

WHO MADE MY CLOCK?

The situation often arises where the owner of an antique clock or watch wants to learn more about it. Even the most basic facts such as the maker's dates go some way towards identification. For some owners a little knowledge of the clock's maker is also a comfort blanket he can wrap himself in, as some known dates might appear to confirm his clock's genuineness and his wisdom at buying it. This can be very helpful in countering potentially-hostile attitudes from wives or partners, who may not always appreciate the wonder of old clocks, which usually fall into that category they now call 'mantiques'.

I can't help but smile when people say they have 'researched' their clockmaker on the internet but can't find anything by way of identification. Putting a name into Google is not research, it is just typing. Yes, you might be lucky, but you might just as easily fail, or pick up mistakes others have made. But, it *is* fast and easy to use and nothing is lost by trying a quick internet search as your first step towards finding out about your antique

by **Brian Loomes**, UK

clock. If you don't know how, ask the schoolkids next door to 'research' it for you!

The internet is an amazing tool. It may not find you much detail about your particular maker but it may well turn up one or more items by him that have passed through auction in recent years and so may offer some facts about him from the auctioneer's catalogue. If you are very lucky it might lead you to articles in horological publications such as *CLOCKS* magazine. Who would go to the time and trouble of researching a clockmaker and then put the results online for your convenience? Only benefactors like me and the editor of *CLOCKS*!

There are three obvious routes I can think of to identify your clock and its maker.

- See if someone else has already done the work for you. If they have the result will probably be published in a book, a



magazine or just possibly online.

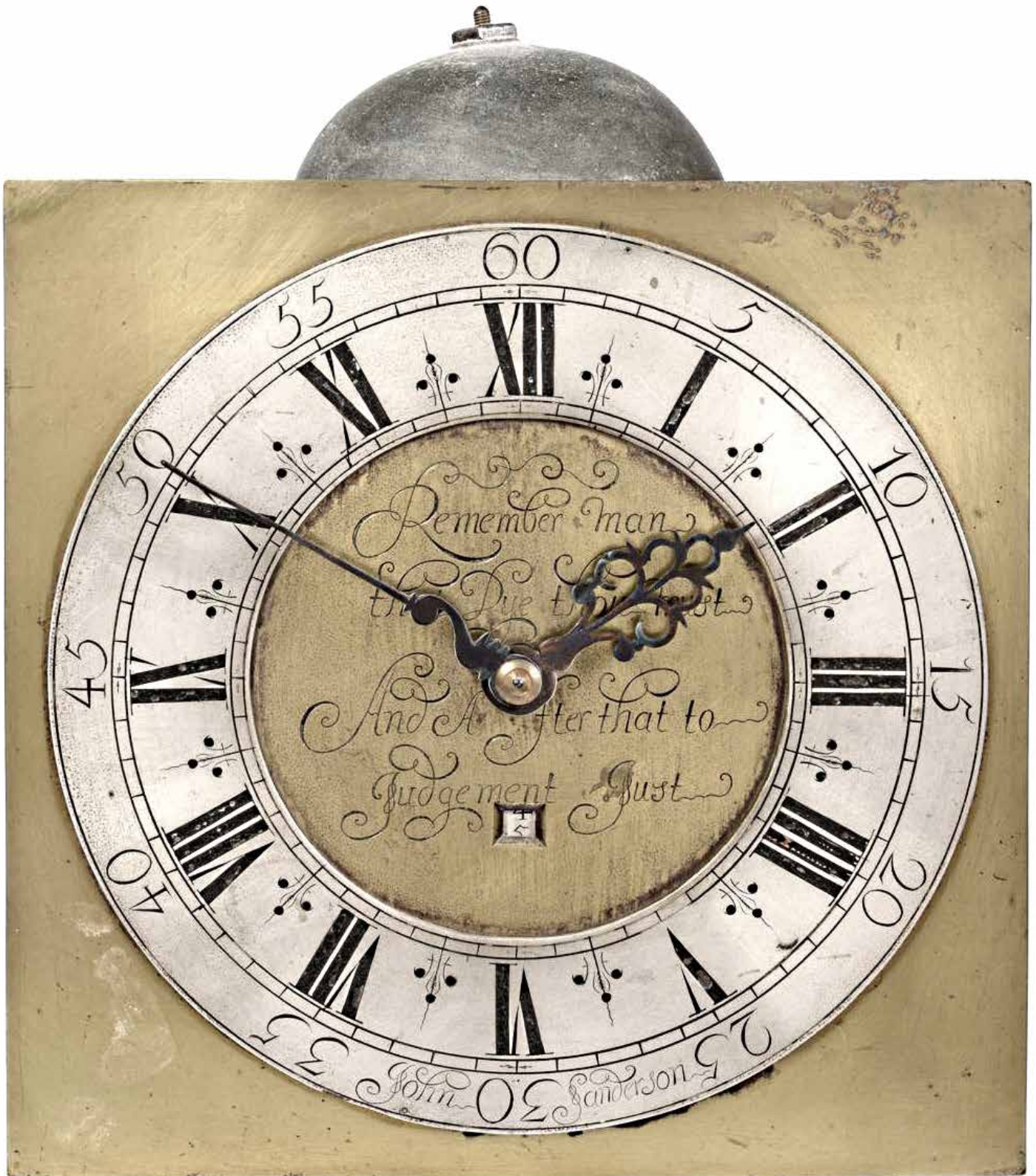
- Research it for yourself
- Pay someone to research it for you.

The first is by far the easiest route. Old hands may think they know how to go about this already. Just look him up in those books they used to call the 'bible' of the trade, often referred to in brief as 'Baillie' or 'Britten', they will tell you, as they have for the past 40 years. And that is exactly the problem. Their knowledge of sources can be way out of date. I have come across people who consider themselves keen collectors, who boast about the fact that they have not bought a book in 40 years. Why should they, they ask, when they already have Baillie and Britten? Well, I will explain why, but the problem

Figure 1. Late eighteenth century longcase by Will Snow of Padside, a maker barely mentioned in the older reference books. Today his name is known to most clock collectors, thanks to my own researches. Padside is only two miles from my home. Photograph courtesy of Anderson and Garland.

for them is that they will not be reading this either!

I am amazed even today to see auction houses, including some with specialist clock and watch departments, quite often quoting in their catalogues details they may have 'researched' in, for instance, that old standby known simply as 'Baillie'. I could name a few but that would be unkind. They seem not to realise that that book covers hardly any makers ●—



after 1825 and was first published in 1929, almost 100 years ago! It was *not updated after 1947!*

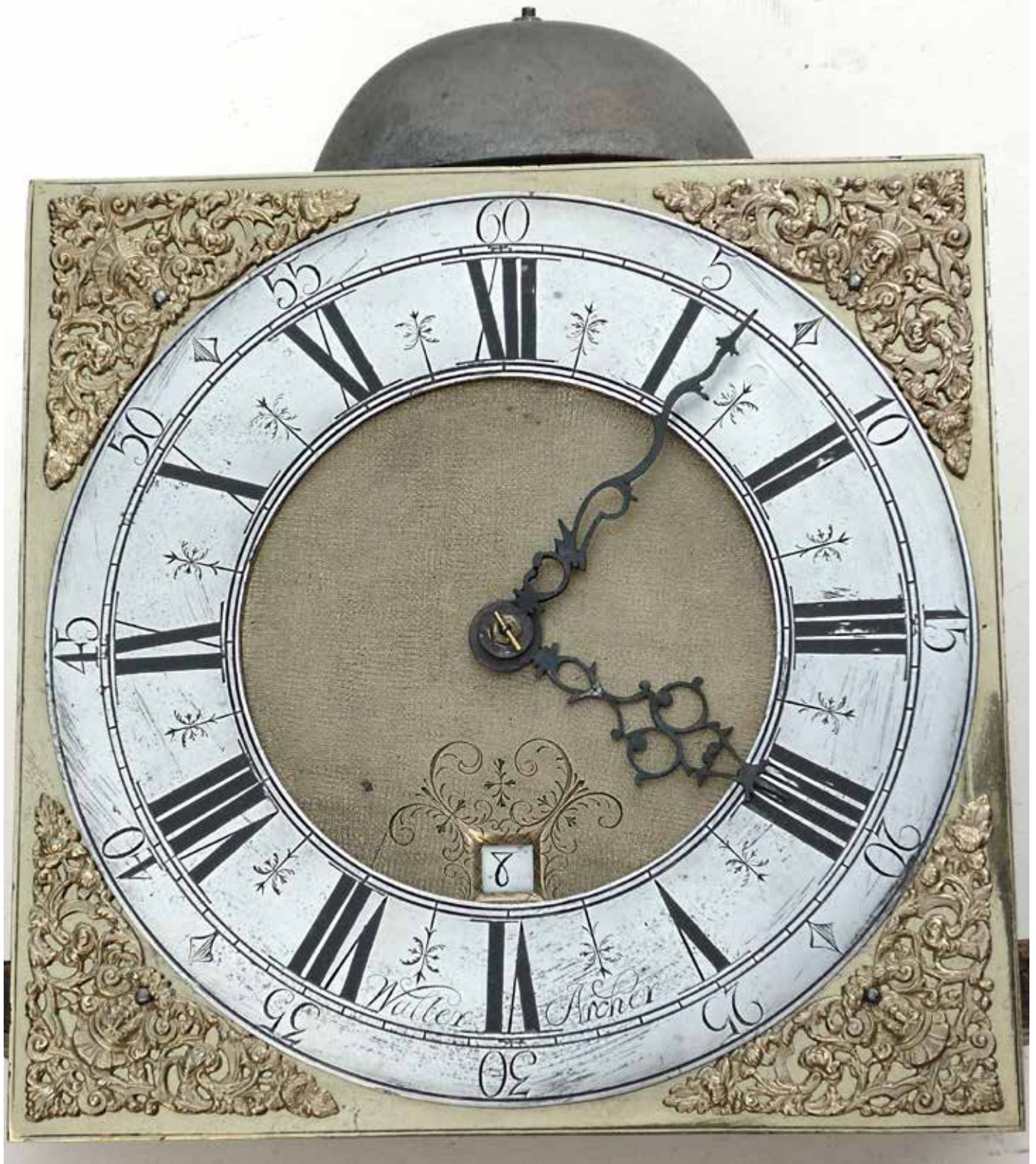
Or they look at 'Britten' unaware that it too was compiled over 100 years ago and has had few updates in the last century. Even today it contains details of fewer than one in four known makers. The newest edition of Baillie contains no more than one in three. There is little point in trying to look up an antique clock in books that themselves could sell as

Figure 2. John Sanderson of Wigton was virtually unknown until my researches of the 1970s. He produced clocks in his own inimitable and eccentric style. Today every collector knows his name. Photograph courtesy of Tennants Auctioneers, Leyburn, Yorkshire.

antique.

An explanation is given below of the background of both of these, the two best-known known general books that include makers from all parts of the world. They were compiled by dedicated men who collaborated with each other and whose names will live for ever. Their books were masterpieces in their day—a century ago.

First, the oldest old favourite, is F J Britten's book, *OLD CLOCKS & WATCHES*,



usually known just as 'Britten'. This book began in the late nineteenth century, first published about 1894, with some more recent updates, the last I think in 1982 (nearly 40 years ago), that updating taken principally from London trade directories. It is believed to contain about 25,000 makers. Britten died in 1913. The book is strong on nineteenth century London century makers, where it gives street addresses that can be very useful, but compared to the next title has very small

Figure 3. The name of Walter Archer was virtually unknown when I came across a lantern clock by him in the 1960s. Today, because of my researches, every enthusiast knows this name and details of his life are set out in the 'red book' and other books of mine.

coverage.

A vastly more comprehensive book is *WATCHMAKERS & CLOCKMAKERS OF THE WORLD*, compiled and first published by G H Baillie in 1929 and at that time containing about 25,000 makers. This book, usually called just 'Baillie', was revised to the point where the 1947 edition contained about 35,000 entries and was reprinted unchanged thereafter. It is thought that at one time Baillie employed several people in searching

various archives. It was never out of print until replaced by my own adaptation of this book in 2006.

The background to my book is very complicated so I will try to explain. Baillie's book can be found today in second-hand form in about a dozen different versions. Mr Baillie died in 1951 and the book continued to be published unchanged. Even though many 'new' makers were known and I offered to update the book, this could not be done for reasons of copyright. Baillie left several heirs, who could not agree on a formula of a shared royalty, even though it was me who would do all the updating work, not them.

Eventually I lost patience and in 1976 I compiled a second, totally separate volume of roughly a further

Figure 4. Giles Lumbar of Ilminster was unrecorded till this clock came to light. I found he was married in 1686 and died in 1707. The research was set out as an article in Clocks for September 2017.

35,000 new and revised entries, which excluded anything in Baillie except a few corrections. It took me several years.

The two volumes were then published side by side by the same publishers, who at that time were NAG Press. The publishing arm of the National Association of Goldsmiths was then run by the late Eric Bruton, a lovely man. Not many know that, as well as being an expert gemmologist, he was himself an author of crime fiction as well as clock books. He died in the year 2000.

Baillie's original book, the title still unchanged, was now called 'Volume One', and my own was called Volume Two. They shared the same title and together they now contained around 70,000 entries. In 1989 my Volume Two went into a revised edition adding many more entries. 'Baillie' (Volume One) continued to be re-printed unchanged. The two volumes were sold as a pair, or Volume Two could be bought singly by those who already owned Baillie.

My Volume Two included many entries from regional books, though I took nothing from any book without permission—unlike some I could name today who steal material from my books and publish it as their own. Let them take note that I will sue them when I get the energy. I was astonished that every author or compiler I approached agreed without exception to my using



their facts and figures as I wished. How this contrasts with a threat I had about 1970 when preparing my first book, *YORKSHIRE CLOCKMAKERS*. A clergyman named Dinsdale, who had produced his own book on that subject in the 1940s, feared I might copy from his work, and threatened, I remember the phrase exactly, to 'hound me through every court in the land' if I did. Not much Christian charity there. I ignored The Reverend Dinsdale's book totally.

By the year 2000 it was an understatement to say the situation was confused. Baillie's original book (Volume One) existed in two different versions, my own book (Volume Two) existed in two editions, all published under several different book jackets. Each volume had an Addenda section. So to look up any maker comprehensively you had to

Figure 5 (centre). John Dennis of Maidstone was another unrecorded clockmaker when this clock was discovered in 2017. This clock formed the subject of an article in Clocks in October 2017

search in the newest Volume One plus its Addenda (unchanged in 50 years) and in the newest Volume Two plus its Addenda (unchanged in ten years). That meant you could have to search four different indexes. Is it any wonder the searcher was uncertain where to look. Moreover I had collected about 25,000 more entries that were not yet published in any version.

NAG Press had been taken over in 1993 by the old-established publishers Robert Hale. The Managing Director,



look at all manner of original records, such as parish registers of baptism, marriage and burial, wills, marriage licences, apprenticeship records, and many other local history documents—if you can access them. Today a great many of these can be consulted online, but to access them you usually have to subscribe to one or more search organisations to be able to use their indexed searching systems. In fact once you begin undertaking such a research project you will probably find it not only fascinating but very enjoyable and rewarding too.

A few systems are accessible free of charge. These include Family Search, a vast library of baptisms, marriages and deaths taken from parish registers and compiled and indexed by the Church of

*Figure 6. This lantern clock signed by 'Peter Guy of Liverpool' is not only the only clock known by this previously unrecorded maker, it is the only lantern clock recorded from the city of Liverpool. My researches into his life and work appeared in *Clocks* in November 2016.*

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons). The National Archives offer free online access, but will also undertake paid research for you or guide you towards a professional researcher.

The Society of Genealogists, Find my Past, Ancestry.co.uk and The Genealogist—two weeks free trial—are all exceptionally useful, but all are sites that charge for access.

You could employ a professional genealogist to search on your behalf. You will obviously need to arrange a fee with the researcher, but the advantage is that he or she will be totally familiar with the kinds of records that will help produce results. A professional will find results, successful or otherwise, much quicker than if you try doing it yourself but of course you may regard your own time spent on this as free time.

How do you find a professional? The Association of Genealogists and Record Agents (www.agr.org.uk) provide a list, from which you could contact a researcher in the right locality. Local County Record Offices usually have a list of searchers in their county. You can contact a professional researcher through the National Archives service. Or try googling for a genealogical researcher.

I myself offer this as a professional service—details on my website on the page 'Finding out about your antique clock'. 📄

John Hale, a very patient man, eventually devised an agreement with Baillie's heirs to enable the two books to be produced as a single updated volume—I would do all the work and they would share the royalties. I updated the entire book with revisions, corrections and new entries, in all over 800 pages—easily said but it took several years. The latest version appeared as a single volume in 2006, was given a new, bright red jacket to distinguish it from all the old Volume One and Volume Two versions, and was still called *WATCHMAKERS & CLOCKMAKERS OF THE WORLD*, but with the subtitle '*Complete 21st Century Edition*'.

This 800-plus-page edition is the only version on sale today as a new book. The publishing rights are now owned by Crowood Press, who took over the old Robert Hale company in 2015. Today we

sometimes refer to it as 'the red book' to distinguish it from the earlier versions. As it happens I have now gathered together many more entries in case a revised version may one day be published—which I very much doubt.

Why would I go into the lengthy and involved background of this book? Because this is the *only* up-to-date version. If you consult any older version of this book, or, worse still, if you buy one, the contents are anywhere from 20 to 70 years out-of-date, are incomplete and you may well fail to find your clockmaker, even though he is there in the current edition. People often write to tell me the maker of their clock is not in 'the book'. Well, if they consult an obsolete edition it may well not be.

To do your own research you need to become an amateur genealogist and