



**LAST MONTH'S MEETING**  
**British Women in**  
**Horological Businesses 1800-1930**  
**Geoff Allnutt and Su Fullwood**

Su Fullwood and Geoff Allnutt jointly gave The South London Branch a very detailed lecture on some amazing women who worked in the horological industry over one hundred and thirty years. The one thing that became immediately obvious was the extent of research required to find these women. In many cases a watch made by a woman would be in the name of a man who might have been her relative or an employer. The general impression was that a watch with a woman's name engraved on it, represented that of the owner or as a commemorative item but not that of the maker. Geoff persuaded Su to read Loomes from cover to cover, which held many clues for their research.

What sparked this interest was the history of Geoff's shop which he inherited with many items, from his father in Midhurst which had been a watchmaker's business for 100 years. In the collection was a watch engraved with the name of Martha Nason. Geoff asked Su to do some research for a display at Midhurst Museum about past clockmakers at his Midhurst premises going back to the 1700's. To her surprise Su found two of the previous occupants were women running a watchmaker's and jewellers' business from that same address.

From these beginnings a great deal of further research accumulated many details of the women, much of which is on going as snippets of detail emerge. It was noticeable that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Christchurch became the centre for fusee chain making, founded by Robert Harvy Cox with his wife Anne who took over the running of the business after his death in 1815 aged 60. Anne further developed and expanded the business, which was creating employment for about 500 people, mainly women. Weiss notes that Mrs Andrews stated "she filed and polished 144 hooks in two hours, when working a forty-five-hour week. She also pointed out that the girls aged nine and upwards were actually working seventy hours a week

. In 1870 the Married Women's property act allowed married women to be the legal owners of the money they earned and to inherit property. In 1882 a further law included the wife's right to own, buy and sell her separate property. The courts were forced to recognise a husband and a wife as two separate entities. Su and Geoff then described many women for whom they had found watchmaking history including Madame Lina, watchmaker real name Paulina Muller, in newspaper articles and in the census having been trained by her father in Geneva. Eliza Andrews 1790 - 1812, listed as a watchmaker in 1802 and later as a jeweller. There were many others mentioned but space does not allow here.

This was a lecture researched in intimate detail and continues to have much more to be discovered. This resulted in many questions and reminiscences from our members.

The audience showed their gratitude in their usual enthusiastic way as Su and Geoff were presented with a suitable lubricant.

MICHAEL McDONNELL