

# Spotlight On... Conway Stewart

BY CHRIS LEWIS



**Conway Stewart**

When I asked Alastair Adams, Managing Director of Conway Stewart, how he would describe what has happened to this famous British Pen company, he said “It is a good news story; a British success. When Conway Stewart closed their Plymouth factory everyone thought that was the end of another great British pen manufacturing company; even me! But today Conway Stewart is alive and growing. All our pens are made in Great Britain at our workshop in Hampshire. We are still using the original technical drawings and many of the same iconic colours. And every hand-built pen goes through a rigorous quality control process. We must be doing something right as we have received over a thousand customers reviews giving us a 4.9/5.0 stars rating. And we export over 60% of what we make.”

## THE HISTORY OF CONWAY STEWART FROM 2014 TO THE PRESENT DAY

Let’s go back to August 2014, when the doors of the Conway Stewart Plymouth factory were suddenly closed when the company went into administration. Was this the end?

Fortunately, a company called Bespoke British Pens Limited bought most of the stock from the factory in Plymouth and technical drawings for all of the pens. The directors were Alastair Adams (previously Managing Director of Onoto), David Cooper (previously Marketing Director of Onoto), Peter Robinson (previously Managing Director of Carville who made the components for the Parker Duofold and Onoto), and Francis Katz (a lawyer, an avid pen collector and owner of Inkwell Pens). (See Fig. 1)



Fig 1 - Francis, Alastair & Peter at the London Pen Show 2023

**CONWAY STEWART IS ALIVE AND WAVING THE BRITISH FLAG AROUND THE WORLD**

Originally based in the Isle of Wight, they later set up a workshop in Emsworth in Hampshire near to where their Production Director, Peter Robinson, lived. In early 2015 they started to assemble Conway Stewart pens from the original components and sold them worldwide directly to the public via

the website [www.bespokebritishpens.co.uk](http://www.bespokebritishpens.co.uk) and through a select number of retailers. The range of Conway Stewart pens on sale on the website grew each month as new pens were launched using the original materials acquired from the Plymouth factory. The range included the Churchill, Winston, Series 100, Series 58, Wordsworth, Wellington, Nelson, Marlborough, Belliver, Capulet, Dandy, Bard, Coronet, Duro, Henry Simpole’s Marilyn Monroe pen, Raleigh, and the Regency.

These pens used the original CS branded nibs bought from the administrators, but soon these nibs were all sold, so the Flag 18ct gold semi-flex nibs were launched. The “Flag” was naturally the British Union Jack flag to show the world that Conway Stewart pens were still alive and being made in Great Britain. The same nib company that made the original CS nibs was used to make the

Flag nibs, and they were engraved in Birmingham, England with the Flag logo. These new nibs were universally praised for being smooth and beautiful writers straight from the box, and many regarded them as being better than the old CS nibs (see Fig. 2).



Fig 2 - Flag & CS 18ct Gold Nibs

## PENS FOR THE FILM INDUSTRY

They also supplied the pens for various famous films including the Kingsman films *The Secret Service* (Fig. 3) and *The Golden Circle*. In the first Kingsman film, one of the pens, a Marlborough Vintage Ebonite Lever Fill, had a major role to play as it was used to kill Michael Caine’s character, Arthur.



Fig 3 - Conway Stewart pens used in the Kingsman; The Secret Service

A Churchill Classic Black Fountain Pen was used in another famous film launched in 2017 called *The Darkest Hour* starring Gary Oldman as Winston Churchill.

Just before this film was launched, the company renewed its links with the Churchill family and launched the Churchill Heritage range of pens. This

was to support Churchill Heritage Ltd through which the Churchill family distributes money to charities and good causes that keep alive the legacy of Sir Winston Churchill and the spirit of the words of wisdom he penned.

Each Churchill Heritage pen has Winston Churchill’s signature engraved on the barrel with one of his famous sayings:

- All Will Be Well
- Never Give In
- Action This Day
- KBO
- Victory At All Costs
- I am an Optimist

The second pen in the series, “NEVER GIVE IN” is a fitting axiom for the directors of the company who were determined that Conway Stewart should live on (Fig. 4).

**The Series 58 Indiana Jones Replica pen** is a celebration of both quality

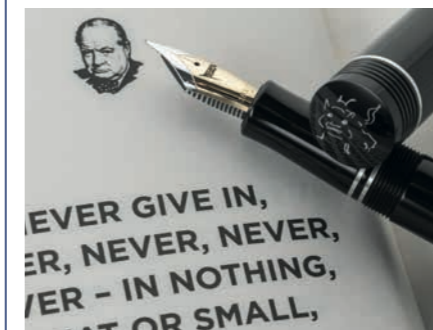


Fig 4 - Conway Stewart Churchill Heritage “Never Give In”

craftsmanship and classic cinema. For this release, Conway Stewart designed a replica of the pen used by Sir Sean Connery in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

In the iconic scene inside a Panzer tank, Connery’s character Henry Jones Sr., uses the lever-fill mechanism to squirt ink in the eye of a Nazi tank operator, to save his friend Marcus Brody’s life, and that of his son, Indiana Jones played by Harrison Ford.

The scene finishes with Marcus Brody’s humorous comment “Henry, The Pen. Don’t you see? The pen is mightier than the sword!” These were a limited edition of only 100 pens produced worldwide and sold out very quickly. (Fig. 5)



Fig 5 - Indiana Jones Replica pen

A new unlimited Conway Stewart pen based on the Indiana Jones pen will be launched in November 2023 with this famous saying “The Pen is mightier than the sword” engraved on the barrel.

## BESPOKE PENS

The company also continued to supply pens to some of the world’s most prestigious companies such as Rolls Royce who ordered 35 bespoke Sterling Silver pens for their 2018 Silver Ghost Limited Edition model (Fig. 6).

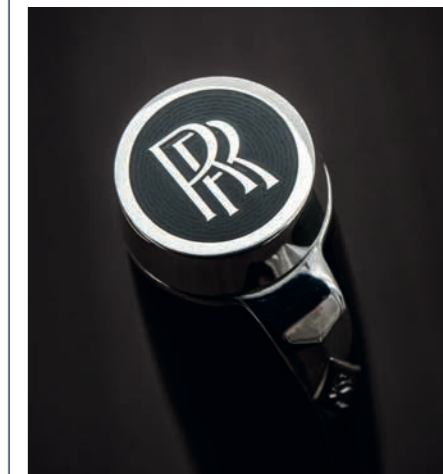


Fig 6 - Conway Stewart Rolls Royce pen

## MORE ABOUT THE COMPANY, PENS AND OTHER PRODUCTS

The website domain name, conwaystewart.com, was bought and relaunched soon after the Trade name “Conway Stewart” (European Union of Intellectual Property Office Certificate of Registration No. 017948469), and the Conway Stewart Trademark (European Union of Intellectual Property Office Certificate of Registration No. 018074073) were obtained by Bespoke British Pens.

In 2020, the company launched the NEW 18ct gold nibs engraved with the Conway Stewart logo; available as 2-tone, or single tone all gold colour. At the same time, they started to offer the traditional barrel engraving (Conway Stewart logo and “Made in England”) as an option on most pens.

All pens are made in the UK to the original technical drawings and using original Conway Stewart materials like Cherry Red, Classic Green and Classic Brown - the beautiful marbled acrylic resins that are iconic to Conway Stewart. All trims are made from precious metals including Sterling Silver and 9ct gold and hall-marked where width permits. (Fig. 7). They have recently launched a range



Fig 7 - Conway Stewart Winston Cherry red

of British made leather accessories including notebooks, pocket note pads, full and half demy sized traditional desk blotters, and pen cases. All of these are available in stunning premium Montana leather in green, burgundy, or black (Fig. 8).



Fig 8 - New leather accessories – all made in England

## HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2023

Highlights for 2023 have been the launch of several new pens including the King Charles III coronation pen (Fig. 9), the Churchill Heritage Second Series, the Shakespeare pen to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the First Folio, as well as lots of new colours in many of the pen ranges.

**THEY HAVE RECENTLY LAUNCHED A RANGE OF BRITISH MADE LEATHER ACCESSORIES**



Fig 9 - King Charles III Coronation Pen

Special mention must go to their new Lever-fill Churchills which have become their fastest selling pens. These lever fill pens use a silicone ink sac for durability and long life. It turns out that Alastair read engineering at Warwick University and with his Production Director, Peter Robinson, are always looking at how to improve things.

## MOVING FORWARD

When I asked Alastair about the operation of making things in the UK, he said “It is one of my greatest joys to make things in this country and sell them around the world. We will continue to fly the flag for Britain and in 2023 we expanded our operation in Emsworth, Hampshire to 3 business units and 7 staff. The extra space has allowed us to invest over £30,000 in a new British Made laser engraving machine, and we have further plans to expand in 2024.”

## SPECIAL WES MEMBER OFFER

“So, Conway Stewart is alive and waving the British flag around the world. If you have never bought a Conway Stewart, then perhaps their special WES

promotion will tempt you. Use this code **WESCHRISTMAS2023** when buying from their website [www.ConwayStewart.com](http://www.ConwayStewart.com) and you will receive an 8% discount valid until 31st December 2023.”

A fascinating story and I thank Alastair for providing the details and images for this piece – for which Conway Stewart has obtained the necessary permissions for publication where required.

# The Shakespeare Pen

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Conway Stewart

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