

Kew PALACE

Plan a spring day out at one of London's lesser-known royal residences, 120 years after it first opened to the public, says Adrienne Wyper

ing red-brick edifice in the beautiful grounds of Kew Gardens offers a fascinating insight into the lives of its former anointed inhabitants.

Built on the banks of the Thames in 1631 for a wealthy silk merchant, the double-fronted 'Dutch House' was leased by Queen Caroline, wife of King George II, in the 1720s. It was used as an intimate retreat, where the

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was leased by Queen Caroline, wife of King George II, in the 1720s. It was used as an intimate retreat, where the royal family could escape from public life. In 1781 King George III bought the freehold, and it then became a refuge for him during his periods of ill health, as charted

in the 1994 film The Madness of King George.

chair she used for resting, in which she died in 1818.

Below stairs, the enormous kitchens are preserved just as they were when Queen Charlotte died, with the lengthy original elm table, scarred by food preparation, as well as the copper boilers and charcoal stoves. Behind the

Palace is the Queen's Garden, designed in formal style ▷

It's easy to envisage royal life here: the bedrooms are restored to how they looked when they were occupied by daughters of King George III and Queen Charlotte. The Queen suffered from dropsy (swollen tissues due to excess fluid) and found it uncomfortable to lie down. Among the period furniture on display is the black horsehair chair she used for resting, in which she died in 1818.











