

## AHS Study Tour 2016

This year's tour from Monday 9 to Thursday 12 May, took us to North-west England, where we visited four National Trust houses, four museums and a private collection. Duncan Greig, a member of the South Eastern Section and one of the National Trust's Horological conservators for the Northwest, was our horological guide throughout the tour.

### Rufford Old Hall (NT)

This is where we started on the Monday. Our first clock in the entrance hall was an intriguing lantern clock with an original anchor escapement, and two-weight drive (no Huygens endless rope). It was unsigned, and apart from a later pendulum, showed no signs of any modifications. Believed to date from c.1680, this was a rare and interesting clock. The second clock was a quasi-skeleton piece of unusual design by John Pace of Bury. His designs are often in the form of a large watch, with a single back-plate and all other pivots supported on bridges. A 30-hour longcase by Jacob Grice (1797–1830) of Ormskirk was in the same room and is an example of the work of a local family who have roots back to Mordecai Fox, an early London clockmaker. There were two French clocks in the study followed, in the school room, by a 30-hour clock by Winstanley of Ormskirk, fitted with dummy winding holes and arbors, to appear as an eight-day clock; it has an extra wheel acting as an intermediary to ensure the seconds hand rotates clockwise. At the foot of the staircase was an eight-day longcase clock by John Booth of Wakefield, which had a Wilson of Birmingham painted dial. Another longcase clock by Hendrie of Wigton had a movement of posted frame construction.

### Speke Hall (NT)

On Monday afternoon, Speke Hall was opened specially for our visit, so we had it to ourselves, with Hayley King, conservation assistant and Duncan as our guides. The entrance welcomes you with an example of an American wall clock by Seth Thomas. The king of this collection, a fine example of Liverpool clock making, was a longcase clock by John Kaye, trading in Chapel Street, Liverpool's 'Bond Street'. Unusually the case is signed in a glass painted cartouche at



Multi-dial French table clock seen at Speke Hall.

the top of the hood by a case maker, S. Fewler, who also traded in Chapel Street. In the Great Parlour there was an interesting multi-dial French table clock by A Brocot & Delettrez but signed Willm Roskell, Liverpool. This is one of two French clocks retailed by this firm displayed in this collection. Also in the Great Parlour is a longcase clock by John Martin of Great Crosby, with date indication and moon phase across the break-arch. A central anchor escapement enables the maker to utilise a sweep seconds hand, a feature of some Liverpool longcase clocks. The dial centre is engraved with cormorants. The star of this house's clocks is a fine lancet-hooded longcase clock with Egyptian headed pilasters by Ellicot and Taylor, Royal Exchange. This beautifully cased clock chimes the quarters on ten bells, with an additional bell for striking the hours. The movement is by Thwaites and Reed.

### Dunham Massey (NT)

At this magnificent house we were met by the Conservation assistants and Duncan. We first went into a private room to examine some remarkable watches and a small spring clock, the latter by George Graham. Watches seen included a Graham pocket watch, a watch signed J R Arnold and Charles Frodsham The Strand, No. 9159, which belonged to William 9th Earl of Stamford, and a watch belonging to Lady Stamford, with a Swiss movement, gold case decorated with diamonds, signed C F Hancock 39 Burton Street London No. 2066. We also saw three longcase clocks: the first by



Above: Watch belonging to Lady Stamford, with a Swiss movement, gold case decorated with diamonds seen at Dunham Massey.

Left: Lancet-hooded longcase clock with Egyptian headed pilasters by Ellicot and Taylor, seen at Speke Hall.

Benjamin Peers, Chester, with calendar and moon phase in the break arch, the second by John Kirby, Bromley in Kent in a black japanned case, and the third 'Geo Graham, no 629', approx. 13ft tall, with a specially cast front plate incorporating the six dial pillars that are latched to support the rectangular dial; the fruit wood case has originally been ebonised. Other pieces of interest seen included a magnificent grand orrery and a celestial globe by Thomas Wright, instrument maker of London.

### Cuckooland Museum

On Tuesday afternoon we visited Cuckooland Museum in Tabley, Cheshire which was hugely informative and interesting. A collection of some 730 pieces, surely the largest collection of any genre of clocks anywhere, ranged from the simple examples that are familiar to most of us to those with different bird songs, multiple tunes, fusee movements often with very high quality cases and carving. We were guided around the collection by Roman Piekarski, one of the two brothers who have established this fine collection. Apart from his immense knowledge of this subject, he had



The group enjoying the collection of the Cuckooland Museum established by the Piekarski brothers.

numerous anecdotes regarding their acquisition. Our visit concluded with a rendering of the Blue Danube on the fairground organ that defines one end of the large building in which the collection is housed.

### **Lyme Park (NT)**

Wednesday was set aside for a visit to Lyme Park in Cheshire, which is undoubtedly the most magnificent of the National Trust houses we visited, and is graced by a substantial collection of premier English classical clocks. The collection of 47 horological items is based on that of Major Hon. Sir Francis Legh and further enhanced by a bequest of Capt. Hugh Vivien, a founder member of the AHS. Some pieces in the Lyme collection are indigenous to the house, one most impressively large clock being in the Servants Hall. The trunk has most plainly been made from a surrogate longcase and the elaborate carved hood is an extraordinary piece of work. This clock has clearly been made specifically for this purpose and it appears on the house inventory of 1879. The house was closed to the public and we were special guests for the day. We were split

into two groups and the National Trust ladies had arranged an informative tour of the house taking half of us to the sumptuous rooms showing us the clocks in their settings, while Duncan took us up to the State bed chamber, (clock rooms), giving us a talk on the history of the collection and some of the clockmakers whose clocks were there. He outlined some of the outstanding features of a few clocks using slides and video clips taken while these clocks were in pieces. We were further indulged as a special display of two clocks had been arranged for us to study. Breaking for lunch the groups changed around for the afternoon.

Clocks seen included an unusual equation clock by William Dunant, London made for the Turkish market with anti-friction rollers to the verge and a single going barrel driving the going and striking of the clock, a Thomas Tompion quarter repeating alarm table clock, a remarkably small spring clock by Claudius Du Chesne with a lovely nest of bells, and a magnificent musical clock by John Berry, London. In the Drawing Room we saw a tortoiseshell miniature three train table clock by Nathaniel Barnes, London, and an automata table clock by Stedman of



The large clock in the Servants Hall at Lyme Park.

Godalming. A turn table musical clock by Claud Viet is an especially attractive piece with interchangeable barrels similar to the work of Claudius Du Chesne; this clock is reputed to have a history with the house and a charming family story.

The finale to this visit was to the clock display room in which are housed a number of very fine clocks which include an early spring clock by Ahasuerus Fromanteel, a longcase clock by Henry Younge, in marquetry case with second and a quarter pendulum, a



Two fine clocks seen at Lyme Park. Above a musical clock by John Berry, London, below an automata table clock by Stedman of Godalming.





Front and side view of a tortoiseshell miniature three train table clock by Nathaniel Barnes, London, seen at Lyme Park.

grande sonnerie longcase clock by Christopher Gould, eight Tompion clocks, two Knibbs, and examples of the work of Edward East and Daniel Quare, to name a few. We were very grateful to the staff and the National Trust who made us feel most welcome. There is still a large amount of knowledge to be learnt and absorbed from this collection.

### **Anson Engine Museum**

The first visit of the last day was a little out of the ordinary for a horological Study Tour. We were given a warm welcome at the Anson Engine Museum in the Cheshire Peak District on the site of the now defunct Poynton Colliery. It is the work of a group of former colleagues who have had the energy and enthusiasm not only to put the collection together but also voluntarily to be at the site to maintain the engines and provide the demonstrations both inside and outside the building. There are major plans in place for further expansion and extension in the future. The museum is recognised as one of the country's leading specialist museums with



some of the world's rarest engines. They have a truly remarkable collection in working condition or in the process of restoration. One particularly worthy of mention was the atmospheric engine which we saw running. We were informed that its last use was to drive a threshing machine on a local farm. They of course also have a steam engine section, and they have the Mirrlees No. 1, the first Diesel engine to be built in the UK. There is also a rather splendidly noisy sleeve-valve Gardner engine. Apart from many work-related demonstrations, one should also make a point of seeing the topographical model of the Poynton area as it appeared around 1900 showing the large amount of industry locally. This has been created by a group of dedicated volunteers. Whilst at Anson, we were provided with a most excellent and plentiful buffet.



The topographical model of the Poynton area at the Anson Engine Museum.

### **Macclesfield Paradise Mill and Silk Museum**

The last visit of this Study Tour was to Macclesfield to visit both the Paradise Mill and the neighbouring Silk Museum. On the visit to the Mill, it was like stepping back into the 1930s. We saw the restored Jacquard looms and machinery and were given a demonstration of these working and an explanation of how the silk is spun and woven. Because of the complexity of the machines and the possibility of damage or injury all tours are guided. This was a fascinating experience and we had the premises to ourselves. There is a link with horology not only with the creation of silk suspensions but also for the lining of clock cases. Following this visit, we had a short time to look at the Silk Museum which provided an opportunity to see some of the items created as well as the equipment required. The items

displayed go through the journey of the silk from cocoon to loom. The exhibition also covers workers' lives and Macclesfield silk during the war, as well as Macclesfield's diverse textile industries in the past and its role both in design and education. The town is renowned and celebrated as the heart of Britain's Silk Trade, the western end of the Silk Road. Today, the museum is a focus for special exhibitions.

One of our hosts, who had arranged both this visit and that to the engine museum, invited us to see his private collection and this we did before returning to our hotel and having a last evening meal together.

Report by Ian White, Duncan Greig and Jack Knight. All photos by Ian White; those taken in NT houses remain copyright of the National Trust.