

Harewood House

Henry Lascelles bought the Harewood estate in 1738. At that time the medieval manor house, Gawthorpe Hall, stood just above where the lake is now, and it was here that the family originally lived. The Lascelles family wealth was founded in the early eighteenth century by Henry Lascelles and his half brother Edward who were involved in financing slave ships, providing mortgages to plantation owners, supplying goods to the Navy. They both acted as Collector of Customs for Bridgetown.

On the death of his father Henry in 1753, Edwin Lascelles inherited the estate. John Carr was also commissioned to design and build Harewood House. In 1765 Robert Adam returned designed the interiors. Adam wanted everything to be part of a decorative whole, and as you tour the House you will notice how in many rooms the friezes around the ceilings match not only the carvings on the large mahogany doors but also those on the chimney-pieces.

One of the master craftsmen who worked with Adam on many projects was Thomas Chippendale (1718-1778). Chippendale's notable reputation was largely based on his publication of furniture designs, 'The Gentleman's and Cabinet Maker's Director', first published in 1754. Chippendale's initial commission at Harewood lasted from 1767 until 1777 and was, at around £10,000, the most valuable he ever received. By comparison at this time a Housemaid earned between £8-10 per year.

Edwin Lascelles became Baron Harewood in 1790, but he died without heir leaving his cousin Edward to inherit Harewood but not the title. In 1796 the title was revived for Edward, who also went on to become 1st Earl of Harewood in 1812.

During the 1840s the 3rd Earl and Countess radically altered both the house and parkland. They invited Sir Charles Barry, architect of the "new" Houses of Parliament, to up-date the kitchens, add service passages, bathrooms, and generally modernise the House. They had thirteen children and wanted to provide more accommodation for their family and large numbers of staff. The alterations also considerably changed the external appearance of the house from a classical villa to an Italianate Palace with the fine Terrace to the south. The Terrace was viewed as an extra room, where the family could take tea and entertain.

In the 20th century Harewood became a Royal House when HRH Princess Mary, daughter of George V and Queen Mary, came to live at Harewood in 1930 as the wife of the 6th Earl. She had married the then Viscount Lascelles in 1922.

The 7th Earl and Countess of Harewood made Harewood into a charitable trust in the mid-1980s. The Trust was set up to secure Harewood's future in



the long term, and in the short term to finance the refurbishment of many of the State Rooms. The refurbishment involved the reinstatement of several of Adam's decorative schemes. In 1994 Harewood House was granted Registered Museum Status, the first country house to be given such an award, and in 1998 the then Museums and Galleries Commission, now the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, accorded Designated Museum Status to Harewood to reflect the national and international importance of its collections.

