

An interesting maker

THOMAS BAGLEY

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Thomas Bagley is an interesting clockmaker, a maker of lantern clocks. The first problem in researching him is that there were two of the same name, who were apprenticed through the Clockmakers' Company, their ages not more than six years apart. The difficulty is in sorting one out from the other. The first Thomas Bagley was born about 1636 and was apprenticed through the Clockmakers' Company in October 1650 (through Nicholas Tomkins) to Richard Morgan, who was essentially a springmaker and member of the Blacksmiths' Company. Bagley was made free from his apprenticeship in November 1658. One of this name married on 12th December 1658 at St Bartholomew the Less, London, to Ann Ardin.

An apprentice was forbidden to marry during his training period. It was therefore quite common for an apprentice to marry almost immediately as soon as he was 'out of his time', and so this

Figure 1. In this lantern clock Ahasuerus Fromanteel used a conventional frame as used by most lantern clock makers during the Commonwealth period (1640-1660). Made as a balance clock, it was converted later to a 'cowtail' (front-hanging) pendulum, presumably in mainland Europe, where it was a form of pendulum used regularly.



might imply that this was the first Thomas Bagley, the springmaker. He does not appear on the Clockmakers' Company list of members in June 1662, which could imply he was dead by then or that might simply be because he made springs and not clocks.

He is believed to have married again on 8th February 1662/63 at Allhallows London Wall to Anne Dowle. A child, Thomas, born on 11th September 1664 to parents Thomas and Ann Bagley, was baptised at St Giles Cripplegate on 16th September 1664, and was buried there 10th August 1665. I mention these facts simply to remove them from the scene, to stop them blurring the picture about the other Thomas Bagley, the one who made clocks.

The second Thomas Bagley was born about 1642, perhaps the son of Anthony Bagley of St Margaret's Westminster, though I am not certain this baptism relates to him. He too was apprenticed through the Clockmakers' Company in May 1656 to Thomas Loomes, who made lantern clocks at the Mermaid in Lothbury. I recently discovered that Thomas Loomes was an ardent Baptist, as had been his former masters, the Selwood brothers, John and William, both now deceased. It was usually the case that masters took as apprentices boys from families they knew or had links with, as it



Figure 2. This lantern clock by Thomas Bagley also uses the conventional frame of the day, as used by Thomas Loomes and others. It was probably one of his earlier clocks. It was converted later to a fusee movement.



Figure 3. In this lantern clock Andrew Prime uses the specialised frame associated with the Fromanteel family, as also used by Thomas Bagley. The frame is taller, wider and deeper than most.

often turned out therefore that the whole household were of the same faith. This applied especially when the family were religious nonconformists.

Certainly it seems that Thomas Bagley had strong nonconformist views, as the next we hear of him is on July 27th 1662, when he was in court at the Surrey Quarter Sessions for breaking the law that forbade religious assemblies other than in one's own local parish church. He was charged with others with 'unlawfully departing from the places of their several habitations and assembling themselves together under pretence of joining in a religious worship'. This law was deliberately framed to prevent meetings

of Nonconformists, who often had to travel some distance from their own parish if they wished to attend meetings.

On August 11th 1662 'Thomas Loames of Loathbury, clockmaker and William Whightman of Basinghall Street, London, founder', stood surety for him to the value of £40 each to ensure that he would appear in court when called. A footnote states that Thomas Bagley was to answer 'for being taken in an unlawful assemblé under pretence of joining in a religious worship contrary to his majesties' laws in that behalf, and not to depart ...' and was to appear and 'answer for a Quaker'.

Another report of 1676 refers to the Quaker meeting house at Barking,

where meetings were held on Sundays and Fridays at three in the afternoon and refers to 'dangerous fellows', who attended, including Thomas Bagley of Lothbury, Clockmaker. This might imply Bagley was still working at the Lothbury premises, re-built after the Great Fire.

Thomas Loomes already had problems enough of his own with the law at that very same time. In August 1662 Loomes was on bail for sheltering former officers of the Cromwellian army, Colonel Paul Hobson and Captain Thomas Gower, who were now fugitives from the law. Thomas Loomes, himself formerly a Lieutenant in the Parliamentary army, was later imprisoned but was released



Figure 4. This lantern clock by Thomas Bagley is a winged version, having a centre pendulum, which allowed the alarmwork to be positioned at the back, just as in earlier balance-wheel clocks. Early pendulum lantern clocks often had the pendulum positioned centrally.



Figure 5. Detail to show the larger and more bulbous form of finial of the Fromanteel frame.

on bond to be of good behaviour. With a King back on the throne Puritan ex-army officers were being hunted down.

Thomas Bagley's apprenticeship would have ended in May 1663. But he did not take up his freedom in the Clockmakers' Company for over a year—till October 1664. It was not unusual for an apprentice out of his time to delay taking up his freedom for as long as he could avoid it, since once he did become free he had to pay subscription to the Clockmakers' Company. But if he wanted to sell clocks under his own name rather than that of a master, it was essential to be a freeman.

Thomas Bagley's master, Thomas

Loomes, disappeared mysteriously about this time. We can only presume he died. He paid rates on the Mermaid in 1664 but in 1665 it was Thomas Bagley and fellow ex-apprentice Edward Sedwell, who paid the rates jointly—two shillings and two pence (11 pence in today's money) between them! Sedwell also took up his freedom in October 1664, and this too was a year later than need be. This suggests to me that Thomas Loomes had died, probably before October of 1664, which forced Bagley and Sedwell to begin trading in their own names, still at the Mermaid.

Sedwell died in 1665, probably of the plague, and we know that some

of Thomas Loomes's wife's family, the Fromanteels, also died in the plague. Thomas Loomes had been married in 1654 to Sarah, daughter of Ahasuerus Fromanteel, the man who introduced the pendulum into British clockwork shortly before 1658. Sedwell's burial is recorded in the parish registers of St Margaret's Lothbury, but years of searching have failed to trace the burial of Thomas Loomes. I can't help wondering if he died in some prison cell or was murdered in some dark alley by political enemies, of which he had his fair share, his body perhaps thrown into the Thames.

Then in 1666 everything changed as the Great Fire of London destroyed

Figure 6. Detail to show the form of the foot in the Fromanteel frame, with a long 'leg'.

Figure 7. Thomas Bagley's winged clock has the pendulum between the trains, the pendulum bob itself shaped like the flukes of an anchor. The wings protect and frame the flukes yet allow the pendulum to be seen as it swings.

the Mermaid and all other properties in Lothbury, which leads us to ask: where did Thomas Bagley make clocks after 1666?

The fact that he took apprentices from 1665 to 1677 indicates that he was still working in the clock trade. His apprentices were:

John White, who had been apprenticed in 1662 to Thomas Loomes, and was presumably transferred to Bagley after Loomes died in 1664/65 and was made free in September 1670. He was a mathematical instrument maker and later lived at Richmond (close to Bagley's later home).

William Lucas, who had been apprenticed to Reginald Staunton of the Founders' Company then transferred to Robert Robinson (who died in 1665), presumably transferred to Bagley in 1666 and was made free in April 1669. He was a goldsmith, and it was later decided he was in the wrong Company and eventually went to Amsterdam (perhaps with the Fromanteels).

The
Fromanteels
did not make
many lantern
clocks. I know
of only four
by Ahaseurus
and two by
his sons.

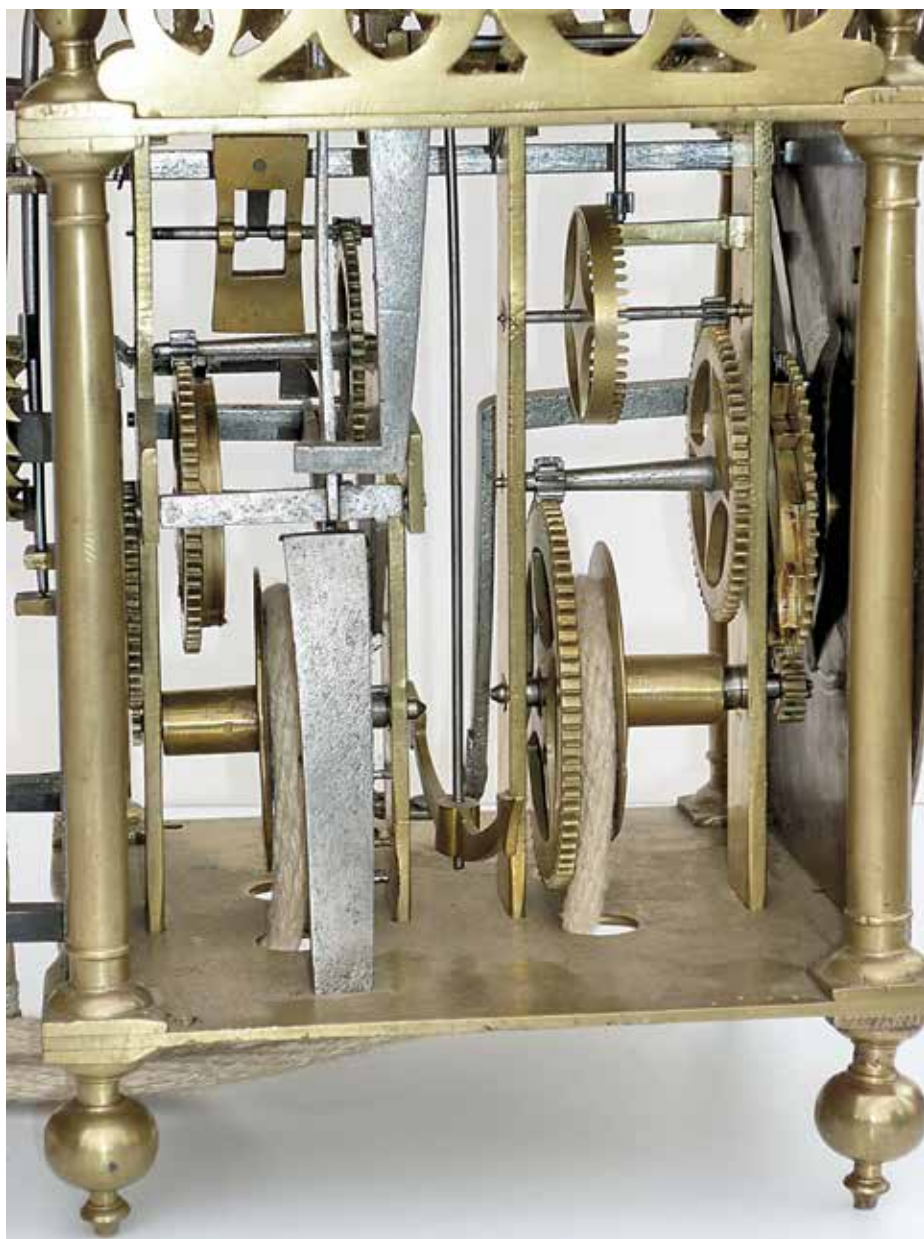




Figure 8. This Thomas Loomes lantern clock is the only one so far noted to use the Fromanteel frame. It is a grander, taller clock, originally with balance wheel and was converted anciently to anchor escapement and longer duration.

John Pleydell, June 1666, known later for lantern clocks. He later went to work in Yarmouth.

Richard Thomlinson, April 1669.

Ralph Panck, November 1677.

Richard Fennell, who had been apprenticed in September 1669 to Matthew Crockford till 1677 transferred at an unknown date to Bagley and was made free in November 1679, by which latter year Bagley had died. He later worked in Kensington.

On 30th September 1672 Thomas Bagley (or one of this name) was married at St Giles Camberwell to Eleanor Sayers. If this was his first marriage then Eleanor must have died for by 1674 he had a wife named Sarah. The suspicions in 1662 that Thomas Bagley was a Quaker later proved to be true. About 1674 he married a girl named Sarah (the marriage as yet untraced). Quaker records show the birth of a daughter Sarah in 1674 (who died in 1677) and the birth of a daughter Priscilla in 1675 (who died in 1678). Other evidence suggests a son, John, was born about 1675, but he seems not to appear in the records. On 4th February 1688/89 John (born about 1675), son of Thomas Bagley, Citizen and Clockmaker, was apprenticed through the Grocers' Company to Nicholas Deyos.

Thomas Bagley's wife, Sarah, died in 1677, Thomas himself in 1678, apparently buried at St Giles's Camberwell in Surrey. He was only about 36 years old. His burial there appears to confirm that the 1672 marriage there was him. He can have been making clocks for only about 13 years, which explains why so very few are recorded by him. His son, John, would have been barely two years old when Thomas died, which leads us to ask: who reared the son?

For many years I have kept a record of all named lantern clocks pictured in books and of all those passing through auction, though not all the latter were illustrated. Of course, some were suspect, even fakes, and I can't comment on those. Moreover there will obviously be others unknown to me, but the figures I quote are based on my records and offer a sort of guide as to how prolific a clockmaker was.

I know of seven lantern clocks, signed variously 'Thomas Bagley Londini' and

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'Thomas Bagley London', some originally with balance wheel escapement, others (at least two) with centre verge pendulum, six of them having a frame with large finials and long-legged feet, being distinctively based on a type associated almost exclusively with the Fromanteel family. The Fromanteels did not make many lantern clocks. I know of four by Ahasuerus Fromanteel, one by his son, John, another one by his son, Abraham—all but one with this frame. I know of six by his brother-in-law, Andrew Prime, five having this frame. On the other hand I know of many lantern clocks (around 25?) by Fromanteel's son-in-law, Thomas Loomes, of which only one has this frame and that a specially grand

clock.

By the time Bagley died the Fromanteels and Andrew Prime seem to have lost interest in making lantern clocks in favour of other types, or had moved away, or both. The Fromanteel family had between them working lives of at least 219 years (excluding Thomas Loomes). Ahasuerus 62, son Abraham 62, son John, 26, brother-in-law Andrew Prime 69. During that amazing period I have recorded something like only a dozen lantern clocks by them. Yet I recorded seven by Thomas Bagley in a span of only 13 years. We know Thomas Bagley succeeded Thomas Loomes in 1664 or 1665, but he seems pretty well always to have used Fromanteel castings for his clocks.

In fact Thomas Bagley used what we think of as the 'Fromanteel castings' more

than the Fromanteels did. So after the Mermaid was destroyed along with the rest of Lothbury in the Great Fire of 1666 did he perhaps work in the Fromanteel workshops, which were located in Southwark, not that far from Camberwell? We know Ahasuerus Fromanteel went to live in Amsterdam about 1668 or just before, though he kept on his family home in Whitechapel. His son, Abraham, moved to Newcastle about that same time. Or did he continue working in Lothbury but living in Camberwell? There are always more questions to be answered.

One unusually fine lantern clock is pictured here with centre pendulum and alarmwork made by Thomas Bagley of the Mermaid in Lothbury in the late 1660s or 1670s and probably one of the earliest lantern clocks to have pendulum control. 📷