

The story of Doc Martens



Everybody wears them: postmen and punks, policemen and skinheads, schoolgirls and top models. They are the famous Doc Martens boots.

The story of Doc Martens boots began in Munich more than 60 years ago. In 1946, Dr Klaus Maertens, a German doctor, injured his foot skiing. He needed a very comfortable shoe. With the help of a friend, Dr Herbert Funk, he made a shoe with an air-cushioned sole. They used old car tyres! The shoes were very pleasant to wear. The two men created a business and began to sell the shoes, especially to people with foot trouble.

The medical image lasted until 1959, when Maertens and Funk decided to export their shoes. They needed a partner outside Germany. They found a small family company, Griggs & Co. It was based in Northampton, England. In 1960, Griggs changed the name for "Dr Martens" (which sounded more English) and started making these boots. The new range of shoes was called AirWair and people liked them because they were practical and comfortable.

At that time, the shoes were mostly bought by factory-workers and by the army. A few years later the company discovered that British skinheads wore their shoes because, even if they were soft and comfortable, they also looked hard and intimidating. Soon, other groups like punks began to wear them. Then British policemen as well as students wore them. In 1975, pop star Elton John made them even more famous by wearing a giant pair of Docs in the film version of the rock opera Tommy. Soon the shoes were worn by everyone, from Naomi Campbell to Prince Harry.

The classic black eight-eyelet leather 1460 still represents almost half of the production. '1460' is in fact 1/4/60, the date when the first pair of 1460s was made. However, they now offer 150 styles, including sandals and shoes, in 70



different colour and leather combinations.

Docs used to constitute 10% of the British shoe market. The company used to employ 2.500 people and make 170.000 pairs of shoes a week: 9 million a year! Although Dr Martens remains one of the most high-profile footwear brands, the company is no longer the fashion powerhouse that it was during its 1970s heyday. A decline in sales obliged the company to cease all production in the UK on April 1, 2003, resulting in the loss of 1.000 British jobs. Since then, the production has moved to China.

Some experts believe that Dr Martens' status as a fashion icon is so firmly established that it is only a matter of time before the boots come back into favour. Since 1960, more than 50 million pairs of Docs had been made in the UK.



Adapted from *Easy Steps, 2nde professionnelle*, Nathan 1996 updated in 2007 (www.bbc.co.uk)

1. Complete the paragraph below.

This document is It is *Easy Step*, and was in 2007 with information the BBC website. The text the story of Dr Martens shoes, the origins nowadays.

Comprehension

2. Associate the appropriate title to each part of the text (write them in the frames).

A wide variety – From working classes to the masses – Birth of a German orthopaedic shoe – Yesterday, today and tomorrow – Made in Britain

3. Write in French what these dates and figures correspond to.

Dates:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1946 | 150 |
| 1959 | 70 |
| 1960 | 10 |
| 1975 | 2.500 |
| April 1 st , 1960 | 170.000 |
| April 1 st , 2003 | 9 million |

Figures:

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| 1460 | 1.000 |
| | 50 million..... |

4. Right or Wrong? Justify ALL your answers by quoting the text.

1) Klaus Maertens was English. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

2) He designed shoes after a skiing accident. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

3) Originally Docs were for people with bad feet. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

4) Griggs manufactured Docs in Germany. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

5) Only skinheads and punks wore these shoes. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

6) There isn't a great variety of Docs. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

7) The first pair of Doc Martens was made in 1460. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

8) Dr Martens are still manufactured in England. RIGHT / WRONG

.....

5. Tick the correct answer.

- 1) Dr Maertens initially designed special boots for his patients.
 for himself.
 for Herbert Funk.
- 2) Griggs & Co. is a German company exporting in Britain.
 a British company created by Dr Maertens.
 the company which produces Doc Martens boots.
- 3) Skinheads liked and wore Docs because they were black and comfortable.
 these people had bad feet.
 they looked hard and intimidating.
- 4) The company used to produce 9 million pairs of shoes every day.
 170.000 pairs of shoes every week.
 50 million of shoes every year.
- 5) The best moment for Dr Martens was in the 1950s.
 in the 1070s.
 in the 1990s.
- 6) Since April 1st , 2003, the production of Dr Martens has totally stopped.
 the production has partly moved to China.
 the production has stopped in England and moved in China.

6. Translate into French the following words or expressions.

- to injure (§1)
- trouble (§1)
- a family company (§2)
- factory-workers (§3)
- footwear (§5)
- the heyday (§5)
- the loss (§5)

7. Find in the text the English equivalents for:

- des pneus (§1)
- la gamme, le modèle (§2)
- un œillet (§4)
- le cuir (§4)
- une marque (§5)
- les ventes (§5)
- un symbole de la mode (§5)