

2023

BRITISH FOOTWEAR ASSOCIATION

FOOTWEAR 50

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  **IMBOX | PROTECTION[®]**



BUILDING OUR FUTURE, TOGETHER

BRITISH FOOTWEAR ASSOCIATION

FOOTWEAR 50

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **IMBOX PROTECTION**

“Welcome to the second edition of BFA Footwear50 in Partnership with Imbox Protection”

There are many fantastic awards in the footwear sector. As the CEO of the British Footwear Association, I often have the privilege of being involved and can share my thoughts with the trade. When we began discussing how we could recognise and celebrate success in our own way, we knew we wanted to do something different, more personal and with our signature spin. That’s why we created the BFA Footwear50 - to spotlight 50 individuals across seven categories who represent the most important, influential and inspiring people in the footwear trade in 2023.

There’s no single winner here. All 50 people are on the same pedestal for 2023. They’ve each gone above and beyond to bring innovation, ideas and resilience to the footwear sector. And you don’t just have to take our word for it! The BFA Footwear50 nominations process meant we received more than one hundred nominations for various people, hailing from manufacturing departments, design teams and UK-wide retailers to sustainability. This was a great opportunity to hear from BFA Members and non-members, and it has really highlighted just how many worthy and talented people there are in our trade. Sadly, however, this couldn’t be the Footwear200, so we eventually narrowed it down to just a handful of people with the support of the BFA Board of Directors.

Our final selection includes both BFA Members and non-members, as well as people from our extensive network of BFA Partners. Hearing their stories and writing their profiles has given us a unique insight into the personalities that bring footwear to life. We would also like to thank those included in the following pages

for keeping quiet about their inclusion until now! Thanks to your secrecy, turning the pages of this brochure becomes a little more exciting for all.

And speaking of thank yous, I can’t forget to mention the team at Imbox Protection, who immediately understood what we were trying to do with the Footwear50 and jumped on board. Your support in making this initiative possible has been invaluable. Secondly, I would also like to express my gratitude to our Category Sponsors, Streathers Solicitors, Dainite, Heavenly Feet, schuh, Petaurum HR, CGS UK and CovationBio. Their involvement is a testament to the network of connections and relationships that can flourish when BFA Members and Partners come together.

Finally, I hope you, the reader of this BFA Footwear50 brochure, find inspiration in the following pages. We’ve enjoyed every moment of pulling this together, and I hope there’s a sense of optimism that bursts from the pages and inspires you to take the next step in your footwear career.

Building our future, together

Lucy Reece Raybould,
CEO, BRITISH FOOTWEAR ASSOCIATION

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“The environmental, ethical and sustainability synergies that align our organisations and people have never been more apparent than they are today.”

**Rene Charles Marker, CEO,
IMBOX PROTECTION**

It is a real privilege for IMBOX Protection to be championing this year's prestigious Footwear50 event. To be in the company of so many of the UK's most influential and dynamic footwear industry experts is a real honour. The environmental, ethical and sustainability synergies that align our organisations and people have never been more apparent than they are today. Together we have the power to revolutionise the footwear industry, making it better for the people and the planet.

IMBOX Protection is an in-store shoe protection service. The simple plug-and-play solution provides your customers with premium quality footwear protection right

in your stores. The IMBOX is easy to use. Simply place the footwear in the machine, select the program, and in less than 60 seconds, the shoes are ready to wear. The machine works by spraying the shoes inside a chamber. IMBOX Protection is the world's only in-store shoe protection service. IMBOX Protection was created to better the world of footwear protection and the planet. The easiest and most sustainable footwear protection on the market.

I look forward to connecting and working closely with BFA Members. Together we are stronger, together we can achieve anything. Every move matters.





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“This sponsorship is a celebration of innovation, resilience, and excellence in the footwear retail sector.”

Philip Deja, Managing Partner,
STREATHERS SOLICITORS

We are immensely proud to sponsor the 'Retailers' category at this year's Footwear50 event. The British Footwear Association's initiative in recognising and celebrating the most inspiring individuals in our industry aligns seamlessly with our own commitment to empowering footwear businesses.

Streathers is a growing, boutique London law firm. We help footwear businesses navigate the key legal issues you face across all stages in your life cycle: from setting up a new footwear business and initial fundraising, right through to business sales and exits, plus everything

in between (commercial contracts, joint ventures, commercial property, employment issues, etc).

At Streathers Solicitors, we are more than just a law firm; we consider ourselves strategic partners to the growing businesses we serve. We love building long term relationships with our clients and becoming your trusted strategic adviser. As part of the personal service we offer, we will take the time to learn about your business, your strategy and objectives and any challenges you may be facing.

This sponsorship is a celebration of



innovation, resilience, and excellence in the footwear retail sector—qualities that we strive to support every day through our specialised legal services. We look forward to strengthening our ties within this vibrant community.

“I’ve been fortunate enough to work with a range of large and medium-sized organisations and have taken invaluable lessons from my time at each.”

Helen Connolly, CEO, NEW LOOK

Helen Connolly, with over two decades in retail, now leads as the CEO of New Look, showcasing a career marked by significant transformation and growth in the sector. Her journey, beginning as a buyer at Next, paved the way for advanced roles at Dorothy Perkins and George at Asda, where she honed her skills in leading dynamic, commercially successful teams.

Helen’s career progression is a testament to her adaptability and learning across various large and medium-sized organisations. She has consistently drawn invaluable lessons from each role, applying them to her evolving leadership style.

In 2020, Helen transitioned from Bonmarché to New Look, initially serving as the Chief Commercial Officer. During this tenure, she significantly improved the company’s Buying, Merchandising, and Sourcing capabilities, focusing on driving efficiencies and exploring partnership and concession opportunities. Her belief that the best product is crucial for retail success guided her strategies as CCO.

As CEO, Helen’s vision for New Look is anchored in achieving long-term, sustainable growth. She leverages the brand’s robust omnichannel presence and advances in digital transformation to steer

the company towards new horizons. Under her leadership, New Look is not just growing but also adapting to the ever-evolving retail landscape.

Helen is passionate about leading and inspiring her colleagues, sharing her wealth of real-life experiences to nurture the next generation of leaders. Her approach to leadership is not just about business metrics; it’s about people, innovation, and setting a path for future success in the dynamic world of retail.



“The key to understanding is listening and exchanging ideas with as many different people as possible.”

Simon Wilson, Managing Director, DEICHMANN UK

Simon Wilson is Managing Director at Deichmann UK, which is part of the Deichmann Group, the market leader in European footwear retail. In his time with Deichmann, Simon has steered the growth and increased awareness of the brand in the UK markets, by developing engaging marketing campaigns and brand partnerships. He has likewise directed the expansion of their market-leading kids and school footwear collections, making Deichmann a compelling destination for all footwear needs.

In his earlier career Simon gained all-around business experience in various senior roles in product development, marketing and sales in Europe, the UK, and the United States.

Holding an MBA from the University

of Birmingham, Simon is enthusiastic about developing people, products, and stories, which prove value and drive loyalty. His philosophy is, “Practically and metaphorically speaking if a shoe doesn’t fit, there will be no joy in wearing it. Footwear like apparel is driven by trends, but I like the added challenge of making sure a brand delivers in terms of fit, function and durability. This combination of fashion, engineering and marketing is unique to the footwear industry”.

Simon believes that understanding consumers motivation is the secret to building a successful brand and product, “The key to understanding is listening and exchanging ideas with as many different people as possible. What motivates me is finding growth in those exchanges and hopefully aiding others in their growth as well”.



“There is nothing better than working with talented people and seeing them progress and develop in their careers.”

Greg Traill, Head of Brand Partnerships, SCHUH

Greg is the Head of Brand Partnerships at schuh, and works across all of schuh’s branded partners and charity partners, being close to everything from the latest products, marketing campaigns to impactful work with communities. Greg says he is particularly passionate about making a difference and is inspired by the work done with communities and charity partners: “I am particularly proud of the work we do with the likes of The Prince’s Trust and our ‘DO YOU’ initiative, helping young people upskill and gain confidence”. schuh has also built a partnership with World Land Trust, to help protect habitat and wildlife through native tree planting. Greg explains how the relationship works, “This is directly funded by our ‘Sell Your Soles’ footwear takeback scheme, which looks after end-of-life product. It is these types of initiatives that we need to be investing in for the future”.

Greg’s career did not begin in a way that you might expect, “I started out in schuh’s first ever store in North Bridge in Edinburgh, fresh out of university, schuh offered me a welcoming and progressive environment to develop myself and find my career”. Fast forward through 12 years at schuh and Greg says he has learnt so much from working in different areas of the business, and through overseas projects in France and Germany.

Greg explains the satisfaction he gets in his

role at schuh: “There is nothing better than working with talented people and seeing them progress and develop in their careers, and we really have a great culture which enables that. Everyone I work with gets excited by, and is passionate about footwear, and that translates into an inspirational work environment for me”.



“My job is exciting and challenging every day. In this industry, you must be creative and determined, be obsessed with design and quality, and care deeply about the customer.”

Debra Bloom, Global Buying Director, DUNE

As the Global Buying Director (GBD) at Dune Group, Deborah is at the forefront of steering the creative, buying, and design aspects of the company's women's, men's, and accessories ranges on a global scale. Her 12-year tenure on the board of Dune, complemented by her rich experience at Arcadia and JLP, reflects a career dedicated to fashion and excellence.

In her current role, Deborah embodies the spirit of leadership and vision. She aims to inspire her teams with a clear direction, focusing on "setting a clear vision to deliver our future growth strategy". Her expertise isn't just limited to leadership; she's also an adept Fashion Buying Executive, known for her significant contributions to sales and profit growth in the fashion industry. Deborah's skill set is diverse and comprehensive, encompassing product

development, global sourcing, brand management, and team building.

Her insight into the footwear sector is profound. Deborah perceives her role as both exhilarating and demanding, a testament to her commitment and enthusiasm for the industry. She believes that success in this field requires a blend of creativity, "My job is exciting and challenging every day, in this industry, you must be creative and determined, be obsessed with design and quality, and care deeply about the customer".

Embracing the challenges ahead, Debra Bloom is poised to lead the Dune Group to new heights. Her commitment to excellence and customer-centric approach ensure that the company's future is as bright and innovative as the visionary path she has charted.



“I appreciate being in an industry that is driven by the passion and creativity of people - there is a reason why many of us never leave this industry.”

Matt O'Connor, Vice President Footwear, ALLSAINTS

Matt is the Vice President of Footwear at AllSaints, having joined the British brand in 2021 to set up an in-house Footwear Division, which now includes the John Varvatos & Buscemi brands. Matt is responsible for the design, development, and global distribution of footwear across all sales channels.

Prior to joining AllSaints, Matt was Sales & Brand Director for Footwear & Accessories at Global Brands Group, working across a number of brands including Calvin Klein, Juicy Couture, AllSaints, Reiss, Karen Millen, Frye, Kenneth Cole & Fiorelli. Matt also spent 4 years at Pentland where he was Sales Director for Ted Baker Footwear and started his career at Rockport where he

spent 13 years under the ownership of both Reebok and Adidas, working his way up from Tech Merchandiser to UK General Manager.

Matt explains his love of the footwear sector: "I believe that people make our industry great. I have an amazing Team that inspires me every day and I appreciate being in an industry that is driven by the passion and creativity of people - there is a reason why many of us never leave this industry".

Matt says that he remains so engaged and driven because: "The footwear industry is constantly changing, and the ability to react and adapt to these changes keep me motivated to succeed".

“I have been unbelievably lucky to work with teams and factories who make my job feel like a joy.”

Emily Townsend, Senior Buyer - Menswear, MARKS AND SPENCER



Emily Townsend, with her 15-year tenure in the footwear industry, has charted a remarkable journey to her current role as Senior Buyer of Menswear at Marks and Spencer (M&S). Beginning as a Footwear Product Development Assistant at Fred Perry, Emily's path took her through creative and technical roles at River Island and Lloyd Shoe Company. At Lloyd, she focused on product and factory development and buying, crafting profitable ranges for renowned brands like Topman and Burton within the Arcadia Group.

A pivotal part of her career involved working with factories in Asia, where she played a crucial role in refining production processes. Her efforts in tailoring patterns and sample finishing significantly reduced unnecessary sampling, enhancing production quality and sales, which benefited both the factories and the brands.

Before joining M&S, Emily collaborated

with Amazon Fashion to launch their 'Find.' footwear brand. Now, as a Senior Buyer at M&S, she leads a passionate team, focusing on delivering innovative and quality men's footwear collections. Emily is drawn to the unique challenges in men's footwear, appreciating the slower pace of trends and the intense competition. She's committed to sustainability and quality, aligning with M&S's strategy to produce enduring, ethical footwear.

What drives Emily is the joy of collaboration, the thrill of innovation, and the advancements in sustainability within the footwear sector. She finds immense satisfaction in working closely with factories and teams, turning ideas into products that resonate with customers. Emily's journey is not just about creating shoes but also about making a meaningful impact in the footwear industry through sustainable practices and customer education.

“I have been very lucky to have learned from so many industry icons and great leaders. I am motivated each and every day by the amazing people I get to work with.”

Jon Ram, Chief Executive Officer, CLARKS

Jon joined Clarks as CEO in April 2022, bringing significant global experience and knowledge to the global footwear brand. Jon joined Clarks from HanesBrands Inc. where he was the Global President of Global Activewear. Before that, Jon spent sixteen years at New Balance, where he was instrumental in leading transformation, growth, and profitability. Prior to joining New Balance, Jon built a background in sports marketing, with senior roles at the National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball and National Hockey League Players' Association in North America.

Jon is a visionary, strategic and operational executive leader with vast general management and global experience, and has a demonstrated track history of proven results in restructuring and driving growth within organisations. Jon shares what inspires him in his role: "I have been very

lucky to have learned from so many industry icons and great leaders. I am motivated each and every day by the amazing people I get to work with and the positive impact they have had on my personal and professional life. My hope is that I manage to put smiles on people's faces and continue to grow and develop".

Reflecting on his career, Jon says: "I have spent over 25 years in the footwear and apparel industry and have had the opportunity to visit many countries around the world and made hundreds of friends along the way". Jon's enthusiasm for the industry remains endless: "There is nothing like watching a shoe go from concept to consumer. Balancing the art and science of footwear continues to fascinate me. I have built a collection of shoes that I treat like precious art versus something I would wear on my feet".



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Dainite

THE PERFECT UNDERSTATEMENT

“Dainite has a strong belief in the importance of raising awareness of UK manufacturing.”

Tim Chapman, Operations Manager, DAINITE

We take great pleasure in congratulating all of the individuals being chosen for the BFA Footwear50 2023 in the manufacturing category.

UK Manufacturing has been at the heart of Dainite for 130 years, and we believe the UK is the home of the best footwear in the world and is the reason why we are so pleased to support this initiative.

Dainite has a strong belief in the importance of raising awareness of UK manufacturing, identifying, and appreciating the contributions of all, and with such depth of talent, we believe

it's only right that we put some of these leading figures in the spotlight to appreciate their hard work and efforts.

Over the years, Dainite rubber soles has become the soles of choice for the most discerning of footwear manufacturers. The company remains in Market Harborough, at the original heart of the UK's footwear industry between Leicester and Northampton, under the leadership of the original founder's family. Consistency and dependability of the products we make is the foundation of the success of the Dainite brand and the focus of the company is continually towards making



products of the highest quality. Dainite is the trade name established from the local phrase describing the company as the "Day and Night" mills.

The BFA Footwear50 event is a great platform to raise awareness of the outstanding talent driving the British footwear sector forward.



“Our workshop has over 180 years of continuous operation and heritage.”

Simon Bolzoni, Owner & Last Maker, CANONS

Simon is the owner and head last-maker at the bespoke London bootmaker, Canons, which incorporates the sister business W. S. Foster & Son. In 2022, Simon bought the W.S. Foster & Son business, explaining: “My vision to create the very highest quality, fully bespoke product, led me to rebrand the historic Fosters bespoke department, into Canons”. Simon shares what drives him forward saying: “I am focused on my part in keeping the skills of hand-welted shoemaking and bespoke last-making alive and relevant for the next generation of craftspeople and clientele”.

Simon’s experience in the fashion industry in the early 2000s within buying and merchandising, sparked his fascination with footwear. A quest for gaining knowledge in traditional shoemaking led him to London’s bespoke shoemaking craft, which existed in only a small number of West-End bootmakers. In 2006, Simon began training

as an apprentice bespoke last-maker at Foster & Son, London’s oldest bootmaker, under the legendary master last-maker, Terry Moore.

During his tenure at Foster & Son, Simon worked his way up to become the Managing Director of the company, applying his previous industry expertise to oversee a whole brand overhaul, including the opening of a ready to wear factory in Northampton, alongside running the established bespoke London workshop. Simon is proud of the journey the company has taken: “Our workshop has over 180 years of continuous operation and heritage, alongside the feel of being one of the world’s newest bespoke luxury makers. What I like the most about the footwear sector, is just how passionate we all are and how in turn this captures the imagination of our customers in a way that is completely unique compared to any other product”.

“I value the ability of the footwear industry to bring together like-minded individuals who appreciate the talent and experience that goes behind making bespoke shoes.”

Billy Tana, Luxury Bespoke Footwear Manufacturer, BILLY TANA

Billy Tana is the man behind the company of the same name, a luxury bespoke footwear manufacturer, and the product of Billy’s passion of making shoes by hand, for over 40 years. Billy started off as an apprentice at the age of 11 years old, back in his home country and became a ‘master’ shoemaker at the age of 17 years. During his career, Billy worked with many well-known British shoemakers and designers, from Gina Shoes where he was manager for several years, to elite designers, like Pashmina, Caroline Groves, and James Taylor to name a few.

Billy has a vast experience in bringing women’s footwear designs to life and has made many bespoke shoes and boots in accordance with clients’ requests. Billy

explains that he has had a passion for making shoes since the age of 11 and “being able to constantly be presented with unique designs to be brought to life by the many amazing designers I work with, helps to fuel the passion I have for making shoes”. His continuing success means that he has now moved to a larger workshop and is able to accept small production orders.

Billy is looking forward to collaborating with other professionals: “I value the ability of the footwear industry to bring together like-minded individuals who appreciate the talent and experience that goes behind making bespoke shoes, that will continue to bring joy to people for many more years to come”.



“I like the humbleness of the work, the beauty and elegance of the footwear we make, and how much a well-made pair of shoes can improve someone’s life for the better.”

Bill Bird, Bespoke Orthopaedic Footwear Specialist, BILL BIRD SHOES

Absorbing the intricate knowledge of making bespoke footwear from some of the finest craftsmen in the West End trade, BILL learned to hand-carve wooden lasts from new wood in the traditional way. Beginning in 1979, he studied foot anatomy and biomechanics to learn how to help people with foot problems. Using that knowledge, he began making bespoke orthopaedic lasts which could help those who could not walk with ease to do so.

Setting up Bill Bird Shoes in the Cotswolds 1987, whilst also running a fortnightly clinic in London, Bill specialises in making bespoke orthopaedic footwear. He was the bespoke shoemaker for the London Foot Hospital from 1996-2003. He gained a Certificate in Further Education from Warwick University 2004-2006 and was a part-time lecturer in Footwear Design at De Montfort University, Leicester 2007-2018.

Bill Bird Shoes is a collective ownership company, and the shares are held by those who work there, he has a dedicated team of

four working alongside him. Bill shares his appreciation of those he works with: “First and foremost, I like being with the people who are attracted to the craft itself. I like the humbleness of the work, the beauty and elegance of the footwear we make, and how much a well-made pair of shoes can improve someone’s life for the better. I feel very much at home working amongst a group of makers, quietly carrying out their trade”.

Not yet retired, Bill has also created and runs the two year long, ‘Pattenmakers Certificate in Bespoke Orthopaedic Footwear’, “Now towards the end of my career, I am most motivated to inspire the shoemakers who are coming after me, in the way that I was inspired as a young man”. Bill says that he is now the age the craftsmen were when they taught him as a younger man and feels that, “The wonder and importance of the tradition and the skills that were mine to nurture for a short time, which I now have the pleasure of handing on”.





“My motivation is to continue my family’s predecessors in keeping Crockett & Jones a thriving business.”

Nick Jones, Production Director, CROCKETT & JONES

In response to finding recruiting difficult, Crockett & Jones started a training school in the factory, which has enabled them to find and train people of all ages and backgrounds. However, Nick shares that with the shrinking of the shoe industry, it is also increasingly more difficult to source components, machines and parts. Employee’s welfare remains of great concern to the business, and they now offer counselling and other support where necessary, something Nick believes a family business can, and should offer.

While shoemaking is becoming challenging, with raw material quality and supply increasingly difficult, Nick still loves what he does: “The pleasure is holding a lovely

pair of finished hand-polished shoes in your hands, the smell of the leather, the feel of them and the thought of all the attention to detail and skill that has gone into their manufacture”.

Nick continues to find satisfaction in his work, stating his work ethic remains strong, with an attention to detail, and his willingness to put in the hours, he says: “My motivation is to continue my family’s predecessors in keeping Crockett & Jones a thriving business, offering employment to hundreds of people in the Northampton area”. While now aged 72, Nick is still working tirelessly to support the business: “I will keep going as long as I can fulfil my responsibilities to the company and our workforce”.

Nick Jones is Production Director at Crockett & Jones, a company that his great Grandfather started in 1879. Nick came to the factory in 2005 with experience of running his own business, employing people and extensive knowledge of machinery, however he shares that: “Starting from scratch in shoemaking, was and still is a steep learning curve”. Working with, and employing around 300 people is a big responsibility, which Nick has never taken lightly.



“I have grown as a person in the 27 years that I have worked at Church’s and been given opportunities that have given me the confidence to want to achieve more.”

Stuart Nutt’s journey at Church’s started in February 1996, on the Factory floor and progressed onto a number of higher skilled jobs. During this time, he studied for a Degree in Social Policy and achieved a First Class Honors Degree, Stuart believes this is what gave him the confidence to explore new areas of the company. He went on to be a successful Closing Room Manager in 2010, before being promoted in 2012 to the role of Regional Closing Manager across Northampton, Kettering and Rushden, and remained in this role for 10 years. Stuart has been in his current role as Planning and Procurement Manager since August 2022.

Stuart says that there are many aspects of working for the Footwear Industry that he values: “Working in the industry for 27 years I have seen a lot of change, but what hasn’t changed is my appreciation of being

part of a team pulling together to achieve a goal”. Stuart’s love of the history of the industry and its role in shaping the town of Northampton and other towns in the County is palpable: “Locally, I think the industry is unique in how the different companies share a bond and are willing to help each other out in times of need”. Stuart believes that the industry has helped him in many ways: “I have grown as a person in the 27 years that I have worked at Church’s and been given opportunities that have given me the confidence to want to achieve more”. After many years in the business, Stuart says he is still as motivated and engaged as he has ever have been: “I thrive in dealing with the daily challenges. I enjoy seeing changes at company and industry level and the new challenges that these changes bring”.

Stuart Nutt, Planning and Procurement Manager CHURCH AND CO FOOTWEAR LTD

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“My role is to be the custodian of this great company and ensure its future for generations to come.”

Michael Fallis-Taylor, Managing Director
HARBORO RUBBER COMPANY
HOME OF DAINITE



Michael Fallis-Taylor says that as the Managing Director, he is the “the proud leader” of the Harboro Rubber Company, home of Dainite. Although new to the footwear industry, Michael says he is learning every day thanks to his “great team who hold a wealth of experience”. Before joining the footwear industry, Michael enjoyed a long career in manufacturing, and was recently the Managing Director of the Express Lift Company, a pioneer of the business lift industry.

Dainite has a long history with over 130 years of tradition and remains in Market Harborough, at the original heart of the UK’s footwear industry, under the leadership of the original founder’s family. Michael

appreciates the culture, heritage and values in the footwear industry, and states that he plans to continue his company’s legacy, saying: “My role is to be the custodian of this great company and ensure its future for generations to come”.

Michael continues to be passionate about his role, dedicated to delivering customer excellence, and is extremely passionate about building partnerships throughout the footwear industry and continuing to deliver

an excellent service to the Dainite customer base: “My many years leading British-made companies has taught me that a quality product, strong brand identity, effective marketing, exceptional customer service, and adaptability is the key to success”.

“The nature of footwear production never fails to throw up challenges, engaging and overcoming manufacturing issues is very rewarding.”

Brian Clayton, Project Manager, DR. MARTENS



After spending 50 years with R. Griggs Co. Ltd / Airwair International Ltd, Project Manager, Brian Clayton reflects on his time with the company: “February 1973 was the date my footwear manufacturing career commenced and was more varied than I could have ever imagined. I was looking for a challenge during my time as an apprentice engineer in the early 1970s, and after spotting an advertisement in a local newspaper, I certainly found what I was looking for”.

Up until the Millennium, Brian’s involvement was primarily the manufacture of bottom stock componentry, which gave him a succession of roles from Mechanical Engineer, Technical supervisor, Technical Manager to Chief Engineer. Experience and confidence gained through implementing

manufacturing innovative solutions, alongside the required installation of new plant and manufacturing processes was impeccable, this also introduced Robotics into a manufacturing process.

The Millennium was a turning point in Brian’s career, overseas manufacturing was an imperative factor in the survival of the company. Following large redundancies, Brian and elected employees became Sourcing Managers, regular trips to Asia were successfully implemented for the training of Asian footwear operatives. Brian explains his ongoing determination: “The nature of footwear production never fails to throw up challenges, engaging and overcoming manufacturing issues is very rewarding”.

Following a request in 2006 from his CEO, (an achievement which will always stay with him), Brian reinstated and managed the Made in England footwear production (namely the Vintage range) utilising the Wollaston Cobbs Lane factory. Brian shares what keeps him motivated: “Inspiring character of the footwear and personnel involved in the manufacturing processes, the whole experience is difficult to explain other than to say it gets into your blood”. Today, albeit semi-retired, Brian is proud to actively contribute towards the expansion of M.I.E footwear production in Wollaston.

HEAVENLYFEET



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DESIGN INDEPENDENTS

WITH



“We believe that the soul of the footwear industry thrives on the creativity and resilience of independent and emerging designers.”

Ken Gray, Chairman, HEAVENLY FEET



At Heavenly Feet, we believe that the soul of the footwear industry thrives on the creativity and resilience of independent and emerging designers. Their vision redefines trends, reshaping our understanding of style and comfort with every step. It's this spirit of innovation that compels us to sponsor the Design Independents category at the Footwear50 2023. We stand with the British Footwear Association (BFA) in celebrating the remarkable talents that infuse our industry with fresh perspectives and ideas.

Our brand embodies the essence of timeless elegance paired with the

forefront of fashion. As a leading name in comfort footwear, Heavenly Feet is synonymous with designs that transcend age and time. We craft our collection with a deep understanding of what it means to blend comfort with style. Each pair of Heavenly Feet shoes is a testament to our commitment to excellence and our dedication to ethical fashion, as reflected in our Vegan friendly footwear.

At Heavenly Feet, we're constantly at the drawing board, innovating and evolving our products to match the changing tides of fashion, all while holding true to our sustainable ethos.

Our dedication to fostering a new wave of talent leads us to proudly sponsor the Design Independents category at Footwear50 2023. In doing so, we celebrate the innovative spirit that drives our industry forward and underscores our commitment to the community that shapes the future of fashion.

“I love how innovative the footwear industry is and how craftsmanship can co-exist and have space to be reinvented over and over again.”

Louise Ryan, Design & Trend Consultant, LAR CREATIVE

Louise Ryan has nearly 20 years of experience within the footwear industry. She started off as a junior designer on the high street, at a time when design and development played a crucial role in shaping brand identity. From there she worked her way up to senior levels across some of the UK's leading iconic retailers. Notably, Louise's design work was included in many designer collaborations that debuted at London Fashion Week.

In recent years, Louise has moved into the future foresight arena, consulting for

some of the most renowned global trend and foresight agencies as their footwear expert across bespoke client projects. Her design work has moved on to support younger brands focusing on driving change through innovative design concepts and sustainability. Louise shares: “I love the tradition, craftsmanship and generational skills that revolve around footwear. Across all levels, there is a specific knowledge and skill required to design and develop footwear”.

Another recent development in Louise's career has been lecturing at both AMD

in Munich and The London College of Fashion, discussing the importance of fusing foresight with tradition and innovation to create beautiful design concepts guaranteed to be future-proofed. Louise explains what keeps her motivated: “I love how innovative the footwear industry is and how craftsmanship can co-exist and have space to be reinvented over and over again”. Louise believes in the strength of working in teams and strives to create an inspiring, creative, and kind environment: “I love to be part of the change and thrive in creating new positive solutions, that drive impact”.



Jeroo Doodhmal, Founder and CEO, PIP AND HENRY

“England has such a strong heritage for quality craftsmanship that modern brands can draw inspiration from, with British designers being renowned the world over for their creative brands and products.”

Pip and Henry, is the product of Jeroo Doodhmal's vision of creating beautifully stylish, luxuriously comfortable, and responsibly produced shoes for children. Jeroo identified that over the course of a year, the average child owns 15 pairs of shoes, which is the equivalent to 80 million pairs of children's shoes bought in the UK alone. With so many shoes ending up in landfill, Jeroo believes that the time is ripe for a change in the way this everyday product is made and disposed of, and that is what set her on the path to build Pip and Henry.

Jeroo has secured funding from John Lewis and Innovate UK to develop the first ever expandable children's sneaker to further her mission of sustainably disrupting the children's footwear space: “I am particularly excited by the work done by some factions of the industry to innovate in the design and manufacturing space - genuinely pushing for the future of footwear to be more circular and less wasteful”.

Jeroo is an award-winning entrepreneur who has been featured in the likes of Forbes and the Guardian, as well as

having received the Asian Women of Achievement award for her contribution towards innovation in footwear design. Passionate about empowering the youth to drive environmental change, she has also authored three storybooks to inspire children to make better choices to improve the environment. Jeroo is proud to be a part of an industry, rich in knowledge and skills: “England has such a strong heritage for quality craftsmanship that modern brands can draw inspiration from, with British designers being renowned the world over for their creative brands and products”.

“I love the variety of design and development work that comes through the door, ranging from your high street; kids, women's and men's, to complex innovation projects that can test all my experience.”

Dan Spencer, Founder, LUCKY CAT SHOE DESIGN

Reflecting on his time spent growing up in Street, Dan feels it was inevitable that he would be drawn into the world of shoes. After studying Product Design, Dan has worked across different disciplines in footwear creation including technical, 3D, CAD, innovations and then in Design, for a period spanning 23 years. He says that this time gave him an “excellent schooling” in footwear design and development with opportunities to travel the world.

In 2019 along with his business partner, Dan decided to take the leap and start his own company. Navigating through the unprecedented covid pandemic, together they created their consultancy business, ‘Lucky Cat Shoe Design’. Dan is passionate

about his work: “I love the variety of design and development work that comes through the door, ranging from your high street; kids, women's and men's, to complex innovation projects that can test all my experience”.

Dan appreciates the people in the industry and being part of a network where “there is always someone to call upon for help”, and where he can enjoy collaborating with other freelance designers “to achieve the best results”. Dan's satisfaction at being able to help a new brand from its concept to launching in the marketplace, is clearly evident: “When we have delivered the shoes and sales come in, it is a great feeling and makes the decision to start Lucky Cat a very worthwhile one indeed”.



“I still get excited about shoes in general, how they evolve influences my attention to detail. I reference historical footwear and how the artisans of the day created such beautiful design and quality.”

Genevieve Steadman, Senior Footwear Designer & Consultant, FREELANCE

Genevieve is an experienced and accomplished footwear designer with over 25 years' experience within the footwear industry and has spent a good part of this time working for leading British retailers such as Clarks, Marks & Spencer, Next Retail, as well as more recently working with the smaller British brand, White Stuff.

Following her graduation from De Montfort University, Genevieve teamed up with another designer from Cordwainers, to make one-off catwalk shoes for independent British clothing design brands. Genevieve

explains how their new venture started: “We were also commissioned to hand produce Japanese toe thongs for an opera company, this led to us expanding into a full range of toe thongs, gaining extensive press coverage with publications such as Vogue and the Sunday Observer”.

Last year Genevieve made the decision to focus all her energy into working on a freelance basis across the retail sector and global supply base. Her recent clients include The White Company, as well as supply-based companies in both India and

China. Genevieve reflects on her efforts to get to this point and says that she believes no matter how much experience she gains, there are always new things to learn and new ways of achieving results, “I still get excited about shoes in general, how they evolve influences my attention to detail. I reference historical footwear and how the artisans of the day created such beautiful design and quality. All of this keeps me engaged and motivated within my profession”.



“We all now have the overriding challenge to ensure our industry makes a positive impact on the world by creating shoes that are truly sustainable.”

Cathryn Widdowson, Director of Materials and Sustainability, FOOTWEAR ELITE LTD

Cathryn Widdowson, Director of Materials and Sustainability at Footwear Elite Ltd, stands out in the footwear industry for her commitment to driving sustainable practices. Her career, spanning over two decades, has been marked by a significant five-year focus on environmental stewardship within the company. Cathryn's philosophy on her work is clear: “I love seeing materials 'come to life', from a drawing to a final shoe”, showing her dedication to every stage of product development.

She values the industry's creativity and diversity, noting: “There is always something new and exciting happening in the world of footwear”. Cathryn finds joy in the sense of community, remarking: “You can work with some incredible people... then all of a sudden, meet them unexpectedly somewhere else and just pick up where you left off”.

Cathryn is driven by the creation of beloved products and the challenge of innovating within the industry. Her goal to make a real-world impact is expressed

in her commitment: “We all now have the overriding challenge to ensure our industry makes a positive impact on the world by creating shoes that are truly sustainable”.

Cathryn's vision for a sustainable future in footwear is not just about meeting benchmarks but about igniting a larger conversation on responsible consumerism and production. Her leadership not only inspires change within businesses but also advocates for a global shift toward sustainability in the footwear industry.

“Let's make 2024 the year of innovation, determination, and progress towards a sustainable future, one shoe at a time.”

Gaynor Thomasson, Founder and CEO, HEELZ AND TOEZ LIMITED

Gaynor Thomasson, Founder and CEO of Heelz and Toez Limited, has carved a unique niche in the footwear industry with her innovative and sustainable approach. Born in the UK and raised in South Africa by engineer parents, Gaynor's entrepreneurial spirit and problem-solving skills are deeply ingrained. Her journey in the footwear industry began with an enlightening experience in Florence, leading to her “Aha moment”: the idea of adjustable straps for a customised shoe fit.

Under Gaynor's leadership, Heelz and Toez has embarked on a mission to create sustainable shoes from algae bloom, inspired by the desire to protect the planet and provide children with comfortable footwear. “Innovation is the heart of progress,” Gaynor asserts, emphasising her commitment to revolutionising the industry

and advancing sustainability. She aims to reduce shoes ending up in landfills, using recycled and recyclable materials to create environmentally friendly products.

For Gaynor, shoes are more than just footwear; they are a part of life's memories. She reflects: “People think shoes are just a shoe but to me they are a memory”. Her vision extends beyond business success to inspiring change and making a meaningful impact as she encourages: “Let's make 2024 the year of innovation, determination, and progress towards a sustainable future, one shoe at a time”.

Gaynor's story is one of resilience, innovation, and passion, embodying the spirit of an entrepreneur committed to making a difference in the world, one step at a time.



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“With over 85 brands available at schuh, our brand relationships are key.”

Colin Temple, Managing Director, SCHUH

The footwear industry is an exciting community bursting with talented individuals. We are delighted to sponsor this category for the second time and congratulate those on the Brands shortlist and everyone nominated across all categories.

By always putting our customers at the forefront of decision-making and leading with purpose we have achieved success. More than just a footwear retailer, schuh celebrates inclusivity, diversity, and self-expression across every part of the business, from our colleagues and brand partners to our product offering.

With over 85 brands available at

schuh, our brand relationships are key. Whether that be the coolest new sneaker collaborations or fostering talent across our channels, the brands we partner with align with our core values and foster a community of self-expression and diversity.

To say things are tough for brands and businesses would be an understatement. Still, regardless of the challenges, influential figures behind these brands continue to be relentlessly innovative for their customers.

The BFA Footwear50 is a fantastic initiative to recognise those individuals for their efforts.





Joanne Jørgensen, Materials Design Director – Footwear, NIKE

“My favourite thing about the footwear sector in the UK is the passion amongst the community.”

Joanne is a passionate and creative leader, driving an interdisciplinary design approach to solve the future edge of sustainable design and manufacturing for performance footwear. Joanne’s career in design began with a degree in Textile Design from Glasgow School of Art. Her early years started in New York in the Fashion Industry, working for small concept studios, through to large corporates. In 2008 Joanne made the move to London and continued working across many UK brands.

Since 2015, Joanne has led Nike’s Materials Design & Innovation Studio for Footwear in London. The studio works at the intersection of design and manufacturing, training designers on the latest production level machinery and technology, to drive the future edge of sustainable sport performance textiles for footwear. Joanne believes there is no comfort zone, she

always challenges herself and her team to push into the unknown and truly lean into the uncomfortable space of things that have never been done before: “I am always kept motivated by my incredible team and how challenging shoe design today is, especially to solve a sustainable and circular future where product do no harm”.

Under her leadership the design team in London has achieved numerous utility and design patents, won industry wide product awards, as well as internal innovation awards. It is this appreciation of what is possible that keeps her motivated: “By far my favourite thing about the footwear sector in the UK is the passion amongst the community. It’s with this passion and collaboration we can all continue to pave the way for a thriving, creative and sustainable UK Footwear industry”.

“In my experience, most of the shoe trade are very friendly and helpful.”

Guy West, Joint Founder, JEFFERY-WEST

Guy’s first venture in the footwear trade was selling men’s fashion shoes, with Mark Jeffery in 1981, (Guy was 16 and Mark was 17). They went on to establish Jeffery-West in 1987, which was the fulfilment of their boyhood ambition. Guy describes how he and Mark started out: “Initially it was very difficult for us to have our designs made, so we would control each stage ourselves by having the patterns cut by hand, then take the pieces to a separate closing room, then, when the uppers were ready, take them to the final manufacturer. We delivered our first collection in Spring 1988”.

Guy and Mark continued to grow the brand during the early 90’s, when they developed their unique Jeffery-West design. The brand went on to win multiple awards in the UK, Europe, and Asia. Guy has judged the Drapers footwear Awards and the

Honourable Company of Cordwainers Student Footwear Awards. Guy has also contributed many times to the footwear design courses at both De Montfort University and Northampton University.

Synonymous with music, media and film, Guy works with many bands, theatre productions and costume departments (including Moulin Rouge, The Libertines, Batman, Duran Duran, Cabaret, Skyfall, The 1975, Barbie, Rival Sons, The Prodigy and Harry Potter).

Guy continues to value the relationships he has built within the industry saying: “In my experience most of the shoe trade are very friendly and helpful”. He also recognises that it is the interaction with his actual customers that keeps him motivated and engaged, saying: “Without them we have nothing!”.



“Working in a global brand and yet being given the opportunity to help our industry as a whole through pro-bono work is what makes Burberry special.”



Denise Valin Alvarez OBE, Director Global Trade Compliance, BURBERRY

Denise leads an international team based in EMEA, the Americas and Asia, covering international trade across 100 borders. Her role is to ultimately ensure global compliance at borders. This means she has a very particular approach to fashion: “I appreciate beauty, but to me this means ensuring seamless cross border movement. Moving goods globally can be incredibly challenging and being able to do this elegantly and with no delay is part of an increasing customer satisfaction experience”.

Having worked in trade compliance for over 25 years, Denise’s career spans both in-house and advisory roles across multiple sectors, including fashion, automotive, oil and gas, “You could say I enjoy walking in many different shoes, not just one groove”. Denise is a pro-bono member of UK Government working groups covering Trade

and Customs at BEIS, DIT, DEFRA, BRC, BFA, and the BFC. She is also a member of The Strategic Trade Advisory Group (STAG), a forum for high-level strategic discussions between Government, and key stakeholders on UK trade policy matters. Denise feels that, “Working in a global brand and yet being given the opportunity to help our industry as a whole through pro-bono work is what makes Burberry special”.

Denise says that through her work with the BFA and broader industry, the thing that has struck her most, is that whether a business is large or an SME, the drive for detail and excellence remains constant: “Footwear people are very determined, even when the going gets tough, so being able to help provide insights to overcome problems, and then watching a business thrive as a result, is incredibly rewarding”.

“I have been fortunate to work with the world’s best brands and understand their individual nuances, which includes limited collaborations to hand-made artisans.”

Ben Leaver, Commercial Director, MALLET LONDON

Interestingly Ben didn’t expect to have a career in the footwear industry, he shares: “It’s just something that I’ve grown into. If I think back to my youth, I always took pride in my footwear choices, but it wasn’t something I favoured over other categories”. Ben feels that his interest in fashion, came from skateboarding and basketball, sports that continue to set market trends today.

Ben’s career developed progressing through the shop floors of Cruise and Harrods, he admits that he didn’t follow the traditional route of doing a degree or becoming a buyer’s admin or an assistant buyer, and

acknowledges that he has been fortunate to have some great mentors in some iconic businesses: “They noticed my passion for product, and they encouraged me to do more, I became a student of the industry”.

With the recent role heading-up footwear at the Frasers Group, Ben was fortunate to work across all categories with Flannels, Frasers, 18 Montrose and USC, where he learnt a lot about scale and fast-tracking brands growth. Ben reflects on his years of experience and how it will shape his future: “All this experience has put me in perfect stead for my latest role at Mallet and I’m

confident we will create some amazing work together”.

Ben continues to remain energised in his work, recognising his journey has been a positive one: “I have been fortunate to work with the world’s best brands and understand their individual nuances, which includes limited collaborations to hand-made artisans”. Ben feels there is always something new around the corner in the industry, discovering these brands, their products and joining with them on their journey is what keeps him inspired.



“I strive to enhance and inspire all those around me - my colleagues, my teams, and my family and friends.”

Mark Clarkson, Managing Director, BIRKENSTOCK, NORTHERN EUROPE

Mark Clarkson boasts a proven track record spanning three decades within the Footwear and Fashion industry. Having previously held Director and Senior Lead positions with brands of strong heritage, he currently holds the position of Managing Director Northern Europe at Birkenstock, encompassing the UK/IE and Nordics. In 2016, Mark’s talents found a home at Birkenstock, where he remains an integral part of the leadership team. Under his guidance, the Zeitgeist brand continues to uphold its values & Naturgewolltes Gehen philosophy. With a formidable background in the footwear industry, Mark remains steadfast on the path of sustained success.

Mark appreciates the fact that the industry constantly evolves, as he shares: “The

constant evolution tests and challenges us to adapt, all the while encouraging us to embrace technology to advance and progress. Furthermore, I fully appreciate that quality stands for something in the footwear industry”.

Mark continues to remain motivated, “I wake up every day enthused for my work, I am driven by the will to achieve, engage, learn & resolve to improve not only my daily life, but I also strive to enhance and inspire all those around me - my colleagues, my teams, and my family and friends. I used to focus too much on the minor details but have learnt over the years if you focus on the broader picture, the rest will fall into place. However, it is key to make time and engage with all staff”.

“I love working in the footwear industry. Many people say that it gets into your blood, and I have to agree.”

Sarah Northage, Commercial Partnership Director, START-RITE SHOES

Sarah’s passion for footwear began when she worked part-time at a wonderful Wind-Surf and Skate fashion shop in Sheffield in the early 90s. Sarah remembers how she loved seeing how an item of footwear played such an important role in an individual style statement, and how shoes became a “cultural barometer of the decade”.

Following her stint in retail, Sarah moved into the wholesale brand environment where she was lucky enough to be part of the incredible and talented Ellesse team at Pentland Brands, during the height of the sportswear fashion movement of the late 1990s. She worked alongside some of the most colourful industry characters and

some iconic retailers of the time. Sarah shares: “I love working in the footwear industry. Many people say that it gets into your blood, and I have to agree”. Sarah values the collaborative nature of her role saying: “I have always loved working as part of a sales team and I have been fortunate enough to work with some of the most talented buyers, and skilful, forward-thinking retailers in the industry”.

In her current role as Commercial Partnership Director at Start-Rite Shoes, Sarah is now able to guide and lead the product, technical, design and sales teams, in order to collaborate and curate a collection that enables the brand to create



products fit for today’s consumer demands and expectations. Sarah’s pride in Start-Rite is obvious: “It gives me enormous pleasure to know that little feet can grow and develop with the Start-Rite brand as we move forwards into the next chapter of its 231-year story”.

“Empowering our talented teams across our business is especially important. I want everyone to feel their part in our success.”

Richard Parker, Managing Director UK & Ireland, SKECHERS

Richard Parker is proud of Sketchers' success and the fact it recently became a Fortune 500 company, whose products are sold in over 180 countries, and who in 2022 shipped over 266 million pairs of shoes across the world! Through his 24-year tenure with Skechers, Richard has played a key role in developing the business, having worked his way through the business in a wide variety of roles, including a 7-year presenting role, (alongside his day job) on QVC for the brand. Richard was appointed Managing Director in April 2023, having most recently held the position of National Sales Manager leading the team through significant growth across the last five years. Reflecting on his career, Richard says:

“Being successful and having a purpose has always been something that has driven me in all that I have done”.

Richard continues to build and develop his team, putting in place solid foundations for the future growth of the business, he shares: “Empowering our talented teams across our business is especially important. I want everyone to feel their part in our success is important and that they are valued members of our organisation”. With the launch of new exciting new categories like Football, Pickleball and Basketball, all with elite-level athletes as ambassadors (including England Captain, Harry Kane), Richard is watching with interest to see how the momentum builds.



“My drive stems from a genuine love for footwear, a relentless drive for success, and a natural ability to innovate creatively.”

Sheldon Smith, Brands Director, WILLIAM LAMB GROUP

With over 30 years of expertise in cultivating and expanding global consumer brands, Sheldon Smith's journey began as assistant footwear buyer for Spitz in South Africa and further evolved into roles such as Assistant Buyer for Kurt Geiger, London, Head of Men's Division at Clarks, before being appointed as Global Category Director for Children's division at Clarks in 2012. Sheldon explains what keeps him so focused: “My drive stems from a genuine love for footwear, a relentless drive for success, and a natural ability to innovate creatively”.

Sheldon values the footwear industry for its distinctive consumer dynamics, marked by

constantly evolving trends and challengers, saying: “It still relies on strong human connection and creativity in the majority of manufacturing processes. This adds a unique and rewarding dimension to the industry”.

Currently serving as Brands Director at the William Lamb Group, Sheldon steers key branded accounts and spearheaded the growth of the iconic 70's POD brand. He believes his success as a director is not only rooted in his extensive footwear product knowledge, and his comprehensive knowledge of Retail, Wholesale and On-Line business, but also in his guiding principle

of “Listen, Learn, and Lead”, Sheldon shares: “I am dedicated to fostering a positive, cohesive team, ensuring high morale to tackle any challenge head-on. I am proud of my leadership skills”. He elaborates further by saying, “I find motivation in guiding and mentoring my direct team and the wider team, witnessing their growth and development within the footwear industry”.

Looking ahead, Sheldon confirms that he is committed to pioneering innovative strategies, navigating the evolving landscape of the footwear industry, and contributing to the enduring success of brands in an ever-changing market.

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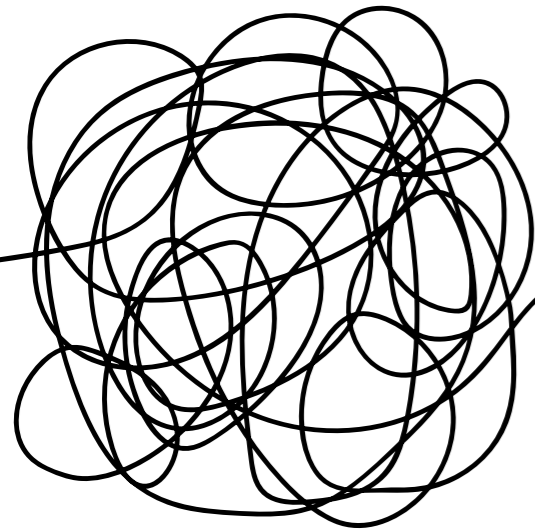
SATRA Footwear Foundations is an interactive online footwear course. It can be accessed 24/7 and aims to expand the basic technical knowledge of existing staff and new starters. The modules include:

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FOOTWEAR SUPPORTERS



“We’re delighted, once again, to be sponsoring the Footwear Supporters category, as we recognise the importance of those essential ‘behind the scenes’ services, that make the footwear industry so great.”



Adam Davey, Director
 PETAURUM HR

We’d like to congratulate everyone who has secured a place in the Footwear Supporters category of the BFA Footwear50 2023. The quality and volume of nominations really demonstrate the strength of the industry and the people working in it.

As a ‘Footwear Supporter’ ourselves, we recognise the importance of all the essential ‘behind the scenes’ services and how their expertise helps to underpin the quality of the end product. Allowing the experts to do what they do best leaves the designers, manufacturers and retailers

of many amazing footwear businesses to focus on what only they can do.

We firmly believe that a high-performing team is made up of different people with different contributions and different roles. Everyone playing to their strength. Value them all, let them do what they need to do and engender a sense of pride in the team. This is what this recognition is all about and why we are delighted to sponsor it.

At Petaurum HR, we’re all about making better workplaces and our purpose is “To make a positive difference to employers

and their staff by providing outstanding HR support”. In doing so, we take a proactive approach to HR and try to prevent people problems by having solid foundations in place. Above all, we believe in a straightforward approach. After all, it’s easy to make your own area of expertise sound complicated.

This aligns with the simple ethos of the BFA Footwear50 - to highlight those who deserve recognition. That’s why we are so proud to partner with the British Footwear Association.

“I am driven by supporting our industry with solutions to help individuals and businesses meet both opportunities and challenges head on.”

**Dr Andrew Hudson, Managing Director,
EUROFINS BLC LEATHER TECHNOLOGY CENTRE LTD**

Having worked in the footwear and leather sector for over 25 years, Andrew has developed a keen appreciation of the complexity of a simple product and the varying perspectives and challenges faced by different factors along the supply chain. Despite having worked in the industry for such a long time, Andrew explains his satisfaction of creating footwear: “Each item is a seemingly simple product, yet it is truly complex from a global material and production supply chain perspective”.

With a background in Chemistry and its application in materials, Andrew works

closely with footwear brands and retailers to map their supply chains, and to understand the associated Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) risks, ultimately supporting in the mitigation of these risks and compliance to sustainability and CSR related legislation. More recently, Andrew has project managed the development of a new digital Footwear Impact Calculator which enables key stakeholders in the footwear supply chain to assess the sustainability impacts of their footwear, using the principles of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), in a simple and scalable way.

Andrew believes that the UK Footwear Industry is in a strong position to benefit from the changing environmental landscape which will create opportunities for businesses who can adapt accordingly. He shares: “I am driven by supporting our industry with solutions to help individuals and businesses meet both opportunities and challenges head on. Even after 25 years in the industry, every day feels like a school day, and the more I learn, the more I realise there is so much more to uncover”.



“I understand the importance of nurturing industry connections, to provide students with valuable networking opportunities and the chance to gain real-life experiences.”

**Nanette Westberg-Brown BA (Hons), PGCAP, APA, SFHEA,
Senior Lecturer, Footwear Design Programme Leader for
BA (Hons) Footwear Design,
DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY, LEICESTER**

With a successful background in women's footwear, Nanette Westberg-Brown's expertise lies in footwear design and project development. Nanette completed her own studies in footwear design at De Montfort University, Leicester, during that time, she had the opportunity to intern at Alexander McQueen, gaining experience working backstage at the Paris Fashion Week runway show. After graduating, she started working at Kurt Geiger, working with both in-house and wholesale brands. Nanette then joined the Aldo group, splitting her time between London, Montreal, and East Asia. After returning to Leicester, she joined the successful supplier

T&A Footwear before taking on her current role as Senior Lecturer and Programme Course Leader in BA (Hons) Footwear Design at De Montfort University (DMU).

Nanette recognises the necessity to ensure the students at DMU are prepared for life beyond their studies: “I understand the importance of nurturing industry connections, to provide students with valuable networking opportunities and the chance to gain real-life experiences”. Nanette is passionate about extending the reach and impact of the educational institution beyond the classroom, and participates in various outreach projects to promote the importance



of education and career opportunities in the footwear industry.

Nanette remains inspired by the footwear sector's incredible heritage, and the way it continues to combine the traditional craftsmanship of shoemaking, with the advances of innovative technology, and remains committed to her role of helping students to develop and enhance their ideas and creativity, into realised footwear products.

“The sector is full of wonderful people who do vital work without fanfare.”

Marc Greene, Commercial Director, IN KIND DIRECT

Marc spent 20 years at Pentland Brands, working across a variety of brands (including Mitre, elleste, Berghaus and Kickers). He progressed from field sales and account management roles, to sales leadership positions at Mitre Sports and KangaROOS footwear. Marc states that his place on the Pentland Graduate Scheme gave him an early insight into footwear design and development: “I was fascinated with the process, and with the amount of time, expertise and effort that went into the creation of the product itself. This was my first experience of footwear, and I was hooked”.

In the coming years, Marc shifted to the consumer side of the organisation, as Brand Director of Kickers, where he was able to reshape the strategy, driving sustainable growth within the school shoes and kid's footwear categories. Marc was also accountable for bringing elleste footwear back into a global central range, after many years of licensing the category regionally.

Marc says that his passion for “doing the right thing” and being values-led meant that a switch in 2020 to the charity sector felt natural, he now works at ‘In Kind Direct’, a charity set up by HM King Charles II,



focused on distributing consumer products. Marc explains the shift: “Going to work, knowing that everything you do directly supports a network of over 6,500 small UK charities, who now have less funding but support more people, is inspiring and motivating. Visiting these organisations and seeing the impact first hand is humbling: “The sector is full of wonderful people who do vital work without fanfare”.

“Seeing your own designs and ideas turn into a profitable product gives huge satisfaction.”

Roy Mason, Footwear Consultant and Owner, RAMPSON SHOES

Roy Mason, with an impressive tenure spanning over 30 years in the footwear industry, is the dynamic owner and leading Footwear Consultant at Rampson Shoes. His consultancy is tailored to enhancing clients’ footwear offerings, diversifying their supply base, and bolstering profitability. Roy’s journey from a senior buyer to a celebrated entrepreneur has been marked by an extensive accumulation of industry knowledge and a keen insight into market trends.

Roy’s expertise shines in his specialised knowledge of the wide-fitting shoe market, having developed unique products like wide calf boots that cater to niche demands. His international experience is vast, with significant contributions to setting up new factories in India and Bangladesh, showcasing his global impact on the footwear industry.

What Roy appreciates most about the sector is its vibrancy and constant innovation: “It is an area that doesn’t stand still, and every day gives the opportunity to learn something new,” he reflects, highlighting his admiration for the sector’s continual evolution.

Driven by a deep-seated passion for footwear, Roy finds motivation in the creativity and collaborative process of product development. “Seeing your own designs and ideas turn into a profitable product gives huge satisfaction”, he shares. This relentless pursuit of success is what keeps him engaged, underpinning his philosophy that in footwear, “it becomes a passion as much as being a job”. Roy’s dedication to his craft and his pivotal role in mentoring future industry leaders underscore his influential presence in the footwear community and his unwavering commitment to excellence.



“I just try and do every repair in the proper manner, without cutting corners. People trust me with their prized footwear, and I feel an obligation to try do everything with integrity.”

Dean Westmoreland, Founder, YORKSHIRE SOLES

With a career spanning 18 years, Dean Westmoreland stands out as a distinguished shoemaker and repairer. His journey in the world of footwear led him to establish Yorkshire Sole in Leeds, UK, an award-winning company renowned for its exceptional shoe repair services. As the proud winner of the last UK Shoe Repairer of the Year competition, Dean has cemented his reputation in the industry.

Yorkshire Sole, founded in 2017, was born from Dean’s ambition to delve into shoemaking, a path he chose due to the lack of apprenticeships in the footwear trade in Northern England. Under his guidance, Yorkshire Sole quickly made its mark, specialising in Goodyear welted repairs. Dean’s philosophy is rooted in meticulousness and integrity, as he emphasises: “I just try

and do every repair in the proper manner, without cutting corners. People trust me with their prized footwear, and I feel an obligation to try do everything with integrity”. This dedication did not go unnoticed, earning him the prestigious title of an official authorised Redwing repairer – a significant accolade in the UK shoe repair trade.

Dean’s expertise and skill also caught the attention of the BBC. He was approached to be the ‘shoe expert’ on BBC1’s “The Repair Shop,” showcasing his versatility in repairing a wide array of footwear, from clown shoes to running spikes and even baby cowboy boots.

Away from the workbench, Dean cherishes time spent with his wife and two young children at their home in Bradford. His

passion for footwear is not just about the craft but also about the community and continuous learning it offers. He shares: “The variety of people and knowledge along with the keenness of said people to advise and help. There is always something new to learn and new people to meet which makes for a challenging and fulfilling career path”.

His drive is partly fuelled by a light-hearted commitment to his family’s wellbeing, as he jokes about not letting his children starve. However, at the core, it’s his thirst for knowledge and growth in the footwear realm that keeps him motivated. He reflects: “Knowing that the more I learn, the more I realise I don’t know. The amount of knowledge to be gained from working in footwear is immense - it is more than a lifetime of learning”.



“I am driven by learning new things and working closely with people who want to develop and make a difference.”

Helen Errington, Head of HR, CHURCH’S

As Head of Human Resources, Helen is responsible for HR, payroll and statutory compliance for Church’s in the UK, in addition to some related activities for Prada Group companies within UK and Northern Europe. Helen has become a strategic partner and strong influencer on various committees within the footwear industry. Helen is passionate about her role of guiding, managing and delivering people strategies, in line with organisational objectives: “I am proud to be a keen participant in lots of activities and committees, both past and present, and I’m happy to help anyone within the industry who may need some guidance or just a friendly ear to listen”.

Helen explains that she works closely with British Footwear Association and was also “honoured” to have recently joined

the British Footwear Development Trust, which provides access to funding used to support individuals and businesses to reach their full potential within the UK footwear industry: “We are eager to see the positive impacts these grants will have on our industry and the talented individuals working within it”. Helen is proud of the impact that this support offers, saying: “Being able to see the results of this, with people or businesses moving forward, keeps me motivated and engaged”.

Passionate about learning, Helen is keen to share her knowledge and experience: “I am driven by learning new things and working closely with people who want to develop and make a difference”. Helen’s belief is that by adapting and changing, “We support the future of the industry, enabling it to thrive and survive for generations to come”.



“The world is a lot smaller and opportunities outside of the UK are more accessible than ever.”

Matt Walsh, Co-Founder, MODULAR COMMERCE LIMITED

Matt Walsh has worked exclusively in the footwear industry for the past 27 years. He started out as a Retail Management Trainee with Clarks Shoes on October 7th, 1996, and spent his first day working with the team at K Shoes in Reading, under the guidance of Sam Robb McKinley, who Matt describes as having had a profound effect on him, both personally and on his career.

Matt is appreciative of his experience of having worked in a variety of roles, from Key Account Manager, through to International Business Development Manager, and he enjoyed a 5-year stint in Buying and Merchandising as the Head of Buying for the European Region. Matt’s last role for Clarks, saw him work across the Southern European Markets as the Sales Director. Matt explains his love of the industry: “The Footwear Sector is just special to me. It’s a sector full of quirks and individuality”.

After redundancy and then Covid, Matt started out on his own and co-founded an e-commerce company that supports the Footwear industry (brands and retail) to

trade successfully online, he shares: “I am very proud of what Modular Commerce has achieved in a very short space of time”. Matt works as a consultant, supporting brands setting up and managing International Markets, “I see myself as an enabler whether that is helping an independent business trade on-line successfully or supporting the development of a brand overseas”.

Reflecting on his time in the business, Matt says: “The Footwear Industry has changed over the last quarter of a century, as e-commerce has become essential for retailers and brands. The world is a lot smaller and opportunities outside of the UK are more accessible than ever”.



“I positively encourage the fusion of traditional craft skills and new technology within footwear design, and the course reflects this aspiration.”

Sarah Day, BA Cordwainers Footwear Course Leader, CHAIR OF THE CORDWAINERS TRADE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Graduating from the original Cordwainers Technical College in the 1980s, Sarah’s childhood obsession with drawing shoes became a career, and she has gone on to enjoy a prolific commercial presence developing designs for a wide range of companies, such as Clarks and Pentland PLC’s brands, including Lacoste.

Sarah set up her own design consultancy in 1997, specialising in Far Eastern sourcing, and managed an impressive client list, which included her former employers Clarks and other well-known high street companies such as M&S and Next. She began teaching at Cordwainers at London College of Fashion in 2006 and for the past 12 years has been leading the course at LCF,

mentoring students and staff alike.

Sarah has a goal to enthuse others with the same passion for shoes that she has and hopes to share the same excitement and energy: “I positively encourage the fusion of traditional craft skills and new technology within footwear design, and the course reflects this aspiration”.

Sarah is a member of the Cordwainers livery company as a Liveryman, and was granted the Freedom of the City of London in 2017. She is an avid supporter of Footwear education and has taken part in many Livery events, including the Blenheim Triathlon, to raise funds for education through the Master’s charities.

“I feel more driven than ever to inspire others to be as passionate about the Footwear Industry as I am.”

Sharon Reason, Sales Director, L & E INTERNATIONAL

Upon leaving School, Sharon joined the British United Shoe Machinery, then after a company merger and becoming rebranded as Texon, Sharon was promoted to Key Account Manager. Sharon’s customer at the time, CK Shoes, offered her a role covering the R. Griggs factories all over the UK, overseeing the imported uppers in the UK shoe factories, but then as production shifted to Asia, Sharon’s role changed, and she was offered a job overseas as a Production Manager covering Thailand and Indonesia.

Sharon was based in Bangkok, Thailand, for two years, before moving to China, and describes her life in Dongguan, Shenzhen, as being: “A bit like little Leicester, as so

many of my old customers would pass through Dongguan”. As Sharon grew her European business, she was given the opportunity to move back to the UK, and she is now based back in Leicester.

She recently became a Pattenmaker, and prides herself in being based in “our great industry” for over 35 years.

In the recent years, Sharon’s ambitions shifted: “Now at 54, I feel more driven than ever to inspire others to be as passionate



about the Footwear Industry as I am”. Sharon wants to pass on old and new ideas to the next generation as they embark on their footwear journey: “In no other industry could you still be learning so much, yet the processes have changed so little”.



“Footwear is an essential item for the majority of the global population and yet there is still so much to learn and understand, I love being part of the team of technical people who try to solve those challenges.”

Dr Christine Anscombe, Assistant Director (Marketing), SATRA

Christine joined SATRA 14 years ago and prior to her current role as Assistant Director (Marketing) has spent her working life in the leather industry, undertaking a variety of roles in manufacturing, product testing, funding procurement, training and management. In addition to the ‘day job’ Christine has been the external verifier for leather, for the Scottish Qualifications Authority and is currently chair of the British Standards Institute Committee for Leather and Footwear, Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Curriers and Past President of the Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists - representing

SLTC on the Executive Committee of the International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists. In 2016 she was privileged to be awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University of Northampton.

Christine originally studied at the University of Northampton to become a qualified leather technologist, leading to her first position as works director of a UK garment tannery, Carr Tanning, followed by moving to Australia to manufacture kangaroo leather for footwear and accessories at Packer Tanning.

On returning to the UK, she spent 11 years at BLC as their Innovation and Training

Manager before taking the plunge to Co-Found Leather Wise, a leather problem solving and training consultancy. Christine says she enjoys the diversity and challenges that each new day brings: “Coming from a leather background (which is complicated in its own right), I am always amazed by how complex footwear is. It is an essential item for the majority of the global population and yet there is still so much to learn and understand and I love being part of the team of technical people who try to solve those challenges”.

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“We are committed to supporting the footwear industry with our state-of-the-art technology and unwavering dedication to innovation.”

Tony Mather, Managing Director,
CGS UK

We would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to all the outstanding individuals who have made it to the prestigious BFA Footwear 50 list for the year 2023. This annual ranking serves as a testament to the exceptional talent, creativity, and dedication that drive the British footwear industry forward. Each individual on this esteemed list has demonstrated excellence in design, craftsmanship, and innovation, making a significant impact on the market. We applaud your achievements and the contributions you have made to the

industry, and we are honoured to be part of such a vibrant and dynamic community.

At CGS, we are committed to supporting the footwear industry with our state-of-the-art technology and unwavering dedication to innovation. We constantly strive to provide the market with the most efficient and sustainable solutions for success.

Partnering with the British Footwear Association aligns perfectly with our mission, as it allows us to collaborate with like-minded individuals who share our passion for pushing the boundaries of

footwear innovation. Together, we can pave the way for a future where British footwear stands at the forefront of global trends and craftsmanship.

We extend our gratitude to the British Footwear Association for this opportunity to contribute to the continued growth and success of the industry. We invite all industry professionals and enthusiasts to join us in celebrating this milestone edition of the Footwear 50, which showcases the remarkable achievements of the British footwear community.

“The UK Footwear Trade is steeped in heritage from different regions and families. There is a real openness to survive, evolve and thrive for the benefit of all.”

Ben Gardiner, Chief Product Officer, GARDINER BROTHERS

Ben Gardiner, the Chief Product Officer at Gardiner Brothers, is a distinguished figure in the footwear industry, boasting a 20-year career marked by expertise in global sourcing, brand building, and driving company growth. His journey, deeply rooted in his family's business, began in earnest in 2003. Since then, Ben has played a pivotal role in increasing the company's turnover 12-fold and relocating it to purpose-built facilities in Gloucester, now distributing over 2.5 million pairs of footwear annually.

Ben's profound understanding of the global production market has been instrumental in his success. His skill in sourcing

from various factories and suppliers worldwide has significantly enhanced the company's ability to deliver high-quality products efficiently. Ben shares: “Adding Value is the most important element for us”, emphasising the importance of collaborative partnerships in unlocking growth opportunities.

What Ben appreciates most about the footwear sector is its rich heritage and evolving dynamics. “The UK Footwear Trade is steeped in heritage from different regions and families. There is a real openness to survive, evolve and thrive for the benefit of all”, he reflects.

Driven by a passion for product excellence and team development, Ben remains focused on future growth, he shares: “Helping people develop themselves and fulfil their potential really excites me”. His love for creating products that solve problems and are desired by end-users keeps him motivated. “Developing, supplying and seeing people wearing and loving product that we are involved with gives me a real buzz”, he enthuses about his commitment to delivering products that resonate with consumers.



“It is the art of bringing an idea to life and creating a product that people can wear, appreciate, and love for years.”

Gautam Mehra, Managing Director, VANILLA MOON FASHION (UK) AND LEINER SHOES (INDIA)

Gautam Mehra, Managing Director of Vanilla Moon Fashion (UK) and Leiner Shoes (India), is a visionary leader in the footwear industry. With a background in Economics and Business Administration from the US and an initial career in banking, Gautam's entry into the shoemaking world was marked by a keen observation: the decline of footwear manufacturing in the UK and the absence of quality women's footwear factories in India.

In 1989, Gautam established the first Leiner Shoes factory with just a single sewing machine and three employees. Since then, Leiner Shoes has transformed into a powerhouse, boasting two fully mechanised factories and a production capacity of 100,000 pairs of quality footwear per month. Gautam's commitment to design, quality, service, and craftsmanship

has fostered strategic partnerships with various brands and retailers.

Through Vanilla Moon Fashion, Leiner extends its reach to the UK, offering customers direct factory access with products and services tailored to their specific needs. “It is the art of bringing an idea to life and creating a product that people can wear, appreciate, and love for years”, Gautam says, expressing his passion for the footwear sector. He finds the constant change and need for fresh ideas in this seasonal business both challenging and invigorating.

The driving force behind Gautam's motivation is his team, he shares: “The people that I work with! Our skilled craftsmen, our designers, our management, and our customers”. For him, providing employment and supporting his team and partners is not just a business imperative but a privilege.

“I love creating products that people enjoy wearing, that are both functional and fashionable.”

Antony Nathan, Managing Director and Co-Founder CHAPTERS AND FABULOUS FOOTWEAR

Antony Nathan, the Director and Co-Founder of Chapters and Fabulous Footwear, has been a driving force in the footwear industry for nearly three decades. With his vision to be best-in-class for young, branded fashion footwear, Antony has successfully licensed and distributed globally recognised brands such as Ben Sherman, Original Penguin, Scholl, and Blowfish Malibu. His efforts have not only established these brands in the footwear category but also positioned them as distinct entities in the fashion world. Antony is currently expanding the company's portfolio to include Caterpillar and Bench.

His passion for the industry is evident in his commitment to investing in design, manufacturing, and, crucially, the skilled team behind it all. “We continue to build our reputation as pioneers in footwear design and distribution, championing collective thinking and the effective evolution of

our brands”, Antony asserts, reflecting his dedication to continuous growth and innovation.

A notable achievement in Antony's career is his recognition as an honorary Chinese Citizen for his contribution to the region of Ping Ziang in China, a testament to his significant influence in East Asian manufacturing.

Regarding his appreciation for the footwear sector, Antony comments: “I love creating products that people enjoy wearing, that are both functional and fashionable. I like the fact it is a tight-knit industry where people generally get on well and challenge each other”.

What drives Antony in his profession is the ever-changing nature of the industry: “Every day is a new challenge, trends are constantly changing and emerging, and the



market is always evolving so I am always learning”, highlighting his enthusiasm for adapting and thriving amidst the dynamic trends of the fashion footwear sector.

“The majority of people I’ve had the fortune to meet truly make me feel that this industry is where I belong.”

Stewart Richards, Sales Director, ETERNAL BEST

Stewart Richards, the Sales Director of Eternal Best (UK) Ltd, has charted a remarkable journey in the footwear industry since graduating from Central St Martins. Starting with an entry-level sales position at Phildon footwear, Stewart quickly immersed himself in the world of ladies’ footwear, despite having limited initial knowledge in the field.

Over his 19-year career, Stewart has been a driving force behind the growth of Phildon’s made-to-order division, transforming it from servicing a handful of small accounts

to partnering with prestigious retailers and brands like Next, Arcadia, and Kurt Geiger. His efforts were further recognised when Phildon was acquired by Eternal Best in 2008, and he was appointed as Sales Director.

A key to Stewart’s success lies in his approach to relationships within the industry he shares: “A key factor to my success, has been building and maintaining relationships”, highlighting the importance of these connections in his professional growth. Stewart views the industry as an

extended family, stating: “It’s common to hear that ‘It’s the people that make the place’ but the majority of people I’ve had the fortune to meet... truly make me feel that this industry is where I belong”.

The excitement of seeing a style evolve from a mere idea to a bestseller continues to captivate Stewart, he shares: “Still to this day, I get excited about seeing a style go from an idea in the initial showroom meeting to becoming a bestseller,” reflecting his passion for the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the footwear market.



Justin Morgan, Managing Director, HB SHOES LTD

“As an SME we juggle all aspects of the business process and must be involved at every level of the entrepreneurial journey.”

Justin Morgan, the Managing Director of HB Shoes Ltd, has navigated a dynamic and diverse career in the footwear industry since graduating from University College Dublin in 1985. His journey, spanning sales representative roles to managing director positions, has been marked by significant achievements and continuous learning.

Justin’s career took a pivotal turn when he moved to England to gain experience in business management. “England was never on my horizon,” he recalls, but the opportunity presented a new challenge that he embraced wholeheartedly. His tenure at PVH (NY) expanded his understanding of the international nature of shoes, while his leadership at Rohde UK saw a remarkable growth in the brand’s revenue.

What Justin appreciates most about the footwear sector is its multidimensional

nature, he explains: “Footwear is always properly 3 dimensional”, emphasising the importance of the continuum between designers, manufacturers, salespeople, and consumers. His passion for shoes is deeply rooted in their personal yet visible nature to consumers: “Shoes are so very personal yet visible”, reflecting on the emotional connection people have with footwear.

Driven by the responsibility of leading an SME, Justin is committed to making HB Shoes a fair and communicable company. “Our small team rely on shoes, and the sale of shoes, for their livelihoods”, he states, underscoring his dedication to protecting and supporting his team. As the current custodian of a company with a 60-year legacy, Justin is determined to continue what Peter Hogan-Hern started, ensuring the brand’s longevity and relevance.

“The footwear industry has given me purpose and also allowed me to pass on skills to others which I am very proud of.”

Wayne Kellingray, Sales and Sourcing Director, GOLDLINE



Wayne Kellingray, the Sales & Sourcing Director at Goldline, has had a dynamic and enriching career in the footwear industry since his start in July 1994 at Sanders & Sanders in Northamptonshire. Starting as a sample chaser and trainee pattern cutter while attending college, Wayne has grown to become a master in his field, learning all facets of footwear manufacturing.

His six years at Sanders & Sanders were a period of rapid growth, where he evolved from a pattern cutter to taking on roles in design and sales. Wayne reflects: “I was given the opportunity to join the Goldline UK team and worked my way through the ranks to become Sales Director back in 2007”, reflecting on his impressive progression.

In his current role, Wayne sources from Vietnam, China, and India, and has had the pleasure of working with multiple retailers, producing diverse footwear. He shares: “The footwear industry has given me purpose and also allowed me to pass on skills to others which I am very proud of”, acknowledging the sector’s unique challenges and opportunities for growth.

What Wayne appreciates most about the footwear sector is its distinct nature and the constant learning it offers, he says: “Every day is a learning day and there is always something I have never come across before around the corner”. His passion for travel and learning fuels his drive, with the ultimate satisfaction of seeing his team’s hard work materialise into products in shops.

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FOOTWEAR SUSTAINABILITY

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“We work with people and brands that are making a change in the environmental footprint of the footwear industry.”

Patrick Van Waes, Global Marketing Director, COVATIONBIO



We are delighted to sponsor the Footwear50 and especially the sustainability category which is close to our heart. As a company we work day in, and day out with people and brands that are making a change in the environmental footprint of the footwear industry, using 100% bio-based renewable materials such as our Susterra[®] 1,3 propanediol which originates from regenerative farmed corn. We work with living things to benefit living

beings. Our world-class science unlocks the inherent genius of plants and nature to enhance product performance. At CovationBio, sustainability is fundamental! Our materials are designed for performance but are judged by how they impact our planet. To us, performance and sustainability are one. We live in a world without compromise, made possible by some mind-blowing science.

We couldn't be a force of nature without collaboration and shared goals. We work together to elevate our science and inspire others to join us on the journey to sustainability. The partnerships we create can literally change the world. By sponsoring this category at the Footwear50 we want to recognise those people driving change and highlight that environmental alternatives are already available today.

“I am driven by a desire to make a positive impact on the environment and society. I am motivated by the opportunity to create a more sustainable future for all.”

Tuze Mekik, Global Head of Sustainability, DR. MARTENS



Tuze Mekik, the Global Head of Sustainability at Dr. Martens, is a visionary leader in the fashion industry, renowned for her 20-year journey advocating for environmental and social sustainability. Her career spans influential roles with brands like Gap and Burberry, culminating in her current position where she spearheads sustainable practices. Tuze’s approach to sustainability is rooted in innovation and regeneration, always keeping human rights and social justice at the core. As a trustee of the Dr. Martens Foundation, she extends her impact beyond corporate realms, championing social justice causes.

Her global perspective, shaped by experiences in EMEA, Americas, and Asia, and her proficiency in four languages, lend her a unique insight into the diverse aspects of fashion sustainability. Tuze finds the footwear manufacturing process particularly fascinating, stating: “Our products are simple and yet have the ability, like Dr Martens, to make people feel empowered to self-express”. Driven by a passion to create a positive environmental and societal impact, Tuze is committed to crafting a sustainable future. She shares: “I am driven by a desire to make

a positive impact on the environment and society. I am motivated by the opportunity to create a more sustainable future for all”. Her vision for the future of the footwear industry focuses on technology, innovation, and circularity. As a mother of two, Tuze is also dedicated to instilling her values in the next generation, ensuring that her legacy of sustainability and responsibility endures.



“We are a family business, and if you are part of the team, you are part of the family.”

Thomas Forbes, Managing Director, THE BOOT REPAIR CO.

Thomas Forbes, Managing Director of The Boot Repair Co. (BRC), stands as a testament to a rich family legacy in the footwear repair industry. Thomas reflects: “All my family on my Mum’s side before me have worked as cobblers, leather repairers and shoemakers”. His journey began under his grandfather’s tutelage at the age of five, a time when he immediately showed interest in the craft. Under his leadership since 2020, The BRC has flourished, particularly with a pivotal partnership with Vivobarefoot. “Our mission was to repair and clean all returned and faulty products produced by Vivobarefoot, and sell them at a reduced price to avoid landfill”, Thomas explains. This innovative approach also extended to a bespoke repair service for Vivobarefoot’s footwear, a challenge that no other cobbler dared to undertake at the time.

Thomas finds great significance in the footwear sector’s role in fashion and sustainability. “I have always found it fascinating, that a pair of boots or shoes physically contribute to around 5% of a whole outfit, yet we collectively obsess over the right fit, the right look”, he says. His pride in the BRC’s contribution to a circular economy in the footwear sector is evident. What keeps Thomas motivated is the people he works with. He shares: “During an awful time for businesses during the lockdowns, we inherited an amazing team... We are a family business, and if you are part of the team, you are part of the family”, highlighting the familial spirit that drives the company’s success.

“Meaningful sustainability progress across the footwear industry has begun, but we have a very long way to go before we reach scaled, collaborative impact on our shared challenges.”

Charlotte Pumford, Head of Regeneration, VIVOBAREFOOT



Charlotte has 10 years of sustainability experience working across the textile and footwear sector, spanning global FTSE 100 organisations, high-growth SME’s, local government, and the management of a small-scale start-ups. For the past 4 years Charlotte has been working at Vivobarefoot, a UK-based natural health brand making Barefoot footwear and experiences that bring people closer to nature. Charlotte sits on Vivobarefoot’s legal board, whilst leading their Regeneration team and managing Vivobarefoot’s strategic journey towards becoming a truly regenerative

business. Charlotte leads Vivobarefoot’s B Corp Certification and value chain impact programme and was recognised by Edie in 2020 as one of the UK’s 30 under 30 sustainability leaders. Charlotte is a passionate advocate for the protection of our natural world and believes business can be a force for change in identifying the regenerative solutions we need to address global challenges. She shares her appreciation of commitment and energy that footwear brands apply specifically to innovation: “Meaningful sustainability progress across

the footwear industry has begun, but we have a very long way to go before we reach scaled, collaborative impact on our shared challenges”. Charlotte is committed to finding solutions to some of our most pressing industry challenges and wants to demonstrate how business can be a vehicle for change and that business operations can be done in a much better way: “The team at Vivobarefoot are all 100% committed to progressing towards our ambition of becoming a truly regenerative business across our entire business model and that motivates me every day”.

“I am passionate about making a difference to the industry overall and to the lives of workers and communities in the supply chain.”

Stephanie Shaw, Sustainability & CSR Manager, FITFLOP

As the Sustainability and CSR Manager at FitFlop, Stephanie Shaw brings a blend of passion for fashion and a commitment to ethical practices in the industry. Stephanie's career, which started in Buying, took a significant turn as she realised her true calling was in the realm of sustainability. "I soon found that my passion was more behind the scenes in the responsibility of brands within their supply chain", she reflects.

Her journey through various roles at ASOS, River Island, and Hush, culminated in her current position at FitFlop, marking her first

foray into the footwear-specific sector. At FitFlop, Stephanie is not just maintaining existing sustainable practices but is actively involved in introducing new initiatives. "I am passionate about making a difference to the industry overall and to the lives of workers and communities in the supply chain", she states, highlighting her holistic approach to sustainability.

What Stephanie appreciates most about the footwear sector is its balance of tradition and innovation. "I like that while there is so much history behind this industry, there is lots of potential to try new things

and help to create a more technologically advanced and sustainable sector", she says. This perspective drives her work at FitFlop, where she is excited to see the company's growth and the impact of her initiatives in the industry.

The prospect of influencing industry practices keeps Stephanie motivated. "The possibility that my work could impact the way that we do things going forward as an industry is really motivating", she shares. Her willingness to embrace new challenges and not fear failure is a testament to her dynamic approach to sustainability in footwear.



“At Centre for SMART, we are committed to the vision of ‘zero-waste to landfill’ for footwear sector.”

Shahin Rahimifard, Professor of Sustainable Engineering, Director of Centre for SMART, LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY

Shahin Rahimifard is the Founder and Director of the Centre for 'Sustainable Manufacturing and Recycling Technologies (SMART)', and his research work is focused on sustainability issues throughout a product's lifecycle. These projects have benefited from involvement of several high-profile global manufacturers and retailers within seven manufacturing sectors.

Professor Rahimifard has actively been involved in more than fifty R&D projects in footwear sustainability throughout the past two decades, and is the Editor-in-Chief of the 'International Journal of Sustainable Engineering' and has over 200 refereed

publications associated with this work. His renown and highly cited publications on 'footwear recycling' in early 2000's has been the source for development of many current commercial solutions and services being increasingly offered for collection and recovery of post-consumer shoes.

Shahin goes on to say: "There is no doubt that the footwear industry is resource-imbalanced. Virgin materials go into the front end, while used resources are largely wasted at the back end. There is no hiding from the fact that as much as 90% of footwear waste, mainly post-consumer unwanted and old worn shoes is still

ending up in landfill". Shahin believes that industry and consumers recognise that this cannot continue and that a circular reuse of materials and/or products is the only approach to safeguard the future of the industry: "At Centre for SMART, we are committed to the vision of 'zero-waste to landfill' for footwear sector and are looking forward to working with key stakeholders and industry leaders to fully implement circular business models in which 'materials are not consumed but only borrowed to address current needs and returned for further reuse'".

“There is so much creativity and determination in this industry; I just cannot see how we can fail to overcome the environmental challenge we have been set.”

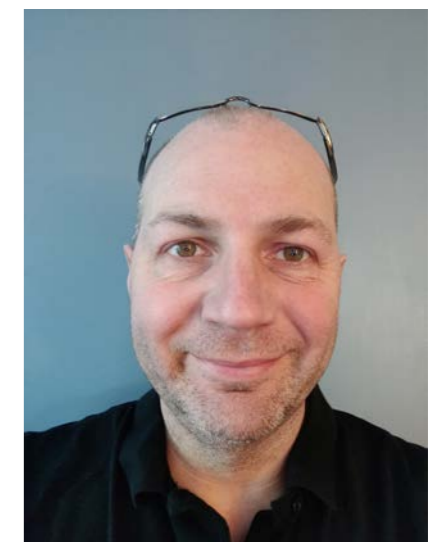
Simon Payne, Co-Founder, SOLE RESPONSIBILITY

Along with his wife, Helen, Simon is the Co-Founder and joint owner, of SoleResponsibility, a company focused on reducing the environmental impact of the footwear industry. By re-selling seconds, ex-display and returned footwear (which could otherwise have been sent to landfill), SoleResponsibility are providing a green alternative to cost conscious consumers looking for a quality product.

Simon explains how his company began: "Initially driven by a need to support the family budget, Helen and I would buy second hand footwear and resell it on eBay. Surprised by our success, we took the decision to quit our jobs and go full time in 2015, a decision we have never regretted". SoleResponsibility has since grown from very humble origins to a company that now

has strong ties with many prominent High Street retailers. In 2022 SoleResponsibility was named an official sustainability partner of JD Sports. Simon says: "I am proud of what we have achieved so far, the strong partnerships we have built, and the small but growing steps we have taken to increase sustainability in the footwear industry".

Simon believes that what they are doing at SoleResponsibility will, in some small way, help to deliver a more sustainable future for the footwear industry, and he remains motivated by the people he has, "the opportunity and privilege to work with". Simon concludes by saying: "There is so much creativity and determination in this industry; I just cannot see how we can fail to overcome the environmental challenge we have been set".



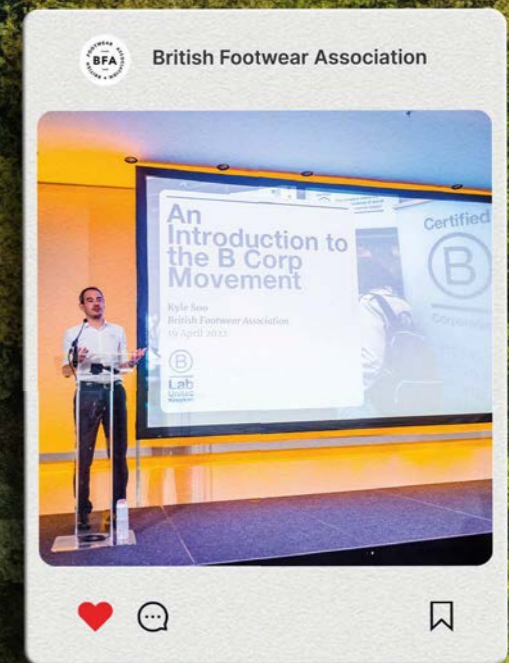
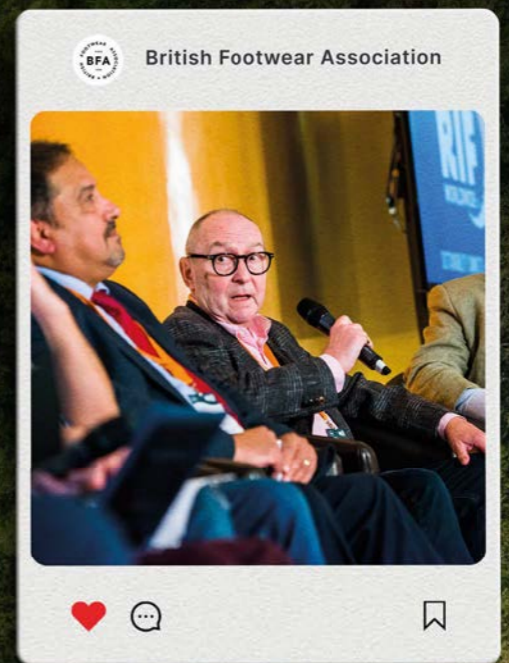
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