

# WEST COUNTRY CHESTS, COFFERS AND BOXES

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The chest or coffer was the commonest item of furniture in old farmhouses and cottages. In a study of 456 probate inventories from the West Country,<sup>1</sup> dating from 1576 to 1769, out of a total of 5,492 pieces of furniture recorded 1,021 (over 20 per cent) are chests or coffers.<sup>2</sup>

As a means of storage the chest has many advantages. It is adaptable and can be used for many purposes. There are records of its use to contain corn, cheese, salt, potatoes, books, money, silver and plate, as well as linen, bedding and clothing. For many of these goods a chest is more suitable than drawers or a cupboard, particularly before the days of modern packaging. Another reason for the continued popularity of the chest in rural houses, long after it had ceased to be fashionable in town furnishing, may be found in the fact that the majority of old farmhouses had sloping ceilings to their upper rooms. There was no space for a chest of drawers or a wardrobe. A third factor was no doubt a matter of economics. The simple plank-constructed chest, made out of six boards nailed together, could be made out of local materials by any carpenter or wheelwright. Although there was a general tendency during the period to invest more in the home,<sup>3</sup> where fashion was no consideration cost remained important.

It must also be remembered that a chest is essentially portable, a quality made much use of in the past. In the Middle Ages plate and tapestries were transported during Royal Progresses in chests called standards, and at King's College, Cambridge can be seen the original chest in which King Henry VII sent £5,000 from London for the completion of the chapel in 1509. A traditional usage more relevant to the farmhouse is to be found in the former common practice of village girls going out into domestic service. These young women took with them a small chest in which to keep their personal belongings. There are many small plain chests to be found in finely furnished country houses which were probably brought in by maidservants and for some reason left behind. Normally a young woman would take her chest with her when she left, probably to get married, and it became therefore an early version of the bride's 'bottom drawer'. This tradition continued until the end of the nineteenth century, by which time the chest had developed into something more accurately described as a travelling box. There is an interesting description of the use of such boxes in *Louisa, Memories of a Quaker Childhood*,<sup>4</sup> wherein the author points out how the size and shape of the box were dictated by the ability of one man to lift it and the space available in the boot of a stage coach. The making of these boxes — a day's work for a craftsman — is described in *The Village Carpenter* by Walter Rose.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the documents contain entries such as 'one chest and two coffers', from which it is evident there was a distinction in the minds of the appraisers between the two pieces of furniture. What this distinction was is not easy to establish with any certainty today. S. W. Wolsey and R. W. P. Luff in their book *Furniture in England*<sup>6</sup> write 'Despite some evidence to the contrary, which may be the result of the ignorance of those recording at the time, it seems likely that throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the coffer related to a



1. Chest, oak, c. 1600. From Wolfeton House, Charminster, Dorset

type of chest with a domed lid covered with either leather or material and frequently studded with brass nails'. This accords with the description of Randle Holme in his *Academy of Armoury*, which is believed to have been written before 1649.<sup>7</sup> He refers to a 'Usurer's Trunke, or coffer . . . bound with plates, or Iron hoopes . . . If it haue a streight, and flat couer, it is called a Chest; which in all other things represents the coffer, save the want of a circular lid or cover'. The coffers described above were made by specialist craftsmen known as coffer makers, or cofferers, who also made the elaborate X-framed chairs covered with material and studded. It is doubtful whether any such pieces ever found their way into farmhouses or cottages, nor would they have had any place there. In this context the evidence of the inventories points to another interpretation.

It is noticeable that whereas the word chest attracts a number of different spellings, as chest, chesst, cheast, chist, cheist — all with or without a final 'e' — the permutations of the word coffer are variable to a much greater degree, ranging from coffer, cofer, cofar, cofear, coffr, coaffer, coafer, to coofer, couffer, couvfer, quafer, quaifer, cewfer, kofer, and kwafer. Some of these deviations can only be accounted for in terms of dialect, for which our alphabet provides no real phonetic equivalents. The intrusive 'w' or 'qu' sound in some of the above can still be heard in West Country speech where, for example, an acorn tree is



called a 'woak'. The implication is that the coffer was a common local name for a common local object.

This common local object is most likely to have been the simple six-board chest, as opposed to the joiner-made panelled variety. Other evidence in the inventories supports this view. In eleven instances chests are described as wainscot, which implies panelled construction. This word can be found also applied to cupboards, chairs, presses, boxes, and cradles, but never to a coffer. One would expect also that the joiner-made panelled chest would be considered more valuable than the locally-made coffer. Valuations in early documents must be treated with caution and are more often than not given for groups of items. There are, however, fourteen inventories within each of which a fair comparison of values can be made, and in every case it is clear that the chest was worth more than the coffer (see Table below). Although the only fully documented six-board coffer available, that in Corfe Castle church (Fig. 12) is described in the contemporary accounts as a chest, this need not invalidate the argument. There are many inconsistencies in old documents, and it may be that in a church the word chest seemed more suitable. The evidence of the furniture actually found in old farmhouses and cottages supports the interpretation suggested. The numbers of surviving seventeenth-century panelled chests and six-board coffers are in very much the same proportion as those recorded in the inventories.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the craft of the joiner appears to have died out completely. The few panelled chests made in the eighteenth century are evidently the work of craftsmen trained in a different tradition. Coffers, however, were still being made until the end of the century in village workshops. It is worth noting that the majority of West Country coffers from the eighteenth century are of elm rather than oak. Elm was used for a number of special purposes, particularly where water was present. It was used in water mills for wheel paddles and 'stanking boards'.<sup>8</sup> It was used to make 'V' shaped guttering under thatch and to form the troughs of dough bins and 'zylts'.<sup>9</sup> It was used by wheelwrights for the hubs of wheels and the floors and sides of wagons.<sup>10</sup> In the West Country elm was used extensively in house carpentry for beams, roofing and flooring. Village carpenters were also village undertakers, and wide elm boards, which might be needed at any time to make coffins, were part of their regular stock in trade. It is not surprising therefore, that elm boards were used by these village craftsmen, who were not primarily furniture makers, to produce coffers.

With the end of the making of panelled chests it is likely that the distinction in nomenclature between chest and coffer also died out. Any references in the eighteenth century to chests may refer equally to six-board coffers. In the nineteenth century the coffer was superseded by the travelling box, or blanket chest, which remained popular, as mentioned above, for its portability. The difference between this and the coffer is that a box has the grain of the wood at the ends running horizontally and the piece requires, therefore, separate feet or a plinth on which to stand.

The illustrations, Figures 1 to 20, show examples of all three types, chests, coffers and boxes. The panelled chests, the work of joiners, show inevitably some signs of the standardisation one would expect within a well organised trade. Domestic pieces tend to be fairly plain, any carving confined to the top rail and lightly incised patterns on panels. Even the plainest examples have some form of scratch mouldings on the framing, or alternatively the stiles and rails are channelled down the centre, the sunk ground ornamented with



2. Chest, oak, c. 1640. South-east Dorset



3. Chest, oak, carved with the initials of Zachary Winter and the date 1683. From the Wellington district of Somerset



4. Chest, oak, with incised and black painted decoration, late seventeenth century.  
Somerset/Devon border



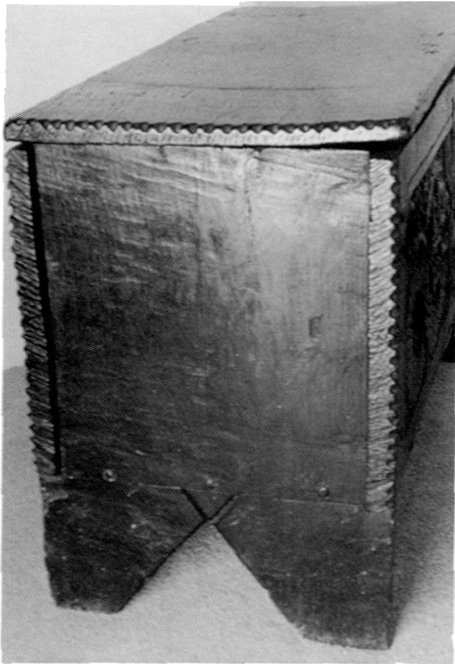
5. Underside of Fig. 4. The thin oak bottom board, with the grain running lengthwise, has been strengthened with an oak bar



6. Coffe, oak, with scratched and punched zig-zag decoration, c. 1660. From North-east Dorset. Probably made for an institution rather than for domestic use



7. Coffe, oak, dated 1642. West Country



8. End of Fig. 7. The crossed saw cuts are a typically West Country feature

9. Detail of carved frieze from above a fireplace at Wolfeton House, Charminster, Dorset, c. 1600

10. Coffin, oak, mid-seventeenth century. West Country





11. Coffe, elm, seventeenth century. South-east Dorset



12. Coffe, oak, in Corfe Castle Church, Dorset. Made by Henry Parlot in 1671 at a cost of 8s.

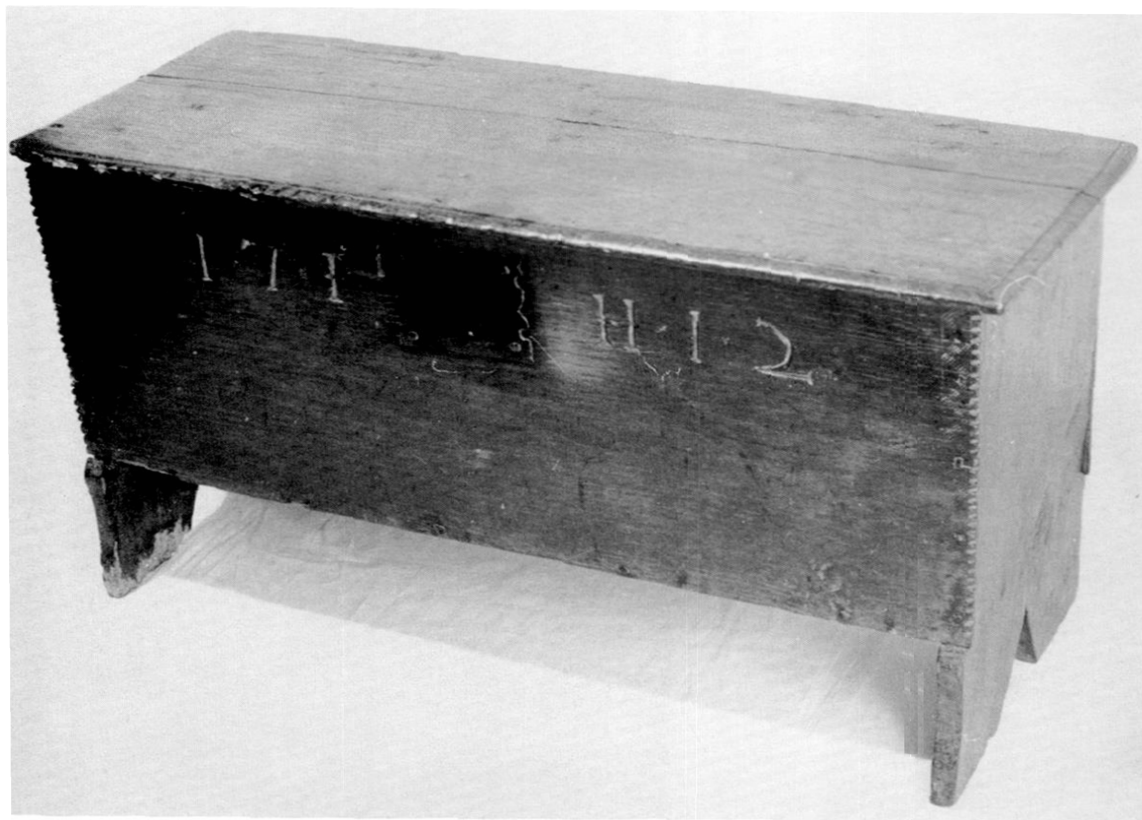




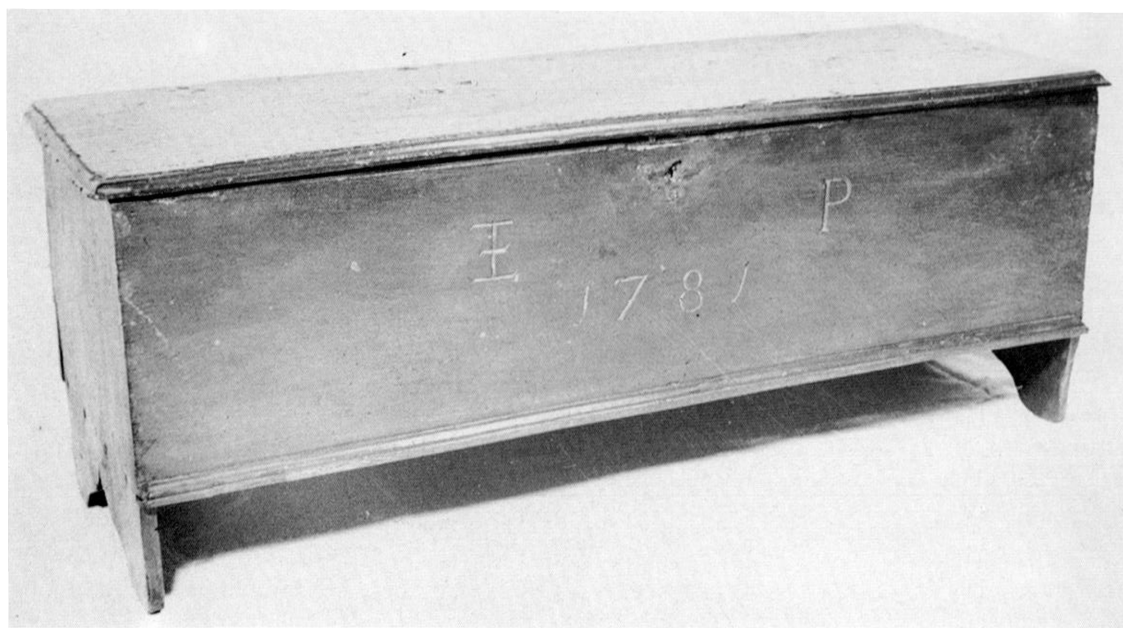
13. Coffe, incised HM and dated 1692, elm. West Somerset



14. Coffe, elm, inscribed Tho: Harris 1712. Devon



15. Coffe, elm, inscribed IP 1781. From a farm in north Devon



16. Coffe, elm, inscribed IP 1781. From a farm on the Quantock Hills, north Somerset





17. Coffe, oak, inscribed 1799. From a farm on the Quantock Hills, north Somerset



18. Travelling box, elm, early nineteenth century. From Wincanton, Somerset



19. Blanket box, elm, early nineteenth century. South-east Somerset



20. Travelling box, pine stained dark red, c. 1880. From Wincanton, Somerset



21. Stool (cricket), ash,  
c. 1800. West Country



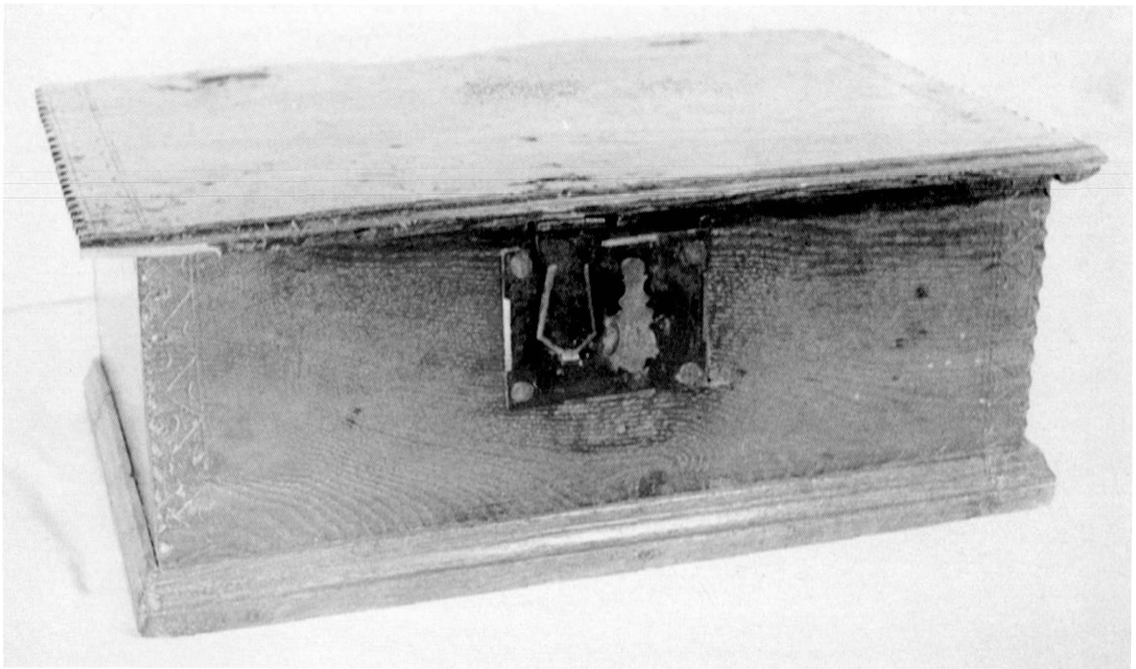
22. Box, oak, carved LM  
1753, formerly owned by  
the poet William Barnes,  
Dorset



23. Box, oak, seventeenth century, first half. From Porlock, Somerset



24. Back of Fig. 23 inscribed JPP Cooper Porlock

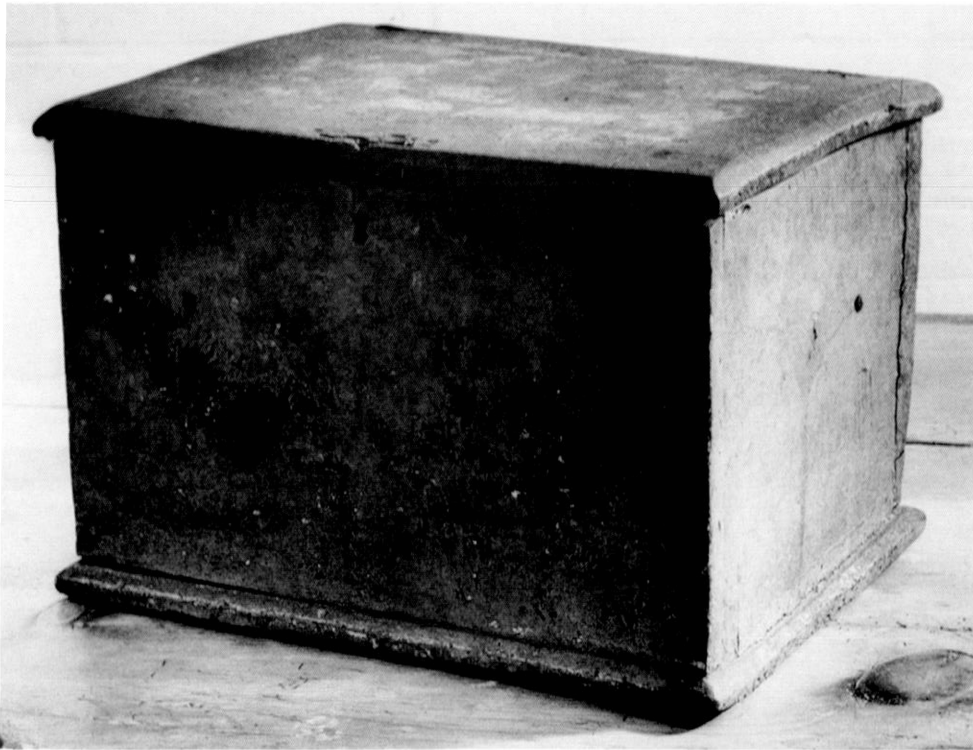


25. Box, oak, eighteenth century, first half. West Country



26. Box, elm, carved TP 1813 for Thomas Pring of Hemyock, East Devon





27. Box, elm, c. 1810, formerly owned by Thomas Hardy's grandfather. Dorset



28. Box, elm, c. 1810, bearing a brass tablet engraved C. Parsons. From Wincanton, east Somerset

scratched or punched patterns. Panelled lids are virtually unknown in the West Country. A tendency towards lighter construction is noticeable throughout the seventeenth century.

The six-board coffer is an ancient form which, in the seventeenth century, appears to have been influenced in its decoration by the panelled chest. Yet most seventeenth-century examples from the West Country show some traces of buttress feet. Figures 7 and 9 are exceptional in this respect. The notched end grain, which appears also on stools and boxes (Figs 21 and 22), can be seen on coffers from the late sixteenth until the end of the eighteenth centuries. The 'V' or stepped 'V' cut in the ends, which forms the feet of the coffer, is certainly the commonest shape seen in the West Country, though not universal. Eighteenth-century coffers do not usually have buttress feet.

The two blanket chests (Figs 18 and 19) are very crude in construction compared with the 'strong wooden chest well secured with iron clamps and three Locks and Keys thereunto', made by William Chippendale in 1770 for Admiral Long's Endowed School at Burnt Yates, Yorkshire.<sup>11</sup> It would seem that the canons of eighteenth-century woodworking did not reach some West Country workshops until some time in the nineteenth century. The maid's travelling box (Fig. 9) is of the standard pattern made in many parts of the country at the time and has no discernible regional characteristics.

Apart from chests and coffers there are smaller numbers of trunks and boxes recorded in the inventories.<sup>12</sup> Of trunks little can be said here. Those that have survived from the seventeenth century are elaborate creations which would not have been found in a farmhouse or cottage. Eighteenth-century trunks are of standard patterns, often carrying labels of their makers or sellers in provincial towns. They do not appear to have any regional characteristics and have therefore been excluded from this survey. Large numbers of boxes have, however, survived, of the kind generally described as 'bible boxes' (Fig 22 to 28). Although numbers of bibles appear in the inventories, none are associated with boxes and there is no reason to suppose this was the purpose for which they were made. Those which can be traced with any certainty to the West Country are generally of fairly light construction. Early boxes generally have the bottom extended with a half-round edge at front and sides. Later ones are finished with an applied moulding round the base. The sloping top, for writing or reading, found in some other parts of the country is not found in the West. Elm is less commonly used than in coffers, presumably because oak in smaller sizes was more readily available. Carving in many of the styles associated with the area may be found on these boxes and, indeed, is more common on them than on either chests or coffers.<sup>13</sup>

To sum up, it is possible to define those features common to panelled chests in the West Country, some of which are distinctive to the region. Boxes are more easily distinguishable by their carving, although a number have decoration similar to that found on coffers. It is the coffers from the West Country, particularly those from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, which seem to express most strongly the character of the region. Simply made, of native timber, and decorated with the simplest of tools, their designs evince a freedom of expression which is the hallmark of a genuine folk culture.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A TABLE ILLUSTRATING COMPARATIVE VALUES OF CHESTS AND COFFERS  
IN WEST COUNTRY INVENTORIES

1603	Corfe Castle	one chest	1/8	two coffers	1/8
1607	"	the halfe of the Chest	5/—	two coffers	3/—
1612	"	1 Chest	10/—	5 Coaffers	10/—
1614	"	one greate Chest	5/—	three coffers	4/—
1615	"	one greate Chest	6/8	1 Livery bedsteede a Coffe & a shelf	5/—
1622	"	one wainscott chest	5/—	3 Coffers a bad sea chest an old hutch a sive & a Range	4/—
1628	"	one wainscot Chest	4/—	one Coffe	1/6
1662	Yetminster	one chesst	6/8	to coouffers a boaxe and a trunke	8/—
1668	"	2 chests	12/—	2 Couffers	3/—
1673	Corfe Castle	one wayeskat Chest	5/—	two shop bordes one olde Cofer two beere vesels	2/6
1687	Yetminster	A chest	18/—	2 Trunks A Quafer & a Box	9/—
1689	"	Two Cheists	8/—	Three quofers and a box	8/—
1693	"	One Chest	10/—	One Trunke & Coffe	4/—
1694/5 (Feb)	Corfe Castle	1 Chest	5/—	1 Coffe 1 trunk & 3 Chairs & bottl frame	4/—
		1 Smal Chest	2/6		
		1 old Chest with 2 feather pillows in it	5/—	2 old Coffrs with 2 tubbs and other lumber	2/6

#### REFERENCES

1. 141 from Yetminster (pub. Bristol University Extra Mural Dept. 1976). 3 12 from Corfe Castle (Dorset County Record Office Bankes Papers transcribed R. Machin n.p.). 3 from Wimborne Minster (in private possession transcribed J. James).



2. Chests Yetminster 141, Corfe Castle 283, Wimborne 5.  
Coffers " 170, " 416, " 6.
3. Cf. W. G. Hoskin, *Essays in Leicestershire History* (1950) and *The Midland Peasant* (1957).
4. Louisa. *Memories of a Quaker Childhood*, ed. Evelyn Roberts, Friends Home Service Committee (1970).
5. *The Village Carpenter*, Walter Rose (1938).
6. *Furniture in England: The Age of the Joiner*, S. W. Wolsey and R. W. P. Luff (1968).
7. *The Academy of Armory*, Randle Holme (pub. 1688) (written c. 1649).
8. Stanking boards are the heavy timbers lowered into slots in the sides of canals and mill streams to dam back the water during repairs.
9. A zylt is a long shallow trough in which a side of bacon can be salted. The same article appears in the inventories also as a sylting trough. Nineteenth-century zylts were sometimes lead-lined.
10. Cf. *The Wheelwright's Shop*, George Sturt (1923).
11. No. 9 in *An Exhibition of Town and Country Furniture Catalogue* by C. G. Gilbert (Leeds, 1972).
12. Trunks Yetminster 71, Corfe Castle 51, Wimborne 0.  
(inc. 1 Portmanteau)  
Boxes " 146, " 162, " 6.  
(several writing boxes)
13. For West Country styles of carving see *Oak Furniture from Gloucestershire and Somerset*, A. Wells-Cole and K. Walton (Bristol and Leeds, 1976), and 'Oak Furniture in Dorset' by A. Wells-Cole, *Furniture History*, xii (1976), pp. 24-28.
14. *Excavations in The Donyatt Pottery*, R. Coleman-Smith and T. Pearson (Phillimore, 1988).
15. Dorset County Record Office, ref: PE.COC.CW3. For the inventories see article elsewhere in this journal.
16. *Mechanic Exercises or The Doctrine of Handye Workes*, Joseph Moxon, pub. in parts (1683/5).
17. 'The Old Devon Farmhouse and its Furnishings, Part II', C. H. Laycock, *Transactions Devon Association* (1922).

#### NOTES TO THE ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Chest from Wolfeton House, Charminster, Dorset. The house, parts of which are Norman, was extensively remodelled about 1600 and this chest probably dates from that time. The house remained in the possession of the Banks family until 1964, when the contents were dispersed. Although this is a sophisticated piece from a wealthy house, the simplified adaptation of linen-fold panelling points to a provincial origin; the quality indicates the skill available in the area. The unusual bun feet are original, being turned out of the solid timber of the stiles.  
Dorset. Oak. c. 1600.
2. Chest from 22, The Green, Studland, Dorset. This chest, with other pieces now in the Dorchester Museum (cf. Fig. 11) is known to have been in the same house since 1865. With its flat lid, formed of two boards, plain panelling relieved only by scratch mouldings and simple carving on the top rail, it is typical of the majority of chests found in the West Country. Three panels on the front, however, are more common than four.  
South-east Dorset. Oak. c. 1640.
3. Chest of Zachary Winter. The Winter family, in whose possession this remained until 1970, came from near Wellington in Somerset. The general similarity of this chest with that in Figure 2, from more than a hundred miles away is striking. The lozenges, with leaves sprouting from the corners, were a very popular motif in the West Country and can be seen on many different pieces of furniture.  
West Somerset. Oak. Dated 1683.
4. Oak chest with incised compass pattern, the alternate leaf shapes, both on panels and framing, picked out in black paint. This type of decoration can also be seen on late seventeenth-century pottery excavated at Donyatt, near Ilminster, Somerset. Such a late example of painted oak furniture is remarkable.  
Somerset Devon border. Oak. Late seventeenth century.
5. The underside of Figure 4. At least four chests have been noted with almost identical decoration, some with red and blue paint, and all coming from the same area. All of them have the same appearance underneath as illustrated here, the bottom being a single thin oak panel nailed on with the grain running lengthwise and strengthened by a rough-hewn oak bar. The grain of chest bottoms

normally runs across the piece. The similarities of style and construction of all these chests suggests they were the product of the same workshop.

6. Coffers found, covered with grey paint, in the outhouse of a cottage in Gillingham, Dorset. The multiple locks and initials suggest this was made originally for institutional rather than domestic use. The additional moulding under the lid was designed to prevent forcing of the locks. The moulding on the top, similar to that seen on early seventeenth-century joined stools, and the strongly marked Gothic-style buttress feet, both point to an early date. The gouged scalloping of the end grain of the front, the moulding along the bottom edge and the scratched and punched zig-zag decorative band are all typical of the West Country (cf. Figs 21 and 25).

North-east Dorset. Oak. c. 1600.

7 and 8. Carved oak coffer dated 1642. This piece has three typical West Country features, the moulding along the bottom of the front, the gouged scallops of the end grain and the shaping of the ends. This straight cut 'V' shape seems to have been the most popular method of forming the feet in the West Country (but see Fig. 11). The crossing of the two saw cuts forming the 'V' can be seen on other coffers (e.g. Fig. 9). The chamfered edges in this case indicate that this was intentional. The overhang of the front and back to the sides is unusual, as is also the lack of buttress feet at this period. (There is no sign of nail holes on the ends below the front).

West Country. Oak. 1642.

9. Portion of carved frieze from above a fireplace at Wolfeton House, Charminster, Dorset (see note to Fig. 1 above). I am grateful to Anthony Wells-Cole for information that he has recorded carvings of opposed dragons in several churches in Dorset and north Somerset. This motif clearly enjoyed widespread popularity in the region.

Dorset. Oak. c. 1600.

10. Coffers with three and a half pairs of opposed lunettes. The bottom moulding on the front, the notched end grain and the crossed saw cuts forming the feet are typical West Country. Inverted lunettes can also be found on other West Country furniture and woodwork. (There is a very bold example of these to be seen in the church at Queen Camel, Somerset.) As Figure 7, above, there is no sign that this coffer ever had buttress feet.

West Country. Oak. Mid-seventeenth century.

11. Coffers from 22, The Green, Studland, Dorset. The carving on this coffer may be compared with Plate 6c in Anthony Wells-Cole's article 'Oak Furniture in Dorset', *Furniture History*, xii (1976). The ends are shaped with the typical 'V' cut. There are signs that this piece originally had buttress feet. The illustration shows what was probably the primary purpose of the so-called glove box in a chest or coffer.

South-east Dorset. Elm. Seventeenth century.

12. Coffers in Corfe Castle Church. An entry in the Churchwardens' accounts for 1671 reads 'pd. Hy Parlot for a chest 8/-' (not Harry Paulett in 1672, as given in the *Dictionary of English Furniture*, 11 (1924), under the heading Construction, and as in the church guide). The two locks were added later at a cost of 8d. The stepped 'V' cut forming the feet is a fairly common alternative version of that seen in Figures 7, 9, and 11. The original buttress feet have been lost. Henry Parlet's [*sic*] probate inventory, dated 1679, includes an item 'for his Working tooles £1 os od'. Total value was £39 11s. 8d.<sup>15</sup>

South-east Dorset. Oak. 1671.

13. Coffers inscribed H.M. and dated 1692. The diamonds sprouting leaves are typical (cf. Fig. 3) as also the mouldings on the front, top and bottom, with notched ends. The feet, also notched and clearly original, are perhaps not so much a foreshadowing of eighteenth-century bracket feet as a reminiscence of the shaped aprons below some early chests. Other examples of this treatment, more nearly Gothic in inspiration, have been noted.

West Somerset. Elm. 1692.

14. Coffers of Thomas Harris. The cursive scrolling on this piece is notable for its freedom of line. Other variations on this theme can be found. The bead along the bottom of the front and the 'V' cut

ends relate to earlier examples illustrated here.

East Devon. Elm. 1712.

15. Coffe inscribed I(J?) H. 1712. This coffe, from a farm in North Devon, has retained a simple version of the earlier type of buttress feet. The notched ends of the front and the 'V' cut ends mark its regional origin.

North Devon. Oak. 1712.

16. Coffe inscribed I(J?) P. 1781 from a farm on the Quantock Hills. The applied moulding across the bottom of the front, which is carefully returned just short of the ends, is a feature which is sometimes seen on late eighteenth-century pieces in the area. The curved cut-out forming the feet is similar to Figure 6.

North Somerset. Elm. 1781.

17. Coffe from a farm on the Quantock Hills. On the lid is scratched a crude pattern of tulips and the date 1799. This form of housing of the front into the ends can be seen on other late coffers and is sometimes cut at an angle, giving the impression that the carcass of the piece is dovetailed together.

North Somerset. Oak. 1799.

18. Elm travelling box ('blanket box') from Wincanton, Somerset. With its boxed lid and plinth cut out to form bracket feet, this box marks a clear break with the old tradition. Its simple nailed construction and the use of wide elm boards suggests it was made by the same kind of unspecialised village woodworker who made many of the coffers.

South-east Somerset. Elm. Early nineteenth century.

19. Elm blanket box similar to the foregoing and from the same area. The exuberant and slightly irregular scalloped plinth and simple construction, the mouldings not mitred at the corners, are the mark of the country craftsman. These two boxes may be construed as transitional pieces marking the change from the old tradition of the coffe to the standardised form of carpenter-made box.

South-east Somerset. Elm. Early nineteenth century.

20. Travelling box stained red, with iron carrying handles. This belonged to Louisa Martin, who died in Wincanton in 1956 aged 90. By her own account it was the box in which she took all her belongings when she first left home to go into domestic service. It remained in use in her bedroom, under a sloping ceiling, until her death.

South-east Somerset. Pine, stained dark red. c. 1880.

21. A typical West Country stool. Such a stool is more properly termed a cricket. There is no historical justification for the application of the word cricket to any other piece of furniture. Joseph Moxon describes the use of a draw-knife for making the legs of crickets,<sup>16</sup> but those from the West Country almost invariably have legs of rectangular section, or chamfered, sometimes braced in pairs with a rounded stretcher. One or two crickets usually stood by the hearth, as described by C. H. Laycock,<sup>17</sup> and were the traditional seat of the story-teller — hence the title of the book *The Cricket on the Hearth* by Charles Reade. These stools are, or at least were, very common in the West Country. The tops are, without exception, decorated with a bead and notching. The similarity between this and Figures 6 and 25 in particular is noteworthy.

West Country. Ash. c. 1800.

22. Box which belonged to William Barnes, the Dorset poet. Although William Barnes was not born until 1801, this box may well have been in his family in 1753 and is typical of many West Country examples. The label on the end is inscribed 'Writings' in the poet's own hand, indicating his use of it.

Dorset. Oak. 1753.

23. Box from Porlock, Somerset. The carving on this may be compared with some of that illustrated in *Oak Furniture from Gloucestershire and Somerset* (q.v.). The thin boards of which it is made and the base protruding to form a moulding are characteristic of many regional examples.

West Somerset. Oak. First half eighteenth century.

24. Rear view of Figure 23 showing the inscription. Although no trace of the name Cooper can be found in the parish records of Porlock between 1680 and 1850, the writing indicates this box must have been in West Somerset at an early date.

25. Oak box with scratched and punched decoration. The notched end grain and the zig-zag pattern are comparable with that on Figure 6 although this box must be very much later in date. The lock is evidently a replacement.

West Country. Oak. First half eighteenth century.

26. The box of Thomas Pring. The Pring family came from Hemyock in East Devon. The box remained in the possession of a descendant until 1972. The notched ends and scratched decoration are late survivals. The box top is comparable with Figures 18 and 19 of similar date.

East Devon. Elm. 1813.

27. Elm box which belonged to the grandfather of Thomas Hardy, the novelist. Hardy's grandfather carried this on his back when he 'marched over Ridgeway to meet Napoleon,' a scene described in 'The Dynasts'.

Dorset. Elm. c. 1810.

28. Elm box from Wincanton of similar size and shape. On the lid is a brass plate engraved C. Parsons in copperplate writing. Parsons is a common name in Wincanton and East Somerset.

East Somerset. Elm. c. 1810.