

= Nunney Castle =

Nunney Castle is a medieval castle at Nunney in the English county of Somerset . Built in the late 14th century by Sir John Delamare on the profits of his involvement in the Hundred Years War , the moated castle 's architectural style , possibly influenced by the design of French castles , has provoked considerable academic debate . Remodelled during the late 16th century , Nunney Castle was damaged during the English Civil War and is now ruined . English Heritage maintain the site as a tourist attraction . The architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner has described Nunney as " aesthetically the most impressive castle in Somerset . "

= = History = =

= = = 14th century = = =

Nunney Castle was built near the village of Nunney in Somerset by Sir John Delamare . Delamare had been a soldier during the Hundred Years War with France , where he had made his fortune . He obtained a licence to crenellate from Edward III to build a castle on the site of his existing , unfortified manor house in 1373 and set about developing a new , substantial fortification .

The resulting castle centred on a stone tower @-@ keep , measuring 60 feet by 24 feet (18 m by 7 m) internally and 54 feet (16 m) tall , with four round corner @-@ towers . The tower @-@ keep had eight @-@ foot (2 @. @ 4 m) thick walls made from Lias Oolite ashlar stone and was designed around three floors . The corner towers had conical roofs and prominent machicolations . The ground floor of the tower @-@ house included the kitchen and other service areas . The functions of the first and second floors are uncertain ; one theory is that the first floor was another service area , with the hall on the second floor ; another approach argues that the first floor formed the hall , and the second floor living accommodation ; a minority view proposes that the first floor was an armoury . The third floor was used as living accommodation for the owning family . The original design had a number of windows and fireplaces on the upper floors , but the hall would have been relatively dark and the stairs were inconveniently narrow .

The tower @-@ keep had a modest entrance , which was reached by a draw @-@ bridge that lay across the surrounding moat , which initially reached right up to the base of the castle . A simple , 12 @-@ foot (3 @. @ 6 m) high bailey wall , with minimal defensive value , surrounded the moat , which was in contrast wide , 10 @-@ foot (3 m) deep , and would have been difficult for an attacker to drain . On the east side of the castle Nunney Brook was used as a line of defence rather than a bailey wall .

Historians , such as Adrian Pettifer and Stuart Rigold , previously believed that the design of Nunney was heavily influenced by the French castle designs that Delamare would have seen on his military campaigns . Nunney closely resembles the Bastille in Paris , for example , and the machicolations are typical of those found in French castles . Nunney was considered a conservative , even slightly backward design and probably built to protect against French invasion . Historians such as Robert Liddiard and Matthew Johnson are now less certain . Nunney is regarded as a bold , striking design , similar in many ways to those at Herstmonceux or Saltwood Castle . Whilst Nunney does resemble many French castles , there is no direct evidence that it was built in imitation of these designs , and indeed there are other English castles , such as Mulgrave and Dudley , that have a similar structure to Nunney 's . Nunney Castle may be better understood instead as characteristic of a wider range of tower @-@ keeps built in England during the period , designed , as Nigel Pounds puts it , " to allow very rich men to live in luxury and splendour . "

= = = 15th - 16th centuries = = =

Nunney Castle was inherited by John 's son , Philip Delamere , and grandson , Elias , before passing by marriage into the Poulet family following Elias ' probable death during Henry V 's

campaigns in France . Sir John Poulet and his son John , and grandson , also called John , held the castle during most of the 15th century , but their primary residence was Basing Castle in Hampshire rather than Nunney . William Paulet , the Marquess of Winchester , was the final member of the family to own the castle ; after his death in 1572 it passed rapidly through several owners and in 1577 was sold by Swithun Thorpe to John Parker , who only kept it for a year before selling it to Richard Prater , at a cost of £ 2 @, @ 000 . The castle was redeveloped in the second half of the 16th century , probably by the Praters : the windows were enlarged to let in more light ; a grand staircase was built in one of the towers ; a Catholic altar was installed , and a revetment , or terrace , was built around the inside of the moat , leaving it 25 feet (7 @. @ 6 m) wide .

= = = 17th - 19th centuries = = =

Nunney Castle continued to be owned by the Roman Catholic Prater family into the 17th century . In 1642 the English Civil War broke out between the rival factions of Parliament and the king ; like many Catholics , Colonel Richard Prater supported Charles I. As the war progressed the Royalist situation deteriorated , however , and the south @-@ west became one of the few remaining Royalist strongholds ; Nunney Castle was garrisoned in anticipation of Parliamentary attack and took in a number of refugees , including many Catholics . In September 1645 a Parliamentary army under the command of Lord Fairfax and Oliver Cromwell advanced into Somerset , taking Sherborne , Cary and Shepton Mallet before turning to Nunney . Two regiments of soldiers with cannons surrounded the castle on 18 September ; when Richard Prater refused to surrender , the cannons opened fire on the north side of the castle , breaching the castle wall . Richard continued to resist , hoisting a flag with a Catholic crucifix on it above the castle to taunt the besiegers , but two days later the garrison surrendered .

Due to the damage caused by the cannon , the castle escaped the slighting , or deliberate damaging , that occurred to many other castles at the end of the civil war . Nonetheless , Richard Prater was forbidden to return to the castle , despite his promises to support Parliament , and his son , George Prater , only recovered Nunney from its interim owners after Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 . The castle declined and was sold by the Praters to William Whitchurch around 1700 . During the 18th century the building was still in a reasonable condition and in 1789 an order was received make it ready to receive French prisoners , although it is unlikely they ever arrived .

= = = 20th - 21st centuries = = =

By the 20th century , Nunney Castle was increasingly ruined and covered in thick ivy . As a result , on 25 December 1910 a portion of the damaged north wall entirely collapsed ? most of the fallen stone was stolen by local people . In 1926 , with the fabric of the castle under threat , the owner , Robert Bailey @-@ Neale , transferred the property to the Commissioner of Works , who began a programme of restoration work . The castle is now run by English Heritage as a tourist attraction and is a scheduled monument . The architectural historian Nikolaus Pevsner has described the castle as " aesthetically the most impressive castle in Somerset . "