

A LABELLED LIVERPOOL CLOCK CASE

Christopher Gilbert

Clocks, like barometers and musical instruments, have traditionally been treated separately by furniture historians and there is evidence that, at least in London, clock cases were made in specialist workshops — successive editions of *The Cabinet-Makers' London Book of Prices* certainly omitted them from the record of furniture in common production. However, in the provinces, especially it seems in the north, clock cases were provided by general cabinet makers; Books of Prices issued by masters and journeymen in the Lancashire towns of Liverpool, Preston and Bolton included costings for 'square head' and 'arch head' clock cases, while an article by Susan Stuart in the first volume of our Journal discussed cases made by Gillows of Lancaster.

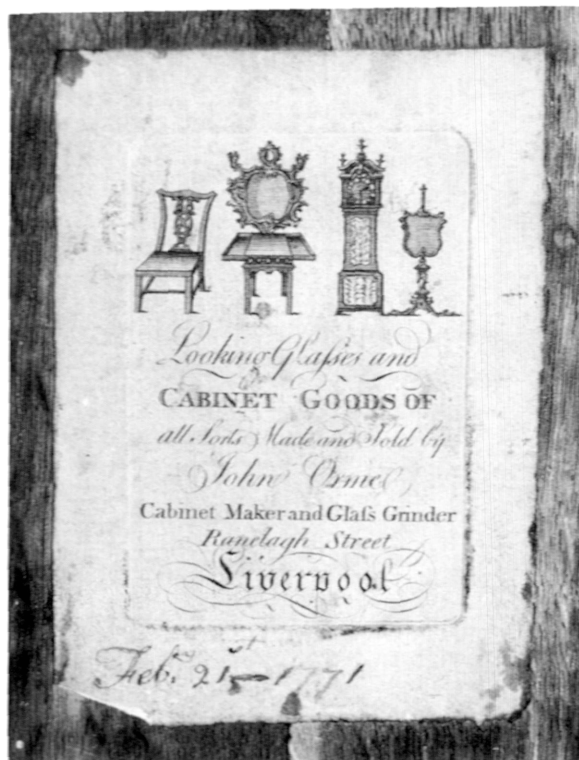
Clock cases bearing a maker's label are quite rare, so drawing attention to a fine Liverpool example needs, I trust, no defence (Fig. 1). The printed paper trade label pasted inside the door is of capital interest because it not only carries an informative text 'Looking Glasses and | CABINET GOODS OF | all Sorts Made and Sold by | John Orme | Cabinet Maker and Glass Grinder | Ranelagh Street | Liverpool'; but is also inscribed in ink with the date 'Feby 21st 1771' and features five diminutive pieces of furniture including a long-case clock (Fig. 2). The fire screen is a conflation of two designs in the second edition of *Genteel Household Furniture in the Present Trade* (c. 1765), plate 91, and the dressing table is a simplified version of a model illustrated on plate 34. A precise source has not yet been identified for the chair or looking glass, but the clock conforms to a familiar Lancashire design type.

No other furniture bearing John Orme's trade label has so far been recorded and little is known about his career except that he was apprenticed to the prominent Liverpool cabinet maker Charles Charles, became free by servitude in 1765 and set up business on his own account initially in King Street and then at 9 Ranelagh Street.¹

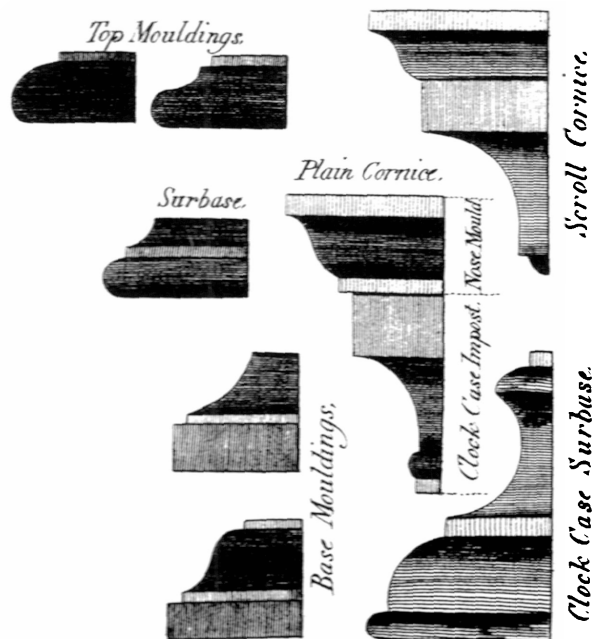
The ambitiously styled clock case expresses a strong Lancashire personality and certain design features display a distinctive Liverpool character. The complex profile of the scrolled pediment enriched with dentils, carved and gilt rose terminals and infill panel painted blue-black bearing rococo tendrils is typical of the region (Fig. 4). Decorative glass panels were a popular alternative. The boxed superstructure to the hood supporting turned side finials and a central platform with a carved lip are further evidence of high quality. The impost at the head of the trunk is elaborately banded with coved Gothic arcading between Greek and Chinese frets. The double-fluted front pillars on the hood and quarter columns on the body are standard elements on upmarket Liverpool clock cases of this period, but the canted and rusticated pedestal (Fig. 5) is a notably luxurious feature.² Other refinements include the way in which the door and pedestal are faced with two sheets of matched veneer so that the richly figured mahogany creates a balanced effect. The back-board and door are of oak with solid mahogany sides and pine inner structures. The eight-day movement is signed 'Jon Drinkwater|Liverpool', recorded as a watchmaker at 34 Pool Lane in 1777, and the arch is engraved 'Time Shew's the way of Life's Decay'.



1. Clock by J. Drinkwater, Liverpool, 1771. Ht. 96 in.



2. Case-maker's label inside door



3. Liverpool Book of Prices (1805)



4. Detail of hood



5. Detail of rusticated base

Finally, it is instructive to compare the cabinetwork with two specifications and an illustration of design details (Fig. 3) in the *Supplement to the Cabinet and Chair Prices Settled Between the Master and Journeymen Cabinet Makers, in Liverpool* dated 15 March 1805.³ Interestingly, the profiles of the 'Clock Case Surbase', the 'Scroll Cornice' and 'Base Mouldings' (lower) exactly correspond to the published diagrams despite the thirty-five year time gap — a discovery which underlines the conservatism of provincial design attitudes. Both specifications in the *Liverpool Supplement* are reprinted below because they serve as a valuable source of contemporary terminology and it is rewarding to try and relate the cost analysis for optional extras to features on John Orme's distinguished clock case.

REFERENCES

1. G. W. Beard and C. G. Gilbert eds., *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers* (1986).
2. B. Loomes, *Lancashire Clocks and Clockmakers 1975*, contains useful information on regional clock case designs. A clock of c. 1775 by Robert Anderson, Liverpool in the Noel Terry collection at Fairfax House, York, has rusticated quoins.
3. Liverpool Reference Library contains a possibly unique copy of the *Supplement*, I am grateful to them for supplying a photocopy of this 32 pp. publication.

APPENDIX
CLOCK CASE, No. 1

	£.	s.	d.
WITH square head, two pillars in the do. quarter columns in the body, with frieze and astragal, the pedestal canted, top of door square with hollow corners; plain cove impost, and Tuscan surbase, as in plate of mouldings	1	2	0

EXTRAS.

For pitch, open, and scroll pediment, *see Do. in London*

<i>Book.</i>			
Fluting body columns	0	1	0
Reeding do.	0	1	4
Fluting head columns, each	0	0	6
Reeding do.	0	0	8
Half pillars in front of head fluted, each	0	0	6
If do. be reeded, each	0	0	7
Do. at back of head fluted, each	0	0	3
If do. be reeded, each	0	0	4
Whole columns in the body fluted	0	3	0
If do. be reeded	0	3	6
Veneering breaks for whole columns	0	0	8
Do. plinths, each side	0	0	1
Do. cants, each	0	0	2
Veneering rails above and below door	0	0	3
Slipping or veneering stiles	0	0	2
Square pannel under door with quarter round	0	1	3
Mitering mahogany round do. to form quarter round	0	0	4
Veneering do.	0	0	3
Do. door	0	0	10
Do. pedestal	0	0	8
Joint in veneer of door	0	0	6
Do. in pedestal	0	0	4
Veneering door frame cross way	0	0	10
Do. feather banded	0	1	4
Architrave, extra	0	0	3
Frame for pedestal, when a raised pannel	0	0	9
A raised pannel with quarter round	0	1	0
Hollow corners in do. each	0	0	3
Moulding on front and sides between door and pannel, broke over the plinths	0	1	6
Hollows in the head, each	0	0	6
Veneering body sides, each	0	0	8
Do. Pedestal do. each	0	0	4
Do. head do. each	0	0	4
Do. box sides, each	0	0	3
Clamping door, each clamp	0	0	3
Joints in door or pedestal, each	0	0	1
Moulded brackets	0	0	6
Moulded French brackets, extra	0	0	6
French feet and commode base, veneer'd	0	1	6

Small moulding or band above caps, and under base of columns, each	o	o	3
Small pedestals capp'd with veneer, (top of head) each	o	o	1½
O G corners at top of door (middle part straight) worked with quarter round	o	o	3
Do. with hollow middle, worked with do.	o	o	6
Do. with double O G middle, worked with do	o	o	9
Mitering mahogany round door to form quarter round	o	o	6
Oiling and polishing	o	o	9

CLOCK CASE, No. 2.

WITH arch head, three wood friezes for painting, form'd by margin of veneer, laid on the front board, two pillars in the head, quarter columns in the body, with frieze and astragal; the pedestal canted, top of door square, with hollow corners; plain cove impost, Tuscan surbase, and the moulding of scrolls to be as in plate of ditto, a neck mould instead of a dome, glass door, either veneered cross way, or worked quarter round	I	12	o
---	---	----	---

EXTRAS.

A moulded dome pierced through to form leaves	o	I	6
Three glass friezes in the head	o	o	6
Forming friezes by a string grooved in each	o	o	8
A plain taper key-stone	o	o	I
A key-stone moulded, with double O G	o	o	3
Banding and stringing, <i>see London Book.</i>			
All other extras, <i>see No. 1 Clock Case.</i>			