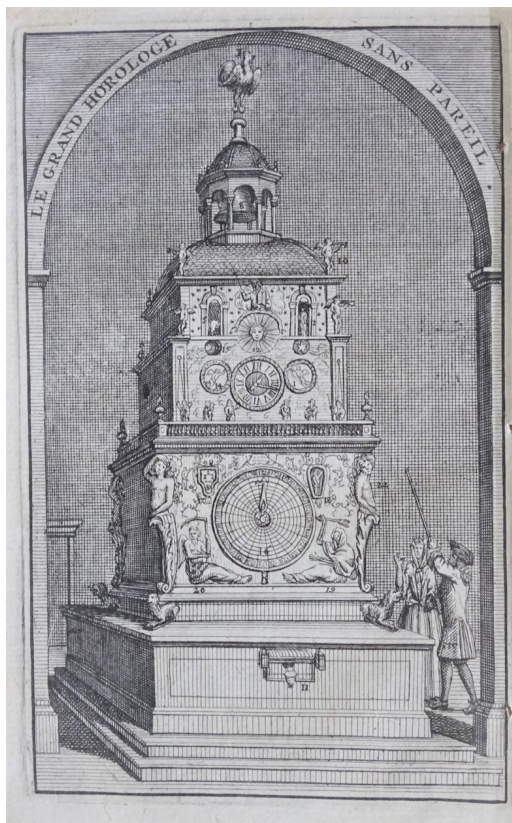


AHS London Lecture Thursday 9 March 2023

Anthony Turner, **Clockmaking and practical mathematics in the provinces of England and France, 1500–1800**

Clockmaking in the Early Modern Period is an integral part of the practical mathematics deployed in everyday life to effect such essential tasks as land-measurement, navigation, military bombardment and manoeuvres, time-finding and time-keeping. The practitioners of these activities were often local, with relatively little formal education but with considerable practical ability. In part, knowledge of this kind was seated in the monasteries, whence, in England it was expelled in the 1530s, but in the course of this period the denizens of the provinces became increasingly literate and increasingly prominent in the life of their localities, playing practical and educative roles. Local success could also be a springboard to wider, metropolitan horizons and the great astronomical clocks of the provincial cathedrals not only played a pedagogical role, but also inspired the skilled and ambitious to emulate them. Complex automata and astronomical clocks in the 18th century became a source of income and reputation when travelled through provincial regions. At the same time some of their makers mutated into general engineers. The talk will conclude with some account of these unusual travellers and with the gradual emergence of the ‘mechanician’.



'The Great Clock without Equivalent', created by Timothée Pastre, and travelled by him to gain a living by the amazement that it would provoke in the provinces of north-west Europe.

Historian by training, Anthony Turner has worked in, and with, several European museums producing exhibitions or catalogues of parts of their collections. His interests extend to all kinds of scientific instruments and he acts as an expert consultant to Sotheby's, Bonhams, and various French auctioneers. He is the surviving partner of the Rogers Turner business in antiquarian and scholarly books. He is the main editor of A General History of Horology, published this year by Oxford University Press.

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