

What is a Kent Chest? Chris Pickvance

As many of you will already know Chris has been enthusiastically studying and recording early furniture for many years and one of his particular interests is the early chests that are found on his local patch, the County of Kent. Chris began his illustrated talk by giving an overview of his progress during the last decade, mentioning comparative chests in Northern Europe and detailing his methodology thus:

1. Identifying the group in question, looking for similarities and differences, shared features, differences that do not feature in other regions
2. Detailed study of construction and decorative features
3. Looking at documentary evidence, such as an inventory or churchwardens' accounts (rarely available)
4. Mapping the distribution
5. Reviewing dendrochronology reports (if available)

Chris talked about four types of chest identified in the Kent region:

- The 'Kentish Gothic' type, c. 1400 – this is the large clamp-fronted type in Baltic oak with features including carved Gothic arch detail to the lid and applied buttresses whilst inside there is a groove in the back for a high shelf and the bottom-boards are held in grooves. The lockplate is concave-sided and the whole façade slopes inwards slightly. Examples are at Faversham and Rainham, Kent and in East Anglia. Related chests are recorded in Germany.
- The domed Standard type, c. 1400 – this is the boarded chest in Baltic pine with lime lids (140 identified in England), sometimes completely armoured and with distinctive rebate joints and gable-headed nails. This type is also recorded in Sweden and Northern Germany.
- A small group of chests identified in East Kent, possibly c. 1300 in English oak featuring pin hinges and an early form of lock. This research is still ongoing.
- The deal chest, various forms, some scumble-decorated, 17th and/or 18th century in date

And finally, there appears to be:

- A group of 'mystery' chests, dovetail construction and trestle feet with decorative nailed dates, further research needed.