



Tailoring Savile Row SUCCESS

Michelle Rowley catches up with the first tailor on Savile Row to cater exclusively for women to discover her trade secrets

Written by Michelle Rowley with photos by Moezz Ali

As a child, Phoebe Gormley would watch in fascination as her grandmother, a talented seamstress in South Africa, used her sewing skills to turn fabric into beautiful well-fitting garments. Watching her grandmother's meticulous work instilled Phoebe with such a deep love for tailoring that she would go on to become the first women's only tailor in the whole history of Savile Row.

BOLD ASPIRATION

Aged around 14, Phoebe started making clothes for herself by cutting up her dad's unwanted suits. "I remember walking around feeling like I had created something amazing!" she laughs. When someone told her that she should aim for Savile Row, the seed was planted for what would eventually become Gormley & Gamble, the first Savile Row tailor's run exclusively by women for women.

Knowing from a young age that tailoring was the path she wanted to follow, Phoebe started applying for internships as soon as she could and spent several summers working on Savile Row and Jermyn Street. After finishing school, she enrolled in

a university course on bespoke costume design. "I quickly realised I wasn't the type of person who could sit in a classroom for too long. I told my parents I wasn't happy and wanted to learn quickly and do something bigger than I could at university." Phoebe convinced her parents to support her decision to drop out of university and to invest her tuition fees into starting her own womenswear tailoring business instead. This was 'the gamble' in Gormley & Gamble.

WOMEN FOR WOMEN

"I was told women were 'too challenging to please' – but that only made me more determined to prove them wrong. I knew there was a real need for women to have access to the same level of tailoring that men had." When Phoebe arrived in London, she set up shop in a co-working space in Bank and focused all her energy on building a client base. "I reached out

to everyone I knew and asked if they had any female friends or colleagues who were over 6ft tall. My thinking was that taller women often struggled with 'ankle-bashing' trousers, and they'd immediately understand the value of a bespoke suit." She was right. Phoebe found clients who believed in her vision, but the pivotal moment came when she told James Sleater, co-founder of Cad & the Dandy, that her dream was to be on Savile Row. His reply - 'We have a big shop; we can make space for you.' So, in the autumn of 2015, the dream became reality.

Left and above **Founder Phoebe Gormley (in the red suit) who founded Gormley & Gamble, with a selection of clients and models showcasing the variety of tailoring on offer.**



A FIT FOR EVERYONE

Gormley & Gamble is now approaching its ten-year anniversary of creating bespoke perfectly fitting tailored garments that meet the needs of women. "We've never been busier. Over the years, I've seen a huge shift in the demand for women's tailoring.

Women today are excelling in their careers and business, and they want a suit that not only works in the boardroom but also looks effortless when they throw the jacket over a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. We've had so many fashionable women coming in, looking for unique pieces like a perfect burnt orange suit with horn buttons or a sage green double-breasted outfit," says Phoebe. Customers come from a wide range of industries – from CEOs and celebrities to artists and business leaders. "We create garments for all sorts of special occasions, from award ceremonies to barristers' first days in court, and even for Saudi princesses." One of Phoebe's most memorable pieces created was for a client who had gone through a double mastectomy. She was struggling with the changes to her body, and

Above left **Phoebe Gormley**. Above right **various examples of bespoke shirts tailored by Gormley & Gamble**. Right **Bespoke Jacket Tuxedo Double Breasted**. Far right **Silk shirt with monogram**.

shopping on the high street had become an emotionally difficult experience. "We made several pieces for her wardrobe that not only made her feel incredible but also helped restore her confidence. She told us that the suits made her feel like a million dollars."

The fit is what truly defines a Savile Row suit – there are no drag lines, the sleeves and jacket length are spot on, and the trousers hit the perfect length. Every detail is tailored to ensure it fits the individual perfectly. A standard jacket will roughly take around 18 hours, trousers around 13, shirt 14, dress 17 - this includes pattern cutting, fabric cutting, sewing and quality control, working from blocks using the customers unique measurements. At Savile Row, the hallmark of the garments is the incredible attention to detail and the significant amount of hand-sewing involved. A lot of handwork goes into each piece, particularly in the finishing process, to ensure

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Great Fit

Savile Row tailoring is known for its impeccable fit. To achieve this, take the time to properly measure, adjust the pattern, and make a toile for fittings. Make small adjustments along the way to achieve a perfect fit, and don't forget to check the length of the garment for balance.

Use of Hand Sewing

Hand sewing is a signature of Savile Row tailoring, adding both durability and a refined touch. Keeping your stitches small and even, you can use hand stitching to attach cuffs, collars and even linings for the most impeccable finish.

Smooth Seams

A Savile Row suit has seams that are beautifully finished and pressed. Consider using a French seam or a bound seam for a professional touch. Press each seam as you go to ensure a smooth finish.

Setting in Sleeves

On Savile Row, the sleeve seam is often hand-stitched to maintain precision and strength. You can use a sleeve board to press as you sew and make sure to take your time with basting to ensure a perfect fit before starting stitching.

Crisp Collars

A Savile Row collar is always crisp and structured. To achieve this, use a good-quality fusible interfacing for added stability and press each collar edge meticulously. After sewing, give it a final press with a clapper to achieve that professional, sharp finish.

Neat Cuffs

When sewing cuffs, focus on precision: ensure the cuff edges are clean, and use a blind stitch or hand stitching to attach them for a seamless, neat finish. A properly pressed cuff gives the garment its sharp, refined look.

Perfect Buttonholes

On Savile Row, buttonholes are often hand-stitched for a more polished, durable finish. Use a fine needle and thread and finish the edges with a tiny slip stitch to make them look simply flawless.

Lining a Garment

Lining is a subtle but essential feature in Savile Row tailoring. The lining should be cut with precision and attached smoothly, ensuring it doesn't bunch or shift. To elevate your lining, hand-stitch the hem of the lining and ensure that it complements the main fabric.

Use of Interfacing

Savile Row tailors often use multiple types of interfacing to add structure where needed. For collars, cuffs, and waistbands, choose an appropriate interfacing that provides the right amount of stiffness. Use a fusible interfacing for ease but use a non-fusible one for areas needing a softer finish.

Perfect Pockets

Pockets are an essential part of tailoring and need to be precisely made for both function and style. For a clean finish, reinforce pocket openings with a small piece of fusible interfacing. Use hand-stitching around the pocket edge for a smooth, polished look.

the perfect fit and exceptional quality. Clients also have the option to add special touches, like contrasting thread on the buttonholes or a ticket pocket, which give the garment that signature Savile Row character. At Gormley & Gamble, every suit is a reflection of the client's personal style, while still honouring the traditional craftsmanship of Savile Row. "We stay tuned into the catwalks to see what the big fashion houses are leaning towards, but ultimately, we're guided by our clients and their wardrobes. We pay close attention to what's missing, what colours they're gravitating towards, and how we can add something new to their collection. We mix it up with different fabrics and colours,

ensuring our suits don't feel too traditional – they're fresh, modern, and made to work with the lifestyle of the wearer" explains Phoebe. With everything carefully considered, including the client's hair colour and skin tone, the garment should get as much wear as possible, making it a more sustainable item. As home sewers we have the luxury of adapting similar methods to meet our own wardrobe needs.



Michelle (she/her) is a content writer and dressmaking tutor with a love of fashion history. Follow her on socials @stitchywhitney