

CORONATION CELEBRATIONS: CLOCKS AND MONARCHY

MAY 18, 2023

Celebrating this past week, with all its pomp, ceremony and joyous celebrations, one was reminded of the long association of monarchs with the technological advancements of clocks and clockmaking. Not only is our present King Charles III a great lover of clocks, but so were his ancestors.

In the 18th century George III was passionate about science and technology, amassing a large collection of scientific instruments and took a keen interest in the work towards measuring longitude made by the clockmaker John Harrison. His son, the Duke of Sussex, was also a great collector of clocks and barometers, some of which still grace the royal collections today, and George III's granddaughter, Queen Victoria, also patronised some of the best clock and instrument makers of her own age.



Grenadier Guards Marching in precision during King Charles III's Coronation Celebrations. (Own photo)

If you are looking to celebrate this momentous moment in history with a fine antique clock or barometer with a royal connection we have a few options for you. For example, this substantial and beautifully inlaid satinwood clock with shell marquetry by Thomas Wright of Poultry, dated to about 1770, is an excellent choice. The clock's backplate is engraved "Watchmaker to the King", Wright having provided George III with clocks and watches.



A George III clock by Thomas Wright of Poultry, Maker to the King. (Photo: Raffety)

If you prefer a barometer, then a stunning verre eglomise wheel barometer made by John Russell of Falkirk is a fine example and dates to around 1810 – the barometer is crowned with gilded Prince of Wales’s feathers, perhaps in honour of the Prince Regent, later George IV, who was also a great collector. Falkirk is known to have supplied barometers to both George III and his son, one of which is still to be found in the royal collection. The verre eglomise decoration and giltwork on this example certainly gives it a regal elegance. Falkirk was proud of his royal connections, signing the silvered dial “Jno Russell Falkirk, Watchmaker to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent”.



Verre Eglomise Wheel Barometer by John Russell of Falkirk. Decorated with Prince of Wales Feathers. (Photo: Raffety)

From the 1830s we also have a fine antique porcelain clock by Benjamin Lewis Vuillamy, enriched with birds and floral motifs, with a fine gilt and engine turned dial. Vuillamy was clockmaker to the Crown, a title he inherited from his father, also named Benjamin. Such porcelain clocks were popular in the early Victorian period, and at least two similar clocks by Vuillamy can be found in the royal collections today.



Floral Porcelain Clock by Benjamin Lewis Vulliamy, Clockmaker to the Crown. (Photo: Raffety)

Finally, from the 2nd half of the 19th century we have a beautiful oak wall clock, the oak case finely carved with flowing scroll work and foliage. The clock dates to around 1875 and its large silvered dial is signed by the makers Lund & Blockley of Pall Mall “to the Queen”, another maker who supplied the royal family and was proud to state their royal associations – undoubtedly the royal connections helped with sales too, but they would not have supplied the Queen if not for the fine quality of their clocks.



Carved Oak Wall Clock by Lund and Blockley, Clockmakers to Queen Victoria (Photo: Raffety)

All these clocks and the beautiful barometer exhibit the finest craftsmanship and mechanisms, a testament to their age. But they also celebrate the associations between fine craftsmen and the monarchy, which for centuries supported and patronised the best British craftsmen and encouraged innovation. Each of these fine objects would be prized by any collector, but the links between the makers and our past monarchs give them an added sparkle.

Details of all these items can be found on our website or for further information email us at info@raffetyclocks.com