

MEET THE MAKERS

The artisans of Savile Row



CHRIS KTORI
TROUSER MAKER

Chris Ktori came to London from Cyprus at age 16, having learned to make trousers from his father. On his arrival in the West End, he undertook a five-year apprenticeship with Savile Row trouser maker Louis Costandis before striking out on his own.

He moved into his compact workshop at the top of a steep flight of stairs on Kingly Street in Soho, just a few minutes' walk from Savile Row, in a lofty warren of workshops occupied by half a dozen other tailors. His workshop has 30 years of stories to tell through accumulated fit-ups and shelves filled with log slips. In the corner is a small fridge holding milk and oranges – no visit to Chris's workshop is complete without being given an orange to take away. Watching over him from a little shelf above his board is a photograph of his beloved daughter.

Chris has worked for many of the great names of Savile Row, including some 25 years for Norton & Sons, as well as H Huntsman & Sons; Anderson & Sheppard; Tommy Nutter, and later Chittleborough & Morgan; and Gieves & Hawkes. Over

the years he has tailored trousers for rock stars such as David Bowie and Charlie Watts of the Rolling Stones; giants of Hollywood such as Burt Lancaster and Jack Nicholson; and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and King Charles III. He has made for countless other famous and infamous men, but modestly claims he can't recall them. Despite being one of the world's best trouser makers, Chris doesn't make his own. It takes five to six hours of his time to make a pair, and he has to pay his finisher £95, so he buys them instead.

Sharing Chris's workroom is Oscar, his latest apprentice. Chris has had many apprentices pass through his workroom over the 61 years he has worked on Savile Row but he's lost count of exactly how many. •



RACHEL ALICE SMITH
COAT MAKER

Rachel Alice Smith started sewing at age six, when her mother bought her a sewing machine for Christmas. Her great-great-grandmother had been a shirt maker; both

her grandmother and mother were dress and pattern makers, and her mother even trained as a needlework teacher in the seventies, so making clothes is in the blood.

At 15, Rachel began teaching herself how to make clothes, creating a jacket for her older brother. A few years later she spent school holidays learning from Paul 'Griff' Griffiths, a former Anderson & Sheppard coat maker. Through his connections, on her 18th birthday Rachel began a formal apprenticeship on Savile Row at Dege & Skinner, working under the legendary Stefano Tornambe. Tornambe, who had been a tailor in Sicily since he was seven years old, was in his seventies by then and recognised Rachel's potential, admiring her beautiful hand sewing. After completing most of her training she moved to Norton & Sons, where she was mentored by Dennis Cooper, and formally completed her apprenticeship just before her 21st birthday.

Rachel is one of a fast-growing number of young female tailors slowly changing the gender balance and dynamic in the once very male and very white workshops of Savile Row. She has in turn passed on her skills to her apprentice, Kirsten McDove, one more in a growing lineage of exceptional female coat makers to have occupied the workrooms at Norton & Sons over the past 15 years.

During her career Rachel has worked on some unique and fascinating garments. She made Thom Yorke's suit coat for the video of his band Atoms for Peace's 2013 single, 'Ingenué'; worked with Norton & Sons Head Cutter, Nick Hammond, to create the world's first 'intelligent' coat as part of the Google Jacquard project in 2015; and made the coat Sam Smith wore to the 2016 Oscars to collect their award for best theme song for *James Bond: Spectre*. She was even asked to make a suit for a somewhat eccentric client's alien spaceship. She's made coats for Tommy Lee Jones, Jon Voight,

Bryan Adams, Michael Caine and Anne Hathaway.

Having taken a short time out to raise her daughter, Rachel is back working for Norton & Sons and Dege & Skinner, dividing her time between Savile Row and her home in Margate. •



FELICITY HAMACHER
WAISTCOAT MAKER

Felicity Hamacher was born and raised in Cologne, Germany, and taught herself to sew so that she could make herself costumes for the city's annual carnival. These were much admired by her friends, and after leaving school at 18 she decided to begin an apprenticeship at Roeben, a traditional bespoke tailors in the centre of the city. Here she trained for three years under Herr Roeben, and after finishing her studies she travelled to London where she walked into Anderson & Sheppard and asked if they needed any tailors. To her great delight, they did. Thanks to her slightly less-than-perfect English, she began as a finishing tailor and then moved on to alterations. One day they had many waistcoats to produce for a film and Anderson's one waistcoat maker was unable to finish them all. The foreman at the time, Mr Pitt, asked Felicity if she could help. Her waistcoats were so good that she has never made anything else since.

When she started a family a few years later, Felicity decided to work freelance,

continuing to serve Anderson & Sheppard and also other clients, including Brian Russell, who had worked for Anderson's for 20 years before setting up his own firm in Hanover Square. Through Brian she picked up Meyer & Mortimer, one job led to another, and in her nearly 30 years working for Savile Row she has made for H Huntsman & Sons; Gieves & Hawkes; and Norton & Sons, where she has been the principal waistcoat maker for many years.

She is not one for worrying about who she makes for, but in her time she's made for film stars including Tom Cruise and Ralph Fiennes; musicians including Elton John, Robbie Williams and Charlie Watts; as well as King Charles III. No matter who they are, she sews all the waistcoats with the same dedication and care. •



**LIZZIE WILLETT,
KATH MUIR,
& JACQUIE GRANT**
SHIRT MAKERS

SAM WAKELY
HEAD OF CUTTING

Lizzie Willett is Head of Sewing at the Emma Willis workshop in Gloucester, where she was born and raised in a sewing household, taught by her grandmother and mother. She studied textiles at school all the way up to 'A' Level and then took an Art Foundation course at SGS College

in Stroud, where she learned pattern cutting and full garment making. Through one of her tutors at Stroud she found out about and won the Emma Willis-Condé Nast Sewing Scholarship, a sponsored apprenticeship programme. Here she was taught shirt making by Kath Muir, who retired in March 2023 after many years as Head of Sewing at Emma Willis and Turnbull & Asser before that.

Kath Muir's career in sewing began in 1981 in Goole, Yorkshire, where she worked in the Meritina factory, making coats for Marks & Spencer. Six years later she moved to Gloucester and joined Turnbull & Asser, which had previously made all of its shirts in London and then acquired the Eagle Shirts factory to expand capacity. At the time it was making ready-to-wear shirts under the T & A name for upmarket department stores in the United States such as Bergdorf Goodman and Neiman Marcus, and for other brands including Burberry and Hawes & Curtis. Around 1994 they started to produce bespoke shirts, too, using the same method. Kath started with six months developing her skills on 'yoke to back'; six weeks on 'fronts'; a fortnight on sleeves; and then on to collars. Lizzie learned from Kath in the same way, section by section, learning and then working on each section to perfect her techniques over a year-long apprenticeship. On Kath's retirement, Lizzie took over her role as Head of Sewing after six years in the workroom. During her tenure at Emma Willis, Lizzie has made for King Charles III; for Benedict Cumberbatch at the Met Gala's 'Camp: Notes on Fashion'; and for Kenneth Branagh in his role as Hercule Poirot in *Murder on the Orient Express*.

Jacque Grant is the 'collar hand' – a specialist within the shirt-making workroom who makes collars and cuffs. Jacque left school in the early eighties and went straight to work at the Turnbull & Asser factory, where her talent for collars was quickly spotted.

Sam Wakely is Head of Cutting and began her shirt-making career in the sewing room before moving to patterns, where she cuts individual bespoke patterns for clients. She is responsible for cutting out the work as part of the workshop's three-person cutting team in the workshop. •