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My Black Forest Clock

Scrap It or Save It?

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I have several boxes full of clock bits in my loft, many being the wreckage of my youth. Some of them contain just parts for spares, but some have the remnants of complete clocks which were put away for another day, with no idea when that day may be.

This is the story of one of them: a Black Forest timepiece with an alarm. The prompt here is the dial, which was in reasonable condition and needed only some gentle retouching by Robert, **Figure 1**. This dial is quite interesting, being of the shield variety rather than the 'English dial' type. According to E. J. Tyler, these shield dials were more popular in their place of origin than in the UK.

Black Forest clocks are like Marmite: you either love them or hate them. I like them and admire the design because, although they can appear to be quite crude, they are accurately made. It is easy to imagine that something that is roughly finished is also inaccurate in some way, but this is not my finding at all. The drilling for the lantern pinions on this clock is very well executed and it would be difficult to do any better today, even with supposedly more accurate machines. The wheels are cut and mounted up quite well and they run sweetly together with their pinions, demonstrating that the sizing and depthing of each pair was done properly..

I have had this Black Forest clock for nearly 50 years, but I had done little with it apart from dismantling it and making some dubious modifications in my early days. Both the movement and the wooden frame had been in pieces in a shoe box for most of this time, but after spotting the clock in my loft, I decided to get it back into working condition. Normally, these clocks project from the wall a long way because the trains are behind each other. To reduce this, I had removed the alarm train, cut off the rear of the frame and made a new slot in the base for the pendulum. We do these things when we are young and think we know better than the makers!

I had to make up my mind whether to rebuild it with or without the alarm. One reason for the dilemma was that I could not find some of the alarm train parts. Perhaps they did not come with the clock when I was given it. I did not want to spend too long on the project, so some quick thinking had to be done. I decided to reinstate the alarm train as original and keep what remained of the frame.

The slot which I had originally cut to bring the pendulum forward was filled with a new piece of beech, as can be seen in **Figure 2**. The pendulum originally hung in front of the original back board which was in contact with the wall. To get over this problem, I made a new back board with pillars, like earlier Black Forest clocks, which I attached to the original frame. I used plywood for this as I did not have a piece of



Figure 1. The retouched dial. (The new alarm setting disc has yet to be engraved).

beech suitable for the job. The pendulum now hangs between the new backboard and the wall.

The new parts which had to be made were the alarm great wheel and its ratchet wheel, click and click spring and sprocket, **Figure 3**, and the alarm setting disc with its associated parts, **Figure 4**.

The bell was also lost and a suitable diameter one was found and fitted along with the wire levers, **Figure 5**. Now, apart from making a pendulum, all is ready to go. I did eventually find the weight which came with the clock, but it was much too heavy. With a temporary pendulum from another clock, it now runs on one and a half pounds.

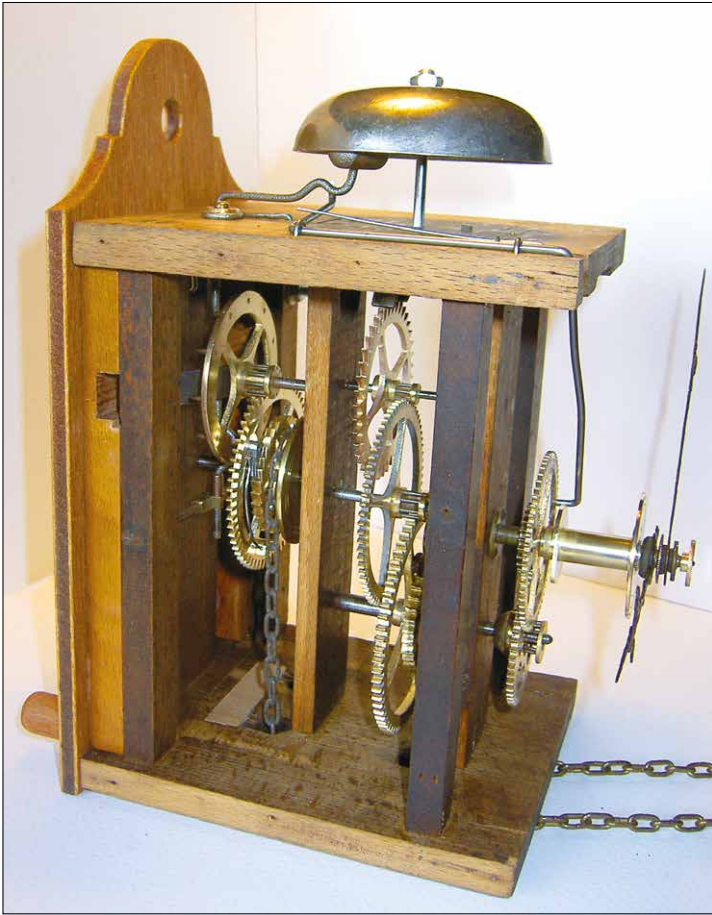


Figure 2. The restored movement.



Figure 3. The new alarm great wheel, ratchet wheel, click, click spring and sprocket.



Figure 4. The new alarm setting disc.



Figure 5. The replacement bell and new wire levers.