

SPECIAL '86

The Last AUTHENTIC END OF THE PIER SHOW

SAVAGE • Gary Lovini • Bradley Walsh •
PRICES ALL SEATS £2.85 •

NIGHTLY 8.15
MATS.
WED 6.2.30
SAT. 5.00

ISH

SUNDAY 13 JULY *The Romantic Violin*
ROBIN COLVILLE & SARILL FLORY

WED 10 JULY GILBERT & SULLIVAN
CHRISTMAS ROUND DONALD ADAMS
JEAN TEMPERLEY

PAVILION THEATRE
BOX OFFICE



outing to Cromer 1986



Clickers, Walter Edwards & Son Ltd, 1925

The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Industry



Made in Norwich

The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Industry is published by Norwich Heritage Projects which is a totally independent non-profit making organisation with the simple aim of encouraging an appreciation of the heritage of our beautiful City of Norwich.

The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade

Published by Norwich Heritage Projects

Norwich Heritage Projects

5, Cringleford Chase

Norwich

NR4 7RS

www.norwich-heritage.co.uk

Norwich Heritage Projects is a small group of enthusiasts who combine local historical resource and expertise with modern technology to take a fresh look at the rich and varied heritage of Norwich.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without prior permission in writing from the publisher and copyright owners.

© Norwich Heritage Projects 2013

ISBN 978-0-9566272-3-0

Edited, designed and brought to production by Norwich Heritage Projects.

Printed and bound in the UK by

Barnwell Print Ltd, Dunkirk Industrial Estate, Aylsham, Norfolk, NR11 6SU

Every reasonable effort has been made to establish the copyright holders of all the photographs and information sources used in this book. Any errors or omissions are inadvertent. Anyone who has not been contacted is invited to write to the publisher so that a proper acknowledgement can be included in subsequent editions.

Front cover photographs (left to right):

Top Row

(L to r) Pamela May, Margot Fonteyn and Len Waspé c1952

Kaye Sisters and Martin Miller (front right), 1958

(L to r) Princess Elizabeth and Geoffrey Holmes, Edwards & Holmes, 1951

Middle Row

Conveyor belt, Riverside, Norvic, 1961

Norvic, St George's Plain, 1946

Stockroom, Start-rite, c1975

Bottom Row

Closing room, Sexton, Son & Everard, 1959

Title page: See pages 92 and 97

Image Credits.

We are very grateful to all who have allowed us to reproduce images including:

- Our contributors (see pages v to vii)
- Shoe firms especially: Bobcol, Bowhill & Elliott, Broadland Slippers, the Florida Group, Freed of London and Start-rite. These firms have allowed us to reproduce images from their archives and also to take photographs of their current operations.

Additionally the following individuals and organisations have permitted us to reproduce images. Where accreditation is not made in the text, we have listed the page number where the image is located:

Archant Newspapers: 20 (CWS), 27, 31, 34 (Sexton & Norvic), 35, 36, 46 (Bally & Kirbys), 55, 79, 83, 88 (mechanical), 123, 146 (CWS), 164 (Mag. Shoes), 168 (Croxford & trimming), 171 (clicking room & factory), 178 (machine room), 179, 185, 195, 197 (outing), 202, 213, 214 (stock room), 223, 235, 243.

Philip Armes: 18, 105, 132, 133, 184 (Sultzter's Court), 215.

Mike Dixon All photos of shoes in the Bridewell Museum Collection. All interior 2012 photographs of Florida's Dibden Road factory. All exterior shots of former factories and factory sites taken in 2012.

Norfolk County Council Library & Information Service: 146 (Boulton & Paul), 173 (George White), 184 (Palace Works), 193, 197 (St Mary's Works), 227 (c1963).

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service: The Bridewell Museum: iv, 3 (shoeworkers), 4, 20, 39, 51, 52, 64 (Band), 76 (Executive), 82 (conveyor), 88 (CAD), 91, 127, 147, 156 (post 1990), 176, 178 (teenage council), 182, 200, 221 (factory).

Norfolk Record Office: All photographs of Walter Edwards & Son Ltd, 45, 47, 64, 206, 207.

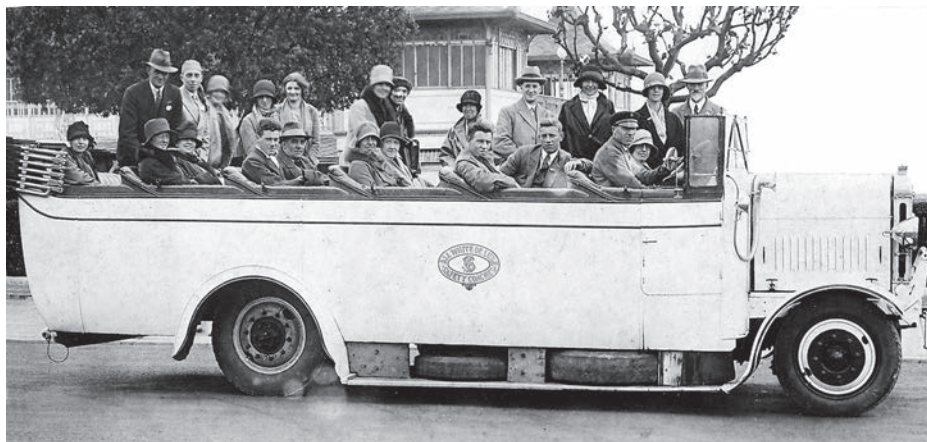
Ordnance Survey Department: 174.

George Plunkett (permission from Jonathan Plunkett): 65, 166 (factory, 1936), 187, 201 (Colman House 1936), 203 (54, Pottergate, 1968), 222, 227 (1938), 234, 236.

Contents

Foreword	iv	8. The Norwich Footwear Manufacturers	125
Contributors	v	Arthur Howlett Ltd	127
Company Names Used in the Text	viii	Bally Shoe Factories (Norwich) Ltd	128
1. History of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Industry	1	Barfield & Richardson Ltd	136
Early Days	2	Batson & Webster Ltd	138
Expansion: 1850 – 1900	4	Bowhill & Elliott Ltd	141
Consolidation and Growth: 1900 – 1939	7	Broadland Slippers	143
WWII and Beyond: 1939 – 1950	12	Chittock & Sons Ltd	145
An Industry on its Uppers: 1950 – 2000	16	Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd	146
The 21st Century	21	Edwards & Holmes Ltd	149
2. The Structure of a Traditional Shoe Factory	25	The Florida Group Ltd	158
Introduction	26	Freed of London Ltd	164
The Pattern Room	27	John F. Kirby Ltd	166
The Clicking Room	30	Meadows Bridal Shoes Ltd	169
The Closing Room	35	Meadows (Norwich) Ltd	170
The Press Room	39	The Norvic Shoe Company Ltd	172
The Making Room	41	P. Segger (Norwich) Ltd	184
The Finishing Room	43	Pell Footwear Ltd	185
The Shoe Room	44	Ramsbottom Brothers Ltd	187
3. Working in the Shoe Factories	47	R. Roberts (Norwich) Ltd	188
Applying For A Job	48	S. L. Witton Ltd	190
Starting Work	51	S. Thompson & Son Ltd	192
Piecework	54	Sexton, Son & Everard Ltd	193
Training	59	Shingler & Thetford Ltd	200
Camaraderie	64	Shorten & Armes Ltd	204
Health and Safety	71	Start-rite Ltd	208
The Unions	75	Thomas Bowhill & Hubbard Ltd	220
4. Technological Changes	79	Trimfoot Shoes (Norwich) Ltd	221
Technological Changes before 1950	80	W. H. H. Clarke Ltd	222
Technological Changes 1950 – 1980	84	W. Hurrell Ltd	227
Technological Changes post 1980	88	Walter Edwards & Son Ltd	228
5. 20th-Century Norwich Shoes	91	Ward Shoe Company Ltd	230
6. Shopping	101	9. Support Industries	231
Bowhill and Elliott Ltd	104	The British United Shoe Machinery Co. Ltd	232
J. Buckingham & Sons (Norwich) Ltd	107	The Standard Engineering Company Ltd	233
Ponds Foot Fitters Ltd	110	Mansfields (Norwich) Ltd	234
7. Royalty and Celebrities	113	John Culyer & Son Ltd	236
Royalty	114	Bobcol Components: A Success Story	237
Celebrities	119	10. Avis Brown : A Life in the Shoe Industry	239
		11. The Legacy	247
		Glossary of Terms	254
		Bibliography	256
		Acknowledgements	258
		Index	259

Foreword



*Charabanc
outing, Howlett
& White, 1920*

After completing our book on Norwich Pubs and Breweries in 2011, we were looking for a new project when Vic Hopes, a veteran of the industry, suggested that we might like to take on the Norwich boot and shoe trade. We soon found that since Wilfred Sparks wrote 'Shoemaking in Norwich' in the 1940s, other books had concentrated their efforts on the history of specific firms rather than the industry as a whole. It therefore seemed an ideal subject to research.

From the start we were amazed at how little had been recorded about the industry, particularly about the period since WWII. This was despite the fact that it was very clear from the response to the excellent oral project on the subject completed by the Costume & Textile Association (between 2006 and 2008) that there was massive interest in the subject.

In our previous undertakings we have aimed to bring history alive by including personal stories and images, but these have been mainly used to add colour to written sources. For the boot and shoe trade they have often been used as our starting point. Therefore, great thanks have to be given to all who have shared their memories and lent us their family photographs. Collectively our contributors had vast experience in the shoe trade, having cumulatively clocked up well over a thousand years of service.

ARCHANT } Our next major source of material was from Archant, who very kindly gave us access to their extensive newspaper and photographic archive. This enabled us to chart the final years of many of the major firms as headline after headline reported their demise. Their reports also gave a contemporary view of local opinion at the time.

Then of course there was the question of the shoes. To fully understand the industry it is important to see the beautiful footwear that was made in Norwich. Throughout the book we have shown the lovely shoes that were manufactured in the City. Here we have to give particular thanks to the Bridewell Museum who allowed us access to their fabulous collection.



Nor must we forget the Norwich footwear firms that are still operational. Start-rite, the Florida Group, Freed of London, Broadland Slippers and Bowhill & Elliott all welcomed us into their workplaces, enabling us to bring the story right up to date.

These are just a few of the many people and organisations that have given us permission to use their material, for which we are very grateful. Further information on all who have contributed can be found in the bibliography, acknowledgements' page and photo credits.

Although this is by no means a text book, elements of the trade can be somewhat confusing. To clarify the situation we have included the following:

- Brief details of the contributors who shared their memories can be found on pages v to vii
- An explanation of the company names as used in the text is on page viii
- A glossary which explains the various terms used throughout is provided on page 254.

Lasting Memories

In 1934 Walter Moll moved from Switzerland to Norwich with his father, who was responsible for overseeing Ballys' partnership with Haldinsteins:

'By the time war broke out, I was at Gresham's school in Holt from where in 1940, together with my schoolmates,



Walter Moll, c1955

I was evacuated to Newquay in Cornwall. At the time, as a foreigner, I had a grey book in which I had to register every move I made, and even had to report to the police station once a week. The ironic thing was that I became a sergeant in the school's Officer Training Corps, where I was allowed to carry a gun whilst still reporting to the police weekly!'

Graham Howlett recalls a family story about his father Arthur, a director at Batson & Webster:

'During the war it is told that my father was very good at obtaining items that were difficult to find. The story goes that he realised that the Americans, who had a big presence in Norwich,



Arthur Howlett, Oulton Broad, c1950

had a very high demand for condoms. So he hit on the idea of supplying them. He finished up with three changing-room lockers full of them in his office. When the factory was bombed these lockers headed for the sky, and when they were high over Magdalen Street they opened and their contents rained down on the unsuspecting public below. My father was absolutely staggered at what had happened, but undeterred he put in for war damage for his lost "stock", describing it as "items for staff recreational use". It is said that he got all of his money back.'



Betty Barnard (right), Great Yarmouth, c1950

Betty Barnard started work at Shorten & Armes in 1940 when she was a girl of 14:

'During the war when the government took over our factory we had to transfer everything into Howlett & White's [Norvic's] factory on St George's. I remember one day we were coming down the stairs when a bomb was dropped a few yards away, if it had landed on our building I hate to think how many would've been killed. We spent a lot of time in the shelters which were at the side of the factory. We never went down when the siren first went but only when it changed to the "crash warning tone", which meant that the planes were definitely coming our way. At that point we grabbed what we could and ran. The problem was that when we were in the shelters we couldn't work, which meant that we couldn't earn. I remember one week we spent so long in them my wage was just half-a-crown.'





Meadows, Great Yarmouth, c1954



Bally, summer outing, c1960



Barfield & Richardson, Skegness, 1949



Meadows, Peacock Street, c1952



Kirbys, summer outing, c1924



Barfield & Richardson, Clacton, 1952

Norwich Fashions: 1890-1920

c1895



1900



All made by James Southall & Co.

1911

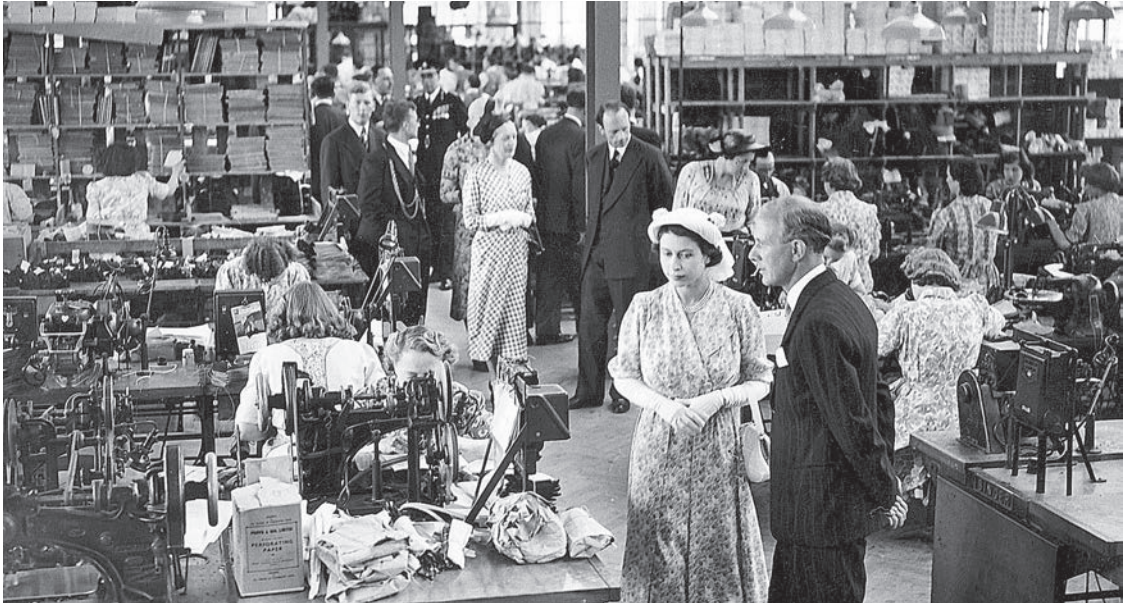


1905



1905





Princess Elizabeth accompanied by Geoffrey Holmes, closing room, Edwards & Holmes, 1951

The Norwich shoe factories have played host to many eminent visitors, the most important of whom was the Queen who toured the Edwards & Holmes' factory on the 18 June 1951, when still Princess Elizabeth. The visit is still imprinted on Jean Smith's memory: 'When Princess Elizabeth visited she stood behind us kids as we were machining, and I broke a needle and thought: "Oh no!"' I still remember exactly what she

wore...' When leaving she was presented with a pair of hand-made, gold-kid evening sandals. Although these were possibly the first shoes manufactured by Edwards & Holmes that the princess had worn, when Prince Charles visited Start-rite in 1992 everyone present knew that he had worn a great many of their shoes. In fact many of the operatives he met could proudly tell him that they had made them!



Princess Elizabeth, Edwards & Holmes, 1951