

A little wider please: a barber-surgeon's chair

This terrifying chair was a show-stopping exhibit in *TEETH – the tale of our pursuit of a pain-free mouth and the perfect smile* at the Wellcome Institute in London from May to September 2018. Described as a nineteenth-century barber-surgeon's chair, a close



The barber-surgeon's chair. *British Dental Association*

inspection revealed the elm seat to be from a late eighteenth-century Thames Valley comb-back armchair. The original legs had been replaced by undressed tree trunks socketed roughly into the seat and strapped together with planks as stretchers to allow the barber-surgeon to get a good purchase when pulling the tooth. The ash arms and head support are of carefully selected branches chosen to steady the patient for the ordeal of the extraction.

The exhibition, the first on the history of dentistry, is one of an educational and visually exciting series mounted by the Wellcome Institute on Euston Road to challenge how we all think and feel about health through the connections between science, medicine, life and art. The chair is from the British Dental Association collection.

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