Who's Gone Bust in UK Retailing 2017 & 2018

Company failures are listed in reverse order, starting with December 2018

A table of annual retail company failures can be found on the webpage ***Who's Gone Bust?*** (web address www.retailresearch/whosgonebust) along with details of how this listing of company is created. There is also an analysis that can be downloaded of the major retailers that have gone into administration since 2008. When using this list please take into account the following conditions that form part of the list:

Business failure can often be a temporary. We are not suggesting that the businesses listed here no longer survive, but they gone through the legal process of insolvency known as **administration***. This listing is based on research carried out at the time based on our understanding of their business affairs. More recent information may well change some of the assumptions or conclusions. Some of these firms entered administration and then were closed down. Others have had a second life as ecommerce-only businesses with no or few physical stores. Most of the large firms came out of administration and are still trading. Some have been sold, but changed their name. Others exist as departments or concessions in larger stores. The presence of any business in this listing must not be taken to imply that it no longer exists, its name is no longer used or that such business, if still trading, is impaired in anyway.*

2007-2019 Review

	Companies failing	Stores Affected	Employees Affected
2019	For 2019 see our regularly-updated page www.retailresearch.org/Whosgonebust		
2018 (12 months)	43	2,594	46,014
2017 (12 months)	44	1,383	12,225
2016 (12 months)	30	1,504	26,110
2015 (12 months)	25	728	6,845
2014 (12 months)	43	1,314	12,335
2013 (12 months)	49	2,500	25,140
2012 (12 months)	54	3,951	48,142
2011 (12 months)	31	2,469	24,025
2010 (12 months)	26	944	10,930
2009 (12 months)	37	6,536	26,688
2008 (12 months)	54	5,793	74,539
2007 (12 months)	25	2,600	14,083

Failures in 2018

- **Greenwoods,** the long-established menswear retailer, went into voluntary liquidation at the end of 2018. It had more than 200 stores in the 1980s, but by 2017 this had shrunk to 63. It went into administration in 2017 and continued to trade. Forty stores were rescued, but all now face closure.
- **Mahabis,** a direct-supply menswear shoe retailer, went into administration after Christmas. Its products were up-market slippers, sold mostly to well-heeled millennials. The company, set up in 2014, claimed to have sold 1mn pairs of slippers in 100 countries. The company has been purchased by Simba.

- **HMV,** the entertainment/music specialist, went into administration at the end of Christmas 2018. It reported that DVD sales over Christmas had fallen by 1/3rd compared to last year: overall its turnover had suffered from a disastrous November. This second failure for HMV affected its 2,200 employees and 133 stores, including eight Fopp outlets. It had been rescued in 2013 by Hilco, who threw in the towel in 2018 after a very poor Christmas. HMV's last full-year accounts show a loss of £7.5mn on sales of £278mn (down 8%). HMV is the last major music and DVD chain to survive on the high street. The company has been bought by Mike Ashley of Sports Direct.
- **Fishing Republic,** the sports specialist, was bought out of administration just before Christmas. There are 111 employees and 14 outlets. Its shares were suspended three months ago when its major stakeholders refused to supply additional funds to the ailing retailer which lost -£2.5mn in its most-recent financial year against total sales of £3.4mn (down from £4.1mn).
- **Blue Inc**, went into administration on 10 December 2018, the second time in two years. Blue Inc is a menswear retailer oriented towards the younger market with 31 stores remaining. A CVA was agreed with trade creditors last year, but poor trading has led the firm to go into administration. It made a loss of £2.7mn in 2017. The stores remain open.
- **Red Dog Music,** the independent music store in London and Edinburgh, went into administration and shut down at the end of November. There were 18 employees, of which 13 were made redundant immediately. As well as selling instruments and music it provided instrumental and technical support and other facilities for musicians.
- **Berketex**, the bridalwear retailer and producer, went into administration in the latter part of November. There were 15 stores plus Debenhams concessions. There were around 80 employees with a turnover of £1.5 mn. Around 300 customers had paid in advance for their wedding dresses, and presumably will become unsecured creditors.
- **Crawshaws,** the butchery chain with 42 stores and 12 factory outlets, went into administration at the end of October. There are 662 staff. The company has been loss-making and sought to raise cash to revamp the business, but failed to do so. Crawshaws has a significant pre-prepared food-to-go operation as well as traditional meat sales. The factory outlets are profitable and Crawshaws has a strategic partnership with A F Blakemore, the SPAR colossus, with two trial stores that opened in October 2018. Ranjit Boparan owns 30% of the business. The business has been steadily losing trade to supermarkets and the price war associated with continental discounters. As the company's name suggests, it started in Yorkshire and mainly operates in the North and the Midlands. Its shares are quoted on the AIM market.
- **Evans Cycles,** the long-established supplier of bicycles, cycling-wear and accessories, went into administration at the end of October after failing to agree terms with Halfords and other potential partners. It was immediately bought out of administration by Sports Direct, which has recently started selling certain high-end cycle products. Evans Cycles has 62 stores and 1,300 employees. All bricks-and-mortar cycle shops have faced stiff competition from online suppliers in the past few years. Senior managers needed £20mn for a recovery plan, but its current owners, ECI Partners, refused to provide this money so Evans looked around the market to see who would buy it. Sports Direct expects to close one-half of the stores, making around 440 employees redundant.
- **Gardman Group,** one of the UK's largest suppliers of garden products founded in 1992, gave notice of intention to appoint an administrator. It is currently owned by Rutland Partners and has 206 employees. It supplies merchandise such as solar lighting, garden furniture, gardening tools and bird-care products and is looking for buyers. It suffered a major warehouse fire in March 2018 which has meant that many of its products have been out of stock in the major selling period. The company was bought by Westland Horticulture (also trades as *Unwins*)

- **American Golf,** Europe's largest golf retailer with 132 stores, went into administration in mid-March. It was purchased by private-equity firm Endless, presumably on a pre-pack basis, and immediately closed 20 stores. Around 150 jobs have been lost. There are 900 employees of the new company. In 2018, the company has been hit by snow at the beginning of the year and sunshine over summer, both of which hit footfall. However golf as an active sport is currently in decline.
- **Coast**, the fashion chain with 24 stores, went into administration in mid-October. All its stores are to close, although the concessions in third-party stores will stay. There are 900 employees. Karen Millen has bought the company's website, IP, brand and concessions and will continue to employ over 600 of Coast's staff. Coast, like Karen Millen, is a subsidiary of Aurora Fashions, which is owned by Icelandic Bank, Kaupthing.
- **Deciem,** the global Skincare brand that trades as **The Ordinary** and **Niod** in specialist site like London's Covent Garden and Seven Dials, has closed all its stores citing 'major criminal activity'. The acting CEO/founder had taken over Deciem's social media account which was followed by some unusual behaviour, including publicising the company's 'closure' and he was replaced. There were 120 UK staff, although the bulk of its business is in the U.S. and Canada.
- **Arch Angelz Ltd**, the beauty—bar chain based in Debenhams stores, went into administration early in October 2018. It has 31 units with total sales of more than £3mn and more than 120 employees. Arch Angelz was trying to arrange additional funding, when it went into administration. The company is to be wound up
- **Orla Kiely**, the retail fashion/homeware design business (owned by Kiely Rowan PLC), went into voluntary liquidation in mid-September, its two UK stores closing immediately and its online site being taken down. Although popular (too common?) the company, best known for its vintage 70s prints, was regarded as not being sufficiently innovative. The company expects to continue to sell merchandise through upmarket third-party stores. Orla Kiely's design work will continue. There were 50 employees, most of whom were unpaid for the previous weeks when the company closed down.

Display of Orla Kiely products in a department store

- **Saltrock,** the Devon-based surfing clothing brand, went into pre-pack administration in August, emerging as a subsidiary of Crew Clothing. Saltrock previously had 30 stores with 175 staff. Five shops were closed and 25 staff made redundant immediately.
- **House of Fraser (HoF)**, the upmarket department store group established in 1849 went into administration in mid-August 2018. It was running out of money.

HoF includes iconic regional brands such as Jenners, Rackhams and Kendalls. The business had been poorly run for some years (its previous owner inserted a management team with little/no prior retail experience). The new owners provided insufficient investment to make a success of the online operations (unlike John Lewis) or maintain the credibility of its retail stores. Earlier in 2018 it had agreed a CVA with its creditors to cut store numbers from 59 to 31 and a new Chinese owner emerged to save the business.
Certain landlords used Scots law to try to overturn the CVA and the new potential owner C-Banner took fright and decided not to buy the House of Fraser. The other potential purchasers were believed to have either wanted the firm to go through administration before they bought it or would have done it themselves.
The directors appointed administrators to protect the company from its creditors taking legal action to recover their assets and finally agreed to sell to Mike Ashley as a pre-pack immediately out of administration for £90m. The business advantage of administration is that the creditors, pension funds and long-term agreements about rents etc remain with the old HOF, the new HOF being free of all these liabilities. Mike Ashley, owns Sports Direct, Flannels and Lilleywhites bought the existing chain (apart from Dublin's HoF), including the stores earmarked for closure in the CVA.
Ashley has announced he will attempt to save 80% of the HoF stores, meaning he expects the chain to have about 45+stores rather than 31 stores as planned by the CVA. To meet his target of making the chain the 'Harrods of the High Street', he expects to include more luxury product and a more personalised service for clients. There are 17,500 staff including 11,500 concession staff, working in 59 stores (note that a few have closed).

- **Poundworld.** Ireland-based Henderson family were to have bought 50 Poundworld stores from the administrators, via their wholly-owned group RVT Holdings ltd, but this project has fallen through. The closure of all the chain's stores will continue as planned, although 19 stores are now to be rebranded as Iceland shops.
- **Gaucho,** an Argentine themed restaurant group, went into administration in July. Its **Cau** chain (pronounced 'cow' for some reason) employing 540 people in 22 outlets was immediately closed, suffering from what its administrators (see Butler, *Guardian*, 19 June 2018) described as 'rapid overexpansion, poor site selection, onerous lease arrangements and a fundamentally poor guest proposition.'
- **Childrens World,** a part of Mothercare with large stores focusing on toys and childrenswear, has been placed in administration by its parent company. Thirteen stores are to transfer to the Mothercare brand: the remaining nine Childrens World (CW) stores are expected to close, employing around 140 staff. CW was originally set up by Boots 30+ years ago as part of its diversification strategy that included Halford, 50% of Do-It-All DIY and home decorator A G Stanley (trading as 'Homestyle by FADS'). The CVA for CW did not get the necessary agreement from creditors, hence the subsidiary was placed into administration.
- **Gin Festival**, the organiser of craft and artisanal gin opportunities around the country, has gone into administration. As far as we know, all the 20 forthcoming festivals have been abandoned. It is understood that the company has been loss making for some time and the cost of starting an online business selling craft gins at the same time as it brought ticket sales in-house have sunk the business.
- **Ultra Furniture** based in **Kingswinford** near Dudley, has gone into administration with 160-employees. It is not a retailer but 70% of Ultra's sales came from the *Tesco Direct* website. When Tesco announced last month that Tesco Direct was closing, Ultra was unable to continue trading as a going concern. The firm was set up 30 years ago.
- The 20 retail stores trading as **High & Mighty, Jacamo** and **Simply Be** are all to close as their owner, N Brown, seeks to become a wholly online business. By 2017, the stores contributed only 2% to its turnover. There are 270 staff. Until 2018,

Simply Be (large-size fashion) was an example of a successful ecommerce businesses that had decided to trade on the high street as well.

- **Flooring Republic (FR)** and online flooring company **Posh Floorings (PF)**, both operational subsidiaries of ultimate owner, Chinese multinational ANBO Holdings, went through pre-pack administration in late May/early June. The 22 stores of FR and PF online transferred to a new business and new owners, Birmingham-based Taylor Grange Retail. The business sold laminate, wood, parquet and vinyl flooring and accessories. Flooring Republic/PoshFloorings had expected to reach 80 stores by end 2018, but the new company wants to open seven stores in 2018 and 30 in 2019.
- **Poundworld,** one of several 'Pound-' and '99p' baby shark discount stores, went into administration on 11 June 2018 after no buyer could be found for the business. It has 350 stores and 5,300 staff. 'Bargain Buys' is a subsidiary. The group has been struggling for some time, a victim of the success of other (more recent) discount stores, the tough price war going on in retailing and the marketing issues created by its 'Pound' label - limiting both what it sold and its customers' perceptions of its range and prices. In 2016-17, its losses rose to -£17.1mn compared to -£5.4mn the previous year. It looked at first that the company would be saved at the cost of closing half the stores, but administrators Deloittes closed the business down.
- ***Fabb Sofas***, the furniture retailer set up by DFS founder Lord Kirkham, went into administration in June because it failed to find a buyer and could no longer meet its financial obligations. There are 175 staff and nine stores.
- **Henri Lloyd,** the fashion retailer and designer (largely based on sailing/activity and leisure clothing), went into administration early in June 2018. There are seven stand-alone stores and 18 concessions in the House of Fraser. Henri Lloyd employs around 180 employees.
- **Bags Etc,** (also called **Domo**) a retailer of bags and luggage with 58 stores and concessions, went into administration in mid-May. There were 350 employees. The company is to go into liquidation, blaming the switch to *destination* retailing and online competition. But as virtually every retailer now sells bags and luggage, from Tesco to Dunelm, its market is rather crowded.
- **Gameseek,** an online video retailers, went into liquidation it is thought, over the May Bank Holiday weekend, with a message on its website notified customers that its website was 'under maintenance' and its eBay store returned the message 'address not found'. Creditors have received letters from the liquidators so it looks like the company has closed down.
- **Jacques Vert, Dash and Eastex owner, Calvetron Brands Limited**, has called in administrators for the second time in a year. The current owner bought what was then called Style Brands with 1,700 jobs. The company now has a 1,000 employees but trade has been weak over Christmas and 2018 in their concessions in Debenhams and HoF.
- **Grainger Games,** the video games supplier with 67 stores, has gone into administration with the loss of 400 jobs. Its stock has been bought by Entertainment Magpie for around £1mn, although there has been plenty of discussion with customers who have argued that they retain title of their items that were deposited with the firm to be repaired or sold to and a law firm has been hired to sort out such problems.
- **Bench,** a fashion retailer focused on *streetwear* (founded in 1989), went into administration at the end of April. It has 20 UK stores and 15 in Germany. It has been losing money for some time, but been unable to turn a profit. Its menswear, womenswear and childrenswear goods are sold in 34 countries. There are 176 UK employees and 170 in Germany. The company is continuing to trade.
- **Betterware,** an old-established firm based in Birmingham, which started (1928) selling mops, brushes and polishes door-to-door, went into administration in April. It is a sister company to Kleeneze. In 2015 the business was bought by Texas-based JRJR, a consumer sales group. Sales are around £40mn, though the company

was once worth £117mn. All 94 direct staff have been made redundant. It went into administration after HMRC petitioned to wind up the company. There were approximately 3,000 salespeople who sold and deliver the Betterware goods.

- **Kleeneze,** the old-established (85 years old) household and beauty products company, whose catalogues and merchandise are delivered and sold by door-to-door salespeople, went into administration in mid-April. There are 140 direct staff working in the headquarters and the warehouse, plus 5,000 self-employed salespeople. Kleeneze has recently suffered IT issues and costs from moving its warehouse: it has also been under severe pressure from discounters.
- **Conviviality Retailing**, the major drinks and off-licence supplier that owns **Wine Rack** and **Bargain Booze** with sales of £1.6 bn, went into administration early in April 2018. The company had grown too quickly by merger, there were a series of profit warnings, some problems with record keeping, and an unforeseen £30mn tax bill for which Conviviality had made no provision forced it to ask for extra funds from its investors, who refused. There were 4,000 employees (2,600 in its stores) and 760 stores. Wholesaler Bestway bought the retail operations. Conviviality also owned **Matthew Clark** and **Bibendum,** distribution chains that supplied more than 23,000 public houses and the JD Wetherspoon chain. The distribution chains were bought in a pre-pack by C&C (owners of Magners) with support from drinks group AB InBev.
- **Claire's,** the U.S. parent company of UK *Claire's Accessories*, applied for Chapter Eleven protection from its creditors on 19 March. It has 5,300 sites in the U.S., many of which are concessions in shopping malls. It is known there for its pre-teen jewellery [or jewelry] and claims to have pierced 100 mn pairs of ears since 1978. The corporation is currently trying to shift $1.9 bn of debt placed on it by successive private equity buyouts and hedge funds and to reorganise the corporation. There are no current plans to close any outlets. Claire's Accessories UK is not affected.
- **Countrywide Farmers,** the rural supplies Co-operative, went into administration in March following the decision of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) to initiate a detailed investigation into its proposed merger with Mole Valley Farmers. Countywide employs more than 700 people and sells farm supplies, animal feed, energy, gardening, household products from 48 stores and depots. It has 4,000 mainly-farmer members. It sold its LPG business a few days before going into administration. The CMA was concerned that if the merger went ahead there would be insufficient competition in the south and the south west and lack of competition for things like outdoor clothing, hand tools and pet food. The CMA is the body that waved through the giant merger of Tesco and Bookers, but viewed an agreed merger to save Countrywide Farmers, its workers and its members as an anti-competitive act. Would the French authorities have allowed such an event to happen in their country? Almost certainly not.
- **Toys 'R' Us UK**, the UK's largest toy and children's games/leisure products supplier, went into administration on the last day of February 2018 after failing to find a third-party buyer for the business. Its problems started when its US parent went into Chapter Eleven last December. Toys 'R' Us agreed a CVA with creditors last December on the basis that one-quarter of stores would be closed, making 800 staff redundant. The Pensions Regulator held out for better terms for its pensioners until the very last moment. In February HMRC sought to recover £15 mn in unpaid VAT and this finally tipped the company into administration. There is a £37 mn pension deficit which presumably will now become the responsibility of the Pension Protection Fund. There are 105 stores and 3,200 staff. In the past it has provided support for the American and European arms of Toys 'R' Us, but it is now legally unable to retrieve any of its funds from the U.S.
- **Maplin,** the electrical/electronic component and gadget business, went into administration on the same day as Toys 'R' Us, having failed to find a buyer. There are more than 200 stores and 2,500 staff. *Brinkwire* has stated that credit insurers QBE and Euler Hermes, nervous about its financial position, withdrew credit insurance and this ended Maplin's trading relationship with Tech Data, the UK's

largest tech distributor. Over Christmas, the loss-making company's sales fell by 7%.

- **Berwin & Berwin (B&B),** the menswear group, had been bought out of administration by EWM (Edinburgh Woollen Mill). Eight hundred people work at B&B, whose brands included Lambretta, Paul Costelloe and Baumler. All B&B inventory and 36 concessions have been taken over by Formal Tailoring 1885 Limited, which is part of the EWM group. B&B was the major supplier to Austin Reed and Jaeger, both of which plunged into administration with the brands being bought by EWM. B&B products will be stocked across EWM stores. The Hungarian and German subsidiaries will also be run by EWM.
- **Cloggs**, the specialist footwear retailer owned by J D Sports, is to be wound up in Spring 2018, according to *Drapers*. The company started in a Birmingham market. It now has three stores and a strong online presence. The problems of rising costs and weak consumer demand are common in the footwear trade, as shown by the failure of Brantano, Jones The Bootmaker and Shoon in 2017.
- **Warren Evans,** bed, mattress and furniture retailers in London and the South East of England, went into administration one week after putting itself up for sale. There are 14 stores and a warehouse with 287 staff. Trading at Christmas was good, although Warren Evans has been losing money for some time under the pressure of rising costs and shrinking customer spending. The company was known for its ethical stance. However, administrators have announced that customers that have paid for beds will no longer receive deliveries.
- **Justice Jewellers,** Winchester, is to close its store after trading in the city centre for almost 20 years. It leapt to global attention last year when it suffered a £250,000 robbery. Its reasons for closure were the shift of trade from the high street to online, but also the Christmas Market which did little for traders in luxury goods and 'blocked the streets and car parks' driving his customers away. The company intends to trade online in future.
- **Juice Corporation**, the owner of designer brands Elizabeth Emmanuel (wedding dresses etc), Joe Bloggs, Gabicci, Rawcroft and Loyalty & Faith, went into administration at the end of January. In the past it launched celebrity ranges for Brian Lara and Naseem Hamed. Although the group made profits, it had failed to make inroads into the fashion market particularly now that UK consumers were becoming slightly more austere in their buying patterns. There are 61 staff. The administrators are seeking a sale of the group rather than breaking it up.
- **Joe Bloggs,** the designer brand (above) once known for its wide *Madchester-style* jeans (who writes this stuff?), has gone into administration as part of Juice Corporation.
- **East,** the fashion brand with 34 stores and 15 concessions, went into administration at the end of January for the second time in two-and-a-half years. Last time it was bought out of administration in a pre-pack that closed 15 stores. There are 320 staff.
- **Nice 'N' Naughty Leisurewear**, a retailer of sex toys and intimate apparel, went into administration in January caused by cash-flow problems. The company was bought out of administration by its previous director. There are nine stores and 26 staff.
- **Barkers**, the pet grooming chain owned by Pets at Home, is to close by March 2018. There are seven stores in upmarket areas like Ilkley and Marlow. All 55 staff are to be offered positions with Pets at Home. The company reported that although the proposition was popular with customers, the store operating costs were too high.
- **Joe Delucci's Gelato**, Warwick ice-cream retailer and wholesaler with parlours in 18 shopping centres, went into administration early in January. There were 38 employees.

Failures in 2017

- **Pixiphoto,** a chain of photo shops aimed at mother-baby snaps closed down in July and the company's assets, client list, and images were sold to a third party. 34 stores closed. Apologies for missing this from our list for July.
- **Dickinsons Furnishers Ltd**, which closed stores in Alnwick and Carlisle in September 2017 to concentrate on its contracting business and online sales has gone into administration (December 2017) putting 32 jobs at risk. It was founded in 1878.
- **Australian news.** Oroton the Australian handbag designer and retailers went into voluntary administration at the end of November. There are 59 stores which continue to trade. The company was founded 79 years ago.
- **Shoon,** the footwear retailer, went into administration in November, putting 95 jobs at risk and heavy losses for its suppliers. Its stores in Winchester, St Albans, Leamington Spa and Guilford have closed and stores in Bath and Salisbury (and concessions in Bratts and Northwich) have been sold to The Shoot Shoe Company. It previously went into administration in 2012, when it had 23 stores. Turnover fell by 20% last year although profits rose.
- **Buy As You View,** otherwise *Dunraven Finance*, which rents out TVs and other consumer electronics on a hire-purchase system went into administration in September. There are 260 employees and 40,000 UK customers. The company is known for giving credit to distressed purchasers. A proportion of these deals have gone wrong. Additionally the company was criticised for installing regulators at clients' houses which could ration their viewing if payments were not kept up.
- **Roamers and Seekers,** a small UK clothing outlet for Hong Kong suppliers, set up by former Superdry design manager in 2015, went into administration.
- **MultiYork,** the furniture and homeware retailer with 50 stores, went into administration towards the end of November. MultiYork had been making losses for some time. Its sales last year were £50 mn, but profit was £0.479 mn against a £0.714 mn loss in the previous year. The company had been rescued once before in 1995.There are 547 people working in its stores and furniture was manufactured in Thetford, Norfolk.
- **Mango Bikes**, an online supplier of custom-made cycles, went into administration in November, caused by rising input prices for components and specialist materials and by intense competition. There are five employees.
- **J H Donald,** an Ayrshire electrical retailer with five stores, went into administration in November. It trades as part of the Euronics voluntary group and has 32 employees. One store has already closed. The others are running clearance sales. The company was founded in 1952.
- **Palmer & Harvey (P&H),** the employee-owned major UK tobacco, chilled foods and alcohol supplier to 90,000 stores, is in talks with its suppliers to avoid administration. Tesco's takeover of Booker (it supplies Tesco) is likely to create a major rationalisation of all grocery wholesaling. It is the major tobacco wholesaler in the UK, which explains why Imperial Tobacco is in talks with the company to mount a rescue deal and did the same in April 2017. There are 4,000 employees.
- **Franchisees of Topshop and TopMan in Australia and New Zealand** have gone into administration following general problems with their businesses down under. The UK operations are of course unaffected.
- **Toys 'R' Us in the US and Canada** have sought protection from their creditors, while they reorganise. The UK stores are unaffected.
- **Just for Pets,** the 25-store petfood and petcare business, went into administration in mid-September as a result of poor trading and a large fall in profits. It is part of the Llansantffraid-based Wynstay Group, an agricultural supplies PLC, which include specialist country-store type shops established west of a north-south line passing through Banbury.

- **Greenwoods**, the rather old-fashioned menswear retailer established 150 years ago as a hatter and now with 65 outlets in the UK, went into administration in early September. It has a large formal-wear suit hire business trading as ***1860***. It has been through a series of revamps and downsizing over the last 20 years and had more than 200 stores in the late 90s. Currently it has 318 staff. The company was purchased out of administration by Versatile International Trading which has closed 22 stores , creating 88 redundancies.
- **Basler UK,** the fashion retailer, went into administration at the end of August following the administration of its German parent along with other foreign subsidiaries. The German parent is seeking a buyer. Its failure to find one has produce the present outcome and formal liquidation proceedings have started. Basler UK has three own-brand stores, a factory outlet, 17 concessions and supplies it brand to more than 100 wholesale customers. The Group also owns St Emile.
- **Surfstitch,** the value online Australian retailer that also operates UK and U.S. websites, went into administration as a response to legal cases relating with alleged misinformation of investors. The websites Surfstitch, SurfDome and Swell have not so far been affected by the administration.
- **Beadworks UK,** a wholesaler and retailer of beads, gemstones, chains and related costume/haberdashery items, went into administration in August.it is hoped to find a buyer. There are 14 staff and two sites.
- **Spymaster,** retailer of James-Bond style spy- and anti-spy products and devices, has gone into administration. It started 26 years ago and operates from a stand-alone store, online and two concessions. Its merchandise includes drones, covert cameras, bugging devices, body armour, vehicle tracking equipment and military watches, small hovercraft and miniature submarines.
- **Zatchels,** a satchel and bag manufacturer and retailer based in Leicester, went into administration on the last day of July and was bought out by its two founders. It had been operating under a CVA. There are 50 employees.
- **Cadogan and Co**, upmarket fashion store in Winchester for 20 years, went into administration in July, presumably sharing the malaise common to fashion in the last three years, and closed down in August. Nine people worked in the store.
- **Rare Fashion,** the online company trading as **'Rare London',** went into administration at the end of July 2017. The company's products were sold by Asos, Topshop and Next as well as the company's own site. It was closed the next day, all 56 staff being dismissed. It had previously gone into administration in 2013 with 100 redundancies. It was an important supplier of bridalwear and fashion of a certain kind. There are likely to be hundreds or thousands of customers who will lose most or all of what they have paid.
- **Store Twenty One,** the budget fashion and homewares store (see below) has finally closed its stores and opted for liquidation, involving the closure and sale of its 125 stores and redundancy for its employees. Three months ago it had 1,010 employees but staff numbers had been pared to the bone and were already down to 900. For several years the company seems to have adopted a policy of late payment of suppliers. Some landlords have put in bailiffs once or twice to get their rent paid. The action that led to the company's failure started early this year when HMRC attempted to appoint an administrator because of non-payment of tax. Most of its stores are high street and are around 10,000 to 20,000 sq feet. Many of the stores are ex-Woolworths, ex-M&S, ex-Burtons etc. and have gone through several owners in recent years. They will take a long time to be relet. Many of the staff have long service and are very loyal to the company. The list of creditors will be very long, including landlords, suppliers, staff, and banks.
- **Linens Direct,** an online and store retailer with 35 branches, went into administration in July and ceased trading. It announced its intention of appointing administrators in May. It was established 25 years ago and seemed to be trading successfully with sales of £21mn until it went into administration. There were 320 staff.

- **Lovereading,** the online book recommendation site, went into administration in June 2017.The company continues to trade. There are eight employees. Its brand identities include lovereading.co.uk, lovereading4kids.co.uk and lovereading4schools.co.uk.
- **Gas Superstore,** with sales of £12 mn **(**based in Leicester and Coalville) with an active online business, stopped trading in May and went into administation.
- **Rapid Discount Outlet,** the Liverpool-based hard-discount appliance store, went into administration in May owing £3 mn. No buyer could be found and the store has closed. It is the successor to Rapid Hardware which originally operated a whole block in Basnett Street, but went into administration in 2013. There were 100 staff at one time, but only 25 by May 2017.
- **BBC Store,** the corporation's digital download store, is to close in November 2017 with purchases made later than November 2015 to be refunded or replaced with Amazon vouchers). BBC programmes are normally available on subscription sites such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, while BBC Store was TVOD providing permanent rights to view purchased videos. The streaming service has not been a commercial success, without the scale and range of Netflix or the popularity of a subscription model.
- **Style Group Brands,** trading as **Jacques Vert, Precis, Windsmoor, Eastex** and **Dash** (womenswear brands), has been bought out of a pre-pack administration by part of Calvetron Style Holdings, backed by Harold Tilman (former head of Jaeger) and Asian entrepreneurs Sundeep Vyas, Haseeb Aziz and Arvind Vij. The deal includes only 5 of Style Brands' 22 existing stores, but the 318 concessions in the UK and Ireland along with the 5 remaining stores safeguard 1,719 jobs. Fifty-one Canadian concessions and 14 in the Middle East are to continue, but the Belgian concessions are to close. There are 272 immediate job losses from closing the 17 UK stores and reductions in staffing at head office and a warehouse in County Durham.
- **Equestrian Clearance Warehouse Ltd,** trading as **Equestrian.com,** a leading online retailer of riding products and clothing, went into administration in June. Most of the 12 staff has been made redundant, although the firm continues to trade.
- **Topshop Australia** The worst six months for fashion in Australia saw Topshop Australia go into voluntary administration in June 2017. The UK operations are not affected. Topshop and Topman have 760 staff in Australia and sales of Aus $960 mn through nine stores and 17 concessions (mainly Myers).
- **Store Twenty One,** the budget fashion and homewares store created from Bewise and Quality Seconds (QS), avoided administration through the possible sale of its head office, but also filed a notice of intention to appoint administrators, preventing HMRC (and perhaps other creditors) from pursuing a winding up order. Its bankers have been unwilling to provide more credit. The company has been struggling for some years. In 2016 it arranged a company voluntary agreement (CVA) with its creditors and closed 77 of its stores. Store Twenty One had been bought out of administration in 2006 by Indian megacompany Grabal Alok. There are 125 stores and 1010 employees affected.
- **Joy The Store,** the fashion, lifestyle, gifts and homeware brand (fun based), went into administration in May, but was bought on a pre-pack basis by Louche London the company's immediate owner. Eleven stores have been closed and 78 staff made redundant, leaving Joy with 19 stores and 230 employees.
- **Theo Fennel,** the Chelsea jeweller to the celebrity world focusing on distinctive design and craftsmanship, went into administration in May. It trades from its flagship store in Fulham Road, the Royal Exchange and several concessions including Harrods, Selfridges and Harvey Nichols. There are 54 staff. It was established in 1982, but bought by a consortium four years ago. It has suffered from a costly strategy to expand globally, high overheads and management turmoil.

- **Tempest Car dealership** in Lichfield is closing in May with the loss of 25 jobs. Tempest claim that a decision by the council to develop the site earlier than promised has prevented the business finding a new location: Lichfield District Council argues in contrast that Tempest were slow to relocate. Twenty-four jobs are affected.
- **iCandy (iCandy Cards and Gifts)**, set up by Clinton Lewis after the failure of Clintons in 2012, went into administration in May 2017. There are more than 100 employees and 14 stores, mainly in market towns in the South East. Four stores were closed immediately and 22 staff made redundant while buyers are sought for the business.
- **Retail Acquisition Limited (RAL)**, the personally-owned company used by Dominic Chappel to acquire the assets and good will of BHS for £1 from Arcadia, is to be put into administration and liquidated to make RAL assets available for BHS creditors. When Mr Chappell ran BHS more than £8 mn was withdrawn from BHS in favour of RAL. There is only one director and the last accounts were filed in 2014.
- **Ruddocks of Lincoln,** a large independent stationery and gifts retailer established 163 years ago, closed in April 2017. Reasons given included the decline of the high street, the growth of online retail, the fall in postal communications and increased expenses including rates. Lack of parking has also created particular problems for stores in central Lincoln. Henry's tea room has also closed, but the design and print business will continue.
- **Kit and Ace,** the Canadian retailer of 'technical clothing for men and women' (no we don't know what that means either), is closing its UK stores only two years after announcing that it was to open eight stores in the UK. UK closures are part of the company's retreat from international operations following heavy losses: it abandoned its stores in Australia and the U.S. as well. Australian staff only found out they were sacked by reading a short notice on the company's Instagram page and on Facebook. Kit and Ace seem to be one retailer that has its social media strategy sorted. In the UK it has two stores and 43 staff and in Australia to seven stores and 75 staff.
- **Transline**, the recruitment specialist used by Sports Direct to provide up to 3,000 staff for its Nottinghamshire Shirebrook warehouse, is seeking additional finance and has given notice that it may ask for administrators to be appointed if this is unsuccessful. The agency became well-known when Sports Direct was the subject of BBC and Parliamentary investigations relating to the treatment of staff.
- **CPL Foods and Millcliffe Ltd,** franchisees of Burger King with 1,000 employees and 36 outlets, went into administration in April, probably caused by over-expansion. The stores are based widely in England and Wales, including Blackpool, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Bridlington, Llanelli, Huddersfield, Worksop, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Hull, Skegness and Great Yarmouth. HMRC attempted to wind up CPL Foods in January, but the petition was dismissed in February, administrators were appointed April.
- **Jaeger,** the high street menswear and womenswear fashion chain established in 1884, collapsed into administration at the beginning of April. There were 46 stores (20 of which closed in the following fortnight), 63 concessions and 686 staff, including 70 staff at the logistics hub in Kings Lynn. Harold Tilman (who also ran Acquascutum) sold the company to Better Capital in 2012 for almost £20 mn. It has now been sold to Edinburgh Woollen Mills (EWM) after sales fell by 7% last year to £78.4 mn and pre-tax losses were £17 mn. EWM are expected to close most of the stores and run it via in-store concessions and online.
- **Interio,** a luxury furniture retailer and interior designer set up 20 years ago, went into administration in late March. It was the distributor for John Richard, Dorya, Matsuoka and its own brand, AdVivum. It traded online (HQ in Poole) and from a design store in the Kings Road. There are 27 employees.
- **99p Stores,** the value retailer purchased by Poundland two years ago for £50mn, was put in administration in March. The situation is confusing, because 99p Stores was acquired by Poundland a couple of years ago. The truth seems to be: the

current **99p Stores** comprise only 60 unprofitable 99p stores that remained on old leases. Poundland tried to offload these shops to other retailers (99p Stores had 250 stores when bought by Poundland). The stores still trading as 99p Stores have now all closed. The 670 employees are to be offered jobs at other Poundland stores.

- **Brantano,** the national shoe chain that went into administration in 2016 did so again in March 2017. The company is owned by Alteri, like Jones The Bootmakers (which passed through administration a week earlier). There are around 73 stores (plus 64 concessions) and 1,086 employees. Brantano's online business stopped trading a few days after going into administration.
- **Ted & Muffy**, the Somerset footwear company previously known as 'Duo', went into administration and has dismissed 11 of its 38 staff. It sells quality boots and shoes, made in Frome, from one site in Bath and online. It went into administration previously in April 2016.
- **Matthews,** an Ipswich-based electrical retailer that had traded for more than 70 years, went into administration in March with the loss of six jobs.
- **VIP**, the e-cigarette retailer (formally *Must Have Limited*) owned by US corporation Electronic Cigarettes International Group, went into administration in early March, owning HMRC £2 mn in taxes. There are 165 stores and the company employs 265 staff. The company continues to trade and so far its parent is attempting to explore 'strategic alternatives'.
- **Wallace Sacks London,** a family-owned retailer and producer of upmarket made-to-order furniture, went into administration in late-February owing creditors almost £4 mn. Although Heals, Graham and Greene, John Lewis and House of Fraser are listed as existing clients, most sales seem to have been made through Wallace Sacks online and its associated website. The company was an intermediary, taking orders from customers then commissioning products from outside businesses. It has now ceased trading. There is a large number of unfulfilled orders. The creditors' list is 37 pages long with more than 1,840 names, most owed £800-£1,200. Unsecured creditors have claims of £2.7 mn, but only £192,000 will be realisable from debtors. Companies House info shows that 'Wallace Sacks Furnishings' has been a trading name for a firm called *Muubaa Limited* (that produces leather clothing). Company name changes have allowed Muubaa Limited to continue as a separate concern.
- **Agent Provocateur**, retailer of racy underwear and other products that scarce bare mention, went through pre-pack administration in March and was bought by Sports Direct. 3i obtained a majority stake following the divorce of its founders, Serena Reece and Joseph Corré (son of Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McClaren) who started the business in 1994. Although aimed at a younger clientele, the merchandise was very expensive and the racy designed-to-shock *underground* product was perhaps over-exuberant and no longer shocked in this post-recession world. It operates more than 100 stores in 30 countries (mainly high-end concessions) and has 600+ employees. There are 11 UK stores, 7 in France, 8 in Germany, 14 in China, 9 in Russia and 29 in the U.S..
- **Jones The Bootmaker,** one of the oldest retail chains on Britain's high streets (founded 1857), went through administration in March, put there by its owners, Alteri Investors**,** who also owned Brantano. It has been bought on a pre-pack basis by investors Endless, who have closed 31 branches losing 260 jobs. Before administration it had 110 stores and 13 concessions. Mid-range and upmarket footwear stores face increased competition from the fact that fashion retailers have radically improved their footwear offer.
- **Food Retailer Operations Ltd,** a franchisee of grocery store **Budgens,** went into administration in mid-February. It has 34 stores spread over the south of England, London, Norwich, Ludlow, Newport, Wales, Sherwood and St Neots with 872 staff. It also holds leases on a further 36 non-trading stores and Somerfield's former HQ. These are mostly former Co-op/Somerfield stores. Other Budgens stores are **not** affected.
- **News from A Place Down Under**. Australian/NZ fashion brands David Lawrence and Marcs went into voluntary administration at the end of January 2017. The rationale given was falling sales, poor cash flow and harmful market conditions for

fashion. The companies operated from 52 standalone stores, 11 outlets and 140 concessions in Australia and New Zealand (10 stores in New Zealand) with almost 1,200 staff. They continue to trade. The companies were owned by Webster Holdings: Webster co-founded the UK chain Jigsaw in the 1970s. In Australia, major recent failures in 2016 included Dick Smith Electronics (3,000 employees), Masters Home Improvement (part of Woolworths with 63 stores at demise), Pumpkin Patch (a global retailer in the noughties with 100s of stores, but 27 stores and 1,300 employees at its demise), Payless Shoes (150 stores, 730 jobs), Howards Storage World (home organisation systems, 29 stores and 30 franchises), and menswear chains, Herringbone and Rhodes and Beckett (29 stores and 150 staff) owned by German van Laack group.

- **Prelude Records,** a long-established store in St Giles, Norwich, specialising in classical music and jazz, is to close in March 2017 as a result of higher costs and the changes in the record industry. It was one of *Gramophone's Top 10 Classical music shops* and listed by *the Independent* as one of the top 50 record stores.
- **High Noon Stores,** the south Wales convenience store owner and forecourt operator, announced on 16 Jan it would appoint administrators. There are five convenience stores (which closed overnight) and ten petrol filling stations. The company ran out of cash over Christmas and therefore was required to cease trading.
- **Moda in Pelle**, the Leeds-based women's shoe designer and retailer established in 1975, was rescued from administration by a pre-pack sale agreement. This saves 300 jobs, 17 retail branches and 26 concessions. At one time it operated from 60 stores.
- **The Post Office** announced it is to close 37 directly-managed Crown Post Offices this year, on top of the 62 branches closed in 2016. Three hundred employees will be affected. The work will generally be franchised and the post office transferred to a local retail outlet. This is part of a long-term programme by the Post Office, reflecting reduced use of mail, increased competition in postal/parcels services and payment of benefits and allowances by the state using direct debit and the replacement of what were mostly post office services (eg motor tax or postage stamps) by online services.