



Dunster Castle & Watermill

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1

Dunster Castle: over 1000 years of history

Norman

William the Conqueror granted Dunster Castle to William de Mohun (who he fought alongside at the Battle of Hastings). It would have been a Motte and Bailey castle.

Medieval

The Castle was besieged by King Stephen during the Anarchy (the civil war of the 12thC) as the de Mohun family supported his enemy, the Empress Matilda.

Civil War

The Luttrell family changed sides twice, finally surrendering the castle to Oliver Cromwell. It narrowly escaped being raised like Corfe Castle.

Victorian

The house was remodelled introducing modern luxuries for the family and servants alike.

The Luttrell family were fundamental in modernising and connecting the local area including establishing the West Somerset Railway line.

2



But much more than a castle...

Sub-tropical Gardens

Stunning views of landscape.

Unique site, 360 degree gardening.

Microclimates, allowing extended range of plants to grow.

Gardening in a unpredictable climate.

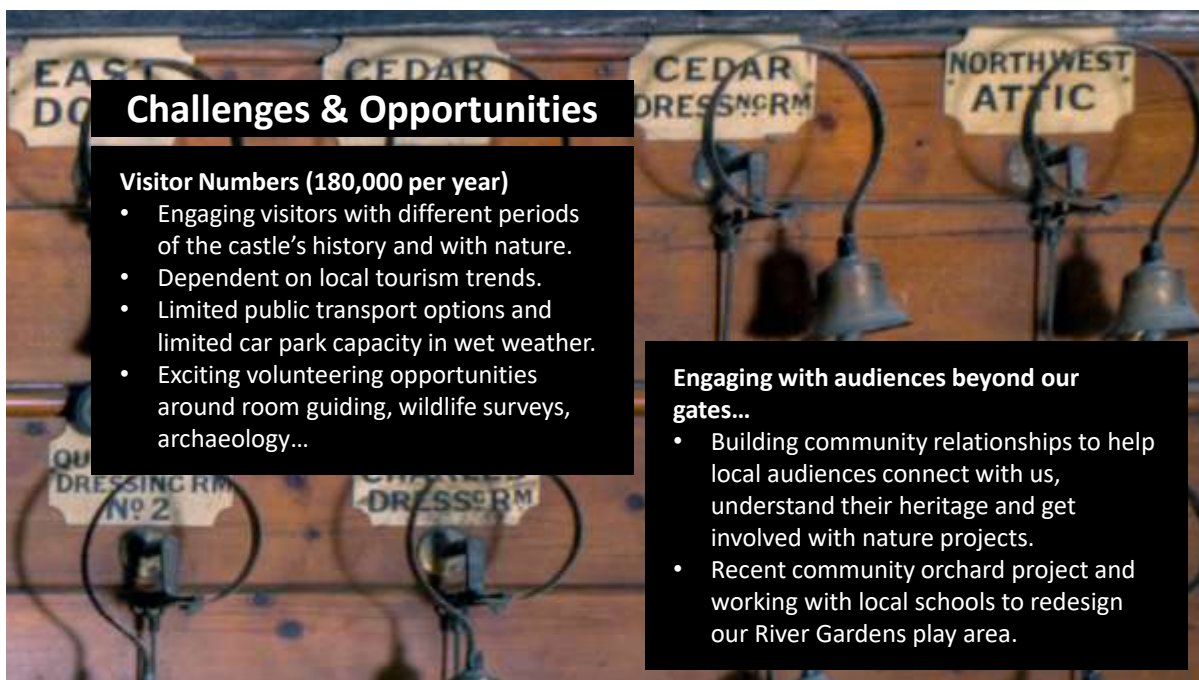
Historic Watermill

A rare double over-shot mill that still mills flour using traditional methods.

A big conservation project this winter to replace one of the waterwheels.

And currently exploring a partnership with a local farmer to grow grain for milling.

3



Challenges & Opportunities

Visitor Numbers (180,000 per year)

- Engaging visitors with different periods of the castle's history and with nature.
- Dependent on local tourism trends.
- Limited public transport options and limited car park capacity in wet weather.
- Exciting volunteering opportunities around room guiding, wildlife surveys, archaeology...

Engaging with audiences beyond our gates...

- Building community relationships to help local audiences connect with us, understand their heritage and get involved with nature projects.
- Recent community orchard project and working with local schools to redesign our River Gardens play area.

4



Challenges & Opportunities

Conservation & Care

- Balancing opening and conservation (wear on site, time to do maintenance works, tree works and deep clean etc).
- Raising funding for essential conservation works.

Unpredictable Weather

- Storms can mean site closure for visitor safety.
- Seeing lots of windy days (gusts above 40mph) which makes managing day to day operations tricky.

5



Looking to the future...

2026 is the 50th anniversary of the National Trust's ownership of Dunster Castle.

And in line with our new strategy:

- Inspire our visitors and community - celebrating what is unique about this amazing site and engaging people with it in creative ways.
- Managing our parkland to support nature and helping our visitors interact and engage with nature
- Improving access to our places – physical but also digital.

6