

# LENHAM CAMP 1781<sup>1</sup>

*By Henny Shotter*

A field called ‘Camp Field’, a tune called ‘Lenham Camp’ and a poem written at ‘Lenham Camp’ were unmissable clues that there must have been a military camp in Lenham, but, nevertheless, it seemed to have been forgotten until it was ‘re-discovered’ by members of Lenham Heritage Society some time ago.

Just before lockdown in 2020, the Royal Collection published military maps collected by George III. Among these, there is the map of Lenham Camp.<sup>2</sup>



**The encamped regiments** are: Berkshire Militia (light blue on the map); Northamptonshire Militia (black on the map); Montgomeryshire Militia (blue on the map); 16th Dragoons/Light Horse (blue on the map); 20th Dragoons/Light Horse (yellow on the map).

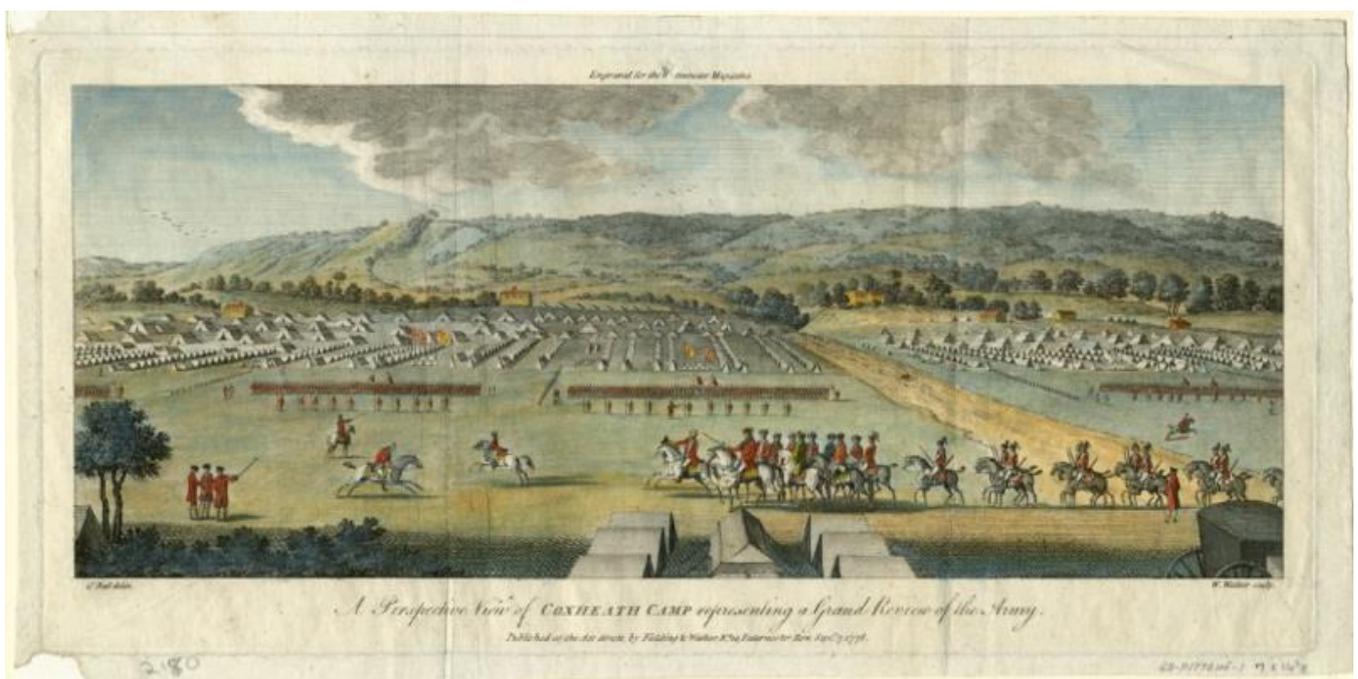
<sup>1</sup> A special thank you to Gail Duff, Steve Finnis, Lesley Feakes, Gail Grieg, Richard Maylam, Amy Myers and Annette Tomarken for their help and advice.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2021

**The location of the camp:** In Lenham Heath, to the west of Bull Hill and to the north of Lenham Heath Road. Lenham Heath Road was at that time the major route from London to the coast. In one of the corners of the camp was the ammunition magazine. The place is still locally known as : ‘The Magazine’. ‘Camp Field’ is in close proximity to the Iron Age/Roman site near Mount Castle. Due to the camp’s proximity to this site, it was assumed for some time that the name points to a Roman connection. It is likely that Lord Radnor who was commissioned as a Captain in the Northamptonshire Regiment<sup>3</sup> of Militia on 27 September 1779 was stationed at Lenham Camp. A hoard of coins<sup>4</sup> discovered near the camp was presented by Lord Radnor to the British Museum.

**Some background:** There were several George III camps in Kent. The *London Gazette* of May 19<sup>th</sup> 1781 names Chatham, Lenham and Cox Heath. We assume that it was due to the influence of the Mann and Cornwallis Family that the Cox Heath Camp and Lenham Heath Camp were established. The Manor House of Boughton Malherbe and Linton were in their ownership. Horatio Mann’s sister Catherine was married to the Reverend James Cornwallis who was between 1773 and 1785 rector of Boughton Malherbe. He was the younger brother of Charles Cornwallis, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess Cornwallis who fought in the American War of Independence and who surrendered to the Americans in 1781.<sup>5</sup>

Cox Heath Camp<sup>6</sup> was the largest camp in Kent and was famous for frivolous activities<sup>7</sup> involving famous ladies and scandals such as the ‘Hanoverian Standoff’.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob\\_Pleydell-Bouverie,\\_2nd\\_Earl\\_of\\_Radnor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Pleydell-Bouverie,_2nd_Earl_of_Radnor)

<sup>4</sup> <https://finds.org.uk/database/hoards/record/id/2720>

<sup>5</sup> An interesting link to the topic is here: <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/spotlight-primary-source/surrender-british-general-cornwallis-americans-october-19>

<sup>6</sup> Contemporary, image in the public domain, thanks to wikimedia

<sup>7</sup> These activities are vividly described here: <https://blog.adkinshistory.com/coxheath-camp/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://nelsonlambert.blogspot.com/2011/07/hanoverian-standoff-maidstone-affair-of.html>



The Camp was subject to theatre plays as well as gossip in the papers, which would make some modern Royals fume. There was even a novel written: ‘Coxheath Camp: a novel in a series of letters. By a lady in two volumes.’<sup>9</sup>

The Camp in Lenham had its own scandals. One was reported in the *Kentish Gazette* of 6<sup>th</sup> September 1882 and possibly involved either John Hamilton of Chilston Park or Horatio Mann of Boughton Malherbe<sup>10</sup>, who was a keen hunter. The *Kentish Gazette* reported that a gentleman ‘remarkable tenacious of his game’ had launched a formal complaint that the Light Dragoons had been shooting too close to his premises. The General firmly denied the allegation, much to the embarrassment of the gentleman (who, seemingly,

was not used to being rebuked). However, the affair was not finished. An unknown poet took to his quill and published a poem in which the gentleman was ridiculed: <sup>11</sup>

*‘Oh, me! How bless’d are happier Galeias skies,  
No hare is murdered and no partridge dies.  
Ah, me! How bless’d are Gallia’s richer sons,  
Whose game is sacred even from soldiers’ guns.  
In that dear land for lords of manors meet,  
The lord reigns monarch of his ancient seat.’*

To add insult to injury, the poet laments that he would be better off in France (the old enemy!)

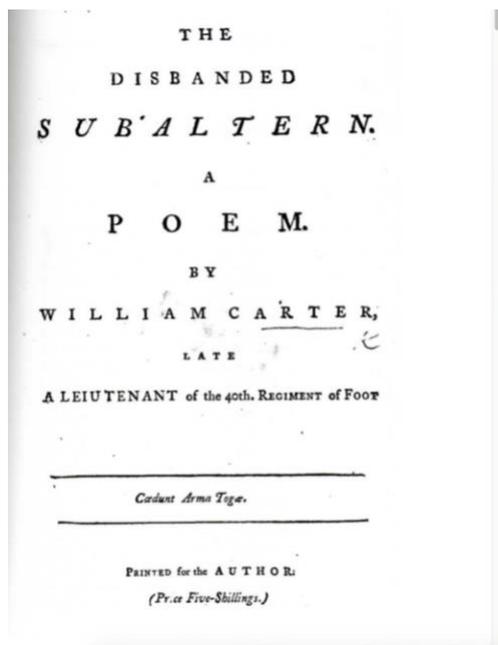
*‘Of that poor pension-let me fly, let me fly,  
And with my cash reclaimed a lordship buy!  
In France thrice glorious! Lords of Manors sell  
Their quails and pheasants by the market bell.  
Here Venison only to the market goes,  
Our English squires send only Bucks and Does.  
Oh, how I envy Gaul her wiser laws,’*

<sup>9</sup> First published in 1779, re-printed as paperback in 2010 by the British Library

<sup>10</sup> Image in the public domain, thanks to wikipedia

<sup>11</sup> Lilian-Boys Behrens, *‘Love-Smugglers and Naval Heroes’* London: Cecil Palmer, 1929. First edition, p. 156-157

Another poem, **'The Disbanded Subaltern'**, also written at Lenham Camp, is more widely distributed.



**The Poem:** Initially in 2018, Lenham Heritage Society was made aware of a poem which was written, as stated on the cover of a Google book edition, at Lenham Camp by one William Carter (possibly a pseudonym) : *The Disbanded Subaltern*. The book is widely available on the internet and as a reprint by the British Library. We assume this ubiquity is due to the fact that another book, which describes the 'Battle of Bunker Hill', is attributed to the same author <sup>12</sup>: *A genuine detail of the several engagements, positions, and movements of the Royal and American armies, : with an accurate account of the blockade of Boston; and a plan of the works on Bunker's Hill, at the time it was abandoned by His Majesty's forces, on the seventeenth of March, 1776. In a series of letters to a friend.*

The book cover shows a motto: 'Cedant arma togae' which translates to: . 'Let arms concede to the toga (Let war yield to diplomacy)', which goes back to Cicero's *De Officiis* 1, 22. The motto gives a clue about the outcome of the story. The poem, actually an 'epistle' or letter, is addressed to a 'friend' , as is the book about Bunker Hill. The author's name is possibly a pseudonym and there has been much debate ever since the book was published as to whether he was indeed a lawyer who belonged to the militia for some time and never saw a battle or was a career military man.<sup>13</sup> Opinions differed, too, in the discussions of Lenham Heritage Society members. If he had been at war himself, would he have needed to draw so extensively from the wartime experiences of a former neighbour and war veteran named Tenaille (page 12):

*'You knew Tenaille who occupied of late  
The snug brick house which fronts our paddock gate: '*

Tenaille seemingly fought in the War of Austrian secession at Dettingen (1740), where the British army and their allies were victorious; and at Fontenay ( 1745), where they lost. The author dedicates two and a half pages to Tenaille's accounts of army life. Why, if he could have drawn from his own experiences?

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<sup>12</sup> Free to read as google book:

[https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A\\_Genuine\\_Detail\\_of\\_the\\_Several\\_Engageme/1jFEAQAAMAAJ?hl=enhttps://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/browse?type=lcsbuc&key=Carter%2c%20William%2c%20Lieutenant%20in%20the%2040th%20Regiment%20of%20Foot&c=x](https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/A_Genuine_Detail_of_the_Several_Engageme/1jFEAQAAMAAJ?hl=enhttps://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/book/browse?type=lcsbuc&key=Carter%2c%20William%2c%20Lieutenant%20in%20the%2040th%20Regiment%20of%20Foot&c=x)

<sup>13</sup> See: The monthly Catalogue of Poetry, 1881, page 148

The poem starts with an atmospheric description of the camp, which, remarkably, reflects the views from Camp Field in Lenham Heath: The midday sun shines over the camp. The narrator lies listlessly on his bed of straw. The soldiers, who were on guard the previous night, sleep blissfully or dream of encounters on their nightly rounds. Others attend to their weapons, clean their belts or repair their worn clothes. Others fill the hot long day with poor jokes or tuneless songs. One moment the steaming land seems to dance in mockery, then the next the land lies in stillness and you only hear the lads in the camp's kitchen greeting their comrades. Down at the bottom of the hillside lies a pond which feeds a mill. He looks at the rich colours of the land and the varied landscape, the fields of waving gold, the jutting quarry face (these chalk quarry faces on the Downs are overgrown today and no longer visible) and the grey of the fallow land. Some sun-burnt soldiers wash and enjoy the freshness of the water. A piper breaks the drowsy spell hanging over the camp and forces the men to move on.

In his contemplation he gregarious joys of army of a lawyer in London. admired by pretty girls through the villages in uniforms<sup>14</sup>. When calling are made welcome by the even give them their drink and chant while walking enjoy much camaraderie. with the life of a London before. The London light the air full of foul smells people, and the colleagues reserved.

After this comparison it of a surprise that he his chosen profession as a didn't actually have a

American War of Independence had been lost, the feeling of loss was real for many and large sectors of the army were disbanded.



Grenadier of the 40th Regiment of Foot in 1767

compares the life with the dull life The soldiers are when they march their shiny in at a hostelry, they landlord, who might for free. They sing in the fresh air and This compares badly lawyer, which he led is described as dim, from animals and haughty and

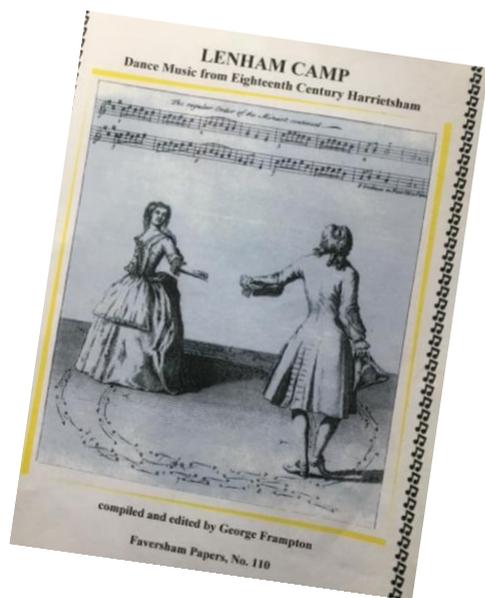
comes as somewhat decides to go back to lawyer. Maybe he choice, as the

<sup>14</sup> Image in the public domain courtesy of Wikipedia. The hat of this uniform is of a new type. The traditional style was broad rimmed made of beaver skin and in shape similar to the hat Napoleon wore. The broad rim often interfered with the musket when it was shouldered or when it was aimed at a target. The new style was more musket-friendly.

A tune called 'Lenham Camp' was collected by Robert Thomas Bottle of Harrietsham (1761-1849) and published under *Faversham Papers 110* in 2010.<sup>15</sup> The music was discovered, compiled and edited by George Frampton with help from his friend Paul Malyon.

In his foreword, Frampton speculates about the potential existence of a camp in Lenham, as there was a proliferation of local dance music from this period.

The tune was performed by Gail Duff for the Lenham Heritage Society and provided a cheerful conclusion to the research into this topic.



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<sup>15</sup> The collection of tunes is available from the Fleur de Lys Heritage Centre in Faversham