

EDWARD EAST

His only lantern clock

by **Brian Loomes**, UK

The lantern clock is signed on the front fret 'Eduardus East Londini'. But no other genuine lantern clocks are known by East. The big question that arises is whether the clock really did come from the East workshops. And that can only be determined by establishing whether or not the signed front fret is original to this clock.

The clock appears to date from the 1670s. At that time Edward East was in his 70s, a very wealthy man with a massive workforce with perhaps in excess of 50 top craftsmen whose services he could call on. I doubt he spent much time at the workbench. A most interesting article by the late H A Lloyd, a man who knew a thing or two about clocks

and one of the greats of horological writers, was published in 1950 in the *HOROLOGICAL JOURNAL*, in which he remarks:

East's later work, both in watches and clocks, loses its individuality and is not appreciably different from the general fashions of the day. This would seem to indicate that as he grew older, productions bearing his name were the product of his workshops, rather than of his hands.



clocks (which, though I have not yet mentioned it, he regularly bought from other makers!). One commentator on this current clock observed that 'while this is a fine clock is in excellent condition it is quite a late example of rather a standard "London" pattern'.

Figure 1. The clock still with its wings as bought at auction recently. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

I know what he means but not the most carefully chosen wording. There is nothing 'standard' about this clock. It is *the only known* quarter-chiming two-handed standard size lantern clock with centre pendulum in existence!

To my mind those succinct phrases from Lloyd sum up this clock admirably. This is exactly what we would expect. The clock is absolutely consistent with that view,

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being a unique tour-de-force mechanically, yet it does not have any of the showy fancywork we might expect in East's finest

this from East, or from any other clockmaker in his envied position. It seems to me that he had this clock made by a contemporary lantern clock specialist such as John Ebsworth or Richard Ames or Edward Stanton and sold it under his own banner (marked on the fret). Some students claim they can recognise individual work from makers like these, but I think it unlikely they could recognise the origin of this clock. I certainly can't. 🔑



Figure 2 (above). This photograph was taken recently with its wings removed, as it looked when first sold from the East workshops. Probably then driven by rope rather than by a chain. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 3 (top centre). The front fret, which carries the signature of this celebrated maker, is original. It fits perfectly but is nudged slightly forward on the left by a badly-fitted pin, giving the impression of a gap. The two matching side frets are plain. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 4 (top right). This East signature on a pendulum clock is undisputedly original. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 5 (right). Rear view showing the original alarmwork and the side door with the wing removed, as it was when first made. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 6 (far right). Right hand view of the movement and door with the pendulum slot. Photograph by Geoff Cox.



I am told by a collector of serious experience that East would regularly buy his movements from other top makers of the day such as Ahasuerus Fromanteel and Sam Watson, to which he would sometimes fit his own dials—and he can recognise who made which so-named East movement! But not with lantern clocks, as there is only this one example and nothing else we can compare it with. Origin from East's own hand may be unlikely and to summarise we can say that uniqueness from the East workshop will have to do.

From a close inspection it seems apparent that the East company bought the lantern clock from a specialist and added their own frets. Another commentator remarked: 'Perhaps it's fair to say of the lantern clock that the signature is of a higher standard than the rest of the clock and by a different hand'. This is in fact what we would expect, reflects what others have said, and is what I am trying to express. Other reasons for this assumption will emerge, not least being the way the frets were fitted.

The signature on the front fret is of a very distinctive type having the unusual feature of what looks a bit like a flowing, curling capital E attached in front of a square-shanked upright to the square-form capital E. I recognised this as having seen it before on East clocks but seldom and it took me a long search to find an example. In all I could find only three East clocks signed this way, though there must surely be others. Amongst several colleagues I consulted, one, who is particularly interested in East, said he had only ever seen this engraving on East's clocks (and one other anonymous clock). So we can conclude that this very unusual style of engraved lettering is one known on genuine same-period pendulum clocks from the East workshop.

Could a faker know that over a century ago, and sufficiently well to replicate it? We know the clock had that same signed fret when photographed for an early edition

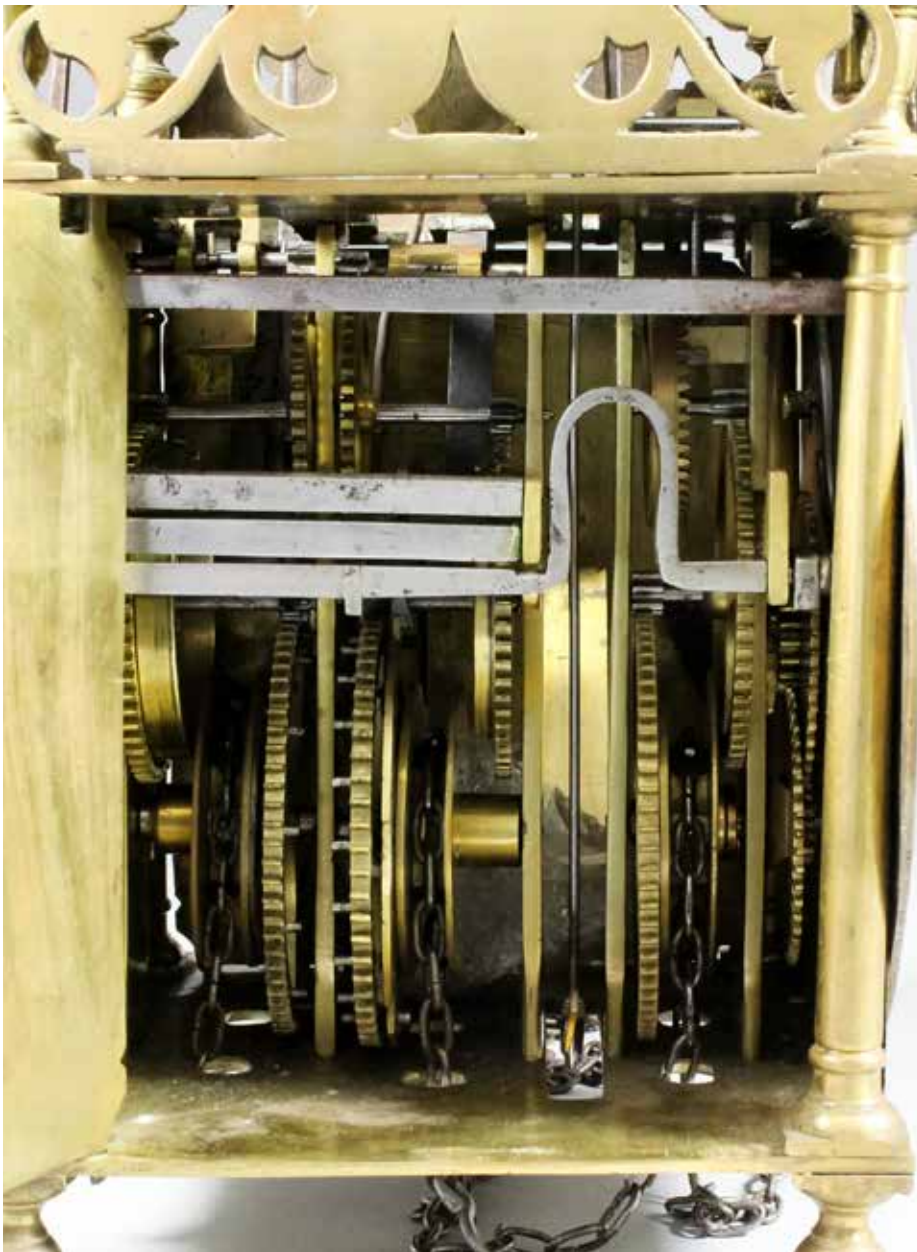


Figure 7 (left). Movement from the left showing the anchor-fluke-bob pendulum. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 8 (above). Front fret nudged forward showing empty pin hole (pin top corroded into lug), shortened left lug, normal right lug held by a conventional screw. Photograph by Geoff Cox.



of Britten around 1920—which edition I don't know as there were many. I think that is so unlikely as to be impossible. It follows that this must be a genuine East signature.

We can tell by examination of the frets, both in situ on the clock and, perhaps more importantly when removed for closer scrutiny, that they are a complete set of three identical castings all from the same mould, all with their attachment lugs in the same position. No question that someone switched the original front fret for the present one. They all three belong together. So they are either *all three* original to this clock or they are all not.

To assume they are replacements would be perverse. To imagine that anyone would be foolish enough to take a set of original East lantern clock frets from an East lantern clock (a kind of clock not known to exist except in this one example) and fit them to

a different unrelated clock of similar age ... well it would have to be someone deranged. The very idea is preposterous.

But casting madmen aside, we can prove those three frets, the centre one bearing East's original lettered signature, were always on this clock. But such things are impossible to prove, aren't they? Yes, they are—usually. We already know the frets are a set with an original signature. Amazingly it happens that in this case we *can* prove that the frets were always on this clock (apart from their being made from the same formula of brass!).

Frets conventionally attach by two square-headed screws, one through each of two lugs or feet that protrude from the back of the frets, the lugs almost always an integral part of the fret casting. If you try to change frets you will find that the screw holes don't match up, so one or more new



Figure 9 (below). Top of movement showing quarter-chime bell and the surprising variety of ingenious fret lug attachment methods. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 10 (right). The three frets from the back. Top to bottom—left, centre, right. Photograph by Geoff Cox.



holes are needed or the fret lugs need moving (by soldering on new ones in the right positions). Frets with lugs attached by soldering are always viewed with suspicion. Such alteration is always obvious, even if the redundant holes are filled with old brass by the best fakers in the world in an attempt to conceal them. With practice we can spot them!

On this clock we can tell the frets were fitted last in sequence, presumably by the East workshop. We can see how this worked. Having had the front fret beautifully engraved, the workman took his three frets and pricked out marks on his top plate to indicate the lug positions. He need only have used a single fret as all three were identical. Then he drilled a pilot hole at each mark prior to enlarging it to take a threaded nut. And—ooooops! He found two of the three frets would not fit happily. They fouled

against mechanical parts. I bet the air was blue with Anglo-Saxon oaths that bring to my mind that expression from the Nixon tapes—'expletive deleted'.

On the East clock the left fret shows exactly what I mean by original fitting. This is how almost all frets were intended to sit—two fret lugs each held by one screw. But the right fret had a nut impeding its right lug, and the front fret had its left lug hampered by the escapement cock. On each of these two frets one original lug had to be filed back to avoid the impediment.


The result is that with each of these two frets the original assembler had insufficient space to fit two screws and so instead for each fret used one screw and one pin, the pins fitting into the original plot holes. Amazingly the pilot holes are still there as evidence! The original pin tops remain today corroded into the brass lugs. I have 



Figure 11 (top left). Right fret with one screwed lug and one cut-back lug still retaining top of the corroded holding pin. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 12 (above). Back of front fret showing one screw and one pin. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 13 (top right). Detail of the cutback lug of the right fret. The remains of the top of the original brass pin can just be distinguished, circled in red. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

Figure 14 (right). The unusual and nicely-filed iron hands appear to be original. Photograph by Geoff Cox.

just occasionally seen frets deliberately attached entirely by pins instead of screws but that is very unusual and tended to happen on miniature clocks where top plate space was always limited. But in this instance the fret assembler was forced into it by circumstance.

This is wonderful evidence that fitting the frets came last in sequence of events. But

also it proves that these frets have always been on this clock, and therefore that the clock came from the East workshop. If you were contrary enough you could argue that a faker could have fitted the present frets (taken from some other East-named lantern clock, a type that we know he didn't make) using the original pin-plus-screw lug method by which other frets were once attached, but that would be to move into the realms of pure fantasy.

From the front a close observer can see some imperfection in what looks like a slight gap where the front fret fits against the left finial base. In fact it is not a gap but the left side of the fret is nudged slightly forward, giving the impression of a gap. It is apparent from examination that some less-than-careful clock mender of the past (which is not what Geoff called him) fitted a larger dial plate retaining pin, but reamed the hole off centre forward with the result that it pushed the fret forward about a millimetre on the left. So the otherwise excellent fit of the fret is spoiled.

The restorer in Geoff likes to see things 'right' and he was desperate to remove the later wings, replace the later anchor-shaped



pendulum bob with a regular pear-shaped one, and to correct the silly way the front fret sits awkwardly forward. I managed to restrain him, because I felt any sign of recent work, however innocent, might look suspicious to prejudiced eyes—like mine. I pointed out that to leave things untouched, exactly as they are, could do no harm and any remedial work could always be done later for the then owner. At least it seemed to me we needed to photograph and document the clock fully first. He agreed.

I should mention that, apart from the added wings and anchor-fluke pendulum bob, one or two items are thought to have been replaced through normal wear and tear. These are the drive chain, the chain pulley cheeks, the verge pallet arbor, front verge cock, and some pinions.

Geoff has now sold the clock. The buyer is himself a restorer with long experience.

He tells me he will leave things exactly as they are. The best part is, if someone does tidy up this clock at a later date, there is no question that it could be thought suspicious since we have documented in this article the present state of the only genuine lantern clock made by Edward East. 📷