

The Castle of Sully-sur-Loire

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Translation id2m

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In the foreground, the mediaeval keep from the banks of the Loire. D. Chauveau.

In addition to its defensive role, this outstanding architecture highlights the Trémoille family's desire for splendour. And they had the means for this ostentation – they received direct taxes from over twenty parishes, charges from Loire crossings and tolls, the grape harvest, communal oven, and mill,

and revenue from their tenant farms and estates. They therefore lived lavishly and, in keeping with the times, during their brief stays travelled from one place to another with their furniture, trunks, tables, trestles and sideboards. It should be added that, in the end, they freed their serfs.



Joan of Arc,
Eugène Grasset,
1894, engraving.
Loiret Departmental Archives.

Joan of Arc in Sully

During the Hundred Years' War, the castle defences were considerably strengthened, particularly through the construction of a south-west tower, designed to protect it from attacks from the town. The castle came under siege in 1411 and was repaired the following year. Charles d'Albret, Marie de Sully's second husband, was killed at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, and the castle was besieged again in 1418 by Charles, Dauphin of France, as Georges de La Trémoille had for a time sided with the Burgundian party. Having submitted, he became one of the most influential advisers of the future Charles VII of France.

The most notable event for the castle during this period was Joan of Arc's visit on 18 June 1429 following the French victory at the Battle of Patay. Her aim was to convince the Dauphin Charles, who was staying there, to be crowned in Reims.

She visited again in March 1430 after her setback in Paris but came up against the enmity of Georges de La Trémoille who turned Charles against her. The rest is history. Joan managed to escape from Sully on 28 March, but was captured in Compiègne on 23 May then tried for witchcraft and heresy by a church court, found guilty and burned at the stake in Rouen on 30 May 1431.



Right-hand page:
*Joan of Arc makes a
sortie from the gates
of Orleans and scatters
the enemies of France*,
William Etty, 1846-1847,
oil on canvas. Orléans,
Musée des Beaux-Arts
© François Lauginie.



The emblem of Sully holding a lightning bolt under the motto *Quo jussa jovis* ("I go where Jupiter orders"). Ceiling of the Main salon, Castle of Sully-sur-Loire. D. Chauveau.

Coats of arms, from top to bottom:

- The Sully town coat of arms, inspired by the House of Sully-Berry crest, features thirteen spurs.
- The black and white emblem chosen by the 1st Duke of Sully.
- The House of Béthune: argent a fess gules (white with red band).
- The Béthune-Desplanques: argent a fess gules for Béthune - gules a bend or (red with gold band) and six billet crest (like the Saveuse crest) as a cadency mark in the dexter chief (top right). (N.B. The number of billets varies).

married Rachel de Cochefilet, who assisted and supported him as a confidante and housekeeper. They lived together for fifty years and she bore him nine children.

Throughout his dazzling career with the King of Navarre then King of France, he was the wise and astute administrator who restored the kingdom's finances. Sully was one of the great servants of the French monarchy. Would Henry IV have succeeded without his minister? And would the latter have remained in the shadows without the king's favour, managing his fortune until his tragic death? A fortune that prospered under Sully. Without reproaching him for any wrongdoing, Sully became, acquisition after acquisition, one of the richest landowners in the kingdom. On his death in 1641, his fortune was estimated at 5,200,000 pounds.

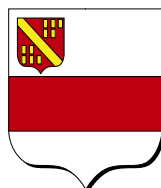
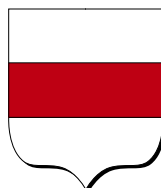
In the same way he served the king and his interests, he provided for his family. He considered it his duty to see his children well established and arranged excellent matches for

them - Henri de Rohan for his daughter Marguerite, and Françoise de Créquy for his son Maximilien.

And this service to the king, his family, and his grandeur also benefited the castle of Sully.

The castle at the time of the Great Sully

From 1602 to 1609, the first Duke of Sully commissioned major building work - he spent 140,000 pounds, more than the purchase price - and oversaw every last detail himself (there are records of around sixty contracts with stonemasons and carpenters). He wanted to transform his castle, which he had bought in a state of disrepair, into a stronghold that was protected from the whims of the river and human fury, and was a fine, comfortable and pleasing residence worthy of his title. He also hoped to win Sologne and Berry's loyalty to the crown as he was extending his empire there and these regions often rebelled against legitimate authority.



A rare period painting of the castle of Sully. The castle is depicted from the gardens to the east. It is part of a 17th-century wall painting in the hall of the Castle of Villebon (in Eure-et-Loir). With the kind permission of Mr de la Raudière. Reproduction prohibited.



The reproduction of a 17th-century plan, with its naivety and approximations.



Sale of the castle

The estate was crumbling. The owners did everything they could to save the castle, and carry on, hoping perhaps for a miracle. But there was no money left. The estate – around 20 farms over 2,250 hectares – was sold, and sadly for the historical heritage, the priceless furniture, tapestries from Beauvais, Aubusson and Flanders, and paintings were auctioned off in Drouot. During the sale on 25 February 1942, the French government saved some items by exercising its pre-emptive rights.

For 20 years, the castle was embroiled in a legal and administrative battle with many twists and turns that hit the headlines.

In 1951, the Marchioness of Bausset-Roquefort was convinced that treasure was hidden somewhere in the castle. After looking for documents and calling on radiesthesists, she organised digs from July 1951 to March 1952 but



the team, who was put up in a Sully hotel, found nothing at all. The contractor and hotelier, who were not paid, obtained a writ of seizure and sale of the castle and its grounds. There were a further 10 years of dealings, unexpected developments, negotiations, greed, higher bidders – the French singer Charles Trenet came forward at one point – and turns of events before finally an amicable solution was reached in July 1962 and Loiret Departmental Council bought the castle and grounds for 850,000 francs.

View of the castle after the fire.
Photograph, Loiret Departmental Archives.

Right-hand page:
View of the castle of Sully-sur-Loire from the town with the "Priests' Bridge".
D. Chauveau.

View of the castle today from the gardens. The curtain wall has been returned to its 17th-century appearance.
D. Chauveau.



MEDIAEVAL KEEP: built from 1396 by Guy de la Trémoille probably on the site of an older castle. It is the "Old Castle" of the Middle Ages, with its "gate" flanked by two towers that were demolished in 1794 and restored by the Béthune-Sullys in the 19th century. The inner courtyard, or main courtyard, was initially separated from the keep by a ditch and drawbridge that were removed before 1713.

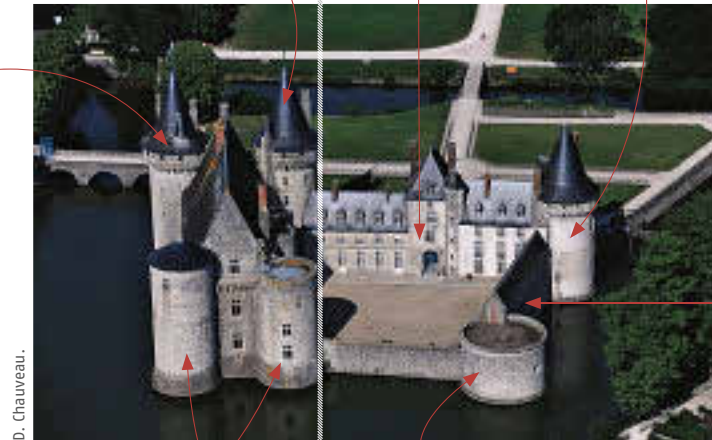
SMALL CASTLE: built by the La Trémoille family and redesigned by Sully. The 14th-century gate square tower was redesigned in 1720. It is the current entrance to the castle. The small castle is connected to the keep by the Louis XV wing, built in the 18th century on a former curtain wall. Destroyed by a fire in 1918, it was rebuilt in the 1920s a storey shorter.

Verrines Tower, which has kept its name since the Middle Ages.

Square Tower

Sange Tower dating from the La Trémoille period. Sully renamed it the "Rosny Tower", in keeping with his idea of giving each of the castle towers the name of one of his fiefdoms.

Chapelle d'Angillon Tower



South gallery, partially destroyed during the Second World War.

Villebon Tower and Nouvion Tower, built c. 1400, completed by Maximilien de Béthune between 1602 and 1640, demolished in 1794, and partially restored in 1946 and 1962.

Béthune Tower or the Artillery Tower, built by Sully in 1606 in place of a 14th-century tower. A victim of the French Revolution, it was only partly rebuilt. It no longer features the small lookout tower at the top.

Tour of the castle

The Loiret department and the revival of the castle

The Loiret department bought an unsound, empty shell but there was soon a real desire to turn it (or turn it back) into one of the main heritage sites in the Loiret.

First, the buildings were restored. The roofing was repaired, and the walls of the Nouvion Tower and the north façade of the keep were rebuilt between 1966 and 1971. The great hall on the first floor, the entrance gate and the "King's Chamber" were also refurbished. The restored chapel

once again housed the tomb of the 1st Duke of Sully and the Duchess. An ambitious plan – to return the old seigniorial residence to its former glory during the time of Maximilien de Béthune and his successors – emerged and a considerable amount of time, intelligence and money would be required.

But an empty castle meant a silent castle and, to bring it back to life, it had to be decorated with furniture, paintings, tapestries, objects and collections, which, though they could not perfectly recreate the past – the original furnishings had been



The great lower hall.
D. Chauveau.

scattered following the auction in 1942 – they could at least reflect it accurately.

Once again, action was taken. Furniture and paintings preempted by the French government in 1942 found their way back to their former home. Other items, which had been purchased by individuals at the time, were bought back. And some pieces, which did not have a direct link to the castle but were true to its history, were bought through public auctions, antique dealers and galleries, for example wall hangings – including *The Story of Psyche*, saved when

Bathing Nymphs,
17th-century tapestry,
Parisian workshops.
D. Chauveau.



the French government exercised its pre-emptive rights at the castle of Rosny auction –, six embroideries, a painting of Henry IV of France at the Battle of Ivry, another one depicting Sully escaping St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre, a screen, trunks, a Louis XVI bed, and letters. The large rooms sprang to life, and whether lavishly furnished like the main salon and King's chamber, or more Spartan like the great lower hall and ceremonial hall, they all capture the attention of the 60,000 visitors who pass through each year.

Great lower hall

This vast ground-floor room in the keep was the service area where the servants, and particularly the cooks, worked. It was once divided into several smaller rooms. The actual kitchen was located in front of the small fireplace. Close by there was an outhouse that was used as a larder. It contained an oven and access to the cellar where provisions were stored. The gutter near the back room was used to dispose of waste. A white Carrara marble statue, which stands next to the late 14th-century fireplace, dates from 1642 and represents Maximilien de Béthune as a victorious man of war, leaning on his marshal's baton and wearing a laurel wreath. The room also features two tapestries woven in Parisian workshops in the early 17th century. They depict various characters in the story of Greek god Pan. In *Bathing Nymphs*, Pan, a satyr, watches nymphs at the edge of a fountain in amongst ancient ruins.

Dining room

This room was Maximilien de Béthune’s study in the 17th century. It was in the neighbouring tower that he secretly printed his memoirs, the *Oeconomies royales*, in 1638. The room was turned into a dining room c. 1869. The kitchen was in close proximity. The table is set and meals were perhaps enjoyed to piano music. The table, sideboard and blanket chest are on loan from the French National Furniture Collection. King Henry IV of France is depicted in two paintings and a bust. A 17th-century tapestry shows a returning hunting party. The painted ceiling, similar to the one in the main salon, features motifs linked to Maximilien de Béthune: cannonballs, eagles, lightning bolts, and mottos in Latin. Above the mantelpiece there is a



Marguerite de Béthune, Duchess of Rohan, as Diana the Huntress, on loan from the French National Monuments Centre, Castle of Châteaudun, in 2013, CHA1942000126. Mid-17th century. D. Chauveau.

portrait of Marguerite de Béthune, the daughter of the minister, as Diana the Huntress. She married very well, much to the pride of her father, becoming the wife of Henri de Rohan, first cousin to Henry IV.

Dining room. D. Chauveau.



To conclude, here is a table showing the “dynasties” that succeeded each other at the Castle of Sully-sur-Loire in their historical context, together with the people and events that marked French history.

Dates	Historical period	Owners	People	Events
1000	Hugh Capet	First House of Sully	Gilon, lord of Sully, Les Aix and La Chapelle Agnès de Sully, wife of the Count of Champagne	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Castle Mound• Probable first keep of the Castrum Soliacense• Collegiate Church
1100				
1200	Philippe Auguste (Bouvines)	Second House of Sully	Marie de Sully, wife of Guy de La Trémoille	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Philippe Auguste Tower (Round Tower or Large Tower)
1300	Hundred Years' War			
1400		La Trémoille	Maximilien de Béthune, 1st Duke of Sully	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep built• Castle besieged• Joan of Arc in Sully• Small Castle, bailey and gardens designed and built
1500	Francis 1 st (Marignan) French Wars of Relig.			
1600	Henry IV/Sully	Béthune	Maximilien-Alexandre de Béthune, last Duke of Sully	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Castle captured and recaptured• Damage and destruction
1700	Louis XIII Louis XIV Regency Louis XV			
1800	French Revolution Empire Bourbon Restoration Second Empire Third Republic	Béthune-Penin (known as Béthune-Sully)	Eugène de Béthune-Sully Mahaut de Béthune-Sully, Marchioness of Bausset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximilien de Béthune buys Sully• Raised to a duchy• Castle buildings and gardens completely redesigned• Voltaire at Sully• Destruction of the Philippe Auguste Tower• Towers demolished• Renovation - Modernisation• 1918 fire• War damage - Furniture auction• Castle's revival• Becomes a cultural and tourist destination
1900	First World War Second World War			
2000	Fourth - Fifth Republic	Loiret department		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steward's Office refurbished• Psyche Apartments
2007				