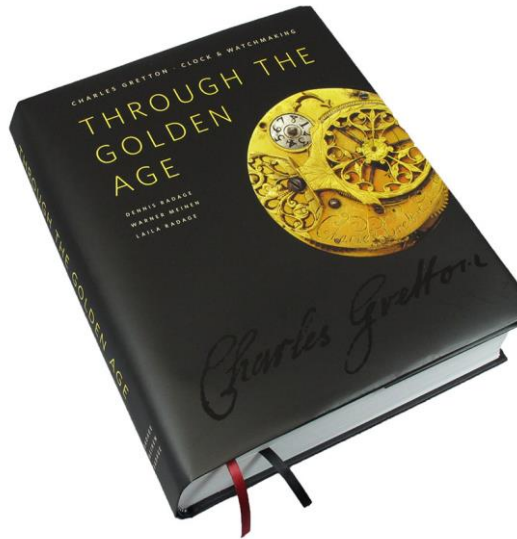


# Book *reviews* *Clocks Magazine*

Every so often a book comes along that is breathtaking in its scope and complexity. The volume under review here, *Through the Golden Age: Charles Gretton, Clock & Watchmaking*, is just such a book. It is lavish, attractive and highly informative, a 'must' for the bookshelves of the serious antiquarian horologist. At over 600 pages in length, it is a big book, packed full to bursting with high quality colour photographs and concise and well-written text, on beautifully laid-out pages. It is published by a Canadian publishing company—Three O'clock Publishing of Vancouver—who obviously know what they are doing.



It is difficult to do justice to such a large book in a few hundred words. The book is the culmination of 'The Gretton Project', which has dominated the lives of the authors, Dennis and Laila Radage and Warner Meinen, for over eight years, years in which they travelled throughout Europe, the UK, Canada and the USA photographing and recording in meticulous detail the many Gretton clocks and watches that had been brought to their attention. Laila Radage, in particular, has researched the life of Charles Gretton extensively, as well as the lives of his family and successors. 'Her research,' according to the Foreword, 'gives an insight into the social and economic standards of a successful artisan ... and puts flesh on the bones of the man.'

So who was this man and what made him tick (excuse the pun)? He is described in the Introduction as 'one of the finest clockmakers in London during the 17th and 18th centuries, a period that is widely regarded as the Golden Age of English Clockmaking'. Gretton rose from humble origins in a Lincolnshire village to become Master of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, as well as a wealthy businessman and philanthropist. The first chapter—all 72 pages of it!—

is dedicated to his life: his apprenticeship to Humphrey Downing, his involvement with the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, his marriages, and his retirement.

The next four chapters are dedicated to his longcase clocks, his spring clocks, his lantern clocks and his watches respectively. Each of the clocks is photographed and described in detail, with a list of standard features including case, dial and movement details. These four chapters form the bulk of the book and will be of interest to both practical and antiquarian horologists.

Chapter 6 contains details of Gretton's known apprentices, including his nephew William Moore. Perhaps his best known apprentice was Henry Sully who played an important role in developing a means of calculating longitude at sea using a timepiece.

The final chapter is about Gretton's workforce and output, and this is followed by appendices listing all known Gretton clocks and watches, published notices of lost or stolen Gretton watches, and recipients of Gretton's Gift through the Clockmakers Company, a bequest that helped over 80 boys and lasted for 100 years.

Through the Golden Age: Charles Gretton, Clock & Watchmaking by Dennis and Laila Radage and Warner Meinen (2016) is published by Three O'clock Publishing, Vancouver, Canada. ISBN: 978-0-9940460-0-0.

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