



# British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

## News FROM CHAPTER 159

Greetings to all of you for the new millenium. I'm certainly happy to report that we have enough articles for the next two issues, but we need more watch writers! Dr. Ganczarczyk cannot carry this on his own. Please help.

Speakers for our next meetings are Roger Gendron on the topic of 30 hour longcase movements (April 13 at the Southern Ohio Regional) and John Taylor, one of our most popular speakers (probably July 20 at the National Convention in New Orleans). We are very lucky to get this kind of volunteer support from our members.

If you remember previous writings here and in the Bulletin about Caledonian Registered clock movements from late 19th century English clocks, you may recall that these so far anonymously manufactured, lyre shaped movements are usually seen in so-called Anglo-American wall clocks. Now, a shelf clock has been found containing one of these movements. The clock is original and from the same period as the wall clocks. I am going to take some photos for a future BHT issue.

Member Lee Yelvington is the new chairman of the NAWCC Program Committee. He's a man who gets things done, so I will be happy to work with him. The London Seminar last October was wonderful, including a fine closing banquet in the lavish Ironmongers Guildhall, with Professor Boksenberg, Master of the Worshipful

Company of Clockmakers as the after dinner speaker. He told a hilarious story of Sir Winston Churchill's abuse of a Dent pocketwatch. Wish I'd had a recorder so that we could present it here. Members Phil Priestley and Ken Johnston brought off a superb event, with much help from their spouses. Incidentally during that same week member Myron Mintz was elected a liveryman of the Clockmakers Company.

I did not accompany the Tower Clock tour which preceded the Seminar but it was very successful, again with the Priestley's help. US organizer Frank DelGreco has promised a report for our next BHT issue.

-Doug Cowan

### C O R R E C T I O N

#### If the crow flew west...

looking for Winster (see map caption on page 4, of November 2000 BHT22, *If Only I Could Talk!*), it would never reach Winster but would eventually look down upon a vast expanse of water. East is the way to go. Apologies to the crow. - Editor



## EDITOR'S CORNER

It's election time.

Three members of Chapter 159 are standing for NAWCC election: Doug Cowan for President, and Frank DelGreco and Ray Marsolek for Directors.

Doug has stated that he knows he will need a strong executive committee and a motivated Council to make real progress.

Chapter 159 members are encouraged to read the biographies beginning on page 57 of the February 2001 NAWCC Bulletin, determine whom you think will best fill Doug's needs and the needs of the Association, VOTE and mail to arrive at destination by April 2. The tear-out ballot is between pages 64 and 65 in the Bulletin. Voting the election is easy (but voting on the amendments is another matter).



-Paul Odendahl

## AN UNUSUAL ENGLISH MOVEMENT?

An analysis of a watch movement by  
**Jerzy Ganczarczyk (Canada)**.

**T**he Author has inspected an unusual English fusee, verge, full plate movement from about 1800 which was so substantially different from other English products of that period that at first he thought that it may be of Continental origin. A more thorough study however indicated several features associated with English watchmaking that eventually led to the conclusion that it might well be an English made movement.

**DIAL.** As shown in Fig. 1, the dial of this movement is of white enamel with a combination of white Arabic and Roman numerals located on black figure plaques placed at odd angles. Its brass edge has a diameter of 46.5 mm. Strangely enough, this dial resembles closely a silver champlève dial in a watch by London maker Henry Harpur (or Harper), who made it in the late 17th century. Harpur's watch was described by Baillie in his book *Watches: Their History, Decoration and Mechanism*<sup>1</sup>.

**CAP.** The movement is housed in a silver cap, cut to expose the balance bridge and held by a single lever latch attached to the balance bridge. This cap also has two additional openings: for winding the mainspring and for regulation of the balance spring (Fig. 2).

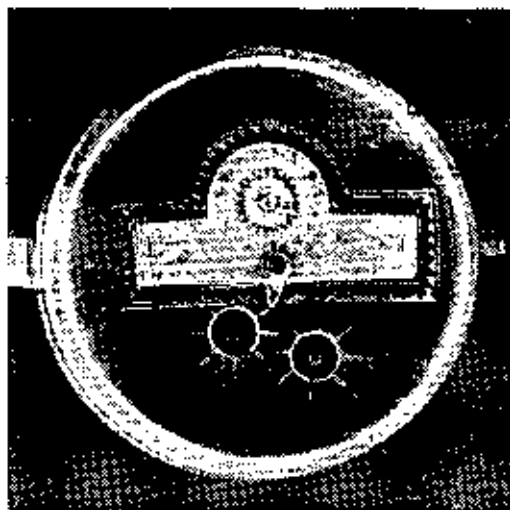


Figure 2. The inspected movement in its silver cap.

**TOP (POTENCE) PLATE.** The top plate of this movement, including its rim as well as its balance bridge, is nicely decorated with flower engraving (Fig. 3). In addition to the decoration there is specific information engraved on the plate: *No 3715, C. Davidson, Finsbury*. This inscription is certainly a primary reason (although not completely convincing) to consider this movement to be an English one. Baillie notes "C. Davidson, watchmaker, ca 1775 in London". Britten gives him a somewhat later date of 1802, and Loomes in the Addenda to his list wrote "Davidson, C., London, no date, W(atchmaker)"<sup>2,3,4</sup>. It is expected that the uncertainty associated with Davidson's dates will be shortly clarified with a more advanced use of the electronic *Biography Data Base 1680-1830*<sup>5</sup>. "Finsbury" is certainly

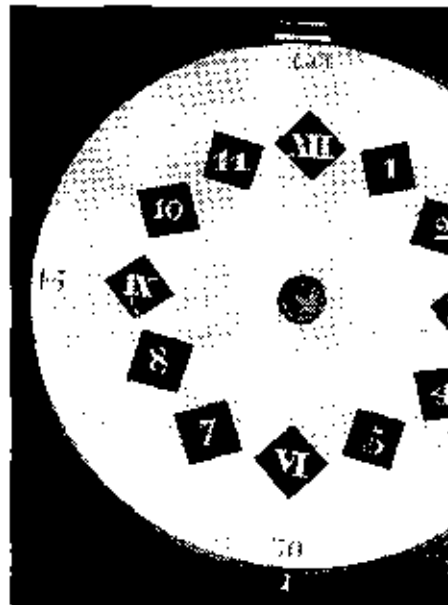


Figure 1. Dial of the inspected movement.

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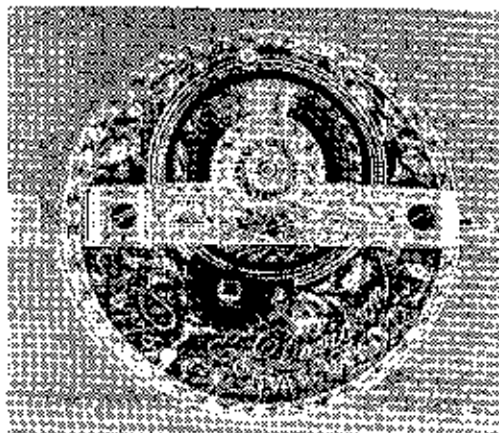


Figure 3. Top plate of the inspected movement.

a London address. The village of Finsbury is located just north of Clerkenwell and is known to be a part of the watchmaking trade district so strongly associated with Clerkenwell. An omission of the magic word "London" in this inscription is another indication that this movement most likely was not a Dutch fake intended for Continental sale, or a Continental product intended for the English market.

**BALANCE BRIDGE.** Use of balance bridges instead of balance cocks was more common among Continental makers than among English ones. However balance bridges were not absolutely unusual at this period in England. Among others, Thomas Mudge and the famous John Harrison used them. As reported by Paul Tuck, a balance bridge very similar to the one in the discussed movement was used in an unnumbered English pocket chronometer of the late 1780s, signed by Charles Haley. This chronometer was sold at the London Phillips auction in September 1997<sup>6</sup>.

**HAIR SPRING REGULATION.** The investigated movement was

equipped with a modification of Tompion's regulator in which, instead of a silver disc, a blued multi-tooth wheel was used (see Fig. 3).

**CONCLUSION.** It is very likely that the described movement was made in England. All comments on the subject would be welcome. ©

#### REFERENCES

1. G. H. Baillie, *Watches, their History, Decoration and Mechanism*, NAG. Press Ltd., London, 1929.
2. G. H. Baillie, *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World*, NAG. Press Ltd., London, 1929.
3. F. I. Britten, *Former Clock and Watchmakers and their Work*, Methuen, London, 1894.
4. Brian Loomes, *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World, Volume 2*, NAG. Press Ltd., Colchester, Essex, 1970.
5. John Robey, *Book Reviews, Antiquarian Horology*, Spring 1999, pp 478-479.
6. Paul Tuck, *Horology under the Hammer. Watches at Auction 1996-98*, Antiquarian Horology, Spring 1999, pp 442-454

Dr. Jerzy Ganczarczyk is a frequent contributor to BHT, writing about his interest in English watches. He is Professor Emeritus of civil engineering at the University of Toronto.



David Penney has written from Britain in response to Jerzy Ganczarczyk's

BHT22 article concerning H. Samuel pocket watches as follows:

"I would like to point out that the CLIMAX movement is not the work of Wm. Ehrhard but is by the Lancaster Watch Company (L. W. Co.) of Prescot England. Its number, 307575, indicates a date of manufacture ca 1897. The Patent Trip Action refers to Patent No. 21412 taken out by C. J. Hewitt of the L. W. Co. in 1894. Further, its club-tooth design of escape wheel may be more associated with Swiss manufacture but is by no means unknown in English work.

"As for the Swiss movement retailed under the name ACME, this may have been manufactured by Buren (not Bueren), but it would be interesting to read the reasoning for the 'almost certainly' attribution."

Finally, David reminds us that these were "both very cheap machine-made movements aimed at the lower end of the English market and should not be compared with better quality movements from either Switzerland or America". (Not without interest however, since collecting pressures, especially on new collectors will make these items desirable. -Editor.)

Jerzy Ganczarczyk writes from Canada:

#### MORE ABOUT SAMUELS.

"My humble article *H. Samuel of Manchester* on inexpensive, machine made, English watches of the end of the 19th century, published in BHT22, has gained an unexpected popularity (or should we say notoriety?). Several readers contacted the Author with additional information, comments and words of encouragement. Thanks are due to all of them. In the meantime some new data on the subject surfaced.

"R. J. Griffith, Curator of the Prescot Museum, kindly informed me that Harriet Samuel was a wife of Walter Samuel. She was born in 1835 at Yarmouth. Both Mr. Griffith and David Penney noticed that the Author made a mistake attributing the CLIMAX movement to Wm. Ehrhard instead of to the Lancashire Watch Co. in Prescot.

See *Recoil*, page 8

## JONATHAN CHAMBERS

A description of a purchase and restoration, research and some controversial hypotheses by Roger Gendron (MI).

NOTE TO THE READER: Much of this article is excerpted from letters and email to and from Messrs. (the late) Charles K. Aked, Brian Loomes and Dr. Jeffrey Darken between October 21, 1976 and January 11, 2000 and from attachments to that correspondence.

**PURCHASE AND RESTORATION.** In February 1976 I purchased a late seventeenth century longcase movement from Strike One Ltd. (R. E. Rose) when Rose was still located in Islington. The name of the maker engraved on the dial below the chapter ring was Jonathan Chambers. It started its existence with a ten inch square dial but during the 18th century the dial had been converted to a break arch, in which condition Strike One had bought it. Once recognized, the movement had been separated from its rather nondescript oak case and the broken arch removed. In need of a great deal of repair, it was acquired in an "as is" condition.

The eight day, five latched pillar (to the front plate), count wheel (behind the rear plate), movement has a one second pendulum and trains typical of good quality London sold movements of about 1690. The bell stand for the 5½" (140 mm) bell is mounted to the front plate. The only atypical movement features are that it was *never* equipped with maintaining power and that the pallets of the anchor encompass 8½ teeth of the 30 tooth escape wheel instead of 7½ teeth for the normal square recoil escapement. The going train is quite standard with a 96 tooth great wheel driving an 8 tooth center pinion, a 60 tooth center wheel driving an 8 tooth pinion and a 48 tooth third wheel driving a 6 tooth pinion. The 30 tooth escape wheel makes one revolution per minute.

The ten inch (254 mm) square brass dial has a 9-7/32" (234 mm) outside diameter, 5-5/8" (143 mm) inside diameter

chapter ring with an average thickness of 5/64" (2 mm). The minute numerals are engraved outside of the minute divisions and the engraved half hour markers are an embellished trident pattern common on London dials around 1690. The matted dial center has no seconds bit and no date indicator. The corners of the dial plate have gilded floral spandrels (See Figs. 1 & 2). They are the only spandrels ever mounted on the dial and are still held in place with their original square head,

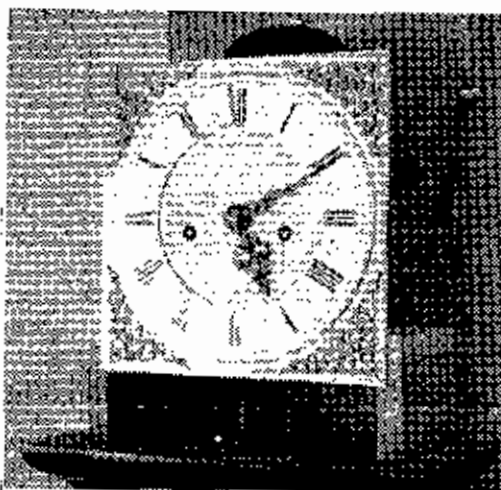


Fig. 2. Jonathan Chambers dial showing chapter ring and spandrels.

hand made brass screws. (Until reading *Brass Dial Clocks* by Brian Loomes in early 1999, I had dated the spandrels at mid-eighteenth century. Now I know that they are the same age as the movement<sup>1</sup>.)

I fully restored the movement to as close to its original state as

possible with the information I was able to accumulate, both from the movement itself and from the many books covering the period. The movement has very few significant parts that are not original, namely: the great wheel, third wheel\* and anchor\* of the going train, the lifting lever controlling the striking train\* and the count wheel detent. (\*Replaced by me in 1976.) Although I did replace the third wheel of the going train, the anchor of the going train and the lifting lever controlling the striking train, the only original part that I replaced was the third wheel.

At some time in the past, probably the nineteenth century, when a new anchor was required, the movement was equipped with an anchor that encompassed 7½ teeth. The anchor arbor had to be bent to engage the escape wheel and the anchor. The clock undoubtedly ran but the effect on the third wheel was a disaster. The recoil bent all of the teeth, probably after they had been worn to needles. Why the escape wheel was not ruined is a puzzle. At the time my skills were not good enough to just put a new rim on the wheel, which has an outside diameter of 1.415", and cut new teeth on the rim, so I made a new wheel and mounted it on the original collet. The person who replaced the anchor was probably the one who bent the long crutch into an "S" curve to shorten it to less than two thirds of its original length, undoubtedly to fit a new pendulum rod. Judicious use of heat and patience allowed me to straighten

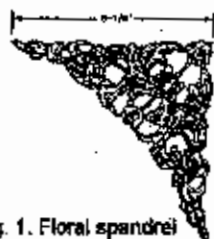


Fig. 1. Floral spandrel design, Jonathan Chambers dial.

the arbor and the long crutch which now ends about 1-5/16" above the seat board. A very low recoil anchor was designed to encompass 8½ teeth (See Fig. 3). Made of oil hardening tool steel the pallets are hardened to about 60Rc. The lifting lever controlling the striking train had been replaced by a crudely cut piece of sheet steel, although the attached brass collet that engaged the arbor's square end may have been an original part. It was replaced with a lifting lever of typical design for the period.

The great wheel of the going train had been expertly replaced. The only reason that I knew it as a replacement was it lacked the decorative turnings on the other train wheels. It now has them. What I believe to be a replacement count wheel detent, normally made of wrought iron, is made of work hardened and pol-

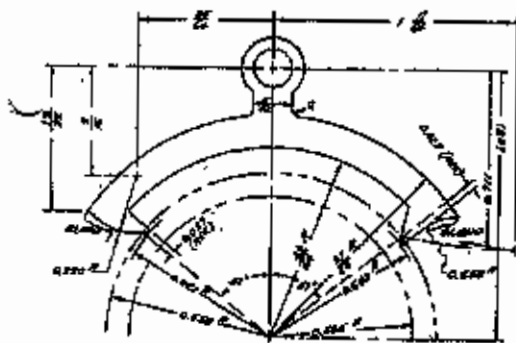


Fig. 3. Very low recoil anchor, Jonathan Chambers movement.

ished brass. It was well made and remains on the movement. The original detent must have had a slightly different shape as there is a hole in the back plate for a detent stop pin. Installing a pin in the hole prevents the newer detent from functioning properly.

In all there were twenty-three separate repair and restoration operations to return the movement to near original condition. The work was completed in late September 1976. The movement has been running well without any attention

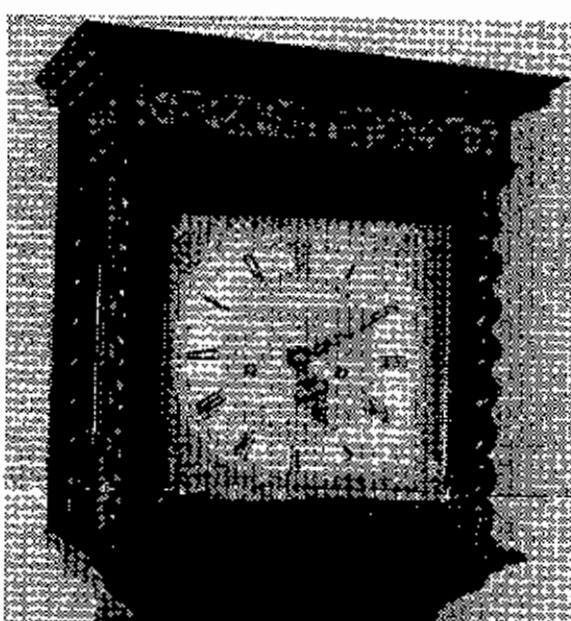


Fig. 4. Hood detail, reproduction case for Jonathan Chambers movement

but cleaning and lubricating since that time.

I spent more than a year after the movement was restored and running in my shop trying to learn two things: 1. What style cases housed Jonathan Chambers longcase clocks? and 2. Was a late seventeenth century case available that I could purchase to house my movement? I was unsuccessful on both quests.

During my studies of the literature prior to restoring the movement, I ran across a thirty hour longcase clock, ca 1690, with a four wheel watch (*watch is a correct term for the clock's going train.* -Ed.) with "Daniel Quare London" engraved on the chapter ring in *The Grandfather Clock* by Ernest L. Edwards<sup>2</sup>. The first thing I noticed was that the hour hand varied in only two small details from the hour hand on the Chambers dial. Coincidence possibly, or made by the same specialist hand maker. Although the movement of this Quare clock has a seconds bit, a date wheel and four

pinned pillars, the workmanship looks very much like the workmanship on my Chambers movement. Possibly another coincidence as the train wheels do not have decorative turnings. I saw enough similarities that when I had to construct a case to house my movement, I used the Quare case design, minus the carved crest on the hood. (Due to ceiling heights I would have to remove the crest to remove the rising hood.) The Quare case is ebonyized pine. My case is ebonyized fruitwood (See Figs. 4, 5 & 6 showing the cased movement).

**RESEARCH.** Starting in 1976 I wrote numerous letters and searched the available literature trying to learn more about Jonathan Chambers than was shown in *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World* by G. H. Baillie and *Old Clocks and Watches and Their Makers* by Britten. Aside from information from Charles Aked regarding an advertisement for a lost watch by Jonathan Chambers in the London "Daily Courant" on 22 June 1708 and seeing a photo of a lantern clock by Chambers in *English Lantern Clocks* by W. F. J. Hana<sup>3</sup>, nothing new was learned. In 1984, after seeing that



Fig. 5. Jonathan Chambers reproduction case.

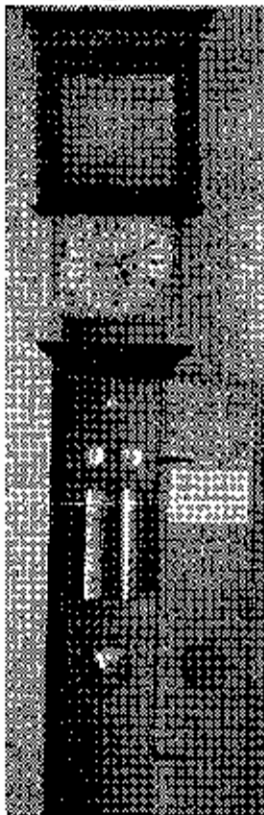


Fig. 6. Rising hood and spoon lock, Jonathan Chambers reproduction case.

*The Early Clockmakers of Great Britain* by Brian Loomes contained no more information about Chambers than I already had, I visited Brian in Yorkshire. It was during that visit that Brian suggested that I concentrate my research on the International Genealogical Index at the Guildhall Library in London where there are microfilm indexes for every other ancient English and Scottish county and for the Channel Islands, Ireland and Wales.

By Spring 1985, having been

unsuccessful in finding Jonathan Chambers, clockmaker, in the parish records of London and Middlesex County, I began to do some speculating that the name *Jonathon Chambers* may have been a pseudonym. London makers were getting a lot of parts made by "Chamber Masters" at the time and my clock may have been made by a chamber master doing a little business for himself on the side. I mentioned that speculation in a letter to Brian Loomes dated 21 April 1985.

Between late 1984 and late 1998 I spent many, many hours, mostly in the Guildhall Library searching Anglican parish records from all the ancient English counties trying to learn more about the maker of my clock. Although a few (very few) men named Jonathan Chambers were found, none of them fit the right profile or time period. My goal was to be in a position to write an illustrated

article about the movement and about Chambers. By 1990, although I had not identified Jonathan Chambers, I was reasonably certain that he had made products for other people, namely London clockmakers, to sell under their own names.

Both *Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World* by G. H. Baillie and *Old Clocks and Watches and Their Makers* by Britten mention a clock by Jonathan Chambers in the Wetherfield collection when it was dispersed in 1928. Britten's entry is "CHAMBERS, JONATHAN, London. Long black and gold case clock, 10-in dial, about 1690..." I am convinced there was such a clock and that it is illustrated in the *Wetherfield Collection of Clocks* by Eric Bruton. By process of elimination, it must be the movement shown in Illustration and Serial Number 217. It is obviously an eight day movement with a 10-in dial, no seconds bit and apparently no maintaining power. The differences from the upper part of my dial are that the minute numerals are inside the minute ring, the hands are of an earlier style and it has cherub's head spandrels. Based on style I would date it at somewhat before 1680, not 1690. The painted oak case that housed the movement in 1928 had nothing in common with the movement - size, style or datewise.

During 1999 I learned an order of magnitude more about Jonathan Chambers than I had in the prior 22½ years. It began when I read *English 30 Hour Clocks* by Jeff Darken and John Hooper. The front of the dust jacket illustrated a key wound wall clock by Chambers, ca 1668<sup>4</sup>. Reading it answered why I had not been able to

find Chambers in Anglican parish records. Chambers was a Quaker who had lived in Shefford, Bedfordshire. There was a lot of information in *English 30 Hour Clocks*, but even more in the footnoted *Bedfordshire Clock and Watchmakers 1352-1880* by Chris Pickford<sup>5</sup>. Although some of his starting dates are contradictory (per Pickford they are typographical errors<sup>6</sup>), Chambers may have been making clocks from before 1668 until close to his death in 1693. Pickford also mentions that two London clockmakers, John Harris (actually a watchmaker) and John Westoby received bequests in Chambers' Will. (It is interesting to note that John Harris, watchmaker, may have made one longcase clock, per Brian Loomes<sup>7</sup> and one lost watch by Jonathan Chambers, clockmaker, is recorded.)

A letter written to Dr. Jeffery Darken, author and editor of *Antiquarian Horology* (the *Antiquarian Horological Society* journal) on October 9, 1999 resulted in Jeff sending me some more information about Chambers. Included were a copy of his original Will with a transcription by Jeremy Evans of the British Museum and a photo and description of an eight day Chambers longcase clock offered for sale at Sotheby's, London on 17 December 1998. For a provincial clockmaker, Jonathan Chambers died quite a wealthy man. Possibly coincidence again, but the case of the Chambers clock offered for sale at Sotheby's (Fig. 7), although marquetry, is essentially the same design as the 1690 Quare case mentioned previously, and my reproduction case. Sotheby's dates the clock ca 1695 and reports that the trunk moldings are reversed. I would have to say that based on the dial and hands alone, the clock pre-dates 1695 by at least ten years. There is no seconds bit but it does appear to have bolt and shutter maintaining power. I can't be sure but I don't think the present under hood molding is original to the case, not just reversed. There must have been other

problems with the clock as it did not sell but was "bought in". In a separate email message Jeff Darken told me that he had seen another eight day Chambers longcase movement in an auction in Bishop Stortford, Essex in 1996 or 1997.

**SOME CONTROVERSIAL HYPOTHESES.** Despite the fact that since early 1999 I have learned of two more clocks and possibly one longcase movement carrying Jonathan Chambers' signature, the total number of Chambers clocks known to me and my sources to have survived until now is pitifully small for a man who made clocks for at least 25 years and apparently became wealthy making them. Making up the total arc: one 30-hour wall clock, one lantern clock, one marquetry cased eight day longcase clock and two, possibly three, eight day longcase movements. (The movement sold in Bishop Stortford *could* be the improperly cased movement from the Wetherfield collection.) It wouldn't surprise me if someone was to show that the one longcase clock that John Harris, watchmaker, mentioned in Chambers' Will, may have made, was actually made by Jonathan Chambers. The lost watch attributed to Chambers might just as easily have been made by Harris.

Learning that Jonathan Chambers was a Quaker and knowing that Quare also was a Quaker only reinforced my opinion that Chambers had made products for other people, namely London clockmakers, to sell under their own names. I believe that Chambers made most of his fortune as a sub-contractor to London makers. He may have made parts, whole movements, movements complete with dials and hands or all of the above. Based on the good (not extraordinary) quality of my movement and the quality of the movement shown in *English 30 Hour Clocks*, he probably made some complete clocks as a sub-contractor. I suspect that he only made clocks with his own name when the sub-contracting business was slow or there

was substantial profit to be made. No! I can't prove it. Even circumstantial evidence would be hard to come by. If the fairly complete shop records of John Harris, John Westoby or Daniel Quare were available they might give some indication. Another possibility would be the records of drayage companies hauling freight between Bedfordshire and London, if such could be found to exist. In any case it is a task out of reach for someone more than three thousand miles away. I have known for some time that by the end of the seventeenth century there was a steady flow of ebauches from Prescot, near Liverpool, to London watchmakers. I would find it hard to believe that the same did not apply to clocks and clock parts. Based on weight and size, to be profitable the distances for clocks would have been shorter. Bedfordshire seems an economical distance from London.

There has been some speculation by scholars that Thomas Tompion had been apprenticed to Jonathan Chambers. Proof is yet to be found. Thomas Tompion enters my picture but in a different context. When Thomas' father died in 1665 he left the tools of his blacksmith shop to James, Thomas' younger brother, indicating that Thomas was already fully occupied with other endeavors, six years before he appeared in London. All writers on the subject including R. W. Symonds gloss over the fact that this 32 year old from near Northill, Bedfordshire appeared in London in July 1671, *paid a search fee* (with funds from where?) and two months later was made a Free Brother of the Clockmakers' Company, albeit as a "Great Clockmaker". By 1674 Thomas was a full freeman of the

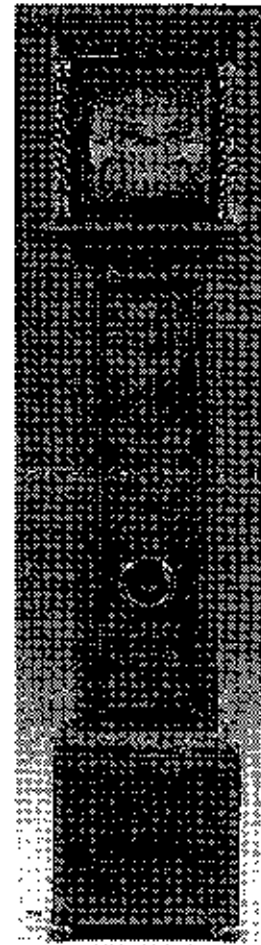


Fig. 7. Jonathan Chambers longcase clock offered for sale at Sotheby's, London on December 17, 1998.

CC. By 1675 he was turning out the highest quality longcase, bracket and lantern clocks, plus instruments. There was no hue and cry about his qualifications. It is my opinion that Thomas Tompion's talent was well known to at least some influential members of the Clockmakers' Company *before* he appeared in London. A very logical way that could have happened was that he was a contract maker to London clockmakers long before 1671. It would also explain how he earned the money to move to London, pay the search fee and perhaps even have enough to set him-

self up in business. Whether he was invited to London or decided to go on his own is too speculative for me to give an opinion. (That may be surprising in view of the other speculative opinions that I have put forth.)

The Knibbs carried the practice one step further. They kept *all* of the profits in the family. Samuel, who moved to London and set up business in 1662, died in 1670. Almost immediately Joseph, who had legally been in business in Oxford for only about two years, moved to London to take over Samuel's workshop. John remained in Oxford. Although there is speculation that products moved from London to Oxford as well as from Oxford to London, there would be far greater profits in the Oxford to London movement. Joseph was a fine maker and quickly established a reputation for extraordinary clocks. Hence a market for high priced goods that could be produced more cheaply in Oxford. It would also account for John's *substantial* business.

There are some who will claim that I denigrate these eminent makers. Far from it. What has to be recognized is that these men were in business to make a profit. They were able to increase their profits by buying in parts and even complete movements so that is what they did. As long as the quality of the bought in components met their high standards, it enabled them to provide many more clocks and watches for their customers.

#### NOTES

1. Pages 53, 54, 55 and 56 of *Brass Dial Clocks* by Brian Loomes illustrate and describe a clock from the 1680s that has dial spandrels almost identical to those on my Chambers dial, differing only in the length of the tip extensions. Loomes states that early in the 20th century these spandrels were frequently found on late 17th century longcase dials but "restorers" replaced them with the "nicer" cherub's head spandrels.

2. Pages 51, 57, 77 and 79 plus

Plates 25, 82 and 140 of *The Grandfather Clock* by Ernest L. Edwards describe and illustrate the 30 hour longcase clock.

3. Plate 29 on page 75 of *English Lantern Clocks* by W. F. J. Hana shows a balance lantern inscribed "Jonathan Chambers fecit" (ca 1690). Hana states that "It is interesting that the dial carries only the signature and possesses no further engraving".

4. Pages 2, 43-47, 291, 298, 322, 366 and 368-371 of *English 30 Hour Clocks* by Darken and Hooper thoroughly describe and illustrate the thirty hour key wound wall clock by Jonathan Chambers (ca 1668).

5. Pages 9, 10, 19, 66, 101 and 102 of *Bedfordshire Clock and Watchmakers 1352-1880* by Chris Pickford mention Chambers and describe anecdotes regarding his life.

6. Letter from Chris Pickford to Jeff Darken dated 3 January 1996.

7. Page 285 of *The Early Clockmakers of Great Britain* by Brian Loomes.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thankfully acknowledge that the late Mr. Charles K. Aked shared his information and

encouraged me. I also thank Mr. Brian Loomes for his suggestions and critiques of my genealogical research; and Mr. Jeffrey Darken for supplying me with a tremendous amount of information about Jonathan Chambers and his recently recognized clocks. ☺

Roger Gendron is a former Air Force pilot and a retired professional engineer. His principal horological interest has always been weight driven, pendulum controlled 17th and 18th century English clocks, more as a student than as a collector. He has restored and recased a few representative antique longcase clocks, and has designed, built and cased longcase movements. He is a member of Chapters 67 and 169.



## MART

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

Doug Cowan is seeking the following items: A pre-balance spring pocket watch, preferably English. A book by Gardaz called *Keys of Time*, and an early 19th century English pocket watch with a Massey 1 lever escapement. Email dcclock@juno.com or phone 513-771-0556. Thanks.

Tom Spittler needs old longcase clock hands. Broken ones are fine, especially minute hands which always seem to be the ones to go. Can't pay much, but I'd rather replace the tip of an old hand than use an incorrect new pair for restoration. Phone 937-845-9032 before 9PM eastern.

#### RECOIL, from page 3

"According to Mr. Griffith the specific movement described was invoiced on March 1, 1898. About that time, Harriet Samuel bought at least 1000 of such movements and resold them under her own name.

"British Patent No. 14528 of 1895, broadly used in the H. Samuel advertisements and submitted to the Patent Office by Edger Samuel, a son of Harriet, proved to be only a communication from abroad, written by Adolf Wyss of Lyss Switzerland, a watch balance maker. The technical value of this patent is highly questionable.

"The documents of the Supreme Court, City and County of New York, described in *NAWCC Bulletin*, Vol. 26, Whole No. 233, P. 710 (December 1984), gave specific light on the business practices of H. Samuel predecessors. These documents dealt with a litigation of 1847 between James Brindle of Liverpool and Morris Lewis Samuel and his partners. Apparently a large number of watches and movements of "spurious quality", signed with the name of James Brindle, were offered for sale in the United States. Brindle claimed that they were only "imitations" of the products of his workshop. In this litigation a falsified document was presented that stated that Sylvester Lewis Samuel was the only agent for Brindle."

-Jerzy Ganczarczyk



## HENRY - PART 2

Abridged from *The First Henry*, copyright © by The Royal Archivist. Used with permission.

Previously in this horological story by **Paul Odendahl (LA)** Henry was separated from Cromwell's New Model Army in Scotland and was headed toward England when he encountered an injured Major John Buffington being transported south in an army wagon train. The Major befriended Henry and as a result Henry took up temporary residence with the Buffingtons in Bedford. Now the plot thickens with Henry about to encounter real clock-makers. He and the Major were visiting with Margaret Tompion and her daughter in Ickwell Green when Mrs Tompion said:

**T**homas has gone down to Buckingham for the day. But Tom is at the forge as usual and if there is anything you need, he will gladly try to help."

"This is just a friendly visit," said the Major. "I want Henry to meet Tom and perhaps you and Margaret can bring me up to date about what's happening in Northill."

With that Mrs Tompion went to the rear door and they could hear three blows struck on a bell, followed by three more blows. Quickly enough a young lad appeared and was introduced to Henry.

"Mother," he said, "may I be excused? I have just made a pour and it needs my attention."

The Major interjected himself: "Please let Tom take care of his work. Perhaps he would allow Henry to go along with him."

On the way out of the back door, Henry had a quick look at the bell hanging from the side of the house. The forge was a building every bit as large as the house, about 100 feet away and sheltered by a ring of old oak trees. Inside, Henry was overwhelmed. Tom went

straight to a sand table and began smelling the air and waving his hands over it. Henry could see that Tom did not want to be distracted with chatter so he looked around. Benches, tools and equipment were everywhere. Henry could see the dissipating smoke had issued from the sand table, and in a far corner was a collection of iron: bars, rods, some shaped pieces and some modest but heavy-looking ingots. Over by the big door through which they had entered was an assortment of neatly arranged pieces: hinges, handles, locks, straps, horseshoes, nails, rivets — obviously all the work of a busy blacksmith.

Henry returned to the area of the sand table and just watched silently.

Shortly Tom said, "This is going well now. I'll show you around this crowded, dirty place and then you may want to return to the comfort of the house."

Of course Henry didn't want any part of the comfort of the house at this time. He was fairly bursting with questions.

"Would you mind, Tom, if I

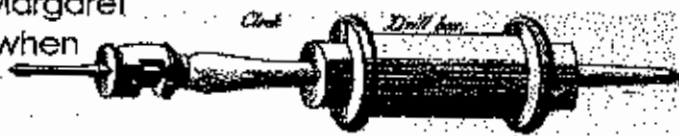
asked questions?"

"Go ahead."

"What is this?" pointing to a curiously shaped but well made object on one of the many work tables. It looked as though it might be a weapon of some kind but Henry didn't recognize it as such.

"That is a clock drill bar."

"Thank you, Lord," thought



Henry, "you have brought me to the right place."

"Drill bar..." murmured Henry.

"Yes. See the wedge shaped bit in this end? Go ahead, you can pick it up. That can be changed to another bit to suit the hole that is to be drilled. Then you take that bow over there and wrap in onto the wood spindle and you can make the drill rotate. Of course you must have the work held steady in a vice and you must have a breast plate on."

"Breast plate?..."

"The other end with the round point fits to a countersink in a breastplate — see that one hanging on the wall? Then you lean into the work for pressure, and drill.

Henry could see that he would come away from this visit enriched.

Tom could see that this would be a long visit.

It was a long visit indeed. The boys didn't stop to eat. After a good look at the entire building, they returned to the sand table.

"Use this to scrape away the sand from the top of the casting beneath," said Tom. "Be careful and don't touch with your hands.

There's no more smoke but it's still hot. When you get through, join me; there's more to do."

At another table Tom was working a flat piece of gold colored metal. Henry peered at it.

"Brass," said Tom, "I'm making a fret."

By then Henry had learned that the best way to get an explanation was to remain silent and look interested.

"When I get through hardening, smoothing and polishing, I will then cut it to shape. For the job of sawing out the fretwork, I'll pass it on to my father. I could do it, but he is better at it. Then I'll finish it."

"Isn't it hard enough after you heat it?"

"No, it's soft. You must hammer it to harden it."

Henry was confused. He recalled his lesson about hardening and tempering. Nothing said then about hammering. He let his doubts pass.

There were other projects going on for Henry to help with. One was the moving of some ingots which Mr Tompion needed tomorrow. Tom was thankful to have Henry help with that.

"Is this iron?" asked Henry.

"Yup."

"Do you ever make steel?"

"Yup, sometimes."

"Where is the carbon?"

Tom stopped and looked up at Henry. What kind of question was that from a greenhorn? Who was this fellow?

Tom had a question of his own.

"How old are you?"

"Nineteen."

"I'm thirteen. How did you learn about steel?"

Henry explained about his lesson from the man with the boat on the River Tweed. He also took the chance to tell Tom about his experiences with the clocks that had fallen from towers when he was in the New Model. Henry was delighted when he got a chance to explain to Tom what the New Model was. Then Tom explained that hardening brass was not at all like hardening steel.

They never did get back to the question of the carbon. Young Margaret appeared to say that Major Buffington was preparing to leave and wanted Henry. On the way back to the house Henry said, "That's a beautiful bell and it has a lovely ring."

"I know, I cast it. Henry, why don't you come here again tomorrow or as soon as you can? We have a lot to talk about and a lot to

do."

At that moment, after a few hours with his thirteen year old new friend, Henry realized what a novice he was. He could give up all thoughts of the long road to clock-making and return to the idle comfort of being an adoptee of the Buffingtons, or he could even re-join the New Model. It didn't take him long to decide his future.

Henry opted for the long road.

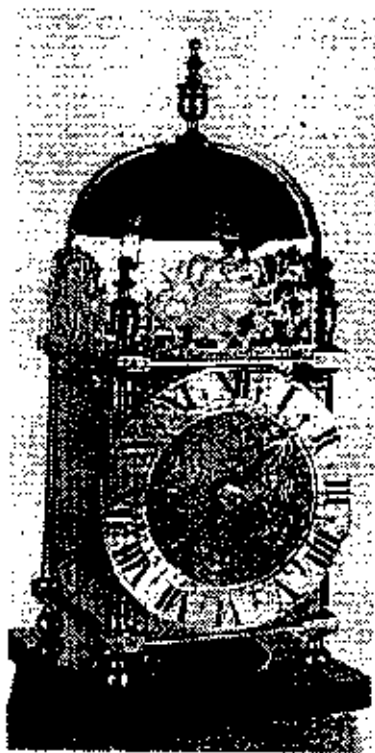
On the road back to Bedford, Henry immediately seized the opportunity to speak his mind about joining the Buffington family.

"Major Buffington, I will accept your offer of yesterday. I would be honored for you to consider me as part of your family. As an adopted part, that is. I have two reasons for arriving at that decision. First is that I admire you and Mrs Buffington. I have never before lived like you live. I shall be happy with you and I will do my best to make you happy about me. Secondly..."

Henry had to stop because he could see that he had lost the Major's attention. Another carriage was approaching coming in the opposite direction. Major Buffington doffed his hat and waved it as they passed and the occupant of the other carriage did the same.

"Now back to what you were saying," said the Major.

"Well the other reason I would like to live with you is that I want to make a friendship with the Tompions. Tom is 6 years younger than I but he knows so much more about the things I yearn to learn about. He told me that he is in the process of making a clock. He calls it a brass clock\* but it will also have steel in it. Not much iron except for what he called a hook and posts. So I will be



\* "Brass clock": 17th century term for what we now call a lantern clock.

wanting to travel over to Ickwell Green a great deal. I can walk there. Sir, I hope you will not be offended at the fact that part of my reason for accepting your offer is to spend time with the Tompions and learn about clockmaking."

"Henry, I will not be offended in the least. Welcome to the family Buffington!"

The flicker of a knowing smile that brushed his face and which Henry did not see, was because he said to himself, "That's exactly what I planned on."

*And so it came about that on All-Hallows day, the first day of November, in the year 1651, with Providential guidance, Henry made two decisions that were to alter his life as well as the lives of the Tompion family, mother and son Buffington, and (some say) British horology.*

Mrs Buffington had seen the carriage approaching and met them at the driveway.

Bursting with news they said simultaneously to each other:

"Dear..."

"Dear..."

"You first, John."

"Dear, Henry will be staying with us as a member of our family."

"Praise the Lord and welcome!" With that she stepped forward and gave Henry an engulfing hug. "You can be my make-believe grandson." Physically tough as he was, Henry melted under that hug. As Henry led Nellie away with the wagon she turned to her son and said:

"John, Mr East was just here."



"We passed on the road."

"I asked him to have a look at... the... tail..."

Henry heard no more. He was out of earshot.

The following day Major Buffington insisted that Henry ride Nellie to visit the Tompions and furthermore told him that he was welcome to take Nellie whenever he wished. It would do Nellie good since the Major was not riding her.

When Henry arrived at Ickwell Green he first went to the front door of the house where he learned from Mrs Tompion that her husband and Tom were in the forge and that Henry was to go directly there. Inside the forge, Henry could see someone working at the largest anvil and he correctly guessed that this was Mr Tompion. Tom looked up from his bench and rose to greet Henry.

"Good morning, Henry. Welcome back. What would you like to do this morning?"

After a pause for thought, Henry said, "Why don't you put me to work?"

"Well, there is something that father needs and I can start you on."

Henry caught the fact that Tom didn't consider himself an instructor and wanted to do his own work.

Tom asked, "Have you ever used nails?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever made nails?"

"No."

"It's easy. Watch."

Tom picked up a narrow bar of wrought iron from a nearby pile and began hammering. Henry could see it quickly take a tapered shape. Then he broke it off at the point, placed it in a special anvil and hammered on a head. He then held it up, examined it and handed it to Henry.

"Can you do that? Father needs twelve dozen. Make them all that length."

Of course Henry said he could do it. He attacked the task. He found that it was not as easy as Tom had made it seem and he bashed his fingers a few times, but he did it.

*Henry's first blacksmith job: twelve dozen handwrought nails!*

He found a bucket and carried the nails over to Tom.

Tom stopped to examine the nails, "They'll do." Then:

"Remember the hot brass yesterday? It has cooled now and you



can work it. Take it over to that iron bench and hammer it. Try to do even hammering all across, back and forth and try not to make too many dimples."

Henry bent to his work. "More hammering," thought Henry. Tom went back to his work. Presently Henry showed the hammered plate to Tom.

"More," said Tom.

After that, "Other side," said Tom.

Neither Tom nor Henry realized that Mr Tompion, while working at his anvil in the far corner, was fully aware of their collaboration. He knew exactly what was going on.

After about three hours of work, Margaret entered the forge and announced, "Mum says midday meal in five minutes. Time to clean up!"

On the way to the house Mr Tompion paused for the two boys to catch up and introduced himself to Henry.

"Interested in clocks are ye?"

"Yes, sir."

"I see that Tom has got you into those brass things. Too soft. Myself, I think iron is better. Been working iron all my life. My father taught me. My first 'clock' was a roasting jack."

"Don't worry, father, I shall not forsake iron. I'll follow the tradition but I want to keep up with modern developments like Mr East does."

The midday meal in those days was dinner and Mrs Tompion and the kitchen maid had prepared roast beef, a haunch of venison, venison pasty, an olive pie, "scallets", "fricases" and "quelque-choses".

Henry was curious about the kitchen activity and discovered that Anna, the kitchen maid, received 5s

for ½ year's wage. After lunch Henry thanked Mrs Tompion and went to sit with the two Thomases. Young Margaret and her 8 year old brother James went into the kitchen with their mother. Henry asked Mr Tompion if, one day, he peruse some of the books which he noticed on the wall shelf.

"You can read?" asked Mr Tompion.

"Yes, sir."

"What is your father's name?"

"William."

"What does he do?"

"He was in religion. He's dead now."

Long pause while Mr Tompion took a sip of his Lamb's Wool\*. "In religion?"

"He was a vicar."

"Of course you may look at the books, but most of them are in French."

"Why French?" asked Henry.

"They belonged to my father. He came over from France."

"Oh... but I'd still like to study them."

"Tell you what, Henry," said Mr Tompion, always eager to sniff out a deal even if it was half in jest, "you get Tom as interested in books as you are in making clocks, and you can dine with us as often as you come here."

"What is your father's name, Mr Tompion?" (Tit for tat.)

"Robert. He died in August of 1635."

Rest time was over. Henry followed them out and allowed his eyes to roam the bookshelf. "Aha," he said to himself. He had spotted

\* "Lamb's Wool": a drink made with the pulp of roasted apples, white wine, spices and sugar.

a French-English dictionary.

Back in the forge, Tom started Henry to filing the hammered brass plate.

"You are smoothing it," said Tom. "The fewer dimples, the easier it is."

This was Henry's first clock-making project. It wasn't much, just a simple brass plate. But to Henry it was just as important as a silver goblet for the King. ☉

(To be continued)

Paul Odendahl enjoys the quest for knowledge about those who have walked this way before us.



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