

## AHS London Lecture Thursday 11 July 2024

### Víctor Pérez Álvarez, *The Pride of Telling Time: Iberian clocks from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries*

Very few people have been interested in the history of Iberian horology until recently and therefore it has been barely researched. At the same time, almost none of the very few Spanish publications on the topic has had any impact on the international specialised literature. For these reasons many aspects of it remain unknown or built on baseless clichés. However, using written sources from various archives, Spain's horological past can be reconstructed and studied.

As the history of Spanish horology is a very broad topic, this lecture will focus on its earliest period, from the introduction of the earliest mechanical clocks in the fourteenth century, to their general spread in the sixteenth century. This was a very complex phenomenon influenced by various social actors, political and economic circumstances. The new devices brought new forms of time reckoning which overlapped



Wooden dial and jacks from the 1520s. Leon cathedral.

with the pre-existing time-reckoning systems and bell signals. For example, the traditional canonical hours did not disappear but ended up being rung at specific clock hours.

The history of early horology can be reconstructed mainly from written sources, since very few historical horological objects remain. In Spain there are still some jackemarts, some dating back to the beginning of the sixteenth century. There are also at least two early pre-pendulum turret clocks still retaining their original verge and foliot escapements. These two rare turret clocks and other historical elements will be shown and explained in the lecture.

The lecture will be partially based on the forthcoming book *Bells of time, wheels of pride* which is due to appear in 2025. The Spanish version, *Ruedas, campanas y tardones*, will be available in a few months.



One of the two known turret clocks in Spain still retaining their pre-pendulum escapements. Santa Marina del Rey town hall (Leon), 1590.

*Víctor Pérez Álvarez graduated in history and defended his PhD thesis about the early history of horology in the Kingdom of Castile at the University of Valladolid. He has published several articles on the subject in academic and specialised journals including Antiquarian Horology. He is also the author of a monograph on the medieval musical clock of Toledo cathedral. Currently he is learning antiquarian watchmaking as an apprentice to Seth Kennedy.*

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