

London Meeting Lecture Thursday 21 July

The Great Knibb

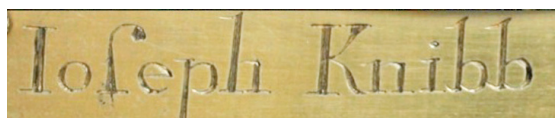
A Commemorative Evening To Celebrate the Tercentenary of
Joseph Knibb [1640-1711]

by Andrew King

Joseph Knibb was born in the middle of possibly the most politically violent and scientifically vibrant century in the history of England. Whilst the Scientific Revolution may have had roots in Tudor times, it was not until the approach of the seventeenth century that science as we understand it today started to flourish. With Galileo's experimental work finally published in Leiden in 1638 reflecting the new epoch, the following twenty years was a period moving towards the first pendulum clocks. This is the world that Joseph Knibb was born into in 1640. He was most likely apprenticed to his uncle, Samuel Knibb, a clockmaker of note in his own right. Therefore it is important to consider Samuel's life to provide us with a more comprehensive understanding of how Joseph became an outstanding craftsman. Samuel's innovative approach to design and his versatility as an instrument maker provided an inspirational environment as Master and Teacher to the young Joseph. Whilst the few surviving examples of Samuel's work suggest that perhaps he worked for others, Joseph became very much his own Master. From the large number of clocks that survive today, allowing for a percentage that have been lost, Joseph's total output was formidable. Despite this, in the discussion of the great clockmakers of the seventeenth century, whilst the names of East, Fromanteel and Tompion spring immediately to mind, the name of Joseph Knibb somehow tends to be sidelined.

This evening, by first of all looking at his early life working with his uncle, to his move to Newport Pagnall, with his difficulty in becoming accepted and established in Oxford and his move to London, we will look at his evolving life through his unique and wide ranging work. This comprehensive contribution to the history of Clockmaking should surely draw the name of Joseph Knibb closer to the centre of the stage of seventeenth-century Clockmaking justifying the Epithet –

THE GREAT KNIBB



Andrew King, Vice Chairman of the AHS, is a prominent antiquarian horologist. He makes reproductions of historically important clocks, and is the leading expert on the life and work of John Harrison.

