Chest

Place of origin: Wiltshire (made)
Date: 1200-1300 (made)
Artist/Maker: Unknown (made)
Materials and Techniques: Oak, riven and sawn; hutch-type construction
Museum number: W.22-1920
Gallery location: In Storage

Descriptive line
Hutch-type constructed chest, oak, 1200-1300, England (Wiltshire), 20/3005

Physical description
Tracy catalogue entry (#298)

Chest: of hutch-type construction, the front is formed of a single plain panel set in broad stiles slightly shaped below; the back is of similar construction to the front and united to it at either end by a bar, behind which are the single panels which form the sides. The top, of pine, of 18th century date, is probably a reproduction of the original; it is hinged by means of pivots inserted horizontally through the back uprights and fixed into the clamps on the underside of the lid.

The piece is of rough workmanship saw marks being clearly visible on the front panel.

Additional notes
The wide leg-stiles were produced from cleft oak to centre of trunk (quarter riven). A wavy grain is visible. The front and back panels display saw kerfs. Each is held in a long groove in the stiles, held on each side by 4/5 pegs (round, relatively tight fitting). The front and back panels are remarkably thin given the difficulty of pit-sawing so thinly. The overall weight of the chest is slight, compared with other clamp-front chests of the same approximate period. The ends, which do not slope outwards at the bottom (as is seen on other similar chests) each fit into a tall mortise and is held by 3 long pegs. The two end battens tenoned into the front and back planks - served to hold it together. The bottom (a single plank, now split and wormy) is held poorly in grooves at both sides, with nails through the ends into the ends of the plank, and through the front (note iron staining). Two U-shaped iron brackets have been added, held by nails apparently at an early date, to support the bottom.

Both locks are attached with clinched nails, possibly from a very early date.

Condition and modifications
In the bottom are old nails (possibly for a old patch). Both rear feet (and one front) tipped, very neatly. Mouse hole at rear. The softwood lid is a replacement but appears to follow the form of original (with battens on underside at each end) and apparently using earlier fixings - huge iron pin hinges (?); the original lid presumably had a clasp for ring fixing on the front. There is a trace of an iron hinge at PL rear.

Dimensions
Height: 63.5 cm, Width: 128 cm, Depth: 54 cm

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Object history note
Purchased from E. M. Dent, Esq., 64 Southwood Lane, Highgate, London N6 for £5-10-0d.

RP 20/3005

Condition: "wormeaten, cracked and portions missing"

From Great Bedwyn Church, Wiltshire (information from vendor without any further detail or substantiation). The vendor said that he had bought the chest in 1919 from a dealer.

Historical context note
Great Bedwyn Church probably dates from c.1092, on the remains of a Saxon building. The chancel and nave probably date to c.1220. The north transept dates to c.1320 and the tower c1350-1400. The south transept was restored 1853-5. In 1854 the timber screen (thought to date from the 14th century) was removed from its original position between the chancel and the crossing, and displayed at the V&A 1919-46, then redisplayed in the church (rededicated 1975).

Comparable chests
V&A W.30-1926
V&A W.158-1921
This chest is of more modest quality than the other V&A examples.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O119338/chest-unknown/