

= Raglan Castle =

Raglan Castle (Welsh : Castell Rhaglan) is a late medieval castle located just north of the village of Raglan in the county of Monmouthshire in south east Wales . The modern castle dates from between the 15th and early 17th @-@ centuries , when the successive ruling families of the Herberts and the Somersets created a luxurious , fortified castle , complete with a large hexagonal keep , known as the Great Tower or the Yellow Tower of Gwent . Surrounded by parkland , water gardens and terraces , the castle was considered by contemporaries to be the equal of any other in England or Wales . During the English Civil War the castle was held on behalf of Charles I and was taken by Parliamentary forces in 1646 . In the aftermath , the castle was slighted , or deliberately put beyond military use ; after the restoration of Charles II , the Somersets declined to restore the castle . Raglan Castle became first a source of local building materials , then a romantic ruin , and is now a modern tourist attraction .

= = History = =

= = = Early history of the castle = = =

Following the Norman invasion of Wales , the area around the village of Raglan was granted to William FitzOsbern , the Earl of Hereford . Some historians , such as John Kenyon , suspect that an early motte and bailey castle may have been built on the Raglan site during this period : the location had strategic importance and archaeologists have discovered the remains of a possible bailey ditch on the site . The local manor was held by the Bloet family from the late 12th @-@ century until the late 14th @-@ century and the family built a manor house somewhere on the site during this period , surrounded by a park . By the late medieval period the Raglan site was surrounded by the large deer parks of Home Park and Red Deer Park , the latter being enclosed at the end of the period .

= = = 15th - 16th centuries = = =

The current Raglan Castle was begun by Sir William ap Thomas , the lesser son of a minor Welsh family who rose through the ranks of mid @-@ 15th century politics , profiting from the benefits of the local offices he held . William married first Elizabeth , a wealthy heiress , and then Gwladus ap Thomas , another heiress who would prove to be a powerful regional figure in her own right . In 1432 William purchased the manor of Raglan , where he had already been staying as a tenant , for 1 @,@ 000 marks (£ 666) and commenced a programme of building work that established the basic shape of the castle as seen today , although most of it ? with the exception of the South Gate and the Great Tower ? was later built over .

William 's son dropped the Welsh version of his name , calling himself William Herbert . He continued to rise in prominence , supporting the House of York during the War of the Roses , fighting in the Hundred Years War in France but making his fortune from the Gascon wine trade . He was also closely associated with Welsh politics and status , being the first Welshman to be made an earl and being described by contemporary poets as the " national deliverer " who might achieve Welsh independence . In the 1460s William used his increasing wealth to remodel Raglan on a much grander scale . The symbolism of the castle architecture may have reflected the Welsh family roots ? historian Matthew Johnson has suggested that the polygonal towers were possibly designed to imitate those of Caernarvon Castle , whose architecture carries numerous allusions to the eventual return of a Roman Emperor to Wales . The resulting castle was what historian Anthony Emery has described as one of the " last formidable displays of medieval defensive architecture " .

There was an important link between the Raglan Castle and the surrounding parkland , in particular the Home Park and the Red Deer Park . Historian Robert Liddiard suggests that on the basis of the views from the castle at this time , the structured nature of the parks would have contrasted with the wilderness of the mountain peaks framing the scene beyond , making an important statement about

the refinement and cultured nature of the castle lord . In the 15th century there were also extensive orchards and fish ponds surrounding the castle , favourably commented upon by contemporaries .

William Herbert was executed in 1469 as a Yorkist supporter after the Battle of Edgecote Moor . Building work may have stopped for a period under his son , also called William Herbert , before recommencing in the late 1470s . By 1492 , the castle passed to Elizabeth Somerset , William Herbert 's daughter , who married Sir Charles Somerset , passing the castle into a new family line .

Sir Charles Somerset was politically successful under both Henry VII and Henry VIII , being made the Earl of Worcester . His son , Henry Somerset , died shortly after inheriting Raglan , but not before using lead reclaimed from Tintern Abbey to help the building work at Raglan Castle during the dissolution of the monasteries . His son and grandson , William Somerset and Edward Somerset , proved to be what John Kenyon describes as " wealthy , brilliant and cultured men " . William rebuilt much of the Pitched Stone Court , including the hall , adding the Long Gallery and developing the gardens into the new Renaissance style . The Somerset family owned two key castles in the region , Raglan and Chepstow , and these appeared to have figured prominently as important status symbols in paintings owned by the family .

== 17th century ==

Edward Somerset made minor improvements to the interior of the castle at the start of the 17th century , but focused primarily on the exterior , expanding and developing the gardens and building the moat walk around the Great Tower . The resulting gardens were considered the equal of any other others in the kingdom at the time .

Upon inheriting Raglan in 1628 , Henry Somerset , then the 5th Earl of Worcester , continued to live a grand lifestyle in the castle in the 1630s , with a host of staff , including a steward , Master of Horse , Master of Fishponds , surveyors , auditors , ushers , a falconer and many footmen . The interior walls were hung with rich tapestries from Arras in France , while an inventory taken in 1639 recorded a large number of silver and gilt plate kept in the Great Tower , including a basket for the consumption of oranges and lemons , then luxury items in Wales . Mead was a popular drink in the castle , but contemporaries described the castle as being a particular sober and respectful community . Henry developed the entrance route to the castle , including building the Red Gate . His son Edward , Lord Herbert became famous for building a " water commanding machine " in the Great Tower , which used steam to pump a huge spout of water high into the air from the moat .

However , in 1642 civil war broke out between the rival Royalist supporters of King Charles I and Parliament . Raglan Castle was still held by Henry , then an elderly man , supported by his son , Lord Herbert . Both men were firm royalists . King Charles sent his own son , Prince Charles , on a fund @-@ raising tour of friendly regions , starting with Raglan Castle in October 1642 , following which Henry was promoted to be the first Marquess of Worcester . Tensions grew in the immediate region , partially driven by religious tensions between some of the more Protestant local people and the Roman Catholic Marquess ; on one of these occasions a local group attempted to search the castle , but were reportedly driven away by the sudden noise of Lord Herbert 's steam @-@ engine . The defences of Raglan were improved after this , with modern earthwork bastions built around the castle and a powder mill created ; a garrison of around 300 men was established at a cost of £ 40 @,@ 000 . Heavier cannon were installed in the bastions , with lighter pieces placed in the castle towers .

Lord Herbert left the castle to join the campaign against Parliament , returning at intervals to acquire more funds for the war . Charles I himself visited the castle twice , first in June 1645 after the battle of Naseby and again in 1646 , when he enjoyed playing bowls on the castle 's green . The Royalist cause was now close to military collapse , and the Marquess started to send some valuables , including the oak panelling from the parlour , some plaster ceiling and many pictures , to his brother at nearby Troy House for safe @-@ keeping . Lord Herbert was captured in Ireland , and an attack on Raglan itself appeared imminent .

In the expectation of a siege , the castle garrison was increased to around 800 soldiers ; the avenue of trees outside the castle gates were cut down , and neighbouring buildings destroyed to

avoid them being used by Parliamentary forces . Large amounts of food were brought in to support the growing castle community , which also included a number of the wider Herbert family and other regional Royalist leaders who had sought shelter there . The first Parliamentary army arrived in early June , under the command of Colonel Morgan and Sir Trevor Williams . After several calls for the castle to surrender , a siege ensued , lasting through the summer months . In August , additional Parliamentary forces under General Fairfax arrived , and calls for the castle to surrender were renewed . Fairfax 's men began to dig trenches towards the castle , and used these to move mortars forward , probably including the famous " Roaring Meg " , bringing the interior of the castle into artillery range . Facing a hopeless situation , the Marquess surrendered the castle on 19 August on relatively generous terms for the garrison . The Marquess himself was arrested and sent to Windsor Castle , where he died shortly afterwards .

Fairfax ordered the castle to be totally destroyed under the supervision of Henry Herbert , a descendant of William ap Thomas . The fortifications proved too strong , however , and only a few of the walls were destroyed , or slighted . Historian Matthew Johnson describes the event as having the atmosphere of a " community festival " , as local people dredged the castle moat in search of treasure , and emptied the fishponds of valuable carp . The castle 's library , including an important collection of Welsh documents and books , was either stolen or destroyed .

Despite some immediate confiscations after the siege , by the time of the Restoration of Charles II , the Somerset family had managed to recover most of their possessions , including Raglan Castle . Henry Somerset , the 3rd Marquess , decided to prioritise the rebuilding of his other houses at Troy and Badminton , rather than Raglan , reusing some of the property sent away for safety before the war , or salvaged after the slighting .

= = = 18th to 21st centuries = = =

For the first half of the 18th century , the castle continued to deteriorate , with the Somerset family allowing their stewards to quarry stone from the castle for the repair of other estate buildings . One particular estate surveyor called Hopkins became known as the " Grand Dilapidator " , due to the number of chimneys , window frames and staircases he had removed from the castle . Henry Somerset , the 5th Duke , finally put an end to this practice in 1756 , and the castle became a tourist attraction , part of the popular Wye Tour . Seats , fences and bridges were installed , and first guidebook to the site was published in the early 19th century . The Great Hall was temporarily re-roofed in the 1820s , when the castle was used for a " Grand Entertainment " by the Somersets , and in 1830 Jeffrey Wyattville was employed to reinstate the Grand Staircase . In 1938 Henry Somerset , the 10th Duke , gave Raglan Castle to the Commissioner of Works , and the castle became a permanent tourist attraction .

Today , the castle is classed as a Grade I listed building and as a Scheduled Monument , administered by Cadw .

= = Architecture = =

Raglan Castle was built in several phases , initial work occurring in the 1420s and 1430s , a major phase in the 1460s , with various alterations and additions at the end of the 16th century . The castle was built in stone , initially pale sandstone from Redbrook , and later Old Red Sandstone , with Bath Stone used for many of the detailed features . Like similar properties of the period , the castle of the 1460s was almost certainly designed to be approached and entered in a particular way , maximising the aesthetic and political value of the fortification . At Raglan , the design highlighted the Great Tower : a typical senior visitor would ride through Raglan village , and first the tower and then the rest of the castle would appear suddenly over the slight rise on the hill . A visitor would have needed to circle the Great Tower and the moat , before coming in through the gatehouse , into the Pitched Stone Court , around the edge of the communal hall , before reaching the previously hidden , and more refined , inner Fountain Court . Only then would a privileged guest be able to enter the Great Tower itself , overlooking the Herbert family 's own chambers . Many less senior

visitors or servants would never have entered this far , seeing only the external elements of the castle , but perhaps having been impressed by the outside of the Great Tower as they arrived .

There has been much discussion amongst academics about the extent to which Raglan was influenced by contemporary French designs ; one school of thought suggests that it was heavily influenced by designs that were then popular in the south of France ; others oppose this " diffusionist " school of thought , and argue that there is insufficient evidence to draw such a conclusion . Another line of debate has been over the nature of the castle 's defences , in particular its gunloops . Many castles built around the same time as Raglan appear to have been built with less concern for defences than in the past , their military features more symbolic than real . At Raglan , there are numerous gunloops throughout the castle 's defences , but many were ill @-@ placed if the intention was to use them in a conflict ; some could barely have been used at all . Traditionally , an evolutionary explanation for this was given : Raglan 's gunloops were of an early period , later surpassed in other castles . More recent explanations emphasis the prestigious symbolism of gunloops for the Herbert family when they built the castle , even if many might have been impossible to use . Anthony Emery notes that Raglan 's gunloops were better sited than many at the time , and at least " the owner was up to date in his symbolism " ; Robert Liddiard suggests that the poor placing of some of the gunloops for aesthetic purposes might have actually been a conversation point for those visitors with experience of fighting in France and the " correct " placing of such defences .

= = = Gatehouse and Closet Tower = = =

The three @-@ storey gatehouse to Raglan Castle dates from the 1460s and is approached over a stone bridge restored in 1949 . Characterised by extensive machicolations and gunloops , the gatehouse would originally have had a twin @-@ set of portcullises and a drawbridge . The intention of the design was at least partially defensive , but was also intended to provide a dramatic and impressive entrance for senior visitors to the castle . The upper part of the gatehouse provided chambers for the constable of the castle . Immediately to the west of the gatehouse was the castle library , once famous for its collection of Welsh literature . On the east side of the gatehouse is the three @-@ storey Closet Tower ; this was designed to be integral to the gatehouse , and may have contained the original castle treasury , conveniently accessible by the constable . The Closet Tower was partly altered in later years , possibly to allow the basement to be used as a magazine in the English Civil War .

= = = Pitched Stone Court and Fountain Court = = =

The Pitched Stone Court forms the north @-@ east corner of the castle , and provided a centre for the castle services and servants ; it takes its name from the late @-@ Tudor cobbling , or pitched stones . On the east side of the court is the former office wing , a 16th @-@ century construction mostly destroyed during the siege of 1646 . The castle kitchens and pantries are on the north side , containing two large fireplaces and storage facilities for food and supplies in their cellars . In the 1460s , the first floors to these buildings included chambers for the senior servants . The buttery in the north @-@ west corner would have been used to store and serve beer and wine .

On the south @-@ west side of the court is the hall , a 16th @-@ century design incorporating an earlier hall on the same site . 64 by 28 feet (19 @. 5 by 8 @. 5 metres) wide , the hall was originally 42 feet (13 metres) high , with a roof made of Irish oak , lit and ventilated by a cupola in the middle . A large oriel window lit the end of the hall occupied at dinner by the earls of Worcester , which by the time Raglan was built would have been used only for larger formal occasions . Originally , the hall would have been fitted with carved wooden panelling and a minstrel 's gallery . The Fountain Court lies to the west of the Pitched Stone Court , and is named after a marble fountain that once stood in the centre of it , featuring a white horse on a black marble base , complete with a flow of running water . The fountain was probably installed somewhat after the initial construction of the court in the 1460s , dating instead to Edward Somerset in the late 16th @-@

century ; the horse symbolised Edward 's prestigious role as Master of the Horse . The Fountain Court was built to provide luxurious accommodation for the family and guests ? by the 15th century , it was important to be able to provide private chambers for visitors , and this court could hold up to four distinct groups of visitors in comfort . The Fountain Court as a whole is marked by what Augustus Pugin described as extremely fine , elegant and delicate stonework .

The castle chapel runs alongside the east side of the court , 41 feet (12 metres) long and originally laid with bright yellow and tiles and decorated with gold and silver vestments . The Long Gallery stretches across the whole east first @-@ floor of the Fountain Court and , although now ruined , would have been a show @-@ piece for the earls ' wealth and power . The gallery was 126 feet (38 metres) long and during the Tudor period it would have been wood @-@ panelled throughout and lined with tapestries and paintings . The Long Galley was intended to allow family and guests to relax inside and to admire the gardens , water gardens and the deer park to the north of the castle . Although most of this decoration has since been lost , two caryatid statues can still be seen on the walls of the Long Galley , modelled on a work by the French artist Hugues Sambin .

The west side of the Fountain Court comprises the apartments , with a number of bay windows and window seats facing west and north across the park . The Grand Staircase divides the apartments ; restored between 2010 and 2011 , the staircase would originally have had a substantial porch , similar to the one that survives in the Pitched Stone Court , and would have been a centre @-@ piece of the Fountain Court . The apartments to the west of the staircase are more complex than the others , designed to create somewhat greater privacy , and overlooked the gardens to the west of the castle . On the south side of the court is the South Gate , the original entrance to the castle prior to the 1460s reconstruction . The fan vaulted gatehouse closely resembles the contemporary cloisters at Gloucester Cathedral , but by the 16th century had been converted to the entrance to the bowling green in the terrace beyond .

On the south @-@ east side of the court were the 16th @-@ century parlour and , on the first @-@ floor , the dining room , both 49 by 21 feet (14 @-@ 9 by 6 @-@ 4 m) . These were intended to provide rooms that were more private than the main hall , but more public than a personal chamber . Now ruined , they would originally have been decorated with carved wainscoting and elaborate , carved chimney @-@ pieces . Alongside these rooms , overlooking the Great Tower , were the private rooms for the lord 's family , of higher quality than the other accommodation in the castle . Some of the carved badges and shields on the external walls of these state apartments still remain intact , as in the hall ; these were a popular contemporary feature of 15th @-@ century great castles , and would have created a similar effect to those at Warkworth and Raby Castle .

= = = Great Tower = = =

The Great Tower at Raglan Castle , sometimes called the Yellow Tower of Gwent , sits outside the rest of the castle , protected by a moat and linked to the Fountain Court by a bridge . The fortification is representative of a trend during the 15th and 16th centuries in British castle building : tower keeps such as this , large , solid buildings designed for private accommodation , probably inspired by those in France , had started to appear in the 14th century at Dudley and Warkworth . In the 15th century the fashion spread , with the creation of French @-@ influenced palatial castles featuring complex tower keeps , such as those at Wardour and Tattershall . These were expensive buildings to construct , each built to a unique design and , as historian Norman Pounds has suggested , " were designed to allow very rich men to live in luxury and splendour " .

The hexagonal Great Tower was probably begun in the 1430s and 1440s , possibly on the motte of a previous castle . The tower today has lost not only one of its walls but part of its upper structure , and would originally have been three storeys high with probably additional machicolations on top similar to those on the gatehouse . It was designed to be a self @-@ contained fortification , with its own water and food supplies , and luxurious quarters lit by large windows on the upper floors . Originally the tower was reached by a bascule drawbridge , usually considered to be drawn from contemporary French designs , such as those at Ferté @-@ Milon and Vannes . This drawbridge was designed to have two parts ? a wide , heavy bridge that would be raised or lowered when the

family was in residence , and a thinner bridge , easier to lift , designed for the use of servants at other times . The Herberts used the bridge as their badge , and it can be seen in the carved window designs around the castle . The drawbridge was replaced with a grander stone bridge in the 1460s , probably at a cost of around £ 900 to £ 1000 . An apron wall with six turrets was also added around the tower at around the same time .

The original moat around the tower would have been a simple design , but it was redesigned in the 1460s to provide a walkway around the outside of the Great Tower . The niches in the walls of the walkway are of 17th @-@ century origin , and would originally have held classical statues - the walkway would have provided a dignified way of admiring the Great Tower . It is likely that fish would have been bred in the moat .

= = = Landscape and gardens = = =

The former 16th and 17th @-@ century gardens of Raglan Castle are still visible in the form of several long terraces to the north of the castle , overlooking the lower ground beyond . First created in the second half of the 16th @-@ century , these terraces would originally have included a number of knot gardens , probably with Italianate sculpture and carved stone balustrades . The gardens at their peak would have probably resembled those at Nonsuch Palace , where the Somersets also had an interest as the royal keepers . The valley below retains some signs of the drainage ditches that once formed part of the water gardens that flooded the bottom of the site , although the original " water @-@ parterre " to the north @-@ west of the castle , another water garden in the south , and the extensive gardens around the south @-@ west of the castle are now no longer visible . The castle 's bowling green still survives , on a terrace just beyond the South Gate entrance . The castle 's parks reverted to agricultural use by the 19th century , and Raglan is now surrounded by fields .