**Buckingham Palace**

Buckingham palace is the official London residence of Her Majesty The Queen and as such is one of the best known and most potent symbols of the British monarchy. Yet it has been a royal residence for only just over two hundred and thirty years and a palace for much less; and its name, known the world over, is owed not to a monarch but to an English Duke.

Buckingham House was built for John, first Duke of Buckingham, between 1702 and 1705. It was sold to the Crown in 1762. Surprisingly, since it was a large house in a commanding position, it was never intended to be the principal residence of the monarch.

Although King George III modernised and enlarged the house considerably in the 1760s and 17770s, the transformations that give the building its present palatial character were carried out for King George IY by Nash in the 1820s, by Edward Blore for King William IY and Queen Victoria in the 1830s and 40s, and by James Pennethoooorne in the 1850s.

In the reign of King Edward YII, much of the present white and gold decoration was substituted for the richly coloured 19th century schemes of Nash and Blore; and in the 1920s, Queen Mary used the firm of White Allom to redecorate a number of rooms.

The rooms open to visitors are used principally for official entertainment .These include Receptions and State Banquets, and it is on such occasions, when the rooms are filled with flowers and thronged with formally dressed guests and liveried servants, that the Palace is seen at its most splendid and imposing. But of course the Palace is also far more than just the London home of the Royal Family and a place of lavish entertainment. It has become the administrative centre of the monarchy where, among a multitude of engagements, Her Majesty receives foreign Heads of State, Commonwealth leaders and representatives of the Diplomatic Corps and conducts Investitures, and where the majority of the Royal Houshold, consisting of six main Departments and a staff of about three hundred people, have their offices.