

As the clocks fall back, the British Horological Institute steps forward

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Horology tutor John Murphy and his students British Horological Institute

HLF has awarded the British Horological Institute (BHI) – a membership organisation for people who make, repair, collect and sell clocks, watches and other timepieces – a grant to create a National Centre for Horology at its Upton Hall base, near Newark in Nottinghamshire.

The Centre, due for opening in 2018, will address the nationwide shortage of horologists by creating new training and workshop facilities in a derelict stable block and glass house, allowing the BHI to double the

number of students it trains a year.

Historic England has included Upton Hall – a Grade II* listed building – in its 2015 Heritage at Risk Register.

HLF has earmarked £2,852,600 for the project including a Development Grant of £160,300, which the BHI will use to progress plans, produce a fully costed proposal, apply for planning permission, and submit a second round application, when the full grant amount will be released.

Dudley Giles, Chief Executive Officer of the BHI, said: "This takes us one step closer to the establishment of a National Centre for Horology at Upton Hall. It is also one step closer to securing the future of Upton Hall itself, which is an important and historic building."

The Centre will be open daily and the public will be able to view students at work and visit exhibitions with key pieces from the BHI collection, which includes clocks going back to the 17th century, watches such as the timepiece carried by Captain Scott on his ill-fated expedition to the Antarctic, and the first two Speaking Clocks.

The historic main building at Upton Hall will also be developed and access to the collection will increase significantly with volunteer support and extended opening hours. The Centre anticipates thousands of visitors annually, including hundreds of schoolchildren for whom special education areas will be set up. Collected from 1858, there are currently over 1,000 artefacts on display and stored in the reserve collection of the BHI, and as such it is unrivalled in the UK but currently only open for public view three times a year.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF, said: "From Big Ben's tower and the Liver Building to the pocket watches and timepieces carried by great explorers, clocks and clockmaking have a long and proud history in the UK. Even as demand for these traditional skills rises, the number of people trained has gone into steep decline. That is why we saw a pressing need for this National Lottery investment which will ensure timepieces are made, serviced, repaired and conserved in this country for many years to come."

Abby Wardill from Henley-on-Thames is a young watch assembler at Bremont Watch Company, a corporate member of the BHI. This leading British watchmaker sends its staff on BHI training courses. Abby said: "I was educated as an illustrator, but went into watchmaking because I love the intricate and beautiful nature of the work. Coming to these courses gives me an opportunity to learn more skills and start servicing and repairing watches."

Robert Jenrick, who prior to being elected as MP for Newark was International Managing Director of the Decorative Arts division of Christie's and as such responsible for the auction of clocks, said: "This is wonderful news for the industry and the wider area around Newark as it follows the opening of the National Civil War Centre, which was built with HLF support."

Emma McClarkin, an East Midlands MEP with a portfolio on international trade, said: "It is well known that there is a dire shortage of training opportunities for watch and clockmakers around the world, particularly in Europe. The BHI already has an international reputation and links with our local universities. Now the creation of the National Centre for Horology sets the Institute on course to address the horology skill shortage, making sure that our watch and clockmaking expertise is passed on from generation to generation, just like our magnificent timepieces."

Focus Consultants Partner Kevin Osbon, who lives just two miles from Upton Hall, led the creation of the long-term masterplan for the BHI and the consequent development of the initial phase one of the Saving Time project which has secured the HLF award. Kevin said: "Focus Consultants have worked closely with the BHI to create a long term sustainable solution for the Upton Hall estate and secure their future as one of the leading horological training establishments in the world. We are very pleased to hear that the HLF bid has

been successful and are really looking forward to working with the BHI team to deliver phase one and then the overall masterplan over time.”

Notes to editors

- Horology is the art, craft and science of timekeeping and timepieces
- The BHI is the voice of British horology, and promotes the needs and interests of the industry. The BHI also supports study, training and education in horology. It offers courses and examinations that lead to diplomas and widely recognised, accredited qualifications for clock and watchmakers. The Awards Education and New Members' Day is an annual highlight, during which people who have passed the BHI examinations receive their prizes, awards and accreditations
- Upton Hall was built in 1832 on the site of an Elizabethan Manor House, parts of which still survive today. It was designed in the Greek revival style by Thomas Wright to house his art collection. The grounds feature a listed Triumphal Archway and a Foster and Pearson glasshouse. It has been the home of the BHI since 1971

Further information

Ben Braber, BHI Communication and Education Manager, tel: 01636 817608 or 07810 128468, and via email: ben@bhi.co.uk



[Inside Upton Hall, base for the British Horological Institute](#)



Abby Wardill, British Horological Institute trainee

Keeping our clocks and watches working