The thrilling history of the city

The Sound Dues
Elsinore has a long and thrilling history - quite different from any other Danish provincial town. We can thank Erik of Pomerania for this. In the 1420’s he decided that ships passing through the Sound should anchor at Elsinore. The captain had to go ashore to pay a tax before being allowed to proceed. At the time there were many protests against this new tax, but it was still carried through and was in force until 1857. The money from the Sound Dues went into the king’s own pocket, so Elsinore’s citizens did not profit directly from it. But the ships’ crews seized the opportunity to take in supplies at Elsinore, and this founded the booming commerce of Elsinore. This also means that a ship - to be precise a ‘cog’ - one of the most common vessels of the time, is in the Elsinore municipality coat of arms.

The Monastery and the Churches
It is still possible to find memories of the Sound Dues in the town. Most remarkable is the Castle Kronborg, which was built by King Frederik II at the end of the 16th century. Kronborg also holds what is left of the old Middle Age fortress - Krogen, built by Erik of Pomerania to uphold the Sound dues and defend Elsinore. The stately Carmelite monastery is one of the best-preserved monastic buildings in all of Denmark. The Monastery - now Saint Mary’s Church - is also among the major sights of the town with its newly-restored frescoes. Not least the organ, which has not been altered since the 1600’s when the famous organist Diderich Buxtehude sat at its keyboard. Saint Olai Church - after 1595 consecrated the cathedral of Elsinore - is the parish church for inner Elsinore. The first small church was built here round 1200 and the rest of it can still be seen in the northern wall of the cathedral. Through the following centuries the church was rebuilt and enlarged several times. Its current edifice was created in the middle of the 16th century and today it’s remarkable exterior and valuable interior are an apt expression of the bourgeois prosperity, which at the time characterised the town.

Preserved buildings
Along Stengade one can find many beautiful and interesting buildings dating back to the late Middle Ages. A very fine example is No. 66 - The Oxen family yard from 1470 with its crenellated gables on the old strait Gl. Færgestræde, tells much about the building style of the time. Here Christiano Pedersen was born in 1480. He was the first to make an authorised translation of the Bible into Danish and is therefore called ‘The father of Danish language’. Gl. Færgestræde has in general kept its late Middle Age character. At the other end of the strait at Strandgade we find the old pharmacy which was founded by Frederik II and was in function up to 1970. Despite the character of the Middle Ages, the Town Hall in Stengade was built in the 1850’s, but using the stones from the 16th century town hall.

This also explains why the building has been decorated with the names of Frederik II and Queen Sophie. In the yard behind Stengade No. 90 there is a beautiful old back house dating from 1630, with original carved timber frame work in the peculiar style. Stengade No. 46 is characterised by the ‘Three Crowns’ of the Swedish coat of arms, and on the roof, the impressive coat of arms of the Swedish King Gustav III. The explanation for this is that the building was erected in 1778 as a Swedish consulate. Here the French Marechal Bernadotte - later King Karl XIV Johan of Sweden converted from the Catholic to the Evangelical church.

In No. 27 Strandgade we find the oldest timber frame house dating back to 1577. As in most of the other houses in this street this house has also been an alehouse - Peter in the Anchor’s daughter - No. 93 Strandgade is the building, which was the scene of one of Karen Blixen’s fantastic tales, namely ‘A kinship in Elsinore’. The other houses in this part of Strandgade present a very fine example of the affluence, which descended on Elsinore in the flourishing period in the second half of the 18th century.

No. 12 Kongengade was formerly Elsinore Grammar School, where Hans Christian Andersen ploughed through his unhappy school days from 1826-27.

Rudolf Tegner
The sculptor Rudolf Tegner was a very controversial and condemned artist for the first half of our century. He was from Elsinore where his grandfather was city treasurer. Tegner himself was to leave his mark on the town. At the corner of Kronborgvej and Havnegade stands his monument over his mother, Sigrid Tegner. This also explains why the town is the most beautiful place in Denmark.

The beautiful, old timber frame houses leave their mark on the city.