

# What was an Upton chair?

An intriguing entry in *The Manchester and Salford Directory*, by Elizabeth Raffold (1781) reads, 'John Barber, windsor and upton chair maker and turner, Red Bank'. A search of various online databases failed to find any reference to upton chairs, so what these were was puzzling. However, all became clear with the realisation that 'upton', like 'Windsor', probably referred to a place, as well as a chair type. Apparently Barber made a distinction between Windsors and the types of chair made at Upton-cum-Chalvey (Slough). The surviving chairs by the Upton makers John Pitt and Richard Hewett indicate that they made what, today, are called 'comb-back' Windsor chairs.<sup>1</sup> This suggests that Barber perhaps considered a Windsor chair to be one of a different (probably the then more fashionable bow-back) design. Since Pitt died in 1759, and Hewett in 1777, it is rather surprising that a chair maker working as far away as Manchester in 1781 should make this distinction. A reasonable conclusion is that Pitt and Hewett's products were well known at the time and that 'Upton' was a contemporary, though perhaps infrequently used, term for a comb-back Windsor.

<sup>1</sup> John Stabler, 'Two Labelled Comb-back Windsor Chairs', *Antique Collecting*, Vol.11, 1977.