



## A Prominent Architect

Tortworth Court was designed by Samuel Sanders Teulon and was built between 1849 and 1853.

Teulon's career was still getting started when he took on Tortworth Court and it was only when he reached his 50s and 60s when his 'high Victorian' style of architecture was fashionable, that his work became famous and much sought-after. It was the 2nd Earl of Ducie who chose Tortworth's elevated position in the valley, in order to supposedly relieve his multitude of medical conditions.

It was as recently as 1991 that the Ducie family finally sold the estate after a 350 year tenure. It was bought with the intention of turning it into luxury flats, before a disastrous fire forced it to lay derelict for a decade. In 2001 it was restored and opened as a luxury hotel.

De Vere Tortworth Court as you see it today is as a result of a £20 million restoration. Former stables have become bedrooms and the iconic Orangery is now a grand and unique venue for weddings and events. The vast library now functions as the hotel's dining room and the Westminster Suite is a completely new building, designed to complement the style of the original house. The corridor leading to the suite offers views of a beautiful magnolia tree of such botanical importance that it was granted special protection. All the original paths in the garden had become grassed over and, it wasn't until the job of clearing them began that a pet cemetery was revealed, beyond the Wisteria and Laburnum tunnel. All the trees of the estate have been documented to record their species, size, age and condition.

For further details on the history of the hotel please speak to our Reception Team.

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# DE VERE

TORTWORTH COURT



## A brief history



## The Earls of Tortworth Estate

During the reign of Edward I in the 14th-century, Tortworth belonged to wealthy local nobleman, Sir Nicholas Kingston. It was subsequently in the possession of the De Veel and Throckmorton families for 200 years, before being purchased by Sir William Ducie.

The Tortworth Estate remained the ancestral home of the Ducie family for the next 350 years, with Sir Robert Ducie being the first to use the title of 'Lord' – a moniker passed on to subsequent heads of the family, later to be upgraded to Earl of Ducie. In 1840 Tortworth was owned by Henry George Francis, the 2nd Earl of Ducie. He suffered with rheumatism and arthritis and hated the long, cold winters at his country home in Woodchester, instead favouring Tortworth's healthier proximity to sea level.





## Construction on the main building begins

Teulon began his creation of the estate by damming the river to form a lake, which was stocked with fish. A boathouse was later added.

The house itself was constructed in local stone and the famous Bath stone, and is in the strikingly handsome and very serious Victorian gothic style. The Court was formed around a square central hall which was 130 feet high.

In its day, Tortworth was a modern building that was equipped with innovative hot air central heating and extensively gas-lit. At one time it had its own elevator, laundry, gun house, slaughterhouse, stables, dairy and chapel.



## Adding the East Wing

The 2nd Earl of Ducie died in 1853 aged 50, before Tortworth Court had been completed. He was succeeded by his son, Henry John.

The main entrance front to the Court is approached through an archway which features the word WELCOME. However, in 1875 a small wing was added to the East elevation. Rumour has it this was for the 3rd Earl of Ducie to reach his quarters without using the main entrance.



## The Conservatory and Aboretum

The conservatory (now called the Orangery) was added in 1899 replacing the original chapel on the grounds. It was designed by Ewan Christian and is similar, though considerably smaller, to Crystal Palace, built for the Great Exhibition in 1851.

The Conservatory housed exotic plants with the added benefit of under-floor heating. The 3rd Earl of Ducie planted the grounds with hundreds of trees including many rare specimens. He started planting in 1853 and carried on until his death. Tortworth Court rivaled Westonbirt, the famous aboretum nearby. Today it is an extremely important arboretum recognised as one of the finest of its type in the British Isles.



## Tortworth Court at war

During the Second World War, the Earl of Ducie opened Tortworth's doors to the British Navy. The house became a training establishment for coding and signals and was named HMS Cabbala. The ceremony of the flag took place daily where the Reception is now located.

In 1942 HMS Cabbala moved to Warrington and the house became home to American servicemen, with a hospital built on the grounds. In November 1943 two Evacuating Hospital Units arrived with wounded men from the North African Campaign. From June 1944 until March 1945 additional units were temporarily stationed here.