WECS Wardrobe

Autumn issue 2024
£8.50: Free to members

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west of england costume society
www.wofecostumesociety.org

Calendar

AGM

Saturday 15 February 2025

Sally Chidlow Grant
Alexander McQueen

■ Bath & County Club

March Study Day

Saturday 22 March 2025

The Frill & The Froth

– A Look at Lace

Seventeenth Century Lace:

"a pretty toy now greatly in request"
Pat Poppy

Painting the Intricacies of Early Lace

Sophie Ploeg

■ Bath & County Club

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WECS March 2025 Study Day

Programme:

The Frill and the Froth – a Look at Lace

9.30am	Registration
10.10am	Pat Poppy Seventeenth Century Lace 'a pretty toy now greatly in request'
11.10am	Coffee / Tea
11.40am	Sophie Ploeg Painting the Intricacies of Early Lace
12.40pm	Lunch Break
2.10pm	Raffle
2.25pm	Workshop Session or 3rd speaker to be arranged
3.35pm	Close

Painting the Intricacies of Early Lace

by Sophie Ploeg

Sophie Ploeg is an art historian and artist specialising in lace shown in 16th and 17th century portraiture. She will talk about her love of early lace and how it was depicted in the rich and colourful portraits from the Tudor and Jacobean era such as in the works of Hilliard, Larkin and Van Dyck. She won the BP Travel Award from the National Portrait Gallery in 2013 and used the award to research early lace and its painted depictions extensively. She was subsequently inspired to create new paintings which were exhibited at the Portrait Gallery. Painting the intricacies of lace is a wonderful challenge now as much as it was 400 years ago.

Seventeenth Century Lace:

"A PRETTY TOY NOW GREATLY IN REQUEST"

by Pat Poppy

Bobbin lace band, possibly belonging to Admiral Jacob van Wassenaer (1610-65). 1630s, Rijksmuseum.

What is meant by lace in the seventeenth century? The talk will look at the different types of lace that were available, from what today would be called braids, through needle laces to bobbin laces. It will examine how and where it was made, who sold it, and who made it. Looking at images of surviving lace it will discuss how fashionable it was, who wore it and what garments they wore it on. It will look at the status implications of wearing lace. How much did people pay for lace, and could they afford it.

Pat Poppy is an independent researcher, who has been studying seventeenth century clothing for over forty years. She has published several papers, most recently in the Journal of Dress History, (Aprons for Men and Women in the Stuart Period: Practical Garment and Fashion Accessory, 2023, vol. 7, no. 2, pp 9-25). She has a blog on Early Modern Clothing (Costume Historian) and contributes to the Facebook page The Stuart Tailor. On the lacemaking front, she used to be a member of the Itchen Valley Lacemakers, but hasn't made lace in years.

Detail from a reticella panel, 1600-10, Rijksmuseum

Ladies in a Garden Embroidering

A page from the Album Amicorum of Gervasius Fabricius (1603-1637),

British Library. BL Add MS 17025- f.50

Rebato with gold bobbin lace edging. 1600-20, Metropolitan Museum, New York

Our wonderful Programme Secretary has asked for members to let her know whether there are any topics that they would like to hear more about at future Study Days and meetings.
Please email her at
programmesec@wofecostumesociety.org

AGM

15 February 2025

Speaker: Sally Chidlow Grant

14.00 – 16.00
£10 for non-members

The designer Alexander McQueen was, and remains, a unique talent and a fashion visionary whose exacting, unusual and uncompromising technical ability, combined with an extraordinary artistic language took British fashion to a whole other level: to the realms of high art.

His ability to cut and execute his extraordinary vision and collections set him apart at a young age: apprenticed to a heritage tailor in Saville Row, McQueen ascended quickly to the world-renowned MA in Central St Martins, and on to a career at Givenchy as Head designer and the upper echelons of Paris Haute Couture.

Themes of violence in nature, anxiety and even death pervaded his collections – a powerful aesthetic when combined with exquisitely embroidered and printed textile and macabre imagery. Themes such as those were unusual and disturbing in equal measure – bringing a whole 'otherness' to fashion and the fashion industry that was timely and equally of its time. Born in the east end of London, he battled to gain access to the rarefied world of fashion, always knowing that that was where his talent belonged. Of his own media image as the bad boy he said:

"Yes there has been this big thing about the east end yob made good..... at the end of the day you're a good designer or not and it doesn't matter where you come from.....I don't think you become a good designer, or a great designer, or whatever. To me, you just are one."

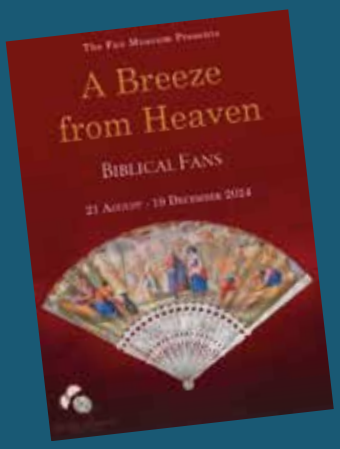
A uniquely talented artist, he did gain access to that world; a world that ultimately destroyed him. In this talk we will touch on his unique contribution and the lasting impact of his legacy.

Sally Chidlow Grant is the recipient of four Janet Arnold Society of Antiquaries Awards for her research into 1960s and early 1970s UK fashion. She studied fashion and textiles at Winchester School of Art and then pattern cutting at the London college of Fashion and Fashion History.

Sally has worked as a garment fitter and styling and press co-ordinator for Issey Miyake and freelance for Warehouse and became a Senior Lecturer at Liverpool Metropolitan University and Cardiff University. Her academic work continues with research into the 1970s era of 'Glam' Fashion, such as Ossie Clark, Celia Birtwell, Anthony Price.

The documentation for the AGM, Agenda, Minutes of 2023 AGM, Financial Statement, Reports, etc. will be sent to members in mid-January.

Out & About



A Breeze from heaven

BIBLICAL FANS

The Fan Museum until 19th December 2024

An exhibition featuring mainly English & Dutch fans from the 18th century that depict biblical stories, most of them from the Old Testament.

Amongst the few French fans included, there are three spectacular 21st century 'Adam and Eve' fans, made by a contemporary French fan maker, Frederick Gay.

**The Fan Museum,
12 Crooms Hill, Greenwich,
London, SE10 8ER
thefanmuseum.org.uk**

"With silken legs and scarlet lips
We're young and hungry, wild and free,
Our waists are round about the hips
Skirts are well above the knee
We've boyish busts and Eton crops,
We quiver to the saxophone
Come, dance before the music stops
for who can bear to be alone?"

James Laver – The Women of 1926

Flax to Fabric

IRISH LINEN CENTRE & LISBURN MUSEUM - PERMANENT EXHIBITION

Trace the history of Irish Linen in the award-winning 'Flax to Fabric' exhibition.

See finely-woven Egyptian linen, explore the history of flax production in Europe, or admire the long saffron-dyed tunics of the Irish nobleman. Visitors can also travel back in time and walk under the arches of Lisburn's historic 17th-century Market House, where local cottage weavers brought their cloth to sell.

Learn how flax was grown and prepared, and watch expert spinners turn coarse flax into fine yarn. Visitors can try the spinning wheel for themselves!

Jacquard Looms in the weaving workshop. Note the mechanism for reading the punched card on top.

A weaver's cottage.

Travel through the spinner's cottage, and see how the whole family was involved in producing linen.

Irish linen was famous worldwide, and visitors can admire fine samples of Coulson's damask, or dresses by Sybil Connolly, one of Ireland's leading clothes designers. Her work was worn by Jackie Kennedy and Queen Elizabeth II.

In the 'Weaving Workshop' see live demonstrations of the hand loom, chat with expert weavers, or witness the innovative Jacquard loom weave intricate damask.

Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum
Market Square, Lisburn BT28 1AG
lisburnmuseum.com

Future Observatory: Tomorrow's Wardrobe

Design Museum until August 2025

The Design Museum
224–238 Kensington High Street
London W8 6AG

Designmuseum.org

Tomorrow's Wardrobe brings together designers from across the fashion industry who are revolutionising the way we create, make, and wear clothes – including Stella McCartney, Ponda, Ahluwalia, Salomon, Ranra, Phoebe English and Vivobarefoot.

The fashion and textile industry is one of the most environmentally damaging design fields at work today. The footprint of our wardrobes extends from textile production in farms and factories to the design process in fashion houses.

Tomorrow's Wardrobe showcases the urgent research and innovation taking place across the UK to rethink how the world of fashion works. Moving from fabric landscapes to design studios to individual garments, the display presents a future built from both high-tech and low-tech tools: sewing machines, robotic arms, artificial intelligence, digital ids, upcycling, recycling and more.

Photo courtesy of Aaron Parsons for the Design Museum

Tomorrow's Wardrobe is curated by Future Observatory, the Design Museum's national research programme for the green transition.

High Waists to Romantic Tastes, Regency Fashion 1800-1837

Chertsey Museum until 30 August 2025

The new Olive Matthews Costume Exhibition explores fashionable dress from the Regency period.

The Regency occupies a very special place in our imagination, particularly when it comes to fashion. It was a time of great elegance and innovation, which saw the appearance of daringly different dress styles.

With pieces drawn from the cream of the nationally significant Olive Matthews Collection, this exhibition showcases rare and important examples of men's, women's and children's dress from this pivotal and cherished era. Iconic, simple and classically inspired garments and accessories from the early 1800s will be on show, as well as the more colourful and complex creations which appeared later in the period. Long-standing favourites are revealed alongside items that have never been displayed before in what promises to be a stand-out exhibition.

Chertsey Museum
The Cedars, 33 Windsor Street,
Chertsey,
KT16 8AT
Chertseymuseum.org

Silk taffeta Spencer, c.1815 - 1817

Kabuki Kimono: Costumes of Bando Tamasoburo V

Until 8th December 2024 but followed by Part 2 from 14th December 2024

Six spectacular kimonos belonging to the kabuki actor Bandō Tamasaburō V are on display in the Textiles Gallery. Tamasaburō is the most popular and celebrated onnagata (male actor who performs female roles) currently on stage.

The costumes selected reflect the wide variety of roles in this actor's long and celebrated theatre career, from court ladies and courtesans to geisha and demons.

You'll see beautifully crafted costumes that showcase a range of elaborate textile techniques, including weaving, dyeing, embroidery and hand-painting.

Ashmolean Museum
Beaumont Street, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX1 2PH
Ashmolean.org

Africa's Fashion Diaspora

New York Museum FIT until 29 December 2024

Africa's Fashion Diaspora examines fashion as a medium of storytelling and as a vital way for designers to contribute to longstanding and evolving ideas of transnational Black cultural spaces. This exhibition explores designers from Africa, the Americas, and Europe who interpret and construct the culture of their distinct localities and communities for an international audience and/or reach across geographies to tie Black cultural practices together through their designs.

Examples include South African designer Sindiso Khumalo's textile print inspired by American abolitionist Harriet Tubman, British designer Grace Wales Bonner's tuxedo informed by the court of Emperor Haile Selassie in Ethiopia, and French designer Olivier Rousteing's collection for Balmain based on Black American cowboys. Through approximately 60 ensembles, textiles, and accessories, Africa's Fashion Diaspora illustrates how fashion designers have contributed to international dialogues to chronicle, evaluate, and expand modern ideas of Blackness.

The Museum at FIT
227 W 27th St, New York, NY 10001
www.fitnyc.edu/museum/exhibitions

Africa's Fashion Diaspora is curated by MFIT associate curator Elizabeth Way.

Image: Sindiso Khumalo, printed cotton dress detail, spring 2021, South Africa, museum purchase, 2023.32.1

Museum of Costume and Fashion

PITTI PALACE

Special Reopening Exhibition until 31 December 2024

For those of you visiting Florence – the Museum of Costume and Fashion at the Pitti Palace has a wonderful display of costume. The Museum of Costume and Fashion has just had a four year restoration project culminating in this special exhibition spanning three centuries to launch their permanent collection.

Pitti Palace
Florence
www.uffizi.it/en/the-museum-of-costume-and-fashion

© National Trust for Scotland

Stitched

Until 18 January 2025

In an exciting collaboration with the National Trust for Scotland, Dovecot Studios presents a captivating new exhibition unveiling Scotland's hidden textile treasures showcasing an extraordinary collection of their embroidered textiles.

Visitors will have the rare chance to explore over 80 exquisite pieces, spanning 200 years of history from 1720 to 1920. The collection features everything from ornate armchairs and grand bed hangings to intricate fire screens, tablecloths, cushions, and tea cosies - sourced from 18 of the National Trust for Scotland's historic properties and displayed alongside histories of the makers and detailed design drawings, weaving together the fascinating stories behind these textiles.

Following a two-year research and conservation programme by the National Trust for Scotland, many of these delicate pieces are now in a condition to be on public display for the first time. By presenting these textiles as significant works of art in their own right, Stitched offers a fresh and inspiring perspective on Scotland's rich heritage of embroidery and domestic interior design.

Dovecot Studios
10 Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LT
info@dovecotstudios.com

Tales of Textiles

Royal School of Needlework until June 2025

Tales of Textiles: The RSN Collection in Focus highlights the life of key pieces from the Royal School of Needlework's Collection & Archive with a focus on English embroidery. Objects on display span three centuries and tell a story of wear and use, protection and care, tradition and innovation, and stitchers domestic and professional.

The exhibition takes place in one of the Embroidery Studios at Hampton Court Palace and the display features many of the RSN's first 100 objects to be digitised and catalogued and provides an opportunity to see them up close and hear their stories.

Exhibits include a fragile embroidered mirror frame dated 1653, a Georgian man's waistcoat, and a late 19th century Royal School of Needlework-designed cushion cover.

Royal School of Needlework
Hampton Court Palace, Surrey KT8 9AU, United Kingdom
Royal-needlework.org.uk

The 1940s Tailored Look

Worthing Museum until 12 January 2025

The costume gallery has been reimagined with carefully selected garments from the museum's collection that reflect the characteristic silhouette of 1940s tailored fashions. This selection of historic daywear and accessories has also been curated to compliment a photographic loan from the Lee Miller Archive to form part of their 75th anniversary celebrations.

Worthing Museum, Connaught Theatre,
Union Place,
Worthing BN11 1LG
Wtm.uk

Women's suit from Worthing museum archive with photograph loaned with kind permission from the Lee Miller Archive, Farley's House and Gallery, celebrating their 75th anniversary in 2024.

Yes I Do! 250 Years of Wedding Dresses

Fries Museum until 16 February 2025

The Fries Museum is presenting a major exhibition about wedding dresses from the past 250 years, with historical, modern and contemporary dresses. The focus is on the wedding dress in the Netherlands. The museum takes the visitor on a journey through time, from the 18th century to the present day, in search of the essence of the wedding dress. What fashions and traditions did the dress adhere to? Where does the 'white' wedding dress, as we know it today, come from? And what does the dress say about the wearer?

Fries Museum
Wilhelminaplein 92,
8911 BS Leeuwarden,
Netherlands
www.friesmuseum.nl

The Perfect Form

Report by Heather Gillard

Ian Chipperfield, introduced as 'The Staymaker' from Norwich, took us through the period 1837-1901. Sixty years of the changing shape of womens fashions.

He started by explaining that he trained as a modern dressmaker and pattern cutter, but soon realised that his interest was drawn to real historic garments and how they were made. He has his own archive collection of books and magazines and has been visiting museums for over 20 years to study original garments as well as practicing authentic period techniques in his own work.

Ian discussed the distinction between a well-fitted corset and the extremes of tight-lacing. For example, he showcased this replica that reduced the wearer's waist from 30 inches to 27 inches, which the wearer still referred to as her "comfy corset." This highlighted the fine balance between achieving the fashionable figure of the time and maintaining comfort.

1880s style replica corset based on an original in Tunbridge Wells Museum.

1888 style replica gown worn over the corset shown on the left

Originally known as stays, the corset has been around, in various forms, for over 500 years. Ian did not bring garments but had various pictures of his work for our delight which included this 1880s style replica corset based on an original in Tunbridge Wells Museum.

This corset has a steel busk at the centre front, whalebone inserted into channels around the body and lacing at the centre back. The lacing was inserted into eyelets allowing adjustment at the waistline by leaving 2 eyelets either side of the waist with a loop of cord before securing the cord at the bottom. This would allow for adjustments by the wearer to make the garment tighter or more relaxed.

As a bridal dressmaker, I see brides who insist their gowns are very fitted. Often this is the first time that a gown with boning has been worn and the perception is that a boned gown should feel tight and restrict movement.

Corsets played a pivotal role in shaping the fashionable figure throughout the Victorian era. Ian continued by emphasizing the essentiality of a good corset. As a quote from *The Queen magazine* (1881) noted, "Without a good corset no dress will fit well neither will any good dressmaker undertake the making of any dress." The corset was the foundation upon which the entire silhouette of Victorian fashion was built. Fashion magazines of the time continually reinforced that without a properly fitted corset, achieving an elegant figure was nearly impossible.

Victorian society was rife with medical opinions about the supposed dangers of corsetry. An article from *The Queen magazine* (1882), listed a staggering 78 diseases allegedly caused by tight lacing, including everything from impaired digestion to hysteria.

Many of the dire warnings about corsetry were seen as exaggerated, with some commentators noting that the actual practice of tight lacing was likely much rarer than critics suggested. The practice of reducing waist size was common, but how extreme this reduction was remains uncertain. Manufactured corsets were limited in sizing, and even styles with names like 'The Majestic' could only accommodate a waist size up to 30 inches, therefore anyone requiring a larger fit would need to have a bespoke garment made.

Corsetry, contradicting the warnings, was not without its medical endorsements. Some doctors and manufacturers claimed that properly fitted corsets could even improve health by offering support and correcting posture.

Wearing corsets did not stop women from taking part in a range of activities that might nowadays be classified as 'sports';cycling, horse riding, gymnastics, dancing, archery, skating, tennis, rowing, country walks, and even mountaineering.

Chipperfield's presentation extended beyond corsets to discuss other essential components of Victorian fashion, such as crinolines and bustles. Crinolines, popular in the mid-19th century, were cage-like structures worn under skirts to create a bell-shaped

silhouette. Made from materials like horsehair and steel, crinolines allowed skirts to extend outward without the need for multiple layers of heavy petticoats.

Throughout the 1850s & 60s the crinoline rapidly grew ever larger, writers who had praised the new crinoline yearned that its size had stayed within moderate bounds. Skirt hems grew from 4 to 6 yards or more but walking was easy even if the size of the new skirts led to other inconveniences. Ian shared images of women being escorted, with the gentlemen clinging to the outside of staircases, or men unable to take their seats at the theatre as their partners skirts spread to take up more spaces. Throughout the 1860s there are numerous questions in magazines asking if crinoline has gone out of fashion. Year after year, the same answer is given – they are not gone out yet.

But by the 1870s, the fashionable silhouette shifted, and the bustle became the dominant figure-shaping device. Bustles created a pronounced fullness at the back of the skirt while maintaining a relatively slim waist. Chipperfield noted that the appearance of the bustle could vary, from subtle to exaggerated, depending on the style and social occasion. Women sometimes used simple home-made solutions, like folded newspaper, to

THE SAFEST WAY OF TAKING A LADY DOWN TO DINNER.

achieve the desired shape without the expense of store-bought bustles.

The image below really demonstrates the range of added accoutrements that a lady required to achieve the desired shape to her skirt. I was fascinated by the many different materials, styles and sizes of bustles. Ian explained that most women would wear an appropriate bustle depending not only on what was fashionable but also on the shape of the wearer. He also introduced us to the word 'Wabble'. This was a commonly feared effect of wearing a separate bustle, when movement within the different layers of a garment could incur irregular, unsteady, or clumsy oscillation.

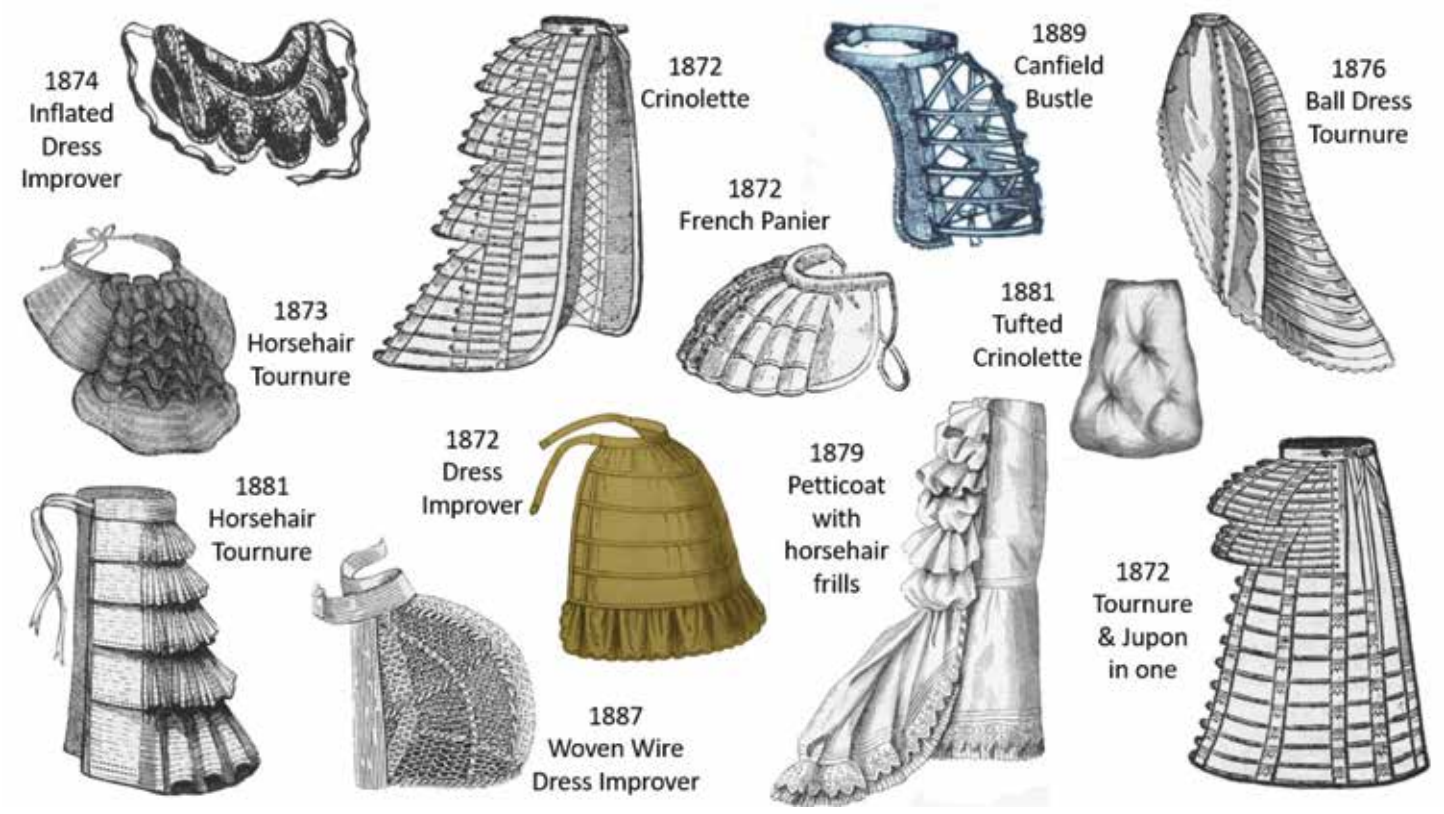
As the decades moved on and the female silhouette became straighter & narrower the fashionable magazines continuously discussed the pro's and con's of each change in women's dress.

In 1887 *The Girl's Own Paper* hoped that, "Someday, when we progress towards the acquirement of common sense, how we shall look back to many a foolish opinion and childish fashion which we have erected into a Juggernaut car to make our lives wretched, and to ruin our health and spirits, merely because we "must do as other people do." "Tight boots and pointed toes, tight stays, large dress-improvers and huge horsehair pads, will all be smiled at as foolish, and even wicked folly, when we know better in the far future."

Ian concluded by reminding us that as we look back at the ways corsetry shaped women's silhouettes maybe we should remember how we continue to search for the ideal figure and how in the future we might be judged on our up-lift bras, surgical implants, Botox, liposuction, cosmetic surgery, and Spanx etc.

I am sure that history in the future shall judge us just as we judge the past & laugh at our fashions and beauty ideas.

Perhaps we should try to look beyond the caricatures and remember we are looking at real people living their lives just as we do. With many thanks to Ian Chipperfield, The Staymaker, for an entertaining and engaging talk.



Bloomers, Rationals and Divided Skirts:

THE VISUAL PROBLEM OF THE WOMEN IN TROUSERS

A talk by
Dr Becky Munford

Report by
Tony Cooper

"The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God." Deuteronomy 22:5

Becky's starting point is pretty simple to summarise; the tenet of the second half of the 19th century was thus: trousers were worn by men and men held the reins of power. In other words, men did all the important stuff and women were just procreative, domestic and/or ornamental. That being the case, and with God in His heaven, all was right with the world.

But there were rumblings. Some people were beginning to ask radical questions: why should women be precluded from activities outside the home? Why shouldn't they engage in sports and other exercise and why shouldn't they wear clothes appropriate to such activities? Why shouldn't they have a life of their own?

Take Elizabeth Cady Stanton, for example in *History of Women's Suffrage, who wrote: "How can you, it was said, ever compete with man for equal place and pay, with garments of such frail fabrics and so cumbrously fashioned, and how can you ever hope to enjoy the same health and vigor with man, so long as the waist is pressed into the smallest compass, pounds of clothing hung on the hips, the limbs cramped with skirts, and with high heels the whole woman thrown out of her true equilibrium."*

The Dress Reform Movement (also known as the Rational Dress Movement) started in around 1850 by mainly middle class women calling for emancipation from the diktats of fashion. Eschewing the unwieldy crinolines and cumbersome bustles was an easy enough sell but the corset was another matter. There were proponents and

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

opponents but the one thing they could agree on is that tight lacing had to go.

Perhaps the best-known product of the movement was a form of dress comprising a short jacket, a skirt extending below the knee and loose "Turkish" trousers, gathered at the ankles. This was adopted by a New England temperance activist named Elizabeth Smith Miller. She wore this to show Stanton, who is said to have adopted the style immediately. (Quite a contrast to her portrait photo.) Later, Miller showed the outfit to the editor of the temperance magazine *The Lily,* Amelia Bloomer (née Jenks), who subsequently not only wore the costume but promoted it enthusiastically in her magazine. It is by this route that the style acquired the popular names of "Bloomer costume", "Bloomer suit" or simply "bloomers".

About the same time a similar outfit appeared in Harper's New Monthly Magazine, this time described as a "Turkish Costume". Whether that would have been seen by the readers as everyday wear or just a novelty is open to question. Radical they may have been but to the modern eye, neither could be considered particularly masculine in style.

Amelia Bloomer

George Cruikshank (no lover of influences from America) portrays what must have seemed a dystopian scenario in genteel Hyde Park

As the couture industry was geared up for the fashionable set, it was largely up to the dress reformers to bring their sartorial ambitions into being by making their own clothes. To that end there were outlets where sewing patterns could be obtained.

Of course, cartoonists and satirical journals on both sides of the Atlantic had a field day.

Dangerous stuff are ideas! So much so that the popular press of the time was awash with articles describing dress reform as a disease closely allied to hysteria, some even to the extent of detailing the vectors of contagion. I must say I found it ironic to see the term "hysterical" being used about the dress reform movement when the articles show all the hallmarks of rabid male hysteria – highly emotional and utterly devoid of logic. More worryingly, though, it seems that the medics weren't immune to such gibberish, with The Lancet featuring "learned" papers from ambitious doctors who were probably striving to find a syndrome to bear their name. One such article of 1883 entitled *Women's Dress* included the statement *"[divided skirts] must be productive of unwomanly ways which are to be deprecated".*

Of course, if all else fails, there was always the ultimate line of attack – question their moral rectitude. In a vicious quote of the time a woman in trousers was cast as *'a new being, a hybrid being, a damned being, an outcast, without conscience and without morals'.*

MODES FUTURES. — LA FEMME EN L'AN 2000.

In his 1887 book *La Femme en Culotte,* Jean Grand-Carteret includes an illustration by Fernard Fau of an imagined outfit of the year 2000. Now I don't know about you, but I don't recall seeing much of that on the street. And it may just be me but I do find it ever so slightly fetishistic.

Meanwhile in the female camp, rational clothing wasn't the only thing on the agenda; politics, female suffrage and emancipation were next. That really spooked the men. If women were going to do any or all the jobs that men used to do, where would that leave the men? What would become of their masculinity? Cartoons appeared illustrating the nightmare of reversed gender roles in which women were getting an education and doing the important jobs – lecturers, police officers, soldiers and so on – while the men were reduced to scrubbing floors and, horror of horrors, reading novels!! The 1851 book *The Beauties of Bloomerism,* a poetic side-swipe at the concept, went out of its way to portray the women in over-masculine garb, in the least feminine poses and doing the least acceptable things like smoking cigars.

There was a large section of society that was mightily unnerved by these trends, seeing them as a threat to the

Deborah Dreadnought (pseudo.), The Beauties of Bloomerism [in verse]. Edited ... by D. D. Illustrated with twelve ... coloured likenesses ... from the designs of W. S. Reed (London: n.pub., 1852), p. 36. Source: The Illustration Archive. http://illustrationarchive.cf.ac.uk/image/11038776774

Deborah Dreadnought (pseudo.), The Beauties of Bloomerism [in verse]. Edited ... by D. D. Illustrated with twelve ... coloured likenesses ... from the designs of W. S. Reed (London: n.pub., 1852), p. 48. Source: The Illustration Archive. http://illustrationarchive.cf.ac.uk/image/11039936684

very fabric of society and a challenge to masculine imperialism. It was clear that something had to be done to stop the rot and the murky law against disorderly conduct proved a useful weapon and was well used as exemplified by the "Arrest of Disorderly Bloomers" report in the New York Times of 1851. It may sound like a simple wardrobe malfunction but it wasn't.

Not that all this was exclusively an American phenomenon; on this side of the pond, headlines reported "Bloomerism" in Piccadilly, Leicester Square and at the Crystal Palace and Madame Tussauds exhibiting three waxworks of women in bloomers.

It wasn't going away, though, because by the 1890s, bicycles came on the scene and what better clobber for a woman to wear while riding than bloomers?

We may remember from our childhood that sense of freedom of being able to go out alone for the first time on our bikes. That must have been just as exhilarating for women at that time. They could join cycling clubs, go where they wanted and leave the chaperone in the dust.

As we know, the campaign against bifurcation was a lost cause in wider western society, with trousers now being a familiar sight and less likely to frighten the horses. By 1891 even the *Lady's Pictorial* wasn't averse to publishing once-controversial images under the title, "Sirens in Small Clothes".

The First World War probably did most to put the "problem" into proportion; there was work to be done and fewer men to do it. Women stepped up, proudly donned overalls and uniform trousers and got on with working in factories and on the land, putting a lie to the 19th century adage that ladies should do nothing that would make them perspire. Society had four years to get used to it, paving the way for the likes of Marlene Dietrich and Katherine Hepburn to go the whole hog and wear sharp, tailored suits with no hint of feminine frippery.

Now that the genie was well and truly out of the bottle, women in trousers was no longer frowned upon, at least during work or leisure pursuits. Nevertheless it was still a novelty for some wearers; Dorothy Curtis, who was working in

a munitions factory in 1918, had her photo taken in her protective clothing, including trousers, and sent a copy to somebody in the armed forces, signing herself "with much love, Trousers".

Still it hasn't been plain sailing in either Europe or the US. In 1923, the US Attorney General declared that it was legal for women to wear trousers anywhere but it took France until 2013 to repeal the statute that rendered women liable for a fine or imprisonment for dressing in "men's clothes" (to be fair, though, the statute had rarely been invoked for decades).

Legislative prohibitions may have largely been dismantled but dress codes have retained an echo of them. Doubtless these are steadily being challenged but progress is inevitably slow because of the sheer number of organisations (schools, retail stores, airlines and so on) concerned.

During question time after the talk I wasn't surprised to hear mention of the mirror image of the subject, namely men in skirts. Let's just say I'm not ready to wear mine out in the streets quite yet. What wasn't mentioned, given Elizabeth Stanton's quote at the beginning of this article, was the female footwear currently prevalent at chucking out time at city nightclubs; now those really do affect the wearer's equilibrium! But it is the *ton* as they used to say. (From *le bon ton* meaning good or elegant form or style.)

Thank you Becky for a most engaging talk with so many personal stories.

Post Script: Oddly enough, over coffee just prior to Becky's talk, I had been musing about whether the pressures to conform to those diktats of female fashion came from men or from women themselves. Then, I was leaning towards it being the sisterhood but having seen the nonsense in the press, I'm not so sure. Any thoughts? We may have to call it a draw.

ARREST OF DISORDERLY BLOOMERS.—On Monday evening, information was received at the Fifth District Police Station, to the effect that two frail women, residing in Church-street, were promenading Broadway, attired in short satin dresses and the full Bloomer costume, conducting themselves in the most indecent and disorderly manner, to the annoyance of respectable ladies and gentlemen, who were taking a quiet walk in that vicinity. Captain Carpenter immediately dispatched officers Cochran and Nesbit, with instructions to arrest the twain, forthwith; and upon reaching the corner of Leonard-street and Broadway, they spied the disorderly Bloomers, in the act of unblushingly stopping gentlemen, with their wives, and committing other indecorous acts of a similar nature, which was witnessed by a crowd of several hundred people, many of whom appeared to enjoy the scene. They were accordingly taken into custody, conveyed to the Station-House, and placed in a cell for the night,—thus giving them an opportunity to ponder in solitude upon their disgraceful conduct.

Explaining the Mechanism.

SIRENS IN SMALL-CLOTHES.

Dressed for Detection

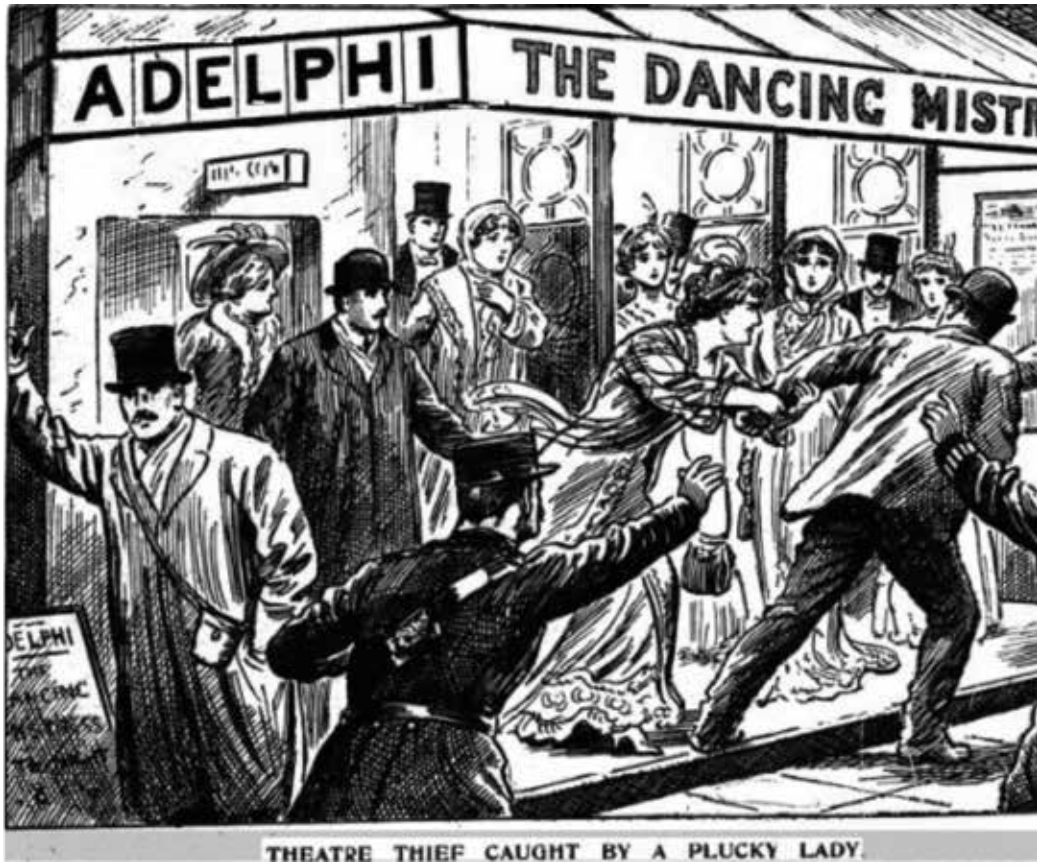
by Paula Harmon

Report by Carolyn Cooper

I do like a good 'whodunnit' so having novelist Paula Harmon come to talk to us was intriguing. She writes with co-author Liz Hedgecock who shares her interest in women's history as well as detective fiction and together they write a chapter of the novel each, often basing the story in the appropriate historical era. They share the class divide, our speaker's detective, Katherine, being middle class and Liz presenting Connie as an upper class character.

Paula answered our unspoken question "Did female detectives really exist?" by saying they did but they tended to be dainty, refined-looking ladies one of whom, Kate Warne, worked in America as the first lady detective at the Pinkerton Detective Agency. This could be useful in divorce cases as they could shadow females into 'comfort stations' when on a case.

In this country, the first decade of the 20th century saw a flurry of female detective agencies open in London. In the 1850s Elizabeth Joyes, a police searcher with the City of London police



in Fleet Street was sent undercover to catch a railway thief. The culprit was furious to be apprehended by a 'woman special detector'. Antonia Moser became a detective in 1888, finally opening her own agency in 1909. Kate Easton opened hers in 1905 and is reported as saying that

she "investigated everything except murder". Maud West opened hers just round the corner from Easton in 1909. Much of West's work was connected with divorce, missing persons and blackmail cases but she was an accomplished self-publicist and had risen to prominence as 'London's Lady detective' by the 1920s.

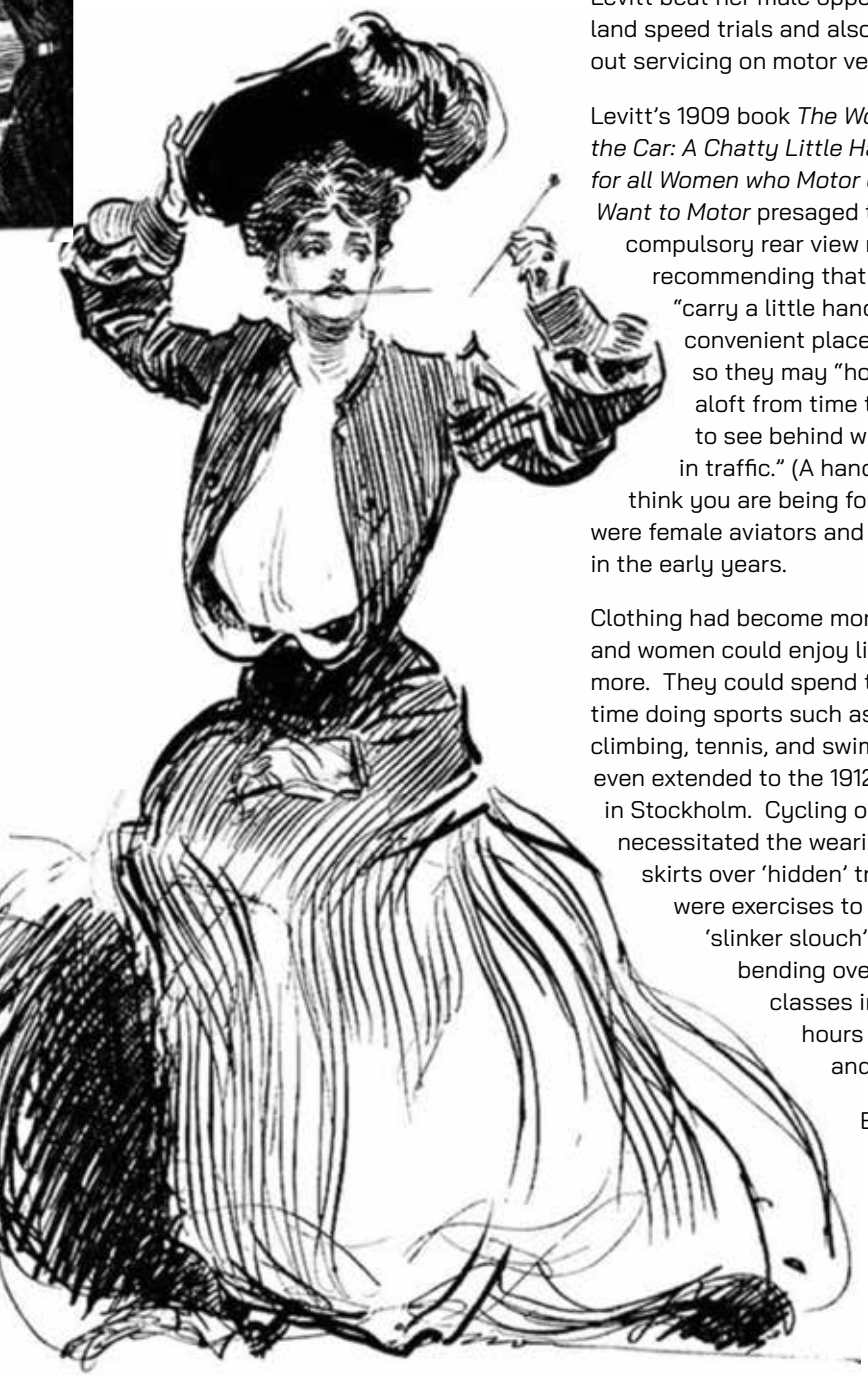
1908: Suffragettes in prison garb advertising their upcoming demonstration outside Holloway Jail in protest against the Government's refusal to treat Suffragettes as political prisoners

As to what they wore it seems it was corsets as usual. The fashion of the day meant the foundation garment could be quickly slipped into using the front fastenings and tightened sufficiently to be effective but not harmful to health. The Rational Dress of the latter half of the nineteenth century with its looser silhouette must have made it easier to chase your quarry, although to be really fashionable you had to stay laced. Corset wearing had to allow the wearer to work and even women prisoners and destitute women

in the poor house were supplied with corsets. However, enterprising corset manufacturers were quick to market specialist corsets for leisure pursuits such as golf.

The long hat pins which held on the feathered and bedecked hats of the period could come in handy as a weapon in a tight corner. There was some general mockery of the fashion for 'hobble skirts' which wouldn't have lent themselves to any rapid movement if you needed to give chase or disappear quickly and discreetly.

By the end of the nineteenth century women had entered areas of employment hitherto closed to them. They were filling the typing pools in the civil service and becoming doctors, and even surgeons by 1895. However, it was still common for lower paid workers such as seamstresses to die of exhaustion after many hours making 'fancy dresses' for the upper classes. In 1912 in America, just as the social season was about to start, ladies' tailors went on strike in a bid to gain better working conditions and shorter hours and were supported by the dockers. Subsequently the dockers went on strike and the tailors supported them.



Even though women could not vote they were gradually invading the historically male workplace and were enjoying activities such as driving, cycling and even motorcycling. In the 1900s Dorothy Levitt beat her male opponents in land speed trials and also carried out servicing on motor vehicles.

Levitt's 1909 book *The Woman and the Car: A Chatty Little Handbook for all Women who Motor or Who Want to Motor* presaged the now compulsory rear view mirror by recommending that women should "carry a little hand-mirror in a convenient place when driving" so they may "hold the mirror aloft from time to time in order to see behind while driving in traffic." (A handy trick if you think you are being followed!) There were female aviators and film directors in the early years.

Clothing had become more streamlined and women could enjoy life a lot more. They could spend their leisure time doing sports such as fencing, climbing, tennis, and swimming which even extended to the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm. Cycling of course necessitated the wearing of divided skirts over 'hidden' trousers. There were exercises to prevent 'slinker slouch' (too much bending over car engines), classes in Ju-jitsu and hours of fun dancing and roller skating.

By 1914 women were of necessity performing men's jobs such as bus conductors but no longer wearing tight corsets. However, in America a woman was arrested for driving a bus wearing trousers. After the war women could join the police force and work in hospitals free of restricting corsets.

Paula gave us a good overview of female dress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, where she sets some of her books. I look forward to reading about Katherine and Connie and will be able to visualise them as they go about their detecting, hat pins at the ready.

Dorothy Levitt

The Biba Story, 1964-1975

By Ann Brown

This exhibition is on at the Fashion & Textile Museum in Bermondsey, London, a fascinating area of London to visit in itself. In the summer of 1963, fashion illustrator Barbara Hulanicki established a mail-order company selling affordable fashion appealing to a new generation of young women, which she named Biba. Although this iconic company became very well known, it's life was short in comparison to many fashion companies of the time. The mail order business was followed by Barbara opening a succession of stores, the first being in Abingdon Road in 1964 for 2 years, meanwhile opening Brighton Biba in 1965 which only lasted a year. The big move then was to Kensington High Street from 1969 – 73 where it was declared "Biba has grown up". It had a Victorian feel with wooden interiors, reclaimed from a recently demolished boys' school and newly created Art Deco inspired sets were installed in the new store. It was during these years that Biba expanded across the Atlantic to the USA. Biba fabrics were sold via Macy's department store to be made up into Biba garments using McCall's patterns. In 1971 Biba opened in New York as a department within Bergdorf Goodman. Big Biba, which many people remember, opened in September 1973 as custodian of the seven storey 1930s Derry and Toms department store where 15 themed departments were created. Many new products were introduced, there was a beauty parlour and well-known bands of the time performed in the famous roof garden with even Liberace performing in the 500 seat Rainbow Restaurant. This store lasted just two years, ceasing to trade on 25th September 1975. Hulanicki lost the rights to the Biba name and the final chapter in the Biba story was an auction at Bonhams of the store's fixtures and fittings.


Circa 1963

The exhibition displays a wide selection of Biba clothes and the iconic Victorian hat stands draped with the brightly coloured ostrich feather boas and large brimmed felt hats. There are examples of other products available to be purchased in the larger stores including cans of soup such as sharks fin soup and birds nest soup, homeware and fashion accessories. Most important of all was the vast cosmetic range introduced in 1970 which were also available nationwide though the high street shop Dorothy Perkins. Within two years the cosmetics were sold in more than 30 countries across three continents. The final room in the exhibition is of Barbara's fashion illustrations as she became a freelance fashion illustrator covering the Paris couture shows for publications such as Women's Wear Daily, Vogue and Harper's Bazaar.

There is also a side exhibition included in the entry ticket called "Do a Ruby Keeler" (a famous dancer of the 1930s performing in such films as 42nd Street). In the 1960s and 1970s, nowhere was the relationship between fashion and film more apparent than with the trend for retro dressing. Do a Ruby Keeler: The Boy Friend – Period Film and Retro Fashion in 1971 curated by N J Stevenson, explores this symbiosis through costumes by Shirley Russell and outfits by Barbara Hulanicki, Janice Wainwright and Ossie Clark. The clown costume worn by Twiggy in the film and many other objects are on display.

When you come away you can understand why this company was so short lived but it brought many memories back for me having lived in London in the 1960s. The exhibition closes on 8th September.

BIBA

Brown Boots and Bare Legs

By Tony Cooper

But Jim, our cousin… what d'yer fink 'e wore? Why, braahn boots!

I ask yer… braahn boots!

Fancy coming to a funeral in braahn boots!

This snippet from Stanley Holloway's monologue illustrates the sorts of sartorial mores that have helped us navigate the potential minefield of social gaffs since time immemorial.

But what are those rules? It's a question that has taxed royalty, legislators and fashionistas for centuries.

Time was when wearing the wrong thing could land you in serious trouble. Although earlier legislation had sought to control the expense of household liveries, Edward IV made the first attempt at a comprehensive sumptuary legislation in England in 1463. That statute imposed restrictions on the use of "royal purple" - a term which, during the Middle Ages, referred not only to the Tyrian purple of Antiquity, but also to crimson, dark reds and royal blue.

A second "Act of Apparel" followed some twenty years later restricting cloth-of-gold, sable, ermine, velvet on velvet and satin brocade to knights and lords. Damask and satin were allowed for yeomen of the Crown and esquires and other members of the gentry, but only if they had an annual income of £40 or more. Bustian, fustian, scarlet-dyed cloths and any leathers or animal hides other than lambskins were also restricted.

Henry VIII's *Act of Apparel* or Sumptuary Law was introduced in 1510 enforcing social hierarchy and authority and preventing the hoi palloi from emulating the court. The subtext being "know your place", with the sub-subtext "or else!".

That wasn't the end of it, the ever-changing influences of trade and religion on society necessitated subsequent acts in 1514, 1515 and 1533.

Daughter Elizabeth I followed suit with the following statute issued at Greenwich, 15 June 1574:

The excess of apparel and the superfluity of unnecessary foreign wares thereto belonging now of late years is grown by sufferance to such an extremity that the manifest decay of the whole realm generally is like to follow (by bringing into the realm such superfluities of silks, cloths of gold, silver, and other most vain devices of so great cost for the quantity thereof as of necessity the moneys and treasure of the realm is and must be yearly conveyed out of the same to answer the said excess) but also particularly the wasting and undoing of a great number of young gentlemen, otherwise serviceable, and others seeking by show of apparel to be esteemed as gentlemen, who, allured by the vain show of those things, do not only consume themselves, their goods, and lands which their parents left unto them, but also run into such debts and shifts as they cannot live out of danger of laws without attempting unlawful acts, whereby they are not any ways serviceable to their country as otherwise they might be

Pick the bones out of that!

She went on to place restrictions on the size of ruffs and length of swords. Given the propensity for extremes, the latter was probably a blessing in disguise; one could imagine a renaissance bloke in a huge ruff trying to compensate for his lack of stature with an over-long sword and, unable to see his feet, tripping and falling flat on his face!

Then there were laws intended to bolster local trade and industry. One such was the 1571 act that decreed that on Sundays and holidays, all males over six years of age (except for nobility and "persons of degree", of course) are to wear woollen caps on pain of a fine of three farthings per day; one that would be crippling for the ordinary man.

Such laws were justified by the reasoning that the price of certain goods had increased to levels where "the treasure of the land is destroyed, to the great damage of the lords and the commonality" when "various people of various conditions wear various apparel not appropriate to their estate".

England wasn't alone with such edicts; James I (of Scotland) limited silk, some types of furs (pine and beech martens) and other items to men of certain social ranks such as knights, lords, burgesses, and their families. In France, Louis XIII issued edicts regulating "Superfluity of Dress" and prohibiting anyone but princes and the nobility from wearing gold embroidery or caps, shirts, collars and cuffs embroidered with metallic threads or lace. Puffs, slashes and bunches of ribbon were also severely restricted. Similar laws were passed in Spain and other countries.

Despite all this, by the mid-sixteenth century it became apparent that sumptuary laws didn't work and never had. They were often revisable regulations rather than stable laws and were simply ignored by those with money and hence were almost impossible to enforce. There was also no danger of poor people wearing the clothes of the rich because they simply couldn't afford them. James I repealed most of these laws during his reign.

Sumptuary laws were no new thing; restrictions on clothing options were in force back in ancient Rome. Appropriately the word "sumptuary" comes from the Latin, sumtus, meaning cost or expenditure. Even the Romans weren't the first; they got the idea from the Greeks.

Sumtuariae Leges were there to curb the fiscal excesses of the populus and ensure that the class structure was maintained in the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. Such laws applied not only to clothing but to other things such as jewellery, food, drink and entertainment.

The clothing of wealthy and upper class Roman males made their rank immediately visible in terms of the materials used in clothing and the style and colour. The style, colour and number of clavi (bands) on tunics were instantly recognisable as an indication of office or rank. All this was heavily codified as illustrated below:

Only the emperor was allowed to wear the trabea, which was a purple toga although statues of gods would also be dressed in the purple toga.

Only augurs were allowed to wear a saffron toga.

Only *consules* (chief magistrates) on public festivals and equites (knights) during a *transvectio* (parade) were allowed to wear a purple band or striped *toga palmata*.

Members of the Senate and their sons were also allowed the privilege of the *latus clavus*, the broad purple stripe on the tunic.

Only Roman citizens were permitted to wear the toga but ordinary male citizens were allowed to wear the *toga virilis* only upon reaching the age of political majority (17).

Young men, until they were seventeen years of age were allowed to wear a toga bordered with purple, called the *toga praetexta*. Magistrates during official ceremonies were also permitted to wear this toga.

The *toga picta* or *toga palmata*, which was a toga with a gold border, was permitted to be worn by generals in their triumphs.

Only Roman matrons (married women) were allowed to wear a *stola* or *vestis longa* (yes, you've guessed it, a long vest!).

Prostitutes and women condemned for adultery, were not permitted to wear the *stola* and were referred to as *togatae*. Unfortunately I never discovered what they actually did wear!!

In addition, for a brief period from around 213 B.C.E. no woman may have above half an ounce of gold, nor wear a dress of different colours, nor ride in a carriage in the city or in any town or within a mile of it, unless on account of public sacrifices. (These served as occasions for communal gatherings, fostering a sense of unity and shared identity among Roman citizens.)

Emperor Honorius (d. 423) issued a decree prohibiting men from wearing "barbarian" trousers in Rome

Emperor Augustus enforced the public wearing of the toga by males in the centre of Rome and forbade wearers of dark-coloured garments (i.e. not the toga) to sit in the *media cavea* of the theatre.

I mentioned the Greeks a moment ago and it is telling that seemingly the first written law code in Ancient Greece, stipulated:

A free-born woman may not be accompanied by more than one female slave, unless she is drunk; she may not leave the city during the night, unless she is planning to commit adultery; she may not wear gold jewellery or a garment with a purple border, unless she is a courtesan; and a husband may not wear a gold-studded ring or a cloak of Milesian fashion unless he is bent upon prostitution or adultery.

Makes you wonder what was going on that necessitated such legislation, doesn't it?

To be continued...

Bath Fashion Festival

at the Holburne Museum on 21st & 22nd September 2024

By Liz Booty

We live in/near a city that attracts thousands of visitors every year to enjoy our treasures. Bath Fashion is and always has been important and is the home of one of the most important dress collections in the world so what better place to feature what is going to, hopefully, be an annual event - the Bath Fashion Festival!

Sustainability is central to the future of Fashion these days and the festival was keen to have this central to the weekend. This coincided with the week being 'Sustainability Week' for the fashion industry with events all over England to raise the urgency of the situation.

I attended the first of the two days and it was spectacular. There was a marquee in front of the Holburne and through the centre of this was a cat walk facing down Pulteney Street - what a setting. There were fascinating interviews - mainly held in the ballroom, and an installation of Vivienne Westwood corsets and couture and a few shoes from the Manolo Blahnik archive aptly set in the Picture Gallery. There were shopping opportunities and a workshop in the grounds.

I went to four different interviews - the first being Chris Floyd who talked about his life as a portrait photographer. We looked at some of his work which included very many of the front covers of Vogue, shoots with so many of the creative industries' stars, and included being the photographer chosen by William and Kate for the official photographs for William's 40th birthday. So many funny stories were teased out of him by Scott Wimsett - who is very well known in the fashion industry with PR and interviewing skills.

Another was with Alice Temperley who was talking about her Somerset life and how she has become a global brand now with her timeless, wearable creations and exquisite evening and bridal wear. Again a designer who puts great importance on her studies of historical costume. Her roots are based in the family cider farm on the Somerset levels

Sam McKnight MBE has had an extraordinary career primarily as a hairdresser - quickly becoming a favourite with celebrities such as Lady Gaga and Kate Moss to name but a few and collaborations with fashion houses such as Chanel, Fendi, Balmain and Burberry. He is known as a 'session stylist'. He created Princess Diana's iconic short, slicked-back hairstyle for a 1990 Vogue magazine and was her personal hair stylist for seven years. He was behind more than 190 cover shoots for the various international versions of Vogue magazine. He styled Madonna and Lady Gaga for the covers of their albums, specialising in high profile editorial shoots.

The beautiful marquee was the setting for the organizer, Jade Parfitt, talking to Bridgitte Stepputtis - the Head of Couture, Vivienne Westwood, about her work and the importance of Vivienne's detailed studies of the C17 & C18 that so influenced her work. The garments and corsets on show were an apt testament to that.

There was an exciting runway show repeated 3 times on each day showcasing the exquisite dresses by Alice Temperley, Scamp and Dude, Albany and the work of Bath Spa University students.

The following day's programme looked just as interesting with panels talking about sustainability in the Fashion industry, the Business of Fashion, Heritage and Style with the Fashion Museum and their collaborations with Bath Spa University, interviews with Erin O'Connor and Robert Fairer from Alexander McQueen.

Look out for next year's festival - for all of us interested in all aspects of clothing it should be once again great!

Out Shopping Exhibition

23rd Mar – 20th Oct 2024

THE DRESSES OF MARION AND MAUD SAMBOURNE (1880 – 1910)

by Pat Cooke

Sambourne House (18, Stafford Terrace) was the home of Edward Linley Sambourne, the Victorian illustrator, photographer and Punch cartoonist. He moved into 18, Stafford Terrace in 1874 shortly after marrying Marion Herapath, their daughter Maud was born in 1875.

Mother and daughter had a very close relationship which continued in the form of letter writing after Maud married Lionel Messel in 1898. This exhibition 'Out Shopping' tells the story of their outings to the many department stores around Kensington and the West end of London as well as their experiences with local dressmakers.

A map in the exhibition marked all the locations of the stores and dressmakers within a carriage drive of leafy Kensington. Such names as Harrods, Whiteleys, Gamages, Barkers, Swan and Edgar, Gorringes and Debenham & Freebody many of which had developed from small drapery businesses into Victorian emporia.

Favourite dressmakers included Madame Bocquet in Berners Street, Mrs Cecil Drummond, Sarah Fullerton Monteith Young in South Audley Street and Russell & Allen, the latter two being Court Dressmakers.

1900 Evening Dress owned by Maud

1912 Evening Coat owned by Maud

1898 Patterned Jacket & Skirt owned by Marian and worn to Maud's Wedding

Marion, in particular was very fond of velvet and owned several velvet dresses. She would also purchase fabric herself to be made up by the dressmaker, perhaps to save money.

Maud, on the other hand was fascinated by historical styles and often attended Fancy Dress Balls in 18th Century dress. Maud was also fond of embroidery and collected antique examples some of which were given to the dressmaker to be incorporated into a design.

This exhibition, although on a small scale, gives a fascinating insight into the shopping and social events which shaped the lives of these upper middle class Victorian ladies.

(Leighton House, where the majority of the costumes were displayed, and Sambourne House are in the care of The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea).

1885 Afternoon Walking Outfit worn by Marian

1909 Walking Outfit owned by Maud

1902 Tea Gown owned by Maud

Framing Fashion:

ART AND INSPIRATION FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION OF VIVIENNE WESTWOOD

The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, DL12 8NP 19 October 2024 – 2 March 2025

Fashion and art collide in a golden decade of design at The Bowes Museum in an exciting new exhibition featuring some of Vivienne Westwood's most recognisable creations from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.

Following the success of *A Collector's Story: A Private Collection of Vivienne Westwood*, which closed in May this year, *Framing Fashion* features a new selection of the late iconic designer's ensembles from the private collection of Peter Smithson, who has spent nearly 30 years adding to his compilation of her work. It explores the inspiration Westwood took from paintings, sitters in portraits and the materials and techniques used by artists.

One of her richest and most recognisable collections, *Portrait* (A/W 1990/1991) was inspired by the art and interiors of the Wallace Collection in London and marked the mid-point of a particularly creative period for the designer. Items from this collection are displayed alongside others exploring Westwood's inspiration from classical art and architecture, eighteenth-century portraits and pastoral scenes as well as other art forms.

Westwood's attention to detail is illustrated and referenced by paintings, objects and historic fashion from The Bowes Museum's collection, including a pair of seventeenth-century paintings of a shepherd and shepherdess, marble cherubs and putti, which featured so much in her work, and ceramic figures from the *Commedia dell'Arte*, which particularly influenced *Voyage to Cythera* (A/W 1989/1990). Many of the objects were acquired by the Museum's founders, Joséphine and John Bowes. Joséphine was also an artist and her palette appears alongside some of the Museum's treasures.

A spectacular man's embroidered coat from 1765 from the Bowes' collection is the exhibition's centrepiece. It is shown with a set of buttons from c.1790, which are still attached to their card backing, having never been used. Also displayed is a woman's spencer from c.1820 and a boy's velvet suit from c.1890.

To provide an insight into the construction of some of the signature Westwood designs featured in *Framing Fashion*, the Fashion Department at Northumbria University has created digital reconstructions of her painter's smock and 'Putti' 'Stature of Liberty' corset, which are shown on a screen close to the garments represented.

In addition, a sample showing Westwood's corset manufacturing process and fabric panels illustrating the way in which her Harris Tweed crown was cut out and stitched together are displayed next to the actual items, as well as images of Westwood corsets and crowns in *Vogue* and *i-D magazine*.

Peter Smithson said, "The reception of *A Collector's Story* and the appetite for more has been overwhelming and reflects the love and admiration for the late Vivienne Westwood and her endless creativity. This new exhibition has been inspired by the homage Vivienne made to the work of the Old Masters through her *Portrait* collection, with the perfect setting nestled amongst the historic collections of The Bowes Museum.

"The pieces displayed explore Vivienne's re-interpretation of fashion within paintings and illuminate the abstract ways in which she so wittily represented every aspect of what she observed; brush strokes to hue, frame to furniture, even the artists' names found their way into her work.

"Other ensembles showcase ideas and inspiration from alternative forms of creative expression including sculpture, theatre, film, photography and social movements, collectively dressing 3000 years of history in undisputable Westwood style!"

Framing Fashion: Art and Inspiration from a Private Collection of Vivienne Westwood runs until Sunday 2 March 2025 in the Fashion and Textiles Gallery at The Bowes Museum, which is open daily from 10am to 5pm.

If any WECS members make the journey north to Barnard Castle, please say hello!

Rachel Whitworth
Curator (Fashion & Textiles)
rachel.whitworth@thebowesmuseum.org.uk

This exhibition is the result of a collaboration between The Bowes Museum and private collector Peter Smithson. It is not an institutional partnership with the Vivienne Westwood brand.

https://thebowesmuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/framing-fashion-art-and-inspiration-from-a-private-collection-of-vivienne-westwood/

Just a reminder

These exhibitions are still on if you haven't managed to see them yet!

NAOMI
V & A Museum until 6 April 2025

THE TEXTILE COLLECTION OF ELISABETH FRINK & OUR SPORTING HERITAGE
Blandford Fashion Museum
until November 2026

INSPIRED: THE ART OF MAKING HISTORICAL FASHION
Bankfield Museum
until 21 December 2024

UNPICKING COUTURE
Manchester Art Gallery
until 12 January 2025

OUTLAWS: FASHION RENEGADES OF 80S LONDON
Fashion & Textile Museum
until 9 March 2025

EDWARDIAN LEGACY
Worthing Museum until 2 May 2025

KIMONO: KYOTO TO CATWALK
V & A Dundee until 5 January 2025

WEC'S Members Sale Table

There has been a great response to the Sale Table - we raised £122.50 for WECS at our October meeting. Thank you to everyone who contributed, with donations or on a 50/50 basis. Thank you to the buyers too.

I will continue with a table at each meeting now. In fact, I shall book 2 tables at the next meeting, so I am able to display our lovely things to advantage.

Small items of jewellery are particularly popular...brooches, earrings, necklaces, scarves, handbags and all accessories.

But really all items that reflect our interest in fashion, decoration and antiques, will be so very welcome.

SO.... get busy, rummage in those boxes and find treasures to delight us all.

If you brought something last time that did not sell, please try again.

It would be very helpful if you could price things beforehand, if selling on a 50/50 basis. Or discuss with me likely realistic prices.

Remember to bring cash if possible.... (I can always take a cheque if necessary or even bank transfer)

Also if something does not sell this time it would be helpful if you could take it home, but try again at the next meeting

Any queries do contact me: annierose9@gmail.com

Keep Wardrobe Full!

I'm sure you have all been visiting wonderful exhibitions during the summer - do let me know what you have seen so that I can tell everyone. What have you been doing, reading, discovering online? Write and tell me so I can share it ...

Copy for the next newsletter to Caroline Bartlett by 30th March 2025

please to **editor@wofecostumesociety.org**

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