

Vox Temporis—*Letters to the Editor*

The views expressed here are those of individual members and are not necessarily endorsed by the NAWCC. Members are invited to write Vox Temporis. Letters may be edited at the discretion of the editor. Please send contributions to the editor at ddelucca@nawcc.org or NAWCC, Inc., 514 Poplar St., Columbia, PA 17512-2130, c/o the Publications Dept.

Cylinder Escapement Beginnings

Letter to the Editor,

Just to say the *May/June W&C Bulletin* was exceptional. The article by Dennis Radage (CAN), *Dating Early English Verge Watches (1660-1730)*, was a magnificent piece of work. I learned a great deal from it. I do believe his date for “cylinder escapement” of 1726 to be incorrect (page 261). Thomas Tompion invented the “cylinder escapement” in 1695. His student and also great horologist George Graham improved on it in 1726 (temperature compensation); this was called the “deadbeat” escapement. But “cylinder” I am sure must go to Tompion in 1695. That said, it is still a *fantastic* article. As was Part IV of David Boettcher’s Borgel series.

It’s a great magazine. Well done to all.

Sincerely,

—Adam Harris (Spain)

From Author Dennis Radage

Thank you so much for forwarding the comments from Adam Harris; it is always a pleasure to know that the work that has been put into these articles is read and appreciated.

I thank Adam for his positive comments regarding my article “Dating the Early English Verge Watch (1660 – 1730).”

It is also nice to have feedback regarding content, errors, and/or omissions, for this is how we all learn.

One would unfortunately expect errors and/or omissions to find their way into such articles, particularly for very early timepieces, and also when one does not have peers to read and edit the piece before it is submitted for publication.

The article was focused on the verge watch, although I did indeed mention the cylinder escapement. My research suggests that the cyl-

inder escapement was not used by any maker, including Tompion, before the last half of the 1720s. Tompion, as we know though, died in 1713. In the meantime, the verge remained the only practical escapement through to the second half of the 1720s.

We must also consider two different aspects to the introduction of “new inventions.”

1. The date and individual who is credited with a new invention, often also patenting the invention.

2. The approximate date that the invention, or derivatives thereof, were taken into common use.

3. The date that the invention (if not particularly practical at the time) was refined or redesigned to become a practical solution. Should this be referred to as the invention, or a new invention? This new invention was also often patented.

I was not, however, considering this alternative wording when I wrote the article. These dates could be just two or three years apart, or maybe decades apart. There are many examples.

So now we have a question as to the wording used. Likely the better choice of words, to be somewhat more correct, would be “applied,” “improved,” or “taken into common use.” I would certainly accept any of these words as a replacement for the word “invented” under the heading “The Cylinder Escapement” on page 261.

For reference I will document some of the material I viewed in writing this article:

a) *Thomas Tompion: His Life and Work*, by R. W. Symonds, page 242: “In 1695, a patent was granted for fourteen years to Edward Booth, William Houghton and Thomas Tompion, for “A new sort of Watch or Clock” which they had invented. This patent was for a type of escape-

ment which was perfected about 1725 by George Graham and called the cylinder escapement.”

This reference suggests that while Tompion was indeed involved with the original invention, he was not alone and the invention was not taken into use, likely for cost or complexity issue, until Graham “perfected it some thirty years later. Meanwhile the verge prevailed.

b) *The English Watch, 1585 – 1970* by Terence Camerer Cuss, page 106: “in 1695 Tompion took out a patent, in conjunction with William Houghton and the Reverend Edward Barlow, which describes a new form of escapement with “teeth made like tenderhooks.” A movement signed by Tompion, now in the Science Museum, seems to be the only surviving example of a project which was clearly never developed.” Page 179: “George Graham, the worthy successor to Tompion, introduced the cylinder escapement in 1726 and used no other up to the time of his death in 1751.”

These references again suggest that three individuals were involved with the design, which was never adopted until Graham introduced it in 1726.

c) *Watchmaking* by George Daniels, page 199: “The cylinder escapement, as illustrated in Fig. 431, was invented by George Graham in the early eighteenth century.

George Daniels gave credit for the invention to George Graham.

I do refer to the Camerer Cuss book in my references.

I am not expecting these references to change opinions; I sincerely appreciate feedback. I cite these references to illustrate where I derived some data. Fortunately, since the article was intended to be focused on the verge, I believe that the article is acceptable in its present form. If any readers would rather replace the

word “invented” with “applied,” this would not cause grief nor would it alter the basis of the article.

Thank you so much,

—Dennis Radage (CAN)

From a Fantastic Finds Fan

Dear Editor,

This letter is in response to the controversy brought to light in issue 403 of the *W&C Bulletin* about the excellent column written by Fredric J. Friedberg titled “Fantastic Finds.” First, I agree wholeheartedly with the letters written by both Rene Rondeau and Bruce Shawkey in response to the letter of Fortunat Mueller-Maerki. In his letter to the editor, Mr. Mueller-Maerki disparages “Fantastic Finds” as being not scholarly enough for a “... peer-reviewed journal.” Granted, the *Bulletin* has the goal of education as its underlying mission, but there is also always room for fresh, insightful and, yes, even entertaining articles and ideas within its hallowed pages. I will admit that I enjoy reading articles such as “The Incredibly Overly Detailed and Painstakingly Researched to the Very Most Microscopic Fact History of the Thoroughly Obscure Clockmakers of the West Podunk Valley 1675-1875” as much as the next Association member, but I must also state that I absolutely love “Fantastic Finds”

and its sister column “The First One or I Collect...Because” (by Joseph E. Jones and William Nelson in issue 403). In fact, these two columns are the first two I read upon receipt of the *Bulletin*. These columns stir my interest in what sometimes can be a very boring journal.

Ms. DeLuca and Messrs. Friedberg, Jones, and Nelson, please keep up the good work and please do not cancel “Fantastic Finds” or “The First One or I Collect...Because.” These columns add immensely to the readability, quality, and value of the *Bulletin* and should continue bringing the “light side” of the hobby to the membership.

Sincerely,

—Roy L. Gilliland (NC)

Restoration Do's and Don'ts

I've been a fan of *Antiques Roadshow* for years and have bought and sold a variety of antique cars, guns, toys, watches, etc. I've always been puzzled and amused by the “do's and don'ts” rules of restoration. For instance, it's acceptable to totally restore an antique building, house, painting, boat, car, truck, fine jewelry, etc., to the point of totally rebuilding and refinishing same, with little effect on value. You can clean the surface and touch up paint, on an antique painting. But when it comes to antique pocket or wrist

watches (also includes firearms and furniture), BEWARE! We're not supposed to refinish dials or cases. Now, I've had at least three watch dials refinished, including a 1950s IWC and a 1927 vintage Patek Philippe.

I've got a really neat 1950s vintage Sears wristwatch with a rare power reserve dial that will be my next dial project. Why do this? I wouldn't wear a coat or shirt with dirt stains or missing buttons, why should I display a scruffy, worn, or dented watch dial or case? Last year I found a great deal on a Nicolet Chronograph wristwatch, vintage 1939. The watch was in good running order, but had several large dents in the 18k gold lugs and case, which, of course, lowered the value. I've got a local jewelry repair person who is a Master Goldsmith. So I had to have the movement removed (to avoid heat damage), case refinished and reassembled, to like new condition. The IWC w/watch dial was almost illegible, but was refinished to like new condition, for a very reasonable price. Should I ever sell any of these pieces, I would, of course, state that the dials and cases have been refinished. So long as the restoration is to be as close to original condition as is possible, I'll continue to go against the “rules” and do my thing!

—Steve Lee Parsons (PA)

Information Request for Clocks by E. D. Barton

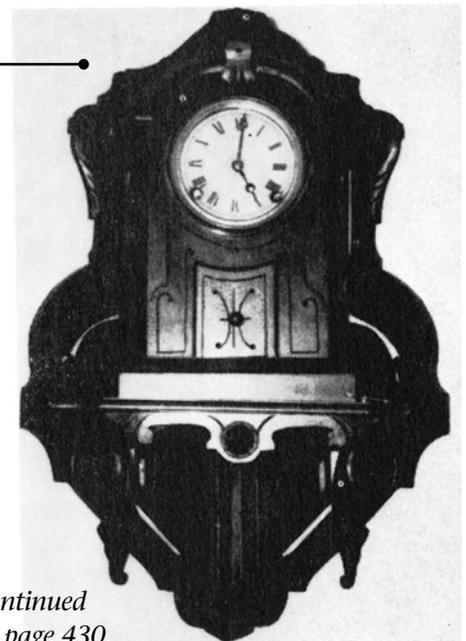
The topic of the request is clocks made by E. D. Barton of Chicago in the early 1870s.

He made clocks under patent number 134,168 for “corner clock and bracket” issued on December 24, 1872. There is one such clock pictured in the December 1962 *Bulletin* (No. 101), and is reproduced here at right and on page 430. That clock is described as being marked “2 No. 184,” which I am interpreting to mean Model 2, serial number 184. The label reads “Corner Clock and Bracket. I have a Model 1, S/N 5, and a close friend has Model 1, S/N 8. These are similar in size and

quality to the Model 2 shown in the 1962 *Bulletin*. I also have acquired Model 4, S/N 180, and Model 5, S/N 394. These latter two clocks are also corner clocks, with the same label and patent date, but simpler in design and smaller, with 30-hour movements (the others have 8-day movements).

I would be interested in learning about any other clocks in the corner design, or other more typical designs, made or marketed by E. D. Barton.

The corner clock and bracket patent was issued on December 24, 1872, to Carlton W. Roberts.



Continued
on page 430.