



# WINDSOR

1 h from Waterloo

## **Windsor time line**

The area around Windsor was not significant for the Romans, but by Saxon times, a Royal Manor with a watermill had been established at Kingsbury, (now Old Windsor) where Edward the Confessor held court in one of the oldest and largest settlements in Berkshire at the time. His wife Edith held Eton, across the river. After the Norman Conquest, William built a ring of fortresses within one day's march of London, including at Berkhamsted, Hertford and Guildford. He sited one just upriver from Old Windsor, on a 110 ft chalk promontory overlooking a bend in the river.

In 1110 Henry I transferred the earlier court from Kingsbury/Old Windsor to the castle, and settlement migrated there to a new planned layout, complete with market square.

### **The Castle**

Windsor Castle is the oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world and has been the family home of British kings and queens for almost 1,000 years.

Initially the fortifications would have been merely ditches and wooden palisades around Clewer Hill as the original site of the castle was known.

The original wooden structures were replaced by stone between 1173 and 1179, with the addition of characteristic rectangular towers. Windsor Castle was besieged twice in the reign of King John (1193 and 1216) leaving it in a sorry state.

In 1230, Henry III built a 'curtain wall' and three drum towers to the west beyond the line of the original Norman fortifications. He also built royal apartments in the Upper and Lower Wards.

Edward III transformed Windsor from a military fortification to a gothic palace, unifying the state apartments for official and ceremonial business, and the King and Queen's own private apartments, in a single residence. The gothic style of building with pointed arches has remained the predominant architectural style ever since. The work continued into the reign of his successor Richard II.

The present St George's Chapel was started in

1475 by Edward IV, the final stone vaulted ceiling was completed by his son-in-law, Henry VII by 1528, but the chapel was not finally completed until the reign of Henry VIII, in 1528.

The gothic transformation of the castle continued with George IV in 1820 in order to give an imposing castle-like appearance. This entailed the heightening of Henry II's Round Tower, the re-clothing of the exterior in massive masonry and the addition of towers and battlements.

Windsor has maintained its position as the prime royal residence for most of its life. (Except during the first two Georges, for example.)

The military tournaments at Windsor gave rise to The Most Noble Order of the Garter in 1348, during the reign of Edward III.

### **The Town**

As the castle grew, so did the town. Edward I made Windsor a Free Borough and granted the town its first Charter in 1276. Windsor was originally the county town of Berkshire later transferred to Abingdon, then Reading.

Development around the Castle remained restricted by the surrounding Crown land that comprises the Home Park and Windsor Great Park. The wealthy lived on Peascod Street. Visitors used the town's inns, first recorded in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, and more than 30 existed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when they catered for pilgrims visiting the tomb of Henry VI in St George's Chapel, a king popularly considered a saint. His shrine was widely venerated until Henry VIII's break with Rome in 1536.

In the late 1840s a major reorganisation of the lands around the castle to the east opened up the Home Park, while south of the new Datchet Road and Victoria Bridge, public access was no longer permitted.

The town began to change faster in Victorian times when a significant number of terraced houses and semi-detached villas were built together with some more substantial homes for the 'well to do'.

This significant growth was accelerated by the arrival of the railways in 1849, providing convenient access to London. Two railways

arrived within months of each other. Brunel's line from Slough being on raised arches across the river, rising up to the town centre, while the Southern Railway approached from the east, through Crown land.

The two railway companies vied for royal patronage, providing a royal Waiting Room at their respective stations, still in existence.

### **Eton**

Eton grew up along the road from Windsor to London. A bridge to Eton has existed since 1268 or before, but being wooden, fell often into disrepair. The present bridge, a cast iron and stone structure, was completed in 1824. It became pedestrianised when cracks were discovered in 1970.

Its history remained unremarkable until Eton College was founded in 1440 by Henry VI. He made provision for 70 poor boys, known as King's Scholars, to be housed and educated at Eton free of charge. Alongside them, other boys could also benefit from the free education, but they would have to pay for their accommodation and were known as Oppidans. The College would be run by a Provost and ten Fellows, with a school Master to oversee the education, and a choir for the chapel. To fund this, Henry VI gave a large amount of land, rights and other benefits, including the right to swans on the Thames. Henry VIII made further endowments from the dissolution of Westminster Abbey.

### **A 1 Thames Street**

The building claims Sir Christopher Wren lived there. Sir Christopher's father was Dean of Windsor and Register of the Order of the Garter at the time of Charles I and as a child Christopher would have lived in the Dean's House within the walls of Windsor Castle. There is no evidence other than hearsay that Christopher Wren lived at 1 Thames Street.

### **B Theatre Royal**

The first Theatre Royal in Windsor was located on the High Street and opened in 1793. Described as 'elegant and splendidly ornamented', it was attended by King George III and Queen Charlotte. The theatre was only used for six weeks each summer when nearby

Eton College was closed and by 1805 it had been sold and converted into a chapel.

However, local people raised the money to build a new one, on Thames Street, which opened in 1815. The theatre later closed until 1869 when it was renovated under the direction of the architect George Somers Leigh Clarke. In his remodelling Clarke added a Royal Box. The theatre was put up for auction in 1869 and underwent further remodelling in 1900 only to be burnt down in 1908 with only a small section of the auditorium surviving.

It was rebuilt to the design of Frank Verity, the son of the theatre architect Thomas Verity. After a spell as a cinema it reverted to a theatre. In 1965 the theatre received a major refurbishment. Many productions which first appear at the Theatre Royal subsequently transfer to the West End or go on national tour

### **C Clewer Tower**

Passing the massive castle walls built in 1240, you have to imagine away the windows which now pierce them, in order to appreciate their original appearance – with one exception. Just before the corner (Clewer) tower is a small iron barred window, mid way up the wall, the last surviving original castle window, which lights a 'sally port' tunnel beneath the High Street. This was the means of escape should the castle be sieged – it was never used, as far as we know. The Clewer tower contains the bells of St George's Chapel, held within a massive timber frame, originally planned as a spire for the chapel, but never installed. It is considered one of the largest and finest belfries in Britain

### **D Queen Victoria Statue**

The statue of Queen Victoria was presented by the town to mark her Golden Jubilee in 1887

### **E Guildhall, Leaning House**

The Guildhall, extended in the 1830s, is largely the structure built in 1691, designed by Sir Thomas Fitz. It replaced Windsor's first Guildhall built in c. 1360, which faced the castle gates. The new Guildhall was an attempt to revitalise the economy. Sir Christopher Wren's son provided the statue of Prince George (consort to Queen Anne, died 1714), which occupies a niche in the eastern elevation. The strangely leaning 18<sup>th</sup>-century Market

Cross house was previously a butcher's premises, then a beer shop, but now Jersey Pearl. It demonstrates the advantages of timber framed buildings over brick.

### **F Market Place**

Windsor proved to be a particularly successful new town, and although at first its market place was filled with temporary stalls on market day (Saturday), by the late 13th century these had been replaced by permanent shops, covering an area much as they do today. The medieval market place, however, was not the genteel place we see now. The streets were unpaved until the 18<sup>th</sup> century and it was dirty, with putrid air owing to its many noxious trades. To minimise inconvenience, these trades were confined to fixed areas: fish sellers occupied Fish Street, now Church Street, and likewise the town's slaughterhouses and butchers ('the shambles') were located near the present day Guildhall. Behind the market place was a red light district.

### **G Long Walk**

Created by King Charles II, the Long Walk was introduced in 1680 – although it was not until 1683 that the avenue was extended to its current length of three miles. The iconic Copper Horse which stands guard over the Long Walk was added in 1831 and depicts King George III on horseback to commemorate his significant contribution to Windsor Great Park

### **H Bachelors Acre**

The Acre dates back to the Middle Ages and was the place where ordinary townsfolk would meet and where markets and fairs were permitted in Windsor by its Charters. Until 1855 the Acre was the site for the famous Annual Revel that was held on the birthday of the Sovereign.

Bachelors Acre includes part of the original Acre Grave Yard, which is located alongside Madeira Walk and where some of the memorial stones are still legible today

### **I Peascod Street**

The oldest recorded street in Windsor, Peascod is an old name for a pea pod. The street is first mentioned in 1308 as Pesecroftestrete, presumably because peas were grown there. It

became the place for the wealthy.

### **J Royal Station/ Shopping**

The partially covered shopping centre, in the heart of the historic town, was converted from part of the old central railway station initially built in the 1850s but entirely remodelled in 1897, complete with arch. In 1997 additional units were built in a complementary style, and waiting rooms and left luggage stores were converted to modern shop units. Many of the original features of the Victorian station remain, including Jubilee Arch and the cobbled stones. The Grade II listed building that now houses All Bar One was built for the exclusive use of the royal family, and this is where you will still find Queen Victoria's waiting room..

### **K Alexandra Gardens**

By 1895, land had been purchased for a riverside garden, and by 1902 the gardens were sufficiently complete to permit the planting of a London Plane tree to celebrate the Coronation of Edward VII and his Queen, Alexandra.

A bandstand was also erected and the band of the Royal Horse Guards played there regularly. The current bandstand dates from 2016. The role of the armed forces is explored in the six commemorative plaques on the bandstand by illustrative artist Rebecca Elliott. Each displays one important event involving the armed forces from each of the six decades of the Queen's reign.

In June 2009 The Dyson Memorial Fountain (which had been moved from its Barry Avenue location) was extensively refurbished and now stands in the south-east corner by the Goswell Road entrance of the Park. The Memorial commemorates Thomas Dyson who founded 'Dyson and Sons', pianoforte dealers of Thames Street in 1865 and who became Mayor in 1890.

### **L Queen Elizabeth Bridge**

The bridge was completed in 1966, and has formed the principal road route between Windsor and Slough since 1970, when structural cracks in the nearby Windsor Bridge forced that bridge's closure to all motorised traffic.

### **M** The Brocas

The large meadow called the Brocas is part of the floodplain. It is named after the Brocas family, owners of the land in the 1300s, and belongs to Eton College. It affords magnificent views of Windsor Castle, the slender buttresses of St George's Chapel giving delicate relief from the rugged, bare walls of the Lower Bailey and the Curfew Tower. The Brocas family, originally came from Gascony where they fought for several generations against the French, before settling in England and acquiring a considerable amount of land in Eton and Windsor. Sir Bernard Brocas (ca 1330-95), was Master of the Horse to King Edward III and a good friend of the Black Prince.

### **N** Eton College

Founded by King Henry VI in 1440. The college buildings are amongst the earliest brick structures in the country and are of exceptional architectural importance. The college chapel contains wall paintings of late 15<sup>th</sup> century, again some of the finest in the country, a chance survival only re-discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Eton School has educated nineteen British prime ministers.

### **O** Barnes Pool Bridge

Barnes Pool Bridge is recorded from the 13th century, although remade in iron in the 19th century.

### **P** 47-49, High Street

The Cock Pitt Cafe, 47-49, High Street is a grade II\* example of 15th-century timber framed architecture. Part of this building was used as an inn in the 16th century, called The Adam and Eve. Its local name 'The Cockpit' dates from 1936, making reference to a rear slaughterhouse, incorrectly thought to be a cockpit.

The adjacent pillar-box (consisting of a fluted pillar surmounted by a pill-box) is also listed as an early example of its type, dating from 1854.

### **O** Windsor Bridge

This iron bridge was built in 1822, and replaces a succession of timber bridges which date from c.1170. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century bridges were both rare and costly. Windsor Bridge was important because it brought trade to Windsor's market, underpinning the new town's economy. River and road tolls were collected at the bridge until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and claimed by the crown until the 16<sup>th</sup>, when ownership of the bridge passed to the town

*Note: much of the information here comes from Windsor & Eton Heritage Walking Trail, prepared by Dr David Lewis at*

[https://www.windsor.gov.uk/dbimngs/Heritage%20Walking%20Trail3%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.windsor.gov.uk/dbimngs/Heritage%20Walking%20Trail3%20(2).pdf)

*Also A brief history of Windsor at*

<http://www.thamesweb.co.uk/windsor/windsorhistory/brief.html>

