

The Manor of East Lenham

Welcome to a “viewing” of a Manor House in East Lenham, based on professional research which was carried out for the Barr Family some years ago. ¹

The researchers who looked into the history of East Lenham Manor identified many primary sources² for the history of the manor. The history of East Lenham Manor is, unlike the history of the ‘Manor of Lenham,’ very well documented and could offer excellent sources for academic work. ³

When the researchers looked into what other people had written about East Lenham, they found this secondary source:

*Villare Cantianum of Kent,
Surveyed and illustrated by Thomas Philipott.
1st edition 1659.*

This document threw up the family names of Hussey and Parkhurst. Once the researchers had these names, they could start looking for primary sources connected to the names. They found the Inventory of a Manor House in East Lenham belonging to John Parkehurst⁴ who had purchased a ‘moiety’⁵ of the Manor of East Lenham from Henry Hussey in 1543. Using this inventory we have set up a ‘visit’ to the manor, which had 26 rooms spread over three floors. The pictures of rooms and furniture⁶ that we reproduce below are not from East Lenham as no pictures exist, but we hope they will help you visualise the interior.

As we walk from Lenham along the Stour, we encounter a watermill. This mill is mentioned in the Domesdaybook. It is also mentioned in the inventory and was still in use in 1830 as part of the East Lenham Estate in the ownership of the Knatchbull Family. The walls of the mill, now gone, were standing in the early 20th century

¹ Thank you to Catherine and Andrew Barr for sharing it with us.

² A primary source is a document which was written at that time in history.

³ A good starting point is the manorial document section at the National Archive

⁴ See: <https://wills.kentarchives.org.uk> Inventory Parkehurst John , Lenham, 1577/PRC/10/9/224

⁵ A “moiety” is defined as an equal part.

⁶ I am grateful to a friend for her expert advice that some of the furniture shown is “not quite right” in the period. There are of course also regional differences in furniture styles. I tried my best. It is however difficult to find images which can be used without infringing on copyright. The furniture shown will hopefully give a ‘rough idea’ of the interior to the lay person and I apologise to the expert.



Remains of Bone Mill, Lenham, Mick J Fuller

Eventually we reach the manor house in front of which are several service buildings:

- A milk house
- A cheese house - According to the inventory, there were three gallons of butter and many cheeses in the milk and cheese house together with the cheese press and cheese moulds.
- A brew house
- A barn
- A bakehouse containing a kneading trough, two moulding boards, and two wooden peels.⁷ There was also a second baking room for making sweet pastries. It was called the “little pastrye”. There two were two peeles, a baking pan and a moulding board.

Other outbuildings were the ‘sawse house’⁸ in which vinegar and candles were kept, a house containing two beehives, and a hen house.

In the same complex was the wash house with bowls and tubs and a small building in which clothes were folded after drying.

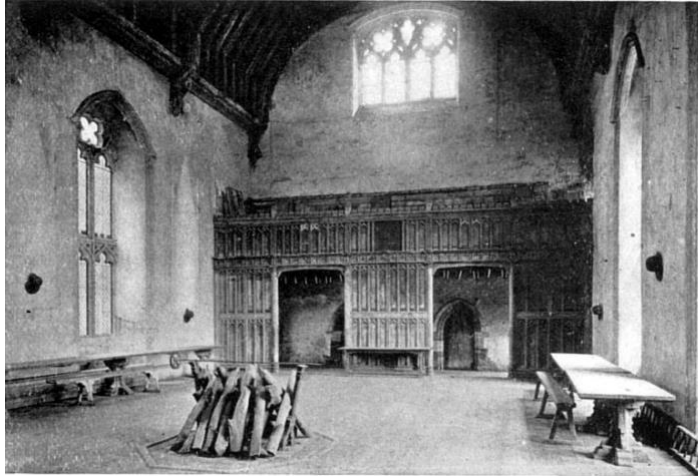
There was a vegetable garden and also a small pleasure garden to entertain guests.

In 1577, the home farm complex housed wheat, barley, oats, beans and “podware” (pulses). Hay was stored in the haylofts. Among the hay eaters were 9 cows, heifers and three young calves. Also recorded on the farm were 55 pigs, plus hens, capons, and two swans.

⁷ A peel is a wooden board on a long handle with which bread, or today pizzas, are pushed into a hot oven.

⁸ It seems that the middle English word ‘sawse’ means ‘pickling’ or preserving food. See: <https://www.quora.com/How-did-the-word-sauced-and-being-intoxicated-become-associated-with-each-other>

Entering the house you came into the **Great Hall** (here that of Penshurst)⁹ which was, unlike that of Penshurst, only one storey high with smaller windows. Above it was one of the bedrooms.



As we don't know whether our manor house was built from stone or from timber it could also have looked similar to this drawing of Gainsborough Hall¹⁰, but smaller and not extending to the full height of the building.

Just as in Gainsborough Hall, the hall in East Lenham was sparsely furnished.

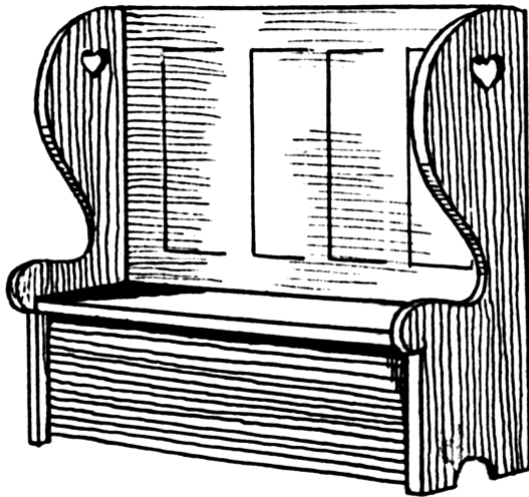


⁹ Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11766730>

¹⁰ Gainsborough Hall in Lincolnshire

By Richard Croft, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13068246>

There were two fireplaces in the hall and two settles¹¹ along the walls, and two forms.¹²



A settle

Forms at that time were simple benches and not very comfortable. They were used in schools, law courts and dining halls.



A forme

¹¹ At that time the seat was possibly more narrow

¹² This example dates from 1620 and is displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum

These furnishings give us an idea of other activities than meals and festivities which took place in the hall. It was the room in which the manorial court was held. East Lenham had its own manorial laws and rules, which were “enforced” at the sessions of the manorial court. Misbehaviour and rental arrears were dealt with by this court. East Lenham held these sessions irregularly and at times not at all.

There was also a chair,¹³ which was probably reserved for the person of the highest rank- the Lord of the Manor, his steward or the bailiff.



The hall also housed a “court cupboard”¹⁴

The name may derive from the French word “court” meaning “short” and indicates that the cupboard was not tall. It was used for storing eating and drinking vessels but could also be used for storing other things such as documents.



¹³ Chair from 1620 to 1625 , courtesy of the V& A.

¹⁴ Court cupboard from 1681, courtesy of V&A



On the wall of the hall were weapons. Possibly not to enforce the laws but to scare away villains or they could have been part of a knight's armour which the Lord of the Manor had to provide as part of his obligation the sovereign. There were in addition three pikes, a horseman's staff, and a pole axe which might have looked similar to this one in the Royal Armouries. ¹⁵

Behind the hall was the **Parlour**, best described as the family's comfortable living room. It must have been of a fair size to accommodate enough furniture for a large household. It also had two fireplaces.

In the Parlour were a round cupboard, a court cupboard, four tables, three forms, seven joint stools¹⁶ four footstools, two chair, twenty large cushions, and even a high chair.¹⁷



The bible and the two service books mentioned in the list were undoubtedly read at least on Sundays, if not every day.

¹⁵ <https://collections.royalarmouries.org/hundred-years-war/arms-and-armour/type/rac-narrative-1165.html>

¹⁶ These were very popular. They were sturdier than simple stools with splayed legs. The example here are 17th century <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/blogs/shakespeare-100-objects-joint-stool/>

¹⁷ By kind permission of Holmes antiques www.holmesantiques.co.uk



Also in this room were two playing tables and two virginals¹⁸

In the 21st century we are so used to pressing a button when we want to hear some music that we forget that in the not-so-distant past people had to sing or play an instrument in order to enjoy music. In previous centuries, the virginal (a form of harpsicord) was very popular with ladies of the upper classes. Female musicians of royal blood are recorded as

devotees of the virginal: the best-known example is Queen Elizabeth I of England, who was however very shy about playing in public.

From the family room, the parlour, we step into the **Little Parlour**, which was crammed with pewter pots and cups, drinking glasses, basins, bowls, dishes of various sorts, saucers, ewers and candlesticks. As it is named as a Parlour, not a storage room, it might have looked similar to the Pages Room at Penshurst, where household items were displayed.



Next to the Little Parlour was the **Study**, which contained a chair, a settle and a desk which was possibly a box with a slanted top similar to the one below.¹⁹

¹⁸ By Creator:Hans Ruckers the Elder - This file was donated to Wikimedia Commons as part of a project by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. See the Image and Data Resources Open Access Policy, CC0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=60922069>

¹⁹ Courtesy of the V&A made between 1580 – 1620



Going up the staircase to the first floor, we find a **Gallery** which might have looked like this ²⁰

On this floor were nine rooms, labelled “Chambers”. One of them, called the **Linen Chamber**, contained in addition to linen



A Chamber Pot

Not just one



BUT 16 chamber pots!

²⁰ image courtesy of Von Michael Beckwith - Haddon Hall Long Gallery, CC BY 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24305754>

The **Chamber above the Hall** had a joint bed²¹ surrounded by blue canvas curtains to provide privacy and keep out draughts²². There were two bolsters, two pillows, a pair of blankets and a coverlet. The truckle bed mentioned as underneath the bed was possibly used by a man/maid servant who might need to attend to the family member during the night. There were three other bedrooms, each with truckle beds under their beds.



Most of the chambers also contained chests²³ which were popular for storing items.



²¹ “joint” meaning that it was not crudely made but skillfully crafted using proper joinery techniques.

²² Courtesy of Weald and Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester which <https://www.wealddown.co.uk>

²³ The pictured chest is part of the collection at the V&A. It was made between 1650 and 1700 possibly in Cumbria. <https://framemark.vam.ac.uk/collections/2012FE5279/full/735,0/default.jpg>

Have you ever heard of a “livery cupboard”?



This one is in Shakespeare’s House in Stratford.

They were used for distributing food at night. The background of this piece of furniture gives us a whole new perspective on what constitutes a ‘good night’s sleep’. Historical research shows that people in the preindustrial era didn’t sleep for six or eight hours at a stretch. They had a pattern of having a two-hour nap after dawn, waking up very refreshed and making the best out of this often-long period after their ‘first sleep’. Medical advice of the period suggested that the best time to conceive was after the first sleep. Some people went to visit their neighbours, others prayed, and others ate!

The thought that six or eight hours of sleep

in one go is a modern invention might be comforting to those who wake in the night and think something is wrong with them.



The **Chamber above the Parlour** was even more luxurious than the one above the hall. It had a tester, hangings made of silk, lots of bedding and two tapestry coverlets. In addition, it contained a press, a great chest, a livery

cupboard, a table which, like the cupboard, was covered with a carpet. There was a chair, three forms and two stools. The wall hangings and a fire must have made the room very cosy.

The chamber over the larder was more sparsely furnished, but it too had a press, an old cupboard, and wall hangings. The nursery had a fireplace and was equipped with two beds, a truckle bed and much bedding. There were two wicker chairs, a stool and a livery cupboard, The cradle in the room was made of wicker.

A room named **Chapel Chamber** also contained two beds but these were of lesser quality and worth much less than the furnishings above the hall. Presumably, the name “Chapel Chambers” harks back to the time before the reformation when master bedrooms frequently had an en-suite prayer room, a chapel. ²⁴

HOW times change!

There were also two beds in the garret on the second floor above the kitchen. None of the rooms was identified as the “servants’ room” but it is very likely that the garrets were used by servants.

One of the chambers was stuffed full of items : a bed, a press, two cupboards, two chests, two coffers, a round table, three chairs and a fireplace.

An adjoining closet was similarly full : five chests, two pairs of trestles with three planks across, a desk, five hampers and lots of boxes and pots.

The house also had a **Buttery**. The word derives from ‘butt’(in the sense of ‘barrel’) and might have looked like this²⁵:



²⁴ An archaeological dig by Lenham Archaeological Society on the site of East Lenham had unearthed a piece of glass depicting a bishop. This glass would fit very nicely into this Chapel Room.

²⁵ As seen in the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester

Next to the buttery was the **Kitchen**, which might have looked rather like this one:²⁶



Our manor house had a great kitchen and a little kitchen. Food was prepared at the two tables and the cooks used pestle and mortar, a mustard quern (meaning a small handmill), a colander, as well as candlesticks, trays and tankards.

The cellar below the kitchen contained dripping-pans, grilling racks and bottles. The great kitchen had 5 spits, 5 kettles and trivets, pots and frying pans hanging from hooks. The heat must have been tremendous at times because there were another seven spits in the little kitchen!

We finish our tour in the kitchen, which in those days was not the “heart” of the house but a place of hard work.

²⁶ Gainsborough Old Hall