

## The History of Buckingham Palace

**A** The site on which Buckingham Palace now stands was originally a mulberry garden planted by King James I (r. 1603-25) to rear silkworms. However, he chose the wrong kind of mulberry bush and silk production never took off in Britain. A house was built on the site by the time Charles I granted the garden to Lord Aston in 1628, which eventually came into the hands of Tory politician John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. Finding the house, not to his liking, the Duke rebuilt the house and created Buckingham House in its place; the main part of the house cost the princely sum of £7,000 to build. Around this time, the site was considered as a potential location for the British Museum, but was turned down on account of the cost of the site (£30,000) and the 'inconvenient situation'.

**B** In 1761, Buckingham House was acquired by George III, to be used as a family home for both himself and his new wife Charlotte. The ceremonial center of the court remained at St James's Palace, so the house was a convenient place to live. It was known as the Queen's House, and 14 of George and Charlotte's 15 children were born there. It was in the library of the Queen's House that Dr. Samuel Johnson had his celebrated meeting with George III. In 1762, George IV and his architect John Nash began converting the palace into a full-scale residential and ceremonial palace, using the proceeds of the land acquired from the demolition of Carlton House. A suite of rooms was added to the main block of the garden side of the house, and the side wings were demolished and replaced with grander structures to form a u-shape. The fourth side of the courtyard was enclosed by railings, with the newly-created Marble Arch monument in the center.

**C** Nash retained the core of the house to try and save money, which dictated the plan, ground floor ceiling height, and proportions of many of the rooms, but he was extravagant with the public money that had been allocated to the project: the final bill was £700,000, when the original estimate had been around £250,000. George IV never lived to see his palace completed and, when William IV came to the throne, he hired Edward Blore in Nash's place. Blore continued the improvements, but the new King showed no interest in leaving his home at Clarence House. He even offered it as a replacement for the Houses of Parliament when they were destroyed by a fire in 1834.

**D** Queen Victoria was the first sovereign to call Buckingham Palace her official residence – she moved in three weeks after her accession in 1837. However, the Queen's new palace was far from perfect; few of the toilets were ventilated, the bells would not ring, and many of the thousand windows would not open. The palace's shortcomings as a family home were further realized when Victoria married Prince Albert in 1840. There was no nursery and not enough room for visitors, so Edward Blore was commissioned to move the Marble Arch and build an east wing around the courtyard, with bedrooms on the ground floor and nurseries on the second. The work was financed in part from the sale of Brighton Pavillion and was finished in 1847. It was during this period that Prince Albert suggested that a central balcony should be added at the front of the palace, and the work was duly completed as part of the refurbishment.

**E** Between 1853 and 1855, new galleries, a dining room, and a ballroom were added to the southwest corner by Nash's pupil, James Pennethorne. The work was obviously to the Queen's liking – in 1843 she wrote of her happiness at the palace. In 1851, Victoria was the first monarch to make a recorded appearance on the balcony at the front of the palace, during the celebrations for the opening of the Great Exhibition. A few years later she watched her troops depart for the Crimean War from the same place. However, the Victorians' time at Buckingham Palace was short-lived: Victoria retired to Windsor Castle after Albert's death in 1861, to live out her final 40 years as a widow.

**F** Edward VII, who was born and died at Buckingham Palace, redecorated the interior and removed many of the unwanted items that his mother had accumulated here during her reign. Many of Edward's improvements can still be seen in the staterooms today. He was fond of the Palace, and it proved to be the scene for many of the greatest moments of his life: as well as being born and dying there, he was also operated on, in a room overlooking the garden, in 1902. The room was turned into a makeshift operating theatre for the new King who was suffering from peritonitis and close to death. Luckily, the surgery was successful, and Edward was crowned in the August of that year.

**G** By the time George V came to the throne, pollution had ravaged Buckingham Palace's French stone façade, so the exterior was refaced in Portland stone to give it the profile we know today. The present forecourt, where the changing of the guard takes place, was created as part of a scheme to commemorate Queen Victoria in 1911. Also built in 1911 were the gates and railings, the final additions to the Palace before the breakout of WWII. Like many buildings in

London, Buckingham Palace did not survive the war intact; it received nine direct bomb hits, including during the time that both King George VI and Queen Elizabeth were staying there, and the Palace Chapel was destroyed in 1940. It certainly brought it to public attention that nowhere was safe: Queen Elizabeth was reported to have said at the time: 'I'm glad we've been bombed. It makes me feel I can look the East End in the face.' It was King George VI who introduced the custom of the RAF flypast at the end of Trooping the Colour when the Royal Family appear on the balcony.

### Questions 1 – 8

Read the passage and select the correct name for each paragraph **1-10** from the list of names provided below:

1) Got the palaces frontal view refurbishes with Portland stone

Select your answer

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2) Lived in the Palace with his wife and had many kids.

Select your answer

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3) Planted the wrong type of garden for silk farming.

Select your answer

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4) Added rooms to the main block and demolished the wide wings.

Select your answer

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5) Lived, died, got crowned and even got a major operation done at the Palace

Select your answer

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6) Made final editions to the Palace like the railing, the front doors, etc.

Select your answer

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7) Built an east wing around the courtyard to accommodate guest rooms and nurseries.

Select your answer

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8) Had plans to convert the Palace into a museum.

Select your answer

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### Questions 9 to 13

*Read the passage and select the correct paragraph A-G for each sentence from the list provided below:*

9) The library of the queen house was used to hold a distinguished meeting between George III and Samuel Johnson.

Select your answer

10) In the early decade of the 1850s a ballroom was added to the southwest corner of the Palace.

Select your answer

11) The palace was bombed and part of it was destroyed during WWII.

Select your answer

12) Queen Victoria did not continue to stay at the Palace after her husband's death.

Select your answer

13) The amount spent by John Nash to renovate the Palace was double the original estimate.

Select your answer