

AHS London Lecture Thursday 13 July 2023

Richard Newton, Dismantling the ‘East School’: Edward East and the trade in clocks between makers in seventeenth-century London



East School clocks (L-R) signed for Samuel Haley, Edward East and John Hilderson. Photo James Nye.

Lectures by Oliver Cooke and Journal articles by Adrian, Valerie and Anthony Finch have taught us much about the long life and successful business career of Edward East. He was apprenticed to Richard Rogers in the Goldsmith's Company, gaining his freedom in 1627, and set up in business as a watchmaker, many of his watches being finely decorated and some of them having complex movements. There is little doubt that his watches were of the very best quality. Alongside watchmaking there was a thriving industry making lantern clocks in London but East does not seem to have involved himself in this side of the trade.

In 1660, not long after Ahasuerus Fromanteel had introduced the pendulum clock into England, East was appointed clockmaker to Charles II the newly restored

monarch. Through the first half of the 1660s we see significant numbers of spring driven pendulum clocks signed 'Eduardus East Londini'. These so called 'East School' movements are also used by John Hilderson and others. Evidence suggests that John Hilderson was the manufacturer of these movements and supplied them to East. The lecture seeks to look at the evidence for this and then to explore origins for other movements signed for Edward East and the makers who may have supplied them.

It seems clear that there were other trading relationships between clockmakers of the period and that groups of movements with a common origin were supplied to them by a third party maker and it is hoped to shed some light on this in the interests of encouraging further research.

Richard Newton has an interest in seventeenth-century clocks. He has been a member of the AHS since 1990.

Attending London Lectures

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