



British Horological Times

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Number 47

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

Handling a National Treasure by Dennis Radage

While preparing a talk on "Horology in the Pacific North West", I was naturally aware that the Vancouver Maritime Museum possessed an Arnold chronometer which was nicely displayed in the entrance to the museum. Since the chronometer was in Vancouver and Vancouver certainly forms part of the Pacific North West, I had to include the instrument in my presentation. The chronometer was well secured in a custom made case that was screwed together, no doors or openings, the item had to be viewed through the Perspex cover. However, I had to see it and photograph it.

Easy you say! No, next to impossible. The chronometer is rarely taken out of its enclosure and has only been removed two or three times in the 28 years that the Museum has owned the piece. Inquiries brought responses that it is just not possible, this is considered a "National Treasure" and had great historic significance. I insisted, sent my CV and credentials, explained that this would promote the museum, I attended interviews with the curator then the Museum Director. Eventually I believe that I wore them down, I was given permission to view the chronometer and to remove the movement from its case. I took some 400 images in the process. More than anyone has ever taken of this piece.

Briefly, the chronometer was used by Captain George Vancouver, during his explorations of the Pacific North West in 1792. He commanded HMS Discovery, while HMS Chatham was the companion ship. George Vancouver mapped the Pacific North West from California to Alaska. Vancouver Island is named after him so is the city of Vancouver BC, as well as Vancouver WA. Mt. Baker, Mt. Hood, Rayonier and 400 other locations and sites were named by George Vancouver. The Pacific North West however, is another story for another time.

While photographing the "National Treasure" it was obvious



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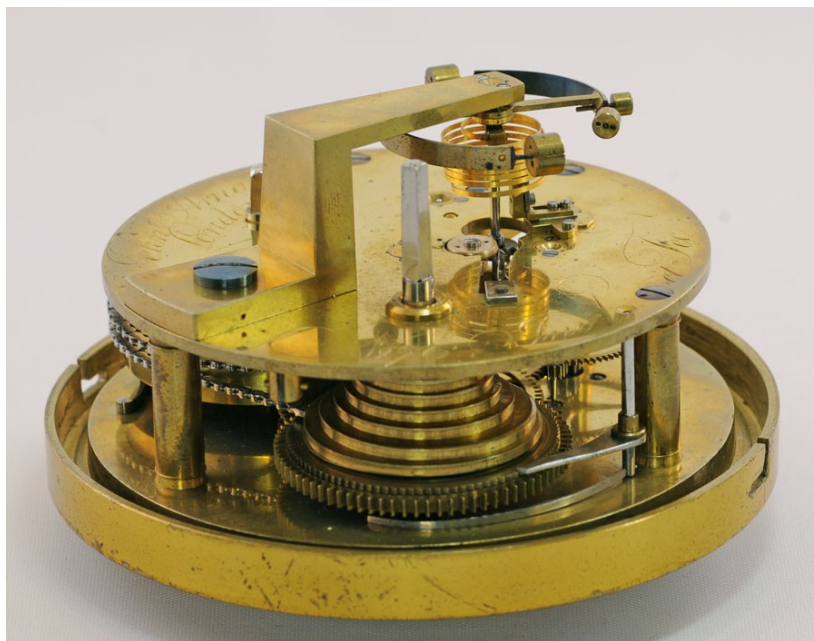
Correspondence and manuscripts should be
sent to the Editor.

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

Annual membership costs: USA \$5.0
Canada \$5.0
Overseas \$6.0 in US funds or equivalent.

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that this chronometer had not been well protected or serviced for some 30 years. Things were degrading and the dial particularly, the piece that most visitors see, was oxidizing badly, becoming almost illegible. I suggested that the dial should be stabilized using appropriate conservation techniques. I was asked to give a written proposal that the board could read so as to consider such action.

Well, how do you conserve a National Treasure, a one of a kind? How should it be handled? How should this be done without using any mechanical mean? Re-silvering was out of the question. I contacted some associates from the Antiquarian Horological Society in England, who also happen to be curators, specialists at the Royal Observatory and National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. They were very interested in this project and were free with their advice. I was allowed to remove the dial and take it to my workshop. Following the advice I cleaned the dial then gave several coats of lacquer so as to protect the dial and prevent further degradation, at least for the next few years.

I was a little anxious! What if I damaged or lost the dial? What if things went wrong. Fortunately all went according to plan and the dial was re-installed within the week. Included are the before and after dial images and an image of the movement showing one of John Arnold's compensating balances, a gold alloy helical balance spring and of course a spring detent escapement. The chain fusee and maintaining power can also be seen.

In the months ahead I plan a more comprehensive article telling more of George Vancouver's exploits, other timepieces that were used on his voyages and of course much more on the chronometer in the Vancouver maritime Museum. *

Note: For those on the internet, here is the address to the museum's webpage: www.vancouvermaritimemuseum.com

President's Message: 2010 promises to be an exciting year for Chapter 159. We will have interesting presentations at our meetings by internationally regarded speakers (well two out of three – I will do the third), then in August we are sponsoring a tour to England and Scotland. I tried to get the word out to all by email but I know not all have an address and I got a disappointing number of returns on my current list. In case you have not heard the tour is from August 23rd to September 6th. We start in London (Clockmaker's Company collection, British Museum and Belmont House). Travel to Scotland via Bletchley Park and Upton Hall (home of the BHI) where we will spend four days viewing historic Castles, a few collections and also a whisky distillery of course. Returning south we will stop off at Birmingham for a watch and clock fair, ending up at a Hotel near LHR ready for the trip home. I would like to thank Roger Gendron who initiated the whole thing and will be coming but wants to take a back seat. Jim Nicholls (jmn427@aol.com) who is looking after the finances and

Philip Priestley (LINCOLNUK@aol.com) who is doing all the ground work in the UK. If you need more information please do not hesitate to get in touch with these gentlemen or myself (horology@suddenlink.net) for more details as we still have one opening.

One of our members Fred Burgess died in Kissimmee, Florida on October 31st. Fred was very active in Newark, up-state NY for many decades and only recently moved to Florida. I first met Fred in 1996 during the Chapter 13 tour of the UK. Fred was the President of Chapter 13 and the sponsor of the tour while Philip Priestley was the organizer in the UK. On these occasions you tend to build lasting relationships, and so it was in this case. Fred had a constant battle with his health that took a turn for the worse at the Portland National Convention in 1998, but he never complained and joined us for yet another tour in England just two years ago. We will all miss Fred and offer his wife Ann and his family our condolences. Ken Johnston. *

Editor's Corner: The National Convention is now a fleeting memory. Yes, I was there once the Custom agents decided I was no threat to national security and released us from the Canadian border. Everyone said, "Drive across Canada, it's faster!". Maybe in miles but definitely not in hours spent traveling from New York to Michigan. Needless to say, on my way home I drove down and around Cleveland Ohio instead. Oh well, I am glad to see Homeland security being thorough. I saw many of our Chapter 159 members. It was great to meet in person, and be able to put a face with the name. British Horology was represented at a table in the Mart room. Dennis brought a table full of material for all to enjoy. While I did not come home with an English clock, I had a wonderful time anyway. To be honest, I bought a neat little German pendulum clock, and a one of a kind neon electric clock. It was made by a gentleman that has a shop in Grand Rapids. The local paper did a feature article on him and he had a table in the Mart room. It hangs on the wall of my shop and is a great souvenir of the convention. At the August Eastern States regional in Syracuse NY I was lucky enough to pick up an old volume named *The Old Clockmakers of Yorkshire*, written by N.V. Dinsdale. It was written and published in 1946 and I will feature an excerpt in this newsletter (see page 7). While the 41 pages of clockmakers listed in this little book could not compare to Loomes's volume *Yorkshire Clockmakers* containing over 2000 names, it is

interesting read. My big purchase in Syracuse has nothing what so ever to do with British horology, but is fascinating all the same. It is some sort of a recording clock from the late 1800's or early 1900's. I haven't solved the mystery yet, but it appears to contain some sort of apparatus for recording information. It stands 6' tall with a

Seth Thomas balance wheel movement which connects to a recording mechanism and 2 spoke wheels to take up a paper tape located in the trunk of the case. I hope to be able to feature the clock in an upcoming article in our NAWCC Bulletin. Here is a photo. If you can tell me anything about what this it may be, I'd love to hear from you. Deena. *



2010 Program Schedule: British Horology Chapter 159 meets three times a year, at the Florida Regional, at the Southern Ohio Regional and at the National. The program schedule for 2010 is as follows:
Florida Regional, January 15 – 16:
"My Favorite Clock" by Dennis Radage, See page 7
Southern Ohio Regional, April 8 – 10:
"A Clay Musical Clock" The story of a clock that was presented to Caroline of Ausbach, the Queen Consort of George II, in 1736 and is now in the Colonial Palace of North Caro-

lina." by Ken Johnston

2010 National in York PA June 16 – 20:

"Captain Cook, Venus and a Great Discovery" by Philip Priestley

If you are planning to attend the National or any of the above two Regionals, be sure to attend the British Horology Chapter 159 meeting so as not to miss any of these great presentations. We look forward to seeing you there.

Dennis Radage. *

More on Money by Tom Spittler

I enjoyed the facts presented on the British monetary system in our spring newsletter and a few stories came back to me that I wanted to relay to our readers. Notice I said ‘stories’ as I’m not sure they have any real basis in fact and they should not be repeated as they may not be correct. Both the money stories were told to me in pubs, one in Wales, and one in Ireland. The third story concerns the British Imperial system of liquid measurement.

I had just arrived in England and was having trouble understanding the old system of money when a very smart fellow in Wales explained to me the historic, ancient, relationship between gold and silver and its basis on coinage for over 2,000 years. Gold was considered to be 20 times more valuable than silver. By the 18th century the British gold pound coin was worth a “Pound Sterling” or “a pound-of-sterling-silver.” By weight here were 20 Troy ounces in a pound (weight) and 20 British shillings, weighing a Troy ounce each, equaled in value the gold pound coin. (I remember asking what a Troy ounce was, but he didn’t know). All other British gold and silver coins were marked off that standard, as well as the American colonial coins.

When the American colonies got their independence, they made the \$5.00 gold coin equal in weight to the British gold pound coin and they made 20 silver American quarters equal to the \$5.00 gold coin. Thus the American quarter equaled a British shilling. The Canadians, as Doug Cowan mentioned, did the same thing and \$5.00 Canadian equaled one British pound.

As time went by, everyone put less gold and silver in their coins, but kept the ratio of 20 to 1, silver to gold, the same, until, and I’m not sure who did it first-but lets say it was the Americans in about 1932-all these countries went off the gold standard and in about 1964, the Americans went off the silver standard. The end of story one.

The second story was related to me on my first and only trip to Ireland when I was in an Irish pub and a very smart Irishman told me why there was a pound worth 20 shillings and a guinea worth 21 shillings. He explained it had to do with business transactions and betting.

Let’s say a gentlemen went to an estate agent to sell some land. They agreed the land was worth 100 pounds and that is what the gentleman would receive for it. The estate agent would sell it for 100 guineas, take out the 5% difference, and give the gentleman 100 pounds. The 5% was considered the fair cost of doing business.

A second example has two equal horses in a match race with 1 to 1 odds. A bookie would take bets in guineas and pay off in pounds, again the 5% was the bookies profit. The same thing happened at auctions. Goods were sold in guineas and consignors were paid off in pounds.

Now for another story, this one about British liquid measures and nothing to do with money, but it does involve alcohol. I had a physics professor in college who explained that the French changed their system of measure after the French Revolution and their measure of beer, the litre, was larger than the existing British quart, which is the same quart we in American use today. King George III was alarmed when he found out the French got more beer in their glass than the English and he converted he British system of liquid measure to the Imperial system and the new quart was larger than the French litre. The American stuck with the true British system of measures and today the British use the French metric system, although they don’t like to be told so. What do YOU think? *



From the top:

Half Crown
George VI 1938

Penny
George V 1929

Half Penny
Elizabeth II 1962

3 d
George V 1918

A case for a thirty hour movement by Roger Gendron



At our SOR meeting in 2008 Roger Gendron had some fine photographs of a tall case he had made for a thirty hour movement and his stand up presentation sparked a lively dialogue. The case looked wonderful and I am very grateful to Roger for bringing it to our attention. For those unable to attend, here are some of the photographs. *KJJ. **

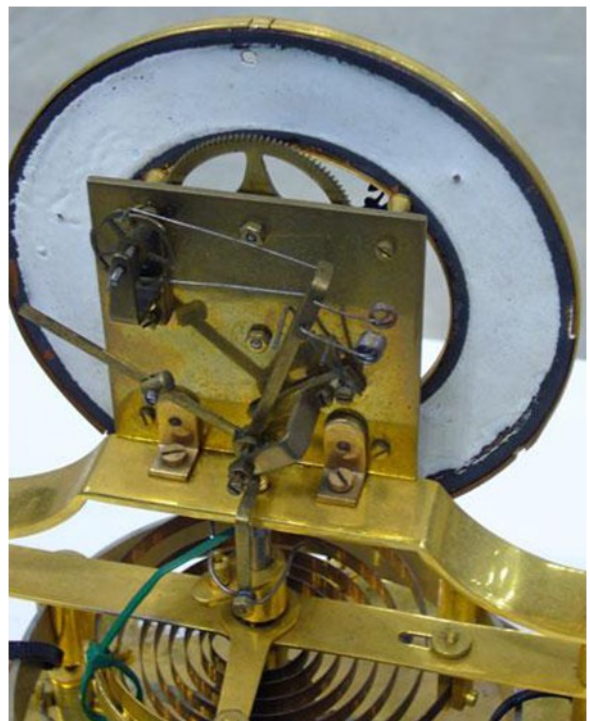
Murday Balance Wheel Clock

John Thomas Murday was an electrical engineer who became interested in designing and making clocks. He took several patents but made little or no impact with his pendulum clocks and so, prior to 1912, he turned to designing a balance wheel clock. About 300 of these balance wheel clocks were made and many have survived.

This example, that I saw at the Florida Regional 2007, needed some restoration – it was missing a dome but otherwise seemed complete (see the pictures). The plate on the base reads: “Made by Reason Mfg Co. Ltd. Brighton. Murday’s Patent.”

I first became aware of this clock by a series of construction articles for making a reproduction of this clock by John Wilding published in the *Clockmaker* and I even went as far as making up a CAD drawing of the balance and Hipp toggle.

I am grateful for the historical background for this clock to “150 Years of Electrical Horology” by E.G. Crum and W. F. Keller, who have few good words for Murday’s horological prowess but do recommend: “When they do appear, either model should be bought, no matter what the condition.” Unfortunately the asking price was too rich for me. *KJJ.* *



Florida Regional Program—My Favorite Clock by Dennis Radage.

This presentation is based on my talk given at the Pacific Northwest Regional in Kent, WA in May 2006, “My Favorite Clock” being the theme of the Regional. How do you define a favorite clock? How do you choose just one? Do you need to own the clock? Does it need to be expensive, very old, complicated or in immaculate condition? The possibilities are endless, from Big Ben to Baby Ben or any one from your collection. Figure 1 illustrates a world icon, the Westminster clock (Big Ben), a possible contender. On the other end of the scale, Figure 2 illustrates a Baby Ben alarm clock, a very collectable piece, but not really a contender for a favorite.

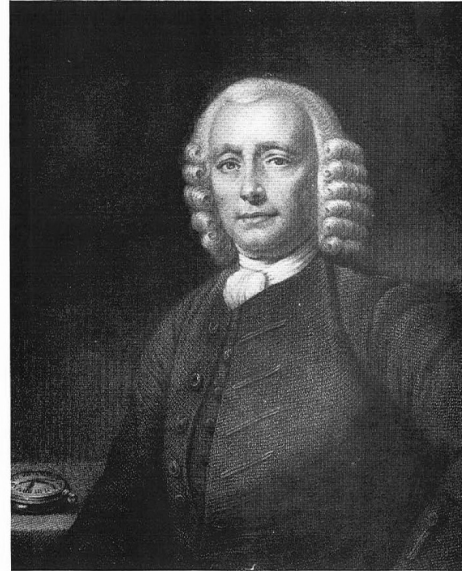
The presentation describes the attributes that, in my view, distinguish the favorite from amongst my collection of English bracket, longcase and wall mounting clocks. I will describe my favorite clock in detail illustrating the specific features that make this a clock of quality and today a “one of a kind”. A glimpse of life at the time will be given to illustrate the point in history when the clock was made. Some contemporary clockmakers were listed along with the types of clocks that they were making at that time. To distinguish this clock from other fine clocks in my collection, the characteristic of ‘torment’ was added as a distinguishing variable. Torment that provided a sound learning experience into solving some difficult and not-so-obvious problems with clocks.

Certainly the favorite will reflect the likes and characteristics of you, its owner. The starting point therefore is to understand something about the owner. My focus, and Passion, is for British clocks from the period spanning the mid seventeenth century to the mid nineteenth century (1660 to 1860). Generally speaking well made clocks with ‘solid’ movements, clocks that are well proportioned and ‘look’ right, clocks that were not factory made but signed by an individual clockmaker. The clock will need to tell a story.

However, to hear this story you must attend the Regional and indeed the Chapter 159 meeting . We look forward to meeting you there and to share in this fascinating story. *



As promised, here is a bit of interest from the book I bought at the Syracuse regional entitled *The Old Clockmakers of Yorkshire* by N. V. Dinsdale:



The inscription written on the tombstone of John Harrison in Hampstead Churchyard:

In memory of Mr. John Harrison, late of Red Lion Square, London, inventor of the timekeeper for ascertaining the longitude at sea. He was born at Foulby, in the county of York, and was the son of a builder at that place, who brought him up to the same profession. Before he attained the age of twenty-one, he without any instruction, employed himself in cleaning and repairing clocks and watches, and made a few of the former, chiefly of wood. At the age of twenty-five he employed his whole time in chronometrical improvements.

He was the inventor of the gridiron pendulum and the method of preventing the effects of cold and heat upon timekeepers by two bars fixed together; he introduced the secondary spring to keep them going while winding up; and was the inventor of most (or all) the improvements of clocks and watches during his time. In the year 1735 his first timekeeper was sent to Lisbon, and in 1764 his then much improved fourth timekeeper having been sent to Barbados the Commissioners of Longitude certified that it had determined the longitude within one-third of half a degree of a great circle, having not erred more than forty seconds in time. After sixty years' close application to the above pursuits, he departed this life on 24th day of March 1776, aged eighty-three. This tombstone was put up many years after his death.

Self-taught, he was indeed the greatest Yorkshire maker of them all.

OUR NEXT MEETING

Will take place at the
Florida Mid Winter Regional,
Kissimmee FL
At 10.30 on Saturday January
16 2010
See meeting notice page 7

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Did you receive a notice to
renew your membership?
Please remember to send in
your check. Thanks!