

# Dialectical Terms for Items of Furniture

In the RFS Newsletter No. 44 (Spring 2006) I wrote a piece entitled *Unusual Words from Post-medieval Inventories*. This dealt with only two words, and since then I have come across a number of local dialect terms for various items of furniture, which led me to think that it might be a worthwhile exercise to compile a short glossary of these, most of them now obsolete or at best obsolescent, as they could well appear in early inventories. For example, the 'one fflaunders chist' which is recorded in the inventory of Thomas Teanby of Barton-on-Humber, dated 1652, refers to a Flanders chest which is a Lincolnshire term for a carved or decorated chest. Many of the words contained in this piece have been sourced from Joseph Wright's monumental six-volume dictionary of dialect words, written between 1898 and 1905, while I have recorded others.

**Bark** - A box or receptacle, formerly made of bark, used for holding candles or candle ends (North Country, Yorkshire).

**Becky** - A woodcarver's seat, consisting of a single leg, with a cross-seat on the top (Northumberland).

**Bink** - A shelf; a frame of wooden shelves for holding earthenware in a kitchen; a plate rack (North Country, Northumberland, Yorkshire).

**Bouter** - A side table (Suffolk).

**Buffet** - A low stool with three or four legs; a stool made with a board at each end instead of legs (Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, Northamptonshire).

**Buffet** - A corner cupboard; a recess for holding glass and china, generally with glass doors (numerous counties from the North Country to Cornwall).

**Buffet Stool** - A low wooden stool set on a frame like a table, generally with four legs (Northumberland, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, East Anglia, Shropshire).

**Bulk** - An old-fashioned fireside settle or seat (Worcestershire).

**Bunker** - A chest; a window seat which forms a chest; a settle (Northumberland).

**Case** - A press; cupboard; a shelf for glasses etc (Yorkshire).

**Close-bed** - A panelled bedstead or bunk with folding or sliding doors (North Country, Northumberland, Yorkshire).

**Coach-chair** - Old-fashioned couch or sofa (Lancashire).

**Coppy** - A small wooden stool with three or four legs, much used by children (North Country, Yorkshire, Lincolnshire).

**Cornel-cubbert** - A corner cupboard (Shropshire).

**Couch-chair** - A sofa with an arm or rest at each end; a long wooden settle (Yorkshire, Lancashire). See Coach-chair, above.

**Coup-chair** - A large chair capable of holding two or even three people (Yorkshire).

**Cracket** - A small wooden stool; a low seat without legs (Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire).

**Cratch** - An armchair, the sides and back of which are made of wooden rods (Yorkshire). See Crotch below.

**Creeper** - A small stool (North Country).

**Creepie** - A low, three-legged stool usually used by children (Cumberland, Yorkshire).

**Cricket** - A small, low stool, with either three or four legs, serving as a footstool, a milking stool or a child's seat (numerous counties from North Country to Cornwall).

**Crotch** - A wooden seat; a shoemaker's bench (Yorkshire).

**Cutty Stool** - A low, three-legged stool (North Country).

**Desk Bed** - A cord bed which folds up and is enclosed in a kind of cupboard during the day (Cumberland, Durham).

**Domery Kist** - A large oak chest (Yorkshire).

**Dropping-chair** - An easy chair for the sick and elderly, paid for by church communion offerings (Devon).

**Flanders Chest** - A carved or ornamented chest (Lincolnshire).

**Going Chair** - A small, bottomless chair on casters for teaching children to walk (Lancashire).

**Happing Kist** - A large linen chest (Yorkshire).

**Holmogen/Homogen** - A small cupboard in the wall (Dorset).

**Kist** - A chest, box, trunk; a chest of drawers, a coffer; a coffin (North Country).

**Long Bink** - A bench with a back and arms (Yorkshire).

**Poverty Box** - A cradle (Yorkshire).

**Presser** - A press or cupboard, especially one that can be easily moved (Northumberland); a folding bed (Northumberland, Durham).

**Put-up Bed** - A folding bed (Yorkshire).

**Save Guard** - A wardrobe (Devonshire).

**Scob** - A desk; an oak chest (Hampshire, Wiltshire).

**Screen** - A high-backed wooden settle (Cumberland, Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire).

**Sell or Seel** - A seat, stool (Northumberland).

**Skemmel** - A long form; a settle; a stool (Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland).

**Stand** - A small tripod table (Yorkshire, Cheshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Warwickshire).

**Steddle** - A bedstead (Kent, Surrey, Isle of Wight).

**Stool** - A form or bench (Kent); a small four-legged table (Lancashire).

**Stool Chair** - A four-legged stool (Lancashire).

**Toit** - A settle (Somerset).

**Trest** - A stool, bench or table (Derbyshire).

**Turn-up Bed** - A bed that can be folded up into a cupboard-like structure (Yorkshire).

**Tut** - A footstool (Somerset, Devon, Cornwall).

**Wending Chair** - A child's wicker-work chair (Lincolnshire).

Two points should be made about the words in this glossary. First, it will be apparent that the majority of them are from northern counties, the reason for which may be that, quite simply, there *were* more dialect words for items of furniture in the north or, perhaps more likely, Joseph Wright had more informants living in the north than in the south.

The second point is that dialect words do not suddenly cease to be used at county boundaries, and so they might well have been used in more counties than those given above.

An aspect of dialect which is not pursued herein, but which could sometimes present problems when reading early inventories is dialectal pronunciation which, when written, tends to be represented phonetically. For example, in the inventory, dated 1600, of Yewen Minshull of Nantwich, Cheshire, 'one weane scottie Cheare in lead' is recorded. It is probably not immediately apparent that the transcription is 'one wainscot chair, inlaid'.

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