

# Newsletter

**Bonding Church and Community together**

## Aims & Objectives

To promote and develop the use of the Church and its facilities as a community asset.

To form partnerships with local affinity groups encouraging them to use the Church for meetings and events in return for their support in maintaining the fabric of the church.

To restore the secular role of the Church as a dynamic centre for a vibrant local community, encouraging today's 'new' Chorley to relate to its past roots.

One of the aims of these newsletters is to portray the historic and lasting connection between St. Laurence's Church and the town of Chorley. In this edition we refer briefly to the connection between the Church and three of the prominent families whose influence helped to make the town what it is today. There is a plethora of documents, many still in existence, others lost, which tell us much about the lives of these families, of their rise and their fall over the centuries but it is in the Church itself that we find solid evidence of their final resting places and accurate information about dates and relationships.



Most prominent among these families were the Standishes of Duxbury, a branch of the Standish of Standish who settled in Duxbury early in the fourteenth century. They were very generous to the Church acquiring much of the chancel above the altar steps although they did not use this space for burial until the Reformation. The Standish family had many branches and was spread far and wide throughout South and West Lancashire although it is the Duxbury branch that is concerned with Chorley.

Sir Roland Standish who fought at Agincourt provided the Church with a relic purporting to be the skull of Saint Laurence which was placed in a reliquary in the sanctuary. Subsequent tests, however, cast serious doubts upon the validity of this artefact. And of course there is a possible connection with Captain Myles Standish the military commander of the Pilgrim Fathers referred to in the third issue of our Newsletter.

For further information concerning the Friends and their activities visit our website [www.friendsofstlaurencechorley.org](http://www.friendsofstlaurencechorley.org) or email [friends@stlaurencechorley.co.uk](mailto:friends@stlaurencechorley.co.uk)

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# Bonding Church and Community together

This is an exciting new experiment in sharing, bonding together Church and a community which already has its roots deep in the area's history.

Hopefully readers of this leaflet will be intrigued enough to want to discover more about Friends of St. Laurence's and explore the possibilities offered by such a proposal.

We encourage you to find out more about the Friends and support our crowd funding appeals, perhaps joining us as members or associates.

You will discover a very warm welcome for members and supporters who will help us to achieve our objectives.

The Charnock family, is thought to have built Astley Hall, one of the most notable of the town's stately halls. The datestone, 1577, showing the initials of Robert Charnock and his wife suggests there is some truth in this. Robert fought for the King during the Civil War with some early success but later had to flee to Wales until it was safe to return. Their importance as a leading Chorley family was enhanced by marriage into leading Lancashire families such as the Norrises of Speke and the Molyneux. Like the Standishes the Charnock family was also closely affiliated with Saint Laurence's Church laying claim to the other half of the chancel for the burial of family members.



The Gillibrands became probably the most powerful family in Chorley. Their origins are obscure but in 1549 John 'Gellybrand' of Chorley appeared on the Burgess Rolls of Liverpool implying that he was a Liverpool merchant. Later the same rolls record him as being a gentleman and he became associated with the Earl of Derby. Over the centuries the Gillibrands, through investment into property and marriage into the Lancashire gentry acquired great wealth and status. They remained, however, firm in the Catholic faith until the nineteenth century although members of their families, nevertheless, appeared in both baptismal and burial registers at Saint Laurence's Church.

Lack of space precludes further details of the Standish, Charnock and Gillibrand families and other prominent families of Chorley of whom there are several. Those who wish to discover more will find the Church to be a treasure trove of information about the town's leading families and the part they played in the history of Chorley.

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