

Waterloo Chamber

This is the first room on the Ceremonial Route, which is the main tour through the State Apartments. These are the rooms used by The Queen and members of the royal family as a setting for royal events and ceremonies.

The Waterloo Chamber is an impressive twenty-five metres long and fifteen metres wide, with a ceiling over fourteen metres high. A space of formal splendour, it was created to celebrate victory at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Designed by Wyattville for George IV, it was part of the grand development of The Castle.

There are two fireplaces on opposite sides of the room and the walls are covered with brown wood panelling to a height of around 7 metres. Above that is a brown and cream floral pattern in relief. These walls are covered by portraits of men, 38 of them, many of them full length and several metres in height. Many are the commanders, politicians and monarchs of Great Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia, whose joint forces, led by the Duke of Wellington, defeated Napoleon. They were painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence to celebrate their victory. Their gilt frames are moulded, with an outer frame of carved wood.

Around the paintings are carvings by Grinling Gibbons featuring swags of fruit and flowers which stand out in a darker wood against the panelling.

Originally a courtyard, the room has no windows, but natural light comes in from the roof, where the central section is lifted, in what is known as a clerestory - the gap between the raised section and the lower filled with etched glass windows. The whole structure is supported by curving beams, often said to be reminiscent of a ship's timbers. The roof is further decorated with carved scrolls and painted panels in patterns of red, gold and blue. Around the bottom of the windows mottos are written in gold, in Latin, German and French -

including that of the Order of the Garter. Five crystal and gilt chandeliers hang along the length of the raised section of roof.

The floor is covered a plush red, green and cream patterned carpet - one of the largest woven carpets in the world. There is a high gallery at both ends, where music is played for dinners, such as The Garter Luncheon, given by the Queen, when a table down the centre of the room is set for up to 60 guests.

This is the setting for investitures. These ceremonies recognise the achievements and service to the nation of people from all walks of life. Honours include knighthoods which allow the recipient to be called Sir, or the female equivalent, Dame, and awards that allow the recipient to put initials after their name, such as the OBE or Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.