

SENILIS

BEHIND ITS WALLS



SENLIS

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Preface

Senlis,

Senlis the bourgeois, Senlis the austere, Senlis the sleepy, Senlis the preserved,

Senlis the mysterious,

Senlis, small town, cradle of the lilies.

A Roman town that turned in on itself during the destructive invasions of the 3rd century, Senlis became a secure residence for the Merovingian and Carolingian dynasties. It was a ‘Louvre’, a fortified royal residence, highly valued by the early Capetians, who flourished here.

As an administrative and ecclesiastical town, Senlis benefited from exceptional architectural enrichment. It suffered from the destruction of the French Revolution, was spared the remodelling of the industrial 19th century, but was affected by the both world wars. However, it retained the essential part of its character.

Today, Senlis jealously guards its heritage, lovingly preserved and maintained by its residents, who are the only ones privy to it. Privileged people, if you like, who, like all lovers, are certain of possessing and enjoying an extraordinary treasure. Art historians are aware of it and often quote Senlis, but know little about it.

To lift the veil of mystery, three indiscreet lovers were needed. So proud of their city that they were ready to show it off like their mistress and sing: ‘See how beautiful she is!’

At first, there were just two: an entrepreneur born in the city and a specialist doctor, both collectors of images and discoveries. Soon they enrolled a historian – an amateur, of course – to form a team driven by the desire to share. As the riches of their discoveries grew, the awareness of the fragility of a seemingly unchanging heritage fuelled the urgent need to leave a mark. It was time to publish a book about the city: a precious showcase, a collection of rare photographs, rich with unknown or inaccessible places.

The people of Senlis have always extended a warm welcome. However, we must not betray their trust or their privacy. As a result, the location of the photographed places will often remain deliberately imprecise. For this reason as well, we have decided to keep our comments as sober as possible.

Nevertheless, the tour needed some structure. In addition to chapters dedicated to iconic monuments such as the cathedral, the Church of Saint-Frambourg, or Valgenceuse, we have grouped houses and interiors by districts (Saint-Vincent, La Halle district, the lower town) or by themes (artists’ studios, cellars, fountains, quarries). Overall, the book offers a glimpse of Senlis at a time already passed. In many cases, we were able to take advantage of property sales or renovations to photograph interiors that it would be vain to seek out today.

Before going down into the cellars, exploring the attics, walking through the interiors and venturing behind the walls, we would like to express our gratitude to all the public and private owners who, together, share their city with us.

Front cover photo: portal of the Hôtel Germain.
Back cover: cellar staircase of the Hôtel Pluyette.
Page 2: coat of arms of the City of Senlis printed on official headed paper in 1785.



Plan drawn up by H. André, DPLG land surveyor in Senlis
Map from the 1930s.

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The ‘Cité’

At the end of the 3rd century AD, the ancient city was equipped with an oval-shaped rampart flanked by twenty-six towers, two fortified gates and several posterns. This wall would define the heart of the city for a long time to come. The royal castle, the cathedral and its canonical quarter, the bishop’s palace and the collegiate Church of Saint-Frambourg were built in the shelter of the rampart, abutting it and partly annexing it. The residential quarter followed suit. Built over Gothic cellars, the houses were reconstructed during the Renaissance and again in the 17th and 18th centuries, often by joining together several former plots. Under the Ancien Régime, this district was known as the ‘Cité’, a name also given to the rampart. In spite of realignments and demolitions, it has preserved its narrow, winding streets, watched over by noble residences.

Hôtel d’Hérivaux

This Renaissance building is located at the Sainte-Bathilde crossroads. It is mistakenly referred to as the Chancellerie. It takes its name from the monks of Hérivaux Abbey (near Luzarches) who owned this site before 1309. The architecture of the house is highly symmetrical: two pentagonal stair turrets frame the facade, which is adorned with pilasters and half-pilasters, whose capitals follow the classical Greek arrangement of the three orders – Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Built against the Gallo-Roman rampart, the house has, from the outset, annexed the wall, tower, and postern of the ‘Cité’.





The perfectly restored 'False Gate' tower overlooks with its two storeys the houses built in the Middle Ages in the old ditch.





The refurbishment of the house and the difference in construction reveal the addition of an extra storey. In 1749, the master mason Louis Mention declared that the house was in ruins and could not be divided. Since then, its successive owners have restored it.



On the Gallo-Roman rampart.



Interior of the Gallo-Roman tower.



Inside the 'Cité' from the rampart.



The rampart walkway above the 'False Gate'.



The monumental fountain is a remarkable ornamental amenity.



The town centre is sheltered by the rampart of the Cité, dominated by the cathedral to the south of which stretches the canonical quarter.

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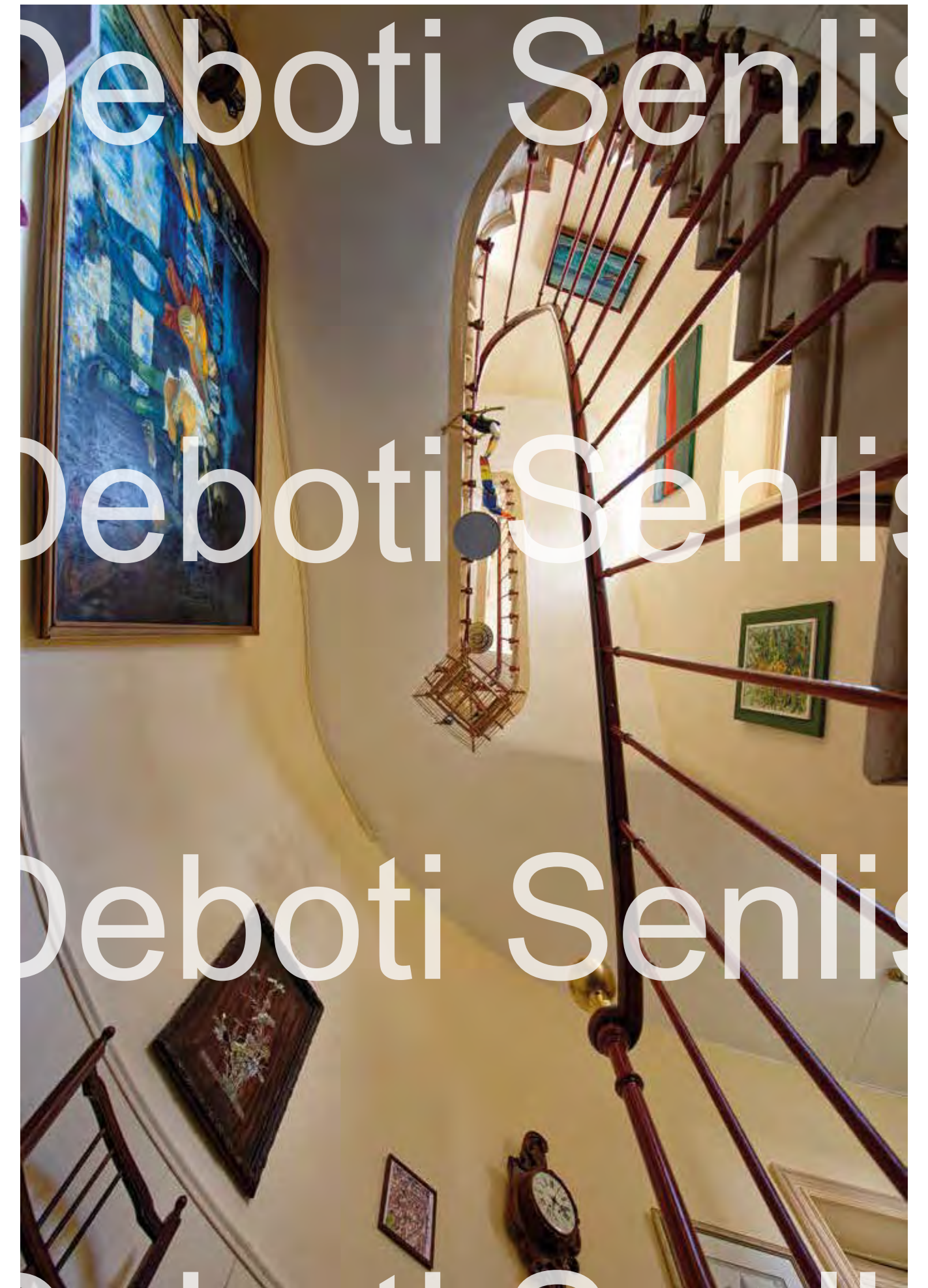
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Hôtel Saint-Gobert

It consists of three major buildings. The oldest, which faces the street and is visible on the far right of the image, features architectural elements from the 14th century. The square tower, covered by a pavilion roof, connects to a two-storey 17th-century building, with four regular bays on each storey. However, the building as a whole is quite homogeneous: the rubble stone walls feature ashlar quoins, as do the window surrounds. The upper storeys are highlighted by stone bands. In the 17th century, these houses were home to lawmen: successively Rieul Bacouel, bailiff and clerk to the Marshalsea of Ile-de-France, Charles Desoubselemontier, magistrate of the Élection (fiscal tribunal) in Senlis, and Jacques de Saint-Gobert President of the Élection.





Spiral staircase with a continuous handrail.

Hôtel des dames de Saint-Remy

The Benedictine nuns of Chelles, known as the Ladies of Saint-Remy of Senlis took refuge within the walls of the Cité after the destruction of their convent in the Saint-Martin quarter during the French Wars of Religion in 1589. They benefited from the use of the Sainte-Bathilde chapel, which survived until the French Revolution. They had their house rebuilt in 1613 but soon left it for a priory in Villers-Cotterêts. The house was rented out to private individuals until the French Revolution.





Engraved limestone tombstone of the abbess of Saint-Remy of Senlis, Claude Sanglier, who died in 1613 at the age of 53. Her coat of arms, three boar's heads, is shown above her effigy with joined hands.



Before 1789, this doorway was a carriage entrance providing access to the inner courtyard from the street.



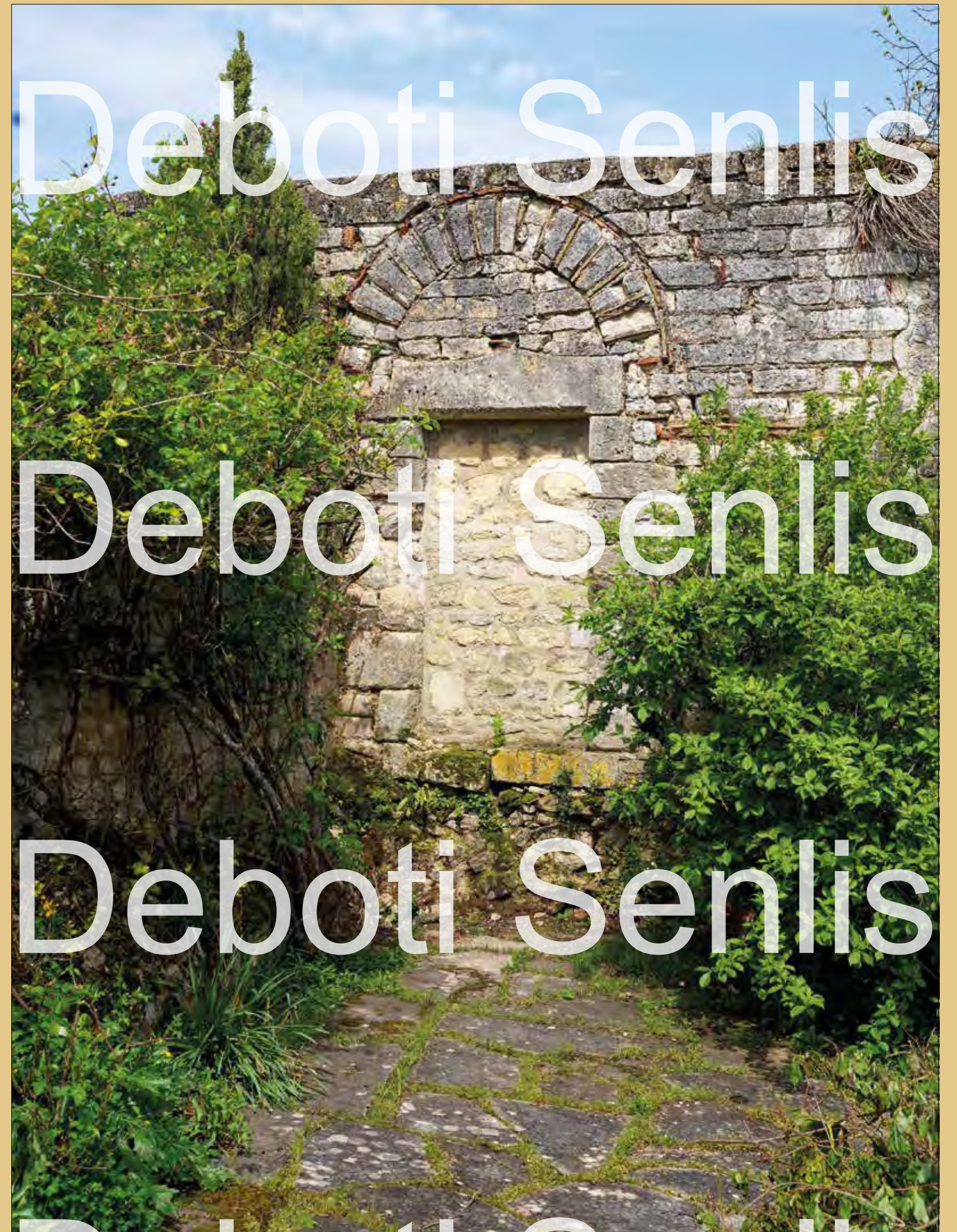
The old carthouse is now a place to relax and unwind.



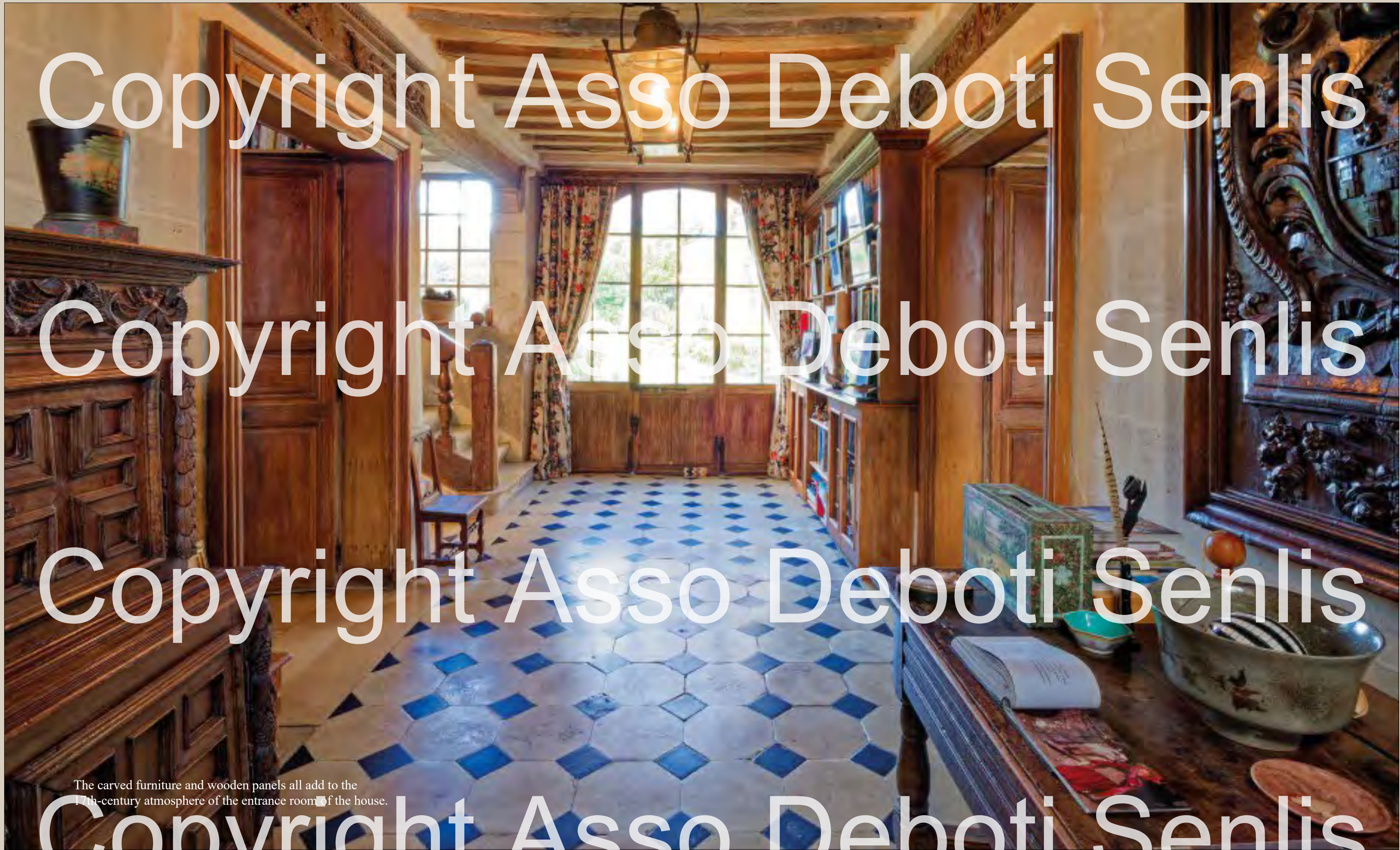
Gallo-Roman tower and rampart. On the left, the houses are built below in the old ditch.



In the garden, a fountain shelters under the flight of steps leading up to the rampart.



The sealed door of a Gallo-Roman tower, which once opened onto the rampart walkway. It still retains its original stonework combining stretchers and headers.



The carved furniture and wooden panels all add to the 17th-century atmosphere of the entrance room of the house.



Enclosed in its 'songbird cage', an evolution of the serinette, the automaton passerine bird waits for the first rays of sunlight to awaken.



An alcove bathed in garden light.



On the mantelpiece, the bust of an enigmatic figure, perhaps an actor, is enjoying the scene.

The living room library features a functional Louis XV-style stone fireplace.



The French ambiance of the living room is unmistakable, despite the seating furniture spanning different time periods. The exposed white beams enhance the space.



The *Toile de Jouy* tapestry, a printed fabric invented in the 18th century, provides a warm atmosphere.



Duquesne House

King's Prosecutor in the Halatte Captaincy

This house extends from the street to the Gallo-Roman rampart. It features a garden that was once planted with fruit trees, while its other facade overlooked an inner courtyard. In its original layout, the study and living room were on the ground floor. A large fireplace once stood on the lateral wall near the wall bordering the street. Its imprint can still be seen above the front steps, visible in the arrangement of the stones and bricks, as well as in the interruption in the corner cornice. The house was already in existence by 1634.



On the ancient rampart walkway.

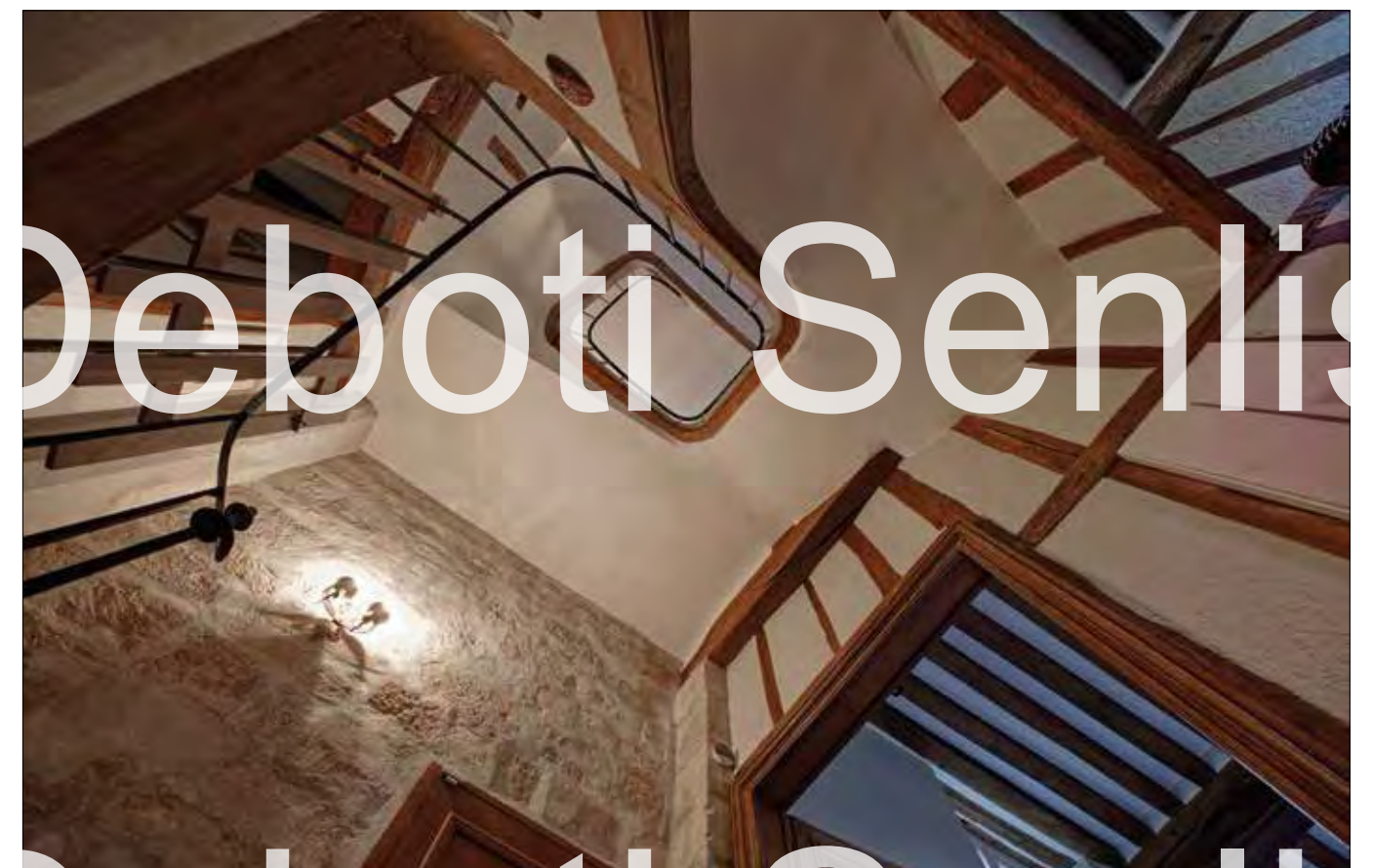




Part of the rampart and an ancient tower of the Cité are enclosed within the houses.



A painted beam with foliage decorations, uncovered during restoration.



Geometric perspective: square stairwell, half-timbered interior walls and beams.

The Royal Castle

This residence of the first kings of France was visited by the itinerant courts of sovereigns from Clovis to Henri II. The castle abuts the massive Gallo-Roman rampart to the north. It incorporates the living storeys of the towers, which may date back to the Merovingian period. The buildings were entirely rebuilt by Louis VI le Gros (the Fat) in 1137. The ruins reveal the structure and protocol of the court.

This aerial photograph shows the Oratory Tower uncovered and straddling the rampart, the King's chamber and its monumental chimney. At the top of the image, the Guards' Tower appears on the right, while the King's Garden is on the left.





A view from the rampart of the garden of the Saint-Maurice priory. In the foreground, the obelisk celebrating the birth of Madame Royale, Duchess of Angoulême, in 1779. Originally erected on the rampart of the Belion Gate, it was dismantled in 1792, preserved by a private individual, and eventually reinstalled in this location in the 20th century. In the background: the castle.



On the rampart, above the Saint-Maurice Gate.



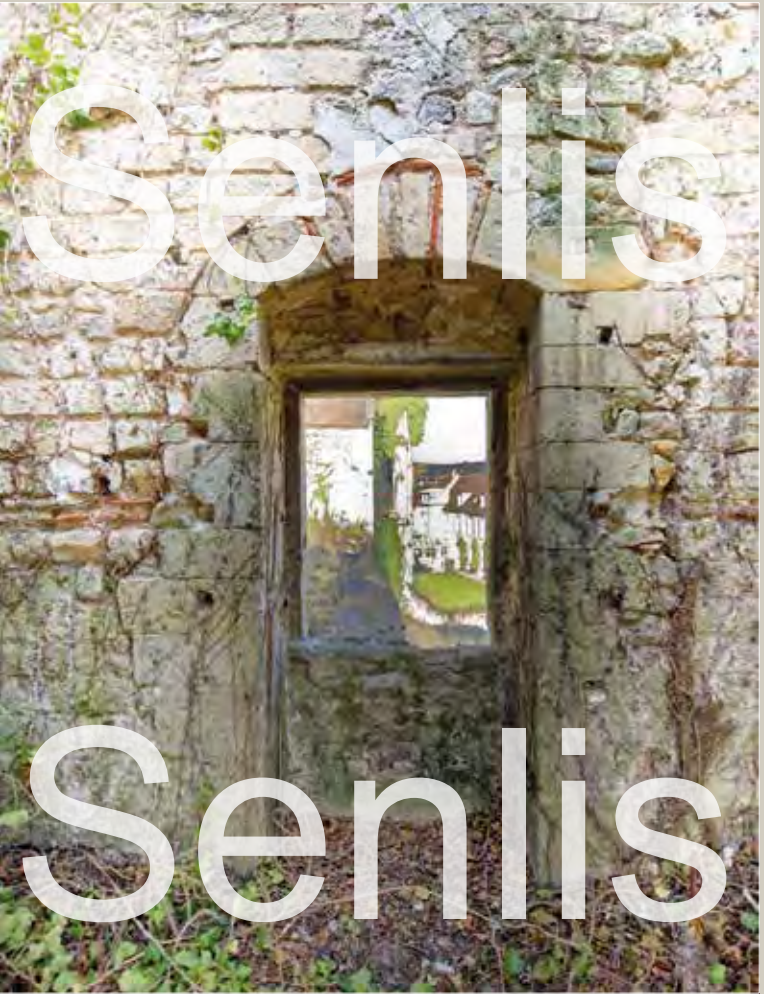
Curtain wall with access to the Oratory Tower.



The architecture of the Guards' Tower is remarkably well-preserved, with its stonework combining stretchers and headers, interspersed with horizontal bands of terracotta "flat tiles" and adorned with arches. The openings were altered during the Middle Ages.



Jamb of the fireplace in the Guards' Tower.



Door of the Guards' Tower leading to the curtain wall.



Inner door of the Oratory Tower.



Fireplace of the King's Chamber.



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A view from the upper storey of the main tower: the cavity of the lower room appears on the right; in the distance on the left is the chapel of Saint-Denis; with the roofs of the King's Chamber and the Guards' Tower visible in the background.

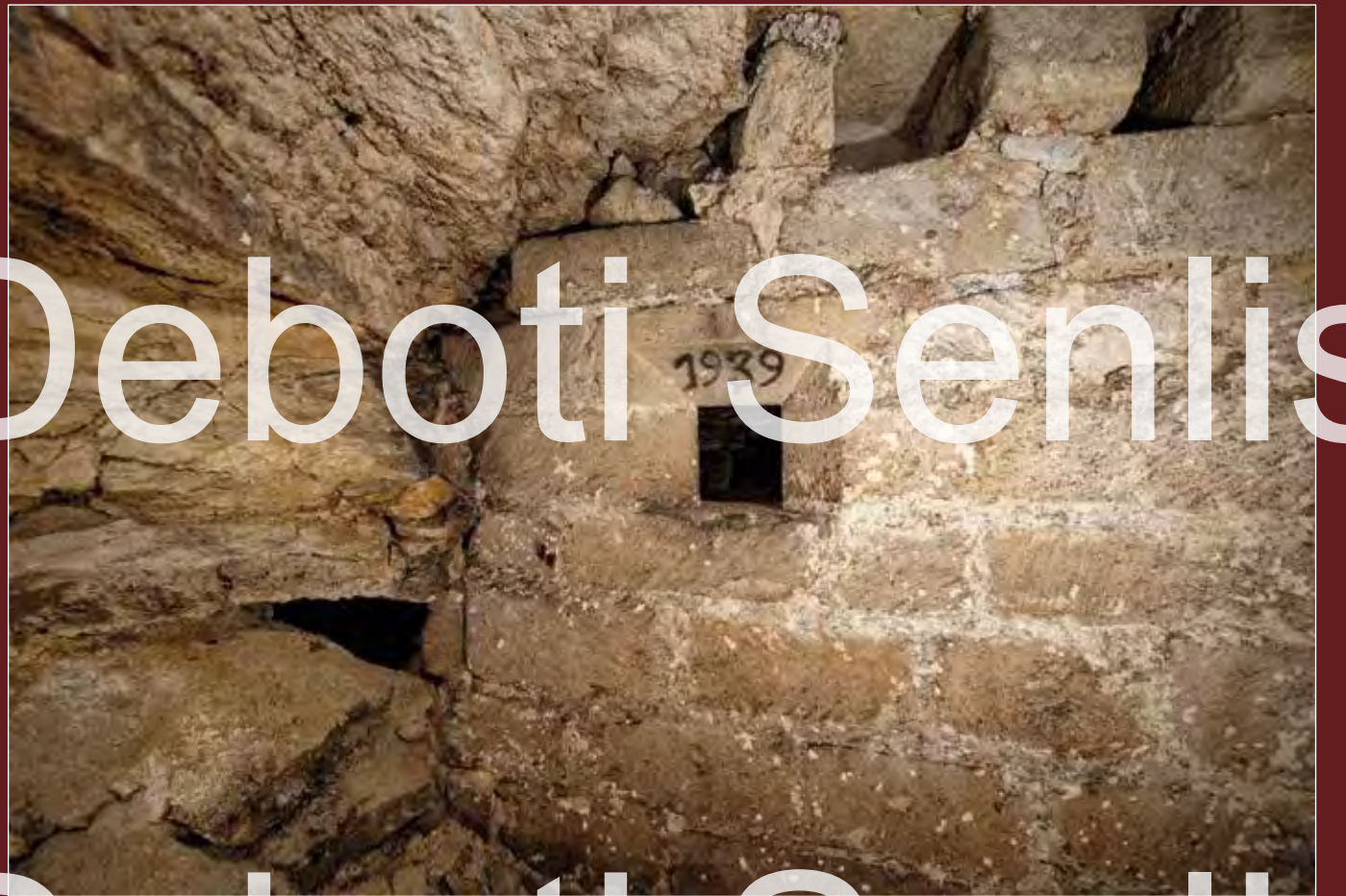
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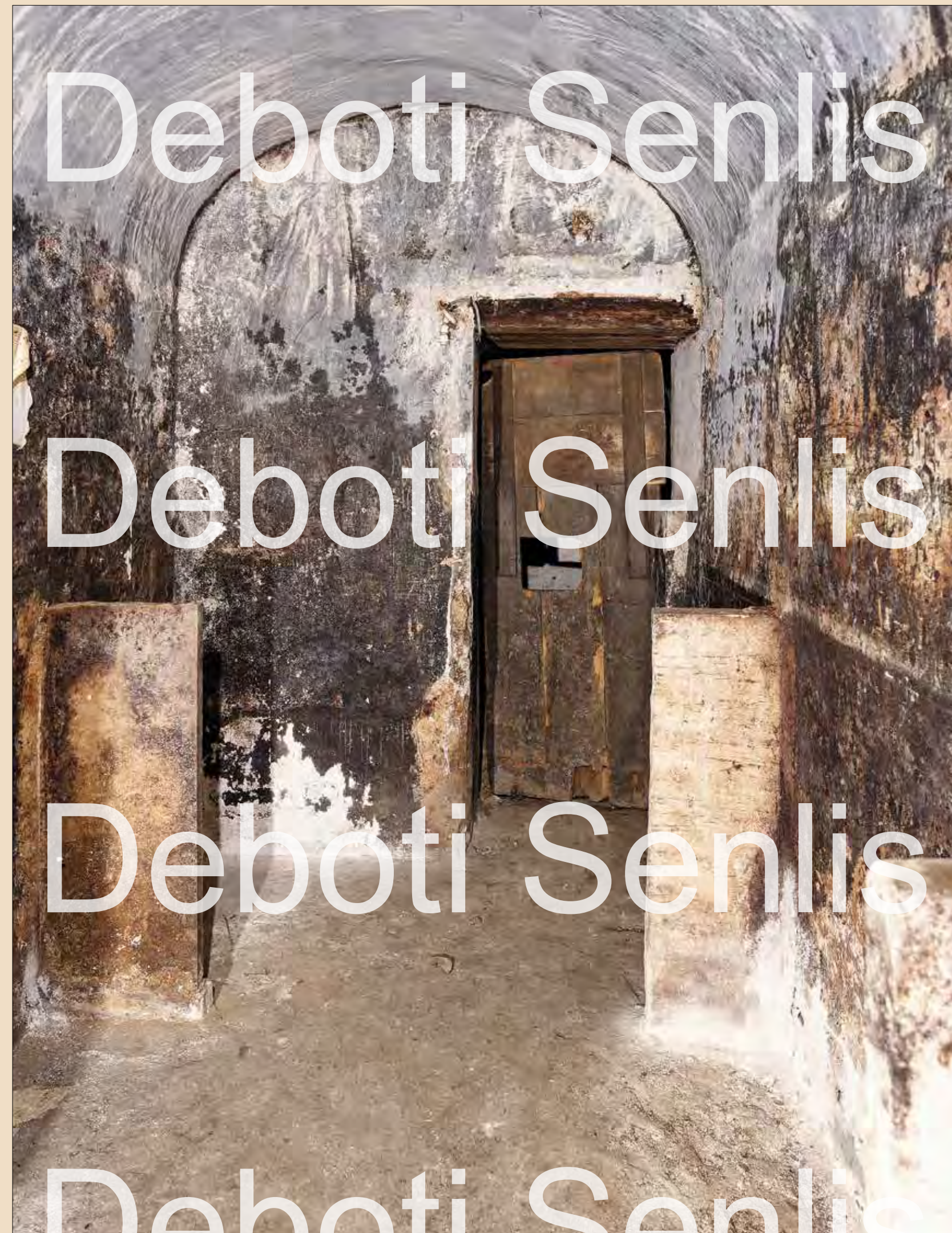
The well in the courtyard of the castle also supplied water to a barrel-vaulted cellar.



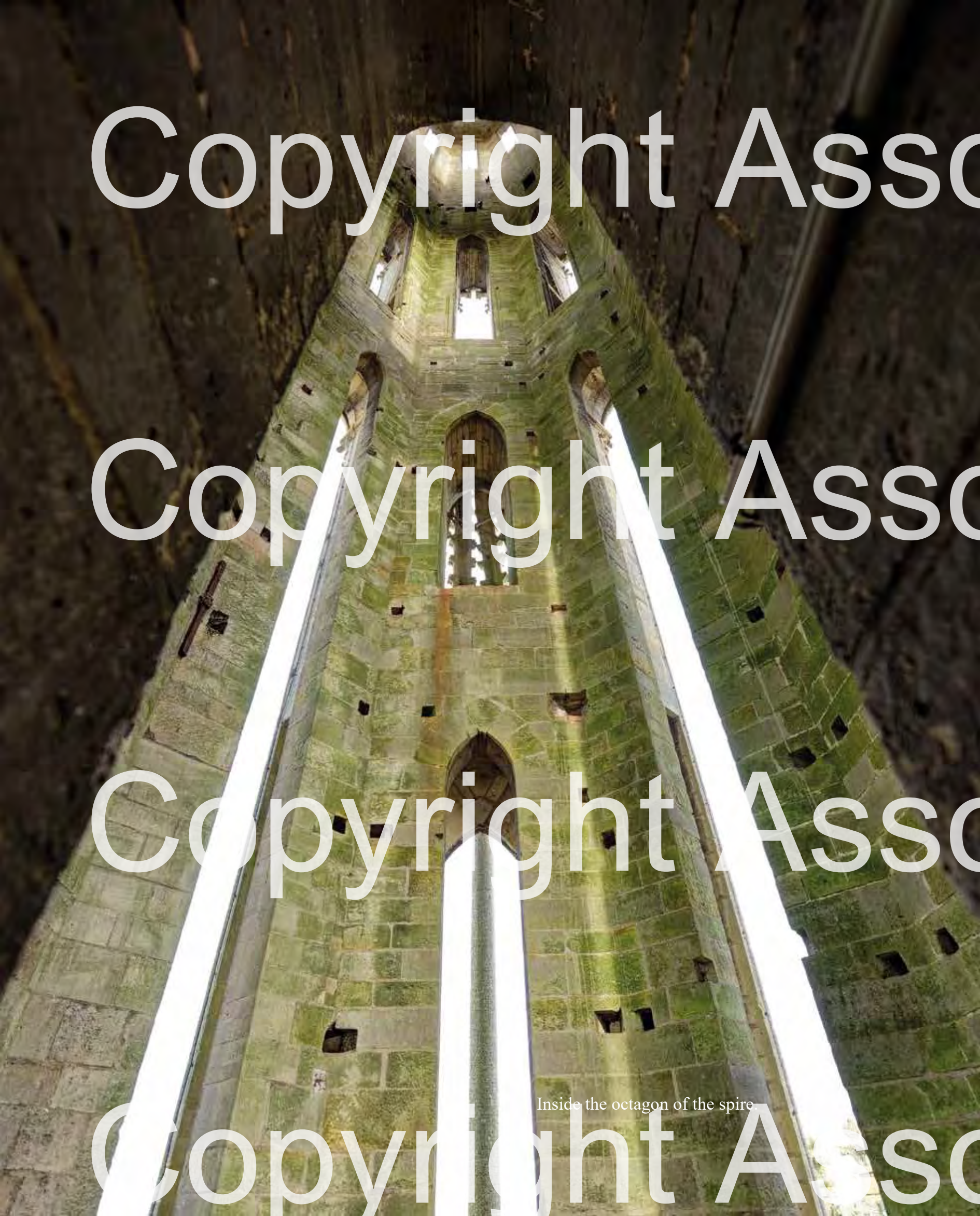
The quarry cellar beneath the storage cellar is divided by a wall constructed from reused stone.



The date corresponds to that of the shelter inventory carried out during the 'Phoney War' in 1939.



The castle's prisons, possibly built in the 13th century, originally consisted of six dungeons and a corridor. The prison remained in use until 1844, when it was sold to a private individual. Today, all that remains are a corridor and two dungeons completely devoid of light.



Inside the octagon of the spire

The Cathedral

It was built in the second half of the 12th century and has been the focal point of the Senlis landscape ever since. There is hardly a place from which it cannot be seen. Since the early 13th century (around 1220-1230), its Gothic spire, a model of its kind, has towered nearly 80 metres above the square (77.31 m to the roof and 79.80 m including the cross).

The spire is built on the solid foundation of the 12th-century south tower, which has been duly reinforced. It fits ‘naturally’ into the construction of the west facade, completed forty years earlier. The masonry at the base of the spire consists of two thin walls, between which lies a gallery at its base and a vertiginous staircase leading to the last dormer windows of the pyramid. The two walls are pierced by tall, slender openings, allowing light and wind to enter.

Nothing in the spire’s complex exterior appearance – octagonal, then pyramidal, adorned with pinnacles, ribs, and crockets – hints at the homogeneous interior, which remains smooth, openwork, and unadorned all the way to the top.





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This aerial view clearly shows how the cathedral and the episcopal palace, located at its apse, are positioned within the oval of the ancient rampart. The modest length of the building (76 m) contrasts with the height of the spire (80 m).

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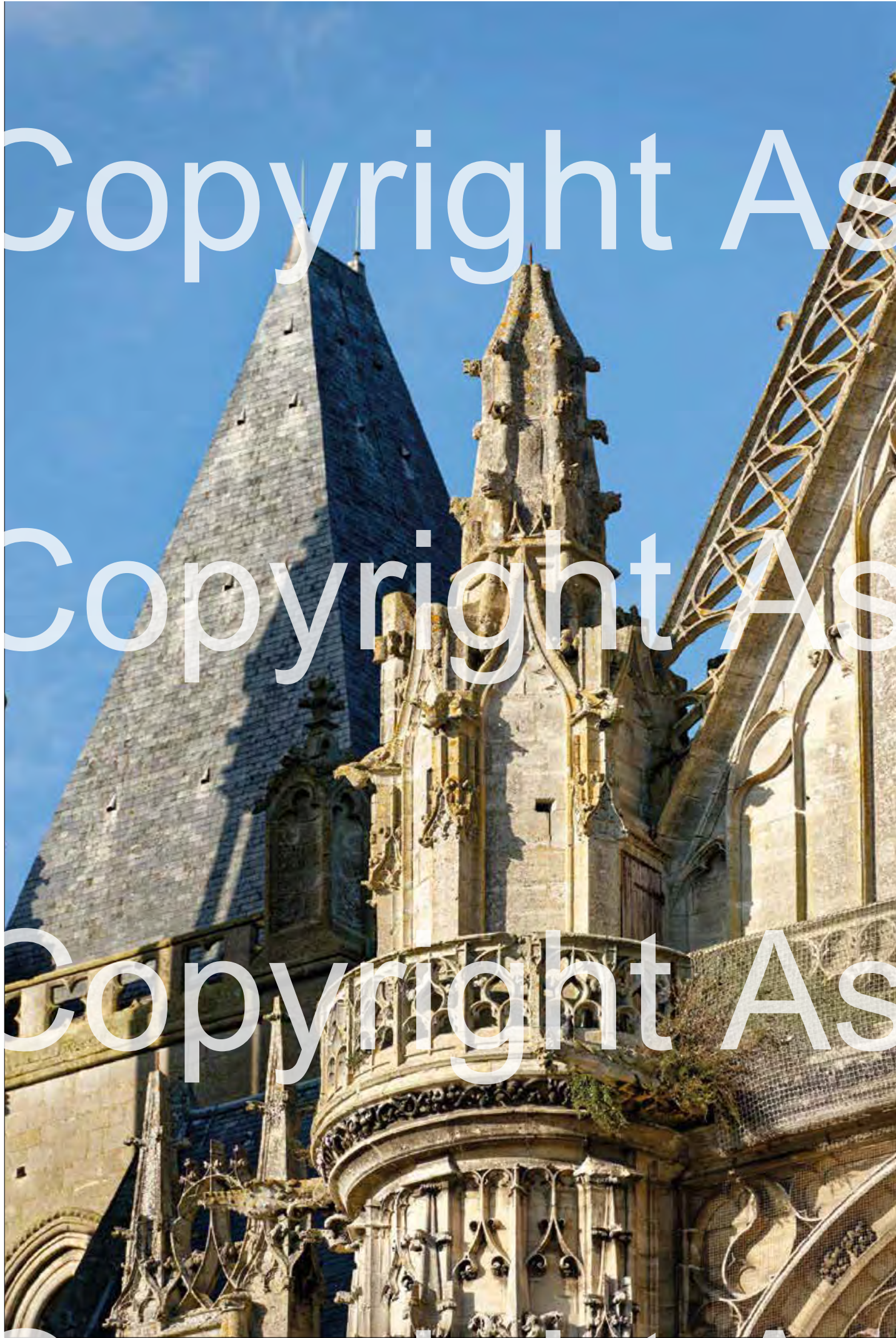
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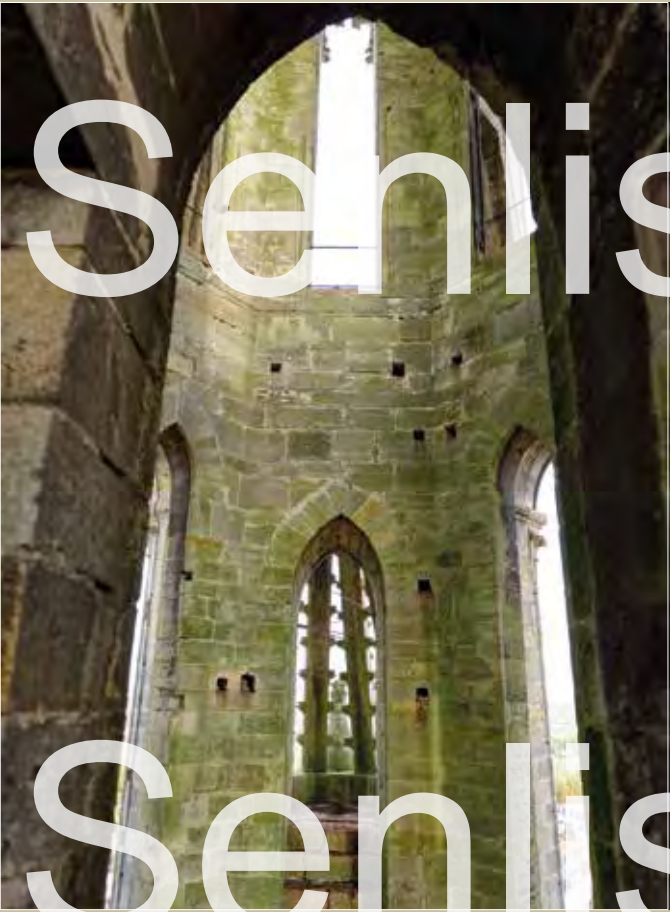
A wide parapet walk at the top of the lateral walls, protected by an openwork 16th-century balustrade, runs around the roof and forms a gutter. It offers incomparable views of the monument's heights and the surrounding buildings.



Flamboyant stair turret on the south portal. The ornate, openwork balustrade protects the parapet walk.



Parapet walk.



On the spire's staircase, just below the dormer windows, the 'architecture of the void' reveals glimpses of the stone ridges that constitute the pyramid on the opposite pinnacle.



Stairs between the walls of the spire.



Through the flying buttresses.



Flying buttresses above the south side chapels.



The 12th-century staircase leading to the cathedral's spire is covered by a barrel vault. This corridor staircase enables the axis of the spiral to be shifted.



The cathedral's north tower once housed the bells, which have now been relocated to the south tower. The 12th-century cage is now empty. The diaphragm arch is supported by the north and south walls.



Old clock mechanism manufactured by Blin in Paris and installed in 1876.

The Rose Window Room

The 12th-century vault between the towers was spared by the fire of 1504 and the subsequent renovations. The space above the vault's extrados is illuminated by the rose window, which was reworked in the 16th century, at the centre of the west facade. It can only be accessed via the bell tower staircases.





The belfry, i.e. the wooden structure supporting the four bells, has been located in the south tower since the fire of 1504. The impressive wooden frame is supported by stone corbels to prevent any vibrations from shaking the masonry.

Four bells ring out the hours and signal ceremonies to the people of Senlis. Cast in 1823, the bells are named Marie-Claire, Adrienne-Antoinette, Jeanne-Marie and Simone-Françoise.



The bells are suspended by fitted stays that surround a 'headstock', also known as a 'yoke'. Left: the wheel.





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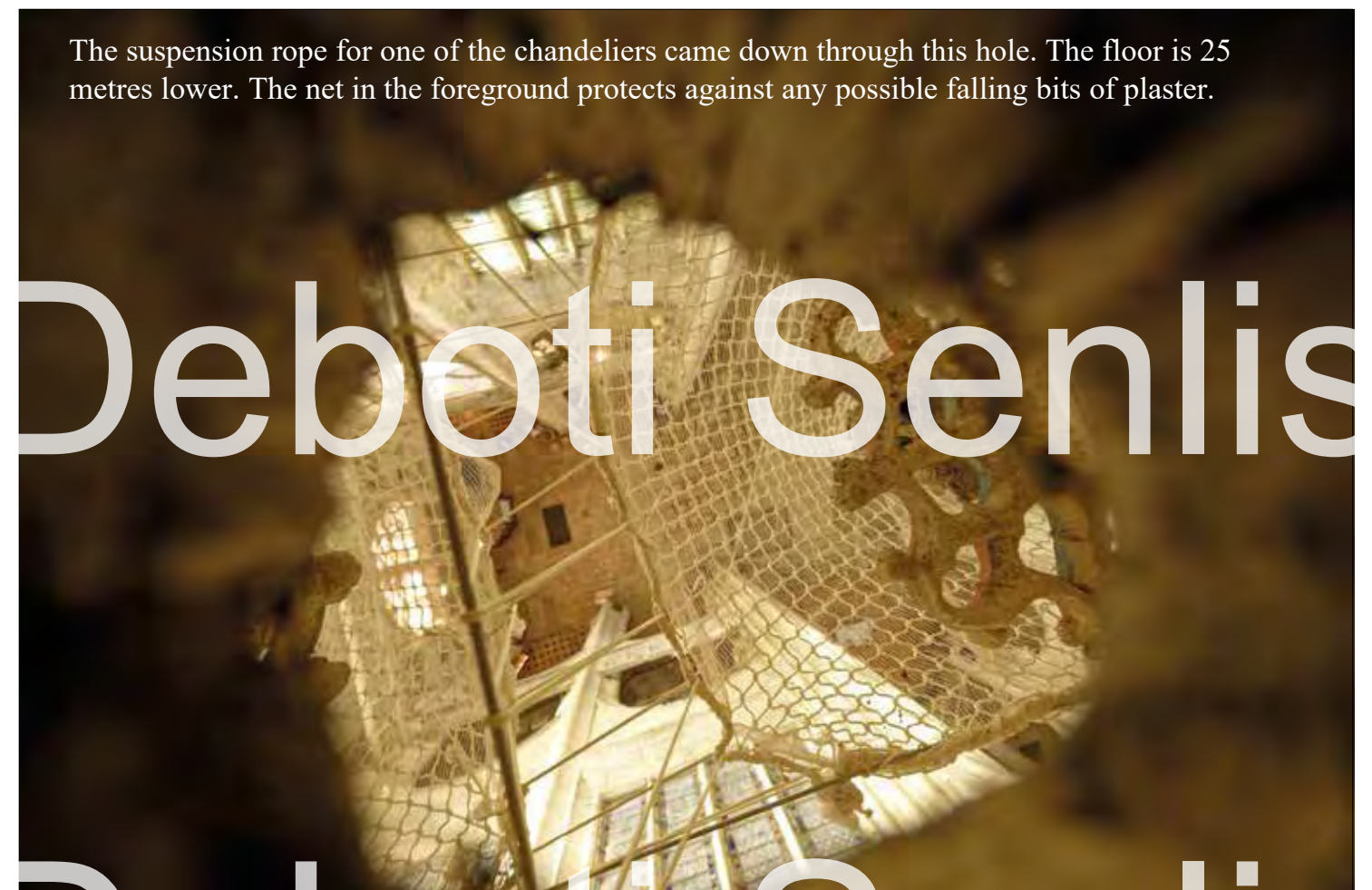
The wooden roof structure was rebuilt after the fire of 1504. It consists of trusses with tie-beams and crown posts that rest on the lateral walls, above the vaults. A walkway allows for inspection of the structure without stepping on the vaults.



A single post on two large intersecting tie-beams supports the trusses at the junction of the nave and transept roofs.



The wooden roof structure does not rest on the vaults.



The suspension rope for one of the chandeliers came down through this hole. The floor is 25 metres lower. The net in the foreground protects against any possible falling bits of plaster.



Structure of the apse roof frame: set of wooden pieces located on a horizontal plane and radiating around the post.



The pulleys and winches of the now disused light fittings remain in place.



The rose window in the south transept was designed by the architect Pierre Chambiges and completed in 1534. The north rose window, on the other hand, was completed around 1560 by Jean Diziult.

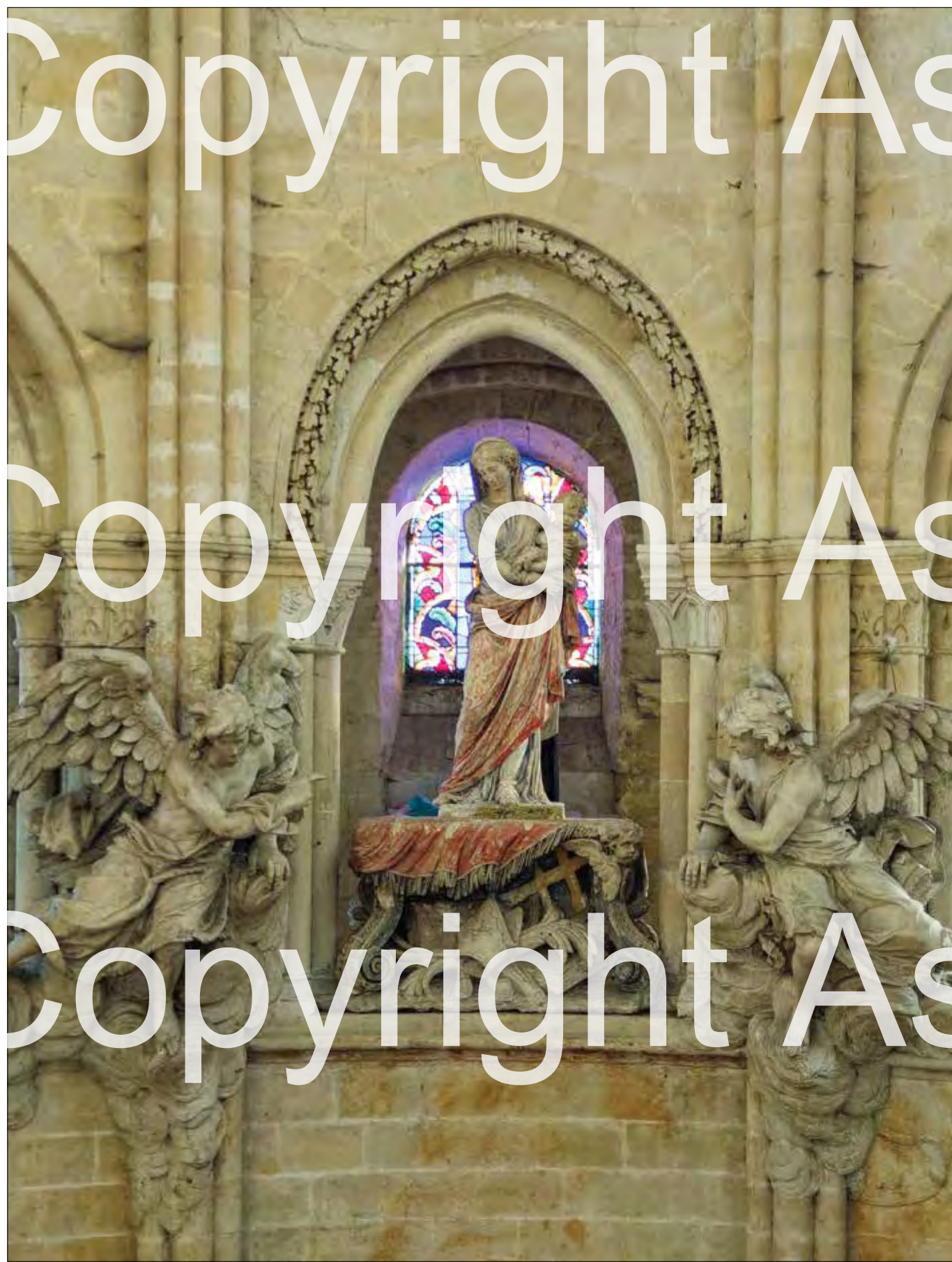


The tribunes mainly date from the 12th century, but in some areas, they show signs of modifications made to the narrow transept in the 13th century. Until the 19th century, the galleries were regularly used by the faithful during services. Paid access to the them and traffic above the side chapels and aisles were regulated.

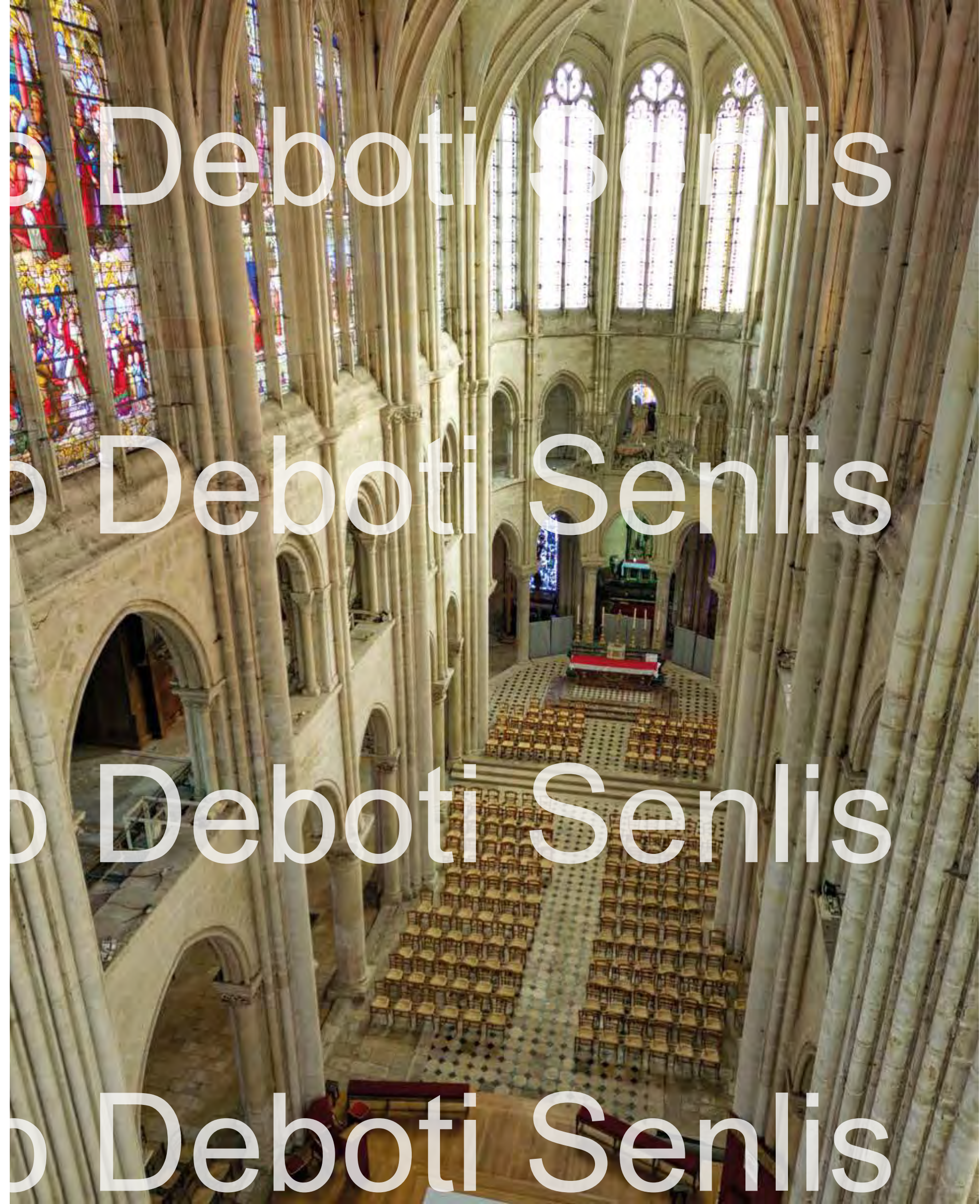


Although the opening of the transept in the 16th century altered the layout, it is still possible to walk around the perimeter of the building on the tribune level, passing beneath the rose windows. The columns at the intersections display the various architectural styles and periods of construction. The balustrade dates back to the 16th century.





On the choir tribune, the Virgin and Child is flanked by two winged angels, carried on clouds, both works of the sculptor Jean-Guillaume Moitte, a pupil of Jean-Baptiste Pigalle. These angels were originally pointing to the reliquary shrine of Saint Rieul, which was placed on a base sculpted with episcopal attributes. The statue of the Virgin has replaced the shrine.

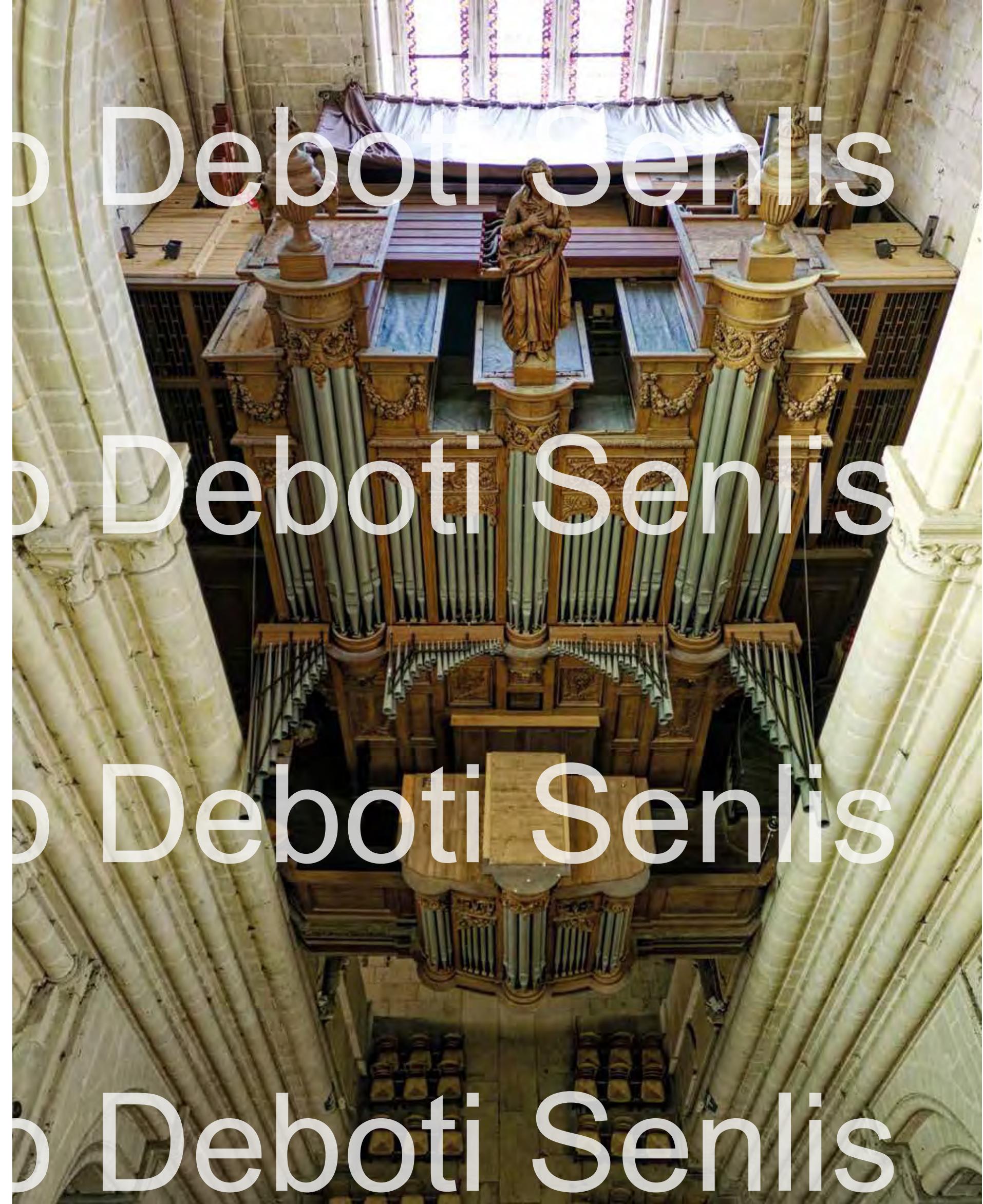


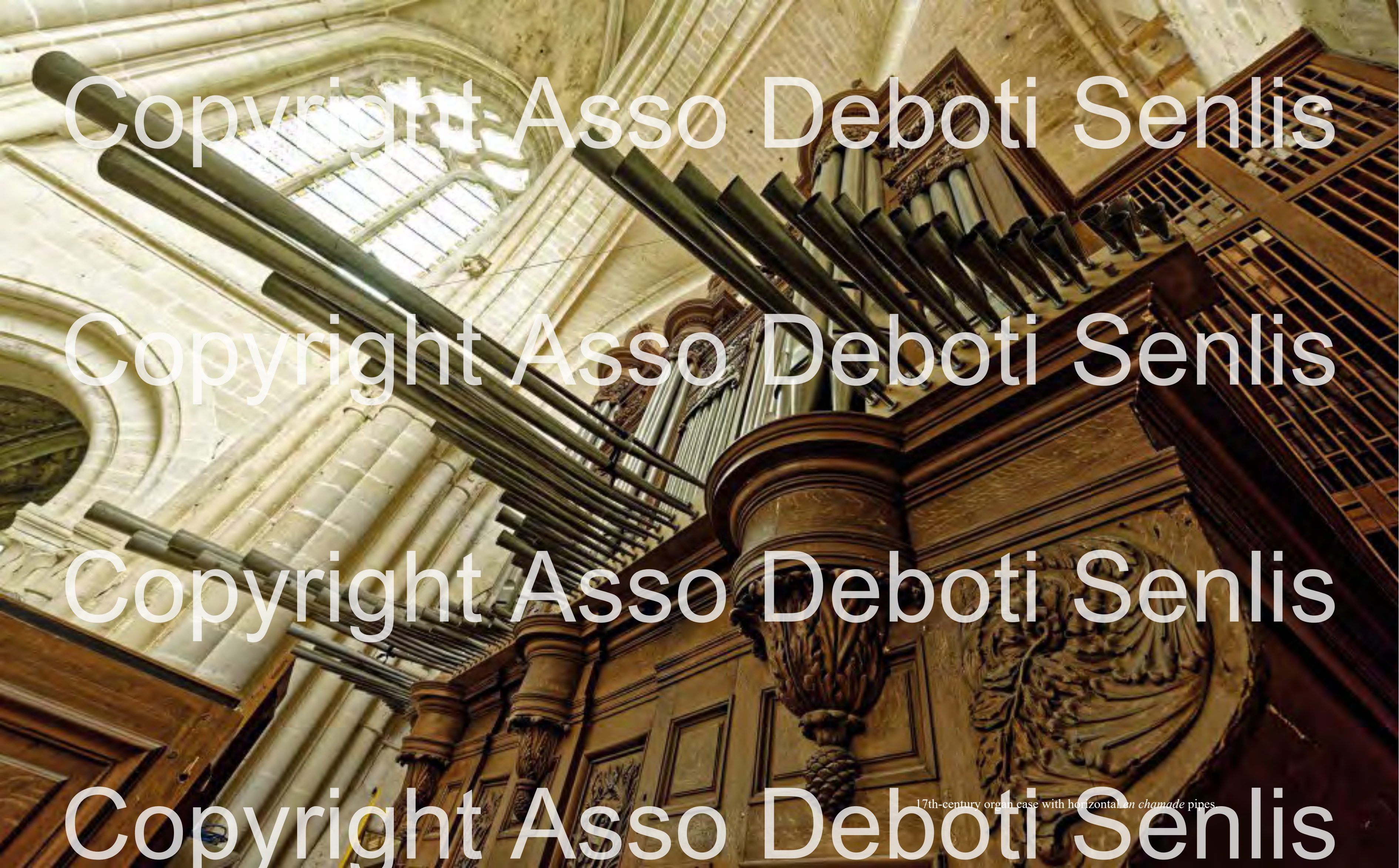
The organ

The cathedral's grand organ dates from 1647 and originally came from the Saint-Vincent Abbey in Senlis, whose monogram is visible on the organ case. Donated to the cathedral in 1803, the instrument was adapted and inaugurated in 1808. Since then, it has undergone numerous modifications and revisions. It was completely dismantled and modernised in 2019, before being re-inaugurated in a public ceremony on 10 December 2022. The organ case is listed as a Historic Monument.



The organ's mechanical bellows were operated by two men called blowers and date from 1858.





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17th-century organ case with horizontal *en chamade* pipes



False windchest holding pipes vertically.



Forest of pipes of the choir.



Old organ console with four manuals, drawstops and pedalboard.

Cathedral district

The houses to the south of the church all belonged to the cathedral's 'cloister'. The cloister, or canonical enclosure, was a walled area with four gates, where the canons serving the cathedral and the collegiate Church of Saint-Frambourg lived, along with their servants. The cloister was closed at night. There were 28 houses built to the south of the cathedral, on Place Notre-Dame, Rue Sainte-Prothaise, Rue du Petit-Chaalis, Rue and Place Saint-Frambourg, Impasse Saint-Nicolas and part of Rue du Chancelier Guérin. Religious establishments in the surroundings of Senlis also had their town houses there, such as the Priory of Saint-Nicolas d'Acy, the Ladies of Saint-Remy and the Abbey of Chaalis.

Over time, through donations, acquisitions, or exchanges, houses outside the cloister passed into the chapter's ownership and thus became canonical houses. The Hôtel de Vermandois and several houses in the Rue du Châtel, between the Place du Parvis and the Rue Sainte-Prothaise, are examples of this.

The houses in the canons' quarter have ancient Gothic cellars, many of which extend into an underlying quarry level.



The roof structure of the Hôtel-Dieu de Garlande, composed of numerous reused wooden elements, has probably been lowered since the disappearance of the south aisle.



Nave of the chapel. The sick received care in the side aisles, with the men on the right and the women on the left.

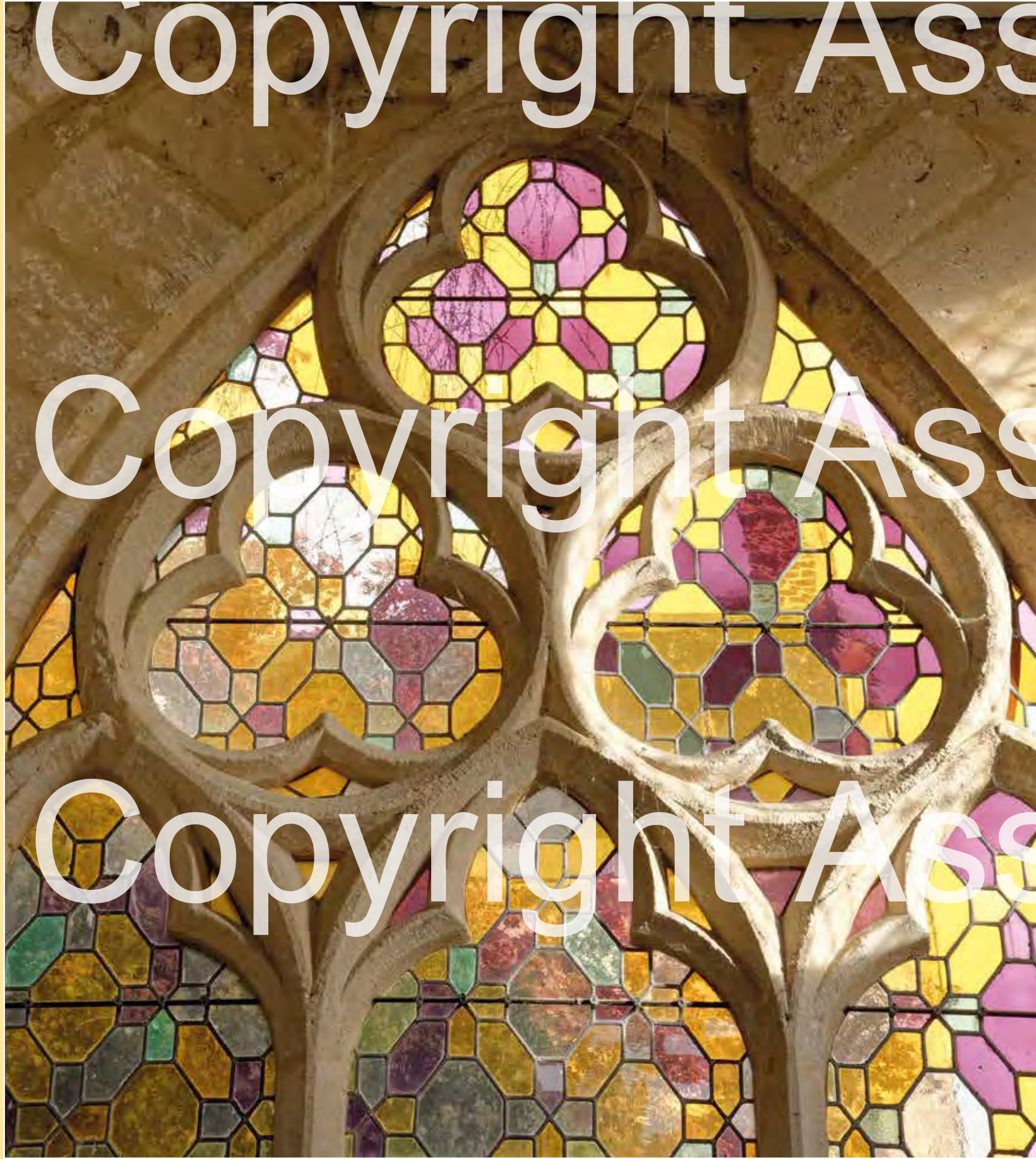
Hôtel-Dieu de Garlande

The establishment was founded in 1170 outside the city walls, in the Faubourg Saint-Martin. It was only in 1227 that it moved within the Cité, onto land belonging to the de Garlande family. Like the Bouteiller family, its rival, the de Garlande family provided high-ranking officers to the Capetian kings.

The Ladies of Charity cared for infirm women until 1839. The buildings were then repurposed as a warehouse and a chicory factory. After the First World War, the Caisse d'Épargne took over the site and carried out major restoration work on the facade in 1966. Today, the building is a private residence, carefully restored and preserved.



The south aisle has disappeared, revealing the architecture of the nave from the garden. It consists of two rows of six sturdy columns with sculpted capitals, supporting longitudinal pointed arches.



Tracery of the flat chevet bay forming three trefoils, surmounting three trilobed lancets.



A well, a remnant of medieval town planning, stands between the flat apse of the chapel and the wall of the canonical enclosure.



Flat apse of the north aisle of the church.



Trefoil of the entrance tympanum decorated with carved oak leaves.



The cartouche painted in the north aisle bears verses from Ecclesiastes, chapter 4, in the Old Testament. It serves as a reminder of the establishment's charitable role.



The latest restoration work uncovered this prophet's head, a lateral coussinet from an arch of the now-lost south aisle of the chapel. The sculpture is very different from that of the capitals in the nave and may belong to an earlier construction phase.



One of the capitals in the nave decorated with oak leaves.

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The bank's logo dates back to 1968. Frozen into the stone, this squirrel looking to the left is consistent with the date of the completed renovation of the building's facade.



Safe of the former Caisse d'Épargne.



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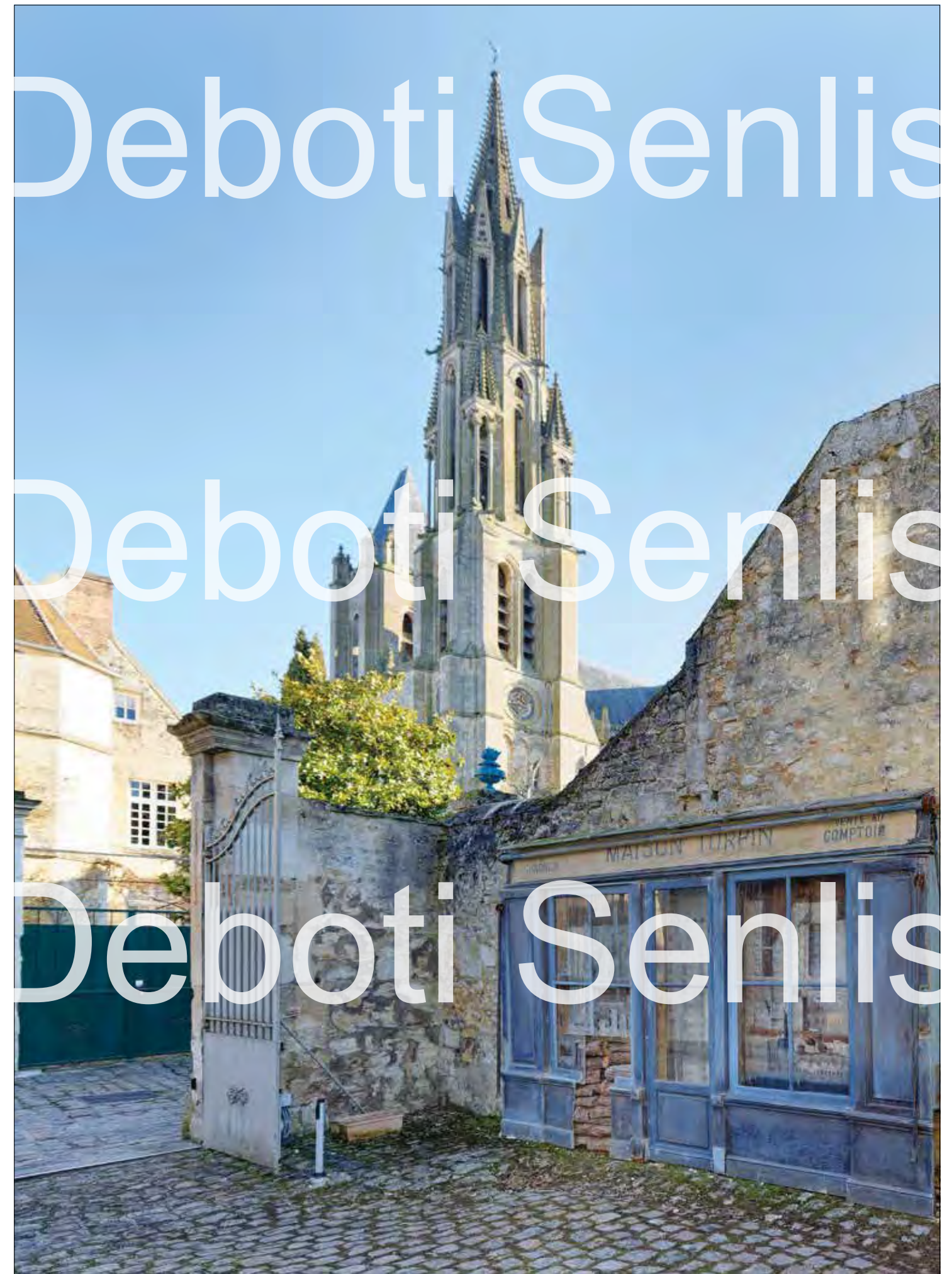
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In 1507, this house was occupied by Pierre Gobert, the dean of the cathedral. Restoration work in the 20th century uncovered a timber-framed facade on the first floor, with wooden beams arranged in a grid pattern and flat brickwork laid in a fishbone pattern. A similar structure can be found on a house in Rue de la Treille and on the chapter library.



Canon house of the cathedral chapter. In 1939, it was the home of Doctor André Chastel, who fought in the French Resistance.



At the foot of the cathedral, a painted wooden shop front from the past is not out of place, even in a film set.



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Courtyards of the canon houses.

The House of Canon Pierre Desprez

This house is a canon house, meaning it was part of the 'cloister' of the cathedral's chapter. The canons did not own their houses, but rather had the right to inhabit them for their lifetime, with the responsibility of maintaining and repairing them.

In 1522, Canon Pierre Desprez had this two-storey house, with an attic and a turreted spiral staircase at the rear, rebuilt. The facade is a fine combination of brick and ashlar stone. In the 17th century, a wing was either added or rebuilt at the rear of the house.

The main building was restored in the 19th century by Antoine Augustin Gervais d'Aldin, a papal knight.

This restoration gave the house a troubadour style. However, the description provided by Louis Graves at the beginning of the 19th century still aligns with the current appearance, with the exception of the added coat of arms. This Renaissance architecture was perfectly in keeping with the historicist taste of the 19th century.



Roof ornament from the 19th century.





A basket-handle door with a woodwork in a linenfold design.



In the 17th-century extension of the house, a large stone fireplace with moulded lintel on corbels heated the room. The white beams and ceiling brighten the space, while the octagonal paving, in alternating ochre and black, adds warmth.



Through the window, the south portal of the cathedral by Pierre Chambiges can be seen.



A vaulted passageway with a staircase leading to the lower room.



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The door of the vestibule on the left has a woodworking in a linenfold design. This carving motif is typical of the late 15th and early 16th centuries. In the 19th century, the design of this wooden construction was in keeping with Gothic tastes and provided a comfortable warmth. The stone fireplace has two robust jambs, while the trumeau, made of large, finely dressed stone, supports a moulded cornice.

The House of the Chaalis Abbey

The building is a canon house donated before 1166 by Guillaume, subcantor of the Church of Senlis, to the abbot of Chaalis. However, it was often rented to canons of the cathedral.

This house is vast and was perfectly suited to serve as a town house for the abbey, used for storing and selling the production of the Senlisis barns and the wines of Brenouille, as well as for crop storage and providing a reception area. In 1778, when it was the seat of the royal abbey's jurisdiction, the courtroom had its entrance on Rue du Petit-Chaalis. Today, it is an 18th-century building whose construction no longer corresponds to its cellars.





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The south wall of the collegiate Church of Saint-Frambourg shelters a house built between its buttresses. A small, single-storey chapel opens onto this wall; it is the counterpart to another chapel opposite in the north wall, sketching out the beginning of a transept.

The Vermandois

The Hôtel de Vermandois is a rare example of a prestigious civil building with an upper hall. Raoul of Vermandois (circa 1085-1152), known as Raoul le Vaillant (the Valiant) or Raoul IV of Crépy, was Count of Vermandois and Valois. He had this mansion built between 1140 and 1142.

It was originally a high rectangular building built over a cellar, with a single storey. On this level, a large room, adorned with arcades measuring 2.40 m in width and 4.80 m in height, features double windows and is connected at the rear to the Gallo-Roman rampart, annexing one of its towers. One of the doors led directly onto the curtain wall of the rampart, providing access to the royal castle. One can only imagine the discreet comings and goings between the two buildings during the time of Raoul of Vermandois and King Louis VI le Gros (the Fat), his first cousin, and later King Louis VII, his brother-in-law.

In 1167, Raoul's daughter Elisabeth sold the building to the brothers of the Temple in Paris. It was then granted to the chapter of the cathedral of Senlis to become a canon house.

In the 16th century, it was extensively transformed. The great hall was divided into two levels, the floor was lowered and a hexagonal staircase tower, clearly visible today, was built projecting from the main structure. The facade was modified in the 18th century.

The building was sold during the French Revolution and from then on was used for a variety of purposes. A boys' school was established there in 1823, followed a century later, in 1923, by the Mortgage Registry.

In June 1940, the facade of the Gallo-Roman tower was badly damaged during bombing raids. The Beaux-Arts administration decided to have a large part of the destroyed structure rebuilt, and initiated the process of classifying the tower as a Historic Monument.

In 1977, exhibition rooms were converted into a museum dedicated to the history of the city. The museum closed in 2007.

It was given the name Hôtel de Vermandois in the 19th century.





A view of the tower of the Hôtel de Vermandois from outside the Cité. The repairs to the breach in the first-floor wall caused by a bomb in 1940 are clearly visible.



The wooden roof structure of the Gallo-Roman tower was spared in the bombardment.



Perspective of the medieval *aula*: the ceiling is the result of transformations carried out during the Renaissance, and the original roof structure likely allowed for a much greater height beneath it.



An original wooden piece of the roof structure?



Upper part of a 12th-century window.



On the first floor, a basket-handle access door, seen from the spiral staircase.



A 12th-century capital from one of the arcades in the great hall.



Upper section of the arcades in the *aula* (great hall on the noble floor). The arches rest on the abacuses of rectangular capitals, which have been embedded in a wooden floor since the 16th century. The walls are coated with ochre plaster featuring false joints.

Saint-Frambourg collegiate Church

The royal chapel of Saint-Frambourg was served by canons who watched over the relics of the hermit Frambourg. It was probably founded around the year 1000 by Queen Adelaide, widow of Hugues Capet. The construction of the current Gothic church began between 1170 and 1177. Its considerable size required crossing the Gallo-Roman rampart and laying the foundations of its choir in the rue Saint-Hilaire below, in the former ditch. It also stands over an older church, whose remains can be seen in the crypt specially built for this purpose.

Abandoned during the French Revolution, the church lost its bell tower and was used as a fodder storage. Its roof structure ultimately collapsed in 1914. After being used as a car garage, it was bought in 1973 by the pianist Georges Cziffra and his wife Soleiha, who restored it and had its underground excavated.

In 1977, the Foundation inaugurated the Franz Liszt auditorium, named after Georges Cziffra's favourite composer.

The roof was fully restored in 2004.





The south chapel was built in the 15th century between the nave's buttresses. Until recently, it served as a greenhouse for the adjoining garden. It has now been reintegrated into the church and its wall has been closed.



Sacristy of the chapel built against the Gallo-Roman rampart.



Tower of the Bancloque postern seen from the curtain wall.



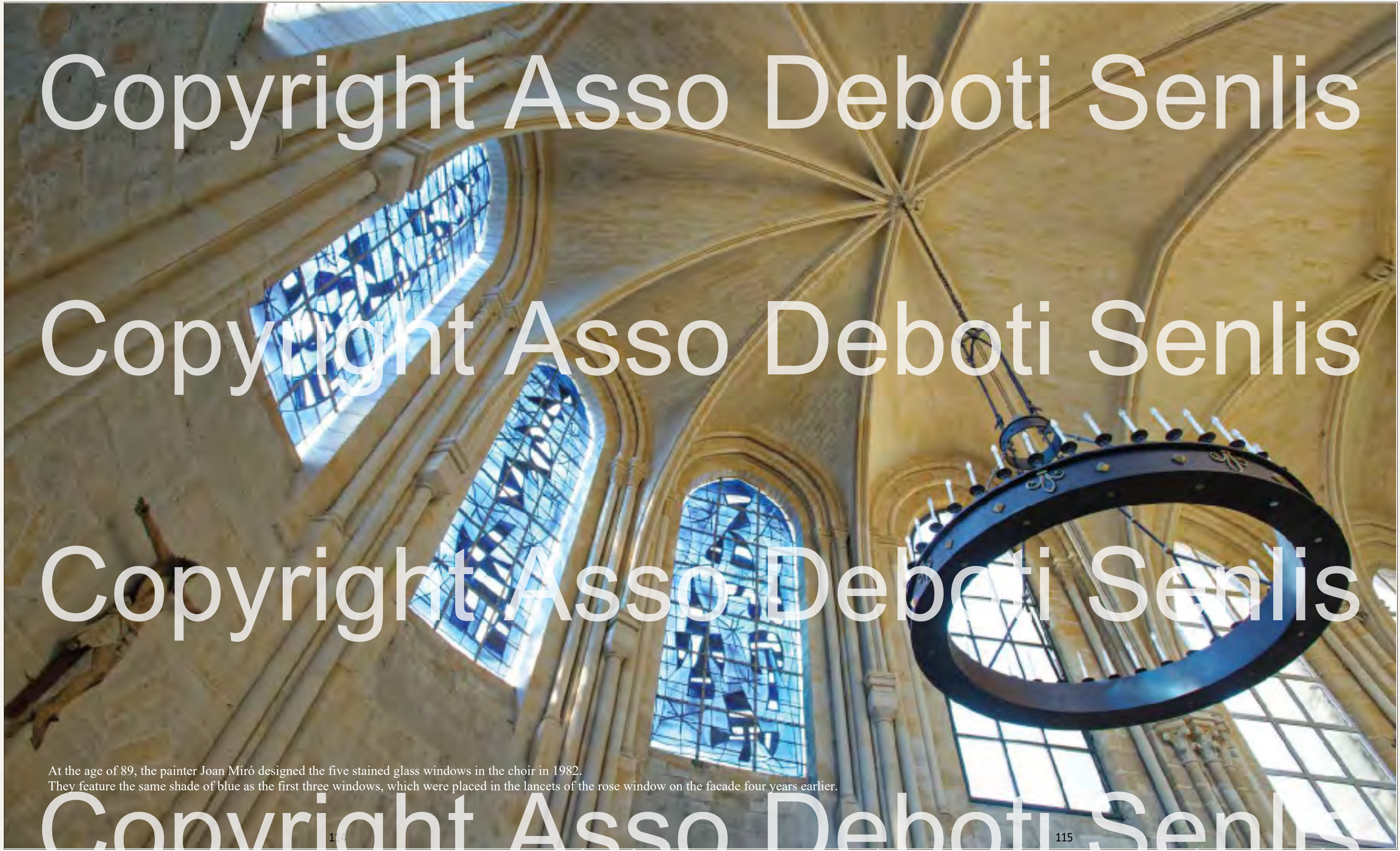
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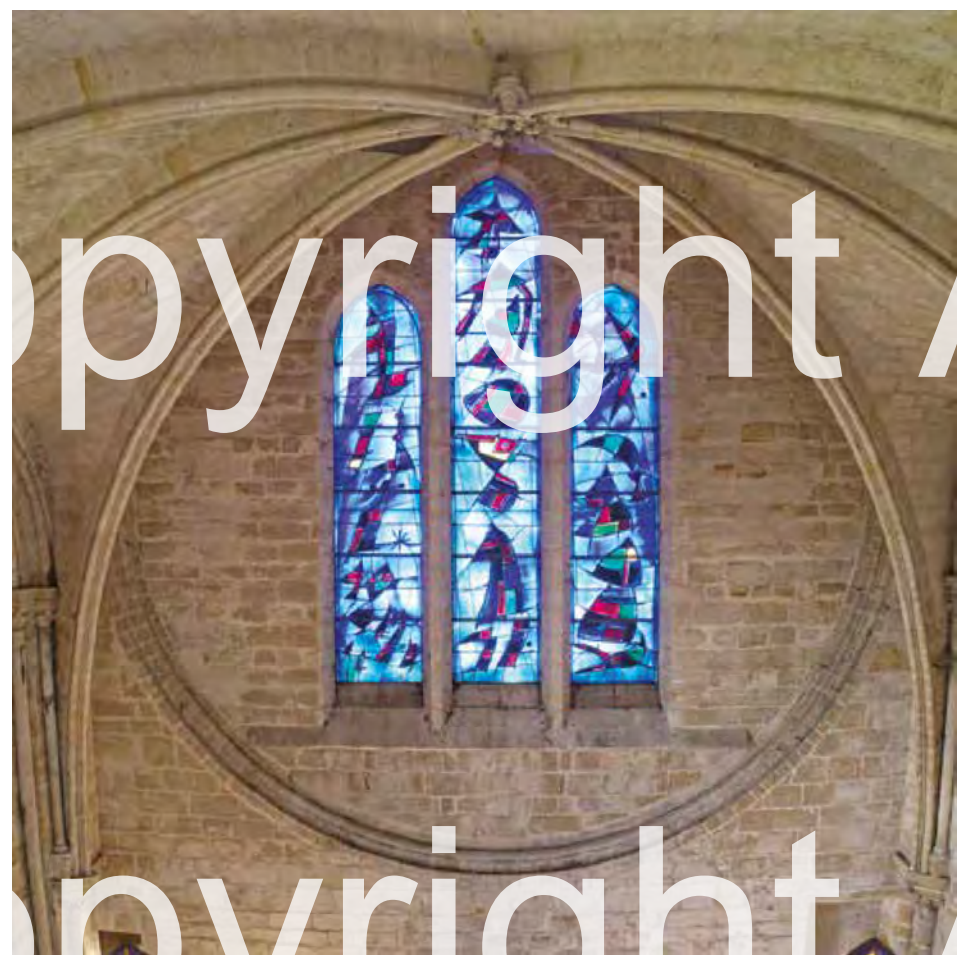
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The church consists of a single, elongated nave measuring 46 m in length and 9.7 m in width, with four bays and an apse. Two 15th-century chapels are set into the nave walls, built between the buttresses.

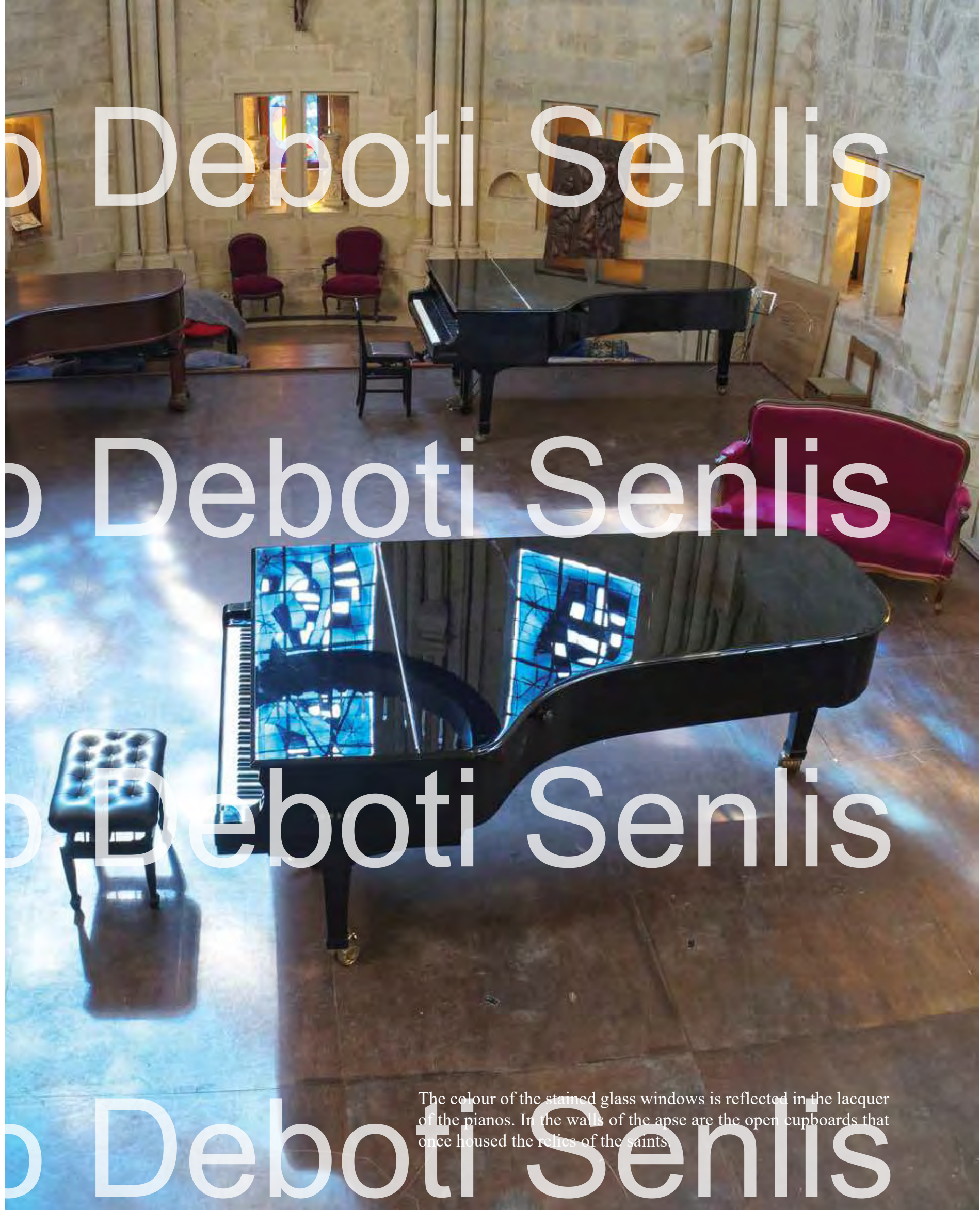
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At the age of 89, the painter Joan Miró designed the five stained glass windows in the choir in 1982. They feature the same shade of blue as the first three windows, which were placed in the lancets of the rose window on the facade four years earlier.



These three stained glass windows, entitled ‘L’échelle de l’évasion’ (*The Ladder of Escape*), create a link between earth and sky. The shade of blue chosen by master stained-glass artist Charles Marq corresponds both to Joan Miró’s scale model maquette and cartoons, and to the luminosity of the nave. According to the artist, ‘in this blue we see the wings of butterflies, sparks, and stars’.



The colour of the stained glass windows is reflected in the lacquer of the pianos. In the walls of the apse are the open cupboards that once housed the relics of the saints.



Modern roof structure (2004) over the vaults.



Under the floor of the choir, excavations have uncovered the remains of the Gallo-Roman tower and rampart, both of which were spanned by the chapel.



A modern archaeological staircase leads down to the base of the tower. This part of the dry ditch was used as a burial ground in the early Middle Ages, as were the nearby Rue Saint-Hilaire and the crossroads with the Rue du Chancelier Guérin.

Cellars

Most of the historic houses in Senlis have a cellar.

The emblematic cellar of Senlis is rib-vaulted and dates back to the 13th and 14th centuries, during the city's golden age. This unique and remarkable feature of the town is perhaps due to the quality of the stone in the subsoil. The vault is composed of small stones, regularly laid, and is supported by ogival arches, most of which are chamfered. It rests on a row of two to four columns forming two aisles. More rarely, two rows of columns create three bays. The round columns generally have an octagonal base and are surmounted by sculpted capitals that support the base of the vault ribs. The most common motifs are 13th-century crockets, but there are also representations of cabbages (known as Senlis cabbages), water lilies, oak leaves, pampres and even suggestive carvings. Ornate keystones are, however, extremely rare. These cellars are sometimes fitted with ogival recesses that form niches.

Small vertical windows in each bay ventilate and light these cellars, which are only partially buried, with the ground floor somewhat raised above the outside ground level. The windows are chamfered to reduce shadows.

These cellars were likely used as warehouses and storerooms, where the sculpted decorations showcased the goods on display (wine, wood, canvas, etc.).

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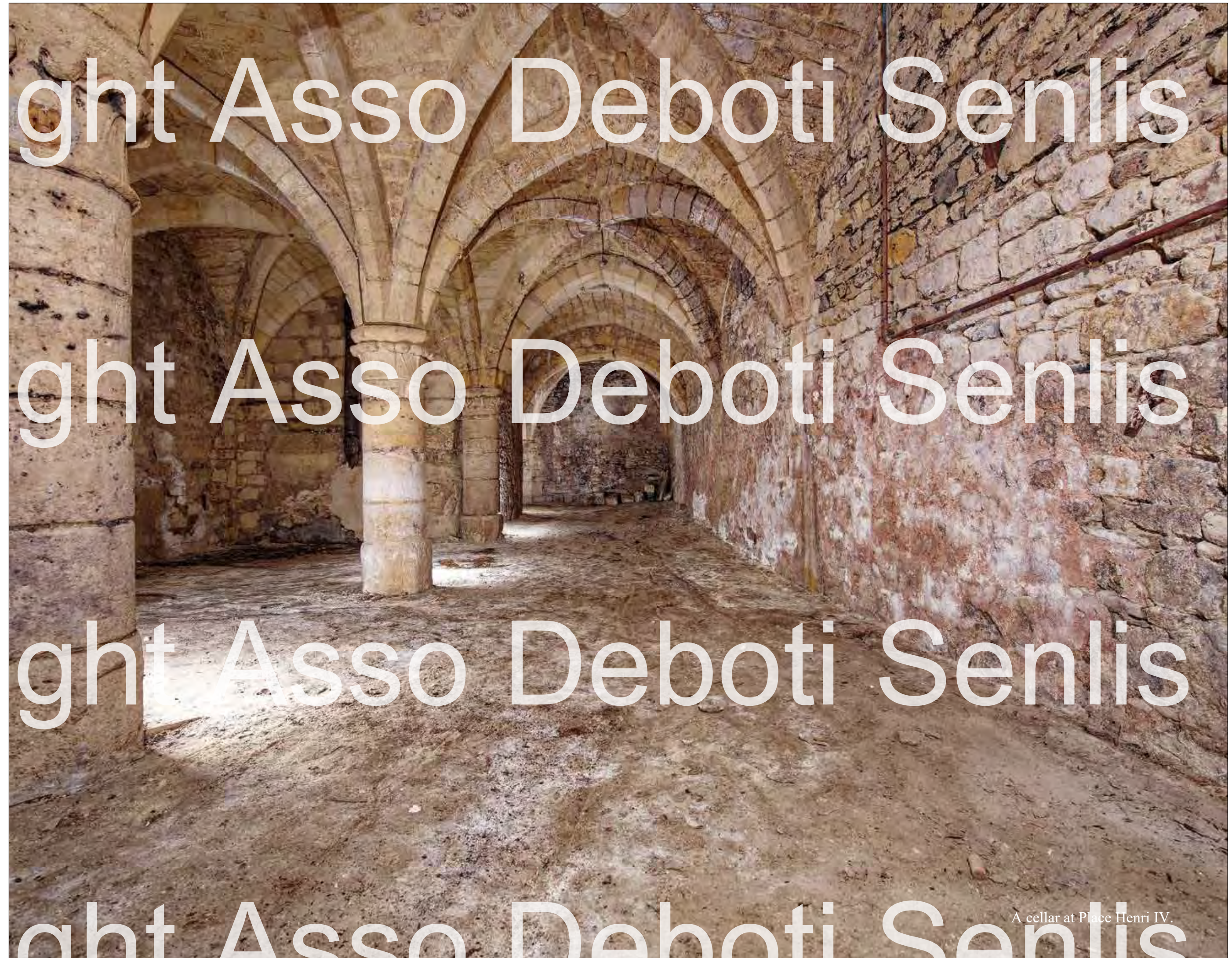
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A high cellar with three pillars, two aisles, and four bays. The arches are recessed into the side walls by a false pillar, which alternately superimposes ordinary stones on larger stones, and has neither an abacus nor a capital.

The original access was directly from the street via a flight of straight steps. Beneath the rampant barrel vault supporting the staircase, a space was created. Over time, these entrances were closed in favour of a more reserved, private access from the courtyard or hallway. These new layouts often disrupted some of the harmony of the vaults. There are several reasons for this. First, the constant rise in street level made direct street access less less practical, reducing the size of the opening. The alignment of streets and the setback of facades made these accesses even more impractical. The exit was reduced to a small window, and the staircase no longer reached the street level. Finally, the change in use of these cellars led to a preference for access from the interior.

Cellars sometimes feature narrow secondary entrances, just wide enough for one person to pass through. These staircases are embedded within the thickness of the cellar's boundary walls. Some of these have been found in the canonical quarter, Place de la Halle and in the Vermandois.

Today, these changes remain inscribed in the stone. The original layout of the cellar can often be restituted by examining the old openings, the design of the vault quarters and the orientation of the arches. Beyond this, the cellar is often the last remnant of the house that once stood above it. In some cases, only the cellar remains, situated under the garden, in front of the current, more recent house. In such instances, the vault is at risk from water seepage or damage caused by vehicles passing on the street. This is also the case when the house rebuilt above the cellar has been set back to widen the street. Some cellars have been reduced in size or divided by walls built beneath the new walls of the house. Access to the part of the cellar that is walled off is often no longer available. In any case, the persistence of medieval cellars is a good indicator of the urban planning of the time, much more accurate than the built heritage that can be seen today.



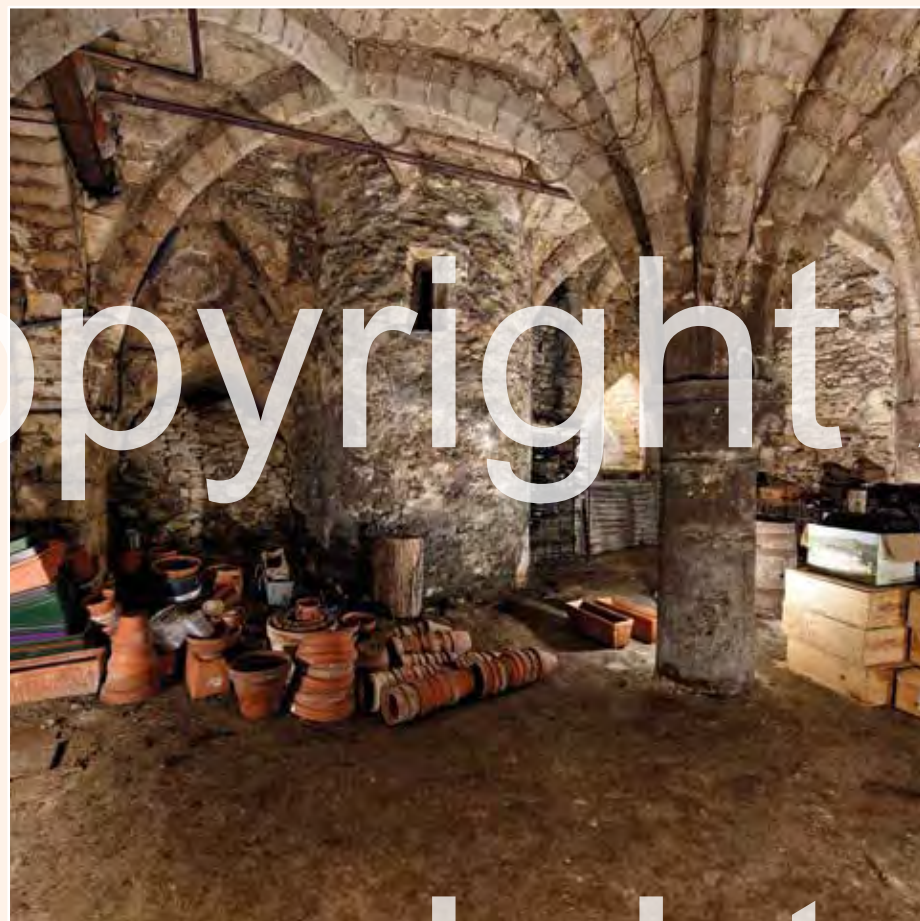
A cellar at Place Henri IV.



This may be the only Gothic cellar with four pillars defining three aisles and three bays.
At the back of the room, monumental niches covered with pointed arches expand the usable space.



Gothic cellar with a central square pillar. The original access staircase, opposite the one leading to the quarry cellar, has been replaced by a high window. However, the arches in the vaults still bear witness to its former existence.



In this cellar in the Sainte-Geneviève district, a well was built at a later date, passing through both the cellar vault and floor.



Gothic cellar with an ornate central pillar. Two alcoves with equilateral arches close off the room, which abuts the ancient rampart.



In this same cellar, a narrow staircase is built into the wall that separates two cellars.



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Rue de Meaux. The long span and relative horizontality of the pointed arches required the construction of this ashlar support pillar beneath them.



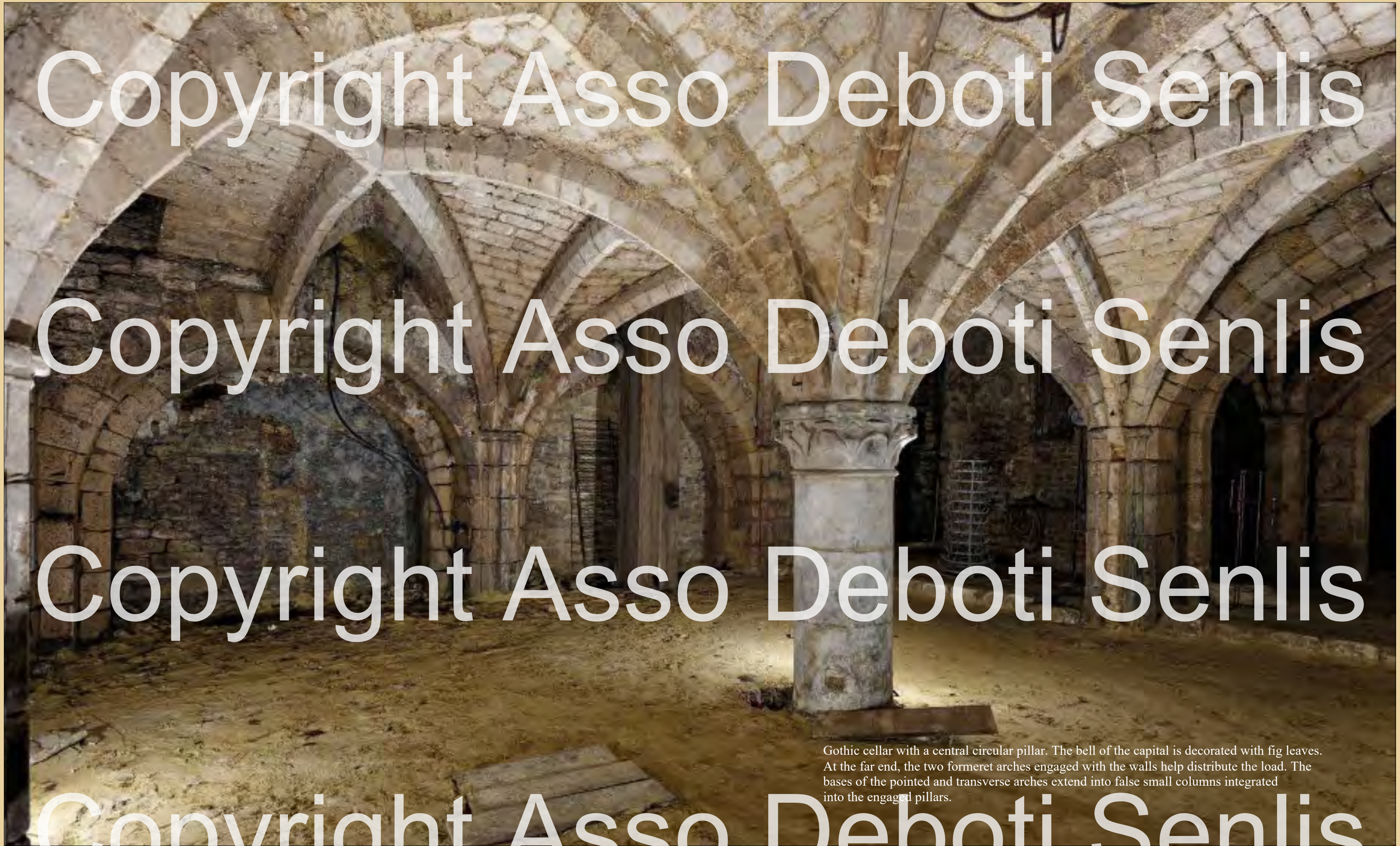
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A very high and vast Gothic cellar at Place de Creil. Two staircases lead down to the quarry.



Gothic cellar with a central circular pillar. The bell of the capital is decorated with fig leaves. At the far end, the two formeret arches engaged with the walls help distribute the load. The bases of the pointed and transverse arches extend into false small columns integrated into the engaged pillars.



Vaulted connecting corridor with a skilful stone arrangement.



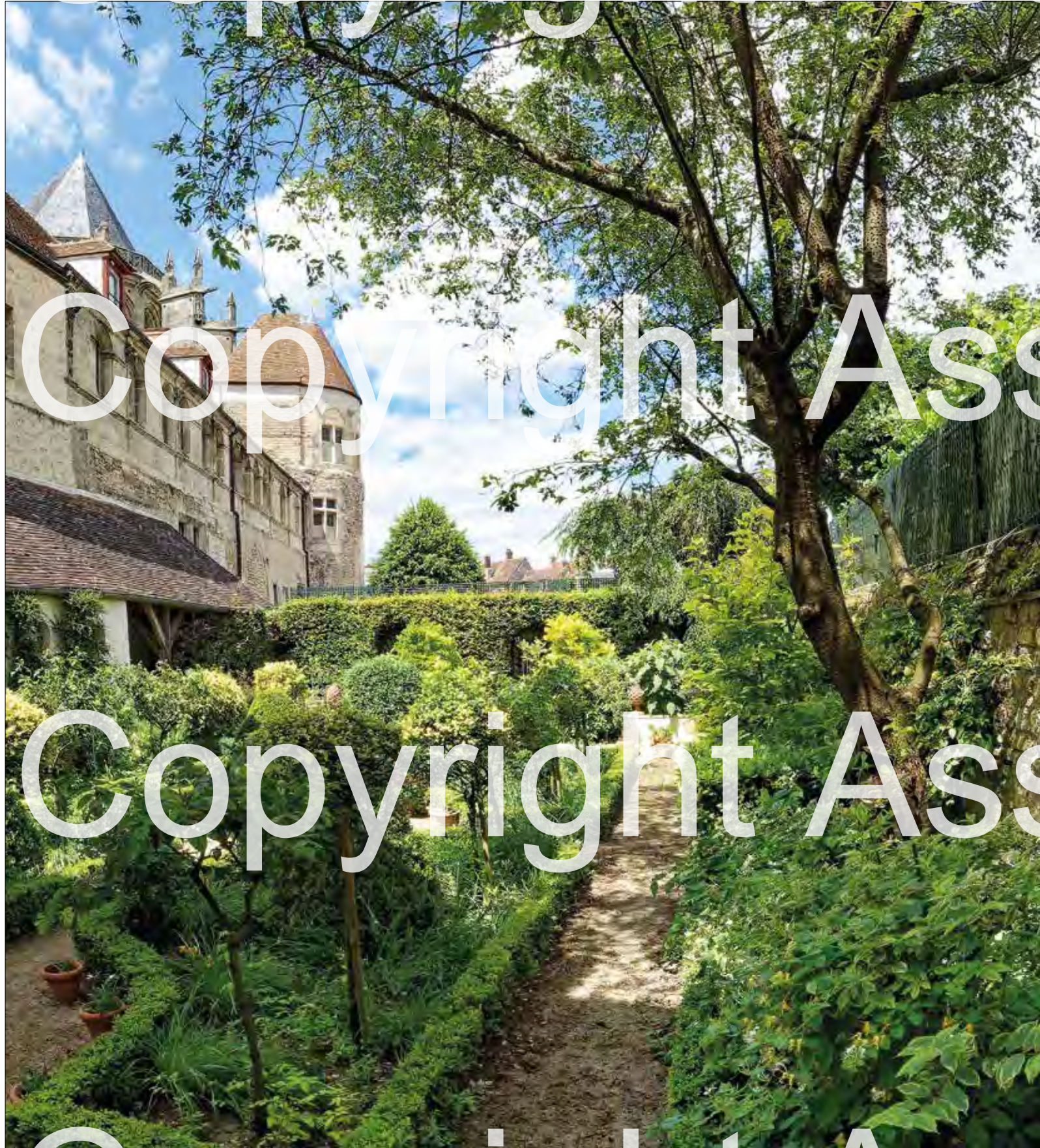
Very high 14th-century cellar, partially obstructed.
The base of the arches merges into the walls.



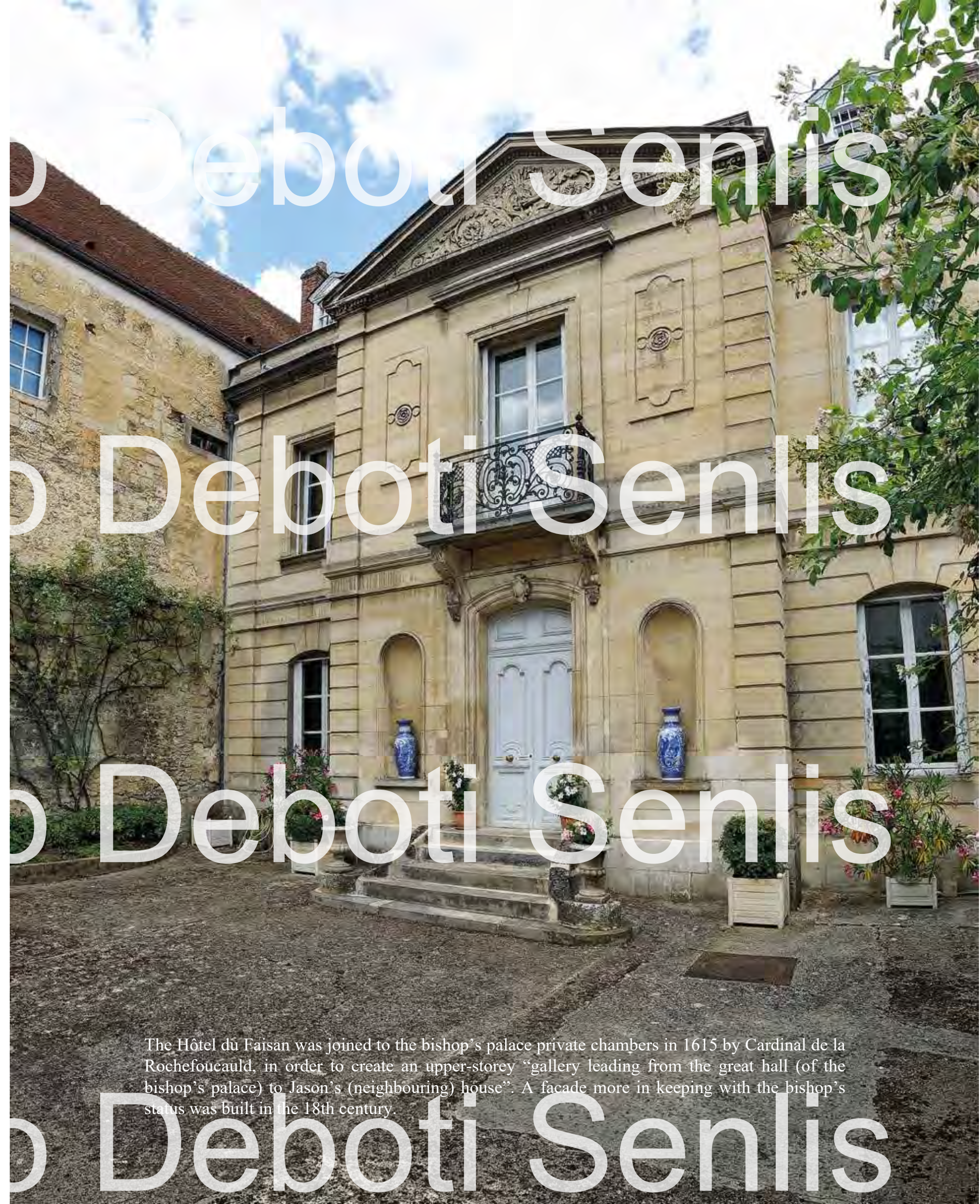
In 1978, scenes from Ariane Mnouchkine's movie *Molière* were filmed in this cellar.

Saint-Pierre district

The Saint-Pierre district extends to the east of the Cité. Under the Ancien Régime, it was the city's most populous parish. The district is still dominated today by the bell towers of the perfectly restored church.



A small private garden nestled below the rampart of the bishop's palace, now home to the 'Musée d'Art et d'Archéologie' (Museum of Art and Archaeology).



The Hôtel du Faisan was joined to the bishop's palace private chambers in 1615 by Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, in order to create an upper-storey "gallery leading from the great hall (of the bishop's palace) to Jason's (neighbouring) house". A facade more in keeping with the bishop's status was built in the 18th century.



An atypical town-centre house, with its small brick frames and pale blue half-timbering imitating wood. It looks a little like the houses on the Côte d'Opale from the Belle Époque period.



Here is a dining room entirely panelled in natural wood tones: a highly atypical interior for this town. Only the view through the windows confirms that this house is indeed in Senlis.



Public Library

Since 1976, the library has occupied the former seminary premises, which were extended on the site of the old post office. The storage facility houses a precious collection of antique books and documents, mainly the result of confiscations made during the French Revolution. Among them are two rare globes dating from 1748, one terrestrial and the other celestial, painted on a wooden core. They came from the Saint-Vincent Abbey.





The furniture and the complete set of books from the *Description de l'Égypte* were donated by the State to the City in 1829, shortly after their publication between 1809 and 1828. The books are bound in a polished calf binding signed Tessier.



The compactors preserve the collection.





Near the Saint-Santin rampart, now Cours Thoré Montmorency, this house is the result of the transformation and merging of several houses once occupied by the canons of the Saint-Rieul collegiate Church before the French Revolution.



These stones, carefully stacked in the middle of the garden as decoration, are not the remains of a medieval construction.

Pluyette House



By 1644, the house of Gilles Pluyette, vicar general of the bishopric of Senlis, already had two main buildings. With its outbuildings, it extended over a fairly large area, from the cemeteries of Saint-Pierre Church to the city walls.



A 19th-century veranda with colorful cement tiles.

Saint-Vincent district

When King Philip II Augustus ordered the construction of new ramparts around Senlis in 1199, the Abbey of Saint-Vincent, founded in 1065, was left outside the enclosure. This omission was corrected 90 years later, in 1288. The layout of modern Senlis' centre dates back to this period. The district is mainly occupied by religious establishments (Saint-Vincent Abbey, La Présentation Monastery, La Charité, the Capuchin Convent), with a few elegant houses built in between. Two main arteries, Rue de Meaux and Rue Bellon, lead to the city gates and serve as residential streets. To the south, along the city walls and near the Nonette River, the tanners' and drapers' quarter has retained its small houses along short, winding streets. The opening of Rue Royale in 1752 (now Rue de la République) nevertheless separated the district from the commercial centre.



Hôtel de Marie de Saint Gobert (also known as Hôtel Dufresne).



This classical townhouse, built between a courtyard and a garden, features a harmonious facade punctuated by tall arched windows. It was constructed shortly before 1705 by the widow of Antoine Grondeau, equerry, councillor and secretary to the King. The courtyard is separated from the street by a large monumental gate. To the right of the entrance, in a small pavilion extending from the main building, are two storerooms. In 1918, the Hôtel, then owned by Georges Fautrat, served as the residence of Marshal Ferdinand Foch and his chief of staff, Major General Maxime Weygand. The Town purchased the house in 1938 and converted it into a girls' school. More recently, it was owned by the *Conseil départemental de l'Oise* and served as the headquarters of the *Circonscription d'intervention sanitaire et sociale* (Health and Social Intervention District) until the mid-2010s.

Gate of Meaux 'l'As de pique'

The bastion of the Gate of Meaux is a sophisticated fortification built under Francis I by Jean-François de La Rocque de Roberval. It was designed to modernise the gate's defences in response to advances in artillery technology, as the two old medieval towers could no longer ensure an effective defense. The city wall was significantly widened, and a bastion in the shape of an ace of spades was built at the southeastern corner of the town. Originally equipped with two orillons, rounded masonry projections designed to shield artillery positions, it was strategically positioned to use the Nonette River both as a natural defense and a water source for men and animals.



1930s petrol pump with glass cylinders.





Staggered access corridor leading to the bastion's courtyard and place-of-arms.



The Nonette River channelled along the orillon and under the bastion.



Access to the river from the place-of-arms of the bastion.

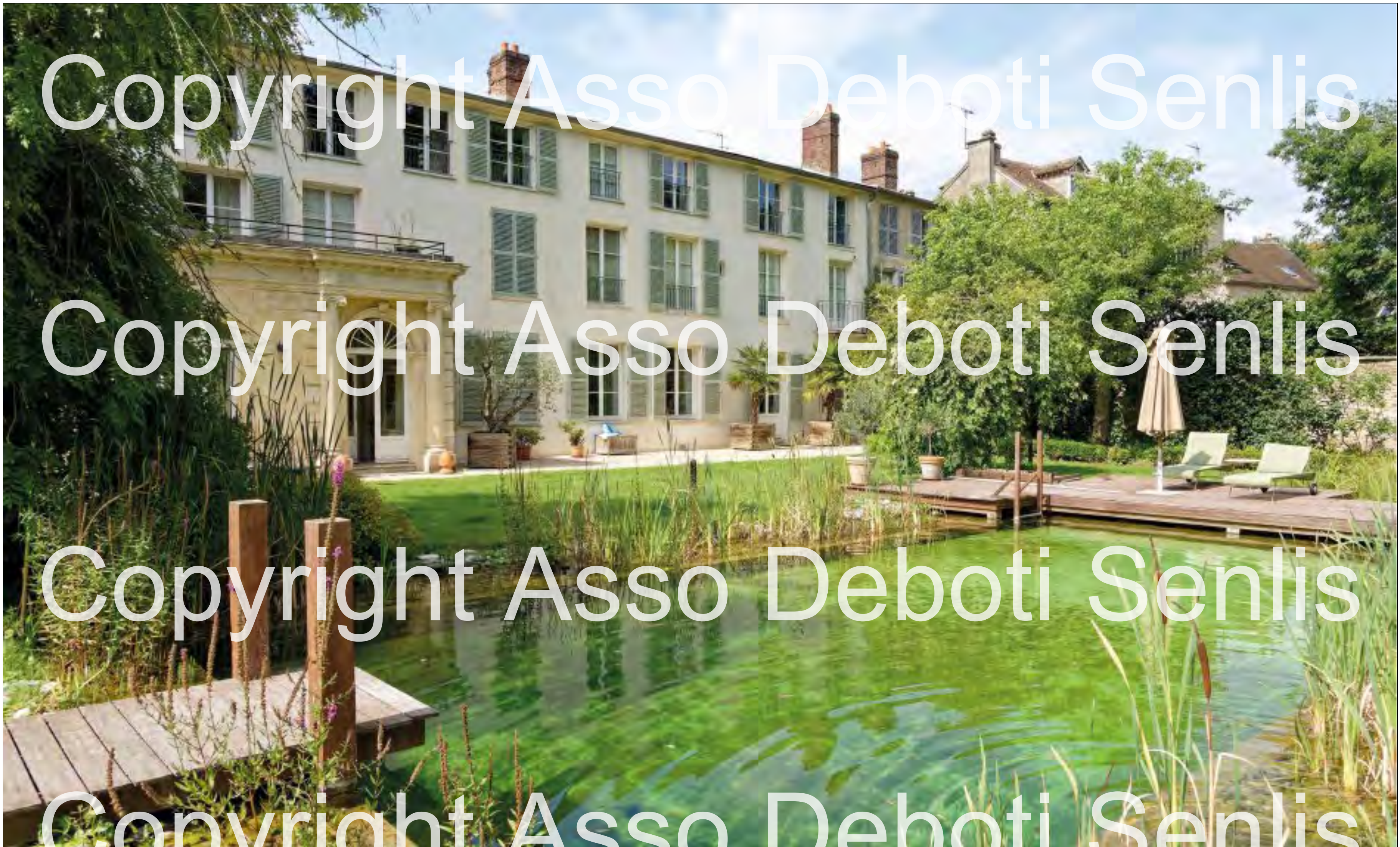


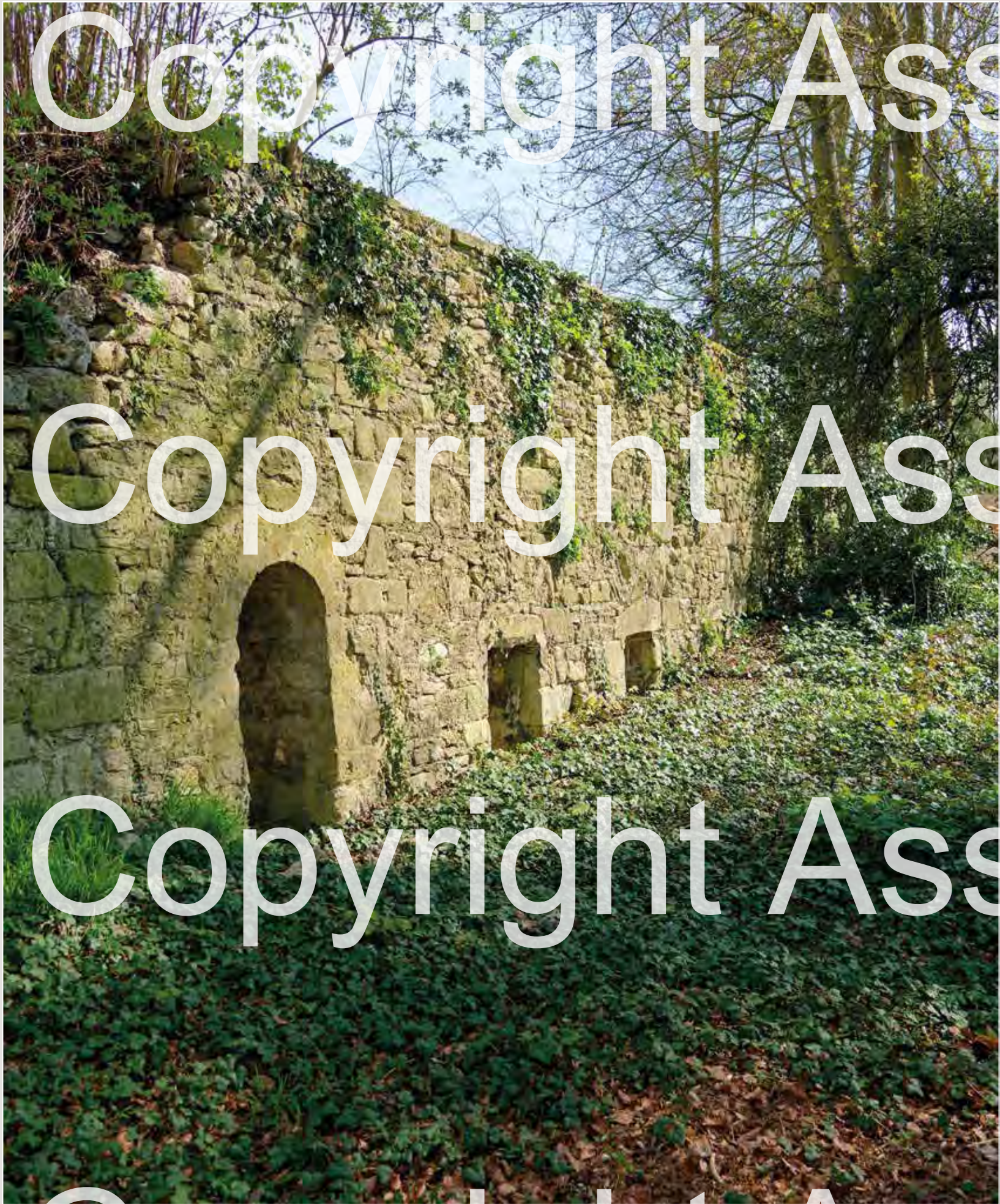
Water flowing beneath the Gate of Meaux.

Capuchin Convent

The Capuchin Friars Minor settled here in 1642. They built a church, a square cloister and a sacristy on the garden site and replacing a group of pre-existing houses. In 1789, the general assemblies of the three orders of the Senlis bailiwick were held at the Capuchin Convent under the presidency of the Duke of Lévis. The order was dissolved and the monks were expelled during the French Revolution. Their convent was sold on 22 September 1792. The church, which stood in line with the portal, was destroyed during the French Consulate between 1801 and 1804. The current house, a remnant of the convent buildings, was rebuilt in the first quarter of the 19th century.







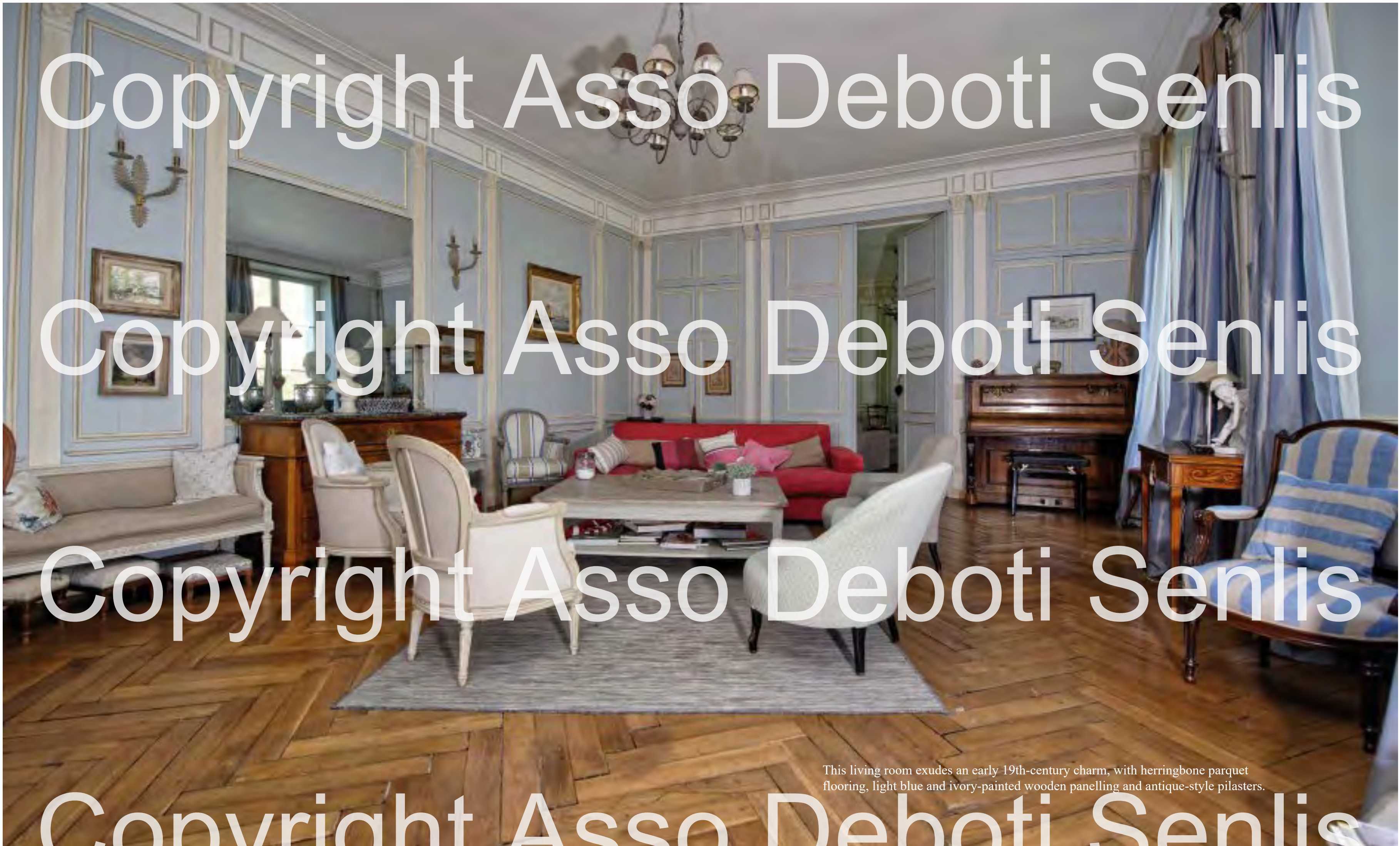
The Escalade rampart and its casemates.



Place-of-arms of the Gate of Meaux bastion. A narrow stone staircase called a ‘pas-de-souris’ leads, not without difficulty for an attacker, to the top of the fortification.



Casemate.



This living room exudes an early 19th-century charm, with herringbone parquet flooring, light blue and ivory-painted wooden panelling and antique-style pilasters.

Hôtel Guillaume Malherbe, collector of the taille-tax

The facade subtly hides a charming asymmetry. A stairway with two flights of six steps, adorned with a delicate wrought-iron balustrade, leads to the entrance door, surmounted by a triangular pediment topped with a niche. On the second floor, above the door, the central dormer features a curved pediment, while the two side dormers have triangular ones. The noble appearance of the house is enhanced by the cellar below, which increases its elevation. Very austere on the street side, the house is entirely turned towards its garden.

Guillaume Malherbe, collector of the taille-tax, lived in the house at the beginning of the 17th century and expanded the property.

In 1862, this house was home to Marie-Joseph Voillemier, chief physician at Senlis General Hospital, town councillor, numismatist, and first president of the Comité archéologique de Senlis (Senlis Archaeological Committee) – also known as the Société d'histoire et d'archéologie (Historical and Archaeological Society). The naturalist painter Francis Tattegrain, grandson of Dr Voillemier, visited the house regularly.





The house is reached via a paved hornbeam alley, gently curving to extend the perspective and create a sense of surprise.



The house orchestrates the scene. The arrangement of the topiaries structures the perspective, creating both real and imagined escapes.



A small fountain acts as a transition between the stone architecture of the house and the structured elegance of the French formal garden.



A living room adorned with 18th-century blonde oak wood panelling and a floor paved with cabochon tiles.



A sturdy concealed staircase with a banister and balusters.

The Arsenal

This was the site of the City's barn and later the arsenal. It was also known as 'the Palace'. The arsenal was very active during the siege of 1589. A horse-powered mill was operated there and cannons were assembled. In 1724, there were 'four cast-iron cannons, some iron cannons, carriages, cannonballs, chains and other utensils and equipment of war'. In 1753, the building was rebuilt to house the barracks and stables for the Marshalsea's horsemen and horses. The buildings were arranged on three sides of a narrow courtyard that was a cul-de-sac. The building has retained a rustic charm.



Since the 1960s, timber-framed walls, once hidden beneath modern renderings, have reappeared, blending harmoniously with the stone.





A harmonious blend of subtly warm colours in an understated decor.



The tie-beam of the roof frame rests on the buttresses of the side walls, which may be remnants of an original gable before the house was extended.



Hanging shelf: this type of furniture was typically used to store food or utensils out of reach of animals.



Elegant early 20th-century English-style staircase with winder steps.



Garden toilet with a wooden seat and box.

Hospital of Charity

‘La Charité’ was a religious hospital for the sick, the incurably poor and the insane. Founded in 1668 at the instigation of priest Jacques Jolly, the hospital in Senlis was built two years later. It included a paying section with individual rooms, which financed a charitable dormitory (the Liberté section), a semi-Liberté section, and a Force where prisoners were held under a lettre de cachet.

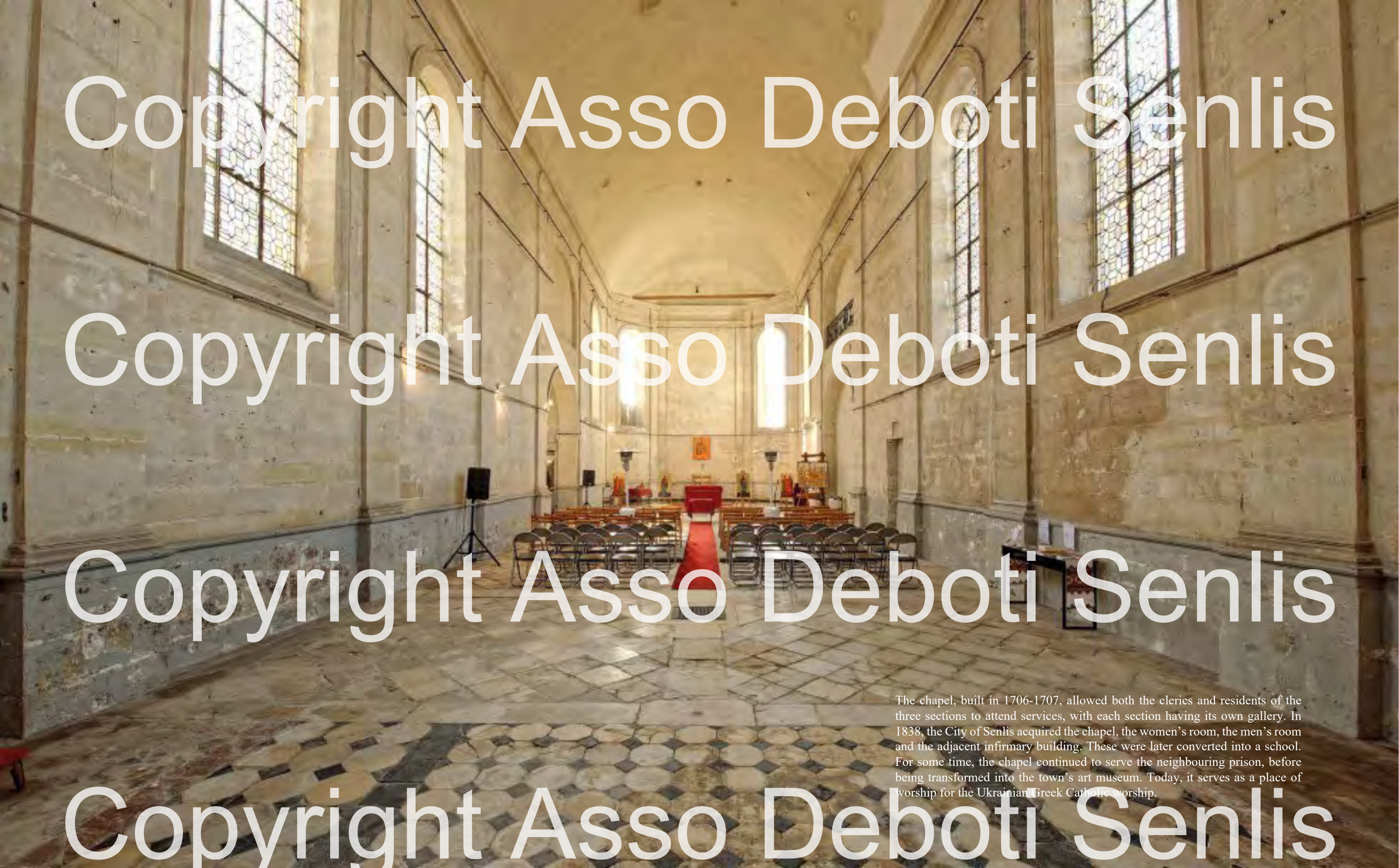
“We admitted mad people, imbeciles, epileptics, ‘venereals’ (soldiers), troublemakers (sic)...”.

Over the years, this vast complex has seen multiple phases of construction and destruction. The modern building in the foreground was rebuilt in 1972 on the ruins of the so-called ‘clock building’ or ‘new building’, originally built in 1771 and destroyed in an arson attack by the German army in September 1914. Until recently, it housed the Revenue Office.

Just behind it, the women’s and men’s rooms were connected to the chapel built in 1706-1707. The chapel is oriented north-south, but the geometry of the patients’ building gives it the shape of a Latin cross.

On the right, the long Force building, built in 1752, was converted into a prison between 1844 and 1955. Now cleared of modern constructions and the sentry walk walls, it is now a residence.





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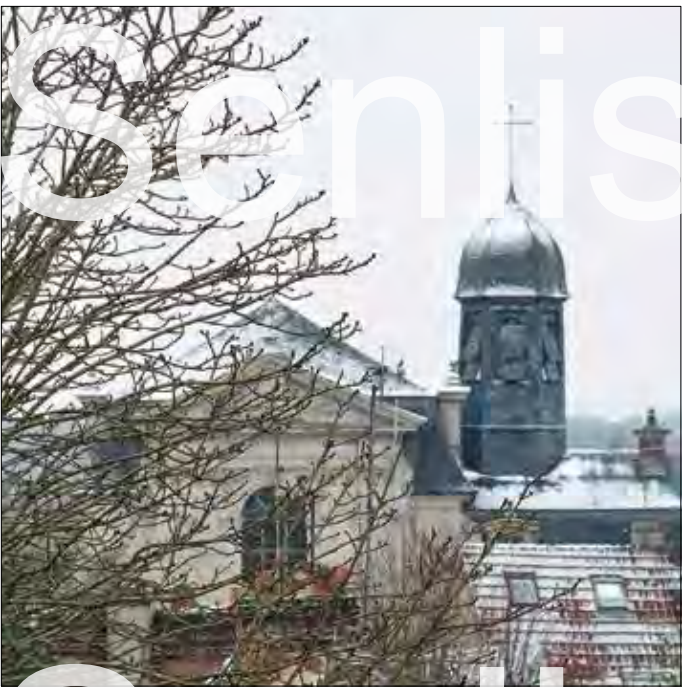
The chapel, built in 1706-1707, allowed both the clerics and residents of the three sections to attend services, with each section having its own gallery. In 1838, the City of Senlis acquired the chapel, the women's room, the men's room and the adjacent infirmary building. These were later converted into a school. For some time, the chapel continued to serve the neighbouring prison, before being transformed into the town's art museum. Today, it serves as a place of worship for the Ukrainian Greek Catholic worship.



The Revenue Office, rebuilt in 1972 on the ruins of the 1771 building, mirrors the style of the previous building. The pediment is adorned with the heraldic image of an eagle with spread wings, symbolising public sovereignty.



The hexagonal bell tower of the Charité Church, entirely covered in slate and the only surviving bell tower from the 17th and 18th centuries in Senlis, is quite modest compared to its grand neighbouring counterparts: the cathedral, Saint-Pierre, and Saint-Vincent.



The street wall and portal of the Charité's noble building survived the fire of 1914.

Saint-Vincent

Saint-Vincent Abbey was founded in 1065 and assigned to the Order of Saint-Augustine. The church, dating from around 1138, replaced an earlier structure. Its square bell tower, 41 m high, features two very high storeys pierced by double windows. The cornice at the top, just below the pyramidal roof, is decorated with alternating billets and mascarons (grotesque heads).

The cloister and convent buildings, fine examples of Grand Siècle architecture, sit on a semi-buried gallery in the manner of cryptoporticoes. They were built before 1660 by the Congregation of France, during which time the church underwent several modifications to its openings and facade, and its nave and vaulting were raised.

Seized during the French Revolution and sold in 1791, it was transformed into a book depository, a military hospital, and a spinning mill. The chapel suffered greatly from this abandonment. The abbey was converted into an educational institution in 1836, a function it continues to serve today. Around 1840, the establishment was joined to the Convent of La Présentation, which was then occupied by the neighbouring Institut des Chevaliers de Saint-Louis (Institute of the Knights of Saint-Louis). The lane separating them was demolished.

The institution became a hospital during the First World War and was later occupied by the Germans during the Second World War. The interior decor, stained glass windows, and furniture of the chapel were completely refurbished in the 1950s.

The rectangular 17th-century cloister is located between the church and the Bellevue rampart, which seems to be pushed southward. For this reason, the cloister is slightly shifted to the west. On the left side of the photo are the tile-roofed buildings of the Monastery of La Présentation, now the Cour Saint-Louis of the *lycée* Saint-Vincent. Two galleries of the cloister and the chapel have been lost.

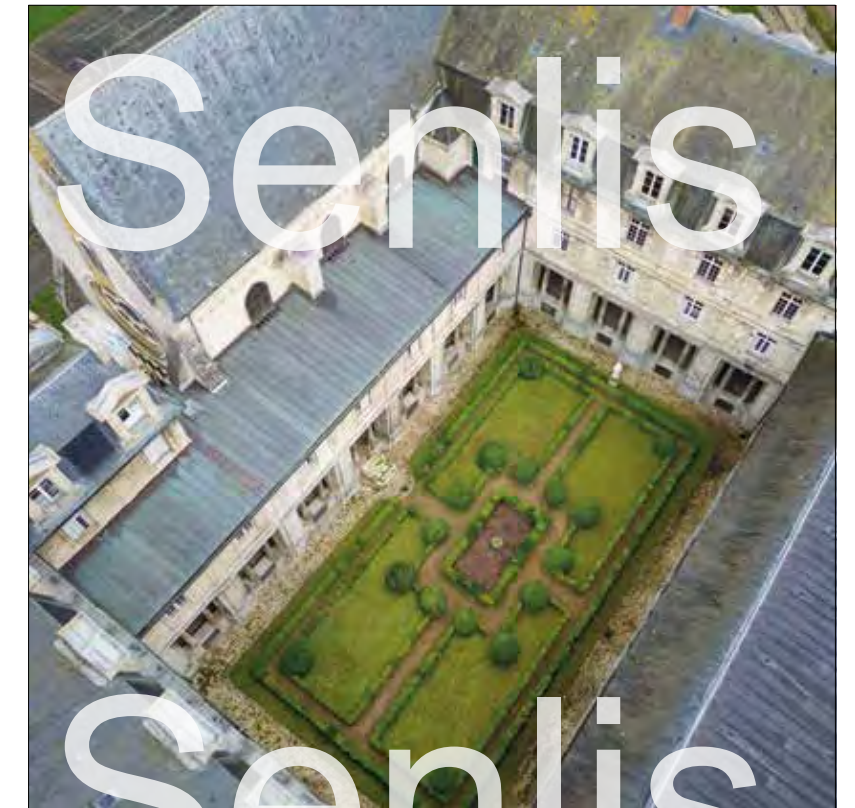




The cloister forms a rectangular quadrilateral measuring slightly over 43 m by 28 m.



The southern wing of the cloister (on the right in the photo) was raised in 1843 and given an asymmetrical, low-pitched roof.



The cloister garden is laid out in the French style, with a well in the centre.



The monumental facade of the convent building rises to four storeys, crowned by a blind, curved pediment. This facade is very narrow and off-centre in relation to the building: these architectural features are revealed here by the aerial photograph.



The Saint-Vincent coat of arms was reinstated on the pediment of the convent building in the 1920s. It is blazoned 'Azure, 3 fleurs-de-lys Or, on a chief Or 3 roses Gules'. Under the Ancien Régime, the coat of arms was located on the pediment, but one storey above, where it was replaced by a clock in the 19th century.



Both ends of the former chapter house, now an amphitheatre, are adorned with bas-reliefs. In the semi-circular tympanum on the wall near the chapel, the Lamb of God lies on the book with the seven seals. It symbolises Christ, who alone is able to fulfill the divine plan. The opposite tympanum features the intertwined Alpha and Omega.



Another sculpture of the Agnus Dei can be seen above the cloister door leading into the church.



The antique-style entrance to the cloister features modern plaster statues (1921) on either side of the doorway, depicting Anne of Kiev, the founder of the abbey, and Abbot Guillaume Le Clerc, one of the six hostages during the siege of the town in 1418, who, despite the circumstances, saved his own life. The old metal gate was also reinstalled in 1921.

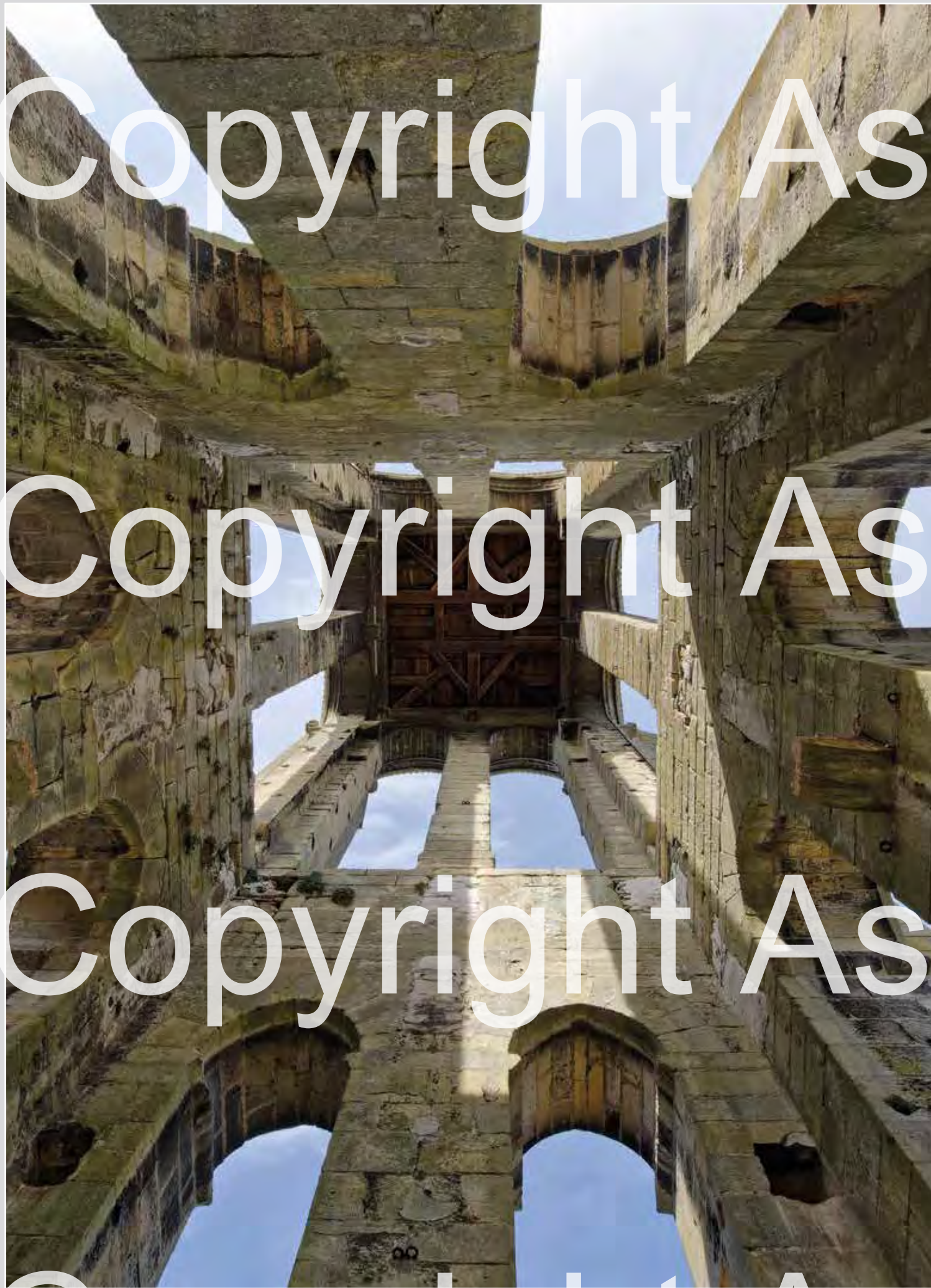
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The cloister gallery runs beneath the convent buildings. It is covered in stone with a low barrel vault, and the transverse arches, slightly in relief, rest on square engaged pilasters with small abacuses. The gallery opens onto the garden through wide openings, each supported by two columns with Doric capitals. The interior and exterior walls are lightened by large rectangular niches. The rather massive structure plays on symmetry and subtle geometric reliefs.

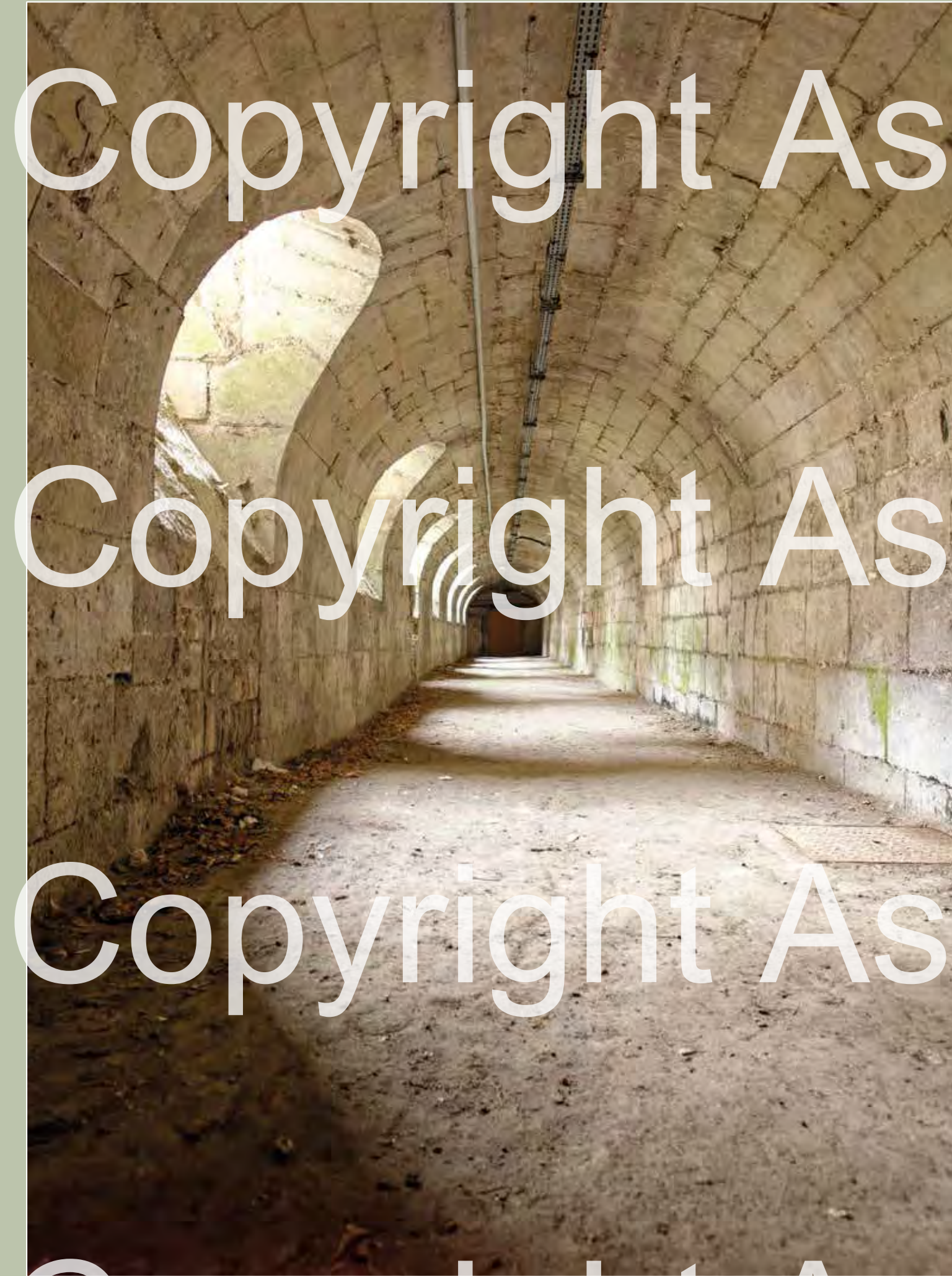
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Interior view of the bell tower shaft, consisting of two storeys of tall, slender twin openings, and lacking the belfry. In the early 19th century, the bell tower was in fact used as a chimney for the spinning mill.



The steep slope of the roof explains the increased use of struts and bracing (oblique wooden pieces) on each truss of the framework.



The cryptoporticoes beneath the cloister gallery serve as a genuine service corridor for the buildings above.



Postern beneath the Bellevue rampart.

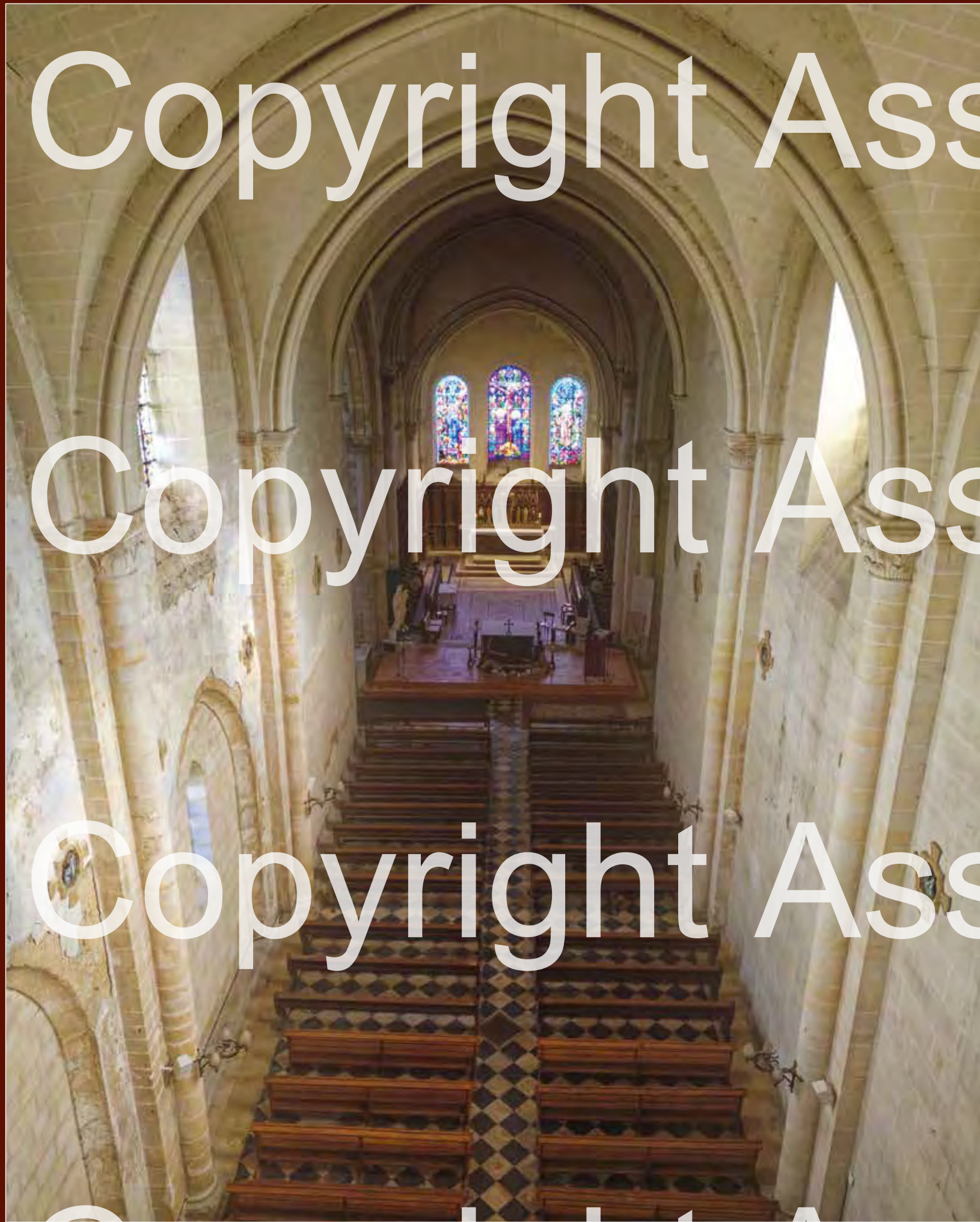




Ramp-on-ramp staircase. The wrought ironwork, featuring an arcade motif and dating from the 1710s-1720s, is typical of Senlisian constructions, similar to that of the staircase in the former seminary (now the public library), for instance. Wooden stair nosing and black-and-ochre checkerboard flooring.



Large gallery on the upper floor of the convent building, featuring French chevron parquet flooring.



The vaults of the nave of the chapel were raised in the 17th century. The stained glass windows of the flat apse date from 1953.



Stalls, altar, and flooring of the chapel's choir. The 19th-century furniture and stained glass were destroyed during the German occupation. The chapel was restored with new stained glass installed in 1953.



On the floor, the mosaic is adorned in its corners by the personifications of the four rivers: Gihon, Pishon, Tigris, and Euphrates. These biblical rivers irrigate the Garden of Eden in Genesis – the earthly paradise of mankind's origins – which is depicted in the central motif. This highly symbolic mosaic, preserved from being trodden on by the faithful, was laid during the first restoration campaign in 1853. It was designed by the Reverend Father Arthur Martin of the Society of Jesus.



Valgenceuse

To the east of the town, the ‘Château de Valgenceuse’ overlooks its park, vegetable garden, orangery, dovecote, ornamental ponds, woods and follies. The name evokes a valley of rushes.

An older château once stood here, separated from its farm and outbuildings by the road from Senlis to Nanteuil. Fortunately, in the early 20th century, the road was rerouted to the north of the farm.

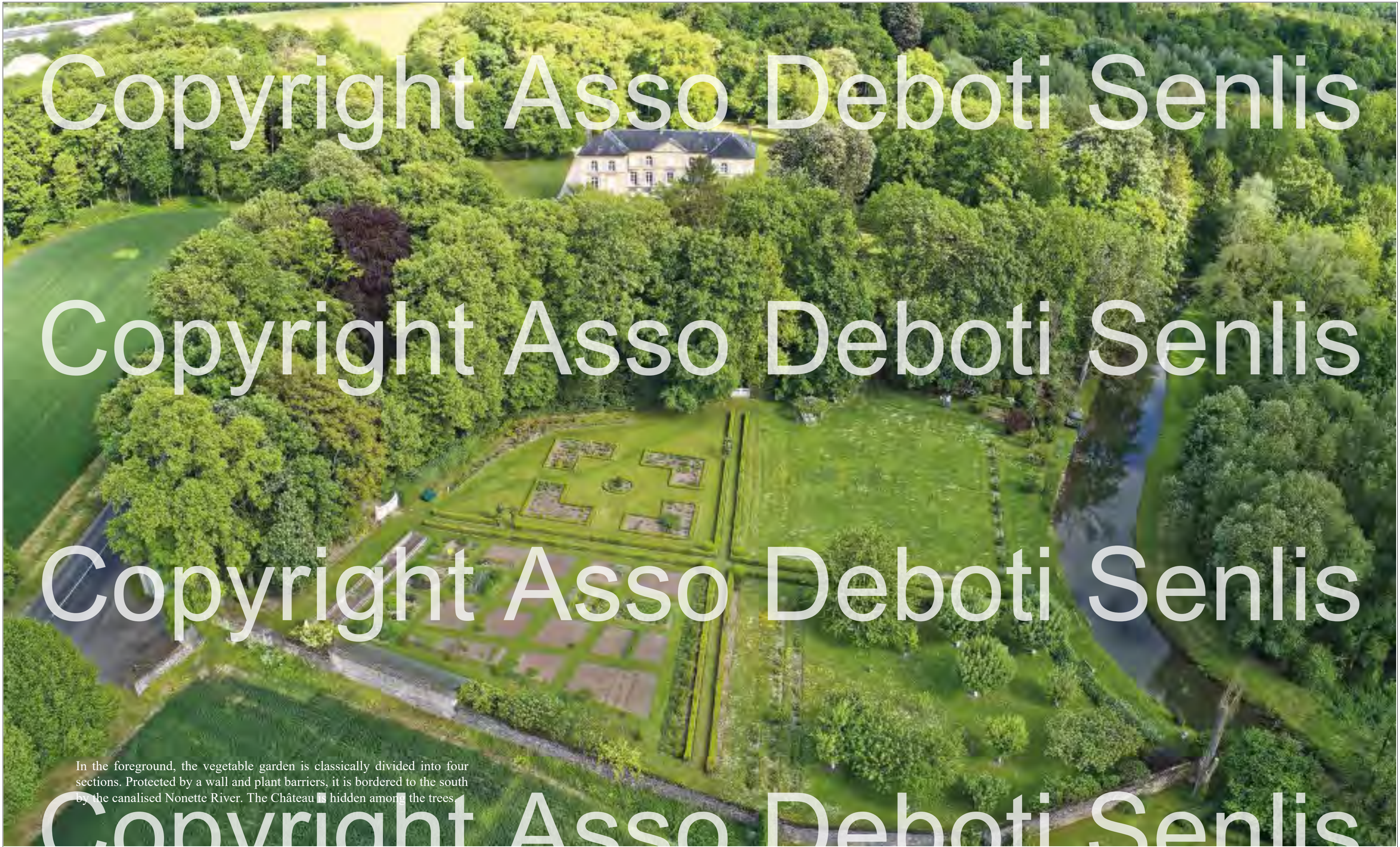
This Restoration-style residence saw some of the most brilliant society in the 19th century. Its salons hosted renowned writers such as Gérard de Nerval, Alfred de Vigny and Alexandre Dumas (father and son).

The literary and theatrical salon was first run by Aglaé-Louise-Léonore Lhoste de Beaulieu de Versigny, wife of Jean-Baptiste-Isidore de Junquières, and later, more notably, by their daughter Céline de Junquières (1806-1875), who became the Marquise de Giac by marriage.

The château was rebuilt at the beginning of the 19th century: a two-storey, slate-roofed main building with low-pitched roofs, a central pediment, and two pavilion-style wings projecting from the main structure. At the centre of the facade, between the wings, the entrance features a columned peristyle leading to a single-level gallery topped by a balustraded terrace. The windows on the first two levels are square, while those on the top level are arched.

The estate includes a vast park, partly designed by landscape architects from the school of Le Nôtre around 1645. The ornamental pond and its terrace add great charm to the setting. Behind the terrace, the grove has been preserved in its 17th-century form.





In the foreground, the vegetable garden is classically divided into four sections. Protected by a wall and plant barriers, it is bordered to the south by the canalised Nonette River. The Château is hidden among the trees



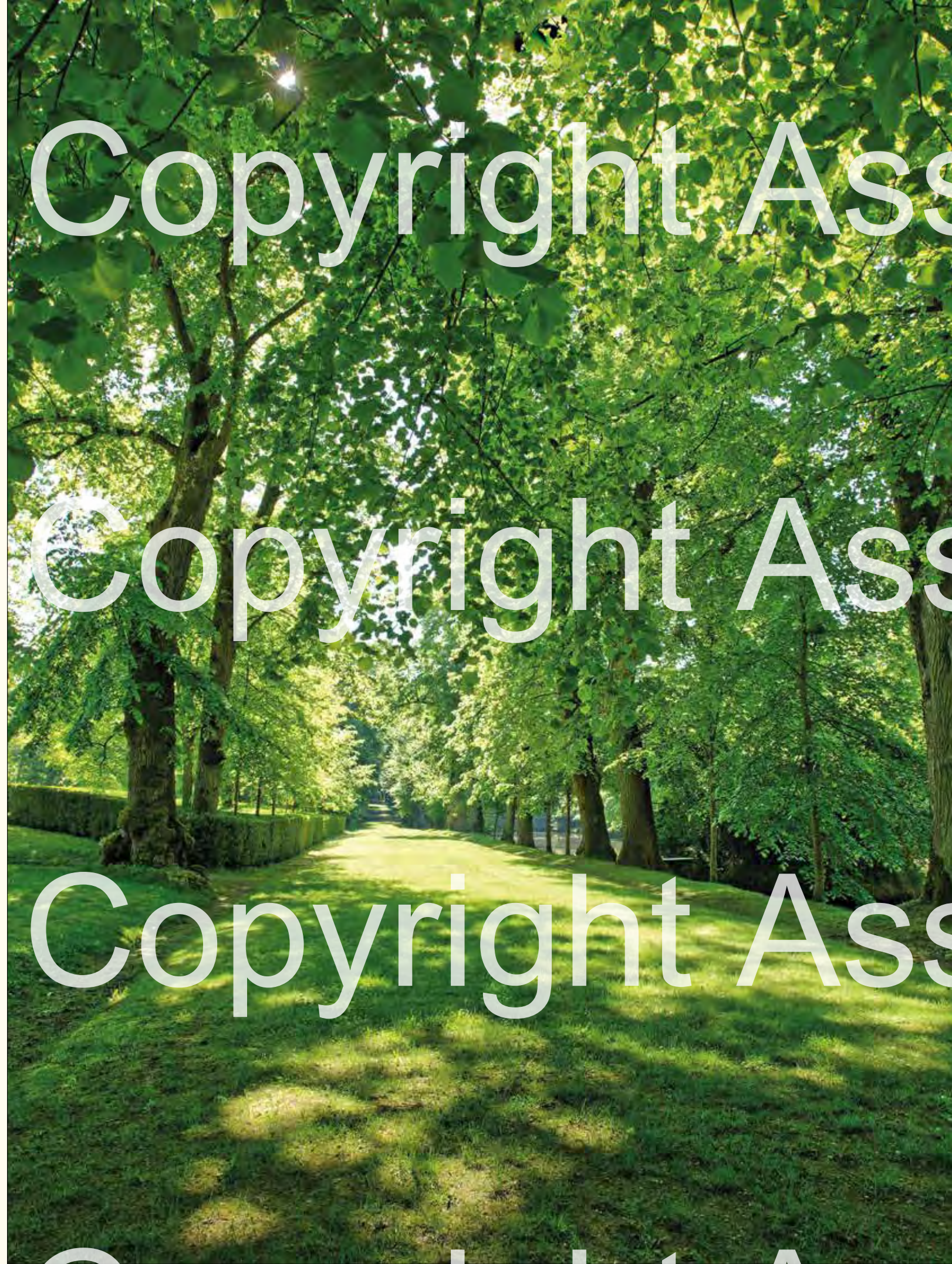
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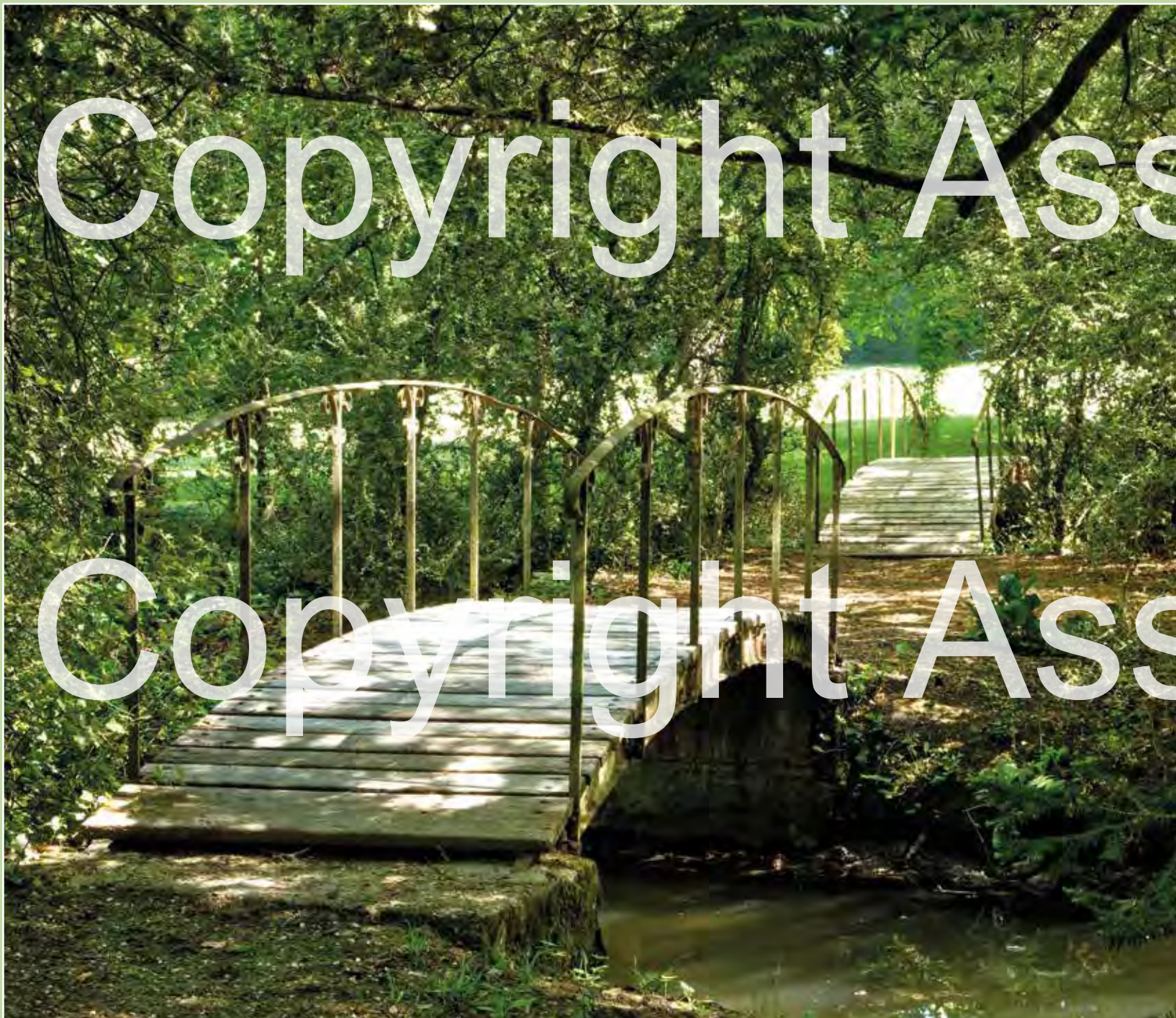
The flatness of the rear facade facing the park is interrupted only by the peristyle with four columns and two small, low architectural projections.



The long avenue designed by Le Nôtre or his school and lined with lime trees, runs alongside the ornamental pond. It then ascends and winds deeper into the woods, offering a kilometre-long view.



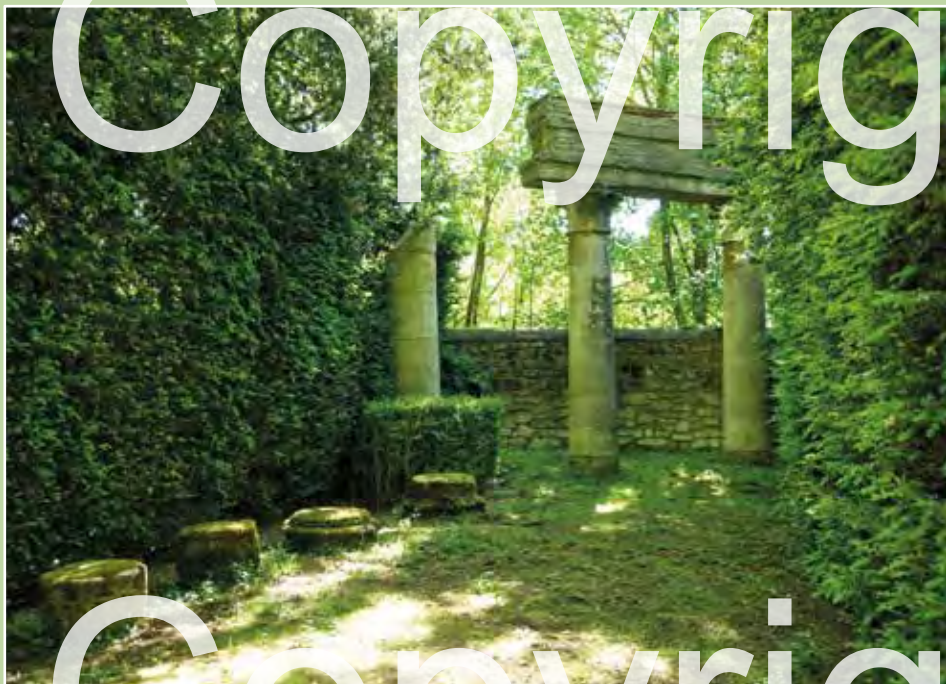
A terrace with a balustrade and a landing stage encloses the reflecting pool to the east. The statue of Diana on the terrace was damaged in 1940 during exchanges of gunfire between the German army, which held the terrace, and the French forces resisting south of the Nonette River.



Vegetable garden greenhouse.



The icehouse is designed in the manner of an ancient temple ruin, with a bas-relief adorning the top of the door.



The addition of bridges and islands transformed the classical park into a Romantic-style park.

These picturesque ruins are 'a folly' deliberately designed to adorn the park. The constituent columns are believed to have come from the Hôtel des Junquières on Rue Sainte-Geneviève in Senlis.



A large vase with rams' head handles marks the junction of two forest lanes. In the distance, the château is faintly visible on its expansive lawn, bathed in sunlight.



The orangery is one of the protected elements of the Valgenceuse estate. Its large windows with transoms face south. The combination of brick and stone in the building's design adds to its elegance.

During the Romantic period, the orangery served as a theater for impromptu performers from the Valgenceuse society and invited writers.



A sitting room is housed in one of the projecting outbuildings built on the east facade. Its window opens wide onto the park.



The 'grand salon' features a remarkable stucco ceiling.



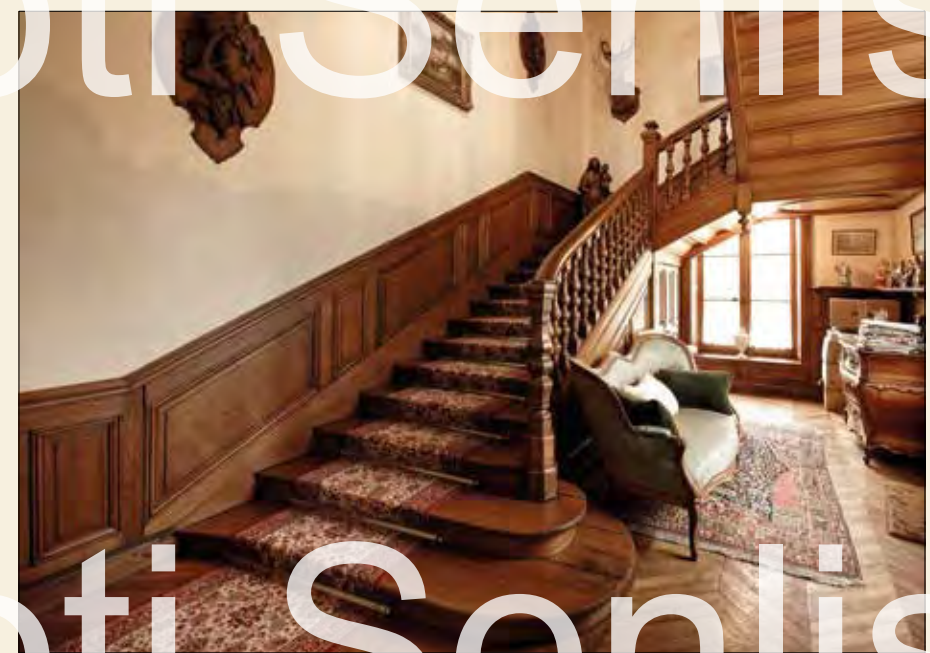
A French chevron parquet floor and painted wood panelling adorn the dining room.



The entrance gallery leads to the sitting rooms.

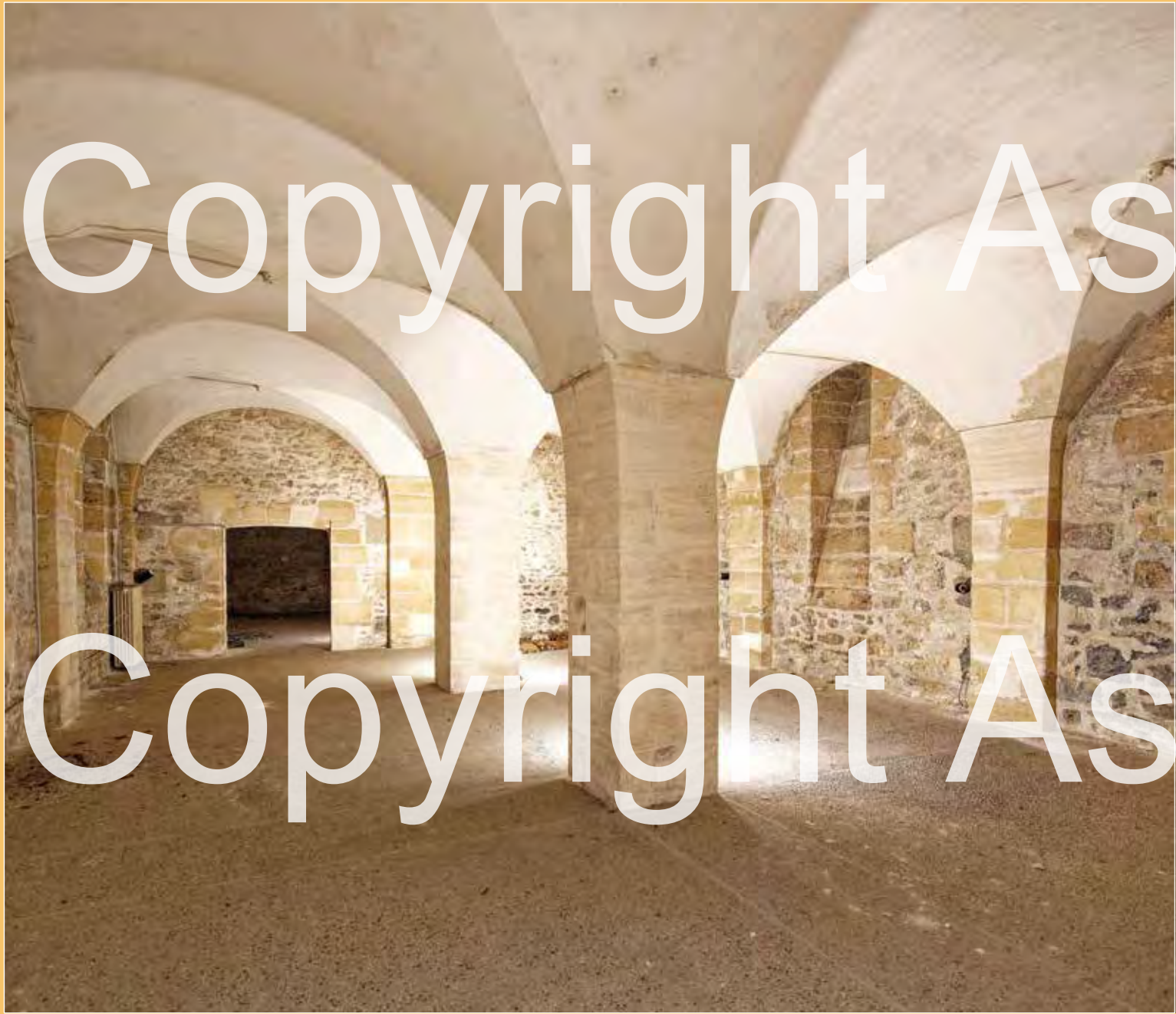


A monumental wooden staircase. The wall is covered with a skirting board, a wainscoting base, and a dado rail, all made from the same wood.



Barrel-vaulted cellars

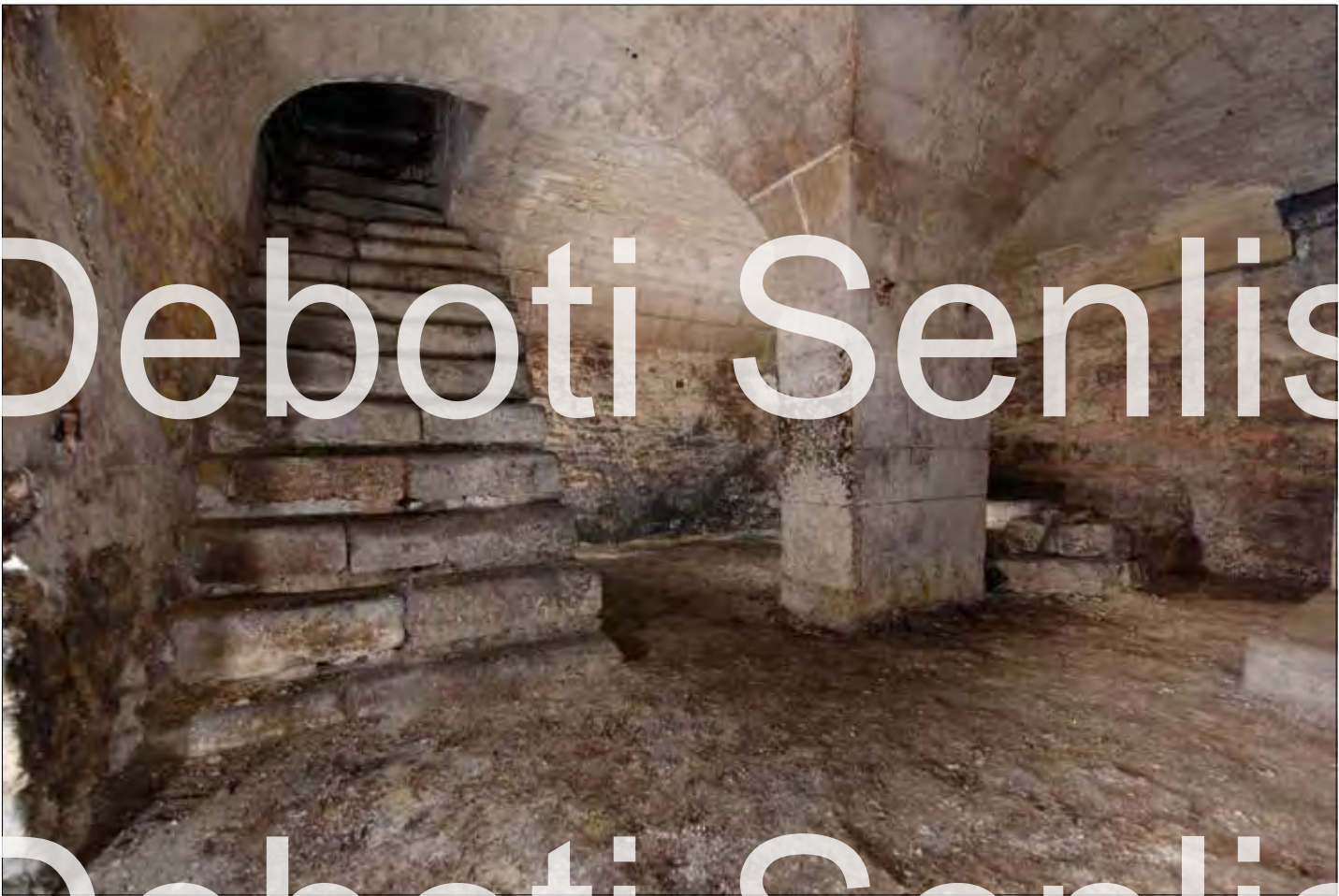
Senlis also has a significant number of barrel-vaulted cellars, constructed with small stones and sometimes reinforced with transverse arches made of larger stones. While less impressive than rib-vaulted cellars, the majority of these barrel-vaulted cellars were built in the 16th and 17th centuries, though some are Romanesque, and a Roman origin has even been suspected. Conversely, no traces of medieval flat-ceilinged cellars have been found (no beams or corbels). Over time, many of these cellars have undergone alterations or reconstructions. Some originally built with pointed barrel vaults were rebuilt and raised with rib vaulting. Others were reconstructed within larger preexisting cellars. In the 17th century, tall cellars with square pillars and groin vaults were built.



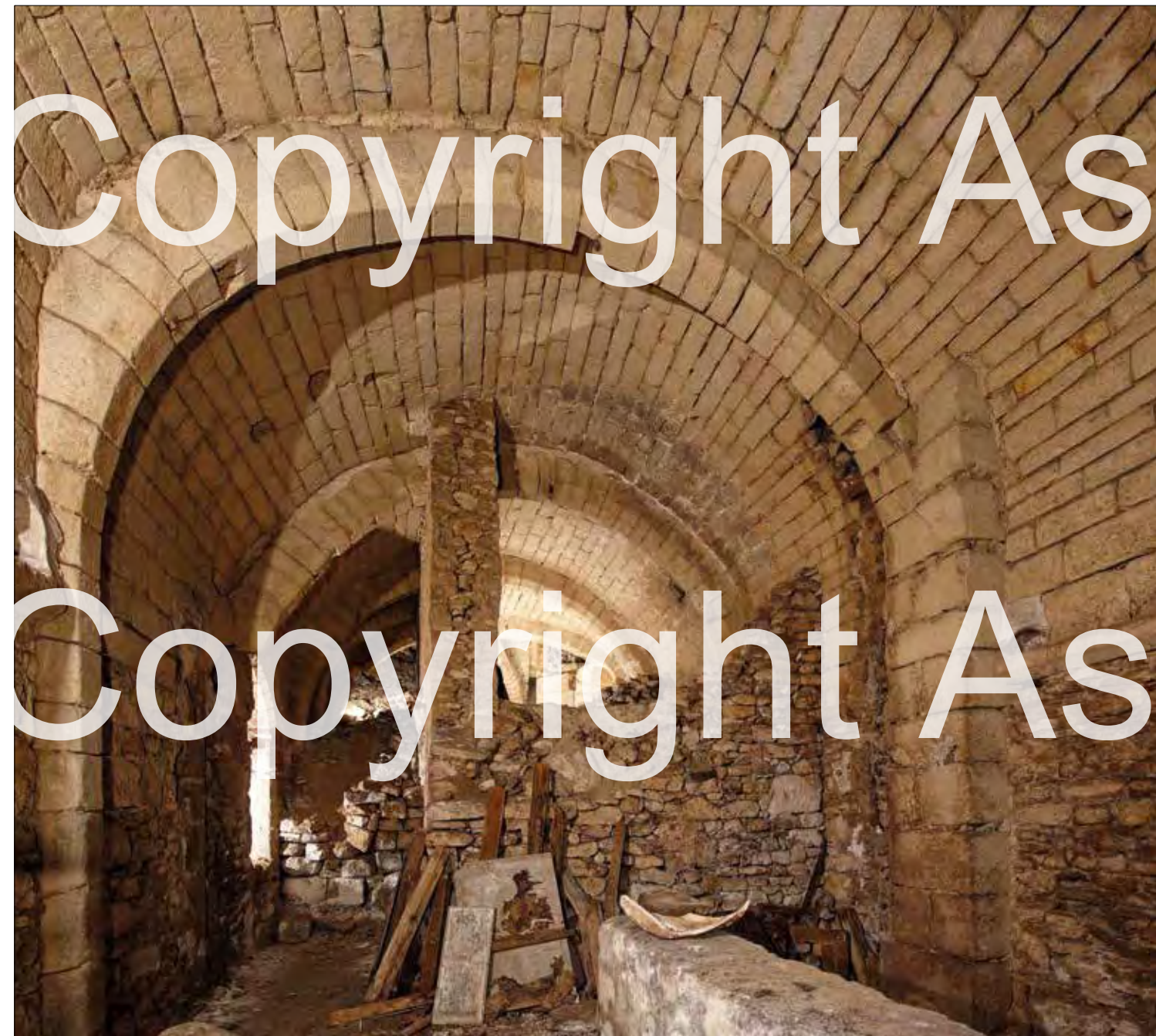
A cellar with groin vaults, located in the basement of the former clock building of La Charité, constructed in 1771.



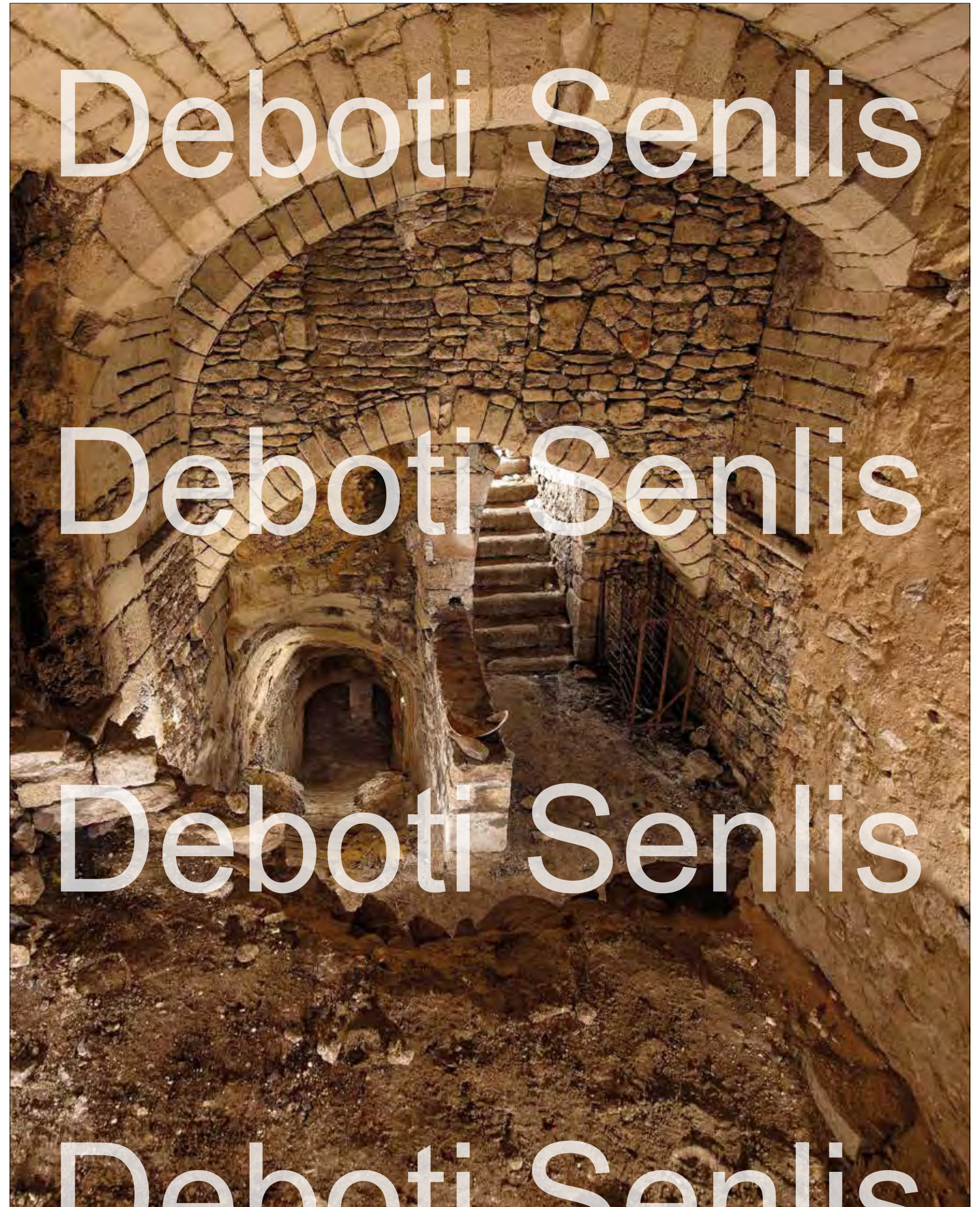
A barrel-vaulted cellar without pillars or transverse arches.



A 17th-century groin-vaulted cellar in a former hostelry.



On Rue du Châtel, one of the most intricate cellars still exists. It features a barrel vault reinforced by chamfered transverse arches made of large ashlar stones. Over time, the cellar has undergone several modifications and divisions. A new cellar was rebuilt within the original one, and a 15th-century spiral staircase connected this new cellar, piercing through the vaults. Another staircase provides access to an extensive underlying network of quarries.





An octagonal stone spiral staircase with a solid stone central shaft. Possibly dating from the 15th century, this staircase is constructed as a turret within the cellar, rather than being embedded within the walls.



This corridor once connected two Gothic rooms at different levels. The deepest one is blocked off. The vault of the passage is made of masonry and reinforced at one end by four sturdy transverse arches. A ventilation duct has been blocked. The walls are cut from natural stone.



In this cellar, the remedial underpinning of the vault is clearly visible. Originally barrel-vaulted, it was later raised with ribbed vaulting.

Quarry cellars

Most often, at the far end of the cellar, directly opposite the entrance if possible, there is a deep staircase leading down into the quarry. In front of this staircase, there is sometimes a capstan housing (like the one under the Saint-Maurice Priory) which was used for lowering and raising heavy loads. If a column is located along the axis of the descent, it often has deep grooves made by the load-handling ropes wrapped around the column's shaft. 25 to 30 steps lead underground. The entrance is always well-constructed, made of dressed stone. The vault may be masonry-built, either barrel-vaulted or ribbed, and in rare cases, in the form of an inverted staircase.

To the right or left of the descent, there is often a small niche for holding small utensils or candles. Rectangular cupboards embedded in the wall can be found both in the cellars and in the quarries beneath. They were closed with doors, as evidenced by the doorframes and the fixing holes for the hinges and locks. A shelf divided the cupboard.

After just a few meters of descent, the stonework disappears, giving way to a rock-cut stairway corridor. To avoid collapse, it was necessary to descend below the layer of hard stone, eliminating the need for stonework lining on the walls and vault. The quarry is carved directly into the geological material, and the walls are only very exceptionally finished with stonework. The layout of the quarry cellars completely disregards the boundaries of the plots and those of the house.



The quarry typically extends about ten metres deep along the axis of the staircase. Often, a second quarry face was dug at a right angle to the main quarry, either to the right or left, as seen beneath the bishop's palace. In larger quarries, if the stone is of good quality, extraction continues using a method known as 'à pilier tournant', where workers preserve a natural support pillar for the ceiling of the quarry while continuing excavation around it. Some quarries are also dug in chambers that branch off from the main gallery.



A quarry with a natural pillar supporting the ceiling.

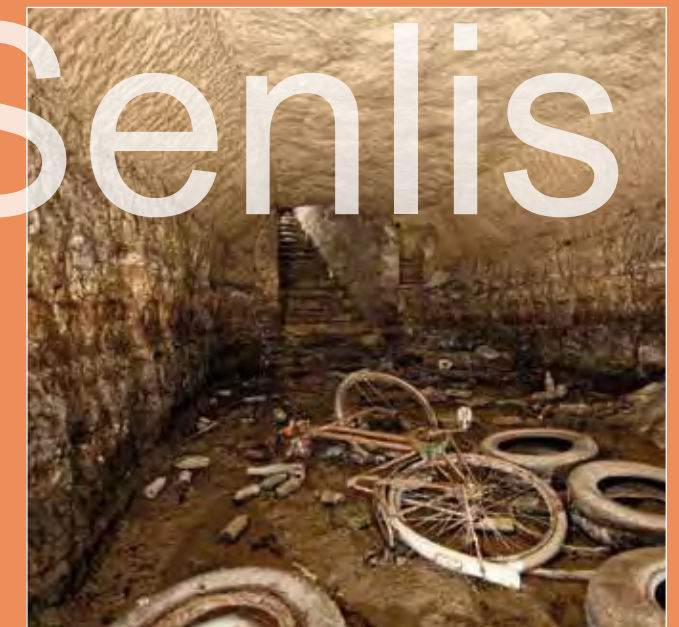
In the larger quarries, vertical ventilation shafts are often found near the entrance to the excavation. If the gallery is long enough, a second shaft may be present, or even an extraction shaft. At the far end of the quarry, or sometimes at the end of a narrow gallery, an access to the well opens up. In the quarry, the well has a masonry wall. A carved door frame clearly indicates the original presence of a wooden door, likely to protect the water quality. We found at least two wells with two access points at different levels within the quarry. Most often, these wells also provide access to the vaulted cellar on the upper level and open onto the garden or courtyard of the house. These wells may have been used during the quarry excavation as extraction shafts. The lining of the well, depending on the type of rock traversed, is either made with neatly dressed stones and small joints, or carved directly into the rock if it is not friable, in accordance with the successive strata. Around the cathedral and the royal castle, the wells reach water at a depth of 23 or 25 meters.



A ventilation shaft seen from below.



Rock-cut staircase.



Quarry cellar. The straight staircase originates from the Gothic cellar. At the bottom of the steps, a cupboard is cut into the wall.

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Small chambers open off either side of the central corridor.



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A crossroads of quarries reinforced with pointed arches.



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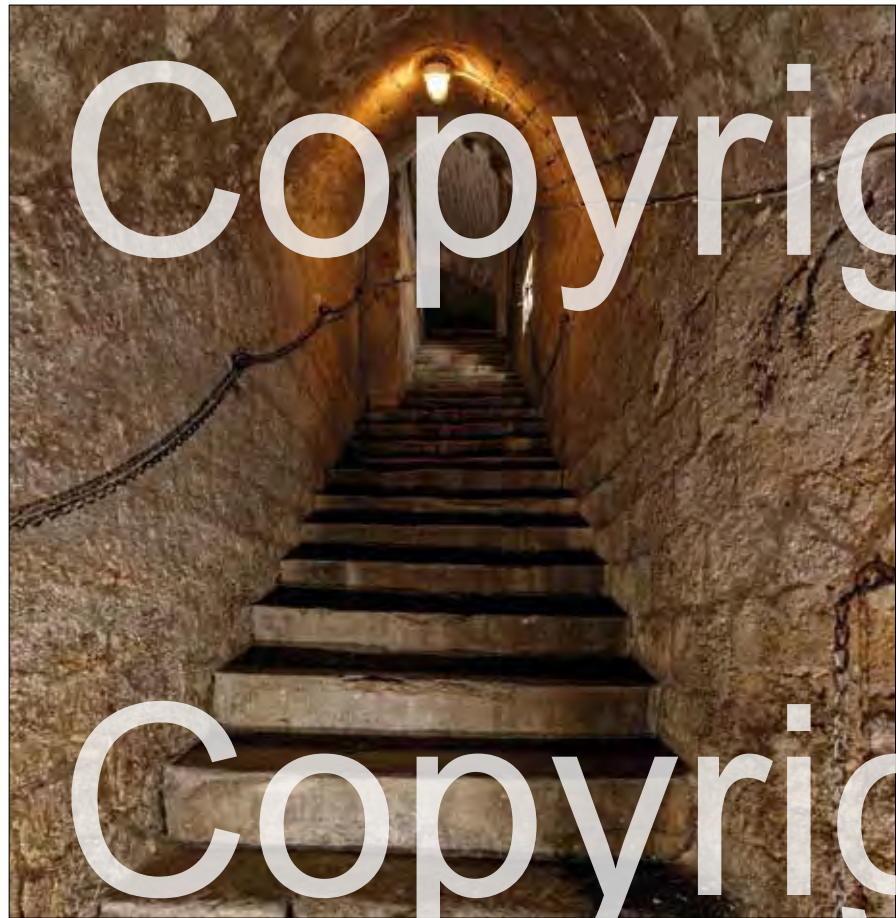
The fragile “roof” collapsed, leaving a pyramid of fallen rocks on the ground and creating a negative tower-like cavity in the ceiling.



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The quarrying process has divided the space into chambers. Inscriptions made with soot can be seen on the ceiling, left by visitors from different eras.





A descent into the quarry built with dressed stone masonry. The vault features a pointed arch.



Modern access to the quarry.



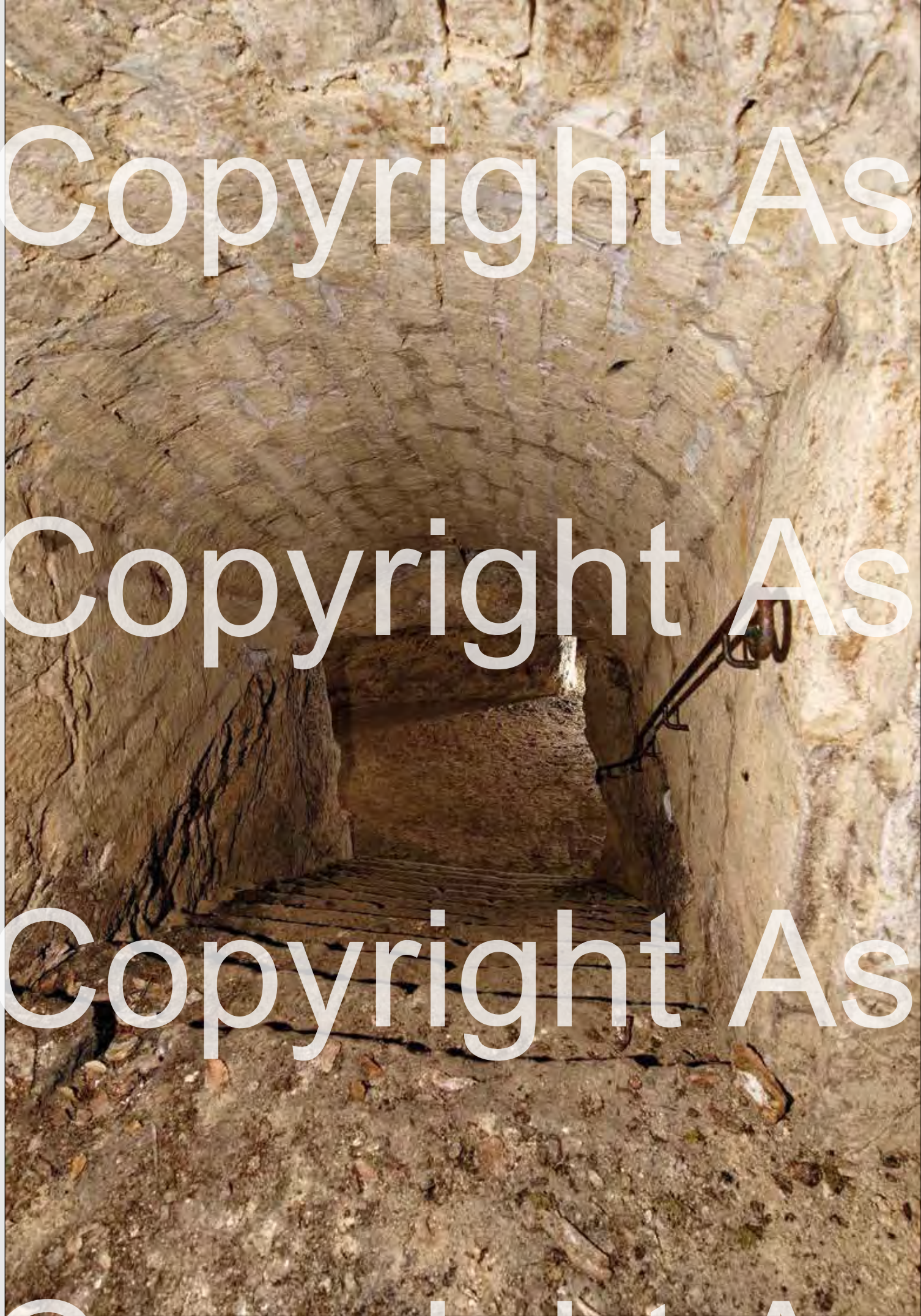
In the quarry, a massive retaining pillar supports the weakened ceiling. At the far left, an access gallery has been blocked off. To the right opens a long, straight corridor.



A spacious extraction gallery with chambers.



A staircase and two quarries carved into limestone. Rubble stone walls made of exogenous stone reinforce structurally weak areas.



A descent staircase into the quarry. The stair nosings are notched from the friction of ropes used to hold or pull loads.

The Senlis stone was particularly suited for building the houses above. As a result, quarries were re-excavated when additional material was needed for house extensions. We identified a case of ‘secondary excavation’, where the floor of the initial, modestly sized quarry was re-dug. The quarry workers excavated beneath a sufficiently solid layer of stone to create a second staircase, which led to a lower quarry level. In some areas, loose soils could provide lime or sand.

Legend has it that the underground passages of Senlis form an extensive network leading to the surrounding hamlets, neighboring villages, and even nearby châteaux. A detective novel written by journalist Victor Goedorp, *Seul sous la terre (Alone Under the Ground)*, published in 1931 by Éditions des Portiques, makes the city’s underground its central plot. Of course, no organized urban underground development plan ever existed, and exploration of the cellars quickly leads to dead ends. However, quarry workers occasionally broke through the wall of one quarry to connect it to a neighbouring one. When these passages exist and have been preserved, a significant difference in floor levels between the two cellars is often noticeable. Most of these openings have now been walled up or sealed.



A grid defines a storage area in the cellar. In the 1970s, this cellar served as an exceptional storage reserve for the finest *grands crus*.



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This vast quarry cellar has been entirely reinforced with sturdy ashlar transverse arches. It forms a wide corridor, nearly 4 meters in width, in a quadrilateral shape with sides measuring 25 metres. As in the past, goods may still be stored here today.

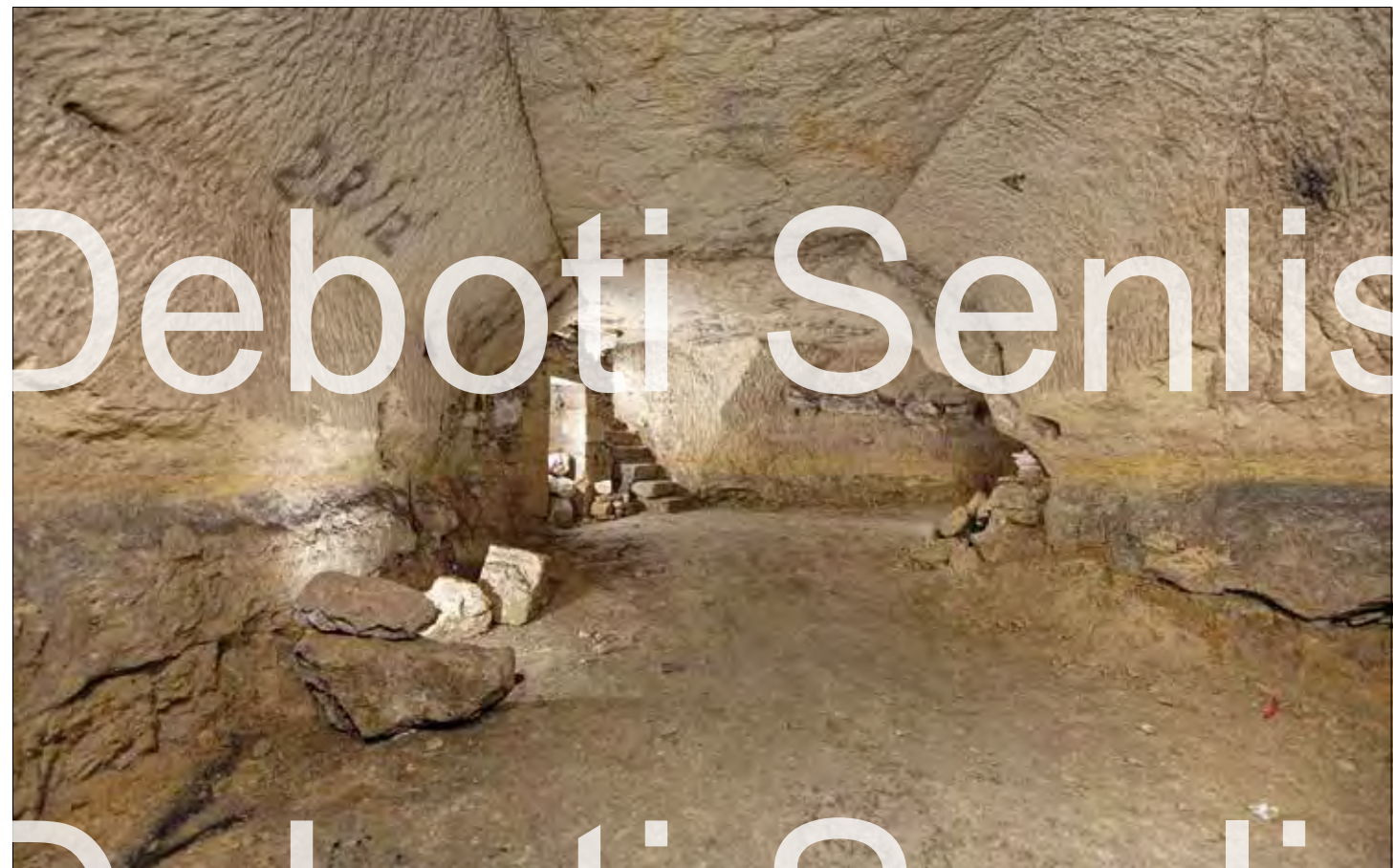
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This staircase leads down into the quarry, reaching the third underground level.



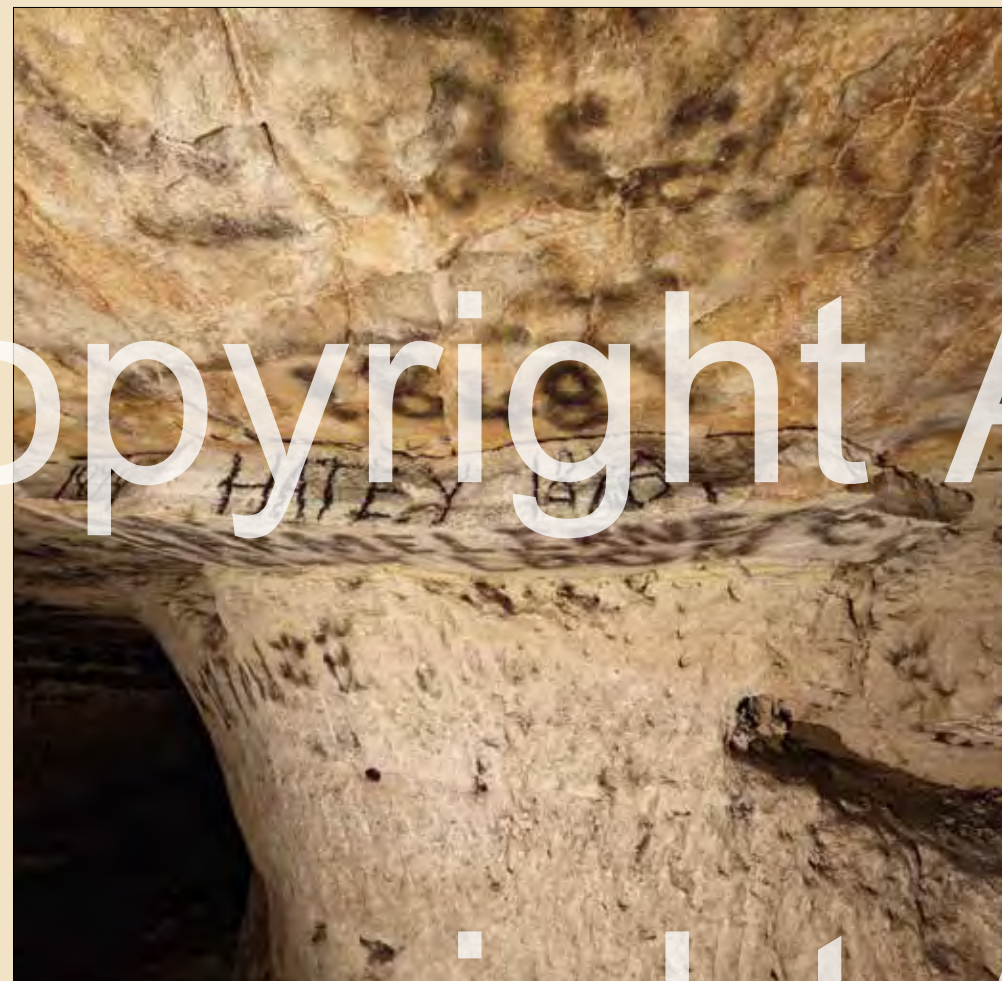
To the right, the quarry face clearly shows distinct marks from parallelepiped block extractions. In the center, the base of the natural pillar has been reinforced with masonry. To the left, a massive masonry pillar supports the ceiling of the quarry.



The access door to the well is located to the left of the staircase.



Light from a well on Rue du Châtel, as seen from the quarry cellar.



Visitors in the past have immortalised their presence here.



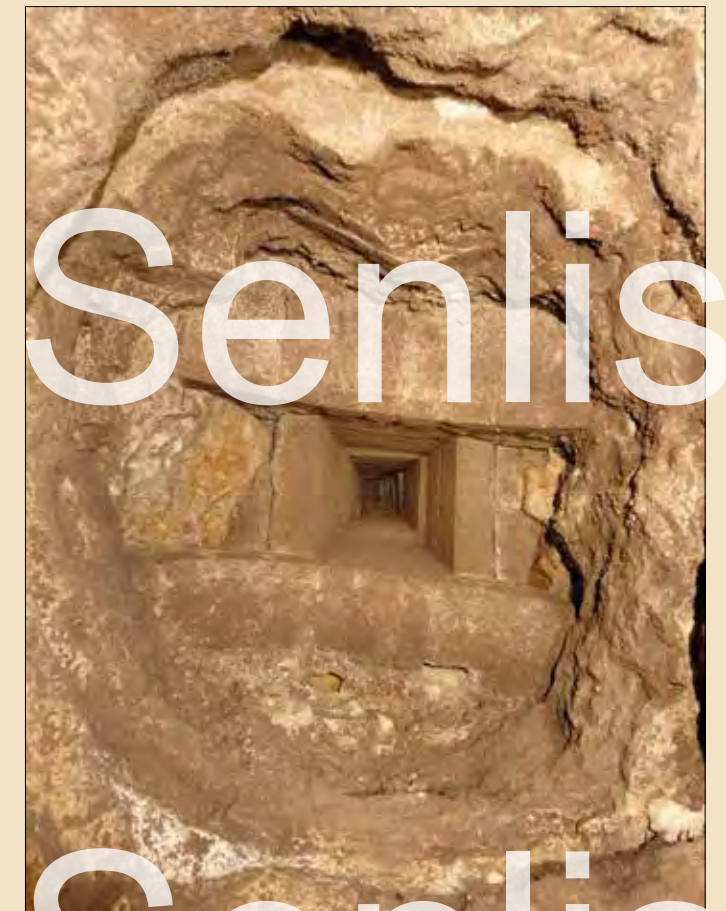
A deep descent into the quarry; a Gothic room opens up halfway down.



A later passage connects two 13th-century cellars. At the far end, a staircase was also added *a posteriori*.



This narrow corridor is the result of underpinning a foundation wall beneath the lateral wall of the new house, which is narrower than the old one.



A well-laid stone ventilation chimney..



An abandoned quarry descent, formerly blocked. The staircase has been partly destroyed.

It can also serve as a permanent disposal area for empty bottles!



A support pillar and collapsed stone blocks.



In a quarry cellar, the ruins of such wooden partitions prove that the site was still used for storage not so long ago.





Because the rock was more friable than elsewhere, large, strong transverse and ribbed arches were necessary. Similarly, the walls were constructed with masonry, though the stability remains fragile.



In this cupboard carved into the stone, the shelf placement slots are clearly visible.



A formerly backfilled quarry descent. Over time, the backfill has compacted, opening up a narrow passage beneath the vault.

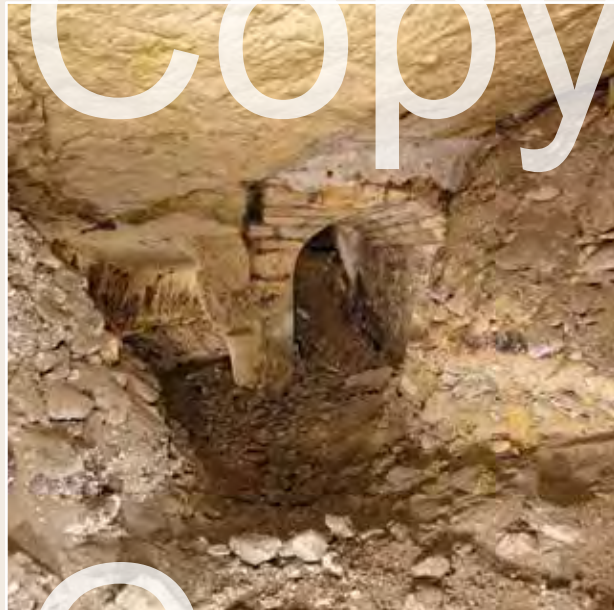
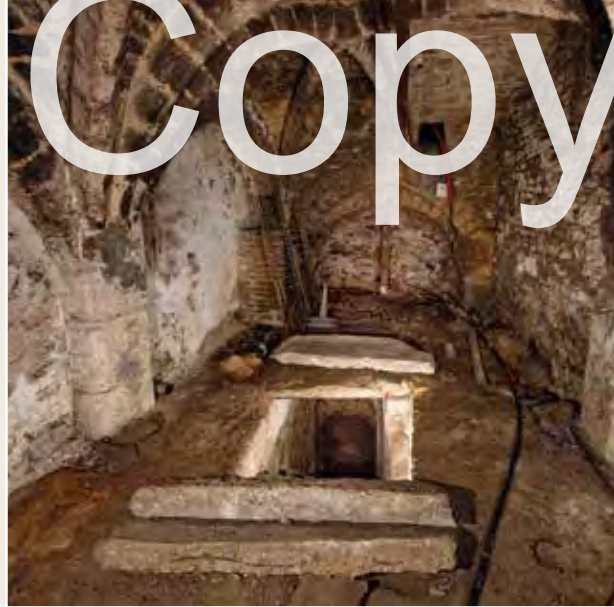


A unique example of a column with a 'spout'. It is possible that this column drum was meant to support an arch of the vault; either the architectural plan changed, or the drum was reused as is.



A two-compartment cupboard.

The Blue Chapel



This quarry hall, featuring three chamfered square pillars, two aisles, and four bays, greatly impressed Henri Leblanc upon its rediscovery. Yeasts from a butcher's laboratory above had given the walls of the adjacent well a blue tint. He subsequently named it the 'Blue Chapel'. Originally, two access corridors led into it from the west.

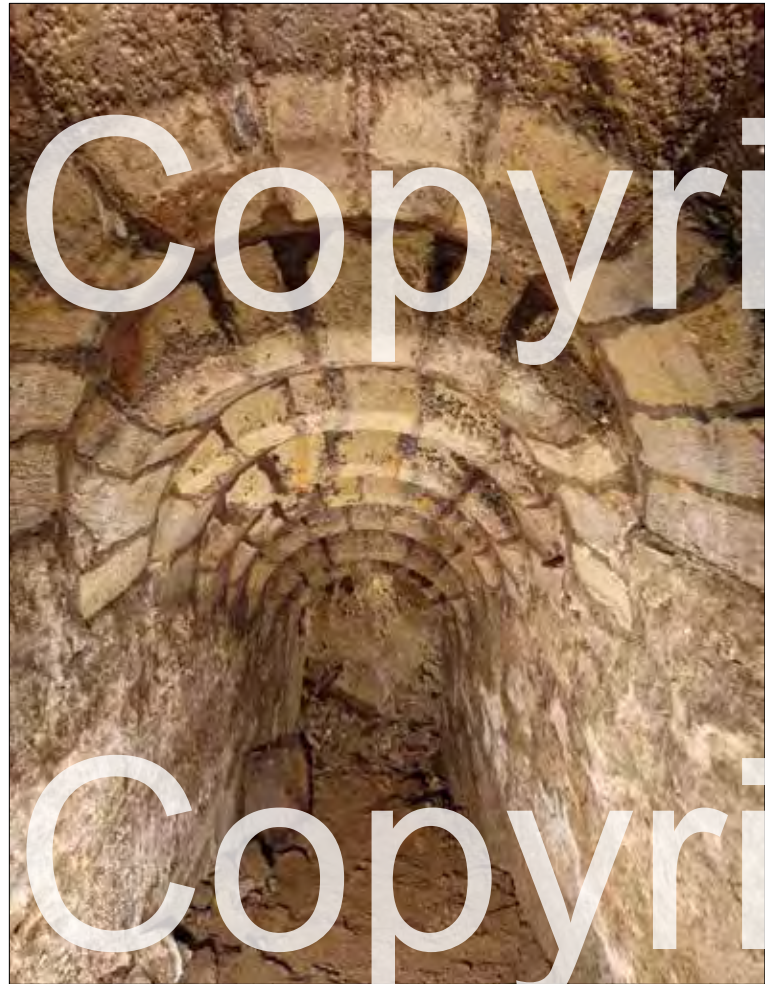


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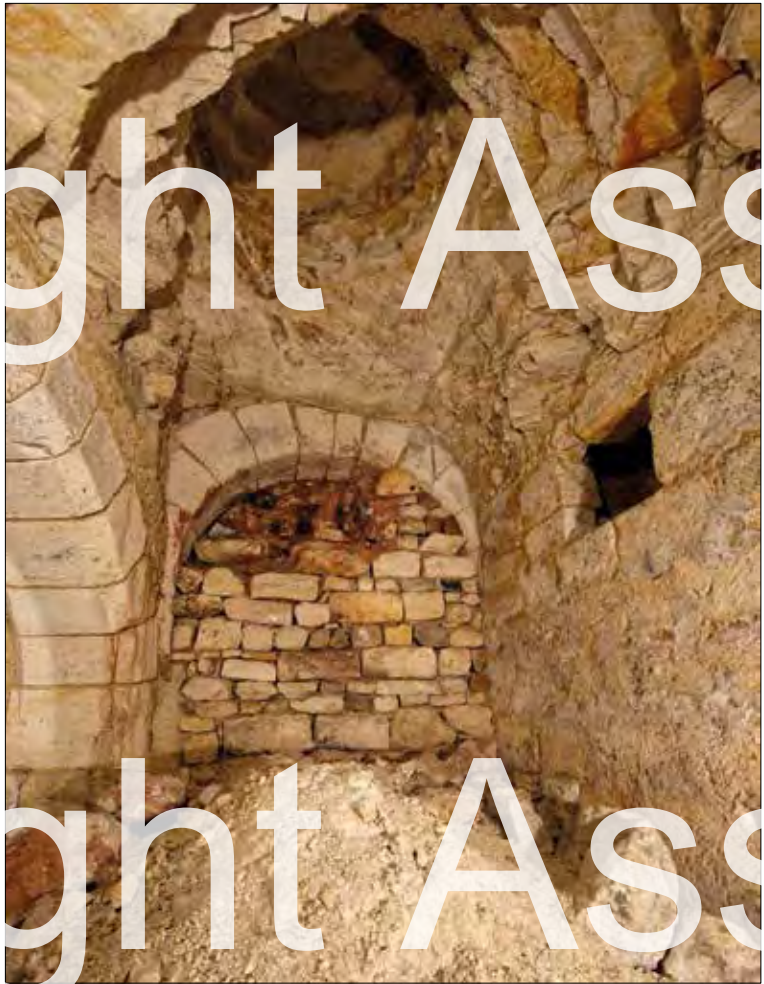
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A quarry descent with a vault in the form of an inverted staircase.



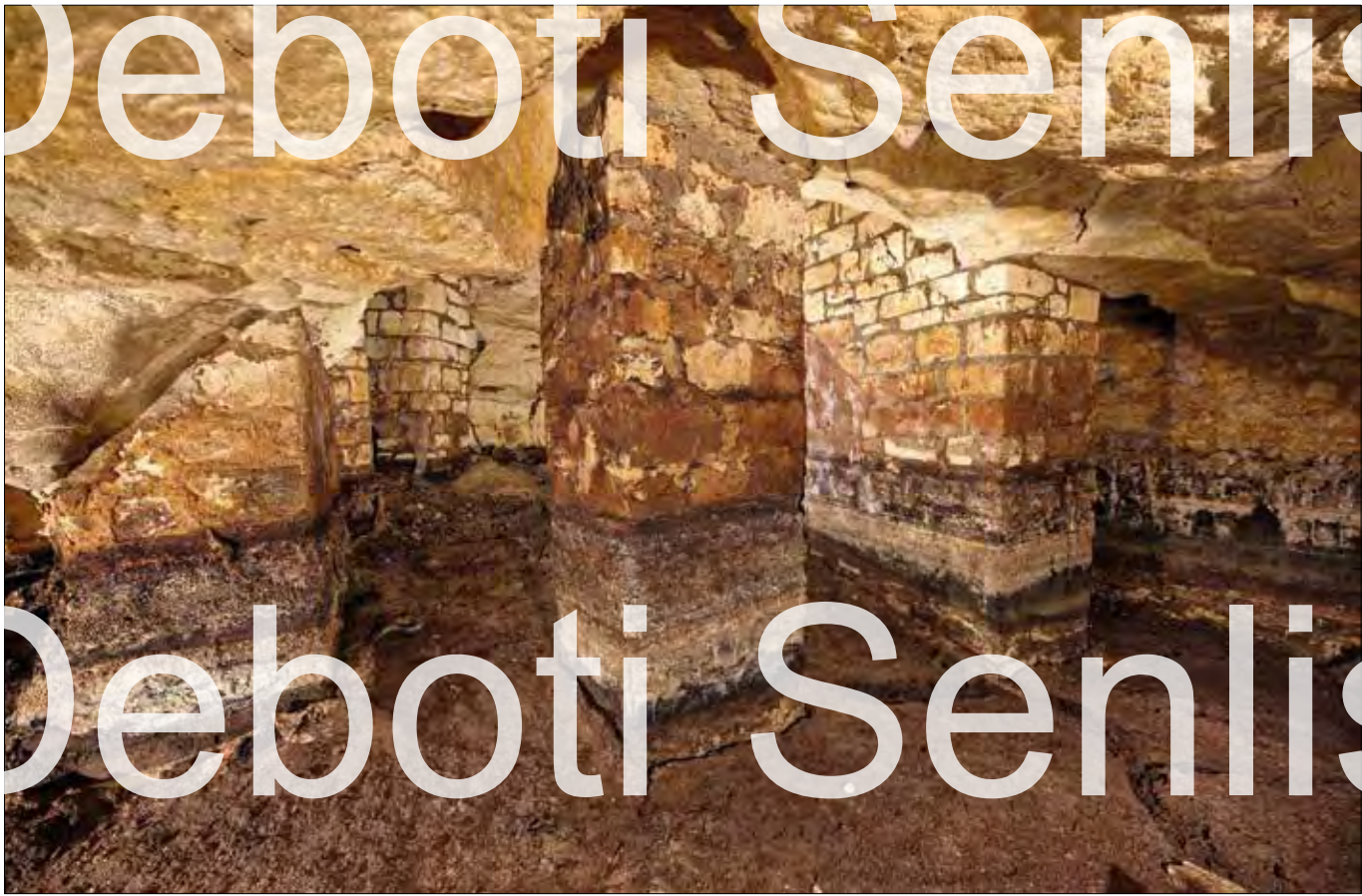
A corridor blocked by a rubble wall. In the foreground, a negative tower-like cavity in the ceiling.



The purpose of the two sturdy pillars built into this quarry wall remains a mystery – perhaps they were part of a plan to enlarge the room. In any case, their monumentality has led to speculation, without evidence, that they date back to antiquity.

Over time, particularly in the 19th century, the quarries fell into abandonment and neglect. The stone used to build houses was replaced by brick. The rubble from the demolition of the previous house was used to fill in the quarries, sometimes including the access staircase or the vaulted cellar. When the access is not blocked and the rubble has compacted, it is possible to crawl or stoop between the backfill and the quarry roof.

Before cemented pits became mandatory, and the sewage system was widely adopted, many quarries were used as cesspits, though the exact drainage routes remain unknown.



This quarry room was used as a cesspit. Humidity has left its mark on the walls. In modern times, it was durably reinforced with masonry pillars.

The lower
town

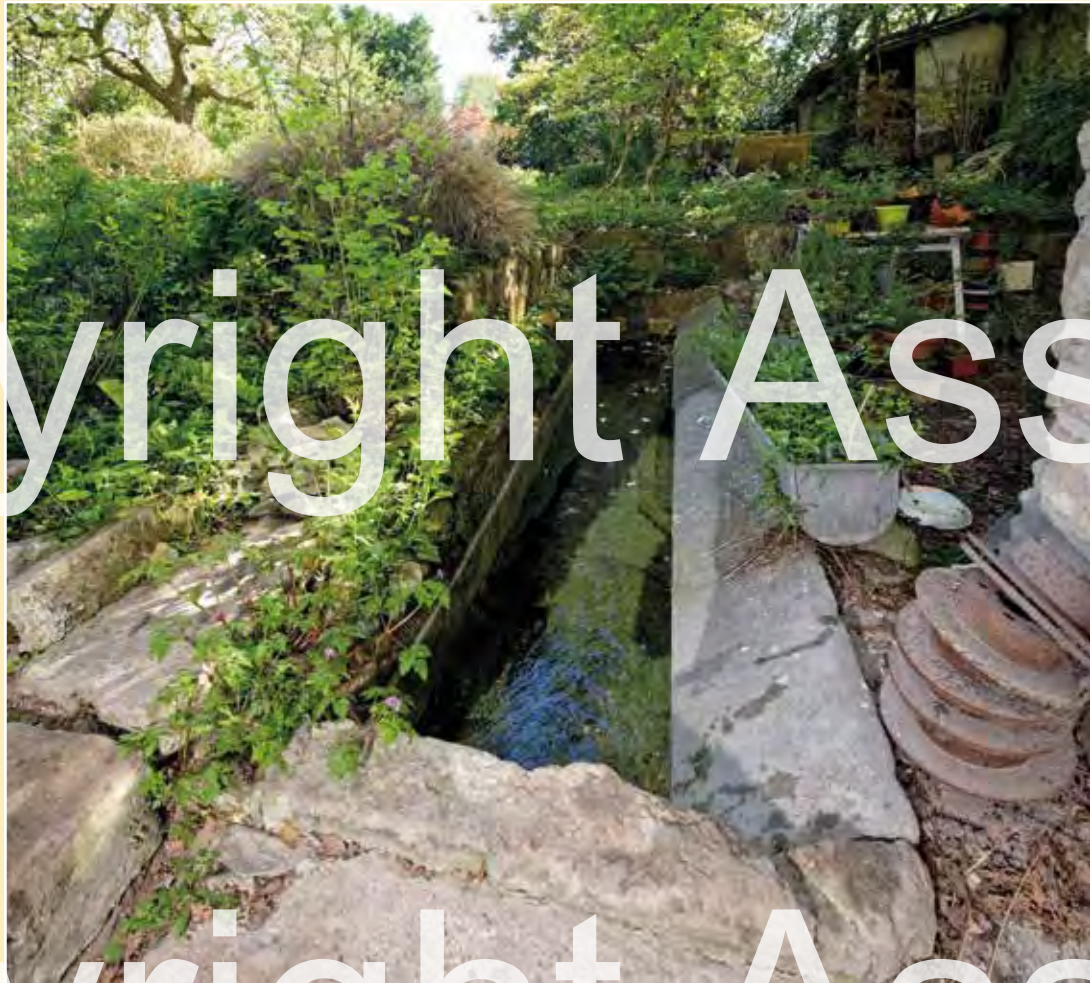
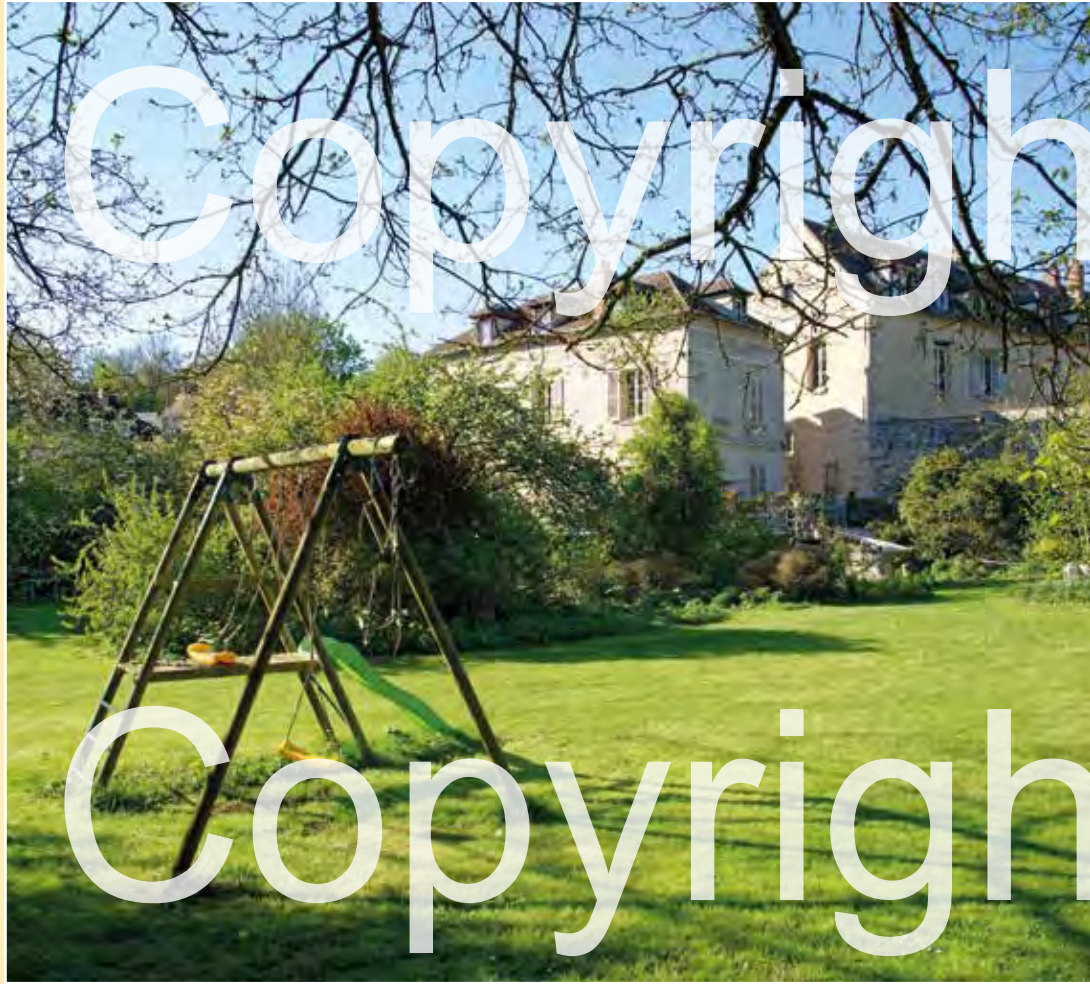
This city view is taken from the cathedral heights, looking south along the axis of Rue du Châtel, Rue Vieille de Paris, and Faubourg Saint-Martin. The lower town, less densely built, stretches across the middle of the image, just before the wetlands of the Nonette River, marked by an abundance of trees, notably aspens.

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Due to its location below the Cité, water is very present in the gardens of the lower town.



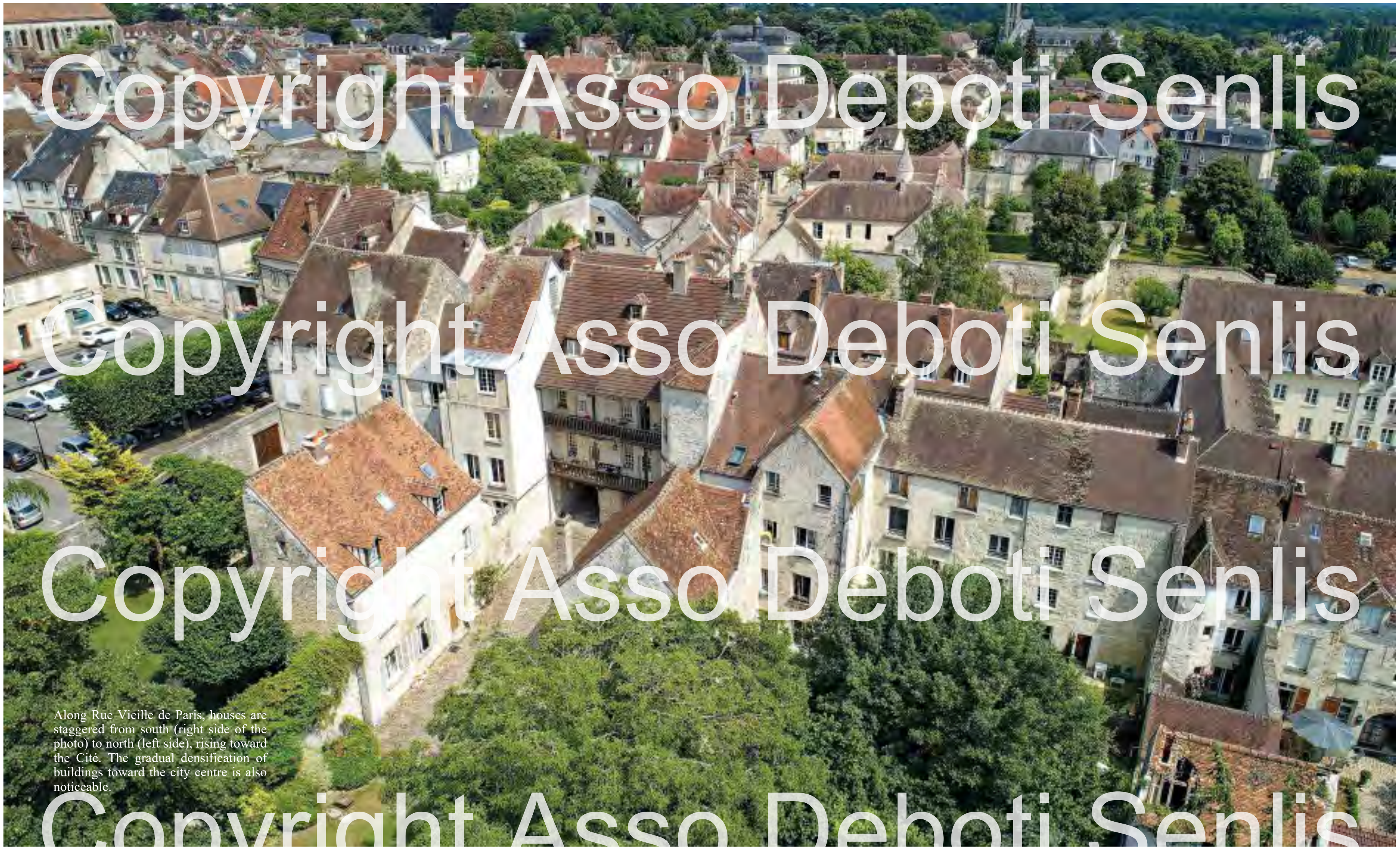
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The lower town, with its wet meadows,
feature sparse and more modern housing.

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Along Rue Vieille de Paris, houses are staggered from south (right side of the photo) to north (left side), rising toward the Cité. The gradual densification of buildings toward the city centre is also noticeable.

House of Master Alexandre Legrand, lawyer

This 17th-century house has three levels, with the second adjusting to the slope of the terrain. Austere on the street side, it opens its large windows onto the garden. The oldest part consists of two perpendicular buildings, where a monumental ramp-on-ramp staircase, serves the elegant rooms of the highest pavilion. Originally, this pavilion must have been adorned, like its neighbor, with a stone dormer window.

At the beginning of the 18th century, it was bequeathed to the Hôtel Commun of Senlis, that is to say, to the City, by Alexandre Legrand's granddaughter and heir. The City sold it by auction on February 14, 1754.

The house was inhabited until 2014 by the writer, poet, and screenwriter Daniel Boulanger, a member of the Académie Goncourt.



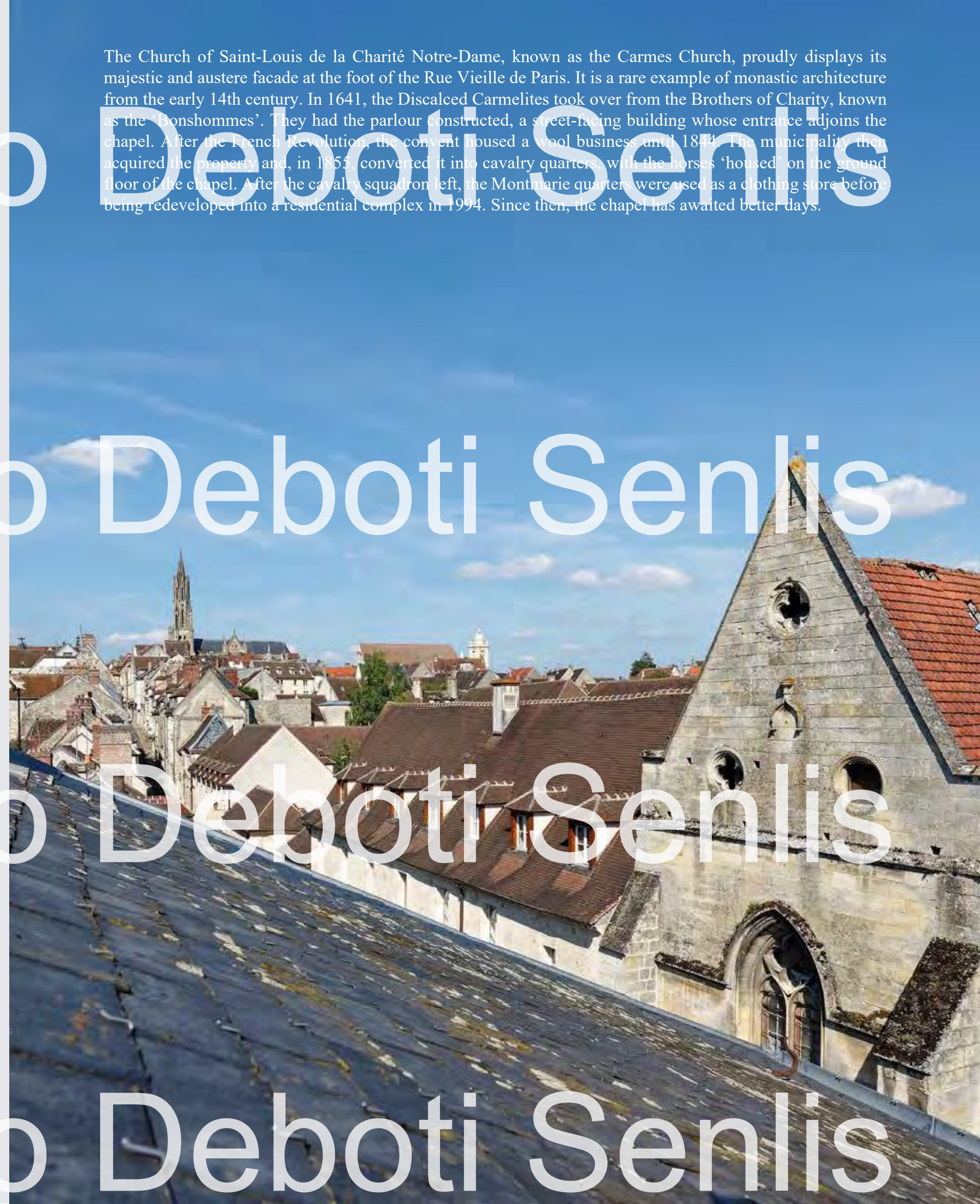
The Malmaison district was named after the slaughterhouses once located there, though their exact locations varied over time.



The Gate of Paris was extensively modified after the French Wars of Religion and the siege of 1589, during which its towers were destroyed. It was then reinforced with a low wall built to protect its base and widened to adapt to siege techniques, before gradually being dismantled. Today, its terrace offers a pleasant garden and a beautiful view of the surrounding area.



The Church of Saint-Louis de la Charité Notre-Dame, known as the Carmes Church, proudly displays its majestic and austere facade at the foot of the Rue Vieille de Paris. It is a rare example of monastic architecture from the early 14th century. In 1641, the Discalced Carmelites took over from the Brothers of Charity, known as the 'Bonshommes'. They had the parlour constructed, a street-facing building whose entrance adjoins the chapel. After the French Revolution, the convent housed a wool business until 1844. The municipality then acquired the property and, in 1855, converted it into cavalry quarters, with the horses 'housed' on the ground floor of the chapel. After the cavalry squadron left, the Montmarie quarters were used as a clothing store before being redeveloped into a residential complex in 1994. Since then, the chapel has awaited better days.



Fountains

All along the southern flank of the town, fountains, gutters, and sewers flow towards the Nonette River, which was channeled as early as the Middle Ages near the ramparts.

The springs and fountains were naturally used and adapted by the local population for sanitary purposes. They provided drinking water and enabled the creation of public bathhouses and *lavoirs* (washing places).

The construction of the medieval rampart, which was considerably extended during the Renaissance, made it difficult for water to flow from the top of the town. This required the construction of underground pipes, cisterns, and aqueducts through the wall to drain off the water. These developments caused a number of problems. The monks of Saint-Vincent, who were regularly flooded, often came into conflict with the City, which was reluctant to pierce its wall and weaken it.

From west to east, one comes across, in succession: the Fontaine des Arènes (now filled in), the Fosse aux Ânes sewer (beneath the Montauban), the Fontaine du Petit Apremont, the Fontaine Saint-Gilles also known as the Fontaine des Étuves, the Gouffre d'Enfer (near the Gate of Paris), the Fontaine Ressante or Roissante, and the Saint-Vincent spillway and sewer.



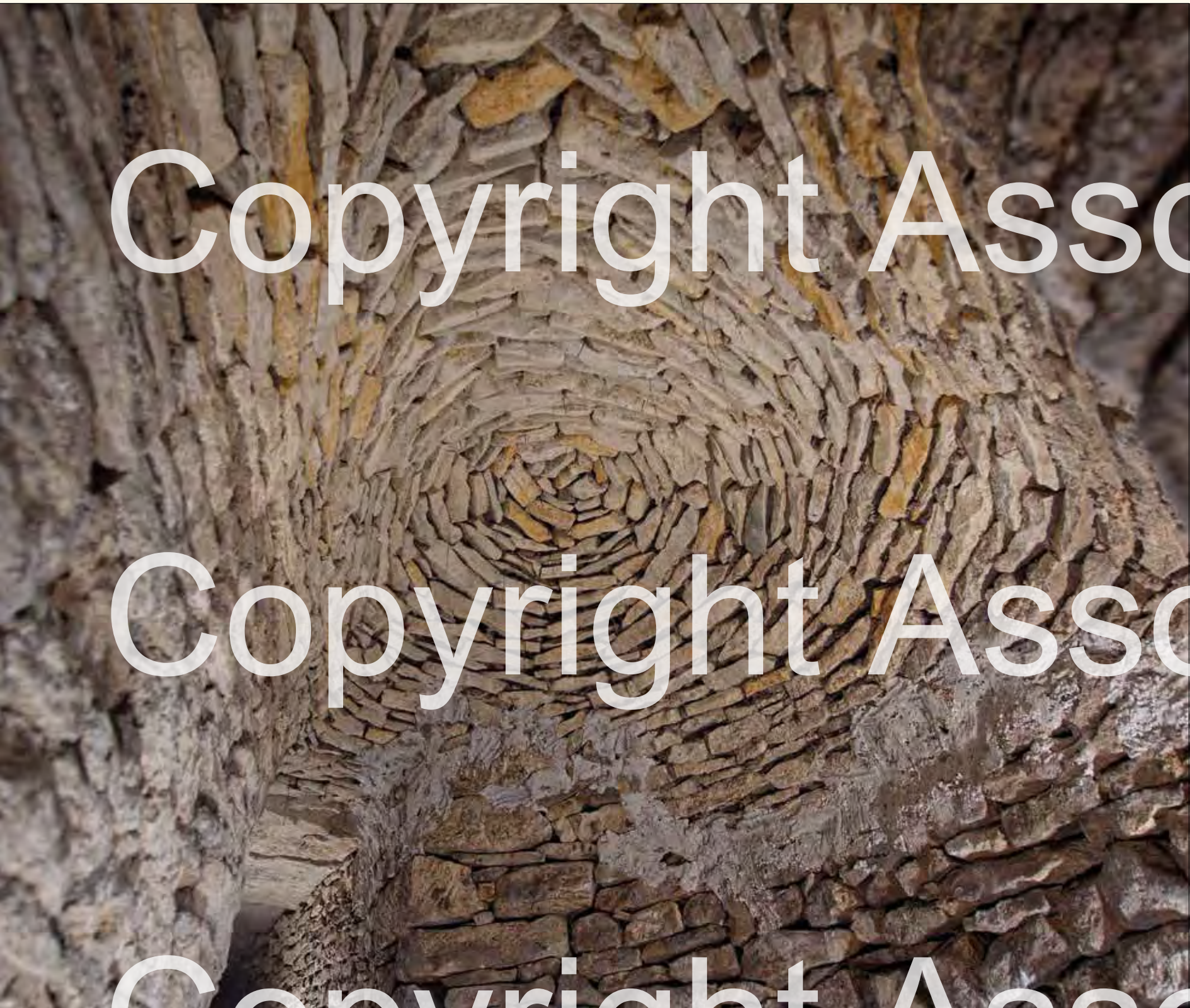
The Fontaine des Étuves

The *étuves* were medieval public baths, gradually condemned due to promiscuity. A purchase contract states that in 1580, at Jean Truyart's house, "in the semi-underground basement of his public bathhouse, there was a fountain that provided good water, which in this way was clean and convenient for the town's inhabitants. Particularly for those in the neighborhood where it is located, who had no well with good water to drink. And in the past, the inhabitants would go via the steps of the Fontaine Saint-Gilles where there was a well, which had long since been closed off". From that date onwards, public access and a staircase were provided. In 1808, Mr. Corbie, a tanner, took possession of the fountain.

The Fontaine Ressant (Roissante)

The basin of the fountain, located lower in the street, is fed by a narrow, high-built stone aqueduct. By following this aqueduct, one reaches a small underground rotunda, a junction of blocked galleries, entirely shaped from flat stones laid on their edge, forming a dome that required formwork during its construction. The appearance is reminiscent of the interior of Provençal *bories*, dry-stone huts where, however, the stones are laid flat. This construction, attested in the 13th century, may have been built before the 11th century.

The downstream aqueduct is more recent. Standing one metre high, it crosses and runs through the thickness of the 13th-century rampart, then the 16th-century Bellevue rampart, and continues towards the Cordeliers.



The dark mark at the bottom of the upstream aqueduct indicates the runoff's flood level.



A confluence cistern in the shape of a rotunda.

Aqueduct to unload the cistern. The almost impracticable passage is extremely narrow.





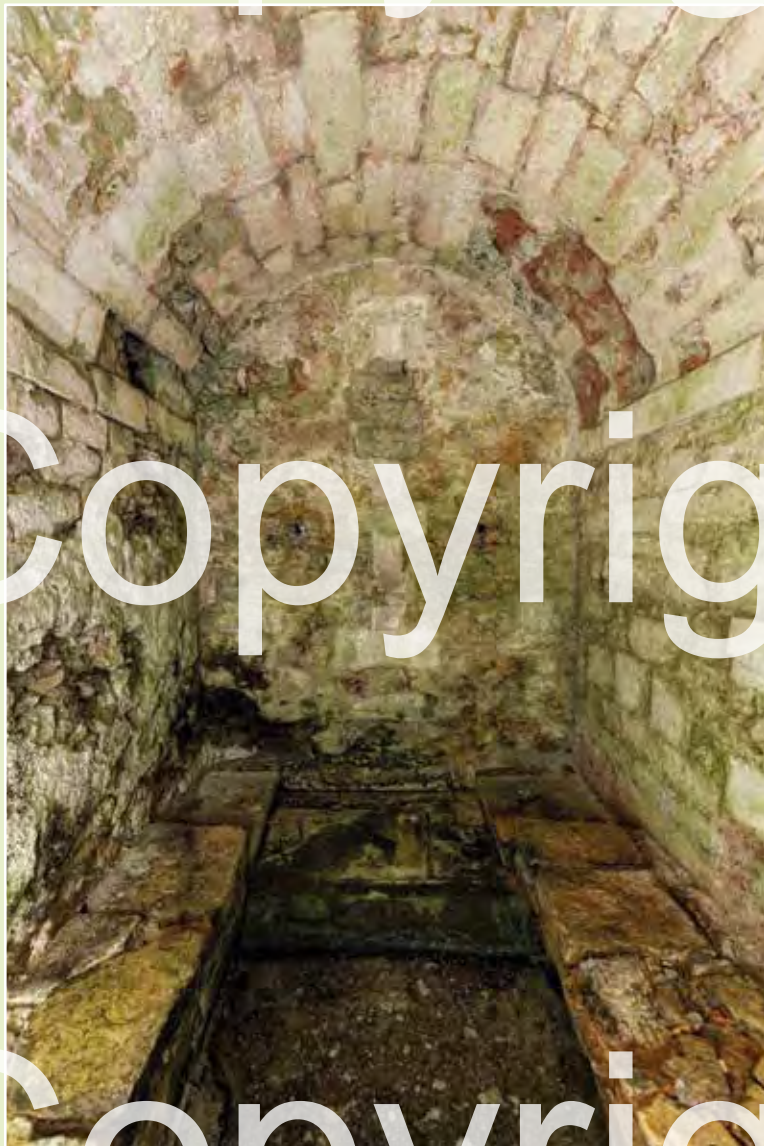
The fountain appears as a shaft of light between the upstream and downstream aqueducts.



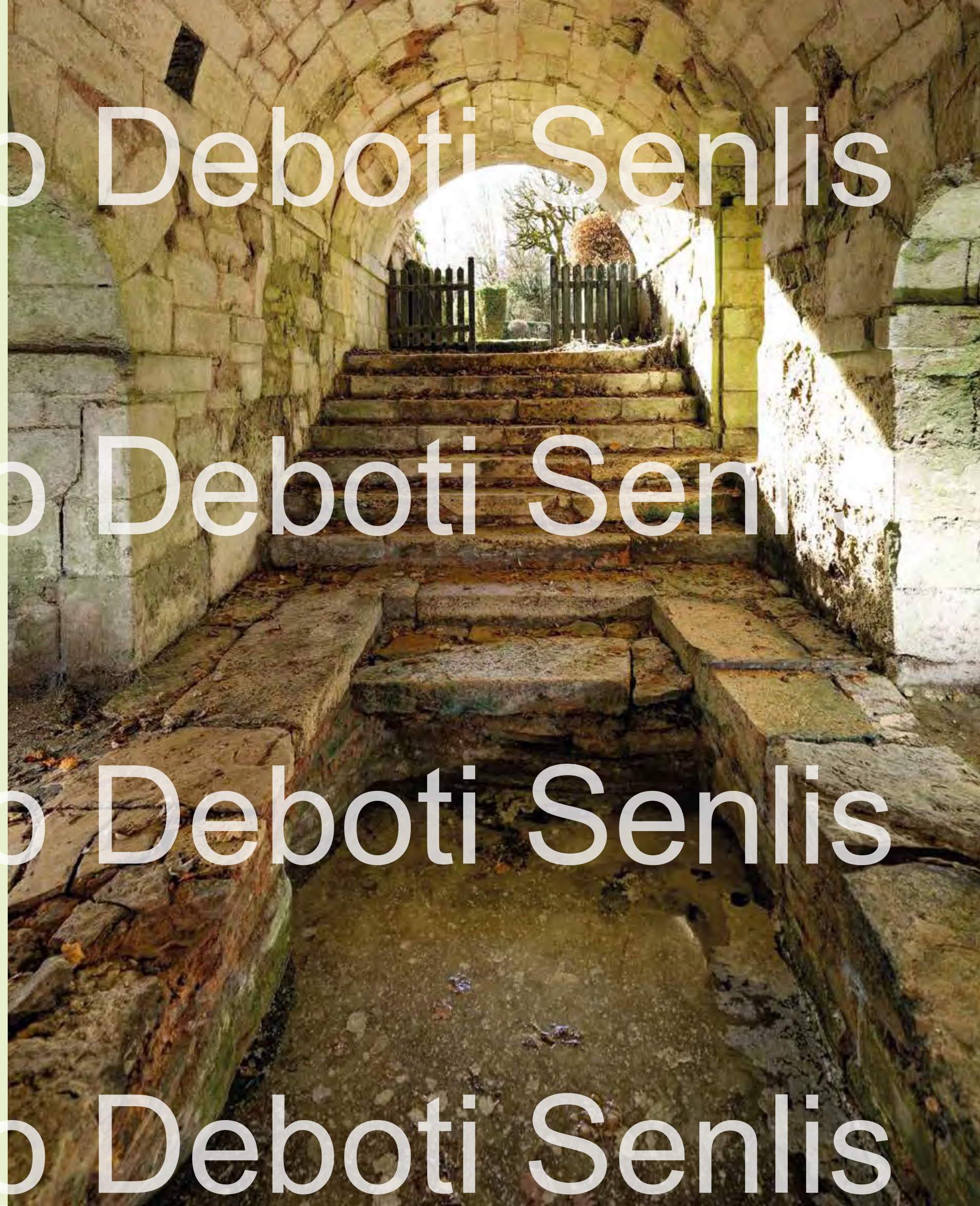
Downstream aqueduct beneath the modern rampart.



The Saint-Vincent retention basin. The flow of water through the city's rampart was a source of conflict throughout the Ancien Régime. It required the construction of a drainage network with chambers, built beneath the cloister garden and under the cryptoporticos.



This fountain was built in the 16th and 17th centuries as an antique-style ornamental basin, with a flight of stairs opening onto the house's garden. The oldest part of the fountain features two alcove niches and a blocked corridor. The deepest part was partially filled in, and the staircase was redone in 1713. The original use of this fountain remains unknown.



Saint-Lazare Church



The chapel is oriented east-west, with the former national road no. 17 running along its apse. Its facade features a bell-gable, while in the background stand the buildings of the general hospital, built in 1923-1924.



Originally, the general hospital of Senlis was preceded by a leprosarium founded in 1025 (a thousand years ago) outside the city by Robert the Pious, son of Hugh Capet. The current hospital chapel, dedicated to Saint Lazarus, was built in the 12th-13th centuries. Its Romanesque portal, capitals and column bases date from this period. The building now presents a rather heterogeneous appearance, having been rebuilt in 1512, likely stripped of its choir when the royal road was widened in 1752, and heavily altered in the 19th century. Thanks to the impetus of the Association pour la Réhabilitation, the chapel has been restored. Completion of the work was solemnly celebrated with a blessing mass on the 27th of June 2023.



Nave and aisles seen from the altar.



The parish pew is placed at the back of the chapel. On the wall, large stone panel monuments commemorate the names of donors since the chapel's origins.

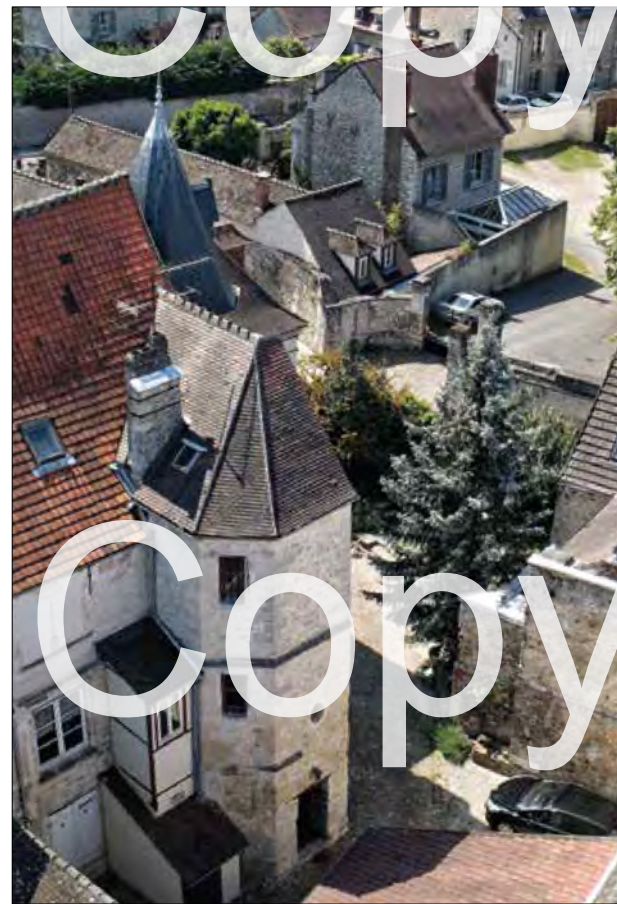


Two-compartment baptismal font: the zinc basin receives the baptismal water, while the right-hand compartment has a drainage hole for the water used in baptism by infusion.

La Halle district

The city expanded beyond the ancient rampart, developing within its ditches, especially to the south, where economic activities began to concentrate from the 12th century onward. This area also saw the establishment of urban landmarks such as markets, squares, a market hall, fish market, butcher stalls, belfry, exchange offices, and town hall.

To this day, it remains the liveliest of the historic districts.



City Hall



City Hall bell tower.

The clock was installed above the Council Hall in 1795, but its mechanism has been replaced several times. In the early years of the 19th century, a bell tower was built to mark the working hours of the laborers: it still chimes the hours in Senlis today.

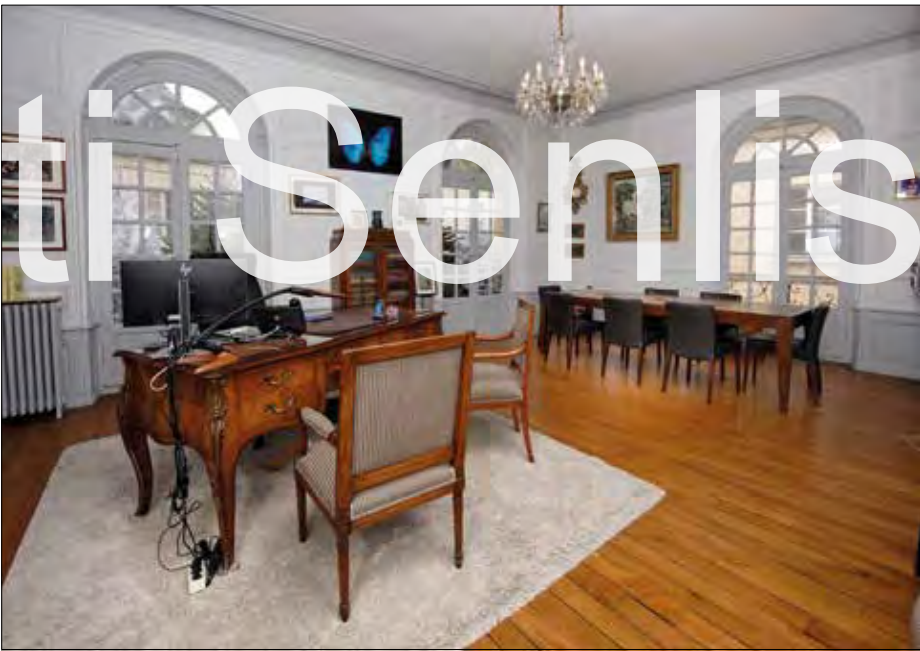


An emblematic civil protection instrument since the Second World War, the warning siren with eight speaker horns is mounted on the roof ridge of the City Hall.



City Hall roofs: on the right, the oldest part dates back to 1497, while the more recent one on the left dates to 1754.

This part of the City Hall was built between 1754 and 1755 at the corner of Rue Vieille de Paris. The room features three large transom windows with round arches and balconies. Originally used as the Council Chamber, it later became the mayor's office.



The main hall, known as the Council or Wedding Hall, was restored in 1884. At the same time, the Gothic door was repaired and later fitted with neo-Gothic woodwork in 1903.

On the back wall of the Wedding Hall, a monumental painting by Lucien Mélingue (1841-1889), completed in 1885, depicts the execution of the hostages at the end of the siege of Senlis by the Armagnacs in 1418. The painting was donated by Edmond Turquet.



Chéron House

Nicolas Chéron purchased the house on the 28th of April 1700, and became the parish priest of Sainte-Geneviève in Senlis. His sisters, and later his niece, inherited the house. A street-facing porch provides access to a courtyard, onto which the house opens. The oldest part is at the back of the courtyard, where a basket-handle door is crowned by a beautiful pediment, to which a modern coat of arms has been added.



A shared well built into the party wall.



A garden and terrace nestled beneath the ancient rampart.



Hôtel de Bonvilliers, also known as Hôtel du Haubergier

Regnault de Bonvilliers, provost of Senlis – whose jurisdiction extended only to those outside the city – had this elegant house “built new” shortly before 1522. The name Haubergier was only adopted in the 19th century.

The house is built over cellars and has two storeys, each marked by drip mouldings. On the street side, it boasts an elegant brick and stone facade. On the courtyard side, a spiral staircase leads to the upper floors and attic. The stairway turret door features a segmental arch topped with an ornate ogree. A shared well adjoins the house.

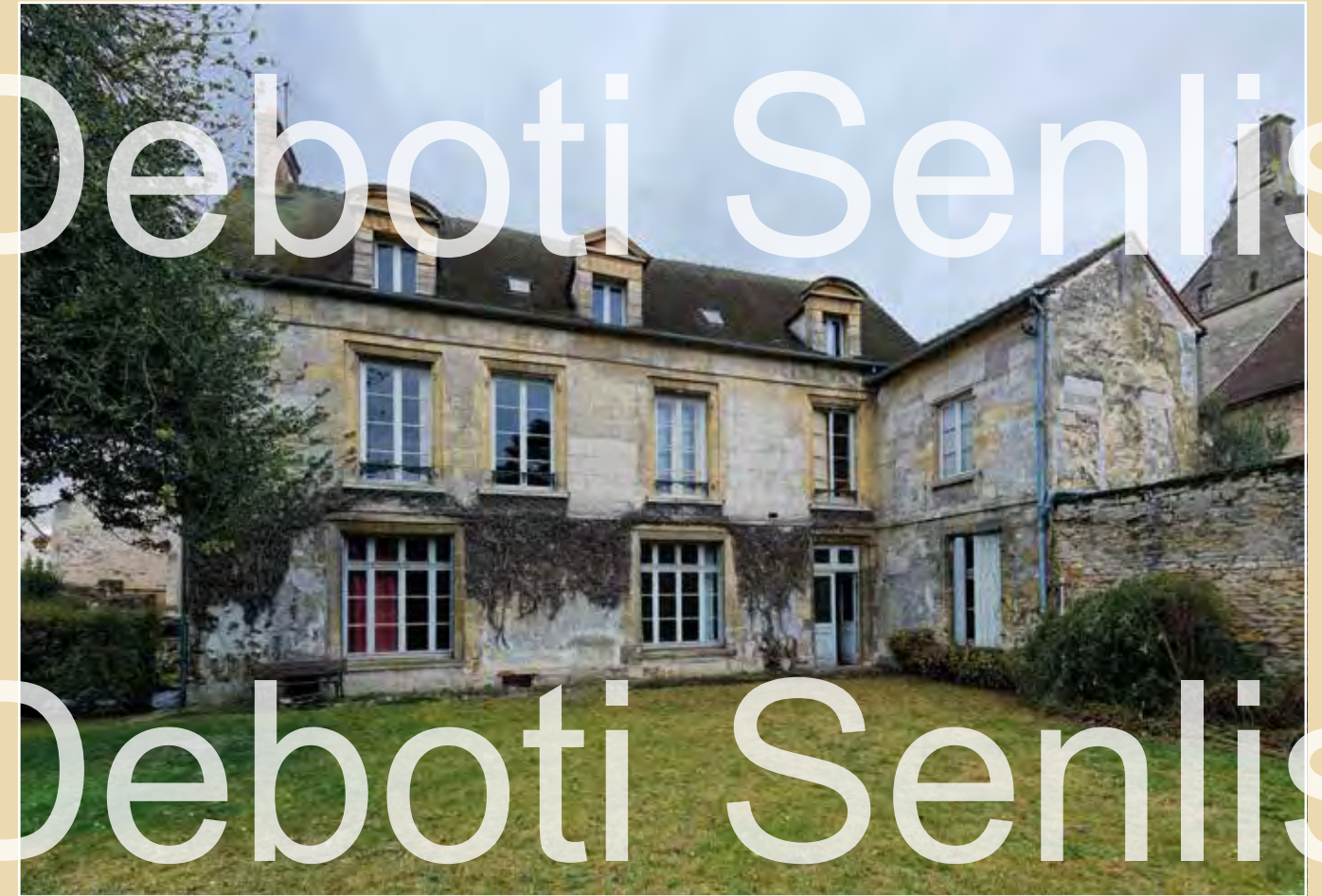
Starting in January 1927, the building was rented by the Société d’histoire et d’archéologie de Senlis (Historical and Archeological Society), which established a museum there. Unfortunately, in June 1940, a shell struck the turret, allowing water to seep in, and the museum was forced to close. The owner refused to carry out repairs. In 1952, the Société d’histoire bequeathed its collections to the City, which purchased and restored the building. The museum reopened in 1955, before being relocated to the former bishop’s palace in 1981. Today, the Hôtel remains in the good care of its private owner.





This house, known until recently as the ‘Bel-Âge’ house, was built on the site of the town house of the Priory of Bray. With the construction of the Avenue royale in 1752 – now Rue de la République – it lost part of its garden and was converted into a major hostelry on the Route des Flandres, named the Grand Monarque.

In September 1914, its large south wing, built in the second half of the 18th century, was burnt down by the Germans and never rebuilt.



The facade on Rue de la République was probably modified at the end of the 18th century to match an extension of the building, which no longer exists.



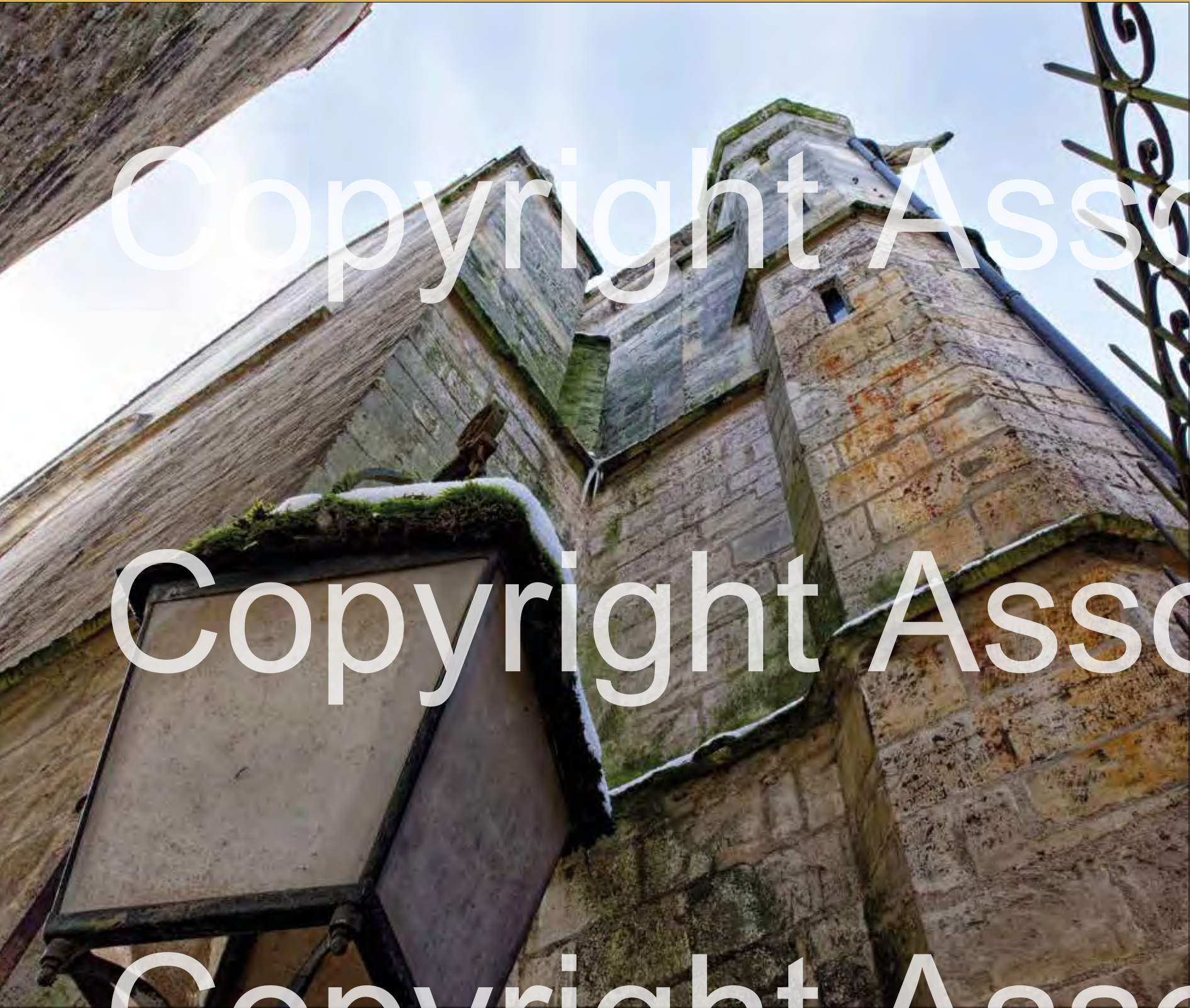
Saint-Aignan district

The Saint-Aignan district stretches along Rue de Beauvais, formerly known as Rue Saint-Aignan, which led to the western exit of the city. Around Place Gérard de Nerval – long the town's largest square and once called Place du Filori or Place du Marché aux Samedis – many of Senlis' grand townhouses were built.



Saint-Aignan Church

The parish Church of Saint-Aignan, once wealthy and with a considerable number of inhabitants, was built on the edge of a slope, on a terrace overlooking the lower town. Its oldest parts date back to the 11th century, but it underwent continuous modernization, particularly in the 15th and 16th centuries. It notably housed a parish association: the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. It was decommissioned in May 1791, then sold along with its adjoining cemetery on the 4th of August 1792. In 1806, the nave and the upper section of the bell tower were demolished by its owner, who converted the remaining part into a theatre. The City purchased the building in 1823, before handing it over to a cinema a century later, in 1920. Finally, in 1980, private owners acquired the former church, undertaking restoration work before selling it again.



Flat apse of Saint-Aignan Church.

View from the south: in the foreground, the terraced garden is a 19th-century redevelopment in two sections, replacing the former ‘upper’ cemetery. In the background, the two large windows and gables of the church’s south transept dominate the view.



The sacristy was built in the 16th century, projecting from the gables of the transept.

Following its sale during the French Revolution, the new owner built some outbuildings on the former cemetery.





This house marks the northern boundary of Place Gérard de Nerval, once the site of witch and Templar executions, theatrical performances, and markets. In the Middle Ages, a large house was built on the edge of the property, as evidenced by its vast vaulted cellar. The current boundary wall dates from the 17th century and features motifs reminiscent of those found at the Château de Raray. The original gateway is the one on the left, while the other, more monumental gateway was opened later to align with the axis of the current house, which was built, between the courtyard and garden, in the 17th century and altered in the 18th century.

In the 17th century, the Germain family owned the Hôtel and the neighbouring houses. In 1757, Pierre Clément Roze, subdelegate to the Parliament of Paris, King's counsellor and *lieutenant particulier* (a magistrate) in Senlis, purchased the property. His son later extended it. Mme de Raimvilliers, Roze's widow, hosted King Louis XVIII on the night of 4th to 5th July 1815 upon his return from exile.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, the Hôtel became the residence of Léon Fautrat, a Senlis town councillor. The house later passed to the family of Bernard Carter, who had its left wing rebuilt just before the 1930s. During the Second World War, the house served as the headquarters of the Kreiskommandantur.





The main building has two storeys. The large windows with small panes are framed by bands and pilasters in slight relief. Above, dormer windows with jambs adorned with volutes, alternately fitted with windows or oculi, and topped with rounded pediments and acroteria, light the attic.



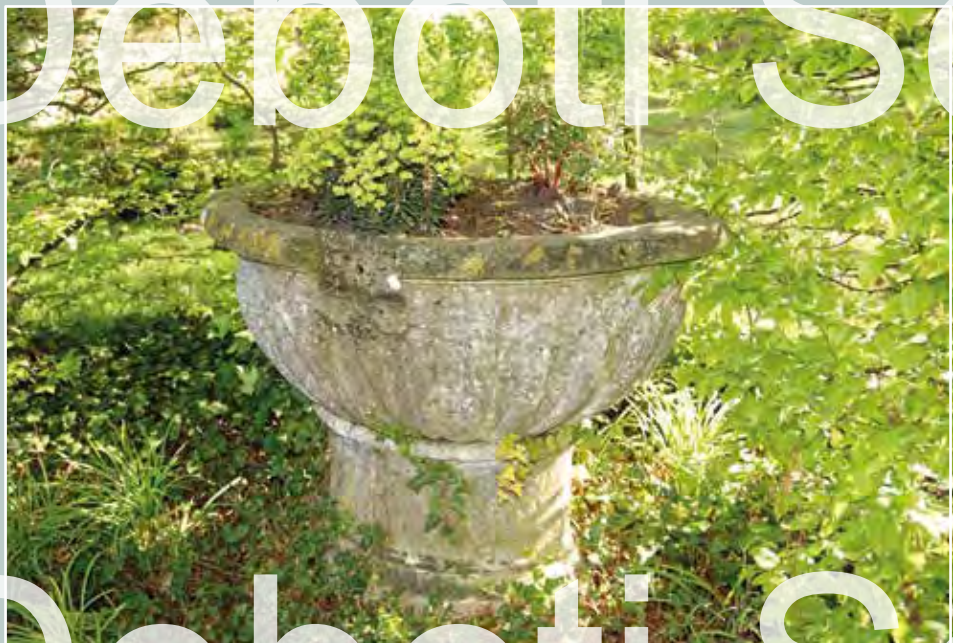
The left wing of the Hôtel, which is partly built on the city wall, was rebuilt in the 1920s by Bernard Carter.



The gardens combine the charm of old vegetable gardens...



... with the elegance of French formal gardens, showcasing the art of topiary.



A baptismal font made of limestone.



The rooms are dual-aspect and arranged in enfilade along the house's facade. The perspective, the width of the double doors, and the mirrors all contribute to the residence's prestige.



The main salon showcases the elegance of blonde wood panelling, light-coloured beams, and the white stone of the trumeau fireplace.



The dining room is decorated with panoramic wallpaper printed using woodblocks. The stone fireplace with a trumeau dates from the 17th century.



The orangery is used as a winter lounge.



The room is decorated with Louis XVI-style painted wood panelling and wall canvas fabric.



In keeping with the rest of the house, the bathroom, though modern, features Louis XVI-style wood panelling.



The room is decorated with an *Indienne* fabric featuring floral patterns on a white background.



The upholstery and draperies are in a blue *Toile de Jouy* with a pastoral design.



A bed with a small oval hanging canopy.



Canvas fabrics printed with blue patterns and a four-poster bed.



In the attic, a bathroom with a claw-foot bathtub.



Glazed hexagonal tomettes (terracotta tiles), a Louis XV fireplace, and a Polish bed with a domed canopy. In a style typical of the late 18th century, this bed is placed against the wall, with identical headboards and a domed canopy narrower than the bed itself.

Hôtel Regnard-Brulé



The Hôtel Brulé was part, in the 17th century, of the extensive property owned by the Germain family. It was later acquired by Jean-Guillaume Brulé, a magistrate of the Élection (a fiscal tribunal). Antoine de Belleval then purchased it, extending his residence with the neighboring Hôtel de Regnard, thus giving it the current name of Hôtel Regnard-Brulé.

Deboti Senlis

A vestibule once frequented by a hunting cavalier.



Deboti Senlis

The wall of the library is adorned with panoramic wallpaper.



Deboti Senlis

The rooms, arranged in enfilade, open onto the garden.



Deboti Senlis

The reverse side of the monumental door is decorated with a bust and *pots à feu* (flame urns).



The retaining wall of the upper garden.



This Hôtel, set between a courtyard and a garden, replaced two preexisting small houses at the end of the 17th century. According to tradition, the monumental gateway is said to have come from one of the gates of the cathedral's canonical enclosure.



The large bay, with its pseudo three-centered moulded arch at the centre of the house, was originally the carriage passage.



This large house conceals its age behind a modernised facade. A walled-up 14th-century window can be seen on the left, and the first storey was probably divided into two levels, as the five large windows upstairs have been split. It is also clear that the large central window opening onto the terrace blocks the original passage under the porch leading to the street. The house has preserved its large Gothic cellar from the 14th century.



The residence once extended further west, as evidenced by this 13th or 14th-century double window with a slender column. The pointed lintel features two blind trefoils, topped by a central oculus.



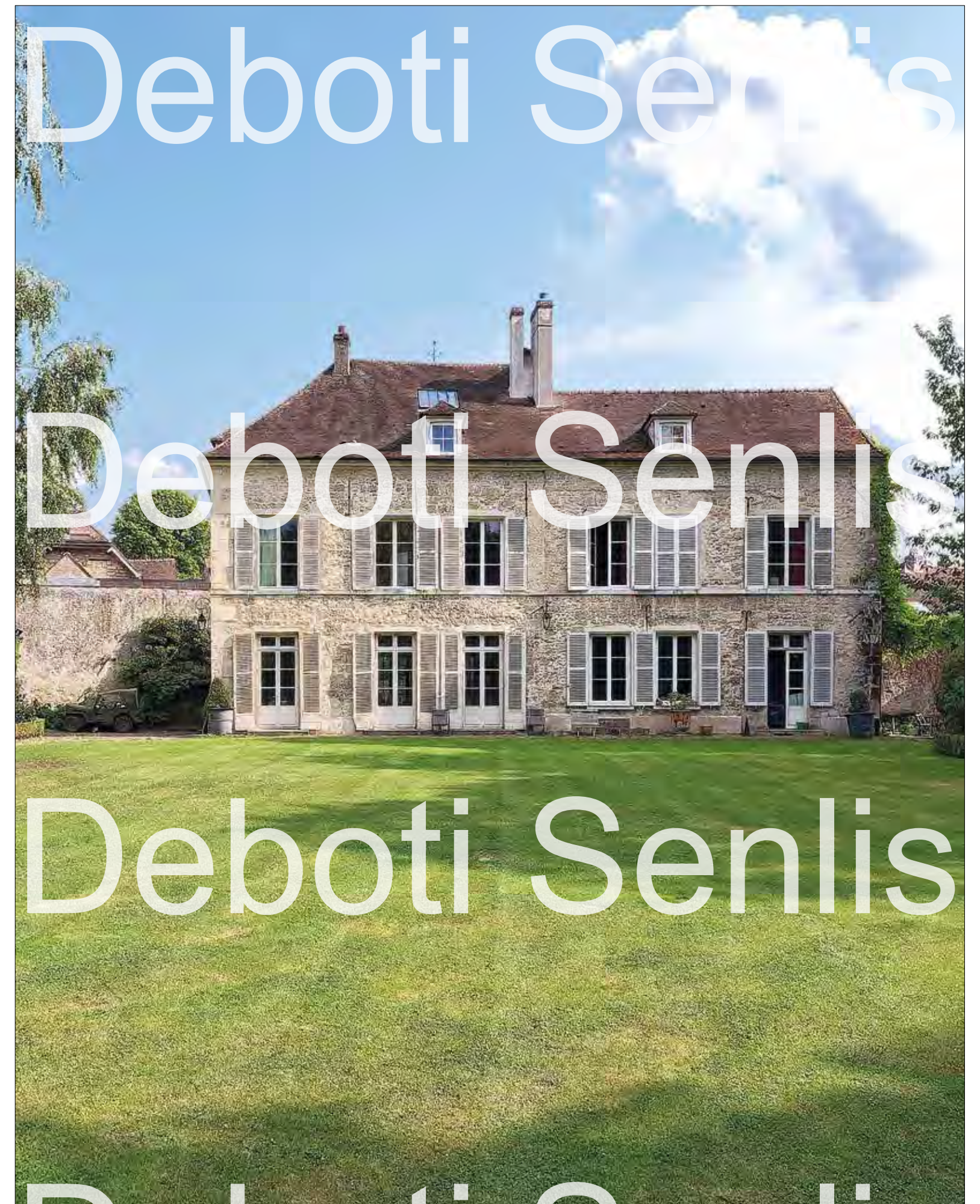
This block, which faces the Place de Creil at the back, is the result of the merger of several houses that were occupied during the Ancien Régime by lawmen from the Lebel, de Saint-Leu and Rose families.



A group of houses and barns occupied this plot of land in the 16th century. The main house, La Clef, was home to the Mallet family, lawmen of the bailiwick and presidial seat of Senlis. In 1668, through successive extensions, Philippe Mallet lived in “a large house” consisting of several main buildings, combining three separate houses. The garden adjoins the city walls.

At the request of the cathedral’s canon, Jean Deslyons, the house was bequeathed to the Filles de la Croix (Daughters of the Cross). They were also known as the Sisters of Charity of Saint-Rieul, the Grey Nuns, or the Sisters ‘with the small pot’. They ran the charity schools in Senlis, with classes held on the side facing the street. In year VIII of the Republican calendar, the current house was called ‘La communauté’. Thanks to its social role, the community survived the French Revolution and was incorporated into the city’s hospices.

After 1808, the house was sold and passed through several owners, including the atrabilious Count of Francieu, who unsuccessfully tried to purchase the former Rue du Grenier à Sel to extend his property. His successor had more success.



The former Rue du Grenier à Sel was privatized, and small constructions were built.



In 1827-1828, the rampart ditches were filled in and the ramparts demolished at the property owners' expense, allowing them to slightly extend their gardens.



Several ancient columns were reused as monuments or support pillars for outbuildings on the property. Tradition links them to the Senlis Arena, though they may have originated from the medieval wall or from demolished houses.



A view through a green wall.



A support column in a small utility building, constructed from disparate elements.



The wooden staircase is set within a square stairwell. However, most of the steps are winders, and the handrail is curved.



Entrance hall with hunting equipment and decoration.



Dual-aspect living room with Versailles parquet flooring, painted wood panelling, and exposed beams.



The city centre seen from the west. In the foreground, the Séraphine Louis elementary school, with its rigid and incongruous architecture, replaced several old houses in 1961, as well as the Hôtel de Giac-Junquière, of which only the small turret on Rue de Beauvais remains. Back in 1423, a significant part of this block was occupied by the Hôtel des Bouteiller. This radical urban redevelopment led to the mobilisation of the people of Senlis and, a few years later, to the founding of the association La Sauvegarde de Senlis in 1965.

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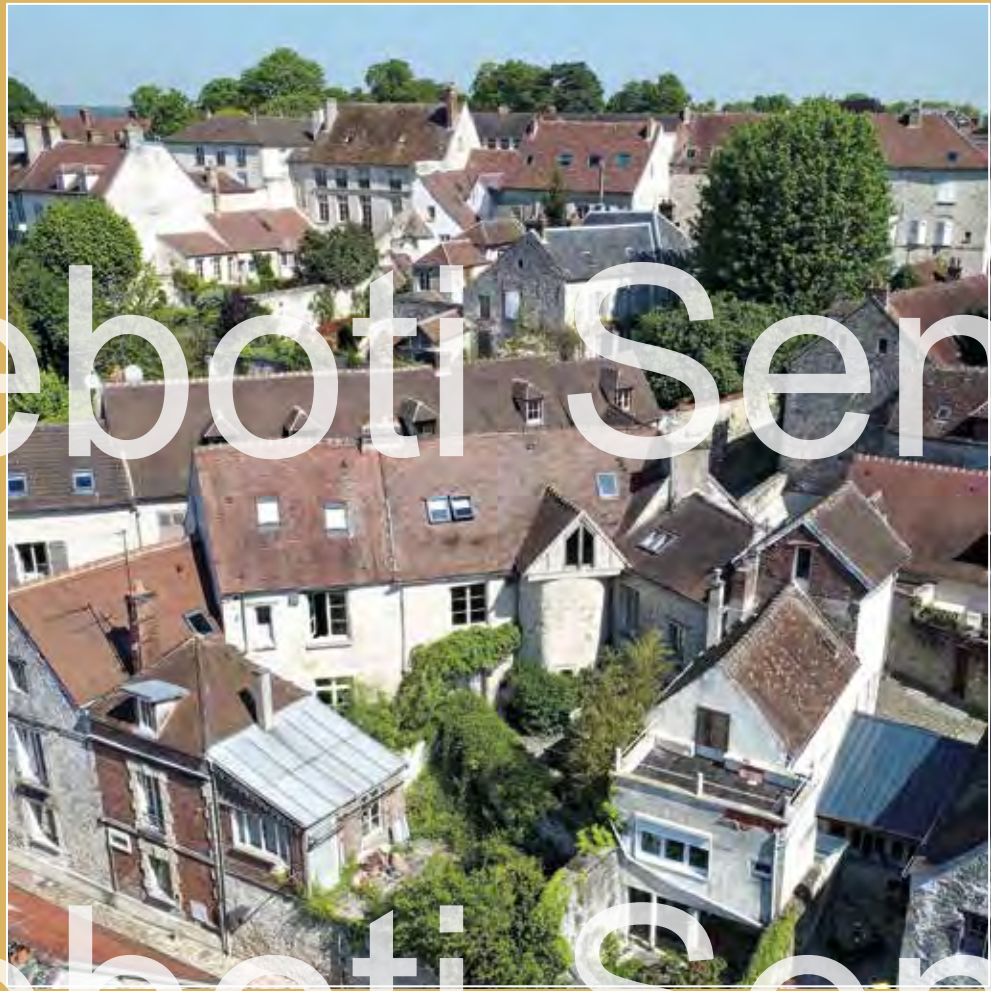
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The street-facing house was rebuilt in the 19th century. The deep garden reflects the original strip parcel layout.



Housing is denser below the Saint-Aignan ‘mountain’.

On the courtyard side, this house has a stair turret providing access to the upper floor. It still preserves architectural details from the 15th century. However, it has undergone numerous modifications, divisions, and renovations. The builder is unknown. In 1719, it was purchased by the verger of the Saint-Aignan parish, Charles Meusnier, and his wife Catherine Geffroy.



The carved bell of a capital. At the base of each arch, a stylised leaf emerges beneath the abacus.



A rare carved keystone dividing the vault into seven sections.



Beneath the abacus of the capital, the bell is decorated with sculpted fig leaves.



14th-century capital adorned with water lily leaves, topped with a polygonal abacus.



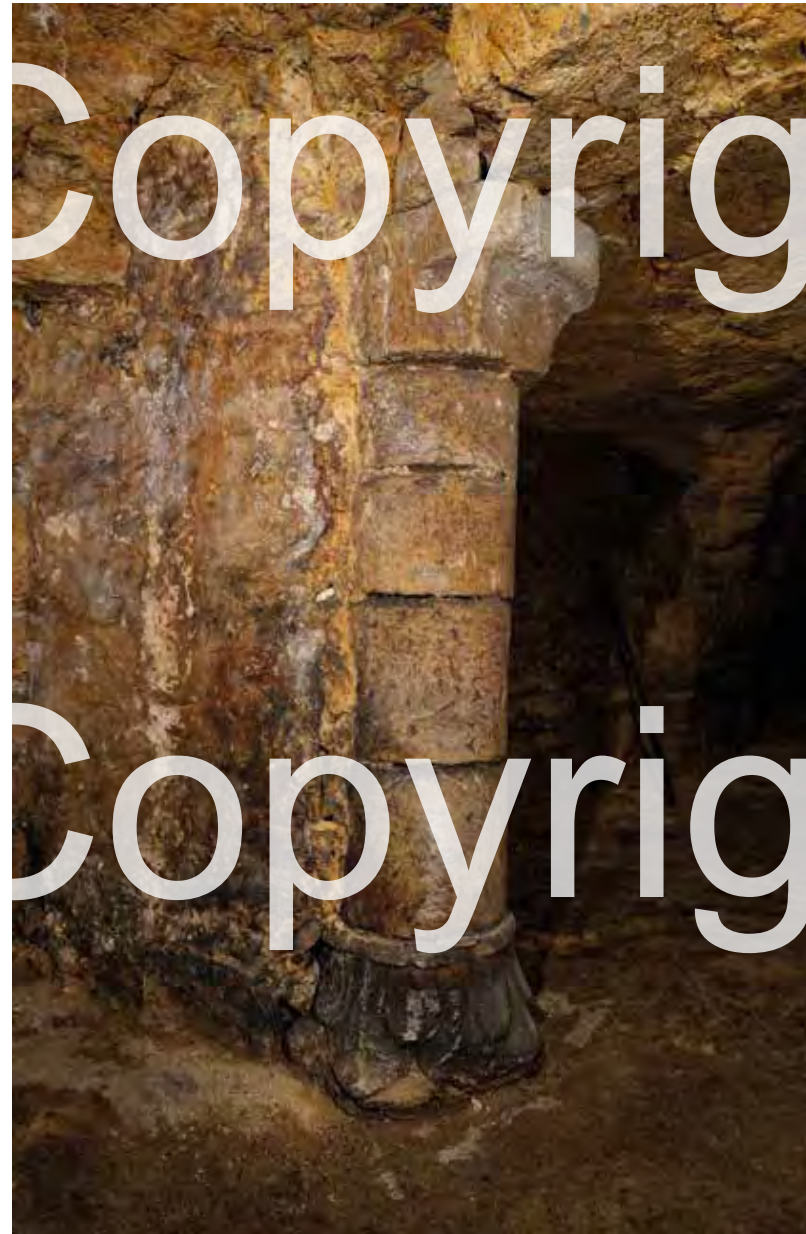
The bell of the capital is decorated with pomegranates.



A cellar corner where arches rest on a capital adorned with crockets and a heavily damaged engaged column.



A capital with crockets on a central column.



In this small quarry, a beautiful 12th-century capital with water-leaf (or plantain) carvings serves as the base of a supporting column, whose upper section ends in a base of different origin.

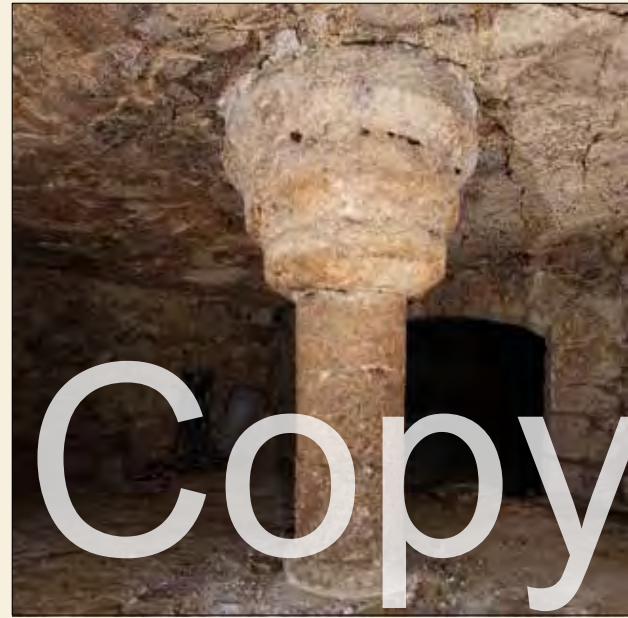


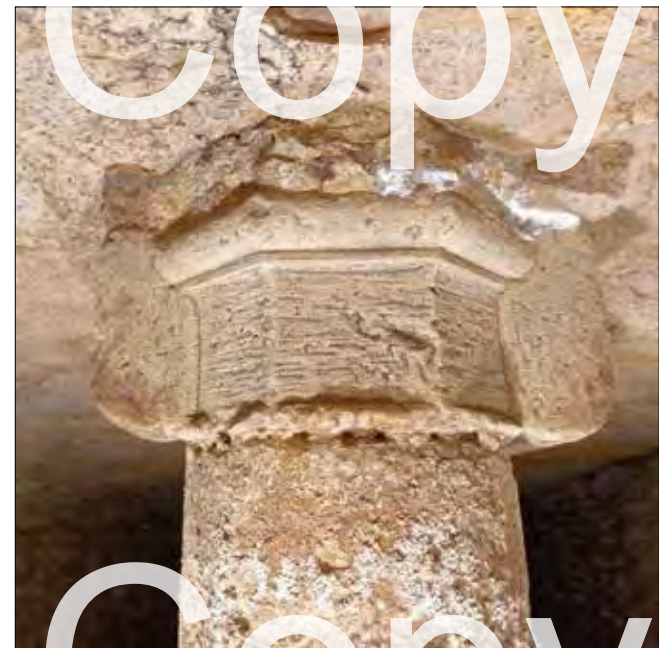
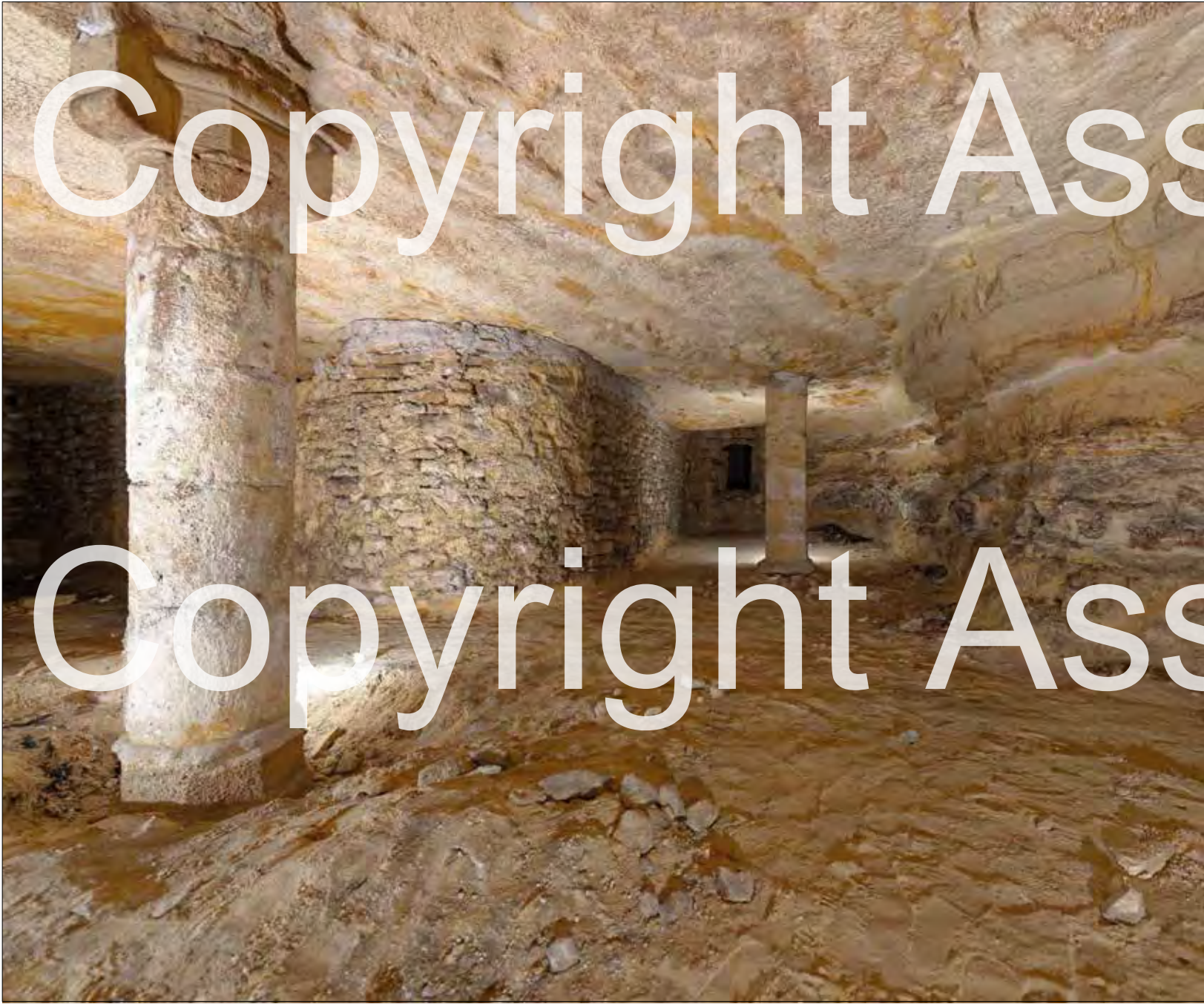
A visit to the city's cellars offers insight into the heterogeneous stratigraphy of the Senlis subsoil. The depth of the cellars and quarries varies greatly. Some quarry ceilings remain intact, while others are fragile, fractured, or even collapsed, forming a negative tower-like cavity known as a *fontis*, along with a collapse pyramid that obstructs the quarry. This phenomenon dates back to the very origins of the quarries. Many have been reinforced with columns or retaining walls added after excavation. Reuse is widespread, ranging from monolithic, possibly ancient pyramidal obelisks to modern concrete columns. Stone columns often consist of mismatched drums of varying diameters, and Romanesque or Gothic capitals are also frequently reused. An ornate, carved capital placed upside down may serve as a base. Larger-diameter stones were preferred where the column meets the quarry ceiling to provide greater support. In addition to reused columns, walls made of small stones were sometimes built, and some quarries feature systematically constructed reinforcing transverse arches.



The quarry is fully reinforced with regularly spaced, dressed arches supported by pillars embedded in the limestone walls. The effort to make the cellar viable is evident.

Massive reused pillars support the quarry ceiling. To improve stability, drums of increasing diameter have been placed at the ceiling junction.





The quarry cellar of the parish house contains several reused pillars, one of which has a capital that may originally have been the base of a column. Some quarry walls have been re-faced with rubble stone. At the back, a well serves the courtyard.



Each drum of this support column consists of two half-discs.



The well, built from dressed stone in the quarry, had a door and opens into the house's garden.



This small quarry cellar contains a finely pyramidal monolithic reused pillar. It is tempting to see it as a reused ancient stone.



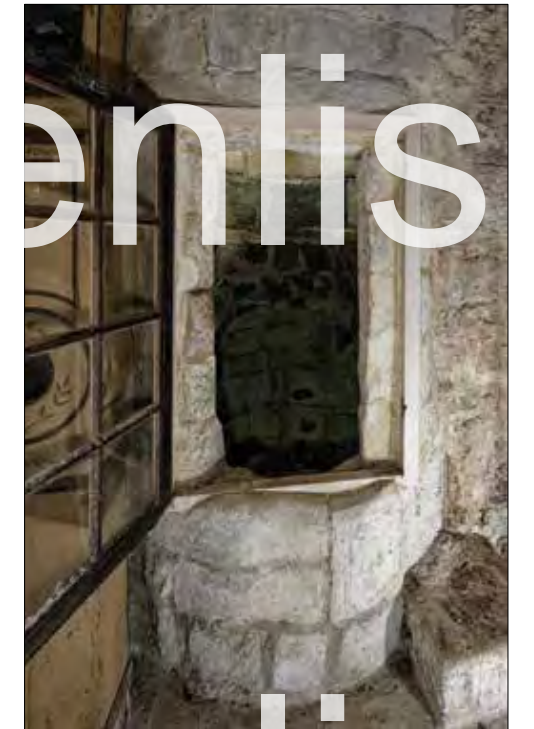
In this quarry cellar, various features can be found: at the back is the well; a quadrangular pillar supports the quarry; and loose, unmortared stones reinforce the base of the walls. In the foreground, a staircase descends to a second, deeper quarry.



The crocket was the most common ornamental motif of the medieval period. This sculpted vegetal ornament, curling like a bud, is omnipresent on the capitals of Senlis' Gothic cellars.



The spiral staircase of the turret, projecting from the house, descends into the cellar.



A well with a window above.



A cellar with a rib-vaulted ceiling. The arches rest on octagonal masonry columns in the middle of the room and on engaged columns along the walls, whose capitals feature crocket motifs.

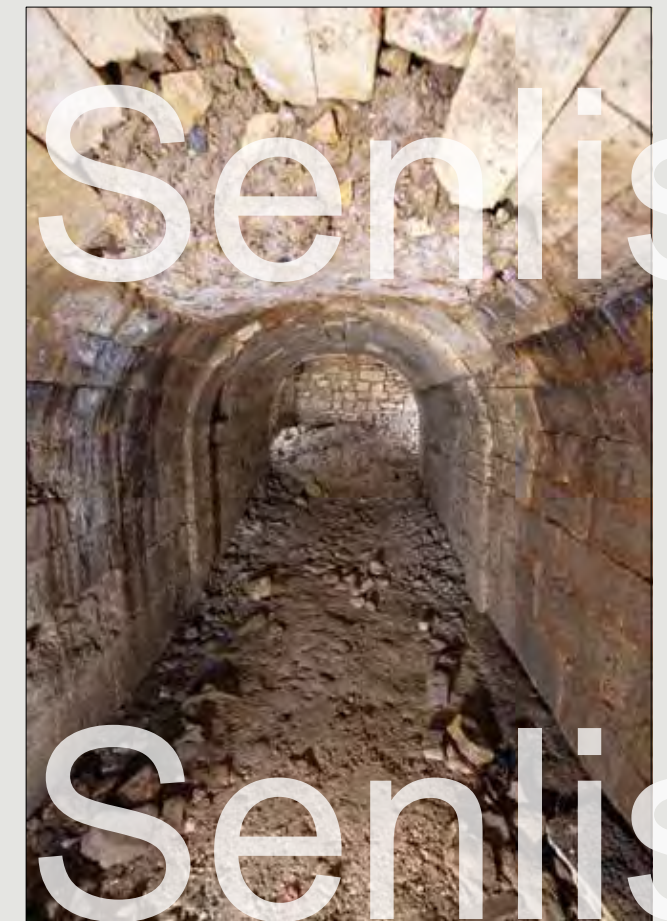


A water well

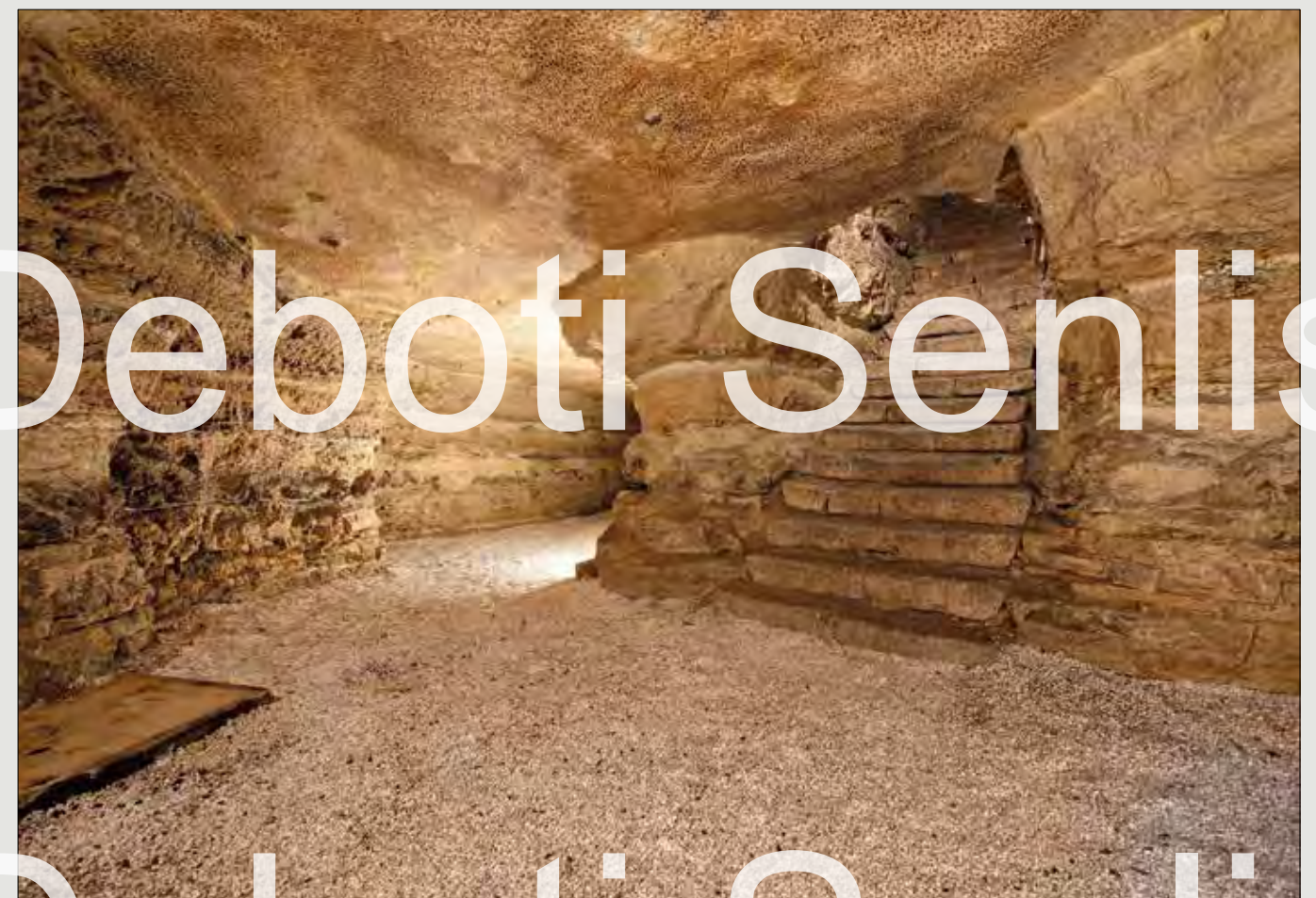
This barrel-vaulted cellar with transverse arches shelters a staircase descending to the quarry. The end walls and the vault were not constructed in a single phase, as the vault extends in front of a small window. On the left, a narrow staircase, now sealed off, is set within the wall's thickness.



View from within the quarry.



A connecting corridor between two quarry cellars, with a barrel-vaulted masonry ceiling.



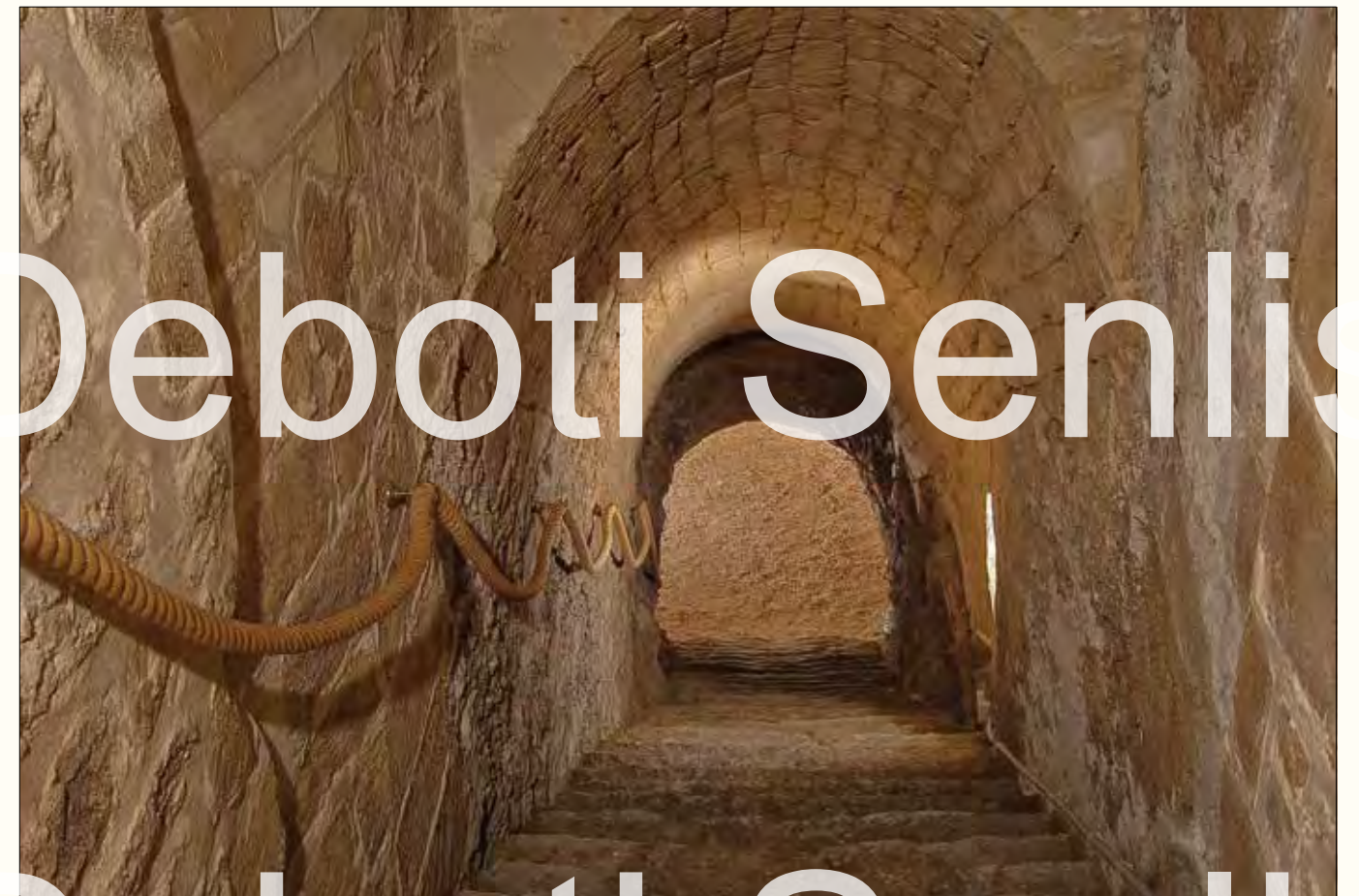
In this quarry, the ceiling remains intact, and the geological strata are clearly visible.



The vault of the staircase leading down into the quarry shows a slope break, probably before passing under the layer of non-friable stone.



A vertiginous descent, largely filled in, that passes beneath the ancient rampart. The date '1582' at the start of the descent indicates that the vaulting was reconstructed at that point.



The vault of the quarry descent is first constructed with regularly laid cut stones before encountering a harder rock and being hewn into it.



An extraction shaft in the quarry, 8 metres high.



The view is taken from within the quarry; the shaft is entirely masonry-lined with carefully fitted stone. Daylight from the ground floor can be seen 12 metres above.



The well of the 'Blue Chapel' is oval in shape. In the quarry, it provides access to two rooms, which are not directly one above the other but are at slightly different levels.

Despite restorations and alterations, this cellar features a wide variety of sculpted capitals on columns, semi-engaged columns, or corbels.



The cellars and quarries have undergone modifications over time. Light partitions define spaces, although it is difficult to date them. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the vaulted cellars were equipped with heating systems. Heating apparatuses and their pipes occupied the space and sometimes damaged the vaults. Two well-preserved units remain in Senlis, and traces of many others can be detected. Later, coal-fired boilers and their systems replaced the previous heating apparatuses.



A unique arrangement of a monumental fireplace installed in a large Gothic cellar.



Access to the quarry well. It is difficult to determine whether the date (1786) refers to the construction, drilling, or a renovation, unless it is apocryphal.



A beautiful Gothic cellar dating from the 14th century, featuring two columns topped with sculpted maple leaf (cinquefoils) capitals. At the far end, beneath the sealed opening of a now-vanished access stair, an early 20th-century cast-iron boiler produced hot water distributed to the house's radiators.





Such coal-fired central heating systems distributed hot air through a network of ducts and vents throughout the house. Installed in the 19th century, they took advantage of the vast cellars in Senlis. Most have been dismantled, like the one in the Musée de la Vénérice. This one, the best preserved, still has its ducts.



Another model of coal-fired heater installed in a barrel-vaulted cellar.



This cellar was divided late to store wine. At the far end, it abuts the Gallo-Roman rampart.

Contemporary features in cellars

Since the end of the 20th century, many cellars have been converted into living spaces. While some have been transformed into restaurants or reception halls, the one in the former bishop's palace is used as an exhibition hall, and private individuals have converted theirs into living rooms.



A spacious converted 'underground' room. The ribbed vault is supported by three massive columns, and the capitals are adorned with two rows of crockets.





The springing of the arches on the walls is supported by corbels adorned with crockets.



In the centre of the room, the descent into the quarry opens up.



This cellar features pointed segmental arches, that blend into the masonry of the walls, without any engaged pillars or corbels. On the left, the quarry descent opens up.



This cellar, comparable in its construction to the previous one, has been converted into a game room.



A wine-tasting cellar. Note the reinforcing columns to support the transverse arches.

Segmental vault from the 16th century.
The vault ribs rest on corbels set into the side walls.

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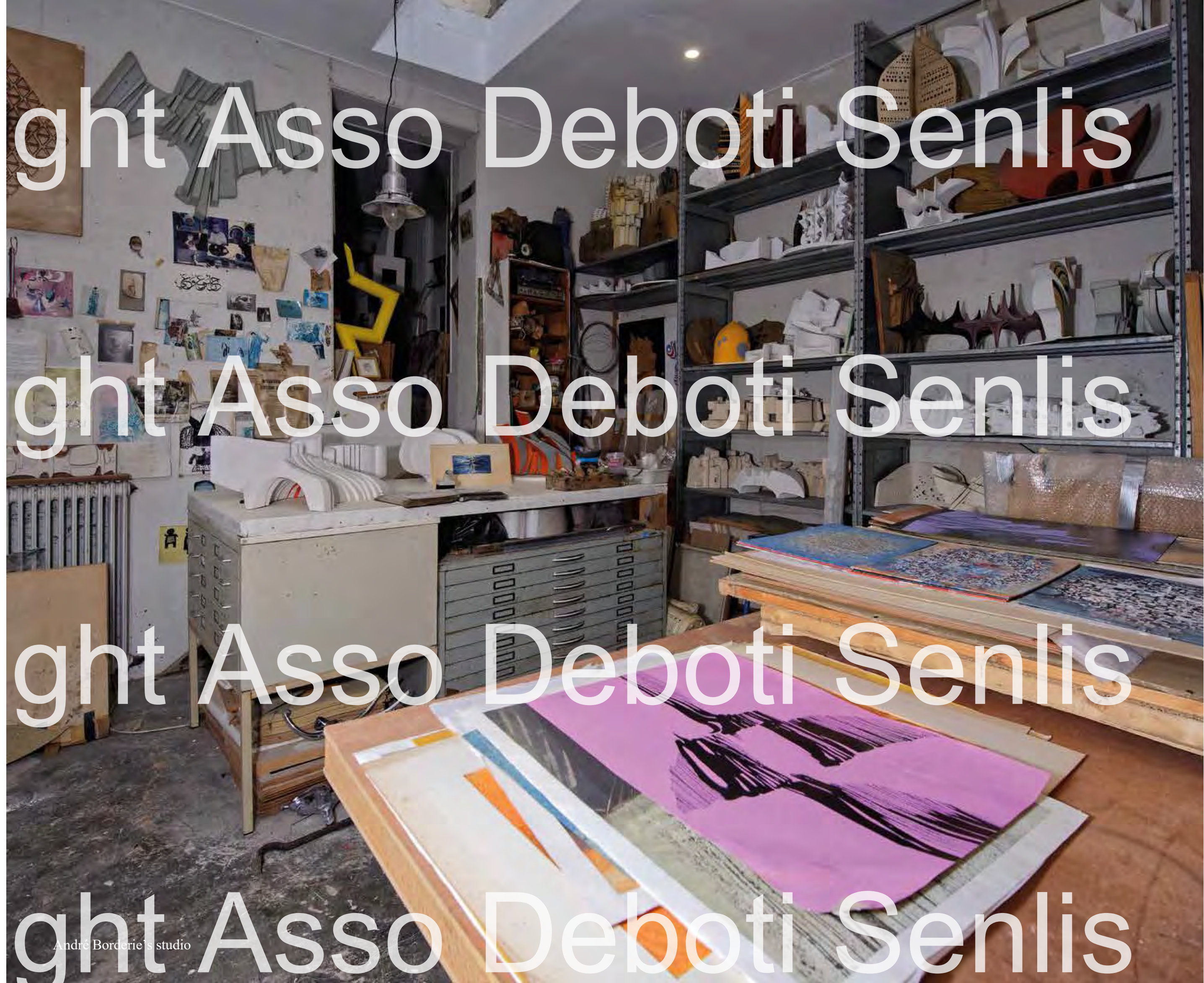
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Artists' studios

Senlis seems to have always inspired artists. Poets Jean de Jandun and Eustache Deschamps praised it in their verses and lived there. A multitude of painters set up their easels in the 19th and 20th centuries. Yet, while two figures – Thomas Couture and Séraphine Louis de Senlis – stand out in history, there was never a ‘School of Senlis’. We have been able to trace the studios of remarkably talented artists, distinctive individuals, including our departed contemporaries such as Charles-Jean Hallo, Henri Leblanc, Jacob Pakciarz, and André Borderie, as well as those still active, like the painter and sculptor Pascale Courbot, and others less well-known...



André Borderie (1923-1998)

Painter, ceramist, tapestry designer, and sculptor, André Borderie was inspired by the Sacred. His daily life revolved around his studio work, where sketches, drawings, and paintings coexisted with models for monumental sculptures.



In a geometric language, the works explore shapes, paintings, sculptures, and materials.



Fireplace decoration.

The artist's kitchen incorporates his ceramic art, shapes, and colours into everyday life.



A tap turned into a work of art.



Storage of stretchers.



The background of the entire image is a large, abstract glazed ceramic wall. It features a grid of square tiles, each containing various organic, hand-painted shapes in shades of blue, red, orange, and grey. The overall effect is a vibrant, textured mosaic.

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Since 1962, a large glazed ceramic adorns the wall of the Séraphine Louis elementary school.

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Studio of Charles-Jean Hallo (1882-1969)

The studio that Charles-Jean Hallo, engraver, painter, and poster artist, had had built by adding a storey to his house in the Saint-Vincent district, was bathed in light from large glass-panelled ‘atelier windows’.



The panelling and fireplace of the dining room. The panel in the upper part of the mantelpiece is painted by Charles-Jean Hallo.



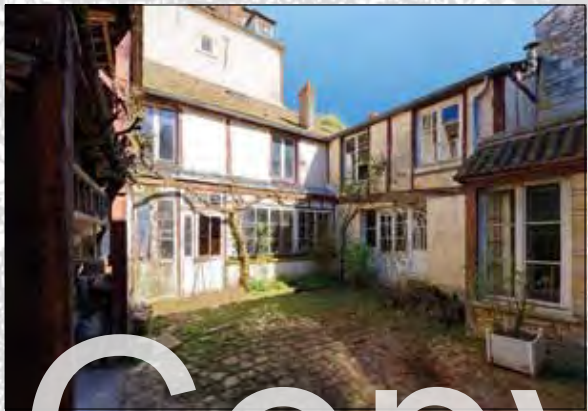
Henri Leblanc (1910-1998)



An upholsterer by profession but an artist, sculptor, and draughtsman by vocation, he celebrated old Senlis and its secrets through his work.



A Virgin and Child carved in wood in the style of a medieval floral crocket adorning a capital.



Henri Leblanc's upholstery workshop, with its display window on Rue Léon Fautrat, was a well-known spot for the people of Senlis. However, his artist's studio – his private retreat – was located at the back, nestled against the rampart of the Cité, overlooking a charming courtyard with half-timbered buildings.

Olivier Prévost (1927-2020)



Olivier Prévost, a Marine painter and regular exhibitor at the Salon des Artistes Français at the Grand Palais in Paris, was born and died in Senlis. He immortalised its streets and monuments by painting them *en plein air*.



Studio of Jacob Pakciarz (1921-2015)

The sculptor Jacob Pakciarz lived in the house at the Gate of Paris. His studio gradually expanded to take over all the courtyards and staggered access corridors of the former 16th-century bastion.



Françoise Watrigant-Debray



In the heart of the town is the light-filled studio of the painter Françoise Watrigant, who won the first prize at the Salon de Printemps de Senlis in 1992.

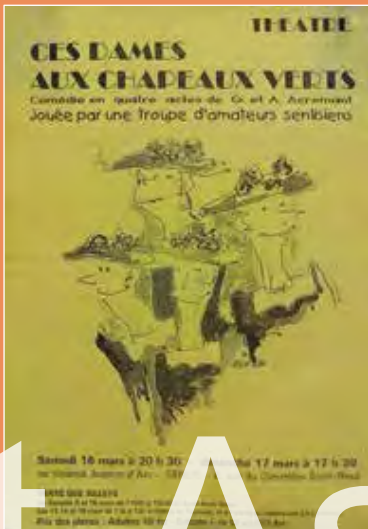


Irises



Anemones

Beyond her work as a painter, theatre enthusiast Françoise Watrigant, founded the troupe 'Les tréteaux de Saint Rieul' in 1995, which performs classical and contemporary plays annually.



Pascale Courbot



A painter, she held her first solo gallery exhibition in 1980. Her garden in Senlis became a source of inspiration and has played a significant role in her artistic journey. She founded the Senlis International Biennial of Contemporary Art, held during the *Rendez-vous de septembre*. Today, her work is represented by Galerie Lehalle in Nice.



Saint-Rieul district

The collegiate church of Saint-Rieul was built north of the city walls in the early Middle Ages, and once housed the tomb of Senlis' first bishop, an evangelist and iconoclast. The church did not survive the French Revolution and has since completely disappeared. As the central axis of Senlis was later shifted further east, the district gradually lost its vibrancy. Today, it is home to the private schools Notre-Dame du Sacré-Cœur and the *collège* Anne-Marie Javouhey.

Hôtel du Grand Cerf, later known as Devaux boarding school

Ideally located on Rue de Villevert, near the former 'des Balances' crossroads along the main north-south road through Senlis, this house was an important hostelry until 1752. As early as 1573, travelers could find lodging here at Le Petit Cerf. Over time, the establishment expanded significantly and became the Hôtel du Grand Cerf. Its last keepers in the mid-18th century, Guillaume Baumé and Antoinette Courroye, were the parents of Antoine Baumé, the renowned pharmacist and chemist born in 1728. The Hôtel was later relocated to a newly constructed road – now Rue de la République – and the house was sold in 1772. It was then turned into a private boarding school, run by Louis Germain Devaux, a writing master and teacher. Through marriage, the boarding school remained in the Cossin family for three generations until 1889. The house underwent meticulous restoration starting in 1984.

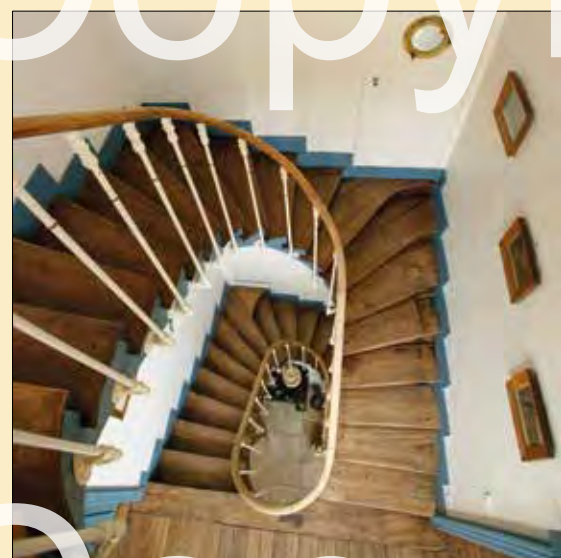
Le Cachouet

This house has been known by this name since 1641, with its description remaining largely unchanged since 1708. During the French Revolution, its owner, Citizen Crestel, a former prosecutor at the bailiwick, purchased the section of the King's Garden adjacent to his house, which had been sold as national property. The house later became both the workshop and residence of printer Franklin Tremblay until 1828, when it was taken over by Jean Odent, a former mayor of Senlis.





The main room of the house is dual-aspect, with windows on both sides. Its width was likely determined by the span of the beams, and the fireplace remains in its original position on the gable wall.



The stairwell is brightened by the blue woodwork.



The successive alterations to the houses have sometimes led to creative solutions. In this canonical house of the Saint-Rieul collegiate Church, access to the cellar has been preserved, while the staircase still serves the different levels of the various rooms.

This ground-floor room is an almost unique case in Senlis. It has a ribbed vaulted ceiling supported by a central pillar and engaged pillars within the walls. It is built above a basement room with the same layout.



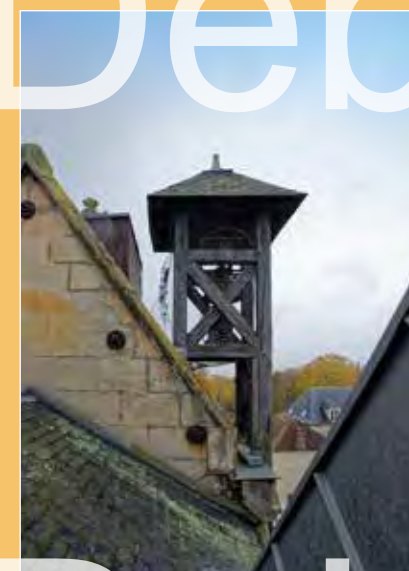
The courtyard, nestled between the street-facing house and the one leaning against the rampart, has become a green haven.



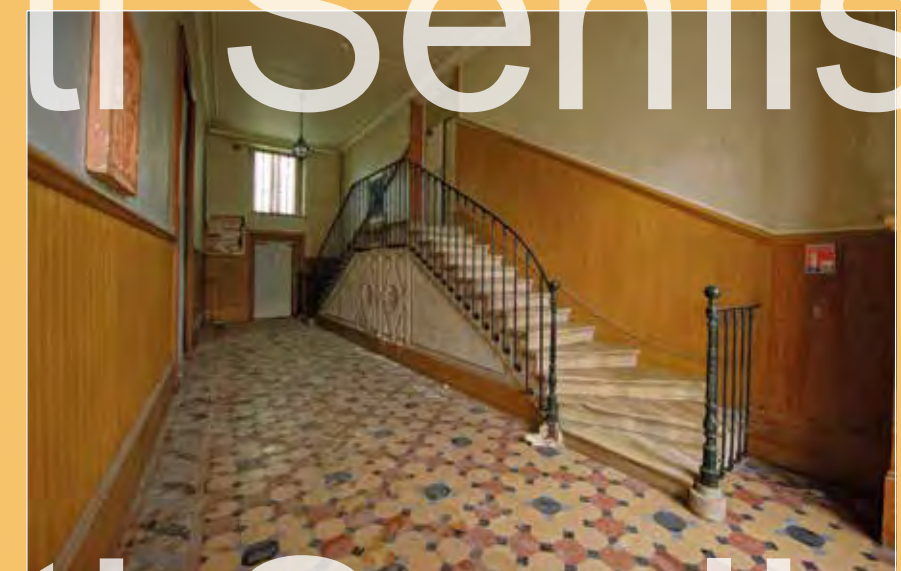
The house at the back of the courtyard is nestled against the ancient rampart, as if protected by the Gallo-Roman tower.

Saint-Joseph Clinic

Two distinctly different buildings stand side by side here. On the right is La Gabelle, a salt granary warehouse originally built in 1760. It was later converted into a stereotype printing house in the early 19th century before being acquired, along with its outbuildings, by the Congregation of Saint Joseph of Cluny in 1834. From 1919, it housed the Saint-Joseph Clinic, where many Senlis residents were born until 2001. Surgical services continued there until 2012. The building has since undergone full restoration and has been converted into a residential complex. On the left, it adjoins the bell tower and the Anne-Marie Javouhey Chapel of the private school of the same name. Built between 1847 and 1849, the chapel is the final resting place of the congregation's founder.



Wooden bell tower of the 'Saint-Joseph Convent'.



The interior platform features a double staircase, with two identical flights of winder steps.

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La Halle district is dominated by the naves of the Saint-Frambourg collegiate Church and the cathedral. To the right stands the Church of Saint-Pierre, with the Halatte Forest in the background.

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The End? Never!

We have come to the conclusion of our city walk. We have run in all directions through Senlis, from the cathedral to Valgenceuse. We have visited the houses, climbed the stairs, and explored the attics. We have wandered in the gardens and got lost in “the city beneath the earth”.

It was like experiencing a long-awaited mythical journey – for example a visit to Venice or Bruges, or attending exciting Heritage Days or Doors Open Days. We hardly paused to catch our breath. We wanted to see everything. Everything? Of course not: already, protests and regrets are rising. We rushed through the cathedral too quickly, didn’t see anything of Saint-Pierre Church, nor Villevert, nor even Villemétrie. Some renowned estates remained beyond our reach, some private houses and public monuments were not even mentioned in this volume. Did they matter less? Certainly not, but true discovery happens on foot and by seeing with one’s own eyes. As with any enjoyable but incomplete visit, we will have to return...

To see even more of Senlis.



Official wax seal of the City of Senlis from 1785.

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(In alphabetical order)

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The Saint-Pierre parish Church has been disused since the French Revolution. Between 2013 and 2017, it underwent major restoration work. The collapsed dome of the south tower, built in 1592, was reconstructed, placed above the drum and supported by consoles. Its gilded cross once again proudly crowns the renovated spire of the old north bell tower.