

William Sergeant: *Windsor
chairmaking in Grantham,
Lincolnshire – the first fifteen
years*

The names of the early master chairmakers who ran workshops in Grantham at the beginning of the

nineteenth century have been well recorded by Christopher Gilbert and Thomas Crispin in their books. The name stamps of AMOS, HUBBARD, CAMM, TAYLOR, TAYLORS, SHIRLEY and CAMM appear followed by the word GRANTHAM. Until recently, no one has attempted to work out who started the tradition of Windsor chairmaking there. However, the Parish Registers reveal much about their families and it became apparent that the father of John and William Taylor was most likely to have been the first one. His name was Roger and in 1782 he married Sophia in St Wulfram's, then raising three sons and a daughter. There were several references to his being a victualler in Grantham but nowhere was he recorded as a chairmaker until an advertisement in the *Stamford Mercury* was discovered, dated July 1800, where he was seeking a journeyman Windsor chairmaker.

Unfortunately, he died the following year at the age of 38, but another advertisement in the *Mercury* at the beginning of 1802 tells the public that Sophia is carrying on the business of her husband. Later, other advertisements were placed seeking more journeymen to join her expanding chairmaking operation.

Their eldest son, John, finished his apprenticeship with a cabinet maker in Boston and William started his with a joiner in Grantham. However, by the summer of 1803, it was possible that both were back to help their mother run the business. She married again in September 1810. Both John and William tried their hand at running



left to right Chair signed TAYLOR GRANTHAM, so made in the workshop of Roger and Sophia Taylor (1800–1810), author's collection; chair signed TAYLORS GRANTHAM, so made in the workshop of William Taylor (December 1811 – October 1815), in the collection of a farmer near Sleaford, Lincs.

their own businesses until both became Mail Coach Guards, the precise starting dates of their change of profession being recorded in the Post Office Registers. All this means that the exact dates of these three workshops can be accurately calculated, namely:

Roger and Sophia Taylor, July 1800 – September 1810,
stamp of TAYLOR GRANTHAM

John Taylor, February 1808 – 31 December 1810, stamp
of J TAYLOR

William Taylor, December 1811 – 6 October 1815,
stamp of TAYLORS GRANTHAM