

Webb & Bunce Refined

In 2020 I set out the fortunes of three generations of the chair-making Webb family of Dorney and Hammersmith, together with a Carter nephew/cousin, Timothy Carter, and niece/cousin, Mary Carter, who married William Matlock Bunce, taken into partnership by Martha Webb, the last of the Webb chair-making line.³²

The British Newspaper Archive has placed more newspapers online: two further advertisements have appeared. From *The Daily Advertiser and Oracle* of 19 May 1802:³³

WEBB and BUNCE's Windsor Chair Manufactory, near the Creek, Hammersmith.—M. WEBB begs leave to return her most grateful thanks to the Nobility, Gentry, and her Customers in general, for their past favours, and to solicit a continuance of the same to herself and WILLIAM M. BUNCE, whom she has lately admitted into partnership, at her Original Manufactory, situated as above, where every article in the Garden-chair Business is manufactured in the best style, and on the most reasonable terms. The Public are requested to observe, that M. Webb has no connection whatever with her late Foreman, Timothy Carter, who has intimated that he intends to establish a similar Manufactory in opposition to her.

This supersedes Sarah Sophia Banks's 1803 trade card as the earliest documented reference to 'Windsor Chairs' in connection with the Webb family.³⁴ It also brings forward the terminus ante quem of the Webb & Bunce partnership by about a year to May 1802 or just before. It also reveals, as was suspected but for which there was, hitherto, no direct evidence, that Martha Webb's cousin Timothy Carter, if he was the foreman, had probably worked in the Webb business for some time. Martha's grandfather John, father Henry, and two brothers, John and Henry, all four chairmakers, three in Hammersmith, had all died in 1793–1795.³⁵ Timothy Carter was 34 in 1802 and he married in May 1803.³⁶ One suspects that he wished to strike out on his own and may have been uncomfortable about the arrival of Mr Bunce. Over the next twenty years he built a substantial victualling and chair-making business only a few yards from Webb's Lane.³⁷ It is also now obvious why the last line of the 1803 trade card reads: 'NB no connection whatsoever with any other Tradesman in the above Districts'.

The second advertisement is from the *Morning Herald* of 30 July 1804:

HAMMERSMITH. – WEBB and BUNCE, Windsor Chair and Garden Furniture Manufacturers to her Majesty, his Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence, and the Royal Family, feel that the best return they can make to the Nobility and Gentry, and others, for the very decided preference which they have been pleased to honour their Manufactory with, will be to persevere in that line of conduct, which has been rewarded with general approbation; and trust it will justify them in soliciting a continuance of their patronage, which has been conferred during a period of near seventy years.³⁸ Webb and Bunce have the greatest assortment in the kingdom, and will be ready at the shortest notice to send to any distance. N. B. The Manufactory is the corner of Webb's Lane, and nowhere else. – Merchants, House Agents, Cabinet-makers, &c. supplied with all kinds of Windsor chairs, for home and exportation.

This now becomes the earliest Webb & Bunce advertisement laying claim to Royal patronage, bolstered by the splendidly punchy but unverifiable boast of the ‘greatest assortment in the kingdom’. One wonders how many of their Windsor chairs of ‘all kinds’ went overseas and reached the parts that other chairs could not reach. Martha Webb was still sore about Timothy Carter’s perfidy but the side-swipe implicit in ‘nowhere else’ is more veiled than the direct shot across his bows a couple of years earlier.

Julian Parker

³² Julian Parker, ‘Windsor Chairs, Children’s Carts, German Stools, Rustic Chairs, Summerhouses and Perambulators: The Webbs (and Bunce and Carter), Dells, Priors and Trotmans’, *Regional Furniture*, XXXIV 2020, pp. 51–141. The section relating to the Webbs, Carters and Bunce is at pp. 58–72. The relevant family tree is at p. 58.

³³ An identical advertisement also appeared on 21 May 1802.

³⁴ Parker (2020) p. 65: the observation there that ‘the evidence now assembled makes it likely that they had been in the family range of products since the Dorney days’ remains true.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 58 and p. 62.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 63.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 64.

³⁸ See ibid. p. 61 — seventy years must include John Webb’s activities in Dorney.