

# SCOTTISH DRUM

## with Harlow

by John R



*Figures 1 and 2. Scottish drumhead clock, signed 'Alexr. Galloway, Mauchline' with carved mahogany hood..*

Since I live in the English north Midlands, when making a call-out to look at a troublesome longcase clock, what greeted me could be the expected or

the unusual. It might be a locally-made brass dial 30-hour clock in an oak case, often it would be a painted-dial eight-day in an oak and mahogany case made in Uttoxeter, East Staffordshire, or less frequently it might be a London clock in a walnut case, though unfortunately not

# WHEEL HEAD CLOCKS

## movements

Robey, UK



Figure 3. The heavy mahogany bezel lifts up for winding.

a Tompion or a Knibb. What I was not expecting was the imposing Scottish drumhead clock shown in **figure 1**.

There is little published about these interesting clocks, and this two-part article attempts to provide some new evidence on their origin and date.

*GRANDFATHER CLOCKS AND THEIR CASES* by Brian Loomes, published in 1985, states on pages 279-283 that drumhead clocks date from about 1820 to 1860, then a few pages later he says that they almost always date from 1820 to 1850. Evidence from both this clock and

one discussed in Part 2, suggests that drumhead clocks continued to be made until at least the late 1880s. They are usually said to come from the south west of Scotland, with the cases being made in Glasgow. But both the date and origin are oversimplifications, and the following background information has been mainly supplied by Jon Reglinski of James Ritchie Clockmakers of Edinburgh.

Drumhead clocks first appeared in Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century, mainly with a silvered brass or painted round dial and a brass bezel. As confirmation of this Brian Cathcart, a third-generation Glasgow clockmaker added that in Glasgow drumhead clocks used to be called Edinburgh clocks. This

About 1840 this style of case began to spread westward and became more decorative.

style is pretty consistent until about 1840 when they spread westwards and the cases became more decorative.

The brass bezels were replaced by a carved mahogany moulding hinged at the top. The carving can be very elaborate, and there is usually a cresting, either carved or in the form of a pierced fret. The trunk is often tapered, and the door can be glazed. The trunk can be both tapered and fluted with an oval or semicircular cross section. Instead of a door, on these pillar trunks the whole

front opens, or there is a removable side panel to access the pendulum. The drumhead clock is usually regarded as continuing into the 1860s, but they actually continued for much longer than this.

The clock that is discussed here in Part 1 is a typical drumhead of good quality, without the very elaborate carving found on the finest examples, **figure 1**. The case would have been made in Glasgow, and is of high quality mahogany, which was imported from the West Indies in

turned and split pilasters on either side. An almost identical trunk is known on an arch-dial clock, so customers could choose what type of hood and dial they preferred. The trunk stands on a base with a square recessed panel at the front.

The carved mahogany dial surround, **figure 2**, is very heavy and it is impractical to hinge it at the side, as on clocks with round brass bezels, such as dial clocks. To get round this problem, the hood door is hinged at the top, so it has to be lifted and held up with one

without the use of a falseplate. On the horizontal centre line is the retailer's name: 'Alexr. Galloway, Mauchline'. This is a town in Ayrshire, south east Scotland, about 33 miles (53km) south of Glasgow. The position for the name and place is in keeping with traditional Scottish dial design, as is the use of a pointer calendar, with both the date and seconds hands being of an identical design. While there are minute markers, there are no minute numbers, which fell out of favour after about 1830.



Figure 4. Round iron dial with a white centre and gilt chapter, seconds and calendar rings.



Figure 5. The movement, made in Glasgow.

vast quantities into the Port of Glasgow.

Drumhead clock cases were a development of the typical nineteenth-century west-coast arched-dial clock, with the rectangular hood replaced by a circular one.

The clock shown here has a typical tapered trunk and bow-fronted door. There are cusp-shaped pieces above and below the door, as well as long

hand while winding the movement with the other hand, **figure 3**. Some examples have a strut to hold up the hood door, but not on this one.

The 13in (32cm) diameter iron dial was probably made in Glasgow by an unknown dialmaker, and has a white painted centre with gilt hour, seconds and calendar rings, **figure 4**. As usual for these dials it is fitted to the movement

While I had been surprised to see a Scottish drumhead clock standing in a house in south west Derbyshire, when the dial was removed there was yet another surprise. Instead of the movement having been made in Glasgow, it was instantly recognisable as having been manufactured in Ashbourne, some 274miles (441km) further south. Not only that, it was residing just a few

miles from where the movement had been made. The strikework, seen on the front view of the movement in **figure 5**, in particular the shape of the rack hook, is specific to movements produced by the Harlow manufactory. For convenience this name is used not only when the business was owned and run by the Harlow family up to 1851, but also later when the works were bought by William Davenport, a former Harlow apprentice.

The principles and layout of the strikework is quite conventional, which

have no practical purpose, but are simply to act as a trademark to identify the Harlow brand, so that factors and retailers would recognise the Harlow quality.

Not only are Harlow movements readily identified, their quality puts them above the run-of-the-mill. As an example, there is a movement now clearly recognisable as having come from the Harlow workshops, but assumed to have been made by James Whitelaw of Edinburgh, the 'clockmaker' named on the dial. This

may strike on a large coiled steel gong fixed to the backboard of the case, **figure 6**. Instead of the hammer rising vertically on the rear left-hand side of the movement, the hammer arbor passes through the rear plate and pivots in a brass cock, **figure 7**. The long horizontal hammer shaft has a heavy hammer head held by a screw. This allows its position to be adjusted so it contacts the correct part of the gong. No hammer spring is necessary, while a stop prevents jangling. To round off the description of this clock,



Ashbourne, south-west Derbyshire.



Figure 6. Large coiled gong fixed to the backboard.

usually has a straight or slightly curved rack hook. Instead, the Harlow version has a C-curve between the hook and the pivot, with its open ends becoming decorative points, one of them forming a 'double hook'. The free end can take various forms, most commonly a scimitar shape of different curvatures or, as here, a broad steep curve. These shapes, especially the C-curve and double hook,

was praised by Ernest L Edwardes on page 143 of the 4th edition of his book *THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK*, published in 1980, as 'a movement that is notably well made and finished throughout'. Horological research has advanced significantly since then.

In one important respect this movement differs from those that strike on a bell. Drumhead clocks, especially late ones,

as might be expected for a Scottish longcase clock from the nineteenth century, the cast-iron pendulum bob is decorated. This one is painted with a large red flower and black leaves on a yellow ground, with a wide red border and black arcs, **figure 8**.

The information available on Alexander Galloway of Mauchline is quite sparse. The comprehensive list of makers in

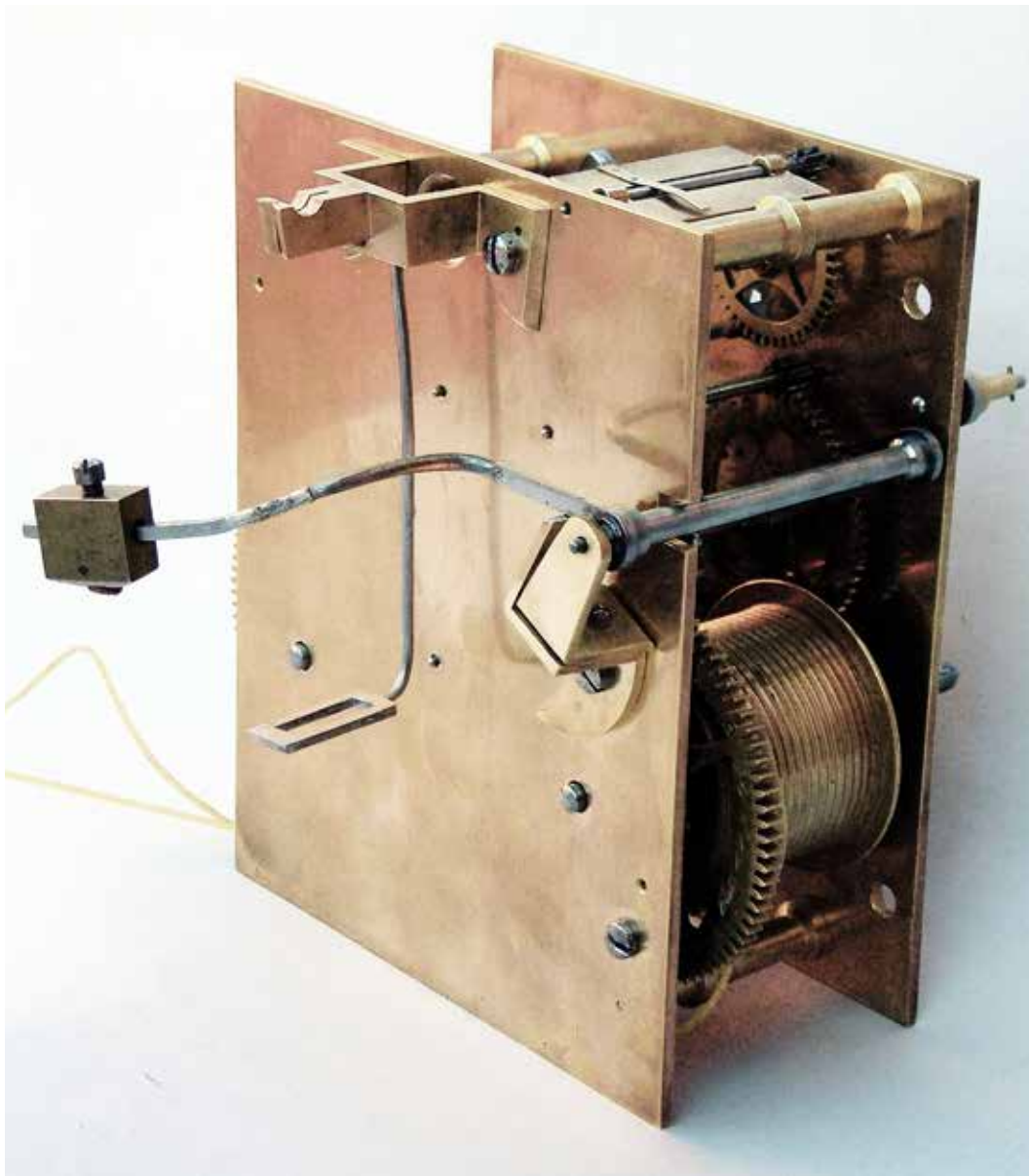


Figure 7. The horizontal hammer at the rear of the movement.



Figure 8. The painted cast-iron pendulum bob.

Donald Whyte's book *CLOCKMAKERS & WATCHMAKERS OF SCOTLAND*, published in 2005 by Mayfield Books, includes him solely based on the evidence of this clock. The Harlow movement does not provide any useful dating evidence, as the same design continued to be used after the works were sold in 1851 to

## Galloway was robbed of a handbag containing several watches and items of jewellery.

William Davenport.

However, there was a quite late Alexander Galloway in Mauchline, who was born in January 1855, in Wigtownshire (now part of Dumfries & Galloway). When he married in 1886 he was aged 30, living near Ayr, working as

a 'watchmaker (master)'. This means he was an employer, not an employee.

Four years later he had moved 12 miles north-east to Mauchline, when in April 1890 the *GALLOWAY GAZETTE* reported that Alexander Galloway, watchmaker of Mauchline, was found not guilty of breach of trust or theft, having been entrusted by a Stranraer pawnbroker to repair a gold Albert chain and a locket, which he kept for himself. In August 1892 the *GLASGOW EVENING POST* reported that while in the Back Wynd, Glasgow, Alexander Galloway from Mauchline, watchmaker, was robbed of a handbag containing several watches, items of jewellery, and 14s (shillings) in cash. Then in August 1893 he was up to his old tricks again; this time he was found guilty and committed to Ayr prison for appropriating five watches, valued at £20 10s, entrusted to him for repair. He was included in the *GUIDE & DIRECTORY TO MAUCLINE*, Catrine & Sonn, published in 1903, as a watchmaker at Earl Grey Street. His son Peter, a signalman aged 22 (actually 20), emigrated to New York in 1907. Alexander's death has not been confirmed, but he may be the man who died in 1919 aged 63 at Alloway, or 1925, aged 79 at Largs, both in Ayrshire. It is now clear that the drumhead clock discussed here is much later than usually suggested for this type of clock, and probably dates from the late 1880s.

Part 2 of this article on Scottish drumhead clocks discusses two other drumhead clocks with Harlow movements, one of which is also much later than previously thought. 📖