

Bristol's oldest watchmaking company returns to city after nearly 50 years

Bristol's oldest watchmaking company has moved back to the city after a near 50-year hiatus.

Fears Watch Company was founded in 1849 by 22-year-old Edwin Fear on Redcliffe Street and operated for 130 years before closing its doors in 1976. Nicholas Bowman-Scargill, the great-great-great grandson of Mr Fear, re-incorporated the business in 2016 for just £12 – and moved the company's headquarters back to Bristol earlier this year.

The watchmaking firm is now moving into new HQ at Bristol Paintworks and is planning to open a watch showroom and manufacturing facility – with cases, dials and straps assembled in its original headquarters – by the end of 2022.

Mr Bowman-Scargill says he has been focused on bringing the family watch company back to Bristol since he restarted the firm.

“The streets in this vibrant city have so much of Fears history entwined in them and our new offices are moments away from where the previous managing directors are buried, overlooking what we are doing with the company today,” he said.



Nicholas Bowman-Scargill is the fourth managing director of Fears Watch Company Ltd

(Image: @JonCraig_Photos 07778606070)

“At the core of the company is a strong belief in good capitalism which means investing in the people we work with and also the suppliers who help us create our beautiful products.”

Fears Watches is planning to grow its headcount in Bristol following the opening of its new Bristol Paintworks HQ, and its showroom and workshop.

Bristolians with old Fears watches and photos are being encouraged to get in touch with Mr Bowman-Scargill, who is trying to rebuild the Bristol company's archives lost in the Blitz during the Second World War.

By the time of the Blitz, Fears had expanded to a second premises on Bristol Bridge, which had become its new HQ, and also had an export department at Brunswick Square. The Bristol Bridge head office was destroyed in November 1940, while the Brunswick Square department was hit three times before being permanently evacuated in 1942.

Following the war, Fears moved to new premises in Clifton – just in time to celebrate the company's centenary in 1946 with a new watch collection.

West of England metro mayor Dan Norris said: “It's great to see such a big Bristol brand back in its spiritual home. I know Nicholas and the team have been working round the clock to get to this point so it's brilliant seeing them back keeping the heritage of West of England watchmaking alive and well after all the hours they've put in.”



Fears' Bristol Bridge premises engraving
(Image: Fears Watch Company Ltd)

Last summer, the company launched the 'Be Fearless' campaign in Bristol, offering a loan watch to lucky Bristolians going for a job interview and, according to the firm, there are "big plans" to invest in local community projects in the city in the future.

Mr Bowman-Scargill added: "The growth and success of Fears should benefit all who come into contact with the company. That is why it was correct to bring Fears back to Bristol and why we are growing the team here, employing local people.

"Now the headquarters is open we are excited for the showroom opening at the start of October and then the workshop opening at the end of the year. It doesn't stop there with even bigger plans for Fears and watchmaking in the city."

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