Howard was born in 1958 and is a second generation horologist after his Father Liveryman Brian Newman, and will be one of the youngest Masters of the Company in modern times. He was educated at Friends School Saffron Walden and in 1974 attended the two-year British Horological Institute course (being awarded a Fellowship in 1978) followed by the National Association of Goldsmiths Retail Jewellery Course. In 2010 he will be “clocking up” 34 years with the family firm A. James Jewellers Ltd. (established by 1863) of which he is a director.

For many years Howard has been researching clock and watch making in North West Essex and this provided the groundwork in 1990 when asked by the Saffron Walden Museum to mount a major exhibition of local horology. The exhibition ran for 13 weeks and was filmed by the BBC and Independent television. In 2008 he was responsible for researching, setting up and maintaining an exhibition featuring a special display of Scientific and Technological Examples of Horology, another area of his collecting. He is a member of the Antiquarian Horological Society and of local Historical, Museum and Library Societies. He is a Trustee of a local charity, Gibson Walden Fund, and is shortly to become a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths.

He is the co-author of Saffron Walden, A Pictorial History published in 1998. His interests include the countryside, walking, swimming, skiing, travelling, antiques, local history, silver/gold ware, jewellery, barometers and all things horological.

Howard is married to Inge and they have three boys, Joshua, Benjamin and Oliver. It is hoped one of them will follow their grandfather and fathers’ careers and become a third generation horologist.
300 years ago England was the capital of the watchmaking world. In that golden age of English horology, timepieces represented the ultimate in style, status and science. Today the spotlight is once again on Britain – or rather the Isle of Man where the fine art of English watchmaking has been revived.

From the start of his career, Roger Smith was determined to be a watchmaker with a difference. With George Daniels’ classic book Watchmaking as his guide and exquisitely crafted English pocket watches as his inspiration, he set out to do where few have succeeded – create a pocket watch entirely by hand.

Roger Smith writes:

“While studying at the Manchester School of Horology I first met George Daniels, a watchmaker widely regarded as the greatest living horologist. George was driven by two challenges, to improve the technical performance of the mechanical watch and to create his own English watches.

Aged 20 and inspired by his lecture, I spent the next seven years perfecting the 30 or so different disciplines involved in creating a handmade pocket watch. While George admitted my first watch was a valiant effort, I only won his approval with the second. An invitation to work with him on the Isle of Man on his Daniels Millennium series of 50 wristwatches proved to be an experience beyond price. The finest finishing school any aspiring watchmaker could wish for.

In 2001 I founded my own workshop on the Island. My goal was to bring the superlative quality of traditional English pocket watches to the modern wristwatch, reviving the fine hand craftsmanship lost in this age of mass production.

My first challenge was the Series 1 – a rectangular wristwatch made in a limited edition of 9 - all of which were sold to watch connoisseurs. I then decided to design and create an entirely hand-made British watch and in February 2006 Series 2 was launched. This wristwatch is not only the first high grade production wristwatch ever to have been entirely designed and made in Britain, but is also the only production watch in the world to be crafted by hand with meticulous attention to detail.”

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The catalogue is at www.rwsmithwatches.com.
It is difficult to judge the number of visitors who have seen the Clockmakers’ Museum and Library year by year, since their foundation in 1813. Initially visitors seem to have been restricted to members of the Court, as the books and watch movements were kept in “the House of Messrs. Vulliamy, Pall Mall” and with other Library Committee members. Access became easier after July 1817, when it was recorded then that the scale of the collection was so great as “to render its custody inconvenient to individual members of the Committee”. It was moved first to the King’s Head Tavern in the Poultry, and later to the London Tavern. There, members of the Company as a whole seem to have been admitted, provided that they were judged by the Court to be responsible.

The Library and Museum did not open to the general public until 1873. By then they had moved to the newly-built Guildhall Library. Although the actual visitor numbers do not seem to have been recorded, on 14th April 1890, Mr Welch, the Guildhall Librarian reported enthusiastically that numbers had “shown a steady and noteworthy growth. There is abundant evidence that the museum excites an increasing interest and spirit of enquiry…” So hectic did things become, that in 1894 Mr Welch recommended that iron bands should be provided to protect the base of the cases because “the wood is beginning to suffer from the boots of the visitors.”

Today, visitors entering and leaving the museum are counted by electronic eye. Last year was the first in which the eye counted the visitors over London’s “Open House” week-end. The Keeper, Sir George White, was thrilled to find that over 1000 visitors had been recorded in just two days. When he checked the numbers after the same event this September, he was initially disappointed, because numbers recorded were much the same. But on comparing notes with Guildhall Library staff, who use manually operated counters to check visitors in and out, he found that actually the Museum’s eye had been unable to cope. No less than 2,203 people had enjoyed access to the Museum in two days.

Liveryman Michael Holford commissioned a fine table regulator to commemorate his Ruby Wedding Anniversary in 2007; the piece comprised the work of a cabinet maker, a clockmaker and a glass engraver. The amboyna wood case with fine stringing and silver embellishments was designed and made by Rupert McBain, an up-and-coming cabinet maker. The month-going calendar movement was designed and constructed by Past Master David Poole, the dial showing the phase of the moon, month, day and date. The glass panels on the sides and back were engraved by Tracey Sheppard, probably the leading glass engraver in the UK. There are two family Coats of Arms which were engraved on the glass side panels; the family tree is on the back panel. The inside of the front door bears a plaque hallmarked 2007 with the details of the makers.

Throughout the making of the case and movement, there has been particular attention to detail; the locks were designed specifically for the case with the key held by a secret device behind the silver patera in the right foot – a press of a button at the back ejects the key for use.

This individually designed timepiece is a wonderful memento for posterity.

Rupert McBain can be contacted at rupertmcbain@tiscali.co.uk. and David Poole at davidpooleclocks@btinternet.com.
The Master’s Outings

Several of the events and activities of Commander Peter Linstead-Smith’s year as Master majored on the close relationship between precision time keeping and the demands of navigation at sea, from the development of the chronometer to the latest atomic clocks. Master’s outings, the Four Liveries Lecture “A Great Time to be an Astronomer”, given by Freeman Professor Ian Morison, and the Harrison Lecture “Time in the Cosmos”, given by Honorary Liveryman Professor Martin Rees, Lord Rees of Ludlow, President of the Royal Society and Astronomer Royal, were all chosen to reflect this theme. At the same time the Master wanted to highlight not only the relationship with astronomy and astrophysics but also the modern advances in time keeping, hence the visits to Jodrell Bank, the National Physical Laboratory and the manufactory of Charles Frodsham & Co Ltd. Through the very kind offices of one of our Liverymen, he was also able to add a touch of the past as well.

The first of the outings was in May and the Master lead 40 members of the Company on a visit to the Jodrell Bank Observatory, the Centre for Astrophysics in Cheshire. Professor Ian Morison, Gresham Professor of Astronomy, and Astronomer at Jodrell Bank, hosted a fascinating and memorable day, lecturing personally to the guests and taking them to parts of the Observatory that are not open to the public on the standard tours. They learnt about Merlin, the UK’s national radio astronomy facility, and saw round the Lovell Radio Telescope, which has stood proudly over the Cheshire plain since its completion in 1957, and is the flagship of the Jodrell Bank Observatory.

The July visit offered a rare opportunity to see behind the scenes at the National Physical Laboratory, the UK’s national time centre, in Teddington TW11. This is where, in 1955, NPL scientists developed the world’s first successful atomic clock. Today, the NPL houses the remarkable suite of atomic clocks that forms the UK’s contribution to UTC (the global master timescale). It is also home to experimental laboratories in which some of the most accurate clocks ever made are now being developed. It was a unique chance to see first-hand the technology behind today’s timekeeping and to meet the world-class scientists working in this exciting field. 31 members of the Company were hosted and guided on a magnificent and fascinating tour of the NPL scientific laboratories by Freeman Dr Patrick Gill, Tompion Medal winner 2000.

The Master led a group of around 30 members of the Company and their
guests to view the private collection of a Liveryman in the West Country in early September. The collection consisted mainly of seventeenth to nineteenth century longcase and bracket clocks including a number of automaton clocks. The visitors were royally entertained and the Master expressed his most grateful thanks for the generosity of their host who provided an excellent lunch for all.

The Master’s outing to the manufactory of Charles Frodsham & Co Ltd in late September proved to be so over-subscribed that it was duplicated on a second day. It was no wonder as the tour was fascinating. The guests were greeted by Simon Frodsham, Philip Whyte and Richard Stenning and were divided into two groups. The building was originally a Volkswagen restoration garage when the trio took it over in 2002 and rebuilt the interior, the concrete floor being flat and sturdy enough to take the massive machines. Frodsham’s highly skilled technicians/clock and watchmakers showed us the enormous range of items the machines produced in next to no time – a tiny screw, almost too small for tweezers was manufactured in 30 seconds! Restoration of clocks and watches took place on the upper floor with a team of workmen at the bench led by Freeman Roger Stevenson, together with the manufacture of the Frodsham wristwatch which contains Daniels’ double impulse chronometer escapement. On leaving, the visitors were given a Frodsham mug as a souvenir, prior to meeting those on the afternoon tour at the local pub for lunch.

The Master is closely associated with West Dean College, the Edward James Foundation, and he led a small group of visitors attending The St. Roche’s Fund Lecture at the College in June. He introduced the lecture “Autonomy – The Reality Behind the Dream”, English Watchmaking in the 20th Century, which was delivered to a capacity audience by the Charles Frodsham & Co Ltd “team” who are producing the new Frodsham chronometer wristwatch.

2009 saw the 800th anniversary of the completion of the first stone London Bridge, and to celebrate the occasion the Lord Mayor granted permission to close the bridge and stage an Anniversary Fayre in aid of the Lord Mayor’s charities, which included a sheep drive. Thus Freedemen of the City of London were given the rare opportunity to exercise their ancient privilege, associated with the Freedom, to herd sheep “toll free” across London Bridge. Liveryman Frank Hohmann III came from New York to London especially to exercise his rightful privilege, and is shown here with his sheep, preparing to cross the bridge.

The Clockmakers were teamed to play with the Air Pilots and Information Technologists and had a very sociable and enjoyable day. The Clockmakers came 5th overall which was one of the best results in the Prince Arthur Cup and was achieved against stiff competition. The winners, for the first time, were the Cutlers with the Stationers as runners up. In addition the pairing of Messrs. Woods and Reich recorded the best afternoon round on the Old Course. Next year’s date has already been set, it will be a challenge to improve, and who knows, it might be the Clockmakers’ moment!
The Livery Dinner, in the splendid surroundings of Goldsmiths’ Hall in October, had a distinctly Naval flavour; not surprisingly with a Naval Master at the helm. Lining the stairs to welcome the guests were sea cadets from Training Ship Terra Nova in Croydon, and they piped the guests into dinner. The guests included the Captain of HMS Endurance, Commander Tom Sharpe, and Chief Petty Officer David Sharp also from Endurance. One of the Master’s private guests was Commodore Doug Littlejohns CBE who knew Commander Sharpe well.

HMS Endurance had suffered a very serious mishap in the Antarctic 12 months ago during which disaster was only narrowly averted due to the outstanding leadership of the then Lieutenant Commander Sharpe, in temporary command of the Ship. In recognition of this the Master presented Commander Tom Sharpe with The Master’s Medal. Since the flood in December, outside keeping the ship safe alongside in Portsmouth Dockyard (in her rather sorry state!) the Ship’s Company are working hard to scope alternative options for the Ice Patrol Capability, some of which are quite exciting.

The Clockmakers’ Company tankard is awarded every year to a member of the HMS Endurance crew who, in the opinion of the Captain, has contributed the most during the recent tour of duty. The Master presented the Clockmakers’ tankard to Chief Petty Officer (Survey Recorder) David M. Sharp, for having displayed outstanding leadership, professionalism, courage and team building skills, particularly during the major flooding of Endurance in December 2008.

The affiliation with TS Terra Nova in Croydon is a new initiative pioneered this year by the Master, and we expect to see plenty of these intrepid youngsters in the future. TS Terra Nova is also affiliated to HMS Endurance so there is a double link all round, forming a special bond. The Master said that the Clockmakers’ Company chose TS Terra Nova reflecting the Lord Mayor’s encouragement of Livery Companies to assist youth organisations and cadet units to help young people develop life skills, contribute to their local Communities and move towards responsible adulthood, by encouraging the development of personal attributes and high standards of conduct through team work and self discipline.

Above: The Master with Sea Cadets of TS Terra Nova at the Livery Dinner; Below, left: CPO David Sharp receiving the Clockmakers’ Tankard; Below, right: Commander Tom Sharpe receiving the Master’s Medal

The West Dean Prize

The Worshipful Company of Clockmakers’ prize to the best overall clock student was awarded to Liveryman David Higgon for his all-round ability including bench-work. This included the restoration of a longcase clock, lantern clocks and a significant amount of restoration to a month-going musical clock by Du Chesne, including research and translation of music into the pinned barrel format. David excelled in the college’s written examinations and engaged positively with many aspects of the course and wider college life.
St. Paul’s Vestments
by Isobel Lattimore

In 2009 St. Paul’s Cathedral celebrated 300 years since the new cathedral, designed by Sir Christopher Wren was commissioned. To mark the anniversary the Dean and Chapter decided to commission a complete set of vestments in all the liturgical colours for communion and other state occasions. This included over 200 pieces to be worked and embroidered, of which not least were 54 cope!

Not unnaturally the whole could not be bought “off the peg” as it were and a competition was held among the design students at Central St Martins art school which was won by Marie Brisou, a textile design graduate. The fabrics were then woven to her designs at Gainsborough silk weavers in Sudbury and the rolls of silk delivered to the Chapter house to be embroidered and assembled.

At this stage a graduate from the Royal School of Needlework, Kate Sinton, was employed by the Dean and Chapter to put together a team of experienced embroiderers and head up a workroom in the OBE Chapel to complete the whole. In April 2006 I was privileged to be invited to join the group of about 20 people meeting twice a week to sew with pure silk, imitation gold jap and thousands of Swarovski crystals, the new designs on to the unique silk. As we worked (all complete strangers) wonderful new friendships were forged and we were constantly interrupted by visitors wishing to view the new vestments. Even a group from the Clockmakers’ Company came to visit us after the unveiling of the Newgate Street Clock.

The Eucharistic garments, (chasubles, dalmatics and stoles) were finished by November 2008 and were dedicated at Evensong by the Dean where four of the volunteers were invited to read the intercessions and Marie Brisou read the lesson. No mean achievement for a young French woman! After Christmas we made a start on the 54 copes as well as two mitres for the Bishop of London.

The whole project cost £250,000 and was funded by the Friends of St Pauls, the Worshipful Companies of Broderers, Clothworkers and Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers, as well as the generous gift of all the thousands of crystals by Swarovski.

Although in theory the project has finished, there are still about ten of the original volunteers working twice a week. We are maintaining the whole collection, cataloguing and numbering each garment, and beginning to take small commissions for other churches, amalgamating our embroidery skills for their benefit. It has been a wonderful three and a half years.

Congratulations to:

Dr Philip Woodward DSc on receiving The Tompion Medal for services to precision mechanical horology. Philip is now in his nineties and the Master travelled to Malvern to attend a special lunch in his honour, and present him with The Tompion Medal.

Liveryman Mr Alderman David Wootton on his election as Sheriff of the City of London.

Liveryman David Thompson on receiving The Harrison Medal from the Master, at the Livery Dinner, for services to the history and technology of horology.

Court Assistant Jonathan Betts, FBHI with the BHI Barrett Silver Medal awarded for outstanding development or achievement in any field of horology or related to horology. Though granted in 2008 the Medal was only presented this year due to conflicting dates and commitments.
The 16th of September was a sad day for all of us who cherished the work of Derek Pratt, horologist extraordinaire. His pocket tourbillon chronometers are exquisitely made and finished and are now in the hands of some of the most knowledgeable horologists to be found in Europe. His work was almost always made by hand methods because he enjoyed the feel of the tools and the freedom of introducing alterations as he worked. His workshop was innocent of computer-aided design and repetitive tooling. Serious horologists were always welcome to see and discuss his methods.

When not engaged on his own work, he would design and make prototype mechanisms for the benefit of less able commercial makers who wanted to decorate their dials with subsidiary information. Given the tools, Derek could make anything that attracted his interest. One of his early triumphs aided the production of micro circuits for the fledgling Semiconductor industry. At the other end of the scale were his ingenious water clocks that were his invention and now serve as public clocks in some surrounding Swiss villages. Derek’s understanding of escapements was of great assistance to me. He immediately saw the benefit of the co-axial escapement and enthusiastically accompanied me in visiting factories to discuss its worth. He could speak French and Swiss German fluently, which was essential to our needs. We would take to the road early in the morning with coffee, with some brandy to relieve the cold, and spend the day discussing escapements with largely uncomprehending research and development departments. Derek’s final choice of escapement was the double impulse chronometer, to which he added an ingenious remontoire, to finalise the development of a beautifully unique and complex work of art. I am delighted that Derek chose my escapement to demonstrate his power of original thought.

Among his more relaxing activities he used a 19th century Dursley-Pedersen bicycle and a hundred year old ‘ordinary’ (Penny Farthing). For longer distances he favoured a 1000cc BMW motorcycle, upon which he looked rather dangerous. The machine was too big for him; when sitting on the saddle his feet could not reach the ground.

As a young man he became a student at the National College of Horology of which the formidable Major Fell was principal instructor. The relationship developed into full time service with Fell who took him to Switzerland to help design the world’s first black box recorder for passenger aircraft. During this period he acquired his first vintage Bentley and followed this with a Phantom Rolls Royce. Both required serious maintenance and were sold to allow more time for horology.

With Derek’s passing we have all lost an important mechanical horologist of great experience, and great knowledge, who was above all generous and congenial in his dealings with others. I have simply lost a brilliant horological friend and companion.