

The Elizabethan House Museum, Great Yarmouth

The Museum housed some interesting early furniture. Downstairs there was a large c. 1600 refectory table with a strapwork and gadrooned frieze and boldly carved baluster legs. The main upstairs room had a North Italian cypress chest (a V&A loan W.13-1947) of 16th-century date with small panels of penwork, in contrast to the examples we had seen at Christchurch Mansion with twin panels with moulded edges and a unified rather than fragmented design. The room also contained an oak chest with three panels with geometrical inlay within deeply moulded frames and a gadrooned top rail, perhaps showing Low Countries influence – probably late 16th to mid-17th century.

In a dark corner of an upstairs bedroom we were pleased to discover an early French walnut boarded chest of dovetailed construction, of 1480–1530 date, unfortunately suffering from furniture beetle infestation. The façade has four single linenfold ‘panels’ with ogee brackets, carved in the solid, with a large space in the design for the lock plate and with handles fixed low on the sides. Whereas the parchemin (opposed brackets of different shapes, with more or less elaboration) and linenfold designs are usually attributed to Flanders, the design on this chest is associated with France. Inside the chest were an oak till box and high shelf with retaining strip; the latter is a rare survival – usually only the groove in which the shelf is held is visible. (See R. Bebb, *Welsh Furniture*, 2007, Vol. 1, p. 195 for a similar chest. The Hotel Dieu at Beaune, designed by Flemish architects, has dendro-dated mid-15th-century frame and panelled chests with simple panels.)

Chris Pickvance



The Elizabethan House Museum. A refectory table with a strapwork frieze and boldly carved baluster legs, c. 1600



The Elizabethan House Museum. French walnut boarded chest, 1480–1530, showing the four single linenfold 'panels'



Interior of the French walnut chest, with an oak till box and high shelf. Note the low handles on the sides.