



# British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

## News FROM CHAPTER 159

The February Florida meeting was well attended, and enjoyed an excellent presentation by Julian Gibbard, a well known professional restorer of fine English clocks. He covered two subjects, the first being fusee work — letting down, repair and setup work. Then Julian described rack striking and the particular problems associated with this type of English movement. Several useful workshop tips were shared.

Then, at the April Cincinnati meeting, verge watches was the topic. Approximately 35 members participated in an informal review of the many design changes of English paired-case verge watches during the period 1720 to the mid-1850s when that combination of watch features died out at last. Several members brought watches so that about two dozen examples, exotic and ordinary, were examined closely by those present.

Membership stands at 200 and is pretty static. If you know people who would enjoy the subject that we cover, please invite them to join. We will lose ten or so members a year as they leave the NAWCC, and a membership of about 200 is needed to cover newsletter expenses plus a few meeting costs. On a related topic, how about renewing for two years (\$10) next January 1997? Several have already done this and it surely reduces the need for reminders.

Recent National awards include a President's award for excellence to our chapter, and Certificates of Appreciation to Julian Gibbard and Frank DeIGreco for fine efforts in club meeting presentations.

### NEXT MEETING

Thursday, June 20 at the Cleveland National convention. We'll look forward to seeing you there. The short program will be a very good one, assuming plans get finalized. Meeting time is 3PM; check your registration package for location.



## BOOKS I USE

By Tom Spittler (OH)



One pays little attention to the books one refers to until a book goes missing. This happened to me when I misplaced my copy of Baillie's *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World*. No matter how many other texts I referred to I just wasn't satisfied until I had a look at Baillie's. I then thought it might be interesting to write a very brief article for the BH Times on the few books on British Horology that I find myself constantly referring to. Before I begin I must say that my primary interest is in British longcase clocks and British watches so most of what I am looking for is information on makers of those items and specific information on things like styles of hands used in different periods. I do read books of a more general interest and of a broader scope, and some on a narrower scope, but the ones I am going to cover here are the ones I couldn't live without and find myself referring to all the time. I will start with the books I use on specific makers:

*Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World* by G. H. Baillie. First published in 1929, I use a third edition printed in 1951. It contains 36,000 makers names from all over the world, but mostly from the UK. It is a bit difficult to use as Baillie lists all the makers with the

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These spring newsletters come with disconcerting frequency to this amateur editor. I've now used most of my backlog of articles and interesting letters and want to fill the pipeline for next year. Enough promises and ideas are around for BHT10 in December, but please try to send something along to me during the summer. Thanks! ☺ -Doug Cowan

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same last name and then lists them first by those who worked in London in chronological order and then those outside London again in chronological order. If you are looking for a William Smith there might be 200 Smiths with 20 Williams scattered throughout the pages. Therefore it can be hard to use for common names. The names cut off at about 1825, which is understandable when one considers those makers would have been only 100 years old when Baillie began writing the book. Sometimes this book is referred to as Vol. 1 with the advent of Brian Loomes Vol. 2 mentioned next.

*Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World, Vol. 2* by Brian Loomes. I use a first edition of 1976. This book corrects some errors made by Baillie and adds additional information on other names covered by Baillie. However it adds about another 35,000 names of makers and moves the cut off date forward to 1880. I would say its greatest contribution is the thousands of provincial makers that Baillie didn't think were important enough to cover. It is easy to read and is the first book I grab to find information on a maker.

*Old Clocks and Watches and Their Makers* by Britten. I use a seventh edition of 1956. This book had its origins in the late 1800s. I must say I do not use the makers list too often as I have found it to be bit unreliable on several occasions. It also leaves the reader with the impression that if you weren't interested in a London clock pre-1720 it really wasn't worth knowing about. Considering the book was started 100 years ago that was

probably a correct statement at the time. The first half of the book is a very good read and gives one a solid foundation on the subject of British horology. I don't trust the list but when I do get a good London clock I always turn to Britten to see what he has to say about the maker, as his writeups on makers are full of opinions about who was a "good" maker. His opinion still carries weight today when it comes to valuing a clock.

*The Book of American Clocks* by Palmer. One might ask: why look at a book about American makers? I do it because about 1 in 20 of Palmer's entries carries information about makers who came to America from Britain. I like to know that sort of information and it has helped me out greatly in the past. Even though the clock in question is British it is always of interest to know the maker came to America later in his life.

After I have looked at these books I then go to many other books on makers from a very specific area. I might have over 30 of these that have taken a lifetime to collect. Most are small and out of print but they do sometimes contain a name not found in another source. Most of these stay on the shelf for years between openings but as a group they are very handy.

Before I leave books on makers I'll say that I have recently spoken with Brian Loomes and he informs me that he is beginning to work on a new *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World* that combines his and Baillie's works and adds many new names. He says it will be out before the year 2000, so if you can hold out for a few more years

this will be the one book you must have.

On the watch side of things I find myself constantly into a small book of silver hallmarks. The one I use is *British and Irish Silver Assay Office Marks* by Frederick Bradbury, 1973 edition. It has another title on the cover but that is 27 words long. My copy is in several pieces but is still doing the job. There are probably several other books out there that would do the same thing: tell when a British watch was made from the hallmark.

The second general reference I use for watches is Phil Priestley's *Watch Case Makers of England*, an NAWCC supplement. I use this to identify the maker of the case of British silver watches. I can never afford gold watches.

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**BRITISH HOROLOGY TIMES**  
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## WHY THE WATCH-COCK VANISHED

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The street markets of London seem to be filled with trays of broken Georgian and Victorian watches. What are they bought for — the jewels? Cannibalization for parts? It must be one or the other. At all events, one part that almost certainly will be missing is the watch-cock, or balance-cock as it should more accurately be called. Its absence is the result of one of those unaccountable crazes in fashion that sweep through the female population every now and again: only in this case the craze was nearly a hundred years ago, and it was not exactly unaccountable - only unexpected.

The function of a balance-cock in the mechanism of a watch is two-fold: to provide the outer support for the spindle on which the balance wheel turns; and to protect the whole of the delicate balance wheel itself, which until about 1830 oscillated outside the main body of the watch and was extremely vulnerable. The cock had to be removable so that the balance wheel could be reached and repaired, and the shape of the wheel dictated the shape of the cover. So the basic balance-cock was a circular plate, the same size as the balance wheel, with a central boss holding a jewelled pivot, and a "foot" at one end with screw holes so that it could be fixed to the main body of the watch.

Within the fundamental

shape however, there are variations which help the collector in deciding the country of origin and the date of manufacture. The first (16<sup>th</sup> century) cocks were made in two parts. The foot was rivetted permanently to the upper plate of the watch mechanism, and the protective disc was attached to the foot by a mortice-and-tenon joint wedged together with a tapering pin. The screw is said to have been introduced to watch-making, at first in



Germany, in about 1540. This enabled the cock to be made in one piece and to be screwed to the plate for easy removal. One piece cocks became common from about 1625, with a characteristic step up from the foot to the "table" (as the main circular part covering the balance wheel came to be known).

There is a very distinct difference between watch-cocks made in England and Germany, and those made in France, Switzerland and Holland from this time onwards. It is only the single footed English and German ones which can really be called "cocks" for it is a technical term used by watchmakers for just that — a protective plate fixed at one end only; foreign balance wheel protectors were almost invariably made in the form of a circular, or sometimes oval, table supported at two diametrically opposed points. This form is known as a bridge.

Between the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and about 1830, when watch-cocks stopped being made, some unmistakable changes in style took place. Initially, both foot and table were pierced for decorative effect. By 1700 the foot had become semi-circular, so that the two straight edges formed a straight line, and the "neck" between the foot and the table was very narrow. The shape of the foot is one of the most useful indications in dating Georgian watch-cocks. The semi-circular shape common by 1700 became progressively squarer through the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the neck between foot and table proportionally wider, until by the end of the period the sides of the foot were almost parallel.

By 1700 both foot and table began to be made with a comparatively thick rim of metal outside the main decorations. Between

1700 and 1750 all English cocks had rims. Piercing was still the main form of decoration, but from about 1725 some of the feet were made solid and ornamented with engraving rather than piercing. The main decorative theme during this period was a kind of natural-



istic rococo — swathes of leaves, tendrils and flowers springing from a human face, or sometimes a shell, at the junction of foot and table. The details were exquisite, and have to be studied closely to be properly appreciated. Birds and animals, faces and figures, monsters, flowers, trees, basket work, scrolls — the variety is infinite. The only feature that needed to be incorporated in the scheme was the central boss covering the pivot of the balance wheel, and this was usually turned into a flower.

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## WATCH-COCKS, from page 3

What is remarkable is that they were decorated at all. The balance-cock occupied a position inside the case of the watch where it was scarcely ever seen; indeed, almost the only time it would ever see daylight was when the watch needed adjusting or repairing, and then it was the repairer, not the owner, who had the pleasure of it.

For, as a glance at any watch-cock of the 18<sup>th</sup> century will convince you, these were works of superb and delicate craftsmanship. Each one was hand-made, and no two (until perhaps the final decade of their manufacture) were alike. More remarkable, the making of watch-cocks was entirely a cottage industry. Although it was by no means unknown in the vicinity of other major cities, Liverpool (the center of the watch-making trade in England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) was the main focus and nearby Prescott the chief producing village. A cottage industry two hundred years ago meant, of course, working by the light of a single candle, perhaps magnified by the same water-lens that the lacemakers

used. The two crafts were by no means dissimilar in their delicacy: neither was work for old eyes and unsteady hands.

The watch-cock began as a blank of thin brass. The intricate and beautifully executed piercing which makes up the majority of the decoration was carried out with needle files of varying diameters. It was slow work. Some individual cocks took two to three weeks to make. The rewards were in proportion: a comparatively simple design would fetch fifteen shillings, and the most intricate up to two or three guineas. The same craftsman would also do the chasing of the solid parts, and finally the whole cock would be fire-gilded to protect the soft brass from corrosion.

From 1800 until the craft came to an end in 1830, watch-cocks were usually made solid throughout, without pierced decoration, and the standard of ornamentation declined sharply. Sometimes there was no attempt at engraving at all. More often than not, when decoration was still attempted the designs were

uninspired, symmetrical and often geometric.

We talked at the beginning of this account about the disappearance of watch-cocks from the carcasses of old watches on sale in the street markets. The reason for this is in about 1885, just before the Jubilee, some leader of fashion took it into her head to string some of these delicately wrought, pretty, golden objects into a necklace. It seems that the idea caught the imagination of everyone and within a couple of years there was scarcely a watch-cock to be found.

Necklaces were formed by joining the edges of the feet together with two or three small links, so that the circular tables hung downwards in a half-circle. Brooches, earrings, even finger rings were made. The imagination boggles at the number of perfectly good watches which must have been scrapped for the sake of the balance cock. In a way it was justice being seen to be done, for it was only then that this hidden example of craftsmanship at its best could be appreciated. ☺

# MART

MART ADS are free to members and should pertain to British or Anglo-American horology.

**FOR SALE** Two books—*Watch and Clockmakers of Birmingham* \$12 and *Watch and Clockmakers of Warwickshire* \$10. About 100 pages each. The Birmingham book is the better and has much information on dial makers not found in other books. Postage and packing is \$1.65 for one or both. Tom Spittler, 10925 Sigler Rd., New Carlisle OH 45344.

**WANTED** Musical English long-case clock. I've been offered a few but they were quarter chiming and  
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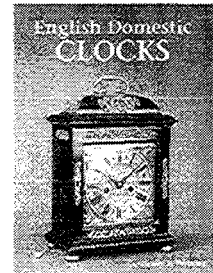
On the clock side I am always into Brian Loomes *Painted Dial Clocks* and its two earlier versions: *The White Dial Clock*. I use the information on dial makers a lot as well as referring to the book for hints as to when a clock might have been made.

Mary Tennant's book *Longcase Painted Dials, Their History and Decoration* is another excellent book that I am sure I will refer to from time to time.

The last book that I am into all of the time is *English Domestic Clocks* by Cescinski and Webster. It is an old book but it contains many wonderful plates on hands and dials that I always go back to.

As I look up from my keyboard there are nine shelves full of clock books. I have probably left some out that I shouldn't have but the ones I have included are ones that are more often off the shelves than on. ☺

Would the readers please share with us the names of those few books you consider essential to your collecting/restoration interest? We'll publish them later. -Editor



## SNAPSHOTS IN TIME IN BRITISH HOROLOGICAL HISTORY, PART 2

By Philip Priestley (UK)



Part 1, in *British Horology Times* issue number 8 of March 1996, described the earliest days - about 1530 to 1630, and listed 32 clock, watch and watchcase makers who were being protested by the "establishment" for not being Freemen. The sixteen angry protesters were also listed in the article. Their 1622 petition was unsuccessful.

Now, in Part 2, Mr. Priestley describes the 1631 incorporation of the Clockmakers' Company.

Some nine years after the unsuccessful Petition, the Company eventually received its Royal Charter granted by Charles I on 22 August 1631, and which exists to present times. This gave the Company power to control the horological trade in the City of London and within a ten-mile radius thereof and it incorporated a controlling body consisting of the Master, Wardens and the Fellowship (Freemen). It is of interest to note that the Records of the Clockmakers' Company escaped the curse of the 1665 Plague and the 1666 Fire of London and are now located in the Guildhall Library on Gresham Street, City of London. There are 14 volumes of Court Minute Books beginning 12 October 1632, together with several Registers of Apprenticeships and Freemen. (Strangely there is no recorded reason as to why the list of Subscribers first appears in the Minute Books 14 months after the

incorporation of the Company!)

The following list of subscribing members to the Company (12 October 1632) is extracted from manuscript CC 3974 where it is written in the script of that time. A transliteration is provided in a rare and expensive book *Some Account of the Clockmakers' Company* printed in 1881, page 51, and which is shown below. Of the 49 members recorded, two marked (\*) have been identified as watch case makers. It is of interest to note that the "undesirable foreigners" referred to in the 1622 Petition are now in the fold, so to speak. Since the subscribers were already Freemen of the Blacksmiths' and other Companies, they took the Brotherhood rather than the Freedom of the new Company. Eventually some of the hierarchy made themselves Freemen and by 1639 apprentices were becoming Freemen proper in the Clockmakers' Company.

Henry Archer, deputy Master (*Davyd Ramsay, Master, King's Clockmaker, away on business*)

John Willow }  
Sampson Shelton } Wardens

James Vautrollier }  
ffrauncis Foreman } Assistants  
John Smith }

John Harris \*  
Richard Morgan  
Samuell Lynaker } Assistants  
John Charlton }  
John Middnall }  
Symon Bartram  
Edward

*Continued in next column*

(Continuation of list of subscribing members:)

Robert Rothwood  
Thomas Holland  
John Brooke  
Onisipherous Heldon  
Symon Hacket  
Pierry Hue  
Oswald Durant  
Richard Child  
Thomas Shepheard  
Josiah Cuper  
Thomas Alcock  
Davyd Backquett  
Ely Volant  
Robert Grinkin  
Thomas Howse  
William Petit \*  
John Burgis  
William Daniell  
John Droeshout  
Edmund Gillpin  
Lewes Cooke  
John Walter his mark x  
Thomas Reead  
Edward Okeham  
Thomas Ward  
Thomas Lambe  
George Clarke  
Robert Holloway  
John Bullby  
John x Bull his mark  
William Daniell  
Richard Jackson  
Richard x Lord his mark  
Daniell Saunders ☺

### **MART**, from page 4

not true musicals playing waltz or marching tunes. I'll be grateful for any leads toward finding a nice one. Doug Cowan, 110 Central Terrace, Cincinnati OH 45215.

Fusee watch restoration **WORKSHOP** to be held in Columbus OH on Sat. & Sun., July 15-16. For 4 to 10 enthusiasts, experienced or not. Fee \$250. Register by June 1. Fred Powell, 18 Evergreen Lane, Middlebury VT 05753, 802-388-6902.

## UK CLOCK AND WATCH MATERIAL SUPPLIERS

By Eliot Isaacs (UK)



*In the following list, provided by Eliot Isaacs of the British Horological Institute, specific addresses and phone/fax numbers are provided for UK suppliers. If you phone you'll need to start by dialing 011 (the international access code), then 44 (the UK code), then the phone number. Don't forget to eliminate the first 0 from the local numbers provided when calling from the USA or Canada.*

-Editor

Clockspares (Manufacturers of many of the parts supplied by The Yard other houses - they issue a catalog)

East Dereham  
Norfolk NR19 2BP Phone 01362 694165

Cousins Material House  
Unit J  
Chesham Close  
Romford, Essex RM7 7PJ Phone 01708 757800  
Fax 01708 757012

Devon Clocks  
Albion Hill  
Exmouth  
Devon EX8 1JS Phone 01395 263943

C. R. Frost & Son Ltd. Phone 0171 253 0315  
Fax 0171 253 7454

The Glass Dome Co. Ltd.  
62 Priory Road  
Tonbridge  
Kent TN9 2BL Phone 01732 360830  
Fax 01732 367181

Jim Habgood  
42 Shorelands Road  
Barnstaple  
North Devon EX31 3AA Phone 01271 46926

Jevon & Stanley (General clock and watch parts)  
19 Queen Street  
Wolverhampton WV1 3JW Phone 01902 26309

*Continued in next column*

Jones & Chambault (Wheel & pinion cutting)  
Gronfa  
Station Road  
Clynderwen  
Dyfed SA66 7NF Phone 01437 563579

Lynton Dials  
22 Norwich Street  
Falkenham  
Norfolk NR21 9AE Phone 0132 8863666

Meadows & Passmore Ltd.  
Farningham Road  
Crowborough  
East Sussex TN6 2JP Phone 01892 662255  
Fax 01892 662277

A. A. Osborne & Son (Electric master & slave clocks  
& parts)  
Unit 1  
Bosworth House  
High Street  
Thorpe le Soken  
Essex CO16 0EA Phone 01255 861913 ☺

*More on this in later issues!* -Editor

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