

## Horological News

### Horology's Great Collectors – 2002 NAWCC Symposium

Between Friday 21 October and Sunday 23 October, a group gathered in New York, centred around the 2022 NAWCC Annual Time Symposium, titled 'Horology's Great Collectors'. Masterminded as in previous years by Bob Frishman, this was a highly successful and enjoyable event, on top of which there were some bonus outings and visits. The principal location was the wonderful Library of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen on West 44th St, in the building in which the Horological Society of New York (HSNY) maintains its offices.

For some, the Friday commenced with a tour of an assortment of highlighted European clocks and watches in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, guided by senior curator Wolfram Koeppe, rounded off with a descent to the subterranean reserve collection and a privileged look at some renaissance clocks and exquisitely cased early watches. The overriding theme that linked many pieces we saw was their provenance as part of the collection of J Pierpont Morgan, a major figure in the pantheon of great collectors.

The afternoon was occupied by a special program organised as a tribute to the astonishing animations of the late John Redfern (1939–2019). This session was underwritten by the American Section of the AHS, and chaired by James Nye. We heard a historical overview of horological illustration from Symposium organiser Bob Frishman, guiding us through the emergence of horology in drawing and painting over the centuries, before moving images emerged. Martin Conradi, long-term admirer of John Redfern, and a computer graphics entrepreneur, walked us through the life and achievements of the great man, on the way running examples of animations, and illustrating the development both of the technology and John's skill. The afternoon was rounded off with a panel discussion.

The Symposium proper commenced with the James Arthur Lecture, given by Daryn Schnipper, chair of the international watch



Attendees were given a 84-page programme, compiled by organiser Bob Frishman, which contains some 200 great-collector bios, references, images, etc. This information is available as three freely downloadable PDFs on the 'Great Collectors' website page -- <https://www.greathorology.com/greatcollectors/>.

division of Sotheby's, the Symposium's sponsor. This was a highly personal and fascinating account of a 42-year career in auctioneering, and the encounters this had involved with both the finest horological pieces, and the extraordinary (and sometimes eccentric) characters that occupy the collecting space.

A few Symposium attendees were fortunate to be invited to a reception. For decades, Fortunat Mueller-Maerki, long-term chair of the NAWCC's Library Committee, has been assembling an internationally significant horological library, which he has now given to the HSNY, forming the Jost Bürgi Research Library, and the opening of this, including ribbon-cutting and plaque unveiling, was accompanied by uplifting speeches, canapes and chilled prosecco. The opening of this new and comprehensive library resource in the heart of Manhattan is a significant event. Two guests from the Jost Bürgi Initiative in Switzerland gave a brief presentation.

Saturday saw the main run of lectures, commencing with Johannes Graf of the German Clock Museum in the Black Forest, who gave an account of the life and



A walking tour on Thursday afternoon, prior to the symposium, included a visit to this Seth Thomas turret-clock movement at the summit of a skyscraper. Its four illuminated clock dials are the same approximate size as those of the Great Clock of Westminster.

significance of Oskar Spiegelhalder (1865–1925), an influential German collector from Lenzkirch, and contemporary of Marfels and Bassermann-Jordan. Over time, Spiegelhalder amassed three separate collections focussed on Black Forest artefacts and craft, and sold all three collections into the museum world. The scale of these collections cemented his particular interpretation of his collected objects, which included a range of clocks, but Graf's forensic investigation shows that Spiegelhalder actually interpreted, dated and located some of his clocks wrongly. However, his attention to detail in documenting his collection—its provenance, purchase price etc—and his choice of seeking permanent museum homes, was offered as a demonstration of an ideal standard for the outstanding collector.

Oliver Cooke of the British Museum offered an account of the life and collection of Courtenay Adrian Ilbert (1888–1956), whose (mainly) watch and clock collection continues to dominate the wider British Museum horology catalogue. A collector from childhood

onwards, Ilbert amassed an astonishing collection of watches, watch movements, and some very fine clocks, housed in a large house on Milner St, Chelsea, in London. His collection informed a wide knowledge, respected and consulted upon by many. He became a leading light in the antiquarian movement that came to the fore after the Second World War, leading to the establishment of the AHS in 1953.

Jonathan Betts focussed on the life and collection of George, the Fifth Lord Harris (1889–1984), who lived at Belmont House near Faversham in Kent, England. We heard a recording of an interview, late in his life, in which he talked of loving 'to see the wheels go round'—an overly naïve explanation of a lifelong obsession with collecting very fine clocks. Harris collected excellent examples from England's Golden Age, but had a strong love for the French Golden Age as well – there are over 30 Breguet pieces in the collection, for example. But he could also appreciate the modern—witness some twentieth-century replicas, and a Junghans Astrochron quartz clock bought when new. Harris was founding President of the AHS, and Jonathan invoked his friendly spirit, which would surely approve of the antiquarian horological legacy that he and his friend Ilbert had bequeathed us.

Robert Cheney of the Willard House & Clock Museum explained the collecting career that led to the establishment of Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, the brainchild of the Wells brothers, industrialists from the American Optical stable. The Village is a living history museum, celebrating New England culture from 1790 to 1840. J Cheney Wells (1874–1960) formed a collection of both paperweights and an outstanding assembly of early New England clocks, by the Willards and their important contemporaries and competitors.

Will Andrewes gave us a personal account of two collectors: Seth Atwood (1917–2010) and Winthrop (Kelly) Edey (1937–1999). With the considerable wealth founded on his family's involvement in the automotive parts industry and developed through his own highly successful ventures, Atwood shared his passion for horology by founding The Time Museum in Rockford, Illinois, in 1971, where Andrewes worked as curator from 1977 to 1987. Over fifteen years, Atwood established what became

widely recognized as the most comprehensive collection of timekeeping devices in the world, illustrating the development from the earliest period to the atomic clock. Among the examples shown in the lecture was the Patek Philippe 'Supercomplication' commissioned by Henry Graves—mentioned several times during the Symposium.

Kelly Edey was one of the 24 authors engaged by The Time Museum to contribute his expertise to the catalogue of the collection. As an heir to the fortune amassed by his grandfather Morris W. Kellogg (who made his fortune designing and building oil refineries), Kelly inherited enough money to never have to work for a living. Nevertheless, he worked hard at his passions, including the assembly of a collection of clocks, with a focus on the finest French pieces. He was an expert on André-Charles Boulle and advised both museums and auction houses. His life was colourful, lived in the bright lights of New York's social scene—as a young man he was even featured in a Warhol film, but found time each night to keep a finely detailed diary. His collection was bequeathed to the Frick in 1999 and displayed in 2001 in an exhibition curated by Andrewes called *The Art of the Timekeeper—Masterpieces from the Winthrop Edey Bequest*, with an illustrated catalogue.

Tom McIntyre offered a portrait of Paul Chamberlain (1865–1940), who assembled two distinct watch collections—the first, of about 300 pieces, before the Great War. On being mobilised, the collection was donated to a museum. Post-war, Chamberlain started again, and over a lifetime assembled a second collection of some 1500 pieces. An important exhibition of the first collection occurred in Chicago in 1921, and the balance of the interwar period saw Chamberlain continue to research the history and technical development of watches, and in particular the lever escapement. He built a strong relationship with Ilbert, corresponding regularly. His writings on horology were gathered into an important posthumous work, *It's About Time*.

Russ Oeschle offered an entertaining and affectionate account of the life and collection of Chris Brown (1935–2012). Brown, unlike other collectors we had heard about (save for Spiegelhalter), focussed not on the rarest and most significant international pieces, but

instead concentrated on assembling probably the most comprehensive collection to date of early American wood-movement shelf clocks—requiring a gradual expansion of storage space, and increasingly tight tessellation in order to accommodate the huge numbers involved. He was a leading light of the 'Cog Counters', and is remembered by many for hosting an annual picnic in upstate New York that gathered many who shared his passion.

Highlighting the importance of the dopamine rush for the collector, John Reardon drew on his long-term exposure to serious buyers of Patek Philippe watches, offering us an insight into a select band of those who either commissioned the finest and most complicated pieces from Patek, or who perhaps simply bought in colossal quantities. Once again we met the Graves 'Supercomplication' Patek, which migrated to Pete Fullerton, thence to Seth Atwood, selling through Sotheby's to Sheikh al-Thani, and then selling again to an as-yet-unknown buyer. While obsessive Patek collectors include the great and the good, Reardon also danced lightly over the careers of some of the 'bad boys' whose colourful careers included a Patek fixation—characters such as JB Champion, or Bernie Cornfeld, whose mutual fund salesmen received Pateks if they exceeded \$1m in sales.

Over the course of the day, themes and observations resurfaced. Chair Bob Frishman referred regularly to a notional clock collector heaven, in which those we discussed looked down on our musings, many of them having spent their lives pursuing the rare and the finest, often keeping meticulous records and journals, detailing provenances and research—in many cases the assembled collections being crystallised through acquisition by major museums, and thus being preserved.

The day ended with a reception and banquet held at the nearby Harvard Club, rounded off with an insight into the appraisal of collections by Marsha Malinowski, an expert in fine books and manuscripts. Her entertaining account offered four case studies, including advising David Rubinstein of the Carlyle Group on the purchase of a copy of Magna Carta for \$21m as a gift to the American nation. Her primary case study described the process of assessing the book and manuscript collection of Fortunat Mueller-Maerki, conveniently bearing out a

pattern discussed above—being amassed by an obsessive collector over the long-term, but now transferred to its new long-term home.

A band of survivors gathered on the Sunday for a final tour, visiting the collection at the Morris Museum in New Jersey, noted for its mechanical musical instruments and automata, and guided by conservator Jere Ryder.

The symposium website ([www.greathorology.com](http://www.greathorology.com)) offers full details on the event and its speakers. Links for online streaming are provided to video-recordings of each lecture.

At the closing banquet, offering thanks on behalf of the guests to the organisers (principally Bob Frishman), James Nye commented on the strong international presence, and the fact that many had travelled long distances to attend. The event had been inspirational and had also helped both to forge new relationships and to strengthen existing ones. He offered congratulations to Rich Newman on his nomination as the new President of the AHS American Section, and wished the section well in expanding its membership and extending its reach.

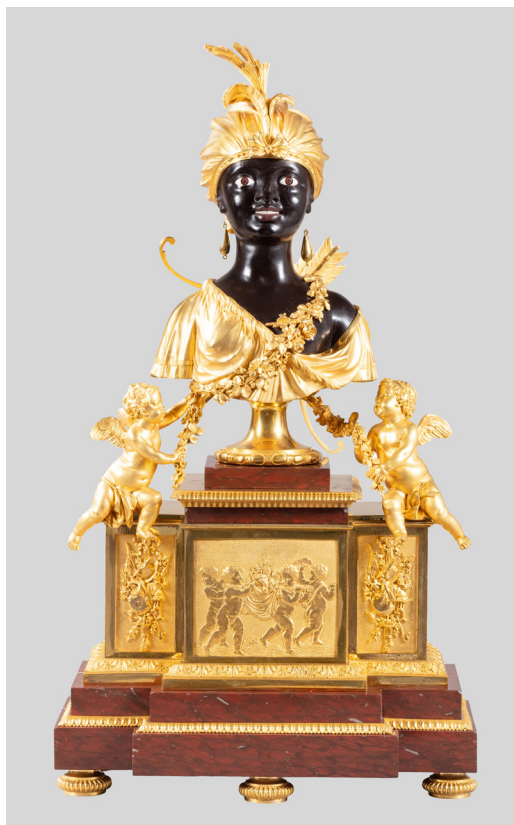
James Nye, Chair

## 'Black Gold' in Amsterdam

*On 28 October the exhibition 'Black Gold' was opened in Amsterdam. Before the opening a symposium was held on the theme Decolonising the pendule au 'Bon Sauvage'. Our member Rob Memel attended both the symposium and the opening of the exhibition and reports on it.*

In the previous issue of the journal, I reported on the wonderful exhibition 'Once upon a Time' in the pop-up museum on the Museum Square in Amsterdam. It offers a chance to see some 85 rare gilt-bronze pendules made around 1800 from the Parnassia Collection. Owing to its success, the exhibition has been extended until 29 February 2023.

At the same time, a collection of so-called black clocks has been added under the name 'Black Gold'. It focuses on *pendules au Noir*. These clocks, often incorrectly referred to



*La Princesse Africaine, the mother of all the pendules au Noir.*

as *pendules au Bon Sauvage*, are French Empire pendules with images of black people. They depicted the new narratives and ideals of France after the revolution (1790-1830) and refer to the ideas of philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau, to the French world expansion, to colonialism and to the trade in luxury goods such as sugar, cotton, tobacco and coffee. The *pendule au Noir* collection, forming part of the Parnassia Collection, is the largest in its field in the world.

Before the opening of the 'Black Gold' exhibition, the symposium *Decolonising the pendule au 'Bon Sauvage'* was held. There were three elements: the presentation of the results of the research on the *pendules au Noir*, a panel discussion, and the presentation of the book (or *cahier* as the authors call it) *Gilded Splendor*. The well-attended symposium had representatives from the black community, the museum world, art lovers and other interested parties. The authors, art historians Dr Alette Fleischer and Bart Krieger M.A.

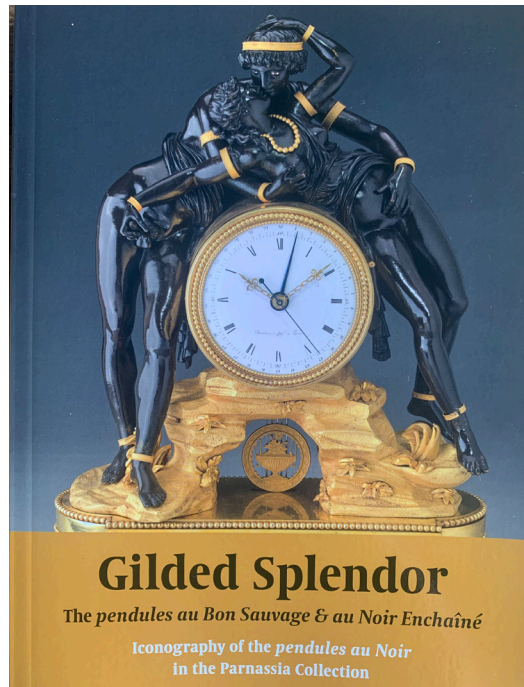


spoke enthusiastically about their research, in which they studied all *pendules au Noir* from the Parnassia collection from different angles. They concluded that they can be categorised into three groups: *La pendule au Noir Personnifié*, *La pendule au Bon Noir* and *La pendule au Noir Enchaîné*. The latter group has a direct relationship with the slavery past, the other two groups less or not at all.

This was followed by an interesting panel discussion, which included the question whether or not it is desirable to display the *pendules au Noir*, partly in light of the Black Lives Matter and other movements. The overall opinion was that you can display them, provided that the accompanying story is shown or told in an accessible and proper manner.

*Gilded Splendor* is a valuable addition to Jean-Dominique Augarde's two-volume book *A journey through clocks, Masterworks of the Parnassia Collection*. I asked the authors why they felt it necessary to write an additional book specifically about the *pendules au Noir*, considering the second volume of *A journey through clocks* covers the entire collection of *pendules au Noir*. They replied that in their opinion Augarde's considerations are incomplete and represent an old-fashioned (today's) position on some points. They believe that further clarification was needed, and that their classification of the *pendules au Noir* is an important new element, allowing these *pendules* to be better understood in their historical context.

After the symposium, 'Black Gold', the new addition to the exhibition, was opened. Stories aside, the *pendules au Noir* exude absolute beauty where the black patinated representations and ornaments contrast beautifully with the gilt-bronze cases. An absolute highlight is the *La Princesse Africaine* clock, the very first model of the *pendule au Noir*. Only five examples of this mantel clock, recently added to the Parnassia Collection, are known worldwide. Other examples can be found in the Royal Collection Trust and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The *pendule* has a musical movement and features a complex mechanism that shows the hours and minutes in the eyes of the princess when one pulls an earring.



The 104-page book, written by Alette Fleischer and Bart Krieger, is available for 24,50 Euros at <https://Impublishers.nl/en/product/gilded-splendor/> where some of the contents can be browsed. ISBN 9789460229909.

By adding the 'Black Gold' exhibition and organising the symposium, the 'Once upon a Time' organisation has taken a pioneering step in interpreting these clocks. The launch of the book *Gilded Splendor* opens up a positive discussion in the art world, which is definitely going to continue. Representatives of several major museums were also enthusiastic. It was an instructive afternoon and the researchers succeeded in making the exhibition of these applied artefacts, which are tangential to the slavery past, possible even today.

Rob Memel

## John Robey HonFBHI

Our member John Robey has been an important contributor to *Antiquarian Horology* over many years. He has also been a valuable anonymous reviewer on behalf of the editor. We are therefore delighted to note the granting of his recent Honorary Fellowship by the British Horological Institute.