

# East Anglian and Lincolnshire Chairs

I am preparing two articles for the Journal, one on the 'Lincolnshire' rush seated ladder and splat back chairs, in which I hope to prove that they were predominantly made in and around the Fens (South Lincolnshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and the edge of West Norfolk). I would be grateful if any member could help me with the following:

1. As far as I know there are no recorded chairs of this type marked with makers' names or initials. Can you prove me wrong?
2. Some of these chairs have original wooden seats and were never rushed. Do you have one?
3. The 18th century chair makers' advertisements for journeymen covering the Fens list turn chair makers and varnish chair makers. I believe varnish chair was a regional name for the framed mortised and tenoned chairs. Has anyone come across any references to varnish chairs?
4. Over the years 18th century rush-seated chairs of the 'Lincolnshire' type have turned up at chair surgeries (for example some very good ones were photographed in the 2005 Autumn Newsletter, No.43). Do you own such a chair that I could examine and photograph?

The second article is on East Anglian chairs and is mainly based on the types listed in the *Norwich Chair-Makers' Price Book*, 1801. These of course include the hollow seat chairs but also drop-in rush seated and upholstered chairs, made in walnut, elm, beech, birch and mahogany and especially any in laburnum.

1. Do you know of any chairs that can be attributed or documented to East Anglia?
2. As far as I know there is a small group of hollow seat chairs that have makers' or retailers' labels: four from the Cotton Collection, now in the Geffrye Museum Collection, with the label of J. R. Bedwell of Colchester; an armchair I own with the label 'From/ Bedwell's/ Furnishing Warehouse,/ 62 & 63, High Street,/ Colchester' (Fig 1), and the one illustrated in Bill Cotton's *The English Regional Chair*, by Harvey & Son of North Walsham, EA78. There must be more of them?
3. A few hollow seat chairs have makers' initials stamped on the underside of the rear seat rail. One armchair has the initials LH which may be attributable to the Norfolk chair maker and cabinet maker Lancelot Howlett (Fig 2). Do you have or know of any other stamped chairs?
4. There are some hollow seat and other chairs with the back uprights topped by very distinctive pyramidal finials. Do you know of any?



Fig. 1 A birch hollow seat armchair with rosewood panels with the label of Bedwell's, Colchester, probably circa 1855-70

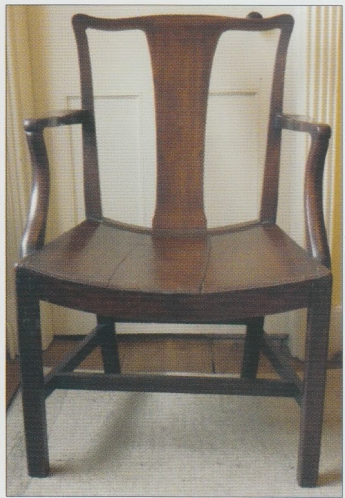


Fig. 2 A mahogany hollow seat armchair stamped LH, possibly by Lancelot Howlett of Norfolk, circa 1780-1810



Sarah Medlam found this delightful illustration of a 17th century cradle and a straw or wicker chair, 'The wetnurse and the martyr' from John Geninges, *The Life and Death of Mr E. Genings* (St Omers, 1614). The illustration was published in David Cressy: *Birth, Marriage and Death, Ritual and Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford University Press, 1977)