

WECS Wardrobe

Summer issue 2022
£7.50: Free to members

weecs
west of england
costume society



www.
wofecostume
society.org

Calendar

Janet Arnold Study Day Dressing for success - medieval style

Saturday 15 October 2022
■ Bath and County Club

Christmas meeting The man in red and white

Saturday 19 November 2022
■ Bath and County Club

AGM A Pocketful of ha'pence

Saturday 11 February 2023
■ Bath and County Club

March Study Day Braving the elements

Saturday 18 March 2023
■ Bath and County Club

Golden Jubilee Tea Party

Saturday 1 July 2023
■ BRLSI Queen Square, Bath



Unicorn Tapestry ©The Metropolitan Museum



Braving the camera
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Naughty or nice?
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Gold standards
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Dressing for Success Medieval style

Saturday 15 October 2022

09.50 - 16.15

■ Bath and County Club,
Queen's Parade, Queen's
Square, Bath BA1 2NJ

£30 for members, £40 for guests
Lunches £8.50.

Booking online, or use the form
with this issue of *Wardrobe*

The day's programme is:

9.50 Registration with coffee/
tea

10.20 Gale Owen-Crocker
**From Folk-dress to
Fashion: Clothing in the
Middle Ages.**

11.20 Coffee/tea

11.45 Sarah Thursfield
**The First Cut: : the
emergence of the
gored tunic in the first
millennium CE**

12.45 Lunch

13.45 Rebecca Shawcross
Getting to the Point

14.45 Coffee/tea and raffle

15.15 Benjamin Wild
**Thoroughly Modern
.. Medieval?** The rich
history of fashionable
dress in the Middle Ages
is evidenced by its use as
a source of inspiration
with modern designers

16.20 Close

October Study Day

From Folk-dress to Fashion: Clothing in the Middle Ages.

Gale R. Owen-Crocker is Professor Emerita of the University of Manchester, having formerly been Professor of Anglo-Saxon Culture and Director of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies. She has published extensively on medieval dress and textiles including the books *Dress in Anglo-Saxon England*, and *Clothing the Past: surviving garments from early medieval to early modern western Europe*.

The First Cut: the emergence of the gored tunic in the first millennium CE

Before there were patterns, when cloth was a precious commodity, who decided how to cut and re-arrange it into a shaped and sewn garment?

Sarah Thursfield is a professional needlewoman and an amateur dress historian, and this lecture will show her reconstructions of early body garments together with the evidence which underlies them.

Getting to the point

Exploring Medieval shoe fashion including the distinctly lewd toe poulaine which were condemned by the church as being 'more like the talons of a demon than the ornaments of men'.

Rebecca Shawcross is the Senior Shoe Curator at Northampton Museum and Art Gallery. She is responsible for the Designated Shoe Collection, which includes collections management, exhibitions, research and enquiries, talks and advising other museums and the media. She has published various articles on shoes and her book *Shoes: An Illustrated History* was published by Bloomsbury in 2014 with a revised second edition to be published in 2022.

Thoroughly modern ... Medieval?

Dr Benjamin Linley Wild is Senior Lecturer in Fashion Communication at Manchester Fashion Institute at Manchester Metropolitan University.

Conventional, and inaccurate, costume histories maintain that fashion as a concept became prevalent only from the fourteenth century. Personal histories, chronicles, lawcodes, not least the complaints of naysayers, reveal that people's use of dress and adornment to delight in and distinguish themselves was commonplace much earlier.

In part, the rich history of fashionable dress in the Middle Ages is evidenced by its use as a source of inspiration among contemporary designers, from Paco Rabanne to Vivienne Westwood. During a period of pronounced social and political upheaval, at a time when we rely so heavily on visual forms of communication to express ourselves, as was the case during the Middle Ages, this illustrated lecture considers the enduring appeal of medieval fashions on our modern wardrobes.





The Man in Red and White Who is Father Christmas?

Speaker David Birks

Saturday 19 November 2022

14.00 - 16.00

■ Bath and County Club, Queen's Parade, Queen's Square, Bath BA1 2NJ

Probably the most famous fictional "father" of all time and regularly confused with Santa Claus, Father Christmas has been a part of the festive season for centuries. But who was he, where did he come from and, more importantly for members of WECS, what did he wear? David Birks, of Trowbridge Museum, will talk about his origins and how his appearance changed over time. David will also touch on the interloper, Santa Claus.

David is the Learning and Outreach Officer for Trowbridge Museum, a role that involves teaching schoolchildren about Saxons, Spinning Jennies and Spinning Tops, running holiday workshops as well as delivering walks and talks. David studied fine art at college and is a practising printmaker. He has also been known to make various items of period clothing including Greek chitons, and Medieval Braies.

The Christmas meeting will start at 2pm and to get us in the festive spirit, we will have our usual mince pies and mulled wine, before the talk.

Christmas outfits positively encouraged!
**even for over 40 fairies!*

As agreed at the AGM, we are charging for this event. £10.00 for members and £15.00 for guests.

Booking online, or use the form with this issue of *Wardrobe*

AGM A Pocketful of Ha'pence

Speaker

Mark Wallis

Saturday 11

February 2023

14.00-16.00

■ Bath and County Club, Queen's Parade, Queen's Square, Bath BA1 2NJ

After the AGM business is completed and tea taken, Mark Wallis of *Past Pleasures* and *The Dandy Dealer* will give us *A Pocketful of Ha'pence* a talk all about what could be found in a Georgian gentleman's pockets.

As well as an illustrated talk, he will bring items from his extensive collection of gentleman's accessories (and a couple of female surprises!)

This talk was delayed from our Accessories study day in March.

The booking form for this event will be in the Autumn issue of *Wardrobe*.



Golden Jubilee Tea Party

Saturday 1 July 2023

14.00 - 16.00

■ Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution (BRLSI), Queen Square, Bath BA1 2HN

Note that the venue for this will be the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institute in Queens Square in Bath. The committee is in the process of arranging a tea to celebrate the Society's Golden Anniversary and we hope that members will come and join us. Our guest speaker will be Rosemary Harden who will talk about the Dresses of the Year 1973 & 2023..

Further details and booking form will be in the Spring edition of *Wardrobe*. In the meantime make a note in your diary and get your party outfit organized. There will be a prize for the most appropriate and imaginative outfit!

March Study Day Braving the elements - protected wherever you go

Saturday 18 March 2023

09.50 - 16.15

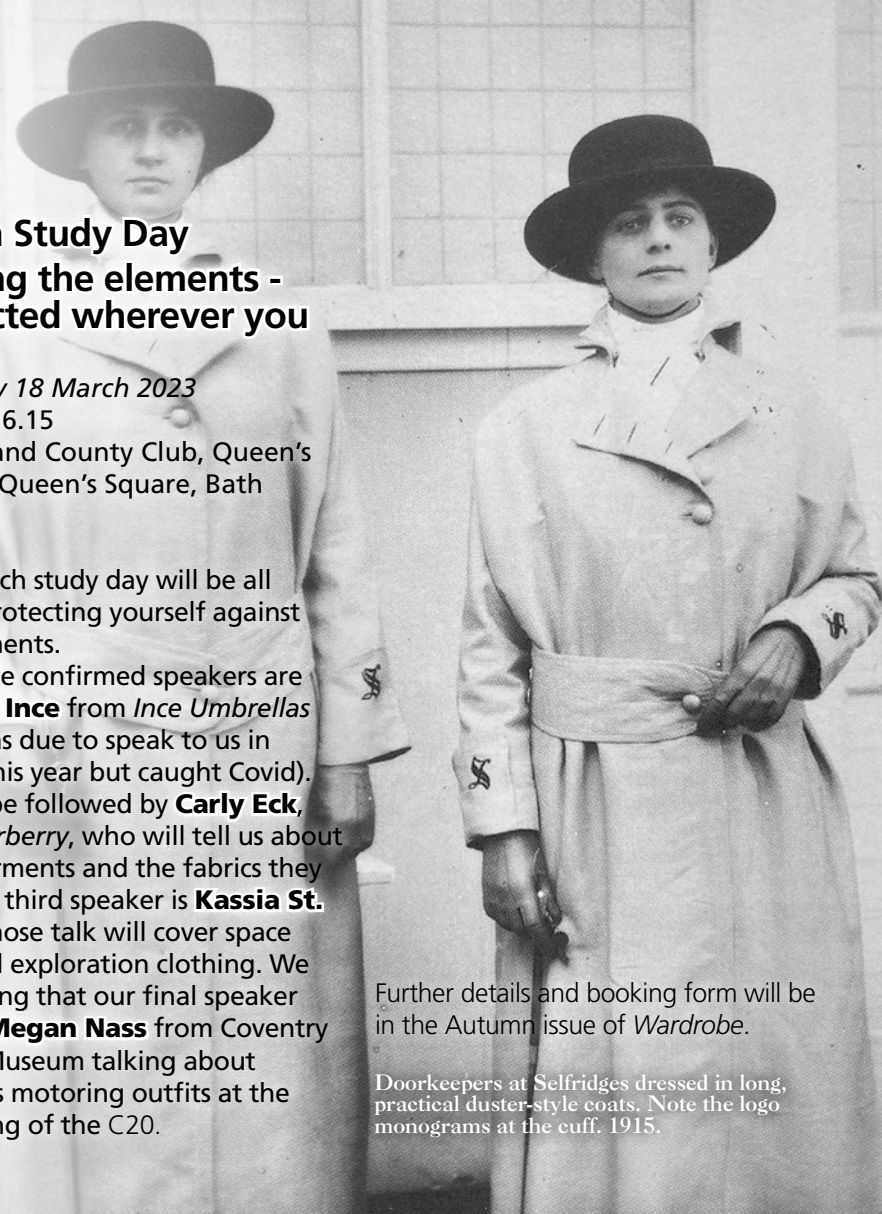
■ Bath and County Club, Queen's Parade, Queen's Square, Bath BA1 2NJ

Our March study day will be all about protecting yourself against the elements.

Our three confirmed speakers are **Richard Ince** from *Ince Umbrellas* (who was due to speak to us in March this year but caught Covid). He will be followed by **Carly Eck**, from *Burberry*, who will tell us about their garments and the fabrics they use. Our third speaker is **Kassia St. Clair** whose talk will cover space suits and exploration clothing. We are hoping that our final speaker will be **Megan Nass** from Coventry Motor Museum talking about women's motoring outfits at the beginning of the C20.

Further details and booking form will be in the Autumn issue of *Wardrobe*.

Doorkeepers at Selfridges dressed in long, practical duster-style coats. Note the logo monograms at the cuff. 1915.



Out & About



The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Exhibition

until September 2022

■ Palace of Holyrood House, Canongate, Edinburgh EH8 8DX

The final exhibition at the Palace of Holyroodhouse will run from July to September 2022, featuring outfits worn by Her Majesty on occasions to celebrate the Silver, Golden and Diamond Jubilees. This will include the pink silk crepe and chiffon dress, coat and stole by royal couturier Sir Hardy Amies for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, which will be displayed with the matching hat designed by Simone Mirman with flowerheads hanging from silk stems.



Bethany Williams

until September 2022

■ Design Museum, 224-238 Kensington High Street, London W8 6AG

London Fashion Week designer Bethany Williams is being celebrated by the Design Museum with a new exhibition embracing the discussion of social and environmental issues. The free exhibition explores Williams' socially and environmentally aware work, featuring pieces from collaborations with community projects and items composed from recycled materials. The exhibit also includes work produced by the London-based designer as part of the Emergency Designer Network to create PPE during the pandemic.



Costume Symposium

2 - 4 September 2022

■ Bristol Old Vic Theatre School
www.costumesymposium.co.uk

There will be a day with speakers including award-winning costume designer Phoebe de Gaye (*Killing Eve*) and others to be confirmed.

Plus two days of hands-on workshops covering Corsetry, Dyeing and Enhancement, Embroidery Embellishment, Handmade Gloves, Men's Period Tailoring, Millinery and Women's Period Tailoring.

Visit the Costume Symposium website for info about workshops and registration.
at <https://costumesymposium.co.uk/> for further information.

Out and About is published in good faith, but please check details before making a special trip.



V&A

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



Fashioning Masculinities: The Art of Menswear

Until 6 November 2022

Discover the art of menswear, from contemporary looks by legendary designers and rising stars to historical treasures.



Africa Fashion

Until 16 April 2023

See the vitality and creativity of a contemporary fashion scene as dynamic as the continent itself.

Hallyu! The Korean Wave

24 September 2022 - 25 June 2023

Explore the popular colourful culture from South Korea and how it became a worldwide phenomenon.





Gianni Versace Retrospective

2 December 2022 - 7 May 2023

■ Groninger Museum
www.groningermuseum.nl

The late Gianni Versace, described by the Groninger Museum as one of the "most influential couturiers" in fashion is to be the focus of the *Gianni Versace Retrospective* exhibition, which will be a "colourful, daring, emotional exhibition" that honours Versace and his trailblazing designs, showcase men's and women's outfits, accessories, fabrics, drawings, interior designs, and footage of the legendary catwalk shows from the Italian designer's glory days between 1989 and 1997.

Curated by Versace experts Karl von der Ahé and Saskia Lubnow, all items on display are original pieces sourced from international private collections and will highlight how Versace linked fashion with music, photography and graphic design and led the way in the transformation of fashion shows and advertising campaigns into works of art.



The Art of Elegance

Fashion illustration by Bil Donovan

Opening 13 September 2022

■ GRAY M.C.A Exhibition
Cromwell Place, London SW7 2JE
www.cromwellplace.com

The Art of Elegance is a celebration of contemporary fashion illustration at its finest as seen through the dazzling brushstrokes of celebrated American fashion artist Bil Donovan. The exhibition honours the beauty and elegance of a master of fashion illustrator. An artist whose influence reaches far beyond the normal realms of fashion documentation and who is a legend in his field, acknowledged internationally as the most elegant and captivating fashion illustrator of a generation.

To accompany the exhibition, Gray M.C.A will be hosting three special events:

15 September, Cromwell Place.
6.30pm – Bil Donovan in conversation with esteemed fashion writer Tony Glenville.

17 September, Cromwell Place.
3.30pm – *The Art of Elegance* Exhibition talk and live demonstration with Bil Donovan.

22 September, In partnership with The Royal Crescent Hotel, Bath. 2pm – A Conversation and afternoon tea with fashion illustrator Bil Donovan.



Fashion
and Textile
Museum

■ Fashion and Textile Museum,
83 Bermondsey Street, London
SE1 3XF
www.ftmlondon.org
Info@ftmlondon.org



150 Years of the Royal School of Needlework: Crown to Catwalk

Until 14 September 2022

A retrospective exploring the often-surprising history of one of the UK's oldest and most revered applied arts organisations.

Kaffe Fassett: The Power of Pattern

23 September 2022 - 12 March 2023

Explore Fassett's world with some of his own original artworks as well as works inspired by him from international quilters and makers.

Isaac Pitman

22 September 2022, 19.00

■ Trowbridge Museum, The Shires, Trowbridge BA14 8AT
www.trowbridgemuseum.co.uk
01225 751339

In one of a series of evening events at Trowbridge Museum, WECS' member Helen Montague-Smith talks about Trowbridge's most famous son, the inventor of Pitman Shorthand who was knighted in 1894. There will also be a selection of Pitman items from the collection on hand. Pitman was born in Trowbridge in 1813 and left as a young man to attend Teacher Training College. He started to study shorthand when he was only seventeen and later created his famous 'writing by sound'. Trowbridge Museum has a wonderful collection of etchings, which were produced to illustrate a biography, which were never used.

The talk costs £7 and includes wine and nibbles. Please book through *Ticketsource* or come in to the museum.

Please note : the Shires ASDA entrance will be open from 6pm-7pm please arrive promptly as the doors will close at 7pm and there will be no entry after this time. There will be several talks over the autumn, each will last about an hour and a half. Please park on the top level of the ASDA car park as it is 24 hour parking



Trowbridge Museum visit

July 2022

Angela Bailey

On a steamy 7th July twenty of us, having heard Mr Johnson's resignation speech, foregathered at Trowbridge Museum for a jam packed afternoon organised by member Andrea Bartlett (the Museum's Retail and Income Generation Officer) and her colleagues. After drinks and melted chocolate biscuits, we settled down to listen to David Birks's presentation on '1000 years of warp and weft at Trowbridge'. It seems that an archeological dig at the castle some years ago unearthed twelfth century cloth making equipment including a tiny shuttle.

David gave a brief history of the woollen trade that evolved in West Wiltshire. The locality provided all the ingredients for wool products: sheep; river water; and fuller's earth (silicone). The processes were largely taken on by individual outworkers, using basic spinning and weaving equipment, but in the C12 innovations arrived, including the horizontal loom and mechanical fulling devices for pounding the cloth to shrink it to size (before then this was done by stamping on the cloth). By the C13 and C14 the trade had been formalised and quality controlled; finished cloth was sent to Flanders and Italy for dyeing and finishing.

Architectural evidence of cloth production is all over the town - and other towns and villages locally. As the process became more mechanised entrepreneurs called clothiers co-ordinated the process, and during the C15 and C16 they invested in centralised premises where several workers could operate the equipment, not least because it was now too big for a private home. Still standing in Trowbridge is Parade House, dating from the 1700s, and Clothier's House, now Lloyds Bank. Handle House was used to dry cloth, and the weavers' cottages, with wide top windows, still stand in Castle Street.

David now gave us a brief overview of the extensive cloth making process. First the sheep's wool is washed and cleaned and the open fibres are degreased, spun, dyed, washed again, and 'fulled' (the nap raised) and then sheared. For a comprehensive history, do look at 'Woollen Industry Processes' by KH Rogers, published by the Friends of the Museum, for explanations and fascinating images of equipment used through the centuries, with the operators involved.

It seems that Trowbridge and the local area took full advantage of the production innovations of the industrial revolution. 1733 saw John Key's 'flying shuttle'; Hargreaves's 'spinning Jenny' dates from 1764 and Compton's Mule was a bigger spinning machine. A fulling machine was invented by John Dyer. Workshops became larger and larger until, later in the C18 they became factories with machinery powered by steam, coal for which was brought by canal. Several examples are on show at the Museum.

All this mechanisation was not welcomed by the workforce. The introduction of the shearing frame is documented as leading to protests by the highly skilled individual



WEFT

■ Upper Gallery, Trowbridge Museum, The Shires, Trowbridge BA14 8AT
until 29 October 2022
www.trowbridgemuseum.co.uk
01225 751339

Andrea Bartlett

West of England Festival of Textiles, WEFT, is our biennial exhibition celebrating local and regional artists and businesses inspired by textiles.

This year the theme for WEFT explores sustainability in the world of textile to highlight the greener approach many textile artists, creatives and businesses are taking.

With this in mind, and to illustrate the cyclical nature of sustainability, we pose the question, 'Where Do We Start? Where Do We Finish?'

But why? Trowbridge was first recorded in 1100s when it was besieged during a civil war. It evolved from a farming settlement and by the C14, it was a centre of the wool industry. In 1540, John Leland said that Trowbridge 'flourished by drapery'.

As the centuries passed, Trowbridge's woollen cloth production and renown grew; this is reflected in our museum, which is heavily influenced by woven textiles and West of England woollen cloth.

We often look back to the past at how the Industrial Revolution changed our town, but not often at how the boom changed weaving from a sustainable craft to a thriving machine-driven industry.

However, we also need to look forward to the future of textiles and the length artists, craftspeople and businesses are willing to go to highlight that sustainability can still be workable, affordable and beautiful.

workers, and 19 year old Thomas Hilliker was arrested, tried and executed for burning down the shearing workshop, though it is by no means certain that he was the guilty party. He is remembered as the Trowbridge Martyr, but there were other protests at the introduction of equipment for spinning and weaving too, which delayed the industrialisation process. Throughout the C19 the industry gradually declined, with bankruptcies and takeovers recorded in the local legal records. The last big 'push' was for wool for WWI uniforms. In the C20 specialisation of high quality fabrics for Gor-Ray, Aquascutum, Biba and Mary Quant continued, but mills gradually closed, including, in 1982, the mill that now houses the Museum. The town's remaining mill buildings are gradually finding other uses, including for housing and offices.

After much-welcomed refreshments, we moved on to a spinning demonstration by Kathy Davies. Kathy explained how early spinning wheels worked, and how in the C15 spinning equipment consisted of a spindle and the U shaped device called a 'flier'. The wheel was originally turned by hand, but then a treadle was adopted, enabling the spinner to sit down while at work. The flier had hooks to steady the flow of carded wool, which had been made into small rolls ready for spinning. Watching Kathy process the rolls into fine spun yarn was mesmerising and I hope you will forgive my lack of note taking at this point, but I did manage to take on board that the work was originally done by out workers whose work would be collected ready for the next stage for the clothmaking process.

With the development of the spinning Jenny and mule in the 1700s multiple cones of yarn could be spun at the same time and by the mid 1800s 200 spindles per machine was not unusual. Home spinning had been done by women and children, but the larger machines in factories were originally overseen by men. Later, however, mechanisation reduced the need for physical strength to work the machines, and women once again took over the spinning tradition.

Back to Kathy: while talking to us and spinning at the same time she explained that about 60 types of sheep produce wool in the UK. The fibre is measured in microns, and prepared by 'carding' ('to get the air in') the fibres ready for spinning. She showed us short worsted fibres, Shetland 'bouncy' fibres, and Merino, originally introduced to England in the C15, and currently the consumer favourite for its soft, long fibres, and 'very bouncy' feel. Finally she showed us the finished product: a lovely knitted jacket, the yarn spun by her, of course.

Our third treat was a visit to the Museum's store rooms. Here Hannah Randal took us through the collections and even allowed us to touch some items and look at an exquisite Victorian wedding dress donated as part of a Trowbridge lady's wardrobe.

We then had not nearly enough time left to properly explore the Museum. Here were items of strictly local interest, including the display case of clothes, including the blue Mary Quant dress made in local fabric and bought in 2019, for which WECS has supplied a mannequin (we are duly thanked on the label). There's also an amazing temporary weaving exhibit (see *article below. Ed*), and, of course, the lovely shop, with souvenirs for all ages, as well as a range of local history books. Do visit - and allow rather more time than we had to do so. I most certainly will be back. Thank you to all at the Museum for their wonderful welcome.



Above: Blue Mary Quant dress displayed on the mannequin supplied by WECS

WEFT explores history, industry and artistry. Undoubtedly, the true highlight of the exhibition is the stunning array of work produced by local artists.

From exploring colours and textures in the home with weaver Sarah Truscott and artist Jill Hillman to reimagining and repurposing unconventional materials with weaver Mayumi Kaneko, sculptor Hans Borgonjon and artist Mary Brading, each creator finds their inspiration in sustainability and textiles in different ways but each equally as beautiful and engaging.

Not to be forgotten is the stunning floral display created by Trowbridge-based Florist Kerry (Rock + Wild). The sculptural display of dyed dried flowers, willow and fresh cut plants also features 'Dorset Button' inspired bike tires, teasels and a ladder of loom heddles, creating an enticing entrance for the exhibition, as well as symbolising the damage caused to the planet by industry.

WEFT is co-curated by Trowbridge Museums Collections and Exhibitions officer Nikki Ritson and author and textile enthusiast Carolyn Griffiths, whose love for eco-conscious fabrics can be felt throughout the exhibition.

The importance of textiles cannot be underestimated. We often take them for granted, but can you imagine a world without them?



Far left: Smudges of dappled Colour scarves and Matrix rug woven by Frome based weaver, Sarah Truscott. Sarah is inspired by colour to create movement and stillness.

Above, left to right: part of the Rock +Wild flower sculpture in June, at the beginning of the exhibition. Japanese paper-yarn hanging, spun and hand woven by Mayumi Kaneko.

Hans Borgonjon uses gold leaf, porcelain and glass to accentuate the shape and form of the 17th century Flemish weaving looms, turning them into one of a kind sculptures.

Canadian "retail therapy" The ultimate shopping experience

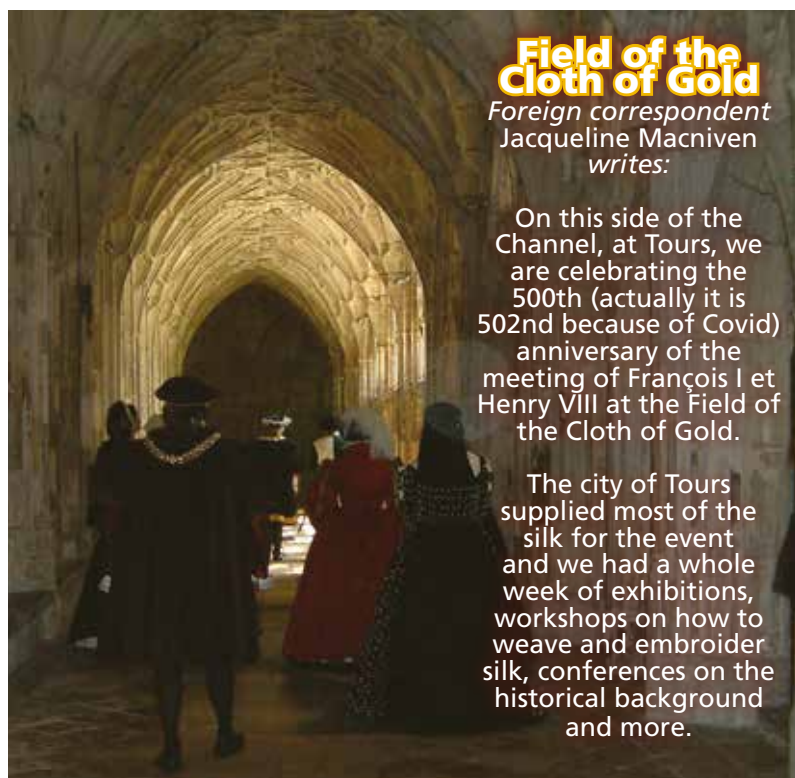
Sarah Bartlett

Being a devoted aunt and having a niece on Vancouver Island who had a milestone birthday in June, I decided I needed to go and visit to help her celebrate, etc. On her birthday she decided that I needed to visit the capital, Victoria, and do the 'sights' like a good tourist. This happened to include "just going past" a certain shoe shop where she was hoping to find a new pair for work. Never being someone who refuses to visit anything to do with shoes, I duly agreed to accompany her. (It was her birthday after all!).

We went into the most amazing shop called *John Fluevog* (www.fluevog.com). It was full of the most wonderful designs and colours, all created by John Fluevog who lives in Vancouver. I have never seen such an array and combination of colours, both in men's and women's shoes. The designs were truly imaginative and very wearable, though you would need not to be self-conscious when walking down the street in some of the boots! You could also buy a matching handbag in the shape of a shoe or boot. They obviously have a very loyal clientele as the shop had a constant stream of customers and, yes, I bought my niece a pair for her birthday which she wore immediately and received loads of compliments and "where did you get those from? I want a pair!" remarks. (No, I didn't buy myself a pair, though very tempted. Next time, maybe!)



The company has shops in all major cities across Canada and the US and also a branch in Amsterdam. So if you ever happen to come across one of their shops, do go in. They are absolutely wonderful and not to be missed!



Field of the Cloth of Gold

Foreign correspondent
Jacqueline Macniven
writes:

On this side of the Channel, at Tours, we are celebrating the 500th (actually it is 502nd because of Covid) anniversary of the meeting of François I et Henry VIII at the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

The city of Tours supplied most of the silk for the event and we had a whole week of exhibitions, workshops on how to weave and embroider silk, conferences on the historical background and more.



Costume designer launches museum dedicated to children's play

For those of you who follow John Bright's career - interesting!

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/jun/05/toy-story-costume-designer-launches-museum-dedicated-to-childrens-play>

Keep Wardrobe full!

What have you been doing, reading, discovered online? Write and tell us so we can share.

Copy for the next newsletter to Vibeke Ormerod by 30 October please

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