

Two more chairs from Auchindrain Township, Argyll

Further to my article in the previous *Newsletter*, No. 73 (Autumn 2020), pp. 12–13, two more West Highland chairs are discussed here. A significant feature of these two is that they have natural arm bows shaped to curl at the ends. One in oak is accomplished, the other more modest in whitebeam, ash, elm, and oak, with clear use of green timber. The latter chair is a good example of a maker using what is to hand. Bark at the back of the thick elm seat might make it an object suitable for dendrochronological study.

The analysis of construction and finishes was made by Dave Hutchinson, a former member of RFS, following a visit to Auchindrain by the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group in 2008. He was the inspiration for bringing together these articles.

Chair, early nineteenth century, oak

Purchased in Bridge of Allan for £150 from a dealer who described it as coming from Kenmore, Perthshire.
Accession No. 92.J.14.01



Chair, early nineteenth century, thought to come from Kenmore, Perthshire. H 29 in (737 mm), W 25 in (635 mm), seat H 14 in (356 mm). Auchindrain Township (92.J.14.01.1). Photo Crissie White



View showing the curved arm bow. Photo Crissie White



left Chair, late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century. H 25 in (635 mm), W 24 in (610 mm), seat H 12 in (305 mm). Auchindrain Township (72.B.89.02). Photo Crissie White

right View showing the heavy D-shaped seat. Photo Crissie White

Construction and Finishes

The chair is constructed in oak throughout using wedged socket joints. The arm bow, probably a found piece, has been shaped with a knife and finished by scraping to create a serpentine shape with wide rounded ends. Eleven spindles are delicately and symmetrically tapered to each end and fixed to the arm bow with wedged socket joints. The seat is a single board, shaped to echo the arm bow. The legs of square-section cant (tilt) from front to back while the joints to the seat are round and socket wedged. The two front legs have been

cut on a slight curve to add to the canting and stability. Altogether it presents a creative piece of chairmaking.

Chair, late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century, whitebeam arm bow, ash spindles and front legs, elm seat, oak rear legs.

Accession No. 72.B.89.02

Construction and Finishes

Constructed throughout using socket joints, the greater number of which are wedged. Shrinkage combined with downward wear on the back spindles means the socket

ends emerge through the top of the arm bow. The arm bow, from a found shape, is knifed and scraper finished with the ends formed into simple scrolls. The spindles are from cleaved timber, also shaped with a knife and scraper. The heavy D-shaped seat is scraped and burnished on top, unfinished below, and is canted from front to back for stability. Its shape causes the unmatched rear legs to be placed closer together. The front legs could be replacements. The chair has a pleasant rich colour created by natural burnishing and kippering of smoke from the peat fire.

With thanks to Dave Hutchinson, Bob Clark (Director of Auchindrain), Rachael Thomas (Assistant Curator), who provided access and helped to record dimensions and photography, and David Jones.

Crissie White