

DATS

Dress and Textile Specialists



Spring Journal
April 2009

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Front cover image:
18th century embroidered pockets from *The Art of Embroidery*, Bankfield Museum, Halifax.

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STUDY VISIT FREE TO DATS MEMBERS**BEHIND CLOSED DOORS****Monday 18th May, 10.00 - 4.00**

A chance to study in detail some of the rich examples of 18th century mens and womens costume from the Charles Wade Costume Collection at Berrington Hall followed by a trip to see the costume at the recently opened Museum Resource and Learning Centre in Hereford.

You will need your own transport.

For further information and details contact Althea Mackenzie - details below.

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Autumn Conference 2008

The 2008 DATS conference was held in Birmingham on the 27th and 28th of November. Day one was held in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and the theme was "Access to Stored Collections". At lunchtime delegates had the opportunity to visit the wonderful "Holy Grail Tapestries" designed by Edward Burne-Jones, William Morris and John Henry Dearle, the display of which coincided with the conference.

Day two was held in the Museum Collections Centre just outside the city centre and the theme was "Identification of materials", with illustrated talks and related handling and identification sessions. Delegates were then taken on a tour of the Collections Centre, justifiably considered one of the best such centres in the U.K.

Access to Birmingham's Collections – 'Indiana Jones Meets Ikea'

Jeremy Ross, Manager, Museum Collections Centre, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

Access to reserve or stored collections have long been the topic of discussion in British museums and national publications, like the Museums Journal and Museums Heritage. Today you only have to look at the number of advertisements for museum storage to realise that many organisations are entering a new phase of higher profile access, as well as long over due improvements in their collections storage that have in many instances been subject to neglect. It could be considered that ultimately, heritage assets have little value unless they are intellectually or physically accessible. This is a point I have strongly believed in since starting as a museum professional.

On 27th November 2008 I was asked to talk about the work of Birmingham's Museum Collections Centre (MCC) to the Dress and Textiles Specialists Conference at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, prior to their visit to the site the next day.

Background to the improvements

Birmingham's central museum buildings, dating from 1885 and 1912, provided little or no accommodation for stored collections when not on display. Over many years, offices and basement areas were adapted to house some collections, whilst others were held in a range of council owned and leased buildings.

By the mid 1990's, despite an ever increasing demand, the location, overcrowded conditions, lack of study facilities and staffing limitations made it virtually impossible to provide a good level of access commensurate with the museum's commitment to the provision of public access to its stored collections. This position was rapidly becoming desperate as many of the buildings deteriorated and became unsuitable for either collections care or public access.

In 1997 the closure of Birmingham's Museum of Science and Industry in Newhall Street, and the relocation of only a small percentage of this designated collection to

Thinktank at Millennium Point, meant that storage had now become an urgent priority, requiring a 'radical' solution.

Birmingham finds a new site

In 2002 Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG) was able to acquire a large warehouse facility, formally used as a goods depot by the Council's Central Supplies Organisation, as well as a training venue and home to Social Services and Education departments.

The site located in the Nechells area of the city, was approximately 3 kilometres from the main museum. The site provided ample parking and was within walking distance of a railway station, only a five-minute ride from the centre of Birmingham.

However, the first problem identified, was that even though the warehouse offered 3,000m² of narrow aisle racking and some floor space, with an additional office area and small extension, this was too small for the displaced Science and Industry collections. Following a full survey of the site a multi-million pound project was tendered to build a large extension and adapt the office area for object storage. The design was altered several times, when it was highlighted that cars, traction engines and large machinery would not fit into extra racking. The extension eventually became a three-storey build.

Today the Museum Collections Centre provides 9,500m² of storage space across a four-hectare site, with over 10 kilometres of racking, if laid end-to-end. The addition of 500 mesh fronted visible storage units provide visitors with access to a selection of the smaller objects, and this helps illustrate that the site is home to considerably more than just the larger objects from the Science and Industry collection. For the past six years the staff from Birmingham's museum service has facilitated the movement of over half-a-million objects to this growing Centre. Objects can be seen from Archaeology collections, Decorative and Applied Art (including costume and textiles), Ethnographic collections, Birmingham History and Natural Sciences.

In 2008 we piloted several special events, including 'Big Picture', a day for photographers to visit the MCC and take unusual digital images of the objects. All images submitted were uploaded to the 'Big Picture' website and entered into a competition, with prizes from Jessops and the winning images displayed at our next open day event. In October we repeated this event for 'Big Draw', this time focusing on drawing and painting skills, with resident artists available to offer advice.

Future Developments

This year's open days will include more for families to see and do. The May event will include a miniature steam railway, heritage vehicle clubs, a recycled sculpture built by an artist working with visitors on the day, and a 'Plastics for Collectors' workshop. Our August event will focus on providing a 'Family Summer Fete', weather permitting.

We already facilitate the provision of the School Loans Service to many schools around the West Midlands, as well as providing Inset training sessions for teaching staff. We hope to extend the use of the loans service by encouraging families and youth groups such as Scouts, Guides and Brownies to use this service during school holidays.



The MCC's Legacy

The MCC has established public expectation, which we now have to sustain. The centre provides a fit-for-purpose storage facility for thousands of objects for many years to come and is regarded as one of the leading public access orientated Museum Collections Centres in the country, a proud achievement for all of the dedicated staff involved on this project.

For further information about Birmingham's Museum Collections Centre contact Jeremy Ross at Birmingham Museums Service on 0121 303 1657. E-mail: jeremy.ross@birmingham.gov.uk or visit us on one of our Open Days on Monday 4th May and Sunday 23rd August.

TEXTILE COLLECTIONS HELD BY EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL MUSEUMS SERVICE & THE LOOM ROOM AT THE DICK INSTITUTE, KILMARNOCK

Bruce Morgan & Linda Fairlie, Museums Officers, East Ayrshire Council

East Ayrshire Council Arts & Museums Service comprises of six museums, each holding textile related material. We thought that it would be useful to put the textile collections into context in relation to the buildings within our care and the geographical part of Scotland in which they are situated. East Ayrshire is a largely rural area with one major industrial town – Kilmarnock which has a long history of diverse textile manufacture. Most of the smaller towns and villages within the area also have their own distinctive textile heritage. Textile production has taken place in factories and as a cottage based activity. The fibres used and products created throughout the centuries have been varied and the stories associated with them stretch back to mediaeval times and beyond. The earliest evidence for the production of textiles locally, dates to the late Iron Age or Roman period and takes the form of loom weights, spindle whorls and a weaving comb.

Our textile collections are distributed across the museums within the service. They reflect Ayrshire's textile production heritage unevenly, with areas of strength such as machine made lace and areas of weakness such as woollen bonnets i.e. 'the Kilmarnock Bonnet'.

Dean Castle in Kilmarnock consists of a group of buildings including a 14th century Keep and a 15th century Palace surrounded by a courtyard. This museum houses

a collection of Arms & Armour (some with textiles attached), Early Musical Instruments, Early Archives relating to the Boyd family, Robert Burns material and other collections. This is where the main part of our textile collections are stored. Important pieces here, are our 15th & 16th century tapestries. There are eight in the collection with three on permanent display.

The **Dick Institute** is the local municipal museum and the largest of its type in Ayrshire, showing permanent and temporary displays of Art, Natural Sciences, Local, Social & Industrial History, Archaeology, Ethnography and the Loom Room, our textile gallery. This will be the main focus of the talk.

The **Baird Institute** in Cumnock contains collections relating to Social & Industrial history. There are important collections of Mauchline Souvenir Ware, Cumnock Pottery and mining material. There is also a room dedicated to Keir Hardie, the first Labour Party M.P. and includes memorabilia relating to his involvement with Suffragettes including the Pankhurst family. The most important textile here is a Covenanter's Banner.

Burns House Museum in Mauchline is the home in which Jean Armour lived with the Poet, Robert Burns, following their marriage. The displays focus on the early years of their life together and show original manuscripts, artefacts and books relating to the poet. The main textile is an 18th century embroidered fichu which belonged to the 'Lass of Ballochmyle' as immortalised in the poem of the same name.

Doon Valley Museum in Dalmellington consists of three weaver's cottages, joined together which are open-plan internally. There are three gallery spaces. One is dedicated to permanent displays showing local social history issues which are supplemented with temporary arts and museum displays. Two of the main industries here, in the past, were shoemaking and weaving.

Kilmaurs Museum is a gallery which is an adjunct to the local library. It houses a Social History collection which formerly belonged to the local history group. One of the main textile items is a Paisley shawl. This is one of around half a dozen that we hold in our collections. These span the age of Paisley shawl manufacture. Around 10 years ago, we were given the challenge to embark upon a major redevelopment of the Dick Institute's permanent displays. Kilmarnock was once known as being among the most industrially diversified manufacturing town in Scotland, with industries of all types e.g. heavy engineering, Johnnie Walker Whisky blending and bottling, Mining, Ceramics, Saxone Shoes, and printing, as well as textiles. Choosing which story to tell first could have been difficult. In the mid 1980's, a 6th size Nottingham Lace curtain machine had been installed in a side gallery in the Dick Institute. This room had then been used as a general store for over a decade, cut off from public view. During this time the room became filled from floor to ceiling with ex-display material. Since textiles had played such an important role in the development of the area, we felt that this was the obvious place to begin.

It was agreed and we set about clearing the room. Six weeks and several skips later, we had a clear space other than the magnificent 'training / sampling' lace

loom. The floors were sanded and varnished, the walls and cornicing painted, the lace loom cleaned if not fully restored, and we began the process of display. We were most fortunate to still have huge original wooden framed display cases (h.10' x w.6' x d.2') although these were in a dilapidated state. We decided to restore them and found a local company to take the job of stripping away the black lacquer. We then set about rebuilding the interiors using conservation materials, sealing the backs internally with vapour barrier. New backs and conservation standard fabric were used in an attempt to make them as conservation friendly to collections as possible.

Our next consideration was to highlight the main subject areas and identify where the strengths of our collections lay. We had floor and wall space for five, from a set of twelve, large cases and two or three smaller ones alongside floor standing exhibits. We decided to use one of the large cases for each subject which were identified as Ayrshire Needlework, Calico Printing, Machine Lace & Madras, Wool & Carpets and Spinning & Weaving. Ancillary displays were to contain shoes from Kilmarnock's Saxone factory which had closed down some years before and modern textile products that were still being produced in the district.

Because of the strength of our machine lace related collection and presence of the lace loom as a towering centre-piece in the gallery, it was inevitable that great emphasis should be placed upon the lace story. During the late 19th century, the Irvine Valley (Galston, Newmilns & Darvel) in the north of our district became an important centre for the production of furnishing textiles of all sorts. Products from here, were sold by fashionable retailers like Liberties in London, and Irvine Valley firms collaborated with leading designers such as William Morris. The industry had its origins in one of the specialist hand-loom weaving crafts which survived the introduction of the power loom into Scotland in the early 19th century. This product being made using the jacquard system, was a form of lace-like figured gauze termed 'madras'. By the 1860's, the madras trade was suffering from competition from the Nottingham lace manufacturers whose powered machines made a similar product to that produced by the Irvine valley hand-loom weavers but on a more efficient basis. The response by a local weaver and entrepreneur, Alexander Morton was, in effect, 'if you cannot beat them, join them'. A lace making machine was brought to the Irvine Valley and within a few years, the Ayrshire lace manufacturers were undercutting their southern competitors.

Right at the start of the project we enlisted the help of people from the 'Valley' towns including Drew Gilliland, one of the last designs artists still producing hand-painted patterns. Drew was a treasure-trove of information about the industry, and generously gave of his time and knowledge. The Nottingham curtain lace loom, like its hand-powered predecessor, is dependent upon the jacquard system. As we were embarking on the project, we became aware that the traditional production of jacquard cards which was taking place locally, was about to disappear as the retirement of the last card cutter in the Irvine Valley – Ian Hamilton - was imminent. We felt this should not go unrecorded.

We were most fortunate to enlist the assistance of Brian Green, a film maker who was attached to East Ayrshire Council's Education Department. We spent two days filming Ian Hamilton at work using machinery which dated back to the early

part of the 20th century. He was the last person still to be producing cards, using traditional methods – as far as we know - in Europe. We approached the National Museums of Scotland to establish whether their resources could be brought to bear in order to save the massive card cutting machine for posterity. The factory in which this was contained had been built up all around, subsequent to the installation of the cutter. The difficulties of removing this heavy machinery intact were too great for it to be considered feasible. Part of the machine was able to be dismantled and preserved by a local group of heritage enthusiasts while the heaviest section was cut up for scrap. Our only option under the circumstances was to record the entire process of card cutting and assembling, before the workshop shut down. Having secured a detailed visual record of this process immediately before it ceased forever, we became aware that there was a need to continue the process of recording and extend our attention to the entire cycle of design, production and finishing of machine lace.

We gained access to one of the two working lace factories in the Irvine Valley and filmed a modern computer-controlled version of the card cutting process. Drew Gilliland set up a studio space in his home. We filmed, as he talked us through the each stage of the design phase, from initial sketches to the final hand colour coded pattern with instructions for the card cutter. We jumped forward again and filmed the lace design process being carried out with the aid of a computer in the lace factory. The work involved in filling bobbins and spools with yarn was recorded, along with the process of winding the warp onto the beam. The jacquard controlled lace looms were filmed in action and at the same time modern computer controlled madras weaving looms were filmed operating in the same factory.

The film then lay for another couple of years while other projects took priority. We then received the news that the last lace factory in Darvel – the home of the industry in the Irvine Valley - was about to close and merge with another factory in the neighbouring Valley town of Newmilns. This gave us the impetus to start filming again. We were able to film the last lace weaver in Darvel at work the day before loom was to cease operation. We captured parts of the demount of one of these huge machines and its removal, ready to be re-instated in the factory in Newmilns – quite an amazing sight.

We also had the opportunity to record the inspection and mending of the finished product. This entailed invisible mending by hand and mending by sewing machine. The darners were working on un-patterned net fabric which is used for backdrop screens in theatrical productions all over the world like Phantom of the Opera. Finally, we filmed in the despatching room with a map on the wall which indicated the worldwide extent of the machine lace trade.

The film was edited over a period of six months, snatching half days here and there when we could get together with our colleague from the education section. The only cost for this was from our salaries. It is now up and running in the Loom Room Gallery. It runs for around 1½ hours split into 8 'chapters' of around 10 minutes for each aspect of the story. The remaining unused footage which runs for several hours has been archived.

Other areas of our textile collections and displays include:

- Ayrshire Needlework - baby robes and tools of the trade
- Calico Printing - a 19th century pattern book, costume, shawls, pattern blocks and tools of the trade
- Saxone shoes – adults and children’s footwear, including ‘Jumping Jacks’ and ephemera
- Kilmarnock and Stewarton male bonnets, ‘tammys’ or ‘Tam o’ Shanters’
- Ayrshire Blankets
- Carpet industry e.g. archival material from the former BMK factory
- Madras model loom and fabric
- Tapestries from 15th and 16th centuries
- Ethnographical textiles
- Samplers
- Military uniform
- 19th century female costume

One of the most important points about textiles in Ayrshire is the fact that historic industries still survive and are prospering in these difficult financial times. e.g. Alex Begg & Co. in Ayr is a 19th century company that started life in Paisley and moved to Ayr around 1900. They produce top of the range cashmere shawls, scarves and garments for the rich and famous and the fashion industry. Robert Mackie of Scotland is another 19th century company with links to the historic Scottish bonnet-making of the early 17th century. This company provides hats, scarves and gloves to the fashion industry both here and abroad and military headgear.

Smith & Archibald & Co. which has merged with Morton, Young & Borland Ltd. These are machine lace and madras makers. Both companies have their roots in the 19th century lace-making industry mentioned earlier in the article. They have diversified over the years which has helped them to survive during difficult times. An example is that during wartimes, they produced blackout and camouflage netting. During quieter times, the same techniques used for lace making was turned to the production of baby blankets. Today the accent is turning to working again with top designers of fashion and household goods as was the case at the beginning of this industry. The days of lace window curtains has had a slump in recent years but as we all know fashions change quickly and we hope that this beautiful fabric will always be in demand.

Sampler – culture clash

Curated by **David Littler**, London Printworks Trust

I have two real passions in life – textiles and music. I have spent my career to date working in both fields, as a textile designer and now as director of London Printworks Trust – an educational textile print charity, based in Brixton, south London. In terms of music as a DJ since I was about 16, growing up listening to

northern soul, ska, jazz, funk and hip hop as a youngster in Blackpool and avid crate digger (collector of vinyl records), promoting my own club nights and radio shows.

Very seldom do those two worlds meet. It is very rare that I have a conversation with someone in the textile field about an obscure 70's funk break, or the joys of a piece of 18th century embroidery with my dj friends. They appear to be very different people with very different cultures. Or are they?

Sampler – Culture Clash is an attempt to bring those two cultures, embroidery and dj-ing together to see what might happen when the two cultures clash. The word *sampler* is common to both cultures, but has different definitions and understanding depending on which culture you occupy.

When I ask my dj friends. “What is a sampler?” – they all reply a piece of software or hardware for capturing sound, usually in their case drum breaks and sections from other records, that can then be looped to create new music. Examples of hardware include the classic AKAI MPC sampler and new music software such as Ableton Live. When I ask the same question to colleagues in the textiles field they usually reply with the definition given in the Oxford English Dictionary. “**Sampler 1– n.** a piece of embroidery worked in various stitches as a specimen of proficiency (often displayed on a wall etc). OF *essamplaire* (as *Exemplar*).”

Last year I was fortunate to receive one the Crafts Council's first Spark Plug Curators' Awards to carry out initial research to develop the idea. This has enabled me to bring together a group of artistic collaborators, comprising embroiderers from the New Embroidery Group and the Embroiderers' Guild; curators Clare Brown from the V&A and Lynn Szygenda from the Embroiderers' Guild; performance poet Yusra Warsama; and sound artist, beatboxer, dj and music producer – Jason Singh. We have been exploring the connections between each of these artforms through the word “sampler”. Our aim is to push the boundaries of each art form and to create new interdisciplinary work combining stitch, sound, word, pattern and performance.

The beauty of this research phase is that there is no defined outcome. We continue to ask the question “What if?” and true to sampling philosophy to trial, to experiment and to mix things up. We don't know where we are going to end up, but we're enjoying the journey. It's made us all think outside of our own creative practice, taken us outside of our comfort zones and made us re-think the connections between different art forms. One unexpected outcome to date has been the huge level of respect and affection the collaborators have for each other.

To date we've run a series of exploratory workshops, where we've been mixing the stitched word and pattern with the spoken word, turning stitched pattern into sound, and sampled sounds back into pattern and stitch. We've presented a work-in-progress live performance event, including moving image artists and b-girls (breakdancers) as part of the London Design Festival 08. The audience were essential to the creation of the piece, helping to create the visuals and live soundtrack for the evening. As such they moved from passive recipients to active creators. This is an area we're interested in exploring further. The ultimate goal is

to create a cyclical process where every stitch creates a sound that in turn creates another stitch that creates another sound and the creator becomes both embroiderer and composer, manipulating the process as they go.

Our starting point for the research has been the embroidered textile samplers from both the V&A's and the Embroiderers' Guilds' collections. At first there may not seem to be obvious connections between the two worlds of embroidery and dj-ing. But the more you investigate the closer they become. Alongside sampler there are many common words such as needle (to sew or on a record player), cut (cut work or to cut up records / scratch), loop (looping threads or looping beats), counting (threads or beats per minute). The approach to sampler making, particularly in its early development is very similar to that of the development of the dj moving into music production. The process of spot samplers, filling a piece of cloth with trials of patterns, randomly placed to fill any available space to refer back to later when working on a final embroidered design is like building up a library of sound samples stored in analogue or digital format to refer back to and to create new compositions. Copying has been critical to the development of both art forms, particularly hip hop and dance music. Motifs such as the Boxer - two male figures holding gifts - re-appears in samplers from the 16th-18th century, just as the infamous drum break from James Brown's Funky Drummer has been sampled and used in over 200 other compositions by artists as diverse as Public Enemy and George Michael. Jason, one of the collaborators, commented that band samplers with bands of repeating patterns were just like digital music software, bands of sounds repeated in whichever time signature. So the repeating strawberry pattern becomes the base drum beat, the rows of dots become your baseline, and the tulips become your vocals. Embroidery charts with their grid format and marks instructing the embroiderer which stitch or colour to use are like early punch card systems of binary code for developing computer programmes. Then there's the stitched letter and word, whether it's the alphabet, psalms, or the moral texts of young girls aspiring to do better unto their families or the lord. Yusra and the embroiderers have been working together to create new written and spoken pieces informed by these early samplers, using games such as consequences. Here's one such composition by embroiderer Jackie Rayer,

This is my life
this ball of thread.
It is not large,
but like me,
small, soft and twisted

Yusra has created several new poems, including a very moving piece based on Elizabeth Parker's now famous stitched sampler in the V&A's collection. Parker's piece about her early troubled life, starts with the words "as I cannot write" and ends with "what will become of my soul". Yusra starts and ends her poem with the same words but instead describes the life of a young refugee woman arriving in contemporary Britain, struggling to fit in and find a positive future for herself. There's an instant connection between Elizabeth Parker's stitched piece and Yusra's spoken piece even though they were created centuries apart and with seemingly very different subjects.

Collectively we've been creating new stitched and drawn pattern pieces, from which Jason has been sampling sections and using music software Reaktor to create new sound pieces. It's a liberating way of composing, using pattern as your starting point and going with which ever sounds the programme produces. Then in true sampling style, we've been copying, cutting, looping, repeating, reversing and re-sampling these sounds and combining them with the spoken word pieces to inspire new stitched work. The process is on-going.

So, where next? We'll continue to explore and experiment, bring in new collaborators, start to develop new technologies, and new ways of presenting this work. We're really interested in exploring sampler collections across the UK and internationally, working with different communities and responding to regional differences in samplers and sampler making. Following the presentation I gave at the DATS conference, several members have been in touch and we're exploring potential collaborations and workshops based on their sampler collections, which is very exciting.

A selection of the work created to date will be featured in the exhibition *Open Source Embroidery* curated by Ele Carpenter which opens in June at the Bildsmuseet in Sweden, before it tours to San Francisco later in the year. Recently, we've received support from the British Council's Creative Collaboration programme to develop the project with collaborators in Romania and Turkey. A Romanian embroiderer working with a Turkish computer programmer and a British beatboxer – what might they produce?

We're working with the V&A to develop a new section on samplers on its website, which will enable the public to learn more about the V&A's fantastic collection and to think about their relevance to contemporary creative practice.

To quote from one of the samplers I recently saw at Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery.

“Fear God, Honour the Queen and meddle not with them that are given to change”.

I'm glad we started to meddle.

Find out more about the on-going research at the sampler –culture clash blog <http://sampler-cultureclash.blogspot.com>.

You can contact David at david@londonprintworks.com

To find out more about the Crafts Council's Spark Plug Curators' Award visit <http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/learning-and-support/for-curators/curator-awards/>

Digitisation of Manchester's dress archive

Jennifer McKellar, Platt Hall, Manchester

The Gallery of Costume is delighted to have been awarded a generous grant from the Getty Foundation to enable us to sort, organise and make accessible our photographic

archive to support research and scholarship through web access.

The photograph collection forms part of the significant library and archive accumulated by Drs C Willett and Phillis Cunnington during the 1930s. Since 1947 when Manchester Corporation acquired the archives, they have been considerably expanded and are now the most comprehensive specialist resource for dress study outside London.

The archive of images comprises over 25,000 portrait photographs dating from the 1840s onwards, although the bulk of the photographs are from the period 1860 - 1914. Many of the images are from photographic studios, with formal backdrops and careful lighting, but others are taken outdoors by travelling photographers. Although many sitters are middle class or aristocratic, they sometimes chose to have their portraits in sporting or riding dress, or else showing their profession, such as clergymen or school teachers. Other, rarer images are of labouring people, including servants or nurses, and rural and urban workers. One particular highlight of the collection is an important album dating from 1865 showing fifty images of female Welsh Iron workers from Tregeddar in their working dress.



The Cunningtons collected material from all across Britain, and the photographs reflect this eclectic impulse. There are however a number which relate to North West photographers, and specifically to Manchester. Significant Manchester photographers represented include: Robert Banks (late 1870s), John Barrow (1880s), Warwick Brooks (1860s), Enos and Silas Eastham (late 1860s), John Leech (early 1860s), Lachan McLachlan (1860s) and Rogersons (1860s).

Tintype, 1870s, The Gallery of Costume

We are only at the start of this project that will go on until November 2009, and we will be working behind the scenes to create digital images and records of the collection for publication to this website, adding more information as we go along. We will also consult with the public, and with our users, to ensure that we produce interpretative material that is appropriate for students, researchers and general interest.

Postcard, 1900s, The Gallery of Costume



The Beamish Buds Embroidery – Using the Stored Collections at Beamish

Kate Reeder and Cheryl Knight, Beamish Museum

When Kate and I were invited to talk at the DATS conference in November on providing access to stored collections, the main problem we encountered was choosing a project to focus on. Recent months have seen a huge amount of activity at Beamish's Regional Resource Centre – recent costume and textile based projects and activities have included an exhibition of collections-inspired work produced by Cleveland College of Art and Design, a commemorative banner in memory of the West Stanley pit disaster produced by South Asian arts charity Kalapremi, a memorial patchwork quilt made from patches sewn by Beamish visitors, and paper fashion dolls based on those at the museum (to mention just a few). We settled on the Beamish Buds embroidery activity as it combined two long term projects, textiles and craft education and practice, and using the stored collections for inspiration and ideas – with a very pleasing result!

Developed over five years and situated adjacent to the main period Beamish site, the Regional Resource Centre (RRC) houses the bulk of Beamish museum's stored collections including dress and textiles, as well as Tyne and Wear Museums collections. Very large objects such as boats, engineering, industrial and transport objects are kept in the larger Regional Museums Store, also on site. Both buildings were purpose built for open storage, enabling the public to visit and see the collections, search the photo archive and use the reference library. Access to the building is free, and since 2006 has been supported by a dedicated Collections Access Team, funded through the HLF and Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, with the express purpose of broadening awareness of and access to the collections in store. The team deal with group visits and enquiries from researchers, and engage with the local community through outreach activities and projects, talks, object handling sessions using themed boxes with objects from the collections (including a costume box!), and tours of the stores.

As well as one-off tours, handling sessions and activities, the Collections Access Team work to form sustainable relationships with local community groups, schools and other organisations through special projects and partnership working. The Beamish Buds after-school club is a good example of this. Funded through the North East Hub and jointly run by the Collections Access and Education team, the club meets every Wednesday. 20 children, aged 10-11 from 3 schools in the local area attend to do activities based around the museum collections – a different one each week. Past activities have included shadow puppet theatre, making magic lantern slides, and spar boxes. Another long running project is Heritage Cubes – a joint project between Beamish and Tyne and Wear Museums with money from the HLF, that allows local clubs, societies and history groups to store their own collections in the RRC store, inside their own 'cube'. The aim of the project is to provide users with temporary storage in museum conditions with the ultimate objective of having their own display or storage space, or even a museum of their own. Heritage Cube users have access to Beamish staff for advice and guidance, regular training is held on collections care and documentation, and groups are able to hold their own public exhibitions in the Collections Study Room at the RRC.

One such exhibition was The Needle Points North, a display of work by the Embroiderers Guild North East who have their own Heritage Cube – this exhibition was displayed in the Collections Study Room alongside other work by the Embroiderer’s Guild. A contemporary embroidery project, The Needle Points North, was originally produced for the Year of Visual Arts 1996. For the exhibition each local branch of embroiderers worked in collaboration with an artist produce a hanging panel (14 in total) to represent a different area of the North East and Cumbria, under the overall guidance of textile artist Anne Johnson. These panels were the inspiration and the starting point for the Beamish Buds embroidery project. The objective for the Buds was to work together to design and produce their own embroidery hanging inspired by the Beamish collections, a process that would take place over a four week period, the longest activity to date. The Embroiderer’s Guild were directly involved, volunteering to explain and demonstrate the craft to the children and to assist in the practical sessions. In the first session, the Buds viewed the panels and other examples of embroidery, and were given an introduction to embroidery by a member of the Guild. They discussed what they could see in the panels, why the work had been made, and how it was put together. Splitting into four groups, each group was assigned a different area of the collections to research – social history, industry, transport and rural life. Touring the store, they sketched and photographed objects that interested them – after a few weeks of attending Beamish Buds, most of the children are familiar with and confident in the stores environment, and many chose objects that were already familiar to them.

The following week, they used the photographs and sketches to plan a paper design for their own contribution to the panel. They were then given an introduction to materials and an initial sewing lesson to introduce them to some basic stitches. The third and fourth weeks saw the creation of the designs; the groups worked with different fabrics and stitches – fabric pens were available, but were only brought out at the very end to prevent any ‘cheating! The influence of the collections on the children’s creation can clearly be seen on – mining is represented with a lamp, lumps of textured coal, and a canary cage, rural life with farm labourers based on contemporary caricatures. Transport features trains, trams and buses, whilst social history is represented by folk art and domestic objects – Staffordshire dogs, fire ornaments, clocks, and patchwork pottery ‘boudyware’ plates.

The finished hanging is well executed, creative and eye-catching with no two designs the same – each child made an individual contribution. In this activity the Embroiderers were able to explain their own work and pass on skills, and the Buds themselves came away with a new set of abilities (most having never practiced needlework before), confidence and a deeper understanding of the collections in store - a successful and satisfying project!

Wearing Nature

Marion Kite, FIIC, ACR, Head of Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Conservation, V&A

The flora and fauna of the world have provided a rich source of materials from which mankind has made coverings for himself throughout recorded time; from prehistoric times to the present day.

Such coverings are limitless and embrace all cultures, primitive and sophisticated, eastern and western. They may be used for secular or religious purposes, for ceremonial or day to day wear.

This paper concerns the world of fauna and species aquatic, airborne and earthbound; mammals, reptiles, birds, insects and marine life; all of which in some way or another have been worn by mankind.

- Unto Adam also unto his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. *Genesis. Chapter 3 verse 21*

Mammals

Mammalian skins are primarily composed of the protein collagen and are chosen for their specific qualities and processed accordingly.

In the case of the skins of fur bearing mammals it is the quality of the hairy outer coat that is valued rather than the skin alone. This is so with sheep skins when processed with the hair on, although by convention these skins are described as possessing wool rather than fur.

In the production of leather the hairs are removed and it is the skin alone which is valued. The skins of deer, cattle, sheep, pigs and goats have been the most common from which leather has been commercially made. It is true however to say that all mammalian skin can be tanned or tawed or otherwise processed in order to make it non putrescent and fit for use by mankind.

Slink; skin taken from a fawn or calf *in utero* has been much valued for the fineness of its quality and skin marking, and also skin from the dead offspring of cattle or sheep when stillborn or which died soon after birth.

Skin processing has been undertaken for over 3000 years and below is given a first millennium BC Babylonian recipe used for processing very special leather and also most likely for furs. (Matheson 1979)

- “The skin of the kid thou shalt feed with the milk of a yellow goat, and with flour; thou shalt anoint (it) with pure oil, ordinary oil, and the fat of a pure cow. Thou shalt dilute alum in pressed grape juice, then fill the surface of the skin with gall nuts of the tree-cultivars of the Hittites”

Furs

Fur-skin processing or ‘dressing’ refers to the preparation (dressing) and dyeing of raw fur-skins for the purpose of making them non-putrescent and suitable for commercial use. The fur dresser is therefore concerned both with the skin, (the collagen material) and the hair (the keratin material). By Roman times a distinction had already been made between tanners (*coriarii*) and fur-skin dressers (*pellioni*).

Furs have long been associated with wealth and status. In the 12th century only the upper classes wore furs and laws of sumptuary applied restricting the wearing of specific furs according to rank. These laws persisted into the 16th century. Only royalty was allowed to wear ermine and even today ermine is used to trim formal royal robes. The wearing of furs was forbidden to the Church except in 1127. The

Council of London allowed abbesses and nuns to wear the fur of lambs and cats only.

Furs were sourced throughout Europe with the best quality coming from the colder climes. In 1670 Charles II granted a charter to Hudson's Bay Company and the furs which were then sourced from the exploration of north America and Canada provided a stimulus for the fur trade and related manufacturing processes; specifically the use of beaver for making hats.

Until the 18th and 19th centuries the primary use of fur was for linings and the trimming of garments. The furs were set against and used to compliment rich and luxurious fabrics. It was not until 19th century that fur was used as the primary material for the outside of garments.

The effect of the Industrial Revolution and increased prosperity of the lower orders of the social scale meant that more people could afford to wear fur. Advances in science and technology, the discovery of a new processing method for plentiful sealskins and the development of oxidation dyes used in processing these, all contributed to a greater availability of fur to the masses. Fur farming in the latter 19th and in the early 20th century also increased availability.

In the early 20th century over 100 species of fur bearing mammals were used in the fur trade. By the first years of the 21st century very few of these species were still available. Fur farming had been banned in the UK in 2002 and the wearing of fur, although still featured in some couture shows is still an emotive subject.

Hair

Hair is composed of a chemically stable keratinaceous material. Mammalian hair, from many domesticated and also non domesticated species has been used to create fabrics. Wool from a variety of sheep species is perhaps most commonplace but the hair from goats (cashmere) vicuna, alpaca, rabbits and even domestic pets such as dogs has been spun into yarn and then woven or knitted to make a fabric. It is the thickness of the hair fibre bundles, the weight of each thread spun from these, the tightness of twist achieved during the spinning and then the type of weave structure employed, which can all radically alter the characteristics of the cloth produced. The differing qualities of the hairs of the different species of animal can give a further variation.

Hair from differing species has been used for many purposes. Horse hair and cow hair was used to make formal wigs such as Bag wigs in the early to mid 18th century. In the 19th century horse hair was used to make 'crin', a narrow woven fabric used for stiffening in dresses and also to make ladies hats. Horse hair has also been use to make a hard wearing furnishing fabric used in upholstery.

A variety of animal hairs, especially sheep's wool was also processed commercially to make a non woven material such as felt which has vastly different qualities to a woven fabric and differing uses. Historically, the most important animal species used in felt making was the Beaver (*Castor Canadensis*) Beaver hair was the mainstay of the English hat trade from 1550-1850 and English beaver hats were recognised as the best in the world.

The Turk in linen wraps his head
The Persian his in lawn, too
The Russ with Sables furs his cap
And change will not be drawn to.

The Spaniard's constant to his block
The Frenchman inconstant ever;
But of all felts that may be felt
Give me the English beaver.

A Challenge to Beauty. Thomas Heyward (d.1650)

In the 14th century in *The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer, mentioned that the Merchant wore 'A Flaundrish beaver hat' indicating that he was well dressed, fashionable and prosperous. Samuel Pepys wrote in 1661 that Mr Holder sent him a beaver which cost £4 5s. and in the 18th century the association was so strong that the beaver was frequently used as a shop trade sign to indicate the premises of a hat maker. One example is 'Hat and Beaver', Peter White, Newgate St., 1768. The wearing of beaver hats only declined in the 19th century when silk hats came into fashion.

Exotic Skins

Tanners of exotic skins and manufacturers of finished articles made from these usually understand 'exotic leathers' as those made from reptiles, birds, fish or amphibians. The use of exotic skins for apparel and to provide adornments to clothing, no doubt goes back to prehistory.

Reptiles:-Snakes and Lizards

Initially reptile skins would have been prepared simply by being dried, scraped on the flesh side and made supple by the application of various animal fats, but by the late 19th century when they started to be commercially imported they would have been imported in either air dried raw condition or wet-salted and then processed and tanned upon arrival.

Tanning exotic skins follows the same basic process as that for tanning mammalian skins except that following soaking they would have been treated with sodium sulphide to remove the keratinous surface layer of the scales. Frequently it is the distinctive natural markings of the skin that are the desirable feature and frequently reptile leathers were glazed.

Although having other uses in antiquity; such as crocodile skin used as armour by the Romans, it was high value, high quality, fashionable accessory items such as bags, belts and shoes, which provided the most usual use for exotic leathers over the past two centuries and within the framework of apparel and the topic of this paper.

Other Collagen Materials

Collagen products include glues, gelatine, gut membrane and sausage casings; all of which have in some way or another been included in the manufacture of apparel and dress accessories at one time or another.

Gelatine

Gelatine is a hydrolysis product of collagen which was used to make a variety of sequins for decorating dress and accessory objects during the early part of the 20th century. Gelatine sequins may be dyed, or given an iridescent or a metallic finish.

The advantage of gelatine sequins is that they are light and may be used in large numbers on light and delicate fabrics without causing distortion as the much heavier glass and metal sequins would do. This was particularly so in the first half of the 20th century.

Gelatine sequins are not always immediately detectable and care must be taken to identify their presence before any cleaning, or other conservation treatment is undertaken. They are highly reactive to moisture and irreversible damage may be caused by ill advised treatment.

Gut membrane

Gut membrane is prepared from the outer or peritoneal coat of the caecum of bovines and is also known as goldbeaters' skin. It was originally used as a separation layer during the beating out of gold when making gold leaf. It is a light fully transparent sheet material composed of collagen.

In textiles it is found as a substrate for some metal threads which were combined into the structure of silk fabrics. They are often to be found in Italian silks of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and were used to make ecclesiastical vestments. Many examples of which survive today in museum collections.

Seal gut

Seal gut is most notably used by the Inuit to make waterproof parkas. In museums these objects are usually found in ethnographic collections

Parchment

In simple terms parchment is understood to describe an animal pelt which has been unhaired, stretched and limed. Sheep, goats, calves and deer have all been used to make parchment. The term vellum however usually denotes calfskin parchment.

In textiles and dress parchment has had many uses. It has been found used as a stiffening in 17th century gloves, as a base over which to work metal thread embroidery as in Guipure work, and in lace and passmenterie as the base material over which silk or metal threads are wrapped to form bows and other decorative elements.

The presence of parchment needs to be noted before any cleaning , relaxing or other conservation treatment is undertaken as damage may be caused by inappropriate treatments if its presence is ignored.

Birds and Feathers

Mankind has long been fascinated by avian species for personal adornment and frequently throughout history the wearing of rare and extravagant bird plumage has been symbolic of high status, high fashion and wealth. This is so for most cultures, eastern and western.

In the Asian collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum there is an 18th century Jimbaori- (a Japanese surcoat worn over armour) which is adorned with peacock

feathers applied onto the outer fabric. The Jimbaori has a silk lining with peacock feathers woven directly into the fabric as part of the weft.

Also in the Asian collection is a Chinese Wedding Hat (c.1800-early 19th century) worked with feathers from the river kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) applied onto a decorative metal framework and adorned with coral, pearls and carved jade decorations.

In the British Museum collection, as part of the decoration on the floor of the coffin of the Theban Official Ahmose, (dated at c.1050 BC) there is an image of King Amenophis I, (patron of the Theban workmen) who is depicted wearing a stunning feather cape.

More than one portrait of Queen Elizabeth 1 (reign 1533-1603) survives depicting her holding either a natural coloured or a brightly coloured, dyed, ostrich feather fan. At the French court a fad for ornamental feathers was conspicuous in the reign of Louis XVI (reign 1774-1792) and taken to extreme by his queen Marie Antoinette. (reign 1774-1792) This fashion spread throughout Europe.

In the 19th century the fascination for wearing feathers was still predominant and often whole birds were used. Birds of paradise, humming birds, seabirds, peafowl, ostrich, egrets and many others with extraordinary plumage were highly sought after for fans, muffs, hats, and dress trimmings and tiny brightly coloured humming birds, whole or in part, were made into fashionable jewellery. Bird skins, with feathers in situ, were joined together and used to fashion muffs, collars and tippets and other dress trimmings.

Thousands of birds were slaughtered and in 1888, in New York, a sale is recorded where 30,000 humming birds were sold in one afternoon.

Such was the slaughter for millinery purposes and use in fashionable dress that the debate on bird protection grew and in America closed seasons for taking indigenous wild species were eventually declared in various States. The first bird preservation acts were passed in the United States but in 1869 The Seabirds Preservation Act was passed in England, which restricted the taking of seabirds and eggs during the breeding season.

The use of feathers today is still highly fashionable especially for millinery but species use is mostly limited to domestic fowls and farmed species controlled under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) legislation.

Today, feathers are worn by all classes of society and are frequently used in formal and ceremonial wear and also in lavish theatrical dress.

Feathers are rarely used in their natural state and are usually 'dressed' or manipulated in order to colour, curl, trim, extend or otherwise change their appearance to give a rarity and ingenuity to their form.

Marine Life

The sea has provided a vast quantity of marine life which has been worn by mankind. There are records that in the 15th century fish skins were used to make gauntlets and bags and in the 17th century the skins of eel and whale were used.

Certainly, the use of baleen ('whalebone') for corset boning in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries directly corresponds to the 3 peak periods of whale fishing. Baleen is a keratinaceous material; an agglomeration of hair covered in horn, and is found in the mouths of the 10 species of filter feeding whales. The Great Right Whale (*Balaena glacialis*) and the Bowhead Whale (*Balaena mysticetus*) have the largest baleen plates. As well as corset boning, baleen was also used for shoe stiffening and to make umbrella ribs.

Whale hide was used to make leather for many purposes but the hide of the 'White whale' - Beluga whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) was used to make high quality laces particularly for army boots.

In 1886 at the Marine Exhibition at Westminster Aquarium, the skins of Soles (*soleidae*) and Cusk or torsk (*brosme brosme*) were shown and during World War II when most bovine and other mammalian leather was unavailable, the skins of Cod (*Gadus morhua*), Eel (*Anguilliformes*) and Wolffish or catfish (*Anarhichas lupus*) were used to make shoes.

The skins of salmon have been used by many cultures and today salmon skin leather is a by product of the food industry.

During the later part of the 19th century and early 20th century there was a fashion for 'shagreen'. This beautiful textured fish skin was used for bags, shoes, belts, to make bangles and jewellery and other small decorative objects. Various fish were used from which to make 'shagreen' but the common link between them is that they all had dermal denticles on their skins which were ground down during processing to give a smooth finish to the product.

In the 19th century the skins of Blue shark (*Prionace glauca*) were used, also Chat 'peau de roussette' (*Squalus catulus*) Bull Huss (spotted dogfish) (*Scyliorhinus canicula*) and approx 70 species of Stingray, Genus (*Dasyatis*); cartilaginous marine fishes related to skates and sharks. 'Shagreen' was sometimes used undyed and sometimes dyed. In the early 20th century green and red were favourite fashionable colours.

Other Marine Life

A vast quantity of other marine life has been worn by mankind and below are described some of the most common of these:-

Coral

Coral is the name given to sea dwelling soft bodied carnivorous animals with polyps which mostly live in colonies. They belong to the phylum Coelenterata. They have a hard skeleton mostly Aragonite (calcium carbonate) with horny material related to keratin. Coral can be found in white, blue, black and golden colours but red coral (*Corallium rubrum*), is perhaps the most commonly used both for jewellery and for beading on some high quality dress items.

Pearls

Pearls are a nacreous concretion produced by a bivalve mollusc. Natural pearls are formed around a foreign body which irritates the mollusc. Pearls are composed of approx 90% Aragonite (calcium carbonate) with an organic matrix. Apart from their obvious use in jewellery they have been used as an embellishment on costly items of dress and on ecclesiastical vestments for centuries. Opus Anglicanum vestments dating from 13th century frequently had quantities of small pearls included in the embroidery. Pearls are produced by both marine and freshwater species of mollusc.

Shell and Mother of Pearl

A shell is the calcareous outer part of a mollusc's body. The shell is formed by the mantle, which deposits an organic matrix (sometimes called conchiolin) and calcium carbonate which forms crystals. The inner layer of some shells may be porcellaneous whilst others are nacreous. The nacreous effect is called mother of pearl. From this, buttons, buckles, beads, hair ornaments, jewellery and all manner of other ornament has been produced.

'Tortoiseshell'

That which is commonly termed 'tortoiseshell' is usually made from the shell of the Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) although the shells from the Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) have also been used. The carapace (shell on the back) and plastron (shell on the belly) are both used. 'Tortoiseshell' is predominately keratin with the colour being imparted by the pigment melanin. It is a thermoplastic so can be heated then shaped or moulded retaining the new shape when cooled. Buttons, hair combs and buckles have been made from it.

All species of marine turtles are protected under CITES legislation although a few countries in the far east still allow limited fishing for hawksbill turtles to be taken for their shells.

Horn

Horn is another keratinaceous material which has been used extensively to produce buttons, buckles, hair combs, jewellery and many other small decorative objects. It is an endlessly adaptable material and can be carved, turned, pressed, moulded, embossed, dyed or bleached. It has been used inlaid with silver 'pique' work and with mother of pearl and small items have sometimes been mounted in silver, bronze or gold. Mostly, the source of horn for buttons, buckles and combs has been domesticated animals such as water buffalo, cattle and sheep.

Insects

Silk moth- (*bombyx mori*)

It is believed that the Chinese first started making silk around 2,700BC. Legend has it that Empress Si Ling Chi discovered silk when a silkworm moth cocoon fell from a mulberry tree into her tea. After some experiment, she finally managed to weave the silk filament into a piece of fabric.

The process of making silk weaving is still the same today. Known as sericulture, the cocoons of the silk moth (*Bombyx mori*) are placed in hot water to release the silk filaments and kill the silkworm larvae. The filaments are combined to form yarn, wound and finally dried. Each cocoon can yield around 500 to 1,200 yards of silk.

Silk was considered China's most valuable trade commodity, resulting in the famous Silk Road trading route. Silk making was a closely-guarded government secret until AD300 when it was leaked out to India. It is therefore not surprising to find that garments made from silk are ubiquitous in museum collections.

Beetles

Iridescent insect wings, particularly those of the beetle (*Sternocera aequistignata*) have been used as ornament in the embroidery of India. Worked onto muslins, turban cloths, silks, and a variety of other textiles this form of decoration was particularly popular in the late 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Dyes

Reds

The Cochineal beetle (*Dactylopius coccus*) has been used to produce a red dye. Kermes– a scale insect (*Kermes vermilis* and *kermes ilicus*) are also used to produce a red dye as is the Indian lac scale insect (*Tachardia (Laccifer) lacca*).

Purple/violet

A purple violet dye was produced from certain Gastropod Molluscs. The Spiny dye mollusc (*Murex brandaris* or *Bolinus brandaris*) and the Cliff mollusc (*Purpura haemastoma* or *Thais haemastoma*) are some of these.

Conclusion

This paper has intended only to provide an introduction to some of the fauna represented in dress collections. It is the responsibility of the curator and conservator to be aware of the possibilities and to examine carefully each object they encounter to determine exactly from which materials they are made and from which animal species there were derived. Sometimes it can be surprising.

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Plastics, From Blood and Sawdust to Lycra – A Brief History of Plastics, a presentation by Colin Williamson.

During his illustrated talk Colin Williamson gave an informative run down of the history of plastics, from natural carbon based materials to synthetic fibres such as polyester and Lycra, outlining the way plastics have been used and the implications for evolving technologies. Colin brought along a suitcase full of objects from his own collection and delegates were able to handle and compare different plastics while he explained each material, giving useful tips on identification and also the telltale signs of degradation.

A plastic is defined as a material that can be moulded or formed and which must be fluid at some stage during its production.

NATURAL PLASTICS

Horn - A material that can be moulded when warm. John O'Brisset, a London craftsman, used a carved mould to create duplicate snuff boxes in the early 18th century, enabling multiple production. Pressed horn mourning brooches produced in the 19th century.

Hoof - Easier to mould than horn, particularly used for buttons in the early 20th century.

Shellac - A gum produced by the lac insect, the basis of many lacquers and varnishes. Mixes with wood powder to form a thermoplastic material suitable for moulding by heat and pressure. Used for Union cases to mount daguerrotypes, frames and boxes, mirror cases and brush backs, 1850s – 1870s.

Gutta Percha - A hard tree exudate similar to rubber, which softens through heating. Introduced into Europe in 1843. Many uses such as photo frames and jewellery inset with paste stones, but most importantly used as an insulating material enabling under sea telegraphic cables.

Vulcanite - A rigid mouldable compound of rubber mixed with 30 % sulphur, also called Ebonite, patented by Thomas Hancock in 1843. Moulded extensively into decorative household items, bits of jewellery, pipe stems, Vesta boxes, and false teeth and often imitating jet. Also used as a rigid insulator in the emerging electrical and telegraphic industries.

Bois Durci - Patented in France in 1855, a composition of powdered wood and blood. Used for photo frames, desk items like pen trays and decorative inkwells, and wall plaques featuring mythical scenes or the profiles of famous people.

SEMI-SYNTHETIC PLASTICS

Cellulose Nitrate

Parkesine - Cellulose nitrate transformed into a mouldable material by the addition of plasticisers such as camphor, patented by Alexander Parkes of Birmingham, and generally accepted as the first semi-synthetic plastic. The Parkesine Company was established in 1866, producing such things as combs and knife handles, but poor quality led to the liquidation of the company in 1868.

Celluloid - Similar to Parkesine was another more successful thermoplastic cellulose nitrate material developed in the U.S. and marketed as Celluloid. Initially used for items such as dental plates, combs and billiard balls, in 1885 the first celluloid collar and cuffs were produced. Imitation tortoiseshell and ivory quickly became popular and by the 1890s decorative hair combs by designers such as Auguste Bonaz were the height of fashion. Celluloid was the first material to enable brand new products to be developed and produced at low cost, toys being just one example. It also enabled sound recording and introduced a new art form, the cinema.

Cellulose Acetate - Introduced initially in 1894, and available in the U.K. in fibre form as Rayon in about 1918, it was not until after the First World War that an injection moulding machine was developed which was capable of moulding cellulose acetate combined with plasticising compounds. Less flammable than celluloid, it was used for colourful low cost jewellery during the 1930s, and toys and spectacle frames during the 1950s.

Casein - Milk protein reacted with formaldehyde to produce a hard material, used for knitting needles, fountain pens, bangles, brooches, bracelets and other decorative objects. It was particularly used in button manufacturing because it could be surfaced dyed in small batches to match fabrics. Used during the first half of the 20th century until the 1960s when polyesters largely took over.

SYNTHETIC PLASTICS

Phenolic Resins - *Bakelite* is phenol formaldehyde mixed with a reinforcing filler such as wood flour to create a tough hard mouldable powder, which melts on heating to take up the shape of a closed mould. By the 1920s coloured Bakelite used for many household objects, clocks, telephones, hairdryers, picnic sets, etc. but products could only be made in dark colours.

Cast phenolic mouldings, similar to Bakelite but without reinforcing fillers, can be transparent and were often amber coloured, known as butterscotch. Glitter was sometimes added and thousands of jewellery items produced. Both types of mouldings were developed by Leo Baekeland.

Urea and Thiourea-Formaldehyde -In the U.K. British Cyanides introduced a urea/thiourea -formaldehyde moulding powder in 1928, which could be produced in pale colours unlike phenol formaldehyde. Used for “Bandalasta” picnic sets in the 1930s, and other household objects such as wireless sets.

Polythene - Or polyethylene, production of which was established in 1942 by Union Carbide and Du Pont in the U.S. Polythene bags were launched in the early 1950s, now the largest markets for this are squeeze and semi-rigid bottles, (domestic cleaning liquids), bottle crates and gas pipes.

PVC - Poly vinyl chlorides developed in the U.S. in the 1930s and first produced in the UK in 1942 by ICI. Early applications include cable insulating and coating onto fabrics as leathercloth. Later used for belts, bags, clothes, shoes, toys and dolls and now one of the major thermoplastics with a wide range of applications.

Nylon - The first synthetic fibre (polyamide) invented by Wallace H. Carothers of Du Pont in the U.S. in 1935. In 1941 the company launched the nylon stocking, while another early application was parachute fabric.

Polyesters- Used in their saturated thermoplastic form as textile fibres such as *Terylene*.

Although polystyrene, PVC and polyethylene are considered the “big three” of plastics, by the early 1990s there were over 50 other basic types in industrial use, with many more compounds, alloys and varieties.

For further information see:

Plastics – Collecting and Conserving, edited by Anita Quye and Colin Williamson, (NMS Publishing Ltd., 1999)

DATS Autumn Conference 2009

Details of the 2009 conference have yet to be confirmed, but it will be based in Leeds in October/November.

One day will be held in the city centre at either the City Museum and/or the Discovery Centre and the other day at one of the country houses, most probably Temple Newsam.

The day in Leeds will focus on manufacturing and retail, with an emphasis on the North of England

The day at Temple Newsam will focus on the country house.

There will be an informal dinner in a local restaurant on the first evening.

Confirmation of dates and further details will be sent to the email user group and a full programme will be circulated in the summer.

Closure of the Textile Conservation Centre on 31st October 2009 confirmed

Statement issued by the TCC Foundation

TCC CLOSURE

As recipients of earlier updates about the future of the Textile Conservation Centre will be aware, the University of Southampton has decided to close the TCC on 31st October 2009. The Centre's supporting Trust, the TCC Foundation, has for some months been discussing the possibility of transferring elements of the Centre's work to the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford. Although there were many benefits to be gained from such a move, it is now clear that a transfer will not be feasible. The pressure on creating new student places at the University of Oxford meant that a viable plan proved impossible.

The Textile Conservation Centre will therefore be closed by the University of Southampton on 31st October 2009 and its staff will be made redundant with effect from 1st November 2009

TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE FOUNDATION

The TCC Foundation will continue to make every effort to ensure that the TCC's work, accumulated knowledge and expertise will not be completely lost as a result of the University of Southampton's closure decision. The Foundation Trustees are meeting shortly to review options and will issue a further statement in due course.

Speaking on behalf of the Foundation, Peter Longman, Deputy Chairman, thanked those responsible at the TCC and the Universities of Oxford and Southampton who had worked hard to explore the possibility of transfer. Longman said 'this closure will have serious implications for the conservation and museum sector in terms of career-entry

education, CPD and research.' These pressing issues are highlighted in Demos' *It's a Material World* report, initiated by the TCC Foundation. This report is downloadable from <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/materialworld>

NEXT FEW MONTHS

Until 31st October 2009 all the TCC's activities will continue as normal: the two MA programmes (*MA Textile Conservation* and *MA Museums & Galleries*), commercial work and research by staff and PhD students.

Time will also be made to celebrate the huge achievements of the Centre since it was founded by Karen Finch OBE in 1975. To that end the TCC is organising two open days (18th & 19th June) for supporters, former clients, graduates and the Centre's friends to see the work of the current staff and students for one final time before closure. A major reception will also be held in London for those who have funded and supported the TCC over the past 34 years.

For more information about the closure or about the TCC's June Open days please contact Nell Hoare, Director of the TCC, at tccuk@soton.ac.uk

Courtauld History of Dress Association Annual Conference

THE ART OF DRESS

Friday 26 June and Saturday 27 June 2009

Kenneth Clark Lecture Theatre, Courtauld Institute of Art
Somerset House, Strand, London WC2R

This year's conference is planned to coincide with the retirement of Dr Aileen Ribeiro, whose decades of teaching, landmark research and influential publications have helped to establish the field of dress history.

The CHODA committee has crafted the conference programme to include contributors whom Dr Ribeiro has taught and with whom she has worked closely. Papers will include *Rembrandt as Couturier*, *Dress and Politics*, *Balenciaga* and *The new Rococo*, with the highlight of Sir Roy Strong in Conversation with Dr Aileen Ribeiro.

For conference booking form and programme please contact Helen Persson at h.persson@vam.ac.uk or Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL, UK.

The Courtauld History of Dress Association is a registered charity. CHODA's aims are to sponsor students and guest tutors for the MA course in the History of Dress. The annual conference provides a venue for new research in dress and fashion history.

ICOM Costume Committee Conference 2008

The 2008 ICOM Costume Committee conference was held in October in Santiago, Chile, hosted by Isabel Alvarado of the Museo Histórico Nacional. Santiago is a city with rich collections which illustrate the wealth of dress and textile traditions from pre Columbian textiles to Spanish influenced dress and provided a wonderful venue for the conference.

The theme for the conference was colonial fashion, exploring what happens when dress and clothing travels. Over the week there were about 20 papers; the first of these were presented by Chilean colleagues who provided a brilliant overview of different aspects of Chilean dress. These were followed by papers given by Costume Committee members which examined the conference theme and covered topics from footwear in early colonial Australia to Christian Dior's business in South America.

The highlight of the many visits over the week was the exhibition of stunning 19th century silk dresses at Museo Histórico Nacional. Not only were the dresses really magnificent examples, superbly displayed; the exhibition (and accompanying catalogue) also recorded the careful process of documenting twenty silk dresses in the collection both in terms of a detailed textile analysis to a consideration of their historical context. It was an enlightening exercise in terms of documentation and research, and a fascinating example of sharing this accessibly with museum visitors.

Isabel hopes to publish the papers as a set of proceedings from the conference for August. For a list of the papers given email Alexandra MacCulloch at alexandra.macculloch@hrp.org.uk.

The 2009 conference 4-9 October, will be held in Lyon, France, the historic centre of France's silk industry and is organized by Bernard Berthod of Musée de Fourvière, curator of the spectacular collection of ecclesiastical vestments. More details, including the conference theme and post conference tour, will be available on the Costume Committee's website in spring. <http://costume-committee.org/>

Alexandra MacCulloch
ICOM Costume Committee board member

**THE TEXTILE SOCIETY CONFERENCE AND 27TH AGM
2009 SEPTEMBER 25TH, 26TH 27TH**

Macclesfield, Cheshire

The conference theme of 'Two Cultures' is influenced by the work of Thomas Wardle. 2009 is the centenary of Wardle's death and a number of exhibitions and a new publication by Brenda King will honour this much neglected great man of textiles. The three day event will take place at the Silk Heritage Centre, in Macclesfield the town where Thomas Wardle was born. It is a very varied programme which includes visits to Staffordshire churches to view ecclesiastical embroideries produced by the Leek Embroidery Society, in the churches for which they were made, and where many are still in regular use.

The conference features talks by two of our most distinguished textile artists, both of whom use stitch but in completely different ways. Alice Kettle, who is also a Research Fellow at Manchester Metropolitan University, will discuss some past influences and bring us up to date with her current work, which she is developing in conjunction with ceramic artists. Interestingly Alice acknowledges that some of her narrative work was clearly influenced by the copy of the Bayeux Tapestry that she saw in Reading Museum. This gives her a strong link to Elizabeth Wardle and the women of Leek who produced this historic piece.

Maxine Bristow, Reader at Chester University, will use the themes of East and West to talk about the Japanese exchange programme with which she was involved. Maxine will discuss the project with specific reference to the broader context of her own work. This will include the ideas that she and Kyoko, her Japanese counterpart were investigating and the specific content of the work that they produced individually and together. We will hear about some wider observations about the exchange and cultural differences between British and Japanese textile artists.

Trish Belford was formerly a highly successful designer and produced textiles for the fashion industry from her own business in Cheshire. Trish is now a Research Fellow at the University of Ulster. The title of her talk is 'Innovative Textile Applications: Digital and Traditional: Industry and Academia'. She will use case studies, including 'TurnbullThompson digital weave' and 'Girli Concrete', which illustrate how she has combined textile technologies with concrete in collaboration with the architect Ruth Morrow. This is the main body of work that she does as she tries to push forward a spin out business - not as easy as it sounds but an exciting challenge to link a business idea to a university.

Como-Macclesfield, old connections and new collections. Richard de Peyer, Director of Macclesfield Silk Museum will bring us up-to date with a collaboration between silk manufacturers in Como Italy, and Macclesfield Museum's pattern book collection. Richard will enlighten us about what it is that has inspired Italian designers to produce a new range of silks based on silks once manufactured in Macclesfield. The 'Macclesfield collection' will be launched in Florence and Paris Spring 2009.

Dr. Sonia Ashmore is an historian and Research Fellow at V & A. Sonia is currently working for the Indian Diaspora project. She will discuss the context to the important Indian textiles collection at South Kensington Museum in the 19th century, including on Thomas Wardle's relationship with the institution.

Day One Friday Sept 25th

Morning. 10:00 a.m. An introduction to the Work of Thomas and Elizabeth Wardle by Brenda King, author of the book and curator of the exhibition: *Dye, Print, Stitch: textiles by Thomas and Elizabeth Wardle*.

View exhibition at Macclesfield Silk Industry Museum.

Afternoon. 12:30 [lunch on the coach]

Coach travel to Leek, Staffordshire [approx 15 miles] to view ecclesiastical embroideries by the Leek Embroidery Society, in the churches for which they were made.

Day Two Saturday, Sept 26th Macclesfield Heritage Centre,

Textile society AGM, or visit to exhibition.

Talks by Tricia Belford, Maxine Bristow, Alice Kettle, Sonia Ashmore and Richard de Peyer will explore the themes of Art and Science; Craft and Industry; Ancient and Modern; East and West. (Lunch included)

Day Three, Sunday Sept 27th

An opportunity to view pattern books from Macclesfield Silk Museum's important collection. View exhibition and /or Paradise Mill working silk museum.

Please Check Textile Society website & Newsletter for further details and booking form.

News

The Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester

The Wardle Pattern Books Revealed

Eleven pattern books associated with Thomas Wardle were presented to the Whitworth Art Gallery in 1962. They include samples of dye experiments that Wardle carried out with William Morris in the 1870s, as well as a great deal of information about Wardle's own work, and about British printed textile design in general during the period of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Funded through the MLA Designation Challenge Fund's 'Opening Up Collections' scheme these books, which contain more than 1700 pages of original material, are now accessible online at www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/collection

Royal School of Needlework Foundation Degree in Hand Embroidery

Applications are now being accepted for the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) Foundation Degree in Hand Embroidery for the academic year 2009/2010.

This two-year full-time course will focus on hand embroidery techniques, art and design skills and contextual studies to a student body intending to use their learning in a professional capacity.

Our partner, and awarding institution, is the University for the Creative Arts.

The Foundation Degree is a suitable pathway for students wishing to develop existing skills, change a career path to increase their employability or undertake initial training before embarking on a further year to achieve a BA Hons. Other areas for development beyond the Foundation Degree could include options in restoration, conservation, teaching, design work, or a self employed career as a maker/ designer.

During the course students will study key hand embroidery techniques and develop their skills to reach the high standards of technical ability. Students will also be

encouraged to explore areas of application of embroidery skills to discover their own particular niche which can be as contemporary, or traditional, as they desire.

For further information please visit www.royal-needlework.org.uk or e-mail to james.hunting@royal-needlework.org.uk

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Tapestry Conservation at Hampton Court Palace

Henry's Magnificent Tapestries

Henry VIII is renowned for many things but how many are aware of his astounding collection of tapestries?

At the time of Henry's death he was reported to have owned over 2000 pieces of tapestry. One of the most luxurious sets was the 'History of Abraham', now the only surviving complete set of Tudor Tapestries in the Royal collection at Hampton Court Palace.

Through this set of ten tapestries Henry was able to convey not only his wealth but his important status in the world as both the head of a new church and a father to a son and heir. This set of tapestries would have cost Henry a fortune as they are of the finest quality, woven by the best weavers of their day, and incorporate a large quantity of silver and gold threads. They have an illustrious history and would originally only have been hung on very important state occasions. However since the 1800's when Hampton Court Palace was opened to the public, they have been on permanent display. Over the past 200 years a lot of fading and a lot of damage has occurred and nine of the tapestries underwent restoration during the first half of the 20th century. The tenth tapestry, for reasons unknown, was left alone and has retained most of its original threads. However it was in extremely poor condition and over the last ten years textile conservators have been working on the tapestry overcoming complex treatment requirements for re-display. Now as part of Historic Royal Palaces celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Henry's coronation, and for the first time in over fifty years 'The Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek' is back where it belongs, hanging in true splendour in Henry VIII's Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace.

Emma Henni, Tapestry Conservation Supervisor, Historic Royal Palaces

Current and Forthcoming Exhibitions

London

Victoria and Albert Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7, www.vam.ac.uk
Tel. 020 7942 2000

Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones – until 31 May 2009

This exhibition is a collaboration between the V&A and one of the world's most prolific milliners, Stephen Jones. It follows in the footsteps of the V&A's very first fashion show in 1971, *Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton*.

1620 – 1800 Baroque: Style in the Age of Magnificence - 4 April to 19 July 2009

Kensington Palace State Apartments, Kensington Gardens, London W8 4PX
www.hrp.org.uk or Tel. 020 3166 6166

The Last Debutantes - 1958 A Season Of Change – until 14 June 2009

A temporary exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the last court presentations takes visitors on a journey into the glamorous and alluring world of the debutante. Fashionable afternoon dresses and ball gowns, including stunning examples of couture by Christian Dior and Pierre Balmain, as well as accessories worn by some of the 'debs' during the final season of 1958 are displayed in this multimedia exhibition, which tells their stories against the backdrop of dramatic social change that heralded the arrival of the swinging sixties.

The Henry Moore Foundation, Dane Tree House, Perry Green, Much Hadham, Herts, SG10 6EE, Tel: 01279 843333, www.henry-moore-fdn.co.uk

Henry Moore Textiles – 1 April to 18 Oct. 2009

Although Henry Moore is a very recognisable figure in modern sculpture few people realise that at the close of the Second World War he also made a large number of textile designs and fabrics. In the early 1940s as the instigation of Zilka Ascher, a Czech manufacturer who came to Britain as an exile in 1939 he filled four sketchbooks with ideas for this purpose. Between 1944 and 1947 Ascher commissioned several leading artists including Moore, Henry Matisse, Ivon Hitchens and Jean Cocteau, to produce designs for silk squares which were intended to liven up the post-war wardrobe. In line with his socialist approach integrating art with daily life, Moore used bold bright colours to create ideas for the squares, as well as for dress and upholstery fabrics. More than twenty of his designs were eventually used by Ascher and printed on a variety of fabrics, including silk, parachute nylon, cotton and rayon, sometimes in as many as twenty different colourways.

Southeast of England

Hampshire County Council Museums and Archives Service, see www.hants.gov.uk/museums for more details.

Dress 2 Express – Teenage Fashions at

Alton, Allen Gallery	7 March – 18 April 2009
Andover Museum	3 May – 20 June 2009
Aldershot Military Museum	4 July – 22 August 2009
Gosport Gallery	5 Sept. – 24 Oct. 2009

Hair – An anthropological view of human hair

Havant Museum	7 Feb. – 18 April 2009
Eastleigh Museum	9 May – 22 August 2009
Red House Museum, Christchurch	5 Sept. – Christmas 2009

Tudors – With Paddy Killer’s Marye the Quene embroidery of 2004

Alton, Allen Gallery	2 May – 20 June 2009
Eastleigh Museum	5 Sept. – 24 Oct 2009
Aldershot Museum	7 Nov. – Christmas 2009

1970s

Gosport Gallery	7 Nov. – Christmas 2009
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Fabric of a Nation – Printed Fabrics from Ghana, on loan from the B.M.

Eastleigh Museum	28 Feb. – 25 April 2009
Westbury Manor Museum	2 May – 27 June 2009

Quilts - Historical and contemporary, including Jane Austen’s patchwork coverlet
Winchester Discovery Centre 10 Oct. – 15 Nov. 2009

Chertsey Museum, 33 Windsor Street, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8AT, Tel. 01932 565764 www.chertseymuseum.org.uk

Vanity Fair – continues until 5 September 2009

Nineteenth century fashion from Regency dress to late Victorian costume. Beautiful examples of soft muslin dresses, a white cotton cut-work pelisse, silk dresses worn with crinolines and bustles as well as a stunning man’s tail coat from the late 1830s. Numerous items are exhibited for the first time. Also displayed are accessories including shoes, hats, shawls and undergarments. With original film footage, and replica garments to try on.

Southwest of England

Fashion Museum, Assembly Rooms, Bennett Street, Bath, BA1 2QH,
www.fashionmuseum.co.uk Tel. 01225 477 173

Bill Gibb : A Personal Journey – until 4 October 2009

A new display of show-stopping ensembles by 1970s fashion designer Bill Gibb, chosen by Iain R. Webb, author of *Bill Gibb Fashion and Fantasy*, from the Fashion Museum's important collection of wonderful Gibb designs. One of the most iconic pieces from the museum collections is the hippie inspired tartan, floral pint and Fair-Isle knit look chosen as Dress of the Year in 1970. This much loved ensemble will form the centre piece of the new display of approximately 20 ensembles chosen to showcase the fashion genius of this revered British designer.

Dresses From History – opened February 2008

A display of some of the oldest dresses in the museum collection, this selection of 13 women's dresses from the Georgian, Regency and Victorian period have been chosen for their decorative qualities and because they were the height of fashion at the time.

Killerton House, Broadclyst, Exeter, Devon, EX5 3LE

Jobs For The Girls! A Glimpse Inside Working Women's Wardrobes – 11
March 2009 to 1 November 2009

The clothing shown in this new exhibition for 2009 will include uniforms as well as civilian dress worn for both work and leisure by women in a wide range of occupations. By the 1900s more women were involved in a great number of occupations. A design for a suffragette poster claimed that a woman could be a mayor, nurse, mother, doctor, teacher or factory worker as well as a wife and mother, yet was still unable to vote in parliamentary elections. During the first and second world wars with so many able-bodied men away at the front, it became acceptable for women to step into their jobs and – literally – their shoes, taking on male roles, such as working on the railways and delivering letters. The exhibits, drawn from the collection of over 17,000 garments, accessories and associated ephemera at Killerton House, date from the eighteenth to the mid twentieth century, and include a working woman's leather corset from the mid eighteenth century, a Land Army uniform from the second world war, elegant tailor made costumes, and a glamorous cocktail dress from 1957 worn by Armine Sandford, the first woman newsreader for BBC Points West.

There will be an opportunity to find out more about the work of the costume department with a series of talks throughout the season, for further details tel. 01392 881 345.

Devonshire Collection of Period Costume, 43 High Street, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5RY,
Tel: 01803 862857

*Patterned Fashion: English Printed Dress and Textiles from the 18th, 19th
and 20th centuries* – 25 May to 2 Oct 2009

Tuesday to Friday 11am – 5pm, visits and guided tours during October and outside opening hours by appointment, tel: 01803 862857

North of England

Whitworth Art Gallery, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6ER Tel. 0161 275 7450
www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk

The Manchester Indian: Thomas Wardle and India
15 August 2009 to summer 2010

This exhibition celebrates the centenary of the death of Sir Thomas Wardle (1833-1909). Still perhaps best known for his collaboration with William Morris, the exhibition focuses on Wardle's efforts to reinvigorate the silk industry in India as well as the impact that India had on his work. Embroideries and woven silks brought back by Thomas Wardle from India in 1886 are featured together with fabrics printed and dyed by Wardle's company in Leek, Staffordshire, that demonstrate the influence of Indian design on British textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

Bankfield Museum, Boothtown Road, Halifax, 01422 352334

The Art of Embroidery - 21 March to 4 May 2009

Open Tuesday – Saturday and Bank Holidays 10am-5pm, Sundays 1-4pm. Admission free.

The exhibition showcases some of the fabulous embroidered items held in the Calderdale collections, all on a floral theme, and dating from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Crewel work bed hangings that are over 300 years old are on display alongside a flamboyant velvet coat from the 18th century, Russian Arts and Crafts embroideries, an embroidered collar with a delicate pattern of birds and flowers, and examples of brightly coloured Victorian fancy work.

The University of Leeds International Textiles Archive, St. Wilfred's Chapel, Maurice Keyworth Building, Moorland Road, Leeds, LS2 9JT Tel: 0113 343 3919,
www.leeds.ac.uk/ulita

Tibor Reich: a Life of Colour and Weave – to 26 June 2009, Tuesdays – Fridays, 9.30am – 16.30pm

This exhibition presents a selection of the works of the 20th century textile designer Tibor Reich. After graduating from the University of Leeds in the early 1940s, he set up Tibor Ltd, which was to become one of the most innovative textile companies of the

post war period. Clients included Concorde, Ercol, QE2, Lotus Cars, Coventry Cathedral and the Shakespeare Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon. His most famous designs include “Age of Kings”, “Atournament”, “A History of Shapes” and “Flamingo” which are now highly regarded among textile collectors and connoisseurs.

World Museum Liverpool, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EN,
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk Tel. 0151 478 4393

The Beat Goes On - continues until 1 November 2009

The exhibition explores Liverpool’s rich musical heritage, its success and its continuing evolution. It features a range of costumes from the 1950s to the present day which helped to define the city’s musical tastes and genres, such as the Beatles’ famous collarless stage suits of 1963 and a Caroline Charles dress worn by Cilla Black on an early edition of Ready Steady Go! A wide range of styles is included, from clothes worn by local punks at Liverpool’s famous Eric’s club between 1977 and 1980 to clothes worn in promotional videos by local bands, the Zutons and Clinic.

Walker Art Gallery, William Brown Street, Liverpool, L3 8EL Tel: 0151 478 4199
www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

Fashion V Sport – until 31 May 2009

A stylish exhibition on tour from London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, exploring the relationship between contemporary fashion and global sportswear brands over the last 20 years. Around 50 outfits and 120 objects are on display, including contemporary sportswear, streetwear, accessories and shoes.

Hat Works, Wellington Mill, Wellington Road South, Stockport SK3 0EU. Tel : 0161 355 7770 www.hatworks.org.uk

Bike Style - 14 February to 28 June 2009

Welcome to the world of motorcycle helmets . . .

Feeling stifled in your car?

Want to express your individuality?

Is motorcycling the answer?

Even if you have never considered putting on a helmet and taking to the road, this exhibition can give you a glimpse of the dream. Classic track, racing, motorcross and touring – Hat Works presents the motorbike helmet in all its forms. We’ll also be looking at style and safety developments, and introducing you to some local bikers. There will be activities for all the family within this fun and informative exhibition.

What’s Hot - Yasmin Rizvi - 2 April to 8 July 2009

Hat Works is privileged to present a selection of the latest work of London-based milliner Yasmin Rizvi, Hat Designer of the Year 2008-09. Her designs are sculptural and funky, and her techniques a mixture of traditional and experimental. Come and be amazed by her hats.

The Fuss about Feathers - Opens 4th July 2009

An exhibition exploring the use of feathers in millinery with special attention to the late Victorian and Edwardian period when hats were becoming enormous and feathers were used as a weapon in a woman's battle for millinery superiority. Hats of this time displayed feathers in every shape, every size and colour in order to display wealth and status. Wings, quills and entire birds were dyed, painted and mounted onto hats and bonnets.

The problem lay in the use of 'Osprey' feathers of rare and exotic birds such as the bird-of-paradise or species of egret.

Visitors to the exhibition will learn about the use of endangered species of birds used in the hat industry in the past and the supply of feathers for today's milliner. The Royal Society of the Protection of Birds plays a role in this exhibition, being formed as a direct result of those against the destruction of birds for use in hat fashions.

The exhibition will display hats from the last century which reflect the popularity and excitement that once surrounded feathers in fashion and showcase some new headpieces from current milliners who use feathers as inspiration for their work.

Harris Museum and Art Gallery, Market Square, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2PP Tel: 01772 258248 (office hours) Fax 01772 886764

Off the Rails: 10 Years of Collecting Fashion until 18th October 2009

What do Horrockses 1950s fashions, the Women's Land Army uniform, Northern Soul style and a Victorian mourning bonnet have in common? They've all become part of the Costume & Textiles collection at the Harris Museum & Art Gallery over the last 10 years. This new exhibition, *Off the Rails: 10 Years of Collecting Fashion* (11 October 2008 – 18 October 2009) showcases some of the latest additions to the collection, bringing them out of the stores to let them dazzle again.

The exhibition gives a flavour of the vibrant and diverse fashions of the past 200 years as well as being a window onto the lives of some of the people and characters of Lancashire's past.

On display will be an exquisitely embroidered eighteenth-century gentleman's court suit, Victorian wedding and mourning clothes, and fascinating fashions up to the present day. Star items include dramatic Vivienne Westwood platform shoes and glamorous Horrockses Fashion's 1950s dresses with graphic-print fabrics designed by renowned twentieth-century artists Graham Sutherland and Eduardo Paolozzi

York Castle Museum, The Eye of York, York, YO1 9RY Tel: 01904 687 687
www.yorkcastlemuseum.org.uk

The Sixties - continues until 18th March 2012

The brand new 1960s experience at York Castle Museum will change your perspective on one of the most explosive decades in recent times. The gallery brings the spirit of

the decade back to life, looking at the iconic images but also offering alternative viewpoints in an exciting and interactive way. Rare items from a range of collections across the Trust - social history, art, fashion and textiles, militaria, astronomy and decorative art – are all included together with sound, light, moving images and innovative design.

Chinese Reflections – ongoing

Textiles, tea and ceramics feature in this exhibition which explores 300 years of Chinese influence on everyday life in Britain, showcasing our most impressive Chinese and Chinoiserie items and looking at contemporary Chinese influences expressed by today's Chinese community in York.

From Cradle To Grave – ongoing

This exhibition focuses on the history of three rites of passage, birth, marriage and death and includes christening gowns, wedding clothes, trousseau items, mourning clothes and jewellery.

Leeds Costume Collection, Lotherton Hall, Lotherton Lane, Abeford, Leeds, LS25 3EB Tel: 0113 281 3259

Fashion Revolution: British Style from the 1960s to 1970s -

March 1st to December 31st 2009

From the mini skirt to the hippy look, this is an exhibition of some of the leading British designs and designers that put Britain at the forefront of fashion in the 1960's and 1970's.



On display at Lotherton Hall will be many fantastic, original garments from this exciting and highly significant era of fashion. There will be iconic mini dress by Mary Quant, more dramatic outfits by Zandra Rhodes and Bill Gibb, and dapper suits, by the likes of Dougie Millings; tail to the Beatles.

Image: Mary Quant, Ginger Group dress, c 1968

Scotland

National Museum of Costume, Shambellie House, New Abbey, Dumfries, Tel: 0131 247 4030 www.nms.ac.uk/costume

Jean Muir: A Fashion Icon - 3 April to 31 October 2009

Jean Muir was an iconic figure in the world of fashion design. See highlights from her inspiring collection, donated to National Museums Scotland.

The British designer held a unique place in the international fashion scene, from her emergence in the swinging 1960s to her death in 1995. In Paris, she was 'the new queen of the dress' and in New York, 'the jewel in the crown of British fashion'.

Jean Muir: A Fashion Icon celebrates the life and workings of this individual and revered dressmaker. Find out why she obtained such accolades through a stunning display of garments, sketches, film and fashion photographs. This exhibition will feature garments specially selected for the National Museum of Costume. A selection of jewellery will be on display for the very first time.

"The exhibition is so beautifully done, it moved me so much. It's as if she's still with us. It proves that her clothes have never gone away. You could keep them forever; they are timeless." Joanna Lumley on Jean Muir: A Fashion Icon at the National Museum of Scotland

Exhibition entry included in museum admission: Adult £3.50 / Conc £2.50

Child 12 and under free. Members free

Ireland

National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts and History, Collins Barracks, Benburb St., Dublin 7, Ireland, www.museum.ie
Tel: 00 353 1 6777 444

A Dubliner's collection of Asian Art: The Albert Bender Exhibition – from 13 November 2008

This new gallery at the National Museum of Ireland showcases the collection of oriental artefacts donated to the museum by Dublin born Albert Bender during the 1930s, including 18th century painted Thangkas, Chinese tapestries and embroideries, and a Daoist priest's robe.

Neillí Mulcahy – Irish Haute Couture of the 50s and 60s – ongoing

The exhibition looks at the work of the Irish fashion designer, Neillí Mulcahy. She was known for her innovative use of Irish tweeds, collaborating with hand weavers to produce fabrics in lightweight weaves and vibrant colours. The exhibition includes a selection of outfits for day and evening wear supported by contemporary fashion photography and illustrations.

Books - recent and forthcoming publications

Hats: An Anthology by Stephen Jones and Oriole Cullen, V&A Publications, January 2009

Hats: An Anthology offer an unprecedented view of the world of millinery, drawing on the V&A's extensive collection of hats, Stephen Jones's own archive and iconic headgear from around the globe. Beautifully illustrated chapters examine the inspiration behind the creation of hats, the history of their construction, the lure of the hat shop and finally the etiquette and occasion of hat wearing for the client.

English Embroidery in the Metropolitan Museum, 1575 – 1700 “Twixt Art and Nature”, by Melinda Watt and Andrew Morrall, Yale University Press, November 2008

This books centres around the Metropolitan Museum of Art's preeminent collection of embroidered objects from England's late Tudor and Stuart eras.

The Empire's New Clothes – A History of the Russian Fashion Industry, 1700 – 1917, by Christine Ruane, Yale University Press, March 2009

Upholstered Furniture in the Lady Lever Art Gallery, by Lucy Wood, Yale University Press, January 2009

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