

The Cambridge School of Tailoring

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Preface

Before you lies the written part of The Cambridge School of Tailoring thesis project, focussing on the culture of dress in Cambridge, the United Kingdom. This thesis has been written to fulfill the requirements of the MSc Architecture, Urbanism, and Building Sciences programme at Delft University of Technology. I have worked on this written thesis from February to September of 2017, for a 2018 graduation.

This research has been done in the Explore Lab studio, under supervision of Leontine de Wit, Irene Cieraad, en Hubert van der Meel, and continues work from my period at Wolfson College and The University of Cambridge's Architecture Department. With the great help and enthusiasm of my supervisors, I have managed to do this project, that was so special to me, and I would like to thank them for that.

A great many people have helped me do this research, and write this thesis. In particular I would like to thank Ingrid Schröder and Aram Mooradian, who have helped and inspired me during my time in Cambridge, and continued to so afterwards. The Cambridge University Library has been very helpful, in granting me access to the rare books and manuscript rooms, to see some wonderfully inspiring documents. A massive thanks goes out to all those who took the time to share their insights and to answer my questions: Tim Morsink, Jolien Vermeulen, Hilde Taverne and the Downing College boat crew, the Ede & Ravenscroft Cambridge staff, Toby Clements, the Arthur Shepherd staff, the whole team at the V&A Clothworkers' Centre, Cindy Lawford, the Gieves & Hawkes staff, David Goggins, Kimberley Megan Lawton, Krishan Chudasama, Bas Suurland, Roel Wolbrink, and Frans van Veen.

Last but not least, thanks to my family, friends, and fellow students. Your motivation and company have been very stimulating in this final period of my studies in Delft.

I hope you enjoy reading this.

Stef Dingen
October, 2017



*The President and the Praelector
request the pleasure of your company at*

Matriculation Lunch

on Saturday 16 January 2016

12.30pm for 1.00pm in the Combination Room

*Please reply to Jane Reilly (praelector-secretary@wolfson.cam.ac.uk) by 5.00pm on Monday 4 January 2016
confirming whether or not you will attend the dinner and include any special dietary requirements.*

Dress: suit (with jacket and tie) for men and smart day wear for women, or national dress.

Please wear an academic gown if you have one

*fig. 1 (bottom): The official invitation for matriculation lunch as sent by Wolfson College's praelector's secretary
fig. 2 (top): A photo of me, in suit and gown, right before lunch would commence in the Combination Room.*

0 Introduction

0.1 First Encounters

I arrived in Cambridge on the early morning of the twelfth of January. I was set to become a visiting junior member at Wolfson College, which at fifty years old, is one of the younger colleges affiliated to the University of Cambridge. Getting off the train at Cambridge Station, it puzzled me that Wolfson College did not seem to have a clear address. The only thing I knew, was that it was located somewhere on Barton Road. I reckoned I should just ask my taxi driver to take me there, as I could not provide him with a complete address myself. He immediately knew where to go though; evidently, stating a college is enough of an address for a chauffeur in Cambridge. The short drive from the station led me through what seemed like street after street of language schools,¹ as well as a remarkably big, green zone, from which I could see the gothic pinnacles of King's College Chapel looming in the distance. Wolfson looked nothing like King's College, that I knew from Google, but I was not sure what to expect behind the iron gates I was approaching.

What I did know, was that those gates provided entry to one of thirty one autonomous institutions officially tied to the University, and that any new student at the University of Cambridge, would have to be a member of one of these so-called colleges. As a visiting, foreign student, I was assigned a college by the University's International Office, and I did not know exactly what its role would be, except for providing me with a place to live. In any case, the campus I found behind those iron gates, like the images online had suggested already, looked more like that of a generic University out of an American college movie, than a section of one of the world's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education. The gardens looked exquisite, and the buildings organised around a couple of open courtyards seemed to be maintained carefully, but the whole complex hardly looked like a breeding ground for Nobel Prize winners and future world leaders.

However, at midday, I received a formal invitation from the praelector's secretary, requesting the pleasure of my company at the Matriculation lunch that weekend. I was explained that Matriculation is the ceremony where a student becomes an official member of his or her college; it is one of Cambridge's many traditions, even at the younger colleges, as it turned out. The invitation (fig. 1) was very clear about what I, and fellow invitees, were required to wear:

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fig. 3: First encounters; one of many language schools, King's Chapel looming behind green fields, Wolfson College gates, one of Wolfson College's courts, the Architecture Department, the Fitzwilliam Museum, St Catharine's College from Trumpington Street, King's Chapel from King's Parade, Clare College's old court.

Introduction

“Dress: suit (jacket and tie) for men and smart daywear for women, or national dress. Please wear an academic gown if you have one.” Going to Cambridge I did expect I was going to have some formal events, so I had packed a couple of blazers and smart trousers. However, I did not expect to wear a full suit in my first week there. I had never even owned a suit, yet there was this invitation that required me to wear one. With the seemingly anachronistic addition of an academic gown, not to forget. Before I had even seen the physical core of this historic University town, I had already been exposed to an immaterial element its local culture.

Shortly after receiving this invitation, I had a meeting planned with my fellow Dutch exchange student Anna, who would also stay in Cambridge for two terms, and my departmental supervisor at the Faculty of Art History and Architecture. I walked from my college, over those green fields I had been driven through a few hours before, to the faculty building on the edge of Cambridge’s historic centre. At the department is also where I met fellow Cambridge students for the first time; two guys, one British Asian and a Latvian. They inquired what college Anna and I were a member of, as would become the norm when meeting another Cantab, before inviting us to meet some other course mates in a café in town. I remember being absolutely overwhelmed by what I saw on our way there (fig. 3). Looking back at that first walk into the city centre, I think of Caroline Calloway, an American author, who gained Instagram fame by documenting her time in Cambridge on social media. She would describe the city as follows: “But here’s the crazy thing about Cambridge. There’s not just one castle. There’s not even ten castles. Cambridge is a city of castles.”²

Passing by the Fitzwilliam Museum first, then Peterhouse College, “the oldest of them all” as my coursemate Luke said, the grand Pitt Building, Pembroke College, St Catharine’s College, Corpus Christi College, and eventually King’s College with its magnificent chapel, the one from architectural history class, I was amazed by this seemingly endless sequence of what Calloway called castles. These old colleges looked impressive, closed to outsiders, and absolutely worthy Nobel Prize homes. Very different from Wolfson. As I walked into the centre, I was similarly struck by *Ede & Ravenscroft* and *Ryder & Amies*, two stores that seemed to be selling the type of gown I would have to get for my matriculation, and some charming old book shops, which made me feel like I was thrown back in time. The route from the Architecture Department to a tiny coffee shop called *Indigo*, was short, and simple, yet I doubt I would have been able to find my way back without consulting my iPhone.

The group of course mates I met in the café consisted of one Italian and two English girls, as well as one British Dutch and one British Turkish guy. We exchanged some small talk, the college question came up again, and they quickly tried to emphasise that Cambridge is not the upper-class bastion it is sometimes made out to be. They talked about the occasional Public School guy, but that phrase was just confusing to me. How could public school be so posh? Anyway, none of them had done their undergraduate in Cambridge, a couple went to Bath, one did Cardiff, another some school in London, but all of them seemed to have fallen in love with Cambridge in the few months they had been there. No wonder they were eager to show us around a bit. This is when I learned something else; the Cambridge student card I had received that morning, was a valuable piece of plastic: it opened doors. Literally.

As I learned then, the impressive castles I saw everywhere, are not always open to the general public, and definitely not for free. However, when your face and name are printed on a Cam Card, your chances of entry are a whole lot bigger. These colleges turned out to hold functioning libraries, seminar rooms, and professor’s offices among others, and thus need to be

accessible by all University members. That first afternoon I remember passing by Gonville and Caius College, behind Senate House, to go to Clare College, which I could enter after showing my card. Yet again, I was amazed. Behind these closed college walls, big doors, and even bigger gates, was a peaceful court with four immaculately manicured lawns, and wonderful seventeenth century facades. It felt strange and humbling to be there, or in Cambridge at all.

That evening, when Anna and I were sharing our first experiences of this – frankly – bizarre place with each other, we saw them for the first time, fluttering around the picturesque streets. Students and professors alike had dressed up, in suits, dresses and sober, black, academical robes, to engage in, as we had just learned from our coursemates, the tradition of formal hall dining (fig. 4). Against the backdrop of King's College chapel and with hardly anyone else out on the street, this sight was quite surreal. It was almost as if Anna and myself were the anachronistic ones, and not the other way around. We also knew that it was our own turn soon. Even if the both of us were members of younger colleges, without chapels like King's, or a court like Clare's, we too would wear a traditional gown for matriculation.

My first week in Cambridge flew by, in a flurry of introductions at the department, pub visits with course mates, and dinner in my college dining hall with new friends. As I went, I tried to pick up on distinctive local slang, and learn about various traditions, while also practically settling in. Soon it was Friday, late in the afternoon, and I still needed a suit and gown. During that week I had seen remarkably many stores selling suits and formal dress around town, but I decided to just go to Topman, the chain I knew. I ran in just before it would close, took some suits and shirts in a range of different sizes to try on, and found a decent fitting outfit, right in time. Early in the next morning I went to Ryder & Amies for a gown, the final garment I needed. The past few evenings I had seen different kinds of gowns on the streets. Sleeves seemed to differ from each other, as did hem lengths, but I was clueless as to which specific one I would need. "Undergraduate?" the salesman asked (no), "aged twenty four or over?" he continued (no): I was supposed to wear the BA gown.

I opted for a second-hand polyester robe, paid the £55 owed, and rushed back to college. I changed quickly to meet my new friends before pre-drinks would commence, as we wanted to take some photos in our gowns (fig. 2). Subsequently we went to the Old Combination Room, where the President of Wolfson, renowned historian Sir Richard Evans, and several other fellows of the college, welcomed us with a glass of champagne. The students matriculating this afternoon were a diverse mix of men and women from various countries around the world. There were a few Brits, some Chinese, an American, and a German, ranging in subject from law to chemical engineering. Where the University's faculties and departments cater to students from specific subjects, colleges can have members from any course. When we moved from the Old Combination Room to the New Combination Room, where a table was set with monogrammed silver and crystal, each of us was led to an assigned seat. Only after President Evans had said grace, we could all sit down. Although the formality of this luncheon took some getting used to, I enjoyed my afternoon thoroughly.

In the months that followed, I took every chance I could, to go to as many formal hall dinners at various of the older and younger colleges in Cambridge. I did not get to go to all thirty one, a challenge popular among undergraduates, but I went to a nice selection. After all, even though my Cam Card granted me access to college grounds during the day, it remained special to dress up and be a dining guest, at night. How could it not be special to dine in St John's magnificent hall with multiple Van Dycks on the walls? Or to be sat at High Table, among



fig. 4: A scene of two students in gowns walking towards the entrance gate of King's College for a formal hall dinner. This sight is not unlike what Anna and I had seen on our first evening in Cambridge.

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fig. 5: Stills from ‘Chariots of Fire’ (top), ‘The Theory of Everything’ (centre), and ‘The Man Who Knew Infinity’ (bottom); movies set in Cambridge, which show a variety of traditional student garments.

some of the world's leading academics, at Girton? Or to learn about the Isle of Mann under Fitzwilliam's brutalist ceiling? I had never actively engaged in student life in Delft before, but in Cambridge all of this just seemed to be a natural and integral part of the experience. However mysterious and unique it was, or may have seemed.

The idea that something like formal hall, which looked so foreign and extraordinary to me at first, became almost normal very quickly, reflects that the University of Cambridge and each of its colleges really just are living institutions. They are more than their histories of excellence and castles. The tourist in awe I was on my first day, soon transformed into one of many Cambridge students, who took shortcuts through college grounds, to avoid large groups of actual tourists on King's Parade and Trumpington Street. Indeed, there was no denying that Cambridge's student life was endlessly intriguing not just to new insiders such as Anna and myself, but also to hordes of visitors, as many of them came to get a glimpse of university life there each day. They would swarm around King's and Trinity College in the morning, perhaps take a tour over the river in the afternoon, to leave again before evening had even fallen.

0.2 Research

As I got immersed in the still current culture of dress in Cambridge, I realised that various types of traditional clothing are, and have indeed been, an integral part of Cambridge's visual identity and student culture, for a long time. This seemed true in the case of academical dress, which I had been wearing myself, but also for formal dress (fig. 7) and traditional sports clothes, which I regularly saw around town. This notion is perhaps best reflected in the representation of Cambridge in a number of publications and moving pictures, which are being read and watched by a worldwide audience. Deliberately or not, clothes play a very visible role in these renditions too.

Charles Darwin's granddaughter Gwen Raverat may be one of the most explicit authors in regards to local fashions, as she devoted an entire chapter of her 1951 memoirs about growing up in late nineteenth century Cambridge, to clothes.³ For comparison, traditional student garments also play less obvious roles in such diverse books as Whipplesnaith's *Night Climbers Guide to Cambridge* (1937), E.M. Forster's *Maurice* (1971), and Laura Barnell's *The Versions of Us* (2015). A classic example of Cambridge in cinema would be *Chariots of Fire*, the 1981 Academy Award winner for Best Picture, which shows Cambridge's undergraduate sports culture most visibly through the wearing of sports blazers and straw boater hats. In recent Cambridge films, such as *The Theory of Everything* (2014), and *The Man Who Knew Infinity* (2015), the regular appearances of students and academical staff in gowns, bow ties and tails, similarly support the notion that different types of dress are important visual markers of the University of Cambridge's culture (fig. 5).

The idea that clothes carry meaning beyond merely covering our bodies goes back to the late nineteenth century, when figures such as Thorstein Veblen, Georg Simmel, and later John Flügel started theorising fashion. They related modes of dress to social structures, time and place, and their theories have been built upon in subsequent decades.⁴ Clothes as such, become reflective of society over time, and they can thus be an interesting starting point for researching a place as charged with tradition as Cambridge. Even the brief glance upon the University of Cambridge and its culture of dress I offered before, seems to validate some of what fashion theorists suggest. In describing my own experience of Cambridge, I implicitly touched upon

themes such as tradition, class, ethnicity and gender, all of which have left their mark on the University town; its local culture of dress, and to some extent even in the built environment.

Ultimately, for all of the socio-cultural symbolism of clothes, they are also just commodities. Clothes as such have economic meaning, and thus carry the potential to assert a physical presence wherever there is a specific demand. Understood like this, spaces of production and consumption become more obvious physical manifestations of clothing's embodied meanings. Hence, in Cambridge's case, dress customs ingrained in local student culture, e.g. formal hall dining, have meant that tailors and robemakers have historically dominated Cambridge's central shopping streets.⁵ Resultingly, the distinctly English trade of bespoke tailoring bloomed in a provincial town famous for its academic performance.

This research and design project aims to highlight Cambridge's culture of dress, specifically considering British bespoke tailoring, by researching the viability of a new institute dedicated to the craft. To be able to answer the question 'Is there a future for a School of Tailoring in Cambridge?', multiple sub questions will need to be answered. Firstly, to understand the embodied meanings of dress, and therefore what aspects are important to take into account along the way; 'Why do clothes matter?' Secondly, in an attempt to understand the specific local context better; 'How did Cambridge's culture of dress develop?' Historical developments at the University are linked to notable changes in types of dress and dress customs, and the culture's current state is evaluated as well. Thirdly, production and consumption of British bespoke, both in Cambridge specifically and in London, the epicentre of the trade, are focussed on, by asking 'How did the British bespoke tradition develop?' Finally, recommendations of various industry professionals, economic and socio-cultural trends, and local constraints in Cambridge, help answer 'What should a Cambridge School of Tailoring be?'

Literature will provide the means to provide a framework of fashion theory, as well as a historical and sociocultural background to the University of Cambridge and its customs of dress. The latter will be enriched by (non)fictional accounts of student life over time. As the University of Oxford shares many of the same characteristics with its rival in Cambridge, sources covering dress and the collegiate tradition in Oxford, or more generally Oxbridge, will be employed when necessary as well. An image of the state of Cambridge's culture of dress and the tailoring business today, and their respective potential futures, is painted through (digital) observations, site visits and interviews with a variety of industry professionals, including salesmen, tailors, an apprentice and a teacher, in Amsterdam, London and Cambridge (fig. 6). My own experiences on key locations, like London's Savile Row, are audited by comparing it with other people's insights in written sources.

The Cambridge School of Tailoring project aims to create an understanding of the possible implications of dress upon space, by looking into a very specific case in Cambridge, England. It touches upon its direct effects on the physical context, as well as our perception of it, and within the private, communal and public realms, as the production, consumption, and wearing of garments are taken into account. This project takes notion of the cultural, economic, and social developments of the fashion industry at large, and tailoring specifically, as well as local issues in Cambridge. The proposal described in chapter four is the basis for the design project that is done in relation to this dissertation.



fig. 6: l.t.r. t.t.b. Krishan Chudasama, Roel Wolbrink, Tim Morsink, David Goggins, Jolien Vermeulen, Frans van Veen, and Kathryn Sargent are among the industry professionals who have kindly shared their knowledge with me.



fig. 7: Student in white tie, supposedly on his way to club dinner, walking in front of Pembroke College. On the streets around dinner time is when outsiders can get a glimpse of Cambridge's dress customs.



fig. 8: Queen Elizabeth II's coronation gown on the left, and Christian Dior's tulip dress on the right, are examples of 'fixed' and 'modish' garments respectively.

1 Why Fashion Matters

The idea that fashion can be valuable in any way is often contested, and starts perhaps with the ambiguous definition of the word in itself. Different meanings of the word and its connection with related words such as style and adornment, suggest that in fashion form and content are separable and that fashion thus is unimportant. Simply put, the authentic person, or content, is physically separable from the clothes, or form, he or she wears, making their supposed relation fragile.¹ Especially in relation to the glamorous fashion industry that people often connect to the word fashion, which as Cécile Narinx justly points out is only a minor part of the social and cultural phenomenon of dressing oneself, the notion that clothing is merely an ever shifting mask may easily become prevalent.² However, the idea that someone, whether clothed or naked, always appears in a certain way, implies that form and content are not in fact that separable beyond the notion of physically separating one's body from garments.³ In other words, form is inherently valuable and thus arguably so is fashion.

According to Georg Simmel “two social tendencies are essential to the establishment of fashion” and although these two tendencies are somewhat paradoxical “fashion will not be formed” if either of these is lacking. The first is what Simmel calls the “differentiating impulse”; the need for isolation, while the second is the “socialising impulse”; the need for union. In societies with simple class structures, such as primitive ones, the socialising impulse is much bigger than the differentiating impulse, which results in no fashion being formed. Transversely, in societies with complex hierarchical class structures, the need for differentiation within a social group (or subgroup) becomes bigger, and fashion is formed. The more complex a society is, and hence the stronger the differentiation impulse within a society becomes, the more the temporal process of types of clothing becoming fashionable and going out of fashion again is accelerated.⁴ Fashion, as opposed to what Simmel would call anti-fashion, thus accumulates meaning beyond the primal or physical, and becomes a cultural marker bearing social and economic significance as well.

Continuing on the idea of fashion versus anti-fashion is John Flügel who also relates – respectively – modish and fixed clothing to societal organisation, but explicitly in societies' relationship to space and time.⁵ He writes that fixed clothing “changes slowly in time (...) but varies greatly in space,” in exact opposite of modish clothing, which “changes rapidly in time

(...) but varies comparatively little in space.”⁶ Indeed, still today, local costumes of indigenous cultures all around the world vary vastly, whereas leading Western fashions hardly differ from one major capitol to another. The conversation between fashion versus anti-fashion, or modish clothing versus fixed clothing, seems to deal with the tension between the local and the global, between tradition and modernity. Polhemus and Proctor illustrate this same idea in a modern, Western setting by using Queen Elizabeth II’s coronation gown as an example of anti-fashion, paired with Christian Dior’s tulip dress as an example of fashion. The coronation gown represents continuity of the British monarchy, whereas Dior’s fresh, post-war New Look, stands for progress, and challenges tradition (fig. 8).⁷

The relation between the ideas of fixed and modish clothing, and space, becomes perhaps even more apparent when one looks at man-made boundaries within our modern and increasingly diverse society. In places where people from different religious, socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds meet, so much as a wall can determine whether garments are perfectly appropriate or utterly inappropriate. Especially sacred spaces, such as mosques, churches and synagogues, as beacons of tradition and continuity, tend to share a set of values more connected to fixed values of what is appropriate, than contemporary fashion per se. Although these values may be valid within the confines of those semi-public institutions, they may not always be in the greater public realm, which is generally characterised by a more democratic and modish idea of what can or cannot be worn.⁸

But then, it remains a topic of discussion whether fashion can ever be democratic. Thorstein Veblen firmly opposes that notion, and considers it the embodiment of the exact opposite. Fashion, as he sees it, is primarily used to display one’s wealth and superiority over others. Additionally it represents conspicuous consumption, leisure and waste, envy through emulation, and the oppression of women.⁹ This, he specifically states, is true not per se for one clearly defined lower class and one clearly defined upper class, but rather for each class and the class directly above it on the social ladder.¹⁰ As Simmel theorises, fashions are adopted by the upper classes first, and slowly trickle down via the middle classes to the lower classes. Once they have reached the lower classes, the upper class has already adopted a new style, and the process starts all over again. Jean-Jacques Rousseau similarly supports the idea that possessions, such as garments, create social hierarchies. His ideas are especially interesting in terms of their spatial implication, as he mentions the importance of one’s transition from isolation into society, when considering how people start comparing themselves based upon “wealth, nobility or rank, power and personal merit.”¹¹

A clear summary of different meanings clothes can carry, and thus also to some extent a set of attributes upon which people could compare themselves, is offered by Cécile Narinx in ‘Dit Boek Gaat Niet Over Mode.’ Indeed, socio-economic background is one of them, as is gender, which is explicitly mentioned by Veblen as a characteristic with oppressive effects. She also summarises that garments can say something about its wearer’s personality or identity, aspirations, cultural background and need for psychological and physical protection or support (fig. 9). In addition to communicating all these different things about garments’ wearer, she states they can also communicate something about their makers, sellers, marketers, designers and countless others professionals, all of whom are involved in running today’s extensive fashion industry.¹² The late Alexander McQueen’s body of work for example, is famously reflective of his Scottish roots, working-class background, and classic Savile Row training (fig. 10),¹³ while Primark’s seemingly democratic clothes are taunted by scandals surrounding the horrific



fig. 9: Clothes can tell many things about the people who wear them; their socio-economic background, gender, identity, image, cultural background, and need for protection



fig. 10: Alexander McQueen's frequent use of tartans, trademark, ultra low-cut bumster trousers, and sharp tailoring, are all reflective of the designer's background

working conditions in their Bangladeshi factories.¹⁴ Additionally, as commodities, clothes also have economic meaning, and as such have the potential to assert a (physical) presence, wherever there is a specific demand for them.

Clearly, Cécile Narinx writes from a twenty first century point of view, whereas many figures such as Simmel and Veblen, upon which she based her findings, write from a late nineteenth century or early twentieth century angle. However, in essence people still use clothes as cultural markers to either identify themselves with a certain group, or else differentiate themselves from another, as is also illustrated through numerous observations and interviews in Narinx' book. A major and significant difference is to be found in the way garment production has changed between Simmel and Veblen's times and that publication though. The introduction of the sewing machine and mass production, has increased access to clothes enormously and has thus effectively given people from a much wider variety of socioeconomic backgrounds the opportunity to consciously dress a certain way, beyond basic physical needs.¹⁵ Simultaneously did people from higher socioeconomic backgrounds adopt a more casual way of dressing and embraced the new and cheap ready-to-wear garments that many can afford as well. "The secret to the survival of the old aristocracy through the centuries was the mystique of grandeur they cultivated. They dressed, decorated and built to impress, so that nobody dared question their right to rule," wrote Chris Bryant about the English nobility, "The secret of their modern existence is their sheer invisibility."

As certain modes of dress have become the norm and have forged some sense of community feeling, subtle details do continue to reinforce class distinction, among others.¹⁶ Uniforms are particularly interesting in that regard, as they provide an illusion of equality. Not only do they have a tendency of undermining wearer's free will, they also overtly focus on an isolated group of people.¹⁷ Although uniforms may create a sense of equality horizontally; among the group of people who wear these similar garments, they can do the exact opposite vertically; between these insiders and the rest of society. Hence even if uniforms function on one level, they are very likely to be dysfunctional on another (fig. 11).¹⁸ Additionally, depending on the freedoms in a particular environment of uniforms, the smallest details may acquire meaning. The knot of a tie, the symbolism behind a small pin and the quality of one's plain, black shoes suddenly are rare, and thus valuable, carriers of information for those eager to find clues about someone's background or personality. Totally eradicating perceived inequality through an attempt at introducing an imposed uniformity of clothes, seems impossible.

On a different note, hierarchical boundaries between different socio-economic classes have become more fluid, which means that people are increasingly socially mobile. Even if one may wear something that indicates membership of a certain socio-economic group, this may not mean he or she has always been or will forever remain a member of this distinct class. Hence, arguably the focus on clothes as cultural markers has shifted from primarily socio-economic, to more aspirational. As such, garments are now used to express one's social identity in society based on ambivalent notions of "youth versus age, masculinity versus femininity, androgyny versus singularity (...) work versus play, (...) [and] conformity versus rebellion."¹⁹ In today's increasingly complex society, one is no longer a member of one singular, conventional, social and economic category, but rather from various, perhaps seemingly paradoxical, socio-economic groups, and this is reflected in what we wear on our bodies.²⁰



24 APR 2007

Amsterdam, NL

14.00 - 16.30

fig. 11: Page taken from Hans Eijkelboom's photographic essay *'Twenty-First Century People,'* which explores the theme of uniformity in dress. By combining photos of people wearing similar clothes, it becomes apparent that no one truly dresses in a unique way.



2 Cambridge and Clothes

2.1 Early Town and Gown History

“By Cambridge he meant the University, not the town (...). The town was becoming something of a non-entity between the University and Stourbridge Fair.” - Rowland Parker (1988)¹

Over eight hundred years of academic excellence and world famous alumni have made the word Cambridge virtually synonymous with the elite institution of higher education the town hosts. This is true now, but was already true in Tudor England.² However, the town Cambridge was established far before some three hundred scholars from Cambridge's ancient rival Oxford fled their hometown, to seek refuge in Cambridge in 1209. In fact, settlements in Cambridge have existed since Roman rule, and by the time those displaced Oxonians arrived, Cambridge had already become a flourishing, independent commercial centre, with a promising civic future.³ Coinciding with the formation of Cambridge's first so-called 'schools,' was the royal charter that granted the town rights to hold Stourbridge Fair on the outskirts of the city in 1211. In the decades that followed, Stourbridge Fair would grow to become the biggest commercial fair in Medieval Europe, if not the world.⁴ Notably, Stourbridge Fair was the national market and price setter for wool, as manufacturers from up north came to Cambridge to take orders.⁵

As Stourbridge Fair grew, so did the University. It quickly developed to become a more organised entity, so that by 1226 it was officially on record with a chancellor at its head.⁶ At this point, the University of Cambridge was very different from what it is today though. No colleges had yet been established, and its nature was deeply religious. So much so, that Cambridge's scholars had exclusive clerical privileges that put them above secular law.⁷ These privileges, and students' superior intellect, immediately fostered a bitter animosity between local townsmen and those outsiders that had only just barged in.⁸ The establishment of Cambridge's first constituent college by the Bishop of Ely in 1284, Peterhouse, meant to accommodate these students and masters, independent of town, and without the constant threat of eviction or attack by locals. Over the next century various other colleges, usually intended for the specific maintenance of poor students, were founded: Clare in 1326, Pembroke in 1347, Gonville and Caius in 1348, Trinity Hall in 1350, and Corpus Christi in 1352.⁹

Despite animosity towards the academic community, local townspeople did contribute to the establishment of these colleges as well. Benefacting these religious institutions



fig. 13: Later map of Cambridge, made in 1798. The Colleges that were already visible on the earlier maps have grown, and new Colleges have been established. Also, the town has slowly grown beyond the colleges.

with money, buildings and pieces of land was considered a pious venture, and done by such influential figures as bishops and aristocrats.¹⁰ Perhaps surprisingly, local townspeople also chimed in, and were responsible for establishing Corpus Christi and endowing various other colleges. They did so arguably for less pious reasons though. The establishment of new colleges simply meant the University's capacity would continue to grow, and bluntly put, provided local townspeople with ample opportunity to earn money off students, whose bellies needed to be fed and whose backs needed to be clothed.¹¹

In the centuries that followed, benefactors kept endowing existing colleges with more assets and founding new ones, some of the most notable new foundations being King's in 1441, St John's in 1511 and Trinity in 1546. The latter of which was founded and heavily endowed by King Henry VIII, and has been the richest of all Oxbridge colleges since its establishment.¹² Colleges generally got richer and richer though, and became increasingly and imposingly physically present within the city. Parker illustrates the contrast between the colleges and the rest of town by quoting very explicit correspondence of the time: "were it not for the fine colleges, it would be one of the sorriest places in the world."¹³ Additionally, through various royal charters and exclusive privileges, colleges got a right of say in Cambridge's fairs, among others Stourbridge Fair, which gave them significant economic and political power on their own as well. The unequal division of wealth and power in Cambridge this all caused, essentially is the basis of what is commonly called the 'Town and Gown' conflict.¹⁴

Interestingly, the garments worn by the academic community, are often used as a metaphor to refer to them. Usually not in the nicest of ways. Indeed, these specific clothes did set academics apart from local townspeople, in a way that instantly referred to some of the things that bothered local townspeople most. The academical gown developed from the clerical cassock, which in turn derived from the tunica worn underneath draped togas in Roman times (fig. 14). However, it is the Christian subtitle of the garment that mattered, as it underlined the privilege the academic community's minor clerical status historically provided them with.¹⁵ Additionally, these loose-fitted gowns with wide sleeves were not impractical for scholars, as their studies did not require them do any physical work, but they would be for most townspeople.¹⁶ As such academical dress represented intellectual superiority as well. Finally, the gowns of some within the academic community, including those assigned to various masters and students from noble families, were exquisite. Festal gowns, worn on so-called scarlet days, specifically. These were made from scarlet dyed cloth, the most expensive material available at the time, and through sumptuary legislation until late medieval times legally only accessible to peers, bishops, judges and civic officials (fig. 15).¹⁷ Only the richest and most powerful members of medieval English society could afford, and were allowed, to wear these types of garments. Robes like these, with their abundant pleats, and sometimes simply excessive embellishments, had left their humble, monastic origins far behind.¹⁸ Academical dress thus also – in some cases – marked socio-economic superiority.

As time progressed, the University of Cambridge remained a religious institution, although in Tudor times it started to secularise to some extent.¹⁹ Simultaneously, the University notably moved away from being mainly an institution for the underprivileged, as members of the landed gentry and aristocracy became ever more present.²⁰ Although academical dress most obviously marked a different status of the academic community as a whole, in stark contrast with local townspeople, it also highlighted socio-economic differences within this group. As referred to before, an extensive set of rules dictated who was supposed to wear which robe,

and at what time and place.²¹ Among the privileges granted to upper class undergraduates at Cambridge, was the right to wear more elaborate gowns, which set them apart from their common fellow-students, whose plain robes revealed their lower class background. Their status also gave them the right to e.g. sit at high table for dinner, which meant that the spatial division of the upper classes in their more elaborate gowns, was likewise institutionally regulated to segregate different socio-economic groups within a communal context (fig. 16).²²

The extensive set of regulations and prescribed specifics of gowns were unique for Cambridge, and although similar to those in Oxford, still markedly different. J.H. Baker illustrates this with a Godfrey Kneller portrait of Cantabrigian Dr Wallis while in Oxford (fig. 17). Wallis is wearing what looks like the Cambridge robe he is supposed to be wearing, but with details on the sleeves that are specific for the equivalent Oxford gown. Baker proposes that Dr Wallis may have had his Cambridge gown made by Oxford robemakers, who are not familiar with their ancient rival's specific rules, and thus made this unfortunate mistake.²³ This theory suggests that although the robe making craft was to be found outside of Cambridge as well, probably mostly in the proximity of legal, academic and clerical institutions such as in Oxford, specific local knowledge was not as spread around. Hence the robe making trade became one of the specific, local branches related to the University's presence, which townspeople profited from, despite the feud these garments represented.



fig. 14 & 15: The tunica worn under togas in Roman times developed into the medieval, clerical cassock, which later became the basis for the robes of Cambridge's academic community, whose members had a minor clerical status. Some of them, worn by a select few on certain festal days, were highly elaborate, scarlet dyed ones.

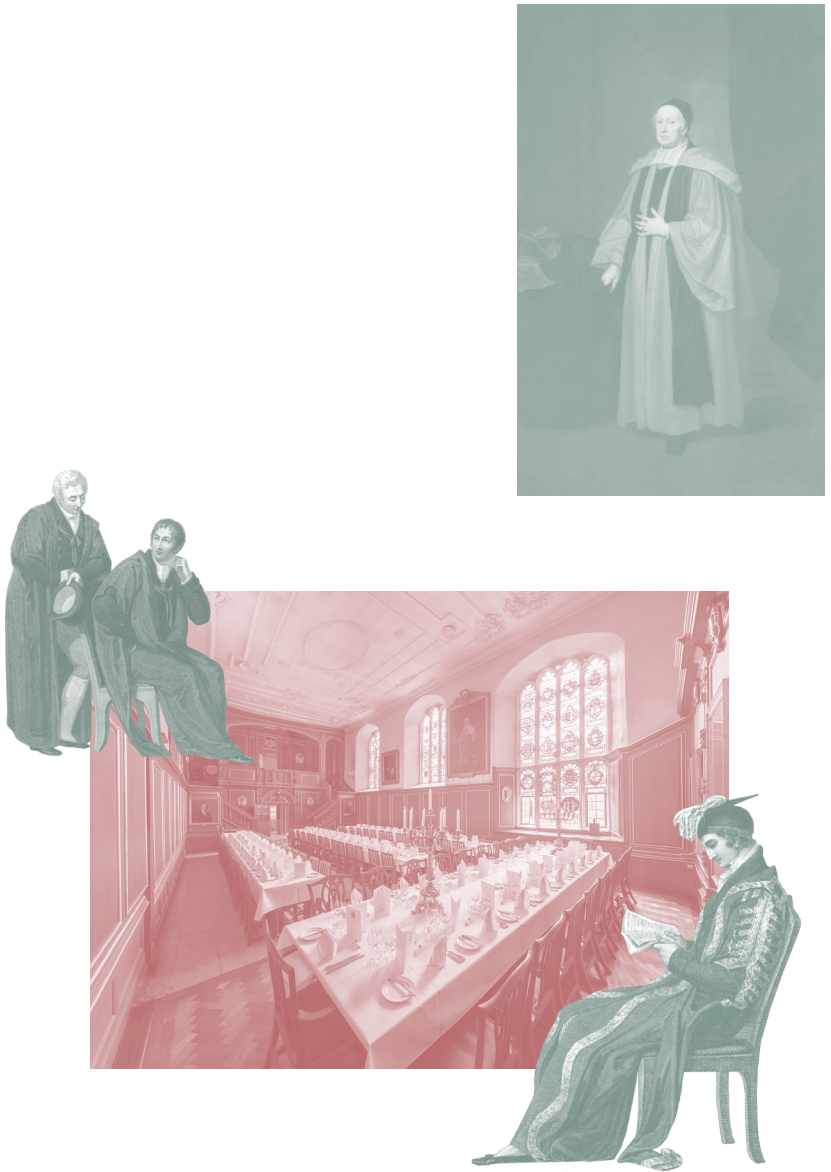


fig. 16 (bottom): Aristocratic students were allowed to wear more elaborate gowns and to sit at high table (right on the photo) as opposed to 'common' students, who wore more simple gowns, and all sat together on the long tables perpendicular to the dais of high table.
 fig. 17 (top): Godfrey Kneller portrait of Dr Wallis wearing a gown with confusing details.

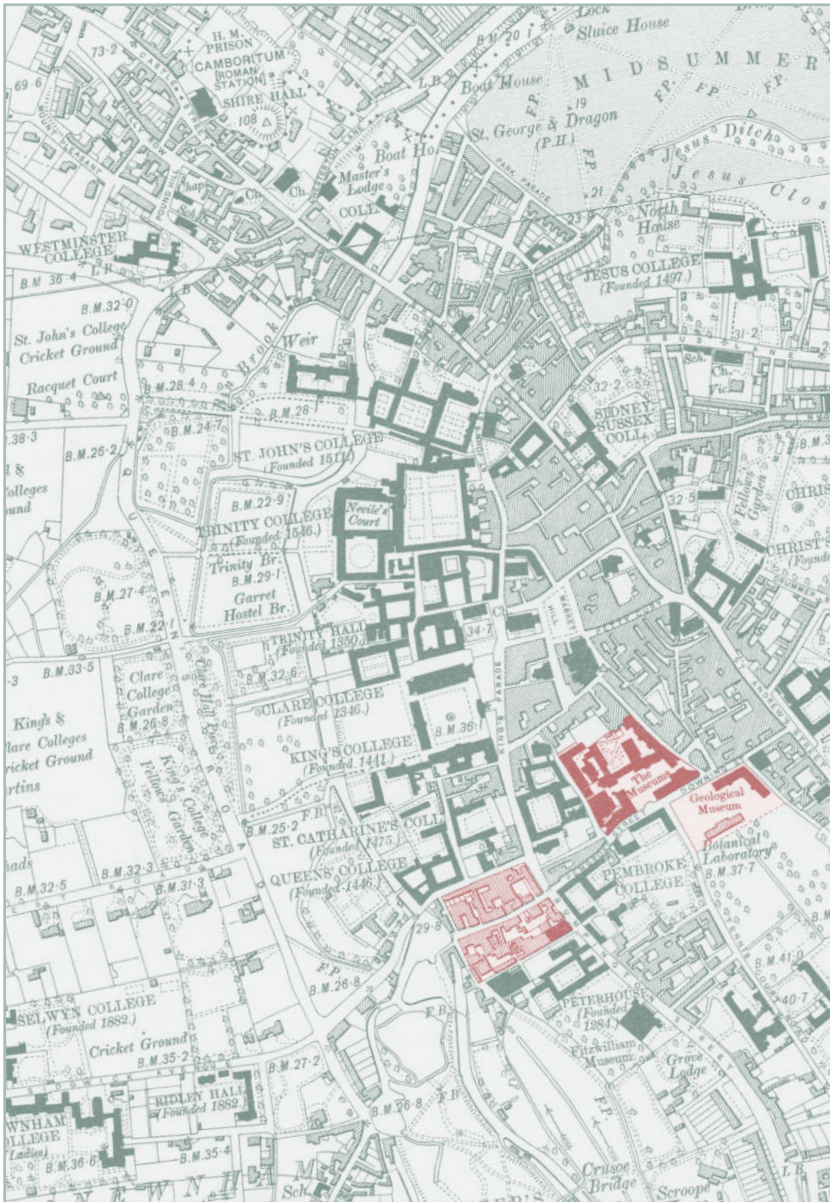


fig. 18: In the nineteenth century the responsibilities between the central University body and all of the separate Colleges were divided more clearly. Resultingly, various sites (marked in pink) were developed to hold departmental buildings, laboratories, and lecture theatres among others, that were used by members of all colleges (dark green).

2.2 The Development of the Collegiate Tradition

“For many well-heeled Victorian parents the purchase of an Oxbridge education represented not only a sound economic investment, but also a vital stage in the rites of passage of their male offspring. The best means of making them both prosperous and worthy citizens.” - David Palfreyman and Ted Tapper (1999)²⁴

The University of Cambridge suffered in early modern times, when “academic laxness and undergraduate licentiousness (...) ruled the day.”²⁵ Not incidentally, no colleges were founded between 1596 and 1800, when eventually Downing was established: “the newest of the ‘old’ colleges, and the oldest of the ‘new.’”²⁶ However, caused by various societal changes, the University of Cambridge and each of its colleges had to adapt to a new actuality in the Victorian era.²⁷ As a result, the university had to organisationally reform, and the collegiate tradition, essentially a reinvention of an existing collegial past, was constructed. A sense of timelessness was considered of vital importance, as collegiality was (and supposedly is) about “change within continuity, and continuity amidst change.”²⁸ Cambridge and its culture of quirks as we still largely know it today, was largely formed in that period between 1850 and 1920. Informed by all these changes, student fashion also started to become more visually present beyond the medieval gown, and was reflective of the zeitgeist.

Two different, but related crises majorly contributed to a need for change within the organisational and cultural spheres of the University of Cambridge and its colleges. On the one hand there was an academic crisis, characterised by a lacking work ethic among undergraduates, a need for expanding the curriculum to include – among other subjects – the physical sciences, and a growing demand for university education among an increasingly diverse group of people.²⁹ On the other hand, middle- and upper-class men in Britain struggled defining a masculine identity, as the world changed at an incredible pace in the Victorian era. The rise of the feminist and labour movements, the growth of a new, industrial middle-class, an ever increasing mobility, and the rise of new military superpowers, such as Germany and the United States of America, disproportionately affected the group of white men from the higher social strata that had historically attended Cambridge, and started to threaten their position as leaders of the Empire.³⁰

As the curriculum had to expand to include the physical sciences, as well as modern languages and modern law, the University faced significant reform. It had become virtually impossible for all colleges to have the necessary staff and facilities, such as state-of-the-art laboratories, to accommodate students in all subjects on their own like before. Instead, the old, federal model of a relatively small central University and a collection of autonomous colleges, developed to more apprehensively divide different functions between themselves.³¹ The university became responsible for general, intercollegiate teaching through strictly subject-related lectures or seminars, and examinations, while the colleges remained responsible for admissions, accommodation, and teaching through highly individualised and liberal-arts-style supervisions. This development had a serious impact on the city, as various university buildings, such as lecture theatres, faculties, and general administration buildings were constructed at various sites around town, to make the new federal model of education possible (fig. 18). Essentially, in this new model, the University was primarily responsible for an undergraduate’s acquisition of knowledge, and one’s college for the formation of his – distinctly masculine – character. The latter especially, was by many considered of

invaluable worth to safeguard the Victorian gentleman's bright future in leadership.³²

The grooming of young, Victorian gentlemen started before they went up to Cambridge – or Oxford – though, and would usually begin with attending one of Britain's great Public Schools.³³ Despite the suggestive 'public' in these institutions' collective name, they are the most elite of private boarding schools, and famously include such renowned places as Eton, Harrow and Rugby (fig. 19). Not incidentally had these schools re-emerged themselves in the 1840s and '50s, shortly before the University and colleges in Cambridge started to reform.³⁴ Public schools, much like Oxbridge colleges, were constructed as unique, little worlds, that defined the included elite as separated from the excluded plebeians. A shared culture of distinct mannerisms, knowledge and fashions, perpetuated class status and imposed a masculine ideal of bodily strength and fortitude. This culture fostered a sense of loyalty and solidarity among the public school communities, that greatly influenced the mindset of the boys that would continue to pursue an Oxbridge education. Through these public school educated young gentlemen, this culture consequently also significantly impacted the undergraduate culture at those institutions themselves, including – very visibly – student fashion.³⁵

Most notable perhaps is the introduction of, and emphasis on, intercollegiate competitive sports, starting in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Tapper and Palfreyman put it: "the reputation of a college was established as much, if not more, on the sports field and on the river as in the examination hall." Not surprisingly, almost all major sports clubs in Cambridge and varsity events against Oxford find their origin in that period; the first annual Boat Race was organised in 1856, the university football club was established in 1866 and the university rugby club in 1878. Simultaneously other clubs and societies started to thrive as well, because indeed "the flower of Oxbridge blooms (...) on the stage, the front page, the platform – everywhere there is an audience and an opportunity."³⁶ The Cambridge Union Society, the famous debating club, was established in 1815, but had their club house built in 1866, the Amateur Dramatic Club was founded in 1855, the Cambridge Footlights, another theatrical society, was established in 1883 and *The Granta*, a literary magazine, was first published in 1889. With its "high-profile leisure activity" to go with an emphasis on academia, Cambridge was "in a sense a microcosm of London" and "the passport to greater pleasures" as Walter Ellis wrote.³⁷

The new Cambridge, academically back on track and enriched with a traditionalist, character-forming student life, was clearly reflected in the clothing worn by the academic community as well. The transformation in British gender ideology, identified by David Newsome as a move from "godliness and good-learning" to "muscular Christianity" was strengthened by and visually reflected in the community's garments. Indeed, the wearing of one-size-fits-all gowns – reminiscent of Cambridge's deeply religious past – became less present, while tailored garments in different forms – such as sports blazers and specific club vests and coats – were introduced. As time progressed, leisurewear additionally also won ground, making Oxbridge nothing short of emblematic for "advanced recreational fashion."³⁸ Eventually this was noted on the other side of the pond as well, where young men at the various Ivy League universities, America's answer to Oxbridge, developed an iconic style that took elements from English student fashion.

In later Victorian and Edwardian eras, the Oxbridge academic community's unique way of dressing was one of the – perhaps most visible – notions that helped creating that distinctive character of upper-class masculinity.³⁹ The gown, that had essentially functioned as such even in Medieval times, remained a very important and visible feature



fig. 19: The so-called Public Schools started planting a sense of superiority in future Oxbridge students at a very young age. The photographed contrast between upper middle class Eton pupils, and working class boys of a similar age is striking.



fig. 20.1 & 20.2: Photos of one undergraduate in gown on Petty Cury (top), and two students in traditional sports blazers in front of Senate House (bottom).
 fig. 19: A contemporary member of the Lady Margaret Boat Club in the club's blazer.
 fig. 22: Two Cambridge students in plus-fours, a popular type of trousers in the 1920s.

in the newly constructed collegiate tradition. Regulations required undergraduates to wear their gown to chapel services, dinner in hall, all lectures and various public occasions.⁴⁰ Moreover, as a precautionary measure, undergraduates also had to wear their gowns while out in Town in the evenings and on Sundays, so that university officials would be able to easily identify them in the ambiguous public realm (fig. 20.1).⁴¹ Despite the required nature of the gown and undergraduates' continuous resistance against these kind of measures, they also used the gown to their own advantage and used it as a symbol of their membership of the Cambridge community.⁴² After all, these garments represented continuity and served as a reminder of not just Cambridge's history of excellence, but that of the nation as a whole. Great minds such as Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon had worn garments like these before, and within the same setting of the colleges' buildings, grounds and gardens.⁴³

As the University and colleges continued to slowly secularise more and further loosen gown regulations, different types of dress started to become more prevalent. Mostly, through these new types of dress, undergraduates did not reject their membership of the exclusive Cambridge academic community, but rather identified with a specific subgroup within (fig. 20.2).⁴⁴ Membership of the plethora of recently founded clubs and societies for example, was expressed through coloured vests with brass buttons, distinctly striped ties, crested cufflinks, and – arguably most famously – through sports coats. The word blazer, now more commonly used to describe a sports coat, is even believed to find its origin in the “blazing red” jackets that were worn by the Lady Margaret Boat Club of St John's College (fig. 21).⁴⁵ In any case, Oxbridge and the Public Schools were pioneers in the development of sportswear and club garb.⁴⁶ A colourful description of the fictitious Banbury Cakes dining club uniform is provided by Lehmann in his satirical view on Cambridge: “Well, it's a light-green swallow-tail coat, with pink facings and brass buttons, a drab waistcoat, white trousers, brown leather pumps with steel buckles, and an orange silk scarf with a Banbury cake painted on it.”⁴⁷

Although Lehmann's descriptions seem somewhat outlandish and are meant humorously, descriptions of Oxbridge undergraduates' dress by Ugolini and upper class men's fashion of the time, suggest that slightly less extravagant versions of the Banbury Cakes' uniform may just have been fairly normal. In any case, the colourful boat blazers, such as that the red coats of the Lady Margaret Boat Club, and dining club uniforms, are – at least visually – very different from the relatively sober black gowns they are alternated with. Tailored to the body, these boat blazers and club suits no longer concealed its wearer or obstructed him from movement beyond reading and writing, but rather showed him in all of its young, muscular, male glory. The importance attached to bodily strength and class status, as taken from the Public Schools, became in Cambridge visible through respectively sportswear and club uniforms. Additionally, these garments are less connected with the bastion that is a college, but more with arguably less shielded sports fields and the river around town, and pubs, restaurants and club houses in town (fig. 20.1, 20.2).

Undergraduate dress worn with gowns or off-duty developed largely in tandem with the professional middle class and consisted mainly of sober suits since the late eighteenth century.⁴⁸ However, in the early twentieth century, especially in the 1920s, the undergraduate community did adopt a very distinctive variant of it. By this time “trousers (either plus-fours or flannels), pull-overs, college scarves, soft collars and shapeless jackets [had become] the essentials of the normal, male undergraduate's day wear (fig. 22), they were of equal, if not greater, importance in defining “the undergraduate than the cap and gown.”⁴⁹ Then, as the student body became

increasingly diverse in terms of socio-economic background, and the production of ready-made garments was on the rise, differentiations between undergraduates and the options each of them had financially also became visible. A minority of richer undergraduates for example, “seem to have been easily recognisable” cites Ugolini, “they wear checks. They wear whole suits, well cut... they are more often seen in a hat than in cap and gown.”⁵⁰

Such dandy-esque – and later famous – figures as Oscar Wilde some years earlier in Oxford, and Norman Hartnell and Cecil Beaton in Cambridge, speak to the imagination though, despite being only a minority. Their whimsical sense of style and extravagant outfits of loud checks and colourful neckties are regularly mentioned in various sources. Walter Ellis for example cites Costello’s description of Beaton, writing that he wore “an evening jacket, red shoes, black and white trousers, and a huge blue cravat” when he arrived in Cambridge.⁵¹ Less elaborate, but equally odd garments seem to have been worn by a larger group of students too though. Old-fashioned straw boater hats and silk shirts were worn to similarly set oneself apart from the common masses.⁵² Gwen Raverat’s attempt of describing these young men may say enough: “if I draw the people as they really were, they simply look impossible. Not quaint, or old-fashioned or uncomfortable or even ugly; but just simply impossible. If I draw young men in bowler hats and high collars and black coats in a canoe on the river, no one will believe that a) they were gentlemen; or b) that if they were, they could look like that.”⁵³ The river indeed, as well as the colleges’ courts, archways, bridges and gardens, formed a “stage set for dandyism,” that “differed from ordinary twentieth-century buildings (fig. 23).”⁵⁴

The wealth of intricacies of dress in Cambridge, from gown etiquette to club colours, are hard to grasp for an outsider, making the transition from young boy to fresher an interesting one. Multiple student publications from the period attempted to make this transition easier and contained specific insider knowledge, like: “it is considered one of the seven deadly sins to wear an ordinary tweed cap with a gown, or to use a walking stick with a gown.”⁵⁵ Also, upon entering Cambridge, many young students for the first time had the opportunity to buy clothes outside parental control. Opening an account at a local tailor and robemaker seems to have been a normal step. Even for less well-to-do students, as local firms were notoriously easy with granting long-term credit to the young men who formed the bulk of their clientele.⁵⁶ Although tailors had started rejecting an exclusive focus on the bespoke trade and started increasing their stocks of more affordable ready-to-wear garments, these loans still posed significant problems for many less affluent students.⁵⁷

Take Ivy Takes the World

2.3

Students at the Ivy League universities on America’s East Coast definitely also took note of British tailoring generally and of the – in their eyes – romantic Oxbridge student fashion specifically.⁵⁸ At renowned institutions such as Harvard, Princeton and Yale, students started taking elements of classic British tailoring and typical student fashions, including boat blazers and wide flannel trousers, to create more relaxed reinterpretations of a classic English look.⁵⁹ When Oxbridge stopped being the hallmark of recreational fashion in the 1920s, partly as a result of the Great War,⁶⁰ one could say the Ivy schools took over. Theirs was a look that lacked some of the stiffness and formality so typical of the English fashions it was inspired by, and thus was more accessible, attractive, and comfortable.⁶¹ The Ivy look was actually quite nonchalant,



fig. 23: A young Cecil Beaton in full morning attire. Beaton was an undergraduate at St John's College, which with its wonderful staircases, colonnades, and courts, such as pictured New Court, was a great stage set for 1920s dandyism.

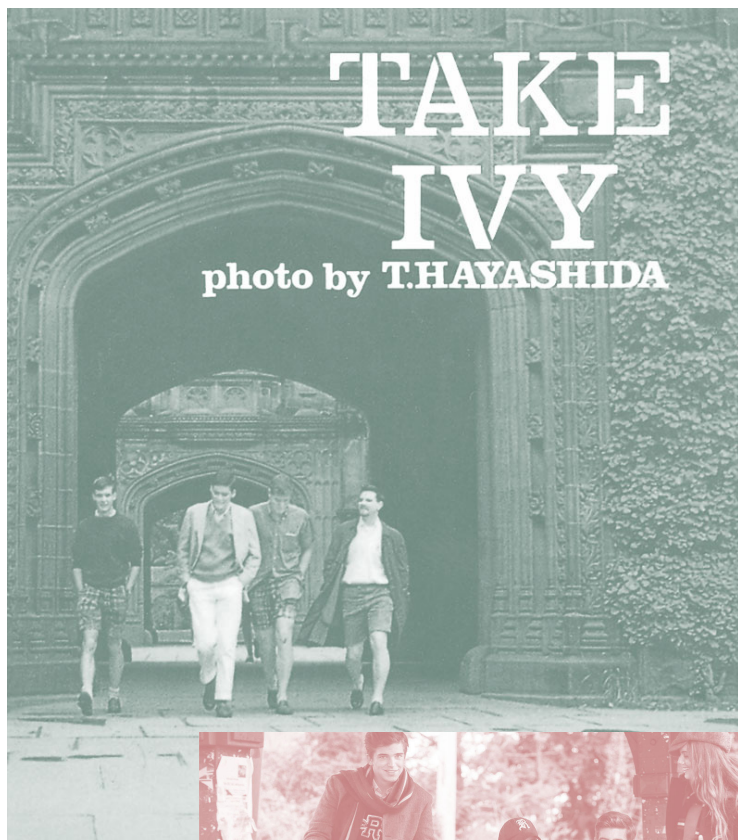


fig. 24 (bottom): This Fall 2012 campaign image of the so-called 'Rugby' line within the Ralph Lauren brand, clearly takes inspiration from the Ivy style. The crested, tweed jackets, patterned ties, striped scarves, and monogrammed jumpers are a stylised version of what young men in 'Take Ivy' wear.

fig. 25 (top): Cover of the iconic 'Take Ivy' book, which is filled with photos such as this one. This book inspired a generation of Japanese teenagers and students to wear American style preppy clothing.



fig. 26: After 'Take Ivy' was published, the preppy Ivy look became immensely popular among Japanese teenagers and students.



fig. 27: Andreas, Anna, Talia, Nicole, Jakub, Bart, Wenqian, Fay, Becky, Bai Xu, Denise, Ben, and Clara, a diverse group of friends and course mates from my time in Cambridge, have all proudly posted photos of themselves in their gowns on Facebook.

but always elegant and neat, and developed further on its own. Where English student fashion remained reflective of an Imperial Britain in decline, the fresh Ivy League style transversely represented the increasing presence of a democratic America.

Moreover, the Ivy look found considerable success outside lecture halls and student dorms as well. Well-known American brands including Brooks Brothers, Abercrombie & Fitch, and later Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger have made names for themselves with the sales of preppy chinos, button-downs, and blazers (fig. 24). Additionally, through various publications and a good deal of college movies, the style's success has spread around the world. The 1965 publication of 'Take Ivy,' a styleguide of sorts, might illustrate this best (fig. 25). It was compiled by Teruoshi Hayashida, Shoshuke Ishizu, and Toshiyuki Kurosu, and was published in Japan to great success. As a result, the Ivy style became immensely popular among fashionable youngsters in Tokyo, who emulated the look of the photographed American students (fig. 26). The book itself became a cult phenomenon as well, rare first prints of which fetching thousands of euros at auctions, and gaining a large international following.

2.4 Cambridge and Clothes in Recent Times

Perhaps surprisingly, Oxbridge still deals with issues regarding elitism, despite the steps forward that have occurred in the decades after Victorian and Edwardian gentlemen tried to maintain their status as leaders of the empire, and especially after the Great Wars. Women may have entered their hallowed halls, as have increasingly many state schooled adolescents and people from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, but the institutions have not yet managed to completely shed their gentlemanly image. Walter Ellis describes an Oxbridge scene of students in formal dress in the 1990's, which may illustrate this quite well: "When Lady Howe turned up (...) for discussions with the Dean (...), the men in [her] set turned up in white tie and she wore fur. The Dean was so embarrassed. It was not quite the meritocratic image he was trying to present."⁶³ Obviously the scene features a woman, which is already a leap forward,⁶⁴ but she and her friends are partaking in ways of doing that may belong more to the Old World of the early 1900's, when perpetuating class status was the norm. Much more recently even, Cambridge suffered from a national scandal, that highlighted the elite attitudes from a particular group of members of the Conservative Society. One of them, Ronald Coyne, was filmed burning a twenty pound note in front of a homeless man. He had just left a Conservative Society dinner, and was wearing white tie at the time of the incident.⁶⁵ After the video of his actions appeared online, multiple students wearing suits and gowns in central Cambridge were assaulted, causing many colleges to advise their students not to wear formal dress while out in town.⁶⁶

A considerable amount of Cambridge's traditions has indeed survived, and – as is illustrated by the quote concerning Martha and the Coyne controversy – customs of dress are very visible and sensitive examples of them. To the extent even that Walter Ellis suggests that students from disadvantaged backgrounds choose not to apply to Cambridge, because they "do not want to wear sub-fusc."⁶⁷ Similar feelings of discomfort or uneasiness with this culture of dress, and the elitism it may represent, are also shared by some students from working-class backgrounds, who did get into Cambridge and were interviewed by Di Domenico and Phillips. "I have to admit, I didn't really feel that I quite fitted in at first. I'm not used to dinners and gowns, and that type of thing," one of them said, "[but] I don't feel that way anymore. I don't

feel awkward or anything. It's a kind of social training I suppose, as well as an educational one. I'm really lucky," he later added.⁶⁸ The crux of this particular student's words of course lie in the fact that he had to get used to wearing that gown, which is an opportunity only insiders have.

Insiders' views towards traditional student dress generally seem to be more relaxed, or are in fact positive. It is important to realise that dress regulations have been loosened drastically over the years. Students today are only required to wear gowns during their matriculation and graduation, and at some colleges during optional formal hall dining as well.⁶⁹ Wearing a gown has thus, for the most part, become a choice rather than a requirement. A choice many students seem eager to make though, as a quick browse on the Facebook profiles of my own friends from Cambridge indicate. Almost all of them, young men and women from various socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicities, have posted photos of themselves proudly posing in their robes (fig. 27). They still flaunt their membership of an exclusive group, although today's group is arguably characterised more by their academic achievements than their financial means. Evidently, the garment that was once only worn by upper-class, white males, is now being worn by a much more diverse crowd.

The statutes of Cambridge that dictate specifics of gowns, have not been significantly altered since the 1930s, before women officially entered Cambridge the decade after.⁷⁰ Hence, when women were officially admitted to the University, the gowns they started to wear, were the exact same gowns men wore. A popular myth that men abandoned square caps in protest to the admission of women at university is simply untrue.⁷¹ Men and women were – and are – equal in terms of academical dress, and both seem to have adhered to rules accordingly. Sub-fusc rules, which dictate what clothes should be worn underneath gowns during official ceremonies, however, did need to be adapted to include regulations regarding skirts, dresses, hosiery, heeled shoes, and jewellery. Men still have to wear a dark suit, white shirt, and white tie, but women are also allowed to wear a dark skirt-suit, with the same shirt and tie, or dark dress instead.

Traditional sportswear, such as boat blazers, once reflective of the idea that bodily strength equalled masculinity, are now worn by women too, albeit in a slightly more fitted cut (fig. 28). Indeed, as Ellis states, Oxbridge women today “are as aware as their male counterparts of the privileged nature of their education, and though they are less tied to what Americans would call the ‘frat culture’ they are just as conscious of being part of an elite. They, too, wish to belong to clubs that treat them as a class apart.”⁷² The female rowers of Downing College confirmed that notion when they, like their male counterparts, got measured for their blazers. One of those female students, Hilde, who qualified for a blazer, considered all of them being allowed to get their blazers a “validation of their accomplishments,” and looked forward to wearing one, as “it affirms your position as part of a group.”⁷³ Notably, Bridget, another student on the team, was the most respected of all Downing rowers. She was being measured for her fourth blazer, after having been awarded three other types of blazers as an undergraduate at Oxford. “It would be nice to get a fifth blazer,” she said jokingly, “I could wear a different blazer for every day of the week.”⁷⁴ Neither Bridget, nor any of the other students being measured, seemed to mind paying two hundred pounds for the blazer. The blazer, like the gown, has been embraced by contemporary Cambridge students too, if only just a particular group of them.

Even club dress, such as the white tie Ronald Coyne wore during his now infamous act and which historically meant to set Cambridge students apart from ordinary paupers, is still actively being worn. However, unlike gowns and traditional sportswear, traditional club dress is largely unavailable to women, as most of the prestigious clubs are strictly male-only.⁷⁵ A 2006



fig. 28: St John's Lady Margaret Boat Club's female members now also wear their blazers.
 fig. 29: Photos taken from the VICE article on various Cambridge clubs, specifically focussing on their clothes and rituals. Tom (left) is a 'blue,' as he is a member of the Cambridge University Hockey club, and Jez (right) is a committee member of the Hawks, which is a drinking club.



*fig. 30: Screenshot of Ronald Coyne burning a twenty pound note
fig. 31: David Cameron in Bullington Club attire, made by
Ede & Ravenscroft at a reported cost of three thousand pounds*

VICE article on Cambridge's club culture shows various undergraduates, featuring indeed mainly men, wearing crested blazers, striped scarves and ditto ties, in a fashion editorial manner (fig. 29). As they pose in their preppy club garb, they also reveal club traditions regarding their garments and accessories. "Our scarves are not to be washed," explains one, while another similarly states that they "can never wash [their] ties." Regarding the Marguerite's Club colours of maroon, navy blue and white, one warns "it's not advised to wear them if you aren't [a member]." ⁷⁶ The owner of one of the oldest outfitters in town talked candidly about one of his oldest customers who was "absolutely terrified" that just about anyone could buy a Trinity tie in his store, similarly underlining the exclusivity, and recognisability, of particular sets in Cambridge. ⁷⁷ Like the gown indeed, getting to know the quirks of a club's sartorial rules seems to be part of a rite of passage, and no doubt still involves regular mistakes by any club's novices.

Despite club traditions still being alive, its clothes do not seem to be as visual a part of Cambridge's culture of dress, than other types of student fashion are. "Very occasionally you come across somebody in the evening walking around in a white tie outfit, but the other students just think they are silly," writes Deslandes about present-day Oxbridge in regards to specific formal club dining garments. ⁷⁸ However, on the rare occasions that a larger public of non-University members are confronted with images and stories of white-tie clad adolescents, they do have a tendency to look at this differently. The Ronald Coyne controversy (fig. 30) is one example of public outcry involving club dress, a minor scandal involving the former prime minister David Cameron is another. A photo of Cameron during his time at Oxford, wearing the Bullingdon Club's navy tailcoats with brass monogrammed buttons and mustard waistcoats, made by Ede & Ravenscroft at a reported cost of over three thousand pounds, caused heaps of criticism while he was still at 10 Downing Street (fig. 31). Even the Lady Howe, from the earlier quote of her and her friends in unmeritocratic formal clothing, disapproves of members from the Bullingdon club and their wearing of white ties and tails. "They don't care who they offend," she is quoted saying. ⁷⁹

One period a year when tailcoats, tuxedos and ball gowns are in fact worn by a large group of Cambridge students, would be the annual May Week, when almost every college hosts a glamorous ball in celebration of the end of the academic year. Unlike small formal club dinners, these grand events are attended by thousands of students, despite tickets costing as much as five hundred pounds a pair. Their dress codes request students to wear black or white tie, causing the streets of Cambridge to be populated by young adults in evening attire every night, for a week in a row. Cambridge's annual May Balls are arguably the one tradition from Victorian times that has not lost ground, but has rather become even bigger. Additionally, these events do no longer go unnoticed by a larger public, like they probably would have a hundred years ago or so, but they are covered by such national tabloids as the Daily Mail from the outside, and student publications (e.g. The Tab) and social media savvy students (e.g. Caroline Calloway and Joe Binder) from the inside. ⁸⁰ The former tend to be looking for saucy shots of future world leaders, while the latter present a fairy-tale world of drinking champagne in seventeenth century courts and dancing on immaculately manicured lawns (fig. 32).

Despite the glamorous images these kinds of occasions provide, it would be wrong to suggest that formalwear, or even the aforementioned sports blazers and academical robes, dominate student fashion in Cambridge on a daily basis. Yes, students can be seen wearing gowns to and from college dinners almost every night, but generally, if students choose to communicate their affiliation to the University or their college at all, they are more likely to

do so in a more casual manner. Tapper and Palfreyman justly note that while “the sale of cuff-links and ties may be down compared with the 1950’s, (...) there are more varied alternative items of badged items on offer than ever before.”⁸¹ Indeed, casual, crested jumpers, caps, and tote bags are regulars on central Cambridge’s streets, more so than striped bow ties or signet rings. Notably the flashiest of these badged items seem to be worn by overseas visitors, rather than more toned down undergraduates though. After all, the University of Cambridge today is considered to be one of the world’s most reputable ‘university superbrands,’⁸² and apparently tourists think some of that reputation rubs off on them, when ironically they seem to prefer buying American style hoodies, from one of the city’s various University outfitters.

In fact, everyday student fashion does not seem to be that different from casual student fashion elsewhere at all. The photos of young Cambridge students in student publications and on social media (fig. 33) could have been taken at any Western university in the world, if it weren’t for the grand college backdrops. Cambridge’s academic population, gathered from all around the globe, overwhelmingly wears the same type of high-street, modish clothing that is universally present in Western metropolises. They just occasionally alternate their generic jeans, leather jackets, and t-shirts, with such fixed clothes as the academical gown. Natasha Michael from student website *The Tab*, which continuously tries to debunk and make fun of Cambridge myths and preconceptions, wrote in response to the idea that all Cambridge students wear chinos and tweed that “honestly, we don’t [all wear that]. You can wear whatever you want at Cambridge. Unless you want to join the Conservative Association,” she added jokingly, “in which case tweed is compulsory.”⁸³



fig. 33: Photos of fashionable Cambridge students, taken from the @styleofcambridge Instagram account

Cambridge and Clothes



fig. 32: The photo of drunk students, published by the Daily Mail the morning after Trinity's May Ball in 2017 (top), gives a very different image of May Week than the dreamy insider's photo taken by student Jakub Ryng at Downing May Ball the night after (bottom)

As is evidenced in the past few pages, Cambridge's culture of dress seems to be very much alive today. Notably Flügel's ideas of fixed versus modish clothing proved true in Cambridge, as traditional clothing changed fairly little over the course of the hundred years since the collegiate tradition's peak, while everyday fashions have indeed changed a lot, and in tandem with Western fashions elsewhere. Hence, while gowns and boat blazers have continuously been worn, plus-fours and tweed coats have been replaced by jeans and bomber jackets. Various cues indicate that this trend will continue, at least in the near future, safeguarding what is left of Cambridge's unique culture of dress. Contrary to what one may expect, this is in great deal not in spite of meritocracy, but rather because of it.

Only in 2015 did Oxford students vote to keep dress requirements exactly as they were, despite critics calling academical dress "archaic" and "elitist". Oxford's sub-fusc regulations, which are even more expansive than Cambridge's, were by a vast majority of students considered to not be elitist, but rather egalitarian. "No matter your background, race, class or gender, when you go into exams wearing the gown, you are equal," Oxford student Harrison Edmonds argued, "The message I get from people from under-privileged or poor backgrounds is that having the ability to wear their gown makes them feel the equal of Etonians or Harrovians, and that is something they don't want taken away from them." In addition to the sense of equality that gowns evidently evoke, students also said they wanted to maintain sub-fusc regulations out of respect for its centuries old tradition. The outcome of Oxford's referendum, an objective poll of students' views towards gowns, supports the earlier observation that photos of Cambridge students proudly posing in their robes on Facebook, indicated insiders' support for the prevalent culture of dress. Even when opponents argued that the gown perpetuated negative Oxbridge stereotypes.

With the knowledge that students themselves support the single officially imposed dress custom, it seems safe to assume that other elements of Cambridge's traditional culture of dress, voluntarily upheld – and adapted to today's more diverse community – until now, may remain active and alive for years to come too. Traditional sportswear particularly, as it could be understood as a meritocratic symbol of one's achievements as well. Boat blazers in that sense, are celebratory garments of athletic success, much like gowns are representative of one's intellectual capability. As such, both traditional sportswear and academical dress have meaning beyond outdated ideas of race, class, and gender, and could thus remain relevant regardless of changes in the student population. Unlike perhaps dress of dining and drinking clubs, which in no way reflects any real achievement, and hence is more easily at risk of being discarded as elitist and superfluous. These club garments were meant to perpetuate class status when they arose, and intentionally or not, they arguably still function that way today, as is also evidenced by the David Cameron and Ronald Coyne controversies. One can argue whether or not meritocracy in Cambridge today is a myth, but in any case it is a truth the University, Colleges, and most people involved seem to strive for.

Despite all the real, embodied meanings clothes can have in regards to one's ethnic background, class, gender, or even athletic performance and intellectual capabilities, they also seem to be understood in a more indistinct way. For Cambridge students, and perhaps even staff members, this may be a sense of community, quirkiness, and escapism, while many outsiders



*fig. 34 (top): Tourist dressed up as student, posing in front of King's Chapel; the town's most iconic landmark.
fig. 35 (bottom): Campaign image from Pepe Jeans' 2014 collection in collaboration with the University of Cambridge. The collection's clothing references traditional sportswear, and campaign images reference traditional student activities, such as punting, and are shot in and around Cambridge's colleges.*

seem intrigued by the anachronistic mystery of Harry Potter-style robes in equally fantastic surroundings (fig 34). Traditional dress in Cambridge is perhaps mostly just a spectacle its cast members of students and academic staff enjoy partaking in, and which the audience of tourists from around the globe enjoys catching a glimpse of. Although this sense of fun possibly ensures longevity of the visual aspect of the culture, it may simultaneously endanger its authenticity, as The Burgon Society's Oliver James Keenan fears. In any case, even in today's fashion industry Cambridge's traditional dress culture is referenced regularly. Pepe Jeans for example launched a Cambridge collection in collaboration with the University in 2014, including an expansive ad campaign shot at the grounds of various colleges (fig. 35), and Savile Row tailor Nick Hart mentions Oxbridge romanticism as a main inspiration in his work (fig. 36, 37).



fig. 36: Oxbridge romanticism, as perhaps most glorious captured in in the 1980's tv series 'Brideshead Revisted', is still a major source of inspiration for fashion figures, including Savile Row tailor Nick Hart.



fig. 37: 'Bridesehead Revisted' was adapted into a film only in 2008. Its visuals, including its portrayal of student fashion, were praised more so than the film itself.



fig. 38 (top): Old-fashion habit à la française on the left, and the new English style on the right.
 fig. 39 (bottom): King Edward VII was a true style icon , and a major Savile Row supporter. He is credited with introducing the tradition of wearing one's bottom button undone (centre), and the development of the modern tuxedo (right).

3 The Bespoke Trade

3.1 British Tailoring

*“A man cannot make love with any kind of conviction unless he is wearing a coat cut within half a mile of Piccadilly.” - Tailor & Cutter (c. 1920)*¹

British tailoring took flight at the end of the eighteenth century, when a sober, English style of men’s dress became the norm in post-Revolution Europe. Decadent court dress, *habit à la Française*, that had flourished in the France ruled by the now fallen House of Bourbon, was replaced by relatively simple suits inspired by ‘honest,’ English, country gentlemen’s riding attire (fig. 38).² Gone was the emphasis on intricate brocades, lace frills, and rich colours, which instead was replaced with a focus on perfect cut and impeccable tailoring. Regency Era dandyism, led by Beau Brummell, greatly helped the abolishment of the old French dress customs, as fashionable, young men disapproved of outdated extravagance, and rather supported a new, more democratic ideal.³

The rise of Savile Row specifically, also known as the Golden Mile of British bespoke, has largely coincided with the great period of change in Cambridge and the United Kingdom in general, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Mayfair area became a particularly popular area among aristocrats after the Crown had purchased Buckingham House slightly earlier, in 1761, and hence became attractive for countless perfumers, wigmakers, bootmakers, jewellers, barbers, hatters, shoemakers and indeed tailors to settle as well. Savile Row, which initially became a street of doctors, started its transformation when Henry Poole moved the family business he inherited there in 1846. His House soon became the go-to tailor of the leaders of the British Empire (and indeed the rest of the world), and in the decades that followed, such distinguished competing houses as Ede & Ravenscroft, Huntsman, Dege & Skinner and Kilgour similarly opened or moved businesses to the Row. Most of these stores had once specialised in making specific military garments, but started to shift towards everyday dress when ready-to-wear became the norm for the armed forces. During this time the English revolutionised the trade of tailoring, thanks in great deal to the introduction of tailor’s tapes and intricate measurement systems, that helped create the perfect fit.⁴

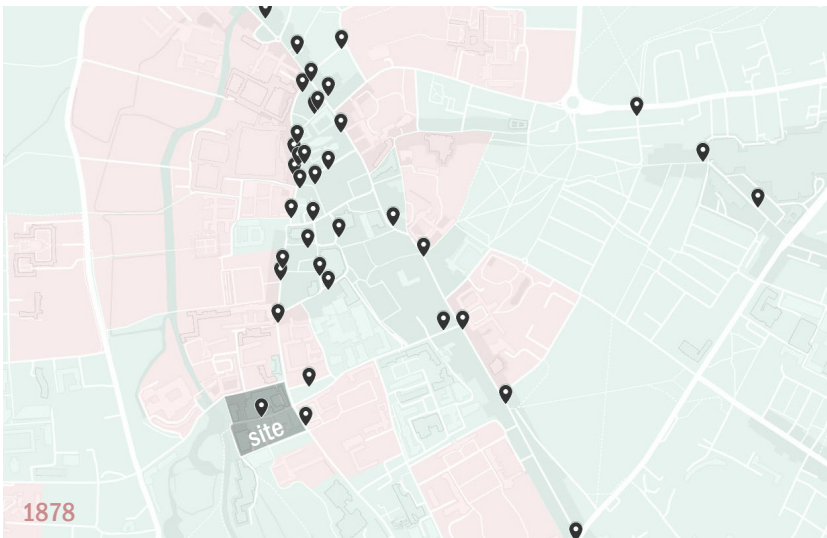
Among the upper class clients of Savile Row must have been more than a few that have been educated at Cambridge. Some of its most celebrated supporters certainly were.

The Prince of Wales, the later Edward VII, was educated at Trinity College and later became arguably the Row's most important patron (fig. 39). He single-handedly transformed men's fashion and is credited with introducing the dinner jacket, white dress waistcoat, velvet smoking, bowler hats and the tradition of leaving the bottom button of one's coat undone.⁵ Cecil Beaton, one of the Cambridge dandies of the 1920's, became a fixture on the Golden Mile when he became a wildly successful fashion photographer after leaving St John's College. His iconic style of dress was an example of using clothing as a tool for social advancement, like other dandies, beaux and aesthetes had done before him.⁶ The fact that Savile Row House Ede & Ravenscroft, robemakers to every English coronation since William III's, opened a branch in Cambridge in the 1930's may also speak for itself. Tailoring on the Row was – and is – as much connected to British Excellence, as indeed the University of Cambridge.

Made in Cambridge

3.2

The idea that clothing as an economic commodity can help transform an area, is reflected by the rise of Savile Row as a result of aristocrats settling in the Mayfair neighbourhood. Similarly, the number of students in Cambridge has historically meant that plenty of book binders, innkeepers, and indeed tailors and robemakers, have found a market for their products and services in town.⁷ Medieval records in the University archives, which contain more than a few documents regarding the tailors in town, suggest this may be true already,⁸ but it is even more clearly and measurably visible in Spalding's General Directory. Spalding's overview of every business active in town, published between 1874 and 1940, precisely shows not just the sheer amount of tailors in Cambridge, but also their exact addresses.



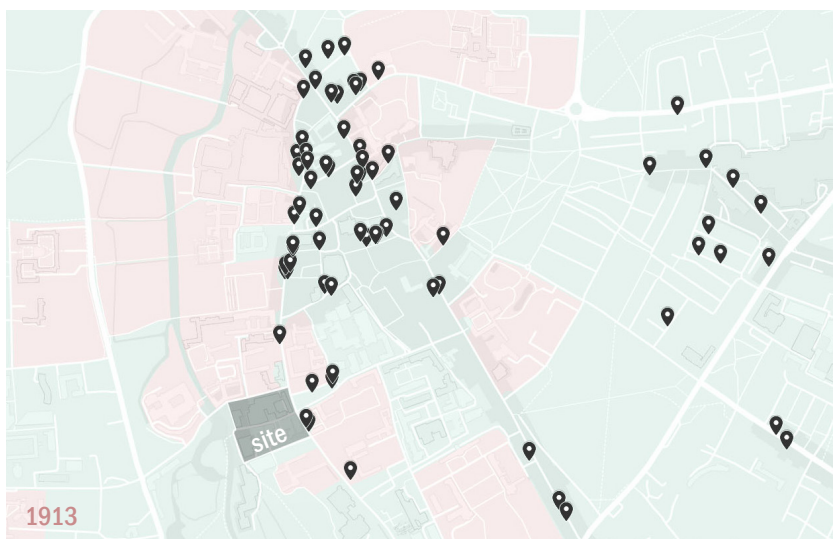
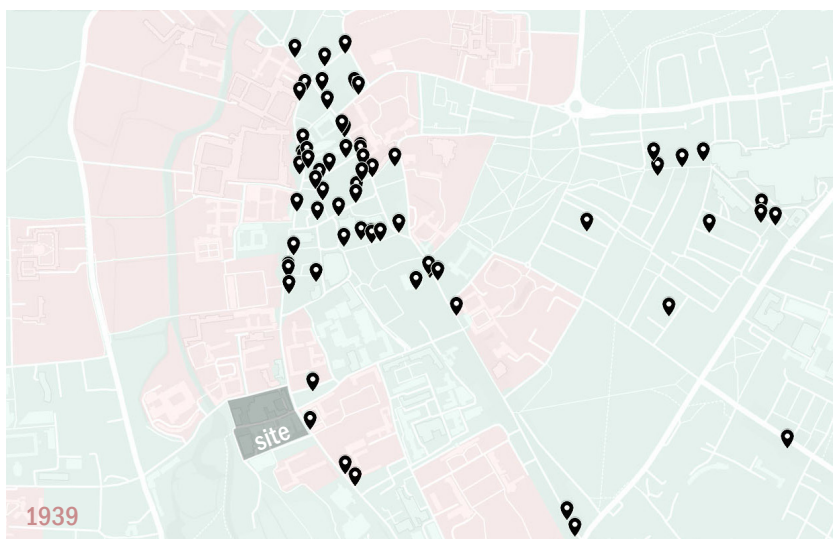


fig. 40: These three maps show all tailors and robemakers in Cambridge's centre, registered in the years 1878, 1913, and 1939 in Spalding's General Directory. There is a clear concentration of tailors and robemakers near the central Colleges (pink) on King's Parade, Trinity Street, and St John's Street.



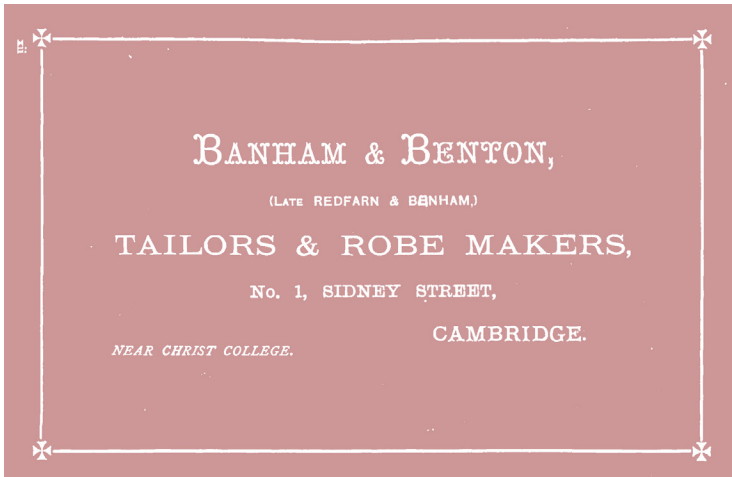


fig. 41: An ad for Banham & Benton in Cambridge, explicitly states their location near Christ College.
fig. 42: Ede & Ravenscroft's shop windows are filled with formalwear a few weeks before May Week.
fig. 43: A sign outside of Peterhouse College states Moss Bros fittings are currently underway.

Thus, Spalding's General Directory indicates the presence of thirty-nine tailors in 1878, and a staggering ninety-four in 1913. By 1939, there were 'only' seventy-three left. Notably, the vast majority of these tailors were located on King's Parade, Sidney Street, Trinity Street and St John's Street, in close proximity to the old, central colleges (fig. 40). Besides, the cumulative amount of tradesmen catering to a male clientele, including hatters, shirt makers, men's outfitters and aforementioned tailors recorded, far outnumbers the amount catering to a female set of clients, such as dressmakers, milliners and corset makers.⁹ Resultingly, Cambridge's shopping streets, must have had an overwhelmingly masculine focus, reflective of the academic community's presence.¹⁰ Additionally, if Thomas Hughes' novel 'Tom Brown at Oxford' is at all to be seen as a true representation of Oxbridge, Cambridge tailors would have been on par with London tailors, as they "vied with one another in providing them [students] with unheard quantities of the most gorgeous clothing."¹¹ With London, Hughes no doubt would have meant Savile Row, the epicentre of British tailoring in central Mayfair.

The introduction of the sewing machine on the one hand,¹² and the monumental societal changes after the great wars on the other, have meant that the trade of bespoke tailoring has declined enormously since its Edwardian heyday.¹³ For Cambridge, this change was already noticeable in the 1939 General Directory by Spalding, which showed not only a decline of the city's total amount of tailors, but also a change in the makeup of the types of tailors still in business. Traditional bespoke tailors had, at least partly, been replaced by more fashionable and cheaper alternatives such as the Fifty Shilling Tailors.¹⁴ These modern chain stores stepped away from an exclusive concentration on bespoke, and started offering ready-to-wear clothes and – what we would now call – made-to-measure services.¹⁵ The availability of these cheaper alternatives, made it possible for the working-class and lower-middle-class to afford elegant and good quality clothes similar to those worn by the middle- and upper-middle-class Cambridge students. It did not totally, and immediately, erase surface differences between classes, but it definitely diminished the big gap between town and gown in Cambridge.¹⁶

As those new chain stores still primarily aimed at Cambridge's student population, at least in the 1930's, one could argue that the academic community's composition, and their specific demands, did still determine what kind of stores settled there (fig. 41).¹⁷ It is in that light not surprising that over the course of the twentieth century, when increasingly more women and students from disadvantaged backgrounds entered the University, and informed a gradual change of traditional dress customs, the entirety of retailers in town also changed. Obviously the introduction of cheaper formal menswear is one development related to the changes within the student population, but notably the growth in the number of stores – tailors, robemakers and otherwise – specifically catering to women is another one.¹⁸ Tailors and robemakers such as George Stace and Madame Stuart in the 1913 directory, and later also H.S. Denny and S.W.X. Buxton in the '39 directory, for example, are explicitly marked as catering to a female clientele. The ever growing amount of – mainly overseas – tourists visiting Cambridge in recent times, has boosted the sales of all kinds of badged items, thus causing an increase of (official) university outfitters selling all kinds of jumpers, t-shirts, umbrellas, and caps. Resultingly, the public realm of central Cambridge, that was so overwhelmingly masculine, well-off, and white, in the late nineteenth century, today is more diverse than ever.¹⁹

This does not mean however, that the University's presence is no longer reflected in fashion retailers in town at all. The fact that Cambridge still hosts one major Savile Row tailor, Ede & Ravenscroft, in itself is quite remarkable, and puts it in the company of Edinburgh,

London, and rival Oxford, where the tailor and robemaker also has stores (fig. 35). Similarly, there is at least one other tailor who offers fully bespoke suits, Tailor & Cutter, although its annual turnover is only a fraction of Ede & Ravenscroft's.²⁰ Involving less craftsmanship and at a lower price point, Anthony offers designer ready-to-wear suits and a made-to-measure service. Additionally, a few chain stores specialised in affordable suits in Cambridge are T.M. Lewin, the Moss Bros., and Savoy Tailors Guild, and a plethora of high street chains, including Reiss, Jigsaw, Hugo Boss, Ted Baker, Topman, River Island, Marks & Spencer, Next, and Primark also have fairly big offerings of ready-to-wear suits. Gowns, official boat blazers, ties, scarves, and other crested items are still available at Ryder & Amies and A.E. Clothier.

The latter two are obviously catering to the academic community, and as a robemaker so is Ede & Ravenscroft.²¹ However, it is uncertain to what extent many of the other stores sell their suits to students and university staff members alike. Both Ede & Ravenscroft and Tailor & Cutter could not disclose details about who exactly their customers were, but the former did confirm bespoke suits are still regularly sold and made in the Cambridge store. Although the bespoke service is only available by appointment, and a cutter and tailor have to come over from one of the London stores, there is a fully equipped workroom on the premises, which by the look of it, is indeed in regular use.²² Anthony's 'Si Misura Specialist' Toby Clements did confirm they sell most of their made-to-measure suits to either university staff members, or high-ranking employees from local high tech businesses.²³ He also explained that Anthony's suits are not made in Cambridge, but in the factories of whatever brand a customer chooses. All of Anthony's salesmen are trained to take measurements and assist in fittings though, to make sure the customer gets a suit that fits perfectly.²⁴

Students do not seem to make up a significant part of the tailored suits offered by any of these three retailers though. Supposedly they would go to one of the more affordable chain stores to get a ready-to-wear suit, like I myself did when I first arrived in Cambridge. This assumption could be supported by a sign on the grounds of Peterhouse a few weeks in advance of May Week, which indicated a fitting with Moss Bros was underway (fig. 36). Considering the options the chain offers, this may either have been a fitting for hired suits, or its personalisation service, which gives customers the possibility to get an altered ready-to-wear suit for a small premium.²⁵ Furthermore, Ugolini wrote about 1930's Oxford, that even by then "undergraduates' spending power was much reduced in comparison with earlier generations of students," and that only a "tiny minority" could afford to have a bespoke suit made for them.²⁶ Since then even more students from underprivileged backgrounds have entered the University of Cambridge,²⁷ and due to increased labour costs, bespoke suits have become even more expensive, making it probably even less common for most students to be able to afford them.²⁸ Even Anthony's made-to-measure suits would cost thousands of pounds, and are thus most probably out of reach for most.

Not unimportantly, female students, who in the 2017-2018 academic year account for 48 percent of all admitted undergraduates²⁹ (up from 12 percent in the 1960's³⁰), do not tend to wear tailored garments at all. Although they wear the same gowns as men, which they have to buy at the same stores their male counterparts do, most seem to prefer wearing dresses over skirt or pant suits for formal events. Official ceremonies such as matriculation and graduation may be an exception, as sub-fusc rules allow only certain garments to be worn, but those same rules are not in play for 'normal' formal hall dinners. Supposedly, female members of the academic community, similarly to men, buy their clothes at one of many high street chains in Cambridge,

many of which, including Phase Eight, Reiss, Zara, and Topshop, have large selections of formal dresses, tops, and skirts. An established culture of making women's garments in Cambridge, lacks entirely though, probably partly because women were only officially admitted to the University after ready-to-wear had already become the standard.

3.3 The Bespoke Tradition

"The very first day we opened our suite at the elegant Carlyle for business, a dapper little chap came by (...) and wished to be measured up for a simple, single-breasted navy worsted. The catch was that he wanted slightly wider shoulders and a roomier waist than are germane to the Huntsman line – fairly significant but not necessarily egregious deviations. (...) Hall (...) declared with chilling disdain: 'You, Sir, are not my idea of a Huntsman customer.'" – Richard Anderson (2009)³¹

Ede & Ravenscroft is the sole survivor of the great British tradition of bespoke tailoring in Cambridge, and a rare taste of London's Savile Row in the province. To get a more apprehensive view of today's bespoke tailoring business, the Golden Mile is the place to go, as it still excels in making and selling arguably the best bespoke suits in the world. 'Bespoke', in master cutter Richard Anderson's words means that a garment must "1) be made according to a pattern created and cut uniquely for that customer, 2) assembled by hand, with machines used only for the long seams; and 3) fitted on the customer an indefinite number of times from baste to finish such that the most successful and individualised fit can be achieved."³² Bespoke is thus different from less expansive made-to-measure services, which may not offer an indefinite number of fittings or an almost entirely hand sewn garment. Unlike use of the French term 'Haute Couture', use of the term 'bespoke' is not legally restricted, and therefore frequently misused by companies that actually offer some type of made-to-measure service.

Both Savile Row's ongoing success and its looming fragility paradoxically stem from the same refusal to deviate from that expansive understanding of what bespoke is. After all, the personal fitting service, which is inherently part of the bespoke process, and which is enjoyed by customers for its almost ritualistic nature, is very costly and time consuming.³³ Additionally, the hand-sewing aspect of bespoke is dismissed by contemporary critics as too expensive for results that could be equalled, or even trumped, by using modern technologies.³⁴ Still, that personal and intimate relation between customer and tailor is the spill of Savile Row's success.³⁵ It is therefore also, that the first step in the bespoke process is selecting the right House. Even more so because the Row's Houses tend to have their own house styles, and even though they make garments to customer's wishes, they do so within a certain framework. Huntsman for example is very well-known for their slim, one button coats, once by the Evening Standard described as "one of the most quintessentially English of status symbols" (fig. 44).³⁶ These distinctive Houses also separate one Savile Row customer from another, who recognise each other based off specific details.

Once a first-time customer has selected a fitting House, he or she will normally commence the actual process of ordering a garment, in conversation with the salesman. Most of the big Houses on Savile Row have front-house salesmen, who are the "client's point of reference" in the bespoke process, as Huntsman's client manager David Goggins explained during my visit to the store.³⁷ During a first appointment they will guide customers through all kinds of different options in regards to choice of cloths, style, and details. Richard Anderson's

Krishan Chudasama confidently said that within just a few questions in relation to the desired garment – what occasion it is for, what climate it will be worn in, how often it will be worn, etc. – he would be able to narrow down thousands of different options to a more manageable number.³⁹ Finally, when the customer has been helped making his or her decisions for the to-be-ordered garment, the head cutter will be brought in, to take the client's measurements. After the client's first appointment, the cutter will use these measurements to draft a unique paper pattern, while the salesman will order the cloths the customer 'has spoken for.'

As the process continues, the salesman will remain the point of reference for the customer, while the head cutter will be the point of reference for all the makers involved in making a particular garment. The first patterns he has drafted will most probably be cut by an undercutter, and afterwards – in the case of a three piece suit – assembled by a coat maker, waistcoat maker and trouser maker respectively. Each of these makers may be assisted by an apprentice, who is learning the trade in-house. For a customer's second appointment, which will be booked through the salesman, garments will not yet be completely finished, but rather basted in a way it can easily be altered or taken a part again. The head cutter will oversee this first fitting, and with his or her expertise, he or she will be able to see what changes to the pattern need to be made, in order to get the garment fitted perfectly to the customer's body. Usually the information gathered in the first fitting, is enough to ensure a perfect fit for the second fitting during the third appointment.⁴⁰

With the needed alterations in mind, the head cutter will draft a new pattern. The undercutter will then cut a new piece of cloth, and the makers subsequently completely assemble the garments again. A finisher will then handmade buttonholes, attach buttons, and neatly finish all pockets, while a presser will expertly mould the garments into shape. When all this is done – for a two piece suit – an average of eight or nine people have put in eighty five man hours over the course of about eight weeks (fig. 45). "You know, with all the work that goes into these suits, it is no wonder they cost over five thousand pounds," Huntsman's Goggins said, "it sometimes stings when people ask how much these suits are, and you can see on their faces they don't understand. But when you go into even just a two minute explanation of the process, they really start understanding."⁴¹ The unique paper patterns made for each customer are carefully and indefinitely stored in the House's archives. "Sometimes we get a notice from a client who has sadly passed away. When we get a message like that, we would normally remove their patterns," said Chudasama at Richard Anderson. If not, a customer can come back years after he or she has ordered a garment, "to find that we have their pattern still" (fig. 46).⁴² Subsequent orders from a house thus tend to take less time than first orders.

Despite the astronomic costs of a bespoke suit, Savile Row serves a surprisingly wide range of customers. From middle-class men that have saved up, and come in once in their lives, to get a suit for their wedding they can keep wearing for special occasions afterwards, to the ultra-rich "we have trouble not seeing every ten days," as Chudasama said. "They just want so many garments," he continued, "it's like a monthly service to them."⁴³ Within the group of well-to-do customers, undoubtedly still the true cash cows, there are subtle differences that influence the process though. David Goggins pointed out that it is very important for Huntsman salesmen to adapt their behaviour to different clients: "because you know, we get some old money, you have to behave one way, and then you've got new money, and you have to behave a whole different way." Similarly Chudasama referred to the different relationships he has with British, European, and American customers on the one hand, and Chinese, Arab and Russian



*fig. 44 (top): Huntsman's signature, slim-cut, one-button coat, with firm shoulders and a flared bottom.
fig. 45 (bottom): It is not uncommon to have at least eight people involved in the making of a single bespoke suit: the salesman, head cutter, under-cutter, trouser maker with apprentice, coat maker and apprentice, and a presser. As is reflected by these photos, the group of cutters and makers is now more diverse than ever.*



fig. 46: Part of Huntsman's extensive pattern archives. The House of Huntsman's archives include patterns of famous customers, such as Katharine Hepburn, who famously wore very wide-legged trousers.
 fig. 47: Famous Cambridge alumni which have been customers on Savile Row are Eddie Redmayne, pictured here in Hardy Amies (left), Sir Ian McKellan, photographed being fitted by Richard Anderson for the 2003 Oscars (centre), and Prince Charles, who has been dressed by Anderson & Sheppard for decades (right).

ones, a new and important group of customers, on the other. Additionally, with many famous customers, among them Cambridge alumni including Eddie Redmayne, Sir Ian McKellan, Hugh Laurie, and Prince Charles, discretion is of vital importance (fig. 47).⁴⁴ Yet it becomes increasingly clear that the elitist old world, of closed, invitation-only shops, and the democratic new world, of openness to whoever can afford it, meet on the Golden Mile.

British tailoring has notably had a big impact on contemporary womenswear as well, perhaps starting with illustrious figures such as Yves Saint Laurent, who introduced the world to ‘Le Smoking’ in 1966,⁴⁵ and Hubert de Givenchy, who is known for his sharp tailoring and was a Huntsman customer himself.⁴⁶ Later on, Alexander McQueen famously was an apprentice at Gieves & Hawkes, before he started his immensely successful eponymous brand and became the creative director of the House of Givenchy.⁴⁷ Stella McCartney also worked on the Row, at Edward Sexton, before she started her own celebrated label of eco-friendly clothes.⁴⁸ Female style icons, most famously Katherine Hepburn (fig. 46), Marlène Dietrich, and Bianca Jagger, were Savile Row customers themselves, and have paved the way for more contemporary stars, such as Cate Blanchett, Madonna, and Hillary Clinton, to wear pantsuits as an alternative to traditionally female, formal dress.⁴⁹

Savile Row’s method of making suits has notoriously changed little since its early days over a century ago. Rosemarie Bolger, waist coat maker at Anderson Sheppard refers to this in the documentary ‘Tailored Stories – An Oral History of Savile Row’.⁵⁰ In the film, she talks about altering a 1927 waistcoat, which she said was constructed remarkably similar to how her colleagues and she would make it today. “[It had] exactly the same stitches, in exactly the same places,” she exclaimed, “I could have done it!” Even so, Savile Row workrooms have undergone quite the change in recent years. A few decades ago these workshops would have been filled with white men, who saw the trade of tailoring merely as a profession. They might have ended up being plumbers or carpenters, had that opportunity arisen before.⁵¹ Now almost two-thirds of sixty students receiving a Savile Row training diploma are female.⁵² Additionally, there was a strong hierarchic order between cutters, tailors and finishers.⁵³ The latter, and least respected function being the only job women would have.⁵⁴ Both the makeup of all involved craftspeople, and their mutual relationships have since drastically changed (fig. 45).

These days, a diverse group of men and women from all kinds of ethnic backgrounds, and ranging in age from their early twenties to late sixties, inhabit the Row’s workrooms. The websites of various tailoring houses show profiles of a diverse group of young apprentices in various functions at work, and I can confirm that is clearly visible when visiting a store as well. Andrew Ramroop, Oswald Boateng, and Kathryn Sargent have become big names on the Row, and are exemplary pioneers of change in that regard. When Ramroop became head cutter at Maurice Sedwell in the 1980’s, he was the first black man to do so.⁵⁵ Similarly, Boateng was – aged only twenty seven – the youngest and first black man to open his own business on the Golden Mile in 1994.⁵⁶ In 2009, Sargent became the first female head cutter on the Row, at prestigious Gieves & Hawkes, before she founded her own namesake tailoring House in 2012.⁵⁷ The inclusion of new and diverse talent has provided Savile Row with a breadth of fresh air, which is reflected in the garments as well, and has as such been celebrated. Boateng’s suits for example, informed by his Ghanaian roots and North London upbringing, are notably slimmer and more colourful than the Golden Mile’s traditional output (fig. 48).⁵⁸

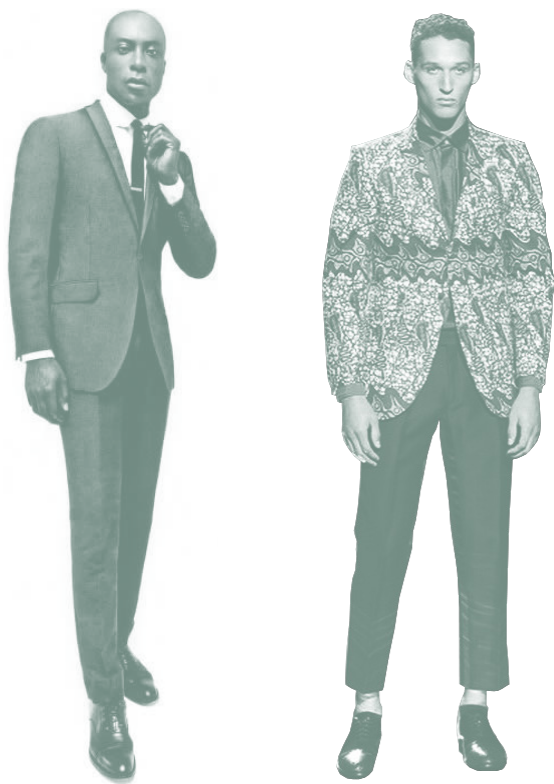


fig. 48: Ozwald Boateng (left), with his Ghanaian roots and North London upbringing, is one of the people credited with revitalising Savile Row.

3.4 The Bespoke House

Despite the big change in its population, the Row's workrooms as physical spaces have changed little, even when some of the front house shops of different Houses have indeed undergone quite the transformation. These workrooms are first and foremost production spaces, and thus largely developed in such a way that it best accommodates its use. Hence, as making methods have changed little, so have Savile Row workshops.⁵⁹ They have mostly decreased in size, as the number of sold garments has come down from its peak, but essentially they function, and look, very much like they would have decades ago. Most workshops are still on the premises, as it makes communication between salesmen, cutters, and makers more easy, while simultaneously providing the opportunity to quickly respond to customers' wishes during their appointments. In recent years it is also believed, that visibly making garments in direct proximity to where customers purchase them, boosts sales.⁶⁰ Among other things, their sheer visibility in this area of London for example,⁶¹ it is therefore also worth paying London's steep rents.⁶²

Because of these high rents, Savile Row tailoring houses tend to have a fairly limited amount of space available for workrooms, primarily in the basement and on upper floors, which is also why they are usually very compact. Although in an ideal situation more space may be preferred, the compactness does make communication between all concerned craftspeople very easy, and it is hence not necessarily considered problematic. The generous amounts of daylight entering the townhouses on this particular street in London's Mayfair district, is one of the reasons why tailoring businesses once settled here (fig. 49).⁶³ It is no coincidence that the most successful tailoring Houses are on the North Eastern stretch of Savile Row, where most light entered the buildings. For cutters and salesmen particularly, daylight is an important condition of their working environments. Cutters need to be able to spot errors in a cloth and to meticulously cut a garment in regards to the fabric's pattern and grain, while salesmen have to be able to show swatches of a variety of cloths to customers.⁶⁴ The various makers do not need daylight as much, and are thus often separated from their cutting and selling colleagues by the windows and on the ground floor (fig. 51).⁶⁵

In most Houses the ground floor is the salesmen's domain, as it usually is where the actual shop is located. It is not uncommon though, that the front house is shared with cutters, whose work requires daylight and whose presence is used to underline the amount of craftsmanship that goes into these costly garments.⁶⁶ Despite differences in the styles of different businesses, some elements are to be found in almost all of them: large numbers of books with cloth swatches from a range of different mills, a cutting board, rolls of fabric, a number of mannequins wearing various models of suits, large fitting rooms with big mirrors, and racks with unfinished garments. Notably some Houses, including Henry Poole, Dege & Skinner, and Huntsman, offer almost exclusively bespoke services, while others, such as Alexander McQueen, Gieves & Hawkes, Oswald Boateng, and Kilgour, have a sizable collection of ready-to-wear garments in-store as well. The former also tend to look more traditional, with parquet flooring, Chesterfield couches, and panelled walls filled with Royal Warrants, while the latter, regardless of their respective age, are much more diverse in the look of their retail environments. McQueen and Gieves & Hawkes have spun a twist to the classic look, while Boateng and Kilgour have gone a completely different direction altogether (fig. 52).

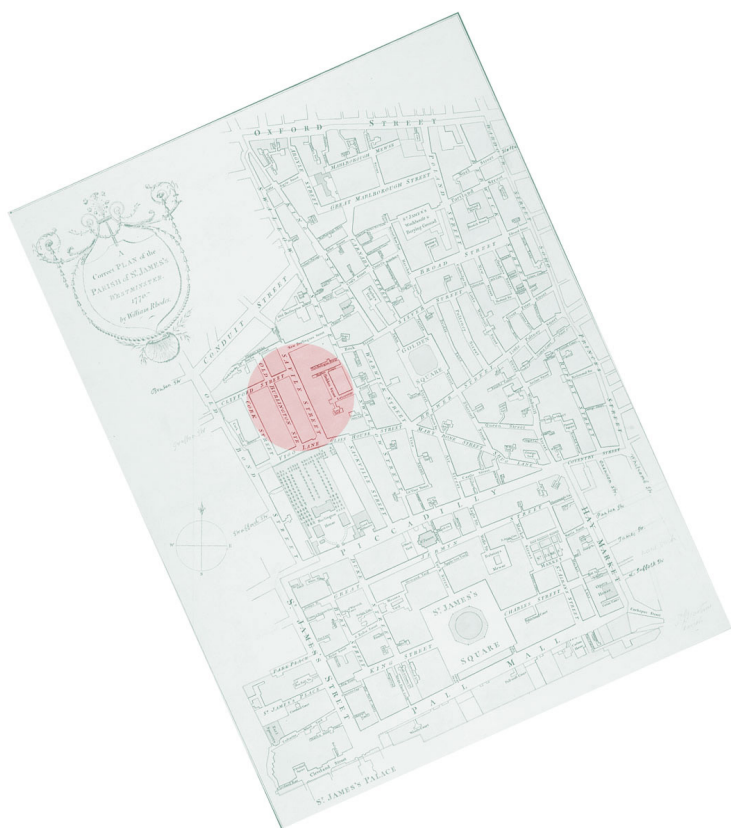


fig. 49: Map of the Parish of St James', Westminster. Savile Row is marked in red. The orientation of the North Eastern stretch of the street is especially pleasant in terms of light. That side of the street has thus become the place where the Row's biggest tailors, such as Huntsman, Gieves & Hawkes, and Henry Poole, have their 'Houses.'



fig. 50: Huntsman's facade (1:200) is fairly typical for a classic Savile Row House. Behind the shopwindow lies the front-house shop, underneath it the main workroom. A small staircase behind the fence provides access to this workshop from outside.



fig. 51: Axonometric of Huntsman. The slightly raised ground floor level is where customers are welcomed (1), where the cutters in need of daylight work (2), where the fitting rooms are (3), and where the salesmen have some offices and storage space. The tailors, pressers, and finishers work in the workroom in the basement (5). The upper floors are mostly in use by different companies, but Huntsman has some workspaces there as well.

The Bespoke Trade



fig. 52: Although facades (top) and especially workrooms (bottom) are very similar at most Savile Row Houses, their front-house stores (centre) are very different. Henry Poole (left) is very traditional, Alexander McQueen (centre) is a modern interpretation of the tailor's shop, and Kilgour is very modern.

The Row's Renaissance**3.5**

After an enormous decline of the bespoke business after the Second World War, and particularly great struggles at the end of the twentieth century, in the new millennium fresh life has been breathed into the tailoring trade. Across the board, from Savile Row's finest bespoke tailors, to Amsterdam's most well-known made-to-measure specialists, various professionals have noticed an increase of and change in customers. Tim Morsink at Oger said the made-to-measure business in the Amsterdam store had tripled since he arrived four years ago. "I like to think this growth is because of me," he said, "but of course it is actually just because of customers' changing needs."⁶⁷ According to Kathryn Sargent the bespoke business in London has also grown in the past few years. She explicitly mentions a new generation of young men, and women, who "are coming with their own ideas and styles, and they are breaking the rules."⁶⁸ Sargent credits these customers with revitalising London's tailoring industry. Frances Ross' recent studies of the bespoke and semi-bespoke⁶⁹ trades, similarly conclude that both distinctive branches have grown in size, and also that young men, from all kinds of ethnicities she adds, have truly helped transform the Golden Mile in recent years.⁷⁰

This diverse set of customers is first and foremost looking for personalised garments, but in the case of true bespoke, a highly personalised process as well. Although made-to-measure and bespoke services may result in similar garments, it is that personalised aspect of the bespoke process that still sells a traditional, handmade suit as opposed to personalised, but mostly machine-made garments.⁷¹ Many of the younger customers for personalised garments do not value the perhaps old-fashioned, ritualistic process very highly, and cannot be bothered to go through the hassle of multiple fittings. This type of customer would thus more easily go to a made-to-measure specialist, that can deliver garments to their specific taste, at a lower price point, and probably within a more limited timeframe as well (fig. 53). Transversely, a different – and much smaller – group of customers perceives that intimate and ritualistic process entirely differently, and is prepared to pay over five thousand pounds for a suit, mainly because of this level of personalisation.⁷² Customers like that value the relationship they have with their personal cutter, and appreciate the traditional craftsmanship by tailors with a face and a name. Both Huntsman's David Goggings, and New Tailor's Roel Wolbrink, who offers both made-to-measure and bespoke services, confirms that notion. Despite a growth in the bespoke business, at least in London, "there is only a very limited group of people who is interested enough to have a fully handmade suit," the latter said, "for many people that little bit of extra attention is completely unnecessary."⁷³

Even in the made-to-measure – or semi-bespoke – branch though, traditional craftsmen are valued highly in the process, their expertise is very much in demand. "We would actually like to hire some specialist tailors, but we simply cannot find them," Oger's Morsink said sighing, "They are not available!"⁷⁴ In response to this serious lack of educated cutters and tailors, surely in the Netherlands, Frans van Veen established a bespoke tailoring course in Hilversum, only in 2016.⁷⁵ In England, similar courses have started fairly recently as well, those of Newham College (2006) and Maurice Sedwell (2008) being the ones with closest ties to Savile Row.⁷⁶ Although students in these courses learn the basic aspects of making a fully handmade suit, the reality is that many of them are actually prepared for a job in the made-to-measure sector.⁷⁷ Their skills are needed for handmade details such as buttonholes, lapels and pockets, which negotiate a certain equilibrium between the traditional bespoke suit and the

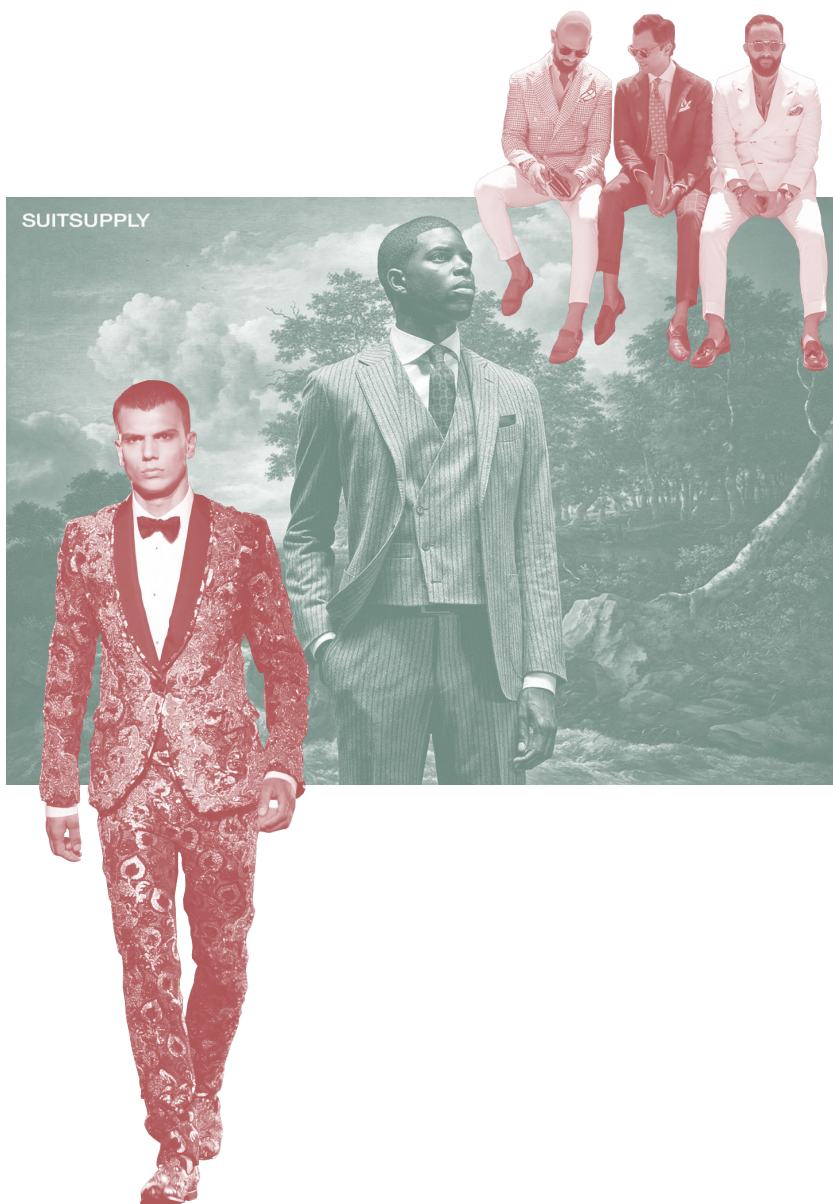


fig. 53 (centre): Campaign image from the immensely popular, made-to-measure-brand SuitSupply.
 fig. 54 (top): Pitti Uomo, the world's biggest menswear trade fair, is notorious for its stylish attendees.
 fig. 55 (bottom): A look from Dolce & Gabbana's 'Alta Sartoria' collection; the Italian brand's ultra luxurious menswear line, which combines classic bespoke tailoring with haute couture embellishment techniques.



fig. 56: Tailored women's looks from recently shown Erdem (left) and J.W. Anderson (centre) collections.
fig. 57: Hillary Rodham Clinton (right) has become a pantsuit icon, particularly since the 2016 presidential race.

more modern made-to-measure variant. For indeed, as Ross found, while modern technologies are on the rise in this semi-bespoke branch, hand-finished elements remain highly desirable.⁷⁸

In Savile Row's case specifically, two initiatives in particular have further aided the renaissance of (bespoke) tailoring. Firstly, the establishment of the Savile Row Bespoke Association, in which many of the best London Houses work together. Both Kathryn Sargent and Richard Anderson attributed much of the Row's recent growth to this collaborative effort.⁷⁹ Together, these businesses have decided to a) invest in training a new generation of tailors, and b) to be very open about that as well. "It's no longer a sort of closed-door thing," Sargent said, "(...) it is really nice to be a part of that. To see that change and be a part of it."⁸⁰ Having been able to visit multiple Savile Row stores, see their workrooms, and talk to various staff members, I can only underline this commitment to openness seems true. Additionally, the Westminster Council has decided to grant Savile Row a special planning protection, which is supposed to safeguard the street's unique character. New rules demand new businesses to not replace "bespoke tailoring uses," and to "sell bespoke, unique, limited-edition or one-of-a-kind products, [which are] complementary to the character and function [of the street]."⁸¹ It is hoped that these measures will prevent rental prices from soaring even higher, as corporate offices which seemed to slowly take over the area, are now officially banned.

In addition to the democratisation of custom garments made possible by new technologies, and the initiatives specifically aimed at safeguarding Savile Row's future, menswear in general has taken flight recently. According to a Euromonitor research, the menswear market is currently growing faster than the womenswear market, and is even set to outperform the latter altogether by 2020.⁸² Menswear's success is reflected in the recent growth of, and attention for men's fashion weeks and trade shows, such as London Men's Fashion week and Pitti Uomo in Florence (fig. 54), and the introduction of new menswear brands, or expansion of well-known, existing labels to include men's lines. Stella McCartney, for example, has launched menswear in 2016,⁸³ while Dolce & Gabbana expanded their haute couture activities in 2015, to include what they call *Alta Sartoria*; ornate, bespoke couture specifically aimed at men (fig. 55).⁸⁴ Notably menswear at the very other end of the spectrum has also grown. H&M spectacularly increased its offering for men by 260% in 2015, while companies such as ASOS and New Look have shifted focus towards male customers too.⁸⁵

Tailoring has also reappeared in women's fashion in recent years, with young British designers such as J.W. Anderson and Erdem leading the way (fig. 56).⁸⁶ The latter's interpretation involves a mix of strong, traditionally masculine tailoring, with such traditionally feminine features as lace and floral brocades, and is exemplary for a new, open attitude toward gendered fashions.⁸⁷ Simultaneously did American Vogue brand suits one of fall 2017's major trends, writing that designers were "perhaps inspired by pantsuit legend Hillary Rodham Clinton," thus seemingly linking tailored garments to women's advancement in leadership positions (fig. 57).⁸⁸ Strikingly, in recent years, pantsuits have also found remarkable success in Arabic countries, as women's emancipation is slowly taking off. Arabic Women are increasingly being heard, and the traditionally masculine connotation to tailored garments, fits the message of empowerment they wish to convey.⁸⁹ Seemingly a whole group of potential Savile Row customers is arising.



fig. 58: The University sites (marked in pink) that were developed in the nineteenth century will likely vacate soon, and are thus possible locations for The Cambridge School of Tailoring project.

4 The Cambridge School of Tailoring

As the past chapters have evidenced, clothes matter, and both Cambridge's unique, local culture of dress, and the distinctly British trade of bespoke tailoring, are clear examples of that notion. Both have had a major impact on contemporary fashion, e.g. piped blazers, college jumpers, and sharp suits, and both are reflective of a range of on-going social, economic, and cultural issues regarding class, gender, and race, among other things. As dress and architecture tend to share a history and culture that has informed the way they look and function, they tell a collective story of their origins and developments as well. The University's ecclesiastical origin thus is reflected in both the traditional gowns being worn by students and academic staff alike, and colleges' monastic set-up. Similarly, Savile Row's workrooms look virtually like they did a century ago, as making methods have hardly changed. Many of the front house shops however are reflective of modern consumption patterns, and have indeed adapted to that new reality accordingly.

The University of Cambridge and bespoke tailoring, as most fully executed on London's Savile Row, are historically connected and similarly emblematic of British excellence. The academic community's big demand of academical robes, boat blazers, suits and more, was responded to, with an equally big amount of quality tailors and robemakers, which eventually dominated Cambridge's streets. Similarly, Savile Row could develop on its specific place in Mayfair, London, because the area had become popular among aristocrats, who created a demand of all kinds of luxury products, including tailored garments. As a result, the public spheres of both Cambridge and central Mayfair were heavily influenced by the commodities local inhabitants desired to buy.

That public realm is especially interesting in regards to clothing in Cambridge, as it is where members of 'town' and 'gown' meet. Colleges are static elements of the University's presence, that most of the time physically separate students and staff members from local townspeople. Their closed architecture, once intended to keep students and academic staff safe, became a physical manifestation of these powerful institution's elite positions. Although more dynamic, rather than static in nature, clothing worn by the academic community essentially is – and definitely was – perceived almost the same. That separation of 'town' and 'gown' is thus not as simply definable as colleges' perimeters, for large quantities of students populating central Cambridge, appropriate public space through their clothing. This clash

my not be as apparent as it was decades ago, but still one can regularly run into students in gowns on the streets, right before dinner time, or boat blazers in local pubs later at night. Instances like these highlight an institutionalised difference between people. The sense of equality connected to these clothes, essentially uniforms, by insiders within colleges walls, is replaced by a sense of inequality outside of them.

Although clothing is dynamic, in that it can easily move beyond certain borders and simply because it is relatively easy to put on or take off again, traditional student dress in Cambridge is in a different way very static. It is in fact exactly what Simmel would call anti-fashion, and what Flügel would describe as fixed clothing. In that sense, traditional student clothing is remarkably similar to centuries old, static collegiate architecture. Although they both reflect outdated ideals of masculinity, socio-economic status, and ethnicity, they are now being used and worn by an increasingly diverse group of people. These traditional garments and buildings may have hardly changed in form, but they have arguably acquired a new, more democratic meaning in recent times. They are no longer symbols of the old-world upper classes per se, but rather emblematic of a diverse, meritocratic elite of men and women. As such, their futures seem relatively safe.

Taking notion of all this, Cambridge's culture of dress, and the British trade of bespoke tailoring, seem valid bases for the project I am proposing here. However, to be able to come to a proposal, which is rooted in reality, multiple conditions still need to be taken into account. Firstly, Cambridge as a site for this project. Various locations within the historic city centre have been considered, but they all have one thing in common; they are University sites that will almost certainly vacate in the near future. As such, the context has informed a starting point for this project; research and education should be at the heart of this proposal. With that central idea in mind, the proximity of local partners, the recommendations of industry professionals, the public's interest in fashion and craftsmanship, and relevant predicaments regarding tourism in the city, subsequently provide the reasoning behind a) the choice of the eventual site, and b) the different programme components that should constitute what I call *The Cambridge School of Tailoring*.

Research and Education

4.1

When in the nineteenth century responsibilities of the University and Colleges were more apprehensively divided, various sites around town were developed to house the many departments, laboratories, and lecture theatres, that were necessary for use by students from all colleges.¹ Among the then established University clusters were the Downing Site, the New Museums Site, and the Mill Lane / Old Press site; the three central locations that were considered for the Cambridge School of Tailoring (fig. 58, 59). All three of them are threatened to be abandoned soon, as the University is developing a new campus just out of town; the West Cambridge Site. This new development should ensure Cambridge's central position at the heart of Silicon Fen, one of Europe's biggest high-tech clusters, as it enables expansion and the construction of necessary new facilities. In any case, all three locations are currently predominantly University sites. The Downing Site, for example, houses the departments of Psychology, Geography, and Biochemistry, the New Museums Site houses the Old Cavendish Laboratory and the Department of Zoology, and the Mill Lane / Old Press Site houses the University Centre, the Mill Lane lecture rooms, and the Department of Land Economy.

The Cambridge School of Tailoring



fig. 59: Views from the three University sites under consideration: the Mill Lane / Old Press Site (top), the New Museums Site (centre), and the Downing Site (bottom).



fig. 60: Ede & Ravenscroft (top), the Fitzwilliam Museum's Institute of Visual Culture (centre), and the University and its various faculties and departments (bottom), are interesting local partners.

Occupying any of these sites automatically means one deals with what could be understood as schools: buildings used by an “institution at which instruction is given.”² The University of Cambridge however, is not just any institution. It has for centuries been, and supposedly will for a long time remain, at the very heart of the city of Cambridge’s success and notoriety. It has not just helped shaping the city of Cambridge itself, but arguably the whole world as we know it today. In addition to the University’s very direct influence on the town, e.g. the University sites being considered for this project, it is also at the heart of thriving tourist and high-tech industries. The histories of alumni like Isaac Newton and Charles Darwin, and architectural marvels like King’s College’s Chapel and Trinity College’s Wren library, capture the imagination of millions of visitors each year, while the outstanding departments of various faculties are valuable collaborators for such high-tech and pharmaceutical giants as ARM, Apple, and AstraZeneca.³ Without its University, Cambridge’s unique culture would be indistinctive, and its booming economy, which at least partly relies on that unique culture as well, would be ruined.

Considering the importance of education and research for the city of Cambridge, and taking into account the history of education connected to these particular University buildings, creating an educational institution dedicated to de trade of tailoring seems like a fitting choice. Although the University of Cambridge is a prestigious institution of higher education, one could argue that an institution dedicated to this exquisite and distinctly British craft, is perfectly deserving of a prestigious – albeit vocational – school, in this specific context too. However, this institution may not be viable if it is a school in the narrow sense of the word. It should rather be a cluster of functions that aims to safeguard a craft and a culture, not just by educating future tailors, but also by researching the production and consumption of dress, and by explaining elements of local, traditional dress customs to a larger audience, as perhaps in a museum. The centre of excellence this constitutes, may be able to connect to various existing instances, thus firmly rooting itself in Cambridge’s context.

4.2 Local Partners

Indeed, various different parties could be interesting to connect to the proposed School of Tailoring. Most obvious perhaps is the presence of Ede & Ravenscroft, a piece of Savile Row in Cambridge. The store’s Cambridge branch is located on Trumpington Street, just around the corner of the Mill Lane / Old Press Site under consideration. Although exact numbers of the bespoke orders in the Cambridge store have not been disclosed, I have been assured several times, that they still regularly get some. Additionally, Ede & Ravenscroft is much larger than just its Cambridge store. It has multiple branches in London too, as well as one each in Oxford and Edinburgh. Moreover, Ede & Ravenscroft is also an active robemaker, which puts it firmly at the heart of Cambridge’s local dress culture. Besides, through in-house apprenticeships, education is traditionally an integral part of bespoke tailoring businesses such as Ede & Ravenscroft.

Secondly, the University of Cambridge itself would make a great partner. With departments as broad as art history, social anthropology and materials science, highly specialised knowledge in all kinds of fields is very close by. A research centre focussing on the production and consumption of clothes, connected to the local dress culture or beyond, could thus fish from an extensive and multidisciplinary pool of specialists and talent. With an existing and prestigious academic infrastructure already

available, including among others the University Press, the possibilities seem simply endless.

A third and final potential partner, is the Institute of Visual Culture at the Fitzwilliam Museum. The Institute aims to “contribute and actively challenge the international discourse surrounding the practice and theory of visual art and culture today,” and “explores challenging and intellectually inquisitive contemporary art practice in all media.”⁴ Through publications, exhibitions, and more, the Institute “examines the cultural, social, scientific and economical structures that surround us, in order to expose, re-think and re-present aspects of the world we live in.”⁵ As such, the Institute seems a perfect partner to conduct research in regards to clothes, but also to translate that knowledge into products that are accessible and comprehensible for a larger audience. Like Ede & Ravenscroft, the Fitzwilliam Museum, and thus the Institute of Visual Culture, is located in direct proximity of the Mill Lane / Old Press Site.

Various clusters of functions, or special connections related to specific fashion schools and courses already exist (fig. 61). The Royal School of Needlework at Hampton Court Palace for example, teaches the fine trade of hand embroidery to students, but also offers workshops to enthusiasts, organises exhibitions, and does special commissions, most famously perhaps the Duchess of Cambridge’s Alexander McQueen wedding gown.⁶ ModeNatie in Antwerp on the other hand is composed by a fashion museum, a fashion school, the Flanders Fashion institute – which promotes local fashion – and a specialised bookshop.⁷ Similarly, Denim City in Amsterdam combines a number of businesses and organisations that together aim to spark innovation in the denim branch, through education, research, and entrepreneurship.⁸ More traditional is Meestercoupeur, a school for couture sewing techniques in Amsterdam, which often works with the Dutch National Opera and Ballet, to help create their costumes.⁹

Industry Professionals

4.3

During visits to, and conversations with, various industry professionals, including multiple salesmen, tailors and made-to-measure specialists in London, Cambridge, and Amsterdam, as well as a bespoke tailoring teacher in Hilversum, I have submitted these ideas of connecting a vocational school with partners such as Ede & Ravenscroft, the University of Cambridge, and the Institute of Visual Culture. The openness of everyone I have talked to in itself, already confirmed some of this proposal is valid. All of them were willing to answer my questions, share their stories, and to show me around, because they loved their trade and seemed committed to safeguarding its future. Exactly what the cluster of functions I propose is supposed to do as well. Even some of Savile Row’s most well-known Houses, such as Gieves & Hawkes and Huntsman, kindly opened their doors, something that probably would have been unthinkable even ten years ago. Dr Cindy Lawford (fig. 62), who showed me around on Savile Row, and generously introduced me to some salesmen and tailors said it herself: “Savile Row is full of caretakers. People with a strong sense of history and a love for their craft. They do enjoy showing that.”¹⁰

The notion that the market for personal tailoring in recent years has grown, and thereby also that there is a growing demand for expertise, which is explained in chapter three, suggests that additional institutions dedicated to training new tailors are welcome. Moreover, Kathryn Sargent explicitly mentioned education’s role in revitalising the trade. Reaching out to new talent from diverse backgrounds, has pushed British bespoke tailoring into the new millennium, and should continue to do so.¹¹ However, that does not yet help answer how exactly that should be done.

The Cambridge School of Tailoring



fig. 61: Examples of succesful fashion and education clusters are the Royal School of Needlework at Hampton Court Palace (top), Modenatie in Antwerp (centre), and Denim City in Amsterdam (bottom).



fig. 62: Dr Cindy Lawford during one of her Savile Row walking tours, which is open for anyone who is interested. Only a decade ago such openness on the Row would have been virtually unthinkable.

Most importantly, as it seems, is connecting the school to real, operating business. Gieves & Hawkes trouser maker Jolien Vermeulen very clearly stated that linking the proposed school to an existing bespoke tailor, such as Ede & Ravenscroft, is indeed very valuable. Tailoring schools such as Newham College and Maurice Sedwell's Savile Row Academy, which are currently educating most of the Row's apprentices, teach students only basic techniques in what's called a pre-apprenticeship course. They are designed like that, so that students can eventually do an apprenticeship in a bespoke workroom to fully learn the craft, as is preferred by the tailoring Houses. Introducing periods of reality-based working experience early on, Vermeulen says, is extremely helpful.¹² Frans Vermeulen similarly supports that idea, and stresses the importance of bring in a sense of reality to schools. By that he not just means providing students with a chance to work in actual bespoke workrooms, but also introducing a certain culture within the educational system, that may not be as rigid and prescribed, as sometimes is the case at the ROC in Hilversum.¹³ Willingness of Savile Row Houses in England, and New Tailor in Amsterdam, to collaborate with schools, also suggest that employers value that experience in future employees. New Tailor's Roel Wolbrink himself further acknowledged the potential of these connections by praising the combination of education and entrepreneurship in Amsterdam's Denim City.¹⁴

In addition to valuing a connection to business, Vermeulen was also supportive of connecting a bespoke tailoring course to a research centre, as she said that it was simply not possible anymore to follow the "hard, traditional path."¹⁵ Students may not be able to fully immerse themselves in research, she stated, but academics' output parallel to the tailoring student's more practical work, could greatly – and more proactively than by merely educating a more diverse set of students – benefit the introduction of innovation in traditional craftsmanship. Wolbrink confirmed that notion specifically in terms of technical progress. He underlined the level of innovation that goes into the production of new cloths by various mills, and saw value in bringing that forward in education as well. Especially as these developments are often barely visible. Additionally, he claimed, wool institutions such as Woolmark would be more than happy to financially support an initiative that would help ensure longevity of woollen products, through bolstering innovation.¹⁶ Frans van Veen on the other hand saw a lot of value in broadening the scope primarily culturally, as he thought fashion is to be understood within a larger social, historical and economic context.¹⁷

The latter likewise seemed very open to the inclusion of a museum focussing on the production and consumption of (traditional, local) dress in the cluster, as it would help to put the school within that wider social, cultural, and economic context he mentioned.¹⁸ He also thinks it is important to give crafts students, such as the ones in this bespoke tailoring course, a stage. Crafts students, he argues, do not have the same opportunities as e.g. fashion design students, who already get the chance to put their work on display to a wider audience in highly publicised end-of-year shows.¹⁹ Although Vermeulen agrees with the potential of a museum in providing students with insight and inspiration, she explicitly disagrees with the importance of giving students in a pre-apprenticeship course a stage. She finds that "the pressure to show your work to the outside world [is] too high sometimes," and that "it is more important that the student feels that he or she is in a safe place of learning."²⁰ On a completely different note, Oger's Tim Morsink thinks that a connection to a prestigious institution of education, which might be most publicly visible in a museum, could also be commercially interesting. "A centre of excellence like this," he said, "could help to further grow the amount of bespoke customers."²¹

As industry professionals seem to agree, a vocational school, clustered with an active bespoke salon, a research centre, and a museum, is a potentially interesting and viable proposal for educating new tailoring talent. It may furthermore help introducing new innovations in the trade, and answers to a growing demand for specific tailoring expertise in the fashion industry. Additionally, the museum may help to further raise the profile of British bespoke, and thus create an even larger demand of personal tailoring. However, for this to be true, interest from the general public is of vital importance. Luckily, craftsmanship and fashion do indeed seem to be very much en vogue.

Andrew Bolton's *Manus X Machina*, the major 2016 fashion exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, which explored the value of craftsmanship in an age of technology, is an apt case in point. Through numerous historical and contemporary garments, Bolton counters the notion that the relationship between the handmade and the machine made is oppositional *per se* (fig. 50). In fact, the traditional idea that the handmade, as opposed to the machine-made, equals luxury, has never been fundamentally true, he argues.²² "Can machine-made fashion dazzle like handmade couture?" asked the *Washington Post's* Robin Givhan rhetorically in her glittering review of the exhibition, "Yes, and the Met proves it," she answered herself.²³ The annual spring exhibition by the museum's Costume Institute was a huge success. It constructed a difficult dialogue within the global, luxury fashion industry not unlike the one conducted on Savile Row, and attracted a record audience. It became the Metropolitan Museum's seventh most visited exhibition in its history.²⁴

Manus X Machina's success is not self-contained though, and seems to reflect a wider trend of increased public interest in craftsmanship in general, and fashion in particular. Savage Beauty, a major Alexander McQueen retrospective, became the Costume Institute's most visited exhibition ever in 2011.²⁵ Its success has since been even surpassed by both 2015's *China Through the Looking Glass* and 2016's *Manus X Machina*.²⁶ The McQueen retrospective subsequently became the Victoria & Albert Museum's most visited exhibition ever, when it travelled to London in 2015 (fig. 51).²⁷ The Gemeentemuseum in the Hague similarly attracted a record audience for its recent Hubert de Givenchy – *To Audrey With Love* show,²⁸ while Dries van Noten's *Inspirations* at Het ModeMuseum in Antwerp became Belgium's most visited fashion exhibition ever, in 2015.²⁹ In addition to the success of a plethora of fashion exhibitions, festivals celebrating craftsmanship have also found a growing audience. London Craft Week for example, was first launched in 2015, and *Ambacht in Beeld* in 2013. Both are organised not for profit, and aim to show how the finest artisans in fashion and beyond, do their work in London and Amsterdam respectively.

Commercial enterprises too have started opening their doors, physically as well as digitally, to show their customers how the products they buy, or rather should buy, are made. Similarly to what Huntsman's David Goggins said about explaining the bespoke process to customers, it also legitimises the sometimes astronomic prices of these luxury products. LVMH, the world's largest conglomerate of luxury goods, has given the public a chance to visit the factories and workshops of its many holdings during *Les Journées Particulières* annually since 2014.³⁰ Some of its most well-known brands, including Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, additionally post so-called *Savoir Faire* videos on their social media channels on a regular basis (fig. 65). Similarly, luxury fashion manufacturer Hermès first organised *Festival des Métiers*,



fig. 63 (top): Andrew Bolton combined traditionally crafted garments with equivalents made using modern technologies, in the Manus X Machina exhibition.
fig. 64 (bottom): The V&A's *Savage Beauty* exhibition caused long queues.



fig. 65 (bottom): Dior is one of LVMH's holdings regularly posting savoir-faire-items on social media.
fig. 66 (top): Chanel annually hosts the Métier d'Arts show, highlighting a specific, traditional couture craft.

which shows the work that goes into its bags and scarves among other products, in 2012. After its initial run in New York, the festival has since travelled to numerous cities around the world, including Beijing, London, and Amsterdam.³¹ Valentino and Chanel have taken on even more proactive roles, as they seek to secure the future of traditional, haute couture craftsmanship. The former established a small Scuola di Couture within its ateliers in Rome,³² while the latter actively buys companies such as the renowned embroiderer Maison Lesage and the feather maker Maison Lemarie through its subsidiary Paraffection. Each fall the French House hosts a fashion show specifically highlighting the expert skills of these artisans (fig. 66).³³

Craftsmanship indeed has become more central in today's luxury market, but so has heritage. The two are often, but not necessarily, intimately connected. The re-emergence of heritage brands such as Vionnet, Loewe, and Schiaparelli are a testament to that, as is the continued success of labels like Gucci and Burberry.³⁴ The latter especially is known for the way it has reinvented itself within the framework of its brand heritage, after popularity had dropped spectacularly in the late nineties.³⁵ These heritage brands often specifically draw from a sense of national identity as well, as is signified by Burberry's frequently emphasised Britishness. The proposed museum, where admired, local culture and British legacy meet, answers to a trend of renewed interest in craftsmanship both economically and culturally. Evidently, the public do not just want to buy carefully crafted products, they are also interested in both why and how they are made.

4.5 Tourist Takeover

As has been stated before, Cambridge is an immensely popular tourist destination, with over five million tourists visiting the city every year. There is no doubt that its history of academic excellence, manifested in fairy-tale-like architecture and picturesque grounds, is primarily responsible. Lonely Planet even writes that "Cambridge is ancient colleges and a winding river," completely diminishing the city to its collegiate core by the river.³⁶ However, the vast majority of visitors these world-famous institutions attract, only stay in Cambridge for the day.³⁷ Not only does this mean that the town misses out on extra revenue in hotel stays and restaurant visits, it also results in extreme crowds in only a small part of Cambridge's historic core, in a limited time frame during the day (fig. 67).³⁸ Resultingly, Colleges, still first and foremost in function as institutions of education and members' accommodation, are disturbed by literally busloads of tourists visiting their buildings and grounds. Clare College has even decided to close its doors to the public very recently, after the situation had become simply insufferable. Visitors too frequently turned up unannounced in large groups, and have occasionally been found wandering around in private areas, even invading students' and staff members' rooms.³⁹ These large numbers of visitors additionally push local inhabitants out of the city centre even more, reversing the University's efforts to do the exact opposite.⁴⁰ In other words, tourists widen the already existing gap between town and gown.

Day-trip tourists, which account for about ninety percent of all visitors, in particular are seen as problematic, as they contribute relatively little to the local economy, while causing much nuisance for local inhabitants. The city council thus wishes to promote so-called slow-tourism, which would encourage visitors to stay longer, and explore Cambridge – and the Cambridgeshire region – beyond its overcrowded historic core.⁴¹ Paradoxically perhaps, the role of the University of Cambridge and other local educational institutions are

seen as vital in successfully diverting tourism. Using their expertise, and profiting from the University's aura of excellence, could benefit local tourism organisations, which are already trying to transform the local tourism industry.⁴² This is exactly how the Cambridge School of Tailoring cluster could also contribute to the city council's wishes regarding tourism. It connects to the University and the appealing qualities of its history and traditional culture, while also shifting focus towards craftsmanship. The latter specifically, as is evidenced in the former section, has enjoyed increased public interest over the past few years, hence the School of Tailoring could serve as a catalyst of change.

Taking that into consideration, one of three sites in particular seems promising. All three are just outside the overcrowded collegiate core, and could thus relief the very centre, however only the Mill Lane / Old Press site is situated on a prominent route taken by many visitors going into the city. This location could help intercepting tourists before they have even entered Cambridge's main problem area, and potentially divert attention away from it at all. Its position by the river Cam additionally does give tourists a chance to see some of the most beautiful colleges from the water, as popular guided punt tours leave from here. Hence, developing the Cambridge School of Tailoring cluster on the Mill Lane / Old Press site could keep tourists away from the overcrowded centre, while still offering them a) a rare view into the mysterious world of Cambridge through fashion exhibitions and b) a glimpse of its architectural glory from traditional boats on the river, as Lonely Planet suggested. Moreover, introducing craftsmanship in a major new public development, could start transforming and enriching Cambridge's tourism industry, thus also stimulating slow-tourism ideals, and encouraging overnight stays. Coincidentally, a 2010 planning document for the Mill Lane / Old Press Site, specifically marks this location as a place where the reintroduction of craftsmanship and the creative industries are highly desirable.⁴³

Proposing the Cambridge School of Tailoring

4.5

I dare to answer the question asked in the introduction 'Is there a future for a School of Tailoring in Cambridge?' with a resounding yes. The tailoring business is booming, expertise is in demand, and Cambridge has a historical connection to the trade, all of which seems to be in favour of this proposal. However, I will add immediately, that the Cambridge School of Tailoring should be more than just an institution which provides vocational training to students. To ensure a successful future for a tailoring school in this specific context, it is valuable to involve existing, local partners, and to take into consideration various user groups in and around the site that will house the Cambridge School of Tailoring. Those local partners would be Ede & Ravenscroft, the University of Cambridge, and the Institute of Visual Culture at the Fitzwilliam Museum, while the user groups of interest would involve, among others, students and teaching staff of both the University of Cambridge and the Cambridge School of Tailoring, day-trip tourists, overnight tourists, and local inhabitants. Based upon its proximity to local partners, as well as its position on arguably the most important route into the city for day-trip tourists, the Mill Lane / Old Press Site is the chosen location for the Cambridge School of Tailoring (fig. 68, 69). Both considerations are conformable with industry professionals' vision for what this cluster could be, while also answering to some of the City Council's wishes and visions for the city and this specific site.

Education and research are at the heart of the Cambridge School of Tailoring, as



fig. 67: Typical scene on King's Parade. Over five million of tourists visit Cambridge each year, while the vast majority of them only stay for a day. As a result, a very small part of Cambridge's historic, collegiate centre, mostly around the Colleges on King's Parade and Trinity Street, has to cope with extreme crowds.



fig. 68: All around The Cambridge School of Tailoring's site, various colleges' courts and lawns are visible. The river Cam, that plays a central role in Cambridge's traditional sports and leisure activities (and thus fashion), runs along the location's Western perimeter. The towers of the Pitt Building and Emmanuel Church are major landmarks here.

that fits in Cambridge's DNA of excellent education and research, and particularly for the old University site that will be transformed to create this cluster. A vocational tailoring school and a research centre, which studies the production and consumption of (local) dress, thus form the basis. A new bespoke salon for the existing Ede & Ravenscroft branch in Cambridge will be added to introduce real business. Some of students' training will also be provided for in these workrooms. A fashion museum related to Cambridge's specific local culture of dress answers to a growing public interest in craftsmanship and fashion, while also responding to some of the city's difficulties with tourism. The larger masterplan will similarly also include a hotel, various crafts-related shops, a punting station, and some places to eat. Inspiration for the organisation of the masterplan as shown and described here, involving multiple courtyards, colonnades and even a tower, is taken from the site's direct surroundings amidst some of Cambridge's oldest colleges, i.e. Peterhouse, Queens', Pembroke, and Corpus Christi, on the one hand, and Victorian shopping streets and arcades, particularly in London's Mayfair, on the other. Using familiar elements like these, help creating a college-like site, albeit much more public in character than actual colleges (fig. 70). The Cambridge School of Tailoring prevents extra disturbance of the University's students and staff, while still giving visitors a sense of the Cambridge experience of mystery and intrigue.

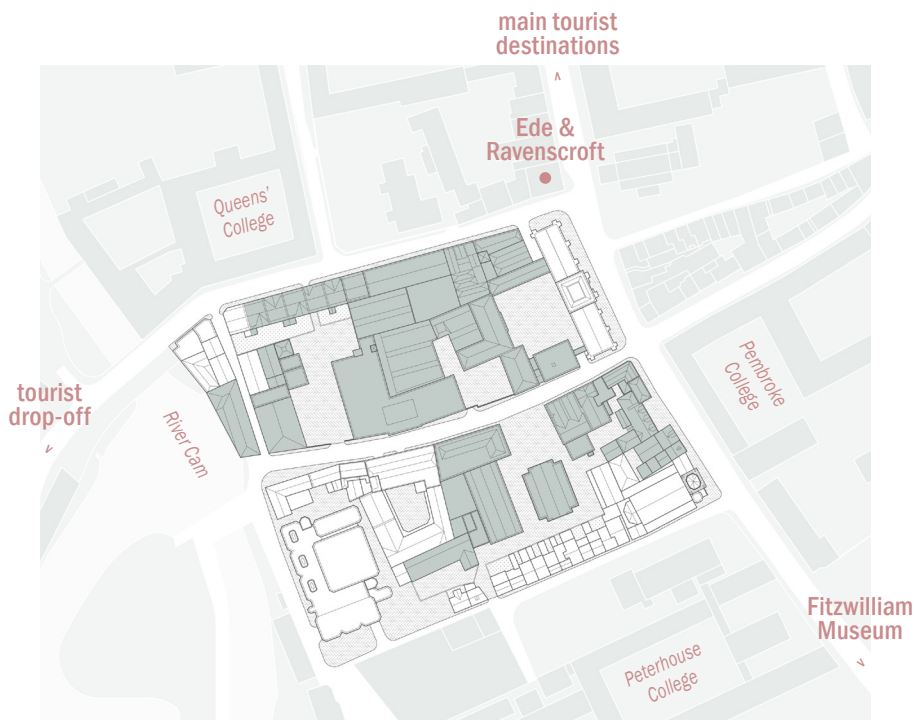


fig. 69: The Mill Lane / Old Press Site in relation to local partners and the touristic route into town. All the marked buildings are owned by the University and will probably be abandoned in the foreseeable future.

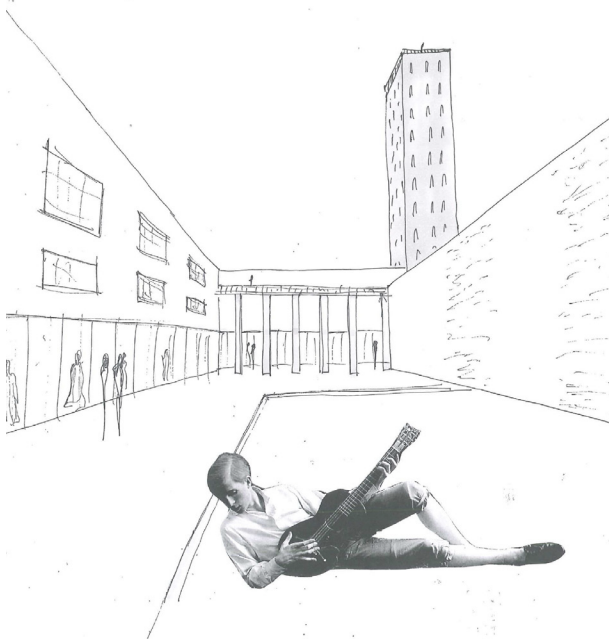
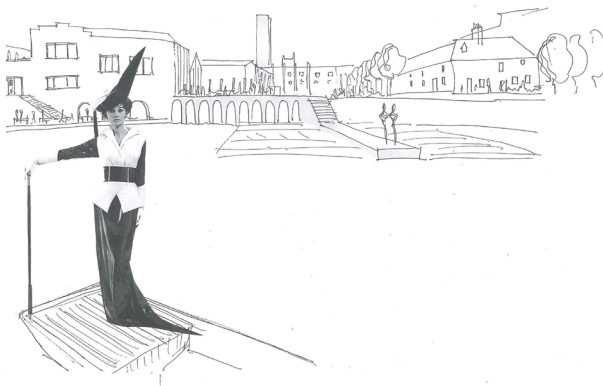


fig. 70: Early sketches of The Cambridge School of Tailoring masterplan, featuring Cecil Beaton photographs. The tower and various courts remind of Cambridge Colleges, as this new development similarly becomes a stage set for dandyism.

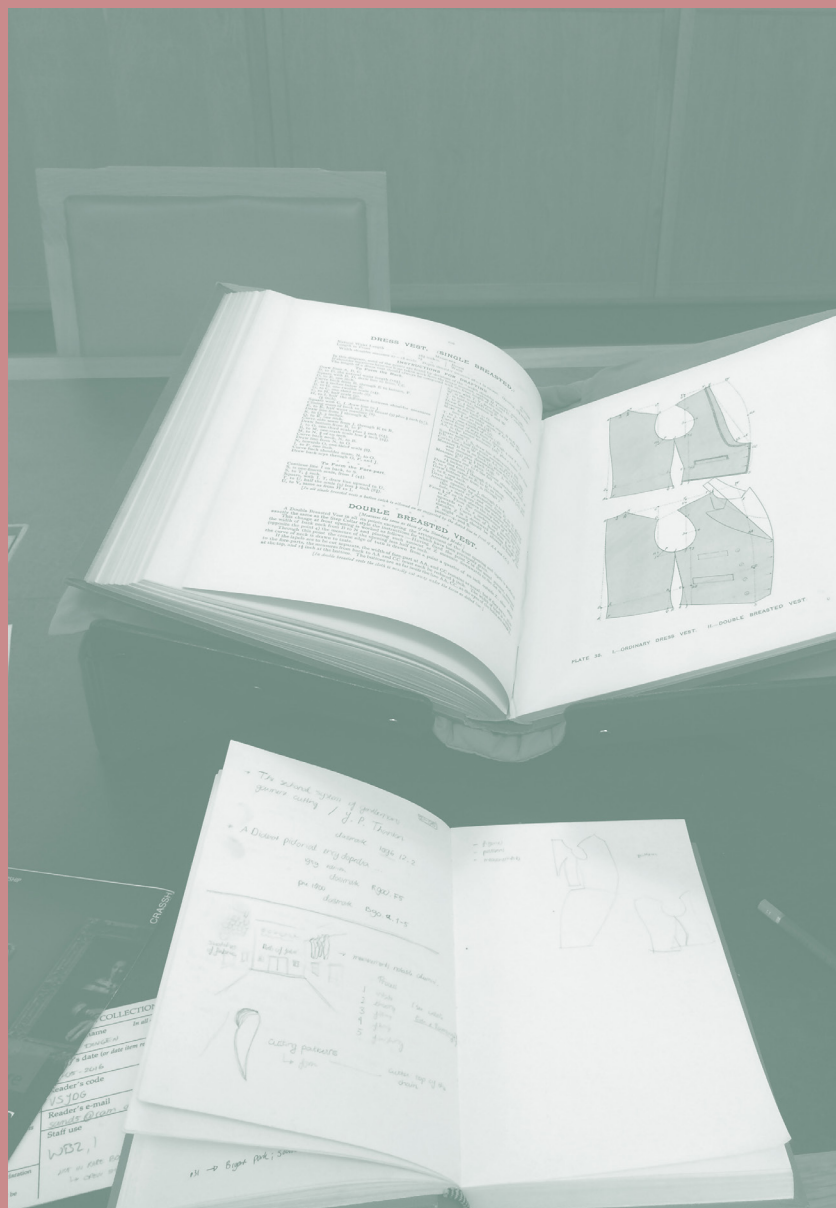


fig. 59: Consulting an early edition of Thornton's Sectional System, in the Cambridge University Library.

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Interviews & Observations

Appendix 1, Tim Morsink (Amsterdam, 27-04-2017).

Appendix 2, Downing College Fitting (Cambridge, 02-05-2017)

Appendix 3, Ede & Ravenscroft (Cambridge, 02-05-2017)

Appendix 4, Anthony (Cambridge, 05-05-2017)

Appendix 5, Arthur Shepherd (Cambridge, 05-05-2017)

Appendix 6, Jolien Vermeulen (e-mail, 02-05-2017)

Appendix 7, V&A Clothworkers' Centre (London, 03-05-2017)

Appendix 8, Craftsmanship Panel (London, 03-05-2017)

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Appendix 11, Frans van Veen (Hilversum, 31-05-2017)

