Architect drawings for the rebuilt Botanic Cottage

The Botanic Cottage at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh (RBGE) has reopened 250 years after it was first completed - but in a different location!

Rescued in 2008 from demolition where it used to stand on Leith Walk, the 18th-century cottage has undergone a wholesale move and a traditional rebuild thanks to players of the National Lottery. It is now set to blossom as a new centre for community and education work in the Botanic Gardens.

Simon Milne, Regius Keeper at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, said: “The completion of the Botanic Cottage is such an achievement for everyone involved. It’s taken a lot of grit, determination, skill and commitment to get the building from Leith to Inverleith.”

The cottage was the idea of John Hope, the Regius Keeper of the time and leading figure of the Enlightenment. It originally served as the head gardener’s home, the main entrance to the Garden, and as a teaching facility for Edinburgh’s medical students learning about botany and horticulture. It was used in this way until RBGE moved to its present site in the 1820s. It then became a private dwelling, and more recently, business premises, until in 2008 it was threatened with demolition to make way for new development. It was then that local community campaigners stepped in with a plan to dismantle the cottage brick by brick and rebuild it over a mile away.

From little seeds, great things grow…

With the help of 47 apprentices and 10 trainees, learning important heritage conservation skills, the cottage was painstakingly built in the community and teaching gardens as the heart of RBGE's community education programme. It features a spacious gathering room upstairs while downstairs, has a kitchen along with a potting shed and additional education space housed in the wings. Groups of all ages will be able to use the Cottage for classes, workshops, demonstrations, talks and meetings.

Simon Milne, adds: "As a focus for education and community work, the building is a perfect space, and we hope that the groups using it in the years to come will be inspired to greatness by the history in the walls, the glorious setting and the unique craftsmanship around them."

The Botanic Cottage has already received a commendation at the UK Georgian Group's prestigious annual awards, recognising exemplary conservation and restoration projects in the United Kingdom. In their commendation, the Georgian Group said: "The Botanic Cottage rebuild is a heroic rescue of a garden building of real historic importance, and a triumph of craftsmanship and scholarly research."

Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland, concludes: "While this marks the end of the most incredible piece of conservation, it also marks the beginning of a new lease of life for this historic cottage. Thanks to HLF support, it will be a lively, welcoming hub where young and old, many with more challenges in life than others, can be inspired by and learn from RBGE's wonderful gardens and collections."

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Sutherland Forsyth in front of the Botanic Cottage

The Botanic Cottage in its new location

The Botanic Cottage throws open its (traditionally crafted) doors