

A surfeit of Richars

William Sergeant has a clock by John Richars of Wisbech: he asked me to trace any connection to John Stabler's note (RFS NL 75, p. 8) about the Widow Richars, Upholster, and her public argument with Mr Marlow. Those exchanges set out in the *Norwich Gazette* were also in the *Stamford Mercury*, which fired a last salvo on 1 August 1734:

Peregrina Richars, Widow of Mr. Wm. Richars, late of Wisbeach in the Isle of Ely and County of Cambridge, Upholster, continues on the Business there, and has laid in a fresh Stock of Goods of all Sorts, and will sell the same as



Clock made by John Richards (1700-?) of Wisbech. *Photo William Sergeant*

cheap as in London, (Land Carriage only excepted.) And whereas Thomas Marlow having in a late Stamford Mercury advertised that there is great want of an Upholster in Town, she keeping neither an Apprentice nor Journeyman : There are to satisfy the Publick, that there is a Person who lives in the said Town and serv'd his Apprenticeship in London, makes Beds, Seates, and Easie Chairs up after the best Manner and newest Fashion, whom she imployes upon any Occasion, her Business not allowing her to keep a Man constantly, and besides (using his own Words) the Author is desired to render Part of the Advertisement into English, it appearing a little Irish at present, and not to be understood, so that the Country may know what he meant (if he had any Meaning) by inserting and assuring to so many Falsities ; but it would be more Credit for the Author to advertise the Truth in the next Mercury, by inserting, That whereas there was a Note at the Bottom of an Advertisement in the Stamford Mercury of the 18th Day of July, that an Upholster could not fail of good Business, and for which I give them my Assurance, (which no Body that knows me will question) tho' I know the same to be false, and that there was formerly four or five Woollen Drapers and Mercers in the said Town, which did all well at the Business, tho' to my certain Knowledge some of them does full as well in their Graves, and are to some Purpose as much at their Libertie, as they were before they died. That the House wherein the Widow Richars now lives in stands convenient for a Linnen-Draper, but the Person that has the Disposal of the said House is a Linnen-Draper, and lives next Door, and that there is never an Undertaker in the Town but Mr Marlow, and that the said Advertisement and Note is more Malice than Matter, and Passion and Resentment was the only Inducement that made me write such Nonsense, and that a good Tenant is only wanted for the said House.

She was almost incoherently cross!

William Richars (1700–1732), son of Matthew (1662–1713) and Sarah Coult (1664–1716) was baptised on 14 November 1700 at Walpole St Peter,⁶ apprenticed on 17 March 1715 for £40 to Robert Preston,⁷ Upholder, of Wisbech, married Peregrina Brown at Ellough, Suffolk in 1723, made his will on 22 February 1732,⁸ was buried on 1 March 1732,⁹ and his probate was proved by Peregrina (d. 1773) on 4 April 1733.

The link to the clockmaker? John Richars (1700–?), son of Valery (1675–726), brother of William's father Matthew, (making William and John 1st cousins) and Mary Falkner (1675–?) was baptised on 14 November 1700 at Walpole St Peter, apprenticed on 30 August 1715 to Thomas Loftus, Clockmaker of Wisbech.¹⁰ From the *Stamford Mercury*, 21 September 1732:

John Richars, Clock-maker, late of London, is now settled at Wisbeach in the Isle of Ely and County of Cambridge; where Gentlemen may be supplied with all sorts of Clocks and Watches after the newest and best Manner; likewise have old Watches or Clocks mended with the utmost Expedition.

Julian Parker

⁶ Norfolk Record Office: nro_register_bills/at/walpole_st_peter

⁷ National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Collection: Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books: Series IR 1; Class: IR 1; Piece: 44

⁸ National Archives; Kew, Surrey, England; Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, Series PROB 11; Class: PROB 11; Piece: 658



above Detail of the clock face showing John Richars' signature and the town given as 'Wisbich'. *Photo William Sergeant*

below Detail of the inlay on the clock door. *Photo William Sergeant*

⁹ FHL Film No. 1040587

¹⁰ National Archives of the UK (TNA); Kew, Surrey, England; Collection: Board of Stamps: Apprenticeship Books: Series IR 1; Class: IR 1; Piece: 44; according to Brian Loomes, Thomas Loftus was the first maker to work in Cambridgeshire from about 1690 to 1718 (and probably later, given John Richars's apprenticeship date).