

WORLDFOOTWEAR



Early Church's lady's dress shoes

"With these hands we make great shoes"

This was the title of a special autumn exhibition by English shoemaker Church's held in conjunction with the Northampton Museum & Art Gallery, which houses a huge collection of footwear past and present.

The English county of Northamptonshire has long been a centre for the manufacture of quality men's shoes and, although output is but a fraction of what it once was, it is still home to some

of the world's top Goodyear welted manufacturers. Church's is probably the most famous and its shoes are known all over the world for their high quality and finish. The company, now part of the Prada Group, chose to celebrate 133 years as a shoemaker in Northampton, by staging an exhibition which looked at the past, the present day and what the future might hold for the brand.

The story of Church's began in the late 1600s with Stone Church, a Northampton shoemaker. His skills passed on through three generations to his great grandson Thomas. In 1873 together with sons Alfred, William and Thomas, the business that bears their name today, was founded in a purpose built factory in Duke Street, Northampton. The accent of the exhibition was therefore on how many of these traditional skills have been maintained in

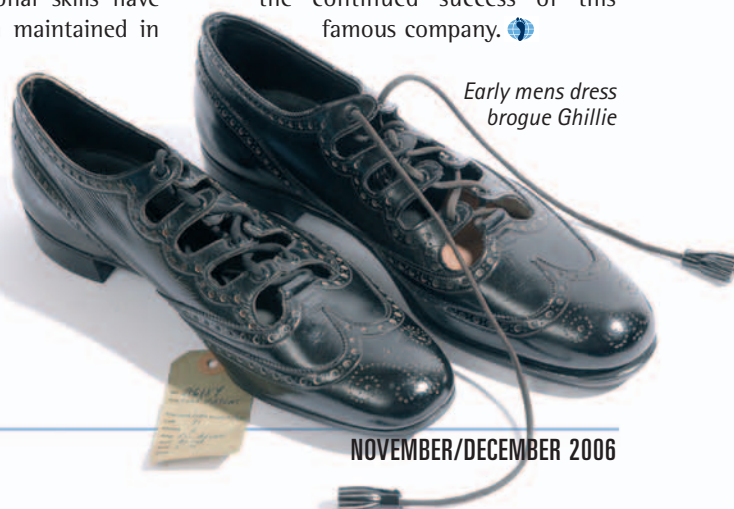
order to produce the best shoes possible, with many of them being demonstrated practically by Spencer Wainwright, who has spent 40 years at Church's.

Speaking about the exhibition, Stephen Etheridge, group chief executive, said, "Northampton has a long and proud association with the footwear industry and the town has played a pivotal role in Church's success and continued growth. The Northampton museum is a premier reference point for the shoe industry in the world and we were delighted to be able to run this exhibition in collaboration with them."

Most people in today's buy-it-cheap and throw-it-away consumer society have little understanding of what it takes to produce a high quality product of any sort. This exhibition provided a timely reminder—as well as offering a unique insight into what lies behind the continued success of this famous company.



Early Church's men's dress Oxfords



Early men's dress brogue Ghillie