

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE ABBEY:

- **7TH CENTURY** A church probably existed on this site
- **960** Dunstan, Bishop of London, founds a Benedictine monastery
- **1065** King Edward the Confessor's church completed
- **1220** Work starts on the Gothic Lady Chapel
- **1245** The eastern part of Edward's church is replaced by Henry III's Gothic Abbey
- **1272** Building work stops after five bays of the nave are finished
- **1376** Rebuilding of the nave in the Gothic style continues
- **1503** The Lady Chapel is demolished and the foundation stone of Henry VII's Chapel is laid
- **1517** The nave is completed
- **1540** Henry VIII dissolves the monastery
- **1560** Elizabeth I establishes the Abbey as a collegiate church
- **1745** The west towers are completed

THE PURCELL CLUB

The Purcell Club's members are mainly former Choristers of Westminster Abbey. Our guided tour of the Abbey, with music, lasts about two hours and offers a unique way of seeing the Abbey in the quiet of the evening. Each year the tours raise thousands of pounds for charity. Tickets are available for group bookings only. The Bookings Secretary can be contacted at purcellclubbookings@gmail.com.

MEETING POINT

When facing the west towers of the Abbey there is an arch on your right hand side which leads into Dean's Yard. Go through the arch and turn immediately left. The Cloister entrance can be seen straight ahead through another arch. Assemble at 6.45pm just inside the Cloister entrance where you will be met by members of the Purcell Club.

CELLARIUM CAFÉ

Although the Abbey's Cellarium Café restaurant is not open for the general public on a Saturday evening it is available for pre-booked Purcell Club tour groups, subject to there being sufficient numbers. It offers good food and facilities and is perfectly located within the Cloisters as a comfortable and convenient gathering place before the tour.

TOILETS

The Abbey's toilet facilities are situated in the Cloisters and will normally be available both before and after the tour.

THE PURCELL CLUB

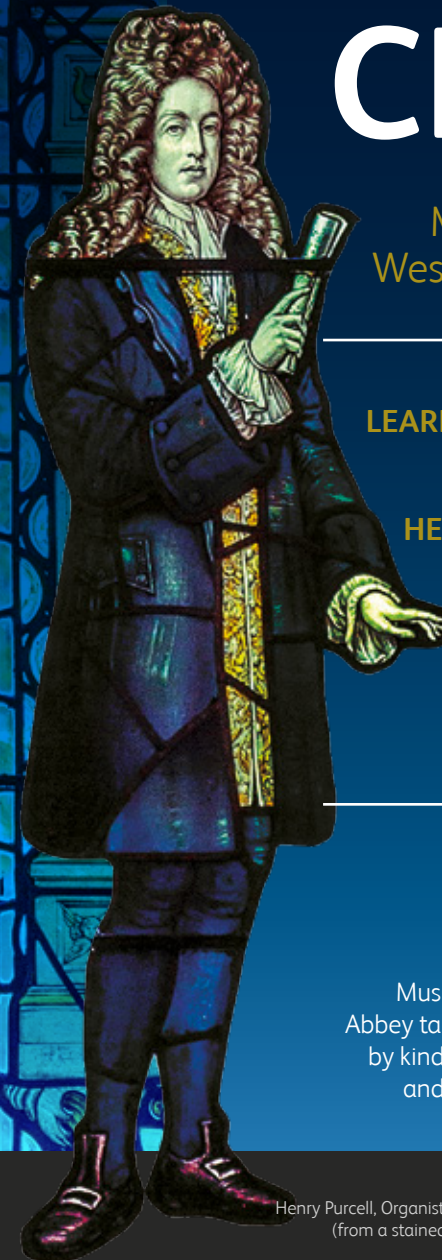
Musical Tours of Westminster Abbey

LEARN about the Abbey's remarkable history

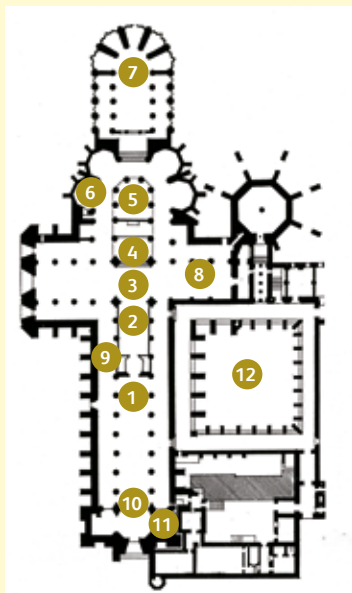
HEAR about the events which shape its life

SEE the tombs of the medieval Kings and Queens

Musical tours of Westminster Abbey take place ten times a year by kind permission of The Dean and Chapter of Westminster



Henry Purcell, Organist of Westminster Abbey 1680-1695 (from a stained glass window in the Choir School).



- 1 The Nave
- 2 The Quire
- 3 The Lantern
- 4 The Sacrament, Cosmati Pavement and High Altar
- 5 St Edward's Chapel
- 6 North Ambulatory
- 7 King Henry VII's Chapel and side Chapels
- 8 Poets' Corner
- 9 Musicians' Aisle
- 10 Tomb of the Unknown Warrior
- 11 St George's Chapel and Coronation Chair
- 12 Cloisters



King Henry VII's Chapel

The magnificent Lady Chapel was built by King Henry VII. His body and that of his wife, Elizabeth of York, lie east of the Chapel's high altar. In its side chapels are the tombs of Queen Elizabeth I, Queen Mary and Mary Queen of Scots. Its crowning glory is the fan-vaulted ceiling. It is the Chapel of the Order of the Bath and the knights' banners hang over the stalls.



The Coronation Chair

The Coronation Chair was made in about 1300 to house the Stone of Scone brought from Scotland by Edward I in 1296. It has been used at nearly every coronation since then. The Stone of Scone is now in Edinburgh Castle but will be returned to the Abbey for future coronations. The Chair has left the Abbey only twice – in 1657 for the installation of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector in Westminster Hall and during the last world war when it went to Gloucester Cathedral for safe keeping. The Chair, newly cleaned and conserved and with a new grill in front of the Stone cavity, is now on display in St George's Chapel at the West end of the Abbey.



Tomb of the Unknown Warrior

In 1920 the body of an unknown soldier was brought from France to lie 'among the Kings because he had done good toward God and towards his House'. He rests in soil brought from France and is covered with a slab of black Belgium marble. Every State Visit by foreign Head of State begins with a wreath-laying ceremony at the tomb.



The Abbey's Organ

The five manual Harrison and Harrison organ was installed for the coronation of King George VI in 1937 and has since been regularly upgraded. It is now one of the largest organs in the country with more than 7000 pipes. The tour includes a short organ recital by one of the Abbey's organists to demonstrate the instrument's versatility and power.



St Edward the Confessor's Shrine

This Shrine is one of the few in Britain still to contain the body of a Saint. In 1540, at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the monks dismantled the Shrine but rebuilt it when Mary came to the throne and re-established the Roman Catholic faith. The Chapel contains the remains of five Kings and three Queens.



Poets' Corner

Since the end of the sixteenth century poets and men and women of letters have been commemorated or buried here including Ted Hughes, Oscar Wilde and Sir John Betjeman. The transept contains Shakespeare's memorial and the graves of Charles Dickens and George Frederic Handel.

