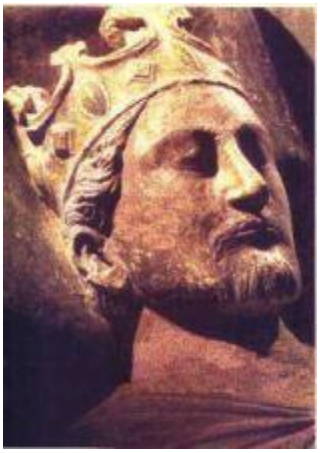
Radcliffe Family

Radcliffes family members – going back into history

The Radcliffe Family story in England dates back to the arrival of William the Conqueror from France in 1066.



The ancestor of the Radcliffe Family Ivo de Taillebois was a Norman Knight who invaded England with William the Conqueror.

The Family Name Radcliffe is derived from the area settled by the family ancestor Nicholas Fitz-Gilbert de Taillebois.

RADCLIFFE, a small town, a parish, and a sub-district, in Bury district, Lancashire.
The town stands on the river Irwell and it took its name from a red cliff on the opposite side of the Irwell.

Sir Nicholas de Fitz-Gilbert de Taillebois was rewarded by the King of England for services rendered in the Wars in Scotland with the ***'Manor of Radcliffe'***.

He was then known as Sir Nicholas **de Radcliffe** which became the family name.
The family name continued to evolve to the name **Radcliffe**.

Radcliffe Tower, Radcliffe near Bury, Lancashire

Source: Lancashire Past – Lancashire History Website & Blog

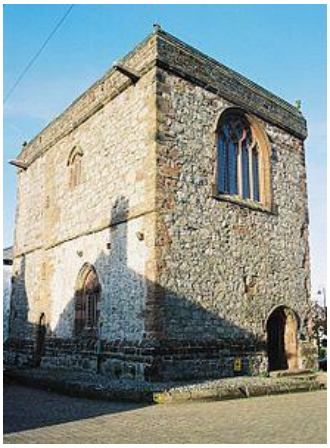
After the Norman Conquest of England, Nicholas FitzGilbert de Tabois was given confiscated Saxon manor land in the present day Radcliffe area. He took the name 'de Radclyffe' (which means of Radcliffe) and his descendants continued to live in the area for hundreds of years. They built a manorial house with a church alongside it on this naturally defendable site, which is protected on three sides by the River Irwell. The *'red cliff'* on one side of the river gives Radcliffe its name.

Radcliffe Tower

The earliest record of a fortified Pele tower is from 1358. It is probably this ruined structure that remains today, but why was it built? The 1300s was a time of ongoing war between England and Scotland. The Radcliffe family were participants, as Richard de Radcliffe fought with Edward I and his son Edward II in the Scottish Wars. In between these battles were devastating raids by both side into each other's territory.

This led to **Pele Towers** being constructed mainly in present day Cumbria and North Lancashire (for example see **Dalton Castle**).

Dalton Castle



Turton Tower

Scottish raids could reach as far as South Lancashire, where Radcliffe is today, and so defendable manorial homes were an option for a wealthy family. **Tower** is a similar building at Chapeltown near Bolton.

After the wars were over there followed two centuries of unrest where the inhabitants of the North were at the mercy of families acting as armed bands of thugs, namely the Border Reivers. Again, an attack this far south was not as likely as it was for those living close to the border, but South Lancashire was still within striking range.

As a typical Pele tower, Radcliffe Tower was three stories high. Storage would be on the ground floor in a strong stone vaulted room, and accommodation would be above. A Pele was built to repel attackers and Radcliffe Tower incorporated the following: massively thick walls, some 1.5 metres wide; huge draw bars that could be pulled across the backs of the doors to stop them being forced open; narrow ground floor windows to prevent entry, and restricted access to the first floor (in the form of a removable ladder or stairs). This latter measure meant that if attackers broke into the ground floor they could not easily get to the rooms above.

Radcliffe Tower would have been connected to a Medieval Great Hall, which would butt up directly against it. The Great Hall would be a timber frame building, consisting of a huge open room. At one end would be a large table where the family ate. At the other end would typically be doors leading to a buttery, pantry and kitchen. These would be blocked off from view by a large moveable wooden screen (a rare surviving example of which can be seen at **Rufford Old Hall**). The footprint of the Great Hall has been laid out in the grass on the site today, so you can get a feel for its size. For an idea of what both the outside and the inside would have look like, visit nearby **Smithills Hall** at Bolton). It was built in the same era and its Great Hall still survives to this day. It was also owned by the de Radcliffe family.

The footprint of the Medieval Great Hall

Smithills Medieval Great Hall, in Bolton

On 15th August 1403 King Henry IV gave James de Radcliffe a ‘licence to crenellate’ which meant permission to fortify his house. James had fought in the Battle of Shrewsbury and this could have been his reward for doing so. Seeing how he already had a Pele Tower, this was probably a permission for further fortified building work. Indeed the licence was for a new Great Hall with two thick walled stone wings, all enclosed by an outer wall. It appears that the second stone wing was never built, but the hall and tower were probably remodelled at this time.

In 1517 the manor of Radcliffe passed to a more distant branch of the family, that of Robert Radcliffe Lord Fitzwalter who later became the Earl of Sussex. His descendants sold Radcliffe Manor in 1561 to the local Assheton family who lived at Middleton Hall (near Rochdale).

The Asshetons did not move in, but leased the hall and its lands to tenant farmers. In 1765 the Earl of Wilton from Heaton Hall near Prestwich took ownership and it would remain with the Wilton family until the 1950s. Again it continued to be let to tenants and not occupied by the family themselves.

By the early 1800s much of its former grandeur was gone and people only continued to live in the small west wing. The Great Hall was converted to a barn and the Pele tower began to be used as farm buildings.

This saw the huge ground floor fireplaces being knocked through on the south and east walls, probably to give access to either farm carts or animals.

South wall of Radcliffe Tower, showing one of the huge fireplaces

By 1840 the Great Hall and west wing had been demolished as both were in a poor state of repair. Some of the stone from their foundations was used to make cottages close by. A new farmhouse was built to the north of where the Great Hall had stood. The Pele tower was spared, but it continued to be used as a farm building.

Throughout the twentieth century the site around the tower saw huge change. Although the tower was scheduled in 1925, the land around it was not protected and in the 1940s gravel quarrying began to the south of the tower. By the 1960s, the farmhouse and cottages had been demolished. Starting in the 1970s the quarry was used as a landfill, with huge trucks rumbling right past Radcliffe Tower. It was in a very sorry state, being protected only by a fence around it.

Gradually, the fortunes of the tower begun to turn and in 1988 Bury Council took over ownership. Conservation and stabilization of the structure followed- which included blocking the fireplace arches and two windows. The scheduling of the monument was extended to include the land that the Great Hall had stood on. By 2007 the landfill was gone, and Bury Council acquired the land surrounding the tower.

East wall of Radcliffe tower with another fireplace blocked up

From 2012 there followed a series of archaeological excavations. Many of these involved the local community, as well as Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University of Salford. In 2013 the Heritage Lottery Fund gave £267,000 to the Radcliffe Heritage Project to investigate the site and publicise their finds. Not only were the tower and hall site investigated, but also the later farm and cottages that were built nearby. Finds revealed that the Great Hall would have had a floor made from glazed tiles. Green ridge roof tiles were also discovered, which would have topped the thatch of the hall. Pottery included 15th century Cistercian ware which is made of a red clay with a brown iron glaze. This included drinking pots, some with one handle and some with two, as well as storage jars.

The diagonal roof line shows where the Great Hall would have met the tower. Note also the finer brickwork which would have had plaster on it for the inside of the hall

Today the medieval fabric of the tower has been professionally conserved and restored, and the area around it landscaped. Interpretation notices tell you all about the history of the site. If you examine the ground in front of the large doorway, you can see where the Great Hall would have butted up against Radcliffe Tower, as the archaeologists have helpfully left its footprint in the grass. If you look at the photograph above the diagonal roof line of the hall can be seen, and smaller irregular stonework of the interior wall which would have been plastered can also be made out. The three blocked large fireplaces are very obvious on three of the sides of the tower, created when the bottom floor was converted from a storage room to a kitchen.

Today Radcliffe Tower has been incorporated into Close Park which also has a heritage trail. An excellent website has been set up (the Radcliffe Manor Website- see link below) to give lots of details and pictures of the site and you can view the trail and more history by visiting it. The Tower and Park are supported by two groups: Friends of Radcliffe Manor and Friends of Close Park, and their links are also given below. It's a remarkable journey the tower has been on, and it is now a fantastic heritage destination for Radcliffe and the whole of the Lancashire region.

A 'Roundup' of the Radcliffe Family

- ✓ **The Radcliffe Family were hugely influential in England throughout the Middle Ages.**
- ✓ **Many stories exist on the Internet focusing on these more influential family members.**

Ivo de Taillebois

Source: The History Jar - Posted on **29 May, 2014**

Ivo de Taillebois arrived in England in 1066 with William of Normandy. Accounts are not clear cut as to who his parents were, Fulk of Anjou is a possible contender for the title. There is also a suggestion that like William, Ivo may have been illegitimate.
Many of the records related to Ivo are vague or lost. One thing is clear. He did well from the invasion. He gained parts of Lancashire, Westmorland and also Lincolnshire.
He became Sheriff of that County two years after the invasion and features as an extensive landowner in the Domesday Book. There is some debate as to how Ivo acquired Kendal or Kendale, which later became a barony.
The Strickland sisters say that he married a Saxon Noblewoman, **Lucy, Countess of Chester**, sister of the earls Edwin of Mercia and Morcar of Northumbria. Lands in Kendal would have come to him through his marriage but it is also evident that he was given lands by William Rufus.
It is certain that he gave the church in Kendale to St Mary's Abbey in York. It should also be added that the Scots were only driven out of Cumbria in 1092 – so Kendal was no sinecure.
The remains of his motte and bailey castle can be viewed at Castle Howe, the stone castle is from a later period.

But back to Lucy. She held lands in and around Spalding. This may have been part of the reason, along with his role as King's man, that Ivo found himself in Ely taking up arms against Hereward the Wake in 1071. Lucy's brothers were also caught up in the rebellion against the conqueror – making their lands forfeit- so Ivo seems to have done quite well out of it all.
No one seems to have recorded what Lucy thought of all this or the fact that she appears to have been married not once, not twice but thrice (her third husband being Ranulf le Meschin) dying in 1131.
One thing is clear though Lucy has disappeared into history leaving some very fragmentary and tantalizing historical evidence behind her.

In addition to Kendal, Ivo was also overlord of Furness. The man's family tree is complicated. Evidence suggested that he may have been married twice before marrying Lucy. Other evidence taken from Ingulph de Croydon- the Croyland Chronicle- and reproduced in Some Records of Two Lakeland Towns by Brydson paints an unappealing picture of Kendal's first Norman lord:

"All the people in his domains were very careful to appear humble before Taillebois, and never to address him without bending one knee to the earth, but though they were anxious to render him all homage, he made no return of goodwill.
On the contrary he vexed, tormented, and imprisoned them, and loaded them with daily cruelties; his truly diabolical spirit loved evil for evil's sake. He would often set his dogs to pursue other men's cattle, would scatter the animals far and wide, drown them in the lakes, maim them in various ways, and make them unfit for service by breaking their limbs or backs.
Ivo was not only absolved, but praised for all he had done in extortion, pillage, and murder."

Internet Comments

Sounds charming! And he was a forebear of Katherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth queen and also of George Washington.
Lucy is also known as Lucy of Bolingbroke from the Honour of Bolingbroke, a name given to her collection of estates.
Katherine Keats-Rohan presented a strong argument that Lucy's father was Thorold (aka Turold), who was Sheriff of Lincoln before the Conquest, and that her mother was a daughter of William Malet.
Thorold may have been closely related to Earl Leofric of Mercia and Lady Godiva, but the jury is out on that one.
Ivo had two daughters. Only the elder's name, Beatrix de Taillebois-Hephall, is now known; her mother may have been a wife of Ivo's who preceded Lucy.
Beatrix married Ribald, a half-brother of Count Alan Rufus, and Ribald adopted her surname.
There is circumstantial evidence that Ribald actively opposed the Harrying of the North – and why not, as it threatened to depress his rental returns!
Alan and Ribald had good reputations with the English and the Scots and endeavoured to make the North wealthy again. It is not too melodramatic to say that their arch-enemy was the man the English hated the most, Bishop Odo of Bayeux, who caused enormous trouble at every turn, in every way possible.