

= Dunstanburgh Castle =

Dunstanburgh Castle is a 14th @-@ century fortification on the coast of Northumberland in northern England , located between the villages of Craster and Embleton . The castle was built by Earl Thomas of Lancaster between 1313 and 1322 , taking advantage of the site 's natural defences and the existing earthworks of a former Iron Age fort . Thomas was a leader of a baronial faction opposed to King Edward II , and probably intended Dunstanburgh to act as a secure refuge , should the political situation in southern England deteriorate . The castle also served as a statement of the earl 's wealth and influence , and would have invited comparisons with the neighbouring royal castle of Bamburgh . Thomas probably only visited his new castle once , before being captured at Battle of Boroughbridge as he attempted to flee royal forces for the safety of Dunstanburgh . Thomas was executed , and the castle became the property of the Crown , before passing into the Duchy of Lancaster .

Dunstanburgh 's defences were expanded in the 1380s by John of Gaunt , the Duke of Lancaster , in the light of the threat from Scotland and the peasant uprisings of 1381 . The castle was maintained in the 15th century by the Crown , and formed a strategic northern stronghold in the region during the Wars of the Roses , exchanging hands between the rival Lancastrian and Yorkist factions several times . The fortress never recovered from the sieges of these campaigns , and by the 16th century the Warden of the Scottish Marches described it as having fallen into " wonderfull great decaye " . As the Scottish border became more stable , the military utility of the castle steadily diminished , and King James I finally sold the property off into private ownership in 1604 . The Grey family owned it for several centuries ; increasingly ruinous , it became a popular subject for artists , including Thomas Girtin and J. M. W. Turner , and formed the basis for a poem by Matthew Lewis in 1808 .

By the 1920s , the castle 's then owner , Sir Arthur Sutherland , could no longer afford to maintain the property , and he placed it into the guardianship of the state in 1930 . When the Second World War broke out in 1939 , measures were taken to defend the Northumberland coastline from a potential German invasion . The castle was used as an observation post and the site was refortified with trenches , barbed wire , pill boxes and a mine field . The Dunstanburgh Castle golf course was built around the property in 1900 , and expanded by Sutherland in 1922 . In the 21st century the castle is owned by the National Trust and run by English Heritage . The ruins are protected under UK law as a Grade I listed building , and are part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest , forming an important natural environment for birds and amphibians .

Dunstanburgh Castle was built in the center of a designed medieval landscape , surrounded by three artificial lakes called meres covering a total of 4 @.@ 25 hectares (10 @.@ 5 acres) . The curtain walls enclose 9 @.@ 96 acres (4 @.@ 03 ha) , making it the largest castle in Northumberland . The most prominent part of the castle is the Great Gatehouse , a massive three @-@ storey fortification , considered by historians Alastair Oswald and Jeremy Ashbee to be " one of the most imposing structures in any English castle " . Multiple rectangular towers protect the walls , including the Lilburn Tower , which looks out towards Bamburgh Castle , and the Egyncleugh Tower , positioned above Queen Margaret 's Cove . Three internal complexes of buildings , now ruined , supported the earl 's household , the castle constable 's household and the running of the surrounding estates . A harbour was built to the south @-@ east of the castle , of which only a stone quay survives .

= = History = =

= = = Prehistory - 13th century = = =

The site of Dunstanburgh Castle in north @-@ east Northumberland was probably first occupied in prehistoric times . A promontory fort with earthwork defences was built on the same location at the end of the Iron Age , possibly being occupied from the 3rd century BC into the Roman period . By

the 14th century , however , the defences had been long abandoned , and the land was being used for arable crops . Dunstanburgh formed part of the barony of Embleton , a village that lay inland to the west , traditionally owned by the earls of Lancaster .

The origins and the earliest appearance of the name " Dunstanburgh " are uncertain . Versions of the name , " Dunstaneshurgh " and " Donstanburgh " were in use by the time of the castle 's construction , however , and Dunstanburgh may stem from a combination of the name of the local village of Dunstan , and the Old English word " burh " , meaning fortress .

== = Early 14th century = = =

== = = Construction = = = =

Dunstanburgh Castle was constructed by Thomas , the Earl of Lancaster , between 1313 and 1322 . Thomas was an immensely powerful English baron , the second richest man in England after the King , with major land holdings across the kingdom . He had a turbulent relationship with his cousin , King Edward II , and had been a ringleader in the capture and killing of Edward 's royal favourite , Piers Gaveston in 1312 .

It is uncertain exactly why Thomas decided to build Dunstanburgh . Although it was located on a strong defensive site , it was some distance from the local settlements and other strategic sites of value . Thomas held some lands in Northumberland , but they were insignificant in comparison to his other estates in the Midlands and Yorkshire , and up until 1313 he had paid them little attention .

In the years following Gaveston 's death , however , civil conflict in England rarely seemed far away , and it is currently believed that Thomas probably intended to create a secure retreat , a safe distance away from Edward 's forces in the south . He also probably hoped to erect a prominent status symbol , illustrating his wealth and authority , and challenging that of the King 's . He may perhaps also have hoped to create a planned town alongside the castle , possibly intending to relocate the population of Embleton there .

Building work on the castle had commenced by May 1313 , with labourers beginning the process of excavating the moat and starting to construct the castle buildings . Some of the outer wall may have been built by workers from Embleton as part of their feudal dues to Thomas . The operations were overseen by a mason , Master Elias , possibly Elias de Burton , who had been previously involved in the construction of Conwy Castle in North Wales . Iron , Newcastle coal and Scandinavian wood was brought in for use in the project . By the end of the year £ 184 had been spent , and work continued for several years . A licence to crenellate - a form of royal authorisation for a new castle - was issued by Edward II in 1316 , and a castle constable was appointed in 1319 , charged with defending both the castle and the surrounding manors of Embleton and Stamford . By 1322 the castle was probably complete .

The resulting castle was huge , protected on one side by the sea cliffs , with a stone curtain wall , a massive gatehouse and six towers around the outside . A harbour was built on the south side of the fortress , enabling access from the sea . Northumbria was a lawless region in this period , suffering from the activities of thieves and schavaldours , a type of border brigand , many of whom were members of Edward II 's household , and the harbour may have represented a safer way to reach the castle than land routes .

== = = Loss = = = =

Thomas of Lancaster made little use of his new castle ; the only time he might have visited it was in 1319 , when he was on his way north to join Edward 's military campaign against Scotland . Civil war then broke out in 1321 between Edward and his enemies among the barons . After the initial royalist successes , Thomas fled the south of England for Dunstanburgh in 1322 , but was intercepted on route by Sir Andrew Harclay , resulting in the Battle of Boroughbridge , in which Thomas was captured and then later executed .

The castle passed into royal control , and Edward considered it a useful fortress for protection against the threat from Scotland . Initially it was managed by Robert de Emeldon , a merchant from Newcastle , and protected by a garrison of 40 men at arms and 40 light horsemen . Roger Maduit , a politically rehabilitated former member of Thomas 's army , was appointed as constable , followed by Sir John de Lilburn , a Northumberland schavaldour in 1323 , who was in turn replaced by Roger Heron .

Maduit and the castle 's garrison took part in the Battle of Old Byland in 1322 , and the garrison was subsequently increased to 130 men , predominantly light horsemen , and formed a key part of the northern defences against the Scots . By 1326 , the castle was given back to Thomas 's brother , Henry of Lancaster , with Lilburn returning as its constable , and continued to be of use in defence against the Scottish invasions over the next few decades .

== Late 14th century ==

Dunstanburgh Castle was acquired by John of Gaunt through his marriage to Henry of Lancaster 's granddaughter , Blanche , in 1362 . Gaunt was the younger brother of King Edward III and , as the Duke of Lancaster , was one of the wealthiest men of his generation . He became the Lieutenant of the Scottish Marches and visited his castle in 1380 .

Dunstanburgh Castle was not a primary strategic target for Scottish attack , as it was positioned away from the main routes through the region , but it was kept well garrisoned during the Scottish wars . The surrounding manor of Embleton had nonetheless suffered from Scottish raids and Gaunt had concerns over the condition of the castle 's defences , ordering the building of additional fortifications around the gatehouse . Part of the surrounding lands around the castle may have been brought into agricultural production at this time , either to feed a growing garrison , or to protect the crops against Scottish attacks .

In 1381 the Peasants ' Revolt broke out in England , during which Gaunt was targeted by the rebels as an especially hated member of the administration . He found himself stranded in the north of England in the early part of the revolt but considered Dunstanburgh insufficiently secure to function as a safe haven , and was forced to turn to Alnwick Castle instead , which refused to let him in , fearing that his presence would invite a rebel attack .

The experience encouraged Gaunt to further expand Dunstanburgh 's defences over the next two years . A wide range of work was carried out under the direction of the constable , Thomas of Ilderton , and the mason Henry of Holme , including blocking up the entrance in the gatehouse to turn it into a keep . In 1384 a Scottish army attacked the castle but they lacked siege equipment and were unable to take the defences . Gaunt lost interest in the property after he gave up his role as the Lieutenant of the Marches . Dunstanburgh Castle remained part of the Duchy of Lancaster , but the Duchy was annexed to the Crown when Gaunt 's son , Henry IV , took the throne of England in 1399 .

== 15th - 16th centuries ==

The Scottish threat persisted , and in 1402 Dunstanburgh Castle 's constable , probably accompanied by its garrison , took part in the Battle of Humbleton Hill . Henry VI inherited the throne in 1422 and during the next few decades , numerous repairs were undertaken to the property 's buildings and outer defences , which had fallen into disrepair . The Wars of the Roses , a dynastic conflict between the rival houses of Lancaster and York , broke out in the middle of the 15th century . The castle was initially held by the Lancastrians , and the castle 's constable , Sir Ralph Babthorpe , died at the Battle of St Albans in 1455 , fighting for the Lancastrian Henry VI .

The castle formed part of a sequence of fortifications protecting the eastern route into Scotland , and in 1461 King Edward IV attempted to break the Lancastrian stranglehold on the region . Sir Ralph Percy , one of the joint constables , defended the castle until September 1461 , when he surrendered it to the Yorkists . In 1462 , Henry VI 's wife , Margaret of Anjou , invaded England with a French army , landing at Bamburgh ; Percy then switched sides and declared himself for the

Lancastrians .

Another Yorkist army was dispatched north in November under the joint command of the earls of Warwick and Worcester , and Sir Ralph Grey . They besieged the castle , which surrendered that Christmas . Percy was left in charge of Dunstanburgh as part of Edward IV 's attempts at reconciliation , but the next year he once again switched sides , returning the castle to the Lancastrians . Percy died at the Battle of Hedgeley Moor in 1464 , and the Earl of Warwick reoccupied the castle that June following a short siege .

The castle was probably damaged during the wars , but , other than minor repairs in 1470 , nothing was spent on repairs and it fell into disrepair . It was used as a base for piracy in 1470 , and by the 1520s its roof was robbed for lead for use at the castle at Wark @-@ upon @-@ Tweed , and further lead and timber were taken for the moot hall in Embleton . By 1538 it was described in a royal report to Henry VIII as " a very ruinous house and of small strength " , and it was observed that only the gatehouse was still habitable . Some repairs were carried out to the walls by Sir William Ellerker , the King 's receiver , but a 1543 survey showed it to still be in poor condition .

In 1550 the Warden of the Middle and Eastern Marches , Sir Robert Bowes , described Dunstanburgh as being " in wonderfull great decaye " . A report in 1584 suggested that it would cost Queen Elizabeth I £ 1 @,@ 000 to restore the castle , but argued that it was too far from the Scottish border to be worth repairing . Alice Craster , a wealthy widow , occupied the castle from 1594 to 1597 , probably living in the gatehouse , where she carried out restoration work , and farming the surrounding estate . For much of the 16th century , local farmers bought the right to use the outer bailey of the castle to store their cattle in the event of Scottish raids , at the price of six pence a year .

= = = 17th - 19th centuries = = =

In 1603 , the unification of the Scottish and English crowns eliminated the need for any residual need for Dunstanburgh Castle as a royal fortress . The following year , King James I sold the castle to Sir Thomas Windebank , Thomas Billott and William Blake , who in turn sold it onto Sir Ralph Grey , a nearby landowner , the following year . Ralph 's son , William Lord Grey , was affirmed as the owner of the castle in 1625 .

The Grey dynasty maintained their ownership of the castle , which passed into Lady Mary Grey 's side of the family following a law case in 1704 . The lands around the castle and the outer bailey were used for growing wheat , barley and oats , and the walls were robbed of their stone for other building work . A small settlement , called Novia Scotia , was built on the site of the castle 's harbour , possibly by Scottish immigrants . Several engravings were published of the castle in the 18th century , including a somewhat inaccurate depiction by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck in 1720 , and by Francis Grose and William Hutchinson in 1773 and 1776 respectively .

Mary 's descendants , the earls of Tankerville , owned the property until the heavily indebted Charles Bennet , the 6th earl , sold it for £ 155 @,@ 000 in 1869 to the trustees of the estate of the late Samuel Eyres . There had been some attempts at restoration in the early 19th century , and the passageway through the gatehouse was modified and reopened in 1885 . The historian Cadwallader Bates undertook fieldwork at the castle in the 1880s , publishing a comprehensive work in 1891 , and a professional architectural plan of the ruins was produced in 1893 . Nonetheless , a representative of the estate expressed his concern to the Society of Antiquities in Newcastle upon Tyne about the condition of the castle in 1898 , noting the poor repair of much of the stonework and the importance of the ongoing preservation work that the estate was undertaking .

Dunstanburgh 's ruins became a popular topic for artists from the end of the 18th century onwards . Thomas Girtin toured the region , and painted the castle , his picture dominated by what art historian Souren Melikian describes as " the forces of nature unleashed " , with " wild waves " and dark clouds swirling around the ruins . J. M. W. Turner was influenced by Girtin , and when he first painted the castle in 1797 he similarly focused on the wind and the waves around the ancient ruins , taking some artistic licence with the view of the castle to reinforce its sense of isolated and former grandeur . Turner drew on his visit to produce further works in oils , watercolours , etchings and

sketches , through until the 1830s , making the castle one of the most common subjects in his corpus of work .

= = = 20th and 21st centuries = = =

A golf course was constructed alongside the castle in 1900 , and the estate was later sold to Sir Arthur Sutherland , a wealthy shipowner , in 1919 . Sutherland opened an additional course at the castle in 1922 , designed by the Scottish golfer , James Braid . The costs of maintaining the property became too much for him and , after undertaking eight years of clearance work in the 1920s , he placed the castle into the guardianship of the state in 1930 , with the Commissioners of Works taking control of the property . Archaeological investigations were carried out as part of the clearance work by H. Honeyman in 1929 , exposing more of the main gatehouse , and further work was carried out under Robert Bosanquet in the 1930s . Aerial photography was carried out by Walter de Aitchison for the Ordnance Survey .

Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War , concerns grew in the British government about the threat of German invasion along the east coast of England . The bays just to the north of Dunstanburgh Castle were vulnerable targets for an enemy amphibious landing , and efforts were made to fortify the castle and the surrounding area in 1940 , as part of a wider line of defences erected by Sir Edmund Ironside .

The castle itself was occupied by a unit of the Royal Armoured Corps , who served as observers ; the soldiers appear to have relied on the stone walls for protection rather than trenches , and , unusually , no additional firing points were cut out of the stonework , as typically happened elsewhere . The surrounding beaches were defended with lines of barbed wire , slit trenches and square weapons pits , reinforced by concrete pillboxes to the north and south of the castle , at least partially laid down by the 1st Battalion Essex Regiment .

A 20 @-@ foot (6 m) wide ditch was dug at the north end of the moat to prevent tanks from breaking through and following the track south past the castle , and a 545 @-@ foot by 151 @-@ foot (166 m by 46 m) wide anti @-@ personnel minefield was laid to the south @-@ west to prevent infantry soldiers from circumventing the castle 's defences and advancing down into Craster . After the end of the war , the barbed wire was cleared away from the beaches by local Italian prisoners of war , although the two pillboxes , the remnants of the anti @-@ tank ditch and some of the trenches and weapons pits still remain .

In 1961 , Arthur 's son , Sir Ivan Sutherland , passed the estate to the National Trust . Archaeological surveys were carried out in 1985 , 1986 and 1989 by Durham University , and between 2003 and 2006 researchers from English Heritage carried a major archaeological investigation of 35 hectares (86 acres) of land around the castle .

In the 21st century , the castle remains owned by the National Trust and is managed by English Heritage . The site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and the ruins are protected under UK law as a Grade I listed building . It lies within the Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty , and is part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest , with parts of the site comprising a Special Protection Area for the conservation of wild birds . The National Trust has encouraged the land around the outside of the castle to remain waterlogged to enable the conservation of amphibians and bird species , and the inside of the castle is protected from grazing animals to encourage nesting birds .

= = Architecture and landscape = =

= = = Landscape = = =

Dunstanburgh Castle occupies a 68 @-@ acre (27 @.@ 5 ha) site within a larger 610 @-@ acre (246 ha) body of National Trust land along the coast . The castle is situated on a prominent headland , part of the Great Whin Sill geological formation . On the south side of the castle there is a

gentle slope across low @-@ lying , boggy ground , but along the northern side , the Gull Crag cliffs form a natural barrier up to 30 @-@ metre (98 ft) high . The cliffs are punctuated by various defiles , formed from weaknesses in the black basalt rock , including the famous Rumble Churn .

The landscape around the castle was carefully designed in the 14th century as a deer park or planned borough , and would have looked similar to those at the contemporary castles of Framlingham , Kenilworth , Leeds and Whittington ; in particular , Kenilworth may have been a specific model for Dunstanburgh . The area around the castle was dominated by three shallow artificial lakes , called meres , and accessed by three gates on the north , west and south sides . The meres were fed from a fresh water spring 2 @, @ 000 feet (600 m) inland , linked to the meres by an underground stone channel . The meres were originally bounded by a sod @-@ cast boundary bank and ditch ; today this is heavily eroded , and up to 3 @-@ foot 3 inches (1 m) high . The main route by land into the castle would have been from the village of Embleton , through the West Gate .

The North Mere is 5 @. @ 6 @-@ acres (2 @. @ 25 ha) large , and is blocked off on its northern end by a sod @-@ cast bank , adjacent to the site of the North Gate . The southern half takes the form of a 331 @-@ foot (101 m) long moat , which was recorded as being 18 @-@ foot (5 @. @ 5 m) deep in the medieval period , terminating in the West Gate . The northern part of this mere occasionally floods in the 21st century , creating a temporary lake , and the moated section usually still contains some standing water . The West Mere , covering 2 @. @ 25 @-@ acres (1 ha) , stretches away from the location of West Gate and is blocked at the far end by a small , stone dam . Three rectangular fishponds were built alongside the West Mere , the smallest , probably a stew pond for raising young fish , being fed with water from the lake . A protective earthen bank , probably originally reinforced by a timber palisade , ran for approximately 490 feet (150 m) along either side of the West Gate , where a gatehouse was probably built . At the far end of the lake complex was the South Mere , 2 @. @ 25 @-@ acres (1 ha) in size , with the South Gate positioned in its eastern corner .

A harbour was built south @-@ east of the castle , which would originally have been used to receive first building materials , then later senior members of the castle household or important guests . All that remains of the harbour is its 246 @-@ foot (75 m) quay , built from basalt boulders , and it may not have been in frequent use during the medieval period , since it could only have been safely used during periods of good weather . West of the castle is a later shieling , the earthwork remains of a longhouse . South of this is a rectangular earthwork , with walls over 3 @-@ foot 3 inches (1 m) high , which may have been a siege fortification from 1462 . If this is in fact such a siegework , it would be a unique survival in England from this period .

= = = Architecture = = =

Dunstanburgh Castle 's buildings are located around the outside of the fortification 's outer bailey , enclosed by a stone curtain wall , which enclose 9 @. @ 96 acres (4 @. @ 03 ha) , making it the largest castle in Northumberland . Possibly from the very start of the castle , and certainly by the 1380s , the castle buildings formed three distinct complexes supporting the Earl 's household , the castle 's constable and the administration of the Embleton barony respectively . The inside of the bailey still shows the marks of former strip farming , which can be seen in winter .

The southern and western parts of the walls were originally faced with a local ashlar sandstone with a core of basalt rubble ; the sandstone was mostly quarried at Howick . The sandstone has since been stripped from the western parts of the wall , and the sandstone along the eastern end of the walls gives way to small limestone blocks , originally only laid 11 @-@ foot (3 @. @ 3 m) high with a 4 @-@ foot 11 inches (1 @. @ 5 m) parapet , but later raised in height with additional basalt boulders , probably during the Wars of the Roses . It is uncertain if the curtain wall originally extended above the cliffs along the northern edge of the castle .

Moving counter @-@ clockwise around the curtain wall from the north @-@ west , the rectangular Lilburn Tower looks out across Embleton beach . The tower was named after an early castle constable , John de Lilburn , but may have been built under Thomas of Lancaster ; it was intended

as a high @-@ status residence , 59 @-@ foot (18 m) high , 30 @-@ foot (9 @.@ 1 m) square with 6 @-@ foot (1 @.@ 8 m) thick walls , with a guardroom for soldiers on the ground floor . The rectangular towers at Dunstanburgh reflects the local tradition in Northumberland , and are similar to those at nearby Alnwick . Further along the wall there are the remains of a small tower , called Huggam 's House by local tradition . Earthworks around the inside of the curtain wall suggest that there may once have been a complex of buildings stretching between Lilburn Tower and Huggam 's House .

On the south @-@ west corner of the walls are the castle gatehouses . The most prominent of these is the Great Gatehouse , a massive three @-@ storey fortification , comprising two drum @-@ shaped towers of ashlar stone ; originally 79 @-@ foot (24 m) high . This was heavily influenced by the Edwardian gatehouses in North Wales , such as that at Harlech , but contains unique features , such as the frontal towers , and is considered by historians Alastair Oswald and Jeremy Ashbee to be " one of the most imposing structures in any English castle " . In the 1380s this gatehouse was further strengthened with a 31 @-@ foot (9 @.@ 4 m) long barbican , of which only the rubble foundations now survive , around 2 @-@ foot 4 inches (0 @.@ 7 m) high .

The passageway through the gatehouse was protected by a portcullis and possibly a set of wooden gates . The ground floor contained two guardrooms , each 21 @-@ foot (6 @.@ 4 m) wide , and latrines , with spiral staircases in the corner of the gatehouse running up to the first floor , where relatively well @-@ lit chambers with fireplaces probably accommodated the garrison 's officers . The staircases continued up to the second floor , containing the castle 's great hall , an antechamber and bedchamber , originally intended for the use of Thomas of Lancaster and his family . Four towers extended above the gatehouse 's lead @-@ covered roof for an additional two storeys of height , giving extensive views of the surrounding area . This design may have influenced the construction of Henry IV 's gatehouse at Lancaster Castle .

Immediately to the west of the Great Gatehouse is John of Gaunt 's Gatehouse , originally either two or three storeys tall , but now only surviving at the foundation level . This gatehouse replaced the Great Gatehouse as the main entrance , and would have contained a porter 's lodge , defended by a combination of a portcullis and a 82 @-@ foot (25 m) long barbican . A inner bailey was approximately 50 @-@ foot by 75 @-@ foot (23 m by 15 m) , defended by a 20 @-@ foot (6 m) high mantlet wall , was constructed in the 1380s behind John of Gaunt 's Gatehouse and the Great Gatehouse . This complex comprised a vaulted inner gatehouse , 30 @-@ foot (9 @.@ 1 m) square , and six buildings , including an antechamber , kitchen and bakehouse .

Further along the south side of the walls is the Constable 's Tower , a square tower containing comfortable accommodation for the castle 's constable , including stone window seats . On the inside of the walls are the foundations of a hall and chamber , built before 1351 , part of a larger complex of buildings used by the constable and his household , approximately 60 @-@ foot (18 m) square . To the west of the Constable 's Tower is a small turret that projects from the upper wall - an unusual feature , similar to that at Pickering Castle - and a mural garderobe ; and to the east a small oblong turret with a single chamber , 10 @.@ 75 @-@ foot by 7 @.@ 5 @-@ foot (3 @.@ 28 m by 2 @.@ 3 m) .

In the south @-@ east corner of the walls , the Egyncleugh Tower - whose name means " eagle 's ravine " in the Northumbrian dialect - overlooks Queen Margaret 's Cove below . A three storey , square building , 25 @-@ foot (7 @.@ 6 m) across , Egyncleugh Tower was designed to house a castle official , and included a small gateway and drawbridge into the castle , either for the use of the castle constable , or possibly for the local people .

There is a postern gate in the eastern wall , added in the 1450s , and a further gateway in the north @-@ eastern corner , which gave access to Castle Point and Gull Crag below . Along the inside of the curtain walls are the foundations of a yard , 200 @-@ foot by 100 @-@ foot (61 m by 30 m) , and a large rectangular building , usually identified as a grange or a barn . This would have probably supported the administration of the Embleton estates , and have included the auditor 's chamber and other facilities .

= = = Interpretation = = =

Early analysis of Dunstanburgh Castle focused on its qualities as a military , defensive site , but more recent work has emphasised the symbolic aspects of its design and the surrounding landscape . Although the castle was intended as a secure bolt @-@ hole for Thomas of Lancaster should events go awry in the south of England , it was however " clearly not an inconspicuous hiding place " , as the English Heritage research team have pointed out : it was a spectacular construction , located in the centre of a huge , carefully designed medieval landscape . The meres surrounding the castle would have reflected the castle walls and towers , turning the outcrop into a virtual island and producing what the historians Oswald and Ashbee have called " an awe @-@ inspiring and beautiful sight " .

The different elements of the castle were also positioned for particular effect . Unusually , the huge Great Gatehouse faced south @-@ east , away from the main road , hiding its extraordinary architectural features . This may have been because Thomas intended to establish a new settlement in front of it , but the gatehouse was also probably intended to be viewed from the harbour , where the most senior visitors were expected to arrive . The Lilburn Tower was positioned so as to be clearly - and provocatively - visible to Edward II 's castle at Bamburgh , 9 miles (15 km) away along the coast , and would have been elegantly framed by the entranceway to the Great Gatehouse for any visitors . It was also positioned on a set of natural basalt pillars , which - although inconvenient to build upon - would have enhanced its dramatic appearance and reflection in the meres .

The design of the castle may also have alluded to Arthurian mythology , which were a popular set of ideals and beliefs among the English ruling classes at the time . Thomas appears to have had an interest in the Arthurian legends , and used the pseudonym " King Arthur " in his correspondence with the Scots . Dunstanburgh , with an ancient fort at its center encircled by water , may have been an allusion to Camelot , and in turn to Thomas 's claim to political authority over the failing Edward II , and was also strikingly similar to contemporary depictions of Sir Lancelot 's castle of " Joyous Garde " .

= = Folklore = =

Dunstanburgh Castle has closely associated with the legend of Sir Guy the Seeker since at least the early 19th century . Different versions of the story vary slightly in their details , but typically involve a knight , Sir Guy , arriving at Dunstanburgh Castle , where he was met by a wizard and led inside . There he comes across a noble lady imprisoned inside a crystal tomb and guarded by a sleeping army . The wizard offers Guy a choice of either a sword or a hunting horn to help free the lady ; he incorrectly chooses the horn , which wakes the sleeping knights . Sir Guy finds himself outside Dunstanburgh Castle , and spends the rest of his life attempting to find a way back inside .

It is unclear when the story first emerged , but similar stories , possibly inspired by medieval Arthurian legends , exist at the nearby locations of Hexham and the Eildon Hills . Matthew Lewis wrote a poem , Sir Guy the Seeker , popularising the story in 1808 , with subsequent versions produced by W. G. Thompson in 1821 and James Service in 1822 . The tale continues to be told as part of the local oral tradition .

Several other oral traditions about the castle survive . One of these involves a child prisoner within the castle , who escaped , throwing the key to her dungeon into a nearby field , sometimes argued to be an outcrop of land north @-@ west of the castle , which from then onwards was infertile . Another centres on a man called Gallon who was left in charge of the castle by Margaret of Anjou and entrusted with a set of valuables ; captured by the Yorkists , he escaped and later returned to reclaim six Venician glasses . The historian Katrina Porteous has noted that in the 14th century there are records of receivers and bailiffs at the castle called Galoun , potentially linked to the origins of the Gallon of this story .

There are local stories of tunnels stretching from Dunstanburgh Castle to Craster Tower , Embleton and Proctor Steads , as well as a tunnel running from the castle well to the west of the castle . These stories may be linked to the presence of the drainage system around the castle .

