

Ingatestone Hall 02/07/2019

Currently the residence of the 18th Baron Petre. Not all of the previous 17 barons used it as their main residence, some preferring Thorndon Hall.

Entry is through an arch with a bell tower atop into a courtyard.

The land on which the hall stands was given by King Edgar to the abbey at Barking in 950AD. The secretary to the abbey built a house there.

In the 1530's William Petre was working for Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's man. He accompanied Cromwell in inspecting religiously held property prior to seizure by Henry, including the site of Ingatestone Hall. After the dissolution of Barking Abbey Petre bought the property from The Crown for £849 12s 6d, paid over 4 years. He had wanted to be close to London as he was a Secretary of State to Henry VIII and subsequently Edward 6th, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I. He also sought good fertile land and a water supply. The abundant supply of spring water served the estate for hundreds of years, Ingatestone Hall didn't go on mains water until 1989.

Petre demolished the existing house and from 1540 to 1544 built the first Ingatestone Hall. It used 1,250,000 bricks all made locally. There were lots of windows. Back then it was only possible to make small panes of glass and they were very expensive. There were 48 chimneys, not all of them connected to fires. He needed Henry VIII's permission to build crenelations. All were designed to show off how wealthy Petre was.

By his death William Petre had amassed about 45,000 acres of land at various estates. His widow continued to reside at Ingatestone Hall so his son John bought Thorndon Hall near Brentwood which was the principal family seat for about 300 years.

Circa 1770 the 9th Lord Petre demolished the west wing, replaced the mullioned casement windows with sash windows, opened up the house for larger rooms then divided it into four apartments. Novelist Mary Elizabeth Braddon stayed in one of the apartments and set her novel 'Lady Audley's Secret' (1862) is set at Ingatestone Hall.

In 1919 after the death of the 16th Lord Petre in WW1, the family moved back to Ingatestone Hall. The first floor was seen to be sagging, the old brick-mullioned casements had been supporting the lintels. The wooden sash windows were taken out and replaced with the original design. Other alterations were made to return the hall to something resembling the original Tudor look.

The exterior of Ingatestone Hall was used as a location shoot for the 2005 dramatisation of 'Bleak House'. The Hall also appeared in an episode of the TV series 'Lovejoy'.

We entered the house into **The Stone Hall**. In Tudor times it had been 3 rooms, one of which was the ante-chamber to the chapel. There is a photograph showing a fairly substantial chapel in the late 19th century. After a new church was built people stopped coming to the chapel. It was demolished in the 1960s. Another was the Long Gallery. There are a number of paintings hung there including Charles II, his brother James II, their mother Henrietta Maria and Mary Queen of Scots.

In 1553 Mary Tudor visited Ingatestone Hall on her way to London to be crowned Queen of England. In 1561 her sister and successor Elizabeth I came to stay with 300 followers. It was part of a royal progress that kept the queen away from London for two months. Her banquet included a stag, 6 cygnets, 2 veals, 60 chickens, 60 rabbits, 695 eggs and 7 gallons of cream. It cost the princely sum of £136 10s 3/4d. An additional 5,472 pints of beer were brewed. The late Queen Mother came in 1961 to commemorate the visit.

Lady Jane Grey's sister was imprisoned at Ingatestone Hall. She had upset Queen Elizabeth I by marrying without her permission.

Ingatestone Hall had 2 priest holes. The story is that one was easier to find, when the King's men found it they would stop looking. The priest would be safe in the other hole.

The Drawing Room had been in 3 parts in Tudor times. The antlers on the wall came from Strathspey. There are paintings by George Stubbs. An early 17th century chest, rather big and very heavy. The 2nd priest hole was discovered with bones lying around, chicken bones.

The Dining Room was originally part of the kitchen. The table is from the 1540s but only one of the chairs is the original. The others are copies made in the 1920s by Belgian refugees. The huge tapestries hanging on the walls are from The Mortlake Tapestry Works (Est, 1619). Giles Coren and Sue Perkins feasted here on a whole suckling pig and goose with sorrel sauce for their TV programme 'The Supersizers Eat.... Elizabethan.

The Kitchen has always been a kitchen hence the enormous fire place. There would be several different fires on the go in there including a spit-roast. Children as young as 8 would be employed in the kitchen their size making them suitable for turning the spit.

Upstairs in **Sir William Petre's Bedroom** there is a tester bed. This would have had a cover over the top of the uprights to stop vermin falling on anyone in the bed. They could hang curtains over the sides for both warmth and modesty. There were no corridors so a servant could walk at any time. A small room off in the corner was a toilet with rudimentary plumbing fed from the loft space above running down to the stew pond behind the hall. The adjoining room was used as a dressing room, it was also where they bathed.

The Queen Anne Room was used as a sitting room. The pine panelling made it lighter.

The Long Gallery (95 feet) was for ladies to exercise during inclement weather.

When the railway reached Chelmsford in 1843 some of Lord Petre's land was acquired by compulsory purchase. Lord Petre held out and got 6 times the original offer of compensation.

The current Lord Petre had to retire as **Lord Lieutenant of Essex** in 2017 and no longer has a seat in The House of Lords. He has joined TOPS the Turfed Out Peers Society.

At the back of the hall there is a field that used to be an orchard, the trees were blown down in the storm of 1987. Beyond the field is a small building called the cistern. It covers where the natural springs come up. The Red Cedar Walk takes you down alongside the river, The Lime Walk comes back on the other side leading to a formal walled garden.