OBSERVATIONS ON THE EARLIEST KNOWN
ENGLISH WINDSOR CHAIRS

Robert Parrott

Recent research has provided much information about the makers and regional characteristics of Windsor chairs in nineteenth century England. Two books have also been published illustrating the wide variety of Windsor chair types produced in the eighteenth century. However, the majority of these chairs date from after about 1750 and in only a very few very well-known cases have makers been positively identified or attributed. Moreover, although the Windsor chair is believed to have originated about 1700, even less is known about these first period (1700–1750) chairs. Most of the descriptions and illustrations that exist are more than fifty years old and there is no recently published article that attempts to draw together all the available information. Happily, a handful of these early chairs survives in private British collections and the author has recently been able to examine several of them. This has enabled some previously unreported facts about their stylistic and constructional features, together with details of their surface finishes and dimensions, to be collected. Accordingly, the primary aim of this article is to bring together old, more recent, and new information to provide a comprehensive account of these early vernacular chairs. In addition, developing further the ideas of Dr. B.D. Cotton and the late T. Crispin, some suggestions are made about the way that the Windsor chair may have come into being and subsequently evolved.

The first known reference to a Windsor chair is in the 1708 inventory of the possessions of John Jones, a wealthy merchant of Philadelphia, which included ‘three Windsor chairs worth ten shillings’. He is believed to be an early British settler who almost certainly would have brought his furniture with him; in support of this, the earliest American Windsor chair is considered to date from around the 1730s. Also, there is a number of often quoted English references to Windsor chairs in the first half of the eighteenth century which, for the sake of completeness, are worth a brief mention. In chronological order, these are as follows:– ‘... a large seat called a Windsor seat ...’ (1718); ‘... my wife was carry’d in a “Windsor Chair” like those at Versailles ...’ (1724); ‘seavan Japan’d Windsor chairs ...’ (1725); ‘... all sorts of Windsor garden chairs ...’ (1727); ‘... two can chairs, a matted chair, a Windsor chair ...’ (1728); ‘... Wins chair ordered by the Vestry ...’ (1732); ‘... “very neat” mahogany Windsor chairs ...’ (1729–1733); ‘... a Windsor chair covered in quilted crimson damask ...’ (1733); an illustration of a comb-back chair on a wheeled platform (1733); ‘... 1 Windsor settee with 4 seats ...’ (1734); ‘... four double Windsor chairs and one treble ...’ (1738); ‘... 2 Windsor chairs for the garden ...’ (1738); ‘... Windsor chair for 3 people ...’ (1739); ‘a tolerably large circle, with Windsor chairs round it ...’ (1740); a painting of a comb-back chair (before 1745) – a chair like this from the collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum has been illustrated (see reference 3). Finally, there is a little known reference which, although just outside the period under discussion (1754), is of interest in relation
1. Backstool, late seventeenth century, oak, 1920s photograph.  
   R. Edwards, Dictionary of English Furniture

2. Early comb-back Windsor chair, 1920s.  
   R. Edwards, Dictionary of English Furniture
Robert Parrott

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to the fashion of the time for novel garden furniture. This is a newspaper advertisement for, amongst other things, 'Garden Seats, Windsor and Forrest Chairs and Stools in the Modern Gothic, and Chinese taste; ...'. Clearly, Windsor chairs were being bought for a variety of indoor and outdoor uses in the first half of the eighteen century but, with a few exceptions, we do not know what they looked like.

In the past, there have been several suggestions as to how the Windsor chair got its name, the most plausible view is that Windsor was where it was first made, with the more interesting question, perhaps, being why this should be so. Moreover, the likelihood that chairs were transported from Windsor by river to the capital would seem to provide only part of the explanation. It is certainly the case that the earliest known Windsor chair maker, John Pitt (1714-1759), lived all his life in the parish of Upton-cum-Chalvey, now part of Slough and about two miles from Windsor. Also, all the early eighteenth century chairs that are referred to in this article have a pair of deep grooves around the top edge of the seat (similar to those on chairs supplied to the Bodleian Library in 1756). A grooved seat is a characteristic feature of most, but not all, Thames Valley chairs throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that is only occasionally seen on Windsors from other regional traditions. Furthermore, given that chairs were described as 'Windsors' at the start of the eighteenth century, there is the distinct possibility that the design may have originated in this area some years earlier. In this connection, three early comb-back chairs described in this article (Figures 2, 3 & 4) all have a carved openwork crown in the centre of the comb-rail. This feature might be somehow connected with King Charles II (Restored 1660, died 1685) and have a special resonance in the Windsor area because of his association with the town. During the civil war Cromwell captured and occupied the castle but after the Restoration the King commissioned splendid new state apartments and improved the grounds. In this context, it is interesting that the Windsor chair is probably unique in being the only item of English period furniture named after a place, with the name known to have been in use for nearly 300 years and not a later term invented by the antiques trade. Given that the town is famous because of the castle and its association with the monarchy, some connection with either of these seems a possibility.

In addition to the crown motif, the three comb-backs discussed below have a spirally-turned central spindle and two of them have similarly-shaped stretchers. In several respects, therefore, these Windsors resemble the solid-seated oak joined backstool shown in Figure 1. This chair (stated to be c1665 but probably later) not only exhibits several spirally-turned elements but also has a top rail that incorporates a crown, or coronet, with shaped apertures either side. However, the Windsor chair shown in Figure 2, which is known from a 1920s illustration, has some additional comb-rail features. These are; an opening beneath the crown enclosing a finial that appears to relate to the central spirally-turned spindle and an incised star-like shape in each 'ear' of the rail. Another aspect of this Windsor is that the Thames Valley feature of a groove around the large saddle-shaped seat is repeated on both sides of the arm bow and on its V-shaped underarm support, as well as across the bottom of the comb-rail. Also, unusually for an English Windsor chair, this comb-back has box stretchers, the rear one morticed half way down the back legs while the front one, which may be decoratively turned in the centre, is positioned nearer to the seat. The front stretcher in the backstool (Figure 1) is similarly...
F. G. Roe, *Windsor Chairs*, 1953

4. Early comb back Windsor Chair, legs replaced.  
*Private collection*
5. Comb rail of figure 4.
   *Private collection*

6. Underarm support of figure 4.
   *Private collection*

7. Seat corner of figure 4.
   *Private collection*
8. Seat top of figure 4.
   Private collection

   Private collection
located, suggesting a possible origin for this form of construction. The comb-back also
has a transverse stretcher which is spirally-turned in alternate directions either side of the
centre and morticed into swellings near the front end of each side stretcher. The legs are
cigar-shaped and stoutly proportioned with a single turned ring near the top of the front
ones and scribe marks for locating the back stretcher visible on those at the back. All the
feet are missing as the legs have been reduced in length, however, they were probably like
those on the low-back chairs which will be discussed later. This chair was considered,
originally, to have had more than one spiral stretcher and to have been made in elm.
However, it is likely that only the seat was elm, as is usual in English Windsor chairs, and
the remainder made using a combination of other woods such as ash, beech or fruitwood.
The chair is said to have been in the collection of Mr. Fred Skull, part of which went into
the Parker-Knoll collection. This has now been dispersed and the present whereabouts of
this chair, if it is still in existence, is unknown.

The second chair (Figure 3) is known from an illustration in a book published in
195325. It is remarkably similar to the first example but differs in several respects. The
comb-rail is almost identical although the photograph is not clear enough to confirm
whether the incised star shapes are present. However, there are more spiral twists on the
part of the central spindle above the arm bow than in the former example; this may
indicate a taller chair – the height is said to be 3'6". One obvious difference is the shape
of the underarm support which, although still grooved, is of a much simpler design. The
illustration clearly shows that the rear legs are through-mortised and wedged from the
top and, once again, all the feet are missing. The seat is said to be 24'/" wide and the
legs, which are of a similar shape to those in the previous chair, are also joined with box
stretchers in the same position. However, it differs in having both the front box stretcher
and the transverse stretcher spirally-turned. Curiously, this chair is also said to be of elm
and to be from the Fred Skull collection, although, as is obvious from the above that it is
not the same as the one shown in Figure 2. Either there were two such chairs in Mr.
Skull’s collection or the author was mistaken: in a more recent publication (see reference
2) this chair was said to have belonged to Mr Edwin Skull. It is possible that this chair
may still survive in some private collection.

The third comb-back (Figure 4), which has recently been illustrated in this journal24,
came from the Burrows furniture collection25 which was dispersed in the 1940s. It was
acquired by a prominent Cotswold’s dealer and is now in private ownership.
Unfortunately, this chair has at some time had its legs and stretchers replaced, however,
the remainder so closely resembles the one shown in Figure 1 that it might be thought to
be the same chair drastically altered. Detailed examination of the two illustrations
indicates that this is not the case; the chair in Figure 1 has a distortion of the arm bow
where the second long spindle to the right of centre (as illustrated) passes through a hole
that was bored too near the edge, this is not so in Figure 3. Also, the first chair has a
much shorter finial in the aperture below the crown and the downward central
projections of the underarm supports are less prominent.

This chair shown in Figure 4 is constructed of ash with elliptical spindles in beech
and an elm seat. It is in sound condition apart from two old metal brackets bracing the rear
corners of the arm bow. The dimensions are as follows..._ height 43'/"; comb-rail width,
20"; width across arms and seat, 24'/"; seat depth, 16'/"; seat thickness, 2'/"; height of
The wood of the chair is a fine warm brown and many areas show traces of a black finish that looks more like paint than varnish. This is particularly evident on the spiral spindle and on the back of the comb-rail and the plain spindles. The underside of the seat appears to be painted dull black over most of its surface. On parts of the chair (e.g. the front of some spindles and the rear edge of the seat) there are traces of light green paintwork on top of a whitish layer which might be some sort of gesso or grain filler. The legs and stretchers are old, but not original as they show no signs of paintwork. Also, the legs have three rather than one turned ring at the top, as might be found on a nineteenth century Windsor chair, and there are no spiral stretchers. However, the restoration was obviously carried out by someone who was familiar with this type of chair as the box stretcher design is correct and the side stretchers have swellings near the front to receive the transverse stretcher, as in Figure 1. All these replacement parts are in ash and the legs, which are appropriately turned to a large diameter, are through-morticed and wedged from the top and, in addition, pegged through the seat edge. Although, it would appear that the chair may have been carefully but incorrectly, from a stylistic viewpoint, reconstructed some time in the nineteenth century.

The detailed characteristics of the chair are as follows. The comb-rail (Figure 5) is attached from behind by pegs into the two outermost-but-one spindles; these are also pegged into the arm bow and seat. In the centre of the comb-rail is a carved, pierced, crown decorated with several circular recessed (pits), which presumably represent jewels, and at each end there is an irregular four-pointed star. Below the crown is a segmental aperture, bordered by five pits, enclosing a small finial. The elongated lobed apertures either side of the crown also have a pit at the end and there are two more less round recesses (pits?) just above the outer spindles. Finally, there is a deep groove running along the bottom of the comb-rail. The V-shaped underarm support (Figure 6) is attached by three pegs, two above and one below, and is morticed through the seat; the illustration also shows that there are two scribe lines on the edge of the seat. Also, viewed from the outside, the support has two lateral grooves and another in the centre that ends in a pit. The arm bow is undercut at the end to form a small rounded handgrip and is also continuously grooved up to the point where it adjoins the underarm support. All of these features are also repeated on inner parts of the underarm supports and arm bow. The top of the seat (Figure 8) has two scribe lines around the back and sides, presumably for positioning the spindles, one marks the centre of each bore hole and the other is set some distance from the front of the spindles. The seat is deeply chamfered beneath its outer edge, especially below the central point of the saddle where there are remains of the black paint finish and an underlying whitish layer. There is another deep chamfer above each front leg (Figure 7) which stops at the corner to start again on the side edge of the seat, whereas the deep pair of grooves around the top of the seat is continuous. It is noted, also, that the side edge of the seat is initially straight but curves outwards just after the junction with the underarm support. A most unusual decorative detail (Figure 9) is the V-shaped notch and associated pit that terminates the chamfer below the seat adjacent to the mortice for each back leg; this resembles the end of a strap or ribbon but, being beneath the back of the seat, cannot easily be seen. One of the scribe lines referred to earlier is also visible running around the middle of the seat edge; the lighter area to the left of the picture is where the black surface has been rubbed away to expose greenish

*Private collection*


*Victoria & Albert Museum, on loan to William Wilberforce House, Hull. Photograph by R. Passart*
paint on top of a white base coat. This figure also shows that both the long, as well as
the short, spindles are through-morticed.

The dating of these interesting and rare early comb-backs, as with all unlabelled or
unattributed pre-nineteenth century Windsor chairs, is problematical. French and Dutch
influences on English furniture became fashionable as a consequence of the Restoration
of Charles II and amongst these was the use of decorative spiral turning\(^{16}\). This first
appeared on vernacular furniture around \(1670\) and is often seen on reliably-dated late
seventeenth century longcase clock hoods. However, the crown as a decorative element is
uncommon on English vernacular furniture, although similar carved crowns do occur on
the back of late seventeenth century cane chairs\(^{17}\), many of which also exhibit spiral
turning. There is also a walnut-veneered longcase clock, dated \(1685-1690\), by the
celebrated maker Thomas Tompion which has a hood with spiral columns and a carved
cresting that includes a three-dimensional jewelled crown\(^{18}\). Close examination of the
crown on the comb-back chair described above (Figure 10) indicated that it resembles the
central part of the crown motif seen on Carolean cane-seated chairs (Figure 11)\(^{19}\), with
apertures either side but, characteristically, also has a lower opening enclosing a finial
(this appears to have been covered by a tacked-on piece of card at some time). Therefore,
the simplified, cruder shape of the crown, with the carved jewels replaced by pits,
suggests that the Windsor chair makers may have adapted a design first used by cane
crown chair makers in \(1686\).

With regard to the legs of these comb-back chairs, conventional wisdom suggests that
the simple turned shape indicates an early eighteenth century date; this is probably
because many seventeenth century joined oak chairs have legs decorated with complex
baluster and ring turning. Nevertheless, contemporary turned (thrown) chairs have plain
legs and there are also examples to be found of seventeenth century stools, backstools,
armchairs and tables that have simple columnar legs with a single turned ring near the
top. Usually, though, these legs seem to have ovalo turning where they join horizontal
parts of the framework. However, it is not difficult to imagine that with Windsor chair
construction techniques, i.e. morticed and wedged without framework, these additional
turned elements might be dispensed with. Taken together, therefore, the stylistic features
of these early comb-back Windsors indicate that, as previously suggested, they could have
been made in the late \(1600\)s, rather than in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

The author has recently learned that there is another example of these early comb-back
chairs in private hands that still has its original feet\(^{19}\). Likewise, the low-back chairs
shortly to be discussed have a similar leg form but retain worn-down remnants of their
feet with a turned ring above. Normally when Windsor chair legs are shortened due to
wear the rings above the feet are retained. It is odd, therefore, that two of the chairs
described above, although apparently in reasonable condition, are completely without
these rings or feet and the third has a replacement set of legs and stretchers. One
explanation for this is that the legs were cut down because the feet had totally rotted
away as a result of the chairs being used outdoors. Another possibility is that the chairs
were either originally, or sometime later, mounted on wheeled platforms for outside use,
similar to those shown in the \(1733\) print of Stowe Gardens and on the trade cards of Lock
and Foulger (1777) and William Webb (1785)\(^{31}\). When wheeled seats became
unfashionable, or their trolleys became dilapidated, the chairs may have been saved by
   Courtesy Christies

   Courtesy Christies
14. Comb rail of low back chair in figure 12.


cutting through the legs above the turned rings at the junction with the feet and then taken to be used indoors.

Although the three comb-back chairs described are polished wood, it is important to recognize that the third example (Figure 4) was originally painted, suggesting that it was intended as a garden chair. The idea of painted chairs for outdoor use, some of which could be moved about on wheels, may have been introduced from France. Wheeled chairs, although not of Windsor design, are known to have been used in the gardens of the Palace of Versailles in the 1680s, and would probably have been seen by Charles Stuart during his period of exile. After the Restoration he may have requested craftsmen to make similar chairs for use in the grounds of Windsor Castle, thereby establishing a fashion for wheeled garden seats. For example, the Hall Barn estate, where movable chairs ‘like those at Versailles’ were being used in 1724, is only eight miles from Windsor. However, although the assumption is that these chairs were not of Windsor design, it seems likely that actual Windsor chairs may have evolved sometime later to fulfil the same purpose. Evidence for this is provided by the 1733 print showing wheeled Windsors, albeit with plain comb-rails and baluster legs, in the gardens of Stowe and the 1727 London advertisement for painted (i.e. outdoor) Windsors. Conceivably, a lightweight stickback chair, incorporating some stylistic elements of contemporary ‘crown-motif’ cane chairs (popular 1686-1700), might have been developed locally for use in the castle grounds. If court practice was then copied by the landed gentry, a demand might have been created for these fashionable ‘Windsor’ chairs which eventually spread across the country.

The survival of a few of these early comb-back chairs after about three centuries is noteworthy. Furthermore, given the significance of the Windsor chair in the history of English vernacular furniture, and the affection with which these chairs are held by the general public, it is to be hoped that one of these rare and historically important early comb-backs might be acquired for a national collection. In this context, the sale of the earliest labelled English Windsor chair, made by John Pitt of Slough (1714-1759), to an overseas collector illustrates the need for vigilance to prevent the loss of nationally important items of vernacular furniture.

In addition to these early comb-backs, two pairs of early painted low-back Windsors have survived, examples from each pair (with replaced transverse stretchers) having previously been described and illustrated (see reference 2). These chairs, the only known examples of their type, were found by a member of this society in a small private museum in Glandford, North Norfolk. The Glandford Shell Museum was built by Sir Alfred Jodrell in 1915 to house his collection of shells and an early poster shows a pair of the chairs placed either side of a central display cabinet. The four chairs, like the shells, are presumed to have come from Sir Alfred’s home, the nearby Bayfield Hall. Nothing is known about the previous history of these chairs and they are not mentioned in the inventory of Sir Alfred’s effects. The two pairs of chairs were subsequently sold at Christies, London on 19th November, 1992. The auctioneers’ descriptions are as follows: Lot 65. ‘A matched pair of early Georgian green-painted Windsor armchairs, each with deeply-curved top rail centered by a pierced stylised serpent cresting above a railed back, one with central baluster rail to back, and pierced rectangular arm-supports with saddle seats and baluster turned legs joined with baluster-turned stretchers,
variations in size and design, one lacking feet the other with section of seat replaced, previously grey, green and red-painted.' (Figure 13).

Interestingly, these low back chairs exhibit many stylistic similarities with the comb-back Windsors described above, including the application of various paint finishes. They also appear to be from the Thames Valley region as they have double grooved saddle seats that are chamfered below. The seats are rounded at the back and shaped below the front edge like the comb-back shown in Figure 4 and have fretted underarm supports of a similar design. All of the chairs illustrated in this article have twenty-one spindles but there are no spirally-turned spindles or stretchers on the low-backs instead the central spindle and the transverse stretchers are baluster-shaped. Also, although the crown motif is absent, both types of low-back retain the concept of an upward extension of the central spindle but, as there is no proper comb-rail, the finial is placed above or within the arm bow. In addition, the chairs shown in Figure 12 have diminutive comb-rails (‘stylised serpents’, Figure 14) supported on upward extensions of the spindles whereas those in Figure 8 have the same lobe-shaped opening (Figure 15) seen either side of the crown as on the comb-backs. Similarly, all the low-backs have the cigar-shaped leg with a turned ring below the seat present only on the front legs. However, they also have parts of their original feet surmounted by one or two turned rings.

By a remarkable coincidence, the RFS member who originally discovered these chairs in Glandford recently happened upon them again in the lobby of The Wormsley Library, near Stokenchurch, Buckinghamshire. Acting upon this information, the chairs have been re-examined and some further details collected. The dimensions are as follows:-- the present height ranges between 29½" and 31", the seats are between 24" and 24½" wide, 16" to 16½" deep and 2¼" thick with the seat tops now 17¼" above the ground; the legs are 2¼" diameter at the widest part. The individual chairs of each pair differ in that one has an underarm support that is grooved on both sides, without pits (Figure 16), whereas the other has a plain support. In one of the chairs the central spindle ends in a finial between the arm bow and the small comb-rail whereas, in the other, the projecting end of the spindle is simply shaved to a point; this seems to be original. In all the chairs, the underarm supports are attached with two pegs into the arm bow and one into the seat, also, on both types of chair the third spindle each side of the central baluster one is pegged into the arm bow. The grooving is present on both sides of the arm bow and is stopped at the hand grips and where the bow is pierced or surmounted by the small comb-rail. The chamfer below the seats is also stopped either side of each back leg, providing a space for a peg to enter the leg (Figure 9d); there are also pegs passing through the chamfered edge of the seat into the front legs. Also, the side stretchers have swellings near the front to receive the transverse stretchers, as in the comb-back chairs. Interestingly however, neither the legs nor the spindles are through-morticed, unlike the underarm supports (Figure 17). The paint finish seem originally to have been applied over a white grain filler or gesso and where the original dry wood surface has been exposed there is no sign of stain, polish, or varnish; large areas of the underside of some of the seats have never been painted. The seats are elm, the arm bows look like ash and the spindles and legs are of a reddish wood resembling unstained mahogany, but possibly cherry.

The fortuitous survival of this unique group of low-backs allows some conclusions to
be drawn about the production and use of the early Windsor chair. Firstly, although these chairs may not be quite as old as the comb-backs described above because there is no spiral turning, it appears that the low-back form was available as an alternative to the comb-back probably from early on in the eighteenth century. Secondly, the maker of these chairs offered two differing designs, both of which include features that seem to be derived from the comb-backs. Thirdly, there was clearly some degree of standardisation in the making of these early chairs as the dimensions and unusual shape of the seats are virtually the same as those of the comb-backs. However, the low-back chairs were produced by a different maker as neither the spindles, nor the legs are through-morticed. This is an atypical method of construction not usually seen until the nineteenth century, except perhaps on fine quality mahogany Windsors such as the set at Holkham Hall, Norfolk and may suggest that assembly techniques were still evolving. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the untreated wood surface beneath the white undercoat indicates that these chairs were originally intended for outdoor use. In fact, subject to confirmation of a similar finding from the unaltered comb-back not yet seen by the author, there may be no surviving early Windsor chairs that were not originally painted; in this context, the earliest known reference to painted Windsor chairs dates from 1727.

Many types of indoor seating furniture, from the simple joint stool to the ornate gilt upholstered armchair, were available in late seventeenth century England. It is difficult, therefore, to envisage what needs would be met by the introduction of a novel, less substantial, chair such as the Windsor. By contrast, the concept of a strong, lightweight armchair specifically designed for garden use, was entirely new, and, with possible royal associations, likely to have broad appeal. It is likely, therefore, that the Windsor chair was initially conceived in the Thames Valley region, perhaps in Windsor itself, as a form of portable or wheeled seating suitable for outdoor use. However, the origin of the design is unclear although the archetypal wedged stool, the thrown and cane chair and the backstool may all have been influential. Moreover, being made of common woods such as ash, beech, and elm, these outdoor chairs were painted to provide decoration and protection from the elements.

The idea that the first Windsor chairs were made for garden use, and usually painted black or green, has been proposed before. This conclusion, which arose out of a survey of the literature (see introduction to this article) and inspection of the low-backs (Figures 12 & 13) is further corroborated by the new findings obtained from the earlier comb-back chair (Figure 4). Furthermore, the scarcity of these turned-leg Windsors, compared with other contemporary chair types, supports the idea of garden usage as the rate of attrition for outdoor chairs is likely to have been greater than for those designed for indoor use. It is also interesting that although there are several contemporary paintings by Zoffany and others showing Windsor chairs in gardens, there are hardly any eighteenth century pictures, even by artists such as Hogarth, showing the indoor use of these chairs. Finally, in this context, the reason why most American Windsors also are painted and lacking splats could be because their design was influenced by these stick-back ‘garden’ chairs imported by the first English settlers.

In conclusion, it is hypothesised that the evolution of the Thames Valley Windsor from a fashionable garden seat to common everyday chair may have taken the
following course. Possibly influenced by a custom instigated at the Stuart court in Windsor, the use of painted comb-back chairs in country house gardens became widespread amongst the nobility and persisted throughout the eighteenth century. However, as the advantages of the Windsor design in terms of portability, strength, and one may suppose, cheapness, came to be appreciated it is probable that a fashion arose for stained and polished chairs in attractive woods such as yew, cherry, walnut and mahogany to be supplied to the well-to-do for indoor use; this seems to have occurred about 1730. Thenceforth, the Thames Valley Windsor chair evolved along different lines influenced by stylistic developments in fine furniture. This led to the cabriole leg comb-back, with its vasiform splat, and the gothic Windsor and, following further design innovation, to the ‘Chippendale’ and wheel splat bow-back. Finally, in the nineteenth century, the Windsor became universally popular as a versatile form of seating and distinct regional styles developed as the design was interpreted by makers in different parts of the country. The Thames Valley makers, however, largely retained the historic precedent of a groove around the tope of the seat and often also used this feature on the front edge of the back bow. In so doing, they maintained an element of continuity with the very first Windsor chairs made in their locality more than a century earlier.

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6. S. Switzer in his publication Iconographica Rustica (1718) describes a ‘large seat called a Windsor seat which is contrived to turn round any way’. N. G. Evans, English Windsor Furniture, Furniture History (1979).
7. Lord Percival writing to his brother-in-law Daniel Dering about a visit to Hall Barn, near Beaconsfield, Bucks; N. G. Evans, English Windsor Furniture, Furniture History (1979).
12. In relation to furniture for The Prince of Wales library in St. James Palace, The Royal Household Accounts for 1729–1733 record that ‘Henry Williams, joiner, supplied a “very neat” mahogany Windsor chair for the
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Blue Room of St. James, he also made at a cost of £8, two other mahogany Windsor chairs, richly carved; I. G. Sparkes, *The English Country Chair, An Illustrated History of Chairs and Chairmaking*, Spurbooks Ltd. (1973).


15. '1734. 13 May. Paid John Willis rect. in Paul’s Church yard for 1 Windsor Settee with 4 seats, Two ditto with 3 seats each and 8 single chairs at 6s ye Seat £5.8.0. Pd. Waterage and drink money to the Ship’s Crew of Thos and Francis on board of whom they were sent to Gibside. 2/6. £5.10.6.' G. Bowes, London Accounts 1733–1734. Durham County Record Office, D/Strathmore/v 1390.


19. In a letter dated 21st May 1740, Lady Hartford describing her estate ‘Richkins’ (Richings) near Colnbrook, Bucks, states ‘There is one walk that I am extremely partial to; and which is rightly called the Abbey-walk, since it is composed of prodigiously high beech trees, that form an arch through the whole length, exactly resembling a cloister. At the end is a statue; and about the middle a tolerably large circle, with Windsor chairs round it ...’ T. Crispin, *The English Windsor Chair*, Alan Sutton, Bath, Avon (1991).

20. A painting of Sir Roger and Lady Bradshaigh at Haigh Hall, Lancs, by Jonathan Richardson (1665–1745) shows a comb-back chair in the garden.

21. ‘Notice is hereby given that William Partridge hath opened a Shop near the White Lion in Banbury, with all sorts of the most fashionable furniture in the cabinet way ... Likewise all sorts of carpentry, joinerswork, and carvings; viz. Brackets, Umbrello’s, Temples, Pavilions, Pallisadoes, Fences, Garden Seats, Windsor and Forrest Chairs and Stools in the Modern Gothic, and Chinese taste; and all other Things made in Wood that are not to be had in this Part of the Country of any Person but himself.’ *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, Saturday 13th July 1754. (This may be the earliest reference to gothic Windsor Chairs – Horace Walpole started restyling Strawberry Hill in 1747).


25. Burrows’ Furniture Store, 15b St. Thomas Street, Scarborough, Yorks; proprietor Carl Hamilton Burrows.


27. A. Bowett, *English Furniture 1660–1714, from Charles II to Queen Anne*, Antique Collectors’ Club Ltd., Woodbridge, Suffolk, p. 93 (2002). The top rails of cane chairs were originally decorated with carved cherubs holding a basket that was later replaced by a crown; the first order ‘for 8 Caine Chaires of Walnuttree carved with Boyes and Crownes’ came from the royal household in London in 1686.


29. The illustration is of the front stretcher of a walnut caned chair (c1680) on loan from The Victoria and Albert Museum (W.499–1927) on display at The William Wilberforce House, Hull. (Photograph supplied by R. Passant)

30. Dr. B. D. Cotton’ personal communication.


32. Painting of Louis XIV being wheeled around the gardens with his courtiers, by Jean-Baptiste Martin, 1688;
33. Noël Riley; personal communication.
34. Kindly provided by the curator, Mrs S. Hullah.
35. Mr R. Combe; personal communication.