

## Irish State Coach

This is the Irish State Coach, a closed carriage whose dark brown body panels are decorated with golden scrolls. At the front of the carriage, arching up over the wheels is a large curved guard, designed to protect the carriage from mud.

The carriage's most distinctive feature, though, is its ornate gilded roof. From a central gold crown on a red cushion, four elaborate scrolling friezes radiate out to each corner; at which is a small gold crown. Linking these crowns along the edge of the roof is a delicate frieze; roses for England alternate with thistles for Scotland, shamrocks for Ireland - and palm trees. These represent India and were added to the coach in 1876 when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India.

Made In Ireland, the coach was exhibited in 1853 at the Great Industrial Exhibition in Dublin. The coach maker was hoping to attract the attention of two distinguished visitors - and when Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert saw it, they bought it. It went on to become one of Queen Victoria's favourite carriages, and she used it often after her husband's death.

The coach has been heavily restored. It was completely rebuilt after all its woodwork was destroyed by fire in 1911. And in the 1980s it was entirely re-painted and re-gilded.

Until recently, Her Majesty The Queen travelled in it to the State Opening of Parliament each year.