

The Still Room at Temple Newsam House

Over a period of many years Temple Newsam House has been slowly transformed through a meticulously researched programme of works to restore the building's interiors, initiated and led with great enthusiasm and scholarship by Anthony Wells-Cole, recently retired as senior curator at Temple Newsam House.

The Still Room, a domestic interior on the ground floor, is the latest addition to this programme. At some stage in its history it had a distillery in it, hence the name. Its historic use included food and preserves preparation and the making of medicines, in addition to storage of the house's china. The room has been faithfully reconstructed to its 1880s appearance after excavation and analysis, drawing on the skills of specialist contractors in wallpaper manufacture, plastering, joinery and decorating. In-house conservation skills were essential to the project, as they have been with all previous room restorations, from excavation and analysis, commissioning and quality control, to hands-on conservation and restoration work.

The centrepiece of the room is the oak china press, supplied by a Leeds joiner, built and installed in the Still Room in 1740. This range of cupboards had been moved and heavily altered twice since 1922 (when Temple Newsam House came under ownership of Leeds City Council) and their successful reconstruction, by Leeds Museums and Galleries furniture conservator, Ian Fraser, was the key feature of the project.

Ian has been invited to present a paper on the reconstruction of the Still Room at the International Symposium on Wood and Furniture Conservation in Amsterdam in November (see page 8). This year, the conference is focussing on vernacular furniture, of which Temple Newsam House has an outstanding collection. Room restorations at Temple Newsam House continue with a current project, part funded by the Wolfson Foundation. Works to three upstairs rooms, the Darnley Room, Mr. Hugo's Room and the Red Dressing Room are all in hand.

Ian Fraser

The reconstructed Still Room at Temple Newsam House, Yorkshire

