

PANTOGRAPH 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.slbbhi.co.uk

Please contact

Norvin 07922813998 norvin@astoolhire.co.uk

Trevor 07507 142704 trevor_keast@hotmail.com

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



**South London Branch
British Horological Institute**

Newsletter No. 561 DECEMBER 2025

Branch No 25. Founded 1978

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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www.slbbhi.co.uk

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."

Steve Jobs

**NEXT MEETING
4th DECEMBER**

Mr Tjeerd Bakker FBHI MVO

The George Daniels Memorial Lecture

"The Royal Vulliamy Turret Clocks and Dials".



Tjeerd will speak about the Turret Clocks in the Royal Residences. Specifically, about the Turret clocks and dials by the Vulliamy family of clockmakers. Often there has been individual research done but Tjeerd will share his extensive research on the collection how it has evolved and moved from one royal household to another.

Continued

Tjeerd Bakker studied horology at Schoonhoven in The Netherlands, after which he continued to study Horological Conservation at West Dean College in West Sussex for two years. Tjeerd's first employer was Rijksmuseum Boerhaave, the museum for History of Science and medicine in The Netherlands. Tjeerd joined the Royal Household as a Horological Conservator in 2014 and became Senior Horological Conservator in 2019. He works in Buckingham Palace and is responsible for the clocks throughout the United Kingdom. Since 2017 Tjeerd has been a Fellow to the British Horological Institute and this year he was made a member of the Royal Victorian Order for services to the Monarch.

Duncan Greig.

LAST MONTH'S MEETING

. Bernard Novell.

'Cylinder Musical Boxes

History, Restoration & Rejuvenation'.

Bernard, secretary of the Association of Musical Box Collectors, had some sad news at the beginning of our 6th November meeting. AMBC President Ted Brown, who has been to speak to us before and taken part in many of our "Open Days", has sadly passed away. Trevor Keast asked for a one-minute silence for Ted, Dave Cook and John Davies two BHI members who had also passed away recently.

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 :-

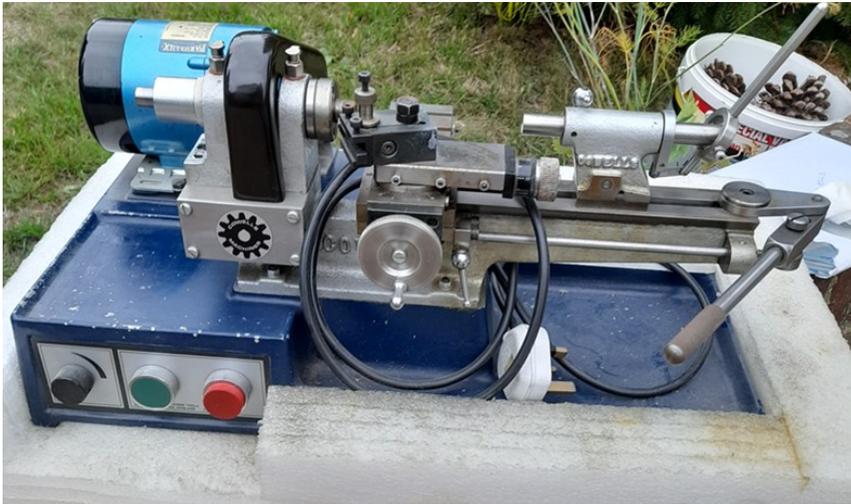
Norvin 07922813998 or norvin@astoolhire.co.uk

For Sale

COWELLS 90 C.W. LATHE FOR SALE; Accepts 8mm Colletts
FOR SALE £1,800 or best offer.

Contact Barnaby Smith: 01322 273264

Or Barnaby.smi3th@gmail.com for details.



Continued

Bernard brought with him a multitude of musical boxes to illustrate his wonderful talk, “History, Restoration & Rejuvenation” of musical boxes and more. He's a keen and relatively new collector, only starting in 2020 having been inspired by The Repair Shop's Stephen Kember. Bernard came from the background of commerce, “owning” the specification for many a new Waitrose store. Joining AMBC was a way to learning more but realising that the association needed help he soon became webmaster, and later Secretary.

Musical boxes represent a remarkable intersection of mechanical engineering, musical artistry, and historical innovation. Their story begins as far back as the ninth century in Baghdad, where Persian inventors created intricate hydro-powered organs that hinted at the complex mechanical music mechanisms to come. The journey from these early mechanical wonders to the refined musical boxes of the 19th century is a tale of continuous innovation and artistic expression. The development of musical boxes wasn't a sudden invention but a gradual progression. In the 13th century, a bell ringer in Flanders introduced the carillon, an early mechanical musical device with keyboard which could play bells manually or automatically. By the mid-18th century, significant advancements were taking place.

In 1750, Jacquet Droz created musical watches & clocks with automata, which moved onto more sophisticated mechanical music devices like the singing bird box.

The Droz Brothers, in La Chaux-de-Fonds, known for their extraordinary automata, pushed the boundaries of mechanical art. Their creations included remarkable pieces

like the Musician, the Writer, and the Draftsman - intricate machines that could actually play music, write, and draw with astonishing precision. These pieces, now preserved in a Swiss museum, Neuchâtel, demonstrate the incredible mechanical skill of the era.

The period from 1790 to 1900 represents the true golden age of musical boxes. Initially centred in Geneva, the manufacturing hub soon shifted to St. Croix, Switzerland. During this time, musical boxes evolved from simple mechanical devices to extraordinary works of art and engineering.

Some of the most exquisite pieces from this era were true masterpieces of craftsmanship. One particularly notable example Bernard showed us was a box adorned with split pearls, featuring intricate engine turning, gold detailing, and enamelling. "An Object of Vertu" which was recently found in Edinburgh and sold last year at auction for a staggering 380,000 Swiss francs. Such boxes were not merely musical instruments but luxury items that showcased the pinnacle of mechanical and artistic skill.

The manufacturing process of musical boxes was a complex affair. Many components were produced in cottage industries, with skilled artisans creating specific parts that would later be assembled in factories. The progression of musical box technology was marked by continuous improvements.

1. Early boxes typically had 2, 3 or 4 tunes on a single cylinder, but as technology advanced boxes with 12 tunes were being produced.
2. Manufacturers developed interchangeable cylinders to expand musical repertoire.

BRITISH HOROLOGICAL INSTITUTE SOUTH LONDON BRANCH GEORGE DANIELS DINNER

**To be held on Monday 23 March 2026
Addington Palace Golf Club
Gravel Hill Croydon
Surrey CR0 5BB**

Booking form with full menu etc. is attached/ enclosed.

Please complete and return to Alan Westgate at the address on the form or hand to Alan at the meeting.

Alan has asked that forms are returned to him ASAP to allow him to confirm all the arrangements.

THWAITES AND REED CLOCK

Note to Branch Members Our Thwaites & Reed clock will soon be ticking. October's newsletter gave an update on the installation of the T&R clock at Soper Hall up to the point that it had been mounted on its brackets on the wall of the Soper Hall with the wiring, in its channel, in place. Walsh have confirmed they will be fitting and commissioning the drive motor, master clock, etc. on 20th November, so now we are able to go ahead with an event arranged jointly with Soper Hall Community Centre (SHCC) to unveil the clock on Saturday, 13th December. SHCC will be arranging a reception in the Garland Room with SLBBHI providing assistance on the day as well as arranging the overall programme and unveiling details. Ron Rose will be our 'unveiller'. So this as an opportunity for members to join in this important event at a very sociable time of the year. Further details are given in the invitation card (below) which is being used by us and SHCC for inviting outside guests. We hope you will join us and be ready to cheer when the clock is unveiled! Butplease note the RSVP as SHCC need to get the catering right. A map showing parking places will be sent with the December newsletter. For any further information you require, or questions you may have, please contact: Terry Servant 01883 343881 or terenceservant@gmail.com

Invitation attached/enclosed

continued

3. The winding mechanism evolved from key-wound to lever wound systems.
4. Glass covers were introduced to protect the delicate internal mechanisms.
5. As case decoration became more elaborate, so the quality of the movements declined.

The rise of other musical technologies posed significant challenges to musical box manufacturers. Thomas Edison's phonograph in 1877 and Berliner's disc gramophone began to replace these mechanical marvels. World War I and the Great Depression further contributed to the industry's decline. Despite these challenges, musical box manufacturing continues, albeit on a much smaller scale. Contemporary manufacturers include:

- Reuge (Switzerland) - producing high-end musical boxes.
- Sankyo (Japan) - creating quality movements.
- Porter (USA) - manufacturing high quality classic disc boxes.
- N.J. Dean (UK) - designing and assembling modern Movements.
- Many very cheap Chinese 'novelty' music boxes can be found, but their movements are inferior and mostly unserviceable.

As a collector and restorer, Bernard's collection includes approximately 80 working boxes, ranging from tiny snuff boxes to larger, more complex pieces. The restoration process is meticulous, involving:

- Careful inspection.
- Complete disassembly.
- Thorough cleaning & polishing.
- Precise repairs.
- Restoration of original mechanisms and often their cases too.

Restoring musical boxes presents unique challenges. Straightening pins, for instance, requires specialised tools and considerable skill. Some pins can be carefully realigned using a hypodermic

needle-like tool, but severely damaged cylinders may require complete repinning.

A fascinating aspect of restoration is exploring the provenance of each box. This involves researching tune sheets & deciphering serial numbers in order to identify the maker and date of manufacture, and to understand the historical context of each piece. Beyond collecting and restoring, Bernard said "I've found joy in creating personalised musical boxes" including:

- A miniature Square Piano musical jewellery box for my daughter.
- Customised boxes for grandchildren.
- Commissioned pieces for special anniversaries and events.

Each project is an opportunity to breathe new life into forgotten mechanical marvels, transforming ordinary objects into musical treasures.

While mass-produced electronic music has largely replaced mechanical musical boxes, there remains a dedicated community of collectors, restorers, and enthusiasts who appreciate these intricate machines.

Modern musical boxes continue to be produced, though often as luxury items or collector's pieces rather than everyday music players. The complexity of their mechanisms, the craftsmanship involved in their creation, and their historical significance ensure their continued fascination.

Musical boxes represent more than just mechanical music players. They are time capsules of technological innovation artistic expression, and cultural history. From their humble

beginnings in ninth-century Baghdad to the precision-engineered pieces of the 19th century and today's limited productions, they tell a story of human creativity and mechanical ingenuity.

For collectors and enthusiasts, each musical box is a unique treasure, carrying within its mechanism not just a melody, but a rich narrative of technological and artistic evolution. The East Surrey Museum, Caterham, has just taken delivery of such a piece. A rare Henriot 4 tune, 113 tooth comb, Cartel box No 14586, restored by Bernard and fellow Music box experts who were introduced to the museum at our Open Day. Go to <https://www.bernysmusicboxes.co.uk/4113-henriot.html> for the full story.

We were treated to a full rendition of all the musical boxes that Bernard had lovingly set up for us to see, with explanations for each one. Bernard thanked us for the South London Branch "Lubrication" which I hope he enjoyed.

JANUARY MEETING

The January meeting will be held on the 2nd Thursday to avoid the Christmas/New Year celebrations