

M) A SHOEMAKER'S STORY



My name is Richard Edwards, and I was born in 1736 in Rhyn, Shropshire. As a young man I spent seven years as an apprentice and finally qualified as a master shoemaker. Not to be confused with a cobbler who repairs shoes! I use new leather or fabric to create new shoes. These are some of my tools.

I joined the single brethren's house in Fulneck in 1760 and made shoes to order in one of the workshops. My friend the joiner works nearby, and he is just making a spinning wheel and stool. I appreciate his company.

I am proud of the shoes I make and take care to make sure they are a good fit for every individual who hires me.



Mostly I make strong, well designed shoes as the residents living on Fulneck work hard and need practical footwear. They are not so wealthy to be able to purchase the delicate and fashionable heeled footwear.



However, I stock a selection of brass buckles and buttons to add individuality and sometimes have orders for silver decorations.



Now and then I have orders from outside Fulneck for the more fancy, expensive silk and satin ladies' shoes with shaped heels. It makes a change and I enjoy demonstrating my ability and creativity.



Look, these are my special tools,



I use this one after I have measured the foot and made a pattern on the leather. This is the last around which I shape the top of the shoe.



I stretch and shape the leather using these pincers, and I stitch and tack the top to a wooden or extra strong leather sole. To finish off I polish and blacken the shoes with a mixture of bee's wax and soot.



This sharp awl makes the holes for the laces.

At the moment I am the only master shoemaker living in Fulneck so I am constantly busy, but that's the way I like it. I love my work and it's very satisfying when a customer is happy and pleased with their new shoes.