

The History of Watermouth Castle



1825

Watermouth Castle was built in 1825 by Arthur Davie Basset for his bride Harriet. The Bassets are a historical family recorded in the Domesday Book, having come to Britain with William the Conqueror way back in 1066.

Around 40 servants were employed in the running of the Watermouth Castle household during this era. They would've worked in the kitchen, dairy, and family apartments.

Examining the castle and nearby areas, there is also evidence of old underground tunnels leading to the harbour opposite - this suggests the area was once used by smugglers. The tunnels are believed to have been blocked up towards the end of the 1800s.

1890

Walter Basset (grandson of Arthur Basset) was an engineer, and built the first European Fairground Wheel. It was designed by the American engineer George Washington Gale Ferris Jr; this is where it got the name 'Ferris Wheel'.

Walter Basset then went on to construct the Giant Ferris Wheel in the late 1890s. It is still standing today in Prater Park, Vienna.

1916

In 1916, the castle was used as a care home where Army Officers wounded in the First World War could recover from their injuries.

1939

During the Second World War, the castle was the headquarters for Operation P.L.U.T.O., Pipe-Line-Under-The-Ocean. It was a mission that involved building oil pipelines under the English Channel to support the British army.

1977

In 1977 the near-derelict castle was bought by Richard Haines and his family, who, with a bit of foresight, a lot of hard work, and unfaltering dedication, turned it into what it has become today - one of North Devon's premier tourist attractions with entertainment for all the family.

2023

Since 2023, Watermouth Castle has been owned by the Escapade Group, a UK-based group who specialise in weird and wonderful attractions. They have renovated parts of the castle, and added new areas like the Hobbledown Bay play village and Fairy Museum.