, who quotes Afforty, volume XVIII, 173.

¹⁷⁶ Abbé Müller, Eugène: "Analyse du cartulaire de Notre-Dame de Senlis 1041-1393", in *Comptes rendus et Mémoires du Comité Archéologique de Senlis*, 1904, p. 196. And AD Oise, G 2064.

¹⁷⁷ Bernard, Guenée: "Catalogue des gens de justice de Senlis (1380-1550)", in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, années 1981-1982, SHAS, p. 61.

On 4 July 1612, “Robert de Lespinay, keeper of the king’s castle in Senlis”, rented from Jehan Vallée, locksmith in Senlis, the house in Rue de Villevert, built against the walls of the castle’s great tower and the “false gate of Saint-Rieul”¹⁷⁸. At the beginning of 1615 “Pierre de Lespinay, captain of the castle of Senlis, living in Paris on Rue Montorgueil” bought an annuity of 500 livres tournois in the presence of the notary Philippe Tulloue in Paris¹⁷⁹.

In October 1705, by a royal edict, the office of ‘concierge-buvetier’ (steward of the drinking hall) was created “in each of the chancelleries established near the parliaments and other higher courts and in each of the offices of finance, judicial courts and fiscal regions of the kingdom”¹⁸⁰, of which Senlis was one.

Furthermore, we have, conserved in the SHAS archives, a parchment deed dated 19 November 1734, in which “Marie Lange, widow of the late Antoine Bacouel, who lived as steward of the castle (housing) of the presidial (court) of Senlis, resided there”, acknowledges that she owes a surcharge on a house in Rue de la Poulaille¹⁸¹. It should be noted that this may be the only mention we have come across of a castle steward’s residence. However, Antoine Bacouel had already died by 1726¹⁸² and it is probable that this mention of specific residence applies to the town in general and is not connected to the office of steward.

From then on, the letters of appointment to the office provide the names of successive holders¹⁸³:

François Mercier, ‘concierge-buvetier’ at the presidial seat and election of Senlis, appointed on 27 September 1725, succeeded Antoine Bacouel.

Claude Labitte, captain steward of the castle of Senlis, appointed on 24 April 1734, succeeded Jean Baptiste Labitte.

Charles Billot, captain steward of the castle of Senlis appointed on 9 June 1741, succeeded Claude Labitte.

Louis Yvorel, captain steward of the castle of Senlis appointed on 10 January 1752, succeeded Charles Billot. The central minutier of Paris (place where the minutes are kept) retained the deeds of sale of the office of captain and steward of the castle of Senlis. Charles Billot, bourgeois of Paris, domiciled at the castle of Senlis and Marie Madeleine Bertrand his wife sold the office to Maître Louis Ivorel, pastry merchant and innkeeper, in Paris, on 4 November 1751¹⁸⁴.

Claude Julien de Blois, ‘concierge-buvetier’ at the presidial seat and election of Senlis, appointed on 29 September 1759, succeeded Jacques de Blois.

Jacques Luce, ‘concierge-buvetier’ at the presidial seat and election of Senlis, appointed on 24 September 1760, succeeded Claude Julien de Blois.

However, there is no indication that this ‘buvette’ (drinking hall), so important in the life of the courts, was located in the castle of Senlis. The function of ‘concierge-buvetier’ (steward of the drinking hall) was binding on its holder but did not prevent him from delegating his duties. This explains why there were ex-officio holders living in Paris. Since the Middle Ages the function had evolved considerably.

¹⁷⁸ Notary of Saint Leu, AD Oise, 2E28/51.

¹⁷⁹ National Archives, Central Minutier, Study XXIV, Tulloue, Philippe, MC/ET/XXIV/126.

¹⁸⁰ Édité ... portant création d'un office de concierge-buvetier en chacune des chancellies établis près les Parlemens (sic) et autres Cours Supérieures... Registré en Parlement | Gallica (bnf.fr) <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8623203z> (accessed 28/07/2022).

¹⁸¹ SHAS (archives) DD 764.

¹⁸² Lequoy Michel, *op. cit.*, volume 5, p. 141.

¹⁸³ National Archives, Grande Chancellerie (sub-series V/1). Letters of provision of office.

¹⁸⁴ Central Minutier, reference: MC/ET/XLIX/691, online inventory.

Fig. 120:

The Chateau Royal at Senlis, Part Two: “The Prisons”

In Senlis, the former prisons, located in the impasse Baumé, were once an integral part of the royal castle.

The building, at one time the property of Électricité de France - Gaz de France (fig. 119)¹⁸⁵, has now been largely abandoned. We were concerned to discover that the city had plans, happily now dropped, to sell the site, so we felt it necessary to visit and photograph the site in its current state. Our first visit took place in December 2017.

The ancient prisons are situated in the southeast corner of the castle grounds. They are bordered by the Impasse Baumé, known, in the early 19th century, as the Rue des Prisons, and prior to that, as Rue de la Treille. The layout of the street was modified in the 19th century during building works on a house belonging to the de La Hante family (Hôtel de la Hante). In 1835 the street was cut off and widened, so that it became a cul-de-sac¹⁸⁶.

After the closure of the prisons in the mid-19th century, this section of the road was re-aligned and named impasse Baumé¹⁸⁷.

On the site plan (fig. 113, p. 151), known as the Napoleonic cadastre (property register), the building of interest and its outbuildings occupy lots 307 (a courtyard, an L-shaped building, a second courtyard); 304 (a courtyard to the west, a building in the shape of an inverted T that has disappeared, and a courtyard to the east); and 306, which now comprises more modern, but neglected, buildings previously used as stables and an ironmongery. The eastern part of lot 304, at the corner of Rue du Châtel, is not part of the old prison complex. It is a more modern building, formerly a bakery and now an Asian restaurant. To the north, what remains of the hotel des Trois Pots, dates from the Renaissance period and is not part of the prison complex either.

To the west of this complex¹⁸⁸, there is a small garden closed off to the west by a large wall, which borders the courtyard of the Saint-Maurice priory, onto which open the windows of the chapter house situated below the monks' dormitory (fig. 120). This courtyard has an exit at the end of the impasse Baumé, in which we can identify a passage formerly called “petit huis de Saint-Maurice” (Saint-Maurice's little door).

Between the ‘petit huis’ and the tower we can distinguish a door with a bevelled frame, which is now walled-up. It opened on to the small garden (fig. 121 to 123). Next to it, a second door leads out of the stair turret at the corner of the building, directly onto the street. This latter exit is modern. The proximity of these doors distinguishes their use: one accesses the prison in the tower, the second opens onto the garden of the royal castle, and the third gives access to the priory, whose main entrance and cartway was located to the north on the Place Saint-Maurice. A fourth, pedestrian, access to the priory existed in the western building of the castle but has now disappeared.

Fig. 119:

¹⁸⁵ Électricité de France actively occupied the premises until 1968 (Jean Vergnet-Ruiz, La Sauvegarde, n°12).

¹⁸⁶ Les Tablettes of the SHAS, n° 52, December 2017, Les TABLETTES (archeologie-senlis.fr).

¹⁸⁷ Louat, Félix: *Histoire de la ville de Senlis*, Imprimeries réunies de Senlis, Senlis, 1931. The author specifies that the road changed its name on 20 November 1880 at the request of the owner of the Hôtel des Trois Pots (p. 166). The family of the chemist Baumé lived not far to the north, in the rue de Villevert (Lequoy Michel, *op. cit.*, volume 2).

¹⁸⁸ Access to the garden requires crossing the house from east to west because the doors on the street are blocked.

Fig. 121:
Figs. 122 and 123:

Fig. 124:

Fig. 125:

This layout is clearly illustrated in the Delorme plan of 1767 (fig. 124). It should be noted, however, that the wall separating the prison garden or courtyard from that of the Saint-Maurice priory is not shown in this plan. Remarkably tall at 5.70 m, the wall assures privacy, to this day, by blocking the view, from the prison, both of the royal apartments and of the priory. However, it is not possible, at this time, to be certain that this was always so.

We have not been able to determine when the wall was built. It may well have been part of the gallery wall that allowed the King, Saint Louis, to reach the Saint-Maurice chapel from his apartments.

If it existed in the Middle Ages, this wall would have delimited an inner courtyard in a layout identified by Nicolas Bilot at the castle of Creil¹⁸⁹. This author's hypothesis is that the health (insanity) of King Charles VI, necessitated the construction of enclosed courtyards. This would seem plausible at Senlis since, as we shall see, this king occupied a room in this part of the castle.

In 1813, the wall was in very poor condition¹⁹⁰. Indeed, it was partly ruined at its northern end and "so low" that prisoners had escaped their yard several times into the garden of the Saint-Maurice priory, which belonged, at that time, to Pierre Joseph de Malézieu and subsequently to Victor Turquet. A first estimate dated July 27, 1813, and a second, dated September 29, 1816, both presented by the Senlis mason, Jean-Pierre Blanchet, proposed that the wall be demolished, and its foundations reused if possible. It would then be rebuilt "with rubble and lime and sand mortar, with chain-walls, three in all..."¹⁹¹. The Deputy Prefect (of the Oise) requested of the Prefect, that the work be carried out expeditiously (October 11, 1816). The prefect agreed and advised the Minister of the Interior, stressing that "the circumstances do not allow the slowness of a regular adjudication (process)"¹⁹². Indeed, the prisoners were forbidden to leave their cells, two large dogs were let loose in the courtyard and it was even stressed that "convicts sentenced to life imprisonment in irons, although detained in the aforementioned dungeons, had already attempted to escape"¹⁹³. The chains are still visible today and make it possible to date the wall accurately (fig. 125).

By contrast, the wall that closed off the northern part of the garden was considered at that time (1813) to be sound over most of its elevation and only required the repair of its upper parts. This wall had in fact been recently built following the auction, as national property, and division of the various parts of the château in 1793. As the prisons remained the property of the state, the purchaser of the castle's dwelling, the courtyard and part of the garden to the east of the Saint-Maurice priory was required to build this wall. The sale of September 28, 1793, was made "[with] the charge by the successful bidder to build a separation wall between the aforementioned land behind citizen Préville and that which remains, and which leads to the prison"¹⁹⁴.

On July 25, 1813, following consultations with the Mayor, the Deputy Prefect decided to build an additional room to serve as a kitchen and sluice area for the guard, since he and his household lived in a single room known as "la Geôle" (the Gaol)¹⁹⁵. This room appears on the 1820 plan (fig. 126) in the southern courtyard, adjoining the wall that separates it from the priory of Saint-Maurice and the wall that delimits the courtyard for women. It was designated as a bakehouse in 1838, with an attic above it¹⁹⁶.

¹⁸⁹ Bilot, Nicolas: *Creil, Oise, le château*. Archaeological report on building. SDAO August 2021.

¹⁹⁰ The following quotations are taken from the work specifications, AD Oise N81/3.

¹⁹¹ The chains (or chainages) are stone pillars without projections, intended to consolidate the wall. The stones are arranged in quoins (English technical term) where large and small stones are alternated.

¹⁹² AD Oise, N81/3. Letter from the Deputy Prefect accompanying the estimates and positive response from the Prefect with advice to the minister in the letter.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ AD Oise, adjudication of national property, 1Q3/658.

¹⁹⁵ AD Oise, 5N81/3.

¹⁹⁶ AD Oise, 5N81/1.

Fig. 126:

Fig. 126:

Fig. 126 A:

Fig. 126 B:

Fig. 127:

The Western Façade

The southern half of the western façade of this building complex, facing the priory, has three chamfered pointed arches above the ground-floor windows and a stone string course separating the ground floor from the upper floor (fig. 127). This string course does not continue onto the stair turret.

According to Pierre Garrigou Grandchamp, who was consulted on this subject¹⁹⁷, the “vestiges of pointed arch windows on the ground floor and the string courses of sill and transom on the first floor would suggest a [construction] date prior to the 15th century (end of the 13th century and more probably the 14th century)”. The presence of these three “residential” bays on the ground floor may be surprising, given that public life for the nobility generally takes place upstairs. In the castle at Senlis the area is small but the existence of a private and closed medieval garden at this place would, nevertheless, be consistent with this being a small, private, royal residence.

On the first floor, above three modern crosspieces, the frame of a small transom window can be identified, it is similar to those found on the 13th century façade of the monks’ dormitory in the Saint-Maurice priory opposite (Fig. 128). There is also a small cornice in cyma form at mid-floor level (fig. 129). We can therefore hypothesize that the construction of the façade was roughly contemporary with the building of the priory in 1264 and that the construction of the stair tower happened later.

From now on, we will refer to this part of the construction as building A or “the Gaol”, from its name at the beginning of the 19th century.

The stair turret forms the south-western corner of the building, and delimits the medieval quadrilateral of the castle, stair turret, fortified door on the Rue du Châtel, keep or master tower, and the tower known as the tower of Saint-Louis.

The northern half of the (western) facade appears to have been extensively remodelled. It comprises the gable wall of a part of the building that extends towards the east. We will call this section building B or the dungeon building.

Examination of the exterior wall suggests that the gable was rebuilt, using random rubble masonry. Three rectangular windows open on the ground floor, in line with three on the first floor. The metal lintels of these windows can be seen under modern cement rendering. The upper right window has a recessed, filled-in, lintel, which suggests an earlier, higher, opening. The upper part of the gable wall has no openings of any sort. A cornice demarcates the first floor from the smooth upper part of the gable. The northern corner of this gable, constructed of dressed and cut stones, and decorated with a cornice pilaster, is also visible in the courtyard of the castle, and can be dated to the 17th century. The cornice is bevelled and in continuity with the corner pilaster suggesting that they were constructed at the same time.

Fig. 128:

Fig. 129:

¹⁹⁷ e-mail exchange in 2018.

Fig. 130:

The rendering on the gable wall has deteriorated sufficiently to reveal traces of a large, round, central arch, which extends above ground floor level to reach the upper third of the central window on the first floor (fig. 130). On either side of the arch, its trace cuts through what remains of a drip cornice situated under the windowsills on the first floor and in continuity with the cornice of building A.

Happily, we have found unpublished plans of the prisons, dated 22 Messidor of the year IX (11 July 1801), which show the building as it was when the plans were drawn up and suggested alterations. These documents must be interpreted with caution, however, since their purpose is to show projected layouts (fig. 131).

It appears, however, that the ground floor of this part of the building A (in the upper part of the plan - fig. 131) contained, at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, six dungeons and therefore had no windows. Nevertheless, the plan drawn up on July 5, 1820, and preserved in the Departmental archives of Oise¹⁹⁸ shows two doors on the ground floor, each serving a dungeon (fig. 126 p. 173). This arrangement appears on an undated estimate, probably from 1817, “of [for] two doors to be opened in the dungeon overlooking the garden”¹⁹⁹.

More surprisingly, the 1801 plan shows, in the middle of the gable wall, a square tower housing a spiral staircase to the first floor. At this level (fig. 132), there was a window in the gable wall on either side of the tower. One of them, the northernmost, lit the room which, as we will see later, belonged to citizen Lefèvre. This room was on the “mezzanine floor”, and it is possible that this window was a little lower than its counterpart on the other side. It is the only window which, today, has a blind recessed lintel. We hypothesize that it was constructed earlier, perhaps at the same time as the ones that now face the castle courtyard on the north wall of this building.

At this stage of our analysis, we cannot explain the purpose of the large arch on this gable. It would help us solve this enigma if we had a better understanding of how the building was used. Were the dungeons medieval or are they the result of later rebuilding in the castle during the 16th and 17th centuries following the establishment there of the law courts? Was there, for example, a plan to clear the first floor of this building for the use of the Royal Arsenal, which we know was scattered inconveniently in various parts of the castle and the neighbouring Hôtel du Pot d'Étain²⁰⁰?

The structure of this arch, however, is reminiscent of that of the door to the exterior staircase leading to the upper floor, which was once located on the eastern façade of the same building and which we will describe later. Could it be that an access to the upper floor was envisaged through this façade?

¹⁹⁸ AD Oise, 5N81/3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ Afforty, volume XII, 7624.

Fig. 131:

Fig. 132:

A section of the dungeon building was demolished in the mid-19th century, to make way for a vast workshop with a high ceiling that breached the first floor. The arch could be associated with those works. However, this is doubtful as its appearance does not correspond very well with this period and this use.

The significance of the arch and the fate of the square staircase tower illustrated in the plan of the year IX (fig. 131) must remain a mystery. On the plan the staircase tower is shown in grey, as opposed to solid black, which might, at first sight, suggest that it was a projected as opposed to an existing building. However, the hexagonal stair turret to the south is also shown in grey but was already built at that time, and still stands today. We believe that the centrally placed square tower never progressed beyond the planning stage. It does not appear on any other plans before or after 1801. It is not on the Benoist plan which we were able to date from 1793, nor does it appear on the Gueret plan dated 5 July 1820²⁰¹.

In the upper part of the gable, which is now completely smooth, there were, during the Belle Époque (end of the 19th century until WW1) two small openings that can be seen on postcards of the time (fig. 133).

We will come back to the analysis of this gable in the visit of the interior.

Fig. 133:

²⁰¹ Plan drawn up by Gueret, Controller, 1st class of the Ponts et Chaussées (bridges and roads), 5 July 1820, AD Oise, 5M81/3.

Fig. 134:
Fig. 135:
Fig. 136:

The Stair Tower

The hexagonal stair tower is built around a spiral composed of large monolithic steps. They are elegantly cut and polished with fine joints. The spiral staircase turns clockwise to ascend to the upper floor.

On the ground floor a narrow doorway was created to give access to the street. The late construction of this door meant that part of a step had to be cut out. At this level, a slightly broken arch can be seen on the side wall of “the Gaol”, close to the ground. It corresponds to the original opening of the staircase leading to the cellar below (fig. 134).

In the southern corner inside the staircase, a chimney flue can be seen, but only from the first-floor upwards, and levelled off at the roof (fig. 135). Jean-Vergnet Ruiz was probably a little hasty in casting doubt on Matherat’s assertion of the existence of a cylindrical chimney at the corner of the tower. Although its placement is unusual, it is, nevertheless, clearly visible²⁰². We can see that it existed on the ground floor, as its imprint remains on the wall, where it merges with the trace of a narrow doorway, the width of a step, cut into the wall at mid-floor level and now closed (fig. 136). The only plan on which this door can be seen is that of 22 Messidor IX (11 July 1801) (fig. 132). The flue must have come from a hearth on the side wall of “the Gaol” building. There is no visible trace of this chimney inside the building in its present state. The creation of the door probably led to its removal. The tower serves the first floor and the attic. It is topped by a hipped roof structure with a single beam (fig. 137).

Fig. 137:

²⁰² Vergnet-Ruiz, Jean: *La Sauvegarde*, n°12, 4th quarter 1968, p. 12-17.

Fig. 139:
Fig. 140:

The Cellar

We begin the decent to the cellar by taking an anti-clockwise spiral staircase, illuminated by a small skylight, in the shape of a lampshade, and opening onto the garden (fig. 138). The stairs then straighten out, and at the level of “the Gaol” wall, they suddenly double in width to 1.56 m. This is because the original staircase to the cellar had to be reduced in width, at the top, to accommodate reinforcements to the base of the spiral staircase of the stair turret, built later than the main building. As the stairs widen, we can see, on the left, a blocked corridor, which led northwards under “the Gaol” (fig. 139)²⁰³. The staircase then descends straight down for 11 m (fig. 140). It is vaulted with a pointed arch made of small carved keystones, continues eastwards, and gives access to a small, almost square quarry cellar measuring 3.28 m by 4.07 m. The vault of the staircase ends at the bottom with a fine semi-circular double arch (fig. 141). There is a small niche in dressed stone to the left of the companionway (fig. 142). The stones bear the marks of a Breton cutting hammer (fig. 143)²⁰⁴. The quarry cellar measures 13 m². The walls are ashlar. Flint mortar is used, which is not the case for the access staircase²⁰⁵. The ceiling is cut into the limestone. On the back wall (to the east) near the south corner, an access, blocked with rubble and subsequently reopened, leads, with difficulty, into two cellars approximately 5 m long, cut into the limestone rock, of good height and arranged parallel to each other. The wall separating these two cellars is very carefully built of dressed stone. There is probably a filled-in passageway, a stairway or well, to the north in the second cellar. Above the current access, an air shaft is blocked. These quarry cellars are located under the north courtyard of the building.

According to the account of Marc Durand, taken in November 2017: “*This room, which is orientated roughly east/west, has a cellar staircase in its western section. In my day, the cellar was cluttered with 19th century debris and rubbish to about a third of its height, and you could get to the far end of it only by bending over; you could see perfectly how wide it was (which I didn’t measure), and that it extended well to the south under an area, which was, at that time, a lawn. In terms of dating, if memory serves me correctly, the oldest parts of the building date back to the 14th/15th centuries*”.

Fig. 138:

²⁰³ This passageway measures 1.05 m wide and 1.49 m high and is blocked 1.32 m from its entrance.

²⁰⁴ This stone-cutting tool first appeared in our region at the end of the 12th century and came into widespread use in Senlis around 1230. See Delphine Lemire: “Les outils de taille de la pierre aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles en Picardie : état de la question et perspective”, in *L’architecture en objets : les dépôts lapidaires de Picardie*, Histoire médiévale et archéologie, no. 21, 2008 ;

see also Doperé, Frans: *Dater les édifices du Moyen Age par la pierre taillée*, Bruxelles, éditions Safran, 2018.

²⁰⁵ The same red tile mortar was found on a vault identified in January 1995 in the north-east corner of the building belonging to the prior of Saint-Maurice.

Fig. 142:

Fig. 142:
Fig. 141:
Fig. 143:

Fig. 144:
Fig. 145:

“The Gaol” Building

This building, the southern wing of the royal chateau, faces onto the street. Abbé Müller²⁰⁶ quotes the accounts for the residence of Charles VI (King of France from 1380 to 1422). These record the King giving: “4 francs and 64 sols paris to Agnès la Durande, a poor woman living in Senliz, near the King's ostel, who has always repaired and maintained an alleyway **behind a room where the King often retires**”.

It therefore appears that, at this time, the first floor of the prison complex formed part of the royal apartments.

If we go back to the general plan of the château (page 12), we can see that this building was constructed to the south, probably as an extension to the original quadrilateral, perhaps at the expense of a protective glacis (earth bank). As space within the courtyard was limited, it must be assumed that the extension was built beyond the original enclosure. The north wing along the (Roman) wall was too beautiful and too symbolic to be radically altered again. Not only did these new apartments modernise the old Romanesque castle, but by linking up with the west wing of the castle - the building that no longer exists - they also suggest a new role for this wing. The west wing probably existed at the time of the original castle. Its last known state, at the beginning of the 20th century, indicates that it was used for residential purposes. Was it rebuilt? Its position at the back of the courtyard, its view of the priory and its gardens, and its link between the historic north wing and Charles VI's new apartments to the south all suggest that it played an essential role in the Gothic château.

The plan of the first floor of the Senlis prisons dated 22 Messidor IX (fig. 132 p. 181) shows a gabled chimney on the opposite side of the turret. A sectional view of the July 1820 plan shows this gabled chimney opening onto the north side of the roof, as it still does today, with a hearth on the ground floor and another on the first floor, which appears to be very large.

In the estimate for the work in July 1813, it was planned to replace the wooden mantel of the chimney on the ground floor (the gaol room) with an iron mantel.

The ground floor and first floor were converted into apartments in the second half of the 20th century. The original doors have been condemned: at present, nothing can be seen without soundings. On the ground floor, on the courtyard side to the east, there is still a paving stone in the entrance that may date back to the 19th century. Under a false ceiling, three large transverse beams can be seen resting on stone roll corbels (fig. 144). On the first floor, a single beam corbel is visible on the east gutter wall, under a broken false ceiling, which should ideally be removed (fig. 145). It has a sloping profile, and in form, it is not unlike that of the murder holes designed by Jean Aubelet, general mason to the Duke of Louis d'Orléans and from 1412 “maître des œuvres du roi au bailliage de Senlis” (master of the king's works in the bailliage of Senlis)²⁰⁷.

In the first half of the 19th century, the ground floor, which was part of “the Gaol”, contained the entrance to the prison and the guard's room. At that time, the only access door opened onto the street in the corner near the stair tower.

²⁰⁶ Abbé Müller Eugène: *Monographie des rues, places et monuments de Senlis, 1880*, (Hôtel des Trois Pots: p. 105-107, prisons: p. 504).

²⁰⁷ Abbé Müller Eugène: *Essai d'une liste d'artistes, architectes, peintres, tombiers, verriers, etc. ayant demeuré ou travaillé dans l'ancien diocèse de Senlis*, Paris, Plon, 1893, p. 6.

And Mesqui, Jean, Ribéra-Pervillé, Claude: "Les châteaux de Louis d'Orléans et leurs architectes (1391-1407)" in *Bulletin Monumental*, volume 138, n°3, 1980, p. 293-345. www.persee.fr/doc/bulmo_0007-473x_1980_num_138_3_5913 (consulted on 01/06/2022).

These are the châteaux of Montépilloy, Pierrefonds, La Ferté-Milon, Creil and Coucy.

Fig. 147:

The Bailiwick Building

The Dungeons

Today, access to the dungeons is via modern doors in a lean-to on the south facade, at the corner of the main building. Traces of a stone arch can be seen in the middle of the wall below the first floor (fig. 146).

The plans dated 1801 and 1820 show that a spiral staircase stood at the angle made by the two wings of the building. It served the first floor and must therefore must have reached, at least, to the height of the eaves. It protruded slightly into the courtyard. You can see that the wall from the top of the lean-to section up to the eaves has been altered and filled in with industrial bricks. There is no cornice at the top of the wall at this point. There are no clues as to how this staircase was covered. It is still possible that it also served the cellars described above, and a soil test in this area might be helpful in confirming this. In the 19th century, the right-hand side of the lean-to was used as a latrine (this was still the case in the following century). In 1801, the right-hand side of the gutter wall was completely blind and the large rectangular bay window with small panes was missing. In fact, this part adjoined the Hôtel du Petit Pot d'Étain.

The spiral staircase has been replaced by a passageway under a wooden lintel.

The interior has been extensively altered, most likely in the second half of the 19th century. A large room, 11.57 m long and 7.76 m wide (90 m²), occupies the entire width of the building. Its ceiling is made up of small modern joists lined with metal beams; the walls and floors are modern cement. The room serves as a repository for lapidary sculptures from the cathedral (gargoyles, statues) and as a book depository.

Georges Matherat and Thérèse-Paule Martin state that there were once six dungeons. Their source appears to be Moinet's 1865 plan, used by Combaz in 1893 (fig. 147)²⁰⁸. However, these plans drawn up *post hoc* are consistent with the early 19th century plans that we have found. They confirm the presence of six dungeons of varying dimensions and a single corridor. Access to these dungeons was via the staircase turret, which has since disappeared. The sixth dungeon, longer and narrower than the others, is located along the west gable and runs perpendicular to the corridor. It is possible that this last dungeon was originally just an access corridor from the wing of the dwelling to the north. Indeed, outside in the courtyard of the château, the north gutter wall of this building shows the trace of a narrow round-headed doorway on the ground floor, near the rebuilt corner.

Fig. 146:

²⁰⁸ Lemaire, Robert: *op. cit.*, 1976, p. 66.

Fig. 148:

The 1801 plan also seems to show a window opening onto “the Gaol” to the south. The 1820 plan separates this dungeon from the others by a large, slightly sloping wall, which might be evidence of an extension to the building. In 1817, this large dungeon - or corridor - was divided into two, each with an opening onto the courtyard reserved for women.

Almost all these features have now disappeared. According to Georges Matherat and Thérèse-Paule Martin, the stones from the dungeons were reused in the wall bordering the impasse Baumé, where prisoners' graffiti and sculpted stones can be seen.

To the right of the ground floor room, there is a passageway, described by Jean Vergnet-Ruiz²⁰⁹ in 1968 (and before him by Matherat), which gives access to a vaulted corridor 5.20 m in length and 1.32 m wide (fig. 148). The dark grey rendering of this vaulted ceiling is reminiscent of the 19th century.

At the end of the corridor, there is an old, previously blocked-up, exit, surmounted by a basket arch. Matherat believed (perhaps because of the presence of the exit door) that the cellar, which we will study later, served as an interrogation room. The 1801 plan shows that the exit was closed at the time. We shall see that there is no evidence to support the hypothesis that this was an interrogation room. If it opened onto the outside, the exit led, as we shall see, behind the monumental staircase leading to the first floor, and along the surrounding wall of the royal palace. It is easy to imagine a prisoner on trial descending the monumental staircase, disappearing behind it, and being thrown into the gaol. However, by the end of the Ancien Régime, this route had probably already been condemned, as the boundary wall of the courtyard had been pushed inwards. On the right as we enter the cell corridor, we see a high skylight that has been blocked off. Measuring 0.75 m wide, it pierced the wall, which is 1.43 m thick at this point. Although inaccurately positioned on the 1801 drawing, it must have opened over the latrines.

In this corridor, two vaulted stone dungeons, with no other openings, open into the 0.63 m thick wall to the north. The first cell is 2.73 m wide and 4.31 m deep (almost 12 m²). The second is narrower: 1.98 m wide, or 8.5 m² (fig. 149). The door of this dungeon is off-centre on the left-hand wall. Both have a vaulted height of 2.80 m.

The heavy, low dungeon doors are still in place. The low basket-handle lintels have been cut away and the doors enlarged with planks. Originally, it was only possible to enter the cells by bending over. There may have been an opening above the lintel. The peepholes that were still there in 1968²¹⁰ have now disappeared (fig. 150). The blackened walls of the dungeons bear numerous graffiti marks. A drawing of a hanged man can be seen on one wall of the back dungeon (fig. 151). The inscriptions have yet to be systematically recorded.

Fig. 150:

²⁰⁹ Vergnet-Ruiz, Jean: *La Sauvegarde*, n°12, 4th quarter 1968.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Fig. 149:

Fig. 151:

Fig. 152:

Externally, the three walls of this part of the building on the ground floor are without windows.

When we measure the building (including the corridor and the dungeons) from inside and compare these measurements with those taken from outside, we find that the walls are an impressive 1.72 m thick. This might suggest that they were adapted from ancient fortifications to the south of the castle. The lower part of the north wall, visible in the garden of the château, is the only one to feature a fine stone bond (fig. 152).

We know from a number of historical accounts that several prominent individuals spent time in the castle prison: they include Pépin II, Charles the Bald's nephew in 864; Hincmar, bishop of Laon in 871; Carloman, son of Charles the Bald in 870; Bernard de Saisset, bishop of Pamiers, in 1301; the Perron brothers and Jean de Chaversy, who were released on 26 June 1344²¹¹. It would be useful to compare the archaeological data on the buildings with this chronology. The site boundaries (fr. 'jouxtes')²¹² attest to the existence of prisons on this site in 1564 (which does not prove that they were always on this site). These prisons were opened in the presence of the King, on the occasion of Louis XIV's entry into the town of Senlis in 1649²¹³.

We know that the prison buildings date back to the medieval period, but we can postulate that there was another dungeon under and in front of the king's bedroom, known as the chambre de Saint Louis, in the north wing of the castle. Accounts say that King Pepin was locked up here, under the king's chamber. The southern part of the castle, however, has been largely neglected since the French Revolution. Despite the long gap in time, we have seen that King Charles VI had some of his apartments there.

It should be noted, however, that the Château de Senlis, in its role as a court of law, had a modest prison capacity, but one suited to the size of the town; the Châtelet in Paris had 14 cells, while Rouen had 20. Although we have found no trace of a pit (oubliettes or underground chamber accessed only by a trap door), latrines, which were a constant feature of medieval prisons²¹⁴, are still included on plans from the early 19th century.

²¹¹ Acts of the Parliament of Paris. Second series from 1328 to 1350: Judgments (Letters - Decisions - Judgments). Volume II (1343-1350). A.N. classification: X/1a/10, fol. 118. Chaversy was a parish and a fief situated to the east of Senlis at the foot of Mont Cornon.

²¹² 'Jouxtes': property boundaries which, in notarial deeds, specify neighbouring properties.

²¹³ Afforty, volume XIII, 4897.

²¹⁴ Telliez, Romain: "Geôles, fosses, cachots: Lieux carcéraux et conditions matérielles de l'emprisonnement en France à la fin du Moyen Âge", in *Enfermements. Volume I : Le cloître et la prison (VIe-XVIIIe siècle)*, Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2011. <https://books.openedition.org/psorbonne/72994> (accessed 12/06/2022).

On the eve of the Revolution, the Cahiers de Doléances (official list of grievances) called for improvements to the prisons²¹⁵. They were taken over by the State and refurbished but remained too cramped.

In year IX (1801), the department of Oise had only one women's prison, in Beauvais. The Senlis remand centre had held 140 individuals during the year²¹⁶. It therefore made sense for a for women-only facility to be established at Senlis, justifying a redevelopment project and the construction of a new staircase.

By 1838, it was clear that the existing facilities were too old and cramped to be fit for service, so the prison was moved to the Senlis Charité buildings on Rue de la République. On 16 February of that year, the State relinquished ownership of the old prison, "a house that had long been used as the town's remand centre", to the Département (the District Authority)²¹⁷.

The deed of sale transferring the Charité buildings from the Hospices de Senlis to the Département de l'Oise and the town of Senlis was drawn up on 30 November 1838²¹⁸. In 1840, the Charité ceased its hospital activities. The work of adapting the buildings for prison use was completed in 1843. From then on, the "Vieux château" prisons were abandoned.

The old prison buildings are a rich source of evidence from which we can throw some light on the city's judicial life under the Ancien Régime and in the early 19th century. It should be remembered that the very rich legal archives of Senlis were destroyed by fire in 1914 and have now almost completely disappeared. We should cherish and learn as much as we can from the exceptional heritage that remains.

²¹⁵ Simon, Hélène: *Les cahiers de doléances des pays de l'Oise en 1789*, Archives départementales de l'Oise, 1999.

²¹⁶ Cambry, Jacques: *Description du département de l'Oise*, Didot, Paris, An XI-1803.

²¹⁷ AD Oise 5N81/1.

²¹⁸ Dr Bonnafous-Sérieux, Hélène: *La Charité de Senlis*, Presses universitaires de France, 1936.

Figs. 153 and 153 bis:
Figs. 154 and 154 bis:

The Prisoners' Courtyard

Until the early 19th century, the corner of the lean-to building and the wall bordering the street formed a narrow “prisoners’ courtyard”, closed off to the east by a wall separating it from an alleyway beside the adjacent Hôtel des Trois Pots. We think that the reused stones, with heavy graffiti (figs. 153 to 153 quarter), that we now find in the boundary wall along the impasse Baumé are most likely to have come from the old east wall (adjacent to the Trois Pots). Indeed, we can see, high up in the corner of the building that parts of the east wall have been torn away. Other deeply engraved graffiti can be seen to the west, under the rendering of “the Gaol” building, near the entrance door (figs. 154 and 154 bis).

According to the plans we have, this courtyard had no exit onto the street. The doorway that can be seen today in the boundary wall at the corner of the house was built in the second half of the 19th century.

Figs. 153 ter and 153 quater:

Fig. 155:
Fig. 156:

The Floor of the Bailiwick?

We will now describe the section of the first floor that is situated just above the (now only partially intact) dungeons. A few lightweight modern partitions divide the space, but no trace remains of any dividing wall dating from previous centuries. A large room now occupies two-thirds of the surface area (fig. 155). If we disregard the modern partitions, we have an even larger rectangular room measuring 18.35 m long by 8.74 m wide (160 m²) with a 3.42 m high ceiling. It is lit by three windows on the north-east side which overlook the château courtyard. Another window pierces the east gable, and there are three grill windows in the west gable facing the Saint-Maurice priory. The ceiling is supported by five very large crossbeams (40 cm wide), but the floor is modern. The west side of the north wall is currently without windows, but there are traces of old openings that have been blocked up. This is not surprising as the building (or logis) that joined this structure to the so-called Saint-Louis apartments to the north, was demolished around 1835. At the end of the 18th century, this west wing housed the bailiff's criminal court on the first floor. You can still see traces of the corner stones remaining from the wall of the (now demolished) west wing of the château. The plastered wall in this part of the room still bears numerous carved graffiti, several of which are dated 1845 (fig. 156). Further east, three tall windows open out, splayed at the bottom in the form of a lampshade.

The south gable has three grilled windows. As we have said, external examination reveals that the wall has been extensively remodelled. Examination of the room's ceiling reveals a main beam (around 40 cm wide) that is unusually close to the gable wall. The gap between the wall and this first beam (1.55 m) is less than that between the remaining beams in the room (2.92 m). It is worth noting the presence of two spandrels (header beams), one on the right and one on the left, very close to the wall and off-centre in relation to the crossbeams (fig. 157). This would suggest that the gable was completely rebuilt, slightly in from its original elevation. It was not aligned with the neighbouring wings.

The positioning of these headers would suggest that the original windows differed from those seen in the "great hall", whose lintels are lower than the ceiling. They perhaps suggest that the original windows were taller, or that these were, in fact, fireplaces. The total absence of chimneys in this part of the building is puzzling, but as we have seen, there are numerous indications that the structure was rebuilt in the 17th century (corner ties, opening panels etc.).

According to Afforty²¹⁹, in around 1312, the bailiff Robert de Hueval²²⁰ handed down his ruling "in his room, above the well, near the red bonnets, sitting there as a tribunal". The red bonnets owe their name to their uniform: it was that of the monks of Saint-Maurice, whose dormitory adjoined our hall to the west. The well in the courtyard still exists, as we saw in the first part of this book, at the foot of the monumental staircase (now disappeared) leading to this floor. The only other well in the castle is in the keep, at some distance from Saint-Maurice.

Fig. 157:

²¹⁹ Afforty, volume IX, 4857.

²²⁰ Afforty, volume XVII, 362-369, Robert de Hueval or Huval (1311-1315): "*Robertus de Hueval, baillivus Silvanecti*".

So, did this courtroom originally cover the whole of the first floor or just part of it? Was it a “great hall” or royal aula? Do its dimensions provide any clues?

Traveling back in time, we can visualise a primitive gable wall supported by external buttresses, two fireplaces placed either end of the hall and a judge’s chair installed at the centre of a raised platform at one end. The layout would be comparable to that of the Palais de Justice (law court) at Poitiers. The raised platform would face the visitors’ entrance door and would be close to the entrances respectively to the apartments in the (now demolished) west wing of the royal dwelling to the north, and those on the first floor of “the Gaol” building to the south. It should be noted that not far from Senlis, the Château de Creil had, as Nicolas Bilot’s recent study proves, a large upstairs room with two fireplaces and a gabled entrance door²²¹.

However, we can only hypothesise. An archaeological survey at the base of the gable wall would perhaps throw more light on the matter.

Today, modern lightweight partitions cut through the room and conceal a ladder stair leading to the attics. Another wooden staircase opens in the façade and descends in two flights to the ground floor. It has replaced the turreted spiral staircase shown on the early 19th century plans.

Prior to the French Revolution, the main access to this floor was via a monumental outdoor staircase leading from the well in the château courtyard and opening into the north-east corner.

We have no reliable information about the layout of the first floor under the Ancien Régime. The abandonment of the château from 1551 onwards to the Presidial (tribunal)³ and later to various other administrative functions altered the arrangement of the rooms.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, a number of alterations and refurbishments were carried out, including changes to the outside staircase leading to the château courtyard and the erection of a new gable facing the garden.

The first floor was given over to the Presidial (tribunal)³. A Presidial chapel or “prison” chapel was built here in the 17th century, probably because the Saint-Denis chapel had fallen into very poor repair.

More is known about the developments to the building at the beginning of the 19th century, thanks to plans dating from An IX and 1820, and records of the deliberations of the Town Council.

²²¹ Bilot, Nicolas: *Creil, Oise, Le château, rapport d’archéologie du bâti*, SDAO, August 2021.

Figs. 159 and 159 bis:
Fig. 160:

The Great Bailiwick Staircase

19th century plans show an external staircase leading to this “great hall” from the castle courtyard via the east gable, which is perfectly in keeping with its function as a courtroom. The small modern building constructed later in the 19th century and raised above ground level, was probably built on the rubble of this stairway (fig. 158)²²². Examination of the outer wall of the gable of the “great hall”, on the edge of the flashing of this small building, reveals a keystone and the dressed stones of the doorway (fig. 159).

Hidden under the roof of the small 19th century building we can see traces that confirm the presence of an upstairs entrance. The door frame is clearly visible (fig. 160) and can be dated to the 17th century.

The great stone staircase was demolished after 1795²²³, as required by the Sale of National Property, and a bakehouse and kitchen were installed in its place, or rather on its rubble. The five steps that provide access to this building today attest to it being raised above ground level. They were used as outbuildings by the Lefèvre couple, who took up residence in the west wing of the château.

The origin of this staircase may well be medieval. In fact, the ruling²²⁴ handed down in 1312 by Bailiff Robert de Hueval states that it stood “in his room, above the well”. This staircase started just behind the well, which still exists today. If access to the courtroom had been by another route, it is unlikely that the scribe would have mentioned the well in this location.

Fig. 158:

²²² Sale by auction on 27 April 1835, mortgage transcription, AD Oise, 4Qp4/1148, no. 48.

²²³ AD Oise, 1Q3/658.

²²⁴ Afforty, volume IX, 4857.

Fig. 161:
Fig. 162:
Fig. 163:

The Attic

Above the “great hall”, on the second floor of the dungeon building, there is a vast attic with a fine roof structure. Within the attic we can see that the western section of the north wall of the building is slightly higher than the rest, as it is here that the, now demolished, west wing of the castle (fig. 161), adjoined the prison building. This wall is probably all that remains of the inner gable of the (west) wing.

Examination of the roof structure confirms that it has been altered and that a north-south roof structure, which would have covered the lost west wing, has disappeared. Today, it is supported by five trusses²²⁵ (fig. 162).

Four trusses bear assembly marks. The crossbeams²²⁶, struts and assembly marks (numbered I, II, III, IIII, from west to east)²²⁷ are engraved with a sharp point, as was customary in the 13th century (fig. 163). Only the first truss, to the west, lacks assembly marks. It was probably modified when the central (west) wing of the palace was demolished shortly after 1835. It is the only one without an assembly mark.

The current gable wall, which is difficult to examine in its current state, reveals traces of old openings, now blocked off by industrially produced bricks.

Let us now examine the outer wall of the building where the west wing of the castle was once attached (fig. 152).

Several documents testify to the presence, at the junction of the west wing and the prison wing, of a staircase which provided access to the first floor of the west wing and the Galerie de Saint-Louis (King Louis’ corridor). The Delorme plan shows a path leading from the fortified castle gate to this corner. This is also shown in Moinet’s 1843 archaeological plan. Amédée Margry²²⁸, in his ‘notes pour servir à l’histoire de Senlis’ (Notes To Contribute to the History of Senlis), refers to an agreement signed on 15 November 1817 between the City of Senlis and the Brunet daughters (heirs of Citizen Lefèvre and his wife Dame Brunet), who were joint owners of the “Vieux Château”. Margry continued: “Now, this building adjoined the one in which the prison had been set up to such an extent that, among the premises (previously) enjoyed by the Lefèvre couple, was a room located above the dungeons and below the women’s prison infirmary”, and he adds: “this room was used as a greenhouse or woodshed by the former master”. Similarly, part of Lefèvre’s attic was occupied by the prison caretaker. The agreement stated that the Brunet daughters would relinquish the room between the floors (in the prison building) to the city (of Senlis). According to Margry, it was the city’s responsibility to block the access to the staircase “leading to the upper rooms”. Unfortunately, the municipal resolution does not provide any details about the staircase. In exchange, the city would give up part (a third or half) of the attic above the central dwelling (the west wing) and the Brunet girls would block off all communications with the prison attic²²⁹.

²²⁵ Truss: the part of a roof structure that supports the weight of the roofing, triangular in shape for a gable roof.

²²⁶ Crossbeams: horizontal parts of the truss.

²²⁷ Punch: vertical part (post).

²²⁸ Margry, Amédée: *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de Senlis (d’après les Archives municipales)*, Senlis sous la Restauration, 1815-1830, quinzième série, Senlis, 1913, p. 388.

²²⁹ Departmental archives of Oise, EDT1 1D7, Senlis, registers of deliberations.

Fig. 164:

Today, the north-facing wall of the prison building shows traces of its former connection with the demolished west wing of the castle. From the corner of the prison building, we see a drip moulding at mid-height, 3.36 m in length. This is consistent with Benoist's plans and those of 1867, which show that the west facade of the west wing of the castle and that of the prison were not aligned. Below, on the ground floor, there is a blocked arched doorway, probably an early access to the dungeons. To the left of the eaves, the trace of a blocked doorway can be seen at mid-height, which must have been the entrance to the room on the mezzanine floor. Close to the threshold of this door, on the left, is the section of a wooden beam that no longer exists inside the building and would have supported the floor of the mezzanine room. Even further to the left, the imprint of the staircase (20 steps, according to Matherat in 1949) leading down to the courtyard of the château is still clearly visible.

On the first floor, the wooden lintel of a large doorway remains at the level of a large beam in what is now the "great hall". The cross-section of this beam is exactly superimposed on that of the floor of the attic room. The question is whether this doorway communicated on the same level with the rooms on the first floor of the west wing, or via a landing with a staircase leading up to the mezzanine. The plans do not suggest the latter hypothesis.

The prison plan of 1801 clearly shows citizen Lefèvre's room (fig. 132). Rather than a mezzanine, it is a room with a lower floor than that of its neighbours. At this time, the main staircase leading from the château courtyard was walled off and it is not shown on the plan. The plan also overlooks one of the three windows in the north facing wall overlooking the castle courtyard. It shows the so-called "court chapel", reduced now to the small south-east quarter of this part of the building. Most of the first floor lit by the three windows was used as a straw store. A staircase, situated by the westernmost window, led to the attic. A second staircase led above citizen Lefèvre's room to the women's infirmary, as we have just seen. This infirmary would not have had very high ceilings unless it protruded into the current attic. An undated estimate from before 1817 describes the work required to install the infirmary in the attic. A large room in the south-west quarter was connected, or might have been connected, to the staircase turret at the front of the building, designed to serve the women's prison. The entire first floor was accessed by another spiral staircase in the corner formed by the two buildings of the dungeons and the gaol on the impasse Baumé. The 1820 plan is slightly different in that it suggests that the staircase tower in the gable was in the planning stage and not completed. A roofing estimate for the partial renewal of the tiles on the prison buildings mentions one old staircase and one new staircase²³⁰. The infirmary in the attic is no longer mentioned. It must have been thought unsuitable. In fact, the 1813 estimate refers to the construction of a chimney in the former chapel, which was to be converted into a women's infirmary.

A letter from the Deputy Prefect to Count de Germiny, Prefect of Oise, dated 17 November 1817, states that "with regard to the establishment of an infirmary for women and two private water closets, the urgency has been sufficiently established according to the deliberations of the commune"²³¹. It is possible that the infirmary was reinstalled in one of the rooms designated by the letters ABCD on the plan (fig. 126). The straw store is separated into three rooms. The chapel was re-established on 25 September 1817 by a decision of the Senlis prison charitable committee, chaired by Mayor Pommeret. It has an enclosure for the altar and the officiant, with its own entrance. A partition divided the remaining space for the congregation in two, separating male and female prisoners, who had two separate entrances. The ornaments were supplied by Dautier, a goldsmith in the town.

Finally, on 22 June 1818, the charitable commission decided to install a bell above the roof of the prison. Its purpose was to sound the alarm should there be a rebellion or attempted escape by prisoners. A "small bell currently in the town hall, and serving no useful purpose, is to be transferred to the new building"²³². An estimate was drawn up for the construction of a small frame bell tower.

²³⁰ AD Oise 5N81/3.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.*

The Privatization of State property

On 16 February 1838, the estates handed ownership of the prisons to the department, thus applying the law of 9 April 1811²³³.

According to Jean Vergnet-Ruiz²³⁴, writing at the beginning of the 19th century, a Masonic lodge was established in the part of the prisons previously reserved for the warden's quarters. This was the Phare Hospitalier (Lighthouse of the East) as noted on the Benoist surveyor's plan, but this reference is a later addition. The entry in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (French National Library) dates the initial foundation of the lodge in 1810²³⁵.

Abbé Müller testifies that a Masonic lodge, "Le Phare Hospitalier", was set up in the building after it ceased to serve as a prison. Jacques Gabriel Victor Allain (1773-1852), a colonel in the imperial and royal armies, became Master Mason of the lodge.

Camille Guyot, a Freemason from Senlis but a member of the Creil Lodge, left an unpublished typescript which states that the Phare Hospitalier was initially created on 30 September 1810 and ceased its activities in 1814. The lodge was reactivated twice, in 1863 and 1982²³⁶. As the premises were not vacated by the prison administration until 1845, the establishment of the Phare Hospitalier at the former prison can be dated to 1863.

By this time, the prisons had been sold, by auction on 24 December 1844, to a private individual, François Parfait Aimable Pelletier²³⁷.

The outbuildings of the Hôtel des Trois Pots, close to the prisons, were also sold and added to the former prisons at a date that is not known.

²³³ AD Oise N81/1.

²³⁴ Vergnet-Ruiz, Jean: *La Sauvegarde*, n°12, 4th quarter 1968, establishes the "Phare Hospitalier" after 1840.

²³⁵ Vow issued by the lodge Le Phare Hospitalier, of the Order of Senlis, on the proposal made at the last Convent by FF. Massol and Colfavru [Signed: Polydore Yon] (1869), Extract from the minutes of the meeting of 21 August 1869.

²³⁶ Guyot, Camille: *La Franc-Maçonnerie à Creil*, typescript, 1982.

²³⁷ AD Oise transcription of mortgages, 4Qp4/1316, volume 504, no. 19.

Fig. 165:

Fig. 166:

Hôtel du Petit Pot d'Étain (Impasse Baumé)

To the east of the “prison buildings”, against the wall of the château courtyard, there now stands a 19th century edifice divided into three parts (fig. 165). The left (west) part was used as a blacksmith’s forge (the bellows remain to this day); the middle section was a barn, higher and more prominent than the buildings on either side, with a small attic above. The central door, flanked by two windows, is topped by a pulley for lifting sacks. A former stable to the right (east) completes the ensemble.

The 19th century ensemble was constructed behind much older buildings lining the street, which have now disappeared. These were known as the Hôtel du Petit Pot or the outbuildings of the Hôtel des Trois Pots. According to research carried out by Georges Matherat and noted on Jean-Pierre Paquet’s reconstructed plan, the surrounding wall of the courtyard of the royal castle must originally have been located beneath these buildings, in line with the south wall of the dungeon building²³⁸. However, the inspection pit that remains in the barn gives no indication of this.

Baron Taylor’s engraving of 1846 (fig. 166) may give an idea of what the building on the right-hand side looked like before it was demolished. The drawing shows a wall facing the street with a dormer window at first floor level, which cannot correspond to the prison building. We believe that Taylor has shortened his perspective, as his drawing was intended to serve as a cover for the text, which did not make it necessary to depict the prisons.

At the start of the 19th century, the prisoners’ courtyard was separated from the Hôtel du Petit Pot by a narrow courtyard in the form of an alley perpendicular to the street.

We have seen that at the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, the royal armoury was spread across several outbuildings in the château. The inventory of 30 August 1614 locates part of it “inside a small barn controlled by the master of the Pot d’Étain, Master Michel, (in which were) six pieces of wood six feet long suitable for making culverin (primitive gun/cannon) moulds...”²³⁹.

In the south-west corner of the forge, where it connects to the wall of the access corridor to the cells, is a blocked-up cellar stairway in a narrow, vaulted passageway, constructed of small stones. The cellar below is unobstructed. It is clearly more recent than the vaulted stairway that provided access to it. Their two vaults do not match. The cellar has a fine barrel-vaulted ceiling, and measures 10.2 m long, 3.3 m wide and 3.40 m high (fig. 167). It was lit by three, now blocked, window wells: two to the west and one to the east (fig. 168). They were 0.5 m wide and 0.80 m high. The vault is made of small stones and the walls of rubble stone. There is only one cornerstone on the west wall at the north corner. The five double arches are spaced two metres apart. The second and third arches bear coats of arms carved into the keystone (figs. 169 and 170). A rectangular carved cartouche measuring 0.65 m x 0.35 m can be seen on the back wall (i.e., near or below the street), under the vault (fig. 171). This cartouche bears a pomegranate or globe in flames, it bears the date 26 March 1637 and two monograms identified by Michel Lequoy²⁴⁰ as the names of the owners, IB (Joël Boulard, master of the Trois Pots d’Étain and controller for the King of Water and Forests) and CLM (Catherine Le Moine) his wife. The arms are therefore probably those of the husband (field of cups - or 7 cups set 2,3,2) and of the couple (part field of cups and part chevron accompanied by 3 martlets). Catherine Le Moine died on 6 May 1645, aged 65. The ceiling of the cellar is very fragile in one place (there is grass above). Below the cartouche there is a ventilation chimney. In the north-west corner, we can make out an old, blocked-up passageway. The cellar must have been situated exactly under the buildings described above (the Hôtel du Petit Pot d’Étain).

Catherine Le Moine’s first husband was Jean de Bonnaire, master of Les Trois Pots. When he died, she married Joël Boulard, “servant to Madame de Morfontaine”²⁴¹, on 6 July 1625 in Mortefontaine with the blessing of the parish priest of Notre-Dame de Senlis. Joël Boulard and his wife Catherine Le Moine were affluent. They owned the entire Hôtel des Trois Pots, the Hôtel du Petit Pot, which they probably had rebuilt, as well as the room above the castle entrance and part of the Hôtel du Sauvage on the other side of the castle gate²⁴².

Of course, we do not know anything about the decoration or the presence or otherwise of coats of arms on the elevations of the vanished building, but the coats of arms in the cellar that we have described are unique to Senlis in their location and are quite intriguing both in their number and in the symbolism on the cartouche.

²³⁸ We have not found any excavation reports or notes on this subject. See plan by Jean-Pierre Paquet (fig. 115 bis, p. 155).

²³⁹ Afforty, volume XII, 7624.

²⁴⁰ Lequoy, Michel: *op. cit.*, vol 2, p. 336.

²⁴¹ Registres Paroissiaux Mortefontaine (Parish Registers, Mortefontaine), AD Oise, EDT 39/GG2 and Registres Paroissiaux de Notre-Dame de Senlis (Parish Registers of Notre Dame de Senlis), AD Oise 1MI/ECA612R12.

²⁴² Lequoy, Michel: *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 345.

Fig. 169:
Fig. 167:

Fig. 168:
Fig. 170:

The Enigmatic Cartouche

Joel Boulard and Catherine le Moine had their coats of arms and their initials built into the cellar of their house. The cartouche shows a lion's mouth, which appears to be swallowing an earthly sphere, or perhaps a universal orb, engulfed in flames, on a background of leather scrolls. This cartouche resembles engravings seen in books of emblems that were very popular between 1550 and 1650. If the sphere evokes both perfection and instability, what was its significance to the Boulard couple? Perhaps it marks the fragility and vanity of social and amorous success; a way of immortalising their pride and humility in stone.

Fig. 171:

The Fate of the Buildings in the Impasse Baumé in the 19th and 20th centuries

Starting on 24 December 1844, the buildings located in the “impasse de l’ancienne prison”²⁴³ (Old Prison Close) passed into private hands.

The first successful bidders for the former prison were François Parfait Aimable Pelletier, a Parisian cloth manufacturer, and his wife, who bought it from the department of Oise, which had owned it “since time immemorial (sic)”²⁴⁴, something of an exaggeration!

They rented out part of the premises and converted the other part into a crinoline factory. On the death of his wife, the widower Pelletier, sold the property, on 1 February 1848, to Étienne Jean François Pinçon. By that time only four of the dungeons remained. However, there was a dispute with the owner of the Petit Pot d’Étain before the Senlis court over the party wall, which was left untouched by court order. The owner of the Hôtel des Trois Pots and its outbuildings, Pierre-Victor Delamare, died on 28 June 1855²⁴⁵.

Étienne Jean François Pinçon, a masonry contractor, and his wife Adeline Augustine Fanchon lived at Impasse des Prisons from 1848 until 1878²⁴⁶, where they also housed up to a dozen people in the apartments in the former prisons, including, from 1872, Louis Adolphe Vasse, a blacksmith, and his family. At that time, four households lived at this address (no. 2). The Pinçon household lived alone at a separate address (no. 4): perhaps the building formerly known as the Petit Pot d’Étain? We do not know when the Petit Pot d’Étain was linked up with the buildings of the former prisons.

Étienne Jean François Pinçon died at home on 25 November 1878.

His son, Félix Joseph Pinçon, bought the property from his mother and his brother and sister on 11 November 1879, by order of the Senlis civil court.

The number of residents in the Impasse des Prisons fell from this date onwards, which suggests that the Petit Pot residential buildings were demolished to make way for another business: that of a wholesale wine merchant.

From 1881 until 1911²⁴⁷, the premises were occupied by Albert Boissay, a wholesale wine merchant, his wife, three children and a maid.

On 26 July 1893, Adolphine Louise Zoé Gachon, known as Dady, inherited the property from her husband Félix Joseph Pinçon, a masonry contractor who had died on 11 April 1885. She died on 8 March 1915. She and her husband had named her great-nieces Blanche Marie and Berthe Mélina Gachon as their heirs, so the buildings in the Impasse Baumé passed into their hands.

In 1921 the property was rented by Maurice Monnier and his wife Suzanne Ducret who made it their home. From 1926 to 1931, he worked as a wine and spirit merchant²⁴⁸.

²⁴³ As stated in the reference to the 1851 census route, AD Oise 6Mp673.

²⁴⁴ AD Oise, 4Qp4/1316, volume 504, no. 19.

²⁴⁵ Registres d’État civil de Senlis (Senlis Civic Registers), “Pierre-Victor Delamare, owner, former wood merchant, aged 90 years less a month, living in Senlis Rue du Châtel n°25, widower...died in his home...”.

²⁴⁶ The census records (AD Oise online) show that the couple lived continuously from 1851 (date of the first census after the date of purchase) to 1876 (date of the last census before the date of sale).

²⁴⁷ Senlis census (AD Oise online) and *Annuaire de l’arrondissement de Senlis* (Annual of the Senlis district), Nouvian, 1895 and *Annuaire de Senlis* published by the *Journal de Senlis*, 1901.

²⁴⁸ Louat, Félix: *op. cit.*, 1931, p. 122.

Fig. 172:

On 12 December 1925, the sisters Blanche Marie Gachon and Berthe Mélina Gachon, living respectively in Vineuil-Saint-Firmin and Paris, sold the property to Maurice Monnier²⁴⁹. The buildings were laid out as they are today. All that remained were two of the old dungeons used as small cellars and “a large wine shop” next door. In the courtyard overlooking the Impasse Baumé, the three 19th century buildings had already been erected: the one furthest west was used as a spirit shop, the one in the middle, with its overhanging storey, was a cask store²⁵⁰ and the one to the east a stable and saddlery. Two large doors opened onto the street from the courtyard, one of which was a double-leaf door close to the residential building²⁵¹.

Maurice Monnier and his wife sold the premises, where they had lived since 1921, on 12th March 1943. He was, by then, chief clerk at the Senlis commercial court. The new owners were the Société Anonyme du Gaz et de l'Électricité, based in Lyon²⁵². In 1955, Électricité de France set up its Île-de-France-Nord distribution centre here.

The buildings were purchased by the City of Senlis on 1 June 2001²⁵³, but there were no plans to reunite them with the rest of the Royal Castle.

²⁴⁹ AD Oise, transcription of mortgages, 4QP4/4503, volume 2961, no. 21.

²⁵⁰ ‘Foudre’: large barrel.

²⁵¹ In other words, the “La Geôle” building.

²⁵² AD Oise, transcription of mortgages, 4Qp4/5128, volume 3587, no. 32.

²⁵³ Deed of sale from La Gérance Générale Foncière to the City of Senlis before Daniel Carlier, associate notary.

Fig. 173:

Conclusion

As we conclude this study, we are struck by the paucity of archives and of medieval or Ancien Régime iconography that has come down to us. We know that a great deal of material was destroyed either by war, revolution, or simple carelessness. However, it is possible that there remain documents and other materials, so far unknown to us, because they have not been identified as such. We hope that this work, which was intended to breathe new life into our ancient castle, will help to draw attention to these possible sources, which could be used to improve our knowledge of these precious historic buildings. Throughout this book, we believe we have demonstrated how valuable, even limited, archaeological excavations can be in well-chosen locations: for example, at the foot of the gable of the prisons, on the site of the west wing or in front of the so-called Saint Louis chamber. It is indispensable that an in-depth archaeological study of the buildings be carried out. The historical importance of the Château de Senlis should make it the centre of an active local and regional research effort, and this would lead, in turn, to fruitful comparisons with neighbouring sites. Modern methods of study and preservation, but also new approaches, need to be implemented.

The Royal Château of Senlis is nothing like the medieval military fortress that the public expects to see. Today, it has no archways, no machicolations, no casemates (rooms for the storage of artillery); its walls, apart from the ancient rampart and the first floor of the main tower, are hardly impressive. As a residence, it has none of the splendour of the palaces built since the Renaissance, combining colonnades, sculptures or balconies depending on the period.

Its great age is the main reason for this. In the early Middle Ages, its ancient walls were more than enough to discourage an assault by an army lacking major siege resources²⁵⁴. The early Capetians made it one of their residential palaces. However, abandoned early as a royal residence at the beginning of the 16th century, it did not benefit from any major works after 1622. Its administrative function meant that it suffered from the chronic lack of funding for judicial administration under the Ancien Régime, and gradually fell into disrepair. The Revolution resulted in it being divided up, and its successive owners demolished many of its most interesting buildings. Today, only half of what still exists is open to the public. Paradoxically, this historical neglect may present an opportunity. It leaves us with a heritage that is older than any of the surrounding royal residences (Versailles, Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain-en-Laye) and it is therefore rare and precious. Despite its condition, the Royal Château of Senlis remains an emblematic structure. Its residence-tower, undoubtedly one of the oldest of its kind, was associated with an exemplary palace complex on the upper floor. A monumental grand staircase led to two successive large halls, communicating with the royal chapel. At the end of the staircase was the king's bedroom, reserved for the most important people, which adjoined an ancient tower as a private study and oratory. This, with the ancient Roman rampart in the background, was witness to many important historical events and diplomatic developments.

Our work has also revealed a second monumental staircase, the age of which has yet to be determined, which opened onto the gable end of the southern apartments, above the dungeons. It provided access either to a large courtroom or to the apartments reserved for the use, we know, of King Charles VI. There was another internal staircase in the south-west corner of the château courtyard, linking these apartments to the residential part of the west wing, which has now disappeared. An upstairs gallery linked these apartments to the king's bedroom, which still exists today. Another return gallery led to the chapel of the Saint-Maurice priory, set in the centre of its courtyard-garden.

It is particularly satisfying to have been able to identify here, as at the neighbouring castle of Creil, a second route to the king's bedroom via the private apartments.

Neither can we overlook, the similarity of the layout at Senlis to that of the Palais de la Cité in Paris: a large tower, a public access stairway, private access, a succession of rooms, a chapel, a gallery, judicial functions rooms, etc.

We may be criticised for our passionate chauvinism when there are so many major sites in France that deserve to be studied and restored. We take the same view of the Senlis palace as many historians before us, who foresaw that the "ruins" we contemplate today have more to tell us and teach us than their simple landscaping.

²⁵⁴ This was the case when the armies of Louis d'Outremer and King Otto I failed at Senlis in 946 and 948.

Fig. 174:

A selection of the Castle's Prisoners

Pepin II of Aquitaine

Pepin II was the son of Pepin I, King of Aquitaine, and himself the son of Emperor Louis the Pious. He came into conflict with his uncle Charles II the Bald, King of West Francia. He was imprisoned in Soissons in 848 but escaped. He was recaptured, condemned as a heretic and apostate in June 864 and imprisoned in Senlis, where he is believed to have died.

Hincmar of Laon, known as the Younger

Hincmar, bishop of Laon in West Francia, was the nephew of Hincmar, archbishop of Reims. He clashed with King Charles the Bald over ecclesiastical benefits and tried to evade a civil lawsuit. Feeling that he had little support, he excommunicated his entire diocese²⁵⁵. He was tried in August 871 by the ecclesiastical court of Douzy and stripped of his episcopal see. Locked up in Senlis, he was blinded in 873 but eventually regained his freedom.

Carloman

Carloman was the son of Charles the Bald. Having embarked on an ecclesiastical career, he was ordained a deacon, and was thus excluded from the dynastic succession by his father. However, he conspired with the kingdom of Lotharingia (in present day north-eastern France). Arrested on 18 June 870 at Attigny, he was imprisoned at Senlis. He was stripped of his diaconate and all ecclesiastical titles. According to his supporters, this made him eligible for the succession once again²⁵⁶. He was retried at a council meeting in Senlis and sentenced to death in 873. His life was spared but was blinded as a penance. He would end his days imprisoned in the monastery of Corbie.

Charles, Duke of Lower Lotharingia

Charles, known as de Lorraine, was the son of King Louis IV of Outremer and Gerberge of Saxony. He was born in Laon in 953 and became Duke of Lower Lotharingia in 977. As the uncle of King Louis V, he was the legitimate hereditary claimant to the Frankish throne on the latter's death. However, he was slow to assert his dynastic rights when Hugues Capet took power. He was excommunicated at the Council of Senlis in 990 for poisoning Adalberon, Bishop of Laon, and pillaging his diocese. Captured in Laon in 991 with the complicity of the bishop, he was locked up in Senlis castle²⁵⁷ and then transferred to a prison in Orléans. He is believed to have died after his release in 1001.

Bernard de Saisset, Bishop of Pamiers

Bernard de Saisset, Bishop of Pamiers, with the support of Pope Boniface VIII, incited the Counts of Foix and Comminges to rebel against King Philip the Fair. He threatened the king, publicly insulted him, and allied himself with Pope Boniface. The king had him arrested and brought to Senlis on 24 October 1301, where Pierre Flotte, vice-chancellor of the kingdom, demanded that he be put under lock and key. As a religious dependent on ecclesiastical power, it is not certain that he was locked up in the castle's prisons, but rather in a house owned by the Church, surrounded by royal men-at-arms. After the death of Pope Boniface, Saisset was released and later pardoned. He returned to his bishopric in 1308²⁵⁸.

²⁵⁵ Fleury abbé: *Histoire ecclésiastique* (ecclesiastical history), volume XI, Paris, 1724.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Combaz: *op. cit.*, p. 276 and Müller, Eugène: *Monographie des rues, places et monuments de Senlis* (Monograph on the Roads, Squares and Monuments of Senlis), Senlis, 1880-1884, p. 504, who seem to be the only ones to mention this confinement in Senlis but do not give their sources.

²⁵⁸ Vidal Mgr: "Bernard Saisset, évêque de Pamiers" (Bernard Saisset, Bishop of Pamiers), in *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 1926, 6-2, p. 177-198.

Fig. 175:

The Templars

In 1307, Templar knights were rounded up all over France, and those of the Bailiwick of Senlis were arrested on 13 October of that year. They were tried, between May and July 1310, at the general Council of the province of Reims, presided over by Robert de Courtenay, archbishop of Reims.

At Senlis, the Templars were imprisoned in three different places. The “reconciled”²⁵⁹ Templars were in the custody of Michel Gosselin and Alart Colin in the “manor of the late Jehan le Guagneoeur”²⁶⁰. Pierre de la Cloche, who had previously served at Crépy at the keep of the royal castle of Saint-Aubin, kept eight “unreconciled” Templars²⁶¹ in the “hôtel”²⁶² in Senlis. Pierre de la Cloche, in common with the other guards, was an officer of the king or “King’s valet” (a royal appointment of some importance). This raises the question of whether “l’hôtel” refers to the royal prison at Senlis. Finally, a third temporary prison was guarded by Daniel Quant, also “King’s Valet”, between October and November 1311 at the hotel of knight Pierre de Plailly, where eleven “unreconciled” knights from Beauvais were incarcerated.

After the trial, nine relapsed Templars were burnt at the stake in Senlis on 17 May or the eve of Ascension Day 1310.

Perron and Jean de Chaversy

In 1344, the brothers Perron and Jean de Chaversy were held in the royal prison at Senlis. They were probably not, in fact, lords of the land of Chaversy located 17 km from Senlis and owned at that time by Jean de Ver. They were accused by the Sire de Muret of having killed Pierre Gravier at Ars-lès-Cambronne (today Cambronne-lès-Clermont, Oise). The accuser asked the Parliament of Paris to refer them to its high and low courts. However, the Parliament of Paris ruled that they had been completely absolved and ordered their release on 26 June 1344²⁶³.

Jean Bodin, Gaoler of Senlis

A native of Senlis and the father of a family, Jean Bodin was condemned by the bailliage court for having allowed Charlot de Beaucourt, man-at-arms of Jean, bastard of Thian, captain and bailli of Senlis, detained for criminal acts, to escape. Charlot de Beaucourt had sworn an oath not to try to escape. Jean Bodin obtained a royal pardon from Henry VI, King of France and England, in May 1423. Although he was released from all prosecution, he had to remain in prison on bread and water for a fortnight²⁶⁴.

Jeanne Harvillers and her mother

Jeanne Harvillers was born in Verberie²⁶⁵. Her mother, “well versed in the art of evil spells and prostitution”²⁶⁶, had sworn her daughter to the devil. He would visit her on dark nights dressed as a knight and teach her the art of getting rid of men and animals. The daughter and then the mother were arrested and tried by the Senlis court. The sentence was confirmed by the Paris Parliament, and the mother was burnt alive in Senlis, Place du Vieux-Marché in 1548²⁶⁷. The daughter, after being imprisoned and whipped, was released. She was in turn convicted of witchcraft and executed in Laon on 30 April 1578²⁶⁸.

²⁵⁹ The Knights Templar were said to be “reconciled” when they admitted the crimes of which they were accused and “unreconciled” when they did not confess to their crimes or retracted their confessions. They thus become “relapsed” and incurred the worst penalties.

²⁶⁰ Keipo Lekpaï, Yves: *La détention des Templiers dans le royaume de France 1307-1314 : le cas des frères de l'Ordre du Temple dans les prisons du bailliage de Senlis* (The Detention of Knights Templar in the Kingdom of France 1307-1314 – the case of the brothers of the Order of the Temple in the Bailiwick of Senlis), doctoral thesis in medieval history, Nantes, 2020.

²⁶¹ Keipo Lekpaï Yves points out that he found nine names of Templars in the custody of Pierre de la Cloche, although the latter only ever held eight at a time.

²⁶² Keipo Lekpaï, Yves: *op. cit.*, p. 210.

²⁶³ Acts of the Parliament of Paris. Second series of the years 1328-1350. Judgments (Letters - Decisions - Judgments). Volume II (1343-1350). A.N. classification: X/1a/10, fol. 118. Chaversy was a parish and fief located east of Senlis at the foot of Mount Cornon.

²⁶⁴ Gut, Christian: "Actes de la chancellerie royale relatifs à Senlis (1420-1435)" in *Comptes rendus et mémoires*, 1978, Senlis, 1980.

²⁶⁵ Bodin, Jean: *De la démonomanie des sorciers*, Jacques du Puys, Paris, 1580, p. 169 verso.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ Today Place Gérard de Nerval.

²⁶⁸ Vatin, Casimir: *Senlis et Chantilly anciens et modernes*, Senlis, Duriez, 1847, p. 57 ff

Fig. 176:

Conspirators and the League

On 3 July 1590, the members of the “League” led by Sieur de Vieuxpont attempted to enter the town. They were aided and abetted by several clerics from Senlis, including Pierre Guillot, Canon of Saint-Rieul; the Father Guardian of the Cordeliers; Cordelier Caron; merchants and twelve disguised soldiers. When night fell, the plan was for these men to make it easier for the League troops, equipped with ladders, to scale the city walls. The plan was foiled, and the attempt failed at the last moment. The compromised members of the League and the arrested soldiers were taken to prison, tried by the Presidial (tribunal)³ and hanged a few days later. The number of those condemned varies according to the source, from 18 to 44²⁶⁹. One witness stated that 28 culprits were hanged on the same day. He added that the ladders were kept “under the vaults of the castle courtyard for more than 60 years”²⁷⁰.

Jean Greffin, Protestant private lieutenant at the bailliage

Jean Greffin was a special lieutenant employed by the bailiwick and Presidial Court of Senlis. He had recently arrived in town and as a royal officer, was a man of high status. From June 21 to 26, 1562, the town was disrupted by riots and sedition. The Protestants were blamed for this as they had been opposed to the imposition of “The Watch”²⁷¹ (local bourgeois militias - vigilantes). They were also blamed for the violent death of a Catholic. The aldermen had those of the new religion arrested, starting with the leading figures of Protestantism in Senlis: the special lieutenant Jean Greffin and his wife; André Parent, councillor at the Presidial Court, and his wife; Nicolas de Cornoailles, bourgeois; Jean Goujon, preacher; and Antoine Crappier, schoolmaster. They were all imprisoned. André Parent and Nicolas de Cornoailles escaped. Greffin was transferred to the Conciergerie in Paris and tried. He was hanged at Les Halles in Paris and his body burnt on 13 August 1562. Two days later, his head was brought back to Senlis and displayed in the Place de l’Apport-au-Pain, in the centre of the town. Jean Goujon was hanged in the Place du Vieux-Marché in Senlis²⁷².

Joseph Nung, galley slave

Joseph Nung, a beggar, and vagrant, “prisoner in the Royal Prisons of Senlis”, was tried on 22 August 1766. He was convicted of theft in the parish of Ermenonville. The lieutenant of the Senlis Marshalsea, Charles-Gabriel de La Balme, and the Chamber of the Presidential Council sentenced him to nine years on the King’s galleys and to the hot iron brand of “GAL”. The sentence was carried out four days later²⁷³.

Ange-Dominique Desjardins, Officer of the Empire, retired

Ange-Dominique Desjardins, born in Roye and living in Paris, was 27 and a half years old in 1816. He was a retired lieutenant, married with children. On 1 July 1816, on the road from Senlis to Fleurines, he “uttered seditious remarks and spread alarming news, saying that the reign of His Majesty Louis XVIII would soon end and that the King would not be able to pay France’s debts”²⁷⁴. He was arrested, charged under the law of 15 November 1815 and brought “from the detention centre in this town” before the Senlis Magistrate’s Court on 31 July 1816. He was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment, during which time he was deprived of his entire pension and fined 200 francs. An appeal to the Beauvais Magistrate’s Court on 19 August 1816 deprived him of just a third of his pension but confirmed the judgement.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 113 ff and Broisse: *op. cit.*, p. 76-77 and Amalou, Thierry: *Le Lys et la Mitre*, Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2007, p. 267.

²⁷⁰ Bernier: *op. cit.*, p. 494.

²⁷¹ ‘Le guet’: bourgeois militia for maintaining order and surveillance in the event of war.

²⁷² Amalou, Thierry: *Une concorde urbaine. Senlis au temps des réformes (vers 1520 - vers 1580)*, Pulim, 2007.

²⁷³ Placard, *Jugement prévotal rendue en la maréchaussée de Senlis*, Senlis, imprimerie Nicolas Des Rocques, 1766.

²⁷⁴ Placard, *Jugement du tribunal de première instance, séant à Senlis*, Senlis, imprimerie Tremblay, 1816.

We need to bear in mind that the castle was not the only prison facility available in Senlis. Although we have clear evidence that prisoners were interned at the castle, there were many alternative lockups in Senlis, controlled by the various municipal or ecclesiastical jurisdictions. Prisoners could also be held sequentially in several jurisdictions and moved around. According to Jaulnay, there were prisons in the Gallo-Roman gateway to the town near the Apport-au-Pain (Porte de Paris)²⁷⁵. There is evidence of cells in the Place de la Halle belfry, which was demolished in 1806. The cathedral chapter had its own prisons near its headquarters and at the Porte de Reims, now Rue du Chancelier Guérin. Lastly, various places could be used as temporary prisons, either to accommodate prisoners who were politically sensitive, as in the case of Bernard de Saisset, or to deal with excessive numbers, as in the case of the Knights Templar.

By the end of the Ancien Régime, most of the inmates were neither prestigious cases nor serious criminals. The *Journal règlement des prisons de la ville de Senlis*²⁷⁶ was a register of inmates kept from November 1759 to 1768. Prisoners were generally serving short sentences, arrested as deserters, poachers, lunatics, beggars, suspected thieves, cabaret swindlers, rowdies and libertines, rebels against the king's wood wardens, people on remand awaiting trial, or vagrants.

In 1847, Casimir Vatin, President of the Senlis civil court, congratulated himself at length on the progress of the “new cell system”²⁷⁷. He stated that since the closure of the castle’s old and “despicable prison”, where the prisoners were “held together in a damp dungeon, with a few bales of straw spread out on the floor”, “the physical condition of the inmates has changed completely”.

²⁷⁵ Jaulnay: *op. cit.*, p. 337.

²⁷⁶ AD Oise 1Cp353.

²⁷⁷ Vatin, Casimir: *Senlis et Chantilly anciens et modernes*, Senlis, Duriez, 1847, p. 152 ff.

Specific bibliographies

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Acknowledgements