

Brief history of Westminster Cathedral



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Westminster Cathedral is a world-renowned church that has been inextricably linked with the political, social, and cultural history of Great Britain for nearly a millennium. It is said that there have been 17 royal weddings held since 1066, sponsoring all the coronations of the British royal family. More than 3,300 British royalty and eminent Englishmen are sleeping peacefully in the cemetery at Westminster Cathedral.

In the past, a cathedral, of which the size was similar to that of St. Peter's Cathedral, was located in the far-East corner of London. Dedicated to St. Paul was popularly known as 'Eastminster' in London. The people of London were accustomed to call St. Peter's Cathedral, which was located to the West of the palace built by King Edward I, as 'Westminster'.

Westminster Cathedral, built by King Edward I, was only two centuries old when King Henry III decided to rebuild it according to Gothic architecture in the 13th century. It has been rebuilt to suit the burials and coronations of royalty, using techniques used to build newly built churches throughout Europe, such as the Cathedral of Canterbury in Kent. However, the circular arches, the support towers, and the chambers of the priesthood, built by King Edward I in Romanesque architecture, can still be seen.

The rebuilt Westminster Cathedral was dedicated to the Roman Catholic Church by King Henry III on October 13, 1269. It was then given to be used as a monastery around 1559, and at the same time the Church left the Roman Catho-

lic Church and began to function as an Anglican Church belonging to the Church of England. However, in 1560 Westminster Cathedral was granted "Royal Peculiar" status, which transferred the control of Westminster Cathedral from the Church of England to the British Royal Family.

Westminster Cathedral sponsored the coronation of King William I, who was crowned on Christmas Day 1066, and all 39 subsequent coronations of the British royal family. The last coronation took place at Westminster Cathedral in 1953 was that of Queen Elizabeth II.

King Edward I, who spearheaded the Cathedral's establishment, was also the first monarch to be buried in the tomb of Westminster Cathedral, where many of the British monarchs lay in peace. King Henry III later erected a new tombstone to replace the mausoleum of Edward I in front of the old cathedral altar and to bury his body behind the altar in the new cathedral. In addition to the royals, many famous Englishmen are buried in Westminster Cemetery.

A plot of land called 'Poets Corner' has been set aside for the burial of famous artists. It houses the monuments of William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, Oscar Wilde, Charles Dickens, and the Bronte sisters.

The number of royal weddings held at Westminster Cathedral, not limited to coronations and funerals, is reported to be 17. King Henry I of England and Queen of Scotland were first married on November 11 1100 in Westminster Cathedral. The wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer, the heirs to the British throne in 1981, as well as the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011 took place at Westminster Cathedral.