

CUTTING ACROSS THE SEXES

KATHRYN SARGENT, the first female Head Cutter on Savile Row, interprets the language of business dress for Brunswick's **PATRICK HANDLEY**

"I was always drawn to men in suits"

"There's a lot a suit can do for a person. A bespoke suit should be an extension of your personality"

"When you see somebody who looks confident, comfortable in their clothing, that reflects in the way they behave as well"

"I don't think people realize just how much what they wear communicates about them. Especially if they're in the public eye"



KATHRYN SARGENT

Kathryn Sargent's career in bespoke tailoring began with an apprenticeship at Gieves & Hawkes on Savile Row in London. For centuries, men have been the craftsmen making suits – for their male clients – and not many women have felt cut out to be tailors. But within 13 years, Sargent was promoted to be Gieves' Head Cutter, the first woman to hold that position in the country. In 2012 she left Savile Row to open her own *atelier* (above) in Brook Street, and now makes suits for both men and women just a short walk from the famous street where she learned her trade.

PATRICK HANDLEY is a Partner in Brunswick's London office and co-heads the firm's Energy and Resources practice. Kathryn Sargent is his tailor. Her confidential notes on him read, "Prot. S/blades, VBL"; tailor-speak for "protruding shoulder blades, very bow-legged."

"Bespoke is not one suit fits all, it's not one method fits all. It's problem solving. Bespoke is a blank canvas. You're not working with anything that pre-exists – it's handmade completely from scratch. So you can do anything. It really is limitless"

"I'm very proud to have trained on Savile Row. But the businesses there have changed over the years. Many are now more global luxury brands than traditional tailors, whereas I'm just interested in the craft behind the trade. I am a tailoring geek"



SAVILE ROW

in central London was built in the 1730s, on land that had belonged to the 3rd Earl of Burlington.

It was named in honor of the Earl's wife, Lady Dorothy Savile. Tailors arrived on Savile Row in the early 19th century and theirs has remained the street's defining trade ever since.

Savile Row is world renowned for its bespoke tailoring. Bespoke garments are made on the premises from scratch and by hand. It takes approximately 50 hours to make one suit. Despite their name, "made-to-measure" suits are produced in a factory, and then altered in-store to fit the customer.

Savile Row's clientele has included many powerful and famous figures, from Lord Nelson to Ian Fleming, J.P. Morgan to Elton John and John F. Kennedy to Gregory Peck. The Beatles gave their final live performance on the rooftop of 3 Savile Row, above the offices of Apple, their record label. In their famous *Abbey Road* album cover, three of the four Beatles crossing the road are wearing Savile Row suits.

BRITISH BILL-DODGE

Winston Churchill is pictured below inspecting English coastal defenses during World War II. The July 1940 morale-boosting trip to Hartlepool in north-east England came less than two months after his famous, "We shall fight on the beaches" speech. He is posing with a Thompson submachine gun and wearing a Savile Row suit made by Henry Poole & Co.

The company recently discovered that Churchill had once refused to pay a bill of £197, equivalent to £12,000 (\$17,000) today. They have not held a grudge; the "Winston Churchill grey chalk stripe" is still sold today.



Right:
Winston Churchill
in a Savile Row suit

*“There is a formula,
for cutting a trouser,
the waist-measure,
seat-measure, outside leg,
inside leg. You make a grid
with a pencil and
set square – it’s fractions,
and you work on a scale.*

*The scale of a trouser
is half the seat, the scale
of a jacket is half the chest,
and you draft the pattern
proportionately.*

*Then you take into
consideration
the client’s shape:
bow-legged, knob-kneed,
high right hip,
sloping shoulders...”*

“I used to find really amazing tailored pieces in secondhand shops when I was a student. I would take them apart to see how they were made, then put them back together again. My tutors thought that was a bit mad. But how do you design something if you don’t know how it’s made?”



“I started as a trimmer at Gieves & Hawkes, the person who puts in all the buttons, linings and canvases when the cutter has cut the job.

When the suit comes to you, you put in all of that, bundle it up and give it to the tailors. And you keep stock – it’s stock control”



“There are rules for men: two-button, three-button, double-breasted, four-button cuff. You do this, you do that. You’ve got your trousers, you’ve got your buttons, there you are. You’ve got a framework. Men have been wearing suits for hundreds of years and it has evolved. And suits for women have evolved from menswear”

“Traditionally, you were brought in by your father – he told you what tailor to go to. Now everybody searches the internet before they meet you. My youngest client is 18 and I have many in their 20s”

“Some men come in and say, ‘I want to look like the king of the world. Give me a suit that makes me look powerful. What’s the boldest check you’ve got?’”

“A client said, ‘I don’t want to look like I’m too much in command. I want to be approachable.’ I said, ‘Don’t do stripes – and you need to be more open, less buttoned-up. Think about having your suit a bit looser rather than overly fitted, so you look more relaxed. And try pleating your trouser – that way the cloth’s going to flow when you move. That will work’”



Bespoke career

“Even though I didn’t really want to do womenswear, I started making things for myself. And I got a lot of pleasure from wearing garments that were handmade. Clients would ask me, ‘Where did you get your suit?’ And then, ‘There’s a woman I work with who’s always trying to find something’ or, ‘Can I send my girlfriend?’ And I said, ‘Absolutely.’ It started like that”



“A client tells me she gets respect from male colleagues when she wears a bespoke suit. *‘Is that gray herringbone? Where is your tailor? Oh, London! Savile Row!’ It gets you automatic acceptance. She calls it her armor. She feels comfortable because it fits her and it’s very sharp and it’s going to last her”*

“Gieves & Hawkes has a masculine history, but I trained there. I have that experience of tradition. I wanted to put my stamp on that and for my *atelier* to be a very open and welcoming place”

“How much does all this cost? My prices start at £4,220 (\$6,000) for a two-piece bespoke suit, and £2,970 (\$4,250) for a sports coat or blazer”



WHAT’S IN A NAME?

“When people talk about going to see their tailor, they’re not. They’re actually going to see their cutter. I am a cutter. I measure the client, advise them on style, cut the pattern and cut the material. Then I send it to the trimmer and *then* it goes to my tailor. The tailor actually does the sewing. When the garments are basted together, I do the fittings and alterations. I’ll rip down the suit completely flat, remark it, and then it will go back to the tailor. When you walk down Savile Row, and look down into the basements, the people you see there are tailors. The cutter is client-facing. But when people ask me what I do, I say, ‘I’m a tailor.’ Because if I say a cutter they don’t understand”

Left: “Derek,” Kathryn Sargent’s mascot