



Fig. 6 Photograph courtesy of Mac Cartneys of Ludlow

A GROUP OF CHESTS FROM THE WELSH BORDERS

From time to time one comes across pieces of furniture whose superficially normal appearance belies abnormal or eccentric construction. Individually, they may be just interesting curiosities, but when a number occur, we may be on the track of a single workshop or group of craftsmen. The chest illustrated (figure 6) is one of two from the same source, sold recently in Ludlow. Its construction is very unusual, being made without the use of the mortise-and-tenon joint. Instead, the corner posts are chopped out inside to form notches into which the boarded sides and ends are nailed; in effect, it is a nailed box, supported on notched corners. All sides are formed from single planks, and the bottom is a single lengthwise board, three inches thick.

The seller of these chests lives near Church Stretton, and is a member of the VAG. He has noticed similarities between local architectural details (e.g. cusped detail on roof trusses and windbraces) and the form of the chest feet. A third chest of this type is to be seen on the third floor of the Old House Museum in Hereford, described as a "Radnorshire Borders Chest" and a fourth is in the Abergavenny Museum. Its origins are obscure, but may be linked with the Brecon area.

The sketch (figure 7) shows the corner details. The boards may be butted together or rebated. Otherwise, the lids are of plain boards originally joined by two cross-rails with their back ends formed into wooden hooks, connecting with holes in the back. This form of hinge is common in South and West Wales. Decoration is confined to mouldings on the edges of the corner-posts and all long plank edges.

The extent, distribution and variety of these interesting pieces could form a fine research project for members in the Border areas, and I would be glad to share information with any such who would like to pursue it.

Luke Millar

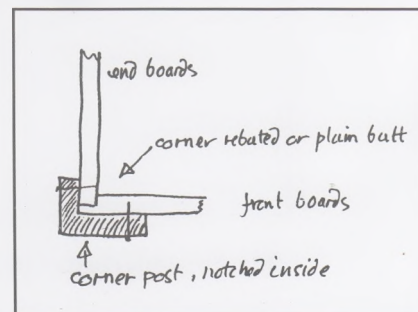


Fig. 7