



**Fig 1.** A nice mix of medium priced clocks. Bottom left a French Drum clock, probably marble. Centre right an American or German marble with a nice bronze figure on top. (sometimes an iron case) Extreme right Wooden clock, probably German. Above the Drum clock next to the kettle, another French marble. To left of figure a French Alabaster.

## The second in a three-part series Back to basics with clocks Part 2 - making a purchase

By Peter Wotton

In Part 1 we outlined the shapes and price ranges of the best known types. Now we are off to visit a major antique fair. This is always an exciting experience. The buzz of a fair, the range of goods displayed and the sheer breadth of technologies encompassed are quite overpowering to a lover of clocks. Each venue has its own aura. In a reasonably sized show you can expect to find both indoor and outdoor stands. It is often a feature of these types of fairs that some of the most interesting finds can appear under the least encouraging conditions! So what are we looking for?

Firstly, let us take a look at two marble clocks from separate stands, (with strike - two winding holes) see **Figs 2 & 3**. These pose most of the simple questions we should ask. For a start, most black marble clocks, as shown here, are made of slate. In these cases they are probably Belgian slate which was originally about a third of the price of marble. These examples are in the classical Hexastyle (six columns) design. (See Part 1 Fig 4.) and were made in large quantities and varying qualities. The asking price for **Fig 2** was £275, whereas that for **Fig 3** was £60. Both are French. See **Fig 4a** for hand style and **Fig 4b** for the position of the winding holes. At the turn of the century, marble clock cases and movements were available in catalogues on a sort of 'pick-and-mix' basis. The brass pillars and extra detail of **Fig 2** may indicate a slightly better quality case, but the real difference in price here relates to condition. **Fig 2** has been restored. **Fig 3** is as seen.

We are interested, so we start by checking both cases carefully for any external damage. We then open the back and examine the works from the rear. Check that pendulums and gongs, or bells are present and that the screwed holding-straps retain the mechanism properly. Take a superficial look at the state of the mechanism. Heavy-handed interference is an alarm signal! Go back to the front. Check that there is little or no cracking on the enamel dial. Or is it glossed paper which is cheaper?. If there is a visible Brocot escapement, (see Part 1, Fig 4ii) check for the condition of the jewels. Or are they steel which is cheaper?. Has the dial assembly, including the movement, been changed? Is it loosely or badly fitted? **Fig 3** appears to be complete and sound of case, while the mechanism, though filthy and blackened, merely seems to have been untouched for years. This is ideal. What are the costs going to be to put **Fig 3** in order? Firstly, a complete professional clean up of the case with simple overhaul of the mechanism will be over a £100. A colleague recently charged £180 for a similar clock. Immediately the price difference takes on a new perspective. What would the typical extras be for restoring **Fig 3**? Cleaning and polishing materials can be upwards of £10. In addition any serious faults will cost extra. A broken mainspring for example could be, say £20 before fitting. A missing pendulum could cost £10-£15 with fitting but it could be more. You may also have to consider a damaged pendulum suspension, repair of missing gear

teeth (typically caused by a past broken mainspring), escapement wear and so on. In addition, for **Fig 2** you should be expecting a six-month guarantee and, if possible, a written statement of the fact that it is complete and in good working order.

The best of the clocks illustrated in **Fig 5** are made of top quality porcelain and can cost a few hundred pounds. This example, though not of the highest quality, nevertheless has a certain charm. The price is very dependent on the visual quality but around £20 to £60 without a movement would be typical. There is no dial or mechanism but this is easy to rectify with an effective period drop-in-assembly (quartz) for around £30 complete which may be bought from Meadows & Passmore. (see below)

The clock in **Fig 6** is housed in a classical, late nineteenth century brass-framed, four-glass case. The usual movement would be French at a price around £600. The example shown, which was haggled down to £200, is an anniversary clock by Gustav Becker, who was a top German maker. The screwed disc pendulum is pre-1900. See *Anniversary Clocks* in the Shire Album series, No. 331.

Buried behind stand wires, **Fig 7** reveals a very popular style of French kitchen clock and usually with a good movement by Japy Freres. The surrounding decoration on the case varies in style. Prices are from £20 upwards depending on condition. This one is very dirty.

The range of wooden cased clocks illustrated in **Fig 8**, is typical of the period either side of the Second World War. Usually of excellent quality and typically English or German expect to pay about £40 with a strike and £60 with chime. These are a good investment but look for a case with artistic appeal. **Fig 9**, a French Napoleon Hat timepiece in brass, c1900, with pendulum window and the old-style swept-back base is a real gem. One of this quality is rare but if you like brass this is a real find. The price before haggling was £94.

Many makers offered versions of the delightful, weight-driven, American Ogee clock shown in **Fig 10**. Note the winding-hole positions, **Fig 4(c)**. Weight driven, these are well-made, accurate timekeepers. The price is according to quality of case, condition and quality of the decorative, lower, back-painted glass. But beware, there are a lot of poor quality examples to be seen. At the bottom end prices can be as low as £20, to over £300 in the top antique shops where provenance and guarantee can be expected.

**Supplier for clock assembly (Fig 5): see Meadows & Passmore catalogue. (01273-421321)**

**My thanks to Richard Holmwood of RH Clocks, Tunbridge Wells for help with Fig 7.**

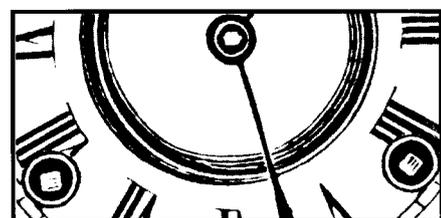
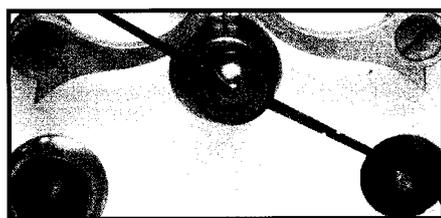
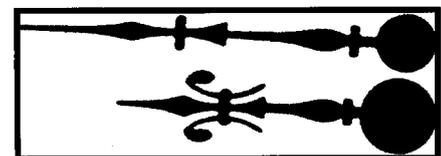
**In the final part of this three part series I will be looking at do-it-yourself restoration and how far you should go before calling in an expert.**



**Fig 2.** 'Marble' clock in the classical Greek Hexastyle (6 columns). This style, common to so many public buildings, was very popular in the mid nineteenth century.



**Fig 3.** Another classical Hexastyle marble clock and very similar to the one in Fig 2 but the case is of a lesser quality – for example, the columns are painted iron.



**Fig 4.** (a) These fleur-de-lis hands are the ones most commonly to be seen on a French clock, particularly the marbles. (b) The clock winding holes, bottom left and right of the illustration, are very close to the dial centre. This is typical of French clocks (c) In this example, the winding holes are well away from the centre of the dial in the number ring. This is typical of American and Black Forest clocks.



**Fig 5.** A charming porcelain clock case and with the right period décor a desirable example.



**Fig 6.** An Anniversary Clock by Gustav Becker in classical brass four-glass case. This example, late nineteenth century, is older than the ones normally found as may be seen by the movement fixing and the screwed disc pendulum (Ref. Anniversary Clocks, Shire Album No.331).



**Fig 7.** A popular French kitchen clock with a good movement by Japy Freres (Japy brothers). Types of case decoration are widely variable and this, together with condition, is an important selling point.



**Fig 8.** The wooden cased clocks shown here are typical of an era either side of the Second World War. Slowly becoming collectable, they are an excellent investment and usually have a superb mechanical movement. (they are also found with electric movements) The largest selling point is the artistic quality of the case.



**Fig 9.** A Napoleon Hat clock in brass. This is French, early, rare and a particularly nice example.



**Fig 10.** A superb American Ogee clock by Jerome. The back-painted glass plates, showing early American scenes, are a particularly important part of the price. Originally, they were an extremely popular, cheaply priced clock and possibly for those reasons have their detractors. Nevertheless they are well made and, being weight driven, are very accurate. They are available in three basic sizes and are either 30-hour or 8-days between winding. The one shown is 30-hour.