

Number 45
March 2009

Deena Mack
Editor Pro Tem

British Horology Times

NAWCC CHAPTER 159

British Horology Chapter 159 of the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors

President's News:

I am writing this one week before I depart for Florida Regional and our first meeting of this year. As you all know Lee Yelvington was to give us a presentation on dating tall case clocks, unfortunately he passed away in December. He was Vice-President of Chapter 159 under just about all the Presidents we have ever had. I am sure he was offered the top post many times but declined, preferring to serve in the background. The most significant duty of the VP is to find speakers for our meetings which he did very well. I was especially pleased when he agreed to give us a presentation on dating longcase clock dials for the National last year as it would serve to make the Chapter aware of him and his vast knowledge on the subject. Unfortunately he had to cancel and the presentation was rescheduled for Florida. He will be missed.

Philip Priestley from England kindly offered to give us a presentation at short notice. The presentation is entitled "Impact of American Technology on the English Watch Trade". I am looking forward to it and will give a summary for the next BHT.

Looking forward we have the Southern Ohio Regional at Ft Mitchell which incidentally we co-sponsor and the National at Grand Rapids. There will be a British Horology table at the National and I encourage you stop by and pass the time of day.

Best Regards,
Ken

P.S. I hope you all took the time to read the article "My Favorite Clock" by Chapter 159 member Dennis Radage, in the February Bulletin. It is really well written and a joy to read. I encourage you all to tell us about your favorite clock and give our editor Deena a few words and pictures for the BHT.

Editor's Corner

Thanks for the nice comments many of you took the time to send me after receiving your November BHT. It has helped to sustain and inspire me as I put together my second newsletter. I have just finished reading Brian Loome's "Antique British Clocks." You may recall that I am in the beginning stages of my English clock education. My next book is "English Dial Clocks" by Ronald Rose. I am quite eager to get into it. In fact, as I write this, "English Dial Clocks" is the firm surface under my pad of paper.

I find that the newsletter sits quietly in the back of my mind waiting to jump forward at odd moments and say "Aha! here's an idea for you." One of the thoughts I had may seem absurd to many of you but I feel brave and will put it out there anyway: I cannot picture the names that come up in the study of British horology. For example, while London is certainly familiar, where or what is Coventry, Bath or Corahill? Living in the US, I am familiar with towns, counties, cities, and states. How are areas in other countries defined? Bear with me while I post these and other equally quizzical questions. Don't be afraid to jump in and send me some answers. Better yet, post your own queries and we will learn together. See page 8 for this month's geography lesson.

Looking forward to seeing many of you at Fort Mitchell.

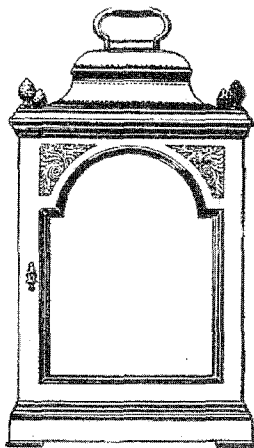
Deena

Did you know?
According to the Watch & Clock Encyclo-

pedia by Donald de Carle, a Bracket Clock is defined as: "Originally a clock made to stand upon a table, or a portable clock. The bracket upon which the clock could stand was popular in the later part of the 18th and early 19th centuries." Mr. de Carle further describes Bracket clock case styles as follows:

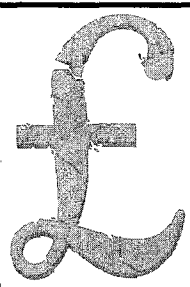
- Architectural, circa 1665
- Basket top, circa 1680
- Domed top, circa 1685
- Bell Basket top, circa 1695
- Inverted Bell top Broken Arch, circa 1720
- Double Inverted Bell top, circa 1720
- Bell top, circa 1720
- Double Basket top, circa 1770
- Broken Arch top, circa 1780
- Balloon, circa 1790
- Arch top, circa 1790
- Lancet top, circa 1800
- Chamfer top, circa 1810

He notes: dates are approximate, there were overlapping of styles and features of up to 10 years.



This is a Bell top.

It is his design-British pound. It is roughly equal to half an American dollar. So what is a "d." or an "s."? How about a "bob" and a "crown"? What is the value of "sixpence" and a "guinea"? Can anyone relate these monetary terms to American dollars?



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NEXT MEETING
Will take place at the
NA WCC Southern Ohio
Regional
April 2 -4 4, 2009
Ft. Mitchell KY



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British Horology Times-BHT
Is a newsletter of British Horology
Chapter 159 of the National
Association of
Watch and Clock Collectors

BHT is published 3 times yearly.

Editor Pro Tern: Deena Mack

Correspondence and manuscripts should
be sent to the Editor
Applications for membership and pay-
ments of dues should be sent to the Treas-
urer.

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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Chapter 159

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The Difficulty of Buying Well:

By Doug Cowan
Cincinnati OH

A friend who wants to collect early English bracket clocks has asked: "How can I tell a good one?" I've offered to give him my two hour long, sleep inducing lecture on that some day, but meanwhile here are a few actual experiences that I have had to show you what he is up against:

- Overheard in a London auction showroom as two men looked at a bracket clock cataloged as mid 18th century: "Do you like it?" "Yes, and did you make it?" "Yes, (proudly) I did!" This was in 2004.

- Was shown another cataloged 18th C. bracket and told it was circa 1970's made by that English master restorer the late Dan Parkes. He made several and they had distinctive style and trim features. Sorry, I cannot find the notes made then to share them with you.

- Visited six English dealers in early English clocks by prior arrangement to examine and purchase one 18th century bracket clock. One had a good one, which I bought. One had a very attractive bad one and

was kind enough to tell me not to buy it. Four had faulty clocks which showed questionable characteristics (usually sloppily replaced quarter striking) and professed to not have noticed these peculiarities-- or denied them altogether in one case, declaring before I examined the piece that he never bought, let alone sold, a less than all original clock. I needed an extra set of expert eyes to separately examine the clock and point out, among other things that much of the steelwork in the movement was not old. It was of a different color than the original bits.

- At a prominent clock specialist auction, I saw an attractive 19th century clock which had been retrained to balance wheel and left in deplorable condition with gaping plate holes and poor finishing (though it did run, to give it its due). Asking the firm's specialist what he thought of this, I received this piece of fiction: "The buyer must have visited the clockmaker during the finishing of the clock and asked to have balance wheel instead of pendulum control" Of course there is no need for such stretched logic. There is no crime in converting a clock to a newer, more modern form, it was done to most early lantern and many early bracket clocks. It's the attempt to deceive that is annoying.

- Haven't kept score, but have examined dozens of bracket clocks, lanterns and long-

cases at American auction houses and found their condition very much under described, especially when it relates to originality of parts. Also, these clocks often include American antique dealer's invoice stating that these are in original condition, and usually attributing their age to be at least several decades older than they really are.

- Stopped watching eBay because I cannot bear the degree of fraudulent description which envelops the older European bracket clocks.

Of course, these deceptive practices are a result of "chasing the money". There are not enough really original 18th century clocks available at anyone time to keep dozens of dealers and auction houses around the world in business. In the UK, and probably elsewhere as well, the look is everything. Clocks are restored to look like new, heavily refinished and presented to the buyer as though they are straight from the maker's workshop. In addition, prices are so high that fakery is attractive if you are skilled enough to fool people. The American examples found in estate sales are, I believe, a different case. In the recent past, many of these clocks are ones that would not have been saleable to a European collector, so sell them to a visiting tourist or a dealer wholesaler who doesn't know that much and may not care anyway.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

Nowadays even those clocks are too valuable to sell cheaply for export and undergo "restoration" at home in England. At auction, dealers in the UK pay a premium for unrestored clocks over ones restored by others. They like to know that they are getting an "honest" clock. Good provenance will turn them on as well, for the same reason. However, I strongly suspect that they also buy and restore "marriages" and other defective examples for resale for the reasons given above. Do they openly tell their customers what's right and wrong about the piece?

So, my hypothesis is that most 18th century century bracket clocks are sold as furniture, with the look, age and name on the dial (for bragging rights) being the guiding criteria. Your job as a collector is to cut through this screen and make a sound buying decision. Here's my free advice, worth what you are paying for it:

- Clocks are machines and they wear over hundreds of years. Replacement parts are virtually always present and are part of the history of the piece. An example of that is the historical replacement of a crown wheel escapement with the more accurate anchor type. It's part of the history of the clock, is technically justified, and yet many collectors will rush to have their clocks, at great expense reconverted, throwing away a 200 year old part so that the piece will "look right".

- You should strive to buy a piece that pleases you, whatever its condition, at a price that does not include deceptive practices to enhance its price, whether the present seller/owner knows the actual facts or not. To do this successfully you must:

Prepare by reading up on what you think you want. I've appended a list of

key books for bracket clocks. Study those pictures, especially of the movements. Take those books to the auctions and compare what you see.

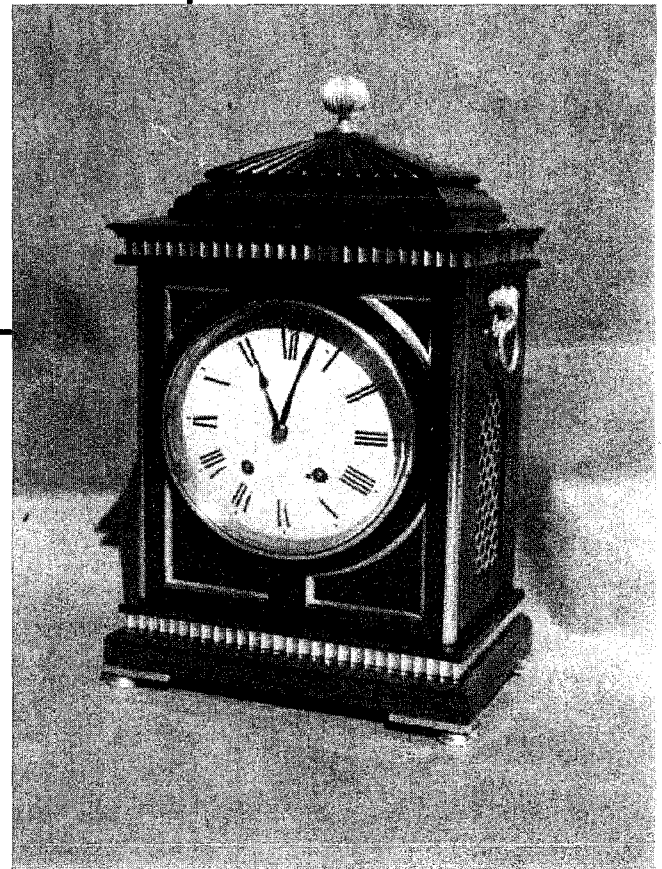
Look at a potential purchase in person. (Which is another reason not to buy clocks on eBay or over the internet even from auctioneers). Again, the auctioneers in the USA, with a few exceptions, are not expert on these clocks, they just don't know what the real condition is in most cases.

When you examine a clock, your duty is to find the replacements and faults. A checklist is desirable because most of us will fall in love at first sight if a piece is even close to what we are seeking.

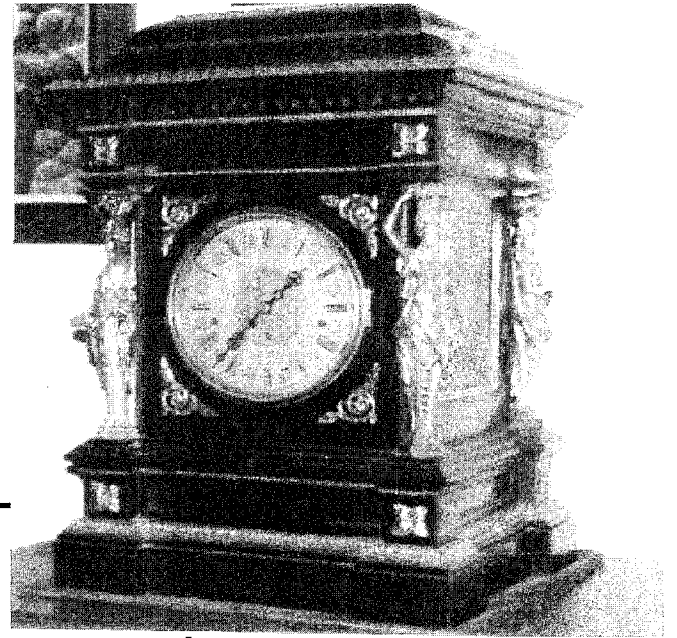
Many collectors would conclude that this English clock, signed by Dent is a late Regency example, circa 1840's.

Not quite!

Although it is absolutely original, including the finish, it is actually a French movement, imported and cased in England by the prestigious Dent company. It dates from circa 1865 or a bit later.



Made by E. White, London, circa late 19th C. This big boy weighs almost 100 pounds with 8 bells and 5 gongs plus massive movement and case components including ormolu bronze "4 seasons" corner columns. But, though the movement is custom made to fit the case, it is apparent from one clue that another movement once lived there. Two empty bolt holes



- Ask lots of questions. Very few people will actually lie to you. They just will not tell you everything that you should know about the clock.

Vague answers or shifty ones such as the classic "I don't know, I just picked it up on the way to the show" are warning signs.

- Ask auctioneers for a condition report. These, if available, tell you a lot more about the defects than do the catalog descriptions.

- If buying from a dealer or even a seller at an NAWCC Regional, ask for a short "money back guarantee" period, then hustle to get another person to check the clock out. Regional buyers have some protection from the NAWCC Ethics Committee.

- And finally, if your life is just too busy to do all these things I have suggested, you have a couple of other options;

1. Grab your seat and pay the price, hoping it's not a mistake. I've done this in older days,

with mixed results but when prices were not so high.

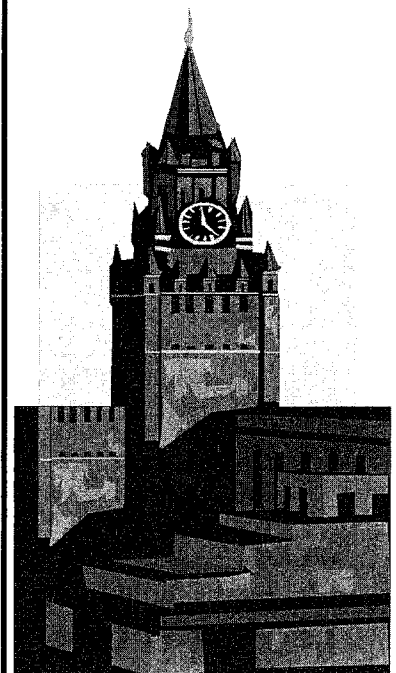
2. Hire someone to vet clocks for you. They are going to need to visit the clock before telling you what it is. I know that there are people who do this, and that it costs money. Just make sure that they are not simultaneously wanting to sell you a clock from their own inventory.

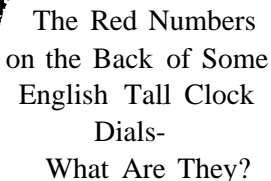
And don't forget the importance of developing good relationships. If you live near a city with an expert clock dealer or auctioneer, get to know the key experts. If they know that you are a serious student of the type of clock you want, and that you will be a buyer when you get satisfied with a piece, they will help protect you from mistakes and may even become friends, and scouts for you.

Good Luck with the hunt-- that's half the fun, especially if you do it right!

The Best Books For English Bracket Clocks:

English Domestic Clocks-- Cescinsky and Webster
Early English Clocks- Dawson, Drover and Parkes
The Georgian Bracket Clock- Barder
Clocks magazine-- for current prices and movement pictures





The Red Numbers
on the Back of Some
English Tall Clock
Dials-
What Are They?

By Tom Spittler
New Carlisle OH

(conceived with help from
John Robey)

The Red Numbers on the back of some English tall clock dials- What are they?

When I used to read scientific papers I always felt a long title next to the author's name meant he didn't know what he was talking about.. Not so, in this instance. I think I could write the substance of this whole article in one sentence, and I will do that, at the end, just to prove I can.

'There are a handful of people I know with an interest in the painted dials found on Longcase clocks. Leaving out my American friends with the 'dial bug' I mainly communicate with my English friends John Robey, and Hugh Cockwill on the subject, and sometimes Brian Loomes. I also consider Mary Frances Tennant an expert in the area, but we have only spoken a few times. I speak with John on a weekly basis, but only rarely on the dial subject.. Hugh still works for a living, but has a world of knowledge on the subject. His working doesn't allow him the time to talk with me very often.

John Robey has done fascinating work.. The second edition of his Longcase Clock Reference Book will contain lots of new information, much of it on painted clock dials. He has identified many new moon or hemisphere maps, and that is good because if you can identify the dial painter from his maps, (and you can!), and if you know the working dates of the painter, you know the 'bracket' of dates of the dial and when the clock dates, too.

Now to this 'short' story: John and I have often talked about the numbers, often in red paint, found on the back of some English tall clock painted dials. Neither of us could figure out what they might have been. A friend of John's, David Severs, author of Northallerton Clockmakers, solved the problem when he picked up two Northallerton movements and dials by the same clockmaker.. The same clockmaker's name appeared on the front of the dial, and David found they both had the same number painted in red on the back.. Both the clock dials were by the same dial maker and he went on to find two more dials by the same clock-regional maker and dial maker with the same number on the back of the dial, four in total.. He then went on to discover another *different* Northallerton clockmaker with the identical (but different from the 1st) number on the back of the dial.. Those two dials were by a different dial maker then the first four.. The red number was a cus-

tomer number used by the dial painter.. When one considers the dial painting process it makes sense. Dial painters had to work on many dials at the same time - painting the ground color, letting it dry- painting some comers, letting them dry- painting some fine detail or shading, letting it dry- inking the numbers, letting them dry- AND THEN putting the maker's name and place of the dial.. "Now which dial was the one I was painting for John Smith?" Just look up the customer's number in the log book and the dial with that number on it is his- then paint his name on the dial.. The same holds true for the details 'John' might have wanted on his dial.. In the back and forth between his dial request and the actual dial, a number identifying 'John' on the back of the dial would have come in handy. So there you have it.

Now how does this help us? If somebody like John, or Hugh were to keep track of the dial numbers on the back of specific dial painter's dials and publish that information, such as in a table in the Longcase Clock Reference Book, or in a maker's book, in time we might be able to look up the number and identify the maker of an unsigned dial. Wouldn't that be wonderful?? Now for that summary- "the numbers often in red paint, on the back of some English painted dials are the clock makers' reference number, used by the dial maker to assist in keeping orders straight..

This is the December 31, 2008 Operating Statement for the year then ended. The Statement is on a cash basis. 2008 was a good financial year for the Chapter with a Net Income of \$214, compared with \$491 last year. Revenue was \$741 compared with \$1,096 last year. 2008 was an unusual year. We were missing an Editor for much of the year and produced only one full newsletter plus a partial one, resulting in lower overall costs. Based on lower overall costs we decided to defer dues for a year which of course, resulted in lower revenues. Our major expenses are for printing and mailing of the BHT and both are presently under control.

We had 140 members at 12/31/08, versus 142 last year. Of the 140, 12 members carry 2008 expiration dates. We will continue to make the effort both to get new members and retain members. Dues stayed the same at \$5 per year and barring any major operational change, should continue at that level.

We had \$4,9356 in the bank at 12/31/08, the Chapter's only asset.

Respectfully,

Dave Kern, Treasurer Chapter 159

THE BRITISH HOROLOGY CHAPTER 159, NAWCC

2008 FINANCIAL REPORT

December 31, 2007, Cash in Bank \$4,721

INCOME

Received Membership Dues	\$241
Participation in Southern Ohio Regional	500
Donation Members	<u>\$0</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$741</u>

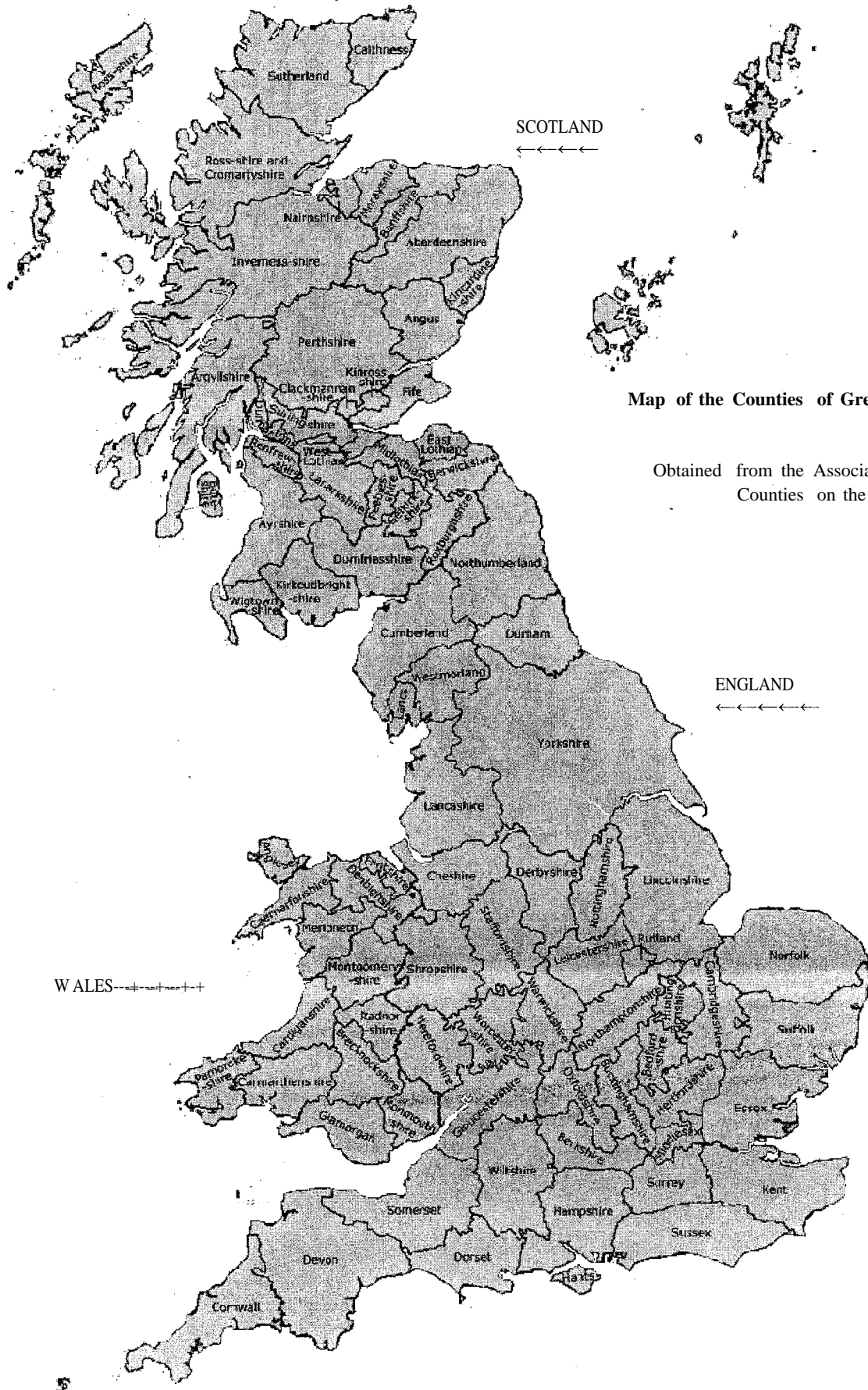
EXPENSES

Newsletter - British Horology Times	\$116
Mailing	311
Contributions	100
Supplies	0
Miscellaneous	0
TOTAL	<u>\$527</u>

Excess of Income over Expense \$214

December 31, 2008, Cash in Bank \$4,935

D. E. Kern, Treasurer



Map of the Counties of Great Britain

Obtained from the Association of British Counties on the web.