

# Camps Castle: medieval motte and bailey castle

Camps Castle, the largest medieval fortress in the county, is a fine example of a Norman motte and bailey castle. To the north east are the remains of the medieval village of Camps Castle, which was deserted following the Black Death. The castle and village

earthworks are protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument and are also an important wildlife site and part of a working farm. The site is privately owned - please stick to the public footpaths, keep dogs on a lead and follow the Countryside Code.

**Parking:** There is limited parking at Castle Camps Church, in the centre of the monument.

## 1 All Saints' Church

The earliest record of the name All Saints' dates to around 1470, although the Normans almost certainly built a church on the site when the castle was first constructed. Some Norman masonry was found when the church tower collapsed in 1850, suggesting that stone from this earlier church had been incorporated into the present All Saints'.

century, probably replacing earlier timber buildings. They were sadly demolished, or allowed to fall down, between 1730 and 1738 when the present farmhouse was built.

*Go over the stile by the church into the outer bailey.*

Standing within the Castle bounds, All Saints' probably served as both a garrison chapel and the Parish Church. During the Civil War, the rector, Dr. Gray, was ejected from the Rectory for supporting King Charles 1st. In March 1643 the notorious William Dowsing destroyed the painted glass windows, although some surviving 14th century glass in the south window of the Nave was re-set in 1923.

## 4 Bailey and deer park

When originally built, the castle included a large motte and a small horseshoe-shaped bailey, where stables, kitchens and other service buildings would have stood. Traces of the original bailey are still visible as a faint bank by the church. However, between 1265 and 1331, important works were carried out which led to the enclosure of a much larger area with a bank and ditch which remain well preserved to this day. As well as the castle, there was an extensive deer park. This was certainly in existence by 1263, and by 1586 covered an area of over 600 acres.

*Walk along the access road and go through the gate by the information board, to the deserted village remains.*

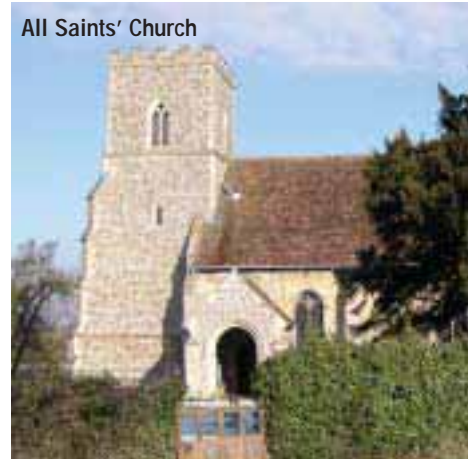
## 2 Village earthworks

The earthworks (lumps and bumps) in this field are all that now remain of the medieval village of Camps Castle. It has been suggested that the village was seriously affected by the Black Death (c.1348), which led to its abandonment, although it is more likely that the villagers simply moved away as the castle declined in importance. The remains include a holloway or sunken road and a number of house platforms – ditched rectangular platforms on which the houses would have stood.

*Walk back up the track to stand in front of the motte.*

## 3 Motte ditch

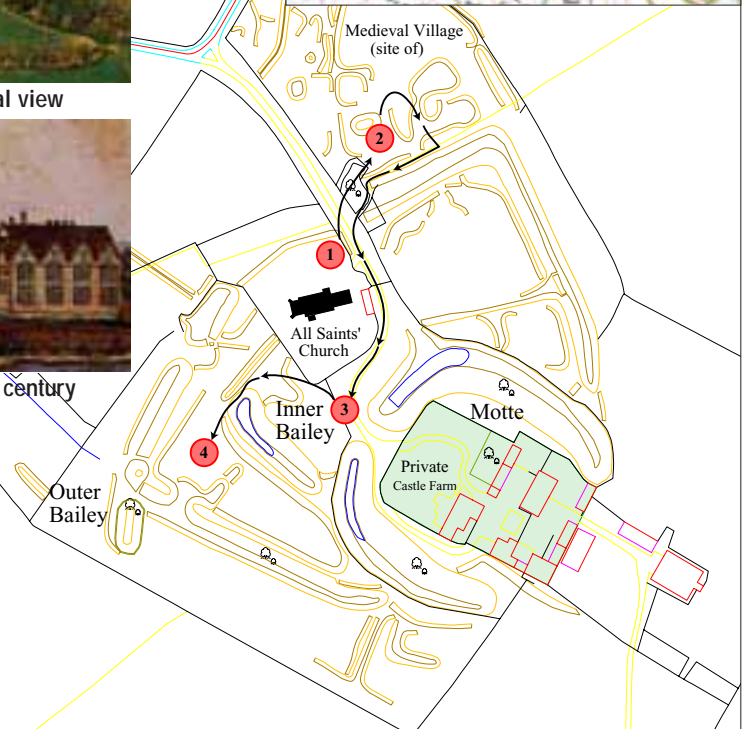
The motte is surrounded by a deep ditch, or moat, some 25ft deep, which would have been a formidable obstacle to any attacking force. A house and a four-storey brick tower were built on the motte in the late 15th



Camps Castle - aerial view



Camps Castle engraving



For more information about Camps Castle, or other local sites of archaeological interest, contact the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record on (01223) 717312, email CAO@cambridgeshire.gov.uk