

# *Walk Awhile*

## *Briefing Paper 31*

### **Lenham Village Square**

Lenham has been described as once being a flourishing market town on the old coach road to Canterbury. The town was granted a market by charter of the King in the thirteenth century. On the north side of the market square can be found the Saxon Pharmacy. It is so named because during restoration work in nineteen forties a Saxon grave was discovered that had been left undisturbed since the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The building is a typical Wealden timber framed house and has a tall medieval window and a king-post roof..

Also on the north side of the square is the Limes Hotel and restaurant. The building is an original timber framed building dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Turning to the west side of the square one can see the Dog and Bear Hotel. This old coaching dates back to 1602. Queen Anne visited the Hotel in 1704 and her coat of arms can be seen above the door. Many of the buildings in the square date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century and had Georgian and Victorian fronts added to them.

The village of Lenham formed part of the Lordship of Kenwulf, King of Mercia, in the 8th Century. Kenwulf granted land in Lenham to the Abbott of St Augustine's Abbey and by AD 839 the land owned by the Abbot amounted to half the present Parish Lenham. The Domesday Book records that in 1086 the population of the village consisted of 250 adults.

On the south side of the square stands St.Marys church. The original church was burnt down in what has been described as a mysterious act of arson in 1297. Records show that the culprits were never identified. However the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and early 14<sup>th</sup> century was a period of much friction between church and common people in Kent. Between 1272 and 1278 there are records of violent disputes between townspeople and the church in Canterbury and in 1318 local people in Thanet rioted and burnt buildings in connection with disputes over rents owed to St.Augustine's Abbey.

Behind the church can be found a Norman tithe barn. The church suffered a disastrous fire in 1297, and in the following year Archbishop Winchelsea excommunicated the incendiaries (names unknown) who wilfully caused the destruction of the church and adjacent tithe barns. The church was rebuilt in the early 14th Century and the tower was added in the 15th Century.

The present tithe barn dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century but unfortunately an adjacent barn of similar stature was destroyed by fire in the 1960's.

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