

## THE USE OF ALDER IN CASE FURNITURE

Recently an interesting Lancashire chest of drawers was brought into my workshop for repair/conservation.

Continuity of family ownership suggests an origin, during the 19th century, in the village of Bamford near Rochdale. The chest is 43" wide, 45.5" tall and 20"



Fig. 4 Oak and Alder chest of drawers

deep. Oak is the primary timber, but drawer linings and the carcase interior are made of deal. Plank construction is used throughout with a two piece drawer bottom in the long drawers matching the panelled plank back. The legs and lower banding are both made of stained Alder, but the cockbeads appear to be Mahogany, although no sample analysis has been carried out to confirm identification of timbers. All drawer fronts are pieced plank construction as are the top and sides. Escutcheon inserts are ebony and cut to lie with the grain at 45 to the vertical. The handles are made of mahogany with Mother of Pearl turned and carved buttons. Unmarked brass locks are fitted to all drawers. Construction quality is good and involves a careful use of timbers. A date of construction between 1840 and 1870, seems reasonable.

It is interesting to note the use of Alder in the construction, a timber commonly used by woodturners and chairmakers in the North-West of England\*. Perhaps we should check whether Alder banding was more widely used as an alternative to Mahogany cross-banding on Oak furniture made in this region!

Ref\* See the mention of alder in Deposition of Mark Chippindale, 1815, Lancashire in 'The Regional English Chair' by B.D. Cotton and the references to its suitability as a substitute for mahogany.

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