

A PROGENITOR ?

Figure 7 illustrates an armchair stamped, I.W. on the top of the back upright, which represents the mark of the John Warander (b.1786) chairmaker from the village of Bransford, Worcestershire. It displays typical West Midland seat construction, a thin elm seat mortised into round rails at the side and rear and a shaped frieze nailed at the front. The chair frame and ladders are made from ash.

This ladder-back design is rare and possibly unrecorded. To date, a number of spindle-back chairs stamped I.W. have been recorded (refer to *The English Regional Chair* by B. D. Cotton, pages 295-300) which are essentially identical in detail to those produced by Philip Clissett's workshop at Bosbury, Herefordshire 1841-1913 and stamped P.C. The workshops at Bransford and Bosbury, which are eight miles apart, are recorded as active during the 1840s.

The discovery of this ladder-back chair, made by John Warander, is particularly important since it suggests the existence of an earlier tradition and potential design source for many features incorporated in the rush-seated ladder-back chairs attributed to the Clissett workshop in the period 1880 to 1913.

Side by side, the Clissett armchair displays more generous proportions, the ladder width being 41cms and the seat width 53 cms, compared with the Warander chair, 37.5cms and 47cms respectively. The ladders are slightly deeper and certainly more finely profiled in the Clissett example (figure 8).

This rare Warander chair was sent to a charity auction on behalf of Worcester Cathedral many years ago and unfortunately there is no further information available regarding its original background.

Barbara Pearce



Fig. 7 The John Warander chair