



*Schwab and Brandt triangular watch. Back view.*

## Masonic Clocks and Watches

at the Library and  
Museum of  
Freemasonry in  
Freemasons' Hall,  
London

by Steven L Jordan



*Dudley Watch Company of Pennsylvania watch. View of movement showing working tools.*



*Pocket watch showing polychrome dial.*



*The Neild watch, front.*



*Hogarth back of the Neild.*



*Front and back of the William Staples watch-clock.*



The Collection at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London forms a reference collection of considerable interest to collectors and researchers in this field.

A good example in the collection of a triangular case is the silver pocket watch by Schwab and Brandt of Geneva. The mother of pearl dial has stonemason's tools depicted at the hours bordering the legend 'love your fellow man, lend him a helping hand', a direct reference to the charitable aspect of freemasonry. The cast back depicts an altar between the twin columns of Jachin and Boaz, and bears London import marks for 1929. Unfortunately a number of triangular masonic watches of a dubious nature are reaching the market. Distinguishing features include poor quality mother of pearl dials and 'cast in' hallmarks.

The USA is represented by a 14ct gold open faced emblematic pocket watch by the Dudley Watch Company of Pennsylvania. The nineteen jewel keyless wind movements mounts are designed as stone masons tools. William W Dudley was an American freemason.

Also on display is a collection of eighteenth and early nineteenth century pair cased silver pocket watches. Many have emblematic polychrome enamelled dials and inscriptions. A good early nineteenth century example by Lambert Webb is dedicated to a Henry Jackson. A similar example of 1813 is by John Anderson of the Freemasons Arms, Limehouse. Britten's 'Old clocks & watches and their makers' lists John Anderson as a member of the Clockmakers' Company and a surveyor of excise.

An earlier example by Thomas Lithgous of Manchester bears the monochrome arms of the first Grand Lodge on its dial, above the legend 'In the Lord is all our Trust'. The watch represents a fine example of the watchmaker's art. The verge movement includes fusee, turned pillars and cock pierced with masonic emblems whilst the outer case is composed of pique work tortoiseshell. It was the jewellers' skill in piercing and engraving the individual jewels worn by the Freemasons during the eighteenth century that lent itself so well to the decoration of watch cocks. The Collection includes many examples, both housed in movements and loose.

In my opinion the finest watch in the collection is the late eighteenth century pair case pocket watch by James Neild. Ambrose Heal records Neild in his book 'The London Goldsmiths 1200-1800.' as a jeweller, goldsmith and sword cutler at No.4 St. James's Street from 1770-1794. Heal adds "James Neild, the prison reformer, made a fortune as a jeweller in St. James's Street. He was the father of the eccentric character, James Camden Neild, who left his fortune, valued at £500,000, to Queen Victoria. This particular watch has an emblematic monochrome dial depicting masonic symbols. The verge movement has tapered turn pillars and a foliate pierced cock with classical urn motif. Sadly the repeating strike on bell mechanism had been later soldered into a fixed position. The movement is housed within a silver and gilt-metal foliate scroll pierced case, with grotesque mask and flowerhead motifs, none of which is of masonic significance. However the back of the case, signed by Neild, bears an exquisite paste set Grand Stewards jewel. Neild was a member of the Grand Stewards Lodge in 1773.

The watch-clock was popular during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and was generally hung in the bed chamber. A pair cased watch-clock by William Staples has one of the most elaborate movement and case of its type I have seen. This type was large in order to be seen clearly in a bedchamber or carriage. A large white enamel dial displays its multi-functions. The chapter ring represents stop/start seconds within which are six subsidiary dials for hours, day/date, power reserve, chime, moon age and strike. The inner gilt-metal case is finely foliate scroll pierced. The back is formed by the largest polychrome enamelled plaque in the collection which depicts the twin columns of Jachin and Boaz, surmounted by a pomegranate and globe, with, to the fore, a squared pavement with working tools. In the background there is a representation of Solomon's Temple above which an aperture reveals a revolving line of processional Chinese figures. The secondary 'bronze' lacquered case has a chinoiserie scene in high relief.

**The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, London WC2B 5AZ. Telephone for opening and tour times: 020 7831 9811.**