
1785
GIEVES
&
HAWKES
1771
GIEVES & HAWKES
VIGO STREET
NEW ARRIVALS
SAVILE
ROW W1

Arbiters of elegance

Despite facing many crises, Savile Row has upheld British style for 200 years

SAVILE Row is the most celebrated single-speciality street in the world, a handsomely preserved throwback to a bygone era of elegant luxury and a globally respected icon of English artisanal style. Bespoke tailors have occupied this narrow strip of Mayfair since the early 19th century. Fashions have come and gone, as have wartime bombing and multiple recessions, but the Row's skilful occupants kept sketching, cutting and stitching throughout. The coronavirus pandemic may be the toughest challenge they've ever faced, but the community is banding together to keep upholding London's sartorial superiority.

The Row has belonged to the Pollen Estate since 1764 and several early residents remain, such as Henry Poole & Co, whose business moved there in 1846, and Huntsman, which arrived three years later, although the 21st century has seen an influx of newcomers. Beyond the storefronts and the Chesterfield chairs are workshops where traditions are maintained while the world changes—by decree, each unit must produce at least 60% of the shop's output on the premises.

> 'We have an austere exterior, but inside it's not like that'

Seventh-generation tailor Simon Cundey joined his family firm, Henry Poole & Co, in 1988. The company invented the dinner jacket (in 1860 for the Prince of Wales and, later, for one of his friends from Tuxedo Park, New York), and the Prince of Wales check (this time not for the Prince of Wales, but for a lady client). Although the Row has made womenswear for some very prominent customers, it is no stranger to hard times. 'My father had to go down to three days a week during the 1961 recession,' says Mr Cundey. 'My grandfather traded through two world wars and the Great Depression. Great-grandfather? That'd be the Boer wars.'

William Skinner of Dege & Skinners, founded in 1865, calls this fight for survival 'World War Three', but says that 'at least this time we're not having V2s dropped on us'. On his wall hangs a photo of some jauntily dressed camels, tailored for the Sultan of Oman's pipe band. 'We can adapt to make all sorts of different things.' Among others, Dege & Skinners staff and many along Savile Row have been making PPE for NHS and care-home workers, who say they feel an extra sense of pride wearing scrubs with a prestige label. Some tailors have left handwritten thank you notes on the tags.

Facing page: **Savile Row is a British icon** *Above:* **Some shops are almost 200 years old**

Mr Skinner, who made wedding uniforms for both Prince William and Prince Harry, is also the chair of the Savile Row Bespoke Association, which was formed to protect the street and promote its virtues. He describes the Pollen Estate as 'very generous, helpful and understanding. We are a community and our shared passion is to maintain this unique destination for bespoke tailoring'. Looking at the current situation, he adds: 'I'm pretty certain this is a blip—one we can weather together. We're part of the DNA of the West End and we're very much open for business.'

The estate collectively promotes its tenants and has organised events in the Row that bring the brands together, such as the first Christmas lights switching-on soirée in 2019 and 2015's Wool Week, where sheep grazed in the road. These have proved enormously popular and attracted high-profile supporters, as well as new customers. Plans are now afoot to stage a motoring event, with each shop tied to a two or four-wheeled marque.

Huntsman was the inspiration behind Matthew Vaughn's 'Kingsman' action comedy films. The director-producer was brought to the shop by his mother to have his first suit made and that is when the seed for the film franchise was sown. Campbell Carey, head cutter and creative director of Huntsman, says the films have engaged a huge audience. 'It has opened their eyes to bespoke tailoring and made it look fun. We've also done a collaboration with Reebok. We've always innovated. We have this austere exterior, which I think is very intimidating, but once you're inside, it's not like that at all.'

Although many of the 'Kingsman' generation advocate sustainability, they often choose to buy fast fashion, despite its appalling track record on both the environment and staff treatment. The difference in price is vast, but Savile Row clothes are made to last and can be passed down the family. Huntsman offers a free refitting service if you come in with one of your father's suits. 'A lot of people baulk at a £6,000 price tag, but if a suit is well cared for, it's not expensive per wear. Increasingly, people like to know where their clothes are made and what they're made from.'

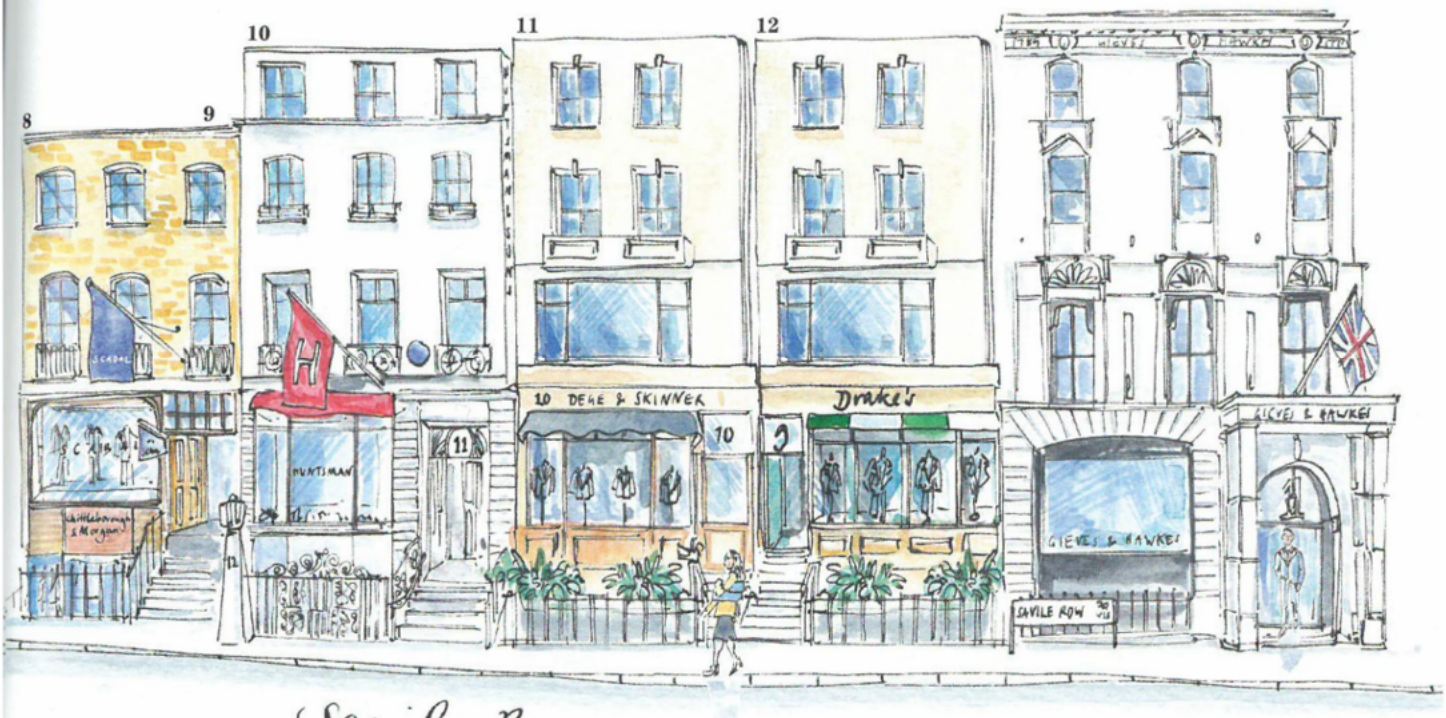
The Row's latest innovation is The Service, a coffee shop that takes care of the tailors' caffeine cravings. The idea is the brainchild of James Sleater of Cad & The Dandy, the tailors he established in 2008. Each label showcases a jacket at the shop, which also provides consultation space for those that have little to spare on their own premises because of social-distancing measures.

It also helps fuel the sense of camaraderie that has bound the tenants of this sliver of W1 for 200 years. It's that glue, says Mr Cundey, that will 'get us through the Covid crisis as one, with our craft intact. It's all about the craft and you can't have the craft without the retail'. The tailors are coming together to adapt to the new normal while preserving what makes Savile Row special. And they're ready to take your measurements.

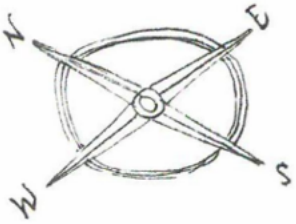
Making the cut

Meet the tailors and shoemakers that fly the flag for British style on Savile Row

1. Richard James: this British Fashion Council Designer and Bespoke Designer of the Year has been 'doing things differently' since 1992 and has moved from the smallest space on the Row to the biggest one (020–7434 0605; www.richard-james.com). **2. Welsh & Jefferies:** some would say this tailor's shop is a little untraditional: it combines intricate, bespoke techniques with outstanding modern cloths (020–7734 3062; www.welshandjefferies.com). **3. The Deck:** classical elegance meets modern femininity at this tailoring house by women for women (contact@thedecklondon.com; www.thedecklondon.com). **4. Norton & Sons:** founded in 1821, this Savile Row tailor creates bespoke and made-to-measure clothing for clients across the world (020–7437 0829; www.nortonandsons.co.uk). **5. Henry Poole:** among the founders of Savile Row, Henry Poole continues to offer pure, bespoke clothes that fuse timeless elegance with a modern approach (020–7734 5985; www.henrypoole.com). **6. Richard Anderson:** at this elegant house, traditional tailoring gets a fresh, contemporary twist (020–7734 0001; www.richardandersonltd.com). **7. Cad & The Dandy:** founded in 2008, Cad & The Dandy boasts a highly contemporary approach to bespoke tailoring both on Savile Row and at its New York and Stockholm shops (020–7434 4344; www.cadandthedandy.co.uk). **8. Chittleborough & Morgan:** style and elegance infuse this house's traditional bespoke tailoring (020–7437 6850; www.chittleboroughandmorgan.co.uk). **9. Scabal:** this company has been offering the finest-quality fabric and tailoring collections since 1938 (020–7734 8963; www.scabal.com). **10. Huntsman:** one of the most innovative, long-standing bespoke tailors on Savile Row, it has been creating some of the world's finest hand-crafted clothes since 1849 (020–7734 7441; www.huntsmansavilerow.com).



Savile Row



11. Dege & Skinner: set at the heart of the Row, Dege & Skinner have been bespoke tailors and shirt-makers for more than 150 years (020–7287 2941; www.dege-skinner.co.uk). **12. Drake's:** opened in 1977, this tailor's shop makes timeless pieces with an air of relaxed elegance (020–7734 2367; www.drakes.com). **13. Anderson & Sheppard:** these English-drape pióneers have been making flattering men's suits since 1906 (020–7734 1420; www.anderson-sheppard.co.uk). **14. Gaziano & Girling:** whether bespoke or ready-made, this company's shoes are sharp yet classic, with an edge rarely found in British shoe-making (020–7439 8717; www.gazianogirling.com). **15. Davies & Son:** established in 1803, this shop is a piece of refined British history (020–7434 3016; www.daviesandson.com).

One of a kind

The recent revival of interest in British craftsmanship has nothing to do with nostalgia and everything to do with creating unique work. **Arabella Youens** talks to designers about the infinite possibilities of making by hand

THERE is an emotional connection between the eye and the hand that has a transformative impact on anything it touches, from jewellery and joinery to tailoring and textiles. Before the Industrial Revolution, it contributed to the character of everything, from humble, everyday objects to more elevated pieces, and it helps to explain our enduring fixation with antiques.

Despite the rise of mass manufacture, modern craftsmanship continues to thrive and remains much in demand. Its appeal has nothing to do with nostalgia and everything to do with the possibilities it creates, not only for quality and longevity, but also for functionality and comfort beyond that which is dictated by a machine. The results are unique: suits cut to accommodate the shape of a shoulder, joinery made to suit the proportions of a space, a car upholstered in a client's chosen hide.

In the world of luxury, bespoke craftsmanship is a defining quality of the items made in the workshops of Bentley, Theo Fennell, Purdey, Holland & Holland and Huntsman, to name but a few. All work in a tradition that dates back centuries and which has the capacity to offer pleasure for centuries to come.

Automobiles

In an industry associated with the efficiency of the production line, the name Mulliner is a beacon of the long tradition of craftsmanship in British motor manufacturing. H. J. Mulliner, based in Bedford Park in west London, was a legendary name in British coachbuilding that could trace its roots to a business that hired out carriages and made saddles in Northampton in the late 18th century. Today, Bentley continues Mulliner's legendary tradition.

'The possibilities of bespoke production in the creation of a car are almost infinite,' says Stefan Sielaff, Bentley's director of design. It is those possibilities that are as evident in Bentley icons, such as the 1952 Mulliner R type, as it is in the exquisite form of the coachbuilt Bentley Bacalar, in which contemporary techniques and sustainable materials demonstrate the company's design capabilities as no other model does available today.

'The human involvement in making a car doesn't only create exciting opportunities, it also gives it a unique spirit,' he says. 'For this reason, none of the artisanal aspects in the production of anything bearing the Mulliner name are outsourced.' Details such as the embroidery are all done by hand in Crewe's factory, an artisanal approach that is intrinsic to everything Bentley produces, from the Continental to the new Flying Spur.

Guns

British-made guns have long been considered the finest available, thanks to a combination of expertise and enterprise. The genesis for this success began with Georgian gunmakers, such as Joseph Manton, who came up with the

Facing page: **Huntsman Savile Row tailors.** *Above:* **Fine gunmakers Holland & Holland**

concept of fitting a gun to a client. He trained a number of gunsmiths who would go on to make names for themselves, chief among them being James Purdey, who established his eponymous shop in 1814. It wasn't long before the British gun trade was renowned for its exacting standards.

As the 19th century progressed, country sports were made more accessible by better roads and, eventually, railways. As a result, gunmakers set up shop across the country to cater for the growing appetite, with the two main centres in London and Birmingham.

Although the Industrial Revolution sounded the eventual death knell for so many traditional crafts, a handful of fine gunmakers survived. The most resilient, such as Purdey and Holland & Holland, were those who were happy to embrace new technology.

Safety and confidence in a British-made gun was also paramount. 'Safety testing was considered to be more rigorous than some others, and that assisted in confidence in the products people bought,' notes Nicholas Harlow, gun-room manager of Purdey.

'Much like other bespoke products, British-made firearms are generally considered to be of a higher standard than comparable guns made elsewhere,' continues Dr Harlow. 'If made bespoke, the gun will have been constructed entirely to the client's requirements, from the wood used for the stock to the dimensions and embellishments of the finished product. However, a hallmark of a British bespoke gun is its shape and handling. They are, after all, practical products, not merely ornamental.'

Silver

Famous not only for its enigmatic hallmarkings, but also its exquisite artistry, British silver is the most collected in the world. Up until the 19th century, silver was made using traditional hand-wrought methods as special commissions for rich clientele. When mechanised methods became available, supported by a voracious Victorian appetite for decorative silverware, production exploded, but, fortunately, a nucleus of bespoke, hand-wrought workshops continued to operate.

Today, British silversmiths are 'imbued with the age-old traditions of our silversmithing heritage,' believes jewellery and silverware designer Theo Fennell, who has a workshop above his Fulham Road gallery, London SW3. 'The best are genuine craftspeople and artists, not merely a link in the chain of production.'

Citing historic pieces dating from the Saxon, Renaissance, Elizabethan and Victorian times, alongside fairgrounds, pictures, cathedrals and music as sources of inspiration for designs, what piques Mr Fennell's interest is solving the puzzle that is producing silverware for contemporary needs: think tomato-sauce sleeves and ice-cream tubs instead of nutmeg graters and finger bowls.

As well as bespoke trophies, the team has made everything from silver table services incorporating Roman soldiers to hot-air balloon-shaped bon-bon dishes. 'The skills we have at our disposal are extraordinary, so we can pretty much do anything.'

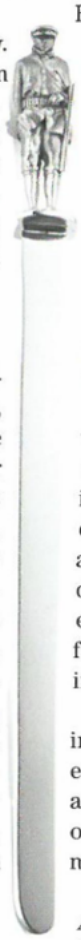
Jewellery

From the exalted crown to the modest hairpin via rings and pectoral breastplates, handmade one-off pieces of jewellery in a variety of materials have been fashioned on these shores for centuries.

Inevitably, industrialisation threatened handmade jewellery with extinction, but, thanks to visionaries such as C. R. Ashbee, who founded the Guild of Handicraft in London's East End to maintain traditional craft skills, many artisans rejected machine-based factory products and kept the old skills alive.

Today, British-made pieces are highly valued and sought after specifically for this exquisite craftmanship. 'I have often heard it said that the ultimate jewel is one that is designed by an Italian, styled by a Frenchman and crafted by an Englishman,' says jewellery designer Cassandra Goad, who adds that this expertise is the reason why many of Europe's finest jewellery houses maintain workshops in London.

Designing bespoke has always been an important part of her business, since it was established in 1985. Commissions include a bracelet decorated with the silhouettes of 10 grandchildren given to a grandmother on her 60th birthday and cufflinks ➤



Above: **A Theo Fennell silver paperknife.**
Below: **The Bentley Mulliner Bacalar**

Bespoke

A bespoke pebble pendant created by Cassandra Goad

made for a 30th wedding anniversary engraved with the detail of the tie worn by the groom on the wedding day. 'Jewellery is the ultimate expression of a gift of love between two people,' the designer emphasises. 'I love the challenge of translating a vision, a message or a feeling into something tangible and beautiful.'

Joinery

Once regarded as a functional part of a building, interior joinery became more decorative than merely structural during the medieval period. Bruce Hodgson, of bespoke cabinetmakers Artichoke, calls it the medieval equivalent of the supercar. 'The wealthier you were, the flashier your joinery became,' he explains.

In the Victorian era, public buildings were testament to Britain's wealth of joinery, tiling, brickwork, glazing, plasterwork and metalwork skills, but, at the turn of the 20th century, woodworking skills began to diminish. Now, however, Mr Hodgson believes that the future of bespoke joinery in this country is looking brighter. 'I believe we're on the cusp of an Arts-and-Crafts revival. After 20 years of extraordinary technological change, both in manufacturing and computing, there is an underlying feeling that people are yearning to get back to working with their hands to create real, tangible items of furniture that will last forever.'

Increasingly, his clients fall in love with a building and want to do the best by it, which includes investing in well-designed joinery. 'There's growing awareness of sustainability and things made with integrity, built to last,' he points out. Artichoke has bridged the gap between using traditional techniques and raw materials, but takes advantage of the technology that's available. 'It's a sensitive judgement call: deciding which process to introduce without losing the soul and essence of real craft.' When the balance is achieved, the possibilities are endless.

Tailoring

Thomas Hawkes was among the first tailors to establish himself in one of the newly developed houses in Savile Row. He came to London in 1760 and worked first as a runner before establishing his own shop, where he later tailored for the sartorial needs of George III. It was the French Revolution that gave British bespoke tailoring an opportunity to shine. With the demise of flamboyant aristocratic Court dress, fashions swung in favour of English country gentlemen's riding attire, an understated aesthetic that was espoused by George 'Beau' Brummell and gave birth to British bespoke tailoring as we know it today.

Above: **Gainsborough dyes its own silk yarns.** *Below:* **Huntsman is a leading bespoke tailor**

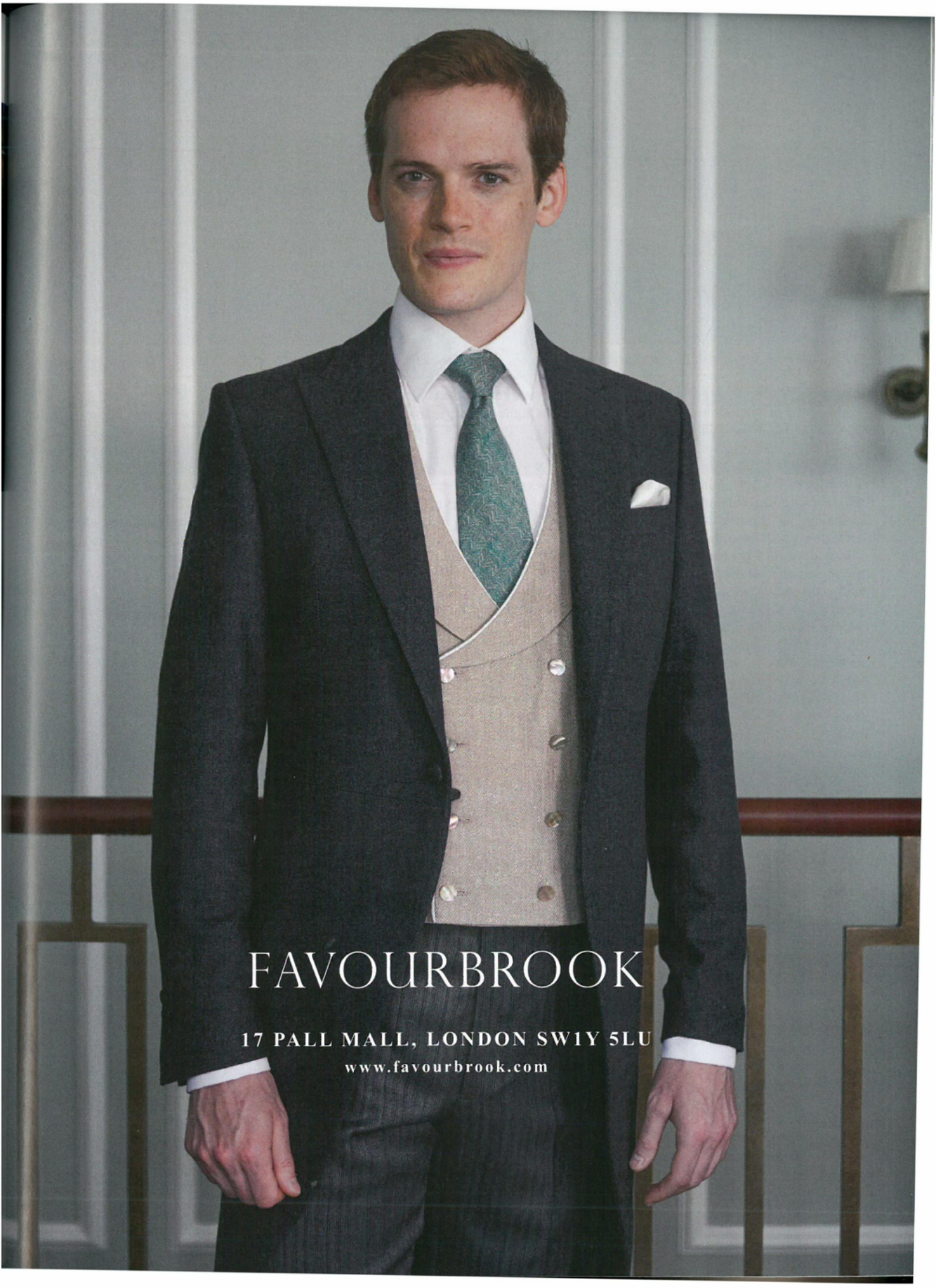
Savile Row, and the surrounding streets of Mayfair, have thus been home to the most prestigious bespoke tailoring houses in the world since the early 1800s. 'The area is the standard bearer that other tailors around the fashion world strive to emulate,' says Campbell Carey, creative director of Huntsman, a firm founded in 1849. 'The cut and silhouette of each of the houses, which has been honed and perfected through time, can be spotted not only around the West End, but all over the globe.' A bespoke Huntsman 1849 suit will typically involve up to 50 individual measurements, with the tailors assessing posture to accentuate best features and making subtle adjustments to the fit and hang. It also opens up the opportunity for personalising, adds Mr Campbell, suggesting hidden pockets for items such as a cigar, mobile phone, loose change or even an iPad.

Silk weaving

Standing in defiance of the Eastern dominance over the global market is a corner of Suffolk, where a micro silk-weaving industry is thriving. Its craftsmen fulfil singularly British requirements, from the gloves worn by jet-fighter pilots in the RAF to furnishing royal palaces.

That silk weaving in this country flourished and survived is thanks to our long-held status as a safe haven for economic and religious migrants. First introduced by talented Protestant artisans from the near Continent fleeing persecution in the 16th century, it was given a further shot in the arm after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, when French Huguenots established themselves in Spitalfields, east London.

Over the centuries, it has faced a number of threats, including silkworm diseases and the emergence of manmade fibres in the late 19th century. Production almost ground to a halt during the Second World War, when the raw-silk supplies from Japan were disrupted and new synthetic fibres were used to make stockings and parachutes. By then, however, a stronghold of highly skilled workers had formed in Sudbury. 'Today, the town produces 95% of all UK silk fabrics,' explains Neil Thomas of Gainsborough, among Britain's last remaining silk-weaving houses—and the only one still dyeing its own yarns. The business, established in 1903, stands at the forefront of bespoke British silk weaving, an appreciation for which has seldom been stronger. With an extensive archive, 80% of its commissions are one-offs. Not limited to working only with silk, the company made a cotton damask to celebrate Bentley's 100th anniversary. ➤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Bespoke

Above: **Inside the historic Tricker's factory in Northampton.** *Below:* **Vaara, the scent created by Penhaligon's for the Maharaja of Jodhpur**

Shoe- and boot-making

Northampton is Britain's historic cobbling capital, famous for its handmade shoes and for developing what is known as the Goodyear welt: a process of stitching thin strips of leather to the sole, midsole and upper of a shoe for added comfort and durability. Names such as Church's, Edward Green and Tricker's are still based in the town today.

Now in its fifth generation, the family-owned and run John Lobb Ltd (not to be confused with the ready-to-wear arm, John Lobb, a subsidiary of Hermès), makes bespoke handmade boots and shoes using the same methods and standards of craftsmanship that were employed in the 19th century. Each customer has their individual lasts—among the firm's collection are those made for Queen Victoria, Jackie Kennedy Onassis and Frank Sinatra—and it can take six months for the first pair to be delivered. According to Lobb, the result is 'as robust and loyal as a well-trained gundog'.

Although a pair of Lobb shoes might cost several thousand pounds, a less expensive route is to go for something made in the Goodyear-welted tradition. Although it is not entirely bespoke, the method involves 'a great deal of personalisation,' explains Euan Denholm of Edward Green, who adds that a made-to-order pair would start at about £1,250. 'The Goodyear welt makes for a practical shoe that is noticeably English in character—not too designed nor contrived, but distinguished with the finest materials, detailing and an elegant balance.'

Couture

When Norman Hartnell first opened his couture salon in the early 1920s, Paris was the undisputed leader in couture.

Members of British Society would travel to the French capital, where gowns were regarded as more cutting edge and of a higher quality than what was available here. 'Hartnell [who later went on to design The Queen's wedding dress] was at the forefront of London's battle to rival Paris,' explains couture fashion and bridal designer Stewart Parvin. 'Not only did he show his collections in Paris in the early years of his business, but he also employed several French staff, therefore creating a fairer comparison of the couture markets of both cities.'

Dior opened its own branch of its couture house in London in the 1950s and, until the early 1980s, the difference between Paris and London couture was stylistically relatively small. In the mid 1980s, with the emergence of the extravagant fashion shows being staged by Paris couture, London began to take more of a back seat. 'Paris offered showmanship and extravagant, often unwearable clothes for the avant-garde, whereas London offered exquisite, wearable clothes that were naturally more understated,' says Mr Parvin.

Today, London designers continue to uphold the tradition of exquisitely tailored, beautifully made outfits. Added to which, the price of buying in London, although not inexpensive, is a fraction of that of the big names in Paris. 'Compared with many deluxe ready-to-wear garments, something bespoke offers several benefits,' adds Mr Parvin, 'from the perfect fit to the adjustment of style to flatter the wearer, the sustainability through longer life and the added comfort of not bumping into other women wearing the same expensive outfit.'

The Queen wearing a coat designed by Stewart Parvin

Scent

Scent-wearing had a chequered history up until the 17th century. The Romans introduced fragrant herbs such as bay, which were worn to ward off disease, and the Crusaders brought back exotic fragrances from the Middle East. In the 17th century, the rich found the only smell to mask that of the unwashed poor was the civet cat; the discovery spawned the birth of perfumery in Britain.

Although there is evidence that Yardley's history goes back to the reign of Charles I, when a man of that name paid the King a sum to supply soap to the City of London, the world's oldest independent family-owned perfumier is Floris. Established in London by Menorcan Juan Famenias Floris in 1730, the company began by making individual scents for clients who were largely members of the aristocracy or the Royal Family.

Penhaligon's adds to the triumvirate of long-standing world-leading London-based scent companies. Celebrating its 150th anniversary this year, it was opened by William Penhaligon, a barber who arrived in London from Cornwall and established a barbershop in St James's. As the firm's reputation took hold, it began to work on creating bespoke colognes on commission. 'The first was in 1902, when the 9th Duke of Marlborough worked with Walter Penhaligon, son of the founder, to create what is today one of our most iconic fragrances, Blenheim Bouquet,' explains Penhaligon's CEO Lance Patterson. 'It was designed to capture his personality as a rather flamboyant character and remains one of our iconic fragrances and bestsellers.'

The tradition continues: in 2013, Penhaligon's was asked to make a fragrance by the Maharaja of Jodhpur. 'Our perfumer went to the city in Rajasthan to capture its scents and the result is named Vaara, after his granddaughter.' ➤