

Diamond Jubilee Coach

This magnificent coach is the newest in the Royal Mews, created to commemorate The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. It's about five and a half metres long, three metres wide, and weighs 3 tonnes. The lower half of the body is reddish-brown and top half is painted black, with ornate scrolling in gold. The central door panel shows the Royal Coat of Arms. On the panels to either side, a circular wreath is made out of alternate blue ribbons of the Order of the Garter and golden bows. Above the wreath sits a golden Crown. Hanging below is a small image of St George on his white horse, slaying the dragon.

The central of three side windows is gently arched, the curve taken up by the carriage roof. In the centre of the roof, four gilded lions stand as though guarding a crown - the Imperial State Crown worn by Her Majesty The Queen. A gilded frieze around the top of the carriage is made up of alternating carvings of rose, flax, thistle and leek - each representing the countries that make up the United Kingdom; England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. At each corner is a cylindrical lamp, hand carved and gold-plated. The glass is etched with the same four national emblems.

The wheels and supporting framework is entirely covered in gold, with the central shaft connecting the two sets of wheels curved under to follow the shape of the carriage body.

This thoroughly modern coach is also a celebration of Britain's rich history. The Imperial crown on the roof, for instance, was made by British artist O. H. Boyd using oak from HMS Victory, Britain's most famous warship. It's hollow to allow cameras to be fitted, to record images of the crowd outside.

Other historic artefacts are used in the interior. A 200-year-old British musket ball, recovered from the battlefield at Waterloo, is embedded in a small square of polished wood - one of many which form a decorative border around the inside of the carriage doors.

These squares of historic timber come from many structures including 10 Downing Street, Caernarfon Castle, Durham and Canterbury Cathedrals, the Mary Rose and Captain Scott's Antarctic base.

The polished wooden armrests of the carriage's yellow silk upholstered seats come from the Royal Yacht Britannia. Passengers can use switches hidden inside them to control the heating, interior lights and windows.

'S' shaped hand-holds by the doors are gold-plated, and over the bolts which fix them to the frame are beautifully enamelled covers set with a diamond.

The coach's traditional appearance hides an array of up-to-date technology. The body is not wood but aluminium, making it lighter and stronger. Although using conventional curved suspension springs above the wheels, there are also six concealed hydraulic stabilisers to stop the coach swaying as it moves. The wheels themselves, although resembling gilded wood, were engineered by a racing car designer. And finally, the delicately etched lamps can take either candles or LED bulbs – summing up perfectly the coach's blending of past and present.