

**THE BRITISH TOY & HOBBY ASSOCIATION
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD 2017**

~MENU~

Starter

Iberico ham, avocado, salsa, burrata, garden parsley
Heritage beetroot salad, pickled walnuts, toasted seeds (v)

Main

Pave of beef, rosti potato, spring vegetables, Port jus
Mushroom and blue cheese Wellington, spinach, red onion marmalade, pine nuts (v)

Dessert

Millefeuille of raspberries, caramelised pastry, lemon curd, raspberry sorbet

Coffee & Petit fours

Wine

Chardonnay d'Antugnac, Collovray & Terrier, Aude, France	2015
Château des Antonins. Bordeaux Supérieur, France	2014

ROGER DYSON'S CAREER IN THE TOY BUSINESS



Roger as a young boy

Roger was born in Cardiff 1947, and where he spent his early years as a boy. Roger attended Penarth Grammar School, where he enjoyed a good education and went on to captain the school rugby team.

Roger began his career as a sales man at the age of 17, where he sold apples and flowers at Cardiff based grocers William Bradnum & Co.

Having mastered the art of selling, the following year he moved to a new role as salesman at another local retailer; Casey's Camping, also based in Cardiff.

Roger's first job in the toy industry was with J&L Randall Ltd (Merit Toys) where he joined as a Trainee Sales Representative in September 1966. The title 'Trainee Sales Representative' covered any tasks that were required, there were about 10 Trainee Sales Representatives when Roger joined and they all did anything and everything. Roger often acted as a relief van driver for urgent local deliveries, trips to the "old" London Docks and Heathrow Airport to deliver and collect goods and any odd delivery jobs that were required.

After some time, Roger began working in the Export Office at Merit Toys. Exports became a significant and important part of the business as most of the products were manufactured or assembled in the UK, many of which were made in the Potters Bar factory in North London.



Roger, joining Merit Toys aged 18

In 1970, Roger was given responsibility for Merit Toys' presence at the UK Toy Fair, which took place at the time in the Metropole Hotel in Brighton. Merit Toys' stand was a replica of their showroom, which was effectively transported to Brighton.

Roger recalls that when Trainees started 'on the road' for Merit Toys they were given a couple of suitcases of samples and sent to South East London by public transport and left to their own devices to illicit orders from "lapsed accounts". Roger, although given the same brief as other trainees was against the trend, generously rewarded with a company car – a Ford Cortina Mark 2.



Roger with an agent in Madeira for first export trip with Merit Toys, 1971

Business travel became the norm for Roger, and in 1971 he took his first international export sales trip. The itinerary for his first trip included visits to Gibraltar, Tangiers, Las Palmas Gran Canaria, Casablanca, Rabat, Tripoli and Malta. During the final stages of the trip, Roger's luggage was not correctly de-planed in Tripoli, the intended destination, but instead sent to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, a place Roger was thankful never to be sent to sell toys. Roger returned from the trip with enough orders for it to have been deemed a success but with a stomach bug that took several weeks to clear.

His role and stature continued to grow within Merit Toys and further international travel followed to other destinations including Algeria, Tangiers, Madeira, Libya and Greece.

During his time at Merit, Roger sold popular brands including; Slinky, Magic Robot, Ring-a-Bell, Mr Chuff Chuff, Chemistry Sets, Magic Sets and about 600 other lines. Also during his time at Merit, he was to meet and work with his good



Roger and Pamela on their wedding day, July 1973

friends David Ross and Trevor Simmonds, both of whom are still in the toy business.

During the early 1970's Roger was dating Pamela, his now wife. Roger was a vibrant dresser in his younger years and used to meet Pamela from work wearing Mary Quant shirt, matching purple tie, red flares, orange socks and Cuban heels.

Roger's role with Merit ended in December 1972, and one of the main reasons for his leaving the company was that Roger was to marry Pamela who lived in Caerphilly, South Wales. Roger enjoyed working for Merit, but together with Pamela decided the time was right to move back to Wales.

In January 1973, Roger Joined Airfix Ltd as Sales Representative for South Wales and the South Midlands. Roger spent three successful years at Airfix where he worked hard to further develop his career in the toy business selling the company's 600 product lines. During his time working at Airfix, Roger also celebrated the birth of his daughter Natasha, who was born in July 1975.

Many of the Airfix kits Roger sold are still in the product range today. Products that Roger sold during his time at Airfix included Rainbow Games, Craft Kids and Painting by Numbers. Roger left Airfix in December 1975.



Roger, having recently joined Airfix, 1973

In January 1976, Roger joined Palitoy. Prior to joining, he had been approached by local Palitoy representative for South Wales, John Squires, who had also become a good friend of Roger. John had informed him that Palitoy was recruiting for

another Sales Representative to cover games and mainline railways which were about to be launched and if he was interested the job would be his.

Roger was interviewed twice for the position, the first of which was in the bar of the Dolphin Hotel in Swansea and as there were no questions asked at the second in Coalville, Roger sailed through and was duly offered the job as Sales Representative (Games and Hobbies) for Wales.

In August 1977 their son James was born and together they settled as a happy family in Caerphilly.



In the office at Palitoy, 1983

Working for Palitoy was one of life's great pleasures, the company had great brands and it was the ultimate "fun job". Brands the company owned included Action Man, Tiny Tears, Girls World, Pippa, Carrie, Parker Games, to name just a few of the brands Roger sold.

After starting out as Games and Hobby Representative, Roger later took over the toy ranges owned by Palitoy, following the departure of John Squires. His success in selling the toy ranges later led to him becoming Area Sales Manager for Wales and the South West, and eventually Southern Regional Sales Manager.

During his time at Palitoy, Roger was part of the launch of iconic brands including Star Wars and Care Bears and was the first UK sales representative to sell the board game Trivial Pursuit.

Around this time, Palitoy as a company was changing radically and with the addition of new senior management, they soon became the first large toy company to employ grocery techniques in sales and marketing. This was due largely to the new management, much of which had joined from Proctor and Gamble. The company would eventually be sold by its American owners, General Mills to Kenner Parker who were then eventually acquired by Tonka.

During his time working at Palitoy, Roger worked with and formed good friendships with others who also remain in the industry today including Nick Austin, Rob Mann, John Barbour, Duncan Billing, Kevin Jones, John Harper and John Nicholas.

After 10 years of working at Palitoy, Roger left on the 1st January 1986 and joined Ertl (UK) Ltd as Sales Manager. Upon his starting at Ertl, Roger hosted the company's Sales Conference with little or no idea of the range, sales policies, pricing, marketing plans or anything else. Roger recalls this was a sales conference where the "blind were leading the blind". He was later to find out that the range was indeed not finalized, there were no sales policies, pricing or marketing plans. It was as far removed from Kenner Parker as was possible! Roger excelled in his role at the company and in October 1986 was made Sales Director. His success in growing the company's sales continued and key licences and products including Thomas the Tank Engine, Postman Pat and Fireman Sam as well as Bumble Ball and Jibber Jabber all contributed to grow.



Ertl International team, for Fall Conference in Illinois 1986

In January of 1989, Roger was promoted to Managing Director of Ertl and later became Vice President International EMEA. During his time at Ertl, Roger oversaw the relocation of the company headquarters and warehouse complex and helped build a hugely successful and profitable business. A major achievement for Roger at Ertl was the purchase of Britains Petite, who at the time was their biggest competitor in the Farm Toy Business.

During his career at Ertl, Roger had the pleasure of working with people he still counts as good friends today including Dave Ross and Trevor Simmonds (again), Robert Mann, Rod Toddhunter, Ross McDonald and Wendy Yarwood. After some 11 years, Roger's tenure at Ertl came to an end in September 1997.

Following his departure from Ertl, Roger spent a couple of weeks on holiday in Spain to watch the European golf team in action as part of the Ryder Cup with his wife Pamela, good friend Derek Morris and his partner Dawn.

Derek at the time was the Managing Director and owner of MV Sports, and during their holiday Roger was offered the opportunity of some consultancy work to help in establishing further their presence in Europe, following the signing of European Licences - the company had no experience of selling into Europe and so Roger, with his experience provided the perfect fit. During his time with MV, Roger was offered numerous other opportunities, including further European roles. Roger felt that he had completed his days of international travel and held the desire to continue his career of managing in the UK. An approach had come from Ideal Toys where he had been offered the role of Managing Director in the UK. Roger had previously many business dealings with Ideal Toys in France when he had been in his role as Vice President International at Ertl and already knowing many of the team at Ideal, decided to take the job, which began in February 1998.

Having joined Ideal, Roger was to find the business in turmoil. He later found that the company that owned Ideal Toys was looking to exit the toy business. Together with his boss, a deal was put together and Ideal UK was sold to Toy Brokers. Part of the deal was that Roger would move to Toy Brokers to assist with the integration and, in December of 1998, the deal was done.

Although now part of Toy Brokers, Ideal Toys regularly had exhibition stands booked at both the Harrogate and London Toy Fairs. In January of 1999 Roger was in Harrogate, manning the Ideal Toys stand with one of the two staff who had also moved to Toy Brokers. It was there that Roger was approached to become Managing Director of Toymaster and after some negotiation with Peter Brennan, the then MD of Toy Brokers, it was amicably agreed that Roger would stay for six months and then move to Toymaster.

Roger enjoyed 17 successful years as Managing Director of Toymaster, where, despite some turbulent times, established Toymaster further as a respected and important part of UK toy retail – which would not have been possible without the support of an outstanding group of Directors. Roger retired from Toymaster on 31st July 2016 where he now remains as a Non-Executive Director.



Roger with fellow Toymaster Board Members

Roger is a long-standing member of the Fence Club and held the position of Chairman of the Club from 2005-2006.

Roger has held many influential and important roles within the BTHA. Roger served as a member of the BTHA Council with distinction from 1995-2016 and

was Chairman of the Association from 2008-2010. He sat on the Toy Fair committee from 1999 to 2007 during which he held the role of Toy Fair Committee Chairman (2002 to 2007) and as part of this Chairmanship led the Toy Fair's move from ExCel Exhibition Centre to Olympia – a move, which at the time saved the event from the threat of extinction. Roger is a keen golfer and along with being captain of Caerphilly Golf Club has also been a big supporter of the industry's charitable golf tournaments for both the Fence Club and Toy Trust events.



Roger with fellow BTHA Council members

Roger fulfills the criteria of the BTHA Lifetime Achievement Award perfectly. He has enjoyed a distinguished career and along with being highly revered by his peers, has also made a significant contribution to the UK toy industry. Roger has worked in the toy business for more than 50 years representing both supplier and retailer and is without doubt a very deserving, and very popular, recipient of the BTHA Lifetime Achievement Award.



Roger Dyson, BTHA Lifetime Achievement Award winner 2017

“Roger has made a lasting and significant contribution to the toy industry in his many roles that have spanned suppliers, manufacturers, and as leader of the retail buying group Toymaster along with his 21 years’ service on the BTHA Council.

Roger’s enthusiasm for the toy business, his deep knowledge of the industry from multiple perspectives and his great wisdom have ensured a highly successful career and an industry-wide respect, which is unparalleled.

From Roger’s first role in the toy business in 1966 until this day, he has made lifelong friends, and holds the support and admiration of the people who he has worked with across all sectors of the industry.

Through some of the most difficult and challenging times the industry has faced, it has been Roger’s dedication and leadership along with his commitment to the BTHA in many roles, that truly sets him apart.

This BTHA Lifetime Achievement Award is richly deserved for the vision and wisdom that he has brought to the Association and the industry as a whole. “

Kevin Jones
BTHA President

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