

Factsheet

The Banqueting House at Whitehall

- The Banqueting House, opposite Horse Guards Parade, is the sole surviving complete building of Whitehall Palace, the sovereign's principal residence until the reign of William III.
- Whitehall Palace was built by the renowned 17th century architect Inigo Jones for King James I to hold state occasions including masques, plays and state banquets and was once one of the largest palaces in Europe. Sadly, the majority of the palace's buildings were lost in the devastating fire of 1698 leaving just the Banqueting House remaining.
- The Banqueting House is perhaps most famous for being the site of the execution of King Charles I in 1649, the only member of Britain's monarchy to be executed. Oliver Cromwell, the Lord Protector, then made the palace his official residence until his death in 1658. In 1660 the Restoration of Charles II to the throne made the Banqueting House a royal palace once again.
- The famous painted ceiling by Peter Paul Rubens was commissioned by Charles I in 1629 to celebrate the glorification of his father James I. The canvasses have decorated the ceiling of the Banqueting House since 1635 and are the only Rubens paintings to remain in their original location.
- Today the Banqueting House is open to the public Monday to Saturday all year round.