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English Carriage Clocks and Their Makers/Retailers

By Doug Cowan (OH)

I have recently completed a search for English Carriage Clocks in books, auction catalogs and about 30 years of Clocks magazines. If I still had my AHS Journals I am sure I could have found more, but as it was, I was able to identify about 300 examples whose nominal origins are known. One author opined that only a few hundred were made, but unless he meant only early ones, say before 1850, that cannot be correct. Even if the real total from the period I chose, ca 1825 to 1915, was one or two thousand, finding about 300 examples suggests to me that most of these never left the British Isles, or were repatriated.

These clocks are beautiful small machines, usually of high quality and elegant design. They were never meant for the mass market, and were most frequently produced to order or in small batches. Phillip Belcher noted "ownership of such clocks was a question of status" and "Vulliamy's workbooks reveal that their carriage clocks went to upper society, who often bought more than one." They were very expensive partly as a result of using leading craftsmen to make them and also because their designs stemmed from expensive French examples (e.g., Breguet) and later from English "bracket clocks" which used fusees, chains and other more costly parts and cases. My opinion is that these clocks were mostly a subset of portable English clocks using balance wheel controlled movements. Tompion and a few others were making such small portable clocks, about 8 inches (20cm) tall as early as 1700.

Editor's Note – Doug Cowan's first article on English carriage clocks appeared in the March, 2015 issue of British Horology Times. We are pleased to publish in this issue Doug's updated research, that additionally includes a list of English carriage clock makers and retailers, that appeared in Chapter #195's May, 2015 issue of The Carriage Way.

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Chapter 159

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Delightful 1735 sundial motto recorded in Alice Earle's 1902 book, *Sun-dials and Roses of Yesterday*:

SO ROLLS THE SUN, SO WEARS THE DAY
AND MEASURES OUT LIFE'S PAINFUL WAY;
THROUGH SHIFTING SCENES OF SHADE AND LIGHT
TO ENDLESS DAY OR ENDLESS NIGHT



President's Message:

Dear Friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Philip Priestley and Philip Poniz who presented lectures at our meetings last year and Doug Cowan, Dennis Radage and Safwat Whaba who contributed articles to BHT. Please consider contributing a lecture or an article. Simply contact any Chapter officer with your ideas and we would be happy to help write and edit it. As a reminder, we will be holding elections for all positions (President, VP, Treasurer and Secretary) at the June, 2016 National Convention in Louisville. Please email **britishhorology@gmail.com** if you are interested. It is critically important to have new leadership from time to time and I encourage your participation. We are also looking to strengthen our article writing process and seeking volunteers willing to serve on a new committee that would focus on writing articles, and soliciting others to write articles and conduct presentations. Please email me if you can help.

I attended the Board of Directors meeting in Columbia, Pa. in November and after several days of presentations, deliberations and meetings decided to stay an extra day to spend time in our world-class research library and museum (FYI, board members often donate all expenses and take off work to attend these meetings). Obviously, the expense and time to visit headquarters is difficult; however, I can't say enough in words to express how fantastic these resources are. So - - here are a few of my pictures!

			
<p><i>A few of the thousands of items in the museum collection - - Tompion & Knibb tall case clocks, Thomas Parker bracket clock & Aime Brandt calendar watch</i></p>			<p><i>BH member Philip Poniz (right) with guest curator Adam Harris in the Library & Research Center</i></p>

Next Meeting: Bob Pritzker will be presenting the program at our next meeting at the Southern Ohio Regional (April 7-9). The presentation is on the famous maker, Sir William Congreve, and includes Bob's first-hand experiences with Congreve's most unusual rolling ball clocks. Those who were able to attend our last meeting at SOR will recall the robust and fun Show-and-Tell session that we had and we intend to reserve time at the end of the meeting for another short Show-and-Tell session. Bring something interesting to show - - but please don't be offended if we run out of time! See you in Ohio! *Rich*

Small portable table clocks were common in England by the early 1800's, and in the 1830's a Vulliamy workbook speaks of a "small balance clock" when describing a carriage clock. Later in the 19th C. we see gentlemen's library chronometers which are refinements of the carriage clocks, without handles and virtually always using detent escapements. That form lasted almost to the end of the 20th Century.

While the English carriage clock was meant to be exclusive, it is not currently rare. As I write this I am aware that a few are available from English clock merchants. However the clocks continue to be very costly to collect. A quarter chiming Dent example sold for \$60000+ US in a 2013 auction. In the 1870's Dent advertised both English carriage clocks and high grade French ones (which they sold as well). The English ones cost twice as much, and about equal to 10 years wages for a middle class clerk.

And now to the sample. I do not claim that the sampling methods are statistically correct. However the base is so large that some broad conclusions can be reached and for example, nothing much changed when I expanded the sample size from about 230 clocks to the final 310. Much of the data surrounding the pictures, especially from auction advertisements and "clocks stolen" lists is either absent or perhaps incorrect but the decision to tie the study to the list of makers and retailers allows me to feel fairly confident. I've tried not to duplicate any examples but I'm sure a few slipped in.

What clocks did I exclude? Extra large ones bigger than 12 inches (30cm) tall, which I think were meant as table clocks "in the style of" carriage clocks. Dent and Barwise made many such and they are scarcely even portable, some weighing as much as 70 pounds (32kg.) I also did not count strut clocks, nor clocks which looked English but were not identified as such. French carriage clocks with English retailers names on the dials were not counted, and there is a whole class of legitimate marriages of French cases with English movements and vice versa which were eliminated. And finally English carriage clocks after 1915, the First World War being a sort of major disrupter in the western world. No one else that I know has attempted a classification system for English carriage clocks so the following is proposed.

The carriage clocks are divided into 4 types, by appearance or size. In the process, about 80 makers/retailers were identified in pictures of actual clocks. The earliest clocks are ca 1823, when JF Cole started making clocks that looked like (but were not identical to) those of the French horologist Breguet.

Type A: Breguet "look alike." Figure 1 (next page) shows a "clutch" of these from the early 1800's by JF Cole and from the late 1800's to 1915 when the case style was revived by eminent makers such as Jump, Nicole Nielsen and Dent. Breguet made the first ones in France ca. 1818. Cole followed in 1823. The cases were of silver and most used a silver chain as the handle. Tardy states that JF Cole made them by his own hands. That may be true for the movement and dials but certainly not the cases. The Cole brothers were closely associated with major London silversmiths as early as the 1820's, and there would have been no need for JFC to learn how to make silver chains!

Although the sizes of the Type A clocks are seldom given with the pictures, they are approximately 5 to 6 inches tall (12-15cm). The case style is called Borne. Highly prized, the same ones appear very often in print. They may be overly represented in the sample, at approximately 11% of the total.

Type B: Figures 2 and 3, below, show examples. The cases are of brass, usually gilded and are approximately 6 to 12 inches tall (15 to 30 cm). In Figure 2 we see an early style, most of which came from the shops of JF and Thos. Cole. This example is late for the form, but the Coles made them as early as circa 1825. Again, this "chunky" case design followed the Breguet and other early French carriage clock makers' work. And again, the mechanical components were of English origin-- not copies of French movements. Only a few examples were found in the sample. Figure 3 shows the most familiar style of English carriage clocks. Type B's represent 60% of the total sample. Virtually every major maker made the Type B's and some were still being made by Thos. Mercer during the late 1900's. Most Type B's used sturdy English lever movements, highly finished. Much more complex examples exist, including detents, duplex escapements, quarter chiming on multiple bells, etc., but I think these were prestige driven features.

No one needed such complexity by the mid-1800's when English carriage clocks were most popular. All owners of carriage clocks would certainly have had adequate pocket watches, and the detent clocks would not have been cushioned adequately to serve as ship's chronometers. No English carriage clocks were noted which had cylinder escapements. Some early Cole examples did not have fusees and ran for only 30 hours.



Figure 1: **Type A** clocks by JF Cole circa 1830 (the front winders) and late 1800's revival examples with their cases, by Dent.



Figure 2 (left): Some English **Type B** carriage clocks like this Thos. Cole resembled early French clocks of the same period (before 1840). Figure 3 (right): **Type B** by James McCabe the Second, ca. 1850's

Type C: Figure 4. Type C's are very similar to Type B's except that they are housed in wooden cases. This type was 18% of the sample. Rosewood was most popular, but English walnut, mahogany, ebony or ebonized pear wood, and even rare woods such as peacock wood are known. The back doors tended to be of glass instead of metal. Many of the major Type B makers made them. James McCabe and successors made many of the Type B and C including special case designs of Type C for the Indian market, using rather fussy looking designs which would certainly have required protective carrying cases. Since McCabe et al made unsigned carriage clocks for many other retailers it is safe to give that firm the title of the leader in this category, especially of Type B's. Their movements were simple but rugged and well finished. Finally, Type C's were made as early as the 1840's and well into the 20th century.

Type D. Figure 5. This is the only category ruled by size-- and perhaps by maker, since most were actually wholly or partly made by the Cole brothers, JF and especially Thos. Cole. These were small, less than 5 inches (12 cm.) tall, and housed in gilt cases which were most often heavily engraved, a Thos. Cole specialty. Both 30-hour timepieces and 8-day timepieces are known, often without fusees and also using purchased lever movements of adequate but not superb quality, wherein the balance was suspended vertically outside of the back plate. Thos Cole in particular had wide ranging contacts, having worked for James McCabe from 1825-1843 as a case decorator. He also offered his services as a case designer to other firms and finally provided finished clocks to 19 London retailers. Type D clocks are known from ca. 1845 and probably into the 1860's. They totaled 11% of the sample.




Figure 4: Type C clock by Dent, late 1800's.



Figure 5: Type D by (John?) Cragg, ca. 1850

List of Carriage Clock Makers and Retailers

The following list of "makers and retailers" is made more complex by the close relationships among London craftsmen and retailers. Many clocks signed by one firm were actually made and supplied to the seller by others. This was probably more common as the 19th century went on, but was prevalent almost from the beginning of London horology in the late 17th century. For example, chronometer making/finishing was specialized. Finished, uncased chronometer movements would likely be supplied by specialists whose name never reached the dial or back plate of the finished clock. Therefore, please treat this list as a record of the clocks with the names upon them, and some idea of when they were made. The list will also record how many of each clock type (A through D) were found with a particular name upon them. I have grouped together in some cases the products of several makers who were closely related. This is because my data source was not specific. These clocks will be called, for example, Dent Family. Unless obviously wrong, dates are as shown in the publication, and/or from Loomes, "*Watchmakers & Clockmakers of the World.*" All names are London located unless noted otherwise. 

Arnold, J.R. 1A, 1D, late 19thC; Arnold & Frodsham, 1A,4B,1C, mid 19thC; Asprey, 1B, late 19thC; Aubert & Klastenberger, 1B, 1855-65.

Barnsdale, 1B, late 19thC; Barraud Family, 9B,3C,2D 1839-1914; Barwise, 4B, mid 19thC; Bennett, John, 1B, 1856-70; Benson, JW 1B, late 19thC; Blundell, 1C, 1831-51; Borrell, 1B, early 19thC; Boxell, in Brighton, 1C, 1850-60; Bridgeman & Brindle, 1B, 1900.

Cole, J F & T, 11A, 2B, 2C, 13D, 1820-60; Comyns, Wm., 1D, 1912; Cragg, (John?), 1D, mid 19thC; Craighead & Webb, 2C, mid 19thC; Cumming, Alex. 1B, 1D, early 19thC.

Dent Family, 13A, 37B, 8C, 3D, 1814-98; Desbois, 2B, 1844-75; Donaldson, 1C, (no date)

Earnshaw, Thos. 2D, 1840's and 50's; Emanuel, 1B, mid 19thC.

Finer & Nowland, 1B, mid 19th C; Fletcher, John, 2C, 1849-80 French, James Moore, 1B, 1C (no date); Frodsham Family, 1A,5B,7C,1D, mid 19th C to early 20thC; Funnell, in Brighton, 1B, 1900.

Garrard, R&S, 1B, 1D, 1845-50; Ganthony, R.P. 1B (in style of Cole) ca 1840; Gaze, S.B & Payne Co., 4B, 1850; Gillett & Johnston, 1B, late 19thC; Grafton, J & E, 1B, 1832-44; Greenlade, Taylor & Hunt in Taunton, 1B, (no date); Grohe, 1B, 1C, 1860.

Hamilton & Co., 1B, 1865-1911; Hancock C F, 1D, 1862; Hart & Sons, 1B, 1820's; Heugenin, 1B, 1840 Howell & James, 2D by T. Cole, 1855; Hux, James, 1B, 1851-63.

Jump, 7A, 2B, late 1800's.

Klastenberger, 1B, 1863-85; Kullberg, Victor, 1B, 2D late 19thC.

Losada, J R, 1B, 1839; Lost, Wm., 1B, 1850; Louchars & Son, 1B, late 19thC; Lupton, Clifford, 1B, 1870.

Mercer, 1B, Late 19TH C; McCabe Family, 3A,28B,4C, 1D by T. Cole, 1811-1868; McMaster, in Dublin, 1B, 2C, 1840's; McMaster & Son, (in Dublin?), 2C, 1860; Molyneux, Robert, 1C, ca 1840's; Moore, John & Sons, 2B, mid 19thC; Muirhead & Son, 1C, 1D, 1850's; Murray, Jas., 2C, mid 9thC.

Nicole Nielsen, 7A (nickel plated, not silver), 3C, ca 1900.

Parkinson & Frodsham, 2B, 1828-1947; Payne & Co. in Bath, 6B, 2C, 1870-99; Payne, Wm. 1C, (no date); Payne T E, in Tunbridge Wells, 1B 1C, 1874; Phillips, 1B, 1860; Poole, John, 1B(chronometer), 1845-75; Purvis, Alex. 1C, 1840's.

Roskell, John in Liverpool, 1B, 1848-51.

Sewell, Jos. in Liverpool, 2B, 1848-1900; Smith, E W, 2B, mid 1800's; Smith & Son(s), 3B, late 19thC; Storr & Mortimer, 1D, 1830-1845.

Thomson & Protaze, 1B, 1863-81; Thwaites & Reed, 1B, mid 19thC.

Upjohn, Bright, & Wood, 3B, after 1850.

Vieyres, 1D, 1832-44; Viner, Chas, 4B (2 chronos. & a month going), 1D, 1840's; Viner & Co., 1B, 1C, 1827-50; Vulliamy, 1B, 4C, ca 1850.

Wakham, George in Bath, 1C, 1852-78; Webber in Woolwich, 1B, 1826-55; Webster, R W, 1B, ca 1840; White, E, 4B, 1D, 1860's; Whitelaw, Jas. in Edinburgh, 1C, ca 1845; Wilde, 1C, ca 1850.

Yonge, Walter, 1D, ca 1860's.

CHARLES GRETTON • CLOCK & WATCHMAKING THROUGH THE GOLDEN AGE

After nine years of writing, research and photography, mainly in Great Britain, BH is pleased to announce the availability of a comprehensive study of the life and work of the celebrated 17th century clock and watchmaker, Charles Gretton. This monumental work by Dennis and Laila Radage comprises 660 pages of never-before published material and photographs, including in-depth study that traces the development of clocks and watches from the early 1670s to the mid-1720s, often referred to as the Golden Age of Watch and Clockmaking. Amazingly, Gretton produced some 2,000 watches and about 450 clocks.

Members received a small glimpse of Charles Gretton's life and accomplishments at the National Convention in 2014 when Dennis and Laila provided a wonderful lecture on Gretton, a maker who rose from humble origins to become Master of the Clockmakers Company in 1700. Gretton was an apprentice through the years of the Plague and Great Fire, gaining his freedom in 1672, and made many fine lantern, longcase and spring clocks, and watches during his long career. While recognized as one of the greatest English makers, his life and accomplishments have never been fully presented until now.

This book will be of interest to keen horologists, historians, and collectors of British clocks and watches as well as those with a more casual knowledge of clocks and watches, and the author's in-depth analysis of the socio-economic conditions in which 17th century skilled craftsman worked paints an enlightened picture of what may have been the life of many yet unrecorded clockmakers.

Exquisitely produced and lavishly illustrated with close to 1,000 images, charts, graphs and tables, *CHARLES GRETTON • CLOCK & WATCHMAKING THROUGH THE GOLDEN AGE* will also capture the attention of those who enjoy the visual beauty of printed books.

Three luxury limited editions of this book are available as this issue of British Horology Times goes to press. Further information and purchase details can be found at www.grettonbook.com.

