



BP PR 48 2012

▪ **The Right Honourable David Cameron MP Opens New Visitor Centre at Blenheim Palace on 6th July 2012**

In the largest development for over 200 years at Blenheim Palace, Friday 6th July 2012 marked the formal opening of a stunning new visitor centre at the World Heritage Site in Oxfordshire. The East Courtyard Visitor Centre was officially opened by The Right Honourable David Cameron, MP for Witney, and Prime Minister.

The new visitor centre is part of a major project that commenced in December 2011 to improve the retail and catering facilities in response to the dramatic increase of visitors to the Palace following the introduction of the 'free Annual Pass' ticket offer in 2009. Blenheim Palace now receives an additional 200,000 visitors per year, reaching an annual footfall of over 550,000.

The extensive redevelopment project, led by the Blenheim Estate Construction team, involved the covering in of the former Palace laundry drying yard in the East Courtyard to create a new retail area and visitor reception facilities, and converting the old laundry, which in the recent past has been used as a storage space, into new and expanded toilet facilities.

The East Courtyard Visitor Centre will include a dedicated visitor welcome desk, a new café called The Oxfordshire Pantry, and a stunning new shopping area. The developments took place in line with the appointment of our new catering partner, Searcys, in 2012, bringing new expertise and refreshed offerings to the Oxfordshire Pantry, in addition to a new Champagne bar in the Water Terraces Café, and the new Pleasure Gardens Deli.

The Right Honourable David Cameron said: "There are many reasons to celebrate this year in Great Britain, with the Diamond Jubilee, and the forthcoming London 2012 Olympics. Blenheim Palace is one of the foremost visitor attractions in the UK, and in competitive times it is wonderful to see the palace opening up new spaces for customers to enjoy. Blenheim Palace commemorates victory at great battles and is a vital part of history. I am very glad to celebrate the opening of the new visitor centre which is both a part of history and the future."

His Grace The 11th Duke of Marlborough comments: "This exciting project is the most significant development since the Palace was originally built. I am delighted that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, who is our local constituency MP, has officially opened this superb new space for the enjoyment of our visitors this year, and for many years to come".

Blenheim Palace is home to the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, and is the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill. The Palace was created a World Heritage Site in 1987, in recognition of its architectural importance.

Set in over 2,000 acres of Capability Brown parkland in the heart of the Oxfordshire Cotswolds, Blenheim Palace is a world-renowned visitor attraction and a superb venue for weddings, banqueting and conferences. Blenheim Palace is “Britain’s Greatest Palace”.

For more information visit www.blenheimpalace.com

This new centre is fitted throughout with Minoli Italian Porcelain tiles , from the Contemporary essentials collection, Minoli Stay Series Harbour 600 x 600. Minoli worked with Clive Wilkins Blenheim Palace Construction Manager and Roger File Blenheim Palace Property Director on the project to ensure that the tile was suitable and delivered on time to enable Blenheim Palace Estate Contractors to complete the project on time for the official opening.

The tile was chosen personally by His grace the Duke with his daughter Lady Henrietta during a visit to Minoli in early 2012.