

Barwise & Sons: watchmakers to the King. A brief history of family and firm

A. D. Stewart*

John Barwise, born at Cockermouth in Cumberland about 1756, opened his watch retailing business in London in 1780. His home and shop were at 29 St Martin's Lane from 1790. He died there in 1820. His sons Weston Barwise (1793–1826) and John Barwise (1795–1869) continued the business. The firm was at its zenith as a retailer of high-class watches and clocks during the period 1810 to 1825. But in 1842 John Barwise Jr. decided to provide moral and financial support for Pierre Frédéric Ingold's attempt to mass produce pocket watches in London. When the project collapsed in 1845 Barwise and his business were ruined. He struggled on until 1855 and then retired. The name of John Barwise as a watch retailer in London, however, survived until 1988.

The Victorian writer R. D. Blackmore (1825–1900) provides a vivid contemporary view of the Barwise firm in one of his short stories, set in the early nineteenth century. The narrator had decided to buy two watches, one for a friend and the other for himself:

In those days a gold watch was thought a good deal of, and made an impression in society, as a three-hundred-guinea ring does now. Barwise was then considered the best watchmaker in London, and perhaps in the world. So I went to his shop, and chose two gold watches of good size and substance — none of your trumpery catchpenny things, the size of a gilt pill trodden upon — at the price of fifty guineas each. As I took the pair, the foreman let me have them for a hundred pounds, including also in that figure a handsome gold key for each, of exactly the same pattern, and a guard for the fob of watered black-silk ribbon.

My reason for choosing these two watches, out of a trayful of similar quality, was perhaps a little whimsical — viz.,

that the numbers they bore happened to be sequents. Each had its number engraved on its white enamel dial, in small but very clear figures, placed a little above the central spindle; also upon the extreme verge, at the nadir below the seconds hand, the name of the maker, "Barwise, London." They were not what are called "hunting watches," but had strong and very clear lunette glasses fixed in rims of substantial gold. And their respective numbers were 7777 and 7778.¹

These serial numbers, as we shall see later, date from about 1815. The watches, from their description and price, were pocket chronometers in consular cases. At this time the firm was almost at its zenith and its founder, John Barwise, still alive. It subsequently went into a slow decline. In the sequel I trace the history of the family and the firm they created.

Family history

The firm was started by John Barwise, born in Cockermouth about 1756, the son of Lot Barwise, a well-known Cumberland

* The author (gavuzzo-stewart@alice.it) has published several papers in *Antiquarian Horology*, most recently on a *Barraud chronometer* (December 2011) and on *Pennington of London* (September 2013). He contributed a chapter to one of *Derek Roberts' books on precision pendulum clocks* (2003).

1. R. D. Blackmore, *Slain by the Doones and other stories* (New York 1895), p. 144.

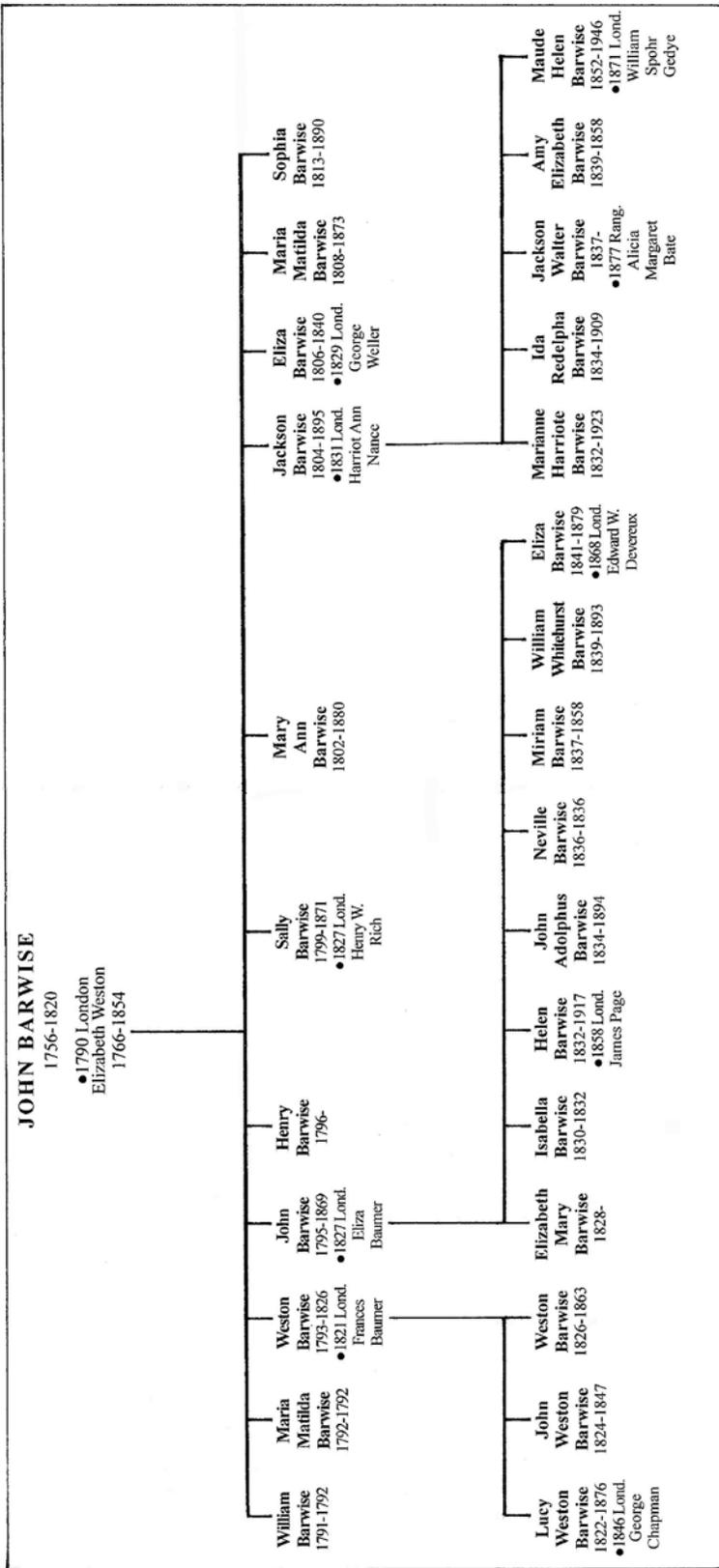


Fig. 1. Table showing two generations of the Barwise family, descendants of John Barwise (1758-1820) and his wife Elizabeth Weston. Bullets indicate the year and place of marriage; Lond. = London, Rang. = Rangoon.

clock-maker. The evidence for this is as follows. Firstly, there is the marriage notice, quoted below, which states that John Barwise the London watchmaker was born in Cockermouth. Secondly, the records for Cockermouth parish church contain only one John Barwise baptized during the period 1750–1760, viz. on 18 March 1759, son of Lot Barwise.² John, moreover, is mentioned in the will of Lot Barwise, written in 1798.³ When John Barwise died in 1820 he was said to have been sixty-four years old and should thus have been born about 1756. His age at baptism is not known.

The business was continued by the son of John Barwise, also called John, and so it is convenient to call them John Barwise Sr and Jr. The father, John Barwise Sr, appears to have gone to London when he was twenty-four years old. The evidence for this is the watch Barwise No. 37, described later, which has the London hallmark for 1780. By 1790 he was living and working at 29 St Martin's Lane, in the City.⁴ This was also the year he married:

a few days ago, in London, Mr John Barwise, watchmaker, of St Martin's-lane, London (formerly of Cockermouth) to Miss Weston, daughter of Mr William Weston, of Greenhill-rents, Smithfield.⁵

William Weston was a dial enameller who worked for Barwise.

All the children of John Barwise Sr and his wife were born at the St Martin's Lane

address, including his successor John Barwise Jr on 10 March 1795. The Barwise family is summarized graphically in Fig. 1.

About 1800 John Barwise Sr joined many wealthy Londoners by buying a house in the country. It was at Dulwich, a hamlet clustered round the eponymous college some 8 km south of St Martin's Lane, in the parish of Camberwell.⁶ After this date his children were all baptized at Dulwich College, the last in 1813. The City at this time was a small, overcrowded area on the north side of the Thames. Only three bridges linked it to the south side, which consequently remained largely rural. John Barwise Sr was evidently very familiar with the area, for both the executors of his will came from Camberwell, viz. Theophilus Hearsey of Denmark Hill and William Forbes, the surgeon. Other acquaintances were Robert Pennington (1752–1813) and his eponymous son who had settled in Camberwell village in 1804 and supplied pocket chronometers to Barwise for resale from this time on.⁷

By 1810 there were frequent coaches plying between London and Camberwell, but to reach Dulwich one might have to walk through the fields, commonly the haunt of highwaymen. At dawn on Thursday 14 February 1811 John Barwise Sr, on the way from Camberwell to Dulwich, was surprised by a group of five armed men and robbed of his gold watch, greatcoat and a guinea and a half in cash.⁸ It may have tempered the family's enthusiasm for the countryside, for after 1813 the Dulwich

2. The Bishop's transcript of the Cockermouth baptismal registers for 1759 (FHL British Film No. 90596) contains the entry *James s. of Lot Barwise yeomn. aged 3 years & 8 months John s. of Lot Barwise March 18. 1755.1756*. The years 1755 and 1756 written at the end of the entry may refer to the respective birth years of the two boys.

3. Will of Lot Barwise dated 9 June 1798, proved 19 November 1799, <http://tinyurl.com/ossvw8t>

4. *Holden's London Directory* for 1790.

5. *Cumberland Pacquet* for 24 Feb. 1790, p. 3. See also the *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 60 for 1790, p. 178. The marriage was 8 February 1790 at St Sepulchre, Holborn.

6. Barwise first appears in the Dulwich rate book for 30 December 1802, now in Southwark Local History Library. The books for 1786–1801 are missing.

7. A. D. Stewart, 'Pennington of London: a brief history of the family, the firm and their chronometers', *Antiquarian Horology*, 34/3 (September 2013), 367–384.

8. *Annual Register*, vol. 53 for 1811, Chronicle p. 19.

rate books show that the Barwise house was occupied by a tenant.

John Barwise Sr died at 29 St Martin's Lane in 1820 and was buried on 4 April at St Martin in the Fields. He left 'my house in Town' and 'my residence in the country', together with the income from the fifth part of his personal estate, to his wife.⁹ His personal estate included substantial investments in public funds, and his widow was able to live comfortably with her unmarried daughters in Islington for a further thirty-four years. The house in Dulwich may have been sold at this time. The business was continued by his two sons Weston Barwise and John Barwise Jr. His youngest son, Jackson Barwise, played no part in it, but his restless lifestyle is reviewed briefly below, since it sheds an oblique light on the character of his brother John.

Weston Barwise married Frances (Fanny) Baumer, one of the two daughters of a wealthy London stockbroker, Charles Baumer. Weston's brother John Barwise Jr married Fanny's sister Eliza. Weston Barwise played an active part at St Martin's Lane but died when he was only thirty-three years old, in 1826. His will, written 15 March of that year, is most unusual, for it is in the form of an affectionate letter to his wife:

My Dear Fanny,
I have written this as my Will in case death should suddenly happen to me and I should not be able to arrange my affairs. I would recommend your quitting the house in St Martins Lane as soon as you can and as early as possible [and] put the accounts of the business into the hands of a professional accountant. The policy for £2000 on my life will be immediately paid, which together with all monies,

goods furniture plate and all my property arising from the business or otherwise of whatsoever description or denomination I will and bequeath to my dear Fanny and her children....I might add some recommendations about the children but that the good sense of Fanny renders this unnecessary.¹⁰

The life insurance for £2000 would have a purchasing power today of about £130,000. His widow took her husband's advice. She left St Martin's Lane and went to live with her father Charles Baumer at 37 Albermarle Street. Her two sons opted for an adventurous life when they joined the army of the East India Company. The eldest son, John Weston Barwise, was a lieutenant in the Madras Artillery when he died in 1847. His brother Weston Barwise entered the 45th regiment of the Madras Native Infantry and was a captain in the newly created Indian Army when he died in 1863.

John Barwise Jr left St Martin's Lane about 1826 to live at 42 Craven Street. Craven Street is about 400 m south-east of the shop in St Martin's Lane. In 1827 he married, and the same year joined the Madrigal Society, doubtless at the suggestion of his father-in-law Charles Baumer who was the secretary. John Barwise was a member of the Society for many years.¹¹

In 1840 the family moved to a spacious residence called East Lodge, near Acton, then a village in open countryside 11 km west of St Martin's Lane.¹² The family had three resident servants and probably also a full-time gardener, for the garden covered a hectare. Unfortunately, they had to leave Acton in 1846 when John Barwise Jr was bankrupted by the collapse of the British Clock and Watch Manufacturing Co. The family went to live instead in another large

9. *Will of John Barwise, Watch Maker of Saint Martin in the Fields, Middlesex*, dated 1 December 1819, proved at London 14 April 1820: National Archives probate 11/1627/323.

10. *Will of Weston Barwise of Saint Martin in the Fieds, Middlesex*, dated 15 March 1826, proved at London 15 December 1826: National Archives probate 11/1719/262.

11. Thomas Oliphant, *A brief Account of the Madrigal Society, from its Institution in 1741, up to the present Period* (London, 1835), p. 23; Thomas Oliphant, *Musa Madrigalesca...* (London, 1837), p. i. Madrigals are short poems on the human condition, set to music as part songs.

12. East Lodge no longer exists but can be found on the six-inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map published in 1874. It stood 400 m west of the centre of Acton village.



Fig. 2. No. 7 Queen's Row, Camberwell. This house, the seventh from the northern end of the terrace and now called No. 30 Grove Lane, was the home of John Barwise and his family 1846–1867. The terrace was built about 1780. Photograph by courtesy of Carole Mason.

house at 7 Queen's Row, Camberwell, a leasehold property owned by John Barwise's father-in-law, Charles Baumer and offered to the family rent-free. This was a stroke of good fortune, for Queen's Row, with its ample gardens, is an architectural gem (Fig. 2).

It does not seem as if the Barwise fortunes improved much after the 1846 debacle, for in 1851 the family of seven had no servant — a most unusual circumstance at this social level and location. In 1861 some improvement can be seen, for the family, now numbering four, had a fourteen-year old girl to help them. John Barwise's son

William now had a job. In addition, Eliza Barwise had had since 1856, when her father died, an income of about £40 per year, derived from a trust he set up. With the death of Eliza in May 1866 the trust income passed to her husband, John Barwise Jr.¹³ But, under the terms of Mr Baumer's will, the house in Queen's Row, which had been occupied by Eliza and her family rent-free, became the property of her eldest daughter.¹⁴

John Barwise Jr, now alone, left Queen's Row in the autumn of 1867. He died on 29 May 1869 at 52 Church Street in Camberwell. The death was witnessed and registered by a Mr Henry Martin. The 1871 Census shows that Mr Martin was the householder and that he was then supplementing his income as a bookseller by renting a room to an elderly widower. Presumably, Mr Barwise had also been a lodger. No application for probate was made, so it can be assumed that John Barwise possessed nothing of any value. By contrast, the National Probate Calendar reveals that the master watchmakers Charles Frodsham (†1871) and James Grohé (†1872) left £70000 and £25000, respectively, equivalent to millions of pounds today.

The two sons of John Barwise Jr, namely John Adolphus and William Whitehurst Barwise, never had any connection with the watchmaking business. John, the eldest, started dealing in mining shares and went bankrupt in 1854, when he was only twenty years old.¹⁵ He eventually became a stationer, like his brother William.

John's brother Jackson Barwise, doubtless inspired by his brother-in-law's family, the Wellers, emigrated to Australia when he was twenty-three years old.¹⁶ He left England in June 1827 on the barque

13. *The Will of Eliza Barwise (Wife of John Barwise) late of Queen's-row Grove Lane Camberwell...* dated 25 May 1866, proved at London 2 August 1866: filed at the Principal Probate Registry.

14. *Will of Charles Baumer of Albemarle Street, Middlesex*, dated 4 November 1850, proved at London 26 September 1856: National Archives, probate 11/2238/416.

15. *London Gazette* for 10 January 1854, issue 21510, p. 105.

16. The Wellers were merchant-adventurers in Australia and New Zealand. The family, consisting of the father and five children, emigrated from England to Sydney, NSW in 1829 and 1830. They invested their abundant capital in land, trading and whaling. Eliza Barwise married one of the five children, viz. George Weller (1805–1875), in London in 1829 and emigrated with him in 1830. She died in 1840 at Petersham, now a suburb of Sydney (www.weller.org.uk, accessed 9 Jan. 2013).

Nimrod, and arrived in Sydney on 29 December. In less than a month he had set up shop as a general merchant at 97 George Street in Sydney. Under the name Jackson, Barwise & Co. he sold goods which had come with him from England, such as pickles, cider and stout, cases of prime English cheese, Durham mustard, glass tumblers, sheet copper, paint and axes. Later newspaper advertisements mention clothes, pianos, wines, books and prints, indeed almost everything but watches. The only advertisement which mentions a watch is the first, in which he offered for sale 'a handsome pocket Chronometer "Barwise, Maker" Mahogany case, with 6 spare lunette Glasses, the Rate has been kept by by Captain HARVIE of the ship *Nimrod*. Price 75 guinees.'¹⁷

The *Nimrod* was the ship he came on, so perhaps the chronometer had been loaned to the captain for the duration of the voyage. In 1829 Jackson also set up a store and cattle auction at Morpeth (near Maitland NSW, about 140 km north of Sydney).¹⁸ Despite all this activity he left Sydney for London in April 1830 and married early the following year.

Jackson remained in London, an impecunious house decorator, until 1851. Then the wanderlust struck him again and he left for San Francisco with the aim of prospecting for gold, leaving his family and pregnant wife behind for ever. She fortunately seems to have had the resources to live gracefully in Torquay for the following thirty years. He returned to London in 1852, but his continuing interest in gold deposits is shown by letters to the Colonial secretary

in 1857 and 1858.¹⁹ About 1860 he returned to America, this time to Washoe County, Nevada, again in search of gold. In 1867 he wrote 'I have only recently returned from a seven years exploration of the countries west of the Mississippi basin, to the Pacific coast'.²⁰ He was now sixty-three years old and remained in London until he died at the age of ninety-one. His explorations evidently yielded more memories than money; his estate for probate was only £162. Perhaps some of the enterprising and impulsive nature of Jackson Barwise was also to be found in his brother John Barwise Jr.

The firm of Barwise

Little has emerged about the early history of the firm, except that, as mentioned earlier, it evidently started about 1780 with the production of the first hallmarked watches. In 1786 the workshop, and presumably the retail outlet, was in No. 2 Rolls Buildings, off Fetter Lane in the heart of the City of London.²¹ In 1790 the family and the shop moved to 29 St Martin's Lane, in the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields. It was to remain the focal point of the business for more than sixty years. The present building at this address, however, is not the one occupied by Barwise.²²

The reputation of the Barwise firm steadily ascended during the lifetime of John Barwise Sr. In 1805 he was one of the fifteen watchmakers selected by the Board of Longitude to adjudicate in the acrimonious dispute between John Arnold and Thomas Earnshaw over the respective merits of their chronometers.²³ The others called (in alphabetical order) were Barraud,

17. The arrival of Jackson Barwise in Sydney is recorded in the *Sydney Monitor* for 31 Dec. 1827, p. 3. His first advertisement is in the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser* for 28 January 1828, p. 4.

18. *Sydney Monitor* for 16 February 1829, p. 6.

19. Colonial Despatches for 1857, National Archives CO 305 vol. 8, p. 367; Colonial Despatches for 1858, National Archives CO 60 vol. 2, p. 452.

20. *The Argus*, Melbourne, for 25 November 1867, p. 3: letter from Jackson Barwise dated 17 September 1867 at 7 Grove Lane (Queen's Row), Camberwell, his brother's home.

21. Fire Insurance Policy Register 1777–1786 online in London Lives. Sun Insurance Company policy No. 523054; sum insured £300 equivalent to about £30,000 today.

22. No. 29 St Martin's Lane is now a public house called *The Chandos*, built in 1891, which stands on the corner with William IV Street (formerly called Chandos Street). The building replaced an earlier public house on the corner, No. 28 and the old Barwise shop, No. 29.

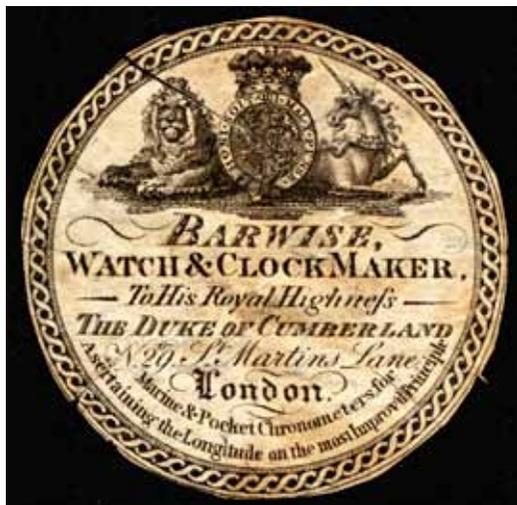


Fig. 3. Barwise watch paper from about 1805.
© Trustees of the British Museum.

Brockbank, Grant, Grimaldi, Hardy, Haley, Molyneux, Nicholson, Pennington, Petto, Recordon, Robinson, Troughton, and Young.²⁴ The Barwise watch-paper shown in Fig. 3, with its stress on chronometers and longitude, may date from this period. The royal arms appear on the watch-paper because the Duke of Cumberland was the fifth son of H. M. George III, the reigning king.

John Barwise Sr took his sons into partnership about 1816, when his second son John Barwise Jr. reached twenty-one years of age. From that year the signature on their watches becomes Barwise & Sons. A watch-paper of about 1817 thus signed cites not only the Duke of Cumberland but also other members of the royal family, suggesting a concerted attempt to attain prominence in the trade. Not long after, the firm succeeded in obtaining the royal warrant as watchmakers to the to H. M. George IV. This was probably in 1820, the year of the king's accession.²⁵

John Barwise Sr died in 1820, and Weston Barwise in 1826, leaving the firm in the hands of John Barwise Jr.

The next significant developments in the history of the firm were the alliances between John Barwise Jr and Alexander Bain over the years 1840 and 1841, and with Pierre Frédéric Ingold from 1842 to 1844.

Alexander Bain (1810–1877) was an inventive Scottish clockmaker captivated by the possibilities that electricity offered to horology and telegraphy. He arrived in London in 1837 with neither money nor friends, and started work as a journeyman watchmaker. In his spare time he devised an electrical clock and an electrical telegraph, models of which were complete by 1840. In August of that year he was granted an interview with the celebrated Professor Wheatstone, then the acknowledged authority on telegraphs. At the same time he also approached John Barwise Jr to seek his support in patenting his design for an electric clock. Barwise agreed and the patent was filed on 10 October 1840. Patent No. 8783 was granted to Barwise and Bain on 11 January 1841 for 'improvements in the application of moving power to clocks and time-pieces'.²⁶ This rather opaque title conceals the epoch-making invention of electric clocks impelled and regulated by an intermittent electric current. The current was switched on and off by the swinging pendulum of an ordinary mechanical regulator. However, the patent also envisaged the possibility of impulsing the pendulum electromagnetically, an idea later realised in Bain's patent No. 9745 of 1843. The 1841 design, described as 'Bain's and Barwise's Electro-Magnetic Clock', was exhibited at the Royal Polytechnic Institution, 309 Regent Street, London, in 1841.²⁷ No

23. For a succinct review of the dispute see Rupert T. Gould, *The Marine Chronometer, its History and Development* (London, 1923), pp. 205–208.

24. National Archives, inventory ref. RGO 14/26.

25. The watch paper signed *Barwise & Sons* is in the Museum Victoria (Australia), inventory No. HT 20577. A lease assignment in the London Metropolitan Archives (E/BGS/004) dated 1826 records 'John Barwise, 29 St. Martin's Lane, Middx., watchmaker to H. M. King George IV'.

26. *Annual Register* vol. 83 for 1841, p. 555.

27. *The Royal Polytechnic Institution, for the Advancement of the Arts and Practical Science... Catalogue for 1841*. London 1841, p. 63.

examples seem to have survived, but several of the later version, with electromagnetically impulsed pendulums, are to be found in British museums, including the one now on display at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, and another in the Clockmakers' Museum in London.²⁸ It is not clear exactly what role Barwise had in the production of the original clocks, if any. He may have only provided financial support for the original patent, but he certainly did Bain a signal favour by thwarting Wheatstone's notorious attempt to steal his invention in 1841.²⁹

Hardly had Barwise retired from the partnership with Bain than he was approached for support by another inventive genius, Pierre Frédéric Ingold (1787–1878). Ingold was Swiss by birth and had developed designs for machine tools to produce identical watch parts. He had already tried, and failed, to set up a successful factory for the mass production of watches in France and now, in 1842, wanted to try his luck in London. He was supported not only by John Barwise, but also by numerous other watchmakers and retailers. The retailers, in particular, must have quickly appreciated the advantages of standardized production over the labour-intensive English system, in which almost every watch was different to every other. It would not only reduce prices, but stimulate sales, turnover and profits. The watch component makers, on the other hand, represented by the Clockmakers' Company, saw only the prospect of losing their livings,

and vehemently opposed the project, which eventually collapsed.³⁰

In 1842 John Barwise Jr and Thomas Earnshaw (son of the eminent chronometer maker) were appointed managing directors of the newly established British Watch and Clockmaking Company. In 1843 John Barwise was nominated company secretary. The factory established at 75 Dean Street, in Soho, functioned for little more than two years and closed in 1845. According to Alun Davies, no shares in the company were ever sold.³¹ If true, the working capital must have been supplied by banks, which eventually lost their nerve and called in their loans, despite the fact that good quality watches were being produced. The bad publicity surrounding the project, especially the absurdly optimistic prospectus, was, presumably, too much for them.

It seems likely that John Barwise Jr had guaranteed some, and perhaps all, of the loans, for on 1 April 1846 he was declared bankrupt. To satisfy his creditors he had to sell his large house near Acton and was discharged from bankruptcy on 4 August 1846.³²

John Barwise's next business relationship was with the young Swiss watchmaker Jules Rochat (1815–1884). The 1841 Census shows Rochat living at 82 Dean Street, Soho, one of a group of Swiss watchmakers that included Adolphus Nicole and Jules Capt. His acquaintance with these eminent men seems to have been of little avail, for Rochat was declared bankrupt in February 1847.³³ He found work with Barwise and

28. National Museum of Scotland inventory No. NMS T.1949.7. Worshipful Company of Clockmakers collection, inventory No. 627, electrically driven pendulum clock signed Alexander Bain patentee No. 235, see Cecil Clutton & George Daniels, *Clocks and Watches: the Collection of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers* (London, 1975), p. 106.

29. For Bain's career see Charles K. Aked, 'Alexander Bain the Father of Electrical Horology', *Antiquarian Horology*, 9/1 (December 1974), 51–63. The dispute with Wheatstone is summarized in *The Mechanics' Magazine, Museum, Register, Journal and Gazette*, vol. 39 (1843), pp. 69–70.

30. See also R. F. & R. W. Carrington, 'Pierre Frederic Ingold and the British Watch and Clockmaking Company', *Antiquarian Horology* 10/6 (Spring 1978), 698–714 and Alun C. Davies, 'The Ingold episode revisited: English Watchmaking's Pyrrhic Victory', *Antiquarian Horology*, 31/5 (September 2009), 637–654.

31. Alun C. Davies, 'The Ingold episode revisited', p. 651.

32. The Barwise bankruptcy was announced in the *London Gazette* for 7 April 1846, issue 20592, p. 1294, and the discharge in the number for 14 July 1846, issue 20622, p. 2610.

33. *London Gazette* for 7 May 1847, issue 20731, p. 1696.

immediately moved to 29 St Martin's Lane.

We know little more of what happened to the firm of Barwise over the eight years years from 1846 to 1854 except that by the end of the period it was in serious financial difficulty, with debts of £6700 (about £500,000 today).³⁴ The interest on this debt (8 per cent) must have absorbed a major part of the firm's trading profit, which may explain the penurious state of the family after 1846. There is no direct evidence to show the origin of the debt, but the most likely explanation is that it was left over from the collapse of the British Watch and Clockmaking Company in 1845.

Fortuitously, help came from an unexpected quarter. About 1835 John Barwise Jr had formed a business relationship with Robert John Lattey (1806–1882), a silversmith and jeweller in Calcutta.³⁵ Mr Lattey returned to England from India in April 1853 to become one of the founding directors, and auditor, of the London & Eastern Banking Corporation. The bank was established in 1854 with offices in London, Calcutta and Bombay.³⁶ Hearing of Barwise's predicament Lattey contrived a scheme in 1855 whereby he and the managing director of the Bank, John Edward Stephens, trading as Lattey & Co., assumed the Barwise debt and became sole owners of the business. The shop was transferred that year from St Martin's Lane to rented premises at 69 Piccadilly.

Unfortunately, the money Lattey & Co. used to pay off the Barwise debt was borrowed illicitly from the London & Eastern Bank. This emerged in 1857 when the bank became insolvent to the extent of £600,000 (about £44 million today). The bankruptcy proceedings, which started on 7 December 1857 in Edinburgh, provide a minutely detailed account of how the directors had

been helping themselves to the bank's money.³⁷ The matter was neatly summarized by a contemporary commentator;

the manager [Stephens], Colonel Waugh, and Mr. Lattey, and perhaps Captain Fendall... employed the funds of the bank in brick and tile works, watch-making, chair-making, carpet-weaving, and a score of other entirely speculative enterprises, from which, upon the principle of 'heads I win, tails you lose' all the profit, if any, was to be their own, and all the loss the luckless shareholders.³⁸

The shareholders were even more luckless than might be thought, for they had to shoulder the bank's losses. For them, the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1856, which established limited liability for shareholders, came too late.

Mr Barwise had to describe himself in the 1861 Census as a 'chronometer maker out of business', though he continued to live in Queen's Row, Camberwell. Mr Lattey's assets in England were seized, but those in Ireland escaped the liquidators eyes. When he died in London in 1882 his estate was valued at over £13,000 (about £1 million today). It may be remarked that bank failures were common in late nineteenth century Britain. Most of them followed the pattern described above.

At this time the name Barwise was still a household name, at least among the wealthy. The correspondent of *The Times*, in a hurriedly written description of the horrific scene he found on entering the city of Sebastopol, abandoned by the Russian army at the end of an eleven month siege, 12 September 1855, found space to recall the name of Barwise:

34. The Barwise debt is mentioned in *The Times* for 9 December 1857, p. 9.

35. Details of the Lattey family's business interests in Calcutta, and the meeting with John Barwise Jr. in London about 1835, can be found on the web page <http://lattey.com> accessed 22 Oct. 2012.

36. Charles Northcote Cooke, *The rise, progress, and present condition of banking in India* (Calcutta, 1863), p. 303.

37. *The Times*, London, 9 December 1857, p. 9.

38. David Morier Evans. *Facts, Failures and Frauds: Revelations, Financial, Mercantile, Criminal...* (London, 1859), p. 604.



Fig. 4. George Skelton's clock and watch shop at No. 43 St Martin's Lane, London. Water colour by John Wykeham Archer, dated July 1859. © Trustees of the British Museum. The arrangement of the text on the front, 'SKELTON / Many years foreman to BARWISE [...]', seems intended to deceive old customers into thinking it was the original Barwise shop. For a close-up see the front cover of this issue.



The great Redan was next visited. Such a scene of wreck and ruin! - all the houses behind it a mass of broken stones - a clock-turret, with shot right through the clock - a pagoda in ruins - another clock-tower, with all the clocks destroyed save the dial, with the words "Barwise, London," thereon....³⁹

By 1855, however, the firm of Barwise existed only in name. Lattey & Co appointed Jules Rochat, formerly employed by Barwise as resident watchmaker, as the manager of the new shop in Piccadilly.⁴⁰ The removal of the premises from St Martin's Lane appears to have inspired Mr George Skelton, formerly an employee of Barwise, to set up a rival business at 43 St Martin's Lane,



Fig. 5. Verge watch signed on the dial *John Foster* and on the backplate *Jn° Barwise London N° 37*. The photographs are reproduced by courtesy of the Board of Trustees, National Museums, Liverpool.

where he lived (Fig. 4). Skelton was still at this address in the 1861 Census, so he appears to have had some success.

After Lattey & Co were liquidated in 1857 the firm was bought by the jeweller and goldsmith Douglas Guillaume Cavé (1841–1908). Mr Rochat continued to be employed as resident watchmaker until 1869 when both he and Cavé independently went bankrupt.⁴¹

The firm continued as 'John Barwise' under different owners until 1988, for the last sixty-five years at 153 Fenchurch Street.

Barwise watches and clocks

John Barwise Sr sold all kinds of clocks, but is best known for pocket watches, hence the royal appointment as watchmaker in 1820. The position of royal clockmaker was, of course, in the hands of the Vulliamy family from 1773 until 1854. The Barwise firm retailed some 12,000 pocket watches over the eighty years from 1780 until 1857.

Production started about 1780. The

39. *The Times*, London, 26 September 1855, a classic of war reporting, frequently reprinted. The term Great Redan refers to one of the formidable Russian fortifications protecting the city of Sebastopol.

40. Rochat's employment by Lattey & Co. is reported in *The Times* for 9 December 1857, p. 9.

41. Rochat's second bankruptcy is recorded in the *London Gazette* for 24 December 1869, issue 23569, pp. 7327 & 7346; for Cavé see the *London Gazette* for 14 May 1869, issue 23497, p. 2854.

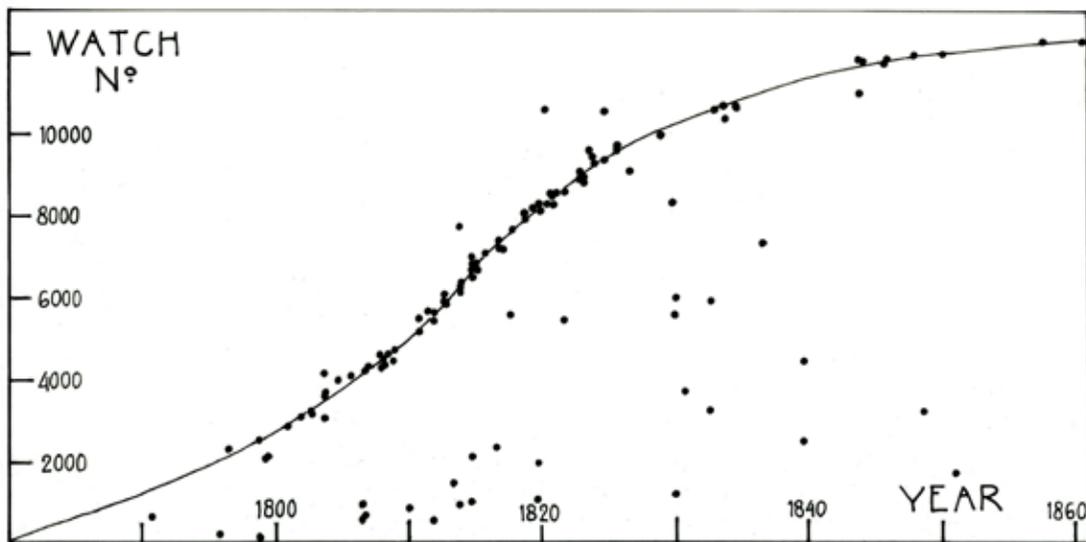


Fig. 6. Graph of Barwise serial numbers 1780–1861, based on the list of David Thompson, *Antiquarian Horology* 24/3 (Autumn 1998), 240–243, updated to 2012.

earliest surviving watch is Barwise No. 37 signed on the backplate *In° Barwise London N° 37* and on the dial *John Foster* (Fig. 5). Foster was an eighteenth century Liverpool watchmaker, which explains why the watch is now in the National Museums at Liverpool. The hallmark year on the case is for 1780, the case maker WQ.⁴²

From the graph of serial numbers against hallmark year, Fig. 6, it can be seen that the rate of production until 1795 was about 130 watches per year, increasing to about 300 per year over 1810–1825. It then declined rapidly. One might wonder if this was connected with the death of Weston Barwise in 1826.

About 30 per cent of the watches have been re-cased, some more than once. Re-cased watches lie below the line in Fig. 6.

The early watches had verge escapements, elaborately pierced balance cocks and a Tompion regulator, a typical eighteenth century style. From about 1808 most watches had duplex or, less commonly, lever escapements. However, the verge was

still used. The last recorded Barwise example is dated 1826.

Barwise watches are noted less for originality than for their elegance, of which a good example is provided by Barwise No. 739 of about 1790 (Fig. 7). John Barwise Sr evidently appreciated that the pocket watch was not just a timepiece, but something to be admired, as hinted at the start of this article. Nevertheless, the firm also sold pocket chronometers of a more utilitarian aspect, some with wooden boxes for use at sea. Although John Barwise Sr often described himself as a chronometer maker, there is little evidence that he ever made any. He seems to have ordered many pocket chronometers from specialist suppliers, such as the Penningtons of Camberwell. Pennington movements can be identified by their balances and the dovetailed detent spring. Examples are Barwise No. 4249 of 1807, No. 5154 of 1811, and No. 5445 of 1812, illustrated in Fig. 8. There is also No. 8280, made about 1821, which has the signature on the back plate *Barwise London*

42. According to Philip T. Priestley, *A History and Register of Gold & Silver Watch Case Makers of England: 1720–1920*. *NAWCC Bulletin Supplement No 20*, Spring 1994, the initials WQ stand for William Quinton, i. e. William Brett Quinton, born in 1746, 'citizen and clockmaker of London' in 1796. His son William Quinton, who was a casemaker in Clerkenwell in 1797, was too young, for he was born in 1771 and apprenticed to his father in 1785.



Fig. 7. Verge watch signed on the backplate *Barwise London* N^o. 739. The watch is by courtesy of Don Levison and the photographs by courtesy of www.bogoff.com.



Fig. 8. Dial and back plate of a gold pocket chronometer signed *Barwise London* N^o 5445. Back plate diameter 44.0 mm. Balance diameter 19.0 mm. Case diameter 54.8 mm. Total weight 151 g. Case maker T.H. Hallmark for London 1812. Private collection.

Robert Pennington Camberwell 17 April 1836, evidently restored and signed by Robert Pennington Jr.⁴³ Over the years 1800–1825 about 25 per cent of the 5000 watches retailed by Barwise were pocket chronometers.⁴⁴

The last Barwise pocket chronometer,

No. 9763, dates from 1826, by which time it seems to have been generally realized that they were unsuitable for accurate timekeeping unless treated with great care.⁴⁵

John Barwise Sr appears to have taken little interest in the marine market, for box

43. Barwise No. 4249, Christie's sale 5865 lot 246 (South Kensington 12 December 2005; Barwise No. 5154, Bonham's sale 19806 lot 71 (London 13 June 2012); Barwise No. 8280, <http://www.lot-tissimo.com/de/i/1590162> (accessed 18 Sept. 2013).

44. This percentage is based on the data of David Thompson, 'The Watches of Barwise of London', *Antiquarian Horology*, 24/3 (Autumn 1998), 240–243.

chronometers with his signature are very rare. Examples are Barwise No. 4307, now in the British Museum Ilbert collection, and Barwise No. 4137.⁴⁶ From their serial numbers they both date from about 1806. The Arnold - Earnshaw controversy at about this time may have temporarily stimulated his interest in precision chronometry. What is written on the watch paper Fig. 3 corroborates this.

After the bankruptcy of Lattey & Co. in 1857 the firm's new owner, Mr Cavé, continued to produce 'Barwise' watches with the old system of serial numbers. Two of the last known are a gold-cased dual train

lever watch signed *Barwise, London No. 12/676* with the hallmark for 1865, and a half-hunter pocket watch signed *Cavé late Barwise, 69 Piccadilly London 12/912*.⁴⁷

Acknowledgments

This article was much improved as a result of the thoughtful comments contributed by the anonymous referee. I should also like to mention, with gratitude, David Thompson's paper 'The Watches of Barwise', published in *Antiquarian Horology* in 1998, which provides so much hard-won data for analysis.

45. The chronometer escapement of a watch conveyed in the pendant-up position readily trips on receiving a small shock, and the watch loses time. This fault can be remedied by keeping the watch dial up (or down), preferably in gimbals, but then the advantage of portability is lost. One would then be better off with a box chronometer or even a lever watch costing substantially less. For these reasons the popularity of pocket chronometers peaked between 1800 and 1810 but then faded. Few were produced after 1825. See also A. D. Stewart, 'Pennington of London', p. 381.

46. Bruce Kodner Galleries (Lake Worth, Florida) 4 February 2012 lot 69, marine chronometer signed *Barwise No. 4137 London*.

47. *Barwise No. 12/676*, Christie's sale 1326 lot 235 (Geneva 16 May 2005); *Cavé late Barwise No. 12/912* Silverwoods of Lancashire (Clitheroe Auction Mart), June 2012, lot 167.