

Castle of Castelnovo Magra

CASTELNUOVO MAGRA

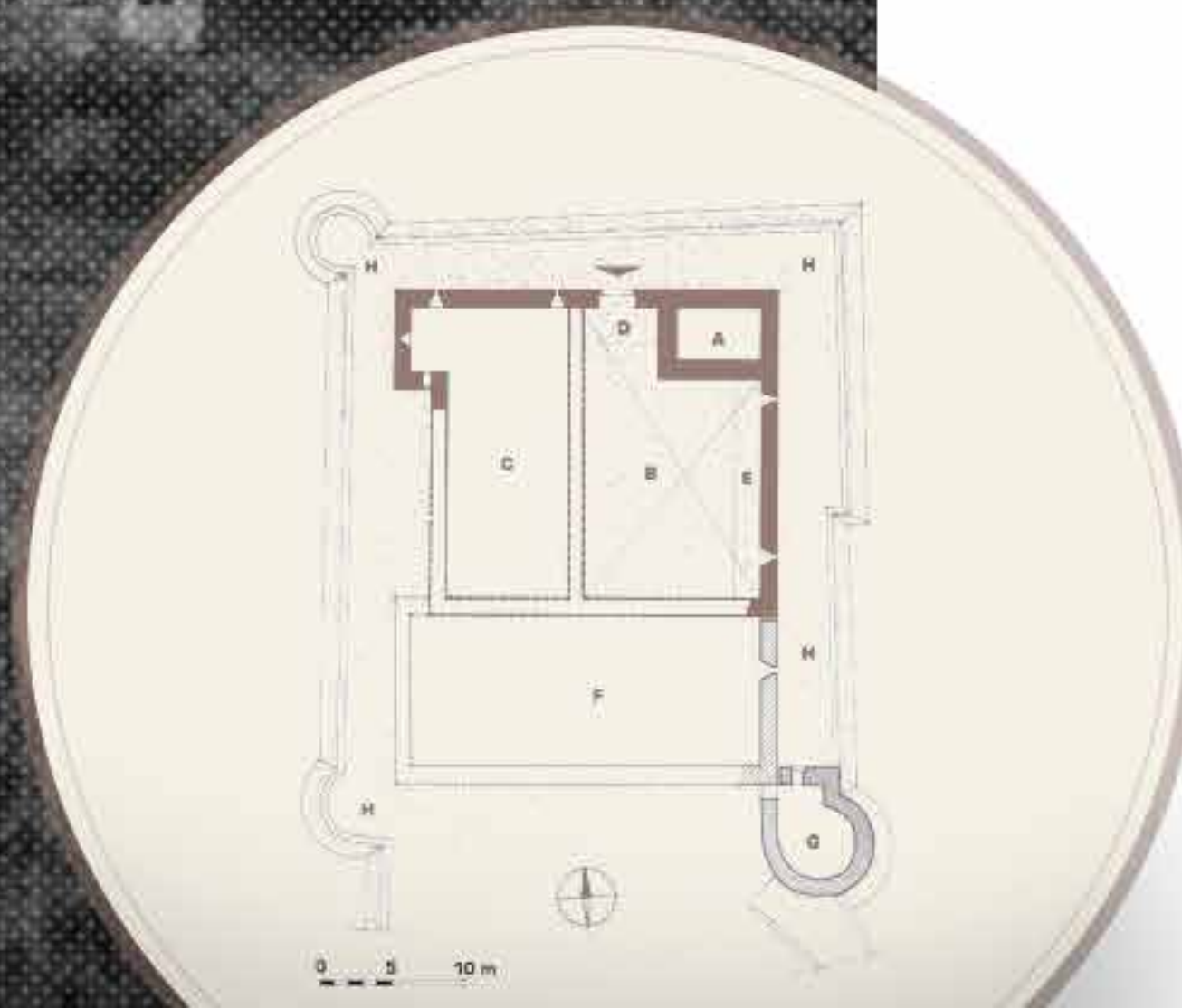
Location: The Castle of the Bishops of Luni is located on a small hill in Castelnovo Magra, which slopes towards the plain of the River Magra and which depends on the northern buttress of Mount Bastione. Thanks to its position, the castle commands a panoramic view from the Tyrrhenian coast to the Vara Valley.

Type of castle: Castle and residence.

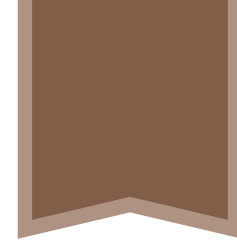
Construction period: The currently visible structure dates back to the 13th century and was built by the Bishop of Luni Enrico da Fucecchio.

First appearance in historical sources: In the addenda of Enrico da Fucecchio, where he illustrates what he did to restore the ancient episcopate's rights in Lunigiana, there is a reference to the construction of the castle in Castelnovo. This place was registered in the Codice Pelavicino from 1203.

Strategic role: Abode and episcopal stronghold against the expansion of the neighbouring commons and the Malaspina







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Further in use: in the 16th century.

Current condition: Ruins in excellent condition, the turris magna is fully preserved.

Viewing: The location is accessible and safe. Since 2015, the turris magna is open to the public for exhibitions and tours.

History: The village of Castelnuovo emerged around the end of the 12th century thanks to Bishop Gualtiero, who intended to guarantee the Romea road's safety from the incursions of the lords of Fosdinovo and Erberia. The village developed quickly around the castle and it became quite independent from the Bishop. In fact, in the 13th century the village secured an alliance thanks to which its inhabitants became members of the middle-class and castellans of Sarzana, which aimed to steal the Bishop's forces. As it came back under episcopal rule, Castelnuovo was affected by a great political change and became the last episcopal fortress in Lunigiana. During the same period, Enrico da Fucecchio decided to build a new castle – the one that survived – and to strengthen his power by buying fields and in increasing his income. Besides the Bishop, Castelnuovo, Avenza, Carrara and Serravalle

all supported Pisa in the war against Genoa, Lucca and Florence, and they were also involved in the exhausting war for supremacy in that area against the Malaspina, who in the end were the victors. The Peace of Castelnuovo, signed by Dante Alighieri during his exile, ratified the victory of the Malaspina over the Bishop, who lost his power in Lunigiana. Even if the common of Castelnuovo remained the seat of the Bishop until the middle of the 14th century, it gradually became part of the territories of Sarzana. From this moment on, the two towns shared the same destiny.

Structure: The castle as we see it today is the result of several restorations. The ancient core dates back to 1272, when Enrico da Fucecchio decided to build a fortress with a big tower which would represent the rebirth of episcopal power in Lunigiana. It is located in the historic centre of Castelnuovo, on the small hill right in front of the place where the ancient Santa Maria Castle of Bishop Gualtiero was supposed to be. During the 15th century, after Medici's Florentine rule and after the transition age, which provoked an evolution in fortress design, the palace was restored in the area of the quadrangular tower and adorned with brackets. Under Genoese rule they built the circular tower, which was used as a place for ammunition storage. The remaining part of the structure hosted some boardrooms.