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A Scottish Tower Clock With a Provenance

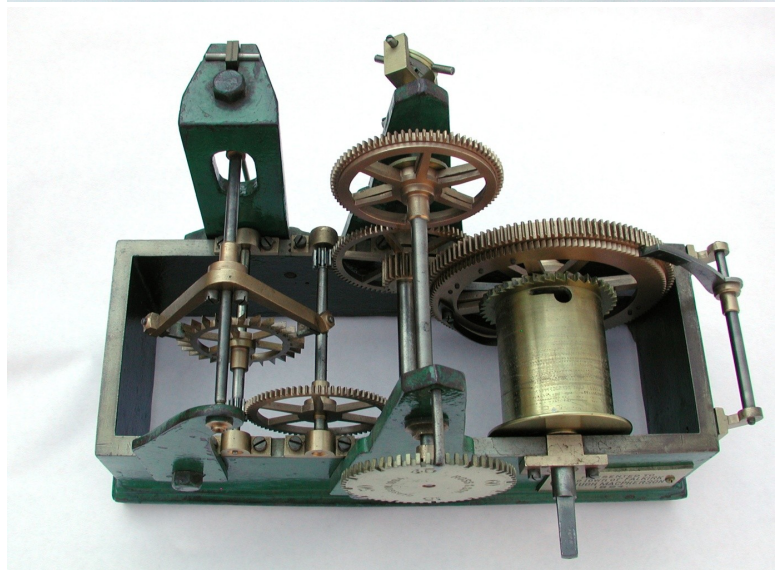
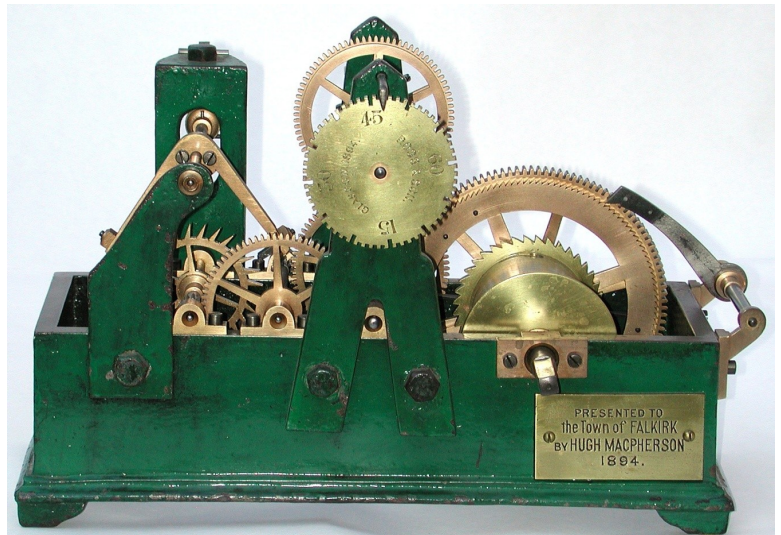
By Frank Del Greco (OH)

I acquired from another collector, a Scottish tower clock made by Ross & Son of Glasgow, ca. 1894. Ross & Son is listed in Loomes' "Watchmakers and Clockmakers of the World – Complete 21st Century Edition" as working in Glasgow in the mid-19th century. The clock is time only with a slightly longer than one meter pendulum. It ticks at 3360 beats per hour. It measures 17"W by 8"D by 11"H and is shown in the accompanying pictures. It runs on a 17 pound weight when not driving a dial. (I don't have the dial.) The clock has an interesting provenance, as recorded in the Falkirk, Scotland historical society's records:

"A town hall was built in the late 1800s in Falkirk but the town ran out of money and couldn't afford to put a clock in the tower. They therefore simply boarded up the hole where the dial would go.

A businessman, Mr. Hugh MacPherson, often passed by the town hall on his way to work. It irked him to see the boarded up hole, so he bought the town this clock. The clock bears a plaque with his name on it."

It reads: Presented to the Town of Falkirk 1894 By Hugh McPhearson.



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Chapter 159



Our Next Meeting
will be at the
Mid-Winter Regional
Daytona Beach Florida
February 15, 2013
9 a.m.

Our Speaker will be
**Johnny Wachsmann, co-founder
of Pieces of Time, London**
Speaking on “Collecting
English & Continental Watches”

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The building (old photo from historical archives shown below) has since been torn down.



Old Town Hall of Falkirk, Scotland

Comment from reader regarding Workshop Notes, June 2012 issue:

I have just received my BHT issue #56 for June 2012. The article "Workshop Notes-Bad Packing" by Dennis Radage struck a raw nerve. I purchased a birdseye maple longcase clock on eBayUK in England and had it shipped here to me in Louisiana, USA. I paid \$750 to an alleged competent packer/shipper, insured, to get it here to me.

It originally had pierced carving in the scroll top hood, with three custom mahogany finials. Upon finally arriving here after clearing U.S. Customs, I discovered that it had been packed in a poorly constructed put together cardboard box with the hood, movement and dial being standing in place as set up to run!! The pendulum was loose inside the trunk. The weights were loosely packed at the bottom of the box. It was wrapped in a Styrofoam "blanket" with the now loose peanuts having been shifted to the bottom of the box. My grandsons ages two and eight could have done a better job. As you may imagine, we opened the cardboard box in an unfit state of mind. The entire pierced and carved top, scrolls and finials were broken. There were splinters, dust, and broken pieces everywhere and some damage to the feet. The suspension spring was broken. The clock was otherwise in remarkably good shape considering its ordeal. Of course the U.S. Customs had opened the box. I suppose that they were interested in the shapes of the weights and probably some other appearance in their x-rays or something!

Finally after more than two years we have the whole clock back together in our living room fully restored by a fellow clock collector & engineer who is a very, very good friend living here locally. If it were not for him with his skills in carving and all manner of restoration (and building his own reproduction furniture), we would have been up the proverbial creek. We did not want the clock out of sight for some long period of time. Thanks to Steve, it looks as good as it should have looked when we opened the box!!

Gary Post Shreveport, LA

Presidents Message:

Dear friends,

Firstly I want to congratulate Philip Priestley and Jim Nichols for organizing a fabulous horological tour to Italy. This is the fifth tour that the Chapter has arranged and they seem to just get better and better. We will have details in our next BHT. Well done Philip and Jim!

Last year I reported that our \$5 dues no longer covered the cost of production and postage for this newsletter, let alone other Chapter expenses, and we had to find ways to become more efficient to avoid an increase. Everyone played a role in improving the financial position of the Chapter so firstly I want to say a huge “thank you” for adopting the changes so quickly! With your help, we have turned our financial position around and our 19-year dues streak of \$5 is no longer in jeopardy. In fact, we’ve even extended the \$5 to our overseas members who were previously charged a premium. Improving our technology has had a number of really great benefits as well: Members can pay their dues on-line through our website.

“britishhorology.nawcc.org” eliminating the need to write checks and addressing the biggest issue for our international members who previously had no easy way to remit dues to us We have dramatically improved the quality of the BHT by going to all-color pages and higher resolution photographs. Our website has been re-designed and updated, and thanks to Frank Del Greco has an archive of all prior newsletters

2013 marks the completion of the 3 year term for your current officers. I am personally grateful for all the hard work and thoughtful advice so generously given by Dennis Radage (VP), Marion Krajewski (Secretary) and Pete Stipanovich (Treasurer). Elections will be held at our National meeting in June. Per our bylaws, I will establish a nominating committee; however, anyone interested in serving or learning more about any of the positions can contact me directly at any time.

Rich

Editor’s Corner:

I absolutely love Doug Cowan’s short piece on the unusual pocket watch. How many of us would have walked right past it after giving the dial a cursory glance? The movement is beautiful and I am quite taken with it. If it were mine, I would have a special display made so I could keep it opened to show that eagle.

I appreciate Doug taking the time to email the photos and description to share with us. Thanks also to Tom Mostyn for his piece on Big Ben’s demise. It was a subject that tickled him, and he thought enough of BHT to send it along.

We have some very talented writers who faithfully send in feature articles, but the short ones are also interesting. You do not need to be an English scholar to contribute. Just send me your views or pictures of whatever interests you about British horology. If not for Doug, we never would have seen that great watch movement.



One last thought: Please show your support for the NAWCC by voting for new board members...our own President Rich Newman is running.

Deena

These photos are of a hooded clock in my collection I purchased it at the Eastern States regional in NY a couple of years back. The dial is signed:
H Woodham Lambourn



And Now for Something Unusual!

This small (5cm. diameter) gold watch is nice, with its 18 ct. case and gold dial, but superficially looks like many others of its kind. The case has beautifully cast edges and stem, and bears Chester hallmarks for 1828-29. The casemaker's mark is **IE HFR**, and I cannot find that in Phil Priestley's maker's mark book. ("The Compendium of Chester gold & Silver Marks 1570 to 1962. From the Chester Assay Office Registers", by Maurice Ridgway, & Ph. T. Priestley).

The watch hands appear to me to be slightly later, say 1850. The back of the case is undecorated.



The surprise is inside-- a half plate English movement of the period, with a spectacular rendering of an eagle. The banner across the wings identifies the watchmaker, John Moncas, Liverpool 9098. Moncas is listed in Liverpool 1822-37.

In other respects the watch conforms to the description in T.C. Cuss's "The English Watch 1585-1970." He states that these small single case watches, without movement cap but with cuvette* were made from about 1825. The movement appears to be a right-angled single table lever with a three arm balance, again correct for the period. It is

pinned into the case. The movement, as expected, is chain fusee and key wind/set.

So, I am wondering. Is it a custom made piece for an American customer? Or, less likely, an Austrian? Have you seen one like it anywhere? Please respond to the Editor if you can help.

Sincerely,
Doug Cowan

*cuvette: the hinged cover underneath the back hinged cover.



Big Ben Dethroned

By Tom Mostyn

Mates say it isn't so. Big Ben is on its way out. How could this *bloody awful* mess happen?

Just about every country has an icon that people all over the world associate with that country; Eiffel Tower and people think France, Statue of Liberty and people think USA, Sidney Meyer Music Bowl and people think Australia, Big Ben and people think London, England. The list goes on. But, now by parliamentary procedure Big Ben will become known as Elizabeth Tower.

Before discussing this, a brief history of Big Ben would seem appropriate here.

On 16 October 1834 workers were ordered to burn the "*tallies*" (check receipts) that had accumulated for years. Workers filled the furnaces to capacity and left the scene, the chimney got clogged and the clock tower and a huge part of the Palace of Westminster was destroyed.

Twenty five years later on 31 May 1859 a new clock was installed and running. Numerous delays, caused by bickering of the politicians, delays in awarding the clock contract, the bell cracking because of a bad casting - and later again in October, and delays in building the damaged Palace of Westminster and the tower, the bell sounded throughout London.

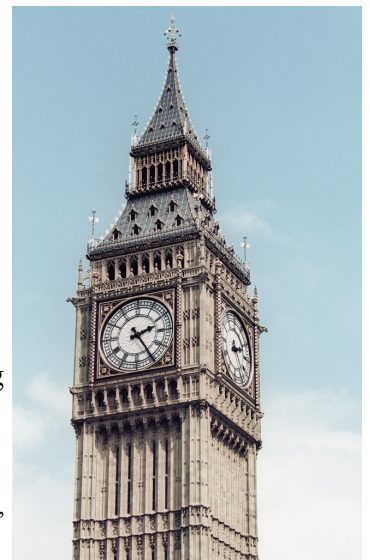
Since the beginning of large bells, they have been given names. The names typically are of Saints and the church in which many reside. How the name Big Ben came about is most commonly accepted as being named for Sir Benjamin Hall, MP for Marylebone and Chief Commissioner of Works. He was 6' 4" and as one book describes him, "rather large girth." And you have probably guessed by now, he was called Big Ben. Sir Hall, as Chief Commissioner of Works, was deeply involved in the clock and the bell as part of his responsibilities. The story, although not documented, is that during a meeting before Parliament, Sir Hall was speaking and the topic of naming the bell came up and a *back bencher* (heckler) shouted out "Why not call it Big Ben?" Although there are other stories e.g. named after the famous heavy weight boxer Benjamin Caunt, the former seems to be the most credible.

Which brings us to today. Far be it from me, a *commoner* here in the *colonies* and of British ancestry, to find fault with renaming Big Ben to Elizabeth Tower in recognition of this wonderful and outstanding monarch, but my zealous horological interest does cause me to have some remorse at the loss of this name. But, as the Brits are fond of saying, one cannot stay "*cheesed off, now can one?*"

Britain has been celebrating Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee or the Queen's reign of 60 years. Conservative Party lawmaker Tobias Ellwood submitted the name change and it was quickly ratified by the parliamentary politicians. The actual name change will take place some time in the near future.

As can be expected, you will find those in the UK for and against with the typical responses ranging from "another tradition lost to *jolly good* for the monarch."

Like all changes in history the waning generations will continue to refer to the clock (bell) as Big Ben but, the waxing generation will refer to it as Elizabeth Tower. A century from now Big Ben will be just another name long forgotten along with others and if history is any indicator, debates about the origin of the name Elizabeth Tower will be par. So *mates, keep a stiff upper lip*, you have another memory to pass on to your grandchildren, "I remember when the Elizabeth Tower was called Big Ben....." View of "Old What's its Name"



Workshop Notes

By Dennis Radage

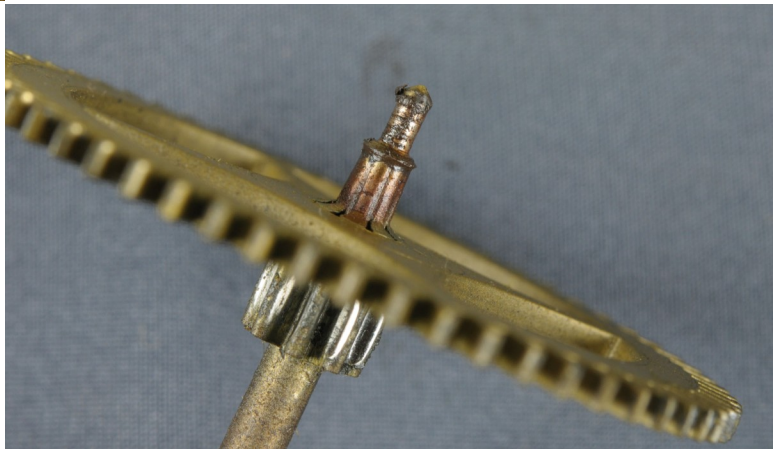
The Perils of Dried Lubrication



One of my earlier submissions to Workshop Notes dealt with bushing, the damage caused by incorrect punching of pivot holes, and the inability of later professionals to remove the damage which has now become a permanent feature of the clock. But why was it necessary to punch or bush the pivot holes in the first place?

Two clocks of similar type and age can have very different experiences in this regard. One might have no re-bushing (of any type) and has no need, it just requires periodic cleaning and the addition of fresh lubrication. The second similar clock however can exhibit very sloppy pivots and wear to the point that a wheel and pinion combination no longer mesh on their pitch circles, and in fact total power transmission to the escape wheel can be lost. The

clock will no longer run. So why might this second clock be in such a poor condition? The answer invariably rests with the knowledge of the owner, and the care, or lack of it, given by the owner. It is amazing to think that many owners just expect their mechanical clocks to continue running indefinitely without any form of attention. It can be expected that some owners have absolutely no knowledge of how to manage their antique clock. Others may believe that they can service the clock themselves and so squirt a few drops of oil here



and there. They attempt primitive repair with all manner of foreign objects to improvise what they believe might solve the clock's problems. There are others who might employ an inexperienced technician to perform a minimum cost repair job. Soft solder is the bodger's best friend!

All mechanical clocks need to be lubricated, usually about every three to five years, and then dismantled and cleaned about every eight to ten years. The length of time between

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servicing depends greatly on the environment where the clock is kept. Obviously sun, heat, cold and dust are just a few of the enemies of good conservation. The attached photos show what neglect and lack of owner knowledge can do to an otherwise fine clock. This one has apparently not been serviced for more than a quarter of a century. The owner could not recall ever having the clock serviced.

The photos show oxidized and gummed up lubrication. Lubrication that has become a grinding paste that quickly wears the steel pivots down and elongates the brass pivot holes. This clock needs a thorough cleaning to remove all dirt and residue, possibly re-pivoting two of the badly worn pivots, polishing others, then re-bushing appropriately for correct wheel and pinion depthing. Fresh lubrication is then added as the clock is re-assembled. An additional clock part is shown that has been neglected for decades. The pivots are dried and rusted and poor earlier servicing had left a liquid residue which has caused “bronze disease”, the corrosion of the brass. The green coppery corrosion is easily visible.

Unfortunately I see far too many clocks that have been neglected. I presume that much of this is through ignorance and the lack of knowledge of how to manage their antique clock. Unfortunately in this modern world many of our values are such that we expect our clocks to work forever, we have no time to learn the intricacies and maintenance needs of our antique clocks. Great shame for the clocks, even if it does create work for the restorer.

Workshop Notes is a feature of our newsletter started by Dennis Radage. It is a place for members to submit short stories or notes on their workshop experiences. If you are not a writer, don't let that stop you from submitting a photo or two and explanation describing your project. We can do the rest. Send your material by email or postal mail to our editor listed on page 3.

