

Changing times for watchmaker



While Kylie Carter didn't originally intend to be a master watchmaker, she has spent almost 20 years in the trade.

Given **Kylie Carter** works as a master watchmaker, it is surprising she hasn't been tempted to change her name to Kylie Cartier.

But such a highbrow name change would not be in keeping with Kylie's down-to-earth approach to her work, which is among a group of highly skilled trades that are becoming harder to find.

Not that Kylie, 35, grew up with a desire to keep an eye on the time: instead, she more or less "fell into" the job after deciding to leave school at 16.

"I wanted to get out of school and work, and this was something that the school (Brauer College, in Warrnambool) put

me onto," she said.



Despite changing times, some things are irreplaceable...like gorgeous old watches.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] K
[/dropcap]ylie secured an apprenticeship with what was then Hogg's the Jewellers, in Warrnambool, and spent three years learning from Roger Hogg and attending classes in Melbourne.

During that time, she learnt how to repair watches and clocks using an array of fine tools that require a steady hand and a keen eye.

"I do get tired eyes sometimes, I must admit," Kylie said.

Kylie has remained with Hoggs, which is now run by Roger's son, Peter, and operates under the name JAWS (Jewellery and Watch Service) in Koroit St, Warrnambool.

Her work desk is scattered with watches of all shapes and sizes – new, old and very old – that Kylie handles with dexterity.

The microscopic metal parts of a watch are disassembled and

reassembled using tweezers and tiny-headed screwdrivers, while watch cases and faces are removed and replaced using special tools that look like they have not changed in decades.

“I actually prefer working with watches to clocks. Clocks are far more complicated,” Kylie said.



Kylie at work in the JAWS workshop in Warrnambool: her work relies on a keen eye and steady hand.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] While some jewellers also do watch repairs, there are only three master watchmakers in the district, including, oddly enough, two named Peter Hogg.

And although many people still bring in watches for repair, especially those that have sentimental value, the times, well, they are a changing.

Metal watches with mechanical parts are being replaced by cheap, plastic watches that are usually thrown away once they stop working and there is a new threat on the horizon.

“Some people are apparently not buying watches at all, because they use their mobile phones to check the time,” Kylie said.

Kylie still wears a sturdy, metal watch (a Swiss-made Candino, for the record) and prides herself on being punctual.

“Always, always,” she said, smiling.

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