

# An 18th-century Mahogany Barometer

I wondered if readers may have any thoughts or information on a mahogany barometer that I came across earlier this year.

It is almost twenty years since I first wrote to Bill Cotton with a query on regional furniture. Like many of us who have written to Bill, a friendly and informative reply was duly received, and it was this reply that was to continue my interest in the subject. In his letter, Bill made me aware of



The barometer case after the removal of the mercury tube, showing the printed paper scale of Joseph Testi

being cautious in attributing the cases of longcase clocks to the name or place on the dial. Over the years I have noted a few clock cases that have clearly been made in a different area to that of the movement and I am forever thankful for the encouraging and timely advice from Bill.

This wall-hanging barometer dates to the second half of the 18th century and follows the northern tradition of the case resembling the form of a longcase clock. The paper scale inside the glazed hood is printed 'JOSEPH TESTI FECIT YORK'. It seemed at the first instance that this was a 'signed' York barometer, with the possibility that the case may have been made in the city too.

When disassembling the barometer for conservation work, the mechanism and tube were removed to allow access to the paper scale and I realised that there was a second paper scale underneath. These scales were removed and sent to Richard Hawkes of Artworks Conservation,

who worked on them to identify a third paper, this third scale being pasted to the back of the others.

Richard's work revealed that the top-most scale, inscribed 'JOSEPH TESTI', covered an earlier scale inscribed 'Manticha fecit LONDON'. It is likely that both Testi and Manticha were of Italian descent. Both names are listed in *English Barometers 1680–1860* by Nicholas Goodison (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1977). However, the third paper scale, which may be the original, is more rococo in style and certainly the earliest of the three. It is inscribed 'Printed & Sold by John Sadler Liverpool'. I have found no reference to a John Sadler of Liverpool making or supplying barometers. There is however the John Sadler of Liverpool who printed on ceramics up until his retirement in 1770. Could this be an example of Sadler diversifying from printing on ceramics?

I would be interested to hear from anyone who may be able to shine further light or offer any suggestions on this barometer, the reason for the three paper scales and its possible maker.

*Andrew Cox-Whittaker*  
*acoxwhittaker@gmail.com*