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Family sells chateau after 1,000 years

The Château de Verteuil's fairytale turrets were part of a 19th-century renovation
ALAMY

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A storied château that has been in the same French family for a thousand years has gone on sale for €2.8 million (£2.5 million) after the owners ran out of relatives willing to take it on.

The Count and Countess de La Rochefoucauld have heavily renovated the Château de Verteuil, an 11th-century stronghold that commands a stretch of the Charente valley in western France, since they inherited it two decades ago, but cannot keep up with the bills.

Sixte de La Rochefoucauld, 64, and his wife, Ingrid, 66, who are distant cousins, said that the effort of the upkeep was proving too heavy a burden, both financially and for his health. "My health is declining and maintaining the building is costing a crazy amount of money," the count said. The countess said that the couple had had no choice but to put the family seat, a protected monument with fairytale turrets from a 19th-century renovation, on the market along with its 90-acre (380,000m^2) park after failing to find a taker from the family, which has several branches, a batch of other historic properties and 58 members listed in *Le Bottin Mondain*, the directory of French high society.

Verteuil, where the 17th-century essayist François de La Rochefoucauld wrote his *Maxims*, is the latest ancient pile to join the glut of châteaux and *manoirs* that are on the market in France. The Rochefoucauld château has British connections. It was occupied by the English several times during the Hundred Years War and one of its bedrooms is called *la chambre Queen Mum* after the Queen Mother stayed there in 1980.

Patrice Besse, the estate agents handling the sale, notes the excellent state of the château and its cosy apartments but it warns customers: "As always with these great houses, the obligation of new work will fall to the future occupants."