Jonathan Betts is Senior Curator of Horology at The Royal Observatory (part of Royal Museums Greenwich).

Born in 1955 into a Suffolk-based family of retail watchmakers and jewellers, he has been involved in the business of timekeeping and old clocks and watches since childhood. He says he has rejoiced in the horological ‘virus’ ever since. After studying the subject at Hackney College between 1972 and 1975 (winning the British Horological Institute’s national prize for practical watch-making that year), he spent five years in private practice as a clock conservator in Ipswich, being made a Fellow of the BHI in 1977. He is also a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, the International Institute for Conservation and the Royal Society of Arts.

Since starting at Greenwich in 1980 Jonathan has been Horological Adviser to the National Trust of Great Britain and is currently also Curatorial Adviser to the Harris (Belmont) Charity, the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, the Wallace Collection and a number of private collections. He is a Council Member of the Antiquarian Horological Society, Vice President of the BHI, and President of the South London Branch of the Institute.


Jonathan has just completed a catalogue of the collection of marine chronometers at the RMG (OUP).

In 1989 he was awarded the National Maritime Museum’s Callender Award, in 2002 the Clockmakers’ Company’s Harrison Gold Medal, in 2008 the BHI Barrett Silver Medal and the Queen’s 2012 Jubilee honours saw him awarded the MBE ‘For Services to Horology’. In 2013 he was awarded the Plowden Medal by the Royal Warrant Holder’s Association for his contribution to horology conservation.

Jonathan is immensely proud of his association with the Clockmakers’ Company whose charter, unaltered since its Royal assent in 1631, links today’s horologists in a direct line back to the great illustrious names of the past such as Shortt and Vulliamy and early masters Edward East, the Fromanteels and Thomas Tompion.

Jonathan says: “One of the very special aspects of our Company is the continuing connection with highly-regarded members of the profession. The creative horological work of many of our members today clearly shows there is a great future for the craft of horology in England.”

This horological fascination extends to historic literature (Jonathan has an extensive library on the subject) as well as a wider interest in antiques generally, including collecting 18th century English drinking glasses. He also has a particular interest in the history of motoring and has a small collection of old cars. Jonathan and partner Steve have lived in Greenwich for over 30 years.
What goes round comes round. I feel that clockmakers know that better than many others. So it is with the Clerk’s year. I am delighted to have met so many members in the last few months and corresponded with others who are further afield or whose commitments have prevented attendance at recent events. I am also looking forward to organising the programme for 2014 on the basis of some prior knowledge and with the advantage of a firm base – no office move this year. On which note, please do call in at Carpenters’ Hall to visit Kerry and me if you are in the vicinity of EC2. The Clockmakers are now at 1 Throgmorton Avenue on the 3rd Floor between the dentist and financial recruitment company. I think a prize of some sort is in order for the first person who can combine a visit to all three organisations. The outline programme for the year appears in this Newsletter and will be kept updated on the Clockmakers’ web-site.

If you can’t call in to visit, do make sure that you keep us updated on any changes to your contact details. The Clerks’ email updates now receive about twenty ‘undeliverable’ returns and it gets quite hard to track down their owners. Can you please remember to keep us informed of any changes to your email address or the preferential address you wish us to use. While on the subject of email, could I also ask that we all try and keep the content of any email related to its subject header? Some of us, me included, tend to stray off subject particularly when it’s a chain of correspondence making it all the harder to identify, for example, an event booking next week under the heading of a meeting next year.

2014 being such a significant year for the Board of Longitude, I was pleasantly surprised to see what I thought was South West Trains doing their bit for advertising the 300th Anniversary with a suitably named station café at Clapham Junction. I think it’s probably more to do with the location of Clapham Junction: 0.17º off the prime meridian, good enough for SW Trains timetabling!

Kerry and I look forward to seeing you at forthcoming events in 2014.

For events with an asterisk (*) eligibility may be restricted to Liverymen or priority given to Liverymen over Freemen in the allocation of places. Check on the web-site www.clockmakers.org for specific details.

What’s On

**INSTALLATION COURT**, Choral Evensong, and Dinner  
Wednesday, 29th January 2014 at 5.15pm  
Painters’ Hall & St James Garlickhythe

**PAST STEWARDS’ DINNER**  
Monday 24th February 2014  
Bakers’ Hall

**VISIT TO UNIVERSITY OF LONDON OBSERVATORY**  
February/March TBC

**POULTERS PANCAKE RACES**  
Tuesday, 4th March 2014 at 12 noon  
Guildhall Yard

**UNITED GUILDS SERVICE**  
Friday, 4th April 2014 at 11.00 am  
St Paul’s Cathedral

**LADY DAY COURT Luncheon**,  
Monday, 7th April 2014 at 1.00 pm  
Carpenters’ Hall

**MASTER’S OUTING to the Isle of Man**  
7-10th May 2014

**SONS OF THE CLERGY SERVICE**  
Tuesday 13th May 2014 at 5.30pm  
St Paul’s Cathedral

**MIDSUMMER COURT**  
Tuesday 1st July 2014  
Bakers’ Hall (TBC)

**FOUR LIVERIES LECTURE**  
(Ironmongers’ organising this year)  
Tuesday 8th July 2014 at 6.30 pm  
Scientific Instrument Makers’ Hall / Glaziers’ Hall

**MASTER’S OUTING TO GREENWICH**  
Thursday 10th July 2014  
Exclusive pre-opening private view of the Royal Museums Greenwich exhibition Ships, Clocks and Stars

**LADY LIVERYMEN AND FREEMEN’S LUNCH**  
In early July at Grays Inn … TBA

**LADY LIVERYMEN AND FREEMEN’S LUNCH**  
Monday, 7th April 2014 at 1.00 pm  
Carpenters’ Hall

**MINDYOUR BUSINESS’ LUNCHEON**  
Monday 29th September 2014  
Goldsmiths’ Hall

**MIDSUMMER COURT**  
Tuesday 1st July 2014  
Bakers’ Hall (TBC)

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**MASTER’S OUTING to Sussex**  
11-12 September 2014  
Visit to the manufacturing establishment of Charles Frodsham & Co. Ltd

**MICHAELMAS COURT DINNER & HARRISON LECTURE**  
Tuesday 23rd September 2014 at 6.45 pm  
Carpenters’ Hall

**ELECTION OF LORD MAYOR**  
Monday 29th September 2014  
Goldsmiths’ Hall

**CLOCKMAKERS’ ANNUAL BANQUET**  
Tuesday 18th November  
Goldsmiths’ Hall

**FESTIVAL OF ST CECILIA**  
November 2014  
Westminster Abbey

**CAROL SERVICE**  
In December TBA

Further details about all events can be found on the web-site.
New Stewards for 2014

Dr James Nye
Jane Pedler
Robert Wren
Keith Scobie-Youngs

The Master’s Voice

A great deal has happened since my column in the July 2013 “Clockmaker”. Firstly we have moved office and are now housed at Carpenters’ Hall. Details are on the website but please note that the telephone number has changed to 0207 998 8120.

The events I mentioned in July have taken place. On our visit to a member’s collection in Somerset we were generously entertained and viewed an amazing collection of clocks. The trip to Padua in Italy was blessed with good weather. One of the unexpected highlights was finding a previously unrecorded Frodsham regulator in the La Specola observatory. This, apparently, is very similar to the Frodsham regulator at the Harvard observatory but unlike that one it is complete with all its paperwork including the hotel bill of the man from Frodshams who took it to Padua and set it up! It is an exciting find about which details will be published in an appropriate journal in due course. The Harrison Lecture by Past Master Sir George White was extensively researched and of high academic content. It was delivered in a most entertaining manner and enjoyed by all present. There is a hope that it might be published in the future.

At the end of October the Livery Dinner was held at Merchant Taylors’ Hall. Our chief guest was the Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, a Liveryman of the Company, who gave a very amusing and lively response on behalf of the guests although he had only arrived back from Brazil on the morning of the dinner. It was my pleasure at the dinner to make two awards. The first was the Master’s Medal to Past Master Richard Cope for his long and devoted service to the Company. The second was the Poole Cup to Mathew Porton for being the outstanding horology student of 2013.

It was a very special pleasure for me to announce at the Livery Dinner the introduction of a new international award for “the creation, development and/or institution of a significant advance in horological technology or the measurement of time”. The value of this award is to be £20,000, the same as that of the original Longitude Prize in 1714. The award has been instituted and funded by United Technologies Corporation (UTC) of Hartford, Connecticut, USA. Dr. Michael McQuade, a Senior Vice President of UTC, installed as an Honorary Freeman of the Clockmakers’ Company earlier in the day, was a guest at the dinner. The award is to be managed by the Clockmakers’ Company and will be awarded no more than once every three years if a suitable recipient is identified. It will be the most valuable international horological prize in the world. The award is to be named “The Derek Pratt Prize” after that most distinguished, innovative and precise British horologist the late Derek Pratt. It was a great honour that Derek’s widow, Jenny, and his sister, Sheila, were able to be with us at the Livery Dinner.

The first Derek Pratt Prize will be awarded at an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich in July 2014. Dr. Kevin Fewster, Director of the Royal Museums Greenwich, a guest at the dinner, gave the first public announcement of this exhibition. It is to be called “Ships, Clocks and Stars : the Quest for Longitude” and will run from 11th July 2014 to 4th January 2015 before going on tour to Australia and the USA.

Apart from the above, more has happened in the last six months. An excellent illustrated 44 page booklet on the history and traditions of the Company has been produced by Past Clerk, Joe Buxton. This is to be given to special guests of the Clockmakers and used at exhibitions and events to promote the Company. Copies will be available to members, in due course, from the website shop. Following a suggestion from Liveryman Michael Gibbons, which was supported by the Court, bars for Stewards and Past Stewards to be attached to the cord of their Livery Badges have been made.

Past Stewards who wish to purchase one should contact the Clerk. A new bale to support the Master’s travelling badge from its ribbon has been designed and made by Liveryman Apollonius Nooten-Boom. It is made of 18K gold with an inset hematite stone at the top – the gold and black of our livery colours. The stone represents the armature of a watch and the body of the bale one of the watch hands.

Apple has donated this to the Company and we thank him for his generosity.

The Company still needs volunteers to help with its various panels and activities. Particularly at present a public relations expert is needed as not enough is being done to promote the Company and horology in general to the outside world. If you would like to help please contact the Clerk and let him know your special interests and expertise.

This year there are two amazing landmarks for the Father of the Company, Past Master Thomas Gurney Mercer OBE, DL. He has been 75 years a member of the Company and it is 50 years since he was Master in 1963.

Finally, I leave you with this thought. A clock is like a woman it can be beautiful and you can fall in love with it but you’ll never completely understand its nuances or what makes it tick.
What’s Up at the Museum?
Keeper Sir George White updates The Clockmaker...

Clause 5 of the Clockmakers’ bye-laws of 1632, lists the wider trades under the Company’s jurisdiction. These ‘incorporated arts’ include ‘selling, buying, importing, exporting or in any way trading in clocks, watches, ‘larums and sun-dials, casemaking, graving, mathematical-instrument-making in any nature, condition or material whatsoever…’

The list was actually made to remind the ‘incorporated artists’ that owed their allegiance and their quarterage to our Company. Equally it stood (and still stands) to remind the Company of the trades which it has an obligation to nurture.

Despite the fact that there is barely an antique clock or watch in the world which lacks engraving, ‘graving’ is one of the ‘incorporated arts’ to which the Company has of late paid the least attention. This was not so in the past (freemen included such distinguished engravers as Simon Gribelin and Matthias Darly) and it will not be in the future, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of Liveryman Chris Rowley.

It was through his determined efforts that in October 2006, the Hand Engravers’ Association was formed (www.handengravers.co.uk), with Chris himself as fund-raiser and the distinguished craftsmen Alan Craxford and David Bedford as Chairman and Treasurer.

The trio launched “Cut in Clerkenwell” with the help of numerous grants and volunteer labour, in 2011. This was a six month project to assemble the history of 20th century engraving in London, to mount an exhibition at Craft Central and to hold practical workshops at which anyone interested could learnt the basics of the craft. As though that were not enough, they persuaded Association members to engrave a square of silver each, to be mounted on identical wooden blocks to form a contemporary collection of hand-engraved paperweights. To mark the end of the project in April 2012, a celebratory party, exhibition and practical demonstration of hand engraving was held at Guildhall Library.

There the paperweights were formally presented to the Clockmakers’ Museum for permanent exhibition. They are magnificent, colourful and inspiring. They are well worth a visit. Do come and see them.

With characteristic fervour, Chris Rowley addresses a crowded room at Guildhall at the “Cut in Clerkenwell” closing party.

This engraved silver tea kettle has been donated to the Clockmakers’ Company by Mrs Alison Young of Edinburgh who inherited it from a relative. It had originally been presented to Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy (1780-1854) by the Clockmakers’ Court of 1849 in recognition of his forty years of ‘eminence and dedicated service’.

New Additions to the Museum
by Liveryman David Newman

The Trustees of The George Daniels Educational Trust have recently purchased a Daniels gold pocket chronometer. The movement of lepine-calibre construction, 48 hour duration with a single going-barrel, Daniels three position keyless winding, Daniels slim co-axial escapement (the first watch to include this escapement), a silver engine-turned dial with gold seconds ring and sectors for reserve of winding and thermometer. The gold open faced case is hallmarked London 1983, the watch was sold to a private collector in 1986. The watch is signed Daniels, DLR, N-C. This watch has been loaned to the Museum by the GDET Trustees.

The Daniels Trustees and Roger Smith had also given to the Museum the design prototype of the Daniels anniversary watch. This Daniels /Smith collaboration watch was launched in 2010 to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Daniels co-axial escapement, it also marked the very first time that a series of hand-made wristwatches with a new movement fully designed by GD and made on the Isle of Man have been offered to the public.

The watch is manually wound with a power-reserve indicator, calendar and seconds dial in a style reminiscent of the famous tourbillon chronograph pocket watch created by GD in 1994.

Both watches are on display in the Museum.

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‘I would estimate your watch is worth around £250,000-300,000, Sir.’
Now, in my experience this could have gone one of three ways: shock and disbelief, laughter, or outrage. I braced myself.

Either way you looked at it, it was a strong start to the day. I had begun at around 5am, and arrived in Italy for my monthly valuation days. The following trips that month would be to Munich, Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Paris…and Inverness! Needless to say, I don’t have a typical working week, let alone a typical working day. You have to be able to think on your feet and be prepared for valuing anything from a collection of 18th century pair case pocket watches, to the aforementioned Patek Philippe minute repeating wristwatch, bought by the client only 5 years ago.

When I’m in the London office, my day might be spent cataloguing or researching the things I find. This is usually between on the spot ‘walk in’ valuations (we regularly have as many as 15-20 a day). When I can, I try to read around the watches as much as I can, visit museums and collections, attend auctions, read watch blogs and publications, as well as try to attend the odd watch course. There is so much information available on the internet these days, and many of our clients have been collecting for decades, so I have to work hard to keep up to date with current and fluctuating market prices, as well as having a thorough and broad knowledge of a huge subject.

Many people I meet, including the Italian Patek Philippe Reference 5079 collector, are somewhat surprised to meet a young (ish) and female watch specialist, although most of the top International watch specialists are in fact women.

People forget that since I started at Bonhams around 8 years ago, I’ve seen and catalogued well over 10,000 watches!

Naturally, I’m always on the hunt for that elusive and lucrative star lot, but, of course, the most interesting pieces aren’t always the most valuable. Last June, we were fortunate to have sold a fantastic collection of 16th-18th century clocks and watches, including a particular favourite, a silver cased double wheel duplex pocket watch by James Foggio. This maker had an exciting history as he was essentially rescued by the great Breguet himself when he went on the run to France to avoid imminent arrest by the British government for being a radical socialist. Working on this collection was fascinating and educational, but I also had a very personal insight into seeing how somebody built up such a collection.

Another important part of my job after all is advising people on an interesting and sound purchase for the future.

The end result of all this travelling and hard work culminates on the day in the auction. Of course we have multiple international phone bidders, but people often travel across the world to attend the auction to fight over the star lots. It can move very quickly, usually around 100 lots an hour, where a watch might sell for hundreds of thousands in just a matter of minutes. Then the gavel goes down at the end of the sale and it’s all over. Then I’m straight back out there finding that next lot.
The Clockmakers’ Charity Panel meets quarterly and over the past 12 months has considered a variety of good causes, horological and otherwise. For example, supporting horological workshops and students in training, restoring a clockmaker’s tomb, commemorating other clockmakers, purchasing a clockmaker’s portrait, as well as clock-restoration appeals and many other appeals to the Charity, including City-based appeals such as the Lord Mayor’s Appeal.

The Panel should be doing a great deal more, but is hampered by lack of funds. Members can help improve the Charity’s ability to support worthwhile causes in three ways:

1. Regular Charitable Donations.
   If you are not already making a regular charitable donation to the Clockmakers’ Charity and would like to do so, please contact the Clerk’s office for a Regular Giving and Gift Aid form.

2. Collection Boxes.
   If you are running or working in a clock or watch-making business – have you got a Clockmakers’ Charity box on display? Customers can be invited to make a donation in lieu of, or in addition to, some small service and the contents can be emptied annually on Charter Day. Charity boxes are available from the Clerk’s Office.

3. Legacy bequests.
   Additional tax allowances were introduced in April 2012 for legacy bequests that have been the subject of recent guidance from the Lord Mayor’s Office. The following example gives an indication of the tax benefits to be gained from a legacy bequest:

   Assume an estate has a taxable balance of £100,000. If some of this is left to charity, only the balance is subject to tax.

   If £4,000 is left to charity, the balance of £96,000 is taxed at 40%. So tax of £38,400 is deducted from estate, leaving £57,600 for other legatees.

   If £9,000 is left to charity, the balance of £91,000 is taxed at 40%. So tax of £36,400 is deducted from estate, leaving £54,600 for other legatees.

   If £10,000 is left to charity, the balance of £90,000 is taxed at 40%. So tax of £36,000 is deducted, leaving £54,000 for other legatees.

   In short, there is no cost to the other legatees from increasing the donations from 4% to 10%. But the favourable tax rate is only effective when charitable donations reach 10%. There is no benefit at 9% and no additional benefit above 10%.

   Copies of the latest guidance on legacy bequests are available to all members on request from the Clerk.

The Clockmaker’s gift to the Company, presented at the 2013 Livery Dinner, is a unique timer. In outline it evokes an armillary sphere, the ancient crest of the Company, but in fact contains a sand-glass adjusted to precisely seven minutes. A witty inscription around its equator reveals that its purpose is to limit the length of formal speeches. Seven minutes was chosen because the Master believes that it is sufficient time for any good speaker to make their point and also because seven minutes is a critical period in vascular surgery, the Master’s medical speciality. It is engraved with emblems reflecting the Master’s career and was commissioned from Liveryman Joanna Migdal (Lady White), who is soon to join the Court of the Company. It was made in hallmarked silver and walnut by Grant Macdonald Ltd., of London.
The ladies enjoy their annual summer lunch at Gray’s Inn. All lady Clockmakers are welcome – the more the merrier.

1. Galileo’s rostrum at Padua University from which he lectured.
2. Jacopo de’ Dondi’s (1298-1355) clock on the façade of the Clock Tower in Piazza dei Signori.
3. A replica of Giovanni (1318-1389) de’Dondi’s astrarium at the University, the forerunner of astronomical clocks in Europe, and constructed following his original design treatise.
4. At peace with the world.

Livery Dinner, Merchant Taylors’ Hall.
The Master with Past Master David Poole (left), and the 2013 winner of the Poole Cup, Mathew Porton.
Dining in the magnificent hall of the Merchant Taylors
The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke MP QC addresses his audience at the Livery Dinner.

The Harrison Lecture
Sir George White giving this year’s Harrison Lecture entitled ‘Don’t Mention the War’ – the English Civil War, that is!

‘Picturing Time’ competition (Reception & Prize-giving)
The Clerk (left) and Craig Palmer, a student at Staffordshire University, in front of his winning entry ‘Just a Moment’

All photographs in this issue have been kindly supplied by:
Anne Berkley (Padua);
Bonhams Ltd. (K. Lacey working);
Michael Gibbons (Padua);
Howard Newman (Portrait);
Brenda Blackburn (Lacey Portrait/Silver Tea Kettle);
Royal Greenwich Museum (Betts portrait);
Gerald Sharp Ltd. (Livery Dinner);
Roger W. Smith Ltd. (Daniels’ Watches);
Patricia Snell (Company Move);
Anthony Gray/Robert Sales (Harrison Lecture);
Sir George White Bt (Sundial).

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Past Master Howard Newman reveals his innermost secrets...

1. What prompted your interest in horology? Being brought up in a family business surrounded by clocks and watches, as a youngster during school holidays I loved to help with the servicing of church turret clocks.

2. What was the first time piece you owned? I was given a good slim stainless-steel automatic wrist watch.

3. Where is it now? It is now my gardening watch!

4. What would you do with a million pound lottery win? Create a museum and study centre showing examples of Scientific, Technological and Industrial Horology along with Barometers, Meteorological and Navigational Instruments.

5. What’s your favourite book? I don’t seem to have much time to read non-horological books but one of the great reads of the past was ‘Papillon’ by Henri Charrière.

6. Favourite piece of music? ‘Building the Barn’ (soundtrack from the film Witness) composed by the late Maurice Jarre.

7. Favourite film? ‘The Railway Children’, it is still such good family entertainment

8. What do you never leave home without? My hearing-aid!

Caption Competition

Rather than speculate on Simon & Cathlyn Davidson’s motives in this picture, we thought you might like to have a go. The Clerk has promised to donate “a generous prize” to the best submitted caption. Please send your entry to Simon Frodsham simon@indepost.co.uk with the heading ‘Caption Competition’ in the subject line. Captions, not longer than 25 words, should be submitted by February 1st.

New Court Assistants from 2014:
Mark Levy
Joanna Migdal

Promotion to Livery
at Michaelmas Court at Carpenters’ Hall on 23rd September 2013:
Samantha Davies

Admission as Freemen
at Michaelmas Court:
Laura Blaxland
Lawrence Crusinger
Colin Evans
Andrew Herbert
Donald Weston
Philip White
Anthony Dessain
John Kirk
Anthony Kingsley
Tim Morgan
Daryn Schnipper
Martha Willoughby

Admitted as an Honorary Freeman
on 31st October 2013 at a Special Admissions Court at Merchant Taylors’ Hall:
Dr Michael McQuade

Special acknowledgement to the “Father of the Company”
To commemorate 75 years as a member of the Company:
Past Master Gurney Mercer

BHI Awards Day
on 26th October:
Awarded Honorary Fellowship of the BHI: Mr Philip Whyte: Renter Warden (Senior Warden from 29th January 2014)

Awarded BHI’s Silver Barrett Medal. Awarded to Liveryman David Thomson, FSA FBHI “for service to the history of horology and for his curatorial work”. In a special citation, BHI Vice President, Kenneth Lloyd Jones HonFBHI, said of David’s highly acclaimed horological work at the British Museum: “After nearly 34 years, David Thompson retired from the British Museum in March this year. He started in August 1979 and has been the Senior Curator of Horology since 1995”. Despite his ‘retirement’ he still attends intermittently, and continues his researches.

This evocative portrait of the late Past Master George Daniels CBE, DSc, FBHI, FSA is to hang in the Museum. Painted by John Walton RP, it was recently bought by the Clockmakers Charity from the Daniels Trust.