

**THE TURRET CLOCK OF
ST. PETER'S CHURCH, BUSHLEY**

by

BENJAMIN LEWIS VULLIAMY

1843



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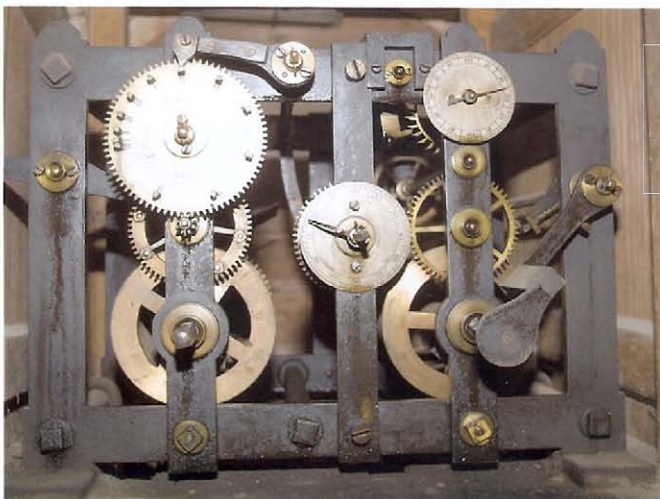
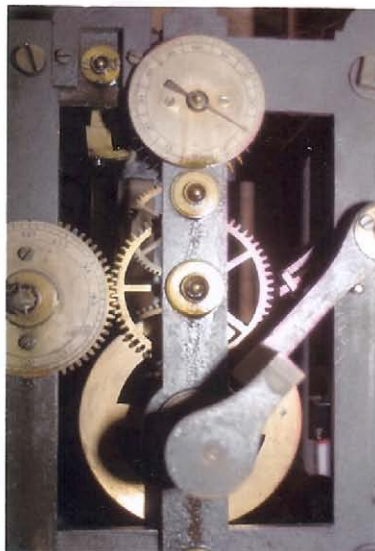
Benjamin was born in 1780 and died in 1854. A third-generation clock maker, he made a lot of turret clocks as well as making domestic clocks, watches and fine architectural fittings. His clocks were of very high quality and expensive. Benjamin was in line to design and make the Great Clock at The Palace of Westminster, (to be known as Big Ben) but a rival, E.J. Dent managed to get the job. Vulliamy was an early user of the flat bed design of clocks, and was a writer of books on clocks.

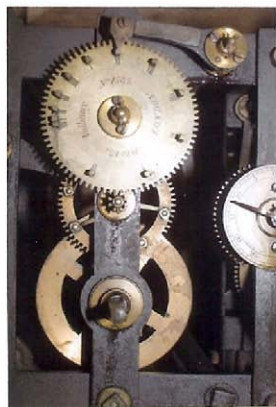
Vulliamy clocks are quite a rarity (approximately only 25 were ever made) with one situated in Hampton Court, one in The Royal Mews, and one in one of the Oxford Colleges.



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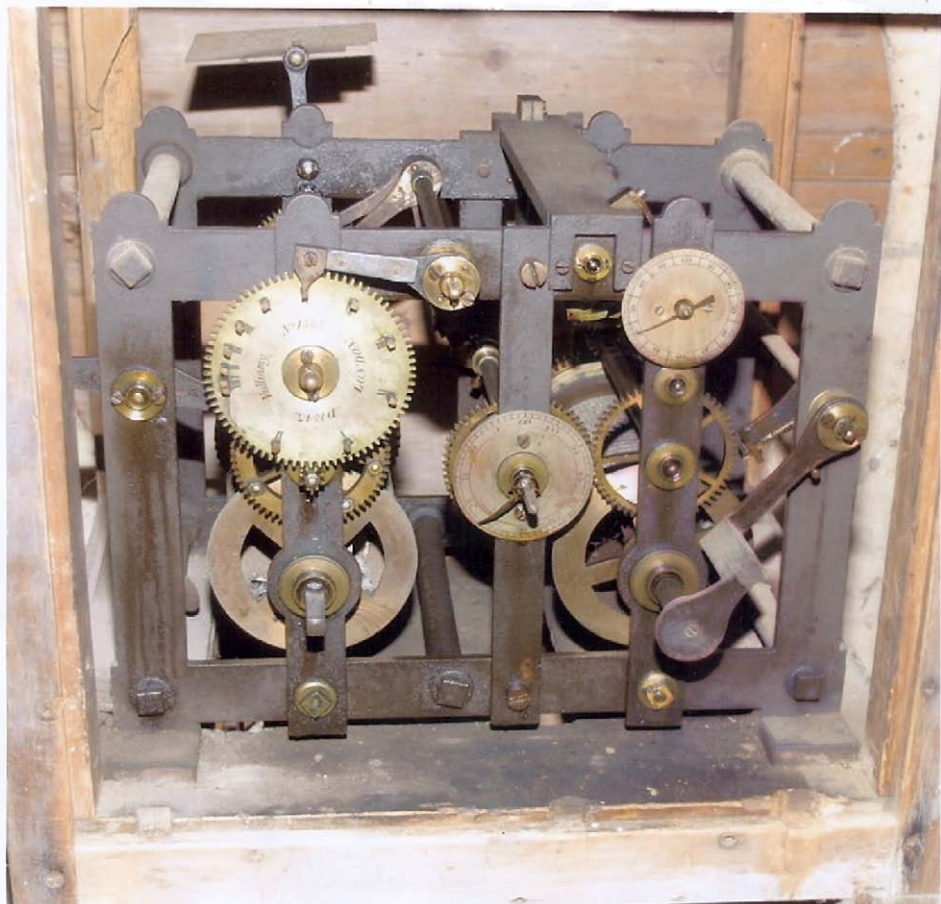
He was well known as an accomplished clockmaker who had many fine turret clocks to his credit. Charles Barry originally invited Vulliamy alone to submit tenders for not only the Great Clock, (Big Ben) but also for all the other clocks which would be required throughout the New Westminster Palace. Vulliamy was unhappy with Airy being chosen as referee and was most indignant when Dent succeeded in obtaining the contract. In particular, he stated publicly his considered opinion that it was impossible to make a clock of such size keep time to within one second. He did not live to see the successful completion of the clock.

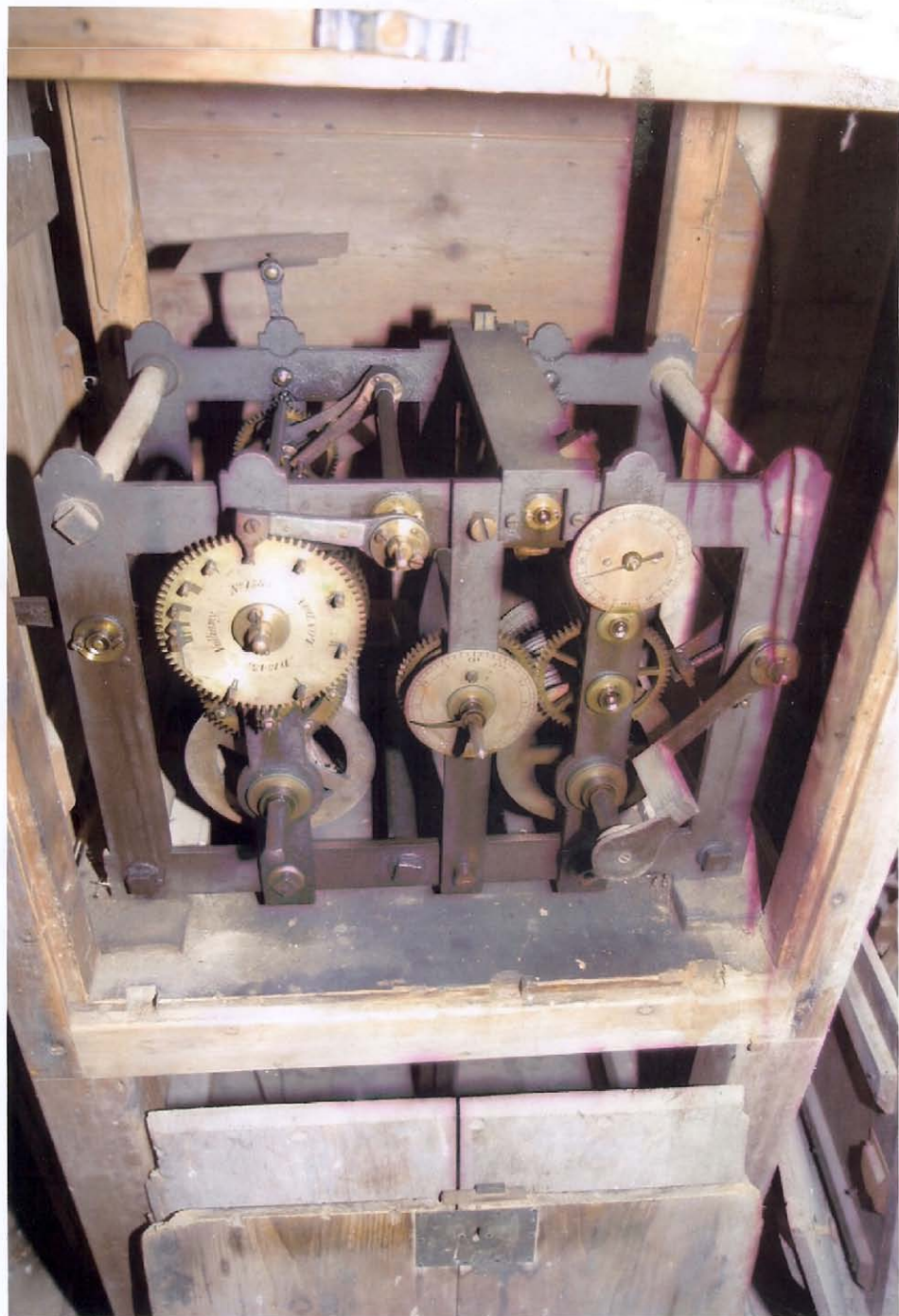




The pinned 'locking plate is inscribed:
Vulliamy, London,
1843, No. 1585







B. L. VULLIAMY
of London, 1837

DARLAH P THOMAS
20 EDINBURGH WAY
QUEENS PARK
CHESTER
CH4 7AS
TEL: (0244) 671444

The list: This list is in the form of a printed pamphlet (14pp.) entitled *Testimonials respecting Clocks made by B.L. Vulliamy*, published in 1837. The original is in the British Horological Institute library. It includes testimonials relating to three Vulliamy turret clocks and one domestic clock.

Editorial method: The title page and Vulliamy's preface are printed in full, but only the essential details have been extracted from the text of the testimonials. A supplementary list of some further Vulliamy clocks is appended - chiefly from Chris McKay's unpublished notes on this noted maker.

History: Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy (b.1780 - d.1854) came from a noted clockmaking family, and he was himself an eminent and respected maker. Admitted to the Clockmakers' Company in 1809, he served as Warden from 1821 to 1825. He also held the appointment as clockmaker to the King. Turret clocks only represent one aspect of his work. After his death in 1854 the business was purchased by Charles Frodsham, with whom Vulliamy had previously collaborated (e.g. the clock of 1848 at Norton St.Philip in Somerset signed by Vulliamy & Frodsham).

Further reading: B.L. Vulliamy *Some considerations on the subject of Public Clocks, particularly Church Clocks: with hints for their improvement* (1828); useful references to Vulliamy in Vaudrey Mercer's books on *Edward John Dent* (1977) and *The Frodshams* (1981). The Dent book includes extensive quotations from correspondence about Vulliamy and the clocks at the Royal Exchange, Clifton Hampden, and the Palace of Westminster.

THE LIST

TESTIMONIALS / RESPECTING / CLOCKS, / MADE BY
B.L. VULLIAMY, F.R.A.S., F.R.G.S., &c.
CLOCK MAKER TO THE KING, THE HON. BOARD OF ORDNANCE, AND
TO THE NEW POST OFFICE

LONDON:
PRINTED BY T. BRETTELL, RUPERT STREET, HAYMARKET.
1837

The following Testimonials were given perfectly unsolicited by me, except the permission by the Honourable Board of Ordnance to print the extract from Colonel, now SIR JOHN, JONES'S Report to the Board; which was originally printed in a Supplement to a Paper on Public Clocks, printed for private circulation only, A.D. 1830.

The first Clock mentioned was purchased by His Majesty's Government expressly for, and was put up at, the New Post Office.

The copies of the letters to the Rev. JOSEPH WIGRAM were given me by that Gentleman. they are answers to inquiries he made respecting two Clocks I made for two new Churches in Essex,

8 TURRET CLOCKS: Makers' lists

for the purpose of recommending me to be employed to make a large Clock for a Parish Church.

The letter from the BISHOP OF CALCUTTA has reference to a Drawing Room Clock I made, which was, as the letter implies, a present to his Lordship.

B.L. VULLIAMY.

London, 1837.

TESTIMONIALS.

WESTMORELAND, seat of the Earl of Lonsdale [Lowther Castle]: testimonial dated 14 April 1823 from M.C. Brunel, F.R.S., Bryan Donkin, Joshua Field, Timothy Bramah, Thomas Hoblyn, John Pond (Astronomer Royal) and William Congreve (Maj. Gen.) re: turret clock - Pendulum Bob weighing 448 lb. believed to be the heaviest ever put to a clock.

NORWOOD, Church: testimonial dated 4 August 1828 from Col. Jones, copy forwarded by H. Byham, Office of Ordnance, dated 6 October 1828 re: Church Clock - "appears to me superior to any Turret Clock I have seen in ... simplicity of construction; ... in durability; ... in regularity of keeping time ... far superior to the clocks at Woolwich." [West Norwood church clock, 1827]

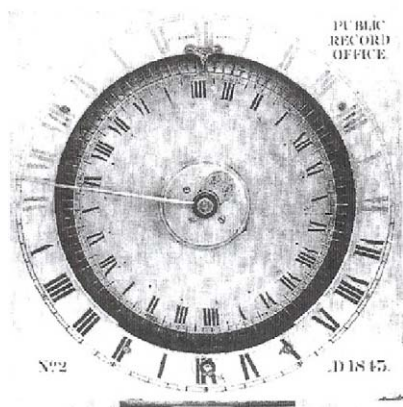
STRATFORD, Essex, St. John's Church: testimonial dated 12 July 1836 from W. Davis, Leytonstone - "Our Clock has now been going at least two years, I believe, without the slightest deviation as to time." ... not cheap but ... may be depended on. Testimonial dated 5 July 1836 from Hugh C. Jones, Stratford Green - not yet met an individual not pleased with it; Mr. Vulliamy selected from list of seven competitors; accuracy carefully observed. Testimonial dated 4 July 1836 from A. Lancaster, Stratford: clock "placed in tower of new church January last"; since pendulum adjusted, in six weeks never altered and varied (lost) five seconds on Greenwich.

CALCUTTA, Bishop's Palace: testimonial dated 29 October 1833 from Bishop of Calcutta re: drawing room clock made as leaving gift from parishioners in Islington; various gentlemen [named] including express the highest admiration; appearance "purely ecclesiastical"; elegant; tone of bell "exquisitely deep and musical"

ADDITIONAL NOTES

Some further turret clocks by Vulliamy are as follows:

1799	Hampton Court (no.353)	1837	Quex Park, Kent (no.1344)
1801	Conington, Hunts. (no.385)	1838	Helions Bumpstead, Essex (no.1393)
1803	Halifax, Canada (no.371)	1838	Oxford (Christ Church)
1816	London - Horse Guards (repairs)	1839	Charlwood, Surrey (no.1433)
1820	Oriel College, Oxford (no.748)	1839	Old Basing, Hants. (no.1441)
1827	West Norwood (no.941)	1843	Westonbirt, Gloucs.
1829	Woolwich (no.965)	1843	Bushley, Worcs. (no.1585)
1829	Windsor Castle (no.1000)	1843	Basingstoke, Hants. (no.1616)
1830	Woburn church, Beds. (no.1087)	1847	Somerleyton Hall, Suffolk (no.1792)
1831	Plymouth Dockyard (no.1100)	1847	Dilton Marsh, Wilts. (no.1493)
1832	Mapledurham, Oxon	1847	Plymouth - The Cremille
1832	Ramsgate, St.George (no.1148)	1850	Westminster, St.Stephen (no.1882)
1836	Adelaide, Australia (no.1329)	1853	Markbeece, Kent (no.1495)



78 *Three-Month watchman's Clock No. 2*

by Vulliamy, London, 1843

The clock has a very plain mahogany case. It has a fixed 24-hour chapter ring, the night hours being in black and the day hours in red. Within this fixed ring is a rotating 24-hour dial marked in quarters, hours and with 96 pins around its periphery. (see fig. 78a) There is a single minute hand recording against the outer minute circle or the fixed dial. The hours are shown by the inner dial against a pointer at the top XII o'clock. Winding is at the bottom XII o'clock.

The dial is inscribed *VULLIAMY LONDON* with the government mark in the top left-hand corner and *PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE.* in the top right-hand corner, *No. 2* bottom left and *A.D. 1843.* bottom right.

On operating the pull on the right-hand side of the top of the trunk the watchman pushed in a pin thus revealing the fact that he was at the clock at whatever times the pins are depressed. The next day the foreman or somebody in authority can note the frequency and times of the visits and having a case key can reset the pins.

H. 6 ft 9 in.

Courtesy British Museum.

Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy was born in 1780 and died in 1854. He was made free of the Clockmakers' Company in 1809 and was Master of the Company no less than five times, in 1821, 1823, 1825, 1827 and 1847. Up until the time of his death he was in charge of the clocks in Buckingham Palace and was Clockmaker to no less than three sovereigns, George IV, William IV and Victoria. He was noted for the exactness and excellent finish of his work, examples are to be found in many palaces especially Windsor.

Vulliamy's business was based at 68 Pall Mall and he used to send an assistant on horseback or by river on a six-hour journey to get the right time from Greenwich until 1836 when John Belville started a service bringing Greenwich Time to makers' workshops. Many of Vulliamy's workbooks are to be found in the Public Record Office, deposited there because of a legal dispute.

He was one of few makers to make use of Harrison's grasshopper escapement and examples can be found in the British Museum and in the Society of Antiquaries. However in his hands the escapement is quite differently designed and unmistakably his.

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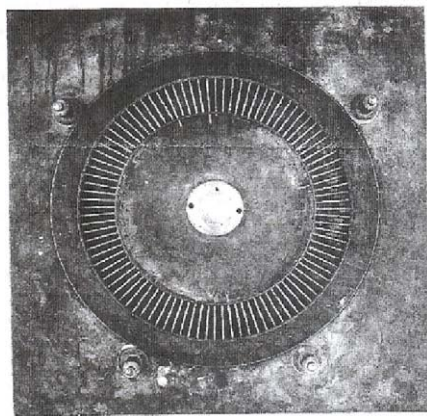


Fig. 78a

Bushley Turret Clock Technical Details

Maker: Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy (25/01/1780 - 08/01/1854).

Makers address: Pall Mall, London, England.

Nameplate inscription: Vulliamy - London - No.1585 - AD 1843
(inscribed on the Strike control rack).

Date on Clock: 1843.

Frame Type: Plate and Spacer.

Size of Frame: 20"/500mm (long) 14"/350mm (high) 12¹/₄"/306mm (deep)

Frame Material: Cast Iron.

Trains and Going: Going and Striking.

6no. wheels (cogs) in going train:

4no. wheels (cogs) in striking chain:

8 day going period.

Trains Control: Strike control rack.

Escapement: Deadbeat.

Pendulum: length 13'1"/4m, pendulum period 2seconds.

Winding: Winding crank on winding square.

Dials: 1no. bronze, 2 hands.