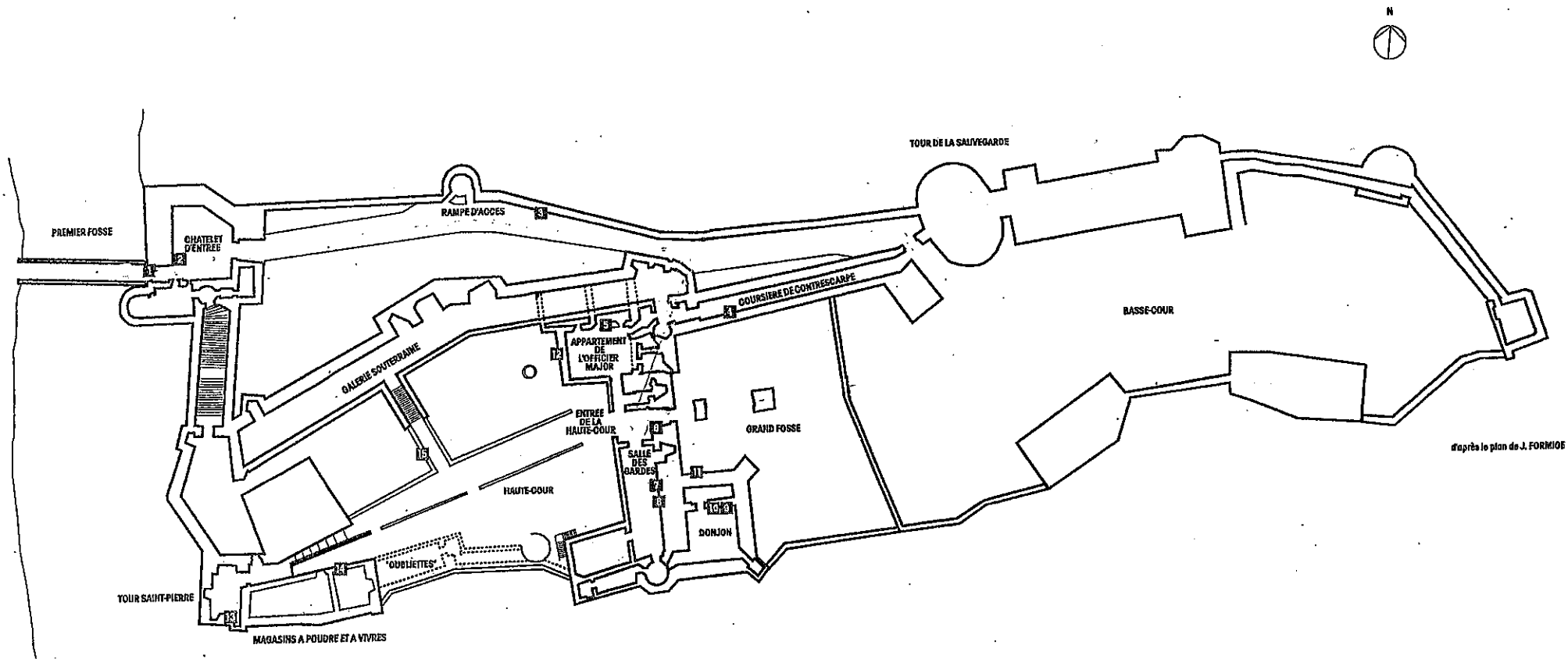


Plan général du château



d'après le plan de J. FORMIGE

Miolans Castle

Classified as an historic monument since 1944, Miolans Castle stands at an altitude of 550 meters on a rocky cliff overlooking the Combe de Savoie.

The earliest castle stood on the site of the Saint-Pierre Tower, a primitive dungeon built by the lords of Miolans in the 12th century. In the late 14th century, Jean de Miolans began expanding the castle, and Anthelme IV modified it in the 15th century to keep step with developments in artillery. These improvements solidified the power and autonomy of this family not only in Savoy but also in Dauphiné and Viennois. When the dynasty died out in 1523, the castle passed into the hands of Duke Charles III of Savoy, but by then had become too outdated for military purposes. From 1564 to 1792, Miolans Castle served as a state-run prison. The Marquis de Sade was one of its most famous prisoners. The Guiter family, owners of the monument since 1869, has restored the castle and opened it to the public.

Gatehouse

Construction on the gatehouse dates back to the early 16th century. This first-defence building was used to control access from the north side, after the stone bridge over the first moat hewn in the rock. The gatehouse consists of a barbican (an extension of the castle gateway) equipped with numerous murder holes; a U-shaped tower topped by a crenellated parapet for defending the moat; a tower-gate sealed by two fortified gates and reinforced with an assommoir and a portcullis; and finally a covered passageway with direct, protected access to the upper bailey.

Access Ramp

The first enclosing wall was probably built around the same time as the gatehouse in order to protect access to the lower bailey. At one time, this ramp could be blocked midway up by a fortified drawbridge located at the point where the ramp narrows. Beyond that point, the ramp continued up to the Sauvegarde artillery tower which was built in the late 15th century and to the monumental gate which protected the entrance to the lower bailey.

Counterscarp Gallery

Built in the 15th century into the thickness of the second castle wall, this straight, narrow defensive passageway had a vaulted ceiling and several murder holes for defending the great moat and the access ramp. It is crowned by a wall-walk built in the late 15th century, and protected by a parapet with numerous murder holes overlooking the ramp, thereby allowing quick passage from the lower to the upper bailey.

Master Officer's Apartment

This 58-square-meter rectangular building consisted of 3 levels. The enormous fireplace with the freestone mantle and cornice moulding running the entire length of the wall dates back to the second half of the 15th century. The fireplace also contains an oven which was used when this room served as a kitchen for the prison. The first floor receives light from a doorway on the south side (13th to 14th century), a bay which was remodelled to add a sink and which displays the Miolans-Roussillon coat of arms on the exterior accoladed lintel, and a large casement window with benches on both sides. Records describe this building with its residential features in 1729 as the master officer's apartment, but its structures are older than that. It may have been the great baronial hall mentioned in 1332 which covered at least the first level and the room located behind the fireplace.

Upper Bailey Gate

Built on top of the scarp wall, this deep passageway is built entirely of freestone. The square pillars on the outside rest on two toadstones which enabled the drawbridge to pivot. When the drawbridge was lowered, it reached across to the fixed bridge of which two piers still remain. On the outside, the keystone of the arch is engraved with an unidentified coat of arms. This double-door gate is framed by two murder holes, with a firing room behind each one. On the upper level, two French-style cannon-holes provide a clear shot over the moat.

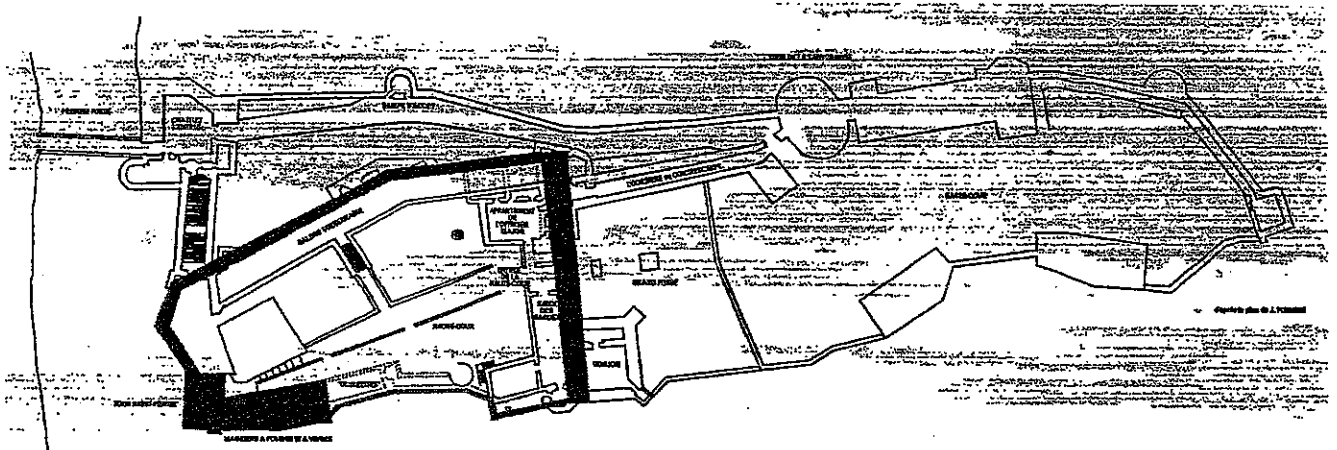
Guard Room

This vast vaulted room leads to the dungeon. It was built against the scarp wall to facilitate communication. The designation as guard room probably comes from the years it was used as a prison. From 1559 to 1792 more than 192 prisoners – Piedmonts, Savoyards, Nicois, and even three Frenchmen – were imprisoned in Miolans by order of the Prince. They were political prisoners, “heretics,” common-law prisoners or young nobles locked up by request from their families for scandalous conduct. Some of the most famous prisoners were Father Monod, counsellor to the duchess and regent of Savoy Christine de France, the sister of Louis XIII; and above all the Marquis de Sade (December 1772 to April 1773) who managed to escape through a window with help from the guards a few months after he was incarcerated.

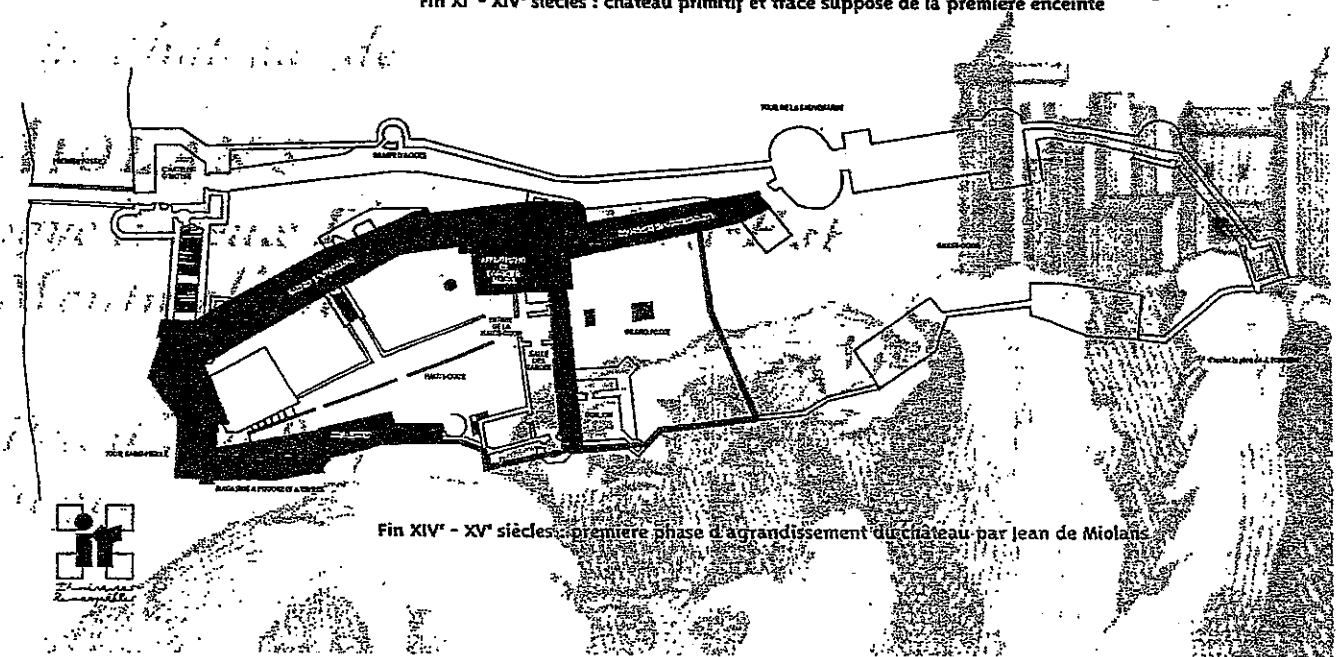
Development of the Castle

Late 11th to 14th century: Primitive castle and presumed footprint of the first wall

Late 14th to 15th century: First phase of castle expansion by Jean de Miolans



Fin XI^e - XIV^e siècles : château primitif et tracé supposé de la première enceinte

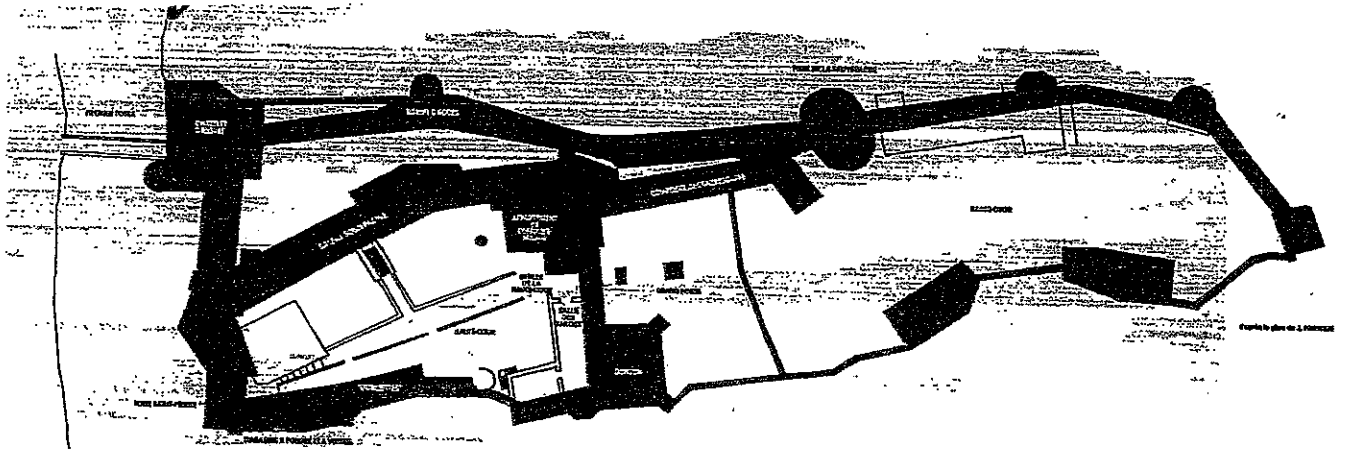


Fin XIV^e - XV^e siècles : première phase d'agrandissement du château par Jean de Miolans

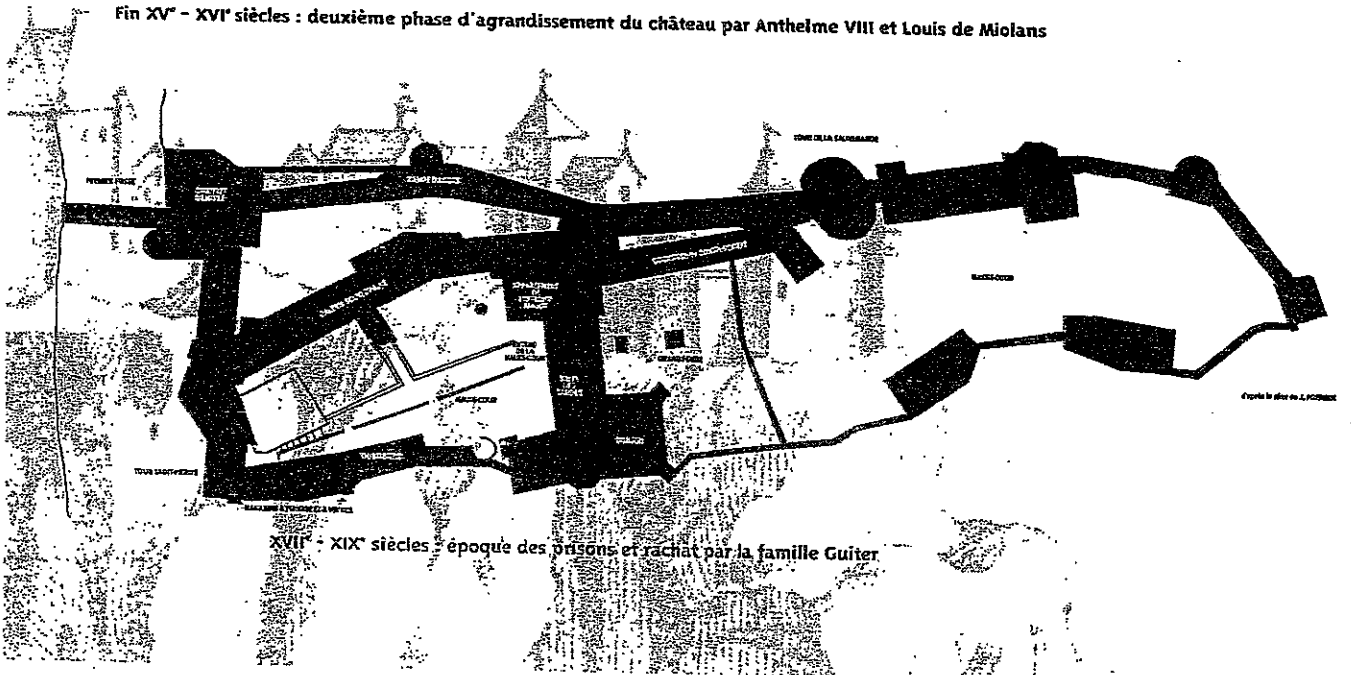
Development of the Castle

Late 15th to 16th century: Second phase of the castle expansion by Anthelme VIII and Louis de Miolans

17th to 19th century: The prison years and purchase by the Guiter family



Fin XV^e - XVI^e siècles : deuxième phase d'agrandissement du château par Anthelme VIII et Louis de Miolans



XVII^e - XIX^e siècles : époque des prisons et rachat par la famille Guiter

The Dungeon

The dungeon was built in the late 15th century or early 16th century. It is an imposing four-sided building, 23 meters high, with 6 levels connected by a spiral staircase built into a corner tower. It is crowned by an enclosed terrace with a crenellated parapet which was restored in the 19th century. The architectural homogeneity of this tower, a symbol of the lord's power, linking defensive and residential functions, can be seen on every level despite the modifications made when it was converted to a prison. From bottom to top, each cell bears a name representing the living conditions of its occupants: Hell, Purgatory, Treasury, Reception Room, Hope and Paradise. The walls of the Treasury, a heated room equipped with latrines, still bear prisoners' graffiti marks, including some dates.

The Lords of Miolans

The Miolans family, one of the most powerful families in Savoy, was little known prior to the 13th century, although Witfred, Nantelme and Aimon are mentioned as early as the end of the 11th century. Geoffroy de Miolans, a vassal of Count Amédée III of Savoy, took part in the second Crusade in 1147-1148. The lords of Miolans forged alliances with the great land-holding families in Tarentaise, Maurienne and Viennois; other branches such as the Miolans-Urtières were formed. After the marriage of Jean (1380-1420) and Agnes de Roussillon, the family succeeded the Roussillons, lords of Anjou, and thereby received new fiefdoms in Dauphiné. The family liberally supported the foundation of religious orders and included important members within the Church. Jean founded the Augustine convent in Saint-Pierre-d'Albigny and his son, Jacques I, Knight of the Order of Collier, brought home three sacred thorns from the Holy Land. In 1491, Claude-Jacques became Count of Montmayeur and then Louis became a baron in 1497. Throughout the 15th century, the lords of Miolans played an important role in the court of Savoy as chamberlains, counsellors or marshals. In 1521 Jacques III, Knight of the Order of the Annonciade, passed away. He was succeeded by his nephew Urbain, Commendatory Abbot of the Abbey of Saint-Michel-de-la-Cluse. The family died out when Claudine ceded the castle to the Duke of Savoy, Charles III in 1523 after her marriage to Guillaume de Poitiers-Saint-Vallier. The Miolans inheritance then passed to the Miolans-Saluces and the Mitte-Chevrière-Miolans.

The Dungeon and the Great Moat

The great moat carved out of the rock between the lower and upper baileys is bordered to the north and the east by the two counterscarp walls, to the west by the scarp wall and to the south by a crenellated parapet. The moat is 11 meters deep on the south side and 8 meters deep on the north side. In its middle are the remains of quadrangular bridge piers hewn from limestone and stacked alternating lengthwise and width wise. Great care was taken to build a very solid dungeon: the wide-angled turrets on the lower levels serve as buttresses in places where the tower is not built into the rock. The walls are more than 3 meters thick at the base. Higher up, they are thinner and have more bay openings. The highest bays are the widest.

Upper Bailey

A new enclosing wall was constructed in the early 15th century. It encloses the uppermost level area on the rock, thus defining the upper bailey. The military, political and residential functions of the castle were managed here, in contrast to the lower bailey which was initially used as a shelter for castle inhabitants and later as lodging for the garrison.

The rustic lay-out of the upper bailey today reveals several of the key elements in the life of the castle, in particular the well and the remains of the former prisoners' chapel. Popular tradition and local legends held that the underground chamber was used as the castle's fearsome oubliettes.

Saint-Pierre Tower

Like the two preceding rooms, this tower, built in the 12th century, corresponds to the oldest location of the castle of the barons of Miolans. This four-sided building dominates the first moat to the west and the cliff to the south. An outside staircase connects the three levels. Each floor has the necessary amenities for the comfort of the lords: latrines, fireplaces, bays and benches. The second level was probably for the nobles, judging by the coat of arms sculpted with the shield of Anthelme V de Miolans (1276-1304) on the fireplace mantel. The third level was rebuilt in the 15th century and was modified again later for use as a prison. The tower was used to control communication routes in Combe de Savoy, particularly those leading to Italy. On top a crenellated parapet surrounds the terrace which offers a panoramic view of the Mont-Blanc (to the left), the Belledonne range, and the Chartreuse and Vercors mountains (to the right).

Gunpowder Magazine and Provisions Storehouse

These twin rooms, built in front of the Saint-Pierre tower, are located in the historic heart of Miolans Castle. Records indicate the presence of a Franco-Roman Miolans property called Meiolanum, as early as 1014. The earliest reference to Castro Mediolano and his baronial chapel dates back to 1083.

These two rooms were probably built in the 13th century on the same level as the floor of the upper bailey. They are covered by a single terrace. Some of the walls may be of Roman origin.

Underground Gallery

This large cannon room with its cylindrical vault ceiling measures almost 200 meters from end to end. It was constructed in the late 15th century, behind the curtain wall of the second enclosing wall. A straight staircase between the walls connects this gallery to the upper bailey where it opens onto a large vaulted gateway. This gallery contains 13 chambers with archery and canon holes built into the north wall for defending the access ramp.

General Plan of the Castle

Premier fossé	First moat
Tour Saint-Pierre	Saint-Pierre tower
Châtelet d'entrée	Gatehouse
Magasins à poudre et à vivres	Gunpowder magazine and provisions storehouse
Galerie souterraine	Underground gallery
Oubliettes	Oubliettes
Rampe d'accès	Access ramp
Haute-cour	Upper bailey
Appartement de l'officier major	Master officer's apartment
Entrée de la haute-cour	Entrance to the upper bailey
Salle des gardes	Guard room
Donjon	Dungeon
Coursière de contrescarpe	Counterscarp gallery
Grand fossé	Great moat
Tour de la Sauvegarde	Sauvegarde artillery tower
Basse-cour	Lower bailey
D'après le plan de J. [illisible]	From a map by J. [illegible]
Ancien cheminement d'accès à la haute cour	Former access route to the upper bailey