



## STYLE & SOCIETY: DRESSING THE GEORGIANS

PLAIN ENGLISH TRANSCRIPT

THE QUEEN'S GALLERY, BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Welcome to The Queen's Gallery and to *Style and Society: Dressing the Georgians*. In this exhibition we will be looking at 18th century British fashion. It will tell us much more than what people wore and how they looked. It tells a story of a world that was changing quickly and how those changes affected people's lives.

These notes contain the same information as the audio-description provided for hearing visitors. They are adapted from a script produced by ATS with information from a number of experts whose names are included at the end of these notes.

**I. Attributed to BRITISH SCHOOL, 18<sup>th</sup> Century  
St James's Park and the Mall, c. 1745  
RCIN 405954**



This picture is like a snapshot of Georgian society. People from all walks of life have flocked to St James's Park in London.

We are looking towards Whitehall Palace and can see Westminster Abbey in the distance. The painting was done around the middle of the 18th century, so we see a variety of different clothes that are being worn at the same time. There are fashionable dresses, and less fashionable dresses. Some men are wearing uniforms, others are wearing religious clothes. There are also visitors from abroad. The picture shows us a slice of London life.

But when it came to court dress, clothing worn in the presence of the King and Queen, there was much less variety. People invited to a royal event usually had their clothes specially made for the

occasion, using the latest fabric designs. But the styles were not as up-to-date as fashions worn every day and shown in magazines. Formal court styles hardly changed for sixty years.

As you go through the rooms of the exhibition, you will see close up remarkable examples of 18th-century clothes which have survived – as well as other clothing, textiles and accessories. They give a clear understanding of the materials, construction and craftsmanship of the outfits and objects shown in portraits, prints and drawings.

This exhibition uses clothes and fashion to tell a wider story about Georgian society. It shows how clothes can reveal information about the people sitting for paintings, but also about changes in society, about modernisation, about travel, or about politics. Dress is much more than just what we see on the surface: when you look deeper it gives much more information about what was happening in the world at that time.

**2. PIETRO LONGHI (Venice c.1701-1785)**  
***The Married Couple's Breakfast*, signed and dated 1744**  
**RCIN 403029**



Light streams onto a bed as the morning routine begins. A woman, dressed in a loose, rose-coloured gown over a long white undergarment, sits on a chair and drinks a cup of coffee or hot chocolate. She leans against her husband, who is sitting up in bed, wearing a linen shirt.

In formal portraits, these layers – underwear and shirts – are usually hidden by upper layers of clothing. We might see them at the cuffs or at the collar, but we don't usually see the full items as we see them here. So this picture is unusual and interesting.

Everybody wore this type of underlayer, whatever their position in society. For the rich underclothes were made of expensive silky fabric. Poor people wore cheaper, thicker materials. Undergarments and shirts were comfortable next to the skin, but also hardwearing, protecting the clothes on top of them from sweat and dirt. They washed well too.

Wearing clean underwear was seen as an important part of respectability, so even poorer members of society would try and change their linens every day. A person might have two shirts; one in the wash and one for wearing. Rich families would have their laundry done by a laundress. Heavy laundry would be taken away for cleaning to remove dirt and stains. But more delicate items like cuffs, possibly made of lace, would be cleaned at home, so that a lady's maid could look after them properly.

Clothing was so highly valued by the Georgians that it was listed in household records and also in marriage contracts and wills. Whenever possible it was recycled – the servants in this picture may be wearing their employers' hand-me-downs. New items were made carefully, with an eye on economy.

Undergarments like those in the painting were usually made from a number of straight-sided shapes, such as squares, rectangles and triangles. The clothes-makers would cut a few of them at a time from a roll of material, so that every scrap of material was used, with very little wasted.

**3. Stays, c.1780s.**  
**Cotton, linen and baleen**  
**Bath Fashion Museum, BATMC I.27.44**



The underwear we see here was known as a pair of stays. They were worn on top of a woman's linen undergarment, creating a fashionable body shape and a smooth base for layers of clothing on top.

These stays are stiffened with what people often call whalebone. But whalebone does not refer to the parts of a whale skeleton. Rather it is material called baleen, from the jaws of some whales. It is the same material as our hair and fingernails.

Here we have horizontal channels with baleen in them across the breast area, and diagonally placed strips at either side of the front centre. It is designed to create a beautiful curved shape across the front of the body. The little skirts at the bottom of the stays allowed them to curve into the waist and out again without pressing into the waist.

These stays have back lacing with a single lace, laced from the bottom in a spiral pattern up to the top. Stays that were fastened too tightly could limit free movement but generally they could be supportive and comfortable and working women wore them as well.

**4. WILLIAM HOGARTH (1697-1764)**  
*David Garrick with his Wife Eva-Maria Veigel, c.1757-64*  
**RCIN 405682**



Celebrated actor-manager David Garrick was a frequent subject in 18th century portraits. But here his wife, the dancer Eva-Maria Veigel, steals the show with her eye-catching gown.

Quite a few gowns in this egg yolk yellow colour from around this time have survived. They are probably linked with the liking for things connected to China around this time: we see across the decorative arts. Yellow in this shade was closely associated with the Emperor in China. It was made from an expensive type of dye.

Veigel's gown is in a style called a 'robe à la française' or a 'sacque'. It is known as an "open gown" because the edges at the front are not joined together. The gap between them is filled by a separate triangular piece of fabric called a 'stomacherr'.

The 18th century definition of a petticoat was much wider than a modern one. Today we expect a petticoat to be hidden by a skirt worn on top. In the same way, a petticoat at that time might be a skirt designed to be worn under other petticoats. But a petticoat then might also be designed to be seen.

If Eva-Maria turned round we would see one of the sacque's characteristic features at the back: a number of box pleats running from the shoulders. This meant that there was a huge expanse of

fabric that flowed from the shoulder line down the back all the way to the ground. It was almost like a canvas, to show off these beautiful textiles.

As she reaches to pluck the quill pen from her husband's hand, sleeve flounces made of layers of silk and lace hang down at her elbows. A similar example is in the display case nearby. Lace was often the most expensive part of an outfit, after jewellery. It was made slowly and carefully using a needle or bobbins. Fifty centimetres of the very finest quality lace – just enough for a sleeve flounce – might take a lacemaker about a year to produce, even working 15 hours a day.

**5. JOHAN JOSEPH ZOFFANY (Frankfurt 1733 – London 1810)**  
***Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with members of her family, c.1771-2***  
**RCIN 401004**



Queen Charlotte, queen consort of George III, sits on a bench, surrounded by her two elder brothers, three of her children and their governess. This is a new kind of outdoor group portrait, known as a 'conversation piece'. It captures affectionate family interactions: a mother holding back her energetic son, and a little girl trying to show her uncle her doll.

This is a very British style of painting. It shows that the sitters are landowners, and that they have the freedom to enjoy walks in these beautiful surroundings. This is a different approach from the

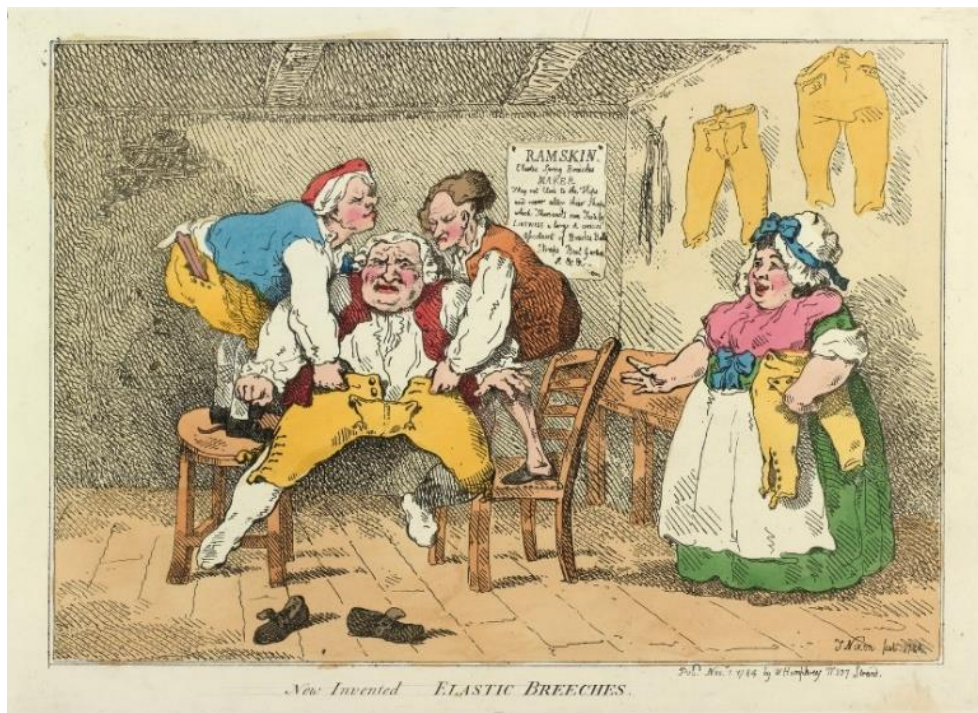
French artists painted their sitters – they show them inside, in highly decorated interiors. This is one of the differences between British and French portrait painting.

The setting of the portrait is less formal than in a traditional royal portrait. So too is the way the family is dressed, in the type of fashionable clothes they would probably have worn every day. We know that Queen Charlotte's brothers, Prince Karl of Mecklenburg-Strelitz and Prince Ernst, are members of the nobility because of star-shaped orders pinned just below the left shoulder. In every other way the German visitors are dressed like English gentlemen, wearing a simple, elegant style: the close-fitting frock coat.

The frock coat is identified by its small turn-down collar. More formal styles of coat would have had no collar, unless it was a small standing collar. They are both holding canes rather than swords. The sword was traditionally the sign of a gentleman, but by this time swords were not worn very often. Instead of a sword, fashionable men took a cane with them when they were walking around outside. And there was the sort of equality in the way British people dressed at this time. Foreign visitors coming to Britain would be surprised that everyone is dressed much the same - even the shoemaker is dressed as if he was a prince.



**6. THOMAS ROWLANDSON (1757-1827)**  
*New-Invented Elastic Breeches, 1 Nov 1784*  
**RCIN 810113**



There's a lot of pulling and pushing in this print by Thomas Rowlandson. The poster on the wall of the shop tells us that "Ramskin's Elastic Spring Breeches set close to the hips and never alter their shape." Like most fashions they do not work for everybody, but the stout customer shown here is determined to get them on. With two assistants gripping the waistband for support, he wriggles and squeezes his way into the breeches.

Breeches were usually made of silk or wool, which did not have a lot of give. Because of this they were made quite full in the seat so they were comfortable when sitting down. But the fashion at this time was a slim-fitting look. A fashionable gentleman had to wear breeches either made of a kind of leather – doeskin, lambskin - or of cotton, which achieved the same look. A pair of leather breeches had to be stretched to fit the body shape of the person who was going to wear them.

Not long after this print was made men started to wear longer leg-coverings which were just as slim-fitting. They were called 'pantaloons' and were usually tucked into boots. In Richard Dighton's watercolour, below, the Prince of Wales wears them while riding. In contrast to his father George III, who was very careful when it came to spending money, the prince was a devoted follower of fashion.

**RICHARD DIGHTON (1795 –1880)**  
*George, Prince of Wales on Horseback, 1804*  
RCIN 453262



He bought hundreds of items of clothing every year. He would buy in bulk, perhaps 24 waistcoats at a time, along with perfume, or swords. It is known that Prince George ordered a pair of lilac striped pantaloons at one point, but sadly there is no image of what they looked like.

Pantaloons gradually change into another type of leg covering, the trousers. Trousers had been worn by lower class people for a long time but gradually they started to be worn by the more fashionable men around town. By the 19th century they were an important part of a man's wardrobe.

7. **Court dress (mantua gown, petticoat, stomacher and shoes),  
c.1740 – 60  
BATMC I.09.1406 to 8**



**THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH (1727-88)**  
**Queen Charlotte (1744-1818), c. 1781**  
**RCIN 401407**



Whatever fashionable upper-class people normally wore, when they were in the presence of the King and Queen the rules of the royal court meant they had to dress formally, in long-established styles. The see-through gown worn by Queen Charlotte in Gainsborough's portrait shows the broad shape of women's skirts. And this is a beautiful over-gown – known as a 'mantua gown' – with a long train, matching petticoat and shoes.

The main material used for a mantua and petticoat was a very crisp, strong, ivory-coloured silk which made beautiful curves and folds. At the back of the bodice there are various pleated panels stitched down, so that it follows the shape of the woman's back down to her waist. For decoration a big bow sits at the centre of her back, and below it a train draped on the ground. Sometimes these were all separate items, sometimes they were all one piece.

Whoever wore this beautiful gown was probably wearing a petticoat underneath with hoops. These were actual hoops stitched either to the inside or the outside of the petticoat, at various levels from the hips down. The rest of the petticoat was soft material, so the hoops would fold together as the wearer sat down.

Walking in such a wide skirt was not easy. It involved taking tiny footsteps which made women look like they were rolling along on wheels. Only palaces and other grand buildings had doorways wide enough to pass through without turning sideways. This was not at all easy to do wearing so much heavy fabric. And the embroidery looked delicate but was often decorated with precious metal.

### **Embroidery**

Something else which makes this gown, petticoat and shoes quite remarkable is the huge range of different materials used to decorate them. There are beautiful flower patterns all over the gown, with shaded petals and leaves in different colours of greens and pinks, which have a three-dimensional look. There is also a lot of what is called 'couched work' in the embroidery, where a thread is placed on the surface of the material which is then fastened down with thread sewn around it. Here silver or silver gilt thread has been used.

Some of these threads make the outlines of large, curved leaf shapes which are filled with tiny silver and silver-gilt discs. They look like sequins but are made of metal. They are made by wire makers, who took a spiral of precious metal wire, cut it down one side, then formed every horseshoe shape by repeatedly hitting it with a hammer on an anvil. This kind of decoration is known as 'split ring spangles'.

The shoes were an essential part of the whole outfit. These shoes have also been embroidered so that every part of the shoe is decorated with precious silver and silver-gilt threads and spangles. Looking at the way the shoes are made, using silk, it is very difficult to imagine how women walked

in them. They would have had to walk very carefully and delicately, without putting their weight on the floor as women in high heels do today.

**8. Court suit of coat, waistcoat and breeches, c. 1760s  
BATMC II.24.9 to B**



This suit is made of red and gold silk velvet, which is the most luxurious type of velvet. If you look closely you can see a pattern in the fabric which looks like tiny bricks. The gold thread running through the material would have sparkled in candlelight. This is an outfit suitable for wearing at the most important court occasions – it is collarless and close-fitting and the coat, waistcoat and

breeches all match. It is the outfit a man would have worn at a ball held in honour of the king's birthday.

It was important that clothes worn at occasions like this were new, and that they had been bought specially for that event. It would not have been proper to appear in something that had been worn already. Being fashionable was less important, and actually the quality of the materials clothes were made from, and their trimmings, changed more often than the style of the clothes.

In Gainsborough's portrait hanging nearby – and below – the composer and oboe player Johann Christian Fischer wears a suit of a similar colour and style.

**THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH (1727-88)**  
***Johann Christian Fischer (1733-1800), exhibited 1780***  
**RCIN 407298**



The court suit here is not exactly the same as the one worn by Johann Christian Fischer, but it is interesting to compare paintings with clothing which has survived, as they each give us different information.

Examining a piece of clothing can tell us how it was made and how it felt to touch it. Signs of wear, such as rubbed areas or sweat stains, help in working out how material might have worked in

relation to the body – whether it rustled or swayed as the wearer moved, or fitted tightly, staying fixed in place. A portrait shows a complete outfit – in Johann Christian Fischer’s case this included wig, cravat, stockings and buckled shoes.

We should remember that everything in the picture has been carefully selected by the sitter or the artist. In most formal portraits men wear white stockings, which suggests that they are trying to show off their best clothes. White stockings were expensive because they were usually made of silk and were hard to keep clean. In reality men wore stockings in a variety of colours. Examples in museum collections can be blue, green or red, but in paintings coloured stockings are not seen as often as white ones.

### 9. JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY (1738-1815)

*The Three Youngest Daughters of George III and Queen Charlotte, signed and dated 1785*

RCIN 401405



This is a painting of the three youngest daughters of George III and Queen Charlotte. It shows clearly that ideas about children and how to bring them up were changing during the 18th century. The children are out in nature, playing with jumping dogs, being allowed to be children. This portrait

is very different from some earlier paintings of children in which they are dressed like small adults, standing formal and stiff.

Instead of being a time when they were always being told what to do and then being told off for not doing it right, childhood was now a time to be enjoyed. Children were encouraged to be creative and to explore the world around them. So, we see new styles of clothes for both boys and girls which allow them more freedom of movement and give them room to play.

Princess Amelia is sitting barefoot in the baby carriage, wearing a plain white linen or cotton dress with lots of room to kick her legs or toddle about. This sort of frock was worn by all young children. This can make it hard to tell sometimes whether the child in the picture is a boy or a girl, there are very few signs of gender. And colour was definitely not one of them – there are portraits of both young boys and young girls wearing pink and blue.

Behind Amelia, eight-year-old Sophia wears a dress that fastens at the back. Her sister, Princess Maria, on the left, is just one year older but wears a more adult, front-fastening dress.

In the full-length portrait by Benjamin West, hanging nearby, the girls' brother Octavius wears a new type of boys' clothing designed to be worn before moving on to adult breeches. It is known as a 'skeleton suit'. It is a jacket and trousers joined together at the waist, a kind of 'onesie', made in hardwearing material like nankeen cotton, which would have been easy to wash. It really allows a child to be a child.

**BENJAMIN WEST (1738-1820)**  
***Prince Octavius (1779-83) c. 1782***  
**RCIN 401410**





**10. Circle of FRANCIS COTES (1726–70)**  
**George III, c.1750–1800.**  
**RCIN 409483**



***Wig bag, c.1760–90***  
**Silk and linen**  
**London, School of Historical Dress, TSHD.2017.017**



George III is wearing a style of wig known as a 'queue' where the hair has been caught into a tail at the back. The tail could be formed into ringlets and tied with a bow, or placed into a silk bag at the back of the neck.

This 'wig bag' was designed to protect clothes from the powder and pomade (scented ointment) used to style the wig, and also to stop it from drying out. In this portrait it is fastened at the back with a bow, with the ends of the ribbons brought round to the front, tied again and tucked out of sight. This is a style known as 'en solitaire'. In the case nearby there is a very similar wig bag made of black silk, with black ribbons. The ribbons have tiny loops of thread along the edges for decoration.

At the beginning of the 18th century even the cheapest wig cost around £3, which is more than £400 today. But wigs became cheaper over the course of the century, which made them much more widely available. Soon they became something that any respectable man would be expected to wear. By the 1740s all men apart from those from the lowest classes would have worn a wig. Anyone appearing in public without one was thought to be not a real man and offensive.

The most expensive wigs were made to measure from human hair. Top of the range was brown hair from youthful country girls, free from damage caused by city fumes and too much hairdressing. Poorer people wore wigs made from goat, horse or cow hair. They were often second hand, sometimes bought by paying a penny to have a lucky dip into a sack of old wigs of uncertain origin. Wigs were really easy to steal – they could be pulled from the head of the wearer with a hook, or even, according to some accounts, removed by trained monkeys!

## II. BENJAMIN WEST (1738-1820)

*Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) with Charlotte, Princess Royal (1766-1828), signed and dated 1776*

RCIN 404573



Queen Charlotte usually wore clothes in traditional styles, but portraits like this show that she followed fashions in hairstyles very closely. Here her hair is done in the heart-shaped style of the time, with the hair widening at the top on both sides. When we look at portraits from this period it is tempting to think that women are wearing wigs, but the hair is usually a woman's own. It will have been stretched and moulded over supportive pads, and might be supplemented with fake curls or extensions, but the hair is hers.

From the 1760s until the time Benjamin West painted this scene hairstyles had been getting taller and taller, as the different portraits of Queen Charlotte on this wall show. Making the tallest hairstyles was done in stages. People did not routinely use soap and water to clean their hair until the 19th century. They thought it was more hygienic to clean the hair while it was dry, with regular combing, and applying scented ointments and powder.

The ointments were made from animal fat, and were used to remove dirt and soften the hair. The powder was applied with bellows or a shaker, like the ones on show nearby. It soaked up the grease, like dry shampoo today. It made the hair less slippery and easier to style and set. Finally, any extensions were blended in by applying more powder, making the overall hairstyle look more natural.

The profession looking after hair had always been the barber, but they were seen more as part of the medical community, because their work involved a range of activities related to care of the body, like drawing teeth, or bloodletting. Styling hair and resetting wigs needed more creativity. There was an explosion in demand for a new trade, specialists known as 'hairdressers'. Barbers also saw another part of their trade taken off them by others, from the upcoming profession of dentistry.

**THOMAS ROWLANDSON (1757-1827)**  
***Transplanting of Teeth, etched 1787, published 1790***  
**RCIN 810243**



**THOMAS ROWLANDSON (1757-1827)**  
***A French dentist shewing a specimen of his artificial teeth and false palates, 26 - 26***  
**Feb 1811**  
**RCIN 810834**



People in the 18th century definitely looked after their teeth. They brushed them and used early forms of toothpaste. It was the increasing use of sugar, particularly amongst the upper classes which affected the health of teeth at this time. As decay increased and rotten teeth were pulled out or fell out, people looked for ways to replace them. Thomas Rowlandson makes fun of one method of doing this, transplanting teeth, in this print. The tooth being pulled from the young chimney sweep is going to go into the mouth of the wealthy woman sitting next to him, sniffing a bottle of smelling salts.

The operation involved fitting the donor tooth into the empty socket and then attaching it to the two neighbouring teeth with silk or seaweed. New adult teeth taken from children were preferred because it was easier to fit them into the gap in the gum.

Two other children are leaving the room, clutching their jaws. Although the sign on the door promises 'Most Money Given for Live Teeth', the girl clutches in her hand just a single small coin.

This print obviously condemns this procedure. It exploited young, poor children with an immoral practice which harmed them, all because of the vanity of rich adults.

Actually, transplanting teeth had a high failure rate, so it soon fell out of favour. People turned to false teeth, made of bone or porcelain, which became a popular alternative. Another print by Rowlandson, hanging nearby, shows a grinning dentist holding open the broad mouth of a woman to show off her perfect false teeth to a possible new client.

During the 18th century portraits begin to show people smiling, which is probably because standards in dentistry improved and people were happy to show their teeth, unlike in the past when they might have kept their mouths closed.

## 12. GEORGE STUBBS (1724-1806)

*Laetitia, Lady Lade (d. 1825), signed and dated 1793*  
RCIN 400997



George Stubbs has painted Laetitia, Lady Lade, on a rearing horse showing off the full, sweeping petticoat of her elegant dark blue riding habit, with its double row of gold buttons on a tight-fitting short jacket.

A riding habit like this would have been made in the same way as a man's suit. They were usually tailored by men, unlike dresses which were made by women mantua-makers. For this reason, they buttoned left over right like men's coats, and often included pockets. They were made of similar materials: broadcloth, worsted and linen.

Tailored styles like the woman's riding habit and man's frock coat came from clothes worn for outdoor country pursuits. They became popular on the continent during the last quarter of the 18th century as France and the rest of Europe were gripped by 'Anglomania', which was a passionate enthusiasm for English fashion. People loved the elegant tailoring, which fitted well in many different circumstances – a woman did not have to ride a horse like Lady Lade to wear a riding habit.

Riding habits were comfortable and warm and they could be worn at home before changing into full dress. They could also be worn while visiting or travelling. They were often accessorised with items usually found in a man's wardrobe such as cravats, hats, jockey caps, boots and riding crops.

This blurring of differences between clothes worn by men and women sometimes caused confusion. The author Samuel Richardson grumbled, 'One cannot easily distinguish your sex in it, for you neither look like a modest girl in it, nor an agreeable boy'.

### 13. MARIA SIBYLLA MERIAN (1647-1717)

*Cotton bush with Helicopsis Butterfly and Tiger Moth, 1702-03*  
RCIN 921164



At this date there were four main fibres used to make clothing – silk, wool, linen and cotton. Two came from plants and two from animals. The painting above shows a cotton bush, *Gossypium barbadense*. The cotton fibre is in the seedheads, known as bolls, in the lower left.

Maria Sibylla Merian painted this plant in Suriname on the north-eastern coast of South America, at a time when cotton was also being grown in the Caribbean and mainland North America. The cotton was grown on huge plantations which exploited enslaved people for unpaid labour. The Atlantic slave trade saw an estimated 12 million people transported from Africa against their will, and forced to work in terrible conditions. The slave trade was driven by demand in Europe for products like sugar, tobacco and the new darling of the fashion world – cotton.

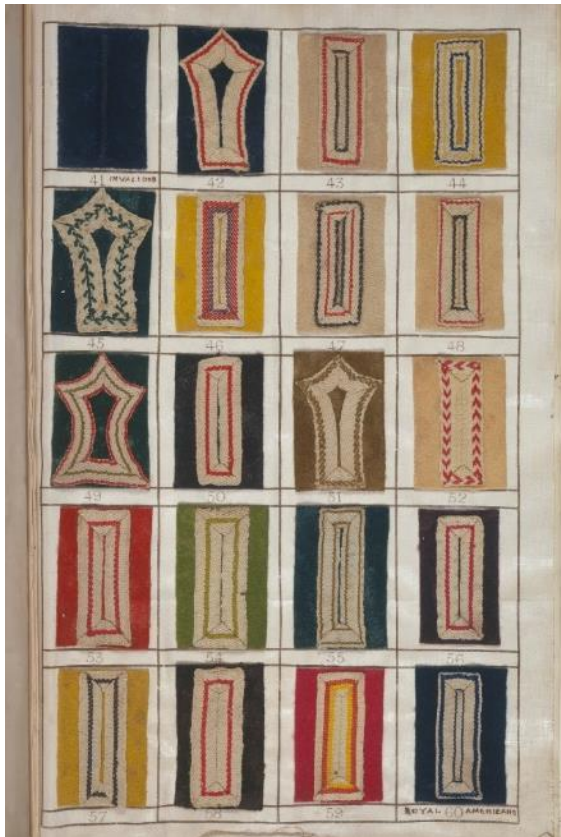
Cotton was incredibly popular. Unlike linen, cotton took colour very well – it could be printed and it could be dyed. It was also washable.

Cotton was accessible to everyone. With different levels of quality and cost it could be used to make a huge range of items, from a simple apron or handkerchief to a fine muslin from Bengal. As it became more and more popular, workers in the wool and silk industries felt threatened. They ransacked shops and even assaulted people wearing cotton, ripping the clothes from their bodies. In response Parliament passed the Calico Act in 1721 which banned all cotton imports. But by the time

then Act was scrapped over fifty years later, the home cotton industry had grown up to fill the gap in the market. New inventions like spinning machines and looms were making major changes to textile production in Britain. This was the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

#### 14. CHARLES FFOULKES (Active 1768)

*Facings & Lacings of the marching regiments of Foot of the British Army, 1768*  
RCIN 1085813





**DAVID MORIER (1705?-70)**

***Grenadiers, 1st Royal, 2nd Queen's and 3rd Regiments of Foot, 1751, c. 1751-60***  
**RCIN 405578**



Military uniforms were standardised for the first time during the 18th century. All four Georgian monarchs were fascinated by them. This book identifies the British army's seventy marching regiments and is the only one of its kind which has survived. It belonged to George III who, so people said, spent hours memorising the different uniforms.

Although most soldiers wore the standard red coat, the combination of the coloured lining of the coat, (visible when the lapels coat-tails or cuffs were turned back), and the braid used as trim and around buttonholes (as shown on this page), were different for each regiment. The lining is known as the 'facing' and the braid as 'lacing'.

Buttons made of brass or pewter were not sewn directly onto the coat or the waistcoat. They were held in position by leather cords which were threaded through the button loops on the inside of the coat. This meant they could easily be replaced or polished.

Not all red coats were as colourful as paintings may suggest. The woollen coats worn by ordinary foot soldiers were dyed with the root of the madder plant, and were a dull brick red. Wealthier officers paid for their own uniforms coloured with cochineal which was more expensive. This made them closer to scarlet. But it was the colour of the facings that mattered for telling regiments apart. David Morier's painting shows grenadiers from three different regiments with facings of blue, sea green and buff (a shade of dull yellow).

Grenadiers were a company of top-class soldiers. They were chosen from the tallest, bravest and most experienced troops. Grenades were thrown with an overarm movement but the traditional tricorne hat worn by soldiers got in the way. Because of this, the tall mitre caps were introduced, like the ones seen here. The backgrounds of the caps match the facings of the coat.

By the 1770s these embroidered grenadier caps had been replaced by black bearskins with a regimental metal badge or plate. They were the ancestors of the familiar bearskin caps worn by Guards in the Household Division today.

### **15. MATHER BYLES BROWN (1761-1831)**

***George, Prince of Wales (1762-1830), later George IV, 1789?***  
**RCIN 405135**



Smoke from cannon fire billows above a castle's ramparts in the background of this painting. George, Prince of Wales, stands confidently, looking exactly like a commander planning the next stage of his army's campaign.

The coat is standard military scarlet in colour, with blue lapels. It has the buttons of a general officer with a crossed sword and cannon inside a wreath. His white sword belt is embroidered with the Prince of Wales's coat of arms and feathers, and he wears epaulettes on both shoulders, showing that he is an officer.

But the Prince of Wales was not an officer. At this date he had no official military rank or title. Also, this is not a standard regimental uniform – it is a made-up uniform, perhaps designed by the Prince of Wales himself. He was fascinated by military dress, and ordered uniforms that he liked the look of to be made. He would then wear them in public, sometimes adding extras, like the gold lace decorating his sleeves and the buttonholes in this portrait. When the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons were renamed the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment in his honour, he could not resist the chance to be involved personally in the design of their uniform.

The Prince of Wales changed the colour of the coat from the standard red to a striking shade of blue. He took great personal interest in what his unit were wearing. It was known for its glamorous appearance and it attracted fashionable young gentlemen to join it.

When the Prince of Wales was made Colonel of the regiment in 1793, he added more elements, inspired by the uniform of the Hungarian Hussars. These were tight pantaloons, a tunic with a lots of looped cord decoration (known as 'frogging'), a wide waist sash and a cloak (known as a 'pelisse') worn over one shoulder. He was extremely pleased with the resulting uniform, and wore one for several portraits, including the one by Sir William Beechey hanging nearby and below.

**SIR WILLIAM BEECHEY (1753-1839)**  
**George IV (1762-1830) when Prince of Wales, 1803**  
**RCIN 400511**



**16. LOUIS GABRIEL BLANCHET (1705-72)**  
*Prince Charles Edward Stuart (1720-88), 1739*  
**RCIN 401208**



This is Charles Edward Stuart, the grandson of King James II of England and VII of Scotland. He was known as the 'Young Pretender' and led the Jacobite cause, trying to reclaim the English and Scottish thrones from George II.

In this painting the Prince is only 19 years old. He is shown as a warrior, wearing a breastplate. One gloveless hand is resting on a helmet, the other is on his sword hilt.

Everyone called him Bonnie Prince Charlie. He had lived his whole life in exile in Italy and France, and it would be another six years after this portrait was painted before he came to Scotland to bring together an army of supporters and start his advance on London. In the meantime, since he was not able to be here in person, he had to make sure people saw pictures of him. This was hugely important for getting people to recognise and support him and his cause. Portraits like this one show he is a king in waiting.

Just as his father did, he's wearing both the Order of the Thistle, an order associated with Scotland, and the blue sash of the Order of the Garter, demonstrating his right to rule over both countries.

Soon Jacobite supporters realised that a brightly coloured tartan was a quicker way of identifying their leader. And so, this became the main feature that tells us this is Charles Edward Stuart. The tartan was added to copies of earlier portraits and prints. At the same time the facial likeness became less and less accurate.

Tartan quickly became a symbol not only of the leader but of the whole Jacobite cause. As soon as British government forces had defeated him at the Battle of Culloden in 1746, it moved quickly to get rid of their unofficial uniform. An Act of Parliament banned men in Scotland from wearing Highland dress. Court cases were rare but if men were convicted the punishment was severe: six months in prison or, for repeat offenders, being sent to live in North America for seven years.

## **17. After RICHARD DIGHTON (1795-1880)** ***Westminster Election, 1796*** **RCIN 750576**



Candidates for the 1796 Westminster election stand on a temporary wooden platform in front of St Paul's Church in Covent Garden, ready to address the swarming crowd below. People gather at windows and on rooftops nearby, and a sailor in wide trousers – known as 'slops' – hangs off the side of the structure to get a better view.

Towards the far left of the platform, Admiral Alan Gardner stands with arms folded. He is the Tory party candidate and is wearing blue naval uniform with gold epaulettes and a bicorn hat. John Horne Tooke is between the next pair of vertical wooden posts, wearing a plain brown coat. He is an independent, and strong supporter of reforming Parliament. Next to him, in the centre of the picture, is Charles James Fox, leader of the Whigs, who is also a candidate. He is wearing buff (a

shade of dull yellow) and blue. Two similarly dressed supporters are by his side and others, in the same buff and blue, are circulating in the crowd.

Charles James Fox was the leading Whig politician at that time. He had chosen to wear the buff and blue colours in the late 1770s to show his support for American soldiers after the American Wars of Independence.

By wearing the same colours as George Washington's 'Continental army' in America, the Whigs made a powerful visual statement of their opposition to George III and the Tory government, headed by Prime Minister William Pitt the Younger. Even the Prince of Wales wore buff and blue – a very obvious insult to his father.

In this picture working class people seem to be the ones most involved with the candidates' campaigns, even though they did not have a vote (along with women from all sections of society). In the foreground a woman wearing a peach-coloured shawl and green quilted petticoat hands out copies of Fox's speeches. Work done by conservators at the Royal Collection has made it possible to make out the tiny print of his name.

### **Conservation**

When the object was taken to the conservation studio it was clear that something was wrong with it because the cravats were discoloured and were no longer white. And the same went for the faces. These areas had originally been painted using lead white, a pigment now known to be highly poisonous, which was created using metallic lead and vinegar. Lead white had been highly valued by artists since ancient times as it was thick and good for covering surfaces so that nothing underneath showed through. It was also used to create highlights, and was mixed with other colours to depict skin tones.

When lead white paint is exposed to hydrogen sulphide (a common pollutant in the atmosphere) it goes dark. The conservation department uses a treatment to turn the darkened black sulphide into a new chemical compound that looks white. The treatment uses tiny amounts of hydrogen peroxide mixed with a chemical called diethyl ether which is applied to the darkened areas with a very fine brush and very gentle brushstrokes. The process is repeated until the lead white discolouration is converted and the darkening no longer spoils the artwork. The conservation process took about 40 hours over a number of weeks.

It is important for conservators to assess what they have done, which involves waiting some time to allow the solution to dry off so that the results of the treatment can be seen. One constant concern

is that the chemicals might have an effect on the paper underneath, which is why everything is done so carefully.

**18. After ELISABETH LOUISE VIGÉE LE BRUN (1755-1842)**  
*Marie Antoinette, Queen of France (1755-1793), c.1775-1830*  
**RCIN 406515**



Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI of France, loved to keep up with all the latest fashions. She bought more than a hundred new gowns every year and regularly overspent her generous annual wardrobe allowance. Half of the money she spent on clothes in 1783 went to Rose Bertin, Marie Antoinette's favourite 'Marchande de Modes', whose role was to be a kind of personal stylist.

In this portrait Marie Antoinette wears the most formal style of the French court – known in French as the 'grand habit'. It had a boned bodice, a hooped petticoat and a train. Even so, despite her reputation for luxurious clothes she really preferred the newly fashionable chemise gown, this was a far simpler style made in cotton that became known as 'Chemise à la Reine' – 'the Queen's gown'.

It was cut much along the same lines as a woman's undergarment, and was put on over the head. This was a major change from other types of gowns which the wearer stepped into, rather like a coat today.

As revolution in France drew ever nearer, the clothes people wore started to reflect people's politics. Many of those who wanted to overthrow the monarchy adopted simple peasants' clothes. One militant group became known as the 'sans-culottes', which means 'without breeches', showing that they rejected the luxurious clothes worn at the court at Versailles, along with everything they stood for.

In the fevered atmosphere of the time Marie Antoinette was forced to wear the 'cockade' in her hair – a circular pleated rosette of red, white and blue ribbon. A fashion plate displayed nearby shows how it was worn:



If people did not wear it, they were seen as traitors against what the revolutionaries stood for. Marie Antoinette was forced to wear the colours of the group that eventually overthrew her and her family. This must have been a humiliating experience.

It was from this combination of white, the colour of the King, and red and blue, the traditional colours of Paris, that France's 'Tricolore' flag eventually emerged.



**19. FRANCIS SMITH (ACTIVE 1763-9)**  
*The audience with the Grand Vizier, c.1763-9*  
RCIN 917142



*The audience with Sultan Mustafa III, c.1763-9*  
RCIN 917143



In the first of this pair of jewel-coloured scenes, inside Topkapı Palace in Constantinople (now Istanbul), the Grand Vizier, sitting by the window in the corner of the room, talks to Henry Grenville, British Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, which was an area covering modern day Türkiye and Greece as well as parts of Northern Africa and the Middle East.

Grenville wears a white silk suit with gold braid which is formal English court dress typical of the 1760s. The officials with him are dressed in the same way, with powdered bag wigs and tricorn hats.

In contrast, the Turkish men wear long gowns and a variety of turbans. The difference in the height of the turbans showed their status.

A pile of fur-lined robes wrapped in a floral cloth can be seen in the foreground. They are gifts to be presented to the visiting British party before they have an audience with Sultan Mustafa III, which is the scene in the second watercolour.

Here Grenville and the others with him have changed into yellow fur-lined robes. However, they have kept on their bag wigs and their black hats even though this combination of Turkish and British dress looks rather peculiar.

People back in Britain were fascinated by pictures like these. They took elements of unfamiliar and rich clothing from far-off lands to use in fancy-dress parties and, later, in their everyday clothes. Luxurious textiles, fur trims, long flowing gowns, jewelled girdles and baggy trousers were all grouped together under the blanket term 'Turkish'.

When Europeans say that clothes are in a particular style, or come from a specific part of the world, they are not giving an accurate description of what was really worn there. Rather they are taking features of clothes from a number of regions, combining them and adding them to European fashions. This ends up with something very different from the clothes worn by people living in those places.

**20. Attributed to the studio of FRANÇOIS-HUBERT DROUAI (1727-75)  
Madame de Pompadour (1722-64), after 1764  
RCIN 403908**



**Roll of Chinese hand-painted silk**



Here we see Madame de Pompadour working on embroidery, stretched on a frame, known as a 'tambour frame'. She is famous for her taste in fashion and works of art. She met King Louis XV of

France on a hunting trip about twenty years before this portrait was painted. Shortly after that they met again at a masquerade ball at the Palace of Versailles where she was dressed as a shepherdess and the king as a yew tree! Within weeks Madame de Pompadour became the King's mistress. She had her own suite of rooms at the Palace, where she stayed her whole life as his close friend and advisor.

Madame de Pompadour is wearing a type of jacket known as a 'sacque' made from a floral fabric. It is difficult to tell whether this is a printed cotton or a painted silk. An example of the type of painted silk that it might have been made of is shown alongside. The silk was made in China for European customers.

Before it could be painted, the plain cream silk would have been brushed with a mixture of glue and a chemical called 'alum'. This process was called 'sizing'. It acted like a primer, so that the paints would stick but not spread. Then the design would have been outlined in ink, or by using a metal pen.

The bright colours for the different patterns were made by painting the design with lead white and then applying thick colour on top. The colours were made from the same materials used for easel painting, for example malachite for green, or vermilion for red. Sometimes touches of silver were used to emphasise the outlines.

Pastel shades and floral designs were typical of the decorative style known as 'rococo' which is very closely associated with Madame de Pompadour, with all her frills, ruffles and bows. She wore the colour pink all the time, so when, in 1758, the French porcelain manufacturer Sèvres created a line of porcelain in a new shade of pink – which is 'rose' in French – they called it 'Rose Pompadour'.

**21. MRS TRIAUD (active 1816)**  
***Princess Charlotte's Wedding Dress, 1816***  
**RCIN 71997**



This is the only surviving royal wedding dress from the Georgian period. It was made for Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent, for her marriage on 2nd May 1816 to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. Nowadays lots of brides are dressed in white, but for most of the 18th century they just wore their best clothes, which could be any colour. However, brides from royal or noble families across Europe had new gowns made, specially designed for the wedding. They chose rich white and silver textiles which created a striking effect.

But this dress does not look exactly as it did on Princess Charlotte's wedding day – the Georgians were keen recyclers and remade existing clothes as fashions changed. The wedding dress here has probably been altered at least once in its history, perhaps twice. The most original part of the dress is the sleeves. The print below gives some idea of what it might have looked like originally.

**The Princess Charlotte of Wales & Prince Leopold of Cobourg, c.1816-50**

**RCIN 605455**



The new style of shorter sleeves showed a lot more of the arms, and skirts were narrower, with layers of light fabric like columns, which skimmed and draped the figure. You can see this below in a work from earlier in the exhibition.

**Princess Mary (1776-1857), signed & dated 1802**

**RCIN 913862**



Gowns of the early 19th century were inspired by the chitons and tunics worn by people in ancient Greece and Rome, and so are known as 'neoclassical'. By now the waistline has risen to just under the bust. It remains high for quite some time, while the bodice has become more fitted.

**22. JOHAN JOSEPH ZOFFANY (FRANKFURT 1733-LONDON 1810)**  
***George III (1738-1820), Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) and their Six Eldest Children, 1770***  
**RCIN 400501**



Our ideas of what 18th century fashions were like often come from television or theatre shows where the clothing is being used as costumes, and is intended to make us think of a particular period of history.

But thinking about just a narrow range of clothes worn by people to the 18<sup>th</sup> century can lead to ignoring the many different trends popular at the time. For example, the one shown in this family group of George III, Queen Charlotte and their six eldest children. The Georgians enjoyed dressing up as characters from history. They are wearing an old-fashioned style popular for portraits and at masked balls – known as ‘Vandyke dress’. It was inspired by paintings by the 17th century Flemish artist Anthony van Dyck, who was Principal Painter to Charles I. In this work there is an obvious similarity between the two older boys on the left – Prince George and Prince Frederick – and Van Dyck’s 1635 painting of George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham, and his brother, Lord Francis Villiers which you can see below.



**ANTHONY VAN DYCK (1599 –1641)**

**George Villiers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Duke of Buckingham and Lord Francis Villiers, 1635  
RCIN 404401**



This style of dress brought to mind a romantic vision of Britain from the past. By the mid-18th century enough time had passed for the dress of this time to seem beautiful rather than just old-fashioned. But there may have been another reason for wearing these clothes –by wearing the kind of clothes worn at the Stuart court, the kings from the House of Hanover in Germany may also have been making a statement about their right to sit on the British throne, which came from the fact that they were descended from the Stuart King James I of England and VI of Scotland.

Portraits present a particular image chosen by the artist or the sitter, and are fixed in time. But they also contain clues about the changing history and culture of that time. Changes in styles, fabrics, colours and silhouettes often reflect big changes in society.

By the early years of the 19th century fashion designers were being inspired from all sorts of different sources. Fashions looked back at the past, at earlier years in British history and also overseas, taking ideas from different countries and regions and combining them into a range of new looks.

What is clear is that fashion acts as a sign of what is happening in the wider world.

We have now come to the end of our tour. We do hope you have enjoyed the exhibition.

Although this is the end of our tour, there's still more to see. If you would like to dig deeper into the style and society of Georgian England, make sure to visit the Millar Learning Room. To get there, leave the exhibition through the door at the far end of the green gallery and turn right. The Millar Learning Room will be straight ahead of you.

To find out more about works of art in the Royal Collection, please visit our website at [www.rct.uk](http://www.rct.uk). There you can find out about future exhibitions and keep in touch by signing up to our e-Newsletter or by following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. If you have bought your ticket directly from us, you can return to The Queen's Gallery, free of charge, for a year, by converting your ticket into a 1-Year Pass. Just sign the back and ask a member of staff to stamp it before you leave.

### **23. The Royal Collection**

The Royal Collection is one of the largest and most important art collections in the world, and one of the last great European royal collections to remain together. It contains works from almost all the fine and decorative arts. It is spread across 13 royal homes and former homes across the UK, most of which are regularly open to the public. The Royal Collection is held in trust by the Sovereign for his successors and the nation, and is not owned by The King as a private individual.

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This script was put together from interviews with Anna Reynolds, Deputy Surveyor of The King's Pictures; Puneeta Sharma, Paper Conservator and Jenny Tiramani, Principle of the School of Historical Dress.