Bringing lost homes back to life

With more than 50 years of experience in construction and restoration, R. W. Armstrong has built an enviable reputation as a traditional building company. Its restoration projects range from homes that have fallen into disrepair because of neglect or fire to extensions and refurbishments that adapt homes to include modern-day comforts without damaging the historic characters of the buildings. The award-winning company is on the list of approved contractors for English Heritage, SPAB, the National Trust and local-authority conservation departments. Its craftsmen work with the best architects and interior designers in their field, and apprenticeship training ensures that traditional skills continue to thrive.

Such skills were put to excellent use in a Grade II*-listed home, built in 1885, the north wing of which had been destroyed by fire. Together with Fine Town & Country House Commissions, the company restored the wing, re-creating the stone entrance, chimneystacks, Belvedere Tower and intricate brickwork, with more than 40,000 bricks specially made to match the old house. The interior was completed to an equally high standard, with old and new joinery being carefully matched. The finishing touches to the five-year project included the restoration of outbuildings, extensive landscaping and the construction of a new Victorian style pool pavilion.

A 17th-century Grade II-listed cottage gave an opportunity to employ traditional construction techniques, using natural and reclaimed materials, as the owner wanted to match the original finish as closely as possible. The walls were replastered with lime and horsehair or wattle and daub, with pigments, rather than paints. R. W. Armstrong’s extensive database of suppliers ensured everything, from reclaimed flagstones to new oak joists, was of high quality. Comforts such as underfloor heating were installed, and rewiring was hidden between the wattle and daub of the walls and then lime plastered.

‘Modern-day comforts can be added without damaging a building’s historic character’

Simon Lewis, director, R. W. Armstrong & Sons

Traditional homes do not have to have old-fashioned facilities. The owner of a Victorian home wanted a luxury leisure complex, complete with indoor pool, gym, jacuzzi and steam room, but was keen for it to be in keeping with the main house. R. W. Armstrong ordered limestone from Greece, and handmade tiles for the pool wall and mosaics for the base from Morocco. They were laid individually by hand, and the company’s own joinery workshop carved detailed finials.

For more information, telephone 01256 850177 or visit www.rwarmstrong.co.uk