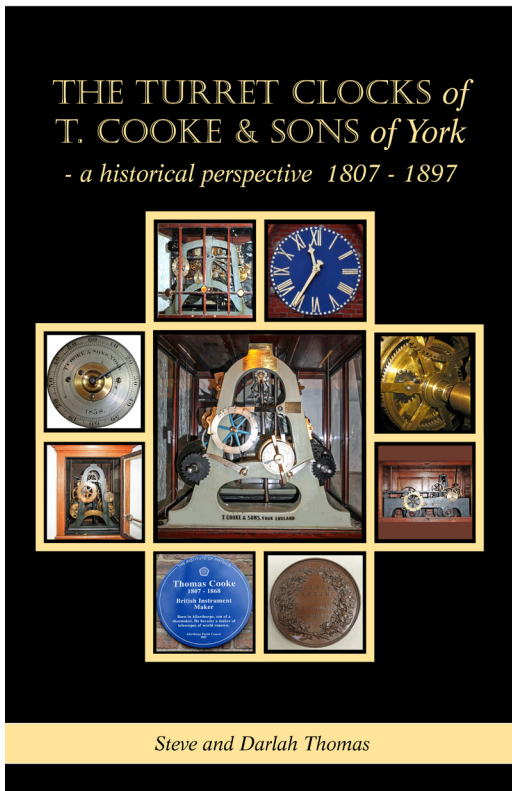


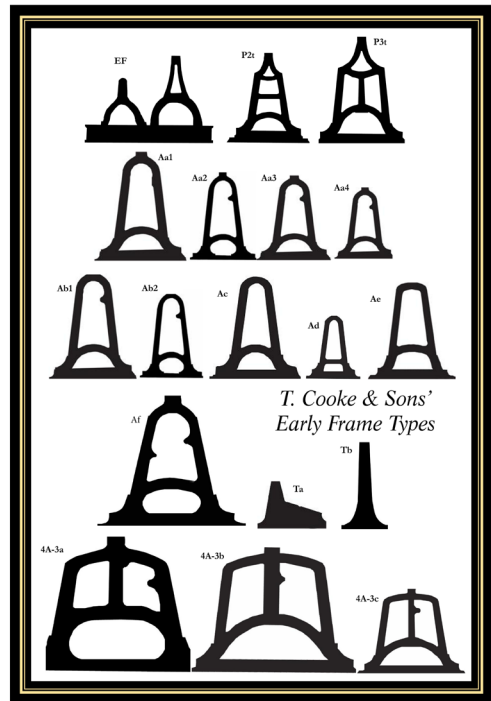
Book reviews



STEVE and DARLAH THOMAS, *The Turret Clocks of T. Cooke & Sons of York. A historical perspective 1807-1897.* Published by Inbeat Publications ISBN 978-0-9573733-3-4. £75.00. 305x224mm approx. 584 pages with colour throughout. Section printed, casebound with dust jacket.

I first saw a Thomas Cooke clock in 1976; this was at Cottingham church in Yorkshire. Whilst they rang, the bell ringers shut me up in the outside case, a structure a bit like a garden shed. Inside was a large magnificent clock in its glazed mahogany case. A plaque declared that the clock had been shown at the Vienna and York exhibitions in 1870 and 1880. Everything about the clock was the pinnacle of Victorian clockmaking. It was with delight that many years later I learnt that a new book on Thomas Cooke of York was under preparation.

This is a big book. At over 580 pages and weighing in at around three and a half kilo, this just has to be the largest and most lavishly



Front and back covers of the book under review.

illustrated book on turret clocks ever published. In this the reader will find a history of the company, a detailed illustrated compendium of known Cooke clocks and appendices that include a transcription of the Cooke order book. As a limited edition of 250 copies, it is a must for the student of turret clocks. If it is not reprinted, it will join the likes of Mercer on Dent, or Lee's book on Knibb as a hard-to-find book along with an escalating price tag.

I must get a little grumble out of the way. The text is 10 point on 14 point, too small for my eyes; 12 on 14 would have been better I think. Do not let my niggle put off prospective readers. Quality of printing is very high on the glossy paper and the photographs are superb. As one who has taken many photos of turret clocks, I know just how tricky it can be to get a really good photo. Lighting is the main problem, a black clock against a dark wall loses its detail, or a black clock against a white wall has hard shadows from the flash that makes it difficult to work out what is clock and what is shadow. With the photos in this book Steve and Darlah excel, not only in quality but also in quantity and diversity. I have not counted them, but there must be in excess of 2,000.

The book should be regarded as a reference book, one you consult to find information. You can use it like a coffee-table book and just pick it up and enjoy one of the clock descriptions with its photos as a self-contained unit.

The book starts with six chapters over 50 pages that cover a timeline, family tree and the early years up to 1836 after which Thomas began making spectacles. Then there is Cooke as the Optician and then the establishment of the Buckingham Works in 1855 when the company T. Cooke & Sons was founded. An early turret clock job was making new wheels for the York Minster quarter and hour striking trains; this was in 1846. An obligatory Factory Rules and Regulations poster is reproduced: for wasting time and whistling a worker could be fined 6d. In 1862 the company exhibited at the International Exhibition in Kensington. They supplied a telescope to Prince Albert. Thomas died in 1868 leaving the business to his wife Hannah. Financial difficulties led to liquidation of the company in 1879, the reconstitution allowed creditors to be paid. In 1895 a fire partially destroyed the Buckingham Works. Barnard Cooke, Thomas's brother, also made turret clocks in Hull. He died in 1887. G.J.F. Newey, who may have been a company employee, took on the turret clock business and went on to maintain and make turret clocks. The last member of the Cooke family was employed on scientific equipment until sometime after 1911 when they retired.

Not only did Cooke make turret clocks they were leading telescope makers, made surveying instruments, electro-magnetic, meteorological and pneumatic apparatus.

By far the largest section of the book is over 400 pages that describe known Thomas Cooke turret clocks. These clocks were very well-made; the frames were almost always an inverted U or V shape, all the frame variants have been drawn out in silhouette. Cooke attached bearing blocks to the outside edges of the frame and so achieved ease of assembly and disassembly. It was like a flat-bed frame that had been bent in the middle. Some flat-bed clocks were made. Regarding escapements, Cooke used at first the single three-legged gravity escapement that he later altered to a single five-legged one of his own design. A remontoire was added to some clocks, mainly where there were large dials. A sort of

conventional deadbeat was employed, but rollers often appeared instead of normal pallets. The pinwheel was also used by Cooke after 1872. Maintaining power was achieved by an epicyclic system inside the great wheel. In all the design of Cooke clocks was firmly grounded on good engineering practice, sometime we see a little decoration in the way of hand-scraping on gravity arms. In the main, Cooke avoided sharp corners in crossings, in the roots of wheel teeth and everything was solid to say the least. Dials could be of any material, they had a sunken centre, but hands were commonly made from teak. Chapter marks normally had the two strokes on the V and the X the same width and lacking any serifs. Obviously the clock case was supplied with the clock; they were all well-made and follow the same design, usually being glazed to display the movement and having little shutters over the winding holes to keep dirt out. Lord Grimthorpe wrote some acid words in his book about using rollers, remontoires, round locking pins and five legs in gravity escapements. No doubt Cooke was the object of his vitriol.

In the turret clock section 123 clocks are described in chronological order; the first clock is dated 1852 and the last 1885. The methodology is first to provide a description of the clock. Generally this description covers a description of the building, its location, history, who gave the clock and who supplied it if it was not purchased directly from Cooke. A nice little touch is that local history is woven in such as a biography of the donor, Cromwell staging his troops in the place, details of the architect and issues with access. Descriptions are pithy, but informative and interesting. One nice description is where they dryly record that access was denied by the managing agent who required of them public liability insurance, a risk assessment, a method statement, training certificates for working at heights, personal protection equipment, and tested access equipment. They concluded by saying 'We did not intend to scale the tower on the outside to see the clock'. This made me smile since I made recently a similar request to the managers of a building where I restored my first turret clock well over 40 years ago. All I asked was to see the clock I once worked on. The request was denied for much the same reasons.

The description of each clock continues with a number of systematic photos, the building, tower, dial, access, clock case, clock from many angles, escapement and very often the clock keeper next to the clock or winding it. There are no captions for these photos, they are not needed. Occasionally a caption is needed, but what is the unusual item at the top right-hand of page 82? It has to be a burner or distribution manifold for the original gas lighting as mentioned in the text. A mini table then concludes with basic data like date, location, frame type, escapement, if there is an hour strike and quarters, pendulum length, number of dials and if the clock is wound by hand or electrically. Typically four pages are needed to cover a clock; four large photos per page are usually included.

After the clock descriptions we have a chapter on a historical perspective of the clocks, then appendices on missing and lost clocks (numbering 27), clocks made for the trade and clocks for post offices (48). There are details on a telescope driving unit, astronomical clocks plus a Lancashire watch signed Cooke. Barnard Cooke was the brother of Thomas. Some 13 clocks signed by him are known; these all were very similar to clocks made by Thomas, so movements or parts may have been supplied by the Buckingham Works. Thomas's will and a transcription of the Cooke order book provide interesting reading.

A bibliography, glossary and four-page index concludes the book. Throughout, extensive footnotes on each page and detailed acknowledgements are included.

Chris McKay

CHRIS HOOLJKAAS, *Speciale Comtoises en Lantaarnklokken. Special Comtoise Clocks and Lantern Clocks.* Hardback, A4, 2016, 336 pages; available from the author at Chris@Hooijkaas.net €49+postage. ISBN 978-90-82553-0-1.

This is a quite unusual clock book. It describes and illustrates in great technical detail 96 individual clocks (57 Comtoises and 39 lanterns), most of which are, or have been, in the author's own personal collection. His collection has expanded so much that space now dictates that some of these clocks must

be for sale, so this book is not only the catalogue of a fine collection but simultaneously a sale catalogue.

The author is a Dutchman, a passionate collector who has concentrated on what he calls 'special' clocks, i.e. clocks that differ from the standard Comtoise or lantern clock, and have something special about them that fascinates him, such as a particular decorative feature or technical detail like an uncommon striking mechanism or a special escapement such as pin-wheel, cross-beat, Graham, and Chevalier de Béthune. He delights in tracking down early and special clocks, dismantling, cleaning and reassembling them, and photographing each stage of the process. Each one of the 96 clocks in the book is described and illustrated with copious colour photos, all by the author. The book contains 2240 photos in all, thus averaging over 20 photos per clock, though some individual clocks have more than 50 illustrations. The description of each clock, with illustrations, takes from two up to seven pages, and includes dimensions, details of the dial and movement, and draws particular attention to any special features. The whole book is completely bilingual throughout, each section of Dutch text being followed by a very readable English translation, and the page layout is excellent so that the detail is easy to follow in either language.

After a brief Foreword and Introduction, the real meat of the book consists of five chapters on the Comtoise clocks and four on the lantern clocks. These chapters are entitled: Comtoise clocks with chapter rings and cartouche dials (9 clocks); Comtoise clocks with ceramic or enamel dials (10 clocks); Quarter-striking Comtoise clocks with multiple bells (11 clocks); Haute Saône, Haute Marne and lantern Comtoise clocks (13 clocks); Special Comtoise clocks (14 clocks, including a regulator, alarms, a giant, and a miniature); French lantern clocks (14 clocks); Lantern clocks made outside France (9 clocks, made in the Netherlands, England, Italy and Belgium); Quarter-strike lantern clocks with multiple bells (6 clocks from Brittany and Normandy); and Special lantern clocks (10 clocks, including miniatures, and features such as sweep seconds, pewter chapter rings, a carillon, month-duration etc.).