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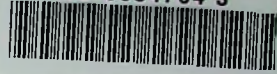
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**A GENTLEMAN'S WARDROBE -  
A STUDY OF THE MENSWEAR INDUSTRY  
THIS CENTURY**

**CYNTHIA STEWART  
FASHION  
1991**

N: *Jason Rowe*

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Mr J Monaghan, Mr R Pender, Mr G Devereux, Mr A Copeland, Mrs Heavey and the Rev J Crawford, and all the books and documents that they entrusted me with.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Gilbert and National Libraries for all their patient assistance.

## INTRODUCTION

In order to study the history of costume in Ireland this history, it seems necessary to write my remarks in the simple, direct, unadorned style of a private letter to a friend.

'Perhaps one of the most difficult things for us to do is to choose a notable and joyous dress for men. There would be more joy in life if we were to accustom ourselves to use all the beautiful colours we can in fashioning our own cloth ... At present we have lost all nobility of dress and, in doing so have almost annihilated the modern sculpture. And in looking around at the figures which adorn our parks, one could almost wish that we had completely killed the whole art. To see the frock coat of the drawing room done in bronze or the double waistcoat perpetrated in marble adds a new horror to death.'

Oscar Wilde 1882

Essays and Lectures

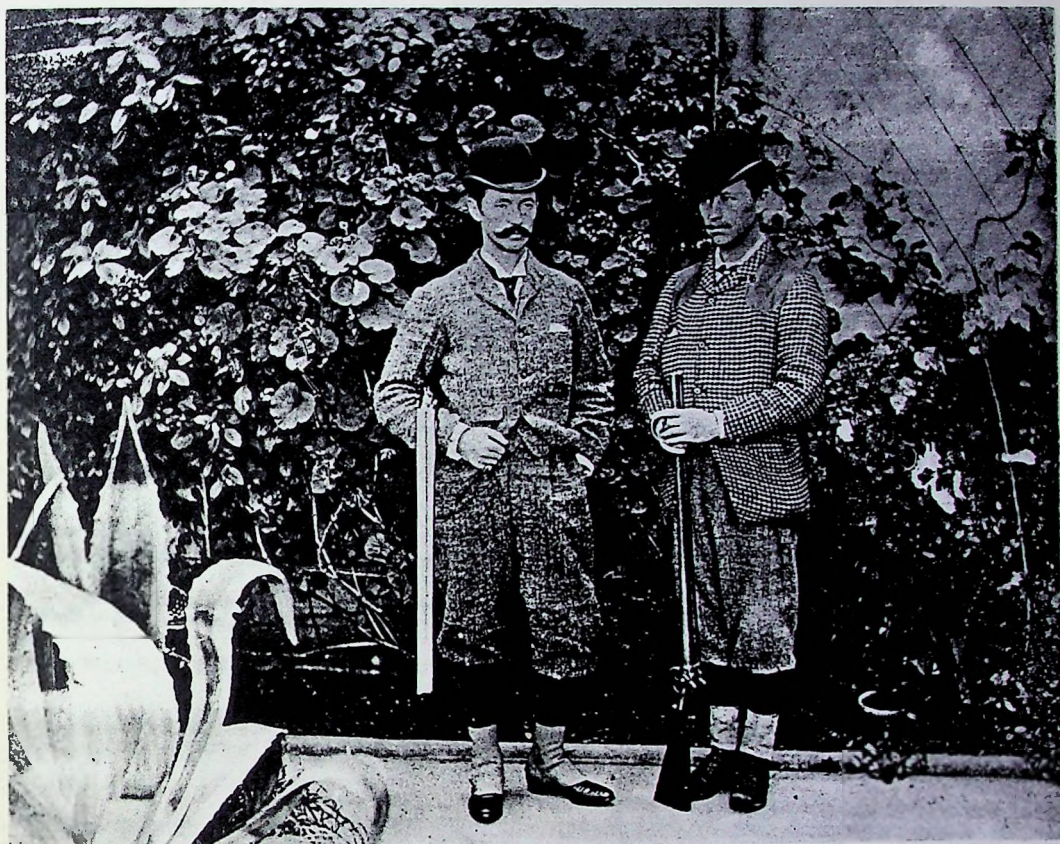
## INTRODUCTION

In order to study the industry of menswear in Ireland this century, it became necessary to begin my research in the 1850's, where changing dress etiquette and the emergence of the lounge suit formed the basic style of mens clothing we know today.

The later introduction of the sewing machine enabled menswear to diversify from the handicraft workshop to a competitive manufacturing industry. Established in the 1890's, the Blackrock Hosiery Company, manufacturer of mens undergarments was a good representative of such an industry co-existing in the early twentieth century with the bespoke tailors.

To understand the craft of tailoring, I obtained interviews with the last remaining bespoke tailors in Dublin. I also interviewed Louis Copeland, a modernised tailor, representative of the contemporary menswear industry in Ireland. A short interview was conducted with Heavey Textile Wholesalers, who supply to most of the tailoring workshops in Dublin and indeed the rest of the country.

No study of the industry of menswear would be complete without a mention of fashion in the twentieth century. The main visual reference for this was obtained from social periodicals from 1900, not only an excellent historical source of Irish gentlemens attire but also as main fashion journals of their day.



1a      Fashionably dressed in tweeds and checks for a  
shooting party in the 1890s.      A

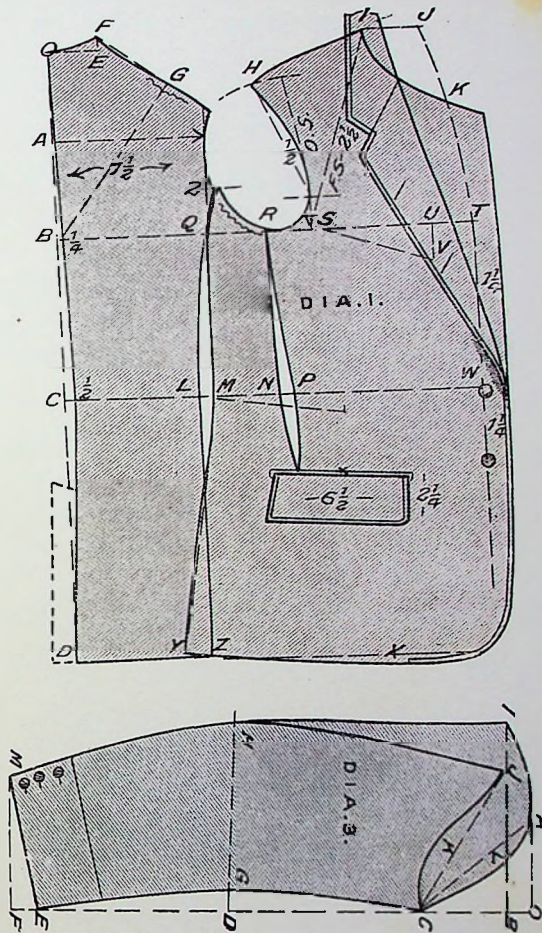
## CHAPTER 1

### MENS FASHIONS FROM 1840

Towards the middle of the nineteenth century in Ireland, it was necessary to obey codes of behaviour and niceties of dress in the pursuit of power to be seen to be socially and morally acceptable and successful. As the head of a middle class household, a man's dominant role was emphasised through his clothes, which became progressively darker in colour. More attention was given to the cut and tailoring of the clothes and the gentleman's intellectual presence was generally regarded as superior to his aesthetic appearance. Nonetheless, correct fashions were incredibly important. Different occasions demanded different strict codes of dress and conduct. 'The Habits of Good Society', for example, emphasised the need for each gentleman to have four types of coats: a morning coat, frock coat, dress coat and overcoat.<sup>1</sup>

Such quantities of clothing were made possible for two reasons: first through the arrival of the merchant tailor system. Many small or under-trained tailors were employed at low wages so that made-to-measure suits and military uniforms were made in a short amount of time, at low cost. Secondly, the use of sewing machines in the tailors' workshops from about 1870, speeded things up considerably.

By the 1850's 'the suit' had begun to evolve; the coat, waistcoat and trousers were made of the same cloth in sombre



1b

The lounge jacket and sleeve.

1840

colours such as dark blue, olive green, and brown, with black being most predominant. About 1860, a variation of the jacket began to emerge, without tails and with skirts just long enough to reach the thigh. This new style of garment was an informal one, worn indoors and at sporting events. It marked a trend for more comfortable clothing and the beginnings of the lounge suit, which became popular in the late 1860's for day and informal wear.<sup>2</sup>

As organised outdoor pursuits in the early nineteenth century increasingly became social events, there came an increasing demand for accompanying fashionable dress. Different styles of sports clothes were worn in accordance with differing codes of etiquette for the differing sports e.g. hunting, shooting, or boating. At this stage, tweed had a good reputation as being a highly durable, wind-resistant fabric that soon spread from sporting to informal suits. This led to a demand for Irish fabric, Donegal in particular, in all the major capitals of Europe, and as far as America in the late nineteenth century.

Up to the turn of the twentieth century, strictly formal, clearly defined rules of dressing were adhered to by all gentlemen. Status was suggested through fabric, design and fit. It was also incredibly important to know the right time and place to wear silk lapels, gold watch chains, rings, or the particular knot to wear in a cravat or neck tie.

To the student of such things there are many little points visible that would not be noticed by the

casual passer in the street, and it is these inconsiderate trifles that go to make up all the difference between the well-dressed man and the other things<sup>3</sup>

The very early twentieth century saw the total disappearance of the once universal silk facings on overcoats and in their place, the arrival of the velvet collar. The main fabric used for overcoats was tweed, usually lighter colour tweeds. At this stage the overcoat was generally double-breasted, but no longer raglan styled, but by 1904, this style of tweed overcoat was becoming too acceptable. It was being copied in every imaginable shape and price by the 'brass-and-plate-glass clothier, sometimes miscalled tailor'.<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, this meant their doom for any self-respecting man who wanted to be well dressed. So instead of tweeds, finished class clothes began to be used for the new style overcoat. There was a re-emergence of the drab covert style coats. This type of drab (thick, strong, twilled, linen or wool cloth) would have been of a medium shade with a faint stripe or check.<sup>4</sup>

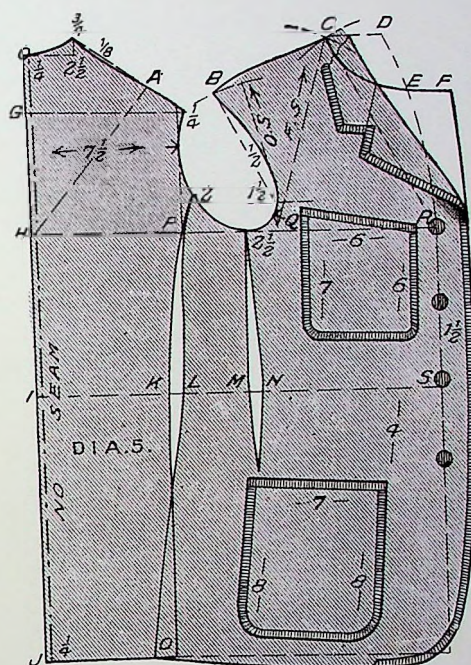
Lounge suits were fairly standard in Ireland by about 1905. The jacket had a fairly full front with the bottom front edges curving away. It was also quite acceptable to have a double breasted lounge jacket but with double sewing on the edges. On the cuff, the number of buttons began to increase to three, or sometimes even four, instead of just two. By 1910, tight trousers had gone out of style, replaced by a tendency towards a moderately loose trouser as far as the knee and then a very

neat bottom over the boot. The beginning of the twentieth century saw the invention and use of the trouser press, therefore making clear, central creases fashionable for the first time.<sup>5</sup>

Collars, which were by now being used on the double, had risen in height to be about three inches high. While there were many styles of collar available by about 1905, the general rule was in the double for day-time and the winged with evening dress.<sup>6</sup> One of the features of the year was the growth in popularity of Irish poplin ties. These were thin enough to slip around the double collar and extremely durable, as opposed to silk which only gave half the wear. Every colour imaginable was both acceptable and fashionable due to the fact that so little of the tie was visible above the high buttoning waistcoat and below the double collar.<sup>7</sup>



1c          Students at Queens College, Galway, Wearing  
lounge jackets, and silk hats or bowlers.



CRICKET OR TENNIS BLAZIER.

These are invariably made from flannel, and are often bound with ribbon. They are usually cut, as shown by the diagram, viz. :—Whole back and sides moderately suppressed with high turn and four butts. Three or four patch pockets. Club monogram on the left breast pocket.



1e

The International Boat Race 1901

Competitors wearing blazers with flannel  
trousers.



1f

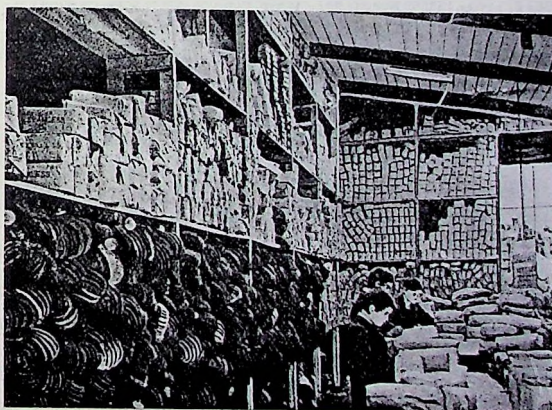
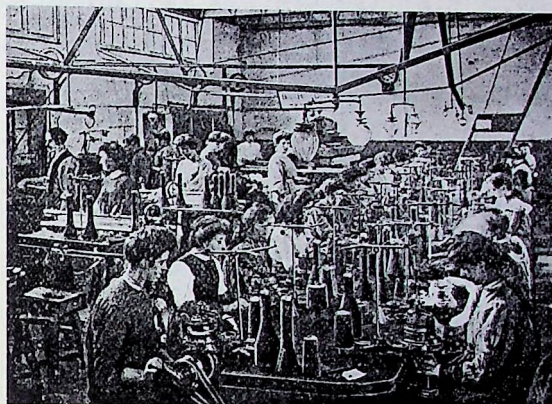
Lord Fermoy wearing a checked double breasted  
suit at the Dublin Horse Show 1902.

## CHAPTER II

### INTRODUCTION TO INDUSTRY

By 1900 the clothing industry in Ireland had begun to depend on modern technology such as the sewing machine. With this and the aid of women finishers, many craftsmen no longer needed to learn how to make a whole article of clothing, they would just specialise in perfecting a piece. Hence, many of the skills of the craft of tailoring were subsequently lost or forgotten. This made many workers dependant on employers to integrate their work into larger schemes of production. Clothing factoring in Ireland (especially Dublin) were on the rise and employment in them was increasingly appealing. These new economic realities compelled many craftsmen to change from handwork and finishing to factory work.

As early as 1850 and onwards, factory-made shirts were widely available in Ireland. Arnotts of Cork, the department store, who had a workforce of about 450, were making plain and detailed shirts as well as shirt fronts and underwear. William Tillie started a shirt factory in Derry about the same time, 1854, and pioneered a complete industry for the region. By 1904 it was estimated that there were 80,000 employed in the Derry-Strabane-Buncrana area producing machine and hand-made shirts.<sup>1</sup> In the Dublin area, many smaller factories were being set up, mainly by Jewish immigrants bringing in business skills from outside the country. By 1915, after only a few years of production, Blackrock Hosiery, a company producing underwear, was employing over 100 people.



2a

Bandon Hosiery Co Machine Room

Bandon Hosiery Co Warehouse

*1 Date*

## IRISH INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION, 1907

In 1903, a series of articles were published in the (Dublin) Irish Daily Independent, by its editor, Mr W F Dennehy, pointing out the possible benefits of co-ordinating and placing on a practical basis the 'various and isolated bodies which were working independently in different parts of the country for the attainment of a common purpose'.<sup>2</sup>

The proposals put forward had two purposes. The first was the establishment of a National Institute of Commerce and Industries and the second was the holding of an Irish International Exhibition on a large and comprehensible scale in Dublin at an early date. These articles in the Daily Independent attracted a great deal of attention and approval from a wide range of people. Viscount Powerscourt, like many others, wrote advocating his desire to assist, thereby securing large results [for the country] from this industrial awakening".<sup>3</sup>

The Exhibition was carefully planned and took place in 1907 in Herbert Park, Dublin. Mr M Murphy, a member of the exhibition board, declared to its chairman that the Exhibition would give 'the possibility of Ireland providing not only themselves, but others in other parts of the world, with industrial produce'.<sup>4</sup>

One of the larger industries represented in the Home Industries Section was the Balbriggan Hosiery Co. It was established in 1740 and by the year of the exhibition, the

company employed over 300 people and was exporting to England, France and America.<sup>5</sup> Smaller companies such as the Dublin-based Brown Thomas Dept Store and T.J. Callaghans, hunt tailors, also participated.

The Exhibition was, generally speaking, a way for exhibitors to gauge their opposition and indeed learn by them. It was also a formal way of introducing new companies to industry at large and also to try to slow the continual ebb of emigration by showing the broad range of possible employment.

But the great effect of an exhibition of that kind was to stimulate the youth of the country. Without some deep feeling, without some backing of spirituality, their industry could be nothing but sordid and their achievement could not be lasting.<sup>6</sup>

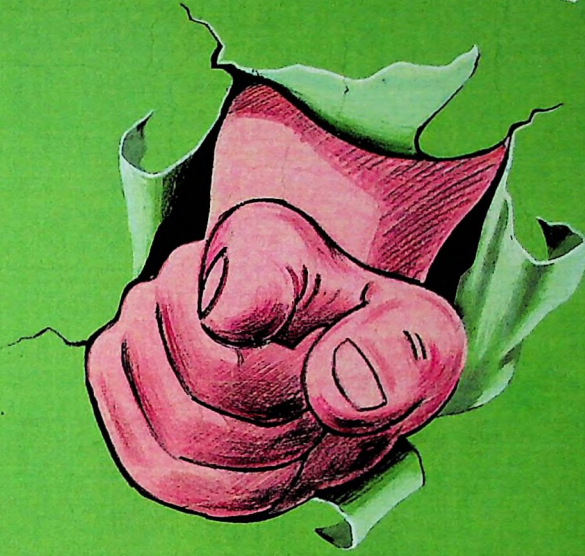
Another important effect would be the attention the exhibition would give to the city of Dublin and its establishment as an industrial centre and port of industry, not just a cultural capital.



The Most Hon. The Marquis of Ormonde, K.P.  
*President of the Exhibition.*

2b

TAKE A TIMELY TIP!



PUT YOUR SHIRT ON

*Rock*

**UNDERWEAR**

SOCKS

CARDIGANS

PULLOVERS

**GARMENTS OF QUALITY**

### CHAPTER III

#### BLACKROCK HOSIERY COMPANY

The various clothing industries in the Dublin area towards the turn of the twentieth century had varying origins. During the 1890's, only a few had made as much progress in such a short period as the one in Blackrock, Co Dublin. Blackrock Hosiery Company, was founded by Father Watters, a local catholic curate. This young priest had sought a project to provide both employment for the local area and a stable industry to support it in the long run. *when?*

'Rock' - the company's brand name, after its initial success was taken over in 1903 by Alderman George Tickell. Rock then underwent modernisation initiated by an entire restructuring of premises, thus making the plant able to compete with its British and European counterparts. However in 1906, due to Tickell's untimely death, the company was taken over by a new board of directors, chaired by Mr W T Crawford. Still further extensions were made to the buildings and also the most up-to-date machinery was installed for the manufacture of underwear, for ladies, gentlemen and children, children's jerseys and men's socks.

It is perfectly safe to say that no underwear is more widely sought after, by those who have once worn it, than that bearing the trade mark of Rock.<sup>1</sup>

By 1919 the company employed over 100 people. Mr Crawford declared in the Evening Telegraph (6 December 1919):



3b      Blackrock Hosiery Machine Room and Weave Room

"I am proud to say that every supervising man and woman here is local."

It also became customary from time to time to send selected employees to workshops throughout the country, for the purpose of gaining knowledge and experience in hosiery trade centres. Such centres were found at Tralee, New Ross, Bandon, Balbriggan, Longford and Carlow. The intention was that these employees would be fit for rapid advancement to responsible positions, thus availing of latent ability which might otherwise have been lost. This plan of educating and promoting from within Rock ultimately meant that the supervision of the factory was performed by local men and women who, only a few years previously, would have been local school leavers.

Like most other factories of this time, there were vital points of manufacture, although with hosiery every process was difficult. It was important that the operatives and the machinery were kept up to the highest working standards if quality control was to be maintained to an acceptable level. Their success was also due to the financial ability to scrap machinery no longer capable of full work or which was antiquated. Loss, however, was inevitable at this stage as the supplier of the equipment could not estimate or advise local requirements and they would also decline responsibility of the machinery.

In order to survive as a company, Blackrock Hosiery had to maintain a state of constant revision. the most delicate machinery for making socks was, between 1906 and 1920, ~~was~~ replaced five times by the latest pattern machinery. In the making of Rock underwear every attention was made to detail so that, in 1907, in order to make all rib parts of underwear, it became necessary to install at considerable cost the best machinery at that time. This particular machinery, unique to Rock in the country, enabled them to accurately secure various sizes of fabric. The result meant that, through a knitting operation, the ribbed part could be joined to the main fabric of the underwear, thus making a perfect high class garment.

#### MANUFACTURING PROCESS

Two varieties of underwear were manufactured which were known to the trade as 'fashioned' and 'cut'. The fabric for the former is, as the name implies, fashioned to the shape of the body in the actual knitting. The machines for doing this work, which were known as "Cotton Patents", were capable of making six garments at a time. The idea of multiple garment producing machines had been around since the 1870's, but apart from minor improvements, the original plan of its workings held up against any of the more recent patents. This "cut" underwear was knitted on circular machines fed by numerous bobbins of yarn revolving at high speed. The rolls of fabric were cut to shape and a flat seam of 'great endurance' was effected by up-to-date flat bed machines.

After the various knitting processes had been accomplished, the goods were passed on to the Finishing Department. This stage used vast quantities of water and other ingredients to remove impurities and to add to the garments a rather soft texture which would render them extremely pleasant to the wearer. This finishing, which Rock was one of the first factories to realise and utilize gave them an obviously superior finish adding effectively to the value and reputation of the garment. This had been tested on the market and proved quite successful. They were held well in advance of their competitors.

Rock continued to boom<sup>2</sup> in the twentieth century and despite a general recession during both World Wars, was able to maintain business by supplying to the British and the Free State Army. This business was thwarted by numerous threats from the Irish Republican Army. The chairman, Mr W Crawford, took the risk and made it public knowledge through newspapers etc. that it was company policy to defy any such intimidations.

Up to the 1950's due to the increase in the use and popularity of synthetic fabrics and garments, Rock as a company felt it was (in the 50's) unable to compete with British and European imports. In 1956 Blackrock hosiery accepted voluntary liquidation and the company was disbanded.

O G L A I G H N A H - E I R I A N N.  
(Irish Republican Army).

HEADQUARTERS  
Brigade 1. DUBLIN.  
13. 2. 1926.

You are hereby warned to discontinue supplying goods to, or in any way dealing with the Free State Government or its Army.

You will only supply goods etc., when taken by force from you by the Free State Government.

Confiscation of your goods will follow breach of this order.

*copy*  
10/3. Brigade.



For  
lasting  
comfort



## "Eyelet fabric"

For Men and Youths

UNDERWEAR that fits that gives you a splendid sense of freedom and lightness — in other words complete comfort. These beautifully finished garments will stand up to repeated washing and the most strenuous wear.

Look for  
the tab on  
every  
NATIONAL  
garment

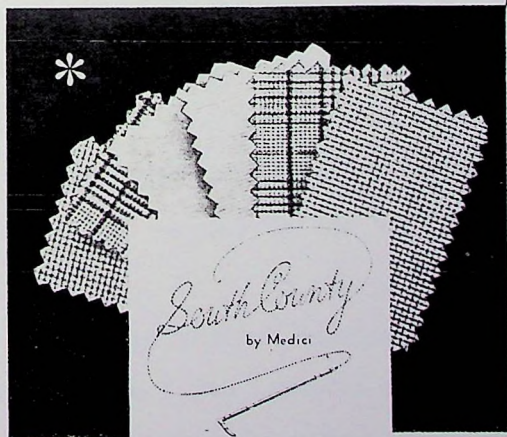
**NATIONAL**  
Brand

*For underwear outstanding in quality ask for*

# MEDICI

*now gives you  
shirts in a  
NEW FABRIC*

Right up-to-date with a new range of South County Shirts, made from a blend of cotton and 'ARDIL' protein fibre. The blend closely resembles a wool and cotton fabric which has softness and a silky-smooth handling and gives lightweight warmth. It is incapable of felting and is, therefore, shrink-proof. Moth resisting and has good absorbency, ideal for near-the-skin clothes. Colours are fast and will withstand the usual dry cleaning and washing processes.



"'ARDIL' is a man-made protein fibre constant in quality, absorbent, silky and warm.

Manufactured by

MEDICI SHIRTS LTD.  
DUBLIN

## CHAPTER IV

### INTRODUCTION TO THE CRAFT OF TAILORING

'A really well-made button hole is the only link between Art and Nature.'

Philosophies for the Young, Oscar Wilde

In previous centuries, tailors by far out-numbered any other craftsmen in Ireland. They were mostly journeymen in the country areas, serving local people with made-to-measure clothing and in return they received part payment with board and lodgings. In the busy towns and cities, these craftsmen became resident tailors and a large majority were able to boast the most refined skills, catering for the urban gentry.

In 1417 the Guild of Tailors was formed and their hall, originally was in Winetavern St. In 1706 they moved to Back Lane where it remains today as the last physical relic of the guild age. Due to the fact that mechanisation and factories came late to Ireland, tailors fulfilled a vital role in society. In 1911, there were nearly 1500 craftsmen in Dublin, doing mostly handiwork. 'Few craftsmen have such a close relationship with their customers, as the tailor.'<sup>1</sup>

The height of handcraft tailoring in Dublin was during the 1920's. The tailors occupied much of the fashionable Dame St and it's surrounding area. Every self-respecting Dublin man had a tailor or at least knew where they were. The most prestigious establishments such as Walter Conan and Scott &

# TAILORING.

THE BEST.

*MODERATE PRICES.*

**Hunting Coats & Breeches.**



*DRESS SUITS*

*DINNER SUITS.*

**Military and Civil Uniforms.**

*PLEASE*

*Note Address carefully.*

## WALTER CONAN,

44 Kildare Street,

DUBLIN.

4b

'I have no hesitation in recommending my correspondents to pay a visit to Walter Conan of 44 Kildare St .... He is thoroughly up-to-date in his work, and his prices are very moderate'

'Tip-Top' 1902

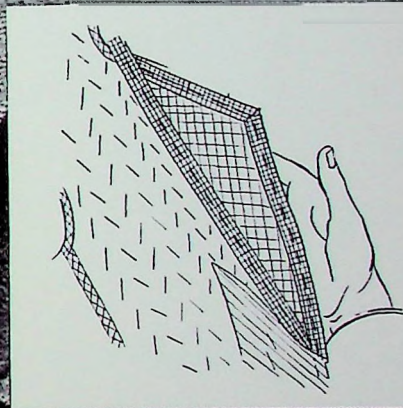
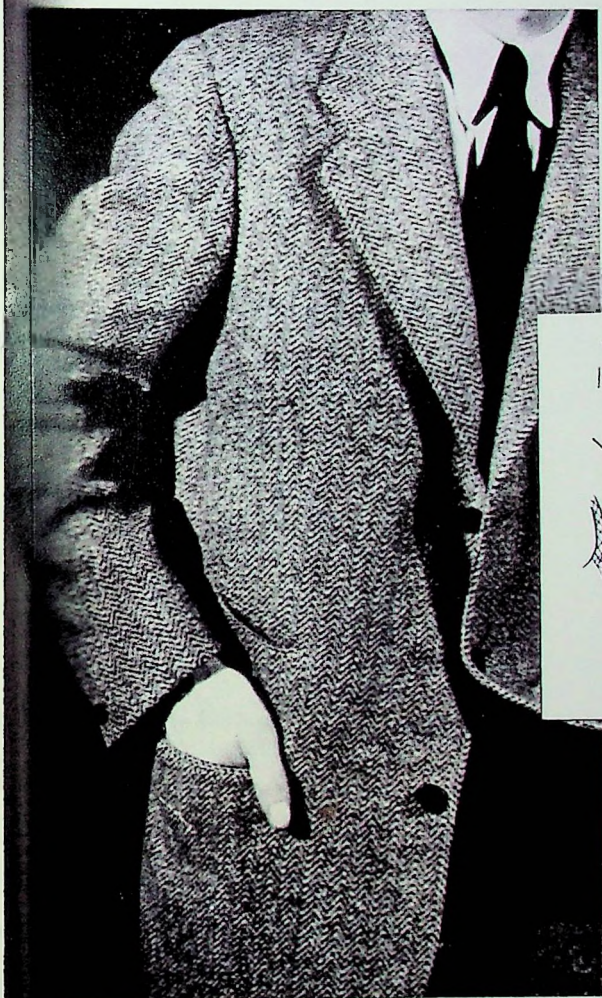


4c

**F**ROM Martin Sidney of 9, South King Street, Dublin, comes the two-button single-breasted jacket on the left. This jacket, which was highly commended in the Tailor and Cutter Exhibition this year, has flapped and jetted side pockets and is worn with a matching waistcoat.

Nothing keeps the shape as well as

**Irish Linen  
interlinings**



- linen buckram
- linen elastic canvas
- linen duck
- linen holland

**Irish Linen *INTERLININGS....***

**the foundation of good tailoring**

Issued by the Irish Linen Guild on behalf of the Linen Industry of Northern Ireland

Scott were able to select their clientele. A man could not walk in off the street to such a place and demand a suit, he would have to show references to establish identity and credit-worthiness. There were no deposits taken. The system was that when a customer went in to get a new suit, he then paid for the last one. It was an abiding relationship based on trust.

In the 1940s, when Irish manufacturing was on the rise, many factories induced many mediocre tailors into industry. This left a small number of top class craftsmen to cater to a loyal clientele of Dubliners still demanding the elegance of a hand-crafted suit. By the 1950s, factory-made clothes were available in a greater range of cost, colour and style. By then Richard Pender relates 'the tailoring trade was on its knees. We started to lose the tailoring premises along Dame St and<sup>2</sup> Westmoreland. It was all but dead. It was inevitable'.

In the late sixties the craft underwent some change. With the advent of the cities technical schools, there was an influx of what Devereux calls

a lot of little mushroom tailors who had minimal training and made poor quality clothing using sewing machines. They weren't top class, they were in-between a hand-made job and a factory job.<sup>3</sup>

The finest bespoke tailors inevitably have survived. Joseph Monaghan, Gerald Devereux and Richard Pender cater for a small

amount of conscientious Dubliners who know the difference.

Devereux vehemently maintains

Sewing is not just sewing, sewing makes the collar sit like that/feel the life/theres a life in that. Today they're just engineered, stuck together, with no tailoring.<sup>4</sup>

The craft of tailoring to these people is more than a trade, it is a way of life.

#### JOSEPH MONAGHAN

Joseph Monaghan was born in Galway in 1925 and, like so many in the industry got his first taste of the craft after a long illness. For any child that had been sick, it was quite often the practice for him to undertake therapeutic handiwork of some kind, such as sewing. As a result, he 'served his time' under a tailor in Lough Rea, Co Galway, living with him over the shop. In the late Forties, he moved on, to Belfast, the main purpose being to learn cutting. This accomplished, he came to Dublin in 1950. In Dublin, he set up partnership with a fellow tailor, but, as this rarely works out in such a specialized craft, after only a year Joseph Monaghan took over. It seemed the most sensible thing to do to come to Dublin at this time. Ireland was coming to an end of the post war recession, the tailoring trade was picking up and it seemed that the best place to be was the capital city.



Immediately, Joseph Monaghan was able to employ two tailors to assist with hand-sewing. Business was good from the beginning and after the first twelve months he was able to employ two more, a hand-sewer and a finisher, bringing the workforce up to four. The workshop was in the fashionable Dame Street district of Dublin.

From a customer's point of view, he was quite difficult to find, but the standard of garment Mr Monaghan was producing at this stage made the search worthwhile.

There weren't many people doing the kind of business we wanted to do. William O'Connor of Andrew St, Martin Sidney of Kent St, but they're gone now. There were a huge number of businesses around, but none doing the same quality of work.<sup>1</sup>

Most of his stitching was hand-done at this stage as all the workshop consisted of was one flat bed machine. With increasing trade it became necessary to move. In 1957, Mr Monaghan occupied two floors at 98 St Stephen's Green. More machines were added with more up-to-date irons.

It was then, in the latter half of the fifties, that Joseph Monaghan started doing competitions in London. These were run by the prestigious Tailor and Cutter, the bible of the trade. In 1959, he won the gold medal award for evening wear. This was a remarkable achievement for the Dublin tailor as it was the first time the award had gone outside London for fifty-eight years. On his return from London with his award-winning

coat tails, Joseph Monaghan was met at the airport by Dublin's Lord Mayor. He had represented his trade well.

The customers of the tailor in the fifties came from all walks of life, generally speaking, but there was always a steady flow from the professional classes. These professionals were mainly doctors, but there was also a good number of solicitors. Mr Monaghan's oldest client is a doctor who has faithfully had his suits made by him since the days in Dame St.

He maintains his prices are very reasonable considering all the work involved. In the 1950's and 1960's, his clients knew what they wanted:

It wasn't so much of a luxury as it is now surprisingly. It was accepted that if you wanted a decent suit, you went to a a tailor.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Monaghan believes the decline of the craft is due to an increasing amount of propaganda, from television and from radio, giving the impression that when the customers are buying ready-mades they think they are buying tailored suits; he feels they do not know the difference as the older generation did. The individualism of the Fifties and Sixties has gone, he maintains, so now everyone wants to look the same. Today, it is still the professional person who comes for a tailored suit, perhaps even more so in the past few years.

In the 1960's, there wasn't as much money around but they were educated as to what a good suit was.<sup>3</sup>

It used to be a social requirement for any self-respecting man to have his suit tailored. Today not enough time is spent on dressing, according to Mr Monaghan. Young men want to be able to walk into an outfitters and pick an 'off-the-rail' there and then. He believes it helps the 'ready-made' industry to keep the fashion baggy and shapeless, the 'throw it on style'.<sup>4</sup> Now he finds many conscientious customers want to see the workshop before they place their order, to ensure that everything is still made on the premises and that they will be getting what they will have paid for.

In these harder times, Joseph Monaghan still feels no need to adapt as a business or to modernise - 'It would be a disaster. To change the system would be to lose the craft.'<sup>5</sup> He still does not use basic blocks. Every pattern is made by hand for the individual customer. It is evident from the care each garment receives from the small workforce of old men that this really is evidence of bespoke hand-crafted tailoring. For him there will always be 'one man, one garment'.<sup>6</sup> Every button-hole is still hand done. To compromise, even on small issues like this (i.e. machine button-holes) 'would be to sell out to the ready-mades'.<sup>7</sup>

Joseph Monaghan has been for the past two years located at 9 Northumberland Rd, just outside the main Dublin business district. Established customers seem not to mind travelling

the extra mile for their suits. Tailors no longer need to stick together in one area to attract the clientele.

In the Fifties if you stood at the bottom of Dame St at six o'clock, the street would be swarming with tailors, in grey overcoats .... but those days are long gone.<sup>8</sup>

His business, now lying in a quieter area of town, is working to full capacity, approximately 8 suits per week. One only has to be impressed by the waiting room, the front parlour, where hangs all his certificates proudly with awards and photographs, and (on the occasion of my visit) fitted on a stand, a half finished judge's robe from the law courts.

For the future? Business will just carry on. We have our niche. You see London has been through this competition before us. Savile Row is still there, West End is still there. Still busy. My trade in Dublin will survive.<sup>9</sup>

#### **RICHARD PENDER**

The tailoring shop in Manor St, Stoney Batter, was started by Richard Pender's Grand-father in 1922. Originally his grandmother had lived across the road, in a house in Manor Place. The present premises became vacant in 1920, so the family moved in. The family business started out with a drapery shop on the premises as well. The Grand-father ran the tailoring end of things and the Grandmother worked in the drapery shop. Initially they were pretty large employers: then people were employed in the workshop and eight in the drapery shop.

When Richard Pender senior took over the business from his father in 1959, there was nothing in it. The Grand-father did not have a business mind, he 'had a bit of a sickener' and let things go. There were no orders in the books and most of the debts were outstanding - customers had just disappeared without paying. So old Mr Pender 'got in a few lads' and started from scratch. While the location was a good walk from the Dame St. Tailors, it served the Penders well enough as they were able to serve the east counties - Meath, Laois and also the greater Dublin areas such as Castleknock.

The workshop started out with the basics: two flat bed sewing machines and two old irons. However in the sixties, everyone was getting in more machinery and at this stage a steam iron (which replaced the block) was a necessity.

It was a big day here when the button-holer arrived. Everyone was so excited. It took hours off the job.<sup>1</sup>

Richard Pender Jr came to the trade in 1972 as a school leaver. He studied for just over a year in the School of Cutting and Tailoring in London and came home in late 1973. He realised a decline in the industry when he attended night classes in the technical college in Parnell Square. He was the only one in the tailoring class and as a result of this he left in 1975 out of 'sheer boredom'.<sup>2</sup>

The shop, which is in one of the older areas of Dublin has fared reasonably well over the years. Richard Pender Jnr

refutes the idea that all tailors were poverty stricken in the earlier part of the century and in a slave trade. Every tailor that came through the Pender's workshop between 1955 and 1979 bought his own house out of a craftsman's wage packet. Since the original days of hand-tailored suits, they have diversified into uniforms. The Penders remain Ireland's leading maker of military uniforms. The workshop always seems to have some officer or lieutenant waiting for a fitting. The shop also remains an important part of the business so that when the tailoring declines to an extent that it is not profitable, the shop will succeed it.

As a tailor, young Richard Pender has seen the rapid descent of the woollen mills in Ireland. He still relies on the cities wholesalers such as Brook Turner and Heavey Textiles for fabric but realizes that their stock is nearly all continental. The Sixties brought a great change in wool cloths. The demand was for more lighter, more durable creaseless cloths so the manufacturers responded with an increasing amount of synthetic and synthetic mixes such as Terylene. 100% wool was dying a slow death.

Mr Pender sees the fate of the mils as a fore-warning of the fate of tailoring as a craft. There is no new blood in the industry, due mainly to the social conditioning in the education system. As a young man still, he sees school leavers trained for university. No one is encouraged to apprentice for a trade or work in a shop.

The trade is 'dead duck'. I, personally, will be the last guy (if I live long enough) in the city who can sew. Because there's no one else working with his father in the city who's a tailor.<sup>3</sup>

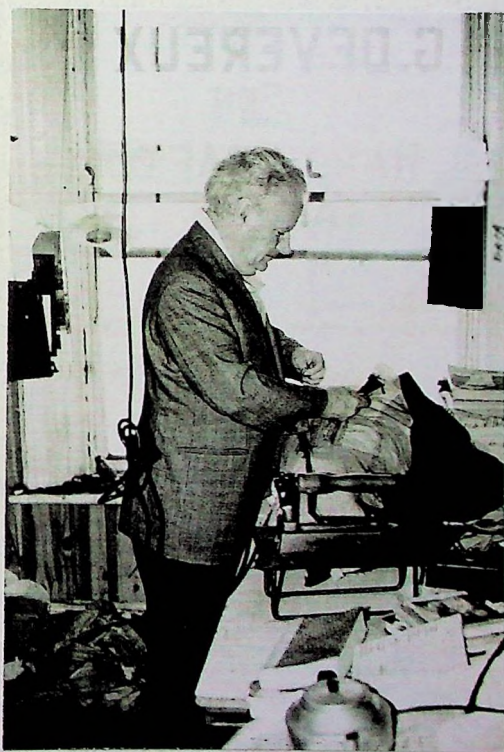
Pender Jnr is not one to gripe about how hard the old days were.

As I remember, our workrooms were all very happy. They were innocent days, new machines caused a stir. But this was before the cynical Seventies and Eighties. People wouldn't be impressed with the same things anymore.<sup>4</sup>

#### GERALD DEVEREUX

In Lower Abbey St<sup>5</sup> lies the workshop of Gerald Devereux. On the fourth floor, one can discern the sign "Gerald Devereux and Son, Hand Craft Tailors" on the window from the street. His son no longer shared the partnership, he has long since moved on to a career more lucrative. The workshop, tiny in comparison to most, is piled high with 'cabbage cloths'<sup>1</sup> (left-overs), and three or four suits in the making.

Life has always been a struggle for Gerald Devereux. He was orphaned at an early age, but luckily, through various charity organisations, he was given a good education, especially in music and sewing. Sewing from the early age of twelve, by his young fourteen years he could make a jacket, 'nothing much but still ....'.<sup>2</sup> This early apprenticeship was under a tailor called D'Arcy in Ballaghdereen, Co Kerry. These were to be some of his hardest years. During this time he suffered a bad football accident, which left him in poor health. He was



treated badly in D'Arcy's country workshop and paid less than one shilling a week. He realised now that:

All country tailors are bad because they don't know any different. Finesse or style wasn't there. Plenty of hand-sewing, but uncouth hand-sewing, not the type of sewing that you love.<sup>3</sup>

With some local help, he was able to leave, after two gruelling years, and make his way to Arklow. Here, Gerald Devereux served under a Kerryman when he was seventeen years of age. This Arklow-based tailor was a magnificent craftsman but his downfall was, as with so many of the trade, that he drank excessively. With him, Devereux often worked until three or four in the morning. He realised that, although benevolent, this tailor was not for him so after a few months he travelled to Greystones in search of a new apprenticeship, which he knew would not be difficult.

You see, most towns had a tailor or two. The priest, the bank manager (it goes accordingly), the teacher, the tailor, they were the head people of most towns.<sup>4</sup>

At this stage it was the 1940's and the war was in progress. Devereux had realised, as did his employers, that he had a real gift for the craft. He knew that, in order to learn the finest craftsmanship he would have to go to Dublin. He left Wicklow for the city, ('by the way, they offered me more money'<sup>5</sup>) and got a job in Lehane's in Eustace St. Devereux recalls that there were many tailors in the city at that stage, but only a few were any good. The average tailor never learnt how to make everything, only how to make a part of a

jacket, or part of an overcoat, or he might not have been a good machinist. It was apparent that 90% of all the unfortunate tailors in the country never made a living. They never learnt all of their trade.

It was here that Devereux learnt the log system, as it was worked at that time. The log system was something like piece work; for example an hourly rate on the log, in 1940, was one shilling. A set of eight button holes would require a log hour, or a pocket would be a two hour log. A tailor could spend all day doing them if he wanted but he would only ever get paid the log amount. When a waist-coat was finished, a tailor would probably get thirty five shillings and about £2.50 for the jacket at that time. It would have been hard work - roughly 23 hours.

In the early Fifties, after about ten years, Gerald Devereux started his own shop. He and his craft have survived after almost forty years, but he still works a long twelve hour day, six days a week. He is in love with his work as a craftsman but he accepts that there is no money in it. 'Today, you're lucky if you make a fiver an hour. I exist with it.'

He believes craftsmen in general just do not make any money. However he also admits that craftsmen (those that are left) are more learned, more into making better tailored garments.

Devereux believes (as do most of the others interviewed) that the decline in tailoring is due partly to lack of apprentices and also to the fashions of today. The men of Dublin, in his eyes, are very badly dressed. He sees most of them wearing continental suits. These continental factory suits are 'all stuck together'.<sup>7</sup> They have no craft in them at all. Also people do not know the quality of cloth. The best quality cloth is 100% wool but people do not respect that. He feels that even the wool mark is a charade. 'Pure New Wool' does not necessarily mean 100% wool. Under this symbol, manufacturers are allowed to add a certain amount of synthetic fibre. 'You can tell, it doesn't make up as well.'<sup>8</sup>

Retirement is out of the question for Gerald Devereux. It would be a punishment rather than a reward. He is keeping going in the workshop, maintaining his craft. He sells his suits way below a price that he should, so that more people can afford them. 'Money just means nothing to me.'<sup>9</sup>

He remains one of the last of his kind, a true craftsman in every regard.

## LOUIS COPELAND

The Copeland brothers, Louis and Adrian, come from a long line of tailors and clothiers. Their grandfather, Abraham, was a Jewish immigrant who arrived in Dublin in 1905 from Lavitia. He purchased a house in Parliament St and set up a tailoring business in Capel St. In the 1920s the family moved to a new premises in Bray. This did not work out as Abraham never seemed to get paid. The local people would barter for his suits, trading local produce for his tailoring services. The Copelands returned to Capel St in Dublin in 1926.

Abraham's son Louis served as an apprentice in Sables tailors on Sackville St. He studied cutting in technical school and in 1940 won a Master Cutter Award. Louis Snr worked in various factories such as Roches Stores in Dublin and Ben Dunnes in Cork, but by the late forties he had acquired so many tailoring jobs privately, he was ready to take over his fathers workshop in Capel St. He had so much business that within two years there was a six month waiting list for a suit and he employed thirty-five workers including six trouser makers and six women finishers.

By 1960 it was apparent to Louis Snr that bespoke tailoring was on the decline and ready mades were becoming increasingly popular. Louis Snr then made a decision to diversify into ready mades.



It wasn't selling out. As people dealing with menswear, we saw it as the future of the industry in Ireland. To fight it would have meant the eventual end of our business.<sup>1</sup>

Adrian and Louis Jnr took over the business in 1971. The bespoke customer was gradually disappearing and a new generation had arrived looking for fashionable, comfortable clothes, at a competitive price. The Copelands began thinking of the entire image of the man. Adrian introduced ties, shirts and jumpers to accessorize the suits and jackets.

In 1982, the whole workshop in Strand St under-went complete modernisation. A new workshop of younger, skilled men and women were employed. New machinery was installed, including five Toyota flat bed machines, a button holer and a pocket binder. While they still produced the made-to-measure suit, it was nearly all machine sewn. A system they believe to be both profitable and acceptable.

Today in Louis Copelands 85% of business is ready mades.

Young men in Ireland today, see in Vanous magazines the suits of Milan and Paris and want to be able to buy them in Dublin. They don't want to wait weeks for a handcraft equivalent.<sup>2</sup>

The brothers, who still trade under Louis Copeland, seem to be able to bridge the gap between a hand tailored and a machine job. Adrian Copeland sees it as the future of the made-to-measure, the modernised, modified inheritor of the bespoke suit.

## HEAVEYS TEXTILES

Heaveys textiles was started by Aidan Heavey in January, 1965. He had worked prior to this in Dwyers of Cork and it was here that he realised the potential of the business. As wool merchants, they deal mostly with mens worsted suiting, and with some mohair fabrics. Wool worsted has always been the more luxurious of fabrics, it has a nicer feel and many tailors find it easier to make up than most other qualities.

Today all the Irish mills have closed. The main mills were Mahoneys of Blarney, Muroughs of Cork, Irish Worsted in Portlaoise and Convoys in Donegal. The Heaveys feel their demise was due to much competition from Europe. The machinery in their mills was too old to cope with the demand for finer, more high quality wools. Textile merchants have no doubt suffered as a result of this. In Dublin, during the Sixties, there were four main wholesalers. Now Heaveys are only one of two that have survived. They serve the tailoring trade in Dublin, selling all continental fabrics. However with the steady decline of the tailoring industry, the Heaveys feel their trade will eventually go too.



4h

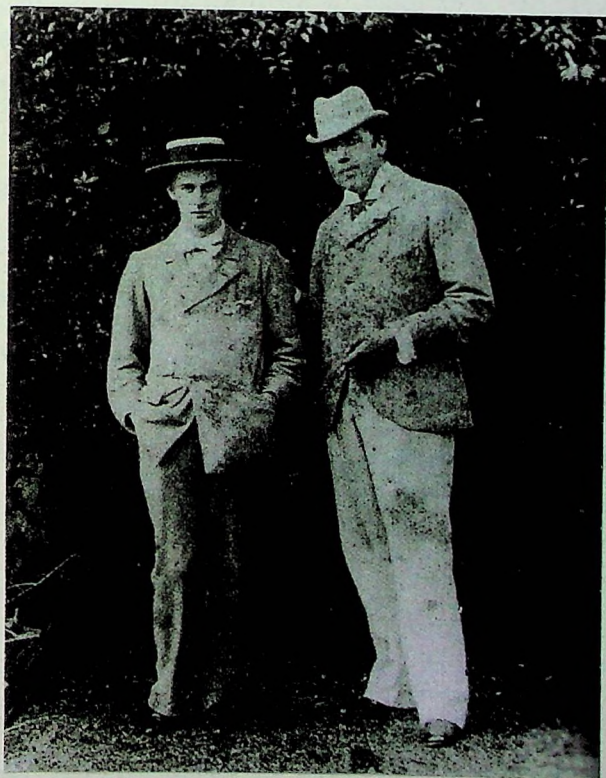
Heavey Textiles, Strand St

## CHAPTER V

### MENS FASHIONS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Whilst Ireland being on the peripheral of Europe was slower to come to terms with modernisation and industry, she cannot be accused of being indeterminate of style and fashion. As early as 1842 William Makepase Thackery, remarking on the large number of Dublin Dandies, found them different from those in Paris and London as they appeared not once a week, but everyday in 'an original and splendid appearance of their own'.<sup>1</sup>

Oscar Wilde was to declare in 1886 'A fashion is merely a form of ugliness so unbearable that we are compelled to alter it every six months'.<sup>2</sup> A fore-runner of style ('To be premature is to be perfect'<sup>3</sup>) Wilde by 1890, denounced knee breaches, because they were too tight for comfort, and substituted them for close fitting light trousers. Above this he wore a broad rolling collar, a high dark waist coat, and a black stock. He started to wear a broad-brimmed hat and spoke in favour of cloaks and doublets. However his style did not translate as most of his following simplified greatly the pointers of style which he advocated. Some few years later in 1894, Wilde and his contemporaries were sporting linen suits, pale in colour, with almost white trousers. This seemed to almost contradict the fashion he had worn at the beginning of the decade.



5a

Oscar Wilde - Advocate of Style, in somber mood in 1882 and in lighter attire 1892.

The first two decades in Ireland brought little change to the overall fashions of men in the twentieth century. Formality and fit were the essence of dress at this time, fit in particular being strongly advocated by all in authority on dress.

There is no excuse for badly fitting clothes; though you protest you got them at blank's and gave seven guineas for your tweeds and fourteen for your dress things, it does not excuse you.<sup>4</sup>

However to prevent things getting too bland 'Tip-Top' in the 'Memo and Modes for Men' column 1909 suggested brightening up suits occasionally with fancy waistcoats. In order to get this style right it was important not to wear a tie of such a colour that it would clash with the shade of the waist-coat.

With the advent of summer in 1912, men were adopting a soft shirt instead of the usual white shirt and under-flannels. The main advantage was that it enabled men to do without under-flannels in hot weather and were also a lot more comfortable. As these were mostly worn without linen cuffs, men who made a practice of wearing these generally had to have the sleeves of their coat made narrower to prevent a view up their sleeve.<sup>5</sup>

By 1929 there was an increasing amount of 'novelties' to be seen in mens fashions. These subtleties made the wearer up-to-date yet not ostentatious in his attire. Coloured handkerchiefs made their debut with the Irish gentleman who liked to wear his club colours in an inconspicuous manner.

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Any man with any social standing belonged to one of these 'clubs', which were usually Dublin based, so the handkerchief was a way of indirectly flaunting this. The colours were introduced by way of a striped boarder or in some cases, a half shaded polka-dot silk edging.<sup>6</sup>

Another such novelty was braces toned to match a man's shirt. These were introduced and sold by R Tyson of Grafton St, to co-ordinate with their silk poplin shirts. The colours were quite acceptable, blue and buff being the leading favourites.<sup>7</sup>

Hats in the 1930s were still an extremely necessary accessory. In Dublin it was no longer as fashionable to wear hard silk black hats (unless a formal occasion demanded it). Trilbeys and other such soft felt hats were being worn by most gentlemen. These were usually sand or slate in colour and waterproofed for the outdoor wearer. Samuel Beckett, Irish writer, in the late forties, was to declare -

When my head had attained I shall not say it's definitive but it's maximum dimensions my father said to me, Come son, we are going to buy your hat, as though it had pre-existed from time immemorial in a pre-established place. He went straight to the hat. I personally had no say in the matter, nor had the hatter/It was forbidden me from that day forth, to go out bare-headed.<sup>8</sup>

The post-war forties signified the decline of the rigidity of mens dress in Ireland. Sporting events which had previously this century commanded such formal etiquette of dress had relaxed considerably. In 1945 the exhibitors in the Dublin Royal Golf Club, wore pull-overs tucked into pleated wide

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5c

legged trousers with turn-ups. This decade also showed a marked change in overcoats. In 1946 gentlemen at the Dublin RDS blood-stock sales were sporting loose coats sometimes belted, which came to the knee or shorter.

By 1953 the most fashionable look for suits was stripes. It was possibly a reaction against the American' post-war checks which, with padded shoulders, gave the appearance of greater width. These new stripes made the man look narrow and slim. The jacket was usually double-breasted with no pocket flaps.<sup>9</sup>

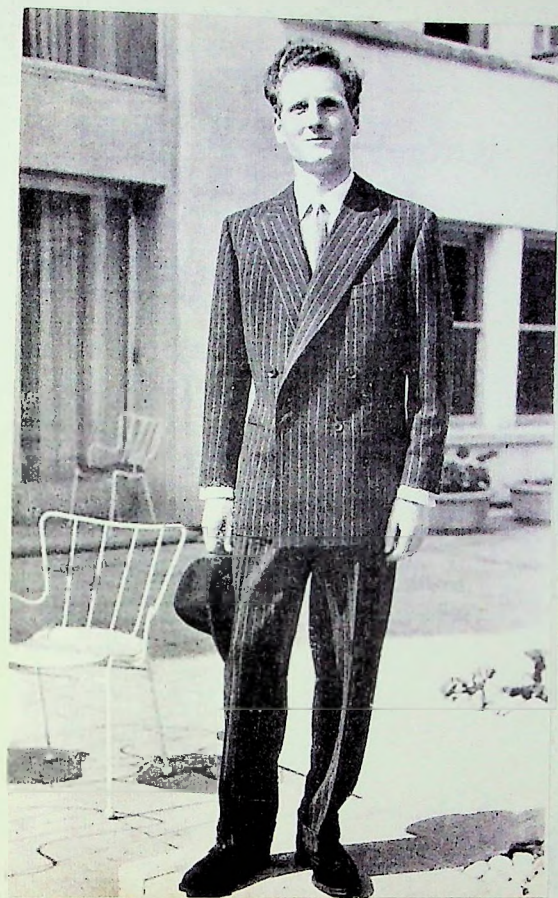
By the late fifties suit had become a two-piece, the waistcoat omitted, with a soft simple silhouette. Leisure jackets which were usually made from a different fabric from the trousers, started to become extremely popular. Variations included the double vented lounge jacket, and the yoke jacket with pleats and a half belt.<sup>10</sup>

Gentlemen's fashions in Ireland in the latter half of the twentieth century were increasingly influenced by America and the continent, not only by imported ready-to-wear garments but by the increasing spread of television, cinema and foreign periodicals. Mens attire in Dublin and the rest of the country was becoming less formal and more simplified a look which eventually heralded the Sixties.



5d

Loose fitting overcoats, 1956





5f      Betted overcoats    at the  
RDS Bloodstock Sales, 1947



5g      Casual Competitors playing exhibition holf in  
the Royal Golf Club, 1945



5h

Check leisure jackets, in contrast with  
trousers.

1 date

## CONCLUSION

The clothing industry in Ireland this century provided a chance for economic growth, employment and relative prosperity. Many factories were strong employers in the community and workers were succeeded in their jobs by their children. Likewise in the first half of the twentieth century, tailoring was a lucrative trade, with many highly skilled workers employed in successful workshops. The industry's demise stemmed from an inability to compete with stronger, more technically advanced European markets. Despite this, Irish clothing maintains a strong reputation. Irish linen shirts are still famous for their superior quality. A hand-crafted suit from Joseph Monaghan today commands only three quarter the price of a suit in Saville Row or half the price of one made in Paris.

The Irish gentleman today is discernably more clothes-conscious. The formalities of dressing that were adhered to in the early twentieth century were being broken by the 1950s. Instead of the formal, intense, layered look, men were opting for more comfortable two piece suits in lighter fabrics. Irish men will always maintain their style but not necessarily in the same way their fathers did.

My study has provided me with an interesting insight into the mens clothing industry, both manufacturing and hand-

crafted and also the style and fashion of the Irish man.  
This industry has suffered a decline but I have no doubt  
that a revival is imminent, the clothing industry in  
Ireland has something to offer, and compete with the  
rest of Europe.

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