

# **PALL MALL BARBERS: WAYS INTO OUR GREAT BUSINESS**

**General Manager of Pall Mall Barbers, Daniel Davies talks about taking the right steps into the barbering industry. A recent visit to the London School of Barbering left Dan questioning his own response towards short courses being offered to those wanting to train as barbers, an experience which left him feeling inspired and motivated.**

Pall Mall Barbers is one of the finest independent barber shops in London, offering traditional barber services including wet shaving. For more than 100 years, barbers at 27 Whitcomb Street have provided discerning men with the finest in haircutting and wet shaving services and grooming products.



There has been quite a bit of negativity recently in blogs by various associations connected with barbering in the UK, along with some recognised names in our industry towards barbering NVQ's being 'fast tracked'.

Many years ago when I started my career in the hair industry an apprenticeship took two years, and then it would take a few more years to work yourself up to a good standard.

Last year I discovered that it is possible to achieve an NVQ in barbering in just nine weeks, I was slightly taken aback. I decided to look further into this and that is when I came across the London School of Barbering. I corresponded with the school's owner, Justis, and was invited to come along and check out the facility and see how they work. I took them up on this offer of a visit and did a question and answer session with the students and teachers.

This opened my eyes massively. The students attend the school five days a week for nine weeks, and were buzzing with an excitement that I have never seen from young people in the barbering industry. The focus, determination, ambition and atmosphere of the room was contagious. I instantly wanted to pick up some scissors and start cutting hair with them but I resisted the temptation and watched as the tutors guided students into haircuts that were of a good standard.

During the question and answer session the students were respectful and inquisitive about my rise through the industry. The students were hungry for success and I advised them to profile their work and always watch what is happening on the shop floor.

After a chat with Justis I walked back through Covent Garden and Leicester Square with a buzz I have not had in a long time, I was inspired. Inspired to be the best I can be and get the best out of the team around me to show these students that hard work, good will and practice can get you as far as you wish. When I got to Whitcomb Street to my office at Pall Mall Barbers I told my colleagues about my experience and we all started to smile and reminisce about our times as a junior/apprentice.

When we spoke more in-depth about it we had all had some shocking experiences; having to clean skirting boards with tint brushes, getting spoken to in a terrible manner, and going on errands all day for non-work related items - the list went on! Many of us agreed that if this was an option when we were training we would have taken it and joined a barber shop where we could further train on the job.





## Q&A WITH THE LONDON SCHOOL OF BARBERING (LSB)

I asked Michael (the head trainer of London School of Barbering) some questions to see what his take on the industry was.

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO OPEN A SCHOOL SPECIFICALLY FOR BARBERS?

*"We started the school out of our passion for barbering and because we had a wealth of knowledge in this part of the hair industry to share with the rest of the world so that everyone would have a chance to learn this great trade."*

*"The hair industry has been saturated with many, many hair academies trying to show their way of cutting, predominantly within women's hair. Men's education in hair cutting has been neglected somewhat over the years, up until recently when we have seen a renaissance and boom in the male grooming industry. We here at LSB have chosen to take advantage of this ever-growing interest in male grooming, by delivering an intensive but thorough education in what you need to become a real barber, from the techniques to the etiquette, all the way through to the panache and swagger."*

### HOW DID YOU DECIDED UPON THE AMOUNT OF TIME IT WOULD TAKE FOR A STUDENT TO GET TO NVQ STANDARD?

*"We created our barbering course with the goal of getting students job-ready -- this means being able to complete advanced haircuts and wet shaves at a good standard without assistance. Through our experience we calculated that the average student would need nine weeks to do this with the correct quantity of models supplied. In terms of the NVQ, we have strong structure and trainers in place to complete the Level 2 requirements well within the nine-week timeframe, with sufficient time to deliver Level 3 elements as well, such as cut throat shaving and advanced hairstyles."*

*"We are able to achieve such rapid results due to the volume of haircuts students are doing each day. They are doing 100 to 150 haircuts over the course, which means that they build rhythm and their rate of development is extraordinary."*

**CONTINUED...**

## **DO MANY OF YOUR STUDENTS FIND WORK AFTERWARDS?**

*"Being an employable barber is 50% talent and 50% personality. We encourage all our students to get a foot in the door with as many job opportunities as are available -- once employees see their talent and if the students have the right attitude, then our graduates have a good chance of getting the job."*

*"Lucky for us, the majority of our graduates have found work. We help out through our dedicated website posting barber-specific jobs, our networking teaching modules, and our CV help. We also have a growing network of barbers coming to us to hire our graduates, which I think is a testament to the quality of work that is being produced by our team here."*

## **HOW DIVERSE ARE THE STUDENTS ATTENDING? (AGE, SEX, BACKGROUND)**

*"Guys and girls come to us from all walks of life and all corners of the globe to learn barbering. We have lots of domestic students but we also have many international students. We teach school leavers from the ages of 17, as well as people who want to start a second career up to the age of 60. We are very passionate and dedicated to our trade, and we are happy to share this with anyone who wants to attend our course."*

## **WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO BARBERS AND ORGANISATIONS IN THE INDUSTRY THAT BELIEVE SHORT COURSES ARE NOT GOOD FOR THE INDUSTRY?**

*"It's easy to see why there are doubters out there because what we are accomplishing has never been heard of before. We are revolutionising the way in which people are educated in modern male barbering. Our students are training with an unrivalled 100 to 150 models, they are learning from our hand-picked barber trainers in small groups, and they are seeing expert demos each week. We are very certain that nobody else is providing this level of service."*

*"As a result, our graduates are securing jobs in barbershops all around the UK. To anyone that doubts what we are doing, we invite you in to have a look at the buzz and feel of the academy and to meet our hand-picked trainers that deliver these results."*





## DO YOU THINK THAT ANYTHING NEEDS CHANGING IN THE CURRENT BARBERING NVQ MODEL?

*"Standards are always being updated with the times. The overall model is fine and every training school has the flexibility to deliver the NVQ requirements as they see fit."*

*"The London School of Barbering chooses to deliver training well above the normal NVQ Level 2 standard since our duty to students is to get them job-ready. This is why we teach wet shaving, advanced haircuts like skin fades, and advanced techniques like texturising and razor touch-ups. When the next trend hits, you can be sure that we'll teach it to students regardless of what the standards might say."*

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO PEOPLE LOOKING TO GET INTO THE BARBERING INDUSTRY?

*"Do your research and go visit the schools. Talk to the trainers and owners to see if their approach works for you and is affordable for you. We strongly believe that the best barbers are bred through loads of real practice, lots of teacher attention, and a solid course structure. Also look for schools that provide support after your course finishes -- for instance, we've got lots of great info on our website for graduates, such as videos, a technical blog, and a dedicated section posting barber jobs."*

To finish this article I would like to say that I do strongly believe that there is some courses out there that are not the best option for people wanting to get in our industry, where the people running them are maybe looking to earn a 'quick quid'. But I would say to anyone that thinks this of all of the shorter NVQ courses, what basis have you judged your opinion on? Is it because of the hard slog that you had when you were a junior?

I would also strongly suggest you visit a place like The London School of Barbering to see for yourselves the hungry people coming into the industry. It is very easy to slate something that you do not understand and this is very true of some organisations and well known barbers. I question why this is done. Is it for reaction, shock value or simply to make themselves look better? I just hope that the people in the barbering and hair industry today do not buy into to all of it and are open minded to evolving our great industry.

**Daniel Davies, General Manager of Pall Mall Barbers**