



# THOMAS SILK TAILORS & SHIRTMAKERS

**T**his bespoke tailoring company trades on Chapel St in the historic Caxton Hall at the side of Sacred Trinity Church. The impressive building was built in 1907 for the Typographical Society in Manchester. It was named after Caxton, inventor of the printing press. The building was hired out to socialists and trade union activists for many years and was an important venue for the labour movement.

The shop front has a look of London's Saville Row and invites anyone passing by to peer through the window and ask what happens here? Owners David Williams and Jonathan Gill have been business partners for 40 years. They specialise in hand made suits and shirts and list barristers, businessmen and military personnel as their regular customers.

We chatted with David Gill about his past. "I started making shirts for a company owned by Mike Summerbee (Ex Man city and England player). He remembers "It was an exciting time for me - our customers were all big stars at the time - Bruce Forsyth, Jimmy Tarbuck and Michael Crawford and most of the "A" list footballers." He started his own business, in partnership with Jonathan Gill forty years ago.

"It was previously in Booth Street, Manchester and later Back Pool Fold, off Cross Street. We have been on Chapel St for about 10 years now and in our current premise 5 years" The company uses British wools for its suits, sourcing from the few Yorkshire mills still producing high quality fabrics. The shirting fabrics are all 'finished'

in European plants as sadly, the U.K. no longer has the capacity for this.

"Our customers are spread all over the U.K. and often send repeat orders through for new shirts selected for the fabric swatches we send to them. Double cuffs, single cuffs, removable and fixed collars, dress shirts, depending on their line of work".

The pair still deal with the new celebrities "we supplied many shirts to the Harry Potter film franchise up to and including film no 8." He added "We had to deliver the first batch to the film set with a delivery address The field next to the barn, \*\*\*\* Road, Yorkshire and a post code, it was a bit scary, but they all arrived safely." Other customers on their list include Glyndebourne, Royal Shakespeare Company and a least a couple of Dr Who's."

We moved on to chat about the future and although David thinks business is not going to be easy, he is pleased to see the developments in Salford "new businesses are moving in and the new apartments are bringing in young professionals who can see the value in made to measure suits and shirts"

He even sees some value in the recent traffic congestion on Chapel St. He has had new customers come in and place orders he says" they spent so long sitting outside the shop in their cars, looking at our premises, they decided to come in at a later date and see what we could offer them," he quickly added "not so nice for the poor motorist, but good for local businesses".

Visit Thomas Silk at Caxton Hall, 88-90 Chapel Street, M3 5DW telephone 0161 832 4077