Research Proposal

‘Was There a Large Clockmaking Workshop Supplying the Trade in Post-Restoration London?'

Summary
The project will test the hypothesis that a substantial horological manufactory, associated with the Fromanteel family, existed in post-Restoration London, supplying movements to a wide range of retailers whose names are familiar from the dials of a diverse group of surviving clocks. Demonstrating the existence of this manufactory, which may have had a life of more than fifty years, would alter our view of the horology industry in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century London. The project would require defining a series of core comparable characteristics drawn from a sample of clocks, sufficient to indicate a common workshop as a source for the majority of the clock movements concerned, together with gathering data (including illustrations) to support the proposition (or conversely, to reach the conclusion that the evidence is insufficient to do so). Where possible, documentary and archival evidence would be marshalled in further supportive evidence. Ideally, the project should relate an assessment of practice in the narrower field of horology with the wider practice of the production of scientific instruments more generally, and therefore offer a contribution to the literature in that field.

Project Background
The hypothesis stems from decades of experience on the part of a horologist with significant experience in the clocks of the relevant period, who from the close practical handling of movements, has recognized more than a dozen common characteristics. Photographic record-keeping provides a large historic body of evidence. A second horologist, also with a strong interest in the same era of horology, has long shared this view of the likely common source for movements in clocks signed by other well-known makers. Considerable evidence has been accumulated, but it requires systematic recording and interrogation. Such an exercise may well lead to a wider appeal for more data. The outcome from the project should be an article for submission to Antiquarian Horology, outlining the theory, the evidence and any possible conclusions.
The Hypothesis
A significant proportion of surviving clocks signed Fromanteel are dated to the period prior to the Restoration. In contrast, given the size of their workshops, there do not appear to be as many extant London clocks signed Fromanteel which post-date the Restoration as one might expect. This might be explained by the known links between Ahasuerus Fromanteel and Oliver Cromwell, and Fromanteel’s pro-Commonwealth sympathies, which would make his business in Royal London post-Restoration less prosperous. Nevertheless, significant numbers of post-1660 clocks exist, signed under a variety of other names, which have, in places, a resemblance to those of the Fromanteel stable, with respect to a range of well-defined characteristics (i.e. shape of the hour bridge, the shape of the bell stand, the shape of screw heads and the form of the threads, etc etc).

It is already well-documented that highly reputable makers occasionally relied on each other for the supply of basic movements. This hypothesis goes considerably further, and postulates a trade in which at least one (and very probably more than one) large workshop produced significant quantities of basic longcase and spring-clock movements for a large group of clockmakers practising in London (many therefore belonging to and recorded by the Clockmakers Company) who then finished and adapted such movements for inclusion in completed clocks, signed under their names, without obvious credit to the original movement supplier.

Methodology
The researcher will interview the two horologists who have championed this hypothesis. The existing evidence requires resolution into a systematic account of identifiable characteristics, described in such a way that others can easily identify matching characteristics in other clocks. One long-term goal of the research is to crowdsource further data. To this end, a preliminary outcome should be the publication of a short summary of the project in Antiquarian Horology, summarising the hypothesis and presenting the main evidence, inviting readers to offer data drawn from their own clocks and those known to them. Given the wide circulation of the journal (print run 1600, circulation significantly higher), this may well produce valuable further data. This might easily be supported by material on a web-site offering clear pictorial guidance in identifying comparable examples. The AHS will provide any necessary support to create necessary web pages.

A database should be created to gather together the details of all known clocks that support the hypothesis; ideally, it would comprise photographic evidence as well as textual entries identifying the clocks in question with an agreed list of data points (signature, place, estimate of date, location now etc). One stumbling block will be the degree to which examples are in private ownership, where there may be some restriction on the inclusion of a clock or some details in the database.
The aim is to establish a database that can be modified and added to over time, hosted on the AHS website and available to the wider public (i.e. not in the members’ area).

**Programme of Work**

*Read-in*: The researcher will be required to familiarise themselves with the relevant literature. A reading list will be provided, the majority available electronically.

*First interviews*: The horologist who first articulated the basic idea of a common workshop for basic movements will require interviewing. This will involve travel to West Sussex (about 1 ½ hours’ travel from Victoria or London Bridge). Two initial visits are probably called for.

*Second interviews*: A second horologist—a friend of the first—will have further data available and examples to offer, and will be a useful touchstone. This will involve travel to Surrey (less than an hour’s travel from London Waterloo). Allow for two visits.

*Amassing the evidence*: The evidence shared by the two horologists will allow for the detailed description of the main defining characteristics of mechanisms that betray their common origins. This needs to be supported by photographic evidence. Existing images may date back over a significant period and many will not be digital. A programme of scanning may therefore be required to add older images to any available existing digital images. The researcher will have to co-operate closely with the two horologists to work out a workable means of assembling a properly ordered and adequately referenced database of digital images to support the various categories of characteristics being used to identify a common source.

*First publication*: With the benefit of the background literature, the initial interviews, and an ordered database of images, an initial piece can be drafted for inclusion in *Antiquarian Horology*, seeking further data and opinions.

*Gathering in additional information*: The most likely time for further information, ideas, data and views to emerge will be in the three months following initial publication. During this period the researcher will gather together any such information, but will also follow up leads suggested by the two horologists first interviewed. This may involve further travel, and the arranging of further photography. Visits to various museums as well as private collections may be called for, and the researcher will be expected to be imaginative in following up either further material evidence (clocks) or archival and documentary evidence which would support the existence of the supposed common workshop. Further context might be added if there are other proposed links between makers where a common style of base movement has been observed, but which differs from the ‘Fromanteel’
pattern, and (if there is time) to provide complementary evidence of possible additional large ‘ebauche’ manufactories.

**Final publication:** At the conclusion of the stages above, there should be data and evidence available to publish a complete article in *Antiquarian Horology*, using the website of the AHS if necessary for the publication of supportive data or tables and such like. An illustrated article of approximately 8-10,000 words should be the target at the outset, but this can be altered to suit the outcome. For example, a larger piece of work could be split across two successive journals.

**Supervision**
The project will be overseen by James Nye and Jonathan Betts.

**Candidates**
The ideal candidate will have proven research and writing skills and will likely have a background in the history of scientific instruments, ideally with specific knowledge of horology. They should be comfortable with the need to develop, under guidance and instruction, an ability to analyse practical and material characteristics of a range of clock movements in order to determine the likelihood (or lack of it) of common authorship. Previous experience in the cataloguing or analysis of clocks or scientific instruments would be valuable. Candidates should have the ability to arrange appropriate high resolution photography where needed, and also to digitize and adequately label and catalogue existing images.

**Funding**
Travel expenses incurred in direct furthermore of the research will be covered against production of receipts. A bursary of £4,500 in total is available to cover the research project, which would be disbursed (i) one third on initial award, (ii) one third on submission to *Antiquarian Horology* of the preliminary summary and crowdsourcing request for further data, and (iii) one third on submission to *Antiquarian Horology* of the final published article to arise from the research.

**Application**
Candidates should apply by email to chairman@ahsoc.org including a CV and a covering letter in either Word or PDF format. This letter should concisely outline your interest in the project, and should highlight how you match our candidate description, clearly addressing each element. It can also include any other information you believe helpful and relevant (for example in relation to timetabling, availability and so forth). The closing date for applications is 26 March 2017. The AHS anticipates making a decision on the award by 10 April 2017.

Dr James Nye, Chairman

3 March 2017