PONT-FARCY CLOCKS

Part 3 of 3. A Normandy timepiece alarm

by **John Robey**, UK

Figure 1. Pont-Farcy alarm, standing on typical tall legs.

The clocks discussed in Parts 1 and 2 of this article have been a lantern clock and a longcase clock, and this short series concludes with a timepiece alarm. This one is very similar in principle to English miniature timepiece alarms, which have a hoop and spikes for hanging from a hook on a bedroom wall. They were also used as travelling alarms, sometimes complete with an oak box with compartments for the two weights. They could then be set up in a coaching inn to make sure that the traveller did not miss his early morning coach connection. However, the alarm shown in **figure 1** has no hoop and spikes for hanging on a wall, so it would have stood on a bracket or in a simple basic hooded wall case to wake the

WHEEL COUNTS

Going train

Crownwheel	15	6
Contrate wheel	42	6
Second wheel	48	6
Greatwheel	60	8
Hour wheel	48	

Beat = 0.43 seconds

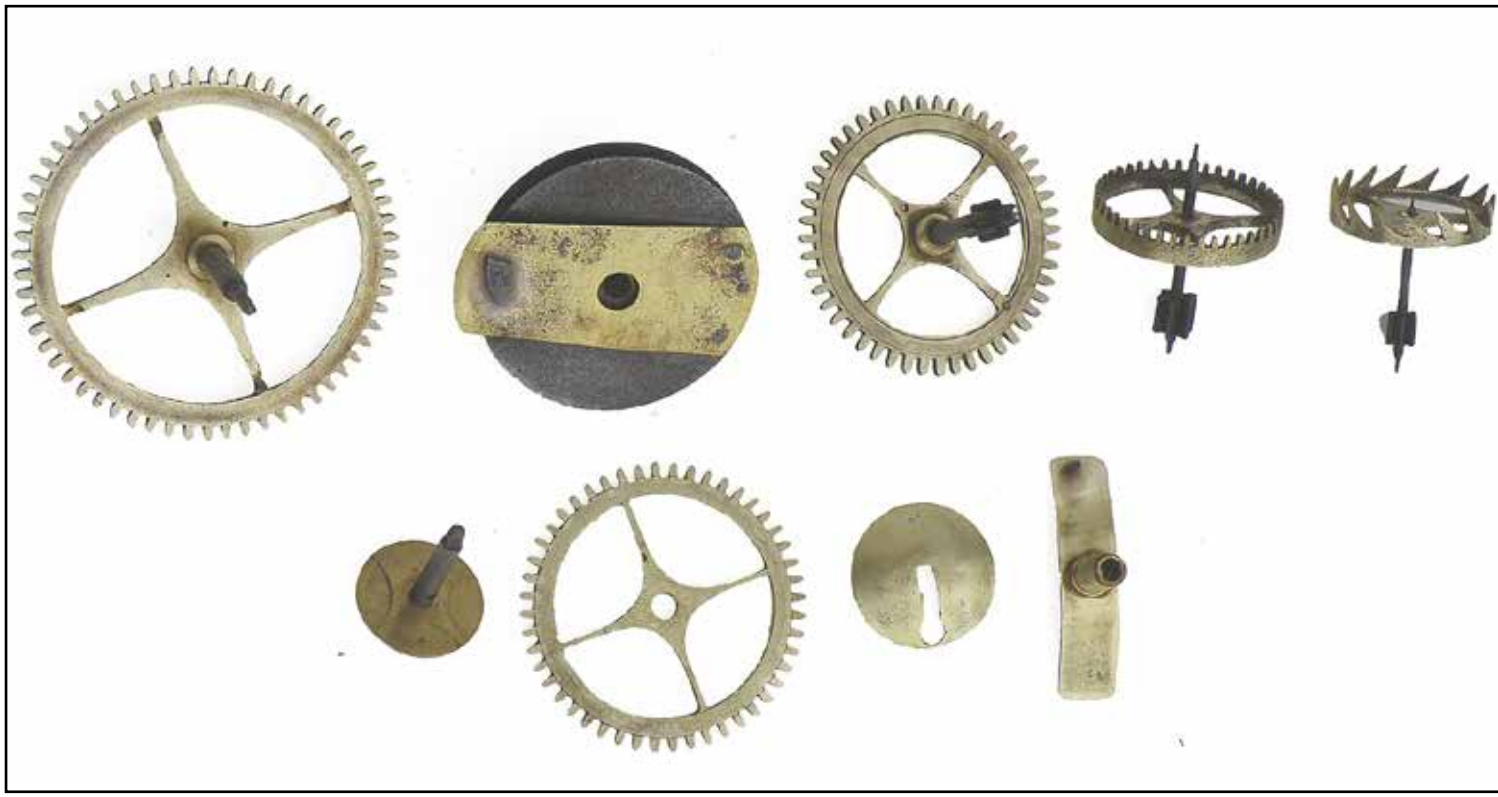
Duration = One day

OVERALL DIMENSIONS

10½in tall x 5in wide x 4¾in deep (267 x 127 x 121mm)

Frame (excluding feet): 4¾in tall x 4¾in wide x 4¼in deep (121 x 121 x 107mm).

Figure 2. Iron frame with a brass top plate.



Fiogure 5. The going train and motionwork.

occupants every morning.

Considering first the dial, the chapter ring is riveted to the plain brass dial centre, with the usual alarm-setting disc in the centre. The cast-brass fret is a smaller version of the popular French fret also used on the larger clock in Part 1. It extends down to form the top corners of the dial, and two small tabs at the rear are also riveted to the chapter ring to help support the top of the dial.

The frame has the characteristic tall legs, an iron bottom plate but a brass top plate, unusual for Pont-Farcy clocks, both with two large rectangular apertures, **figure 2**. The apertures in the brass plate would have been cast

Figure 3, Decorative iron scrolls stabilise the frame.

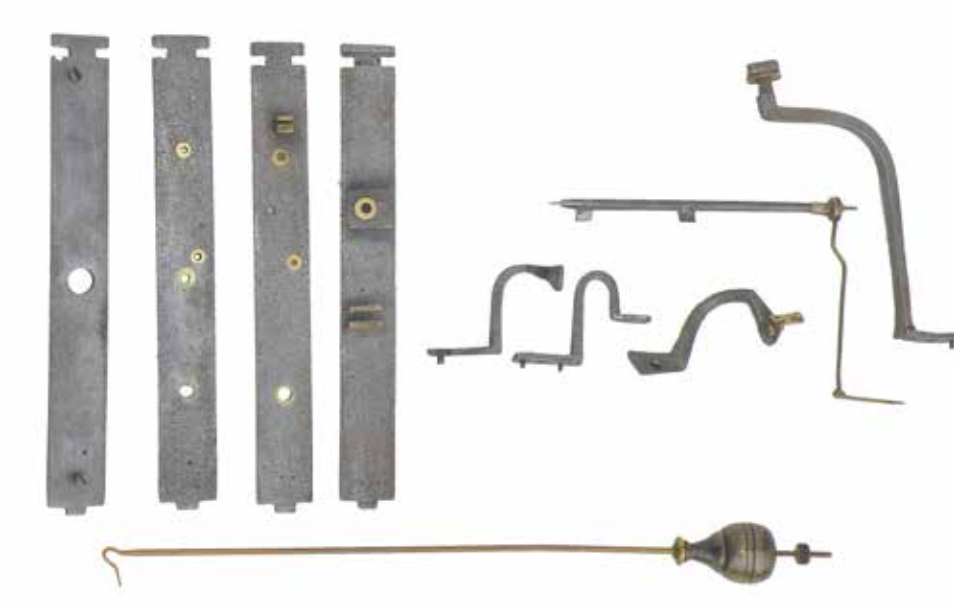


Figure 4. Movement bars, cocks, verge, bell stand and an original pendulum.

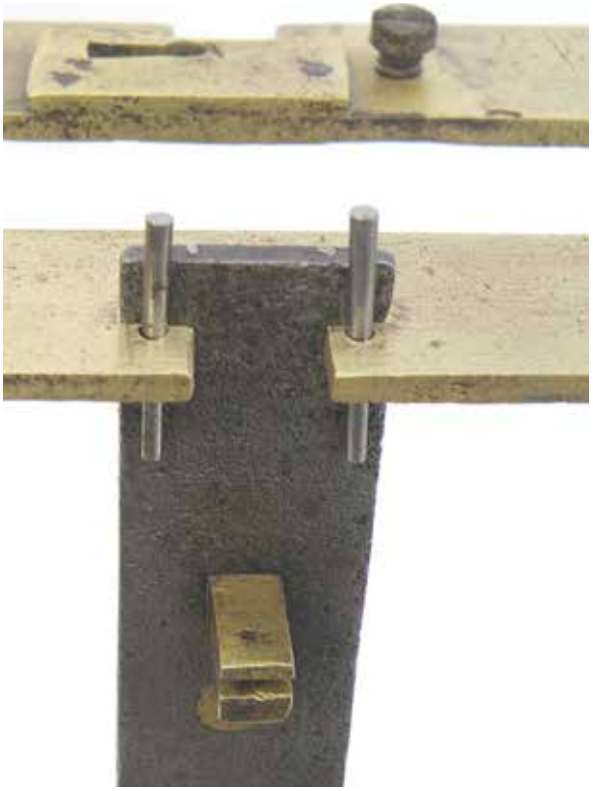
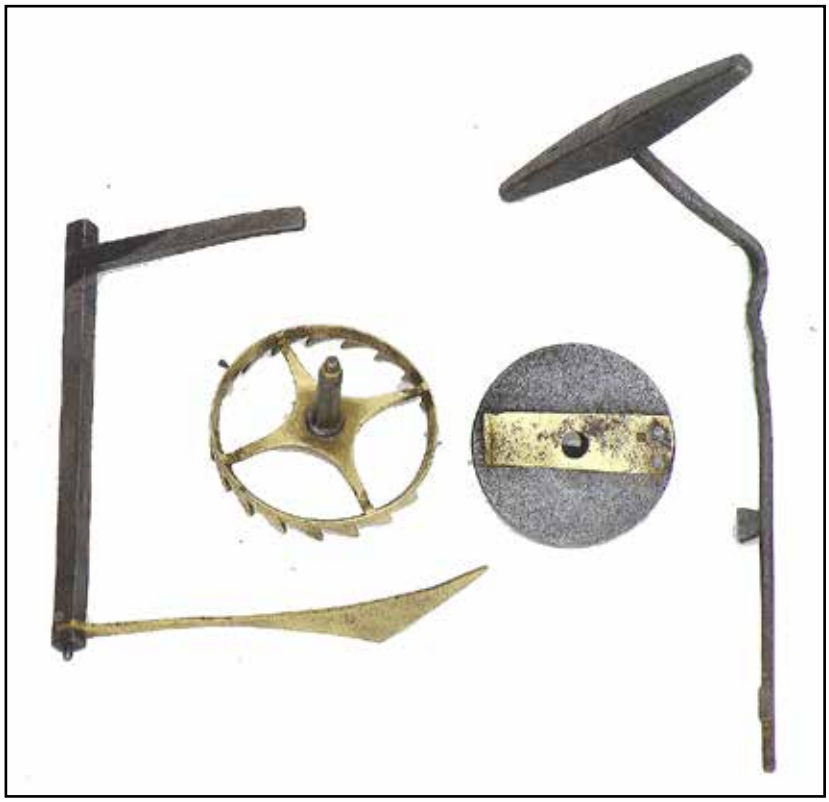


Figure 6. The movement bars held at the top by taper pins.



igure 7. Components of the alarm mechanism.

in place, while those in the iron plate would have been cut out with a cold chisel when the red-hot metal was held on an anvil. There are no finials, so the usual rectangular-section iron corner pillars are riveted flush at the top. At the bottom forged decorative scrolls are riveted to the bottom plate to provide extra stability, **figure 3**.

Despite having no striking train there are four straight iron movement bars, **figure 4**. The dial is screwed to the front dial bar, which also supports the hour wheel. The going train pivots between the second and third bars, the latter also having a pivot post at the rear for the alarm crownwheel. The lower end of the alarm verge

locates in a potence on the rear bar, which also has a cock for the alarm crownwheel. All four bars are held by taper pins, not wedges, **figure 5**, and the brass bushes are probably original, not later repairs. The cocks for the verge and top crownwheel pivot are of forged iron.

All the brass wheels have four crossings except the crownwheel, which has only three, **figure 6**. The going rope pulley has a brass outer shroud and an iron inner one, and instead of a circular spring click there is a springy brass strip riveted at one end and an iron click at the free end. The all-iron alarm pulley has a similar arrangement with the free end bent to act as a click.

The alarm itself is of the conventional type, comprising a crownwheel and rope pulley, vertical verge with a hammer at the top and pivoting between the plates, and let-off and locking detents pivoted between the left-hand pillars, **figure 7**. The side view shown in **figure 8** clearly illustrates the going train pivoted between the bars with the verge escapement on the top plate, and the alarm at the rear. The wheel and pinion counts and the dimensions are shown in the panel on page 40.

While Pont-Farcy clocks of both one-day and a week duration are regularly seen, later examples from the nineteenth century often having round ceramic dials. Timepiece alarms are not very common, and the example discussed here is an interesting example, probably dating from around 1750.

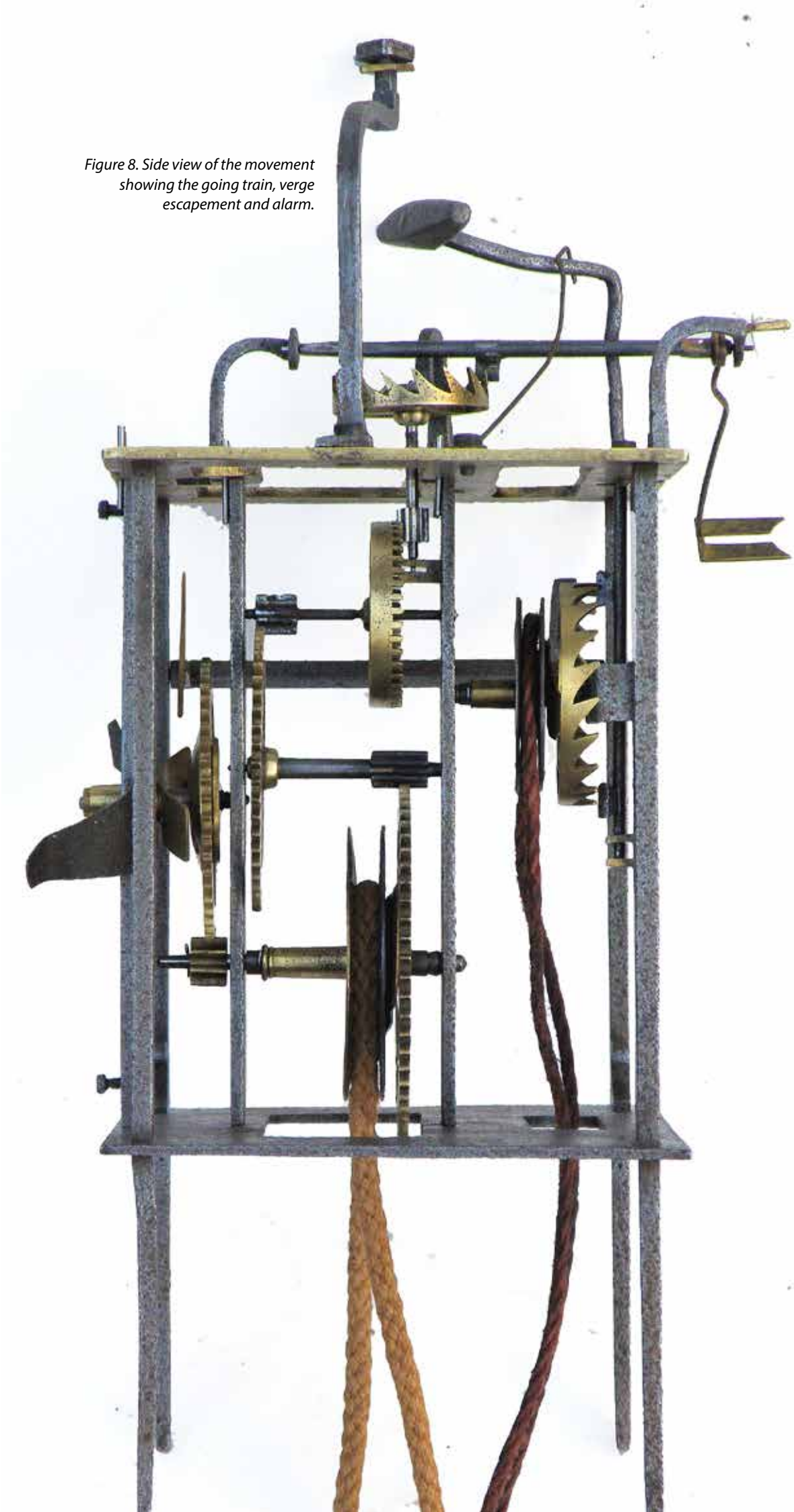


Figure 8. Side view of the movement showing the going train, verge escapement and alarm.