



In the earliest clocks the escapement could maintain accuracy only to within a quarter of an hour rather than within minutes or seconds. It is for this reason that the earliest lantern clocks needed only one hand to mark the passing hours.

The world was to wait until the latter half of the 17th century for the development that was to revolutionise

clock manufacture and to dominate design for the next 200 years. Appropriately it was the great English clockmaker Fromanteel who, in 1658, wrote: "There is lately a way found for making clocks that go exact and keep equaller time than any now made."

He was talking about the pendulum. Galileo had carried out experiments with a

pendulum, so it was not a new idea. What was new was a re-arrangement of the clock workings so that the pendulum's regular swing from side to side could briefly interrupt the rotation of the train. The length of the pendulum could be altered by means of a nut beneath the bob or weight. Shortening the pendulum made the clock go faster, lowering the bob made it go slower and fine adjustments achieved greater accuracy.

The application of the pendulum established England as the leading clock making country and resulted in the birth of the longcase clock. Often erroneously called the grandfather clock, longcase clocks also include the so-called grandmother and granddaughter clocks. A grandfather clock is usually considered to be over seven feet tall.

Longcase clocks have always been popular and range in design from the homely, plain, oak cased 'country' examples to those with highly embellished dials and lavishly worked cases. If he has been considerate enough to sign the dial, the maker's name is the best indicator as to date. There are several other pointers however and the style of the case and the size and nature of the dial will also help.

Clock cases decorated by the use of marquetry, were popular in the reign of Charles II and until the early years of the 18th century. The beautiful example (on page 4) dates to around 1690 and is by Joseph Jackman. Walnut was the fashionable wood and the panels of floral marquetry were derived from contemporary Dutch design. The square hood and spirally turned pillars together with the circular window or lenticle as it is more properly known, are typical of this period.

The other clock featured is slightly earlier in date and is a typical lantern clock dating from the 1680's by the London maker Thomas Wheeler.

● Brett Tryner is an auctioneer and valuer with the Fine Art Auction Group. For valuations and sale details you can contact Neales Auctioneers at 192-194 Mansfield Road, Nottingham (tel. 0115 962 4141) or visit the website at [www.dnfa.com](http://www.dnfa.com)