



Basting a collar onto a fitting.

pocket, and it usually will, this should have a hand-stitched border. Front pockets must be top-stitched by hand. Buttonholes must be hand-sewn, and behind the left lapel buttonhole there should be a hand-sewn flower loop. Cuffs must feature an opening slit. Buttons should be attached by hand using a cross stitch. Finally, every Savile Row Bespoke garment must be sewn with inlays, additional cloth left in the seams, to allow adjustment to those seams (taking in, but mostly letting out) during the many long years of the garment's life. The process of cutting, sewing and fitting a bespoke coat can take upwards of 25 hours, with as many as seven highly skilled individuals (cutter, undercutter, trimmer, coat maker, alterations tailor, finisher and presser) having a hand in its creation.

On Savile Row, trousers are sewn by trouser makers, trouser finishers, trouser alteration tailors, and trouser pressers. A trouser maker serves an apprenticeship of two to three years. Just like the coat makers, they are trained under a master trouser maker and on completing their training they are examined by master tailors from other member houses of the Association.

Bespoke trousers must, like the bespoke coat, be hand-made. Pockets, band linings, and 'back curtains' must be sewn in by hand and seat seams hand-stitched. As with the coat, the finishing should also be made entirely by hand. The fly should be prick-stitched by hand, hems hand-sewn, buttonholes hand-sewn, and buttons sewn on by hand. As with the coat, bespoke trousers are not simply sewn, they are sculpted: calves stretched, back knees shrunk in. A bespoke pair of trousers should be adjustable over time, so waistbands and side seams must have significant inlays, typically enough for a combined adjustment (letting out) of up to three or four inches. The entire process of making a pair of bespoke trousers may take upwards of 10 hours and involves as many as seven skilled artisans, with the cutter, undercutter, and trimmer being the same people who work on the coat.

The excellence in making is just one part of the bespoke tailor's commitments to their customer. Beyond the process of making, the art of bespoke is also characterised by an unequalled level of service. Your bespoke tailor is an expert advisor on any and all aspects of formal men's dress. Need to attend the Lord Mayor's Banquet? A day at Royal Ascot? The Oscars, the BAFTAs, the Grammys? Your tailor makes sure that the dress code, and tone, are correct. They ensure that you do not stand out from the crowd for being either over- or under-dressed; that you are not photographed wearing your medals on the wrong side of your chest, as one famous footballer did at a royal wedding. Your tailor helps you build a beautiful wardrobe of clothes and helps you

the workshop with human form, a three-dimensional sculpture in cloth.

At the end of the making and fitting process, if the coat requires additional alteration, this is carried out by a specialist tailor skilled in altering coats. They only alter – they do not make – and only once all final adjustments are complete will the coat be passed to a finishing tailor for hand finishing. From there the coat is passed to a presser, who applies its final finishing press. Some coat makers sew on buttons themselves, others leave it to another member of the team, often a junior, to complete. And that is the coat, complete and ready for collection.

To bear the mark of the SRBA a bespoke coat must be made entirely by hand. Sewing machines are used for the sewing of seams, but all other sewing must be completed by hand. Jacket foreparts and collars must be fully hand-canvased and these canvases must be hand-cut and hand-formed. The top collar should be hand-drawn and stitched onto the facing. Sleeves must be set in by hand and armholes should have a lining that is dropped in. The coat must also be hand-finished. It must have its linings felled by hand, its vents (typically two, sometimes one, occasionally none) and its front edges must be prick-stitched by hand throughout. If it has a breast

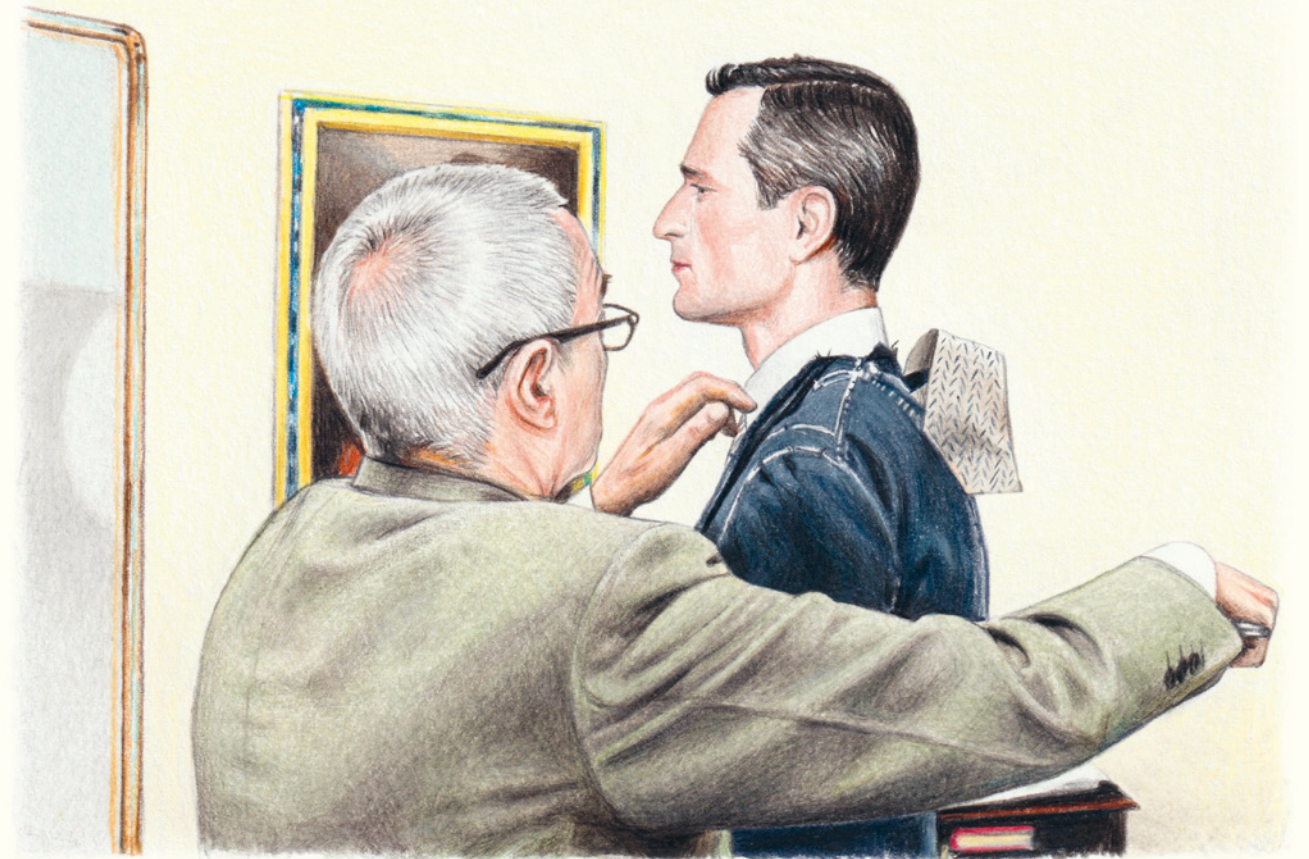
keep that wardrobe in beautiful condition. They advise on dry cleaning, shoe polishing, and clothes hanging. Tailors also service your clothes for as long as you, or whoever you pass them on to, continue to wear them. As most of us have been in business for a century or two, there's a very fair chance we'll be there to honour all of those commitments.

Your Savile Row bespoke tailor and his or her trusted cloth merchant keep a record of every cloth you have ever made anything from – not just the design but the individual piece, so that should a customer require a repair, or wish to add a second or third pair of trousers to accompany a coat, a precise match for the original cloth can be sourced. The cloth merchants who supply the tailors of Savile Row keep a small length of every piece of cloth sold (for a certain time period at least).

A bespoke tailor also offers an alteration and repair service for the clothes they have made. They let out and occasionally take in. They re-line and send moth holes

for repair by the very best invisible menders. If a coat is passed on, they can do a full re-cut. During my time in the Norton & Sons workrooms, we frequently saw clothing made 50 or more years ago come back for alterations and occasionally repairs – the oldest a riding coat dating from 1908.

A suit from Savile Row, in the right cloth, can last several lifetimes. It will be the best-made suit you ever wear, the best fitting, the most flattering, and it will certainly last longer than any other suit you own. Bespoke, as practised by the tailors of Savile Row, sets and upholds a standard that is unmatched by any other clothing maker anywhere in the world. •



A cutter removes a collar during a fitting.