

A.W. Rule & Son

by Stephen Davy-Osborne

Stepping up to take on the family business was no mean feat for Gareth Rule, but he had learned his skills from one of the best - his father.



As 2014 draws to a close, sporting gun and rifle stock maker A.W. Rule & Son have marked a decade at their current base in Somerton, south Somerset, experiencing a decade of the trade whilst remaining true to the family ethos of a bespoke personal service. The business is now in the hands of son Gareth, who is driving his father's vision forward.

The seeds of the family business were planted in 1950s London when Anthony William Rule began his training as a gun maker with James Purdey & Son, The Worshipful Company of Gun Makers. From 1957 he channelled his enthusiasm as a working lad to serve a formal

apprenticeship in the fine art of gun making under the watchful eye of Master Harold Delay, Durling Makers, Holland & Holland Gun Makers and Boss & Co Gun Makers to make bespoke shotgun stocks and forends including many new guns. But after many years of building up a client base, the enterprising gun maker decided he wanted to serve his own private clients, bringing the high-end London quality engrained in his training to shooters in the rural West Country. Once more the family home formed his base

as he expanded his own workshop, with the wide knowledge and skill base needed to drive the A diversification into fishing tackle saw four shops in their own right of Anthony's masterpieces and he found himself in serious demand with game keepers and shooters alike. Remaining loyal to the firm that had taught him his craft, Anthony continued to work almost exclusively for James Purdey & Son, but it wasn't long before he found himself highly sought after by other gun makers, which saw him carry out

decision to join the family business craftsmanships led Gareth to make the location couldn't have been secured as a base for father and son to

himself, delighting his father as he A.W. Rule & Son in 1996. Gareth then began his own gunnelling apprenticeship, guided through the intricate craftsmanships by his father, who imparted his own skills learned almost four decades previously in post-war London. Anthony taught him only the traditional methods of gun stock making, while eager to ensure that all aspects of the family business were covered to set Gareth up with the wide knowledge and skill base needed to drive the company forwards. In 2004, as Gareth was nearing the end of his apprenticeship, the father and son team took a giant step together, Jennifer, and opened their current premises in the heart of Somerton town centre, overlooking the historic Buttercross. As the ancient royal capital of Wessex, a more fitting location couldn't have been secured as a base for father and son to

welcome clients eager to own their own piece of history.

The following year Gareth completed his apprenticeship, making his father and Master incredibly proud, while also winning the praise of The Worshipful Company of Gun Makers and The Gun Trade Association. The family business was in very capable hands indeed. It has built a reputation over the years for a truly unique end product, directly sourcing the finest walnut from Turkey, much of which is in excess of 300 years old. Once the wood is on Somerset soil, Gareth begins the intricate carving and crafting process that will see the finished gun become the envy of all on the shoot.

Just five years after the family sign went up, Gareth found himself without the guiding light of the business following the untimely death of his father in 2010. However, Dubai and the Middle East, Gareth is keen that the business's success in turn has a knock-on effect for the rest of the town that his family have come to call home. He often welcomes clients from Scotland - and even further afield - who continue to enjoy the same success his father enjoyed early in his career, ingrained in rural heritage and, indeed, a necessity of rural life that has been passed down through generation after generation. ■



accepted that the internet had remained determined that he would form part of the business, but not lose sight of his traditionalist values in doing so - allowing him to restate in his appreciation for the fine art of something that was made 100 years ago that he in turn could keep running and put his own stamp on for another 100 years. While being online may not have been something he initially wanted to do, he soon

pubs and B&Bs. as well as the hospitality of the local attractions Somerton has to offer, enjoy some of the other sights and on. This in turn sees his visitors service A.W. Rule & Son prides itself Somerton for the individually tailored make the journey along the A303 to - and even further afield - who continue to enjoy the same success confident that the business will Looking to the future, Gareth is

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