

Bytown Times

Volume 29, No. 2, March 22, 2009

ISSN 1712—2799

NEXT MEETING

WHEN:

Sunday, March 22, 2009
 Meeting begins at 1:30 PM
 Workshop begins at 11:00 AM

WHERE:

Qualicum & Graham Park
 Community Centre
 25 Esquimault Ave., Ottawa

MEETING AGENDA:

- NAWCC Chapter Charter Vote
- Show and Tell

Sundials: the Grandfather of Horology

Though our interests lie mainly with relatively more conventional means of telling time, horology is not at all as recent a phenomenon as in-

ventions such as the printed word, the revolver, steam engines or hybrid vehicles, telephones or laptop computers. Much like delving into the history of a family by searching out far reaching ancestors, a quick peek into the history of telling time can be a fun and intriguing task. This search inevitably leads back to the grandfather of all clocks and watches: the sundial.



Since ancient times, humans

continued on page 2...

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Sundials: the Grandfather of Horology</i>	1,2&3
<i>Workshop and Course Info</i>	1&2
<i>January Meeting</i>	3
<i>Meet Our Members: Gary Fox</i>	4&5
<i>The Sweetest Clock on the Block</i>	5
<i>List of Local Supply Shops</i>	5
<i>Club Info & Contacts</i>	6
<i>Secretary's Corner</i>	6
<i>The President's Desk</i>	6

March Workshop: Making a Clock Repair Tool Using the Lathe

The March workshop is a hands-on event. The workshop will be held at the Qualicum & Graham Park Community Centre on Sunday March 22nd. The workshop will run from 11:00 AM until approximately 12:30 PM. There is no fee for attending this workshop.

The objective of this workshop is to learn how to use the lathe's calibration dials, cut a taper, find center, face stock, and make beveled cuts. This workshop will feature a project: making a female dead center, which is useful when the piece to be turned is slightly out of round or cannot be gripped squarely in the collet or chuck. It is also used when dealing with a bit of soft material that one does not wish to mark with the point of a male center.

If you wish to attend the workshop, please bring the following materials with you to the class:

- brass rod 3/4" diameter x 1" long; 1000 grit emery paper; large piece of pegwood;
- calipers/micrometer;
- toolrest and hand graver;
- tool bit for cutting an inside taper on micro-lathes;
- center drills;
- watchmaker/micro-lathe with accessories.

Though this workshop is open to everyone, it will be especially helpful preparation for those taking the May Suitcase Lathe Course.

Sundials continued...

have measured the passage of time by tracking the movement of the sun on sundials. Over the years, sundials have taken many different forms, but the basic designs have common elements. Most sundials tell time by the tip of a shadow lain over a grid of 'hour lines'. The shadow is cast by an object called a gnomon. Gnomons can be fixed or impermanent, can be oriented vertically or horizontally. The surfaces on which the gnomon casts its shadow can be flat, spherical, conical, or almost any other design imaginable. Sundials are also traditionally inscribed with a motto – in the case of the sundial pictured with this article, the words “Carpe Diem” or “Seize the Day” are etched into the ring.

In order to properly orient a sundial, it is often necessary to know the local latitude, the precise vertical direction, and True North. When oriented properly, sundials indicate the local solar time, though fixes can be done to allow them to indicate the standard time. Fixes include the following: making corrections to the placement of the sundial relative to the longitude of the time zone; adding an extra set of numbers at the hour lines to indicate daylight savings hours; indications of calculations to be made at certain times of the year to compensate for variations due to the orbit of the Earth not being perfectly round, along with its rotational axis not being perfectly perpendicular to its orbit.

Pictured with this article is a Shepherd's Watch. The bronze band is adjusted to the correct month, as indicated on the outside of the ring. Then the ring, which is often worn on a chain around the neck, is hung vertically, and oriented sideways to the sun. Light passes through a small hole in the bronze



band (which acts as a reverse-gnomon), and shines a spot of light on the hour lines inscribed inside the ring.

The Shepherd's Watch is also known as an Aquitaine Ring Sundial, named after Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204). Eleanor was Duchess of Aquitaine and Countess of Poitiers at the age of 15. She married King Louis VI of France, but the marriage was dissolved in 1152. That same year, Eleanor proposed to and married Henry, Duke of Normans. Eleanor gave a Shepherd's ring to her husband Henry so he would know when it was time for their rendezvous. Henry gained the English throne in 1154, becoming King Henry II. Their love eventually waned, ending officially in 1173 when Henry II imprisoned her for supporting their son's revolt against himself, the King. Eleanor remained imprisoned for 16 years, until Henry II eventually died, and their son took the throne.

continued on page 3...

Update on Training Activities

May Suitcase Lathe Course

The Lathe course being offered in May, 2009 is already full. If you are interested in attending, there is a waiting list. For more information, please either contact Erin Fox, or speak with Grant Perry at the next chapter meeting.

Fall 2009 Introduction to Clock Repair Course

Dan Hudon is currently collecting names for those who may be interested in attending the Introduction to Clock Repair course this Fall. The course would be held in the Bells Corners area of town. More details will be available at the March and May meetings. Please note the course will only run if enough participants sign up for the course.

Course and Workshop info on pages 1 and 2 provided by Dan Hudon

Sundials continued...

Sundials from ancient times can be found around the world – in Egypt, China, Greece, etc. – but the earliest known sundial on record is located in the Knowth Passage Tomb in Ireland, engraved in stone around 5000 BC. Though much more conventional means for telling time have been invented over the years, sundials are still being made today. The largest sundial known to date is located in Taipei. Taipei 101, a business tower that stands over half a kilometer tall, was, at the time it was opened in 2004, the tallest building in the world. The adjacent park, circular in shape, uses the business tower as a giant gnomon to indicate the passage of time over the park which acts as the dial plate. This giant sundial provides a great convenience to those in the tower lucky enough to have window offices!

*Research for this article was performed by Erin Fox.
Photos by Angelina Dunn.*

January 2009 Meeting



Our last Chapter meeting was held Sunday January 25, 2009. This meeting featured our annual auction, officiated by Maynard Dokken. Many treasures were bought and sold, and fun was had by all!



Meet Our Members! Introducing: Gary Fox

Gary Fox was born and raised in the suburban community of Lachine, Quebec, just to the west of Montreal. He was the third child in the family and, then as now, was liberally picked upon by his much older siblings! (He says he can get away with that comment because “they don’t read this rag!” He also notes that stories about his beating his sister over the head with a sewing machine are grossly exaggerated – it was a toy sewing machine!)

Gary’s Mom, Dad and Grandpa Tyner all worked for Canadian Pacific Railway, so it was no surprise that his first hobby was model railroading. He and his brother built two layouts (one within the other) which ultimately took over a good 20% of the basement in the family home. But as a typical kid, he was never content with one hobby and also dabbled in stamps and coins. (*Just what IS a Tombac nickel?* Ed.)

Just to be ornery, when Gary turned 16, he decided to go into railroading as a career, but unlike the rest of the family, including his much older brother, he eschewed the family’s ties to the CPR to join the Canadian National Railways as a computer programmer. That lasted four years before he moved to Ottawa



where he became one of thousands of (not so) civil servants. After many years toiling in public service, he stayed ahead of the axe by changing jobs in rapid succession as a consultant, Director of Computer Systems in various health care settings, and finally winding up controlling the purse in a small consulting firm where he toils in some obscurity to this day.

Gary took apart his first clock – a Baby Ben – when still a young lad. Unlike those great stories of child prodigies who took fine watches apart and rebuilt them beyond the manufacturers exacting standards, Gary’s first venture was less than fully successful – probably due to the half dozen parts that didn’t seem to fit back into the mechanism. None the less, it looked great and he wasn’t badly beaten for his services.

In truth though, Gary first became interested in horology long after marrying and starting his family, when he decided to decorate the family dining room with an antique school house clock. One afternoon, while at the local library, he was much surprised to learn that Canada had had its own clock manufacturers at one time (G. Edmund Burrows – you have no idea what you started). Gary’s first clock, a Pequegnat, Grecian which is now in the hands of his oldest daughter Melanie in Calgary, was about as far away from a school house clock as one could imagine. But it started the whole disease.

At an auction several months after acquiring the Pequegnat, he finally found his school house clock. It worked well – particularly when hanging at a 30 degree list off the vertical. Remembering his issues with the Baby Ben, Gary enlisted the



help of John Crosby a noted collector in Ottawa. John showed him how to triage a movement and identify problems, but to be safe, John fixed the clock!

After meeting Michael Mazur and the late Peter Bomford, Gary joined the Ottawa Valley Chapter of the NAWCC in 1976 and took a course in clock repair from John Plewes at Algonquin College.

For quite a few years, Gary collected the odd clock when cash was available and spent hours getting the old wrecks working again. But he was lured away from clocks by a long time member of the club, the late Nate Segall. While contemplating a dodgy kitchen clock at a chapter mart, Nate pulled Gary aside and showed him an 18 size 23 jewel Elgin Veritas pocket watch with an Ottawa Private Label. That was it. He was hooked. To this day, Gary collects pocket watches that have any connection to Ottawa, including Private Label watches and commemorative watches from sporting or other events. He has compiled a list of

Meet Gary... continued...

all watchmakers who operated a business in Ottawa up to the 1920's. The oldest recorded watchmakers in the list were plying their trade in 1828.

The late Bill Graham taught Gary watch repair and, over the years, he has managed to fix more watches than he has destroyed, but in reality it became clear that Gary was better at research than clock or watch repair. So it was, while rummaging through the Merrickville Antique show in the summer of 1999 with his old friend Nate Segall, Gary stumbled on his passion – the Canadian Horological Institute (CHI), Canada's first trade school and the first school for watchmakers in the country. At the show, he found the technical drawings and student notebooks of a graduate from the school.

Jane Varkaris and the late Gene Fuller had written an excellent article on the school in the June 1987 issue of the NAWCC Bulletin, but as Jane was to later tell Gary, the article was just a starting point. She and Gene wrote it to document a bit of the history of the school before it was totally lost in time. She had hoped the article would generate more information, but little came to the surface until Gary's find in Merrickville.

Jane has been an inspiration to Gary and has encouraged him throughout his research. Today, he is writing a history of the school and is about 40% finished. The research, however continues as there are still students to be identified and masterpiece watches to be found.

Gary's website www.cdnwatchmaker.com hasn't generated new information, but it gives some legitimacy to his story when he "cold calls" a distant relative of a student from the school. Nonetheless, the site gets several visitors a day from around the world. (Why would people in China, Afghanistan and Pakistan be interested????)

Other than his research and some wood working, Gary's primary interest is in spending time with his family including daughters Melanie and Erin. Erin has followed in dear old Dad's footsteps, collecting character watches and alarm clocks (which he says, for her sake he hopefully won't be asked to repair!) Gary is particularly proud of Erin's efforts as editor of the Bytown Times. (Really, fellow members – he did say that!)

*Information for this article
provided by Gary Fox*

The Sweetest Clock on the Block

Have you ever wondered when is the best time to satisfy your sweet tooth? Gordon & Durward's sweet shop in the town of Crieff in Scotland has found a way to answer that question with their new window display: a life-sized candied grandfather clock. The clock, which is in full working order, took over 2 months to create. Once the tall case clock frame was built, the owner covered the case with thousands of sweets. A mechanism with a simple brass-coloured dial, and pendulum were then put in place.

For more information, or to see a picture of the clock, you can go to the sweet shop's website at:
www.scottishsweets.co.uk

*Information for this article
provided by Bill Pullen*

List of Local Supply Shops

- Metal Supermarkets: 2900 Old Sheffield Rd., Unit 1, Ottawa, 613-747-7511, www.metalsupermarkets.com
[All metal, sheets, rod plates, in small amounts]
- Dowd Supply Co.: 36 Rosemount Ave., Ottawa, 613-236-9493, www.dowdsupply.com
[Jeweler's Tools, and Equipment (Grobet USA)]
- Lee Valley Tools: 900 Morrison Drive, Ottawa, 613-596-9202, www.leevalley.com
[Tools and round Brass Stock]
- Fastenal: 6 Bexley Place, Unit 102, Ottawa, 613-288-1470, www.fastenal.com
[Some Metal]
- Busy Bee Tools: 2251 Gladwin Cres., Ottawa, 613-526-4696, www.busybeetools.com
- Legere Industrial Supplies Ltd.: 1120 Morrison Drive, Ottawa, 613-829-8010, www.legereindustrial.com
[Machine mechanical supplies]
- Ottawa Fastener Supply Ltd.: 175 Robertson Road, Ottawa (Bells Corners), 613-828-4117, www.ottawafastenersupply.com
[All metric and standard fasteners, Tools]
- Dynamic Hobbies: 21 Concourse Gate, Unit 6, Ottawa, 613-225-9634, www.dynamichobbies.com
[small brass rods and small diameter piano wire]

Club Information

This club acts as a meeting place for antique clock and watch enthusiasts. Members are interested in a wide array of topics: some collect, some do research, some do repairs.

Formal club meetings take place five times each year, on the fourth Sunday of every second month, with a break in the summer. Meetings are held in January, March, May, September, and November. Doors open at 1:00 PM.

Club members also enjoy two annual social events: a Wine and Cheese party each November, and a Picnic BBQ each July.

Courses on clock and watch repair are held throughout the year.

The Bytown Times is published five times each year.

Annual Dues for club membership is \$16. Club members should also have memberships to the National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors (NAWCC). NAWCC Dues are U.S. \$65.

Club Officers & Contacts

President & Librarian: Wally Clemens
Box 311, 4970 Opeongo Road, RR#3
Woodlawn, ON, K0A 3M0
(613) 832-3085

Vice President: Patrick Bigras

Auditor: Georges Royer

Membership Chair: Veronica West

Secretary &

Bytown Times Writer & Editor: Erin Fox

Treasurer &

Show and Display Coordinator: Grant Perry

Immediate Past President: Maynard Dokken

Program & Social Director: Tim Bryans

Education & Workshop Chairman: Dan Hudon



Secretary's Corner

I would like to thank Wally Clemens, Ben Roberts, Angelina Dunn, Dan Hudon, Bill Pullen and Gary Fox for their contributions to this issue, in the form of excellent pictures, and valuable information and articles.

As usual, I would like to welcome members to submit their own articles for the newsletter. Topics can be anything: a review of your collection with pictures, a summary of some research you've gathered, 'how-to' or instructional information, museums and other horological sites you've visited, etc. Articles and pictures can be emailed to me at:

erinfoxnawcc111@gmail.com

Please don't forget to visit our website as well:

www.ottawaclocksandwatches.ca

Notes from the President's Desk

At this meeting I will be motioning acceptance of the Revised Chapter Charter, if approved, I will sign the Revised Chapter Charter and keep our club affiliated with the NAWCC. This is a crucial point in the history of our club and I feel we should agree to sign on and keep our club within the NAWCC. Please come out to vote, your opinion is important.

Randall Brooks, from the Science and Technical Museum, has kindly offered to give us a tour of the museum's clock Collection and hold a meeting at the museum. I will be asking if this would be agreeable and if so arrange a date for our visit.

We have no main speaker, so there will be plenty of time for your "Show and Tell" items. Horological items and tools, and why not add barometers and compasses for this meeting.

Don't forget to bring a dry pair of shoes as we request that overshoes be left at the door. See you there.