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Pupils of Ellesmere Secondary Modern School are excavating a 14th century castle. They will map the shape it took and send the plan to the county archivist.

The pupils unearthing the castle, at Myddle, near Shrewsbury, have found that it was either square or "L" shaped. It fell into ruin in the 17th century.

Mr. Jeremy Connell, history master at the school said that the excavation was part of varied studies by the group.

Busy in the picture are, left to right: John Butler (14), Graham Platt (15), and Robert Downs (14). They are digging around the single remaining tower.

Pupils probe history of Myddle Castle

SENIOR pupils of Ellesmere Secondary Modern School have been carrying out excavation work in the locality, under the supervision of Mr J. Connell, history master at the school.

The work has been done by different parties of about 12 senior boys and girls. Two years ago they visited Gadlas, Crifftins. Last year, the site chosen was Ellesmere Castle. This year they have been further afield at Myddle Castle.

The following account of the work undertaken is supplied by the school authorities. Myddle was originally part of the estate of the L'Estrange family who were Lords of Knockin. In order to strengthen the Lordship, a licence was obtained from King Edward III to "embattle" the Manor House of Myddle. This term could mean anything from building a strong tower and curtain wall, as at Stokesay, to the wholesale rebuilding of the original into a regular castle which is what appears to have happened at Myddle. According to various accounts, the castle was two stories high and four square, enclosing a square courtyard.

The castle passed from the L'Estranges to the Derby's, who placed castellans or caretakers in, while they lived elsewhere. The last of these, Humphrey Kynaston, allowed his personal debts to mount so much that he had to flee the area, and the castle was abandoned and began to deteriorate. Legend says this process was hastened by an earthquake in 1688.

At present, all that remains above ground is a single round tower inside the castle, presumably at the Northwest corner of the inside courtyard. Measurements and digging would tend to question the four-squariness of the original castle. Although time has not allowed a decisive study, the present investigations would suggest an "L" shaped structure with the open parts enclosed by a wall, rather than living quarters.

The remains of windows in the remaining tower show that these living quarters existed on the North and West sides of the castle. A section by the South Wall has brought to light a cement floor, a fireplace, and the continuation of the inside wall from the tower.

A second section on the West wall has unearthed a square buttress or tower foundation, and other investigations have shown the thickness of the outer walls.

Conclusions so far would be that the West wall of the castle was 6'6" thick, the North wall 5'10½". At a distance of 22'7" from the North-West corner on the West wall are the foundations of either a buttress

or a square tower, 8 feet wide and 4'7" deep from the wall. The floor of the rooms on the West side was made of a mixture of clay and sandstone laid upon small irregular stone slabs, and covered with about half-an-inch of cement. In the corner made by the South wall and the inside N/S wall from the tower are the remains of a fireplace.

Above this floor was a layer of kitchen rubbish made up mainly of mussel and oyster shells and small bones. Above this, was a dump of lime-mortar, which we assumed to have been left by those who repaired the tower in 1849 or from some later building programme. Pottery from the rubbish would suggest the eighteenth century, which puts it into a period long after the castle fell into ruins.

Several pieces of mediaeval pottery have been uncovered but they are all of a fragmentary nature. A full report will be sent to the County Architect, and the pottery will probably be kept in Shrewsbury Museum.

