

Two 'Country Sheraton' chairs with elements of both types

I have two chairs acquired a few years ago in Gloucestershire which, when I read Jeremy's article, seemed to me to combine elements of both types of



A non-identical pair of Country Sheraton chairs acquired in Gloucestershire. Note the differences in the splats, the single-piece seats and the chamfered front stretchers with slight upturn at the ends. *Photo Linda Hall*



Detail of the left-hand chair showing the reeded splats, the curved rails, and the top rail set on top of the stiles with no pegs. There is a nail on the right-hand side. *Photo Linda Hall*



Back view of the right-hand chair showing the rounded backs of the top rail and the stiles, while the bottom rail and splats have square backs. The splats have been rounded slightly at the top to attempt a better fit with the top rail – the work of an apprentice perhaps? *Photo Linda Hall*

chair. I am happy to call them Country Sheraton as they have the generally square section stiles, splats and rails, the deep seat rails and slight tapers only on one side of the front legs.

- * The backs have evenly spaced splats, although only three rather than four, and the top and bottom back rails are curved.
- * The back stiles and top rails are rounded at the rear.
- * The back stiles have a slight curve which resembles the Country Sheraton rather than the Brander Back.
- * The seats are rounded on three sides, with a simple rounding along the front edge and a stepped moulding on the sides. The pattern of wear on the sides suggests however that any stepping to the moulding on the front edges has simply worn off with protracted use.

So far so similar. However, there are differences.

- * The seats are made of single pieces of timber, not two. Each has subsequently split, one in one place and one in two, and they have an old repair with a square section timber inserted below the seat, running from front to back and with the sections of seat nailed to them.
- * The front stretchers have a chamfer on the top edge and a very slight upturn at the ends.
- * The top rail is set on top of the stiles rather than between them, and is not pegged, although one chair has had a nail added to one top joint. This is a feature of the Brander Back rather than the Country Sheraton.

The chairs are not an exact pair. In one the splats have the triple reeding of the Brander Back and the bottom back rail is rounded at the back like the top rail and stiles; the splats are square at the back. The other chair has chamfered splats, and both splats and bottom rail are square at the back.

The height of the bottom back rail above the seat appears to be halfway between the positions on Jeremy's two chairs, although the fact that my chairs do not have the stile reducing in width between the seat and the

bottom rail makes it harder to compare. Nor do they have the rudimentary yoke of the Country Sheraton.

As a novice in the analysis of chairs, the key points that define the Brander Back to me are the flat back, the irregular spacing of the splats, the more pronounced curve of the back stiles and the generally greater elegance.

The other differences — single plank or two plank seat, top rail between or on top of the stiles, elements rounded or not — could simply be the variations between craftsmen who each had their own preferred method of doing things. Could the simpler chamfered splats and square-backed bottom rail have been produced by an apprentice, while the master craftsman produced the reeded splats and the rounded bottom rail? Or were the variations to do with cost and the need to meet certain price levels by reducing production time in very subtle ways? We shall never know.

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