

Why settle for less when you can have a custom made leather saddle from £695?

Our Editor, Sue Mitchell decided to get a dressage saddle for her eight year old mare CTR Special Print. She had tried out her friend's Jessica saddle from Ideal and really liked the feel and comfort of it. Special Print has a big canter and sitting deep can be difficult. The Jessica had a suede seat and Sue found it easier to sit deep and still in the canter than with a leather seat. Sue shopped around but the only ready-made Jessicas available were black with an 18" seat and they all had leather seats. Why compromise she thought, when she can have a custom made saddle to her exact specification. That's why she contacted Ian Jenkin of Minster Saddlery, who specialises in tailor-made saddles.

On meeting Ian, he said that before the 1970s, everyone had a custom made saddle. It was only after then, when the market for saddles exploded that people were buying saddles off the shelf. The saddler with a van full of saddles, only became the norm after this time. Before then, every saddle was specially made for the horse and rider. He said that a saddle that is custom made should last a life-time, as it can be easily adjusted for the change in shape of the horse.

When a saddle is made to measure, it is doubly precise for the horse as it is the right shape and the right width.

He asked a very good question.

Why should people have to compromise?

If the saddle fits the horse, but the seat is an inch too big for the rider, or the flaps are too long for the rider's length of leg, or the rider prefers a suede seat, why should the customer have to settle for anything less than what you ideally want?

If you are spending more than £1,000 on a dressage saddle, why do you have to settle for less?

The first thing that Ian did was assess the shape of Special Print.

He also assessed the saddle needs for Sue. He noted that she was a 17" saddle seat and had a long leg, hip to knee.

Once the template was taken and the measurements were



Above, Ian shows that Special Print is slightly croup high; note the shape of her back; her back dips before the highest point of the croup.

made, Ian suggested that the Susannah from Ideal would be a very good saddle for Sue and Special Print's needs. So an order was placed for a 17" suede seat, brown leather with deep rear gusset and long knee blocks and saddle flaps. Ian said that the Susannah had a wide twist and wide panels which helps with the comfort of the horse as they will not feel the tree which helps them gain as much top line as possible.

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Loan of saddle

Ian recognises that waiting for 6 weeks for a saddle to be made

is not always possible, so he offers the customer a loan saddle until their own is made. Sue was given a black Jessica which was a really good option for a temporary loan.

Why buy a second hand or a synthetic saddle for a young horse?

Ian said there is no need to do this. If you have a saddle made for the horse as a youngster, it is specially made for him, so as he changes shape the tree can be tweaked in order that it always fits him properly, whether he gains condition, or loses it. A made to measure saddle should last a horse a life-time.

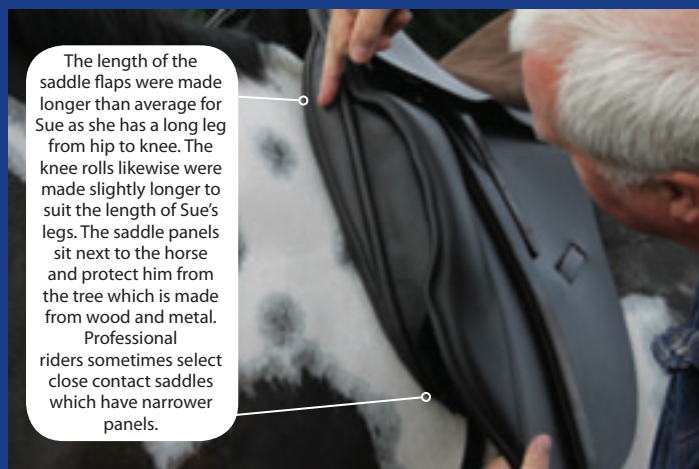
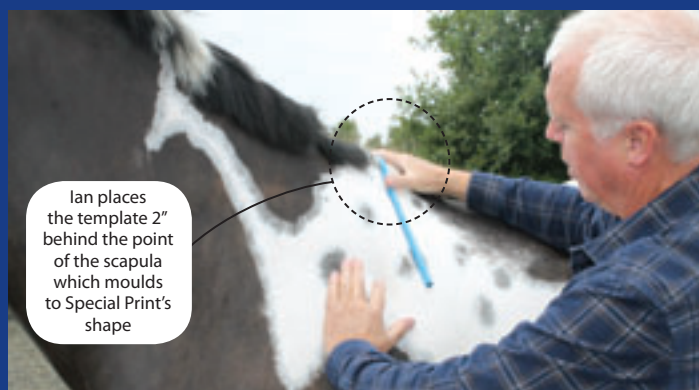
Bespoke Saddles are ideal for Ponies

Ian stressed that ponies are difficult to fit as they can have small shoulders, a little wither and short necks, so a made-to-measure saddle for a pony would eliminate all the head-aches of saddle slippage. It would also be safer for the rider.

Prices start from £695 for a custom made saddle. They are available for general purpose, dressage, event, working hunter and showing.

You also get two visits; one for the template and one for the fitting and then you can request a follow up visit a few months later at a call out charge from £30. There is on going service for you and your horse.

Left, Ian Jenkin, Master Saddler of Minster Saddlery, based in Highgate, North London, brought his made-to-measure saddle for Sue. It is a custom made Susannah dressage saddle from Ideal. From template to delivery the saddle took 6 weeks.



They're made to measure and guaranteed to fit

We offer a wide range of **bespoke saddles** all hand crafted in Walsall using the **finest English leather** and beechwood spring trees to BS6635. **Models include:** GP, event, working hunter and dressage. Black or havana 16"-19". And close contact jumping and pony saddles.

All fitted free by Keith Jenkin, Society of Master Saddlers qualified, who **guarantees a perfect fit**. We also stock Ideal, Stubben, Frank Baines, Jeffries, Pessoa, Manor, Safe Ride, Keith Bryan, Jeremy Rudge and Black Country.



MADE TO MEASURE FROM A TEMPLATE OF YOUR HORSE'S BACK **£695**



MINSTER SADDLERY



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The saddle is currently sitting slightly high in front of Special Print but once Sue is riding, it will drop down into the correct position.



Sue tries out the new saddle in the school. Special Print seems relaxed and comfortable in her new saddle and works nice and freely. Sue is happy with the look and feel and knows she has to gradually get used to riding in her new Susannah dressage saddle from Ideal, custom made by Minster Saddlery. The cost was £1,195 inc vat which is very reasonable for a bespoke saddle.

www.minstersaddlery.co.uk