

= Dacre Castle =

Dacre Castle is a moated tower house in the village of Dacre , 4 miles (6 @. @ 4 km) south @-@ west of Penrith , Cumbria . It was constructed in the mid @-@ 14th century , probably by Margaret Multon , against the background of the threat of Scottish invasion and raids , and was held in the Dacre family until the 17th century . The tower house is 66 feet (20 m) tall , built out of local sandstone , topped by crenellations , with four turrets protruding from a central block , and includes an ornate lavabo in the main hall . Renovated during the 1670s and 1960s after periods of disrepair , the castle is now used as a private home .

= = History = =

Dacre Castle was probably built by Margaret Multon , the wife of Ralph Dacre , in the middle of the 14th century . The Dacre family had risen in prominence in Cumbria during the 12th and early 13th centuries , and William Dacre , Ralph 's father , had acquired a licence to crenellate the property of Dunmaltoght in 1307 , quite close to the future site of Dacre Castle . Ralph married Margaret in 1317 , becoming extremely wealth as a result , and received permission to found Naworth Castle in 1335 . Margaret built Dacre Castle at some point between Ralph 's death in 1339 and 1354 , with the intention of creating a fortified home . Many tower houses were built across the region during the period in response to the threat of Scottish raids and invasions . There may have been an older building already on the site , possibly moated , but this is uncertain .

After Margaret 's death , the castle continued to be owned by the Dacre family until the death of Randal Dacre in 1634 , when it passed briefly to the Crown . By 1675 the castle had become derelict and was restored by the then Lord Dacre , Thomas Lennard . A new entrance to the castle was constructed and square , 17th @-@ century windows installed . After Thomas 's death in 1715 the castle was sold to Edward Hassell . The condition of the castle deteriorated again in the 18th century , becoming overgrown and dilapidated , and by the 19th century the Hassell family were using it as a farmhouse .

In 1961 , the castle was leased for 22 years by Anthony and Bunty Kinsman , at a cost of £ 1 @, @ 000 . The property required extensive structural repairs and renovations in order to be made habitable , which the Kinsmans undertook over the next two years . The construction work cost £ 8 @, @ 596 , and some financial support was provided by the Ministry of Works in exchange for the castle being opened to the public for the next fifteen years . The new oak doors in the castle were fitted with iron hinges that had originally been used in nearby Lowther Castle . In 1967 , the castle was visited by Princess Sharada Shah , the daughter of the King Mahendra of Nepal , as part of an official trip to the UK .

In the 21st century the castle is owned by the Hassell @-@ McCosh family and is rented out as a private home . It is protected under UK law as a grade I listed building .

= = Architecture = =

Dacre Castle lies in a valley , overlooking a stream and fields . It comprises a tower house surrounded by a three @-@ sided moat , creating an enclosed courtyard to the east 73 metres (240 ft) by 55 metres (180 ft) across . The moat is between 9 metres (30 ft) to 15 metres (49 ft) wide and up to 4 @. @ 5 metres (15 ft) deep , with a protective bank on the south and west sides ; originally a wall would have surrounded the outside of the courtyard . The courtyard originally held various buildings , possibly stables and offices , but the tower house was designed to operate independently , without the need for attached facilities . Architecturally , the design of Dacre resembles Harewood and Langley Castles .

The tower house is in the north @-@ east corner of the enclosure and takes the form of a square , central block , with two large turrets on one side and two smaller turrets resembling angular buttresses on the other . It is made of large blocks of local sandstone and the roof is crenellated . The central block is 36 feet (11 m) by 20 feet (6 @. @ 1 m) inside , and is 66 feet (20 m) tall ,

with 8 @. @ 5 feet (2 @. @ 6 m) thick walls . The building was originally entered through the south @- @ west turret on the ground @- @ floor , but since the 17th century the entrance way has been directly into the central block up an exterior staircase .

The ground floor of the central block contains two vaulted chambers and the first @- @ floor forms a hall containing an ornate lavabo , with smaller chambers in the turrets . The second floor similarly forms a single large chamber , 17 feet (5 @. @ 2 m) high , with rooms in each of the adjacent turrets , and is traditionally called the " Room of the Three Kings " , after the legend described by William of Malmesbury . In the 14th century , these large chambers would have been subdivided into smaller rooms . The renovations in the 1960s uncovered a possible priest hole behind the fireplace in the Room of the Three Kings , 7 feet (2 @. @ 1 m) by 4 feet (1 @. @ 2 m) ; this chamber was re @- @ sealed to avoid the cost of restoring it .