



The Chequers - a market building?

By Henny Shotter

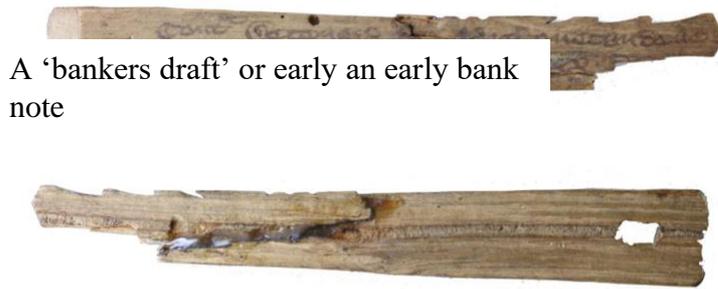
Lenham's Fish Bar and restaurant in Lenham Square, has a very interesting and chequered history, which we explore in our section about Public Houses.. The name quite possibly harks back to the word 'exchequer'. Today we know this word best in the context of 'Chancellor of the Exchequer'.

However, the word used to describe the sovereign's department responsible for the collection and management of taxes. In olden days, a chequer board was used as a device to keep track of income and expenditure. This chequer board gave the Treasury Department its name. The Exchequer was also responsible for establishing and controlling the weights in the marketplace.



Weights and measures in the Exchequer, 15th century. Credit: [Wellcome Collection](#). [Attribution 4.0 International](#) (CC BY 4.0)

The exchequer was also empowered to make payments on behalf of the sovereign. Under Henry I¹, a procedure was adopted by which the treasurer asked the local sheriffs² for an account of all the income derived from the King's own (demesne) land and from other expected local taxes. The local place where this tax was paid was the exchequer.



A 'bankers draft' or early an early bank note

By Winchester City Council Museums - Flickr, CC BY-SA 2.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=39255824>

Hazelwood was marked with notches on its whole length. The first notch was a hand's width down on the stick and marked 1000 pounds. The next was a thumbs width down and marked 100 pounds hands width down on the stick. The width of the little finger marked 20 pounds and so on. A single cut, just a little kerb without removing any wood marked a penny. Each entry had to be marked on the stick with ink to make it valid. Then the stick was split lengthwise. The longer part (the stock) was kept by the issuer (the taxman), the shorter part (the foil) was given as receipt.

When put together the two pieces would 'tally up'.

A 'bankers draft' or early an early bank note.



¹ He was the 4th son of William the Conqueror and was king of England between 1100 to his death in 1135

² The local representative of the sovereign who was in charge of keeping the peace in the county

³ See Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tally_stick#Split_tally

In recent months documents from the 17th century relating to the Manor of Lenham have appeared on the internet.⁴ (For the historic context of these papers, please go to our entry about the Manor of Lenham). One of these documents relates to a lease of the market building to a Thomas Bartlett in Lenham.

‘HENRY WILFORD, of Quindon, Essex, Lease for Twenty-one Years to Thomas Bartlett, of Lenham, of the Market-House, with all the Stalles, Standinges, Penthouses, &c., thereunto belonging, with the benefit of the Faires and Markets, the profit and benefit of the Pound and Poundage, with ten parcels of Meadow, Pasture, and Arable Land; namely, Windmill-Bank, the Workehouse Close, with Meadow adjoining, Pasture-Fields lying near Lenden Cross, and Little Blackman's lying in Harrietisham's Lane; the Court Lodge Close, &c., in the Town of Lenham. April 7, 1630. ‘



The market building from Titchfield, now in the Weald and Downland Living Museum near

It is unlikely that the Chequers in its current built form was once the market building. Market buildings looked very different. If their base layout was rectangular, they were normally aligned with the perimeter of the market, but there are examples of octagonal or round market buildings which were in the middle of the market.

At the Weald and Downland museum a sign informs the visitors that most markets buildings were

taken down after they became obsolete in the 18th and 19th century and replaced by other buildings

⁴ These documents are published in: Descriptive Catalogue of the Original Charters, Royal Grants, and donations: many with seals, in fine preservation, monastic chartulary, official...court baron, court leet and rent rol Available as google book and as kindle version
Abbey Battle, Thomas Thorpe, Sir Thomas Proud, Sir Godfrey Vassal Webster 5th Bart.



The Yarn Market in Dunster photo by Herbythyme - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9005976>

The Lenham market seized trading in the 18th century. Hasted⁵ tells us: ‘the market which was granted to the abbot of St. Augustine's, as has been mentioned before, to be held within his manor here, has been discontinued many years, but in 1757 there was an attempt made to revive it for the buying and selling of corn, and other such commodities, and it was ordered by the lord of the manor to be held on a Friday weekly, but I am informed it has been but little resorted to.’

Charles Igglesden in his ‘A Saunter through Kent’ describes an encounter with one Lenham villager: ‘Aye’, says one, them’s was the days when we had de market ders outside de Chequers, wid de corn market over’ead. Aye, things was cheap in dem days, three big oysters a penny, and real flavoury ones, too, right out of Faversham Creek.’ Igglesden goes on telling ‘The old man’s memory serves him well, for in the Square that the market was held, and over the stalls was erected the corn dealers room, upheld simply by means of trestles. When the latter came into disuse some gay young spirits of the place pushed the whole wooden structure boldly over, and it was never reconstructed.’⁶

⁵ Edward Hasted, 'Parishes: Lenham', in *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent: Volume 5* (Canterbury, 1798), pp. 415-445. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-kent/vol5/pp415-445> [accessed 15 January 2021].

⁶ Charles Igglesden, *A Saunter through Kent with Pen and Pencil*, first published by The Kentish Express, Ashford (1900)

From that description we can conclude that the building was a structure with a timbered arcade and the exchequer (see picture) above.

In 1840 the Lenham exchequer was based in the Dog and Bear⁷

available as e-book: www.archive.org/detail/sauntersthroughke00igg/
⁷ Pigot's directory of 1840