

## TIME SHAPERS

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During their time with IWC, four individuals in particular have considerably shaped the fortunes of the Schaffhausen watchmaking company: Florentine Ariosto Jones, Ernst Jakob Homberger, Günter Blümlein and Georges Kern.

### FLORENTINE ARIOSTO JONES

In 1868, 27-year-old watchmaker, Florentine Ariosto Jones, travelled from Boston to Switzerland and founded the International Watch Company in Schaffhausen. Previously with the E. Howard Watch & Clock Company, he had learned all about the modern production methods used in the American watch industry. His plan now was to combine these processes with the skill and experience of Swiss watchmakers to produce top-quality pocket watch movements for the US market. In Schaffhausen and in virtually no time, he set up the infrastructure needed to manufacture over 10,000 watch movements per year, at a time when watches were mostly made individually by home-based labourers. His industrial approach was also apparent in the Jones calibres, which feature three-quarter plates. This design concept, widely adopted in the USA, enabled simpler and more cost-efficient production of the small components. Jones was undoubtedly a visionary, but faced challenges such as rapid production growth, increasing wages, import duties and therefore missed some profitability targets. When Jones failed to meet his shareholders' expectations, he found himself forced to return to the USA in December 1875. In 1880, a Schaffhausen industrialist, Johannes Rauschenbach-Vogel, took over the company. A genuine pioneer, F. A. Jones was the first person to succeed in transferring modern production methods from the USA to Switzerland. He never returned to the watchmaking industry and died on 18 October 1916 near Boston. Nevertheless, his legacy lived on in Schaffhausen: 2 years before his death, annual production had already reached 25,000 units.

### ERNST JAKOB HOMBERGER

Following the death of predecessor Johannes Rauschenbach-Schenk, Ernst Jakob Homberger took over at the helm of IWC in 1905. Homberger had joined the family through his marriage to Rauschenbach's youngest daughter. At that time, his brother-in-law, the famous psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung, was also active in the company. In 1929, Homberger bought Jung's shares and became sole proprietor of the company. A strictly old-school proprietor, Homberger successfully steered IWC through the difficult years of the economic crisis in the 1930s. Inspired by his two aviation-enthusiast sons, Hans Ernst and Rudolf, Homberger launched the Special Pilot's Watch in 1936 beginning the era of Pilot's Watches that continues to live on today within IWC. It was under his management that the first Portugieser was made in 1939. Homberger also demonstrated far-sightedness on operational topics: in 1944, he appointed Albert Pellaton, a recognised authority on technical questions and production processes, as technical director at IWC. In 1955, the company unveiled the first Ingenieur. A soft-iron cage effectively protected the movement against magnetic fields and, for the first time ever, Pellaton's highly efficient automatic winding system used rotor movements in both directions to wind the mainspring. Ernst Jakob Homberger passed away the same year. His son, Hans Ernst, took charge at IWC as the last private owner.

## GÜNTER BLÜMLEIN

When low-cost quartz watches from Japan flooded the market, large areas of the Swiss watch industry plunged into a deep crisis. In 1978, a German company by the name of VDO Adolf Schindling AG took over IWC. The new owners brought Günter Blümlein on board, an engineer by training, who was also skilled at marketing. He fully endorsed the company's heritage and proud tradition, and ushered in a renaissance of high-quality mechanics. During this period, Kurt Klaus developed the famed perpetual calendar, which had its debut in the Da Vinci family in 1985. In 1990, IWC definitively scaled the heights of Haute Horlogerie with the Grande Complication: among other things, the watch featured the legendary minute repeater designed by Dominique Renaud and Giulio Papi. To celebrate IWC's 125th anniversary in 1993, "Il Destriero Scafusia" was launched, the most complicated watch ever built in Schaffhausen. In addition, Blümlein drove the development and design of in-house movements, such as the 50000-calibre family with Pellaton winding and a seven-day power reserve. Under his leadership, IWC also established the materials expertise that has remained unique to this day. In 1980, the IWC Porsche Design Titanium Chronograph became the world's first wristwatch with a case made from titanium. The Da Vinci Perpetual Calendar, which followed in 1986, was the first watch in a case made of black zirconium oxide ceramic. In February 2000, Richemont acquired IWC, Jaeger-LeCoultre and A. Lange & Söhne. There would have been a role for Günter Blümlein in the Group, but in 2001, after a short but serious illness, he passed away unexpectedly at the young age of 58.

## GEORGES KERN

Georges Kern joined Richemont in 2000 and, as the Group's youngest-ever CEO, took charge of IWC in 2002 at the age of just 36. Over the following years, he developed IWC from a niche manufacturer known mainly in Europe to a global luxury brand. Kern streamlined the product portfolio and, with six families – Pilot's Watches, Portugieser, Portofino, Ingenieur, Aquatimer and Da Vinci – establishing clear positioning. Georges Kern was the architect of IWC's transformation from a watchmaker to a modern luxury brand. Very early on, he understood the relevance of

evocative storytelling and brand experience as a key component of luxury branding and created rich content to increase IWC's appeal across a wide range of audiences. He distilled the essence of each line into a structured, emotional world of experience. He established a link, for instance, between the Pilot's Watches and man's dream of flying. Another example is the collaboration he initiated with the heirs of the French writer and pilot, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. The special editions created in honour of Saint-Exupéry's world-famous story, "The Little Prince", rapidly acquired iconic status with their midnight blue dials. And IWC's partnerships with the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, the Charles Darwin Foundation, the Cousteau Society and leading film festivals consistently developed this storytelling approach. The stands created for the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie (SIHH) in Geneva displayed the various product worlds in spectacular fashion. It was also under Kern that IWC developed its retail presence and expanded its network of authorised retailers, the work of designer and interior architect Christoph Grainger-Herr, who succeeded Georges Kern as CEO of IWC in 2017.

## IWC SCHAFFHAUSEN

With a clear focus on technology and development, the Swiss watch manufacturer IWC Schaffhausen has been producing timepieces of lasting value since 1868. The company has gained an international reputation based on a passion for innovative solutions and technical ingenuity. One of the world's leading brands in the luxury watch segment, IWC crafts masterpieces of Haute Horlogerie at their finest, combining supreme precision with exclusive design. As an ecologically and socially responsible company, IWC is committed to sustainable production, supports institutions around the globe in their work with children and young people, and maintains partnerships with organisations dedicated to environmental protection.

## DOWNLOADS

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Images of the new watches from the Jubilee collection can be downloaded free of charge at [press.iwc.com](http://press.iwc.com)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

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