

CCI 21st Biennial Convention
Oxford, UK. May 2024.

**When is a Barleycorn, NOT
a Barleycorn?**

Jim Joannou

Barleycorn

This are two examples of several designs, from the 19thC, that we now call 'Barleycorn'.

But when and Why did we start using the name 'Barleycorn'?

Originally, they were described simply as 'Bone Chessmen'!



Barleycorn

Originally, they were described simply as 'Bone Chessmen'. Jaques advertisement from 1881

A USA advert from the early 20th C, selling imported UK chess sets, describes them as 'Bone Chessmen in Red and White'

THE ENGLISH PATTERN CHESSMEN.
Rosewood and boxwood, in box, complete, per set 1s 6d, 2s, 2s 6d, 3s, 3s 9d; Rosewood and boxwood, in box, complete, per set, 4s 6d, 5s 6d, 6s 9d, 8s 6d; Ebony and boxwood, superior quality, French polished, in box complete, 4s, 5s, 7s 6d, 10s 6d, 15s, 18s 6d.

ST. GEORGE'S CLUB PATTERN CHESSMEN.
Ebony and Boxwood, French polished, in box, complete, £1 5s, ditto loaded £1 10s, ditto ditto, largest size £1 18s.

THE EDINBORO' CLUB PATTERN CHESSMEN.
Ebony and Boxwood, French polished, in box, complete.

		No. 1	...	per set	0 10 0
Ditto	ditto	2	...	"	0 12 6
Ditto	ditto	3	...	"	0 15 0
Ditto	ditto	4	...	"	0 18 6

BONE CHESSMEN.
Superior quality, in box, complete 3s, 4s, 5s, 7s, 8s 6d, 10s. Ditto, handsomely carved 15s 6d, £1 1s. Ditto, improved pattern, solid bone 7s 6d, 10s 6d, 15s 6d.

Figure 55. Advertisement in Chessplayers Chronicle, 1881.

Barleycorn

On Left: King from a Barleycorn set.

One of many different 'ornamental' designs.

On the Right: King from a plain turned 'Ribbed' style set.

Literature search:

1973 Barleycorn name

1976 Both styles referred to as 'Barleycorn'

1990's – 2000's – 2 references use the term 'So called Barleycorns'



Barleycorn

In 1970's they believed that the highly detailed 'Barleycorn' design was 'Hand Carved' and took many hours from a skilled carver to create it.

They also believed that the plain turned 'Ribbed' style was created to be a cheaper version of the more expensive Barleycorn.

However....



Holzapfl Lathe

John Jacob Holzapfl (1768 – 1835)

1st Ornamental Lathe sold 1795 and continued to be into the 20th C.

These ornamental designs were very fashionable in the Victorian era.

Towards the end of the 19thC, attitudes were changing, and these designs were no longer fashionable.

The Art Nouveau period started in 1890



Holzapfl Lathe ?

CCI member, Chess restorer and Master Turner – Alan Dewey.

Studied 7 Barleycorn sets with different patterns and counted the number of repeating patterns around the body.

A Holzapfl lathe can ONLY produce a repeating numbers of patterns that are multiples of each other.

Alan found odd numbers in the patterns (Including 'Prime' numbers) – Which is impossible on a Holzapfl lathe!



Holzapfl

Holzapfl was a prolific writer. Published 5 books on turning and many articles related to turning.

His last book, 'Turning & Mechanical Manipulation' which was completed by his son in 1884 is considered to be the 'bible' of ornamental turning.

Barleycorn?

Chess sets?

Your help is needed....



Barelycorn?

So in the 1970's when 'someone' decided to call all these sets 'Barleycorn' – THEY GOT IT WRONG!

It was based on false information?

Hold that thought...

We are now going to look at the dating of a number of chess sets and create a timeline....



Ribbed Style set

Produced virtually throughout the 19th C and into the early 20th C
Very Popular design. Dates to ~1820 - ~1910



Barleycorn Style set

Generally, dates: Mid – Late 19th C, but dates of 1830 & 1820 have been noted.
However.....



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Monticello Museum.
Belonged to US President
Thomas Jefferson



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Belonged to US President
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Jefferson died in 1826!

The dating range needs
To be adjusted to
1820's – 1880's



Early 19th C Bone set

Features Solid narrow bodies for the royal pieces and the Rooks on Pedestals
Generally dated as 1800 - ~1840 – However...



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Generally dated as 1800 - ~1840 – However...

Jaques Advert shows these were produced into the early 1880's

So, a revised dating period for These sets is: 1800 – ~1880's

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	No.	1	...	per set	0	10	0
Ditto	ditto	2	...	"	0	12	6
Ditto	ditto	3	...	"	0	15	0
Ditto	ditto	4	...	"	0	18	6

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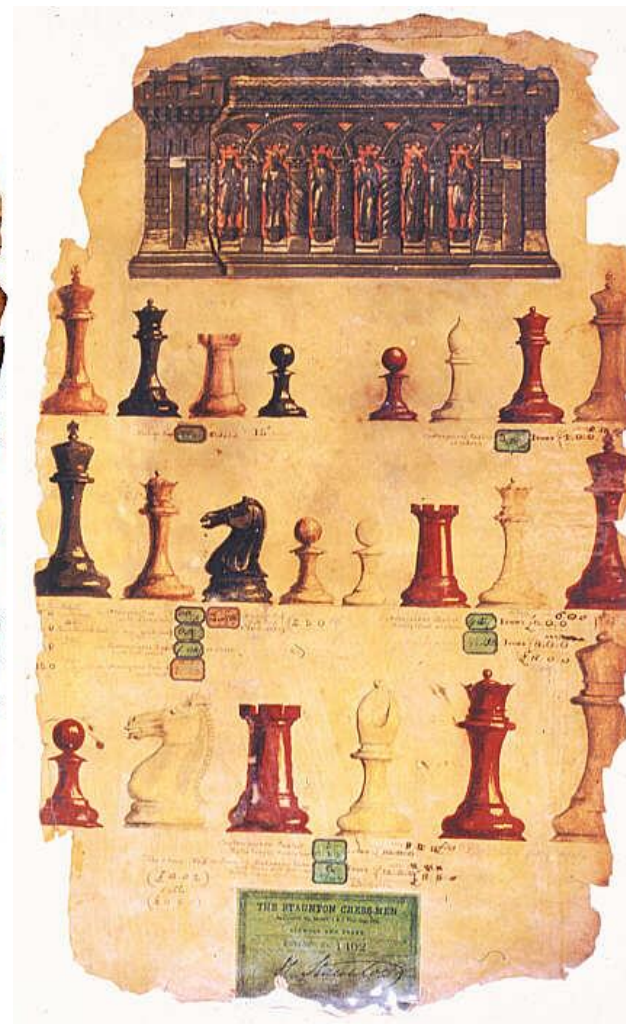
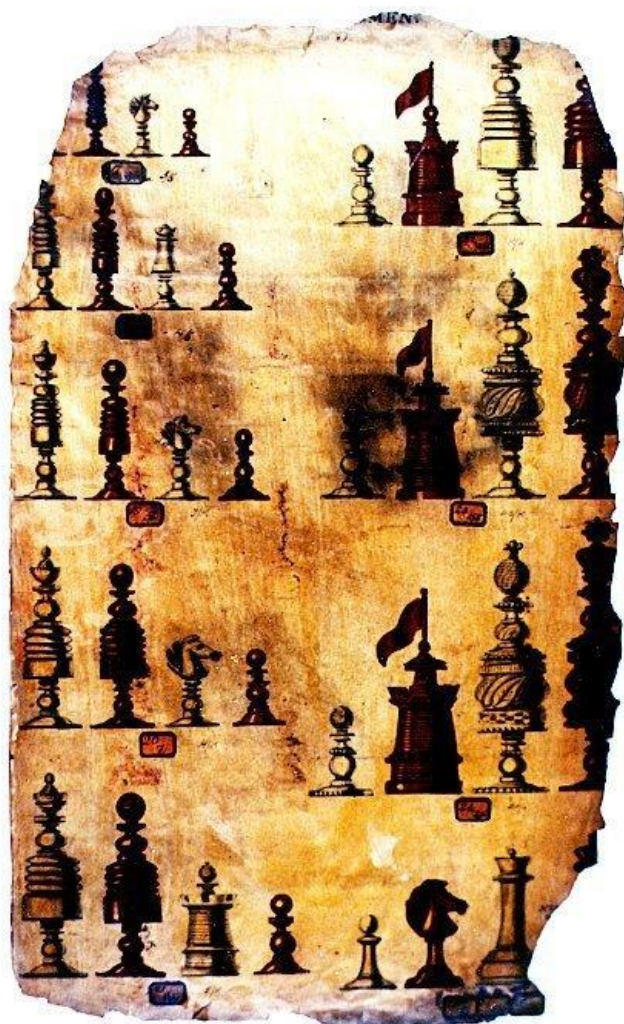
Figure 55. Advertisement in Chessplayers Chronicle, 1881.

Washington Style Bone set

Features: Knights with heads bent forward and Rooks with 'Brick' style markings
Generally dated to ~1770 - ~1790's

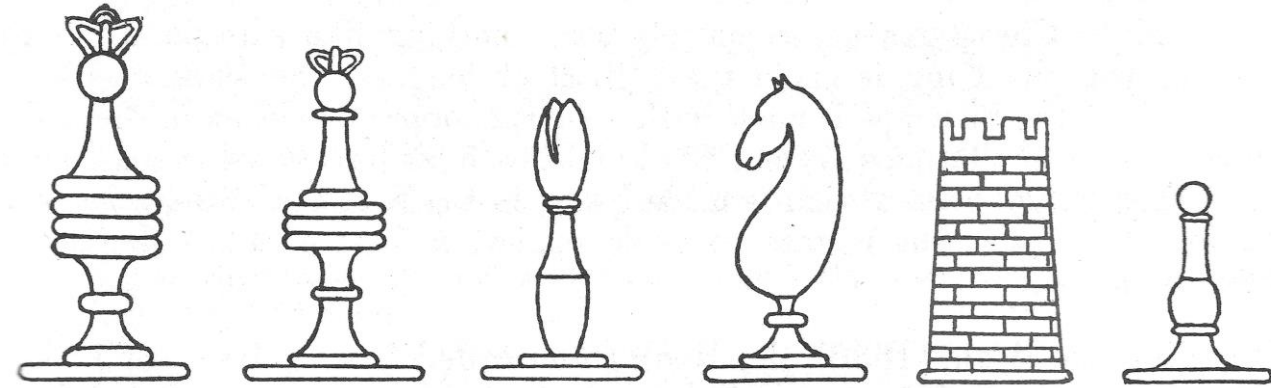


Pages from Jaques Pattern Books



18th C sets?

Picture from H.J.R. Murray (A History of Chess) – Pre 1800
However.....



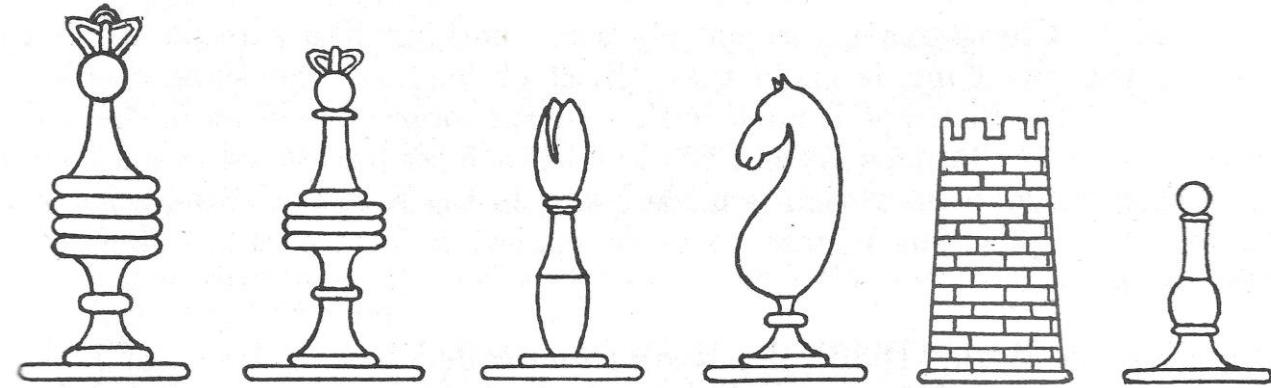
Chessmen from *Studies of Chess*, 1804.

18th C sets?

Picture from H.J.R. Murray (A History of Chess) – Pre 1800

This set is very similar to the Murray picture.

Dated to 1750's



Chessmen from *Studies of Chess*, 1804.



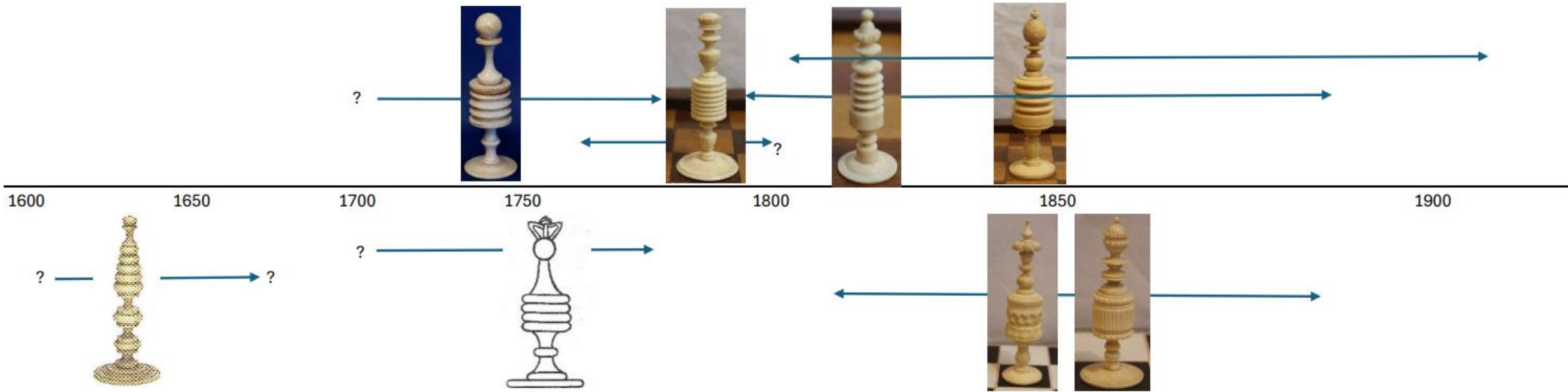
Gareth Williams' Book

Possible Jacobean Set. Features: triple Crown on the King. But look at the Queen!

Jacobean period is: 1603 To 1625



Timeline for the 'Ribbed' Style design



USA Presidents

George Washington

(President: 1789 - 1797)

Thomas Jefferson

(President: 1801 - 1809)

John Quincy Adams

(President: 1825 - 1829)

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Alice in Wonderland

In 1865 Lewis Carroll published his famous children's book 'Alice in Wonderland' and in 1871 the follow up book 'Through the Looking Glass'

Both book were illustrated by John Tenniel and these illustrations went on to inspire Films, Books and even several chess sets.

So, what style did they choose for the Chess scene in the 2nd book?



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A 'Ribbed' style King & Queen



When is a Barleycorn, NOT a Barleycorn?



Southern Germany

Made from Fruitwood

Dated:1850 – 1870



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Made from Fruitwood

Dated:1850 – 1870

‘BARLEY TWIST’



The Anonymous Chess Collector

Blogspot website, which appears not to have been updated since 2011.

Shows and describes many different styles of 'Barleycorn' sets and shows various dating periods from different sources.

But he only presents the data and does not draw any real conclusions from his work

When is a Barleycorn, NOT a Barleycorn?

Your help needed:

1) Change your descriptions

2) Count the number of
repeating patterns and email
the results with a picture to:

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