



Fig. 14 Oak cupboard

Members' comments are invited about the intended function of this unusual item of furniture.

Its more recent ownership is, unfortunately, not known. Constructed throughout of well patinated oak, rich nut-brown in colour, the upper and lower doors are panelled, with simple scratch-mouldings to the vertical framework. The whole piece is competently made, of neat appearance, and suggestive of an early 19th century date. The brass door catches are matching, and original, as are the short, solid brass stump feet.

#### Basic dimensions

Maximum height 41 "

Maximum depth 22"

Maximum width 19"

Height of seat 18 "

Is it some type of farmhouse chair/cupboard? It is reasonably comfortable to sit on as there is a pronounced rake to the upper back section. Did the galleried top provide space for a book (family bible) for earnest family prayers within some simple living room? A combination of cupboard chair and prie-dieu seems a possibility with the discovery of a faded palm cross tucked away in the dusty recesses of the lower cupboard.

Another possibility is that of 'common' hospital furniture, though hospitals for ordinary people were far from common in the early nineteenth century and bedside lockers for patient comfort hardly known. Within religious orders, however, small hospitals or almshouses may well have found a use for such a piece of furniture, combining as it could the three necessary functions of simple food storage, seating, and bible reading.

Whether made for hospital, almshouse or God-fearing country family, this interesting piece of vernacular furniture poses a question that needs an answer.

*Barbara Pearce.*