

WESTMINSTER
ABBEY:
A STRATEGY
FOR 2020
AND
BEYOND

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER



Why do we need a strategy? We love our Abbey as it is, with its pattern of the daily worship of Almighty God which has continued here for a thousand years.

Those who came before us have left a wonderful building, alive with history, a treasure-house of art, architecture and music. But the duty of each generation is to build on that inheritance, not simply conserve it. Like the stewards in the parable, we have been given our treasure not to be hoarded but enhanced, to the glory of God, and to enrich the lives of those who come after us.


This strategy maps an exciting path into the future. We have the opportunity to improve not just the fabric of a unique building, but the experience of those we welcome here to worship or wonder. We believe that the refreshment our Abbey can offer has never been more vital to our national life, founded as it is on Christian faith and partnership with the Church, so powerfully symbolised here.

When our term as stewards ends we must be ready to answer the question, *'What mark did our lives leave on the Abbey and its service to the nation?'* Over the next decade we could see the greatest transformation of the Abbey since Nicholas Hawksmoor created the West Towers 264 years ago.

The aim of this strategy is to help us approach that challenge together with confidence and clarity of purpose.



The Very Reverend Dr John Hall
Dean of Westminster



WESTMINSTER ABBEY WELCOMES
OVER 1.5 MILLION VISITORS,
WORSHIPPERS AND SCHOOL
CHILDREN THROUGH ITS
DOORS EACH YEAR.

Procession of the Knights of the Order of the Bath, Canaletto, 1749

“OUR ABBEY”: PART OF ALL OUR LIVES



WESTMINSTER ABBEY IS UNLIKE ANY OTHER PLACE OF WORSHIP. IT HAS A UNIQUE RELATIONSHIP – SPIRITUAL, HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL – WITH EVERYONE IN THE UK. IT IS PART OF US: FOR A THOUSAND YEARS, IT HAS SHARED OUR COUNTRY’S TRAGEDIES AND CELEBRATIONS. THE ABBEY IS WOVEN INTO OUR SENSE OF IDENTITY AND NATIONHOOD.

It is the home of great souls who shared a love of our country, created the world we inhabit, and shaped the way we think and feel. Walk into the Abbey and you encounter living history, Christian faith and national life interwoven.

You feel the sanctity of Edward the Confessor, the passionate humanity of Wilberforce, the restless presence of Darwin’s intellect, the courage of airmen battling in our skies in two world wars for freedom, the majesty of great kings and queens – and so many other threads woven through our national life.

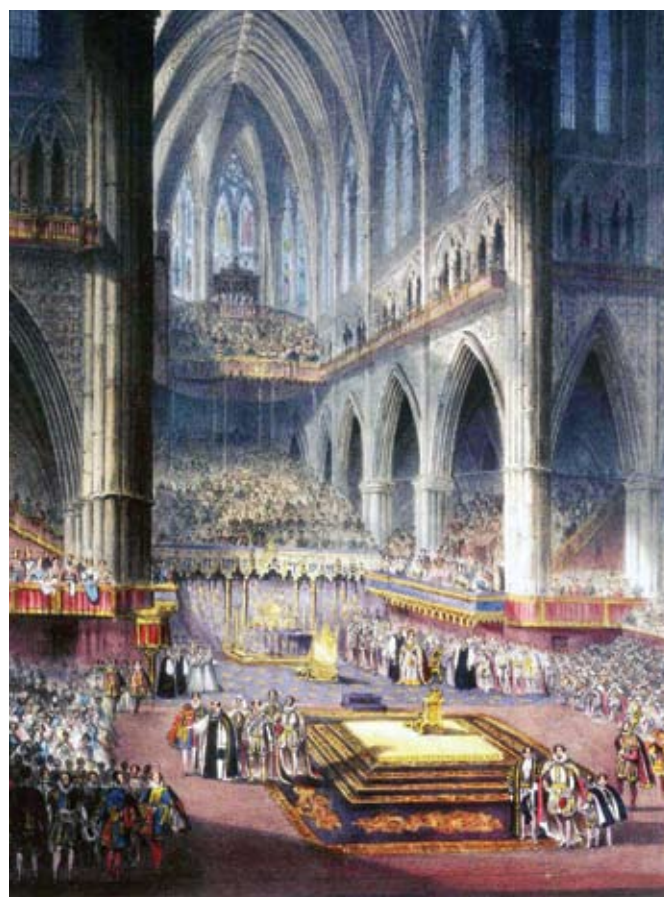
The Abbey has not just passively witnessed a thousand years of history either. As the pinnacle of the relationship between church, state and monarchy, it has played an active role in the course of events.

Look down from the Triforium level and you see the stage on which many great national dramas have been played: playboy Prince Hal becoming the warrior king, a teenage Victoria taking on the heavy mantle of sovereignty or, in our own time, the death of Diana, Princess of Wales and the passing of our beloved Queen Mother.

The past comes to life in many historic buildings. But the Abbey also looks forward. It is the place where the great public occasions of our own generation are marked, and where unknowable future events will be mourned or celebrated centuries from now.

The Abbey is a special place where, in T S Eliot’s words, we understand that

*Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.*



The Coronation of Queen Victoria, 1838

To discover its significance, enjoy its beauty and be inspired by its worship is to explore our roots in the past, our place in today’s world, and our hopes for the future.

But history is only a part of the Abbey’s being. It remains, as it always has been, a place of worship and wonder at the heart of a hectic, materialistic modern city. It is there to satisfy our spiritual hunger for God, to refresh us and connect us with the lasting things of the spirit which matter.



In a typical year, the Abbey holds over 1,500 daily worship and special services

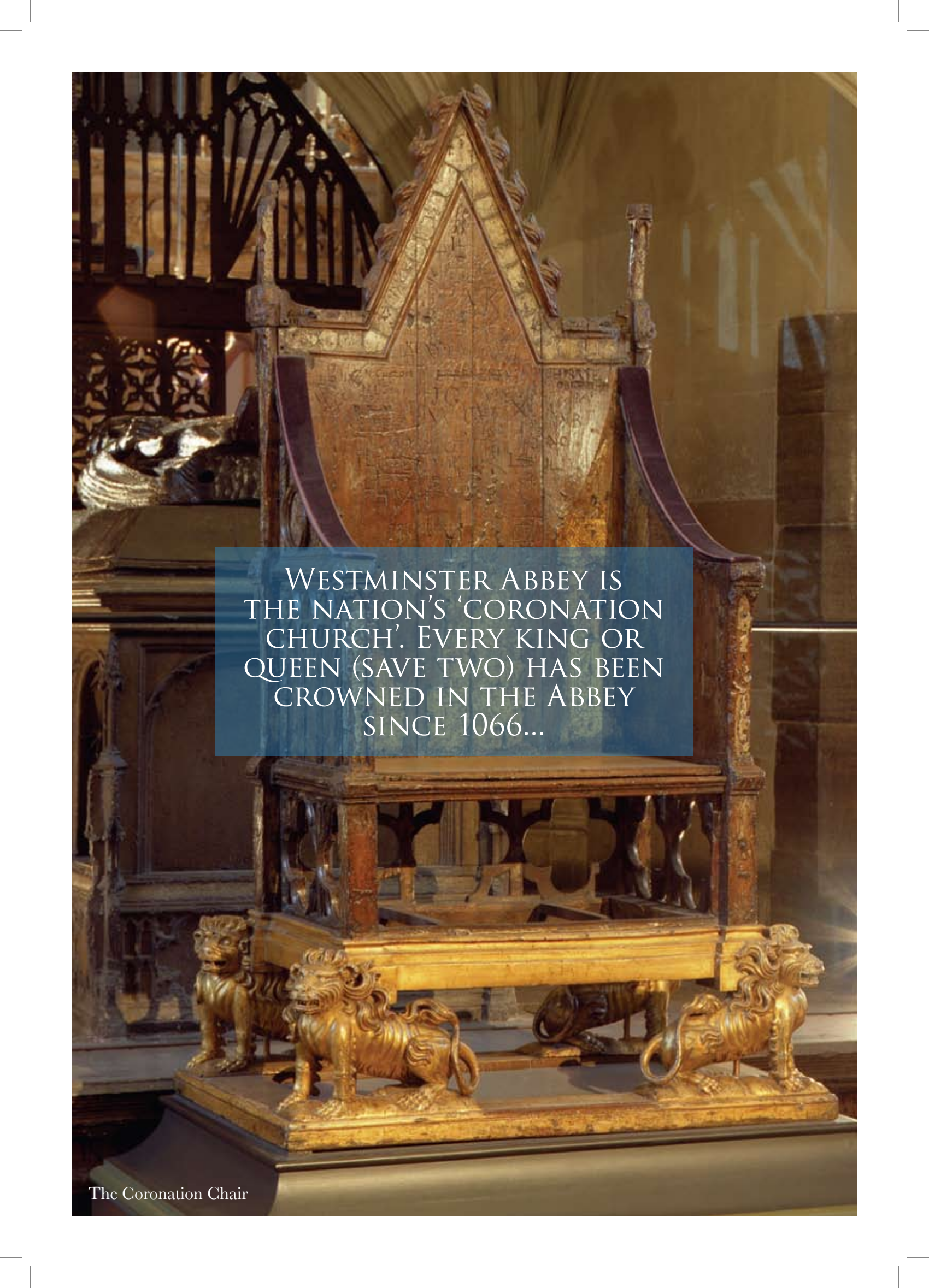
Today this magnificent building has the same power to speak to us and bring us together as it ever had. Our duty is to serve that purpose, and to welcome worshippers, friends, pilgrims and visitors from every corner of the world to the joy, inspiration and peace to be found within its walls.



Shakespeare’s monument in Poets’ Corner

‘He is the surest friend who does not change with the seasons of fortune, but...is an ever-fixed mark, that looks on tempests and is never shaken.’

Shakespeare

The image shows the Coronation Chair, a wooden throne with a high, pointed back and four golden lion supports. The chair is made of dark wood and features intricate carvings. The backrest is tall and tapers to a point, with a decorative finial. The seat is a simple wooden platform. The chair is supported by four golden lion statues, which are highly detailed and appear to be made of brass or gold. The chair is displayed in a museum setting, with a dark wooden railing visible in the background. A blue text box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text: "WESTMINSTER ABBEY IS THE NATION'S 'CORONATION CHURCH'. EVERY KING OR QUEEN (SAVE TWO) HAS BEEN CROWNED IN THE ABBEY SINCE 1066...".

WESTMINSTER ABBEY IS
THE NATION'S 'CORONATION
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The Coronation Chair

WELCOME, WONDER & WORSHIP: WHAT THE ABBEY MUST PROVIDE



AS STEWARDS OF THE ABBEY, WE SERVE GOD, THE SOVEREIGN, OUR NATION AND MILLIONS OF VISITORS, LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL. THAT SERVICE INVOLVES AN OVERRIDING DUTY TO CARE FOR THE ABBEY ITSELF: ITS FABRIC AND ITS CONTENTS.

This duty of service has been performed through centuries of profound social change. At the start of a new millennium, we in turn must help to meet the spiritual needs of today's multicultural nation, and make sure that the Abbey will be able to provide refreshment to our children and grandchildren.

Westminster Abbey must remain a place of peace and reflection, providing oxygen for the soul – a “still point of the turning world” for those who come into it from the busy streets of London. In troubled and confusing times we need its power more than ever to renew and inspire us.

This can happen in three intertwined ways:

- by *welcoming* new generations, many from non-Christian and secular backgrounds, to share the experience of the Abbey;
- by enabling millions of visitors to *wonder* at its beauty, history and traditions in an atmosphere of peace;
- by inviting people to join in its *worship*, which always has been and always will be the heart of its life.

Welcome, wonder and worship are inseparable elements of the Christian life, and everything we do as servants of the Abbey is to further those purposes.

WELCOME

Welcoming friends, pilgrims and strangers has been part of the Christian mission here since Benedictine monks first invited outsiders into their new Abbey on Thorney Island. Times change, and with them the challenge of providing a warm-hearted, individual welcome.

Today we serve a fast-changing multicultural nation, part of a globalised culture. Visitors come from all religious backgrounds and none. Set in the heart of London, next to the seat of government, we are proud ambassadors for our country, welcoming people from every corner of the globe.

This means the development of an education programme for schoolchildren and adults, high-quality visitor facilities to equip them with the knowledge they need to enjoy the Abbey, and modern hospitality amenities. Most vital of all is the warmth of an individual human welcome: kind, friendly and helpful.

To offer a professional welcome to over one million visitors a year is a huge challenge for any cultural destination. But we must meet it in a holy place, created for prayer and worship. We succeed only if visitors can leave us not just impressed, but refreshed by the timeless peace and majesty of the Abbey.

WONDER

Most visitors come to see one of Europe's greatest cultural and historic destinations. The quality of their experience must match that expectation. We hope it can go much further. We want visitors to share our sense of wonder and awe about the Abbey.

Wonder must lie at the heart of our offering to visitors. We hope that each day thousands can step out of the hurlyburly of a great city to marvel at the Abbey's timeless beauty and rich history, and sense the presence of those whose great lives are commemorated within it. This needs to be encouraged.



From 13th century tiled floor of the Chapter House
'As the rose is the flower of all flowers so does this house surpass all other houses'

Visitors need information and guidance to understand the significance of what they see. But above all they need an atmosphere which nurtures wonder at the Abbey's artistic splendour, at its unending role in our history and at the 3,300 souls whose lives are commemorated within its walls.

We want visitors to experience the beauty of the Abbey through its worship, music, history and art. But we can make no assumptions about the knowledge they bring with them. We must make the Abbey both physically and intellectually accessible if no one is to feel excluded.

WORSHIP

Westminster Abbey is first and foremost a place of worship. That is why it was built and why it has been cherished over the years. Worship is the motive behind all its glorious art, architecture and music.

Like any church or cathedral, we are here to meet the spiritual needs of people through a rich pattern of daily prayer and worship. But we also uniquely provide the acts of worship which mark great occasions of state, and embody the role of religion in our national life.

The pressure of over a million visitors each year can sometimes make it difficult to foster an atmosphere of spirituality and peace. Our task is to find ways to satisfy both the spiritual hunger and the need for reflection and contemplation of those who come through our doors.

'The man who is not moved by it must have resigned the human faculty of letting his eyes convey ideas to his brain.'

William Morris
 Speaking of Westminster Abbey

THE ABBEY'S ONLY
REGULAR SOURCE
OF INCOME IS TOURISM.
AS A ROYAL PECULIAR,
IT RECEIVES NO FUNDING
FROM THE CHURCH
OR THE STATE.

2020 VISION: OUR VISION FOR THE ABBEY



EACH GENERATION INHERITING THE STEWARDSHIP OF THE ABBEY TAKES ON A HUGE RESPONSIBILITY: TO ENSURE THAT A PLACE WHICH HAS FOR 1000 YEARS BEEN AT THE HEART OF OUR NATION'S SPIRITUAL LIFE WILL STILL BE AT ITS HEART CENTURIES FROM NOW.

Our first duty, therefore, is to care for the existing fabric of the building and the treasures it contains. But we, like our predecessors, must also add to what we have inherited, to the glory of God and to inspire the souls of future generations.

We believe that the years leading to 2020 can be a period of confident transformation and enhancement, bringing the most significant changes to the Abbey since Nicholas Hawksmoor added the great West Towers in 1745. We want it to be a fitting celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of our Queen's coronation in 2013 and to raise the quality and range of the worship, wonder and welcome our Abbey can provide.

This is a once-in-a-century opportunity which depends entirely upon the generosity of those who love the Abbey.

We can meet it only with the support of partners and friends who share our vision and enthusiasm for the Abbey and understand how it can serve the nation even better in the future. Being a 'royal peculiar', which means that we receive no funding from the state or the church, leaves us entirely reliant upon tourism for our day to day needs. Tourism income is how we survive. But, it provides nothing to develop and improve the Abbey.

That is why today we need help from elsewhere. We need help to realise our vision for the Abbey's future.

ASPECTS OF THE VISION:

CURRENT RESTORATION: THE COSMATI PAVEMENT

For over a century, this unique 13th century mosaic, one of the country's greatest medieval art treasures at the heart of the Abbey, was hidden from public view, covered by a protective carpet. Its first major cleaning, stabilisation and conservation were completed in 2010 and the Cosmati pavement's intricate patterns and colours once again glow in front of the high altar – part of the majesty of our services and an unforgettable sight for visitors.



Detail from 13th century Cosmati pavement recently having undergone a £500k conservation programme.

EFFECTIVE SPACE USE: MAKING CREATIVE USE OF WHAT WE HAVE

The Abbey was built close to a millennium ago upon what was called Thorney Island. With water having been an issue, the Abbey does not have a crypt or proper undercroft. Therefore, the only way

for us to expand or develop our vision today, is to make more creative use of the space we have. This leads us to the conviction that we must develop the Triforium and other spaces within the Abbey.

A PLACE OF WONDER: THE TRIFORIUM GALLERIES

High above the Abbey floor, the huge gallery level or Triforium, with its apsidal chapels, has never been accessible to the public. Sir John Betjeman once described the view from it as the finest in England. It is a vast space that acts as an Aladdin's storage cave of hidden treasures: stained glass, models, artefacts of all kinds and a lapidarium.

By providing public access to it with a lift, we shall be able to add a new dimension to visitors' experience of the Abbey and open a whole new space for our wider use. Much of the Triforium will become galleries for exhibiting treasures such as books from our 16th century library, textiles, gold and silver plate and rare documents, and will also be used for rotating displays and exhibitions linked to historical or special events and to the Abbey's history. This will also allow us to move our museum 'up', freeing vital space for improved visitor facilities on the ground.

For the first time visitors will be able to share the poet's wonder at the glorious vision of the Abbey below. At the same time, the galleries and setting will bring the Abbey's heritage of great art and craftsmanship to the public in a space which does them justice.

A WARMER WELCOME: VISITOR FACILITIES

In the 21st century, our hospitality should be worthy of a World Heritage Site, of which the Abbey is part, and of one of Britain's most inspiring places of worship. Today's facilities are highly inadequate and can make an unsatisfactory impression on visitors.

The wealth of experiences offered by the Abbey, particularly with the opening of the new Triforium Galleries, means that they will want to stay with us longer. At the moment we are able to offer them very little. Visitors will need new toilets, a new café/refectory and a better shop.

Even more importantly, a visitor centre, with first-rate displays and audio-visual materials, will help them understand the Abbey better. We want their direct experience of the building to be as rich and spontaneous as possible.

With an excellent visitor centre and a range of imaginative audio guides there will be no need for intrusive interpretation panels or signage inside the Abbey.



Triforium level of Abbey to be converted into galleries

INSPIRING A NEW GENERATION: EDUCATION AT THE ABBEY

Education is a major priority for us. We want to develop much stronger links with schools in London and beyond to make sure that each new generation can understand the significance of the Abbey in our national life and has the chance to be inspired by its grandeur.

We have created a new Education Centre for school visits which was opened by Her Majesty in May 2010, and have recruited our first ever Head of Education. The first focus of the centre will be building curriculum links with primary schools.

Imaginative internet materials will be developed which can be downloaded to help students prepare for visits, and enable them to follow up their experiences in the Abbey upon their return to school. The education team will also help to build up the Abbey's specialist lecture and debate programmes.

OPEN TO THE WORLD: THE ABBEY ONLINE

Modern internet technology can open the experience of the Abbey and its intellectual resources to the world. We can build a powerful community of friends and supporters across the globe who are able to enjoy webcasts of our services, concerts, lecture series and debates.

Digitisation of documents in our archives and library will make them accessible online to scholars and students. And over time it will be possible to offer 'virtual tours' of the Abbey, its treasures and current exhibitions. These are powerful tools to fire the imagination of potential visitors.

ENHANCING WORSHIP

Above all we want these visionary enhancements to strengthen the spiritual role of the Abbey both for local people in Britain and for the world beyond. It should be a place which people do not just walk past, but come in, whether for a full visit, a service, or a moment of quiet prayer and reflection.

We will raise the public profile of our worship through the website, press, and other media. Improved communications with our regular worshippers will help us to grow the Abbey's pastoral community – developing much closer links with our neighbours, whether living locally, in business or public service.

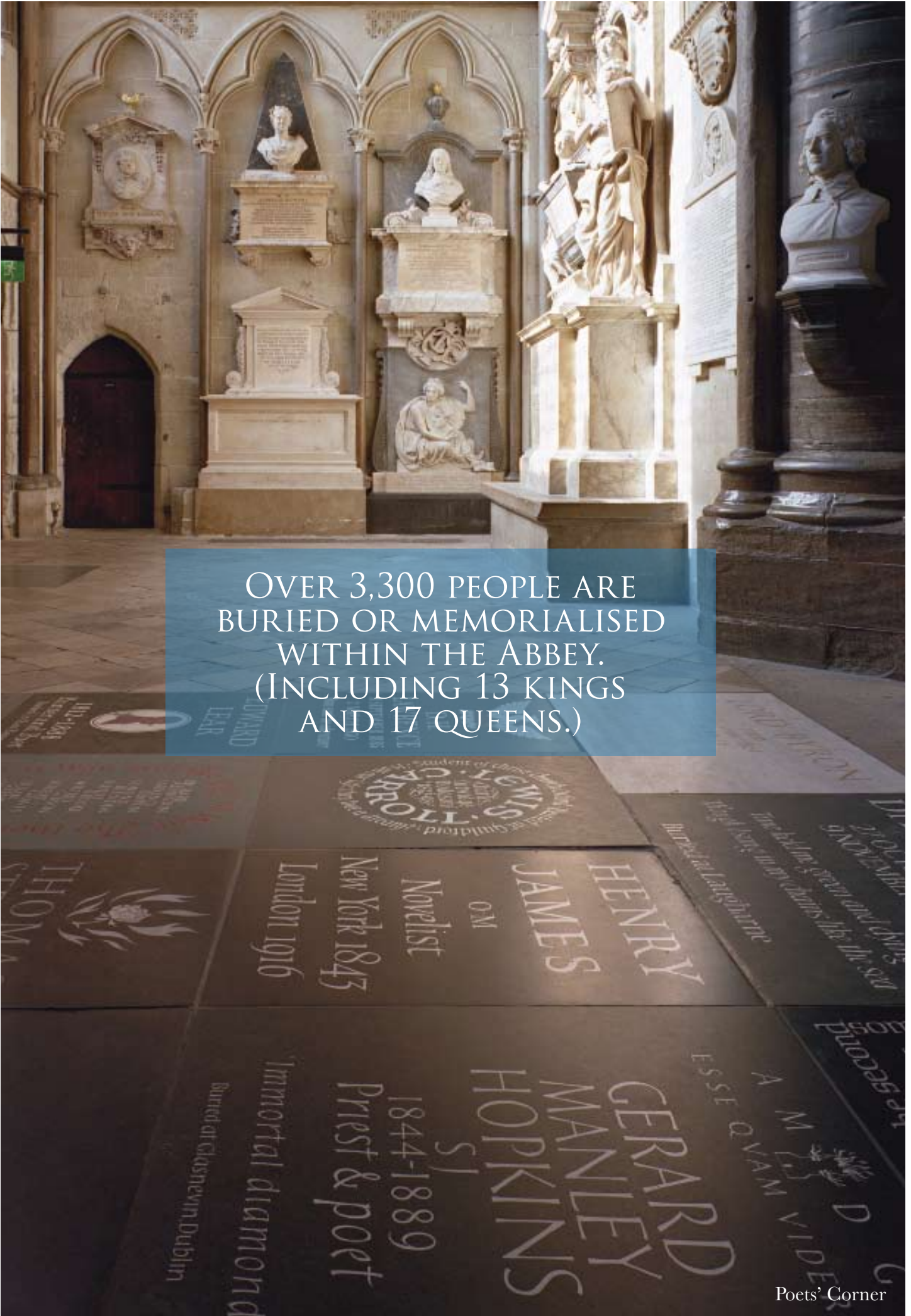
Welcoming over a million visitors (not counting worshippers) must not conflict with the need to provide places for peaceful meditation. Restoration work will regain a number of small chapels for private prayer and devotion.

Music is central to the Abbey's spiritual life, and we want to guarantee its quality and range. We will provide improved facilities for our choristers to ensure great musical performances and to develop a wider network of relationships with other musicians to extend the programme of concerts and offerings.

The shrine of St Edward the Confessor has been a place of pilgrimage for 1000 years. We will build on this tradition, continuing to invite parishes from across the nation to come to the Abbey and join our worship. We will reach out to communities who have never previously had contact with the Abbey.

And finally, this vision for the Abbey is allowing us to review the debate that has taken place for centuries from the time of Sir Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor to that of the eminent Victorian, Sir Gilbert Scott, about finishing the structure of the Abbey. This is the time to explore properly the possibilities.

To provide the public benefits of this transformation, the Abbey depends on the generosity of individuals. It needs us; it has no other source of funding. For 1,000 years this great building has brought inspiration and consolation to millions of people. Today its future lies in all our hands.



OVER 3,300 PEOPLE ARE
BURIED OR MEMORIALISED
WITHIN THE ABBEY.
(INCLUDING 13 KINGS
AND 17 QUEENS.)

THOMAS
London 1916
New York 1843
Novelist
OM
JAMES
HENRY
GERARD
MANLEY
HOPKINS
1844-1889
Poet & poet
Immortal diamond
Buried at Glasnevin Dublin

THE ABBEY IN 2020: OUR VISION OF THE FUTURE



MUCH WILL NOT CHANGE.
AS LONDONERS START FOR WORK, THE FIRST MEMBERS OF OUR STAFF WILL ALREADY BE PREPARING THE ABBEY FOR ITS TIMELESS PATTERN OF WORSHIP. A SINGLE BELL WILL SUMMON WORSHIPPERS TO MATINS AND HOLY COMMUNION, JUST AS IT CALLED OUR BENEDICTINE FOUNDERS TO WORSHIP A THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

Civil servants on the way to their Whitehall offices may look up and see the Abbey glinting in the morning light, inspiring momentary wonder as Hawksmoor’s new towers must have caught the imagination of 18th century passers-by. Some will join us for prayer or worship ahead of their busy working days.

Soon the green grass and mellow stone of the precincts will be thronging with visitors arriving, guidebooks and mobile devices in hand, to walk down the pages of our history.

As they enter, they can begin to appreciate the uniqueness of the Abbey. They will start to feel the wonder of the place and sense the presence of the great souls who are commemorated within it.

High up in the Triforium, visitors will be able to see the interior of the Abbey for the first time as a glorious whole. Walking round the galleries they will discover some of its wonderful treasures – such as rare stained glass, royal effigies, a 1st edition of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the cope worn at Charles II’s coronation – and enjoy displays which open up its spiritual life.

Throughout the day, the quiet of St Faith’s Chapel offers people the chance to step out of the bustle for prayer or reflection.

At lunchtime, the Abbey will be a place of warm hospitality. The shop will be busy. In the refectory, good, simple food will be served in a calm and

welcoming atmosphere to refresh and recharge our visitors.

Meanwhile in the education centre, two groups of schoolchildren, many of whom have never been in a place of worship before, will be preparing for their visit under the guidance of our education officers.



School children visiting the Abbey

By late afternoon, the atmosphere is changing. With the last visitors leaving, it is time for the local community and worshippers to come for Evensong. In the new choir facilities, choristers gather to prepare for tonight's service and rehearse for next week's concert, which will be webcast around the world.

The street lights go on. The organ sounds and the choir and people combine in Evensong. Tonight they are joined by a visiting congregation from Tower Hamlets – a memorable end to their parish pilgrimage. In Cheneygates, the Abbey is hosting the latest in a series of public debates on Capitalism and Christian values – with a world-wide audience watching over the internet.

The final prayer service of the day ends, the pilgrims leave, and the great West Door is locked. The Abbey stands silent in the heart of our capital

city as a timeless reminder of the values, hopes and history we all share:

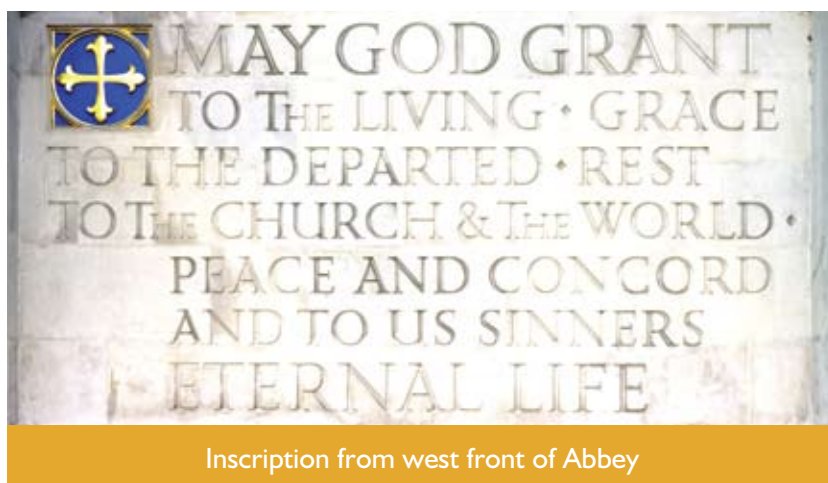
*A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.*

Philip Larkin

Nothing fundamental has changed here for a thousand years. Nothing should change. The enhancements of our vision have left a beautiful place more beautiful, more welcoming, better-equipped to satisfy the spiritual and cultural hunger of the 21st century. The wonder and sense of peace it can inspire are intact.

+ + +

JOIN US IN THIS UNIQUE 21ST CENTURY ENDEAVOUR
TO MAKE WESTMINSTER ABBEY, THE NATION'S HOME
TO WELCOME, WONDER AND WORSHIP.



Inscription from west front of Abbey



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