

Five Generations of Buckinghamshire Chair-Makers: The Lovegrove Family of Eton and Upton-cum-Chalvey

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The neighbouring Buckinghamshire villages of Upton and Chalvey, which later became incorporated into the town of Slough, are well recognized as being the workplaces of the earliest known Windsor chair-maker John Pitt (b. 1714, d. 1759) and of his possible associate/successor Richard Hewett (b. 1722? d. 1777).¹ However, a chance finding of an online genealogical database has provided evidence of another family resident in Upton-cum-Chalvey who also made chairs over a long period of time.² It is not known whether this family, the Lovegroves, routinely marked or labelled their chairs and, to the author's knowledge, only two of their products, a stool and chair, have so far been identified. However, as will become apparent, it is reasonable to conclude that they too were makers of Windsor chairs. Moreover, since five generations of Lovegrove family members were involved in this enterprise, their overall output must have been considerable.

The purpose of this article is to provide information about this little known but possibly quite important Buckinghamshire chair-making family. Many of the details have been found in the Lovegrove family history website which includes information from a huge variety of sources such as parish registers, wills, censuses, directories, quarter session records, etc.³ However, additional material has also been obtained from the online International Genealogical Index (IGI), online census records, and the Buckinghamshire *Posse Comitatus* of 1798.⁴ Note that because there were several Henry Lovegroves, these individuals are referred to numerically in chronological order.

The earliest family member to have been recorded as a chair-maker is Henry Lovegrove (no. 1) who might have been christened in Wantage, Berks, on 8 December 1720 and possibly died, aged 96, in 1815.⁵ He married Margaret Woolman at Upton on 30 May 1751 and they had the following offspring baptised at Eton; Mary (1752), Henry (1755, no. 2), John (1757), Anne (1759), George (1761), Sarah (1764) and James (1766).⁶ Margaret, described in the database as the wife of chair-maker Henry, was buried at Eton in 1793 so the probability is that Henry (no. 1) lived and worked at Eton rather than Upton (about 1¾ miles away).⁷ Henry is therefore likely to have been making chairs at Eton from the 1750s onwards. He would also have been a

¹ Stabler (1977); Parrott, 'New information' (2008).

² www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/.

³ Ibid.

⁴ www.familysearch.org/; www.ancestry.co.uk/; Beckett (1995).

⁵ www.familysearch.org/; Berkshire Record Office, National Burials Index. The index, which does not give occupations, records the burial of Henry Lovegrove, aged 96, 1 February 1815, at St John The Evangelist, Eton.

⁶ www.familysearch.org/.

⁷ www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/.

contemporary of John Pitt, who died prematurely in 1759, and Richard Hewett (died 1777), both of whom made Windsor chairs at nearby Upton.⁸

Henry's firstborn son Henry (no. 2) is recorded as a chair-maker in the Posse Comitatus (1798).⁹ He married Sarah Piner in Burnham, Bucks, Sept. 19th 1778 and they had eleven children all of whom were baptised at Upton.¹⁰ The offspring were; Henry (1779, no. 3), Sarah (1781), Anne (1783), William (1784), Elisabeth (1786), Jane (1788), Thomas (1790), James (1792), Louisa Ann (1795) and twins Edward and Richard (1797).¹¹ It is probable that William and Richard became furniture-makers away from Upton. *The Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* notes a William Lovegrove as a chair and sofa maker in Prospect Place, Kent Road, London, in 1826 and a Richard Lovegrove is described as a furniture broker in 1822 and a Windsor, fancy and garden chair-maker in Egham, Surrey, between 1822 and 1839.¹² Also of relevance is an 1833 record of insurance on properties belonging to Edward Middleton, gent, of Vauxhall. One of these, 5 Cumberland Row, Kennington, was occupied by 'Lovegrove, rustic chair-maker'.¹³ This is likely to be Richard who married Frances Harris at St Mark's, Kennington, in June, 1838.¹⁴ Therefore, it seems that the entries for William and Richard in the Dictionary may have been transposed.¹⁵ Henry's second son John, also recorded as a chair-maker, married Mary Clark in Latimer, Bucks, on 10 October 1780.¹⁶ They had four children christened at Upton and Eton; Charles (1788), John (1789), Mary Ann (1793) and John (1800); their first son named John died in 1793.¹⁷

Henry (no. 3) stayed in Upton and took over the family chair-making business, probably from his father Henry (no. 2) rather than from his uncle John (see below). His marriage is not recorded in the IGI although the Lovegrove family database suggests that he married Elizabeth Hatch in Great Marlow, Bucks, on 24 August 1820.¹⁸ However, it is certain that his wife was called Elizabeth and that they had ten children all of whom were christened at Upton; Mary (1821), Henry (1823, no. 4), Alfred (1824), William (1825), Eliza (1827), Amelia (1829), Ann (1831), Helen (1833), Charlotte (1835) and Caroline (1837).¹⁹ Additionally, it seems that Henry (no. 3) may have married twice as there is a record of a marriage at Upton between Henry Lovegrove (aged twenty-eight) and Mary Pitt, perhaps a distant relative of John Pitt, on Jan 1st 1807.²⁰ However, there is only one child, Mary Ann (1815), recorded from this union.²¹ Possibly both mother and daughter died and Henry remarried in 1820 (aged forty-one). Around this time it appears that Henry (no. 3) took over the business from his father, who would

⁸ Stabler (1977).

⁹ Beckett (1995).

¹⁰ www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/; www.familysearch.org/.

¹¹ www.familysearch.org/.

¹² Beard & Gilbert (1986), p. 556.

¹³ Guildhall Library, MS 11936/539/1157029, 19 June 1833.

¹⁴ www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/; www.familysearch.org/.

¹⁵ Beard & Gilbert (1986), p. 556.

¹⁶ Beckett (1995); www.familysearch.org/.

¹⁷ www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/; www.familysearch.org/.

¹⁸ www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/.

¹⁹ www.familysearch.org/.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

then have been sixty-five years old. Evidence for this is provided by a printer's proof of a receipt form, 200 copies of which Henry (no.3) seems to have ordered.²² This is laid out as follows:

Slough,
 Bucks 182
 Mr
 Bought of Henry Lovegrove, Junr
 Windsor and Garden Chair Manufacturer
 £ s d

W Lindsey March 29 1821
 (200)

Henry Jnr (no. 3) is also listed as a Windsor and garden chair-maker in Slough, Bucks in 1823.²³ Similarly, in the surname index of Robson's 1839 *Commercial Directory* for Buckinghamshire, H. Lovegrove (no. 3) is described as a 'Garden/Windsor Chair Mnf Slough & Salt Hill.'²⁴ Henry (no. 3) and his son Henry (no. 4) are also listed as chair-makers in the 1841 census and in 1851 Henry (no. 3) is described as a 'Master chair-maker employing ...' at 146 Bath Road Upton-cum-Chalvey.²⁵ However Henry (no. 3) died that year and his will (see later) is held by the National Archives.

Henry (no. 4) carried on the family chair-making business and married Emelia Hyde at Upton on 1 February 1854. They had three children christened at Upton; Ernest Henry (1854, no.5), Isabella (1855) and Frederick William (1859).²⁶ However the baptism of a fourth child, Emily, aged 6 in the 1871 census, cannot be traced in the IGI.²⁷ In the 1861 census Henry (no. 4) is described as a 'chair-maker and miller' and in the 1871 census he is recorded as a 'chair-maker employing men and boy' and his son Ernest is also described as a chair-maker; their address is given as 6 High Street, Slough with a chair-maker named Harris at no. 6a.²⁸ However, in the 1881 census Henry (no. 4) is noted as a 'Chair-maker employing 8 men' and Ernest is described as a 'Horticultural builder', with their address given as Eliza Place, High Street, Slough.²⁹ A stool made by Henry (no. 4) turned up at auction in 2004. The description was 'A 19th Century Elm topped oblong Stool inscribed "H. Lovegrove, Slough, 1858" on turned supports'.³⁰ Recently, also, an unusual rustic chair by this maker has come to light (Figure 1). It is constructed of ash and some yew with an elm seat and the underside of the seat is finely impressed with 'H. LOVEGROVE SLOUGH C&M 1864' (Figure 2). However, attempts to find out what was meant by 'C&M' have been unsuccessful.

²² Kingston Museum and Heritage Service, KXII/3.

²³ Beard & Gilbert (1986), p. 556.

²⁴ www.genuki.org.uk.

²⁵ www.ancestry.co.uk.

²⁶ www.familysearch.org/.

²⁷ www.ancestry.co.uk.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Boulton & Cooper, Malton, Yorkshire, 2004, lot 1040.



1 (left) Rustic chair, by Henry Lovegrove, 1864, elm and other woods.

John Boram

2 (above) Underside of Figure 1, showing the finely impressed maker's mark.

John Boram

Ernest Henry (no. 5) was also referred to in 1888 as a 'dealer in rustic work and chair-maker' in Slough and, in the 1891 census, as a 'rustic summerhouse maker' in Slough.³¹ He was apparently still in business in 1895 but there is no record of him in the 1901 census.³² It seems that his father, the chair-maker Henry (no. 4), almost went bankrupt in 1888 but the receiving order was rescinded because an application to pay his creditors at 17s. 6d. in the pound was approved.³³ This may have been the stimulus for Ernest Henry to give up chair-making and concentrate on making garden buildings but it seems that this business may also have failed. In summary, therefore, five generations of Lovegroves were chair-makers in the Slough area from about 1750 to 1890, i.e., about 140 years. There is also evidence that the family were millers and bakers.³⁴

³¹ www.ancestry.co.uk.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *The Times*, 4 January 1888, p. 11.

³⁴ www.ancestry.co.uk.

Henry Lovegrove's (no. 3) will, written in 1850 and proved 4 October 1851, provides further information about his business and family.³⁵ In this he is described as a chair-maker and baker and the various bequests he made can be briefly summarised as follows. His wife Elizabeth and surviving daughters Eliza, Amelia, Ann, Helen, Charlotte and Caroline were to receive equal parts of any monies owed to the business after payment of debts, and also of the household contents. His friend Edward Brown, gentleman, a builder George Lander, and his son Henry (no. 4), chair-maker, were to be given the use of his freehold cottages and land at Wallingford Road, Slough, for the benefit of his wife Elizabeth; on her death the properties were to be sold to set up a Trust Fund. His son Henry (no. 4) was to receive the freehold house and chair-making workshops at Slough (partly occupied by his son Alfred). Henry (no. 4) was also left the goodwill of the chair-making business together with the tools and stock-in-trade, providing he paid £250 into the Trust Fund. His son Alfred was to be left the bakehouse and the parcel of his land (dimensions given) at Slough on which it stood, together with the goodwill of the bakery, its stock-in-trade, utensils, horse and cart and book debts, on condition that he paid Elizabeth £10 per quarter and all the business debts. His son William was to receive the goodwill of his bakery business at Egham, together with the stock-in-trade, utensils, furniture, etc. The Trust Fund was to be invested and used to benefit his surviving daughters and Mary, John and Eliza Fassnidge, his grandchildren by his deceased daughter Mary. However, in a codicil added on 26 August 1851, parts of the will were revoked and some alterations were made to various financial arrangements. From all of this it can be concluded that Henry (no. 3) had run two successful businesses and owned several freehold properties in Slough.

Although only one chair made by the Lovegroves has so far been recorded, some idea of their later products can be got from a fascinating historic photograph of part of their premises on Slough High Street taken *c.* 1870 (Figure 3). This picture is believed to show, seated cross-legged at the front wearing a top hat, the proprietor Henry (no. 4), who would then have been in his late forties, with possibly two of his four children at his side; close inspection also suggests that Henry might be holding something on his lap, perhaps an infant.³⁶ A signboard on the timber-clad building that probably served as the workshop has 'H. LOVEGROVE CHAIR MANUFACTURER' painted in large letters, the wording partly obscured by a what looks to be a large five-branch rustic planter. Five workmen in aprons, and another individual, possibly female, are visible and several seats are placed in front of a picket fence; these include a smoker's bow, a folding steamer chair and two rustic garden seats constructed from twigs and branches. Various items of outdoor furniture and several tiered rustic planters stand behind the fence and six urn-shaped planters are lined up above the signboard. Another rustic seat is partly visible on the far right of the photograph and in the background can be seen some stools, large piles of timber, and one of the outbuildings. However, it appears that by 1899 the manufactory was no longer in existence.

³⁵ National Archives, Prob.11/2142; www.lovegrove.force9.co.uk/ons/.

³⁶ The Slough Museum caption states that Henry is shown with his grandchildren. However, Henry (No. 3) died in 1851 and the children are about the right age to be the two youngest of Henry (No. 4).



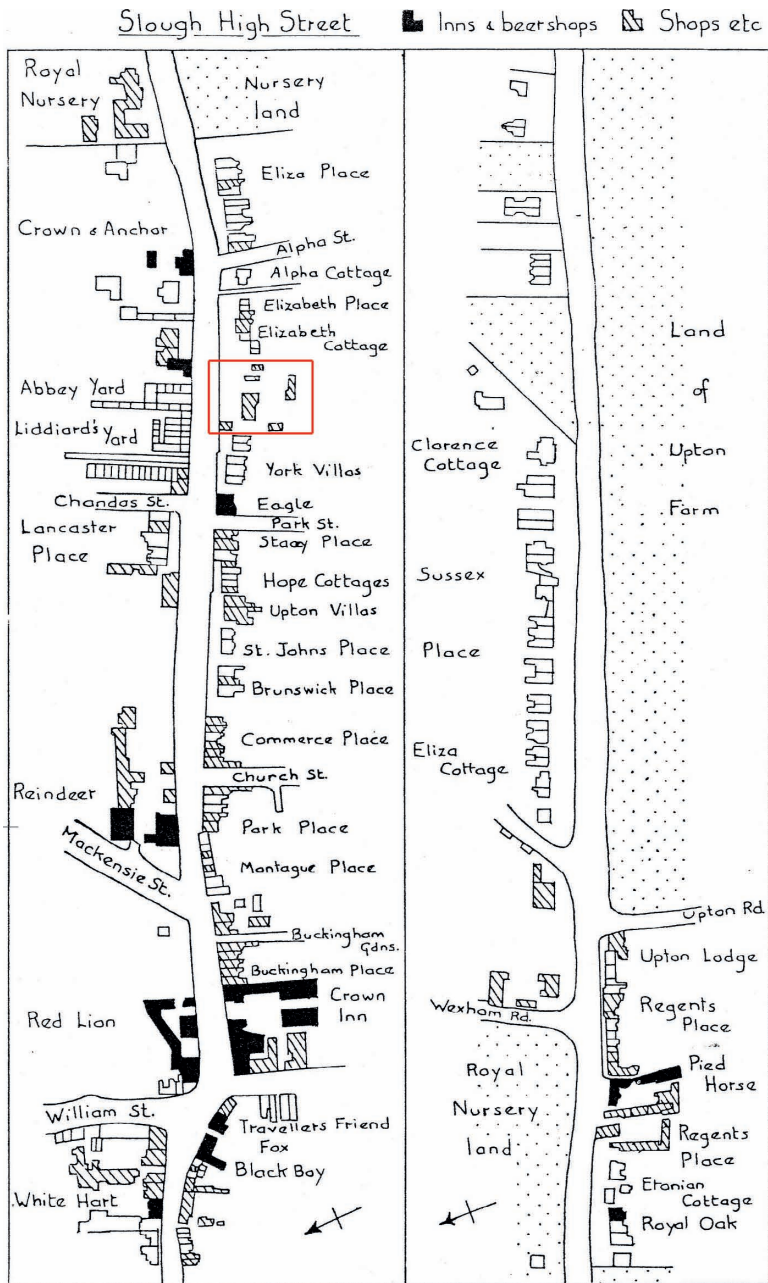
3 The Lovegrove workshop, c. 1870.
Slough Museum, © Slough Express

Some additional information about the Lovegroves' commercial activities is to be found in published studies of Slough local history. For example, a Miss Mason made a series of descriptive notes about Slough in the 1830s which were privately printed in 1896.³⁷ In this publication one area of the High Street was said to include 'two or three small houses and Lovegrove's extensive chair manufactory'. Also, another study concerned with Slough in 1851 states 'The only manufactory in the parish, though, was the chair-making business of Henry Lovegrove which had been in existence for over fifty years'.³⁸ The business was said to have employed six men in 1851 'including the son who was to carry on the business', to have been founded in the eighteenth century and to have still been in existence in the 1870's.³⁹ This source also provides a map of Slough High Street in 1851 with the following description 'Eastwards on the South Side (of York Villas) lay two smaller houses and the chair manufactory of Henry Lovegrove. This had a considerable frontage onto the High Street and included a house, yard, outbuildings and shop. Between the manufactory and Alpha Street several cottages huddled together ...'. This information allows the location of the chair-making business to be determined (Figure 4). As previously mentioned, Henry

³⁷ Mason (1896).

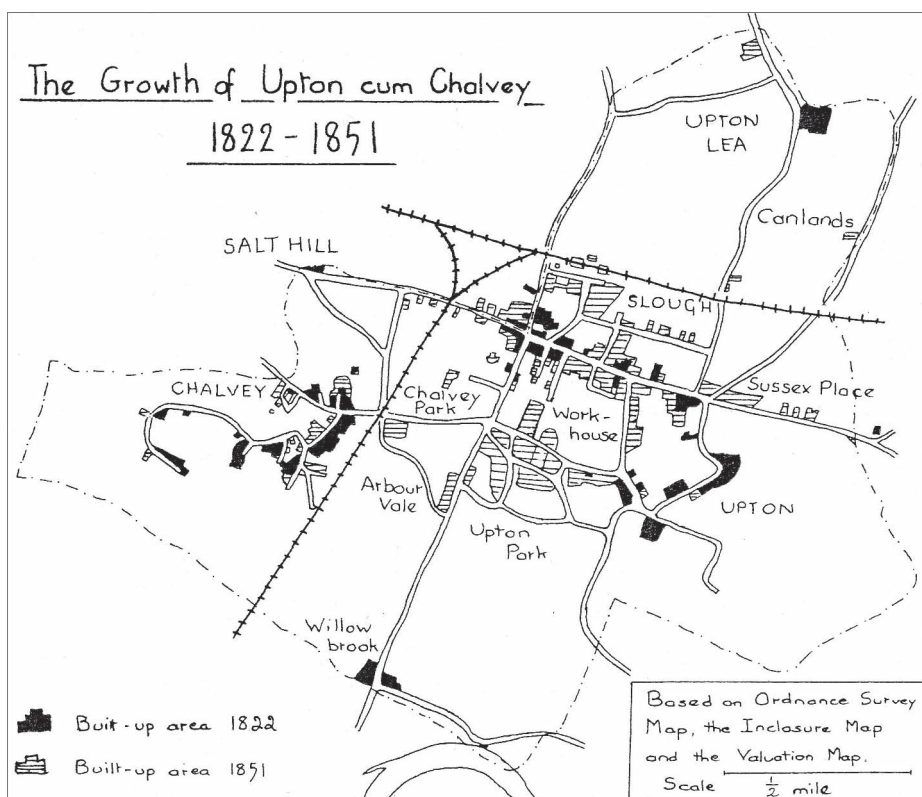
³⁸ WEA (1981), p. 70.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 72.



4 Map of Slough High Street in 1851. The red box indicates the site of the Lovegrove chair manufactory; Henry (no. 4) and Ernest Henry (no. 5) were living at Eliza Place in 1881. Note also that for a long time Crown Corner, with its inns, stabling and workshops, was regarded as the centre of Slough.

Reproduced from WEA (1981)



5 Map showing the growth of Upton-cum-Chalvey, 1821-51.
Reproduced from WEA (1981)

Lovegrove (no. 3) also had other premises at somewhere referred to as Salt Hill. This was a separate village on the Bath Road somewhat to the west of Slough (Figure 5) which eventually, like Upton and Chalvey, became part of Slough. Salt Hill was the site of several hotels built to accommodate the travelling public so presumably the Lovegroves had a shop or showroom there, as well as their manufactory in Slough, to maximise opportunities for selling their products.

Turnpike trusts were established along the Bath Road in the 1720s although it was not fully turnpiked until 1756.⁴⁰ However, because this was an important highway linking London, Bath and Bristol it had become a stagecoach route much earlier. In fact, the first regular Bath Road coaches were initiated in May 1711 by Thomas Baldwin the proprietor of The Crown Inn, a large seventeenth-century hotel also known as the Bowling Green House, situated in Slough High Street (Figures 6 and 7).⁴¹ Later on, other entrepreneurs arranged for London coaches to make their second stages Colnbrook, Salt Hill or Maidenhead.⁴² However, many coach passengers en route between

⁴⁰ Hunter (1983), p. 44; www.turnpikes.org.uk.

⁴¹ Hunter (1983), p. 41.

⁴² Hunter (1983), p. 42.

The Bath and Bristol Stage Coaches, perform'd by Thomas Baldwin at the Crown Inn at Slough near Windsor, being the Bowling Green Houle, goes from the Sarrazens Head Inn in Fridaystreet, and from the One Bell Inn behind the New Church near the May Pole in the Strand; at Mr John Tilley's at the Coach and Horses in Swan Yard over against Somerset House, and at Mr Tho. Brabant's at the Chequer Inn in Chequer Yard at Charing Cross, on Mondays and Thursdays; and also the same Days from the White Hart Inn near the King's Bath in Bath, and from the White Hart Inn near the Tholsel in Bristol for London. Note, One of the Coaches goes in three Days to the Bath as usual, and the other in three Days thro the Bath for Bristol. He intends to begin Flying from the said Places as soon as the Season will permit.

6 (left) Advertisement, *The Post-Man and The Historical Account*, 13 February 1718.

British Library, Burney Collection

7 (below) The Crown Hotel, c. 1875. Refronted in the eighteenth century, it had extensive stabling, a pleasure garden and a separate tap. *Slough Museum, © Slough Express*



London and Bath would have made their first stop at The Crown and, perhaps, seen and ordered the newly fashionable 'Windsor' chairs made by the likes of John Pitt in the neighbouring hamlet of Upton. Possibly, sample chairs might have been put on display in the lobby of the hotel for potential customers to look at and painted outdoor Windsors (Forest chairs) may have been placed around the bowling green.⁴³ It is therefore probably no accident that one comb-back Windsor, attributed to Pitt, is decorated with the arms of the city of Bath.⁴⁴ However, it is now clear that Henry Lovegrove (no. 1) was likely to have been making chairs in nearby Eton at the same time as Pitt was in Upton. Moreover, Richard Hewett, who may have been Pitt's successor,

⁴³ Parrott (2010).

⁴⁴ Parrott & Harding-Hill (2005).

died in 1777 and this could have been a factor influencing Henry (no. 2), who was born in 1755, to relocate the family chair-making business to Upton where he married in 1778.⁴⁵ Possibly, the opportunity to pick up passing trade near the coach staging point could have provided an incentive; in fact, the tendency of Windsor chair-makers to locate their businesses near turnpike roads may have been common practice at the time.⁴⁶ Other Lovegroves followed in Henry's (no. 2) footsteps and the 1798 *Posse Comitatus* also records Henry Hubbard and Thomas Pitt as chair-makers in Upton-cum-Chalvey.⁴⁷ The Lovegrove family, however, seems to have been rather remarkable, and possibly unique, in that they were Windsor chair-makers over five generations.

Apart from a single 1790 trade directory reference, working dates previously given for the Lovegroves are all from the 19th century and no family member is listed in the apprenticeship records.⁴⁸ Consequently, the full extent of the family chair-making tradition had not been realised until the author came across the Lovegrove family database. This illustrates the value of the internet in providing new research leads, although the possibility of errors always has to be borne in mind, especially when the compilers are enthusiastic amateurs rather than specialists. The number of archival websites continues to increase but, as this study indicates, databases assembled for other reasons, e.g., genealogy, sometimes inadvertently provide information of use to the furniture historian. However, the main obstacles to research into eighteenth-century Windsor chair-making are the scarcity of surviving examples by known makers or with well-established provenances, the apparent absence of maker's records or their names in apprenticeship records and the relatively few known trade advertisements; in such circumstances, unconventional research methodology would seem to be justified. Also, whilst studies of this kind can provide new information on the family, social and business life of individual makers there is much about their chair-making activities that, for the time being, unfortunately remains conjectural.

What this article does show is that the association between Upton-cum-Chalvey and Windsor chair-making that might have started with Pitt, or an unknown predecessor, did not end with Hewett but, instead, continued for more than a century with the Lovegroves. There are three possible reasons for this course of events. Firstly, the nearness of Upton to Windsor itself (about 2½ miles away) where these chairs were probably originally conceived and produced (Figure 8).⁴⁹ Secondly, its location close to the pioneer second stage at *The Crown* inn on the London-Bath road where, from the early eighteenth century onwards, coaches carrying the gentry stopped on a regular basis. Thirdly, the existence of a considerable number of neighbouring country houses where other potential clients for these newly fashionable outdoor (Forest) and indoor (Windsor) chairs resided. For example, a 1777 map shows 23 country houses with their estates shaded green, all within a 5 mile radius of 'Slow' (Slough).⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Stabler (1977); Parrott, 'New information' (2008). Note also that the trade label on Richard Hewett's surviving Windsor chair indicates that he made Forest chairs as well.

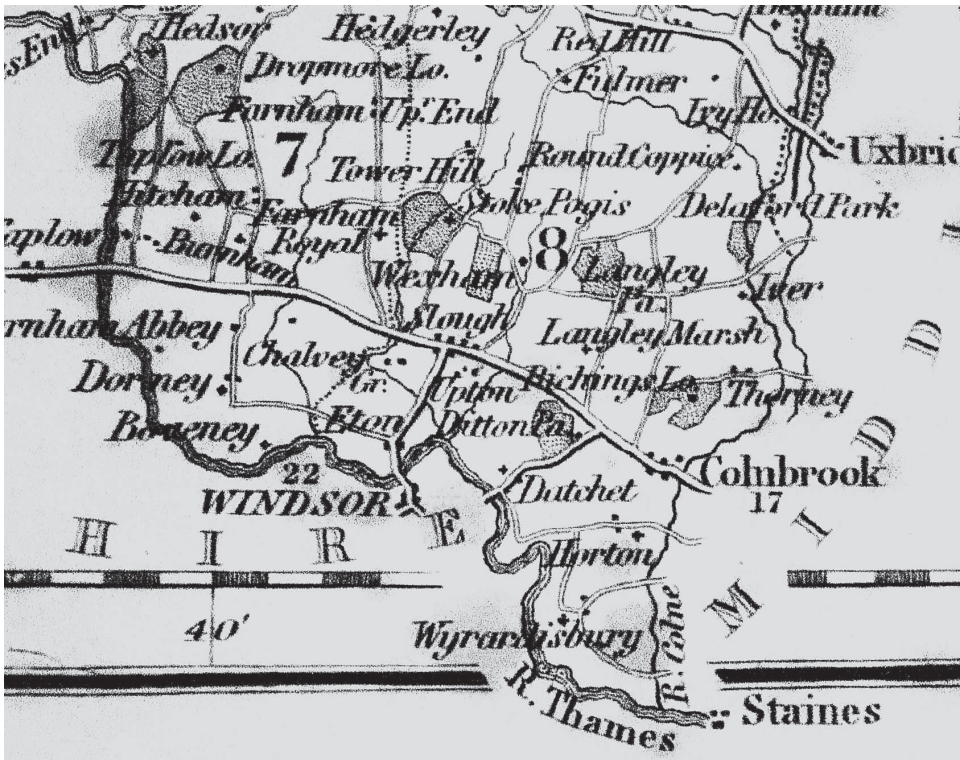
⁴⁶ Parrott (2008).

⁴⁷ Beckett (1985).

⁴⁸ Cotton (1990), p. 455; www.origins.net.

⁴⁹ Parrott (2010).

⁵⁰ Andrews (1777).



8 Map of Buckinghamshire (1833) showing the Windsor area. Archibald Fullerton for James Bell's *A New and Comprehensive Gazetteer of England and Wales*. (Genmaps, www.ancestry.co.uk)

In spite of Upton's long association with Windsor chair-making (Table.1) it is commonly thought that the High Wycombe area was the principal site of production outside London in the eighteenth century. Although this is almost certainly true of the later years of the century, the likelihood that the Slough area may have been more important in this respect than has previously been recognized needs consideration. For instance, Slough is only a few miles from Windsor and Forrest chairs are known to have been supplied from Windsor in 1720.⁵¹ Possibly, therefore, Windsor chair-making may actually have started in the Slough/Windsor area in the early 18th century, perhaps on a bespoke basis. Later on, though, production seems to have been concentrated in and around High Wycombe where large quantities of Windsors were manufactured by a number of workshops to satisfy increasing demand. Perhaps timber for chair-making in the Slough area came from nearby Windsor Forest whereas supplies of cherry, elm, ash and especially beech were more readily available in the Chilterns. This could have been one factor influencing the subsequent development of High Wycombe as a major centre for Windsor chair production. However, further investigation is needed to determine exactly how and why this change came about.

⁵¹ Parrott (2010).

TABLE 1 Summary of Windsor chair-makers in the (New) Windsor and Upton (Slough) area

MAKER	PLACE	LIFESPAN	OTHER DETAILS
John Kennedy	(New) Windsor	Unknown	Working early 18thC; Forrest chairs receipt 1720
John Pitt	Upton	1714–59	Surviving labelled Windsor chair
Richard Hewett	Upton	1722?–77	Surviving labelled Windsor chair
Henry (no. 1) Lovegrove	Eton	1720?–1815?	Children baptised 1752–1766
Henry (no. 2) Lovegrove	Upton	1755–?	Working in 1798 (Posse Comitatus) ■
John Lovegrove (brother)	Upton & Eton	1757–?	Working in 1798 (Posse Comitatus)
Henry (no. 3) Lovegrove	Upton	1779–1851	‘Master chair-maker’, Windsor and garden chair manufacturer Slough and Salt Hill; also a baker
Henry (no. 4) Lovegrove (Photograph) ●	Upton	1823–?	Surviving stool (1858) and rustic chair (1864). Still working in 1888; also a miller
Ernest Henry (no. 5) Lovegrove	Upton	1854–?	Still working in 1888; rustic Summerhouse maker in 1891

■ Henry Hubbard and Thomas Pitt also listed as chair-makers in Upton in 1798; at the time the male population (aged 16–60) of Upton was 256.

● ‘Harris’ recorded as a neighbouring chair-maker in 1871 census

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