

THE CHIME BARREL

In which replacement pins are fitted

by Guy Gibbons



Figure 1: Miss Havisham's clock – before and after repair

There is a fictional lady who, heartbroken and humiliated, lived out her life in a home so decaying that cobwebs hung everywhere⁽¹⁾. Her clock was kept stopped at twenty minutes to nine, the time at which she had been left at the altar by her deceitful fiancé, thereafter living out the rest of her life in her wedding dress surrounded by the table still set for her untouched wedding breakfast.

And so it was that I was called to an 18th century mansion to inspect a clock so hung with cobwebs and containing deceased fauna enough to start an entomological museum that I could not but think of Miss Havisham and her clock – **figure 1**. It was a sad sight, and it was not without a little trepidation that I agreed to take it away in order to prepare my estimate. Well, after hoovering out the car, the clock and then my workshop,

what was revealed was a truly impressive chiming boardroom clock. Removing the movement revealed several significant defects, but this time I shall concentrate on just one: a chime barrel missing two pins.

Replacing pins is always a little daunting but, providing one can get the remains of the broken pins out, is not too difficult. The procedure I used is shown in **figure 2** and needs little additional explanation other than to perhaps admit that by punching the embedded part of a broken pin through, it is eternally consigned to rattling around inside the barrel. Interestingly it appeared that someone had previously made a hopelessly improbable attempt to soft solder a replacement pin into the broken off position – see the soft solder discolouration in image 'A' in **figure 2** –

and the heating was possibly the cause of the adjacent pin also being missing.

I made my replacement pins from blued pivot steel lightly tapered at one end, it being important to get both the length of the fitted pin and its diameter very close to the diameter of the other pins if the tune is to remain melodious. The pins were tapped in (taper-end first) with a dab of low-strength Loctite.

1. *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens, 1861. Having been spurned at the altar by her fiancé, Miss Havisham plots to wreak a twisted revenge by teaching her adopted daughter Estella to torment and spurn men, including the young Pip, who loves her. Many years later Miss Havisham is overcome with remorse for ruining both Estella's and Pip's chances for happiness, and the novel ends with... well, you must discover this for yourself.

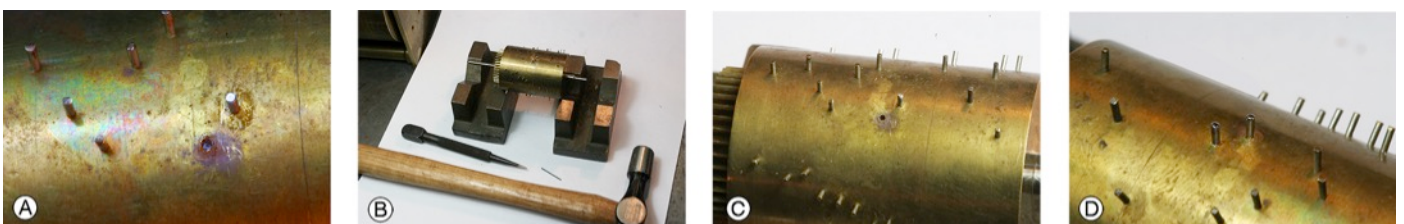


Figure 2: Removing and replacing one of the 0.75mm diameter chime barrel pins. The adjacent pin has already been replaced.