



Child's armchair

THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

June 2006

Welcome to the latest newsletter. It has been some time since the last edition, but that does not mean that life has been quiet and uneventful! More developments have taken place in the last six months than at any time in The Windsor Workshop's short history. Courses have been running steadily at two per month; builders have been on site for three months creating the new workshop; the website www.the-windsor-workshop.co.uk has been rebuilt; new courses have been developed; and a series of articles are being run in *Furniture & Cabinet Making* magazine.

In this edition you will find the first of what I hope will become a regular series of articles by alumni of The Windsor Workshop. Martin Rosendaal shares with you his experience of becoming a keen Windsor chairmaker, having taken the bow-back, sack-back, and 2+5 day Design and Make courses.

With all these developments, now is a great time to come on a course, whether it is your first visit, or to take your chairmaking to the next level.

NEW WORKSHOP



The starting point

Work began in March. It took less than two days to strip off the old un-insulated asbestos roof, and to replace it with new corrugated steel sheets with 80 mm of bonded insulation.



Re-roofing

Next, the old steel windows were stripped out and replaced with double glazed plastic units, and a proper front door was installed.

With the barn originally built as a cattle shed, the original concrete floor sloped in several directions. Joists were scribed to fit the uneven floor, and an insulated and flat plywood surface was then laid on top.



New floor and windows

Insulation has been a major consideration during the conversion, not only to comply with Building Regulations, and to give a pleasant working environment, but also to be inexpensive to heat.



Ready to move in

All the walls were battened out and insulated. New electrics were fitted throughout, and daylight fluorescent tubes installed to give light.



The completed outside

Finally, the whole building was decorated inside and out. As this newsletter goes to print, I am starting to move in all my chairmaking tools and equipment. At present there seems to be so much room—but I know it will soon all be used!

OPENING PARTY

Once the workshop is fully set up for courses, we will have an official opening. Invitations will be sent out separately, and I do hope that you will be able to come!

www.the-windsor-workshop.co.uk

The website has been rebuilt—please take a look!

While the original site was professionally produced, and looked great, it was becoming increasingly difficult to update it with all that was going on. So, with a certain amount of trepidation I have produced the new site myself, and now I have no excuses for anything being out of date! If you have any comments, positive and negative, please let me know.

Course dates, new courses, tools, and everything else should now be online.

Windsor Articles

The June issue of *Furniture & Cabinet Making* (No. 115) contains the first of series of four articles that I have written. This article traces the history and development of Windsor chairs, and the following three give details of how to make a simple, contemporary comb back chair.



This chair can be made on a course, and there is a comb-back armchair that makes up the set. Please get in touch if you are interested.

THE ALUMNUS ARTICLE

In the first article under this banner, Martin Rosendaal describes how he came to be hooked on Windsor chairmaking. Martin recently retired from an academic career in medical research. In his spare time he keeps bees, and is learning Russian.

I was collecting some sweet chestnut from a timber miller in the East End and he'd forgotten one piece. Rather than kick my heels waiting I popped into the Geffrye Museum nearby. I was seduced into its bookshop and seduced again by Bernard Cotton's, *The English Regional Chair*. I used to keep it open downstairs in the kitchen and look at one chair after another.

Chair-making is an especial challenge to an amateur carpenter. The challenge lies in making the strong joint between the back legs and the seat, and what caught my eye and impressed me about Windsor chairs, was how the bodgers had solved that challenge.

A friend told me about West Dean. My luck was getting onto James' bow-back course. I liked the chair I made, and I liked the people I'd made it with. We agreed we'd come back to make a sack back chair. At James' course are books which show you other chairs that makers have tried.

I wanted to make a chair of my own. That too is possible at



Martin with three of his Windsors (and a foreigner!)

The Windsor Workshop. In two days James took me through all the stages of designing the high Windsor I wanted. We even went into the woods to learn how to select the best green timber. Later I came back and made that high Windsor chair. Now happily hooked, I've got my edge tools out of the damp of the garden shed into an indoor workshop. There I'm making a pair of Windsors for my granddaughters. I've turned their legs from yew which grew in the grounds of St John's parish church in Hampstead. That yew grew beside the tombs of John Constable and John (chronometer) Harrison, I hope those legs will contain some of their molecules. If that isn't a touch of paradise what would you suggest?
M.R.

NEW COURSES

Do you have children or grandchildren who would love a Windsor chair? If so, consider making a child's armchair at The Windsor Workshop. The course is 5-days, just like the adult chairs, but don't think you'll finish in four days just because it is 3/4 scale. This delightful chair is based on early English Windsors and has a steam-bent arm, crest, and arm-posts. Plenty to get you teeth into.



I will be running this course 11th–15th December 2006, just in time for Christmas!

CONTINUOUS-ARM CHAIR

Next week I will be running my first continuous-arm course, and will give you full details, including photographs in the next newsletter. For those of you who are not familiar with this chair, the back also forms the arms, and it involves steam-bending in two planes—all in just 30 seconds! It makes a very pretty chair.

There will be a continuous-arm course 26th February–2nd March 2007.

PRICES

With the major investment in the new workshop, The Windsor Workshop will very shortly become VAT registered. All courses will then have to bear VAT, and this means that a price increase is inevitable.

All courses will now cost £430.

The price includes all materials, use of tools, and food/drink each day.

CHAIRS 2006

In the last newsletter I gave details of this event that was due to take place at the beginning of June in Sweden. Sadly however, it was cancelled due to lack of support, although lack of promotion probably played a large part in its demise.

James Mursell

The Windsor Workshop

Churchfield Farm,

West Chiltington

Pulborough,

West Sussex.

RH20 2JW

01798 815 925

jamesmursell@aol.com

www.the-windsor-workshop.co.uk

