



# British School of Watchmaking

EXCELLENTIA EST NOSTRA DUCIS

## JULY 2009 NEWSLETTER

### A Welcome Note From Alan Burtoft

Dear All,

During these harsh economic times when sales have plummeted and budgets remain tight, we are seeing the same number of repairs in the after-sales departments and the need for skilled employees does not diminish.

Some would say that watchmaking never changes but, no industry stands still!

We are all seeing progression with new escapements, new materials, new oils, new measuring instruments and new tools and, as a school, we must keep up and be aware of modern developments. We are all continuously learning.

We all look forward to a recovery and a return to buoyant sales and higher employment.

It is at these times that any review of the investment in training (and taking into account the time taken to train a fully skilled watchmaker) should be considered in respect of possible increases in demand as the economy will hopefully, eventually recover.

Alan Burtoft F.B.H.I.  
Senior Instructor

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## How The Year Has Gone

### NEW INSTRUCTOR

Tom Keegan joined us in September of last year having previously worked for LVMH and Goldsmiths (Aurum Group). With over 23 years experience as a watchmaker he is an asset to our team.

As part of our on-going programme, all our instructors receive support training and teacher training at WOSTEP.



### VISITS BY OTHER INSTRUCTORS

During Tom's 12 week absence whilst training in Switzerland, the students have had the benefit of experienced tutors from WOSTEP, Breitling, Rolex and the Swatch Group.

They have also had the rare opportunity to visit prestigious watch factories in Switzerland.



### FIRST YEAR STUDENT'S MICROMECHANICS

This year, our first year students have completed micro-mechanics, most of which is turning between centres and accurate filing, culminating in the making of winding stems, pivot gauges and balance staffs. The first year programme also covers basic watch servicing including checking and correcting the Swiss lever escapement.

Towards the end of this year their task will be fitting a balance staff, truing and poising the balance and finally fitting a balance spring, which will have to be pinned, and forming the terminal curve. This will be covered when the students return after the summer break.

To date, they have all passed their intermediate assessments and are on course for the final examinations.

I am sure they are all looking forward to working with Quartz, Automatic and chronograph watches by the end of next year.



## How The Year Has Gone

### 2008 GRADUATION CEREMONY

Graduation day took place in September 2008 when students were presented with their certificates for the July 2008 examinations.

This was our first graduation day and we were honoured to have George Daniels to present the certificates.

Six students completed the 3000hr course with five receiving a WOSTEP certificate.



*“This is our third year since the opening of the school and we are proud of our achievements to date.”*

### EXAMINATIONS 2009

This year's exams were assessed by experts from Audemars Piguet, Breitling and Rolex. Our thanks to them for their time, expertise and contribution to the school.

Though the numbers of students receiving a pass are the same as last year with five out of six students gaining a pass, one, unfortunately had an accident with one of the watches during the practical exam.

The overall averages were an improvement. As was the case last year in the theory exam one student scored 100% and all were above 83%. This is our third year since the opening of the school and we are proud of our achievements to date. We have the most up-to-date equipment and teaching aids and the support of major watch factories in Switzerland.

## Student Trip to Switzerland

In June 2009, Tom Keegan and the six second year students embarked on a one week whirlwind tour of Switzerland visiting the manufactures of the five British School of Watchmaking founder members and the WOSTEP Head Quarters and training facility.

Their first stop was OMEGA HQ in Biel. The students were shown around the OMEGA CS workshop as well as the restoration department and the OMEGA museum. The highlight of the tour being to the Centre Tourbillon Department and seeing how some of the micro mechanics etc learnt are put into practical use by these watchmakers.



From L-R:

Alex Schlencker

Ashton Tracy

Charlie Jones

David Carpenter

David Thangiah

Scott Weaver

Next stop was the Breitling headquarters where the group were amazed to see the training facilities and all the materials and tools that were available for training.

At Cartier Horlogerie, the students found the Design and Development department particularly fascinating.

They were also impressed to see that Cartier are able to supply components for the lifetime of a timepiece, by making them by hand from scratch when re-launching production is not possible anymore.



At Patek Philippe the students were enthralled to see how much goes into the movement of a Patek Philippe and also the finishing on each of the parts. This goes further than the Geneva Seal to meet the requirements of the Patek Philippe Seal.



## Student Trip to Switzerland



When the students arrived at the Panerai Manufacture, they were amazed by the level of technology: especially an automatic oiling machine and a machine for resetting pallet stones digitally. While there, a brand new building extension was being built which will be interesting to see on next year's visit.

At the Rolex factory the students were interested in the way Rolex track parts worldwide, and to see the workshop and training facilities in Switzerland.



The final stop on the tour was the Wostep Headquarters in Neuchatel; the students were given a guided tour by Nikolaas Dockx who had provided cover to the BSoW while Tom was training. The students were shown the classrooms and the latest milling machines and other machinery. Before they finished their visit they also had the opportunity to meet with Maarten Pieters Head of the WOSTEP organisation.

## NAG Award For Best Student 2008

A bursary was awarded in 2008 and 2009 by the NAG (National Association of Goldsmiths).

Among the first year students who were eligible for this grant, Scott Weaver (2008) and Scott Miller (2009) are the applicants who successfully won over the NAG jury with their applications.

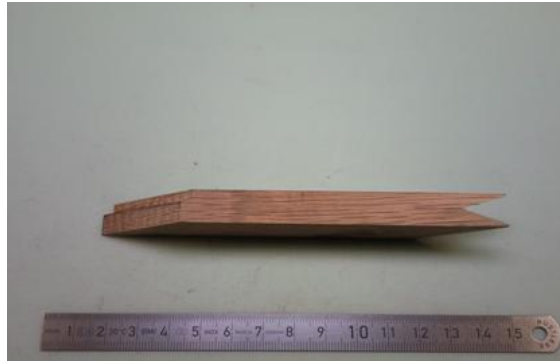
The first £2,000 award was presented by Robert Vander Woerd to Fabien Pellegrini, representing the BSoW, on 7th October 2008 during the NAG Annual Trustees meeting held at the Imperial War Museum in London.

The Board of the BSoW is extremely grateful for the NAG involvement and congratulates both candidates for their success !



## Student Life by Nicholas Cordy

Well, the first year is over and I'm shocked by how fast the year has gone by. It seems like only yesterday that we were being given an introduction to the school. Now I am sitting here reflecting on what has been achieved over the last year. I'm impressed that we have gone from our first project of micro mechanics, 'Making a filing block,



to our final micro mechanics project, 'Making a set of pivot gauges'.



In about eight months we have honed our skills in dexterity from working on projects 15cm to projects 15mm in size, working to small tolerances. We all were examined on making a pivot gauge and winding stem, and we all dreaded getting our results back, although we all did well.

We then moved on to watch work, slowly going through each component of the watch learning about its function in the watch and how to repair it if it goes wrong. Before we broke up for summer we had a gear train exam where we had to go through the watch and eliminate any faults that were in it, and then re-assemble it. Again we all passed this exam.

None of this would be possible if it wasn't for the dedication of Alan and Tom, two fantastic teachers that have a great knowledge of horology and are more than willing to help with additional projects that will better our knowledge of watchmaking. Also to the founding companies that got together to set-up the school, without them none of this would be possible.

Now its time to look forward to the second year, where we have a couple of escapement exams to do and then prepare for the all important final exam.

## A Letter from a 2008 Graduate

As a graduate from the BSOW I would like to wish all the students who have just sat the final exam all the very best for their future careers in horology.

I am a newcomer to the relatively small world of time pieces and their creators having originally studied mechanical and production engineering, specialising in CNC multi-axis turning centres.

I was approached by F.A.Buck Jewellers in Stoke-on-Trent who explained to me about the scarcity of watchmakers and I decided that an adjustment to my career would be beneficial for both my family and our future so was accepted into the British School of Watchmaking in September 2006.

The initial section of study was micro-mechanics and I revelled in bringing my engineering skills to the bench and reducing the scale of them to apply the same concepts to a much smaller dimension. The second part involving learning to service watches was much tougher but the standard of tutoring was very high and the facility was state of the art and despite having to work around a few problems stemming from being the first year to pass through the school I passed the final exams and am now working in the retail sector; another first for me.

I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of my, so-far somewhat short, horological career and would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone who has made the existence of the BSOW possible and to thank Alan Burtoft for his dedication to the school and for his continued help and interest since I have left.

Working at F.A.Buck Jewellers in the retail sector brings the wide variety of watches that I guess I would not get if working for a specific watch house but it does mean the job is perhaps more daunting.

I must thank the people who have endured my emails and calls when I needed to ask a question; you know who you are – thank you very much for your support. Learning how to source the materials and the many mistakes that can be made in doing so is an ongoing lesson. However, thanks to the BSOW, WOSTEP and the founders, I have a very good grounding in the trade from which I can continue to build on, until I become an asset to the industry rather than a liability!

Good luck to all the students who have just left and to all those whose careers include attending the course at Manchester's British School of Watchmaking.

Best Wishes

Steve Lewis

## Update on the 2009 Graduation Ceremony

This year's ceremony will take place on Thursday 17th September 2009. It will be held at the Midland Hotel Manchester in the Stanley Suite.

Invitations have now been sent out and all RSVP's and invitation enquiries should be directed to Alison Scrivens on 02380 646214 or [allison.scrivens@uk.swatchgroup.com](mailto:allison.scrivens@uk.swatchgroup.com)

The event will commence at 6.30pm and a buffet will be served after the presentations.

For further information please contact Liz Allister at [liz.allister@rhone-products.com](mailto:liz.allister@rhone-products.com)

### How To Get To the Midland Hotel:

The Midland  
Peter Street,  
Manchester  
M60 2DS  
Tel: 0161 236 3333  
Fax: 0161 932 4100

### From the south

From the M6 Junction 19 join the M56. Follow signs for the city centre (A5103). Then follow signs for the Manchester Central Convention Complex/Bridgewater Hall onto Medlock Street. Go through the lights onto Lower Mosley Street. Pass Bridgewater Hall on your right and the hotel is facing you.

### From the north

From the M6, join the M61 at Preston. Follow signs for M60 south and west towards the Trafford Centre. Follow signs for the city centre and Manchester Central Convention Complex (A57). Turn left into Water Street and left onto the A56 Deansgate. Turn right onto Peter Street and the hotel is 300 metres on the right hand side.

