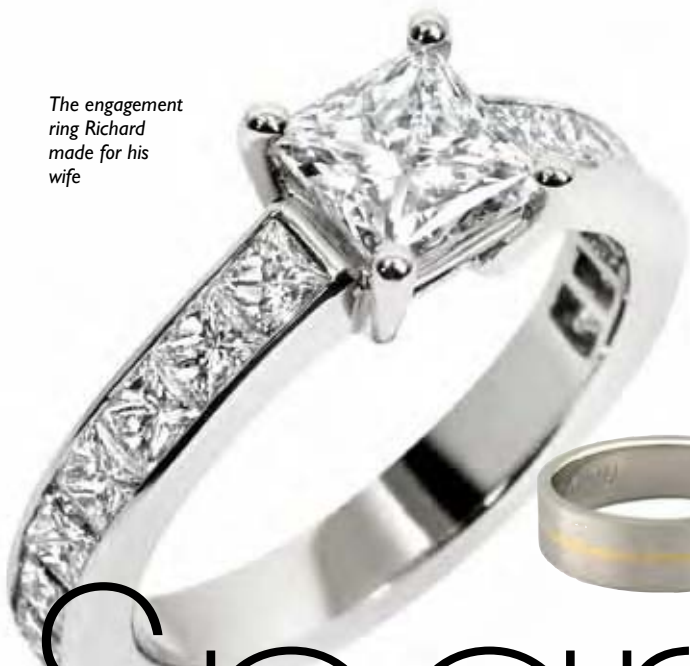


The engagement ring Richard made for his wife



Richard's mother's ring



Groom's wedding band made with gold inlay by Richard from grandmother's heirloom



Sparkling

service

Laura Cartledge meets two bespoke jewellers who reveal why their businesses are Sussex gems.

Richard Talman, of RTFJ Haywards Heath, started his love affair with precious materials at a very young age. "My parents tell me when I was six or seven I was buying rock specimens on museum visits," he explains. "That is what I would spend my pocket money on."

"My favourite part is still working with the natural resources," adds Richard. "The ability to take a piece of rock and a piece of metal from the ground and turn them into something special."

Richard joined the famous Sir John Cass Faculty of Arts in Whitechapel, East London, studying a City and Guilds diamond mounting course when he left school and within five years had won first prize in the UK Fine Jewellery Competition.

He has since represented the country, been awarded an International Diploma of Excellence and become a Fellow of the Institute of Professional Goldsmiths.

However, despite the accolades, Richard's work is still fuelled by a simple aim.

"What I want to ensure is that two people never have the same ring," he says. "I like new challenges, if you made the same ring over and over it wouldn't be satisfying."

As a result he offers a totally bespoke service, uniquely designing each piece around the individual and even offers a remodelling service where he can give new life to old jewellery.



"People wanting to buy wedding rings might walk into a store and be given trays and trays and told to take their pick. People are so used to buying off the peg.

"It's like shopping, they will say I really like the colour of that shirt but I like the style of that one," he explains. "The difference with me is they get to choose from start to finish and are part of the process. I want people to have as much influence as possible."

This can range from people having a go

themselves to watching Richard at work, while another option is sure to be music to the ears of some brides to be.

"I have some who get the diamond from me and propose with that," he smiles, "then their fiancée comes in to help design the ring."

To find out more about Richard's work, visit www.rtfj.co.uk or call 01444 471380.