



**THE GUNMAKERS  
COMPANY  
CHARITABLE  
TRUST**

# Securing the Future of British Gunmaking



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ince 1637, the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers has worked to ensure the safety of firearms and to promote the craft and technology of gunmaking. The Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust (GCCT) was established in 2003, primarily to support training in gunmaking skills.

The Trust supports apprentice gunmakers with bursaries of £5,000 a year, typically for three years each. Our experience is that this level of support overcomes the initial economic obstacles to bringing new recruits into gunmaking. The apprentice is not at first fully productive. His employer loses further productivity in the time spent training. A small craft workshop can ill afford either. We hope that you will support us in this endeavour, and so help to ensure that the finest skills of British gunmaking survive across the generations.

The British sporting-gun industry stands at the intersection of two worlds. It combines traditional crafts and new technologies. It requires intricate woodwork for hand-finished gun stocks, fine engraving for the action, and high precision hand-work to fit actions and to regulate barrels. Alongside these cherished craft skills is the increasing use in gunmaking of high-tech Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Computer-Numerical Control (CNC) machines. These create the basic shape of gun parts to high precision, and so allow traditionally trained craftsmen to focus their art where it provides the most



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The Trust assists in the  
training of a future generation  
of skilled gunmakers

value – not just removing surplus metal. In addition to the traditional craft skills, training can include the use of CNC and CAD machines and their particular application in the manufacture of fine quality guns and rifles. The effective use of these high technology facilities demands highly skilled operators. The Trust is working hard to encourage newcomers as well as experienced craftsmen to learn these new skills, which are increasingly necessary if British gunmaking is to compete successfully in the 21st century. Given that the trade is spread across a variety of largely interdependent small firms – each making use of the others' specialised knowledge – training and maintaining skills is both difficult and critical to its future.

To help British gunmakers marry old and new, and so ensure continued excellence, the Trust first conducted a survey of the trade. This clearly identified a need for training programmes aimed at young people wishing to enter gunmaking – particularly teaching the craft skills best learnt at the bench, and for which there is no training available outside the trade itself. We then identified and financed two pilot bursaries. Watson Brothers of London trained Bradley Hodgson, and Westley Richards of Birmingham trained Stuart Richards. Both completed their apprenticeships with flying colours and were taken on as full-time craftsmen by their respective employers. Their skills were certified by experienced senior gunmakers from

firms such as Holland & Holland brought in by the Livery to serve as independent examiners. This ensured that the apprentices received training to a level that would be recognised and valued across the trade.

We have since expanded the scheme to include a broader range of gunmakers across the nation. Suitably qualified members of the Livery oversee the training to ensure that a well-rounded range of gunmaking skills mastered. At the end of training, by demonstrating skills to a panel of Master Gunmakers' the successful trainee will be certificated as a fully proficient gunmaker.

We have recently awarded three-year bursaries at £5,000 a year to support the following apprentices

**John Spary**

The Gun Clinic, Cornwall

**Chris Watts**

Paul Barber Guns,  
Herefordshire

**Jamie Johnson**

James Purdey & Sons, London

**Tom Hickman**

Paul Roberts (Gunmakers) Ltd,  
West Sussex.

The Trust provides bursaries to gunmakers to assist in employing and training apprentices



Jamie Johnstone, from Ealing, West London, started his three year GCCT training in May 2011 with J Roberts (Gunmakers) Ltd, when the firm was based in South London. Jamie's training was going well, but unfortunately when the company moved to Sussex in May 2012 he decided that he could not commute that far every day. James Purdey & Sons stepped into the breach and have taken him on for the rest of his GCCT Bursary. At Purdey's, Jamie is being trained for three days a week by Mark Labbett in over and under ejector making and for two days a week by Jim Bryan in general gunsmithing and repairs (jobbing). Mark and Jim report that he is making excellent progress in both trades. When his formal training comes to an end Jamie hopes to continue working at Purdey's.

*The Trust needs charitable donations to enable it to meet the demand for skilled gunmaker training across the UK*



J Roberts have continued their work with the Trust from their new premises in Sussex. In August 2012 they took on a new trainee, Tom Hickman, supported by a new 3 year GCCT Bursary. Prior to joining J Roberts, Tom attended Plumpton College, part of Brighton University, where he studied blacksmithing, one of the trades which formed the nucleus of the Gunmakers' Company in 1637. He is proving to be an exceptional student.



This level of support cannot be sustained by the Trust without substantial reserves. At the end of 2013, the Trust had capital of £150,000. This provided income barely sufficient to support one bursary. There is a flow of applications that would justify running at least three concurrently for the foreseeable future. The Trustees have concluded that the Trust needs a capital endowment of around £500,000 to continue its work at the appropriate level.

With a strengthened capital base, not only can we continue to support and certify training, but we can also provide one-off training grants for those looking to take short courses of study. We have in the past supported specialised training courses for arms and armour conservators at both the Victoria & Albert and Glasgow museums. The Trust also works closely with the Almoner of the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers to provide small sums in support of Liverymen gunmakers who have fallen on difficult times.

The Trust has been supported financially by a range of individuals, including members of the Livery, of the gun and allied trades and of the wider shooting community, both in the United Kingdom and abroad. The Arms and Armour Heritage Trust – the charitable arm of the Royal Armouries which supports apprenticeships and engineering training schemes – has very generously donated £15,000 to the Trust. The Trust is also applying for funds to other educational Trusts and Foundations which provide support to apprentices.

Nonetheless the Trust needs to increase its capital endowment to ensure that it has a firm financial foundation for the future.

You can make donations to the Trust in several ways:

- regular quarterly or annual donations of any size by Direct Debit
- one-off gifts
- by remembering the Trust in your Will

You can make a donation using the enclosed pledge form. If you wish to make a one-off donation or leave a legacy please contact the Secretary to the Trust at the address below.

There are also opportunities to contribute in other ways. If you have gunmaking skills and the time and inclination to teach or to certify an apprentice, the Trustees would like to hear from you. The Trust is continually seeking ways in which it might help to improve gunmaking skills and welcomes suggestions from the trade. If you would like to discuss either a donation or a suggestion, please write to

The Secretary to the Trustees  
The Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust  
The Proof House  
48-50 Commercial Road  
London E1 1LP  
Or email [clerk@gunmakers.org.uk](mailto:clerk@gunmakers.org.uk).

The Secretary will forward your enquiry to the most appropriate member of the Trust.

**British gunmaking has led the world  
since the Eighteenth Century.  
We hope that you will help us secure  
the future of British Gunmaking**

# Pledge Form

If you wish to make a donation to the Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust, please complete the form below and send it to:

**The Secretary to the Trustees  
The Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust  
The Proof House,  
48-50 Commercial Road  
London E1 1LP**

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I wish to make a donation to the Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust

- \* I enclose my cheque in the sum of £  
payable to the Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust
- \* I have made a payment by direct bank transfer to the Trust's bank account,  
Royal Bank of Scotland, Sort Code 16-00-15, Account No. 23155004
- \* Please send me a Direct Debit form to enable me to make a regular donation
- \* Please contact me to discuss remembering the Trust in my will
- \* Please delete as appropriate

To be restricted to supporting bursaries

For the general purpose of the trust

Please tick as appropriate

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Name

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Address

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Telephone number



**The Gunmakers' Company Charitable Trust  
The Proof House  
48-50 Commercial Road  
London E1 1LP  
Registered Charity 1100227**