

## ‘OCCASION’S BALD BEHIND’

A NEOCLASSICAL DIAL BY JOHN OWEN OF LLANRWST



by William Linnard

**A**N unusual single-sheet brass dial, signed ‘John Owen, Llanrwst’ (see Fig. 1), was purchased by a friend at a Welsh antiques fair in Builth Wells in spring 2005. Despite all the disfiguring scratches, and despite the fact that it is an orphan dial that has sadly lost not only its movement and its case but also its provenance, it is still a very imposing piece of work with a number of extremely interesting features, and accordingly it merits careful consideration. With its arresting inscription in the arch, for convenience it seems appropriate to refer to it here as the ‘Bald Behind’ dial.

Before discussing the dial itself, it will be helpful to summarise the information available on the clockmaker. John Owen (1719-1776) was the founder of a famous dynasty of clockmakers working in Llanrwst (Conwy valley, North Wales) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Details of John Owen’s life and his clock-making career have been published by Colin and Mary Brown,<sup>1</sup> and need be only briefly recapitulated here. John Owen was apparently born in 1719, and presumably went on to be apprenticed to a good town clockmaker, perhaps in Wrexham but more probably somewhere in Lancashire or Cheshire. He was already established as a clockmaker at Llanrwst when, on 19 January 1746, he signed a marriage bond to wed Elizabeth Jones of Eglwysbach,<sup>2</sup> and the couple were duly married on 21 January 1746 at Eglwysbach. Later that same year he undertook to repair the church clock at Conwy, and he went on to become a prolific maker of longcase clocks, almost exclusively eight-day clocks of good quality and with very distinctive strike-work. John Owen died on 10 February 1776, aged 57, and is buried in Llanrwst churchyard. He died without having made a will, leaving his son Watkin

Owen, then aged twenty-one, in charge of a flourishing clock business at Llanrwst.

In their study of the clockmakers of Llanrwst, the Browns found a total of 125 clocks signed by John Owen, of which 106 are included in their published survey and analysis. All but one of these are eight-day longcase clocks. The analysis showed that ninety of these clocks had square dials, while nine had arched dials with moon-work, and seven had arched dials without moon-work. The clocks with arched dials usually bore a conventional *memento mori* motto in the arch, such as ‘TIME Stayeth not’ or ‘He appointed the Moon for Seasons’. All these 106 John Owen clocks (with one significant exception) had composite dials with a gapped dial-plate (i.e. with apertures or ‘cut-outs’ cast in the plate), an applied chapter ring and cast brass spandrels.

The only single-sheet dial signed by John Owen recorded by the Browns was that on a very special and prestigious clock made in the early 1770s for a Peter Titley of Penloyn, the leading apothecary, doctor and surgeon of Llanrwst. Peter Titley was a wealthy man with social aspirations, who actually became John Owen’s landlord, owning the freehold of Tyn-y-pwll, the house and workshop used by John Owen in Denbigh Street, Llanrwst. Titley claimed descent from the Thirteenth Noble Tribe of Gwynedd, adopted the coat of arms of the Lord of Tegeingl, and had this engraved in the arch of the single-sheet dial (see Fig. 2). This silvered dial-plate measures 18½ x 13½ x 13½ inches (473 x 341 x 341 mm), but it is more than a quarter of an inch thick and weighs no less than 9½ lb (4.28 kg). The Titley clock, with its centre seconds hand and maintaining power, and housed in its imposing Cuban mahogany case, is described and illustrated in

1. Colin & Mary Brown, *The Clockmakers of Llanrwst: pre-industrial clockmaking in a Welsh market town* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 1993), especially Chapters III and X.

2. National Library of Wales. Marriage Bonds. B. 22/167.



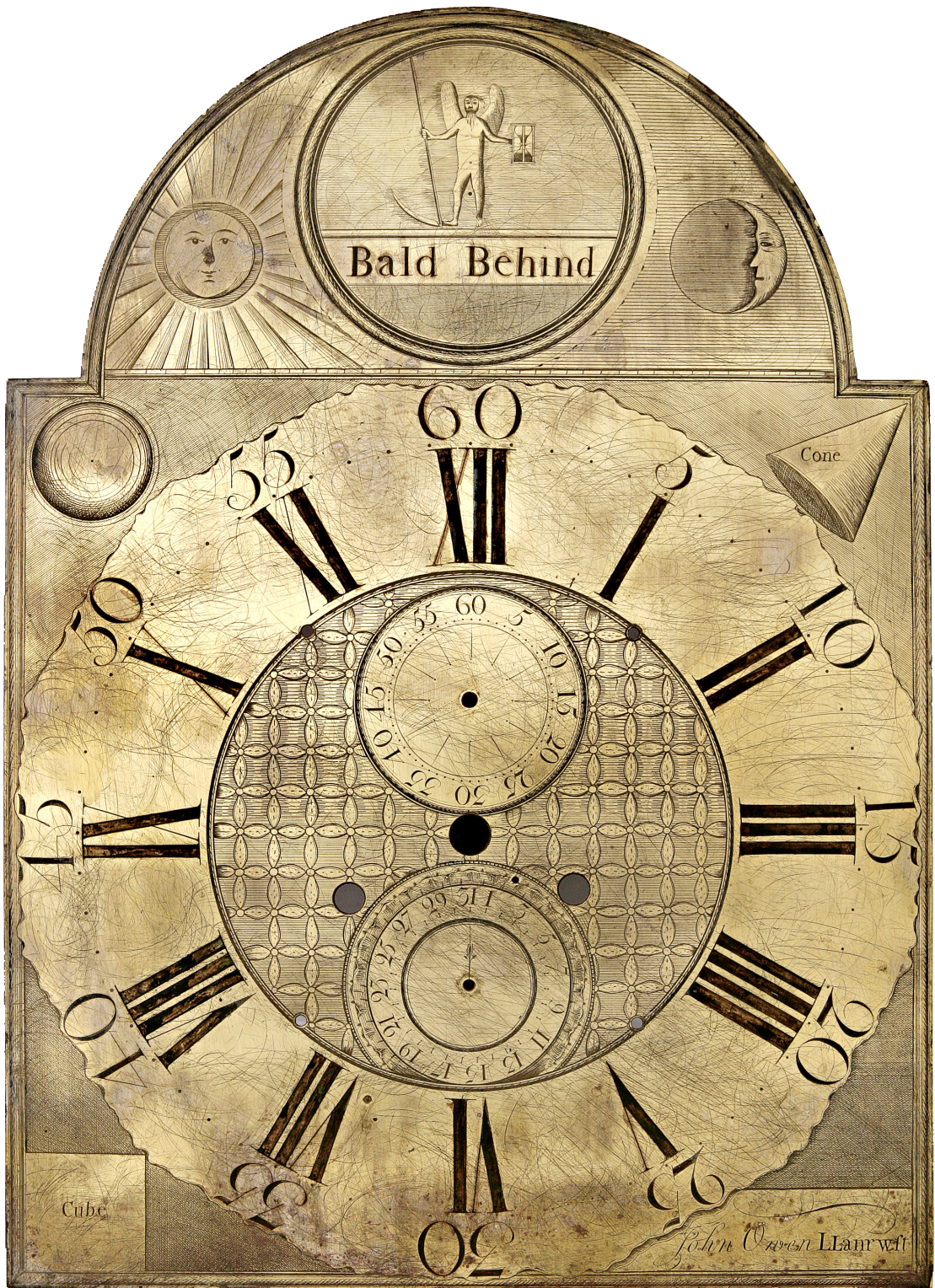


Fig. 1. The 'Bald Behind' dial. Lightly cleaned – it was in this badly scratched condition when found. This arched single-sheet brass dial was engraved by the 'Good Engraver' for John Owen of Llanrwst in about 1774, for an imposing eight-day longcase clock, photograph Ed Cloutman.





Fig. 2. The single-sheet dial of the Titley clock with its coat-of-arms, photograph Colin Brown.





3. The engraving in the arch of the 'Bald Behind' dial, photograph Ed Cloutman.

detail in Chapter X of the Browns' book, and will be referred to again later when discussing the characteristics and possible original owner of the clock with the recently discovered 'Bald Behind' dial, the only other single-sheet dial known that is signed by John Owen.

### THE 'BALD BEHIND' DIAL

The arched dial-plate measures  $18\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{4}$  inches ( $473 \times 335 \times 335$  mm) and weighs  $5\frac{1}{4}$  lb (2.37 kg), i.e. it is very similar in size to but is much lighter than the Titley dial. The brass dial-plate is fairly uniform in thickness over-all, being about  $80/1000$  inch [about 2 mm]. This is an eight-day dial with conventional Roman hour numerals, Arabic minute numerals, dotted minutes, and subsidiary seconds dial and calendar dial. The four dial feet have been removed but their holes are clearly visible, positioned on the inner edge of the engraved chapter ring. This dial can be confidently and accurately dated to within a year or so of 1774. The finely engraved dial was originally matt silvered, and must then have looked quite spectacular. However, subsequently the whole dial has been very badly scratched, apparently having been scrubbed with a wire brush, presumably in a botched attempt to remove the old silvering.

The entire margin of the 'Bald Behind' dial plate is decorated with a quarter-inch border of chevrons and fine parallel hatching lines, somewhat resembling the lines on modern bank notes.

The centre of the arch contains a full frontal picture of a winged 'Father Time' figure (Fig. 3). He is depicted nude (though in accordance with convention genitalia are not shown), and has a beard and a prominent forelock. He holds an hourglass in his left hand and a scythe in his right. Below him is the caption 'Bald Behind'. The figure is engraved on a background or field of fine parallel lines, and is enclosed within a circle, cleverly hatched and shaded as a *trompe l'oeil* to give the illusion of a raised boss in the arch. The circle enclosing the figure is flanked on either side by naïvely anthropomorphic but well executed representations of the sun and the moon.

Three corners of the dial are occupied by engraved three-dimensional geometrical figures, and the fourth by the maker's name: 'John Owen Llanrw t' (Fig. 4). The maker's signature in its flowing cursive script, and the form of the place-name with the Welsh letter 'Ll' and the long 's', are typical of John Owen's later clocks, but this dial is unique for John Owen's work in having the signature and place-name positioned down in the bottom right-hand corner of the



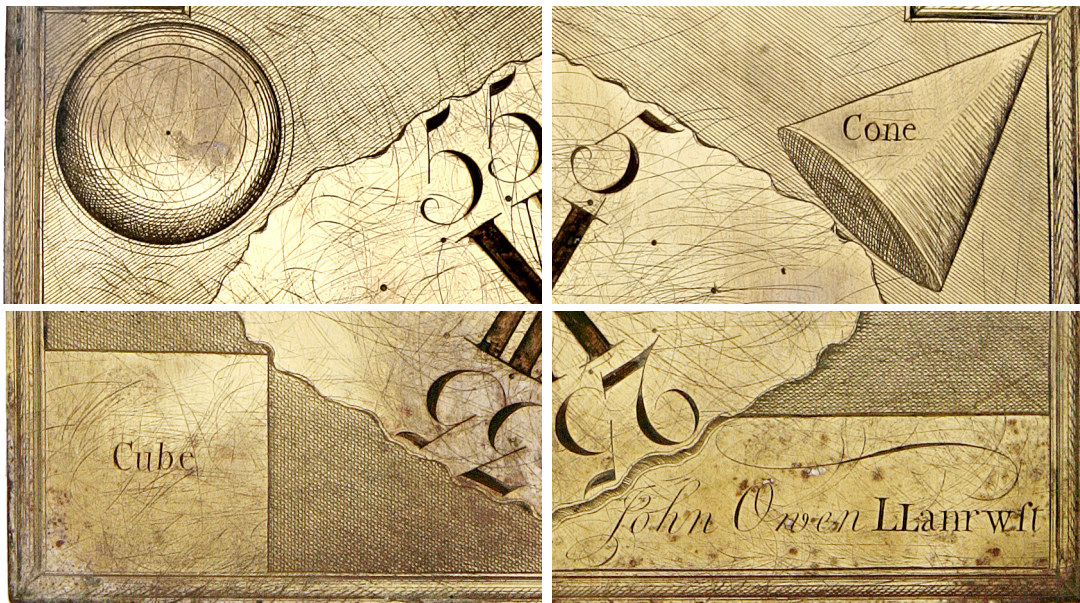


Fig. 4. Details of the four corners, photograph Ed Cloutman.

dial, instead of conventionally either in the dial centre, or on the chapter ring or, occasionally, in the arch. It can be assumed that this unusual corner location was dictated by the need to balance the three geometrical figures: the cube in the bottom right-hand corner, which is labelled 'Cube' (though the figure engraved is actually a square); the globe or sphere in the top left-hand corner, which is left unlabelled (another oversight by the engraver?); and the cone in the top right-hand corner, which is correctly drawn and labelled 'Cone'. These three geometrical figures are engraved upon a background or field of fine parallel lines (hatching or cross-hatching).

The actual font used by the engraver for all his lettering on this dial is identical to that used on John Owen's later dials.

Except for the numerals, the chapter ring itself is left smooth and un-engraved, but again both the inner and outer scalloped edges of the chapter ring are skilfully hatched and shaded as a *trompe l'oeil*, cleverly creating the illusion of an applied chapter ring. There are no half-hour markers. Inside the chapter ring, apart from the space occupied by the seconds dial and the calendar dial, the whole dial centre is completely filled with a diaper pattern of repeated 'propeller devices' on a background of fine parallel

hatching (Fig. 5). Incidentally, this diaper pattern of 'propellers' was a manifestation of a quite short-lived vogue for all-over decoration of the dial centre, and has been noted on several Lancashire dials in the 1770s, for example a clock by Joseph Finney (1708-1772), the famous Liverpool clockmaker and architect.<sup>3</sup> It has also been recorded on one other John Owen dial, though here the 'propellers' were turned by 45° compared to those on the 'Bald Behind' dial (Colin Brown *personal communication*; this other dial was found too late to be illustrated or included in the published analysis in his book).

The back of the 'Bald Behind' dial is completely devoid of any markings, such as a casting mark or trial engravings. The only attachments surviving are a small spring (which steadied the calendar wheel carrying the date pointer) riveted to the plate, and a delicate jumper spring screwed to the plate.

Initial attempts were made to clean up the dial and get rid of the unsightly scratches, but unfortunately these were so deep that there was a real danger of losing some of the fine engraving detail. Accordingly, no further restoration was done, and re-silvering of the dial was not considered.

3. Brian Loomes, *Clockmakers of Northern England* (1997) p.115-6; for illustration of Finney's diaper dial, see Alan Smith ed., *Country Life International Dictionary of Clocks* (Hamlyn, 1988), p.37, Fig. 7.



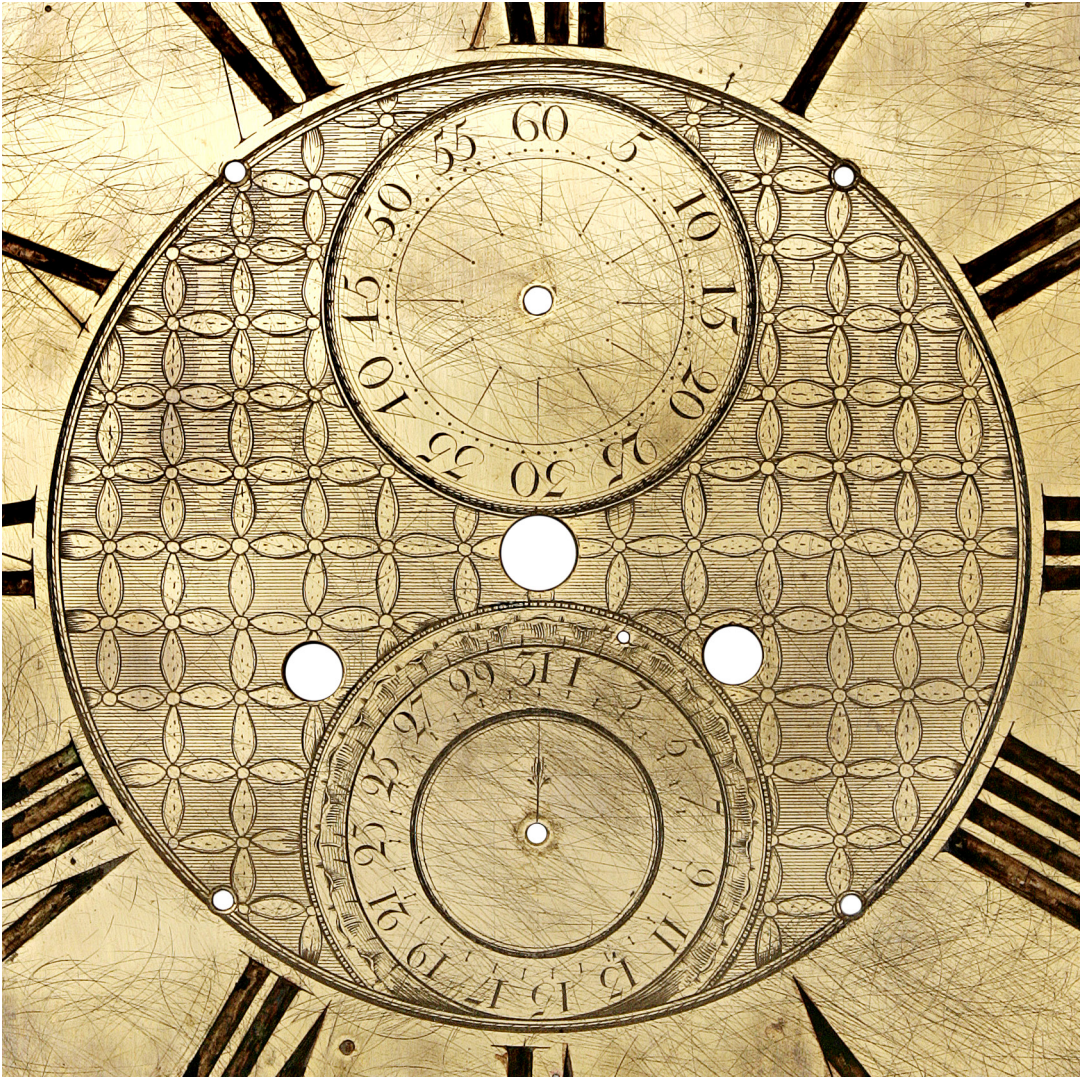


Fig. 5. Detail of the dial centre with diaper pattern, photograph Ed Cloutman.

## THE ENGRAVER

The graving work on the 'Bald Behind' dial is detailed and for the most part very finely and cleverly executed, but it is difficult to accept that all the detail was the spontaneous creation of the engraver himself. The various features and objects depicted on this dial must have been deliberately engraved to meet the precise individual specifications of a particular customer (as obviously was also the case with the coat-of-arms shown on the dial of the Titley clock).

Although close examination of the engraving work on the 'Bald Behind' dial does reveal several small slips, omissions, and slight misalignments

of lettering, the overall impression must be one of a wealth of fine detail and stunning quality.

For his later dials John Owen used a dial engraver of considerable skill, whom the Browns dubbed 'The Good Engraver', and this 'Bald Behind' dial is definitely his work. As yet this master engraver remains unidentified, but his work has also been recognized on dials of other makers such as John Kent of Manchester, John Stancliffe and Joseph Batty of Halifax, as well as Joseph Finney of Liverpool. The Browns have concluded that John Owen was obtaining his dials from an engraver working probably in Lancashire, either direct from the engraver himself or via a wholesaler or intermediary agent. John Owen would have insisted that the



engraver used an acceptable form of the special Welsh letter LL.

The Browns used the appellation ‘The Good Engraver’ to indicate an artist-craftsman who was artistically brilliant and innovative rather than one who was technically excellent but artistically limited. We may picture him as an engraver of considerable skill, a fast and fluent worker, perhaps more eager to accept new and interesting challenges than to perform perfect but essentially repetitive humdrum tasks. Like other expert engravers of his day, probably he exercised his skill not only on the decoration of brass dials for clocks but also on other fine work such as copper-plate engraving for book illustrations, trade-cards etc.

### NEO-CLASSICISM, GEOMETRY AND FREEMASONRY

Stylistically, this ‘Bald Behind’ dial takes us right away from the Rococo and into the world of neoclassicism. In a recent essay, Wendell Garrett<sup>4</sup> describes neoclassicism as:

the style of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, of the culminating evolutionary phase of that great outburst of human inquiry known as the Enlightenment. In its most vital expression, Neo-Classicism sought to bring about a return to primitive simplicity and purity. Dignified, restrained and sometimes rather chilly, it is characterized in the decorative arts by the fondness for simple geometrical forms, the sparing use of Greek and Roman architectural ornament, sobriety of color

and a preference for linear and flat, rather than richly sculptural, decoration.

Elsewhere in the same essay Garrett amplifies and reinforces this point:

Designers and craftsmen in the everyday world of the decorative arts, who abandoned the wayward and frivolous Rococo motifs and responded to demands for greater simplicity, sobriety and solidity by seeking inspiration in Greek and Roman objects, seem to have taken an almost perverse pleasure in transferring motifs from one medium to another ... Cabinetmakers resorted to the architecture rather than the furniture of antiquity ... For Neo-Classical craftsmen the imitation of the antique was not an end in itself but a means of creating ideal works of universal and eternal validity ... [these craftsmen] concentrated on form rather than texture, on line rather than color ... Art took on a Platonic geometry where architects and craftsmen discerned the pure forms of triangle or circle, cube or cone.

It should also be remembered that freemasonry, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, reflected many of the philosophical, moral, political, artistic, and intellectual currents of the Enlightenment, and exerted considerable influence on neoclassical architecture.<sup>5</sup> In the late eighteenth century, designers had a vast vocabulary of masonic and quasi-masonic emblems, images and allusions on which to draw.

Symbol	Significance
‘Father Time’	occasion, opportunity (see discussion below)
Scythe	death
Hourglass	the transitory nature of life
Sun	day; wisdom, power and goodness; omnipresent rule by day
Moon	night; wisdom, power and goodness; omnipresent rule by night
Cube	stability; the perfect ashlar; socle
Circle (globe, sphere)	God; supreme being; power and enlightenment
Cone	humanity

Table 1. Symbols on the ‘Bald Behind’ dial and their significance.

4. Wendell Garrett, ‘Neo-Classicism’, *Artnet.com Magazine* features (2004), article in the series ‘Garrett’s Attic’.

5. James Stevens Curl, *The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry* (Batsford, 1991), p.125.



Geometrical figures have symbolic meaning in sacred geometry, which covers both Pythagorean and neo-Platonic geometry, and most of the symbols on the 'Bald Behind' dial shown in Table 1 are important masonic symbols.

In his definition of the term 'Adam style' as an aspect of neoclassical design popularised by the architect Robert Adam, Alan Smith mentions its rather limited application in horology:

Clock designs which are completely representative of the Adam style are fairly uncommon; longcase clocks, which are rare, are usually shorter and slimmer than earlier examples. Cases veneered in mahogany and satinwood are found with marquetry decoration and penwork designs based on the Adam repertoire of classical motifs such as the Grecian urn, Roman *paterae*, strings of husks and swags of leaves and flowers.<sup>6</sup>

In horology perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this abrupt change in artistic fashion from rococo to neoclassical is seen in the adoption of single-sheet dials and the abandonment of cast spandrels. This switch to single-sheet dials was a fairly general one, led perhaps by engravers and their clients in provincial centres of fashion such as Liverpool and Bristol, but it extended even to the cheapest products of country clockmakers working in the most remote parts of rural Wales. Examples of Welsh single-sheet thirty-hour dials that can be cited are one signed by Samuel Roberts of Llanfair Caereinion c.1781, and one signed by David Mathews who made clocks at Talley and Carmarthen.<sup>7</sup> The contrast between the 'Bald Behind' dial and a simple little single-sheet dial made for a single-hand thirty-hour clock with a posted movement could hardly be greater (Fig. 6).

This change to single-sheet dials appears to have occurred in the 1770s, and thus it coincided with the time when the first white or painted dials were beginning to be produced in Lancashire and the English Midlands. It remains



Fig. 6. A single-sheet square dial, signed by David Mathews of Carmarthen (and Talley), on a simple 30-hour country clock; the engraver is not known, author's photograph.

a matter of some debate whether the advent of the single-sheet silvered brass dial was an independent technical and stylistic development, or whether it was a direct response to perceived competition from the new painted dials, or indeed whether the makers of the earliest painted dials were in fact copying features of single-sheet brass dials.

## BALD BEHIND

The most striking feature of the dial is of course the 'Father Time' figure and the prominent 'Bald Behind' caption in the arch. Conventionally this 'Father Time' figure is usually referred to in horological literature as Chronos (Greek *Χρονος*). Manfred Lurker defines Chronos as:

the personification of time, often coincident in the late classical period with the figure of Aión. His portrayal as a bearded old man with sickle and hourglass was particularly popular in the Renaissance and the Baroque periods.<sup>8</sup>

However, horologists must remember that the Greeks used two quite distinct words for time,

6. Alan Smith (ed.), *Country Life International Dictionary of Clocks* (Hamlyn, 1988), p.12.

7. For illustration of Samuel Roberts's single-sheet dial, see W.T.R. Pryce & T.A. Davies, *Samuel Roberts Clock Maker* (NMW, 1985), Fig. 47, p.145. For details of David Mathews, see W. Linnard *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers* (Mayfield Books, 2003), p.202.

8. Manfred Lurker, *Dictionary of Gods and Goddesses, Devils and Demons* (Routledge, Kegan & Paul, 1987).



viz. *Chronos* (Χρόνος) in the sense of a definite time, a period, or season, and *Kairos* (Καιρός) in the sense of the right point of time, the proper or exact time, opportunity or occasion.<sup>9</sup> In the case of the 'Bald Behind' dial there is no doubt that we are dealing with *Kairos* (= Occasion or Opportunity), not *Chronos* (= Time).

In his seminal essay *Icones Symbolicae*, Sir Ernst Gombrich, art historian and Professor of the History of the Classical Tradition at London, discusses an image which he states 'represents a being from the very twilight realm between divinity and abstraction, *Occasio* or opportunity'.<sup>10</sup> He then goes on to quote part of a dialogue poem by Ausonius (*Opuscula* book xviii, 33), a Latin poet and rhetorician of the fourth century AD, which is a close imitation of a Greek epigram on *Kairos*, the right moment of time:

I am the goddess known to the few as  
Opportunity.  
Why do you stand on a wheel?  
Because I cannot remain in one place.  
You cover your face with your hair.  
I do not want to be recognized.  
But why are you bald on your hindhead?  
So that I cannot be held when I flee.

In Renaissance iconography, 'Occasion' or 'Opportunity' was depicted as a bald-headed personage (male or female) with a long forelock of hair that had to be seized as he/she passed by. This striking imagery has its roots far back in the classical era, long before the development of mechanical clocks. Other examples can be quoted from Greek and Latin as well as from French and English literature.<sup>11</sup>

The earliest reference appears to be by Posidippus, a Greek comic dramatist who flourished c.289 BC (*Greek Anthology*, Book xvi, epigram 275: *On a Statue of Time by Lysippus*):

Why hast thou hair upon thy brow?  
To seize me by when met.  
Why is thy head then bald behind?  
Because men wish in vain,  
When I have run past on winged feet  
To catch me e'er again.

Phaedrus, a Latin fabulist who flourished c.20 AD, expressed the same idea (Phaedrus, *Fables*, Book v, fab. 8):

Opportunity has hair on her forehead, but  
is bald behind. If you meet her seize her,  
for once let slip, Jove himself cannot bring  
her back.

Again, the Roman writer Dionysius Cato (*Disticha de Moribus* ii, 26) put it thus:

Let nothing pass that will advantage  
you; hairy in front, Opportunity is bald  
behind

Here the original Latin text reads: *Fronte capillata, post est Occasio calva*. The notes to this work explain the allusion as follows: 'In Roman mythology, *Occasio* (Occasion, or in more idiomatic English, Opportunity) was personified as a god or goddess standing on a rotating wheel, the feet fitted with winged sandals, the head hairy in front but bald behind. Time (*Saturnus*) also had a character of Opportunity, as distinguished from Length of Years, and in this character (*Καιρός* in Greek as distinguished from *Χρόνος*) was also represented as hairy in front and bald behind'.

In France, Rabelais, 1494-1553, *Works*, Book i, ch. 37, described the same thing:

For occasion hath all her hair on her  
forehead; when she is past, you may not  
recall her. She hath no tuft whereby you  
can lay hold on her, for she is bald on  
the hinder part of her head, and never  
returneth again.

It would be diverting to quote many more similar pieces from English literature, but the following selection will be sufficient to show just how strongly this *Carpe Diem* imagery of time/opportunity slipping past and affording only one chance to seize it was implanted in the European mindset over the centuries.

Christopher Marlowe in *The Jew of Malta*, Act 5, Scene 2 (c.1590;) has Barabas say:

9. Liddell & Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (OUP, 1955 impression).

10. Sir Ernst Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (Phaidon, 1985), p.133-4.

11. The literature references are taken from *Stevenson's Book of Quotations*, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (1974).

Begin betimes; Occasion's bald behind;  
Slip not thine opportunity, for fear too  
late  
Thou seek'st for much but canst not compass  
it.

Nearly a century apart, Edmund Spenser and Milton both expressed the same idea. Spenser, *Amoretti* sonnet lxx (1595):

Tell her the joyous Time will not be stayed  
Unless she do him by the forelock take.

Milton, *Paradise Regained*, Book III, lines 172-3 (1671):

Zeal and duty are not slow  
But on Occasion's forelock watchful wait.

Again, Abraham Cowley in *Pyramus and Thisbe*, stanza 15 (1633) expressed the idea very neatly:

Who lets slip Fortune, her shall never  
find;  
Occasion, once passed by, is bald behind.

Robert Southwell, the English Jesuit poet (1561?-1595), put it thus in *Time in Delay*:

Time wears all his locks before,  
Take thou hold upon his forehead;  
When he flies, he turns no more,  
And behind his scalp is naked.

Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) again described the depiction of Time:

Time is painted with a lock before, and bald  
behind, signifying that one must take time  
by the forelock; when it is once past, there  
is no recalling it.

For a final example, Shakespeare may be cited. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, Act V, Scene 3, line 39 (1602;) the King of France says:

Let's take the instant by the forward top.

These quotations show that 'Occasion' was portrayed as male or female, and occurred

frequently in literature before pictorial representations began to appear in the form of paintings and engravings. Pointing out that a pictorial formula for this distinction between *Occasio* and *Tempus* hardly appears before the sixteenth century, Rudolf Wittkower<sup>12</sup> analysed several Renaissance examples, including a fresco of the school of Mantegna (not before 1490) and an allegorical composition by Rubens (c.1629). Rubens depicted the relationship between time and opportunity as friendly, but the traditional interpretation of *Occasio* is that the rapid course of time prevents man from grasping opportunity by the forelock.

It may appear a little surprising to us that the engraver, or his client, decided on the concise two-word caption on the dial 'Bald Behind', rather than the fuller version 'Occasion's Bald Behind'. Obviously, the allusion was much better understood in the eighteenth century than it is today.

#### THE SPECIAL CUSTOMER

Unfortunately, John Owen left no account books or workshop notebooks to provide clues to his customers, and apart from Peter Titley of Penloyn, already mentioned above, the Browns were unable to identify any of John Owen's original customers. Titley's clock, the only one to have a reliable provenance right back to the day it first left John Owen's workshop, is still owned by descendants of the original owner.

It seems that John Owen sold most of his clocks to customers living within a radius of twenty miles or so of Llanrwst, but very few of the clocks located by the Browns are still standing in the same houses where the original customers lived, two and a half centuries ago. However, many of the surviving longcase clocks are said by their current owners to have moved just once during that period.

The 'Bald Behind' dial has only recently been re-discovered, and its provenance seems totally and irretrievably lost. Accordingly, we will never know for certain the identity of the special customer who, in about 1774, commissioned this splendid example of an early neoclassical dial from a country clockmaker working in a small Welsh market town. The mystery customer who ordered the 'Bald Behind' dial was probably

12. Rudolf Wittkower. 'Chance, Time and Virtue', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, 1 (1937-38), 313-321.



not a mere mathematician, teacher of geometry, or even freemason. Whoever he was, this customer must have been well educated, at least well-to-do if not actually wealthy, and fully abreast of the latest trends in artistic fashion and embellishment. Above all, undoubtedly, he was someone inspired and imbued with the ideals and the principles of neoclassicism. There could not have been many people fitting this description in Llanrwst and district during the 1770s. Gwydir Castle is the nearest 'big house' to Llanrwst, but it seems rather unlikely that the successors of the Wynns at Gwydir would have ordered the 'Bald Behind' dial, and there is no record of such a clock at Gwydir.

John Price of Bryneglwys and George Edwards of Mold both used the appellation 'Philomath' when they subscribed to an anthology of Welsh poetry in 1759,<sup>13</sup> but these two self-professed philomaths lived well outside John Owen's customer catchment area and accordingly it is most unlikely that either of them would have ordered the clock with the 'Bald Behind' dial.

Could the mystery customer perhaps have been John Lloyd (1749-1815) of Hafodunos (Denbighshire), lawyer and dilettante, dubbed 'The Philosopher'.<sup>14</sup> The mansion of Hafodunos was only five or six miles from John Owen's workshop in Llanrwst. Like John Owen's other special customer Peter Titley, whom he must have known, John Lloyd too claimed descent from the 'Fifteen Tribes' of North Wales, in Lloyd's case from the ancient families of Wigfair and Hafodunos. John Lloyd of Hafodunos was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1770. Elected FRS, and later FSA and FLS, he had a wide range of interests, and corresponded with the leading astronomers, engineers and antiquaries of his day: just the kind of man to order a clock with the 'Bald Behind' dial. He amassed a library of more than 10,000 items (books, manuscripts and maps) and a large collection of scientific apparatus. John Lloyd died in 1815, and his precious collections were sold off the following year. It took John Broster of Chester nearly a fortnight to sell all the collections by auction.

Lot No.	The items as described in the auction catalogue Bibliotheca Llwydiana
2187	A very fine, half second Time Piece, Bronze Dial, with three silver Circles, compound metallic <i>Smeatonian Pendulum</i> , in oak case (purchased from Mr. Smeaton's Observatory, by Mr. Lloyd) by Hartley, of York
2188	An eight Day Clock, with Day of the Month, handsome in-laid oak case, by Joyce
2189	An eight Day Chime Clock, with Day of the Month, Age of Moon, Minutes, Seconds, &c by Seddon. This clock repeats the hour at every quarter
2190	A very fine Astronomical Time Piece, with gilt Pendulum, dead beat, in oak case, by Holmes
2191	An Observatory Journeyman, in black wood case, by Holmes
2192	A very fine compound metallic Smeatonian Pendulum, with Glass Rod and Screw, by Troughton. This Pendulum is applicable to all kinds of Time Pieces
2193	An eight Day Time Piece, in oak case, by Griffiths
2194	A very fine thirty day Regulator [sic], on cast iron bracket, gilt Pendulum, dead beat, in oak case, by Holmes
2195	A small Time Piece, with a three circled Dial, one <i>Finger</i> shewing both <i>Hour</i> and <i>Minute</i> , without case or Pendulum, of a very curious and singular Construction
2196	Bed-room Repeater, for Watch, in oak case
2197	Sankey's Watch Alarm, in Japanned case, by Dale

Table 2. Details of the horological items in John Lloyd's collection.

13. Hugh Jones, *Dewisol Ganiadau*, (Amwythig [Shrewsbury], 1759).

14. *Dictionary of Welsh Biography Down to 1940* (Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion, 1959), p.583.





Fig. 7. The 'John Lloyd' dresser-clock, photograph Museum of Welsh Life.

metal urn decorates the clock hood, and a shell in the Sheraton manner is inlaid on the door. Essentially this dresser clock is a utilitarian piece of kitchen furniture, whereas the 'Bald Behind' dial would certainly have belonged to an imposing longcase clock, probably in a case of heavy Cuban mahogany (like the Titley clock), fully appropriate for the hall or library in a grand mansion such as Hafodunos.

Tempting though these speculations may be, they remain unproven. However, it is safe to say that, whoever he was, the man who ordered the 'Bald Behind' dial from John Owen was a very unusual individual, and this dial appears to be a unique 'one-off' piece of skilled craftsmanship. Of course, it is always dangerous to make such a claim, but, to the best of my knowledge, nothing comparable has ever previously been recorded in Wales, or indeed in the wider

British horological literature.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to Philip Havard (Havard & Havard Antiques, Cowbridge) who acquired the 'Bald Behind' dial in 2005 and realized its significance, and to Colin and Mary Brown whose book on the clockmakers of Llanrwst has proved quite invaluable. In writing this article I have been helped by many people: in discussions Colin Brown generously provided additional information on John Owen's clocks, and commented very perceptively on the Good Engraver and on the 'Bald Behind' dial, and several other experienced horologists, including Dr Ed Cloutman, Michael Grange, Brian Loomes, Dr John Robey, and especially Dr W. T. R. Pryce, have all made useful comments on this unusual dial.

The 1816 auction catalogue, entitled *Bibliotheca Llwydiana*,<sup>15</sup> lists all the books and manuscripts, and also all the scientific instruments in Lloyd's collection, including the very interesting list of eleven time-pieces, clocks, etc. (Table 2), but unfortunately not the 'Bald Behind' clock.

It is obvious from this list that John Lloyd of Hafodunos was a keen and discerning clock collector, aware of the latest technical developments in horology. Apparently he was also the owner of another quite famous clock not included in the above list. This was a dresser clock,<sup>16</sup> i.e. a Welsh dresser with an inbuilt clock, now in the National Museum of Wales (Fig. 7). The oak dresser contains a fairly unremarkable eight-day painted-dial clock (signed by Moses Evans, clockmaker of Llangernyw, very near Hafodunos), and the name 'John Lloyd 1797' is also painted on the dial within the chapter ring. Reflecting contemporary stylistic fashion, a

15. *Bibliotheca Llwydiana, a Catalogue of the Entire Library...*, National Library of Wales, X 2 997. B58. The horological items are listed on p.120 of the Catalogue.

16. This dresser clock, now in the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans (accession no. 58/122), has been described and illustrated several times, e.g. T. Alun Davies, *Y Ddresel Gymreig/The Welsh Dresser* (Cardiff: NMW, 1991) pp.43-4; C. & M. Brown, *The Clockmakers of Llanrwst* (1993) pp.214-5; and W. Linnard *Wales: Clocks & Clockmakers* (2003), pp.127-8.