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BROMPTON BORDERS
THE GARDENS ISSUE

THE NEW CRADLE WALK AT KENSINGTON PALACE



One of Kensington's best-loved gardens has recently been elegantly refurbished: the Cradle Walk, which snakes around the perimeter of the Kensington Palace's Sunken Garden, has been reinstated. This curious leafy gallery, formed by the alignment of hundreds of parabolic-shaped arches clad in a livery of red-budded lime *tilia platyphyllos rubra* replaces, the earlier bower which was destroyed in the late 1980s, and enhances considerably the setting of Kensington Palace.

The original Walk was completed in spring 1909, and like the neighbouring Orangery Lawn, was created with a view to improving the character of the Palace's East Gardens. This area, which since its original embellishment in the late 1680s had been laid out in a succession of courtly styles, was by the late 19th century an unsightly blemish on the royal gardens. Edward VII – 'ever in quick sympathy with any project designed to add to the interest of the Royal parks and gardens, or likely



to increase their enjoyment by the public' – galvanised the restoration of the then 'unkempt and dilapidated' early 18th-century Orangery. He also banished the 'old unsightly conglomeration of forcing-houses and potting-sheds' which lay to the east of the royal apartments to forge the new gardens.

The reinstatement of the Cradle Walk and the replanting of the Sunken Garden are the first steps in a major project by conservation charity Historic Royal Palaces to reconnect Kensington Palace to the neighbouring park. The aim of the project is to transform access to and improve the visitor experience of Kensington Palace, including opening up its landscape setting by summer 2012 and creating extensive pleasure grounds for locals and visitors alike to enjoy. The lead consultant and architect employed by Historic Royal Palaces for the Kensington Palace project is John Simpson & Partners, and the landscape architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan has been charged with the improvement of the gardens.

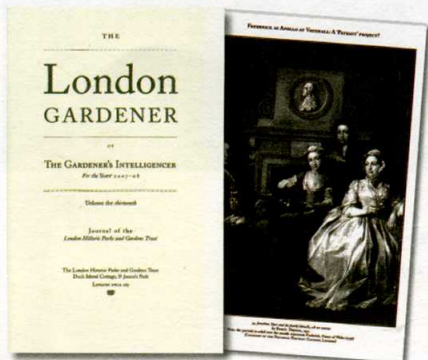
The New Cradle Walk was designed and its construction superintended by Gardens Adviser Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and his colleague James Fox, in collaboration with the Historic Royal Palaces' Gardens and Estate Team. The Walk's lightweight metal framework was made by the Sheffield-based blacksmith Andrew Renwick.



1 - Kensington Palace circa 1920. Credit: Country Life

2 - Looking down the Cradle today.

3 - Looking down the Cradle circa 1920. Credit: Country Life.



Landscape Architect Todd Longstaffe-Gowan is the editor of *The London Gardener*, the annual journal of the London Parks and Gardens Trust, which is the only journal dedicated to the history of London gardens. To subscribe to *The London Gardener* please visit www.londongardenstrust.org