



# The Fortress of Brunella

AULLA

**Location:** The fortress of Brunella is located on a steep hill overlooking the village of Aulla, which was founded in the 9th century at the confluence of the rivers Magra and Aulella.

**Type of castle:** Fortress.

**Construction period:** It is uncertain. Even though the structure reminds us of the transition age, it was probably a substitution of a pre-existing medieval structure, which was no longer adequate for the new war techniques.

The three most reliable theories ascribe the construction to Jacopo Ambrogio Malaspina, at the end of the 15th century, or to Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who moved to Aulla in 1522, or to Adamo Centurione, a powerful Genoese businessman, who became owner of Aulla in 1543. This last event is confirmed by documents of the 17th century and by Matteo Vinzoni.

**First appearance in historical sources:** The most ancient document dates back to 1533, when the castle was controlled by Marcantonio di Pavia.

**Strategic role:** The position of the fortress allowed it to control all the main paths of the area and the people passing through Apennine passes.









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**Further use:** From a military point of view, it was used for the last time as a garrison headquarters in the 19th century.

**Current condition:** Completely restored and turned into a museum.

**Viewing:** Inside the fortress it is possible to visit the Museum of Natural History of Lunigiana. For further information please go to: [www.museimassacarrara.it/musei/museo-di-storia-naturale-della-lunigiana/](http://www.museimassacarrara.it/musei/museo-di-storia-naturale-della-lunigiana/)

**History:** The sources do not reveal much about the most ancient history of the fortress, we only know that the Centurione kept it until the half of the 17th century, when the fief was assigned to Cosimo II of Tuscany. It passed to the Spanish at the beginning of the 18th century, and became part of the imperial treasury. In 1716 it was assigned to the Malaspina, who supported the emperor during the conflict against the Spanish.

They assaulted Brunella in 1733 and then kept it for three years.

Between 1816 and 1859 Aulla was part of the territories belonging to the Estensi and the headquarters of a small garrison. Only after the unification of Italy was the fortress sold to private citizens.

In 1920 it was sold to an English couple, Lina Duff Gordon and the painter Aubery Waterfield, who transformed it into their residence and turned the upper terrace into a garden, which was removed during the restoration works of 1997.

**Structure:** The fortress is characterised by a solid quadrilateral structure equipped with large bastions and surrounded by a deep moat. The walls have been built with local materials. The access was a drawbridge protected by a ravelin, which has been substituted by one made of bricks.

The fortress was transformed in the 16th century, when the medieval towers were destroyed and new spaces for guns and embrasures were created.