

*Photographic Memories of Stoke sub Hamdon*

## *The Gloving Industry*



The gloving donkey was invented by James Winter of Stoke sub Hamdon in 1809, it made a big difference to the sewers at home and abroad, as the glove could be clamped which ensured regular and even stitching. Machines for sewing gloves did not come into use until the 1850s.

*By kind permission of Dents' Gloving Museum.*

## *A Brief History of the Gloving Industry in Stoke sub Hamdon*

In 1747 there is documentary evidence to show that a Joseph Winter (probably from the Combe St. Nicholas area) was a glover in the village. By 1784\* he had started a glove factory with his son James. After Joseph's death in 1795 James took over the business and in 1807 took out a patent on a glovers donkey, which ensured regular and even stitching. Winters traded under the name of Walters when Mary Winter (daughter of James) married Richard Walter, their son John Winter Walter took over the business in around 1844.

It is known from the 1830s to the 1860s apart from Walters there were various other glove manufacturers such as Alfred Ashford, George Chaffey, James Slade and Christopher Lucas, unfortunately we do not know where these factories were.

Richard Southcombe had arrived in Stoke by 1841 and set up a glove manufacturing business by 1847 in what is now known as the Spats or Fabric factory. He was joined by various brothers who helped manage the factory and shop. One brother, Robert, moved to Tintinhull and set up his own factory in 1880. Southcombes also expanded their business around 1875 by building a second factory making leather gloves in Cole Lane, Stoke.

From the 1860s to the mid 1890s Southcombes and Walters dominated the gloving industry in Stoke. They were joined by William Brooks who started manufacturing gloves by 1897, George Dalwood in the High Street and Matts Lane by 1914, Hamdon Glove Co., Percombe by 1919, Harry Harris in Castle Street by 1927, South Somerset Glove Co., West Stoke by 1930 and Joe Shayler at East Stoke by 1934. From the 1940s onwards unfortunately there was a steady decline in the manufacture of gloves due mainly to foreign competition and high interest rates, today in 2003 there is only one glove company left, Southcombe Bros. Ltd., which celebrated 150 years trading in the village.

\* Baileys British Directory



Front view of Southcombe's Gloving Factory, Cole Lane, Stoke, early 1900s. Note the coloured skins drying on racks in the foreground.



The earliest known photograph of Southcombe glove cutters c1880s.  
**Top row 4th left:** William Brooks who later started his own glove factory in Windsor Lane. **Far right:** standing with bowler hat Teddy Nelms, foreman glove cutter.



J.H. Walters Glove Factory, West Street, Stoke c1920s. On the far right, a small cottage adjoining the factory but now demolished, which in the past has been used for Union, TOC.H and British Legion meetings. Note on the far left the end of Southcombe's Spats and Glove Factory.



J.H. Walters, Cutters and Apprentices c1910.

**Rows left to right. Top row:** 1. Harry Turner 2. Henry Trotman 3. Oliver Shoemark 4. Bert Trotman 5. Evelyn Trotman 6. .... Wilsdon 7. Alf Dyer 8. William Wilkinson (cap) **2nd row:** 1. Jabez Drew 2. Ern Trotman (both dark tops) 3. Tommy Whitlock (tie) 4. Edwin Webley 5. Ernest Turner **3rd row:** 1. Ed (Sheena) Shoemark 2. Ralph Trotman 3. Reg Morgan 4. Percy Trotman.



J.H. Walters, Dye House c1930.

**Left to right:** 1. .... 2. Ted Jeremy 3. George Barnes (came from Peterborough but trained in France as a dyer). Note the drums are being run by a belt and pulley system.



Southcombe Bros., Paring and Staking c1930.

Paring, the process of reducing the thickness and smoothing the backs of skins by a saucer shaped knife. Staking, a process where skins are softened by working over a blunt blade on an upright post.





J.H. Walters, Wheel Room c1930.

**Left to right:** 1. Len George 2. Albert Jones 3. .... Skins are being worked over an emery covered wheel to produce the nap on suede. Note the blanket of dust hanging from the ceiling.



J.H. Walters, Cutting Shop in the 1930s.

**Left to right:** 1. Stanley Thorne 2. Ralph Trotman 3. Oliver Shoemark 4. Jabez Drew 5. Harold Trotman 6. Edwin Webley.



Southcombes Bros., Leather Cutting Shop c1930.

**Left to right, back row against wall:** 1. .... 2. Hedley Chaffey 3. .... 4. .... 5. Tom Pittard (by pillar) **2nd row:** 1. Mr Palmer 2. Arnold Nelms (both striped shirts). **Front bench - sitting** 1. .... 2. Will Creek 3. Bert Davis 4. .... 5. Fred Nelms (under bucket) 6. Fred Abbott. **Right side of room. Bench:** 1. Ron Male 2. Don Palmer **Front to back:** 3. .... 4. .... 5. Wilf Dunford (at window) 6. Herbie Male 7. ....



Southcombes Bros., Fabric Machine Room c1930.

**Rows left to right. Front to back:** 1. Vi Trotman 2. Dorothy Bull 3. Miss Chant 4. Amy Raison 5. Elsie Johnson (Forewoman) **Middle row:** 1. Murial Dodge 2. .... 3. .... 4. Winnie Palmer 5. Bess Callow (Forewoman) 6. .... 7. .... **Right side:** 1. Olwyn Weakley 2. Winnie Gomm 3. Dorothy Gillett 4. Cis Rice 5. .... 6. Dorothy Wines 7. Glad Morris 8. Olive Brown.



Southcombes Bros., Ironing Department c1943.

**Left to right:** 1. Vi Davis 2. Phil Creek 3. Betty Shires 4. Barbara Grinter. Note gas warmed upright irons.



J.H.Walters, Leather Machine Room c1930.

**Left to right. Back row:** 1. Gertie Tucker 2. Marg Palmer 3. Ethel Bagg 4. .... **2nd row:** 1. Lily Palmer 2. Evelyn Bussell 3. Sybil Lawrence 4. Maud Edmunds 5. Dora Jones 6. Gertie Lawrence.



Southcombes Bros., Counting and Studding room c1930.

**Row left to right:** 1. Eva Palmer 2. Gladys Thorne 3. Amy Fane 4. Ivy Fane 5. Muriel Welsh 6. Audrey Dodge 7. Olive Gummer (stud machines being used on right).





Southcombes Bros., Examining Department, Gloves and Spats c1930s.

*Left to right*, 1. Ethel Dedman 2. May Tucker 3. Nora Creek 4. Elsie Baker 5. Muriel Dodge 6. Ena Ansell 7. Ivy George 8. Joyce Thorne 9. Edith Lawrence 10. Mona Batstone.



Southcombes Bros., Tannery.

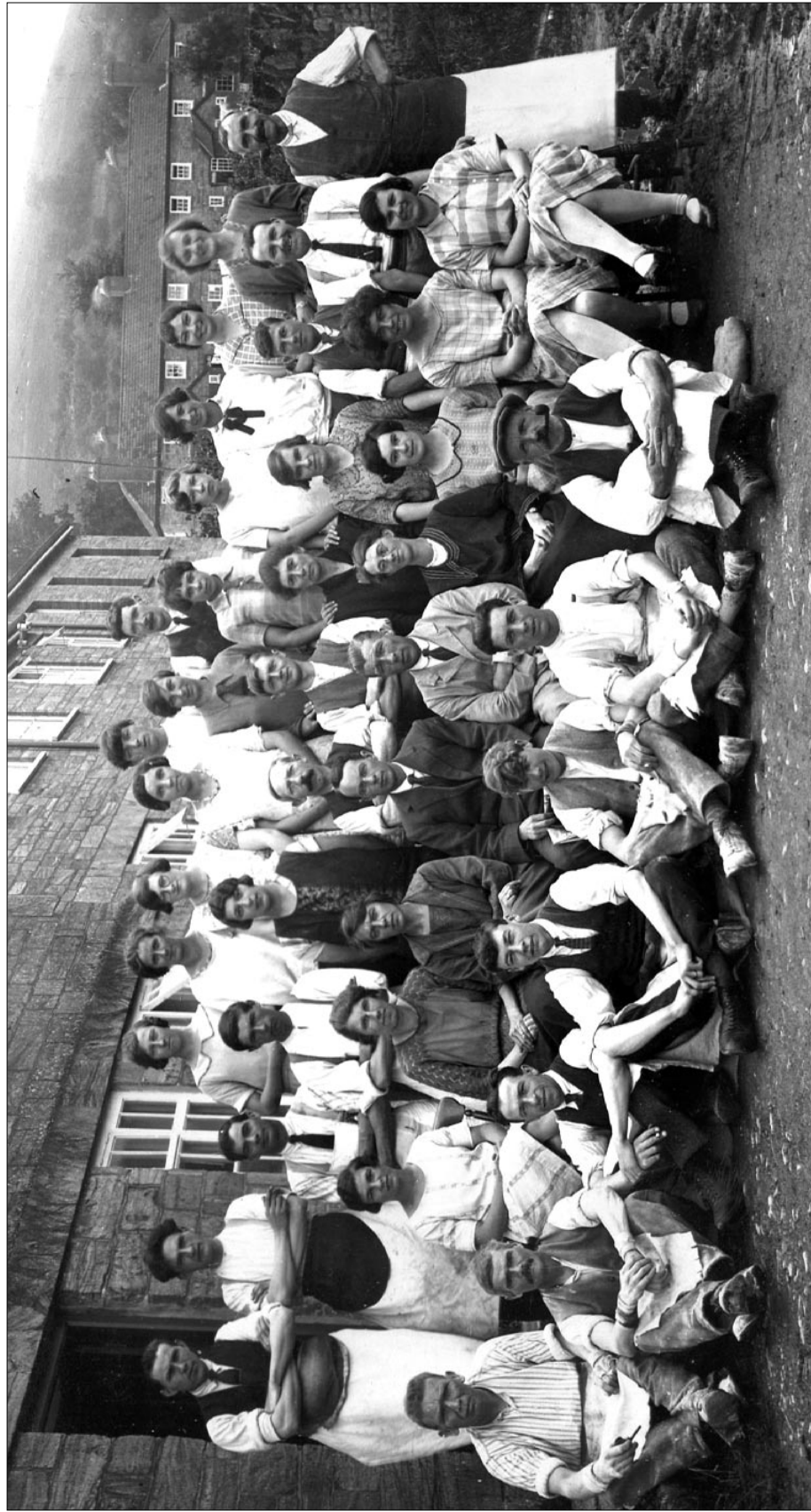
This machine was used from the 1950s to the 1970s spray dyeing leather, previously dark colours were dye brushed or sprayed by hand.



Southcombe Bros. Ltd., Glove Manufacturers, Stoke. 150 years Celebration 1847 to 1997- office staff.



Southcombe Bros. Ltd., Glove Manufacturers, Stoke. 150 years Celebration 1847 to 1997- factory and tannery staff.



William Brooks Gloving Factory, Windsor Lane, Stoke around 1930

**Rows left to right. Back row:** 1. Lily Palmer 2. Sylvia Haines 3. Nora Singer 4. Myra Welsh 5. Ed Shoemark 6. Nora Margetts 7. Arthur Grinter 8. May Dodge 9. Eileen Palmer 10. Vi Minchington 11. May Warr 12. Iris Nelms **2nd row:** 1. Embert Warry 2. Herby Male 3. Fred Johnson 4. Jimmy Morris 5. Gwen Shoemark 6. Topper Foon 7. Les Wardle 8. Cis Welsh 9. Cis Dyer 10. Joe Rice 11. Ewart Baker 12. Plummy Wilkinson **3rd row:** 1. Lily Thorne 2. Hilda Sharp 3. Hilda Wardle 4. Leslie Knight 5. Hensleigh Brooks 6. Emme Murley 7. Dorothy Best 8. Lily Fane 9. Flossie Denman **4th row:** 1. .... 2. .... 3. Bill Foon 4. Norman Grinter 5. Ed ? Morris 6. Les Margetts 7. Bill Warr.





Hamdon Glove Company, Percombe, Stoke c1930.

*Rows left to right. Top row:* 1. Vera Long 2. Ada Haynes 3. Doris Crook 4. Violet Mattock  
*2nd row:* 1. Ivy Palmer 2. Gwen Best (dark dress) 3. Hilda Davis 4. Joan Belban 5. Kathy Jeffery  
 6. Hilda Trott 7. Betty Read 8. Mabel Caller (Forewoman) *3rd row:* 1. Ivy Trotman 2. Phillis Dodge  
 3. Mrs Hamlin 4. Mary Belben 5. Cis Trotman 6. Rene Stockford 7. Vera Sweet.



South Somerset Glove Company, West Street, Stoke c1940s.

*Left to right. Top row:* 1. Gary Vivash 2. Cyril Brinson 3. Fred Hockey *2nd row:* 1. Eileen Strickland 2. Rosa Bennett 3. Ella Lawrence 4. Sheila Cornish 5. Joyce Fane 6. Mrs Bicknell (Forewoman)  
*3rd row:* 1. Georgie Fane 2. Olive Hale 3. Joan Gundry 4. Vi Sparks 5. Flossie Johnson 6. Betty George  
 7. Peggy Gaylard 8. Audrey Brooks *Sitting:* 1. Doris Fane 2. Norman Bryant 3. Doreen Lawrence  
 4. Billie Moody 5. Joan Mattock.