

A brief history

Much of Cressing Temple as you see it is the work of the Knights Templar. This Order of 'warrior monks' was founded in 1118 to protect pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land, and grew to become a powerful organisation with almost 7000 estates throughout Europe.

The Cressing estate was bestowed upon the Knights Templar by Queen Matilda in 1137 - it was their first grant of rural land in England and became the largest and most important estate in Essex. It had resident Knights, with a Chaplain and officers who ran the estate, and a complement of craftsmen & labourers. The Knights Templar commissioned the great barns you see here today - two of the most spectacular medieval timber barns in Europe. Cressing functioned as a large estate farmed for profit to help the Order pay for the war effort in the Holy Land.

In 1308 the Knights Templar were suppressed by The Pope on accusations of heresy, and Cressing Temple passed into the hands of the Knights Hospitaller. The site was sacked during the 1381 Peasants Revolt, and was similarly threatened in the Civil War when it was one of the few Royalist estates in a predominantly Parliamentary area.

Cressing Temple remained a working farm until the last private owners, the Cullens, ceased to farm and the estate was split up.

The site and buildings were acquired by Essex County Council in 1987, with help from English Heritage and the National Heritage Memorial Fund. Further aid for major repairs has since come from the European Community in recognition of Cressing Temple's archaeological importance.



More detailed information about the history of Cressing Temple can be found in **Cressing Temple: A Guide** on sale in the Visitor Centre.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Sundays from March to October 10.30 - 5.00
also Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays,
May to September inclusive 10.30 - 4.30.
Bank holidays excluding
Christmas and New Year.

Coffee shop with cream teas and gifts.



It is possible to visit the site outside normal opening times by prior arrangement.

Group bookings, specialist tours and school visits are welcome at any time.

Also modern conference facilities.
Please ring 01376 584903 for details.

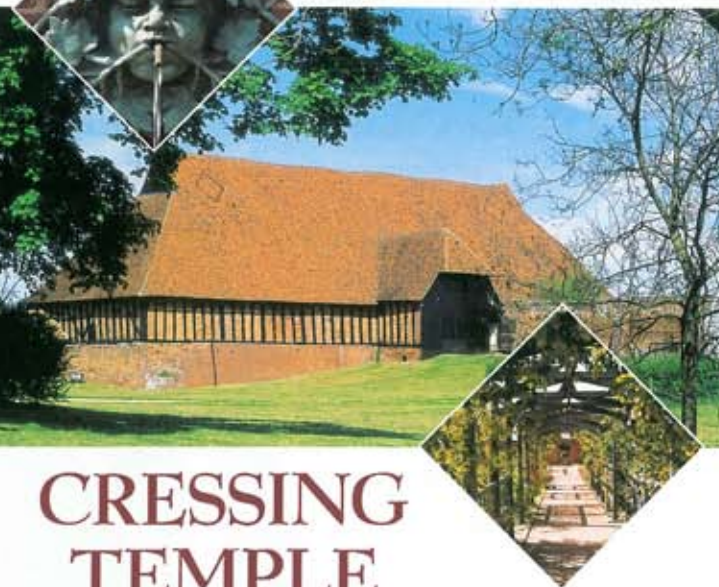


Essex County Council is preserving Cressing Temple as a focus of historical interest, and developing facilities for study and enjoyment.

CRESSING TEMPLE

Witham Road, Braintree, Essex CM77 8PD
Telephone 01376 584903
www.essexcc.gov.uk

Walk around
and discover...



CRESSING TEMPLE

Today, Cressing Temple is dominated by two magnificent medieval barns; the Barley Barn is the oldest timber barn in the world. Step inside and you will be awe-struck at their scale and the rare skill of the men that built them. In the Wheat Barn you will find an exhibition which guides you through Cressing's history.

Around the site you will discover many other fascinating historical buildings, whilst the Walled Garden is a tranquil paradise.

Why not complete your trip with a treat from our tea-room?

We hope you enjoy your visit.



CRESSING TEMPLE

The Wheelwright's Shop, Old Forge and Stables

The wheelwright not only made and repaired wheels but also made carts and waggons. Agricultural and domestic ironwork of all kinds was hand-fettled in the fire of the old forge.

The Visitor Centre

Our modern Visitor Centre has a well-stocked gift shop, tea room and conference facilities.

The Well House c1920

The Well House is a scaled down barn made of brick and timber. Inside is the stoned-lined well built by the Knights Templar. It now houses the garden museum.

The Moats

The Moats are a haven for all kinds of plants and wildlife. Look out for great crested newts, mallards and moorhens. Visitors should take care as the Moats are deep.

The Walled Garden c1550

Parts of the wall which encloses the Garden are believed to date from the 16th century. The Garden was painstakingly reconstructed from surviving features, archaeological evidence and documents from the archives of other gardens of the period.

Only plants available to Tudor gardeners are grown here. For more detailed information, please see our Walled Garden leaflet.

The Cartlodge c1800

This fine 19th century Cartlodge has been restored twice by the County Council. The 1990 gale blew it over into the adjacent pond and it had to be rebuilt a second time. The re-thatching has been done in the traditional Essex style using local materials.

The Granary c1623

This fine Elizabethan building is the largest of its kind surviving in Essex. The ground floor comprises stables and a chaff room; the huge Granary occupies the entire upper floor.

The Farmhouse c1600

This typical Essex farmhouse possibly incorporates remnants of the 'Greate House' which was destroyed by fire. The Farmhouse houses the Site Administration Office and conference rooms. It is not open to the public.

The Barley Barn c1200

This is the earlier of the two barns. There is evidence that it was once wider and longer than it is today, and it is believed that the roof - supported by an aisled structure like a church - was originally built to be tiled. These tiles would have been larger than those used today, and the roof would have weighed over 70 tons. The Barley Barn was altered in the 1500s. The roof structure is noticeably different from the Wheat Barn, and includes several curved bracing timbers.

The Wheat Barn c1250

This is the least altered of Cressing Temple's barns. A masterpiece of Romanesque carpentry, the soaring timbers give the barn an awe-inspiring, cathedral-like quality.

The prolific use of huge timbers is typical of the period; during later periods such large trees became scarce, forcing carpenters to adapt their techniques.

The Bakehouse c1800-1842

This extension, added to the north side of the farmhouse, was built specifically to house the brick oven. The oven is a brick oval dome, heated by bundles of wood or 'faggots'.

