



Fig. 6

### 1. Joseph Fruin

The set of six simple ash and elm windsor side chairs shown above (fig. 6), unusually, are still owned by descendants of the maker, one Joseph Fruin. Each chair is stamped underneath the seat with a large capital letter 'F' (fig. 7). This stamp could be the maker's mark or it might be that the chairs were marked in this way to indicate ownership by the Fruin family when they were used in their hotel. It has previously been noted that individuals other than the maker sometimes put identification marks on windsor chairs (J. Boram; *Regional Furniture Vol IX*). Joseph Fruin was born in 1818 or 1819 at Appleton, then in Berkshire, six miles southwest of Oxford. In this context, the chairs are of a typical Thames valley type, although they lack a groove around the seat edge. They probably date from the mid nineteenth century, possibly when Joseph was living and working in this area.

However, there is no record of him as a chair-maker in the standard reference work on the subject '*The English Regional Chair*' by B. D. Cotton.

In later years, Joseph moved to Cheltenham in Gloucestershire. The 1881 census records him as living at 4 Bruton Street with his daughters Elizabeth, Ellen and Annie and his occupation is given as cabinet maker. A photograph of him taken around this time still remains in the family's possession (fig. 8).

Interestingly, when the family subsequently ran the Cotswold Hotel in Cheltenham, the chairs are said to have been used in the bar.

Joseph's transition from Windsor chair to cabinet maker may reflect changing fashions in domestic

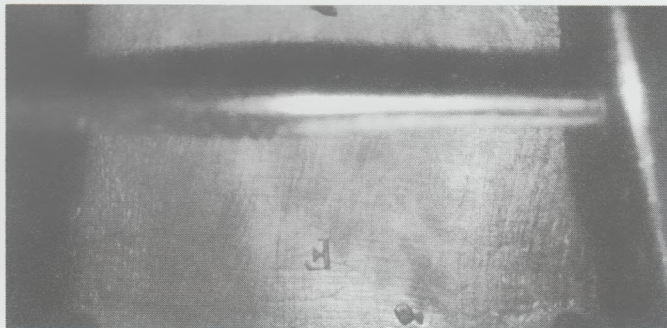


Fig. 7

furniture and increasing affluence as the 19th century progressed. One may speculate that Joseph was originally apprenticed to a rural Windsor chair maker but had the foresight to realise that a better living was to be had making more sophisticated furniture for a growing urban market.

Bob Parrot

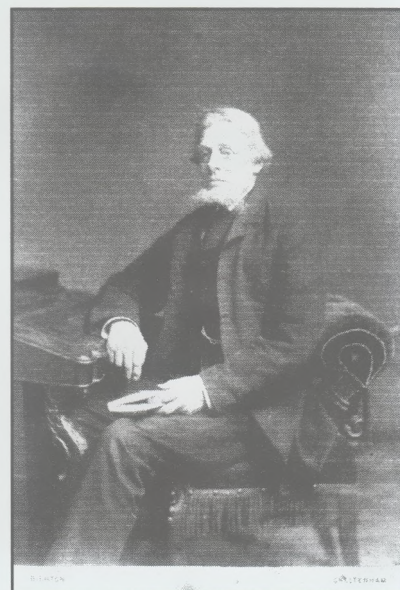


Fig. 8