

Westminster Abbey

Legend asserts that the abbey church of St. Peter at Westminster was founded at the beginning of the seventh century during the reign of King Sebert, that it was miraculously consecrated by its own patron saint, and that its royal founder was buried within its walls when he died in AD 616. These stories are incapable of proof, but we know that there was a small monastery on Thorney Island towards the end of the tenth century, when St. Dunstan was Archbishop of Canterbury, which Edward the Confessor decided to refound in redemption of a vow to make a pilgrimage to St. Peter's in Rome. The Benedictine establishment was enlarged till there were 70 monks, and for them the king built the great church which was consecrated on 28 December 1065, only ten days before his own death. It is possible that his rightful successor, Harold, was crowned here; it is certain that William the Conqueror celebrated his own coronation in the great abbey church on Christmas Day 1066, for he had based his claim to the throne on Edward's promise of it to him, and he wanted to emphasize their relationship by assuming the crown in the Confessor's own church. Since that time, Westminster Abbey has been the coronation place of all our sovereigns, save only Edward V and Edward VIII, neither of whom was ever crowned, and, from Henry III's death till that of George II, this has been their customary place of sepulchre. 39 monarchs have been crowned here and here 16 have been buried. These associations combine to make the Abbey the most important historical building in England. They also served to protect its supreme architectural beauty from mutilation and iconoclasm at the Reformation.

The Confessor's church, of which nothing now remains above ground, was said to have derived its plan from that of Jumièges. The monarch was canonized in 1163 and the church was rebuilt by Henry III, whose devotion to the Saxon saint was such that he called his eldest son after him, was buried beside him, and judged the Confessor's own edifice to be too humble a resting-place for his sacred body. In 1245, he began to pull down the old structure and to rebuild it in the magnificent style of Rheims Cathedral, which had just been completed.

The work carried out under his aegis during the next 25 years must be considered as the most significant display of artistic patronage ever undertaken

by an English monarch. Henry's piety and reverence for his predecessor were such that the work was carried out at his own expense; a conservative estimate¹ suggests that he laid out well over £40,000. His first consideration was the building, and here we should remember that the queens of France and of England were sisters, daughters of Raymond Berengar, the poet Count of Provence; the cultural relationships between the two courts were close and fruitful. Specifically French architectural features will be pointed out later, but the royal connection should be noted. From 1245 till about 1253, the king's master mason was Henry of Reynes, who may have been a Frenchman or who may have come from Raynes in Essex, but who had certainly worked in France. He had already been responsible for new buildings at Windsor. His assistant and successor was John of Gloucester, who directed the work till 1261; after that date, Robert of Beverley was in control.

As the building progressed, so Henry furnished it, for he believed that the adornments were of equal importance with the main structure. The walls and the woodwork were painted, the floors inlaid with precious marbles, sculpture was commissioned and installed, metal work was wrought, and Mabel of Bury St. Edmunds embroidered altar frontals and copes. The very account entries suggest the King's enthusiasm for the work and the respect in which he held his craftsmen; Master Walter of Durham is described as 'dilectissimus pictor' and Mabel is allowed to keep the surplus silks and gold thread for her own use. It is important to realize that what we have today is only a flicker of the brilliance and colour that must once have filled the building.

The work continued till 1269, by which time the east end, the transepts, and the first four bays of the nave were completed, the saint's body had been placed in a new, magnificent shrine, and the chapter house was finished. There the building stayed, the lofty eastern portion awkwardly joined to the nave of the older, less stately, church. A century later, two efficient abbots, Simon Langham and Nicholas de Litlington, re-organized the abbey's finances and, with the generous support of Richard II, continued

¹ Brown, R. A., Colvin, H. M. and Taylor, A. J., *History of the King's Works*, 1963. volume I, p. 157.

the work. Their master mason was Henry Yevele, whose humility and sensibility were so great that he planned it, not in the style of his own day, but in that first chosen by Henry of Reynes, so that the whole church could almost be the work of one generation. After Richard's deposition in 1399, the work languished till Abbot Islip completed the vaulting in 1503-6. At the same time, the Lady Chapel, constructed about 1220 from the Abbey's own funds, which stood to the east of the main building, was pulled down and a new one was begun by the express desire of Henry VII. The king and his mother, the Lady Margaret Beaufort, spent some £14,000 on the chapel which was to be 'painted, garnished and adorned as such work requireth and as to a King's work apperteyneth'. The western end remained unfinished till 1734 when Hawksmoor, disciplining his ingenuity as Yevele had done before him, designed two square pinnacled towers with a gable between them. He died in 1736 but John James completed the work in 1745. The labours of five centuries were at last complete and the Abbey a perfect and harmonious whole.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY is shaped like a Latin cross, measuring 511 feet 6 inches from the west door to the eastern extremity of Henry VII's Chapel, and 203 feet 2 inches from the north door, across the Choir, to the south door. The western towers soar 225 feet 4 inches into the air, and the nave rises up through 101 feet 8 inches. It was built of stone quarried in Caen and shipped across the Channel with difficulty and at great expense, but by the end of the seventeenth century, the exterior was in need of repair and the work of refacing was begun in 1698 under the careful supervision of Sir Christopher Wren. The whole of Henry VII's Chapel was refaced, less sympathetically, by Wyatt between 1807 and 1822, and in the middle of that century J. T. Micklethwaite renewed the rose window in the south transept, while Sir Gilbert Scott began, and J. L. Pearson continued, the remodelling of the North Porch. In spite of these renewals, the form of the Abbey remains clear and we should notice especially the windows, the buttresses, and the North Porch. The tall windows are divided into two lights by bar tracery, while above them and below the window arch is a sexfoiled circle, all of open work. Such tracery had been devised in Rheims, between 1210 and 1220, and it is generally accepted that this delicate technique was first introduced into England when it was employed for the Abbey.¹ The windows are divided by buttresses which rise above the aisle

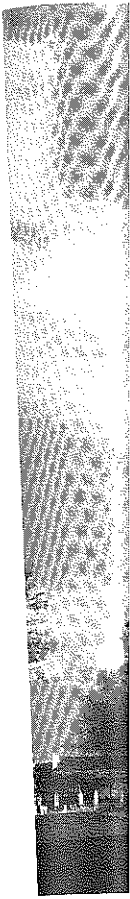
¹ Unless, as Sir Nikolaus Pevsner reminds us, the great, glorious, blinded, bricked-up west window of Binham Priory in Norfolk was indeed completed, as Matthew Paris asserts in his *Chronica Maior*, before 1244, in which case this remote corner of North Norfolk has the honour of having brought such tracery to this island.

roofs to terminate in pinnacles, while from them flying buttresses stretch out to brace themselves between the windows of the clerestory. To Henry III's fabric, the main entrance was not from the west, but by the north, the royal porch. This entrance was the nearest and most convenient to the palace of Westminster.

When visiting the Abbey today, it is best to enter by the west porch. The plan of the interior repeats the basic simplicity of the cross formed by the outer walls, and there are two especially French features in the design, namely the height of the nave and the chevet arrangement at the east end, where an ambulatory surrounds the apse of the choir and chancel, and is itself encircled by a chain of small polygonal chapels, dedicated to different saints. The nave is the highest in England, exceeding the choir at Lincoln by more than 27 feet, though dwarfed in its turn by Amiens and Rheims. It is 35 feet wide, giving a ratio of three to one, proportions more usually found in France than in England. It consists of 12 bays, but the ritual choir projects into it and occupies the four easternmost. A screen is set across the central aisle at this point, with the nave altar before it. The pillars of the main arcade should be examined carefully; they are of Purbeck marble and, uncharacteristically enough, have always been polished and never painted. At the fourth bay, their form changes slightly and they have eight shafts instead of four; this distinction marks the end of Henry III's work and the beginning of Yevele's fabric. Above the main arcade are the windows of the triforium and clerestory; a gallery runs around the church at triforium level - an arrangement more characteristically English than French. The vaulting is studded with great, golden bosses and from the sides hang 16 glorious Waterford glass chandeliers, given by the Guinness family in celebration of the nine-hundredth anniversary of the Abbey's consecration.

At eye and pavement level, our contemplation of the nave may be jarred by the extraordinary number of monuments, many of white marble, which throng the walls, the aisles, and the chapels. Besides the kings, many of the great, and a fair number of the comparatively humble dead lie in the Abbey or have their monuments here. The Abbey can claim to shelter a neat anthology of English sculpture from the thirteenth century to the present day. Details of each monument are set out in the official guide. Of pre-Reformation work, more can be seen in the Abbey than in any other church in the country, so thoroughly was the destruction of religious sculpture elsewhere carried out under Henry VIII and Edward VI.

Above the entrance in the west porch is a carving of Our Lord, flanked by St. Peter and Edward the Confessor. The work, by Michael Clark, is made of teak and was set up in 1967. At the west end of the nave, a black slab with a long inscription covers the body of the Unknown Soldier, laid here on 11



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West front of Westminster Abbey

November 1920. Wreaths and posies of scarlet poppies always ring it round. Nearby, another, plainer slab commemorates Winston Churchill, who lies with his family at Bladon. Outside St. George's Chapel hangs a portrait of Richard II, probably the work of André Beaunève de Valenciennes, painter to Charles V, who visited England about 1398. The pose is stiff and hieratic, majesty enshrined rather than enthroned, but the face is clearly a portrait, the earliest convincing one that we have of an English king, and should be compared with the effigy on Richard's tomb and with the younger man shown in the Wilton Diptych in the National Gallery (see p. 119). The great west window is part of the fifteenth-century work, but the glass dates from the 1730s, when the figures were designed by Sir James Thornhill and executed by Joshua Price. Among the many large monuments – the younger Pitt and Charles James Fox, political rivals throughout their lives, lie near each other and are both commemorated by Westmacott – is one small one under the south-west tower. It is by Cheere to Joseph Wilcocks, Dean of Westminster for 25 years, during which time the

western towers were completed. So proud was he of those towers that the sculptor showed them on his memorial. On English monuments, the most interesting and skilful work is often to be found, not in the main figures, but in the details or the bas-reliefs of the pedestals. Two particularly memorable examples in the Abbey are the monuments to Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. Roger Townsend and to Thomas Thynne. The former was killed in 1759 when reconnoitring the French lines at Ticonderoga; the bas-relief, designed by Robert Adam and Jean-François Breton and carved by John Eckstein and T. Carter, shows the fort with French and English troops, garbed as Roman soldiers, skirmishing. The latter's monument, carved by A. Quellin, shows the murder of Thynne in 1682 by three ruffians in the pay of Count Konigsmarck, as he drove in his coach along Whitehall.

The Choir Screen, which was set up in 1834, was designed by Edward Blore, though much of the inner stonework dates from the thirteenth century. Against it, facing into the nave, are placed two monuments, both designed by William Kent and executed by

Rysbrack; they are to James, 1st Earl Stanhope, and to Isaac Newton. Near to Newton lie other great scientists – Kelvin, Herschel, Darwin, Thomson, and Rutherford – while plaques commemorate Faraday and Clerk-Maxwell. A single grave close by encases the bodies of two great clock-makers, Thomas Tompion (d.1713) and his friend and apprentice, George Graham (d.1751).

Behind the Screen lies the Choir, its black and white pavement given by Dr. Richard Busby, Headmaster of Westminster School. The medieval stalls were destroyed by the Abbey surveyor in 1775 and the present ones date only from 1847 but, with painted and gilded woodwork behind them, they make a brave showing. The Organ has grown from an instrument built by Christopher Shrider in 1730, and still incorporates two stops from the 'Father' Schmidt organ of 1694, namely the 8-foot Stopped Diapason and the 4-foot Stopped Nason on the Choir Organ. Among the Abbey organists have been Orlando and Christopher Gibbons, John Blow and his pupil Henry Purcell, Samuel Arnold, and Thomas Greatorex. Purcell and Blow lie in the north aisle of the choir, underneath the organ, and near them are the graves and monuments of many British composers. In this part of the Abbey, the carvings on the spandrels of the north and south wall-arcades should be noticed. They are a series of sculptured coats of arms, traditionally representing those who assisted Henry III in the rebuilding. The arms of the Holy Roman Emperor are there, with those of the King of France and the Count of Provence, Henry III's father-in-law; among the English nobles, Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, and Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, are represented. In 1264, within a year of the shields being set up, de Montfort was in open rebellion against the King, determined to force the rule of Parliament upon him.

We now stand in the crossing under the Lantern and can look towards the transepts. The North Transept is known as the Statesmen's Aisle, so many of our greatest politicians are commemorated there. The fashion was set by the elder John Bacon's monument to the elder Pitt, which stands 33 feet high in white marble and cost £6,000. Castlereagh, Grattan, Peel, Palmerston, Disraeli, Gladstone, and Asquith have graves or memorials here. Gibson refused to undertake the statue for Peel (d.1850) unless he might garb the statesman in classical attire, so Peel is represented in a toga, but Boehm's figure of Disraeli has something of the character and panache which its subject must have had in life. The north transept has three distinct aisles, the eastern one being divided into three small chapels dedicated to St. Michael, St. Andrew, and St. John the Evangelist. In St. John's Chapel lie two soldier brothers, Sir Francis and Horace Vere, 1st Baron Vere of Tilbury (d.1609 and 1635). Francis Vere's widow set up a monument to them, a copy of the tomb of the Count of Nassau at Breda. It consists of two slabs of black marble, on the

lower of which lies Sir Francis's body, wrapped in his cloak. Four kneeling knights support the upper slab on their shoulders and on it is laid his armour like an empty carapace, to show that he died in his bed and not upon the field of battle. Adjacent, in St. Michael's Chapel, is Roubiliac's famous monument to Lady Elizabeth Nightingale. The poor lady died from a miscarriage, having been frightened during a thunder-storm. She sinks down, lifeless, in her husband's arms, while he tries in vain to ward off Death's spear, directed by a ghastly skeleton which emerges from the base of the monument. Charles I's supporter, the Duke of Newcastle, has a fine tomb with effigies upon it of himself and his learned wife, Margaret Lucas; she is shown holding a book, an inkhorn, and a pen. They share their vault with their son-in-law, Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford, who died in 1741; his wonderful library of manuscripts is now the Harleian Collection in the British Museum. An exceptionally graceful figure of an Oriental maiden, carved by Scheemakers, adorns Rear-Admiral Charles Watson's monument (d.1757), and there are numerous morsels of thirteenth-century sculpture on the arches and spandrels of the walls and aisles. St. Margaret and her dragon keep each other company outside St. Andrew's chapel. Opposite, the slightly narrower, aisleless South Transept is the most popular corner of the whole great church. Chaucer was buried here in 1400, probably because, in his old age, he lived in a house close to the Abbey. The place was unmarked, but in 1555 another poet, Nicholas Brigham, gave a grey marble tomb as a memorial, and was himself buried nearby. When Edmund Spenser (d.1599) was laid here, all his contemporaries, in all probability Shakespeare among them, gathered here and threw their elegies and the pens with which they had written them, into the grave. From that time onwards, the bodies or the memorials of England's poets have been gathered together in the South Transept. A dandified figure of Shakespeare, designed by Kent and carved by Scheemakers, is here, and there are tributes to Dryden, Drayton, Beaumont, Milton, Addison, Gay, Sheridan, Prior, Burns, Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Tennyson, Browning, Dickens, Kipling, T. S. Eliot, Dylan Thomas, Henry James, and W. H. Auden. The great actor, Garrick, is represented by a figure carved by H. Webber, and there is a fine statue of the composer, Handel, by Roubiliac; the face was worked from a death mask. William Camden, antiquary and Headmaster of Westminster School, who wrote the first guide-book to the Abbey in 1600, lies in the South Transept. His pupil, the poet Ben Jonson, who lies in the Nave, wrote of him with affectionate reverence, and near to Camden's grave lies William Heather, his friend and executor, who was a composer and founded the music professorship at Oxford



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which is called after him. Among so many literary men is one monument to a statesman, John Campbell, 2nd Duke of Argyll (1680–1743), who was largely responsible for the union of England and Scotland and whose body lies in Henry VII's chapel. A memorial group was carved by Roubiliac; History inscribes the Duke's titles, Eloquence proclaims his fame, and Minerva contemplates his deeds. In the midst of these three ladies, the Duke sits, attired in classical armour, looking a little apprehensive of their vehemence. The whole work has a fair claim to being considered as Roubiliac's masterpiece, the tense attitude and flowing draperies of Eloquence being an especially remarkable achievement.

In the South Transept, special attention should be paid to the remains of the thirteenth-century adornments. High up at the south end, on a level with the triforium, are four figures, two of them winged angels, joyously swinging censers, another seated holding a staff, and a fourth, now headless, standing patiently. The angels are often held to be the finest sculpture of their period surviving in England, but binoculars are needed to appreciate them. They were wrought with such careful attention that even the backs of the wings are meticulously carved with feathers. Below them at eye level, partially obscured by the memorials, are two huge wall-paintings representing St. Christopher and the Incredulity of St. Thomas. A door in the wall beside the paintings leads into St. Faith's Chapel which is reserved for private prayer and meditation. Above the altar is a life-sized wall-painting of the saint, her visage beautiful but most uncompromising, with a book and a gridiron — the instrument of her martyrdom. Below is a crucifixion, with two curiously shaped devices on either side. Their outline is that of an eight-pointed star but the small scenes that once filled them have faded away. To the left is a small half-figure of a Benedictine monk, a scroll issuing from his lips with two lines of Latin enclosed in it — they are a prayer to the Virgin. Professor Tristram suggests that a monk, either Master William of Westminster or Master Walter of Durham, was responsible for these masterpieces.

The Sanctuary, St. Edward's Shrine, and the Royal Tombs lie to the east. The floor of the Sanctuary or Presbytery is raised about 30 inches above the level of the nave and it is here, before the high altar, that the ceremony of coronation takes place. The present altar was set up in 1867 to designs by Sir Gilbert Scott; it stands against a retable with a mosaic of the Last Supper which was designed by J. R. Clayton of Clayton and Bell and was executed by Salviati. The mosaic is flanked by wooden figures of St. Peter, St. Paul, Moses, and David, carved by H. H. Armstead. Before the altar, carefully covered by carpeting, is a pavement of Cosmati work. It was laid down about 1268, Abbot Ware having brought back from Rome a skilled craftsman called Odericus. It is made of Purbeck marble with panels of porphyry and serpen-

tine and mosaics of marble and glass, all arranged in inter-woven circles and squares, the pattern showing the plan and the duration of the universe and the elements of which it is composed. Strangely enough, the pavement is shown in the foreground of Holbein's painting, *The Ambassadors*, which is in the National Gallery. On the north side of the Sanctuary are three magnificent tombs, those of Edmund Crouchback (d.1296), Earl of Lancaster and youngest son of Henry III, of Aveline, the beautiful heiress who became his wife (d.1274), and of Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke (d.1324). All three are altar tombs with elaborate canopies above them, and around the bases are little figures of men and women called 'weepers'. The tombs of Edmund and Aveline are very similar and may be by Master Alexander of Abingdon or by Master Michael of Canterbury, while Master Richard of Reading may have fashioned that for Aymer de Valence, who is shown both in effigy and again in a roundel on the top of the pediment, where he wears full armour and is charging on horseback. On the south side, opposite the tombs, are the sedilia or seats for the senior clergy. They were set up in Edward I's day, in the time of Abbot Wenlock. Behind them are four panels and, on two of them, painted, life-sized figures of kings are clearly visible. They are probably meant to represent Henry III and Edward I. Originally, the figures were ornamented with glass mosaic, though this has now nearly all disappeared. Other figures are visible on the backs of the panels and can be seen from the South Ambulatory; they are probably part of an Annunciation, and Edward the Confessor giving a ring to a pilgrim, who proved to be St. John. They should be compared with the figures in the South Transept. In the south corner of the Sanctuary lies that sensible lady, Anne of Cleves. Nearly fifty years after her death, a marble slab was set above her tomb; the decoration, a skull and cross-bones, is said to be the first of its kind in England.

Behind the High Altar is the Shrine of St. Edward the Confessor. The Saint lies in a marble tomb covered with mosaic decoration, the work of Peter, 'civis Romanus', possibly the son of that Odericus who laid the pavement in the Sanctuary. Around the tomb are trefoil-headed recesses, in which pilgrims would crouch hoping for miraculous cures. Above is a curious wooden feretory or superstructure, added by Abbot Feckenham in 1557 during the reign of Mary Tudor. Carvings of events from the Confessor's life and of miracles wrought by him run along the frieze of the screen, which divides the Shrine from the Sanctuary, which was completed in 1441. Burial near to the Saint was a privilege reserved only for those of the blood royal or of particular importance. The Lady Edith, his wife, and his sensible great-niece, Maud, who married Henry I and so united the Saxon and Norman lines, lie in unmarked graves, but some of the other royal persons have remarkable tombs. At the north-west corner, Edward I lies in a plain altar

tomb of Purbeck marble; it was said that adornment was avoided so that the king's body could easily be taken out to be carried before his troops should they march north to Scotland. His father's, Henry III's, tomb comes next, and is as magnificent as Edward's is plain. It is another Purbeck marble altar-tomb, but it is adorned with entwined circles and squares in mosaic work by Peter the Roman, and on it rests a gilt-bronze effigy, showing the king crowned and in coronation robes. The figure is the work of the sculptor, William Torel, citizen and goldsmith of London, who was also responsible for the gilt effigy of Eleanor of Castile, Edward's beloved queen, to whose memory he raised the Eleanor Crosses from Lincoln to Charing Cross (see p. 122). The tomb was made by Richard of Crundale and had originally a wooden canopy above it, made by Thomas de Hokyntone and painted by Master Walter of Durham, though this was destroyed, probably to make way for Henry V's Chantry, and has been replaced by a plainer structure. Queen Eleanor wears a simple coronet, beneath which her hair falls loosely; she looks young and lovely, and her hands are long and elegant. Around the effigy is an intricate iron grille made by Master Thomas of Leighton Buzzard. Opposite her, on the south side of the Shrine, lies Philippa of Hainault, Queen to Edward III; her effigy is of white marble, carved by the famous French sculptor, Hennequin de Liège; her face is kindly and sensible, she wears a stiffly formal head-dress, and some 70 little bronze figures, made by John Orchard, used to adorn the tomb, though most of them have now vanished. Edward III comes next, his tomb designed by Henry Yevele. The gilt-bronze effigy upon it, showing the king in coronation robes, is by John Orchard and the elaborate wooden canopy above is the work of Hugh Herland. Around the base of the tomb stood little bronze weepers, representing twelve of the fourteen children of Edward and Philippa; of these, six only, on the south side, now remain. They were clearly intended as portraits and it was always said that the venerable face of the King's effigy was modelled from a death mask. The westernmost bay on the south side is occupied by the double tomb of Richard II and his first queen, Anne of Bohemia. The Queen died in 1394 at the Palace of Sheen (now known as Richmond, in Surrey); so bitter was her husband's grief, that he caused part of the building to be torn down. He entrusted the tomb to his master masons, Henry Yevele and Stephen Lote, and the coppersmiths, Nicholas Broker and Godfrey Prest, and bade them fashion two effigies, holding hands. The work was completed by 1397, having cost £670. Richard was murdered in 1400, but some thirteen years later, Henry V, the son of the man who had supplanted Richard, had the poor body disinterred and buried honourably at Westminster. Richard and his queen lie together, but the effigies have been damaged and the linked hands are missing.

At the western end of the Shrine stands the Coronation Chair. This was made soon after 1297 when Edward I seized the Stone of Scone and brought it to the Abbey from Scotland. Tradition identifies the stone with the one on which Jacob rested his head at Bethel, and various interesting legends account for its transfer to Scotland. Edward had a magnificent oaken chair made with a compartment to hold it, and Master Walter of Durham painted it all over with birds and foliage and animals on a gilt ground. Lions were added for feet, probably in Tudor times. The Chair has never left the Abbey, save when it was carried across to Westminster Hall for the installation of Oliver Cromwell as Lord Protector, and during the Second World War when it was removed to Gloucester cathedral; the stone was buried in the Islip Chapel.

Just to the east of the Confessor's Shrine is the chantry chapel raised to hold the remains of Henry V (d.1422). It was designed by John of Thirske, who was in charge of the fabric of the Abbey at that time, and was completed some time after 1441. It consists of a platform, some 5 feet 9 inches high, on which rests a panelled Purbeck marble tomb-chest. On it lies an oaken effigy of the King, which originally had a silver head, but this disappeared in 1546, and it was not till 1971 that a new one was supplied, of humbler material but good workmanship. Above the tomb is a Chantry Chapel raised on a bridge, the piers and the sides of which are covered with carvings of saints and of scenes from the monarch's life. Henry's queen, Catherine of Valois, lies here, but the upper structure is not open to the public.

Around the Sanctuary and the Shrine runs an Ambulatory, and off it there are four large and three small chapels, four to the north and three to the south. At the western end of the north Ambulatory is the Islip Chapel. Abbot Islip lies here; it was he who completed the building of the nave, helped to plan and to build Henry VII's Chapel, and added the Jerusalem Chamber to the Abbot's House; his rebus (an eye within a slip or branch of a tree) appears in the carvings. The chapel is today dedicated to the use of members of the nursing profession. Beside it is the tiny chapel of Our Lady of the Pew, the walls of which still bear traces of the elaborate blue brocade pattern, adorned with white fleur-de-lys, with which they were once painted. Beyond are the larger Chapels of St. John the Baptist and St. Paul, which contain some remarkably fine tombs, of which the most impressive are perhaps those of Sir John and Lady Puckering, Sir Thomas Bromley, Giles, Baron Daubeny, and Frances Sidney, Countess of Sussex, who founded Sidney Sussex College. The dress of her effigy is painted vermilion and its feet rest on the quills of a porcupine, her family crest. Off the south Ambulatory lie the Chapels of St. Nicholas, St. Edmund, and St. Benedict, all of them thronged with monuments, each of which has its own particular interest. In St. Nicholas's Chapel, we should notice

especially the 24-foot high, painted, multicoloured marble monument to Mildred Cecil, Lord Burghley's second wife, and to Anne, Countess of Oxford, their daughter. Both ladies were learned, benevolent, and strong-minded; children and grand-children cluster about the effigies, and Lord Burghley himself wrote the Latin inscription which speaks of his grief for the loss of those who 'were dear to him beyond the whole race of womankind'. The centre of the chapel is occupied by the altar-tomb of Sir George Villiers and his wife, Mary, the parents of the Duke of Buckingham. The exceptionally fine white marble recumbent figures were the work of Nicholas Stone and cost £560. Next door, in St. Edmund's Chapel, Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester (d.1399), lies under the finest brass in the Abbey. At the entrance to the Chapel is the tomb of John of Eltham, second son of Edward II, who died at the age of 19, but not before he had been regent of England three times over. His effigy is of alabaster, his shield bears the lions of England surrounded by the fleur-de-lys of France, and around the sides of the tomb there once stood 24 little weepers. Three of them are missing and several of the rest are mutilated, but those at the west end are intact; their appearance is far from dolorous, for their faces are jocund and their attitudes positively jaunty. Beside John of Eltham is a tiny tomb-chest containing the dust of his nephew and niece, William of Windsor and Blanche of the Tower, children of Edward III. The diminutive alabaster figures by John Orchard are of especial interest for they show what children wore in 1340. On the right-hand side of the entrance to the chapel is the tomb of William de Valence (d.1296). The tomb and the effigy are of exceptional interest for they were originally covered with Limoges champlevé enamelwork, of which substantial traces remain, the only example of this technique of adornment in England. Next door is St. Benedict's Chapel, where rest Gabriel Goodman (1529-1601), Dean of Westminster for forty years under Queen Elizabeth and friend of William Camden, whose expenses he defrayed in 'some of his journeys after antiquity', and Simon de Langham (d.1376) who rose from being Abbot of Westminster to being Lord Chancellor of England and Archbishop of Canterbury. So able was he that Pope Urban V made him a cardinal and summoned him to Rome, but he chose the Abbey as his resting-place and left his whole fortune towards the rebuilding of the nave. Under the arch between this chapel and that of St. Edmund is a small altar-tomb which holds the remains of Katherine, Henry III's five-year-old dumb daughter who died in 1257, four of his other children, and four small children of Edward I. Katherine was an exceptionally attractive child, and to express and assuage their grief her parents ordered an exquisite tomb, inlaid with marbles and mosaics and adorned with two figures, now lost, a brass one by Master Simon of Wells, and one of silver by William of Gloucester.

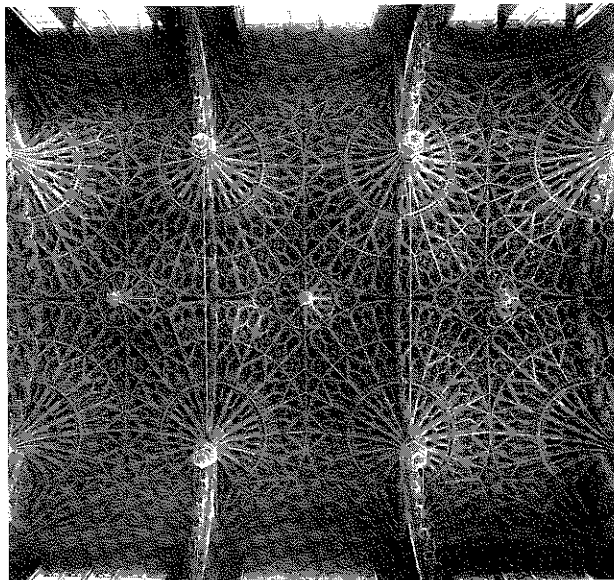
Turning eastwards up the south ambulatory to Henry VII's Chapel, we pass the tomb in which King Sebert's body is said to rest (see p. 95), and above it the thirteenth-century paintings on the backs of the sedilia. A little further on, attached to the back of Queen Philippa's tomb, is the Westminster Panel or Retable, part of Henry III's original altar furnishings, which, though worn and battered, is still worth careful study. It is a long panel (3 feet high by 11 feet long) divided into five compartments. That in the centre and those on the sides were painted with figures - we can still distinguish St. Peter with his key and Christ accompanied by the Virgin and St. John - while the second and fourth compartments hold four representations of miracles, each little scene set in a curious distinctive frame shaped like an eight-pointed star or a lozenge enclosed in a square, and similar to the blank panels on the plasterwork in St. Faith's chapel. We can distinguish the *Raising of Jairus' Daughter*, the *Healing of the Blind Man*, and the *Feeding of the Five Thousand*, but the other divisions are now blind. The backgrounds of the gesso panels were inlaid with glass and adorned with goldwork. Comparison with manuscript illuminations of the third quarter of the century (in particular Douce MS 180 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford), and a careful study of the serpentine lines of the draperies, the gentle melancholy of those faces which are still visible, and the extraordinarily long, thin, sinuous hands, suggest an English rather than a French origin for this masterpiece.

Henry VII's Chapel was begun on 23 January, 1502-3. The Chapel consists of a chancel and apse, around which radiate five small chapels, and two aisles, almost completely invisible from the chancel. It seems probable that the architect responsible was Robert Vertue, one of the King's three master masons, whose brother William vaulted St. George's Chapel at Windsor about 1505. Wonderful bronze gates, probably made by Thomas Ducheman, separate the Chapel from the main Abbey. They are divided into compartments, each of which is filled with badges relating to the royal house. Beyond, the incomparable vaulting draws its inspiration from the roof of the Divinity School at Oxford, which was completed about 1480. The aisles and the chapels are fan-vaulted, but the chancel has a groined vault from which are suspended huge fan-shaped pendants which in fact act as braces to the arches. Half-way up the walls, reaching up to where the ribs of the vault poise themselves for their airy leap, are the stalls, some of them still the original furnishings, others added in 1725 when the Chapel was first used for the installation of the Knights of the Bath, whose banners hang brightly above them, contrasting with the grey of the stonework. The stalls retain their misericords which are carved with scenes of robust humour. Above them, on a level with the triforium, runs a series of carvings of saints, the most perfect of its kind surviving in England, for 95 of the original

107 figures remain, almost all of them intact. Even the most ardent of Reformation iconoclasts did not dare to damage the Abbey church which, to this day, is a royal peculiar. Besides all the more popularly represented saints, there are a number of specifically English ones – St. Edward, St. Edmund, St. Thomas of Canterbury, St. Kenelm, St. Dunstan, St. Cuthbert, and St. Hugh of Lincoln, as well as some Breton worthies, St. Armagilus and St. Roche, who remind us that Henry VII spent much of his boyhood in that windswept countryside.

In the burial vault beneath the chancel lie Edward VI, at whose funeral the burial service of the Church of England was used for the first time for a monarch, and George II, the last sovereign to be entombed in the Abbey. The altar itself is modern, designed by Sir Walter Tapper in 1933–4, though it incorporates two pillars and a part of a frieze from the original altar by Torrigiani, and upon it hangs a painting of the Virgin and Child by Vivarini. Behind the altar stands the tomb of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, his queen. He died in 1509 leaving instructions that he should be buried in a manner 'somewhat to our dignitie Roial, eviteng alwaies dampnable pompe and outeragious superfluities'. He had intended his tomb to be designed by Guido Mazzoni, known as Pagenino, who had worked for the King of France, but nothing came of the suggestion and Pietro Torrigiani was charged with the commission, which he completed about 1518 at a cost of £1,500. He had been a pupil of Ghirlandaio at the same time as Michelangelo and is perhaps best remembered for the brawl in which he broke his fellow-pupil's nose. The king's tomb is of black and white marble, with gilt-bronze effigies, angels, and enrichments, and is the harbinger of the arrival of Renaissance sculpture in England. The scheme – two effigies recumbent upon their tomb – is traditional enough, but the skill with which they are modelled, the lifelikeness of the rounded forms beneath their mantles, the delicacy of the hands and features, was of an excellence not seen before in England. The emphasis is essentially on the humanity, rather than on the sovereignty, of the couple who lie here, whose union brought peace to England after a generation spent in bitter civil war. The ornaments of the sarcophagus were of a new fashion, too: *putti* had replaced prim angels, enwreathed medallions showing pairs of saints decorated the sides in place of niches filled with weepers, while graceful, Italian spirits with grave faces, clad in floating golden draperies, perch on each corner. In contrast, the screen – almost as great an achievement within its own field – which encloses the wonderful tomb, is utterly English and wholly Perpendicular. Two tiers of elaborate openwork tracery are sustained by stalwart buttresses at the corners and provide, at intervals, niches for the saints. It was the work of Thomas Ducheman.

In the chapels around the apse there are several monuments of great interest. Beginning on the north



Ceiling of Henry VII's Chapel, Westminster Abbey

side, the first chapel is filled with the tomb of George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, friend and favourite of James I and Charles I, who was murdered in 1628. The main figures and the mourners at each corner were by Le Sueur, the little figures of their children, of whom only one lived to become a man, were by Nicholas Stone. The Mars and Neptune who sorrow at the Duke's feet are especially good. In the north-eastern chapel is the monument of John Sheffield, 1st Duke of Buckinghamshire (1648–1721), who married Catherine Sedley, the illegitimate but very regal daughter of James II, who built Buckingham House on the site where the Palace stands today in St. James's Park. The life-sized figure of the Duke is shown in Roman armour, the Duchess wears contemporary dress; these figures are by Scheemakers, the allegories around them are by Delvaux.

The easternmost chapel was the burial place of Oliver Cromwell, his family and some of his supporters but their bodies were disinterred at the Restoration and reburied in a common pit in St. Margaret's churchyard (see p. 113). In 1947 the chapel was dedicated to the memory of the men of the Royal Air Force who died in the Battle of Britain, and Viscount Trenchard, 'Father' of the R.A.F., and Lord Dowding, who controlled Fighter Command during the battle, are buried here. The glass of the east window was designed by Hugh Easton, the altar by Sir Albert Richardson, and the cross, candlesticks, and candelabra by J. Seymour Lindsay. The figures of St. George and King Arthur were carved by A. F. Hardiman, RA. In the south-eastern chapel lie Dean Stanley, author of *Memorials of Westminster Abbey*, and his wife, Lady Augusta, Queen Victoria's friend; Sir Edgar Boehm sculpted their memorial. In the

southernmost chapel is the tomb of Ludovic Stuart, Duke of Richmond and Lennox and cousin to James I (d.1624), who lies in the company of other members of his family. The huge monument almost fills and quite overwhelms the chapel; it was designed by Hubert Le Sueur and consists of a black and gilt sarcophagus with recumbent gilt effigies, shaded by a canopy borne by four larger than life-sized caryatids representing Faith, Hope, Charity, and Prudence. The canopy supports a gilt openwork dome on top of which is perched a figure of Fame, equipped with two trumpets. Such tombs were more common in France or the Netherlands than in this country.

In the north aisle of the Chapel, Henry VIII's two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, share a tomb, though only Elizabeth has an effigy, which Maximilian Colt carved from white marble, giving to the stone the life and character of the queen's gaunt, aquiline profile. The memorial – a tomb-chest on which the effigy lies, shaded by a canopy supported by six black pillars – was finished by 1606 and cost a mere £765, far more economical than the resting places of some of her subjects, and considerably less than James I spent on his mother's memorial in the south aisle. At the end of the north aisle is 'Innocents' Corner' as Dean Stanley called it, where James I's daughters lie. Princess Sophia died in 1606 when she was only three days old; Maximilian Colt made an alabaster cradle from which a small chubby face peeps over the coverlet; he was paid £170. Her two-year-old sister Mary (d.1607) is shown, half-reclining, on a small tomb-chest, and against the wall beside them stands an urn, carved by Joshua Marshall, Charles II's master mason, about 1678 when the bodies of two children were found, buried under a staircase, in the Tower of London and, in all probability correctly, were held to be the murdered remains of Edward V and his younger brother.

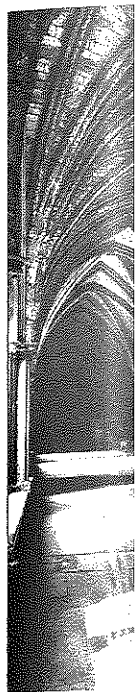
The south aisle contains what is perhaps the most important piece of sculpture in the whole Abbey, Torrigiani's tomb for the Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, Henry VII's mother, from whom he derived his claim to the throne. She died in 1509 and Torrigiani undertook to have the work finished by 1513, so this truly Renaissance sculpture probably antedates the king's own memorial. The design for the black tomb-chest with its gilded effigy is similar to the king's, the effigy is remarkably lifelike with refined features and tiny, wrinkled hands, the face expressing clearly the intellect, the asceticism, and the determination from which her character was compounded. The grille around the tomb was made by Cornelius Symondson in 1529; he was paid £25 for it by St. John's College, Cambridge, which the Lady Margaret had founded. It disappeared during the nineteenth century but was discovered and recognized in 1915 and, through the generosity of the National Art Collections Fund, was restored to its proper place. Near to the Lady Margaret lie Mary, Queen of Scots, and Margaret

Douglas, Countess of Lennox. The Scottish Queen has a magnificent memorial designed and carved by William and Cornelius Cure between 1607 and 1612. The white marble effigy is dressed with extreme elegance, a crowned Scottish lion crouches at her feet, and the coffered vaulting of the canopy above her is studded with Scottish thistles. The Countess of Lennox was a lady of extraordinary beauty. She was the daughter of Margaret Tudor, Henry VIII's sister, by her second marriage with the Earl of Angus. She married Matthew Stuart, Earl of Lennox, in 1544 and became the mother of four sons and four daughters, who are shown kneeling on the sides of her tomb. The eldest was Henry, Lord Darnley, who became Mary Queen of Scots' second husband, so the Countess was mother-in-law to the Queen of Scotland and grandmother to James I and VI. The little figure of Lord Darnley has a crown above his head.

Re-entering the main body of the church, a door leads into the cloisters, which were built during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the work beginning in the north-east corner about 1244. The vaulting overhead is simple and unadorned, the great windows, opening into the garth or central green, are of three and four lights with elaborate tracery. In the East and South Cloisters are long benches of stone on which the old men and children who were entitled to Maundy money sat to have their feet washed on the



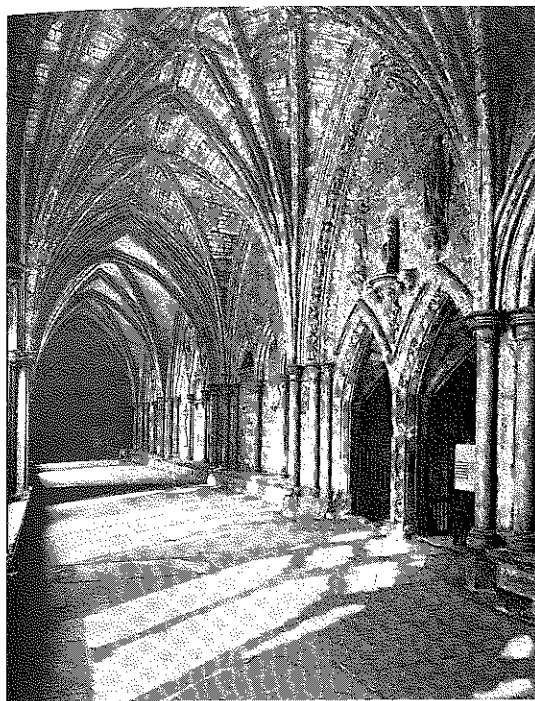
Tomb of Lady Margaret Beaufort, Westminster Abbey



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East Cloister, Westminster Abbey

Thursday in Holy Week, while the North Walk was used as the library and scriptorium, and the novices were taught in the West Walk. Around the walls are a great number of memorials, the most touching of them all being that to 'Jane Lister, deare child', who died in 1688; she was the daughter of Dr. Martin Lister, an eminent physician and zoologist.

From the East Cloister open the Chapter House, the staircase which leads up to the Library and Muniment Room, the Chapel of the Pyx, and the steps down to the Norman Undercroft which houses the Museum. All these are worth visiting, the Chapter House being of especial importance. It was built between 1245 and 1255, octagonal in shape with a central pillar and a diameter of 60 feet, probably by Master Alberic working under Henry of Reynes. There had been circular chapter-houses at Worcester, built rather earlier, about 1160, and at Beverley, and a polygonal one at Lincoln, and there were to be others, at Lichfield, at Wells, and at Salisbury, but the chapter-house at Westminster was, as Matthew Paris wrote, 'incomparable'. Its shape stressed the equality of the Abbey brethren in 'the work-shop of the Holy Spirit', as Abbot Ware wrote, but its great size was to enable it to be used for secular meetings. The Great Council assembled here in March 1257, and until 1547 it was used regularly for the meetings of the House of Commons. After the Reformation, when the Commons forsook it for St. Stephen's Chapel, it was used as a depository for state papers, and the

roof, which became ruinous, had to be rebuilt in 1740, but Sir Gilbert Scott restored it as carefully as he could in 1865, with considerable success. A double entry under a tall, blind arch around which run the generations of the Tree of Jesse, leads into it off the Cloister. The Purbeck marble shafts are adorned with carved sprays of foliage. The vestibule had, necessarily, to be low and dark since the monks' dormitory lay above it, but the dark passage only served to emphasize the lightness and spaciousness of the chapter-house itself. Huge four-light windows fill six of its sides; they are 39 feet high and each light is four-and-a-half feet broad, so the great chamber always seems radiant, even on a dull day. In the nineteenth century, the windows were filled with stained glass but this was shattered by bombing, and modern glass, designed by Joan Howson, now preserves their brilliance. Heraldic panels of those most closely associated with the building of the Abbey, have been inserted at intervals. On entering the Chapter House, it is necessary to don felt overshoes to protect the patterned tiles which cover the floor, the finest of its kind still left in England. They are decorated with shields, including one of the earliest surviving representations of the royal arms of England as well as an archer, a horseman, a king, a queen, a pilgrim, a bishop, and a rose window, and were clearly the work of an able artist who may have been Master William, a monk at Winchester, who was described as 'the King's beloved painter'. In the south-east corner, Henry III placed a triumphant inscription which can in part still just be discerned: '*Ut rosa flos florum, sic est domus ista domorum.*' ('As the rose is the flower of flowers, so is this House the house of houses'.)

Around the walls of the Chapter House are a number of paintings which can be divided into four distinct groups, a *Last Judgement* on the east, scenes from the *Apocalypse* on the west, an *Angel Choir* winging its way above the heads of the arches, and animals and birds which occupy the spaces below the *Apocalypse* scenes. John of Northampton, a monk at Westminster from 1372 till 1404, gave the first two, and they were probably executed about 1400. The *Last Judgement* fills the whole eastern wall below the window and extends into the two bays on either side, while 85 scenes, probably based on the paintings in a manuscript now in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge (Ms. B 10, 2), can be distinguished in the *Apocalyptic* series. These works and the angel heads, which were probably executed at the same time, are sadly worn and were probably, even in their heyday, of a quality which should be described as forceful rather than exceptionally accomplished. The birds and the beasts were added towards the end of the century. They bear titles in English and one can distinguish an Ostrich, the Reynder, the Ro, the Wild Asse and the Tame Asse, the Dromedary, the Kamel, the Lyon, the Cokedryll (crocodile) and the Greyhound. Between each pair of beasts is a tree,

with birds, which include a proud farmyard cock, perched among the branches. On the entrance wall of the Chapter House is a roundel with a *Christ in Majesty* commissioned by Sir Gilbert Scott, which is flanked by thirteenth-century figures of the Virgin and Archangel Gabriel. Two sculptors, Master John of St. Albans and William Yxewerth, are mentioned in the accounts of the period but we cannot be certain that they were responsible for the carvings. The figures are tall – over six feet high – and of an arresting beauty. Their elongated, graceful forms seem to sway backwards and in the spandrels of the arch are two smaller (3 feet 6 inches) angels who joyously swing censers.

Beyond the Chapter House is the entrance to the Library and Muniment Room, which lies above the South Transept. There are several finely carved bosses in the vaulting here.

The Chapel of the Pyx was built soon after the Conquest as part of the early monastic buildings, and was used in the fourteenth century as the monastic treasury and to house the pyx or box containing the standard pieces of gold and silver which were tested once a year, as they still are in the Mint. Next door to it is the Undercroft, of a similar antiquity, which since 1908 has housed the Abbey Museum, where are displayed the wax effigies carried on top of the hearse at the funerals of royalty or the greater nobility. The earliest is that of Edward III, a full-length wooden figure, the face probably carved from a death mask, since it shows a slight droop at the corner of the mouth which suggests the stroke from which he died. There is a complete figure for Catherine of Valois, Henry V's Queen, but only the heads of Anne of Bohemia, Henry VII, and Elizabeth of York, his Queen. They are certainly portraits – one has only to compare Anne's unmistakable long face with that of the effigy on her tomb. There are life-sized figures of Charles II dressed in his Garter robes, of William III, Queen Mary, and Queen Anne, of Catherine, Duchess of Buckingham, and Frances, Duchess of Richmond, of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, which was made by an American lady, Mrs. Patience Wright, and is extraordinarily lifelike, and of Admiral Nelson. There is also one of Queen Elizabeth, remade in 1760 to replace an earlier figure which had decayed. The effigies are of particular importance to the student of costume.

Behind the Abbey, around Dean's Yard, lie the medieval monastic buildings which are still in use as **Westminster School**. There was of course a school for novices, and Henry VIII provided for two masters and 40 boys at the Reformation, but Queen

Elizabeth is regarded as the founder of the school as it is today.

The School Hall is out of sight, but was part of the monastic dormitory built between 1090 and 1100; the old walls have served generations of schoolboys very well. The Prior's Lodging was built in the fourteenth century and then, in the third quarter of the seventeenth, was refaced and much altered, probably by John Webb, Inigo Jones's assistant, and is now called Ashburnham House. The woodwork and plasterwork are sumptuous, and the well-hall and staircase with a lantern above are among the most satisfying interiors in London. Plans for the school dormitory, which can hardly be seen from the Yard since it looks onto the garden, were prepared by a famous pupil, Sir Christopher Wren, though the designs executed, in 1722–30, were by Lord Burlington.

The Abbey garden, usually open to the public on Thursdays, is probably the oldest continually cultivated garden in England. Occasionally, it is possible to see the **Jerusalem Chamber**, which was built in the late fourteenth century. Henry IV, who was stricken down as he prayed at St. Edward's Shrine on the eve of his departure on an expedition to the Holy Land in 1413, was carried into this chamber for his greater comfort; when he became conscious again, he asked where he was and on being told the name of the chamber, knew that he would die there for it had been prophesied that he would end his days in Jerusalem. The Chamber has been used by those engaged upon the Authorized Version of the Bible, in 1611, on the Revised Version of 1885, and on the New English Bible in 1961. There is some thirteenth-century glass in the windows and around its walls hang five portions from two large tapestries designed by Bernard van Orley and executed at Brussels by W. Pannemaker in about 1540–50. The carved cedar-wood overmantel was installed by the Dean when he entertained the French Ambassador at a banquet to celebrate the betrothal of the Prince of Wales, later Charles I, to Princess Henrietta Maria in 1624.

During recent years, the atmosphere of the Abbey has altered greatly. Cost of maintenance has risen, and troops of tourists in their thousands wander to and fro around the barriers set up to channel their explorations. For a good part of the day, the emphatic patter of the guides, shepherding small groups from one monument to another, has replaced the sound of prayer, and it is more important than ever for the serious student to attend a religious service, for then the great building, which can fairly claim to be the most important and to have the loveliest interior in all England, comes into its own.

Ann Saunders

THE ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF LONDON

An Illustrated Guide



PHAIDON