

## John Leonard



No Picture Available

Born: 1508 England

Married: Elizabeth Harmon

Died: 3 Dec 1590 England

Parents: John Leonard & Catherine Weston

John Lennard was High Sheriff of Kent; a Barrister of Lincoln's Inn, Holborn, London; and a gentleman of some wealth. His daughter Rachel became Lady Bergavenny when she married into the powerful Neville family, noble descendants of King Edward III of the House of Plantagenet.

John Lennard lived and worked during the turbulent times of the Tudors: King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Lady Jane Grey, Queen Mary I ("Bloody Mary"), and Queen Elizabeth I. The shire of Kent is very close to London and John, from his position, was a participant in the momentous events of 16th Century England. Henry VIII married Catherine of Aragon in Greenwich Palace, Kent, in 1509. Queen Elizabeth I was born there in 1533 and Edward VI died there in 1553 at age 15. Canterbury, the seat of the Archbishop, is also in Kent. Traditionally, the High Sheriff, who had precedence over the local Lord-Lieutenant, was notified and invited to attend ceremonies whenever the sovereign or a member of the royal family was in his shire.

In old England, the High Sheriff of a shire or county was more than a civil servant. It was an honor usually bestowed on a distinguished member of the local gentry or minor nobility, whether he wanted it or not. The position of sheriff (shire-reeve or king's representative) is over a thousand years old. Appointed by the Crown or by local nobles, the sheriff was responsible for keeping law and order in the shire and enforcing the collection of taxes and fines. The Magna Carta of 1215 mentions the role of sheriff several times.

While the position of sheriff was considered an honor, it could also be expensive. If all the required taxes and fines in his shire were not collected, the sheriff had to make up the difference out of his own pocket. He was also expected to entertain visiting dignitaries. Many well-qualified members of the local gentry tried to avoid being appointed sheriff. But if a man was chosen, he had to serve.

In the 1500's the High Sheriff of a shire held some of the powers now exercised by the Lord-Lieutenant, High Court Judges, Magistrates, and Inland Revenue. Today the position is bestowed on an outstanding citizen for a one-year term and is primarily ceremonial, with some administrative duties.

The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn is the oldest of the London live-in societies dedicated to the technical study of English law. Since 1422 it has been a place where its members could practice

law and congregate. Young gentlemen would study for the Bar and live at Lincoln's Inn. It functioned as a law school and fraternity house. When they were qualified, the Honourable Society would recommend its graduates for admittance to the Bar as barristers.

Members of the Bar who were also members of the Society could stay at Lincoln's Inn when they were in London. It offered all they needed for their practice in the nearby Royal Courts of Justice. These included chambers to work and live in, a dining hall, a chapel, and a law library. Many notable figures in British political and judicial history have been members of Lincoln's Inn.

In 1565, when John Lennard was a Bencher (Master of the Bench - a senior member) of Lincoln's Inn, the Honourable Society voted to preserve its morals by excluding all laundresses and other women servants between the ages of 12 and 40 from the premises.

Today, although few barristers actually live at Lincoln's Inn, it still functions as a library, society, and club for its members.

In 1580 John Lennard purchased the manor and estate of West Wickham from Sir William Heydon for his son, Samuel Lennard, for 2,700 pounds sterling. A clerk or carpenter in 1580, working 300 days a year for 12 pence per day, earned 3600 pence or 15 pounds per year. Information from online research at: [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com)



John Lennard's alma mater, The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, is the oldest of the London live-in societies dedicated to the technical study of English law. Since 1422 it has been a place where its members could practice law and congregate. Young gentlemen would study for the Bar and live at Lincoln's Inn. It functioned as a law school and fraternity house. When they were qualified, the Honourable Society would recommend its graduates for admittance to the Bar as barristers. [Wikimedia Commons photo, released to the public domain.] The Law Library is on the left, while the Bencher's Room (for senior members, Masters of the Bench) is on the right. In 1565, when John Lennard was a Bencher here, the Honourable Society voted to preserve its morals by excluding all laundresses and other women servants between the ages of 12 and 40 from the premises. Lincoln's Inn is one mile north of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. Information from online research at: [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com)