

# Introduction

The long and diverse history that is Park Hall's own unique story, 'vaguely' became known to me in 1974. I was at that time employed there as the assistant manager of the swimming pool. It wasn't until 2002, however, that I began to learn just how much history Park Hall really had.

All I ever knew about Park Hall during the 1970s was that it had been home to some of Lancashire's most influential families and of course the many ghost stories that always accompany such old historic buildings. It has amazed me that no one has bothered to write Park Hall's story before now.

Perhaps everyone (like me) thought it was just another old hall that had been some 'rich Squire's' house for years and was quite boring ... How wrong!

That illusion was shattered one day during a visit to Chorley Library. I was browsing through the local history section when I came across a book by a man called George Birtill. Mr Birtill was a renowned writer and had been the editor of our 'local rag' the *Chorley Guardian*. The book was called *Follow Any Stream*. In his book Mr Birtill had a couple of pages giving a brief account of Park Hall's history. It wasn't much, but it was more than enough to set me thinking.



*Camelot's own King Arthur, looking very regal and in command.  
Photograph © Park Hall.*

What made my eyes open was a paragraph that stated,

*'Park Hall's story began in the seventh century and had been the resting place for monks who had been travelling for seven years with the Body of St Cuthbert ... in a stone coffin!'*

I had taken up writing seriously only two years prior to this and I was hungry to learn more about Park Hall and St Cuthbert. I searched my local library and bookshops alike, but there was nothing. However, I was determined to find out more. I then intended to write an article and send it off to *Lancashire Life* magazine. I began my research and interviewed people who had been involved with Park Hall, such as John Rigby. John had been the man who owned and developed Park Hall during the 1970s. I also spoke to Mark Leader, the current Managing Director. Both were very helpful, as were the people at Durham Cathedral, where St Cuthbert's monastic see is based.

After my research was complete I began to write. By the time I had written what I believed to be a fair and honest account, I ended up with something that resembled a short story. I knew it would be far too long for submission to any magazine so I tried to cut it back and tighten it up here and there, yet I still had over 2,000 words. To have cut any more would have been detrimental to the story of what has gone on at Park Hall since its beginning and by now I had my teeth into it in such a way that I was not going to do that. So I have written it in the form of this book.

The decision to write a book meant that I had to do a lot more in-depth research and in doing so I have uncovered some areas of Park Hall's history that are best described as 'grey areas'. However I am going to let you, the reader, make up your own mind. It may be fact or it maybe folklore ... But remember! There is no smoke without fire!



*View of the lake as it is today. Photograph by Alec Price.*