

# Aston Hall

## KS3 Interpreting The Evidence

### Sample Worksheet



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## Background Information

Aston Hall was built for **Sir Thomas Holte** between 1618 and 1635. Sir Thomas was a local landowner and dignitary. He had received, at first a knighthood, and then a baronetcy from **James I** and had the house built as a statement of his wealth and importance. It was put up on the largest of his manors at Aston, overlooking the church and small village.

The Hall was approached from the main Birmingham to have looked up towards an **turrets, glittering windows** stretch of chestnuts have been idea of the effect. Two **lodges** yard: one housed the **garden-**

Important guests would have and taken to a guest suite of **Chamber (Great Dining Chamber (King Charles' Room), Drawing Room) and Long** much original **Jacobean work** beautiful, **geometrically de-** out on the south side to be strolled in on fine days.



through an avenue of trees leading Lichfield road: the visitor would imposing brick creation with **tall and broken skyline**. A short planted in recent times to give some were built in front of a large court- **ers** and the other the **porters**.

been greeted in the **Entrance Hall** rooms on the first floor - **Great Room), Best Lodging Chamber Withdrawing Room (Green Gallery**. These rooms still retain **in plaster, wood and stone**. A **signed garden** would have been laid viewed from the windows or

Located on the north side were **kitchens, larders, pastry, buttery, stillroom and sculleries**. The stable block still remains but a range of buildings running at right angles to the stables, and parallel with the house, has been demolished. These buildings would have been made up of a **bake-house, brew-house, wash-house, milk-house, cheese house and wool-house**.

**Kennels** for hunting dogs and **mews** for falcons were further essentials for the wealthy Stuart gentleman and would have been found on the north side too.

**Sir Thomas Holte** lived in the house with his second wife and any remaining alive and unmarried children (he had **16 children** but only 6 lived to adulthood).

In **October 1642** (two months after Charles I declared war on his parliament and their supporters) Sir Thomas was honoured with a visit by **King Charles I** as he made his way south from Shrewsbury where he had been raising troops to serve the Royalist cause. Shortly after leaving Aston Hall the king's army was engaged in one of the first big battles at **Edgehill**. Aston Hall itself was **attacked in December 1643** by a **Parliamentarian** force from Coventry. **Royalist** soldiers had been sent from the garrison at Dudley Castle to help defend the house and earthworks were hastily thrown up in the park. Following a 3 day bombardment Sir Thomas surrendered. A cannonball hole in the staircase provides a lasting reminder of the attack.

Aston Hall was lived in as a home for nearly 250 years. It was **opened as a museum in 1858**.

## Outside



? Why was **Aston Hall** built on a slight hill?

? What is it **built** from?

? How can you tell it is a **grand house**?

## Entrance Hall

A **grand entrance room** and the **servants** dining hall.

? In what way is this first room decorated to **impress guests** entering the house?

? What clues tell us the **servants** ate in here?

? The picture of **Sir Thomas Holte** is a useful source of information. What does it tell us?



## Great Parlour

The furniture is **Jacobean** (from the time of **James I**).



? How would you **describe** it?

? How can you tell the **chairs** held cushions?

? What **covers** the floor?

## The Main Stairs



This is one of the first **cantilevered** staircases ever to be put into a grand house and the only **Jacobean** stairs now left that rises to the second floor.

? Why do you think these **stairs** were expensive to build?

## First Floor Landing

? Why is the **stair post** a reminder of the seventeenth century **Civil War** ?

? From which **direction** did the cannonball come?



## The Great Dining Room



? How can you tell this room was **built to impress**?

Look at the large portrait of **Charles I** and his family.

? What **symbols of kingship** have been portrayed?

## King Charles' Bedroom

This room is much changed from Stuart times: only the **Jacobean plasterwork** ceiling and frieze remain. It is still possible to consider the king getting ready for bed.

? What was his **nightshirt** brought in?

? How did he **wash** ?

? What would he have used for a **toilet** ?



## Green Drawing Room

Originally a '**withdrawing room**' was for **sitting, playing cards or eating the sweetmeat course** at the end of a meal.



The **ceiling** and **fireplace** are from the time the house was built.

? What **materials** have been used in these?

## Long Gallery

It was very fashionable to have a long room like this to '**promenade**' (walk) up and down.

? List the **Jacobean** features of this room.



## The Red Room



The **fireplace** and much of the **furniture** comes from **Stuart** times.

? Describe the **bed**.

? What do you think the **wooden frame** is for?

## Dick's Garret

The **Civil War armour** is a reminder of the time when the **Royalist** soldiers were quartered here.

? Who do you think usually slept here?

? Write down how this room differs from the grand rooms on the ground and first floors.



## The Kitchen

There have been many **changes** to this part of the house. There would have been a number of rooms for preparing food: **kitchens, pastry, stillroom, buttery, larders** and so on.



? Look at the walls and note down the evidence of the **outside wall of the original kitchen**.

? Look in the **Servants' Hall** (created in the late C17th or early C18th) can you find **further evidence** of the first kitchen?