

# *Carol Alayne ~ master tailor*

*a blend of haute-couture and Savile Row*

## Carol Alayne

In association with Tailoring for Women Ltd.

<https://www.carolalayne.com>

## **DM Buttons**

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Nobody ever thinks of buttons unless they come off. But I can tell you there's a whole technology that exists around buttons and buttonholes. I guess most people imagine that tailors know all there is to know about buttons, but it's far from the case. When I need some special button feature, I pop along to the trade's best-known button specialist in the centre of London's Soho: [DM Buttons](#) (and, just as important: DM Buttonholes).

Once upon a time Soho was home to many specialist trades but it's more than likely that DM Buttons is one of the few survivors, trading out of the same building it was established in nearly 100 years ago. It's also likely that its longevity is due to its proximity to the West End theatres, since a large part of the specialist button demands come from theatre and film costumiers, where not only do the smallest costume details have to look right, they also have to survive huge amounts of wear and tear. A button coming off just before you leave for the airport is one thing; if it comes off during a theatre quick change it could wreck a performance.

The sole proprietor is David Miller who took over the business from his father, who took over from his great aunt. His father was originally a hat maker, working in the same building with his grandfather. Fortunately for us, David's father's early fascination for buttons over hats has meant that we still have a specialist close at hand to call on.

If you do call, it needs to be early morning – their opening hours are 7.30am to 3pm which is great if you need to have some button or buttonhole attention to a garment before the start of the business day. And David's establishment is a veritable meeting point for many in the tailoring trade. Often he will complete that task while you wait. And there's always an excellent espresso on hand!

Hand sewing traditional buttonholes is a long and arduous process which tailors can rarely afford to spend time on. But DM Button's special machine can complete the task quickly and efficiently, making stronger apertures than could be done by hand. They deal in any kind of garment fastening: buttons, poppers, rivets, eyelets, etc.

You may not notice of course, but DM Button's work features on stage in just about every West End show there is, plus operas and feature films. Period costumes, for example, can't afford to be fake, since they are often subject to considerable action whether on stage or on film. They can't afford to come apart either! (Look more closely at the Harry Potter movie costumes...)

It's heartening to know that David has ensured the continuation of his very special trade by linking to some of the UK's best known art and fashion colleges. Students will come to DM Buttons for help and advice in completing their graduation projects. And some of them keep on coming: that was the case with Bruce Oldfield and Alexander McQueen who first visited when they were originally college students. Their design houses still use DM Buttons for their special requirements.

I continue to be fascinated by the intricacies of my trade and by the personalities who keep it alive. Although I wouldn't recommend you go along to DM Buttons every time you lose a button on your favourite jacket, you should certainly take a look the next time you're in D'Arbly Street in Soho.