

December 2015 - March 2016

Project Team:

Palace Programme Sponsor: Jo Thwaites (HRP)
Project Manager: Tracy Simmons (HRP)
Assistant Project Manager: Zoe Roberts (HRP)
Building Curator: Jane Spooner (HRP)
Conservation Care & Collections: Kathryn Hallett (HRP)/Victoria Richards (HRP)
Quantity Surveyor: Jordan Belgrave (HRP)
Project Support : Hannah Matthews (HRP)

Construction Manager: Gardiner & Theobald
Project Architect: Carden & Godfrey

Programme:

Site set-up and scaffold construction began on the 20th December 2015
 Completion: End of March 2016

History:

Banqueting House is the last surviving building from Whitehall Palace which burnt to the ground in 1698.

It was designed by Inigo Jones for James I, and work finished in 1622. Inigo Jones had travelled to Italy, had seen the buildings of the ancient world, and decided to recreate something of their effect in rainy London. This was supposed to look like a piece of ancient Rome transposed to Whitehall, and the effect would have been extraordinary compared to the buildings that would have surrounded it.

The building was intended for Court masques, State receptions and entertainments. But when Charles I commissioned Sir Peter Paul Rubens to paint nine ceiling paintings to commemorate his father, James I, it was decided the painted ceiling was too delicate for the smoky atmospheres and entertainment events were relocated to other palaces.

The Banqueting House is probably most famous for one real life drama: the execution of Charles I. This took place here in 1649 to the 'dismal, universal groan' of the crowd. Paradoxically, one of Charles's last sights as he walked through the Banqueting House to his death was the magnificent ceiling celebrating his father's rise into Heaven.

Continuing on from the external work that was on site for the duration of 2015, the Banqueting House remained opened to the public and for events. The Banqueting House is now closed between January and March 2016 to both staff and visitors whilst we continue with essential work to complete this phase of the buildings history.

Background:

This phase of the project is twofold and involves the installation of secondary bombproof glazing. This removes the requirement for the bomb proof nets previously installed. This new glazing will visually enhance the views both internally and externally of the Banqueting House and provides an improved, more up to date level of protection. The secondary glazing will also deliver an improvement to the thermal and acoustic performance of the building and create a better level of thermostatic control.

The second element of the project is to remove the asbestos debris/dust that currently rests on the back of the Rubens painting. This debris was recently discovered and is the result of an asbestos fire partition that was previously within the roof space and acted as a fire partition. It is believed this partition was poorly removed in the 1970's and it seems that the debris was swept down through the floor boards of the roof space and onto the back of the painting. To enable us to work and carry out conservation to the ceiling in the future, this asbestos now discovered needs to be safely removed.

Diary**December 2015: one scaffold down and one going up!**

In December the external scaffold was struck as the conservation work to the exterior of the building nears completion. The cleaning and repairs to the stonework on both the east and west elevations are revealed and include completed repairs, regarding to the weather vane and new leadwork laid around the perimeter of the roof. The new render repairs to the North Annex are also revealed to Whitehall.



Figure 1: Scaffold struck to below Gantry Level



Fig. 2: Scaffold strike at rear of building

Inside the Banqueting House we prepare for a huge scaffold to go which will reach the windows and provide access underneath the ceiling paintings. The protection is removed from the windows, the chandeliers are lowered and sent away for conservation and display items are moved to storage (Figs 3 - 6)



Figure 3: Clearing the hall and removing the window protections



Figure 4: Chandelier specialists at work de-installing



Figure 5: Charles I leaving the building!



Figure 6: Substantial floor protections are put in place ready for the giant scaffold

January 2016

The New Year sees the scaffold rising quickly in the hall.

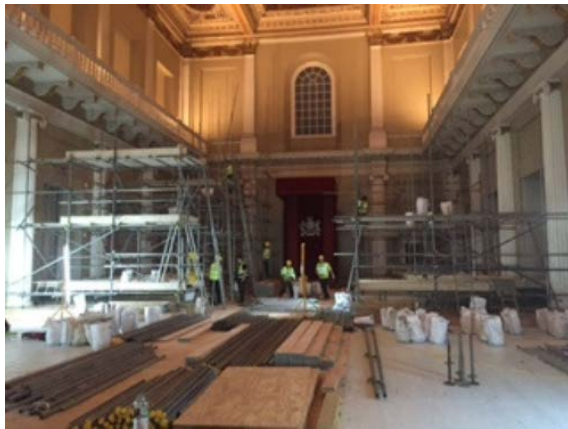


Fig. 7: The beginning of the scaffold build



Fig. 8: The scaffold will accommodate work to the windows and ceiling is built in three phases

Windows

The bombproof nets that previously hung at the windows acted as protection to those within the building to catch the glass in the event of a bomb blast. The majority of the government buildings along Whitehall have these heavy nets and contributed to the perception that Banqueting House was another government building. We have worked closely with our security advisor; a government security advisor and a glazing manufacturer to devise a glazed window that

could offer improved protection and visually enhance the building. Our brief was to design a single unit without glazing bars that would create an unobtrusive view into and out of the Banqueting House but also meet the high level of security that is required.

This design process involved recreating a bomb blast in controlled conditions to ensure that this size of window would take the impact of a blast from the outside. This size of window to this specification is a first!



Fig. 9 Final preparation of the new window frames ready to receive the new window



Fig. 10 Lifting the windows on to the first floor

Asbestos Removal

A small amount of asbestos had been discovered on the reverse of the paintings and coffering due to the previous poor removal of a fire partition within the attic. Due to the sensitivity of cleaning in this space the Surveyors and Conservators have worked closely with the selected asbestos removal contractor to devise safe working methods to remove the asbestos fibres with least impact on these delicate structures.



Fig. 11: Conservators and Surveyors briefing the asbestos removal team who will work in close proximity above and below the paintings and coffering

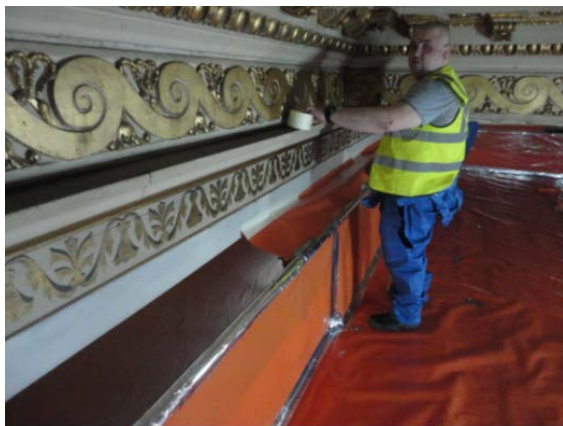


Fig 12: Making an airtight enclosure on the scaffold with polythene and tape



Fig 13: Section 1 is fully enclosed underneath the ceiling



Figure 14: The BH project team take advantage of the scaffold access, before the asbestos work begins above, to get a close up view of the Rubens paintings

Next month...

Window and asbestos work continues and Conservation and Collection Care will undertake inspections, recording and analysis of the Rubens paintings and Inigo Jones coffering in order to prepare for the full restoration and representation work for the interior of Banqueting House starting in 2018.