

## Reinvigorating British Watchmaking



Several styles of Bremont Watches

An Interview with Nick English, Founder, Bremont Watch Company

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Flying historic aircraft has been in Giles and Nick English's blood from a very early age, as has their love for watches and all things mechanical. In creating the brand, the brothers were looking to produce beautifully made yet robust timepieces inspired by their history in aviation. The brothers started working together on the watch designs following the death of their father in a vintage-aircraft accident in 1995, in which Nick also broke over 25 bones. It was a few years later that the brothers made an emergency landing in their 70-year-old plane in a pea field in Northern France. The field belonged to a wonderful old farmer, M. Antoine Bremont, who took them in, and showed them his workshop, and shared with them his love of clocks and, indeed, planes. The brothers set out to make a British watch that would not only last a lifetime but would be tested beyond the normal limits, and could match the best Swiss watches for quality.*



Nick English

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Bremont Watch Company (bremont.com) offers a range of highly developed aviation-inspired timepieces of exceptional quality and aesthetic value. In addition to going through extensive laboratory testing, each model is rigorously used in the field by professional adventurers and sportsmen. The brand has quickly been adopted by personalities like actors Tom Cruise and Orlando Bloom, and adventurers Bear Grylls and Charley Boorman. Bremont has two facilities in the U.K., one in Henley-on-Thames where all of the trained watchmakers are based and whose role is to assemble these mechanical chronometers. The other location is in Silverstone, where they have a factory that makes cases and movement parts for the watches.*

**What was your vision for the brand early on and has it stayed true or evolved?**

It has stayed true and it's part of the reason why it has grown. The vision very much early on was about building a watch brand based primarily on the quality of engineering. There is an incredible history of British watch-making – the world sets its time by Greenwich, not by Geneva, and 65 percent of innovation in watch-making

came from British shores, so we always had a firm belief that British watchmaking could be reinvigorated, and that's what we're absolutely passionate about. Giles and I have a love of beautifully engineered product. It can be a beautifully engineered historic car, a vintage airplane, or a beautiful mechanical watch.

When the brand was on the drawing board, it was about how we could produce a beautifully developed mechanical device – it certainly

wasn't about fashion or about producing a watch that looks "so 2015." It was about producing a watch one could pick up in 20 years and still appreciate it, and love the look of it on his or her wrist.

If we design a watch with the engineering and build quality in mind, the rest flows from there.

**Will growth for the brand come by way of add-ons to the current collections?**

The collections are always broadening. We have a very stable core collection that hasn't changed much in terms of outlandish design over the years. What has been a nice addition is some of the partnerships we're working on like our America's Cup Edition; we have been a timing partner for both the America's Cup (the oldest sporting trophy in the world, which started in 1851) and Oracle Team USA. We have also been doing a lot of work with Boeing. We developed a new range of watches in 2014 and 2015 with new aviation-grade steel and titanium. We also have relationships with Jaguar and Martin Baker (the Ejection Seat pioneer), which are incredible engineering companies in their own right.

This gives us the flexibility to come up with something that is slightly off the core but still defined by our key brand pillars.

**Who is the Bremont client?**

The average Bremont client isn't a showy individual. It tends to be a person excited by the knowledge of what has gone into the timepiece. Some Bremont owners are lucky enough to have a watch given to them on their 21st Birthday but we also have the 85-year-old guy who just loves the same thing, and that is both moving and humbling.

**What was your vision for developing a boutique in New York?**

We're in 20 countries and a couple of hundred different retailers, and we now have four of our own stand-alone boutiques as well: two in London and one in Hong Kong, and this is our fourth and latest one. It's not about producing, developing, and building loads of these boutiques; it's about producing a home for the brand in a particular territory, which acts as both a billboard and as a venue for events. In our boutiques, we can also offer things like the Bremont Adventures Club where, for example, the chief designer for Jaguar will come in to discuss his latest designs, or Kenton Cool, who has climbed Mount Everest 11 times, will pop in to tell everyone about his latest expedition.

We've been in America since 2008 with wonderful retailers, and it's about supporting them as well. It's about allowing the client to come here and have a Bremont experience.

**How hard is it to get the message across about what makes this brand special when there is so much competition?**

We are very lucky. We have some incredibly supportive retailers who really have embraced what the Bremont brand is about. They really do "get" the Bremont story and properly understand what has gone into the product design, development, and manufacture. There are some great brands out there, but Bremont certainly occupies a rather special niche, and this is the message that is getting out there. Films like *The Kingsman* where Bremont features significantly, and events like the America's Cup, also help. In fact, some of our best ambassadors out there are the significant quantities of special military units that use our watches. To me, these are the best spokespeople we could hope to have.

**How critical has customer service been for you and what is the key ingredient to make sure you're leading in that area?**

It's absolutely critical for us as a brand – in fact for any brand – and we have to make sure we are focused on it. Anything Bremont does in this relatively crowded space has to be a step above or different from our competition.

What has made things easier has been these elaborate CRM systems that help identify our customer and their history with us. Any repair times or service times for mechanical watches also have to be short. If there is an issue, we need someone on the phone very quickly. It's an obvious thing but it makes such a difference. ●