

# Meet the *Makers*

The 150th Anniversary of the British Horological Institute in June will provide an opportunity to meet leading craftsmen and individuals behind pioneering small brands, and learn what they are doing.

## Timothy Treffry

A 3-day programme of lectures and discussions on clock and watchmaking at the headquarters of the British Horological Institute at Upton Hall near Newark in the East Midlands, June 7-9, will mark the Institute's 150 years devoted to horological education and the maintenance of standards.

The seminars have attracted a number of leading professional watch and clockmakers from the UK, Europe and the United States as well as enthusiasts who find a fascination both in trying to build more accurate mechanical clocks and in studying the science of horology. Lunches and evening meals will be included in the cost of attendance to provide for informal discussions and encounters. For details see [www.bhi.co.uk/150.html](http://www.bhi.co.uk/150.html). The programme, supported by a number of companies,\* will also present the 'Project-150' 3-pendulum clock which was researched, designed and built by a team of members to mark the anniversary. Displays from the British School of Watchmaking and the Horology Department at West Dean College and the Institute's own Distance Learning Course, will illustrate current opportunities in horological education.

The British Horological Institute was founded 150 years ago at a time of crisis for Clock and Watchmakers. A crafts-based industry catering for the wealthy could not satisfy the needs of a growing middle-class and the trade was being swamped by cheaper, industrially produced, clocks and watches from Europe and the US. Unlike traditional craft guilds, and later trade unions, the new Institute did not aim to protect the trade, but concentrated on education and the maintenance of standards; roles which have persisted into the present day. There has always been a place in the Institute for non-professional enthusiasts with an interest in horology. The current membership, although mainly in the UK where there are a number of active regional branches, is distributed world wide, linked by a monthly *Horological Journal* which

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Solve the mystery of the Greubel Forsey double axis double tourbillon, F-P Journe's resonant twin balance wheels and Volker Vyskocil's separately set hour, minute and seconds hands.



Top: George Daniels Co-axial escapement, bought by the American collector Bradley Martin in 1983. Middle: Lt Cdr Rupert Gould with 'H3' and one of the balances of 'H2', taken at his home in Epsom in 1924. Bottom: A McGonigle Tourbillon from their Ireland workshop.

is also in its 150<sup>th</sup> year. Still going strong, *HJ* is the world's oldest technical journal in continuous publication.

The programme on Saturday June 7<sup>th</sup>: *In the Footsteps of John Harrison*, includes a lecture by a leading authority on Harrison, Andrew King, which will deal with the wooden clocks; including a recently-completed reconstruction of Harrison's turret clock of 1722. This has the first example of the grasshopper escapement. Nuclear power station engineer Malcolm Leach, who has made an astonishingly faithful reproduction of 'H2', will talk about 'The Large Machines', while multi prize-winning watchmaker, Derek Pratt will present his reconstruction of 'H4', Harrison's 'large watch' which solved The Longitude Problem. Pratt is the first watchmaker to be able to make the unique diamond pallets found in this timekeeper. Although exhibited at the Greenwich Observatory, the longitude timekeepers are the property of the British Ministry of Defence and close examination and measurement is prohibited. Reproduction requires attempting to get inside the mind of Harrison to understand the subtlety of the mechanisms; it is not a job for mere copyists. An additional feature of the day will be a talk by Jim Arnfield, introducing the unique 'Project-150 Clock'.

In *Contemporary Watchmakers' Watches*, on Sunday June 8<sup>th</sup>, after an introduction by Dr George Daniels (inventor of the Coaxial Escapement), a number of independent watchmakers will discuss particular issues in modern watchmaking. These include Roger Smith, who worked with Daniels but is now making his own watches on the Isle of Man, and John and Stephen McGonigle who are doing the same thing in Ireland. Other speaker/exhibitors are Stephen Forsey, François-Paul Journe, Gideon Levingston, Peter Speake-Marin, all from Switzerland and Volker Vyskocil from Germany. A British company, Charles Frodsham (established in London in 1834) will introduce a completely new English watch which will be shown and described for the first time at this event.

*Perfecting the Pendulum*, Monday June 9<sup>th</sup>, will deal with clocks ranging from the commercial to the experimental, and consider the practical and theoretical aspects of optimising performance. Jonathan Betts, Senior Curator at the Royal Observatory will give an historical survey of the search for precision. Marcus Gloeggler, of Erwin Sattler, Munich, will describe the commercial production of precision pendulum clocks. Philippe Würtz (Germany) will discuss his free pendulum clock. Stephan Gagneux (Switzerland) will present his research on the behaviour of pendulums in resonance and be followed by Bill Connor's account of the P-150 three-pendulum clock. Philip Woodward and David Walter (US) will describe a mechanical Master/Slave system. Other speakers from the US and UK will deal with fundamental aspects of pendulum behaviour. ☺

\* Antiquorum, Bonham's and Sotheby's as well as Montblanc, Patek Philippe, Seiko, Ulysse Nardin and Smiths of Derby.