

A fifth Windsor chair attributed to John Pitt of Slough

Based mainly on the highly distinctive cabriole legs found on the comb-back Windsor bearing the trade label of John Pitt (1714-59) of Upton-cum-Chalvey (Slough), we have identified three similar chairs that were probably also by this maker.¹ Recently, a fifth example has come to light; this was attributed to Pitt by the auctioneers Woolley & Wallis of Salisbury using information from our article and illustrated in their sale catalogue.² Given this remarkable occurrence, we took the opportunity to examine the chair in some detail before the sale.

The chair, which had previously been in America, is constructed of fruitwood (probably cherry) with the usual elm seat (Fig 1). It is very similar in style to the second Windsor in our paper although it had never been fitted with spandrels on the front legs; there were also additional turned swellings at both ends of the central stretcher. The chair had a number of obvious repairs and the pads of the rear cabriole legs had been worn away. Also, there were two fine scribe lines encircling the seat (Fig 2) and evidence that a trade label (2¼ x 5¼in) had been fixed centrally below the rear of the seat using large-headed tacks (Fig 3), both of which features were noted in our previous report. Atypically, there was a scribed rectangle underneath the seat marking out the leg mortices. However, as in the other four chairs, the rear spindles were morticed through the seat whereas the shorter side spindles, at least in the unlabelled examples, were not.

One of the interesting findings of our former article was that several of the chair dimensions were very similar in the three Windsors that we were able to measure, and some



Fig 2



Fig 3

were identical. In particular, all the comb-rails had a maximum height of 2½in and splat width at the point of entry into the seat of 4¾in. The first of these measurements was the same on the present chair and the slot for the splat was also the same, although the splat itself has shrunk slightly. The various



Fig 1

measurements (in inches) are given below so that they can be compared with those we reported previously.

Comb-rail: max. height 2½; max. width 21¼

Stile: width 1¼

Distance from seat to comb-rail: 24¾

Seat: max. width 25¼; depth 17½; max. thickness 2; height (saddle point) 17¼

Arm-bow: thickness (top to bottom) 1; max. distance across 26¼; height (above seat top) 9½

Splat width at seat-entry: 4½ (slot 4¾)

Seat base to side stretcher: 8¼

Side stretcher length: 14½

Chair height: 42

Obviously the height of the chair is affected by the wear on the rear pad feet (about 1in) but the fact that many of the dimensions are similar to those of the other three comb-backs we have examined is notable. Taken together, the design and execution of this rare chair is such that there is little doubt that it came from the same Thames Valley workshop as the previous examples and that the likelihood is that it too was made by John Pitt.

Note added in proof:

The Sept. 2008 issue of 'Antique Collecting' has an article by John Andrews about some of the stock of the late antique dealer Tom Crispin. This illustrates another comb-back with the same signature cabriole legs (4) of chairs made by John Pitt. The chair is in poor condition and it is not possible to identify other characteristic features from the photograph but, with the exception of outer spindles supporting the comb-rail, the overall appearance strongly resembles the other five Windsor chairs ascribed to this maker.

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¹ J. Stabler, *Antique Collecting*, Vol.11, No.12, 1977; R.Parrott and M. Harding-Hill, *Regional Furniture*, XIX, 2005.

² Woolley & Wallis, *English and Continental Furniture, Barometers, Clocks, Weapons and Works of Art*, Salisbury, 4.9.2007.

See also the item on Upton Chairs, page 25