

Skill Focus: Retrieving information

BIG BEN GETS A BATH!

People from all over the world come to London and visit Big Ben but one week last August, they would have seen an unusual sight!

Five highly trained abseiling experts started cleaning all four clock faces on 18th August 2021. It was the clock's first scrub for 4 years. It took a full week to complete the cleaning - they were lucky that the weather stayed fine otherwise it would have taken longer.

The Houses of Parliament clock (nicknamed Big Ben), which was built in 1859, was also checked for damage to the dials. Each clock face is made up of 312 pieces of opal glass, which had to be treated carefully. The hands of the clock were made out of copper, because it is lighter than other metals.

DID YOU KNOW?

Big Ben's real name is the Great Clock of Westminster which is at the top of the Elizabeth Tower (named after the Queen). The Elizabeth Tower is part of the Houses of Parliament.

To keep the climbing cleaners safe, the clock's hands were frozen in the midday position before the cleaning began.

1. Where is Big Ben?
2. Before this clean, what year was Big Ben last cleaned in?
3. Over 250 pieces of glass are used in each face of Big Ben. Is this true or false?
4. What material was chosen to make the hands of the clock and why?
5. How did they make sure that the cleaners would not be in danger?
6. How many days did it take to finish the job?
7. What is the correct name for the building the clock is at the top of?