

Factsheet

The Orangery at Kensington Palace

The Orangery was built for Queen Anne in 1704-5 to a design attributed to Nicholas Hawksmoor. It was modified by Sir John Vanbrugh and the initial estimate of £2,599 had more than doubled by the time work was completed.

- The building was known as the 'Greenhouse' in the late 18th and early 19th centuries,
- It was used during the winter months for housing plants and in the summer for court entertainments. In 1718, the *Post Boy* reported: 'Yesterday being the Anniversary of HM's Birth Day, the Court at Kensington was more numerous than hath been known for many Years: at night there was a Ball in the Green House'.
- In 1785 the Orangery was fitted with two engines to lift the orange trees that were kept there during the winter months; in the summer they were transferred to the terrace outside.
- The building was restored in the late 19th century when much of the panelling was replaced.
- The interior is decorated with panelling, cornice and 24 Corinthian columns, all painted white.
- Above the arches at either end of the room are pine and pearwood carving by Grinling Gibbons. Beneath them are niches which now contain four statues of female deities by Pietro Francavilla, bought by Frederick, Prince of Wales in 1751.
- In the two circular rooms beyond is a pair of large vases sculpted by Caius Gabriel Cibber and Edward Pearce at the end of the 17th century for the gardens of Hampton Court Palace. The surrounding niches contain copies of Roman busts.
- The Orangery still retains its original terrace of Portland stone. The two brick gate piers to the west, surmounted by large stone vases, marked the northern end of the gardens before the wilderness was laid out in the early 18th century.

- Today the Orangery is a tearoom serving light lunches and teas. It is open daily throughout the year.