



Westminster Abbey

Abbey and Parliament



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Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament share over 1,000 years of history.

Built next to each other in the 11th century by King Edward the Confessor, the two sites have remained connected through architecture, events, and people until the present day.

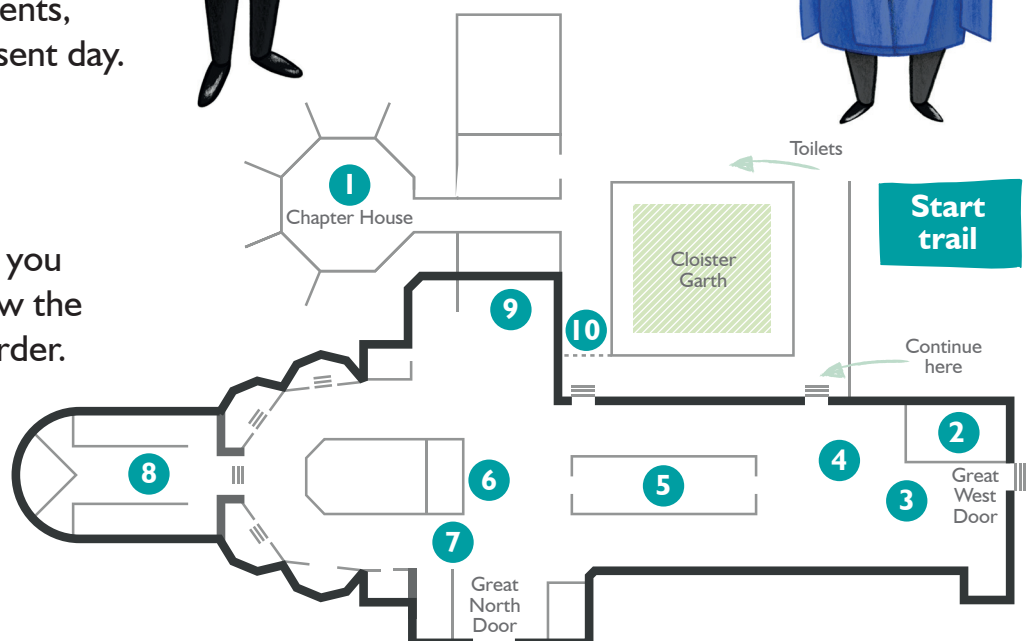


Top tip! If you have any questions, feel free to ask an Abbey Marshal or Abbey Guide in a red or blue gown.



Site Map

This map will help guide you around the Abbey. Follow the blue dots in numerical order.





1 The Chapter House

The Houses of Parliament began life as a royal palace, known as the Palace of Westminster. When it was a royal residence, Parliament had to find other places to meet.

Look around and discuss with a partner: Why would this room be a good meeting place?

This room has always been used for meetings; first by monks (religious men), then by the King's Council (advisors to the king) and finally by the House of Commons. The first parliaments sometimes met in this room.



Can you find the crowd of people painted on the east wall? This may be an illustration of the politicians who met here.

Can you count how many walls this room has?

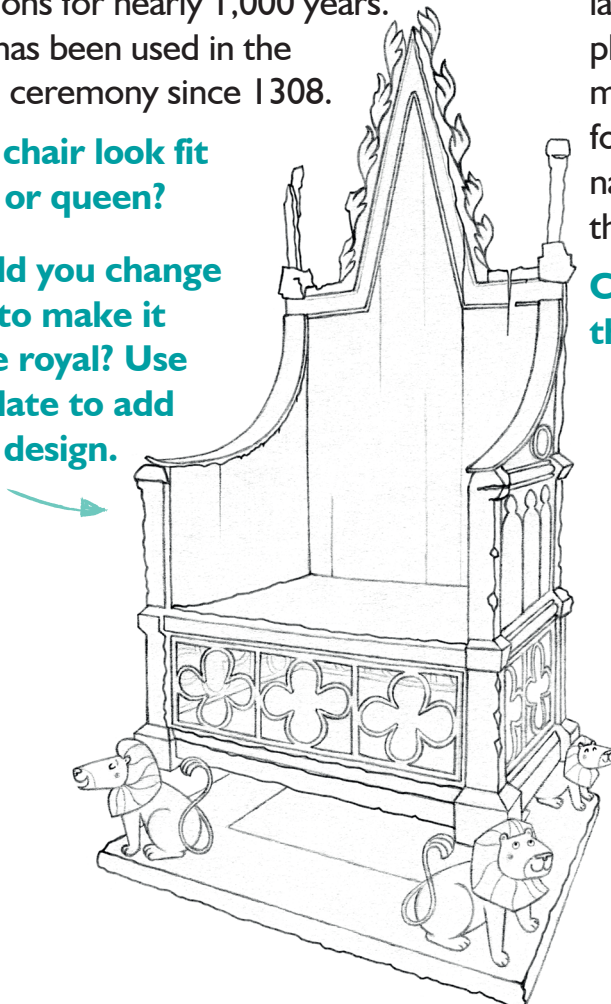
The octagonal shape of the Chapter House inspired the design of the Central Lobby in the new Houses of Parliament.

2 The Coronation Chair

Westminster Abbey has been the site of coronations for nearly 1,000 years. This chair has been used in the coronation ceremony since 1308.

Does this chair look fit for a king or queen?

How would you change the chair to make it look more royal? Use this template to add your own design.



The chair has been damaged over the last 700 years. In 1914, a small bomb was planted nearby, possibly by the suffragette movement. They wanted to raise awareness for their cause by targeting an important national object. Luckily, no one was hurt but the chair was damaged.

Can you spot the crooked shoulder on the right side?

Suffragettes: an activist group who fought for women's right to vote in the early 20th century.

The Abbey has been a site of protest. **Discuss within your group:** Do you think causing damage is a good way to protest for a cause?



3 Unknown Warrior

Look at the grave surrounded by red poppies. Can you find the missing words from this line?

Gave the most that man can give

for God for King and Country.



This person fought and died for Britain in the First World War. No one knows his identity and so he represents all those who have died fighting in wars.

Before the First World War very few people had the right to vote, this might have included the Unknown Warrior.

But after so many had given their lives for the country, the law was changed so that all men over 21 and some women over 30 could vote.

Whilst today we must wait until the age of 18 to vote in elections, we often use the system of voting to make decisions in everyday life. Can you think of a time when you have voted?

4 Candles

Westminster Abbey is a Christian church, but everyone is welcome here. We live in a time when everyone is free to believe in whatever they choose.

These freedoms are protected by our Parliament and upheld by our king.



We have not always had religious freedom in the UK and there are many places throughout the world where freedoms are limited.

You might like to take a moment near the candles to think about something you are allowed to do that you are grateful for.



5 The quire

The choir sits on these benches. **Does this remind you of another place where people sit facing each other?**

When Parliament first moved into the Palace of Westminster, they didn't have a special room to meet in. So, they met in St Stephen's Chapel and sat in the quire stalls. This is why our politicians still sit opposite each other today in the Houses of Parliament.

Discuss with a partner:

Do you think our politicians should sit opposite each other? Is there another shape that would be better?



Can you find the names of four countries on the wall of the quire stalls?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

These seats are for the High Commissioners of Commonwealth countries. The Commonwealth is a group of 56 countries who work together to make the world a better place. Westminster Abbey holds a celebration each year for Commonwealth Day, the largest multifaith service in the country.

6 The High Altar

This has been the site of coronations since the year 1066. The coronation takes place in a church because it is a Christian ceremony.

A long time ago, monarchs had absolute power which meant they could make all the rules. Now we have a parliament which limits the power of our monarch and acts on behalf of the people.

During the coronation, the new monarch must promise to follow the laws of the country.



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Do you think we should always follow the rules? What could you do if you don't agree with the rules? How could you change them?

Write down three ways you can make change. Clue: We have already mentioned a few ways that people can impact change in this trail.





7 Statesman's Aisle

We remember many different kinds of people in Westminster Abbey. This is Statesman's Aisle where we remember politicians.



Can you find these three prime ministers? Tick them off as you find them.

- Benjamin Disraeli
- William Gladstone
- Robert Peel

These prime ministers helped to widen democracy, ensuring more people could vote, and increased people's rights and freedoms. Robert Peel also created the modern police force.

Fun Fact: Police are sometimes called bobbies or peelers, both nicknames for Robert Peel.



If you were remembered at Westminster Abbey, what pose would your statue have? Create your pose to show your classmates.

8 The Lady Chapel

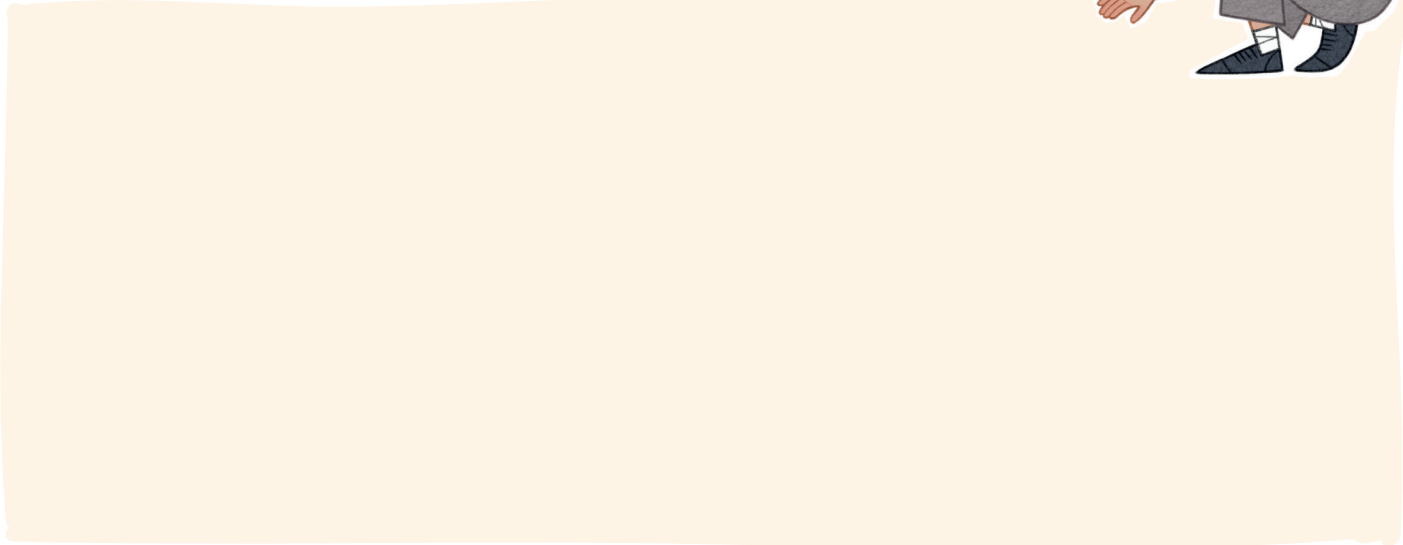
In 1834, a fire destroyed much of the Houses of Parliament. A competition was held to decide who would design the new building. Charles Barry won this competition; his design was inspired by the Lady Chapel and Chapter House at Westminster Abbey.

The portcullis shape you find around this room is also the symbol of Parliament and was used throughout Charles Barry's design, possibly because he was inspired by this chapel.

Can you find this shape? Count how many you can find.



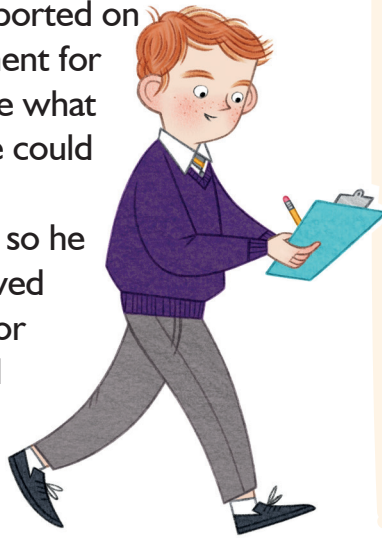
Imagine you are designing a new building. Find three things in this chapel you would use in your design. Draw them below.



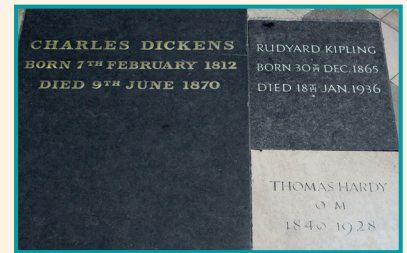


9 Poets' Corner

Before he wrote books, Charles Dickens was a journalist. He reported on the activities of Parliament for five years and didn't like what he saw. He believed he could make a greater impact through his stories and so he wrote books that showed the struggles of the poor such as *Oliver Twist* and *A Christmas Carol*.



What could you write about to raise awareness for a cause?





10 The cloisters

Return to the cloisters.

If you have time at the end of your visit, why not sit for a while on one of the old stone benches and reflect on your visit?

- **What was the most interesting thing you have learnt on this visit?**
- **Did you find anything surprising?**
- **What questions do you still have? What would you like to learn more about?**

Use this space to make notes and sketches.



We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Westminster Abbey today!