



Pele Tower

A branch of the Standish family lived at The Pele, or Pele Tower. The site of the Pele has been the subject of debate over the years, and old maps have sown confusion. In particular there has been uncertainty as to which side of the River Yarrow the Pele was situated. Current thinking leans towards placing the Tower on the northside of the Yarrow within the boundaries of Chorley, at the highest point in Chorley. That site has been occupied by St. Gregory's Roman Catholic church since 1815.

The residence in Chorley made the Standish family parishioners of St. Laurence's, then the only church in Chorley, and eligible for burial there.

Pele Towers were tower houses, built on both sides of the Scottish border between the 14th and 17th centuries. Typically, they consisted of service-rooms, living-quarters and bedrooms, structured vertically rather than horizontally. They had thick walls, narrow windows and crenelated roof-lines. Their design was to provide short-term defence against marauders. In this case the marauders were the Scots.

The Standish's Pele Tower, built on land leased to Hugh Standish by the Lord of the Manor of Chorley, was erected during the Scottish Wars of Independence. The Scots, led by Robert the Bruce had defeated the English at Bannockburn in 1314, and had effectively won their independence. At the beginning of 1322, a two-year truce between Scotland and England ended. The Scots resumed border raids and the English were in disarray, under the unpopular King Edward II. In June 1322, the Scots came south via the coastal route, crossing the Duddon Sands to Furness and the sands of Morecambe Bay to Lancaster, where they joined with another Scottish group which had arrived via Kendal. They took Lancaster and Preston and came as far south as Chorley, wreaking

havoc in Healey Park. This was a major concern in Lancashire, although a minor incursion when compared to the Bruce's military successes against Edward in Yorkshire later in the year.

The Standish Pele Tower was built around this time in the best strategic position to command the best view of the neighbouring town and countryside. Whether its defences were ever put to the test is not known.

Arnside Tower, in North Lancashire, is an example of a later medieval Pele Tower.

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