

The Footwear Industry in the South West of England 1850 to 1950

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When proprietor Mr Charlie Moon finally shut and locked the door of his small boot factory in Black Horse Road, on 22 December 1970, he closed the last of Kingswood's old-style family-run boot manufacturers. On that occasion Mr Moon is reported to have said:

'When I started in the business more than fifty years ago there were at least sixty similar small factories in the Kingswood area. We watched them go one by one'.¹

Mr Moon was not exercising a flight of fancy. The first Yearbook of the Boot Manufacturers' Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, published in 1921, listed amongst the members 38 shoemaking concerns in Kingswood, five in Bristol, five in St. George, another five in Paulton, two in Hanham and one in Oldland. Further out in the countryside of the south-west were three member firms in Midsomer Norton, one in Clevedon, another in Okehampton and two - one of them C. and J. Clark - at Street.

By any measure, the Bristol and Kingswood cluster of footwear manufacturing plants was a significant part of the economic geography of the British footwear industry at the start of the present century. Not all the footwear manufacturing businesses in the vicinity would have been members of one or the other of the two local manufacturers' associations, so the list comprising Table 1 for 1920-21 may underestimate the total number, perhaps by as much as 15 per cent. Arthur Butnam's list of 1911 is contained in Table 2. Butnam was a commercial agent of the U. S. Department of Commerce and Labour reporting to the Bureau of Manufacturers in the department for the benefit of U.S. shoe and leather manufacturers.² It is not clear whether this eighty-page report was based on first-hand fieldwork in the U.K. or whether it was a desk study, but Butnam was so busy investigating the industry for the bureau in so many parts of the world in 1909-12 that the latter seems likely. In 1909 he had produced a twenty-four page report on the shoe and leather industries in Cuba and Mexico, in 1910 a forty-three page report on the same industries in Brazil, Venezuela and Barbados. In 1910, too, he provided the Bureau's Special Agent Series Report Number 37, a seventy-page document on the shoe and leather trades of Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay. The frequency and wide geographical spread of these reports might imply reliance upon secondary materials rather than first-hand fieldwork.

Whether or not this was so, an independent count by Butnam or his staff to produce the list of footwear firms in Britain from which Table 2 is abstracted, and on which Figure 2 is based, seems unlikely. The probability is that the figures were provided, as the 1920-21 list, from the

membership records of the local manufacturers' associations, and that, for the same reason, they provide an underestimate of actual numbers of firms then extant. There were three manufacturers' associations in the south-west, the Bristol Association, the Kingswood Association and the Street Association. In 1920-21 there were seven footwear manufacturing firms in the Bristol Association, 57 in the Kingswood Association and three in the Street Association. Comparison of the 1911 and 1921 lists reveals some degree of permeability between them. One or two firms located in Kingswood were members of the Bristol Association in at least one of the years; some firms, especially those with an address on Kingswood Hill, may have been listed in the Bristol group one year and in the Kingswood group in the other; firms tended to move, of course, from one set of premises to another. In any event there were many interests shared between the members of the two associations and in 1921 Mr P. Steadman of Messrs Derham Bros, Soundwell, Bristol, was president of both.

At the time of Butnam's report, the Bristol and Kingswood firms, as listed in Table 2, produced approximately 4,340,000 pairs of boots and shoes per annum. This was 4.5 per cent of U.K. footwear output (97,000,000 pairs), two-thirds coming from Kingswood, the rest from Bristol. Manufacturers in Street, Somerset, mainly through C. and J. Clark, produced at the same date approximately 1,030,000 million pairs per annum, or 1.05 per cent of the U.K. total. Yet in studies made by business and economic historians the footwear industry in south-western England has tended to be identified with the fortunes of just one or two large firms, especially with Clarks of Street with their well-organised museum and archives department and, to a lesser extent, with G.B. Britton's in Kingswood.³

The existence of this valuable body of well-documented work on two firms should not be allowed to blur the fact that they were part of a wider regional pattern of footwear production in the south-west, centred on Kingswood and Bristol. This was a spatial cluster of firms, individually much smaller than Clarks, but at one phase more important in total which, by the end of the nineteenth century, had exhibited a distinctive evolution and which had developed a particular spatial organisation.

The Origins and Early Development of the Footwear Industry in the South-West

Figure 1 shows that shoemaking was a widespread occupation in England and Wales in the mid-nineteenth century. From medieval times a settlement of even modest size would be likely to contain hand craftsmen capable of making and repairing simple everyday footwear. Historians of footwear fashion have tended to stress the

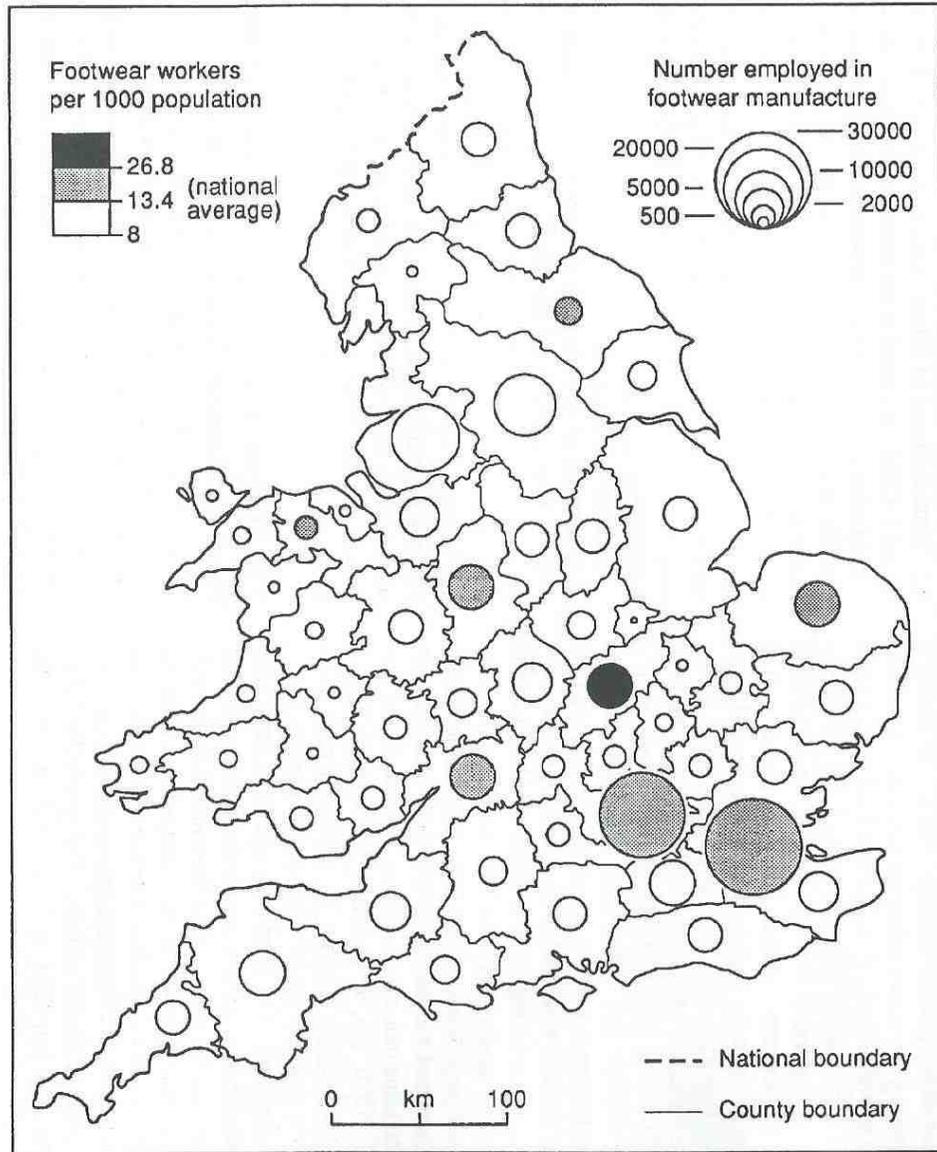


Fig. 1. Employment in footwear manufacture in England & Wales, 1841
 (Source 1841 Census, published tables)

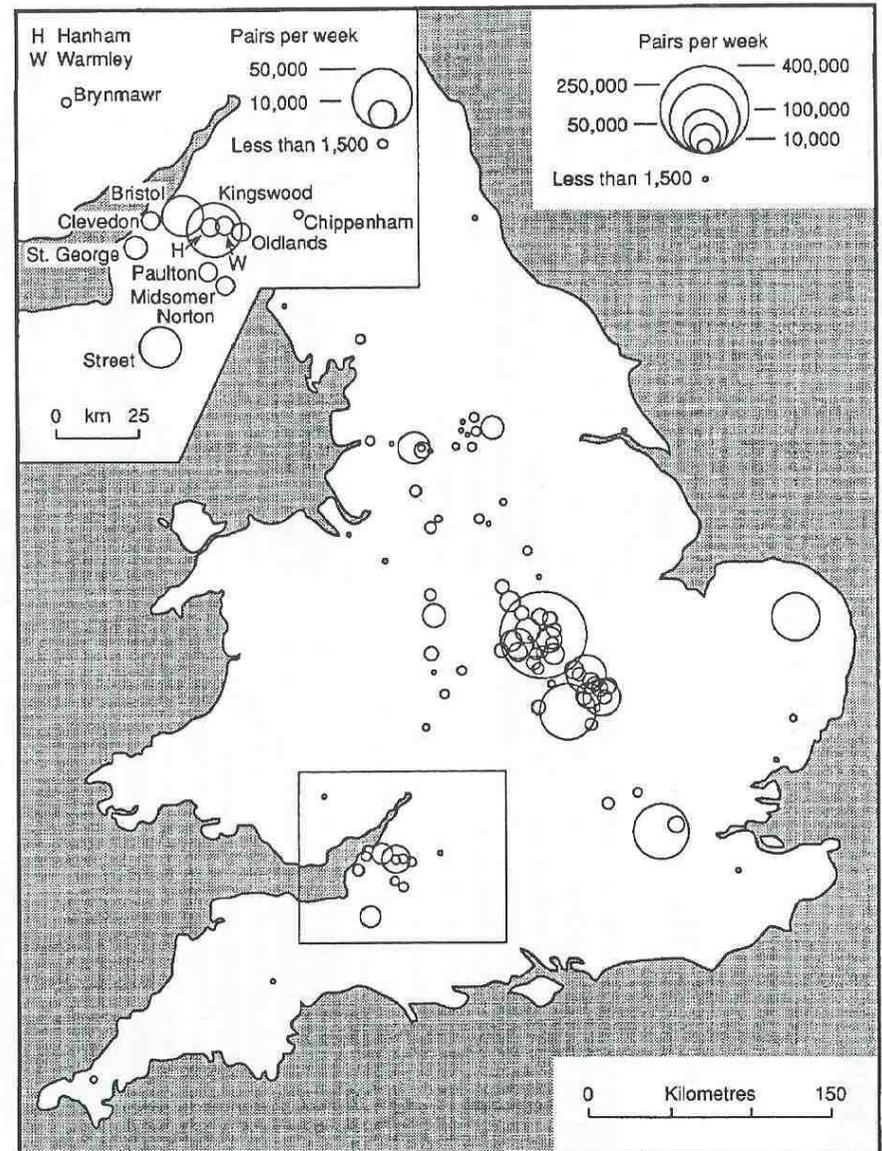


Fig. 2. Location of footwear manufacturers in England and Wales 1911-12
 (Source of data A.B. Butnam (1912))

BIAS JOURNAL No 28 1995

Table 1. Footwear manufacturing firms in Bristol, Kingswood and locality in 1920-21

NAME OF FIRM	ADDRESS/LOCATION	OUTPUT
BRISTOL		
Coe. Church and McPherson Ltd	King Square	Womens and girls
Cridland & Rose	King Square	Womens & mens machine stitched & welted, medium & high grade
Derham Bros. Ltd	Soundwell	Mens & womens heavy, womens welted & machine stitched
Hutching G.F. & C0 Ltd	3 Portland Square	Womens best
KINGSWOOD		
Bawn Bros.		
Bees, E.J.	Cecil Road, Kingswood	Miners and agriculturalists heavy, postmens, womens and girls light nailed
Bird Bros.	Two Mile Hill	Mens heavy
Brain W. & Sons	Fairview Boot Works, Bridgegate	Mens heavy
Britton, G.B. & Sons	Dryfoot Works	Mens, womens, youths, boys and girls medium and heavv
Brvant, S.J.	193 Two Mile Hill	Mens heavv nailed
Croot & Sons	Waters Road	Heavy nailed and school
Edwards, W.J. & Co	Wood Road	Heavv, all kinds
Furber, H.	Downend Road	
Fussell, A & Sons Ltd	Kingswood Hill	Mens and boys heavy
Gore, C.H. & Co	Honey Hill, Kingswood	Miners and agriculturalists
Griffin, G. & Co	Reformatory Road	Medium and heavv
Grove Bros.	Factory Lane	Medium and heavv
Hibbs, Henry	Soundwell Road, Staple Hill	Heavy nailed & sprigged
Hoare and Douglas	Whittucks Roa	Medium and heavv
Howes and Co	Charlton Road	Farmers heavv, boys and girls school
Johnson, Aaron & Co	Blackhorse Road	Miners and agriculturalists
Lovell, A. & Co	Bank Road	Heavv, boys & girls school
Miles, Thomas & Co Ltd	Soundwell Road	Miners, farmers, womens, girls, bovs, vouths heavv
Moon, A.F. & Co	Times Test Works	Miners, farmers, womens, girls, bovs, vouths heavv
Neale, Tanner & Co	Unitv Street	Mens and vouths heavv
Nicholls, J.W. & Son	Soundwell Boot Factory, Staple Hill	Mens & boys heavy
Parsons & Williams	276 Two Mile Hill	Mens & boys, womens & girls, medium and heavv
Potter, W.G.	Black Horse Road	Miners, farmers and school
Pow, Isaac	Moravian Road	Mens heavv, best and medium
Pratt, E.W. & Co		Mens, womens & boys country best grade
Reliance Boot Mfg. Co Ltd	Two-Mile Hill	Mens, womens & boys heavy best grade
Saunders Bros.	Downend Road	Heavy
Savery, H. & Co	Wood Road	Miners, farmers, navvies, womens, girls & boys school
Silverthorn & Sons	Silverdale Boot Works	Mens, youths, childrens heavy and miners
Somerset Boot Mfg. Co	South Road	Mens, youths, childrens heavy and miners
Sterling Boot Co	Hanham Road	Miners and farmers, boys school
Weaver, R.J. and Co	Southwell Road	Miners & agriculturalists, womens, youths, colliers, boys and girls
Weaver, R.J. and Co	Southwell Road	Miners & agriculturalists, womens, youths, colliers, boys and girls

BIAS JOURNAL No 28 1995

NAME OF FIRM	ADDRESS/LOCATION	OUTPUT
KINGSWOOD Continued		
Webb, F.B. & Co	Boultons Lane	Mens. youths, boys, womens, girls heavy
Weblev, I.F. & Co	Hanham Road	Mens heavv
Wetton, J. W. & Co Ltd	Hanham Road	Miners & agriculturalists, mens shooting, womens, girls, youths heavy & medium
Wilshire, F. & Co	Church Road, Soundwell	Mens, womens, boys heavy
Wiltshire, S.A.	Kingswood Hill, Bristol	Mens, womens, boys, girls heavy
HANHAM		
Cook, Geo. & Sons		Heavv. medium & bes5t
Empire Boot Co	Waterloo Boot Factory	Mens heavv
OLDLAND		
Fry, Edward James & Co	High Street	Miners and agriculturalists, boys school
WARMLEY		
Brain, T.W. & Co	North Common	Mens heavy nailed
ST. GEORGE		
Brvant, Geo. & Son Ltd	Beaconsfield Road	Heavv. best and medium
Crost, Henry	Orchard Road	
Furber, G.H.	Bethel Road	Heavy
Holbrook Bros.	Marling Road	Medium. heavv and handmade
Smith, R.C.	Brvants Hill	
PAULTON		
Ashman Bros.		Miners and agriculturalists, heavv
Butler, W.G.		Heavy nailed
Collier, W. & Sons		Mens nailed
Edwards Bros.		Mens heavv
Elliott & Gregorv		Ladies heavv and medium

Source: Federated Association of Boot and Shoe Manufacturers, Year Book of the Boot and Shoe Manufacturers' Federation of Great Britain and Ireland, 1920-2.

Note: Manufacturers' associations emerge in the UK footwear industry from 1859 onwards. The Bristol Association was formed in November 1891 and was originally entitled 'The Bristol, West of England and South Wales Boot Manufacturers' Association'. At the end of 1893, Kingswood formed a separate association. A local branch was formed in Street and joined the national federation in 1918. The National Federation itself was formed in June 1891⁴

extremes of design and ornamentation demanded by early courtiers and members of the landed classes but for most ordinary people, especially of the agricultural and artisan classes, progress from the simple footcoverings of medieval England was slow. The heel, for example, did not come into general use until the mid-sixteenth century.⁵ For centuries, London was the only market of any size, elsewhere the small-town cordwainer and cobbler served relatively circumscribed local markets. As the country's population grew, garret masters and workshops were able to meet the increased demand and it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that Northampton began to supply footwear on a wholesale basis, for the army.⁶ Stafford began wholesale shoe manufacturing in 1767 and Norwich in 1792.⁷

In the Bristol and Kingswood area the emergence of footwear production on a scale greater than that needed to satisfy strictly local needs took place in the middle years of the nineteenth century. The industry seems to have been relatively unimportant in the late eighteenth century. George Heath made no reference to footwear manu-

facture when writing of the numerous trades of Bristol and its vicinity at the end of the eighteenth century.⁸ Even in 1842, amongst a lengthy list of locally produced articles, boots and shoes were not mentioned in the Bristol Guide. On the other hand, in the 1841 census, Bristol and Barton Regis Hundred contained an above-average number of shoemakers per thousand of total population compared with England and Wales and so, fractionally, did Gloucestershire. There were 1811 adult shoemakers in Bristol, 5972 in Gloucestershire but the census provides no hint of the proportion engaged wholly or mainly in wholesale manufacture. Thomas Wright has dated the beginning of the Bristol industry at 1845, when the Derham brothers relocated their business to Bristol.⁹ The two brothers were sons of a doctor in the Somerset village of Wrington, ten miles from Bristol. They began to make children's shoes in a workshop at their home in 1839. The business grew and was removed to premises in Nelson Street, Bristol, in 1845. The firm became a limited liability company in 1898 and after using several different premises moved to Barton Street, St. James. These premises were destroyed by fire in 1906 and

Derhams then moved to Soundwell, where production was concentrated in a modern factory at Morley Road in 1939. Steadman & Co took over Derhams at this time. During world war two a new factory was set up in Kingswood for the manufacture of heavy boots but in 1955, when the demand for this type of footwear began to fall, these premises were used to expand the firm's output of women's fashion footwear.

By 1874 footwear manufacture had achieved sufficient importance to be mentioned in a local guidebook,¹⁰ and in 1881 it was claimed that, *'The leather trade of Bristol is famed over the world and the manufacture of boots and shoes is surpassed by few towns'*.¹¹ Kelly's 1889 Directory of Gloucestershire listed 27 wholesale boot and shoe manufacturers in the locality in 1881, 13 of them in Kingswood, where bootmaking had been established as a cottage industry for some time and where, later, outworking for the Bristol and Kingswood manufacturers became quite common.¹² Some light is thrown on bootmaking as a part-time craft in Kingswood in the early part of the nineteenth century by the following extract from the Reverend H.T. Ellacombe's *History of Bitton*:

*'Whatever the colliers may have been in former times, it is a pleasure to me to say that, during my long residence amongst them, from 1817 to 1850, they were, with very few exceptions, the cleanest and most industrious parishioners; the majority (for some worked in the night) going down the Pits at 5 a.m., and returning at 1 p.m., they washed in hot water; on reaching their neat cottages, and then worked as gardeners, tailors, shoemakers or some other handicraft during the remainder of the day.'*¹³

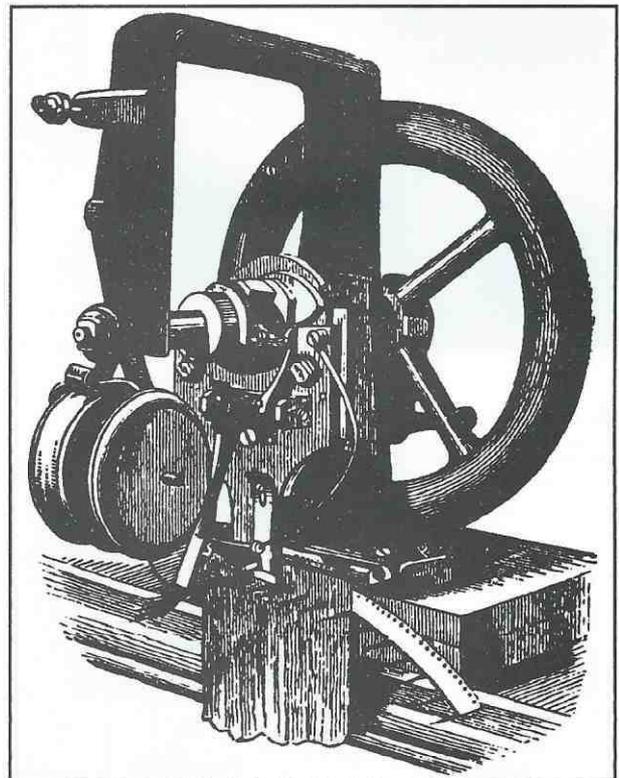
Table 2 makes clear the Kingswood firms' pre-occupation with heavy footwear, industrial and agricultural boots, particularly in 1911, and this may be attributed to the fact that the earliest wholesale manufacturers were themselves colliers who would know from first hand the need for sturdy footwear in the pits of the Bristol (Kingswood) coalfield.

The firms of J. Flook and Sons and A. Fussell and Sons were established in 1847 and 1855 respectively. Little can be gleaned about Flook's early life but Fussell had been a collier. To supplement his income he began to make boots, at first on a part time basis, in a workshop at Kingswood.¹⁴ He then took over a small shop at Honey Hill, Kingswood. Subsequently he opened a factory in Old Market Street, Bristol and then again at Lawrence Hill. The property at Honey Hill was extended and eventually all the sections of the business were consolidated there. In 1891 Braine wrote: *'These works, with their surrounding houses for workmen form an entirely new neighbourhood ...'*

Flook began business in Kingswood in 1847; his trade increased so rapidly that he bought additional premises in Quay Street, Bristol, for making lighter goods and expanded his factory in Kingswood. There exists today a whole locality in Kingswood originally consisting of

houses built by Flook to house his workpeople; including Albert Road, Wesley Avenue, Victoria Road and Regent Street. They now contain only traces of this early phase of capital accumulation, but at the mid-century these streets accommodated many of Flooks' 400 workpeople and their families. In 1891 Fussell employed 400, too, and both firms had installed steam engines. The Bristol coalfield, small as it was, may have helped the local manufacturers by providing fuel for boilers but most British shoe manufacturers at the turn of the century used gas engines. For footwear firms steam power was on average three times more expensive in 1911 than the horsepower provided by gas engines.¹⁵

At the mid-nineteenth century things were happening, too, in Somerset, where, in the village of Street, the firm of C. & J. Clark was at the start of its progress to becoming, ultimately, the largest footwear manufacturer in Britain. In the 1950s 7,600 people were employed by the firm in its west country factories alone, 2,545 in Street. C. and J. Clark's were founded in 1825 when Cyrus Clark began operations as a fellmonger, woolstapler and sheepskin rug maker. Footwear was added in 1833 when James Clark, Cyrus' younger brother, began to make sheepskin slippers from short-woolled skins not suitable for rugs, for pocket money. By 1851 the firm's total net sales amounted to more than £2,500, the sales of slippers representing three-quarters of the total, and in 1863 sales amounted to £42,000. Footwear became so important that in 1870 the rugmaking section of the business was shifted to Northover.¹⁶



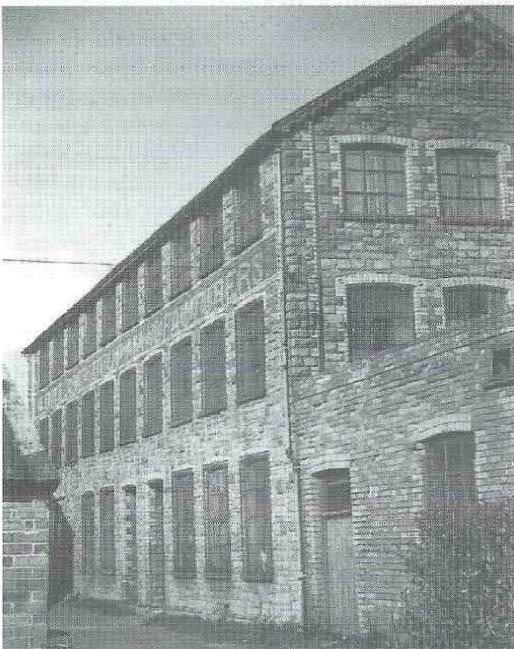
Elias Howe's sewing machine, patented in England in 1846
From *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th edn, 1886



Geo. Nash & Sons, wholesale footwear distributors in 1966 in Portland Square, Bristol



W.J. Burgess & Co Ltd, slipper manufacturers at 28 Lyppiatt Road, St. George, Bristol.
The premises below, Orchard Road, Kingswood were also occupied by W.J. Burgess until early 1965.



Former premises of A. Lovell & Co, Bank Road, Kingswood (photographed in 1966 when almost derelict)



Houses built by J. Flook & Sons, to house their workpeople, corner of Albert Road and Wesley Avenue, Kingswood.

The Nature of the Early Footwear Factories

Whilst the nature of footwear manufacturing in the nineteenth century is reasonably clear and the sequence of making operations quite well known, care has to be taken in envisaging the design and organisation of British footwear factories before the influx of the largely American shoemaking machinery in the 1890s. Before this, many factories comprised not much more than a cutting room and a packing and shipping room. The upper and bottom leathers were purchased and cut up according to orders for varied sorts of footwear. The upper parts were given out to be fitted together and stitched, then returned to the factory, and again given out with the bottom stock to the laster or tacker, to be lasted, bottomed and heeled. The tacker, as he was called, bought his own grindery (tacks, nails, threads etc.). The goods were bottomed and shopped or returned, inspected, and passed or rejected by the 'taker-in', and once again given out to the finisher for trimming of edges and heels, sandpapering, buffing the bottoms and finishing. After the final return the products were packed at the factory and shipped. Only in a minority of cases before the late nineteenth century was there machinery of a sort, with the various operations accomplished in sequence on one set of premises.¹⁷ In the 1860s and 1870s the few footwear factories present in Kingswood were very small and their main function was to put out work to home-based shoemakers who provided most of their own tools. Generally the work was seasonal, June to December being the busiest period for heavy working boots, and during this season the whole family would be involved in the making process.

Braine enumerated ten firms in Kingswood in 1891, with some others in Bristol, Warmley, Hanham and Clevedon. Nearly all were founded after 1850 and the Kingswood factories specialised virtually exclusively in heavy boots. The emergence of new machinery and the widening of markets for the manufacturers were both important in stimulating the growth of the local industry. In most of the British footwear manufacturing centres the introduction of machinery led to the construction of brick factories designed and built for the purpose with dividing partitions between the several departments for cutting leather (clicking), stitching, bottoming, etc. These were sometimes single-storey with north-light roofs but there were, too, factories described by Butnam as '*of the American type of construction, with the various departments on different floors*'.¹⁸ By the time of Arthur Butnam's survey (1911-12) many of the former hand operations were being conducted using machines housed in these new factories though upper stitching (closing) was still being given out to home workers during the height of the busy season, '*when the manufacturer may find his stitching room inadequate to meet the demands*'.¹⁹ In 1911 McKay-sewn footwear formed the commonest British product, followed closely by nailed goods and the latter dominated the Kingswood output.

Whereas the rapid growth of factory production in Norwhich has been attributed to the introduction of sewing

machines²⁰, in Kingswood it was brought about by the introduction of riveting systems for sole attachment. Derham Bros introduced riveting in the early 1850s and there was a growing demand for heavy riveted footwear for use in collieries, locally, and in South Wales, and amongst agricultural labourers in the south-western counties. Initially supplying the miners of their own coalfield, the Kingswood boot manufacturers quickly increased in number and in size in response to growing demand from the much bigger South Wales coalfield. There new coal mines were being sunk, iron works built and extended, railways engineered, docks and harbours improved and new housing put up for the incomers who manned these heavy industry facilities. In this period of growth the early footwear firms in and around Bristol and Kingswood were copied by former employees who set up as manufacturers in their own right. The capital needed to establish a business was relatively modest and growth could be financed from profits. Fussell's first manager, for example, formerly worked for Derham Bros. The two men later quarrelled and the manager left to help develop the firm of James and John Branch Ltd (see Tables 1 & 2). G.B. Britton and Sons were founded in Kingswood in the 1870s as Bryant and Britton, manufacturers of riveted, screwed and stitched boots. Another Kingswood firm, the Holdfast Company, was founded in 1875 as E.W. Pratt & Co, manufacturers of conventional heavy boots. A. Bevan Ltd, founded at Hanham in 1876, concentrated on navvies' boots, '*in which Mr Bevan commands a heavy trade at the principal railway centres*'.

Wholesale boot factors 'downstream' from the manufacturers held an important position in advertising and marketing the product. In Bristol itself Lennards Ltd became the most important of these. Founded in 1883, they eventually ran a chain of 200 shoe shops throughout Britain and a large mail order business in Bristol. Other wholesale concerns included Lindrea and Co founded in 1845 as a subsidiary of John Carter of London, five years after the opening of the main railway line between Bristol and the capital. Lindrea's activities were confined mainly to the supply of merceries and shoe polishes to footwear firms in England west of a line from Liverpool to Southampton. H.A. Batten and Co, established in 1938 in Kingswood, by the 1950s were dealing mainly in rubber and waterproof footwear. Henry Quick and Co was founded as a drapery business in the late 1850s but subsequently became a large wholesale factor. George Nash and Co, founded in the 1880s, were originally footwear manufacturers as well as distributors but in 1920 ceased manufacturing to concentrate on wholesale distribution. One of the largest wholesalers in the south west was Holloway, Son and Co in King Street, Gloucester, described in 1904 as:

'the only wholesale boot and shoe factors of any importance between Bristol and Birmingham. Maintaining a varied stock of 50,000 pairs, an exclusive brand of their own — the 'Optini' brand - has created an exceptionally wide demand'.²¹

BIAS JOURNAL No 28 1995

Table 2. Footwear Manufactures in Bristol, Kingswood and locality in 1911

NAME OF FIRM	ADDRESS/LOCATION	OUTPUT (weekly production and class of work)
BRISTOL		
Ashley, R.W. & Sons	Portland Square	900 pairs womens light 100 pairs mens heavv nailed
Coe. Church & McPherson	King Square	2000 pairs womens and childrens light
Cridland and Rose	Dighton Street	3000 pairs womens light and army work
Derharn Bros. Ltd	Staple Hill	3000 pairs womens and girls light
Flook, J. and Sons	Portland Square	600 pairs womens light and heavy nailed
Fussell, A. & Sons Ltd	Kingswood Hill	1000 pairs womens and mens light and nailed
Headford, J. and Erwin	Excelsior Boot Factory	900 pairs womens and girls best light
Levi and Co	Pritchard Street	1000 pairs womens common light
Mayo and Co	29 Portland Square	1400 pairs womens light
Nash, G. & Sons Ltd	16 Portland Square	600 pairs womens light
Orr and Pole	Brompton Place, Lower Ashlev Road	500 pairs womens common
Pratt, E.W. and Co	Kingswood Hill	5000 pairs womens light & nailed
Parsons & Co	Cliftonia Works, Gerrish Avenue, Whitehall	2000 pairs womens light
Steadman, H. & CO	Castle Green	3000 pairs womens light
KINGSWOOD		
Bawn Bros.		600 pairs mens nailed
Bees and Potter	Moravian Road	4000 pairs mens nailed
Britton and Sons		5000 pairs heavv nailed
Champion Boot Co		2000 pairs heavv nailed
Furber, H.	Downend Road	1500 pairs mens nailed
Hoare & Douglas		2000 pairs mens heavz
Johnson, A.	Black Horse Road	1500 pairs mens nailed
Jay Bros.		3000 pairs mens nailed
Lovell, A. and Co	Challenge Boot Works	2000 pairs heavv nailed
Miles, T. & Co Ltd	Lodge Road	800 pairs mens nailed
Moon, A.F. & Co		800 pairs mens nailed
Pow, I. & Sons		5000 pairs mens nailed
Rudge, W.S	Hopewell Hills	1500 pairs mens nailed
Saunders Bros.		5000 pairs mens nailed
Silverthorne & Child		1000 pairs mens nailed
Savery, H. & Co		2000 pairs mens nailed
Wetton, J.W. & Co		1000 pairs mens nailed
HANHAM		
Cook, Geo	Anchor Works	1500 pairs heavv nailed
Empire Boot Mfg. Co	Waterloo Factory	2000 pairs mens nailed
OLDLAND		
Fry, S.	High Street	4000 pairs mens nailed
Neads, E. & Co	North Street	1500 pairs mens nailed
Brain, T.W. & Co	North Common	4000 pairs mens nailed
ST. GEORGE		
Bryant, Geo. & Son		5000 pairs heavy nailed
Smith, R.C.	Brvants Hill	1500 pairs mens nailed
PAULTON		
Ashman Bros.		1500 pairs mens nailed
Butler, W.G.		2000 pairs mens heavy nailed

Source Arthur B. Butnam, Shoe and Leather Trade in the United Kingdom. U.S. Department of Commerce and Labour Bureau of Manufacturers Special Agents Series No. 49, (Washington, 1912) 70-71.

Gloucester was well placed to serve as an organising focus for boots and shoes made by the Kingswood and Bristol manufacturers and destined for workers in the mines and factories of South Wales and the West Midlands.

The use of brands and trade marks had become common by the end of the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1921, Bristol manufacturers Cridland and Rose were advertising their 'Impenetrable' boots and local competitors Smith, Lawrence and Co were highlighting their 'Walmuir' brand.. In Kingswood, G.H. Furber had branded their 'St. George' boots and the Sterling Boot Company was taking every opportunity to advertise its 'Bulldog' brand.

The list of footwear manufacturing firms in Bristol, Kingswood and nearby localities comprising Table 2 relates to a time when, in terms of firms in existence, factories in operation, pairs of footwear produced and numbers employed, the industry was at or near to its peak. In 1911 the depression years of the 1920s were still to come and the penetration of the British market by foreign manufacturers at the turn of the century had been fought off. On 3 May 1913, in a four-column article headed 'The Victory of British Boots', the Economist reported:

'Some 20 years ago British manufacturers of leather boots and shoes had no effective rivals anywhere else in the world. At that time their goods were sounder and more durable than those of any other producers, but the style and finish of the goods left much to be desired. Anyone who remembers the footwear bought by the average man in the street two decades since will recall the tops of thick leather; which quickly assumed a series of irregular and permanent ridges, giving the boot, after a week's wear; a most unsightly and clumsy appearance. He will remember, too, the rough surface of the leather; and the ugly design of the entire boot. These shortcomings were scarcely noticed in England until they were remedied by foreign countries, and ladies' footwear; neat in design and beautifully finished, began to arrive here in larger and larger quantities from France and Austria, while men's boots, equally well planned and finished, began to pour in from the United States. It was a surprising number of years before our makers woke up to the necessity of bestirring themselves, and when they did, this was the effect that had already been produced on Britain is trade:-

THE ATTA CK

	Imports of Foreign Boots £	Exports of British Boots £
1890	333,000	1,898,000
1903	<u>940,000</u>	<u>1,845,000</u>
	607,000	53,000
	Increase	Decrease

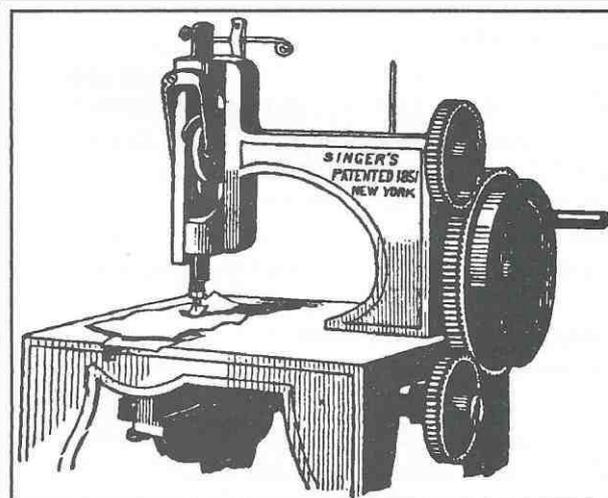
This raid on British commerce - made manifest by the enormous growth of imports for the home market at

the same time that British sales abroad had actually declined - was sufficiently serious to stir up the latent energy and resource of the English manufacturers. Our makers were principally alarmed by the success of America, for the shipments landed here from the United States had gone up from £532 in 1890 to £472,822 in 1903. They therefore decided to reconnoitre the enemy's country, and a number of Northampton factory-owners went to the States to see how it was done over there. They found that the secret of Yankee success lay entirely in style and finish, and on returning they set to work to imitate their competitors in those respects. Boots were made here in "half-size" gradations, so that a man for whom a "seven" was slightly too small could get a good fit with a "seven and a-half", whereas before the Yankee invasion he would have been compelled to take an "eight". At the same time, the shape and appearance of the goods were vastly improved, and almost immediately the results began to be seen in our records of foreign trade. Imports commenced to fall steadily, while shipments of British boots for sale abroad revived and rapidly broke record after record. This is the achievement our manufacturers can now contemplate with pride."

THE REPULSE

	Imports of Foreign Boots £	Exports of British Boots £
1903	940,000	1,845,000
1912	<u>837,000</u>	<u>3,963,000</u>
	103,000	2,110,000
	Decrease	Increase

Of the total fall of £103,000 in the imports, the major portion has fallen on America. But even more satisfactory than the fall in imports is the enormous rise in exports. This rise of £2,119,000 will appear truly remarkable when we remember that until 1907 the total value of the exports had never once reached £2,000,000'.



The first Singer sewing machine, patented by Isaac Merritt Singer in 1851. From Encyclopaedia Britannica, 9th Edn, 1886

Footwear manufacturing operations constituted the core activity in the process of capital accumulation by the Bristol and Kingswood firms during the growth phase, but backward linkage into the leather industry was attempted by some. Fussell's was one such, running its own tanpits and currying shop for the first 15 years of its existence. However, more important elements 'upstream' from the footwear factories were the independent tanners and leather carriers of Bristol and nearby towns. In the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century these included P. S. Evans and Co, the Avonside Tannery, H. Philip's Marsh (the largest tannery in the region with over 100 employees in 1875) tanning all kinds of sole leather from American and Irish hides imported through the port of Bristol; Cox Bros, Clift House; Vicary Bros, Sheen Lane; Hassell and Cogan, Baptist Mills and H. Densham, Redcross Street. Further out were country tanners processing English hides, such as Cox and Shepperson and Macgregor Rake, both in Bedminster, and some others in Frome.²² In 1888, Sheppard and Co of Marlborough Road Eastville were listed as boot lift manufacturers in Kelly's Directory of Gloucestershire (1889) and the same volume registered the existence in Kingswood of Buchanan Bros and Douglas Bros, two boot and shoe machinery manufacturers. The accumulation of ancillary trades in the form of a widespread regional ensemble of footwear-related activities included cardboard boxes, insoles, heels and a wide range of other accessories. By the 1950s fibre board for insoles was being supplied by firms at Stroud and Nailsworth. The most important supplier then in Nailsworth, E.A. Chamberlain Ltd, was founded in 1879 and came to produce boxes, insole strips, moulded insoles, socks and a wide range of other accessories. The Avon India Rubber Company began to manufacture soles and heels in 1916 and in 1947 formed a subsidiary company, Avon Footwear Sales Ltd, to cater exclusively for the requirements of the footwear industry. A factory was acquired on the Bridgend Trading Estate in South Wales to serve footwear firms in the West of England and the West Midlands. Dinkie Heels Ltd was founded in Kingswood in 1925 to provide heels for local manufacturers.

The County Cut Sole Co opened in 1927 to supply cut out soles and Fussell's Rubber Co Ltd, began at Weston-super-Mare in 1919 also provided bottoming materials of various kinds. From the late nineteenth century most of the machinery used in the West Country factories was leased from the British Limited Shoe Machinery Co of Leicester but there were, too, some local suppliers. The New Fortuna Machine Co Ltd, founded at Westbury-on-Trym in 1918, concentrated part of its output in the 1950s

on lighter kinds of footwear machinery, as did the Plastic Machines Division of Pamall and Sons, Lodge Causeway, Bristol. A proportion of the local footwear industry's lasts, knives and grindery was provided by A.J. Jackson Ltd, a firm which began business in Bristol in 1891 and which in the 1950s possessed a modern iron foundry, machine shop and knife department.

The Modern Phase

The footwear manufacturing labour force in Bristol and Kingswood shrank rapidly after 1911 and by 1955 the district had lost two-thirds of the number of firms present in 1913. The reasons for the decline have been dealt with elsewhere²³ and are outside the scope of this article but the Bristol and Kingswood manufacturers were adversely affected by trends which had a national impact and by some which had particular effect locally. Amongst the latter were the growth since the early 1900s in the use of alternative types of industrial and agricultural footwear such as rubber boots and 'Wellingtons'. Many of the traditional bootmaking firms went out of business and in the 1950s there were just four firms left in the city, employing a total of 914 people and producing mainly women's footwear. One of these was Derham Bros, employing 608 workers. In the Kingswood, the six remaining factories employed 1,251 people in 1951, most of them, too, were in one firm, G.B. Britton.

When Mr Moon closed his factory in 1970 it employed a dozen people and Mr Moon said, '*We carried on in our own way making good old-fashioned boots*'.²⁴ One or two of the firms that remained in the 1950s had become reasonably large, and had engaged in new production methods. One such was G.B. Britton, which amalgamated with F. Wilshire in 1942 and became a public company in 1951. In 1955, after considerable experimentation with vulcanising processes on machines supplied initially by C. & J. Clark, the firm introduced the first direct-moulded boot, retailed under the trade name '*Tuf*'. This product proved so popular that in 1956 and 1959 two more local firms were bought out by Brittons to provide extra capacity. In 1957 the Holdfast Company also took up moulded boots. In 1959 the manufacturing side of a Northern Ireland firm was taken over by Brittons who at about this time also acquired a South Wales footwear firm whose premises were turned over to moulded boot production. Early in 1961 a 75,000 sq ft factory extension was completed in Kingswood and a successful takeover bid was made for Wyles Brothers, a Midland multiple and wholesale concern. As a result of this activity, between 1956 and 1961 Britton's labour force dou-

Table 3 The movement of employment from workshop to factory in the UK footwear industry

Year	Number employed in factories			Numbers employed in workshops		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1889	35.103	3.934	49.037	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1895	59.844	23.727	83.571	27.144	10.391	37.535
1905	71.022	31.467	102.489	15.528	6.175	21.703

Source Board of Trade, Inquiry into Earnings and Hours of Labour (1906)

bled to over 1,000 and production figures had increased from 10,000 to 50,000 pairs a week, mainly 'Tuf' boots and 'Gluv' shoes, a period of growth which subsequently ran out of control. Britton's were taken over by the Ward White group in 1973.

Shifts in Factory Siting

In Bristol itself the first shoe-manufacturing premises were garrets and small workshops situated in the north-eastern part of the old city. Then came a movement to one or two of the squares in which were the large buildings formerly belonging to city merchants, such as Portland Square and King Square.²⁵ Later a further movement took place, this time to the eastern outskirts in a search for non-unionized labour and the cheaper sites needed for building proper factories. In localities such as Kingswood Hill firms which had originated in the city mingled with others which had begun in Kingswood itself. By 1911 there were clusters of shoe manufacturers in Portland Square, on Kingswood Hill, in Soundwell and at Two Mile Hill, with generally smaller numbers in Hanham, Oldlands, Warmley, St. George and Paulton, formerly separate settlements subsequently absorbed into Bristol as the city spread out.

These shifts in location were prompted, most frequently, by the expansion of output that took place in all the British footwear manufacturing centres during the late nineteenth century through the rapid increase in the use of machinery and the need for purpose-built premises in which to house it. In Bristol and Kingswood, as elsewhere, the earliest factories were little more than simple workshops accommodating just one or two of the essential processes of manufacture, with the others being put out to home-based outworkers. The turn of the century saw a steady movement nationally from workshops to factories (see Table 3). This trend required not only the enlargement of existing premises but also the strengthening of buildings.

Some manufacturers stayed in the old squares but in many cases enlargement of old workshop/warehouses was impossible because of the close proximity of houses and, in other cases, the structural alterations required were extensive and costly. Thus, new factories were built, for the most part on the outskirts of existing settlements, on greenfield sites which could be used, too, to build houses to accommodate the workers. In the Bristol/Kingswood area such districts included Honey Hill, in Kingswood, Albert Road and Wesley Avenue, Lodge Road, Downend Road, Soundwell; Lyppiat Road, St. George and several other localities.

Conclusion

The nature and logic of the spatial and organizational structure of the footwear industry of Bristol and Kingswood as it emerged during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is clear. In Bristol were manufactured chiefly medium and cheaper goods of all kinds but with an emphasis on women's and children's footwear. In Kingswood the dominant product was heavy,

nailed footwear, often working boots suitable for agricultural workers and those employed in coal mines and heavy industry. Markets were both regional and national. Bristol was connected to London by rail in 1840, some 20 years before Norwich, but South Wales was an important regional market for the local boot manufacturers and they produced, too, a type of product widely used in the army and in particular demand during wartime.

The port of Bristol handled hides imported from the Americas and exported boots and shoes for local manufacturers, particularly to South Wales and Ireland. Bristol tanneries processed the imported hides and country tanners such as those in Frome and Bridgwater, treated English hides. Wholesaling activities were developed locally as part of the structure of the industry 'downstream' from the footwear factories themselves. Holloway Son and Co's premises in Gloucester, established in 1874, first in Brunswick Road and then from 1877 in King Street were well located to handle some of the overland trade to South Wales and the West Midlands whilst Lennards, through its retail and mail order activities, later aimed at a wider market.

In sum, the clear impression is of a regional complex or ensemble of footwear manufacturing firms and related activities obtaining materials and marketing products in a system which originated and grew independently of other regional concentrations elsewhere in the country, such as those in Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Norwich, London, Leeds and Lancashire (see Figure 2). It was, too, for many decades a regional concentration of firms in which C. & J. Clark Ltd held an important but not yet a dominant position. It was one in which housing, street layout, factory siting and the general morphology of localities particularly in Kingswood owed much to the accumulation of capital in pre-Fordist modes of production by firms no longer in existence.

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All Photographs in this article were taken by A.J. Budd.

A. Fussell & Sons Ltd, Footwear Works at Honey Hill, Kingswood.



The Dinkie Heel Manufacturing Co Ltd, joint occupants with an engineering company at this Downend Road works, Kingswood, in March 1966. This was possibly the former premises of H. Furber producing 1,500 pairs of men's nailed footwear each week in 1911 (see table 2).



Allen and Prior's Apex Boot Works, High Street, Kingswood