

Factsheet

Kew Palace Ground Floor

On the ground floor of the palace, George III, Queen Charlotte, their family as well as their many interests are introduced to visitors. The King enjoyed enormously diverse interests encompassing architecture, music, astronomy, agriculture, botany, the sciences and art.

The ante-room

- The fine wooden linenfold paneling in the ante-room pre-dates the palace and may have come from an earlier Tudor building on the same site.
- Here visitors come face-to-face with George III in this, the first room of the palace they enter. A strikingly realistic wax life-mask of King George, created from a cast made by Madam Tussaud herself around 1809 is displayed.
- *Radio play: visitors are introduced to George III through an audio presentation given by the King 'himself'.*

The library

- George III's collection of books was legendary and he kept a small personal library in this room at Kew. The library retains a number of features from the original 17th Century house including two carved heads of 'green men' incorporated into the paneling as well as two Jacobean paint schemes discovered in 2005.
- Queen Charlotte is introduced in this room with a portrait of her as the young Princess Sophie-Charlotte of Mecklenburg-Strelitz by Johan Georg Ziesenis. Aged just seventeen she was married to George III immediately after her arrival in London. This picture is believed to have been that sent to the King in advance so he could view his bride-to-be.

- Objects displayed reflect George III's character, his breadth of interests and learning, including architectural drawings, and astronomical and chorological scientific instruments. An early 19th Century glass water bottle (found during archaeological excavations by the palace's lift shaft) that once contained rose-coloured mineral water renowned for its medicinal properties is displayed alongside medals and a lady's silk belt with Hygiea cameo marking the King's recovery, introducing visitors to the King's well-known illness.

Pages' waiting room

- This room would have been sub-divided into a series of smaller compartments where household servants waited to be summoned by residents. The King's private rooms were located in an annexe (since demolished) that could be accessed from here.
- The entrance to central service stairwell is located here. Visitors can glimpse up this hidden staircase that enabled servants to move around the palace without disturbing the royal family.
- *Radio play: Queen Charlotte introduces visitors to herself, her extensive family and their time at Kew. The royal couple had no less than fifteen children, thirteen of whom survived into adulthood. Each child is presented one by one via an audio visual slideshow in this room.*

King's Dining Room

- The original 1630s house had no screen and corridor at the west end of this room and instead this would have been the main hall of the house. The plaster Tudor Rose on the ceiling would have been centrally positioned in the larger room. Plaster strapwork above the door in this room demonstrates the opulent interior décor of Sameul Fortrey's original house.
- George III was known for his simple culinary tastes, preferring food such as mutton chops. The dining room is furnished as it might have looked when the King stayed at the palace with a large dining table, laid out rather modestly reflecting these simple tastes.

- A small organ was also kept in this room. That displayed in this room is a new acquisition by Historic Royal Palaces to represent the one that
- George III put in his Dining Room at Kew. This instrument, attributed to Richard Bridge and Thomas Parker c 1740, is a rare example of early English chamber organ, largely in original condition. It is believed to have come from the Ridge family of Fyning House in Hampshire.
- The specially commissioned plates at each setting detail some of the important characters in George III's reign including Prime Minister William Pitt and Joseph Banks, the first director of Kew Gardens.
- Copy of a self-portrait of Van Dyck, by Giuseppe Nogari (18th century Italian) c1730-40 also hangs in this room. The Rev. Thomas Willis, brother of the two younger Drs. Willis (who treated the King for a recurrence of his illness in 1801) recalled asking to seeing this painting in this very room as a distraction to calm the King, who was reluctant to discuss his renewed symptoms at the time.

King's Breakfast Room

- This room was the informal eating room used by all of the family. Prior to that it was used as a schoolroom for the future George III and his brother Edward (later Duke of York).
- The room was refurbished in the early Georgian period and wood panelling was installed (some parts of which, e.g. the classical pilasters, came from the original 1630s panelling) and painted white. In the 1920s the paint was stripped away revealing different wood types that did not match! Subsequent attempts were made to disguise the variation by graining.
- The centre-piece of this room is the fascinating 'baby house', acquired from a New York art dealer in 2004 by Historic Royal Palaces. Made by a ships carpenter on the Royal Yacht using a cupboard, the princesses probably decorated some of the house and the miniature furniture themselves. In the late 18th Century it was given as a gift to the children of the Flag Captain of the King's ship in Weymouth. Its survival intact is

quite remarkable, complete with similar green verditer wallpaper with border, and beautifully grained doors and skirting boards, as found inside Kew Palace, making it a very rare Georgian piece.

- Also on display are other objects relating to education and childhood at Kew Palace, including a silver-gilt egg-boiler inscribed with the ciphers of George III and his five daughters, a gift to their father on his 66th birthday (1804); fabric samples from the princesses dresses; examples of handwriting exercises scribed by the princes; scientific instruments that belonged to the King as a boy; and a silver filigree rattle given to baby George, Prince of Wales, later George IV.
- A painting by Phillip Mercier (c1733) depicting George III's father, Frederick, and his sisters playing musical instruments with Kew Palace in the background hangs in the Breakfast room.
- *Window seats with built-in speakers are provided for visitors to hear about Royal education and growing up at Kew.*