

WECS Wardrobe

Spring issue 2024
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www.wofecostumesociety.org

Calendar

Janet Arnold Study Day ‘Shape Shifting’

THE CHANGING FEMALE
SILHOUETTE THROUGH THE
19TH CENTURY

Saturday 5 October 2024

■ Bath & County Club

Christmas Meeting

Saturday 16 November 2024

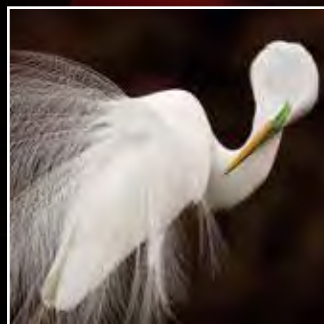
■ Bath & County Club

AGM

15 February 2025



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Janet Arnold October Study Day

Sat October 5th 2024

SHAPE SHIFTING

the changing female silhouette through the 19th and early 20th century.

We take a glimpse into the history of corsets, bustles and crinolines, how they were made and worn, and how the advent of bloomers and the transition to divided skirts and early trousers impacted women's lives and society.



IAN CHIPPERFIELD – THE STAYMAKER

Ian's interest has always been in how things were done in the past. He originally trained as a modern dressmaker and pattern cutter, while at the same time starting to research in museum reserve collections. Over the last 30+ years he has studied garments from many museums' reserve collections in great detail, adding new research and garments to his own archive.

Over the years Ian's knowledge and skills have been sought by many groups and organisations. He has taught a wide range of sewing students, from absolute beginners to re-enactors, period dancers, bridal makers, sewing teachers and degree lecturers.

An experienced lecturer, Ian has delivered sessions to costume societies, museums, genealogy and WI groups around the country, often bringing his replica clothing to demonstrate.



1880s style corset copying one in the Tunbridge Wells Museum collection.

DRESSED FOR DETECTION

Illustrated talk by Paula Harmon, fiction author

One minute you're an ordinary Victorian or Edwardian woman, the next minute you have a crime to solve. Whatever should you wear?

Paula Harmon has published a number of historical mysteries. The Margaret Demeray series is set in the 1910s. The Caster & Fleet series (co-written with Liz Hedgecock) is set in the 1890s. In both series, the main female characters – on different incomes – want to follow the prevailing fashions, but still have to solve mysteries and tackle crime. Would their clothes hinder them? Or would it be perfectly possible to manage, corsets and all? Using information and images from her research, including fun facts, Paula will talk about what her characters might have worn and how they might have got around any inconvenience their clothes might have posed. From remodelled ball-dresses to cycling outfits to suffrage Margaret, Katherine and Connie as they dress to detect.



DR BECKY MUNFORD Lecturer at Cardiff University



Becky's Research interests are in gender and feminist theory, modern and contemporary women's writing, literary and visual cultures of fashion, dress and the body (especially trouser-wearing women), girlhood and spectrality.

She is the creator of Women in Trousers: A Visual Archive (www.womenintrousers.org), a digital resource that is home to images

of bloomers, knickerbockers, divided skirts, slacks, culottes, breeches, dungarees and shorts, amongst other bifurcated garments, which capture the multiple and often unstable meanings attached to trousers and trouser-wearing women from the 1850s to the 1960s.

Becky's talk is about the advent of the bloomer and the 'visual problem' of trouser-wearing women in the public sphere.

Out & About

Andy Warhol The Textiles

Dovecot Studios, Edinburgh
Until 18 May 2024



Dovecot Studios is showcasing the first exhibition in Scotland exclusively dedicated to the commercial textile designs of pop artist and icon Andy Warhol.

Leading figure of the Pop Art movement, Andy Warhol's swiftly successful career began in commercial and advertising art during the 1950s and early 1960s. At this time, Warhol's output was almost entirely devoted to realising the demands and deadlines of professional clients, such as Glamour magazine where he undertook his first commission.

Andy Warhol: The Textiles will take you on a journey through the unknown and unrecorded world of designs by the influential artist before his Silver Factory days. Showcasing over 35 of Warhol's textile patterns from the period, depicting an array of colourful objects; ice cream sundaes, delicious toffee apples, colourful buttons, cut lemons, pretzels, and jumping clowns, this exhibition demonstrates how textile and fashion design was a crucial stage in Warhol becoming one of the most iconic artists of the twentieth century.

Dovecot Studios Ltd
10 Infirmery Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1LT
dovecotstudios.com



The Biba Story, 1964 – 1975

The Fashion & Textile Museum
Until 8 September 2024

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.

The Biba Story explores how fashion phenomenon Biba blossomed to become the world's first lifestyle label, sparking a revolution in how people shopped and how Biba earned its spot as the brand that epitomises 1960s and 1970s fashion.

The exhibition focuses on the years 1964, when the first Biba boutique opened, to 1975, when the legendary Big Biba closed its doors to the public. Displaying fantastic archival pieces of clothing, original photographs, film, and material all of which have been personally chosen by Barbara Hulanicki.

'It isn't just selling dresses, it's a whole way of life',
Barbara Hulanicki, 1970.



Fashion & Textile Museum
83 Bermondsey Street,
London SE1 3XF
fashiontextilemuseum@newham.ac.uk



Naomi

Opens Saturday 22 June 2024

The first exhibition of its kind exploring the extraordinary career of fashion model Naomi Campbell. Through the work of leading global designers and photographers the V & A celebrates her creative collaborations, activism and far-reaching cultural impact.

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



Blandford Fashion Museum

Blandford Fashion Museum has two new exhibitions which started in February 2024 and run until November 2026.

THE TEXTILE COLLECTION OF ELISABETH FRINK

The collection consists of kimonos and quilts which she collected due to her interest in colour in pattern. Also part of the collection are textiles which carry her designs including curtains and jumpers.



Kimono & Quilt

& OUR SPORTING HERITAGE

Featuring sportswear as 2024 is an Olympic year - here showing a Riding Habit from 1907 which is in the exhibition.

Blandford Fashion Museum
Lime Tree House, 11 The Plocks
Blandford Forum DT11 7AA
blandfordfashionmuseum.co.uk

Snowy Owl Scarf



Out Shopping:

THE DRESSES OF MARION & MAUD SAMBOURNE 1880-1910

Leighton House & Sambourne House
23 March – 20 October 2024

A curated selection of spectacular outfits, several never displayed before and other rare surviving examples by leading dressmakers of the era, this exhibition tells the story of a middle-class mother and her affluent daughter, Marion Sambourne and Maud Messel, at a moment in history that significantly shaped the way fashion is consumed today.

The exhibition places these dresses in the context of their wearers' lives and relationship, both with fashion and each other – speaking of their shopping habits and distinct tastes, and more generally, the important role fashion shopping played in the lives of women in this period.

For the first time in the history of the museums, the exhibitions will span across three spaces – the two exhibition galleries at Leighton House with an additional display and a documentary film at nearby Sambourne House, offering an immersive experience for visitors.

Leighton House
12 Holland Park Road
LONDON W14 8LZ
&
Sambourne House
18 Stafford Terrace,
LONDON W8 7BH
rbkc.gov.uk/museums



Fashion from The MoMu Collection

MOMU ANTWERP THROUGHOUT 2024

21 September 2024



The collection presentation on the ground floor sheds light on avant-garde Belgian and international fashion, with an alternating presentation of silhouettes and archive material from the museum's collection of more than 38,000 items. The selection will change regularly to display as much of the MoMu Collection as possible, from contemporary fashion to historical clothing, textiles and accessories.

Nationalestraat 28
2000 Antwerpen
momu.be/en/exhibitions



Farthingale's Jane Austen Lectures

21 September 2024

The Guildhall
High Street
BATH, BA1 5AW
farthingalescostumes.com



Inspired: THE ART OF MAKING HISTORICAL FASHION

Bankfield Museum
27 January – 21 December 2024



This exciting new exhibition showcases fashion makers from across the country who design and make clothing based on historical dress. It explores the process of how you go from a museum garment or fashion plate to producing an item of historically inspired dress that is ready to wear.

Alongside these pieces will be costumes and textiles from Bankfield Museum's world class collection and films where you can see the makers at work and learn more about what inspires them

Bankfield Museum
Akroyd Park
Boothtown Road
HALIFAX HX3 6HG
museums.calderdale.gov.uk

Defashion Dorset

24 & 25 May 2024



A 2-day sustainable fashion event promoting fibre growers & makers and a local clothing culture

Get ready to explore a curated selection of local exhibitors and discover sustainable treasures that support artisans who embody the spirit of conscious fashion.

Engage in hands-on workshops designed to enhance, embellish, and mend clothing. Immerse yourself in the art of working with

natural fibres, making and learning valuable skills to incorporate sustainability into your daily wardrobe choices.

Hawkers Farm
Dorset
SP8 5LZ
defashion.dorset@gmail.com

Fashioning Our World: UNPICKING THE PAST TO THREAD TOGETHER OUR FUTURE

Salisbury Museum
10 February to 12 May 2024



This exhibition will tell the stories of clothes and accessories from the past that have been repurposed, mended, altered and looked after. It asks whether this can inspire us to think differently about sustainable fashion in the future.

The show is part of the Fashioning Our World project, which is working with young people (aged 11 – 25) to share these stories with the community, change attitudes to fashion in the future and help fight the climate crisis.

Fashioning Our World has been co-curated by local young people, working alongside the museum team, volunteers and experts. It will feature a range of historic garments and accessories from The Salisbury Museum fashion collection as well as work by fashion designers, sustainable fashion campaigners and young people taking part in the project.

The Salisbury Museum,
The King's House,
65 The Close, Salisbury SP1 2EN
museum@salisburymuseum.org.uk



Keep Calm & Wear It Well

Chertsey Museum
Until 31 August 2024

The 1940s was a tumultuous decade, characterised, in the first instance, by the Second World War (1939 – 1945). The State involved itself deeply in ordinary people's dress. The wartime period and the years that followed are characterised by government policies such as clothes rationing, the Utility Scheme and the Make-Do and Mend campaign. These sought to control the acquisition and care of clothing, its price, quality and, to some extent, look.

Even when war ended in 1945, the conflict would cast a long shadow, with lasting restrictions and shortages biting well into the second half of the 1940s. It was only with the resurgence of Paris as a fashion capital, and Christian Dior's New Look in 1947, that the traditional fashion system would re-assert itself. The decade ended with a long pent-up burst of extravagance; a very different place from where it began.

Chertsey Museum
33 Windsor Street
Chertsey KT16 8AT
chertseymuseum.org

Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk

V & A Dundee
Opens 4th May 2024

The intricate story of the style, appeal and influence of the kimono, *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk* presents the kimono as a dynamic, ever-evolving icon of fashion, tracing its influence from 17th century Japan to today's cutting-edge couture and street fashion across the world.

See rare, centuries-old kimono and modern designs from Issey Miyake, Yohji Yamamoto, and Alexander McQueen, and incredible costumes that have wowed audiences onstage and on the silver screen.

This is the final stop of the international tour, the last chance to see the show curated by V&A South Kensington that originally premiered in London.

V & A,
1 Riverside Esplanade, Dundee, DD1 4EZ
vam.ac.uk/dundee



Playing by the rules: CHILDHOOD, DRESS AND IMAGINATION

Killerton House
Until Sunday 3 November 2024

The exciting new fashion exhibition in 2024 is themed around childhood. The exhibition draws on the Killerton collection and explores children's clothing of the 19th and 20th centuries, many of them part of the Margaret Bodley collection of children's clothes which was acquired by the National Trust in the early 1980s. The theme highlights formal clothes and fancy dress, more practical clothes for active play, and uniforms for school and work. It's not all about the clothes though, a selection of toys and games from the collection will also be on display.

Five local Brownie and Guide units have been working with Killerton to produce future fashion designs, along with taking on the task of 'young curators' for one of the display areas. There'll be plenty to get involved with too, find activities for younger visitors throughout the exhibition.

Killerton House
Broadclyst, Exeter EX5 3LE
killerton@nationaltrust.org.uk



Icons of British Fashion

Blenheim Palace
23 March – 30th June 2024

The highly-anticipated Icons of British Fashion exhibition features a line-up of world-class designers and labels, with each fashion house taking over one of our significant rooms.

Each space along the visitor route in the 300-year-old Palace will pay homage to a British fashion icon starting in the Great Hall with designs on display by the late Dame Vivienne Westwood and creative partner Andreas Kronthaler.

Icons of British Fashion will continue through Blenheim Palace where you can marvel at the highly visual exhibition dramatically lit and displayed amongst the palace's own priceless collections.

Blenheim has such a rich history in British fashion having hosted many fashion shows, photoshoots, and catwalks attended by high society and royalty. The Palace is the perfect backdrop to showcase the lasting impact of British fashion on the global stage over the years.



Alongside the impressive array of legendary designers, Blenheim will also be celebrating their own icon of fashion, Sir Winston Churchill. With this year honouring the 150th anniversary of Sir Winston Churchill's birth, it's only right that during this momentous exhibition, visitors can see one of the original Churchill Siren Suits, kindly loaned by Turnbull & Asser, as well as a new take on the iconic boiler suit and a smoking cap designed by Steven Jones.

The upcoming exhibition will celebrate fashion from the past through to the present day and will feature bespoke designs and loans from some huge names in the fashion world.

Blenheim Palace
Woodstock, OX20 1UL
blenheimpalace.com

A Common Thread: A TAPESTRY OF MEMORIES & EMOTIONS

Trowbridge Museum
4 May – 28 September 2024

Textiles can be secret gatekeepers of memories and emotions. Favourite pieces are often kept a bit too long or mended and patched to extend both their 'life' and the memories we associate with them. WEFT: A Common Thread, explores the universal connection we all share to textiles, as well as the Trowbridge woollen history heritage through the words of those who made it happen,

The women whose thumbs would split to the bone winding yarn, the children crawling under moving parts to help feed their families or the men tuning the looms to create the innovative designs which kept the industry thriving until the 80s.

You are invited to join us as we ask; 'What textile memories do you carry with you?'

Trowbridge Museum
The Shires Shopping Centre
Court Street, Trowbridge BA14 8AT
trowbridgemuseum.co.uk



Untold Lives: A Palace at Work

Kensington Palace
14 March – 27th October 2024

Portrait of Bridget Holmes (1591-1691). Royal Collection Trust /© His Majesty King Charles III 2024

A new exhibition at Kensington Palace, uncovering the forgotten stories of those who worked at the royal palaces over 300 years ago.

They were at the centre of royal life, but little is known about the servants and courtiers who ran royal palaces for centuries. From pages to cooks, from wetnurses to seamstresses, a host of workers managed life at Court and used their skills and expertise to look after the royal family and their homes.

Now, for the first time, the lives and contribution of these forgotten figures will be explored in a new exhibition, created by the independent charity, Historic Royal Palaces.

Untold Lives: A Palace at Work will shine a spotlight on the overlooked people from all walks of life who worked tirelessly – often behind-the-scenes – to maintain, protect and promote the monarch and the royal palaces.

Kensington Palace
Kensington Gardens
London W8 4PX
Hrp.org.uk/Kensington-palace

Statement Sleeves

New York Museum at FIT - Until 25 August 2024

Whether puffed, ruffled, split, or sheer, statement sleeves have been a ubiquitous fashion trend for the past decade. These dramatic, contemporary creations can enliven and update a wardrobe, yet many current sleeve styles have cycled in and out of fashion for decades, if not centuries. Although sleeves can be especially challenging to make, they also inspire countless creative ideas.

Statement Sleeves takes an original approach to the history of fashion. The selected garments date from the 18th century to the present, but they are not presented chronologically.

They are instead organized by type. Following an introduction to basic sleeve shapes – from gigot to raglan – visitors will encounter the myriad ways in which designers have reinterpreted and remixed sleeves through variations in material, shape, embellishment, and even functionality. More than sixty styles, all from the museum's permanent collection, emphasize how sleeves hold the power to define a look – in both the past and present.

Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology
227 West 27th Street,
NEW YORK CITY 10001-5992
fitnyc.edu/museum/exhibitions

Sargent and Fashion Tate Britain

Until 7 July 2024

Celebrated for his striking portrait paintings, this exhibition sheds new light on John Singer Sargent's acclaimed works. It explores how he worked like a stylist to craft the image of the sitters he painted, who he often had close relationships with.

Sargent used fashion as a powerful tool to express identity and personality. He regularly chose the outfits of his collaborators or manipulated their clothing. This innovative use of costume was central to his artwork – for

example, tugging a heavy coat tighter around a man to emphasise his figure or letting a dress strap sensuously slip from a woman's shoulder. It was these daring sartorial choices that allowed him to express his vision as an artist.

Almost 60 of Sargent's paintings will be on display, including major portraits that rarely travel. Several period garments will also be showcased alongside the portraits they were worn in. The show examines how this remarkable painter used fashion to create portraits of the time, which still captivate today.

Tate Britain, Millbank
London SW1P 4RG
Tate.org.uk



Glam Fashion – AGM 2024

- Speaker: Sally Chidlow Grant
- Report by Annie Rose

AGMs are known to be boring...but certainly not this year. It was our pleasure to welcome Sally Chidlow Grant. Sally is a renowned academic with a vast reservoir of knowledge. Today she concentrated on just one small BUT very influential area.

Sally told us she is a west country girl, with fond memories of research at the Fashion Museum in Bath. She is the recipient of no less than four Janet Arnold Society of Antiquaries Awards for her research into 1960s and early 70s UK fashion. Janet Arnold is close to all our hearts, a west country girl, who attended the same school as me, Red Maids in Bristol. (I have to say our domestic science classes were not known for fashion!)



Roxy Music,
'For your pleasure'
Photograph by Karl
Stoeker
1973

David Bowie/Mick Ronson (1972) were icons of the time. As were Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood coining the phrase "The Look of Music, The Sound of Fashion".

Sally studied Fashion and Textiles at Winchester School of Art and then pattern cutting at London College of Fashion and Fashion History.

The early 70s, known for Glam, Nostalgic fashion with influences from Hollywood and notably...Anthony Price, Ossie Clark, Celia Birtwell, Roxy Music, album covers and photography. I was living in London at the time with 4 young children. Looking back at photographs, I still managed to waft about in full length skirts and dresses

and platform shoes...even to the supermarket. These I had mainly made myself but the above influences were there...street fashion.

Sally took us on an enthusiastic journey through the 70s. The vibrancy associated with youth, music and fashion including street fashion.

We all know and love the Ossie Clark and Celia Birtwell collaboration. Ossie Clark was well known for his wonderful chiffon dresses of mixed prints... the prints designed by his wife Celia Birtwell and often modelled by the then supermodel Amanda Lear. But he was also an expert cutter and made exceptional tailored pieces as well. Credited with introducing women's trouser suits, long before Yves Saint Laurent.

Sally said she viewed this couple, Ossie and Celia, as a bridge from the 60s to 70s. This was an intense time with bomb scares, changes of laws for equal pay, gay rights...and then, fashion charged in with Nostalgia, Hollywood Glam and film, and importantly the music. It may be surprising now, but cat-walks with music had arrived.



The Whirligig dress arrived from Ossie Clark in 1971...chiffon prints cut on the bias and flattering to everyone. This dress was revived by Top Shop for the Celia Birtwell collection in 2006.

We were then invited to think of the influence of 30s/40s nostalgia...Oxford Bags & Hollywood Glam and also Elvis and street fashion, Brian Ferry with his dyed black hair, stylists and make-up artists. All these factors were drawn upon and adapted. Street fashion is always so exciting, walking along the road in 60s and 70s London was heaven on earth. Still is, for the young of today.

The importance of cut, construction and methodology could not be emphasised enough. Not to forget exquisite textiles influenced by the V & A archives.

Sally brought examples for us to see. We looked at the 'apron' dress inspired by Ossie's Mother and the crushed velvet 'screen goddess' dress by Anthony Price... think Marlene Dietrich and Gone With The Wind. We also saw the Whirligig dress as well - it was so good to look at the detail (not original).

Cutting for freedom - Glam Fashion and the use of Hollywood Nostalgia and Camp in cut and construction, with particular reference to Anthony Price, a renowned Fashion designer, still alive today, used military influences, uniforms, hoodies, sweat pants early mass production. He also designed so many Roxy Music covers.

Top Shop sold Military coats, sculptured coats and jackets designed by him, Jerry Hall modelled.

All this around Roxy Music covers and plenty of lame. Semi couture techniques

Such exciting times and wonderful to be part of 'the Scene'. I have now found a 70s chiffon dress in my collection, which I will bring to the next meeting. So, thank you Sally very much...not just for the wander down memory lane but also those extra details that bring Fashion alive.

Images Courtesy of Sally Chidlow Grant

March Study Day

Fashion, Fury and Feminism Tessa Boase

- By Caroline Levett

Tessa Boase was introduced to us as a social historian, journalist, campaigner, author and broadcaster focusing on women's fights for change.

In the 1880s 'millinery adornments' were frequently feathers, and sometimes even whole birds. Egret plumes – known as Osprey – were particularly popular.



Millinery Record 1189

A chance remark from a birder set her off in an unexpected direction: 'Did you know that the RSPB was started by women protesting against hats?' Tessa decided to find out more about these women. The RSPB in Sandy had no archivist, and the librarian said she was sorry, but they were bombed in the blitz and there were no records left. She found photos of the all-male staff in the 1960s. By the 1970s there were two women, who appeared to be secretaries. In a box labelled "Contraband" they did find eight beautifully preserved 'millinery adornments'; single feathers dyed curled and wired, all from what are now protected birds.

Finally, they found a photograph of Mrs Etta Lemon. Etta (Margaretta) Smith was brought up to campaign, as the daughter of the head of the Evangelisation Society. As a young woman she went to church in Blackheath and as the congregation rose she noted down the details of feathers worn in the hats by members of the congregation, and then proceeded to write to each of the offenders, naming the bird, explaining where the feathers had come from and explaining the cruelty – birds killed in the nesting season, chicks left to starve. Etta was obsessive, not at all worried about upsetting people, happy to be unpopular and clearly on the spectrum. Her image as a young woman is reminiscent of Greta Thunberg. Tessa's concern at finding that the RSPB had little interest in the topic spurred her on. She was clear that there was a book in this, and she would write it. The RSPB did not let her revisit their archives. Indeed she was accidentally copied into a chain of emails which referred to her: 'she is not a birder; this sort of thing worries me.'



Etta Lemon

The British Library did a little better, and put Tessa on the trail of two other remarkable women. And so, in Didsbury, a select suburb of Manchester, Tessa found the Croft, Fletcher Moss Park, the former home of Emily Williamson, a solicitor's wife. Her anger was triggered by the plight of the grebe. The popularity of the crest, and of the soft

under pelt for powder puffs reduced it to only 22 nesting pairs in the UK – the brink of extinction. Emily wrote to the British Ornithologists Union, but men of science seemed unwilling to get involved and there is no trace of a reply.

So in 1889 she founded the Society for the Protection of Birds. She invited friends to tea and committed them to wear no birds, to pay a penny, to visit schools and to write to newspapers, and the campaign began in earnest.

The Mancunian reported in 1989 that the RSPB had been founded by a stout Victorian woman, but there was little other recognition of Emily's role. A small plaque on the Croft, dated 1989, names Magnus Magnusson, and celebrates 100 years since the founding of the RSPB, but fails to name Emily.



Emily Williamson

The RSPB said they had no material relating to Emily, and she had no children. She did however have six brothers with eminent descendants, and Tessa tracked some of these down through Ancestry.com. Patrick Bateson, FRS, was a great nephew at Cambridge, and he replied by return: 'What, Great Aunt Emily founded the RSPB?' He investigated immediately

and sent Tessa a family photo of Emily Williamson, which Tessa forwarded to the V&A. The V&A concluded that she was dressed up as if for her 21st birthday, and identified the brooch at her throat as a bird with outstretched wings at which she is pointing with a look as if to say 'that is what my life will be about'. Her great-great niece Melissa Bateson is now at Nottingham University researching starlings; she said "birds are in my blood".

Also in 1889, in Croydon, lived Eliza Phillips, then 67. The widow of a rector and a member of the RSPCA, Eliza set up an organisation called 'Fur, Fin and Feather Folk'. Etta Smith travelled each month from Blackheath to the meetings. Etta suggested that they focus on a single issue - Murderous Millinery. They prepared postcards agitating and ruffling feathers.

In 1891 the RSPCA brokered a meeting between the two organisations – rather than get involved directly in so sensitive an issue. And so the three women met, and decided to combine forces, as the Society for the Protection of Birds, with Emily as vice president and Etta as secretary.



Duchess of Portland

Frustratingly a condition of the charter was that women could not be in control of the organisation. Etta had to resign in favour of her husband Frank Lemon.



The Trade

The Port of London was the centre of the plumage industry, and it was big business. The industry was worth £20 million in the money of the time. Auction catalogues show the scale of the trade: in 1888 there is a reference at one single auction to 8,000 parrots, 1,000 woodpeckers and 12,000 hummingbirds and these auctions took place initially fortnightly and subsequently weekly. The finished adornments were marketed to milliners through catalogues. In Florida in 1903 egret feathers were worth twice their weight in gold.



Imported Humming Birds

The cleaning, dying, curling and joining and wiring of the feathers was carried out in the East End of London and also in Paris and New York by poorly paid workers. One young worker was sent to prison for six weeks for stealing 2 ostrich feathers; as a feather washer she was paid 5 shillings a week. Her mother was a feather fence. The feather preparation industry was seasonal, alternating with artificial flower making. Many of the workers were also prostitutes. Photographs of the workers show them with hacking coughs, streaming eyes and many had TB.



Eliza Phillips

The Duchess of Portland, then aged 26, agreed to become a patron. She was a goddaughter of the Queen and already campaigning on pit ponies. Frank Lemon, a lawyer and a friend of Etta's family, wrote the constitution and subsequently married Etta.

Their aim was to ban the use of all feathers in millinery – except for ostrich – as the birds were farmed but not killed, and game birds, who would have died anyway. In 1904 thanks to the support of the Duchess, they became the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

The issue

Tessa challenged us to recall memories of female relatives who would not leave the house without a hat - it certainly applied to my grandmother in the 1950s and early 1960s.

The Victorians were fascinated by birds and catalogued them and stuffed them. There was a huge rise of consumerism in the late 19th century, with department stores as cathedrals of fashion. Cupidity was aroused by displays and shop windows became a means of selling goods.



In the British Library Tessa found the millinery records for 1889. There were extraordinary images of women wearing hats adorned with whole dead birds including one woman wearing opera glasses as though bird watching.



Women's magazines in 1907 carried images of what was called the Merry Widow hat worn by Lily Elsie. It featured black bird of paradise feathers from New Guinea where they were hunted to near extinction just to make hats.



By 1911 some hats were two feet wide and four feet high.

Not only wealthy women wore feathers in their hats. Working women set up clubs to save up to buy feathers, and took it in turns to wear them. The V&A when asked for '1870 to 1920 bird hats' produced twelve, including one featuring most of a dead peacock. Tessa found the hats light as feathers, voluptuous, tempting to the touch, yet passers-by drew back in shock and revulsion. What changed our sensibilities? Why did we move to modest cloche hats in the 1920s?



Photograph of a Rag Trade Day Out - the older women wearing boaters

The Campaign

The new society used Emily's campaigning methods, and proved very effective in attracting members, in 1890 they had 1000, by 1891 they had 10,000.

The campaign was curious - for the first time it was women against women and complaining about dress which was a huge part of identity. The protesters were caricatured on the front of Punch in 1892.

Emily Pankhurst, the highly eloquent product of a Paris finishing school advocated the use of the feminine arts in her campaigns. In 1909 she laid down a dress code for the suffragettes. Although there were protest letters printed in Votes for Women objecting to feathers in hats the letters were not answered, perhaps because adverts for hats from department stores formed a significant source of income to produce the magazines.



A Bird of Prey - Punch 1892



Constance Lytton with Suffragettes



Millicent Fawcett and Suffragists

Etta Lemon took a dim view of the suffragettes, but decided that the RSPB also had to be militant. She felt that it would not be effective for women to campaign against women, and in 1911 she hired a team of sandwich board men to display visceral photographs of the trade in snowy egret.

They were included in pamphlets and posters at railways stations aimed at provoking the maternal instinct in women. The summer sales in 1911 were attacked with arson and window smashing and a host of violent campaigns. Etta was known as the dragon. Virginia Woolf became a supporter, saying 'No more Plumage'.

During the war the importing of feathers was banned. More women started to work and hats shrank. After the war fancy feathers did return, but on a smaller scale. A bill to ban the import of feathers was introduced repeatedly, but was constantly opposed in Parliament because of the value of the trade – run by men. In 1919 Nancy Astor decided to promote the plumage bill as the first that she would sponsor and in 1921 the act which banned the import of feathers was passed.

Postscript

Frank Lemon died in the 1930s. Etta continued to work for the RSPB but with increasing tension until she was finally sacked in 1939 - opposed to the development of nature reserves and the ornithological approach being taken by men in the RSPB.

The Duchess of Portland remained as president until her death in 1954 aged 89.

Tessa Boase commissioned portraits in pencil of the four key women and had them framed and displayed at the Manchester Museum. Finally she suggested that the RSPB - who had no pictures of women - might like to borrow her portraits. They are now on display in the main reaching room of the RSPB. And if you look on the RSPB website now and ask for founders you will find that all these people are clearly named so Tessa has achieved her objective.



Tessa's research is told in a book originally published as **Mrs Pankhurst's Purple Feather: Fashion, Fury and Feminism** to coincide with the anniversary of women's suffrage, but now reissued as **Etta Lemon: The Woman Who Saved the Birds**.

Fur, A Sensitive History

Jonathon's talk entitled Fur, a Sensitive History delved deeply into the complex relationship between fur and humankind with its everchanging history.

Originally the purpose of fur was purely functional, namely the need to wear animal skins in order to keep warm in very cold climates. However, it was the change from necessity to a desirable luxury which gave birth to the fur trade.

The Chinese are said to have prized animal fur more than 3,500 years ago and this craving for tactile luxury was passed from the Greeks to the Romans. In medieval times the French nobility were subject to sumptuary laws passed in 1294 that dictated which furs could be worn by different ranking persons so only the nobility could use Ermine, sable and marten whilst the common folk had to make do with lambskin, rabbit and cat. This also extended to what type of fur could be used for edging and lining garments.



At this time the best furs came from northern and central Europe and the Hanseatic League with its network of towns around the Baltic Sea also controlled the export of furs



Albrecht Dürer Self Portrait 1500

ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY, POLITICS AND FASHION

- By Professor Jonathon Faiers – University of Southampton
- Report by Pat Cooke



from Russia. As a result, many of the European animal species were decimated, a fact echoed later in 1612 in the Hudson Bay area when beaver colonies were destroyed to satisfy the fashion for beaver hats in Europe.

Up to this point fur garments were still used in the main as a means of keeping warm being used primarily as linings though by the late Victorian period fur started to appear on the outside of garments in the form of tails used as edge trimming.



The new use of synthetic dyes made it possible to employ a variety of furs which would before have been despised - particularly rabbit, which under the name of cony (generally dyed cony), is now an important part of the fur industry. Marmot can be dyed to represent mink, and musquash to resemble sealskin. A whole new chapter of the fur industry was opened.

James Laver Taste and Fashion, 1948



Fur's journey from inner comfort to outer status symbol reached a peak in the 1930s, 40s and 50s when it became an acknowledgement of power and potential among Hollywood actors and icons. The priciest fur on the market was mink which took many animals to make a full-size coat and Jonathon showed a slide of the reverse side of a fur coat displaying the seaming of all the individual skins required to give the appearance of an outer continuous fur.

The desire for fur among the less wealthy and the new use of synthetic dyes made it possible for a variety of cheaper furs to be used so marmot could be dyed to represent mink and Musquash to look like sealskin which opened a new chapter in the fur industry.

Moving onto the 1960s and the realisation of the cruelty involved in killing animals purely for their coats meant that the wearing of fur became wrong in the eyes of many. This was not the first time that Anti-Fur protests had occurred, in 1894 Henry Salt, the writer, argued explicitly in favour of animal rights rather than just improvements to animal welfare. Whilst a lot of people agreed with these sentiments there was still a need to produce fur-like fabric with the same intrinsic qualities of warmth and luxury and around this time Borg, a company using a synthetic fibre called Orlon created fabrics which claimed to look more like fur than fur itself.

Much earlier in 1365BC a hat which looked like fur from the grave of a Bronze Age warrior found in Denmark was actually made of textile.



From the 1970s the campaign against wearing real fur had taken hold and animal activists were seen spraying paint onto the furs of wearers as well as generating poster campaigns depicting models trailing pools of blood in their wake.



If you don't want animals gassed, electrocuted, trapped or strangled, don't buy a fur coat.



By the 1990s fake fur had gained popularity and Calvin Klein in 1994 banned the use of real fur in his collections. He was followed over the next 20 years by many couturiers including Armani, Gucci and Westwood. Stella McCartney has been fur-free since launching her label in 2001.

Whilst the battle for the wearing of real fur had been slowly won it was inevitable that another battle, this time against the use of synthetic fibres used in fake fur was beginning. Slogans such as "Fake fur is plastic and harms oceans" and "Don't fake it, go real" led this backlash which was part of a much wider campaign against the use of synthetic fibres which are derived from petrochemicals which will not biodegrade and whose processing releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.



What animal activists won't tell you:

Fake fur is plastic.
Fake fur harms oceans.

Don't fake it. Go real.

FakeFurFacts.com

Humans are always likely to be attracted to and seduced by the tactile feel and warmth of fur. Whilst the opportunity can exist to refresh existing fur by remodelling or using them as linings the fur controversy, whether real or fake, is likely to continue until an ecologically friendly substitute 'fur' is found.



Re-Fashioning Our Second Skins:

HOW CAN DESIGN AND MAKING PRACTICES IN FASHION, RE-SHAPE OUR CLOTHING AND TEXTILES FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?

■ By Dr. Lisa Farouk Shawgi
 ■ Report by Liz Booty



Our talk was looking at the impact of leather on the environment looking at:

1. Its role in the fashion industry
2. Alternative replacements
3. Student experiments and
4. What IS sustainability

At present leather is one of the most sustainable fabrics BUT we know it has the second largest carbon footprint because 99% of leather used comes from animals slaughtered primarily for meat and dairy and 1% coming from exotic animals.

However, the journey to create a usable material involves a huge use of water in the processes between the raw material and the finished leather in a condition for use in a variety of ways.

Each skin or hide, after being cleaned in the Beamhouse, is usually 'scived' into



3 layers - the best quality being the top layer. The Tanning process is one of a number of procedures known as wet-end, before any final dressing is applied.

The quantities of water and chemicals that are used usually end up in the rivers polluting them. These chemicals can be toxic and harmful to the workers. So maybe again it is cattle v the environment.

We were then introduced to some companies who are close to being able to produce a substitute leather from natural materials. It was lovely to be able to handle samples of the 'leathers' produced.

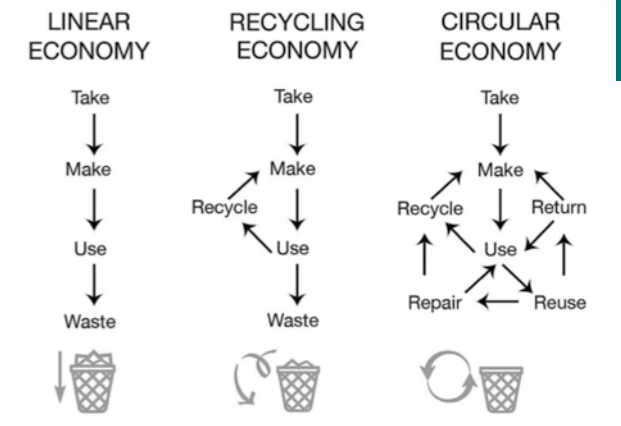
'Pinātex' which claims to be 95% renewable, having a natural look, being sustainable, using no hazardous chemicals and with a scalable process. It is made from: 72% pineapple leaf fibre, 18% Polylactic Acid, 5% Bro PU and 5% PU. It needs 480 leaves in order to create 1 square meter. At present it is quite stiff, a bit hairy and thick making really only possibly suitable for accessories. It has a carbon footprint that at present is not good with the Pina being exported to the Philippines then to Spain where it is made into 'textile' and then to London!

'Desserto' is being developed in Mexico using cacti plants otherwise known as prickly pears with the great advantage that these plants thrive in harsh, dry

environments. The 'textile' is created from the waste from plant material remaining from Tequila manufacturing. They market it as being tough - but tough to what?

We were able to handle samples of these first two but they seemed to be on the thick side and too stiff for clothing use but it is exciting that so much money and time is being put into trying to find alternatives.

'Mylo' is being developed from the mycelium found in fungi. It interested the developer - Dan Widnaier - who first looked at spiders' webs then at the root formation of mushrooms which he felt resembled the structure of leather. The advantage of the production method is that the fungi are grown on sawdust, and on a vertical farm incubation. Adidas have sampled it for the tongue on trainers, Stella McCartney experimented with 200 bags made from it and Lulumelon is trying it with yoga mats.



'VTT' also used mycelium but has a way of speeding up its production at present being able to make 3 metres in 1 minute. The aim is to make it 100% biodegradable - at present again different parts of the process being facilitated in different continents.

Obviously, if these fabrics are to be of real use they will need to be able to be manufactured from start to finish in one country.

It was exciting to hear that our young fashion students a De Montfort University are actively being encouraged to research and experiment with possible avenues to achieve this. Many Universities have courses now dedicated to sustainable fashion - there is a long way to go but hopefully...

At present, many questions have yet to be answered.

Sustainability goes with having to adapt - do we need so many clothes/shoes/bags? How can this be reduced - how/what can be re-cycled?

Is a circular economy the answer?

All sustainability needs to cover cradle to grave

Considerations to the makers and wearers - are they safe to manufacture and handle?

The planet - how much water is required? What finite resources are being used? Every stage of their production adds to the Co₂?

What about chemicals being used?

The economy - how can a profit be made - the bottom line. Without this is it possible?

Thank you for such a thought provoking and informative lecture.

Images Courtesy of Dr Lisa Farouk Shawgi

A Gift To WECS

By Angela Bailey

Soon after the New Year in 2023 an email arrived addressed to the 'Chair@WECS' address, out of the blue. It was from the widower of former member (and WECS Secretary) Margaret Trump. She had accumulated a range of historical and vintage costumes and accessories. I rang Mr (Lewis) Trump later in the month, not knowing what to expect, but he was definite that he wanted the items to come to WECS, to help with our funds. He knew they were interesting, and felt that we would know what to do with them. It seems Margaret gave talks about the items to various local groups, and lent them for 'am-dram' performances. Since her death many years before, several large boxes had been left in a corner of Mr Trump's dining room.

I had a chat with Shelley Tobin, who confirmed that she had met Mr Trump and that the items were not of interest to Killerton, so we drove to Mr Trump's house to pick them up.

The following week, Sarah Bartlett, Fiona Starkey and I opened up the boxes, bearing in mind that they had been left for many years in somewhat un-museum-like circumstances. Annie Rose also came round at a later date. There was a great deal to go through, and moth carcasses everywhere, but it was fascinating.

Two items stood out: a tiny but beautifully finished corset that was packed with a postcard of 'Tom Thumb's wedding'. This was delicately boned and decorated with lace. We instantly thought it might be of interest to Philip Warren of Costume Society fame: he was very positive, and

recommended that we contact Kerry Taylor Auctions to see if they might be interested in including it in a sale. I duly contacted them, and their Lucy invited me to visit their offices near Waterloo Station. So off I went! She was amused by the corset, (and the story) but said that it would not be of high enough value for them to auction (their lower limit is £200 hammer price). However, she telephoned Jenny Tiramani on the spot to ask if she might be interested in adding the item to the collection of the School of Historical Dress. The School is very nearby, so I visited Jenny straight away: she loved the corset (though not convinced it was ever near Mrs Tom Thumb) and contributed £100 to our funds towards our Jubilee party.

Meanwhile, I had shown Lucy at Kerry Taylor pictures of the other items in the trove, and she confirmed that they would be very interested to see a Victorian two-piece paisley dress labelled Mathew Charley, Belfast which was rather damaged and showing signs of wear to the boning inside the bodice. Rather surprised, I returned home and couriered the box to Lucy, who confirmed that KT would be willing to add it to their October auction sale. You can imagine our surprise and delight when the outfit achieved £440 (of which we received £325.52).

There were plenty of other items of interest, and we had to decide how to proceed. A Victorian parasol was gifted to Richard Ince of James Ince Umbrellas for his collection. A box of games and pastimes was offered to a museum in Avebury. Then Annie Rose had a brainwave: she contacted the Bath University drama group (BUST) to ask if they might be interested in the mid-century dresses for one of their productions. The answer was a resounding 'yes, please' and we received a donation for our funds, and Annie had an invitation to their production of 'A Gown for his Mistress'. A small box of handbags was looked at by Sarah Delves and she kindly offered to help us sell the 'interesting' ones. A lacemaking pillow sold for £20. Finally, Annie included the remaining items (including two black lace capes on our sales table at the Christmas meeting.

All in all, thanks to Mr Trump's generosity, we have added nearly £550 to our funds so far. It has been quite an adventure, but well worth the effort, not least in the fun of opening boxes that had remained untouched for such a long time. Talking of the boxes, they are now with Edward Green shoes, storing leather for their belt making range. Thank you, Margaret!



Silver Dress



Postcard of Tom Thumb's Wedding



Jenny with the tiny corset



Two Piece Paisley Dress - Bodice



Parasol Handle

Parasol

Historical Treasures of Gold & Silver Wire

By Patricia Cooke

In the Autumn of 2023 an exhibition at the Guildhall Art Gallery in the City of London celebrated the quatercentenary of the Worshipful Company of Gold and Silver Wire Drawers.

This exhibition contained a dazzling display of Ecclesiastical, Military and Coronation robes alongside jewellery, glassware and embroidery which was a real feast for the senses.

Wyre drawing is a very ancient trade where a bar, usually of gold and silver amalgam is drawn through a series of smaller and smaller holes in drawplates. It can be drawn to the width of a human hair. Secondly, flattened wire is spirally wrapped round a core of silk to produce various types of embroidery thread such as bullion and purl.

The Worshipful Company of Gold and Silver Wyre Drawers (Wyre was the original medieval spelling) was firmly established as a protected trade in London by the 15th Century. By the 16th Century their reputation and status were so high that they worked directly with King Henry VIII and accompanied him in 1520 to the famous tournament in France – The Field of the Cloth of Gold, so called after its many gold wire Pavilions.

The King's Book of Payments records a payment to John Burton, wiredrawer, for gold and embroidery for doublets as a gift to the French King.

The photos show examples of the many types of fine gold thread produced for embroidery along with a photo of the much heavier bullion thread used for military epaulettes.

Today, the Company continues to support the ancient wire trade of wiredrawing and provides awards for outstanding workmanship in the modern usage of gold and silver wire and thread. Two modern examples pictured below are the 1977 Silver Jubilee Cope which featured embroidery of London churches and took 36 embroiderers 6,015 hours to complete and an award winning vessel from the Goldsmith's Company.

It also supports the trade by sponsoring scholarships to the Royal School of Needlework, Glasgow School of Art, Hand and Lock, The Goldsmiths Company and Royal Ballet School.



Book Reviews



By Tracy Chevalier

It is 1932, and the losses of the First World War are still keenly felt. Violet Speedwell, mourning for both her fiancé and her brother and regarded by society as a 'surplus woman' unlikely to marry, resolves to escape her suffocating mother and strike out alone. A new life awaits her in Winchester. Violet falls in with the broderers, a disparate group of women charged with embroidering kneelers for the Cathedral, and is soon entwined in their lives and their secrets.



The Fabric of Civilization: How Textiles Made the World by Virginia Postrel

The story of humanity is the story of textiles - as old as civilization itself. Textiles created empires and powered invention. They established trade routes and drew nations' borders. Since the first thread was spun, fabric has driven technology, business, politics, and culture.

In The Fabric of Civilization, Virginia Postrel traces this surprising history, exposing the hidden ways textiles have made our world. The origins of chemistry lie in the colouring and finishing of cloth. The beginning of binary code, and perhaps all of mathematics, is found in weaving. Selective breeding to produce fibres heralded the birth of

agriculture. The belt drive came from silk production. So did microbiology. The textile business funded the Italian Renaissance and the Mughal Empire; it left us double-entry bookkeeping and letters of credit, the David and the Taj Mahal. From the Minoans who exported woollen cloth coloured with precious purple dye to Egypt, to the Romans who wore wildly expensive Chinese silk, the trade and production of textiles paved the economic and cultural crossroads of the ancient world. As much as spices or gold, the quest for fabrics and dyes drew sailors across strange seas, creating an ever-more connected global economy.

Synthesizing groundbreaking research from economics, archaeology, and anthropology, Postrel weaves a rich tapestry of human cultural development.

Editor's comment... I have just read this book on the recommendation of a friend. It was published in 2019 so isn't brand new but is absolutely fascinating – I loved the history of the textiles from ancient to very modern and was truly amazed at the number of industries which were directly affected by textiles and still are today. A thoroughly interesting read and very topical given our recent speakers on the subject of sustainability.

A visit to the “Fashion City” Exhibition

Museum of London, Docklands

■ By Ann Brown with quotes from the displays.

The exhibition “Fashion City” was of particular interest to me as my first job, in the early 60s, was at the London Hospital, where I lived for 3 years, in the Whitechapel Road, surrounded by the most fabulous Jewish bakeries, and many more fascinating shops and buildings where you could hear the clatter of sewing machines producing many of the garments for the High Street shops. So, in February I set off on the Docklands Light Railway to West India Quay and The Museum of London Docklands.

This exhibition is the story of Jewish Londoners and the Fashion City. The history of London’s fashion industry would be very different without the involvement of Jewish designers, makers and retailers. Jews have long been associated with the production of clothing. Of the around 100,000 Jewish migrants who came to London between 1881 and 1914, an estimated 60% found employment in the clothing or accessories trades. Their connection to London’s East End is well known, but these and subsequent generations also had significant influence in the West End. We are also reminded that through the 1600s and 1700s Jews in Britain were banned from working in certain

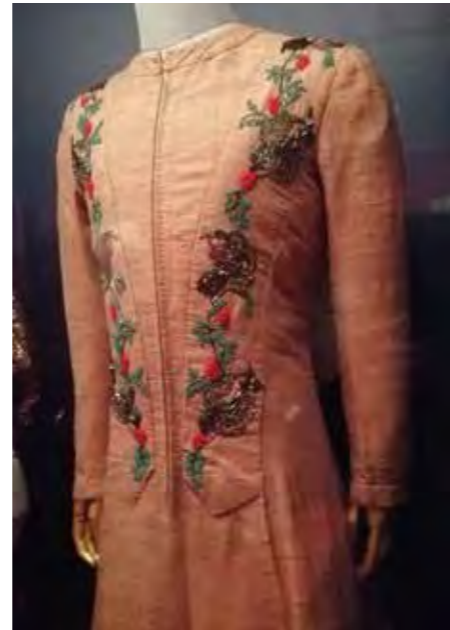


Trude Tausinger’s Bag

professions including medicine and law. This resulted in disproportionate numbers of Jewish people working in commerce, banking and the garment trades. Many worked as second-hand clothes dealers, sometimes growing their one-person businesses into shops or larger companies. Certain areas of London were made famous by these Jewish businesses, particularly the streets around Houndsditch and Petticoat Lane to the east of the city. By the 1800s the restrictions were slowly lifted but there remained many well established Jewish-owned businesses selling clothes and accessories to fashionable Londoners.

An example of one person who started his business working in the second-hand trade was Moses Moss (1830 – 1894) the founder of the company now known as Moss Bros. He started his business selling second hand clothes around 1860 near Kings Cross, sourcing stock from east London’s Houndsditch market and further afield. In 1881 he opened his shop, M Moss, in Covent Garden. Thirteen years later the business passed to his sons, Alfred and George, who renamed it Moss Bros in 1899.

A display area was dedicated to Sophie Rabin which gives an insight into the experience of being a Jewish Londoner in the garment trades in the early 1900s. The Jewish population of London’s East End was around 100,000 in 1914. Though many Jewish Eastenders experienced extreme poverty and hardship in the late 1800s a network of Jewish charities worked to support and stabilise the



Men’s Maxi Smoking Dress

community. By 1914 living conditions had improved for many and there were good job opportunities for young workers like Sophie.

Tailoring and dressmaking were not the only major garment trades in the East End. Many Jewish Londoners worked in the fur or leather trades, or the manufacture, sale or repair of shoes, boots, slippers, caps, corsets, umbrellas and other accessories. These trades were largely portable meaning that migrants could bring skills and tools with them to London and quickly find work. In the exhibition there were displays of shoes, bags and umbrellas from Jewish established companies. Rose shoes being one, established by Davis Rose (1892 – 1975) who founded a shop in Middlesex Street around



Dress Design for Princess Diana by Belville Sassoon



Cecil Gee Suit

1917. He lived upstairs with his wife Esther and her family. One of Esther’s sisters worked for him and the rest of the family worked in cap making. After the shop closed it was discovered that Mr Rose had hoarding tendencies and kept much old stock over five decades in business. It was believed that Rose catered to a colourful mix of East End customers who were described as “street boys or spivvy people who wanted a very flashy look to their feet!”

Bags and vanity cases were represented by a display of the company Molmax who, in the post war years, worked in collaboration with Harris Tweed and made vanity cases for Yardley, Helena Rubenstein and Elizabeth Arden.

A reconstruction of a passageway in the London Underground took visitors through from the East End to the West End. The opening of Oxford Circus underground station in 1900 made the grand department stores and bespoke dressmaking workshops of the West End more accessible to both workers and customers. The clothing businesses around the East End were primarily Jewish-owned until 1970s – 1980s, when some were purchased by Turkish, Greek and Cypriot migrants, who were previously employees. In turn many businesses were then purchased by Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi migrants in the 1980s.



Rose Shoes

Oxford Street and Regent Street’s evolution to high street shopping destinations started in the late 1920s. Jewish entrepreneurs were behind some of the earliest chain stores with names such as Marks & Spencer and Moss Bros becoming ubiquitous on British High Streets. Competition arose throughout the 20th century from innovative new retailers, who drew on London’s manufacturing and design knowledge to create on-trend garments at increasingly lower prices. The West End became home to many flagship stores which drew customers to the area creating a fashion destination. Couture copies of quality originals were represented by inexpensive copies of Parisian couture and Wallis was given as an example of this. Marks & Spencer moved their head office to London in 1924 and from the 1940s onward strengthened its position as a leader on the high street led by head designer Hans Scheider, a Jewish refugee from Vienna.

London’s couture industry established itself in 1930s Mayfair, following the influence of Paris. Typically dominated by wealthy well-connected individuals, this was the hardest segment of the industry to break into as a Jewish designer. Nonetheless each achieved the prestigious status of “couturier” in their own way. There were beautiful examples of cutting, beading and the construction of some of these garments, including a tailor’s table set out for a dress suit jacket.

Fame and success came to Jewish designers from Mick Jagger’s Mr Fish dress to Princess Diana’s Bellville Sassoon ball gowns. Cecil Gee’s Shaftesbury Avenue store was popular with the Beatles where they bought suits for more formal events. Letters of thanks from Princess Diana to David Sassoon were on display along with the coat he designed for her to wear when she was pregnant in November 1981, attending a function at London’s Guildhall. Other examples of trendy men’s shirts available from shops on Carnaby Street were on display together with a copy of the Man’s maxi smoking dress as worn by David Bowie.

No fashion show is complete without the finale of a wedding dress and this exhibition is no exception. One Jewish London designer was Netty Spiegel, who founded Neymar with her husband Jack in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Neymar were best remembered for their luxurious wedding occasion outfits. Netty was a Kindertransport child who lost most of her family in the Holocaust and became a beloved designer heading a successful business in fashionable Mayfair. Netty’s story reflects the



Molmax Vanity Case

possibilities presented by a career in fashion for a Jewish migrant. The first display in the exhibition is of a small case and precious bag brought over by Trude Tausinger when she fled Vienna in 1938 and the last is of a beautiful wedding dress designed by Netty Spiegel for Sara Railer in 1972 from her Mayfair studio.

A very moving and beautifully presented exhibition not only covering fashion but a taste of our close social history. It was well worth a visit but sadly closes on 14th April.



Sara Railer’s Wedding Dress by Netty Spiegel

Bunny's Trip to the Exhibition



**“INSPIRED:
THE ART
OF MAKING
HISTORICAL
FASHION”**

■ By Bunny Bush

As part of Calderdale's Year of Culture 2024 celebrations, this exhibition in Bankfield Museum, Halifax, showcases fashion makers from across the country who design and make clothing based on historical dress. It explores the process of taking a museum garment or fashion plate and reproducing an item of historically inspired dress that can be worn. Alongside such pieces there are costumes and textiles from the Museum's world class collection.

Set in its own grounds, Bankfield House, which now houses the Museum, is a substantial building built for Edward Akroyd, the grandson of James Akroyd, who founded the world's largest worsted manufacturing company. Akroyd lived there from 1837 to 1856 and, after his death in 1887, it was opened to the public.

Even more imposing are the steps leading up to the Museum itself where there is a welcome coffee shop alongside the book and souvenir shop. When I was there the walls were adorned with silk scarves of many colours.



On the lower floor is an interesting display of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment – costume, video with sound and lots and lots of reading material.

Climbing the beautiful dark oak stairs is an occasion in its own right as you pass the ornate carved lions, one placed perfectly atop each post.

The exhibition itself is spacious, easy to follow and flows beautifully with a separate room where there are videos showing the four makers whose work features in the exhibition. Seating allows you to enjoy watching them talking about their research and inspiration, sharing their individual visions of fashion, drafting their patterns and assembling and fitting the garments. My favourite was Tom Pye who was responsible for BBC's Gentlemen Jack* outfits (which are on show in the exhibition). There was even information about "dirtying up" the costumes to make them look worn and muddy and lived in.

A special treat was the area where you are able to try on outfits and hats. Fortunately this catered for adults as well as children. Who doesn't love trying on a period hat and frock!

The exhibition runs until Saturday 21st December 2024 and is open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10am-4pm.

Entry is Freeeee!

*Shibden Hall, former home of Gentleman Jack, is less than a mile and a half from Bankfield Museum.



Colour Revolution Exhibition

Ashmolean Museum – Oxford. 21st Sept 23 – 18th Feb 24

■ By Patricia Cooke

The explosion of colour in the second half of the Victorian period owed its existence to the accidental discovery by a young student William Henry Perkin. In 1856, whilst working at London's Royal College of Chemistry, attempting to create artificial quinine to treat malaria, he produced a vivid violet dye from coal tar, a waste product of the British coal gas industry.

Prior to this find textiles had been coloured with natural dyes made from plants such as madder and walnut, insects (cochineal) and minerals (lazurite). As these had to be imported from Asia, Africa and South America and were therefore expensive, coloured clothes were only worn by the wealthy in Society.

Perkin was astute enough to see the commercial viability of his synthetic purple discovery and initially named it 'Tyrian purple' in order to give it market appeal. The original murex purple dye had been extremely expensive and had been subject to sumptuary laws in the Roman and medieval periods. He later changed the name to 'mauveine' in homage to Parisian haute couture as Empress Eugenie of France often wore this colour.

Following Perkin's discovery of this vibrant, deep mauve, which was much brighter and bolder than the natural dyes currently used, by August 1859 London Society had succumbed to 'Mauve measles' according to the satirical magazine Punch.

Other chemists followed suit with more colourfast aniline dyes producing such shades as Britannia violet, fuchsine, red magenta, China blue and aniline yellow, the first Azo dye. The bulk commercial production of these enabled manufacturers to produce consistent colour in large quantities meaning that brightly coloured clothing became more affordable for the masses. This caused the collapse of the market for natural dyes.

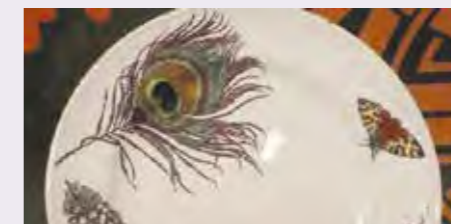


Synthetic dye samples, the Berlin Aniline Co, wool, card, c.1900 © History of Science Museum, University of Oxford

However, this explosion of colour resulted in many animals and insects being exploited for the use of ever more colourful and exotic fashion accessories. A tiara gifted by the Portuguese Ambassador to the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, contained the iridescent bodies of 46 South American weevils. Hundreds of thousands of hummingbird skins were shipped into the country each week and Trafalgar Square held weekly markets selling parrots for their feathers. One writer recalled that in 1902, over 1600 packages of heron plumes were sold at just one London auction house to decorate hats.

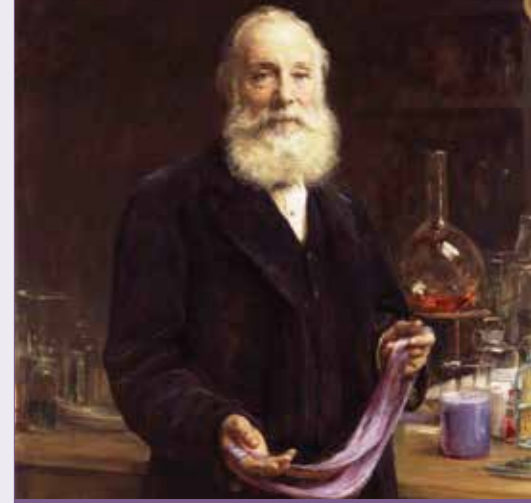
Women were usually deemed to be the 'unofficial' perpetrators of this, though later in the century women began to organise political action groups to speak out against this 'murderous millinery'. Two groups, The Plumage League and The Fur, Feather and Fin folk, combined to form the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in 1889.

It was not just fashion items that were lured by the exotic and colourful; household items such as pottery and china used these tropical images to transform the home environment.



Although it had been British and French scientists pioneering the development of aniline dyes, it was Germany and Switzerland who rapidly came to dominate the new synthetic dye industry. By 1914, the range of basic synthetic colours ran into hundreds thought at that time to be 'sufficiently comprehensive for all purposes'. Today the number of colours available runs into the thousands. This earlier synthetic dye industry spawned the development of the modern pharmaceutical industries.

Although Perkin's find was useless for malaria it did lead to the discovery of many coal tar derivatives still used today including paracetamol and saccharine.



William Henry Perkin



Parure of Tiara, Necklace and Earrings made of dried South American Weevils – on loan from the British Museum

Jute Manufacture in Dundee

Jute Museum, Verdant Works, West Henderson's Wynd, Dundee, DD1 5BT

By Vivien Isbister

Dundee was once famous worldwide for the production of Jute. During the 19th century the town was the main source of Jute manufacture, employing a large number of people on low wages though the mill owners lived a life of luxury. The town became known as 'Juteopolis'.

Dundee had already been producing textiles. The larger Mills dominated the skyline with an aroma of jute smelt all over the city. At one time there were sixty jute mills in the centre of the town employing some 40,000 people.

The Verdant Works was built in 1833. It was still surrounded by green fields hence the name. Flax and linen were originally produced there, later Jute. The Dundee Heritage Trust bought the mill in 1991 opening it as a museum in 1996.

A knowledgeable volunteer guide gave a tour of the mill, explaining the process of manufacturing jute. Being a natural versatile fibre native to the Bengal area of India, now Bangladesh, the raw material arrived on ships in large tightly packed bales which felt as hard as wood and weighed approximately 400lbs.

Whale oil was used to soften the fibres before a further nine processes to reach the end product so that it could be woven into a strong and durable fabric.

Its uses include interfacing of jackets and boots as well as rope, sacking, sailcloth, backing for lino and horse covers.

We were shown woven samples of various grades from an open to close weave.

By 1864 three steam engines drove the 70 power looms and 2,800 spindles to prepare and spin the jute. Weaving the jute was done in a weaving shed nearby. Some of the machinery is still in the museum and is operational for demonstration purposes.

Women and children generally worked in the Jute mills as they were cheaper to employ and their fingers were more nimble than men's. Working a 50-60 hour week was normal. The term 'Mill Fever' was adopted as working in the Jute mills caused many health hazards due to the dust from the fibres and noise of the machines. Hearing loss was common amongst the workers as there was no ear protection then, workers communicating by sign language.

By 1869 the production of jute at this mill had almost ceased. The mill came under new ownership during 1900 when the works changed over to the recycling of Jute waste and scrap metal.

Jute production is now centred on Calcutta as it is cheaper to process

Early Weaving Loom



the jute there, being closer to the production of the plant based raw material and with lower labour costs.

Mills in Dundee became redundant and many were demolished during the middle and late twentieth century. However, some redundant mill buildings can still be seen when walking around the city today. Some are now residential while others are used for other businesses such as Hotels and restaurants.



Sorting Jute Bales ready for processing

The Crown Pre-Auction Exhibition

By Pat Cooke



Replica Gold Coach



Room Set



Held at Bonhams, New Bond Street, this exhibition, on display three weeks prior to the auction taking place, was a magnificent example of the attention to detail and the enormous budget required for the making of the Netflix series The Crown.

Spread over six series with a total of 60 episodes televised between 2016 and 2023 The Crown charted the reign of Queen Elizabeth II and the political and personal events that shaped her reign.

Within the exhibition there was a full size, faithfully reproduced, replica of the Gold State Coach which carried the Queen to her 1953 Coronation and which was expected to fetch between £30,000 - £50,000. Also going under the hammer were many of the costumes made for the main characters. Around 350 costumes were made for Season 1 alone, on top of dressing nearly 7,000 extras.

In addition, there were entire room settings with furniture, china, accessories and portraits, all of which went to live auction on Wednesday 7th February. The portraits hung around the different room settings portrayed the actors playing the characters which added a certain authenticity to the filming.

Video screens on various floors showed interviews with the set designers, costume and model makers alongside the different actors who portrayed the Royal family members at different stages of their lives, Dominic West (Prince Charles) and Elizabeth Debicki (Diana, Princess of Wales) among them.

Fashion drawings, 3D models in wood and cards with room settings and set layouts were also included in the items to be auctioned.

The live and on-line auction of 473 lots made more than £1,674,000 against an estimate of £525,000. Some of the proceeds will go towards funding 20 years of bursaries and specialist training at the National Film and Television School based in Beaconsfield, Bucks, who were involved in making some of the models used in the series.



Tartan Exhibition at V&A Dundee 2023

By Vivien Isbister

I had an opportunity to visit this exhibition during the autumn of 2023 along with my husband who incidentally enjoyed the exhibition too. A fascinating exhibition which gave an insight into the production of tartan fabrics with a wide range of costumes displayed from earlier centuries to the present day. It gave the viewer a perception of how popular the fabric was in past centuries as it is today.

The exhibition started off with detailed information that showed the spinning of the thread, design work and weaving of the material. The design is a grid pattern originally woven in wool but now synthetic fibres are used too. Three or more colours are used to weave the final design.

The fabric is water resistant so making it ideal for outerwear. It is also used to make a variety of clothing such as dresses, trousers, fashion accessories and furnishing fabrics. The exhibition also showed items of china and other small items with the Tartan influence.

Before mechanization in the 19th century weaving was done on hand looms. Colour use was limited as only natural dyes were available. This also meant that repeat dyes could not give an exact colour match. During the 18th century fabrics were woven with 'worsted wool' which made the finished fabric a tighter finish. The wool used today gives a completely different quality to the finished fabric.



All Alexander McQueen. From left, Dress wool and silk, 2006 From the 'Widows of Culloden' theme. Sleeveless top, wool, synthetic from the 'Highland Rape' theme 1995.

Dress, wool, 'Joan' dedicated to Catholic Martyr's Mary Queen of Scots and Joan of Arc



Japanese, dress with shoes.



Early Victorian tartan dress, boots and shawls. All part of the Balmoralisation effect.



Three modern tartan costumes. From left, Tartan spangled jumpsuit by Violet Chacki, with matching gloves and baseball cap. USA, 2015. Teddy boy suit 2018 wool and cotton. By Charles Jeffrey, a Loch carrion weaver, London. Child's Suit 2013, silk, by Belgium designer Caroline Bosmans.



Tartan Wedding dress. About 1755, wool. Unknown maker. 'There are few examples of women's costumes which survive before 1800'

By the mid-19th century manufacturers were weaving the cloth both in wool and silk. Silk was popular with the well-off clientele for use in ladies' fashionable costume.

Scotland's association with tartan goes back many years. Originally worn as Highland dress, the Scottish military 'adopted' it for their uniform in the 1700s.

Clan tartans with named patterns became popular in the early 19th century. During this time the military wore Dress Tartan at evening functions. Several portraits showed Clan Chieftains wearing their 'Highland Dress'.

In 1713 'Antique Roman' patriotic dress was adopted by the Royal Company of Archers, it being the first unit to include tartan in their uniform. The idea of furnishing fabrics in the 1930s was inspired from the uniform fabric.

When in 1848 Queen Victoria bought the lease of Balmoral Castle she and her husband Prince Albert decorated the interiors with tartan. The Queen and Prince Albert wore a form of Highland fancy dress. They even dressed their staff in tartan! This became known as Balmoralisation! The Royal family continue to wear traditional tartan clothing especially when in Scotland. I believe the interiors of Balmoral Castle are still 'dressed' with tartan.

A small selection of utility clothing explained that fabric and clothing was rationed in the 'Utility Clothing Scheme' set up in 1941 during WW2. The scheme aimed to set a fair controlled price. Manufacturers producing clothing were required to be less wasteful and more efficient in their production, the scheme continued for a few years after the war.

Tartan has been in and out of fashion throughout the years. Present day fashion designers have incorporated tartan in their catwalk shows. Some of their clothes were on display such as Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen and Dior as well as the Japanese designer Yohji Yamamoto and Zandra Rhodes.



Fragment of Old Tartan 1700 - 1750



1713 'Antique Roman' patriotic dress as worn by the Royal company of archers

Tartan, or the equivalent material, is also worn by other cultures. A Shuka blanket is worn by the Maasai people of East Africa. 'Shuka' cloth has a distinctive check pattern with colours generally in bright reds, blues and purples.

The Exhibition included a film with actors portraying Scottish soldiers wearing tartan kilts through the ages. During WW1 the frontline troops in the Scottish regiments wore kilts with no undergarments even while serving in the trenches in winter conditions.

The Exhibition demonstrated how far tartan fabric has evolved since earlier centuries when it was a rough hand-woven cloth. Today it is manufactured in a variety of colourways in wool, silk, and synthetic materials. Apart from traditional clothing, fashion designers worldwide have, with their imagination and skill, manipulated the fabric into more stylised contemporary garments for today's fashion conscious clientele.

It has recently been in the news that the oldest known tartan fabric, apparently some 500 years old and which had been found in a peat bog in the Highlands of Scotland about forty years ago, has been reproduced.

Vivienne Westwood 1993 from her Anglomania collection. Suit with jacket, wool coat, kilt and trows.



“Threads through Creation”

AN EXHIBITION OF WORK BY JACQUI PARKINSON

At Wells Cathedral

By Ann Brown

In November there was a spectacular Exhibition of 12 large panels of stitched and appliquéd fabric inspired by the first pages of the bible. Jacqui Parkinson completed it in 2021, involving nearly three years' work, requiring miles of black thread and eight million stitches or so she says! There are many miles of strips in a wide variety of materials used in the most imaginative way. Each panel gives the quote from the bible and Jacqui's explanation of how she interprets the quote. On close inspection a lot of the work is machine stitched but some of the applique looks as if it is hand stitched.

Look out for this exhibition at Leominster Priory 5th June – 21st July 2024 and Sherbourne Abbey 24th July – 8th September 2024.

Really recommend it.



Vyshyvanka: UKRAINE'S SPIRIT OF RESISTANCE

By Jill Hazell

Colourful embroidered Ukrainian costumes were a feature of an event called Ukraine's Spirit of Resistance which I recently attended in a large church in Bristol. It had proved so popular that by the time it started there was standing room only. Many of the audience were themselves Ukrainian refugees, others were from the host community and all wanted to support Ukraine and help raise funds for Ukrainian charities.



When the war started two years ago, the Ukrainian organisers had felt compelled to make a positive difference by doing something uplifting and purposeful for their country. They decided to create an event which would involve Ukrainian refugees and showcase to the British public an iconic aspect of Ukrainian culture, the art of the embroidered shirt, the Vyshyvanka.

For hundreds of years Vyshyvankas have been a potent symbol of Ukrainian identity both in Tsarist times and more recently as a symbol of resistance during the Soviet regime. The organisers say that today when their aggressors are trying to deny their very existence as a nation and their identity is being attacked by the looting of museums and the stealing of national treasures, promoting the Vyshyvanka is one way of asserting their identity and fighting back.

The event kindled such interest amongst the Ukrainian refugees who were invited to take part that many have now brought over the precious

Vyshyvanka heirlooms of their great grandparents. Others had brought their own when they escaped and a few have made and embroidered new ones using skills handed down through the generations. Each design is different according to the region but almost everyone (both men and women) still wears one on special occasions.

The event was run like a fashion show catwalk complete with music from Ukraine's national instrument, the bandura, and folk songs by the Kozachy Ensemble, though unlike a regular fashion show, some of the commentary had many in the audience in tears as the Ukrainian compere told of the bravery and overwhelming loss of many of the women who were modelling the clothes. Some had stories of incredible courage – one had escaped through Russian occupied territories, terrified as she drove her car for days on end, helped over the phone by her Ukrainian soldier son telling her how to avoid the areas where the Russians were dug in. Another woman came with her small daughter who was carrying a toy dog. It represents the small terriers who have become national heroes in Ukraine as they have been trained to sniff out land mines. The little girl carries her toy everywhere - a reminder that her father



lost a leg when he trod on a mine before they had dogs on the battlefield. The toy dog wore his own tiny embroidered Vyshyvanka.

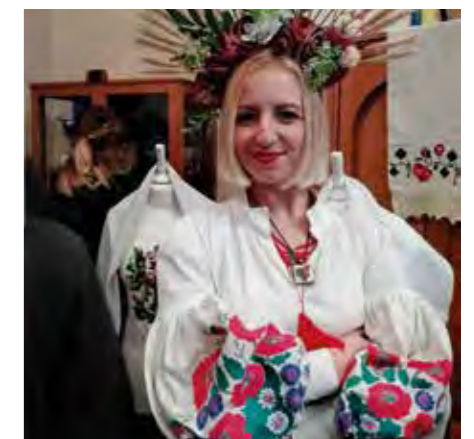
All the women had led perfectly normal lives before the war and while the men are still in the army back in Ukraine, the women have settled into life and work here in the UK. However, many are planning to go back to Ukraine and help rebuild the country once the war is won.

Meanwhile, the models kept coming – each one completing their outfit with an embroidered Ukrainian skirt, belt and exquisite headdress.

The show finished with several contemporary Vyshyvanka shirts still made in Ukraine for both the home market (as worn on special occasions by both President and Mrs Zelensky) and for export.

Finally, the Kozachky Ensemble sang a Prayer for Ukraine, the spiritual anthem of the country and some of the girls brought round huge loaves of Palyanytsya, a delicious sweet bread made from the wheat grown in 'the bread basket of Europe'.

If you hear of a repeat of the show near you, I can't recommend it highly enough.



**Is your passion for fashion?
Could you stand at the rostrum and talk about costume?**



Is there a fashion or costume related topic that's close to your heart? Perhaps a hobby or job that you have a lot of knowledge and experience of?

Could you give an engaging **fifteen minute** illustrated talk or demonstration about it? After all if it interests you it's very likely to interest the other members of WECS too!!

If you think you'd like to give this a go please get in contact with me, stating what the topic is and how you'd approach it.

For example:

Conduct a talk with a PowerPoint presentation and / or props and examples relevant to the subject. Or give a demonstration, or 'have a go' workshop.

It could make a super WECS meeting event, and it would be such a helpful resource should a scheduled speaker pull out at the last minute too.

**Contact Andrea Bartlett at:
programmesec@wofecostumesociety.org**



WEC'S Members Sale Table

Summer is coming, time for a declutter...!!

We now have a members' sale table and items would be very welcome.

If you have anything you would like to donate, to help us raise funds, please bring them to the Janet Arnold Study Day on 5th October 2024..

contact Annie
annierose9@gmail.com

if you have any queries.

Keep Wardrobe Full!

Do let me know what wonderful exhibitions 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 edition of Wardrobe to Caroline Bartlett by 26th July please

editor@wofecostumesociety.org

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