



British Horology Times

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

Lantern or Longcase?

By Dennis Radage

The English lantern clock would normally be considered as being quite easily recognizable. Lantern clocks were the first distinctly English domestic clock, being mostly of brass and having a posted frame movement. The lantern clock evolved through three characteristic periods as described by Sir George White in his book “The English Lantern Clock,” 1989, Antique Collectors’ Club, and by Brian Loomes in his book “Lantern Clocks and Their Makers,” 2008, Mayfield Books. Each book nicely describes the evolution and stylistic changes over the three periods:

First period	1580 to 1640
Second period	1640 to 1660
Third period	1660 to 1700

By the early 1700s lantern clock production had essentially ceased. Of course, first period lantern clocks are

the rarest and most expensive, many were made in London. Second period clocks are also very desirable and sought after by collectors, so these clocks also fetch high prices and are also quite rare. Both first and second period lantern clocks, if they retain their original components, would have a balance wheel regulator. For illustrations of first and second period clocks you will need to refer to one of the two books already mentioned, or surf the net for dealers who specialize in such clocks.

Third period lantern clocks, post 1660, were mostly regulated by a pendulum, initially with a verge and crownwheel escapement and a short bob pendulum that would swing with a



Fig.1 square dial 30 hour clock



Fig.2. square dial 30 hour clock

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Chapter 159

Upcoming Meetings

Southern Ohio Regional

Wilmington Ohio

2 p.m. Friday April 12

Dan Osterud

will present the history of the English
watch trade with the Ottoman Empire
plus fascinating information about
domestic watch making.

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**National Convention:**

Dayton Ohio

July 3-6

**Philip Poniz**

will present his investigation into the  
topic of isochronisms in pendulum  
clocks, with a look at the most complex  
regulators ever built.

Check out [www.britishhorology.nawcc.org](http://www.britishhorology.nawcc.org) for details

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Presidents Message:

Dear Friends,

I am just back from our Mid-Winter Regional meeting that featured outstanding presentations by Johnny Wachsmann and David Cooper on collecting pocketwatches and an indepth analysis of a recently discovered Thomas Harland (Norwich, Conn) colonial verge watch. We had about 40 members attending and signed up several new ones. Great job Johnny & David! Our next meeting is at the Southern Ohio Regional in April (see information in this BHT) followed by the National Convention in July where we will be electing Chapter Officers. As is our custom, the Union Jack will be flying somewhere in the mart so please stop by to chat.

I am sorry to inform members that Deena Mack is leaving the role of BHT Editor. Deena has been instrumental in raising the quality of our publications and deserves a huge "Thank You" for all her help. Our next BHT will be published in June and we certainly need to fill this role quickly - - please contact me if you would like to help. On a personal note, I am running for the NAWCC Board of Directors, and would like to take this opportunity to ask for your vote. Credentials for all candidates were published in the last Bulletin and ballots should already be in your hands.

Rich

Editor's Corner:

I received a note from member Daniel Hammer soon after our last newsletter went out. Daniel writes, "I found Tom Mostyn's article in the November issue regarding Big Ben quite interesting. I would like to add the following: Big Ben is the name given to the largest of the bells in the tower and thankfully that has not changed. What has changed is the name of the tower. The original official name was, quite simply, "The Tower." The Victorian British press called it "St. Stephens Tower," based on the fact that the members of Parliament originally met in St. Stephens Hall, located near the tower. It was also called the "Central Tower" although that name was not used extensively. So, as Tom points out, the new name is "Elizabeth Tower," but the old bell is still called "Big Ben." Thank heavens, some things never change. Deena



British Horology 15 Day Italy Tour Report

Phil & Jean Priestley with 26 other members from USA and Canada led a 15-day tour of horological and historical sites in Italy during September/October 2012. This two-year in the making tour was organized with an outstanding travel company, Insight Vacations, and turned out to be one of those *Trips of a lifetime*.

We all met up in the Eternal City, Rome, and enjoyed a welcome drink with our tour director Gianfranco, a charming retired professional skier from northern Italy. Next day we were busy with the Vatican Museums, Sistine Chapel, The Forum, Coliseum, St Peter's Basilica and the Trevi Fountains; some of us later enjoyed walking Rome by night and dinner. The tour continued to the hill town of Montepulciano with its clock tower and then to our overnight stay in the thermal spa town of Chianciano Terme. The following morning we went to medieval Siena for a wonderful tour and then on to San Gimignano for a tour of the *Town of Towers*. We spent the night in magical Florence and our guided tour the next day was unforgettable, with a special visit to the Galileo Museum with its outstanding collection of clocks and watches. The following day was free in Florence, and some climbed the Duomo dome and saw the gilded bronze *Gates of Paradise*. The tour continued to Pisa with its outstanding

“Anything” Can Be Fixed

By Frank Del Greco

In my experience with antiques I have decided that anything can be fixed. Before some of you say, “I’ll bet an antique glass dome that is shattered into a hundred pieces can’t be fixed,” I’ll admit there will always be exceptions, but very few. I’d like to relate two experiences.

The first one was my visit to my local chapter member’s home in Chesterland, Ohio. Mark was a retired fireman. He collected English clocks and he showed me a beautiful early- to mid-1700s provincial brass dial long-case clock. Although the case was rather plain, with only a little veneer banding, it looked like it was all original and well taken care of throughout the centuries. Then he told me its story:

A number of years ago, his dog jumped against it, knocking it over. The case broke into several pieces. Mark was furious, and in what can only be called a rage, picked up the clock case and threw it down the basement stairs! It shattered into literally dozens of pieces. (I’m glad he didn’t throw the dog!) After Mark cooled off, he told himself, “I probably shouldn’t have done that!” He went down into his basement, picked up all the pieces, and began the enormous and meticulous task of gluing the case back together and steaming out and filling dents. It took months, but what I saw was the result. I’m a skilled woodworker and the case looked as if it just lived through the normal wear and tear that two+ centuries create.

The second case is even more dramatic. On chapter 159’s tower clock tour of England in 2000, we visited R.A. Creamer & Sons, a Jaguar dealer in London. In the waiting room was a magnificent two train posted iron turret clock, ca. 1837, on a wood stand. It was made by I. P. Paine, who was considered a top-notch London turret clockmaker. The escape wheel and verge bushings were jeweled. Then we heard the story:

The clock was originally located in St. Peter’s church in London. In 1987 a radical group set the church on fire. The flames engulfed the clock tower. First, the lead roof melted, spattering molten lead all over the clock. Then the clock room floor collapsed and the clock fell 60 feet and sat in burning timbers until the fire was put out. The clock was demolished by the fall and by the fire. As John Wilding said, “The impact caused the clock frame to burst apart and serious damage was sustained by nearly all parts of the movement. The clock frame was buckled, the studs in the horizontal pillars were all fractured, all the cast-iron bearings bars were broken, one in five pieces. Every pivot was bent or broken,



The Restored Clock in the Jaguar Showroom

(Continued on page 5)

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many of the wheels were bent and also the arbors.” The pieces of the clock were stored for a number of years in several places before the decision was made to dispose of it. On the way to the scrap yard it got diverted to someone’s garage where it sat until Wilding found out about it and bought it.

Wilding rebuilt the entire clock using/repairing as many of the original parts as possible. He straightened arbors and pivots, welded the broken frame, flattened warped brass wheels, and so forth. As the original drums were of wood, those had to be replaced.

The clock as it sat on display in the dealer’s waiting room looked like the original with a new paint job. The glass case next to the clock displayed the distribution gears that were not restored – twisted, melted, and so forth. The complete story of the restoration of the clock can be found in the Clocks magazine article, volume 20 No. 8 (August 1997), page 35.

I am firmly convinced that if one has the skills, anything can be fixed!



Some of the Burned Distribution Parts (one restored)

(Continued from page 3)

British Horology 15 Day Italy Tour Report (continued)

leaning tower and duomo. The initial view from the city gates is breathtaking. We then made a special side trip to Cremona, the birthplace of modern violins, to see the complex astronomical clock, then to our overnight stay in Milan. Although the *Last Supper* painting museum was closed by a strike, we were able to view the later painting in the DaVinci Museum where we also had a visit to their watch and clock department. After lunch we saw Antonio Lenner’s unique private collection of clocks and watches, and finished the day at the Poldi Pezzoli museum with many more wonderful clocks and watches.

The next day saw the group heading for Mantua with its special town clock. Then to Verona for a Shakespeare experience and finally to wonderful Venice where we started with a visit to the glass works and then glided down the canals in gondolas with musicians. The afternoon found us climbing the famous Astronomical clock tower and a dramatic cruise down the grand canal to a special dinner in the Venetian Room at the famous DoForni restaurant, but then the heavens opened up as we left for the hotel! In the morning, we went to Ravenna for its medieval mosaics, and then on to the charming hill town of Perugia. We finished the day in Assisi where the evening meal was at a restaurant with a plate glass floor built over a 70 BC Roman villa. The views from the hotel were simply brilliant. In the morning we toured the monastery and the Saint’s tomb.

We then travelled to Sorrento for a wonderful two days. We visited the local museum with its collection of clocks and watches, and then to Capri which was a wonderful experience. We shared a private boat ride around most of the island and had a great time. Our last day involved a guided tour of Pompeii, a visit that will remain in our memories forever. What an experience. Afterwards, we visited the moving WWII cemetery of Monte Cassino.

We then started the long journey back to Rome for our special highlight dinner with excellent speeches, goodbyes, and fabulous stories of our adventures during the past two weeks. This was a very special tour that will be hard to beat.

large arc. Later third period clocks would be fitted with an anchor escapement and have a long seconds beating pendulum. All lantern clocks would be powered by weights.

Like all clocks, lantern clocks also suffered from “upgrading” or “improvements” to modernize and improve performance and thus accuracy. Balance wheels could be replaced with a verge and crownwheel escapement and short pendulum, and short pendulum clocks, as well as earlier balance wheel clocks could be fitted with an anchor escapement and long pendulum. It is not too difficult to distinguish which clocks have been upgraded and which ones remain original. Usually the extra holes in the top plate would give clues as to earlier changes.



Figure 3 viewed from the right

Most lantern clocks on the market today are from the third period, and most from this period are made by provincial makers.

Viewed from the front, the two 30 hour brass dial posted movement clocks shown in Figures 1 and 2 look very similar. Both have a square brass dial, silvered chapter ring, single hand and very similar winged cherub spandrels. The chapter ring features are quite similar and in both cases the bell is visible above the dial. So why the question Lantern or Longcase?

First, many 30 hour longcase movements were made with brass posted movements, similar in style to the construction of the lantern clock. Some were never fitted into a case, but were hung on the wall with the movement, weights and pendulum exposed as a lantern clock might be. Refer to Figures 3 and 4.

Looking at the posted movement from the right hand side, both clocks look strikingly similar. They would originally have been even more similar if the movement shown in Figure 4 had retained its verge and crownwheel escapement and short pendulum. The anchor and long pendulum are later modifications. Note that in both cases, the time train is at the front, closest to the dial, and the strike train is at the rear.

You would typically expect to find a 30 hour longcase movement actually housed in a wooden longcase, typically made of oak. However, it is



Figure 4 viewed from the right



Figure 5 viewed from the left

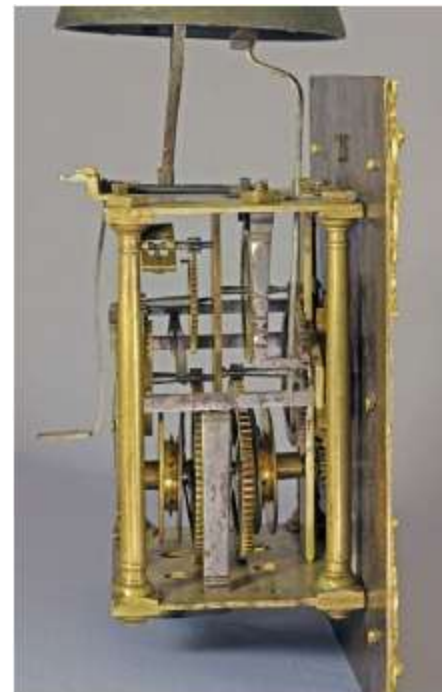


Figure 6 viewed from the left

(Continued from page 6)

also quite possible to find a 30 hour lantern clock movement also housed in an oak floor standing longcase. This just adds to the confusion.

Figures 5 and 6 show both movements but now looking from the left hand side. Note that again, the construction looks strikingly similar. Both have a similar decorated bell hammer stop and a similar bell return spring.

Both of these clocks were made by Charles Gretton, and both are contemporary to one another. It would be expected, therefore, that being made by the same maker at about the same time, both clocks would have features and components that would be very similar.

Errors can be found in both books and journals that confuse and wrongly identify a 30 hour longcase as being a lantern clock.

In Figures 7 and 8 we can now see both clocks viewed from the rear. Again they are strikingly similar, both have outside countwheel striking control. The configuration of top and bottom plates, turned brass posts, striking control and escapement are, or would have been, very similar if the clock on the right had retained its original verge and crownwheel escapement and short pendulum. Figure 9 shows the detail of the top plate of the lantern which retains its original verge and crownwheel escapement.

If you have not already guessed, the clock to the left is an original Gretton lantern clock made just before

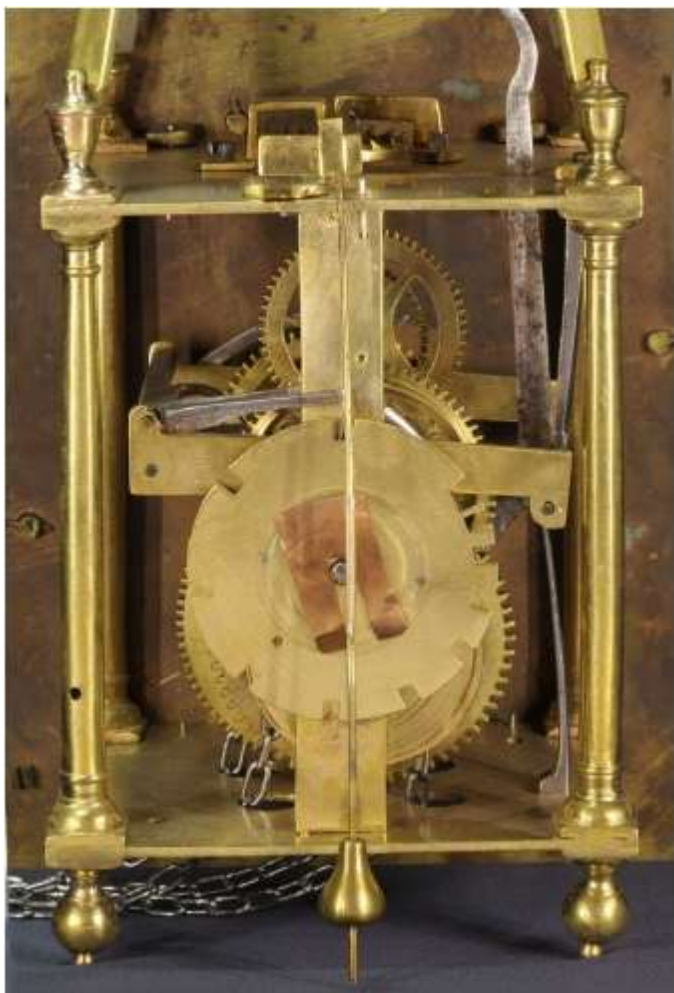


Figure 7 viewed from the rear



Figure 8 viewed from the rear

1700. Figure 9 is the detail of the Gretton lantern top plate. The clock to the right, also a Gretton, and made about the same time, is a 30 hour posted longcase movement.

Not obvious here is that the longcase movement would not have been made with covers or doors to the side. The fact that it is designed to fit into a case would offer sufficient protection from dust and dirt. The lantern clock on the other hand, does have covers and side doors, however, these were removed for photographing. There would be brass hinged and latched doors to the right and left hand side, and a steel cover plate to the rear of the movement.

Since this lantern clock has a full square dial, it would not be supplied with the traditional engraved front fret and side frets as is common with most lantern clocks.

So, what are the features and distinguishing components that allow us to say which clock is a traditional lantern clock, and which is a longcase movement that is intended to fit into a floor standing case?

From the front, viewed from the dial, it is difficult to identify the lantern from the longcase. However, even here there are clues. The lantern clock has a brass finial to the bell, the longcase movement does not. The bell on the lantern is held by four brass straps that attach to the four corner finials. The longcase movement has a top mounted bell that is held by a single steel post that is screwed to the movement top plate. This can be seen better in Figures 3 and 4.

Figures 3, 4, 5 and 6 offer better clues. The lantern clock has finials and feet to the four corner posts, the longcase posted movement has neither finials nor feet to the posts.



Fig. 9 detail of the Gretton lantern top plate

A square or arched dial lantern clock does not have fretwork, as already mentioned. However, most traditional lantern clocks do indeed have an engraved front fret above the dial and below the bell, as well as side frets, usually not engraved. The longcase movement would not have fretwork.

As already mentioned, the lantern would have side doors and a rear cover plate, the longcase movement would not have doors or a rear cover. Even if the lantern is missing its doors, holes would be found in the top and bottom plates where the doors would be hinged.

Most, but not all lantern clocks were designed to hang on the wall. They would therefore have a hoop to the top plate and long pointed iron spikes from the pillars next to the bottom plate to allow hanging from the wall. If the lantern was not initially designed to hang on the wall, but rather be supported on a bracket or mounted in a case, the top plate hoop may be missing, but the spikes would usually still be there. Longcase movements would not have either a hoop or spikes. However, close examination of other features may be necessary since there was a variation of the longcase movement which did hang on the wall, called a hoop and spike clock. In this case, both the hoop and spikes would be present, but other traditional lantern features such as feet and finials would not be there.

There are similarities, so confusion can easily occur. If in doubt, compare the features as previously described. Such examination will usually result in the lantern being reasonably easily distinguished from the posted longcase movement and, of course, vice versa.