

# Timely success for watch creator

A UNIQUE business based in the north of the island has been featured in the Financial Times.

Roger Smith, of Roger W. Smith Ltd watch, clock and chronometer makers, runs the business in Ballaugh.

'We are the only company that makes every single part of a watch ourselves, by hand, in Britain,' Mr Smith said.

The feature in the daily business paper comes shortly after the company recently exhibited at the SalonQP event at One Marylebone, London.

Their luxurious timepieces received a 'fantastic response' at the show, and the new 'Open Dial' Series 2 watch attracted a huge amount of attention.

As Business Examiner reported last year, it was while studying at the Manchester School of Horology that Roger first met George Daniels, a watchmaker widely regarded as the greatest horologist of modern times.

Mr Smith was inspired by a lecture given by Mr Daniels and spent the next seven years perfecting the 30 or so different disciplines involved in creating a truly handmade pocket-watch.

BY DUNCAN FOULKES

While George Daniels acknowledged that Mr Smith's first watch was a valiant effort, it wasn't until he completed his second that he finally won the approval of his mentor.

An invitation followed to work with him in the Isle of Man on the now legendary Daniels Millennium series of 50 watches. The experience was priceless and Mr Smith describes his time with Mr Daniels as 'the finest finishing school any aspiring watchmaker could wish for'.

Ultimately this led to Roger setting up his own company.

In the Financial Times article Mr Smith explains: 'At the moment we are creating a Series 2 timepiece. We make 10 watches a year - each has about 220 parts and takes five months to make, and they cost between £72,000 and £120,000.'

He adds: 'When a client orders a piece, usually online, they specify a material and we take a deposit to buy the metal.'

'We have not been affected too much by the recent changes in commodity prices, since we lock that cost in at the beginning. We have a two-year waiting list.'

Mr Smith reveals he is looking to move to bigger premises.



**MAKING HEADLINES:** Roger Smith makes luxurious timepieces by hand

'We need a space that reflects the products we make, which are real luxuries.'

He tells the Financial Times that clients usually come to visit once during the watch-making process.

About 40 per cent of customers come from the United States, 40 per cent from Britain and 20 per cent from Asia.

Mr Smith told Business Examiner:

'Our customers tend to be self-made business people. They tend to be people who are enthusiastic about their own work and, when they reach a certain level in life, they often buy one of our watches almost as a treat to themselves - a kind of pat on the back.'

His wife Caroline joined the business a year ago as general business manager.