Buckingham Palace

**Buckingham Palace** ([UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_English): [/ˈbʌkɪŋəm/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA/English))[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-1) is a [London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London) royal [residence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Official_residence) and the administrative headquarters of the [monarch of the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarch_of_the_United_Kingdom).[[a]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-2)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-royal.uk-3) Located in the [City of Westminster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_of_Westminster), the palace is often at the centre of state occasions and royal hospitality. It has been a focal point for the [British people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_people) at times of national rejoicing and mourning.

Originally known as **Buckingham House**, the building at the core of today's palace was a large [townhouse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Townhouse_%28Great_Britain%29) built for the [Duke of Buckingham](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sheffield%2C_1st_Duke_of_Buckingham_and_Normanby) in 1703 on a site that had been in private ownership for at least 150 years. It was acquired by [King George III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_III) in 1761 as a private residence for [Queen Charlotte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_of_Mecklenburg-Strelitz) and became known as The Queen's House. During the 19th century it was enlarged, principally by architects [John Nash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nash_%28architect%29) and [Edward Blore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Blore), who constructed three wings around a central courtyard. Buckingham Palace became the London residence of the British monarch on the accession of [Queen Victoria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Victoria) in 1837.

The last major structural additions were made in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the East Front, which contains the well-known balcony on which the [British royal family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_royal_family) traditionally congregates to greet crowds. A German bomb destroyed the palace chapel during the [Second World War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_World_War); the [Queen's Gallery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_Gallery) was built on the site and opened to the public in 1962 to exhibit works of art from the [Royal Collection](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Collection).

The original early-19th-century interior designs, many of which survive, include widespread use of brightly coloured [scagliola](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scagliola%22%20%5Co%20%22Scagliola) and blue and pink [lapis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lapis_lazuli), on the advice of [Sir Charles Long](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Long%2C_1st_Baron_Farnborough). [King Edward VII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII) oversaw a partial redecoration in a [Belle Époque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_%C3%89poque) cream and gold colour scheme. Many smaller reception rooms are furnished in the Chinese [regency](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinoiserie) style with furniture and fittings brought from the [Royal Pavilion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Pavilion) at [Brighton](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brighton) and from [Carlton House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_House). The palace has 775 rooms, and [the garden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_at_Buckingham_Palace) is the largest private garden in London. The state rooms, used for official and state entertaining, are open to the public each year for most of August and September and on some days in winter and spring.

History[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: History)]

**Pre-1624**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=2)]

In the [Middle Ages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Ages), the site of the future palace formed part of the Manor of Ebury (also called [Eia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eia%22%20%5Co%20%22Eia)). The marshy ground was watered by the river [Tyburn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyburn_%28stream%29%22%20%5Co%20%22Tyburn%20%28stream%29), which still flows below the courtyard and south wing of the palace.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-4) Where the river was fordable (at Cow Ford), the village of Eye Cross grew. Ownership of the site changed hands many times; owners included [Edward the Confessor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_the_Confessor) and his [queen consort](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_consort) [Edith of Wessex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edith_of_Wessex) in late Saxon times, and, after the [Norman Conquest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_conquest_of_England), [William the Conqueror](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_the_Conqueror). William gave the site to [Geoffrey de Mandeville](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geoffrey_de_Mandeville_%2811th_century%29), who bequeathed it to the monks of [Westminster Abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westminster_Abbey).[[b]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-5)

In 1531, [Henry VIII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_VIII) acquired the Hospital of St James, which became [St James's Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_James%27s_Palace),[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-6) from [Eton College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eton_College), and in 1536 he took the Manor of Ebury from Westminster Abbey.[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-7) These transfers brought the site of Buckingham Palace back into royal hands for the first time since William the Conqueror had given it away almost 500 years earlier.[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-8) Various owners leased it from royal landlords, and the [freehold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freehold_%28law%29) was the subject of frenzied speculation during the 17th century. By then, the old village of Eye Cross had long since fallen into decay, and the area was mostly wasteland.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-9) Needing money, [James I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_I) sold off part of the Crown freehold but retained part of the site on which he established a four-acre (1.6 ha) mulberry garden for the production of silk. (This is at the north-west corner of today's palace.)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-10) [Clement Walker](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clement_Walker) in *Anarchia Anglicana* (1649) refers to "new-erected sodoms and spintries at the Mulberry Garden at S. James's"; this suggests it may have been a place of debauchery. Eventually, in the late 17th century, the freehold was inherited from the property tycoon Sir [Hugh Audley](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Audley) by the great heiress Mary Davies.[[c]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-11)

**First houses on the site (1624–1761)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: First houses on the site (1624–1761))]



Buckingham House, c. 1710

Possibly the first house erected within the site was that of a Sir William Blake, around 1624.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-12) The next owner was [Lord Goring](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Goring%2C_1st_Earl_of_Norwich), who from 1633 extended Blake's house, which came to be known as Goring House, and developed much of today's garden, then known as Goring Great Garden.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-13)[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Harris,_p.21-14) He did not, however, obtain the freehold interest in the mulberry garden. Unbeknown to Goring, in 1640 the document "failed to pass the [Great Seal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Seal_of_the_Realm) before [Charles I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_I_of_England) fled London, which it needed to do for legal execution".[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-15) It was this critical omission that would help the British royal family regain the freehold under [George III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_III).[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-16) When the improvident Goring defaulted on his rents,[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-17) [Henry Bennet, 1st Earl of Arlington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Bennet%2C_1st_Earl_of_Arlington) was able to purchase the lease of Goring House and he was occupying it when it burned down in 1674,[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Harris,_p.21-14) following which he constructed Arlington House on the site—the location of the southern wing of today's palace—the next year.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Harris,_p.21-14) In 1698, [John Sheffield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sheffield%2C_1st_Duke_of_Buckingham_and_Normanby) acquired the lease. He later became the first [Duke of Buckingham and Normanby](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_of_Buckingham_and_Normanby).[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-who_built-18) **Buckingham House** was built for Sheffield in 1703 to the design of [William Winde](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Winde). The style chosen was of a large, three-floored central block with two smaller flanking service wings.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-harris22-19) It was eventually sold by Buckingham's illegitimate son, [Sir Charles Sheffield](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Charles_Herbert_Sheffield%2C_1st_Baronet), in 1761[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-rob14-20) to George III for £21,000.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-21)[[d]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-22) Sheffield's [leasehold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leasehold) on the mulberry garden site, the freehold of which was still owned by the royal family, was due to expire in 1774.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-23)

**From Queen's House to palace (1761–1837)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: From Queen's House to palace (1761–1837))]

Under the new royal ownership, the building was originally intended as a private retreat for George III's wife, [Queen Charlotte](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Charlotte), and was accordingly known as **The Queen's House**. Remodelling of the structure began in 1762.[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-24) In 1775, an Act of Parliament settled the property on Queen Charlotte, in exchange for her rights to nearby [Somerset House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somerset_House),[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Old_and_New-25)[[e]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-26) and 14 of her 15 children were born there. Some furnishings were transferred from [Carlton House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carlton_House) and others had been bought in France after the [French Revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Revolution)[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-27) of 1789. While [St James's Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_James%27s_Palace) remained the official and ceremonial royal residence,[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-Old_and_New-25) the name "Buckingham-palace" was used from at least 1791.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-28) After his accession to the throne in 1820, [George IV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_IV) continued the renovation intending to create a small, comfortable home. However, in 1826, while the work was in progress, the King decided to modify the house into a palace with the help of his architect [John Nash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Nash_%28architect%29).[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-29) The external façade was designed, keeping in mind the [French neoclassical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neoclassicism_in_France#Architecture) influence preferred by George IV. The cost of the renovations grew dramatically, and by 1829 the extravagance of Nash's designs resulted in his removal as the architect. On the death of George IV in 1830, his younger brother [William IV](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_IV) hired [Edward Blore](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Blore) to finish the work.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-30)[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-31) William never moved into the palace. After the [Palace of Westminster](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palace_of_Westminster) was destroyed by fire in 1834, he offered to convert Buckingham Palace into a new Houses of Parliament, but his offer was declined.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-32)

**Queen Victoria (1837–1901)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: Queen Victoria (1837–1901))]



The palace c. 1837, depicting [Marble Arch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marble_Arch), a ceremonial entrance. It was moved to make way for the east wing in 1847.

Buckingham Palace became the principal royal residence in 1837, on the accession of Queen Victoria,[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-33) who was the first monarch to reside there; her predecessor William IV had died before its completion.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-34) While the [state rooms](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_room) were a riot of [gilt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gilding) and colour, the necessities of the new palace were somewhat less luxurious. It was reported the chimneys smoked so much that the fires had to be allowed to die down, and consequently the palace was often cold.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-ws249-35) Ventilation was so bad that the interior smelled, and when it was decided to install gas lamps, there was a serious worry about the build-up of gas on the lower floors. It was also said that staff were lax and lazy and the palace was dirty.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-ws249-35) Following the Queen's marriage in 1840, her husband, [Prince Albert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albert%2C_Prince_Consort), concerned himself with a reorganisation of the [household](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Household) offices and staff, and with addressing the design faults of the palace.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Rappaport-36) By the end of 1840, all the problems had been rectified. However, the builders were to return within the decade.[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Rappaport-36)

By 1847, the couple had found the palace too small for court life and their growing family[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-37) and a new wing, designed by Edward Blore, was built by [Thomas Cubitt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Cubitt),[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-38) enclosing the central quadrangle. The large East Front, facing [The Mall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mall%2C_London), is today the "public face" of Buckingham Palace, and contains the balcony from which the [royal family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_royal_family) acknowledge the crowds on momentous occasions and after the annual [Trooping the Colour](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trooping_the_Colour).[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-39) The ballroom wing and a further suite of state rooms were also built in this period, designed by Nash's student Sir [James Pennethorne](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Pennethorne).[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Twilight-40) Before Prince Albert's death, the palace was frequently the scene of musical entertainments,[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-41) and the most celebrated contemporary musicians entertained at Buckingham Palace. The composer [Felix Mendelssohn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felix_Mendelssohn) is known to have played there on three occasions.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-42) [Johann Strauss II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johann_Strauss_II) and his orchestra played there when in England.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-43) Under Victoria, Buckingham Palace was frequently the scene of lavish costume balls, in addition to the usual royal ceremonies, investitures and presentations.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-44)

Widowed in 1861, the grief-stricken Queen withdrew from public life and left Buckingham Palace to live at [Windsor Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Windsor_Castle), [Balmoral Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balmoral_Castle) and [Osborne House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osborne_House). For many years the palace was seldom used, even neglected. In 1864, a note was found pinned to the fence of Buckingham Palace, saying: "These commanding premises to be let or sold, in consequence of the late occupant's declining business."[[40]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Gardiner2006-45) Eventually, public opinion persuaded the Queen to return to London, though even then she preferred to live elsewhere whenever possible. Court functions were still held at Windsor Castle, presided over by the sombre Queen habitually dressed in mourning black, while Buckingham Palace remained shuttered for most of the year.[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-rob9-46)

**Early 20th century (1901–1945)**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: Early 20th century (1901–1945))]





The east wing public façade, enclosing the courtyard, was built between 1847 and 1850; it was remodelled to its present form in 1913.

In 1901, the new king, [Edward VII](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII), began redecorating the palace. The King and his wife, [Queen Alexandra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Alexandra), had always been at the forefront of London high society, and their friends, known as "the [Marlborough House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marlborough_House) Set", were considered to be the most eminent and fashionable of the age. Buckingham Palace—the Ballroom, Grand Entrance, Marble Hall, Grand Staircase, vestibules and galleries were redecorated in the [Belle Époque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belle_%C3%89poque) cream and gold colour scheme they retain today—once again became a setting for entertaining on a majestic scale but leaving some to feel Edward's heavy redecorations were at odds with Nash's original work.[[42]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-47)

The last major building work took place during the reign of [George V](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V) when, in 1913, Sir [Aston Webb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aston_Webb) redesigned Blore's 1850 East Front to resemble in part [Giacomo Leoni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giacomo_Leoni)'s [Lyme Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyme_Park) in Cheshire. This new, refaced principal façade (of [Portland stone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portland_stone)) was designed to be the backdrop to the [Victoria Memorial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Memorial%2C_London), a large memorial statue of Queen Victoria created by sculptor Sir [Thomas Brock](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Brock), erected outside the main gates on a surround constructed by architect Sir Aston Webb.[[43]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-48) George V, who had succeeded Edward VII in 1910, had a more serious personality than his father; greater emphasis was now placed on official entertaining and royal duties than on lavish parties.[[44]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-49) He arranged a series of [command performances](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Command_Performance) featuring jazz musicians such as the [Original Dixieland Jazz Band](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_Dixieland_Jazz_Band) (1919; the first jazz performance for a head of state), [Sidney Bechet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Bechet) and [Louis Armstrong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Armstrong) (1932), which earned the palace a nomination in 2009 for a [(Kind of) Blue Plaque](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brecon_Jazz_Festival#(Kind_of)_Blue_Plaque) by the [Brecon Jazz Festival](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brecon_Jazz_Festival%22%20%5Co%20%22Brecon%20Jazz%20Festival) as one of the venues making the greatest contribution to jazz music in the United Kingdom.[[45]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-50)[[46]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-51)

During the [First World War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_World_War), which lasted from 1914 until 1918, the palace escaped unscathed. Its more valuable contents were evacuated to Windsor, but the royal family remained in residence. The King imposed [rationing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationing_in_the_United_Kingdom) at the palace, much to the dismay of his guests and household.[[47]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-52) To the King's later regret, [David Lloyd George](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Lloyd_George) persuaded him to go further and ostentatiously lock the wine cellars and refrain from alcohol, to set a good example to the supposedly inebriated working class. The workers continued to imbibe, and the King was left unhappy at his enforced abstinence.[[48]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-53)

George V's wife, [Queen Mary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_of_Teck), was a connoisseur of the arts, and took a keen interest in the Royal Collection of furniture and art, both restoring and adding to it. Queen Mary also had many new fixtures and fittings installed, such as the pair of marble [Empire-style](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empire_style) chimneypieces by [Benjamin Vulliamy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Vulliamy), dating from 1810, which the Queen had installed in the ground floor Bow Room, the huge low room at the centre of the garden façade. Queen Mary was also responsible for the decoration of the Blue Drawing Room.[[49]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-54) This room, 69 feet (21 metres) long, previously known as the South Drawing Room, has a ceiling designed by Nash, coffered with huge gilt console brackets.[[50]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-55) In 1938, the north-west pavilion, designed by Nash as a conservatory, was converted into a swimming pool.[[51]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-56)

**Second World War**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=7" \o "Edit section: Second World War)]

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| **External video** |
| video icon [Buckingham Palace Bombed (1940)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxbV8EcaSkk) – Newsreel of damage to the palace and chapel (1:08) |

During the [Second World War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_World_War), which broke out in 1939, the palace was bombed nine times.[[52]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-57) The most serious and publicised incident destroyed the palace chapel in 1940. This event was shown in cinemas throughout the United Kingdom to show the common suffering of rich and poor. One bomb fell in the palace quadrangle while [George VI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_VI) and [Queen Elizabeth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Elizabeth_The_Queen_Mother) (the future Queen Mother) were in the palace, and many windows were blown in and the chapel destroyed.[[53]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-58) War-time coverage of such incidents was severely restricted, however. The King and Queen were filmed inspecting their bombed home; it was at this time the Queen famously declared: "I'm glad we have been bombed. Now I can look the [East End](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_End) in the face".[[54]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-Luftwaffe-59) The royal family were seen as sharing their subjects' hardship, as [*The Sunday Graphic*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Sunday_Graphic) reported:

By the Editor: The King and Queen have endured the ordeal which has come to their subjects. For the second time a German bomber has tried to bring death and destruction to the home of Their Majesties ... When this war is over the common danger which King George and Queen Elizabeth have shared with their people will be a cherished memory and an inspiration through the years.[[55]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-60)

On 15 September 1940, known as [Battle of Britain Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain_Day), an RAF pilot, [Ray Holmes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ray_Holmes) of [No. 504 Squadron RAF](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No._504_Squadron_RAF) rammed a German [Dornier Do 17](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dornier_Do_17) bomber he believed was going to bomb the Palace. Holmes had run out of ammunition and made the quick decision to ram it. Holmes bailed out and the aircraft crashed into the forecourt of [London Victoria station](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Victoria_station).[[56]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-61) The bomber's engine was later exhibited at the [Imperial War Museum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_War_Museum) in London. The British pilot became a [King's Messenger](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_Messenger) after the war and died at the age of 90 in 2005.[[57]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-62) On [VE Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/VE_Day%22%20%5Co%20%22VE%20Day)—8 May 1945—the palace was the centre of British celebrations. The King, the Queen, [Princess Elizabeth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II) (the future Queen) and [Princess Margaret](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Margaret%2C_Countess_of_Snowdon) appeared on the balcony, with the palace's blacked-out windows behind them, to cheers from a vast crowd in The Mall.[[58]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-63) The damaged Palace was carefully restored after the war by John [Mowlem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mowlem) & Co.[[59]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-64)

**Mid 20th century to present day**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Buckingham_Palace&action=edit&section=8" \o "Edit section: Mid 20th century to present day)]



The [Victoria Memorial](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Memorial%2C_London)

Many of the palace's contents are part of the Royal Collection, held in trust by [Elizabeth II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II); they can, on occasion, be viewed by the public at the [Queen's Gallery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_Gallery), near the Royal Mews. The purpose-built gallery opened in 1962 and displays a changing selection of items from the collection.[[60]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-65) It occupies the site of the chapel that was destroyed in the Second World War.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-who_built-18) The palace was designated a Grade I [listed building](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listed_building) in 1970.[[61]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-NHLE-66) Its state rooms have been open to the public during August and September and on some dates throughout the year since 1993. The money raised in entry fees was originally put towards the rebuilding of Windsor Castle after the [1992 fire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1992_Windsor_Castle_fire) devastated many of its state rooms.[[62]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-67) In the year to 31 March 2017, 580,000 people visited the palace, and 154,000 visited the gallery.[[63]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-68)

The palace used to [racially segregate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_segregation_in_the_United_Kingdom) staff. In 1968, [Charles Tryon, 2nd Baron Tryon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Tryon%2C_2nd_Baron_Tryon), acting as Treasurer to the Queen, sought to exempt Buckingham Palace from full application of the [Race Relations Act 1968](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_Relations_Act_1968).[[64]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-:1-69)[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-:2-70) He stated that the palace did not hire people of colour for clerical jobs, only as domestic servants. He arranged with Civil servants for an exemption that meant that complaints of racism against the royal household would be sent directly to the [Home Secretary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Home_Secretary) and kept out of the legal system.[[65]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-:2-70)

The palace, like Windsor Castle, is owned by the reigning monarch in right of [the Crown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crown). Occupied royal palaces are not part of the [Crown Estate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_Estate),[[66]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-71) nor are they the monarch's personal property, unlike [Sandringham House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sandringham_House) and [Balmoral Castle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balmoral_Castle).[[67]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-72) The [Government of the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_the_United_Kingdom) is responsible for maintaining the palace in exchange for the profits made by the Crown Estate.[[68]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-73) In 2015, the State Dining Room was closed for a year and a half because its ceiling had become potentially dangerous.[[69]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-74) A 10-year schedule of maintenance work, including new plumbing, wiring, boilers and radiators, and the installation of solar panels on the roof, has been estimated to cost £369 million and was approved by the prime minister in November 2016. It will be funded by a temporary increase in the [Sovereign Grant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sovereign_Grant) paid from the income of the Crown Estate and is intended to extend the building's working life by at least 50 years.[[70]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-75)[[71]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-76) In 2017, the [House of Commons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_of_Commons_of_the_United_Kingdom) backed funding for the project by 464 votes to 56.[[72]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-77)

Buckingham Palace is a symbol and home of the British monarchy, an art gallery and a tourist attraction. Behind the gilded railings and gates that were completed by the [Bromsgrove Guild](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bromsgrove_Guild) in 1911[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-rob9-46) and Webb's famous façade, which was described in a book published by the [Royal Collection Trust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Collection_Trust) as looking "like everybody's idea of a palace",[[41]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-rob9-46) has not only been a weekday home of Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, but is also the London residence of the [Duke of York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Andrew%2C_Duke_of_York) and the [Earl](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince_Edward%2C_Earl_of_Wessex) and [Countess of Wessex](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sophie%2C_Countess_of_Wessex). The palace also houses [their offices](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Households_of_the_United_Kingdom), as well as those of the [Princess Royal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne%2C_Princess_Royal) and [Princess Alexandra](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Alexandra%2C_The_Honourable_Lady_Ogilvy), and is the workplace of more than 800 people.[[73]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-fact-78)[[74]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-79) Every year, some 50,000 invited guests are entertained at garden parties, receptions, audiences and banquets. [Three garden parties](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_at_Buckingham_Palace#Garden_parties) are held in the summer, usually in July.[[75]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-80) The forecourt of Buckingham Palace is used for the [Changing of the Guard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen%27s_Guard), a major ceremony and tourist attraction (daily from April to July; every other day in other months).[[76]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckingham_Palace#cite_note-81)

In March 2022, it was reported that Elizabeth II will no longer reside at Buckingham Palace, and instead will live and conduct business at Windsor Castle.

**FACTS:**

1. Buckingham Palace sits in the very heart of London, surrounded by the lavish St. James and Green Parks.
2. Built as **Buckingham House** in 1703, the palace was originally constructed by English Gentleman and architect William Winde as a large townhouse for Duke Buckingham.
3. In 1761, King George III bought the property as a private residence for Queen Charlotte, earning it the title The Queen’s House. It is under King **George IV** that the residence was transformed into the palace we know today.
4. In the 19th century, the residence underwent renovations, adding three additional wings that surround a central courtyard.
5. In 1837, the palace became the London Residence of one of Britain’s most famous and longest reigning monarchs, **Queen Victoria**.
6. In 1982, Michael Fagan broke into the Royal Residence, entering Queen Elizabeth II’s very own bedroom.
7. Buckingham Palace features 775 rooms. These include 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices, 78 bathrooms, 52 royal and guest bedrooms, and 19 state rooms.
8. In total, the Buckingham palace grounds span over 39 acres.
9. Despite the palace serving as an important space for the royal family, the Queen does not in fact privately own the residence. It is instead held in trust by the Crown Estates.
10. Despite the Netflix series “**The Crown**” setting many scenes in the building, the actual palace was never used by the cast.  However, several scenes were filmed in iconic British buildings such as Lancaster House, Ely Cathedral, and Eltham Palace to name a few!
11. When the Queen is not in residence, typically around late July to late September, the beautiful [State Rooms](https://www.rct.uk/visit/the-state-rooms-buckingham-palace) at Buckingham palace are open to the public, attracting tourists from all over the world!
12. With dimensions of 36.6 m long, 18m wide, and 13.5 m high, the ballroom earns the award for the largest room in the iconic palace.
13. The ceremony of the **Changing of the Guard**, also known as Guard Mounting, occurs just outside of Buckingham Palace at 10:45 and typically lasts around 45 minutes. The actual handover between guards occurs at 11 a.m.



Aerial view of Buckingham Palace during [Queen Elizabeth II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_II)'s official 90th birthday celebrations in 2016. The principal façade, the East Front, was originally completed in 1850, and was remodelled in 1913 by [Aston Webb](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aston_Webb).