

= Bruton Dovecote =

The Bruton Dovecote is a limestone tower that was built between the 15th and 17th century in Bruton in the English county of Somerset . The structure was once used as a dovecote , and may have been a watchtower or prospect tower prior to this . It is a Grade II * listed building and scheduled monument .

It has been associated with Bruton Abbey and the Berkley family who owned the estate after the dissolution . It is known that the conversion to house pigeons and doves took place around 1780 . It was acquired by the National Trust in 1915 and they have managed the site since then undertaking restoration work .

= = History = =

Though the Bruton Dovecote 's date of construction is not known precisely , the structure was built some time between the 15th and 17th century . Architectural historian Lydia Greeves suggests that the building was once within the deerpark of Bruton Abbey and was adapted by the monks from a gabled Tudor tower . However , John and Pamela McCann , authors of The Dovecotes of Historical Somerset , claim that the structure was not built until after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s . The authors claim that the Berkley family , who acquired the lands of the Abbey , constructed the building as a prospect tower . Dendrochronological dating commissioned by the National Trust found that timber in the door and window frames came from trees felled between 1554 and 1586 .

The conversion to be a dovecote took place around 1780 . Pigeons and doves were an important food source historically kept for their eggs , flesh , and dung . Although it is now a roofless ruin with some of the windows blocked up , it previously had a chimney and the fireplace can still be seen . The National Trust acquired the freehold from Sir Henry Hugh Arthur Hoare of the Hoare baronets , whose family seat was at Stourhead , in 1915 . The tower was subsequently designated as a scheduled monument in 1953 and a listed building (Grade II *) in 1961 .

In the 1980s the dovecote was inspected as part of an investigation into an outbreak of psittacosis (also known as parrot disease or parrot fever) , a zoonotic infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Chlamydophila psittaci* , at the adjoining King 's School . No cause was found for the infection . In 2010 restoration work was undertaken including repairs to the tops of the walls ; these are exposed as the building no longer has a roof . Wall ties were used on the south west corner where the masonry was bulging . In addition , car parking and educational signage was provided . This was partially funded by South Somerset council , Bruton Town Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund to a total of £ 105 @, @ 000 .

= = Location = =

The dovecote stands on Lusty Hill to the south of Bruton overlooking the town . It is approximately 370 metres (1 @, @ 210 ft) south of the Church of St Mary , and 230 metres (750 ft) south of King 's School . It is on the Leland Trail .

= = Architecture = =

The square tower was built of local coursed oolitic limestone with Doultong stone dressings . The walls are 2 feet 8 inches (0 @. @ 81 m) thick at the base , and the tower is 6 square metres (65 sq ft) in plan . The doorway has an ovolo moulded arch which is 5 feet 9 inches (1 @. @ 75 m) high . This suggests a construction date in the late 16th or early 17th century . Another entrance was made for cattle to enter at a later date but this has been blocked up . Several of the windows have also been filled with stone . On the north @- @ east face there were two @- @ light chamfered mullioned windows on each floor while on the north @- @ west wall they were one- and two @- @ light windows .

It has over 200 pigeon holes , which were installed after the original construction , possibly before 1780 . Six tiers of nest boxes remain ; however there were previously several more , possibly as many as 850 . They are made of regular blocks of tufa each around 8 inches (200 mm) square and 16 inches (410 mm) deep .