

## LINKS BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE: ST MARGARET'S CHURCH AND THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

If you are combining a visit to Westminster Abbey with a tour of the Houses of Parliament, why not make your way from one to the other via the 'parish church of the House of Commons': St Margaret's Church? Established originally in the 11<sup>th</sup> century to serve the parish of Westminster so that the monks in the Abbey could be left in peace, St Margaret's is, like its neighbour, a 'Royal Peculiar', subject only to the authority of the Sovereign.

- This guide starts at the East Door on St Margaret Street, opposite the Houses of Parliament.
- The church is open to visitors at the following times: Monday-Friday 9.30am - 3.30pm.
- If you do intend to visit, please check with the Vestry on 020 7654 4840 prior to your visit.
- There is more information on St Margaret's website and a useful plan of the church:  
<http://www.westminster-abbey.org/st-margarets/visit-us>

### Outside the East Door

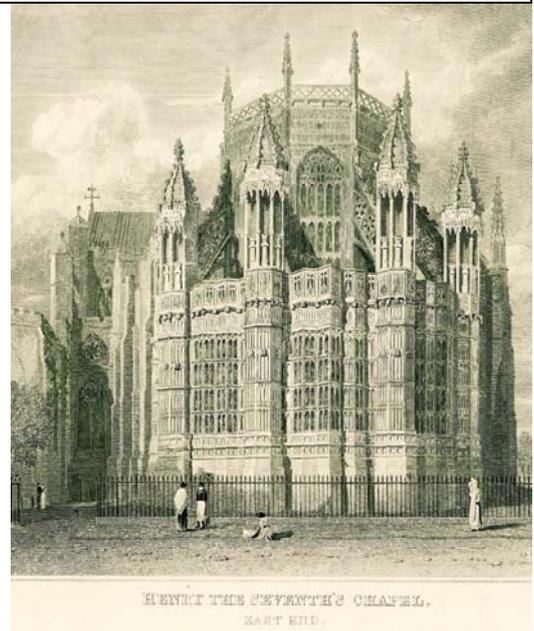
**Compare the architectural style of the Lady Chapel (east end of Abbey) and Parliament's St Stephen's Tower (directly opposite you). This is how the Lady Chapel looked in 1822.**

Look for the crowned portcullis symbol of Houses of Parliament on St Stephen's and the portcullis symbol on the Lady Chapel. Sir Charles Barry 'borrowed' the portcullis from the Lady Chapel as his logo when he submitted his plans for the design of the new Houses of Parliament after the 1834 fire; plans had to be submitted anonymously. Thus the portcullis emblem of the mother of Henry Tudor (Margaret Beaufort) became, with the crown, the symbol of the State: the Crown in Parliament.



Barry modelled his designs on the Abbey, particularly the Lady Chapel, to achieve a unified effect, especially as originally there was no road – they were part of the same yard.

**Bust of Charles I:** placed to the right of the East Door after 1899 to stare defiantly at the statue of Cromwell erected opposite on what is now called Cromwell Green.



### Inside East Door

**Royal coat of arms and the window above the door:**

The coat of arms reminds us of St Margaret's royal status and links with the House of Lords, whereas the mace in the stained glass above, commemorating Speaker Fitzroy (1869 – 1943), reminds us of the symbol of royal power placed in the House of Commons when it is in session.

### The Chancel: East Window above the altar



This window was made to commemorate Henry VIII's marriage to his first wife, Katherine of Aragon. Henry and Katherine can be seen kneeling in the bottom left and right corners respectively. They married in 1509 but Katherine did not give Henry what he wanted: a son. This window was made in 1526 by which time Henry was already in love with Ann Boleyn. The window – along with Katherine and the Church of Rome – fell out of favour until it was installed here in 1758. Its history is a reminder of a time when monarchs believed that they ruled by 'Divine Right' and could disregard Parliament. It is worth remembering that both Ann Boleyn and Henry's last wife, Katherine Parr, supported the reformed Protestant religion which went on, in the next century, to dominate Parliament and bring an end to absolute monarchy in England.



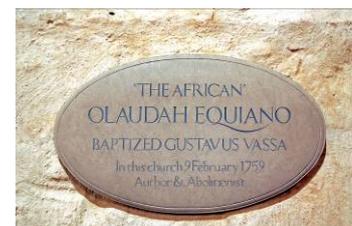
### 'Mr Speaker's' pew: first pew on the south side [RHS facing the altar]



The crowned portcullis emblem marks out the pew reserved since 1681 for 'Mr Speaker'. The emblem appears on the kneelers in this and surrounding pews where MPs sit to celebrate Eucharist or attend weddings, baptisms and funerals of Members of Parliament, often held here. Note the 'House of Commons' green soft furnishings.

### Memorial to Olaudah Equiano: on the wall in the south aisle at the West Door end

Equiano, baptised here in 1759, and Ignatius Sancho, married here in 1758, were freed slaves living in London in the 18<sup>th</sup> century who campaigned against slavery. Equiano, a prominent member of 'Sons of Africa' group of 12 black men, worked with MPs to abolish the slave trade. They finally succeeded in 1807. Sancho was the first Black Briton known to have voted in an election in 1774.



### House of Lords Entry with portcullis design in the north aisle at the West Door end

This red padded door reminds us of the regal colours in the House of Lords.

### Outside West Door: plaque on the wall to left of the door (side further from Abbey)

Memorial plaque to Parliamentarians dug up from graves in the Abbey after the Restoration, in 1661, and thrown into a pit in St Margaret's churchyard. This was an act of revenge by the returning Charles II for the execution of his father in 1649. The church reconciles the two warring parties by remembering Charles I in the east and the Parliamentarians in the west!