THE HUNDRED PARISHES SOCIETY
www.hundredparishes.org.uk

Guilds were an early form of trade association. They became established in the Middle Ages by groups of merchants to control standards and promote their particular craft or skill in the locality in which they operated. Some acquired sufficient funds and status to erect their own premises or Guildhalls in market towns. These buildings were used for meetings and other functions by the guilds. Some were designed to allow markets or trade on the ground floor.

The Hundred Parishes has some wonderful surviving examples of guildhalls. Thaxted is probably the best known - three storeyed, timber framed and jetted, built in the 15th century. Thaxted was an important centre of cutlery manufacture and it is believed the cutlers helped to fund the building we now know as the Guildhall. Its original purpose is uncertain; it may have had broader uses as a moot hall or civic meeting place. The building later became a school and today it is used for parish council and other meetings and incorporates a small museum of Thaxted's history.

The guildhall at Linton was built in 1523 and is now a private house. It was once the home of Sir John Kendrew who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1962.

Finchingfield's 15th-century guildhall stands beside the parish church. In the past it was used as almshouses and now the renovated building houses a library and excellent museum. The first floor is used in non-Covid times for courses and is available for private hire.

In Church Lane Clavering you will find a 15th-century timber-framed and plastered building. Now a private dwelling, it was built as the guildhall and later served as a workhouse and then almshouses.

Ashdon's former 15th-century guildhall, behind the church, also later served as a workhouse before becoming a private house.