

'Welcome to Kensington' project

News



October 2011

Inside:

Conserving a 'palace for everyone'

HRH The Duchess of Cornwall enjoys a fashion finale

Kensington's new gardens fit for a king

Queen Victoria's statue is receiving a conservation 'make over' ready for the completion of the 'Welcome to Kensington' project

Welcome to Kensington

Jo Thwaites, Project Sponsor

Over the summer the new gardens have really taken root with the grass and new topiary firmly bedding in the east gardens. A meadow seed mix of yarrow, wild carrot, bedstraw, oxeye daisy, yellow rattle buttercups and mallow autumn hawkbit is also now growing on the south lawn.

Behind the scaffolding the fine red brick arches of the new shop and cafe have been built, completing the new extension which sits beautifully against Christopher Wren's North Range. Our new visitor entrance loggia will soon become a reality with work beginning shortly on the structure which will be erected in early 2012.

We have also been busy conserving some of the most famous elements of the palace gardens. Kensington's Golden Gates have been carefully repaired and re-gilded and Queen Victoria herself (or rather the statue of her created by her daughter Princess Louise) has been receiving a makeover by conservators in anticipation of the grand reopening of the palace.

Inside the palace, our interpretation team have started fitting out the first floor rooms where our new permanent exhibition 'Victoria Revealed' will be. The newly painted rooms are beginning to take back the shape of Princess Victoria's childhood home once again.

We are carefully reawakening architectural details including mouldings, cornices, ceiling roses, shutters and architraves.



These and other special details speak of the different centuries of the palace so their repair and revival are very important.

Meanwhile, hidden modern services are gradually being upgraded and installed too. You'll never see the wiring but the light, warmth, security, fire safety and communications we need in the 21st century will all work quietly without intruding on the special atmosphere we are creating inside the palace.

Above: Kensington's Golden Gates are carefully repaired and re-gilded





News of Views: Kensington Palace Gardens

Todd Longstaffe-Gowan, Gardens Adviser to Historic Royal Palaces

Readers will know from previous editions of 'Welcome to Kensington News' that the new gardens at Kensington Palace are nearing completion, and that they are poised to open to the public from late March 2012.

When this momentous occasion takes place visitors will be able to enjoy the palace's pleasure grounds more or less as they were intended to be when they were dramatically recast in the English 'natural style' of gardening between 1726 and 1733 by the royal gardener Charles Bridgeman for George II and Queen Caroline. This is not because we have restored Bridgeman's original design (although we have kept what features survive of it), but

because we have removed a great deal of 'clutter' to reinstate the celebrated views he created from the palace to the extensive landscape beyond.

The recovery of these 'well judg'd vistas' to the Broad Walk, the 'Great Bow', and the Round Pond is a key component of the present landscape scheme, and underscores the larger aims of the Kensington Project - to reconnect the palace to the neighbouring park, and to make the *tout-ensemble* a more attractive and accessible attraction for residents and visitors to London.

The views will serve spatially to restore the integrity and design objectives of the still-very-much-intact Baroque landscape, and shall also reconnect the palace with the wider community.

Kensington Palace has for too long demurely concealed its many treasures behind hedges, railings and trees. It is hoped that with the advent of the new scheme that the royal splendours and, indeed, the regal idiosyncrasies of this formerly invisible royal demesne will once again with 'proud vigour rise', and take its place at the heart of London's Royal Parks and, indeed, the Metropolis.

The new gardens at Kensington Palace have been designed by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and James Fox.

Above: Late 18th century watercolour of the palace, seen from the south-east. The figures in the foreground stand on the earthworks constructed by Charles Bridgeman, and set off the unimpeded views of the building at that time