

Visit to a private collection in Sussex

September 30

It was a privilege to be shown such a splendid collection of early oak where so many pieces fulfil that 'must-have' quality, and highlighting one piece becomes a challenge. An item which would nicely tuck under the arm is a fruitwood folding lectern or book rest. It has turned uprights and rails which cleverly accommodate a ratchet for comfortable use. This is not just a rare late 17th or early 18th century piece, but well designed, of excellent colour and proportions, and in original condition.

Roderick Butler

In a landing recess area were two chairs, three tables, two cupboards (one standing, one hanging) with accessories to match. All were of small proportions with unusual constructional and decorative detail and, like everything else in the collection, of rich colour and patination. Such a feast for the senses, as was the utterly delicious lunch which our hostess had prepared with great style and skill. This visit will long be remembered on many counts!

Valentine Butler

We studied two matching carved panels of high quality, showing a couple standing facing each other with a cloth draped over their proffered hands and an archer on one knee, aiming an arrow upwards (a fragment) both on a scaly background, within an arched frame with gothic windows in the columns and upper flower spandrels. The figures all have large noses reminiscent of the Cotehele panel. The panels belong to the same set as the two sold at Bonham's Chester in May 2008 and January 2009 showing a dancing couple with purses, and a kneeling male with dagger. The original size of the panels was about 21x12in and they were chamfered at the sides but pegged at the top and bottom. Presumably they come from a large 16th century cupboard, possibly celebrating a marriage.

Chris Pickvance

Among the many and various items of interest we particularly noted two unusual windsor chairs. The first was an apparently standard Thames Valley example with a turned roundel to the splat, sometimes called a 'draught' or 'domino' back. Closer inspection revealed the very uncharacteristic feature of a sycamore seat, something associated with the area where it was purchased, the Welsh Marches. The chair is stamped twice, W.Griffin. While there are Griffins listed in the High Wycombe area neither have the initial W. The only others listed with that surname in the *English Regional Chair* are from Manchester, and also have the wrong initial. *The Dictionary of English Furniture*

Makers lists several Griffins but the only Ws, both Williams, were based in London and are unlikely candidates for the maker of this chair. While a sycamore seat is unusual for the Thames Valley area, the beaded moulding round the edge and square shaping at the back of the seat together with the rest of the chair, being largely of ash, is more typical of that region. It would be fascinating to find out who W. Griffin was and where he worked.

The second chair, a curious comb-back example, has several features that we have never encountered before. The front legs are turned, but terminate in pad feet; the seat is deeply dishd with a prominent 'kick-up' in the centre of the front. At the back of the seat is an extension, a kind of 'fishtail', for a strut to support the back - just a single thick spindle, not the usual two. The yoke-shaped top rail and vase splat are fairly typical of 18th century windsor chairs but there are only two uprights either side of the splat. The timber is fruitwood. It is a most difficult chair to describe but I hope the snapshots help and that someone will be able to shed light on this chair's origins.

We would like to thank the private collector for his hospitality and for allowing us to examine his prized pieces in typical RFS manner, ie. upside down and inside out.

Keith & Gill Pinn

Fruitwood folding book rest



Windsor chair with sycamore seat, stamped W. Griffin



Unusual fruitwood windsor with vase splat and pad feet

