

greate Marlowe and to the vicar of Bissh̄m mie beste gowne Itm to Jone Leicrofte mie cloke Item I giue to Henrie Lovelice mie boks the rest of my gods [sic] not bequeste I giue to Lettice Bennet wife to Thōm Benet whome I make my sole Executrix. witnesses George Offerpinge vicar of greate Marlowe, Willm Hare vicar of Bissh̄m and Rafe Nuttinge the farmer of Hurley wth other.

S̄m Inuentār—lviijs. iiij*d*.

Probatū fuit p̄ns testamentum apud Redinge 14^o Januarii scdm etc. 1558 corā Mro Robrto Pound in Tl Baḥc offi^{li} Berk.

(Hurley Priory was suppressed in 1536.)—F.T.W.

Some Old Clockmakers of Reading and the Neighbourhood.

By Ernest W. Dormer, Lieut. R.A.F.

AMONG the furniture of our forefathers few things were more highly prized than the "Grandfather" clock, and to-day the dealer in antiques will tell you what store the average village housewife sets by the clock that has the virtue of having been in the family "over a hundred years." In the seventeenth century a clock was an asset of considerable value; Birmingham and Germany had not arrived with their tens of thousands of nickel "tickers" at half-a-crown each, and a tall "Grandfather," with its solemn dick-dock was only possible of acquisition after many years of thrift and self denial. Even then it was but a "thirty-hour," which had to be wound up every night, and its case was as often as not of the oak grown in the locality of the home, and made by the village cabinet-maker with not a little pride and care. But for all this it was a "Grandfather," and could be relied upon to tell the time correctly and to last many generations. A "Grandfather" is always an excellent time-keeper.

It has been my pleasure to take a more than ordinary interest in these old time-tellers, and so before naming some of the makers that have come before my notice as being men of Reading and its neighbourhood, it would perhaps be advisable to touch lightly upon "Grandfathers" in general.

The oldest "Grandfathers" are square headed, and have brass dials with triangular cast brass ornaments in the four corners. The cases are very narrow and often, in order to allow the pendulum to swing to the full escapement, holes have been cut in the sides of the waist. There is also another reason for this. The earliest long-case clocks were of the balance and short pendulum type, and in the cases made for these only just sufficient width was allowed for the rise and fall of the weights. In some instances a clock of this kind would be "converted" and a long, or "royal" pendulum introduced. It was then necessary to do something to allow the full swing of the pendulum and so holes were cut in the sides of the case where the pendulum bob swung to and fro. There is a rare type of projection or wing, known as "ears," which was made to cover these holes. "Eared" clocks, which date before the reign of James II., are very scarce. In the seventeenth century clock cases there was no door to the "bonnet," the hood lifted off the case. It was not until Georgian days that the "dome," or semi-circular heads became the vogue; this being to admit an equation of time calendar, a moon or a chime dial. Cases of this type continued to be made until about the year 1800 and often bear a heavy and handsome superstructure.

The dial of a clock is an excellent indication of its period; but clock buyers should beware of the reproductions that are about, especially those of Tompion, Mudge, Graham and East. Britten says: "From the first the hour circles were, with few exceptions, engraved on a separate silvered ring as in lantern clocks; the double circles within the numerals were retained and in the space enclosed between them were radial strokes, dividing the hour into quarters, the half hours being denoted by longer strokes terminating in a fleur de lys or other ornament." Among the clocks that have been in my possession are three with dials bearing these insignia of an early period.

One of the earliest Reading clocks I have seen is an "hour-hand" eight-day by Luke Wise, of Reading. It dates from the reign of William and Mary, and has spiral twist columns flanking the bonnet, with concentric rings about the winding holes. The case is of pear or cherry. Another fine movement by Luke Wise was recently in the possession of a Reading dealer; it has a calendar and a second hand. Another, a "thirty-hour," by the same maker, is also in the town. Luke Wise appears as a maker of clocks in 1686, and as a member of the Clockmakers' Company in

1694. There seems to have been a maker of clocks named Richard Whitehear, who settled in Reading as early as 1648. There is recorded a lantern clock by him, with dolphin frets, inscribed "Richard Whiteheare,* Reading, fecit." There was also a Reading maker of lantern clocks in 1688 named John Hoddle. Of these two makers I have not seen an example, although I am very anxious to do so. Neither have I seen a walnut marqueterie case containing a Reading movement, but no doubt there are specimens in existence. It must not be presumed that a movement having one hand only is always the earliest; for two-handed clocks appear as early as 1670, while clocks with the single index only were made well into the 18th century. I have had a Henley example made in 1746.

The chief clockmakers of Reading in the 18th century seem to have been the Hockers and the Dickers. By the kindness of Mrs. Hautenville Cope, of Finchampstead, I have been enabled to gather from her "Original Yeoman Pedigrees,"† the following particulars of the Hocker family:—"The first reference to the family which I have is that they owned the Manor of Woodley, in Sonning, in 1609, and continued to own it till the middle of the 18th century; for in 1746 John Hocker, Esq., gave a lease of the Manor of Woodley to his son John, a family settlement perhaps on marriage. In 1698 the office of parish doctor of Sulhamstead was held by Dr. Hocker of Mortimer. There were apparently several generations of John Hocker. The doctor died in 1709. He had bought land in Sulhamstead in 1671 and probably removed there from Mortimer. Next we find John Hocker the second as a watchmaker in Reading in 1682. I believe that John Hocker had two sons, John and Joseph, and that the latter was also a Reading clockmaker. Recently I bought at an old furniture shop a clock face‡ and works bearing the name of Joseph Hocker of Reading, which from its general appearance was made about the middle of the 18th century, and would coincide with the time of Joseph Hocker." It is worthy of note that John Hocker was Mayor of Reading from 1751 to 1758. Apparently John, the son of Dr. Hocker of Mortimer and Sulhamstead, was the John who was apprenticed to John Martin and turned over to Edward Josslin in 1728, and who was made a member of the Clockmakers' Company

* Mrs. Cope thinks this name ought to be Whitehead.

† Published in *Reading Mercury*.

‡ I had the clock face fitted into an old case, which was for sale in the same shop.

in 1729. Joseph, before referred to, certainly seems to have been his brother, but he was trading at Basingstoke about this time, for there is a "thirty-hour" by Joseph Hocker of that town which has come under my notice. There is an interesting little inside indicator dial in the Reading Museum which is recorded to have come from the old clock in the tower of St. Laurence's Church. It bears the following inscription: "Hocker fecit, 1733. Tho. House, Edin. Pain, Churchwardens; New Dialwork and Hands by Rt. Mann, 1816." There are several notices of births of members of the Hocker family in St. Laurence's Registers, and on the north side of King's Road, Reading, there was once a patch of meadow, which, if I am not mistaken, was known as Hocker's Green. The possession of a Hocker clock, therefore, is doubly interesting, since the family was intimately associated with the civic and professional life of the neighbourhood, and several of its members horologists of no mean repute.

Of the Dickens' examples, many have come before my notice; and in this instance again members of the family seem to have migrated to the surrounding towns and villages, where they settled and made clocks bearing their names on the dial. I have seen a plain "eight-day" by Thomas Dicker of Mortimer, and another by a Dicker of Silchester, while single-hand "thirty-hour" clocks by Dicker of Reading are very common. The best example by this family that has come to my notice is one lately in the possession of Mr. Negus, of Reading. It is an "eight-day" with calendar, and in the dome is a rocking ship under which is the inscription "The Terrible Captain Death," clearly an allusion to the old man Time and his scythe, and not to a corsair who flew the piratical emblem. The case, a large one, is of fruit wood. I have seen a lac-cased "Act of Parliament" clock by Thomas Dicker of Reading. There appears to have been a Thomas West of Reading, who was a clock and watch maker in Reading in 1780, and a "thirty-hour" by him has been located. I believe some of the members of this family are buried in St. Laurence's Churchyard, on the south side of the path leading to the Forbury Gardens. Messrs. Hampton, of Pall Mall, lately advertised a fine "Act of Parliament" clock in a black and gold lac case by Thomas Wild, of Reading. It dated, naturally, from the end of the 18th century. In an old inn at Thatcham is an "eight-day" clock by W. Randall, of Reading, dating from about the year 1780. It has a white painted dial. I recently had in my possession two clocks by John Lee, of Cookham, but as this village is

not strictly within the neighbourhood of Reading I refrain from describing them. Perhaps another day I can take a wider field of enquiry into old timekeepers. I may, however, legitimately include the quaint name of Horsnaile, who was making clocks at Warfield in 1730.

It may be news to many that so small a village as Arborfield possessed a clockmaker in the 18th century, one, I think, named Critchfield, or Crockford, of whose labours an "eight-day" with brass dial, in a green lac case, was for sale a few years ago in the window of a Reading shop. The presence of a name on a dial, however, is not indisputable evidence that the movement was made by that particular individual. It must often have happened that a supply of dials, if not complete movements, was purchased of London makers and assembled as required. These would be engraved with the name of the local middleman. The same or an analogous practice exists to-day in regard to the making of cycles.

It may be fairly assumed that there are many residents in Reading who are interested in and possess long-case clocks, and as I am anxious to secure as complete a list as possible I should be grateful if readers of this article who have examples from the hands of long-past citizens of the County Town will send me the dial names, or indeed any other particulars bearing upon the subject.

I append a list of clock and watchmakers who were in business in Reading about a hundred years ago. I seem to remember having seen a type of round wall clock with enamelled dial by Player of Reading, while of course the name of Winch is not an unfamiliar one. A bracket clock by James Trendell came into an auction recently in Reading. It was late Georgian and in a rose-wood case. I believe it was a "chimer."

John Butler, 3 and 34, Middle Row.

William Coxhead, 41, Market Place.

David Oliver, 3, Broad Street.

John Player, 13, Chain Passage.

William Simpson, 87, Silver Street.

Henry and Edward Smith, 31, Minster Street.

John Stone, 176, Friar Street.

George Tight, 11, King Street.

James Trendell, 55, Minster Street.

Francis Wale, 125, Castle Street.

Richard Winch, 5, Middle Row.

There doubtless were others, but I have not been able to trace them.