

THE WINDSOR CHAIRMAKER

Newsletter of The Windsor Workshop

Winter 2009



Welcome to my final newsletter of 2009. I have produced more editions than usual this year as a result of publicising my book *Windsor Chairmaking*. Next year I will aim to send you no more than six. It is difficult to judge the appropriate number but if you feel that they are coming too thick and fast please let me know!

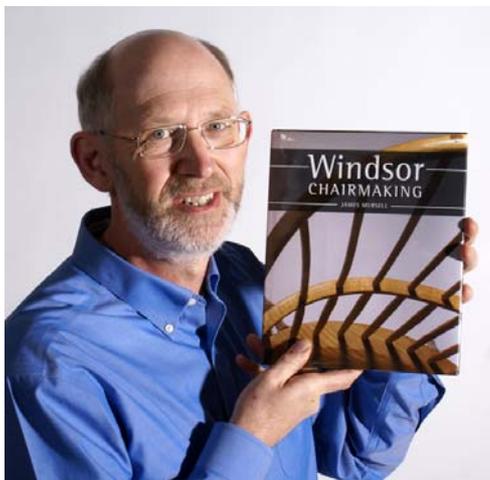
I wish you a very happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous new year. I plan to take ten days off from chair-making and then return reinvigorated in January!!

Windsor Chairmaking

Thank you to all of you that have pre-ordered a copy of my book. My publishers have a delivery date of 18th

December so it will be touch and go to achieve delivery to you by Christmas. I will post ordered copies immediately I have stock and do my best.

Although it is difficult for me to see the book with fresh eyes, having been so intimately involved with it for so long, I am absolutely delighted with the result. Full marks to Crowood Press who have produced it. Those who have seen my single copy have also been impressed. I hope that you will look out for it, and perhaps even purchase a copy! Copies will be sent to all the major magazines for review. But if you have any suggestions for marketing/promotion please let me know.



Price: £19.95 plus £2.75 p&p from: <http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/online-shop/book>

www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk

My website has now been completely rebuilt by a professional. It is a great improvement on my previous site that I built rather amateurishly five or more years ago! Navigation is now much easier and more logical, and a big step forward is the existence of a shop where tools, course deposits and books can be ordered and paid for. It has now been live for two weeks and the interest that it has generated, even from people not on my mailing list, has been terrific. Part of its success is caused by now being No.1 result when Googling 'chairmaking courses'.

I have been at two shows in the past three weeks and the number of times that I have been told about a recent episode of Antiques Road Show has been incredible. One of the experts displayed a Windsor chair that he had recently made on a 5-day course. Hopefully thousands of viewers are now thinking of doing just that! I don't know whose course it was, but it was fantastic publicity for all chairmakers. Sadly it had dropped off BBC i-player when I looked. Great marketing – wish I had thought of doing it.

Anyway please have a look at the new site. It will be gradually updated with new and better photos and I have plans for new tool offerings in the New Year.....

**If you need to have website built or redesigned, check out Mind's Eye Design: www.mindseyedesign.co.uk
I thoroughly recommend the service!**

www.thewindsorworkshop.co.uk

"dedicated to Windsor chairmaking"

Advanced Course: 19 - 23 April 2010



This course is available to anybody who has completed two previous courses. We will make this delightful 19th century English double bow Windsor in elm and ash – the original is made of elm and yew. This is a compact chair that does not take up a lot of space, but its making involves most of the challenges in Windsor chairmaking. The turnings will need to be completed before the course in order to finish the chair in five days. If you do not have the facilities at home I can do this for you.

Please give me a call/email if you would like to know more.

Dates 19th – 23rd April Price £555



An interesting chair!

Over the summer I was asked to make three copies of a fascinating English comb-back armchair. I was given the original to copy, which always makes life easier, and my respect for the chair and its maker grew constantly as I got to know it. Copying chairs is not a straightforward job and I only agree to do it if I really like the chair myself and believe that I will want to make more over time. Usually one finds that the seat has twisted and pieces have been replaced. This makes measuring angles and sight lines more a matter of judgment than science! This chair had had a rear leg and centre stretcher replaced and the two back legs were at quite different angles.



The copy pictured here is made of elm and ash and I have coloured it by fuming it using concentrated nitric acid. So many features of it are unusual:

- It has twelve long spindles – so no central spindle
- The spindles close to the centre are bent forward and the outer spindles are bent back to allow them to join the strongly curved arm to the fairly straight crest.
- The arm posts are not steam bent but are shaped with spokeshaves from the solid. They curve forward over most of their length but straighten up at the top to give a tenon that passes through the arm
- All the short spindles pass through the arm and are wedged – this is most unusual in English chairs.
- The arm is much higher over the seat at the back than the front. This is anathema to the 'rules' of American chairs and is much more extreme than I have previously seen in any other English chair.
- The seat is very deeply excavated and has a satisfyingly rounded mound in the front.
- There is a line scratched all around the top edge of the seat including around the front.

The original's owner, who knows quite a lot about Windsors, suggests that it is from the West Country and dates from around 1780, but I would be most interested to hear any other opinions if you have seen something similar before.

I would love to offer it as a course chair (advanced) but I fear that the number of spindles (20) may be too much.

Writing-arm Chair(s)

Theresa Macnamara came on one of my first courses at West Dean five years ago. She has returned many times since, both to West Dean and to The Windsor Workshop and has been working on a pair of writing arm chairs for the past three years. The first of the pair was completed in October this year and she has written about this journey:



"I was working as an Engineer back in 2004 when I first tried my hand at wood turning, on a course at West Dean. I enjoyed working with my hands on the course since my job, like most jobs nowadays, involved spending many hours at a desktop computer. I was not too keen on the dust created by the dry wood turning and having to wear a mask, so when I saw James' green wood turning course later that year I decided to attend. I was really pleased with the lack of dust and the smell of the green wood as it was being turned. Being the only woman on the course I was at first intimidated since all the men were already experienced and most had their own lathes. However I persisted and worked late in the evenings to catch up and turn legs for a stool.

I went back to West Dean for James' Windsor chair making course in May 2005, and made a single bow chair as well a stool. I was astounded that I actually managed to make a chair that would not collapse when used, since I had had many disasters with putting up shelves etc. Having looked through James' many books that he had brought with him, I found the eighteenth century American Windsor armchairs that had writing paddles and persuaded him to help me make not just one, but two chairs with paddles on left and right sides.



I attended James' workshop in Autumn 2005 and turned all the parts for the two chairs over the four and a half days. The following May I attended James' West Dean course and made a high stool for my granddaughter as well as working on the seats etc. of the Windsor writing arm-chairs. The high stool was so ergonometically comfortable and admired that my daughter asked me to make one for her as well, so in May 2007 I made one for her as well as finishing the comb writing arm Windsor chair – excluding the paddle.

Having retired in early 2007 I was actually less well organised and it was not until this October that I finally put the paddle on the comb writing arm Windsor chair. It is so great being able to rest coffee cups or those elusive remote controls on the paddle that I cannot wait to finish off the second double bow (left-hand) paddle chair. James too was so pleased with the finished comb writing arm chair that I feel sure that he will offer this as a two week course to include a high stool as well, especially if he gets requests from others. I have to make another high stool and finish off my second chair so I hope to attend a course at his workshop in the summer next year."

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Thank you Theresa – not certain that I'll be offering 2-week courses, but I was certainly delighted the way that the writing-arm chair turned out. Do let me know if you are interested in making such a chair and if so I'll devise a suitable course.



New Course Brochure

I have just produced a new brochure for 2010. It follows the format of previous years and contains all the key information about courses, including dates through to June.

You can **download** a copy from: <http://thewindsorworkshop.co.uk/courses-at-the-windsor-workshop/download-a-course-brochure>



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