

## Book reviews

**JÜRGEN ERMERT, Präzisionspendeluhren in Deutschland von 1730 bis 1940. Observatorien, Astronomen, Zeitdienststellen und ihre Uhren – Band 2 & 4** [Precision Pendulum Clocks in Germany from 1730 to 1940. Observatories, Astronomers, Standard Time Agencies and their Clocks – Volumes 2 and 4]. Published by the author [JE Verlag] in October 2017. No ISBN number stated. Hardcover, semi-leather spine; 21.5x31cm; Vol. 2: 545 pages – Vol. 4: 610 pages. Additional information and previews on the author's website [www.ppu-buch.de]. Available as a 2 volume set directly from the author for Euro 488.- per set plus shipping or individually from specialist booksellers.

Some horological authors are casual collectors, while others are enthusiastic and diligent researchers, and others are compulsive scholars. But Jürgen Ermert, the German author of the two books on precision pendulum clocks under review, is in a category all by himself. He is completely obsessed by his subject matter, to the degree that he has already dedicated a decade of his life to his passion, and is now already working on the final volume 5, which will focus primarily on the Riefler clocks.

Precision pendulum clocks are the 'Holy Grail' of mechanical clockmaking, just like ever more complex 'Grand Complications' are the pinnacle of high-grade watchmaking. The details of these subject matters are of little interest to the bulk of horological enthusiasts, but those with an interest in the subject tend to be extremely passionate about it.

Note that the series of books<sup>\*</sup> has the title 'Precision Pendulum Clocks in Germany' and deals not only with German made timepieces, but also includes detailed descriptions of precision timepieces made in the UK, France and Italy, which have found homes in observatories, museums and collections throughout German speaking Europe.

Ermert is one of the most meticulous – and tenacious – horological researchers I know. Each maker's biography and oeuvre is

documented in excruciating detail through text, countless images (mostly hereto unpublished) and facsimiles of original source documents. This makes reading tedious at times, but the reward comes in the form of facts and images not found anywhere else in the horological literature in any language. This double volume addition to the series has not only been praised in all the German language horological press, but all my English speaking precision pendulum clock specialist friends seem to agree that for them – even if they cannot read German – the four volumes published so far are unique, indispensable and useful research tools in this subject area.

This is mainly due to the quality – and quantity – of the approximately 2,500 images (mostly in colour, all reproduced in high resolution) that Ermert included in these two volumes. This reviewer also applauds the meticulousness of explicitly citing 1186 third party published sources, allowing the reader to dig even deeper. In addition to countless original documents relating to the shown artifacts that are spread throughout the chapters of these two volumes, there are twenty-three longer historic source documents which are reproduced in facsimile as appendices in these two volumes.

These are books that every horological enthusiast with a serious interest in mechanical precision timekeeping should have on his or her bookshelf. Let us hope that the author has the stamina to complete the series in the years to come. With a limited print run (the bulk was sold before printing by subscription) only a limited number of copies are still available, so readers of *Antiquarian Horology* should act promptly.

Fortunat F. Mueller-Maerki, Sussex NJ (USA)

**CEES PETERS and JOHAN SELDERS, Horloges van Engelse Uurwerkmakers, 1670–1910**, 2015, 136 pages (ISBN 978-90-822841-0-3; €25) and **Horloges van Duitse en Zwitserse Uurwerkmakers en Miscellanea, 1670–1910**, 2017, 202 pages (ISBN 978-90-822841-0-4; €25). Both books were printed at Drukkerij True Colours Nederland, Utrecht and can be ordered from the Dutch Clock and Watch Museum, tel. +31 (0)75 6179769 or by sending an email to directeur@mnuurwerk.nl.

<sup>\*</sup>Reviews of Vol 1 and 3 by the same reviewer were published in *AH* March 2014 and June 2015.

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