



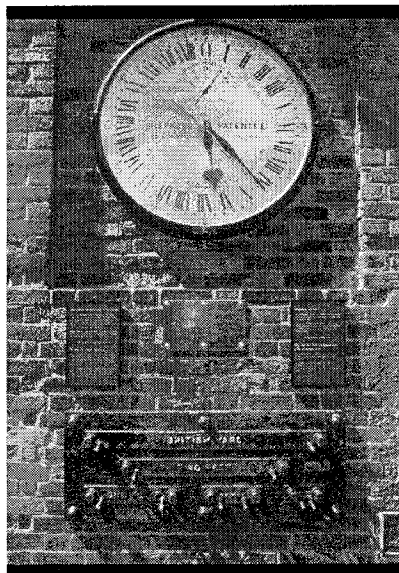
British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

News FROM CHAPTER 159

Chapter 159's fourth trip to England, in spite of a rash of respiratory infections, seems to have been a success. Although every participant was not interested in every activity, there was enough variety so everyone I spoke with said the trip was enjoyable and informative. We did get to see and closely examine some extraordinary clocks and watches.

Our meeting at the Southern Ohio Regional was well attended. In addition to my presentation about Jonathan Chambers, a not very well known seventeenth century maker, aided by one of his eight day long case movements, Ken Johnston gave a brief verbal report on the trip and Tom Spittler showed us an unusual mid-eighteenth century eight day movement by Thomas Clare of Warrington, near Liverpool. Clare had used plates, originally for a thirty hour clock, modified and added to them to make an eight day move-



On the dial: "Shepherd, Patentee, 63 Leadenhall, London, Galvano-Magnetic Clock". 24 hour dial, Roman hours, Arabic 5 minutes, spade hour hand, counterbalanced minute hand, seconds bit, dial about 36" diameter.

See note on page 8 "Electric Clock".

ment. The brass dial has four seasons spandrels. There was quite a lively exchange of ideas during the question and answer session.

Please remember that we will have an election of chapter officers at our meeting in Chattanooga on Friday, June 8th at 9:00 AM in the Lookout Mountain Room of the Chattanooga Convention Center. We have a full slate of candidates, but as always, nominations from the floor will be accepted. Phil Priestley's presentation should be informative. I doubt that there is anyone with more knowledge than Phil about English watch cases.

This will be the last time that I write this column as chapter president. I have a lot of people to recognize. First and foremost, I want to thank you chapter members for allowing me to represent you for the past three years. Next I

Continued on page 8

EDITOR'S CORNER

Our members might find the article beginning on page 3, as I did, enlightening. It was submitted by Stuart Kelley who has done something most unusual. He didn't write the article - he transcribed it from a 1747 book he discovered and thought it would fit into BHT. I found it enlightening for two reasons. One, it gives first hand information about how the craft of watchmaking was done in the 18th century. Two, as I read it, I was transported back 260 years to a different style of writing. I found the prose, the cadence, the quaint expressions fascinating, even the long sentences. There is no doubt that the original writer knew the art of watchmaking and those of us who have given

employment in our lifetimes will appreciate the "advice to the young apprentice" (coming in Part 2 in November); advice which I doubt any of us has had the temerity to state to our employees, but nevertheless advice which is well worth following.

The 1747 book had no illustrations so keep in mind that all of the illustrations and captions in the article, as well as the sidebars, have been added by the editor.

As a counterpoint, James Watson's article on page 6 tells about watchmaking in the 1930s. It gives a treasure trove of details.

Thus in this one issue you can compare how the craft operated some 200 years apart.

- Paul Odendahl



UNHELPFUL HINTS

By **Doug Cowan (OH)**

Our members will not lay claim to any of this.

Do you ever wonder at the causes of some of the strange conditions in which you find old clocks? At least one reason is bad advice.

In a 1939 English publication entitled *Useful Hints for Household Clocks*, the following advice is given:

- Undertake clock cleaning and repairs as a hobby, since the nighttime war blackouts keep you indoors.
- Paint the bezels of your kitchen clocks with white enamel as a preservative.
- If a mantle clock stands unevenly, remove one or more feet, place discs between the foot and the case, then nail them together.
- Clean clock dials with petrol (gasoline).
- Remove wall and grandfather clocks from outside walls, which cause rusting.
- Stove gas fumes work havoc with brass and steel.

Of course there were a few good ideas as well, such as:

- Oiling the works, unless thoroughly understood, can produce disastrous results.
- Interference with springs and other internal mechanisms should be avoided.

And, finally:

NON-STOP TIMEKEEPER

"I'm ever so sorry, ma'am, but I've knocked the big marble clock off the mantelpiece."

"Did it stop?"

"No, ma'am, it went straight through into the cellar."

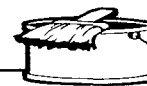


Doug continues to delight with facts and pictures of all manner of British horology.



NEXT MEETING

At the Chattanooga TN NAWCC National, Friday, June 8, 2007, 9AM in the Lookout Mountain Room in the Convention Ctr.



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All correspondence and manuscripts should be sent to the Editor.

All applications for membership and payments of dues should be sent to the Treasurer.

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.

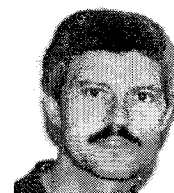
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THE LONDON TRADESMAN - PART 1

Stuart Kelley (VA) says: "The following is an almost verbatim transcription from a book I read in the Library of Congress (LC call No. HF5381.C256 1969). The book is titled 'The London Tradesman' by R. Campbell and was originally published in 1747, later published in 1969 by A.M. Kelley, New York.



Stuart Kelley

I have changed the *f* that is used in a double *s*, to *s*, and converted a few phrases to modern use. I de-capitalized most nouns but I retained the sentence structure of the original manuscript."

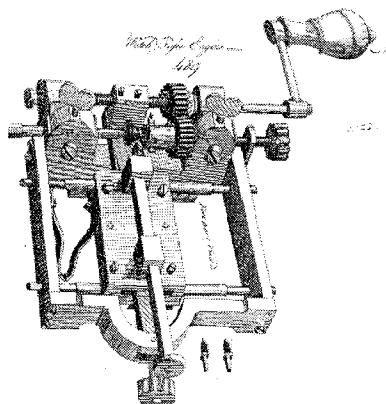
The Editor reminds the reader that the following was written in 1747 and that statements such as "sixty years ago" is referring back to the year 1687.

Chapter LIV

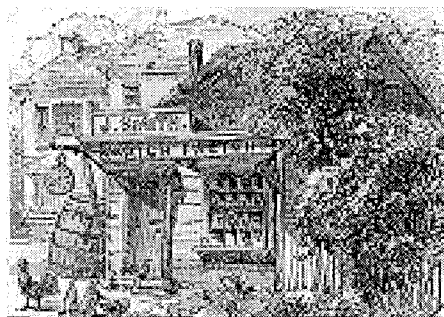
Of the Watchmaker, and those he employs.

Section 1. Of the Watchmaker.

The watchmaker's business is but of modern invention, and of late improved in England to the highest perfection; we beat all Europe in clocks and watches of all sorts, and export those useful engines to all parts of the known world.



Watch Fusee Engine

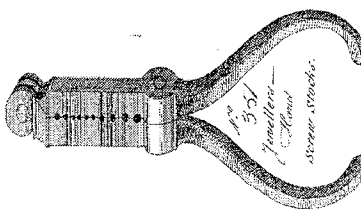


An old watch "factory"

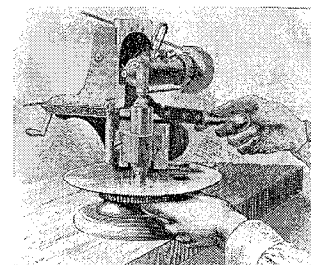
At the first appearance of watches they were but rude to what they are now; they were began and ended by one man, who was called a watchmaker; but of late years the watchmaker properly so called, scarce makes anything belonging to a watch; he only employs the different tradesmen among whom the art is divided, and puts the several pieces of the movement together, and adjusts and finishes it. Watches about sixty years ago went upon cat gut instead of a chain, and were affected by every change of weather; it was morally impossible to adjust them to any fixed certainty; but

since the invention of the chain and our improvement in the temper of springs, our watches are reduced to certain principles upon which the weather, at least in our climate, can have no effect.

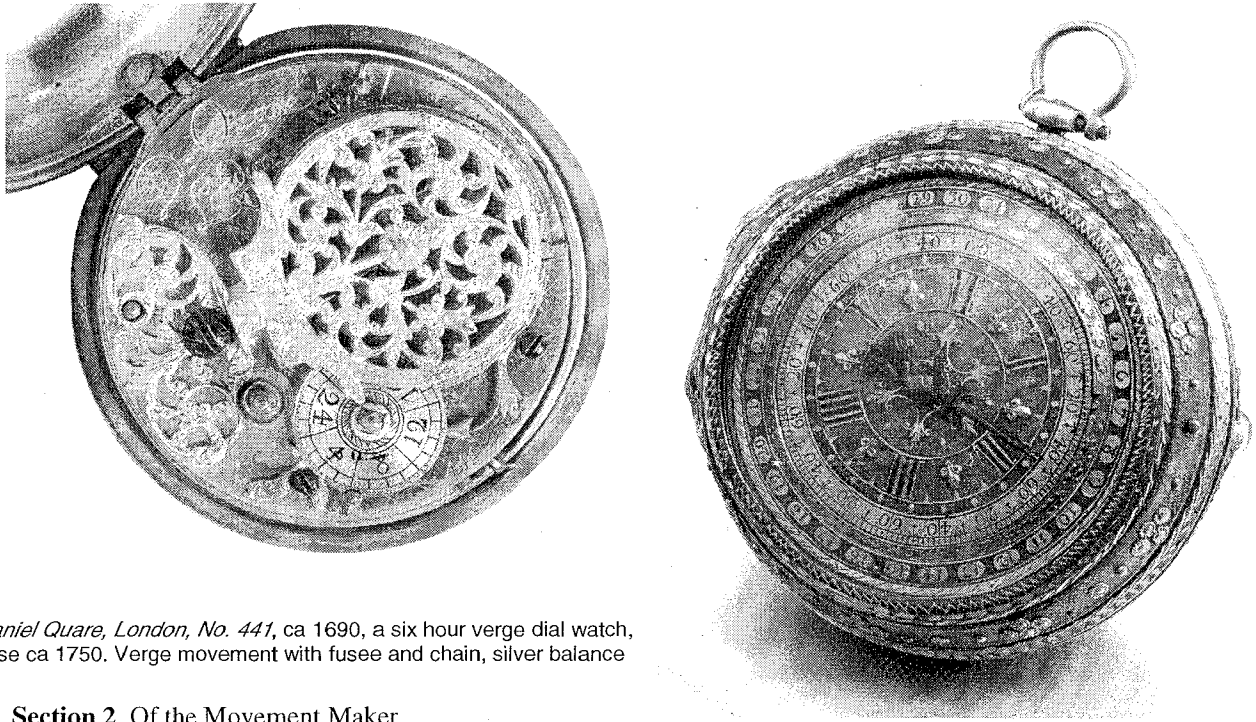
The next improvement watches and clocks received was the invention of engines for cutting the teeth in the several parts of the movement, which were formerly cut by hand. This has reduced the expense of workmanship and time to a trifle, in comparison to what it was before, and brought the work to such an exactness that no hand can imitate it.



Jewelers Hand Screw Stocks, made by John Wyke of Liverpool, ca 1755



Cutting teeth



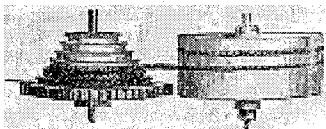
Daniel Quare, London, No. 441, ca 1690, a six hour verge dial watch, case ca 1750. Verge movement with fusee and chain, silver balance

Section 2. Of the Movement Maker.

The movement maker forges his wheels of brass to the just dimensions; sends them to the cutter and has them cut at a trifling expense. He has nothing to do when he takes them from the cutter but to finish them and turn the corners of the teeth. The pinions, made of steel, are drawn at the mill so that the watchmaker has only to file down the pivots and fix them to their proper wheels.

Section 3. Of the Spring and Chain Maker.

The springs are made by a tradesman who does nothing else, and the chains by another. These last are frequently made by women, in the country about London, and sold to the watchmaker by the dozen for a very small price. It requires no great ingenuity to make watch chains; the instruments made for that use render the work quite easily, which to the eye would appear very difficult.



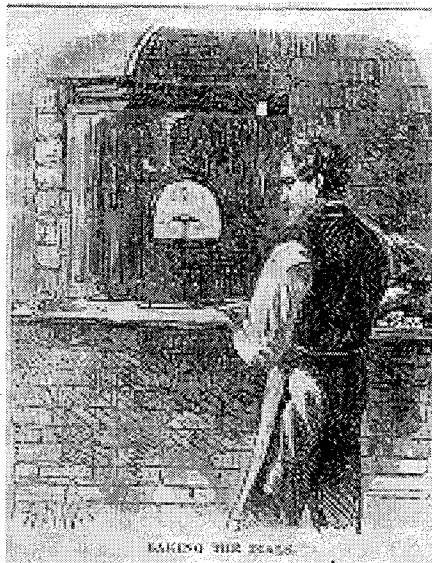
Chain fusee

Section 4. Of the Cap, Stud, and Casemaker.

There are workmen who make nothing else but the caps and studs for watches, and silversmiths who only make cases, and workmen who cut the dial plates, or enamel them, which is of late become much the fashion.

Section 5. Of the Finisher.

When the watchmaker has got home all the movements of the watch, and the different parts of which it consists, he gives the whole to a finisher, who puts the whole machine together, having first had the brass wheels gilded by



Enameling the dial

The dial, a plain circular plate of copper, is first covered with a paste of fine white enamel, carefully spread on with a knife to the thickness of three one hundredths of an inch. After it dries a little, a workman with a large pair of tongs places the dial flat upon a red hot iron plate in the mouth of a glowing furnace, watching it closely and frequently turning it. The copper would melt but for the protecting enamel, and at the end of a minute, when he takes it out, it is as soft and plastic as molasses candy. The baking has set the enamel but has left it rough, as if the dial face were marked with smallpox. After cooling it is ground smooth upon sandstone and emery, and then baked again.



The Finisher

the gilder, and adjusts it to proper time. The watchmaker puts his name upon the plate, and is esteemed the maker, though he has not made in his shop the smallest wheel belonging to it. It is supposed, however, that he can make all the movements, and apprentices are learned still to cut them by hand. He must be a judge of the goodness of work at first sight, and put his name to nothing but what will stand the severest trial, for the price of a watch depends upon the reputation of the maker only.

All the branches require a mechanic head, a light nice hand, to touch those delicate instruments with which they make pivots almost imperceptible; and a strong

sight, there being scarce any trade which requires a quicker eye or steadier hand.

Wages.

The profit of the master is considerable; and a Journeyman has as much as he can earn, for they are generally paid by the piece; a finisher may earn thirty or forty shillings a week, if constantly employed.

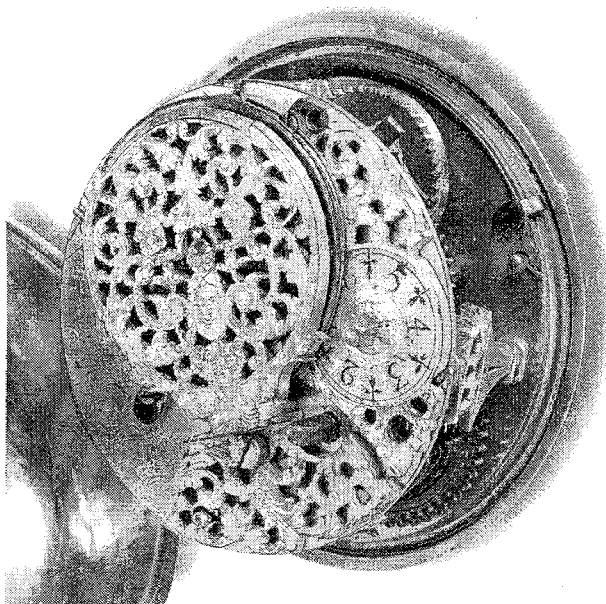
Education.

It requires no great strength nor much education to make a practical watchmaker, but a man who intends to be master of the theory ought to have a tolerable education, and should have some smattering of mechanics and mathematics. He may be bound about fourteen, or sooner if he is tolerably acute. The trade is not much overstocked in town, and no trade has better encouragement in our plantations, or in any other part of Europe. If he understands his business, he may have bread almost anywhere. Ⓢ

To Be Continued



David Lesturgeon, London, ca 1694, a gold and tortoiseshell pair case watch, gilt verge movement, balance cock pierced and engraved, gold champlévé dial, blued steel beetle and poker hands, the outer case tortoiseshell with gold inlay.



THE LIFE OF A LONDON WATCHMAKER

This article, written by James Watson (VA) and describing conditions in 1920s and 30s London, first appeared in the August 2004 issue of the NAWCC Bulletin. It is reprinted here so readers can get a taste of watchmaking conditions then and compare them to conditions in 1747, about 200 years earlier, as described in the article by Stuart Kelley which begins on page 3 of this issue. Reprinted with permission. NAWCC Bulletin No. 351, © by the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors, Inc.



George II, King of England in 1747.

This story is about what it took 68 years ago for a London watchmaker to survive and make a successful life while struggling to meet daily expenses, pay monthly bills, overcome debilitating health problems, and raise a family. (people ask me "Could he actually make a watch?" The answer is yes, - if given enough time.)

My father - James Devereux Watson was born in 1894 in the borough of Islington in London. His early life as a "street smart" boy included doing errands for folks for a penny, running behind horse carts with a bucket to collect the droppings for sale as manure, fetching his father's penny a pint beer, and many other such things while also devoting much of his time to being a mischief maker! His family was large and lived in a tenement. His father (born in 1859) was quite mean and sometimes violent, but I remember him best as a nice old man in a hospital bed.



Islington Hospital.

In those days gentlemen wore gold pocket watches on gold chains, and pick-pocketing was common. A small device was built into the watch chain which, if the chain was jerked, expanded into three claws to grab the owner's waistcoat (vest). You can romanticize those times as being the "Mary Poppins" era if you wish to dream, but the real life was hard and mean.

Father's teenage years were spent working as an errand boy and doing odd jobs. Then he began attending BHI evening classes to learn the basics of the watchmaker's trade. The school was located on St. John's Street, Islington, and the general facility has since become the City College. Late at night, after he returned from classes, his father would shout at him to go to bed and he would have to creep back out and finish his homework by candlelight (gaslight was usually available if one had a shilling for the meter). Would a teenager work this hard today? For Father, the demanding regimen had its rewards, such as the class prize he won - a bound volume of *Old Clocks and Watches* by Britten.

Father's watchmaking training was interrupted by World War I - he joined the Army to get a good breakfast. He served as a staff sergeant armorer and sus-

tained partial gas exposure. Finally, at the end of 1918 peace returned, and with it the struggle to find employment.

He told me that when he was a journeyman/apprentice in an establishment on Connaught Street near Marble Arch, the owner used to say that Lord so and so had not asked for any repairs lately, so (since one of Father's duties was to wind the clocks in the rich people's houses) he was told to put the customers clock off-beat when winding it so that it would lose time. I suppose that his apprenticeship must have lasted for some five years before he was allowed to work at the bench on a timepiece. As I remember much later, he would never allow clocks on his bench because they were too dirty. He finally only worked with wristwatches like Movado, Longines, Rolex, Omega, and Waltham...and I remember once a three-layer striking pocket watch. Also ladies' very small wristwatches with movements approximately one centimeter in diameter.

Father worked in a high-class repair establishment until around 1935, when failing health forced him to do his work in an alcove in the living room of our house in North London. Traveling on the Underground to the center of London, and the bad fogs, had gradually sapped his stamina, and now emphysema was present. Watching him, I learned



King George V reigned during the time of James Watson, watchmaker

about the stresses involved in watch repairing and in trying to support a family on work that is paid for by the piece, with no fixed salary.

Father had already established a contact with an expert small business repairer to the trade in our area. The work was hand carried from the big houses like Mappin and Webb to North London, and Mother used to travel twice a week to the local house for collection and delivery. Generally we had around 10 or 15 watches in the house at one time, and Father was expected to complete about 10 watches or more per week. Each job was priced by the local house, and I used to keep the records for the income tax. All work had to be guaranteed for one year, and any returns had to be serviced by Father without additional pay. Of course there were always problem watches, but if your work originated from Mappin and Webb you were not in a position to argue and lose all work and income. It is well to remember that in this environment one could never leave work behind. Many times Father worked at the bench past midnight.

Each watch was taken completely down to clean all of the parts. The hairspring was removed and the balance wheel tested in the poising tool. If the watch had passed previously through a poor repair shop it was often necessary to place washers

under the balance timing screws

A broken balance staff was quite common if the watch had been dropped. Father would rough out a new one from rod in approximately one hour, using only a hand graver and not a cross-slide. Naturally there was more to do after that - final fitting burnishing pivots, resetting timing screws, etc.

One learned not to attempt any task as a master repairer after doing heavy work such as gardening; hand vibrations persisted after physical exertion. There was also the task of maintaining a level head under stress and delivery pressure.

Digressing for a moment to wages and workload - a reasonable wage during the years between 1930 and 1939 for a "lower middle class" family was £5 sterling per week. In those days only the husband worked. The normal workweek (in an establishment) consisted of five nine-hour days, plus Saturday morning.

As I remember, the approximate fee my Father received and the times he required for cleaning or repairing gent's wristwatch were as follows:

Clean and time: (2½ hours), 4 to 5 shillings, 20 shillings = £1 sterling.

Replace mainspring, clean and time, 6 to 7 shillings.

Replace balance staff, clean and time. (5 to 6 hours), 12 to 15 shillings.

The fees for cleaning or repairing a lady's small wristwatch were somewhat higher.

Thus £5 per week of income (assuming 6 shillings and 2½ hours per job) required 42 hours of work. Allowing for the usual disaster, we are looking at a 55 hour week, which was okay if one worked at home. A new small row house at that time cost about £780, and a small new car was approximately £100.

As far as replacing watch parts went, there really was no such thing. Of course one could buy new main-

springs, watch glasses, and similar items from a supplier; but there were so many different types of construction that it was almost impossible within the time frame given to order and obtain most other parts; so one just did not lose any! But of course such losses occasionally did happen - another story.

We occasionally went downtown for live theatre in the evening, and this was a big event. But on occasion while Father was working he would lose a small part. It would flip away into the living room. This would then become a hands-and-knees operation, with magnets and flashlights, and brush and pan. As one can imagine, any theatre visit planned for that night was usually spoiled by this event. Sometimes we found the item before evening's end, and other times it would turn up at the top of the stairs a few days later. Stress was part of this work!

Some of my tasks involved going to a supply house in Clerkenwell to buy various parts and supplies such as mainsprings, cleaning brushes, and possibly some of the simpler tools. Other errands consisted of taking work to the nice German lady dial painter. She did wonderful work, and I should have asked her how she did it. We had loose ties with the jewelry trade, of course, but did not take any such work on any regular basis. However, I did take items such as large silver vases for expert polishing and lacquering, or perhaps a ring for resizing.

Despite the difficulties that my father experienced, I don't want to paint a picture of continual misery. Hopefully the word images that I have created for you portray a hard-working person who lifted himself from depressing surroundings to become a respected member of a worthy trade. ☺

NEWS from page 1

want to thank my fellow officers for their tremendous help and support. Running a special interest chapter is not a one person job and without their help things would not have gone smoothly. Then I want to thank all of those members and past chapter officers who were all too willing to assist in various ways. Of special note were the contributions of

Yvonne Johnston and our meeting hostess, Betty Brown.

Thanks again and I hope to see many of you at the National.

-Roger Gendron

BRITISH HOROLOGY CHAPTER 159, NAWCC
FINANCIAL REPORT
December 31, 2006

2006 was a good financial year for the Chapter. Net income was \$930 compared with \$278 last year. Revenue was \$1,577 compared with \$897 last year. 2005 results reflected lower costs due to having published only two issues of BHT, a consequence of the Katrina effect. In addition, it was the November 2005 issue of BHT that wasn't published and therefore Dues Notices were not sent out until 2006, a negative for 2005 but positive for 2006. Expenses are almost entirely related to publishing and mailing the BHT. Additional expenses are for a contribution to NAWCC and some door prizes.

At year end we had 143 members, up from last year's 130. We continue to make efforts to get new members and to keep present ones. Dues stayed the same at \$5 per year and should continue at that level, assuming present conditions do not change. At that level, total income, including co-sponsor income, would be adequate to cover expected Chapter expenses. These last comments are made to give rationale to our dues structure and are not forecasts of cash receipts and expenditures in any given period.

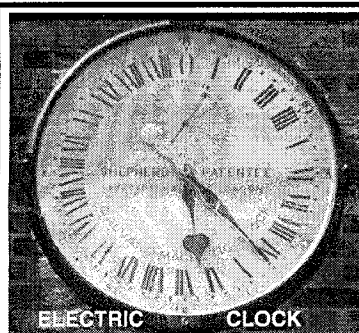
We had \$4,230 in the bank at 12/31/06.

Those wishing further information may contact me via email or telephone.

Respectfully,

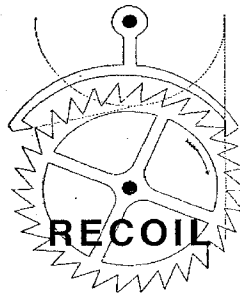
Dave Kern, Treasurer, Chapter 159

Telephone: 516-627-1012 email: dkern@optonline.net



The Editor stumbled upon the interesting clock picture shown on page 1. All that he knows for sure is that it is in London. Nothing is known about the details of the clock, who made it, its date, or exactly where it is located in London, and what is the function of the cast iron(?) panels beneath the dial. There are two descriptive plaques on the brick between the dial and the panels but the editor hasn't been able to decipher them.

Anyone who has knowledge or remarks about this clock that he or she would like to share will be gratefully acknowledged. Email the editor at peoden@cox.net



Is it OK for the Editor to write a letter to the Editor?

If so, here's one:

Doug Cowan's *Unhelpful Hints* article on page 2 made me think of something I read long ago and have never forgotten:

"To oil the works of a clock, immerse a feather in benzene, stick it into the back of the clock, and brandish it about."

-Paul Odendahl

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