

# The QP Bookshelf Part 1: Wide Variety



## Ken Kessler is your guide to the world of fine watch literature



It is a given that you love watches enough to read about them: after all, you are holding a magazine devoted to the subject. But how do you fill the time between issues of *QP* in order to continue to expand your knowledge to make you a “better” collector? It may seem old-fashioned, but books on the subject are still the best form of reference, even in this era of Web surfing.

The World Wide Web is a “cowboy” zone free of policing and devoid of responsible editors. It is a universe where anonymous and venomous malcontents can fill screen after screen with mis- or dis-information. Book publishers are intrinsically more accountable because they have physical, geographical addresses, and are more likely to fear law-suits. Thus, the accuracy is higher, the liability a given. And this is important, because the boom in watch books has followed the growth in interest in watches, and plenty of you are investing heavily because you need the knowledge imparted by quality reference material. You do not need to be misled by a mouse jockey with zero accountability. (One day, we will publish a collection of case studies from people who have been screwed buying vintage watches online.)

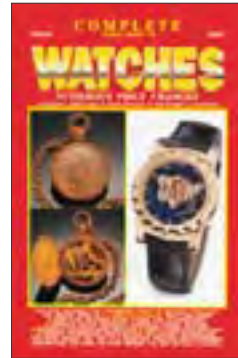
It is no exaggeration to say that watch books have become a mini-industry. Schiffer Publishing, a major player when it comes to books about collecting, seems to have cornered the market for English-language titles, producing both individual marque histories and sub-topic studies, such as books on chronographs, automatics and similar narrow topics. But a general search on your local bookseller’s computer will produce an alarmingly large list, so the “QP Bookshelf” has been devised to help you discover and sift through what is on offer.

Each issue, we will pick a topic and alert you to the titles available, both in and out of print. (One of the better things about e-retail is finding out-of-print books.) It may be books on DIY watch repair, books just about Patek Philippe, price guides or general histories. We are even assembling a pile of novels about watches. But to get you started, we have selected five books that illustrate the broadness of the scope of watch book publishing, including a basic history, a price guide, a marque study and two titles dealing with specific sub-topics. The only downside? We have yet to find any watch books that are small enough to take on holiday.



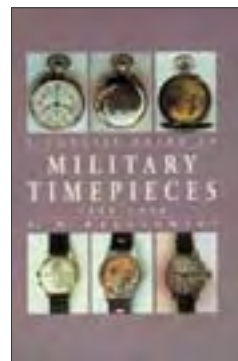
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Hardback,  
512 pages.  
Price (approx.) £20.  
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2

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3

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4

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5

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1

## Wristwatches Armbanduhren Montres-bracelets

By Gisebert L Brunner & Christian Pfeiffer-Belli

Watch enthusiasts could not believe the price when this lavish hardback appeared in 1999 – it seemed too good to be true. Two of the world’s leading horological journalists put together the single finest one-shot purchase ever for readers who want all the basics and do not want to fill a shelf with expensive books. Between lavishly illustrated histories of over 80 great brands are chapters on every topic you would care to study: movements, collecting, chronographs, automatic winding, minute repeaters, time-zones, watch design and more. They also included a comprehensive chronological history of the watch, a glossary, technical drawings... This book simply cannot be recommended too highly. It is, up to the point where you become addicted to one brand or one type of watch, or you enter the field professionally, the only watch book you will need.

2

## Complete Price Guide to Watches

By Cooksey Shugart, Richard E Gilbert & Martha Shugart (Editor)

Having now reached its 23<sup>rd</sup> edition, this thick paperback is rightly regarded as an industry “bible”; heaven knows that legions of wheeling-and-dealing collectors and vendors swear by it. On the upside, it is a terrific single purchase for a novice watch enthusiast because, in addition to its role as a price guide, the authors have crammed in a basic primer for collecting, a glossary, some horological history and more, along with tens of thousands of photos of pocket watches and wristwatches. The downside? No price guide can ever be even remotely complete or accurate; the prices quoted in this book seem to bear little or no resemblance to those you would find in the real world. Beyond that, minor errors and omissions will drive the experienced collector crazy, and the photo quality is risible. But there is an awful lot of info included for under £30.

3

## A Concise Guide to Military Timepieces 1880–1990

By ZM Wesolowski

Number 1 in a field of one, but it will have to do unless you speak Italian. This admirable work tries to do too much by attempting to cover over a century of military watches. Essentially, the field is too large; to put it into perspective, a recent publication from Germany uses 625 pages just to cover that country’s efforts alone. But this book will give you a fine grounding in the single most volatile and competitive area of collecting; canny watch enthusiasts realised long ago that the timepieces made for the military are built to the highest standards and represent superb value for money. That they are now collectible, thanks to all things military being so

chic (combat trousers, Hummers, etc.), is a testimony to form over function. But if military watches are your main passion, do yourself a favour and find a copy of *Militari Da Polso* by Leopoldo Canetoli. And learn Italian.

#### ④ **Vintage Rolex Sports Models** By *Martin Skeet & Nick Urul*

This constitutes a near-perfect book about a single make. But not just any make: Rolex is the most coveted brand of all among collectors, whether you like it or not. The authors have wisely avoided dealing with the overcrowded world of writing general Rolex histories; along with Patek Philippe, you can fill a sizeable shelf's worth of weighty tomes about the brand. They chose instead to concentrate on a niche consisting of the most desirable models. It is an anorak's wet-dream, page after page of minutiae, analysing every model in the GMT/Explorer/Submariner/Sea Dweller/Daytona axis, their variants and "relatives", the minuscule detail changes. In effect, it is a spotter's guide for those who worship the marque's sporty models. As it is unauthorised, there are trivial mistakes or claims that will irritate Rolex insiders, but, given that this is a handicap affecting every book on Rolex, this is still a must-have. (A Rolex-only instalment of the "QP Bookshelf" is planned for the next issue.)

#### ⑤ **Chronograph Wristwatches to Stop Time** By *Gerd-R Lang & Reinhard Meis*

As with the Rolex book, this is one to consider once you feel that your affliction has gone beyond the casual. Probably the definitive work on the subject (Lang is the founder of Chronoswiss and one of the world's top chronograph collectors/experts), this book tells the history of this particular complication, delving deep into the technical aspects and wrapping the subject in an array of mouthwatering photographs. Chronographs are among the most fascinating and appealing of watches (collectors love to push buttons), so this book will fascinate a specific breed of enthusiast in the manner of the military and Rolex books above. By now you can see where the overlap is leading, and how collecting books about watches can become as overpowering and expensive a pursuit as acquiring the watches themselves. But this title is worth every penny if you favour chronographs above all other watch types. Trouble is, it will alert you to a few hundred watches that you *really must* own... ○

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**Next Issue:** Rolex books

**Further information:** For more information on any of these books, contact Rita Shenton Horological Booksellers, 142 Percy Road, Twickenham TW2 6JG. Tel: 020 8894 6888, Fax: 020 8893 8766