



British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

News FROM CHAPTER 159

After one year of planning the Chapter and eight years more or less as President, it's time to step aside and let some new leadership take our Chapter forward. I'm sure that I speak also for Tom Spittler, our cofounder and current Vice President, when I say that it has been fun and satisfying to enjoy this club with all of you. We've kept the cost down and, I hope, the enjoyment up, thanks to many volunteers and enthusiasts.

Acting as Nominating Committee, Tom and I offer the following slate for your Chapter election consideration.

President: Frank DelGreco (OH)
Vice President: Lee Yelvington (NC)
Secretary: Ken Johnston (NC)
Treasurer: Bernie Pollack (CA)

Not an elected official but key nonetheless to our success is Paul Odendahl (LA), our newsletter editor and publisher. He will continue in that job.

But if you want to run, nominations will remain open until the election on July 12 at the National Convention in New Orleans. Just phone me at 513-771-0556 if you wish to compete. Tasks of the officers are as follows:

President: Guides the Chapter, chairs the live meetings, advises editor about newsletter content, approves all expenses except his own, handles awards, writes Chapter News for newsletter.

Vice President: Organizes Chapter meetings and speakers.

Secretary: Records annual meeting minutes, maintains Chapter archives, writes Chapter news for NAWCC Bulletin.

Treasurer: Collects dues, maintains membership roster, handles IRS reports when and if needed.

NEXT MEETING will be Thursday, July 12, 2001 at 2:30 PM. Location will be in one of the Superdome meeting rooms. Check your program on arrival to find out which one and to ensure that you don't miss if the time gets changed. Jon Taylor, a most entertaining speaker, will present a slide talk on "Buying American Clocks in England".

-Doug

EDITOR'S CORNER

Your Editor believes that this is a good time to talk about two subjects: Forgetfulness, and Glad Tidings.

Forgetfulness. Your Chapter is experiencing a drop in membership. And it seems not to be a result of dissatisfaction, lack of interest, or other negative factor. We have lost members because they have not paid their dues because they simply forgot. At \$5 (or \$6) per year we are a distinct bargain. Maybe it's trouble to get out the checkbook, find an envelope, find and slap on a stamp and get to a maildrop — all just for a simple five bucks. That can be made easier by prepaying for more than one year.

As an experiment Frank DelGreco and Bernie Pol-

lack organized a mailing to recent non-payers which resulted in the reinstatement of 24% of the recipients. If you know someone who is not receiving this newsletter, you might want to help by giving him a gentle reminder so we can welcome him back.

Glad Tidings. As a result of the recent NAWCC election Doug Cowan was elected President of our national organization and Frank DelGreco was elected a Director. Congratulations to both of these gentlemen.

Besides co-founding our Chapter 159 and leading it as President for many years Doug Cowan is past President of Buckeye Chapter 23, and has served on the national organization Program Committee, Answer Box and Long Range Planning. He has written a book and many articles

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A DUBLIN CLOCK, The early Roots of the Rare Old Times

Killian Robinson (NC) takes us back in history to early Ireland, brings us forward to 17th century horologists and then shows a Dublin long-case clock from the early 18th century by Geo. Pilkington.

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Dublin, known in the early centuries of the first millennium as Eblana and later by the Gaelic speakers as Dubh-linn (Black Pool) and Baile Atha Cliath (The Town of the Hurdle-Ford) has a rich history. Although controlled in the 9th century by the Danes, the Irish intermittently had control on several occasions during the next three hundred years. In the 12th century, however, the Anglo-Normans, led by Henry II, King of England, took control. British suzerainty persisted to the 20th century despite sporadic rebellions throughout that time. During this time, in spite of the apparent turmoil, the city flowered intermittently as a cultural center and a town of letters. In the 18th century particularly, architecture, furniture and clockmaking thrived.

The origins of many of the earlier domestic clockmakers remain obscure but, even by the middle of the 17th century, master clockmakers were sufficient in number and in skill to pass their knowledge on to a generation of apprentices. The Dublin watch and clockmakers were closely allied with the Dublin Goldsmiths' Company. The earliest of the Dubliners mentioned specifically as a watchmaker on the list of Freemen in the records of the Goldsmiths' Company was Robert Walsh¹. Although Walsh was a Freeman by 1664 his name had already been entered on the list of Quarter Brothers for 1661-63. Quarter Brothers were those who had served their apprenticeships elsewhere, and thus also

included immigrants. Accordingly, Walsh may have trained abroad although his name does not appear in the *Register of Apprentices of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers of the City of London*² or in the *Freemen of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers 1631-1984*³.

There were others however who may have been contemporary with (or even antedated) Walsh. John East, the son of a London watchmaker of the same name, commenced his apprenticeship to Daniel Bellingham in 1656, himself the understudy of Peter Vaneijudhoven in 1637. Curiously the name of John East also appears on the list of Quarter Brothers for 1661-63. Since it is unlikely that young East finished his apprenticeship early, perhaps he was joined by his father, a watchmaker from London, who as a foreigner would have been eligible to be a Quarter Brother. Baillie records a certain John East in London before 1654⁴, but not after.

During the period 1650-1700 several other Masters had enough stature - and business - to take apprentices. These included George Southicke (or Southaick), Adam Soret, John Popkins, Walter Bingham, John Morphy, Henry Chabenor, Robert Rigmaiden and William Lucas, all of whom had taken apprentices before the year 1700 (see table on page 4).

Tracing the horological roots of the masters themselves is difficult and it remains unclear where

they acquired their skill. Southicke does not appear in the Irish or English apprentice lists of the time. He took 2 apprentices: Hammond of Preston England in 1658, and Chabenor of Dublin 20 years later. Slightly later, one of the more enigmatic of the early Dublin workers, Adam Soret, made his appearance. He became a Freeman in 1675 and was Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company from 1680 to 1683. In the *Registers of the French Conformed Churches of St. Patrick and St. Mary, Dublin* it is noted that Adam Soret was married to Anne Quarine and their daughter was born September 27th, 1685⁵. Joseph Wessencroft (or Wesoncroft), the first Dublin apprentice to Soret⁶ in 1675, was present at the baptism of this child and one wonders if there may have been a previous connection. Adam Soret

BRITISH HOROLOGY TIMES
IS A NEWSLETTER OF
BRITISH HOROLOGY
CHAPTER 159 OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
WATCH AND CLOCK
COLLECTORS

British Horology Times is published
3 times yearly by
THE ROYAL ARCHIVISTS
340 South Diamond St.
New Orleans LA 70130

Editor: PAUL ODENDAHL

All correspondence, manuscripts and applications for membership should be sent to Frank DeGrego 42730 Brakum Lane, Novato, OH 44092-9598, USA; e-mail: fdegrego@jaol.com

Opinions expressed in articles in this newsletter are those of the writers and are not necessarily endorsed by the Chapter and/or by the newsletter and/or by the National Association.

Annual membership costs: USA \$5; Canada \$5 overseas \$6 - in US funds or equivalent

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British Horology Chapter 159

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

died in 1723 but not before he had twice become Master of the Goldsmiths' Company: in 1686-87 and again in 1691-92⁵. He is mentioned in *Dictionnaire des*

Horologers Fran-

*cais*⁷ where he is referred to as Sor-est although his exact geographic origin in France is not given. Like several other 17th/18th century Dublin clockmakers with French names, he was a Huguenot. These French Protestant refugees found Dublin a safe haven from the pogroms which took place in the 17th century. These disturbances were a major cause of displacement of these people particularly following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 and gave many European cities distinguished watch and clockmakers. Sorét had arrived slightly earlier than this date, perhaps having anticipated a change in the political climate in France. A contemporary of his, possibly even a younger relative, Abraham Sorét, was also a Freeman of the Dublin Goldsmiths' Company from 1702 until 1705 and died in 1715. Wesoncroft aside, Adam Sorét took other apprentices including Will Mainwaring in 1678, the son of an Athy gentleman, and Francis Bové in 1681¹ or 1687⁶. Bové (or Bovet), the son of Elias Bovet, a merchant in Rochelle France, began his apprenticeship in 1681¹ but none of his work is recorded. Other masters taking apprentices during this period include Popkins, Bingham, Morphy, Lucas and Chabonor, the erstwhile protege of Southicke.

At the close of the 17th century Robert Rigmaiden took an apprentice by the name of George Pilkington. He was the son of Thomas



Fig. 1. Detail of the carved lion's head in the hood

Pilkington of Dublin who at the time of his son's apprenticeship, was deceased. Some of Rigmaiden's work has survived including a pendulum watch in the collection in the National Museum of Ireland⁸ and an early

watch movement by him which recently appeared on the market.

Illustrated here is a longcase clock by George Pilkington. This clock stands some 91½ inches tall with an extra ½ inch or so for the central finial: a globe with an eagle. The proportions are typical for the Dublin style with the plinth and the hood about 18 and 25 inches high respectively. The trunk is 13 inches wide and about 7½ inches deep. The carved frieze to the hood with the lion's head and the broken pediment with an arrangement of rosettes are also typical of Dublin. The 8-day movement with grooved barrels has an inside countwheel and strikes on a bell.

One of the more interesting features is the dial which shows some early Dublin horological brasswork. In the first quarter of the 18th century, Dublin dials were heavily engraved and in this example the designs are florid. The outer edges are decorated with a recurring floral design. The chapter ring is surrounded by concentric lines enclosing a herringbone type pattern. The most intricate engraving, however, occurs in the center of the dial where extensive engraving is seen around the winding apertures above which are figures of birds. Flower sprays surround the date aperture and support a basket above, possibly containing fruit or loaves of bread. The subsidiary seconds dial is surrounded by concentric rings enclos-



Fig. 2. The early 18th century George Pilkington longcase clock

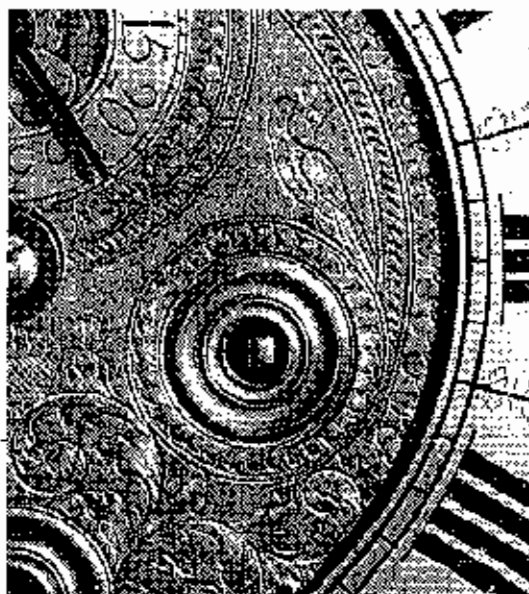


Fig. 3. Intricate engraving of birds and flower sprays in the dial center of the Pilkington longcase clock

ing a simple linear arrangement. Floral designs are enclosed within. The cherubhead spandrels are surrounded and surmounted by floral wreaths and the details of these are clearly visible. Dublin clocks bore stylistic similarities to their English counterparts at this time and in their book *English Domestic Clocks*, Cescinsky and Webster note that this type of spandrel design was in use around 1695-1710⁸. Loomes, in *Brass Dial Clocks*⁹, gives a slightly wider range of dates from 1690 to 1720.

Whatever the chronological nuances, young Pilkington was apprenticed to Mr Rigmaiden in or around the year 1695. He would have been expected to have completed his apprenticeship shortly after 1700 and one can assume, therefore, that this may have been one of the clocks he produced earlier in his career. Pilkington was one of approximately 20 clockmakers working in Dublin in the year 1702. This was the beginning of the halcyon period of the Dublin clock industry and

the number of watch and clock-makers rose steeply in the ensuing decades. A preliminary examination of the published sources in which Dublin makers are specifically mentioned^{1, 4, 6, 10-12} shows about 40 makers in 1725, 50-60 in 1750, rising further to about 80 in 1775, and 100 or so in 1800.

What is clear is that even in this early period Dublin was not insular and there were links with her neighbors in England, Wales, France and Holland. Later there would be a German connection. The skill of these early masters, combined with the favorable contemporary economic circumstances in 18th century Ireland promised the later success of their industry which would flourish for

many hundreds of makers in Dublin during the next century and a half. ☺

(A Bibliography follows on page 6)



Killian Robinson is a practicing physician who has been a member of NAWCC and AHS for several years. He collects Irish clocks, watches and related items (and is always looking for new items). Born in Ireland, he moved to the U.S. in 1983 and now lives in Winston Salem, NC with his wife and two daughters.



EARLY DUBLIN APPRENTICES AND THEIR MASTERS¹

Year	Master	Apprentice	Origin of Apprentice
1656	Bellingham	East	London (England)
1658	Southicke	Hammond	Preston (England)
1675	Soret	Wescroft	Dublin (Ireland)
1675	Popkins	Bennett	Carmarthnshire (Wales)
1678	Southaick	Chabenor	Dublin (Ireland)
1678	Soret	Mainwaring	Athy (Ireland)
1681	Bingham	Meckins	Dublin (Ireland)
1681	Soret	Bovet	Rochelle (France)
1686	Morphy	Cadell	Dublin (Ireland)
1690	Chabenor	Miller	Dublin (Ireland)
1693	Lucas	Evers	Unknown
1694	Bingham	Fitzgerald	Tara (Ireland)
c1695	Rigmaiden	Pilkington	Dublin (Ireland)

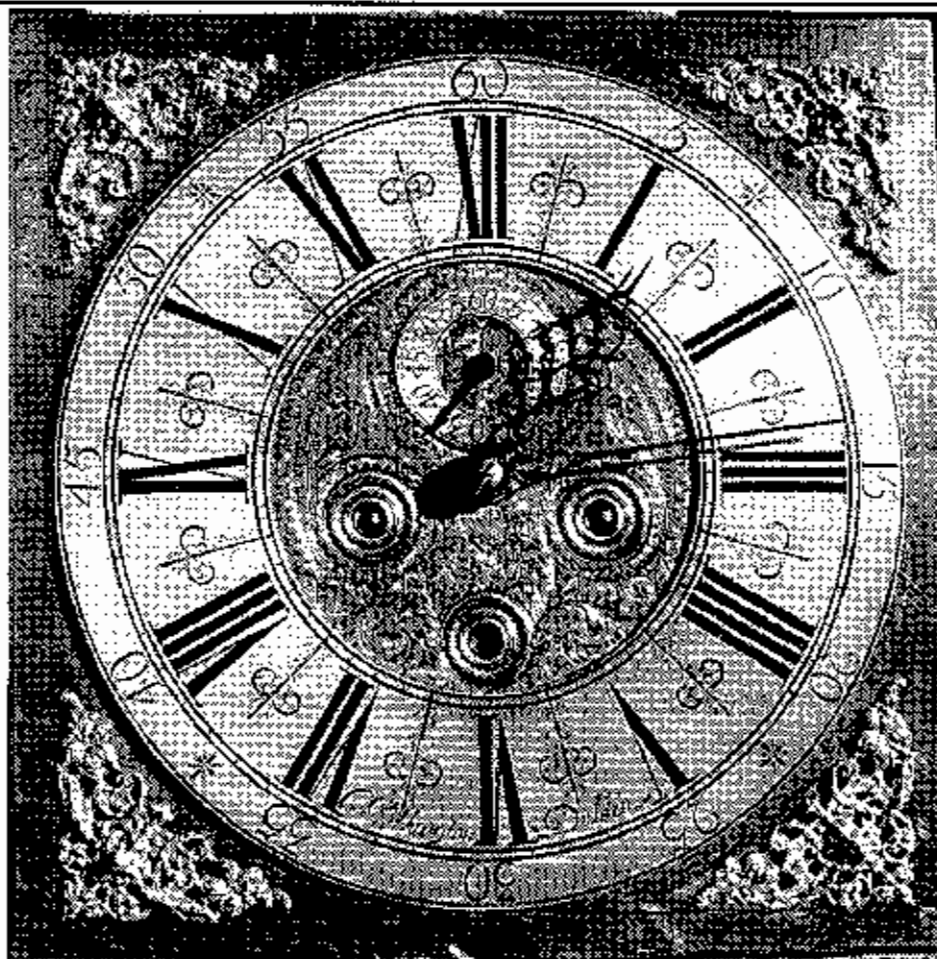


Fig. 4. Dial of the George Pilkington, Dublin longcase clock showing the ringed holes, elaborate engraving and signature

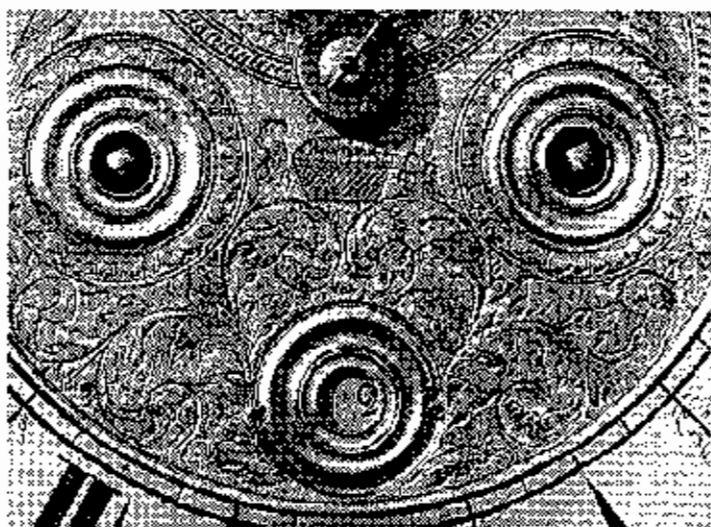


Fig. 5. The ringed date aperture and the ringed engraved winding holes with sprays of flowers and a basket of fruit (or bread?) on the Pilkington dial

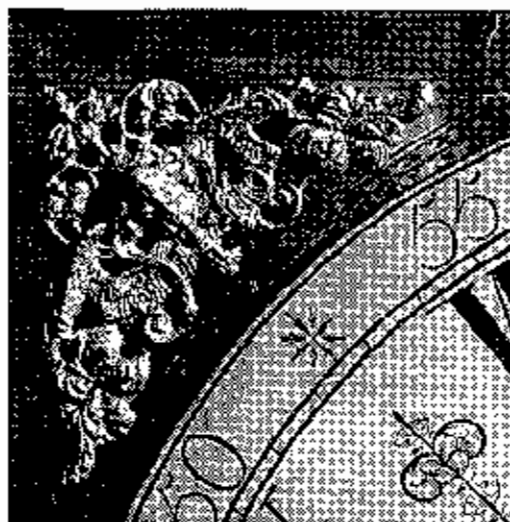


Fig. 6. Detail of the cherubhead spandrels on the Pilkington longcase clock

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From Editor's Corner, page 1

including those for this newsletter. He is the retired President of a large national company. And he also collects clocks and watches.

Frank DelGrosso has been Secretary of your Chapter 159 since June 1998. He is also President of Lake Erie Chapter 28. Frank organized the English Tower Clock Tour in year 2000 in connection with the NAWCC London Seminar. He has written articles for this newsletter. Frank's interests include English lantern and longcase clocks, English pair case watches and tower clocks. In addition, Frank enjoys woodworking

It is indeed a pleasure to publish these Glad Tidings.

-Paul Odendahl

MART

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

Doug Cowan is seeking AHS magazines: *Antiquarian Horology*, Vol. 2 issues 3, 4 and 5, and Vol. 24 issues 1, 2, 3 and 4. Phone him at 513-771-0556. Thanks.

Doug Cowan is also seeking Watch winder (key) books: "Watch Keys" or "Keys of Time". Phone 513-771-0556. Thanks.

Killian Robertson wants Irish horological items including watches, clocks of any type, papers, ephemera or anything else relevant to Irish horology. Phone 336-725-7251 or email kebr@aol.com

For Sale. Complete run of *Antiquarian Horology* (AHS magazines) Vol. 1 through Vol. 25. Phone Doug Cowan at 513-771-0556 who will put you in touch with the owner. Asking \$2000 (about \$10 per issue), or offer.

NEXT MEETING

In New Orleans during the National Convention on Thursday, July 12, 2001 at 2:30 PM in the Superdome. Please consult your program upon arrival for details. Guest speaker: Jon Taylor.



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