

LITTLE HALL, LAVENHAM - Angie Harrison

Opening Times: The museum will reopen from 22 May 2021 on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, between 1pm and 4pm.

Admission: £4.50, or £5 incl Gift Aid. Groups are welcome but must be booked in advance. Please check their website.

Website: www.littlehall.org.uk



Travel Time: From Newmarket - approximately 40 minutes by car.

Parking: Free parking in the Market Place and free on-street parking. Two free car parks: one near the Angel Hotel, one near the church.

General Information: Little Hall is an independent, accredited museum, owned by the Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust (Charity 265212). It has been open to the public for forty years and throughout that time it has been run entirely by volunteers.

The house is a half-timbered medieval building situated on the northeast side of the Market Place. It was built in the 1390s as a workplace and home for the Causton family, who were clothiers. (*Clothier, Clothmaker, Clothman and Merchant were all terms used for a man who grew rich on the profits from the production of cloth.*) A clothier would trade on credit to buy in more fleeces and he would control the production of the cloth from start to finish.

During its life Little Hall has undergone many changes. It was enlarged and 'modernised' in Tudor times and was further extended later. Six families lived in it by the 1700s and restoration work was undertaken in the 1920s and 30s. Kingston College of Art in Surrey used it as an Outpost during the 1960s and 70s. In 1975 Surrey County Council offered Little Hall to the Suffolk Buildings Preservation Trust, who restored the building and opened it to the public in 1978 as a museum.

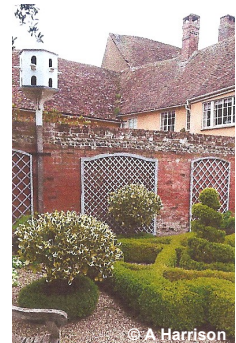
The house has had many and varied owners, with the last private residents being the Gayer-Anderson twin brothers who were professional soldiers and talented artists with a shared interest in art and antiquities. They travelled extensively collecting antiques, pictures, books, china and decorative art. Many of their personal possessions still remain in Little Hall. There are a number of pargetted (concrete) crests set into the plasterwork on the external walls. These depict a lion and a tree and are the combined emblems of the Gayer-Anderson family.



There are seven rooms open to the public including the **Library** which contains books collected by the brothers, some of which go back to the 15th century. The doors of the cupboards in the **Study**, which is now known as the Panel Room, are faced with panels from Persian bridal boxes or dowry chests. The panels are decorated with Asian birds, scenes of domestic life, flowers and fruit.

Upstairs there is a large chamber called the **Dormitory**. This room got its name because it was used to house five evacuee boys who came to Little Hall from Bethnal Green in September 1939 after World War II was declared. There are displays about the Bethnal Green bombing that these boys escaped and stories about their future lives. Three of the boys emigrated - possibly influenced by the Gayer-Anderson tales of foreign travel.

Outside the house there is an attractive courtyard with an archway leading through to a small knot garden, which is planted along traditional Tudor lines, with topiary and clipped box hedging. The Dove Cote has been restored recently. The steps from the courtyard lead down to a pretty walled garden from which there is a good view of the rear of the house.



There is a memorial plaque to the Gayer-Anderson brothers on the side of the steps: *“In this garden are scattered some of the ashes of both the identical twin brothers ... who together acquired this 15th/16th century property in 1924 & having restored, furnished, endowed & lived in it presented it and its contents to the Surrey County Council as the Gayer-Anderson Hostel for art students - 1960”*

Visitors to the house need to be vigilant as it is old, with uneven floors, narrow stairs and low beams. Wheelchair access is limited. People who find stairs difficult can see part of the upstairs floor on the museum’s CCTV and they can have an individual commentary from a guide.

