

# Charting a new career

One man's return home to Devon has prompted a career change from motor racing to map making, as LAURA DALE discovers

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MATT AUSTIN



3D map maker Peter Bolt

Last year, former Formula One Red Bull Racing engineer Peter Bolt opted for a slower pace of life and moved back to Devon where he is a full-time dad. With his engineering mind in need of new stimulation, he tried his hand at producing 3D nautical charts. Initially a hobby, Peter's map-making has caught the attention of keen maritime enthusiasts and enquiries for commissions have come from as far a field as Chile.

Whilst holidaying on the south coast of Ireland, Peter came across some 3D nautical maps. Intrigued by the intricate detailing and precision work, he began to play around with some old charts. "After about six months I became quite obsessed with it and I started to research what the best tools and methods were. I cracked it in February this year and started to produce bigger maps," he says. Peter gave the first

map he produced to Salcombe Yacht Club: "They put it up outside the locker rooms in the clubhouse and this gave me the confidence to carry on."

Peter is one of only three people known to produce 3D maps in the UK. A surprising statistic until you realise the patience and painstaking accuracy needed to produce a high quality map. It takes about 40-50 hours to produce an A2 size one.

Peter explains: "I use several maps to make each one because you overlap each layer. I cut it all out by hand using a small craft knife. I cut out each piece bonded onto a map board. I use old university books to put some weight on it and leave it overnight. Then I cut it all out on the foam map board, so everything is cut twice."

Even if you have no interest in cartography or the coastline, it's hard not to appreciate the craftsmanship which goes into each map. Finished off in frames, they



are pieces of artwork. Peter says: "Engineering is creative, but it's about being creative within guidelines and procedures which you have to follow. There was no book that I could read to tell me how to make the maps."

He adds: "You have to be accurate. Making 3D maps is so precise I think it's a good craft for people with an engineering mind. I am addicted to accuracy and detail. I find it hard to stop once I start making one."

Growing up in Exmouth, Peter's ambition was always to work in Formula One. In 2006 he landed his dream job and began working for the Red Bull Racing Formula One team. A test engineer, Peter was factory-based in the UK for three seasons in the research and development department where one of his duties was the gear box sign-off.

He says: "I loved the competition and it





The fine detail on the charts takes hours of work

really captured my imagination. I have always been interested in putting things together. Working in F1 is the ultimate for an engineer because you're competing with your skills. If you work hard the car might go faster. It's great seeing the results of what you are doing at a race. It was daunting, but the team support from the race track filters into the factory."

The team always had a debrief after each race by team principal Christian Horner. Peter recalls: "If the race had gone well the drivers would also attend. During my time there the drivers were Christian Klien and David Coulthard. Mark Webber replaced Coulthard in 2007. It was always motivating when they walked around the factory unexpectedly and took the time to ask about what you were doing. I remember thinking that the drivers looked a lot smaller in real life than they do on the TV."

After leaving Red Bull Peter went on to work for SAIC Motors Ltd, Antonov Automotive Technologies and Drive System Design Ltd; but the lure of the South West proved too much: "I grew up in Exmouth and I could never get Devon out

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of my system. I love being by the coast and the sea, so I had a lot of home sickness being in the Midlands. When my son Jonas was born those feelings grew stronger. My wife Adele picked up on those feelings and she took a job as head of geography at Uffculme School. Unfortunately there isn't much opportunity here for me engineering wise, which is what led me to the maps."

Peter uses original waterproof charts and he has a licence from the Hydrographic Office to produce them for the smaller designs. He uses Imray maps because the colours are more contemporary.

He explains: "People assume they are machine or laser cut, when they find out they are cut by hand they are taken aback." So far Peter's fledgling business has attracted commissions including maps of the West Solent and the Isle of Wight. He has also been asked to quote for a Chilean map which the client would like hand delivered to Chile. He recently completed his largest commission to date, a map of Eddystone Rocks to Berry Head, a chart which measures 1,060mm wide x 700mm tall. Prices start from £85 for a small unframed map to £350 for a large unframed map. ■

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