

Factsheet

Interior Furnishings at Kew Palace

Extensive research of the accounts of early 1800 have enabled curators and furnishing experts to create a fascinating profile into how George III, Queen Charlotte and their daughters furnished this small, domestic residence. Visitors expecting subtle Georgian interiors will no doubt be surprised, and we hope delighted, at how the royal family chose vivid, contrasting colours and designs for fabrics and carpets, to complement bright green verditer wallpaper and pink paint schemes (discovered through archaeological investigation inside the palace).

- The Lord Chamberlain's accounts at the National Archives provided a vital source of information about curtains, furniture and carpets ordered for Kew Palace between 1800-18. The accounts showed the house was relatively simply furnished with wool and cotton fabrics (no silk) and woven carpets.
- The bright schemes, a combination of vivid wall colours, furnishing fabrics and carpets, brought much needed colour to rooms only lit by candlelight. Through 21st Century eyes the rooms might be considered garish or perhaps lacking in taste, however, in the early 19th Century the interiors at Kew the height of fashion and much sought-after.
- Three phases of furnishing and works were identified:
 - 1800 - Considerable repair and decorating work undertaken and furniture moved in from the White House. The King's Dining Room received new cotton curtains and a hearth rug, and a table with chairs and an organ were installed. The King's Library was fitted with bookcases and shelves, and the bedrooms were furnished with white dimity.
 - 1804-6 – The Princesses' rooms were redecorated in latest fashions using colourful cottons.

- 1809-11 – The last major furnishing period with new decorative schemes, including a Grecian scheme in black and yellow cotton for the Queen’s Boudoir and leopard-spot chintz for the King’s bathroom!
- In 1809 references are made to the decoration of the Queen’s Boudoir: black and yellow cotton curtains; cushions for chairs and Grecian sofa with yellow and black cases; black and gold fire screens covered with yellow silks; and a Brussels carpet with border. Based on these references, the décor of the boudoir has been returned to the surroundings Queen Charlotte and the Princesses would have known with black and yellow chintz’s in stark contrast to the green verditer walls. The Queen’s Boudoir is the first insight visitors receive into the fabulous interiors at Kew Palace.
- In 1811 the Lord Chamberlain’s accounts record that five pairs of scarlet Morine curtains were supplied for the Music room, which is likely to be the Queen’s Drawing Room. Similar wool red curtains with black velvet trim have been recreated to adorn this room and to furnish the Grecian couch and other chairs in this room. The walls of the room have been painted pink, in contrast to the red furnishings, as the royal family would have known them.
- Princess Elizabeth’s Bedroom received a lavish makeover in 1805 with the accounts describing “A 4ft wide double headed Grecian Couch stuff in fine canvas neatly japanned and ornamented withal Dome top finishd insuit inside and out... A handsome Furniture to do of yellow & red cotton lind with moroon Calico full draperies round the dome and on headcloth fringed throughout with drapery base vallens end corded & gimpt” with curtains in suit with this bed furniture. Grecian couch beds in Augusta and Amelia’s bedrooms (on the second floor of the palace) are also referred to. In 1804 reference is also made to a mason fitting a veined marble chimney piece with bronzed columns in this room, a feature that remains in situ in Elizabeth’s Bedroom today. The bed described above has been recreated for display in this room inside the bedroom’s alcove, complete with dome and painted (‘japanned’) features. Matching curtains of yellow and red furnish the bedroom and the antechamber.
- The only documentation for Queen Charlotte’s Bedroom occurs in 1800. Green baize was supplied for the Queen’s bedroom as well as a fitted carpet. There is no reference to a bed for the Queen, however, as the King and princesses had japanned beds furnished with dimity fabric it is likely the Queen did too. A four

poster bed (using two bed posts that belonged to the Queen) has been recreated for Charlotte's bedroom at Kew Palace, hung with white dimity, lined with green fabric, and finished with green and white fringing.