

TWELVE 10 x 8 INCH GLASS PLATE CLOCK NEGATIVES



by Peter Gosnell

EARLY in 2009 the Conservation Department of Camberwell College of Arts were given a selection of glass plate negatives to be used for practical projects by students. Now of unknown origin, these negatives were once stored at the Victoria and Albert Museum and had subsequently been moved to the Wallace Collection before being donated to Camberwell.¹ Within the selection were found twelve 10 x 8 inch glass plate negatives of clocks contained within an old Ilford photographic paper box. From an initial inspection the significance of these clock negatives at once became apparent and it was decided that their subject matter should be further investigated, the images themselves recorded through digital scanning, and prints from them offered for publication in *Antiquarian Horology* to notify readers of the existence of these negatives. The publication would also form an introduction to the students who will eventually be working on them.

Research has shown that these negatives depict seven different clocks, one of which is now in a public collection with the remaining six thought to be in private ownership and/or location unknown.

NEGATIVE BAGS AND THEIR SCRIPT

All twelve negatives contained within the Ilford photographic paper box, which can be dated sometime between 1947 and 1964, are in their own individual negative bags and hand written notations were found on both sides of every bag. The table lists the negative bags' data. The negatives have been arranged into the numerical order derived from the numbers listed on one side of every negative bag (Side 2 in the table) with negatives found to be images of the same clock grouped together. The table also lists (from left to right) an assigned negative number, a short description of what the images depict and then the script found

on each side of the twelve negative bags. All twelve bags always have two lines of script on one side with the top line having words and/or abbreviations and initials with a spacing between each unit, below which are varied groupings of numbers, words and letters with associated punctuation; this information has been recorded (with compressed spacing) under the heading of 'Side 1' in the table. Some of the top lines of this script contain names and initials that are at once recognisable to horologists interested in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century clocks, whereas the lower line in the Side 1 column possibly records photographic data of some kind. The numbers found on the other side of each bag have been listed in the 'Side 2' column of the table and may possibly be reference numbers used originally for cataloguing purposes. The obvious similarities in the system used to record all this information on both sides of each negative bag at once suggest that all these negatives were probably taken by the same photographer and formed part of a single collection.

Script on Glass Negative Bags

Neg	Image	Side 1	Side 2
1	John Knibb Longcase Clock	W-MAR PRESS 4.5.7.9.20 MED 45	9/19301
2	Thomas Harris Longcase Clock	W-MAR PRESS 5.7.15 MED	9/19302
3	Tompion's No. 22 3/4 Mvnt. View	MED 10-18 1-	51/3233
4	and Back Plate Mvnt. View	MED 20 1x7 1-20	51/3234
5	B.M.'s Ilbert Night Clock	R.W.S ILBERT 5-10-14 1xT MED 1.25	51/6046
6	J. Knibb Back Plate Mvnt. View	MOLLER (AT SYMONDS) TITE ST 8.15 MED 1.30	51/18819
7	J. Knibb Back Pte. Mvnt. View and	MOLLER (AT TITE ST) PRESS 6-8-10 1xT 1.10	51/19116
8	Front Plate Movement View	MOLLER (AT TITE ST) PRESS 4-5-8 2xT MED 1.10	51/19117
9	Tompion's Unn.[3] Dial and	MOLLER RWS 5-6 2xT MED 1-30	51/22908
10	Back Plate Mvnt. View and	MOLLER RWS 6-8 1xT MED 1.30	51/22909
11	Front Plate Mvnt. View and	MOLLER RWS 5-8-9-(12) 1xT MED 1.10	51/22910
12	3/4 Movement View	MOLLER (RWS) PARKES 6-7-10 1xT MED 1-	51/22911

1. Information given to Dave Garnett, member of the Conservation team at Camberwell College of Arts, on collecting the negatives.

PRINTS MADE FROM SCANNING THE NEGATIVES

All negatives were scanned on an Epson V700 flatbed scanner at 300 dpi and were then saved in two independent places. The resulting prints that are now being presented here have only had very little subsequent work done in Photoshop to repair obvious loss of emulsion on some of the negatives. The thin glass plates of the last three negatives originally at the bottom of the box (Negatives 6, 10 and 7) have all become cracked due to their previous inappropriate horizontal storage in the Ilford box with now just the photo-emulsion coating holding them together.

John Knibb Walnut Longcase Clock

From a detailed examination of Negative 1 (Figs 1 and 1A), 'John Knibb Oxon Fecit' was found engraved along the bottom edge of this clock's dial. No print from this negative or any other photograph of this same clock has been found in available publications,² and it is therefore not known where this clock now is. The two white areas in this print running down either side of the clock were achieved by gluing black paper tape strips to the negative's reverse glass plate surface; this was obviously done, sometime in the past, to remove unwanted room detail from the image.

Thomas Harris Longcase Clock

Jeremy Evans has identified Negative 2 (Figs 2 and 2A) as depicting a Thomas Harris eight-day parquetry longcase clock that has been veneered with olive wood pieces and banding with additional decorative stars and whorls. Jeremy has also reported another photo of this clock in the November 1941 issue of the *Apollo Magazine*, when it was at Percy Webster's. At that time, it had just plain turned tapered columns on its hood; this clock no longer resides in this country and now additionally has had a cresting and ball finial added at the top.

This image was clearly taken in the same interior as Negative 1 and again has had the same black paper strips glued on to mask unwanted room features.



Fig. 1. Print from Negative 1. John Knibb Walnut Longcase Clock.



Fig. 1A. Detail from Negative 1.

2. The author searched a complete run of *Antiquarian Horology* and then the R.K. Foulkes library and papers now at the Royal Observatory Greenwich. No *Horological Journal* publications were searched. All future use of the phrase 'available publications' in the main text will refer to these specified journals, books and papers.



Fig. 2. Print from Negative 2 – Thomas Harris Longcase Clock.



Fig. 2A. Detail from Negative 2.

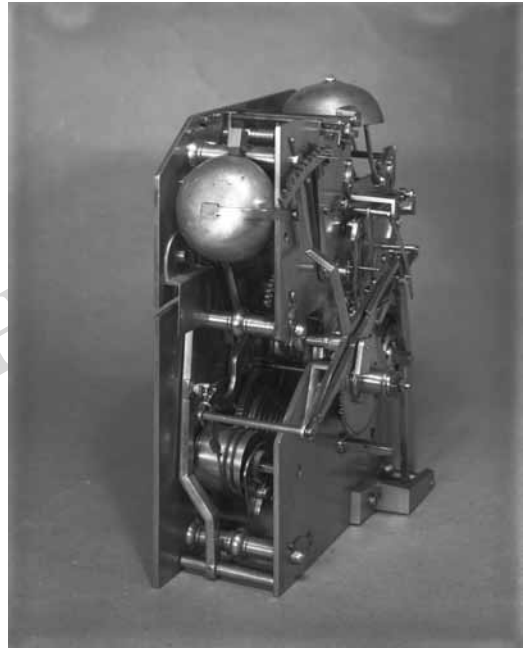


Fig. 3. Print from Negative 3 - Three-quarter Movement View of Thomas Tompion's table clock No. 22.

Thomas Tompion's spring driven table clock movement No. 22

Negative 3 (Fig. 3) and Negative 4 (Figs 4 and 4A on next page) are different shots of Thomas Tompion's spring driven table clock movement No. 22.³

The $\frac{3}{4}$ view of this movement shown in Negative 3 has not been found in available publications whereas Negative 4 is the negative used by R.W. Symonds, first in his article 'Craftsmanship of Thomas Tompion' published in the *Country Life Annual* of December 1949⁴ where it appears as Figure 12 on page 113 and then in his book *Thomas Tompion His Life & Work* (B.T. Batsford Ltd., London. 1951) as Figure 174 on page 193. Thomas Tompion's No. 22 has also been illustrated from other sets of negatives in earlier publications⁵ and appears to have always been in private ownership.

3. Jeremy Evans also lists this clock in *Thomas Tompion at the Dials and Three Crowns* (Ticehurst: Antiquarian Horological Society. 2006), page 72.

4. This reference came from the R.K. Foulkes files at the ROG.

5. The author has all these references on file.



Fig. 4. Print from Negative 4 - Back Plate Movement View of Thomas Tompion No. 22.

Fig. 4A. The number 22 engraved on the back plate on the upper left hand side.

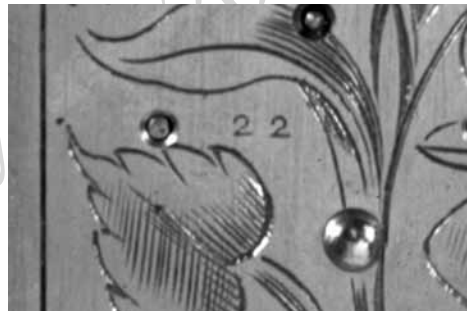




Fig. 5. Print from Negative 5 - Night Clock.

Night Clock

A print from this negative was used in an article on night clocks by R.W. Symonds that was published in the September 1948 issue of the *Country Life Magazine* as Figure 10 on page 625.⁶ When this article was written this clock belonged to C.A. Ilbert and David Thomson has confirmed that this clock is still in the Ilbert Collection at the British Museum, registration number 1958,1006.2082.

The word 'ILBERT' on side 1 of this negative's bag (see table) must therefore refer to the clock's ownership and the initials 'R.W.S.', also found on the negative's bag, in all probability confirms that this negative was taken for R.W. Symonds. A different image of what is possibly the same clock can be seen in *Old Clocks* by Alan Lloyd (Ernest Benn Ltd., London. 1951), Plate 47.

6. Information from Michael Hurst.



Fig. 6. Print from Negative 6 – Joseph Knibb Back Plate Movement View.

Joseph Knibb Movement

A print from Negative 6 (Fig. 6) (along with another image of the same clock) was used by R.W. Symonds in his book *Furniture Making in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century England* (The Connoisseur, London, 1955) as Figure 351 on page 222.⁷ A very similar movement back plate shot of the same clock along with a case image is in *The Iden Clock Collection* by Percy G. Dawson (Antique Collectors' Club, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

1987) Volume III, No. 68, on pages 166 & 167. In comparing the Walter Iden movement back plate shot with our Negative 6 it was noted that our negative shows a different pendulum back cock, pendulum rod and pendulum bob, and part of the upper hammer's rear section is missing. The author has not been able to find any other reference to this clock's whereabouts since being sold by Walter Iden at the end of WW2.

7. Information from Michael Hurst.



Fig. 7. Print from Negative 7 - Back Plate Movement View of a Joseph Knibb Table Clock.

Joseph Knibb Table Clock

Prints from Negatives 7 (Fig. 7) and 8 (Fig. 8), along with three other images of the same clock, were again used by R.W. Symonds in his book *Furniture Making in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century England* (The Connoisseur, London, 1955) as Figures 345 & 344 on page 219.⁸ What are believed to be manipulated images

from these same negatives have also appeared in *The Knibb Family – Clockmakers* by Ronald Lee (The Manor House Press, Byfleet, Surrey, 1964) as Plate 130 on page 124 and Plate 131 on page 125 respectively.⁹ The present whereabouts of this clock could not be found.

8. Information from Michael Hurst.

9. Plates 130 and 131 in Ronald Lee's book printed from Negatives 7 and 8 have had their backgrounds removed. From a careful inspection of Plate 130 it looks as if the background may have been just physically cut out with knife or scissors from a print made from Negative 7 (inspecting the curved edges around the spring barrels and count wheels helps to confirm this). If this same technique was done on Plate 131, it has been done very masterfully.



Fig. 8. Print from Negative 8 - Front Plate Movement View of a Joseph Knibb Table Clock.



Fig. 11. Print from Negative 11 - Front Plate Movement View of a Thomas Tompion Unnumbered Table Clock.



Fig. 9. Print from Negative 9 - Dial of a Thomas Tompion Unnumbered Table Clock.

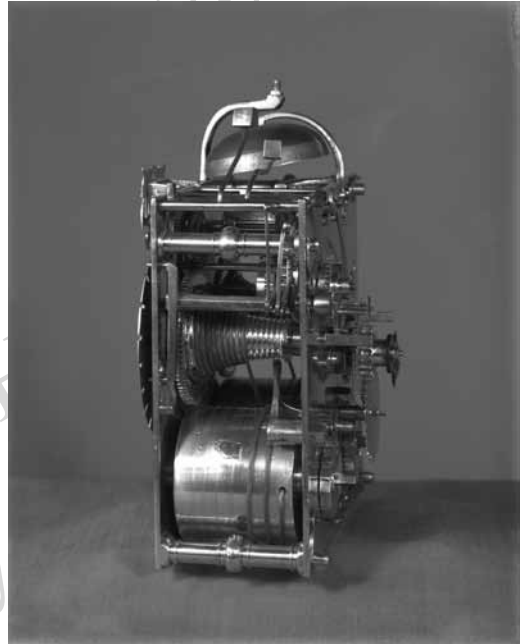


Fig. 12. Prints from Negative 12 - Three-quarter Movement View of a Thomas Tompion Unnumbered Table Clock.



Fig. 10. Print from Negative 10 - Back Plate Movement View of a Thomas Tompion Unnumbered Table Clock.

Thomas Tompion Unnumbered Table Clock

The images of negatives 9 to 12 (Figs 9 to 12) have all been identified as depicting Thomas Tompion's unnumbered 8-day spring-driven table clock [3].¹⁰ No prints from these negatives have been found in available publications although this clock has been featured extensively

in *Early English Clocks* by Dawson, Drover and Parkes (Antique Collectors Club, Woodbridge, Suffolk. 1982) as Plates 433-437 and Plates 605 & 606. This clock is in all probability still in a private collection.

10. This clock is in Jeremy Evans book *Thomas Tompion at the Dials and Three Crowns* (Ticehurst: Antiquarian Horological Society. 2006) on page 69 where Jeremy lists it as [3].

CONCLUSIONS

The last seven negatives listed in the table all start off with the name 'Moller' written on Side 1 of their negative bags suggesting perhaps that these three clocks were part of the Moller collection¹¹ at the time these negatives were taken. The last eight negatives also all have a connection with R.W. Symonds either by having his initials, his name or his Tite Street address¹² mentioned in the script written again on Side 1 of their negative bags. This probably indicates that these last eight negatives were shot for R.W. Symonds with Negative 12 possibly at Dan Parkes's workshop; an arrangement made by R.W. Symonds perhaps? Negatives 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 have been found in published articles, and as Negative 5 appeared earliest in print in September 1948 and similarly Negatives 6, 7 and 8 must have been taken by 1955, if we equate these dates to the reference numbers (assumed chronological) listed in the Side 2 column of the table we can speculate that Negative 1 and 2 were probably taken a few years earlier than 1948 and Negatives 9-12 some time later, possibly after 1955.¹³ At present the author has no idea what 'W-MAR PRESS' found written on negative bags 1 and 2 could refer to, unless these negatives were used or were intended to be used in a press publication of some kind. Negatives 3 and 4 give us no information as to who might have owned this clock at the time these negatives were taken or where they might have been shot; they just have 'MED' written on the top line of their bags on Side 1 whereas this same word appears on the lower line on all other ten bags and probably refers to photographic data of some kind. It now seems likely that these twelve negatives were part of a collection

belonging to perhaps a principal photographer in the London trade specialising in such subject matter; the script on the negative bags could be seen as endorsing such a theory. If this is the case Raymond Fortt who specialised in such work and was active in the trade during this period must be a prime candidate as possibly having taken these negatives.¹⁴ Any other comments from readers would be most welcome and will be added to the material that will be passed on to relevant students at Camberwell College of Arts who will eventually be engaging in the conservation work needed on these negatives.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The author is a member of staff at The University of the Arts London working at Camberwell College of Arts. The text published here is a shortened version of a report that the author has prepared. He can be contacted for further details at Camberwell College of Arts, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UF (p.gosnell@camberwell.arts.ac.uk).

11. Eric Moller, and his brother Ralph, started collecting furniture and clocks in 1943 helped by R.W. Symonds who took an 'almost curatorial approach to the collections he helped to form' (information from the Sotheby Moller Collection sale catalogue of 18 November 1993; reference supplied by Michael Hurst).
12. Jonathan Betts helped me with this information but additionally R.W. Symonds did mention his address in a reply to a letter published in the *Country Life Magazine* on 17 December 1948 – once again sourced from the Foulkes's files.
13. Large Format glass plate negatives for standard photographic use were still available well into the 1960s (information from Martin Reed at Silverprint).
14. From correspondence with Michael Hurst, seven out of the twelve photographs that he was given by Ronald Lee for his article on the exhibition 'The First twelve Years of the Pendulum Clock', published in *Antiquarian Horology* of June 1969, were taken by Raymond Fortt.