

Youra Turceninoff's love of all things mechanical and his respect for the great engineers of the past led him into horology – and he has no regrets.

Born in Lancaster, Youra has lived mostly in the London area, where he was schooled, graduating with a BSc in Electrical Engineering from Brunel University, Uxbridge. He spent the largest part of his career as an electronics designer, working mostly with small hand-held devices, initially at Psion and then at Nokia. He also has an MBA and is a Chartered Engineer.

Youra became interested in horology around 20 years ago through exposure to small mechanical objects, coupled with visits to the Science Museum in South Kensington, which fascinated him, particularly the work of high-tech engineers of the past.

He explains: 'I started by making one of the simpler Malcolm Wild designs, as well as taking apart clocks and (usually) getting them back together in a better state than they were before.'

After pursuing horology as a hobby for 14 or so years, Youra studied full time at West Dean, where he graduated with Distinction and was awarded both the AHS and Clockmakers' Company prizes. For the past two years he has been self employed, but goes back to West Dean one day a week as a graduate TA on the horology courses.

'I enjoy the interaction with upcoming young horologists there, as well as those who, like me, have come to the formal study of the subject a little later in life,' he explains.

As a sole worker, trading as Surrey Clocks, Youra is responsible for everything from finding clients (although he says that sometimes is the easiest part) to servicing and repairing the clocks. He works from an outbuilding at home and also has some space attached to the house where the larger equipment, such as lathes, are kept.

'I decided I wanted to work for myself as it allows for much greater flexibility than working in a shop environment,' he said. 'It also means I can spend more time with my family too as I have a son still at school.'

Over the last few years, Youra says his main progression has been with his own working efficiency. 'As you "bed in" you realise that re-organising your working environment is key to working efficiently, so my bench and workshop have had a couple of working iterations, which have helped with throughput and, I hope, output quality.'

'I had been worried about finding clients, but with minimal advertising, I rapidly had more than I could sensibly cope with. I no longer advertise, and my work queue is a more manageable size.'

Youra presently services, repairs and restores a wide range of clocks, from a small powder compact music box movement, through carriage and mantel clocks to a substantial three train musical longcase movement, but is always looking to gain more experience and work on a larger variety of clocks.

'I have a good relationship with an excellent dial restorer and an excellent case restorer, so I am happy to tackle pretty much anything,' he explains. 'I'm able to cut wheels and pinions if necessary, and with my background in electronics, I particularly enjoy working on electrical clocks – I have a Eureka and a couple of Bulle clocks on the bench at the moment.'

Although Youra works alone, his faithful workshop hound Roxy, the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, keeps him company from her vantage point on her royal blue throne!



Youra with his workshop 'hound' Roxy.

His customer-base covers a wide area as the last local clock shop closed some 10 years ago. He said: 'I find my customers are generally slightly older and perhaps have a clock that has been in the family for a long time and they are invested in keeping it in good working order, or maybe they have inherited a clock that needs some attention.'

Youra continues to be inspired by the variety and the inventiveness of the old clockmakers who show that there is *always* another way of doing things.

He explains: 'Just when you think you've seen all the ways rack striking can be done – you find out you are wrong and a different one comes across the bench!'

'I also especially admire the delicacy of the work on some of the older French movements. Although I've never worked (and likely never will) on a Breguet timepiece, his influence on French (and English) clockmaking is profound.'

At the moment, Youra is busy working on a very substantial three train longcase movement, with selectable ¼ chiming tunes, which has not run for some considerable time and he says it is the 'dustiest object' he has seen in a very long time. In terms of a favourite timepiece it would be the Breguet three-wheel skeleton table clock without hesitation, but perhaps 'more realistically', an original Wm. Smith of Musselburgh coil spring-driven column mounted clock.

He adds: 'Wm Smith was an inventive man who tried something new but was let down by the underdeveloped materials science of the day. I have a modern replica, but an original would be lovely...'

For the future, Youra may look to tackling pocket watches and improving his skills in jewellery, in particular for older platform escapements. He also plans to continue with his hobby as an avid user of CAD and 3D printing for making jigs and helpful items around the workshop.