



Castle of Varese Ligure

VARESE LIGURE

Location: Varese Ligure is located in the upper part of Vara Valley, in a strategic position. From ancient times it has been an intersection between Sestri Levante and the Padan Plain thanks to the Cento Croci pass. It has been an important place for commerce since the Middle Ages. In Varese during the Early Middle Ages, Ligure was the central village of the monastery of Bobbio's estate.

Type of castle: Fortified village.

Construction period: The castle and the village were built in the same period. Under the defensive walls built by the Fieschi there are signs of more ancient structures, probably a byzantine castrum.

Strategic role: Control of some important commercial routes linking the coastline's most important centres (Chiavari, Lavagna, Sestri Levante) and the Apennine between Liguria and Emilia.

Further use: It was a prison until the end of the 18th century and then it became a private residence, which was nevertheless abandoned to decay.





Castle of Varese Ligure

VARESE LIGURE

Current condition: The restoration of the structure is due to the Cavaliere del Lavoro (i.e. “Knight of the Order for Merit of labour”) Giacomo Rossignotti from Sestri Levante and to his wife Lina Delucchi, whose ancestors came from Varese Ligure. As new owners of the castle, they promoted and financed the restoration of the building between 1961 and 1965, together with the Superintendence of Monuments in Liguria.

Viewing: It is still a private property; its owners use the castle for exhibitions, conferences and events.

History: During the Middle Ages the castle was property of the Counts of Lavagna. After a conflict it was then shared by the two branches of the family: Fieschi and Pinelli. However, by the end of the 13th century, the Fieschi gained control of the whole Vara Valley until 1547, when Fieschi’s “conspiracy” against Andrea Doria failed and the Genoese Republic seized their goods. Two characters are essential to the following events: Niccolò Piccinino and Manfredò Landi.

In 1435 Piccinino had the attack tower built by artisans from Lunigiana. This tower was originally equipped with a drawbridge and was one of the most modern and innovative defensive structures of that time.

Between 1472 and 1478-79 Manfredò Landi added a second, smaller and cylindrical tower with a slope base and so the definitive shaping of the citadel was completed.

Structure: The more ancient tower is surrounded by a wide terraced basement, with the typical slope shape of other defensive fortresses. It has several embrasures and the defensive walls are incredibly strong.

The second fortified tower has many circular embrasures. These two main structures were probably linked by another building, which may have been the Fieschi family palace. Although this building originally was as tall as the fortified tower, this block was reduced in size at a later time.