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## ***Sir Humphrey Kynaston 1474-1534*** ***‘Wild Man’***

A jumbled pile of rubble is all that remains of a once-impressive tower set in the centre of a farm field in the village of Myddle. This is all that remains of Myddle Castle, the family seat of one of Shropshire’s most amazing characters.

Born in 1474, although one respected chronicler claims that he was born in 1468, Humphrey Kynaston was the first son from Sir Roger Kynaston’s second marriage, to Elizabeth Grey. From his first marriage to Mariona ap Griffiths, he had a son, who died in infancy, and a daughter.

So, when his father died, Humphrey inherited Myddle Castle but his recklessness and irresponsibility resulted in his lands and castle falling into disrepair. He was said to have been of a ‘wild’ temperament with little regard for reputation or person.

Heavily in debt, his truculence went too far one cold winter’s day in 1491. He was out riding with Thomas Kynaston (his half brother) and Robert Hopton, when they encountered John Hughes.

The men, apparently unprovoked, attacked and killed the unfortunate Hughes: Humphrey stuck his lance into him, Thomas Kynaston hit him on the head with his sword and Hopton struck the man in the leg with a billhook. The three appeared in court on 20 December 1491 and were unable or unwilling to explain why they had attacked and murdered Hughes. They were found guilty.

Shortly after the trial and before he could be incarcerated, Humphrey fled his crumbling Myddle Castle, leaving behind his family and enormous debts; he was subsequently declared an outlaw by King Henry VII and his legend began.

He retreated into the wilds and settled in a cave in Nesscliffe Rock, close by the village of Nesscliffe. The approach to the cave is heavily wooded and up a very steep pathway, the end of which

*Fascinating Characters*

leads to towering red sandstone cliffs. Set in the cliffside is the cave, which is spacious and divided into two sections by a pillar of stone. Here Humphrey Kynaston lived in one part, and his precious horse and sole companion, Beelzebub, lived in the other part. There is a path leading to the cave, which is accessed by steep stone steps. A heavy iron door guards the entrance. Today it is a protected historical site and is a real delight for those familiar with the story.

The horse would graze in the fields of amiable neighbours close by the hideout and would come whenever Kynaston whistled. His neighbours respected his secrecy and gave him food from time to time, while his horse was well provided-for and stabled. In return, Kynaston shared some of the spoils of his activities as a highwayman. Situated as he was, he could see the road winding between Shrewsbury and Oswestry from the top of Nesscliffe



*The entrance to Kynaston's Cave: 26 steep stone steps leading to an iron door in the rock-face.*



*Chapter Six*

## MURDER MOST FOUL

Since the dawn of civilisation, murder has been the ultimate crime: man's evil solution to the frustrations created by greed, fear, jealousy or passion. Despite greater education, despite all the deterrents and punishments, the act of murder will regrettably dog mankind until the end of time.

Murder can never be condoned but on occasions can be understood, where reason has been overtaken by the basic instincts of fear, revenge or an attempt to protect vulnerable loved ones. However, there are instances where murder is so brutal, so heinous, so sadistic, so horrific and pre-meditated, it defies all understanding.

Shropshire, like every other county in Great Britain, has had its share of brutal murders, many of which have made headline news.