



Fig. 1. Clare Castle, Suffolk. The fragmentary remains of the shell-keep from the south. The castle now lies in the Clare Castle Country Park. The inner bailey was purchased by the Great Eastern Railway and Clare station, track and sidings were open from 1865 until 1967. Much of this railway archaeology remains.

Clare

5. Clare

Clare Castle is a motte and bailey castle first documented in 1090, and probably built by Richard FitzGilbert (before 1035 - c. 1090), yet it appears to have gone out of use by the middle of the 15th century. Richard FitzGilbert (styled de Clare) was granted a barony by William the Conqueror, with two blocks of land, first in Kent and later across Suffolk and Essex. Richard built two castles to defend his new lands, Tonbridge in Kent, followed by Clare Castle in Suffolk. The total castle area was unusually large, with two baileys, rather than the usual one, and a 100 ft (30m) high motte. The circular shell keep on the motte was originally 52ft internal diameter with walls 6ft thick, but only the west arc of the shell wall survives to a height of 25ft (figs. 1, 4).

The two baileys at Clare may both be part of an original layout designed to allow for a staged progression into the inner bailey and the motte; alternatively the northern, outer bailey (fig. 2) may be a later addition. The motte lies west of the inner bailey, and is surmounted by a section of flint rubble wall, all that remains of what is probably a 13th-century polygonal shell keep. Whatever was there in the 12th century, the shell keep was (re)built, perhaps

in the late-13th or 14th century. This took the form of a polygonal shell, with (presumed) fourteen integral triangular buttresses (of which three remain) supporting a 6ft (1.8m) thick wall. The inner bailey was strengthened with new stone walls, 20 to 30 feet (6 to 9m) tall on top of the earlier earthen banks, the walls and shell keep being built of flint and rubble. Another section of wall east of the motte protected the steps up to the shell keep. Both walls were part-restored in the 19th century, when the present spiral path up the castle mound was also built. In 1846 the motte was still separated from the inner bailey by a curving section of a water-filled ditch, now in-filled.

The southern inner bailey comprised an earthen rampart topped with a stone wall. Three fragments of this wall survive on the south side where the rampart runs alongside the 'New Cut' (a 14th-century diversion of the Stour created to supply water to a mill). A break in the south-east corner of the rampart may be an entrance. The northern rampart of the inner bailey is topped by a path, now called 'Lady's Walk', (fig 10) and the north-east corner, known as 'Gun Hill', may have carried a 13th-century building. This may have been built to create more spacious living accommodation than was available on top of the

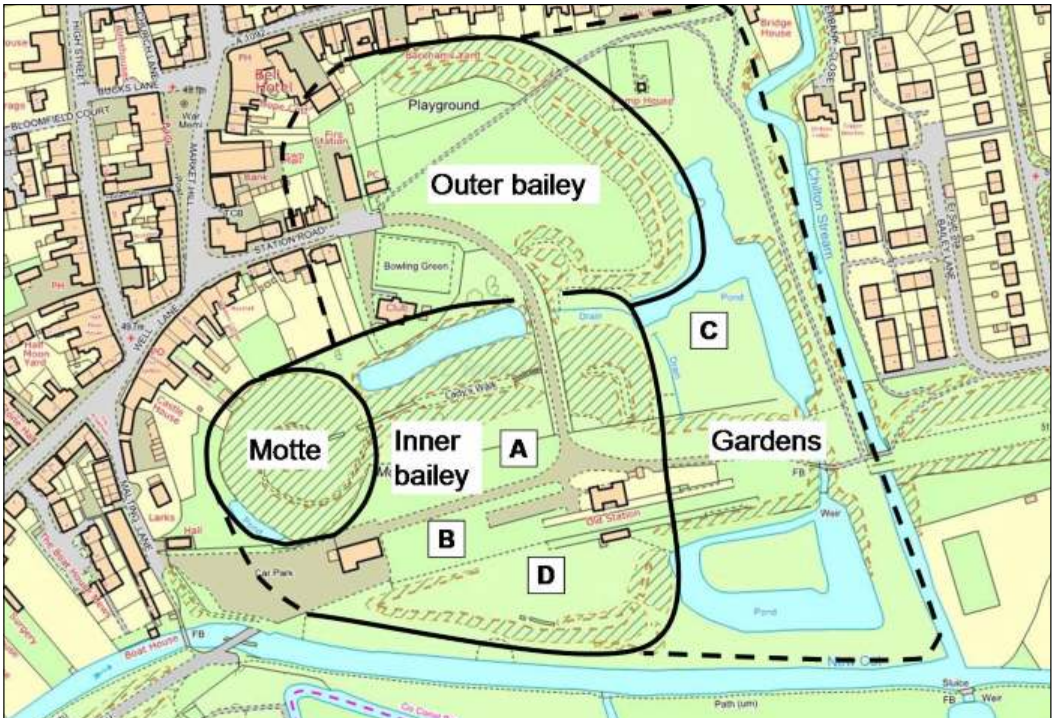


Fig. 2. Clare Castle, Suffolk. Plan of Clare Castle showing the outline of the castle (conjectural lines shown dotted) and the approximate locations of the four archaeological excavations in 2013. Plan reproduced courtesy of 'Access Cambridge Archaeology' - University of Cambridge.

motte. The de Clares in the 14th century had a retinue of more than 250 people and entertained royalty. The east side of the rampart was badly damaged in 1865 when a railway line and station was built: the platform still survives with the buildings housing an interpretation centre, but the track has been removed leaving a flat grassed area where it ran.

The northern, outer bailey is separated from the inner bailey by a large water-filled ditch. 19th-century excavations showed an entrance linking the two baileys to have been via a causeway flanked by stone towers and earthwork bastions, one of which is still visible on the east side. The outer bailey comprised an earthen rampart, with no evidence for any stone walling. The western rampart was quarried away in 19th century. Suspected medieval gardens survive east of the baileys, visible on the 1846 map as a quadrilateral enclosure defined by narrow water-filled ditches, surrounding a central rectangular pond with a smaller rectangular pond at each corner.

This is the likely location of an important 14th-century garden made for Elizabeth de Burgh, the Lady of Clare. Documents record that this contained flint

pathways railed with rods, a glass structure (perhaps an aviary) a fountain and a pool. The area was badly damaged by the railway line, and the area to its north used for dumping silt from cleaning the ponds. The area to its south is now a wildlife island. For centuries, the de Clares were one of the most important families in medieval England, who became earls of Hertford and Gloucester. The last male heir died at Bannockburn in 1314, and his great-niece married Lionel Duke of Clarence (disgraced son of Edward III). In the 15th century the Clare estate passed to the king, and the castle probably went out of use soon after this.

Internal Diameter: 60ft x 50ft (18.3m x 15.25m).
Shell wall height: 25 ft (7.62m) +
Motte height: 100ft (30m)

Published refs: Tymms, S., 1849; Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. XXXIV (July-December), 1850, pp. 471-474.

2013, Clare Castle Excavations in September 2013
 2013, Clare Castle Excavations in May 2013.

Both available online

at: www.arch.can.ac.uk/aca/clarecastle.html



ABOVE. Fig. 3. Clare Castle, From Grose's Antiquities of England and Wales. Vol VIII (Supplement), opp. p. 124, c. 1787 (Newton, engraver). From the east. Keep fragment and wing-wall, both of which remain substantially as seen here. Interesting for its series of joist (or putlog) holes under the wall-walk, no longer visible, suggesting perhaps an inner range of two-storey lean-to buildings.

BELOW: Fig. 4. Clare Castle motte top with shell-keep fragment, heavily consolidated. View from the south.





Figs. 5-8. Views of the remaining fragment of shell keep with its 6ft (1.8m) thickness wall, supported on the outside berm by a series (7, 8 below) of ashlar quoined triangular buttresses which do appear contemporary with the walling but may be later additions. The brick base is post-medieval. Fig. 9. next page, clearly shows the stepped buttressing.

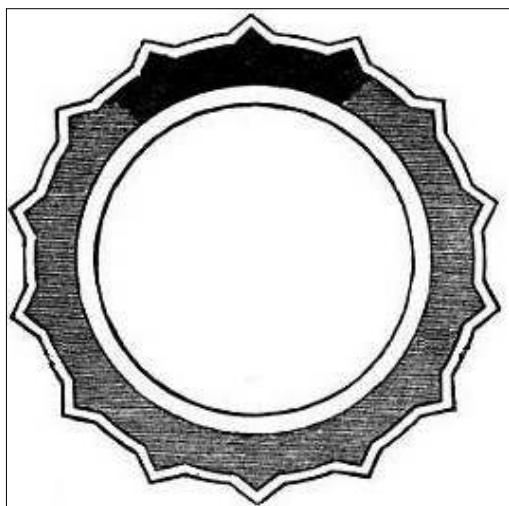


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ABOVE: Fig. 10. The wing wall from the motte running east-west along the line of the north wall of the inner bailey, and now described as 'Lady's Walk'.



ABOVE: Fig 11. Suggested appearance of the shell keep from Tymms, 1849. Darker shade indicates the remaining fragment.

RIGHT: Fig. 12. Norman postern door? at the base of the motte in the north wall of the inner bailey. It is unclear how much of this has been rebuilt. (The vault soffit is of red brick but the imposts look original).





ABOVE: Fig. 13. OS Map 6 inches to the mile, of 1885, showing the intrusion of the railway and remaining section of the wet moat around the motte base.

BELOW: Fig. 14. Sketch map of 'Clare in the 14th century'. A plan by G A Thornton, 'A history of Clare, Suffolk' Cambridge, 1928, showing lines of the inner bailey with some postulated towers.

