

Islington U3A - Outings

Eltham Palace trip on Monday 16th April 2018.

Seventeen iu3a members enjoyed a visit to Eltham palace on a bright and sunny April day.

The day began with a short walk across the bridge to the main building, a fusion of a Medieval and Tudor palace and a 1930's Art Deco house. Our guide, Paul, first took us on an extensive tour of the Art Deco house. This house was built by the millionaires, Stephen and Virginia Courtauld, in the 1930s, and the socialites held many parties here with their wide circle of friends. It is fair to say that their lifestyle was one of opulence, and even the pet lemur was treated like royalty. We learned that Virginia was ahead of her time, having had a snake tattoo fashioned on one of her lower legs as an act of teenage rebellion. The rooms we saw were beautifully presented and there were an intriguing number of 'hidden doors' leading from one room to another.



The second half of the tour involved the great hall. We heard much of the history of the palace which had its hey day from the early 14c onward, becoming one of the top Royal palaces. Indeed Henry VIII spent much of his childhood here with his sisters. However he rarely visited as King in the 1530's and Elizabeth 1st only visited once during her reign. The hall fell into disrepair from 17c-19c being used for many years, for example, as a cattle shed! The hall was fully restored by the Courtaulds in 20c.



By now it was time for lunch in the sun-drenched cafeteria, after which members explored the magnificent gardens and greenhouses.



It was a really enjoyable, fun day out and there was a lot of enthusiasm for further Outings.

For more information see <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/eltham-palace-and-gardens/history/>

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