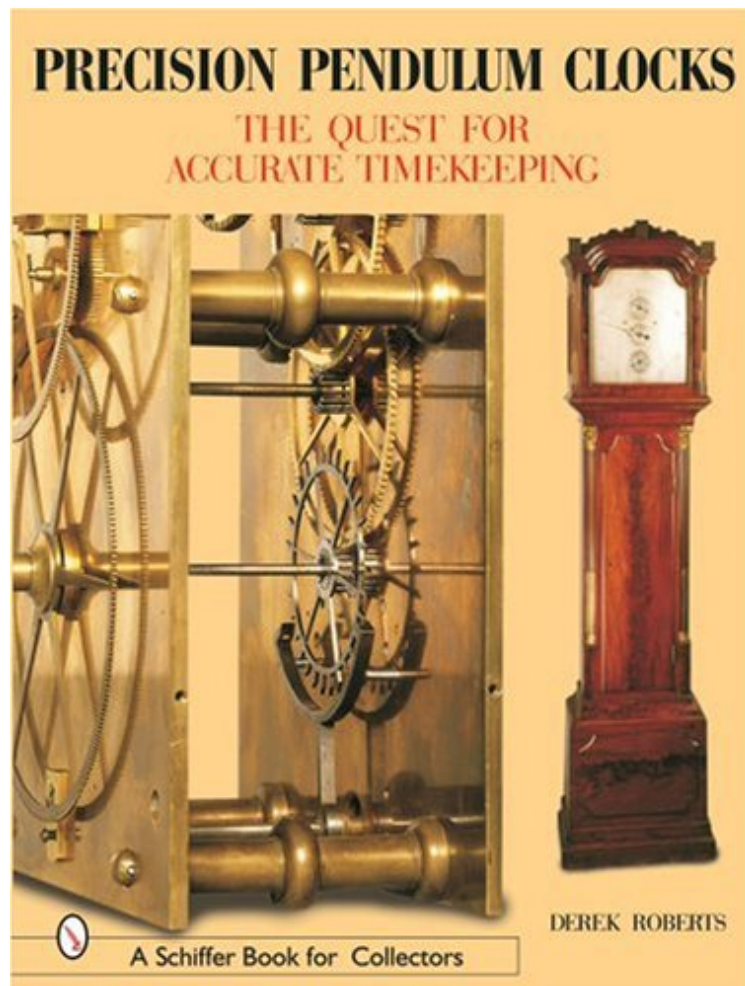


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Precision Pendulum Clocks: The Quest for Accurate Timekeeping (Schiffer Book for Collectors) (Volume 3)

Derek Roberts

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Derek Roberts : Precision Pendulum Clocks: The Quest for Accurate Timekeeping (Schiffer Book for Collectors) (Volume 3) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Precision Pendulum Clocks: The Quest for Accurate Timekeeping (Schiffer Book for Collectors) (Volume 3):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer Very pleased with the book. 13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. At long last: A book on this subject! We waited 30 years. By Fortunat Mueller-maerki Book Review by Fortunat F. Mueller-Maerki, Sussex NJ Precision Pendulum Clocks, The Quest for Accurate Timekeeping, by Derek Roberts. Schiffer Publishing, Atglen PA, published 2003, ISBN 0-7643-1636-2, 24x31 cm, 224 pages; Glossary, Index, Purchase for ca. [with money] at .com. ... The subtitle of this book "The Quest for Accurate

"Timekeeping" neatly sums up the very essence, the *raison d'être*, for the art and science of mechanical. Given the central importance of the subject, it is hard to understand why there has not been any serious, in-depth book published on precision horology in 25 years (since Erbrich, *Präzisionspenduluhren*, 1978, was published, but only in German), and never a book in English. Not only the precision timekeeping enthusiasts, but any serious horologist, owes Derek Roberts thanks for having finally filled this gap. Anybody familiar with prior books by Roberts, such as his volumes on *Skeleton Clocks*, *Mystery Clocks*, or *Carriage Clocks* will have high expectations, and will not be disappointed. However I must point out that the title is somewhat misleading. Roberts set out to produce the comprehensive treatise on precision timekeeping, a vast and broad subject, and after many years of research, collecting material and writing he had produced a work that could never fit into one volume, and indeed he had planned this to be a three volume work. Schiffer Publishing balked at that concept and forced the author to publish it as three separate books. (The second and third, named "English Precision Pendulum Clocks" and "Precision Pendulum Clocks: France, Germany, America and Recent Advancements", are due out in intervals of half a year). The publisher must have felt that there were better market opportunities in selling at first one book only. Marketing considerations must also have driven the misleading title; something along the lines of "An introduction to Precision ..." or "An overview of Precision ..." would have been more accurate and more descriptive for this book. Furthermore it soon becomes clear to the reader that abandoning the original "one-title, three volumes" concept came late in the production, because the text repeatedly refers to examples in the yet unpublished companion books. In one instance the reader is told to go to chapter 28 (in a 10 chapter book) for further information. To this reviewer such sloppiness in the final editing is slightly annoying. Once the reader however realizes that the text was designed to set the stage, to merely introduce the topic of precision timekeeping, it becomes clear that such goal is achieved in a superb manner. The specialist reader will find a concise and very readable introduction, while the more casual horologist may well be content with getting a good overview of the subject, without the burden of the details and technicalities of the volumes yet to be published. Unlike in his earlier books, Roberts does not attempt to write it all himself; actually 4 of the 10 chapters appear under the byline of eminent experts in their specialized fields (Jonathan Betts on Astronomy and Precision Time; John Martin on Escapements; Denys Vaughn on Electric Clocks, and A.D. Stewart provides a 200 year timeline style summary of the subject). The core of this volume - and the core in the quest for the perfect pendulum clock - is the 50 page chapter on the compensated pendulum, dealing with all the various approaches to both temperature and barometric compensation. This subject obviously is also close to the heart of the author. The last two chapters deal with the achievements of Thompson and Graham (the early strivers in the UK for more perfect pendulums) and Harrison (the first horologist utterly devoted to perfect timekeeping). The value of the book is as much in its illustrations as it is in the text. Some 280+ illustrations have been carefully selected to illustrate the points made, with careful attention to assuring that the photograph taken clearly shows the feature described in the text. Many illustrations are functional, technical diagrams, with captions (often in the style of "Lever A, lifts the Notch B, releasing pin C, letting wheel E turn ...") sometimes taking more space than the image. Clearly Roberts has taken as much effort and pride to get the illustrations and captions right, as he has devoted to the text. He follows the convention of showing most of the sample clocks he describes in several images, often from different angles, all under one illustration number. The book succeeds in working well for various types of readers: On one level it is an enjoyable "coffee table" book with pretty pictures of superb world-class clocks, as well as interesting tid-bits of technical knowledge to be learned by the casual, unsystematic browser. Unlike most books appealing also to the superficial reader, Roberts however also succeeds in producing a scholarly text that stands up to highest scrutiny for the individual who is willing to read every caption and pursue every footnote. The references to sources and further bibliographic resources (grouped at the end of every chapter) are voluminous; the compensated pendulum chapter alone lists 32 publications providing additional details. "Precision Pendulum Clocks: The Quest for Accurate Timekeeping", and its future companion volumes, are indeed destined to become the standard text on the subject, and should be part of any well rounded horological library. Fortunat Mueller-Maerki, Sussex NJ

This beautiful book relates the incredible story of how leading clockmakers, primarily of England, struggled to control accurate timekeeping for over 300 years. A remarkably thorough yet concise text, by several of today's leading horologists, is accompanied by nearly 1,000 photographs of clocks, which demonstrate each fascinating development. From museums of international significance, as well as private collections worldwide, the best examples of each new invention to establish accurate time-keepers is illustrated and recorded here. Chapters are devoted to the Royal Observatory at Greenwich and many of the brilliant men of science who made instruments and provided timekeepers. Georgian, Regency, and Victorian advances are shown to have contributed to the eventual success of accurately measuring time, that is so crucial to the success of today's highly integrated society.

About the Author Derek Roberts is a respected dealer and specialized collector of fine antique clocks, music boxes, and barometers. His previous books on horology have been widely acclaimed. He works in Tonbridge, Kent, England.