



Factsheet G11 General Series

Revised March 2008

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House of Commons Information Office

The Palace of Westminster

This Factsheet gives information about the Palace of Westminster as a building. The Palace, home of the Houses of Parliament, is an internationally famous building. The Factsheet looks at the history of the building, its construction and current uses.

This Factsheet and links to related documents are available on the Internet through:

<http://www.parliament.uk/factsheets>

March 2008
FS No.G11 Ed 3.4
ISSN 0144-4689

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The Site and its Royal Associations

Within the walls of the Royal Palace of Westminster is the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The building is situated on north bank of the River Thames in the City of Westminster. Originally this place we now call Westminster was known as Thorney Island. It gained its name from the overgrown briars and thorns that grew on the island. The Thames was much wider and shallower than at present and two branches of the River Tyburn, which discharged into the Thames from the north bank, created this tiny island.

It is possible that the Romans built a temple to Apollo on Thorney Island but this was destroyed by an earthquake and on these ruins a new Saxon church, St Peter's, was built by the Christian King Sebert in the seventh century. The church managed to survive the Danish invasions of the ninth century and area was made safe by King Edgar (959-975) who restored the buildings and re-established an order of Benedictine monks. Over the next century, there were further Danish invasions and it was a Danish King, Canute (1016-1035), who set up a Royal palace during his reign on this site as the area was sufficiently far away from the busy settlement to the east known as London. It is believed that, on this site, Canute tried to command the tide of the river to prove to his courtiers that they were fools to think that he could command the waves.

It would be seven years after the death of Canute that an Anglo-Saxon King would once more rule England. King Edward, who later became St Edward the Confessor and Patron saint of England, was proclaimed King in 1042. Almost immediately after his coronation, Edward began building his great Abbey. The Abbey became known as the West Minster, St Paul's, lying to the east in the heart of London, was known as the East Minster. Edward resided here so he could oversee the construction of his new Abbey. Westminster Abbey was consecrated in the Christmas of 1065 and Edward died just days after; leaving his kingdom without an heir. He was buried in his beloved Abbey.

The power struggle that followed Edward's death resulted in the Battle of Hastings in 1066. William, Duke of Normandy, who had defeated King Harold at Hastings, was crowned King of England on Christmas Day 1066 at Westminster Abbey and ended the reign of the Anglo-Saxon monarchs. William the Conqueror established his tight grip on his newly acquired Kingdom by building a new fortress built of stone, the Tower of London. The capital city of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings had been Winchester in the Kingdom of Wessex. The new Norman King saw Westminster and London, with its increasing population and importance as a trading port and business centre, the place to locate many of the administrative functions of the Kingdom. However, the seat of government was not permanently based at Westminster; it was wherever the King happened to be with his seal. Although William tried in vain to rebuild the Palace, it was his son, William II (William Rufus)(1087-1100) who began work on a new palace in 1087. In 1097 the foundations of the Great Hall (Westminster Hall) were laid and the Hall was ready for use by 1099. It was the largest of its kind in England, and probably Europe, at the time (and still is today). The Hall was used for ceremonial occasions such as Royal Feasts which made Westminster the ceremonial centre of the Kingdom.

The Palace was one of the monarch's principal homes throughout the later Middle Ages with Westminster and Winchester sharing the royal seat of power but gradually more of the institutions of government settled at Westminster. During the reign of King Henry II (1154-1180), a subsidiary treasury was established at Westminster to keep the Royal treasure safe when away from Winchester Castle. The Exchequer (Treasury) was permanently moved to Westminster by King John (1199-1216) along with the Courts of Common Pleas and the Kings Bench, which firmly established Westminster as the Royal seat of government and the capital. The Chancery, the administrative branch of the Crown, had established its headquarters in Westminster Hall by 1310. To the east and south of the Hall lay the domestic apartments of the medieval Palace. When in residence at Westminster, the King was attended by his court and worshipped in St. Stephen's Chapel; his courtiers worshipped in the crypt chapel below, now known as the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft.

During the reign of the Norman monarchs, meetings of the King's Council, *Curia Regis*, were sometimes held in Westminster Hall or in one of the smaller halls but the Council never met at Westminster on a regular basis. Monarchs have sought the advice and consent of their subjects stretching as far back as the Anglo-Saxon Kings. The Witan, 'the knowing ones', were summoned to meetings known as the Witenagemot to discuss legislation and taxes. After the Conquest, the Norman Kings used the Witenagemot to entrench their control over the country and decided to include the Norman feudal courts as part of the King's Council. Eventually the House of Lords, the courts of law and the Privy Council would evolve out of this council.

The 13th century was a turbulent time with wars against France and civil wars at home. The issue of taxation and the implementation of Magna Carta were the two big issues of the day. It was during the 13th century that Parliament, taken from the French word *parler* - to speak or talk, was established. The need for monarchs to raise additional taxation to pay for wars became ever more important with the loss of the French territories and the disposal of Crown lands since the Conquest. Magna Carta had limited the ability of the monarch to raise taxation so regular tax requests were required and this could now only be achieved by summoning a Parliament. Edward I called the first 'Model' Parliament on 13 November 1295. It was called the Model Parliament because it was from this meeting that all future meetings were based upon; two knights of each shire, two citizens from the cities and two burgesses from the boroughs were elected to attend court at Westminster along with the bishops, barons and noblemen. The additional burden of taxation would fall on these persons but factions and groups soon emerged. By 1332, the knights, citizens and burgesses had grouped together to form the Commons while the nobles and bishops had come together to represent the interests of the Lords. In 1341, the Commons and Lords meet separately and the future architectural development of the Palace was therefore inextricably bound up with its role as the meeting place of both Parliament and of the Courts of Law.

It was often not possible to accommodate the whole of Parliament within the Palace. The State Opening Ceremony would be held in the King's private apartment, the Painted Chamber. The Lords would then retire to the White Chamber for their discussions, but the Commons at this time did not have a recognised home of their own. On occasions, they remained in the Painted Chamber but at other times they held their debates in the Chapter House or the Refectory of Westminster

Abbey.

There have been numerous fires and it was after a fire in 1512 that Henry VIII decided to abandon the Palace as a residence and move to Whitehall Palace. The Canons of St Stephen's, the religious order which had held the services for the royal family, were dismissed in 1547 and by 1550 St Stephen's Chapel had become the first permanent home of the House of Commons.

The other rooms vacated by the royal family were occupied by Members and Officers of both Houses. The site thus developed into a Parliamentary building, rather than a royal residence though both it, and its successor, remained a Royal Palace with the official title the Palace of Westminster.

Westminster Hall and the other Medieval Survivals

Westminster Hall, of which the walls were built in 1097, is the oldest surviving building on the site. Its floor area is about 1,547 sq m (1,850 sq yds) and it is one of the largest medieval halls in Europe with an unsupported roof. It was believed that the original roof was supported by two rows of pillars but recent archaeological explorations in Westminster Hall found no evidence of this and that the roof may have been self supporting. The present magnificent hammer beam roof was designed in the reign of Richard II (1377-1399). The mason/architect of the 14th century rebuilding was Henry Yevele and the carpenter/designer of the roof was Hugh Herland.

During this period the Hall, with its many shops and stalls, selling wigs, pens, books and other legal paraphernalia, became one of the chief centres of London life. It housed the courts of law and was the place of many notable state trials: Sir William Wallace (1305), Sir Thomas More (1535), Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot conspirators (1606), Charles I (1649) and Warren Hastings (1788-95). Westminster Hall was also the traditional venue for Coronation banquets. The Hall is now used for major public ceremonies.

Among the events that have taken place there have been; the presentation of Addresses to the Queen on the Silver Jubilee in 1977, the Golden Jubilee in 2002, to mark 50 years since the end of World War II in 1995 and the opening of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in 1986. A similar event took place in 1988, to mark the tercentenary of the Glorious Revolution, and, in 1989, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Centenary Conference was held there. In 1995, the Government organised a ceremony to mark 50 years of the United Nations. On these occasions, the Hall is brightly lit and decked with flowers and coloured hangings and presents an altogether different public face from its normal, rather sombre, appearance.

The Hall is also the place where lyings in state, of monarchs, consorts and, rarely, very distinguished statesmen traditionally take place. The most recent having been those of King George VI in 1952, Queen Mary in 1953, Sir Winston Churchill in 1965 and Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother in 2002.

An exhibition to commemorate Westminster Hall's 900th anniversary was held in the summer of 1999, the 'Voters of the Future' exhibition was held there between April

and September 2000 and an exhibition commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot in 2005. From the 31st January 2008 until 1st May 2008 there will be an exhibition in Westminster Hall that charts the history of the hall and includes fragments of the Kings Table found during an archaeological dig of the hall in 2006. The exhibition is open to the public and further details can be found on the Parliament website. A refreshment facility for the public, the Jubilee Café, opened in May 2002. The café is situated near the North Door of Westminster Hall and opens out on to New Palace Yard.

The other medieval buildings on the site are not accessible to the public. These are the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft, which is the lower part, at ground level (not subterranean) of the former Chapel of St Stephen, which was built between 1292 and 1297 as a magnificent showpiece based on the Sainte Chapelle in Paris. The upper part of St Stephen's Chapel was destroyed in fire of 1834 and had been the Commons Chamber from 1547. The Cloisters were built between 1526 and 1529. Much restored, they are used as offices and writing rooms and include an oratory, the lower part of which is the private office of the Serjeant at Arms.



QUEEN ELIZABETH IN PARLIAMENT
*A. Chancellor B. Marquises, Earls & C. Barons D. Bishops E. Judges F. Masters of Chancery G. Clerks H. Speaker of the Commons
 I. Black Rod K. Serjeant at Arms L. Members of the Commons house M. St. Francis Walsingham Secretary of State.*

Queen Elizabeth
 in Parliament
 four hundred
 years ago

The Jewel Tower, now on the other side of Abingdon Street, was formerly the Muniment Room (storage of land/title deeds) of the Palace and is now administered by English Heritage. Since 1992, the tower has been the setting for a permanent

exhibition on the history and work of Parliament, called Parliament Past and Present. The tower and exhibition are open to the public. [There is an admission charge].

The Fire of 1834 and Rebuilding

On 16 October 1834, the medieval palace with its later additions was virtually destroyed by a devastating fire, which started by the overheating of a stove in the House of Lords. Only two years after the passing of the Great Reform Act of 1832, Parliament itself would have to be reformed from the ashes of a great fire.

A House of Commons Committee was set up in 1835 and it was decided to completely redevelop the site and not to keep to the original layout of the old palace buildings but that any new design would have to incorporate Westminster Hall, the Crypt and Cloister (the only parts of the building that had survived the fire).

A public competition was organised to design a new Palace of Westminster in either the Gothic or Elizabethan style. A Royal Commission, consisting of amateurs of architecture, was appointed to select between 3 or 5 designs for the consideration of Parliament. There were 97 designs submitted with each designers identity shrouded by the use of a motto or pseudonym. The Commission recommended 4 designs and the winner of the competition was entry number 64, which was marked by a Portcullis.

The Portcullis symbol was used by Charles Barry (1795-1860) who had estimated the time to build his design would be 6 years and at an estimated cost of £724,986. In fact it took just over 30 years to build at a cost of over £2 million. In the execution of the design and building, Barry was assisted by Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-1852), particularly in the matter of detail, fittings and furniture.

Neither man would see their creation completed as they both worked long hours and endlessly worried about every detail of the design and building of the the Palace. It was not until 10 years after Barry's death in 1860 that the new Palace was completed, his son, Edward, taking over from his father as architect. Pugin's health suffered greatly from working on the building and refurbishing of the interior of the Palace. He was committed to Bedlam (an asylum for the insane, now the site of the Imperial War Museum) for a short period and he died soon after in 1852.

Building work began on the new Palace in 1840 and was substantially completed by 1860, but only in 1870 actually finished. The site was extended into the river by reclaiming land and now covers about 8 acres. The Gothic style and its adoption for the parliamentary buildings had an influence on the design of public buildings such as town halls, law courts and schools throughout the country. The effect on the imaginations of the public and 19th century architects of the huge new building towering over the three-storey yellow brick terraces and ramshackle half-timbered houses of mid-Victorian Westminster was enormous.

The Bombing of 1941

At the height of the Blitz on London during the Second World War the Palace of Westminster was bombed several times. The most devastating air raid to occur on

the Palace was on the night of 10 May 1941. The Commons Chamber was hit and a great fire swept through the building and onto the roof of Westminster Hall. The authorities had a choice of saving either the Commons Chamber or the roof of Westminster Hall, they decided to save Westminster Hall. Barry's Commons Chamber was destroyed. To replace the devastated Chamber, a new block was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott: a steel-framed building, that incorporated five floors, two of which were taken by up the Commons Chamber. Both above and below it are offices. Commonwealth countries contributed to the refurbishing of the new Chamber; Australia the Speaker's Chair, Canada the Table of the House, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) Serjeant at Arms chair, Jamaica the Bar of the House, India and Pakistan the Entrance doors to the Chamber and New Zealand two Dispatch boxes, All other Commonwealth countries contributed to the refurbishing of the new Ministerial Offices located in the new block (See Appendix C). The new air-conditioned Chamber was used for the first time on 26 October 1950. In Parliament 1939-50 (produced by the House of Commons Library and available for purchase from The Stationery Office)¹ explains and illustrates the bombing and reconstruction.

Brief Description of the Palace

The building is on four main levels. The ground floor river front houses offices, private dining rooms, bars and meeting rooms; the first or principal floor the Chambers, Libraries, and dining rooms. The second or Committee floor is given over on the river front to Committee rooms, as is the third or Upper Committee floor. At each end of the building are apartments for the Speaker and the Lord Chancellor (the remnant of a number of private apartments once available) and there are two great towers: the Clock Tower (often called Big Ben) and the Victoria Tower. The very distinctive Central Tower is built over the Central Lobby.

Along the whole length of the building, at ground level parallel to the river, is a roadway leading into several courtyards, with a further line of courts on the west side. The arches over the roadway are made to the dimensions of horse-drawn carts, and are difficult to traverse with modern delivery lorries.

The main entrance for visitors is currently St Stephen's Porch and Hall (See Appendix B for a map of the building). This was the original site of the Commons Chamber and brass markings on the floor indicate where the Speaker's Chair and the Table of the House original stood. From Stephen's Hall is Central Lobby, or Octagon Hall, which is the centrepiece of the building. To the north of that lies the Members' Lobby and House of Commons; to the south, and thus in a straight line, the Peers' Lobby, House of Lords and Royal Gallery and Robing Room. In general, the Lords end of the building is more ornate than the Commons, with red furnishings, and much gilt and brasswork. By contrast, the Commons' accommodation is definitely austere, as befitted its period of construction, the late 1940s. The colours used in the two Chambers are discussed in **Factsheet G10**.

A good deal of internal restoration has taken place over the last thirty or so years, including the reinstatement of Barry and Pugin's original designs and details wherever possible. Carpets and wallpaper have had to be made especially for the purpose.

¹ <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/>

A complete rebuilding of the House of Lords Chamber ceiling was necessary in the early 1980s.

Among the parts of the Palace inaccessible to the public are the two Houses' Libraries (ten rooms on the principal floor), Ministers' rooms (under the Chamber and to the west of Speaker's Court), dining rooms, departmental offices, etc. There are four acres of green lawns. The Terrace of the Palace, which was raised by some 4ft in 1970-71, extends along the whole river front. Two prefabricated pavilions are erected here in the summer months.

Old Palace Yard, by St Stephen's Entrance, and the cobbled New Palace Yard, under which is the House of Commons car park, opening from the corner of Bridge Street and St Margaret's Street, are reminders, in their names, of the earliest times. New Palace Yard was laid out as a garden, with a fountain that commemorates the Silver Jubilee of Elizabeth II, in 1977. In October 2002, an analemmatic sundial, the Parliamentary Golden Jubilee gift to The Queen, was installed in Old Palace Yard (Analemmatic sundials use the shape of a person to cast the necessary shadow).

Statues and Works of Art

Many works of art are displayed in the Palace. Notable among the statues are the modern bronzes of Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, Clement Attlee and Margaret Thatcher, in the Members' Lobby; and a marble statue of Gladstone in the Central Lobby. Sir Charles Barry, the architect of the Palace, is commemorated by a large marble statue at the foot of the main staircase leading to the Committee floor. There are numerous frescoes and mural paintings as well as a most extensive collection of free-hanging pictures of subjects connected with British, particularly Parliamentary, history. A series of reconstructions of the paintings which were found in the old St Stephen's Chapel in the early 19th century can be found on the Terrace Stairs. Many of the items of furniture and fittings of the Palace, in which the design and influence of Augustus Welby Pugin is clearly seen, can be classed as works of art in their own right. The fine medieval statues of kings at the south end of Westminster Hall were conserved in 1992/93.

Stone Restoration and Conservation

The Palace was faced with Anston stone, a magnesian limestone. However the alkaline stone suffered badly because of the atmospheric pollution of London, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries, with its reliance on the burning of coal, and consequent acidification of the rain. The decision was therefore taken in 1928 to replace the worst decay, and a general programme of masonry replacement on the perimeter was finished in 1960.

Many of the statues placed round the outside of the building had decayed badly and, from 1962, many have been replaced. A new programme of stone-cleaning and restoration was started in 1981: the north, west, and south fronts, the river front and Clock Tower being finished by 1986. The Victoria Tower, whose cleaning was completed in 1993, was the last part of the exterior to be dealt with. Of the inner courts the Speaker's Court was the first to be tackled; work started in January 1994. An exhibition on the Restoration Programme was mounted in Westminster Hall from January – April 1994.

Expansion

The House of Commons has taken over other nearby buildings as its functions and staff have increased. These include the two Norman Shaw Buildings (see **Factsheet G13**), the Derby Gate building, 3 Dean's Yard (now vacated) and 7 Millbank. It expanded further, into numbers 35-47 Parliament Street, renamed the Parliament Street Building, in 1991 (see **Factsheet G14**). A new Parliamentary building, designed by Michael Hopkins and called Portcullis House, was completed in Autumn 2000 on the site of numbers 1 and 2 Bridge Street, St Stephen's House, St Stephen's Club and Palace Chambers. The new building has provided additional committee rooms, refreshment facilities and Members now all have their own offices for the first time.

Control

Control of the Houses of Parliament, as a Royal Palace, was vested in the Lord Great Chamberlain as the Queen's representative. In 1965, however, control passed to the Speaker, for the House of Commons part of the building, and to the Lord Chancellor, for the Lords' part. The Lord Great Chamberlain retains joint responsibility with the Speaker and Lord Chancellor for the Crypt Chapel and Westminster Hall. The Parliamentary Estate is cared for and maintained (since 1992) by the Department of Facilities. The title to the outbuildings was transferred from the Department of the Environment following passage of the *Parliamentary Corporate Bodies Act 1992*.

The Palace is very much a living community, whose citizens are not only Members, but their personal staffs, maintenance and cleaning personnel, and permanent House staff, who work in many different offices and departments. The Palace is not, however, simply a place for work. There are a number of social clubs and groups, places for recreation, sitting and talking, sleeping, eating and drinking. It is not, therefore, simply a huge office block peopled from 9 to 5 and at other times absolutely deserted – indeed, it has a resident population, for there are still some apartments for officers and staff of the Houses. It was designed as, and remains, something of a village.

Visiting the Palace

UK residents wishing to tour the building should contact the Member of Parliament for their constituency for a permit. At most times of the year, people holding such permits visit at a prearranged time on Monday to Wednesday mornings, and all day on Fridays (after 3.30 pm if the House is sitting). Permits (which admit up to 20) are rationed, so visitors are advised to contact their Member well in advance.

Due to the recent changes in the sitting hours of both Houses, it is no longer possible to provide overseas visitors with permits to tour the Houses of Parliament during session. We apologise for any disappointment this may cause. Overseas visitors can tour the Houses of Parliament during the period of the summer opening and are able to attend debates in either House when Parliament is sitting.

Guided tours of the Palace of Westminster were established in 2000 and have taken place during the summer recess each year since then, with tours operating every few minutes from 9.15am to 4.30pm. For details see:

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/visiting.cfm>

The Parliamentary Education Service organises a programme of visits for students. The Autumn Visits Programme is for Year 11-13 students. The Discover Parliament Programme is aimed at Year 8-10 and the Citizenship for the 21st Century programme covers Years 3-9. The Education Service also holds a series of Pupil (Mock) Parliaments and teacher seminar days.

For further information contact:

Parliamentary Education Service
House of Commons
London SW1A 2TT
Phone 020 7219 2105
Fax: 020-7219 0818
Email: education@parliament.uk
Website: <http://www.explore.parliament.uk>

It is not possible to have a tour of the Palace just by turning up. Advance arrangements, as above, must be made although some tickets may be available on the day during the summer opening.

The Line of Route

Those in possession of permits enter at the point on the plan (Appendix B) marked *Entrance (tours)* and then proceed, after security examination, via the Robing Room, Royal Gallery, Princes Chamber, Peers Lobby, Central Lobby, Members Lobby, No Lobby, to the Commons Chamber. They then return to Central Lobby and go via St Stephen's Hall to Westminster Hall, leaving the premises via New Palace Yard.

Parts of the Route may be closed, particularly for maintenance work, from time to time.

Appendix A

Some statistics relating to the Palace

General

Length of River Front	265.8m*	872ft
Height of roofline	21.3m	70 ft
Dimensions of Terrace	206.7m x 10m	678 ft x 33 ft
Area of masonry (superficial)	83,610 sq m	900,000 sq ft
Length of North Front	70.7m	232 ft
Length of South Front	98.2m	322 ft
Area of site:	3.24 hectares	approx 8 acres
Staircases:	100	
Length of passageways:		about 3 miles 4.8km
Rooms:	1,100	

Towers

Clock Tower	Height 96.3m	316 ft	12.2m square	40 ft square
Central Tower	Height 91.4m	300 ft	22.9m across	75 ft across
Victoria Tower	Height 98.5m	323 ft	22.9m across	75 ft square
Flagstaff on Victoria Tower	Height 22.3m	73 ft		

Principal rooms

St Stephen's Hall	29m x 9.1m	95 ft x 30 ft		
Royal Gallery	33.5m x 13.7m	110 ft x 45 ft	Height 13.7m	45 ft
Lords Chamber	24.4m x 13.7m	80 ft x 45 ft	Height 13.7m	45 ft
Peers' Lobby	11.9m x 11.9m	38 ft x 38 ft	Height 10m	33 ft
Central Lobby	18.3m	60 ft across octagon	Height 22.9m	75 ft
Members' Lobby	13.7m x 13.7m	45 ft x 45 ft		

Commons Chamber

Floor of Chamber	20.7m x 14m	68 ft x 46 ft		
Across Galleries	31.4m x 14.5m	103 ft x 48 ft		
Height	14m	46 ft		
Distance between red lines on carpet	8 ft 2½ ins	2.5m		

Commons Library (6 rooms) 79.3m x 9.1m 260 ft x 30 ft
(main rooms each – 16.8m x 9.1m (55 ft x 30 ft))

Lords Library (4 rooms) 51.8m x 9.1m 170 ft x 30 ft

Crypt Chapel of St Mary Undercroft 27.4m x 8.5m 90 ft x 28 ft Height 6.1m 20 ft

*(Metric figures are rounded to one decimal place)

Westminster Hall

Length	73.2m	240 ft
Width	20.7m	68 ft
Height	28.0m	92 ft

The Great Clock

Hands:	Minute (copper)	Length	4.3m (14 ft)	Weight	101.6kg (2 cwt)
	Hour (gunmetal)	Length	2.7m (9 ft)	Weight	304.8kg (6 cwt)
Pendulum:	Total Length	4.4m (14 ft 5 in)			
Length of Roman numerals:	61cm (2 ft)				
Minute squares:	30.5cm (1 ft)				
Number of panes of glass in each clockface	312				

The Bells

Big Ben (the Great Bell)	Weight	13.8 tonnes	13 tons 10 cwt 99 lb
Note E:	Hammer Weight	203.2kg	4 cwt

Quarter Bells

1	Note G sharp	Weight	1 ton 1 cwt 23 lb	1.07 tonnes
2	Note F sharp	Weight	1 ton 5 cwt 30 lb	1.28 tonnes
3	Note E	Weight	1 ton 13 cwt 69 lb	1.71 tonnes
4	Note B	Weight	3 tons 10 cwt 69 lb	3.59 tonnes

Time between Strikes:

From start of chime to 12 th strike	=	95 seconds
Big Ben: From 1 st strike to 12 th strike		54 seconds, 5 seconds between strikes

Appendix B

The Palace of Westminster Principal (1st Floor) plan

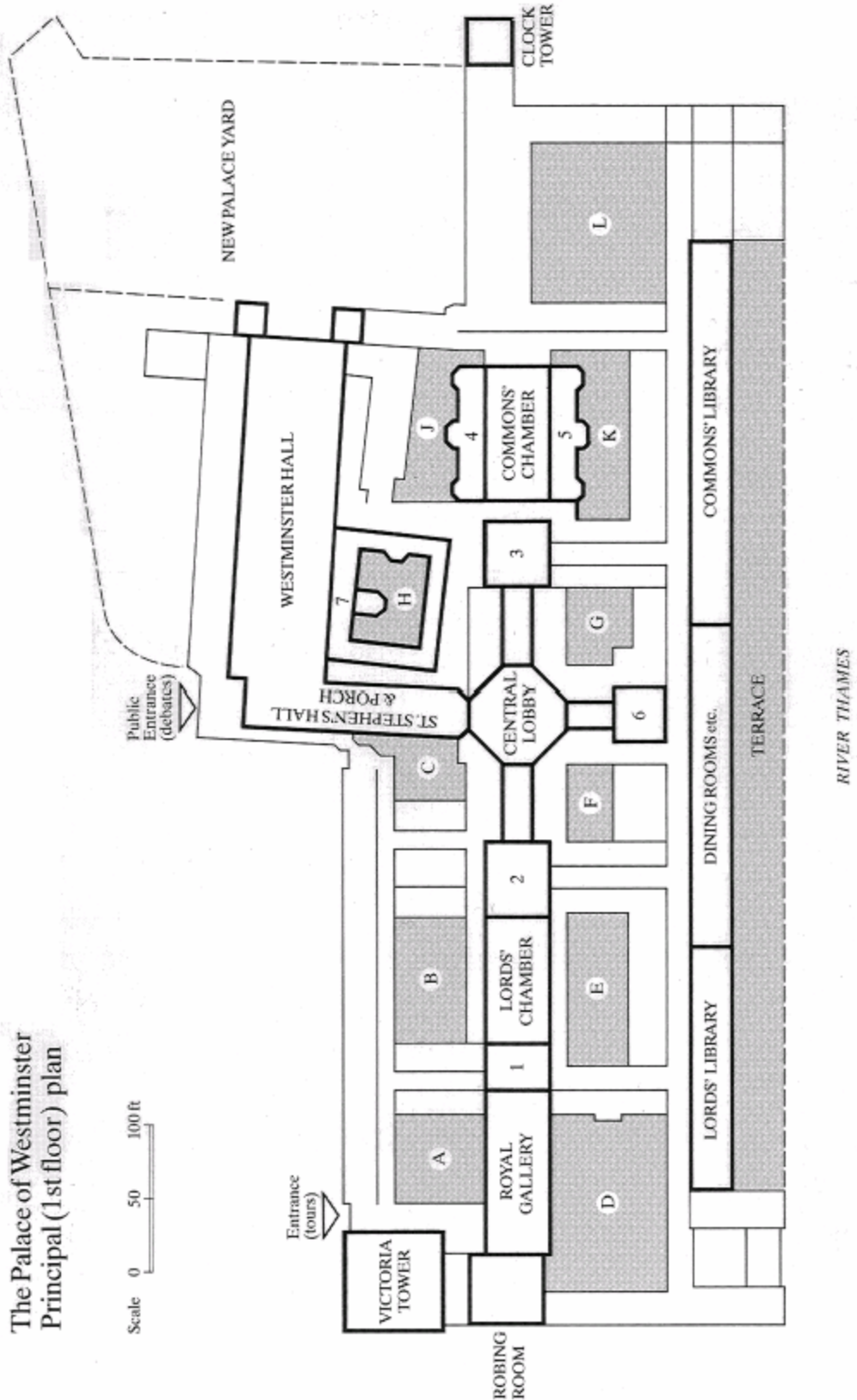
Key to the plan

Courts, etc.

- A – Chancellor’s
- B – State Officers’
- C – St. Stephen’s
- D – Royal
- E – Peers’
- F – Peers’ Inner
- G – Commons’ Inner
- H – Cloister
- J – Star Chamber
- K – Commons
- L – Speaker’s

Rooms, etc.

- 1 – Princes Chamber
- 2 – Peers’ Lobby
- 3 – Members’ Lobby
- 4 – Aye Lobby
- 5 – No Lobby
- 6 – Cromwell



Appendix C

Commonwealth Gifts

The following gifts were made by the countries of the Commonwealth in 1950 to mark the rebuilding of the House of Commons Chamber:

- AIDEN** (Yemen)- Members' Writing Room table
- AUSTRALIA** - Speaker's Chair in Australian black bean
- BAHAMAS** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- BARBADOS** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- BERMUDA** - Two triple silver gilt inkstands
- BOTSWANA** - One silver gilt ashtray
- BRITISH HONDURAS (Belize)**- Minister's writing desk and chair and Royal Coat of Arms
- CANADA** - Table of the House in Canadian oak
- CEYLON (Sri Lanka)** - Serjeant at Arms chair
- CYPRUS** - Members' Writing Room table
- DOMINICA** - One silver gilt inkstand
- FALKLAND ISLANDS** - One silver gilt ashtray
- FIJI** - One silver gilt inkstand
- THE GAMBIA** - Two silver gilt ashtrays
- GHANA** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- GIBRALTAR** - Two oak table lamps with bronze shades
- GRENADA** - One silver gilt inkstand
- GUERNSEY** - Minister's writing desk and three chairs
- GUYANA** - Four triple silver gilt inkstands
- HONG KONG** - One triple silver gilt inkstand
- INDIA** - Entrance doors to Chamber
- ISLE OF MAN** - One silver gilt inkstand and two silver gilt ashtrays for Prime Minister's Conference Room
- JAMAICA** - Bar of the House in bronze
- JERSEY** - Minister's writing desk and chair and silver gilt inkstand
- KENYA** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- LEEWARD ISLANDS** - Six oak table lamps with bronze shades
- LESOTHO** - Two silver gilt ashtrays
- MALAWI** - One triple silver gilt inkstand and one silver gilt ashtray
- MALAYA** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- MALTA** - Three silver gilt ashtrays
- MAURITIUS** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- NEWFOUNDLAND** - Six chairs for Prime Minister's Conference Room
- NEW ZEALAND** - Two dispatch boxes in pururi
- NIGERIA** - Furniture for Aye Division Lobby in iroko
- NORTHERN IRELAND** - Two clocks and division clock for the Chamber
- PAKISTAN** - Entrance doors to Chamber
- RHODESIA** - Two silver gilt inkstands with paper racks
- SABAH** - One table and five chairs for interview room
- SEYCHELLES** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- SIERRA LEONE** - Minister's writing desk and chair
- SINGAPORE** - One table and five chairs for interview room
- SOUTH AFRICA** - Three chairs for Clerks at the Table
- ST HELENA** - One Chairman's chair for Prime Minister's Conference Room

ST LUCIA - One silver gilt inkstand

ST VINCENT - One silver gilt ashtray

SWAZILAND - One silver gilt ashtray

TANGANYIKA - One table and five chairs for interview room

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO - Minister's writing desk and chair

UGANDA - Furniture for No Division Lobby in mvule

ZAMBIA - Two pairs of bronze brackets for the Mace

ZANZIBAR - One silver gilt ashtray

Further reading

Robert Wilson
The Houses of Parliament
Jarrold Publishing 1994

Nigel Smith
The Houses of Parliament: their history
and purpose
Wayland 1997

Christine Riding and Jacqueline Riding
The Houses of Parliament: History, Art
and Architecture
Merrell 2000

Edited by Robert Smith & John S Moore
The House of Commons: seven
hundred years of British tradition
Smiths Peerage Ltd. 1996

Edited by Robert Smith & John S Moore
The House of Lords: a thousand years of
British tradition
Smiths Peerage Ltd. 1994

Useful websites

The Parliamentary website:
www.parliament.uk
The Education Service website:
www.explore.parliament.uk
The British Monarchy website:
www.royal.gov.uk

Contact information

House of Commons Information Office
House of Commons
London SW1A 2TT
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Fax 020 7219 5839
hcinfo@parliament.uk
www.parliament.uk

House of Lords Information Office
House of Lords
London SW1A 0PW
Phone 020 7219 3107
Fax 020 7219 0620
hlinfo@parliament.uk

Parliamentary Education Service
House of Commons
London SW1A 2TT
Phone 020 7219 2105
Fax 020 7219 0818
education@parliament.uk

Parliamentary Bookshop
12 Bridge Street
Parliament Square
London SW1A 2JX
Phone 020 7219 3890
Fax 020 7219 3866
bookshop@parliament.uk

Factsheet G11 The Palace of Westminster

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| 1. Very useful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Fairly useful | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not much use | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| 3. Clear | <input type="checkbox"/> | Not always clear | <input type="checkbox"/> | Rather unclear | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Any comments?

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