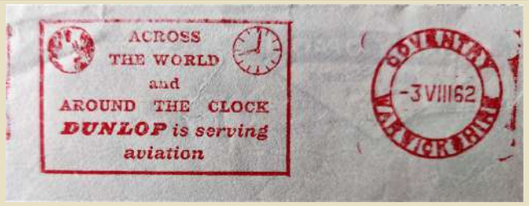
Hands of Time

1

INTRODUCTION: Often, we see life as a series of “Good Times, Bad Times”, while time moves on “across the world and around the clock”.

In this exhibit on horology, let us examine how time measuring devices came into existence from the ancient times, or should we say, how the hands of a clock started to move as we trace its history.

(Austria, 2019 | "Good Times, Bad Times", by Anna Jermolaewa | Scott 2817)



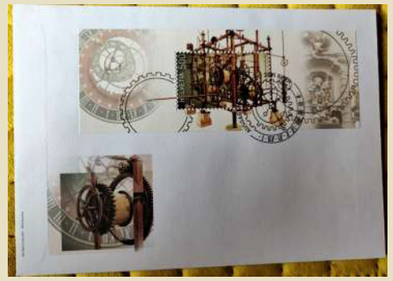
(GB, 1962 | Dunlop Meter, “Across the World and Around the Clock…”)

(France, 1977 | Meter depicting Rouen Clockface)

(France, 1976| Rouen Clocktower| Scott 1476)

4

The first mechanical clock came in 1360 A.D., from an invention made by Henry De Vick of Wurtemberg for Charles V of France. Today, there are quite a few claimants to be the oldest clocks still extant - chiefly, the Salisbury Cathedral Clock of England (1386 A.D.) the Gros Horloge or the “Great Clock” of Rouen, France (1389 A.D.) and the Wells Cathedral Clock now preserved at the Science Museum, London (1386- 1392 A.D.)



(Switzerland, 2020 | Clockmaking| Mi:CH 2680)

(Guine-Bissau, 2009 | Christian Huygens, Inventor of Pendulum Clock)

5

Then in 1658 A.D., almost two hundred years since De Vick’s mechanical clock changed the science of horology, an innovation came that was applied at once to all types of clocks: it was the introduction of a pendulum. Many inventors are credited with the pendulum, namely: Jost Burgi of Prague, Richard Harris of London, Vincenzo Galilei of Pisa and son of the legendary Galileo Galilei, Robert Hooke of England’s Isle of Wight, Ahasuerus Fromanteel of England, and Christian Huygens of Zulichem, Holland.

2

The word ‘Clock’ signifies a bell, and came from the Latin glocio, the old French cloca or clocca, and similar to the Saxon, clugga, the Anglo-Saxon, clocge, the German, Glocke, and the French, cloche. In this exhibit, let us gain a glance on the development of this humble machine.

In ancient times, the earliest instrument to measure time was the Sundial. The 5th Century Greek historian Herodotus states that sundials came from Babylonia. The Sundial works on the principle that the shadow of an obelisk is the longest in the morning and gradually it reaches a minimum at noon and then increases again to reach its maximum at the evening.

(Israel, 2014 | Sundials in Zoharei Chamma Synagogue, Jezzar Mosque and ancient Jewish quarters | SG 2299-2301)

3

The second time-measuring device in chronological order is considered to be the water-clock or the clepsydra. Vitruvius ascribes it to Ctesibius of Alexandria of 2nd century B.C. Next comes the sand-glass, which is generally ascribed to the 8th Century monk of Chartres, named Luitprand.

(Liberia, 1999 | Su Sung’s Water Clock| EC101)

(South Korea, 2021 | Ancient clocks of Joseon Era | KR 3263-66)

(Switzerland, 1950’s | History of Time Measurement - Poster Stamps edited by Swiss firm Nestlé-Peter-Cailler-Kohler Chocolate in the series n.89 - Sciences, Discoveries & Explorations)

6

Slowly, tower clocks became popular as they were affixed to the steeples of churches and were also called ‘Church Clocks’ or being installed at a town’s centre, they were called ‘town clock’. Today, most of modern clocks are electrically driven, with Alexander Bain often credited for the first electrical driven mechanical clock in 1840.