

THE LAST NEVERGATETM CHRONICLES

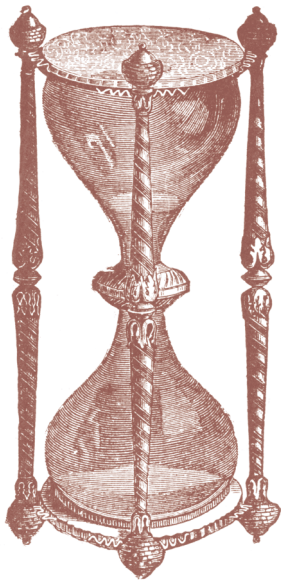
Reference Item Number 0006-0

Description Refdoc: Merlin's Hourglass

Date January 27, 2176

Source *Hammerli's Reliquarian Resource*, via
Transpoint Independent Archive (TIA)

Background As the brief refdoc from Hammerli's makes abundantly clear, the so-called "Merlin's Hourglass" is a remarkable artifact. Perhaps only the fact that it has rarely been on public display has sheltered it from far greater attention.

MERLIN'S HOURGLASS**Document 001**

This engraving is the earliest known image of the artifact. The artist is unknown, but the style, technique, ink and medium place its origin in the late 19th century, probably in Glasgow, Scotland. It was acquired by the Smithsonian Institution U.S., with the artifact as part of a private collection donated in 2039. Smithsonian donor records indicate only "anonymous."

BRIEF

Merlin's Hourglass remains an enigma. While stylistically akin to certain functional timekeeping artifacts of the Louis XIV mode, its origin, materials and method of operation have never been established with any degree of scientific precision. In fact, it could not have been created with 17th century technology. Nor could it be created with any technology known to our 22nd century Nevergate Era.

During most of its known history the artifact has been in the care of the Smithsonian Institution U.S. According to its Item Log, Smithsonian scientists, technicians and outside contractors have examined it in nearly a dozen separate instances over the 126 years it was in their possession. This much is currently known: the "glass" bulb appears to be a single molecule and virtually indestructible. The trapped "sand" inside the evacuated bulb appears to be a mix of previously unknown metallic forms of hydrogen and oxygen in a 2:1 proportion. The spherical "granules" are the closest approximations of perfect spheres ever measured.

The ornately shaped "wooden" frame is more accurately an unknown quasi-organic material with an extremely complex molecular structure. The frame has no actual joints and appears to have been "grown" rather than formed into its shape. Ornate joinery appearing to be brass is actually a quasi-organic substance similar in structure to the "wooden" frame. Likewise, the top and bottom caps, although they simulate Lemurian white marble to such a degree as to be indistinguishable from that material in physical appearance, are also a quasi-organic substance similar to other "components." Both of the identical top and bottom surfaces, while they appear flat, are formed to a concave radius that is a remarkable approximation of the average radius of the planet Earth.

The operation of the device has perplexed all who have studied it. Helmuth Knauss of the Berlin Institute for the Study of Unfathomable Phenomena (BISUP), a well-established organization of scientific "debunkers," said, in a 2089 report to the Smithsonian: "This is an object of unparalleled obscurity. Our techniques have shed no new light on its functioning. We are returning your fee."

Dharma Jean Lacey of the New Satterfield Institute of

ITEM 571333

MERLIN'S HOURGLASS (continued)

**Document 077**

Acquired by the Smithsonian with the artifact, this portion of a Harry Houdini show poster during his Vaudeville years may have given rise to the idea, held by some, that the "Merlin's Hourglass" once belonged to the illustrious early 20th century escape artist and magician. The fact that the former Erich Weiss was something of a historian of things magical lends a certain aura of believability to this hypothesis.

Nanometrics was able to at least make these observations in her brief report: "We applied photon tags to a sample of 200 each of the black and white granules. We then instituted 5,000 consecutive "flips" of the object using 26 different "flipping" techniques which were alternated in a random sequence. Another 5,000 "flips" were run using the simplest "flipping orbit" obtainable by mathematical definition. In all cases, the flips were accomplished using a freshly calibrated high precision Fanuc CMR14 complex motion replicator. In both trials we monitored the tagged orbs in two ways: we identified their ascension order and plotted their individual trajectories. In 100 percent of the flips, each tagged granule ascended in exactly the same order and followed exactly the same trajectory into the upper bulb. While we draw no formal conclusion from these observations, we would informally suggest that this apparently simple device is actually a machine of nearly impossible precision. However, it must also be noted that its 'hour cycle' was never exactly one hour in duration."

Robert Orville Miles Dunnigan, a notable of the Clans Dunnigan, acquired the Merlin's Hourglass artifact and related files at a Smithsonian fundraising auction held on the White House "front lawn" on April 1, 2165, outbidding one Exeter of Ommergard. It is believed Robert Orville Miles Dunnigan subsequently offered it to the late Madonna 13 as a "friendship" gift, which she apparently declined for unknown reasons.

The artifact is currently on exhibit in the recently completed North Castle Museum (private) on Dunnigan's Wall in the Tusas Mountains District of WG.US.NM. It is viewable only upon invitation and all other information has been privately vaulted in the Transpoint Independent Archive.

The *Hollywood Reporter* has this comment on file, attributed to holomaker Cecilia Demillian upon returning from a visit to the North Castle Museum: "I know one thing about that exhibit they call Merlin's Hourglass. Every time I had it flip, I lost an hour on my timepatch and had to reboot. So does this mean if I flip it 823,440 times I'll get to start my life all over again? And if I do, will I know then what I know now? If so, where do I sign up?" ●

Revised January 27, 2176