

ELMS AND HUMANS

As well as being important for the environment because of their unique qualities, elms have also been used a lot by humans.

Elm wood can survive in water longer than wood from other trees, so has been used to build **bridges, locks and beach groynes**. From Edinburgh to London, elm wood was used for our city's first **water pipes** too.

There is an old nursery rhyme called "Old London Bridge is falling down", but really the bridge stood standing for over 600 years! It was built in the twelfth century and thanks to the elm wood that held it out of the water, it stood standing until the 1800s when a new bridge was built which was wider than the last to cope with London's busy traffic.

Elm wood needs to stay in water to keep its resistance against decay, so isn't very good for use in structures that frequently go in and out of the water, like **canoes and water wheels**. However elm is stronger than a lot of woods, but also bends well. In Wales archers used elm wood to make their **long bows**, and in the Scottish Highlands the stick used to play the game Shinty, which is called a *caman* and looks a bit like a **hockey stick**, was made of elm wood as it was easy to get the shape right. In churches all over the UK the **church bells are held up with elm wood** as it was the only wood strong enough to support them.

Activity: Take a look at the pictures below and circle objects that elm wood might be useful for. When you've done that, try to think of something else it would be good for and try drawing it.

