

Meeting swiss fabric friends : London

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LONDON

In the heart of Mayfair: bustling New Bond Street. ▽

South Molton Street – a quaint pedestrian area. ▽

Shopping for Swiss fabrics almost inevitably takes you to some of the most exciting shopping centres in the world. When in London head for the historical district of Mayfair, with its warren of bustling streets and meandering lanes, lined by handsomely restored Georgian and Victorian townhouses. Strolling down New Bond Street you will discover, next-door to some old-established confectioner, to baconist or tea merchant, some of today's most prestigious names in international fashion and luxury goods.

At number 42 a tasteful display of gorgeous fabrics may catch your eye. This is the beautiful textile world of Simmonds at Stanley Lowe. In an aura of hushed elegance, softly illuminated by crystal chandeliers, you will be shown an exclusive selection of embroideries from such renowned sources as Forster Willi, Filtex, Naef, Rohner, Schlaepfer and Union. While you marvel at the intricacy of Swiss superimposed-embroidery, the high fashion colours and designs of Swiss silk prints, the sheerness of Swiss cotton voiles and wool challis, you may find yourself in distinguished company. For, as a sign discreetly informs you, this store enjoys royal patronage.

The picture repeats itself at Jason's of 53 New Bond Street. Here, in a lovely 16th century townhouse which escaped the great fire of 1666, you will find a superb range of couture silk prints and embroideries from Switzerland's top suppliers and a large selection of cottons from Mettler, Reichenbach, Taco and Fischbacher.

Just a short walk away you will notice a dark green canopy adorning the front of a fine Victorian brick building and protecting the marble and brass encased glass entrance to Allans of 56 Duke Street. Inside, racks and open shelves display a fascinating assortment of silks and cottons from Abraham, Gut and Schubiger as well as novelty embroideries, many of them richly embroidered with iridescent sequins, from the best St. Gall houses.

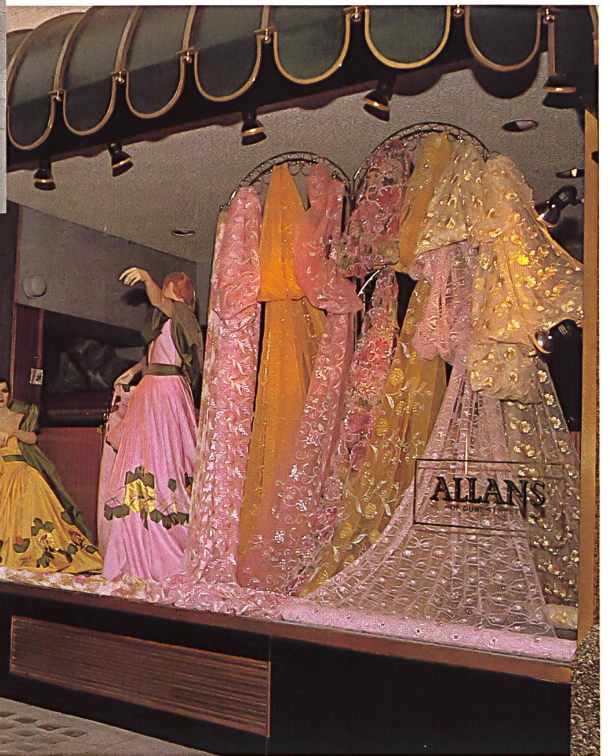
Choose your way back through South Molton Street which has been converted into a charming pedestrian area bordered by quaint houses where milliners and haberdashers used to keep shops. If you are bargain hunting do not miss Jacob Gordon at number 19. Behind its unpretentious front you will discover two storeys chock full of cloths from some of Switzerland's finest addresses. Some of the fabrics may not be the very latest as part of the goods on display are mill stock items. But, as the poet said – a thing of beauty is a joy forever – particularly if it can be had at a really interesting price.

Beatrice Feisst





Beautiful embroideries – artistically displayed.



Allans OF DUKE STREET



Alan Hershman's love-affair with beautiful fabrics goes back a long way. Trained at an East End retail trader's and subsequently a buyer with one of the City's fabric wholesalers, he acquired a thorough understanding of textiles, the people who make them and the tricky business of buying and selling retail piecegoods. When he established Allans of Duke Street in 1946, post-war England craved nice fabrics. As soon as cloth rationing eased, Mr. Hershman started to import materials from Switzerland. A great admirer of the craftsmanship, professional know-how, artistry and precision in production found among the old-established St. Gall family enterprises, he lectures on fabrics at various schools of fashion and art.

With an eye to the Southern Hemisphere Allans' Swiss specialities include fine cotton voiles, superb embroideries for sarees and printed pure silk crêpe de chine which also doubles as a luxurious men's shirting material. They pride themselves on having an intuitive awareness of coming trends and set no price limitation on the fabrics they buy provided there is a fair share of exclusivity, beauty and quality in exchange. Their clientele comprises the members of 6 Royal Families, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Covent Garden Opera House and many British television and film companies. Trade is always lively at Allans prior to a royal or social wedding, the Wimbledon Tennis Tournaments or the Ascot Races.

MEETING SWISS FABRIC FRIENDS





Their visitor's book reads like an extract from Who's Who and dates back to 1958 when Michael Simmonds and Stanley Lowe moved their business to the present New Bond Street location. Something of a perfectionist by his own description, Mr. Lowe insists on exclusivity, beauty and quality in fabrics and only trades in the finest materials possible. He usually finds these at the top Swiss houses, whose sensitivity to colours and designs he rates among the very best.

At any time, as much as 80% of this store's cottons and more than 50% of their embroideries and silks come from Switzerland. Price is of minor consideration and some of the most exclusive embroideries may easily run up to £400.—a meter. Pure silk taffetas, mix-and-match themes in silk and cotton batistes, embroidered organzas and wool georgette have been some of their last winter's bestsellers.

Simmonds at Stanley Lowe Ltd



Exclusive Swiss fabrics in elegant surroundings.





JACOB GORDON LTD.

By his own definition a compulsive buyer of beautiful fabrics, Mr. Ginsberg, owner of Jacob Gordon Ltd., almost naturally turned to Switzerland some 8 years ago. Since then, he has probably become England's biggest one store unit stock buyer of silk. Following his own hunches on colours and designs, he invariably goes for the highest quality in pure silk and pure cotton at prices which the average consumer can afford to pay.

Do not look for avant-garde trends at Jacob Gordon. Their store assortment is focused on classical fabrics in colours and designs that will not be outdated within the week. Sales have been particularly brisk in printed crêpe de chine and novelty chiffons, with more silk prints arriving for the forthcoming summer season. Although tourists from all over the world – including Switzerland – shop at Jacob Gordon, their materials are still sold by the yard. This is a gesture to their regular English customers, among them many well-known television and showbusiness personalities, as well as fashion and theatrical clothes designers.

...where even the Swiss shop.

Embroidered silks from Switzerland in a historical setting.

Jason's of Bond St.



A family business now managed by the second generation, Jason's have been importing Swiss couture fabrics for the past 25 years. All their fabrics are exclusive to London and buying-in is limited to the very best in natural fibres and natural fibre blends. In the course of the years, sales of Swiss fabrics have been steadily increasing and now account for about 60% of the turnover. Some of the store's specialities include silk prints, crêpe de chine and embroideries, with a currently strong demand for sequined and heavily embroidered fabrics. On the average, cottons retail at £4.-/5.-, silks at £10.-/12.-, wool at £10.- and embroideries up to £100.- per meter.

Catering to a sophisticated international clientele, Jason's staff of long standing takes pride in personal service and a profound knowledge of fabrics. On the subject of his Swiss suppliers, Mr. Jason considers them accommodating, straightforward, honest. Although delivery times tend to be too long, he would rather do business in Switzerland than anywhere else.

MEETING SWISS FABRIC FRIENDS

