

Time Detectives at The Toot: Motte and Bailey Castles

There are three sites in Milton Keynes where motte and bailey castles have been found:

- Bradwell Village (near St Lawrence Church)
- Old Wolverton (number 28)
- Shenley Church End - The Toot (number 39)

Can you find the Toot on the map?



Motte and bailey castles are made of wood that would have rotted so how do archaeologists know that there was a castle on this site?



a) Look at the photos of the Toot. What can you see?





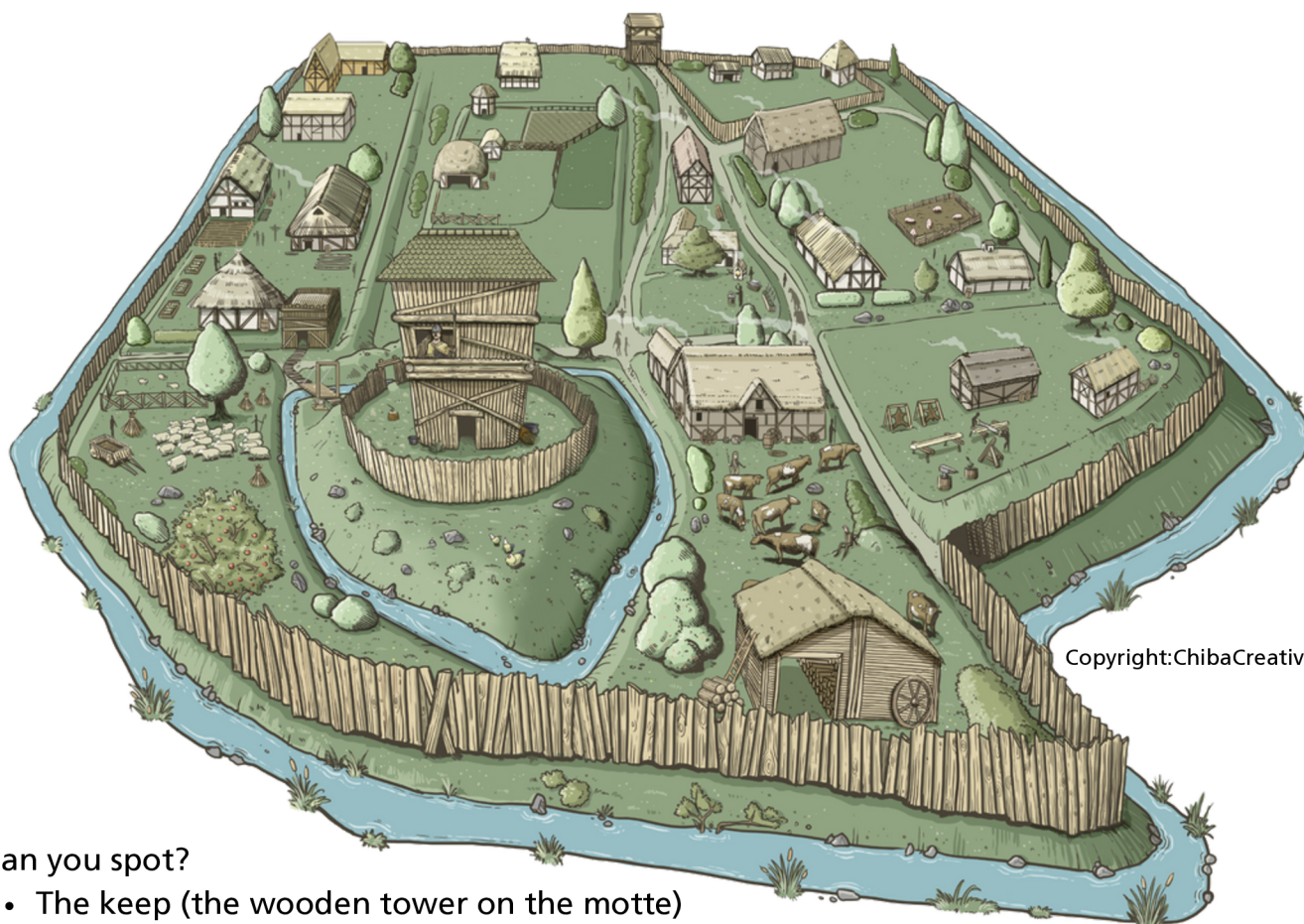
motte
(mound)

ditch

The photos show the key characteristics of a motte and bailey castle:

- a large mound of earth (the motte), surrounded by a ditch
- a large area at the base of the motte that has a ditch around it

The image below was created by a local artist to show what the motte and bailey at the Toot may have looked like.



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Can you spot?

- The keep (the wooden tower on the motte)
- The carpenter's shed to store wood from the local woodland (Shenley wood)
- The wheelwright
- The tannery (where they made leather items from animal skins)
- The blacksmith (who would have made horse shoes and weapons)

The animals shown in the bailey would only be kept in this area for protection. Most of the time, they would have been on the land outside the bailey so that they could graze for food. The castle would have been surrounded by fields where the peasants worked the land to grow crops such as barley, wheat and rye. The lord or his representative (the bailiff), would have lived in a large hall in the bailey.

Create a thought shower of all you have found out about the motte and bailey castle at the Toot

Why and when were motte and bailey castles built? Try to think of at least two reasons

Why were motte and bailey castles built?

Motte and Bailey castles were built under the orders of the new King, William the Conqueror, and his decedents. The Normans had successfully invaded England in 1066 and he lent out his new land to obedient lords to make sure he and his descendants had power over the whole country. The Normans built the castles for defence from enemies but also to show power to the local people. During an attack, local people would bring their animals and family to the bailey for protection. The keep would have been able to store the local lord's most important possessions.

The motte and bailey at The Toot was either built by the Earl of Chester (who was a supporter of William) or was built during the civil war that happened when William's granddaughter, Matilda, was challenged to the throne by her male cousin, Stephen. This period was called The Anarchy and was a long period of wars and unrest (1135-1153). Castles sprang up all over the country. Lords had to decide which to support and the rest of the population (mostly peasants) had to fight with their lord, whether they wanted to or not. Eventually Matilda agreed Stephen could be King until he died, and her son would then become king. Her son was Henry II (father of Richard I, or Richard the Lionheart, and John who are better known for the story of Robin Hood).

Were you right about why motte and bailey castles were built? Add any other reasons you have learnt.

The motte and bailey at the Toot in Shenley Church End would have gradually rotted or been dismantled and the whole area would have been part of the grounds of the lord's manor house.

Extension activities:

- Draw an image of a motte and bailey castle and label it.
- List the pros and cons of building a castle mainly made of wood.
- Research more about the life of those who lived in a motte and bailey castle.
- Using your research, create a diary entry for the Bailiff (the representative of the lord) or his wife and give details about what daily life was like. Note, peasants were not taught to read or write, and almost all positions of power were held by men during the medieval period!