

# BLENHEIM PALACE

## HOME OF THE 11TH DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

Blenheim Palace was built as a gift for the 1st Duke of Marlborough and his wife Sarah. Look carefully at the inscription above the gates at the entrance to the first courtyard.

1. Who built the Palace according to this inscription?

The man named in the inscription was the architect. The Palace was actually built by an army of labourers and many skilled stonemasons. Edward Strong and his son (also called Edward) were considered the most skilled of the stone masons. The stone came from nearby quarries in Oxfordshire and the Cotswolds.

2. According to this inscription, when was the Palace finished?

The date on the inscription was actually the date the 1st Duke died, it was not the date when the Palace was completed. The Palace was built from East to West and the Chapel (in the West) was finished in 1733.

3. Who gave the money to pay for the building of the Palace?

The 1st Duke and Duchess also paid some of the costs for building the Palace. This became necessary after they fell out of favour with the monarch, Queen Anne.

4. What decorations can you see on the gate to show that a Duke or someone important lived here?

The iron gates are not as old as the Palace. They were made in Victorian times by a company called Bramah. They were displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851.



There is a large area above the gates which houses an enormous cistern (tank). This was built to hold water for the Palace; the water was pumped up from the lake through pipes made of oak. The cistern is still there but it no longer holds the water supply for the Palace.

5. Look at the stone decorations on the archway. List 3 different stone decorations.

A man more famous for carving wood, Grinling Gibbons, carved many of the decorations on the archway of the gate.

The Flag flies to show that the Duke is at home. The flag is taken down when the Duke is away. A member of staff has to climb a very narrow spiral staircase hidden inside the arch to retrieve the flag.

6. Who else in this country uses a flag to show whether or not they are home?

These gates serve as the first entrance into the Palace for all visitors.

7. What information is available near these gates to help visitors?

When the Palace is open, these gates always have staff present to help visitors. In previous times there would have been a Gateman on duty, often accompanied by some of the Duke's dogs.

8. Walk through the iron gates and look down at the ground. What are the cobbles made of?

This particular type of cobble is used on the floor of all 3 archways. They were used to deaden the noise as horses pulled carriages through the archways.

The Orangery was originally used as a greenhouse and it did have orange trees in it. The 4th Duke (1758 - 1817) turned the Orangery into a 200 seated theatre because his children liked putting on plays!

1. What is the Orangery used for today?

When the Clock Tower was originally built, servants had to climb a narrow spiral staircase to set & adjust the clock.

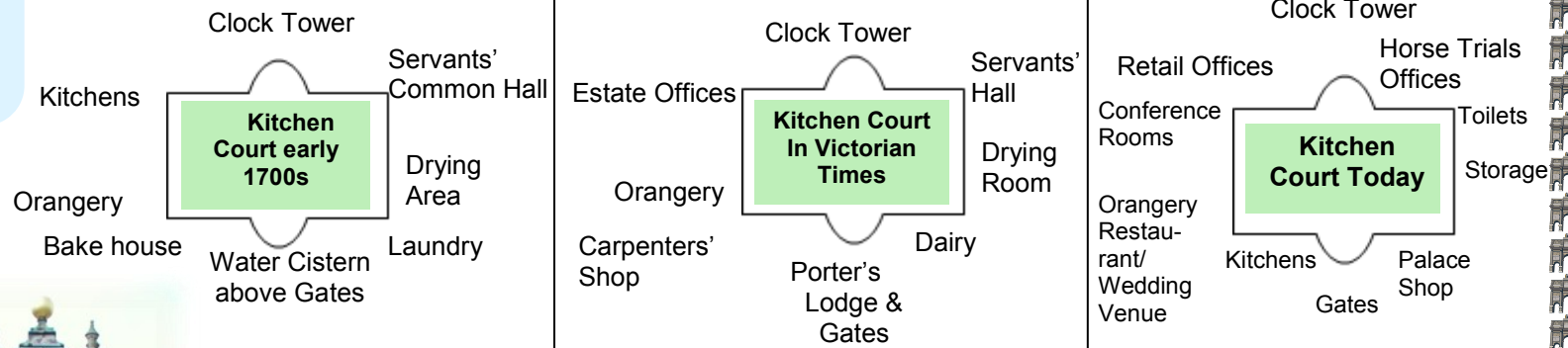
2. Look at the Clock Tower. How could the Palace Horologist (clock man) get up to the clockworks today?

The clock in Kitchen Court was made in 1710 by Langley Bradley. Four sundials were placed around the Palace to help staff keep the time of tower clock accurate. The tower clock has 3 other faces.

3. Give 1 reason why 3 faces of this clock are higher than the one you see in Kitchen Court.

## KITCHEN COURT

When this courtyard was first built, it housed 'useful' rooms. In Victorian times the purpose of some of the rooms changed; they changed again in recent years.



During the time of the 1st Duke & Duchess, Kitchen Court was a very busy place. There were many servants working hard in the Bakehouse & Kitchens. The laundry included rooms for ironing as well as for washing clothes. Porters were employed to fetch and carry as necessary.

4. What jobs can you see being done by employees in Kitchen Court today?

### Servants' Wages in the time of the 1st Duchess

May King - Laundry Maid - £6 per annum  
 Anne Middleton - Laundry Maid - £6 per annum  
 Walter Jones - Porter - £8 per annum  
 'The Necessary Woman' - for helping in the kitchens for 8 days - 5 shillings and 8 pence (29p).  
 'The Washerwoman' - for 2 days help in the laundry - 2shillings and 6 pence (12.5p)



5. Look around Kitchen Court. What evidence is there to show what Kitchen Court is used for today?

The Kitchens were moved into the Palace by the 6th Duke in Victorian times. He wanted his food to be hot when it was served and felt that having kitchens in Kitchen Court was impractical.

In the time of the 1st Duke, an 'Odd Man' and a 'Necessary Woman' were employed at the Palace. The man did any odd jobs that needed doing. The woman did any job that was necessary.

6. Look at the list of wages. Was the 'Necessary Woman' well paid compared to the Laundry Maids?

Today the Estate Offices are at Woodstock Gate.

# GREAT COURT

The Palace has approximately 1000 windows and 200 rooms. The size of the windows vary according to the importance of the room and the people who would use it. The most humble servants were housed in the uppermost rooms which have tiny square windows - Housemaid's and Workshop Heights. The more important servants, the Butler and the Housekeeper were housed where you can see the round upper windows.

In 1792, the following Window Taxes applied:-

6 windows or fewer	- nothing to pay.
7 - 9 windows	- 2 shillings (10p)
10 - 19 windows	- 4 shillings (20p)
20 or more windows	- 6 shillings (30p)



A window tax was imposed in England from 1696 - 1851. This was seen as a taxation upon the very light by which people could see and gave rise to the expression, "daylight robbery". Many people bricked up their windows to avoid paying the tax.

5. If the Duke owned 4 neighbouring houses for his staff, the first one having 27 windows, the second one 13 windows, the third 2 windows and the final one 8. How much window tax would the Duke have had to pay in total for the 4 houses?

1. How many small square windows can you see at the very top of the Palace?

2. Find the 4 statues showing a lion mauling a cockerel. If the Lion represents Britain and the unfortunate cockerel represents France, what message do you think Grinling Gibbons, the sculptor, is trying to give us about the Battle of Blenheim and the countries which took part in it?

The eyes in the Portico were commissioned by the 9th Duke's 2nd wife, Gladys Deacon. She climbed to the top of the scaffold where the artist was working and showed him a scarf the exact shade of blue of her own eyes. The 3 blue eyes belong to Gladys - the inspiration for the brown eyes remains a mystery...

Vanburgh designed the Palace to be symmetrical (exactly the same on both sides if you were to draw a line down the middle.) The Palace was never completed and so the courtyard to your right, if you stand facing the Palace, still remains to be finished.

4. At the Palace front door, look up and count the eyes which are staring down at you. Why do you think Gladys Deacon had these eyes painted?

6. Look around the courtyard and see if you can spot anything that looks unfinished and doesn't look symmetrical.



This side of the Palace faces north. The east (left) side of the Palace was finished first and is where the 1st Duke and subsequent Dukes have their Private Apartments. Originally access to the east wing was via the steps leading up through the colonnades.



3. Look around Great Court and name 3 things that would tell you that this Palace was built for a great soldier.

7. Look carefully at the west wing. Where do you think the servants' entrance to the Palace was?

The Chapel at Blenheim Palace was finished in 1733, 11 years after the death of the 1st Duke. It is still used for special family occasions and on 27th December 1874, Sir Winston Churchill was baptised here.

Sarah, the 1st Duchess, had the monument erected in memory of her husband after the Chapel was built. When the Duke died in 1722, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, but his body was moved to rest beside Sarah's when she died and was buried below in the Chapel tomb in 1744. They still lie there together in their red leather coffins.

1. Look at the monument, its inscription bears the date MDCCXXXIII in Roman numerals. If M = 1000, D = 500, C = 100, X = 10 V = 5 and I = 1, work out the date that the monument was erected.

The first Duchess described the Chapel as 'very plain'. The organ, pews and some of the statues were installed in later years during the time of the 7th Duke and Duchess - a period when family and estate workers were summoned every day for morning prayers. The 9th Duke once commented that 'the Marlboroughs are worshipped here.'

2. Consider the way the Chapel is laid out - what is unusual about the way the pews are facing?

3. Look at how the Chapel is furnished then list 3 things that people might do in a church.

4. Over the years this chapel has been used to mark many occasions - some of them happy and some of them sad. List 3 special events that might be celebrated in a church or chapel.

5. Look around the chapel and see how many wyverns, dragons and other mythological creatures you can find.

## THE CHAPEL



The medals on the walls either side of the monument are by John Croker - they commemorate the many victories of the 1st Duke and show the monarch at the time, Queen Anne. Two medals side by side represent both sides of the same medal.



The Spencer-Churchill crest can be seen in the Chapel. The double headed eagle - a mythological (imaginary) creature - was the crest of the Holy Roman Empire of which the Duke had been made a Prince after his great victory at the Battle of Blenheim. The red Wyverns had a poisonous sting in their tails and were considered a sign of strength to those who carried them.

The family motto, 'Fiel Pero Desdichado' can be seen on the family crest. It means 'Faithful but Unfortunate' and was adopted by the father of the first Duke whose name was Sir Winston Churchill.

6. If you had a family motto, what would it be and why? Which animals would you choose to be on the crest?

7. One of the medals beside the memorial commemorates the Duke's victory at Oudenarde (Aldenard). Using the information given to you in question 1, work out the date of the battle.

Compare the medals showing Queen Anne with a coin showing our present queen. Can you see any similarities?

In the Chapel, there are 3 statues of men, 1 of a woman, and 2 of children. While the woman, Sarah 1st Duchess, is dressed quite simply, the men are dressed in grand costumes or robes. The 1st Duke is dressed as a Roman general, the 7th Duke is in his Garter robes and Lord Randolph Churchill is dressed in his Parliamentary robes. All the statues were erected by women in memory of their husbands or sons.

8. Look at the statue of the 1st Duke. Which animal can you see decorating the tops of his boots and the middle of his tunic?

9. Find the statues of the 7th Duke and his son, Lord Randolph. How old was Lord Randolph when his father died? How old was Lord Randolph when he died? (In years and months.)

# THE WATER TERRACES

The Water Terraces were created under the watchful eye of the 9th Duke. He employed the services of the French landscape architect, Achille Duchêne. This area to the west of the Palace had originally been level and 25,000 cubic yards of earth had to be removed to create the different levels as seen today. A small track was constructed bearing wagons which were used to transport the earth away.

1. Walk towards the Water Terraces Cafe. Stand on the paving slabs and find the one which commemorates the men who worked on the terrace. How many years did the Water Terraces take to complete and how many men - including the Duke - worked on them in total?

The hedges on the Upper Water Terraces are box, and the water in the pools is piped from Rosamund's well - a spring which flows into the Park. The statues and plinths are in the classical Greek style.

2. Stand on the Upper Water Terraces and look around you. The Terraces are decorated and adorned with all sorts of different items. What sort of things can you see decorating the Terraces in addition to the statues?



3. Stand with your back to the Palace, look to your left where the steps go from the Water Terraces up to the South Lawn. There is a Latin inscription on the wall of the steps telling us that the work was ordered by the Duke, Charles (CAROLVS DVX).

If  $M = 1000$ ,  $C = 100$  and  $X = 10$ , what year was this inscription dated?



The Water Terraces were designed to be symmetrical (exactly the same on both sides if you were to draw a line down the middle.) If you stand with your back to the Palace, you will see that the centrepieces in the 2 pools differ. The one on the right is by a very famous Italian artist called Bernini and is the model for the fountain which stands in the Piazza Navona in Rome. The centrepiece on the left was ordered by the 9th Duke to complement Bernini's work.

4. Look carefully at the centrepiece erected by the 9th Duke. To whom has the dedication been made?

The 9th Duke was married twice. The face of his 2nd wife, Gladys Deacon appears on the head of the 2 sphinxes who keep guard on the Lower Water Terraces.

5. Look carefully at the sphinxes and see if you can spot who made them and when they were made.

There are 4 sundials in the Gardens at Blenheim Palace - they were designed by John Rowley at the time the Palace was built. One of them was missing for some time - it had been sent for repair many many years ago. It was recently found in a box - together with the invoice for the repair work!



6. There is a sundial in the centre of the Lower Water Terraces. Can you spot the Double Headed Eagle? Why does it appear on the sundial? Where was the last place you saw one?