

TAKE YOUR TIME

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Over time, the form, function and purpose of timepieces have all evolved. Their story is shaped not only by technological advancement but also by changes in fashion and social attitude. Here, we delve into the history of watches and take a look at the journey from the traditional pocket watch to your modern day wristwatch.

The history of personal timepieces is a long and interesting one. Their story begins in the early 15th Century with the invention of the mainspring. This breakthrough allowed the miniaturisation of clocks to the point where they could be worn on pendants around the neck or fastened to clothing. Early examples were wildly inaccurate and were prized more for their novelty and decorative value than their functionality.

Over time clockmakers advanced their craft and improved the accuracy of their creations. By the 17th century, pocket watches had become both fashionable and practical. Devices of this period were still susceptible to exposure to the elements, so keeping them safely in a pocket was ideal.

By the mid 19th Century, wristwatches were becoming common, but initially, their manufacturers marketed them as bracelets for women. A gentleman would be expected to use a pocket watch. This perception changed as the timepiece became a vital item of military equipment. The need to synchronise manoeuvres without the use of signalling led to the issuing of watches to officers, but referring to a pocket watch in the heat of battle, or on horseback, soon proved impractical. Soldiers began to strap their pocket watches to their wrists using cupped leather straps, so their hands remained free. By the time the Second Boer War was underway, companies such as Mappin and Webb were offering “campaign watches” specifically for military personnel.

The start of the 20th Century also saw the first aeronautical watches. As well as keeping a precise track of time, they would also be able to calculate fuel consumption, air-speed and lift. The use of wristwatches became crucial to the success of tactics used during the First World War, and soldiers continued to wear their timepieces upon returning from service. The association of wristwatches with the military and aviation soon dismissed the perception of wristwatches as feminine.

The post-war period saw a boom in wristwatch sales to the point where, by the 1930's, they were outselling pocket watches by 50-1. Higher demand drove continuous innovation, from 1923's introduction of the first self-winding mechanism, electric watches in the 1950's, quartz watches in the 1970's to the multifunctional, digital watches of the 1980s. Each wave of innovation drove further sales as consumers rushed out to buy the latest technology.

Today, the ubiquitous smartphone with its built-in clock performs the function of telling us the time, leaving the wristwatch to find a different role for itself. The modern personal timepiece finds itself performing a similar function to its very earliest ancestors. It makes a statement of style and prestige rather than merely serving to mark the hours and minutes.

One company specialising in elegant dress watches for men is Söner by Sweden. Söner was founded by Freddie Palmgren on the Swedish west coast, inspired by his quest to find the perfect



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watch. Like many people, during trips abroad, Freddie would often be drawn to wristwatch stores, looking for a timepiece that was just right for him. Time and time again he found that he was never truly content with what was on offer, there was always a compromise, whether that was size, colour or price. From these experiences, the idea of Söner was born. If he couldn't find the watch he wanted, why not make it himself?

He started to sketch on an elegant, minimalist, rectangular watch for men, with the ultimate goal of producing a robust, high precision watch with an exclusive design. Materials and technical solutions were chosen to secure a long and trouble-free use. A watch that could be passed on to coming generations, a concept which led to the first model being named Legacy. Söner focuses solely on men's watches as Freddie feels these are the customers he best understands. All Söner watches are rectangular because the brand seeks to challenge the 100-year dominance of round-faced watches.

Freddie believes that a wristwatch reflects your taste, he said: "For me, the message that a watch sends out has become more important, and today I have a different opinion about my watch's appearance than I did 10 or 20 years ago. I've matured as a man, and it affects what type of watch I want to wear."

Emphasising the way in which watches have become a fashion and personality statement, Freddie said: "The idea is, of course, to wear your watch as much as possible. Therefore, the most important thing when choosing your watch is to really feel that enjoyment. Make sure you invest time in really thinking about what you want, and for what occasion. It's also important to think about what you want the watch to say about you as a person."

