

= Peckforton Castle =

Peckforton Castle is a Victorian country house built in the style of a medieval castle . It stands in woodland at the north end of Peckforton Hills 1 mile (2 km) northwest of the village of Peckforton , Cheshire , England . It is recorded in the National Heritage List for England as a designated Grade I listed building . The house was built in the middle of the 19th century as a family home for John Tollemache , a wealthy Cheshire landowner , estate manager , and Member of Parliament . It was designed by Anthony Salvin in the Gothic style . During the Second World War it was used as a hostel for physically handicapped children .

The Tollemache family used the castle for occasional gatherings , but otherwise it was unused until 1969 . From 1969 to 1980 the castle was leased by Lord John Tollemache to George W. Barrett , and it again became a private residence and closed to the public . The right wing and tower and the castle gardens were restored to their former glory by Barrett , an American employed by the U.S. Government . His daughter Pascale 's wedding was the first to be held in the chapel and a special decree had to be obtained by the Archbishop of Canterbury to legally hold catholic weddings in the grounds of the castle . During the 1970s and 1980s it was used as a location for shooting films and television programmes . The castle was bought in 1988 by Evelyn Graybill , who converted it into a hotel . In 2006 it was purchased by the Naylor family , who expanded its use to include hosting weddings , conferences , and other functions .

= = Early history = =

Peckforton Castle was built between 1844 and 1850 for John Tollemache , the largest landowner in Cheshire at the time , who was described by William Ewart Gladstone as " the greatest estate manager of his day " . Tollemache 's first choice of architect was George Latham of Nantwich , but he was not appointed , and was paid £ 2 @, @ 000 (£ 180 thousand today) in compensation . Instead Tollemache appointed Anthony Salvin , who had a greater reputation and more experience , and who had already carried out work on the Tollemache manor house , Helmingham Hall in Suffolk . The castle was built by Dean and Son of Leftwich , with Joseph Cookson of Tarporley acting as clerk of works . Stone was obtained from a quarry about 1 mile (2 km) to the west of the site , and a railway was built to carry the stone . The castle cost £ 60 @, @ 000 (about £ 5 @. @ 8 million as of 2016) .

Although it was built as a family home its design was that of a medieval castle . It has a gatehouse , a portcullis , a dry moat , external windows that are little more than arrow slots , and large towers . In 1851 The Illustrated London News said that it " seems to exhibit the peculiar beauties of Carnarvon Castle without its inconveniences " and in 1858 Sir George Gilbert Scott called it " the largest and most carefully and learnedly executed Gothic mansion of the present " and that it was " the very height of masquerading " . It is regarded as " the last serious fortified home built in England " and " it was executed to the highest standards and is one of the great buildings of its age " .

There has been debate about the motives for building a more @-@ or @-@ less complete medieval @-@ style castle in the 19th century . Although he was a great estate manager , Tollemache was also perceived as " a man of considerable eccentricity " . Dr Jill Allibone is of the opinion that he might have been protecting himself and his family from the political troubles of the time . In a defensive building he would be able to protect himself against any revolution by the masses from nearby Manchester or Liverpool . A possible practical reason for building such a solid residence rather than an Italianate @-@ style villa was to provide shelter from the adverse weather conditions which could affect the Cheshire plain . However Durley comes to the conclusion that the decisive factors were to use his " vast inheritance " to provide himself with a house that was " impressive , dominant and suitable for Cheshire 's greatest landowner " .

= = Location = =

Peckforton Castle stands in a wooded area near the northern extremity of Peckforton Hills at an

elevation of 469 @. @ 2 feet (143 m) . The land falls steeply downwards to the north and the west of the castle , and the Sandstone Trail , a long @-@ distance footpath , runs along the base of these slopes . The ruins of Beeston Castle stand on a separate steeply @-@ sloping hill 0 @. @ 75 miles (1 km) to the north . The village of Beeston is 0 @. @ 75 miles (1 km) to the northeast and the village of Peckforton is 1 mile (2 km) to the southeast . Access is via the road between Beeston and Peckforton .

= = Architecture = =

= = = Castle = = =

= = = = External = = = =

The castle is faced with red sandstone , and has lead , asphalt and tile roofs . It is mainly in three storeys with a five @-@ storey tower . The buildings are arranged around a ward with the principal accommodation on the north side . It is surrounded by a dry moat which is bridged at the gatehouse . To the west of the inner ward are the stables , the coach house , a rectangular bell tower and the kitchens and service area . To the north is the great hall range which consists of 18 bays . Behind the entrance to the hall is the circular main tower . At the east end of the gallery wing is the octagonal library tower . The outer walls of the castle have full @-@ height slender turrets at the changes in direction . Corbel tables support part of the battlements . The walls contain arrow slots , and in the gatehouse is a garderobe . The flat roof has a crenellated parapet .

= = = = Internal = = = =

The porch leads into the great hall which has a Minton tile floor and a large stone chimney piece . In the east wing is the long gallery which has oak panelling , a chimney @-@ piece and a panelled ceiling . Behind the long gallery is an irregularly @-@ shaped billiard room and the drawing room . To the south of these is the library . Behind the great hall is the main staircase . The circular tower at the north @-@ west corner contains the octagonal dining room with a Minton tile floor , two fireplaces , and a vault of eight radial ribs running to a central boss . The room contains an oak sideboard with a carved Green Man . Below the dining room is a wine cellar . On the fifth floor of the circular tower is a room designed for playing rackets , which is approached by a stone spiral staircase .

= = = Garden = = =

The castle had no formal garden , but at the bottom of the drive were kitchen gardens which included vegetable gardens , an orchard , extensive glass houses and a large orangery . At one time , 17 gardeners were employed .

= = = Chapel = = =

On the east side of the ward is the family 's private chapel , a Grade II * listed building . It was also designed by Salvin and is constructed of rock @-@ faced sandstone with a tile roof . Its plan consists of a two @-@ bay nave , a south aisle , a vestry , and a narrower and lower single @-@ bay chancel . On the gable ends of the nave and chancel are stone cross finials . Over the chancel arch is a cruciform stone bellcote . Inside the chapel an arcade of three Gothic arches separates the south aisle from the nave . The reredos is made of oak and is inscribed with the Lord 's Prayer and the Ten Commandments . The choirstalls and the benches in the nave are carved with poppyheads . The baptistry at the west end contains a carved stone font with a carved oak cover . Although it is

described as a modest building , the chapel is considered to " complete the ensemble " of the castle .

= = = Entrance lodge = = =

The entrance lodge to the southeast of the castle is also listed at Grade II * . It was designed by Salvin and is constructed in red brick and stone with a tile roof . It consists of an archway with a round turret behind and a two @-@ storey lodge to the left .

= = Later history and present use = =

Before moving into the castle in the 1890s , Wilbraham Tollemache , 2nd Baron Tollemache added central heating and electric light . In 1922 a large scheme of afforestation was started on the Peckforton Hills , and the resulting woodland has been granted the status of a Site of Special Scientific Interest . Bentley Tollemache , 3rd Baron Tollemache ? grandson of Wilbraham Tollemache ? and his family left Peckforton at the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 . During the war the castle was used as a hostel for physically handicapped children who had been evacuated from the London area . Bentley Tollemache died in 1955 and , as he had no sons , the estate passed to his cousin , John Tollemache . During the 1970s , 1980s and early 1990s , the castle was used as a location for shooting films and television programmes . These include the Doctor Who serial The Time Warrior , broadcast in 1973 ? 74 , and a 1991 movie of Robin Hood starring Patrick Bergin and Uma Thurman . From 1982 to 1986 , Treasure Trap , one of the world 's first live action role @-@ playing games took place on the site . In 1988 the castle was purchased by an American , Evelyn Graybill , for £ 1 million . She renovated most of the building and secured planning permission to convert it into a hotel . In 2006 Chris Naylor was married in the castle , following which the Naylor family bought the property . Peckforton Castle is now used as a luxury hotel and a venue for corporate events and weddings . The building was severely damaged by fire in June 2011 during a wedding , the cost of the damage being in the region of £ 6 million . In December 2011 the bridegroom admitted to a charge of arson .