

Two more diamond dials

John A. Robey

Two more clocks with diamond dials, also known as lozenge dials, can be added to that recorded by Martyn Pettifer in *AH* June 2020, pages 209–13.



Fig. 1. Two-handed timepiece with a diamond dial, fitted in a brass case with brass ornaments on the sides. (Photo: F. Ballestrem)



Fig. 2. The original verge escapement. (Photo: F. Ballestrem)



Fig. 3. Dial with later winding holes and chapter ring.

The images of the first diamond dial (Figs 1–2) were supplied by a collector near Münster, Westphalia, Germany, and it is largely original. The wide chapter ring of the two-handed timepiece has hour and minute numerals, while the dial centre is engraved with acanthus scrolls. The dial sits in a brass case with small cherub-head spandrels and cast-brass ornaments on the sides, turning it into more of a star than a diamond. The movement retains its original escapement with the verge pivoting in a tall curved backcock (not the usual English type of knife-edge suspension) and a relatively long pendulum.

The second dial was a surprising discovery. In 2004 I was asked to restore a miniature longcase clock, bought at a local auction, which proved to be more interesting than it first seemed. The dial (Fig. 3) was only $6\frac{3}{4}$ in (171mm) square and fitted in a 1920s ‘grandmother’ case. The mechanism had started life as a small thirty-hour movement ingeniously converted to an eight-day by squeezing winding barrels into the small frame. While it was relatively simple to dismantle, reassembly proved to be more challenging. The chapter ring was later and spuriously signed ‘Mawkes Derby’ in a



Fig. 4. Dial digitally edited to reveal its original appearance.

twentieth-century script. However, the dial plate was extremely interesting, the centre being filled with high-quality floral engraving. Removal of the small cherub-head spandrels revealed engraved corners. The engraving was not symmetrical, but rotating it by 45 degrees revealed that it had originally been a diamond dial. Fig. 4 shows it after digital retouching to restore the later winding holes and orient it correctly.

In this orientation the floral pattern is symmetrical about the centre line with a large tulip at the top. It is a design used on the earliest longcase clocks, about 1670–80, being

a continuation of the style used on lantern clocks, before being superseded by a more austere plain matted centre. The original clock, presumably with a single hand and a duration of only about thirty hours, had been recycled to make a more practical timepiece, but at the cost of destroying most of its originality.

It is becoming clear that timepieces with diamond dials were more common than previously realized, though they never became very popular and were only produced for a relatively short period in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.