

= Brownsea Castle =

Brownsea Castle , also known historically as Branksea Castle , was originally a Device Fort constructed by Henry VIII between 1545 and 1547 to protect Poole Harbour in Dorset , England , from the threat of French attack . Located on Brownsea Island , it comprised a stone blockhouse with a hexagonal gun platform . It was garrisoned by the local town with six soldiers and armed with eight artillery pieces . The castle remained in use after the original invasion scare had passed and was occupied by Parliament during the English Civil War of the 1640s . By the end of the century , however , it had fallen into disuse .

In 1726 the castle was converted into a private residence by William Benson , despite complaints from the town of Poole . Benson and the subsequent owners extended the original blockhouse to form a country house , landscaping the surrounding island to create ornamental gardens and lakes . The 19th century saw continued building work by the castle 's occupants , including the entrepreneur Colonel William Waugh , who erected various Jacobethan @-@ styled extensions . A serious fire in 1896 gutted the castle , which was restored by Major Kenneth Robert Balfour . The wealthy stockbroker Charles Van Raalte led a lavish lifestyle at Brownsea at the start of the 20th century , using it to house his collection of antique musical instruments .

Brownsea Castle was purchased by Mary Bonham @-@ Christie in 1927 . She allowed the property to fall into disrepair and by the time of her death in 1961 it was in a very poor condition . It was then purchased by the National Trust and leased to the John Lewis Partnership , who restored it over many years . In the 21st century it is still used by the Partnership as a corporate hotel for their employees and former staff .

= = History = =

= = = 16th century = = =

Brownsea Castle was built as a consequence of 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 small 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 then broke with Pope Paul III in order to annul the long @-@ standing marriage to his wife , Catherine of Aragon and remarry . This resulted in France and the Empire declaring an alliance against Henry in 1538 , and the Pope encouraging the two countries to attack England . Henry responded in 1539 by ordering , through an instruction called a " device " , the construction of fortifications along the most vulnerable parts of the coast . The immediate threat passed , but resurfaced in 1544 , with France threatening an invasion across the Channel , backed by her allies in Scotland . Henry therefore issued another device in 1544 to further improve the country 's defences , particularly along the south coast .

The castle was built on the south @-@ east corner of Brownsea Island between 1545 and 1547 to protect the entrance of the busy Poole Harbour . The island belonged to the Crown , having been confiscated from Cerne Abbey during the Dissolution of the Monasteries a few years before . It was a conservative design , being a one @-@ storey , square blockhouse , reported in 1552 to be 44 feet ( 13 m ) across , able to support guns on its roof and sub @-@ divided into three rooms ; the blockhouse was originally intended to have been two storeys in height , but this was not achieved . The blockhouse was surrounded on the seaward side by a hexagonal gun platform , with a moat around the other three sides and a 24 @-@ foot @-@ long ( 7 @-@ 3 m ) drawbridge on the south @-@ west side to allow access .

The construction was paid for by a combination of the Crown and the local town of Poole , who took on the responsibility of garrisoning and maintaining it ; in the early years of Elizabeth 's reign , the normal garrison was described as comprising six men and was equipped with eight artillery pieces .

Additional work on the gun platform costing £ 56 was carried out in 1548 , and further work was carried out in 1552 to develop the castle 's defences , at the cost to Poole of £ 133 . The castle needed regular investment : 101 piles were driven in during 1551 , probably to combat coastal erosion , and in 1561 the town petitioned the Crown for help with further repairs and the provision of new cannons . Another petition was made for similar help in 1571 , resulting in repairs two years later costing £ 520 and requiring 4 @, @ 000 tonnes ( 3 @, @ 900 long tons ; 4 @, @ 400 short tons ) of stone . More work followed in 1585 , including building an additional 4 @-@ foot @-@ high ( 1 @. @ 2 m ) wall around the castle .

In 1576 , Elizabeth I granted the castles of Brownsea and Corfe for life to Sir Christopher Hatton , making him the Admiral of Purbeck . Hatton argued with the town of Poole , claiming that he had the right to search and inspect ships going into Poole Harbour , as well as the rights to the revenues from the local ferry service ; he lost his legal case around the ferrying rights in 1581 . In 1589 , the Bountiful Gift refused to pull in for inspection , arguing that it had had a valid pass to leave , and Brownsea Castle fired on the vessel , killing two of the crew . The castle 's captain , Walter Partridge , was tried and convicted of manslaughter , but ultimately pardoned . The rest of the island , but not the castle , was leased out to various landowners over the next few years .

= = = 17th - 18th centuries = = =

The castle was garrisoned throughout most of the 17th century . In the civil war of the 1640s between the supporters of Charles I and Parliament , the castle was held for Parliament , under the control of the Governor of Poole . The castle was refortified and in 1644 , Parliament ordered that four pieces of artillery and four chests of muskets be sent to the castle , which by 1646 had a garrison of 20 men . During the Interregnum , the wealthy merchant Sir Robert Clayton bought the surrounding island . Clayton probably did not live in the castle , however , and it fell into disrepair ; by the end of the century the town of Poole refused to garrison the decaying defences .

The amateur architect William Benson bought the island from Clayton 's heirs in 1726 for £ 300 . Benson set about converting the castle into a private residence , amid complaints from the authorities in Poole . The town took the matter to the Attorney General , where they argued that Benson had not bought the rights to the castle itself , only the island , and that the castle was a national fortification , originally built by Henry VIII and owned by Poole . Benson argued that the building had not originally been a castle but rather a lodging house ; it had not been built by Henry and therefore the Crown had no particular rights over it - rather , the previous owners of the island had simply allowed the town and the government to place artillery there . The matter was eventually dropped and Benson demolished the external fortifications , created a Great Hall and planted trees and rare plants around the island .

The castle was sold to a Mr Chamberlayne and then onto Sir Gerard Sturt in 1762 and Gerard 's cousin , Sir Humphrey Sturt , in 1765 . Humphrey extended the castle around its 16th century core to form a Palladian styled , four @-@ storey tower with battlements , with new wings stretching away on three sides . He also built a walled courtyard with hot houses beside the castle , and landscaped the island with two lakes and a large number of fir trees at a cost of £ 50 @, @ 000 . His son , Charles Sturt , made the castle his primary home , although he was often living elsewhere as a result of his involvement in the Napoleonic Wars .

= = = 19th - 21st centuries = = =

Charles Sturt 's son , also called Charles , inherited the property and sold it to Sir Charles Chad in 1817 . Chad invested significantly in the castle and Prince George visited in 1818 , arriving to a salute from the castle guns . The diplomat Sir Augustus Foster acquired the castle in 1840 on his retirement ; he committed suicide at the castle 1848 , having been in what his inquest termed a state

of temporary insanity following a " disease of the heart and lungs " .

A retired Indian Army officer , Colonel William Waugh , bought the island in 1852 , hoping to turn it into a profitable pottery works . He carried out restoration work on the castle and built up a new Jacobethan @-@ styled range around the south and east sides of the castle . Waugh also constructed the crenelated gatehouse and clocktower at the entrance to the courtyard , and the Jacobethan @-@ styled family pier by the sea below the castle . The commercial venture was a failure and Waugh fled his creditors to Spain in 1857 .

After a period of ownership by a Mr Faulkner , who continued the pottery scheme , the property was eventually resold in 1873 to the politician and lawyer George Cavendish @-@ Bentinck for £ 30 @,@ 000 , who furnished the castle with an extensive collection of Italian Renaissance sculpture . Cavendish @-@ Bentinck closed the pottery works and gave the island as a family home to his son , William , paying for the castle to be extensively renovated ; William and his wife Ruth moved into it in 1888 . Cavendish @-@ Bentinck died in 1891 with extensive debts , forcing William to sell the castle and island to Major Kenneth Robert Balfour .

The castle caught fire on 26 January 1896 and the interiors were gutted by the blaze . Balfour rebuilt the property with the services of the architect Philip Brown , softening the more complex aspects of the castle 's design . Balfour 's wife , Margaret Anne , fell ill and he decided to sell the island in 1901 to the stockbroker Charles van Raalte .

Van Raalte maintained a lavish lifestyle at the castle , which by now had 38 bedrooms , holding grand house @-@ parties during the summer months , complete with servants and a part @-@ time musical band and assembling a rare collection of around 250 historical musical instruments from Europe , Asia and Africa at the castle . Charles died in 1908 but his wife Florence stayed until 1925 . On Florence 's death in 1927 the castle was sold to Sir Arthur Wheeler , who promptly decided to auction off the remaining contents with the intent of demolishing the property . The sale , which included some of Van Raalte 's collection of instruments , paintings and a 5 @,@ 000 book library , produced £ 22 @,@ 300 .

The castle was not demolished as planned and instead was purchased by Mary Bonham @-@ Christie for £ 125 @,@ 000 later that year . She decided to live in a nearby house rather than the castle itself , allowing the island to return to nature and the castle to fall into disrepair . By the time of Bonham @-@ Christie 's death in 1961 the roof had partially collapsed and a tree was growing up through the centre of the building . Facing large death duties , Bonham @-@ Christie 's grandson put the island up for sale , before agreeing to donate it to the state in lieu of taxes .

The National Trust took on ownership of the castle and island in 1962 but considered the castle to be of " little antiquity or architectural interest " . The John Lewis Partnership leased the castle from the Trust for use as a corporate hotel by their employees , gradually restoring the buildings in stages and they remain the current tenants . Some of the 19th century interior features still survive , including wood panelling and ornamental ceilings , with some carved stone fireplaces from Venice ; the castle also has four cannons , probably dating from the 17th or early 18th century . The castle is protected under UK law as a Grade II listed building .