

Factsheet

King George III's Waistcoat

- A very pertinent and personal item to be displayed at Kew Palace is a waistcoat worn by George III towards the end of his life.
- The waistcoat was specially adapted for the king's comfort: sleeved waistcoats were unfashionable but preferred by those who suffered from the cold. A strip of pleated fabric was added around the armhole to ease movement.
- The cut of the waistcoat is slightly outdated, but – unusually for a garment worn during illness - It is made from the finest pale blue silk damask.
- The waistcoat remains in good condition, reflecting the quality of workmanship for Royal dress at the time. However, the silk retains some evidence of staining, which after examination it was decided would not be removed as the stains are part of the history of the object and removing them would remove a vital part of its story.
- Historic Royal Palaces acquired the waistcoat at auction in 1995 along with letters confirming its provenance. Very few pieces from George III's wardrobe still survive so this was an incredibly important acquisition for Historic Royal Palaces to add to our already extensive royal dress collection based at Kensington Palace.
- The waistcoat belonged to Rev J. Drake of Kirkthorpe, Wakefield, who had written to Rev William Mansel, Chaplain to George IV requesting some clothes belonging to the late George III. The items were sold by a page who had been footman to the King for many years, and who had been given the King's clothes. Three letters (dated 1820-21) written by Rev Mansel shortly after the king died were acquired with the waistcoat although they are not displayed.