

Having now completed the first year of the Pattenmakers Orthopaedic Course and with the second year on the horizon we the students wanted to write and give the Pattenmakers our thoughts on how the first 12 months have gone.

Every Monday throughout term time we all get together virtually, something we've all gotten used to over the past 18 months, to participate in 2 sessions of 45 minutes each. It gives us some regular protected learning time that we wouldn't get otherwise. All of us on the course work as shoemakers and having the opportunity to take time out of the busy work schedule to learn without distractions is without doubt a big positive.

The structure of the weekly sessions for Year 1 meant that we spent the first part learning the theory of a condition. This gave us the opportunity to get into the medical detail and learn about how a condition has come about and how we can help to alleviate it. In the second part of the afternoon we learned how to go about this practically. For example we learnt about all the details of bunions and then altered a last to accommodate this and created a soft derby upper that would be appropriate for a wearer with this condition.

Having the course run online has opened up opportunities for us to be taught by experts from different parts the world. Hartmut Seidich and Lisa Sorrell, based in Germany and USA respectively, both joined sessions and gave us some valuable tuition on leathers and closing. As much as we'd loved to have done so it would have been impossible for us all to travel to both those places even without Coronavirus restrictions.

As is likely with future courses we are all at differing levels of expertise. However those that have strong experience in particular areas have found that the opportunity to learn about other aspects of making is enhancing their current skills and also increasing their understanding on how what they do can be improved. We have also shared knowledge amongst ourselves to help one another through the course. We see this as opportunity to create a community of future bespoke orthopaedic shoemakers and carry the mantle forward. It was nice for us all to finally get together in person for a Summer School weekend in Leicester at the end of the first year. We learnt a lot and had a lot of fun as a group.

During Year 1 of the course we have all developed a comprehensive folder of the presentations that are shown to us each week. We have this material for life that we can continue to refer to all in one place. Knowing it will always be there to reference means we need not fear a condition that is presented in the future as we will have the tools in our toolbox to help.

On a final note we would just like to say a thank you to Bill for taking his time to prepare and deliver all the sessions and to the Pattenmakers for their support and allowing us all to benefit from the tuition we have so far received. We're now all looking forward to Year 2, which started on October 4.