

THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

Winter 2008



Welcome to the first digital edition of *The Windsor Chairmaker*. I have opted to make it available as a .pdf file via my website, and to alert you to its existence by email with a link. This way I can maintain the same quality of layout as before, though sadly I cannot provide you with direct links (though I'll show them where appropriate). I am hopeful that this simple method will be satisfactory, but please let me have any feedback that you wish to offer, and I'll do my best to adapt to the most convenient method for the majority.

The past few months have been filled with a run of excellent and full courses, leaving little time for commissions and writing the book. However they will have to be fitted in, with orders due by Christmas, and several new chairs and tables to be made for inclusion in the book. The lights in the workshop may be burning late into the winter nights!

James Mursell

Westonbirt Windsor

It seems a long time ago now, but I was demonstrating at the Festival of the Tree at Westonbirt Arboretum over the August Bank Holiday. Mike Hancock from *Classic Hand Tools* had invited me to be in his magnificent marquee, and asked that I make a chair over the four days.

I chose a design that I hadn't made before and simplified it a little so that it was achievable during the show, while giving plenty of time for talking! Sadly I was only able to be there for the first two days as my father died over the weekend, but the chair was duly finished and painted with milk paints. This picture shows me trimming the spindles to fit the crest.

Nick Gibbs the proprietor of *British Woodworking* took photos during the process and wrote a comprehensive article about making the chair. Even if you don't read the article, do have a look at this recent newcomer to the woodworking shelves.



Links: www.classichandtools.co.uk
www.britishwoodworking.com

Click on the link on the home page of *The Windsor Workshop* for Nick Gibb's article

Happiness through Chair Making?

There was an article on 22nd October 2008 in *The Times* titled '**Do five simple things a day to stay sane, say scientists**'. It may have been the accompanying picture of autumn foliage at Westonbirt Arboretum that first attracted me, but the article that was based on a recent Foresight report, made considerable sense - particularly the 5-steps (reproduced opposite).

Why mention this in *The Windsor Chairmaker*? Well, it seemed to me that 4 out of 5 steps can be satisfied by coming on a chair making course, and one could make a good argument for no. 5 as well!

I thought I was just teaching people to make chairs - little did I know that I was also giving them a chance to be happy as well!!

Link: www.foresight.gov.uk/OurWork/ActiveProjects/Mental%20Capital/Welcome.asp



The Five Steps

1. Connect

Developing relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours will enrich your life and bring you support.

2. Be active

Sports, hobbies such as gardening or dancing, or just a daily stroll will make you feel good and maintain mobility and fitness.

3. Be curious

Noting the beauty of everyday moments as well as the unusual and reflecting on them helps you to appreciate what matters to you.

4. Learn

Fixing a bike, learning an instrument, cooking - the challenge and satisfaction brings fun and confidence..

5. Give

Helping friends and strangers links your happiness to a wider community and is very rewarding.

www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk

"dedicated to Windsor chairmaking"

Ash



In my last newsletter I mentioned that I was intending to use ash more and more in my courses in preference to oak. This process is now almost complete. I will continue to use oak for chairs that I am making to commission, as I prefer the colour and grain patterns and it blends together pleasingly with elm, but ash will now be used for all parts of the course chairs apart from the seat.

It is interesting how this change has come about. When I made my first chair with Jack Hill many years ago we used air dried ash, and rounders to make the spindles; but after learning from Mike Dunbar in the USA I changed to green woodworking techniques and found that oak was much more pleasant to use than ash. When I used ash, I tried to use it as green as possible (just like the oak) but it had a horrible tendency to tear if one tried to cut across the grain. Also I had frequent failures during steam bending.

The trick, which I learned over the summer, is to let the ash dry out a little before using it - I will now split a log into sections a couple of weeks before a course and leave it exposed to the air. This drier wood bends much more reliably, and can be shaved successfully across the grain when it is (occasionally) necessary.

I guess the moral of the story is to keep experimenting, and not to assume that the treatment used successfully on one wood will necessarily be ideal for another.



Paint

Last week Jonathan Squire, who was back to make his third chair before making a full set for his family, tipped me off about linseed oil paints. He showed me photos of planters that he made during the summer which were finished with linseed paints. Samples that I ordered on this recommendation arrived this morning and I can't wait to try them out on chairs. The colours are fabulous. I will keep you posted of progress in future newsletters.

In the meantime if you are interested, check out: www.holkham.co.uk



Travishers

I am confident that I will soon be able to start selling travishers again once a new source of blades has been finalised. If you are waiting for one, thank you for your patience and I'll spread the word as soon as they are available again.



Spokeshaves



These continue to be available direct from The Windsor Workshop, but in the New Year should also be available from Classic Hand Tools. Readers of Fine Woodworking will soon be able to see them in the Reader's Gallery and on their website www.taunton.com

Courses - Gift Vouchers and Prices

With Christmas fast approaching, and chair making courses being a popular present, think about giving a voucher for a course, which can be redeemed on any appropriate course over a two year period. This is also a great way of locking into 2008 prices. Please contact me directly for further details.

A modest price increase for courses will take effect on 1st January 2009. However any courses booked before that date will be at the current rates, even though final payment (after the deposit) will not be payable until the start of the course (probably in 2009).

Course Dates

December	15 - 19	Intermediate
2009		
January	12 - 16 26 - 30	Introductory Introductory
February	9 - 13	Introductory
March	9 - 13	Intermediate
April	20 - 24	Advanced
May	4 - 8 18 - 22	<i>Bow back at West Dean</i> Intermediate
June	7 - 12 29 - 3 July	Introductory Introductory

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