

Factsheet

Frederick, Prince of Wales, door locks at Kew Palace

- The locks were crafted for King George III's father, Frederick, Prince of Wales, around 1728-30. Made of brass, each lock is engraved with four feathers, the Prince of Wales cipher and the initials 'FP'.
- Seventeen engraved locks were found installed on the doors inside Kew Palace.
- It is thought that the locks were made by a gunsmith, rather than a locksmith, as the steel internal mechanisms and very high quality hand engraving are typical of the skills required by the former. The Royal accounts also do not record the employment of a locksmith at Kew, adding credence to the theory that they were made by a gunsmith.
- Curators are undecided as to the origins of the locks. Some believe that Frederick had the locks made for the Dutch House (the building we now call Kew Palace) when he took up residence there for a few months in the late 1720s. Another theory is that they were made for the White House, the Royal residence that once stood opposite Kew Palace, and when it was demolished the locks were removed and installed inside the palace instead.
- All of the historic locks have been carefully conserved and restored by an ironmongery and metalwork specialist prior to reinstallation inside Kew Palace in 2006.
- A new replica lock was created to mark the official opening of Kew Palace in May 2006 by HRH The Prince of Wales. Minor alterations were made to the original design such as the letters 'CP' instead of 'FP' and the date '2006' replacing two of the four engraved feathers. The lock is located on a new door inside the palace on the first floor landing. The Prince of Wales was presented with an engraved key to this new lock in recognition of his official reopening of Kew Palace.