

= Etal Castle =

Etal Castle is a ruined medieval fortification in the village of Etal , Northumberland , England . It was built around 1341 by Robert Manners , and comprised a residential tower , a gatehouse and a corner tower , protected by a curtain wall . The castle was involved both in local feuding and the border wars between England and Scotland . There was a battle between the rival Manners and Heron families outside the walls in 1428 , and in 1513 it was briefly captured by King James IV of Scotland during his invasion of England .

The castle passed into the hands of the Crown in 1547 and was garrisoned as part of the border defences , but fell into disrepair and was abandoned as a military fortification after 1603 . In the 18th century it ceased to be used as a domestic dwelling and became ruinous . In the 21st century the castle is owned by the Joicey family , but managed by English Heritage . Open to the public , it is protected under UK law as an ancient monument and a Grade I listed building .

= = History = =

= = = 14th ? 15th centuries = = =

Etal Castle was built around 1341 by Robert Manners in the village of Etal , after Robert was granted a licence to crenellate by King Edward III in order to defend the location against the Scots . The Manners family had owned the manor since at least 1232 .

The earliest part of the castle was its residential tower . This tower may have been built around 1341 on the site of an older , unfortified house owned by the family on the same site , incorporating part of the structure into the new , crenellated tower . Alternatively , the central tower may have been built at some point between the late 13th and early 14th centuries , complete with crenellations , in which case the licence from Edward III served only to allow Manners to extend the perimeter fortifications . By the 1350s , the castle was surrounded by a manor which included mills for corn and fulling , lime kilns and coal mines .

Work continued under Robert 's son , John Manners , who inherited the property as a minor in 1354 . In 1355 , when Sir Edward de Letham acquired the wardship of the property , the site was described as a fortalice , a weakly defended location , but by 1368 , when the wardship passed to Joan , his widow , it was considered to be a fully @-@ fledged castle . De Letham was a powerful regional figure , and may have been granted the wardship by Edward III in order to retain his loyalty in the face of military advances by the Scots ; he and his wife allegedly ran down the surrounding estate , resulting in a commission being established to investigate the abuses .

John Manners died in 1402 , probably leaving the castle to his son , Robert , who in turn left the property to his own son , another John Manners . John was involved in a long @-@ running feud with the neighbouring Heron family , who owned the neighbouring Ford Castle , and on 20 January 1428 there was a fight between the two sides outside Etal Castle , in which William Heron died . The precise events are unclear and formed the basis of a subsequent lawsuit , but John argued that William had assaulted the castle , during which attack he had died , and that John had no direct involvement in his death . William 's widow blamed John and his eldest son , also called John , for William 's death and demanded compensation . After arbitration by the Church , eventually John agreed to pay for 500 masses for William 's soul , and to give 250 marks to his widow .

In 1438 , another of John Manners ' sons , Robert , inherited the castle and the estates . The lands had fallen in value considerably over the preceding years , as a result of the wars with the Scots , the feuding with the Herons and the poverty of the lands . Robert 's son , another Robert Manners , inherited the property in 1464 , and passed the castle onto his son , George , on his death in 1495 . George inherited the title of Baron de Ros from his mother 's side of the family and the castle was abandoned as a residence by the family around the end of the 15th century when the Manners moved closer to the royal court .

== 16th century ==

In the absence of the Mannors , Etal Castle was managed by the Collingwood family , who gradually became the castle 's hereditary constables , renting the demesne lands on the estate from the family as well . The castle was heavily involved in the border wars with Scotland , usually holding a garrison of 100 men and forming an important strategic defensive location , one step removed from the fortifications along the border itself .

In August 1513 , James IV of Scotland invaded England with a large army ; equipped with modern artillery , he took the border castles of Norham and Wark , and then moved south against Etal Castle . Etal surrendered quickly in the hope of avoiding being pillaged by James ' army , but nonetheless it was at least partially slighted - deliberately damaged to prevent it being used as a defence .

After the English victory at the Battle of Flodden the following month , the castle was retaken , garrisoned and used by Lord Dacre to store the captured Scottish artillery , under the guard of Sir Philip Tilney . Lord Dacre went on to use the castle extensively in 1515 and 1516 . In 1541 , a royal commission reported that the castle and its buildings were " in very great decaye " , recommending that the fortification should be repaired .

The Crown bought the castle from the Mannors in 1547 in exchange for other estates in England , putting Sir John Elleker in charge of the property , along with a garrison of 100 horsemen and 200 foot soldiers . Within two years , however , the Collingwoods were once more acting as the castle constables , a position they would retain for the rest of the century . The castle remained important to the defence of the border but fell into in poor repair : in 1564 it was described as in poor condition , " scant able to lodge the captain " ; in 1580 another report reiterated similar problems ; and in 1584 commissioners wrote that the poor maintenance over many years had left it need of repairs in the order of £ 200 .

== 17th ? 21st centuries ==

In 1603 James VI of Scotland inherited the kingdom of England , uniting the two thrones , and Etal Castle lost its military value and soon passed into private ownership . In the 18th century it ceased to be used as a residence , and the ruins were painted in watercolour by Thomas Girtin in 1797 , based upon his visit to the castle in the autumn of 1796 .

Lord Joicey bought the castle in 1908 , and by 1922 the ruins had been cleaned of ivy and repointed . The castle was placed into the guardianship of the state in 1975 , and archaeological excavations and surveys were carried out on the site in 1978 , 1983 , 1994 and 1998 . In the 21st century it is managed by English Heritage , and protected under UK law as a Grade I listed building and as an ancient monument .

== Architecture ==

Etal Castle originally overlooked a bridge over the River Till , and was protected by the steep banks running to the river . The castle forms a rectangular enclosure , approximately 182 by 162 feet (55 by 49 m) , protected by a well @-@ made , but relatively thin , stone curtain wall , mostly 4 feet 6 inches (1 @. @ 37 m) thick . Most of the wall above ground has since been destroyed , with only the foundations remaining .

The residential tower in the north @-@ east corner was entered by a forebuilding , unusual in this region , 17 feet 6 inches by 7 feet 10 inches (5 @. @ 33 by 2 @. @ 39 m) in size and protected by a portcullis . Four storeys tall , each floor of the tower was reached by a spiral staircase and comprised two rooms , one large and one small chamber . The tower is built from sandstone ; the forebuilding and uppermost floor are made of a lighter sandstone than the lower floors and may have been added retrospectively . The ground floor is 46 by 32 feet (14 @. @ 0 by 9 @. @ 8 m) and originally had a vaulted ceiling . The upper floors were well @-@ lit with large , transomed windows , complete with window seats ; the first and second floors were probably used by the Mannors family and had large fireplaces , with the third floor used by the castle staff . The tower was possibly linked

to a neighbouring hall complex by a doorway on the first floor , although any such complex has since been lost .

The gatehouse in the south @-@ east corner is 36 feet (11 m) square , and its vaulted passageway was originally protected by a portcullis , gate and a drawbridge . On either side of the passageway were two vaulted guardrooms , 21 feet (6 @. @ 4 m) long and up to 6 feet 8 inches (2 @. @ 03 m) wide . On the first floor , since lost , there was a large chamber , 22 by 19 feet (6 @. @ 7 by 5 @. @ 8 m) wide , with an ancillary room , 7 feet 6 inches (2 @. @ 29 m) square , and a doorway that led onto some form of forebuilding or platform . The gatehouse has what architectural historian Anthony Emery has described as " flamboyant window tracing " , and the Manners ' coat of arms are carved above the entrance to the gatehouse .

The north @-@ west corner tower is 14 feet by 10 feet 6 inches (4 @. @ 3 by 3 @. @ 20 m) across on the inside , with an entrance door on the east side , and originally had a loft floor . It remains uncertain if there was a second corner tower built in the south @-@ east corner of the castle complex ; excavations in 1978 in one possible location failed to find any traces , and a geophysical survey in 1998 proved inconclusive .