

Westminster Abbey

Clergy seating, cafe and song school



Luke Hughes

Furniture in Architecture

As one of the world's foremost sites of religious worship, Westminster Abbey is a true landmark of ecclesiastical architecture and has been a centre of pilgrimage and tourism for centuries.

Luke Hughes® is proud to have worked with the Abbey across multiple projects over the last decade. Chief amongst these was the restoration of their priceless Cosmati pavement, the installation of a new cafe in a 16th-century food store and the refurbishment of their adjoining song school.

The Abbey is set over 32,000sq ft and is final resting place to 17 monarchs. Each of our projects lie within distinct precincts of the Cathedral and its neighbouring buildings, each carrying with it a unique architectural history.

Cover and this page: Exterior of Westminster Abbey

Opposite page: Bespoke clergy seating on the restored Cosmati pavement





The royal wedding, one of the first major events featuring the restored Cosmati pavement and new clergy seating







Above: A team restore the Cosmati pavement
Below: The clergy seating's adjustable feet



The challenge for Luke Hughes® was to design and make clergy seating to sit upon the uneven Cosmati pavement in front of the High Altar. This unique and remarkable floor was laid down in 1268 by order of Henry III who had started re-building Edward the Confessor's Abbey in the new Gothic style in 1245. We designed a special foot to stabilise the seating whilst protecting the priceless floor. 4 benches and 2 chairs were designed and made in time for both the Pope's visit and the Royal wedding.

Clergy seating featuring the bespoke adjustable feet



The refurbished Cellarium cafe







The Cellarium, part of the 14th century fabric of Westminster Abbey, was where the monks kept their stores of food and drink. Now the Cellarium café, run by Benugo, refreshes this tradition of hospitality and allows visitors to enjoy a meal with views over the towers of the Abbey on the upper level or under the historic vaults downstairs.

The furniture, made in solid English oak, is designed to complement the tough regime of Benugo's catering operation whilst still reflecting the monastic traditions of the Abbey. The tables are designed to be capable of reconfiguring for more formal feasts as well as daily catering for visitors. More important, all the furniture can be cleared away completely in less than 15 minutes. The leather upholstered backs of the chairs are embossed with the Abbey coat of arms, and the stacking benches have a bronze version, cast from a lime-wood carving by Gyorgy Mkrtychian, set into the backs.

The new stacking chairs, benches and tables in the Cellarium café







Choir stalls encircle the Choir Master's piano

The new song school comprises both group and individual stalls crafted in solid European Oak, designed with a sloped music stand, bookstop and pencil ledge with two storage shelves underneath for folders and sheet music.

Accompanying rehearsal benches feature a traditional through-tenons and contrasting rosewood wedge. Tapered music steps were designed to allow younger choristers to have a clear view of their music and maintain sight lines to the piano. Music storage cupboards, for the choir's vast musical repertoire line the walls, and the room is finished with two of our signature Sheffield benches for visitors to sit and observe rehearsals.

Choir stalls encircle the Choir Master's piano





Exterior stone detail of Westminster Abbey

