

One of the few still remaining today is Luke's Bespoke Tailoring, run by Savvas Economou, the latest in his family to offer a traditional tailoring service from the premises.

"Before mass-manufacturing, nearly everyone had their suits made," says Savvas. "Back in the 50s and 60s, there were tailors all down Barking Road from Plaistow to Canning Town. Now most people are happy to buy their suits off the peg in shops and most of the old tailors have retired."

Despite cheap competition from the High Street, many people still prefer to have a suit personally made and the bespoke tailoring service Savvas provides is in high demand.

"Most people are not the exact shape offered to you by the High Street," he says. "People might have one arm longer than the other, short arms or legs or are tall or broad, so a tailored suit will fit much better."

"Styles, materials and finishes will always change with time, but I hope the quality and prestige of a well-made suit will never go out of fashion."

"We advise customers on the best style for them. Your shape will affect the cut that will look good on you, for example a one-button, fitted suit will look much better on a smaller man. We can also advise on material, as a light colour will make you look bigger, while tapered pinstripes would give shape to a tall and slim man."

Savvas' family came to Britain from Cyprus in the 1950s. His father, already a successful tailor in Cyprus, worked on Saville Row before eventually settling his family and business in the East End.

"My father could sew a pair of trousers by the time he was nine," says Savvas. "He tried to get work at a

Until the 1960s, Barking Road was home to a host of bespoke tailors, offering high quality, made-to-measure suits to the men of the borough and beyond.

Stitching up the East End

dockyard as a child and was told he was too small, so he tried tailoring instead. By 15 he was running his own successful tailoring business in Cyprus and by 21 he was working in London."

Both Savvas and his brother Luke followed in the footsteps of their father and went on to work in the tailoring industry. Savvas spent three years at the London College of Fashion studying handcraft tailoring.

"I much prefer the personal tailoring side of things rather than manufacturing,

although that seems to be the way things are going now," says Savvas. "As I was leaving the college they were shutting down the tailoring course. Young people don't seem to be interested in it anymore. It's long hours and very labour-intensive work."

Luke's Bespoke Tailoring caters for people of all backgrounds, with many old customers who have since left London returning to the shop when they need a new suit made. There is also a flowing trade from city workers in Docklands.

"We tailor for all occasions, from



weddings to funerals. A lot of people like to have a special suit made for going to church, and I have made the pastor himself his suits too. I also recently made a pair of suits for a lesbian civil partnership ceremony.

"We often make suits for bigger guys as they usually find it hard to find well fitting, off the peg designs. One customer who came to us had a 72-inch chest and I had to attach two tape measures together to do the fitting.

"There is a gym behind us and one

down the road, so we get a lot of custom from the boxers. I have made suits for Frank Bruno, and I also made a Union Jack suit out of sequins for the MC who introduced Frank Bruno during the Tyson fight."

Purchasing a suit at a bespoke tailor's shop means customers have hundreds of styles and materials to choose from. Throughout his career as a tailor, Savvas has seen fashions change as people request the different styles of suit available.

"At the moment the trend is for a very English suit, with one or two buttons and close fitted," says Savvas. "We are also doing a lot of mod-style 60s suits, and pinstripes are very popular.

"The guys from the city like to have extra pockets to hold all their modern gadgets such as BlackBerrys and mobile phones.

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