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The Padbury Collection of Watchpapers

Primary Source Material and Some Nineteenth Century Watchmakers

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Figure 1. A watchpaper from the middle of the nineteenth century issued by Henry Tyrell working at 24 Castle Street, Hastings. This is not part of the Padbury collection but is from a watch in the Beresford Hutchinson collection, also held at Upton Hall. In typically worn and stained condition, it is shown in its intended home: the outer casing of a pair cased pocket watch.

There are many items of ‘lesser’ interest in the Institute’s collection, one of them being the framed collection of 70 watchpapers that has hung high up in the main hall of Upton Hall for as long as I can remember. Though difficult to get near enough to look at properly, such printed ephemera is most definitely worthy of greater attention.

Watchpapers, in effect miniature tradecards, started to be used in the early eighteenth century and were inserted in the outer case of a pair cased pocket watch, **Figure 1**. Originally created by the watchmaker/retailer, they initially contained an equation-of-time table used for setting the watch to the correct mean time from a sundial. They were also an easily viewable advertisement for the seller, who would have been keen to see the watch come back to them for servicing – a far more frequent event in the days of minimally refined animal oils. The idea quickly caught on amongst those who serviced rather than made watches and, by the end of the eighteenth century, such papers were the norm, so much so, pair cased watches often ended up with many papers inside.

The main reason that such papers are now rightly considered as important historical documents is because ‘primary source’ material, such as watchpapers, get us closer than anything

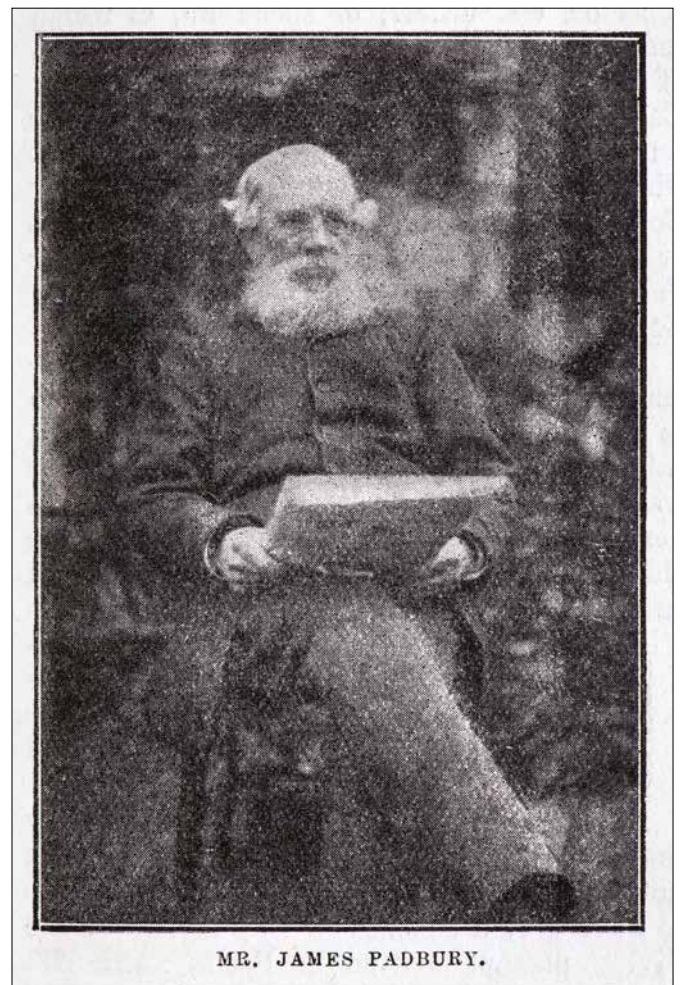


Figure 2. Image of James Padbury (1816-1898). From the three-page obituary of Padbury by John James Hall that was published in the October 1898 issue of the *Horological Journal*.

else that survives to the individuals named. Present day ‘secondary sources,’ such as these words of mine, will contain opinions that should always be under review and conclusions that must be challenged and corrected as necessary. Primary source material is, however, different and truly important for anyone keen to have a better understanding of past events.

This is not to say that such material should always be believed. Being ‘economical with the truth’, for whatever reason, is not a modern trait and promotional material such as these miniature tradecards are always likely to contain aspirations as much as the reality of a past working life.



Figure 3. A decorative paper issued by John Goater working in Winchester. Dating from circa 1830, it features a fine birds-eye view of the city, in addition to stating that he is capable of working on chronometers as well as watches and clocks.



Figure 4. Another decorative paper from around 1830, this example featuring popular images relating to Father Time. Issued by Thomas Hayes working in Camden Town, London, it also includes instructions on how to use the Tompion-type regulator found on most watches of the period.



Figure 5. An example using Masonic symbolism on a watchpaper issued by J Wickcom working in St Mary's Street, Portsmouth. One of many watchmakers not recorded in Baillie, Britten or Loomes, this late Georgian paper is also rare as it contains the name of its engraver. Just under the eye it is signed: Gardner Sc[ulpt]. Note also the rather haphazard cutting of the paper, it neither being centred nor very round. Supplied mostly on square-ish pieces of paper off-cuts by the printers, the cutting to shape for the size of case must often have been hastily done given that so many papers show a similar lack of attention.

That said, such papers do provide just about the only lens that we have to understand better what that life was like for the majority of watchmakers – more about that in the captions to the individual papers.



Figure 6. Enlarging on his chronometer association, this paper was issued by the watchmaker William Hough working in the important seafaring city of Portsmouth at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It clearly states his ability to work on 'Marine and Pocket Chronometers for ascertaining the Longitude at Sea'.

The Padbury collection was donated to the Institute in 1937 by John James Hall FRAS (1846–1941), an Honorary Fellow of the Institute and a frequent contributor to the letters page of the *HJ*. Hall was apprenticed to James Padbury and almost certainly mounted and framed the papers himself, but thankfully also clearly states the collections origin.

Given Hall's past, the collection will have come to him from James Padbury, **Figure 2**, the last of a family of watchmakers



Figure 7. A paper issued by William Lasseter working in Havant, Hampshire. Dating from the middle of the nineteenth century, it describes all the different types of work undertaken (chronometers, watches, clocks, music boxes, jewellery), as well as declaring the fact of his London background, having previously worked for 'Messrs Upjohns, 5 Chandos St, London'.

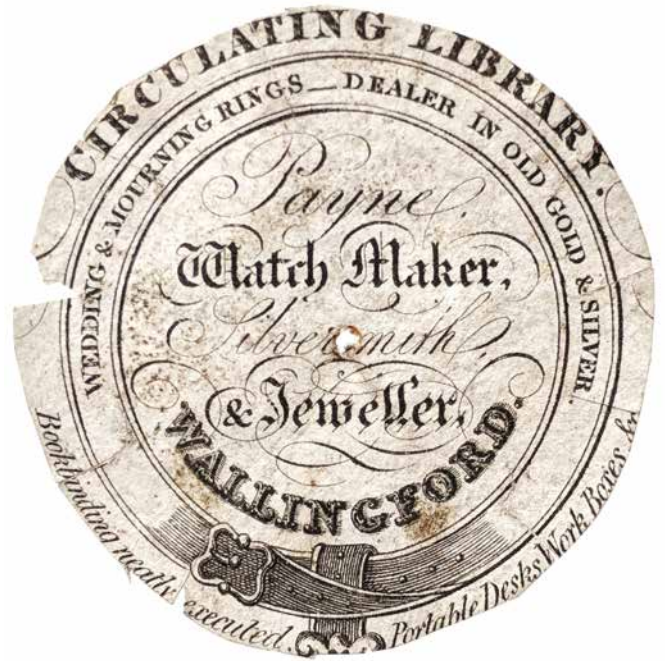


Figure 8. A mid-nineteenth century paper issued by Payne, a father and son (I believe) watchmaking firm in Wallingford, Berkshire. As well as the usual varieties of Silversmith and Jeweller, they offer the additional services of a Circulating Library, allowing customers to borrow books, as well as undertaking orders for bookbinding and selling portable desks and work boxes.



Figure 9. Watchpaper issued by Daniel Ray, a well-known watch and clockmaker based at Battle in Sussex. Dating from the first half of the nineteenth century it includes a poem that was often used on papers at this period. It reads: 'On a watch. Could but our tempers move like this machine, not urg'd by passion nor delay'd by spleen, and true to nature's regulating power, by virtuous acts distinguish ever hour, then health & joy would follow as they ought, the laws of motion and the laws of thought, sweet health to pass the present moments o'er, and everlasting joy when time shall be no more.'



Figure 10. An interesting mid-nineteenth century paper issued by Charles McDowell working in Kensington, London. It also reads: 'Inventor of the helix lever & revolving endless gravitating time piece, without springs, chains, barrels, fusees & keys, & quiescent armillary escape'.

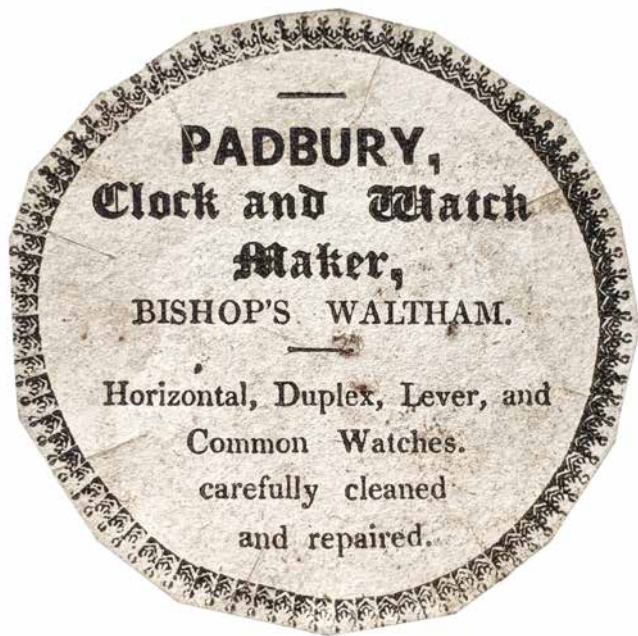


Figure 11. A mid-nineteenth century paper issued by the Padbury firm, probably from the time of John Padbury. As with all these papers shown, they may well have manuscript dates on the back that would allow for accurate dating. These are not now viewable having been glued onto a backing sheet.



Figure 12. The only foreign paper in the collection, this one issued by the English born George Savage and his son who left the UK to work in Montreal. In doing so they founded one of the most important watch and jewellery businesses in Canada. Dating from the second quarter of the nineteenth century it clearly states the fact that they were makers (Savage invented the two-pin form of detached lever escapement) as well as being importers of clocks and watches, etc.



Figure 13. A watchpaper issued by E Gilbert working from 437 High Street, Portsmouth, another of the many names that have not yet found themselves into the published lists. As can be read, Gilbert is not shy in promoting himself, even calling into doubt the honesty of anyone who does not share his own high opinion of his abilities.



Figure 14. The last paper shown was not issued by a watchmaker but is a fine late Georgian example of the watchpaper-type tokens that we know were available from print sellers and stationers of the time. This is in fact a rare example of a 'Frost Fair' paper. These were sold from special booths that were popular on the few occasions that the Thames was known to have frozen over; this example is dated 5 February 1814.

Checklist of the 70 Framed Padbury Watchpapers:

D'ANGELO & CADENAZZI. 69 High St, Winchester. Watch & Clock Makers. Dealers in French Fancy Goods

BAKER. Maryport St, Devizes. Clock & Watch Maker

BRAMBLE, Joseph, successor to the late W Bramble. 407 Oxford St, London. Watch & Clock Maker

BROWN. 161 High St, Southampton. Watch & Clock Maker

BROWN, Jas. 56 George St, Portman Square, London. Watch & Clock Maker

BUDGEN. Croydon. Clock & Watch Maker

BYWORTH. 12 Bridge St, Lambeth. Watch & Clock Maker

CARTER. Poultry Cross, Salisbury. Clock & Watch Maker

COOK. Whitechurch. Watch & Clock Maker & Engraver

CURRIE. Church St, Romsey – from London. Watch and Clock Maker

DAVIS. Emsworth. Watch & Clock Maker, Silversmith, &c

DUMBELL. New Scotland Rd, Liverpool. Watch & Clock Maker

EAMES, H. Alresford. Watch & Clock Maker

ELMS. 11 Pike(?) St, Devonport. Watch Maker

FAIREY, Richard. 150 Tooley St, London. Watch & Chronometer Maker

GILBERT, E. 437 High St, Portsmouth. Professor and Workman in all Branches of Watch and Clock Work

GOATER, John. Winchester. Chronometer, Watch & Clock Maker

GOATER, John. in the Square, Winchester – from London. Watch & Clock Maker, Silversmith & Jeweller

GRAVE, G. 271 Whitechapel. Watch & Clock Maker. Two copies

GREGORY. Basingstoke. Watch and Clock Maker. Music & Musical Instruments Sold

GUY. Shaston. Watch & Clock Maker, Jeweller, &c. Appraiser and Auctioneer

HAWKINS, successor to Mr MORSE. 9 High St, Southampton. Watch & Clock Maker, Silversmith, &c

HAYES, Thos. Camden Town. Clock & Watch Maker

HAYWARD, T H. Winchester. Clock & Watch Maker

HEADWORTH. 55 St John St, West Smithfield. Watch & Clock Maker

HOBBINS, Wm. Portsea. Watch Maker

HOUGH, Wm. 120 Hight St, Portsmouth. Clock Maker. Marine and Pocket Chronometers for ascertaining the Longitude at sea...

HUBBARD. Risbygate St. Bury St Edmunds – from London. Watch & Clock Maker

HUNT. Market Place, Salisbury. Clock & Watch Maker

IRISH. 43 High St, Portsmouth. Clock & Watch Maker

JACKMAN, Wm. High St, Fareham. Watch Maker, Jeweller and Engraver

JAMES, E. Farnham. Clock & Watch Maker, Jeweller, &c

JONES, J. Tenby. Watch & Clock Maker

KIDDLE. Sherborne. Clock, and Watch Maker, Jeweller &c

KNIGHT. Wickham. Clock & Watch Maker

KNOWLES, son in law to the late E GOLDSWORTHY. Royal Hospital Row, Chelsea. Clock & Watch Maker

LASHMORE. 39 High St, Southampton. Watch & Clock Maker

LASSETER, W. Havant. Watch & Clock Maker – from Messrs Upjohns, London.

MANNING, J. East St, Chichester – from London. Watch and Clockmaker, Silversmith. Jeweller & Cutler

MARRIOTT. Lymington. Watch & Clock Manufacturer

MARSH. Market Place Dover – from London. Chronometer, Clock & Watch Maker

McDOWALL, C. 21 Church St, Kensington. Watch & Clock Maker

MOORE, J C. 25 Warwick St, Worthing. Watch Maker and Jeweller

MORPIE, T W. 9 Essex Quay, Dublin. Watch, Clock, Time Piece Maker, Jeweller & Silver Smith

NEWLAND. High St, Alton. Watch & Clock Maker

NIACKALLS, Thos. High St, Reigate. Chronometer, Watch & Clock Maker, Jeweller & Engraver

NOBLE. 12 Union St, Bath. Watch & Clock Maker

PADBURY. Bishop's Waltham. Clock & Watch Maker

PAYNE. Wallingford. Watch Maker, Silversmith & Jeweller

PEGLER. High St, Southampton. Clock & Watch Maker, Silversmith, &c

PHILLIPS. Market Place, Salisbury. Watch & Clock Maker

PLASKETT. 18 Gr? St Bath. Clock & Watch Maker

PLOWMAN, J. West St, Chichester. Watch & Clock Maker

PRATT, John. Epping. Clock & Watch Maker

RAY, Danl. Battle, Sussex. All sorts of Watches made and sold by...

ROW. Alton, Hants. Clock & Watch Maker

SAVAGE, G & Son. Montreal. Makers and Importers of Clocks, Watches, Gold & Silver Ware

SHAW. Lymington. Watch & Clock Maker, Jeweller & Silversmith

SIMSON. Southampton. Watch & Clock Maker, Engraver, &c

STEDMAN. Godalming. Watch & Clock Maker, Jeweller and Silversmith, Bookseller, &c

STEPHENS, R. Castlebar. Watch & Clock Maker, Jeweller, &c

STRANGE, Chas. High Wycombe, Bucks. Watch & Clock Maker, Silversmith & Jeweller

THOMSON, Adam. 25 New Bond St, London. Watch & Clock Maker

WATSON, J. Market Hill, Cambridge. Watch & Clock Maker, Silversmith & Jeweller

WATTS. Christchurch. Clock & Watch Maker, Silversmith & Jeweller

WICKOM. Portsmouth. Watch & Clock Maker

WILKINS, E. Newport, Isle of Wight – from London. Watch & Clock Manufacturer

WRAPSON, H. East St, Havant. Watch & Clock Maker, Silversmith, Engraver, &c

ANON. Frost Fair watchpaper dated 5th February 1814

working in the town of Bishop's Waltham at the western edge of the South Downs in Hampshire. It is likely, however, that the collection was formed by at least two generations of Padbury and is one of many such collections of papers that past watchmakers are known to have formed. Just what the owners of the watches thought about the removal of old papers is not known, but one being taken out and a new one bearing the name of the firm being put in, on top, must have been a common occurrence.

Regarding the life of an average 'watchmaker,' it should be remembered that the Padburys of this world did not make watches, but serviced and repaired them, along with any other aspects of their working lives that helped generate income. Few such country firms would have been able to specialise in just pocket watches and instead would have needed to be a jack-of-all-trades in order to serve their local community. Watchpapers like these allow us to understand this far better and see that not all watch repair shops were the same, and that different customer interests were widely catered for.

Watchpapers also provide important connections that may otherwise have been lost, and many claim 'successor to'

or 'from London' in their text. Others contain images that would no doubt have caught the eye of their customers, or have been intended to do so. Poems were also often used and subtle associations could be expressed, such as the Masonic 'eye of providence' that can be found in the designs of two of those framed.

A few of the more interesting and unusual examples from the collection are shown, but I must make a plea to all BHI Members who have examples of their own not to mount them as they were in Upton Hall. Instead, put them in archival quality stamp albums or similar. This keeps them secure and safe from further deterioration and damage, as well as allowing the notes and dates that most watchpapers bear on the reverse to be seen when required. Such manuscript notes are another primary source of information that is often of great value in identifying past owners, dates and the type of work done.

Lastly, many thousands of such small and ephemeral pieces of paper will have been discarded over the years, the more so if they were torn or stained. Survivors are rare and should be treasured if readable, even if damaged or dirty.

About the Author

David Penney is an antiquarian horologist and horological consultant.