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The Country Life book of clocks

Edward Thomas Joy



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Edward Joy has written a concise history of European clock-making in general, paying particular attention to English examples and craftsmen. After a brief look at primitive, non-mechanical devices sundials, waterclocks, candle-clocks, etc. _ we move straight on to weight-driven, verge escapement clocks which, a John Smith wrote in 1675, gave the true hour "by the circular moving of certain wheels and pinions artificially disposed within the body of the instrument". The cathedrals of Salisbury and Wells have two of the three oldest surviving mechanical clocks in the world. A section on spring-driven clocks brings us chronologically to perhaps the greatest step forward in horology_ the pendulum. With the introduction of the pendulum in England by John Fromanteel in 1658 came the golden age of English clocks. For a century they held pride of place in world markets both on account of case design and mechanical efficiency; the famous long-case clock, popularly called the "grandfather", was, according to all available evidence, an entirely English invention. Mr Joy devotes a large part of the book to this period and deals as fully as possible with such famous makers as East, Knibb, Quare, Graham and the incomparable Tompion. He then shows how, in Victorian times, as fashionable considerations began to play an over-important part, the quality of the design of the cases began to deteriorate, except in specialist fields such as regulators and marine chronometers and, in particular, the Shortt 'Slave' clock. A brief concluding section on modern clocks indicates that this situation has only recently begun to be rectified. The Book is illustrated with 90 photographs (many appearing in the book for the first time) and 16 drawings, chosen with care by the author to complement his text. By Country Life Limited.

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