

AIRGUNS *are my* BUSINESS - Gr8fun targets



Clever hands and 25 years of airgunning enthusiasm combined to turn the passion of **Danny Roberts** into a target-making enterprise that caught the eye of the UK's biggest shooting products distributor!

Right: Danny, in the workshop – all his products have that hand-finished touch

Below: Well-made, reasonably-priced and a little bit different – the airgunning world has taken to Danny's targets well



Whether you're practising for serious competition, honing your hunting skills or simply fun-gunning in the back garden, a resettable spinner is the perfect target on which to set your sights. Most shooters have one in their kit, too – but for Danny Roberts, a plinking good idea for producing an alternative spinner has turned into a rapidly flourishing target-making business.

However, craftsman Danny admits that such a seemingly simple concept has resulted in a great deal of near misses along the way – although acknowledges that getting his eye in has been worth it. That's because the finished product has now not only won the blessing of giant shooting wholesaler, John Rothery, it's also given the entrepreneurial Danny a chance to make public the rest of his range.

While not quite the 'X-Factor' in terms of rags to riches, Danny's story is one of making the most of an opportunity. An airgun shooter for more than 25 years, he was in his local gun shop, chewing the fat with the proprietor, when a rack of steel targets caught his eye. Specifically, it was the way they were constructed that got Danny's mechanical mind into gear.

"I could make something better than that," he commented, "and probably cheaper."

His claim was immediately turned into a challenge. "Go on, then," said the shop's manager. "Put your money where your mouth is!"

Though meant more as an exchange of banter than the throwing down of a gauntlet, Danny *did* rise to the challenge – and a few months later

he presented The Portsmouth Gun Centre with some single – and double – paddle spinners.

His audience was immediately impressed. Indeed, manager, Steve, was so taken with Danny's efforts that he put in an order on the spot. "I'll take them all," Steve told Danny, "and any more you've got!"

And so it took off. An elated Danny realised he'd be able to turn his new-found talent into a potentially lucrative business – but the road ahead for Gr8fun Targets, as the company was named, was to be an uneven one.

"As I look at it now," he says, "it's a success – especially with the Rothery deal in place. But, boy, has it been tough to get here."

Danny explains that it proved extremely difficult to get a cordless, resetting target to work properly enough to make it viable for commercial production. Despite looking straightforward to design, the balance of the lower paddle took much trial and error before Danny was happy the target's resetting mechanism worked flawlessly.

"My garden's still littered with no end of prototypes," he quips, "that all 'sort of' work... but not quite!" However, he's happy that the finished version – the one pictured left – is very sound. Indeed, having fired relentlessly at a full-

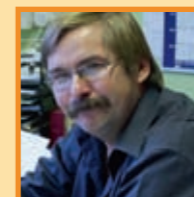


DANNY'S BIG BREAK

Having a distributor of Rothery's status take on your product as part of its prestigious Bisley range is quite an accolade – so to see why

Danny's target-making business caught their eye, we asked them what convinced them to list his product in their 2010 catalogue. After all, there are plenty of other spinner targets on the market.

The answer their MD, Bob Rothery, gives is disarmingly simple: "Gr8fun's spinner is well-made, reasonably priced and a little bit different. And that, in a nutshell, is why we like it so much."



production version for a few weeks with all manner of test guns (pistols and rifles), the *Airgun Shooter* office can also confirm it's a testament to Danny's meticulously thought-out design and professional craftsmanship.

Able to 'flat pack' (for ease of transport), the spinner is made in 3mm steel from laser-cut parts, and set on high tensile bolts with no welds or joints that could potentially fracture with the repeated pellet strikes over time. Another key production measure has been that every target to leave his workshop is also finished by hand. "It's the only way to ensure the final quality check is up to scratch on every single unit," says Danny, who is savvy enough to know that his new business' reputation relies on his targets' quality.

Aside of it catching the eye of one of Britain's biggest shooting products distributors (see above) and his local gun shop, the appeal of Danny's target is self-evident to others, too. Already, Gr8fun has been approached by shooting clubs and other gun shops to supply the rest of its range to them.

The interest being shown in the target range may be, in part, due to Gr8fun's commercial philosophy – Danny is insistent that all his prices are exactly what the punter pays... and he is quite vocal in his irritation at



Above: Danny shows off the range of targets to have come out of his workshop

Below: His resetting target may look simple, but a lot of thought has gone into its operational design

advertised prices which don't include postage and packaging (a necessary part of his delivery based service). What's more – as Rothery's MD openly highlights – the prices are very reasonable, with the current range spanning price points between £5 and £34.

So, what of the future? Well, the success story looks like continuing. Danny's wholesaler has agreed with him that if sufficient interest is shown in the one Gr8fun product currently on their books, they'll consider others in his range.

And there's no shortage of ideas up Danny's sleeve; he already has plans to expand the range to include vermin-shaped targets with head and body kill zones – and, following lots of enquiries already, he's researching bell targets. Oh... and there's also a pendulum target on the drawing board. Although Danny's playing his cards close to his chest on that one, he has divulged to us that his concept is to give you a rough idea of your pellet's retained energy downrange.

If there's one company that's likely to bring it to fruition, it's definitely Gr8fun Targets. After all, with a man like Danny Roberts at its helm, with his enthusiastic drive for ingenuity, quality and value, how can it ever miss? ●

Anyone interested in Gr8fun Targets should contact John Rothery. T: 01730 268011, W: www.bisley-uk.com

