

Clothes

As a small child, in the 1950s, clothes were primarily home-made. My mother, her mother and my great aunt Ella were always knitting. Strangely, I don't ever remember my paternal grandmother knitting, yet she was certainly not in the income bracket for shop-bought clothes. We saw her much less frequently so maybe any knitting was out of the way because she had 'guests' but this is unlikely as I never benefited from, or was embarrassed by, the fruits of her labours. As an only child, with no cousins, I didn't get hand me downs although I believe that the few clothes that were relatively unscathed once I had outgrown them were given to the younger girl next door. She probably didn't appreciate this, as I was a tomboy and she was a dainty, doll-like child.

Certainly, until the late 1960s, clothes were minimal in quantity, washed only when visibly dirty and thrown away only when beyond any sort of repair. Outgrown woollen garments were unravelled and the wool was reused, either for other clothes, or as part of multicoloured, crochet blankets. The unravelling itself was a therapeutic process, especially if the person winding the resulting crinkly wool couldn't keep up with the pace of whoever was pulling the garment apart with a satisfying ripping sound. Some makes of new wool came in skeins, as opposed to balls; this too had to be wound. I would stand with my hands eighteen inches apart with the skein round them to hold the wool, whilst it was turned into a ball by an older relative.

Sewing was less common than knitting in our household, although some sewing was done on an antiquated Singer hand sewing machine. I remember standing on a chair to have skirt hems pinned up. I tried electric sewing machines at secondary school but could never get the hang of controlling the speed, so even now I use a hand sewing machine on the rare occasions when I need one. Goodness knows what I will do if it breaks down, as I am sure you can't buy them anymore. Mum did try a knitting machine in the early 1960s, before the days of electric knitting machines but it seemed unnecessarily complicated and she didn't persevere.

For shop-bought clothes, coats and school uniforms for example, we went to department stores such as Alder's and Kennard's in Croydon or to chains: Marks and Spencer, Littlewoods, British Home Stores or C & A. I can remember having a row with mum in C & A when I was about eleven, probably because I wasn't keen on any of the items she suggested. I ended up being hit (not very hard) with a plastic coat-hanger. This is the only time I can recall being physically punished, so she must have been exasperated!

In the late 1960s, boutiques arrived and the 'in' places to shop were independent stores or chains such as Top Shop, Etams, Chelsea Girl and Dorothy Perkins (affectionately known as 'Dotty P'). Once I got to secondary school, I was allowed to go on the bus to shop for myself. I am not sure where the budget came from for the bizarre purchases that resulted; birthday or Christmas money perhaps, or accumulated pocket money. I know at the age of eleven I returned with some fluorescent green stockings and purple nail varnish, the latter cost 1/11d. I teamed these with a jersey mini-dress that had a zip down the front and narrow fluorescent stripes in yellow, pink and orange. I remember attaching a key-ring in the shape of a yellow transistor radio (known as a 'tranny' - a word that has since acquired other connotations) to the zip. Sadly, or probably fortunately, there is no photographic evidence of this ensemble. In the late sixties, men began wearing wide floral ties, known as 'Kipper ties'. Girls might have 'kipper tie dresses' with the attached tie of a contrasting colour to the dress, mine was a greenish paisley pattern. I also vaguely recall a maroon and brown one. These were home made.

Underwear and Nightwear

I always had clean pants and socks every day but vests lasted a week and school dresses and blouses several days. I remember being amazed that a friend not only had a clean vest every day but that she took it off at night; this seemed the height of decadence. Pants however were removed at bedtime. These pants were white, or occasionally pink and by the mid-sixties, nylon had replaced a heavy, jersey-like, knitted cotton. My first brightly patterned pants, by then termed 'knickers', one

pair blue and purple and the other with an orangey palette, were purchased in about 1968.

Socks were usually short until I was at secondary school when long socks were fashionable and only the despised would be seen in short socks. Strangely, by the time my daughters were at school, in the late 1980s and 1990s, the reverse was the case. Boys' long grey socks were often held up by elastic garters with little green tabs of material hanging down under the turned down top of the sock. These may have been part of cub scout uniform but they were certainly worn at other times too.

At primary school we wore thick woollen tights in winter. When I was in the top year of the junior school my mum acquired some hideously thick stockings and I daringly wore these instead. Using a red and white suspender belt, I pulled the stockings up really tightly, so that the tops of the stockings almost reached my knickers. I think I was the first girl in the school to have stockings, even though they looked like tights! Very shortly afterwards nylon tights, initially called 'panti-hose', came in. At first these had different coloured 'knicker' parts and there was a debate as to whether one should count these as knickers or wear actual knickers as well. Stockings, tights and socks were not discarded when they had holes in. Ladders in nylons could be temporarily halted by the application of nail varnish or soap. These would later be mended and socks would be darned using a wooden mushroom inside the sock. Old habits die hard and I only stopped darning socks when it became impossible to buy the fine wool required for this purpose.

At twelve, I had a pink-checked, heavily padded bra, size 30A, which I clearly didn't need. This was followed by one in navy blue, a great advance as this was a size 32A! I had two pairs of 'baby-doll' pyjamas, one pink and one blue, when I was about nine, of which I was very proud. These consisted of cotton knickers and a smock style top with puffed sleeves. Otherwise, we wore nighties made of a fluffy brushed cotton called 'winceyette' and later pyjamas. I also had a home-made, purple candlewick dressing gown that I loved and wore for years.

There were no tissues when I was a child, so we had cotton hankies. Mine were always ironed into triangles and mum's into squares so we knew whose were whose. I think Granny's had been triangular, so the plan seemed to be to alternate the generations. When I was small my hankies wouldn't have been mixed up with mum's as they had children's pictures, such as nursery rhyme characters, on. I had a days of the week set of seven, depicting the 'Monday's Child is Fair of Face' rhyme. I still hate tissues and continue to use cotton hankies. Men had large white hankies, often with blue initials embroidered in the corners. Sometimes these were worn as headgear on the beach. A knot would be tied in each corner of the hankie in order to make it head shaped.

Children's Clothes

Photographs and rare survivals suggest that, as a baby, I wore hand-made, thick cotton, embroidered nightdresses and knitted cardigans. These would be protected by voluminous, home-made, cotton bibs when I was being fed. In all photographs that feature bibs I am wearing what appears to be the same one, though I may have had several of



1956



the same style. Large cotton pants covered my nappy, presumably with rubber pants in between. Nappies at this time were terry towelling squares, worn with a muslin square inside and fastened with a nappy pin, a safety pin that had an additional outer clasp to stop it coming undone. By the time I could walk I was usually in cotton dungarees with dresses on special occasions. As a pre-school child, dresses had puffed sleeves and perhaps smocking across the front. I remember a shop-bought, pale green pair of dungaree style shorts, with a rabbit's head for the bib, that were a particular favourite. I also had conventional cotton shorts. By the mid-1960s, I was wearing stretchy trousers with a sewn-in seam at the front and 'stirrups' under the feet. At this time, tee-shirts began to appear as part of the wardrobe. Jeans as a fashion item came in about 1967. A much-loved cotton dress of the same era



20 May 1957



May 1959

had a full skirt and was made from material whose pattern was black poodles between tartan squares.

At the age of about eight I pestered my mum for a skirt with horses on. Despite her suggesting that material depicting horses would be hard to come by, I persisted. Bless her, she eventually produced a blue skirt with horses on, made from curtain material. I still have



this. I had a kilt that I seem to think mum made from a kit consisting of the wool to make a red double-knit jumper and the material for the kilt itself. I also had a tartan dress in brushed cotton. I think the Scottish influence was probably inspired by the royal children, the celebrities of the day.

There doesn't seem to have been much distinction between summer and winter. If it was cold an extra jumper went on. My favourite jumper had different coloured rows of people, like cut out dolls holding hands. I wore this until it was far too small as I loved it so much. My first knitted garment that I made for myself, when I was about eleven, was a double knitted, roll-necked jumper in a jewel green. I had terrible problems with static and could never wear nylon



December 1962

wool, which has a similar effect on me as running fingernails down a blackboard does on others. When I was about eleven, I wore 'skinny-rib' jumpers; tight roll-necked, ribbed, shop-bought jumpers. These were sometimes teamed with 'pop-overs', which was a name for pinafore dresses.

For small children, summer sun bonnets gave way to knitted winter 'pixie' hats. These were basically two squares sewn together and fastened under the chin. When it rained we would wear plastic macs, or 'plakky macs'; one of the brand names was 'Pac-a-Mac'. These were heavy duty plastic in a small range of colours and had a fairly short life span but they did fold up into a small bundle. They were the fore-runner of the kagool. We also had rain hats, much thinner, fold-up polythene hoods that tied under the chin with strings, only females wore these, although both sexes wore plastic macs. When I was about eleven I had a fuchsia pink 'grown-up' umbrella, of which I was very proud. Shortly after this collapsible umbrellas came in, so this item became old-fashioned.

When I was a young teenager, mini-skirts were the fashion. My mum was fairly liberal and modern in outlook so I was allowed quite 'daring' clothes. At about fourteen, in 1970, I had a very tight, very short, nylon dress, printed to look like grey snakeskin. Another favourite was a see through, tight, white lace-effect blouse in stretchy nylon, often worn with black velvet trousers or a mini skirt. There were also 'hot-pants', very short shorts that usually had a bib but I didn't have these. By the 1970s, teenaged fashions diverged according to whether you were a skinhead, a hippy or a greaser. I went for 'hippy' clothes, long floral skirts, tie-dyed tee-shirts, 'afghan' coats (fur-lined sheepskin coats worn with the fur inside and usually embroidered on the outside) and flared jeans, often decorated with embroidery. Straighter jeans could be converted into ones of more acceptable width by unpicking the leg seams at the bottom and letting in triangular shaped pieces of material to create 'bell-bottoms'. We used to try to shrink jeans, so that they fitted more tightly, by wearing them in the bath; this never seemed to work. We also used to bleach blotches on our jeans using household bleach. Particular

favourite items of this era were a black velvet jacket, an embroidered denim jacket and a cheesecloth smock. I also had a sludgy green, suede waistcoat with fringing that was considered very trendy. Even at this stage, I still sewed or knitted some of my own clothes, a practice that declined after the mid 1970s.



**Cheesecloth Smock
31 March 1973**

Swimwear

In the early 1960s, I had a ruched cotton swimming costume that seemed to last for years. When I started going to the swimming baths, in 1967, mum made me a changing tent by sewing a large piece of 'sixties style', brightly coloured towelling into a circle, with a cord threaded through a hemmed down piece at the top, so that I could tighten it round my neck. This has now reverted to a flat piece of towelling but it is still used to sit on on the beach! At school we had 'regulation' black swimming costumes and white rubber hats. My first two-piece swimming costume, acquired in about 1967, was in a tiger striped nylon. This was worn with a swimming hat covered in rubber flowers although I resisted wearing swimming hats if I possibly could. I did later have an unsuccessful, yellow, crocheted bikini which lacking, as it did, elastic in the legs verged on the indecent. My favourite bikini was black with tortoiseshell-effect plastic rings on either hip (joining the front to the back) and in the centre of the top.

Footwear

Shoes were leather and in a narrow range of styles. When we lived in Addiscombe I would be measured for these at Freeman Hardy and Willis, which was



My First Shoes

managed by the father of a school-friend. At any one time, we might have one pair of shoes, one pair of sandals and perhaps a pair of wellington boots, plimsolls for school and a pair of slippers. On the beach we wore plastic shoes, with buckles that went rusty in sea water. These were revitalised in the late 1990s as 'jelly-shoes'. I was twelve before I had any kind of heeled shoes. I recall some mauve patent leather shoes that I had about this time; I teamed these with the fluorescent green stockings mentioned above! In the late 1960s, fashion boots and platform soled shoes made an appearance. We also started to wear white lace up plimsolls, often customised with felt pen, the forerunner of modern trainers. Dr Scholl wooden-soled sandals and wooden-soled clogs with leather uppers became popular about 1970. By 1972, my favourites were 'Jesus sandals' with long leather ties that criss-crossed round and round my legs and were incredibly uncomfortable as, in order to make the straps stay up, they had to be tied tightly enough to cut off all circulation. Shoes would be taken to be mended, either via the shoe shop, who sent them away, or we went to the 'while you wait' shoe bar and key-cutters in Alder's arcade, which had a distinctive smell of rubber.

The most popular ladies' slippers had Bri-Nylon fur round the tops. Slipperettes were often given as Christmas presents. These very soft soled slippers had elastic round the top and arrived folded in half. I guess the idea was that they could be easily carried and put on when visiting friends. We were not obsessive about 'slippers indoors' at home but one of my friend's mothers always made us take our shoes off at the front door; this was definitely an exception and strangely this was the family whose head managed the shoe shop!

'Party' Clothes

One of my first party dresses was a wonderful creation, white with, I think, embroidered flowers. The pièce de résistance was the petticoat. My mother had fashioned this from many layers of different coloured net, each slightly shorter than the last. There was an ongoing competition for having the most layers of petticoat and I don't recall ever being beaten. I



20 July 1963

also remember a silky white party dress with bright pink tulips on, which survived until my children's time as part of the dressing up box. As a teenager, I had a cream mini-skirt that I wore for a party. Unfortunately, it was sewn together with white cotton that showed up in the fluorescent lights that were common at discos. From the age of sixteen (1972), I had long dresses for parties such as a dark green halter neck in a thin jersey material, which always clung round my legs in an unpleasant fashion and a full skirted black and white checked dress with puffed sleeves. When I married, in 1980, it was impossible to



31 March 1974

buy a dress that was not made of nylon, which I hated because of the static. In the end, mum made me a cotton wedding dress.

Outerwear

Once I reached school age, coats were usually purchased. Before then I had the obligatory home-made woollen coat with a velvet collar. Later, I wore an anorak, known as a 'windcheater' (but pronounced 'windsheeter') and a woollen coat in mustard and grey. The incident associated with the purchase of this item is mentioned above. I also had a navy duffel coat, which were popular in the mid-sixties.

Apart from school uniform, school aged children rarely wore hats, although boys might wear their school caps out of school. As a toddler I had a fur fabric muff. This was a cylinder of material with a string attached so that it could be hung round the neck. The idea was that muffs kept our hands warm and it was probably easier than trying to get tiny fingers into gloves, although I wore mittens as well. The inadvisability of

children who were still unsteady on their feet having no hands to save themselves when they fell over seemed to escape the designers of this item. Adults also had muffs, in their case without strings and probably made from real fur. Small children's gloves were attached to a long string and threaded through the sleeves of their coats so they did not lose



1980



4 April 1958

them; no one suggested that they might garrotte themselves on the string.

Women's full, wide coats of the early 1960s became closer fitting by the later 1960s and belted trench coats were popular as a shower-proof coat. Fur coats were a status symbol and there was no stigma attached to wearing real fur. My grandmother had a black fox fur necklet, complete with head and feet. 'Foxy' was relegated to the dressing up box before succumbing to the moth. When I was eleven, mum made me a purple cape. In the 1970s, youth culture dictated the type of coat you wore. Male hippies wore army surplus 'greatcoats'. Velvet jackets and embroidered denim jackets were worn by both sexes of hippy, as were afghan coats. Skinheads wore parkas and greasers wore leather jackets.

Chiffon headscarves were popular with older women. The post war teenagers largely abandoned hat wearing, although hats saw a revival as a fashion item, firstly the large PVC caps of the 'Twiggy'¹ era, followed, in the early 1970s, by the wide brimmed floppy hats of the hippies, made from material or straw; I had one of these.

Uniforms

School uniform was dark green for my private infants' school. A pinafore dress, or 'tunic', made from a thick, ridgy fabric, known as 'drill', with a blouse and tie (yellow and green stripes), was worn in winter and a green and white gingham dress in summer, both with hand knitted cardigans. This was accompanied by a



15 March 1961

1. In the 1960s, Lesley Hornby was a very thin model, with a short 'pixie' haircut. She worked under the name of 'Twiggy' and her iconic style became a trademark of the era. She was associated with the fashion designer Mary Quant and trendy London, shops such as Biba.

green beret, a gabardine, belted raincoat and leather satchel. A fleecy lining could be buttoned on inside the raincoat when it was particularly cold. At junior school, navy tunics replaced green in winter. Here our ties were purple, green and yellow and our checked summer dresses could be whichever of these colours we chose. Blazers and berets were navy with the school badge sewn on; this too was purple, green and yellow. All our school clothes had to be named. We had 'Cash's' embroidered name tapes which lasted a lifetime as they would be carefully unpicked from discarded clothing and reused. I still have some of mine; my embroidery was green, my favourite colour. Knickers were thick knitted cotton in regulation green or blue, colours that used to adhere to one's person when they were new.



The School Tie
Note the Cash's nametape on the end

In primary school, purses had been worn on long straps across our chest so I was very excited by the 'purse-belts' that replaced these when I changed schools. These belts, navy in winter, white in summer, had a small, zipped section for our bus fare and 'emergency' phone money. The financial circumstances of most of the pupils at my school meant that any dinner money was paid termly by cheque.



Purse-belt

In secondary school, tunics were replaced by navy skirts that were supposed to reach the floor when we knelt down, although never did. In any case, skirts could be and were, wound up at the waist until they reached a more fashionable height. This resulted in an unsightly roll



Secondary School Uniform 1968

round one's waist but it was the length that was key. Skirts were accompanied by white blouses, green ties and regulation, never hand knitted, navy jumpers, with green and white stripes round their v-necks. Shoes had to be stipulated styles, Clark's 'Sunlo' sandals for summer and 'sensible', flat, brown leather lace-ups of a particular style in winter. Summer dresses could be any style, as long as the length was appropriate and the material was the specified sort. This was striped cotton with a choice of red, blue, green or yellow and white stripes. My favourites were in yellow and were a straight style that I wore for several years, so that they became a length of which I approved. Blazers were worn in summer and dark blue coats in winter. In my first year (1967-8) we were supposed to wear velour hats in winter and straw 'panama' hats in summer but these were abandoned as a lost cause and I don't think I ever had a panama hat. In 1968, the system for changing clocks in the autumn was altered and we retained British Summer Time throughout the year until 1972. This meant going to school in the dark for much of the winter. When this first came in, the school issued us with fluorescent arm bands, the wearing of which was supposed to be compulsory. This was long before this kind of thing was normal wear for cyclists and the idea was a dismal failure. Despite the best efforts of the school, the arm bands were soon consigned to the bottom of school bags.

Uniform rules relaxed as I went up the school, skirts certainly got shorter and shoes and coats acquired more individual styles. In the sixth form, we could wear our own clothes, including trousers. Technically these were supposed to be trouser suits but I don't recall ever seeing even the most 'square' girls wearing anything resembling a trouser suit. Jeans would have been a bridge too far but we got away with corduroy trousers. I frequently wore a red gingham smock, that I had made, to

school in the sixth form. When I was at college and ran a Saturday club for children with additional needs I wore this every week so that I was familiar.

PE kit for primary children was vest and knickers for girls; I think boys may have kept their shorts on. We also had black plimsolls with elasticated panels over the foot to make them easy to get on and off; 'common' children wore these on a daily basis. At secondary school, PE kit consisted of divided skirts, or culottes and aertex shirts for outdoor PE. These were embroidered in green with our full initials and a number that corresponded to our hanger in the changing room; I was number 34. Fortunately, I was not remotely overweight, or the cruelty of schoolgirls would have had a field day with my initials, which were JMB. Only once did anyone make a passing comment about the lack of a 'U' and 'O' but it didn't catch on. I think the wearing of knickers only for indoor gym went on until we were about fourteen. I vaguely remember being instrumental in a campaign to get us to be allowed to wear shorts over the top. PE kit was kept in home-made, large, red, drawstring bags, with our names embroidered in grey wool.

Whatever the weather, only those in sports teams were allowed to wear jumpers, thus ensuring that those who weren't already in a team were too cold to perform well enough to scale those dizzy heights. A particularly sadistic PE teacher always claimed that she thought I was wearing tights under my PE kit. This eminently sensible practice was totally forbidden on our windswept hockey field. I was usually quite sun-tanned so the teacher used this as an excuse to run her hands up and down my legs at regular intervals just to check that I wasn't breaking the rules. A bout of glandular fever when I was about nine ensured that I was pretty bad at all forms of sport. For the first year of secondary school, I deluded myself by trying out for teams before sinking into an acceptance of my inability, becoming adept at 'losing' my PE kit at every possible opportunity. I know we also had long-sleeved, wrap-round, long, cotton lab-coats for science and art, I think they could be green or blue but I cannot recall actually wearing this item.

Some of my friends changed out of their school uniforms when they got home but I rarely did this unless I was going out somewhere. I probably got away with this as I didn't play outside much on school days, only weekends and in the holidays.

Hairstyles

Although I had what passed for a fringe, my pre-school hair was short, side parted and tied back on one side with a ribbon. By the age of five I abandoned the ribbon in favour of a boyish pudding-basin style. I had several false starts at growing my hair - I always wanted to have plaits and preferred bunches to a pony tail. Elastic bands were used. Sometimes these were pulled up by dividing the pony tail or bunch and pulling upwards. This meant that my fine hair broke off at the level of the elastic band. We also had stretchy Alice bands to hold our hair back. Hair washing was once a week only, until I was a teenager. Finally, I persevered and my hair grew gradually longer between the ages of eleven and nineteen, by which time it was well past my waist. Always straight, always fine, always mousy; I resisted rare attempts to curl it.

Hair was supposed to be tied back at school. By secondary school ribbons were a thing of the past. We had 'bobbles', two plastic beads on a figure of eight shaped piece of elastic, these were wound round the hair and one bead was pushed over the other to



20 July 1958



July 1963

hold it in place. By the age of fourteen, on occasions when I had to tie my hair back, I usually used a large hair slide to hold my hair in a low pony tail or a half pony tail, with the top part held back and the underneath left loose. When my hair was very long I had to plait it at night to stop it tangling, this made it vaguely crinkly when it was undone. I had a decorative slide with a green net butterfly on that I wore to parties as a teenager.

For adult women, hair was permed and then shampooed and set. Both processes could be done at home, although perms were usually a job for the hairdresser. Ladies who had their hair shampooed and set weekly at the hairdressers wouldn't wash it in between. When washed at home, mum would curl her very straight hair with plastic covered wire rollers, which had bristles through the centre; these were secured with plastic pins. When I was growing up, no one we knew obviously dyed their hair, although my ballet teacher had a variety of pink and purple rinses. Older women in particular might go out with their hair in rollers, perhaps covered by a headscarf. Hairnets were also worn, both by day and night to keep 'sets' in place.

I don't remember who cut my hair as a child, mum probably cut my fringe and certainly trimmed my hair once I grew it long. I suspect the short styles must have been the work of a professional. I reluctantly had my waist length hair cut when I was at teacher training college and shortly after had it permed for the first time. I felt like Danny La Rue, who was a famous TV drag act of the era. Despite its fineness, perms never really 'took' in my hair and after several failed attempt, I reverted to straight and volume-less.



1979

2. A 'perm', or permanent wave, was a chemical process of curling the hair, in what was meant to be a semi-permanent manner. Permed hair did however still need to be 'set' (put in rollers when washed) in order to avoid a distinctly frizzy look.

Make-up

I got my first make-up when I was eleven, purple, green, blue and silver eye shadows and an almost white lip-stick. Later I acquire block mascara with a little brush. You were supposed to spit on the block to wet it before it was applied but I never quite got the hang of that. There was also dark black eye-liner, rouge and powder in a compact. I basically stuck to the eye shadow and lip-stick, adding mascara once brush applicators came in and later blusher. Make-up was removed with cold cream, with liquid, white 'cleansing milk', or impregnated circular pads called 'Quickies' that came in a tin. As a teenager I was very fond of musk perfume, later I used 'Charlie'. Once I was in my twenties I rarely wore any make-up, unless I was going anywhere special and abandoned it entirely in my fifties.

Accessories

'Jewellery' consisted of wooden or glass beads, bracelets and in the 1970s, leather thonging tied round our foreheads. I also had a chunky watch with a wide strap. Cool (and we did say cool) or 'groovy' jewellery came from a shop called 'Shape' on the top floor of the Whitgift Shopping Centre. I acquired a large gold coloured 'hank' cross and a slightly smaller silver cross there, as well as a silvery ring with a Maltese cross on it. Mum had her wedding and engagement rings, the latter had five small stones, alternate diamonds and rubies. This was part of a set of three, the others having sapphires, which I think was originally a dress ring of my grandmother's and emeralds. The emerald one was sold on the grounds that green was unlucky. Mum wore a watch and occasionally enamelled brooches. I bought her an iridescent 'eye' shaped brooch for 5/- from the haberdashers when I was nine or ten. Very occasionally she wore clip-on earrings. My grandmother regularly wore her wedding ring



**One of Granny's
Brooches**

and a gold bracelet whose links resembled fence panels. I now wear this when I am not typing. If Granny wore a suit, she might wear a brooch with glass stones on her lapel. Both she and my mother wore beads of various kinds, usually in two or three rows. There were also plastic 'popper' beads in many colours. Each bead had a hole on one side and a knob on the other, enabling beads from different sets to be reassembled into necklaces in a variety of patterns.

I was at college before I had my ears pierced (too common) and even then I think my mother thought I had sold my soul to the devil. I rarely remember to wear anything other than 'sleeper' earrings. I bought a copper ring at a souvenir shop in Freshwater Bay, Isle of Wight when I was eleven. It always made my finger green, even though I nail-varnished the inside. It was replaced with a wide silver coloured band three years later. I wore this on my wedding finger throughout the 1970s and only took it off when it was replaced by my wedding ring. Silver identity bracelets were popular and it was considered a badge of office if we acquired the wherewithal to wear a boy's ID bracelet instead of our own. We also had pin badges with slogans such as 'I'm Backing Britain' or 'Ban the Bomb'. In the late 1960s, we used brightly-coloured, paper carrier bags with plastic handles - 'tote bags'. Adults carried shopping in string bags or baskets. I did have a basket for my school books in about 1970. This was later used to keep potatoes in. Later, I had woven 'hippy' bags, which were made from brightly coloured wool with little mirrors embedded in the weave, in a style that would now be called 'ethnic'.

By the time I was born, my mum's tight, wide, elasticated belt, a fashion of the 1950s, was consigned to the dressing-up box. Boys held their trousers up with striped, elasticated belts fastened with a silver snake shaped clasp. All males might wear braces to hold their trousers up.

Women always carried handbags. These were usually voluminous leather squares, with short handles in brown, black or navy leather. For special occasions, a small, strapless 'clutch-bag' might be carried and this could be silver, gold or white, or might be embroidered velvet. In the mid-1960s, coloured handbags and shoulder bags came in. My first handbag,

acquired in 1966 or 1967, was a red square, shortly followed by one in purple PVC.

Children's glasses were inevitably 'National Health'. These were either round, wire framed affairs in pink or blue, or marginally less hideous plastic frames. The latter were flatter across the top and came in pink, blue or clear plastic. Mine, which I got when I was nine, were blue. Shortly afterwards, I acquired a more grown up style with brownish 'wings'. These were very fashionable and my mum had a pair with interchangeable pieces of coloured plastic for the wings. Inevitably changing them was all a bit of a fiddle so she mostly stuck with the black ones unless she was going somewhere special. Men would wear glasses with narrow tortoiseshell or black frames. By 1969, I had heavy tortoiseshell frames, which were the new trend. In 1970, we won £50 on the premium bonds. These ten bonds have been held from my birth until now but this remains our one and only win. This financed hard contact lenses for me at a time when lenses were very new. I wore these for ten years until a bout of measles meant that lenses were uncomfortable and I went back to glasses. Adopting the theory that if I had glasses they might as well be visible, my glasses of the 1980s were large and brightly coloured, in green and later pink. I tried soft contact lenses in the 2000s, when glasses were inappropriate with seventeenth century dress but I never really got on with them, apart from which, glasses disguised the bags under my eyes. I also couldn't read with lenses, as by this time I was using vari-focals; a distinct disadvantage as I spend most of my life reading. After a couple of incidents when the lenses tore and part of a lens got stuck in my eye for several days, I abandoned these entirely.

Women's Clothing

My mother married, in 1947, wearing a dress made from a parachute, which I still have. She wore cotton dresses in summer with hand knitted cardigans or occasionally a jacket. A blue summer dress with white daisies in a slightly shiny material lasted many years and may have been purchased for her honeymoon. I particularly remember a green dress with white spots, about half an inch in diameter. I counted the spots in a

sunny dentist's waiting room to try to delay my appointment! I was probably three or four at the time. Short socks would be worn under sandals. I remember my mother and grandmother knitting identical woollen suits from a speckly wool. Mum had a yellow and a green one; my grandmother's were blue and brown. Women and girls had knitted 'twin-sets', a cardigan worn over a matching short sleeved, round-necked jumper, fastened with a button at the shoulder. These would normally be made at home.



25 July 1968

Cotton aprons were worn. For older women these were still the inter-war, cover-all, wrap round style 'pinnies'. For women of my mother's generation, they were replaced by aprons that tied round the waist and did not cover the upper half of the body. These aprons were decorative as much as practical and might have frills round the edge.



Perhaps increasing numbers of labour-saving devices made housework a less messy process and all-embracing overalls were no longer necessary. By the late 1970s, plasticised aprons that hung round the neck and tied at the back were the norm; I still have mine depicting Snoopy.

When I was a child, women always wore petticoats or 'slips' under their skirts. These could be full length or waist slips. By the 1960s, they were made from nylon and caused huge problems with static as they reacted with nylon stockings. Most of my generation abandoned petticoat

wearing before we reached teenage, although some older women continued to wear slips into the twenty first century.

Women who grew up before the second world war tended to stick with the styles of their young adulthood. Thus, older women often had darker coloured clothes with longer skirts and thick stockings, which rarely stayed up well. My grandmothers had laced or buttoned 'boots' with a small heel. Their cotton dresses tended to have tiny floral prints. Women of my grandparents' generation wore hats and gloves when they went out in order to be respectable. The generation who were born in the mid-1920s seemed to be the first whose fashions continued to adapt to take account of the less extreme changes of later decades. Crimplene was a fabric of the 1960s, popular because it dried quickly and did not crease. It was definitely for older women, although mum did have Crimplene (for some reason, derisively termed Crumplene in our household) trousers and dresses in a straight style.



**Mum in a Crimplene Dress
28 September 1968**

Male Clothing

My father always wore trousers, and a shirt (short sleeved in the summer) with a jacket or occasionally a sleeveless jumper. Unless we were on holiday, a tie would be worn. Even on the beach, unless actually swimming, he wore socks, sandals and a jacket, never shorts. The life spans of 'sports' jackets (i.e. jackets that were not part of a suit) were lengthened when they wore thin at the elbows by adding a leather patch. Sometimes cuffs would be reinforced with leather strips as well. Boys wore short trousers at least until they went to secondary school at eleven, otherwise their clothes were the same as their father's. Hair was short and facial hair neat. 'Beatnik' hair came in in the 1960s for

teenagers. Teenaged groups had their own styles. Scooter-riding 'Mods' wore shoe string ties, collarless jackets and 'parkas' with sharp-toed 'winkle-picker' shoes. Rockers wore motorbike leathers, even if they didn't own a motor bike!

Until the mid-1960s, men wore hats when outside. The style of hat was dictated by one's social class. The professional, 'white collar' classes, might wear a bowler hat. Working class men wore cloth caps, anyone in between wore a trilby. School boys wore caps, which were more close

fitting than those of older men. These were made from six or eight roughly triangular sections of cloth, often with a button in the centre where the segments joined. The peak would be heavily stiffened.

Underwear for men usually included a string vest, a rather strange and seemingly pointless garment that resembled a cotton fishing net. Men's socks, in particular, were often hand knitted. My mother-in-law knitted my father-in-law's socks until in to the 1990s. When she got to the heel she would add a harder wearing thread to the wool to reinforce the part that got the most wear. I learnt to turn the heel of a sock for my Girl Guide knitter's badge but never put this skill into practice.

1980 onwards

Clothing changed tremendously between the second world war and the 1980s. My perception is that changing styles since that time have merely been reinventions of earlier fashions. Since I was married in 1980, my clothes haven't changed very much and my aim is for comfort rather than style. Trousers where possible, usually jeans or cords, tee-shirts or polo-shirts and then sweatshirts or fleeces. These last two items have



1959

arrived on the scene more recently, offering alternatives to woollen top layers. Jackets, skirts and dresses are reserved for special occasions. In the summer I might wear a knee-length, full, cotton skirt or shorts. The latter have got longer with the years and are now usually below the knee. There are no real favourite clothes at this point, as new clothes replace similar older ones. When I was pregnant, I had two shop-bought maternity dresses and one pair of dungarees. I had another pair of dungarees and two home-made corduroy pinafore dresses that weren't maternity wear but which fitted nonetheless. These saw me through two pregnancies.

Unlike many women of my age who seem to have a new wardrobe every season, I still keep clothes for years on end. Two particularly long lasting items were a tight red jumper that I bought in a jumble sale in 1978 for I think 10p. I wore it for years and then it passed to my daughters, by which time it had knitted navy patches to reinforce the elbows. I also had a full khaki cotton skirt in the late 1970s. When I was potty training my elder daughter it somehow got bleach on it but mum took a piece out to remove the damaged section and I still wear it very occasionally. I still have but rarely wear, a grey Snoopy sweatshirt from the 1970s; John and I had 'his' and 'hers' versions. I am also very fond of a long sleeved tee-shirt with narrow green and white stripes that has lasted several years and is very similar to one with black stripes that I had in my teens. I have also had the same two, identical pairs of 'best' black trousers since the late 1990s.

I do still like slightly 'hippified' clothes with multi-colours. The only clothes that I have ever bought that could remotely be called 'designer', have been some 'best' clothes and jumpers from Joe Browns. These were bought because I like the style not in any way for the label. I am very scathing about those who feel that they need to define themselves by branded items. Sadly, these are rarely worn because there are few occasions when 'best' is warranted and I would rather be more comfortable.