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South London Branch British Horological Institute

Newsletter No. 564 MARCH 2026

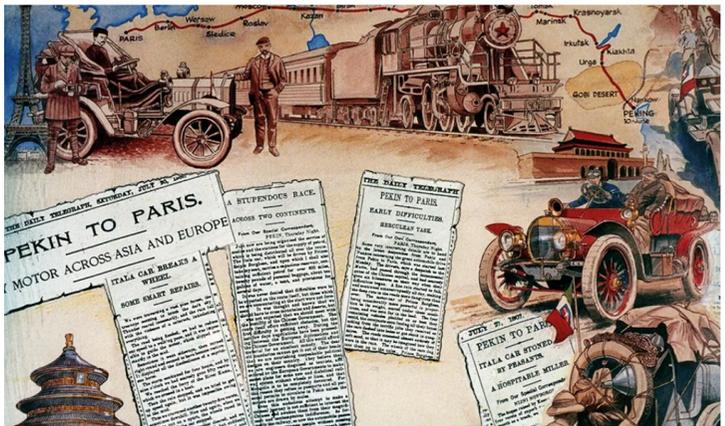
Branch No 25. Founded 1978

*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.*

“The best thing about the future is it that comes one day at a time”

Abraham Lincoln

NEXT MEETING 5th MARCH AGM. FOLLOWED BY **Riding the Phantom Through 7 Time Zones**



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UNVEILING
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2 LATHES
FOR SALE
2026
NEWSLETTER

www.slbhi.co.uk

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AGM - 5 March 2026

Our AGM this year takes place at our normal meeting on 5th March 2026.

A vote(s) by eligible members will be taken on the proposed committee structure for the coming year. The Chairman is elected for a two-year term and was last confirmed at the AGM on 7th March 2024.

To be able to vote at the AGM, please remember we are a branch under the umbrella of the BHI at Upton Hall so, **you must a) be a member of the BHI at Upton Hall, b) be a member of our branch, and also c) sign the voting register at the meeting.**

Proposals by any member for election to any relevant post within the branch must be proposed, seconded and agreed with the member being proposed before being submitted to, and received by the Secretary (norvin@astoolhire.co.uk 07922 813998) at least two weeks before the AGM. i.e before 20.00 hrs on 19th February 2026.

In addition to the elections there will be the normal reports from the Chairman, Treasurer, Workshop Committee Chairman, Webmaster, and of course the opportunity for all members of the branch to raise any questions.

Following the AGM our main talk this month will be :-

Riding the Phantom Through 7 Time Zones

(Driving a 1930 Rolls Royce from Peking to Paris)

Continued

If you had picked up a copy of Le Matin newspaper in France on January 31st 1907 you might have come across the following extraordinary challenge...

“ What needs to be proved today is that as long as man has a car, he can do anything and go anywhere. Is there anyone who will undertake to travel this summer from Peking to Paris by automobile?”

With this bold statement, the world’s first great endurance rally was born. It wasn’t just about speed - it was about proving that these new fangled motor cars were more than just city playthings. They could go anywhere - even across the then uncharted wilderness between China and France.

Originally 40 teams expressed interest, but when the time came, only five courageous crews lined up outside the French embassy in Peking. What followed was a gruelling 9300 mile odyssey across some of the world’s harshest terrain. Prince Borghesi in a 7litre Itala arrived first in Paris on August 10th 2007. His prize was a magnum of Mumm champagne.

There have been a number of ; repeats of the event since then and the latest started in May 2025 with 65 cars starting. Richard Jeffcoate joined the fray as co-driver in Steve Kiss’s 1930 Rolls Royce Phantom 2. They left the Great Wall in Beijing on 17th May. After many adventures



while travelling approx 9500miles, they arrived in Paris some 37 days later on 22nd June. The oldest entrant was a 1910 huge 17 litre American ‘La France’ fire engine and the youngest was from the mid 70’s. On this occasion, in crossing Asia and Europe, the rally passed through 11 countries and 7 time zones

Richard and Steve’s talk will describe some of their experiences on the journey from first deciding to enter to finally arriving in Paris.

February Branch Lecture

William Sunderland:

“Clockmaker and Collector Extraordinaire”

William Sunderland’s presentation, “The Collection of Domestic Clocks, 1450–1800,” offered an engaging, deeply informed journey through three centuries of English horology, blending personal memoir, craft insights, and historical narrative. Delivered with the authority of a seasoned collector, restorer and maker, the lecture traced his own path into horology and then used that platform to guide the audience through representative clocks, key technical developments, major makers, and the social history that shaped clock manufacture and ownership. The talk combined passion for objects with meticulous scholarship and practical experience; this summary highlights the lecture’s principal themes and most notable anecdotes and artifacts for use in our newsletter.

Personal background and motivations

William opened by situating himself as both a storyteller and practitioner. He recounted early influences—his apprenticeship in publishing in Edinburgh with John Bartholomew & Sons, early fascination with skeleton clocks (including a significant purchase in 1976), and a parallel career growing the Triumph TR sports car club from a small group to an international membership. Those publishing and organisational skills would later help to produce his book. Family engineering roots (a father in heavy-haulage design and a brother at Rolls-Royce aerospace) provided an engineering grounding that predisposed him to clocks and horology. Under the tutelage of Chris Lowe at Richards of Burton, Sunderland transitioned, over 15 years, into restoration and clockmaking. His book, the fruit of 30 years collecting and ten years writing, is a limited-edition, self-financed volume produced with very high printing and binding standards; all sales proceeds are donated to the MS Society.

Approach and structure of the book

His stated aim was to fill chronological gaps in existing literature by presenting clocks in a technology-driven timeline: from early weight-driven mechanisms and iron work to the arrival of the pendulum and the anchor escapement, then through brass-faced longcase and bracket clocks to regional and provincial varieties. Rather than a mere catalogue of attractive objects, the book integrates social history, restoration processes, technical analysis, and close photographic documentation—making it valuable both to collectors and restorers as well as to social historians. He emphasised “less is more”: each clock included was carefully chosen to represent technological, regional, or historical significance. The book is produced in the tradition of fine publishing—endpapers, six-colour Heidelberg printing, special paper, and traditional stitching—reflecting his publishing background.

Early clocks: iron work, lanterns and miniatures

Sunderland traced the development of domestic clocks from the late medieval period into the Renaissance. Early iron clocks, often forged by blacksmith clockmakers, are loud and mechanical in appearance but possess unique hand-filed pinions and clever ingenuity. He discussed rare Renaissance miniature clocks, including fire-gilded copper examples with original gilding that had been conserved in North American museums before finding their way into private hands. Lantern clocks—central to the 17th century—featured prominently: he explained first-period lantern clocks, their lugged bells, the heavy construction before c.1640, and the artisans who specialised in them. He highlighted the work of pioneers such as Peter Closon and emphasised that many early lantern clocks were luxury items (costing as much as a manor house) owned by a wealthy few.

Notable anecdotes and provenance

Bill's talk balanced technical discussion with vivid provenance tales. He recalled examining a clock once given by Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn within the Queen's private library at Windsor,

illustrating both the intimate ties between clocks and elite patronage and the surreal experience of being privileged to work with such objects. Another story involved Brian Loomes and a historically significant lantern clock and the lengthy conservation effort required to return it to display condition. These anecdotes underscore the detective work of provenance and conservation and reinforce how condition and originality enhance a clock's story.

The pendulum and continental influences

The lecture marked the seismic shift brought by the pendulum in the mid-17th century, focusing especially on Christian Huygens' innovations (the 1657 one-second verge pendulum) and its implications for accuracy and design. He discussed Dutch and French influences—illustrated by clocks associated with figures such as Ole Rømer and the collaborative network of Huygens, Rømer, and French clockmakers like Furey—demonstrating how continental science and English practice were in dialogue. He explained how early pendulum applications were often tied to astronomical measurement rather than everyday domestic time-keeping, and how instrumentation like the one-second verge revolutionised precision.

Longcase clocks, anchor escapement, and evolving escapements

Sunderland covered the progression from verge escapements and short-duration weights toward anchor escapements and longer-duration longcase (grandfather) clocks. He highlighted key makers and shifts in movement architecture—changes in pillar count in London movements, the adaptation of single-rope “endless” winding for longer runs, and wheel-cutting improvements that increased accuracy and reduced winding frequency. Noteworthy examples included Edward East's celebrated longcase clocks (mid- to late-17th century), Thomas Tompion's circle of makers and case-makers (including Croxon and Worcester), and later William Clement's innovations. He related the painstaking work of reproducing or conserving

historically important horological elements, including the engineering complexity of long-duration clocks (e.g. one-year movements).

Regional and provincial horology

A major theme was the geographic spread of clockmaking beyond London into Suffolk, Dorset, Wiltshire, Derbyshire, Yorkshire Leicestershire, and other counties. Sunderland demonstrated how regional makers adapted metropolitan forms, and how provincial clocks can exhibit distinctive local characteristics—different escapement choices, case styles, and construction techniques. Notable regional makers discussed included Savage (Shropshire), the Lister family (Yorkshire), and local Quaker makers such as Nethercott. He illustrated how some clocks had remarkably short geographic journeys: many stayed within a few dozen miles of their origin, preserving local features and making regional study a fruitful research avenue

Case-making, aesthetics and changing tastes

Bill examined the interplay between cases and movements—how case decoration and furniture trends influenced demand and clock types. From hooded wall clocks and chamber clocks to elaborate Georgian and Arabesque marquetry longcases, he traced how clock cases progressed from utilitarian housings to integral pieces of interior decoration. He noted the late-17th and 18th-century trend where case-makers and clockmakers collaborated closely to produce unified pieces for elite interiors, and how ornamentation—spandrels, marquetry, and figural motifs—became as important as movement quality.

Technical craft, restoration philosophies, and workshops

Throughout, Bill conveyed practical lessons from restoration and making: the significance of original parts (hands, bells, pulleys), the challenges of correctly identifying filled and re-drilled holes from past interventions, and principles of conservative restoration (repair using original holes, minimal new drilling, matching techniques). He credited collaborators—engraver Peter Fox, case-maker Chris Air,

and restorer Chris Lowe—and emphasised teamwork in producing faithful restorations. He also described his workshop tools and processes (wheel-cutting machinery, lathes, and handwork) and recounted the difficulties of tasks such as pouring for large lead weights and creating historically appropriate hands and fittings.

Curiosities, rarities and mechanical experiments

Bill delighted the audience with rarities: extremely small miniature skeletons and chamber clocks, early hooded wall clocks with original pine hoods and chains, a few surviving one-second verge clocks, and unusual escapements such as the tic-tac. He also presented idiosyncratic pieces—single-handed yet eight-day movements, enormous lantern clocks that chimed quarters, and hybrid constructions where makers mixed alarm and time trains. Particularly striking was his own homage piece attributed to King James II era designs: a six-foot longcase with a one-and-a-quarter-second pendulum and a one-year duration, a work combining historical research, complex engineering, and bespoke casework—reflecting his capability to both conserve historicity and create historically informed new clocks.

Social context: patrons, markets and the economics of clock ownership

Sunderland tied technological development to social and economic life. Lantern clocks and early domestic timepieces were elite luxuries; events like Tulip Mania and the price of houses contextualized how costly such items were. He noted how the Great Fire of London and the plague disrupted London clock making and led to a reconfiguration of the trade. He also discussed export markets (Turkish and Continental bound clocks), the growth of provincial demand, and how decorative tastes—particularly in the Georgian era—drove changes in case design and the proliferation of high-end bracket clocks and regulators.

Final reflections and legacy

He concluded with personal reflections on the responsibilities of custodianship: the joy of discovering well-preserved examples, the satisfaction of returning an object to life, and the importance of accurate documentation for future scholars and restorers. He stressed that his book is not only a catalogue but a practical manual for those concerned with restoration, social context, and technical detail. The limited-run, finely printed book—now held in major UK libraries and beginning to appear internationally—represents both a personal labour of love and an offering to the horological community. All proceeds benefit the MS Society reinforcing his intent to give something back.

In summary, Bill's lecture provided an immersive panorama of domestic clockmaking from 1450 to 1800, combining the tactile authority of a maker-restorer with the narrative arc of a historian-collector. For newsletter readers, the talk is a reminder that clocks are more than timekeepers: they are artifacts where science, craft, taste, and social life intersect. Sunderland's book—richly illustrated, technically detailed, and historically grounded—is recommended for anyone interested in horology, conservation, or the social history of objects.

John Summers

Original Longcase Clock Weights,

8 day and 30hour. Cast Iron £2.50 or Lead £5.
Contact Ron Rose 07980 175181. Can be taken to a meeting, left in the workshop or collected.

Unveiling of the Thwaites & Reed Clock at Soper Hall, Caterham

Around 60 visitors arrived at Soper Hall on the afternoon of Saturday, 13th December blessed with sunny, mild and calm winter weather for the unveiling of the historic, restored Thwaites & Reed clock. For the reception, the management of Soper Hall Community Centre (SHCCL) provided an excellent buffet in the Conference Room, attractively set out with seating at round tables.

To formally start the event, Chantal Baker, Chairman of Soper Hall Community Centre, gave a welcoming address mentioning the much appreciated addition of the clock to the building and the beneficial working relationship between SHCCL and SLBBHI



as tenants. Our Chairman, Trevor Keast, then gave an outline of the Branch's activities and the afternoon's programme.



After refreshments, everyone was invited to assemble outside in front of the building. The clock itself could not be seen as it was shielded by two curtains bearing the names and logos of SHCCL and SLBBHI. Our Vice President, Ron Rose gave a short address.

“It is my pleasure and great honour to unveil with the Chairman of Soper Hall, Chantal Baker, this historic clock which originally hung outside the premises of Master Clockmakers, Thwaites & Reed

in Clerkenwell.

After many years it has been restored and presented to its new home at Soper Hall and can help contribute to the community of Caterham.

We wish it many years of useful service”

continued



Chantal and Ron each took a cord and smoothly pulled the curtains from their rails to reveal the clock lit by a light beam highlighting its glistening gilding in the failing evening light. The light beam was turned off, and after a few seconds, the clock's internal illumination was turned on to display its impressive dial.

Following the unveiling and final glances at the illuminated clock, everyone returned to the Hall where after a short interval, Ron gave an address recounting his memories when, as a teenage apprentice at Thwaites and Reed, he passed under the clock each

workday morning together with many skilled and respected craftsmen. Now, he can see the clock as he arrives each Tuesday evening, as a tutor at the SLBBHI workshop class.



The New Clock for Soper Hall (Ron Rose)

“New clock? Not exactly, as it has probably been around since Victorian times and salvaged by Thwaites and Reed to hang outside their factory at 15 Bowling Green Lane, Clerkenwell, EC1 in 1930. The owner of the family company at that time was Frank Ainscow Buggins who made the movement which originally drove the clock and is now ticking in the South London Branch Workshop down stairs in this building. The drum clock is now driven by a Master clock supplied by H.S.Walsh of Biggin Hill.



So, who are Thwaites and Reed? That is a question that would not be asked in horological circles, as the name is so famous and prestigious that any Horologist would feel it an insult to ask! They made domestic and tower clocks that were sent throughout the world to every continent except perhaps Antarctica where the only reason, not to, was that Penguins had difficulty in telling the time. Some of the clocks they provided were special, one offs, which have now earned an importance and prestige in their own right. Clocks like Fortnum and Mason's clock opposite the Royal Academy in Piccadilly still attracts a crowd, waiting for the hour for Mr Fortnum and Mr Mason to appear from the clock after 60 years of service, to a musical accompaniment.

But this clock holds a special place in my own career of 63 years. My story is that in 1962 I was a bit of a rebel and all I wanted to do was to leave school and undoubtedly the school felt the same about me. So at the age of 15, I went to the careers master and said “I want a job”. The reply was “what do you want to do?” I knew I was artistic so I said “I want to make things with my hands

So he rummaged through his card index, picked out two cards and slid them, with some force, across the desk at me. I picked up one for a clock making apprenticeship and slid back the other, with some force, offering an apprenticeship as a Typewriter Mechanic. That was my first lucky escape to start my working life. I would not have had much work now!

The job was at Thwaites and Reed, 15 Bowling Green Lane, established in 1730 and the oldest clockmaking company in the world! This was my second stroke of luck and I hadn't even started work yet.



The Clock at T&R, Clerkenwell c.1970

When I did, my apprenticeship it was with Albert Fox in the Domestic Clock Department, just him and me. Due to ill health Mr Fox had to leave within 2 years. So I was left on my own at 17. I also had to take over winding rounds when the three full time clock winders were on holidays. This was a job that really does not exist anymore, but I really enjoyed the 6 o'clock start to wind clocks in the City of London. Memories of walking down to the gold vaults in the Bank of England, rattling

the bars saying "clock winder" so that they opened up and led me to the "14" dial clock, nestled between floor to ceiling gold bars. Bit of chat, "haven't seen you before". "No, Bert's on holiday" was my reply. Or the memory of the Mansion House when I turned up at the Lady Mayoress's Boudoir and the security man outside, aggressively said "you can't go in there, the Lady Mayoress is in bed". But overhearing, the Lady Mayoress shouted from within, saying, "is that the clock winder? Come in!"

Those things were so long ago, that they happened like that. So, after the digression, back to my start!

Bus and tube to Farringdon station and a short walk to Bowling Green Lane. I couldn't miss the entrance to the factory as the clock, and I mean THE CLOCK, this clock, hung directly above the entrance. My third stroke of luck was walking underneath the clock, into a tiny alley entrance where the doorway was sideways on to the office but continued into the Turret Clock shop. Many fantastically skilled clockmakers had trodden that alley before me and walked under this clock. Names like Peter Haward who designed and made Fortnum and Mason's clock, John Vernon who starred in the early TV watch advert in front of Big Ben which was a maintenance contract held by Thwaites and Reed. He was seen, looking at his wrist watch, with Big Ben in the background, saying, "The time by my ACCURIST watch is 12 o'clock precisely". So, I was given the job by Geoffrey Buggins whose wife is here today, and I loved the job and the job seemed to be pretty happy with me.

So that was my little bit, but every person that worked at that site until the late 70's would have first taken that same path under the clock and created their contribution to its wonderful history.

Thank you ”

Following sustained applause from the audience, Grahame Brooks, a very longtime friend of Ron, was invited to respond.

Response and Vote of Thanks by Grahame Brooks, MBHI

“ Ron, clearly, you decided that that your speech would be about the clock and not yourself, but I think we all realise that the clock and the craftsmen you mentioned were very much interlinked in your thoughts and it was their achievements that inspired your own career development, and I think we should all like to know what happened next, if you don't mind. Well, here are a few facts. You Joined the BHI and studied for their exams to get a grade of membership, and “rebel” that you were, you *passed the highest level possible to get Fellowship qualification in two years at the age of 17!* But Fellows had to be over 21 so you had to wait before you could use the letters FBHI after your name – and you've held that award for 57 years.

Your career developed working for various well-known clock restoring and repairing companies and eventually establishing your own business, opening a shop, and writing a definitive book on English dial clocks. Little wonder then that in the year 2000 you were awarded the BHI silver medal. In your spare time you made some beautiful clocks, and in recent years you have been the driving force in the creation of our workshop.

That veteran clock outside has been waiting 50-odd years to be discovered and revived - so now you're both re-united close to that workshop.

Thank you again, Ron ”

Again, there was sustained and enthusiastic applause, endorsing Grahame's words which continued the story of the start of a celebrated career and the lifelong, now re-united, relationship between man and the machine that inspired it.

The formal proceedings of the unveiling event ended with Chairman Trevor recognising the effort put in by everyone connected with the project, and arranging the day's event.

***STOP PRESS – The clock has been running faultlessly –
as SLBBHI members would expect !***

For sale Myford ML7B lathe 240v £650

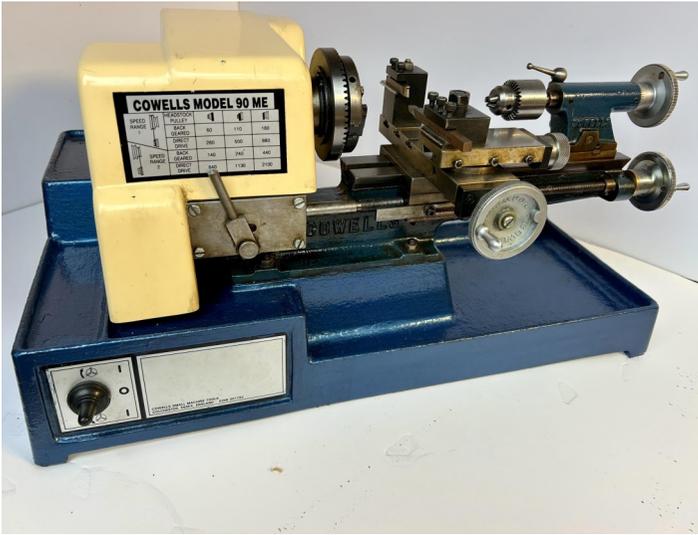
The lathe is in full working order on a metal stand with drip tray and jacking blocks fitted with a 3phase motor running from an inverter (giving speed control).

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

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

For more information contact Norvin 07922813998 or norvin@astoolhire.co.uk





COWELLS MODEL 90 ME LATHE

£1500

Also included :- Face plate, Cutting tools, Additional Gears, Chuck
Keys

Mike 07704664576

macaloon@btinternet.com

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions for 2026 are coming in steadily with more than 80% already paid. If you received a renewal form with this newsletter please complete and return to me with payment.

I have posted membership cards to those who have paid.

FREE ADVERTISING FOR BRANCH MEMBERS

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