



M0056568NC

WOMEN'S SPORTSWEAR

FROM THE RATIONAL HEALTH MOVEMENT TO 1950

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN AND COMPLIMENTARY STUDIES

AND

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE

FACULTY OF DESIGN

DEPARTMENT OF FASHION AND TEXTILES

BY

TOINETTE SEYMOUR

1985



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|         |                    |                       |    |
|---------|--------------------|-----------------------|----|
|         | INTRODUCTION       | 1                     |    |
| CHAPTER | I                  | Riding and Hunting    | 22 |
|         | II                 | Croquet               | 35 |
|         | III                | Golf                  | 37 |
|         | IV                 | Cricket and Hockey    | 40 |
|         | V                  | Tennis                | 45 |
|         | VI                 | Skating               | 52 |
|         | VII                | Motoring              | 59 |
|         | VIII               | Bathing and Beachwear | 67 |
|         | IX                 | Cycling               | 77 |
|         | CONCLUSION         | 83                    |    |
|         | BIBLIOGRAPHY       | 87                    |    |
|         | LIST OF QUOTATIONS | 90                    |    |



In the early nineteenth century the feminine ideal was one of fragile immaturity. Women were seen as weak, timid innocent creatures of sensitive nerves who could be happy only under the protection of some masterful male. Slenderness, pale complexions and fragility were admired and considered a sign of aristocratic birth. What was known as "rude health" belonged to vulgar lower classes. The more helpless a woman looked the more elegant and feminine she was perceived as being.

Fashions were designed to emphasize the fragility of the female form. Pale colours and easily damaged fabrics reflected the weakness and uselessness of the wearer. These clothes ensured the ill-health of ladies by putting them in low-necked sleeveless muslin dresses and flimsy footwear. Worn in the harsh European and North American Winters, in large drafty residences, it is no wonder that consumption was the dreaded disease of the day. The novels of Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters abound with feverish, delicate heroines.

Fig. 1.

The corset was another culprit, inflicting ill-health on women, though it was considered a medical necessity by most Victorians. It was believed that ladies "frames" were extremely delicate and that their muscles could not hold them up without assistance. Well-brought up little girls were laced into corsets as early as three years of age, the stays being stiffened, lengthened and tightened progressively as they grew older. By the time they





Fig 1

The tyranny of the corset ~ 1895



reached adolescence, they were wearing heavy canvas structures reinforced with whalebone or steel. At this stage it was often impossible for women to even sit or stand unsupported by the corset. The internal organs were compressed and sometimes deformed and it was impossible to draw a deep breath. This was the cause of the frequent blushings and fainting spells so familiar in Victorian literature. It also brought on digestive complaints and loss of appetite.

Fig 2,3

Women in the mid nineteenth century wore layers of shifts and chemises over their corsets, three or more petticoats, a hoop skirt or crinoline and a long dress which might contain twenty yards of fabric. For outdoor wear a heavy shawl and a bonnet or hat decorated with feathers, flowers, ribbons and veiling would be worn. Altogether a woman might carry between ten to thirty pounds of clothing. In this costume it was difficult to move about vigorously and virtually impossible to run. In an emergency the genteel thing to do was faint and let the nearest capable gentleman take command.

The corset was considered to have not only a medical function but also a social one. Not only were woman considered the weaker sex physically, their morals were considered to need constant vigilance. Woman, therefore, must not travel without a chaperone; must not follow a profession or attend university, must not see a play or read any book which might inflame the imagination. Even Shakespeare fell into that last category, unless it was Bowdler's censored version of his work. To avoid becoming



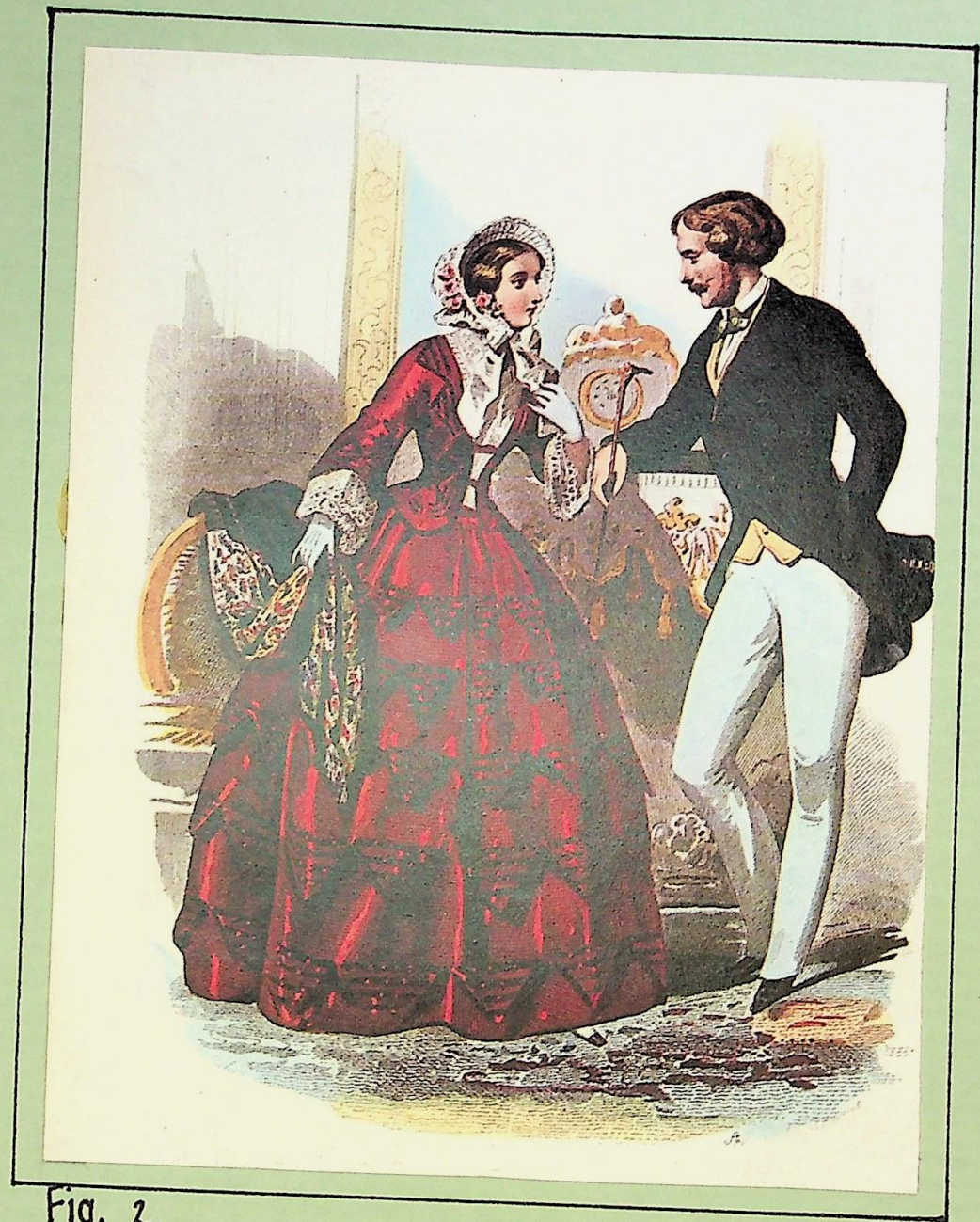


Fig. 2.

Fashions of May 1857 from Les Modes Parisiennes.





Fig. 3.

The year the crinoline reached its zenith - 1859



the victim of her own weakness woman needed to be confined in an ungainly, heavily reinforced costume which would make undressing a difficult and lengthy process. These extremes of inconvenience were suffered mainly by ladies of some status since it is inevitable that when clothes are uncomfortable, high-status clothes will be more uncomfortable. Working women wore looser corsets and clothes and carried less weight of cloth.

In a highly patriarchal society such as the mid-nineteenth century, a helpless, lavishly costumed pretty woman was the ultimate object of conspicuous consumption. Men sought and maintained such a woman as a sign of their own economic and sexual power. In such a society the dress of women and men was clearly differentiated, and anyone who adopted the dress of the opposite sex was considered shocking, or even disgusting and unnatural. In such an environment Mrs Amelia Bloomer's campaign for the divided skirt in the 1850's was doomed to failure. Greeted with ridicule and social ostracism she had little hope of succeeding with her ideas though she gave her name - Bloomer - to a garment. Thirty years later when the first dress reforms began to seep through, they were not imitations of masculine styles, but rather an attempt to modify the worst excesses of contemporary dress.

Lady Harberton, founder of the National Dress Society (1881), later the Rational Dress Society, did her best to persuade





Fig. 4

Mrs. Bloomer's Rational Costume for cycling - 1850



women to adopt suitable clothes for sports and everyday wear. A report from a newspaper in 1887 had this to say:

"Under the auspices of the National Dress Society Viscountess Harberton delivered a lecture on ladies dress at the Westminster Town Hall on Wednesday ..... with Mrs Oscar Wilde in the chair ..... The reform she preached was a radical one ..... if compression (from corsets) oppression and dragging were not inseparable from petticoats and corsets there would be no need of a Rational Dress Society." (1)

Reformed dress followed contemporary styles, though dresses were cut more loosely and sleeves were fuller. To our eyes the dress looks very Victorian, but at the time it was considered revolutionary and thought to resemble medieval costume. The Dress Reform Movement was also concerned with underwear, some radicals advocating the abandonment of the corset while most merely thinking that a less rigid construction would suffice. The introduction of "health underwear" of wool (Jaeger) or cotton (Aertex), in the 1990's, gave women more protection from the climate. The minority who actually did adopt the reformed dress tended to be intellectuals, socialists, and bohemians.

Herr Doktor Gustav Jaeger (1852 - 1912), a lecturer on anthropology at Stuttgart Royal Polytechnic, had been an invalid in his youth. He was afflicted by blood-poisoning, chills, piles and stoutness. Other medics of the time put their faith in Swedish drill or patent tonic foods, but Dr. Jaeger, receptive



to the theories of rational dress, believed wool to be the cure of all his ills. Only animal fibres, he believed, were compatible with the human skin. Cotton and linen he dismissed as absorbing "noxious vapours when cold, emitting them when warm to poison the body and foul the air." (2) He believed that the dangers of draughts should be minimised by wearing evenly distributed layers of clothes. He also was of the opinion that both natural and chemical dyes were harmful. He evolved a system of dress and exercise which he explained in his book "Health Culture" (1872). He also started a business in Germany, named Jaeger, to sell all the necessities for a life of health.

Jaeger advocated sleeping between double cashmere sheets. Underclothes consisted of combination garments of undyed machine - knit stockinette, a type of fine wool jersey. A seamless knitted coat would be worn over this, and for men, breeches and possibly digital socks, each toe separately compartmented. For ladies there were wool corsets, gowns, jackets and shawls. Hats were of wool or plaited horsehair, feather ornamented. Lace was made from wool and footwear was fleece-lined. Natural wool colours only were acceptable, although indigo blue and black might be allowable. A certain Lewis Tomalin imported the Jaeger ideas into London in 1884 and opened an agency in Fore St.

Business was slow at first, but when Tomalin took a stand at the international Health Exhibition in 1884 things began to



take off. "The soft, warm natural wool was hailed with delight", wrote an early dress historian of the 1890's. "It was just what people wanted. Every article that could be procured was sold directly." (3)

Tomalin's Jaeger clothing had many advantages - it was durable, and the "United" suits were warranted for five years if laundered in the company washing powder, "Suaviter". It also offered unbulky warmth in the unheated rooms of Victorian times. The Arctic explorers Fridtjof, Nansen and Scott all testified to the efficiency of the long "combinations". However, the real advance lay in the freedom of movement now possible. Jaeger's woollen system used previously uncommon textiles: machine knit wool jersey, the lightest grade being far thinner than modern T-shirting; exotic imported cashmere, alpaca, guanaca, vicuna, angora, and hair from the twin-humped Bactarian camel. Tweeds and plaids were elevated from peasant status and became fashionable. Fleece from the merino sheep, widely ranched in the Antipodes, was another popular choice.

As Jaeger's system was radically "anti-fashion", the fibres were knit or cut into shapes influenced by workwear, or by the newly evolving sportswear - tennis, cricket, golf, yachting etc. His outfits for men and boys are astonishingly modern, rather like jogging suits. Fussy detail was ignored, and the result was practical, easy - to - wear clothing which would not look too incongruous if worn today. Ladies Jaeger-wear might consist of a dress of soft-structured navy jersey worn



over a hand-knit petticoat. Spare and uncomplicated, one can see in them the beginning of modern clothes as we know them.

Jaeger was aware of, and catered for the growing need for rational sportswear. He produced various styles of the cardigan for both sexes: plain in 21 shades, banded, intarsiaed, and in fair-isle for golf. He designed an "athlete gymnastic sweater" for ladies, Fleece saddle covers for cycling, vicuna dust coats for motoring, blazers and argyll socks for country life - Jaeger supplied them all. Jaeger had sold mannish coats and knitted jumper suits for a decade before the revolutionary Chanel adopted them. Like Chanel, Jaeger always kept his mind on the rational and practical - pyjamas for ladies about "to travel or camp out", "tennis coats as worn by our leading players." (4)





Fig. 5.

Elaborate blouse with high boned collar and fluted skirt. 1903.



With the dawn of the twentieth century the balance of fashion tipped away from the mature woman in favour of youth. It saw the commencement of a steady diminution in the amount of clothes worn by women. The bodice, at the beginning of the century was lined and boned, the skirt had a soft, pliable

Fig.5. line with deep curved gores, giving a fluted effect. In 1909 skirts were generally close-fitting, especially for evening, and many were hobbled below the knee. This was the beginning of a five-year span of hobble skirts, and significantly, this was the time of greatest activity for the militant Suffragette movement.

By 1910 the high-boned collar was rapidly being replaced by the simple, turn-down, Peter Pan collar. The fashion was for a long uncovered neck and throat, although according to contemporary illustration many kept the familiar high boned look. Bodices were now less aggressive than at the beginning of the century. By 1912 skirts had reached to above the ankle - these were all small measures, but once women could breathe more easily and had no trains to trip over they were better able to take part in sport.

World War I proved to be a turning point in social attitudes, though the immediate post-war reaction to dress was an attempt to put the clock back to 1913. The Suffragette movement, so vehement and militant leading up to 1914, was overtaken by the war and when the vote was given to women in 1918 it was as much a mark of recognition for women's war effort as a



Fashion sketch by Hemjic, 1929. Skirts are shorter than ever before. Hats are small and close fitting.



Fig. 6.



result of protest and demonstration. The post-war decade of 1920-30 glorified youth; the death of so many young men in Flanders and a score of lesser battlefields produced an idealised idea of male youth. Willet Cunningham, in his book "English Women's Clothing in the Present Century" says that "young women sought by every physical means to obliterate their feminine outline and assume that of the immature male" (5)

From 1921 economic troubles of a seemingly uncontrollable kind prevailed throughout the world, in Britain causing declining exports, and rising unemployment. For men contemplating marriage, such conditions discouraged thoughts of raising a family, and the anti-maternal schoolboy-shaped girl became his ideal. To appeal to such tastes girls flattened breasts and bottoms and disguised waists. The clothes of the 20's were

Fig.6. thought at the time to represent an extreme of freedom for women, and certainly they were a relief to anyone old enough to have worn the styles of twenty years earlier: One of the greatest advantages was the reduced time spent washing, ironing and mending, and also in simply getting dressed and undressed. The woman who bobbed her hair saved hours that would have been previously spent washing, brushing and braiding.

Some developments in this decade worth mentioning are the development of the zip fastener, the increase in the number of knitted garments, and the commercial production of "rayon". The zip-fastener, developed in the U.S. appears to have been



first used on clothing by the U.S. Navy in 1918. In 1923 this fastener was being used on rubber boots, and in 1925 was to be found on leather "Russian" boots. Technically, the growing importance of artificial silk (rayon) was allied to an increasing output of ready-to-wear clothes of all kinds. The name rayon was adopted in 1924.

The decade between 1930 and 1940 brought a returning ideal of maturity. The higher waistline, longer skirt and complex cut of women's clothes produced a silhouette more elegant and natural than the schoolgirl shapes of previous years. The cinema was now the biggest influence on fashion. An increasingly American influence, including the spread of American shoes and ready-to-wear clothes in English shops, was allied to the influence of the cinema.

Casual clothes and sportswear were a feature of the decade, and trousers and shirts were at last acceptable for beach and casual wear. Women were told that they looked very unattractive wearing trousers, and that wanting to wear that symbol of male authority was unnatural. Nevertheless, the fashion spread and by the mid-thirties woman could play tennis or dig the garden in clothes that did not handicap her. This freedom however, was strictly limited to the private and informal side of life. Wearing slacks to the office or to a party was out of the question, and any female who appeared on a formal occasion in trousers was suspected as being either eccentric or lesbian. Most schools and colleges insisted on



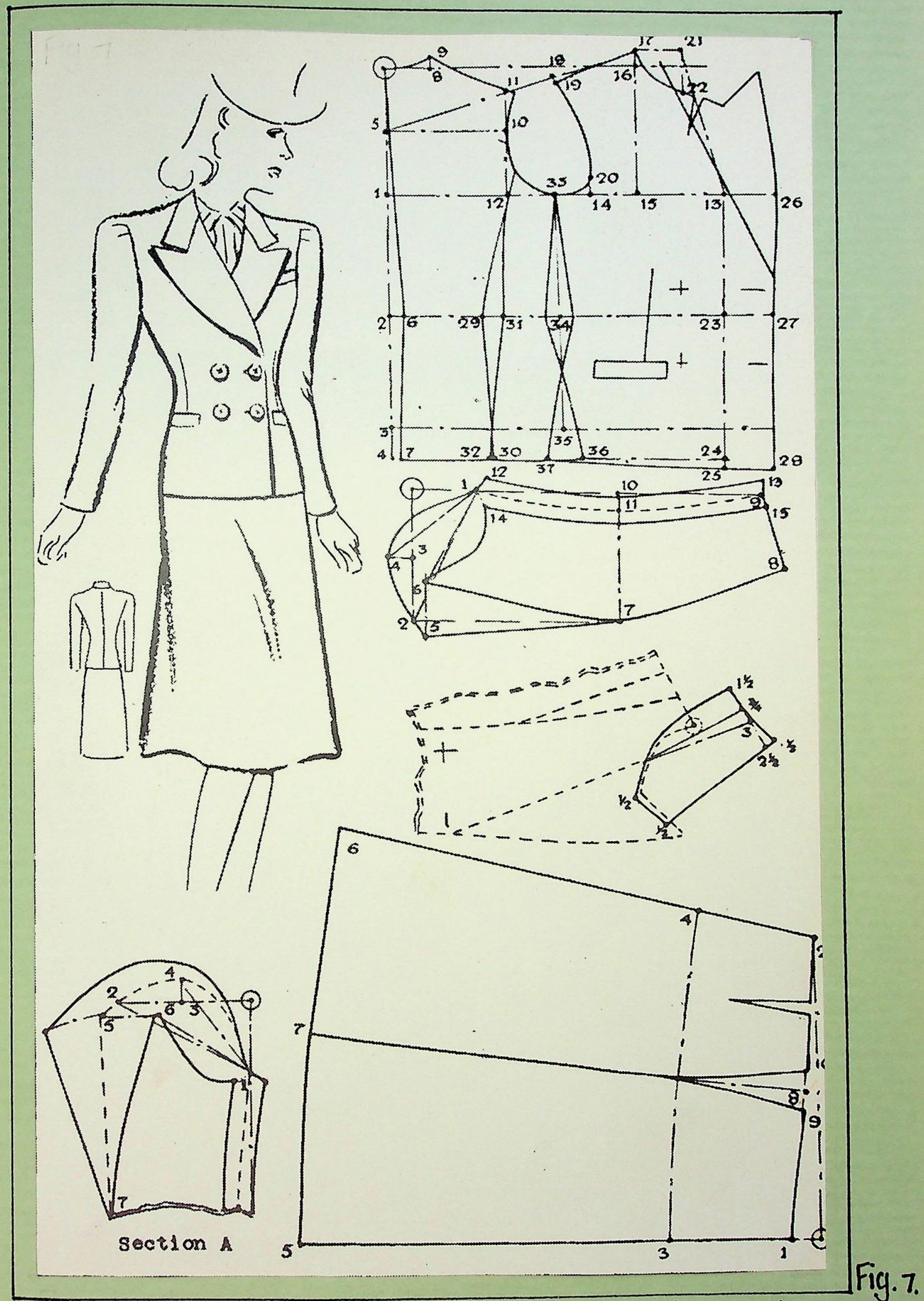


Diagram from Tailor and Cutter, 1941, showing how patterns could be laid out to save cloth.



skirts for classes, and even today this custom occasionally survives.

Fig. 7.

The whole of the 1940's was overshadowed by the second World War and its aftermath, to a degree that had never before been experienced. The thoughts, ideas and resources of the entire world were concentrated in an unprecedented manner upon the pursuit of the war in the first five years, and in the attempted reconstruction and rehabilitation during the second half of the decade. New synthetic materials appeared, at first notably nylon. First produced in Britain in 1941, the new fabric was initially available only for war materials. Immediately after the war a popular source of nylon for the home dressmaker was ex - R.A.F. parachutes. Sold free of coupons, these provided a supply of white or coloured 11 foot long triangular panels. "ideal for making blouses, lingerie, kiddieswear, curtains etc."

There was less opportunity for sportswear during the war years, except in the services, which provided their own designs of appropriate garments; and manufacturers turned their production over to government contracts. Post-War rationing kept the demand for sportswear down: people expended coupons on more essential clothes. Many pre-war bathing dresses and tennis frocks lingered on. Traditional forms of dress for tennis, golf etc. survived however, and by 1950 hints of brief nylon dresses worn with lace edged panties were causing eyebrows in tennis circles to rise.





Fig. 8.  
Dior's New Look, Paris 1947



12  
Fig. 8. Dior's extravagantly feminine "New Look" burst upon the fashion scene in 1947 in Paris. With its rustling long skirts, "wasp" waists and emphasis on the bosom, it harked back to a bygone age. After the drab and dreary war years women loved his romantic, extravagant styles, and despite rationing and shortages it was soon popular everywhere, and became the definitive style of the 1950's. This was the decade of the baby boom, and the perfect wife, and, as usually happens in patriarchal periods, female and male clothes were sharply distinguished. The New Look Woman and the Man in the Grey Flannel Suit were almost as distinct in silhouette as their grandparents.

In the preceding pages I have sketched a general picture of dress, from the Rational Health Movement right up to 1950. One can see how much events of the time and social attitudes influenced and changed dress, and the gradual freedom women attained from constricting costume. The exceptions to this growing emancipation were the periods immediately after both World Wars, when, as a reaction against the turmoil that had gone before, there was an attempt to put the clock back and have male and female appearance clearly differentiated. I am now going to deal with individual sports, and give a more detailed picture of the developments which occurred in sportswear in each category.



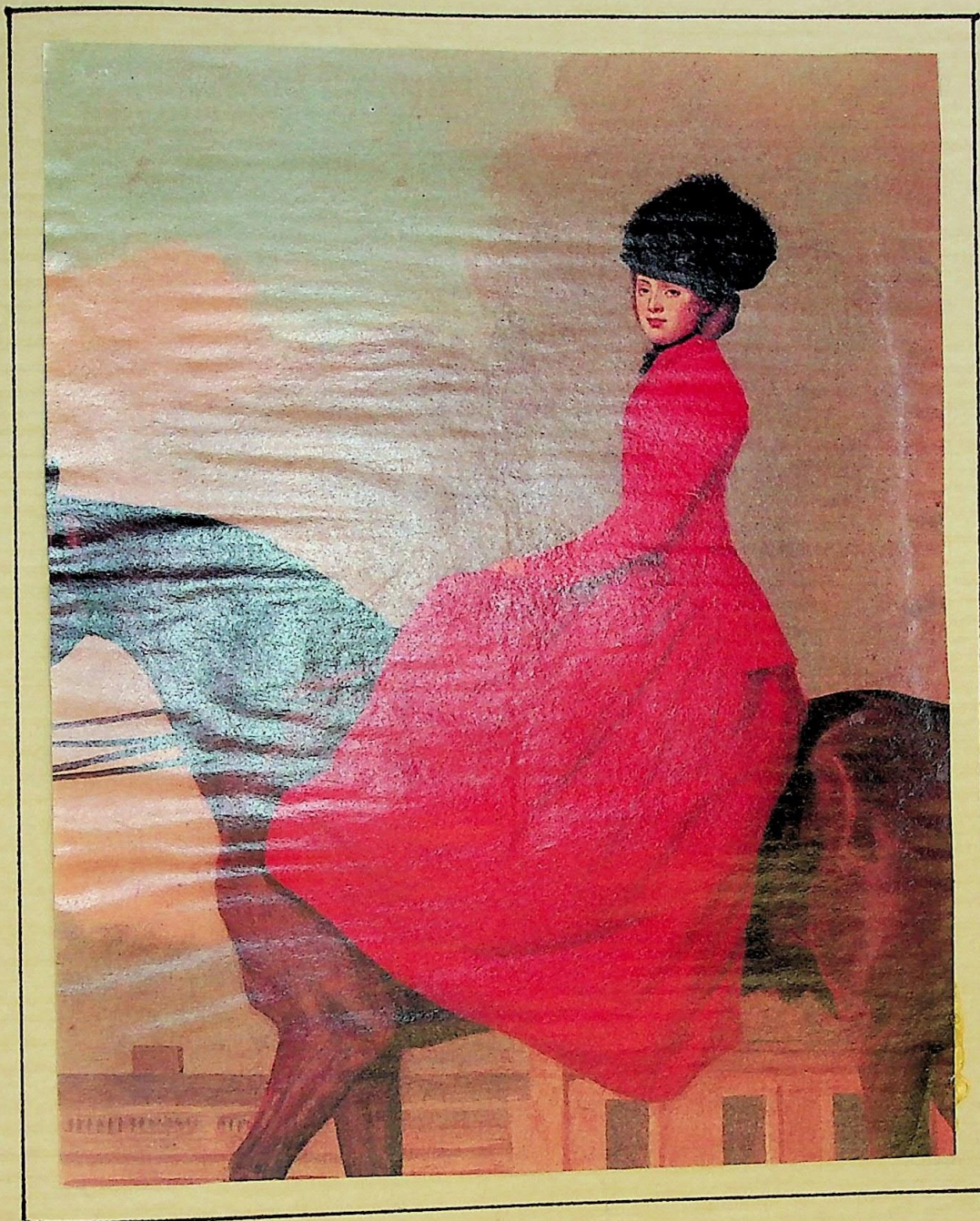


Fig. 9.  
Lady in early nineteenth century Hunting Habit.



Fig. 9.

For centuries riding had been a means of transport and an acceptable way for English ladies to take exercise. At the end of the nineteenth century when hunting gained in popularity as a social event, riding became a fashionable sport. The spread of the railways from the mid to the end of the nineteenth century brought more people, and especially ladies, onto the hunting fields. In the past, town dwellers were unable to make lengthy expeditions into the shires to indulge in the sport. Now, it was possible, travelling by train, to spend the day hunting on a borrowed or hired horse, or even on your own, which had travelled with you in a railway horse-box.

The costumes worn for both riding and hunting were very similar, though the latter usually included the hunt colours on the waistcoat. A workmanlike piece of tailoring, the costume was made from warm and sturdy fabrics. Riding costume changed slowly, unlike other fashions of the time, and the changes were always made with the safety factor in mind. A coat, skirt, linen blouse, hat, gloves and boots made up the outfit. Breeches were worn underneath the skirt, so too were petticoats until the 1880's. Skirts were long and voluminous until 1880, resulting in a number of accidents on the hunting field. One of the first refinements to this skirt was to tailor it to allow a pocket for the knee. This allowed the skirt to sit gracefully when the rider was mounted. The skirt was gored and the old flowing skirt disappeared even for park riding.





Fig. 10.  
Princess of Wales Riding Habit  
held up for walking (1881)



There was no gathering at the waist; the skirt fitted neatly into the waistband and was long enough to cover the feet.

The trousers worn underneath the skirt varied from all leather to all cloth, depending on the price of the costume. Sometimes both were combined; the upper part being leather and the lower part being cloth. The jacket had no centre back seam, forming instead one deep jacket basque tapering almost to the waist at the side seams. In the middle of the basque there was a pleat with two small buttons at the top. The sleeves were set in with a little fullness and buttoned tightly to the wrist.

The plain-collared shirt worn with the outfit had a man's cravat of black silk or white batiste tied at the neck. The leather boots were either square or round toed, had a small heel and were worn high on the leg. Doeskin gloves, similar in style to gentleman's, but without the outside stitching, were worn. The hat and riding crop completed the outfit.

The hat favoured in 1880 was a man's hat ornamented with a gauze or lace veil; gauze was preferred as it shielded the neck from the sun. The lace was tied around the hat, while the gauze veil dropped from the crown. A second long veil was placed flat around the hat and drawn to the right, shading the face and neck. Unadorned round crown hats were also worn, held on by elastic or rubber. Victorian ladies were proud of their costume:



"Nothing can be neater than the habit of the present day, fitting its wearer like a glove, utterly destitute of braid or trimming of any kind, and depending for its beauty, entirely on its cut (6) and its thoroughly useful and workmanlike appearance".

THE QUEEN 1880

Shortly after 1880, an alteration originating in France occurred to the riding costume. A tab was stitched inside the costume from which an elastic stirrup was suspended. The foot passed through this and the skirt could not ride up. Many adopted this idea although it was dangerous. In 1886 H. J. Nicholls patented the safety foot strap which kept the skirt in position but released the foot easily if there was an accident.

The third pommel was eliminated from the side saddle and it was claimed that this measure was safer. The chief danger to ladies lay in being thrown from the saddle and being caught up or dragged by the skirt. Many "safety" skirts were invented and worn. One of the first ideas was to button the side seams together so that they would become undone when under strain. This proved unsuccessful because the buttons came undone too easily at the least movement. Many factors had to be taken into account when designing the riding costume. It was necessary to have free access to the stirrup of the left foot; the skirt had also to be kept down, and there was the problem of the appearance of the skirt when dismounted.

"Ladies cut out large holes from the under part of the train,



for additional safety" (7)

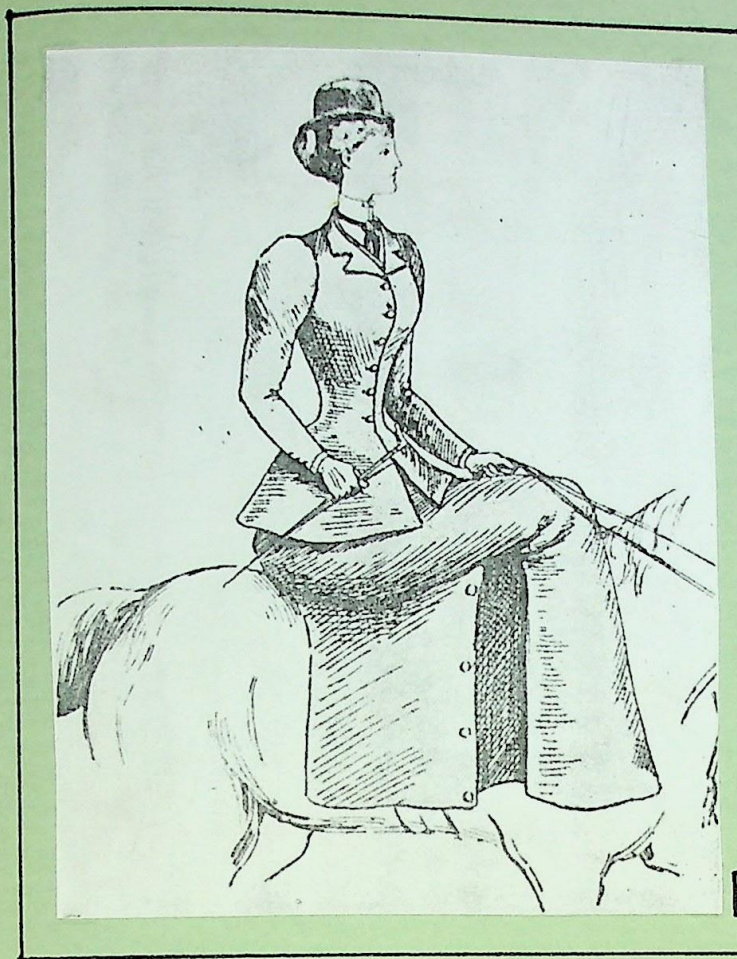
↑  
Tailor and cutter practical guide (1887)

The Burgess Safety Habit was the first to use this idea in 1890, but in a compromise with earlier styles. The skirt was made in the ordinary manner but the part which caught on the saddle was cut away in a horseshoe shape, held in place by cup and ball fastening. This was secure for ordinary wear; when pressure was applied the cup and ball unfastened and that portion of the skirt would remain over the pommels. The danger of dragging was removed and the idea of cutting the habit to shape was introduced.

Another safety habit was designed in 1892 to cling to the rider instead of the saddle. The under-part was cut away except for the part that covered the knees. The footstrap was designed to make it impossible for the boot to catch in it. A clip attached to the riding trousers ensured that the habit would come away with the rider. A loop fastened it back for walking.

Fig. 11. In 1890 an apron skirt made of thick melton cloth appeared. It could be made into an ordinary skirt from behind, but it did not become popular until ten years later. In 1894 the Hayes Safety skirt and the Twin Zenith Safety Habit were designed. The former could be buttoned up when dismounted to give the appearance of an ordinary skirt. When in the saddle the skirt opened at the side, the front turned slightly under, fastening with





Safety Habit (1894)  
worn open on the horse.

Fig. 11



Right: A riding habit consisting  
of a coat similar to a  
gentleman's frock coat.  
Left: Habit with divided skirt  
for riding astride (1890)

Fig. 12



17  
a loop of elastic under the knee, fastening to a button on the breeches. The latter habit combined breeches and skirt.

The novelist, Richard Surtees, was the great contemporary authority on hunting during the middle years of the nineteenth century. Surtees was a countryman, and a hunter, as well as a keen observer with an eye for detail. His novels abound with descriptions of contemporary costume: e.g.

"Mrs Somerville re-entered attired for the chase ..... she had on a smart new hat with an exquisitely cut eight guinea habit braided in front, and beautifully made chamois leather trousers with black - cloth feet ..... she had on a pair of smart new primrose - coloured kids (gloves) that fitted with the utmost exactitude. She had got a beautiful gold-mounted whip down from London with a light blue silk tassled cord through its ruby-eyed fox head handle."(8)

extract from "Mr. Tracey Romford's Hounds" 1865.

The finery of fashionable ladies was not always up to the rigours of the hunting field. A description of a Miss de Glancey in her wide-awake hat and feather, her light green habit of exquisite fit and the straw-coloured ribbon at her neck, after a run ending in a thunderstorm:

"is drenched as if she had taken a shower or a bath. The smart hat and feather are annihilated, down comes her hair ...



the crinoline and wadding dissolve like ice before the fire:  
She has no more figure or shape than an icicle."(9)

By the twentieth century the four main type of skirts were:-  
the close fitting train for riding in the park which looked  
smart when dismounted; the safety train with a hole for the pommel  
of the saddle on the underside; the apron skirt, and the ride -  
astride skirt. The apron skirt, cut away on the underside so  
that nothing could catch on the pommels, was slow to become  
popular. The reason for this was that "It ..... was looked  
upon as a very fast garment, not on any account to be worn  
by a lady with a shred of modesty, in that when dismounted the  
riders legs were visible from the back" (10)

The Queen, 23rd/January/1910

Despite this, it was adopted as the only safe garment.  
Breeches and boots were worn underneath. Once the breeches  
were revealed at the back it seemed pointless to cover the  
front, and soon it was realised that the sight of breeches and  
boots offended no-one. This has a parallell with the bathing  
costume - once the combination suit became popular with a  
separate skirt worn over it, women realised that the combination  
suit alone gave far more freedom of movement in the water, and  
the skirt was discarded. The revolutionary idea of riding  
Fig. 12. astride instead of side-saddle was growing in acceptance, lead-  
ing to a changed, ride-astride costume. It was claimed that  
the cross saddle was safer for the rider and better for the horse.



"Obsolete notions stood in the way of women having the advantage of the cross-saddle and in consequence many a riding woman who spent her early youth on horseback laments today a slightly enlarged right hip and perhaps also a right shoulder a shade higher than the left one." (11)

The Queen, 7th/February/1920

It was still thought that a girl should learn to ride side saddle. The thinking was that since men had flatter thighs than women there was a danger that girls would develop stronger and flatter thighs than nature intended.

The divided skirt was the first ride-astiride costume, no longer thought unfeminine. There were several styles, all cut as variations of very wide legged trousers. One style consisted of three parts, the front (and largest piece) the back and the gusset. Another style was based on the circular skirt shape. Sometimes the skirt was dispensed with, and a coat which fell on either side of the saddle, and looked like a skirt, was worn. By 1925 the skirt had been discarded and the breeches were finally revealed completely.

The jacket also changed, but change was influenced by fashion rather than safety. Looser styles were particularly favoured as they allowed for more freedom of movement. At first the jacket was tailored to fit tightly at the waist, imitating masculine styles. "The object has been to make feminine riding dress as much like the other sex as possible and really, last



season, when the cravat and waistcoat were worn, at a little distance it was almost impossible to distinguish young ladies from young men." (12)

The Queen, 6th February 1886

A new bodice was introduced with two or more rows of hooks and eyes so that it could be let out. "This is very useful for ladies who are in the habit of altering the amount of under-clothing" (13)

The Queen 19th/April 1890

This was a practical measure since most Victorian women doubled their underclothes in Winter.

The woollen combinations so much in favour at the time were recommended as a suitable undergarment. These combinations reached to the ankle. Stockings were pulled up over them and fastened with garters, looking completely smooth under the habit. Another option was a knitted wool jersey and knitted pantaloons reaching to the ankles under the boots. Riding stays, cut low at the back and the front, made in a soft pliable elastic, were worn.

The habit bodice at one time became very low, showing an inch of the waistcoat. Both single and double-breasted styles were popular. A loose-fitting coat similar to the masculine version replaced the tight fitting bodice. A coat recommended



in 1892 was made of a bronze-coloured cloth, with white lapels, buttoning left over right with four large buttons, loose fronts and rounded corners to reveal the waistcoat. By 1898 the loose coat with buttons under the fly fronts of the collar and revers was being worn. Decoration was usually simple, relying on the smartness of the costume. The waistcoat was an important part of the costume, often made in the hunt colours, or to contrast in colour with the habit e.g. a dark brown habit with a bright turquoise waistcoat. Small patterns could be introduced on this part of the costume. Leather was used, plush leather, white buckskin or tan kid, all of which looked thick and serviceable. An overcoat to match the outfit was advised.

Hats were worn as part of the costume.

Jockey caps and deerstalkers were popular around 1880 then sailor hats became the height of fashion. One writer claimed that "the get-up for riding at the height of the season is the same as would be worn on a yachts deck".<sup>(14)</sup>

The Queen 9th/August 1890

The Sailor hat was replaced by the top hat. The Billycock hat came into favour next, which had a hard crown and brim, yet was soft where it touched the head. The ride-astride costume was often topped by a bowler or a round soft hat. Around 1906 silk hats with bell shaped crowns and broader brims were back in fashion.



Popular safety skirt, short in front,  
long and draped at the back.  
British Vogue, 1927



Fig. 13.

Illustration from  
American Vogue,  
1920



Fig. 14.



Fig. 13, 14

The breeches, boots and golves have changed very little, even to the present day. A ridge was introduced on the sole of the boot to prevent the foot slipping too far forward in the stirrup. Buttons were introduced at the knee, fastening on the inside. In 1894 the breeches were strapped to the boots but after 1910 they were buttoned, front and back, with loops. Black or untanned leather remained popular for boots throughout the period of the 19th century. Fabric changed little, varying in colour from season to season. The most frequently mentioned are tweeds, Melton cloth, Tattersall cloth, and salt-and pepper mixtures. Woollen garments and leather breeches were worn underneath. Habits were usually lined with silk, usually black but sometimes green, brown, grey or blue; with matching waistcoats.



## CROQUET

The heyday of the game of croquet was in the 1860's and throughout the 60's and 70's it was the most popular outdoor game for ladies. It was a great social event, and it brought men and women together in the open air as no other sport of the time did. Contemporary fashion was worn as it was not a game which required strenuous movement, and it was considered more important to look charming and ladylike than be "sporting". In the crinoline period of the 60's women's skirts were slightly shorter than previously and for croquet were generally hitched up over the cumbersome hooped petticoat so that the ankles became evident. "The dress should be hooked up, or not only will it spoil many a good stroke, but with its sweeping train will probably disturb the position of some of the balls..... If the young ladies hands are very tender and apt to blister, we advise her to wear a pair of old kid gloves. She must be careful, however, that they fit well or, as they prevent the hands taking a firm hold, they are sure to deaden the force of the stroke."

### The Queen, February 7th 1865

The popularity of croquet was such that it was even played on the beach in bathing suits. As the craze subsided near the end of the century smart clothes were no longer considered essential, even for women, and in the 1890's and after a blouse and skirt was usual; but even then the skirts were long. Men usually dressed in an ordinary day suit, but to prevent them from becoming slack this warning was pinned to the board of a croquet club: "Gentlemen are requested not to play in their shirt sleeves when ladies are present."





Fig. 15. Croquet Dress, 1860-5



## GOLF

It is not known exactly when women began to play golf. Mary Queen of Scots is reputed to have played. The game gained immense popularity among both men and women in the 1890's. A game playable in Winter and Summer, it allowed for a variety of female costume; from blouses and skirts and straw hats to heavy tweed costumes, with thigh length jackets. Golf capes were introduced in 1803, hip length, kept in place by straps crossing in front, and were often tartan lined.

Hats were of straw, boater shaped, often decorated with ribbons or artificial flowers, or of felt, or they might take the form of a cap.

At the beginning of the present century, ladies jackets became shorter and were often in the Norfolk style. Flannel was used for Spring jackets and coats. Skirts, which were 6" - 8" off the ground took a great deal of wear and tear; leather was frequently used to reinforce the hem.

"It is a good plan to have a broad strip of leather round the hem, as this lasts well, and when covered with mud can be washed with little trouble." <sup>16</sup>

Mary Hexleat "Ladies Golf" 1907

The use of leather in this fashion was not confined to golfing but was often found in skirts and dresses for country walking,



shooting and the like. Shorter skirts meant smarter footwear often worn with cloth or leather gaiters. Flat heels were recommended. Nails or studs were sometimes worn in the soles and heels.

Scarlet jerseys were briefly popular in 1906. The Tam O'Shanter was particularly popular though: "Not everyone who goes to Scotland should wear a Tam O'Shanter. It is only by skilful management that this trying woolen monstrosity is ever rendered becoming ..... It has a disconcerting way of lurching over just at the wrong time."<sup>17</sup>

Mrs Douglas "Gentlewomen's Book of Dress". *here*

By 1909 some women players copied the American fashion of no hat. Tweed skirts, shirts, ties, cardigans or Fair-Isle jerseys; blouses with sleeveless overblouses of jersey material - such became regulation golf gear, and hardened into the traditional golfing gear which remains to the present day. Checked wool stockings were frequently worn, and from about 1923 cloche hats were common. Shoes were functional.

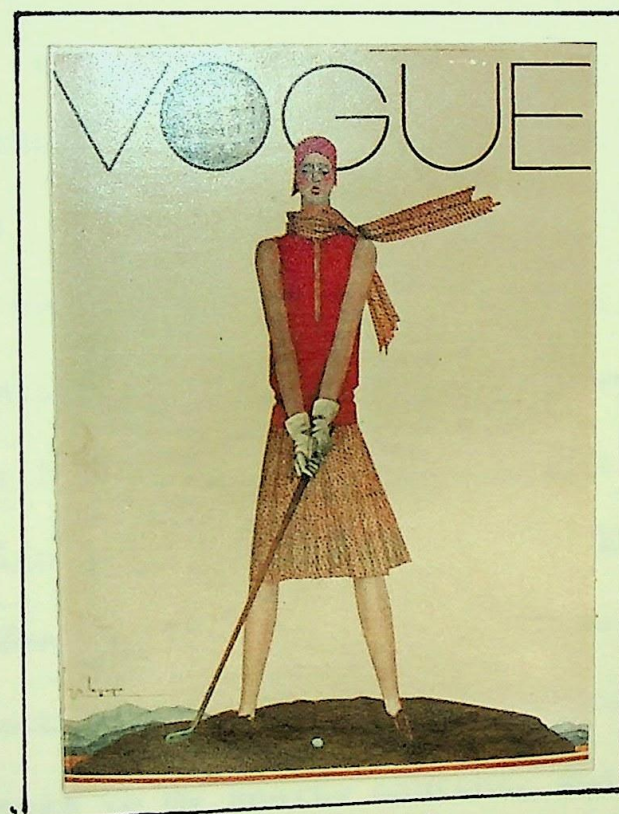
"Crepe rubber solid shoes, recommended for golf, everyday wear, tennis and bowls."<sup>18</sup>

Advertisement for S. Buckingham and Sons, Colchester. 1923

The period between 1930 and 1940 saw a great interest in sports and sportswear. Suede tops or jerkins were fashionable.



for golf, tweed skirts and dresses were worn with pullovers and jumpers. From 1935 onwards trousers and checked shirts gained in popularity, influenced by American casual wear. Crocheted caps and small skull caps completed the outfit.



Vogue Cover, 1928.



## CRICKET AND HOCKEY

Women began to play cricket as early as 1745; the only concession in dress being a slightly shortened skirt. From the middle of the nineteenth century onwards it was a popular game for schoolgirls, who were allowed greater freedom of dress than adults.

"Cricket ? says a loud clear voice, the door is shut again, and down go work and thimbles, a babel of delighted cries goes forth and upstairs pulling off ribbons, gowns, crinolines, all our feminine belongings, and pulling on knickerbockers and blouses. Yes, knickerbockers! Let no one blush or look shocked for they are long and ample, and tied modestly in at the ankle: as to the blouse which descends below the knee, and is trimly belted in at the waist, it is as decent and uncompromising as that worn by Dr. Mary Waller; our costume being in short, nothing more or less than that which is designated by the somewhat approbious title of "Bloomer". The knickerbockers bring comfort, the tunic confers respectability. It is a lovely thought that I can kick up my heels to my hearts content, and yet preserve decorum.

As to what manner of female I look, I care nothing; my sensations are all I think about and they are blissful." 19

This extract from "Comin' thro the Rye" (1875) by Helen B. Mathers



28  
shows the delight felt by schoolgirls in their new-found freedom. The Illustrated London News of 1897 depicts cricket players wearing dresses with small gigot sleeves fashionable at the time; skirts shortened to just below the knee, showing knickerbockers below. Peaked caps were still in evidence, though going out of fashion in favour of the straw boater. By 1900 headgear ceased to be worn during play.

Skirts remained long as late as 1905, but then the gym tunic began to be adopted. It was introduced in 1885 by Madame Bergman Osterberg and was increasingly used by colleges of physical training and schools for gym and games. Tunics were knee length and sleeveless, and worn with a washable blouse. The tunic had three box pleats down the front and back and was tied around the waist with a sash-like belt of braid. They were usually made from navy-blue serge, but clubs had their own colours which might be brown or dark green. Appropriate underwear was necessary and close-fitting knickers matching the tunic were introduced. The name "bloomers" came to be applied to this new undergarment. Corsets were replaced by loose unboned supports with suspenders, such as "liberty bodices."

The gym tunic remained popular for many years, and is still worn today in many British girls' schools. The male cricket



29  
Fig. 16. attire of white flannel trousers, white skirt and white cable-knit sweater was adopted by some female cricketers from about 1940 onwards.

In contrast with cricket, Hockey did not become a popular game until the late nineteenth century. The present form of the game came under national control when the Hockey Association was founded in 1886. The typical costume worn at this time was a sweater, or heavy woollen shirt, sometimes striped or coloured, knickerbockers, long woollen stockings and leather football boots. By the twentieth century cotton shirts, variously coloured, became the rule and light weight ankle shoes with studded rubber soles replaced boots, but long stockings remained.

Women undergraduates took to hockey at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford in 1887 and from the 1890's enthusiasm for the game spread. We are told by a writer on sport in 1910 that:

"The wide increase in the popularity of hockey and its rapid development as a women's game in the last 20 years is unique in the history of sport."<sup>10</sup>

#### Encyclopaedia of Sport

The first international ladies match between England and Ireland was played in 1887. They all wore ankle length skirts, red for England, green for Ireland. The skirts were teamed with shirt blouses with collars and ties.





Fig. 16.

White cable-knit cricket sweater adopted by female cricketers from about 1940 onwards.



The Irish team wore peaked caps but the English team was bare-headed.

By 1893 schools and P.T. colleges were wearing the gym tunic for hockey but it was an uphill struggle for others to achieve tunics or even short skirts. Miss Clarke, captain of the all England team in 1912, failing to achieve the wearing of a tunic, compromised by wearing a knee-length skirt and was then asked by the All England Council to have her red England skirt made longer as it was "so important on these occasions to avoid all criticism." By 1915 gym tunics had won the day and were worn by all the first teams in England. Short canvas boots with rubber studs were the commonest form of footwear. Ankle pads and padded gloves were adopted by some.

In 1900 a garment known as a djibbah was introduced at Roedean School. It was a knee-length dress with a round neck and short sleeves, fitted the figure closely and flared out from the hips without pleats. The djibbah had no general popularity and the gym tunic had no rival for hockey players until it was ousted by shorts.



## TENNIS

Tennis originated in France where it was popular all through the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries. It is not known when it first came to England but it is mentioned in Gower's *Balade* C. 1400. The Tudors popularised the sport in England, and apart from a decline in the eighteenth century this game has been popular ever since.

As with other sports, women at first allowed fashion to rule over practicality and merely wore contemporary dress when playing. In 1873 they even wore bustles with trains! In the 1880's aprons with pockets for holding the balls were popular. A gradual awareness of the unsuitability of women's dress began to show itself as can be seen from this extract from "The Field" in 1885:

"The present healthy custom of indulging in active outdoor amusement is sadly interfered with by the ordinary costume... Lawn tennis has taught women how much they are capable of doing and it is a sign of the times that various games and sports which would have been tabooed a few years ago as "unladylike" are actually encouraged at various girl's schools.

Despite the efforts of Lady Harberton, founder of the National Dress Society, and other like-minded individuals, the dread of appearing "unladylike" hampered dress reform. Ladies



continued to wear ordinary clothes until the end of the nineteenth century, and the desire to attract the attention of onlookers of male sex to the players rather than to the game remained.

A typical tennis ensemble in 1884 would be as follows:

Made from striped flannel, the skirt would probably be plain in front and in wide pleats behind, measuring  $2\frac{3}{4}$  yards around the hem. The Tunic would be either long on one side and turned up "milkmaid style" on the other, or short and drawn back, ending in two long sash ends. The bodice would be round waisted with a band and fancy buckle. The skirt would have an alpaca foundation and a bustle of horsehair.

From 1903 white became the rule for tennis as it looked neater, and white linen holland became popular for skirts, dresses and blouses. Skirts were shortened to above the ankles. High collars were going out of fashion, to be replaced by soft collars and ties. Straw boaters topped off the outfit. By 1920 a hair ribbon or cap was worn, with Quaker style dresses in chintz with white collars and cuffs. Dresses in white sponge cloth with coloured embroidery were also popular, worn with perhaps paisley pattern jumpers.

Skirts were 10" from the ground in 1924, and had jumped to just below the knee in 1925. Pleated skirts with white cardigans were popular. The "Leglen" bandeau (named after the popular ladies champion) was worn to confine the hair, White stockings

Fig. 16(a)  
17.





Fig. 16 (a)

Bare arms and bound heads make up  
the tennis look in the 20's. British Vogue 1927





Fig. 17.

French Vogue 1925. Even for men it was possible to undress only so far, judging by the shocked expression of the girls.



Fig. 18.

Vogue Cover from 1932

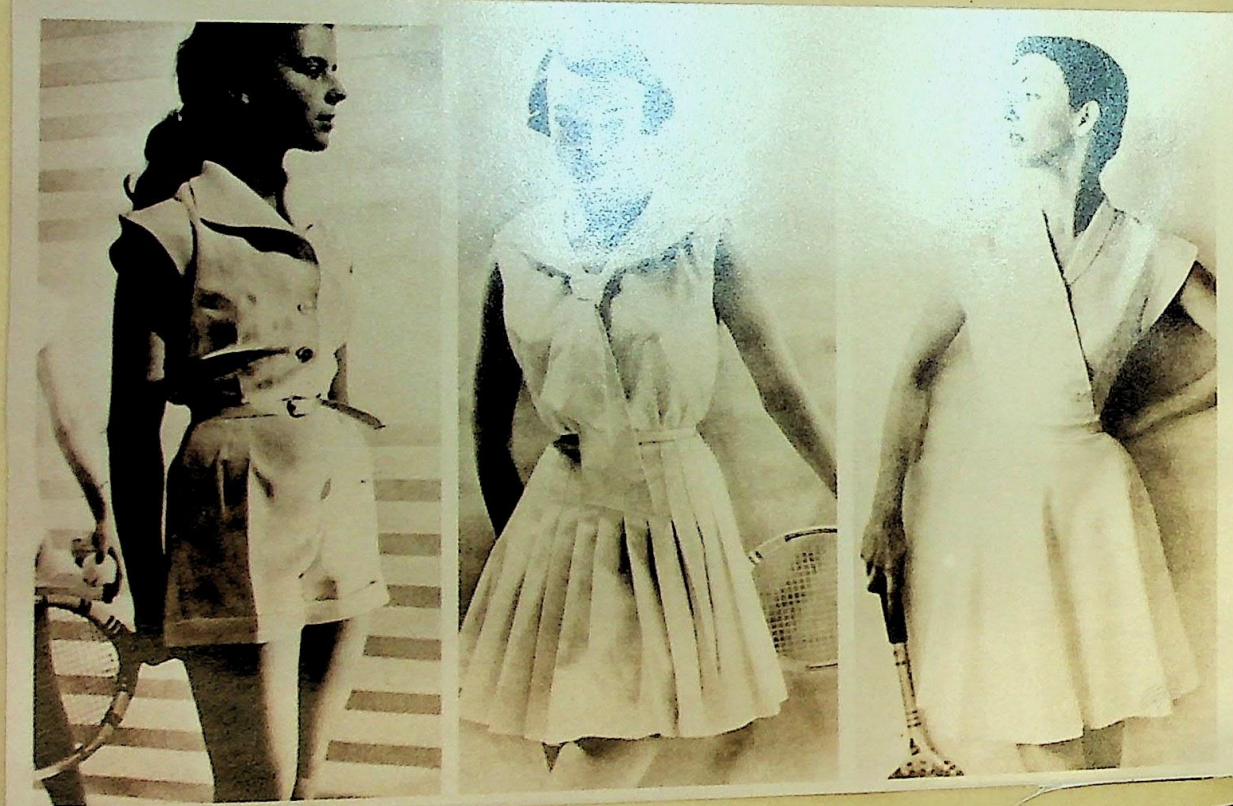




(i)

(ii)

(iii)



(iv)

(v)

(vi)

A wide variety of tennis styles to choose from.

(i) 1940

(iv) 1942

(ii) 1946

(v) 1951

(iii) 1950

(vi) 1937

and shoes teamed with these outfits.

The "Helen Willis Peak", a large eyeshade worn on a band, was named after another popular ladies Wimbledon champion. White trousers in gabardine, drill and piqué were worn from 1927. A sleeveless white crepe-de-chine dress with a tucked bodice and the skirt pleated in front, belted and pocketed, was considered chic in 1930. White stockings and laced on strapped white shoes were worn with this.

Fig. 18

Between 1931 and 1933 sleeveless, collarless dresses with short skirts were all the rage, as were belted silk dresses with collars and revers. Helen Jacobs was pictured in 1933 in America wearing white shorts with a short sleeved shirt and turned-down ankle socks. Shorts were more common by 1936 but skirts and dresses were as popular as ever. By 1936 circular, flared or sun-ray pleated little-girl skirts with tight pants underneath were more popular than shorts. By 1940 the emphasis was on wholesome health rather than glamour. An all-in-one shirt and shorts outfit with a button-on skirt to be worn over the shorts was popular: as were wide shorts with shirts.

Fig. 19



## SKATING

Skating as recreation developed in England around 1660 when the Stuarts made it a fashionable Winter sport. In 1870 an anonymous writer reported that "The skate boot" invented in the great frost some years ago, is highly recommended. Another in use by the London skating club called the "elastic skate" is also good, from a spring being introduced at the bottom of the foot, which keeps it firmly in its place ..... Skates of gutta percha are also worthy of notice for young skaters.

The skate has not changed radically to the present day.

Warm clothes were essential for this pastime, and furs were popular.

"A skating costume furnishes an opportunity for the display of handsome furs; and an electric blue dress trimmed with golden beaver, and a biscuit coloured gown with an ermine waistcoat have both been much admired at the Real Ice Rink of artificial ice which will keep the skating furore up yet for some months to come in town. A good many ladies come in heavy carriage wraps, which they throw aside in order to appear in the smartest of blouses, in company with plain black skirts. A beautiful blouse was in cornflower blue chiffon, tucked to fit the figure with a broad box pleat down the front, fastened with diamond studs. Another was in heliotrope silk, with cut steel buttons, and a beaver collar,





Fig. 20.

Hazel and John Lavery skating in Switzerland in 1911. Hazel wears the indispensable hat, muff and gloves with her sensible skirt and cardigan.





Fig. 21.

Poiret's oriental influence is evident in this fantasy garment, with its lampshade silhouette and bloomers. Despite its imaginary nature it features the much-used band of fur around its hemline. British Vogue

finished off with a bunch of Neopolitan violets on one side and a heliotrope chiffon rosette on the other." 22

The Housewife Volx (1895)

Skating costume became a shade more practical with the turn of the century. A typical outfit would be a blue cloth dress with a short flared skirt, worn under a double breasted coat with a habit basque. Fur would probably appear only on the collar and cuffs, and the skirt might have black braid trimming.

Fig. 20

In 1910 the Russian tunic was a popular choice for the ice rink; this was knee length in one piece from neck to hem. It was usually worn over a close fitting skirt with tight sleeves. The tunic and skirt would be edged in fur. The

Fig. 21

indispensable gloves, hat and muff completed the regalia.

Other Winter sports became popular with the advent of the twenties, such as tobogganning and skiing, though skiing was still the preserve of the monied élite. Clothing became even more practical and less glamorous - long, thigh-length woollen pullovers, trousers tucked into thick socks, boots, woollen gloves and large mufflers. A peaked cap with medium height round crown was frequently worn with this garb. Near

Fig. 22.

the end of the 20's a skating outfit of short pleated skirt, jumper, boots and cloche hat, was typical. This type of costume changed little throughout the 1930's. The development of light, non-bulky Winter sportswear benefitted from experiments made with air-crews' uniforms during the

Fig. 23.

war and more recently, aluminium linings. This allowed great





Fig. 22.

Vogue cover, 1928. Skiing outfit with bright scarf,  
fur gloves and peaked cap.





Fig. 23.

American Vogue 1940. Slimmed down ski trousers and matching jerkin.

progress to be made and light, non-bulky Winter garments were the result.



## MOTORING

"I don't know a silencer from a clutch",  
A sparking plug from a bearing,  
But no one, I think, is in closer touch  
With the caps the women are wearing:  
I'm au fait with the trim of the tailor made brim,  
The crown and machine stitched strap:  
Though I've neither the motor, the sable lined coat, nor  
The goggles - I wear the cap.

Anon 1899

Fig. 24

The arrival of the motor car at the close of the nineteenth century created a vogue for motoring. Dust coats for both sexes were essential to keep clothes free of clouds of dust sent up in dry weather from the macadam surfaces: even in Winter a dry day posed a problem. One reason for ladies coats being fur lined was that fur coats proper would catch and hold the dust. By 1910 fur coats, cloth lined, were worn in closed motor cars. The Summer dust coat was of linen, cotton, alpaca, etc. and was generally loose fitting.

An advertisement in 1910 announced

Smart, semi-fitting dust coats, of alpaca, with revers and corded silk ties. (49/6). The dust problem, together with





Fig. 24

British Vogue 1920. Huge Military style overcoat. The collar fastens tightly up to the neck for rain proofing.





Fig. 25.

French Vogue 1924. The long, slender dress is printed with zig-zags. Long smart gloves and sleek, head hugging cap and goggles add a note of professionalism.

with that of wind and rain, also necessitated the wearing of goggles in the days of motor cars without windscreens. Protective goggles of mica or wire gauze served as the model for the earliest motorists. .... Perhaps the hardest concession a woman can make if she is going to motor, and that is that she must wear glasses - not small dainty glasses, but veritable goggles." Efforts were made to lessen this concession and in 1903 there was a "motor veil and face hood with mica mask in which a woman feels she is looking as nice as she can look under the circumstances." The most common type of goggles were of leather, covering closely the upper parts of the face, with inset glass eye-pieces. The ladies version was of chamois, lined with silk and edged with fur or fur fabric.

Another problem female motorists encountered was the damage caused to hair and hat by the rush of air. The answer was found in the motoring veil, and numerous hair and hat pins.

"The veil can be varied from gauze in Summer to a long grey shetland cloud in Winter .....this is pinned to hat or bonnet, pulled over the ears, crossed behind with the ends to the front and tied in a bow under the chin. Pull down over the face if necessary."

Lady Jeune, 1900

Grey was the recommended colour as it showed the dust least. Later, motoring veils were made gathered at the centre with



with a large, self covered button. Small hats were recommended.  
....."the blue glengarry cap is the best headdress for the  
motor car. The Tam O'Shanter and a man's peaked cloth cap  
were also popular. New designs of head gear were introduced.

"Aunt Mary invested in a kind of patent helmet with curtains  
that unfurl on the sides, to cover the ears; and I found myself  
so fetching in a hood that I bought one, as well as a toque  
to provide for all weathers."

C.N. and A.M. Williamson

The Lightning Conductor 1903

Hoods ranged from fur for the Winter to silk for Summer wear,  
including various waterproof materials.

Motorcycles, with or without sidecars, had their place on the  
road from the early days of motoring. Ladies were usually  
side-car passengers. Dress was similar to motoring dress.  
Gloves of the gauntlet type were worn for both motor car and  
motor cycle and were worn by both sexes.

"The best gloves to wear are white knitted worsted. They  
are warm and easy to wash."

Lady Jeune - (1905)

Leather coats were worn by men and women but do not seem to  
have been as popular as cloth coats. In 1912 the Army and



Navy stores stocked "motor coats in various new shapes, lined with check cloth or grey and white squirrel, in nutria, musquash etc. from £ 7 - 12 - 6 to £45.00. <sup>14</sup>

Horwoods of Colchestor sold silk motor scarves for 2/11½. They also sold leather and imitation leather coats.

From about 1908 onwards motor cars were constructed with greater regard to the comfort and protection of their passengers and by the end of World War I little distinctive clothing was required, though in 1933 a motoring 3 - piece of skirt, cardigan and long coat was advertised. The motor car has had a greater effect on the sartorial habits of man in the twentieth century than perhaps any other single factor.





Fig. 27.

Cape, turban, flowing dress, wool-clad legs, lace-up pumps -  
the outfit for the seaside before World War I.  
Illustration by Helen Dryden from American Vogue 1912





Fig. 28

one-piece striped wool jersey  
swimsuit worn under a  
slip-on wrap of black  
and white silk.

British Vogue 1918



Fig. 26.

Black silk bathing costumes worn with black silk stockings.  
Illustration by Helen Dryden from American Vogue 1910

## BATHING AND BEACHWEAR

Swimming as exercise was disdained by fashionable women before 1910, though sea bathing from bathing machines for medicinal reasons had been common practice for years. The "Ipswich Journal" carried the following advice in 1814.

"The bathing preserver is a most ingenious and useful novelty for ladies who frequent the seaside: it is intended to provide them with a dress for bathing far more adapted for such purposes than anything of the kind at present in use..... and will relieve them from the nauseous idea of wearing the bathing coverings prvided by the guides."<sup>30</sup>

Swimming costumes were not fashionable essentials at the turn of the century, when the desired look was not fitness but soft elegance. A typical costume at this time would be in red or navy serge and perhaps braided in white. A knee-length skirt would be worn with a basqued tunic and voluminous knickers or bloomers. More elaborate examples include a white tunic-style with black braid, scarlet embroidery, a satin bow and black buttons. (1907) Figure-hugging woven bathing dresses caused some comment in 1909. Black or white bathing stockings and shoes with criss-cross lacing up to the knee were fashionable during this decade.

Fig. 26, 27

The war changed attitudes towards women doing physical work. The war effort affected lifestyles dramatically - and suddenly,



Fig. 28

after the war, swimwear was fashionable. Now fashionable society once again travelled to Deauville for the season, and Le Touquet also became a popular resort. Better cars made the South of France, Cannes and Menton more accessible. In the U.S. Palm Beach or Long Beach were the "in" places for the fashionable set. Bathing costumes became more streamlined and easier to swim in, but generally were still designed for parading and paddling. Throughout the 20's a tunic and knickers or one piece costume with separate or attached skirt were popular. The length of the skirt varied from the knee in '21 to the upper thigh by 1929. One piece "regulation" costumes with no skirt were also worn. Fashionable from about 1928 were "American" style costumes of separate trunks and tops - the tops often of horizontal stripes. One piece costumes patterned with spots or abstract designs were popular in the closing years. Tunic and skirted styles usually followed the fashionable waist with belts or braid trimming.

Beach accessories were important - the parasol was essential after 1914. Brightly embroidered beach bags and large swirling capes were frequently made in rubberized silks in bright prints with contrast edging. Girdles were essential too, until about 1915, in spotted taffeta, rubber and patent leather. Swimming hats in 1910 were large, impractical turbans. Later versions were attached to the head with a chin strap. They served to keep hair tidy but also to conform to etiquette's rule that hats should be worn outside.





Fig. 29

Swimwear designs by Patou (1924). Long, lean, tubular lines worn under brightly patterned flowing capes.





Fig. 30.

The figure on the right wears a playsuit, while on the left is a variation on the beach pyjamas, in red breton sailcloth.

Shoes were essential; the earliest type being pumps, with or without leg lacing. Made of satin or kid, they were worn with dark stockings of wool or silk. By the end of the decade stockings had become optional when the new boots were worn. These boots were either slip on, or longer lace-up types - neither sound very practical for swimming.

Fabrics and colours were very limited around 1910, black satin being the preferred material. Dark brown, dark blue and plum also popular colours. There was the problem of colour change in silk when it became wet, but Gimbel brothers of London offered "salt-waterproof silks ..... guaranteed to withstand the ravages of the deep." Lighter and more pliable fabrics gradually became more popular than satin and silk: taffeta, silk moiré, crêpe-de-chine charmeuse and wool jersey were the most commonly used. By 1917 there was a craze for the recently developed rubberized fabrics, and bags, hats, bandannas, capes and belts were produced in rubberized silks.

The popular '20's swimsuit began to look increasingly like a male maillot. This outfit, with vest-shaped top and shorts reaching to ankle, and later knee, was a major change from the previous decade's silhouette. The body shape was very much emphasised by the new, knitted, clinging fabrics. Beachwear now required a fairly extensive wardrobe. As the transition to more clinging costumes was made, cover-ups in the form of

Fig. 29



capas, shawls and coats became necessary. The newest type of clothing to appear on the beach, however, was the pyjama suit, introduced in 1927. This was a completely new shape for women to wear, and came in an exciting variety of fabrics and colours. The first beach pyjamas came in very bright oriental prints, but, warned VOGUE, "let good taste set the rules." By 1930 these suits were tailored, bias cut, and fashioned from fabrics such as crêpe-de-chine, eponge (an early type of towelling) and jersey.

Coco Chanel is credited with starting the vogue for suntans in the early twenties. Later in the decade the dangers of over-exposure to the sun were realised. The extent of the danger had increased as swimsuits grew scantier; backless and exposing most of the shoulder area. The figure hugging costume also caused more emphasis to be placed on body shape and natural fitness. Exercise was a must, and the Michelin push ball (a huge, light ball) was a favourite method. The fitness

Fig. 31. craze grew with the arrival of the thirties, and British VOGUE published an article on swimming pools within easy reach of London, so popular was this form of exercise. As costumes became ever smaller and more revealing, the body needed to look trimmer. The appearance of Lastex and Contralex, fabrics with elastic woven into them meant that even the less-than-perfect could look relatively shapely and slender.

Flannel slacks, divided skirts and backless linen dresses





Fig. 31.

Six young Americans picnicing on Waikiki beach (1934)  
in all the latest playsuits, jersey swimsuits and stripy  
beach trousers.





Fig. 32.

Beach robe in vivid colours which trebled as cape, towel, even beach bag. French Vogue 1943

with matching coatees were fashionable for cruise wear in 1931. So too were front button-through dresses worn over shorts and unbuttoned from the waist down; shorts, playsuits and wrap-over skirts. Raffia sandals and cork or wood jewellery completed the nautical look. In 1935 the "bikini" (not known by this name until 1946 after the hydrogen bomb was exploded on Bikini Atoll) appeared, a two piece costume which left a few inches of flesh exposed between the two parts. The bared midriff was considered very daring and did not become widely popular until 1940.

As the 40's approached beachwear became more tailored. The hip-length beach coats and capes showed a more tailored line too. Sun hats were huge and flat, made of rigid or soft straw, without the twenties style curved brim. "Peon" hats and clothes were briefly in fashion and influenced millinery for more than a decade, producing cartwheel hats held on with a ribbon under the chin. Hats, shoes, tailored separates all teamed to create a smart look: Dressing, rather than undressing, was the mode. The most important new fabric was terry cloth, a spongy cotton which looked like wool and was more absorbent than the previous eponge. It was used for towels, beach robes and playsuits. Plain and printed cotton pique was popular, as were glazed chintz and knits in different fibres. White was a favourite colour; later brilliant colours took over, Wild prints in scarlet, green, blue and yellow enjoyed popularity also.

Fig. 32



During the second world war America led the field in swimwear fashions, not surprisingly since Europe was embroiled in war, its beaches mined and fenced off with barbed wire. In the States there was no fabric rationing until 1941, and even then, the fabric allowances were generous. An all-the-year round tan was a status symbol, even more so in wartime. An early Forties advertisement in VOGUE read<sup>31</sup>

"Your first few days in a bathing suit won't look so First if you use a pseudo tan." British VOGUE had this to say<sup>31</sup>

"With the tension of wartime living and the fatigue of wartime work..... make the most of every opportunity to bask in the sun." Tans were more likely to be acquired in Britain while contributing to the war effort, digging potatoes or harvesting, rather than on the beaches. After 1945 the beaches were open again and seaside holidays were once again possible. Beachwear had become much more simple and basic, and the thirties layers of maillot, skirt, shirt, coat or cape was impractical and became obsolete.

Fig. 33

The one-piece costume was frilled, ruched and very feminine, the bust usually padded out or underwired. American VOGUE featured "a strapless suit, bared to the 24th vertebra, wired to hug the ribs ruched all over"<sup>32</sup> Brilliant colours were a reaction to the drab colours of the war. Polynesian and Mexican Prints were popular in both America and Europe. The latest in fabrics were rayon, elasticated jersey, synthetic





Fig. 34.

Two black and white suits in wool jersey, one herringbone, the other in banker's stripes. American Vogue 1952



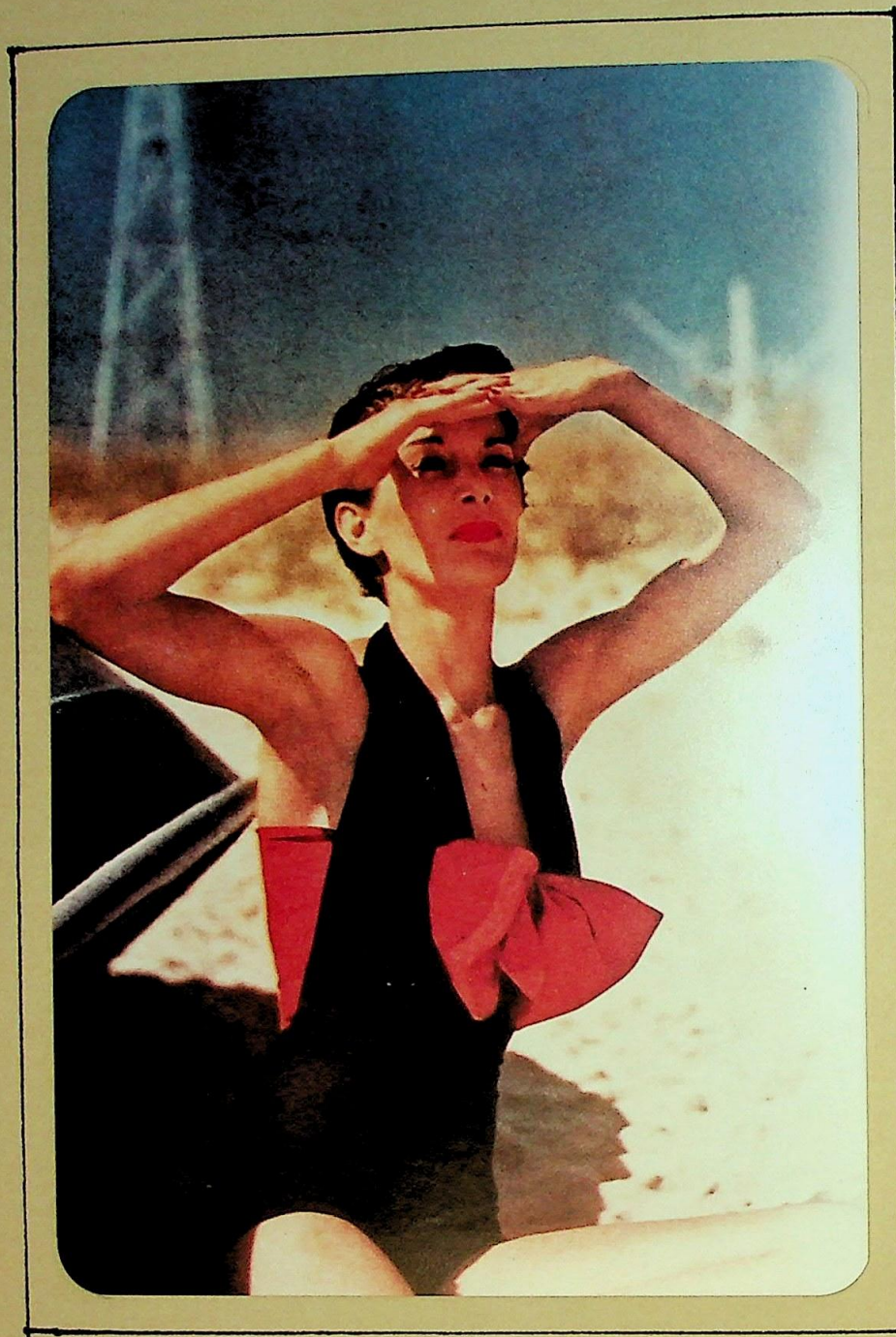


Fig. 33.

Bathing suit worn with optional sun band, both as decoration and back protection. The suit is close-fitting and elegant in navy blue wool jersey.

"sharkskin", waffled pique, linen and velour. Nylon, discovered by the American company Du Pont, became commercially available just before the war and was quickly recognized as being an ideal choice, for swimwear. It was quick-drying, durable and stretched to fit the body closely.



Early forms of bicycles which appeared towards the end of the eighteenth century were crude and uncomfortable. In 1779 a Frenchman invented the volocipede - this consisted of a wooden bar rigidly connecting two wooden wheels placed one in front of the other. Handle-bars were fixed to the front wheel, and a saddle fixed on the bar. The machine was propelled by the rider seated astride the bar, pushing against the ground with his feet. The next refined model was called the "draisine", with the front wheel pivoted on the frame so as to be turned from side to side by the handle. This machine was very popular in England in 1819. It was much caricatured and called a hobbyhorse, dandy horse, accelerator or bone-shaker. In order to save ladies from the immodesty of riding astride, a hobbyhorse with two back wheels was invented, becoming the forerunner of the tricycle. There was little need to adapt costume and ladies went tricycling in the height of fashion.

Tricycling or bicycling did not become popular until the second half of the nineteenth century, possibly due to the uncomfortable jolting caused by solid tyres and rough country roads. When J. P. Dunlop invented the pneumatic tyre in 1888, cycling was taken up with enthusiasm by women as well as men, and suitable clothing had to be considered.

Professor Hoffmann wrote a manual entitled "Tips for Tricyclists"



in 1887, in which he gives his views on the attire most suitable for lady tricyclists.

### Dress-Ladies:

This is a matter of some delicacy to be approached by a masculine writer. The Cyclists Touring Club list is as under, and will give a fair notion of the kind of garments which are found most suitable for lady riders. A special West-of-England tweed has been adopted for the outer garments, the pattern being a small grey check.

|  | f | s  | d |
|--|---|----|---|
| Coat Bodice, or Norfolk jacket                                   | 1 | 15 | 6 |
| Skirt - plain  | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Skirt with pannier and apron                                     | 2 | 6  | 0 |
| Knickerbockers or trousers                                       | - | 18 | 6 |
| Merino or lamb's wool combinations                               |   | 12 | 6 |
| Dark grey worsted stockings per pair                             |   | 4  | 0 |
| Special ventilated tan gloves per pair                           |   | 3  | 3 |
| "Alpine" or "Deerstalker" hat of clubcloth                       |   | 5  | 9 |
| Helmet of Clubcloth  |   | 6  | 3 |
| Puggaree for Ditto   |   | 2  | 0 |
| White straw hat, rough or smooth<br>plait with club ribbon       |   | 4  | 6 |
| Registered Ribbon without hat (colours<br>same as for gentlemen) |   | 2  | 0 |
| Silk handkerchief in club colours 24" square                     |   | 6  | 6 |
| Silk muffler 30" square  |   | 6  | 0 |



This list gives some idea of the excessive amount of clothing endured by women at this time. Professor Hoffman also offered advice on correct behaviour for lady cyclists:

"Do not ride unattended by male relative or friend. Do not accompany club runs unless specially small and select.

Always ride in correct cycling costume.

Stick to the "all wool" principle and don't have your skirt either too long or too full, these being fertile sources of accident.

Do not lace tightly.

Use a saddle, not a seat, and preferably a saddle with a short neck, as specially constructed for ladies use.....

When touring, carry your own soap, also a box of Brand's or Johnson's meat **lozenges** and a few tablets of chocolate or good Muscatel raisins - These by way of roadside pick-me-ups.

Carry a waterproof cape, but don't ride in it. Carry a menthol cone. Drawn gently over the forehead it is a capital thing for headache or to soothe the nerves when over-fatigue won't let you sleep.

" 34

From the reminiscences of an Elizabeth Haldane we read:

"In 1879, I wrote from London of an extraordinary sight, a lady attired in a sort of riding habit, tricycling unconcerned down Oxford St. That was the beginning of what developed



7  
during the next ten or twelve years, till in the 90's bicycling, not tricycling had become all the rage..... A woman had to take her courage in both hands to mount even a safety bicycle, for it betokened something fast and our full skirts and petticoats were not well adapted for the work. Mercifully, coats and skirts came into Vogue before long..... and along with them came sailor hats; and hence the lady cyclist in the end presented quite a good and tidy appearance, though various means had to be adopted of so fastening her skirts on her legs as to prevent them tangling on the back wheel, or worse still, showing her legs to the public, an unforgivable offence."  
35

One method of preventing cycling skirts from blowing up and exposing the legs was to sew a piece of looped elastic to the hem of the skirt on either side. The feet were slipped through this loop before reaching the pedals. This method was used even by royalty. Another method was to have the hem heavily weighted with lead.

In 1885 Miss Ballin in her "Science of Dress" recommended for cyclist feet: "boots or shoes made to fit the foot ..... the toes should be broad, to allow full play to the toes of the foot: the heels, if any are worn, should be broad and low, and under the natural heel instead of being a sort of peg pushed forward right into the middle of the foot like the fashionable wurtenburg heels."  
36



At the turn of the century cycling was one of the most popular pastimes. "Gentleman Joe", a musical comedy produced in 1895, deals with the joys of cycling:

"Some folks think bicycling a thing  
A girl should not go in for  
But their idea of fun for one  
I do not **care a pin** for  
So if you're figure's trim and slim  
Put on your knickerbockers  
And shut your ears to jeers and cheers  
From rude street Arab mockers."

Despite the mention in this verse, knickerbockers were never widely worn. Skirts were much more common, often cut specifically to allow the back to hang straight down over the wheel. By 1911 the most popular type of skirt had an inverted pleat at the centre back. In 1920 there was an attempt to reintroduce knickerbockers, but the divided skirt became much more popular. The dawn of the '30's saw cycling attire become very relaxed and casual, due in part to the fact<sup>1)</sup> that bicycle designs had greatly been improved. The usual cycling outfit consisted of shorts or a skirt worn with a cotton shirt and perhaps a beret. There was little change from this type of costume for years, and a similar version would not be out of place today. In 1941 the "trouser - skirt" was big news - a wide knee - length divided skirt. A practical





Fig. 35.

Claire Mc Cardell's wool jersey hooded top, tweed knickerbockers and leather waist pouch for winter cycling. American Vogue 1944



garment, it reflected the unfussy, sensible attitude to clothes prevailing through the war years.

I have decided to stop my study on sportswear at 1950. The period from 1950 to the present day saw such a revolution in the area of sportswear that it warrants a separate study. The development of increasingly sophisticated and practical, man-made fabrics proved to be a catalyst, speeding up changes in design and style. In 1954 permanent pleating appeared on the sportswear scene, and knife-pleated skirts became essential tennis wear since they were smart and easy to look after. The puckered nylon introduced in 1949 dried in fifteen minutes and quickly became established for all sports. Generally, tennis wear influenced by Dior's New Look of 1947 was becoming more feminine. In 1953 Teddy Tinling designed a very popular tennis dress in white waffle pique, with a high scalloped neckline and scalloped skirt flared at hip level. There was a new need for casual clothes for a more sporting lifestyle, particularly for motorbikes and vespas. For these, a fake leopardskin top with a cowl neck, jersey slacks and suede chukka boots were eminently suitable. Cycling remained as popular as ever and trousers for this sport followed the pattern of ski pants, narrowing considerably.

Fig.35

In the sixties the "sporty" look was popular. Yves Saint Laurent, Pierre Cardin and Courrèges led the field in fashion's new sporting look, and produced dashing, space-age clothes. These clothes were never designed or worn for sport but the vital thing was



at its most impractical was made of silver vinyl, the decades favourite fabric and colour. Anaraks were breaking out in stripes, dots, daisies and checks, and colours were dazzling and brash. In 1963 an important advance in warm, waterproof clothes for sport was made: the appearance of the Huskey, a thermo - insulated jacket comprising a nylon shell and polyester filling. Since then, innumerable variations on this idea have been marketed for any sport played in damp cold conditions. In 1969 VOGUE remarked that "Sportsclothes showed fashion how to be fast and free. Now they show how to steal the thunder from all the other competitors, with racing colours, great goggle glasses, hair binders, all-in-ones, second skin shapes, striding shorts."<sup>37</sup>

The hedonism of the sixties faded with the advent of the seventies. People had less money to spend, and even the synthetics now used so extensively were becoming increasingly expensive because of the leap in oil prices. A reaction against the brash sixties was the fitness craze which has endured to the present day. Sportswear had a direct influence on daywear; stretch velours and towelling tracksuits were even acceptable for partywear provided that the colours were bright enough. In 1978 VOGUE sported the first grey flecked cotton jersey, a fabric that was to dominate the market for the next four years. In 1978 also, roller skating and roller disco became a craze, and the new glossy, clinging lycra proved to be the ideal fabric to wear for these pursuits. There is now no place



in sport for the cumbersome and impractical. Women have come so far that they no longer need to borrow men's clothes in order to assert their competence, but have taken them on as their own. The striking and angular clothes of the eighties accentuate wide shoulders "capable of carrying the world."

---



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. C.W. and P. Cunnington  
Handbook of English Costume in the Nineteenth Century  
Faber and Faber London 1959
2. P. Cunnington and A. Mansfield  
English Costume for Sports and Outdoor Recreation  
Faber and Faber London 1969
3. Janet Arnold  
Patterns of Fashion: Englishwomen's Dresses and their Construction.  
Macmillan London 1972
4. A. Mansfield and P. Cunnington  
Handbook of English Costume in the Twentieth Century.  
Faber and Faber London 1973
5. Jane Darner  
Fashion in the Twenties and Thirties  
Allan London 1973
6. Elizabeth Ewing  
History of Twentieth Century Fashion  
Batsford London 1974
7. Anderson Black and Madge Garland  
A History of Fashion  
Orbis Books, London 1980
8. Christina Probert  
Swimwear in Vogue since 1910  
Condé Nast Publications Ltd. London 1981



9. W. Cunnington  
English Women's Clothing in the Present Century  
Faber and Faber London 1971
10. Mary Hexleat  
Ladies Golf  
London 1907
11. Mrs. Douglas  
Gentlewoman's Book of Dress  
Hewitt London 1906
12. Helen B. Mathers  
Coming thro' the Rye  
London 1875
- 13 C.N. and A.M. Williamson  
The Lightning Conductor  
London 1903
- 14 Professor Hoffmann  
Tips for Tricyclists  
Orwell London 1887



# PUBLICATIONS

1. The Gallery of English Costume. Picture Book No. 8  
Article - Costume for Sport  
Published for the Art Galleries Committee of the Corporation of  
Manchester 1963
2. American Vogue June 1950  
Conde Nast Publications N.Y.
3. British Vogue  
  
Issues  
May 1912  
Feb. 1922  
July 1923  
Jan 1929  
Apr. 1932  
Sept. 1935  
Aug. 1940  
June. 1944  
Nov. 1952  
July. 1969  
  
Conde Nast Publications Ltd. London
4. Jaeger Press Release London 1985
5. Ipswich Journal London 1914
6. The Queen ( London)  
Issues Feb. 1865  
March 1925
7. The Field (London) March 1910  
Issue
8. The Housewife (London ) Vol. X 1895
9. Lady Jeune (London ) Vol. IV 1900  
Vol. 111 1905



SOURCE OF QUOTATIONS

1. P. Cunnington and A. Mansfield  
English Costume for Sport and Outdoor Recreation  
P. 115
2. Jaeger Press Release  
P. 11
3. Op Cit P. 13
4. Op. Cit. P. 16
5. W. Cunnington  
English Women's Clothing in the Present Century  
P. 75
6. P. Cunnington and A. Mansfield  
English Costume for Sport and Outdoor Recreation  
P. 121
7. Op. Cit P.123
8. Op. Cit P.119
9. Op. Cit P. 124
- 10 Op. Cit P.126
- 11 Op. Cit. P. 123
- 12 P. Cunnington and A. Mansfield  
English Women's Clothing in the Present Century  
P. 29
13. Op. Cit. P.37



14. Op. Cit. P.38
15. The Queen (London) Feb. 7th 1865  
P. 13
16. Mary Hexleat  
Ladies Golf  
P. 99
17. Mrs. Douglas  
Gentlewoman's Book of Dress  
P. 33
18. The Queen (London ) March 1925  
P. 45
19. Helen B. Mathers  
Comin' thro the Rye  
P. 121
20. Encyclopaedia of Sport (Eng.) 1910  
P. 236



21. The Field 1910  
P. 13
22. The Housewife Vol X 1895  
P. 37
23. P. Cunningham and A. Mansfield  
English Costume for Sports and Outdoor Recreation  
P. 230
24. Op. Cit P. 232
25. Lady Jeune (London) Vol IV 1900  
P. 31
26. Op. Cit P. 33
27. C.N. and A.M. Williamson  
The Lightning Conductor  
P. 214
28. Lady Jeune (London ) Vol 111 1905  
P. 17
29. British Vogue May 1912
30. Ipswich Journal 1914
31. British Vogue Aug. 1940
32. Op. Cit. P. 47
33. American Vogue June 1950  
P. 62



34. Professor Hoffmann  
Tips for Tricyclists  
P. 22
35. Elizabeth Haldone  
Memories of a Bygone Age  
P. 234
36. Miss Ballin  
Science of Dress 1885
37. British Vogue      July 1969  
P. 46