

AHS London Lecture Thursday 12 September 2024

Alex Jeffrey, The Dial Clocks of the Palace of Westminster

With an internationally celebrated horological icon and one of the world's most distinguished timepieces standing proud on one side of the building, it would be easy to focus all of one's attention on The Great Clock of Westminster and its loyal companion Big Ben when discussing horological points of interest at Westminster Palace.

What is not generally known is that inside the Palace there are hundreds of heritage clocks hanging discreetly on the walls of this opulent and historic building. Our speaker has worked in these corridors alongside the in-house clock team to contribute to a practical stewardship of this nationally important collection of English Dial clocks, a collection that has not previously been examined externally.

Made by manufacturers of high repute to a formidable standard, these clocks can be celebrated for the commonality of design fundamentals across them, and for showing traditional, conventional and effective



manufacture by industry-leading makers of the time. But that is not to say they lack character.

The talk will bring together the histories of the manufacturers who contributed to the collection, the subtle style distinctions that are inherent despite design standardisation of these clock movements, hand-written documents from renowned horologists of the time, evidence of the practical database that is used to maintain them and an innovative variation of the database named 'clock diaries' that our speaker made during his time there. There will also be parallels drawn between the makers and the in-house clock teams of the palace over the years that left metaphorical fingerprints on these pieces.

Hung proudly in much-frequented offices across one of the busiest buildings in London, these English Dials have born witness to many historic stories. Complete with floorplans of the Palace, video imagery of the clocks in situ in their iconic setting and exclusive photography, this talk intends to tell their story.



After graduating from his term-served clockmaking apprenticeship with Thwaites & Reed in 2019, Alex joined the in-house clock team at The Palace of Westminster in 2021 to work on the collection of heritage clocks across the estate. Before leaving, he worked at the heart of the team which completed the restoration of the Great Clock of Westminster. Alex started the Alex Jeffrey Clock Company in 2019 which he now continues to build full-time. He is Clockmaker-in-Residence at The Clockworks in South London.

Attending London Lectures

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