

Clophill through the years

A step back in time to Cainhoe Castle

To get to Cainhoe Castle follow the footpath that starts opposite Town Shott and goes down the side of the house that used to be the New Inn, across the river Flit and continue around the lakes. You will come to a field where you will see the remains of Cainhoe Castle. You will have to use your imagination as all that remains of the castle are the earthworks. There is Permissive Access which means you can walk anywhere in the field.



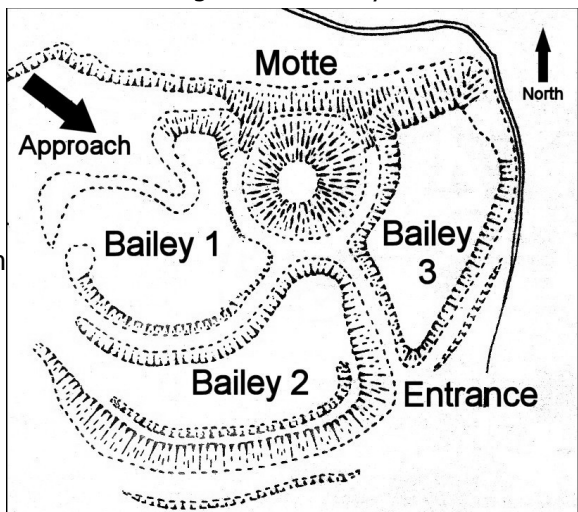
As you walk towards the earthworks you will see a large mound in the centre. This is the **motte** which was the main defensive area.

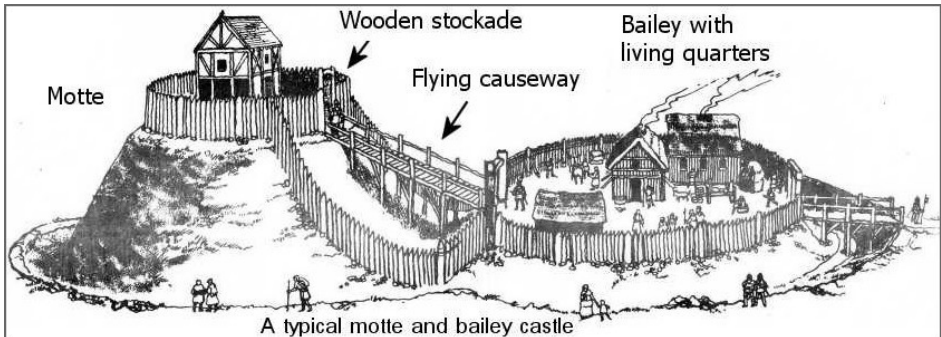
Surrounding the motte are living areas, protected by banks and ditches, called **baileys**.

The bank in front of you has, at some time, been quarried, presumably for sand. Imagine it as a continuous bank enclosing the first bailey.

As you walk around you should be able to see that there are three living areas enclosed by baileys. The first seems to have been the original. Later, two more baileys were added to provide more room. The ditch between them might have been an entrance road.

The motte and the banks around the baileys would have been surmounted by wooden palisades for increased protection.





The sketch shows the arrangement of a typical early motte and bailey castle. The motte was the main refuge and means of defence. It was built by producing an artificial hill or making use of the natural topography, if it was suitable as it was at Cainhoe. On it was built a tower (or keep) to give more height and to further intimidate the native English.

The bailey was a yard, surrounded by an embankment and ditch and provided a first line of protection. It contained barracks, stables, livestock and other buildings for storing food, weapons and equipment. If attacked the occupants could retreat to the motte.

William the Conqueror built many motte and bailey castles as they were quick to make and wouldn't have required any special materials. Later, they would have been upgraded with stone walls but there is no indication that that happened at Cainhoe.

After the Norman Conquest, Cainhoe was the baronial seat of Nigel d'Albini, Lord of the Honour of Cainhoe. He was a Norman who came to England with William and may have fought alongside him at the Battle of Hastings. As a reward William gave him Cainhoe and many other manors in Bedfordshire and other counties. So the castle was most probably built soon after the Conquest as Nigel d'Albini's stronghold. From here he could control his holdings.

The castle did not have a very long life. By 1374 the castle was abandoned and in ruins. This might have been a result of the depopulation caused by the Black Death of 1348. The male line had been extinguished and the estate divided

The field around Cainhoe Castle contains a variety of earthworks. Those to the west of the castle appear to be of the manorial complex, including a moated house and fishponds, which succeeded the castle.

Earthworks to the north of the castle, now destroyed by the Fuller's Earth quarrying but recorded on aerial photographs, may have been the remains of the medieval settlement at Cainhoe.