

Duxbury: Contested Inheritance

In 1812, after generations of straightforward successions in the Standish family to the ownership of Duxbury, on the death of the bachelor Sir Frank Standish, there was no heir. However, there were two claimants; the first was Frank Hall from County Durham. He was a great grandson of Sir Thomas Standish, who had died in 1758. Frank Hall was a minor so his Guardians installed a bailiff at Duxbury Hall.

The second claimant was Tom Standish, a handloom weaver from Horwich. Subsequent research has shown that Tom and Frank Hall had a common ancestor in Alexander Standish (1567-1622). Along with about 100 miners from the Blackrod area he took control of the Hall on 4 June 1813. The park became a recreation ground for the Duxbury Races and the Yarrow Bridge Fair. The Hall was barricaded and two groups of constables were repulsed before a party of the Queen's Bays evicted the miners and arrested Tom Standish on 6 June. The siege was reported in the Preston Guardian 12 June 1813 and has subsequently been described in detail in Jim Heyes's "History of Chorley" (pp 84-6) and George Birtill's "Follow any Stream" (pp118-9). Tom was sent to prison and Frank gained Duxbury, taking Standish as his surname.

Claimants emerged again when Frank Hall Standish died in Cadiz in 1840. However, Duxbury was inherited by William Standish Carr from County Durham and he also took Standish as his surname.

When the estate was finally put up for sale in 1891, its ownership was again contested at the auction by William Hall, a retired coachman of Wigan, a descendant of Frank Hall Standish. The sale went ahead on the advice of the lawyer for the trustees. William Hall and his supporters occupied the previously unoccupied Duxbury Hall, but they were subsequently evicted by the steward, Mr. Hogg, and a group of men, but not without "a free fight".