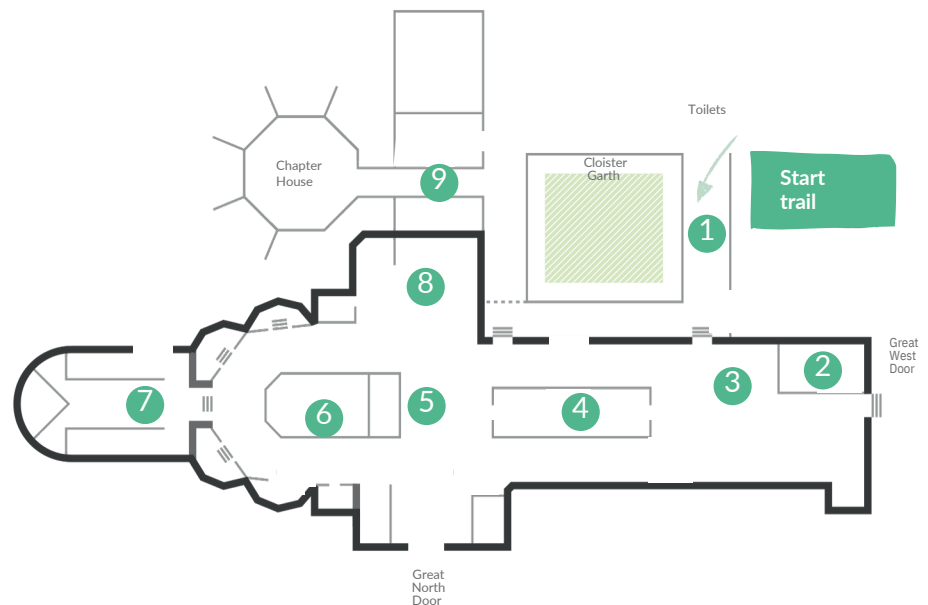


Tudors

There has been a place of worship here for over 1,000 years, and today the Abbey is still a living church. The first stone Abbey, built by King Edward the Confessor, was completed in 1065. In the 1240s it was rebuilt in the Gothic style by King Henry III. Westminster Abbey has been the site of coronations since 1066 and over 3,000 people are buried or remembered here.

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

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



1 The cloisters

Westminster Abbey used to be a monastery, a place where monks live and worship together. The monks spent much of their time in the cloisters: meditating; exercising; studying; writing; and teaching. The Abbey was a working monastery for over 500 years, until the reign of King Henry VIII, when all monasteries in England were closed as part of the Reformation.



- The Abbots of Westminster were powerful and influential men, often employed by the king on state business. Abbot John Islip often entertained Henry VII, serving the king's favourite marrowbone pudding.
- By the early 16th century, Westminster Abbey was one of the wealthiest monasteries in England owning property all over London (Hampstead, Covent Garden, Knightsbridge) as well as across England.
- The Abbey was dissolved in January 1540, on the orders of Henry VIII. Although his daughter Mary managed to reopen the monastery for a few years, it was finally closed under Elizabeth I.

Question: How did monasteries contribute to society?

Stretch: 'The Dissolution of the Monasteries was motivated by Henry VIII's need for money'
Discuss.

2 The Coronation Chair

Since 1308, this chair has been used in coronations as the place where the monarch sits during important parts of the service, including the crowning. It was made on the orders of King Edward I to hold the Stone of Scone, the Scottish coronation stone, which he had captured. The chair was originally decorated with patterns of foliage and animals but has been damaged over time. You might notice the marks on the back, which are graffiti from Victorian schoolboys and visitors.



- Margaret Beaufort attended the coronation of Richard III in 1483. Just two years later, she attended the coronation of her son Henry VII and in 1509, that of her grandson, Henry VIII. She died in the Abbot's house, just behind the chapel where the Coronation Chair stands today.
- Mary I was the first queen regnant (reigning in her own right) rather than queen consort (the wife of a reigning king) of England. She chose not to be crowned on the ancient coronation chair as she thought it might have been 'polluted' by her Protestant brother Edward.
- Elizabeth I was crowned on the Coronation Chair in 1559. After Elizabeth I's death, her cousin James VI of Scotland was crowned James I of England, in 1603. For the first time in 300 years, a Scottish king had been reunited with the holy Stone of Scone.

Question: What challenges might Mary have faced as the first queen regnant?

Stretch: Why has the Stone of Scone been considered so controversial and symbolic?

3 Candles

Light is important in Christianity; in the Bible, Jesus is described as 'the light of the world'. Candles can also be a symbol of prayer. Both candle stations have an icon (a devotional painting of a religious figure) above them. They represent Mary with baby Jesus, and the adult Jesus. The Abbey is a Christian place of worship, but all are welcome to light a candle regardless of personal belief.

- The west end of the Abbey was still under construction at the start of the Tudor era; it was finally completed in 1517. Looking up at the vaults, you may be able to spot the Tudor symbols of the rose and portcullis. These would have been difficult to see when the church was lit solely by candles.
- Henry VIII had closed the monastery in 1540, but his daughter Mary had reopened it during her short reign. Elizabeth I watched the monks process through the Abbey carrying lighted tapers and commented 'Away with these torches, for we see very well'. Just a few months later, she finally closed the monastery and sent the monks away for good.
- Elizabeth I famously did not wish 'to make windows into men's souls'. Today, everyone is welcome at Westminster Abbey, no matter what their faith and beliefs.



Question: Why did stonemasons bother to decorate the parts of the Abbey that would have been difficult to see?

Stretch: What might Elizabeth I have been referring to when she said 'away with these torches, for we see very well'?

4 The quire

When the Abbey was a monastery, this is where the monks would have worshipped. Today the Abbey choristers sing in these stalls during daily services. As well as a boys' choir who attend boarding school here, the Abbey also has a girls' choir, based at St Margaret's Church. Look out for the seats labelled South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, which are reserved for representatives of these Commonwealth countries.



- The monks would gather in the quire to sing and pray. They sang unaccompanied; Latin choral music and Gregorian chants.
- John Blanke, court musician, played the trumpet for the funeral of Henry VII and the coronation of Henry VIII at the Abbey. His portrait appears twice on the Westminster Tournament Roll. He is one of the first people of African descent for whom we have an image as well as written records.
- Elizabeth I loved many of the Catholic traditions, such as Latin choral music. Her Church of England was a mix of both Protestant and Catholic forms of worship.

Question: Most Tudors would have little understanding of the Latin hymns they sang. How might this have affected the way they worshipped?

Stretch: To what extent were changes in religious music more about politics than faith?

5 The high altar

This is where services such as weddings, funerals and coronations take place, as well as some of the daily services. The mosaic floor, called the Cosmati Pavement, is made from thousands of individually cut pieces of stone and glass. During a coronation, the Coronation Chair is placed in the centre of this floor. The most recent royal wedding (that of William and Catherine, The Prince and Princess of Wales) took place here in 2011.

- All the Tudor monarchs were crowned and anointed here. The anointing with holy oil is the most important part of the ceremony, symbolising God's blessing on the monarch.
- The birth of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon's son, Henry Duke of Cornwall, in 1511 was widely celebrated but he died aged just 2 months old and is buried close to the High Altar. Henry's fourth wife Anne of Cleves is buried on the south side of the High Altar, the only one of Henry's wives to be buried at the Abbey.
- Elizabeth I acceded the throne on her sister Mary's death in 1558. Most of the bishops refused to crown her. Eventually the Bishop of Carlisle agreed to it and Elizabeth was crowned here in January 1559. Whilst the service followed the medieval coronation tradition, Elizabeth insisted the Gospel be read in English



Question: What is the significance of the anointing at a coronation?

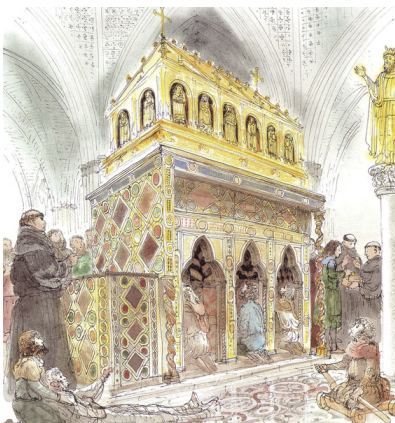
Stretch: In what ways was Elizabeth's 'via media' encapsulated within her coronation?

6

The shrine is not open to the general public as it is very old and fragile. Please look up to your right to see it.

Shrine of St Edward the Confessor

After building the first stone Abbey, King Edward the Confessor was buried here in 1066 and canonised (made a saint) in 1161. When the Abbey was rebuilt by King Henry III, St Edward's body was moved into this new shrine. The tombs around the shrine belong to medieval kings and queens who wanted to be buried as close to the saint as possible. St Edward's shrine has been a place of pilgrimage for hundreds of years, and pilgrims still come to pray here today.



- Henry VII commissioned a golden statue of himself to be placed on St Edward's shrine. There was no space for his burial here, but he wanted a visual presence in this holy shrine.
- St Edward the Confessor had been the patron saint of the royal family throughout the medieval period. The name Edward was a popular name for royal princes. Henry VIII also chose the name Edward for his son, born to Jane Seymour.
- Many shrines were despoiled during the Reformation, most famously Thomas Becket's shrine at Canterbury. The monks of Westminster hid St Edward's body during the Reformation, restoring it only after Mary was crowned. Significantly, Elizabeth allowed the shrine to remain here.

Question: Why were saints' shrines desecrated during the Reformation?

Stretch: List the monarchs you can see buried around St Edward's Shrine. Why were the Tudors buried elsewhere?

7 The Lady Chapel

Started by King Henry VII in 1503 and completed by his son, King Henry VIII, the Lady Chapel was designed as a burial place for Tudor monarchs. A lady chapel, dedicated to Mary (the mother of Jesus), can be found in most large churches. Look out for the colourful banners, belonging to the Knights of the Order of the Bath. This military order was established in 1725 and use the Lady Chapel for special services. Newly installed knights design their banners to reflect their careers and interests.

- Henry VII commissioned this spectacular chapel to be the final resting place for members of the Tudor family, since there was no space left in the Shrine of St Edward, the traditional place for royal burial. The chapel cost £20,000 at the time and was described as 'the wonder of the world' by 16th century historian John Leland.
- The chapel is full of Tudor imagery. Look out for the Tudor rose, the portcullis as well as dragons and greyhounds.
- All the Tudor monarchs except for Henry VIII are buried in and around this chapel. Mary Queen of Scots was brought here for burial too, by her son James I, after Elizabeth's death.



Question: What does the dragon on the royal coat of arms above the altar signify?

Stretch: Looking around you, what do you think Henry VII's intention was in building this chapel?

8 Poets' Corner

Over 100 poets and writers are buried or remembered in Poets' Corner. The first poet buried here, in 1400, was Geoffrey Chaucer, author of *The Canterbury Tales*. This wasn't because of his poetry but rather his job as Clerk of the King's Works, looking after royal properties. Nearly 200 years later, the poet Edmund Spenser asked to be buried near Chaucer. This started a tradition of literary memorials which still continues today, and also includes musicians, actors, singers and directors.



- The large wall paintings of St Thomas and St Christopher were painted in the 13th century and indicate how the Abbey would have been decorated before the Reformation.
- Edmund Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene* was dedicated to Elizabeth I. He was a great favourite of the queen, who granted him a pension for life, a clear signal of her favour.
- At the beginning of the 16th century, the only plays were miracle and morality plays. William Shakespeare and many other playwrights writing towards the end of the 16th century had the freedom to write tragedies, comedies and history plays for the new theatres and companies of players to perform.

Question: Why are there so few medieval wall paintings in the Abbey today?

Stretch: Why has Elizabeth I's reign been described as a cultural 'golden age'?

9 The Chapter House

The Chapter House was a meeting place for the monks who gathered every day to hear a chapter from the rules of St Benedict. In the entrance to the Chapter House is the oldest door in Britain, dating to the 1050s. Nearby is the Pyx Chamber, where pyxes (small boxes) containing gold and silver coins were kept. The Pyx Chamber is one of the few remaining parts of the first stone church and is nearly 1,000 years old.



- At the start of the Tudor era, the Chapter House would have been used daily by the monks who met here every morning to discuss Abbey business and to be reminded of the Rule of St Benedict.
- Beneath the stained-glass window of Henry VIII, another window depicts the scene in 1540 when the monks gathered in the Chapter House to sign the Deed of Surrender which handed control of the monastery over to Henry VIII's ministers.
- After the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the Chapter House was used to store state papers and other important documents such as the Domesday Book.

Question: Why might paintings of 'The Last Judgement' have been chosen to decorate the walls of the Chapter House?

Stretch: Whilst many monasteries were physically pulled down during the Dissolution, the church building here survived. Why?

Use this space to make notes and reflect.