

The Challenges of Fit for Mass Production – High street to higher end.

- a) Introduction.
- b) Ready to Wear.
- c) Personal Tailoring.
- d) Made to Measure & Bespoke.

My life in Clothing.

I started working in the clothing industry in 1979 as a junior in the cutting room. I was always keen to learn and found most roles very interesting.

I was taken under the wing of the factory manager who sent me to night school in Leeds. I spent four brilliant years at Jacob Cramer, studying part time, two nights a week and latterly on day release.

Both lecturers inspired me to develop my career in the Design room. This is where I have spent the last thirty years of my life, working for numerous companies and Brands such as Jaeger, Daks Simpson, Burberry & BMB.

The last five years have been spent with BMB. Here I manage a small team of technical designers working very closely together with the buyers. We have many brands, both wholesale and retail and they all have their own peculiarities for styling and fit.

I travel overseas regularly where I spend the time in factories, design rooms and production lines.

I also travel to London frequently where I work closely with famous designers, getting their product to the highest standard possible.

My normal working week is spent at our site in Goole and also the head office in Leeds.

READY TO WEAR.

BMB are the 3rd largest men's suit supplier in the UK, behind M & S and Next. We have over 200 concessions, 30+ standalone stores and 1500+ wholesale accounts.

Our single biggest customer is Debenhams to whom we supply Brands like Racing Green, Red Herring, Limehaus, Ben Sherman, Big and Tall, Thomas Nash and Occasions etc. We also have Designer ranges with them such as Jeff Banks, Jasper Conran & Patrick Grant (Hammond & Co).

House of Fraser is another major customer offering some of our high-end brands. Alexandre, being one of them.

Suit Direct is currently experiencing great success and therefore continues to expand with a planned opening of another three stores this year.

We currently manufacture in Egypt, Portugal, Vietnam and with several companies in China. We are also looking to expand our venture in Vietnam with another supplier and also looking to break into Cambodia.

Our business in menswear works to a base model size of 40" chest, 34" waist and 41" seat. This applies to all of our numerous blocks (silhouettes) on formalwear. We grade down to 32" chest and up to 66" with lengths of short, regular, long and extra long. We believe that if we grade down any further than a 32" chest, this could be bordering on childrenswear. Each brand usually provides 3-4 different fits: Classic, tailored, contemporary and slim or super slim etc.

All base blocks have a 1% warp and weft shrinkage allowance built into the pattern and also include an "over measure". In other words, a 40" jacket chest actually measures between 42" and 43" depending on the fit (Classic or Slim etc). A 34" trouser waist measures 35" to 35 ½". This is common practice for men's formal tailoring.

At the outset, every single block for every brand goes through a process of fitting. This involves fitting the sample garment on a fit model, not a mannequin. The fit models that we use are fairly local and are self - employed professionals. We fit with these every single week of the year. From time to time we also use agencies in London for fit sessions with our major customers.

Each block may take a few attempts of sampling before it becomes fit approved. Once the approval has taken place, all relevant style features such as SB1 notch and peak, SB3 notch, straight pockets, slant pockets and patch pockets, centre and side vents and DB versions will be applied. The standard BMB grade rules will also be applied at this stage so that a size set can be sampled with each individual factory / supplier before any orders are produced.

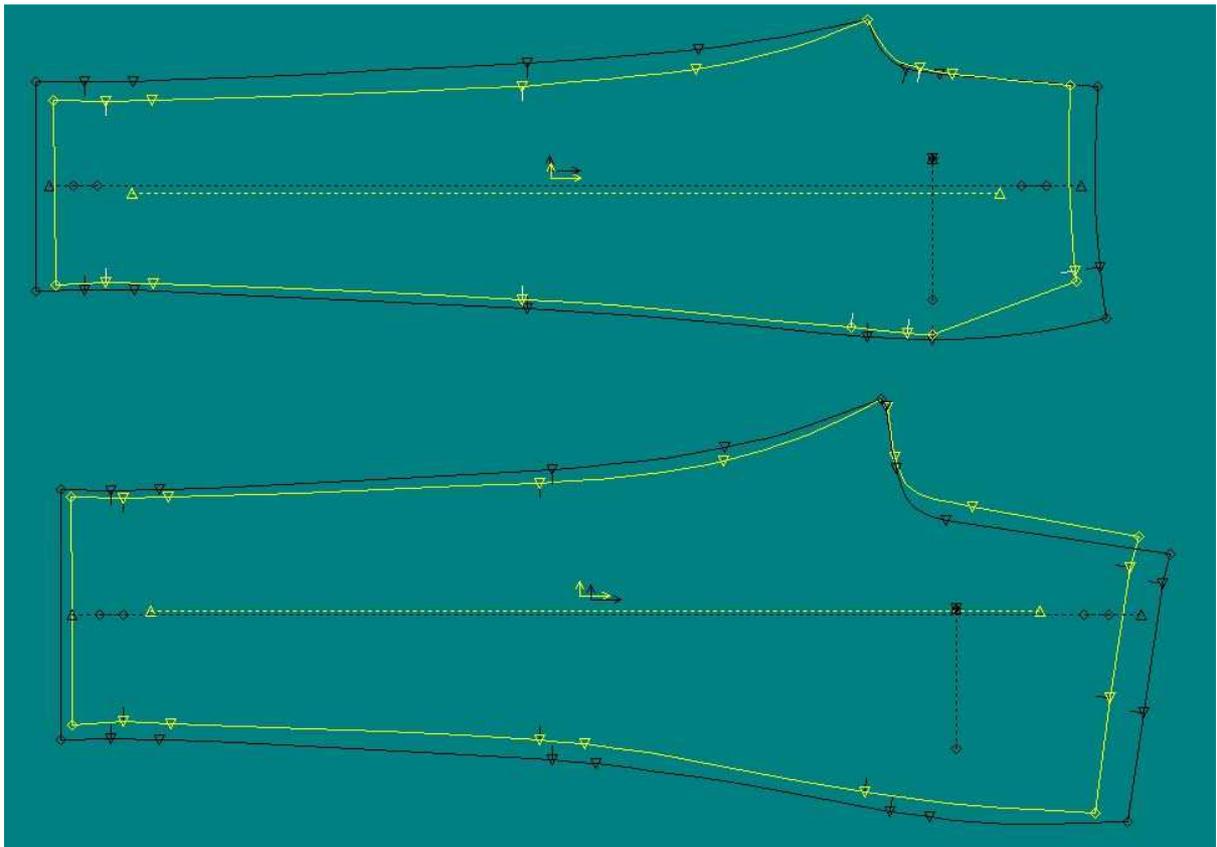
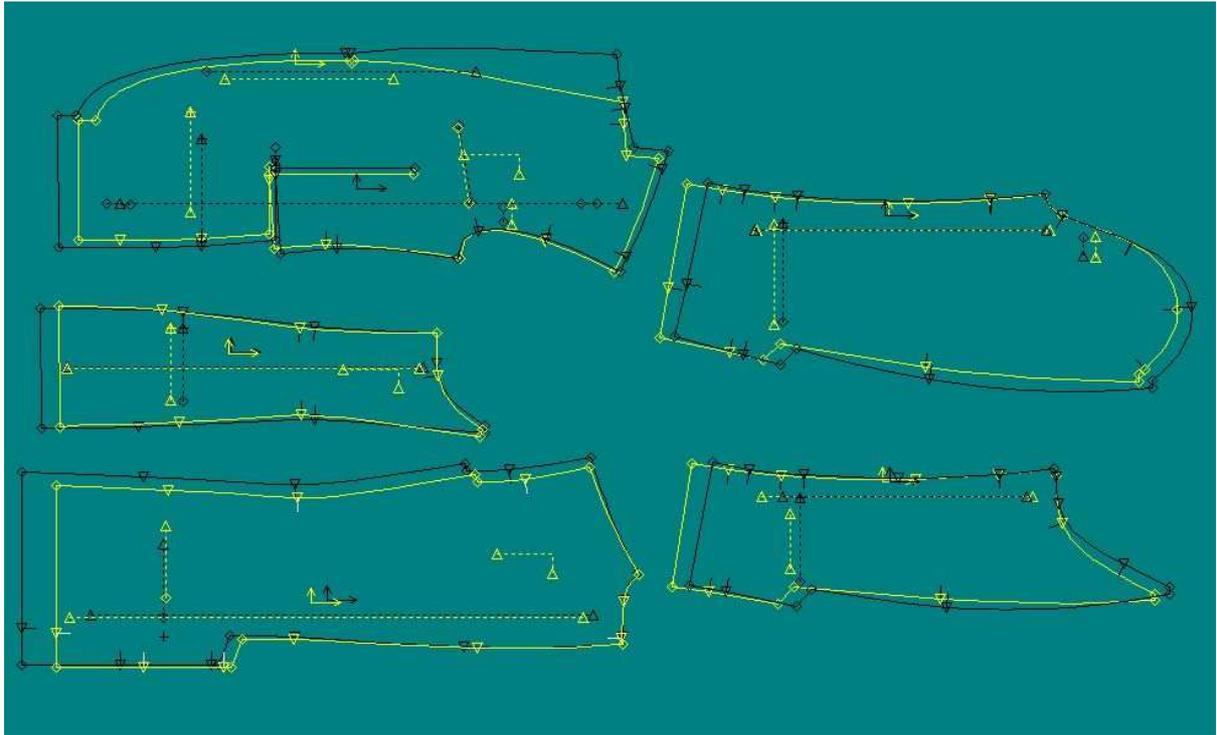
Each new block starts life as a concept from the creative designers and buyers. This is brought to life through conversations and meetings with the technical designers. The concept is trend or fashion driven. All businesses tend to keep an eye on their competitors and through comparative shopping, are aware of the market place with the larger retailers etc. There are also numerous websites that our buyers subscribe to and it is here where many ideas and influences appear which are then developed into their branded products.

Shoulder lines have become a very important factor in the fit and appearance of the desired look. In recent years we have had to develop modern jackets with no shoulder pad at all, in order to give a much more relaxed and softer or even washed appeal. We have shoulder pads that range from a tiny amount of interlining as a support, gradually increasing in depth and shape to suit the more classic customer. Obviously the finished patterns have to be adapted to suit the shoulder line. A soft shoulder line has to have quite a differently shaped shoulder to the standard and the pad allowance has to be removed completely to suit the padless jacket.

Interlinings are another very important factor. Once upon a time, businesses like ours tended to use only one or two trim packs. Nowadays we have up to almost a dozen different trim packs, ranging from luxury half canvas, classic, soft and super soft etc. These components are carefully selected, tested and sampled with each supplier before submitting to the brand managers and designers for full approval.

Menswear has changed radically in the past decade and I believe this change is down to the influence from women and womenswear. Men now prefer a closer and shorter fitting garment than they did a few years ago.

See the diagrams below comparing the last decade to where we are now;



The black outline above shows a typical silhouette from 6-8 years ago. The yellow outline shows a current slim fashion silhouette. The closer fit speaks volumes.

approval. Usually each factory make two gold seals, one for us and the other for their own reference. Once the gold seal is approved, bulk production can commence. This is kept and stored in the Warehouse, awaiting bulk delivery. The production is then checked against the gold seal by the AQL team before bulk can be sent to stores.

PERSONAL TAILORING.

Each block / silhouette that we use for our personal tailoring selection started life with ready-to-wear. This offer is fairly limited and is brand specific. For certain customers ready-to-wear isn't suitable. This is perhaps due to these customers being taller than the average person. On these occasions we can offer them longer sleeves, longer bodies and longer legs. The offer is less expensive than a full Made to Measure garment due to the simplicity of the order. We can also include 1" increments on the girth measures – chest, waist and seat. The prospective client will try on our RTW selection and will find that even the "long" or "extra long" isn't long enough. Our salesman will then discuss this offer and will measure and analyse the RTW garment on them. An order will be completed and put into work and in four to six weeks, the suit will be delivered to the store for the customer to try on in front of our qualified sales personnel.

The style options available are also limited to be in line with the RTW selection, this also helps to keep the cost down and speed up the manufacturing process. fabric, lining and trim choices are also kept to a minimum. Seam widths are also a standard 1cm. In other words, there are no inlays added to the base pattern because this type of customer is only wanting a suit that fits him slightly better than the RTW offer.

The amount of sales that we have from this offer is only a very small percentage, when compared to a full Made to Measure.

The typical Made to Measure customer wants to experience the whole special attention of the salesman – being measured, being given the choice of special fabrics, linings and trims and perhaps they can't fit into a RTW suit because of their unusual shape, or perhaps they have some unusual style features that

they would like replicating. These are the kind of things that we provide as part of the Made to Measure service.

MADE to MEASURE & BESPOKE.

We offer “Made to Measure” in the majority of stores and we also supply Austin Reed with their own brand of Made to Measure.

Our MtM blocks also started life as RTW. Our offer of Made to Measure is again brand specific to each type of store. We also have travelling tailors up and down the country, who manage different types of accounts. We have the Royal Warrant which allows us into Buckingham Palace, where we dress many types of staff. We look after a wide variety of staff in the Houses of Parliament, such as Black Rod, the Sergeant at Arms and Door Keepers, along with many individual MP’s.

Made to Measure is about as complex as it gets. Our Gerber CAD system has links to our own in house Oasys system. Most stores have an EPOS system where individual MtM orders are keyed in and sent electronically to our Order Office / Technical Services Office in Goole. Every day our staff process these orders and individual marker lays are produced for each MtM customer. These orders are processed on the Oasys system and then they automatically link to the Gerber system to produce each marker.

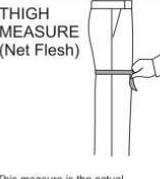
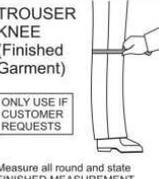
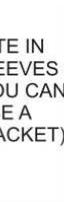
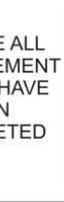
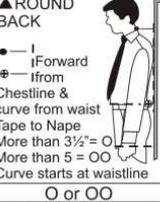
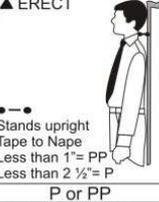
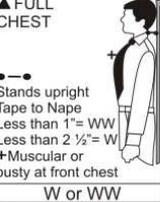
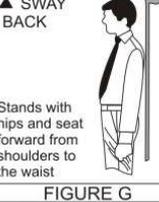
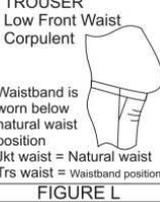
More than 90% of the weekly orders go straight through the system, but the other 10% have a manual intervention. This is because there are certain limits entered into the system to prevent orders from going wrong. These orders are reviewed by my technical design staff to ensure the end result is a good fit. These mainly occur when the customer has a larger waist to chest measure etc. It is also due to the customers “special requests”. They may want a new lapel, special pocket or cuff detailing etc, this becomes a special pattern. We charge a minimum amount for this intervention in order to recoup the time spent by each technical designer on the development.

Our MtM blocks are not only graded from 32” to 66” chest but also have predetermined figurations applied to them. There are many of these that we offer, including;

Sloping or square shoulders, short neck, round back, sway back, erect and full chest etc.

MEASURING AND FIGURATION *(Model not available)*

All girth measures are taken nett - with one finger only under tape

HEIGHT  Measure to nearest 1" and give measure in FEET and INCHES	NAPE TO WAIST MEASURE  Follow contour of body from Nape to Natural Waist Position	JACKET LENGTH MEASURE  Place end of tape at the collar seam (NAPE) and down the back to the length required.	HALF BACK MEASURE  Tension jacket back and measure from sleeve seam to sleeve seam and HALVE THE RESULT i.e. 16" across back = 8" HALF BACK	CROWN TO CUFF MEASURE  Place Tape end at CENTRE OF SLEEVE CUFF at required length and measure up to CROWN TO SLEEVE (Highest point of sleeve)	JACKET/VEST CHEST MEASURE  Place the tape around the chest keeping it well up & underneath the arms. Tape should be over the shoulder blades and parallel to the ground. Make sure the measurement is taken with the body relaxed.	JACKET/VEST WAIST MEASURE  Place tape on the NATURAL WAIST POSITION (at navel) - this could be over the narrowest part of the waist or over a prominent stomach.	JACKET/TROUSER SEAT MEASURE  Place tape around at prominence of seat. Ensure tape is level and not covering bulky items in pockets
INSIDE LEG (Leg seam)  Measure right leg from the physical crutch NOT THE TROUSER CRUTCH (holding the tape from behind on the inside leg) to required length at the front of heel.	OUTSIDE LEG (Side seam)  Measure right leg, Measure from top of waistband down side seam to required length. NOTE - Mentally check RISE (body of trouser) by subtracting inside leg from outside leg. If answer is LESS THAN 10" CHECK MEASURES.	TROUSER WAIST MEASURE  Place the tape around the position where the customer wishes to wear the trouser waistband. If the figure is corpulent (below the trouser waistband) a further measure is required over most prominent part.	THIGH MEASURE (Net Flesh)  This measure is the actual measurement of the thigh. Approx 4" down the leg from the crutch.	TROUSER KNEE (Finished Garment)  ONLY USE IF CUSTOMER REQUESTS Measure all round and state FINISHED MEASUREMENT REQUIRED on the trouser i.e. 19" - 20" - 21" etc.	TROUSER BOTTOMS (Finished Garment)  Measure all round and state FINISHED MEASUREMENT REQUIRED on the trouser i.e. 18" - 19" - 20" etc.	VEST OPENING  Place the tape around the neck halter fashion, to the point of chest prominence to show the opening required. Halve the result for the actual measurement i.e. 26" = actual opening 13"	VEST LENGTH  Place the tape around the neck halter fashion, & drape over the chest to measure length, minimum 4" each side below top of trouser waistband.
★ — ▲ FIGURATE IN SHIRT SLEEVES (WHEN YOU CAN NOT USE A STOCK JACKET)  Tape to Nape 1 3/4" to 2 3/4" Normal no shoulder figure	★NORMAL SHOULDER  Tape to Nape 1 3/4" to 2 3/4" Normal no shoulder figure	★SQUARE SHOULDER SHORT NECK  Tape to Nape Less than 1" = ZZ More than 1 3/4" = Z	★SLOPING SHOULDER LONG NECK  Tape to Nape More than 2 3/4" = X More than 3 1/2" = XX	★DROP RIGHT SHOULDER  Tape to Shoulder More than 3/4" = RS More than 1 1/2" = RSS	★DROP LEFT SHOULDER  Tape to Shoulder More than 3/4" = LS More than 1 1/2" = LSS	★FORWARD SHOULDERS & PROM BLADES  Ridging and tightness from back neck to front sleeve area. Prominent blades showing through shirt at the back.	TROUSER Prominent Seat  When SEAT is 7" or MORE than WAIST check for prominent seat
ENSURE ALL MEASUREMENT BOXES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED  Nape to Tape 2 1/2" to 3 1/2" Normal no balance figuration	▲NORMAL BALANCE  Nape to Tape 2 1/2" to 3 1/2" Normal no balance figuration	▲HEAD FORWARD  Forward from Chestline Tape to Nape More than 3 1/2" = T More than 5" = TT	▲ROUND BACK  i Forward from Chestline & curve from waist Tape to Nape More than 3 1/2" = O More than 5" = OO Curve starts at waistline	▲ERECT  Stands upright Tape to Nape Less than 1" = PP Less than 2 1/2" = P	▲FULL CHEST  Stands upright Tape to Nape Less than 1" = WW Less than 2 1/2" = W +Muscular or busty at front chest	▲SWAY BACK  Stands with hips and seat forward from shoulders to the waist	TROUSER Low Front Waist Corpulent  Waistband is worn below natural waist position Jkt waist = Natural waist Trs waist = Waistband position

DO NOT USE ANY COLOURED HIGH-LIGHTER PENS ANYWHERE ON THE ORDER FORM

See the chart below;

I have included a small selection of figurations below to help explain the complexity of Made to Measure;

FIGURE T - HEAD FORWARD AND FIGURE O - ROUND BACK

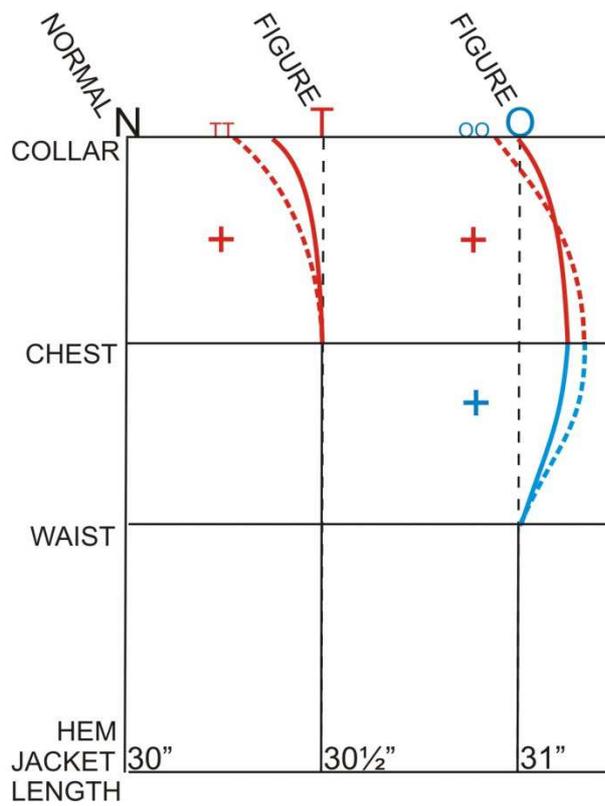
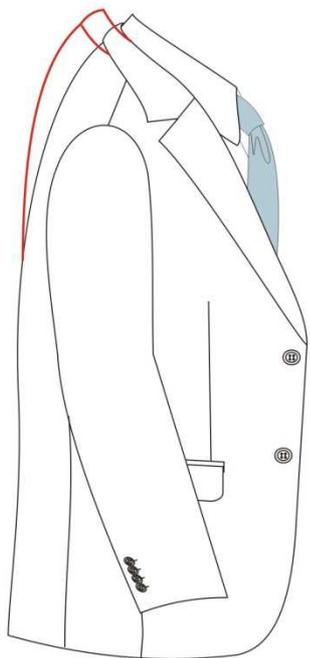
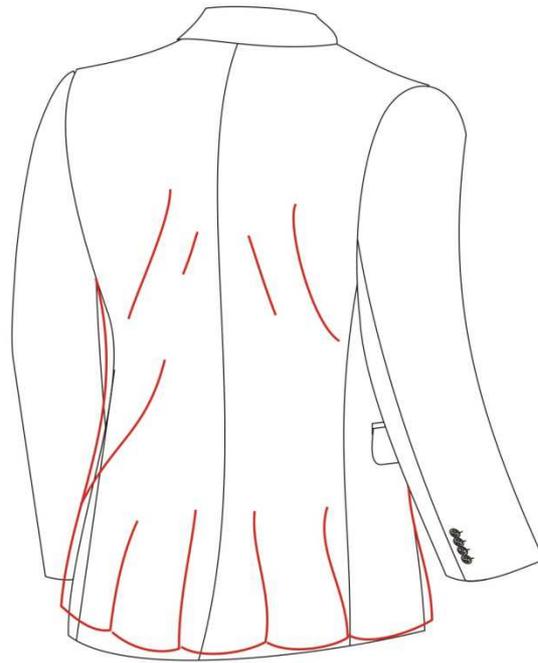
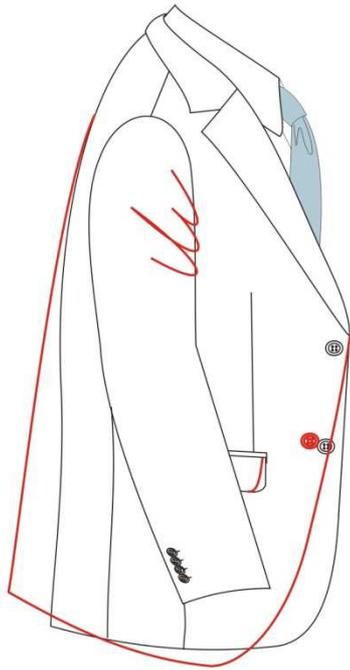


FIGURE Z
SQUARE SHOULDERS
OR SHORT NECK

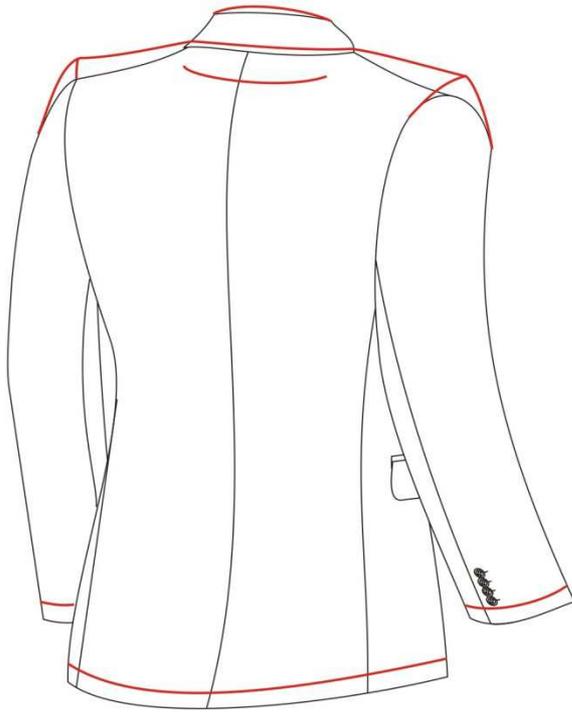


FIGURE X
SLOPING SHOULDERS(BOTH)
OR LONG NECK

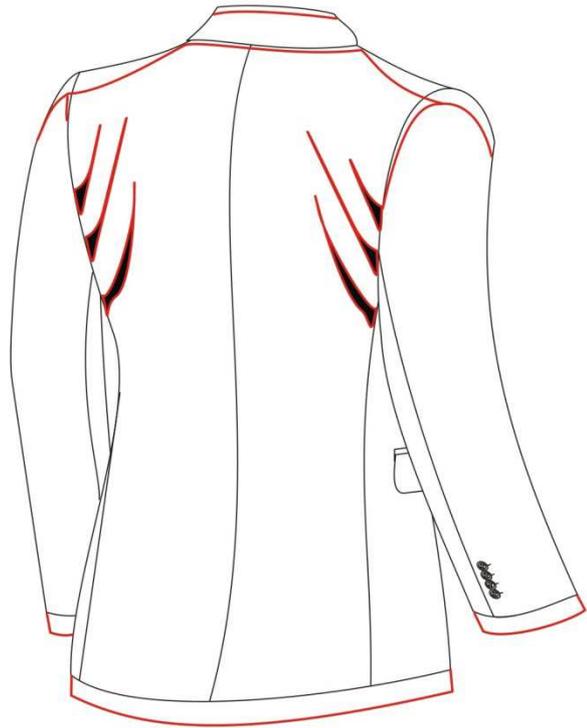


FIGURE R
FORWARD SHOULDER POINTS
AND PROMINENT SHOULDER
BLADES

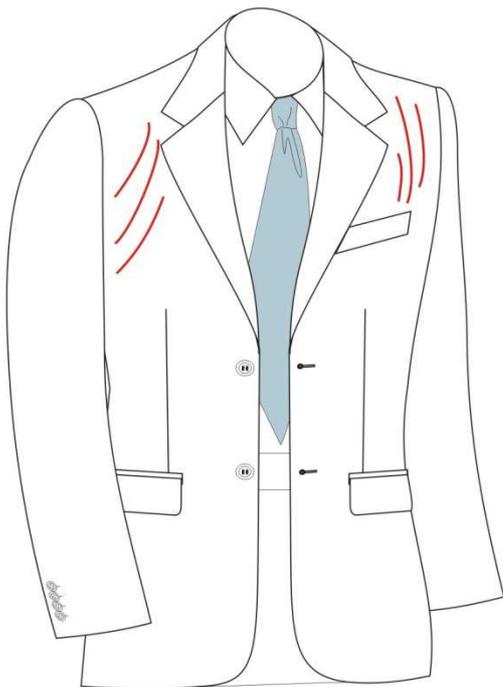


FIGURE LS or RS
DROP SHOULDER ON
ONE SIDE(LEFT OR RIGHT)

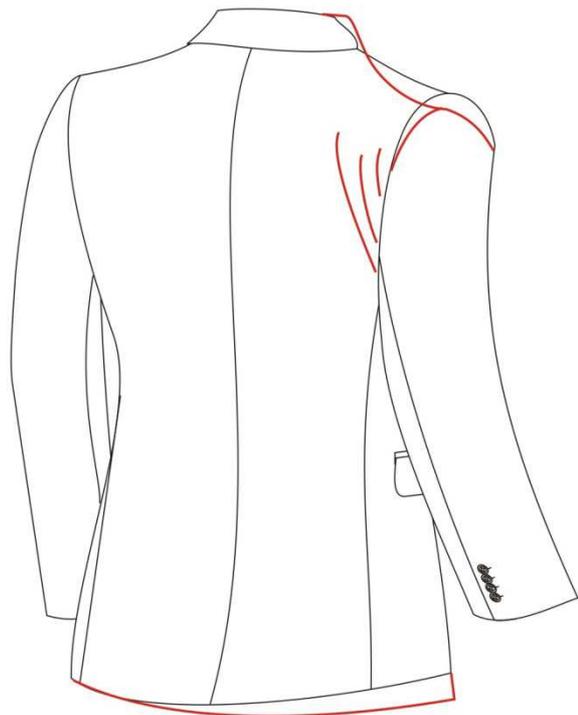


FIGURE G - SWAY BACK
(STANDS WITH HIPS AND SEAT FORWARD)

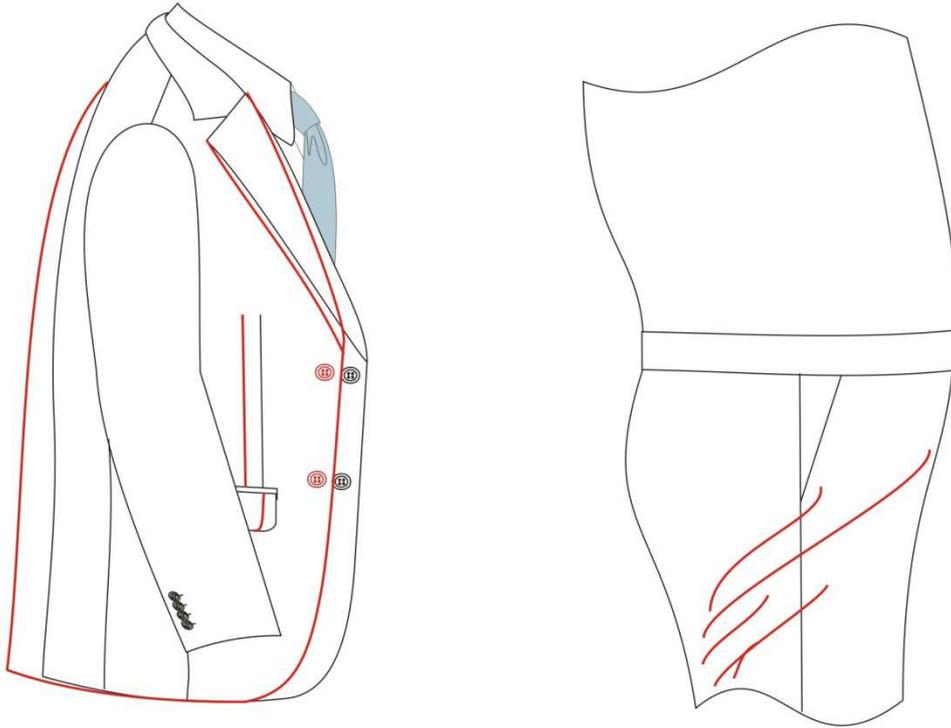
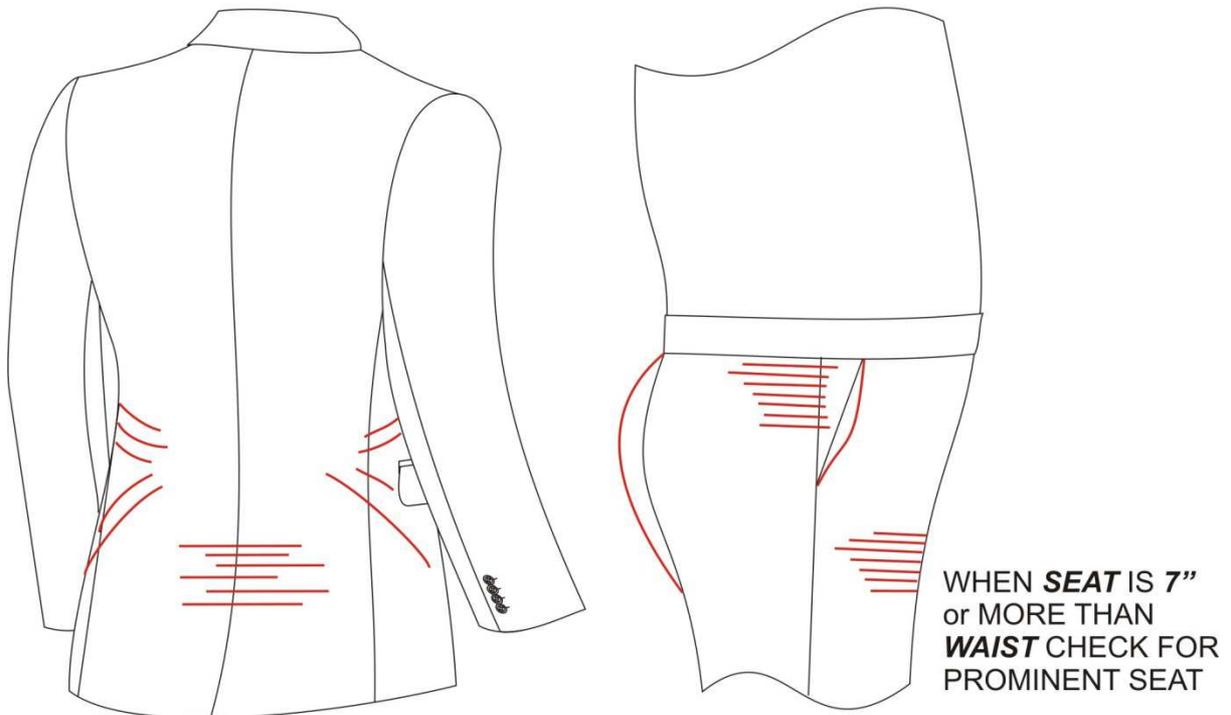
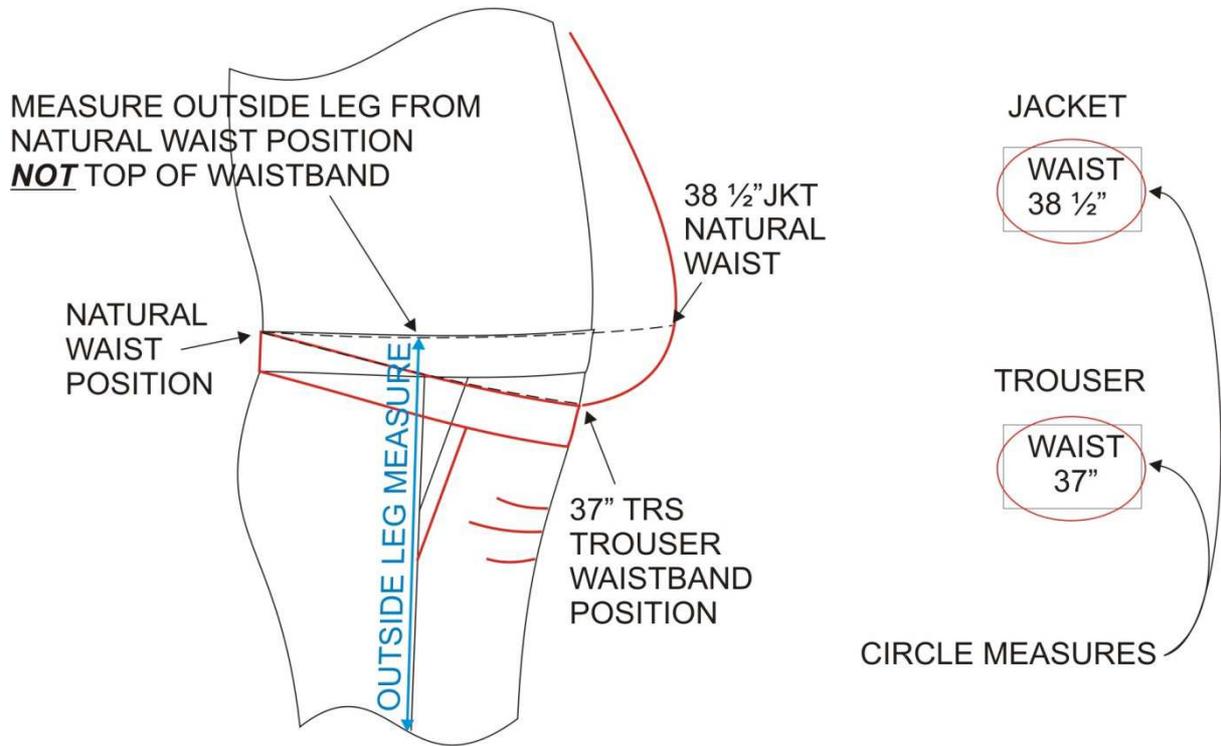


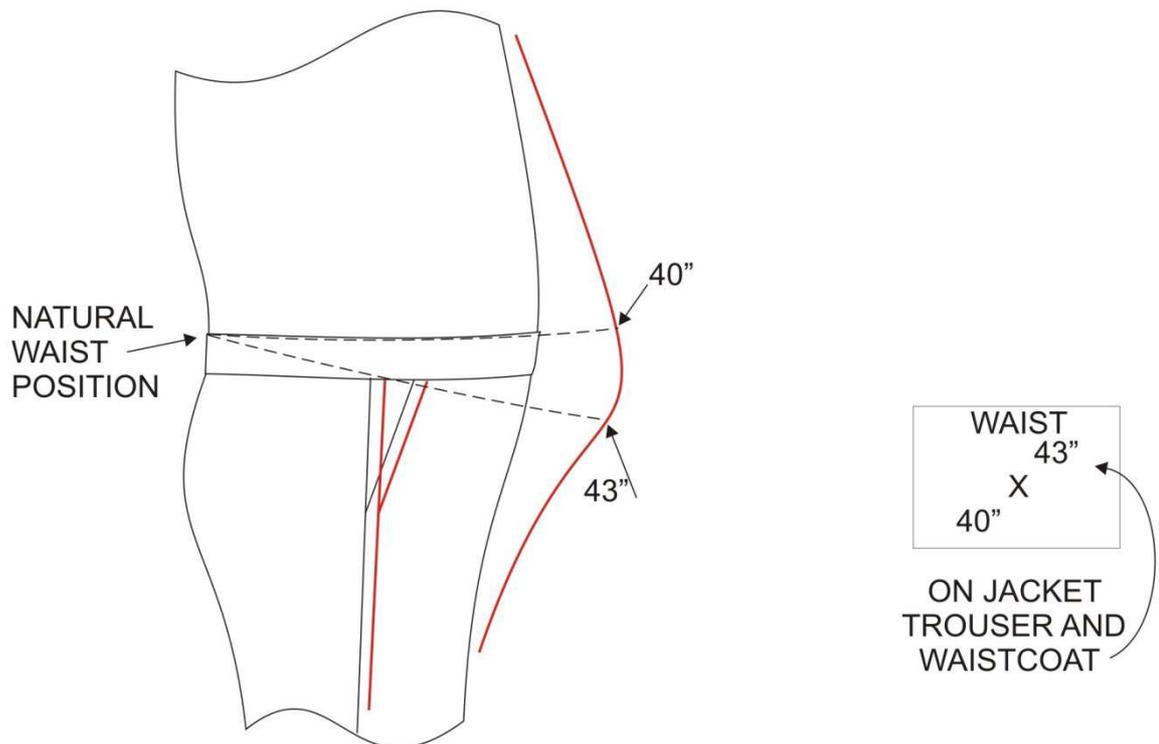
FIGURE J - PROMINENT SEAT



**FIGURE L - LOW FRONT WAIST
(HIGH POT)**



**FIGURE CORPULENT
(LOW POT)**



BESPOKE.

We have recently opened a store in Savile Row and it is here where we are able to offer bespoke. The suit is taken as a full Made to Measure order and one or two fittings are allowed into the timespan, depending on the customer's requirements.

We have fully qualified, experienced staff at our site in Goole where we are able to alter the garments to suit each customer's own requirements.

On a weekly basis these individuals provide a service of Branch alterations, damage corrections or even a full Made in England suit.

We still have all of the machinery that was used when Goole was a manufacturing site, along with a small number of experienced personnel. We often make very complex outfits at this site because there are details that could be lost in translation when sent abroad to be made. An example of this would be the "Sergeant at Arms" in the Houses of Parliament.

We are currently being asked by a small number of retailers to produce the "Made in England" suit.

We may have gone full circle, who knows!

Thank you.

Graeme Pratt, technical designer, BMB Clothing