

IN MEMORY OF CHRISTOPHER WILLIAM SELLORS

It is with great sadness family jewellers C W Sellors announce the passing of their founder Christopher William Sellors.

Surrounded by his family, Chris passed away in the early hours of Monday, 4th September, at Ashgate Hospice in Chesterfield, where he had been receiving wonderful support and care from their fabulous team of staff and volunteers.



Tracing back the success Chris made of his life and business, the journey started with a love of his Derbyshire surroundings and a passion to make his own jewellery designs using the locally sourced Blue John gemstone. What started as a hobby with early jewellery pieces made from a workshop in his parents' garage was accompanied by two years of study at Chesterfield College for a City & Guilds, Silversmith and Goldsmith qualification.

Continuing to be inspired by being close to the source of a beautiful, British gemstone and with a belief shown by local outlets which sold his early Blue John designs, by the age of 21, Chris had established his business – C W Sellors Fine Jewellery – and subsequently opened his first jewellery boutique in 1985 under the name of 'Blue John Gallery' in Bakewell, Derbyshire.

One of Chris' first retailers and one which was instrumental in how he progressed was Chatsworth House. With an interest in his growing business, the personal support shown by Her Grace The Dowager Duchess of Devonshire was of great importance to Chris. It established a lasting friendship, which included a visit by the Dowager to help with the official opening of his purpose-built jewellery workshop and retail boutique in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, in 1989.

With a winning business model of providing great quality jewellery and first-class customer service to a local and loyal customer base, including those just visiting the busy market towns of The Peak District and Derbyshire, Chris seized the opportunity to open additional boutiques across the area.

Alongside the growing retail arm of the business, Chris and his sales team were also busy building a strong network of independent jewellery retailers as stockists for C W Sellors' wide range of handcrafted gemstone jewellery designs. Quality of product and customer service was again of the utmost importance in establishing these trade relationships. Across the years, many friends were made within the industry, for which Chris was immensely proud. Chris also had great pleasure in seeing this area of the business continue to develop.

Following his success in Derbyshire with Blue John, in 1999, Chris took his talents and vision for promoting British gemstones to Whitby and acquired W Hamond – The Original Whitby Jet Shop. Situated at the foot of the iconic Whitby Abbey Steps, it provided the perfect location in which to bring worldwide attention to the history, heritage and beauty of Whitby Jet.

As Chris' passion was for gemstones, not only would he spend time on the road at shows and events in pursuit of the very best material to work with, but would also be an ambassador for British gemstones. In addition to showcasing handcrafted Derbyshire Blue John and Whitby Jet at established UK jewellery events for trade customers, for many years, he would take his British gemstone jewellery to the world's largest gathering of gemstones and gem shows in Tucson, Arizona to build new business partnerships and make new friends overseas.

The profile and appeal of British gemstones were taken to new and unprecedented heights when Chris arranged a collaboration with Fabergé to use Derbyshire Blue John for a new jewellery and objet collection to celebrate 40 years in business in 2019. This was followed up a year later with a Whitby Jet Fabergé collection to mark the 160th anniversary of W Hamond.

Following its success in Whitby, a second W Hamond boutique was opened in York on Shambles in 2007, whilst in 2018, Chris opened The Museum of Whitby Jet with a chance to learn more about the local gemstone. In addition to W Hamond, Chris opened further boutiques in Whitby under separate names to offer further choices of Whitby jet jewellery to the Town's visitors. The business has also continued to grow elsewhere, with store extensions and new boutiques opening across Derbyshire and Shropshire, bringing the total number of retail outlets in 2023 to 17.

Realising the opportunity to grow the business elsewhere and complement the growing number of retail boutiques, in 2002, Chris was also an early advocate of taking his jewellery collections online. As one of the first independent jewellers to step into what was a largely unknown area, the internet allowed a new horizon to be explored and successful new

business partnerships to be made. Following its early success, this area of the business was accelerated when Chris took the opportunity to acquire leading e-commerce watch specialists Jura Watches, to develop a specialist luxury watch division to run alongside the C W Sellors brand.

From growing a business born in the family garage to watching its wide-ranging development over the years, Chris' had an ultimate vision for his business and the wider UK jewellery industry. It was a vision that Chris started to formulate in 2007 to provide a national home for British jewellery manufacturing and design in an inspirational space to develop and showcase industry talent.

Following a great deal of hard work, planning and local conversation, it was with great pride Chris was finally able to see the early development of C W Sellors Carsington taking shape over the past 12 months. With the exterior build near completion, Chris had turned his attention to the inside of the building with some fantastic feature elements he had been closely working on being put in place.

Ensuring such an important project would be completed and successful, Chris ensured he built a strong and capable team to follow through on his vision. C W Sellors Carsington is due to open in spring 2024 and will provide a unique visitor destination for both the public and industry to enjoy. From the opportunity to learn more about jewellery manufacturing, design and gemstones to jewellery and watch retail shopping, enjoying special events and relaxing in the hospitality areas, Chris had planned for every part of the building.

Alongside the Carsington development, Chris had also spent time in recent years in his involvement with the National Association of Jewellers (NAJ) and the British Hallmarking Council (BHC). It was a great honour for Chris when he was appointed Vice Chair of the NAJ in June 2018, as it was when he was appointed a Council Member of the BHC in March 2020.

Gary Wroe, NAJ President, said,

“Chris has given many years of support to The National Association of Jewellers and to other groups in the trade, all in the interests of the betterment of our industry. His passion for knowledge, for professionalism and for commercial success set him apart from the majority, and what he has built and has influenced is to be applauded. Many of us knew Chris and many more will come to realise what a forward-thinking, hardworking and thoughtful human

being he was. We shared many good memories together, and he has been a constant for us all at the NAJ and in other groups we were a part of.”

In both NAJ & BHC positions, Chris ensured he played an active role as he saw an opportunity to help develop their respective profiles and relevance in the modern world. Chris was instrumental in bringing together the jewellery trade in a new and fresh form of networking and events through his time at the NAJ, whilst the HALO Award initiative (Hallmarking Awareness and Learning Online) he helped organise with the BHC illustrated his desire to communicate the hallmarking values.

Noel Hunter, British Hallmarking Council Chair, said,

“Chris contributed a great deal to the BHC. He had extensive experience in the jewellery industry gained through building up a highly successful jewellery manufacturing and retail business noted and respected for its innovation and quality. He provided valuable insights to the BHC as a Council member. He leaves a lasting legacy with the BHC as the inspiration and driving force behind the HALO award. He will be sadly missed by his colleagues at the BHC.”

Hallmarking awareness, in particular, was very close to the heart for Chris. He recognised and valued the importance it provided and would at every opportunity ensure the customers of C W Sellors could be informed and educated on it. Chris took this opportunity even further within the development and fabric of the Carsington building, where he commissioned a gold leaf feature hallmark to be situated in the wall at the entrance to the building.

Above all the business development and the many projects Chris was involved with, he was first and foremost a family man. His energy and drive for all that he achieved were his children, and he was fortunate enough to see them not only come into the business but flourish with their respective roles within it. C W Sellors is in safe hands.

Following private funeral arrangements, the family would like to invite friends and industry colleagues an opportunity to mark the passing of Chris in the place he loved most – Carsington. This special event will be held on Sunday 8th October, 1pm onwards and offer the chance to pass on condolences whilst also sharing in a celebration of Chris’ life. For further details, please contact martynw@cwsellors.com