

Letter from Edward Gardiner, 4 May 1949

This is an incomplete snippet of history which I pass on in case it may provide some clues to help the broader picture. The letter from Edward Gardiner is addressed to J. F. J. at Heal's and it came to me some years ago with some other old papers rescued from Heal's by an ex-employee, probably in the 1960s.

J. F. Johnson was the furniture buyer at Heal's for many years and in his old age seems to have continued to run the antiques department. Johnson evidently had sent Gardiner a photo of an old chair asking if it was one of Gimson's. Gardiner replies in the negative suggesting it is 'much older'. He implies that Gimson's version of the chair was based on a very dilapidated version of the same chair that Johnson is enquiring about, 'made by an excellent craftsman unknown to me' and he then continues to list the alterations Gimson made to the design as follows:



Photograph of the chair sent by Johnson to Gardiner

A VILLAGE CHAIR-MAKING & WOOD TURNING INDUSTRY

Founded by the late E. W. GIMSON at Daneway

EDWARD GARDINER,
HILL VIEW,
PRIORS MARSTON,
NR. RUGBY.

Station: CHARWELTON L.N.E.R.

Messrs Heal & Sons Ltd.
London W. 1.

Dear Sirs. J.F.J.

May 14 1949

Ref: J.F.J./J.L.



I duly received the photograph of the Old Chair, and I am able to say it is not a Gimson, but is much older, evidently made by an excellent craftsman unknown to me.

Mr Gimson obtained one of this craftsman's chairs in a very deplorable worm eaten condition, and only 1 of the arms is still in my possession.

I am Mr Gimson's original craftsman and I made all his chairs, and I know I did not make that one.

Mr Gimson redrew the chair, and I enclose for your inspection, and to compare with the old one, a tracing of Mr Gimson's chair showing the alterations he made.

- 1- the bottom line of slats are not so straight.
- 2- the turned foot of front legs not so deep.
- 3- the arm spindles run right through the seat into a special rail under seat. This stiffens the arms.

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Gardiner says, 'I am Mr Gimson's original craftsman and I made all his chairs' and says he will enclose a tracing of the Gimson chair showing these alterations. 'I made two chairs like this recently and they cost £7 10s 0d'. However, he ends the letter by saying the drawing must come by separate post but encloses a photograph of the chair. Sadly, the drawing was not with the letter when it came to me but the photograph was.

Oliver Heal

A VILLAGE CHAIR-MAKING & WOOD TURNING INDUSTRY

I made two chairs like this recently and they cost £7-10-0

If you want an exact copy of your chair please send life size drawings of details of 1 + 2 overleaf, and any other differences you may notice between your chair & Gimson's drawing.

I also send a photograph of Gimson's Chair - it has a very large seat. by the way.

Note → The drawing must come by Separate post.

Yours faithfully

Edward Gardiner

Letter, Edward Gardiner to J. F. Johnson, 4 May 1949