

# Westminster Abbey

## The Church of Kings and Queens



Westminster Abbey is a large church in the [City of Westminster](#). It was founded in the year 960. In 1042 King Edward the Confessor began rebuilding it and this was completed in 1090. It was consecrated on 28 December 1065, only a week before the Confessor's death on 5 January 1066. The next day he was buried in the church.

The first documented coronation is that of William the Conqueror later the same year. The abbey became the coronation site of all Norman kings, but none were buried there. In 1245 Henry III, intensely devoted to the cult of the Confessor, rebuilt the abbey as a shrine to venerate him. Henry also created a suitably regal setting for his own tomb, by building the highest Gothic nave in England. Work continued on the abbey for centuries.

In 1503 Henry VII added a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Henry VII Chapel was completed in 1517. The building stone came from France (Caen stone from Normandy and Tuffeau limestone from the Loire region), or from the Isle of Portland (Portland stone) on England's south coast.

Most Kings and Queens were buried in the Abbey, apart from [Edward IV](#), [Henry VIII](#) and [Charles I](#) who are buried in [St George's Chapel](#) at [Windsor Castle](#). In 1760 George II was the last king to be buried at Westminster. From then on all monarchs were buried at Windsor. From the Middle Ages, aristocrats could be buried in small side chapels. Monks and other people associated with the Abbey were buried in the cloisters. These included the author [Geoffrey Chaucer](#), Master of the King's Works, and the composer Henry Purcell, Master of the King's Music, who were employed by the Abbey. Later, many famous writers and musicians were buried or had memorials around Chaucer in what has become known as [Poets' Corner](#).

The practice of burying national heroes in the Abbey began under [Oliver Cromwell](#) with the burial of [Admiral Robert Blake](#) in 1657. It soon spread to include famous generals, admirals, politicians, doctors and scientists. [Isaac Newton](#), [Charles Darwin](#), [William Wilberforce](#), the man behind the abolition of slavery, and David Livingstone are all buried here. But since 1936, no individual has been buried in Westminster Abbey or its cloisters; the only exceptions to this rule are the [Dukes of Northumberland](#), who own a private vault.

In the floor, in the centre of the nave just inside the great west door, is the tomb of [The Unknown Warrior](#), an unidentified British soldier killed on a European battlefield during the [First World War](#). He was buried in the Abbey on 11 November 1920 and represents the dead of all Britain's wars. There are many graves on the floor of the Abbey, but this is the only grave upon which it is forbidden to step.



1.	When was Westminster Abbey founded?
2.	On what date was King Edward the Confessor buried?
3.	When was Edward's rebuilding of the church completed?
4.	Who was the first king to be crowned there?
5.	Give two reasons why Henry III rebuilt the church?
6.	Henry VI built a chapel in 1503. What countries did the stone come from?
7.	What is special about the date 1760?
8.	Where were the Abbey monks buried?
9.	Geoffrey Chaucer lived in the cathedral. What job did he have?
10.	What is unique about the Gothic nave in Westminster Abbey?
11.	Who is buried at Poet's Corner?
12.	Why is Henry Purcell buried here?
13.	Who started this practice of burying national heroes in the Abbey?
14.	Who was Robert Blake?
15.	What did William Wilberforce help bring about?
16.	When did Abbey burials largely stop?
17.	Where is the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier?
18.	Why is this tomb so important?
19.	Can we walk over all the tombs set in the floor of the abbey?
20.	Is Charles I buried here?
21.	Name two scientists buried in the Abbey.
22.	What is special about the Dukes of Northumberland?

Join the words on the left (underlined in the text) with their correct meanings:

23.	Consecrated		Loyally attached
24.	Documented		Suitable for a king or queen
25.	Devoted		A covered passage
26.	Regal		Closely connected
27.	Venerate		Written evidence of an event
28.	Dedicated		Nobles
29.	Vault		Made sacred through a solemn ceremony
30.	Unidentified		Devoted to a cause
31.	Associated		An underground chamber
32.	Cloisters		Not named or recognised
33.	Aristocrats		To regard with reverence

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### Answers

1. 960
2. 6 Jan 1066
3. 1090
4. William the Conqueror
5. As a shrine to Edward the Confessor and to create a suitable setting for his own tomb.
6. France and England
7. Date of the last burial in the Abbey of a monarch
8. In the cloisters
9. Master of the King's Works
10. It is the highest in England
11. Chaucer, Purcell and many other writers, musicians etc
12. He was a musician and composer in the Abbey
13. Oliver Cromwell
14. A famous admiral
15. The abolition of slavery
16. 1936
17. By the great west door
18. It represents all the dead of Britain's wars
19. Not over the tomb of the unknown soldier
20. No
21. Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin
22. They have a private vault
23. Made sacred through a solemn ceremony
24. Written about in a document
25. Loyal attached
26. Suitable for a King or Queen
27. To regard with reverence
28. Devoted to a cause
29. An underground chamber
30. Not able to be recognised
31. Closely connected
32. A covered passage
33. Nobles