

Background Information

Foster & Son

We are long established fine bespoke shoemakers in St. James's and one of very few heritage firms in London today.

Our bespoke product is hand-crafted in the workshop above our Jermyn Street store and we also retail ready to wear shoes and other leather products.

We enjoy an international clientele spanning over 80 countries and travel widely to serve them.

Bespoke shoemaking is still our most important activity, but we are also well known for our ready to wear shoes, luggage, cases, wallets and ancillary goods.

History and Heritage

Our business has two strands of history:

Foster & Son traces its history back to 1840 and has always traded close to St. James's Palace, the source of Royal and aristocratic patronage since the 18th century. Over many decades we earned a reputation for fine "West End" style shoes and boots, with a strong following in the city, business and equestrian community. Our celebrated last maker Terry Moore further developed the refined toe shapes for which the company is best known today. The company was acquired by British Tar Products in 1990, but in 1999 they and Maxwell returned to private hands and are now in the 100% ownership of Richard Edgecliffe-Johnson.

Henry Maxwell, founded in 1750 as a spur maker, won royal warrants from every British monarch from George IV to H.M. The Queen and has been the favoured supplier to royal families, the equestrian market and many British regiments across the World. By the mid-20th century, based in Mayfair's Dover Street, Maxwell became the best-known English maker of hunting and riding boots as well as making bespoke shoes. The Huntsman tailoring group of Savile Row owned Maxwell for many years and it is now owned and managed by Richard Edgecliffe-Johnson as a Bespoke Tradition brand with its distinctive style, sharing the Foster production facilities.

Customers

The company's clients come from many countries and cultures. The Company supports its customers with frequent trunk shows especially to the United States and Asia. The USA is our biggest market overall for bespoke work, with a strong representation from bankers, lawyers, IT and entertainment industry professionals and established families. Japan is currently our biggest source of new bespoke work.

Our domestic English customers are drawn from all walks of life from peers of the realm to young professional and they have a healthy share of our walk-in trade. After

USA, Japan and the UK, no other market accounts for more than 5% of sales, so distribution is very wide across the globe.

The Foster & Son Product offering

Foster & Son's reputation comes from the skills and heritage of its bespoke workshop in Jermyn Street. The elegance and fit of a Foster bespoke shoe took generations to perfect and is the endowment of a skilled young team of makers.

A pair of our bespoke shoe usually takes over 6 months to make and a close-knit team is required to ensure that the customer's unique aspirations are fulfilled and the Company's standards are maintained. Because each pair of shoes is essentially a collaborative project between the shoemakers and the customer, our bespoke work builds close personal relationships and our service is rewarded by a high degree of loyalty from our clientele around the World.

How are bespoke shoes and boots made, compared to "ready to wear" shoes?

Our flagship **bespoke shoes** are handmade in the same way as 100 years ago, using the finest materials. Leather for the soles is supplied by an English oak bark tannery with a history stretching back to pre-Roman times, and for the uppers the finest leathers are sourced from around the World.

It is vital for the customer to be met personally, his or her feet measured and the specification and design agreed so that he or she receives a pair of completely unique shoes. Necessarily, this process takes time and typically the customer receives his shoes in 6 to 12 months

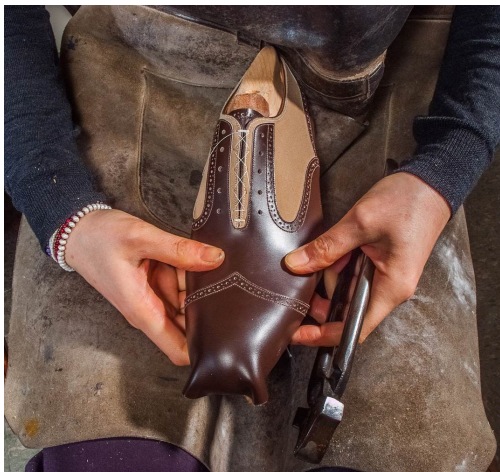


The making process consists of a number of stages, each of which requires years' of training and experience for a top quality result.

- 1) Measuring the customer's feet and making the beech wood last on which the shoes will be constructed. This is crucial, as everything depends on an accurate and aesthetically pleasing last.



- 2) Cutting the pattern and leather components. This is similar to the cutter in a Savile Row tailor and requires similar skills because of the complex three dimensional shapes to which the leather has to be fitted.
- 3) Applying punching and notching decoration, and stitching together the upper parts, called "Closing". This has to be precisely done so that the aesthetic is right and the uppers fit naturally to the curves of the last without stress on the leather.



- 4) Making the shoes. The uppers, inner sole and other components are temporarily attached to the last and are stitched together by hand using flax thread with an awl and a pig's bristle to draw the thread.

- 5) Finishing the shoes is also very important, as we aspire to deliver beautifully finished and polished shoes to our customers, often including customised fading or antiquing techniques.

The result is a unique shoe reflecting the maker's own personality, experience and skill as well as the customer's specifications.

Ready to wear "Bench Made" shoes:



Classic English men's leather shoes are mostly made in Northamptonshire by the Goodyear Welted process.

Essentially this process, invented by Charles Goodyear in the late 19th century, allows a factory made shoe to be repaired without stripping off the inner sole. A tough canvas and rubber rib is attached to the inner sole, which can be detached for repair.

For factory production, the shoes are built on standard lasts that are designed to fit the general public, instead of being uniquely tailored to the feet of one individual.

Although the shoes are factory made, a great deal of skill is required to make them, and they are often described as "handmade".

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Fashion” shoes, evening shoes, slippers and ladies’ shoes are usually made using adhesives. This is faster and cheaper than stitching, and produces a lighter weight shoe.

Cases and leather goods:

Foster & Son have a reputation of 50 years’ standing for briefcases, attaché cases and other leather goods, many of which are custom made to the client’s specifications. The company is also well

known for briefcase and shoe repair services.



The Brand portfolio

Our two main brands Henry Maxwell est.1750 and Foster & Son est. 1840 have the longest heritage of any London bespoke shoemakers.

Our brand integrity is strongly supported by historic royal warrants, distinguished client records etc, and a stylistic inheritance from our famous last maker Terry Moore.

The brands are complementary in that Maxwell offers a more traditional aesthetic based on its long equestrian, military and country sporting heritage while Foster is known for elegance and refinement in its toe shapes.

