The Lady Chapel was begun in 1503 and constructed at the expense of Henry VII. It is the last great masterpiece of English medieval architecture. In 1545 John Leland called it "the wonder of the entire world". Unfortunately the names of the master masons who designed it are not known but they were possibly Robert Janyns and William Vertue. The chapel is approached by a flight of stairs and at the entrance are finely wrought bronze gates displaying royal Tudor emblems.

The outstanding feature of the chapel is the spectacular fan-vaulted roof with its carved pendants. Around the walls are 95 statues of saints. Behind the altar is the tomb of Henry VII and his queen Elizabeth of York. The bronze screen around it is by Thomas Ducheman and the gilt bronze effigies and Renaissance tomb were designed by Italian Pietro Torrigiano. James I is also buried in the vault beneath the monument.

In 1725 the chapel was first used for installations of Knights of the Order of the Bath and the heraldic banners of living knights hang above the oak stalls. Beneath the hinged seats of the stalls are beautifully carved misericords.

At the east end is the Royal Air Force chapel. The stained glass window by Hugh Easton depicts the badges of the fighter squadrons that took part in the Battle of Britain in 1940. Above, in the main east window, is stained glass designed by Alan Younger, installed in 2000.

In the north aisle of the chapel is the tomb of Elizabeth I and her half-sister Mary I. In the south aisle are monuments to Mary, Queen of Scots and Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII. Here also is the vault where Charles II, William III and Mary II and Queen Anne lie, although none of them has a monument. George II, the last monarch to be buried at the Abbey, is interred in a vault below the central part of the chapel.
The Chapel containing the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor, lies east of the Sanctuary at the heart of the Abbey. It is closed off from the west by a stone screen, probably of 15th century date, carved with scenes from the Confessor's life. Work is in progress to conserve the floor of this chapel and during this time public access is restricted.

An earlier shrine had been erected in 1163, after the Confessor had been canonised. When Henry III rebuilt Edward's Abbey he prepared a new shrine, bringing workmen from Italy. Peter the Roman was the chief artist. On 13 October 1269 the body was brought in solemn procession to its new resting place. The shrine seen today is only a shadow of its former self. It originally had three parts: a stone base decorated with Cosmati work, a gold feretory containing the saint's coffin, and a canopy above it, which could be raised to reveal the feretory or lowered to cover it. The shrine was decorated with gold images of kings and saints. Many sick people came to the shrine to pray for a cure and the steps in the recesses of the shrine base are worn away by the knees of pilgrims (the illustration shown is by David Gentleman). At the Reformation the shrine was dismantled and stored by the monks, although the gold feretory was taken away. The Confessor's body was buried in another part of the Abbey. In the reign of Mary I the shrine was rebuilt. The Purbeck marble base was re-assembled but little care was taken to match the carvings and designs which decorated it. In absence of a feretory the coffin was placed in a hollow in the top part of the stone base, where it still remains. The wooden canopy has been restored and re-painted.

Around the shrine are the tombs of Henry III, Edward I, Eleanor of Castile, Edward III, Philippa of Hainault, and Richard II with his queen Anne of Bohemia. To the east, under his chantry chapel, lies Henry V. There are two small tombs to Margaret, daughter of Edward IV and Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VII. A brass on the floor covers the grave of John of Waltham, Bishop of Salisbury. The chapel has a Cosmati floor, similar to that in front of the High Altar. The present altar dates from 1902. For many centuries the Coronation Chair was housed in this chapel but is now located just outside, near the Lady Chapel steps.
**NORTH TRANSEPT**

The north transept became known as Statesmen’s Aisle following the burial of Prime Minister William Pitt, Earl of Chatham in 1778. Here also can be found the graves of Charles James Fox, William Gladstone and Lord Palmerston and memorials to Benjamin Disraeli and Sir Robert Peel among others. The stained glass in the north rose window was designed by Sir James Thornhill in 1722, although it was altered in the late 19th century by J.L.Pearson. The three small chapels on the eastern side of this transept contain some fascinating monuments including that by Roubiliac to Lady Elizabeth Nightingale (pictured) which shows a skeletal figure of Death emerging from a cavern to aim his dart at the dying lady.

**CHOIR**

The choir was originally the part of the Abbey in which the monks worshipped, but there is now no trace of pre-Reformation fittings, for in the late eighteenth century Henry Keene, the then Surveyor, removed the thirteenth-century stalls and designed a smaller Choir. This was in turn destroyed in the mid-nineteenth century by Edward Blore, who created the present Choir in Victorian Gothic style and removed the partitions which until then had blocked off the transepts.

It is here that the choir, of twenty-two boys and twelve Lay Vicars (the name given to the men of the choir), sings the daily Services.

The Organ, with cases designed by J.L.Pearson and placed above the Choir screen, was originally built by Christopher Shrider in 1727. Successive rebuildings in the nineteenth century and in 1909 and 1937 and extensive work in 1983 and 1987 have resulted in the present instrument. Orlando Gibbons and Henry Purcell are two of the great musicians who have been Organists at Westminster Abbey.
When Henry III died in 1272 the building of the Gothic Abbey was not complete and part of the Norman nave remained attached to the new work. The present nave was nearly 150 years in building. It was begun in 1376 by Abbot Nicholas Litlyngton, who financed the work with money left by his predecessor Cardinal Simon Langham. The master mason was the great Henry Yevele, who followed closely the earlier Gothic style of architecture. Flying buttresses on the exterior took the thrust of the walls and enabled the roof to be raised to a height of 101 feet (31 metres). Richard II and Henry V later provided finance to continue the building but it was not finished until 1517, when the west window was glazed.

The choir screen has a monument to Sir Isaac Newton, in an area often referred to as Scientists Corner. Among the famous people buried in the nave are Charles Darwin, David Livingstone, Sir Charles Barry, Thomas Telford and Clement Attlee.

The present stained glass in the west window dates from 1735. The design is probably by Sir James Thornhill and the work was carried out by the glass-painter William Price. The design shows Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and fourteen prophets. At the base are the coats of arms of King Sebert, Elizabeth I, George II, Dean Wilcocks (the Dean at the time) and the City of Westminster.

Just below this window you find the grave of the Unknown Warrior which commemorates the many thousands killed in the 1914-18 war who have no grave. The Waterford crystal chandeliers were the gift of the Guinness family for the Abbey’s 900th anniversary in 1965.
The Cloister were, in pre-Reformation days, one of the busiest parts of the monastic precincts and, with windows filled with glass, rushes strewn on the floor and braziers burning, would have been cosier than they seem today. They were used by the monks for meditation and exercise, besides providing access to the main monastic buildings.

In the West Cloister, the novices were instructed by the Novice Master. Also located here was the washing place. The north walk was for private study, equipped with bookcases and tables and seats below the windows. The south walk was the way to the Refectory where meals were taken, while the east walk led to the Chapter House.

It was in the East Cloister, in monastic times, that the Abbot held his Maundy on the Thursday of Holy Week each year. Thirteen aged men were seated on a stone bench and the Abbot washed their feet, wiped them with a towel and then kissed them. He then gave each man three pence, seven red herrings, some ale and three loaves of bread. Simultaneously, in the South Walk, the monks washed the feet of children, where their Maundy seat, 'a faire, long bench of stone', still exists.
Each of the four Cloisters is approximately 100 feet in length, dating mainly from the 13th to the 15th centuries. The Cloisters were rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1298.

The Chapter House is in the East Cloister and was the place where the day-to-day business of the monastery was discussed and tasks allocated. The Chapter House was also the place where Parliament met in the 14th century before transferring across the road to the Palace of Westminster.

➤ CHAPTER HOUSE

In the East Cloister is the ‘incomparable’ octagonal Chapter House, dating from the 1250s. It is one of the largest in England. The monks met here every day for prayers and to read a chapter from the rule of St Benedict and discuss the day’s work. The King’s Great Council first assembled here in 1257. This was effectively the beginning of the English Parliament. The House of Commons regularly used the room in the 14th century, before they transferred to the Palace of Westminster. After having been a repository for government records from the 1540s it was restored in Victorian times by Sir Gilbert Scott.

The room is lavishly adorned with sculpture, and wall paintings of the Apocalypse, with the Last Judgement painted on the east wall. It contains one of the finest medieval tile pavements in England. The windows incorporate Victorian stained glass and new post-war designs. An inscription underneath them recalls the work of the original masons “In the handiwork of their craft is their prayer”.

➤ MUSEUM

The Museum is housed in the magnificent vaulted undercroft beneath the former monks' dormitory. This is one of the oldest areas of the Abbey, dating back almost to the foundation of the Norman church by King Edward the Confessor in 1065.
The centrepiece of the exhibition is the Abbey's collection of royal and other funeral effigies. This collection includes the effigies of Edward III, Henry VII and his queen, Elizabeth I, Charles II, William III, Mary II and Queen Anne. Later wax effigies include a striking likeness of Horatio, Viscount Nelson (pictured here) wearing some of his own clothes and another of the famous Prime Minister William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, modelled by an American lady called Patience Wright. During recent conservation of Elizabeth I's effigy a unique corset dating from 1603 was found on the figure and is now displayed separately.

Other items on display include the funeral saddle, helm and shield of Henry V, some panels of medieval glass, 12th century sculpture fragments, Mary II's coronation chair and replicas of the Coronation regalia.

A recent addition to the display is the late 13th century Westminster Retable, England's oldest altarpiece. It was most probably designed for the High Altar of the Abbey, although it has been damaged in past centuries. The panel has been expertly cleaned and conserved. One section shows the figure of St Peter, the patron saint of the Abbey (pictured).

The Museum is open daily from 10.30 to 16.00 but may be closed for State and other special events. An illustrated catalogue of the Funeral Effigies and some postcards and books are available at the Museum.

➢ **LITTLE CLOISTER**

The present Little Cloister and the surrounding houses, inhabited by the clergy and staff of the Abbey, stand on the site of the monastic infirmary. The central fountain dates from 1871. On the east side are the ruins of the 12th century chapel of St Catherine where many important meetings were held in the Middle Ages and where the sick monks attended services. This area leads to the College (or Infirmary) Garden and can be viewed Tuesdays-Thursdays.