



THE ART AND CRAFT OF BESPOKE

The unequalled excellence of made-to-measure clothing



ABOVE Cloths and linings on the roll.
OPPOSITE Gieves & Hawkes, No.1 Savile Row.

THE WORDS 'bespoken' and 'bespeak' were first recorded in the late 16th century, coming from the Old Saxon *bisprecan*, meaning 'to speak out'. Originally, to bespeak of something had two meanings: to speak up against or oppose something; or to request, reserve or order goods. In the realm of the tailor a customer would *bespeak* a length of cloth. By the middle of the 18th century the verb had become an adjective, one describing an item that had been made to order, particularly tailored clothing.

King Charles II is credited with the invention of the suit in 1666: mindful of public opinion after a Civil War, the Plague and the Great Fire, he decreed that his courtiers should no longer wear French fashion with big wigs, high heels, and ruffled accessories, but instead a 'Persian vest' – a long waistcoat to be made of English wool – with knee-length breeches and a long coat. Its form was refined and popularised by Beau Brummell in the early 1800s. In Brummell's day, only the wealthy