



**South London Branch**  
**British Horological Institute**

[www.slbbhi.co.uk](http://www.slbbhi.co.uk)



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**British Horological Institute**

*Newsletter No. 543 June 2024*

*Meetings are held on the 1st 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.*

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**OPEN DAY**

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**"With money you can buy a clock but not time."  
Chinese Proverb**

**Next Month's Meeting  
6<sup>th</sup> June 2024.**

**7:30 pm for an 8 o'clock start.**

**Barnaby Smith**

**'The Clock and Watchmakers of Stow on the Wold'.**

This evening Barnaby will share with us his fascination for Stow on the Wold clocks. He will cover the three generations of the Archer family of clockmakers and will outline the different styles of clocks made by them, as well as the other clockmakers in the town.

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Barnaby gives a lot of his time to being our treasurer and is also chairman/treasurer of the South-East Section of The Antiquarian Horological Society. He is also a member of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers.

He worked for 38 years for the in-house bank of PSA Peugeot Citroen.

During the last year, Barnaby has written and privately published an informative work on "Clock and Watch Makers of Stow on the Wold". Some of my introduction comes from his Preface. In 1986 shortly after moving into their new home, he purchased a lantern clock signed "Archer, Stow". Inquisitively he wanted to know more of the Archer family and started to keep records of their clocks and also to collect some of them. This he thought would only be a dozen or so but he now has records of over 240 Archer family clocks, as well as those of other Stow makers.

## Workshop News

The branch workshop continues to thrive and is considering another :-

### BASIC LATHE COURSE

The workshop would like to conduct another of our popular Basic Lathe courses. If anyone is interested in attending on a Saturday in the coming weeks or months please contact Trevor Keast on 07507-142-704

## South London Branch

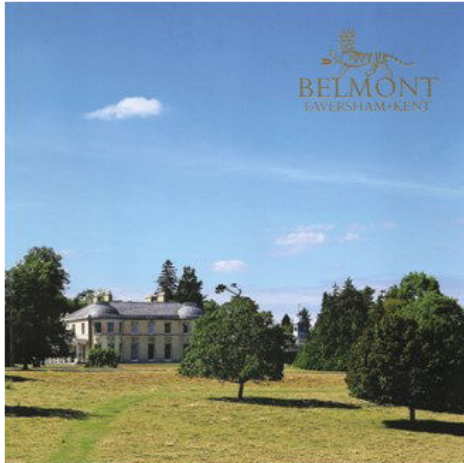
### OPEN DAY

SLBBHI. will be holding an open day on the 5th of October 2024. This will be held at **SOPER HALL CATERHAM CR3 6HY** More details to follow.

## South London Branch Visit to Belmont

### The Lord Harris Collection

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024



I am pleased to announce that we have secured a Private Viewing of the Lord Harris collection of over 300 clocks and watches. The tour will be guided by Jonathan Betts and Duncan Greig, and we have to restrict numbers to 25 on a first come first served basis

Arrival at 10:30 – Tour 11:00 – Buffet Lunch 13:00.

Tea/coffee/biscuits on arrival

The cost will be £30.00per head

To book a place please contact Duncan by email

[djpgreig@btinternet.com](mailto:djpgreig@btinternet.com)

Text or phone 07767 303 289

Belmont House is located near Faversham Kent –Post Code:

ME13 0HH

## LAST MONTH'S MEETING

### West Dean students 2024.

Malcolm Archer, Subject Leader (Horology), from West Dean College near Chichester, brought five of his students, who were willing to talk at our South London branch BHI meeting. Due to the holding of local elections we relocated to Soper Hall Caterham.

Malcolm was keen to show us some of the projects that have been going on at the college over the last year. The clocks course, at West Dean, now has a capacity to train up to 14 students, most of whom are currently on their second or third year, but the programme of learning can now develop to a 5-year course with a master's degree qualification at the end.

Students work on a variety of things from Longcase clocks making verge pallets to balance staffs but the majority of the first-year students work around making a simple clock which is based upon that of Whitehurst of Derby, which can be made as a hoop and spike clock. Students are required to have the clock finished by the end of May and to be fully functioning. Not all dimensions for the wheelwork are given, so as students have to calculate and learn how to plant the train of gears themselves with guidance from tutors. They are allowed a free hand at the aesthetic design, some choosing to make their clocks fairly simple and functional, but as we were to learn later some go to great lengths to design a unique piece.

Ron Rose has influenced the teaching of piercing and Malcolm Archer showed they had adopted his method of the piercing saw, with a large bow and a steel V block. Illustrating how it produces a good steel hand that needed minimal finishing.

Continued

Malcolm went on to show other work that was being done at the college from third-year students working on chronometers, cutting escape wheels and next year's work will be learning to make detents. This concluded the snapshot of the diversity of things that are happening at West Dean College.

## **Micheal Dickson.**

First of the students to talk to us was Michael Dickson.

Since age 14 Michael has loved horology and has been working on watches. He illustrated his talk with work that he had been doing, in his own time, to a gold pocket watch, 65mm diameter by John Barwise, which has centre seconds. Not wishing to compromise the name of the customer he showed us the symbolic engraving of a horse on the case. He extolled the virtues on the quality of the watch which had a squared outside hooking to the barrel, and he was able to tell us that the beautifully blued steel spring, which we presume to be original, had a date June 1793 scribed upon it. He teased us with an illustration of the potance for the verge, being drilled to take something different and there was a knockout centre post presumably for the centre sweep seconds. The beautiful large balance of steel had five spectacularly finished S shaped crossings, and this was impused not by a rack lever but by a verge with wheel driving an integral pinion to the balance. This gears up the amplitude, (vibrations per hour), of the balance and is very noisy. This is a pirouette escapement more popular with a large balance on the continental watches. He also remarked how terribly difficult it is to set the watch on beat and relied mainly on the sound of the watch as there was no trace available on Microset or Vibrograph testing machines. Although the timekeeping is terrible the watch goes very well.

## **Jocelyn Chang.**

The second student was Jocelyn Chang who has already been at the college to study for her master's degree in metals conservation, but this is her first year in horology. Malcolm conducted

## **SLBBHI Members - Request for Assistance**

**I'm new to the world of watchmaking and currently enrolled in the distance learning course offered by the BHI. As I immerse myself in this fascinating craft, I'm in the process of acquiring the necessary tools. However, I've found that some of the costs associated with these tools can be quite daunting.**

**One particular item I'm interested in is a watch cleaning machine. Unfortunately, both new and second-hand options come with a significant price tag, which is proving to be a barrier for me.**

**In exploring alternatives, I've considered refurbishing an old model or even exploring the option of building one from scratch. Recently, I came across a start-up company that provides 3D printer files to construct your own cleaning machine. This self-build option seems promising, but I lack the means to print the required parts myself.**

**I'm reaching out to inquire if anyone would be willing to assist me by printing the necessary parts for a fee. This would greatly help me in getting my own cleaning machine up and running.**

**Thank you for considering my request.**

**Warm regards,**

**Derek Herbert**

**[derek.herbert.miet@gmail.com](mailto:derek.herbert.miet@gmail.com)**

**07799 572527**

## **FREE ADVERTISING FOR BRANCH MEMBERS.**

Is there something you require, an obscure tool or clock/watch part. We can try and help we have had great success in the past. Just contact Bill: - 01543506195 or [electricwilliam@gmail.com](mailto:electricwilliam@gmail.com)

## **CAN ANYONE HELP!**

Under the free ads section two of our members have requested our help, is there anyone out there who can help

## **SLBBHI Members - Request for Assistance**

**My name is Joe and I'm currently studying the DLC watch pathway.**

**I'm looking for some advice regarding accreditation with the Swatch group.**

**It's my understanding that there is an evaluation process and also equipment / workshop criteria. After a fairly extensive search I can't find any official information. Any help would be much appreciated. Please contact me on the following email:**

**[joe@roargill.co.uk](mailto:joe@roargill.co.uk)**

an interview with Jocelyn commending her for the design of pillars for her clock, these are reminiscent of past masters like Joseph Knibb. Malcolm told us that there are five pillars turned by students, the fifth one is kept as a memento by West Dean College. Malcolm was at pains to let us know that Jocelyn has never used a lathe before, neither a compound slide or watchmaker's lathe but to produce such a complicated design has given her a chance to learn and improve upon hand skills. Jocelyn's attention then turned to the making of the escape wheel which was cut with a fly cutter, and she made a set of brass pallets (dummy pallets), to ensure she had the correct shape and angles of their faces before going to the harder task of piercing out tool steel for the final product. Jocelyn's attention now turned to the classical English style of the dial, and she wanted to cut out the arch and produce a moon phase. She has already cut the moon wheel and has progressed to making the actuating levers. In order to accommodate the large dial moon wheel, the dial requires a sub plate to be manufactured between the moon and the front plate of the clock. Her focus is on the functioning of the clock which has been running and she found making the pallets very difficult. She has chosen a heart-shaped design, for hands which are almost completed. However, there is still a lot of work to do and the midnight oil will have to be burnt in abundance to have this clock completed in two weeks' time.

## **Takumi Hamano**

The third student Takumi Hamano has been studying watch making and clockmaking for three years in his native Japan and has come to West Dean for its excellence in teaching conservation. Malcolm Archer carried out the second interview of the evening and we were witness to some of the things that Takumi has been doing. He showed us an excellent illustration of a pinion that he had made which was undergoing polishing. Clearly this young man has a great deal of patience and has been influenced immensely by fine watchmaking. His interest in fine finishing was illustrated in the finishes of his steel work and patterning of the

the wheels on which he has produced snail patterns in contra flow on brass wheels is not something that you would not normally see on fine English clock work.

Inspired by Blacksmiths work on steel banister rails, Takumi set about making a most unique form of pillars for his clock. When tutors saw his first attempts, they all were dismissive and encouraged him to choose a more traditional form of pillar. Not wishing to be defeated, over many nights Takumi devised a method of milling square brass, having four separate columns in the pillar. Then mounting one end at the headstock, the other end at the tailstock, and with a steel rod guiding in the middle executed a spiral twist, reminiscent of fine Smiths work. This time they have turned out better than his first attempts.

## **Kye Leaver**

Our fourth student was Kye Leaver, A first year student brought us closer to home with a subject close to his heart and family, Campanology. More importantly he talked on the history of Gillett and Johnson and its bell making. William Gillett started in Hadlow in Kent circa 1822 under the patronage of the Sackville family, (Knole). by 1840 it had moved to Croydon. in 1854 Charles Bland joined William Gillett to form Gillett and Bland. Nobells were cast by this company at this period, but they used Tailors bell foundry in Leicestershire. Kye showed us illustrations of the bell at Tilgate stables in Crawley. Although with poor access he was able to climb up and shows the bell signed Taylor 1868. The Gillet and Bland clock is manufactured in 1873.

It was only after 1877 when Gillett and Bland were joined by Arthur Johnston and latterly after the death of Bland did the firm start to produce bells from its own foundry, Earlier bells are distinguished by a Gothic font and ornamentation around the top of the bell. Latterly they moved to a Serif font until bell founding

the imperative that the case for the clock movement was adequate in size to accommodate the pendulum. Not an uncommon error. John Ward was for ever optimistic that errors could be overcome... and they were.

Our final speaker was Ron Rose, without whom it is hard to imagine a SLBBHI. He pointed out that evolution will make many skills obsolete, as with the milling machine the workshop has acquired. Ron felt he might have to put his old files into the bottom draw as technology progresses. The public attitude to horology of today and that of the future changes, but he continues to be very optimistic for the future of the profession. Though there will be fewer clocks, there will be greater demand for the skilled people to maintain them. Ron concluded his speech by thanking the committee and in particular, Duncan Greig for having made the South London Branch such a success. It has the biggest turn out at meetings, a comprehensive library, numerous social gatherings and day trips, plus the workshop with thirty plus members a week learning skills from experts. There are also courses in clock case making, screw cutting and the use of specialist tools.

The finishing touches missing from the tables were the place name cards that Joan Underhay hand written in calligraphy each year. Unfortunately, Joan was unable to use her skilful hand this year. We wish her well and hope she will be ready for action soon.

The evening concluded with more socialising and story telling. We all went home contented.

Michael McDonnell

# **BHI SOUTH LONDON BRANCH**

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

### **18<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

The annual dinners are very important to the SLB as it provides the opportunity for members and their friends to socialise within a profession where many are sole traders who spend long days in isolation. This year's dinner was no exception in that nearly seventy of us renewed friendships for a chin wag and dinner in pleasant surroundings.

Our Chairman, Trevor Keast acted as Master of Ceremonies for the evening and after the formalities of respect for deceased members, our President Philip Whyte said grace before dinner.

The competent catering staff cleared the tables after the dinner, Trevor then introduced us to Jane Pedlar, who described her experiences as Past Master of the Clockmakers Company. In this most prestigious post she attended the Lord Mayers Banquet in November and the Buckingham Palace garden party in the following May in the presence of King Charles.

Each year the Masters organise a weekend away which took Jane, her consort and a further three hundred to Glasgow where they attended a Gala dinner at the City Chambers where there was Whiskey galore accompanied by bag pipes. Jane humorously told us of other events and dinners she enjoyed over her year as Master of The Clockmakers Company.

Our next speaker was Grenville Johns who told us of his association with John Ward for the preparation of notes on

ceased around 1957. But it was when Arthur's son Cyril Johnson joined the foundry 1902 becoming a partner 1905 that tuning became refined with the introduction of a vertical lathe, the bell being stationary.

Kye explained to us the harmonics of a bell. This was noted by a Canon Simpson in 1875. The sounds are split into various categories. Hum, the lowest frequency heard. Prime, which is the first Octave. Tierce, which is a minor third. Quint which is major fifth all these go together to make the Nominal, the sound of the bell. We were able to listen to these frequencies on bells Kye used for his illustrations, In Horsham Town Hall Kye showed examples of an earlier bell and the method of tuning them by chipping the inner edge of the mull of the bell. In Fairwarp, a church in Ashdown Park there is a complete set of 8 bells made by Gillett and Johnson, under the direction of Cyril Johnson, who influenced the sound of the bell by the shape of the casting, leaving more metal at the top of the bell which could be turned away to produce a true harmonic. The company went on to produce at least 53 Carillons, including the largest musical instrument in the world. This would be the fantastic Riverside Carillon in New York, with the heaviest, the Bourdon bell 18.5 tons. Kye told us when first cast this bell was 20 tons almost 2 tons of metal was removed in the tuning.

The author was very taken with this presentation and admires the website set up by Kye and his managing partner. [www.thebellsofsussex.weebly.com](http://www.thebellsofsussex.weebly.com) One hopes that in his travels the same amount of excellent documentation will be spent on the horological artefacts in these towers.

## Florine Lemaitre

Our fifth and final student from West Dean, Florine from Brittany, France. She is studying at graduate level. Formerly trained at a 2-year WOSTEP course in Switzerland, Florine decided that she wanted to gain experience working on a wider range of clocks and watches and to understand the Conservation thinking and application.

Her online presentation is the decision-making process that every conservator and now some restorers go through when working on an artefact. The clock she was working on and was used to illustrate her dilemma, was a small spring Mantel clock with striking train, by Leroy Paris. The usual problems were apparent where the pivot holes were worn and require bushing. The pivot for the fly was bent and screws were damaged but more importantly the ratchet wheels were damaged which also damaged the clicks.

The decision processes followed.

Option one. Do I do nothing meaning there is no change to the clock therefore the clock is not run.

Option two. Do I recut the teeth keeping the original wheel. The pros and cons to this is that I'm damaging the original piece to the clock, and a mistake could mean this is irrevocable.

Option three. Do I cut a new wheel, which means that I retained the original in its damaged state, but if there is nowhere in the case of the clock to keep that original and the customer does not want to store it, the component will be lost.

The decision-making process involves many different values. There is the historic value, the material value, and the intangible value. Which makes you look at other elements that surround

the timepiece for example does this have a value of sentiment, is it an element of a bigger story.

Florine chose option two, as the damage to the wheel teeth had sufficient space that the wheel could be dressed with a wheel cutter in an accurate lathe with a divider head that it would although slightly altered, still retain its originality.

In conclusion we have a very unusual dilemma in horology in our decision-making processes. Is the value in the whole piece being retained and not operated. Is the value of keeping an artefact functional as was originally intended, and what is the value intrinsically and historically, to the customer. Does the customer fully understand the implications of making a piece work.

We thanked Malcolm Archer in the traditional way with clock oil and the students were remunerated with a contribution towards their supper.

Duncan Greig.