



Carriage Clocks by Joseph Knibb

THE BLUE PLAQUE

On 25th September 2010 a Blue Plaque commemorating the lives of the Knibb clockmakers was erected on the eastern gable end of Claydon Church Room opposite Leys Farm, a property subsequently much associated with the Knibb family.

As the majority of the 'old' houses in the village date from the 18th Century it is not possible to know exactly where they were born. However, records show that from the time of their success as clockmakers, the family prospered becoming landowners of considerable standing in and around the village, church wardens and benefactors of the parish.

The plaque was unveiled by Mr Gerald Marsh, a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers. Mr Marsh is an expert on Knibb clocks and a well-known antiquarian and clock maker.

It was fitting that the current Lord Mayor of Oxford, Councillor John Goddard, attended the ceremony as John Knibb was elected Mayor of Oxford twice.

The Knibbs

EMINENT EARLY ENGLISH CLOCK MAKERS



Lantern Clock by John Knibb

1600	Samuel Born 1625	Joseph Born 1640	John Born 1650	Samuel Died 1670		Joseph Died 1711	John Died 1722	
James I 1602-1625	Civil War 1642-1646	Commonwealth 1649-1660	Charles II 1660-1685	James II 1685-1689	William & Mary 1689-1694	William III 1694-1702	Queen Anne 1702-1714	George I 1714-1727
	Battle of Edgehill	Battle of Cromwell)	Cropredy	Great Plague 1665	Great Fire 1666			

The Knibb brothers and their cousin, Samuel, were baptised in this beautiful little 11th Century Church of St James the Great and although Claydon has always been recorded as a small poor agricultural village, perhaps the church would suggest more prosperous times.

In the 17th Century from humble yeoman stock the two brothers, Joseph and John, and cousin Samuel, became remarkable clockmakers. (There was another cousin Peter who was apprenticed to Joseph.)

SAMUEL KNIBB (1625 – 1670)

The third son of John Knibb moved from Claydon and started a business in Newport Pagnall before establishing himself in London in 1662. Samuel was the first of eight Knibbs to be admitted to the Clockmaker’s Company, a form of guild approved by Charles I. His cousin Joseph was apprenticed to him in 1655. Samuel’s career was cut short by ill-health and he died in London around 1670

JOSEPH KNIBB (1640 – 1711)

The fifth son of Thomas and Elizabeth Knibb was the most illustrious of the Knibb family of clockmakers. After serving his seven year apprenticeship with Samuel in Newport Pagnell

Joseph moved to Oxford. There he practised as a clockmaker, apparently working for Trinity College.

At this time plague was raging in London and Charles II, his court and Cavalier Parliament moved to Oxford. Patronage of the wealthy was much sought after by the Freeman Traders of the City and they resented any intrusion by newcomers. Joseph applied for the Freedom to Trade, but this was refused. Trinity College officially appointed him a gardener and Joseph withdrew his claim to be a privileged tradesman of the University in return for being accepted as a Freeman of the City on payment of a fine. The fine of 20 nobles (£6.65) and a leather bucket was duly paid.

In 1668, aged 28, with the business prospering Joseph took on Peter Knibb and Thomas Smith from Bloxham as apprentices. By 1670 he had moved to London, leaving his brother John in charge at Oxford. He was made a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers and was elected as a Steward of the Clockmaker’s Company in 1684. He retired from London in 1697 and went to live in Hanslope, Buckinghamshire, where he still made some clocks until he died in 1711.

Joseph Knibb is ranked amongst the finest of the early English clockmakers and is renowned for both the quality of his work and his inventions. He made many longcase and table clocks for domestic use. He supplied turret clocks for

Wadham College and the state entrance to Windsor Castle in 1677 and payments were made to him in 1682 on behalf of King Charles II.

JOHN KNIBB (1650 – 1722)

John joined his elder brother in Oxford as an apprentice or assistant in 1664. Their younger brother, Daniel, came to Oxford as an undergraduate at St Edmund Hall in 1668.

When Joseph moved to London in 1670, John, then aged 20, looked after most of the Oxford business. In 1672 John applied for the Freedom of the City, and although he had none of the necessary qualifications, in April 1673 by Act of the Council he became a Freeman.

John became a Council Bailiff in September 1686, taking his oath in September 1688. In April 1689 he accompanied the Mayor to the Coronation of William and Mary at Westminster. In November 1698 John started his first term as Mayor of Oxford with a second term in 1710/11. During the mayoral year 1716/17 he was chosen Alderman.

John Knibb died in 1722 at the age of 72 and was buried inside St Cross Church, Holywell, Oxford. His wife Elizabeth lived another 18 years and was buried with him in December 1740. Between 1673 and 1722 John Knibb took on ten apprentices and in 1690 he made the clock for St John’s College.