

# WECS Wardrobe

Autumn issue 2016

£5.50: Free to members



[www.wofecostumesociety.org](http://www.wofecostumesociety.org)

## Calendar

### Lace in Fashion and AGM

Saturday 4 February 2017  
■ Bath Cricket Club

### March Study Day: Communicating Fashion

Saturday 18 March 2017  
■ Keynsham

### Janet Arnold Study Day: Dressing to impress in the Seventeenth Century

Saturday 7 October 2017  
■ Venue tba



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## WECS events

### Lace in Fashion: A Collection Story at the Fashion Museum and WECS AGM

Saturday 4 February 2017 14.00 - 16.30

■ Bath Cricket Club, North Parade Bridge Road, Bath BA2 4EX

Speaker: Elly Summers

WECS is extremely fortunate to have one of the best costume museums with a world-class reputation on its doorstep. The museum staff has been very supportive of the society and is very generous in sharing their knowledge and expertise. The museum holds more than 100,000 objects which means that some objects get little exposure - so it is exciting when in the process of caring for the collection beautiful pieces are revealed.

A three year project to catalogue lace and whitework at the Fashion Museum has unearthed countless hidden treasures in an area that was largely unknown. Lace and whitework present incredibly complex and intricate textiles and this talk will take WECS members on a journey of exquisite workmanship and sumptuous design all seen through a host of accessories to dress. *A Collection Story* at the Fashion Museum promises a visual feast of lace and whitework as we take a peek behind the scenes at this fascinating part of the Fashion Museum collection - the rediscovery of which has culminated in an exciting new exhibition for 2017; *Lace in Fashion*.

Elly Summers has worked at the Fashion Museum since 2004 as an experienced dress curator. She has worked on numerous exhibitions including *A History of Fashion in 100 Objects*, *Georgians* and *Laura Ashley: The Romantic Heroine* and has spent the last three years researching and cataloguing the museum's lace and whitework.

### March Study Day: Communicating Fashion

Saturday 18 March 2017 9.30 - 16.45

■ Somerdale Pavilion Conference Centre, Keynsham, BS31 2FW

Do you follow fashion? We probably all do in one way or another as our dress changes according to social norms and the image we want to present to the world. But for a long time being fashion conscious was the privilege of an elite, usually very rich, sending visual messages of their social position to the world. In a world without printing ideas spread through dolls dressed in miniature versions of the latest fashions and travel brought ideas from different cultures. With printed images and text and an expanding reading public, fashion communication flourished and in the early eighteenth century the emergence of the aristocratic society magazines presented changes in style, taste and models of female beauty. Early publications, although not magazines as we now know them today such as Nikolaus von Heideloff's *Gallery of Fashion* and Rudolph Ackermann's *Ackermann's Repository* contain exquisite hand coloured fashion plates which are



**SALES TABLE:  
ANY INTERESTING  
BOOKS,  
MAGAZINES TO  
SHOW, TO SWOP, TO  
SELL?**

collectors' items in their own right. This study day will trace the changes in fashion communication from these early beginnings to the present day.

**Karina Virahsawmy  
Fashion Archive Film  
Partnership Project:  
The Illustrated London News  
and Fashion Journalism.**

'Fashion Archive Film' was a collaborative project with the Fashion Museum, Bath, and the American Museum in Britain, Bath. Funded by Art Council England and the South West Development Programme, it enabled both museums to catalogue, research and share via talks and films, one hundred years of fashion journalism, both formal and informal. These were parts of their collections that previously weren't available to museum audiences. The Fashion Museum, Bath has a large collection of *The Illustrated London News*. Not only the complete news sheets, but also torn out pages relating to fashion. A selection were chosen to be catalogued, digitised and used as part of a filmed talk to share how printed fashion journalism in England had changed between 1840 and 1900. *The Illustrated London News* was the first illustrated newspaper that came out weekly, and shared up to date news. With wonderful illustrations of the fashions from Paris to specificities in changes in the number of tiers in a dress to the fascination in Royal dress, it is an insight into where modern

fashion journalism has come from and how it changed within the 60 years researched.

Karina has an MA in *Investigating Fashion Design* and has freelanced and volunteered at the Fashion Museum for the past four years and helped with the documentation and digitisation of the vast Fashion Archive at the Museum. She works for the Alfred Gillett Trust and became Assistant Curator in April 2016, looking after the Point of Sale Collection, and the Intellectual Property Rights Register. Karina has spoken at the Popular Culture Association Conference and is looking forward to going to San Diego in April 2017 to speak about the Fashion Archive Film project.

**Cally Blackman  
So much more than a drawing**

Since its beginning fashion illustration has not only shown us *what* to buy but more importantly *how* to wear the clothes it depicts. The attitude, the look, the hairstyles, the accessories and cosmetics as well as the social context in which fashion was lived at any time have always provided artists with a wealth of inspiration and subject matter, reflected through their contemporary aesthetic, as well as a vehicle for acute observation and social commentary.

This paper will focus on the twentieth century, a so-called Golden Age, but also a period during which photography gained supremacy as the medium of choice for the representation of fashion and also during which the digital revolution took place.

Cally Blackman teaches Fashion History & Theory at Central Saint Martins and is the author of several books, including *100 Years of Fashion Illustration*, Laurence King Publishing (2007).

**Djurджа Bartlett  
Text and Image, Printed and  
Digital:  
Winners and Losers in  
Contemporary Fashion Media**

The talk will explore the key issues facing fashion imagery and communication today, and consider them in relation to historical and future media cultures. In order to assess the present and the future of print and online fashion representations, the talk will focus on the post-war rise of the medium of photography, the fashion film as a genre, and digital innovations and fashion on the net.

Dr. Djurdja Bartlett is Reader in Histories and Cultures of Fashion at the London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London. She is author of *FashionEast: The Spectre that Haunted Socialism* (MIT Press, 2010), editor of the volume on East

*continued on next page*

Europe, Russia and the Caucasus in the *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (2010), and author of *European Fashion Geographies: Style, Society and Politics, 1912-2012* (Bloomsbury Academic, forthcoming). Bartlett is Coordinator of the Fashion Media and Imagery Research Hub at the London College of Fashion, in which capacity she co-organized a conference on fashion media (2010) and co-edited the book - *Fashion Media: Past and Present* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

At the time of going to press our fourth speaker has yet to be confirmed.

*date for your diary:*

**Janet Arnold Study Day: Dressing to impress in the Seventeenth century**

Saturday 7 October 2017 9.45 - 16.45  
 ■ Venue tba



**POSTCARD PROJECT**

■ The School of Historical Dress, 52 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7PP  
[www.theschoolofhistoricaldress.org.uk](http://www.theschoolofhistoricaldress.org.uk)

Many thanks to everyone who has sent us a postcard for our *Timeline of the History of World Dress*.

So far we have received cards from England, Scotland, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, France, USA and Australia. The variety is exactly what we were hoping for and will eventually result in a truly diverse world picture of the history of dress.

Please do send us a postcard if you haven't done so already, and write a short message on the back stating why you chose it. There is room for literally thousands of cards on the walls of our new school staircase at 52 Lambeth Road.

**Out & About**

All items in 'Out and About' are published in good faith. WECS Wardrobe cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. Please check details before making a special journey.

**Lace in Fashion in the Victorian Period**

Saturday 26 November 2016 14.00

■ Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2QQ  
 Talk by Heather Toomer to celebrate 35th Anniversary of Bristol Lacemakers, followed by tea and cake.  
 Tickets £5 (cheque payable to *Bristol Lacemakers* with S.A.E.) from Mrs. M. McGregor, 3 Henbury Road, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol BS9 3HQ. Past members of Bristol Lacemakers are particularly welcome and are asked to contact M. McGregor.



Image shows Trevor Smith as a punk in the 1970s

heard before. Suddenly those on the periphery had a voice, individuality was celebrated and a community of passionate and creative young people was formed. Clothes were customised using whatever punks could get their hands on; the more provocative the better.

Come and hear the experiences of young men and women who encountered the London scene first-hand. From the handmade mixtape sleeves and DIY fanzines, to the radical clothes sold on the King's Road, this exhibition displays the personal objects and tells the stories of ordinary punks of the late 1970s.

**The Vulgar Fashion Redefined**

until 5 February 2017

■ Barbican Centre Art Gallery, Silk St, London EC2Y 8DS  
[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)  
 02076388891

*Vulgarity exposes the scandal of good taste* Adam Phillips

Potent, provocative and sometimes shocking, the word vulgar conjures up strong images, ideas and feelings in us all. *The Vulgar* is the first exhibition to explore the inherently challenging but utterly compelling territory of taste in fashion, from the renaissance through to contemporary design. Examining the constantly evolving notion of vulgarity in fashion whilst revelling in its excesses, you are invited to think again about exactly what makes something vulgar and why it is such a sensitive and contested term.

Drawn from major public and private collections worldwide, *The Vulgar* showcases over 120 stunning objects, ranging from historical costumes to couture and ready-to-wear looks, with contributions from leading contemporary designers such as Walter van Beirendonck, Chloé, Christian Dior, Pam Hogg, Charles James, Christian Lacroix, Lanvin, Moschino, Miuccia Prada, Agent Provocateur, Elsa Schiaparelli, Philip Treacy, UNDERCOVER, Viktor & Rolf, Louis Vuitton and Vivienne Westwood.

**1920s JAZZ AGE Fashion and Photographs**

until 15 January 2017

■ Fashion and Textile Museum, 83 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3XF  
[www.ftmlondon.org](http://www.ftmlondon.org)  
 The 1920s JAZZ AGE presents a glittering display of haute couture and ready-to-wear fashion from 1919 to 1929. See Summer issue of Wardrobe for fuller information.  
 Open Tue-Sat 11.00-18.00, Thurs until 20.00. Sun, 11.00-17.00.



**Punks**

until 15 January 2017

■ Museum of London, 150 London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN

[www.museumoflondon.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk)  
 Exhibition: *Punks* tells the story of one of music's most explosive genres from the people who were there.

Punk hit London in 1976 and changed music, fashion and attitude forever. The music was frantic, loud and unlike anything





## Fashion on the Ration

### 1940s Street Style

until 1 May 2017

■ Imperial War Museum, North, Trafford Wharf Road, Stretford, Manchester, M17 1 TZ

[www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-north/fashion-on-the-ration-1940s-street-style](http://www.iwm.org.uk/exhibitions/iwm-north/fashion-on-the-ration-1940s-street-style)

## V&A Working in and with Russia

until 8 January 2017

■ V&A Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

The V&A has significant Russian collections of metalwork, jewellery and theatre and performance related objects. Russian furniture, textiles, glass, sculpture and paintings are also present in the V&A collections.

Russian objects can be seen in the V&A galleries, including the superb silver-gilt gates from Kiev (now Kyiv, Ukraine), given under Russian patronage from Catherine the Great to the monks of the Orthodox Church. The V&A galleries show good examples of mosaics, secular and religious silver, gold boxes, and jewellery from the Russian royal collections. The William and Judith Bollinger Jewellery Gallery displays many Fabergé pieces, including the Seeds imperial presentation box, and a loan collection of cigarette cases and carved animals formed by the late Kenneth Snowman, including items owned by Queen Alexandra. The galleries also show Russian toys, Revolutionary ceramics and traditional 19th century jewellery. A Golovin- designed costume for Chaliapin in Mussorgsky's Boris Godunov is on display in the Theatre & Performance galleries.

The recently reopened Europe 1600-18150 Galleries, feature a bust of Catherine the Great by the pre-eminent Russian Neoclassical sculptor, Fedot Ivanovich Shubin (1740-1805), né Shubnoi. The display includes a portrait of Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia and several objects produced at the Imperial Arms Factory in Tula, including a spectacular and unique steel and gold fireplace probably given in around 1805 by the Russian intellectual Princess Dashkova (1743-1810) to Martha Wilmot of Cork in southern Ireland. The galleries also show a specially- created, three-minute film based on Catherine the Great's use of the Neoclassical style that focus on the Agate Rooms at Tsarskoye Selo, Catherine's summer estate and palace, shortly after their conservation. The Hermitage has supported the film.



■ Fashion Museum,  
Assembly Rooms,  
Bennett Street, Bath  
BA1 2QH  
01225 477789  
[www.fashionmuseum.co.uk](http://www.fashionmuseum.co.uk)

## Twilight Talk

### Telling Fashion Stories – Who is Miss Virginia Lachasse?

24 November 2016 18.00



Miss Lachasse is a 1950s fashion doll with a complete couture wardrobe and one of the star objects in the exhibition 'A History of Fashion

in 100 Objects' currently showing at the Fashion Museum Bath. Professor Amy de la Haye from the London College of Fashion will talk about Miss Lachasse and how she and other 'objects' (also known as material culture) in museum collections can tell stories about long-forgotten areas of fashion history.

Includes a wine reception.

## Behind the Scenes

until 2 January 2017

Historic fashions from the time of Jane Austen to the First World War are presented in 'Behind the Scenes', a gallery display with a difference. A century of fashions for women, from delicate white muslin Regency dresses to a khaki drill uniform worn for war work, are all on view set against a backdrop of the stored collection giving a rare 'behind the scenes' glimpse into the Fashion Museum's extensive archives.

## A History of Fashion in 100 Objects

until 1 January 2019

*A History of Fashion in 100 Objects*, celebrating fashion from the 1600s to the present day is an excellent exhibition at the Fashion Museum, Bath. Showcasing 100 star objects drawn from the Fashion Museum's world-class collection, the displays give visitors an instant insight into the era-defining outfits and headline pieces that have shaped our wardrobes over the past 400 years.



## Undressed:

### A brief history of underwear

until March 2017

■ V&A Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL

[www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)

Sponsored by Agent Provocateur and Revlon Discover the fascinating and sometimes controversial story of underwear design from the 18th century to the present day. Find out about the role of underwear in moulding the body to a fashionable ideal and in revealing issues of gender, sex and morality.



## John Bright Historic Costume Collection Revealed

### Celebrating 50 years of Costume and Film Heritage

Leading costume designer John Bright's private collection of original costumes of over 200 striking pieces dating back to the C18th revealed for the first time. A team of specialists has catalogued, detailed and mounted this unique selection to form an online museum. Website launch was Autumn 2016. [collection@cosprop.com](mailto:collection@cosprop.com) [Facebook.com/CostumeHeritage](https://www.facebook.com/CostumeHeritage)



## Bath Textile Summer School

21-25 August 2017

■ Holburne Museum and Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute, Bath [www.bathtextilesummerschool.co.uk](http://www.bathtextilesummerschool.co.uk)

01225 318042  
Stitch and paint, batik and screenprint, beadwork, metalwork and machine embroidery - classes in many disciplines over the week.



*Out and About continued on next page, first column*

## Opus Anglicanum

**Masterpieces of English Mediaeval embroidery**

until 5 February 2017

■ V&A, Cromwell Road, Knightsbridge, London SW7 2RL  
www.vam.ac.uk

Latin for 'English work', 'opus anglicanum' was coined in the 13th century to describe the highly-prized and luxurious embroideries made in England of silk and gold and silver thread, teeming with elaborate imagery. The exhibition will shed significant new light on the tools, materials and makers behind these sumptuous embroideries, many of whom were women based in the City of London – medieval England's creative hub. From the 12th to the 15th centuries, England enjoyed an international reputation for the quality of its luxury embroideries. Magnificent embroideries are displayed alongside related works in other media from the period,

including panel paintings, manuscripts, metalwork and sculpture to show connections in artistic production. Glyn Davies, exhibition co-curator, said: "As a historian, the opportunity to see all these objects, normally scattered across museums and cathedral treasuries in Europe and North America, together in one place is thrilling... England enjoyed an international reputation for the quality of its embroidery. This exhibition shows English art on a European stage."

One of the most spectacular objects will be the exquisite Toledo Cope, travelling from Toledo's Cathedral Primada de Santa Maria, back to England for the first time since it was created in the early 14th century. The piece is richly embroidered with foliage, masks and birds, as well as the Virgin Mary and saints, some of which are shown trampling their tormentors.

Some of the earliest embroideries from the period survive today because they were interred during the burial rites of bishops and abbots. Highlights of these include an embroidered vestment associated with Thomas Becket, as well as other masterpieces produced for his friends and successor bishops at Canterbury.



## WECS Reports

### Visit: Priest's House Museum...

Saturday 7 May 2016

■ Priest's House Museum, Wimborne and Fashion Museum, Blandford

Report by: Sarah Bartlett and Tony Cooper

Eighteen members of WECS assembled at the Priest's House Museum in Wimborne to see the Dacombe clothing collection and other items on display in the museum galleries. After a wander round the beautiful gardens (which strangely hosted a small gunpowder store) and coffee and biscuits we were greeted by Eileen Carter, the museum's textile curator, who had put out various items of clothing for us to see in the meeting room. The items had come from a tallyman called Mr. Dacombe who lived near Wimborne and had sold to the surrounding neighbourhood. He dealt in clothing and shoes for both adults and children and appeared to carry quite a large stock considering he did not have a shop; it was this remaining stock that formed the collection. People would place their orders with him – even by letter (now there was a postal service!) – which he would then deliver on a Friday and collect the money. Some would not be able to pay the full amount immediately and he would keep a tally of what had

### Winter Residential 5 day creative textile course: Flax processing, spinning, weaving and natural dyeing.

Mon-Fri 20-24 February 2017, 10.00 - 16.00 £775 per person

■ Yalberton Farm House, Yalberton Road, Paignton, Devon

Emma Neen, promotions@seldedge.org

Hosted by Susie Gillespie

Join textile artist Susie Gillespie and learn how to process, spin, weave and naturally dye linen.

Susie picked the flax from her orchard in August so it has had time to dry. She will talk through the process of planting the seeds, rippling and retting the stems so they are ready to be spun.

The course starts by making preparations to the flax stems to prepare them for spinning, which includes revealing the flax fibres, removing the pith, combing them and finally winding them to tease off the fiber to produce the yarn.

The fibre can be coloured with a range of natural dyes or kept in its natural state before moving to the weaving studio to begin weaving on a shaft floor loom. Susie will advise on weaving different textures and experiment with wrappings, twill, looping, slits and tapestry inlay. Experiment with gesso, paint and earth pigments for an art piece and distress, fray, stain, unravel, darn, stitch, cut and sew fragments together.

The aim is to make a linen cushion cover, or piece of artwork from start to finish.

The course is five days and includes all materials, accommodation, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Suitable for complete beginners and experienced spinners and weavers.





been paid and what was owed, calling once a week on a Saturday to collect the next instalment.

Trading continuously from 1928 until he retired in the 1950's, it is interesting to conjecture how, despite being called up to serve at the nearby RAF base, Mr Dacombe managed his business and running a car throughout the second world war.

It is most fortunate that neither Mr Dacombe nor his son felt the urge to have a clear out as the museum acquired the collection in 1991 from Mr. Dacombe's family after he died.

The collection consisted of everyday clothing worn by ordinary people and included many things that members remembered and had even worn themselves; a child's Liberty bodice with its rubber buttons that wouldn't break

when put through the mangle, a boy's shirt jacket and shorts made by Banner who produced the majority of children's clothing at that time. There were girls' dresses with Peter Pan collars and ric-rac braiding. These were usually bought around Whitsun so a new outfit would be had for the start of the summer with room to grow as well. A boy's grey flannel suit (shorts were the norm until one left school) costing 39/- (a considerable sum of money at the time; one member said that her father earned only £9 a week including overtime) and a girls' pink coat with matching leggings costing 49/6. A matching hat was also available. Mr. Dacombe also supplied women's dresses, corsets, stockings and shoes. Two summer dresses from the 1950s, which didn't look too far off some of today's styles, and a coat based on the New Look. A man's vest with the CC41 (Civilian Clothing Order 1941) utility mark in it looked remarkably scratchy and the large pair of women's pink drawers were items that most were pleased not to have to wear now. There was a selection of children's sandals, slippers (Spongease complete with pom-pom made by Pirelli), plimsolls and women's shoes and some PVC covered cotton leggings sold as separate legs, which looked rather Heath-Robinson.

Not only did the collection contain clothing, there was also documentation including a few orders such as this one from a woman who certainly knew her priorities:

*Dear Mr Dacombe,  
Please bring along Friday 1 pair men's shoes size 7, colour black, not so expensive as the ones you brought for my old man Cyril as it is for my Brother.*

Dress to Impress was a collection of 'posh' clothing to be worn on special occasions. A selection of baby and small children's clothes; a Scottish military uniform, kilt and all; evening dresses dating from 1860 to 1960 along with shoes and bags; and men's ties and hats. A photograph of a mayoral event held in Wimborne brought a squeal from Pat Poppy who suddenly recognized herself in the background dressed in her Civil War outfit. Fame or what?? In the late 19th century it was expected that a wedding dress be worn unaltered for several occasions during the first year of marriage so that friends, relatives and other could admire it; some brides may have had two identical dresses made for such demands. We were shown the new storage area where they process various archaeological finds discovered at Druce Farm near Dorchester, including a section of a Roman sandal made up of tiny hob nails holding a piece of thin leather together that formed the sole. There are ten different sizes of hob nails used in these types of sandals.



## ...and Fashion Museum, Blandford

At the Fashion Museum housed in Lime House we were given an introduction by Gordon Boutelle on how the collection originated and why it came to be housed where it is. Gordon told us that most of Blandford was burnt to the ground in 1731 by a fire that started in the nearby soap works, which wouldn't normally have caused much damage except that it happened to be windy that day and the thatch nearby caught fire and so quickly spread to all the other buildings which were mainly built of timber and thatched. It took twenty to thirty years to rebuild the town and Lime House dates from around 1760. (Incidentally, all the children who were orphaned by that fire were given the surname of Blandford.)

The costume collection was started by Mrs. Betty Penny in 1950, who was a great supporter of pantomimes and used any costumes she could find. She started doing talks to local WIs and groups using her small collection and over the years people would send her, or be persuaded to give her, their costumes and accessories. She was a great believer that not only were costumes interesting but also that they effected the way the person wearing them behaved. By 1995 she was in need of somewhere to keep her collection and a friend, Miss Pam Young, suggested Lime House to her. She also gave her a cheque for £250,000 to buy the house and open a museum. There were over 4,000 items of dress, fans, shoes, jewellery, etc. and a search for mannequins began. Several 1930 ones were obtained from various shops, but it was soon discovered that they were no use for Victorian costumes; they were simply the wrong size and shape. Twenty-one specially-commissioned mannequins were bought at a cost of £21,000. Today they cost around £350/375 each. Records are now kept to make sure the appropriate mannequin is available before mounting the exhibition. The collection ranges from 1740 to 1980. One area - "Designer's Corner" - is reserved for contemporary fashion and current designers are approached to lend some of their catwalk creations; the first to agree was Bruce Oldfield whose work is now regularly on show. The museum has



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various small galleries, each showing a different year and theme, a Georgian Parlour with 1790's cotton day dresses; wedding dresses from the 19th century; a selection of town and country wear for men and women ranging from work to opera cloaks and children's party clothes from the 1930's. Apparently it was the vogue then for little boys to wear 'skeleton suits' in which the shorts were buttoned to the shirts. Who can forget the sight of a particular species of little boy whose shirt tail would flap in the breeze as soon as he left the house?

Elsewhere were display cases with Victorian decorative aprons, black with colourful embroidery, and a case showing different types of Dorset buttons, first made in Shaftesbury in the 1660's and having names such as Bird's eyes, wheel, Dorset knobs. The gallery showing 'Retro' had people going "I had/wore one of those" and someone still had the pattern and wedding dress that she made!

It was a brilliant day and many thanks to Pat Poppy for organising it all. Both museums are worth exploring and Blandford just shows what happens when you start collecting and it all gets out of hand!



In one case was a pair of unworn pure silk stockings perhaps lovingly kept for That Special Occasion that just never materialised. With it was a flier for a service you don't see now:

### Repair Service

Don't throw away your laddered Stockings before consulting our Hosiery Department.

Our 48-hour Re-Knitting Service will re-weave stockings at a very small cost.

### Prices

3 adjacent ladders, any length 1/6d

1 small ladder, under 6 ins. 8d

Unbroken pulled threads, approx. 4 ins. long .. 6d

## April

I must go back to a vest again, to a winter vest with sleeves,  
And all I ask is an honest shop where the shop-men are not thieves;  
And a fair price, and a free choice and a full stretch for dining,  
And a smooth touch on the bare chest, and a smooth inner lining.

I must go back to a vest again, for that which I most dread  
Is a bad cold, a head cold, and a day or more in bed;  
And all I ask is a man's advice, and a short time for thinking,  
A soft wool, and a man's size and a good bit for shrinking.

I must go back to a vest again, for April winds are bleak,  
And the spring's way is a cold way, and my circulation's weak;  
And all I ask, when the cash is paid and we leave the shop together,  
Is a warm fire, and an arm chair, or a change in the weather.

G F Bradby (with apologies to John Masefield)

## The Ornate and the Beautiful Visit to Wells Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace

6 July 2016

■ The Bishop's Palace, Wells,  
Somerset, BA5 2PD

Report by: Anne Brown

On a busy market day in Wells, twenty members of WECS met in the Cathedral entrance for conducted tours of both the Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace where the exhibition "The Ornate, the Beautiful" was being held. The group was divided into two, spending the morning in one venue and the afternoon in the other. We were blessed with fine weather which helped to make the day even more enjoyable.

### The Bishop's Palace and the exhibition "The Ornate and the Beautiful"

Jonathan Sawyer who curated the exhibition, met us beside the croquet lawn in front of the palace. He gave us a brief history of the palace which has been the residence of the Bishop of Bath and Wells for more than 800 years and the present bishop still resides in part of the building. The exhibition we had come specifically to see featured beautifully embroidered textiles from the collections of Downside Abbey, Stratton on the Fosse, and Wells Cathedral, many of which had never been on public display before. Jonathan explained that on discovering objects at Downside he found them stored tightly packed in boxes that had not seen the light of day for years. The exhibition explores the exquisite craftsmanship and awe-inspiring beauty of church vestments and offers a revealing insight into how they have developed over time. The vestments are a product of hundreds of hours







Left: the 2001 set with altar frontal behind. The wall mounting is made in several transparent layers and designed to be seen with a light behind. Right: Cope with exquisite goldwork and some Opus Anglicorum. The bishop's bling cabinet with amethyst pectoral cross and a Morse with gold and garnets.

Background image close up of embroidery by Liz Booty



of dedicated craft and meticulous needlework with ornate decoration to communicate the wealth, power, authority and importance of the clergy in the special role of carrying out God's ministry. The detail is unbelievable when you realise that a great deal of the work was carried out mostly by monks by candle light. Jonathan pointed out details of the different vestments on display explaining the origins of the cope and the chasubles from the first garments worn by the Greeks and Romans called a paenula, a calf length cloak often worn with a separate hood. On display in the first room is a delicately embroidered chasuble 1895 known as the Berkeley chasuble where the front depicts the Assumption of Mary and the back the Crucifixion of Christ. This is still used today for the ordination of priests at Downside. Alongside this, mounted over a 19th century rose coloured cape is an orphrey and hood of 1625 made by the Benedictine nuns of the convent of our Lady blessed Assumption in Brussels, one of the few early pieces worked by nuns. Jonathan also explained the variety of colours used by the church to follow the Liturgical calendar which breaks the year into key seasons such as Christmas, Easter and special feast days. These colours are used on altar frontals, vestments and sometimes even flowers.

A prime example of this in gold for Christmas was the very modern design of a tunical, chasuble, dalmatic and

altar frontal designed by the late Jane Lemon, part of Wells Cathedral Christmas set, 2001.

The use and origins of the chasuble was explained with a quotation by Rabanus Maurus (c.820 AD) "*the chasuble surmounts and safeguards all other vestments; hence the chasuble signifies love, which surmounts all other virtues, and safeguards and illumines their beauty with perfection.*"

This was certainly true with the exquisitely embroidered examples on display showing how the chasuble design had changed over the centuries from the early bell shape based on the paenula in the 11th century through the fiddle back in the 18th century to the gothic shape which remains a popular design today. The decoration of the chasuble was explained with the key feature being colourful or embroidered bands known as orphreys, which run from the top to the bottom of the vestment often depicting Biblical people or events. A very old example was The Glover chasuble dating from 1510 – 1535 named for the appliquéd gloves in white silk on it along with beautifully embroidered cross orphrey with the letters P(Glove) R embroidered on it which may refer to the priest who made it.

Our visit to the Palace finished with



a selection of smaller items such as the rings and pectoral crosses worn by bishops and abbots along with examples of embroidered mitres. The oldest artefact on display was a pair of orphrey panels dated 1350 probable once appliquéd to a cope, in a very delicate

state but with detailed embroidery still intact. Also a late 15th century hood embroidered with gold silver coloured silk threads.

Many of us learned new ecclesiastical words for the variety of vestments and could not help but be amazed by the delicate embroidery that could easily be mistaken for painting. Jonathan was an excellent guide and happy to answer the many questions fired at him during our visit.

### Wells Cathedral

Both groups were guided by John along with a very knowledgeable lady in the morning and Christopher in the afternoon. We were taken through the magnificent Cathedral to the Quire (correct spelling) stalls where we were given an explanation of all the embroidered banners at the back of the stalls and of the seat panels and backs. These were the inspiration of a lady called Louisa Pesel to enhance the quire, designed by Lady Hylton (mother of the present Lord Hylton) which depict all the Bishops of Bath and Wells

Cope and hood, late C15th. Chasuble, pre WWI, with cope.





The cathedral ceiling and the cope it inspired.

Needlepoint work in the body of the church.

And below... you guessed it: a cope hanger.

Photos this page by Anne Brown except back view right by Liz Booty



over the centuries. Each of the banners contain their coat of Arms along with something that relates to their lives. They were worked by groups of mostly women between 1930 and 1950 stitched nearly all in wools available at the time. When lifted, some of them have the names and dates of the person who embroidered them on the underside. We also marvelled at the three panels behind the pulpit designed by Leonora Jenner, the centre panel depicting St Andrew worked with gold thread making it stand out under the lights of the Cathedral. We were also shown the seat pads designed by our member Pat Ardron to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee, worked by the Cathedral's own embroidery group for 2012.

The magnificent altar frontals were all put out just for us by the high altar. They were all designed by Morris Strike and Jane Lemon MBE (d.2015) and worked by the Sarum group of embroiders. We took note of all the colours for the various times in the Liturgical calendar used in Jane's very modern designs incorporating a great variety of materials including whips to depict the crown of thorns on the one for Easter. They were made between 1999 and 2002 and are stored neatly under the high altar!

The highlight of our visit must have been a display of the present day vestments of copes and chasubles, also by Jane Lemon and Morris Strike and skilfully modelled by Tim the verger along with his amusing commentary on each one and some of the inspirations to the designs such as the ceiling of the Lady chapel for the Christmas cope.

Our visit concluded looking at the cope chest made in 1175 behind the high altar, which is still in use today and studying the altar frontals on permanent display around the side aisles one of which was designed by Morris Strike for Advent and gives a brighter light as it leads up to Christmas.

Wells Cathedral is well worth a visit for anyone interested in embroidery and embroidery tours are a regular event in the cathedral but it is best to contact them beforehand to find out times and dates. Sadly the exhibition "The Ornate, the Beautiful" finished on 2nd September but the palace, chapel and magnificent grounds are still worth a visit and on some fine days you can even join in with a game of croquet!

This article includes some quotes from the story boards of the exhibition "The Ornate, The Beautiful"

# Structure and Artifice Study Day

Saturday 1 October 2016 9.45 - 16.45

■ Bath Cricket Club, North Parade Bridge Road, Bath BA2 4EX

Speakers: Charlotte Fiell, Sarah Jane Downing, Jenny Tiramani

## Hair: Crafting and constructing the feminine identity

Speaker: Charlotte Fiell

Report by Marian Banks

*'Hair is indeed the richest ornament of women'* Martin Luther

Charlotte Fiell, author of *'Hairstyles Ancient to Present'* introduced us to her premise that hair is intrinsic to fashion; that there are different ways of viewing the hairdresser, artisan or artist; that hairdressing can be considered a craft, skill, a design process or even an art form and that the transient nature of hair makes it inherently interesting. The publicity for her book states *'a woman's hair has always been considered her crowning glory from the elaborately dressed styles in Ancient Greece to the simple bobs of the 20s and the colourful gelled spikes of the punks right up to the latest directions in hairdressing today'*. Charlotte shared her approach to research which enabled her to build up a story about hairdressing; the discipline of hairdressing; hair and cultural identity; hair and female identity, emancipation and self image.

Charlotte then guided us through hairstyles from the Egyptians (hair obsessed: shaved heads; wigs made from hair for those of high status and from wool treated with beeswax and resin for those of low status; wigs adorned with combs, leaves and jewellery, and illustrated with examples of wigs and wig boxes in the British Museum) to the present day where really anything goes.... Whilst exploring the hairstyles we were also guided through the context of the relevant time periods so for the Egyptians the hairstyle reflected rank and wealth and contributed to sexual attraction and for the present day reflecting fashion, art and music and sexual attraction.

Who knew Helen of Troy was blond? Or that the Ancient Greeks prized blond hair? Ancient Greek hairstyles were considered next and it is apparent that the classic long hair which was curled on the forehead and side of head and into a bun at the nape of the neck and decorated in different ways with wreaths and jewels had not just a major influence upon early Roman hairstyles but later time periods as well.



Towering 'up-dos' celebrated topical events: à la Belle Poule – a naval battle.

Charlotte Fiell with modern relaxed style (and book!)

Renaissance hairstyles with an emphasis on natural female beauty and simple adornments.

The amazing Icak Plastic Dressing, early C20th. 40s pinned rolls and snoods

...and punk

Early Roman hairstyles drew heavily on Ancient Greece initially remaining quite simple, however over time hairstyles became more elaborate for example being piled up high (using hair pieces and wire for support) and a style called the 'Flavian nest' made up of loops of hair at the nape of the neck. At this time the Roman woman explored hair colour with blond, red and black being popular and achieved by hair dye or wigs from around the Empire. The high maintenance hairstyles were created by household servants and appeared to be important social activities for women.

Essentially hair remained long from the Ancient Greeks, through the Romans and into the medieval time periods. The influence of Christianity led to modest simple hairstyles however, as with the Romans, hairstyles became more elaborate over time: free flowing, braided and embellished with ribbons; hidden under increasingly elaborate head dresses (the henin and butterfly being notable if short lived fashions) or coiled into buns at the side of the head. The long hair was associated with wealth and status and short hair, shaved heads with poverty and low status.

Charlotte then looked at the Renaissance hairstyles with a return to classical influences; a move from religious to secular influences and an emphasis on natural female beauty and simple adornments. The use of metal hairpins enabled styled headdresses to be easily secured.

The 17th century brought the bouffant style to France, whilst its popularity in England was somewhat interrupted by the English Civil war and the Commonwealth, it again came to feature in the reign of Charles II. At this time both men and women were particularly interested in hair and Charlotte

introduced us to Ninon de l'Enclos – the 'Gwyneth Paltrow of her day' who, when her lover went into a decline when she rejected him, sent him her shorn locks as consolation and started a trend for shorter hair – perhaps the beginnings of celebrities influencing hairstyles.

France continued to lead fashion during the 18th century seeing a continuation of fluctuating hairstyles: simple in the reign of Louis XV and becoming increasingly complex in the reign of Louis XVI, especially when women began to wear wigs and adopted *le pouf* - towering 'up-dos' celebrating topical events: le ballon -Montgolfier's balloon ascents; a la Belle Poule – a naval battle. Charlotte illustrated this with portraits and cartoons of the day to our general amusement. Madame Rose Bertin and hairdresser Monsieur Leonard are attributed with creating *le pouf* – perhaps the beginnings of celebrity hairstylists - and Marie Antoinette was a major influence on hairstyles.

Charlotte then romped through the 19th and 20th century:

- The early 19th century: sleek hair with corkscrew ringlets, Apollo knot.
- The later 19th century: shorter hair; the Marcel wave – achieved by using curling tongs invented to replicate the hairdresser's mother's curls.....
- Early 20th century: the first 'bob' – Antoine de Paris (1909); followed by the 'Castle bob' for Irene Castle (1913-15); and the Bonnet bob (1929)

The trend to shorter hair reflected changes in the lives of women especially in respect

of emancipation and the influences of more relaxed fashion from designers such as Poiret and the drawing on oriental influences. This topic could easily take an hour to do justice to the impact this had on women and their lives.

The review of the 20th century continued with:

- 1930s: peroxide and the platinum blonde, Jean Harlow being notable here; the amazing Icak Plastic Dressing – illustrated by a blue/yellow waved experimental hairstyle and the advent of the permanent wave.
- 1940s pinned rolls and snoods
- 1950s shingled bobs and pony tails for women as opposed to girls....
- 1950's Mr Teasey Weasy
- 1960s Vidal Sasson and the 'Kwan Cut' for Nancy Kwan and the 'Pixie cut' for Mia Farrow; Leonard Lewis and the Eton crop/Elfin cut for Twiggy.
- 1970s weekend hippies; long hair, 'big hair and disco –least said the better and the advent of Keith Wainwright at Smile and punk
- 1980s hair extensions
- 1990s and to date the development of hairstylists creating brands; emphasis on the health of hair and associated marketing; new hairstyling inventions such as straighteners.

Charlotte concluded with the comment that hair has shaped and defined women's identity through the ages and the quote:

*'Beauty draws us in with a single hair'*  
Alexander Pope

# Framing the face with layers of linen

Speaker Jenny Tiramani

Report by Tony Cooper

**When Jenny Tiramani arrived she was somewhat taken aback by the size of her audience; she had been expecting about thirty. [Note to self: suggest we warn future speakers how popular WECS is!] She was proposing to include some audience participation involving some form of origami and had only brought the wherewithal for that number of people. As usual WECS members were unfazed and set to to make up the shortfall and we were then each furnished with a strip of paper about the size of an ecclesiastical collar and told to keep it safe for later.**

Whilst the subject of ruffs might at first glance seem stiff and starchy (I promise that's the last of such plays on words), Jenny's presentation was fun and absorbing and her enthusiasm was infectious. She explained the rise and fall of the ruff and the styles of ruff in their heyday.

Around the mid 16th century men displayed the small square collar at the neck edge of the doublet. Over time this developed into a small ruffle, which, under the pressures of fashion gradually became more and more exaggerated; one layer became two and then three and so on - definitely one-upmanship par excellence. Over this period the ruffle became a separate item of clothing - the ruff.

The introduction of starch as a stiffening agent allowed ruffs to become larger in diameter, too. Eventually even the heaviest starching was insufficient and wire supports (*supportasses*) were needed. But by the mid 17th century and with a change of monarch the ruff was "out", remaining in use only by some traditional segments of society until the late twentieth century. For example, some Protestant and Lutheran clergy in parts of Scandinavia still wear a ruff as part of their liturgical garments. (See article on page 14).

It may seem odd to talk about ruffs and practicality in the same paragraph but this change may well have been under pressure from the laundresses. I think it's fair to say that one wouldn't want one's shirt/chemise to be quite as heavily starched as a ruff.

Now call me a philistine if you like but when someone mentions a ruff, what comes to mind is an image of Sir Percy in Blackadder proudly sporting his new cartwheel ruff of such dimensions as to make eating nigh on impossible. Nevertheless, however ridiculous

it might have looked on him, there are contemporary portraits of people wearing ruffs of similar dimensions giving the sitter the look of a disembodied head on a dinner plate. Jenny put me right, though, showing images of more modest, varied and, dare I say, more stylish ruffs. There was clearly more to it.

We may be most familiar with the simple "figure-of-eight" set of a ruff in which the edge of the ruff appears to be a row of 8s all standing to attention, shoulder to shoulder. To call it simple, however, belies the effort and superlative skill required both in its making and in its subsequent care. Jenny had an example of an ecclesiastical ruff from Norway; a bit discoloured but modest and very fine.

It is basically a long strip of fine linen (perhaps 10 yards), hemmed along either side, softly folded into large cartridge pleats and stitched together across the width of the strip to form the "waists" of the 8s. Jenny explained that the hems could be as narrow as 1/32" (less than 0.8mm) so one can only wonder at the fineness of the linen required for that. The "shoulders" and "hips" of each adjacent pair of 8s would then be stitched together using a small stitch at the hem. Of course, every 8 had to be symmetrical, top and bottom, and match its neighbour exactly. (I felt my eyesight failing in sympathy with the poor needlewomen who had to make these concoctions.) Where it would fit at the neck the pleats would be closed up

and stitched to a hidden neck band. This would be laced at the throat as a closed ruff.

Once completed, the ruff would then be plastered with starch and set using "poking sticks" of wood, iron or other materials. The metal ones, heated in hot sand, were an improvement on cold ones as they "ironed" the starch into shape. Variations on the figure-of-eight shape were at the whim of the wearer; they may prefer tall, skinny 8s, short fat ones or something in between.

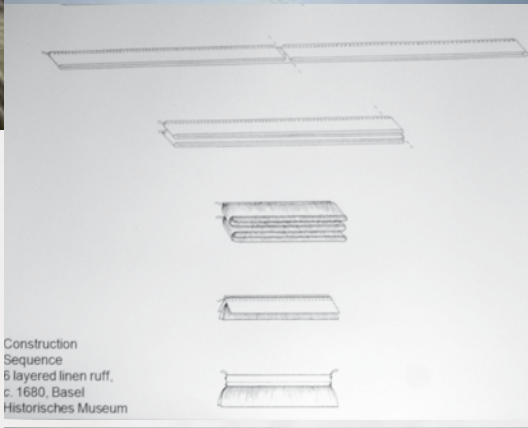
Of course fashion wouldn't be fashion without competition, would it? Ruffs got progressively bigger and more sumptuous as the wealthy and fashionable tried to outdo one another and the plain fabric could give way to lace or black-work as some glorious portraits show. Jenny's examples included modern neck and wrist ruffs decorated with black-work and some of us couldn't resist trying them on (with permission, of course).

Vibeke Ormerod, Jenny Tiramani and Liz Booty getting stuck into ruff preparation.



*Above:* Linen ruffs, all c1620-30: Single layer from the Rijksmuseum and small four layered (child's?) and five layered linen both from the Basel Historischs Museum  
*Left:* Jenny had brought along an original Norwegian cleric's ruff, as worn by the clergy still.  
*Right:* whitework embroidered neckband, showing ties and fastenings.  
*Background image* shows the inside of the pleats.





Construction Sequence  
6 layered linen ruff,  
c. 1680, Basel  
Historisches Museum



Above: six layered ruff, how to go about forming it and a cross section of what you're aiming to create.



# Get Ahead Get a Hat

Speaker Althea Mackenzie  
Report by Caroline Ness

**Althea Mackenzie, curator of Hereford Museum and the Charles Wade Snowhill collection at Berrington Hall, began her fascinating talk on the history of headwear by bravely admitting that she personally abhors wearing a hat! She then demonstrated how we gather a lot of information about people through their faces and how adding a hat can very quickly signify their occupation, status or group affiliation. A hat may tell you something about the wearer's self-confidence or sense of humour (some Ascot hats are extraordinary).**

An overview of the early history of headwear reveals little evidence for hats before the Bronze Age, largely through lack of surviving artefacts. The Iron Age offers more information through the ceramics and wall paintings that survive. The soft conical male Phrygian hat is from this period but women at this time seem to have worn simple plain cloth head coverings. It is not until the Norman period that more graphic evidence exists. The dominant Christian culture in Britain influenced clothing hugely and resulted in women covering their heads with various styles depending on their status. Althea's examples of the different styles worn by mediaeval royal and aristocratic women caused some hilarity – up, out, forward and back, the size and shape of these extraordinary millinery wonders fascinate. How on earth did they keep these confections of wire, padding, veiling, brocade, horns and cauls on their heads?

Moving forward to Tudor England, Althea explained how status was marked by the head covering. The heavy hoods that were worn at the court of Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon were replaced by the French hood when Anne Boleyn came to the throne. Portraits of Elizabeth I reveal a change in headwear as this Queen, who used clothing to great effect throughout her monarchy, used jewels in her hair rather than hoods.

What's left when a lacy confection has reached its zenith? More than one, of course, worn one on top of another and four was not atypical. However, the human neck isn't that long so it wasn't possible to simply stack up basic cartwheel ruffs; multi-layered ruffs had to be made slightly differently at the neck band. In a phenomenal feat of pleating the fabric was neatly gathered into the neckband; sometimes the layers were interleaved in the pleating. Unlike in the cartwheel ruff the neckband was now visible and it goes without saying that this had to be decorated as well; Jenny's illustrations appeared to feature white-work.

Earlier I mentioned a closed ruff but using one of our number as a model she demonstrated how a ruff could be attached to an open-necked gown as an open ruff. A magnificent example is illustrated in the famous "Ditchley" portrait of Queen Elizabeth I.



The Puritans found the sight of these elaborate ruffs intolerable and went so far as to describe ruffs as the dress of the devil. We still have Philip Stubbs's work *The Anatomie of Abuses*, which is an attack on the manners, customs, amusements and fashions of the period; you can rest assured that ruffs don't escape comment. Some even called them 'immoral', which is odd because it would be pretty hard to even steal a kiss when both parties are in ruffs.

Now to our strips of paper. Apparently the idea was for us to each try out the finer points of the folding required for a basic figure-of-eight ruff. Jenny put up a slide that showed, step-by-step how to do it. I felt very smug when I had completed step two but there it stalled; I was tempted to go for a swan instead but... *Sans wings, sans beak, sans everything* (apologies to the bard). Nevertheless it was a fascinating talk and sadly for us Jenny had to leave fairly promptly, otherwise we would have kept her there for hours.



## Ruff and Ready

### The Danish ecclesiastical ruff - a brief summary.

By Vibeke Ormerod

Photos used by kind permission from Hanne Froesig Dalgaard.

To our delight many different ruffs were displayed by Jenny Tiramani at the study day but when she showed us a flat one in a box, it struck me instantly that it was just like the ruff all Danish vicars wear and why had I never thought of finding out WHY they wore them and WHEN it started? The ruffs are also worn by vicars on the Faroe Islands as many vicars there train in Denmark.

As I was due to go to Denmark anyway I rang up the vicar who married me and my husband many years ago and I asked if we could have a "ruff" chat. And I started finding out about ruffs on the net.

Through my brief research I came upon HANNE FROESIG DALGAARD from Copenhagen who has written excellently about these ruffs and I have her kind permission to use her material and some of the photos. A VERY brief summary from her article, relating to the Danish ecclesiastical ruff only, therefore follows:

European dress changed dramatically from loose to more fitted garments during the early renaissance and certain details of the dress became more and more pronounced during the 1500s, one such being the neckline which grew wider and wider and which by the 1570s became an individual garment, the ruff, no longer attached. A relic of this being the white starched ruff which is used by vicars in the Danish Lutheran church and in some places in Northern Germany. The influence seems to have come from Germany, as after the Reformation in Denmark in 1536 many German tradesmen and craftsmen settled in Copenhagen and Elsinore and with them German vicars, often called for by the King at Kronborg Castle. And the ruff, developed as an elegant detail of Spanish court dress in the mid 1500s has through German Lutheran vicars come to Denmark and stayed as liturgical dress, obligatory by order of the bishops since the 1630s, having undergone a "reduction" in size as they at some point became as huge as mill stones in the 1590s and early 1600s, often with many layers. ①

How were the ruffs made? We can get some idea from portraits and there are some well preserved ruffs around, amongst others a ruff from a collection in Livrustkammaren in Stockholm from about 1600. Here it is seen from below, it is too fragile to be starched.

② The lace shows that it didn't belong to anybody ecclesiastical. It consists of three layers stitched down individually to the neck band, all beautifully sewn with tiny stitches by hand.

The making of ruffs for Danish vicars changed gradually from the 1850s with the appearance of the sewing machine and little workshops for production of linen shirts and the like opened by and by. At the Women's Exhibition in 1895 there was a stand displaying three vicar's ruffs made by machine. The ruffs are made with three strips of linen and the sewing is done stitching the middle layer to one of the outer layers alternately to achieve the profile of the figure 8. ③

When the finished ruff has been washed it will be starched in rice starch and then it is time to shape the ruff into the 8 profile by inserting an electric rod first in each hole on the top layer and then doing the same at the bottom layer, all the time keeping a degree of dampness. This has to be done several times and usually over several days for the ruff to be beautifully stiff and hold its shape. ④⑤⑥

A vicar needs at least two ruffs and he will have to send it for washing and starching four to five times a year, each costing about £50. So the vicars take care and see that no damp will get to their ruff, carrying it in a box to and from a service ⑥ and if he/she has to perform a funeral on a rainy day he will undoubtedly bring a big golfing umbrella to try and "save" the ruff. There are about 20 ladies cleaning and repairing ruffs professionally in Denmark. It takes several days to get a ruff ready and five or six can be worked on in any one day.

Finally a photo of my lovely vicar, now retired, who himself knows tailoring and textiles and has a wicked sense of humour. "Ruff" and ready.

Since writing this I found out by chance that this kind of ruff is indeed called a mill stone collar in German: Mülhsteinkrage.



①



②



③



④



⑥



⑤



⑥



*Get Ahead Get a Hat continued from page 13*

During the seventeenth century women's status, or that of their husbands, was expressed through exciting headwear. As wealth poured in from the colonies conspicuous consumption in the form of expensive lace and ribbons became popular for accessorising clothing, including headwear. An early eighteenth century Queen Anne hat in the Berrington collection was a delightful and rare example of a fine split cane broad brimmed hat that was designed to replicate the pattern of Reticella lace.

Printed matter was produced in abundance during the eighteenth century and the fashion plates in magazines and journals informed wealthy ladies of the latest fashions. Setting the trends, an early fashion icon was Marie Antoinette who was very influential during her reign. Althea showed us examples of fashion dolls wearing little Bergère hats similar to those worn by the French Queen in portraits from her 'rural idyll' phase. It seems that, like many fashions, the Bergère was based upon a working class object. The Snowhill collection includes a wonderful example of an early eighteenth century working class straw bonnet coated with paint and varnish that was surely a predecessor of the gentrified Bergère hat.

As the century progressed ever more fantastic and sizeable creations topped mountainous hairstyles resulting in a field day for cartoonists. Marie Antoinette was regularly lampooned as was our home grown British icon the Duchess of Devonshire. Post-revolutionary Paris introduced simplified fashion styles, drawing on classical lines. The new columnar silhouette required classical hairstyles to match and these no longer suited large hats. The 'poke' bonnet was therefore devised and Althea showed us beautiful examples from both collections in her care. Poke bonnets came in many qualities of straw, whilst trimmings and ribbons came into their own.

During the nineteenth century the Luton straw industry flourished, becoming an important part of the Midlands rural economy. Children were famously employed in plaiting schools for such low pay it was practically slave labour. Their small hands could manipulate the finest quality straw. On a lighter note, Althea produced some hilarious cartoons of exaggerated poke bonnets before moving on to the 'chimney pot' and broader brimmed hats of the 1820s. The bigger brims were designed to complement the changing silhouette. Waists returned, skirts widened into the A-line and bigger sleeves graced sloping shoulders. Larger brims meant more room for trimmings and these were often applied without restraint.

When 18 year old Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 hats became appropriately modest for a very young woman. This simpler, more innocent style was of course taken up by polite society who looked to their new young Queen for style indicators. Trimmings were still important but bonnets more proportioned. Fancy straws and horsehair were used to create very fine, delicate plaits and feathers became a must-have accessory. As gowns grew bigger, hats followed in size. The 'spoon' bonnet was a popular design that suited the hair styles inspired by the Queen's own style that left the hair smooth over the crown and looped over the ears. There were some tragic repercussions from the hat fashions of the Victorian era. Artificial flowers used for trimming hats were often coloured using chemical dyes including arsenic which poisoned the flower-makers. When Prince Albert died in 1861 the country was plunged into mourning as the Queen retreated from society, never to wear colour again. Mourning became a huge industry and huge amounts of black crape were produced to fill the need for the highly coded mourning dress expected of anyone in polite society. There are many examples of black crape hats in both collections of which we were shown several styles. As the Queen was all but invisible, British society turned once again to France for its fashion cues. Eugenie, wife of Emperor Napoleon III, became a huge fashion icon. She wore the early form of couture made for her by Charles Worth and hats were part of the ensembles disseminated in popular ladies magazines both in France and in Britain. This time, although skirts were huge, hats were smaller and often looked like little plates with lots of trimmings including ribbons known as 'Follow me lads'.

By the late nineteenth century dresses were slimmer, reflecting the more active lives fashionable women were beginning to lead that included sports such as tennis, cycling and golf. Hats perched on full hairstyles but were less fancy, often made from horsehair or velvet. The 'S' silhouette of the early 1900s was accompanied by hats of growing dimensions once again. Feathers became an absolute must, but this time there was a public outcry at the extensive use of not only feathers but whole stuffed birds in millinery. The RSPB was formed as a direct result of the feather trade which had resulted in the deaths of millions of exotic birds.



1840s mourning bonnet, taken from the National Trust's book *Hats and Bonnets from Snowhill* by Althea Mackenzie

Following the First World War, newly emancipated women of the 1920s rejected restrictive clothing. They adopted the somewhat androgynous fashions that included straight lines, shorter hemlines and little cloche hats. The 1930s were influenced by stars of the silver screen and even by the famous Tutankhamun archaeological finds. World War II saw women in the traditionally male workplace and many were wearing uniform. Hats helped maintain a sense of glamour. After the war Dior's glamorous New Look had a great impact on British fashion, introducing larger hats once again.

1950s and 1960s icons of fashion were often actresses but were also political figures such as Jackie Kennedy who had a huge following on both sides of the Atlantic. Youth culture eventually took its toll and hat wearing became virtually obsolete by the end of the 1970s. Vivienne Westwood used hats in her 1980s collections to make political comments while Princess Diana re-invigorated the wearing of hats for formal occasions. The royals continue to lead and inspire fashion to a certain extent today but hats are now generally worn either for formal occasions or for protection against the elements. Althea finally presented a few extraordinary examples of contemporary cat walk head pieces – one that looked rather like a poke bonnet and another heavily trimmed confection that would have been quite at home in the eighteenth century.

Through her entertaining presentation Althea explained how hats have followed the vagaries of fashionable dress over the centuries, combining their histories with fascinating, extraordinary and often humorous illustrations.

# Queen Egonde

Dear Wardrobe readers

The following article has been sent to Margaret Holden from the Costume Society of America. I have left out references and acknowledgements but we have added the link for the entire article to our web page for your perusal and to give proper credit to all researchers.

<http://www.http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1674&context=tsaconf>

## Luxurious Merovingian Textiles Excavated from Burials in the Saint Denis Basilica, France in the 6th-7th Century

Sophie Desrosiers and Antoinette Rast-Eicher

sophie.desrosiers@ehess.fr and antoinette.rast@sfu.unibe.ch

**In the north of Paris, in what is now the outskirts of the city, stands the Basilica of Saint Denis. The early church of late Antiquity had been enlarged in several stages, in particular during the 6th in conjunction with the ascent of the Merovingian dynasty whose rulers began to use it as burial site for the royal family.**

The Basilica of Saint Denis had been excavated in several campaigns between 1953 and 1980 and the excavations had resulted in an outstanding discovery: the identification of Queen Aregonde's grave, thanks to a gold ring bearing the inscription "*Arnegundis regine*". Aregonde was king Clotaire I's wife (511/561), and Chilperic's mother (537-539/584) and she died in 580-581 AD. Her high rank in the Merovingian hierarchy, as the wife of a king and the mother of another, she rightfully deserved to be buried in luxurious attire. Her jewellery is testament to her status, with a long silver-gilt dress pin, a large belt buckle and garter fittings, among others found in the burial. Based mainly on these elements, her garments had been reconstructed, hypothesized as with a short knee-length dress. This reconstruction had been heavily criticized by scholars at the time, but it is only after the textile finds could be analyzed again with accurate information about their position in the grave that the early hypothesis could be revised.

Patrick Périn then set up a new multidisciplinary project at the *Musée d'Archéologie Nationale* in Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 2006. Its goal is to complement and complete the early publications with new research now possible through the development of new analytical techniques.

The estimated age of Queen Aregonde at death is 61+/- three years after new research and it was found that the garnets in her jewellery originated from Portugal, Bohemia, India and Sri Lanka, a testimony to her wealth.

### An important part of the project deals with the textiles.

All the single fragments were documented and analysed and fibres identified, the structures of the textiles determined and comparable reference materials sought, enabling the linen and wool fragments, and the gold threads, to be placed into their production context, and the same was done with the silks. The dyes were analysed.

In the case of Queen Aregonde's garments, it was difficult to fit the many little clues together, nevertheless, the reconstruction presented at the end of this paper will give an idea of the original splendor of the textiles found in the queen's grave.



Figure 1a, left. Dark blue pleated wooden tabby. (Grave 48)  
Figure 1b, right. Fine woolen tablet woven band with broadened wefts. (Grave 41)  
All the photos of the textiles in the article are from Antoinette Rast-Eicher.

As a general observation, we can say that, whatever the materials – linen/hemp, wool, silk, gold -, the fibres and textiles are of a very high quality. Two exceptional fibres have been found that were said to be very expensive by that time: "beaver" probably spun with fine wool in a very deteriorated fragment of an upper textile layer from Aregonde's grave, and a fragment of "otter" skin, probably used to make a purse.

According to Thomas Calligaro's analyses, the metal used for the gold lamellas contains various percentages of silver and copper and also some traces of tin and cadmium, regularly used in the

making of jewellery. This indicates that the likely source of the metal had come from melting down of jewellery. In addition, the regular traces all of them carry on both faces attest a single method of production that must be considered therefore as a local one.

The wool and linen textiles are local productions: tabbies, 2/2 twill and diamond twill correspond to local productions anchored in the Germanic tradition of the time. Typical Roman types are missing, such as weft-faced tabby, half-basket-weave and tapestry. Instead, we found very fine pleated woolen tabbies with slightly overspun "z" warps and wefts. The large fragment showing a dark blue dye made with five millimeters high pleats (figure 1a), probably belonged to a tunic similar to those represented on a late antique gravestone from Bosnia-Herzegovina. There were also spin- patterned linens with striped or checkered effect obtained through the regular change of spin- direction of a limited number of warps and/or wefts (as seen in the "grande robe" in Chelles), and many very fine woolen tablet woven bands produced with different techniques (figure 1b). All these textile types were well known in Germany, east Switzerland and northern/eastern France in the 6th and 7th century. Tablet weaving has been known in Central Europe since the Bronze Age and was a major decoration during the pre-Roman Iron Age.

The silks are either plain or figured. Two very small fragments of light taffetas have been found which are so fine that it was a miracle to see them (it is probable that they were originally much more numerous). The second one, woven with grège silk, (grège silk is the thread obtained from reeling the cocoons. It has gum and no twist), shows high thread counts - 65 and 60 threads per centimeter - two characteristics pointing to a Chinese weaving tradition (Chinese taffetas have usually been woven with grège. They have no twist in warp and weft).





Figure 2a, left. Silk tabby woven with grège weft whose filaments, after degumming, spread into the available space; and right: twisted warp. (Grave 13) (SEM photos)

Figure 2b, right. Weft-faced tabby with shellfish dyed silk wefts. (Grave 49)

Figure 3a, left. Sample of monochrome figured 2/1 twill, probably woven within a Chinese tradition. (Grave 33)

Figure 3b, right. Samite with 1/1 warp proportion and a twill by queen (Argonde).

Figure 4. Samite with a 2/1 warp proportion. 4a, (left). With three identifiable wefts and a diagonal in "S" direction (grave 11). 4b, (right). With a diagonal in "Z" direction: cuff of queen (Argonde's purple coat sleeve). (Grave 49)

The first one is slightly different with a light "z" twist in the warp and relatively low thread counts - 45 warps and 24 wefts per centimeter - has probably been woven somewhere else (figure 2a). Another tabby example, weft-faced, with 18 warps and more than 90 wefts per centimeter - shows a thick rectilinear warp of very deteriorated (undetermined) fibre, probably a plant fibre and a fine silk weft dyed with true shellfish purple (figure 2b). It composed Argonde's coat. This is the only example that matches the Roman taste, but here in silk rather than wool. In the queen's grave, silk dyed with madder was also found as supplementary triple weft for a large tablet-woven band decorated with diamonds, and more silk threads were used for the embroidery of her leather belt, showing that silk threads were available locally for small decorations.

**Finally**, eight fragments of more complex silks have been identified. Their reduced dimensions and bad state of preservation does not allow more comparison than through their technical features. Happily, during the 6th and 7th centuries, samites and other types of figured silks from different areas - Mediterranean, Persian, and Chinese - showed differences in thread construction, warp proportions, direction of twill and reduction that allow the evaluation of their region of production. They are all bound in 2/1 twill and at an early stage of the research, were all considered as samite. But one piece with grège threads and very high thread counts - 115 and 50 threads per centimetre in the two directions - is now considered as woven with a different technique (figure 3a). Its untwisted threads point to a Chinese tradition and its high thread counts seem more acceptable for a simple twill or a monochrome figured twill with the highest thread count in the warp direction. Another fragment of a probable samite, too deteriorated, show only the "s" direction of its twill and cannot be identified further. With their "z" twisted warps, the six other fragments have been woven outside of China and, according to the 1/1 or 2/1 proportion between their main and binding warps, in two different areas.

With a 1/1 warp proportion, four fragments have been probably woven in the Mediterranean region. The "S" direction of their twill and the dyes used for two of them fit with such a region of production: shellfish purple and some madder in one case (Argonde's grave; figure 3b), kermes, madder and a plant with indigo in the other one. In another female grave with the deteriorated example, the samites had probably been used as veils.

Two samites with a 2/1 warp proportion and a glossy appearance can be considered as imports from the Persian region. The example with three identifiable wefts - red, blue, and what might have been a yellow is bound in a 2/1 twill with a diagonal in "S" direction (figure 4a). It has a warp dyed with madder, the other dye products could not be identified as only indigotine resulted from the analysis. The samite was decorated with a gold border and situated close to the neck of the adult possible female. The second one,

forming the cuff of Argonde's purple coat sleeve, revealed only the presence of madder, maybe for the warp threads as the wefts show a dark bluish reflection (figure 4b). The direction of the diagonal of its 2/1 twill is "Z", then in the opposite direction to the other 2/1 samite, a distinction that does not seem to characterize a definite group in that area as far as we know. (figure 5).

### New proposal for the reconstruction of queen Argonde's funeral attire

Queen Argonde's long garment had been cut in a weft-faced half-silk tabby whose silk weft had been dyed with shellfish purple. At the waist, it was held by a leather belt embroidered with silk and closed by an important gold and silver buckle with garnets. Its front opening was decorated with a silk tablet-woven band showing a diamond design made with a red supplementary weft dyed with madder. The cuffs of the purple garment sleeves were made of a blue and yellow (?) silk samite imported from Persia. And above these cuffs were bands gold-embroidered with rosettes in a series of circles.

On her head and shoulders, secured by gold pins, she was wearing a veil in a red and yellow figured samite imported from the eastern Mediterranean region, dyed also with purple, and some madder. She wore gold earrings with filigree, and, above the veil or another fabric, an additional decoration, probably a tablet woven border brocaded with gold threads.

Under the coat, the queen was wearing a garment made of two different tabbies: one in wool, and the other maybe in linen - possibly a shirt? or part of the purple garment lining? On her legs she had silver garter fittings closed around her shoes made of decorated goat leather.

Not included in the visual reconstruction of figure 4, but more visible because above the long purple garment and under a linen shroud covering her body, was the "*tissu pelucheux*" (shaggy textile) - a coat or a cape? - woven with threads spun from a mixture of very fine wool and beaver hair, an expensive fabric reported as "*vestis*" and not "*pellis*" by Ambrosius of Milan, Claudianus and later Isidor of Sevilla. According to Claudianus, this garment of beaver hair was a "*birrus*", a coat.

The price Claudianus gives for this "*birrus castoreus*" - 6 solidi - is, according to Cassianus, a contemporary of Claudianus, enough to pay a whole year in luxury for two people!

The quality of the prime material - fine wool, silk, gold, beaver hair - allied with the brilliant colors obtained from such dyes as shellfish purple, madder and indigo plants, and the long distance imported textiles probably bearing exotic unusual designs, sometimes on a brilliant surface, converge to communicate the expression of a royal court well aware of luxurious textiles.

# The Down Side of Fashion?

## Killer Fashion: The Consequence of Style

■ The Charleston Museum, South Carolina [www.charlestonmuseum.org](http://www.charlestonmuseum.org).

Report and photos: Carol Bell

**OVER** the centuries, fashion has been a friend but also a foe – to the wearer, the maker and the environment. Wholesale slaughter of animals for their fur or feathers, their ivory or leather, was also used for “frivolous” ornamentation. “The near-extinction of bird populations for millinery, a decimation of Atlantic whales for corsetry, and the plundering of elephants for ivory fans and jewellery are all part of this killer trade” - words which introduced this vibrant and absorbing exhibition.

Here follows a brief outline of harm to people, environment and animals

In Victorian times some of the health hazards in the textile industry might be poor ventilation, dangerous machinery and poisonous substances like mercury, which was used in felting – hence the term “Mad Hatter”.

Dyeing processes have been causing harm to the environment since the mid C19th. The first aniline dye, mauve, was discovered by William Henry Perkin in 1856, when he found that a black coal tar solution he was using actually turned fabrics purple. In 1863 a yellow dye containing nitrogen was formulated that could be



turned into red, blue, violet and black. The first colour created was called *Bismarck Brown*. During the C19th manufacturers tainted rivers by discarding chemical and carcinogen-laden water from factories. The museum say some producers in China, India and Mexico continue this harmful practice to this day.

Stays were boned using baleen, from whales



**Beautiful but deadly?** Above, left to right: A rainbow-coloured array of dyed dresses: first, from the 1950s, a red cocktail dress designed by Madeleine Fauth and bought by Nancy Hawk from a fashionable store in Charleston; an orange chiffon dress and scarf, made from an Indian sari in the 1970s; a bright



**A selection of exotic fans** – left to right, a green feather fan with hummingbird trim, Rio de Janeiro, late 19th century; a pink ostrich feather fan from the 1920s, mounted on celluloid sticks; a folding feather fan (possibly pheasant), late C19th; an open feather fan made by Horace Sams of Beaufort, South Carolina, 1860s; a red-tailed hawk feather fan, from a bird killed by Nathaniel Heyward of Charleston, ca 1928; a guinea fowl fan with a quill covered handle, late C19th; an open lavender feather fan with a bamboo handle; and an ostrich feather fan with tortoiseshell sticks, ca 1930.



yellow silk chiffon dress from the late C19th; a green chiffon creation worn by Ruth Griffin of Charleston in the 1930s; a purple printed silk dress worn by another local girl Amelia Emanuel in the 1890s; a brown crepe-de-chine dress worn by Videau Kirk, from Charleston, ca 1928; and a black cotton dress worn by Ethel Sanford, from the 1890s.

Below: Blue feather fan: A macaw feather fan from the early C20th.

with below that, a turkey feather fan with a plastron handle, owned by Charlotte Gammage of Camden, South Carolina, in the early C20th.

[www.charlestonmuseum.org](http://www.charlestonmuseum.org)



When the Spaniards landed in Mexico in the 16th century cochineal became their most valuable export. Cochineal insects feed off prickly pears in central and South America and produce an acid to ward off predators. When the insects are dried and ground and mixed with water

they produce a vibrant red dye. Bright red was traditionally worn by the wealthy aristocracy and the British military.

This jacket and matching red breeches, worn by Charles Pinckney of Charleston in the 1730s may well have been dyed using cochineal.

which are up to 30 metres long and weigh as much as 130 tons. The baleen is a protein similar in composition to fingernails and was prized for its strength and flexibility. While no longer used in corsets, baleen whales are still harvested, despite an international ban in 1986.

We rarely think of silk as deadly, but I discovered that 2,500 caterpillars die to produce one pound of raw silk. Not surprising then that it takes billions of cocoons to sustain a silk industry, most of which is based in China.

For centuries, feathers have been popular fashion accessories – ostriches, peacocks, pheasants, birds of paradise and heron feathers were used on hats and head-dresses. Sometimes these became so ornate that the wearer had to kneel on the floor of a carriage, or put their heads out the window to get anywhere! One well known fan of elaborate head décor, Marie Antoinette, was nicknamed “featherhead” by her brother Joseph.

Not surprisingly this fashion trend threatened the very survival of some bird species. Between 1870 and 1920 the UK imported nearly 40 million pounds of ornamental plumage! In America government legislation helped minimise the slaughter, but by the end of the 1920s exotic feathers were becoming less practical and therefore the demand fell somewhat.

Tortoiseshell was used not only in hair combs but even knitting needles and guitar picks. The shells were harvested from hawksbill sea turtles mainly in south-east Asia, the Caribbean and Brazil. The process involved softening

the dead turtles’ shell in boiling hot water and flattening the plate with a press. Polishing the shells revealed a beautiful brown, golden and amber tones and a silky smooth surface. Although protective international legislation was introduced in 1973, Japan continued to use tortoiseshell for jewellery and spectacle frames until 1994. For the past 20 years the hawksbill turtle has been on the critically endangered list and a recovery plan put in place by the US government should lead to a resurgence in numbers by around 2020.

Some potential hazards highlighted by the exhibition were muslin dresses (too thin for the British climate, causing wearers to catch pneumonia); corsets (squashing the bodily organs and restricting breathing); and hoops (tripping up, getting stuck in doorways and catching fire)

This was an excellent exhibition which although it was held in a single gallery certainly offered interesting facts and provocative viewpoints. It also gave the museum a chance to display some fine items from their own collection.



## The Artificial Face

by Sarah Jane Downing

Throughout history beauty has been women's chief asset. For those naturally blessed, their beauty could ensure a good marriage, offer social mobility, fame or adventure. For those less fortunate life could be very cruel. Without such obvious gifts, it was necessary to use cosmetics to invent them, and over the centuries women have applied themselves wholeheartedly to artifice to achieve the beautiful ideal, even endangering their lives using poisonous chemicals, their reputations and fortunes at the risk of blackmail, and even the wrath of God.

Those who have dabbled in the arts of artifice have walked a fine line – how to go far enough to create a desirable change both in appearance and in reception of that appearance, whilst also remaining within the confines of what their peers would accept. Moral arbiters and (mostly male) critics were adamant that any artifice at all was morally wrong. It would offend God, as criticism was implied in the augmentation of the faces that God himself had created. It would grant licence to the devil, as vanity was a gateway sin which would incite lust. Worse still, artifice might allow men to be bewitched and deceived!

Aside from the fear that a girl might not be as pretty as they thought, there was the far more serious concern that a woman might be hiding not just pock marks, but marks of 'the pox' under her make-up. Certainly warnings and dark insinuations against what was imagined that a woman might hide are repeated again and again, partly fuelling the association of make-up and prostitution.

Count Castiglione, the most famous courtier of the court of Mantua in Italy characterised the conundrum in *The Book of the Courtier* c1516-18:

*Surely you realize how much more graceful a woman is who, if indeed she wishes to do so, paints herself so sparingly and so little that whoever looks at her is unsure whether she is made-up or not, in comparison with one whose face is so encrusted that she seems to be wearing a mask and who dare not laugh for fear of causing it to crack, ... letting herself be seen only by torchlight, in the way a wily merchant shows his cloth in a dark corner... such is the uncontrived simplicity which is most attractive to the eyes and minds of men, who are always afraid of being tricked by art.*

Queen Elizabeth I displayed her conviction to her people by making herself an icon, and cosmetics played a vital part in creating an image that would become more widely seen than any other person – rather than religious deity – within the Tudor era. Her legendary complexion was enhanced by Ceruse, a concoction of finely ground white lead powder, mixed with vinegar and applied over the entire face and neck. It created a perfect luminous white capable

of smoothing away pockmarks, blemishes and wrinkles which made it popular for several centuries despite the obvious drawback of it being a deadly poison.

Rouge highlighted the cheeks, red ochre gave a brownish red, brighter shades could be achieved by a white lead base dyed with red crystalline mercuric sulphide. Lips were also rouged with a 'pencil' of ground alabaster or plaster of Paris mixed with a colouring agent, usually alkanet, cochineal or the dye from the east Indian brazil tree which could yield shades of pink as well as red, this was mixed into a paste and formed into sticks like wax crayons and dried solid in the sun. The full maquillage was then preserved with a glaze of egg white which also gave a fetching porcelain shine. Layered like tempera painting, the egg white helping to disguise any pitting from smallpox.

Reputedly Venus had a beauty spot, one lovely drop of darkness to highlight her perfect complexion, the imperfection that made her beauty complete. It was probably in emulation of this romantic notion that patching became fashionable in England in the late 16th century, the fashion reaching its height in the later 17th and still popular in the 18th.



Beauty spots were made of black silk, black velvet or very fine perfumed Spanish leather in red as well as black. They were glued to key areas

of the painted face with the intention of highlighting its beauties, each position named according to its charms. The 'coquette' was situated near to a pretty smile, the 'passionate' at the corner of the eye, and the 'gallant' as a dimple in the middle of the cheek. Unfortunately some did not have free choice over the position of their patches which, as the 'receleuse' were also worn to cover moles, spots and smallpox scars. These must have been in dire need of covering after suffering the brimstone and oil of turpentine treatment that would 'make the flesh rise spongy'.

These same lead based constituents were still present in various forms until the 18th century. Although the health problems associated with ceruse were noted as early as the c1580s when Giovanni Lomazzo an artist from Milan commented that women who use ceruse 'have always black teeth, standing far out from their gums like a Spanish mule, an offensive breath, with a face half scorched and an unclean complexion'; and fully catalogued in 1661 when Sir Robert Moray noted the ailments suffered by those he employed to make ceruse, the association was not really properly made until the death of Lady Coventry in 1760 when she: 'died a victim of cosmetics'.

The effects of ceruse were also mostly responsible for the associated cosmetic

Due to unforeseen circumstances our fourth speaker for the Janet Arnold Study Day in October was unable to attend. She has kindly sent this synopsis of her talk.

structures. What was gained in a beautiful clear-looking complexion was lost – quite literally – elsewhere. The more

expensive better quality whites had a high quantity of lead which not only corroded the skin but caused hair loss. Perhaps a good thing for an unfortunately hirsute lip, but frequently a disaster for the eyebrows and a regrettably receding hairline. Luckily this coincided with – or probably created – a look with the hair whisked high off the forehead in a tall and fantastic arrangement. Eyebrows were more difficult to disguise, but as early as 1703 an ingenious solution was found. With mice being the unwanted guests in many houses, their short silky brown fur somehow suggested itself as the perfect material for the artificial eyebrow. The mouse hide was cut to the desired shape and glued in place, often a little higher than the natural eyebrow. Unfortunately wherever they were put they had the regrettable tendency to come unstuck, and it was not uncommon to see a grand society lady vainly trying to keep her dignity whilst trying to rescue and replace a wayward eyebrow!

By 1734 when the poet Jonathan Swift wrote 'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed: Written for the Honour of the Fair Sex' as well as the mouse skin brows he lists a whole catalogue of artificial aids to beauty including:

*Her eye-brows, from a mouse's hide,  
Stuck on with art on either side,  
Pulls off with care, and first displays 'em,  
Then in a play-book smoothly lays 'em :  
Now dextrously her plumpers draws,  
That serve to fill her hollow jaws:  
Untwists a wire, and from her gums  
A set of teeth completely comes:*

Made of cork, the plumpers as described in the *Fop Dictionary* c1690 were 'Certain very thin, round, and light Balls, to plump out, and fill up the Cavities of the Cheeks; much used by the old Court-Countesses'. The front teeth were replaced by a row of artificial teeth carved from hippo ivory as the colour was a better match for human teeth. It must have been incredibly difficult to keep everything in its correct position, and people frequently spoke with a strange lisp due to the effort of trying to keep plumpers and teeth in place. It is deceptive that contemporary satirists take so much pleasure in making fun of women, because all of these artificial devices including wigs and makeup were also frequently worn by men.

We may boggle at our ancestors' use of poisons and obvious artifice, but future generations may well think the same of us. It may be botulism rather than lead, eyelash extensions instead of artificial brows, and an overall orange glow rather than pearl white, but artifice remains. What is more, the question of artifice still resonates and creates invective today. And whilst few Judaeo-Christian commentators would still cite cosmetic artifice as an offense against God, there is no shortage of tabloid journalists and internet trolls desperate to criticise and condemn artifice in all its forms.

# Eleanora's clerics

Fiona Starkey

**The original Eleanora group which produced the outfit for the Janet Arnold Day a couple of years ago had had so much fun working together that someone suggested we have a go at another project.**

**... Slow learners.**

The way it came about is slightly hazy, probably because the discussion occurred in a place of refreshment...

Dave's recollection is slightly different from mine (see right), but here goes:

My husband Nigel had come by some

splendid aubergine wool and brocade for a

Georgian outfit (the way you do) and it was suggested that Georgian be the thing. This is Bath, after all. Further refreshment

'volunteered'

Marian's husband Dave because she had already made a regency outfit for herself, and John, who was part of the group that evening

made the mistake of sounding interested. Being new to this dressing up lark, he and David decided that they didn't want to be too flash and something sober and clerical was decided upon.

We researched lots of portraits of the period - clerics were rather thin on the ground when we went looking for detail, so hit upon the style of some gentlemen of their age in around 1805-1815.

The shirts were fairly straightforward - just lots of seams and a fair amount of gathering, though finding a fine enough linen was lucky (Baillie's warehouse in Sturminster Marshall). For the main outfits we could have gone and cut our own patterns, but there are some available for this period and we sourced a particularly good set from *Laughing Moon*: Burnley and Trowbridge in the States where early C19th is well covered by their re-enactors. (The *Laughing Moon* patterns are available in the UK from Habitat Patterns, www.habitat.co.uk - Ed) They were good about pointing out where the period details differed from modern techniques.

The clerics went for black twill, with a tiny bit of flamboyance on the waistcoats: velvet and a discreet black brocade with some rather splendid buttons.

## Dressing some men

David Banks

I spent an interesting time on the fringes of the Eleanora of Toledo project watching Marian, Fiona, Vibeke, Liz, Pat and Sarah recreate the dress for the *Patterns of Fashion*. I even went to Florence with them to see the original at the Pitti Palace - bolstered by the presence of a couple of husbands.

I knew the girls were looking for another project and this coincided with a conversation with a friend called John. He is a Mayor's Guide for the City of Bath, and also volunteers at No1 the Crescent, Bath. He expressed an interest in having an outfit made from about 1815, we kicked around the idea, and I said "Me, too."

Our brief was a couple of ageing clerics so an outfit of black, ecclesiastical sombreness was envisaged - a couple of old clerics, not very religious, probably more interested in butterfly collections and the plight of fallen women ...

John and I sourced our own materials and handed them over ...

The race was on to complete by the end of September 2016 to join an evening *Frankenstein in Bath*\* walk, in costume. And we made it, much to the pleasure of the walk leader and numerous tourists with cameras.

Nigel, John and I are grateful for the skill and effort of the costume makers and trust that they enjoyed the project as much as we have the fruits of their labours.

*\* The walk was about Mary Shelley's time in Bath, during which she wrote Frankenstein.*

The making was really a series of very jolly, busy meetings to cut out, discuss and then go away with individual pieces of research and outfits to put together for next time. It was amazing how quickly 'the boys' adapted to being measured, prodded and pushed about in pursuit of a decent fit. And really interesting to once again see how much you learn by actually making something.

How to get patterns to match on flaps, how to get points sharp on pockets; just how stiff canvas re-enforcement on the collars can be when you're trying to push a needle through five or more layers of fabric; and I don't think Sarah will want to do more buttonholes for quite a while.

One of the gems at an unconnected evening was overhearing Dave and John discussing how to tie a decent stock, the best place to source silk stockings and hats, and whether you should wear them point forward or back... Dave went for a hunting topper in the event, while John opted for falling bands and a tricorne. One pair of shoes, often a problem, came from *Farthingale Costumes*.

The whole project took about four or five months over summer and the inaugural outing was the 'Frankenstein Walk' in Bath in late September.

After an hour or so promenading round town (very Georgian) we retired to a gentlemen's Club where these days women of the better sort are allowed and relaxed in traditional style. Three outfits in one go was a bit of an enterprise, but I have a feeling that when we've had some fun with these there might be more in the pipeline. Any bets on the boys wanting something brighter next time?



From the top: John Knapper and Dave Banks, Clerics in front of Bath Abbey doors; Nigel Manley, Georgian gentleman; Dave in club mode; Marian Banks and Dave in Abbey Churchyard, John, Nigel and Fiona Starkey recovering from the exertion. Not a glass of ratafia in sight!

*Eleanora's seamstresses*  
Fiona Starkey, Marian Banks, Vibeke Ormerod, Pat Poppy, Sarah Bartlett, Angela Adam Liz Booty.



## The Things You Find...

Tony Cooper

For some unaccountable reason in my mind's ear I heard Russell Davies (chairman of Round Britain Quiz) asking the question: "What is the link between Jane Austen, Jones Bootmakers and a trouser press?"

Don't worry, I'm not expecting you to answer it; but by chance I discovered one - and it's nothing to do with Corby. Let me explain.

It all started last summer on a nice, dry, sunny Sunday morning (remember those?) when Carolyn asked if I planned to go to a car boot sale. 'Planned' was possibly too strong a word but, in short, we decided to go and armed with my small list of things to look out for we soon braved the throng.

After long experience with these gatherings I've found it most efficient to trawl up one side of an aisle and back down the other. Others seem to favour the pin-ball technique of bouncing from side to side, getting into as many people's ways as possible and picking off the odd small dog or child in the process.

It wasn't long before my attention was drawn to something that was definitely not on my list - an Everitt's Patent CITY trouser press that was in need of a little t-l-c. I obviously looked at it for just a moment too long and the stall holder engaged me in conversation about it - the upshot being that it dated from 1923. How he knew that with such precision I didn't understand but stylistically it seemed plausible.

I have a "thing" (all right, *another* "thing") about nicely-made wooden items - particularly those that can be spruced up a bit. This object only seemed to need a few of bits and pieces replacing and a bit of glue here and there. Having done that I was sure I could make a bob or two by selling it on to one of the retro shops in Catherine Hill in Frome.

Now there is a saying from Carolyn's childhood that goes something like, "You don't want *that!*", which was used whenever she expressed a desire for some ghastly (and/or expensive) trinket. Although I was expecting to be on the receiving end of this rebuke on this occasion, Carolyn had moved on. Nevertheless I got the feeling she knew I would eventually succumb, which, of course, I did.

Once home, I looked my new prize over carefully and found that it needed a replacement nut. A quick rummage through my stash of nuts and bolts collected over half a century (my equivalent of your button box) had that problem fixed. A little bit of wood turning provided a replacement foot and after some glue and polish it looked quite a picture.

Turning the press over, I found the manufacturer's guarantee label filled in by the shop that originally sold it - Titley, Son & Price of 19, Cheap Street, Bath and dated 20-12-23. Perhaps this had been a Christmas gift for a man who had almost everything.

After a bit of silver surfing we found an 1869 advertising card for the establishment - a little bit earlier than the trouser press, admittedly, but at that time one would doubtless have had staff for that sort of thing.

"But which one is Cheap Street?" we muttered. (Despite knowing Bath for decades we occasionally find a blind spot for street names and this was one of them.) After a bit more prodding of our keyboard, Google maps came to our rescue and we chorused, "Oh, *there* it is!"

If you do know Bath do you recognise the frontage? The giveaway is the arched alleyway - still with its masked keystone - to the left of the shop that leads through to the Pump Room. Today it is Jones the Bootmakers and amazingly the arched windows still remain.

Scroll on a few months to Christmas when my dear wife bought me a little book entitled *A Charming Place - Bath in the Life and Novels of Jane Austen* by Maggie Lane. She (the authoress, that is) quoted the following from *Pride and Prejudice*:

Half a minute conducted them through the Pump-yard to the archway, opposite Union-passage; but here they were stopped. Everybody acquainted with Bath may remember the difficulties of crossing Cheap-street at this point; it is indeed a street of so impertinent a nature, so unfortunately connected with the great London and Oxford roads, and the principal inn of the city, that a day never passes in which parties of ladies, however important their business, whether in quest of pastry, millinery, or even (as in the present case) of young men, are not detained on one side or the other by carriages, horsemen, or carts.

It surprised me to discover that until 1807 Union Street didn't exist; Union Passage was one of the main routes north-south in the town and seeing how narrow it is it must have been quite a *melée* much of the time. Am I being unfair to smile at Ms Austen's including millinery in her list of "important business"?

## Fifty Shades of Red

■ Totnes Fashion and Textile Museum, Bogan House, 43 High Street, Totnes TQ9 5NP  
www.totnesfashionandtextilemuseum.org.uk  
01803 862857

Report by Judith Steven

Judith Steven who is a fairly new member of WECS has been on a visit to the Fashion and Textile Museum in Totnes and has written a report for us. We love that!

She says:

Each year the Museum has a different theme and this year it was **The Colour Red**. What a vast range of reds there were to see from pink to deep wine.

The first cabinet showed mostly dresses with a few items for men one being an elaborate 1740 gentleman's waistcoat in bright red satin with embroidery and in complete contrast, a 2010 gentleman's dark red evening jacket. The ladies' dresses were much more elaborate from a pink 1850s dress through to 1990s raspberry and black taffeta cocktail suit with its wide shoulders the fashion of the time. There was an extremely elegant stylish 1880 dinner dress with a long fishtail in claret red velvet in complete contrast, and a 1926 flapper style dress. Norman Hartnell was represented by a 1952 coat dress with echoes of an C18th dress in what I would call shocking

What with dodging the rain and other people and looking in shop windows it's not easy just to stop and think of the many generations who have done exactly that across exactly the same paving stones and between exactly the same buildings. I resolved that whenever I'm in Bath I'd stop a while and think about the lives of those people.

That was all very interesting but we still didn't know how the trouser press was supposed to be used - particularly the pivoted clamp thing at the end. Searching the internet for an Everitt's instruction manual proved fruitless. However, we finally did stumble upon an advert for another maker's product that enlightened us.

Given the amount of unexpected pleasure my chance find has given us both in sprucing it up and researching it, I thought that the princely sum of £2.50 was good value and I'm not sure that I can now bring myself to sell it. So keep your eyes peeled for some pretty sharp strides gracing my lallies in future!



pink colour. Even the Hollywood influence was represented by a 1938 scarlet rayon dress looking like lace, cut on the cross with tiny buttons on the sleeves. I particularly liked the 1930 ruby red velvet dress which would have been worn for dinner or evening wear with long gloves.

The 1950s were represented by a candy pink ruched and frilled cocktail dress and a 1952 shocking pink taffeta strapless dress trimmed with black velvet with a full skirt coming below the knee and a rather less full skirted 1959 cocktail frock in a deep shade of pink and burgundy in a princess line with the added feature of a gathered side panel. By 1960 the styles had become much more simple with no waistband. One example was a 1960s candy pink satin dress decorated with small beads. By the end of the 80s the idea of a cocktail dress had more or less disappeared but there was one: a 1983 cerise cocktail dress made in polyester. Of accessories there were small evening bags and party shoes which everybody going out for an occasion would have had.

and from the same period, a burgundy smoking jacket. 1883 with the crinoline now transformed into the bustle and a garnet and red outfit in patterned moiré striped silk.

Then there was an 1895 edwardian walking gown corded silk the colour of ox blood and lastly a dusky pink tea gown made of wool crêpe with embroidery ever practical could be used for day or evening wear. The red and white striped blazer of 1927 worn at schools and colleges and still today worn at such events as Henley Regatta. A 1936 red suede smart casual jacket, 1960 saw the appearance of Mary Quant on the fashion scene with a good example on display of a bright red wool suit with a boxy jacket and three quarter length sleeves also a Biba suit. By 1995 style became more casual with an evening jacket in deep red which could be worn with jeans. Bringing us up to 2003 with Yves Saint Laurent with a casual zip up blouson jacket in deep red.

Some wedding outfits were shown, for example a 1931 sugar pink organdie wedding outfit. Two 1960s outfits, a mother of the bride coat and a Thai silk dress and jacket ensemble in shocking pink designed by Elsa Schiaparelli.

All in all a most enjoyable exhibition. I am already looking forward to next year's exhibition.



The second cabinet showed a variety of cloaks and outer garments, like the scarlet woollen cloak, also known as a cardinal because of its colour. This kind of cloak was worn by women of all ages from mediaeval to

early Victorian times. The Georgian period showed a muslin dress with a short jacket over the top called a spencer. A 1890s Military Uniform for a Guards Officer in crimson wool

## WECS Extras!

One thing I always look forward to on a study day as an added extra is Jill's stall.

Over the years I have made some excellent purchases like a Victorian carriage parasol, long kid gloves, lace hankies, Maltese lace, jewellery and last but not least the 4 metres of superfine wool from Hainsworth @ £4/m. An incredible bargain and here is a rather blurred photo of my husband in his M-notch collared regency tailcoat made of same.

Thank you Jill and all who contribute to the stall.



## WECS Committee

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## WEFT = would you like to join in?

### Call out for exhibitors for the West of England Festival of Textiles 2017 at Trowbridge Museum

West of England Festival of Textiles (**WEFT**) is a biennial event at Trowbridge Museum. The festival aims to highlight the history of textiles and crafts in the West of England, and to celebrate regional, contemporary textile artists, craft groups and students through exhibiting their work.

The next **WEFT**, running from August to November 2017, will focus on some of the crafts used to decorate textiles like tating, netting, lace making, monogram embroidery, button making and braiding. In brief some of the today perhaps more unusual or less known crafts (as opposed to for example knitting and crocheting) which have nevertheless been very important for decorating and embellishing textiles in the past.

Part of **WEFT 2017** will therefore tell the story of these 'traditional' crafts through the examples we hold in the museum collection.

For the other part of the exhibition, we welcome crafters from the West of England who use these techniques to submit potential items for the exhibition. This includes both where the techniques are used in a traditional way but also where they are used in new and unusual ways to create more contemporary works.

The aim is to show both how the techniques were used in the past but also how they can be relevant for us today.

If you are interested in taking part, or wish to find out more about **WEFT**, including the accompanying workshop programme for which we are looking for contributors, please contact us via

**hanne.dahl@trowbridge.gov.uk**

### Programme Secretary

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## Wanted!\*

There are a couple of positions coming up for re-election at the AGM in February. No-body likes to be blind-sided, so below is a brief synopsis of what would be entailed if you'd like to get a bit more involved with the workings of the Society.

Volunteers or press-gang - your choice!

### Secretary

- Attend and minute committee meetings (3-4 a year) and AGM
- Ensure minutes are sent for correction before the next meeting
- Circulate final minutes, agendas and reports
- Remind committee members of date and place of next meeting
- Maintain records and administration
- Deal with communication and correspondence (currently communication via the website is dealt with by the Chairman)

### Membership Secretary

- Maintain the membership list
- Record subscriptions by checking bank statements for standing orders and receiving payments by post
- Send acknowledgements where requested
- Send cheques to the Treasurer
- Send reminders to those who have not renewed their membership
- Send welcome letter and current newsletter to new members
- Provide membership list to the bookings secretary
- Provide mailing labels for distribution of the newsletter
- Attend and provide report to committee meetings and AGM
- Monitor the WECS Membership Secretary's email account and action emails as appropriate
- Deal with communication and correspondence

### Co-opted members

There is also room on the committee for up to two co-opted members. The duties are to attend committee meetings and help in a more general way with ideas and support when an officer has a lot on their plate at particular times.

For example, an optional extra would be jointly with the Editor of *Wardrobe*, to help maintain the Society's Facebook page.

\*The Chairman vetoed 'Dead or Alive' in the subhead... though we have used bullet points.

## The School of Historical Dress has a new home

■ The School of Historical Dress, 52 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7PP  
www.theschoolofhistoricaldress.org.uk

Jenny Tiramani says:

We are delighted to tell you that we have at last been successful in purchasing the freehold to 52 Lambeth Road, London, SE1 7PP as the new home for *The School of Historical Dress*. This was made possible with generous loans from our trustees and with part of the bequest from the Estate of the late Janet Arnold.

The building was erected in 1841 as The Royal South London Dispensary for the Working Poor. It has four floors, three of which have a splayed ward at one end. There is a stone next to the front door inscribed with the words 'This stone was laid by His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, assisted by the Right Reverend the Bishop of Winchester on the 28 day of May AD 1841.'

Now begins our fundraising campaign (with the help of Achatas Philanthropy) to renovate and equip the building and more besides.



### Copy for the next newsletter to Vibeke Ormerod by 25 March please

With this Autumn issue of the magazine you should have:  
Financial Statement for 2015

Nomination forms for: Membership Secretary, Secretary, 2x Co-opted members

Booking forms for : February AGM, March Study Day

## Advice from a Singer Sewing Machine Manual 1949

Prepare yourself mentally for sewing. Think about what you are going to do. Never approach sewing with a sigh or lackadaisically. Good results are difficult when indifference dominates. Never try to sew with a sink full of dirty dishes or beds unmade.

When there are urgent housekeeping chores, do these first so that your mind is free to enjoy your sewing. When you sew, make yourself as attractive as possible. Put on a clean dress. Keep a little bag of french chalk near your sewing machine to dust your fingers at intervals. Have your hair in order, powder and lipstick put on. If you are constantly fearful that a visitor might drop in or your husband will come home, and you will not look neatly put together, you will not enjoy your sewing.

Having recently been treated to a new sewing machine, my husband found this and passed it to me without comment. I pass it on to you in the same spirit.  
Fiona Starkey

### FOR SALE

**English Civil War re-enactment** accoutrements: clothing, swords, armour, padded jacket described as late Agincourt, wooden bowls and glassware.

Moving house and need the space!  
email davidtmartin@icloud.com for details.

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