# Historic Cardiff shoe retailer A.G. Meek closes Albany Road store amid rising costs



A.G. Meek, a longstanding independent shoe retailer in Cardiff with a history dating back more than a century, has announced the closure of its Albany Road store, citing recent increases in National Insurance contributions and business rates as key factors making continued operation unsustainable.

Founded in 1913 by Albert George Meek, the family-owned business has been a fixture of Cardiff’s retail landscape. The store famously survived bombing by the Luftwaffe in 1941 during Nazi attacks targeting the city’s docklands. After the wartime destruction, the Meek family demonstrated resilience by reopening a new shop just a few doors away from the bombed ruins, continuing the business despite the challenging circumstances.

Over the decades, the company expanded to locations in Cwmbran, Newport, Gloucester, and Cardiff city centre. Albert George Meek’s sons later advanced the business by selling coordinated sets of shoes, bags, and gloves known as “Meek’s Sets.”

David Meek, the company’s current CEO and grandson of the founder, explained that the financial pressures stemming from recent government budget decisions have created insurmountable difficulties. Speaking to the South Wales Argus, he said: “Increased cost for running a business that does not have a high turnover has unfortunately forced our closure. The last budget was an absolute stinker for a business of our size.”

He further elaborated, “Smaller businesses have been protected by the various tax increases, but we have 24 staff, and increases in National Insurance have caused a lot of problems. Our National Insurance on one shop and our business rates are increasing by £5,000 a year each from April and this is unsustainable.” Despite hoping conditions would improve, Mr Meek acknowledged that “the recent budget is a disaster for small businesses employing lots of part-time staff like ours.”

The rising employer National Insurance rate, which increased from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent this month, both in conjunction with reductions in retail rate relief — dropping from 75 per cent to 40 per cent — have significantly increased operating costs.

David Meek also reflected on the changing retail environment: “Albany Road used to be thriving with independent businesses, but they’ve since closed, and virtually every shop is becoming either a café or a restaurant.” He noted the decline within the footwear retail sector, describing shoe retailers as “an endangered species.”

Although the Albany Road store will close, the company has assured that none of its 24 staff members will be made redundant; instead, they will be offered positions at the city centre branch. This closure coincides with the shuttering of A.G. Meek’s Gloucester store, which had served the city for 65 years. In a Facebook post, Mr Meek expressed his sadness, stating: “I am very sad to tell you that we are closing our shoe shop after 60 years trading in Gloucester City Centre.”

The closures mark a significant moment for the Meek family business, ending historic chapters of their presence in both Gloucester and Cardiff’s Albany Road while continuing operations in Cardiff’s city centre. The South Wales Argus reports that these developments illustrate the broader challenges faced by independent retailers amidst rising business costs and evolving consumer patterns.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://agmeek.co.uk> - Confirms A.G. Meek as an independent shoe retailer operating in Cardiff and Newport, offering context about its product lines and physical stores.
2. <https://www.instagram.com/agmeek.limited/p/DIZdA0Dv_Wm/> - Directly corroborates the closure of the Albany Road Cardiff store as announced by the company in April 2024.
3. <https://agmeek.co.uk> - Establishes the company's historical presence through its website narrative about 'Four Stores in South Wales,' supporting the claim of a multi-generational retail footprint.
4. <https://www.instagram.com/agmeek.limited/p/DIZdA0Dv_Wm/> - Provides primary-source confirmation of the Albany Road closure decision, though specific financial reasons are not detailed in the post.
5. <https://agmeek.co.uk> - Indirectly supports operational challenges through mentions of repair services and sustainability efforts, reflecting cost-management strategies.
6. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25116920.rising-costs-sees-g-meek-shut-112-year-old-cardiff-store/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data