

London Meeting Lecture Thursday 16 September 2010  
Ahasuerus Fromanteel and the early pendulum clock in England

by Rebecca Pohancenik



Clockmaker Ahasuerus Fromanteel lived and worked through some of the most lively decades of British history. The English Civil War saw shifting politics bring Cromwell to power, whose favour helped Fromanteel gain his Freedom of the City of London. The first Anglo-Dutch war disrupted trade with the Netherlands and could not have failed to affect the bilingual son of Dutch immigrants. The Great Fire and a plague raged, while independently-minded individuals who professed alternate religious views faced persecution as heretics, or in Fromanteel's case, Anabaptists.

In the midst of this turmoil, the 17th century saw an unprecedented level of communication regarding discoveries, theories and inventions across Europe. These activities, and the intellectual networks that formed around them, led to the founding of the Royal Society and the beginnings of a modern science.

The lecture will place Fromanteel in the context of his time, tracing the broad scope of his activities with the known and new details of his interesting life. The second half of the lecture will be dedicated to the pendulum clock itself, with a focus on the roles that Fromanteel and Christiaan Huygens played in its development, and a re-evaluation of the contributions made by one of the most innovative clockmakers in the golden age of horology.



Rebecca Pohancenik is writing a PhD thesis, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, on the early development of the pendulum clock at Queen Mary University. Prior to taking up the studentship, she worked in the Library & Archives of the Royal Society.