

candle sticks in alder wood. Some of the other students had already created several highly commendable 'freeform' chairs, one with an elm-bark woven seat, but not in the three days, I hasten to add. Gudrun and her very able apprentice, Ben, were always on hand to give advice or practical assistance.

There are many skills to be learnt when working with green wood, not the least important of which is in the selection of timber for a particular purpose. For example, we were shown several samples of ash where the disposition of the growth rings is a deciding factor. Too close together and the wood will be lacking strength: too far apart and the wood will be too 'stringy' to turn well.

Having cut the tree-trunks to length, split them into billets, perhaps four for a set of chair legs, and shaved them roughly to round on the shave-horse one then turns them on the pole-lathe. It is normal practice to leave the tenon oversize. They are allowed to dry to a desired moisture content before turning to a tight fit. When fitting to the mortises in an elm seat of 'wet' wood for example, the seat will shrink as it dries out to give an extremely tight grip on the leg tenon. There is a range of techniques to ensure strong joints, many of which are illustrated in Mike Abbot's book 'Green Woodwork'. Of course they can also be learnt at Clissett Wood.

When turning candlesticks, spindles, chair-legs or whatever, one soon finds that it is not strictly necessary to produce identical items, and indeed it is rarely possible to do so with green wood. I was shown some turnings made by an acknowledged expert which only on close scrutiny could be seen to have several discrepancies.

A visit to Clissett Wood is recommended to anyone who wonders, as I did, how a simple wooden chair could still be sound and safe after a hundred or even two hundred years of regular use. Here, one can work to one's own design in a truly creative atmosphere. If you are a little weak in the arm or have a bad back you do not need to worry about heaving heavy timbers about: Gudrun Leitz throws tree trunks about as if they were matchsticks.

There is quite distinctly a 'back to nature' ethos and, having spent much of my own life in the outdoors, my impression of Clissett Wood was one of astonishment that there are so many other people who also believe it possible to live without the amenities and comforts of the 21st century.

Steve Warren



A GLOUCESTERSHIRE TEA TABLE



Fig. 13 George III mahogany tea table

The illustrated late George III mahogany tea table (fig. 13) has been skilfully restored at West Dean College and I am grateful to Fabian Freiherr von Kap-herr for making it possible to publish it. Although, in the tradition of simpler provincial pieces in the style made popular by Hepplewhite's *Guide*, it does have certain distinctive features worth noting. The depth of the frieze is accentuated by unusually thin top boards while, although it is clear where the tops of the legs pass through the frieze, they do not project forwards as is normally the case. The desired effect of an uninterrupted frieze is enhanced by an ebonised banding all round its bottom edge, although apart from this, the table is notable for the absence of any box or holly edge stringing.

The folding top is supported on two swing legs which enhance the balance of the table. These swing out from behind the back edge of the frieze: a concession to neatness which is occasionally found elsewhere on card and tea tables at this period. The frieze is built up in brick construction in four courses of softwood, while the top is mahogany. Its underside has a large 'WE' stamp and two name stamps 'W. Edgecumbe' in a deckle-edged punch (fig 14).

Trade Directories show a William Edgecumbe (sic) as a cabinet-maker and upholsterer in High Street, Tewkesbury in 1820 and a Mrs Edgecumbe there as a cabinet-maker, upholsterer and builder in 1822, who was perhaps his widow. Others of the family, Richard and Handy, are also recorded in High Street from 1798 until 1830 or later.

Christopher Claxton Stevens

Fig. 14 Stamped W.E. & W Edgecumbe