



For sale Myford ML7B lathe 240v £650

The lathe is in full working order on a metal stand with drip tray and jacking blocks fitted with a 3phase motor running from an inverter (giving speed control).

Comes with a 3 jaw and a 4 jaw chuck plus a Jacobs tailstock chuck and a screw cutting gearbox.

Lots of other accessories including face plates and catch plates, 4 way tool post, solid and revolving centres, morse taper sleeves, stop attachment, oil gun, sawing attachment, vertical slide, hand book, and cutting tools.

For pictures see last month's newsletter.

For more information contact :-

Norvin 07922813998 or norvin@astoolhire.co.uk

FREE ADVERTISING FOR BRANCH MEMBERS

If you wish to place an advert in our newsletter, contact Bill :-
01543 506195 or electricwilliam@gmail.com

www.slbbhi.co.uk

Meetings are held on the 1st Thursday of each month

At The White Hart Barn (Godstone Village Hall)

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

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FOR SALE**

Time moves in one direction, memory in another. *William Gibson*

NEXT MEETING Annual Members Auction

October 2nd 2025 – 19:30

The annual South London Branch members auction will take place on Thursday October 2nd 2025 at the White Heart Barn starting at 19:30. This auction contains the last 40 lots from a member's estate and two other collections of lots.

Members of the branch are welcome to bring their own items for sale in the auction. The Lot fee is £1.50 per lot. No sellers fees.

This will be the final South London Branch auction of 2025.

Full auction rules are as usual for our auctions and will be on display on the night. I have also attached a copy on a separate sheet.

The Beresford Hutchinson Lecture.

John B McLemore Thesis

“André Romain Guilmet - The Mystery Clock Escapement”

Presented by Duncan Greig

The 18th Beresford Hutchinson Memorial Lecture delved into the fascinating world of André Romain Guilmet and the Guilmet “mystery clock escapement”, and explored the intricate mechanics and historical significance of these remarkable timepieces. The lecture, presented by Duncan Greig, drew from extensive research and documents entrusted to him by the late John B McLemore, offering a deep dive into the science and artistry behind these extraordinary clocks. Duncan welcomed all South London Branch attendees to the popular Beresford Hutchinson Lecture, this lecture honours Beresford, a former curator of the British Museum and Royal Greenwich Observatory. He was also former Chairman and vice Chairman at the South London branch of the BHI during the 1990s.

André Romain Guilmet (1827-1892) was a prolific inventor who held patents for various innovations, including a bicycle chain in 1868 and his distinctive mystery clocks around 1872 to 1878. These clocks are particularly notable for their seemingly impossible mechanism - a pendulum that appears to swing without any visible connection to the clock's movement. The typical Guilmet mystery clock stands approximately forty-five centimeters tall, featuring a statue positioned on a large Belgian slate case. What makes these clocks truly remarkable is the pendulum, which has no visible connection to the clock mechanism yet continues to oscillate and can be completely lifted off the main clock case. The secret lies in an ingenious escapement mechanism that transmits motion through nearly invisible connections.



For Sale

Taylor Hobson Pantograph Engraving machine type D 240 Volt

This is a solidly built machine and very heavy

Price £100

The machine is available for viewing at Soper Hall Caterham

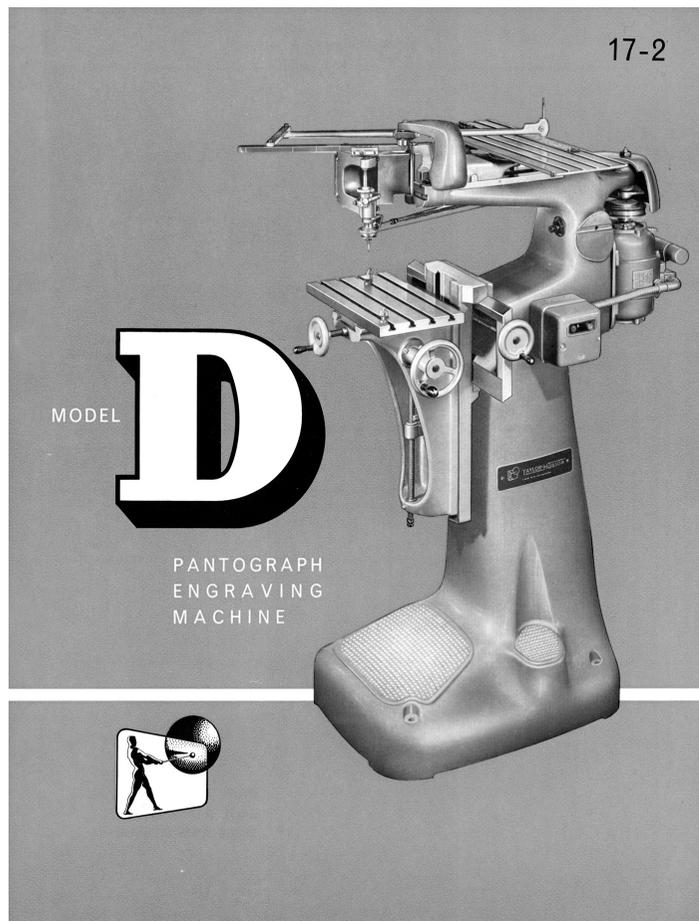
Included is one tray of type face. More are available separately.

More pictures are on the website. www.slbhi.co.uk

Please contact

Norvin 07922813998 norvin@astoolhire.co.uk

Trevor 07507 142704 trevor_keast@hotmail.com



Continued

The heart of the lecture was based on the exhaustive research of John B McLemore, an eccentric horological enthusiast from Alabama. McLemore spent years meticulously studying and documenting the intricate workings of Guilmet's mystery clocks, creating detailed drawings and mathematical analyses that reveal the extraordinary precision required to make these clocks function. John B McLemore was notably featured on the popular S-Town podcast released in 2017 by the producers of "Serial" and "This American Life". Our very own Duncan Greig, long-term friend and confidant of McLemore also made an appearance in the S-Town podcast. Duncan took this lecture in a different direction and focused on the horological and technical aspects of John B, highlighting his attention to detail, technical drawing abilities and perseverance with a particularly exacting escapement.

One of the things Duncan highlighted in his lecture was the four position escapement. He noted that McLemore identified four critical positions in the clock's mechanism:

1. Left Locked
2. Left Unlocked
3. Right Locked
4. Right Unlocked

Each position plays a crucial role in the pendulum's motion, with only minimal distances responsible for impulse and movement. The precision required is mind-boggling, with total travel distances measured in fractions of millimeters. The motion cannot be seen by the naked eye; however, Duncan was able to demonstrate the minute movements via the use of a laser beam reflected off of a mirror attached to the statue. By reflecting the beam to the back end of the White Hart Barn, the movements were amplified and could be seen by the attending audience quite clearly.



Duncan also explored the numerous technical challenges identified by McLemore in maintaining these delicate timepieces

Suspension Spring

The suspension spring is critical to the clock's performance.

Optimal spring thickness is between 2-3 thousandths of an inch and springs that are too stiff or too thin can completely stop the clock's operation. The spring must provide just the right amount of resistance to maintain the pendulum's motion.

Lubrication and Maintenance

McLemore was passionate about proper maintenance, developing his own lubrication techniques. Interestingly, he discovered alternative oils that in his opinion worked exceptionally well as a lubricant. These oils were far more cost-effective than specialized horological oils which over the years have become astronomically expensive to purchase. One such oil mentioned in the lecture was automatic transmission oil that is supplied in a deep purple colour.

Precision Engineering

The clock's mechanism requires extraordinary precision. There needs to be minimal binding between components, perfectly polished surfaces, and carefully adjusted pivot points. Precise alignment of all moving parts is crucial.

Amplification Mechanism

One of the most fascinating aspects is the clock's amplification system. McLemore calculated that the system has an amplification of approximately 76.8 to 1, with the suspension head traveling only about 0.104 millimeters.

Variations and Improvements

The lecture also discussed variations of the Guilmet escapement, including one worked on by horological conservator, Dale Sanderson. These variations demonstrate the ongoing innovation in understanding and perfecting these complex timepieces.

Duncan's presentation was enriched by personal connections, including his own work with Beresford Hutchinson and his relationship with John B McLemore. He shared not just technical details, but the human stories behind these remarkable clocks. Duncan had on display a wealth of paperwork and personal notes from John B which were compiled over many years.

Sad News...

It is with a heavy heart that I have to inform the branch that our long time member and clockmaking weekend participant, Dave Cook, has passed away at the age of ninety. He was a familiar face at our monthly meetings in the White Hart Barn over the years. He was also a regular member in the workshop, participating in the clock making weekends predominantly. We send our condolences to his whole family at this sad time.

Further information will be provided regarding funeral arrangements etc. when it becomes known to the branch.

Save the Date!

George Daniels Dinner

Our annual George Daniels Dinner will be held on Monday 23rd March 2026. As usual, Alan Westgate will be organising the dinner which will be held at the Addington Palace Golf Club. The price and menu details are still being decided and further information will be available in the near future.

The Thwaites and Reed Clock has a New Home

The Thwaites and Reed clock was originally mounted at the company's factory and office in Clerkenwell [where our Vice President, Ron Rose, served his apprenticeship] until the company moved in the late 1970s.

The Branch acquired the clock and refurbished it with the objective of mounting it on the Soper Hall Community Centre (SHCCL) building, with their agreement, home of our basement workshop,

A suitable location on the building was eventually found and on 6th September the restored clock was erected by a small



team including Norvin Simpson who supplied the necessary platform hoist, and tools. After much drilling of holes and fixing of bolts, the cast iron brackets were in position. The clock was man-handled from the basement to the balcony and then, with the use of a pulley hoist, lifted into position on the brackets and bolted in position. It had been

decided, reluctantly, to replace the weight driven pendulum movement (now set up in our workshop) by an electric motor drive unit and master clock which will be supplied and fitted by H.S. Walsh Ltd very soon. Later there will be an official 'unveiling'.

During the following week, conduit and cables from the master clock box located inside the building to the clock were fitted ready for Walsh to connect to their equipment.

SHCCL have been very enthusiastic partners in the project and have contributed to the cost.



Terry Servant

continued

As the S-Town podcast series states, Duncan was a well respected friend of John B and much of his work and thoughts were shared over a long period of time with Duncan.

The lecture was a testament to human ingenuity, showcasing how mathematical precision, mechanical engineering, and artistic vision can combine to create something truly extraordinary. Guilmet's mystery clocks represent a pinnacle of 19th-century horological innovation, challenging our understanding of mechanical motion.

For horological enthusiasts, the lecture offered a rare, in-depth look at a remarkable piece of timekeeping history, reminding us that behind every tick and tock lies a world of scientific wonder.

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Trevor Keast

MY LIFE WITH CLOCKS by Beresford Hutchinson

In the early 1940's, my parents' house in Hastings was fortified in a novel manner. The dining room, about 12 feet square, was emptied of furniture and the carpet lifted. Nine young tree trunks were firmly fixed in place between floor and ceiling, the idea being that this would be a 'safe room' even if the house received a direct hit after the air-raid warning had sounded. This room became the main living quarters in which all meals were taken, the spaces between the trees being imaginatively used for the necessary furniture, including my father's work-bench.

As each Christmas approached, this became a manufactory for toys for me and my ever-growing number of cousins, but was otherwise used for household repairs - shoes, saucepans, window latches, in short, anything that needed mending or

adapting to a fresh purpose. More importantly, my father repaired clocks for friends and neighbours. As a six-year old in 1942, I had already taken my first clock to pieces and successfully reassembled it, much to my father's bewilderment and surprise.

As I grew up, I pestered the local watchmakers and antique dealers, cadging mechanisms and spare parts. The watchmakers were surprisingly tolerant, the dealers even more so, especially when they realised that I could restore something to working and saleable order from its previous status as a rusting heap of junk. My principal source of enlightenment was Julian Greenhill, who had a small repair shop in Castle Hill Road, in the window of which he displayed his graduation certificate dated 1888, signed by two eminent Victorian horologists, Lord Grimthorpe and F.J. Britten. The dealers included Frank Papworth, who virtually owned Courthouse Street with its warren of shops and store-rooms, and Alfred Cracknell, who had his more up-market premises in the High Street. Both encouraged me to develop my skills, often to their advantage as well as mine, and the rewards usually far exceeded my basic pocket money, which gradually rose from one shilling (5p.) to half-a crown (12 1/2p.) in the early 1950's. Admittedly, this could be enhanced by working in our large garden at one shilling per hour.

My arrival at the Grammar School in 1947 meant homework, which seriously interfered with leisure activities, although I seem to have successfully juggled this around clock-repairing, stamp-collecting, train-spotting, walking and cycling. However did I find the time? My progress through school was distinguished neither by academic brilliance nor any enthusiasm for school rules. My liking for brightly coloured socks and waistcoats (the latter in which to wear my pocket watch) and a deplorable habit of cycling down Nelson Road (strictly forbidden) did not endear me to my masters, and I had my just share of detentions. In 1955, having barely scraped passes in three 'A' levels, I nevertheless gained a place at Queen Mary College, London University, reading Botany with the intention of applying for a post in the Forestry Commission. My acceptance was what Dougie Brightmore termed 'a gross miscarriage of justice', since the faculty dean who interviewed me had a similar passion for clocks

the sofa, clearly not the best preparation for a week at work.

Around this time, he came into the possession of a maritime clock. It apparently hadn't worked for years, but always liking a challenge, Dad decided to fix it. Much to everyone's surprise, including his own I think, he managed to get it back in working order. This kicked off a passion that lasted the rest of his life and led to a second career as a watch and clock restorer. This new world of tiny cogs, escapements and pendulums led in turn to joining The British Horological Institute and finding a whole new group of friends and colleagues as a result.

More recently, when Matt and I had families of our own, we got the chance to experience at second hand how great Dad was with children - always entertaining, sharing fun but never patronising. His grandchildren Amelie, Lauren, Will and James, also talk of spontaneous visual and verbal jokes, and funny songs. A reminder of Mum's oft-repeated phrase, "Bill, I'm not sure they are old enough to get that one", to renaming himself 'Great Uncle Bill-garia' in tribute to the Wombles, even to some illicit hop picking once they had moved to Kent - actually another return, as Dad had always said his happiest childhood memories were hop-picking holidays taken in the Kent countryside with his grandmother.

The last few years, with the onset of dementia, were hard for Dad and all of us close to him, but even if his memory faded, that sense of humour, that sparkle was always there. But he did also find a sense of peace, often quoting this rhyme from Flann O'Brien, which feels like an appropriate conclusion:

A wise old owl once lived in a wood, the more he heard, the less he said. The less he said, the more he heard - let's emulate that wise old bird.

Dad great comfort and profoundly influenced his view of the world - and in turn of those close to him.

He was also a great lover of music, with a wide range of tastes, from Bach and Brahms to modern jazz musicians such as Dave Brubeck and songwriters like Jonny Cash and Leonard Cohen. Some of my earliest memories of Dad are of him plugged into his 70's stereo system, listening to music on his headphones so loudly you could hear it from 10 feet away. He also loved literature, with a ready store of quotes from Shakespeare and Irish writers like James Joyce and Flann O'Brien, who he felt a particular kinship with, perhaps preserving a link with his beloved grandmother.

He was born in 1940 in Camberwell. He had a tough childhood, scarred by the early death of his mother, but did well at school and got a place at the prestigious Wilsons Grammar School. From there, he got a job at a top advertising agency, SH Bensons. He worked his way up the industry, setting up his own agency in the mid 1970's, eventually getting some big-name clients like Chanel, Max Factor and Flymo. Along the way, he met our mum Jackie, at a dance at the Beckenham Ballrooms - he always said it was love at first sight. They got married in 1966 and a few years later had me and my brother Matt.

Although busy with his work, he always made time for his family. His infectious sense of fun always came to the fore, with mundane activities like doing the washing up after Sunday lunch often dissolving into fits of giggles and shrieks of laughter. We also had a long-running ritual of playing football in the garden - games which seemed to last for hours and undid much of poor mum's gardening efforts. But he made sure the games were played with a careful balance of competitiveness and good humour. Well, most of the time, anyway... As Matt and I got bigger, the games got more physically demanding - poor dad often spent Sunday evenings slumped in an exhausted heap on

and we never got round to discussing botanical matters during the forty minutes he allowed me. I survived at Q.M.C. for only two years, having spent far too much time wandering around Clerkenwell, which was then still the seat of the British horological trades.

National Service beckoned, and I led an apparently charmed life in the R.A.F. Postings included Finningley, Doncaster, which then, in 1958, abounded with junk shops and friendly watchmakers. Omaha, Nebraska, turned out to be a horological wilderness, but provided rival attractions in compensation, and then there was the grand-sounding R.A.F. Central Medical Establishment, in a rather dingy street close to Tottenham Court Road, again adjacent to Clerkenwell. A generous leave allowance (I calculated that my average working week was less than 4 days) allowed me to maintain my Hastings contacts and create fresh ones elsewhere.

My demob in December 1960 demanded some thought as to what to do next. My studies had been abandoned, and there was not enough work in Hastings to keep me fully employed. I found the answer in the trade's "Horological Journal". "Young man required, with some experience " began the entry in the 'Sits Vac' column . I applied, and found myself engaged under Dickensian terms of employment, conditions and wages, for an old established firm of antique clock restorers with premises barely 300 yards away from my last posting. I was supposed to be an "improver", working under the supervision of an elderly clockmaker with whom I soon became friends. After a few months, however, and much to my consternation, he suddenly decided that I could cope unaided, and promptly left. Meanwhile, I had embarked on a three-year evening course, studying for my professional qualifications. While waiting for the final year's exam results in 1964, I applied for a junior post as a conservator at the British Museum, and eventually became responsible for the horological collections there, trading in the workbench for a desk in the process. After fifteen years of the most interesting work, I found that I could do exactly the same thing at a greatly enhanced salary at the Old Royal Observatory, Greenwich, this time as the curator of timekeepers. Health problems caused me to take early retirement in 1990

but here I am, fourteen years on, still fascinated by clocks and watches, and supplementing my pension by writing articles, acting as a consultant, and, best of all, getting my cuffs dirty by mending and restoring clocks. My father's hobby became my life's work and interest, and I am very grateful to him.

Beresford Hutchinson
13/02/04

This article was found recently amongst Beresford Hutchinson's papers. It was passed to me by Ron Rose who thought it appropriate and timely to publish in our newsletter after the annual Beresford Hutchinson lecture.

BHI Exams

The South London Branch would like to pass on our congratulations to members who have recently taken and passed BHI exams. Two of our members received notable prizes as follows:

Alistair Lewis – The Diploma in Servicing and Repair of Clocks/watches – Best result - ***Worshipful Company of Clockmakers***

Alistair Lewis – D18 - Best Theory Paper Clocks / Watches – D18 Final Grade Lincolnshire Members Prize

Rhys Davies – D5 - Best Practical Test Piece - ***BHI Prize***

Well done Alistair and Rhys!

Past Chairman Bill Grice

1940 – 2025

Back in June Michael McDonnell picked up Lawrie Steadman along with others, they both attended the funeral of our past chairman Bill Grice. His eulogy was one of the last tasks Michael had asked me to do before undergoing surgery from which Micheal never recovered. I contacted James Grice and here is the following Eulogy James composed for his father.

When trying to gather some thoughts together about Dad, one thing kept standing out: his sense of humour. He loved jokes of all sorts, puns, wordplay, the surreal and the absurd. He loved a wide range of comedy, from Laurel and Hardy to The Goons, to Monty Python and the Simpsons. Actually, he always seemed to regard Homer Simpson as a kindred spirit, although without the sweet tooth - he preferred crisps and pickled onions to doughnuts.

But rather like the clocks he so painstakingly repaired in later life, he was a man of a lot of different parts: a successful businessman, a devoted husband to Jackie, and a great dad and grandfather. Underpinning this was a strong sense of right and wrong and an inquiring mind that was interested in the spiritual.

In fact, these two aspects of his life were closely linked. Back in his childhood after the War, two new boys came to his primary school. As well as being outsiders, they were Anglo-Asian, which sadly led to bullying. Dad stepped in to defend Jon and Rob Mehta, an act which led to a close friendship which carried on well into their adult lives. It also introduced Dad to their father, Phiroz - who nicknamed Dad William the Conqueror for his exploits. Phiroz Mehta was a writer and thinker who set up a trust to explore the links between all religions. With an emphasis on contemplation and meditation, this is something that gave