



Stratfield Saye House

Wednesday 24 July 2024



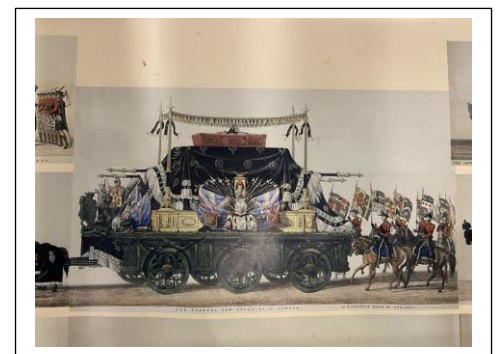
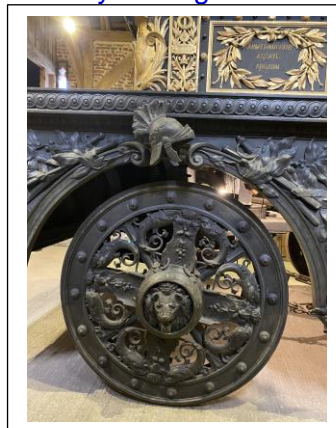
Stratfield Saye House has been home to the Dukes of Wellington for over 200 years, since the first Duke acquired the estate in 1817 after conquering Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo.

Our Arts Society's members arrived, slightly later than expected, on a warm and sunny day and were welcomed by the guides. Our group of 40 were efficiently divided into 4 smaller groups and given a time for their tour of the House. After a welcome cup of coffee and biscuit the first group set off.

We certainly received a very thorough briefing, visited many rooms, admired wallpaper, ceilings, ornaments, paintings. Several sculptures and paintings were bought by the first Duke with the intention of furnishing the Palace he was going to build on the estate, to replace the more humble abode we see today. Eventually money and common sense prevailed and the family decided to remain in this comfortable house, although alterations were made to improve the standard of living. Much of what we saw, dates back to choices the first Duke made. We were impressed and amused by the small en-suite bathrooms hidden behind what seemed just a cupboard doors.

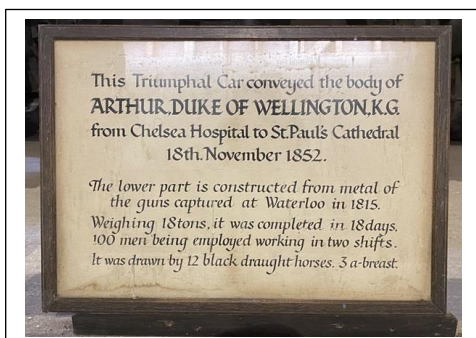


The piece-de-resistance was undoubtedly the small museum which housed the first Duke's funeral carriage, a surreal, huge and heavy carriage.



The carriage was an extraordinarily elaborate concoction. Designed

"by committee," --- and approved by Prince Albert himself, it was an eleven-ton behemoth cast from bronze cannon taken at Waterloo and decorated with a show of "bewildering flourishes and details" It had many critics, and was so unwieldy that it got stuck once on the way to St Paul's, and had to have its canopy removed before it could pass through Temple Bar (from 'The Victorian Web')



This Triumphal Car conveyed the body of ARTHUR, DUKE OF WELLINGTON, K.G. from Chelsea Hospital to St. Paul's Cathedral 18th. November 1852.

The lower part is constructed from metal of the guns captured at Waterloo in 1815. Weighing 18 tons, it was completed in 18 days, 100 men being employed working in two shifts. It was drawn by 12 black draught horses. 3 a-breast.

Having enjoyed a pre-booked lunch, coffees, teas, cake and a stroll round the gardens, we left at 4 pm to arrive back around 6 pm.

