

A SIGNED WELSH CHEST OF DRAWERS

Donald Blakeley

A chest of drawers by a Welsh maker has recently come to light (Fig. 1). It is of small proportions (30 in. high, 39½ in. wide and 18½ in. deep) and although simply constructed, its front is elaborately veneered for a country-made piece. The pine carcass and drawer linings are butt-jointed and nailed. Dovetailing is restricted to the front oak frame which supports the drawers. The front corners are set with semicircular mahogany columns nailed to the carcass, set between matching sections veneered in maple, cross-banded with rosewood. The drawer fronts are veneered in sycamore, cross-banded with rosewood with oak cock beading. The top of the chest is edged with a moulding of mahogany on the front and oak at the sides.

The maker's name — J. ROWLANDS — is impressed on the underside of the top right-hand drawer front (Fig. 2) and again several times on the underside of the lower long drawer. Pencilled inscriptions under the right-hand drawer include his full name followed by 'tyn derw Aber' which could represent his address. The name 'Aberwaengregin' is also inscribed close by but in a different hand. 'Ty'n derw' means 'the house in the oak trees/copse' whilst Aberwaengregin ('Aber of the white shells') is a misspelling of Abergwyngregin, a coastal parish and village situated some six miles east of Bangor in Gwynedd. Ty'n-y-derw appears on the area's OS map, and is three-quarters of a mile south-east of Aber. Signed pieces of this nature are extremely rare in north Wales and John Rowlands has not previously been recorded as a maker.

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2. Maker's mark struck under the top right-hand drawer front

1. Chest of drawers by John Rowlands, from the Bangor area of north Wales