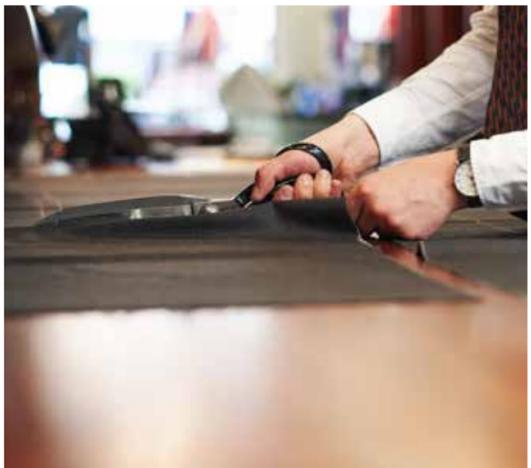




"Henry Poole & Co is the Patek watch of bespoke tailoring - timeless."
Simon Cundey



A CUT ABOVE

In 1846, a tailor called Henry Poole had grown disenchanted with his sombre premises on Old Burlington Street, London. He felt drawn to the back of the emporium - an impressive façade that looked onto a parking area for carriages behind the bustle of Regent Street. He followed his instincts, knocked through an entrance, and became the first tailor to open up shop on Savile Row. It's one of many triumphs for a pure bespoke men's tailoring house that continues to thrive there.

"Henry Poole was considered the Tom Ford of his day," says Simon Cundey, the managing director of Henry Poole & Co. "He was both style adviser and society insider, and his emporium was famous for its club feel." Heady with cigars, claret, and good conversation, the Savile Row shop consistently attracted the likes of Cornelius Vanderbilt, John Pierpoint Morgan and Charles Dickens. The fine craftsmanship received royal favour, too. Henry Poole & Co has accumulated 48 European royal warrants over the generations, from Napoleon III to Queen Elizabeth II. Today, Henry Poole & Co continues to craft the livery coats worn by the postilions of the British royal family for processions and weddings, just as it has done since the 19th century.

DRESSED TO THE NINES
Gentlemen have Henry Poole's association with Edward VII to thank for a milestone in global fashion design. Bertie, 'The Dandy Prince', wanted a more casual jacket than the tailcoat for dining at Sandringham in 1865. So, Henry Poole cut a short celestial blue evening coat - the first dinner jacket - that was later copied by social peacocks in America and dubbed the tuxedo. "Henry Poole & Co was the brand that men aspired to see, and Savile Row became the centre of bespoke tailoring," explains Simon. When Henry Poole died with no children, it was his accountant and cousin Samuel Cundey who took the helm - a baton that eventually passed to Simon Cundey seven generations later.

STITCH IN TIME
"We have expanded and contracted as a business over the eras - even leaving Savile Row for a brief time - but we have survived because of the service, quality and look that we have maintained," says Simon. Henry Poole & Co has never sold off the rack, nor does its work fluctuate with fashion. Pure bespoke is a blank canvas - a style and fabric agreed upon between the cutter and the client. For new clients, it can take six weeks for a suit to be cut, fitted and finished on site using the finest cloths from the UK and Italy. Proportion is paramount and lapels and buttons will only be marginally moved from traditional positioning. A Henry Poole suit will last 10 to 20 years and fit like a second skin.

Henry Poole himself might be pleased that the Cundeys have continued to nurture relationships with an illustrious clientele, from Winston Churchill to more recent collaborations with brands like Adidas and Canada Goose. Another feather in the company's cap is the launch on 12th September 2019 of a book titled "Henry Poole & Co: The First Tailor of Savile Row" (published by Thames & Hudson). "Its timeline spans from the founding of the company - in 1806 by Henry's father, James Poole - to present day," says Simon, "and it features gripping stories about some of our distinctive customers: from the royals and power players, to the heroes and villains."

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