

Corfe Castle Conservation Plan

Client: The National Trust

Project dates: 2005 - 2006

Corfe Castle was bequeathed to the National Trust by Mr H J Ralph Bankes in 1982. The castle and its estate had been owned by the Bankes family for nearly 350 years, since Sir John Bankes bought it from the heirs of Sir Christopher Hatton in 1635. However, the known history of Corfe Castle began in Saxon times. The first castle was built after the Norman Conquest and remained an important royal fortress for five centuries until 1572, when it was sold to Sir Christopher Hatton by Elizabeth I.



In 1646, the castle was abruptly transformed from luxurious country house to the ruin that exists today, when it was captured and destroyed by Parliamentarian forces during the Civil War. Over the centuries since, the castle ruins have acquired a special significance in their own right on account of their distinctiveness, not only as a romantic ruin and memorable landmark, but also a symbol of Purbeck.



Popular as a visitor attraction since the 18th century, the second half of 20th century saw a marked increase in visitor numbers. The need to accommodate visitors, make the castle safe and accessible and provide interesting and enjoyable interpretation all place considerable pressures on the physical fabric of the castle. The Conservation Plan examines the castle in detail, the conservation issues facing it and sets out to anticipate the likely consequences and plan for them.

