

Newton St Cyres History Group



COSTUME OF THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES with AN AMAZING EXAMPLE FROM THE QUICKE FAMILY

For our April meeting we were treated to an amazing evening led by Hermione Skrine looking at clothes brought along by John and Gina Quicke from a collection that has been inherited by their family.

The most interesting outfit belonged to a John Quicke around 1770 to 1780 and this was displayed on one of three dummies. Another dummy showed a wedding dress, possibly that of Edward Quicke's sister Gladwys who married in 1909, and Hermione had used the third dummy to display examples of eighteenth century women's clothing that she had made herself. Along the wall were hung many examples of bright red military jackets also belonging to various members of the Quicke family.

Hermione structured the evening cleverly, tracing the evolution of fashion, particularly that of the gentry and the military, from Restoration (Charles 2nd 1660) to Edwardian. Charles 2nd had been in exile at the French Court during the Cromwellian years and returned to England bringing the more flamboyant French fashions with him. Thus we were able to see how the Quicke outfits fitted into this evolution.

We then returned to Hermione's dummy and she showed us the basic elements of women's eighteenth century costume. Both sexes wore a shift next to the skin which had sleeves and which was slit at the sides from the waist downwards for men and had extra gores of fullness at the sides for the women. This would be of fine linen for the rich and rough homespun linen for the majority. Linen was a tough fabric and could be washed frequently. Over the shift the women wore a corset of stiff denim-like material often striped. The gentry laced theirs at the back (they would have a maid to help them), the working women at the front and sometimes on the shoulder. They then put on a long and full skirt, they called a petticoat. At various periods hoops, cages and panniers were used to make the 'petticoat' fuller. Over this came the gown which covered the back and arms but left the corset and petticoat on view. The corset was covered by the stomacher which was held in position by dressmaker's pins, there were no safety pins. Rather horrifically ordinary pins were used on baby clothes too. Sometimes two areas of the gown would be looped up to be buttoned at the waist. This became more common near the end of the century.

During the Elizabethan period and into the reign of Charles first the short doublet had been the fashion but by 1680 full length coats from shoulder to knee had appeared. They were worn over a long waistcoat, that was often very decorated. Both coats and waistcoats had many

buttons. James 2nd was said to have had a suit with 300 buttons! Coat sleeves were short enough to show a shirt cuff with ruffles. Breeches were buttoned at the knee. Stockings were of wool or silk. The Elizabethans had invented stocking making machines, which strangely were always worked by men.

By 1700 the coat sleeves had lengthened and big cuffs developed. These may be turned back to show the lining of different colour and/or may be buttoned back to the sleeve. The waists became tight and fitted. These coats were worn with high heeled shoes and large and powdered wigs. Gentlemen would relax at home into a garment not unlike a dressing gown. By 1710 there were fewer buttons and the sleeves were tighter but the cuffs were still huge and maybe held by buttons at the elbow. The lace around the cuffs of the shift had died out. Waistcoats were elaborate and cravats worn around the neck and one end brought through the waistcoat buttoning. Hermione then showed a picture of one of the Quicke waistcoats now in Exeter museum. This is a long, sleeved, garment, elaborately patterned, with numerous buttons. There has been some saving of the expensive material by the use of plainer blue material where this would not show. It may have belonged to John Quicke who married the heiress Rebecca Nutcombe in 1720 and it is still in amazingly good condition.

During the 1730's and 40's wigs became more modest and the stock replaced the cravat. This was a band of linen buttoned at the back and often worn with a small black tie. The sleeves were still quite wide. Shoes had smaller heels but coats and waistcoats were made to stick out more. Coats had a slit in the centre back. The position of the buttoned pockets was gradually rising, they had been low on the 'skirt' of the coat. The splits towards the coat sides (topped by buttons) for accessibility to the sword were still there although used less. Ladies were wearing closed gowns with a black shawl, a tiny cap and with their hair small and neat. A Canaletto of Warwick Castle at this time shows ladies in enormous hooped skirts, in fact several overskirts (not petticoats). Between 1720 and 1780 there was an option for a lady to have a less tight, back pleated garment,



Quicke's suit c1770-1780 possibly the wedding suit of John Quicke m1780.

The lace cuffs are not authentic but added later

however there would have been a tight dress beneath. All ladies wore caps. Gainsborough in a painting about 1750 shows a man wearing the three-cornered hat and a lady in an enormous dress with a diaphanous apron and muslin across the chest for modesty.

We then considered the Quicke coat on the dummy. Hermione thought it most likely that it belonged to John Quicke born 1759 and married in 1780, the son of John Quicke (seen at Bath by the Rev. Penrose) and his double heiress wife Jane Coster. She showed us portraits of both father and son. The coat is of very slim line and was unlikely to have been made before 1770. The workmanship needs seeing to be believed. The coat is of a fine deep fawn wool material. This material has been deeply felted, so that the raw edges can be left so, and do not need stitching. The quality of this material would be hard to find these days. It is richly embroidered around the edges and around the pockets with gold thread which is still bright. There are small runs of tiny gold sequins and the thread is held by a method known as

couching. The coat has a small turned down collar which helps in dating it. It has a central slit at the back and the two hip buttons head the stack of folds around the side slits. The breeches, in contrast, are of cream silk satin and have a buttoned fly covered by a small buttoned flap. The magnificent cream silk satin, long, many buttoned, sleeveless waistcoat is richly embroidered to match the coat. Buttonholes are exquisitely made and embroidered as are the pockets. The many buttons are criss-crossed in gold thread. The entire suit is wonderfully preserved and looks as though it was hardly worn.



Back of Quicke's coat c 1770

Following this we looked at the the evolution of the many military jackets on display and worn by various Quickes during the nineteenth century until Edward Quicke's of WW1. We followed the evolution of the jacket tails as they had developed from the slits to reach the sword, through their buttoning back and until they almost disappeared. All the jackets on

display were a very bright red which was made possible by the introduction of cochineal as a dye with suitable mordants. Similarly the French army were able to have jackets of bright Prussian blue. Other military styles were considered, double breasted jackets, often of two colours were introduced during the American War of Independence, for warmth, and these made their appearance in everyday English fashion. Epaulettes were introduced during the 1830's.

Hermione then turned her attention to the evolution of the Quicke's ladies dresses on show, both from the Edwardian era.

During the 1780's French fashion became very exaggerated with high hair and huge feathers

for the ladies and enormous gowns. The English dress, however, became simpler for both men and women.

For women the waists went up and the straight empire line developed. The men's trousers became very tight with a tight fitted jacket and tight sleeves. By 1808 pantaloons had become the fashion, colours were dark blue or black and collars were high. Ladies waists came down again by the 1830's and by the 1870's bustles were in fashion for a short time. By the 1890's with the slimmer lines women's dresses were more recognisable to us. Waistlines began to rise a little after 1910 with the Poiret look. The two dresses on show were both Edwardian and machine stitched, sewing machines having been invented in the 1840's. One was a wedding dress and the other a black evening dress. Both were beautifully made.

This was a very different evening and we thank Hermione and also John and Gina for letting us see the heirlooms they have inherited. We finished the evening with a view of a chemise and some lady's pantaloons from the mid Victorian period inherited by Jane Bailey. Jane Timlett had brought along her great aunt's black two-piece dress that she had worn for the Quicke tenants' photo in 1909. Unfortunately time had run out so we look forward to seeing it another day.

SATURDAY June 13th HISTORY GROUP OUTING

A MURDER MYSTERY

The miller of Clayhidon (in the Blackdown Hills) was murdered in 1853

HOW? WHY? WHEN? WHERE?

Join our host David Pugsley to find out more;-

11.30am An introduction to the social scene will be given over coffee in the Half Moon Clayhidon, followed by a tour to visit the murder spot and relevant areas. This involves a walk of about one and a half miles, easy walking with some slopes. If unable to walk, a car may be taken to the two most important points.

1.30pm The trial at the Half Moon (conducted during our lunch). This will be followed by the execution after lunch.

Home by 4.30pm

Places are limited, first come, first reserved, phone Jean 851337 or Isobel 851351. There is no charge, coffee and lunch payments to the Half Moon (usual pub rates). We will help to arrange transport between those going.