

Wembley Stadium: The Home of English Football

Wembley Stadium is one of the most well-known sporting venues in the world. It is home to the England national football team and also hosts other major sport and music events.

The original Wembley Stadium was built in just 300 days, at a cost of £750,000. It was finished only three days before the FA Cup Final between Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United was due to take place on 28th April 1923. Although the capacity of the stadium was 127,000, it is thought that around 250,000 fans poured onto the ground. They spilled onto the pitch and it looked as if the game would be cancelled. A policeman, on a white horse named Billy, managed to clear the pitch and the game eventually started 45 minutes late. Newspapers called Billy a hero and the match, which Bolton won 2-0, became known as the White Horse Final.

During its 80-year history, Wembley hosted a further 78 FA Cup Finals, the 1948 London Olympics and the World Cup Final in 1966, in which England beat West Germany 4-2. The stadium became the symbol of English football and its distinctive white twin towers, either side of the main entrance, were famous internationally. The stadium was demolished in 2003, after which construction of the new stadium began.

The new Wembley Stadium, built on the site of the original stadium in North London, opened two years later in 2007 and cost an estimated £757 million to build. The most striking feature is the 133-metre-high Wembley Arch that towers over the North Stand. Wembley's sliding roof can cover all 90,000 seats in the stadium, making it the largest covered stadium in the world. When the new stadium was being built, the level of the pitch was lowered. As the playing field was being dug out, a buried construction was discovered: the concrete foundations of Watkin's Tower. This had been an attempt to build an English copy of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Only the base of the tower was built before being abandoned. It was eventually demolished in 1907.

As well as football, Wembley holds many other events, particularly major music concerts. It can be converted for use as an athletics track by building a platform over the lower tier of seating. This would take many weeks of work and cost millions of pounds to carry out. To date, no athletics events have been held at Wembley Stadium.



Name: Class: Date:

1 How long did the original Wembley Stadium take to build?

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2 Which teams played in the 1923 FA Cup Final?

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3 Why was the 1923 FA Cup Final called the White Horse Final?

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4 Which team won the 1966 World Cup Final?

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5 When was the original Wembley Stadium demolished?

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6 How high is the Wembley Arch?

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7 Where is Wembley Stadium?

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8 What was Watkin's Tower?

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- 9** Below are summaries of the paragraphs in the text. Number them to show the order in which they appear in the text.

- Events that took place in the original Wembley Stadium
- What the text is about
- The building and opening of the new Wembley Stadium
- What else takes place in the new Wembley Stadium
- The building and opening of the original Wembley Stadium

- 10** Use the information in the passage to complete this table.

	Original stadium	New stadium
Cost of building		
Year it opened		
Distinctive features		
Capacity of the stadium		