

= Lydford Castle =

Lydford Castle is a medieval castle in the town of Lydford , Devon , England . The first castle in Lydford , sometimes termed the Norman fort , was a small ringwork built in a corner of the Anglo @-@ Saxon fortified burh in the years after the Norman conquest of England . It was intended to help control Devon following the widespread revolt against Norman rule in 1068 . The Norman fort was abandoned by the middle of the 12th century .

The second castle in Lydford was constructed in 1195 following a wave of law and order problems across England . It included a stone tower with a surrounding bailey , and rapidly became used as a prison and court to administer the laws in the Forest of Dartmoor and the Devon stannaries . The tower was rebuilt in the middle of the 13th century , probably in the 1260s by Richard , the Earl of Cornwall . It was redesigned to resemble a motte and bailey castle , an antiquated design for the period but one that was heavily symbolic of authority and power . In 1342 the castle , still being used as a prison and courtroom , passed to the Duchy of Cornwall , who owned it until the 20th century .

The condition of the castle varied considerably over time , and was repeatedly renovated and then left to deteriorate once again . Nonetheless , other than a period during the English Civil War and the Restoration in the 17th century , Lydford Castle played an important part in stannary and forest administration until the 19th century . The castle acquired a bad reputation for injustice in the 14th century , and complaints about " Lydford Law " persisted for centuries . In the early 19th century , however , Dartmoor Prison was constructed , and Lydford ceased to be the centre for legal administration . The castle fell into ruin by the middle of the century .

In 1932 , Lydford Castle passed into the hands of the state , and in the 21st century is run by English Heritage as a tourist attraction . Historian Andrew Saunders has described the castle as architecturally significant , being " the earliest example of a purpose @-@ built gaol " in England . The earthworks of the Norman fort are owned by the National Trust and are also open to the public .

= = History = =

= = = 1066 ? 1150 = = =

The first castle at Lydford was built in the aftermath of the Norman conquest of England in 1066 . In 1068 William the Conqueror intervened in South @-@ West England to put down widespread Anglo @-@ Saxon revolts against Norman rule and set about pacifying the region . William had been responsible for building urban castles across England in the former centres of Anglo @-@ Saxon power and in Devon he constructed new urban castles at Exeter , Totnes , possibly Barnstaple and in the town of Lydford .

Lydford , then called Hlidan , was a type of fortified Anglo @-@ Saxon town called a burh . The castle , in the 21st century called the " Norman fort " , was built on the isolated south @-@ west corner of the burh , soon after 1068 . It had a ringwork design and was only 55 metres (180 ft) by 60 metres (200 ft) in size , protected in part by the existing defences of the burh . A similar pattern of castle building within existing Anglo @-@ Saxon burhs can be seen at Wallingford and Bedford castles . Most of the interior of the castle was used to store grain in large timber and earth buildings . It is uncertain whether these storage facilities were intended for supplying Norman troops or storing grain for wider economic purposes .

This first castle was used only briefly and seems to have been abandoned by the middle of the 12th century . The grain stores were destroyed by fire , but the reason for this is uncertain . By this period , the town of Lydford as a whole was also in serious economic decline .

= = = 1150 ? 1239 = = =

===== Construction =====

In the late 12th century Richard I 's government attempted to promote the growth of Lydford , including revitalising trade in the town . Then , in 1195 , there were widespread problems with law and order across England , including the South @-@ West , and on the basis of this Richard 's government decided to build a fortification for holding royal prisoners in Lydford , further along the west side of the town from the old castle , in a prestigious location next to the town 's church . This fortification is referred to in contemporary documents variously as a firme domus and castelli de Lideford , a " strong house " and " Lydford Castle " respectively .

It is unclear why the decision was taken to build the new castle in a different location within the town . Lydford 's case is not unique , as a similar shift occurred at Canterbury and Gloucester ; generally , such changes in castle location are associated with the destruction of the older defence or changes in political leadership . Archaeologist Andrew Saunders suggests that the new site was chosen because the earlier castle at Lydford was not owned by the Crown in 1195 and was , in any case , in disrepair . £ 74 was spent on the construction of the castle , paid for by Crown revenues from both Devon and Cornwall .

The castle took the form of a stone tower with a surrounding bailey . The bailey was rectangular and in the 21st century measures 180 feet (55 m) by 130 feet (40 m) . The bailey was protected by ramparts and deep ditches on the south @-@ west and north @-@ east sides , with the north @-@ west side protected by the ramparts and valley of the original burh fortifications . The south @-@ east side of the bailey probably formed a small courtyard in front of the tower , in a space now occupied by part of the 13th century earthworks , and was probably the entrance to the original castle .

The tower was a square , free @-@ standing building , 52 feet (16 m) by 52 feet (16 m) and at least two storeys tall ; in the 12th century the tower sat on flat ground with no mound around it . The walls were roughly built from slate and granite , up to 11 @-@ foot (3 @-@ 4 m) thick , and pierced by arrow slits . The tower had a spine wall along the middle of the building , dividing each floor into two rooms . The entrance was probably on the first floor of the building . An internal water supply was installed , of which a decorated spout still survives .

===== Role in stannary and forest law =====

Lydford Castle does not seem to be primarily designed to have a military function , although in 1199 when King John succeeded to the throne he had the castle garrisoned and expensively equipped to prevent any potential unrest breaking out in the region . The castle lacked the usual military features of the time , such as external gatehouses , and its design seems to have been intended to evoke the authority of a traditional defensive fortification rather than to resist an actual attack . Instead , as well as helping to deal with the wider problems in 1195 , the castle appears to have been built with the intention of enforcing the stannary and forest law in Devon . It is possible that the Crown originally intended that the castle took over the stannary law across the whole of Cornwall and Devon , although in practice its role only extended only to governing the Devon stannaries .

Stannary law was a medieval English legal system for governing the tin industry . South @-@ West England , and in particular Devon , was a major producer of tin in the 12th century , produced by independent miners who worked the alluvial deposits across the region . The industry was regulated by the Crown , who taxed mining output and raised revenue from any fines imposed on those who broke the stannary laws . The laws also helped to manage the relationship between the miners and other local people , whose economic interests were often at odds . The output of tin increased from the end of the 12th century onwards , encouraging the Crown to extend its regulation and generate more revenue . In 1198 , William of Wrotham , who controlled Lydford Castle at the start of John 's reign , was appointed as the Warden of the Stannaries , a new office intended to provide additional rigour to the administration of the mining industry . Stannary courts were established in Devon , backed by a team of officials , and , with the creation of the Duchy of Cornwall in the 14th century , the administration of stannary law was delegated to the duchy . From 1198 onwards , Lydford Castle

was designated as the prison for supporting the court and its processes .

Forests were special areas of land in medieval England , owned by the Crown and subject to forest law . They were often selected because of their natural resources , and were expected to provide the Crown with a flow of money or raw materials . In 1195 , the Forest of Dartmoor extended across all of Devon , but in 1204 John curtailed the extent of the royal forest , removing much of Devon from Forest Law and leaving the area known in the modern period as Dartmoor . This reduced forest was still subject to the Forest Laws , involving a specialised group of legal officials who met at Lydford Castle to impose fines and other punishments . Probably both Lydford Castle and the forest was given to the Sheriff of Devon , William Brewer , in 1216 . The arrangement changed under Henry III , when the estates were given to Richard , the Earl of Cornwall in 1239 . Legally , this meant that the Forest of Dartmoor was converted to a chase , although the Earls of Cornwall continued to hold law courts at Lydford Castle , enforcing chase laws that closely resembled the former Forest Laws .

== = 1239 ? 1278 == =

Richard , Edward II 's second son , took possession of Lydford Castle in 1239 as the Earl of Cornwall . Richard took a close interest in developing the town of Lydford , creating an additional market and introducing a new fair in the 1260s . Around this time , the main tower at Lydford Castle was demolished and rebuilt , probably by Richard , possibly following a serious fire in the building . Richard was a wealthy politician and rebuilding the castle in this way would have provided him with an important status symbol in the region .

The previous tower was stripped back , the existing walls levelled off around 14 feet (4 @. @ 3 m) from the ground and the ground floor arrow slits filled in . Two more storeys were then built on top of the older walls , better executed with a higher proportion of granite stone and thinner , typically around 6 @-@ foot (1 @. @ 8 m) thick . Although the structure remained essentially the same , the new tower was slightly smaller , measuring around 48 feet (15 m) by 47 feet (14 m) . The first floor was only basically designed , with a sequence of rooms of different levels of comfort , and intended to function as the prison , and the second floor was better finished , with a hall and a chamber , and probably operated as the courtroom and provided accommodation for the keeper of the castle .

As part of the work , an earth mound , or motte , 17 @-@ foot (5 @. @ 2 m) high , was piled up around the base of the tower . The original ground floor of the castle was now an underground cellar , probably used as a puteus , or pit , for detaining low status prisoners and reached by ladder from the first floor . Some infilling of the ground floor occurred in order to equalise the pressure on the walls from the mound . It is uncertain how many other towers or keeps have similar mounds , as excavation is usually required before the foundations can be examined , but Totnes and Farnham castles are known to have mottes build against the walls of the keep . The reason for building the mound is uncertain , but it was almost certainly not designed as a serious defensive feature . It was instead probably intended as to superficially imitate older motte and bailey designs , with the completed castle echoing these former symbols of power and reinforcing the current political status of its owner .

== = 1278 ? 1642 == =

Richard 's son , Edmund took over the earldom in 1278 but had little interest in Lydford , preferring Restormel and Lostwithiel ; by his death in 1299 the castle had been left to decay and was in ruins . It reverted to the Crown , and when Edward II made his royal favourite , Piers Gaveston , the Earl of Cornwall in 1307 , Lydford Castle was passed to him . The castle was repaired at the start of the century and was in use once again as a prison . Edward II and Gaveston fell from power in 1327 and Thomas le Ercedekne was temporarily entrusted with the castle and Dartmoor by the new regime . In 1329 the castle was valued at a little over £ 11 . Piers Gaveston 's widow , Margaret de Clare , leased the property to Tavistock Abbey , and it continued to operate as a prison .

Edward , the Black Prince became Duke of Cornwall in 1337 and he acquired Lydford Castle on Margaret 's death in 1342 . Extensive repairs took place over the next three years , and the castle was considered to be well roofed and decorated inside . Over the next two centuries the condition of the castle fluctuated . Around 1390 the castle roof was stripped for its lead , to be used on castles in Cornwall . The castle well was possibly dug during the 15th century . After 1425 , the Crown let it to a range of individuals , including Sir Walter Hungerford and Sir Philip Courteney .

Lydford remained the centre of the forest administration through the 14th and 15th centuries . Despite complaints from non @-@ miners at the start of the 14th century that the prison regime at Lydford Castle was overly lax , by the end of the century the prison had a reputation for poor , grim conditions . The first known rhymes complaining about " Lydford Law " date from 1399 , and continued to be popular for several centuries . In 1510 , Richard Strode , a Member of Parliament campaigning for reform of the Stannary laws , was infamously arrested by Stannary officials and imprisoned in Lydford Castle . He later described how he was kept in an underground room in the keep , fed only bread and water , and encumbered with legcuffs until he paid the keeper to release him from the irons .

After 1485 , the Duchy took the castle back into direct control , and by 1546 it was in poor repair . Renovation work was carried out under Elizabeth I , but a report of 1618 suggested that the castle was unable to function as a prison because of its poor condition , and fresh repair work was carried out in the 1620s and 1630s under Charles I.

= = = 1642 ? 1900 = = =

Lydford Castle was involved in the English Civil War that broke out in 1642 between the Royalist supporters of Charles I and Parliament . The castle was used by the Royalist commander Sir Richard Grenville as his main military prison in the region . It had a terrible reputation amongst Parliamentarians , who complained that it was used to summarily execute military prisoners and to extort money from innocent civilians , on fear of imprisonment . At the end of the civil war , the Lydford estate appears to have been sold off by Parliament The castle was assessed by their surveyors to be " almost totally ruined " in 1650 : the roof of the tower was still mostly intact , but the floors and their beams were collapsing , and the whole site , including the bailey , was only worth around £ 80 .

With the Restoration of Charles II to the throne in 1660 the castle and the forest were taken back to the ownership of the Duchy . Sir John Granville was made the Rider and Master Forester of Dartmoor and the Lydford Castle courts continued to be held to regulate the Forest . Repairs to the dilapidated building do not appear to have been carried out , however , and in 1704 a report was drawn up for the government , noting that the Stannary laws could not be enforced without a working prison .

Work was carried out between 1616 and 1733 , bringing the castle back into good order . As part of this , the spine wall was rebuilt properly , and the second floor windows enlarged . The courtroom featured a chair for the Stannary court judge , additional seating for the court officials and a railed , public section around the outside of the room . The courtroom also doubled as a hall for village dances and feasts . At the start of the 19th century , however , Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt , the Lord Warden of the Stannaries , began the construction of Dartmoor Prison at Princetown . Dartmoor Prison and Princetown grew increasingly important and courts began to be held there instead of Lydford Castle .

The castle declined once again , the courtroom became unsafe to use and by 1833 , the remaining judicial fittings had been stripped out . In the middle of the 19th century the Duchy of Cornwall rejected proposals to repair the castle in order to bring it back into service as being too expensive , but the castle site was enclosed to prevent injuries to children who might be tempted to play on the stonework . By the 1870s , the town of Lydford was vastly reduced in importance from the medieval period and the castle 's roofs and floors had either collapsed or been removed .

= = = 20th @-@ 21st centuries = = =

The Duchy of Cornwall continued to own Lydford Castle into the 20th century . Albert Richardson , the architect to the Duchy estate , proposed converting the property into a private house in 1912 , but the duchy turned down the project . In 1932 the Duchy gave the castle to the Office of Works . Repairs were carried out in the 1930s and the 1950s , and archaeological investigations were undertaken in the 1960s . In the 21st century , the castle is controlled by English Heritage and operated as a tourist attraction . Historian Andrew Saunders has described the castle as architecturally significant , being " the earliest example of a purpose @-@ built gaol " in England . The earthworks of the Norman fort are owned by the National Trust and are also open to the public . Both castle sites are protected under law as ancient monuments .