

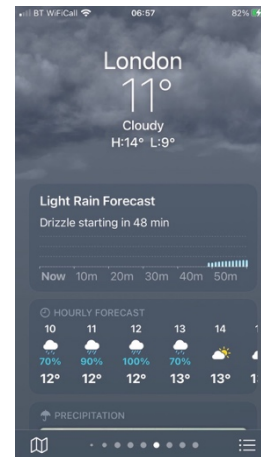
## U3A Bike Rides London Palaces and Parks Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023

We knew that it was likely to be a wet outing today.

The weather forecast promised intervals of heavy rain, only clearing away after lunchtime.

Unfortunately, it turned out the forecast was about right!

The group of ten assembled at Brockwell Park Lido and headed to Battersea Park, this time via Stockwell, South Lambeth and Battersea Power Station, a route with no hills.



Coffee called and we tried a new venue, the Pear Tree Café in the park. By now the rain was quite heavy and the shelter of the café was very welcome.

Niesje confirmed the quality of the coffee to be good and the venue worth visiting on future outings.

Starting from Battersea Park the plan was to visit six of the palaces in central London.

Crossing the Albert Bridge, on through Chelsea and Belgravia, the next destination was Hyde Park, entered by the Albert Gate.

To our delight we arrive in the park in time to see a troop of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment.

They were resplendent in their crimson robes, burnished silver helmet with brass and silver fittings and a long “plume” of horse hair hanging down, seated on black stallions. An impressive sight!



From Albert Gate we rode to Kensington Gardens, past the Albert Memorial and the along the Broad Walk and on to the Round Pond and **Kensington Palace**.



The Palace was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century for King William III and Queen Mary II. It is now home to the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. It has a museum with many royal paintings.

We returned to the Alexandra Gate and headed down South Carriage Drive to Hyde Park Corner, past Apsley House and the Wellington Arch. As we enjoyed the ride down the length of Constitution Hill the rain was really coming on so we paused by **Buckingham Palace**. The palace dates from 1703; it was completed in 1860; it has 775 rooms and the largest private garden in London.



We paused here to consider the options. Given the wet weather, some of the group decided that the best choice was to go to Victoria Station and return by train. This left three of us to complete ride, visiting the remaining palaces, but not lingering.

A cycle path up The Mall took us the short distance to **St James' Palace** which is widely regarded as one of the best examples of Tudor architecture. This is on the site of a former leper hospital and the palace was the home to English kings for centuries, including Henry VIII. King Charles I spent the last night of his life there.



*St James' Palace \*\**

On the other side of the road is the Queen's Chapel, designed by Inigo Jones as a royal residence, originally for the bride of Charles I.



*The Queen's Chapel \*\**



Clarence House is a large house nearby, today flying the Royal Standard showing His Majesty is in residence.

We continued up The Mall and crossed into Horse Guards Road, then walked across Horse Guards Parade, with the **Old Admiralty Building**, Grade II listed, to our left. This has housed some famous figures in history; Churchill (when First Sea Lord), Ian Fleming, and Earl Mountbatten.



*Old Admiralty Building\*\**

Once across Horse Guards Parade we walked on through the arch, past the mounted guards and into Whitehall. **Whitehall Palace** was once a much larger building but now only Inigo Jones' Banqueting House remains; this was built during the reign of King Charles I.



*Whitehall Palace \*\**

Whitehall Palace was where Charles I was executed, on a platform extending from one of the windows. Henry VIII had lived here and his wine cellar still exists, although – presumably – not the wines. The rain continued as we rode down Horse Guards Avenue, past the Ministry of Defence to the Embankment to the **Palace of Westminster**. More commonly called the Houses of Parliament, this was the residence of English kings until the fire of 1547. Westminster Hall in the Old Palace, dating from medieval times with its fine hammer beam roof, was built to provide a large open meeting space. It survived the devastating fire of 1834 which destroyed most of the Palace, and is recorded in a famous painting by J M W Turner.

We crossed the river on Lambeth Bridge to **Lambeth Palace**, the home of Archbishop of Canterbury for centuries. The Palace is 800 years old with a Tudor Gatehouse, built about 1490. Its library has over 120,000 books, some dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century.



*Lambeth Palace \*\**

The return route was by Black Prince Road and Kennington Gardens to Brockwell Park. By now the rain had ceased and the sun appeared as I reached home!

Well done to all the riders today! Not deterred by the wet conditions!! Because of the heavy rain, we did not stop to listen to the notes I had prepared; instead, these are added below. The riders were: Chris, David, Irene, John, Judy, Martin, Niesje, Pat, Tony, Valerie

**Reference** Details of the Royal Palaces in London:

<https://guidelinstobritain.com/royal-london/11-royal-palaces-in-london/>

*Acknowledgement of source material: Wikipedia; Guidelines to Britain*

*Ride leader: John Clements*

*Report and photos (some are from an earlier ride\*\*) by John Clements, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023*



## Notes

**Kensington Palace** *Kensington Palace was originally a two-storey Jacobean mansion built in 1605 in the village of Kensington. Bought by the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Nottingham it was then known as Nottingham House. Shortly after King William III and Queen Mary II assumed the throne as joint monarchs in 1689, they bought Nottingham House from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Nottingham for £20,000 and instructed Sir Christopher Wren to begin an immediate expansion of the house. He added a three-storey pavilion at each of the four corners, providing more accommodation for the King and Queen and their attendants. The royal court took residence in 1689 and for the next seventy years Kensington Palace was the favoured residence of British monarchs, some of whom spent lavishly on it.*

*More recently, in 1981, part of the palace became the London residence of the newly married Prince of Wales and his wife, Diana, Princess of Wales, and it remained the official residence of the Princess after their divorce until her death. Princes William and Harry were raised in Kensington Palace.*

*Following their marriage in 2011, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge used Nottingham Cottage as their London residence and they continued to live at the property until the birth of their son in spring 2019.*

*The Palace also acts as a museum containing many royal paintings and artefacts and so certain sections of Kensington Palace are open to the public throughout the year.*

*The statue of Queen Victoria standing near the Palace was sculpted by Victoria's fourth daughter Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll and erected in 1893. The statue was made from white marble on a Portland stone base. It depicts Victoria aged 18, seated in her coronation robes.*

**Buckingham Palace** *Originally known as Buckingham House, the building at the core of today's palace was a large townhouse built for the Duke of Buckingham in 1703 on a site that had been in private ownership for at least 150 years. It was acquired by King George III in 1761 as a private residence for Queen Charlotte and became known as The Queen's House. During the 19th century it was enlarged by John Nash who constructed three wings around a central courtyard. Buckingham Palace became the London residence of the British monarch on the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837. The last major building work was in 1913 when Sir Aston Webb redesigned Edward Blore's 1850 East Front with a new, refaced principal façade of Portland stone to serve as a backdrop to the Victoria Memorial. With 775 rooms and the most extensive private garden in London, it is the Queen's official London residence and a working royal palace.*

**St James's Palace** *is the most senior royal palace in London and gives its name to the Court of St James's, the monarch's royal court. It is no longer the principal residence of the monarch, but is used if it is a ceremonial meeting place.*

*Built by order of Henry VIII in the 1530s on the site of a leper hospital dedicated to Saint James the Less, the palace was less important than the Palace of Whitehall for most Tudor and Stuart monarchs. Surrounded by gardens, it was used as a retreat from the formal court and a royal guest house. After the destruction by fire of Whitehall Palace, it became more important to the early Hanoverian monarchs. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 19<sup>th</sup> Buckingham Palace was increasingly used. The move was made formal by Queen Victoria in 1837.*

The palace now houses a number of official offices, societies and collections, and all ambassadors and high commissioners to the United Kingdom are still accredited to the Court of St James's. The palace's Chapel Royal is still used for functions of the British royal family. The palace was mainly built between 1531 and 1536 in red-brick, and its architecture is in the Tudor style. A fire in 1809 destroyed parts of the structure, including the monarch's private apartments, which were never replaced. Some 17th-century interiors survive, but most were remodelled in the 19th century.

**The Old Admiralty Building** This Grade II listed building has housed some of the most famous figures in history and literature, including former Prime Minister Winston Churchill when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, and James Bond author - and former naval intelligence officer - Ian Fleming, whose renowned 'Room 39' was located inside the walls during World War II. It was also home to Admiral 'Blinker' Hall's Naval Intelligence Department in World War I and later occupied by Lord Mountbatten.

**Whitehall Palace** The Palace of Whitehall was at one time the largest palace in Europe, with more than 1,500 rooms, overtaking the Vatican, before the Palace of Versailles was expanded to reach 2,400 rooms. It was the main residence of the English monarchs from 1530 until 1698, when most of its structures were destroyed by fire. Henry VIII moved the royal residence to White Hall after the old royal apartments at the nearby Palace of Westminster were themselves destroyed by fire.



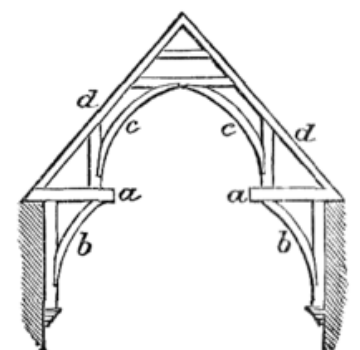
Although the Whitehall palace does not survive, the area where it was located is still called Whitehall and has remained a centre of government.

Inigo Jones's Banqueting House of 1622 escaped the 1698 fire and is the last surviving remnant of the Whitehall Palace; it is considered to be an important work of architecture, as it is the first English building to be built in the neoclassical style. The ceiling contains nine paintings by Peter Paul Rubens and there are paintings and sculptures of King James I and King Charles I.

**Palace of Westminster** The first royal palace constructed on the site dated from the 11th century, and Westminster became the primary residence of the Kings of England until fire destroyed the royal apartments in 1512 after which, the nearby Palace of Whitehall was established.

The remaining buildings continued to serve as the home of the Parliament of England, which had met there since the 13th century. In 1834 a second, greater fire ravaged the heavily rebuilt Houses of Parliament. The only significant medieval structures to survive were Westminster Hall, the Jewel Tower, the cloisters, and the crypt of St. Stephen's Chapel.

The magnificent hammer-beam roof of Westminster Hall is the largest medieval timber roof in Northern Europe. The roof was commissioned in 1393 by Richard II, and is a masterpiece of design.



Section of Hammer-beam Roof:  
aa, hammer-beam; bb, hammer-brace; cc, collar-brace; dd, rafters.

Charles Barry won competition with his design for new buildings in the Gothic Revival style, specifically inspired by the English Perpendicular Gothic style of the 14th–16th centuries. Augustus Pugin, a leading authority on Gothic architecture and style, assisted Barry and designed the interior of the Palace. Construction started in 1840 and lasted for 30 years, suffering great delays and cost overruns, as well as the death of both leading architects. Work on the interior decoration continued intermittently well into the 20th century. Major conservation work has taken place since then to reverse the effects of London's air pollution, and extensive repairs after the Second World War, including the reconstruction of the Commons Chamber following its bombing in 1941.

**Lambeth Palace.** Lambeth Palace has been the official place of residence for the Archbishop of Canterbury since it was acquired by the Diocese around AD 1200. At almost 800 years old, it is one of the oldest Royal palaces in London. The building is listed Grade I. The front is an early Tudor crenelated brick gatehouse built by Cardinal John Morton and completed in 1495, and resembles Hampton Court Palace's gatehouse.

The great hall was completely ransacked, including the building material, by Cromwellian troops during the English Civil War. After the Restoration, it was completely rebuilt by Archbishop William Juxon in 1663 with a late Gothic hammer beam roof.

Within the palace precincts is Lambeth Palace Library, the official library of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the principal repository of records of the Church of England. With 120,000 books and religious records, some of which date back to the 12th century, it is "the largest religious collection outside of the Vatican". Among the portraits of the archbishops in the Palace are works by Hans Holbein, Anthony van Dyck, William Hogarth and Sir Joshua Reynolds. The garden park is Grade II listed; it was a larger area with a notable orchard until the early 19th century and has a noted ancient fig tree (reputedly planted by Cardinal Pole in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century).

Near the gatehouse stands the beautiful **St. Mary-at-Lambeth Church**. From the entry in Domesday Book it is known that there was a church dedicated to St. Mary in Lambeth before the Norman Conquest. The former church in front of its entrance has been converted to the Garden Museum. In the 1980s the church was designated for demolition to make room for a coach park. It was saved by the direct intervention of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. In 1991 Robert Runcie retired as the Archbishop of Canterbury (succeeded by George Carey). When he moved out of Lambeth Palace, the removal company was ..... Bishop's Move! (I had a bird's-eye view from the roof of the building opposite, where I then worked.) The south bank of the Thames along this reach, historically not a part of London, developed slowly because the land was low and sodden. Lambeth Marsh extended as far downriver as the present Blackfriars Road. The name "Lambeth" embodies "hithe", a landing on the river. The archbishops came and went by water, and situated here was the landing stage of the horse ferry to Westminster, which was owned by the Archbishop of Canterbury.