

The Reluctant Baronet

By Jim Meehan

St Wilfrid's churchyard in Standish is the resting place of many distinguished people. On a visit I noticed the fairly modest grave of one Sir Robert Clayton. I could see from his headstone that he was the Baronet of Adlington and died in 1839 at the age of 93. I was intrigued and did some more research. I discovered he was the last Baronet of Adlington and didn't inherit the title until the age of 82 when his brother Richard died without a male heir. Although Adlington and Worthington Manors became his, he left them in the hands of his niece and her husband who were living there at the time. He continued to lead a relatively modest life in the Larches which was his home on Wigan Lane near the Boar's Head.



Sir Robert Clayton the last Baronet of Adlington

His early life was interesting. He was an army Major and fought in the American War of Independence. He was involved in many notable battles and held captive by American forces on two occasions.

On his return to England in 1786 he married Christophora Baldwin; the daughter of the local Rector. He remained a Major on half pay until he died. Dame Christophora shares his resting place in St Wilfrid's churchyard. They had no children, so the title became extinct. Following the death of his niece Henrietta and her husband, General Robert Browne, Adlington and Worthington Manors were inherited by more distant relatives and rented

out. Wigan Corporation eventually became the owners of Adlington Hall and it was demolished in the 1960s.



Final resting place of Sir Robert and Dame Christophora

Robert's reluctance to take on the Manor may have been an act of kindness towards his niece or perhaps he was reluctant to displace her husband who out-ranked him in their military careers. Or perhaps at the age of 82 he was simply set in his ways.



The inscription on the headstone

His funeral plaque which still hangs inside the church may give another clue to his nature. The motto reads *Probitatem Quam Divitias* which translates as "integrity rather than riches".

The inscription at the head and foot of his and Christophora's resting place reads "not with our lips – but in our lives". In other words, it is not what we say, but what we do, and how we live our lives that matters.



Sir Robert Clayton's funeral hatchment hanging in St Wilfrid's Church Standish

You can see from his picture that he is from a very different age. It is fascinating to think that the man buried beneath the large flat stone was born in the year Bonnie Prince Charlie led the Jacobite rebellion; a man who fought in the war that resulted in the birth of America as a nation.



Entrance to Adlington Hall circa 1905

Incidentally the gate lodge to Adlington hall can still be seen on Chorley Road between Platt Lane and the White Crow. Another remnant of the Hall are the plinths on either side of the driveway. These were once topped by Sphinxes. It is believed Henrietta's husband, General

Robert Browne, built them. His distinguished military career included a period in Egypt which gave him an affinity with the country.

It is incredible the history we can find when we simply look around us.



The plinths remain today at the entrance on Chorley Road