

Marriage à la Mode, An Eighteenth-Century Wedding Dress, Hat and Shoes Set from the Olive Matthews Collection, Chertsey Museum

By GRACE EVANS

A rare and important group of items, a set consisting of a wedding dress, hat and shoes, form part of the Olive Matthews Collection at Chertsey Museum. This paper looks in detail at the construction of each of these garments. It also provides an account of how key aspects of provenance were uncovered. Other examples of contemporary wedding dresses are discussed. Finally it goes on to demonstrate how the newly uncovered facts about these garments, reviewed alongside contemporary social and economic contextual details, can further enhance our understanding of these and similar surviving pieces.

THE OLIVE MATTHEWS COLLECTION at Chertsey Museum contains over 6,000 items of men's, women's and children's dress and accessories dating from the seventeenth century to the present day. This group includes a number of well-preserved eighteenth-century pieces. A particularly important ensemble from that era consists of a dress, petticoat, hat and shoes (Fig. 1).¹ The group were selected for inclusion in a Chertsey Museum temporary exhibition of eighteenth-century fashion entitled *The Line of Beauty*, running from October 2006 to July 2007. Their selection for the exhibition was the starting point for in-depth research into their construction, context and provenance. As well as informing the text in the exhibition, this fruitful research inspired the writing of a paper given at a Costume Society study day held at Chertsey Museum, and this article is an account of the findings associated with an intriguing group of items.

The ensemble first entered the Olive Matthews Collection as a long-term loan in 1973, shortly after the incorporation of the fashion collection into the then new Chertsey Museum. A catalogue of Chertsey Museum's eighteenth century costume published in 1976 states that the group was 'worn by Miss Jane Bailey on the occasion of her marriage to James Wickham in the early 1780s'.² The items, said to have belonged to an ancestor of the lender, had been handed down through her family. In 1984 the ensemble was purchased from the lender and accessioned into the Olive Matthews Collection. It has since been included in several exhibitions and accessed by many researchers of eighteenth-century dress.

FABRIC AND CONSTRUCTION

The wedding dress is made from cream silk, sparsely brocaded with floral sprigs, and the construction is typical of the late 1770s to early 1780s.³ The bodice is lined



FIG. 1. Dress, petticoat, hat and shoes set, c. 1780

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FIG. 2. Pleating at the back of the gown, with self-covered buttons located at the seam between bodice and skirt

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with white linen and cut separately from the skirt. It has four bones inserted down the centre back, two stitched straight, and two curving down to meet at a point at the small of the back. The sleeves have simple shaped cuffs, and the bodice fronts meet in the centre where they would have been stitched or pinned in place. The point at the front of the bodice echoes that at the back. The low décolletage would have been covered by a starched gauze 'buffon' or handkerchief, giving softness to the bosom. The skirt is tightly pleated to the bodice (Fig. 2), with the pleats running towards the centre back, and would have been worn with a 'false rump' to support the volume of material incorporated into the pleating. This soft 'puffed-up' look at the chest and at the rear was likened by contemporary social commentator Henry Angelo to that of 'pouter pigeons'.⁴ The pattern, especially on the bodice, has been carefully matched at the front and back.

The gown was intended to be worn 'à la Polonoise' (Fig. 3). Under the skirt are two twisted silk cords intended to catch the skirt up, looping over self-covered buttons located at the back of the dress on the outside where the skirt and bodice are joined. Another means of creating the Polonoise is evident from the small cotton loops stitched at four points to the inside of the skirt. The linen tapes stitched inside the waistband would have been threaded through the loops and tied to produce a different and slightly softer version of the Polonoise. As this fashion waned during the 1780s, the long skirt length might have been left loose to trail behind as seen in contemporary portraits and fashion plates.⁵ The matching petticoat consists of five selvedge widths of silk brocade pleated to a waist binding



FIG. 3. The gown shown à la Polonoise
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FIG. 4. Fabric sample:
Spring Brocade 1777 from
pattern book of Batchelor,
Ham and Perigal, London
master weavers, Victoria
and Albert Museum
collections, museum no.
T.374-75-1972
*V&A Images/Victoria and Albert
Museum, London*

tape of plain-weave linen and it was tied in place with linen tapes. Both the dress and petticoat have pocket slits.

The silk used is very light, crisp and fresh in appearance. The creamy-pink ground is woven at regular intervals with tiny cream spots which give a piqué or almost diaper effect. Small circular wreaths enclosing flowers with flowing ribbons stretching to small floral sprigs are brocaded sparsely into the silk, interspersed with smaller floral wreath motifs. The silk was almost certainly woven in Spitalfields in East London, and there are some similarities to a number of samples from the pattern book of London master weavers Batchelor, Ham and Perigal from the late 1770s (Fig. 4).⁶ They show sprigged motifs in circular wreath-like frames, the sprigs being of similar colours to those on the wedding dress.⁷

The hat (Fig. 5) is of the 'Bergère' type, with a very shallow crown and wide, flat brim measuring 36 cm in diameter. It is made from plaited straw, probably Leghorn straw from Italy, covered with cream silk and trimmed with lace around the edge of the brim. Puffs of ribbon, padded with cotton waste, are pinned (with the original steel pins) at regular intervals around the crown. It would have been worn tilted forward over a wide powdered coiffure.⁸ The style of the hat lends the outfit a romantic, pastoral feel.

The shoes (Fig. 6) are made from cream silk satin. They have leather soles and white kid lining. The heels are wedged, and latches, or straps over the top of the foot, are stitched in place in the centre with an added bow trimming sewn to the top. A peaked tongue extends above the latches. The presence of latches shows that the shoes have been modified. Instead of being stitched together, latches were designed to be secured with a buckle. The bows are likely to have been added for the wedding. It is difficult to know whether an existing pair of shoes from the bride's wardrobe were updated, or whether a new pair were ordered from a shoe maker who was trying to achieve a fashionable look without deviating from a familiar shoe construction. There are certainly holes in the latches, but these



FIG. 5. Bergère hat from wedding set

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correspond to holes in the bows where they were stitched in place, rather than buckle marks, so it is likely that the shoes were ordered especially for the wedding. This type of shoe style with a bow trimming and a peaked tongue (though usually without the latches) was a burgeoning fashion. Other examples are to be seen in Joshua Reynolds' portrait of Lady Worsley, *c.* 1776⁹ and Gainsborough's portraits of Mrs Elizabeth Moody, *c.* 1778–82¹⁰ and Mrs Mary Robinson ('Perdita') *c.* 1781.¹¹ The trimming itself, with its tucked ribbon decoration, is very similar to the puffed trimming on the hat, drawing the ensemble together well. The cream silk and the white kid lining of the shoes are almost pristine, suggesting very limited wear, and the frayed damage evident in the silk was unlikely to have been caused by the wearer. It has resulted from handling as the shoe has aged — the brittle fibres rubbing off in certain places revealing the warp threads beneath.

THE BRIDE AND GROOM

When the idea of an eighteenth-century fashion exhibition was first put forward in 2005, it was only natural that this wedding ensemble should be selected as part of the display. To uncover as much as possible about its history was vital to the effective interpretation of the group. The first task was to ascertain whether the verbal provenance associated with the dress was accurate. If the details were correct, it was necessary to find out when and where the bride and groom — Jane Bailey and James Wickham — were married. Armed with a rough dating for the dress, it



FIG. 6. Shoes from wedding set. They are made from cream silk satin and lined with white kid leather

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was possible to carry out initial internet searches. These bore fruit with an entry for their marriage banns from Holy Trinity Church, Wonston, Hampshire for 9 November 1780. The banns from the Holy Trinity parish registers read as follows:

James Wickham of the Parish of Wonston and Jane Bailey of the parish of Stoke Charity married in this church by licence this ninth day of November in the year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty by me James Webster Minister. This marriage was solemnized between us James Wickham [signed] and Jane Bailey [signed] in the presence of Gean Browning and Ann Fielder.¹²

The date of 1780 fits well with the style of the garments, and this appears to corroborate the evidence provided when the dress entered the collection. There was reason to believe that the owner of the outfit and her husband had been found. The vendor, who was subsequently traced, confirmed this identification. Jane Bailey was her great-great-great-grandmother, the group having come down via Jane's granddaughter Arethusa Wickham.

Armed with the knowledge of the location of the marriage, it was possible to take photographs of Holy Trinity, Wonston, which still stands (Fig. 7). The discovery of the church where the wedding took place was an important milestone in the interpretation of the ensemble, linking it to a specific location which can still be explored today. Wonston itself remains a rural village accessed via country lanes. It is located on the edge of the River Dever, around 12 miles north of Winchester and 26 miles from Southampton. Wonston is close to Stoke Charity, the hamlet which was Jane's home, and the village of Sutton Scotney.

The marriage document provides a firm date for the principal occasion on which the dress was worn, locating the bride and groom within a particular area of rural Hampshire. However, it is also the starting point for the discovery of a number of other records which have shed further light on Jane's background and family. Armed with the right names and the knowledge of home parishes, it was possible to trace the baptisms of Jane and James's four children: William, baptized on 23 March 1783; James, baptized on 24 September 1787; Jane, baptized on 11 May 1790; and Mary, baptized on 14 July 1793. The records of the burials for Jane and James were also present. Jane died at the age of seventy-five, and was buried on 29 December



FIG. 7. Holy Trinity Church, Wonston, Hampshire, north aspect



FIG. 8. Wickham family tomb, Holy Trinity Churchyard, Wonston, Hampshire. Final resting place of Jane and James Wickham

1831. James survived her by three years, dying in 1834 at the age of seventy-eight. The ages and dates they died tell us that they were both around twenty-four years old on the day of their wedding, said to be the average age for marriage at the time.¹³

In addition to the basic information to be found in the parish registers, it was also possible to discover other sources linked to the family. Sadly there has been no discovery of further evidence directly associated with Jane — as with many married women of the time, she is notably absent from official records and unfortunately none of her correspondence is known to survive. However, a number of pieces of evidence provide a clearer picture of the sort of environment Jane inhabited, giving information about the lives of her husband and four children as well as those of her father, brothers and sisters.

The parish registers of Jane's home parish of Stoke Charity made it possible to identify Jane's parents, Richard and Elizabeth. Jane's father, Richard Bailey, Yeoman, made his will in May 1793, and his bequests tell us something about the size of her family and the level of wealth that she must have been used to as she grew up. The will mentions five sons, Richard, William, Joseph, Hinton and Charles, and three daughters, Elizabeth, Martha and Jane. Richard bequeathed the leases to nine parcels of land and/or property to his five sons. The properties are reasonably close to Stoke Charity where he lived, and are all associated with farming. It seems clear that Jane came from a large farming family with established roots in the Stoke Charity area of Hampshire.

Jane's younger brother Hinton, who was born in 1762, is mentioned in William Cobbett's *Rural Rides* of 1825. In addition to providing evocative descriptions of the countryside surrounding Jane's home as it was during her lifetime — 'a country where high downs prevail, with here and there a large wood on the top or the side of a hill, and where you see, in the deep dells, here and there a farm-house, and here and there a village, the building sheltered by a group of lofty trees' — he describes a meeting with Hinton:

After steering for some time, we came down to a very fine farm-house, which we stopped a little to admire . . . The village, which we found to be Stoke Charity, was about a mile lower down this little vale. Before we got to it, we overtook the owner of the farm, who knew me, though I did not know him; but when I found it was Mr Hinton Bailey, of whom and whose farm I had heard so much, I was not at all surprised at the fineness of what I had just seen.¹⁴

It has not as yet been possible to identify the house where Jane grew up. Despite mentioning that he was living at Upper Farm in Stoke Charity at the time of making his will, documentation associated with the lease does not link Richard Bailey's name to the property before 1782, two years after Jane's wedding. Earlier records linked to Richard Bailey's abode do not appear to survive. Despite this frustrating lack of information about Jane's childhood home, it is clear from the amount of property that Richard Bailey was able to leave that Jane's was a wealthy family. This is supported by the fact that she and her sisters each received £1,000 in his will. Though there is no watertight comparison available, the retail price index indicates that this sum of money is now thought to be worth £87,430.¹⁵ To give an indication of what that sum of money might have bought, it is known

that during the mid-eighteenth century a prosperous merchant's house could be purchased for £500.¹⁶

Much of the evidence uncovered about Jane's husband James reveals that he came from a similar but slightly elevated background to Jane's. He used the title 'Esquire' instead of 'Yeoman' after his name and hailed from the neighbouring parish of Wonston. Though his father's will has not survived, his own will of 1834 reveals a man of considerable wealth. He was able to leave land and property in Wonston and the nearby villages of Bullington, Sutton Scotney and Cranbourne to his four children. He was also able to place the lump sum of £9,000 in trust to provide a private income for his daughter Jane. It is not known why he wished to do this as her husband was still living, but he was at great pains to prevent her husband from accessing the money. Jane's sister Mary, who was a widow, received £4,000 in trust in addition to the £5,000 that had been invested on her behalf at the time of her marriage. He leaves a further £1,000 each for his two granddaughters Mary and Arethusa. In addition, James was part of a successful banking co-partnership which included his brother-in-law Hinton Bailey. It seems that Jane's marriage was a good financial match between two people of similar social standing from neighbouring villages. In all probability the marriage cemented a link between two important local families, and evidence of later business associations supports this.

We do not know whether Jane and James's marriage was a happy partnership, or whether they were initially free to choose each other without outside influence. Evidence about courtship during the eighteenth century suggests that couples enjoyed a semblance of freedom of choice, but were often steered by their parents, who negotiated the marriage settlement, into prudent marriages, as may well have been the case here. However, we do know that the couple were financially secure, and that the marriage produced four children who survived well into adulthood. Amanda Vickery's in-depth study of women of 'genteel society' hailing from the north of England during the same period can tell us about the sort of life Jane might have led. Their correspondence, diaries and household accounts reveal that these women described themselves as 'polite', 'civil', 'genteel', 'well-bred' and 'polished'. As brides they aimed to appear 'amiable and accomplished'. 'Their possessions were contrived to have a genteel effect, rather than a dazzling elegance, and their entertainments aimed at generous liberality not sumptuous magnificence.'¹⁷ It seems that these women were not on visiting terms with the local nobility, but that their interactions were usually between kin and well established neighbouring families.¹⁸ Vickery states that they 'exchanged information on print and politics, local news, servants, prices and fashions, recipes and remedies, child bearing and child rearing'.¹⁹ All of these observations chime well with the evidence we have of Jane's life. In death too, the Wickhams maintained their high status within the local community, establishing a family plot in the churchyard of Holy Trinity, Wonston (Fig. 8).

JANE BAILEY'S WEDDING DRESS

Having uncovered a firm date and some important provenance for the wedding ensemble, it is now useful to return to the garments, looking at the social, economic

and geographic reasons for Jane's, and possibly her mother's, choice of fabric and style of dress. Using the newly discovered information alongside established knowledge about eighteenth-century fashion, and some locally focused research, further conclusions can be drawn about the clothes themselves. It is important to mention that these wedding clothes were probably not intended solely for the wedding day. On the Sunday after the marriage the bride would have been expected to make her 'appearance' at church, where best clothes would be worn. She would also make formal visits within the locality.²⁰ The garments may have made an appearance on later special occasions before they went out of fashion. However, rather than simply using an existing 'best dress', someone of Jane's background would have had wedding clothes made specially, and intended initially for the marriage. The following passage from a serial in *The Lady's Magazine* of June 1776 illustrates contemporary thinking on the subject:

New cloaths are as necessary to a bride as the wedding ring, and if dress is ever in any estimation at all, it certainly is on the wedding day . . . It was disputed whether [Pricilla] should dress in a Sack or a Nightgown, in a Polonoise or a Brunswick . . . the polonoise was preferred with this proviso — that Pricilla should make her appearance in full dress — and visit in a negligee and receive her morning visits in a nightgown.²¹

Jane certainly followed the convention of wearing a Polonoise. We do not know whether she wore the same gown for her other wedding engagements, but the pristine condition of her wedding ensemble suggests that they were not worn on many occasions and, unusually for an eighteenth-century gown, no alterations have been made for fancy dress during later centuries.

The cut and style of Jane's wedding clothes are in keeping with what might be expected for a woman from the provincial English gentry — they are fashionable, but conservative. The tight pleating of the skirt to the bodice with the point at the small of the back are styles that are first seen during the late 1770s, but they were to continue, becoming more exaggerated, until the middle of the 1780s. The Polonoise was at the height of fashion during the second half of the 1770s, but it was coming to the end of its fashionable period by the early 1780s.²²

Perhaps the most obvious indication of Jane's more conservative style is the pattern of the silk brocade used to make her gown (Fig. 9). There is no stripe in the ground — stripes being a classical design element very common to silks dating from this period. The floral sprigs are on the large side for 1780, being more akin to the styles of the late 1770s.²³ They are regularly but quite sparsely scattered through the silk, rather than woven in obvious geometric formations or anchored to increasingly bold stripes as became the norm from the 1770s and into the 1780s.²⁴ The motif itself is something of a mixture of old and new, as one might expect from this transitional period in fashion development. The slightly asymmetric trailing ribbons have their roots in the rococo, and they soften the circular 'neo-classical' wreaths which bring the design more up-to-date. The very similar sample of silk from the Batchelor, Ham and Perigal pattern book (Fig. 4) is annotated 'Spring Brocade 1777', and this is likely to be the approximate date for the production of the silk, suggesting that Jane or a close family member acquired it around that time, or purchased it closer to the date of the wedding from a provincial dealer who might hold slightly older stock.



FIG. 9. Detail of brocade from sleeve of wedding dress

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Personal taste, and the occasion for which the silk was chosen, would also have had an impact on the pattern selected (Jane's contemporary, Barbara Johnson, ignored the stylized designs of the 1750s and 1760s in favour of plain silks²⁵), as would a desire not to deviate from a conservative dress-code established by a local social circle. There is evidence to suggest that, particularly during the early to mid-eighteenth century, clothing was strictly codified according to social position, with appropriate manners of dressing and choices of fabrics being consciously adhered to, or in some cases deliberately subverted for purposes of social climbing.²⁶ This attitude seems to have softened somewhat by the end of the eighteenth century, but would still have had relevance in conservative, rural areas. In addition to social level, age was also an important influence on clothing choice. The Polonaise seems to have been associated with youth. Certainly Marie Antoinette, when she turned thirty in 1785, determined to stop wearing frivolous garments that were felt to be more suited to younger women, Polonaises being explicitly mentioned.²⁷ Considering what we know of Jane's background, it seems entirely fitting that a twenty-four-year-old bride from a gentry farming background should have selected wedding clothes that were cut in a youthful style and essentially up-to-date without being cutting-edge.

It is useful to compare Jane's wedding ensemble with other surviving examples of late eighteenth-century wedding dresses for which there is provenance. The Killerton Collection contains a 1770s dress of plain pink silk which is said to have been worn by Alice Westcott, the daughter of an Admiral, on the occasion of her marriage.²⁸ The style of the dress is at least five years earlier than Jane's, but it shows how a high-status wedding dress could be quite plain and simple, though made extremely well. It is stated that this dress may have been worn 'à la Polonaise' as Jane's was, reinforcing the point that this was a youthful style felt to be suitable for wedding clothes.

The Snowhill Collection contains two comparable gowns to Jane's. One is stated as likely to have been a wedding dress. It is dated to *c.* 1775 and woven with flower sprigs in green, pink and crimson on a cream ground with the back 'en fore-reau'. It was worn by Elizabeth Frances Paine, daughter of the Revd John Paine, Canon of Wells, who married the Revd Richard Chapple Whalley. Revd Whalley held livings at Horsington and Chelwood, Somerset. The couple married in 1775, and the contemporary style of the dress indicates that it may well have been Elizabeth's wedding gown.²⁹ The details about Elizabeth's background tell us that she was of a similar social status to Jane, making the gown a good comparison. Though accessories do not survive, a contemporary pink wool suit, worn by Richard at their wedding, is also part of the Snowhill Collection. The other gown is a Polonaise open robe of cream silk with a spotted ground and flower sprigs dated 1770 to 1780 with a very similar construction and silk to Jane Bailey's.³⁰ It is said to have belonged to Miss Massey of Clanoraid, County Limerick, and, though it is not stated that this was a wedding dress, I would suggest that its survival unaltered may indicate such a provenance. A further Polonaise wedding gown of striped cream brocade was worn by Dolly Varden in her portrait by William Powell Frith (*c.* 1841). Although the dress is not known to survive, the cut and the style of the cream brocade, with small-scale sprigged design and stripes, dates it to around 1777 to 1778. It is said to have belonged to the maternal grandmother of the artist. Frith's grandmother Mary was married to William Powell, who, according to Frith, was 'a Shropshire squire who spent a tolerable fortune on extravagance and self-indulgence'.³¹ This wealthy rural background once again shares similarities with Jane's, and it is interesting to note the common features of the wedding gowns. I have not as yet discovered surviving examples of wedding ensembles that include hats and shoes, but I would be very glad to hear of any that may be known. I would be equally interested in surviving contemporary accounts of such groups.

PURCHASING THE ENSEMBLE

An assessment of Jane's proximity to larger towns and knowledge of transport links, coupled with an understanding of what shopping opportunities were open to her, can help us to speculate about how Jane acquired her garments. There would have been various options available locally. We know that she had access to garment makers, fashionable clothing and fabrics in her home county of Hampshire. Advertisements in the *Hampshire Chronicle* provide plenty of evidence for clothing and fashion-related businesses in Winchester, Salisbury and Southampton.³² Retailers frequently made efforts to associate their establishments with fashionable London. For example, the 14 April 1777 edition of the *Hampshire Chronicle* carries an advertisement from 'Barker, Milliner at Mr George Miller's in the High Street [who] respectfully informs the ladies of Southampton and its neighbourhood that she is returned from London with a genteel and fashionable assortment of millenary'. We know of retailers from other provincial towns who also did this, such as the Chester milliners Sarah Towsey and her sister who took the stagecoach to London twice a year in the 1780s in order to purchase new items from the London wholesalers.³³ Further evidence from the *Hampshire Chronicle* shows the fabric retailer James Nield

of James Street, London, advertising that he had taken a shop at the Polygon in Southampton, thus bringing London fashions directly to a style-conscious clientele in the provinces.³⁴

If this type of retailer did not appeal, there is also plenty of evidence to suggest that Jane might have been able to acquire her silk from a London mercer direct. We know that it would take around twelve hours to travel to London by stagecoach — the route to London from Weymouth via Salisbury passed through Sutton Scotney, just a few miles from Jane's home.³⁵ Turnpike Trusts improved roads and travel times during the latter part of the eighteenth century, and contemporary evidence suggests that it was common for people from Jane's level of society to travel to London from the provinces in order to shop for fashions. In the late 1770s to the early 1800s Parson Woodforde and his niece Nancy made shopping expeditions to Bath or London every three to four years, with Nancy acquiring a London milliner.³⁶ It was also common for relatives or friends living in London to purchase fashion items, and Nancy's brother sent her a balloon hat in 1784. Correspondence relating to bride-to-be Mary Tipping and her fiancé, the Revd Edmond Williamson, who were based in rural Bedfordshire, show London relatives purchasing wedding clothes. In 1760 Christian or 'Tidy' Russell bought silk for Mary. Detailed instructions with measurements were sent in advance so that the right amount of silk could be purchased.³⁷ If Jane Bailey had no relatives or friends in London who were willing to carry out such purchases for her, it was possible to hire the services of the proprietor of a London coaching inn as a shopping agent.³⁸ If Jane's family had the money available for such fashionable purchases then there is no reason why they could not have acquired her wedding silk direct from London, but if their budget or connections did not stretch to that, then there were definitely local options available.

As mentioned earlier, the construction of Jane's clothing is of high quality, with the pattern carefully matched on each side of the bodice and skirt, and tiny, neat and regular stitches evident throughout. It was possible to have clothes made in London, and this could be carried out during a stay in the capital, or done long-distance by sending up an existing gown and having the new garment made to the same size.³⁹ However, skilled makers would have been available to Jane in her local area. Advertisements in the *Hampshire Chronicle* provide evidence of the presence of a local skills-base for garment construction. For example, 'John Rogers, Taylor and Habit-Maker in the High Street [Winchester] . . . [who took pains to state that] the utmost attention will be paid to expedite those commands which he may be favoured with in future and in the execution of which he flatters himself he shall give the utmost satisfaction'.⁴⁰ Though a tailor would have made more structured garments such as riding habits, it is likely that skilled seamstresses or mantua-makers were also operating in the area. Options were very much based on personal preference and wealth. Martha Dodson, an elderly, but fashion-conscious lady whose clothing accounts from the mid-eighteenth century survive, went to the expense of purchasing fabric in London, but used a trusted local seamstress to make up her gowns, thereby saving money.⁴¹ Jane's comfortable but conservative background, and the conventional cut of her clothes, may suggest that they were made up by a skilled maker from the local area who was easily accessible for fittings.

Jane Bailey's wedding ensemble is a rare and wonderful survival for many reasons. As a dated set of garments and accessories which have survived unaltered in good condition, they enhance knowledge purely in terms of fashion history. To be able to trace the wearer and her family and to get a glimpse of the sort of life she might have led adds a valuable socio-historical dimension. The extra information enhances the displays that we can produce at Chertsey Museum, hopefully firing the imagination of visitors of all interest levels and inspiring them to visualize a person behind the static exhibit. In addition, as touched on above, the clothes and associated details can act as a starting point for a myriad of different lines of enquiry, not least an analysis of the various production and communication chains that brought them into being and into the hands of the wearer.

Chertsey Museum is located at The Cedars, 33 Windsor Street, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8AT (www.chertseymuseum.org.uk). A book about the Olive Matthews Collection of Costume will be published shortly.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their help during the production of this paper: Edwina Ehrman, Alison Carter, Clare Browne, Moira Thunder, June Swann, Althea Mackenzie, Kay Staniland, John and Philippa Stobbs and Mrs Mary Gill.

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² Christina Rowley, *Costume in Chertsey Museum 1700–1800* (London: Runnymede District Council, 1976), p. 6.

³ See Nancy Bradfield, *Costume in Detail, 1730–1930* (London: Harrap Books Ltd, 1981), pp. 57–58 and 61–62 for similar garments from the Snowhill Collection; and Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600–1930* (London: Faber, 1969), p. 76 and diagram XXII showing a similar robe from the collection of Leeds City Art Galleries.

⁴ Henry Angelo quoted in Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600–1930*, p. 125: 'Ladies, old and young, at this period, wore preposterous pads behind; and, as if this fashion wanted counterbalance, enormous false bosoms were contrived of puffed gauze, so that they might be compared to pouter pigeons.'

⁵ 'La Gallerie des Modes' 1780, from Stella Blum (ed.), *Eighteenth Century French Fashion Plates in Full Colour* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1982), p. 33, or 'The Harpist' by Vigée Lebrun, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

⁶ Victoria and Albert Museum collection, museum no. T.374-75-1972.

⁷ See also Natalie Rothstein, *Silk Designs of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Thames and Hudson, V&A, 1990), pls 300, 301, 302.

⁸ Similar hats are worn by Fanny Burney in the portrait of her painted by Edward Francesco Burney, part of the National Portrait Gallery collection, and the Duchess of Cumberland in Thomas Gainsborough's 'Henry, Duke of Cumberland with the Duchess of Cumberland and Lady Elizabeth Luttrell' from the Royal Collections.

⁹ Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Worsley, c. 1776*, Harewood House Collection.

¹⁰ Thomas Gainsborough, *Mrs Elizabeth Moody and her two sons, c. 1778–82*, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Collection no. DPG316/1831.

¹¹ Thomas Gainsborough, *Mrs Mary Robinson c. 1781*, The Wallace Collection, no. Po42.

¹² Microfiche copy of parish registers, Holy Trinity, Wonston, housed at Hampshire County Record Office.

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¹⁵ <http://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ppoweruk/>

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- ²¹ 'The Lady's Magazine', June 1776, p. 285, quoted in Tozer and Levitt, p. 48.
- ²² Nancy Bradfield, *Costume in Detail, 1730–1930* (London: Harrap Books Ltd, 1989), p. 61.
- ²³ Natalie Rothstein, *Silk Designs of the Eighteenth Century*, pl. 304, top right-hand silk sample.
- ²⁴ Rothstein, pls 300, 304 (top left-hand sample), and Natalie Rothstein (ed.), *Barbara Johnson's Album of Fashions and Fabrics* (London: Thames and Hudson & V&A, 1987), 'brown and white striped and flower'd Lutestring', p. 17 of album.
- ²⁵ Natalie Rothstein, 'Textiles in the Album', in Natalie Rothstein (ed.), *Barbara Johnson's Album of Fashions and Fabrics*, p. 31.
- ²⁶ Strong indications of attitudes during the mid-eighteenth century come from contemporary literature. In Samuel Richardson's novel *Pamela* he makes full use of collective awareness of social messages associated with dress as Pamela, when returning to her humble country roots, carefully alters her clothing from that of a high-society servant dressed in silks and fine linen to simpler, homespun garments. S. Richardson, *Pamela*, EML edn, vol. 1, pp. 8, 13, 32, 41, 42, 64, 65, 270, quoted in Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1979), pp. 115–19. In Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* the violent reaction of the local community to Molly Seagrim's error in wearing Miss Sophia Western's cast-off clothing unaltered offers an exaggerated example of what could happen if one got it wrong; Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, first published 1749, this edition, 1994), pp. 146–51.
- ²⁷ 'Her Majesty sent for Mlle Bertin and told her that in November she would be thirty years of age: that she wanted her dresses now to be made without all those frivolous additions which were more suitable to younger women; that she would no longer wear feathers or flowers. The etiquette for dress also has been changed so that the Queen will no longer wear *Pierots, Chemises, Redingotes, Polonoises, Levites, Robes à la Turque, Circassiennes* . . .'; Bachaumont, *Mémoires Secrets*, quoted in Norah Waugh, *The Cut of Women's Clothes, 1600–1930*, p. 124.
- ²⁸ Shelley Tobin, Sarah Pepper, and Margaret Willes, *Marriage à la Mode, Three Centuries of Wedding Dress* (London: National Trust Enterprises Ltd, 2003), p. 6.
- ²⁹ The National Trust, Snowhill Collection, acc. no. 9138.
- ³⁰ The National Trust Snowhill Collection, cat. no. SNO 24, published in Nancy Bradfield, *Costume in Detail, 1730–1930* (London: Harrap Books Ltd, 1989), pp. 57–58.
- ³¹ Mark Bills and Vivien Knight (eds), *William Powell Frith: Painting the Victorian Age* (New York: Yale University Press, 2006).
- ³² *Hampshire Chronicle* (22 November 1779, vol. VII, no. 379, Winchester edition) carries an advertisement for a lady's riding habit retailer from Southampton, and also see *Hampshire Chronicle* (3 February 1777, vol. V, no. 233, Southampton edition) for an advertisement published by Ann Fowler for her hairdresser's shop in Salisbury which stocked everything 'belonging to the head dress . . . from Ball and Smith's warehouse in London', who made a particular point of mentioning 'Orders from the Country punctually observed'.
- ³³ Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 172.
- ³⁴ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 19 July 1773, as cited in Christina Fowler, 'Satisfying Popular Consumer Demand 1775 to 1815 with specific reference to the dress trades in Hampshire' (Portsmouth: PhD thesis, University of Portsmouth, 1998), p. 136.
- ³⁵ John Cary's *New Itinerary* 6th edn (London, 1815) to be found on www.geog.port.ac.uk/webmap/hantsmap.
- ³⁶ Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 79.
- ³⁷ Buck, pp. 73–74.
- ³⁸ Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress*, p. 161.
- ³⁹ 'Tidy' Russell mentions the need for arm size for the making up of sleeve ruffles, but also suggests that gowns could also be made up in London — 'tis worth while to have them made up in London and no great expence, indeed if her Cloaths could by sending an old Nightgown that fitted her to be sure it would have been better'; Anne Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 74.
- ⁴⁰ *Hampshire Chronicle* (19 June 1780, vol. VIII, no. 409, Winchester edn).
- ⁴¹ Edwina Ehrman, 'Dressing well in old age: the clothing accounts of Martha Dodson, 1746–1765', *Costume*, vol. 40 (2006), p. 31.

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