

AHS London Lecture Thursday 20 November 2014 Jonathan Betts

Learning from the Artefact: The Marine Chronometers at Greenwich

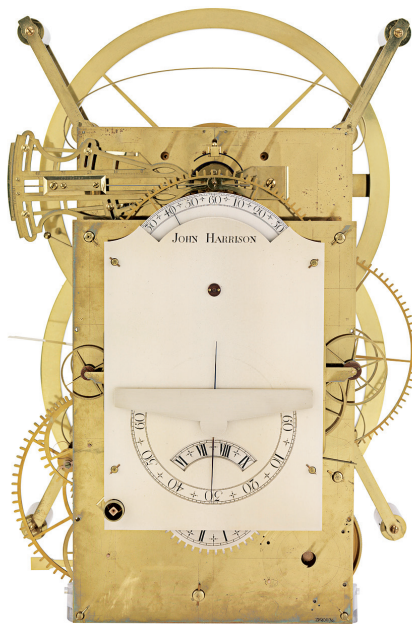
Over the last ten years the collection of over 200 marine chronometers at the National Maritime Museum have been catalogued by the museum's Senior Curator of Horology, Jonathan Betts, to be published by Oxford University Press as part of the museum's '*...at Greenwich*' series. The first, in 1999, was *The Globes at Greenwich*, and catalogues have followed in recent years on the *Sundials*, *Astrolabes* and *Sextants*.

Following the two excellent catalogues by Anthony Randall of chronometers at the British Museum (1989) and at Rockford (1992) this will be the third in-depth catalogue of a major chronometer collection, and great trouble was taken to ensure the research was comprehensive. In fact this publication will be much more than simply a catalogue; the NMM collection contains John Harrison's four marine timekeepers H1 to H4, as well as many other timekeepers of immense historical importance and the collection forms probably the finest and most representative of its kind.

The research and publication was thus aimed at producing a new history of the instrument, intended to complement (and



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Harrison's marine timekeeper H3

occasionally to correct) Cdr Gould's great book *The Marine Chronometer, its History and Development*. In addition to deriving highly detailed descriptions of the objects themselves, the study provides much new evidence concerning how these functional instruments were developed, manufactured and used and how they were maintained during their long working lives.

The lecture will also show how research into the lives of the makers has enabled a properly informed interpretation of the evidence in the chronometers themselves, as well as revealing the real people behind these esoteric but important navigational instruments.

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