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Summary Article: **Hampton Court Palace**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Former royal residence near Richmond, England, 24 km/15 mi west of central London. Hampton Court is one of the greatest historical monuments in the UK, and contains some of the finest examples of Tudor architecture and of Christopher Wren's work. It was built in 1515 by Cardinal Wolsey and presented by him to Henry VIII who subsequently enlarged and improved it. In the 17th century William (III) and Mary (II) made it their main residence outside London, and the palace was further enlarged by Wren. Part of the building was extensively damaged by fire in 1986.

The last monarch to live at Hampton Court was George II, who died in 1760. During his life many of the Tudor apartments were pulled down and replaced. The palace was opened to the public, free of charge, by Queen Victoria in 1838 (though visitors now pay an admission fee). Hampton Court has a remarkable collection of pictures housed in the Hampton Court Gallery.

History At the time of building, Wolsey was Archbishop of York, and, except for the king, the most powerful man in England. As he increased in wealth and favour, so he added to the range of buildings. His household numbered over 400 persons, and 280 rooms were always ready for guests. This lavish display of wealth (he also built two other country seats and occupied York House) was probably a factor in his downfall. Tradition asserts that Wolsey, hoping to placate Henry VIII, presented him with Hampton Court in 1525.

On Wolsey's fall Henry enlarged it. Five of his wives lived here, and Jane Seymour died here soon after giving birth to Edward VI. Mary I, Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I (who was also imprisoned here) used the palace; so did Oliver Cromwell and Charles II (who laid out the gardens more formally), but not James II. With the accession of William and Mary, Wren was asked to design a new palace. One of his plans involved the destruction of all the Tudor buildings except the Great Hall. Work began in 1689, but on Queen Mary's death complete rebuilding was abandoned. The interior was not completed until after William III's death.

Layout The buildings that comprise Hampton Court are grouped round three principal courts on an east–west axis. The main approach now is from the west, by **Hampton Green**, which leads by an outer court and a bridge across the dried moat to Wolsey's magnificent Gatehouse. Beyond is the first and largest court, **Base Court**, the buildings of which date almost wholly from Wolsey's time. The east side leads by Anne Boleyn's Gateway to **Clock Court**. Above the east side of the gateway is a panel with Wolsey's arms and motto, and above them is the famous astronomical clock, made in 1540, its mechanism renewed in 1879.

On the north side is the Great Hall, built 1531–36 by Henry VIII in place of Wolsey's smaller hall, with a hammerbeam roof of unusual splendour. Grouped round the hall are the great Tudor kitchens and king's cellar. Wren's Ionic colonnade on the south covers some of Wolsey's rooms and the entrance to the state rooms. Farther east, and lying more to the south than the two other courts, is Wren's **Fountain Court**, begun 1689, round which are grouped the principal state rooms, replacing most of Wolsey's buildings in this quarter. On the east front Wren achieved a grandiosity almost equalling Versailles. The state rooms are on the first floor, and are divided into two adjoining suites, the King's Side on the south

facing the **Privy Garden** with the wrought-iron screen made up of ten gates designed by Jean Tijou, and the Queen's Side on the east facing the well-planned **Fountain Garden**, each with its own guardroom, presence and audience chambers, etc. The Royal Chapel, beyond the north side of **Fountain Court**, has 16th-century wooden fan-vaulting and a reredos carved by Grinling Gibbons. Also to the north of the palace are a Tudor tennis court, the **Tiltyard Gardens**, and the famous maze.

Grounds There are very extensive grounds surrounding the palace and gardens. Wolsey originally enclosed about 800 ha/1976 acres. The north portion, **Bushy Park**, was laid out in its present form by William III; and the Lion Gates on the south of this park were designed by Wren as part of a grand north entrance to the palace. The south portion of Wolsey's land is the **Home (or Hampton Court) Park** to the east, and it was here that William III suffered the fall from his horse that resulted in his death.

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Hampton Court Palace

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