

London Meeting Lecture Thursday 11 March 2010

Wiser after the event?

Researching and writing *Shaping the Day*

by Paul Glennie and Nigel Thrift

In their recently published book *Shaping the Day*, the authors have studied the practice of timekeeping in England and Wales between 1300 and 1800.

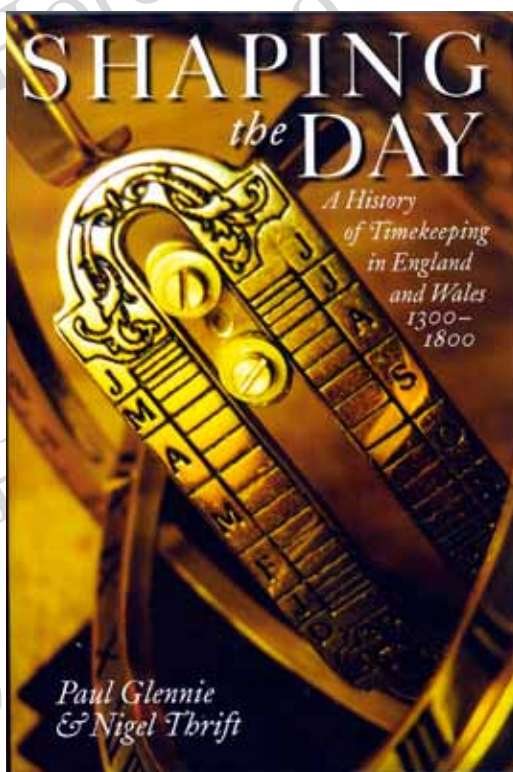
Previous histories of clocks and clock-time have tended to emphasise either a horological story, of technological developments exemplified through surviving examples, or a social-disciplinary story, in which social authorities (the church, merchants, factory masters) use clock-time to organise people in more coordinated or intense ways. The authors have broadened the questions and have attempted to trace how, where, when and by whom clock-times were used, and to explore the practices, understandings and skills of clock-time that were important in everyday life.

Of particular interest in this talk will be the very large and varied range of primary sources that the authors have used to undertake their research and the means by which that material was analysed and interpreted. These historical sources range from personal diaries to housekeeping manuals, and illustrate how a particular kind of common sense about time came into being, and how it developed during this period.

Many remarkable figures make their appearance, ranging from the well-known, such as Edmund Halley, Samuel Pepys and John Harrison, to less familiar characters including sailors, gamblers and burglars. Overturning many common perceptions of the past - for example, that clock time and the industrial revolution were intimately related - the authors' study reminds us how 'telling the time' has come to dominate our way of life.



Left Dr Paul Glennie, School of Geographical Sciences, University of Bristol, and right Professor Nigel Thrift, Emeritus Professor of Geography at the University of Bristol and presently Vice-Chancellor of the University of Warwick.



The cover of the book, published by Oxford University Press in 2009. A detailed review by Ian White was published in *Antiquarian Horology* of September 2009.