

# HUBBARD GRANTHAM and I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM: a Late Georgian Windsor Chairmakers' Whodunnit

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Windsor chairs stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM are usually attributed to the workshop of John Hubbard. In *The English Regional Chair*, published nearly thirty years ago, Dr Bernard Cotton thought, on the evidence then available, that John Hubbard, noted as a wheelwright in Grantham in the census of 1841, was the likely maker of these chairs.<sup>1</sup>

Five chairs marked HUBBARD GRANTHAM appear in *The English Regional Chair*. Cotton's plate 16 is a high splat back armchair of fruitwood with an elm seat, crook underarm supports, single ring and concave turned front legs, plain turned rear legs, H-form stretchers, four elliptical underarm spindles, six long back spindles, and a splat (Figure 1). The central stretcher is turned in a manner identified by Cotton as regionally specific. He did not reproduce the stamp on this chair. Cotton NE14, a medium stick back armchair of ash, with bell-shaped elm seat, crook underarm supports, single ring and concave turned legs, crinoline stretcher, four elliptical underarm spindles, and nine long back spindles, is illustrated with its stamp (Figures 2 and 3).<sup>2</sup> A pair of low splat back yew armchairs with bell-shaped elm seats are illustrated together as NE24, alongside one stamp (Figures 4 and 5). These have low crook underarm supports, single ring and concave turned legs, crinoline stretchers, four elliptical underarm spindles, six long back spindles and central fretted fleur-de-lis top splats with two shaped piercings in the lower splat. Lastly, a hoop splat back side chair appears as NE44, with an image of its stamp (Figures 6 and 7). This has a bell-shaped elm seat with a hoop and plain rear legs in ash, and the single ring and concave turned front legs, the splat, elliptical long back spindles and H-form stretchers in fruitwood. The unusual pierced splat is similar to the top splat of the first chair, which also shares the characteristic dart-turned cross stretcher.

The stamps illustrated are all located on the upper rear surface of the seat. In two instances the seven letters of HUBBARD are centred above the eight of GRANTHAM whereas in the case of the matching pair the two words, name above place, are right-aligned. It is noticeable that all five chairs feature single ring and concave turned legs. In Cotton's photographic table of 33 representative Lincolnshire leg turnings, all three Hubbard turnings shown are single ring and concave (L24–L26).<sup>3</sup> The four armchairs all have crook underarm supports; none are turned. Turned arm supports may have emerged in Lincolnshire quite early in the nineteenth century but all authors agree that

<sup>1</sup> Cotton (1990), pp. 105–121.

<sup>2</sup> Also Gilbert (1998), pp. 699–700, no. 878. Purchased from Dr Cotton in 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Cotton (1990), figure NE8, p. 107.



1 © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990), plate 16. *Private collection*



2 (left) © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990), figure NE14.  
*Temple Newsam Collection, Leeds, 30.6/84*

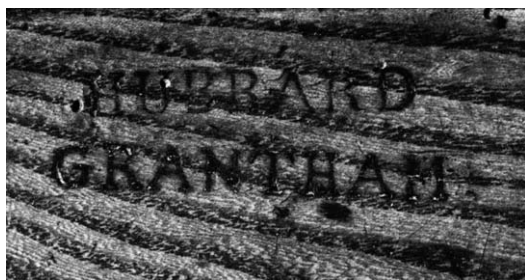
3 (above) Detail of stamp, © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990),  
figure NE15



4 (above) © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990), figure NE24.  
*Philips, Chester*



5 (left) Detail of stamp, © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990),  
figure NE25



6 © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990), figure NE44

7 Detail of stamp, © Dr B. D. Cotton (1990), figure NE45

crook underarm supports, generally, point to an earlier date than turned arm supports. Few crook underarm supports are found much after 1830.

We believe the attribution of these chairs to John Hubbard the wheelwright to be inadvertently mistaken: two different stamps were in use in Grantham: HUBBARD GRANTHAM and I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM. Chairs from each stamp group are set out below.

#### CHAIRS PROBABLY STAMPED HUBBARD GRANTHAM

A chair similar to Cotton NE14 was sold by Golding Young in Grantham in 2009 (Figure 8).<sup>4</sup> The medium stick back yew armchair had a bell-shaped seat, crook underarm supports, single ring and concave turned legs, a crinoline stretcher, four elliptical underarm spindles, and nine long back spindles. At Moore Allen & Innocent, Cirencester, another yew armchair was sold in 2011 (Figure 9).<sup>5</sup> This was similar to NE14

<sup>4</sup> 3 June 2009, lot 195.

<sup>5</sup> 30 September 2011, lot 1223.



8 Sold Golding Young,  
Grantham, 2009



9 Sold Moore Allen &  
Innocent, Cirencester, 2011



10 Sold Siebers, Stuttgart,  
2017

above the seat but similar to Cotton's plate 16 below the seat. All four legs in this case were single ring and concave turned whereas plate 16 has plain turned rear legs. Finally, in 2017 Siebers Auktionen of Stuttgart sold a pair of yew armchairs one of which was stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM (Figure 10).<sup>6</sup> This was also similar to NE14 above the seat (bell-shaped elm seat, crook underarm supports, four elliptical underarm spindles, nine long back spindles) and similar to the Cirencester example below the seat (four single ring and concave turned legs and H-form stretcher with the dart device).

The authors have been unable physically to examine these last three chairs and so it is unclear whether the stamp in each case is HUBBARD GRANTHAM or I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM: one would hope that the auctioneer's catalogue entry would be accurate, but a possibility remains that I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM has been recorded merely as HUBBARD GRANTHAM.

#### CHAIRS KNOWN TO BE STAMPED HUBBARD GRANTHAM

A chair from the collection of one of the authors, is clearly stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM on the rear upper seat (Figure 11). The legs are slightly reduced but otherwise it is in good condition. This is a previously unrecorded variant design with only three, not four, elliptical underarm spindles each side and short square sections on the side stretchers. It is otherwise a medium stick back armchair with bell-shaped seat, crook underarm supports, single ring and concave turned front legs, plain turned rear legs and nine long back spindles. The square section on the side stretcher has chamfered edges and occurs at the joint with the cross stretcher (Figure 12). It would appear that the blank for this side stretcher started as a square section and then the edges were planed down before the ends were turned. This treatment contrasts with

<sup>6</sup> 10 October 2017, as part of lot 974.





11 (left) Stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM. *Private collection*

12 (above) Detail of side stretcher, Figure 11

the dart ends of the cross stretcher in a most pleasing fashion and gives a distinguished air to the chair. Pictures of this feature were sent to Bernard Cotton who could not remember seeing anything quite like it before. There are tiny wooden pins driven through from the back of the top bow to help secure the back spindles in place. Every chair in the authors' collections by Thomas Marsh of Sleaford has this construction method and it occurs on Amos of Grantham and Taylors of Grantham chairs as well. As not all Grantham chairmakers did this, were these makers taught by the same Master?

Another chair from the collection of one of the authors was a wreck when acquired, with no commercial value (Figure 13). It is a medium stick back yew armchair with elm seat, crook underarm supports, single ring and concave turned legs, crinoline stretcher, four elliptical underarm spindles, and nine long back spindles. The seat is clearly stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM (Figure 14). The arm bow was badly cracked and broken and appeared to be beyond repair until restorer Tim Garland was persuaded to see what he could achieve. The result was highly gratifying (Figure 15). The seat is made from elm and extremely thick, measuring a full two inches in depth. The back legs are also made from elm, which is most unusual, as the legs of these chairs are normally ash. The rest of the chair is made from yew. The seat is of



13 (left) Stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM.  
*Private collection*

14 (above) Detail of stamp, Figure 13



15 Figure 13 after restoration



16 (left) Stamped HUBBARD  
GRANTHAM. *Private collection*

17 (above) Detail of stamp, Figure 16

the typical bell shape, in plan, that was used by a number of these early makers. Close comparison with the previous chair (Figure 11) revealed that many of the dimensions differed yet comparison with a Thomas Marsh of Sleaford chair showed close similarities between the seats. The length and width of the Hubbard and the Marsh seats were almost identical, a further hint of some connection between Hubbard and Marsh.

A further Hubbard stamped chair from the collection of one of the authors (Figures 16 and 17) is similar to the restored chair but, in common with the chair featuring the square sectioned side stretchers, has three, rather than four, elliptical underarm spindles. A narrow range of common features appear in no predictable order among these chairs. Finally, in this category, a very similar Hubbard stamped chair was with Acorn Antiques, Dulverton, in 2018 (Figures 18 and 19). This differed only in having plain rear legs. In spite of the variations, all of these HUBBARD GRANTHAM chairs show every indication of having been made in the same workshop, and none have features indicating that they were made later than 1825–1830.





18 (left) Stamped HUBBARD GRANTHAM. *Acorn Antiques*

19 (above) Detail of stamp, Figure 18

#### THE IDENTITY OF HUBBARD GRANTHAM

Bernard Cotton was unable to make extensive use of newspapers as evidence. The digitisation of the British Newspaper Archive enables us to propose a more likely maker of these chairs than John Hubbard the wheelwright. One Richard Hubbard of Little Gonerby advertised in the *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury* on 28 August and 11 September 1807:

WANTED immediately, Three Journeymen Windsor and Fancy chairmakers. — Perfect workmen may have constant employ by applying (if by letter, post paid) to Mr. RICHD. HUBBARD, Little Gonerby, near Grantham; by whom is wanted a quantity of Yew or Yew Edges, for which a good price will given, by applying as above; where Jobbing Turning is taken in.

Here then, previously unrecorded, is a Hubbard running a Windsor chair workshop in Grantham thirty-four years before John Hubbard the wheelwright was recorded in the 1841 census. This makes perfect sense: all the chairs described above fit better stylistically in Lincolnshire in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

#### CHAIRS STAMPED I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM

At this point it is necessary to return to the first chair discussed (Figure 1), for the current owner of this chair has kindly allowed us to study it and we can reveal that the stamp is I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM (Figure 20). The first reference to such a stamp was made by Thomas Crispin in *Furniture History* in 1978 (Figures 21 and 22).<sup>7</sup> Crispin was also the first to attribute the stamp to the wheelwright recorded at Granby Yard in 1841. The design of this chair is close to that of Cotton NE14 (Figure 2) but with plain turned back legs. Other I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM chairs have been

<sup>7</sup> Crispin (1978), p. 41 and plates 49A and 49B.



20 (left) Detail of stamp,  
Figure 1. *Private collection*



21 (left) Stamped I·HUBBARD  
GRANTHAM. *Tom Crispin*

22 (above) Detail of stamp, Figure 21.  
*Tom Crispin*



23 Stamped I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM.  
*Golding Young*

24 Detail of stamp, Figure 23

handled and recorded by the authors. One was sold at Golding Young, Grantham, in 2018 (Figures 23 and 24).<sup>8</sup> It was similar above the seat to Cotton NE14 (Figure 2) but below the seat to Cotton plate 16 (Figure 1). Another I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM chair in a private collection near Sleaford is exactly similar in configuration, although six of the long back spindles are made of fruitwood (Figures 25 and 26). All nine of the long back spindles are made of fruitwood in a further chair formerly with Style and Source of Flamstead, Hertfordshire (Figures 27 and 28). In this chair the four elliptical underarm spindles either side are all ash.

Finally, one of the authors acquired at auction in Sheffield, a chair strikingly elegant and delicate, with all the features one would expect for a Lincolnshire example (Figure 29). There is no maker's mark and some old restoration work. Both front and back legs splay out and pins in the back bow secure the tops of the two outside long spindles, visible from the front. These details bear comparison with the similar splayed legs and visible pins of the chair we began with (Figure 1). The distinctive back splat design is not identical yet it is somewhat similar. With the images side by side there is little doubt that the bows have been bent around the same forms. The tops of the outermost three spindles each side curve into the fixture point on the back bow at an

<sup>8</sup> 29 August 2018, lot 41.





25 (left) Stamped I-HUBBARD  
GRANTHAM. *Private Collection*

26 (above) Detail of stamp, Figure 25



27 (left) Stamped I-HUBBARD  
GRANTHAM. *Style and Source*

28 (above) Detail of stamp, Figure 27





29 Attributed to Hubbard workshop.  
*The Authors*

identical and unusual angle. The likelihood is that this chair is also from the workshop of I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM.

In 1992, Christie's sold a chair described as follows:

an elm and yew stick-back Windsor armchair, on turned legs joined by crinoline stretcher, stamped I. Hubbard, Grantham, early 19th Century, slight damage to back. See *English Vernacular Furniture* by Christopher Gilbert, plate 146 for a similar example of this stamp.<sup>9</sup>

This chair was not illustrated in the catalogue and whether this was actually stamped I·HUBBARD GRANTHAM is open to question since the comparator cited is the one in the collection at Temple Newsam, stamped simply HUBBARD GRANTHAM (Figure 3). Perhaps the stamp did include the initial I and it was the reference that was inaccurate. This is a further example of the care and caution required in gathering such information.

So there were two workshop stamps: whether this means that there were two workshops, or one that succeeded the other may never be known. Taken as a whole there are self-evident similarities in the designs by both. Possibly the most significant of these is the similarity of the unusual splat of the armchair in Cotton plate 16 (Figure 1) and the hoop back side chair, Cotton NE44 (Figure 6): different stamps but a common design influence. Both sets of armchairs have a relatively limited range of design

<sup>9</sup> Christie's South Kensington, 3 June 1992, lot 467.

elements with many common features. It is remarkable and significant that no chair bearing either stamp has ever been recorded that has turned arm supports. Without exception, the sixteen armchairs recorded all have crook underarm supports. The eight stamped chairs that have cross and side stretchers all have the cross stretcher set one third of the way back from the front legs, blind tenoned into a mortice located at the widest part of the side stretcher turning, again one third of the length from the front. All eight feature the regional turnery device of a tapered dart at either end of the cross stretcher.

#### GENEALOGICAL EVIDENCE

The initial I of the second stamp almost certainly signifies Ioannes, Latin for John. But who was John Hubbard and what was his relationship to Richard Hubbard, who placed the advertisements in the *Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury* in 1807? The genealogical evidence is complex and in parts obscure. The earliest document for Richard Hubbard is his marriage to Elizabeth Smith at Dembleby, a small village ten miles east by north of Grantham and six miles south-southwest of Sleaford, on 22 October 1795.<sup>10</sup> The couple had three children, all baptised at St Wulfram's Grantham: Susannah (born 29 July 1796, baptised 1 August 1796), Charlotte (born 21 December 1797, baptised 27 December 1797) — both described as daughters of Richard and Elizabeth Hubbard of Little Gonerby — and John (born Little Gonerby 22 December 1799, baptised 27 December 1799).<sup>11</sup> Richard Hubbard next appears as a witness at the marriage of another known Windsor chairmaker, Thomas Marsh, later of Sleaford, bachelor of Little Gonerby, who married Helen Thompson at St Wulfram's Grantham on 26 July 1802.<sup>12</sup> The other witness was Richard Hubbard's wife Elizabeth. This a particularly intriguing discovery because of the similarities between some of the HUBBARD GRANTHAM chairs and those made by Thomas Marsh of Sleaford. They knew each other and may well have spent time in the same workshop.

No baptism has been firmly traced for Richard Hubbard: one candidate was baptised on 29 January 1771 at Barkston (three-and-a-half miles north of Grantham) to one Richard and Mary Hubberd (*sic*); the putative father, Richard Hubbard, son of Richard and Mary Hubbard, was baptised at Barkston 2 September 1750.<sup>13</sup> Another candidate was recorded on 26 January 1764 at South Witham (ten miles south of Grantham) to one Richard Hubbard and Susannah Hubbard, née Watson.<sup>14</sup> No burial of Richard Hubbard has been found. Elizabeth Hubbard, née Smith was buried at Dembleby on 25 November 1817, allegedly aged 34, which would make her only 12 at the date of her marriage.<sup>15</sup> More probable is that that entry is a slip of the hand by the clergyman: if it is a transposition error (very common) the age should have been 43,

<sup>10</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Dembleby Par/1/2.

<sup>11</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par/1/6.

<sup>12</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par/1/25.

<sup>13</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Barkston Par/1/3 and Par/1/2.

<sup>14</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, South Witham Par/1/2.

<sup>15</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Dembleby Par/1/6.



30 Enclosure plan, Little Gonerby, 1808, with plot 8 here outlined in red.  
Lincolnshire Archives

which would indicate a birth in around 1774; this has also so far proved impossible to trace.

However, there is clear evidence that Richard Hubbard was in Little Gonerby from 1796 onwards and he may well have been making chairs for more than ten years before the advertisements in the *Mercury*. There seems little doubt that HUBBARD GRANTHAM is Richard Hubbard and that I-HUBBARD GRANTHAM is John Hubbard. Richard Hubbard may have been the earliest Grantham Windsor chair-maker if he began as early as 1796, though it remains possible that that honour belongs to Roger Taylor, whose earliest advertisement calling for a journeyman Windsor chairmaker was published in the *Mercury* on 18 July 1800.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Hubbard and family lived in a fine three-storey Georgian terrace house on the Manthorpe Road in Little Gonerby. The land plot is recorded as Hubbard's property in the Little Gonerby enclosure awards of 1808, marked as no. 8 on the accompanying map (Figure 30).<sup>17</sup> The building is now a public house and has been remodelled but a photograph of 1904 shows what was a substantial dwelling (Figure 31). So John Hubbard, born 22 December 1799, would have grown up in the surroundings of his father's workshop alongside the journeymen making Windsor chairs there. He could well have undertaken his apprenticeship there as well. This cannot be verified as there was no requirement for any public record to be made of an eldest son apprenticed to his father.

<sup>16</sup> Research into Taylor and his family is well advanced and will be published in due course.

<sup>17</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par/17/2.



31 Richard Hubbard's house, Manthorpe Road, Little Gonerby, photographed in 1904.  
*John Manterfield*

#### WHO WAS JOHN HUBBARD THE WHEELWRIGHT?

It might seem logical to identify John Hubbard, the only son of the chairmaker Richard, with the wheelwright of the same name, recorded in 1841. However, on 25 November 1792 another man called John Hubbard married another Elizabeth (Harvey) at St Wulfram's Church, Grantham.<sup>18</sup> Careful scrutiny of the baptismal register of St Wulfram's reveals that between 1793 and 1807 John and Elizabeth Hubbard had no less than five sons and two daughters baptised there.<sup>19</sup> The sons include Thomas (1798) and John (born 10 February 1802). The last child, Elizabeth, born in January 1807, was described as daughter 'of the late John and Eliz'. The burial register shows John Hubbard senior being buried on 15 October 1806, aged 56, which would indicate that he was born in 1750.<sup>20</sup>

In the 1841 census, John Hubbard the wheelwright, aged 40, was living with Elizabeth, washerwoman, aged 78 (therefore born c. 1763) and Thomas, watchmaker, aged 41 (therefore born c. 1800).<sup>21</sup> In the 1851 census, at Blue Lion Lane, Grantham, are found Elizabeth Hubbard, widow, unable to work, aged 86 (therefore born c. 1765) and Thomas, clock maker, aged 52 (therefore born c. 1799). Ages in the 1841 census were rounded to within five years, which accounts for the minor inconsistencies.

<sup>18</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par 1/25.

<sup>19</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par 1/7.

<sup>20</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par 1/7.

<sup>21</sup> The National Archives, Census Returns. All subsequent census return citations are available at [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com).



Plainly this is the same family and they appear to have nothing to do with Richard Hubbard, the Windsor chairmaker, or his son John, born in 1799. There is a burial entry in the register of St Wulfram's, Grantham on 6 August 1848 for John Hubbard, Market Place, Grantham, aged 45: this must be the death of John the wheelwright.<sup>22</sup>

BUT WAS I·HUBBARD THE SON OF RICHARD HUBBARD  
AND ELIZABETH SMITH?

The story gets odder: elsewhere in the 1841 census, at Club Row in Basford, Nottinghamshire, is John Hubbard, shopkeeper, aged 40, born outside the county, married, inevitably to a woman named Elizabeth (born in the county), with a daughter called Elizabeth, aged 12. In 1851 at Rawson Street, Basford, is John Hubbard, widower, aged 51, born Lincoln Gonerby, a tailor, with a daughter called Elizabeth aged 22, born in Nottingham itself. The Wesleyan Methodist register shows that Elizabeth Lander Hubbard daughter of John Hubbard, Lace Maker, Parish of St Nicholas, Town & County of Nottingham was born 28 October 1828 and baptised 6 November 1828.<sup>23</sup> In 1871 John Hubbard, aged 71, tailor, born Lincolnshire, Grantham is found living at Old Post Office Yard, Mansfield Road, Sherwood, Nottingham, with another daughter, Susan, aged 35 — and last seen aged 15 as Susannah in the 1851 census, and aged 6 in the 1841 census. The dates match: this is highly likely to be Richard and Elizabeth Hubbard's son but his trade is tailoring and lace making, not chairmaking. This must also be the same John Hubbard, lacemaker, in Nottingham, who is recorded voting in the 1830 Parliamentary Election as a freeholder in Grantham.<sup>24</sup>

SO WILL THE REAL I·HUBBARD STEP FORWARD?

Until further evidence emerges the mostly likely explanation may be that John Hubbard (born 1799) had a spell as a chairmaker — he grew up with chairmaking, after all. Perhaps his mother's death in 1817 led to changes. We know that by 1828 John was married, living in Basford outside Nottingham, and working in the lace-making trade. It is perfectly possible that John Hubbard owned the business and others made the chairs bearing his stamp in his workshop. If this is I·HUBBARD there is another tentative conclusion which may be drawn from the evidence set out here: the likelihood is that any chair stamped either HUBBARD GRANTHAM or I HUBBARD GRANTHAM can probably be dated to the period between around 1796, when Richard Hubbard can first be shown to be in Grantham, and around 1828, when John his son can be shown to be in Nottingham.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, Grantham St Wulfram Par 1/50.

<sup>23</sup> The National Archives, Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths surrendered to the Non-parochial Registers Commissions of 1837 and 1857; Class Number: RG 4; Piece Number: 2866.

<sup>24</sup> Lincolnshire Archives, 1-ANC/13/A/13.

<sup>25</sup> There is another John Hubbard at this period who also lived both at Little Gonerby and Grantham but whose family came from Allington, Lincolnshire; he was a corn factor and coal merchant and had nothing to do with chairs!

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