



CHAIRS

— made by tasmanian bush carpenters
during the 19th and early 20th centuries

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indebted to the many lenders, both private and public, whose co-operation has made this exhibition possible, and we would also like to thank all those who have assisted us with the collection of material and who have advised us on the many aspects of our research programme. In particular: Grace Cochrane, Dr. C. Craig, Rod and Trisha Crocksford, Mr and Mrs R. Gardiner, The Larcombe family, Mr K. Vallance, Mrs M. Vanderfeen, Murray Walker, Mr F. Frampton from the Forestry Commission, Peter Mercer, Lance Cosgrove and Barbara Prettyman from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. The committee and staff from the Deloraine Folk Museum, Van Diemen's Land Folk Museum and Clarendon House.

The following staff and students from the Tasmanian School of Art have assisted us untiringly in the production of this catalogue and exhibition: Margaret Appleton, Bruce Campbell, Robyn Harman, Jon Holmes, Tom Paton, Robyn Stacey, Paul Stutter, Meg Taylor.

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PREFACE

This catalogue is the result of a research project conducted throughout the state over a period of five months and has been produced to coincide with an exhibition of "Chairs made by Bush Carpenters in Tasmania, during the 19th and early 20th Centuries", held at the Tasmanian School of Art Gallery in September, 1978.

As part of our course as fourth year Art Teacher Education students at the Tasmanian School of Art, Mt Nelson, it was proposed that a number of students involve themselves in the presentation of project shows with an emphasis on community activity.

We would like this catalogue and the resulting exhibition to be seen as a small but valuable contribution to research into some early Tasmanians and their singular bequest to Tasmania's heritage.

The requirements of our course have forced us to allocate only a certain portion of our time to this project, which has meant travelling during weekends, holidays and co-ordinating our research during weekly working hours.

At a certain stage our research efforts began to be concentrated in a particular area, due to the fact that a large number of chairs appeared to have survived from the district. In order to make use of our time effectively, we decided to uncover as much information as possible about the Deloraine district, rather than disperse our efforts too thinly around the state.

We view our project as a pilot programme within a field of interest whose boundaries have expanded enormously after each month of research. The kindness, generosity and encouragement shown to us by those who have assisted us in our research has been overwhelming. In fact, due to our interest and enthusiasm which has been generated by the Chairs, their makers and an appreciation for the colourful history of this state, it is our intention to continue researching after the completion of our course.

We would therefore, be most grateful to hear from anyone who might be in a position to confirm or correct information documented so far, and secondly to hear from those who would be happy to contribute further information or suggestions for the co-ordination of further research.

MICHAEL McWILLIAMS MARY DUFOUR

JENNY SHARP ADAM THORP



INTRODUCTION

Chairs - we take them for granted. The advantages of sitting upright and at a certain level are obvious when we take into consideration the purposes for which chairs are made today.

Despite their awkward appearance, many of the chairs presented in this catalogue are surprisingly comfortable. Comfort may not have been a primary consideration of the makers of these chairs, but one can be sure that some very simple advantages were gained through their construction.

Certain tasks are achieved more efficiently with the assistance of a chair. One's dignity is confirmed in a throne-like position. Satisfaction is guaranteed when a person sits for the first time in a chair that he/she has made. A few "bob" can be earned if one can turn one's hand to making chairs. AND - finally - Necessity is the Mother of Invention.

One of the most difficult tasks confronting us during the early stages of our research, was to arrive at a correct term to define the type of chair we sought. As we progressed, a number of terms presented themselves and we used them concurrently as passwords during our great search for chairs. "Cottage, country, bush, amateur, hand-made, primitive, rustic, kitchen and so on..."

No term embraced sufficiently all the characteristics of the chairs, although the term "primitive" most correctly defined the methods and circumstances of their production. As we began to uncover some of the personal histories of the makers and view the chairs in their historical and social context, an interesting development took place. Each of us began to acquire an affection for certain chairs or a particular maker, and as a result of discussions with people from all parts of the state, it became easier for us to visualise the circumstances under which the chairs were made.

The chairs became very much intertwined with the personal histories of their makers; the intentions for which the chairs were made and the makers' immediate environment.

We first became aware of the term, "bush carpenter", one day while on a visit to Deloraine. The term was used to describe one of the chairmakers about whom we were researching at the time. He lacked any formal training in furniture-making and as a carpenter was, for the most part, self-taught, devising his own rules and methods. He may have worked in the timber industry, and acquired skills as a paling and shingle "splitter", as evidenced by the buildings and fences surrounding us at the time. The chairs he made were for personal use.

It was thus that we decided to present this catalogue under the title of *Chairs made by Bush Carpenters*. A number of chairmakers fit into this category, although we have allowed ourselves a little licence, by including under the same title those makers who, as back-yard furniture makers, chose to make chairs for the following reasons:

Chairs for domestic use - products of necessity

Chairs to sell - perhaps to make a few "bob" during the Depression

Chairs made for pleasure - "when the day's work was done".

We were interested in bringing to the attention of the public works which we saw as fulfilling some immediate practical, personal or creative need and which highlight the ingenuity and self-sufficiency of early Tasmanians.

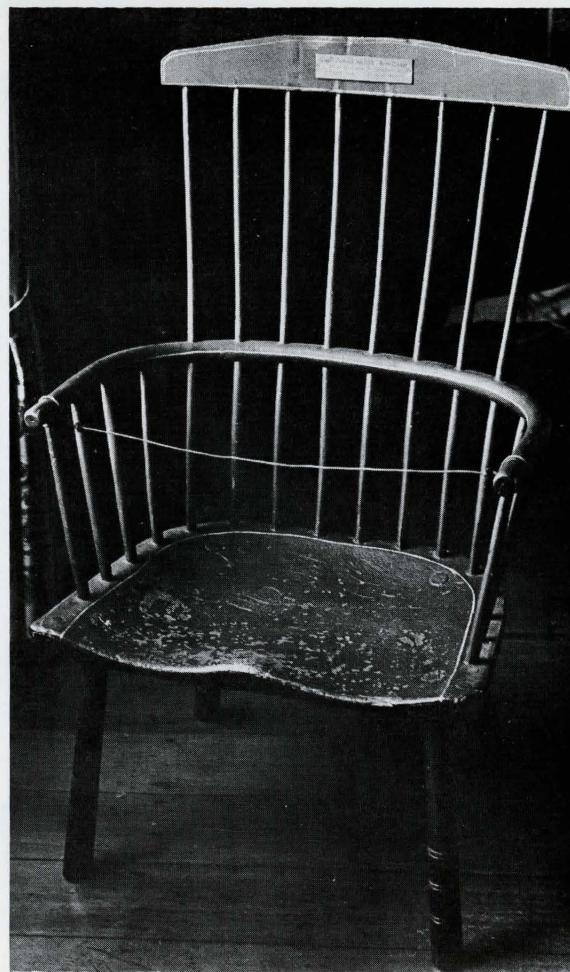
Some criteria had to be established for the selection of chairs - a few pieces of wood haphazardly nailed together, for instance, will always serve as something to sit on, but in almost all cases, a chair will have been chosen for some expressive quality which reflects the nature of its production. It may also be some feature which the maker has chosen to incorporate - some unusual use of available materials or tools - a style developed by some maker, or some interesting adaptation of traditional features which indicates the maker's familiarity with European designs. Collectively,

the chairs suggest some common characteristics: They are essentially one-off pieces, often crudely wrought, generally independent of most traditional designs, and originating in rural rather than urban areas. The maker's approach is unpretentious, the style unsophisticated and any innovations may be the result of circumstance rather than formal training.

Some of the chairs are simply utilitarian; they make no claims to be anything more than practical furniture. A small group of chairs, however, may appear conspicuously more refined (pages 21 - 24) and correspond in design to their European forebears, but they are nevertheless primitive in their crude adaptation of designs such as English Sheraton (pages 21 - 22). One of the innovations of Sheraton furniture design was the square-back chair with vertical back-stays, often decorated with vase, leaf or drapery motifs. Forsaking the decorative elements, these Tasmanian chairmakers have captured, whether consciously or not, the essential lines of the Sheraton square-back chair.

Another small group are copies of designs, popular in England during the late 19th century and have been included for their interesting use of available materials. The Victorians' penchant for the picturesque manifested itself in "rustic" furniture, in which the actual materials of Nature were used. "Washed" wood (driftwood), roots, curved stems and branches, even animal horn and antlers were all used to achieve this "naturalistic" effect.

We have not rejected chairs (from the catalogue or exhibition) which have been repaired or restored, for in many cases, these chairs are owned by people who regard them with real affection and who have taken the trouble to research their origins and to restore them as faithfully as possible; with the exception that, originally, many chairs were painted, which was common practice at the beginning of this century.



ENGLISH WINDSOR CHAIR

Painted

112; 69; 44

This chair belonged to Captain James Kelly, (1791 - 1859) Tasmanian seafarer and explorer.
Collection - Van Diemen's Land Museum, Hobart

The dating of chairs has been a difficult task, although most chairs included in this catalogue will have been produced during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chairs of a very primitive nature produced during the early part of the 19th century do not seem to have lasted the distance; it is only the more robust or the more refined models which survive from this period.

The major part of our documentation has been concerned with chairs, but we include a collection of forms and stools which both complement and have a direct relationship with the chairs, having been made under similar circumstances and by similar means. The construction of stools and forms in this manner (see pages 31, 36) has occurred for many centuries. The simple milking stool is a good example of the type of construction from which the stick-back chair has developed.

The district from whence a considerable amount of such furniture survives is Deloraine and its surrounding settlements. The most renowned chairmaker from this area was nicknamed Jimmy Possum and he is believed to have worked around the turn of the century. He is reputed to have made chairs in great quantity which he peddled around the district, although, due to the lack of any distinguishing mark, it is difficult to attribute any chairs made in the Jimmy Possum style to their namesake. Thus the name has become used to denote a style.

During the course of our research we located approximately 60 chairs constructed in the Jimmy Possum style and undoubtedly many more exist within the state. It is estimated by one dealer that as many as 200 to 300 have passed interstate, although some of these have been acquired by Tasmanians and have thus returned to Tasmania.

The large quantity made, the sturdiness of their construction and their early discovery by collectors and dealers with an appreciation for their charm and potential market value, certainly accounts for their survival today. It is reputed that many of these chairs were being used by their original owners and families in the Deloraine district as late as the 1950's and 60's. Today these chairs are less likely to be located in the area of their origin for obvious reasons.

Similarities are often drawn between the Jimmy Possum stick-back chair and the English and American Windsor chairs. It is perhaps safer to say that the primitive ancestors of the English chair may have been constructed in this way. One of the earliest types of English Windsor, usually referred to as the Comb back, most closely resembles the Jimmy Possum, but the similarity exists only in the back construction, while the remaining sections are handled quite differently (page 4). The "bodgers" who first made the English Windsor, like the "bush carpenters", devised their own tools and methods and made use of woods in the immediate environment.

It is important to mention that a number of other residents from the Deloraine district turned their hand to chairmaking - either copying the familiar Jimmy Possum style or adapting it in some way. These people came from Deloraine, Reedy Marsh, Meander, Jacky's Marsh and as far north as Nienna and Spreyton, and are mentioned in the section on "Bush Carpenters" or amongst the collection of photographs.

Naturally enough, the timber industry in the district played its part in the production of these chairs, having provided work for many residents as far back as the 1850's and 60's. Both the heavy rainfall and the fertile soil have ensured abundant vegetation. Eucalypts, mainly stringy bark and white gum, acacias and silver wattle and the enduring black-

wood all grow in the area. The eucalypts and blackwood were used predominately for the production of chairs. In the early days, little capital was required to start a "bush" farm. One hundred acres could be bought from the Crown on easy terms and many a family cleared their own land for crops. In such an environment a man needed a good set of tools and the adze used for many jobs, would no doubt have been used to trim the slab seat of the Jimmy Possum chair.

Not all "bush carpenters" and back-yard furniture makers were confined to the Deloraine area. Many chairs included in this catalogue were made in other parts of the state. Those people defined as back-yard furniture makers are included for specific reasons. The differences between the "bush carpenter" and the back-yard furniture maker are the latter's interesting use of available materials and his motivation for making chairs. Often living in less isolated areas, he had greater access to materials which can best be termed as "odds and ends" and shows himself to be a great "recycler". He makes use of old packing cases, broken furniture, the fruit tree at the bottom of the garden and woods washed up on the beach. He incorporates as structural features the natural curves and forks of branches, and this is demonstrated in several ways:- a triple-forked branch used as legs for a stool (page 38); a split branch used for the arms and front legs of a chair (page 27); the curved branch to form a back rail (page 19); and the use of stems and branches as decorative features (page 29). The back-yard furniture maker is at times the Heath Robinson of chairmakers, using old car seats as upholstery, extravagant joints and finials to give a flourish of elegance (see page 28).

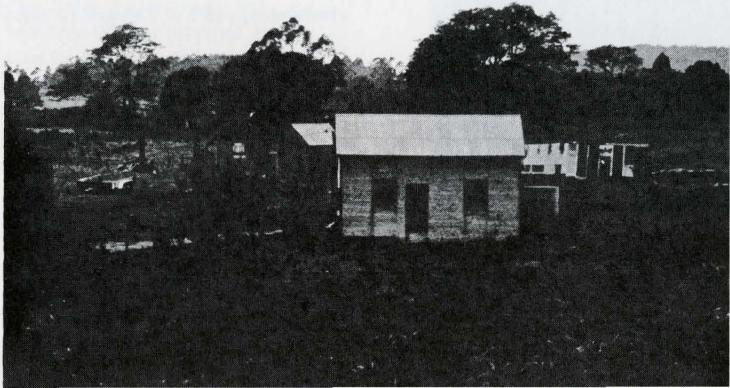
On the other hand there are those with some form of training and a little time on their hands, who desire to create a chair with some semblance of elegance, reminiscent of traditional design (see page 23) and the woods they favour are cedar and blackwood for its strength and grain. The back-yard furniture maker fits best under the category of "making for pleasure" and the pieces he made were much less likely to end up as firewood.

Many of the chairs, whether made by the "bush carpenter" or back-yard furniture makers, survive to remind us of the temporary death of the great art of "making-do". As communications and the individual's means improved, these products of circumstances, considered as a stop-gap in hard times, gave way to the acquisition of "acceptable" or more refined household items. With the introduction of mass-produced furniture to Australia in the late 19th century from such places as America, and with the foundation of firms like the Melbourne Chair Company in 1894, the home-made models were relegated to sheds and shacks; used as stiles, chopping blocks, saw benches, chicken roosts or simply tossed on the fire. There was, of course, a revival in home-made furniture making during the 1st World War and with the advent of the Great Depression, since people were once again forced into a situation of having to "make-do".

Today, we can view these chairs as beautiful things in themselves, but must remember that they were often produced in times of need and geographical isolation. The value placed upon them by their makers was of a different kind, for they probably never dreamt that their chairs would survive as a significant record of some of the more challenging years in Tasmania's history.



ABOVE: George Larcombe



LEFT: Michael Cook's house at Nietta, south of Ulverstone.

ABOVE LEFT: William Larcombe's house at Reedy Marsh, near Deloraine.

BUSH CARPENTERS AND OTHERS

JIMMY POSSUM

The story of Jimmy Possum has, with the passage of years acquired legendary characteristics. As is so often the case with information passed down by word of mouth, each succeeding account is embellished until a rich legend obscures both the historical figure and the facts of his life.

After considerable research, the identity of Jimmy Possum remains an enigma. Although often talked about and referred to, he persists as a shadowy figure; his name, age and background as yet unconfirmed.

The verbal accounts gathered during our research have differed considerably. For the purposes of this project however, all material has been included. Until more extensive research is carried out, this information cannot be regarded as fact, but illustrates how the story of Jimmy Possum has assumed legendary status.

'Jimmy Possum' (James Duckie?, Hampton?, Durham?) is described as an old man with a long white beard living in the Deloraine district during the 1890's until about 1910. The Scott property, Deloraine; 'Entally', Hadspen; Chudleigh and Mole Creek have all been suggested as places where he may have lived. His dwelling was made of (or joined to) a hollow tree or log, and it is here that he made the chairs (often painted green or grey) for 2/6. He is reputed to have made and sold other items such as stools and clothes pegs.

A simple but sturdy construction, the Jimmy Possum chair was most frequently made of hardwood or blackwood. It differs from the English and American Windsor chair in that no part was turned, presumably because Jimmy Possum lacked any but the simplest machinery. The fact that his chairs endure without stretchers also indicates that the lack of sophisticated tools was overcome by sturdy and reliable construction methods. The seat, a split slab of wood, is the unifying feature of the chair. The seat was roughly trimmed with an axe or adze, and any further shaping to the top of

the seat may have been done with a drawknife or crude plane. The underside of the seat in most cases remained roughly hewn. A carpenter's auger, or a brace with a suitable bit, may have been used to bore the holes for the spindles and leg inserts. However, Jimmy Possum is reputed to have used a burning iron for this purpose.

The most significant feature of the Jimmy Possum chair is the construction of the legs and arms. The four legs tapering from the base protrude through the slab seat to support the arm rests. The upper legs needed to be tapered equally, and at the same height, to ensure that the seat was not lop-sided. For additional strength, the forelegs and arms were often secured with wooden pegs and less frequently with wooden wedges. The two outside back spindles protrude through the arm rests, and were usually secured to the top rail with wooden pegs. The central back spindle was similarly pegged. To round off the five back spindles, arms and legs, Jimmy Possum may have used his penknife, although a number of tools may have been used for this purpose.

It is said Jimmy Possum earned his nickname because he lived in a hollow tree. Another interpretation is, that after a night 'on the town' (Deloraine), he would return home a little inebriated, and to rid himself of the effects would sleep the remainder of the night in a tree.

Yet another account suggests that Jimmy Possum may never have existed. The story is that a passer by in the Deloraine area, noticing an unusual chair deteriorating under an old tree, asked the owner if he would be willing to sell the chair. The owner replied, "No! It's Jimmys; he eats off it." On being asked who Jimmy might be, the owner replied, "He's a possum who lives in the tree above who comes down at night and eats his food from the chair."

Although the true identity of this Tasmanian chairmaker remains a mystery, the name, 'Jimmy Possum' survives to denote a style of chair - ingeniously constructed and of handsome proportions.

WILLIAM LARCOMBE AND FAMILY

If one were to place a Jimmy Possum chair and a Larcombe chair side by side, one would have some degree of difficulty discerning the difference between the two. They are very similar in their basic shape and design, are constructed along similar lines, and are made out of basically the same woods - an indication of the most widely available timbers in the Deloraine area.

William Larcombe was born at Evandale in 1862 and spent the earlier part of his life there with his family until, in the 1880's, they moved to the Deloraine area to pioneer and settle a small property several miles out of the town.

The family gradually dispersed, and William and his younger brother Samuel, both bachelors, managed to farm on their own for several years. Keith, a third generation Larcombe (William's nephew) now looks after the farm. Many of the sheds and farm buildings surrounding the near century old weatherboard cottage were constructed by William and are still standing today. Besides building the farm sheds, William made a number of chairs and other items of furniture for domestic use.

Another of William's brothers, George, also made himself a chair of similar design, but utilized slats instead of spindles for the back supports. Roy Larcombe, (Keith's brother) who died recently, constructed a rocker along similar lines and is reputed to have produced a number of chairs for the family during the Depression.

Although William spent most of his time working the farm with his brother, he was a keen breeder of racehorses. He is remembered as a sturdy, solid looking man, with a fine head of dark hair, good strong teeth, and never seen without his pipe. He died suddenly in one of his chairs in front of the fire in the early 1920's.

MICHAEL COOK

Michael Cook was born on a farm in Deloraine during the 1860's. His parents had emigrated from Ireland and he had five brothers and three sisters.

Around the turn of the century, in partnership with his brother Jim and a Mr. Mick Donovan, he acquired some land in Lucke's Road, Nietta, south of Ulverstone, which they cleared together. Michael and his brother shared a house together on the property until the partnership was dissolved. Michael then lived on his own in a smaller house on the same property. The brothers grew potatoes as was the custom in that area at the time and Michael did a bit of pale-splitting for extra income.

His brother Jim died in 1930 and three years later Michael, at the age of 75, went to live in Ulverstone with his sister Nellie, until his death in 1946.

It is believed that the chairs were made between the years of 1900 and 1933 while Michael was living at Nietta. The construction of the chairs is similar to that of Jimmy Possum, and it may be that Michael had seen some examples of the Jimmy Possum chair while living in Deloraine.

However, it can be observed that both the finish and construction of his chairs is more refined. For example, the back spindles have been carefully worked so that they appear as if machine-turned, and the back rail and arm rest have been methodically rounded off.

His workmanship was obviously admired, for while living in Nietta, he was able to sell two of his chairs for 2 pound a piece and a couple of stubs of tobacco, to a Mr. Young who was the local storekeeper. The two chairs were later sold by Mr. Young and Michael took another two with him to his sister's house in Ulverstone which were sold after his death in 1947.

His chairs were made for personal use and he most likely produced no more than four or five in his lifetime. Michael's niece, Mrs. Vanderfeen from Ulverstone who knew him during his last years, recalls that he was a "lovable little man whom everybody liked." He was very active for his age and found great pleasure in gardening and growing vegetables for his sister Nell.

OTHERS

Many chairs and stools presented in this catalogue are reputed to have been made or found in the Deloraine/Westbury districts. We were fortunate to be able to record the names of some of the makers of these chairs, if only to demonstrate that apart from the enigmatic "Jimmy Possum", others were also producing a variety of chairs.

Amongst these, is the 'rustic' chair made by Mr. Sydney Higgs from Western Creek and the 'stick' back chair made by a gentleman, nick-named "Jimmy the Bushranger" from Jackey's Marsh. A Mr. McMahon and a Mr. George Upston from Deloraine are reputed also to have made chairs, but are not represented in this catalogue. The chairs made by Mr. Upston are reputed to have been 'stick' back chairs, without arms and with a broad, flat back rail, and were destroyed in a house fire. Mr. McMahon made several chairs, one of which is believed to resemble the chair pictured on page 16.

The only women recorded during the course of our research, are Mrs. Alfred Amos of Cranbrook and Miss Elvie Gatenby of Longford, who both made use of old packing cases for the construction of their respective stools.

Around the turn of the century, it was not uncommon for women to make simple furniture and other items from recyclable materials during their spare hours.



STICK BACK CHAIR *
Blackwood - Hardwood Seat
108; 65; 50

A very solid Jimmy Possum style chair. The legs protrude through the slab seat to support the arms and are secured with wooden wedges.
Private Collection



PAIR OF STICK BACK CHAIRS *

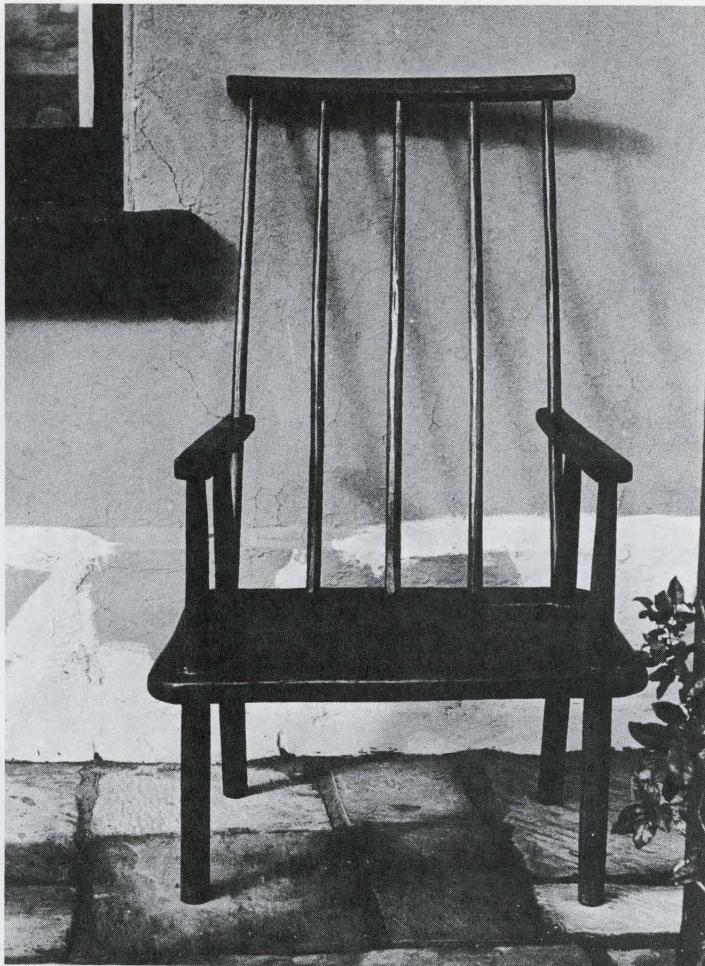
Blackwood - Hardwood
Left: 107; 62; 42
Right: 111; 63; 39

Reputed to have been made by Jimmy Possum, these chairs best exemplify the features and methods of construction used by a number of chairmakers in the Deloraine/Westbury district, during the late 19c and early 20c.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR
Hardwood
88.5; 59; 54

A chair from the Deloraine district; with flat back rail and rounded arm rests.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR
Hardwood - Blackwood
113; 69; 63.5
Origin - Westbury/Deloraine
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR *
Blackwood - Hardwood Seat
88; 57; 54

Another chair from the Deloraine district - with
curved arm rests.
Private Collection



SLAT BACK CHAIR *
Blackwood
95; 59.5; 68
Made by George Larcombe of Deloraine, after 1900.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR

Blackwood - Hardwood (painted)
109; 61; 60

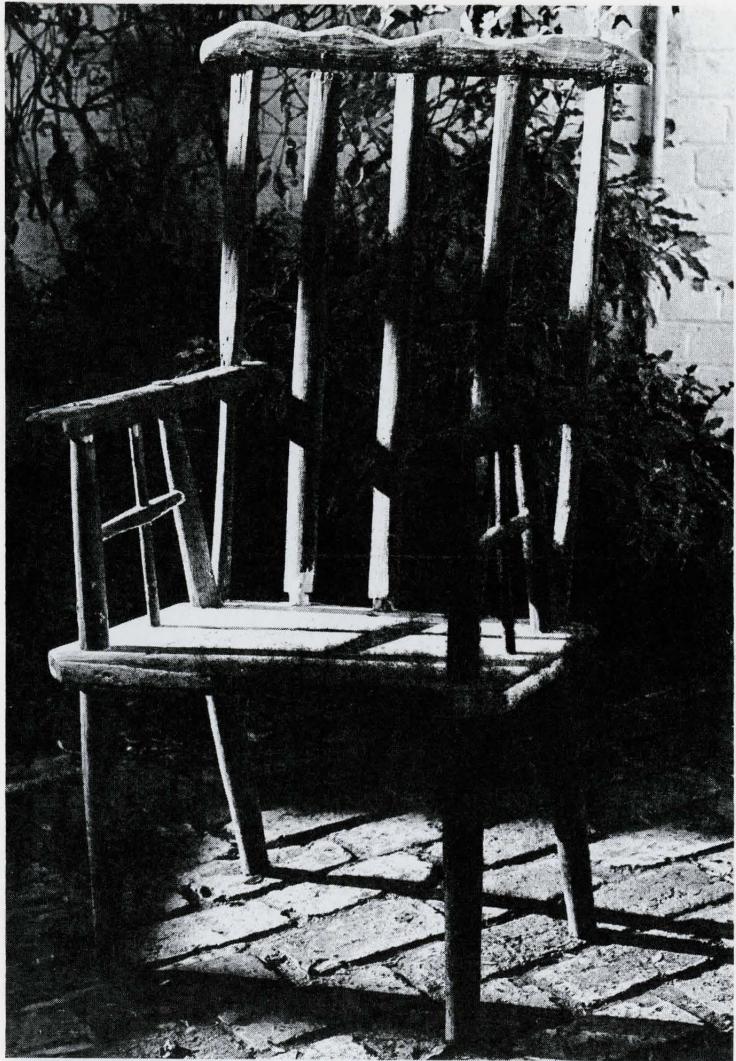
Made by William Larcombe of Deloraine - C. 1900.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR

Blackwood - Hardwood (painted)
92; 59; 58

Made by William Larcombe of Deloraine - C. 1900.
Private Collection



SLAT BACK CHAIR *

Blackwood

107; 58; 54

A decorative example; this chair originally found on a Spreyton farm. incorporates window frame arm supports.



SLAT BACK CHAIR *

Blackwood (bleached)

103; 62; 38

Found in the Deloraine district.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR *

Blackwood
115; 67; 45

Reputedly made by a man, nick-named "Jimmy the Bushranger" from Jackey's Marsh, near Meander.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR

Blackwood
124; 66.5; 68

Made by Michael Cook of Nietta, south of Ulverstone, between 1900 and 1930.
Private Collection



SLAT BACK CHAIR *

Blackwood
105; 57; 56

This chair with gently curved arms and moustache shaped back rail, comes from the Deloraine/Westbury area.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR

Blackwood, Pine and Myrtle
Recycled factory made base.
122; 63.5; 51.5

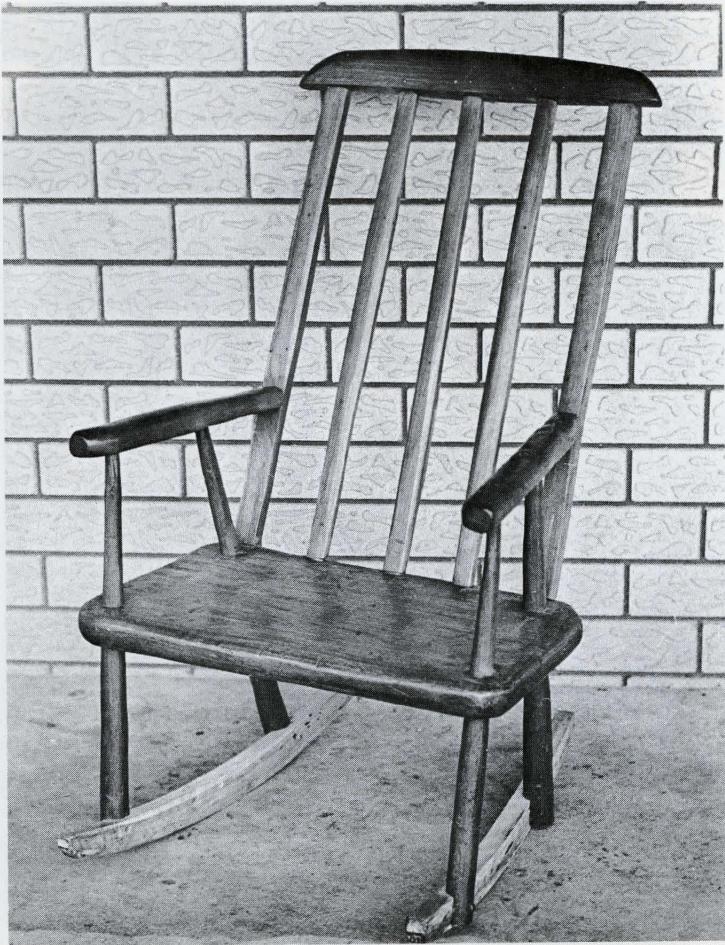
Method of construction suggests a nursing chair (note differing height of arms), but is reputed to have been made at Gunn's Plains for a physically disabled man.
Private Collection



STICK BACK CHAIR *

Hardwood
97; 53; 32

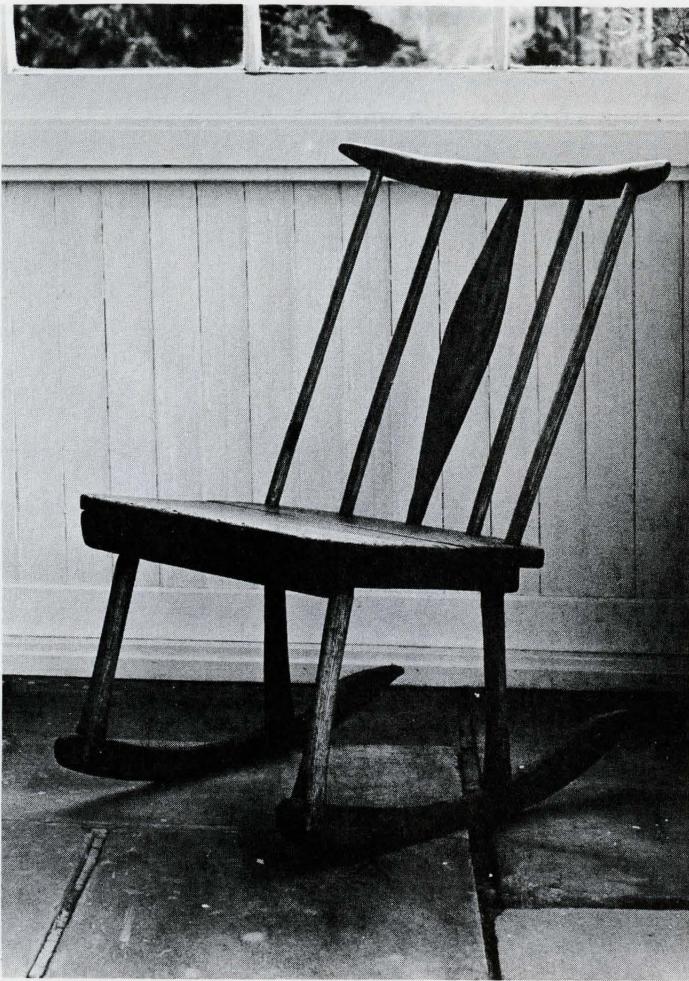
From the Deloraine district, this chair is a more refined example.
Collection - Deloraine Folk Museum



ROCKING CHAIR

Blackwood
96; 60; 77

Made by Roy Larcombe during the first half of this century. A simple arm chair which Roy adapted as a rocker in later years.
Private Collection



ROCKING CHAIR *
Cider Gum - Cedar seat
89; 53; 71

Made at the Steppes, north of Bothwell, in 1865 by a trooper
serving under Mr. Wilson, superintendent of the district.
Private Collection



ROCKING CHAIR
Hardwood, Blackwood and Myrtle
93; 52; 70.5
Burnie - C. 1900
Collection - The Plough Inn, Stanley



STICK BACK CHAIR

Painted

78; 68.5; 40

The bow back is shaped from a naturally curved piece of wood

and was found at St. Marys.

Private Collection

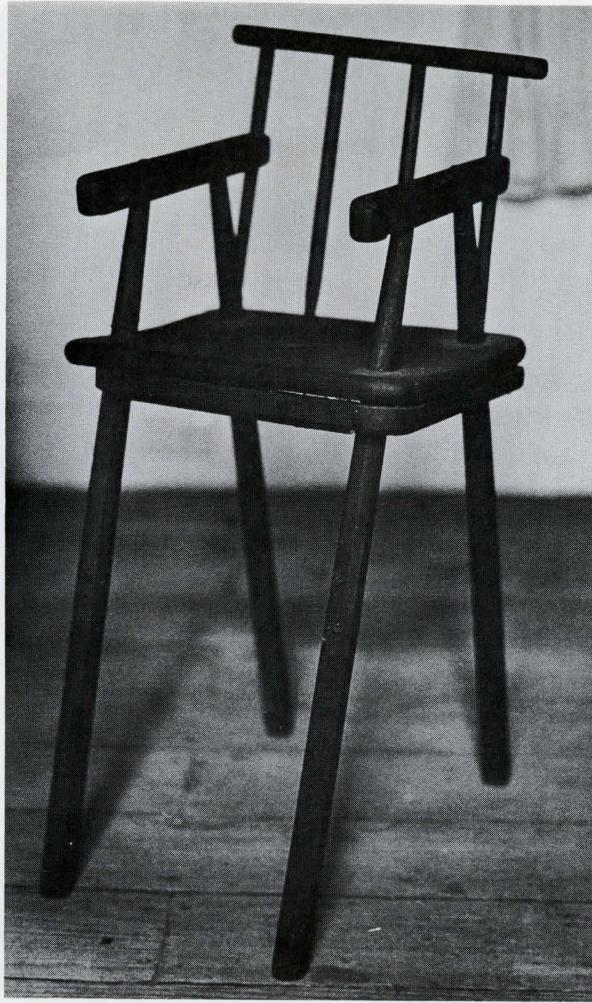


FOLDING DOLL'S CHAIR

Hardwood (painted)

50; 21; 35

Private Collection

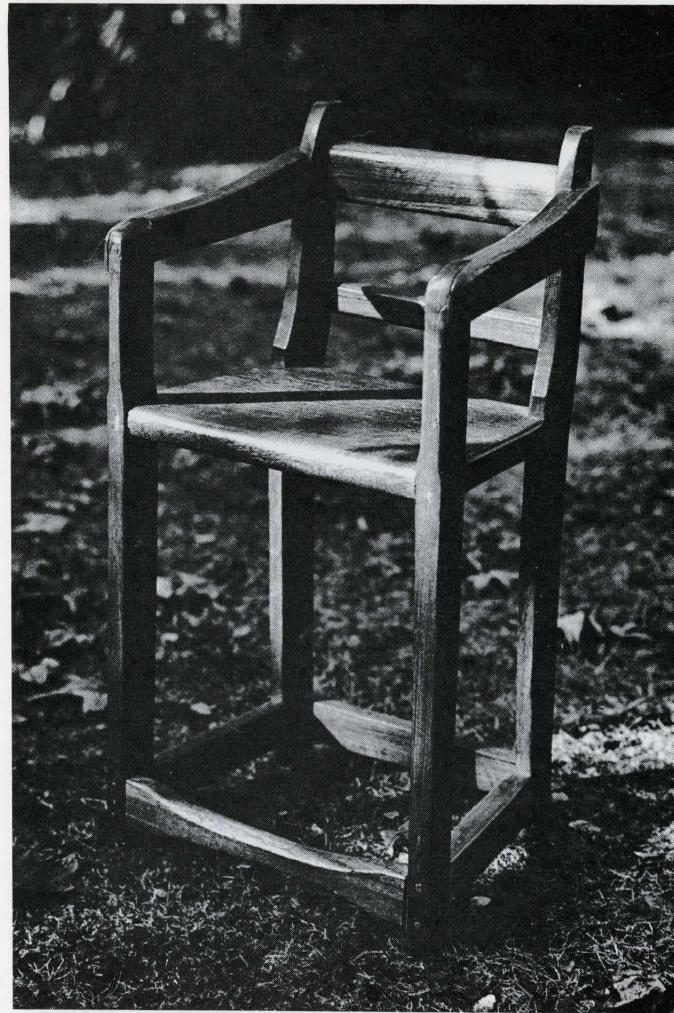


STICK BACK HIGH CHAIR *

Blackwood - Hardwood
77; 35; 30

Found in the Deloraine district. Dowels secured with wooden wedges.

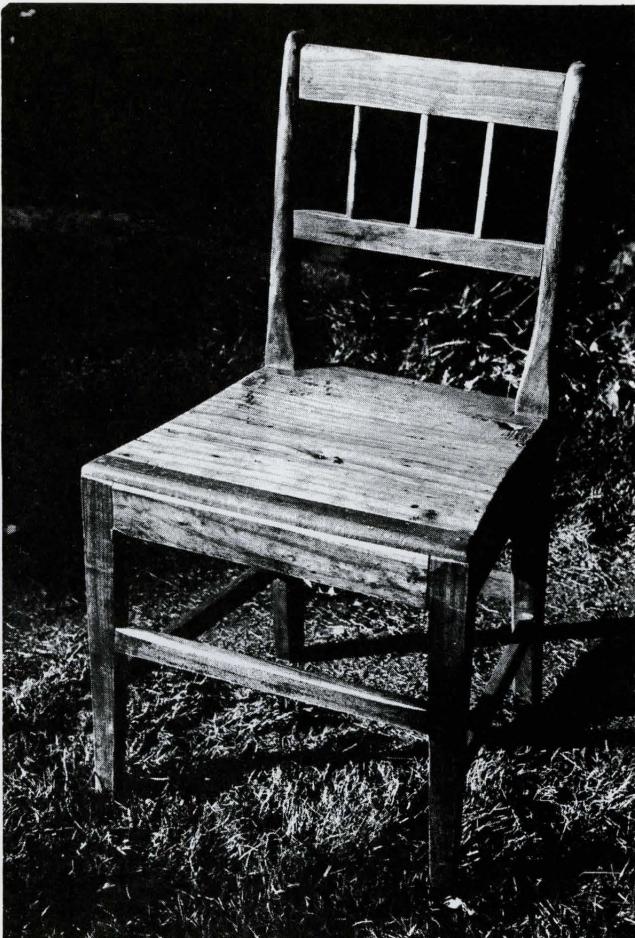
Collection - Deloraine Folk Museum



CHILD'S HIGH CHAIR *

Blackwood - Hardwood
72.5; 39; 31

Found in the Launceston area.
Private Collection



ARMCHAIR AND DINING CHAIR (1 of 3)

Blackwood

Armchair: 86; 54; 49

Dining Chair: 88; 48; 49

**Early 19th Century
Private Collection**



COMMODE
Blackwood
82.5; 63; 50
Private Collection



SQUARE BACK CHAIR *
Cedar
81; 44.5; 42
Early 19th Century
Private Collection

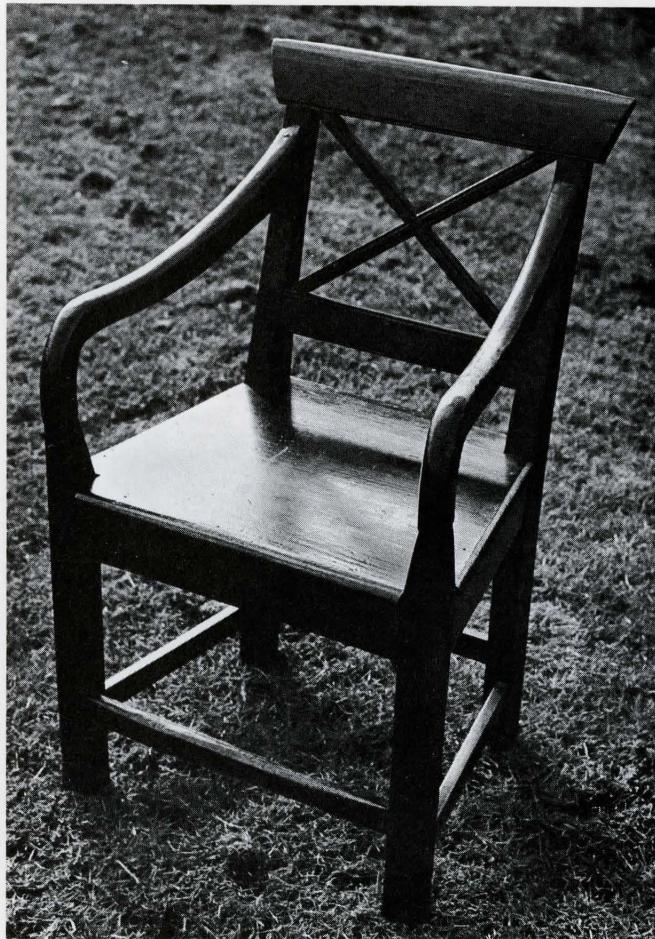


CROSS BACK CHAIR *

Cedar

81;46;40

Possibly made in Hobart - 19th Century
Private Collection



CROSS BACK ARMCHAIR *

Mixed Woods - predominately Blackwood

Private Collection



ARMCHAIR *

Blackwood, Hardwood; seat made of pine (old packing cases).
86; 57; 49

All joints pegged.

Collection - Van Diemen's Land Museum, Hobart



BLACKWOOD ARMCHAIR *

76; 48.5; 44.5

Found on Maria Island - C. 1830

All joints pegged.

Private Collection



SLAB-CONSTRUCTED ARMCHAIR

Blackwood, Myrtle and Hardwood

99.5; 66; 59

Longford district - C. 1900

Referred to as the 'Lennie Longford' chair.

Private Collection



CEDAR ARMCHAIR

88; 51.5; 54

Found in the Hamilton area.

Private Collection



STICK BACK ARMCHAIR

Blackwood (painted)

85; 60; 47.5

Found in a Launceston frock shop! The seat has a serpentine front. The maker has attempted to incorporate some of the features of the Windsor Chair e.g. splayed legs mortised into a slab seat.

Private Collection



ARMCHAIR (painted)

80; 54; 47

Made in the Longford district.

Private Collection



SETTEE *

Pine

80; 189; 39.5

Early 20th Century

Found in the Mt. Seymour area.

Private Collection



ARMCHAIR *

Hardwood

91.5; 58; 46.5

Found in the Launceston area.

This unusual armchair incorporates two interesting features:
A single curved branch (split in half) functions as both arm
and front leg, on each side.

Acorn finials.

Collection - Clarendon, Nile.



THREE ARMCHAIRS AND SINGLE CHAIR*

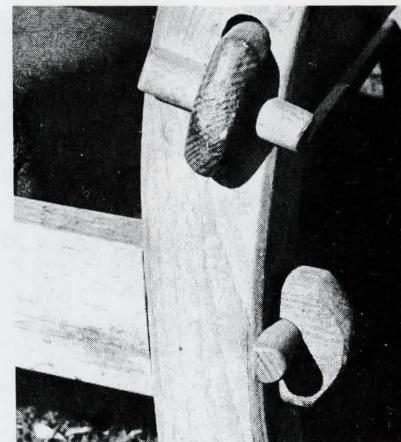
Mixed woods and Pine (old packing cases)

Armchairs: (average size) 108; 69; 69

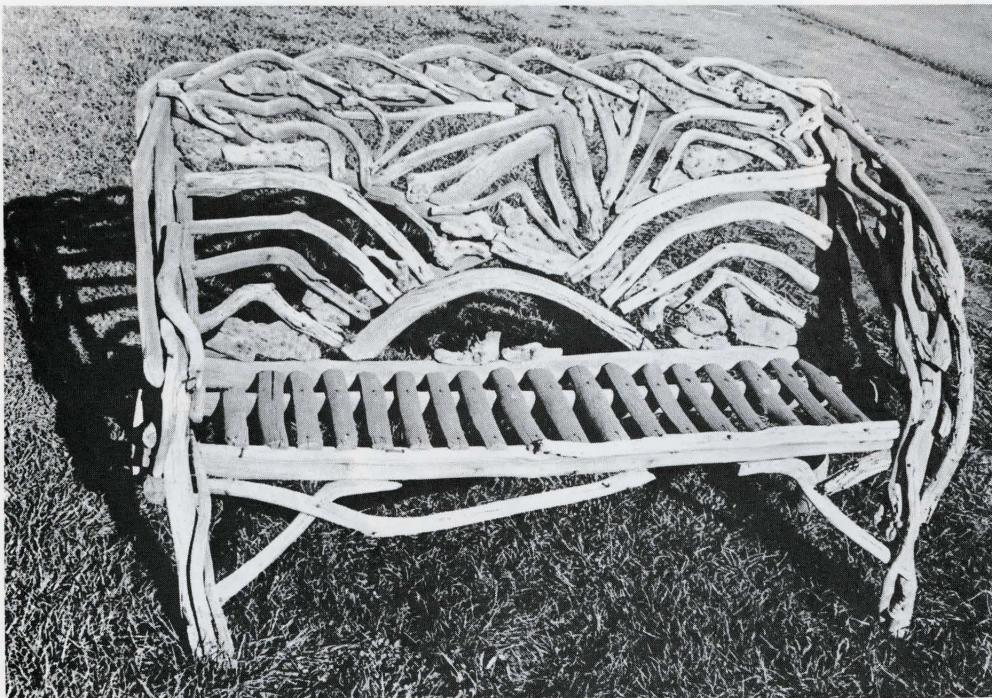
Single Chair: 86; 44; 43

Found in the Launceston area. The same chairmaker (see armchair on previous page) made this group of chairs. The construction is much sturdier and old car seats were used for upholstery.

Private Collection



DETAIL: Joint



RUSTIC GARDEN SEAT *

87; 143; 71

Early 20th Century. Reputedly made by a man at Westbury. This type of furniture, utilising natural forms, was popular in England during the late 19th century - but carries on from similar designs illustrated in 18th century furniture guides. e.g. Chippendale, Manwaring.

Private Collection



RUSTIC ARMCHAIR

89; 68.5; 60

Early 20th Century. Made by Sydney Higgs of Western Creek, near Deloraine. Parts missing.
Private Collection



UPHOLSTERED ARMCHAIR

Cattlehorns

79; 58; 64

Circular Head - C. 1900

Made by a Mr. Wainwright in collaboration with Coogan's Furniture store. This type of construction, utilising cow horns or deer antlers, occurred in both Britain and the U.S.A. during the 19 century and early 20th century

Collection - The Discovery Centre, Stanley



MINER'S CHAIR *

Hardwood

From the West Coast - C. 1930

Private Collection

Forms Stools



FORM AND MILKING STOOL

Blackwood

Form: 44.5; 132; 27

Stool: 33; 33.5; 14.5

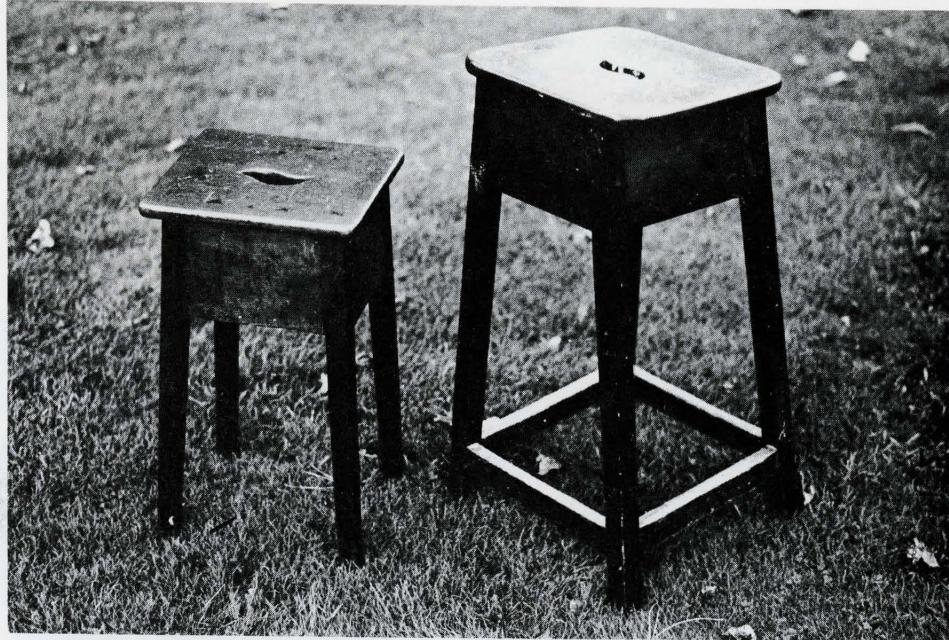
Private Collection



STOOL WITH STRETCHERS *

Blackwood - Hardwood
48.5; 32.5; 33

A cobber's stool found at Lilydale.
Private Collection



PAIR OF CEDAR STOOLS *

Left: 55.5; 30.5; 26
Right: 73; 30; 37

The large stool was made on the Brickendon property,
Longford - the land being granted to William Archer
in 1824.
Private Collection



STOOL *
19; 50; 18.5

Bilge board (from a boat) may have been used for the seat. The surface of the seat is holed and grooved.
Private Collection



STOOL *
Blackwood - Hardwood
59; 50; 51

This stool which originally had a leather top, came from a saddler's store in Launceston.
Private Collection



STOOL *
53.5; 23.5; 22.5

Made from packing cases by Miss Elvie Gatenby of
Longford - C. 1910.
Private Collection



PINE STOOL
Made of old packing cases by Mrs. Alfred Amos of Cranbrook -
C. 1910
Private Collection



HUON PINE FORM

19; 141; 32

Found at Biralee, near Deloraine.
Private Collection



BLACKWOOD STOOL

47.5; 47.5; 30.5

Found on a Spreyton farm.
Private Collection



MILKING STOOL

Hardwood

27.5; 31.5; 17

Found in a paddock at Deloraine.

Private Collection



BLACKWOOD STOOL

36; 69; 19

Found in the Deloraine district.

Private Collection



BLACKWOOD STOOL

20.5; 25.5; 20.5

Private Collection



FORM AND STOOLS

Hardwood

From Bream Creek, Copping.

Private Collection



STOOLS *

Large: Blackwood - 50; 75; 28

Small: Fiddleback Blackwood - 18; 27; 18.5

Private Collection



HARDWOOD STOOL

51; 22; 11

The maker has used a triple forked branch for the legs.

Collection - Clarendon, Nile



PAIR OF STOOLS

Hardwood (painted)

Average size of Stools: 51; 47; 32

Made on the Brickendon property at Longford.

Private Collection



STOOL*

23.5; 47.5; 32

From the Deloraine district; reputedly made by a member of the Larcombe family.

Private Collection



STOOL OR SMALL TABLE

Fruitwood - Hardwood

From the Scottsdale area, the maker has used a triple forked branch from an apple tree.
Private Collection



HARDWOOD BENCH

54; 120; 55

Found at Rokeby House, Rokeby.
Collection - Van Diemen's Land Museum, Hobart



STOOL *
Hardwood
62; 75; 34

Legs reinforced with wooden wedges.
Private Collection



MILKING STOOL *
Hardwood
28; 30.5; 10
Found at Runnymede and made after 1915.
Private Collection



FORM *
Hardwood
40; 152.5; 40
Private Collection



STOOL *
Hardwood and Kangaroo Skin
25.5; 80; 21.5
Found at the 'Cut' north of Swansea.
Made sometime between 1830 - 1890.
Private Collection

GLOSSARY OF TERMS: Woods, Tools and Methods of Construction

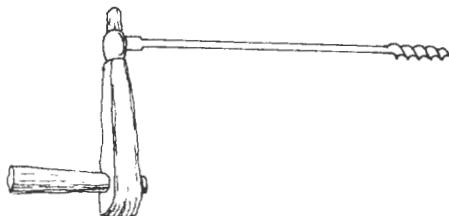
With one exception, all the chairs included in this catalogue are made of wood. In some instances the identification of woods has been extremely difficult. We therefore include here, descriptions of woods which may have been used over the years for the production of chairs; either for their particular qualities or because of their geographical location. Similarly, we list a number of terms related to particular methods of construction and include a number of tools which are likely to have been used by the chairmakers for specific tasks.

ADZE: A tool similar to an axe, but characterized by having its curved, dished blade set at right angles to its handle. It is used for shaping and smoothing heavy timbers. It is swung towards the user's legs.



ANNUAL RINGS: One of the yearly growth rings on a cross section of a tree.

AUGER: An auger is properly a complete tool in itself, with a transversely fitted handle used for boring holes in wood. However the word auger is sometimes used to mean an 'auger bit' which is something used in a 'bit brace'.



AUGER BIT: The auger bit is the bit most commonly used by wood-workers to drill holes. It is used in a brace and is made in a variety of sizes.

AXE: An instrument with a bladed head on a handle used for hewing, cleaving and chopping.

BACK STAYS: These are the outside uprights of a chair which support the top rail (or comb).

BILLET: Short timbers, hewn, split or in the round. Also used to mean a roughly shaped chair leg before it is turned or shaped.

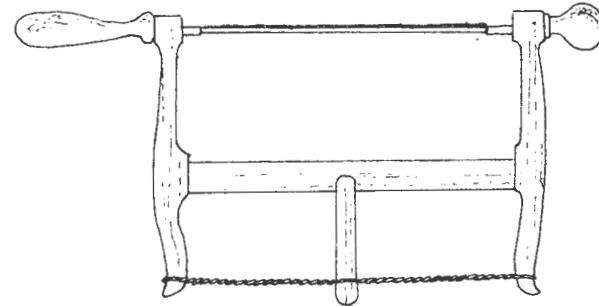
BIRD'S EYE: Figure on the sawn surface of timber exhibiting numerous rounded areas resembling small eyes, caused by small depressions of fibres. Huon Pine is an excellent example.

BIT: A bit is that part of a drill or bit brace that actually penetrates the wood. It cannot be used on its own; it always needs a drill or bit brace to turn it.

BLACKWOOD: (Acacia Melanoxyton) This handsome tree is widely distributed throughout Tasmania, especially in the slopes of the North West and Western coasts and extends into rich alluvial valleys. Blackwood is golden to dark brown in colour, usually straight grained, but occasionally yielding beautiful fiddle back figures. The wood is strong, dense, close-grained and heavy, and the texture is excellent. It is easy to work and used for bending, cabinet work, carving, furniture, parquetry and turning. Other varieties include fiddle pattern and bird's eye blackwood.

BLUE GUM: See Eucalyptus.

BOW SAW: A saw for cutting curved shapes with a narrow blade which is kept taut by a twisted string tightening the framework.



BRACE: The brace, also known as the bit brace, is basically a crank for holding and turning the various bits for boring holes.

CEDAR: (Cedrela Toola) The cedar is not native to Tasmania, but is imported from New South Wales. This variety, although not scientifically a true cedar, is commonly referred to as red cedar.

RED CEDAR: It is a specialty timber of rich reddish brown colour, which is easy to work. It is frequently used in cabinet work because of its light weight, even grain and durability.

CELERY TOP PINE: (Phyllocladus Aspleniifolius) This tree only grows in Tasmania. The timber is exceptionally durable, is pale white in colour, straight grained with fairly distinct growth rings.

CHAIR: A seat with a back and legs or other support, often with arms and usually for one person.

CHISEL: A chisel is simply a metal blade with a handle (usually of wood), with the cutting edge at the end of the blade. It is used to trim and shape wood. (see Mallet)

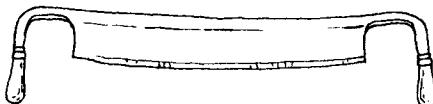
COMB: The straight top rail of an 18C Windsor chair into which the sticks are closeted - also called the cresting rail.

COMMODE: A piece of furniture containing drawers or shelves; a stand or cupboard containing a chamber pot or washbasin.

DOWEL: A wooden pin, usually round, often used in various kinds of joints, or in place of a mortice and tenon joint.

DOWEL BIT: Sometimes called a short auger bit, its main use is for boring holes into which dowels are to be inserted.

DRAWKNIFE: The drawknife until recently was called a drawing knife, because it is simply a knife with a handle at each end operated by being drawn towards the user. It was an extremely popular tool because it could remove so much wood so quickly, and consequently many different kinds of drawknives have been developed.



DRY JOINT: These are joints which have not been glued.

EUCALYPTUS: Commonly known as the gum tree; trade name is Tasmanian Oak or Tasmanian Hardwood.

BLUE GUM: (Eucalyptus Globulus) This tree yields magnificent hardwood timber suitable for almost any purpose. The colour varies from straw to madder brown, the texture is dense and the grain frequently twisted and curled.

GUM TOP STRINGY BARK: (Eucalyptus Delegatensis) Other names include Alpine Ash and White Top Stringy Bark. It is of pale brown colour, with an open texture, fairly straight grain and showing prominent growth rings. It is an excellent timber suitable for many purposes, including house construction, furniture etc. It splits well into excellent palings and shingles.

STRINGY BARK: (Eucalyptus Obliqua) Stringy Bark grows plentifully in Tasmania. The tree is straight stemmed and grows rapidly. The timber is pale brown, straight grained with well defined growth rings. It splits freely and makes an excellent structural timber.

SWAMP GUM: (Eucalyptus Regnans) Also known as Mountain Ash, White Ash and Peppermint Gum. This species is recognized as the tallest hardwood tree in the World. The timber is light to pale brown in colour, with prominent growth rings, of open texture, straight, coarse grain and easily worked. Like the Stringy Bark, it is suitable for many purposes.

FIGURE: This is the term used for the pattern displayed on the surfaces of wood after it has been sawn and is caused by the variations in colour, grain and texture.

FILE: A file is a hard steel instrument, its surfaces covered with parallel rows of sharp teeth or furrows, used for shaping and smoothing wood, metal and other materials.

FINIAL: A decorative ornament at the top of the back stays or uprights of a chair.

FORM: A long, low bench or seat without back.

GRAIN: The grain of the wood is the direction of the fibres in relation to the trunk, e.g. straight grained wood arises when most of the elements are parallel to the axis of the trunk. Cross grain is when the fibres are at an angle to the trunk. The rate at which a tree grows determines the coarseness of closeness of the grain. e.g. Celery Top Pine is a close grained wood and due to its slow growth exhibits 6-10 growth rings per centimetre. Coarse grain is characteristic of fast growing trees such as Radiata Pine and most Eucalypts. These exhibit 2-4 growth rings per centimetre.

HARDWOOD: In Tasmania often used as a collective term for Eucalyptus.

HEWN TIMBER: Rough timber finished to size by axe or adze.

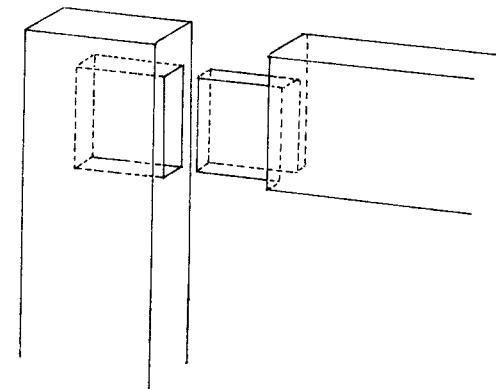
HUON PINE: (Dacrydium Franklinii) Huon Pine occurs only in the south and south-west of Tasmania. The timber is pale yellow, straight-grained sometimes showing a bird's eye figure and gives off a characteristic odour. It is a sound, mild working wood, good under any kind of tool and excellent in the lathe.

KING WILLIAM PINE: (Athrotaxis Selaginoides) Pencil Pine or Cedar Pine as it is sometimes known, grows on the West Coast of Tasmania. The timber is yellowish pink in colour with a straight grain and fine texture, being easy to work, soft and durable.

KNOT: A branch of limb embedded in the tree and cut through in the process of manufacture.

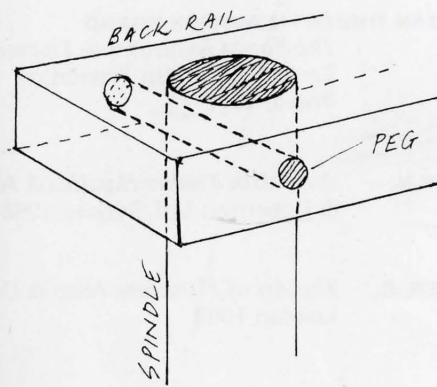
MALLET: A type of hammer, usually made of wood. For instance, it is important that a wooden mallet be used for striking wooden handled chisels.

MORTICE AND TENON: A mortice is a hole or slot in a piece of wood to receive a tenon or dowel of corresponding size to form a joint.



MYRTLE: (*Nothofagus Cunninghamii*) Myrtle (or beech) grows in the moist areas of Tasmania. The timber varies from pink to reddish brown in colour and has a fine uniform texture. It is not regarded as a good milling timber though its popularity stems from its often beautiful marked appearance. It is a sound, mild working wood frequently used in cabinet and furniture making.

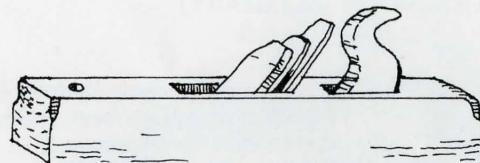
PEG: Peg and pin are often terms used interchangeably. However a pin is always circular in section and used in a fixed joint, while a peg is not necessarily round and is removable.



PIN: See peg.

PLANE: A tool for levelling and smoothing the surface of wood by paring shavings from it. It consists of a 'stock' body of wood (or metal) in which is set an 'iron' or blade which projects slightly through a 'mouth' or slit.

JACK PLANE: This is one of the more common planes used for heavy, coarse work. Its purpose is to remove the irregularities left by the saw and leave a fairly smooth surface. The cutting edge of the iron is slightly rounded in order to remove big shavings without tearing the wood with the corners of the iron.



POCKET KNIFE: No carpenter is without a pocket knife of which there are many varieties called pen-knives, jack-knives, clasp-knives etc., some with only one blade and others with many.

RADIATA PINE: (*Pinus Radiata*) Originally imported from California, this tree is often seen on plantations and around farmhouses. It is white to creamy yellow with distinct growth rings.

SASSAFRAS: (*Atherosperma Moschata*) A beautiful tree common to the west and north west coast of Tasmania. It is a light, sound wood varying in colour from white to straw and bistre brown. It is moderately soft, of close even texture and it works well under tools.

SETTEE: A settee implies a seat with a back and arms to hold two or more persons.

SHE-OAK: (*Casuarina Stricta*) The tree is sombre in appearance and the wood, which is bright pink, sometimes reveals bold and beautiful markings. It is a coarse grained wood, and although it works well under tools, it was often used for firewood.

SHERATON: Thomas, English Furniture Designer (1751 - 1806). The Sheraton style favours the straight line and many designs are essentially rectangular with emphasis on vertical lines.

SLAB: A flat, broad, relatively thick square or rectangular piece of wood or other solid material.

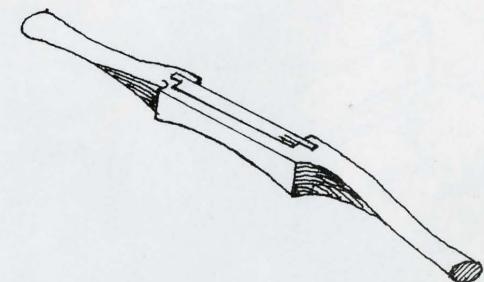
SLAT: Thin, flat strips of wood sometimes chosen as upright supports for the back of a chair.

SOFTWOOD: A conventional term used to denote the timber of trees belonging to the botanical group Gymnosperms-class Conifers.

SPINDLE: A thin, turned or shaped rod, either straight or with slightly swelling profile, frequently used as an upright member in a chair back.

SPLAT: A broad, flat piece of wood, especially one forming the central, upright part of the back of a chair.

SPOKESHAVE: The spokeshave is like a narrow drawknife but set in a stock so that the depth of cut is regulated. It is in fact a small plane, capable of travelling over curved surfaces. One of its principle uses is the shaving and shaping of round pieces of wood, like handles or spokes. It is drawn towards the user.



STICK BACK: A generic name for chairs and seats of stick construction, with spindles socketed into solid wooden seats to form back and legs.

STOOL: A backless seat for one person. Crude stools often consist of a wooden slab joined to three or four legs.

SUMMERWOOD: The late growth of an annual ring producing harder and denser timber. In warm and weathered pieces, summerwood is felt as a rippling sensation to the touch.

TASMANIAN OAK: Trade given to some Eucalyptus trees.

TENON: See Mortice and Tenon.

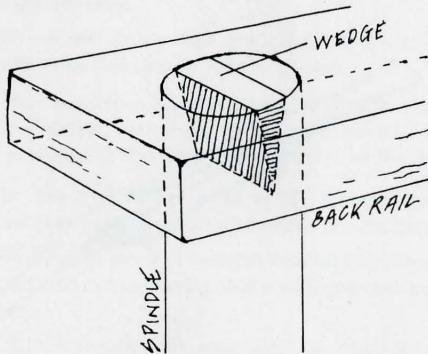
UPRIGHTS: Chair makers' term for the vertical members of a chair that are continuous with the legs.

WATTLE:

BLACK WATTLE (Acacia Mearnsii) The timber is of straw colour; a close grained strong wood which seasons well. It has been used for tool handles and rustic work.

SILVER WATTLE (Acacia Dealbata) This tree grows mainly in the North East and North West of Tasmania. The colour of the wood is from white to light straw and it is tough and even grained. It saws and planes well.

WEDGE: A wedge-shaped piece of wood, forced into the exposed end of a peg, dowel or spindle, to tighten the joint.



WINDSOR CHAIR:

A spindle or stick back chair. Windsor chairs were being made by rural craftsmen in England in the early 18th Century, and are still made today. The American Colonists carried the Windsor chair to its ultimate, and the first of these was made in Philadelphia. The place of origin of the English Windsor is unknown, but the technique of stick construction may very well have developed concurrently in many localities, where materials such as ash, elm, yew, beech and some fruitwoods were available. The two basic forms have either a bow back or a curved horizontal rail known as a comb-back. The back spindles and arm rests are pegged into the saddle shaped seat. Various types were made both with and without arms, and the legs were invariably splayed.

WOOD: Because of its many and varied properties including the combination of lightness and strength, ornamental appearance, working properties, insulation, elasticity, durability,

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A BLACKWOOD TREE (Acacia melanoxylon)

