

THE ADAM

Part 3: The Suffo

by John F

After discussing the movement and dial of the Adam clock in Part 1 and the significance of the figure and other symbols on the pillars in Part 2, we now need to see if it can be discovered where, when and by whom this intriguing and unique clock was made. The pillars indicate that we need to look for an area where there was a strong Puritan tradition as well as a belief in witchcraft. In addition there has to be evidence for a clockmaker working in the area in the early seventeenth century.

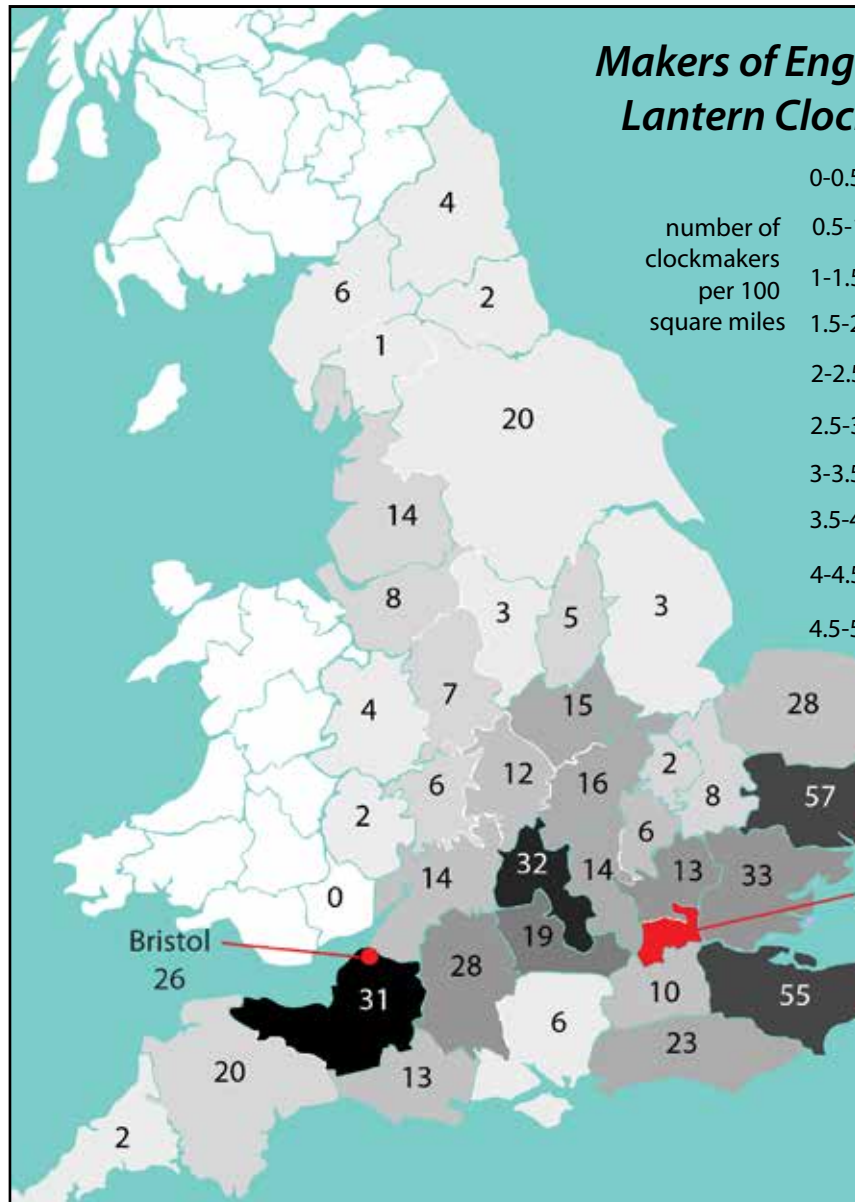
The region that fulfills the first two requirements is East Anglia, where there was also the greatest number of makers of lantern clocks outside

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London or Bristol, **figure 30**. However, most of these provincial makers were relatively late, with few of them working before the middle of the seventeenth century, and many continuing well into the eighteenth century. Fortunately there are five men early enough to be serious contenders as the maker of the Adam clock: Thomas Tue of King's Lynn, Norfolk, Luke Cocksedge of Bradfield St George and Drinkstone, both near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, and Robert Sparke and his son William of nearby Cockfield. Richard Copping, the earliest recorded clockmaker in Bury St Edmunds is also a possibility.

Thomas Tue had an extraordinarily

Figure 30. Distribution of makers of lantern clocks.



long life, being born in 1613 and not dying until 1710, aged 97. Several lantern clocks signed by him are known, dated from 1646 to 1698. While generally similar to London clocks, some are said to have larger plates with a dial design unique to him, **figures 31** and **32**, though at least one clock was made in London,

and possibly others. He was free as a gunsmith, which was probably the closest Lynn guild to his actual trade. He also made turret clocks, and especially roasting jacks, which are of a very high standard.

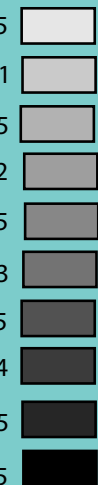
Irrespective of the actual maker of Tue's lantern clocks, their good quality

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Figure 31.
Lantern clock
by Thomas
Tue of King's
Lynn with a
galleried fret.
Photograph
by Brian
Loomes.

33 and **34** has been discussed by Brian Loomes in *CLOCKS*, April 2003 and September 2007. It has the date 1644 scratched on the front of the dial, and a front fret signed 'Luke Cocksedge fecit'. Not only is the dial engraving, the front fret and the hammer spring unique, the chapter ring is fixed by a lug through the dial and front movement bar, and is a feature that is significant in the story of the Adam clock. The pillars are cast integral with the feet and finials, while the rear edges of the plates are poorly finished. The movement bars are of a pattern used on the earliest London clocks, while the side frets are of a standard early London pattern.

There were, and still are, numerous Cocksedge families (with many spelling variants) in the villages near Bury St Edmunds, **figure 35**, at least back to Edmundo de Cokeshegh at Felsham in 1327. Luke Cocksedge was born in Norton in 1585, son of Luke Cocksedge I. In his will of 1621 Luke I is described as a yeoman, a term used at that period for a landowner only one step down from the gentry classes, living in a large farmhouse and employing many indoor and outdoor servants. In 1615 Luke Cocksedge II married Frances Sparke at Hawstead, who was probably related to clockmaker Robert Sparke of Cockfield (see later), but the exact relationship is unclear as the genealogy is quite complex.

Luke and Frances Cocksedge had children at nearby Bradfield St George in 1620-8. They had moved to 

(and that of his roasting jacks), compared to the naïve style and workmanship of the Adam clock suggests that Thomas Tue was not its maker.

Richard Copping is likely to have married at Bury St Edmunds in 1662 and paid hearth tax there in 1674. Though not a member of the Clockmakers' Company,

in 1654 he took George Copping, not his son but probably a relative, as an apprentice. He died in 1689, and a longcase clock and a lantern clock are known by him. He appears to be too late to have been the maker of the Adam clock.

The unusual lantern clock in **figures**



Figure 32. Signature and date 1663 underneath the alarm disc of the Tue clock. The floral engraving is not typical of London work. Photograph by Brian Loomes.

Drinkstone by 1631, where Luke was a churchwarden in 1640.

In 1640 Luke Cocksedge appears in the Suffolk Ship-Money Returns for Drinkstone, being assessed at £2 7s 3d. Whereas the Subsidy Rolls were a tax mainly paid by the rich, Ship Money was an imposition by Charles I on both rich and poor alike, and though not actually a tax it was widely regarded as such. It became a major grievance which contributed to the start of the Civil War.

The assessment was primarily based on land ownership, the rate for Suffolk being £1 for 118.5 acres (2d per acre), or for those who owned little land but had other assets, it was based on their total wealth. Luke Cocksedge's charge equates to 280 acres, and was much larger than any other in Drinkstone and only occasionally exceeded elsewhere in neighbouring parishes. It was almost twice the next three largest payments in the parish, including the rector for the church lands. Exactly where his landholdings were and how he came to own them, particularly as he had only been a tenant in Bradfield St George (perhaps by inheritance), remains a mystery.

Luke Cocksedge was still alive in February 1653, aged 67, when he was granted probate after the death of his son Thomas, who had died at Newcastle upon Tyne in September 1650, aged 22. Thomas was probably a soldier in Oliver Cromwell's army, which after the end of the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I in February 1649, was sent north to repel an invading Scottish army. On 3rd September 1650, though outnumbered, Cromwell's forces defeated the Scots at Dunbar, with 4000-5000 killed and 10,000 Scots taken prisoner.

Thomas Cocksedge was probably badly injured during the battle at Dunbar and died as the prisoners were moved south. He only survived long enough to give a verbal will to witnesses, leaving all his unspecified estate to his father. This must have been significant enough to

It is unlikely that Luke Cocksedge was a clockmaker but a yeoman like his father.

make it worthwhile for the elderly Luke Cocksedge to travel to London in the middle of winter to claim probate.

It is not known when Luke Cocksedge died as the Drinkstone burial records do not survive for the relevant period, but it was probably before 1666 and he does

not appear in the Hearth Tax returns for 1674. Nothing more is heard of Luke Cocksedge and while he is very likely to have been related to later gentry in Drinkstone a direct link has not been proven. Nevertheless it is clear that Luke was not only a wealthy landowner himself but was associated with other prosperous Cocksedges. So was he a clockmaker responsible for the lantern clock that bears his name? There is no evidence that he was apprenticed in any trade. The inclusion of 'fecit' translates literally as 'made it', but it was widely used to mean 'had it made' or, as here, 'commissioned it'.

On the available evidence it is very unlikely that Luke Cocksedge was a clockmaker, but a yeoman like his father, most likely a prosperous grazier or a large-scale sheep farmer, with extensive lands in Drinkstone parish. He may even have been a merchant selling wool to the clothiers. He had this clock made locally by a clockmaker who had made a few other clocks in his own idiosyncratic style, not a slavish copy of London work.

It now remains to consider if Robert Sparke was the maker of the Adam clock, or even the maker of Luke Cocksedge's clock. Robert Sparke is one of the very few clockmakers recorded in East Anglia in the early seventeenth century. His birth has not been discovered, but he was probably related to one of the six generations of Sparke blacksmiths who had been working in Hawstead since at least the fifteenth century.

He is probably the Robert Sparke who married Bridget Nunne at Stanningfield, on 6th August 1602, and had a daughter Bridget baptised on 1st January 1604 at Great Whelnetham, and a son Robert on 15th October 1605 at Little Whelnetham.



Figure 33 The enigmatic Luke Cocksedge clock.
Photograph by Brian Loomes.

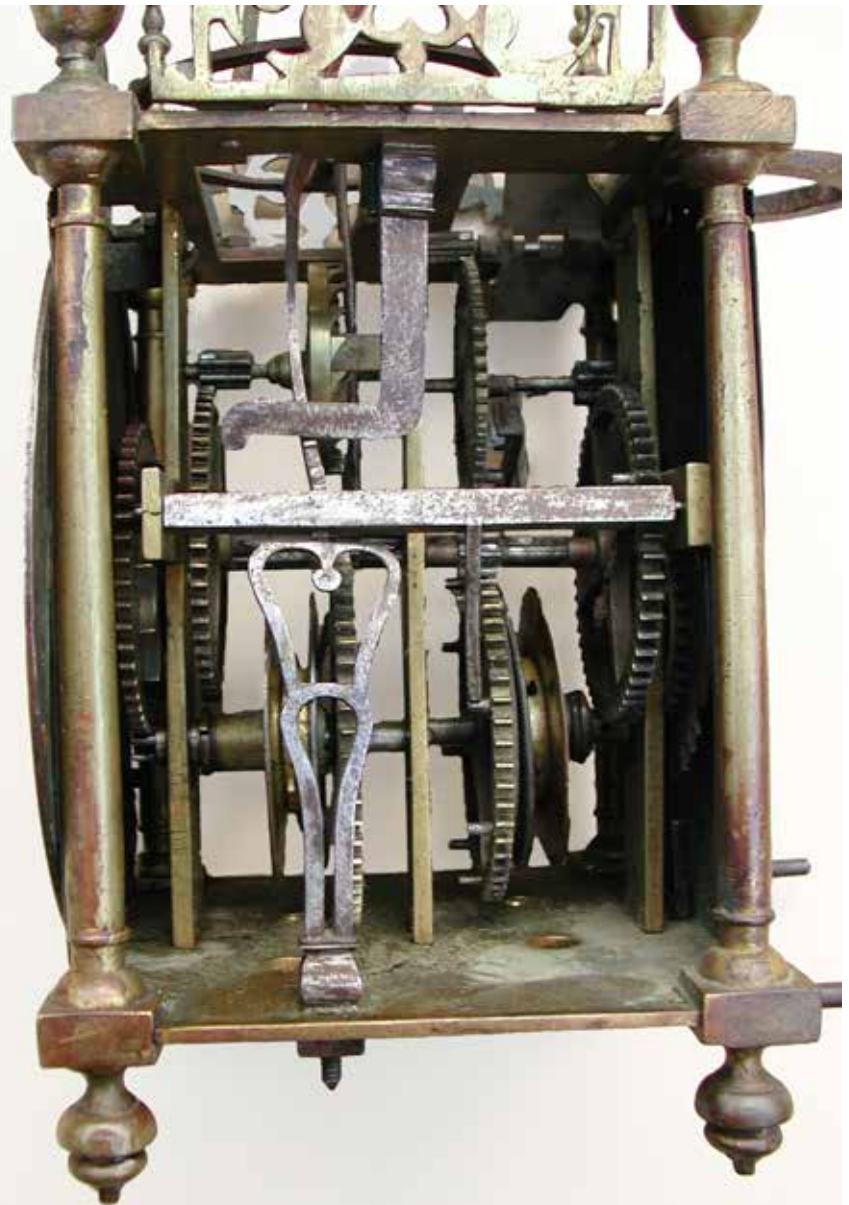


Figure 34. The Cocksedge movement with one-piece pillars, feet and finials, and a unique hammer spring. Photograph by Brian Loomes.

By 1640 the family was at Cockfield, one of the largest villages in Suffolk, though widely dispersed with numerous hamlets, including nine greens. Robert Sparke senior was assessed there for Ship-Money at 2s 6d, representing 15 acres, and Robert Sparke junior at 3s 4d, implying a land holding of 20 acres. Their workshop was probably at Great Green, about a mile northeast of the church, where Forge Cottage is a seventeenth or eighteenth-century house. It was a 'house and blacksmith's shop' in the 1845 tithe survey and a smithy on later Ordnance Survey maps. Alternatively he might have been at Blacksmith's Corner, a short distance west of the church, where a smithy existed within living memory.

Robert Sparke senior was buried on 6th April 1648, perhaps aged about 70,

having made his will nine months earlier. This clearly states that Robert Sparke senior was a clockmaker, this being the earliest record of the trade in Suffolk. At this period he would have been making and repairing church clocks, as well as general ironwork, though fitting horseshoes was probably left to one of the three nearby smithies on the main road south of Bury St Albans, **figure 37**. He mentions his wife, Bridget, who survived him by six years, sons William, Robert and Philip, and his daughter Bridget Smyth, who had married yet another blacksmith. Robert Sparke the clockmaker left to his son William 'all my workeinge tooles in my Shopp bellonging to my trade'.

William Sparke was taxed on four hearths in 1674, but his brothers are

not listed separately. He would have continued his father's trade of making and repairing church clocks, although there are none that can be specifically attributed to either of them, as well as other smithing work. William Sparke, blacksmith of Cockfield, died in June 1681 without leaving a will, the administration of his estate being granted to his son John, also a blacksmith of Cockfield. William Sparke the younger, who is probably a grandson rather than a son of the earlier William, died in 1749 and was recorded as a blacksmith in his will, and as a farmer and blacksmith when he was buried on 3rd July.

While the whole of Suffolk inclined to Puritanism and there is a greater occurrence of so-called witch marks on buildings to ward off evil spirits than

elsewhere in England, this is especially the case in the area around Bury St Edmunds. In particular Cockfield, where Robert Sparke and his sons, lived and worked, had a very important and influential fire-brand Puritan rector, John Knewstub. He convened a meeting at Cockfield in 1582 of 60 clergy from Suffolk and Norfolk to discuss means to abolish cathedrals and bishops, as well as a conference at Hampton Court in 1604 when he opposed conformity. It is inconceivable that Robert and William Sparke did not know and were not

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influenced by John Knewstub, who died in 1624.

Most of the neighbouring villages, and also those further afield, were strongly Puritan, and many of the pilgrims who emigrated to form Puritan settlements in the New World, came from this region of Suffolk. During the Civil War William Dowsing, who originated from Suffolk, was commissioned to remove or deface anything that might be idolatrous in churches throughout Cambridgeshire and Suffolk. The region also had a strong association with the Parliamentary cause throughout the Civil War, and during this period Oliver Cromwell's Eastern Association met in Bury St Edmunds Guildhall.

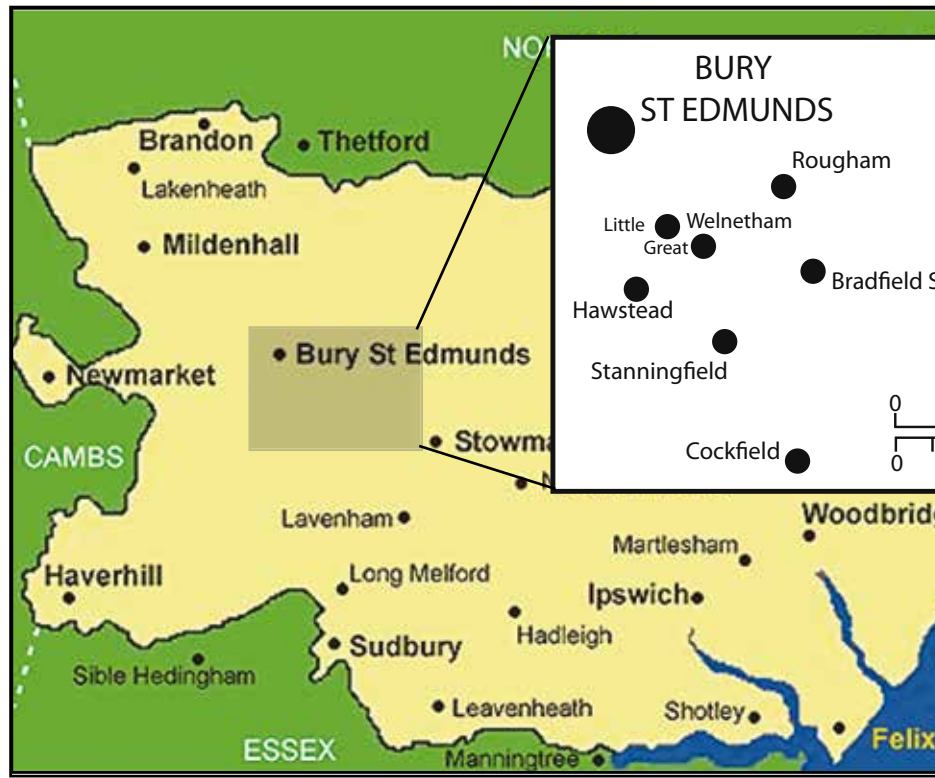
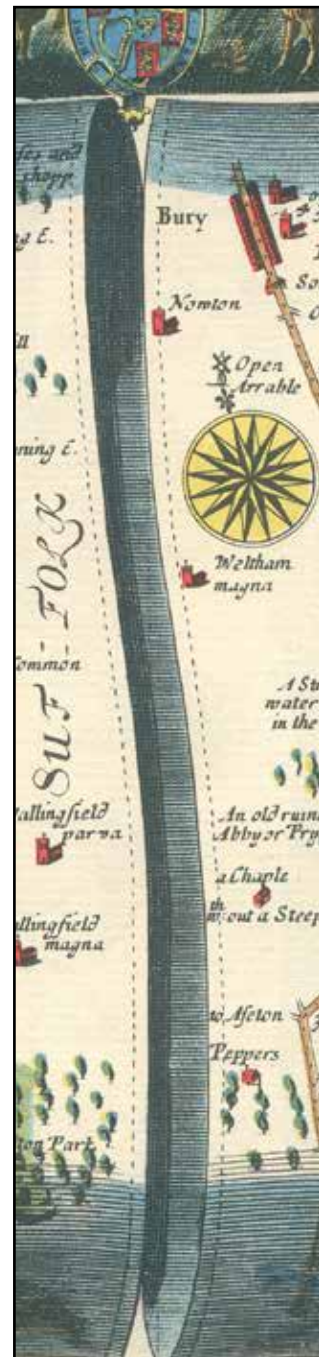


Figure 35. Some of the villages near Bury St Edmunds associated with Luke Cocksedge and Robert Sparke.

This area of Suffolk was equally dedicated to a belief in evil spirits and the persecution of women accused of witchcraft, with the population having an unusually enhanced desire to protect themselves by using symbols, such as the saltire cross. The zealot Matthew Hopkins, known as the 'Witchfinder General', **figure 36**, was responsible for the deaths of about 300 women accused of being witches during 1644-7, mainly in East Anglia. There were 18 known witch trials in Bury St Edmunds alone, though about 200 were claimed, and some of these prosecutions were used as the basis for the infamous Salem Witch Trials in Massachusetts in 1692.

If we are correct in deducing that the symbolism of the Adam clock's pillars has a good claim to the Bury St Edmunds area, can its maker be suggested with some reliability? In the late medieval period this area of Suffolk became very wealthy from the wool trade, and while the prosperity of towns like Lavenham, which is only five miles south of Cockfield, had declined by the early seventeenth century, there were still families rich enough to aspire to owning a London lantern clock. These would have needed regular servicing as frequent cleaning of balance clocks was essential at a time when only animal or vegetable oils were available and fairly consistent timekeeping depended on a constant

Fig 37. The northern section of the highway from Chelmsford to Bury St Edmunds, showing three smithies alongside the road. Bradfield is Bradfield Combust, Munk Bradfield is Bradfield St George and Cockfield with a church and a windmill is in the shaded area towards the bottom. From John Ogilby's *BRITANIA*, published in 1675.



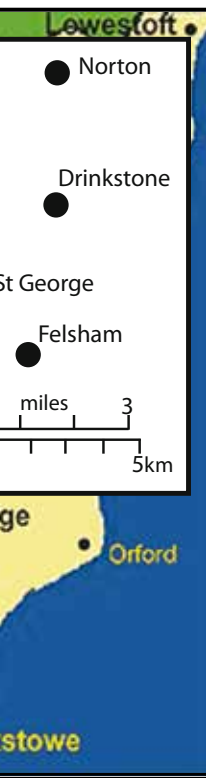


Figure 36. Frontispiece from Matthew Hopkins *THE DISCOVERY OF WITCHES* (1647), showing how witches could be identified.



driving force unfettered by variations in friction caused by deteriorating lubricants. Robert and William Sparke were the only clockmakers known to have been working in Suffolk in the first half of the seventeenth century. While their main work would have been making, repairing and maintaining church clocks, their knowledge of the basic principles of clockwork made them the obvious choice when a lantern clock needed cleaning or repairing.

And there was at least one such lantern clock right on their doorstep. An inventory made in 1664 of 'the goods and chattels of Richard Maninge of Cockfield ... Gentleman, deceased' includes: 'one brasse clocke £1 15s'. This is one of the highest valued items out of a total of £626 7s, with a present-day purchasing power of £66,000. Richard Maninge was a prosperous tenant farmer at Cockfield Hall, originally a large Elizabethan farmhouse and just the sort of person to aspire to owning such a clock. He is unlikely to have bought an expensive item like this shortly before his death, so the 1640s, 1630s or even earlier is not an unreasonable estimate of when it had been made. It confirms that lantern clocks were not only owned by wealthy merchants and the like in towns such as nearby Bury St Edmunds and Lavenham, but also by those of means in rural communities.

When it needed cleaning, Richard Maninge would have taken his clock just a mile down the lane to Robert or William Sparke. They had plenty of opportunities to examine it, and others, closely and use them as prototypes when making a clock of their own.

Since the maker of the Adam clock had unsuccessfully tried taper pins and then lugs to fix the dial, examples of clocks with these methods must have been examined by him. But due to his inexperience in making lantern clocks he got in a muddle, as described in Part 1.

The unique hollow-cast pillars would have been cast by a specialist brass founder, such as one of the several bell founders known to have been working in Bury St Edmunds in the early seventeenth century, with the patterns being made by a local woodcarver. Likewise, the brass wheels and movement bars could also have been cast locally, or to avoid making special patterns for just one set of parts, they could have been bought from a clock-brass founder in London. The bell strap and both movement plates were forged from iron, and though the hammer spring is neatly shaped and finished, the hammer stop is a crude L-shaped iron strip. The original balance top cock and the side doors may also have been made from iron, but as they are missing this cannot be confirmed. The dial appears to be reused from some other purpose, such as a brass saucepan or cooking pot.

While nothing is known of the Sparkes' personal beliefs, it is likely that they, like most people in the region, had a strong leaning towards Puritanism and a fear of evil spirits, so making a clock of their own that symbolised these ideas would be a natural thing to do.

So was it Robert Sparke or his son William who might have been responsible for the Adam clock? The loss of the frets leaves little stylistic evidence to suggest a date. The naïve dial with a chapter ring, closely delineated by wiggles, borders, making it narrower than on any other known lantern clock, appears to be very early, but its rural style gives a false impression. The 1630s or 1640s would not be an unreasonable estimate of the clock's date. A clockmaker is unlikely to make a clock for himself, especially one of a type he had never made before, towards the end of his working life. So unless it was made at an exceptionally early date, Robert Sparke can be discounted.

This leaves his son William Sparke who is likely to have been apprenticed

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to his father and working with him from about the mid-1620s, sharing the tools that would later be passed down to him in 1648. Making a clock for himself would be just the sort of thing a young man might do during his apprenticeship or shortly afterwards. It would be a challenge for him to produce one of the latest must-have items, normally reserved for only the wealthy.

And what of the lantern clock that bears Luke Cocksedge's name? As he is most likely to have been its owner not its maker, can the actual maker be identified? It should not be forgotten that Luke Cocksedge's wife was a Sparke and probably closely related to Robert and William Sparke, who lived only six miles from him. The family connection and their closeness not only made them the obvious choice, there were no alternatives. The Sparkes were the only men qualified to make any sort of clock in this region at this period.

This time a much more fashionable clock was required, and though it is similar to an early London clock, the finish of the plates, the unique hammer spring and dial engraving, suggest that

it was made locally and not just bought in from the capital. In this instance there were no unusual pillars to be made locally, so castings for the pillars, plates, movement bars, frets, dial, chapter ring and wheels could have either been cast nearby or bought from specialist London founders. The dial and front fret, which are not of a London design, would have been engraved locally. With the problems with fixing the dial of the Adam clock behind him, William Sparke was able to fit the dial correctly this time using lugs.

It can be concluded that the Adam clock has a good claim to be one of the earliest surviving provincial English lantern clocks, possibly made in the 1620s or 1630s, and a unique example of horological folk art, even though the trains and strikework of the movement are very conventional. Despite it being an unsophisticated clock, it has been in regular use throughout much of its long life. It was regarded highly enough to justify the successive installation of the latest pendulum technologies, and it was still in use in the twentieth century when a new chapter ring, frets and hand were added. This emphasises that during the last four centuries this clock has been esteemed as something rather

special. While it no longer has religious significance, and the belief in its powers to keep evil spirits at bay are greatly diminished, it is part of horological, religious and folklore history.

The Adam clock has drawn attention to an aspect of horology that has previously not been recognised: the inclusion of symbols to prevent malevolent spirits from causing unexplained malfunction of the mechanism. It also gives a brief insight into the beliefs of some seventeenth-century clockmakers.

It has taken ten years of investigation to discover the true meaning of the figures and other symbols on this clock, but patience has been rewarded. It had once been thought that its origins would never be determined, but now William Sparke can be proposed as its maker. He is likely to have only made the Adam clock for himself and another for an in-law, so finding a lantern clock bearing his name is remote. This attribution for these two clocks is not definite proof of course, that is very unlikely ever to be found, but there is intriguing circumstantial evidence.

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