



FRANK HOLMES FINE DÉCOR

Frank Holmes Fine Décor specialises in heritage decorating and restoration, incorporating specialist wallpaper installation, gilding, woodgraining and decorative finishes. Frank is also an Approved Lincrusta Installer and Restorer. Supported by his wife, Amanda, Frank works across the North West, from the Lake District and across to the Yorkshire Dales, down to Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

Frank and Amanda take us through some recent projects which range from a Lake District hotel, a Victorian town hall, a former millowner's house and a restored railway carriage.

Langdale Chase Hotel, Windermere

The Langdale Chase Hotel sits in an enviable position on the shores of Lake Windermere. Following a major refurbishment, the hotel reopened its doors to guests in November 2023. Now the hotel is placed at Number 3 in the Sunday Times top 100 places to stay in 2024.

Frank Holmes Fine Décor played a key role in the refurbishment when asked to restore and refinish what the owners' thought was Lincrusta in the lounges.

Frank said: "On investigation I realised I needed to do some research. We delved into our personal archives and discovered these embossed canvas wallpapers, friezes, dado and decorative ceiling are all rare survivors from

when Langdale Chase was built in 1891. Rather than being Lincrusta these are Tynecastle Tapestry designs, manufactured by William Scott Morton & Company, Edinburgh, founded in 1870. The remarkable Arts and Craft-style frieze in the Oak Room resembles old Scotch plaster. William Scott Morton, greatly influenced by the English Arts and Crafts movement, was at the forefront of developing embossed wallcoverings that imitated leather, stucco or carved wood."

Fortunately, Frank's experience enabled him to repair and restore these stunning embossed canvas wallpaper designs to their former glory.

Lincrusta and Pre-war Anaglypta restoration

Frank has repaired many Victorian and Edwardian raised relief dado wallpapers including Lincrusta, Anaglypta, Lignomur, Salamander, Tynecastle and other similar products dating from the 1870s. In this former mill manager's home, the Lincrusta dado – c.1890 – in all three storeys

Above, Langdale Chase Hotel, Windermere

of the hallway, was still in remarkable condition. Frank replicated additional panels needed to extend the vintage Lincrusta dado over a blocked-up doorway.

Royton Town Hall, Oldham

The refurbishment of Royton Town Hall, Oldham has been a major project involving multiple agencies: Oldham Council; Kepczyk Pearce Sanderson Architects, Handforth, Cheshire; Royton Historical Society, overseen by Seddon Construction, Bolton.

The Town Hall was constructed in 1880 as a purpose-built municipal building for the Royton Local Board of Health and was opened by the Board's first chairman, James Ashworth, in the same year.

Amanda said: "KPZ architects contacted us in February 2022 regarding damaged historical Lincrusta discovered above a suspended ceiling. Frank's first inspection was in April 2022, with the suspended ceiling *in-situ*."

"We were excited to identify two historical designs from the Lincrusta archives from around the 1880s - potentially the oldest known surviving Lincrusta! The top-most frieze is a ceiling paper cut down. Below that is a botanical wallpaper design. There are similarities to designs by Dr Christopher Dresser, a renowned industrial designer in the Arts & Crafts era. Lower down the wall there is a later

Below, Royton Town Hall - First Glimpse above the suspended ceiling



oak-grained Lincrusta 'linenfold' design, which is still available," Frank explained.

He added: "Sadly more storm damage and water ingress has occurred since our first visit. In November 2023, with the suspended ceiling down, I carefully salvaged some historical Lincrusta sections before other building renovations took place."

Frank stabilised the salvaged pieces (now dried out) and made moulds of each design. From these he handmade replica panels to make the repairs and reinstate the Lincrusta designs around the entire room.

The 'Lincrusta room' restoration will be completed in July.

ECJS Dining Car No.189

ECJS Dining Car No.189 is one of the world's oldest surviving dining carriages. Built by the Great Northern Railway Carriage works in 1894, it was a third-class dining car with 42 seats in three saloons. It worked on the London–Edinburgh/Aberdeen 'races to the North' run as part of the Flying Scotsman and operated for 33 years. Constructed in durable and rot resistant teak 189 then became a workshop on a Yorkshire farm, where it remained for six decades. But in 1998 it was a week away from destruction.

Thankfully it was salvaged and the car should eventually run on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.

"The polished gold engraved wood, fine etched glass, painted glass, and clerestory roof make this a craftsman's delight," said Frank.

"Several years in to the restoration by the LNER Coach Association, we became involved alongside conservator, Helena Brazil of Lincrusta Heritage. Lincrusta-Walton, as the company was then known, had a special range of designs specifically for railway carriages."

The only reference was an original black and white photograph from which Helena identified the Lincrusta border as one of two probable designs. Directors of LNERCA chose which design to reinstate, then Helena arranged for samples to be 3D printed.



Above, ECJS 189 c.1909 photo credit LNERCA
Below, Frank working on ECJS 189



Helena asked Frank to 'first cast' and then add in the fine detail by hand before recasting to prepare masters for mould making.

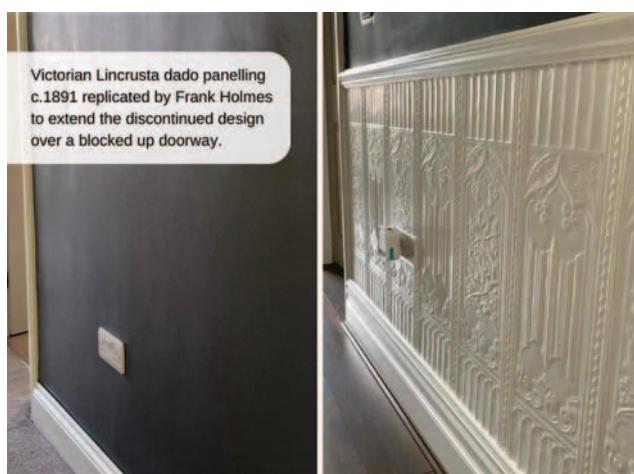
Frank said: "We spent a week in Pickering with Helena reproducing 450ft of 'straights' and 12 of the corner designs on site. Then we re-instated the Lincrusta borders to the clerestory ceilings. Nearby on the North Yorkshire Moors Railway, Tom Cruise and Hayley Atwell had been filming with the Mission Impossible team for 'Dead Reckoning: Part One'.

He added: "Our mission threw up its own challenges. The curved roof proved difficult when installing the border, despite using pieces fresh out of the mould. However, the expert LNERCA workshop engineers quickly produced their wooden template, which we reversed to lay our mould on to successfully cast the curved sections needed."

Car 189 is slowly returning to its 1909 condition, and the painstaking attention to detail continues.

"I've always been fascinated by fine details" said Frank, who has been in business for 34 years in June, "I've been privileged to work on some really interesting properties across the North West and I still love the feeling I get from restoring something back to former glory".

Above opposite, Victorian dado replication



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