

# An Answer to the Chair

In the Spring 2008 issue of our newsletter, John Boram's report of the visit to Dr Johnson's house (p10) included a view of a chair-like structure purporting to be Dr Johnson's dining chair, and asking for comment.

I think this is from an artist's studio, for propping up a canvas. Such chairs were usually used by portrait painters for working on domestic size canvases, 30 by 25in., while the artist was seated doing fine detail work, and were very easy to move near a window or wherever required. The raised edge on the front of the 'seat' would stop the canvas sliding off, with the top resting on the upright back at an angle. If the 'chair' has not been over-restored at any point in its life, it may be possible to see where the top of the canvas stretcher rested against the back, or even traces of paint.

It is possible that it came from Reynolds' studio, as he and Johnson were friends. I could imagine Johnson sitting on it and thinking it quite comfortable because of its strength and his size, with the under-stretchers taking all the strain of any leverage when leaning back!

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