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## HOROLOGICAL NEWS

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### ERIC JOHN TYLER

Eric John Tyler, Founder Member and Fellow of the AHS, died on 2 July 2012 after a short illness at the age of 92. With his passing, a link with the prehistory of the Society has been severed. He attended the meeting at Northampton Square at which the Antiquarian Section of the BHI was formed.

John's interest in horology began before the war as he had already acquired a copy of Britten's *Handbook*. He had also encountered a book on the Netherlands which had ignited an interest in all things Dutch and a wish to visit the country. After the war he attended evening classes to learn the language before venturing abroad. He made many visits to Holland and sought out the de Waart brothers, who were making Friesland *stoelklokken* by traditional methods. At that time the only book available on Dutch horology was by Ottema, published in Dutch before the war. John wrote a book on Dutch clocks, but he lost control of the manuscript, which was plagiarised and never returned.

In spite of this setback he eventually went on to write several books on clocks, which have proved their worth in encouraging those drawn to the subject; a list is appended.

During the 1950s a hoard of Friesland *stoelklokken* was discovered in London. They were bought by a member and many were restored by John. Unfortunately someone had prior access to the collection, so many of the clocks were incomplete. The making of new dials led John to take up painting. One of his paintings, of the former locomotive works at Hornchurch, hung in the museum at North Woolwich (now closed).

Dutch clocks led John to Black Forest clocks, so he learnt German to visit and study them.

When Dr Torrens' library came up for sale, Malcolm Gardner's catalogue thereof included Jacob Auch, *Handbuch für Landuhrmacher* (1827). It contained detailed instructions for making a verge watch, with the remark that it ought to be translated and published in English. John took the hint, bought the book and undertook the labour of translation. It was eventually published in 2005 by Richard Watkins at Kingston, Tasmania, with a kindly introduction

and a list of all John's book publications.

When the Society rented two rooms from the BHI at Northampton Square, John, as Librarian, attended there on a regular basis so that members could have access to the Society's collection of books. He also contributed 'Further Reading' to the journal for many years.

As the grandson of a Great Northern engine driver who drove an 8ft single, it was natural that John should take an interest in railways. During the war he was a volunteer engine cleaner and so learnt the details of Brighton locomotives. In 1948 he led a party of the Railway Correspondence & Travel Society to Holland on their first tour abroad since the war.

John also took a keen interest in paddle steamers and their machinery, visiting the Rhine and Swiss lakes as well as the coast of Britain. He long wanted to be in a paddle steamer in rough weather. He got his wish. At the end of the summer season, Campbell's steamers on the south coast sailed to their winter quarters in Cardiff. John repeatedly joined the small number of passengers taken in Spartan conditions on these sailings. One year, when off the Lizard, the weather was so bad that the captain decided to return to Falmouth for shelter, with the passengers returning home by train. As *Cardiff Queen* turned broadside across the sea, the waves broke over the funnels and John thought his last hour had come.

On his retirement from Cable and Wireless, John and his wife moved to Battle and eventually to Hornchurch to be near the grandchildren.

John's interest in horology remained untainted by pecuniary considerations. Those who knew him will remember his serious manner, helpfulness and quiet humour. Our sympathy goes to his widow, who devoted a lifetime to his care, and to his daughter and family.

R.J. Law

Book publications by E.J. Tyler: *European Clocks*, 1968; *Clocks and Watches*, 1974; *The Craft of the Clockmaker*, 1974; *Rye Church Clock*, 1976; *Black Forest Clocks*, 1977; *American Clocks for the Collector*, 1981; *How to make a wooden wheeled clock*, 1982; *Clock Types*, 1982; *Clock Museums and Collections Visited*, 1983; *The Clockmakers of Sussex*, 1986; *The Clockmakers of Hertfordshire*, 1997

## PHILIP ROGERS (1945–2012)

As we were going to press we heard with great sadness of the death of Philip Rogers. ‘Phil’ to so many of us, the England-based partner in Rogers Turner Books, a great bibliophile who never failed to source the very finest, rarest and desirable of horological literature. A fuller appreciation is in preparation.



## CORRECTION

In the obituary of Jeff Darken that appeared in the last issue, mention was made of his superb photography skills – appreciated by many over the years. However, in detailing his editing of the *Horological Masterworks* catalogue, we fell into error in attributing to him the photography as well. In fact, as Jeff’s foreword made clear, all the superb photographs in that catalogue were the work of Dr John C. Taylor, to whom the society is of course also extremely grateful for the establishment of the resulting Masterworks Fund.

Since the educational goals of the society are not always visible, it is worth reminding our members that from its creation this fund has been the source for bursaries and prizes granted by the society to students at both Birmingham University and West Dean College – a vital source of support for which those students, and the society on their behalf, are extremely grateful. Current commitments to students stretch into 2013 and will see the fund nearly depleted. Council is therefore actively considering further ways to fund the continuance of such educational bursaries, which we see as integral to the society’s charitable goals.



## MARGATE TIME BALL

Margate Clock Tower is an iconic and well-loved feature of Margate. Built to commemorate Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, it was officially opened on 24 May 1889, the Queen’s 70th birthday.

The Clock Tower boasts a time ball, used to allow ships at sea and onlookers on shore to set their clocks accurately. The time ball is a large



copper ball which was raised to the top of the mast at the pinnacle of the tower and dropped at precisely 1.00pm. Unfortunately, the time ball at Margate has not worked for many years and Margate Civic Society is raising funds to enable Thanet District Council, the owner of the Clock Tower, to restore the time ball to full working order.

AHS member Mike Bundock, former chairman of the Turret Clock Group, is advisor to Margate Civic Society on this project, and is writing a book on the history of Margate Clock Tower. It will cost £10 plus £2 p&c and all funds raised will go towards the time ball project. Subscribers to the project who order and pay for the book in advance will have their names printed in it on publication. Mike Bundock is not charging any fee for his work. It is intended to publish the book in May 2013.

To pre-order, contact Mrs Lynda Smith, 5 Addington Square, Margate CT9 1NN, tel (01843) 228174, email [membership@margatecivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:membership@margatecivicsociety.org.uk)



York's Little Admiral clock back after restoration, and seen from the other side on facing page. Photos Clive N Ponsford.

## 'LITTLE ADMIRAL' RETURNS AFTER TEN-MONTH REFIT

York's Little Admiral clock, described as one of the city's most famous sights, is now back in place following extensive restoration work.

The clock, affixed to the outside of the church of St Martin's in Coney Street, takes its name from a carved figure of a naval officer, which surmounts a projecting drum and ornamental metal bracket, with dials facing up and down the street.

Similar figures – mostly Georgian – are known to have stood outside the shops of nautical instrument dealers. A fictional one, featured in Charles Dickens' novel *Dombey and Son*, was called the Wooden Midshipman; which was also the name by which the shop was known. Mostly these carved effigies are holding a quadrant. The York 'admiral' however differs in that he is holding what appears to be a cross-staff, a navigational instrument from an earlier age.

The clock, suffering from corrosion and other problems, was taken down in November 2011 for restoration at the Cumbria Clock

Company workshops near Penrith. Ten months later it was returned to the church, which is situated on one of the city's busiest shopping streets, and on Monday 3 September 2012 was rededicated by the Archdeacon of York, the Venerable Richard Seed.

The clock movement itself is some distance from the dials, to which it is linked; it now strikes the hours and chimes the quarters and in addition the 'admiral' revolves to follow the sun, as in former times.

Mr Andrew Hingston of St Martin's Church, who oversaw the renovation project, said: 'We only realised the scale of the work once the clock was in the workshop. The 19th century bracket has been repaired, repainted and gilded, and the face of Father Time [on the outside of the bracket] has been replaced. The figure of the Little Admiral [damaged in the Blitz in 1942] has been repainted in the correct 18th century colours and for the first time in nearly two centuries revolves as he originally did.'

The strike has been reinstated; new and better lights have been installed to illuminate the dials at night; and the clock has new quarter chimes written by York composer Andrew Carter.



The church has had several clocks since the 17th century, including new ones in 1754 and 1856, the latter made by Thomas Cooke, the city's leading Victorian clockmaker and instrument maker, who was based next to the church in Coney Street. Regrettably it was destroyed in the blitz in 1942, but a replacement – a new flatbed movement - was made in 1966 by a local clockmaker Geoffrey Newey, a series of connecting rods taking the drive across 20 metres of roofing to the dials .

Among those who kept the clock in order in former times were two of the city's most eminent clockmakers, Henry Hindley (to whom payments were made in 1732, 1742 etc) and John Agar (various payments 1779, 1780, 1786, 1787, 1796, 1801 and 1805).

More information on the clock's history, and many photos, can be found on the church website <http://www.stmartinsyork.org.uk/>.

By coincidence a recent issue of the *Bulletin of the Scientific Instrument Society* (No 114, September 2012, pp. 20-26) contains a well-illustrated and most informative article by Peter de Clercq, headed 'Carved Shop Signs of Nautical Instrument Sellers'. More than a dozen are discussed, including the York 'admiral'.



The shop sign outside the premises of Frodsham & Co. at Brompton Road, London, sometime before 1973. The figure is 138 cm high. Photo Charles Frodsham & Co Ltd.

Interestingly one of the last shops to display a timber midshipman trade sign was that of Charles Frodsham and Co, the famous clock and chronometer makers who acquired it in Leith (Edinburgh) shortly after the Second World War and displayed it outside their premises at 173 Brompton Road, London. It remained there for about 25 years and then, when the premises were closed down in 1973, was sold. Its present whereabouts are unknown (see Vaudrey Mercer, *The Frodshams*, AHS 1981, p. 188).

Clive N Ponsford



## INSTRUMENTS AND TIME

Anyone interested in the history of scientific instruments can join the Scientific Instrument Society (SIS), which publishes a quarterly Bulletin. For details: [www.sis.org.uk](http://www.sis.org.uk). There are also the annual symposiums organized by the Scientific Instrument Commission (SIC), a constituent organization of the International Union of the History and Philosophy of Science. SIC seeks to encourage scholarly research on the history of scientific instruments, and the preservation and documentation of collections of instruments, as well as their use within the

wider discipline of the history of science. There is no formal membership - anyone can take part in these symposiums.

For its forthcoming symposium, to be held in Manchester in July 2013, the SIC has suggested two themes. One is 'Trade and transfer of instruments'. The other - the reason we draw attention to it here - is 'Time'. The organizers write:

Acceptable papers can be about any kind of scientific instrument related to time measuring, time finding, time recording, time and work, time and music, time and psychology, time and navigation, time in sports, or any other topic involving time-associated instruments.

For more details visit [www.sic.iuhps.org](http://www.sic.iuhps.org).



## KEEPING TIME AT FAIRFAX HOUSE, YORK

With the claim to be the 'finest Georgian town house in England', Fairfax House is indeed a fine building with a quite exceptional collection of clocks in the permanent collection including important examples by East, Knibb, Graham and Hindley displayed amongst the equally fine period furniture. Fairfax House is active in promoting exhibitions and the latest, *Keeping Time*, explores the development of timekeeping from the late 17th century focusing on the contribution from York and Yorkshire. Care has been taken to represent not only the famous names such as Henry Hindley of York and the Listers of Halifax, but also such as John Smeaton, a well known watchmaker in his own day but perhaps even more notable as the great-grandfather of one of the greatest engineers of the 18th century. These amongst other makers representative of this great county. Apart from the clocks there are several movements both thirty hour and eight day and a very fine wheel cutting engine by Thomas Green of Liverpool.

The highlight of the exhibition, heralded as 'The Genius of John Harrison Revealed at Fairfax House', is the first public appearance of the James Harrison precision longcase clock, the important discovery from Leeds City Museums. The clock featured in this journal (Vol 31 no 4 June 2009,



The movement of the James Harrison precision longcase clock, on display in York, with close-up of the signature. Photo Fairfax House (Nigel Kirby).



pp. 525-542). This is the clock known to have been sold by Harrison in 1727 and, although known to subsequent generations of the Harrison family, it vanished to the wider world until quite recently. This amazingly original artifact is displayed alongside a full reconstruction of one of these clocks, another first public appearance, to represent the first two of these clocks made by the Harrison brothers for their crucial early experiments. Also making a rare appearance is the sundial made in 1732 by James Harrison for Holy Trinity Church, Barrow-upon-Humber. To further extend the Harrison interest there is



A view of the Keeping Time exhibition. The Harrison longcase is at the far end to the right. In the central showcase an equatorially mounted telescope by the clock and instrument maker Henry Hindley of York (1701-1771), lent by the Burton Constable Foundation. Photo Fairfax House (Nigel Kirby).



a pocket watch by John Harrison's son, William Harrison, dating from the 1780-90 period and, unusually, numbered: 33. The watch, a timepiece, has been restored following the clear evidence that it had originally incorporated the escapement as used by John Harrison in the famous prize winning watch, H4. It would appear that this could represent the entrepreneurial character of William after the death of his father. Another similar watch is known, further suggesting that William could have had a limited production of these watches.

This is a small exhibition in magnificent surroundings now including the very latest bequest of a longcase clock by George Etherington, the case of the very finest parquetry including intriguing motifs possibly illustrative of the life of the first custodian.

The exhibition continues until 30 December.

Andrew King

Longcase clock signed in the arch above the dial John Agar York. Photo Fairfax House (Nigel Kirby).



## CLOCKWATCHING AT THE FOUNDLING MUSEUM

With help from AHS funding for publicity, five students from West Dean College Clocks Department attended the 'Clock Watching' weekend event on 27-28 October at the Foundling Museum with tutor Matthew Read and conservation coordinator Su Fullwood. The museum ([www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk](http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk)) is located in Bloomsbury, London, near the British Museum, and tells the story of the Foundling Hospital, established in 1739 and existing until 1954. Its collections include paintings, sculpture, prints, manuscripts, furniture, clocks and historical documents. The building also houses the Gerald Coke Handel collection. Handel's watch, on loan from the British Museum, is currently on display in the dedicated gallery.

The event was a celebration of all things related to time. Our challenge was to overhaul the excellent collection of clock movements within one of the historic galleries, under the gaze of the visiting public. We arrived on Saturday morning to set up our workshop in

the Picture Gallery. In this inspiring setting, Matthew and the students began their work of dismantling, photographing, recording, assessing, cleaning and oiling the clocks in turn. As soon as the museum opened the room was full of visitors engaging with the work. There were also formal gallery talks and a chance to look closely at clock movements and parts in an attempt to explain how historic clocks run and, more importantly, how conservators preserve them for future generations.

Clock highlights for me included an 8 day rack striking longcase movement signed James Foulsham, Norwich and a drop dial tavern clock that hangs in the café and now keeps the right time for visitors to consult.

Over the weekend we met with many people and overhauled several special clock movements. The Foundling Museum staff were very generous in their hospitality, providing lunch for us each day. Peter de Clercq of the AHS joined us on Saturday. We would like to thank all those involved in making it a wonderful, active, informative and colourful weekend for all.

Su Fullwood