

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

RTFJ jewellers are currently running a waiting list for appointments for their bespoke jewellery. We asked owner Richard Talman what is the secret of his success





Sussex-born Richard Talman grew up near Gatwick and is the acclaimed name behind RTFJ Jewellers.

I always knew what I wanted to do.

School days were undoubtedly the easiest days of my life, but I knew what career I wanted to pursue from quite young, and to be honest I just wanted to get out there and start work! As a young child, I had a passion for geology and built up a vast collection of rocks, minerals and gemstones. Becoming a Goldsmith combined this passion with a love of metalwork. I was introduced to the Sir John Cass Faculty of Arts College in East London by a family friend and it was this course that led to an apprenticeship with a well-respected Goldsmith in Hatton Garden.

Winning competitions is a rewarding experience.

I won the UK Fine Jewellery Competition with a brooch which featured many different shaped stones and skills I was then learning in the trade. The design was set by the competition organisers; we just had to make it the best possible to exacting standards. To win a competition in something you are passionate about is an incredibly rewarding experience. To then go on to represent your country in the World Skills Competition for that skill was mind blowing. The competition was held in Seoul, South Korea. It was one of the toughest things I have ever done. I am proud to

be part of the World Skills Alumni and enjoy giving my time to support and encourage young people to pursue vocational careers.

The inspiration is to create one-off items of beauty from totally natural resources.

It would be impossible to nominate a favourite piece, although my wife's engagement ring would be one of them! The most memorable would have to be the Dragonfly Brooch (above) I made as my masterpiece to mark the end of my apprenticeship. Over 200 man-hours of work went into that!

Trends can change very quickly, like all fashion items.

It is really exciting to keep up with the ever changing designs, although traditional jewellery will always stand the test of time. Semi-precious stones, like aquamarine and tourmaline, have become very popular of late. People are frequently wanting a more contemporary look for their jewellery as well. Palladium is a relatively new metal to be widely used. It is very popular for men's wedding bands right now.

I wear a platinum wedding band, which was made for me by my wife, and an Omega watch.

For me the key to a successful business is the passion I have to provide my customers with such a dedicated service. I particularly enjoy

the Customer's reaction when I present them with their finished piece. My business dream is to be big enough for my jewellery to be widely known, but still small enough to continue to care about my customers.

My favourite time of day is 12 o'clock.

That's when Jeremy Vine comes on radio 2! Outside work I enjoy Taekwondo, walking and good wines! I have based my office in Wivelsfield as it's very close to home, spending three hours a day travelling to work for 14 years made me realise just how valuable my free time was.

I believe in keeping this historic trade alive.

I have learned so much in my 18 years at the bench, but I am still learning new things every day. I have just taken on my first apprentice and, like my master did for me, I shall be passing all I know onto him over the forthcoming years. My hope is that he will in turn do the same in years to come in order to keep this historic trade alive.

RTFJ handmade bespoke jewellery, Wivelsfield,
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