

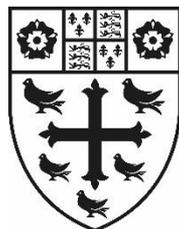


Westminster  
Abbey

# Visiting Choirs Information Pack 2019-20



# Westminster Abbey



On behalf of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, may we express our gratitude to all Visiting Choirs, their musical directors, and all who are involved in arranging their visits to the Abbey. We recognise that a choir visit involves much hard work and long preparation, and often major fundraising efforts. We aim to do everything possible to make all our visiting choirs feel welcome.

We hope that Visiting Choirs would also bear in mind that we have a responsibility to the Dean and Chapter to ensure the quality of the music sung at all services. Therefore, in consultation with the Organist and Master of the Choristers, we have drawn up the following guidelines in the light of our own and visitors' experiences over a long period. We appreciate that much of the information may seem obvious, but it is worth making things absolutely clear in order to help produce the worthiest contribution to worship, and also the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment for our visiting musicians.

We look forward to being able to welcome you at the Abbey in due course. We trust that your visit will be both enjoyable and rewarding.

With all good wishes,

*The Reverend Christopher Stoltz,  
Minor Canon and Precentor of Westminster*

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## Abbey Contacts

For all enquiries not answered in this handbook, please contact:

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If Harry is unavailable or away, contact:

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## About Westminster Abbey

Westminster Abbey holds a unique place at the heart of our national life. It is one of the world's greatest churches, a designated World Heritage Site, and a 'Royal Peculiar', which means the Dean is directly answerable to the monarch. The coronation of kings and queens has taken place here since 1066, and many of the nation's kings and queens are buried in the Abbey. Principal among them is St Edward the Confessor, King of England from 1042 to 1066, whose shrine is at the heart of the Abbey. Also buried or memorialised here are over 3,000 of the most famous and notable men and women from almost every century of these islands' history: statesmen and politicians, lawyers, warriors, clerics, writers, artists, and musicians.

Westminster Abbey is a living church, part of the Church of England: where almighty God is worshipped daily, continuing a 1400-year tradition in this place. Every day (except Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday) the Eucharist is celebrated at 8.00 am. There are twenty-eight services every week, which all are welcome to attend, whether you are Anglican (Episcopalian), or of another Christian Church, or of another faith, or seeking, or doubting. It also plays host to most national services of commemoration, dedication, and celebration.

## Who may sing at the Abbey?

The Minor Canons and Organists are responsible for providing a choral schedule befitting the Abbey's tradition and reputation for musical and liturgical excellence. Visiting Choirs are received at the invitation of the Minor Canons and Organists and through online applications. We welcome applications from visiting choirs that are SATB, ATB, women's/girls', and boys' voices. A choir **must not exceed 40** in number (the maximum the stalls in Quire can accommodate).

## Pattern of Worship

The Abbey has four daily services on Monday to Saturday, and five on Sunday. Sung daily services during visiting choir periods are:

### Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

Evensong 5.00 pm

### Saturday

Evensong 5.00 pm (3.00 pm September–April)

### Sunday

Sung Eucharist 11.15 am

Evensong 3.00 pm

**Please note: choirs that sing on Sundays must sing both services.**

On major solemnities and other principal feasts of the liturgical year, choral Evensong is replaced with a Sung Eucharist at 5.00 pm. You will be told individually if this is the case.

## How to apply

To apply, download and complete the form at the Visiting Choirs section of the Abbey website (<https://www.westminster-abbey.org/worship-music/visiting-choirs>). Applications will be open for a window of a month a year in advance of each visiting choir period (see above).

You will be asked for:

- The name of your choir
- The number of singers
- Contact details of the conductor and/or administrator
- Proposed dates of your visit
- Two live recordings of your choir made in the last year

Once the application window closes, the Minor Canons and Organists will allocate the available dates and inform all choirs as soon as possible.

## Accommodation

The Abbey has no suitable residential accommodation available in Visiting Choir periods, and is regrettably unable to assist in booking any accommodation. Due to its central location, there are a huge number of hotel and hostel accommodations near the Abbey, available through the usual channels.

## Cancellation

In the occasion of an event of national importance, we may have to cancel your visit at no notice. We hope that this meets with your understanding.

## Clergy

The officiant at Evensong is a Minor Canon or Priest Vicar of Westminster Abbey. Sung Eucharist is presided by a member of Abbey clergy. It is not possible for visiting clergy to preside, robe, or process.

## Congregations

Due to its profile and history, the Abbey usually hosts congregations of many hundreds at a weekday Evensong. Attendance during the summer is often even higher, as well as on Sunday mornings. Because it is extremely easy to see any activity going on in the choir stalls, we ask politely that choirs act sensibly and appropriately at all times.

## Dress Code

If you are a robed choir, please feel free to wear your customary dress. In the absence of robes, dark, smart clothing (e.g. suit and tie) should be worn. Academic gowns (with hoods, if desired, except at Eucharist) may be worn. Schools should wear school uniform in the absence of robes.

## Guests and Reserved Seats

Reserved seats for up to 30 guests are available in Quire. Your guests should make themselves known to the vergers before the service and will be conducted straight to their seats, without needing to queue. Guests should aim to arrive for 4.30. We cannot provide reserved seating for more than 30 guests, and any guests above that number will be seated with the rest of the congregation.

## Organists

Visiting Choirs will be accompanied by an Abbey organist in all services. **Exceptionally**, and solely at the invitation of the Abbey organists, strictly subject to separate rehearsal time being available in the Abbey, it may be possible to accommodate a visiting organist.

## Parking

Parking for up to three cars is available in Dean's Yard. Please provide details of cars on your pre-visit information form. Owners of cars parked overnight must leave their keys with the Security Beadles.

## Recordings and photographs

Audio and video-recording of services and rehearsals in the Abbey is **strictly forbidden**. Attempts to film or record a service covertly on a mobile device often prove extremely distracting to choir, clergy, and congregation. Please make sure that any choir supporters in attendance are aware of this rule.

Photographs are not allowed to be taken at any time during the rehearsal or service. However, one group photograph only may be taken following the rehearsal in Quire. Please indicate to the verger on duty if you wish to take this photograph.

## Refreshments

Light refreshments—tea and coffee, squash for children, and biscuits—will be provided for choirs and their directors. Refreshments will be delivered to Cheyneygates.

## Safeguarding

The Abbey's *Safeguarding Policy* can be found here: <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/legal/westminster-abbey-and-st-margarets-church-safeguarding>.

In accordance with this policy, visiting choirs are required to state that they are satisfied with their own safeguarding measures, and that there are no safeguarding concerns regarding any member of their group. We require that you familiarise yourself with our policies and submit a completed *Safeguarding Form*, along with a list of **all** choir members, chaperones, and administrators who will be attending as part of your group. Wristbands for all those listed can be collected by the choir director on your arrival from the Abbey Reception Desk at 20 Dean's Yard (except on Boxing Day, New Year's Eve, and New Year's Day, when they can be collected from the information desk in the North Transept), and must be worn throughout your visit.

**Your choir will not be able to sing at Westminster Abbey if this form and list are not submitted.**

## Tours

The Abbey can offer visiting choirs and their directors a complimentary audio-guided tour, to be taken during visitor opening hours, details of which may be found at <http://www.westminster-abbey.org/visit-us/opening-times>. Please tick the appropriate box on your repertoire request if you want to have a tour. Please note that supporters and friends of the choir have to pay a reduced rate of entry for a tour, and free entry only applies to the choir itself. Please note that there is no entry for tours between noon and 1 pm.

## Tour Operators (for choirs visiting from abroad)

Tour operators provide an invaluable service in organising travel and accommodation arrangements for choirs visiting from overseas. However, we ask that all communication regarding the particulars of your visit is directly between the choir director/administrator and the Abbey visiting choirs administrator. This is to ensure a single point of contact and avoid any possible crossed messages. Additionally, for safeguarding reasons, tour operators are not permitted to accompany the choir during their time at the Abbey unless their name is listed on your pre-visit form.

## Submitting repertoire

Prior to your visit, you will be provided with a repertoire proposal form. **You will also be required to provide scanned copies of all the music you wish to sing (including works in the common repertoire).**

The Kalendar and Lectionary for the period of your visit will be provided to you.

## Repertoire Guidance

The Abbey asks visiting choirs to select their own music and to submit these choices as a proposal for the Abbey to approve.

The music selected by choirs should reflect not only the season or feast of that day, but also music that the choir is confident in and enjoys singing.

We *strongly* encourage choirs not to be too ambitious, and we would prefer them, if in doubt, to propose familiar, modest-scale music from the standard repertoire.

Please be guided by the tone and content of the appointed readings, or by the nature of a Feast day, in your choice of repertoire.

We ask you to understand that it may be necessary for us to ask for changes to your proposals to avoid repetition, or to ensure that a suitable balance of music is offered. The Abbey's policy is that music (other than Responses) should not be repeated in a two-week time frame. The Minor Canons reserve the right not to approve proposed music on the grounds of liturgical or musical suitability at their discretion.

Music on weekdays (apart from major Feasts) should be less grand in scale and nature than on weekends.

The Abbey has a tradition of restrained worship on Fridays, marking the day of Christ's death, and any music proposed for a Friday should reflect this tradition. Fridays which are Feast days (or eves of feasts), and Fridays in the Octaves of Easter and Christmas, are exceptions to this; these are festal in nature.

### Incidental Music

Choirs are often surprised by the amount of time that can be taken up rehearsing the 'incidental music' of services (i.e. the Gospel Acclamation, Gradual Psalm). We strongly recommend that all choirs, even experienced liturgical choirs, look at these prior to their visit, in order to be able to devote as much time as possible to the substantial part of the music you are singing.

Copies of all the incidental music will be sent to you.

## Hymns

Hymns are sung at Eucharist, and at weekend and weekday Evensongs if a Festival is being observed that day. Hymns are appointed by the Minor Canons, and choirs will be informed of them when they receive a proof of the order of service for them to check. It is not possible to inform choirs of hymns prior to this point, as they won't have been chosen yet. Please note:

Hymns should not be conducted.

The organist dictates start and tempo.

No descants should be sung.

Where harmony is provided, the first and last verses of a hymn should be sung in unison regardless.

Choirs must produce and bring their own copies of the hymns, both music and text, from the sources specified by the Minor Canons (most commonly the New English Hymnal). **There are no hymn books for the use of visiting choirs.**

Choirs should ensure that the words of hymns match the words given in any order of service (copies of which will be sent to you in advance of your visit).

## National Anthem

On certain days throughout the year, the National Anthem is sung at services in the Abbey, often marking an anniversary of an event in the Queen's life, or a birthday of a member of the Royal Family. This is part of the tradition of the Abbey's unique relationship with the Crown. If this is to be the case, you will be advised of this by the vergers, and it will be clearly indicated in the service books. We ask that visiting choirs from all countries lead the congregation in the singing of the National Anthem. The words will be found in the printed service books.

## Psalms

The Abbey maintains its own psalm cycle, and requires that all visiting choirs use the Abbey psalter. Apart from at Sunday Sung Eucharist, each psalm (except 42) concludes with Gloria Patri ('Glory be...world without end. Amen'). The congregation will stand before the final Gloria Patri. Copies of psalms will be provided to you by the Minor Canons' Department prior to your visit. Please contact [visiting.choirs@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:visiting.choirs@westminster-abbey.org) if your psalms have not been provided.

## Intraits

We ask that visiting choirs do not sing Intraits.

## Responses

Choirs should use the same set of responses throughout their visit. The Lord's Prayer, if not sung to a setting, is to be recited on a monotone begun by the officiant.

The translation used is *always*:

*Our Father, which art in heaven...in earth...them that trespass...*

It is the conductor's responsibility to ensure that the officiant is made aware of the conductor's decisions regarding options within the Responses.

For choirs visiting from outside the United Kingdom, please note that the second response following the Lord's Prayer is as follows:

*Officiant:*        O Lord, save The Queen:

*Choir:*            And mercifully hear us when we call upon thee.

## Canticles (*Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*)

Generally the canticles are very much at your discretion, but we ask that you consider the Lection, and the likely mood of that particular day in the calendar of the Church, before choosing. If the day is a more solemn occasion then a simpler Tudor or Renaissance work might be more appropriate. If the occasion is one of great festivity, then a larger work is probably more appropriate. Please don't feel that the Canticles have to be a major work, or a huge setting. We will appreciate a simple setting sung excellently much more. The Canticles can be sung in either English or Latin. Other languages may be considered by prior arrangement.

## Anthems

We urge choirs to choose anthems which are appropriate for the Lection of the day, and to err on the side of caution when choosing repertoire for their choir. Again, a simpler work sung excellently will be appreciated much more.

## Motets

Motets sung during the distribution of Holy Communion should be short pieces that match the solemn and quiet mood of that point in the service. Ideally they should last for no more than 2–3 minutes and not be too grand. Unaccompanied Tudor and Renaissance works are ideal for this.

## List of permitted Responses settings

Ayleward	Plainsong ( <i>for upper or lower voices alone</i> )
Byrd	Radcliffe
Clucas	Reading
Darke (upper voices)	Rose
Ebdon	Sanders
Ferial Responses	Shephard
Gibbons/Barnard	Smith (4-part)
Ives	Smith (5-part)
Leighton	Spicer
Morley	Tallis
Nardone	Tomkins

## Arriving at the Abbey

Upon arrival at the Abbey, the choir director should go to Reception at 20 Dean's Yard (or the Information Desk on all Bank Holiday's and Saturdays) and collect wristbands for the choir members. These wristbands are only for members of the choir, must be worn throughout your visit, and you will only be issued with the number indicated on your pre-visit information form. Once wristbands are collected, the key to Cheyneygates can be collected by the choir director from the Security Beadles Box. Reception and the Security Beadles will only provide wristbands and keys to the choir director. If you are singing at the Abbey over more than one day, please retain your wristbands between services.

If you have requested a complimentary audio-guided Abbey tour, please let Reception know.

**Please note that bag searches are currently in operation and that the Security Beadles will ask to check any bags and in some cases conduct a search of the person before entry is permitted.**

After your service, the key for Cheyneygates must be returned to a Security Beadles. Keys must be returned every day, even if you are returning the following day.

## Rehearsals

Visiting Choirs have the use of Cheyneygates, just off the Cloisters, for rehearsals on the day of their performance. Robed choirs should wear cassocks only, not surplices, when they are rehearsing with the vergers in the Abbey. Rehearsals in the Abbey itself will not be available at any other time than below. The Organist will not be available until the times listed below. We strongly advise and ask that all choirs come fully musically prepared and that the available warm up time in Cheyneygates and rehearsal with the Abbey organist are used merely for fine tuning and getting accustomed to singing in the Abbey. Our overwhelming experience of choirs who attempt to put their repertoire together on the day of performing is that they fall short of the required standard.

### Weekday and Saturday Evensongs at 5.00 pm

from 12.00 noon	Cheyneygates available for rehearsal
3.40 pm	Choir moves to the West Cloisters in preparation for processional rehearsal
3.45 pm–4.00 pm	Verger walks the choir through processional route
4.00 pm–4.30 pm	Choir rehearses with Abbey organist
4.30 pm–4.35 pm	Choir rehearses Responses with Officiant
by 4.40 pm	Choir vacates Quire in preparation for Evensong

### Evensongs at 3.00 pm (Saturdays in September–April)

from 12.00 noon	Cheyneygates available for rehearsal
1.40 pm	Choir moves to the West Cloisters in preparation for processional rehearsal
1.45 pm–2.00 pm	Verger walks the choir through processional route
2.00 pm–2.30 pm	Choir rehearses with Abbey organist
2.30 pm–2.35 pm	Choir rehearses Responses with Officiant
by 2.40 pm	Choir vacates Quire in preparation for Evensong

### Sundays

from 8.00 am	Cheyneygates available for rehearsal
9.00 am–9.35 am	Rehearsal with the Abbey organist in Quire
by 9.40 pm	Choir vacates Quire in preparation for Said Matins
11.10 am	Choir lines up for the 11.15 am Eucharist
1.40 pm	Choir moves to the West Cloisters in preparation for processional rehearsal
1.45 pm	Verger walks the choir through processional route
2.00 pm–2.35 pm	Choir rehearses with Abbey organist
by 2.40 pm	Choir vacates Quire in preparation for Evensong

## Cheyneygates

Your rehearsal venue, Cheyneygates, and its environs are extraordinary, listed historic buildings, and their fabric is therefore extremely delicate. Please bear this in mind when consuming food and drink. Dispose of all rubbish in the bins or bags provided. Please report any spillages or damage to a member of staff.

Cheyneygates is up a set of stairs with no lift provision. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause.

You will have a key to the main door; **the door must not be left unlocked and unattended at any point** during your stay, and it should remain shut during any rehearsals, otherwise tourists are likely to enter through it, unaware of what it is.

The key must be returned to a Security Beadles at the end of every day.

## Format of Evensong

The service broadly follows the format set down in the Book of Common Prayer. At 4.30 pm (2.30 pm on Sundays and Saturdays in September–April) the public are allowed into the Abbey to begin taking their seats. At 4.55 pm (2.55 pm on Sundays and Saturdays in September–April) the choir assembles in the cloister and is met by a verger. The choir process into the Choir Stalls in Quire. Items in **bold** are sung by the choir. The service proceeds unannounced.

### *Penitential Introduction and Responses*

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**Psalm(s)**

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*First Lesson*

---

**Magnificat**

---

*Second Lesson*

---

**Nunc dimittis**

---

*Creed*

---

**Responses**

---

*Collects*

---

*Bath prayer*

---

**Anthem**

---

*Prayers, ending with Grace*

---

**(Hymn)**

---

*(Sermon)*

---

**(Hymn)**

---

*(Blessing)*

## Format of Sung Eucharist

At 10.45 am the public are allowed into the Abbey to begin taking their seats. At 11.10 am the choir assembles in the west cloister and is met by a verger. Items in **bold** are sung by the choir. The service proceeds unannounced.

### Hymn

*During which the choir process into the Choir Stalls in Quire.*

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*Greeting and Prayers of Penitence*

### Gloria

*Replaced by the Kyrie during Advent and Lent.*

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*Collect and Old Testament Reading*

### Psalm

---

*Epistle*

### Gospel Acclamation (Alleluias)

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*Gospel, Sermon, and Nicene Creed*

### Hymn

### **Sursum Corda**, Eucharistic Prayer, **Sanctus** and **Benedictus**

*The president will begin the Eucharistic prayer with Sursum Corda, which is printed in the service sheet, ending with the phrase 'in their everlasting hymn of praise' or similar. After Sanctus, Benedictus may be omitted. We may also ask you in advance to omit it.*

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Eucharistic Prayer continues, and Distribution of Communion begins

### **Agnus Dei**

*Sung during the administration of Communion*

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*If members of the choir wish to receive Communion, they come forward after the Agnus Dei and before the Motet*

### **Motet**

*Sung during the administration of Communion*

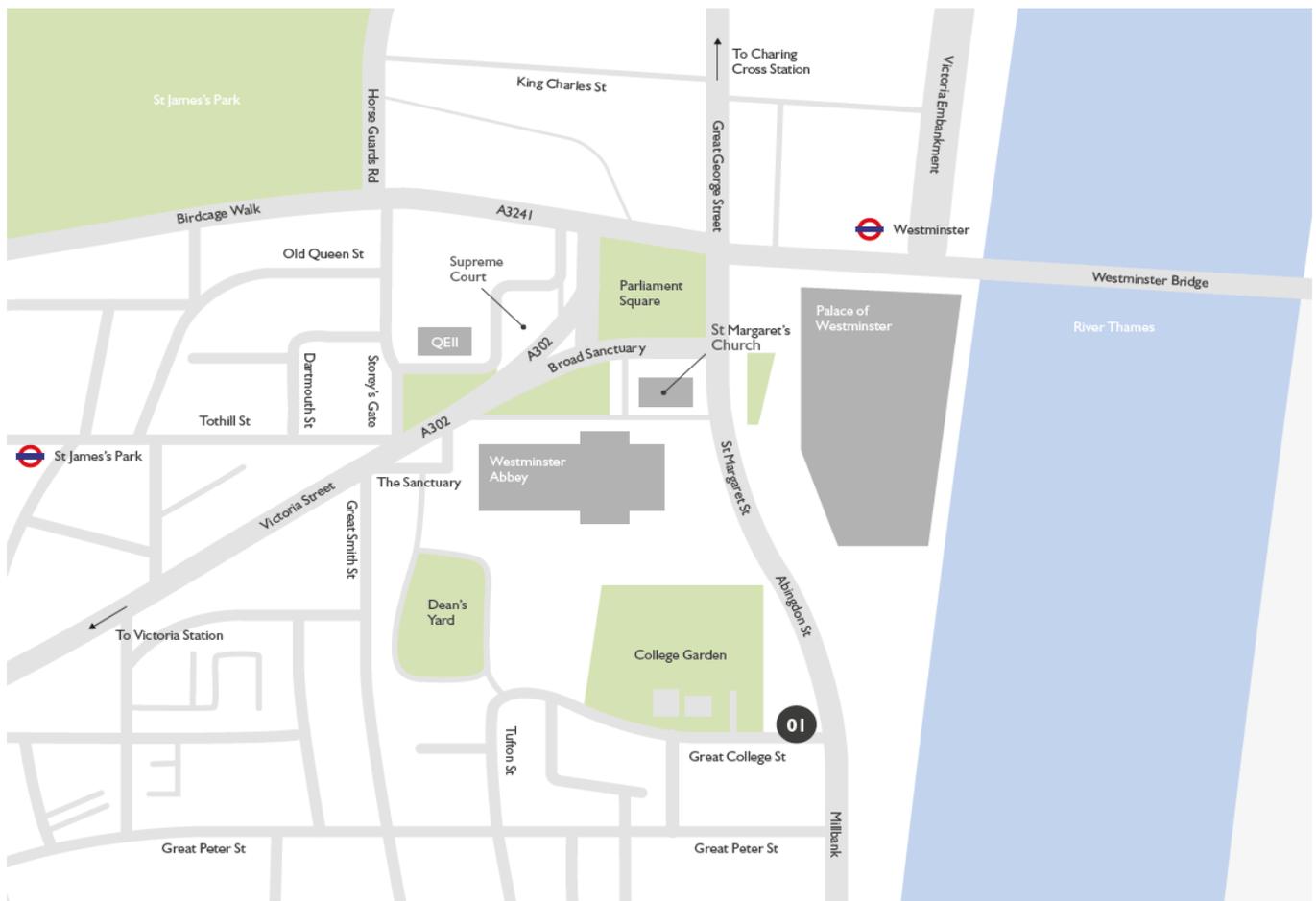
### Hymn

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*Post-Communion Prayer*

### Blessing

*After which, the choir processes out.*



## WESTMINSTER ABBEY & ST MARGARET'S CHURCH



- 01 – Westminster Abbey
- 02 – St Margaret's Church

- 03 – North Gate, Dean's Yard entrance
- 04 – Shop
- 05 – Jerusalem Chamber Entrance
- 06 – West Cloister Door
- 07 – East Cloister Door
- 08 – 1 Dean's Yard
- 09 – 21 Dean's Yard
- 10 – Cloister Entrance
- 11 – Cellarium Cafe & Terrace
- 12 – Cheneygates Entrance
- 13 – Library
- 14 – Chapter House
- 15 – Museum
- 16 – Little Cloister
- 17 – St Catherine's Chapel Garden
- 18 – Choir School
- 19 – 20 Dean's Yard, Chapter Office
- 20 – Westminster School
- 21 – South Gate
- 22 – College Garden Gate

