



Group discussions on comb back Windsor chairs. *Photo Peter Jefferies.*

East Midlands Windsor Chairs

William Sergeant and I gave a presentation on East Midlands Windsor chairs. Members were shown (and had a chance to sit on) two early eighteenth-century comb backs of the type featured in William Sergeant's *Regional Furniture*, XXXII (2018), article 'Joseph Newton, Windsor Chair Maker of Fenton, Lincolnshire', together with the only two known early side chairs thought to be from the same Lincolnshire workshop. These chairs are part of the same group which members had seen both at the Wren Library, Lincoln Cathedral and Epworth Old Rectory earlier during the Conference. My two talks about these chairs may be found on the RFS YouTube channel: '18th Century Windsor Chairs – Early Types & New Discoveries in Lincolnshire' and 'Research, Repair & Authentic Replication'. I also showed a replica of one of the side chairs made for me by Rob Ley, who works at Ailby, Lincolnshire, using authentic eighteenth-century methods, who is very happy to make more if anyone would like one. Rob has also made authentic replicas of the comb back armchairs. There was general agreement that all these chairs, old or new, are extremely comfortable to sit on and have no need of cushions!

The second part of the talk covered recent research into Leicestershire Windsor chairs. William Sergeant told how he and RFS member John Boden pieced together the story of chairs with a provenance from around Loughborough, Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray featuring unusual barrel-shaped turnings on the side and cross stretchers. I then displayed a chair stamped 'HOWES' which is only the second stamped chair recorded from a Leicestershire workshop (from a previously unknown late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century Windsor chair maker, Joshua Howes, successively of Swithland, Mountsorrel, Leicester and Evington). Photographs of four other chairs which must also have come from Howes's workshop were revealed. New photographs from California of the previously published 'W ROWE' of Hallaton comb back Windsor armchair were discussed, together with other groups of stylistically similar Windsor armchairs which may have a Leicestershire origin. These Leicestershire discoveries are the subject of my forthcoming article in *Regional Furniture*, XXXV (2021).

There followed a swift canter through Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Windsors, with focus on the early Grantham makers, especially the Taylor family. Robert Holland had kindly brought along one of a pair of stamped 'TAYLOR' side chairs – an unusual example made of yew and elm (ash and elm being the more common Taylor family habit over three generations). I showed an 1850s Nottinghamshire child's Windsor yew and fruitwood weighing and exercise high chair. These chairs are rare and I thought that only three are known. To my great delight, a member of the audience



Two mid-eighteenth-century comb back Windsor chairs, Lincolnshire. *Photo Keith Pinn.*



Eighteenth-century comb back Windsor chairs, probably Lincolnshire, at The Old Rectory, Epworth.
Photo Julian Parker.

approached me at the end to reveal the existence of a fourth example.

Valentine and Roderick Butler showed us a beautiful painted comb back child's Windsor armchair, probably of Thames Valley origin, with a 7-piercing stylised fleur-de-lys splat. The consensus was that the chair probably dated from the last quarter of the eighteenth century with the paint scheme slightly later, being more likely to be of Regency date.

Julian Parker