

1. Travertine Marble

Wherever you look in the Great Hall you will see the cream, gold and walnut Italian travertine marble. You can see it on the floor, laid out to reflect the pattern of the ceiling. And you will also see it on the Grand Staircase, with its fine bronze balustrades, and on the walls in the hand carved detail.



2. Chandeliers

The central chandelier in the Great Hall weighs 0.3 tons. It is made of cast iron and gilded in 24 carat gold. It was originally a gift from Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany to his uncle King Edward VII. It hung in the State Apartments at Windsor Castle and was later placed in storage prior to WWI. It was subsequently given as a gift to the Government of Northern Ireland. The four smaller chandeliers are aluminium replicas which were made in Belfast at Harland & Wolff.

3. Ceiling

The blue, red and gold painted ceiling of the Great Hall is unique. Due to a secret waxing process formulated by Heaton, Tabb & Co. of London the original paintwork remains as it was when it was first painted 1932. The Great Hall measures 26.85m x 14.31m and is the most richly-decorated part of Parliament Buildings.

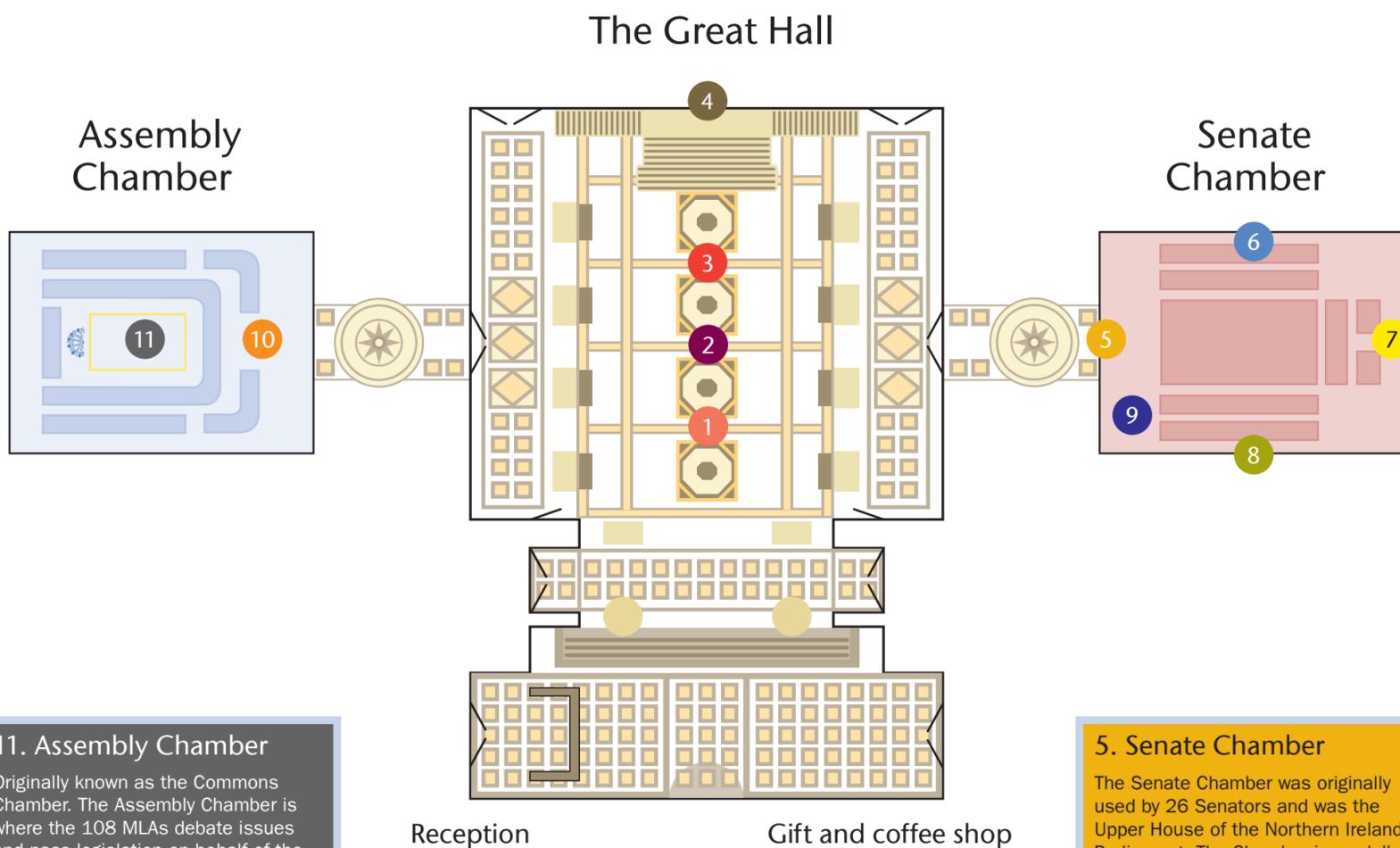
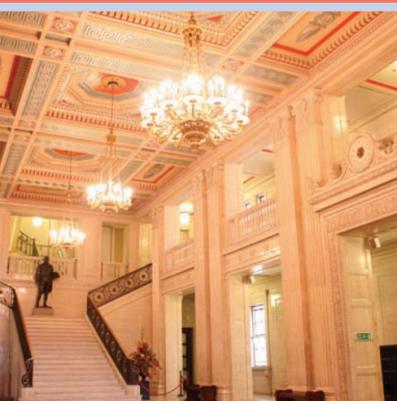


4. Lord Craigavon

At the top of the Grand Staircase stands a life-size bronze statue of James Craig, the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland (from 1921 until his death in 1940). Unveiled in 1945, the statue stands at 6ft 7in and together with its Mourne granite plinth weighs over two tons. Lord and Lady Craigavon are buried in a Portland stone tomb opposite the east entrance to the Building.



A guide to Parliament Buildings



11. Assembly Chamber

Originally known as the Commons Chamber. The Assembly Chamber is where the 108 MLAs debate issues and pass legislation on behalf of the people of Northern Ireland. The seating arrangements have changed twice since 1932; the first was in 1974, when Parliament grew from 52 Members to 78 and again after a fire devastated the Chamber in 1995 when replaced by a European U-shape format.

5. Senate Chamber

The Senate Chamber was originally used by 26 Senators and was the Upper House of the Northern Ireland Parliament. The Chamber is modelled on the House of Lords at Westminster with red leather open benches and the Despatch Boxes. The Despatch Boxes were given as a gift from Westminster to the new Parliament of Northern Ireland. The Senate is now used for Committee meetings.



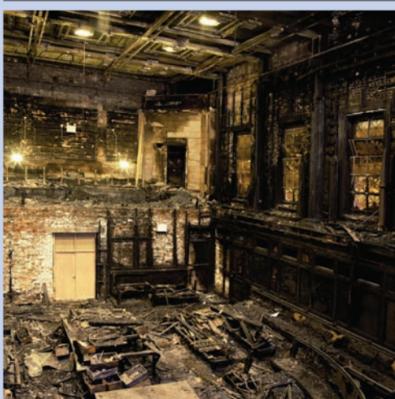
8. The House Will Divide

On the right hand side of the Senate Chamber hangs a painting entitled 'The House Will Divide'. The painting, by Noel Murphy, depicts the 108 MLAs of the new Northern Ireland Assembly of 1998. It was commissioned by the Speaker at the time, Lord Alderdice. See how many of the famous faces you can recognise.



10. Assembly Fire

A fire that started on 1 January 1995, caused by an electrical fault beneath the Speaker's chair, completely devastated the Assembly Chamber. Everything was destroyed including the original English walnut wall panelling and the gold and silver gilding on the columns and ceiling. Following the fire, the Building was vacated for three years allowing restoration and modernisation to take place.



6. William Conor Painting

On the left hand side of the Senate Chamber hangs a painting by William Conor. The painting depicts the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament by King George V in 1921 at Belfast City Hall. In attendance were the first politicians elected to the Parliament, and their families.



9. Three Arabesques

The three arabesques on the ceiling of the Strangers' Gallery in the Senate Chamber represent the three largest industries in Northern Ireland at the time of the Building's opening in 1932; textiles, shipbuilding and agriculture.



7. Balustrade

Following the use of the Senate Chamber as a Royal Air Force Operations Room during WWII, an inscription was engraved on the botticino marble in 1946. In order to camouflage the entire Building during its occupation by the RAF, the Building was painted black using a mixture of bitumen tar and cow manure!

