

Electric Clock SILENTIA – Graham Mitchell reports Sydney Australia(update Nov 2021)

A rare electric clock was bought at the clearing estate of a gent described as “clocksmith and radio repairer extraordinaire” at Echuca on the Victorian side of the Murray River. Patented in France on 10th March 1911, the Silentia was one of many hundreds of attempts Worldwide by inventors to use electric power to drive clocks. The clock originates from Besancon, France, near the Swiss border. The Foreign Patent was accepted in 1912 by the UK and was described as “an automatic electric winding mechanism for clocks and the like.” All parts of this particular case are marked 30.

A search of the NAWCC publications, Clocks Magazine, Karl Kochman's and the Antiquarian Horological Society databases revealed no results for Silentia. However the electric clock archive at wp.clockdoc.org has some examples.

Three main varieties of electric clock were developed over the 1850's to the 1960's, namely electromechanical, electromagnetic and synchronous types.

The Silentia falls into the category of an “electromechanical” clock where electric power is used to raise a weight or rewind a spring of a clock which is mechanical in nature. In this instance, the “motor” comprises the large stationary “horseshoe” permanent magnet and the rotating coil in-between the north and south poles. The brushes above the motor engage the battery circuit when a notch or pin on the centre wheel rotates into position. A worm gear winds the spring through a series of wheels until the notch disengages the brush and the motor stops.

This mechanism can also be termed a “remontoire” from the French to remount or rewind. The winding process is very silent.

This clock is controlled by a balance but there are also wall and mantel pendulum models.

It's a rare pre WW1 clock and since it was retailed by Ingram Brothers in Melbourne (still in business today), there may be more in Australia. Keep a look out!

Case 240 high, 155 wide, 130 deep.
Enamel dial 160 OD.
A 23 second video of the winding process of clock 30 is also posted.

*PS. Another one has been found!

