

## Ralph Brideoake 1612 to 1678

### Rector of Standish Parish 1645 to 1649 and 1660 to 1678

Ralph was the Rector of Standish Parish for two periods from 1645 to 1649 and from 1660 until his death in 1678. He was originally nominated or “presented” for the position by Ralph Standish who was the Lord of Standish manor from 1610 to 1656. As lord of the manor, he owned the “advowson” or the right to nominate the rectorship.



*Ralph's final resting place and memorial in St George's Chapel Windsor*

This was the time of the First English Civil War. The Standish family and many of the other landowning families in Lancashire supported the monarchy. This included James Stanley the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby who was one of the most powerful men in the county. Ralph had been employed by the Earl as a chaplain and administrator of his estates and the Earl supported his appointment as Rector of Standish.

The eleven-year interruption to his rectorship was as a result of the ongoing religious and political turmoil created by the Civil Wars. As the Parliamentarians took control Ralph was displaced by Paul Lathom who had Presbyterian affiliations and was preferred by the Parliamentarian side. Ralph would not resume the rectorship until the monarchy was restored in 1660. Although he officially remained Rector of Standish until he died he was destined for greater things and acquired a number of more prestigious positions or benefices.

Ralph lived through turbulent times and his survival and rise to a prominent position is testament to his resolve and political astuteness. He lived through the English Civil Wars from 1642 to 1651; the surrender to parliamentary forces of King Charles I in 1646; the execution of the King in 1649, and the years of political and religious uncertainty leading to the eventual Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Throughout this time Ralph was close to many of the key players in history.

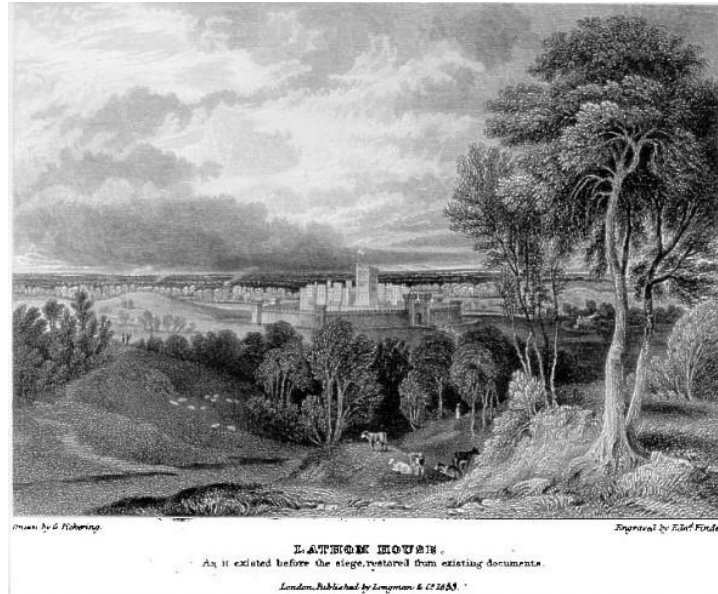


*James Stanley, Earl of Derby, Ralph's patron*

As we know he was close to James Stanley the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Derby whose seat was at Lathom House in Lancashire. Stanley was also Lord of the Isle of Man. He employed Ralph to help administer his affairs during his many absences. Stanley played a major part in the civil war and led Royalist forces in a number of key battles.

Ralph was at the siege of Lathom House which lasted for three months in the spring of 1644. Stanley was in the Isle of Man when 2,000 Roundhead troops led by Sir Thomas Fairfax, descended on Lathom House near Ormskirk. The term "house" is misleading as it was in fact a heavily fortified castle. Ralph helped Stanley's wife Charlotte organise the resistance. After a number of skirmishes the siege eventually ended when Prince Rupert arrived with Royalist cavalry and troops to disperse the Parliamentary forces. It was shortly after the siege of Lathom House that Ralph was first appointed as Rector at Standish.

The Civil Wars ultimately ended in defeat for the Royalists and the Earl of Derby was captured and convicted of treason. Ralph pleaded directly and in person to Parliament for a stay of execution. This was unsuccessful and Stanley was executed at Bolton in October 1651 at the scene of one of his former triumphs. Ralph had lost one of his patrons but had impressed the speaker of the house, William Lenthall, with his submissions and pleading on behalf of Stanley. Lenthall offered him a chaplaincy appointing him preacher at the Rolls Chapel. He was adept at finding the right patrons and successfully negotiated his way through the 1650s.



*Lathom House the location of the siege which Ralph helped orchestrate*

His loyalty to the monarchy was rewarded when he became chaplain to the newly restored King Charles II in 1660 and was installed as the Canon of St George's Chapel Windsor. He became Dean of Salisbury in 1667, and Bishop of Chichester in 1674. He had also reclaimed his position as Rector at Standish in 1660.

Many prominent members of the clergy held more than one position at a time. Rectorships were both an ecclesiastical and administrative position that gave the holder a considerable income from tithes, or taxes, raised from land owned by the church known as glebe lands. Rectors did not always reside in their parish but would appoint or "demise" someone else to run it for them. Standish Parish was one of the larger and more lucrative rectorships.

Ralph died in 1678 leaving a wife Mary and two sons Ralph and John. His son Ralph went on to become the Archdeacon of Winchester.

His final resting place is in the Bray Chantry in St George's Chapel Windsor. It is marked by an impressive monument including an effigy of the Bishop. The chapel is adjacent to Windsor Castle and has been the location of many royal events over the centuries, including marriages. It is also the final resting place of many past Kings and Queens including Henry VIII. George VI (the current Queen's father), and the Queen Mother. So, Ralph rests in auspicious company.

There is no memorial to him in St Wilfrid's Church Standish. Some of the roof beams above the chancel carry the names of donors who supported the rebuilding of the church in the 1580s. The fourth beam in from the east window carries the inscription "Ralph Brideoake 74". Ralph may have donated this beam in 1674 as a replacement for a damaged beam or it may recognise a donation to the upkeep of the church. The other beams carry dates of 1585.



*Commemorative medallion for Ralph Brideoake Junior who also became a Bishop*

Primary sources:

TC Porteus, *The History of Standish Parish*, 1927

P Byron and J Dickinson, *The Parish of St Wilfrid, An Illustrated Guide*, 2005

AJ Hawkes FSA, *Wigan's Part in the Civil War*, 1930

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