

Two years on from the death of one of the world's greatest watchmakers and horological inventors, the legacy of Dr George Daniels CBE lives on through The George Daniels Educational Trust.

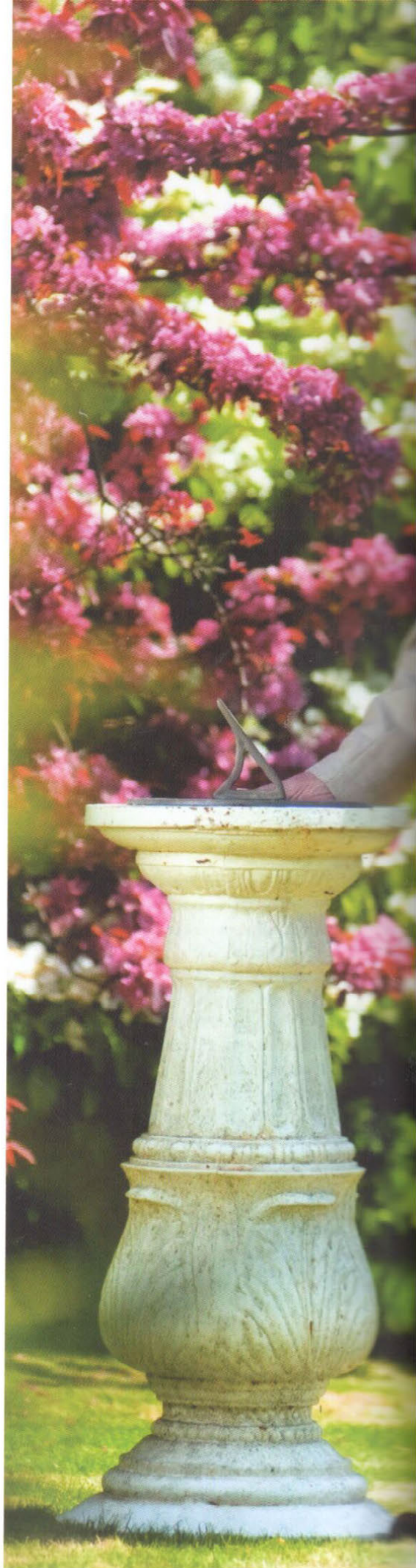
The initiative, which Daniels established before his death, aims to encourage and financially assist apprentices and students to the overall benefit of the British clock and watch industry.

*Simon de Burton*

# IN GEORGE WE TRUST

It seems remarkable that 21 October will mark the second anniversary of the death of the much-missed horologist Dr George Daniels CBE at the age of 85. His legacy to the furtherance of watchmaking has already entered the history books, not least in his creation of the renowned Co-axial escapement, which is now used in all of Omega's better watches and has become a benchmark for accuracy in mechanical movements.

But what has become of the very considerable financial legacy that he was able to leave as a result of the half-century he spent both as an internationally-recognised watchmaker of the





**Left:** The late Dr George Daniels in the garden of his Isle of Man home, Riversdale.

**Far left:** Daniels in his workshop.

**Above:** Daniels' love of vintage cars and racing led to a near £10 million boost for the Trust when his collection was sold earlier this year. This included the legendary 1929 'Birkin' Blower Bentley, which fetched a staggering £5,042,000 at the Goodwood Festival of Speed, smashing the previous British car record of £3.5 million paid in 2007 for a 1904 Rolls-Royce.

first degree and as a decidedly shrewd investor in property, classic cars, art and horology? The answer is that the money – which amounts to a figure close to £20 million – has been invested in accordance with the wishes of the George Daniels Educational Trust, which he set about establishing a decade before his death.

The chairman of the trustees is surveyor David Newman, who met Daniels 51 years ago when the watchmaker was seeking advice about building a garage in which to store – and restore – one of his vintage Bentleys. The two quickly discovered their mutual love of old cars and motorcycles and struck up a lifelong friendship that was to result in Newman becoming the person who managed the ever-burgeoning problem of Daniels' paperwork.

"He was always keen to get in to the workshop and create, but when I met him he was

● constantly battling with administration," recalls Newman. "He had a 12 foot kitchen table which was completely covered in paper. We initially spent three days going through it and sorting it out, after which I would travel to George's home on the Isle of Man every five weeks or so in order to deal with the post, which used to arrive by the sackful from all around the world."

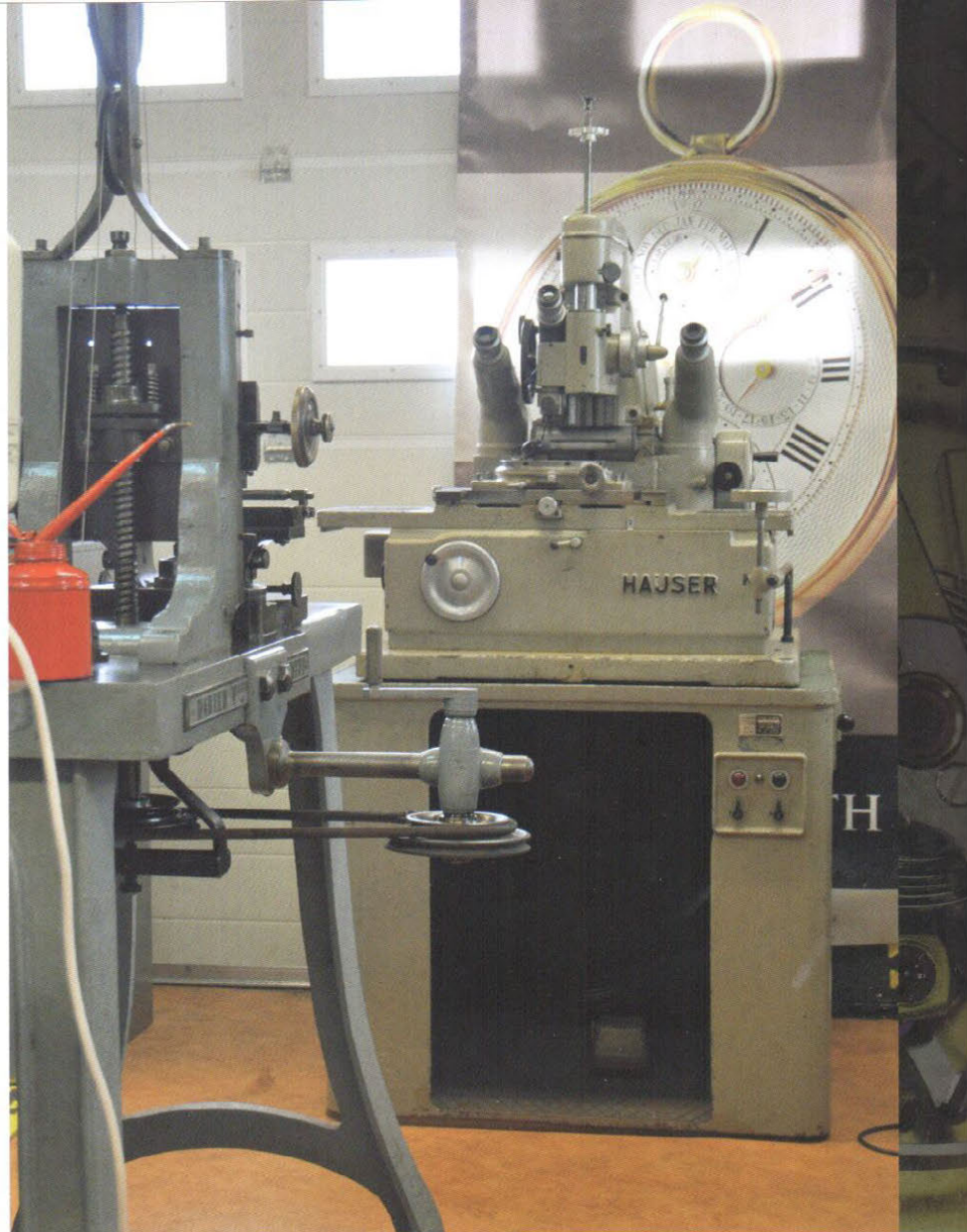
#### MEN TO TRUST

Newman's loyalty, dependability and friendship made him the obvious choice for Chairman of the Trust, which also comprises Isle of Man residents Dr Michael Blayney, a horologist, Manx Classic Car Club Chairman Michael Pearce and Ken Corlett, who was Daniels' accountant.

The task of disposing of the Daniels assets set out in his substantial will was not insignificant. His car collection was sold by Bonhams at the 2012 Goodwood Festival of Speed sale where it fetched £9,942,230; his personal watch and clock collection was sold at Sotheby's a few weeks later for £6,949,500; Riversdale, his imposing home on the Isle of Man, recently changed hands for £1.8 million; its contents, sold separately, fetched around £60,000, and a collection of vintage Leica cameras was sold in Hong Kong, again by Bonhams, for around £15,000.

The money is now in the hands of three separate investment companies, each managing £6-7 million, with returns currently running at around £200,000 per annum. Daniels decreed that 50 per cent of this income should be made available to City University (formerly Northampton Institute, from which he graduated as a watchmaker in 1953) with 40 per cent going to the British Horological Institute and the remaining 10 per cent being reserved to administer the Trust.

In relation to City University, Daniels specifically asked that funding be provided to the faculties of engineering, medicine, horology and architecture, and that a professorial chair should be created and named the George Daniels Professorship



of Scientific Instrumentation – a role which has now been filled by Professor Kenneth Gratton. The legacy will also pay for two doctoral students for three years in the school of engineering, as well as funding five new undergraduate scholarships each year.

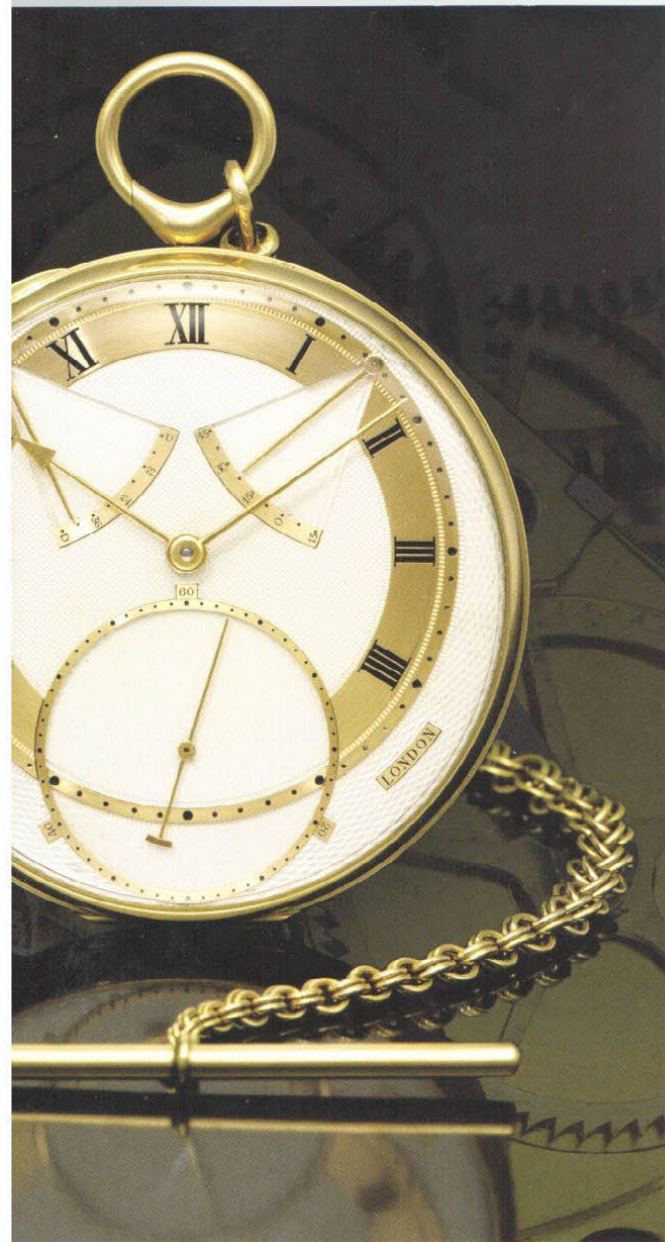
#### THE WATCHMAKER'S APPRENTICES

The income from the Trust going to the British Horological Institute, meanwhile, is currently helping to fund the WOSTEP course in Manchester as well as courses at Birmingham University and West Dean. It is also paying for apprenticeships with leading makers such as Roger Smith (famously the protege of Daniels), Brian Loomes and Gerald Marsh, with further money going to the workshop at the Epping Forest Horology Centre and the BHI's South London Centre premises at Caterham.

All funding relating to the watchmaking side of the bequest is subject to the mutual agreement of both the BHI and the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, meaning that potential beneficiaries must be recommended to the Trust by both in order to be considered.

"George was very keen on the idea of creating a university chair because he realised that it could be something that would continue for decades," explains Newman. "But he was also very aware that, as well as assisting with further education, it would be beneficial to help with the ongoing problem of where students actually live. As a result, we are looking at the possibility of offering accommodation bursaries for Masters and PhD students."

Newman points out, too, the importance of achieving the best possible return on the Trust's investment – in a time of notably

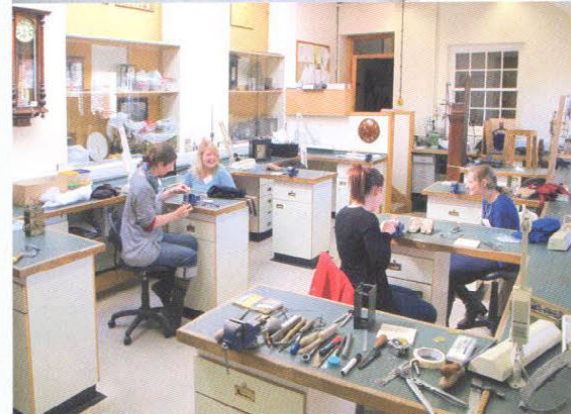


Left: The yellow gold pocket chronometer with slim Co-axial escapement, thermometer and power reserve that Daniels made in 1986 and recently bought back by the Trust for £362,500.

Far left: The Hauser P325 optical jig that played a pivotal role in the development of the Co-axial escapement, in its new home at the Isle of Man workshops of Daniels' famous protégé, Roger Smith.

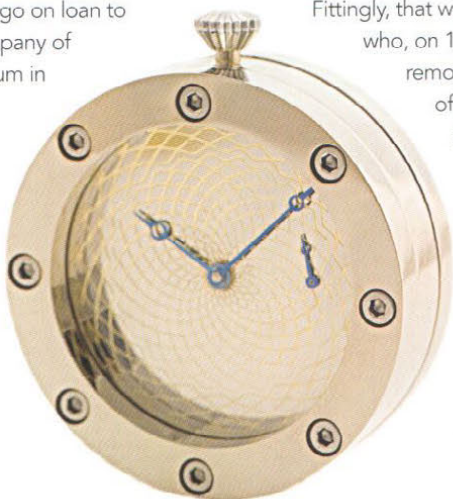
Right top to bottom: Some of the watchmaking institutions being helped by the Trust: Epping Forest Horology Club, West Dean College and the British School of Watchmaking.

Below: One of the masterpieces created by a student at Birmingham City University.



poor returns – while ensuring it remains as safe as possible. And it was with this in mind that, on 3 July 2013, it bought back the highly important Daniels pocket chronometer from 1986 that was the first to feature the slim Co-axial escapement.

The watch was included in a Sotheby's sale entitled *Treasures, Princely Taste* and attracted considerable interest – meaning the trust had to bid £362,500 to secure it. It will now go on loan to the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers' museum in London's Guildhall, which has also become home to the extensive Daniels archive of papers, drawings, articles and



patents as well as a library comprising 350 horological volumes.

#### PRESERVING THE LEGEND

In addition to the financial legacy, however, there is a further, very important aspect of the George Daniels bequest in the form of the contents of his Isle of Man workshop where he produced many of his most important pieces.

Fittingly, that was left to Roger Smith who, on 10 June this year, removed the final piece of equipment from Daniels' studio and relocated it to his own. A Hauser P325 optical jig boring machine, which can achieve tolerances of 0.001mm, it

played a pivotal role in the development of the Co-axial escapement and was used by Daniels to convert various Omega, Rolex, Patek Philippe and Zenith watches from lever escapement to Co-axial.

"It was George's wish that this important horological collection be preserved and used by our team of watchmakers in the maintenance of all existing Daniels watches, in the continuation of Daniels London and, of course, in the making of our own RW Smith watches," said Smith. "It has taken a year to move the equipment across, and the installation of this final piece means that this aspect of George's bequest is now complete."

• Applications for horological grants from the George Daniels Educational Trust may be made by emailing [secretary@gdetac.org](mailto:secretary@gdetac.org). Applications for City University grants should be sent to [David.Street1@city.ac.uk](mailto:David.Street1@city.ac.uk) ●