

The logo features a decorative background of overlapping, light grey circular and swirling lines. The text is centered and reads: "CUT IN" in a large, bold, black serif font with a hatched texture. Below it, "THE" is written in a small, plain font. The main body of the logo is "Hand Engravers Association" in a large, elegant, black cursive script. Underneath that, "of GREAT BRITAIN" is written in a smaller, plain, black serif font. At the bottom, "CLERKENWELL" is written in a large, bold, black serif font with a hatched texture, matching the style of "CUT IN".

CUT IN
THE
Hand Engravers Association
of GREAT BRITAIN
CLERKENWELL

David Wilkinson

Head of Engraving at Tiffany & Co.

Interviewed by Chris Rowley

Interview took place in March 2013

Early life and learning

Born 1967 in Dartford. Father was a jewellery setter who also did bright cutting at home. David's uncle was also in the jewellery making business. *"So I knew I wanted to be a hand engraver by the age of 8. When I left school, I went to see various engravers in London, including George Lukes. He couldn't take on an apprentice at the time but he allowed me to play around in his workshop in Farringdon in the winter holidays. He suggested that I applied to the Cass and I was accepted. Wayne Parrott and Stanley Reece were my teachers there on the engraving side. I did a one-year pre-apprentice course and got my City and Guilds. At the same time I was looking around to find a full time apprenticeship and in 1985 I got offered a job with Ray Wilkins. The problem was that I was only there a week when another apprentice job that I'd applied for came up – at Garrard. So I left Wilkins and started my apprenticeship at Garrard. I went through all the process of being formally adopted by the Goldsmiths Company and started the four years. My main teachers were Fred Rogers and Geoff Stocker – both of whom in turn became head of the department – which seemed to mean that they spent quite a lot of time downstairs talking with management. But by this time I was completely hooked.*

From that time on I was with a fellow apprentice Phil Sale and I know that you have talked with him, so I don't want to duplicate everything he had said. But I had always been keen on the artistic / pictorial side and in my day release course at the Cass, I did life drawing, rather than something which at first sight might appear directly relevant to engraving.

During my apprenticeship, I got given more complex engraving work, moving on to portraits of little dogs – I seem to have done lots of dogs in my time – and scenes of the countryside. I remember putting a coat of arms on a whole canteen of silver cutlery. And I did the silver trophies for Crufts and the South of England Show regularly.

Career

I finished my apprenticeship and became a Freeman of the City of London and The Goldsmiths' Company in 1989, and stayed with Garrard for the next ten years.

The work was fairly standard but still interesting. I remember the replica of the America's Cup, which you've heard about before. And the Augusta's Masters work was satisfying. There were

Premiership Trophies and portraits – and yet more portraits of dogs. I did one on the back of a watch for a couple – I'm not sure why they wanted it there but I was happy to do it if they did want it!

I also started to teach myself seal engraving and I got to really love it. To get a coat of arms absolutely perfect in such a small space is really satisfying. I'm sad that I'm not doing any seals at the moment.

In 1998 there was the merger of Asprey and Garrard that you've heard about and Phil Sale, Ray Hood and I were sent off from Garrard to Asprey in Bond Street. Ray was, what they call, 'let go' but Phil and I were there until recently. Then I was offered a job as the engraver at Tiffany's in January this year (2013).

A couple of years ago I was becoming pretty disillusioned with engraving. I thought of getting an HVG licence! But I was talking with Emmet Smith (and Wayne Parrott) and we all felt that the quality of the work was getting better and more interesting. Now I have got to Tiffany's, I've been discussing with management about how we sell the idea of fine British craft skill in getting goods engraved, so that it would benefit everyone. Tiffany has twelve hand engravers in their New York shop. And they've a shop in Japan and another about to open in China. So they are very go-ahead. I hope that their ideas here in London will lead to more and better engraving."