



# British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

## News FROM CHAPTER 159

Congratulations to two NAWCC electees who are members of Chapter 159. Betty Brown was the top vote getter among the Director candidates, and Doug Cowan was elected First Vice-President running unopposed.

The April Chapter meeting at the Southern Ohio Regional was a big success, with people actually standing out in the Hall for up to an hour, so they could take part. Tom Spittler arranged a special guest speaker—Mr. John Taylor of Sheffield England. He spoke about the changes that have taken place in the ways to buy clocks in England. I thought I knew all of that, but had my eyes opened, and John's friendly and relaxed speaking style made him very popular with the crowd attending.

Our next get together will be Friday, June 25th during the National Convention in Houston Texas. Guest speaker will be member Doug Caulkins, on the subject of early watch winders (keys). Doug is an excellent speaker and in fact the National program chairman has asked that his lecture be open to all convention attendees. Don't know how we'll handle the traditional "medicine" as a result of this, but have agreed with pleasure to share Doug's lecture with as many others as wish to attend.

## EDITOR'S CORNER

This Editor's Corner may be more properly called "HELP" or "WANTED".

You see, we need material to publish. The field is wide open. A scholarly article about a clock or watch is always most welcome. But don't be intimidated. Simpler subjects can be published. Like your favorite clock; your first watch; what got your horological juices flowing; an astonishing discovery. And I can't believe that everything we write in BHT meets with full approval from everybody. (Are we that perfect?). We have a "Letters" column for you to use if you wish to add something or suggest a change. Your clock or watch story doesn't have to be polished. We can edit and catch spelling errors. We can read your handwriting if you don't type. And pictures are important: black and

## NEW PROJECT FOR CHAPTER 159

We've taken on a new project—helping the British Museum in London find and document Tompion and George Graham watches. Already, three have been found which were not previously known to exist. Here's what I'd like you to do. If you have, or know of watches by either maker which currently exist outside of the UK, write details to me, please.

If confidentiality is important, send the data to me anonymously. I'll then pass it along to the Museum. The minimum information wanted is specific signature, whether London or Londini, the number on the top plate of the movement, and the case type (pair or consular/one piece). Also need to know whether it's a timepiece or repeater, what marks may exist in the case, and the case(s) composition (eg: silver, gold or shell, etc.) Let's get behind this worthwhile project. The Museum horologist, Jeremy Evans, promises a book on these makers in the not too distant future.

Even if you are not sure that the watch is genuine, or if it's just a movement, we want to know about it. Oh yes, the diameter of the watch, whether metal or white dial, and escapement type are important too. I realize that with other people's watches, you may only be able to get a name and watch number. That's OK too—we want to find as many as we can.

- Doug Cowan

white or color photos which don't have to be professional. Don't forget a photo of yourself to add your personal touch. (If it's a group photo, we'll crop so only you will show.)

Words from overseas members can be especially interesting.

Please send your publishing contributions to Douglas Cowan, 110 Central Terrace, Cincinnati OH 45215. Thanks.

-Paul Odendahl

## TESTING A TOMPION TIMEPIECE

Douglas Cowan (OH) offers suggestions on how to tell a fake from the real thing.

Spending some time with the British Museum's Jeremy Evans, examining true and false Tompion watches has given me the courage to write a checklist for use when you are offered a Tompion timepiece or movement for one. Phil Priestley has helped with case issues. Neither of these good men is responsible for any errors of memory or understanding as related herein.

First, let's set the scene. Lots of Tompion fakes are in collections, usually quite innocently. In a museum sample of 50 Tompion timepieces, about 25% are fakes. Some of them are darned fine watches in their own right, made

while Tompion was still working. That's why he concentrated so strongly upon multiple numbering of the components of his watches.

Incidentally, it is estimated that only between 6 and 8% of Tompion's timepieces have survived, compared with perhaps 30% of his higher grade watches, especially repeaters. So that's only about 350 timepieces for all of us hungry collectors.

Now, before I start the checklist, a disclaimer. I learned long ago to "never say never". So if your Tompion fails one or more of these criteria, I'm not saying it's a fake. This list might be more useful to you in deciding whether to buy an offered Tom-

pion. Also this list is undoubtedly less than complete and when I learn more, hopefully as a result of response to this article, I may redo it.

### Tompion Checklist.

Does the case and/or movement have the **style and characteristics** of ca 1700 work?. Many fakes, especially late 1700s ones, are obviously of the wrong style and size. Remember, Tompion died in 1713 so any later feature, eg: porcelain dial, is unlikely to be original.

The dial will be silver or gold and *usually* will look like Fig. 1. The dial is in two pieces, one piece dials being reserved for watches with a seconds bit subsidiary dial. This particular one has a typical pattern, but other designs were also used.

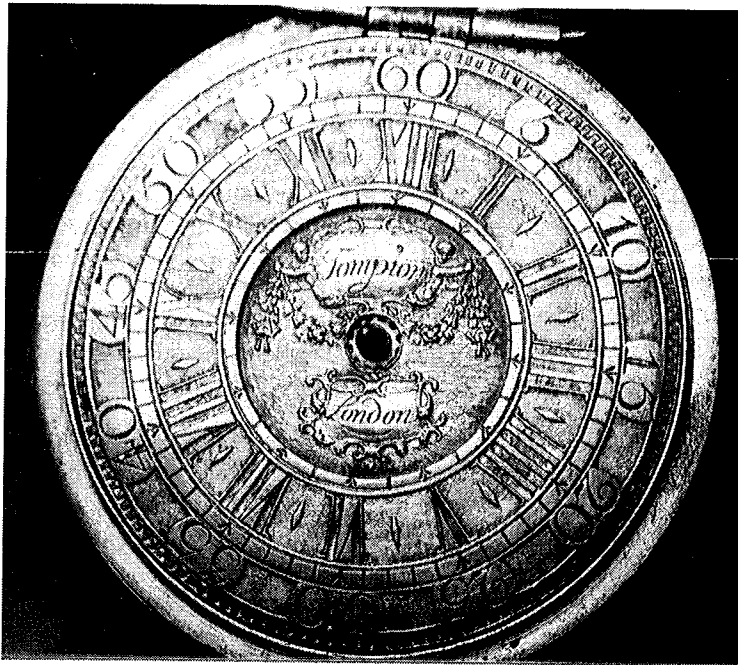


FIG. 1, A THOMAS TOMPION WATCH DIAL

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All correspondence, manuscripts and applications for membership should be sent to Doug Cowan, 110 Central Terrace, Cincinnati OH 45215, USA. e-mail: dcclock@juno.com

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The case can be either pair or consular, with the back or outer case often decorated with black or green shagreen, or tortoiseshell. Although most cases were of silver or gold, gilded metal cases are not necessarily replacements, since the use of lower cost metal would have helped greatly with the cost of buying. Gilded metal would usually be seen in watches also decorated with tortoiseshell, for example. If pair cased in silver the inner one will usually bear the stamped imprint of the case (box) maker. The outer may or may not, since they were sometimes made by different people. Casemaker's marks seen on Tompion watches include ND (Delander), WS (Sherwood), WA (Achurch)? and WI (Jaques) among others.

Of course, any case hall-marked later than 1713 is unlikely to be original.

The top plate of the movement will be signed Tho. Tompion, or T. Tompion; London — not Londini, and always with the first name. That is, a watch signed Tompion, Londini would be doubly suspect. The signatures were engraved by several different hands, so the specifics of the signature don't tell us much.

Looking at the movement, the pillars will be of Egyptian (Fig. 2), or tulip (Fig. 3) designs, sometimes with a pierced gallery on top of each pillar. Square baluster pillars (Fig. 4), which is what I usually see on fakes, were not known to have been used by Tompion.

There will be watch numbers stamped or scratched on almost every part of the watch, and at least the top plate, dial plate,

even the pair cases will be stamped with the number. For the outer case, look beside the stem slot, on the edge. Sometimes only the last two digits of the watch number are used.

Dial feet are of silver in a silver cased watch and there are four of them.

The underside of the balance cock will, in addition to a number, have stamped into it one or more initials, believed to identify the worker who actually assembled the watch.

The regulator will look like Fig. 5. Many excellent fakes, contemporary with the Tompion watches, can be detected by the fact that their regulator discs are smaller and less decorative. Also these same fakes will usually have the potence screwed to the top plate, rather than rivetted. The watches may not look quite so well finished, and the case hinges look a little different than English ones.

Finally, don't forget perfectly legitimate watches made by other, not related Tompions: G. Tompion, London, ca 1715; Charles Tompion, London?, ca 1764; and Richard Tompion, Liverpool, ca late 1700s. These shouldn't be a problem if you stay awake. ☹



Doug Cowan collects, talks, writes, dreams and hunts English clocks and watches. He is also First Vice-President of the NAWCC.



FIG. 2  
EGYPTIAN PILLAR

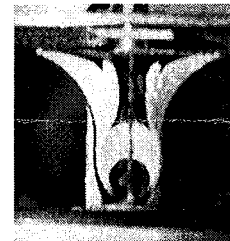


FIG. 3  
TULIP PILLAR



FIG. 4  
SQUARE  
BALLUSTER  
PILLAR

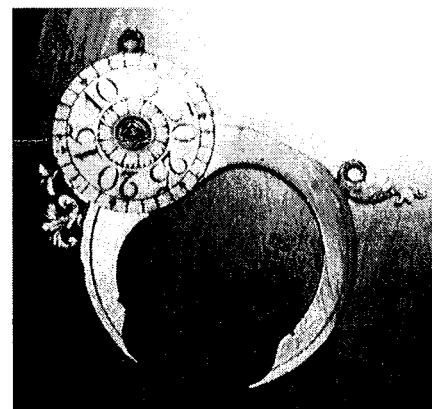


FIG. 5, REGULATOR

## A LOOK AT T. TOMPION & E. BANGER WATCH NO. 3935 (with some background on the makers and their partnership)

Curt Davenport (KY) writes about these two makers and one of their watches - one with an unusual dial.

### ABOUT TOMPION

Little is known of Tompion's early career. He was born at Ickwell Green, a hamlet of Northill in Bedfordshire in 1639. He was a third generation blacksmith. For reasons unknown he decided to leave the blacksmith trade and move to London, perhaps to seek his fortune.

It is not known to whom he was apprenticed. He was associated as a brother of the Clockmakers' Company in 1671; admitted as a Freeman by Redemption in 1674; chosen as an Assistant in 1691; as Warden in 1700; and Master in 1704. It was in 1674 that Tompion moved into the shop on Water Lane at the Dial & Three Crowns.

The boxed quotation at right is taken from *Timetelling Through the Ages* by Harry C. Brearly and published by Doubleday, Page & Co., New York, 1919, courtesy of the A.W.I. Library.

In 1674, the same year he moved into the shop on Water Lane, Tompion met Dr. Robert Hooke, a famous inventive genius of the time. Dr. Hooke commissioned him to make a high caliber quadrant. The job apparently was completed with such excellent skill that Dr. Hooke

watchmaker in the court of Charles II and it is said that by adapting the inventions of Hooke and Barlowe, combined with his own skillful proportion of parts (we would call it quality control), Tompion caused English watches and clocks to become the best in the world. In his lifetime Tompion was much more famous than most think of him today.

"These were the days when the leaders of the industry worked with their own hands as well as their heads. We may imagine the Master seated in the front room of his shop studying over a new model, or putting together and decorating one already made, or perhaps making with his own hands some of the most delicate parts. And the phrase 'Clockmaker to the King' meant something more when applied to such a man than merely that Royalty had purchased some product of his craft. Such a one was Thomas Tompion, often called 'The Father of English Watchmaking'. He was the leader of his craft in the time of Charles II and he, more than anyone else, worked out the inventions of Hooke for actual manufacturing. It may be fairly said of him that he set the time for history in his day, for most of the Royalty, and the great men of Europe timed all their doings from banquets to battles with Tompion watches."

was impressed enough to pursue additional joint endeavors with Tompion. Dr. Hooke was well known to the inner circle at King's Court and to them he introduced Tompion. This was probably the turning point of Tompion's career.

Tompion became the leading

All over Europe he was welcomed as an artist of commanding ability.

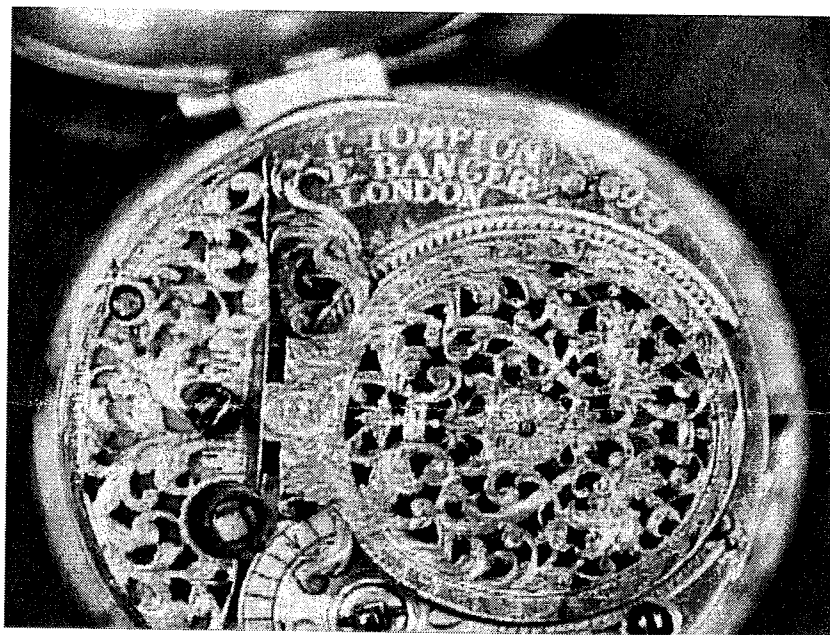
Thomas Tompion died on November 20, 1713 at age 73 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

### THE TOMPION AND BANGER PARTNERSHIP

Edward Banger was apprenticed to Joseph Ashby in 1687 for seven years, but was turned over to Tompion. Banger became free of the Clockmakers' Company on July 1, 1695 at about the same time he married Tompion's niece, Margaret Kent. In 1701 Tompion took Edward Banger into partnership, which lasted until 1708.

During this period the watches made at the Dial & Three Crowns were signed "T. Tompion & E. Banger". Banger must have been an excellent pupil and a skilled craftsman to compel Tompion to take him on as a partner. Watches and clocks made during the partnership were of the highest quality. It is not known exactly what caused the quarrel and break-up of this successful partnership. The following is taken from *Thomas Tompion, His Life and Work*, by R. W. Symonds:

"After about 1708, Banger ceased to work at the Dial and Three Crowns and his name no longer appeared with Tompion's. From Tompion's Will we have an inkling of his opinion of Banger: 'neither such purchased lands or tenements (which were left to his niece, Margaret Banger, married to Edward Banger) shall be in any sort, subject or lyable to the acts, debts, forfeiture, incumbrance, intermedling disposition or control of her now husband'. It is strange that nothing is known about Banger after his quarrel with Tompion. There is no record of his making any clocks or watches on his own account. His name is found only with Tompion's. When he left the Dial & Three Crowns all trace of him is lost."



TOMPION & BANGER #3935 SHOWING: TOP PLATE, SIGNATURE, BROAD FOOTED COCK AND "TOMPION" REGULATOR DISK.

### ABOUT THE WATCH

Between 1680 and 1685 Tompion started to number his production. He apparently was the first maker to do this. He stamped the number on the dial plate and engraved it on the top plate. Around 1700 he also started stamping the number under the balance cock. The watch, T. Tompion and E. Banger #3935, which is the subject of this article, has its number on the top plate. The balance cock and dial were not removed by the present owner for verification of this number. The number 3935 dates this watch near the end of the Tompion and Banger partnership in 1707-08.

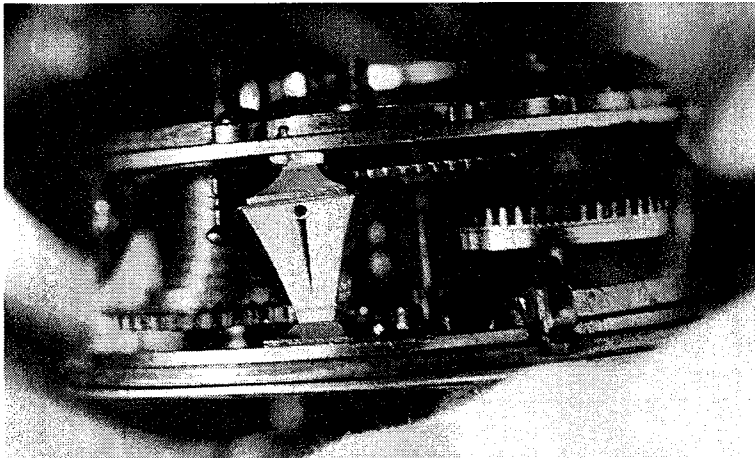
The movement is gilt brass, full plate and has pierced Egyptian pillars, fusee and chain,

No. 3935, from page 5

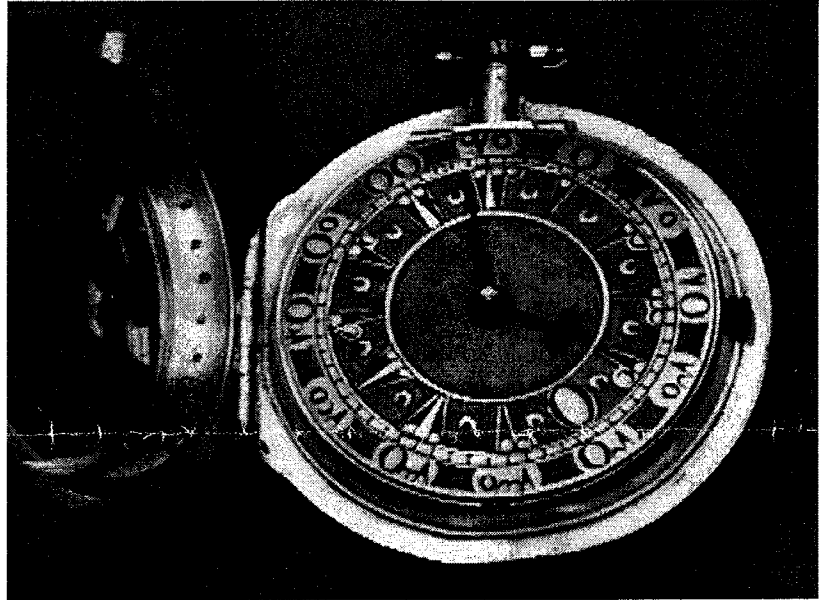
verge escapement, steel three arm balance, gilt-winged cock, pierced and engraved with a human mask and foliage. The wide foot of the balance cock also has piercing and engraving. The regulator is Tompion's. The blued steel beetle and poker hands may be original. Overall the watch is in excellent condition, exhibiting fine qualities of Tompion's work

Tompion designed his watches to be wound through the dial instead of the back. He also liked to use the consular case. These features go together but not exclusively. This watch winds through the back even though it is in a consular case.

The silver champlève dial on this watch is probably from a later date because it has Turkish numerals. It is possible that when the easier to read white enamel dials came out, one was placed on this watch to "update" it. Further, at a later date a collector could have found the present silver dial to be an excellent fit and added it to make the watch seem more original in appearance than the enamel dial. Mind you, this is speculation on the author's part. There doesn't



TOMPION & BANGER #3935: MOVEMENT WITH EGYPTIAN PILLARS



TOMPION & BANGER #3935 IN CONSULAR GILTMETAL CASE WITH TORTOISESHELL DECORATION

appear to be any reference to Tompion making watches for the Turkish or Eastern market.

A timely closing: Horology as a hobby makes us realize how short our lives really are. These beautiful timepieces from the past are not really owned by us. We are merely custodians of them while we are here. But what a blessing it is to spend time with them before leaving them for the next generation to enjoy. ⌚

Curt Davenport is a resident of Peewee Valley KY, a retired sales-service executive for a major truck manufacturer, and a collector of European fusee watches.



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