

CONWAY STEWART

DEEP IN THE SOUTHWEST OF ENGLAND ON THE EDGE OF THE BEAUTIFUL DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK, THERE IS A SMALL BRITISH LUXURY BRAND THAT WILL BE VERY FAMILIAR TO READERS OF THIS MAGAZINE. WHILE THE 20TH CENTURY HISTORY OF CONWAY STEWART HAS BEEN WELL PUBLICISED, WES EDITOR DAVID SHEPHERD DECIDED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT MODERN DAY CONWAY STEWART AND TALK TO ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR GLENN JONES TO SEE HOW THE COMPANY HAS CHANGED AS IT FACES THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

To refresh your memory, the company started life in 1905, thanks to two gentlemen by the names of Thomas Garner and Frank Jarvis who started making pens under the Conway Stewart name. Both had worked for De La Rue who had been making writing instruments since 1880. Having had some early success, they decided to properly establish a company in 1905 and apparently chose the name Conway Stewart (the name of two artistes then appearing in Music Halls) because it sounded better than their own.

The brand quickly grew and produced many, now classic, styles of fountain pen and in its heyday employed over 500 people at its factory in London and well over 1000 outworkers. The brand remained strong through two world wars but it was the advent of the cheap ball pen in the 1960s and 70s that marked the end of an era for the company and as a result in 1975 the Company stopped production.

Interest in the brand remained very high and in the 1990s Conway Stewart was re-launched. Under new independent British ownership, the company has grown to be one of the most prestigious makers of luxury pens in the World.

Whilst it may not yet be a household name, among those who recognise quality writing instruments, the Conway Stewart brand is known for hand crafting some of the world's most exquisite luxury pens. Its formidable list of clients include HM the Queen, several American Presidents and British Prime Ministers as well as many Heads of State from around the World.

Conway Stewart pens are hand made in Plymouth. It is the company's intention to always make pens this way, utilising the best of British engineering and craftsmanship. Every pen produced is individually numbered and comes with an 18k solid gold nib, or solid silver if the customer prefers, and hallmarked bands.

Glenn Jones, MD of Conway Stewart sets out their ethos. "We want to be known for making the finest pens in the world and to us this means making them by hand the traditional way. We also insist on using only the finest materials including solid 18k gold and .925 silver.

"We don't believe our customers appreciate plated products and neither do we. Producing pens at the highest quality obviously means that they are more expensive to produce not just in raw materials, but because we choose to work with British craftsmen and craftswomen.

"We have had requests from people asking for less expensive Conway Stewart pens, but this isn't what we are about – the best quality will always have a cost. Not everybody buys Rolls-Royce motor cars but we all know they are the best quality car in the

world. The same applies in the pen world and we don't expect to sell Conway Stewart to everybody. That said, the truly discerning buyer will always search out the best.

"There are pen brands out there offering cheaper pens but I don't think you'll find them making them in the UK by hand or from the same quality materials. We believe you get what you pay for, and if you want a quality British made hand crafted pen it has to be Conway Stewart".

In an age where so called luxury goods seem to fall off a production line based in Asia in their thousands, its refreshing to see a factory staffed by a small number of highly skilled craftsmen still making pens the traditional way. Every pen is hand assembled, hand finished and polished and of course hand packaged and comes complete with an individual guarantee and certificate of authenticity, which has, yes you guessed it, been filled in by hand in good old fashioned ink.

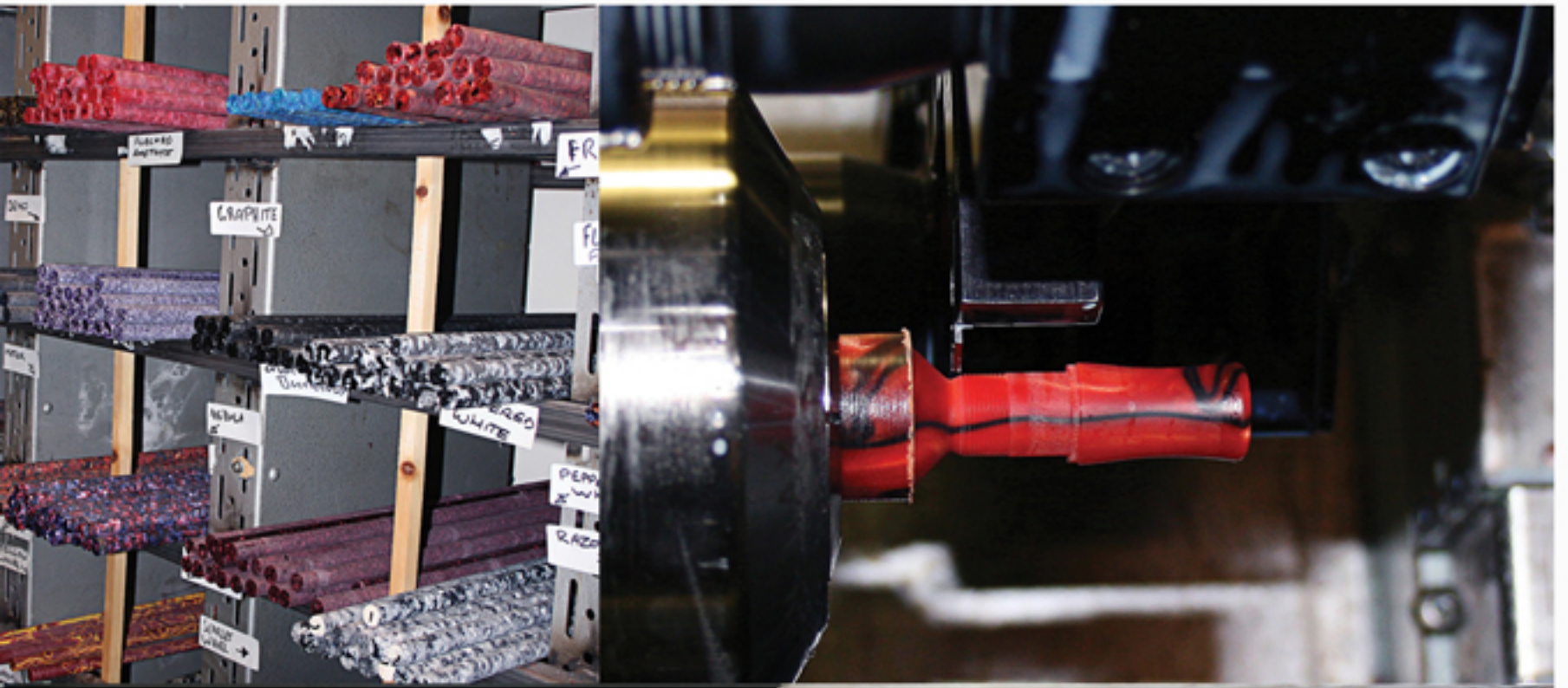
And the personal touch doesn't stop there. If you're looking for a gift which is truly unique, Conway Stewart offers the ultimate luxury of tailor made writing instrument design and creation. In consultation with you, their skilled designers will create a unique and highly personal design which can then be built by master craftsmen in as few or as many examples as required. This full service approach allows you to choose everything from the shape, style, weight and balance of the pen down to the individual engraving and even the exact shade of colour you are looking for. The result is an individual piece produced by world-class British craftsman. Glenn Jones says that whilst this is an option traditionally few can afford, this



Conway Stewart

TREASURED SINCE 1905

WART TODAY



The Black Whirl Wellington





are very much personal choice but until now there has been no convenient way to adjust the centre of gravity of a pen to your own personal preference.

Conway Stewart has completed a three year program to develop a unique and revolutionary system that allows the user to adjust the balance of the pen to suit his or her individual handwriting style. This is achieved from an integral adjustment that shifts the centre of gravity from the front to the back of the pen depending on your preference. If you use your pen extensively this can reduce fatigue and help produce consistency. It can also be used to produce heavier or lighter strokes to complement and enhance your personal writing style.

"We're not just looking to create visually stunning pens, we are trying to improve an individual's writing experience and it's through our commitment to innovation and use of quality materials and craftsmanship that we believe this can be achieved".

As well as new innovations, classic Conway Stewart models are still cherished by the company, as demonstrated with the recent release of the Duro Heritage Limited Edition, commemorating the 1920s Duro. The Heritage pen preserves the profile of the original Duro model but has been engraved to create a subtle twist on the classic design. The new Connoisseur Collection is a collector's dream consisting of five Conway Stewart models housed in a hard wood and black lacquer presentation case with only 75 available.

They are obviously proud of the work they produce from their workshops on the edge of that beautiful National park and if you take the time to view their current collections you'll see why ■.

'Evolution' Limited Edition

service is becoming increasingly popular with a list of clients looking for exclusive designs expressing their personality.

"This is a truly bespoke service and our clients are closely involved throughout the design and manufacturing process. Working in close consultation with our highly skilled senior staff from the initial brief to receipt of the pen, the result will be very much a statement of each persons own style, taste and individuality".

Its not just individuals who benefit from this service, but select corporate clients can too. Companies that have chosen Conway Stewart include Rolls-Royce Motor Cars (their pens can be found in Rolls-Royce Limited Edition Phantom motor cars). Over 233 individual steps are involved in the creation of one of these fine writing instruments, from the selection of the solid silver rods for the cap and barrel through to the fine hand polishing of each piece.

"It's a privilege to be able to work with clients who share our vision to produce elegant, timeless writing instruments that transcend the perception that a pen is merely a functional item. Our collaborations result in stunning pens that not only write superbly, but can be considered as a piece of object d'art and are the ultimate expression of the individual. The pens we produce are and will be considered as design classics and will be used for generations to come".

Along with their boutique collection of modern and classic Conway Stewarts, they pride themselves on producing new limited editions on a regular basis. "We believe our new product development team are second to none and we launch more limited editions per year than any other luxury pen manufacturer. We do this because our customers continually request to buy new and interesting Conway Stewart designs and of course because we love the challenge of making them".

Among Conway Stewart's latest creations is the Evolution fountain pen. Conway Stewart believe the three things which are most important when choosing your perfect pen are Weight, Balance and Aesthetics. Weight and Aesthetics

