



Cover illustration: The chair illustrated on the cover was recently exhibited at the annual exhibition of Robert Hirschhorn Antiques. It retains much of its original grey/blue paintwork, including flamboyant detailed decoration over a framework which comprises a number of components made out of walnut. The continuous arm rail in conjunction with the underarm spindles is reminiscent of some aspects of a Windsor chair made by William Webb in the late 18th century (R1). The shaped collar is attached to the arm rail with sprigs.

The chair on the cover appears to be the first recorded example of such a chair and is important because it adds a measure of reality to various 18th century trade labels that have previously only suggested the diversity and range of vernacular and 'rustic' furniture being made in London during this period.

Such a chair is illustrated on the 18th century trade labels of the chairmaker William Webb near the Newington turnpike (Elephant and Castle area) and Stubb's Manufactory in the vicinity of City Road and Brick Lane, Old Street, London. The labels, which are almost identical, refer to 'yew tree, Gothic, Windsor chairs, China and rural seats, single and double alcoves, garden machines, childrens' chaises' and rush seated chairs, which no doubt served various purposes as well as diverse social groups. Some of these chairs would have been used in garden structures and for other outdoor purposes which are alluded to in the frontispiece of a late 18th century publication supplied by I & J Taylor at the Architectural Library, Holborn, London. (R2). It states that 'IDEAS for RUSTIC FURNITURE proper for Garden Seats, Summer Houses, HERMITAGES, COTTAGES, & etc. on 25 Plates'.

The term rustic appears to be synonymous with rural if one compares the plates in I & J Taylor's publication illustrating rustic sofas with the rural seats in the trade labels of Webb and Stubb's.

References

(R1) An illustration of the William Webb Windsor Chair is to be found on plate 1, F.H.S. Journal X11, 1976.

(R2) 18th century Rustic Furniture Designs by Morrison Heckscher, p59-65, F.H.S. Journal X1, 1975.

Cover photograph supplied courtesy of Robert Hirschhorn Antiques, Camden, London.

JMB

