

Membership

If you have paid your membership for 2022 you will have received your new orange membership card. If you are one of the few that have not paid please complete the membership form and return to me with your cheque. If you have paid and not received your card please contact me and I will sort it out :-Phone 01543506195 or email electricwilliam@gmail.com

Wanted For the workshop

A VIBROGRAPH B200 MICROPHONE

Any you have we will consider (if not Vibrograph) adapting if possible

Please contact Alan Westgate home 01342 619 100 or Mobile 07989 783841 or at the workshop

Thanks for any help

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Contact Bill 01543506195 or electricwilliam@gmail.com

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Est 1858

South London Branch British Horological Institute

Newsletter No. 520 July 2022

Branch No 25. Founded 1978

Meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month

At The White Hart Barn (Godstone Village Hall)

Godstone Surrey RH9 8DU at 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

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"As time is always running, we should say the clock has legs rather than hands." Anthony Liccione

**Next Month's Meeting
14th July**

Chris Papworth MBHI.

A history of clockmaking in Essex.

Chris Papworth has been working in the horological industry for over 50 years. Along with his wife, he runs his own business, Kelvedon clocks in the High Street, Kelvedon, Essex. He is a director and past chairman the British Watch and Clockmakers Guild. Chris has experience and a wide variety of contacts throughout the trade. Working with clocks as long as he has, has brought him into contact with many horological items from his native county. This has enabled him to compile a history of clockmaking in Essex. It will be interesting to learn from him which clocks or watches he would choose to collect himself..

Duncan Greig

Last Month's Meeting

Our chairman James Marten introduced our meeting with a brief silence remembering a long-standing member, Alan Turner, who sadly passed away on Wednesday 11th of May.

Please see Mike Barbers obituary of him in last month's newsletter.

Dudley Withers of the Hand Engraver Association made us aware of their AGM and annual lecture which will take place 22nd of June 2022 at the Royal Academy of Arts. There will be examples of engraved dials, pocket watches and an English carriage clock. After the AGM the highlight of the evening will be a talk from renowned Dr Tessa Murdoch "Huguenots, Horology, and Engravers in London 1680 to 1760". Sadly, not in time for publication of this newsletter but if any SLB members attend please let us know how it went.

Ron Rose FBHI

An evening with Ron Rose, James Cole,

James Ferguson Cole and Thomas Cole.

In Ron's opinion the book by John Hawkins, "Thomas Cole and Victorian Clockmaking" put the Cole family on the map. The majority of clocks studied in this publication are in the Harris collection at Belmont. The two brothers James Ferguson Cole and Thomas Cole achieved greatness at young ages, 23 and 25. But where did this talent emanate from. Ron showing the family tree introduced us to James "conjurer" Cole, father of the two boys. Conjurer Cole was baptised in 1762 Marrying Catherine Slocombe in 1792 who was 11 years younger.

FREE TO A GOOD HOME

Laurie Steadman, one our longest serving members has a lot of Horological Journals to dispose of. They date from 1981 to the current date. The first 25 years are in binders, the remainder are loose.

Also Timecraft magazines from roughly 1979 to 1987. These have several John wilding clock plans in them.

They all have to go no picking and choosing, all or nothing.

Email me Bill Horan electricwilliam@gmail.com or

Phone 01543 506 195

WORKSHOP NEWS AND VACANCIES

The workshop has reopened, there has been some changes to personnel as one would expect after such a long time. This results in some spaces to be filled for the evening classes. Anyone interested in joining us and using the excellent facilities in our workshop please contact James on 01959577312 or 07917226598 The only restriction at the moment is that we require people attending to be double jabbed!

Ron was to speak of James Ferguson's younger brother Thomas, who was born in 1800. Their sister Elizabeth was born in the same village in 1808. Thomas was undoubtedly following in the footsteps of his elder brother and father, at the age of 23 he was working with his brother at 3 New Bond Street then at the age of 29 split from the family and went to work with James McCabe. He returns with an entirely new concept to clockmaking. Some of his early lever escapements look more like pin pallets, oil being retained in a hole and slit on the tooth of the wheel most of the impulse being afforded by the wheel tooth rather than the pallet. One example Ron examined had the escape wheel turned away under a section on the teeth for oil retention. Thomas made hundreds of cases, with a central casting all of them using sheet-metal, layering design, piece upon piece. There were 75 tripod clocks made, there were triple sided desk clocks, Strutt clocks, even a tabletop clock too tiny, engraved spring clocks. All excellent, all of them a unique in design. Ron zoomed in on a 10 mm section of engraving which gained the admiration of those in the room. He made 1600 clocks and he exhibited in all of the exhibitions from 1850 to 1864.

So, who were the Cole family from Nether Stowey, a small village in Somerset? Some of the finest clock and watch makers that have existed.

After questions and thanks James presented Ron with some South London Branch Lubricant.

Duncan Greig

In a book, "The Thistle Clockmakers of Somerset", by Nial and Deborah Woodford Ron gratefully pointed out, this helped him with several dates and facts. In that book an extract from "Paupers and Pig Killers" a diary of William Holland, a Somerset Parson.

"Friday, 20 November 1800. Walked to Stowey with my little boy, met my wife there. Went to Conjurer Coles as they call him. He is a clockmaker and an extraordinary genius but a Democrat from having too much religion has now none at all. He made wonderful clock for the Duke of Somerset that goes 12 months without winding up."

James made three, year-duration longcase clocks, one a full-size with perpetual calendar and musical, playing the tune once per day. One diminutive in size but also perpetual. The third one which Ron had been very instrumental in restoring to its former glory was recorded on video by his good friend Peter Elliott and we were able to go through this with Ron as he explained the intricacies of the layout of the dial, the shutters that operated the sunrise and sunset, the moon wheel, and the flyback perpetual calendar in the break arch. A complicated clock for the little-known Somerset clockmaker to produce circa 1795. The whole clock was not much taller 5 foot six and driven by a weight of 48 Lbs, raised with a ratcheting pumped arm. As with all these clocks the pumping arm drops out of the way when not in use, Ron pointed out if there were a spring the lever would be carried around with the gear train.

The biggest revelation Ron Rose was to make aware to me in his introduction to the Cole family, who were from Nether Stowey, Somerset, was a connection with two eminent poets. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who lived in what is known as Coleridge cottage in Nether Stowey and William Wordsworth. Ron pointed out one poem of each even reciting from the longest, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. Both of these men were founder members the of British Romantic movement. It may have been these circumstances and their experimentation into further addictions, that had a great influence upon James, “conjurer” Cole. James moved to Taunton pursuing his career in timekeepers and chronometers but diversified into organ building following the latest mathematical principles. Around 1818 he moved to London with his family but by 1828 was experiencing financial difficulties and subsequently a year later suffered from mental difficulties being confined in the London Chelsea workhouse or asylum for lunatics. He died in 1838 of senility aged some 76 years.

James Ferguson Cole born 1798, it is said, was named by William Wordsworth, after the inspirational Scottish lecturer in astronomy and science. He went to a school that was founded by Thomas Poole, a successful local tanner, liberal democrat, friend of Coleridge and Wordsworth. James Ferguson Cole at the age of 15 presented the school with a clock, still there today which unusually sounds every 10 minutes.

At such a young age he was already an accomplished clockmaker. Perhaps it was in London where he was to excel making five silver humpback carriage clocks, one being in the British Museum was made with his younger brother Thomas. Ron has seen four of these giving us a description of some of them. The most complicated one was described to us in Ron’s second video, again recorded by his friend and our first chairman Peter Elliott. Where did this 25-year-old man know how to make some of the most complicated carriage clocks, obviously greatly influenced by his father’s earlier work and inspired by Abraham Louis Breguet. By 1823 he was working with his younger brother at 3 New Bond Street.

Ron described how the shutters, for sunrise and sunset rise up and down behind the seconds dial aperture. How we had a perpetual flyback calendar giving us the days of the week, another subsidiary dial giving us the moon’s phase and the lunar age. How the shutters slide on runners are connected by fusee chain to the operating lever and cam. This clock has a lever platform which has an oil retention hole and slit on each tooth. How the repeat mechanism seen from the back of the clock seamlessly strikes hours to quarters, (Grand Sonnerie), with no dummy blow. James Ferguson, although was undoubtedly the most exacting craftsmen, like many, did not produce a vast quantity of work producing more watches with his innovations eventually became bankrupt. James Ferguson Played a leading role in the formation of the British Horological Institute.