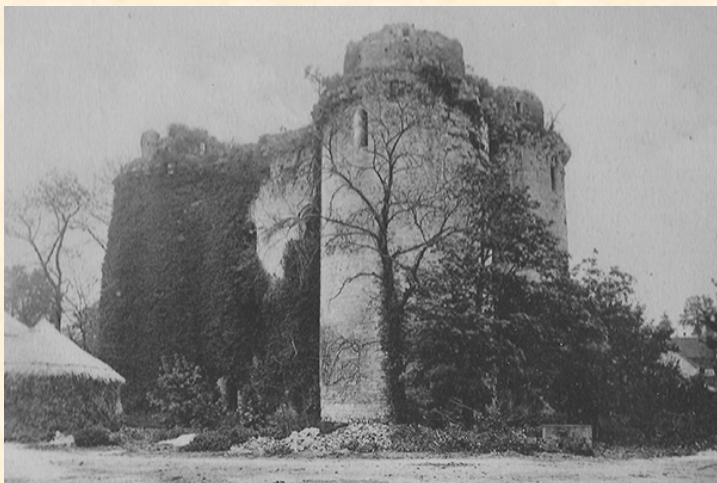


# Nunney Castle



My mother told me years ago that there was a castle in our family ancestry's past. It took me a while to figure it out which castle she was talking about. It was the Nunney Castle. During my search I found I loved reading about genealogy and researching it. Thanks mom for getting me started.

*Lady Kathleen*

*Nunney Castle resides in the sleepy little town of Nunney in Somerset England*



*Current Owner of Nunney Castle is English Heritage*

*Nunney Castle, Nunney BA11 4LW, United Kingdom*

# The Short Story is:

When Sir John De La Mere, a Knight, became tenant-chief of the royal property in Nunney and obtained a license to erect a fortification at Nunney from King Edward III, a church had already been erected in the best position, so De La Mere chose a low-lying site on which to build the castle, which was very small. De La Mere had served in the French wars and had become rather enamored of the French chateau style and paid more attention to this than the construction of a fortification. While the aslar masonry walls were beautiful, in no way could they withstand even the mild cannon attacks of the Edwardian period. And the loops or what is the window slots were suitable only for bows or crossbows. The castle had no outer buildings protecting it and the water from the moat came up directing to the edge of the castle, ala the style of Bodiam Castle in Sussex. Access to all was by a large



newel stair in the northwest corner of the castle which connected to a wooden rampart walkway surrounding it all, and the castle had no portcullis (grating across the entrance) that could be lowered in case of attack. The only time the defenses of the castle were ever tested was during the War with Cromwell in 1645 and when the Parliamentarians placed their cannon on the high ground overlooking the castle, they were able to breach its north wall almost instantly and the defenders of the castle were defeated within two days. In 1910, the north wall of the remains of the castle collapsed and fell into the moat. This debris has since been clean out and the shell of Nunney Castle stands in remembrance. Its magnificent presence remains in the center of the manorial village of Nunney, Somerset, England.



## Quick Guide to the Ownership of Nunney Castle:

*De La Mere - Family and heirs*

*Paulet - Family and heirs*

*George Prater purchased it from John Prather Estate*

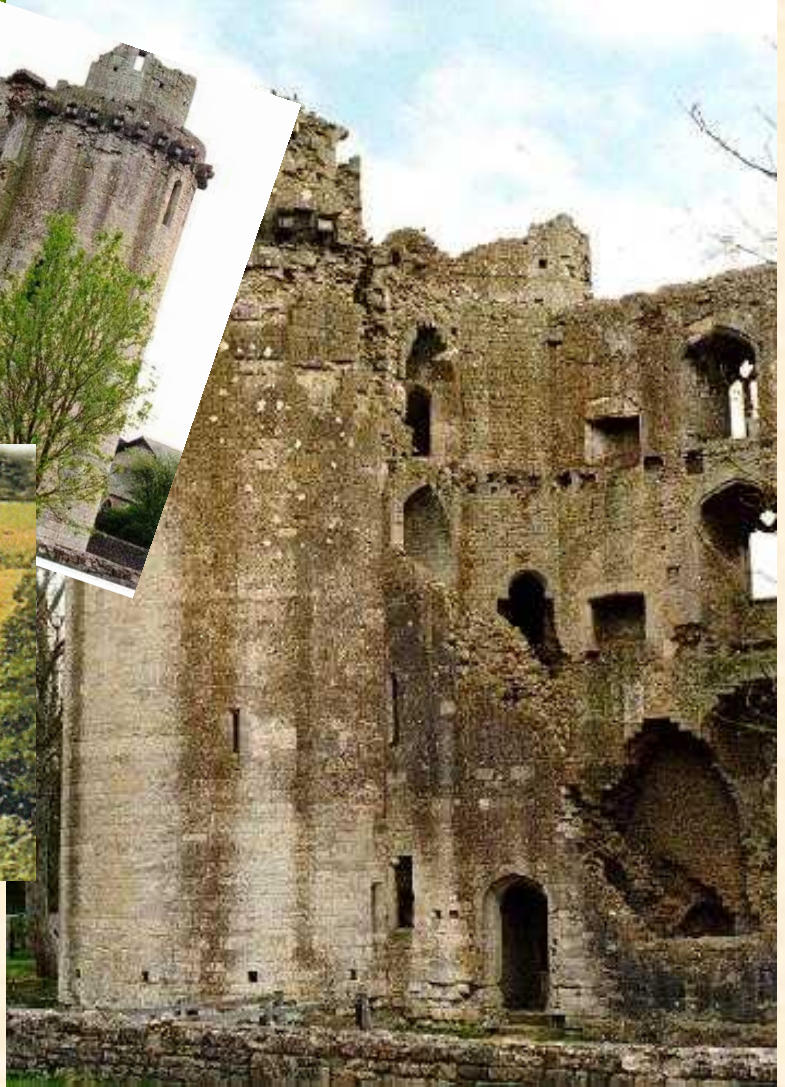
*Richard Prater inherited Nunney Castle from his father George Prater in June of 1564 and lived in Nunney Castle until his death in 1580.*

*Anthony Prater was trustee of the Estate from 1580 to 1586 (6 years) when his brother Richard died.*

*When Richard's son George became of age in 1586 Nunney Castle was passed to him. Richard Prater heirs lived there until 1645 when Col. Richard Prater lost the castle to Fairfax, the commander of Cornwell's forces in the battle that took place at Nunney.*

***It was never lived in again.***







## *As the Story goes....*

In the 14th century Nunney Castle was built near the village of Nunney. A Knight, Sir John De La Mere had made his fortune in the Hundred Years War in France. In 1373 John De Le Mere obtained a licence to crenellate (or licence to fortify) from King of England, Edward III, to build a castle on the property where his unfortified manor house existed. He promptly set about developing a new substantial fortification now known as Nunney Castle.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries Nunney Castle was inherited by Phillip De La Mere, John's son. Then it was passed to Elias, John's grandson. Nunney Castle then was passed to the Poulet family after the death of Elias in King Henry V's campaigns in France.

The 3 John's of the family Paulet (Sir John the Father, John the Son & John the Grandson) owned Nunney castle until 1572. It is said they did not live

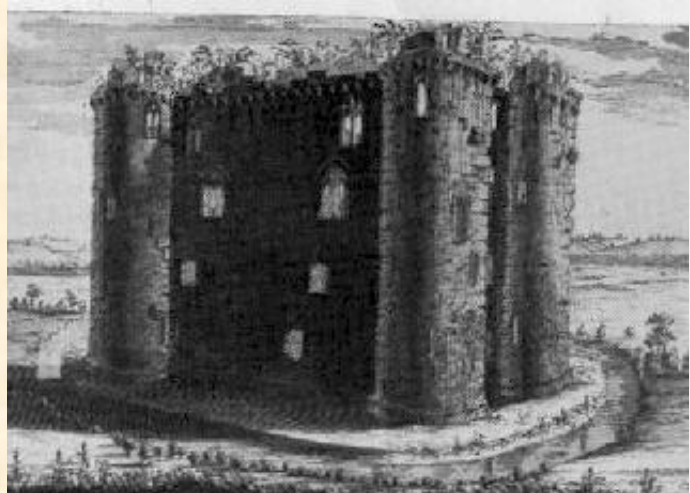
in the castle fulltime as they listed their address as Basing Castle in Hampshire. Maybe Nunney was their summer home?

William Paulet, which was the Marquess of Winchester was the last Paulet to own Nunney Castle. When he died in 1572 it is said Nunney Castle was passed through many owners.

In 1577 Swithum Thorpe sold Nunney Castle to John Parker. John Parker kept the castle for about a year then sold it to Richard Prater for £2,000. If you compared £2,000 in 1577 to today's value then would be just over £100,000.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century it was a very sad time for Nunney Castle. During this

time the Prather family owned the castle. In 1642 there was a war between Parliament and the King. Colonel Richard Prater supported King Charles I. Many refugees from other areas were garrisoned in Nunney Castle. It was not until September 1645 when Oliver Cromwell and Lord Fairfax came to the Somerset area. They



took Shepton Mallet then Cary and Sherborne before turning on Nunney. On September 18<sup>th</sup> Richard Prater refused to surrender so they opened fire with cannons on the north side. The wall was breached, but Richard did not surrender. It was said that Richard taunted his attackers by hoisting a flag bearing a Catholic crucifix above the castle. This went on for 2 days before Richard and the garrison surrendered.

Normally castles are slighted or deliberately damaged during war times, but Nunney Castle was not. It's only damage was what was made from the cannons during the battle.

Richard Prather was forbidden to return to Nunney Castle. Richard's son George Prather did recover the castle from Cromwell after King Charles II

was restored to the throne in 1660. The castle continued to decline over the years.

In about 1700 the Prathers sold Nunney Castle to William Whitchurch. In 1789 Nunney Castle received orders to make ready to receive French prisoners, but there is no record that Nunney Castle actually held any prisoners.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century was covered in thick ivy and mostly in a ruined state. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December in 1910 there was a collapsing of the entire north wall that was damaged. It is said the locals stole the fallen stones.

In 1926 Nunney Castle was in seriously bad condition the owner at the time was Robert Bailey-Neale. Robert transferred the property to the Commissioner of Works and they to restore the damaged Nunney Castle.

It was later transferred to English Heritage Trust, which is registered charity that manages the National Heritage Collection. Nunney castle is now a scheduled monument, which is a nationally important archaeological site that is given protection against unauthorized change.

It is also now a free a tourist attraction.





# The Castle Design

The Castle centered on a stone tower-keep which was 60 by 24 feet. There were 4 round corner towers all 54 feet high. The walls were 8 feet thick made from Lias Oolite ashlar stone, which surrounded 3 floors.

The corner towers had conical roofs and prominent machicolations. The ground floor of the tower-house included the kitchen and other service areas.[8] The functions of the first and second floors are uncertain; one theory is that the first floor was another service area, with the hall on the second floor; another approach argues that the first floor formed the hall, and the second floor living accommodation; a minority view proposes that the first floor was an armory. The third floor was used as living accommodation for the owning family. The original design had a number of windows and fire places on the upper floors, but the hall would have been relatively dark and the stairs were inconveniently narrow.



The tower-keep had a modest entrance, which was reached by a draw-bridge that lay across the surrounding moat, which initially reached right up to the base of the castle. A simple, 12-foot high bailey wall, with minimal defensive value, surrounded the moat, which was in contrast wide, 10-foot deep, and would have been difficult for an attacker to drain. On the east side of the castle was used as a line of defense rather than a bailey wall.

The castle was redeveloped in the second half of the 16th century, probably by the Praters: the windows were enlarged to let in more light; a grand staircase was built in one of the towers; a Catholic altar was installed, and a revetment, or terrace, was built around the inside of the moat, leaving it 25 feet wide.





