



Castle of Olivola

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Location: Olivola is a medieval village located on a hill, rising 300 metres above sea level in the heart of the region of Lunigiana, east of Aulla.

Type of castle: Marquis' seat.

Construction period: The castle was probably built in the 13th century and later extended and restored by Lazzaro I Malaspina in the 16th century.

First appearance in historical sources: Olivola was first mentioned in a document of 1234, in which Obizzo Malaspina granted "to Salio of Verrucola all personal and material rights of Berta, daughter of Alberto of Olivola, in fief".

Strategic role: From its elevated position, the castle overlooked the hills between the Taverone and Aulella rivers, playing an important role as stronghold for the defence of the Malaspina territory.



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Further use: The slow decay of the Castle of Olivola began in 1638, when the Marquis Spinetta II moved the old feudal seat to Pallerone, giving rise to the dynasty of the Marquises of Olivola-Pallerone. According to Formentini, the Castle of Olivola was militarily equipped until the end of the feudal system; in its last days it was provided with just four pieces of ordnance.

Current condition: The last remains of the castle are the ruins of the walls and two large round towers.

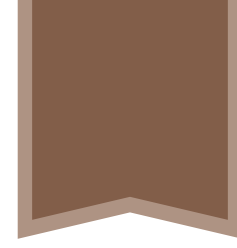
Viewing: The castle is not open to the public.

Dark events: The first Olivola dynasty ended in 1411, when the Marquises Bernabò, Alessandro and Raffaele died. The first two were murdered in Varano, while the third was killed in his castle in Olivola. After the slaughter, the fief was further divided: the higher Taverone-Tavernelle Valley became part of the Este territories, to which it belonged until the unification of Italy. As the similar murders of the Marquises of Verrucola (1418) and Oderico of Biassa (1416) show, the hidden reasons behind these events were territorial claims, which were often encouraged by the neighbouring countries.

History: The castle and the village were strongholds for the defence of the Malaspina territory and, as 13th-century documents show, they were part of the Filattiera fief. In 1275, the amount of land inherited by Francesco Malaspina included a large territory between the Aulella and Taverone rivers. Olivola became the marquis' seat of this new fief, which included several villages, such as Fornoli, Virgoletta, Panicale, Monti, Pontebosio, Bastia, Montevignale, Tavernelle, Varano, Apella, Groppo San Pietro, Agnino, Bigliolo, Aulla, Bibola and Pallerone.

In 1355, because of a debt owed to the Marquises of Villafranca, the fief lost the mid- and lower Taverone Valley, as well as the territories north of the river; in 1411, after the murder of the marquises, the higher Taverone-Tavernelle Valley passed under the control of the Este family.

The castle, together with the rest of the fief, went to Castel dell'Aquila and Fosdinovo. However, in 1510, thanks to Lazzaro I Malaspina, Olivola won its independence back and retained it until the end of the imperial statutes.



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Structure: There are few records of the castle left. It was extended and restored in the 16th century by Lazzaro I, founder of the second dynasty of the Malaspina of Olivola, who transformed the residential area of the building, providing it with an entrance hall decorated with arcades and loggias.

Though abandoned, the castle was kept in good repair until the first half of the 20th century, when it was almost entirely demolished. Today, only two towers and a precariously balanced vault of brick, partially destroyed in the 1920 earthquake, are left.