

Middle Castle

Cambden says Lord Strange built Knockin Castle and it is not improbable that he built this, it being alternately with Knockin the place of his residence. The stone of which the Castle was built was got on the end of Harmaer Heath nearest to Middle. Some part of the walls of this Castle were remaining about the year 1640. It was built four-square, within a square moat, and had a square court inside. There was a piece of ground near half an acre, on the east side of the Castle, which piece was moated round; the entrance to this piece was through a gate-house which stood near the north east corner of the Castle moat. In the gate-house were four chambers. Adjoining this gate-house was a slaughter-house for the use of the Castle, and near it a draw bridge over the Castle moat. The passage from the end of the bridge went into the middle of the Castle Court, on the south side of which was a large room, supposed to have been used as a kitchen, having a large chimney in it, and other conveniences necessary; on the same side was the parlour, and opposite the passage a large hall. The Castle was only two stories high with a flat roof, part of it fell down by an earthquake in the year 1688, and the rest is now entirely demolished.

After the death of Lord Strange, who resided part of the year in this Castle, it descended to the Derby family, when a Constable, or Keeper was appointed; the first mentioned is William Dod, and after him Sir Roger Kynaston of Hordley, was by commission appointed Keeper of Middle and Knockin Castles. Upon the decease of Sir Roger, his son Humphrey, (who for dissolute and riotous living was called Wild Humphrey) was a tenant here; he had two wives, contracted many debts, and being for divers reasons outlawed, he left Middle Castle, which he had suffered to go ruinous and out of repair, and went and sheltered himself in a Cave near Nescliffe which is called Kynaston's Cave. During Kynaston's residence here, several attempts were made to take him, without success: one time when he was got over Montford's Bridge, on the side next Shrewsbury, and must return to his cave over that bridge, the Under Sheriff came with a considerable company of men, and the bridge being then composed of stone pillars and planks laid from pillar to pillar, they took up several planks, left such an open as they thought no horse could leap over, and laid themselves in ambush for his return. When Humphrey came, and was about to enter the bridge, they rose up to apprehend him, which he perceiving, put spurs to his horse, and riding full speed, leapt over the space, and escaped. The measure of this leap was afterwards marked out upon a green plat on Knockin Heath, in the road between Knockin and Nescliffe, with an H and K cut in the ground at the end of the leap. The letters were about an ell long, and were usually repaired yearly by Mr Kynaston of Ryton, but are not now to be found. After this Humphrey's time, Middle Castle was never inhabited, but went to ruin.