



See it for Free!

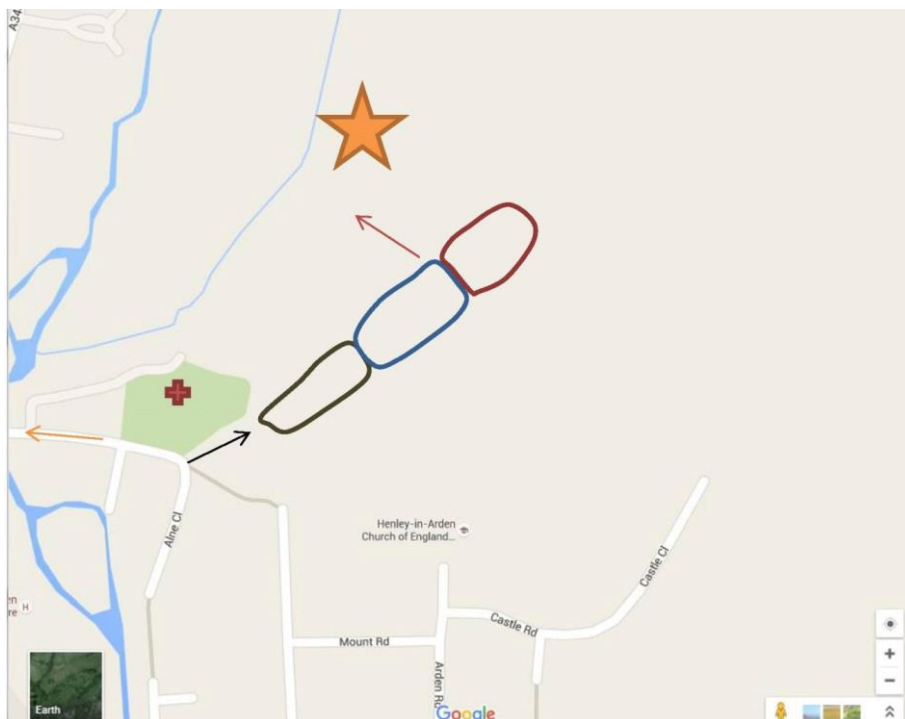
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BEAUDESERT CASTLE

Nearby postcode - B95 5DD (car park in Henley)

Earthwork remains of a motte and bailey castle on a promontory overlooking Henley in Arden and surrounding countryside.



Outer bailey		Start of footpath	
Inner bailey		Footpath to ponds	
Motte / ringwork		Church of St Nicholas	
Fish ponds		To the High St	

Parking - There are free car parks off Prince Harry Road and The Croft in Henley in Arden

Public transport – There is a railway station in Henley in Arden. Buses from Birmingham, Solihull and Stratford stop in the High Street. For bus and train detail see <http://www.networkwestmidlands.com/>

Access - The site is in open space and the Heart of England Way passes through it. It is located about 0.5km from the High Street, Henley-in-Arden. The footpath path is very steep in places and paths can sometimes be a little overgrown and hard to find depending on the season. There is a waterlogged pond on the site. There are plenty of places to eat and toilets in Henley.

Ordnance Survey

Landranger Map – 151
Explorer Map - 220

Grid reference

SP 15586 66176

What you can see



A fine example of a motte / ringwork with a double bailey and two associated fishponds. The castle is built on a steep natural promontory above the town of Henley-in-Arden. The castle is thought to have been completed by approximately 1140 but had fallen into decline by the late 14th c.

From the High Street turn down Beaudesert Lane (between the church and Barclays Bank) cross the river and at the end of the lane you pass St Nicholas Church on your left.



Continue until you reach a metal gate with footpath signs which takes you onto open land. There is a steep climb here up to the western end of the site which can be muddy and slippery when the weather has been wet.



In a short while the ground begins to level out and then rise again until you come to a bench. You have just crossed the defences of the outer bailey. The outer bailey, an area of flat ground before you, is oval in plan and covers about 0.3ha. Continue across this space on the central path until you reach a ditch which separates the outer from the inner bailey, which is almost double the size of the outer.



When you have passed this ditch you may be able to see the top of a holloway leading down the slope to your right. This is where the original main entrance into the castle was located.



Walk towards the trees on the other side of the inner bailey and you will come to another, much deeper ditch which surrounds the motte.



Climb up onto the motte and you will see that it covers a large flat oval area of around 0.5ha. It was once surrounded by a stone wall and there would have been a group of buildings constructed inside. In this respect it is different from a normal motte, such as can be seen at Brinklow, where there was no more room for anything more than a tower on top. Therefore the motte at Beaudesert is often described as a ringwork. Carry on towards the bench at the other side.



Take the steep flight of steps down into the ditch then up onto the high ground just beyond. Looking back from here towards the motte you can see that the ditch had an almost vertical outer bank.



Now look down onto the landscape below you to the north (to your right) where there are the remains of two fishponds associated with the castle. One often has some water in it and a dead tree and is easy to spot and another larger one was located in the flatter area to the right. You should now try to make your way down to this area.



Continue along the main path and as you go down the slope look for a path to your left which goes back around the northern outer edge of the motte ditch overlooking the fishponds (this is the actual route of the Heart of England Way!). Follow the path and notice how steep sided the edge of the ringwork is and what a well defended site it would have been.



Eventually you will see footpath signs on a post and from here take the narrow path down a steep slope to the right.



You will arrive at the bottom near a telegraph pole and the pond dam which shows up as a raised grass covered bank, to the left side of the fishpond. A dead tree stands on the northern bank. Walk along a path to your right to the second telegraph pole and in the field in front of you, you may be able to make out the low banks that once enclosed a second larger rectangular fishpond.

(Note – if you can't find the path around the edge of the motte continue along the main path and look for an informal path at a lower level going to the left and follow this around until you reach the area where the ponds are. Look for the row of telegraph poles and follow these until you reach the last one near the pond dam.)



Return to the last telegraph pole by the dam and take the footpath heading towards an overgrown hedge. Follow this path around turning back towards the church. Don't cross the bridge over the stream! To the right of the path is the silted up overflow channel for the fishponds. The management of the water supply for these medieval fishponds was complex and demonstrates the skill of the people who built them. Fish was an important part of the medieval diet and ponds on this scale would have been a status symbol for those living in the castle.



The path eventually leads into the churchyard where you can explore the Church of St Nicholas which dates back to the Norman period and would have been contemporary with the early castle.

The site is a scheduled monument which means it is protected by law. This means metal detecting and unauthorised digging at the site is not allowed.

The village of Henley in Arden contains many interesting buildings including several timber framed houses from the 15th – 17th centuries. St John the Baptist Church (Photo 1) on the High Street is worth a visit and there is a heritage centre in the village which is normally open in the summer months see <http://www.heritagehenley.org.uk/index.php>

Find out more:

- Hooke, D, 'Henley in Arden (Warwickshire) Beaudesert Part II, West Midlands Archaeology 27 (1984), CBA 8, pp. 63-4
<https://public.worcestershire.gov.uk/sites/archaeology/Reports/SWR2494.pdf>
- Salzman, LF (ed), The Victoria History of the County of Warwickshire: Volume III, (1945), 45
- Chatwin, P B, 'Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society' in Castles in Warwickshire, (1947)

Links: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1012703>
<http://timetrail.warwickshire.gov.uk/detail.aspx?monuid=WA1220>

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