



British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

News FROM CHAPTER 159

At the Florida Mid-Winter regional Tom Spittler gave a presentation on J.J.Elliott and the tubular bell hall clock industry. Vice president Lee Yelvington has lined up two more great presentations: in April Hank and Marge Farrer will talk on "Watch Crystals. Then and Now" at the Southern Ohio regional in Fort Mitchell, KY. Then at our annual meeting at the national convention in Charlotte NC. Killian Robinson will speak on "Irish Clocks".

Don't forget to vote for national officers and directors. The ballot is in your February Bulletin and you have until April 1 to vote. Two members of Chapter 159. Bill Keller and Phil Priestley, are candidates for Director. I urge you to learn about the various platforms of all candidates, speak to them, and vote.

England cultivated some of the best clockmakers and

inspired the American colonies to do the same. England continues in that tradition. In the year 2000 the Turret Clock Group of England's Antiquarian Horological Society initiated "Project 2000" to catalog all of the tower clocks in the U.K. A database has been created and both the public and AHS members are finding and cataloging tower clocks in public and private buildings all over the U.K. The NAWCC is following England's lead again with a similar program to inventory all of the public clocks in the U.S. Most of the tower clocks in the U.K., though older than those in the U.S., are in fairly good shape. Many in the U.S. are in deplorable condition and are being electrified or replaced by synchronous motors. Our program will include getting local chapters involved in the restoration of those public clocks needing help.

- Frank Del Greco

EDITOR'S CORNER

It is with great pleasure that I am able to publish glad tidings. As you know from previous appeals for new material to be published in your British Horology Times we were very short of new articles. Well, it warms the heart when members step up to fill the void with their contributions. **Frank Del Greco** wrote about tower clocks and **Ken Johnston** submitted an article about milling machines, both of which you will see and enjoy in forthcoming issues. **Jordan**

Renaud promises an article about restoration. And **Lewis Miller's** watch article appears in this issue. Not just myself, but we all, thank the authors for their initiative and trouble in writing horologically for the benefit of our readers - and for posterity, I might add.

But wait, there's more. More glad tidings. We are doing our level best to root out and banish from the kingdom those gremlins responsible for the wayward quotation marks and the tumbled word connections that you must have noticed in previous recent issues. Different computer programs between me and the printing company seem to fight each other despite any amount of proof reading and tweaking. Peace has been declared. I hope.

But let us not become complacent. A steady inflow of new articles is still needed. Three newsletters a year can eat up material. Please think about how important you are and do your best to help fill up our tank. Articles about what may seem ordinary and routine to you when presented to your fellow members may cause them to think, smile and be moved to tell us something about themselves.

Then I might be able to get back to my game of tiddlywinks.

- Paul Odendahl

I have been collecting pocket watches since I taught at Oxford University in England during 1986-87. I purchased my first watch at a fete in Hungerford in 1986. Since then I have purchased 42 additional watches. My main interests are in Kw/Ks pocket watches in hallmarked silver cases — both English and American. I also have some Sw/Ss watches that interest me. All my English and some of my American watches have hallmarks. My watches have a time span from 1769 to 1920.

Recently I attended a meeting in Montreal, Canada. I happened to spot an antique shop in the Old Town that had a number of Kw/Ks watches in a display case.

MY NEW WATCH — HELP

Lewis Miller (CA) is puzzled about his new English pocket watch and seeks help. Who was J.J. Burnett, the owner? Where can he find something about Peter Holmes of Liverpool, the watchmaker? What about the date discrepancy on Thomas Collier's silver case?

Lew Miller is a retired physicist/engineer. In 1987-1988 he taught engineering and computer science at Oxford University in England. Traveling during this time in England and Scotland he began collecting silver cased key-wind watches. By the time he returned to the US he had 30 of them, ranging in age from 1769 on. He enjoys researching his watches as well as collecting.

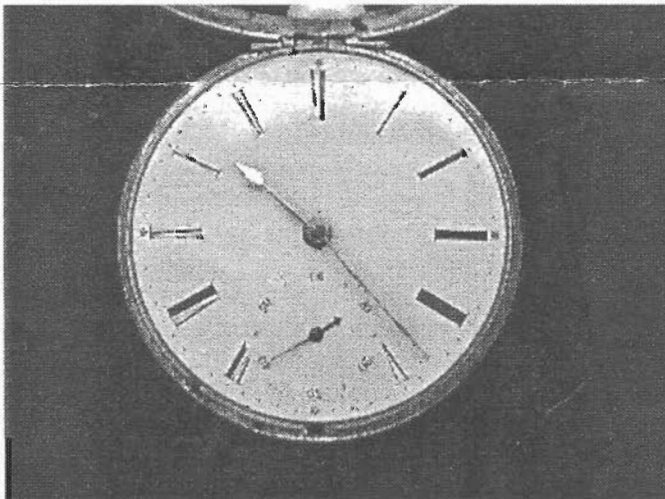


Figure 1. The nineteenth century silver pair cased watch by Peter Homes of Liverpool

One of the watches immediately caught my eye! It was in a silver pair case of 18s size. The watch had a large oval stem and a bulls-eye cover glass. Both cases had a hallmark of Chester dated between 5 July 1836 and 5 July 1837. These hallmarks appear to be correct in that the leopard's head mark, a sign of quality, was also stamped. This was used from 1720 until 1836 according to *Jackson's Hallmarks* edited by Ian Pickford - Antique Collectors Club 1992.

I opened the cases and found a lever fusee movement with a swing out case, i.e. a consular case. The movement has 7 jewels and a diamond endstone. The key is size #3. A watch paper was inserted between the

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cases but it is in such poor condition that I could not read more than a few letters.

The watch ran but as befits a "mature" watch like this it sometimes requires a slight hand motion to get it started. I purchased this watch for Cn\$330 (US\$220).

The watchmaker was Peter Holmes of Liverpool. The case maker was Thomas Collier (Pendant Maker) of 54 Bath Street, Old Street London — according to NAWCC Bulletin Supplement 20, Spring 1994: *A History and Register of Gold and Silver Watch Case Makers of England: 1720-1920* by Philip T. Priestley. Collier's entry date of registry is 27 July 1839. It appears that the case was hallmarked about two

years before the case maker was entered in the registry. Can someone explain this discrepancy? The serial number of the movement is 851 and it has a Bosley regulator. The movement also has the "Liverpool tradition" of engraving the town name in gothic characters surrounded by large scrolls. The name of J. J. Burnett was engraved on the back of the outer case. The inner case has four numbers scratched on it so signify at least four repairs or cleanings of the watch.

I like to obtain as much information as possible about my watches so I looked through all of my watch references, e.g. F.J. Britten's latest edition of *Old Clocks and Watches and their Makers*, *The Englishman's Watch* by Robert Kemp, and other

books. I could not find any reference to the watchmaker Peter Holmes of Liverpool. I am somewhat limited here in California in obtaining more detailed information concerning English watches. So I am hoping that someone in our group would have information about this watchmaker. It would also be appreciated if someone could give information about the owner J. J. Burnett. Does the above account mean the J. J. Burnett purchased the watch in Chester, Liverpool or London?

I would like to hear from anyone who may have information about this watch. ☺

(Lewis D. Miller can be reached at Matsci3@aol.com)

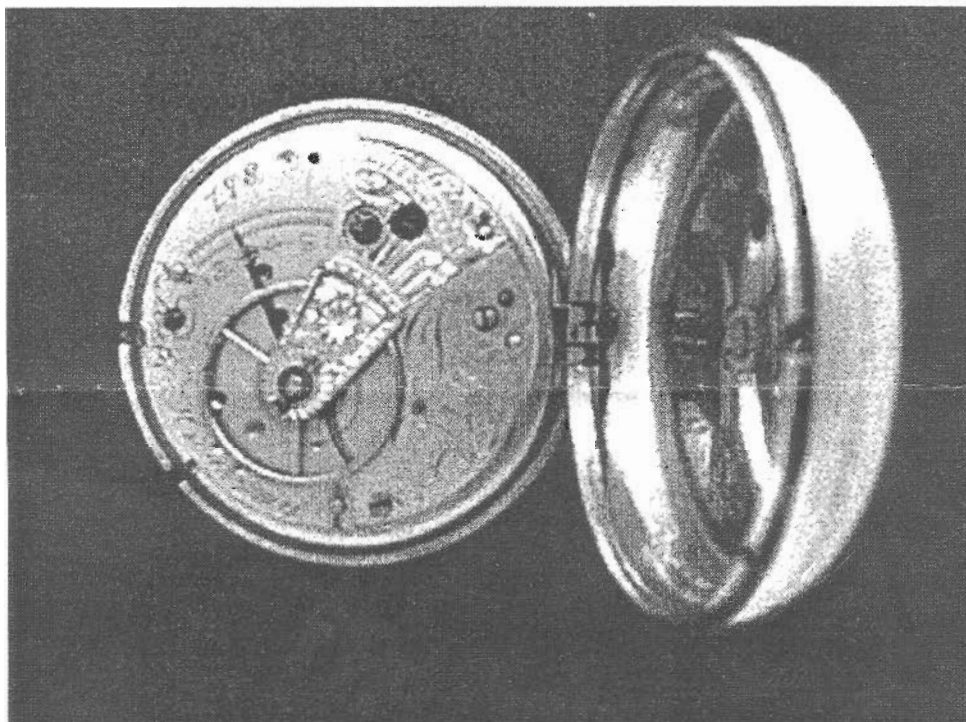


Figure 2. Inside of Lewis Miller's nineteenth century watch showing the lever movement

HENRY - Part 7

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

Henry and Tom Tompion continue their sojourn in Paris in this story by [Paul Odendahl \(LA\)](#). Tom has just fallen off a ladder in the Louvre Palace. Christiaan Huygens thinks Tom performed an act of valor. Tom is trying to explain that he is not a brave hero: "Well...no," said Tom, "I lost my..."

The Dutchman was too excited to listen and just kept on talking. He told Tom that he wanted to know all about him. He escorted Tom to his private quarters on the second floor of the palace, ordered tea and had a long and spirited conversation with Tom about Tom's life and

interests, and about what Tom was doing in Paris. He wanted to hear anything Tom knew about Isaac Newton.



Sir Isaac Newton 1642-1727, English physicist and mathematician

Tom returned to the pension at a very late hour and fell promptly in bed. He didn't awaken Henry even though it was all he could do to contain the astonishing news that he had made the acquaintance of Christiaan Huygens, a.k.a. Monsieur de Zulichem, and that he was asked by Huygens to return to the Louvre Palace the next morning.

Next morning, however, in his haste to be on time for his first full day of work — 15 July 1665 — at the shop of the French Horologueur du Roi, Baltazar Martinot, Henry was up and gone before Tom arose. It didn't take Henry long to observe that of the three other apprentices only one, whose name was Jean, was as advanced as Henry in clockmaking skills. Henry was also happy to see that Baltazar himself spent several hours each day working at his own bench in the shop.

As things in the shop settled down Henry found that he was able to confer with both Baltazar and with

Jean. Baltazar warmed up considerably now that Henry had shown diligence and ability. He took to calling Henry "Henri" and pronounced it almost delicately *Awn-ree*. Henri was a producer at the Tompion forge as well as with Mr East and he showed that quality in Baltazar's shop. Where Baltazar had previously seemed impatient he now carefully showed Henri how to execute details, how to fit and finish in the French manner, what was beautiful and what was not. Henri was delighted with it all. Most of the work was in brass. Baltazar was demanding to the point of being a perfectionist. Baltazar was a skilled craftsman and a careful teacher. Henri was an astute learner. Of course he was. That's why he was there.

There was **one thing** that Baltazar was careful about and that was never to allow Henri to produce a complete clock. When a clock on Henri's bench approached halfway to being completed, it was handed over to someone else. And Henri was never allowed to bring to completion a clock which had been started by someone else. Henri knew then that there would never be a clock made by him in Paris, deserving of bearing his name.

After some 4 months of this it was apparent that Henri had now overtaken Jean in knowledge and ability. Baltazar realized that fortune

had smiled upon him when Henri made his agreement to go to work. As a result he taught Henri most of the fine points known by French horologists and instilled in him the desire for perfection. It was now the middle of February 1666. He wondered how long Henri would remain with him. He got his answer within a fortnight.

But first let us go back to the morning after Tom had met Huygens: 15 July 1665, the morning that Henry had left the pension without learning about Tom's adventure in the Louvre.

Tom awoke and, without taking breakfast, literally ran the mile or so to the Louvre Palace. He entered again at the kitchen and found that the head chef had been told to escort Tom to Huygens's quarters. Which he did and Tom found the Dutchman busy writing at his desk. While Tom waited he carefully looked over the room he was in. It was a different room from the one he was in yesterday when Huygens got Tom to talk about his life and aspirations. He surmised that this was an apartment. It was elegantly furnished and Tom reminded himself that this was indeed, a palace.

Christiaan Huygens put down his pen, sprinkled powder upon the **paper and blew it off**. Then he looked at Tom:

"Tom, if I am right you must be wondering what I am doing here in Paris living in a palace apartment."

"That I am."

"I have an unusually fortunate relationship with King Louis Quatorze. He is a patron of the arts. He loves to surround himself with fine art and objects of beauty. He commands the money to do it. What he doesn't have and cannot command is enough time for all his pursuits. While he has a horologer, sometimes more than one at a time, to build clocks for him, he learned of

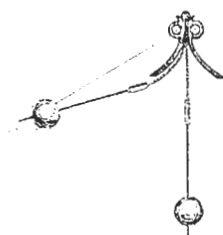
my efforts to perfect the timekeeping ability of clocks. Progress appeals to him and he sent for me. In Holland I experimented with physics and astronomy. I have studied Galileo's *Pusilogium* and in 1658 I wrote my book *Horologium*, a special presentation copy of which is now being prepared in Germany. That was a letter to them that you saw me writing just now. This copy of my book is intended for Louis Quatorze. The best vellum, hand illuminated, gilded, bound in Italian leather. I shall surprise the King when I present it to him next year — it will take that long to finish.

"So the King sent for me and when he had satisfied himself about me he provided this apartment and assigned to me a room on the ground floor where I can carry on experiments and do horological work. He commanded me to inspect, one by one, the various clocks in the palace to see if they needed putting right or if they could be improved with my new invention. Between you and me I think he would like to have the prestige of calling my invention a French development. But I am a Dutchman and I will not assign it to the French, and he knows it."

With that Monsieur Huygens took Tom down to his "room" which was most certainly a laboratory and they spent the day doing trial and error experiments and Huygens explained in detail his thinking about his invention.

"Fascinating!" thought Tom. "This is not making clocks; this is designing clocks. I have come from England to France to learn how a Dutchman designs clocks."

It was true. Huygens did not appear to be interested in, or perhaps even capable of, making a clock. He excelled at taking a detail and improving it or changing it to something better. There were many parts and pieces and assemblies in his laboratory room, and many tools.



Huygens' cycloidal cheeks

But there was nary a clock under construction.

So with all the experimenting in the lab and with accompanying Huygens on his rounds of the palace clocks, Tom learned and time passed. Before he knew it, it was the middle of February 1666.

The two English apprentices in Paris (for that is what they were) were together in their pension one Sunday morning in mid-February 1666. Tom opened a letter from yesterday's post.

"Listen to this (and he smiled). It's from Major Buffington. He wonders if I have found a pretty French girl yet. I say, forsooth, it's a splendid idea!"

Tom only muttered, "Humph, not for me it isn't."

Henry diplomatically changed the subject.

"Tom," said Henry, "I have a plan."

By now Tom Tompion had become used to Henry's "plans" which sometimes turned out to be acceptable to Tom.

"Tell me your plan."

"I have been working at Baltazar Martinot's shop for seven months now. I believe that I have caught the flavor of French clockmaking and I know that their care and precision in finishing is unexcelled. I believe that I have come to the point where I should make a change. As you know Monsieur Martinot is not paying me. I should now earn a fair wage or if I am to continue learning, it should be under a different teacher.

"You, Tom, have spent the last seven months with Mr Huygens. Again, with no pay, but learning. If you have had any thoughts of making a change my plan would affect both of us."

"As a matter of fact," said Tom, "I have been wondering how it would be to experience a true French clockmaker's shop. I think I am guessing your plan already."

"You're right, Tom." And they proceeded to discuss the details of how they would carry out the plan.

Both Martinot and Huygens accepted the plan, in the end. It was 28 February 1666.

Martinot tried his best to keep Henry, offering to pay him the going journeyman's wage and, when Henry declined, threatening to make it difficult for Henry to enter another shop. Henry reminded him of their original agreement and told him that he would be spending time at the palace with the now well-known Christiaan Huygens. Martinot grudgingly acceded to the exchange but made the stipulation that Tom would be under intense pressure to produce work of the high quality that Martinot demanded.

Huygens was easier. He still had the bond of friendship and gratitude as a result of Tom's activity when the two first met at the ladder, and he had found Tom to be a superb workman at the bench. He consented to the exchange because it might benefit Tom.

"I have been without Salomon since 1659," he reasoned to himself, "and I am not accomplishing my goals alone as I am. It suits me well to have a trusted clockmaker working along at my side. If this Henry is as good as

Tom says he is then I will be well advised to let him help me in return for whatever instruction I can give him."

"Tom," Huygens directed his eyes to Tom who had just presented the plan to him, "I accept what you have outlined. I want you to know that you should come to me immediately in the event that things do not work out for you, or even if you should need some advice from me. Be aware that you are not cast off to swim alone in this foreign country. Now, when do you propose to accomplish this exchange?"

Tom, being 27 years of age and not afraid at all of coping in a foreign land, smiled and said only, "I shall bring Henry to you tomorrow morning, unless you prefer another time."

On the morning of 1 March 1666 Tom led Henry through the kitchen of the Louvre Palace and up the stairs to the second floor apartment of Christiaan Huygens. No guide needed, for Tom had the free run of the Palace. Huygens was seated at his desk writing again and this time he immediately rose and greeted the two men.

Henry was no stranger, for Tom had brought him to the Palace for a visit back in July. After a brief time Huygens was ready to take them down to the laboratory so Tom could show Henry what work was in progress. As they exited the apartment door they were astonished to see a group of persons approaching in the gallery. They stopped cold. It was Louis XIV and some of his courtiers! Louis held up his hand as a signal for his group to stop while he slowly walked toward the three.

The King was a sight to see. From the head down he was picture perfect. His hat bore seven white feathers. Seven! Around his neck was a white garment rather like a shawl. His cloak had puffy sleeves at the shoulders and ended at the wrists with bags lined with satin. He had a



Louis XIV, King of France 1638-1715. Builder of Versailles and recipient of a gift from Henry

sash and a belt of ermine. Below the waist he wore a curious dress-like garment which reminded Henry of a Scottish kilt but this seemed to be leather and had pockets. It stopped at the knees and exposed the King's slender, stockinged legs, all terminating with shiny black high-heeled shoes.

Henry looked down at his own New Model boots. So did the King.

There was a moment of apprehension, then the King said,

"Greetings, Monsieur Huygens. We observe that you have company."

To be acknowledged by the King was a sign of his approval and the cortège in the background heaved a gentle sigh of relief.

Huygens bowed properly and presented the two men to the King, being careful to pronounce Henry as "Henri". Being observant, the two Englishmen tried to execute a regal bow, but having no experience, they botched it. Standing shoulder to shoulder and bowing simultaneously, rather awkwardly and too quickly, they bumped shoulders and knocked each other off balance. Tom fell

toward Huygens and caught himself with a little footwork. Henry fell toward the King and the King caught Henry before he hit the floor. Out came the swords in the background. The King burst into a protracted laugh holding his belly with as much dignity as he could and, pointing to Henry's shoes said,

"We have discovered a new style in footwear. Make note of this and see that we are made comfortable with an identical pair!"

The swords disappeared.

The King continued: "Monsieur Huygens, kindly attend us in the royal dining court in precisely one hour."

He turned to walk back toward his courtiers and over his shoulder he added, "And we command the presence of these two men!"

Tom arrived at the shop of Baltazor Martinot the next morning, one day late. Ⓛ

To be continued



Two of the courtiers who followed Louis XIV in the Louvre gallery



Paul Odendahl gives us a curious mix of history and fancy in his story about 17th century clockmakers.

A LOOK INTO THE PAST

Here are pages 3 and 4 from British Horology Times Number 1, April 1993. We previously reprinted pages 1 and 2 in our other issues (BHT 27 and BHT 28). This completes the 4 pages that comprised issue #1. It was published 10 years ago and is still fresh, interesting and instructive.

BRITISH HOROLOGY TIMES #1 page3

I SEARCH FOR THE HOLY GRAIL---A PERFECT BRACKET CLOCK ca 1700

Recently, I had the great pleasure to examine 21 English bracket clocks, made within 10 years in London. That is, between 1695 and 1705. This research was conducted in the hospitable premises of several English specialist clock dealers during the space of only seven days, and with some help from an expert restorer. So many useful observations were made, and so much previous dogma about what constitutes a good clock of this age was refuted, that I wrote out my notes on the plane home. I hope that these will be useful to others. The makers of these clocks ranged from the virtually unknown to Quare, Windmills and Tompion.

These notes should help with the evaluation of HOW ORIGINAL IS THE CONDITION OF A ca 1700 LONDON BRACKET CLOCK?

GENERAL When looking at these 300 year old clocks, it is crucial to consider the effects of age and use upon the materials of construction. Steelwork should have an old grey-blue color, with pits and abrasions. Bell mounts should be forged rather than turned on a lathe and arbors and bells should not be the bright color of new turned steel or new bell metal. Veneer should show some age cracks. Screw/bolt heads should show evidence of damage, and threads should be uneven and look hand made. Internal brass parts should be of the same color indicating at least brass of about the same age and composition.

Having said the above, the degree of restoration is a matter of personal preference, so long as done with excellent craftsmanship and attention to the original intentions of the maker. All dial chapter rings have been resilvered and pivots, pinions, escapement parts wore out and were replaced. Gears broke when mainsprings failed, and so on.

The work of the best makers is superior to the average in finish (Tompion) or extra design details (Quare, Windmills) but one maker (Clowes) exhibited poorer than average design and workmanship (such as one winding arbor ring partly obscured by the chapter ring.).

CASE Almost always ebony veneer on oak. Rarely, cases were veneered in walnut, olivewood, or were made of ebonized fruitwood which shows more grain than ebony. Virtually all were decorated with top handles, 4 finials and brass feet, either flattened bun or flattened claw and ball, always hollow. All but the olivewood case were highly decorated with repousse brass appliques (not castings) on the top, around the front and back keyholes, and elsewhere on the case for design balance. Many of the cases were of the brass basket top type. The thickness of the repousse brass varied, with a double basket top actually using cast brass, for strength. The thinner repousse (always gilt) should show some damage.

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ca 1700 London bracket clock, cont'd.

MOVEMENT

Cases were usually cut at front/top to let sound out, the holes decorated by thin wood or repousse brass frets. Many cases are overloaded with shiny black shellac which now obscures case repairs, not to mention the pleasant ebony woodgrain. This also harms molding appearance.

Two frequent issues here. First, the escapement may have been converted to anchor, and then back to verge. Second, and worse, the pull quarter repeating trains have often been discarded and more recently replaced. Virtually all of these clocks had pull repeating (or striking on timepieces). This can be hard to spot if the original pivot holes were used in the restoration. Plugged holes are almost invisible if the brass is brightly polished, though eventually very slight discoloration will appear even if old brass has been used. Many of the decorative pierced backcock arbors are modern additions. See whether this is of the same quality and style as the backplate engraving. The movement should fit the case snugly, sitting on a loose seat board which is "footed" only if spring barrels protrude below the backplate. Fastenings vary, the nicest being two rotating discs on the rear of the dial that turn into slots in the case frame. With this there is some additional support provided to the backplate. Alternatively, there may be two large bolts threaded up through the case bottom into pillars.

Finally, shaped steel or engraved brass brackets may bolt the mov't. to the case sides, usually at lower left and upper right. Pillars should be of the center bulb plus four rings shape. The post 1700 ones are a little thicker and heavier looking. Five pillars is the minimum number you will see in a clock--most will have more. All will have rack striking. Pendulum should be solid rod (no crutch) unless there's rise and fall pendulum adjustment, when the spring suspension is needed. Then, the bob will be lenticular instead of the conventional pear shape. These latter were lined with wood, which should be visible where the pendulum enters the "pear". Look for consistency of design within the mov't. If one pivot seems long, are others long too?

DIAL

Spandrels always sharply defined cherubs which do NOT overlap the edge of the chapter ring. Winding hole rings after 1700 are common, but may be a later addition to cover damage on earlier clocks. Dials may be signed on the chapter ring between 7&5, in the backplate of the false pendulum, or rarely, not at all. Backplates were always signed and engraved, of course. Calendar apertures are at 6 or at 12 and post 1700 clocks have false pendulum apertures. The outer minute ring on the dial gets progressively wider over this ten year period. Some early clocks have half-quarter markings on the minute ring.

HANDS

Always reach into their chapter rings but never overreach. They should look shaped, not flat, and tapered end to end.

AS ALWAYS, IF YOU DISAGREE, OR HAVE MORE TO ADD, PLEASE WRITE.

Doug Cowan 110 Central Terrace Cincinnati Ohio 45215.

MART

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

FOR SALE. By Chapter 159 member, a ca. 1705 English bracket clock by John Shaw of Holborne, London, in ebony case with basket top, time and strike with pull quarter repeat on five bells. Nearly identical to that in plate 700 of *Early English Clocks* by Dawson, Drover and Parkes. If interested contact Chapter President Frank Del Greco at 440-338-8261 or fdelgreco@aol.com and Frank will put you in touch with the owner.

NEXT MEETING

In Charlotte NC in July 2003. Details in the next issue of BHT. Hope you will plan to attend.



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THE MART

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WHO WILL BE THE NEXT CONTRIBUTOR?

If you would like to write an article for BHT it need not be about a trip to England nor about Tompion, Windmills or Quare. You can make an unknown maker's clock or watch come to life and achieve notice by pointing out its details, speculating about its peculiarities and telling of your efforts in finding, restoring or researching it.