

Stephen Doerr (1946 - 2021)

As announced at our January meeting Stephen Doerr a member of The South London Branch died suddenly just before Christmas.

Stephen was well known within the branch and attended our meetings regularly. He had also attended the workshop since it had been set up. Steve grew up in Selsdon, Surrey, and became a maths teacher in Worth, Sussex.

Steve later became involved in the Ardingly Old Jeshwang Association, building and developing a Health Centre in The Gambia, later becoming the Charity's chairman.

An impulse buy at auction of a longcase clock mechanism led to one of his continuing passions. He would travel far and wide to attend auctions and accumulated a vast number of distressed clock cases and movements. Over time his knowledge and expertise grew. His particular horological interest was in provincial clockmakers and their clocks, 1660-1850, which he loved to research. He became a Free man of the City of London and a Liveryman in the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers.

He was a member of the Antiquarian Horological Society attending the meetings of their South Eastern Section in Maidstone for many years.

Since 2019 he was an external examiner for the BA Horology course at Birmingham City University ,

Bringing his wealth of horological interest and academic experience to the role. He was always keen to explore the student experience and met often with each student cohort to gather their views that informed his annual report and feedback. An incredibly supportive man, generous of his time and with willingness to listen, and consider before making comment.

He will be greatly missed by family, friends and colleagues.



Meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month

At The White Hart Barn (Godstone Village Hall)

Godstone Surrey RH9 8DU at 7.30 p.m. for 8 p.m.

*A day wasted on others is not wasted on one's self.
Charles Dickens*

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE**

**NEXT
MEETING**
10th February

**LAST MONTH'S
MEETING**

MEMBERSHIP

**WORKSHOP
NEWS**

AUCTIONS

OPEN DAY

**STEPHEN DOERR
1946-2021**

**FREE
ADVERTISING**

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Next Month's Meeting

**at the White Hart barn and by Zoom presentation
10th of February Starting 20.00 hours.**

David Rooney.

About time: a history of civilisation in 12 clocks.

Many members of the South London Branch will be very happy and pleased to welcome back David Rooney who has contributed many talks and lectures to our branch over the years.

David, here with a new book that has been occupying a lot of his time, is now a freelance researcher and writer. He is a council member for the Antiquarian Horological Society. Born and brought up in South Shields he has had a lifetime's involvement in horology. His parents started their own horological business in 1982 converting parts of the family home into workshop and office when David was just a small boy. His mother, a researcher, did the accounts and managed the business and David can remember being taken to many properties where his father cared for their horological exhibits.

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Many of those people that his mother and father met still fondly remember the expertise that his parents lavished on their clocks.

So, it is no wonder that David would follow a career path inspired by their own. After working at the Science Museum as a technology curator, David was to become Curator of Timekeeping at the Royal Greenwich Observatory which is where many of us enjoyed hearing his story of the lady who sold time, Ruth Belville. David then left to work again at the Science Museum setting up the mathematical gallery and publishing his second book whilst being Curator of Time, Navigation and Transport. He has now turned freelance and collated a lot of the information that he has already researched along with further new stories taking the often-difficult task of putting pen to paper.

His new book "About time: a history of civilisation in 12 clocks", a very catchy title, is published by Penguin books. This book tackles the history of the world, the history of us, how with time we have been controlled and politicised. How empires have been built. This is not a technical book on horology but how clocks and time has been used for centuries as a source of control, power, morality, and belief.

Duncan Greig

LOGIN DETAILS FOR THE ZOOM PRESENTATION

WILL BE SENT IN A SEPARATE EMAIL

Don't forget our meetings are now on the 2nd Thursday

BRANCH MEMBERSHIP

2022 Membership is going well with 70% of members having paid . If you are one of the 30% yet to respond please complete the membership form and send it with you remittance . I am in the process of sorting the membership cards and they will be sent out with the March issue of the newsletter

Bill Horan (Membership secretary)

WORKSHOP NEWS AND VACANCIES

The workshop has reopened, there has been some changes to personnel as one would expect after such a long time. This results in some spaces to be filled for the evening classes. Anyone interested in joining us and using the excellent facilities in our workshop please contact me on 01959577312 or 07917226598 The only restriction at the moment is that we require people attending to be double jabbed!

James Marten

BRANCH AUCTIONS

We have scheduled 2 auctions the first on the 12th March and a further one in May possibly the 21st. These auctions will be selling effects of John Hatt , and will not be for members to sell items. Our normal November auction is still scheduled.

BRANCH OPEN DAY

The postponed OPEN DAY has now been confirmed for 23rd April full details to follow.

Crispin showed us several examples of the backs of Rolex watches illustrating how Rolex applied for world patents for this design and by 1928 had achieved this. By the 1930s stainless steel cases improved the stability, durability and cost of the watch but how could things be improved further? In 1931 Rolex patented the perpetual rotor solving the problem they claimed, "That had defeated watchmakers for centuries".

This self-winding wristwatch mechanism was mainly due to the development and skill of John Harwood who after returning from the trenches of World War I settled in the Isle of Man and patented the "Buffer self-winding wristwatch". Perhaps the greatest form of flattery is someone trying to copy what you do, culminating with Rolex writing an apology to Harwood. Rolex were to realise the significance of their advertising being all important. After developing their Oyster Perpetual Bubble Back, they produced a multitude of advertising even flying watches over Everest, and getting high profile characters like James Bond 007, to wear their watches.

Concluding his most engaging talk there were a few unusual watches that Crispin showed us, 1930s doctors watches, rectangular watches with jumping hours and he alluded to enjoying collecting early chronograph watches with enamel dials. After a good question and answer session we thanked and rewarded our speaker with our customary lubrication.

Duncan Greig.

FREE ADVERTISING FOR BRANCH MEMBERS.

Contact Bill 01543506195 or electricwilliam@gmail.com

www.slbbhi.co.uk

LAST MONTH'S MEETING **CRISPIN MACIEJEWSKI** **OLDTIMERS Vintage Wristwatches**

Happy New Year to you all.

Following a minute's silence for Stephen Doerr (obituary in this newsletter), James Marten introduced our first speaker of the year Crispin Maciejewski (pronounced Much-ae-ski).

In 1991 Crispin started a business, "Oldtimers", selling vintage wristwatches, these watches are his passion. His beginnings at Epsom College, while studying Jewellery and Silversmithing, he enjoyed working with his hands. Using wood and silver he made a series of wooden cased watches with quartz movements. Learning of grants available from the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers; Crispin applied and was given an interview at Goldsmiths Hall with a croaky voiced gentleman, who he would later get to know as George Daniels. After a nervous interview Crispin was destined to receive his grant and with the help of Ron Rose a suitable workshop was found for him in Weybridge. Crispin was apprenticed to John Wingate working at the 'Weybridge Clock Shop'. George Daniels turned up on a vintage motorcycle one day to check out the company and to grant Crispin the bursary for the next four years (1989 to 1993).

John Wingate his master inspired him to start looking at collecting watches as clocks were too expensive. So, it was early starts at the Bermondsey market on Fridays and Portobello on Saturdays that he found the niche he was looking for in his collecting. After working in Weybridge Crispin was to move to work with a Cheshire dealer before moving back to Kent where colleagues encouraged him to start a website devoted to his passion.

On the images shown some of the first wristwatches were in fact small pocket watches fitted inside protective leather cases, attached to a leather strap and as the shown advert suggested many of these were made for young officers who wore these at the front (Great War 1914-18). The advert even exclaimed "Dust proof, damp proof and delivered to the front". Crispin brought along watches from his own collection and showed five examples of these in his images dating from 1908 to 1916.

Some of these watches were rare as they have a clasp on the watchstrap and even an example of left-hand winding. The wristwatch was here to stay and became a status symbol, German officers posed for the photographs quite clearly showing off the watches on their wrists. Early Omega 1915 adverts proclaimed their watches were "For the town or the front". All the time manufacturers were trying to conquer the ever-present problem of dust and damp ingress. Military style luminous dials and luminous hands became the thing to have. Crispin drew our attention to a list of kit an officer must have for the trenches, with the first item on this list being a luminous dialled wristwatch. One unusual watch in the collection had an experimental dial with diverse battens: the symbol of a triangle at 12 and an oval at the bottom for 6, with 'T' shape battens for the quarter past and the quarter too. The symbols would have been quite heavily filled with luminous paint making it bright enough to see the time in the darkness of the trenches, perhaps too bright. Crispin has only seen one example of these watches that could possibly have made the wearer a target for enemy snipers. Naturally progression led to Hunter and Half Hunter wristwatches being developed such as the illustrated JW Benson Hunter and the illustrated Half Hunters by Helvetia and Vertex, there were of course similar versions designed for ladies.

The problems of humidity dust and damp were not to go away; one of the first manufacturers to have a degree of success in conquering this was Francois Borgel.

The illustrated "Zenith Land and Water" version was similar to Borgel but not by him. These watches had the technological advance of a screw front bezel with no opening to the back, so the movement came out in one piece leaving the split stem and winding button firmly in a protective sleeve on the case. The mountaineer George Mallory's watch, a Borgel, was discovered with his body in 1999 following his and Andrew Irvine's ill-fated attempt to summit Everest in 1924. Remarkably on discovery the watch was still in good condition. Other manufacturers illustrated who were trying to solve this problem included an IWC 1926, a Hermetic 1929. Even a silver Omega in a quality Denison case.

There were several screw front cushion watches many fitting the watch into the case with a cushion of rubber at the back of the case including the dust caps. In 1931 Edwin Harrop developed a watch with the name 'Submarine' that had a gasket around the bezel and crown. Crispin showed us adverts for an early version of a waterproof Omega that was square and which had the whole watch sliding in and out of the case.

Crispin was talking about a rectangular 'Bravington Wetrista', a 'JLC Etanche' and a 'Favre-Leuba'. when sadly we had a break in transmission. We apologise for this as it was not a break in the Zoom transmission, but the branch computer suddenly decided to fail, and we had to reboot the PowerPoint presentation.

Suddenly we have Rolex arriving on the scene striving for the perfect dustproof and waterproof case. The Oyster waterproof crown was developed by 1926, this used lead gaskets. Crispin showed us an early example of this watch dated to 1926 where patents have been applied for and was marketed in the UK with great vigour. From 1928 to 1931 one of Rolex's most famous adverts was showing their Oyster watch suspended in a goldfish bowl in the windows of Jewellers shops.