

Roger W. Smith

Born in Manchester, in Northern England, in 1970 Roger Smith's horological journey began when he enrolled on a course at the Manchester School of Horology, aged 16.

Roger was 'hooked' from day one, having never enjoyed education so much. He passed out top of his class, winning the British Horological Institute's Bronze medal. During the course, Dr. George Daniels (1926 - 2011), widely regarded as the greatest horologist of the last 250 years, was a visiting speaker and showed his hand made 'Space Traveller' pocket watch. From that moment Roger knew that he had witnessed greatness, and his life's calling; to hand-make a watch.

Roger spent the next seven years making, and remaking, his first pocket watches until he had perfected all 34 of the requisite skills comprising the Daniels' Method, and was finally happy with his creation. He took the watch to Dr. Daniels and, after close examination, it passed the great master's scrutiny. Shortly afterwards, Dr. Daniels invited Roger to move to the Isle of Man and work with him on the now iconic 'Daniels Millennium' series. This was the perfect 'finishing school' and he worked with George until the completion of this series, three years later.

Roger set up his own studio in the Isle of Man and, by 2001, had produced his 'Series 1', comprising 9 rectangular cased watches fitted with a retrograde calendar complication.

It was not long however, before Roger was dreaming of completely resetting industry standards by creating his own completely hand-made production wristwatch. And so the Series 2 was born. After a long and complex development period, the first watches were launched in February 2006.

Comprising the first production watch hand-built according to the Daniels' Method the Series 2, above all, fully evinced Roger's unrivaled skill as the absolute master of his time. It also became a mechanical embodiment of Roger's watchmaking ethos, namely to create a means of telling the time which is an object of art that, if properly maintained, will last forever.

In 2008, Roger embarked on what would become his final collaboration with Dr. Daniels, to create a series of 35 wristwatches appropriately numbered to commemorate the 35th Anniversary of Dr. Daniels' invention of the Co-axial escapement.

These Anniversary pieces are as exquisite as they are rare and firmly in the English style as perceived by Daniels and Smith, exemplifying their shared quest for perfection.

Appropriately, the Anniversary watch includes Roger's first significant improvement to the original Co-axial escapement design and, in August 2011, Roger was awarded the Barrett Silver Medal of the British Horological Institute which is awarded for outstanding development or achievement in any field of horology. Roger was honoured for 'Dedication to, and successfully continuing, the finest traditions of English watchmaking'.

The collaboration was a coming of age for Roger, but was also very poignant. Dr Daniels' approval of the Anniversary watch was his final 'swan-song', passing away just weeks later in October 2011.

George Daniels left a huge void in the world of watch making. The great man himself perhaps had the best instincts to make an informed decision on how to fill such a void, when he bequeathed his entire workshop to Roger.

Incorporating the Daniels workshop into the Roger W Smith Studio has therefore been a unique labour of love in itself. "George's whole workshop was geared towards the singular goal of one man being able to design and make a watch from start to finish" explains Roger.

While enjoying the spectacle of the London Olympic Games in 2012, Roger had no inkling that this would lead to perhaps his most famous unique piece. But it did. The GREAT Britain campaign was born out this legacy with a singular purpose, to promote the very best of Britain to the world. Within a few months of its inception, Roger was contacted by a representative for the Prime Minister's office at 10 Downing St to invite him to become an ambassador for the campaign.

In 2013, Roger decided to make a unique commitment to the campaign by creating a true standard bearer for British technology, creativity and innovation - The GREAT Britain watch.

A unique piece, The GREAT Britain is based on Roger's Series 2 watch and became famous for having perhaps the most complex dial ever made by hand.

By 2014, Roger began to reflect on the horological achievements of the past decade and the accumulation of knowledge from his production watches and unique pieces, as well as his arguable 'peak' of excellence, the Open Dial.

A realisation began to dawn. And a new inspiration.

It might just be conceivable to create the first range of true British watches for decades.

After a two year development cycle, Roger announced his intent at the 2015 Salon QP by showing prototypes for a Series 1, 2, 3 and 4.

As ever, the core of the watches is Roger's very latest version of the co-axial escapement.

The completely revised Series 1 (now a time-only piece) and Series 2 watches are accompanied by Roger's first new production watches for a decade; the Series 3 (which has a calendar movement) and the Series 4 (a more complicated calendar watch), which completes the range.

Today Roger lives with his wife, two daughters and dogs by the sea, in a tranquil rural area in the north of the beautiful Isle of Man, which is fast developing its own reputation as a horological centre of excellence. The Roger W. Smith studio employs seven craftspeople in a new purpose-built which has just been completed.