



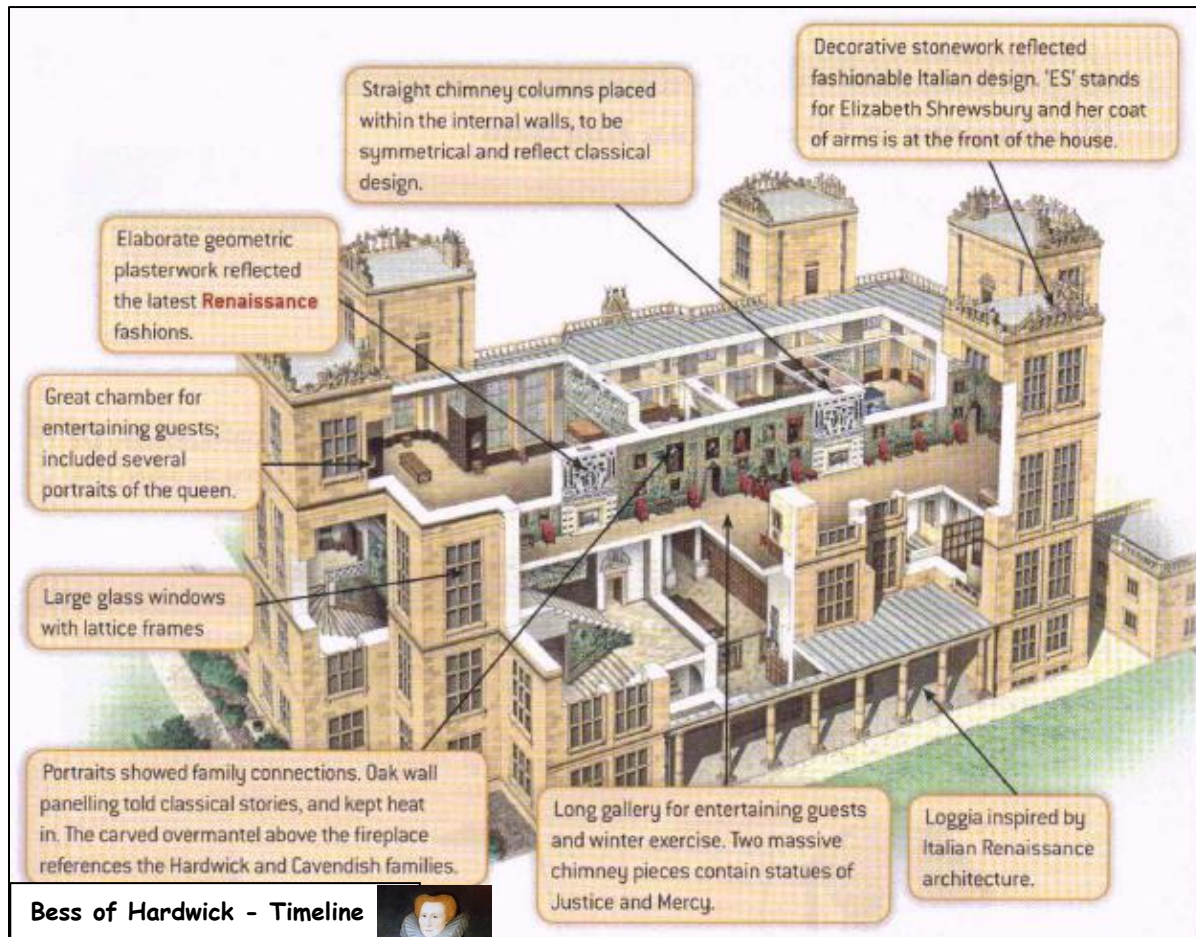
Elizabethan country houses

- How could the gentry afford such homes?

Who were the Elizabethan gentry?

By the 1590's there had been a rise in members of society who classed themselves as the gentry. They were different to the nobility as they hadn't been born into wealth and money. These were people who had made a successful career from trade and had become very wealthy as a consequence. They began to fill powerful positions by becoming members of Parliament and Justices of the Peace.

Our historic site for the 16 mark question is Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire. Built between 1590 and 1597 by Elizabeth Shrewsbury (more commonly known as Bess of Hardwick) it was one of the grandest houses in Elizabethan England and used by Bess to show her great wealth and position in society.



Hardwick Hall - Four Key Rooms!

The Great Hall	Built on the ground floor and different to other houses in that it ran throughout the house from front to back instead of lying across the width of the house. These new style halls were warmer and less smoky. They also allowed a staircase to connect the ground floor to the upper floors.
The Long Gallery	Placed on the top floor of the house, this was once the longest gallery in England. Used for entertaining guests at balls and dinners as well as exercise in the winter. Plenty of natural light was allowed in due to the amount of windows at Hardwick ('more glass than wall')
The Withdrawing Chamber	Where Bess would entertain guests after their meal. The ceilings again, would have been very high in order to impress people. The expensive oak wall panelling and furniture would again have been placed there to impress Bess' guests with her wealth and status.
The High Great Chamber	Bess' area for welcoming guests. The room would have had paintings of Queen Elizabeth as well as the Queen's coat of arms to show Bess' loyalty to her. This room could only be accessed from stairs leading from the Great Hall, this separated Bess from the rest of the household.

Bess of Hardwick - Timeline

