

History Wardrobe

Newsletter Autumn 2011

Dear All,

Summer may be over before it even began, but Autumn & Winter are wonderful seasons for theatre visits, bookshop buying sprees and top television costume dramas. No excuse for not getting healthy doses of history! I hope you enjoy the latest instalment of History Wardrobe news, and, for the first time, you'll be able to share *your* costume memories with our new survey 'My Life in Clothes'. Read on!

- Lucy Adlington

The Royal Wedding



No this isn't Kate & Pippa Middleton, but myself and Merry in *our* wedding finery, enjoying a busy season of **Story of the White Wedding**, a rush of bookings no doubt inspired by the Royal Wedding. (I'd like to get 'smug points' for predicting a Grace Kelly inspired dress for the Royal bride.) Wasn't the whole event just lovely? But I can't help preferring the delightful donations of non-Royal bridal gowns and the 'everyday' wedding stories told us by History Wardrobe fans.

Where possible we display donated wedding dresses with pictures of the brides who wore them. Recent donations to the collection include a beautiful 1930s wedgewood blue lace dress, and a 1940s silk dress, dyed grey and decorated with pink ribbons after the ceremony.

A Royal Audience

Talking of royals, History Wardrobe had the honour of appearing before HRH Princess Anne recently for a Townswomen's Guild "Women of Vision" event. We asked if HRH had any old clothes to donate. She said she'd lost track of what's shoved in the attic... apparently she's a hoarder. She was also very elegantly dressed, in a chic dark-green suit.

TITANIC Maiden Voyage!



While Sir Cosmo checks they haven't missed the sailing, Lady Lucy Duff Gordon reads about amenities on board *RMS Titanic* in her White Star Line guide to the luxury liner.

Researching for **Titanic - Costumes of the Gilded Age** has been a fascinating, absorbing and often moving experience. So many stories clamour for attention; so many details crowd the imagination. We've chosen the Duff Gordon group as our focus in the presentation, following the dramatic events of *Titanic's* maiden voyage and beyond.

2012 is, of course, the centenary of the tragedy, so keep an eye on our online events diary for performances near you. www.historywardrobe.com/events



Look closely and you'll spot me in Land Army gear, presenting **Wartime Wedding** at the Museum of Flight near Edinburgh... and look at the exciting backdrop... Concorde! (photo copyright National Museums of Scotland)

My Life in Clothes

Over the last ten years History Wardrobe has amassed a modest but marvellous collection of costume spanning nearly 200 years. We've also had the pleasure of meeting literally thousands of people interested in social history, family history and fashion history. What better way to combine these passions than with a brand new, unique oral history of clothes?



Marjorie Taylor looking lovely in a black and white 50s dress... with a wild red and yellow lining!

I'm currently writing the first draft of **My Life in Clothes**, and the best bit about this non-fiction book is that YOU can contribute!

This spring I ran a pilot survey asking History Wardrobe fans to jot down their own memories of clothes. I've also been interviewing ladies to find out more.



Film maker Joan Hackney on her 1940s wedding day

The replies have been intriguing, amusing, even moving... and the photographs have been fantastic.

So please look out for the official launch of the **My Life in Clothes** survey, which will come to you via email, or on the website, or you can request a paper copy to be mailed straight to you.



New Acquisitions

Once again I'm delighted to announce that we've acquired far too many lovely new things to show in one newsletter - gowns, hats, shoes, magazines, trimmings and photos.

Huge thanks to everyone who has kindly donated items previously squirrelled away in drawers, attics and trunks - particularly those that come with photographs or personal details. I'm busy acquiring items for proposed new talks including a stunning nurse's outfit from c. 1916, complete with collars, cuffs, aprons, photos and a catalogue of alarming contraceptive devices. This will be carefully kept until 2013 and the launch of the new presentation **Women in the Great War**.

Do send copies of family photos and histories for this period if you have them!

In addition to humble clothes for everyday wear, we now boast a lovely painted silk Hardy Amies frock, and a sturdy brown wool Christian Dior dress. A Biba dress for **Fifty Years of Fashion** is proving more elusive... and we'd definitely love some hotpants!

Here's a sneak preview of some new items...



WWI nurse's uniform



1950s blue lace dress & jacket



1820s linen chemise



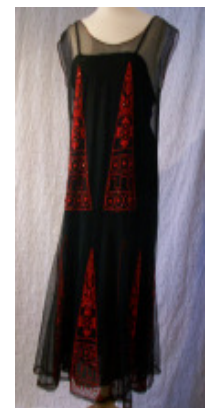
1940s wooden-soled shoes



1930s blue lame evening dress



1920s red silk day dress



1920s beaded 'flapper' dress

Art History Mystery



Portrait of a Lady at Wallington

Wallington House in Northumberland is a beautiful National Trust property in possession of a unique painting that can claim to be the work of not one but two of England's greatest artists.

After months of painstaking research and old-fashioned detective work, it's now revealed that Sir Joshua Reynolds reworked a classic masterpiece from the brush of his rival Thomas Gainsborough.

Family legend at this National Trust property has it that Reynolds had overpainted Gainsborough's original 1761 painting of Susanna 'Suky' Trevelyan. Cutting edge scientific techniques have shown that the myth is fact.

History Wardrobe have performed many events at Wallington over the years, so it was a real joy to be invited to the house to celebrate the unveiling of Suky's picture with performances of **Portrait of a Lady**, which, by charming coincidence, looks at the rival style inspirations of Reynolds and Gainsborough.

Costume aficionados won't admire Reynolds for the fact he didn't even bother painting an original dress when he updated Suky - he simply made a near-exact copy from another painting. That said, the gown is a fairy-tale white and gold satin creation.



If you're in Northumberland we strongly recommend a visit to Wallington to admire Suky in all her finery. You'll also be amazed at the beautiful Pre-Raphaelite style central hall with paintings by William Bell Scott

Wallington, Cambo, NE61 4AR tel. 01670 773600

Titanic Books

Many thanks to everyone who has written in with fascinating snippets of information about the Titanic. We've met several descendants of survivors, including the charming Mr Philip Littlejohn, whose Grandfather Alexander Littlejohn was a first class steward onboard *RMS Titanic*. Philip joined director James Cameron's team to dive down to the wreck site:

"It is quite challenging diving two and a half miles (over 3000 metres) below the Atlantic with no connection to the surface. The Mir can only hold two passengers and a pilot. It is very similar to a journey into space though fewer people have dived to the Titanic than gone into space and I am the only relative. I am often asked how I felt and I found it a deeply moving experience. I think if it had been my grandfather's final resting place I would have felt differently."



Alexander Littlejohn, before the tragedy

Philip's excellent book, "**Titanic, Waiting for Orders**" is available from amazon.



Another book we heartily recommend is hot off the press this month and written by a curator at one of History Wardrobe's favourite costume collections - at Chertsey Museum, near Windsor.

Grace Evans has teamed with Moonrise Press to create

"**Titanic Style - Dress and Fashion on the Voyage**".

She describes the styles, fabrics and manufacture of Edwardian clothing as worn on the *Titanic*, from the finery of first class to the costumes of the second and third class passengers, as well as the vast army of crew and staff who looked after them.

It's an absorbing read for anyone with an interest in Edwardian social history, or if you want to gain a fuller picture of life onboard *Titanic*. A very interesting, well-researched and well-written book with lovely costume images. I'll be bringing copies to History Wardrobe talks for you to snap up...

www.chertseymuseum.org.uk/

www.moonrisepress.co.uk

New Talks

Following the successful launch of the presentation **Titanic** this year I'm pleased to announce that History Wardrobe will launch two new talks in 2012.

One will be lively readings from Jane Austen's novels, entitled **Ladies of a Certain Age**.

The main new talk of 2012 is to be **Agatha Christie & Art Deco**.

You'll have to wait till 2013 for **Women in the Great War** - a moving account of the many roles and experiences of English women during WW1 - nurses, mothers, farm workers, actresses, munitionettes, and even footballers!



New Faces



In addition to the sterling work of Gary Goldthorpe and the delightful Lucy Ridley, History Wardrobe welcomes Meridith Towne to the team.

Merry is an archaeology graduate with a keen interest in Edwardian fashion and costume in general. She's studied at the Northern College of Costume and enjoys wearing 50s fashion for jive dancing. She's pictured here on stage for **Votes for Women** not long after being presented to HRH the Princess Royal.

And here is the Other Lucy - Lucy Ridley - looking rather gorgeous for **Fabulous Fifties**. Lucy also runs super history workshops as part of her own theatre company **Shy Bairns**, including a great Victorian Wash Day workshop.



<http://www.shybairnstheatre.blogspot.com/>

Costume Exhibitions

Vivienne Westwood has had an amazing collection of shoes on display at the Bowes Museum, near Richmond (N.Yorks) - fantastic to look at but I think I'll stick to my flats.

We recently enjoyed a visit to the **Fashion Museum** in Bath & loved the way the collection is displayed, with a 'behind the scenes' gallery and some really exciting 20th Century exhibits.

Further afield, I was lucky to survive the crush at the **Alexander McQueen** exhibition 'Savage Beauty' at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Quite possibly the most impressive, imaginative and magical exhibition I have ever seen.

Scotland boasted one of the sunniest days in living memory for an outdoor performance of **Wartime Wedding** as part of a Home Front Day linking in with a super exhibition on Land Army Girls and Lumber Jills at the National Museum of Costume displayed at **Shambellie House** near Dumfries... surely one of Scotland's best kept secrets.

History Wardrobe 2012 Presentations

Portrait of a Lady
Oh My Poor Nerves!
Ladies of a Certain Age
Florence Nightingale - Respectable Rebel
Votes for Women!
Titanic
Agatha Christie & Art Deco
Wartime Wedding
Fabulous Fifties
Fifty Years of Fashion 1940 - 1990
Story of the White Wedding

Contact History Wardrobe

For details of all talks, information on bookings or enquiries about costume history

www.historywardrobe.com
lucyadlington@hotmail.com
(01904) 620805