

The Early Years



Donald de Carle was born in 1893 to Rosa (nee Salkind) and George de Carle in Norwich, United Kingdom and was the second eldest of seven children, three of whom died in infancy. George de Carle and his brother Horace de Carle were retail and manufacturing chemists in Norwich working in the family business founded by their father, Joseph Parkinson de Carle and known then as de Carle & Son. George, a pharmacist like his brother, left the company and worked for various companies connected with the pharmacy business. Donald de Carle would like to have become a doctor but due to lack of funds he was not able to follow this ambition even though his uncle, Horace de Carle, offered to fund his further education which was declined by George, his father. Naturally, this was a matter of deep regret to Donald who never forgave his father for his action and, as far as is known, he only mentioned this once – to his daughter, Vivienne Turnell, very late in his life. His first job, at the age of sixteen, was with a Mr Brooker who owned a watchmakers and jewellers shop in Addlestone, Surrey after the family had moved south from Norwich. A year later in 1910 Donald became apprenticed to Mr James Bray, Manager of

the Watch and Repairs department at JJ Durrant, 66 Cheapside, London. James Bray was highly respected in the trade and active in the British Horological Institute becoming Chairman in 1910. Donald joined the Northampton Polytechnic Institute, Clerkenwell, London, in 1910 to further his knowledge of horology and also took private lessons from his tutor at the Polytechnic. In 1912 the Worshipful Company of Skinners awarded him first prize in the Horological Department of the Institute and he went on to gain a First Class pass when taking his City and Guilds Grade 1 Horology examination in 1913 obtaining 97% in the theoretical paper. In 1914 he was awarded the BHI Bronze medal and joined Charles Frodsham, 115 New Bond Street, London.

Donald even married into the horological world when he married Lillian Stokes in 1921 who worked in the watch repairing department of the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Company.

They had three children: Vivienne, who worked at Bletchley Park with the Wrens during World War 2 and became a piano teacher teaching, amongst other places at Wycombe Abbey. David, who became a commissioned officer during his three years of National Service and then became a senior partner of respected solicitors in the City of London. John who was a publisher of trade and technical magazines and newspapers.