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Reborn in the Jim Lawrence manner



Fans of the BBC One TV series *To the Manor Reborn*, in which actress Penelope Keith and TV antiques expert Paul Martin work with craftsmen and designers on the restoration of Avebury Manor, might have spotted the work of Hadleigh based iron works company Jim Lawrence.

The company, which is known for its craftsmanship in making curtain poles, lighting and other fixtures, was asked to help with recreating some of the original style of the manor, an important National Trust property.

The aim was to design a different visitor experience at the Tudor mansion in which people are able to use the furniture, play billiards and even jump on the beds.

A centrepiece of the series was a magnificent four poster bed. As the bed needed to be robust enough to be jumped on, rather than simply purchasing an original Tudor bed, the BBC started by buying a four poster bed at auction and then drafted a team of experts to make it fit for such an important country residence.

The Jim Lawrence team was asked to reconstruct the rails, fixings, hooks and rings

A Jim Lawrence craftsman using techniques from Tudor times. Below; the fixings made by Jim Lawrence and used in *To the Manor Reborn*. Above; presenter Penelope Keith



for the bed on which would hang the enormous Tudor style curtains and pelmet. Ian Dale, expert in charge of the bed reconstruction, chose the company for their craftsmen – they are among only a handful in the country with the necessary skills – who would be able to recreate the fittings as authentically as possible.

Ian said although the original curtain rings would have been pretty crude – a piece of iron twisted in to a C shape on an anvil – the process still used by Jim Lawrence of coating

finished ironworks in a beeswax finish was a skill employed in Tudor forges. Not everything was completely authentic, however. The team used tubular steel to take the enormous weight of the twill worsted Say cloth that surrounded the bed as solid steel would have been too heavy. Jim Lawrence's range of beeswaxed curtain poles and ironmongery is individually hand forged in its workshop in Hadleigh. Jim Lawrence said it was a real thrill to be part of such an exciting restoration project.