

= Dunster Castle =

Dunster Castle is a former motte and bailey castle , now a country house , in the village of Dunster , Somerset , England . The castle lies on the top of a steep hill called the Tor , and has been fortified since the late Anglo @-@ Saxon period . After the Norman conquest of England in the 11th century , William de Mohun constructed a timber castle on the site as part of the pacification of Somerset . A stone shell keep was built on the motte by the start of the 12th century , and the castle survived a siege during the early years of the Anarchy . At the end of the 14th century the de Mohuns sold the castle to the Luttrell family , who continued to occupy the property until the late 20th century .

The castle was expanded several times by the Luttrell family during the 17th and 18th centuries ; they built a large manor house within the Lower Ward of the castle in 1617 , and this was extensively modernised , first during the 1680s and then during the 1760s . The medieval castle walls were mostly destroyed following the siege of Dunster Castle at the end of the English Civil War , when Parliament ordered the defences to be slighted to prevent their further use . In the 1860s and 1870s , the architect Anthony Salvin was employed to remodel the castle to fit Victorian tastes ; this work extensively changed the appearance of Dunster to make it appear more Gothic and Picturesque .

Following the death of Alexander Luttrell in 1944 , the family was unable to afford the death duties on his estate . The castle and surrounding lands were sold off to a property firm , the family continuing to live in the castle as tenants . The Luttrells bought back the castle in 1954 , but in 1976 Colonel Walter Luttrell gave Dunster Castle and most of its contents to the National Trust , which operates it as a tourist attraction . It is a Grade I listed building and scheduled monument .

= = History = =

= = = 11th to 12th centuries = = =

Dunster Castle was positioned on a steep , 200 @-@ foot ( 61 m ) high hill , sometimes called the Tor , overlooking the village of Dunster in Somerset . During the early medieval period the sea reached the base of the hill , close to the mouth of the River Avill , offering a natural defence and making the village an inland port . Several Iron Age hillforts were built close to Dunster , including Bat 's Castle , Black Ball Camp and Grabbist Hill , but the earliest evidence of a fortification at Dunster was an Anglo @-@ Saxon burgh . This was built on the summit of the hill and was possibly intended to protect the region against sea @-@ borne raiders ; by the mid @-@ 11th century it was controlled by a local nobleman called Aelfric .

In 1066 the Normans invaded south @-@ east England , defeating the English forces at the battle of Hastings : in the aftermath of the victory , William the Conqueror entrusted the conquest of the south @-@ west of England to his half @-@ brother Robert of Mortain . Expecting stiff resistance , Robert marched west into Somerset , supported by forces under Walter of Douai , who entered from the north ; a third force , under the command of William de Mohun , landed by sea along the Somerset coast . William had been granted 68 manors in the region and by 1086 had established a castle at Dunster ; this would form both the caput , or principal castle , for his new lands , and help guard the coast against the threat of any fresh sea @-@ borne attack , as well as controlling the coastal road running from Somerset to Gloucestershire . This first castle was a motte and bailey design , built upon the former Anglo @-@ Saxon burgh ; the top of the Tor was scarped to form the motte , or Upper Ward , and an area below shaped to form the bailey , or Lower Ward .

Somerset became more stable in the aftermath of the post @-@ invasion period and the unsuccessful 1068 rebellion against Norman rule . It was common in the period for the Normans to build religious houses to accompany major castles , and accordingly William de Mohun endowed a Benedictine priory at Dunster in 1090 , along with its parent abbey at Bath . The River Avill was important for trade ; the region around Dunster was rich with fisheries and vineyards , and Dunster Castle prospered . Stone fortifications were built on the site during the early 12th century , probably

forming a shell keep around the top of the motte .

In the late 1130s England began to descend into a period of civil war known as the Anarchy , during which the supporters of King Stephen fought with those of the Empress Matilda for control of the kingdom . William de Mohun 's eldest son , also called William , was a noted supporter of Matilda , and Dunster was considered one of her faction 's strongest castles in the south @-@ west . In 1138 forces loyal to Stephen besieged the castle ; a siege castle was built nearby , but all trace of it has been lost . William successfully held the castle and was made the Earl of Somerset by the grateful Empress . Chroniclers subsequently complained of the way in which he subsequently raided and controlled the region by force during the war , causing much destruction . In the aftermath of the conflict , William 's son , another William , inherited the castle after a short period of royal ownership under Henry II . William appears to have insisted that his tenants agree to help repair and maintain the castle walls as part of their feudal service .

= = = 13th to 17th centuries = = =

In the 13th century the Lower Ward was rebuilt in stone by Reynold Mohun ; this was paid for in part by Reynold commuting his tenants ' ongoing duty to repair the castle walls into a single , one @-@ off financial payment to their lord , and partially through his marriage to a rich local heiress . A survey of the castle in 1266 described the Upper Ward on the top of the motte as containing a hall with a buttery , a pantry , a kitchen , a bakehouse , the chapel of Saint Stephen and a knight 's hall , guarded by three towers . The Lower Ward included a granary , two towers and a gatehouse ; one of the towers , called the Fleming Tower , was used as a prison . The castle stables lay outside the defences , further down the slope . By the end of the 13th century some of the castle 's roofing had been covered in lead , while other parts still used wooden shingles .

In 1330 Sir John de Mohun inherited the castle ; John , although a notable knight , was childless and fell into considerable debt . His wife Joan took over the running of their estates , and when John died in 1376 she agreed to sell the castle to Lady Elizabeth Luttrell , the leading member of another major Norman family , for 5 @,@ 000 marks , with the castle to transfer to Elizabeth on Joan 's death . At some point during this period additional stone buildings were constructed along the Lower Ward , on the side of the current mansion , and records suggest that a ditch , or moat , may have existed around the base of the Tor in the 14th century .

Joan outlived Elizabeth , and in the event Sir Hugh Luttrell , who was Henry V 's seneschal in Normandy , finally took over the castle on Joan 's death in 1404 . The castle had suffered from a lack of investment during the final years of the Mohan 's ownership , and Luttrell repaired and extended the castle at a cost of £ 252 , constructing the Great Gatehouse and a barbican between 1419 and 1424 . The new entrance lay at right @-@ angles to the old and was three storeys high , built of imported Bristol red sandstone , and contained extensive apartments ; it formed a grand , if ill @-@ defended , ceremonial route into the castle . The castle was reroofed with Cornish stone tiles . By the 15th century the sea had receded , and the Luttrells created a deer park for the castle at Marshwood . Such a park would have been highly prestigious and allowed the Luttrells to engage in hunting , providing the castle with a supply of venison as well as generating income .

During the 15th century , England was divided by the prolonged period of civil war called the Wars of the Roses : the Luttrells were supporters of the House of Lancaster . In 1461 , Sir James Luttrell died following the Lancastrian defeat at the Second Battle of St Albans , and his family were deprived of their estates by the Yorkist Edward IV . The castle was given to the Herberts , but the Luttrells regained it on the accession of the Lancastrian Henry VII in 1485 , when Dunster was restored to James ' son , Sir Hugh Luttrell . Hugh repaired the castle chapel and in the early 16th century his son , Sir Andrew Luttrell , built a new wall on the east side of the castle . Andrew 's son Sir John Luttrell , who inherited the castle , was a famous soldier , diplomat , and courtier under Henry VIII and Edward VI , serving in France and in Scotland during the conflicts of the Rough Wooing . In In 1542 the antiquarian John Leland reported the castle keep and buildings to be considerable disrepair , with the exception of the chapel , and after Sir John 's death the castle was leased out for several years , first by his daughter , Mary , and then under his brother , Thomas .

By the time George Luttrell inherited the castle in 1571 , it was dilapidated , with the family preferring to live in their house , now known as Court House , at East Quantoxhead . In 1617 George employed the architect William Arnold , to create a new house in the Lower Ward of the castle . Arnold was an important architect in the south @-@ west of England , and had managed the building of nearby Montacute and Cranborne House . The redesign expanded on some of the existing buildings and walls to create a 16th @-@ century Jacobean mansion with a symmetrical front and square towers , set within the older castle walls and overlooked by the keep above . The building was decorated in the latest styles , including ornamental plaster ceilings . The project ran almost three times over budget , costing Luttrell more than £ 1 @,@ 200 .

= = = English Civil War and the Restoration = = =

In the 1640s the English Civil War broke out between the supporters of King Charles I and Parliament . Thomas Luttrell , George 's eldest son , initially supported Parliament and after the outbreak of war William Russell , the Duke of Bedford and Parliamentary commander in Devon and Somerset , ordered him to increase the garrison at Dunster to resist a potential Royalist attack . The Royalist commander William Seymour , the Duke of Somerset , attacked the castle in 1642 but was driven back by the garrison , led by Thomas ' wife , Jane . The war in the south @-@ west turned in favour of the King , and on 7 June 1643 the Royalists mustered forces to attack the castle again : this time Luttrell surrendered , switching sides to support the Royalists until his death the following February . Colonel Wyndham was appointed the Royalist governor of the castle . The young Prince Charles , the later Charles II , stayed at the castle in May 1645 .

During 1645 the Royalist military cause largely collapsed , and Colonel Robert Blake led a Parliamentary force against Dunster in October . In November Blake began his siege of the castle , setting up his artillery in Dunster village and starting to dig tunnels to plant mines beneath the walls . The castle was briefly relieved by reinforcements in February 1646 , but the siege was resumed and by April the Royalists situation was untenable ? an honourable surrender was negotiated and a Parliamentary garrison installed . After the end of the Second English Civil War in 1649 , however , Parliament decided to deliberately destroy , or slight , the defences of castles in key Royalist areas , including the south @-@ west . In the case of Dunster , Thomas 's son George Luttrell was able to convince the authorities to destroy only the medieval defensive walls , rather than the entire castle , leaving Dunster damaged from the recent siege but still habitable ; the walls were demolished over 12 days in August 1650 by a team of 300 workmen . The only parts of the medieval walls to survive were the Great Gatehouse and the bases of the two towers in the Lower Ward .

George Luttrell died without children , and Dunster Castle passed to his brother Francis , who survived the political turmoil of both the Commonwealth years and the Restoration of Charles II to power in 1660 . Francis ' heir , another Francis , married a wealthy heiress worth £ 2 @,@ 500 a year ( £ 331 @,@ 000 at 2009 prices ) and with this income set about modernising the castle during the 1680s , in particular building a grand staircase in the latest style . Francis was a colonel in the local militia and in 1688 backed William of Orange 's attempt to oust James II ; when William landed in Devon , Francis mustered a number of companies of infantry at Dunster on 19 November to support him , which formed the basis for the later Green Howards regiment . During this period the castle still kept an armoury of 43 muskets . Francis died heavily in debt in 1690 , and his widow Mary moved the contents of the castle to London , where they were destroyed in a fire in 1696 .

= = = 18th century = = =

At the start of the 18th century the Luttrells and Dunster Castle faced many financial challenges . Francis 's son Alexander , inherited the castle when he came of age in 1704 , but it was still mostly empty and carried large debts with it . Alexander died young in 1711 and his widow , Dorothy , spent almost twenty years paying off the debts . Dorothy built a new chapel , designed by Sir James Thornhill in white Portland stone , on the rear of the mansion at a cost of £ 1 @,@ 300 ( £ 178 @,@ 000 at 2009 prices ) ; few records of this remain , but the interior probably resembled that of the

chapel at Wimpole Hall . A safer , if less grand , approach road to the castle was created , called the New Way , and the remains of the Upper Ward on top of the motte were flattened to be used as a bowling green , complete with an octagonal summer house . Dorothy 's son , Alexander Luttrell , took over the castle in 1726 but ran up new debts , and the castle was handed over into the control of a receiver .

Henry Fownes Luttrell , who married Margaret , Alexander 's daughter , and took the Luttrell name , moved to Dunster in 1747 . The couple redesigned and redecorated the castle in a Rococo style , including the extensive use of the recently invented and highly fashionable wallpaper . Henry Luttrell raised the ground height of the Lower Ward between 1764 and 1765 to extend the New Way all around to the front of his mansion , adding additional ornamental towers onto the inside of the Great Gatehouse in the process . A folly , Conygar Tower , was constructed by architect Richard Phelps to improve the view from the castle , and a larger park of 141 hectares ( 348 acres ) was built just to the south of the castle , requiring the eviction of a number of tenant farmers .

= = = 19th and 20th centuries = = =

Henry 's son , John , inherited the castle in 1780 , but when his son , also called John , inherited in 1816 he chose to live in London instead , opening up Dunster Castle to the public . By 1845 the castle appeared to visitors to be past its prime : with only two of John 's sisters living there and no horses or hunting dogs left in the castle grounds , the remaining servants had little to do . John 's brother Henry inherited in 1857 , but he too lived in London rather than at Dunster .

George Luttrell inherited the castle in 1867 and began an extensive modernisation , backed by the considerable income from the Dunster estates ? in a period of agricultural boom in England , the estates were producing £ 22 @, @ 000 in revenue a year ( £ 1 @. @ 49 million at 2010 prices ) . It was fashionable during the mid @- @ Victorian period to remodel existing castles to produce what was felt to be a more consistent Gothic or sometimes Picturesque appearance and George , a keen historian , decided to follow this trend at Dunster ; in the process , he also hoped to accommodate the larger household and facilities required for a 19th @- @ century landowner : by 1881 , the castle required 15 " living @- @ in " servants alone . He employed Anthony Salvin , a noted architect then most famous for his work at Alnwick Castle , to carry out the work between 1868 and 1872 at a total cost of £ 25 @, @ 350 ( equivalent to £ 1 @. @ 76 million in 2010 ) . The work included the construction of an underground reservoir , holding 40 @, @ 000 imperial gallons ( 180 @, @ 000 l ; 48 @, @ 000 US gal ) of water to provide running water for the castle and village .

Salvin aimed to create a castle that would appear to have grown up organically over time , but still appeal to Victorian aesthetic taste . Accordingly , a large , square tower was built on the west side of the castle and another smaller tower on the east , both creating additional space but also making the castle deliberately asymmetrical . The 18th @- @ century chapel at the rear was demolished and replaced with another tower , alongside a modern conservatory . A variety of windows in the styles of different historical periods were inserted in the walls , while modern Victorian technology , including gas lighting @- @ supported by a gas plant in the basement @- @ central heating and new kitchens were installed within the castle . The roof of the Great Gatehouse was raised to create a more uniform sequence of battlements , and a large hall for gatherings of the local farmers installed . A new wing of servants ' quarters and offices were sunk into the hill , spread over two floors leading away from the main part of the mansion .

Internally , Salvin knocked through existing rooms to create the Outer Hall , a new gallery on the first floor , a billiard room , a new library and a drawing room . Much of the wooden 17th @- @ century panelling in the parlour and the hall had to be stripped out as part of the renovations . As part of his work , Salvin appears to have used a number of rolled wrought @- @ iron beams to span the resulting structural gaps in the building , an advanced use of that technology for the time . The house was refurnished with newly bought 16th and 17th @- @ century artwork , two brass Italian cannons and a stuffed polar bear .

Alexander Luttrell , who inherited Dunster Castle in 1910 , chose to live at East Quantoxhead instead , and it was left empty until his son Geoffrey reoccupied the castle in 1920 , redecorating

some of the rooms in a contemporary style and building a polo ground alongside the castle . The castle and the surrounding countryside at this time was very popular with the Luttrells for fox hunting and shooting . During the Second World War the castle was used as a convalescent home for injured naval and American officers between 1943 and 1944 .

Alexander died in 1944 , and the death duties proved crippling to Geoffrey . In 1949 he sold the castle and 3 @, @ 480 hectares ( 8 @, @ 600 acres ) of the lands to the Ashdale Property Company , retaining a tenancy of the castle for himself . The Crown Estate bought the estate from Ashdale and sold the castle back to Geoffrey in 1954 . His son Colonel Walter Luttrell lived away from Dunster , and following the death of his mother ? the last Luttrell to live in the property ? gave the castle and most of its contents to the National Trust in 1976 .

= = Today = =

Dunster Castle is operated by the National Trust as a tourist attraction . Little remains of the medieval castle except for the Great Gatehouse and the remains of several towers in the Lower Ward ; the heart of the modern castle today is the much altered 17th @-@ century manor house . The key features of the castle include the original 13th @-@ century gates and several pieces of art , including a Tudor copy of Hans Eworth 's famous allegorical portrait of Sir John Luttrell , and a sequence of leather tapestries showing scenes from the story of Antony and Cleopatra . The castle also holds a piano that once belonged to the composer Vivian Ellis . The gardens surrounding the castle cover approximately 6 hectares ( 15 acres ) and include the National Plant Collection of Strawberry Trees ; the wider parkland beyond totals 277 hectares ( 680 acres ) . The gardens and parkland are listed , Grade II \* , on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England .

Just to the south of the castle is the restored 18th @-@ century castle watermill . In 2010 the castle received 128 @, @ 242 visitors . Dunster Castle has been designated by English Heritage as a Grade I listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument . The castle has required continuing maintenance work , in particular to its roof , itself an important historical feature . Efforts have been made to gradually redecorate the castle in a period style , using reproductions of original wallpapers and materials . The National Trust installed solar panels behind the battlements on the roof in 2008 to provide electricity and make the premises more environmentally friendly . This was the first time the National Trust have taken this approach to a Grade I listed building , and it is expected to save 1 @, @ 714 kg ( 3 @, @ 778 lb ) of carbon a year . In 2015 , the National Trust announced plans to make the 19th @-@ century reservoir open to the public .