

## Missing Link – a spindle-back Windsor chair

A phone call from a fellow Regional Furniture Society member, Julian Parker, alerted me to a chair being advertised on the internet site of Ebay, which he knew would be of interest to me. On searching my computer, the vendor's image showed a typical spindled-back Lincolnshire Windsor armchair, made of ash wood, with a small impressed maker's mark towards the back of the seat surface. The place name could not be discerned while the name of the workshop owner was almost indecipherable. However, Julian had immediately recognised the chair, as I did, as being the same as the one that appears in Thomas Crispin's book, *The English Windsor Chair* (1992), p. 138, while the same chair is recorded in Cotton's *The English Regional Chair* (1990).

on p. 113. Both reveal the maker's workshop as John Taylor of Grantham.

Earlier in the year, I had given my lecture at the Conway Hall in London to the gathered members of the RFS on the subject of how Windsor chair making had begun in Grantham in the year 1800. The family of Roger and Sophia Taylor had begun the tradition and it had been carried on by their sons, John and William. I had shown the exact dates when their individual workshops had been manufacturing Windsor chairs (see the Taylors' timeline below) along with their own name stamps that had been used to demarcate the output of each maker. I had even projected an image of this exact chair from Crispin's book while saying that I had tried, in vain, to trace this chair and the chances of ever seeing it again was close to zero. It had vanished for 40 years yet here it was, being offered for sale. The only provenance that the vendor was able to give regarding the history of the chair was that she purchased it from Greenwich outside market over 15 years ago.

This chair was one of only two that had ever been recorded by John Taylor, the other being offered for sale at Neale's of Nottingham in 2002, and as such it was a vital link in the design progression of early Lincolnshire chairs. John Taylor had run his workshop for only 3 years before changing profession by becoming a Mail Coach guard in January 1811, a position he held for the next 31 years.

The purchase was duly completed and a few weeks later the chair was delivered from London; it was in slightly tired condition with one replacement leg. Every other component appeared original with the back leg having the implicit mark of an incised ring to indicate where the hole was to be drilled, exactly as the back legs of his brother William's chairs (signed TAYLORS).

The arrival of this chair made it possible for me to resolve another riddle, as previously in the year I had purchased another spindle-back Lincolnshire armchair that had been advertised by an antique dealer on Instagram. It was made of yew wood and had serious damage issues with broken components. It was repaired and restored by Tim Garland, an FHS member. Placing both chairs next to each other, it was immediately apparent that both were produced in the same workshop, even having the same implicit incised ring around the back legs. So, in the space of a few months after giving my talk in London, I was now not only in possession of the very chair I had said would be near impossible to find but a yew wood version as well.

The Conway Hall talk is available for public viewing on YouTube, link: <https://youtu.be/ot5DNPqYLYs>



The spindle back Lincolnshire Windsor armchair, made of ash wood, with the maker's mark of John Taylor of Grantham



Detail of the ash chair showing the impressed maker's mark of John Taylor of Grantham





On the left the yew wood chair and on the right the ash wood chair, both produced in the workshop of John Taylor of Grantham

#### Events in the timeline for the start of Windsor chairmakers in Grantham

	1763	Birth of Roger Taylor (RT), whereabouts unknown
7 Jan	1782	Marriage of RT and Sophia Smith in St Wulfrans, Grantham
15 Oct	1782	Baptism of John Taylor
30 Mar	1785	Baptism of William Taylor
9 July	1787	Baptism of James Taylor
Jan	1793	Advert by Robert Tilson, chairmaker of Grantham, advert for Turnpin chairmakers
1 Oct	1796	John Taylor starts apprenticeship with his father, no proof
	1797	Grantham canal opens, connecting town to the Trent near Nottingham
13 Dec	1797	Baptism of Charlotte Taylor
	1798	Henry Roughton, chairmaker of Grantham, <i>Universal British Directory</i> (Turnpin chairs?)
12 Dec	1799	Duty paid for William Taylor to become apprentice to William Allison, joiners of Grantham
July	1800	Advert of RT for journeyman Windsor chairmaker in <i>Stamford Mercury</i> (SM)
1 Nov	1800	John Taylor apprenticeship transferred to Quincy Mattison, Boston, for 2 years 9 months
Sep	1801	RT signs his will, leaving everything to Sophia, asks her to continue his business
Oct	1801	RT buried at St Wulfrans, Grantham
June	1802	Sophia's advert in SM to carry on business of her late husband
Dec	1802	William Taylor apprenticeship interrupted as William Allison declares bankruptcy
Jan	1803	Sophia's advert in SM for 6–8 journeyman chairmakers
Dec	1805	William Taylor marriage to Leonora Stafford at St Wulfrans, Grantham
Sep	1807	Richard Hubbard advert in SM for 3 journeyman Windsor chairmakers (approx. age 34)
	1807	James Taylor buried near his father in St Wulfrans, Grantham
Feb	1808	John Taylor advert in SM for apprentice chairmaker
Mar	1809	Sophia Taylor advert in SM for an apprentice chairmaker
June	1809	John Amos advert in SM seeking 2 journeyman Windsor chairmakers (approx. age 37)
Sep	1810	Sophia Taylor marriage to John Bettison, cabinet maker of Grantham
Jan	1811	Post Office appointments register – John Taylor becomes Mail Coach guard for next 31 years
Dec	1811	William Taylor advert in SM, starting business on his own account
June	1813	William Taylor advert in SM – only chairs signed TAYLORS are his
Oct	1815	Post Office appointments register – William Taylor becomes Mail Coach guard for 34 years

<i>Floruit</i>	Roger Taylor:	July 1800–Oct 1801
<i>Floruit</i>	Sophia Taylor:	Oct 1801–Sept 1810
<i>Floruit</i>	John Taylor:	Feb 1808–1 Jan 1811
<i>Floruit</i>	William Taylor:	Dec 1811–7 Oct 1815

William Sergeant  
Lincolnshire Chair Museum