

## FURNITURE NOTES

### A Remarkable Painted Bed at Temple Newsam

A spectacular painted oak tester bed has just been placed on display in one of the Top North West rooms at Temple Newsam House, Leeds, having spent several years in the conservation department while a later coat of discoloured varnish was removed and flaking paint areas consolidated. This striking object must be the finest example of painted regional furniture yet recorded and will be of exceptional interest to Americans who are constantly looking for English precedents for their own tradition of painted furniture.

The bed came from a yeoman's house in Kirkbride on the Lake District side of the Solway Firth. The head board bears the initials F H A and date 1724, while the lintel of the house is inscribed FRANCIS HALL / ANNE HALL / 1721; there is also an overmantel for the house which came with the bed carved F H A 1723. Francis and Anne Hall were married at Kirkbride on 1 August 1713, and the bed remained in the house until about 1977. When it was taken down a manuscript receipt dated 1734 was found for the purchase of three acres of local land. When Francis's father, the Rev. Henry Hall died in 1717 he left his son £200 to buy land. Our knowledge of the origin of this amazing bed greatly enhances its art historical importance.

The underside of the tester centres on an elaborately shaped lozenge decorated with a cross formed of leafy stems, while the corners are painted with eagles displayed. The cornices are ornamented with a running pattern of floral and leaf motifs and zig-zags. The head board incorporates a large cupboard door which formerly opened to reveal a wall niche, reputedly used for hiding smuggled contraband. The panel is designed as an arcaded niche framing a tall bushy tree between a pair of flowery mounds. The spandrels are painted with simulated drapery curtains held by ties headed by a scalloped valance. Flanking pilasters feature fabulous beasts and foliage while the border panels and head posts have been painted to simulate embroidered textiles which presumably matched the original hangings. It remains to be seen exactly how this bed fits into Anglo-Scottish decorative painting traditions.

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