

# More about Gillows' Windsor and Common Chairs

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In the 1995 volume of this journal I published a short article on Gillows' Windsor chairs.<sup>1</sup> In this longer paper I will focus on what the Gillow archives tell us about a variety of social and trade issues concerning Windsor and other common chairs. Who purchased these chairs and for which rooms? Where did the designs come from? How did Gillows sub-contract their manufacture, who were the contractors and where were their workshops? Where did the timber and other materials come from, and what problems did Gillows have with their subcontractors and suppliers? I will also outline what the archives tell us about rout, cottage, and other common and simple painted chairs. Further information on chair work from several Lancaster Workman's Price Books is given in the Appendices, together with an estimate of the number of chairs of all types and patterns made from 1783–87 by the Lancaster business.

## RED STAINED CHAIRS

In 1771 the first common stained chairs were recorded in the Gillow archives. However, the chairs were apparently not made by Gillows but imported from Ireland. Richard Gillow wrote to Messrs. Lamb and Lear, merchants of Dublin, in November 1771, asking them to send him a dozen red stained chairs with rush bottoms. He wrote: 'Should be glad you'd send us per [Captain] Greenwood's next return 12 neat chairs stained red wth rush bottoms about 4s or 5s each such as is usually sent to England'.<sup>2</sup> Despite Richard Gillow's comment that such chairs were '... usually sent to England', recent research has failed to shed any light on the export of any chairs from Ireland to England during the 1770s.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it seems that such a trade did exist, and the following month Gillows paid Lamb & Lear £2 10s. 6d. (£2 14s. 10d. in Irish pounds) for 12 stained chairs.<sup>4</sup> Lamb & Lear were general merchants who presumably purchased the chairs from an Irish chair maker. They were probably the '12 Irish chairs from Dublin with rush bottoms' which were sent to the Reverend Mr Thomas Whitehead of Ulverston in July 1772 for £3 10s. 7d., including duty, freight and charges from Dublin, as part of a large consignment of household furniture totalling £128 2s. 5d.<sup>5</sup> However, there is no evidence that further chairs were ordered by Gillows from Dublin, nor that during the 1770s Gillows made many stained chairs in Lancaster.

However, during the spring of 1778 a Yorkshire customer made enquiries about some red stained chairs from the Lancaster shop, described as: '12 neat armed chairs stained

<sup>1</sup> Stuart (1995).

<sup>2</sup> 344/166, 29 November 1771.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers (2007). John Rogers has researched all eighteenth-century Irish newspapers but found no evidence of Irish chairs being exported to England during this period.

<sup>4</sup> 344/22, about 29 December 1771; 344/3, fol. 190.

<sup>5</sup> 344/167, fol. 291, 28 July 1772.

& made wth. rush bottoms in the neatest manner — & stained a deep red colour bordering upon purple & well polished'.<sup>6</sup> Richard Gillow was initially unsure about accepting the commission so he consulted his brother Robert, the senior partner in the Oxford Street shop. He informed his customer, Mr Pickering of Giggleswick:

... we ordered a pattern stained chair from our warehouse in London in order to have made yours by; but as you seem to be very particular about the form of 'em and the manner of staining 'em we dare not undertake to make them until you have seen this pattern and approved of it besides we are afraid it will be very difficult to have 'em made in this town in all respects to your satisfaction otherwise should be glad to make them.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, enquiries were made rather than lose a sale and a month later a pattern chair ordered from London was sent to Giggleswick for the customer's approval. Richard Gillow wrote: '... the price is 8s 8d each, 1 doz. we have only one man that will undertake to make 'em whom we think will do 'em neatly as well as the pattern sent. If you resolve to have 'em you'll please to return the pattern as they cannot be made without it'. The 'pattern' was not merely a drawing but a pattern chair, and having gone to the trouble and expense of having one made in their London workshop especially for their Yorkshire customer, Richard Gillow wrote: '... If you keep the pattern & don't order the chairs it will be 11s 6d at least as it cost us more wth. packing & carriage'.<sup>8</sup> It appears that Mr Pickering did not approve of the pattern chair because no order was carried out and a cross was scrawled against the original entry in Gillows' order book.

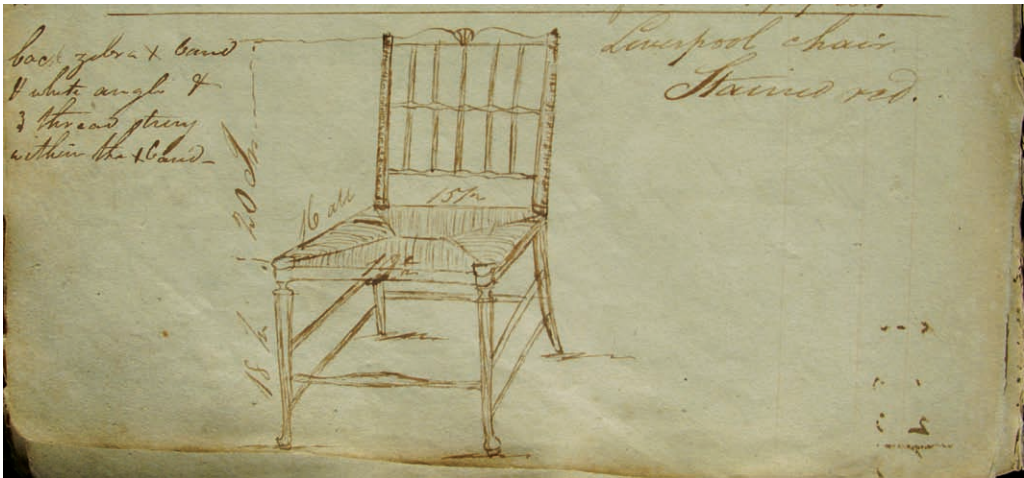
It is unfortunate that no drawings of the red stained chairs with rush bottoms made in the 1770s have survived. Intriguingly, the only drawing of a red stained chair with a rush bottom was the 'Liverpool chair' sketched by Gillows in 1801 (Figure 1). Could this early-nineteenth-century chair have been similar in style to the Dublin chair made in 1771, or the pattern chair sent from Gillows' London shop in 1778? Pad feet would have been fashionable on a provincial town-made chair in the 1770s but they were certainly outmoded by the turn of the eighteenth century on all but country chairs. Do the Gillow archives throw any further light on this popular chair? The Petty Ledger, which might have given further details about its manufacture, and the Waste Book, which would have given the name of the person who ordered it, have not survived for 1801, nor do any surviving letters to customers refer to such chairs. However, John Harrison, who made the Liverpool chair, made twenty others between July 1802 and February 1804.<sup>9</sup> For example, he made a stained Liverpool armed chair in July 1802 for which he received 5s.; three with wood bottoms in September 1802; and twelve stained Liverpool chairs in February without arms at 3s. each. Who made the first 'Liverpool chairs' and when? Could they have been influenced by the Dublin red stained chairs with rush seats which Gillows remarked were '... usually imported into England' during the early 1770s? Gillows do not name the English port of entry, but it seems very likely that some red stained chairs would have been imported into Liverpool given

<sup>6</sup> 344/84, fol. 11; nearest date 19 March 1778.

<sup>7</sup> 344/169, 23 June 1778.

<sup>8</sup> 344/169, 14 July 1778

<sup>9</sup> 344/78, fols 74, 75, 78, 79, 80.



1 Sketch of a 'Liverpool' chair, stained red, 1801. H 38 in (96.5 cm); w front seat 19½ in (49.5 cm); w back seat 15 in (38 cm); D 16 in (41 cm).

Westminster Archive Centre 344/98, fol. 1620

the port's strong trade with Ireland. Certainly the origins of the Liverpool chair and its possible connections with Irish examples is an area worthy of further research. Unfortunately although we know from a letter in the Gillow archives that Liverpool cabinet makers had a journeyman's price book in 1765,<sup>10</sup> enquiries at the Lancashire Record Office in Liverpool demonstrated that no Liverpool agreements have apparently survived in their collection. Although a copy of the *Preston Cabinet and Chair maker's Book of Prices* published in 1802 exists in the Lancashire Record Office in Preston, there is no mention of Liverpool pattern chairs in it.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Liverpool pattern chairs were apparently not part of the Preston cabinetmakers' regular output but they were made occasionally by Gillows of Lancaster at this date.

#### WINDSOR CHAIRS AND THE ROOMS FOR WHICH THEY WERE DESIGNED IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A hybrid easy chair drawn in 1793 and described as a Windsor chair in the Estimate Sketch Book index was illustrated in my 1995 article. This chair was 'painted black ground stroked wth. pink'.<sup>12</sup> Further research has demonstrated that there was a demand for Windsor-type chairs in middling households more than twenty years before this example was illustrated in the archives. For example, Gillows wrote to Mr J. Parker of Astle near Knutsford in February 1772, apparently in answer to his enquiry about a Windsor type chair:

<sup>10</sup> Stuart (2008), 1, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> Jones (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Stuart (1995).

Have annexed a random sketch of a fashionable chair wch. we have even made for drawing rooms as well as dressing rooms it is the nearest to a Windsor chair of any mahogany chair we've made is very light & in as [*sic*] little rooms as an arm'd chair ought to be. The price of wch. with a loose seat stuffed with curled hair into fine canvas wou'd be 21s 6d over the rails wth. fine canvas 23s 6d.

They added: 'Have inclosed the scetch of half a French elbow chair the whole of wch. may be seen by putting the centre edge to a looking glass'.<sup>13</sup>

Gillows made mahogany chairs described as '... nearest to a Windsor chair' but with loose seats or with seats stuffed over the seat rails, to furnish small intimate rooms such as dressing rooms, which were often used by ladies and gentlemen as studies for reading and writing. Some Windsor chairs were gilded as well as painted. In July 1770 a set was ordered by a Mr Hyde of Manchester. Once again they must have been very special since they cost 7s. 6d. each exclusive of painting and gilding (which added 4s. 6d.), and they required a packing case in which they were screwed to avoid damage at 2s. 1½d. The total cost was 14s. 1½d., or more than double the cost of a standard Windsor. When another Manchester customer ordered similar painted and gilded Windsor chairs in February 1775, Gillows suggested that a great saving could be made by sending the chairs to Manchester unpainted, because they presumed that they could be painted and gilded in Manchester, thereby saving the cost of packing them in cases.<sup>14</sup> The customer, Mr George Booth, must have approved of Gillows' Windsors since he had already purchased '... 18 very neat & good Windsor chairs' described as 'beaded' the previous December for 7s. 6d. each.<sup>15</sup> The addition of beads on the chair back meant that the journeyman was paid an additional 2d. per chair.<sup>16</sup>

The inventory of the household furniture of the late John Rawlinson of Lancaster, a West India merchant, appraised by Richard Gillow and Myles Pennington, upholsterer, in March 1782, gives a rare insight into where Windsor chairs were placed in a town house in the eighteenth century. John Rawlinson's hall was furnished with a pair of dining tables (£1 12s.) and six green Windsor chairs (6s. each).<sup>17</sup> This might suggest that his hall was used as a sitting area and perhaps an informal meeting room. Figure 2 illustrates the entrance hall at Heysham Head near Morecambe, with a Gillow Windsor chair in the foreground. The entrance hall of John Rawlinson's house in High Street Lancaster is similar in layout to the hall at Heysham Head. The Windsor chairs at the Judges' Lodgings Museum (Figure 9) were, I understand, part of the furniture left in the servants hall when the Assize Court judges no longer needed the building and it became a museum. Therefore Gillows' adaptable Windsor chairs were made for a variety of rooms such as drawing rooms, dressing rooms and entrance halls as well as kitchens and servants halls.

<sup>13</sup> 344/166, 4 February 1772.

<sup>14</sup> 344/168, 10 February 1775.

<sup>15</sup> 344/167, 6 December 1774.

<sup>16</sup> 344/72, fol. 31, 19 February 1774.

<sup>17</sup> 344/180, 1 March 1782.



2 The entrance hall, Heysham Head, near Morecambe with a Gillow Windsor chair in the foreground.

*Postcard, early twentieth century*

#### SUB-CONTRACTED WINDSOR CHAIR MAKERS

##### I: THE WILCOCK FAMILY OF BENTHAM, NORTH YORKSHIRE

In November 1774 Gillows' wrote to Williams Hassel of Penrith: '... as to the Windsor chairs we have but one man that makes 'em ...'.<sup>18</sup> The 'one man' was James Wilcock senior (1724–1808), of Lower Bentham in North Yorkshire, fifteen miles from Lancaster. Strictly speaking, James Wilcock did not work alone; he was head of a family firm which included his son James junior, who was described on his marriage as a 'joiner',<sup>19</sup> and during the early 1790s James Wilcock junior and Joseph Wilcock, a cabinet maker who made the High Windsor chair in 1806 (Figure 3), were in partnership. However, thus far no family relationships have been traced in the Bentham Parish Registers. Another cabinetmaker, William Wilcock, was also living and probably working in Bentham when he married Mary Ellershaw in 1782.<sup>20</sup> In the early nineteenth century the Wilcocks moved from Bentham to Lancaster. Altogether thirteen men of this name worked for Gillows, four of whom were apprenticed to Leonard Redmayne, the Lancaster partner of Gillows & Co. in the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

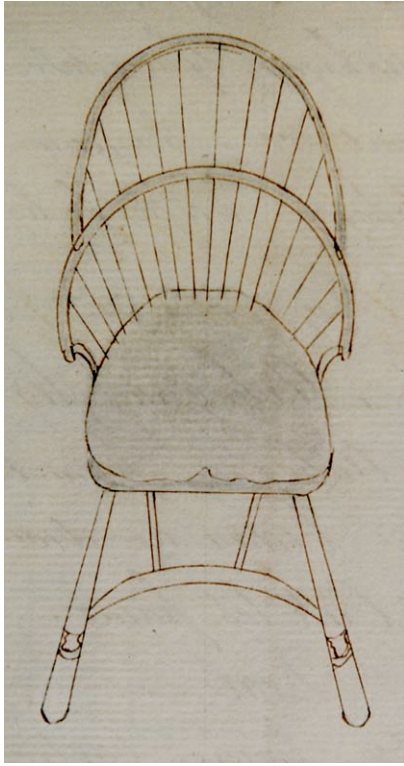
Like many tradesmen who lived in small towns and villages in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, James senior or 'old James Wilcock' as he was known in Bentham, had two trades; he was a victualler and a cabinetmaker, and lived at the Punch Bowl

<sup>18</sup> 344/167, 8 November 1774

<sup>19</sup> LPRS, St John's Church Lower Bentham, Parish Register, 14 October 1799.

<sup>20</sup> LPRS, St John's Church Lower Bentham, Parish Register, 20 May 1782.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart (2008), II, pp. 297–98.



3 A high back Windsor chair painted green, ash with deal spindles. Made by Joseph Wilcock, December 1806. *Westminster Archive Centre* 344/ 99, fol. 1804

Inn, Lower Bentham (Figure 4).<sup>22</sup> His workshop was probably in the adjoining barn which has the initials 'IW 1708' carved in stone over the barn door and another datestone 'IW 1670' had been inserted on a more recent extension. However the date stones signify that generations of Wilcocks had lived there before James set up his business in the eighteenth century.

James Wilcock senior and junior made a wide variety of chairs in mahogany and walnut for Gillows in 1770, and a few other items of furniture such as clock cases in the 1780s.<sup>23</sup> Like many, if not most, journeymen who supplied furniture to the Lancaster firm, the Wilcocks also made furniture for their own customers and these included clock cases which they supplied to the Lancaster clockmaker J. Muncaster, probably John Muncaster, who was in business in Lancaster from 1806 to 1826.<sup>24</sup> Some of the Wilcocks' chairs were apparently of fashionable type, for example the '... 12 splat backed armed chairs Mr. Bradyll's pattern only crooked backs of walnut 6s 6d turning included £3 18s 0d ...', and the '... 12 mahogany chairs open backs best figure of eight pattern 4s 6d relieving do & carving 6s'.<sup>25</sup> However, most of their output was of a plainer style: '18<sup>th</sup> August 1770 By 12 walnut chairs plain, 3s 6d. 2 gns.; By 12 mahogany chairs common open backs a little relieved [carved] @ 4s 4d £2 12 0d'.<sup>26</sup> James Wilcock made Windsor chairs for Gillows from January 1770, when he made fourteen chairs

at 3s. 6d. each, and he was also paid 6s. 'by wood & sawing per account'.<sup>27</sup> Messrs Wilcock provided Gillows with a wide range of services in addition to making and turning chairs. They supplied and sawed a variety of native woods sourced within a ten-mile radius of Bentham, and also arranged their transport to Lancaster. Twelve dozen Windsor chair bottoms at 8s. per dozen were sent from Clapham in the Yorkshire Dales to Lancaster by James Wilcock in September 1780.<sup>28</sup> In May 1783 Gillows' Petty Ledger recorded that James Wilcock of Lower Bentham had sold them Windsor chairs at 2 gns per dozen, and chair bottoms in ash and 16 dozen plane tree bottoms at

<sup>22</sup> Carr, (1997).

<sup>23</sup> 344/74, fol. 301, 1 October 1785.

<sup>24</sup> Carr (1997); Stuart (1996), p. 59.

<sup>25</sup> 344/71, fol. 22, 14 April 1770.

<sup>26</sup> 344/71, fol. 22.

<sup>27</sup> 344/71, fol. 22, 22 January 1770.

<sup>28</sup> 344/73, fol. 95, 16 September 1780.



4 The Punch Bowl Hotel, Lower Bentham, where James Wilcock worked as an innkeeper and cabinetmaker. He was Gillows' main Windsor chair maker during the eighteenth century.  
*The author*

8s. 6d. per dozen. 'Plane tree' was a common misnomer for *Acer pseudoplatanus* or sycamore, used in some parts of England, Scotland and North America. Gillow's clerk noted that the wood had come from Wray, a village on the edge of Roeburndale, near Hornby, about eight or nine miles from Lancaster.<sup>29</sup> Confusingly, in March 1785 Gillows purchased 7 dozen sycamore bottoms at 8s. 6d. per dozen from James Wilcock, the same price they had paid for plane tree bottoms, which may, or may not, indicate that they were referring to the same wood.<sup>30</sup> Gillows also purchased ash wood by the foot in 1783 from Wilcock and they paid for the wood to come to Lancaster by cart.<sup>31</sup> In March 1784 they gave Wilcock 10d. '... for the trouble of buying wood'.<sup>32</sup> In April of the same year Gillows bought a parcel of 29 trees from Wray at 16s. per tree which were probably ash trees.<sup>33</sup> They also purchased unspecified wood from a Mr Geldert of Hornby on another occasion.<sup>34</sup>

During the early to mid-1780s Gillows referred to purchasing nails for Windsor chairs from Wilcock. These were probably made in Wray where nail-making was a thriving industry at this period.<sup>35</sup> In 1793 'Plates' at 1d. or 2d. each were made to be placed under Windsor chair seats, presumably to strengthen them, but no surviving examples have been recorded.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>29</sup> 344/74, 24 May 1783.

<sup>30</sup> 344/74, fol. 258.

<sup>31</sup> 344/74, fol. 125, 20 December 1783.

<sup>32</sup> 344/74, fol. 147, 31 March 1784.

<sup>33</sup> 344/74, fol. 147, 24 April 1784.

<sup>34</sup> 344/73, p. 247, 26 November 1782.

<sup>35</sup> Winstanley (2000), p. 4.

<sup>36</sup> 344/76, fol. 183, 31 March 1793.

After the American War of Independence (1776–83) there was a huge demand for furniture of all descriptions for export, so when Gillows sent four dozen Windsor chairs to Yates & Swarbrick of Jamaica in November 1784 they declared: 'We have had such demand for our goods of late that it has not been in our power to ship much on our own account'.<sup>37</sup> Windsor chairs topped the list of Gillow chairs exported, with 1,386 being sold from 1783 to 1785 (see Appendix II); most, if not all, were made by James Wilcock of Bentham.

James junior and Joseph Wilcock, who were in partnership from about 1790 to 1796, continued to make Windsor chairs for Gillows but not in such quantities as the Wilcock family had during the 1770s and 1780s. In 1801 some Windsor chairs made in Bentham were described by Robert Gillow to Matthew Gregson, a Liverpool upholsterer and overseas merchant, as: '... stained to look exactly like cherry tree chairs & require no painting. This sort have been much in demand here for the West Indies'.<sup>38</sup> However, when Robert Gillow rode over that evening to Bentham to purchase several dozen more Windsor chairs to resell to Gregson, he was told that they would not be ready in time to send on the *Hope* to Liverpool. Thomas Toulmin also made a few Windsor chairs in the early 1790s.<sup>39</sup> John Harrison, who made the Liverpool chair, also made the Windsor chairs in Figures 10 and 12. He was a good craftsman who made large numbers of plain chairs and rush and cane seats for the firm.

#### SUB-CONTRACTED WINDSOR CHAIR MAKERS

##### 2: JOHN RUMNEY (1703–78)

Although Messrs James Wilcock were Gillows' main suppliers of Windsor and other common chairs, due to the chairs' popularity Gillows were obliged to look for additional suppliers. In October 1774 they paid John Rumley (or Rumney), of Dalton, near Ulverston, 5s. each for twelve Windsor chairs.<sup>40</sup> John Romney, called Rumley or Rumney in the Gillow archives, was the father of George Romney (1734–1802), the celebrated portrait painter and rival of Sir Joshua Reynolds. However, John was a multi-talented man in his own right. He has been described as the 'Jethro Tull of Furness',<sup>41</sup> who worked in metal as well as wood, and designed the north of England's first plough with an iron mould-board and other agricultural and mining innovations. John Rumney was credited by his great grandson the Reverend John Romney as importing into Furness the first West Indian mahogany in the form of a sailor's chest which he is said to have made into a chest of drawers. The Reverend John summarized his ancestor's talents in glowing terms:

His genius was as expert in making a fiddle as in constructing, or embellishing a gentleman's mansion. Every structure in wood, however great, or however small, was within the compass of his abilities.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> 344/170, 19 November 1784.

<sup>38</sup> 344/175, fol. 63, 20 May 1801.

<sup>39</sup> 344/76, fol. 33.

<sup>40</sup> 344/33, fols 453–54, 11 October 1774.

<sup>41</sup> Cross (2000), p. 2.

<sup>42</sup> Romney (1830), p. 5.





5 The house and barn at High Cocken, near Dalton in Furness, photographed in the 1890s. John Rumney (1703–78), a joiner and cabinetmaker who made Windsor chairs for Gillows, lived and worked there from 1744 until he moved to Kendal in 1777.  
*Barrow Record Office and Local Studies Library*

John Rumney was first recorded in the Gillow archives in December 1766, when he purchased some mahogany from the firm.<sup>43</sup> Although his address was generally given as ‘Dalton’ or ‘Bardsea’, in 1772 ‘Cockin near Dalton’ was mentioned.<sup>44</sup> This was a reference to High Cocken, a small estate near Dalton-in-Furness and the village of Bardsea, which John Rumney purchased from Thomas Richardson about 1741–42. He set about improving the land and it is said that he built the cottage and its adjoining workshop and moved his family there about 1743–44. John Rumney’s workshop was demolished about 1798 because it was unsafe, and a barn built in its place (Figure 5). Plans of High Cocken estate show that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a plantation adjacent to the house and having his own supply of native timbers was perhaps one reason why John Rumney purchased it (Figure 6).<sup>45</sup>

John Rumney of High Cocken was probably the same cabinetmaker who signed a mahogany bureau dated 29 March 1765.<sup>46</sup> He may also have made the fine mahogany

<sup>43</sup> 344/50, fol. 104, 17 December 1766.

<sup>44</sup> 344/3, fol. 225, March 1772.

<sup>45</sup> Cumbria Record Office, Barrow, Z2312.

<sup>46</sup> Stuart (2008), 1, pl. 425.



6 Drawing of High Cocken, copied from a painting made before 1843 when a stone quarry was built behind the house. The barn and adjacent privy on the right hand side replaced John Romney's workshop which was demolished in 1798 because it was unsafe.

There was a plantation near the house.

*Barrow Record Office and Local Studies Library*

armed chair recently sold at Bonhams which was removed from Whitestock Hall, once the home of the Romney family.<sup>47</sup> Purchases of small amounts of wood from Gillows in 1772 were followed in October 1774 by a payment to him for making a dozen Windsor chairs at 5s. each.<sup>48</sup> However, it was not until January 1777 that Richard Gillow approached Rumney to make Windsor chairs for him on a regular basis. Apparently Rumney's nephew Thomas, who was employed by Gillows, had told them that Rumney was willing to make Windsor chairs but he wished to know the patterns. Richard Gillow urged him to make a dozen as soon as possible and asked how many he could make during the forthcoming year. He continued: '... we presume we can take all you can make to be good & delivered here at 5s or even 5s 6d each if you think they deserve it'. He added: '... don't pinch the bottoms in length at the hips'.<sup>49</sup> Presumably this was a reference to the practice by some chair makers of curving the wood towards the back of the seat in a bell-like shape, thereby narrowing the seat 'at the hips'. Richard Gillow added a plea for more chair makers in Furness to supply the firm with Windsor chairs: 'Ps. If any of your acquaintance over Sands will undertake to make chairs for us of same sort of seasoned wood could take a quantity of em'. The following month Richard Gillow requested Rumney to make him a dozen or half a dozen Windsor chairs urgently, and gave him instructions on how to assemble part of the chairs and send the other chair parts 'loose' depending apparently on the quantities to be sent:

... and let the legs & cross-rails & everything below the bottom come loose, that is not glued together for convenience of packing 'em in a little room to go abroad; & all above the bottom

<sup>47</sup> Bonhams, London, 18 November 2009, lot 179.

<sup>48</sup> 344/33, fol. 454, 11 October 1774.

<sup>49</sup> 344/168, 30 January 1777.

to come fast as usual but if you only send half a dozen at once they may come fast as usual — & if you send a whole dozen at or near the same carriers day [they] would rather they come loose as described.’

Richard Gillow then tried to persuade John Rumney to settle in Lancaster:

If you choose to come & live in, or near Lancaster (for example at Skerton) [across the river Lune]. We think we can lay in wood to keep you doing a good while at Windsor chairs & we give 3s 6d each for workmanship only of each chair, we, in that case finding all materials. If you think it will answer your end, as expect we can give you constant employ.<sup>50</sup>

From 1776 the Gillow brothers tried to find suppliers of large quantities of plane tree seats for their Windsor chairs, probably because as Sheraton observed, it was a very tough white wood with a close grain, which many cabinet makers used as an alternative to beech for painted chairs.<sup>51</sup> The partners suggested that Rumney might be able to supply some. They continued:

... If you can procure us any good sound plain tree bottoms should be willing to give you 6d each bottom for any quantity not exceeding 12 dozen at present, but not more than eight shillings per dozen delivered to us at Lancaster free of expense to us — Therefore should be glad you would take the trouble to send us a few dozens by the first opportunity either by land or shipping if they would not exceed the above price delivered at Lancaster. — but presumes they’ll come cheaper by shipping ... Would rather have them in the log & in pieces of suitable sizes than otherwise. Your procurement and sending us any quantity not exceeding 12 dozen or 8s per dozen or less delivered here & soon will be acknowledged as soon as done.<sup>52</sup>

Rumney sent six dozen Windsor chair bottoms in March 1777, of which one bottom ‘... will not do as it is deficient’.<sup>53</sup> Gillows expected their suppliers to make furniture exactly to the pattern they sent, and not to deviate as regards the shape or thickness of wood. By January 1778 John Rumney had moved to Kendal, twenty-one miles to the north. Having settled in Kendal, he enquired if Richard Gillow could supply him with mahogany roughly cut to make six chairs, Richard Gillow replied:

Presumes you have heard that all sorts of mahogany are much advanced [in price, due to the American War of Independence], but if you incline to have as will make half a dozen chairs shall send all good Jamaica or hard wood wth. the backs, top rails & banister cut out crooked for 7s each chair or of good Bay wood for 6s each wth. a straight banister & cross rails — Ps. We suppose you mean to have 4 low cross rails & mahogany seat rails.<sup>54</sup>

In early February 1778 Rumney purchased six Bay wood mahogany chairs which, with ‘cutting out’ ready for him to finish, cost £1 16s. *od.*<sup>55</sup> However, only two months later he died at Kendal, aged about seventy-five. He was buried at Dalton in Furness on the 3 May 1778.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>50</sup> 44/168, 11 February 1777.

<sup>51</sup> Sheraton (1803) p. 288, also observed that it was used for the fly joint rails of card and Pembroke tables. See also Stuart (2008), II, p. 157, for Gillows’ use of ‘plane tree’.

<sup>52</sup> 344/168, 11 February 1777.

<sup>53</sup> 344/6, fol. 50, 26 March 1777.

<sup>54</sup> 344/168, 10 January 1778.

<sup>55</sup> 344/6, fol. 292, 2 February 1778.

<sup>56</sup> Information from Richard Hall, archivist, Cumbria Record Office, Kendal.



7 The quay at Lag Hall on the river Nith, with Kingholm Quay, Dumfries in the background. James Beck, wood monger, sent chair bottoms and beech planks to Richard Gillow from this quay from 1776 to 1778.  
*The author*

SUB-CONTRACTED WINDSOR CHAIR MAKERS  
3: JAMES BECK, WOOD MONGER AND CHAIR-SEAT  
MAKER OF DUMFRIES AND ULVERSTON

In 1776 Richard Gillow began looking for supplies of wood for Windsor chair bottoms from Scotland. He approached James Beck, a wood monger (or timber merchant) of Laghall, near Dumfries, who was a relative of Thomas Baines, a master cabinet maker of Lancaster who had joined Robert Gillow senior on some of his early export adventures.<sup>57</sup> Lag Hall, on the banks of the river Nith had its own quay which still exists today. It was equipped with three bollards used for mooring boats, one of which can be seen in Figure 7. Lag Hall quay was conveniently situated almost opposite Kingholm Quay, Dumfries, from where timber was regularly exported in the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Richard Gillow wrote to Beck on 5 June 1776:

If you have not already sent the chair bottoms we ordered should be glad you would send us about 4 or 5 dozen by the first vessel you send to this place, or more or fewer as may suit you. If you cannot afford to deliver here right good ones of plain tree at the price we talked

<sup>57</sup> 344/168, 5 June 1777.

<sup>58</sup> Information from the librarian, Ewart Library, Dumfries.

of shall allow you 6s per dozen, but no more. Therefore don't fail to send the above number if you can as above and we shall be further customers to you for them if we approve the sort as well as beech'.<sup>59</sup>

Although James Beck sent wood from Dumfries to Lancaster on the *Peggy & Molly* he failed to send all the goods, so the following October Richard Gillow exclaimed:

You have disappointed us much in not sending the chair bottoms, as the expectation of 'em made us decline purchasing here & missed the opportunity of doing it. Therefore shou'd be glad you would send us 12 dozen plain tree chair bottoms if you can do of such stuff & dimensions as we directed of wch. we've no doubt, especially as we've agreed to give you more than we agreed for — If you cannot find 12 dozen by the first vessel to come near as near as you can & the sooner it come & better as we are in immediate want. We have taken a little of the beech shall be customers for part of next cargo if you oblige us about the bottoms — beech fallen last year will not suit nor any that is decayed.<sup>60</sup>

Gillows planned to use the *Peggy & Molly*, which was to call at Maryport and Dumfries on her return journey, to collect the wood from Beck. They also asked her captain to forward a *Trou madame* table to a customer in Galloway. Richard Gillow was confident that another vessel would arrive at Lancaster soon with wood from Beck, and he seized the opportunity to tout for further orders from his customer Patrick Heron, of Cree bridge, Galloway. He explained that any further furniture could be delivered on the anticipated return voyage.<sup>61</sup> However, the following February Beck had still not sent the chair bottoms so an exasperated Richard Gillow sent another letter demanding that Beck should '... put himself to some inconvenience (if necessary)' and send at least 12 dozen chair bottoms as they needed more than they had ordered initially, to be sent by the first vessel from Whitehaven.<sup>62</sup> A few days later, having been informed that Beck had left Lag Hall to settle at Ulverston, Richard Gillow repeated the contents of his previous letter.<sup>63</sup> By the end of April 1777 the firm had at last received the plane tree planks but had not yet had time to examine them so did not know how many Windsor chair bottoms they would make. This time Richard Gillow complained about Beck's lack of foresight regarding the payment for freight. It was the wood merchant's responsibility to organize it and, in this instance, to pay the cost of freight to Lancaster:

We wish you had mentioned if you had made any agreement for the freight from Whitehaven to Lancaster or given us direction to pay it & put it down to your account, but [as] we had no hint of that sort we consulted your relative Thomas Baines & we both thought twoud [*sic*] be more prudent for us to decline it & write to you to desire you woud [*sic*] order someone in Whitehaven to pay the freight to Andrew Smith or his wife, at the Queen's Head, Barneywell Lane, Whitehaven, who is the person that brought the wood hither & desired we woud do so.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> 344/168, 5 June 1776.

<sup>60</sup> 344/168, 13 October 1776.

<sup>61</sup> 344/168, 13 October 1776.

<sup>62</sup> 344/168, 5 February 1777.

<sup>63</sup> 344/168, 11 February 1777.

<sup>64</sup> 344/168, 24 April 1777.

Gillow continued:

You say you are preparing some more [timber] which is very well. If you can but keep 'em from decaying — If you send another sloop load of wood to Lancaster this summer we would take about the same quantity of beech as we did the first time — Provided you send it good fresh fallen & not decayed & then you might send us the chair bottoms at the same time which woud [*sic*] do part towards filling the vessel — & perhaps answer better for you — We can take about 6 dozen more in about 2 or 3 months. Just as you've opportunity of sawing 'em — & about 6 or 8 dozen further anytime before next winter sets in — & as we may hereafter advise.

He added a postscript: 'Our people have been examining the chair bottoms & find them too narrow. Let the rest be full up to your pattern & not less by any means'.

Despite Beck's tendency to disregard Gillows' pattern for chair bottoms on some occasions, at other times he was paid the full *6d.* each, or *6s.* per dozen which indicates that he had made the seats to the firm's specifications. For example, Beck was owed £1 *6s. 6d.* for 53 bottoms in August 1777, that is *6s.* per dozen. However Gillows made a book error by omitting to pay him until July 1778.<sup>65</sup> The following August Gillows were expecting a visit from Beck to '... settle about chair bottoms'. In preparation for his visit they had wisely called upon his cabinetmaker relative as a witness to examine them. Richard Gillow wrote: 'This morning Thomas Baines went down to look at the last parcel & can inform you that they will not answer our purpose & are not worth above half the money ... besides being a great disappointment to us.'<sup>66</sup> He suggested that if Beck could not do better he would give him *3s. 6d.* per dozen but added: '... would rather have given *6s.* if they had been done according to order, they will not average above 1 ½ inch thick off saw'. Gillows had specified that Windsor chair bottoms were to be cut 'off the saw' to a thickness of two inches.

The Reverend Mr Andrew Hunter (1744–1809), of Barjarg Tower, Dumfries and Galloway, also had an interest in the chair bottoms supplied to Gillows by James Beck. Hunter owned Barjarg (Figure 8), a large country estate near Thornhill, about eight miles from Dumfries, set in woodland.<sup>67</sup> Hunter had supplied the wood for the chair bottoms to James Beck from his estate, and had also entrusted Thomas Baines to sell staves in Lancaster on his behalf. Richard Gillow gave more details in a letter to Hunter on 30 July, 1778:

... are sorry to inform you that the parcel of chair bottoms are all spoiled, for that purpose by being sawn about half an inch thinner than they were ordered and also thinner than those that came before. Therefore they will not answer for chair bottoms of wch. we have informed James Beck soon after they came to hand but have not received an answer from him. Am informed by a relation of Jas. Becks that he will be in Lancaster in a few weeks when he may see the above & make the most he can of 'em. & when the account is fairly settled we presume Jas. Beck of whom we bought the former will have no objections to our remitting you for those that are come to order, after deducting freight we've paid wch. we are willing to do — The last parcel being sawn so that has been a great disappointment to us as it made us decline purchasing here when we had a good opportunity of doing it. According to your

<sup>65</sup> 344/6, fol. 431, 24 July 1778.

<sup>66</sup> 344/169, 15 June 1778.

<sup>67</sup> Information supplied by the librarian, Ewart Library, Dumfries.



8 Barjarg Tower, near Thornhill, Dumfries and Galloway. In 1778 it was owned by the Reverend Mr Andrew Hunter (1744–1809), who sold timber from his estate to James Beck of Lag Hall.

*The author*

request have seen Thomas Baines and gave him the account you sent for him — He gave his answer that he endeavoured to sell the staves you've charged him with as soon as they was landed. Therefore he was under the necessity of housing 'em as they would have spoilt out of doors — We think it would be [in] your interest to order the staves to be sold by [auction] in public for the most they'll give us they are not likely to improve in value — Thos. Baines also says that he has settled the other articles you charged him with Jas. Beck — As soon as Jas. Beck comes here (which we expect as above) shall then settle & discharge our account in a manner that will be right for you.<sup>68</sup>

Beck supplied Gillows with beech wood in March 1779, but less than two years later his will was proved at Ulverston in February 1781, only a month after it was written.<sup>69</sup> Beck was a poor book-keeper, since he had grossly overestimated his wealth, leaving £250 to be divided amongst his five children after his widow's death. In fact all his three trustees in an accompanying letter took the unusual step of refusing to administer his will and declared that the real value of his estate would only amount '... to the sum of £70'.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> 344/169, 30 July 1778.

<sup>69</sup> 344/7, fol. 636, 31 March 1779.

<sup>70</sup> Lancashire Record Office, WRW/F.

## WINDSOR CHAIR FINISHES

Since most Windsor chairs were painted, the type of timber was not significant, except for its strength, durability and soundness. Chair bottoms on common Windsors intended for painting were made of ash, beech, and plane tree. Black lead was sometimes used as an undercoat followed by green paint, as occurred when six neat Windsor chairs were exported to Barbados on the *Goodwill* in March 1775. They were packed with the legs and rails loose and all above the seat glued, so that they could be assembled and painted on board ship. Gillows wrote: '... we hope will be easy to put together have also sent paint in a very small box of this mark & no. to paint over lead colour and afterwards green ...'.<sup>71</sup> Occasionally chairs were supplied unfinished or 'in the white' to avoid the paint being rubbed during transport. This may have been the case in February 1772 when Richard Pedder, Gillows' upholsterer in Kendal, ordered seven chairs 'not painted'; it would have been an easy matter to have them painted in Kendal. The Windsor chairs in the Judges' Lodgings Museum (Figures 9–11), which have been stripped and varnished at an unknown date, were found to have been painted originally with white lead paint, traces of which can still be seen. Oil was itemized in some estimates; it was used on two dozen mahogany Windsor chairs in September 1776 and two mahogany chairs in June 1780.<sup>72</sup> Wood for Windsor chairs on another occasion was itemized, followed by 'a quart of linseed oil', so linseed was probably the oil used.<sup>73</sup>

## PRIME COST OF MAKING WINDSOR CHAIRS

Gillows estimated the cost of making a standard Windsor chair in 1772 as follows: making 3s. 6d. (3s. without arms); oil 3d.; nails 2½d.; wood 3d.; total 4s. 2½d.<sup>74</sup> Wilcock received 5s. for making a mahogany Windsor chair, or 4s. 6d. if the chair had no arms, plus a little extra for oil and nails in 1775.<sup>75</sup> The price of the mahogany was not mentioned because Gillows supplied the wood on this occasion. However, in September 1798 when the mahogany chair in Figure 13 was sketched in the firm's Estimate Sketch Book they gave the full cost including the mahogany and cherry tree as:

|  |                 |                     |
|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| 4½ ft of 1 [inch] mahogany in the seat 1s 6d           | 6               | 9                   |
| 2¾ ft of 1 [inch] mahy. Feet & stretching rails 1s 6d  | 4               | 1½                  |
| 1¼ ft of 5/8 mahogany spindles 1s                      | 1               | 6                   |
| ¼ ft of 1 [inch] cherry tree in the back & elbows @ 6d |                 | 4½                  |
| glue & incidents                                       | 1               |                     |
| Making by John Harrison                                | 4               | 6                   |
| Chair @ 22s  | [prime cost] £0 | 18 3d <sup>76</sup> |

In January 1799 when they made the mahogany and cherry Windsor chair in a slightly different style (Figure 12) the prime cost was £1 1s. 6½d.

<sup>71</sup> 344/162, March 1775.

<sup>72</sup> 344/72, 26 September 1776; 344/73, fol. 61, 1 June 1780.

<sup>73</sup> 344/71, fol. 58, 30 May 1772.

<sup>74</sup> 344/71, fol. 127, December, 1772.

<sup>75</sup> 334/72, fol. 133, 26 August 1775.

<sup>76</sup> 344/97, fol. 1473, 11 September 1798.





9 (top left) Windsor chair, late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, one of a set of four, ash with elm seats. They were originally painted with white lead paint, traces of which can still be seen. H 38 in (96.5); W 16 in (41 cm); D of seat 20 in (51 cm); seat thickness  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in (4.5 cm).

*Judges Lodgings Museum, Lancaster: the author*

10 (above) The seat of Figure 9, showing the seat drilled and the legs knocked through and wedged. Note the scribe line round the edge of the seat; the journeyman would have received more money for adding this feature.

*Judges Lodgings Museum, Lancaster: the author*



11 (bottom left) Detail of Figure 9, showing the elegantly turned chair leg; note also the shallow bow stretcher compared with the bow in 17.

*Judges Lodgings Museum, Lancaster: the author*

## LOW BACK WINDSORS

In 1787 three low-back Windsor chairs with high seats were recorded in Gillow's Waste Book. This is an early reference to this variant of the traditional Windsor chair. In August 1792 William Bishop & Co. purchased 30 Windsor chairs with low backs for 6s. each. Thereafter the traditional Windsor was often renamed the 'high back Windsor' and William Bishop purchased 18 of them at the usual sum of 7s. each.<sup>77</sup> John Harrison made four low-back Windsors in February 1791 and was paid 2s. 9d. each for making them.<sup>78</sup> The low-back Windsor in Figure 14 is one of two identical chairs owned by different owners. Their crest rails are screwed on from below the top rail with four screws. This example has traces of green paint and another lighter colour which the owner feels might be a later layer. The chairs are made of ash. In 1801 Robert Gillow assured the Liverpool upholsterer and merchant Matthew Gregson who wanted to purchase dozens of high-back Windsor chairs for export that some people preferred the 'low backed style' and he added they cost the same.<sup>79</sup>

## WINDSOR CHAIR STYLES AND EXAMPLES

Four high-back Windsor chairs were illustrated in the Estimate Sketch Books between 1798 and 1806 (Figures 3, 12 and 13), but three are almost identical. However, the chair in Figure 13 has a rectangular seat, plain turned front legs, and a much more substantial arm-bow terminating in sweeping curves of almost circular form, supported on vertical sticks instead of the characteristic swept arm supports present on the other Gillow designs. Swept arms and the absence of a central splat are characteristics associated with chairs made in the Thames valley and it is possible, therefore, that these Windsor chair designs were supplied by the London shop. Descriptions of Windsors in other Gillow ledgers indicate that there were only slight variations, some of which, such as gilded Windsors and beaded Windsors have already been noted. Most Gillow Windsors were made with arms but in May 1782 twelve chairs without arms were made by James Wilcock, who received 3s. instead of 3s. 6d.<sup>80</sup> Two children's Windsor chairs were made by John Harrison in 1792, and a Windsor close stool chair with a wooden bottom and no top spindles was also made the same year.<sup>81</sup> In 1780 four chairs were merely described as 'different' but James Wilcock was paid the same as for making the standard Windsor chair, and since no drawing has survived we will probably never know what they looked like.<sup>82</sup>

Gillows supplied wooden patterns to sub-contractors such as John Rumney and James Beck and insisted that chair seats were made to this template, not pinched '... in length at the hips' and two inches thick 'from the saw'. Several Gillow-style Windsor chairs have been studied in order to assess their similarities and differences. All the chair bottoms conformed in shape but because they were fashioned by hand there were

<sup>77</sup> 344/15, fol. 926, 31 August 1792.

<sup>78</sup> 344/75, fol. 170, 19 February 1791.

<sup>79</sup> 344/175, fol. 63, 20 May 1801.

<sup>80</sup> 344/73, fol. 207.

<sup>81</sup> 344/76, fol. 153, 1 December 1792; 344/76, fol. 36, 1 September 1792.

<sup>82</sup> 344/73, fol. 61, 12 February 1780.



12 (top left) A high-back Windsor chair in mahogany with ‘... cherry tree in the back & elbows’, made by John Harrison in September 1798. H 46 $\frac{3}{4}$  in (118 cm); w 19 $\frac{1}{2}$  in (49.5 cm); D 16 $\frac{1}{4}$  in (42.5 cm). *Westminster Archive Centre* 344/98, fol. 1473

13 (above) A mahogany high-back Windsor chair ‘with cherry tree bend and stretchers’ made by John Harrison in January 1799 for ‘Mr. Rawes’, probably Christopher Rawes, an upholsterer who worked for Gillows. H 42 in (106.5 cm); w 25 in (63.5 cm); D 17 in (43 cm). *Westminster Archive Centre* 344/98, fol. 1496

14 (left) Low-back Windsor chair, c. 1790–1800, ash, attributed to Gillows who began making the low-back style in 1792. H 25 $\frac{1}{2}$  in (65 cm); H to seat 13 $\frac{3}{4}$  in (35 cm); w front seat 19 $\frac{1}{4}$  in (49 cm). *Private collection: the owner*

slight differences. The Windsor chairs in the Judges' Lodgings (Figure 9) have seats or bottoms of elm measuring approximately  $1\frac{3}{4}$  inches in depth which is consistent with them being fashioned from 2-inch wood 'from the saw'. On the other hand there must have been some variations of detail, construction, or finish allowed since all four Judges' Lodgings examples have a scribed line round the edge of the seats which is absent from other examples examined (Figure 10). The customer probably requested that the set of chairs be scribed, for it is unlikely that one of their sub-contractors would have added this detail unless he was paid for the extra work involved. On many Gillow Windsor chairs, including those in the Judges' Lodgings, the legs are secured by dowelling through the seat and tightening them with a cross-wedge through the top (Figure 10). This method of securing the legs was not drawn on the Gillow drawings but construction details are often missing and only very occasional notes in the firm's Petty Ledgers mention such details. It was satisfying to read therefore that in July 1803 John Harrison was paid 3s. for '... gluing 12 Windsor chairs including wedging do.'<sup>83</sup> Another method of fixing the legs sometimes known as 'blind wedging' may have been used on the chair in Figure 15. The hole for the leg was only partially drilled into the under side of the seat. A wedge was placed into the top of the leg before it was inserted into the hole, the leg with the wedge in place was then hammered into the hole causing expansion inside the hole which tightened up the joint. Blind wedging had the advantage of leaving the top surface of the seat undisturbed and smooth.<sup>84</sup> The rather shallow bow stretchers are a Gillow characteristic (Figures 9 and 14).

The chair in Figures 15–17 has an interesting history since it was known to have been in a plumbers' and decorators' shop in Bentham in the 1920s and 30s. During this period its front feet were fitted with protective black iron shoes. Since the Wilcock family's workshop was in Bentham and indeed Joseph Wilcock made the Windsor chair illustrated in the Gillow archives in 1806 (Figure 3) it seems likely that this chair was manufactured in the Wilcock workshop. However, when it is compared to the Judges' Lodgings examples there are several differences. The front stretcher is more curvaceous, and the legs are blind mortised. Some of the sticks in the Bentham chair back are drilled through and wedged but most of the side sticks and the swept arms were not (Figure 15). Another interesting feature is the rectangular wooden pegs driven through the arm bow to secure the sticks on the Bentham chair (Figure 16). The Gillow estimates for Windsor chairs invariably list nails under 'incidentals' and iron nails were used on the Judges' Lodgings examples to secure the sticks. However wooden dowels driven through the sides of the arm bow into the sticks on Windsor chairs are uncommon. The legs of several other Gillow-style Windsor chairs are mortised and wedged through the seat like those in the Judges' Lodgings, including a set of six sold by the auctioneers Wilkinson's of Doncaster, one in the Temple Newsam House collection and several others in private collections.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> 344/78, fol. 79, 9 July 1803.

<sup>84</sup> Crispin, (1992), p. 71.

<sup>85</sup> Wilkinsons Auctioneers, Doncaster, 21 May 2002, lot 307.



15 (left) Gillow-style Windsor chair made of ash with a Bentham provenance, it was probably made in Messrs Wilcock's workshop about 1800. *Private collection: the author*

16 (above) Detail of Figure 15, showing the small rectangular pegs driven through the arm bow to secure the sticks. *The author*



17 Detail of Figure 15. The stretcher bow on this chair is much more pronounced than the bow on the Judges Lodgings example in Figure 9. The back sticks are drilled through the seat but the arm supports and adjacent sticks are not drilled through the seat. *The author*

18 Chair made by John Harrison for William Assheton of Preston in 1791, ash with oak seat.

Although this is the only kitchen chair illustrated in the archives, they were made by Gillows from the 1770s.

H 36 in (91.5 cm);

W 19 in (48 cm);

D 16 in (40.5 cm).

Westminster  
Archive Centre  
344/95, fol. 756



#### KITCHEN AND ROUT CHAIRS

Figure 18 illustrates a kitchen chair in ash with an oak seat made in July 1791 for Mr William Assheton Esq., of Preston, by John Harrison, a cabinet maker from Ulverston who made large quantities of chairs for Gillows.<sup>86</sup> This turned or 'spindle back' was one of the cheapest chairs made by Gillows.<sup>87</sup> John Harrison was paid 2s. for making it and the wood cost 1s. 6d., making the prime cost 3s. 6d.<sup>88</sup> William Assheton paid 4s. 6d. per chair for 6 chairs. Although this is the only kitchen chair illustrated in the archives the firm had been making them since at least the 1770s. For example, six kitchen chairs at 2s. 2d. each were ordered by Mr Banks Russel in September 1773, seven kitchen chairs by Mr Meyer of Manchester in 1784;<sup>89</sup> John Harrison made scores of them from the early 1790s.<sup>90</sup> Assheton also purchased twelve 'neat rout chairs' at 5s. 3d. each, two neat rocking chairs at 6s. 3d. each (with low backs), as well as 'handsome mahogany hall chairs like Mr. Tempests' with his crest painted on them.<sup>91</sup> The hall chairs cost 21s. each plus 2s. 6d. for painting the crest on the back. Interestingly, Richard Gillow had written to Mrs Assheton the previous month about the more fashionable 'vestibule' or hall chairs she was thinking of buying; the painted example was probably the design illustrated by Lindsay Boynton:<sup>92</sup>

... we have enclosed a drawing of a very handsome & most fashionable painted chair for a vestibule which we presume would be about 1½ gns. per with a crest handsomely painted &

<sup>86</sup> Lancashire Record Office, WRW/A.

<sup>87</sup> 344/75, p. 211.

<sup>88</sup> 344/95, p. 756.

<sup>89</sup> 344/4, p. 120, 18 September 1773.

<sup>90</sup> 344/75, p. 211.

<sup>91</sup> See Stuart (2008), I, p. 201, pl. 165 for an example.

<sup>92</sup> Boynton (1995), col. pl. 31.

other ornaments to correspond, a miniature drawing does not shew the design so well as we could wish it. We have likewise enclosed a drawing of a mahogany chair for a vestibule which you saw at Lancaster the price of which with a crest neatly painted in the centre back would be 22s This is a much more serviceable chair than the former.<sup>93</sup>

Rout chairs were used for social events such as balls or musical evenings. No sketch has survived but a good description was given in 1786 when the Reverend Edward Ellerton of Satterthwaite, near Hawkshead, ordered '6 rout chairs painted laycock ground white rush bottoms & laycock stripes neatly varnished 7s 6d, £2 5s 0d'.<sup>94</sup> Gillows were making rout chairs by 1780 when Joseph Tyson made twelve at 5s. each for a Mr Wyman; another four painted white at 4s. 9d. and two rout chairs with arms at 8s. each were also made.<sup>95</sup> Other chairs were much plainer, such as the six rout chairs stained black with slips round the edge of their seats for which John Harrison received 2s. 5d. per chair 1790.<sup>96</sup> Very little information has survived on rout chairs generally, but according to the Gillow description they were solid rush-seated painted chairs protected by varnish.

#### COTTAGE CHAIRS

Cottage chairs were another form of painted chair, probably with turned backs and rush or caned seats, but they are difficult to identify without having a surviving example linked to a documented original order. One clue was given in 1796 when ten neat japanned chairs were described as 'cottage chairs (Sedgwicks pattern) 8s 6d'; an armed chair in the same pattern was 13s.<sup>97</sup> If a Sedgwick-pattern chair can be identified then we will have an example of a cottage chair. There was apparently a Sedgwick-pattern chair in Gillow's wareroom in 1797 for customers to order from.<sup>98</sup> However, thus far no sketch of one has been identified in the archives. Another set of 'japanned cottage chairs' costing 7s. 6d. each was ordered in 1792. They were intended for a handsome bedroom at Swinburne Castle near Hexham, the centrepiece of which was a satinwood bedstead. The chairs had tablet backs and were supplied with canvas cushions with covers of dimity.<sup>99</sup> Gillows advised customers that 'Japanned chairs and sofas are generally made of good dry beech and some other tough woods'.<sup>100</sup> In 1795 ten cottage chairs were painted 'in imitation of satinwood ornamented' which suggests they were an upmarket form of cottage chair.<sup>101</sup> Some rare notes on the construction of two dozen standard black stained cottage chairs made by John Harrison were given in the 1802 Petty Ledger:

By 24 black cottage chairs back turned with squares at seat strong frames loose for rush back & side rails morticed square in frame slips round back slip to join to the back.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>93</sup> 344/172, 23 June 1791.

<sup>94</sup> 344/10, fol. 1275, 6 February 1786.

<sup>95</sup> 344/73, fol. 56, 3 May 1780.

<sup>96</sup> 344/75, fol. 57, 24 April 1790.

<sup>97</sup> 344/19, fol. 2591, 6 September 1796.

<sup>98</sup> 344/19, fol. 2799, 29 April 1797.

<sup>99</sup> 344/15, fol. 1059, 29 November 1792, for Thomas Reddall, Esq.

<sup>100</sup> 344/173 fol. 555, 11 September 1797, for Lady Blount.

<sup>101</sup> 344/17, fol. 2272, 5 November 1795.

<sup>102</sup> 344/78, fol. 74, 29 May 1802.

The '... back turned with squares at seat' probably refers to the practice seen on some Lancashire chairs where the stiles were turned to seat level (or just above) and square in section below.<sup>103</sup> Good examples of this style of leg appear on chairs made by the Chipping firm of H. J. Berry founded by John Berry in the 1860s.<sup>104</sup> The strong seat frames were 'loose for rush' that is they were rush bottomed separately ready to be dropped into the seat frame, and the 'back and side rails [were] morticed square in frame'. However, the last part of the description is puzzling — 'slips round back slip to join at the back'. Why would 'slips' — that is presumably thin narrow pieces of wood to cover the rush at the sides of the seat — be necessary, since the loose rushed seat frame would be protected by the seat rails into which it had been dropped? If any readers can offer an explanation I would be pleased to hear from them. Making 'new slips' was a job given to John Harrison in April 1803 when he made '... 15 new slips stained' for 1s. 3d.<sup>105</sup>

## PAINTED BAMBOO CHAIRS

A painted chair for Mrs Banks of Winstanley illustrated in the Estimate Sketch Book in February, 1784 (Figure 19), was described in the index as a 'bamboo' chair, and on their despatch in March 1784 as: '... 8 neat bamboo chairs painted wth black ground & yellow flutes & c. also rush bottoms @ 16s'.<sup>106</sup> At 16 shillings this was an expensive turned and painted chair. Ten years later Daniel Wilson of Dallam Tower near Milnthorpe purchased '... 9 elegant black bamboo chairs the hollows gilt in burnished gold with rush bottoms & arms @ 23s'.<sup>107</sup> Also ordered were probably examples of the chair style illustrated in Figure 20, described as: '... black & gold chairs to match the above with circular caned seats without arms' and a matching sofa '... with a low frame and 8 good round socket castors ...'. The suite would have been a good contrast against the neat white and gold window curtains which were supplied for the same room. A detailed estimate for this chair was copied into the Estimate Sketch Book in November 1795:

|   |    |    |   |
|---|----|----|---|
| A Black & Gold Chair                          |    |    |   |
| Circular caned seat without arms              |    |    |   |
| Making by John Harrison                       | o  | 4  | 8 |
| Cane, caning and boring                       |    | 2  | 9 |
| Wood & incidents & c                          | o  | 1  | 9 |
| Gilding (in oil) & painting black             | o  | 5  | 6 |
| Prime cost with cane                          | £o | 14 | 8 |
| Deduct for a rush bottom paint [ <i>sic</i> ] | o  | 1  | 4 |
|   | £o | 13 | 4 |

<sup>103</sup> Cotton (1990) illustrates several examples pp. 341–49, and fig. NW82 can be firmly attributed to the Berry firm.

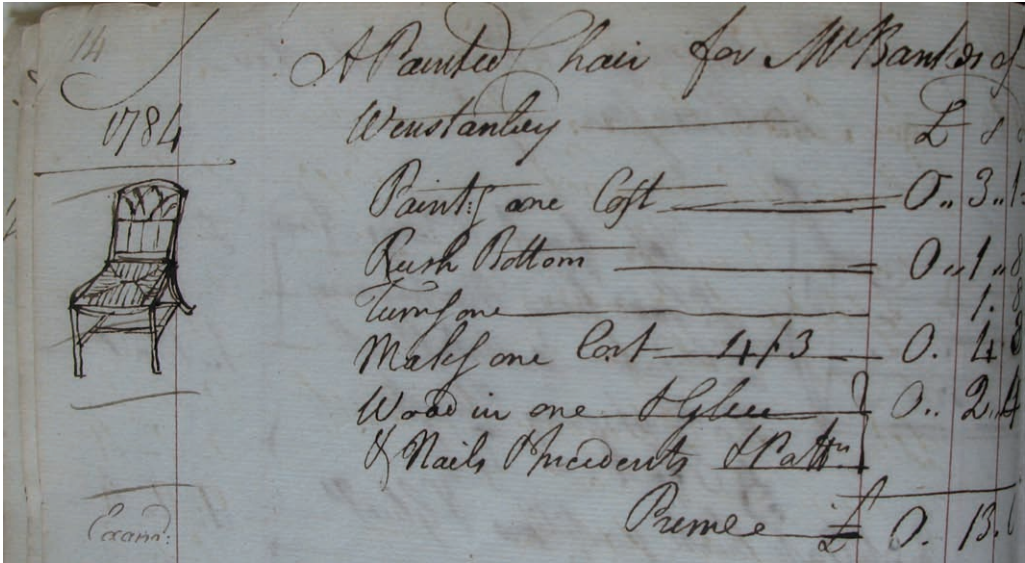
<sup>104</sup> John Berry was born about 1835–37 at Dutton a parish near Ribchester, six miles from Blackburn, Lancashire. He moved to Chipping in the 1860s, his second son Henry J. Berry was 6 years old in 1871 [Lancashire Record Office, RG10/4162].

<sup>105</sup> 344/78, fol. 78, 9 April 1803.

<sup>106</sup> 344/9, fol. 754, 1 March 1784.

<sup>107</sup> 344/17, fol. 1619, 28 June 1794.





19 'Bamboo' painted chair with a rush seat, made for William Banks Esq. of Winstanley in 1784. The annotation 'Examd.' indicates that the pattern chair had been checked before it left Gillows workshop.

*Westminster Archive Centre 344/93, fol. 14*



20 'Bamboo' chair in black and gold with a circular seat, made in Lancaster in 1794 as illustrated in Gillow's coloured sketch book shown to customers.

*Westminster Archive Centre 735/1*



21 Black and gold bamboo pattern chair attributed to Gillows, probably made in 1801 for Sir John Shaw Stewart (1739–1812). The legs have been extended slightly and the seat re-rushed.

*Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the author*

|  |    |     |                  |
|--|----|-----|------------------|
| Making 5s 6d gilding in oil 4s           |    | 9s  | 6d               |
| Wood & incidents 2s rush 9d              |    | 2s  | 9d               |
|  |    | 12s | 3d               |
| A chair if like the above wth arms       |    |     |                  |
| Making by John Harrison wth rush bottoms | o  | 7   | o                |
| rushes compute in 1795                   | o  | o   | 9                |
| wood                                     | o  | 2   | 3                |
| gilding & c & c                          | o  | 8   | o                |
|  | £o | 18  | o                |
| to more if caned seat                    | o  | 2   | o                |
|  | £1 | o   | o <sup>108</sup> |

Caning was always recommended by Gillows as being a saving in the long term since it lasted several times longer than rushes. In the eighteenth century Gillows normally purchased their cane from London, but in 1801 the Lancaster partner wrote to the Liverpool upholsterers and merchants Gregson & Bullen: 'We have been disappointed in receiving some cane from London in our time & being informed it is an article that you deal in we should be obliged to you if you would send us  $\frac{1}{4}$  cwt by the coach and the same quantity by the first sloop'.<sup>109</sup> Rushes were obtained from two suppliers of Skipton in Yorkshire, Abraham Chamberlain and Messrs. Spencer & Grave, but as caning became more popular so Gillows' need for large quantities of rushes diminished. In April 1797 the firm only wanted one hundred bundles instead of the two or three hundred offered by Spencer & Grave.<sup>110</sup> Rushes were 2s. 3d. per bundle for two or three hundred bundles.

The 'bamboo' chair in Figure 21 from the Ardgowan collection is very similar to the Gillow drawing in Figure 20, except for the shape of the seat. Interestingly Gillows wrote to a customer in 1797 enclosing a drawing of 'an elegant bamboo chair japanned black & the hollows gilt oval caned seat without arms 22s 6d' and they also enclosed another drawing with '... a different shaped seat otherwise much the same sort of chair ...'.<sup>111</sup> Gillows may have been referring to the 'different shaped seat' on the Ardgowan chair in Figure 21. The Ardgowan chair was probably made by the Lancaster firm in 1801 as part of a large commission for Sir John Shaw Stewart, but since Gillows' Waste Book has not survived and other books are incomplete this cannot be confirmed by documentary evidence, unlike the Winfreds pattern chairs discussed below. However, the chair's style suggests that it was probably made by Gillows at this period.

#### BEDROOM OR DRESSING ROOM CHAIRS

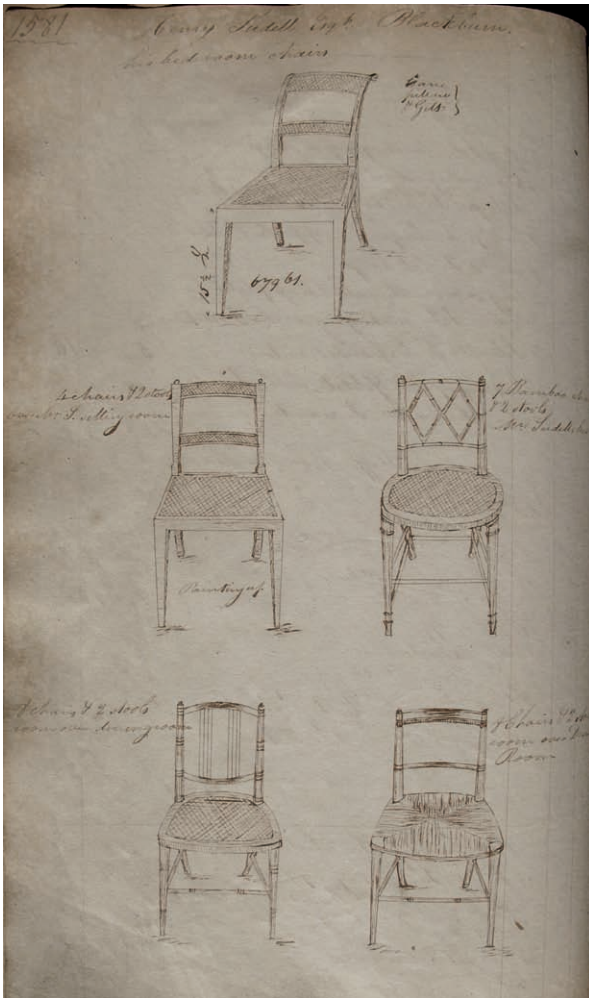
In 1791 Gillows wrote to William Walker Esq., of Crowsnest, Halifax: '... we have enclosed some neat designs of chairs for bedrooms ... No. 121 A neat japanned armed chair for a bedroom may be painted any colour to suit the furniture the price would be

<sup>108</sup> 344/97, fol. 1210, 9 November 1795.

<sup>109</sup> 344/174, fol. 339, 6 February 1801.

<sup>110</sup> 344/173, fol. 428, 5 April 1797.

<sup>111</sup> 344/173, fols. 551-552, 8 September 1797



22 Five bedroom chairs, made for Henry Sudell of Blackburn in 1800. *Westminster Archive Centre 344/98, fol. 1581*

about 14s 6d. No. 122 The same design without arms price 9s 6d. neatly japanned'.<sup>112</sup> Bedroom chairs were made like other painted chairs of white wood such as beech or ash, but in 1830 Gillows apparently made some bedroom chairs of willow, a choice they were to regret. One customer complained that his chairs had 'given way' and Leonard Redmayne admitted that: '... the willow we do find is not quite as serviceable as we could wish but the framing we have not had a complaint of before'.<sup>113</sup> Redmayne continued the '... construction of the chairs is so very light that we cannot expect them to answer for any very regular use; and are only calculated for occasional purposes'.<sup>114</sup> Drawings of bedroom chairs ordered by Henry Sudell Esq., of Blackburn, in 1800 are illustrated in Figure 22. However, at least one of the chairs was not a new pattern. The

<sup>112</sup> 344/172, fol. 472, 2 February 1791.

<sup>113</sup> 344/176, fol. 116, 10 January 1834.

<sup>114</sup> 344/176, fol. 126, 16 April 1834.



23 Design for Winfred's pattern chair made for Sir John Shaw Stewart of Ardgowan, Renfrewshire in 1801. H 34 in (86.5 cm); w front seat 19 in (48 cm); w back seat 15 in (38 cm). Westminister Archive Centre 344/98, fol. 1645

bamboo chair with two diamond or lozenge shapes in the back and a circular seat was illustrated in November 1796 as an arm chair with a conventional cane seat (Figure 31).<sup>115</sup> It also featured in Gillows' coloured Sketch Book with a rush seat.<sup>116</sup> Although Mr Sudell's chairs were described as 'bedroom chairs', the second chair from the top was described as 'Mrs. S. sitting room'. It seems the distinction, if any, between chairs intended for various rooms was blurred. The real distinction may have been in the strength of their frames, as mentioned by Leonard Redmayne in 1834. Bedroom chairs being of fragile construction were not made to stand wear and tear therefore few examples have survived. Fortunately a group of painted chairs made in 1801 for Sir John Shaw Stewart of Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire, part of a major Gillow commission, have survived.<sup>117</sup> The 'Winfreds' pattern chair illustrated in the Lancaster firm's Estimate Sketch Book in August 1801 (Figure 23) was intended for the principal bedroom at Ardgowan (Figures 24 and 25). Two sets of Winfred pattern chairs remain in the house, a blue and white set comprising four single chairs and a matching stool, and a greenish brown set comprising three single and one armed chair. The prime cost of making one chair was estimated as: wood 2s. 6d.; painting 4s. 6d.; making 3s. 6d.; total cost — 10s. 6d.<sup>118</sup> Gillows also set out the costs of alternative seats of cane or rush: cane, caning, boring (holes to receive the cane) 3s. 6d.; incidents 6d.; rush seats

<sup>115</sup> 344/97, fol. 1290.

<sup>116</sup> 735/1, fol. 28.

<sup>117</sup> Jones and Urquhart (1998) pp.127-29, 135, 150-51

<sup>118</sup> 344/98, fol. 1645.



24 (left) A Winfred's pattern chair in blue and white with a cane seat, made in 1801 as part of a large commission for Sir John Shaw Stewart of Ardgowan House. H 34½ in (87.5 cm); w front seat 19½ in (49.5 cm); w back seat 14½ in (37 cm).

*Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the owner*

25 (above) Dressing stool with cane seat, beech painted to match the blue and white Winfred pattern chairs. H 17½ in (44.5 cm); w 19½ in (49.5 cm); D 16½ in (42 cm).

*Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the owner*



26 (left) Winfreds pattern arm chair in brown with a rush seat. H 34 in (86.5 cm); w front seat 21¼ in (55 cm); w back seat 14¼ in (37.5 cm).

*Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the author*

27 (above) Detail of Figure 26, showing the back.

*Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the author*

— making 3*s.*; rush 9*d.*; wood 2*s.*; total — 5*s.* 9*d.*; painting 3*s.* 4*d.*; incidents 6*s.* Beside the drawing of the Winfreds pattern chair was added: 'Sir. J. S. Stewarts wth. rush bottoms cost 10*s.* 3*d.* being 8*d.* more for painting'. As can be seen on the drawing, Sir John's chair had a cane seat but he also ordered others with rush bottoms (Figures 26 and 27). The cane-bottomed Winfred pattern chairs (Figure 24) were probably designed for a reception room since a pier table made for Sir John Shaw Stewart had the same design on the frieze rail as that on the top rail of the chair.<sup>119</sup>

Figures 28–30 illustrate an armed chair and one of two single chairs at Ardgowan which were possibly made by Gillows about 1800. However, there is no trace of similar chair designs in the firm's Lancaster Sketch Books, but they may be the work of the Oxford Street shop. The chairs' top rails are painted to represent a cornice with swags of drapery supported on classical columns which are painted to look three-dimensional. The swept arms on Figure 28 are similar to those on Gillow Windsor chairs.

Bedroom chairs were probably the same as dressing room chairs, as a description of the latter appears to be the same style when Gillows described them to Mrs Edmund Jackson of Preston in 1800: '... Neat light dressing room chairs painted with rush bottoms would come to from 10*s.* to 14*s.* each if with cane bottoms 2*s.* more per chair'.<sup>120</sup> They were probably designed to co-ordinate with a dressing table, since Gillows continued: 'A large painted dressing table with drawers to the bottom on each side & a recess in the centre with shelves would come to about £4 18*s.* 0*d.*' Also mentioned in the same letter was an elegant sofa bed: 'The price of a large & handsome sofa bed on the most appropriate plan to appear as a sofa in the day to form a handsome camp bed at night with folding hair mattress which also serves as a cushion when used as a sofa — would come to about £15 10*s.* 0*d.*'<sup>121</sup>

Painted chairs intended for reception rooms of more substantial construction than light bedroom chairs were sometimes called 'fancy chairs', a term which is still used today. However, I have found only one reference in the Gillow archives to 'fancy backs', when Sir William Gerard ordered '10 handsome japd. armed chairs with caned bottoms fancy backs' for his back drawing room at Garswood, New Hall near Ashton, Lancashire at 37*s.* per chair.<sup>122</sup> They were part of a commission amounting to over £273 for the refurnishing of the dining and back drawing room in 1796. It is possible that these fancy back chairs were 'Lady Gerards pattern' which features with several other chairs in Figure 31. A great deal of care was taken to make canvas cushions stuffed with hair (6*s.* 6*d.* each), with covers in rich grey silk damask with orange silk fringes (8*s.* 1¼*d.*), to match the window curtain in the back drawing room. Tammy covers were also ordered to protect the damask for everyday use which cost 17*d.* each.<sup>123</sup> Although Sir William Gerard's fancy back chairs were apparently the only ones named as such, most of the painted chairs made for their customers' reception rooms appear to answer this description. Many, if not most, of the best chairs the firm made from the 1780s were

<sup>119</sup> 344/98, fol. 1664, 30 October 1801.

<sup>120</sup> 344/174, fol. 262, 28 November 1800.

<sup>121</sup> 344/174, p. 262, 28 November 1800.

<sup>122</sup> 344/19, fol. 2461 9 May 1796.

<sup>123</sup> 344/19, p. 2461, 9 May 1796.

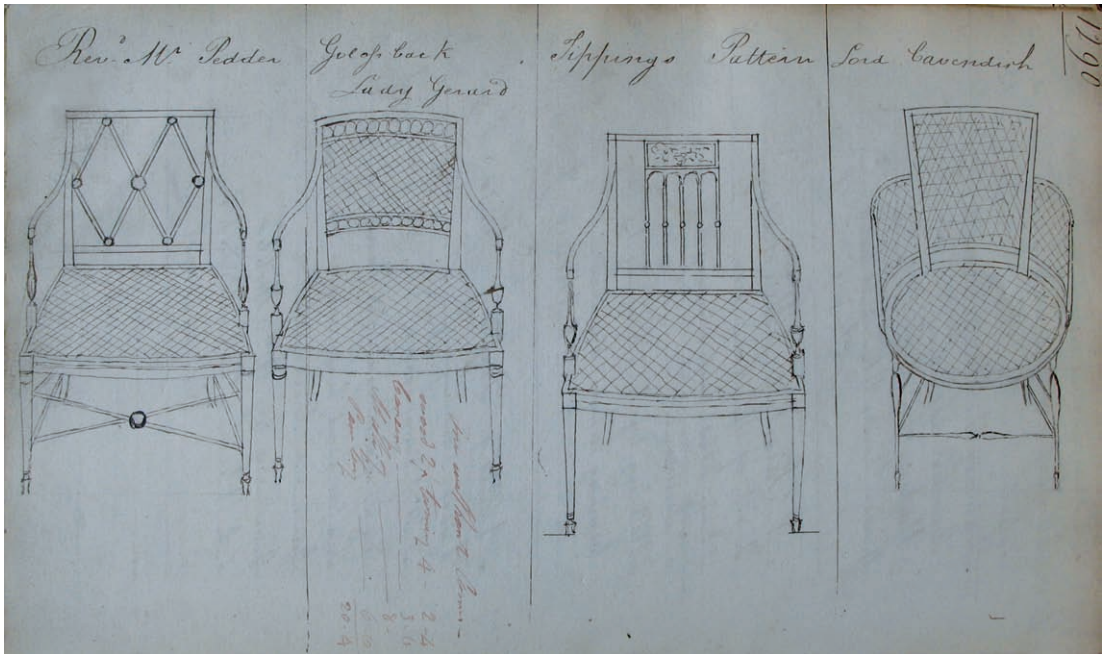


28 (left) Painted arm chair with cane seat, attributed to Gillows. H 33½ in (85 cm); w front seat 18½ in (47cm); w back seat 14½ in (37 cm). *Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the author*

29 (above) Detail of Figure 28; the columns are painted to look three-dimensional. *Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the author*



30 Single chair, one of a pair surviving at Ardgowan which match the arm chair in Figure 28. H 33¼ in (84 cm); w front seat 18½ in (47 cm); w back seat 14½ in (37 cm). *Ardgowan House, Renfrewshire: the author*



31 Designs for painted chairs, November 1796. The 'Lady Gerard's pattern' chair was possibly the 'fancy back' chair made for the back drawing room at Garswood, New Hall, near Aston, Lancashire, in July 1796. *Westminster Archive Centre 344/97, fol. 1290*

designed to be made of either carved mahogany or painted. Both types Richard Gillow advised his customers were equally expensive because of the work involved in painting or carving them.

#### CONCLUSION

It is difficult, if not impossible, to divide Gillows' painted chairs into neat categories. What difference, if any, was there between bedroom, dressing-room or cottage chairs? Very little, it appears, and the few known examples confirm this. The differences would have been not in the names given but the quality of manufacture and finish, especially the quality of the painting, the durability of their frames and the material of which the seats were made. Cane was stronger and lasted longer than rush, but cane was more expensive. Nor were well painted and decorated chairs any cheaper than carved mahogany of equal quality. When we consider common, or country chairs such as Windsor or stained chairs the evidence extracted from the Gillow archives demonstrates that the Lancaster firm looked to their London shop for designs and inspiration just as they did for other types of furniture. Therefore it is not surprising that Gillows Windsor chairs closely follow the Thames valley tradition with which the Oxford Street partners would have been familiar. Also, when a Yorkshire customer wanted a red stained chair, a pattern chair had to be made and sent from London in 1778 because Richard Gillow



was unsure about the style and manner of staining, and indeed his admission that they only had one workman in Lancaster, (probably James Wilcock) who could copy the chair demonstrates how unfamiliar the firm was with regional or country-style chairs as opposed to fashionable chair designs sent from London. As we have seen, men such as James Wilcock, John Rumney, and John Harrison whom Gillows employed to make Windsor chairs were principally joiners or cabinetmakers who were used to making fashionable chairs and other furniture but also knew how to turn, as opposed to turners who specialized in making country chairs. It is hardly surprising therefore that Gillows' Windsor chairs do not fit comfortably into any particular north country tradition. However, Gillows and other Lancaster cabinetmakers had advantages which many north country turners did not have. The archives demonstrate that they could acquire a variety of woods for their common painted Windsor chairs, from the Lune valley, Bentham in Yorkshire, plus some timber from Cumbria and Scotland, and indeed mahogany, a less common wood used for Windsor chairs was also made easy because of Lancaster's geographical position on the river Lune with access to Morecambe Bay and the world beyond.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the help or advice from the following people and institutions whilst researching this article: Michael Stephens, archivist Cumbria Record Office and Local Studies Library, Barrow-in-Furness; the editor of Bentham News, staff at Ewart Library, Dumfries; Richard Hall, archivist; Cumbria Record Office, Kendal, staff at the Judges Lodgings Museum, Lancaster; staff at the Lancashire Record Office, Preston; staff at Westminster Archives Centre, London; the owners of the Windsor chairs illustrated in Figures 14 and 15; Michael and Polly Legg; John Rogers, Lady Shaw Stewart and Ian Stuart. I am also indebted to the Regional Furniture Society for awarding me a bursary in order to produce this paper.

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## APPENDIX I

DESCRIPTIONS OF CHAIR-WORK FROM THE LANCASTER JOURNEYMAN'S  
PRICE AGREEMENTS, c. 1765–1812

Price agreements made between Lancaster master cabinetmakers and their workmen from about 1746 to 1812 have survived copied into various Gillows books. Some of the agreements appear to be complete and some contain amateur drawings of many pieces of furniture, presumably sketched by journeymen rather than the draughtsmen who made the more professional images in the firm's Estimate Sketch Books. Other agreements are fragmentary. However, a detailed appraisal has not been made yet, and for the purposes of this appendix only chair-work has been included. The first agreement, made about 1746, has not been included because it was published in *Regional Furniture* in 1988.<sup>1</sup>

The Lancaster price agreements are important because they cover the longest time span and constitute the largest number of agreements recorded for any town or city. They were made in, or about, 1746, 1765, 1783, 1785, 1792, 1805, 1810 and 1812. The 1783 agreement has not survived but Richard Gillow sent a copy of it to a Liverpool cabinetmaker in August 1783 and explained that it was: '... an agreement between the masters & men in Lancaster by wch. the prices of work in general has been regulated & when any varies from it wch. often is the case we pay more or less according as there may be more or less work put in.'<sup>2</sup>

There was a petition by workmen to increase their wages in 1810 but the Gillow brothers countered by complaining about the taxes they had to pay and the high cost of transporting furniture from Lancaster. They nevertheless agreed to increase wages by 2s. 6d. in the £1 on a long list of articles including chairs.<sup>3</sup> The next page is dated 29 June 1806 and amongst a list of furniture are 'Hunting chairs' and 'old fashioned chairs' yet no details are given.<sup>4</sup> Numerous

<sup>1</sup> Stuart (1988).

<sup>2</sup> 344/170, fol. 303.

<sup>3</sup> 344/67, fol. 104.

<sup>4</sup> 344/67, fol. 111.

numbers appear in the index under 'chairs' but these pages are missing, whilst other pages are torn, out of sequence, or have no pagination. However, references to chairs in the 1805 agreement are included below.

The first price below has been extracted from a list of all types of furniture at the end of the Memorandum Book 1766–1769. This may have been a later version of a new journeyman's price list which Richard Gillow was preparing in 1765 when he consulted Thomas Beetham of Liverpool, a cabinetmaker and timber merchant, about the rates paid in Liverpool for making various pieces of furniture including '... the plainest chairs of mahogany wth square legs also a plain banister not cut open'.<sup>5</sup>

*Journeyman's Price List circa 1766–1769 (Memorandum Book 344/165)*

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| Plain chairs wth. Marlborough feet  | o | 3 | 6 |
| ... [?] chairs wth. figr. of 8 & 5 backs  | o | 4 | 6 |
| Do. with plain backs  | o | 4 | 2 |
| Common fan backed chairs with scrowlds [scrolls?]<br>and leaf on the banister and worked top rail | o | 5 | 6 |
| Chair elbows plain  | o | 3 | 3 |
| Chair feet molded @ 4d per chair  | o | o | 4 |
| Term feet plain ea 1/- per chair  | o | 1 | o |
| Do. molded or fret  | o | 1 | 8 |

*Regulation of Journeyman's Wages Agreement, 1785 (344/67, fol. 69)*

|   |   |    |     |
|---|---|----|-----|
| A plain mahogany chair with square legs   | o | 3s | 6d  |
| And to advance 1d per hole in the back.   |   |    |     |
| Therefore a plain Gothic chair with 10 holes in the back,<br>and square legs without any relief in ye back                    | o | 4s | 4d. |
| Add if taper'd legs 1d per leg—2d. If termed legs 6d per  |   | 1s |     |
| For fluting the legs each leg with flutes as usual 3d per   |   |    | 6d  |
| For molded legs thro' with a plain 1½ per   |   |    | 3d  |
| All other chairs to remain at the price they were before<br>Unless they fall short of 1d per hole for each hole in the back—. |   |    |     |
| Add for a pair of chair elbows made in the usual form   |   | 3s |     |
| If the elbows be tennant'd into the back  |   |    | 6d  |
| If stumps be morticed in the front feet   |   |    | 4d  |
| If a chair be polish'd with wax more than oil 6d per  |   |    | 6d  |
| Add for veneering a back above the seat   | o | o  | 2d  |
| Add for veneering a stay rail in any chair  |   |    | o   |
| Add If a leg be veneer'd on any side 1d each  | o | o  | 1d  |

<sup>5</sup> 344/165, 1 December 1965.

*Journeyman's Agreement to begin 1 May, 1792 (344/67 fol. 42 et seq.)*

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| Close stool chairs   |     |     |
| Any chair made for a close stool add for do.                             | 2s  | 10d |
| Chairs in general  |     |     |
| All chairs that have a sweep'd side rails of whitewood, add 2d per chair |     | 2d  |
| If stay rails be veneered and a joint at middle                          |     | 3d  |
| If mahogany front rail commoded or sweep'd                               |     | 8d  |
| If sweep'd side rail mahogany 7d per                                     | 1s  | 2d  |
| If plain mahogany chair as at the first state [?]                        |     |     |
| With plain balluster straight joints in top rail                         |     |     |
| Straight rails and plane square legs                                     | 4s  |     |
| Add for holes in balluster 1d per hole                                   |     | 4d  |
| Upon this chair only & not upon open balusters                           |     |     |
| White Wood Chairs  |     |     |
| The fan back chair with straight side and front                          |     |     |
| Rails plain taper'd legs. No stretchers                                  | 6s  |     |
| Bed chairs   |     |     |
| The usual size & sort  | 5/6 |     |

*General Book of Prices beginning 1 July, 1805 (344/67, fol. 113)*

... an advance of 6d each per cushion seat in a chair ...

'Old fashioned chairs viz- the balloon back, escutcheon [shield] back, oval back, the old upright carved splats with arched top rail also the fan back with arched commode top rail' — workmen to be paid two shillings in the pound more than they had been allowed formerly (29 June 1806).

#### APPENDIX II

##### NUMBER OF CHAIRS OF ALL TYPES AND PATTERNS MADE BY GILLOWS OF LANCASTER, 1783-87

*Petty Ledger 344/74 (1783-1785)*

|   |              |
|---|--------------|
| Windsor chairs  | 1,386        |
| Upright splats (some escutcheon backs included as they also had upright splats) | 806          |
| Fan back chairs (most with arched or semi-circular top rail)                    | 452          |
| Escutcheon [shield] backs   | 293          |
| Straight Gothic or common Gothic  | 243          |
| Dog leg splat backs   | 235          |
| Oval backs  | 218          |
| Sofas, stools, close stools   | 86           |
| Balloon pattern (1785)  | 74           |
| Easy chairs, cabriole or 'bergier'  | 46           |
| Chinese pattern   | 30           |
| New level splat   | 12           |
| Bamboo pattern  | 8            |
| Fiddle back   | 6            |
| <i>Total</i>  | <u>3,895</u> |

Over three years the average was 1,298 per annum. If Windsor chair output is excluded, 2,509 over three years or an average 836 chairs per year.

*Waste Book 344/10 (1786)*

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Balloon pattern (22 of which 'New' sold Sept.1786)                                 | 160 |
| Fan back (5 straight top rail, ogee top rail, the rest arched)                     | 87  |
| Miscellaneous armed chairs, handsome, japanned, drawing room, 1 'to match old one' | 43  |
| Cabriole   | 36  |
| Oval backs (12 'arched' japanned)  | 34  |
| Three splat (20 described as open)   | 30  |
| Dark ground japanned   | 18  |
| Camel back (refers to top rail)  | 18  |
| Stuffed back   | 18  |
| Fiddle back  | 12  |
| Vase pattern (whitewood)   | 8   |
| Rout   | 6   |
| Dining room (elegant, mahogany)  | 6   |
| New splat back (carved 'like old pattern from London')                             | 4   |
| Escutcheon (japanned bedroom chairs)   | 4   |
| Chinese (folding camp chairs)  | 4   |
| Chamber chairs   | 3   |
| Close stool chairs (1 oak)   | 2   |
| Windsor  | 2   |
| Children's chairs (1 fan back, 1 painted green)                                    | 2   |
|  | 497 |
| <i>Total</i>   |     |

*Chairs in the Waste Book 344/11 (1787)*

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Windsor Chairs (3 low back high seats)                     | 151 |
| Balloon pattern  | 149 |
| Fan back   | 130 |
| Japanned (painted)   | 54  |
| Three upright splats                                       | 45  |
| Mahogany (no pattern noted)                                | 37  |
| Oval back  | 34  |
| Chamber chairs   | 32  |
| Princes pattern  | 26  |
| Rout chairs (12 stained)                                   | 20  |
| Straight Gothic  | 18  |
| Gothic (painted or japanned)                               | 18  |
| Splat back (japanned, 2 with rush seats)                   | 16  |
| New Gothic ('with wheat ears', Sir James Ibbotson, Denton) | 15  |
| Night chairs   | 13  |
| Plume of feathers with drapery                             | 12  |
| Ladies finger [?]  | 10  |
| Stained chairs   | 10  |
| Cabriole chairs (japanned for dressing room)               | 10  |
| Drawing room chairs  | 10  |
| Bedroom chairs (japanned)                                  | 9   |

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| Satinwood (japanned)                                   | 6             |
| Open balusters   | 6             |
| Child's chair (2 fan back, 1 Windsor, 1 painted green) | 5             |
| Dining chairs  | 4             |
| New splat backs  | 2             |
| Bergere  | 2             |
| Fiddle back  | 2             |
| Chairs (water leaf on elbows)                          | 2             |
| Easy chair   | 1             |
| Smoking chair  | 1             |
|  | 1             |
| <i>Total</i>   | <i>c. 850</i> |

If Windsor chairs excluded total is *c. 700*.

*Comment on Chairs recorded in the Petty Ledgers and Waste Books*

The Petty Ledgers are missing from 1786 to 1790 so a direct comparison cannot be made with earlier descriptions of chair types in the Petty Ledger 1783–1785 above. The Waste Book of 1786 (furniture noted at the point of despatch to customers) may not include all the chairs made. For example it is unlikely, given the number of Windsor chairs made in previous years, that only two were made for customers in 1786; or that so few shield or escutcheon back chairs were made. Clearly, some chairs cannot be easily categorized because of inadequate descriptions, whilst others fall into more than one category, so the Figures quoted cannot give a totally accurate picture. Nevertheless certain conclusions can be drawn. The most popular chairs were Windsor chairs in 1783–85, a period when the export market flourished after the American War of Independence, with increased sales in the West Indies. Fan back chairs, which were a staple product of the Lancaster firm and a popular chair apparently for export to London, came second only to the 'balloon pattern' chair. This chair, designed in 1785 at the height of balloon mania in Britain and only two years after the first balloon flight took place, was re-designed or re-launched in 1786, almost certainly to celebrate the ascent of Vincent Lunardi at Lancaster Races after his postponed attempt of 1785.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that the balloon back chair was first noted in North America in December 1793, eight years after it was made in Lancaster, when a documented set of six parlour chairs in cherry wood with a similar splat design was sold by Kneeland & Adams to a Mrs Dickerson of Hartford, Connecticut (the chairs are now in the Winterthur collection).<sup>7</sup> 'Princes' pattern and 'feather & drapery' made in 1787 were probably the same design; they were possibly designed to mark the Prince becoming Regent during a bout of his father's madness.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart (2008), 1, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Du Pont Museum, Winterthur, Delaware, M67.151.1–6