

The Manor of East Lenham Through Time

When we go back to Lenham in the year 1000 ,the area would have looked very different and we need to free our imagination of the images of the modern landscape. There would have been many woods, broken up by small fields and farmsteads.

The areas around the streams forming the Upper Stour would have been very swampy and wooded with alder trees and black poplar. These were the best places to keep the pigs. On the hills of the Kent Downs the vegetation would have been sparse but there would have been



much more scrub than today. Like today, there was not much livestock around. All land was in the ownership of the king. Cultivation of the land took place only in areas which were part of a manor. A manor was a landholding which the king had bestowed on one of his vassals, a noble man, a bishop or a knight. Other areas were completely wild. It was just such a piece of uncultivated land, between the Manors of Lenham and the Manor of Charing, that Queen Edith,¹ the third wife of Edward the Elder, King of Wessex. gave to the priory of Christ Church in Canterbury in the year 961.² The picture, held in the Royal Collection, shows an attractive etching of an older document in which she gifts certain lands in Lenham to Christ Church Priory. The older version is in Canterbury Cathedral.

¹ Courtesy of the Royal Collection

Queen Ediva was a patron of Christ Church Priory, a monastery attached to Canterbury Cathedral. Christ Church and St. Augustine's Abbey competed with one another in the quest to be deemed the most important monastic centre in the English church.³

Is it speculation to think that the abbot of St. Augustine who held the Manor of Lenham was not very happy to have a new manor not even a mile away?

When Lanfranc ruled as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1070–89, he objected to the privileged position of St. Augustine's abbey. The monks there could elect their own abbot, who was also privileged in that as he was entitled to wear a bishop's mitre. In addition, the abbey entertained very close links to Rome.

Queen Ediva had given this manor to Christ Church with no obligation to provide any secular (military) services to the crown. The manor had only to make its contribution to the upkeep of bridges, for example, Rochester Bridge.

After the Norman Conquest, however, Archbishop Lanfranc changed these terms and his steward Godifrid Dapiser had to supply the living of a knight and his family. Part of this responsibility included a suit of armour and a horse.

There are some other 'oddities' about East Lenham. Manors were part of an administrative unit called a 'Hundred'. Lenham was in the hundred of Eyhorne, (that is all of it which lies westward of a line drawn from the centre of Chilston House, northward to the east end of the church, and thence to Warren Street on the top of the chalk hills.)

East Lenham was in the Hundred of Calehill, and thus in the eastern division of Kent..

However New Shelve and Old Shelve, which lie east of East Lenham were also in the Hundred of Eyhorne, in the western division of Kent.

Did this arrangement perhaps reflect a political agenda?

Is it designed to prevent that the large Manor of Lenham, under the control of the Abbot of St. Augustine, could exercise any power over the smaller manor of East Lenham ?

Was this the reason why the Manor of East Lenham was assigned to the same administrative unit as the Manor of Charing with its Archbishop's Palace ?⁴

We might never know for certain.



Back to the Domesday Book:

³ <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/st-augustines-abbey/history-and-stories/history/>

⁴Charing was one of 17 medieval palaces in the possession of the archbishopric of Canterbury and dates back to the 8th century

The Domesday Book records that there were
21 households on the Manor consisting of 15 villagers

2 small holders
4 slaves (serfs)

They all lived and worked in the manor.

2 carucates ⁵of land had to be worked for the sole benefit of the Lord of the Manor (demesne land) and four carucates were farmed by the labourers for their own benefit. There were six acres of meadow and woods for the pannage of ten hogs.

One plough team of eight oxen could till an area of land of 1 carucate, which equals 120 acres. So two of the lord's plough teams worked solely for the benefit of the lord i.e. 240 acres

But there were also four plough teams for the villagers , which means an additional 480 acres

Which makes up 720 acres ploughed land

Plus six acres of meadow and woodland capable of supporting 10 swine herds

What is called East Lenham Farm? today is smaller than 720 acres. According to Hasted⁶ and accounts in the Kent Archive, the Manor of East Lenham had a parsonage and parsonage land which became an independent entity from the manor after the reformation. The parsonage and the parsonage land will have been associated with a chapel or even a church. A predecessor church to Charing Heath Church might be a strong candidate to be the former manorial church of East Lenham.

The family name 'Lenham' started off in East Lenham with 'Roger de Lenham' who resided in about 1211 at the Manor of East Lenham. Hasted writes that the family took their name from the place. He also records a Nicholas of Lenham in the year 1249. Later they are recorded all over the country. In fact, several famous cricketers bear that name. (Leslie John Lenham, for example, is an English former cricketer who played first-class cricket for Sussex from 1956 to 1970).

Hasted names the following Lords of the Manor:

Roger de Lenham	time of King John 12 and 13
Nicholas de Lenham	35th yr of Henry III's reign
John de Lenham	Edward I

The Lenhams handed the Manor over to the Hadlos

Roger de Hadlo
Simon de Hadlo Edward III



⁵ Depending on soil consistency a carucate could be anywhere between 60 and 180 modern acres.

⁶ Edward Hasted, Parishes: Lenham, in ' The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, Volume 5 (Canterbury 1798) pp415-445

John Horne Henry V and VI
(John Proffit (married Alice Horne)
Elizabeth Proffit married John Chauncey from Herefordshire (died 1546)
Hasted then continues that from the Chauncey family East Lenham went directly



to the Knatchbulls.

However, from other sources⁷ in the archives we know, that the Knatchbulls were owners of East Lenham from ca. 1660.

The question is

Where is Mr. Hussey and where is Mr. Parkehurst whose manor we visited ?

The archives hold a document: “The lands of Mr Parkehurst “ It ends in in 1573 with Sir William Parkehurst. and is a summary of “surviving deeds of the manor of East Lenham”. The succession of ownership is described as follows:

1524 manor went to John Chauncey through marriage to Elizabeth Proffit

Easter 1543 moiety⁸ went to Henry Hussey

From him to his heir John Hussey 1547

On June 22nd 1544 the land went to John Parkehurst (our man!!!)

and we can read in this document that on

25.11. 1549

“ Henry Chauncey, Robert Chauncey sonnes of Henry Chauncey and Elizabeth convey the moiety of the manor of East Lenham to John Parkhurst and his heirs forever”???

In the archives there are also receipts from 1642 and 1643 which Katherine Parkhurst, the widow of the second John Parkhurst had prepared in the hope that she would receive outstanding rent. In these receipts she describes her late husband (1640) as “the Lord of the Manor of East Lenham”.

The unresolved problem is however that this record is for the conveyance of a moiety...a half of the manor. Where is the other half?

There are several possibilities, but these have to be researched more thoroughly in due course. However I would like to explore the aspect of the Parsonage of East Lenham which was, according to Hasted taken out of the manorial estate after the dissolution of the monasteries. He writes: ‘*The parsonage of East Lenham becoming thus part of the possessions of the see of Canterbury, was let by the archbishop, among the rest of the revenues of the priory of St. Gregory, in one great lease for twenty-one years, at the yearly rent of fifty-five pounds.*

In 1643, Sir Robert Honeywood, of Charing, was head lessee of these premises. Philip, earl of Chesterfield, afterwards held it, as heir to the Wottons, after whose decease, s. p. in 1773, the

⁷ See: Inventory for East Lenham Manor, owner John Parkhurst 1640 PRC/11/7/90 and rental accounts for Knatchbulls from 1664 https://www.kentarchives.org.uk/collections/getrecord/GB51_U274_1_1_1_5

⁸ Moiety meaning a part

lease of them was sold by his executors to George Gipps, esq. of Canterbury, M. P. for that city, who is the present possessor of it; but Sir Edward Knatchbull, bart. owner of East Lenham manor, is the present lessee under him, for the parsonage of East Lenham, at the yearly rent of seventeen pounds. ‘

It will be very much worthwhile for future research to investigate the deeds of the Knatchbull family in respect of the deeds of the parsonage .

For the time being I will continue with the ownership of the manor under the Knatchbills.

By 1660 the Knatchbull Family owned the manor. The head of the family was then Sir Norton Knatchbull ⁹who was knighted in 1641. Norton Knatchbull was a biblical scholar and politician. He inherited the estate of Mersham Hatch from his uncle. He was knighted in 1639 by Charles I and made a baronet in 1641. He did not ally himself with Oliver Cromwell and stayed away from parliament. He wrote books instead.

In 1660 he and his son John were elected MPs for New Romney.. After he was widowed, he married Dorothy, a daughter of Robert Honywood of Charing. In 1662. She was also widowed and they had no children.

⁹ Painting by Samuel Dirksz van Hoogstraten, courtesy of Wikipedia

1660 was an important year in the history of the country as the return of Charles II heralded a



period of stability and economic recovery. The manorial system was officially abolished and maybe it was in this context that the Knatchbull Family had their Lenham estate mapped.¹⁰

Norton Knatchbull died in 1685 and is buried in Mersham Hatch. The estate of the Manor of East Lenham remained in the family until the 19th century. The Knatchbolls were, with the exception of the Honywoods, the first family to take an interest in the wellbeing of 'Lenham.' They asked to have a pew in Lenham church; they were involved in running the Honywood charity and in later years their tenants, the Powell Family (William and James) were involved in Lenham as churchwardens and also as trustees of charities.

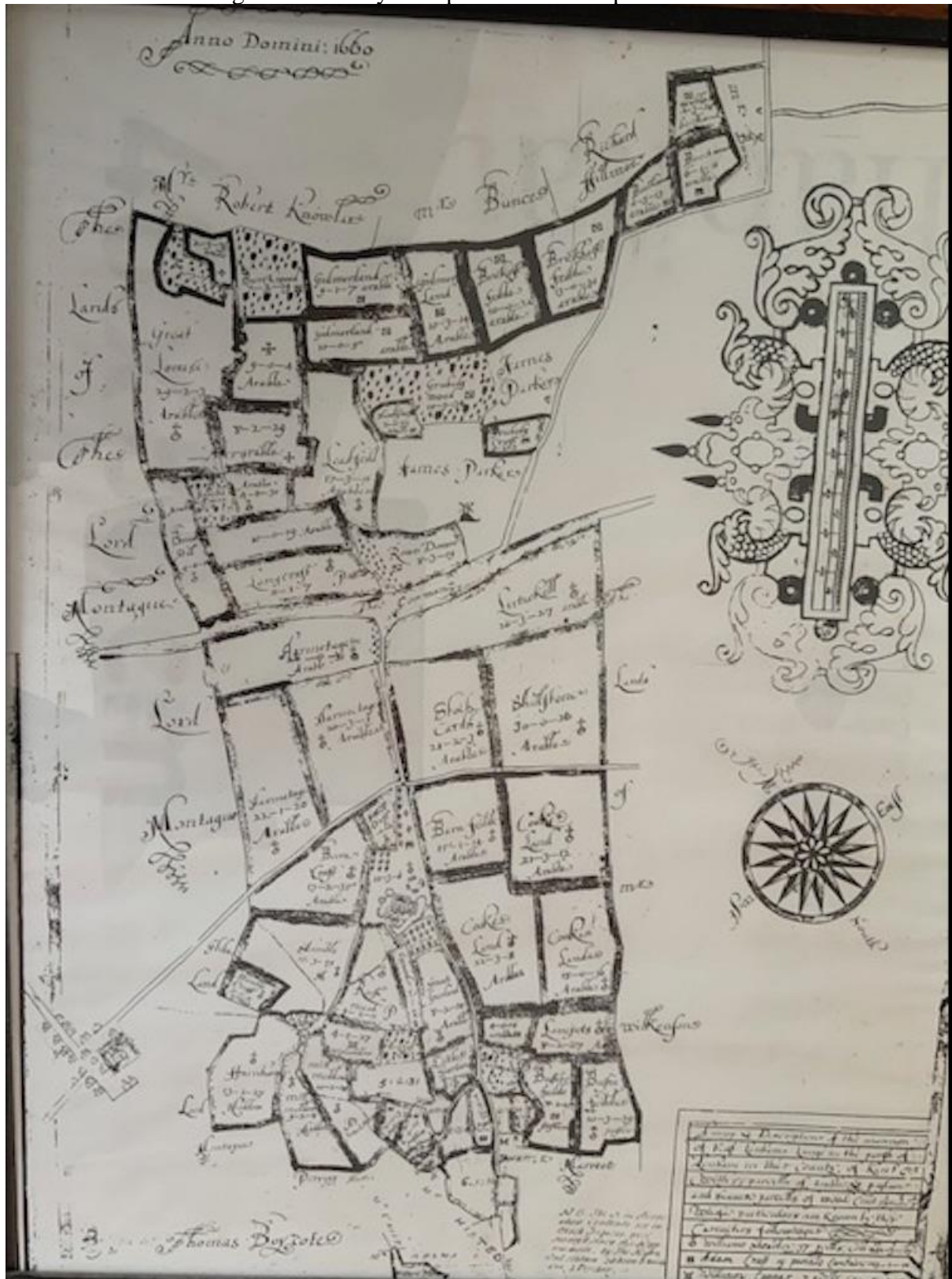
It may be primarily thanks to the Knatchbull family that East Lenham still exists as an entity today.

East Lenham Estate was eventually bought by Lord Chilston. It was possibly after the Corn Laws had come to an end, the price for agricultural goods fell and agricultural depression set in. It was at that time that many large landowners sold land and consolidated their estates. This suited Lord Chilston, who, having lost interest in his Scottish estate., wanted to establish himself as a major landowner in Kent.

It proved very difficult for him to find good tenants. In his notebooks he complains how difficult it is to find good tenants. The tenant in East Lenham was no exception and so he started advertising for tenants in Scotland. One farmer who came from Scotland in 1896 was Andrew Barr, the grandfather of Andrew Barr sen. who after a short time on Greenhill Farm in Egerton became tenant of East Lenham Farm in 1902 and in 1920 could eventually buy the

¹⁰ Courtesy of the Barr Family

farm. The farm he bought was exactly as depicted on the map of 1660.



The manor house however had long gone by then and had been replaced with a Georgian Farmhouse ¹¹



which was, like the rest of the farm in need of much work. Whilst in the hand of the Barr family the farm at East Lenham became an example of good husbandry. In 1966 they received the accolade of “Best Kept Farm in Kent” and over several years their flock of sheep won the national award for their Romney Flock and for breeding a Champion Romneys Ram. In more recent years the farm gained a reputation for outstanding soil management. Over the generations the Barrs have been actively involved in village life and, like some of the previous owners of the former manor, contributed much to cricket and village life in Lenham.

¹¹ Image courtesy to the Barr Family. Depicted is the first Andrew Barr with his family

