

Editorial

Chairman's Chat

A significant event is about to take place. No, it's not the new replacement for the Hubble space telescope, but... our first live SIS event since November 2019! On Friday 12th November, in front of a small, live but *attending* audience, this year's Gerard Turner Medal Lecture will be presented at the Society of Antiquaries in Burlington House. The attending audience may be modest (about twenty if my info. is correct), however we expect at least sixty-five to attend and participate globally via Zoom. I hope these tentative first steps will encourage rather than discourage attended events, at least those coming will enjoy a reception afterwards and then an even more exclusive group will be off to a local for dinner. This year's speaker is Prof. Simon Werrett talking about how the 'History of Scientific Instruments is Thriving' – tune in and find out!; The other day, nearing the end of summer, Camilla and I visited Upton House near Banbury, it's one of the National Trusts portfolio. As they go it was in the 'okay'

range – the contents was put together by an industrialist between the Wars so there's little joyed up thinking, but some good (and indifferent) art. I was delighted to find a couple of Hogarth's I'd not seen in the life before, and then, lurking in a dark passageway, was an attractive family group by Arthur Devis (1712–1787), always recognisable by the pale features and slightly stiff postures in otherwise well-observed accurate pictures. It was reasonably typical – a 'gentleman' pointing out the extent of his estates, his son relaxing on a cane, and the wife/mother seated but holding a nicely-observed reflecting telescope with shagreen covering on an unusual tripod stand, the portrait is probably 1760 or so, but the telescope looks nearer 1730–40 (Fig. 1). There was no label to tell us who the family was, but one does wonder if the telescope still languishes forgotten in an attic corner, or if it's already a part of a collection. It's also possible that the sitter wasn't using it to survey the family's estates, but had it included as she was an amateur astronomer, if anyone fancies

a little research there's a potentially interesting article there somewhere; You may recall back at the AGM our [www](http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/) site was taken on by Nicolás de Hilster in Holland? Nicolás has brought his formidable powers to bear on it and will shortly be releasing a site that, at a quick glance, will have a strong resemblance to the current one, but he's managed to incorporate added functionality thus we will be able to support a great deal more data and resources for our members. I can't say much more – not because I don't want to but because to me it's all Dutch!

Charles Miller



Fig. 1 Arthur Devis, 'Mr and Mrs Van Harthals and their Son', signed and dated 1749. At Upton House, The Bearsted Collection (National Trust). (a) Detail of wife with (b) close-up of the reflecting telescope, taken by Charles Miller. The complete painting and catalogue details are on the National Trust's website: www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/446667

Editor's Note

In his 'Chat' surely Charles Miller means 'double-Dutch'? I feel that as an ex-Dutchman I am allowed to ask that question. A note of warning: with Dutchmen now in charge of the Society's sources of information and a Swiss as our President, are we not in danger of a takeover by dark forces from the 'Continent'? How does that fit in with current UK's policy? The painting Charles and Camilla saw at Upton House is of 'Mr and Mrs Van Harthals and their

Son', a Dutch merchant family who lived at Gravesend. The Dutch - you find them everywhere! What Charles could not see is the date painted in the bottom left corner which is 1749, so he was quite correct in his instinct to want to date the painting by the telescope, which has received only a cursory glance by art historians! Mrs Van Harthals, however, is obviously very proud of the family's scientific possession, Fig. 1.

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The Cover Picture

A portable telegraph made by Lars Ericsson in Sweden in 1892. It is a complete station: besides the receiving register it contains the Morse key, the bell, the lightning detector, the galvanometer and an ink bottle. From the collection of Fons Vanden Berghen (see the review by WDH on pp. 23 and 44 of the March *Bulletin*, No. 149). For more details on this instrument see Fons Vanden Berghen, 'Lars Magnus Ericsson Part 2 About the Ericsson telegraphs', *BVWS Bulletin*, 43 (Winter 2018), pp. 5-7.

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SIS Research Grants 2022

Every year, we award small grants, of up to £750 each, for research on the history of scientific instruments. Grants are available to both members and non-members, but typically we receive very few grant applications come from SIS members. We would like to remind members that the scheme is available, and members are most welcome to apply!

Applications for 2022 Grants are now open; the deadline for applications is 1200 GMT on 8 January 2022.

The short application form is available on our website at <http://www.scientificinstrumentsociety.org/grant-application-form>

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