

= St Catherine 's Castle =

St Catherine 's Castle ( Cornish : Kastel S. Kattrin ) is a Henrician castle in Cornwall , built by Thomas Treffry between approximately 1538 and 1540 , in response to fears of an invasion of England by France and the Holy Roman Empire . The D @-@ shaped , stone fortification , equipped with five gun @-@ ports for cannon , overlooked the mouth of the River Fowey in Cornwall . It was protected by a curtain wall and the surrounding cliffs . The castle remained in use for many years until it was closed at the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 . Brought back into service in 1855 during the Crimean War , it was fitted with two new artillery positions , but it soon became obsolete and was abandoned . During the Second World War the castle was refortified and used to house a battery of naval guns , protecting the coast against the threat of German attack . At the end of the conflict the castle was restored to its previous condition and is now managed by English Heritage as a tourist attraction .

= = History = =

= = = Construction = = =

St Catherine 's Castle was built as a consequence of the international tensions between England , France and the Holy Roman Empire in the final years of the reign of King Henry VIII . Traditionally the Crown had left coastal defences to the local lords and communities , only taking a modest role in building and maintaining fortifications , and while France and the Empire remained in conflict with one another , maritime raids were common but an actual invasion of England seemed unlikely . Modest defences , based around simple blockhouses and towers , existed in the south @-@ west and along the Sussex coast , with a few more impressive works in the north of England , but in general the fortifications were very limited in scale .

In 1533 , Henry broke with Pope Paul III in order to annul his long @-@ standing marriage to Catherine of Aragon and remarry . Catherine was the aunt of Charles V , the Holy Roman Emperor , and he took the annulment as a personal insult . This resulted in France and the Empire declaring an alliance against Henry in 1538 , and the Pope encouraging the two countries to attack England . An invasion of England now appeared certain and Henry began to improve his coastal defences .

In response to this situation , a small , D @-@ shaped stone fortification was built to protect Fowey Harbour in Cornwall , then an important centre for trade . The harbour was reached through the Fowey estuary , which the local town had protected in the previous century with two blockhouses positioned along the river 's edge ? the Fowey and Polruan blockhouses ? and a boom chain strung between them . The new castle replaced these and was located high on the headland overlooking the entrance to the estuary itself , St Catherine 's Point , from which it took its name .

Construction work began on the castle at some point between 1538 and 1540 , under the direction of a member of the local Cornish gentry , Thomas Treffry . By 1540 , a map of the local defences described the castle as only " half @-@ made " ; when the antiquarian John Leland visited what he described as a blockhouse in 1542 , he was hosted by Treffry , and afterwards recorded that the construction had been funded partly by Treffry and partly by the local town .

= = = Later use = = =

St Catherine 's Castle remained in use for many years . During the English Civil War of the 1640s , it was held by the Royalist supporters of King Charles I against Parliament ; in 1684 the local burgesses reported that the fortification was in a " runious " state . The antiquarian Francis Grose visited the castle in 1786 and noted that the fortification was still being maintained at the expense of the local town . He praised its " picturesque and romantic " position but concluded that the building itself was of " little importance , either to antiquity or architecture " . At this time the castle was equipped with six cannons and it continued to be used as a battery until the end of the Napoleonic

Wars in 1815 .

After the Crimean War broke out in 1853 , fresh concerns of invasion were raised and the coastline was refortified . The castle was redeveloped as part of this work in 1855 , and two new gun positions built around the old blockhouse . In 1887 , the castle was equipped with 64 @-@ pound ( 29 kg ) rifled , muzzle @-@ loading artillery pieces , supported by volunteer forces and used for training purposes , but the weaponry became obsolete and the site had fallen out of use again by the end of the century .

The castle was brought back into use in the Second World War by the British Southern Command to defend the coast against German attack . In June 1940 it was re @-@ equipped as a gun battery and observation post , with additional concrete defences laid around the position . Two 4 @. 7 @-@ inch ( 120 mm ) naval guns were installed in one of the 19th century firing positions and in a new gun position built 50 metres ( 160 ft ) to the west of the castle ; these were supplemented by a French 75 @-@ millimetre ( 3 @. 0 in ) gun , and the old blockhouse itself was used to control a minefield in the estuary below . The guns were manned first by the 364 Coast Battery of the Royal Artillery and then by the 379 Battery of the 557 Coast Regiment , but the battery was retired from active operations in November 1943 . After 1945 the entire fort was decommissioned and the newer defences removed .

In the 21st century , the castle is operated by the heritage organisation English Heritage as a tourist attraction and is protected under UK law as a Grade 2 \* listed building and scheduled monument .

= = Architecture = =

The 16th century blockhouse is a two @-@ storey , D @-@ shaped design , 5 by 4 @. 4 metres ( 16 by 14 ft ) internally , with walls of slate rubble up to 1 @. 35 metres ( 4 ft 5 in ) thick resting on a platform cut out of the bedrock . The ground floor originally had three semi @-@ circular gun @-@ ports overlooking the sea and the estuary , although one has since been blocked up . On the first floor were two more gun @-@ ports ? one now filled in ? and smaller windows that could have been used for smaller gunpowder weapons . The building had a fireplace and chimney , with a small guard chamber by the entrance , and was topped by a parapet walk .

The blockhouse overlooks the sea and the estuary from its position on a rocky outcrop . It is surrounded by cliffs and a curtain wall , enclosing a semi @-@ circular area around 500 square metres ( 5 @, 400 sq ft ) in size , incorporating slits for firing muskets . A rectangular bastion , 5 @. 7 by 3 @. 2 metres ( 19 by 10 ft ) internally with 0 @. 75 metres ( 2 ft 6 in ) thick walls , protects the rear of the blockhouse . The original pathway to the blockhouse was blocked by later work , and the current steps up to the building are of 19th century origin .

A flat @-@ roofed magazine was cut out of the rock just below the blockhouse in the 19th century , and a gun platform with two circular recesses for gun carriage rails was constructed , protected by a granite parapet . The curtain wall was reworked in this period and marked by plaques labelled " WD 1855 " . The recesses and marks from the additional defences in the Second War can still be seen in places along the gun platform .