



KSI–KS3

TEACHERS' RESOURCE PACK

Eltham Palace

This resource pack has been designed to help teachers plan a visit to Eltham Palace, which provides essential insights into the royal medieval and Tudor courts and 1930s Art Deco interior design. Use these resources at the palace or in the classroom to help students get the most out of their learning.



INCLUDED

- Historical Information
- Glossary
- Sources
- Site Plan

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ENGLISH HERITAGE
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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

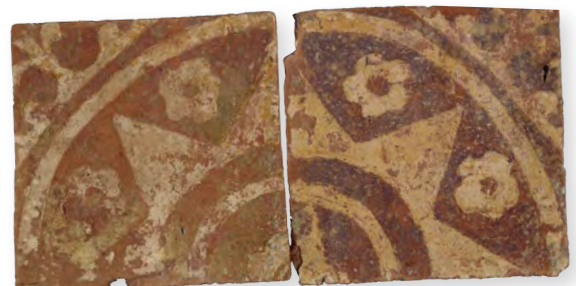
DISCOVER THE STORY OF
ELTHAM PALACE

Below is a short history of Eltham Palace. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You will find definitions for the key words in the Glossary resource.

NORMAN AND EARLY MEDIEVAL BEGINNINGS

The first record of a settlement at Eltham is in the **Domesday Book** of 1086. It mentions the **manor** of 'Alteham' (Eltham) belonging to Odo, the **Bishop** of Bayeux. Odo was William the Conqueror's half-brother. The manor then had many different owners in the 12th century.

In 1295, Antony Bek, the Bishop of Durham became the owner of the manor of Eltham. He was a prince bishop and very powerful. He built many new buildings, as well as a wall around the **moat**. The wall was made from rubble-stone, flint and brick. A wooden **drawbridge** crossed the moat. Bishop Bek also built a **great hall** with decorated floor tiles and created a hunting park. In 1305, he gave the manor to Edward I's son, who would soon become Edward II.



Decorated floor tiles from the great hall built by Antony Bek, the Bishop of Durham. The tiles were discovered in 1979.

14th-CENTURY ROYAL PALACE

Edward II gave Eltham manor to his wife, Isabella. Their second son was born at Eltham in 1316 and baptised in the chapel. He became known as John of Eltham.

Edward III spent a lot of time at Eltham as a young boy and came back to visit many times after he became king in 1327. In 1348, Edward created the **Order of the Garter** – an order of **chivalry**. He ordered 12 blue garters decorated with the order's **motto** for a **jousting tournament** that took place at Eltham.

Edward III made many changes to the buildings at Eltham.

A new drawbridge was built as well as accommodation for servants, a great kitchen and a roasting house. He also built a set of rooms for himself including a private **chapel** and a bathroom with a tiled floor and glazed windows.

In the 1380s, Richard II improved the buildings further – Eltham manor was now really starting to look like a **palace**. He created a new garden outside the moat 'for he and the queen to have dinner in the summertime'. He also built a new bathhouse and a room for dancing, and replaced the wooden bridge over the moat with one made from stone.



The north stone bridge over the moat. The bridge was built in the 1380s by order of King Richard II.

15th-CENTURY JOUSTS AND FEASTS

Henry IV (r.1399–1413) spent 10 of his 13 Christmases as king at Eltham Palace. In about the year 1400, he built new rooms for himself and the queen with beautiful **stained-glass windows** showing his **badge** and portraits of saints.

At Christmas in 1400, Henry held celebrations that included a mumming (mime) performance, a parade and a jousting tournament on New Year's Day.

Eltham Palace was one of Edward IV's (r.1461–83) favourite places to stay. He made big changes to the palace, getting rid of Bishop Bek's hall and building the great hall that you can see at the palace today. One of the most expensive celebrations ever held at the palace was given for 2,000 people at Christmas in 1482.



The great hall, built in 1475–80. Here the king held meetings, gave orders and hosted great feasts and dances.

HENRY VIII'S HOME

Henry VIII (r.1509–47) grew up at Eltham Palace with his elder brother and two sisters. After he became king he extended the palace, building a new **tiltyard** for jousting, new rooms and a new chapel. The chapel was decorated in a lot of detail, with expensive **gilt** leaves and oak **panelling**. He also created a new garden with a bowling green and **archery butts**.

At the beginning of Henry's reign, Eltham Palace was a very important place. **Cardinal Wolsey** took his oath to become **Lord Chancellor** there and later he wrote the **Eltham Ordinances** which were new rules for people in Henry VIII's **court**.

Henry was the last **monarch** to spend significant time at Eltham Palace. From the 1530s, he began to improve Hampton Court Palace to the west of London and spend more time at Greenwich Palace from where it was easier to get to Westminster (by boat along the River Thames) to meet with **Parliament**.



Henry VIII grew up at Eltham Palace. When he became king, he loved hunting and jousting here.

TUDOR AND STUART FIXES

Queen Elizabeth I (r.1558–1603) made only a few visits to Eltham Palace. While she was queen, she rebuilt two of the wooden bridges over the moat and ordered new building work on the royal apartments – the building was in the Tudor style of **diapered brickwork** and some remains of this can still be seen from the south bridge.

James I (r.1603–25) also made repairs to the palace. He fixed the queen's rooms next to the moat – you can see the foundations of these royal rooms as you walk over the south bridge and along the top of the walkway. These rooms were next to a **gallery** from which visitors could see amazing views over London.



Elizabeth I extended the royal apartments. Diapered brickwork (in the pattern of a diamond) was popular in the Tudor era.

1600s: RICH THE REBEL

Charles I (r.1625–49) was the last king to visit Eltham Palace. In the 1600s, the buildings were not looked after and parts of the palace began to fall down.

During the **English Civil War**, in 1648, **parliamentarian** troops were sent to Eltham Palace to put down a **revolt** nearby. The soldiers badly damaged the palace and by 1649 it was 'much out of repair'. All the deer in the parks had been killed and many of the trees had been cut down to build ships for the Navy.

In 1651, **Colonel** Nathaniel Rich – sometimes called 'Rich the Rebel' – bought the palace and knocked down many of the remaining buildings. He also took the lead off the roof of the great hall, letting the rain get in.

When Charles II (r.1660–85) became king, he took Eltham Palace back, but he never lived there.



An engraving of Eltham Palace in c.1653, by Peter Stent.

1700s AND 1800s: A PALACE FARM

In the 1700s, Eltham Palace was used as a farm – the great hall became a barn. The other buildings gradually fell down and became ruins. Artists thought the ruins were very pretty so they came to the palace to draw and paint what was left.

In 1828, the great hall was repaired by the **Office of Works**. Two houses for gentlemen replaced the farm, the great hall was used as a tennis court and gardens were made in parts of the moat where the water had dried up.



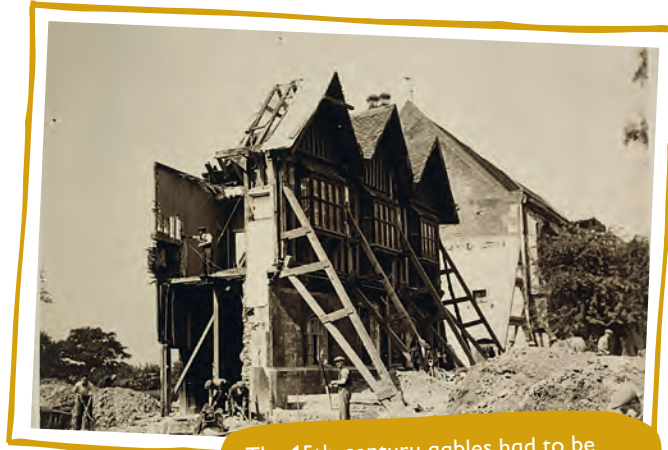
Eltham Palace in the 18th-century in 'View of the Great Hall' by Paul Sandby.

THE COURTAULDS RESCUE ELTHAM PALACE

Eltham Palace became a home again in the 1930s. Stephen Courtauld, the son of a wealthy cloth **manufacturer**, and his wife, Virginia (Ginie), came to live at the palace in 1936. It was still owned by **the Crown**, but Stephen and Virginia were allowed to make huge changes.

They built a new modern house and also **restored** the medieval great hall.

The modern house, built next to the hall, was made from brick and inspired by Hampton Court Palace. The architects John Seely and Paul Paget hid modern materials like concrete behind the **façade**. Not everyone was happy with Stephen and Ginie's plans. People were worried that historic features of the palace would be lost, so they had to keep three 15th-century **gables** built by Edward IV – they had to be dismantled and then re-built into the modern house. You can see these gables at the palace today. Even afterwards, people didn't like the modern building. One person said it looked like a 'cigarette factory'.



The 15th-century gables had to be taken down and re-built into Stephen and Ginie's new house in the 1930s.

1930s: TECHNOLOGY AND ART DECO DESIGN

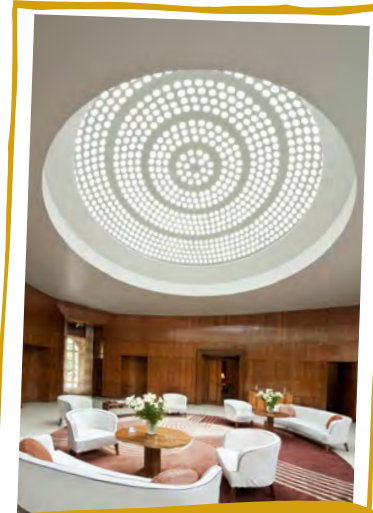
The modern house had lots of new and exciting technology. In the 1930s, electricity was still quite new – many people had electric lighting or a battery-powered wireless (radio), but things like electric heating were still expensive. Stephen and Ginie put electric fires and clocks in most rooms. They also had an electric fridge and cooker, both of which were rare in England at the time. To help the maids keep the rooms clean, a huge central vacuum cleaner in the basement was connected to sockets in the rooms, into which the maids plugged a hose.

In the 1930s, only a few people had central heating – most people still had a coal or wood fire in the fireplace and some had iron radiators. At Eltham Palace, Stephen and Virginia put pipes filled with hot water in the ceilings and the floors to keep the house warm.

The house and its furniture are designed in the **Art Deco** style. Contrasting colours and textures, **geometric shapes**, bold patterns and copying designs from **exotic** places were all very fashionable. Parts of the house are similar to the inside of the Queen Mary. The Queen Mary the biggest and most luxurious cruise liner of the day sailed for the first time in 1936, the year Stephen and Ginie moved into Eltham Palace.

The house was built for entertaining: most of the bedrooms have en-suite bathrooms; there are ladies' and gentlemen's cloakrooms off the entrance hall, and a pay phone for guests to use. It was designed to feel very luxurious. All the baths could be run at the same time so that guests could get ready for dinner and the central heating system was so powerful that some people complained that in winter the rooms were too hot!

During the Second World War, Stephen and Ginie used the basement at Eltham Palace as an **air raid shelter**. In 1940, during the **Battle of Britain**, more than a hundred bombs fell on the estate, damaging the roof of the great hall. In 1944, Stephen and Ginie decided to leave Eltham Palace for Scotland and later Northern Rhodesia. In 1945, the palace became home of the Army (later Royal Army) Educational Corps, serving both as Headquarters Mess and as the base for the Institute of Army Education. English Heritage has looked after Eltham Palace since 1992 when the Army moved out.



The entrance hall at the palace has cloakrooms and a private phone for guests.



ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

GLOSSARY

WEIRD WORDS AND
THEIR MEANINGS

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring Eltham Palace. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

air raid shelter – a building or room, often below ground, that protects people from falling bombs

archery butts – piles of earth at the end of a field to support archery targets

Art Deco – a decorative style of the 1920s and 1930s that used bold geometric shapes and strong colours

badge – a symbol that showed a royal or noble family's identity

Battle of Britain – the battle fought with aeroplanes for control of the skies over southern England between the Royal Air Force and the German Air Force (Luftwaffe) in 1940, during the Second World War

bishop – an important person in the Christian church, who manages the work of other clergymen working within a large area (a diocese)

Cardinal Wolsey – an important Tudor statesman, churchman in the Roman Catholic Church and one of Henry VIII's close advisers until 1529

chapel – a small building or room used for Christian worship within a larger group of buildings, such as a castle



Art Deco-style motifs on the dining room doors.

chivalry – the code of conduct that medieval knights had to follow

civil war – a war between people in the same country

colonel – an officer in the army

court – the royal household: people who lived with the king and/or queen

the Crown – the monarchy; the ruling king and/or queen

diapered brickwork – bricks arranged to make a repeating pattern in the shape of a diamond

Domesday Book – a record of the size, value and ownership of all land in England, completed in 1086 by order of William I

drawbridge – a bridge over a moat that can be lifted at one end

Eltham Ordinances – rules written for Henry VIII's court on how they should behave around the king

English Civil War – the war from 1642 to 1651 between people who supported Parliament and people who supported the king (royalists) over how England should be ruled

exotic – from a foreign country very far away

façade – the front of a building

gable – the triangular upper part of a wall supporting the end of a roof

gallery – a balcony or upper floor projecting from the back or side wall of a hall



These gilt leaves were in Henry VIII's chapel at Eltham Palace.



Elizabeth I ordered extensions to her apartments at Eltham Palace using diapered brickwork.

geometric shapes – shapes that are regular, like a circle, square, triangle or hexagon

gilt – covering an object in a thin layer of gold paint or gold leaf

great hall – the largest, main room in a palace, castle or manor house used for feasting, dancing and carrying out business

jousting tournament – a competition in which two people in armour on horses ride towards each other holding lances (long poles) with blunted tips to try to knock each other off their horse

Lord Chancellor – the most important adviser to the king or queen

manor – a large country house with lands

manufacturer – a person or company that makes things to be sold



The north bridge over the moat at Eltham Palace.

monarch – the king or queen

motto – a short sentence, often in Latin, that describes the beliefs of a person, family, or group

Office of Works – a department of the Royal Household from around 1378, which looked after the building of the royal castles and homes. Today, many of the places it cared for are looked after by English Heritage.

Order of the Garter – the highest award of chivalry for knights and noblemen

palace – a large and impressive building that is the home of a monarch, head of state or other important person

panelling – panels (flat wooden boards) used to decorate a wall

Parliament – the group of people (in the House of Commons and the House of Lords) who make laws in England

parliamentarian – a person who supported Parliament in the English Civil War

restore – repair something to how it was originally

revolt – violent action against a king/queen or government

stained-glass windows – windows with pictures or patterns made from coloured glass, usually found in churches, castles or palaces

tiltyard – the outdoor area where a jousting tournament took place

moat – a deep, wide ditch around a castle or palace often filled with water



A stained-glass window in the great hall.

SOURCES

PEEK INTO THE PAST

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past such as a document, a picture or an object. It may be a primary source, from the time, or a secondary source, created later. Experts at English Heritage have chosen these sources to help you learn about Eltham Palace's history.

These floor tiles were found during an archaeological dig at Eltham Palace in 1979.

These tiles were laid on the floor of the great hall built by Bishop Antony Bek in the late 13th century. They are very decorative and would have been expensive to make.



‘When we came into the hall, the attendants... were all assembled. In the midst stood prince Henry, then nine years old, and having already something of royalty in his demeanour, in which there was a certain dignity...

More, with his companion Arnold, after paying his respects to the boy Henry, the same that is now king of England, presented him with some writing. For my part, not having expected anything of the sort, I had nothing to offer, but promised that on another occasion I would in some way declare my duty towards him. Meanwhile, I was angry with More for not having warned me, especially as the boy sent me a little note, while we were at dinner, to challenge something from my pen. I went home, and... finished the poem in three days.’

This source is an extract from the book **The epistles of Erasmus, from his earliest letters to his fifty-first year, arranged in order of time** (London: Longman, Green, 1901). Desiderius Erasmus's letter was written in 1523, 24 years after he had first met Henry VIII as a prince.

Students can view copies of Erasmus's letters on this book at the University of Toronto's [website](#).



‘It is also ordered that the six gentleman of the privy chamber, by seven of the clock or sooner, as the King the night before decides to arise in the morning, shall be in the said chamber there diligently attending upon his Grace coming forth; being ready and prompt, to apparel and dress his Highness, putting on such garments, in reverent, discreet and sober manner, as shall be his Grace’s pleasure to wear; and that none of the said grooms or ushers do approach or presume (unless they be otherwise by his Grace commanded or admitted) to lay hands upon his royal person; or intermeddle with preparing or dressing of the same, but only that said six gentlemen.’

This source is from the ‘Eltham Ordinances’, held in **The National Archives**. The Eltham Ordinances were a set of rules for the people who looked after Henry VIII – members of his court.

Cardinal Thomas Wolsey was one of Henry VIII’s closest advisers, and he wrote the rules while staying at Eltham Palace in 1526. Henry spent a lot of time at the palace in the early years of his reign.



GILT LEAVES

Three gilded lead decorative leaves originally from choir stalls in Henry VIII’s chapel at Eltham Palace. These are now on display in the garter suite.



‘We’d arrive about teatime on the Friday, and have an enormous tea, with muffins and crumpets and everything. And Ginie always had a tiny little bottle of brandy on the tea table, which she put in people’s tea. And then you’d go to your room, which was fearfully luxurious, with this bathroom with under-warming so you walked with bare feet on this warm marble floor... During meals, Ginie had a little pad and a silver pencil beside her, and anything she didn’t like during the meal she would write down to tell the chef.’

This source is an oral history interview with Mollie Butler, speaking in 2003. She describes a typical weekend at Eltham Palace in the 1930s, when she was married to Stephen Courtauld’s cousin, August Courtauld.

Lady Butler, interviewed by Catherine Cook in ‘An Oral History of the Courtaulds at Eltham Palace’, National Life Stories at the British Library, catalogue reference CI056/05/01-03.



SITE PLAN

ELTHAM PALACE FLOOR PLANS

