

History of Prouds Clocks and their Successors

Over the next hour Norm and I will talk about 'Australian Made' electro-mechanical clocks, in particular those made by and associated with Prouds, Sydney.

On the screen is the animation of a Prouds Master Clock. The animation is by Ted Bosschieter who lives in Leiden, Netherlands. Ted produced this particular animation after visiting Norm and me in Brisbane some years ago and seeing this type of master clock with this unusual system of pendulum impulse used by Prouds till about 1940. This animation is one of an excellent animation CD of over 200 electric clocks. If you would like the details of how to obtain a copy please talk to me or Norm later.

The fundamental functions of this movement are threefold:

- Hipp toggle design,
- Impulse of the pendulum by an impulse arm electromechanically operated which in turn strikes on to a sloping pallet attached to the pendulum rod, and
- Time registration, either:
 - 15 tooth count wheel with 30 second electrical contacts driving one or more electromechanical secondary or slave dials , or
 - Bevel and/or worm gear driving motion work and dial hands, either dial in the case or a tower dial

This movement design was used by Prouds and their successors for five decades during the early to mid-20th Century, albeit with variations. Another nice approach is the modular layout, where whole modules can be quickly changed, a system which Synchronome did not adopt until 1962.

Slide 1

Ted's Picture

Who invented this type of pendulum impulse system is still a mystery. We have not discovered any patent either English or Australian which gives us a clue. There is some anecdotal evidence which points to either Thomas Murday, George Gough or Cecil Gross, who all worked for Prouds in the early part 20th Century, however what we have is conflicting.

Slide 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Before looking at Prouds and their successors, it is well to look at the personalities involved. The following is but a short list and Norm and I have only had the opportunity to look at two of these people in any detail and even then we end up knowing very little about the characters as a whole.

Personalities

Slide 10

- Proud Family, who owned and managed the Prouds company initially in Sydney then opening stores throughout Australia.
- Thomas John Murday, an engineer who was better known also for his clock making skills, especially Reason Manufacturing Company in Brighton England and then in 1911 emigrating with his family and working for Prouds Sydney in charge of their clock workshops.

- George Francis Gough, listed as a watchmaker in Sands directories but known as a clock maker working for Prouds.
- A L Franklin, a scientific instrument maker, worked for Prouds 1913 to 1916. Built clocks for Ashfield, Petersham and Rockdale Town Halls. Formed his own scientific instrument company in Sydney
- Alan Crook who owned and managed his own company Alan Crook Electrical, known later as ACELEC.
- Laurie Taprell was an apprentice at Prouds 1939-45. Then after finishing off his apprenticeship and working for Alan Cook Electrical formed Scientific Clocks in partnership with Cecil Gross in 1947. Laurie also established the Time and Service Company at a later date.
- Cecil Gross worked for Prouds then as a partner with Laurie Taprell in Scientific Clocks in 1947. He designed and built an electromechanical clock for Sydney Observatory based on the Synchronome design for the transmission of seconds pulses. The clock is now located in the Powerhouse Museum Archives at Castle Hill.
- Alan Gross (Cecil's son) was an apprentice at Prouds between 1934-39 and then became a full partner in Scientific Clocks in 1949.
- Frank Rozzoli, Cecil Gross's nephew, commenced his apprenticeship with Prouds in 1925 and worked for them until he joined the RAAF in 1940. His son Ron is also a watchmaker.

Prouds

Slide 11

Prouds as a family jewellery firm commenced in Sydney in circa 1903 owned and managed by William James Proud with the clock business evolving circa 1911 and with the arrival of Thomas Murday from England, commenced selling clocks. Initially selling clocks designed by Thomas Murday and made by the Reason Manufacturing Company of Brighton, England, then locally made clocks and clockwork, including the Murday Micro Barometer circa 1913. Their first known, known to us that is, installation was a synchronised clock system installed at Circular Quay in circa 1913 and probably extending to other ferry wharves around Sydney Harbour. Norm will speak about this in a few minutes in the next segment.

John Seymour Proud, Stinson incident February 1937 in the Mc Pherson Ranges

It is unfortunate that all of Prouds records were destroyed some years ago when it ceased being a family owned company, and the majority of our research has been undertaken from few remaining photos, personal experiences, government records and company brochures. Our thanks go largely to the Taprell family, owners and managers of Scientific Clocks who gave freely of their time, lent us brochures and gave us some bits and pieces which were destined for the tip. Also thanks go to the Jackson family, Brisbane of Synchronome who again lent us photos and brochures for copying. Another thanks to Neville Michie for supplying the information from his research into Alan Crook Electrical.

Also not being where the action is, Sydney, has made it more difficult apart from the visits we make each year. So we ask if you know of anything about Prouds or electromechanical clocks in Australia, we would be happy to hear from you.

Prouds mainly manufactured tower clocks, master and secondary clocks and there were many installations which are listed in their company brochures. Most, if not all of the clock works were 'Made in Australia'.

Prouds produced clocks up to approximately the early 1940's with their master clocks using the 'bakers shovel' cast steel frame and some can be seen here being 'finished' by a shaper with other processes being undertaken in the workshop.

The earliest address we know is 336 Kent St. It was used around 1913.

We don't have a photo from the time.

In July 2008, there are two adjoining buildings, called 332-334 Kent St and 338 Kent St. Both have been restored and are heritage listed and there is an archeological display in one. The people in the coffee shop in 334 said that 338 had been 336 and had been given a luckier number, so that may be it.

Slide 12, 13, 14

Alan Crook Electrical

Slide 15

Exactly when Prouds finished production is difficult to determine but advertisements by Alan Crook Electrical known as ACELEC are recorded from mid 1940's onwards for master clock systems and 'Smith's' domestic clocks. Their master clocks worked on the same principle as the Prouds but the back plate was rectangular in shape. All of the back plate fittings, pendulum etc are interchangeable with Prouds master clocks, as are the secondary dials. The ACELEC master clock cases were plain in style and some would say influenced by the 'art deco' style. The master clock complete with an internal pilot secondary clock weighs in at 35 Kg.

Slide 16

Slide 17

Scientific Clocks and Time and Service Company

In 1947 Scientific Clocks was formed by Cecil Gross and Laurie Taprell, Laurie had served his apprenticeship initially with Prouds from 1939 and finished with Alan Crook Electrical in 1945.

Time and Service Company was formed by Laurie Taprell in Sydney as a successor to Scientific Clocks.

Slide 18

Conclusion

In Conclusion the question arises, were Prouds successful and I wonder whether I should have named this session as History of Prouds and their Successes?

Slide 19

Slide 20

I think that I am right in saying that from a horological standpoint they were successful with hundreds of installations in NSW and other states as we can see on this slide, even one in India!

Slide 21

But one which is still operating after 75 years of operation last July is this clock in Avoca Tasmania

Slide 22, 23, 24, 25

It was constructed as a commemoration to those locals who had served their country during WW I and was installed only two months before the beginning of WW II. It is still going strong and is maintained by the local garage mechanic.