

= Sutton Valence Castle =

Sutton Valence Castle is a ruined medieval fortification in the village of Sutton Valence in Kent , England . It was built in the second half of the 12th century , probably by Baldwin of Bethune , the Count of Aumale . Overlooking a strategic route to the coast , the original castle probably comprised an inner and an outer bailey and a protective barbican , with a three @-@ storey high keep on its southern side . It was passed into the Marshal and de Montfort families , before being given by King Henry III to his half @-@ brother William de Valence in 1265 , from whom the castle takes its current name . It was abandoned in the early 14th century and fell into ruin . In the 21st century the castle is managed by English Heritage , and the remains of the keep are open to the public .

= = History = =

= = = 12th ? 15th centuries = = =

Sutton Valence Castle was probably built in the second half of the 12th century by the Counts of Aumale , most likely by Baldwin of Bethune , but perhaps alternatively by William le Gros , Baldwin 's father @-@ in @-@ law . The castle was built on a commanding position overlooking the strategic route between the towns of Maidstone , Rye and Old Winchelsea. and the location was originally known as Town Sutton . The stone keep of the castle was constructed around 1200 .

In 1203 , Baldwin gave the castle to his daughter Alicia on her marriage to William Marshal , the Earl of Pembroke , who later remarried , passing the property to his second wife , Eleanor . After William 's death , Eleanor married Simon de Montfort , the Earl of Leicester . Simon led a rebellion against King Henry III during the Second Barons ' War , but was killed at the Battle of Evesham in 1265 , after which Eleanor was stripped of the castle .

The King gave Sutton Valence to William de Valence , his half @-@ brother , who had supported him during the conflict . Under William , the castle acquired its current name of Sutton Valence . Aymer de Valence , his son , inherited the castle in 1307 . The Valences travelled around their estates , increasingly focusing their attention on a handful of their various great houses , and stayed at Sutton Valence on at least several occasions .

After Aymer 's death in 1324 , the castle passed by marriage to Lawrence , Lord Hastings , and was held in the Hastings family until 1390 , when Reginald Lord Grey de Ruthin acquired it . There are few historical records of the castle beyond this point , but it appears to have been abandoned in the early 14th century and by the 15th century had become ruined .

= = = 16th ? 21st centuries = = =

By the end of the 18th century , the historian Edward Hasted described Sutton Valence Castle as being " now almost covered with ivy , and the branches of the trees which sprout out from the walls of it . " Archaeological excavations were carried out at the site during the mid @-@ 1950s with the assistance of Maidstone Museum and the local Sutton Valence School , focusing on the castle keep . The castle was placed into the guardianship of the state in 1976 ; it is now owned by English Heritage and conservation work was done on the ruins in the 1980s . It is protected under UK law as a Grade II listed building and as a Scheduled Monument .

= = Architecture = =

Sutton Valence Castle occupied a spur of the Chart Hills , adjacent to the village of Sutton Valence , and probably comprised an inner and an outer bailey and a protective barbican . Visitors would have entered through an eastern barbican , coming through to an outer bailey ; these features only survive as earthworks . A dry ditch protected the inner bailey , which was approximately 300 by 34 metres ( 984 by 112 ft ) across , positioned on the southern side of the site . It probably included a

hall , chapel and kitchen , but only the castle keep now survives . The keep is 11 metres ( 36 ft ) square , with walls 2 @. @ 4 metres ( 7 ft 10 in ) thick , built from ragstone and flint rubble and surviving up to 7 metres ( 23 ft ) high . It was originally 20 metres ( 66 ft ) tall , with at least three storeys , and entered through an external staircase leading to a doorway in the first floor . The building had a corner tower , in which was a spiral staircase linking the floors , and had clasping buttresses at the corners .