

OFFICIAL PROGRAMME
AND DIRECTORY



27th February – 1st March 2026
**Northampton Museum
and Art Gallery**

5-6 Guildhall Road, Northampton, NN1 1DP



2026 Sponsors

Main



Students



THE
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Speakers



Website



www.shoemakersconference.org.uk



THE
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The Pattenmakers' Certificate in Bespoke Orthopaedic Footwear

At a time when most people can easily find shoes or boots to wear that will keep them warm, dry and protected for less than £100, it is hard to find anyone willing to pay for the quality of work that we independent shoemakers produce.

One way is to capture the admiration of the very wealthy. Another is to make for the theatre or the film industry. A third is the re-enactment world in which people are willing to spend to have footwear that genuinely reflects the era that they are re-enacting.

The Pattenmakers' Certificate in Bespoke Orthopaedic Shoemaking course is a two year long, comprehensive programme that is designed to open a fourth way to find people willing to invest in quality handmade shoes. This is the ability to measure and to make shoes and boots for people that have fitting and walking difficulties. The course shows the students how to not only help people walk who otherwise could not do so, but also develop their design and making skills so that their clients feel excited and proud to go out wearing what has been made for them.

Delivered online for two hours every week for ten weeks per term, three terms for each of the two years, the students learn sufficient foot and ankle anatomy and physiology to understand what is needed as well as how to assess their clients and modify their lasts to fit. The course teaches how to make accurate patterns for unusual shapes, how to put together stylish uppers and then build on soles and heels designed to help people to walk with ease again.

The cost of the course will be £600 per term and there are bursaries for a limited number of UK students. As well as the online teaching, there is an annual two day in-person event immediately after the Independent Shoemakers Conference and the opportunity to join the course alumni after completion.

To find out more about the fourth run of the course that will begin in October 2026, please contact Bill Bird at billbird52@gmail.com.

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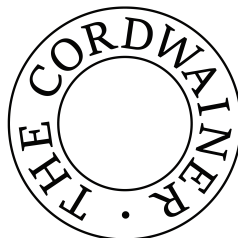


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INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome to Northampton Museum for the 28th Independent Shoemakers Conference (ISC).

In advance, we thank the museum staff and catering company for looking after us this weekend.

This conference started life in 1999 as a gathering of a handful of shoemaking companies, coming together to network and share skills and information. Since then, the conference has grown almost ten-fold, with as many as 80-90 delegates from across America, Europe and of course, Great Britain. It is possible that we might break the 100 barrier this year, such has been the interest in our conference.

One common factor in all the previous conferences is that they have been organised by individual shoemakers or their companies, an increasingly difficult operation as the conference expands. So last year, for the first time, attendees of the 2025 conference formed an organising panel to plan and run this conference. We shall see how successful that has been with your feedback after the weekend.

One of the panel's aims has been to create a set of templates and databases so that future members of the panel are given a head start for each following year. For this to succeed, we hope attendees will feel comfortable putting their names forward to help plan for 2027 and onwards. This in the knowledge that some of the present team will continue to be there to add their experience.

The fact that you are reading these notes is because, for the first time, we have com-

pleted a conference programme. Over time we hope to include a directory of shoemakers, material suppliers and services, further complementing the conference website.

Another 'first' for the 2026 conference is that we have company sponsors on board, and we are grateful to Gilbert & Lisson, Northampton Chamber of Commerce, and The Worship Company of Pattemakers for their contributions towards this event. This has enabled us to offer bursaries to many of the students who are here with us, as well as help to keep the conference fees to a minimum. It is equally important that we are able to build a small surplus to enable us to plan for future conferences and secure venues where a deposit is required.

Further details about this year's planning team are included in the programme, but we ask that while you enjoy the weekend, you consider becoming part of next year's team. You don't need to have a suitable venue on your doorstep, there have been many instances where hosts have opted for more centrally-located hotels. This year's teams have already identified a few possible venues, and there is no harm returning to previous venues if suitable. Remember, this is your conference, help us ensure its future.

PAST CONFERENCES

After small beginnings, with conferences in Leeds and Worcestershire, Bill Bird and his team have been at the helm on seven occasions to date, six of them being held at the King's Court, Alcester. Some way behind Bill's team in the hosting department is The Cordwainer (three times) and Tony Slinger and Peter Schweiger (two times each).

The conference is well travelled too, Devon in 2003, Scotland in 2004, and Ireland in 2008 and 2012. We've been to the Isle of Wight and Eastbourne on the south coast of England, and Northallerton and Harrogate in North Yorkshire, but mostly we have met in and around the Midlands of England. So where do we go next? That's up to you and the planning team to decide.

The full list of previous conferences is as below:

28th	2026	The ISC Team	Northampton
27th	2025	T Slinger Footwear	Northallerton
26th	2024	Bill Bird Shoes	Alcester
25th	2023	JSM Footwear	Alcester
24th	2022	Bill Bird Shoes	Alcester
23rd	2021	Carréducker Shoes	Online Conference
22nd	2020	The Cordwainer	Macclesfield
21st	2019	T Slinger Footwear	Harrogate
20th	2018	Last Maker House / Dominic Casey	Eastbourne
19th	2017	Isle of Wight Feet	Isle of Wight
18th	2016	Bill Bird Shoes	Alcester
17th	2015	Ian Goff / Sue Baughan	Northampton
16th	2014	Marsha Hall Shoes	Horsley
15th	2013	Bill Bird Shoes	Alcester
14th	2012	Des Kennedy Shoes	Cork, Ireland
13th	2011	The Cordwainer	Alcester
12th	2010	James Taylor & Son	Beaconsfield
11th	2009	Bill Bird Shoes	Alcester
10th	2008	George Tutty Shoes	Naas, Ireland
9th	2007	Bill Bird / Dave Xavier	Alcester
8th	2006	The Cordwainer	Chorley
7th	2005	John Cornforth	Harrogate
6th	2004	Galloway Footwear	New Galloway
5th	2003	Conker & Green Shoes	Totnes
4th	2002	James Taylor & Son	Beaconsfield
3rd	2001	Bill Bird Shoes	Stratford
2nd	2000	Simple Way	Badsey
1st	1999	Made to Last	Leeds



THE CORDWAINER



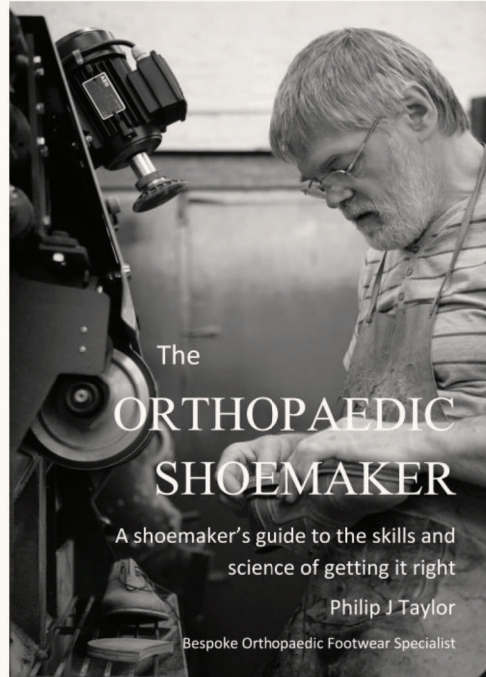
Bespoke Orthopaedic Footwear Specialist

Services include:

- Bespoke orthopaedic shoes
- Bespoke orthotics and adaptations
- Private and NHS

Training Services:

- Individual 1-2-1 skills training
- Group training sessions
- In-house and onsite training in orthopaedic skills



SPECIAL CONFERENCE PRICE £20.00
Students and Apprentices £10.00

Student support:

- Individual or couple 1-2-1 experience days for bespoke shoemaking students
- Individual 1 or 2 day 1-2-1 experience days for orthopaedic shoemaking students

Unit 8, Brough Business Centre, Brough, nr Bradwell
Hope Valley, Derbyshire. S33 9HG

Tel: 01433 621623

Email: thecordwainer@hotmail.co.uk

www.thecordwainer.co.uk

ISC ETHOS

For many, shoemaking is a solitary craft. This may be what led a dozen or so shoemakers to reach out to other likeminded craftsmen and to talk shop over a pint. Now in its 28th year, what originally began as a way to 'find the others' has evolved into the Independent Shoemakers' Conference (ISC), with shoemakers from around the world returning to reconnect with peers and friends.

Over the years, guiding principles have emerged, mainly sharing skills, resources, and networking, but all in the spirit of openness and togetherness. As the number of shoemakers and supporting industries shrank over the years, it became important for shoemakers to share their knowledge and sources for materials and equipment, a big cultural change from when shoemakers competed with each other by withholding knowledge and information. With more widespread access to the internet, shoemakers began to wonder how they might use technology to get more clients. Besides companies' own websites, in the early 21st century the shoemakers.org website was launched as a platform for UK shoemakers, but the development of the Shoemaker's Conference website in 2020 and associated social media has taken this development a giant step further.

Today, the ISC continues to grow and develop. The 2025 conference was the largest one to date with attendees from

ten different countries. To ensure its continued success, a team of five makers have come together to plan and host the 2026 conference and will continue work to support future hosts. The team has developed a website and social media profile which will lend a distinct and professional visual aesthetic, a manual to help future hosts, and a sponsorship programme for those who want to support the conference. The future of the ISC is bright. The ISC has always been 'by shoemakers, for shoemakers.' It is important that we retain this homegrown feel as we cast an eye towards the future. To do so, the ISC will embrace new technologies while continuing to honour, preserve, and practise tried and true techniques, whilst welcoming and supporting the development of new shoemakers.

Researched and written by
Jemitra Hairston

Thinking of starting or growing a business in Northamptonshire?

The Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce supports businesses through:

- ✓ Practical advice
- ✓ Business networks
- ✓ Skills and workforce development
- ✓ Representation and advocacy

Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce has its roots in Northamptonshire's long and proud history of shoemaking and manufacturing industries built on craftsmanship, enterprise, and international trade.

Originally established to represent and support local shoemakers and manufacturers, the Chamber has evolved into a modern business membership organisation that supports companies across all sectors and stages of growth. Today, it provides practical business advice, networking opportunities, policy representation, international trade support, and access to skills and workforce development programmes.

The Chamber plays a central role in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for the area, ensuring that training and education align with

real employer needs. This work helps businesses access the skills they need to start, grow, and remain competitive in a changing economy.

By connecting businesses locally, nationally, and internationally, the Chamber continues its founding mission: supporting enterprise, encouraging innovation, and helping new and established businesses start, grow, and thrive in an everchanging economic landscape.



Whether you're starting out or planning your next stage of growth, the Chamber is here to help businesses turn ideas into sustainable success.

The Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce is proud to support the Independent Shoemakers Conference 2026.

Northamptonshire has a long and proud history of shoemaking and manufacturing industries built on craftsmanship, enterprise, and international trade. That heritage sits at the heart of the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, which was originally established to represent local manufacturers and businesses.

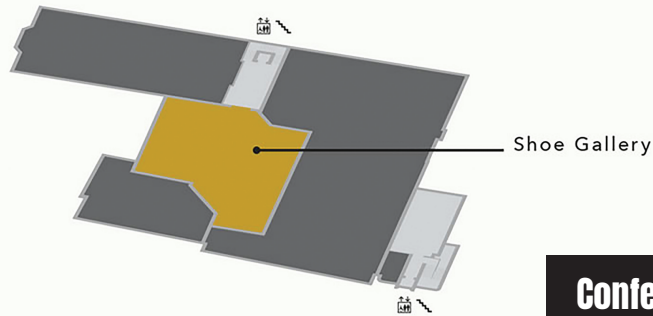
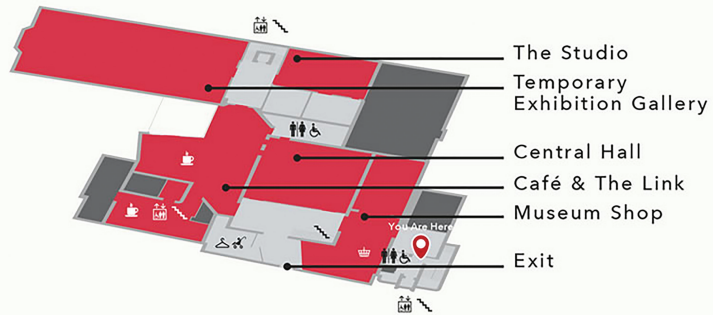
Today, the Chamber continues that mission by supporting businesses at every stage: from start-up to scale-up, through practical advice, strong networks, skills leadership, and business representation.

We're delighted to support an event that celebrates both heritage and the future of enterprise.



N Northampton Museum & Art Gallery

The Shoe Gallery on the lower floor is open with extended hours to all conference attendees.



Conference Map

2026 SPEAKER BIOS



PHILIP TAYLOR — Bespoke Orthopaedic Shoemaker

Philip started making shoes in 1965, aged just eleven. Working under some great shoemakers, and some not so great, he was able to look at shoemaking techniques that might make life a little easier, and more profitable. He took a variety of hand-lasting methods and tried to combine them into a simple lasting technique that he still uses and teaches today.



ROBERT COVACIU — Bespoke Shoemaker

Robert works with one of the city of London's long-established firms. He is currently enrolled on Bill Bird's apprenticeship scheme. He says: "Shoemaking found me more than ten years ago. I started out in Hungary as an apprentice, doing the gritty, hands-on jobs in a handmade shoe workshop. From there, I moved into making equestrian boots, which taught me a lot about precision and fit."



BILL BIRD — Bespoke Orthopaedic Shoemaker

Bill is a Bespoke Orthopaedic Shoemaker and Last Maker. He is a Freeman of the City of London and has been a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Pattenmakers since 2010.

Bill lectured 2nd year students in Footwear Design at De Montfort University, Leicester for eleven years, and also created The Pattenmakers' Certificate in Bespoke Orthopaedic Footwear, a two year long, 60 module course which has been running every two years since 2020. The course includes educational material, graphics and photographs, plus video commentaries, all of which can be adapted to other footwear educational programmes such as in Capel Manor College in North London.

His shoemaking business, Bill Bird Shoes was established in the Cotswolds in 1987 and still thrives today.



MARTIN KISTNER — Bespoke Orthopaedic Shoemaker

Martin Kistner was born in 1965, into a family of shoemakers spanning four generations. His father transitioned into orthopaedic shoemaking, and he began his apprenticeship in 1981, completing it in 1984.

During his journeyman years, Martin worked primarily in Germany, with shorter placements in the USA and England. In 1990, he earned his Master Craftsman title in orthopaedic shoemaking and later became a certified podiatrist.

Martin Kistner (continued)

In 1993, Martin and his wife founded their own practice in Bayreuth, Upper Franconia, where he continues to work. Over the years, he has developed some innovations in orthopaedic shoemaking, always with a focus on biomechanical precision and practical application.

Martin is a member of Praeparatio, an organization that promotes vocational training in orthopaedic shoemaking in Germany and abroad. He is especially committed passing traditional craftsmanship to younger generations and keeping these techniques alive as part of a living heritage.



ADAM LAW – Bespoke Lastmaker

Adam Law is a London-based bespoke shoemaker with over twenty years of experience rooted in the tradition of Mayfair craftsmanship. Trained under master artisans at George Cleverley, he combines rigorous classical technique with a deeply personal approach. In 2024 he founded Adam Law Shoemaker to offer fully handcrafted shoes, each pair a collaboration with clients, reflecting their style, personality, and fit. Prior to that he refined his skills working at Rolls-Royce, on leather interiors and later as a last-maker and managing director at Cleverley, learning discipline, precision and detail. He values longevity, comfort and elegant design over fleeting trends, believing a well-made shoe should grow with its wearer. His work is characterised by refined shape, deliberate material selection and a visible love for craft.



TONY KNAGGS – Northampton Chamber of Commerce Representative

Tony Knaggs works closely with employers, educators, and key stakeholders across Northamptonshire to support business growth and workforce development.

Through his role at the Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce, Tony is actively involved in leading and delivering the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), ensuring that employer priorities directly inform local skills planning and provision. This work focuses on aligning training and education with real business needs across key sectors of the local economy.

By strengthening links between businesses and skills providers, Tony helps ensure that start-ups, growing businesses, and established employers can access the workforce, training pathways, and support they need to improve productivity, adapt to change, and achieve sustainable growth.

Tony's approach reflects the Chamber's long standing mission: supporting enterprise, strengthening local industries, and helping businesses turn ideas and expertise into long term success.

2026 SPEAKER BIOS *(CONTINUED)*

YVETTE WORRALL – Stitchdown Shoemaker



CARRÉDUCKER – Deborah Carré & James Ducker

Carréducker was founded by bespoke shoemakers James Ducker and Deborah Carré.

They met as handsewn shoe making apprentices, training with master shoe maker Paul Wilson. It was a second career for both of them.

Deborah swapped marketing for making when she won a coveted Queen Elizabeth Trust Scholarship (QEST). (She first fell in love with handsewn shoemaking working with Tricker's of Northampton on her degree collection).

James was teaching business English in Spain, when one of his students revealed their father was a master shoemaker. So, James' shoe making journey began. He trained at the Shoemakers Guild School, Barcelona before returning to London to become an apprentice shoemaker at John Lobb, St. James.

Their paths continued in parallel for some time. Deborah set up her own business, Atelier Carré and was a visiting lecturer in Accessories Design & Marketing at University of the Arts, whilst James became a fully-fledged shoemaker for John Lobb and taught handsewn shoe making at Cordwainers College.



FREYA ALLEN – Footwear and Accessories Designer

Freya Allen is a Footwear & Accessories Designer at William Lamb Group, where she creates licensed Children's Footwear and Accessories for retailers including Next and George. Since graduating from De Montfort University in 2019 with a First Class Honours in Footwear Design, she has explored a broad range of niches in the industry — from orthopaedic shoemaking to commercial women's footwear — before finding her passion in children's design. Her talk will share the journey from university to industry, highlighting the challenges, creativity and lessons learned along the way, with the aim of inspiring the next generation to pursue creative careers in Footwear.

BRIAN HARVEY – Bespoke Orthopaedic Shoemaker

After joining Pirelli's footwear division as a management trainee in 1955, Brian spent 17 years working across all the areas of the company including production, engineering and product development before being appointed factory manager. He represented the company on the SATRA Council, and in 1979 was appointed Associate Member BBSI and a member of the national council.

Brian then joined a smaller company making exercise and dance footwear, and consultancy work with M&S where he advised leading on factory layout operator training.

Brian Harvey (continued)

In the last 20 years he developed a range of wide fitting footwear and medical to cater for people with diabetes and lymphoedema.

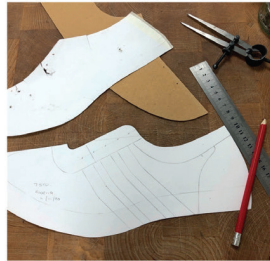


SIMONE CIRO FOCARELLI — Shoemaker & Repairer

Simone is a repairer specialising in restorations of welted footwear. He is passionate about restoring footwear in a way that highlights and honours the maker. Located in York, trading as Focarelli's Shoe & Leather Restorations, in recent years he has trained with Payson Muller in shoemaking. They have created the brand Earth Treds together.



FREYA ALLEN is a Footwear & Accessories Designer at William Lamb Group, working on licensed Children's Footwear and Accessories for brands Next and George. Graduating from De Montfort University in 2019, she has explored a broad range in the industry from orthopaedic shoemaking to women's fashion, before finding her passion in children's design. From technical training in construction to creative product development, her career has been shaped by adaptability, resilience and a love of design that began in early years. Freya hopes her journey shows how varied and rewarding a design career can be, and she enjoys sharing her experiences to encourage others to find their own path in footwear.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the auctioneers **Sotherby's**, the most expensive pair of shoes ever created was made by visionary shoemaker Antonio Vietri. Each heel was made with white gold, with straps containing strings of 30-carat diamonds. A meteorite found in Argentina in 1576 was also incorporated into the design. It cost \$19.9 million, \$4 million more than its nearest rival.

However, this sum was dwarfed by **Dorothy's Ruby Slippers**, worn by Judy Garland in the 1939 film *Wizard of Oz*. One of the four pairs made sold at auction for a staggering **\$32.5 million**.



Photo Courtesy Creative Commons

Lisa Sorrell
Sorrell Notions & Findings

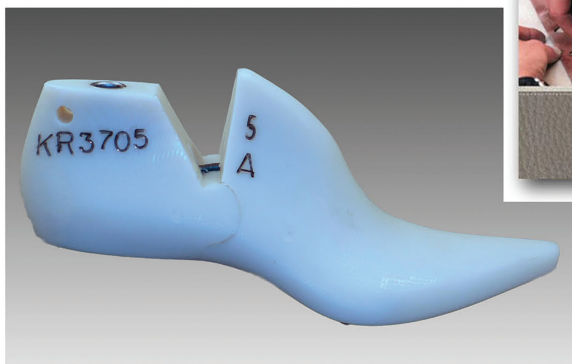
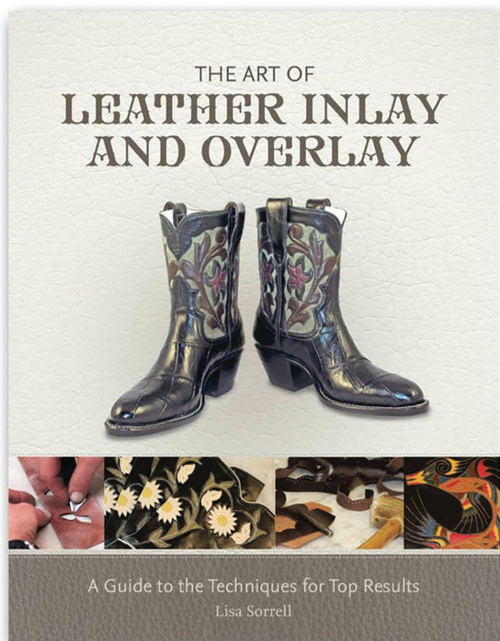
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SATURDAY PROGRAM

MORNING SCHEDULE

TIME	ROOM	PRESENTATION	SPEAKER
8.45	Central Hall	Registration over coffee	
9.00 – 9.15	Central Hall	The Conference Planning Group	The ISC Team
9.15 – 9.30	Central Hall	Profile: 70 years in the industry	Brian Harvey
9.30 – 11.00	Breakdown for 3 practical sessions in rotation—30 minute durations		
	Central Hall	No Nails Hand Lasting	Philip Taylor
	The Studio	Vintage Shoe Restoration	Simone Ciro Focarelli
	Central Hall	Stitch Down Construction	Yvette Worrall
11.00 – 11.30	Break and Exhibitors		
11.30 – 12.15	Central Hall	Twisted Last Building	Adam Law
12.15 – 1.00	Central Hall	Drawing Footwear	Bill Bird
1.00 – 1.45	Lunch and Exhibitors		



SATURDAY PROGRAM

AFTERNOON AND EVENING SCHEDULE

TIME	ROOM	PRESENTATION	SPEAKER
1.45 - 2.00	Central Hall	Profile: Life after De Montfort	Freya Allen
2.00 - 2.45	Central Hall	Norwegian Welt Construction	Martin Kistner
2.45 - 3.30	Choice of presentations		
	Central Hall	Starting and Running a Small Business	Tony Knaggs
	The Studio	Shoe Adaptations	Robert Covaciu
3.30 - 4.00	Break and Exhibitors		
4.00 - 4.45	Central Hall	Expert Panel—Q and A Session	Philip Taylor, James Ducker, Lisa Sorrell, Bill Bird
4.45 - 5.15	Central Hall	Craft of Shoemaking Awards and Capel Manor College Awards	Deborah Carré and James Ducker
5.15 - 5.30	Central Hall	Round-up Session	The ISC Team
5.30 - 7.00	Break		
7.00 - 7.30	Central Hall	Drinks Reception	
7.30 - 10.00	Central Hall	Buffet Dinner and Activities	





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The Worshipful
Company of
Cordwainers

Student Awards for 2025

By Phillip Taylor

Once again, the Year Two De Montfort University footwear students presented their various footwear projects to a panel of judges, all vying for awards presented by the two Worshipful Companies that support student shoemakers: the Pattenmakers and the Cordwainers.

Six students showed their various finished shoes, later supported by their workbooks and slide presentations.

James' shoe, a blue and tan Oxford style shoe was excellently made and well finished, whilst Angie presented a three-toned loafer style shoe with intricate pattern work on the vamp panel. Will's cowboy boot featured two layers of imitation crocodile print on the vamps and was very neatly finished. The first of the orthopaedic shoe presentations was given by Gaia, whose ingenious lace-up boot would have worked well for clients with swollen feet. Mohammed's two-tone apron-fronted shoe with an elastic gusset showed real understanding of the brief, and Damari's African-inspired orthopaedic boot certainly caught the eye of the judges.

The judges had to decide on a winner for each of the two £500 prizes on offer. On this occasion, the Pattenmakers were represented by orthopaedic shoemaker, Philip Taylor, and the Cordwainers by former DMU Head of Design, Steve Weston. Making up the panel were Polly Lythall of the British Footwear Association and Kevin Guildford, former Course Director at DMU.

In the end, the judges were split between two in both categories, bespoke hand-made and orthopaedic. They opted to share the prize for the best orthopaedic shoe and presentation equally between Damari and Gaia, whose work was equally impressive but in differing ways. Gaia's lace up boot was well crafted, practical and stylish, and fit the brief. Her research work and presentation were as impressive. On the other hand, Damari's shoe hit the mark with the research of her client group, and the project she was embarking upon, teaching women in Tanzania to make the shoes for those clients affected. In the end, the judges decided on a joint award of £250 to each student, reflecting in the merits of both students.

Congratulations!



The six students and their various finished shoes, later supported by their workbooks and slide presentations. The students, left to right: James Byrne, Angie Krawczyk, Will Swinfield, Gaia Leah Holder-Saillard, Mohammed Shadaan Syed and Damari Kota.



Gaia and Damari present their shoes in the company of Pattenmaker representative Philip Taylor.



Angie and Will in the presence of Cordwainers representative Kevin Guildford.



The Worshipful
Company of
Cordwainers

carréducker

CRAFT OF SHOEMAKING AWARD 2025

Deborah & James are joined by some of the 2025 award finalists to discuss access to shoemaking training, the challenges, opportunities and where to next. The inaugural award attracted a very high quality and variety of shoes and boots (pictured), some of which will be on display during the conference.



2025 finalists: Ross, Elizabeth, Emma, Caleb, Dan, Richard, Zachariah, James

ABOUT THE CRAFT OF SHOEMAKING AWARD

The award was developed by Carréducker and the Worshipful Company of Cordwainers to celebrate hand skills and to shine a spotlight on shoemakers. It is presented at the prestigious annual Cordwainers Footwear Awards and is open to makers based in the UK, from students and vocational workers to cobblers and outworkers who are challenged to make a pair of shoes or boots, with a focus on hand techniques. 2025 award winner, Caleb Smyth, won 12 days of handsewn shoemaking with Carréducker and 5 days of closing and pattern making with Fiona Campbell.

The 2026 award includes a cash prize of £3000 from the Cordwainers alongside 12 days of handsewn training, sponsored by Carréducker. Entrants can also enter the new Daniel Charkow Emerging Sole Award, celebrating the legacy of Daniel Charkow, a prolific young designer and visionary maker. The winner will receive a £1500 award from the Charkow family.



Handsewn, beaded moccasins by Emma Treleven, weightlifting shoes by Daniel Cope, Norwegian welted derby boots by Caleb Smyth (winner), brogue heart orthopaedic derby boots by Elizabeth Dugmore (2nd place)



Walking boots by Jamie O'Grady, Wellington boots by Ross Edwin Bell, brogue boots by Richard Fitzpatrick, button boots by Zachariah Webb (3rd place)

WALSALL LEATHER SKILLS CENTRE

Footwear Study Program

Starting from summer 2026 the Walsall Leather Skills Centre will begin to offer a program of short courses in shoemaking. The program will be a series of modular courses that run in a linear timeline through the year, starting with an introduction to pattern making, and then progressing to traditional shoemaking.

While the program will cover the shoemaking process from start to finish within a year, there is no need to follow each course with another, and students can pick up whenever suits them. Each course is self-contained, allowing people to access education when they are available, rather than running over a school year.

The first year of courses will focus on introductory outcomes. The more detailed courses in the second year allow students to progress towards professional development practices, ready to go into the industry.

We hope in due course to offer specialist subject courses for the seasoned professional as well.

With the centre's location affording visitors relatively cheap accommodation options, and the range of bursaries for the under twenty-six-year-olds, we hope to decentralise shoemaking from London and to allow a broader audience to pursue the subject.

For all enquiries, please contact patrick@walsall-leather.org. Details will be available from early spring.

For those at the 2026 conference please feel free to speak to **Sebastian Tarek** in person, who will be running the program.





A POEM

The Redundant Making Room

Written by Mr S T Herbert of Northampton

The poem tells of his visit to a shoe factory soon after it had closed.

The room was crammed full with men and machines
When first I walked through, Old hands down to teens
Were toiling and sweating, the most wearing “Jeans”,
But some wore white aprons to complete the scenes.

Those scenes now long gone of shoes in the making;
The voice and noise that set the floor shaking,
Vibrations of “Stitcher”, the squeals of a “Pounder”
“Bed Lasters” and “Heelers”, with whine of “Rough Rounder”.

The room had been emptied of machines and men
When I last walked through it at a quarter to ten,
No sound of men’s voices, no rough words heard then,
Just the chirp of a sparrow, was it Cock bird or Hen.

These birds well looked after when lunch time came round,
With tit-bits of all sorts from food wrappings found,
But now, no more crumbs upon making room floor,
Just patches of oil where machines stood before.

But sunlight still shone in that vast open space,
Through roof-glass and windows of the now silent place,
And one telephone hung off the hook by its lead,
With no-one to answer, or the ringing to heed.

This then just one workplace where the shoemaker’s art
Was practised in Town, others too played their part:
The part of a workforce that made the town great,
With both men and machines, and their ultimate fate.

DID YOU KNOW?

AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY began in the Derbyshire villages of Eyam and Stoney Middleton in 1918, when workers in local

boot and shoe factories started a strike that was to last nearly two and half years. It was one of the longest strikes in the footwear trade in Britain, and one of the longest involving a group of women workers in any industry.

Girls often had to buy candles, because their employers wouldn't light the gas, and their eyesight suffered. Typical weekly hours were 61 before the war and 59 in 1918. Wages were low. Union organiser John Buckle said conditions and pay in local factories were amongst the worst he had seen.

The story was relived one hundred years later in a series of events, and a book *The Air of Freedom* by Philip Taylor and historian Steve Bond.



Philip wrote this poem for the anniversary project.

My name is Willie Slater, my family all make shoes
I'm lucky for I don't have to live in my boss's work tied house
I have to join the union for I see no future here
We all need better wages now, it's hard times we endure

We worked eleven hours every day,
And we worked on a Saturday morn
We worked by candles, from our pay,
Will there be a brighter dawn

I joined the union with my friends, we asked for wages fair
To feed and clothe and pay the bills, we have no money spare
And soon I was the Union Man, I wasn't on my own
But on the Monday morning I was told my job had gone

My name is Thomas Barber, I work for West and Son
My family are workers too, all sacked one by one
Harry Dawson, others too, they lost their houses too
They didn't want the unions here, what were we to do

We went on strike as history tells, both women and the men
In Leicestershire they work less hours and paid as much again
With only strike pay, nothing much, to live from day to day
Many friends and families were forced to move away

The strike it lasted 18 months, the misery is clear
The strike was lost, the bosses won, the workers lived in fear
There were no bands to celebrate, no dancing in the street
And times were hard and money short, the victims of defeat

The factories would soon be gone, for no one wants our shoes
They cost too much and take too long, our future we would lose
We'll have to find another way of making up our wage
For Eyam's changed its shape again, we're in a different age.

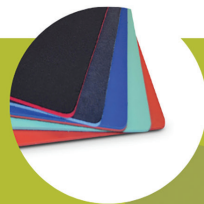


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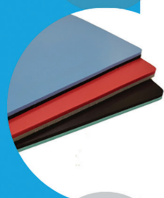
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Shoe components

belmontleatherco.com/

**Brooklyn Shoe Space /
Brooklyn Shoe Supply**

*Supplies, teaching, and
space rental*

brooklynshoesupply.com

See Advert Page 38

Buckle Guy

Shoe components and leather tools

buckleguy.com

CS Osborn

Leathermaking tools

osborneleathertools.com

District Leather

Shoe components

districtleathersupply.com

Frankford Leather Company

Shoe components

frankfordleather.com/

Foam Factory

Foam padding

foambyemail.com

HL Zitrin

*Wholesale distributor of leather,
rubber & shoe findings*

hlzitrin.com

Ivan Leather Craft

Leather making tools

ivan.tw

JMS Plastics Supply

Cork, EVA

jmsplastics.com

**Kaufman Shoe Repair
Supplies**

kaufmanshoe.com/

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National Leather and Shoe Findings

nationalshoefindings.com

Panhandle Leather

*Buckles, leather, tools,
boot components*

panhandleleather.com

Ruby Leather and Orthopedic Co.

rubyortho.com

Saderma

Leather and shoe accessories

saderma.net

Shoedo

Shoe components

shoedo.com/

Sorrell Notions

*Cowboy boot lasts, components
and tools*

sorrellntionsandfindings.com

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LEATHER SUPPLIERS

District Leathers

districtleathers.com

Euroleather

euroleather.net

Global Leathers and Leather Skins

leatherskins.com

Superior Threads

Thread

superiorthreads.com

The Thread Exchange

Thread

thethreadexchange.com

Vicky D’Incecco

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matching wooden heels, shoemaking tools,
and courses for making vintage styles*

vickydincecco.com

Yang cobbler tools

Made to order jacks & stands

langeyang2-2.myshopify.com

ZegZug

zegzug.com



In 1213 King John purchased a pair of shoes from a Northampton shoemaker for the princely sum of 9d (4p). His son, Henry III chose to give shoes to the poor for Christmas.

The Hide House

hidehouse.com

Leatherbox USA Inc

leatherboxusa.com

Maverick Leather Company

maverickleathercompany.com

Montana Leather
montanaleather.com

Rocky Mountain Leather
rmlathersupply.com

Springfield Leather
springfieldleather.com

MACHINERY

Atlas Levy
atlaslevy.com

JackSew
jacksew.com

The Tannery Row
Supplying Horween leather
thetanneryrow.com

Waterhouse Leather
waterhouseleather.com

Weaver Leather
Tools and leather
weaverleathersupply.com

Campbell-Randall
campbell-randall.com/shop/tools

Sewingmachinesplus.com
sewingmachinesplus.com

SHOEMAKING SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMMES

Brooklyn Shoe Space
Supplies, teaching, and space rental
brooklynshoespace.com
See Advert on Page 38

Chicago School of Shoemaking and Leather Arts
chicagoschoolofshoemaking.com

Vicky D'Incecco
Vintage style shoemaking courses and vintage lasts
vickydincecco.com/pages/the-club

David Ulan, C.Ped. E.
The Cobbler & Cordwainer
Shoemaker, teacher, Pedorthist
cobcord.com/index.html

Lastmaking school.com
lastmakingschool.com/classes/
LastMaking101course.htm



The Oscar winning actor
Daniel Day-Lewis took a break from acting in the late 1990s to apprentice to master craftsman Stefano Bemer in Florence, Italy.

ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Shoe Service Institute of America

www.ssia.info

PODCASTS—CONFERENCES—WEBSITES

Stitchdown

stitchdown.com/

Bootcamp Gathering

stitchdownbootcamp.com/

Stitchdown Podcast

stitchdown.com/stitchdown-shoe-cast/all-podcast-episodes/

Footwear Research Network

Podcasts, articles, reading lists and extensive museum list

footwearresearchnetwork.org

UK AND EUROPE 2026

SUPPLIERS

Algeos

Shoe and orthopaedic components

algeos.com

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H Webber

Rapid staples and staple guns

Hwebber.co.uk

Blackbird

Rivets, tools etc.

shop.kos-tacks.com

Lloyd Products

Bespoke caliper sockets

UK 01384 895137

Charles Birch

Shoe repair materials and tools

Charlesbirch.com

Limbtex

Cast-making rigid foam materials

limbtex.com

George Barnsley & Sons

Leather working tools and knives

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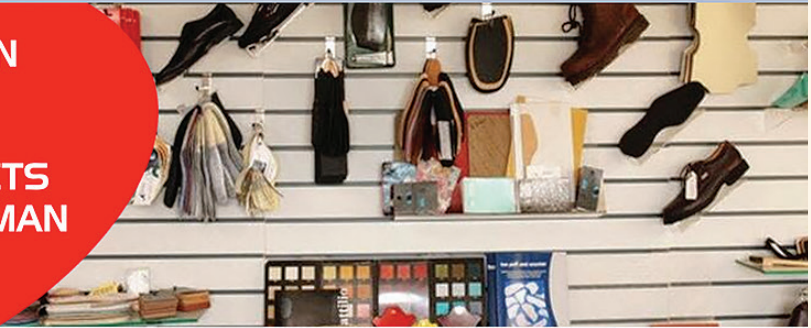
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renia.com

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Starko Tools

Shoemaking tools

www.starkotools.com

Stowlin Ltd

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Stowlin.com

T Colledge & Son

Shoe repair materials

tcolledgeandson.com

TR Lawman

*Material and components inc:
Maxim counter materials*

trlawman.co.uk

See Advert on Page 32

MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT

Standard Engineering

Shoe making and repair machinery

standardgroup.co.uk

SHOEMAKING SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMMES

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Milan, Italy

arsutoriaschool.com

Bespoke Orthopaedic Footwear School

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of the Pattenmakers' Certificate*

Email: Bill Bird at billbird52@gmail.com

Capel Manor College

capel.ac.uk

Carreducker Shoemaking School

Classes and tools

carreducker.com

De Montfort University (DMU)

Leicester, UK

dmu.ac.uk

Haute Future Fashion Academy

Milan, Italy

hffa.it

I Can Make Shoes

London, UK

icanmakeshoes.com

Italian Fashion & Design Academy

Milan, Italy

ifda.it



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crispinians.com

London College of Fashion

London, UK
arts.ac.uk/colleges/london-college-of-fashion

PIPS - Polish Footwear Technical School

Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Poland
pips.pl

LASTS SUPPLIERS

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Grupo-fil.com

Form Studio

formstudio.it

FORMIFICIO STF S.R.L.

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Online Shoemaking Courses
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Stefano Bemer School

Florence, Italy
schola.academy

Studiainitalia - Shoemaking

Florence, Italy
studiainitalia.com

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shop-minke.de

SpringLine Lasts

springline.uk

Spenle

spenle.de/en/home.html

Euroleathers

euroleathers.com

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J. & F.J. Baker & Co Ltd

www.jfjbaker.co.uk

LASTMAKING SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMMES

Lastmaker house

Last making courses

crispinians.com/lastmaking-courses

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIERS

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harristweedisleofharris.co.uk

ASSOCIATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

British Footwear Association

britishfootwearassociation.co.uk

European Footwear Confederation (CEC)

cec-footwearindustry.eu

Confederation of National Associations of Tanners and Dressers of the European Community (COTANCE)

Representative body of the European leather Industry; Offer a tannery database in EU

cotance.com

SATRA

Foundations training in footwear and leather

new.satra.com

BOOKS

Pattern Cutting Book

Frank Jones

noblefootwear.com

Uppermaking for Bespoke and Orthopaedic Shoemakers

Hartmut Seidich

seidich.de

See Advert on Page 37

The Orthopaedic Shoemaker

Philip J Taylor

orthopaedicshoemaker.co.uk

See Advert Page 6

New Pattern Making Textbook for Bespoke and Orthopaedic Shoemakers

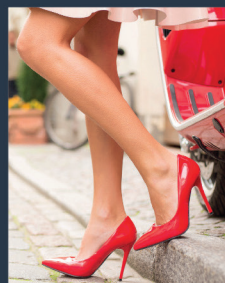
Volume I in our textbook series focuses on pattern making. The 300-page book is comprehensive but also easy to understand: we provide detailed explanations alongside hundreds of photographs and drawings of the pattern making and design process. It is currently the only book which covers pattern making for elegant bespoke shoes and complex orthopaedic shoes. We explain various methods for producing well-fitting patterns and teach you everything you need to know to create your own designs. The book is already used in many educational institutions and is valued by shoemakers in 35 countries.



The Pattern Collection –

a supplement to our textbook

The Pattern Collection contains complete pattern sets for nine popular shoe and boot designs. The templates are intended to help you understand and implement the concepts of upper construction. The patterns are labelled with information to help you design variations of each style and convert them into well-fitting patterns. The collection includes an instruction booklet with tips for all styles.



The Seidich family has been manufacturing uppers since 1928 and have been teaching design, pattern making and upper making for 20 years. At uppermaking.com you can find:

- Free chapter samples in English and German
- Tables of contents
- Further information about the books



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DID YOU KNOW?

IN OCTOBER 1855

over 500 shoemakers, both men and women, attended a mass meeting in Stafford's Market Square. They were protesting against the trial of a sewing machine by Edwin Bostock, one of the town's leading shoe manufacturers. One resolution proposed by Mr A. Brew and seconded by Mr. A. Prosser condemned machinery as 'injurious to the interests of the working classes and solicited the higher and middle classes of Stafford to assist them with their sympathy and support.'

SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to thank Elizabeth Dugmore for her brilliant copy editing skills. Maria McLean for stepping in to help on the conference weekend. All of the independent shoemakers for rallying around this conference year after year.

From the ISC
2026 Team





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