

Four etched prints.

VIEWS OF WESTMINSTER

Ciuitatis Westmonasteriensis pars [and] Palatium Archiepilcopi Cantuarienlis props Londinum vulgo Lambeth Houle [and] Palatium Regis prope Londinum vulgo White hall [and] Sala regalis cum Curria West monastery vulgo Westmoinster Hall

Author
HOLLAR, W[enceslaus]

Publication date
1647.

Publisher

Publication place
[London],

Physical description
Four etched prints.

Dimensions
235 by 402mm. (9.25 by 15.75 inches). Plate size: 150 by 325mm.

Notes
In 1647, Wenceslaus Hollar produced a number of views of Westminster, the heart of London. The first shows Westminster from the Thames, and includes numerous buildings, the three most significant identified by name. “Parlament House”, “the Hall” and “the Abby’ dominate the vista, together comprising the Palace of Westminster. With the first foundation stone lain over one

thousand years ago, the buildings that make up the palace changed much over the subsequent centuries, surviving the Great Fire of London in 1666 but suffering great damage in 1834 from another fire.

Hollar's print shows the seventeenth century complex: the Abby is yet to gain its now-iconic western towers, constructed in 1722; the building labelled "Parlament House" is St Stephen's Chapel, which was later destroyed. The Palace of Westminster was designated as the permanent seat of the English Parliament in 1548, with St Stephen's Chapel used as the seat of the House of Commons until 1834. Westminster Hall, by contrast, remains much the same, being the oldest part of the Palace still existing. Two years after the print was published Charles I would be brought to trial there.

A second view focuses on Lambeth Palace. Also known as Lambeth House, the location on which it stands was acquired by the Diocese of Canterbury in 1200, and has since served as the Archbishop's London residence. The earliest remaining part of the building is the chapel constructed in the thirteenth century, with much of the current structure built during the Tudor period. Hollar's print shows Lambeth Palace during the civil war, when its great hall was ransacked by the Cromwellian troops; it was later rebuilt with a late Gothic hammerbeam roof. The view is taken from the opposite bank of the Thames, with various small and large boats on its waters, looking across at the site. The Great Hall forms the centre of the complex, with towers at either end and smaller buildings with crenellated ramparts. To the right are numerous smaller buildings and a group of people waiting by the stairs down to the river.

Thirdly, the Palace of Westminster is presented, which served as the main residence of the English monarchs from 1530 until 1698, when much of the was destroyed by fire. It had been established as the royal household by Henry VIII after the Palace of Westminster was itself burnt down. With various restorations and expansions over the subsequent centuries, Whitehall grew until it was at one point the largest palace in Europe, with over 1,500 rooms. The Palace of Versailles was soon to overshadow it however, boasting an impressive 2,400 rooms. At its height, the palace extended for 23 acres over a huge area bordered to the north by Northumberland Avenue and Downing Street to the south.

The palace underwent major architectural changes under King James II, who commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to add a new chapel, modify some of the private apartments and redesign the queen's private lodgings. These expansions were conducted throughout the 1680s, and therefore do not appear on Hollar's view of the palace, made several decades earlier. It shows Whitehall from the opposite bank of the River Thames, on which there are multiple small vessels. Particular prominent in the view is Banqueting House, which was designed by Inigo Jones, himself a resident of the adjacent Scotland Yard, begun in 1619 and completed shortly afterwards in 1622. The building was made to host the elaborate entertainment put on by British monarchs, although in the case of Charles I it is better known as the scene of his decapitation.

The final print shows Westminster Hall, which was completed in 1099 under the son of William the Conqueror; at this time, it was the largest hall in Europe. It was renovated, rebuilt and refurbished numerous times across the following centuries, and was used for judicial purposes, ceremonies and banquets. The present view shows the square directly to the north of Westminster Hall, with the building seen on the left and the Abbey visible over the roofs on the right. The square, with an elaborate fountain on the northern side, is filled with people moving about on foot, in carriages or by horse.

Wenceslaus Hollar's view of Westminster from the Thames shows numerous buildings, the three most significant identified by name. "Parlament House", "the Hall" and "the Abby' dominate the vista, together comprising the Palace of Westminster. With the first foundation stone lain over one thousand years ago, the buildings that make up the palace changed much over the subsequent

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Bibliography
NHG 950-953 all first state; Pennington 1037-1040 all first state.

Provenance

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