

**Tailoring the Past: the role of historical pattern
cutting and reconstructive practice in shaping
femininity in Britain, 1820 – 1860**

By

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Abstract

This project investigates how bespoke tailoring techniques of cutting, shaping, and making British men's coats influenced the cut, construction, and silhouette of women's riding habits between 1820 and 1860. Central to this study is a practice-related methodological framework based on triangulation, combining historical research, material culture analysis, garment re-making, and embodied investigation to examine how tailoring practices shaped women's clothing in early- to mid-nineteenth-century Britain. By re-making a man's frock coat and a woman's riding habit using historical tailoring, this research explores how women's clothing adopted and adapted methods associated with male bespoke tailoring—a phenomenon I coined 'cross-tailoring'. In this thesis, cross-tailoring provides an analytical framework for examining the relationship between tailoring practice, gender, embodiment, and cultural expectation. Through this approach, my research demonstrates how pattern cutting and re-making of early nineteenth century tailoring generate knowledge about garment construction, bodily movement, and gendered dress. The embodied element of the study was further developed in collaboration with a professional side-saddle rider, whose specialist equestrian practice enabled the riding habit to be tested in motion, offering insights into how such garments shaped posture, movement, and perceptions of femininity. These investigations demonstrate how women negotiated the tension between restriction and freedom, and how tailored riding dress contributed to shifting gender norms during the four decades under investigation. Furthermore, the research considers whether these sartorial adaptations participated in wider cultural and social changes by influencing perceptions of femininity and women's presence in the public sphere. This study argues that the tailoring of women's riding habits, through the adaptation of male bespoke tailoring techniques, played an important role in shaping new forms of feminine expression and agency. By placing re-making and embodied research at the centre of its methodological framework, the project demonstrates how dress functioned not only as a symbol of social identity but also as a process by which gender was negotiated and

experienced. In doing so, the thesis contributes to an understanding of the relationship between garment making, tailoring, gender, and social change in nineteenth-century Britain.

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Introduction

Tailoring, Practice, and Gender

Clothing acts not only as an object but also as a system that shapes and negotiates social identities. This thesis focuses on the role of historical pattern cutting and tailoring practices in constructing femininity in early- to mid-nineteenth-century Britain between 1820 and 1860. This period was selected as a moment of transition, when women's riding habits underwent significant technical and cultural change, increasingly incorporating tailoring methods associated with men's coats, in particular the frock coat. At the same time, these four decades saw considerable developments in tailoring practice, with many tailors publishing their own system of making garments, facilitating wider access to bespoke tailoring knowledge and practice. This process of dissemination played an important role in the democratisation of tailoring, situating the period as a key moment in the circulation of pattern cutting practices across garments and gendered forms of dress.

Building on the work of dress historians such as Janet Arnold, Norah Waugh, Susan North, and Jenny Tiramani—whose object-based and making methodologies have advanced the study of historical dress—the project foregrounds reconstructive practice and object-based analysis as methodological approaches, using the making of garments as a means of generating knowledge through material and embodied engagement. It is further situated in the re-making and analysis of two garments—a man's frock coat and a woman's riding habit—which were produced and tested as part of the investigative process. It examines the women's riding habit as a primary context for analysing the relationship between technical practice, embodiment, and gender. By focusing on the adaptation of cutting and construction techniques from men's coats in women's dress, the thesis argues that making practices played an important role in shaping ideas of femininity and female agency, while also reflecting wider social change. Although the riding habit fulfilled a practical function for equestrian activity, it also operated as a complex cultural object. Through the adoption of menswear tailoring

techniques, riding habits produced a silhouette combining discipline and movement. This thesis argues that such garments did not simply reflect changing ideas about gender but were involved in shaping them.

The project adopts a practice-related methodological approach in which making and re-making function as forms of inquiry. Through the reconstruction of a man's frock coat and a woman's riding habit using bespoke tailoring techniques, the project engages with the material and technical processes that inform dress making. This approach enables an understanding of how garments were made, worn, and experienced, foregrounding the relationship between maker, wearer, and object. In this way, practice is not treated as additional to historical analysis, but as a method for generating knowledge. In addition to material and object analysis, the study draws on historical tailoring manuals, fashion journals, and equestrian costume sources to situate the garments within their wider technical and cultural contexts.

Embodied research in this study is developed through collaboration with a professional side-saddle rider whose expertise in equestrianism and experience of riding side-saddle, including participation in historical costume classes and performance events organised by The Side Saddle Association that involve period costume interpretation, provided familiarity with historical equestrian dress practices in performance contexts, specially where period garments are worn and assessed in motion (The Side Saddle Association 2025). The rider's contribution is therefore positioned as a form of embodied specialist knowledge rather than subject participation, enabling the riding habit to be tested through lived, skilled horsemanship.

Cross-tailoring

This thesis contributes to the field of dress history by narrowing its focus to historical pattern cutting and tailoring practice rather than the wider study of dress. It demonstrates how the technical and material dimensions of garment making can offer new insights into the cultural formation of identity. By integrating material analysis, historical research, and practice-related inquiry, this study provides a focused account of how tailoring practices shaped

femininity within a specific historical context. It also introduces a term I have coined, 'cross-tailoring', to describe the adoption and adaptation of tailoring methods to produce clothing that responds to the intersection of gender, the body, and cultural expectation. I use the term to refer to a form of dress that supports and expresses an active and independent femininity among early-to mid-nineteenth-century horsewomen. Rather than positioning practice as a supporting method, this thesis understands re-making and embodied research as ways to generate knowledge, enabling historical garments to be critically interrogated and re-understood. In this sense, cross-tailoring functions as the analytical framework of the thesis.

Methodological approach

To substantiate my argument, I developed a methodological framework based on triangulation, combining material culture analysis, historical research, and practice-related inquiry. Tailoring manuals, museum artefacts, and visual sources inform a study of garment construction and aesthetic development. Alongside this, the thesis employs reflective making as a research method by re-making a man's frock coat and a woman's riding habit using tailoring techniques. These garments serve as sites of experimentation, allowing for an embodied engagement with contemporaneous tailoring processes and providing a way to test and understand construction in practice rather than through textual or visual analysis alone. At the same time, the embodied approach considers how the riding habit was worn by a side-saddle rider, exploring the ways in which the physicality of dress influenced the wearer's sense of self and social identity. In contrast, the frock coat produced for this study was not intended for active use like the riding habit; rather, it serves as a comparative example, demonstrating how tailoring techniques associated with menswear were adopted and adapted for women's dress and allowing comparison of construction between male and female bespoke tailoring methods.

Research focus and conceptual framework

In my analysis, I show that by adopting the visual language and technical construction of men's frock coats—particularly the treatment of the upper

body in relation to the women's riding jacket—riding habits not only enabled mobility and functionality for their wearers but also engaged with symbolic questions of identity. This research positions the riding habit as more than a fashion statement; it is treated as a context where femininity was expressed, challenged, and redefined. The use of tailoring in these garments question the gendered symbolism that aligns softness with femininity and strength with masculinity. By incorporating elements of dress found in men's attire, the riding habit allowed women to embody characteristics typically coded as masculine—such as control and authority—while preserving the elegance and modesty expected of them. Rather than proposing a narrative of freedom, the thesis interrogates the way in which these garments operated within and against existing social norms. Riding habits reflected the possibilities and limitations of their time, offering a picture of how dress could support or subvert dominant cultural values.

Instead of functioning as background material or supplementary sources, these elements work as the conceptual framework of the study. Tailoring manuals are treated as a system of technical knowledge in which cutting and making methods were articulated and transmitted in the nineteenth century. Re-making functions as one element of the triangulated methodological approach, enabling material and embodied engagement with historical garment pattern cutting and sewing. The side-saddle is understood as a technological condition that shaped the design, structure, and embodied experience of women's riding dress. Together, these elements provide the framework for analysing the relationship between tailoring practice and the formation of gendered dress.

Scope and limitations

While this thesis focuses on gendered embodiment and the cultural role of tailoring, I acknowledge that access to such garments—and to equestrian activities more generally—was closely tied to class privilege. The research centres on upper-class British men and women, a group whose wealth and status enabled access to bespoke clothing, horse riding, and public life in ways unavailable to the majority. However, the thesis does not offer a

sustained investigation of class as a category of analysis. Rather, class is referenced contextually, where necessary, to illuminate the gendered practices under consideration. The primary objective is to examine how tailoring as a technique—and the riding habit as a form—intersected with the cultural construction of femininity. Class-based distinctions are therefore used only to clarify the social conditions under which sartorial choices were made, rather than forming a central focus of the analysis.

Theoretical and analytical focus

Drawing on theories from gender studies, fashion history, and material culture, this thesis explores how tailored garments shaped the relationship between the body and society, with attention to pattern cutting and re-making as technical practice. Rather than viewing garments solely as symbolic or aesthetic objects, this project adopts a practice-related approach that foregrounds the embodied experience of wearing and making historical dress. This contributes to discussions in fashion studies by showing how clothing practices reveal shifting understandings of identity and embodiment. It offers a perspective on the material and sensory dimensions of fashion, highlighting how riding habits functioned as active tools for negotiating gender roles. The aim is not only to document historical garments, but to understand how they participated in the processes of gendered self-fashioning within a specific cultural and historical context.

Research context and COVID-19 pandemic adaptation

This project began at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, a context that influenced the organisation and progression of the research. Restrictions on access to museum collections required a reorganisation of the research schedule, and the planned object analysis of frock coats and riding habits was moved from the first year to the second year of the project. This shift allowed more time for theoretical engagement, especially with scholarship on nineteenth-century tailoring techniques. During this period, I worked with online resources, including digitised texts, journal articles, and archival material accessed through digital libraries, which supported the development of the research framework and contextual understanding. In parallel, I

continued the practical development of the frock coat and riding habit patterns, using 1830s tailoring manuals to study body measurement and pattern construction based on historical methods. Toiles and sample were also produced as part of this process.

Museum access and object analysis

As lockdown restrictions eased and access to physical spaces gradually reopened, I was able to visit libraries and museum collections. However, access to some key institutions remained limited, as the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Museum of London, and the Fashion Museum Bath were all in the process of relocating their costume collections and had closed their study rooms without a clear reopening schedule. Despite this, I was able to consult relevant artefacts in other collections, including Manchester Art Gallery, Glasgow Museums Collections, Bankfield Museum, and The School of Historical Dress, where I was able to examine historical garments. This combination of digital and physical access allowed the study of bespoke tailoring techniques to develop through archive research and object-based analysis. Working across these sources supported a more detailed understanding of nineteenth-century dress construction and reinforced the integration of material and documentary evidence in the research process.

Practice-related research and reflective making

As mentioned above, this research involved a practice-related inquiry that included the re-making of an 1830s man's frock coat and a woman's riding habit, as well as an interview with a professional side-saddle rider. These elements formed an interconnected field of study in which making, researching, and reflecting informed each other throughout the process. Rather than treating these activities as separate stages, they operated as a continuous process where historical tailoring techniques and embodied knowledge were explored. Throughout the work, I documented the process using photographs, video, sketchbooks, and digital methods. This documentation recorded not only the technical construction of garments, but also the decisions and observations that emerged through moving between object analysis, pattern development, and making. This practice-related

approach, understood as a form of ‘re-making and thinking’, allowed for an engagement with the processes of historical fashion practice and how they might be interpreted through investigation and analysis. The project therefore suggests that practice can function as a method for investigating historical dress, particularly where technical knowledge is not fully captured in written or visual sources. It highlights the potential of combining making and research to generate insights into tailoring practices, while also indicating areas where further methodological development is needed.

Exhibited Work

As part of this research, the riding habit and frock coat that I produced were selected for inclusion in the exhibition *Fashioning Frequencies* at the London College of Fashion, which took place from 25 April to 21 June 2025. The exhibition explored fashion as a way of expressing identity, personal agency, and cultural history, and positioned the garments as elements connected to bodies, time, and political context (UAL: London College of Fashion, 2025). The works on display reflected a range of approaches, from archival and subcultural references to contemporary concerns and speculative design. This was a group exhibition, in which the garments produced for this project were shown alongside works by other contributors. While it included only a small part of the research, it provided an opportunity to present aspects of the project in a wider cultural and professional context. Documentation of the exhibited garments can be found in Appendix 6.

0.1: Definitions and glossary

In this thesis, I define the key terms, practices, and concepts that underpin the research. This section outlines their meanings and explains how they are used throughout the study to ensure consistency of interpretation. As outlined in the introduction, this research examines how bespoke tailoring techniques used in the making of men’s frock coats influenced the structure, cut, and silhouette of women’s riding habits between 1820 and 1860. It focuses on the adoption of bespoke male tailoring methods, originally developed and

executed within menswear contexts, into women's dress. '**Cross-tailoring**' refers to the adoption and adaptation of bespoke tailoring techniques originally developed for men's coats into the construction of women's dress, particularly the riding habit. In this study, the term is used to describe how tailoring knowledge was reworked across gendered garments and informed the construction of women's riding dress in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. This process involves the application of male tailoring methods—such as those used in frock coat construction—to shape the cut and fit of women's garments designed for equestrian activity.

I applied an '**interdisciplinary**' perspective to my research, bringing together dress studies, fashion history, and material culture, and to develop a collaborative methodological approach. This draws on the insights from each discipline to support a more integrative understanding of historical dress (Kumar and Pattanayak 2018).

The fundamental methodological approach in this project is '**triangulation**'—an approach that brings together multiple methods, perspectives, and forms of knowledge to explore the research questions from different angles. In this work, triangulation was used not to confirm fixed outcomes, but to enhance the interpretive process by placing distinct approaches in dialogue with one another. By working across material culture studies, the re-making of historical garments, and the embodied experience of wearing clothes, I was able to consider the complexities of dress from historical and experiential angles. This method allowed for the cross-referencing of insights, helping to expose the tensions and overlaps that might be overlooked through a single methodological approach. In this way, triangulation supports the interpretation of practice-related research, while also foregrounding the value of multiplicity and reflexivity in the production of knowledge.

I use the term '**dress as an object of evidence**' as a concept to frame my approach to object analysis. This involves a process of describing, deducing, and analysing information derived from artefacts—in this case, men's frock coats and women's riding habits—found in museum collections. This analysis

aims not only to understand the physical characteristics of the clothing but also to explore the connections between gender and dress. The objective is to understand how garments reflect and communicate the cultural, social, and historical contexts of a specific period. Many scholars have drawn on material culture studies to gain insights into clothing.¹ While rooted in practices associated with fashion history and dress studies, this project also draws on material culture studies, specially where they explore the socio-cultural context in which objects were made, worn, and experienced. Material culture study allows us to investigate objects not only in terms of design, aesthetics, and construction, but also through the cultural practices, symbolic meanings, and embodied experiences that shaped and were shaped by them. By combining this method with questions, we can expand our understanding of objects in a more comprehensive way, going beyond the surface to explore how these items reflect human interaction, cultural practices, and social relations. This approach provides tangible and intangible ways of exploring the past, especially the relationships between people, objects, and the contexts in which they existed (Whyman 2019). Furthermore, historians who study artefacts connect with the individuals who made, used, or interacted with them. It is through this sense of commonality that objects and images gain meaning and influence. The narratives surrounding creation are as old as human societies, suggesting the importance of this activity—especially when outcomes are valued, rare, symbolic, or seen as having significance (Jordanova 2012).

The concept of **‘re-making as a research method’** refers to the process of re-making historical dress, which is used here as a tool for the understanding clothing construction. Through this method, I was able to identify the similarities and differences in the techniques used to make historical bespoke garments. By re-making the garments, I gained insights into the skills, materials, and methods employed by tailors in the past. This approach allows for an understanding of the original processes involved in the creation of these

¹ For example: Prof. and curator Amy de la Haye, Prof. and curator Clair Wilcox, Dr and curator Valerie Steele, Prof. and curator Alistair O'Neill.

artefacts, as it moves from theoretical analysis to practical experience. This creates new possibilities for investigation, moving beyond traditional methods of study by producing tangible understandings and allowing exploration of the craft behind historical garments. It also enables an appreciation of the socio-cultural context that influenced the design and use. Furthermore, contributes to a comprehensive understanding of historical garment construction, filling in the gaps left by written records alone. In addition, this approach reduces the historical distance between present and past practice. It brings artefacts into the present, allowing engagement with them not merely as static objects but as functional items that were once worn and experienced—re-making historical dress allows us to reimagine and reinterpret historical garments, uncovering the processes that led to their creation. It also brings life back into surviving garments that are often disconnected from the body, showing how they were designed to interact with and accommodate the body in motion. By reconstructing them, I gained a better understanding of how they would have functioned, fitted, and been experienced in their original context, offering a more embodied, lived perspective on fashion and history (O'Neill 2021).

'Embodied research as a process of knowing' is a key component of the methodological framework for this research. It influenced my approach to the theoretical examination and analysis of women's identities during the four decades under investigation. This method focuses on the physical, sensory experiences that shape—and are shaped by—historical contexts. In this study, embodied research forms the foundation for investigating how social life is performed through the body, particularly in relation to clothing. By examining the act of wearing garments, as well as the movements and actions associated with them, this approach explores how clothing conveys meanings about gender and identity within a specific historical period. Furthermore, it highlights the value of engaging in practical, embodied experience as a way of knowing, revealing insights into how dress shapes individuals' social roles and cultural performances. By engaging with material objects such as clothing, we can understand how the body operates not just as a physical entity, but as a social one—constantly performing, responding to, and negotiating social norms and expectations. As Hajo Adam and Adam Galinsky

explain, this process is described as ‘encloded cognition’, where ‘wearing clothes causes people to “embody” the clothing and its symbolic meaning. Consequently, when a piece of clothing is worn, it exerts an influence on the wearer’s psychological process by activating associated abstract concepts through its symbolic meaning’ (2012, p.919).

The term ‘**practice-related**’ is used in this study to describe a research methodology that shifts from being solely practice-based or practice-led to a more integrated framework. Rather than focusing exclusively on generating new knowledge through practice or advancing knowledge about practice, the research explores how these two approaches can work together. This integration allows the production of knowledge that is theoretically rigorous and practically grounded, reflecting a hybrid process that draws on the strengths of practice-based and practice-led perspectives within the context of historical garment making and pattern cutting.

Within the context of this study, the term ‘**upper-class**’ is used to describe British men and women between 1820 and 1860 who had the financial means and social opportunity to access high-quality bespoke tailoring and to participate in horse riding as a leisure activity. Tailored clothing was not, however, exclusive to the upper classes and was also worn by segments of the middle class; indeed, bespoke tailoring remained the norm for both middle- and upper-class consumers until the rise of ready-made clothing (Breward 1995). This study uses ‘**bespoke tailoring**’ to denote garments made through direct client-tailor consultation, often involving the most skilled tailors, materials, and tailoring practices of the time. This usage distinguishes bespoke from more standardised forms of tailoring that became available to a wider public.

To address the varied forms of objects worn by men and women at the time, I use the terms ‘**garment**’, ‘**clothing**’, ‘**dress**’, ‘**attire**’, and ‘**fashion**’ interchangeably, recognising that they all refer to items of dress used by men and women during this period, while acknowledging that they carry different contextual meanings. For example, ‘fashion’ may invoke styles or social

expectations, while 'dress' and 'attire' may be more general or linked to specific occasions. The term '**habit**' was historically used to describe 'the outward attire of the body [of man or woman], whereby one person may be distinguished from another; as the habit of a Gentleman, is different from the habit of a merchant and the Habit-crafts man differing from them both' (Bullokar 1616, HA).² In this thesis, 'habit' is used specifically to describe women's riding clothing, reflecting the distinct nature of these garments within their social context. It is also used in a more symbolic sense in a quotation by Honoré de Balzac in 'Part One', where it refers to the practice or ritual of dressing.

I use the term '**re-making**' to refer to the practice of engaging with historical garments through tailoring techniques and pattern cutting, with the aim of generating understanding of construction processes rather than producing exact copies. In this thesis, the term is used consistently to describe engagement with historical dress as a means of investigating how garments were made, fitted, and functioned in relation to the body.

The terms '**object**' and '**artefact**' are used interchangeably throughout this study to describe the garments made by tailors, which were examined as part of the research in various museum collections. Both terms refer to these physical items as cultural and historical artefacts of study, recognising their role as material evidence of the period and craftsmanship. However, 'object' is sometimes used more generally to describe any item of material culture, regardless of its age or historical context, while 'artefact' specifically refers to items that have historical and cultural significance, particularly those found in museum collections.

0.2: Aims and objectives

- This research aims to:

² 'HA' refers to the location under the letter H in *An English Expositor* (1616), where the word '**habit**' is defined; the source has no page numbers.

Explore how bespoke tailoring techniques—specifically the processes of cutting, shaping, and constructing historical garments—offer valuable insights into how women navigated the tension between restriction and freedom during a pivotal period in tailoring history, from 1820 to 1860. These four decades witnessed significant transformations in fashion and social norms. By closely examining the craftsmanship involved in creating women's riding habits, the research aims to better understand the relationship between sartorial construction and the evolving concept of female identity. The changes in garment construction during these decades was not merely aesthetic; they reflected social changes that influenced how women were perceived and how they negotiated their roles within a rapidly changing cultural landscape. By analysing the practical aspects of garment construction this project seeks to demonstrate that clothing was a means whereby women expressed and defined their emerging sense of gender identity. This project focuses on how tailoring techniques shaped understandings of femininity rather than simply reflecting them.

In this context, my PhD thesis aims to contribute to the scholarly literature on dress history and gender studies by building on the work of scholars such as Janet Arnold and Erica Munkwitz, while narrowing its focus to historical pattern cutting. It explores how this period marked a turning point not only in the history of tailoring but also in the cultural and social construction of femininity, offering insights into how women's clothing reflected and shaped their shifting identities within the context of nineteenth-century fashion. The combination of these technical and symbolic aspects in bespoke tailoring provides a way to examine the dynamics of gender, power, and self-expression during a critical moment in fashion history.

- The research has the objective:

Firstly, to establish an experimental, innovative, and distinctive methodological framework that pushes the boundaries of current practice in the field, based on re-making, object analysis, and embodied practices; and secondly, to build upon and critically engage with existing scholarship on women's riding habits and the discourses surrounding gender boundaries

specifically through practice rather than purely textual analysis. By offering a detailed analysis of historical garments and the cultural narratives they embody, this project has the objective not only of expanding the current body of knowledge but also of contributing to, improving, and refining our understanding of these connections. Through this process, the project critically reflects on the ways in which previous research—such as studies of nineteenth-century gender, material culture, analyses of historical dress as a symbol of identity, and embodied research—has shaped our understanding of women’s riding habits not only as mere clothing, but also as crucial symbols of gendered identity within a social and historical context.

Whereas material culture studies, such as Janet Arnold’s *Dashing Amazon: the development of women’s riding dress, c.1500-1900* (1999) and *Patterns of Fashion 1: Englishwomen’s dress and their construction c. 1660-1860* (1977), and Norah Waugh’s (1910–1966) *The Cut of Women’s Clothes 1600-1930* (1968), have provided important contributions to the symbolic meanings of women’s garments, including riding habits, there remains a gap in research that integrates these insights with re-making and embodied research as a process of knowing. Other scholars, such as Alison Matthews David in *Elegant Amazon: Victorian Riding Habits and the Fashionable Horsewoman* (2002), have largely relied on historical contexts to explore the lived experience of wearing riding habits, particularly in relation to how this might influence women’s gendered identities and self-perceptions. David’s work examines the riding habit as a contradictory garment—masculine and feminine—and situates the Victorian horsewoman as a figure negotiating tensions between femininity and feminist ideals.

On the other hand, Serena Dyer in *Labour of the Stitch: The Making and Remaking of Fashionable Georgian Dress* uses draping to generate eighteenth-century garment patterns, emphasising embodied making and the relationship between maker and wearer. This approach involves taking ‘pattern shapes from the body’ rather than tracing them onto paper (2024, p.

48).³ In contrast, works such as Hilary Davidson's *The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice* (2019), and Alistair O'Neill's *Exploding Fashion: Making, Unmaking, and Remaking Twentieth-Century Fashion* (2021) have investigated embodied research as a process of knowing in the field of fashion studies, but have not explored how the experience of wearing clothing impacts gender identity, especially in relation to women's riding habit and equestrianism. My research addresses these gaps by combining material culture studies, the making of garments, and embodied research, offering a more comprehensive approach to understanding how riding habits influenced the construction of femininity and gendered identity in the nineteenth-century.

0.3: Role and purpose of the practice

This study is situated within recent and ongoing scholarship in dress history, material culture, and practice-based research, particularly work that understands making, re-making, and embodiment as legitimate ways of historical knowledge. Rather than treating garments as static artefacts, this field increasingly positions clothing as evidence of social, and gendered systems (Smith 2016, Taape, Smith and Uchacz 2020, Malcolm-Davies 2023, Dyer 2024). Within this context, experimental making and re-making have become key methodological approaches in which knowledge is generated through interaction with materials, rather than merely interpretation of surviving objects. This reflects a wider interdisciplinary turn across heritage studies where making is a practice of knowledge rather than a representational one (Callaghan 1999, Mathieu 2002, and Flores and Paardekooper 2014).

Drawing inspiration from the pioneering work of scholars such as Norah Waugh and Janet Arnold, whose research has focused on the technical

³ 'Draping is the art of conceptualizing a garment design through the 3-D process of manipulating fabric on a [tailor's mannequin] ...to create a prototype, either out of actual dress fabric or a material known as muslin (calico) (Sterlacci 2019, p.12).

aspects of pattern cutting and the construction of historical garments, this study employs the physical process of 'taking apart' and 're-making' garments as a means of exploring and critically engaging with discourses of gender. Waugh and Arnold's contributions provide an initial understanding of how historical garments were constructed, and this research builds upon their work by using the practice of re-making to critically engage with the assumptions embedded within remaining artefacts. The central aim of this practice is not simply to recreate historical garments but to explore how their construction can offer new and distinctive understanding into the ways in which garments embody and perform gender. In doing so, the process of examining the technical parts of these garments becomes a key point for rethinking gender identity and the materiality of dress in historical contexts.

The action of cutting, shaping, and making historical garments serves as a tool for discovering new possibilities of investigation, as it allows for an engagement with the practical realities of garment re-making. This approach, grounded in historical and bespoke tailoring, offers an experiential way of exploring the relationship between material culture and identity. As Alistair O'Neill notes, 'as if looking through the wrong end of the telescope, the approach foreshortens historical distance and allows us to see the museum object anew by uncovering the process that led to its creation' (2021 p.10). By re-making a men's frock coat and a women's riding habit, this study seeks to shorten the temporal distance between past and present, offering a fresh perspective on the object as not only a static artefact of the past but as a dynamic object that can inform our understanding of historical lives, experiences, and identities.

Furthermore, the practice of re-making is not only a method of engaging with historical garments, but also a way of bringing theoretical frameworks into dialogue with the material reality of the past. This project therefore supports the academic conversations surrounding object-analysis and embodiment, allowing the garments to function as an object of study and a way in which the theoretical engagement with gender can be explored. As Hilary Davidson emphasises, 'theoretical engagement with methodologies of re-creation'

(2019, p.2) is an essential approach for uncovering the complexities of the past, as it allows for a better understanding of how historical objects—specially clothing—can reveal the outlines of social and cultural identities. By focusing on the embodied practice of garment re-making, this research seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing a tangible understanding of how gendered identities were historically constructed and performed through gendered dress.

This methodological approach aligns with wider scholarship that critically interrogates re-making as a form of knowledge rather than imitation. Renée Dancause, for example, highlights the conceptual instability of terms such as reproduction, replication, and re-creation, emphasising how such distinctions reveal questions of knowledge about whether re-making produces historical knowledge or merely simulates it (2006). Similarly, Elaine Webster and Fiona Milne argue that reconstructive practice can reveal ‘dress effects’ that are not visible in static museum objects, reinforcing the value of making as analytical process (2004).

This approach, however, comes with its challenges. Evidence from the past is often incomplete, fragmentary, and complex to interpret. The world from which these garments originated can at times feel alien, with cultural, social, and technological differences making it difficult to fully understand the meanings and functions embedded within the garments themselves. Nevertheless, as Daniel Miller explains, a full understanding of our own identities and potential can only be achieved by looking closely at the material traces left behind by previous generations: ‘[w]e cannot know who we are, or become what we are, except by looking in a material mirror, which is the historical world created by those who lived before us’ (2005, p.8). Clothing, as a tangible artefact, serves as one of the clearest reflections of the worlds our ancestors inhabited, offering us knowledge not just into the styles and aesthetics of a period but into the ways in which those who wore these garments negotiated their place in the social order. It is through this physical engagement with the past—through the act of making and re-making—that we can discover the embodied knowledge encrypted within these garments.

For example, interview findings reveal how the structure of the riding habit works with the posture required for side-saddle riding, supporting the core and encouraging an upright, elegant posture—qualities the rider described as making her feel ‘elegant’ and ‘effortless’. In turn, such experiences offer a better understanding of how these garments shaped the lived experiences of those who wore them.

The re-making of historical dress allow researchers to reveal new ideas and perspectives that may not be immediately apparent when examining surviving examples. Benjamin J. Hartmann and Jacob Ostberg are relevant here as they argue that ‘there is nothing inherent in a market offering that makes it either authentic or inauthentic...rather these are socially agreed upon categories, or in other words cultural constructions’ (2013, p.884), suggesting that ‘craft’ is not only a material practice but also a discursive construction, where ideas of authenticity, skill, and tradition are produced through cultural narratives rather than simply embedded within objects. It also allows for a form of interaction with the historical wearer, offering insights into the ways in which clothing might have shaped and been shaped by the experiences of those who wore it. Through the act of re-making, we engage not only with the physical garments but with the embodied knowledge entrenched in the making process, a form of implicit understanding that can often be overlooked: ‘[t]he line of the pattern drawn and cut by human hand is imprinted with tacit knowledge of the maker. This is the knowledge that is unspoken, expressed by doing rather than saying’ (O’Neill 2021, p.13).

Sarah E. Woodyard similarly develops ‘hand-sewn inquiry’ as a reflexive auto-ethnographic method in which hand-sewn reconstruction functions as a mode of historical investigation rather than merely an illustrative technique. In her study of eighteenth-century millinery, she reconstructs caps to examine their materials, construction, and cultural meanings beyond typological labels such as ‘mob cap’. Her methodological approach integrates embodied making with historical analysis, producing what she describes as ‘sewing literacy’, a materially grounded understanding of craft knowledge. She also highlights how this process can make visible forms of skilled and often invisible labour,

including the work of enslaved seamstresses recorded in historical sources, thereby demonstrating how making practices can function as a critical historiographical tool that challenges established historical categories and recovers overlooked forms of knowledge and labour (2017).

Within this field, experimental archaeology and re-making research have long provided methodological foundations for treating making as analytical inquiry (Mathieu 2002). Toni L. Carrell in *Replication and Experimental Archaeology*, alongside John Coles in *Archaeology by Experimentation*, defines experimental archaeology as the reconstruction and testing of past objects and processes in order to evaluate how they may have been made or used. Rather than simply producing copies, this approach relies on repeatable experimentation to test archaeological interpretations and refine understandings of material culture and human behaviour. It operates within a wider interpretative framework that includes historical records, visual sources, and ethnographic evidence, but emphasises that these alone cannot fully explain how technologies functioned in practice. Experimental archaeology therefore addresses this gap through the physical recreation of artefacts and processes. A key distinction is made between different levels of re-making, ranging from informal or less precise interpretation (Level I) to experiential but untested making (Level II), and finally to fully scientific, documented, and repeatable experiments (Level III), which are considered the only form that constitutes formal experimental archaeology. While such work can demonstrate what was possible, it cannot definitively reconstruct historical behaviour or intention, instead producing plausible interpretations that refine archaeological understanding (Coles 1973, and Carrell 1992).

More recent heritage science approaches further emphasise reconstruction and interdisciplinary data as key to interpreting material culture (Gilbert 2005, and Malcolm-Davies 2023). Research projects such as the Making and Knowing Project (Columbia University, New York) and Refashioning the Renaissance (Aalto University, Finland) similarly demonstrate how iterative making can function as a research environment in which knowledge is produced through practice. This is further supported by initiatives such as the

Making Historical Dress Network (De Montfort University, UK), which explores how re-making through sewing practices can recover lost skills, test construction methods, and foreground makers' tacit knowledge that is often absent from archival records. Similarly, Colour4CRAFTS (University of Helsinki, Finland), combines historical textile practices with scientific analysis of bio-based dye technologies, situating colouration as a site where historical craft knowledge and contemporary material science intersect.

Vanessa Agnew in *History's Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present* complicates this emphasis on experience by arguing that reenactment increasingly reflects an 'affective turn', in which emotional engagement can collapse historical distance and risk replacing critical analysis with identification and feeling (2007). This shift is critically examined by Iain McCalman and Paul Pickering in *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn*, where they situate reenactment within a broader cultural movement away from strict historical realism towards forms of representation that prioritise emotional and embodied experience. Drawing on interdisciplinary case studies from theatre, museums, and public history, they suggest that reenactment increasingly seeks to make audiences feel the past, at times producing experiences that appear more immediate or vivid than historical reality itself, while also raising questions about how such affective engagements shape historical understanding (2010). Within museum and heritage contexts, this tension between experience and interpretation is examined by Elizabeth J. Goodacre and Gavin Baldwin, who explore how reconstruction, reenactment, and 'living history' practices are used as tools for education and public engagement. They argue that such approaches make the past more accessible and experiential through costumed interpretation and reconstructed environments, while also raising critical questions about authenticity, mediation, and the construction of historical narratives for contemporary audiences (2002).

Stephen Gapps in *Mobile Monuments: A view of historical reenactment and authenticity from inside the costume cupboard of history*, however, reframes reenactment as a form of 'mobile monument', arguing that embodied

performance can make history materially and socially present. As he states, 'a mobile monument brings together commemoration, (anti)monumentalism, family history, and historical method'. He further suggests that authenticity is always negotiated rather than fixed (2009, p.396). Taken together, these approaches demonstrate that making is not a neutral process of reproduction but a methodological and interpretative practice in which historical knowledge is produced, negotiated, and contested.

Ruth Gilbert extends this methodological framing by emphasising that the production of artefacts depends on the availability and reliability of source evidence: 'without adequate information, one may make a guess, but not a replica...[w]hat is important is that the compromises and limitations should be clear in the mind of the maker and in any documentation' (2005, p. 18). The framework highlights that such work must begin with a defined research purpose and must acknowledge constraints such as time, cost, and material availability. Gilbert stresses that such re-makings may prioritise understanding process over producing an exact object, and therefore all compromises in materials and methods must be explicitly documented in order to maintain analytical transparency. This insistence on transparency further reinforces the idea that re-making is not a neutral act of recovery, but an interpretative practice shaped by evidential limits and methodological decisions that emerge through the physical process of making and handling materials.

Janet Arnold, in *Make or Break: The Testing of Theory by Reproducing Historic techniques*, further develops re-making as a methodological tool for testing historical hypotheses about garment construction. In museum contexts, she highlights the value of re-making for display and interpretation, particularly when original garments are too fragile to handle. She also emphasises the use of partial toiles to verify pattern accuracy and assembly processes before full-scale making, positioning this practice as a form of validation rather than mere copying: 'usually only half a *toile* made from a single layer of calico for reason of economy, is tacked together to check the pattern shapes' (2000, p.39). This embodied knowledge is vital, as it speaks

to the craft and aspects of garment construction that are often lost in written records or visual depictions. By re-making historical garments, we gain access to this implicit knowledge, revealing the techniques, skills, and decisions involved in their creation that might otherwise remain obscured.

Furthermore, the process of re-making does not simply inform us about the past in an abstract sense; it provides a direct and embodied way of understanding historical practices and material culture. Through the practical act of sewing, cutting, and making garments, we can uncover the real, lived value of these processes. This embodied practice allows us to appreciate the complexities of historical garment construction, highlighting the craftsmanship and expertise involved in producing clothing that served functional and symbolic purposes. Among the scholars who have pioneered technical studies of historical dress, Janet Arnold is distinguished by her meticulous research into historical clothing. Arnold devoted much of her career to exploring the techniques and materials used in the construction of historical garments, with a particular focus on the fabrics and methods employed in their creation (see Arnold 1973, 1995, 1999, 2000). Her work has been influential in advancing our understanding of the details involved in historical dressmaking, offering theoretical insight and practical guidance for contemporary researchers.

Norah Waugh, Susan North, and Jenny Tiramani are also key figures in the field, each contributing significantly to the study of historical garment patterns and construction methods. Waugh's works, for example, explore the elements of garment construction, revealing the often overlooked but essential details that inform our understanding of historical dress (see Waugh 1987, 1994). North and Tiramani's collaborative work further expanded the field by publishing research on the techniques used to create patterns and garments in earlier periods, with a particular focus on the restoration and re-making of historical dress (see North and Tiramani 2011, 2016).

The significance of re-making research is further reinforced by studies of labour and craft in dress history. While Serena Dyer has already been discussed to demonstrate embodied pattern making through draping

techniques, her work also foregrounds stitching as a site of skilled labour and knowledge in Georgian dressmaking (2024). In combination, Webster and Milne demonstrate how process of making can reveal embodied 'dress effects' that remain inaccessible through museum objects alone (2004). Together, these works reinforce the argument that making is central to historical analysis rather than supplementary to it. Together, these scholars have not only documented historical dressmaking practices but have also explored the act of re-making as an important method for gaining new perspectives on history. Their research has established the foundations for studying historical garments through a practical, active engagement, highlighting the importance of cutting, shaping, and making garments as means of unlocking insights that are not always accessible through other methods. Through this approach, the process of re-making reveals itself as an important tool for understanding the technical and cultural dimensions of historical dress.

Through the practice of re-making, we gain a better understanding of the technical expertise employed by historical tailors, including not only the 'sewing thread, the construction order, pattern, fabric, lining, where seams come together and how the fabric falls' (Davidson 2019, pp.13-14), but also the interplay between these elements and their functional significance. As such, re-making becomes a method for finding the often subtle, yet essential, aspects of garment construction that are not always immediately visible in historical records or museum collections. The process allows scholars to engage in a tactile and analytical exploration of the materials and techniques that defined the tailoring practices of the past, facilitating insights that extend beyond theoretical study to a more embodied understanding of the craft.

In line with this, Anne Hollander's work provides a critical theoretical framework for interpreting the role of clothing in historical contexts. As she argues, it is vital to consider the cloth and its drapery before turning to the garments themselves. Her emphasis on cloth as a primary method in which the human form is articulated challenges conventional approaches to fashion history. By exploring garments through the means of visual art, she suggests

that the tailor's craft should be 'apprehended and appreciated through the same kind of visual effort that all art demands' (1993, pp.1-2). In doing so, Hollander redefines the tailoring process as an artistic practice in its own right—one that demands the same level of attention and interpretative engagement as any other form of visual art. However, her focus was not solely on the technicalities of garment creation or artistic representation. Rather, Hollander was interested in the implications of these representations for our understanding of the human body. Clothing, she argued, provides a visual language in which the body is concealed and revealed, and it is this dynamic that allows for the expression of social identities, status, and gender roles. In this sense, garments serve not merely as physical coverings but as cultural texts, which, when decoded, reveal the shifting perceptions of gender and bodily identity across time. The act of examining and reconstruct historical garments enables us to engage with this language, offering new insights into the changing socio-cultural significances attached to specific styles and cuts.

By exploring garments within their historical and social contexts, we begin to discover the implications of tailoring as an art and a craft. The study of men's frock coats and women's riding habits, for example, provides an opening into the ways in which gender identities were constructed, expressed, and negotiated through clothing. These garments were not mere fashion statements but symbols of authority and gendered power dynamics. As one late-nineteenth-century analysis of menswear culture suggests, '[a] code of masculinity which stressed athletic vigour alongside moral fibre gave rise to a fashionable manly 'look' that was overtly physical in its appeal whether the wearer was dressed for riding, walking, tennis, dancing or even business' (Breward 2001, p.166). This emphasis on the physicality of dress highlights how garments participated in shaping ideals of masculinity through the body. As Alistair O'Neill highlights, the practice of re-making allows us to foster a 'historical dialogue about techniques, helping to uncover the past and have new conversations in the present' (2021, p.27). This dialogue is not a passive exercise in historical re-making but an active engagement with the past that allows us to reconsider established assumptions about gender.

Indeed, the value of re-making garments lies in its ability to inform the lived experiences of those who wore them. Through this process, we can engage in a form of ‘embodied’ historical research, one that moves beyond archival study and into the field of physical interaction with the material culture of the past. For example, this process can reveal how garments shaped and responded to the movement of the body, how comfort and restriction were negotiated through fit and cut, and how materials influenced the wearer’s sensory experience. Furthermore, it can inform the time and labour involved in their original manufacture, as well as the specific functions of tailoring techniques—such as hidden openings, reinforcement stitches, or pleating—that may not be fully understood through visual or textual analysis alone. It is through this approach that we can begin to appreciate the details of historical tailoring techniques and their extensive cultural significance. In essence, the research presented here aims to examine the ways in which historical tailoring practices can expand our understanding of past and present, offering a historically grounded perspective on how clothing functions as a marker of social and gendered difference.

0.4: Reflection on practice and research

Theory is the mother of invention, but more strictly speaking it is but the unpolished thought of an imaginary mind. Principles or rules for practice must not be founded upon theory, but upon practical truth, without which acting as a base or basis no theory can stand, nor indeed would any person be unreasonable enough to take latter as a guide, unless sufficiently backed by the former (Walker 1835, pp.3-4).

From the early stages of this project, I have reflected on the progression of my research, considering the significance and relevance of a practice-related approach, and the ways in which this perspective influences my understanding of the subject. To situate myself within a framework of knowledge and to communicate my work effectively within the context of a practice-related PhD, it is essential to begin with a clear definition of what ‘practice’ is. Sunil Manghani provides valuable insights into this concept,

noting that in everyday discourse, the term 'practice' typically refers to the application or use of an idea, belief, or method. For example, we may discuss the principles and practices of education, or the professional activities associated with a particular career. However, Manghani further explores the idea, suggesting that 'perhaps most frequently we refer to practice as the repeated exercise of an activity or skill so as to acquire proficiency' (2021, p.378).

Indeed, practice is often associated with repeated engagement in an activity or skill that leads to proficiency or expertise. This sustained engagement is not merely mechanical; it reflects a habitual, almost anticipatory way of executing a task—an approach defined by a specific set of techniques that together aim towards a particular outcome. In this respect, Aristotle's notion of 'praxis' offers a relevant framework: practice as a form of action that is directed towards a goal yet is filled with a degree of reflexivity and intentionality. Within the academic context, the practice of a discipline—be it law, medicine, art, or music—goes beyond the mere achievement of a set skill; it involves an engagement with the field of study, where one becomes proficient not only in technique but also in the intellectual and philosophical underpinnings that guide the discipline. Furthermore, practice within this academic setting is not confined to the refinement of technical skills; it also encompasses speculative activities that may produce unexpected results and challenge established norms of thought. In this way, practice embodies an interaction between repetition and variation. To illustrate, an artist's studio functions as a space of continual practice, where the act of creating and recreating cultural images and objects is central to the generation of new meanings. Similarly, a writer, as a practitioner of language, engages in the process of drafting, revising, and refining texts—pushing the boundaries of language to generate new ideas, images, and expressions. In a similar way, an ethnographer, by immersing themselves in the cultural practices of a group, documents systems of meaning that may otherwise remain unarticulated or unnoticed by outsiders (Manghani 2021).

Thus, practice is not only a means of producing or creating; it is also a way of thinking. It fosters a particular mode of inquiry and understanding, one that is

embedded in the act of making, unmaking, and re-making. In the context of research, therefore, practice can be understood as a ‘way of defining [a] methodology’ (Manghani 2021, p.378), as it shapes the very ways in which research is conducted, knowledge is produced, and meaning is constructed. In recognising practice as a methodological approach and an intellectual activity, we are able to see how it operates as a component of research, not simply as a tool for achieving results but as a process that continually reshapes our understanding of the world.

My interest in practice-related research comes from a background knowledge of dressmaking—that is, the ability to make a garment from concept to its materialisation. I have been sewing garments since my teenage years, a manual practice that has shaped my understanding and appreciation of the craft. After completing an undergraduate degree in fashion design during the 1990s, I entered the fashion industry, where I worked in various roles, including as a sewing machinist, pattern cutter, and fashion designer. These positions allowed me to acquire technical expertise and a practical understanding of garment creation. In 2016, I was accepted onto a Masters degree in Pattern and Garment Technology at the London College of Fashion, based on the relevant technical and practical experience I had obtained throughout my career. After being awarded my Masters degree, I recognised the potential to focus my skills and expertise into a research-focused approach. The ability to create and construct garments allows me to engage with fabric in a tactile and visual way, providing an understanding of how to develop a garment pattern and bring it from initial design to completed item. Although I had some knowledge of tailoring when I started my PhD, I had not trained as a tailor. To build upon my existing knowledge and ensure I was sufficiently skilled to engage with the research practice, I enrolled in a ‘Level 1’ tailoring course at Newham College in London in 2022. This course provided me with the specific tailoring skills necessary to advance my research, particularly in relation to the re-making of historical garments. Tailoring has always played a significant part in my work, and these new acquired skills proved to be immensely beneficial to my research practice. They allowed me not only to refine my technical capabilities but also to engage

with the historical and methodological aspects of the project. The act of re-making garments, particularly historical ones, requires precision and a thorough understanding of fabric and technique, which my training in tailoring significantly enhanced. This practical knowledge has become an integral part of my approach to the study of historical dress, shaping my research methods and enabling me to explore garments from a perspective grounded in practice and theory.

The ability to understand and appreciate the skills and techniques involved in the reproduction of historical clothing provides me with a distinct perspective on how to read and interpret historical dress. This practical knowledge allows me to engage with garments not only as artefacts of material culture but also as expressions of skill, technique, and craftsmanship. In this sense, my position as a maker places me in a distinct and, in some respects, privileged position within the field of study; I am able to approach historical garments with an understanding of their construction, which gives me insight that may not be accessible to those without a similar background in the practical aspects of garment creation. For example, I can recognise hidden techniques such as specific types of hand stitching, or structural choices like the use of particular interlinings or boning, that might be invisible or overlooked in visual or textual analysis. Furthermore, my practical knowledge allows me to detect adaptations or repairs, helping me to identify where garments have been altered or mended over time—revealing how they were valued, reused, or perhaps adapted for different bodies or fashions. As explained by Carole Gray and Julian Malins, ‘the advantages of the practitioner-researcher role are compelling: your ‘insider’ knowledge, experience and status usually lends your research credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of your peers, that is, you are not an ‘external’ researcher’ (2004, p.23). This sense of insider knowledge, derived from years of engagement with fabrics and techniques, not only increases the credibility of my research but also deepens my reflection on the very processes I am studying. Most importantly, I am approaching this project as a reflective practitioner—someone who recognises the complexity, dynamism, and unpredictability characteristic in the world of making and re-making.

Moreover, having been born and raised in Brazil, I bring an outsider's perspective to this research, which in many ways positions me to challenge and question rooted British cultural assumptions—particularly regarding the relationship between clothing and social identity. My 'outsider' position offers a potentially novel perspective from which to examine these assumptions, as I approach them not from a view of familiarity but from a place of critical reflection. To explore these issues, my research method has involved a process of careful evaluation and selection: determining what is valuable, relevant, and significant within the context of my inquiry, and in contrast, what is not. As Gray and Malins suggest, this approach involves 'playing with the data', visualising possibilities, and making creative connections—taking things apart to understand their components and then reconstructing them, perhaps in a different way, in order to generate new meaning (2004). Through this process of analysis and synthesis, I aim to arrive at a detailed interpretation of the research evidence that respects the historical significance of the garments I am studying and offers new insights into the ways in which clothing can serve as a marker of social identity and cultural values.

0.5: Positioning the research: practice-based, -led or hybrid?

I began this project with an understanding that my research would be practice-based. This meant that the central focus would be an 'original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice' (Candy 2006, p.3). In other words, I visualised my research as an inquiry in which the act of making—through the re-making and re-contextualisation of garments—would serve as the method and the means of generating new knowledge. However, as the project evolved and the practical component of the research took shape, it became clear that I needed to reconsider where this study should be situated within the wider view of research methodologies, especially in relation to the two key categories of practice-based and practice-led research.

The distinction between these two forms of research has been articulated by Linda Candy. According to her, practice-based research is defined as follows:

[A]n original investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge partly by means of practice and the outcomes of that practice. Claims of originality and contribution to knowledge may be demonstrated through creative outcomes which may include artefacts.

In contrast, she suggests practice-led research is concerned primarily with:

[T]he nature of the practice and leads to a new knowledge that has operational significance for that practice. The main focus of the research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice (2006, p.3).

This distinction highlights an important difference in emphasis: while practice-based research focuses on the creation of new knowledge through practice, the aim of practice-led research is to improve and expand the understanding of the practice itself.

As my project unfolded, it became clear that my approach did not fit neatly into either category. My research, rather, seeks to integrate both practice-based and practice-led methods in a way that reflects the complexities and intersections of making, material culture, and embodied knowledge. Specifically, I employ a combination of three distinct research methods: the re-making of historical garments, investigations of material culture, and an embodied approach to research as a process of knowing. In this sense, the study navigates a hybrid research methodology—one that moves between the areas of practice-based and practice-led research.

This hybrid approach is not, however, unusual. As Susie Norris-Reeves demonstrates in her analysis of practice-based doctorates, the blending of these two approaches can be an effective way to bridge the gap between theory and practice, allowing for a more thoughtful investigation of complex, interdisciplinary topics (2014). Therefore, it seems fitting to define the

approach I have adopted here as 'practice as investigation.' This term captures the idea that the act of cutting, shaping, and re-making historical garments is not merely a technical process, but an integral part of the reflection and analysis that underpins the entire research effort.

By framing my work in this way, the research process moves from being exclusively practice-based or practice-led, to being part of a more integrated, dynamic methodological framework. The focus is not solely on creating new knowledge through practice or advancing knowledge about practice, but rather on how the two can work in conjunction to produce insights that are theoretically strong and practically grounded. In this sense, the research supports a claim to originality not only through the creative outcomes of the practice but also through a written outcome that articulates and contextualises these outcomes within a framework. Through this integrated approach, my research aims to contribute new knowledge in ways that challenge traditional boundaries between making, thinking, and knowing, offering a fresh perspective on the intersections of material culture, dress history, and embodied research practices.

Chapter 1: Women, equestrianism, and the side-saddle

1.1: Horses and female equestrian culture

Clothing is at once a science, an art, a habit, and a sentiment (de Balzac 2010, p.70).

Understanding women's equestrian culture in relation to gender implies acknowledging and engaging with the historical, social, and cultural complexities that have shaped its development. Central to this is the evolving relationship between humans and horses, which cannot be separated from larger cultural constructions of gender. While horses held symbolic significance—often associated with power, status, and nobility—their role gradually expanded beyond transportation to include more visible associations with leisure, sport, and entertainment, particularly in relation to women. As Martine Hausberger notes, these majestic animals were progressively seen as integral to everyday life (2008). Yet, their association with women's physicality and public engagement—such as fox hunting or being seen on horseback in public spaces—remained a complex subject. In this context, the notion of female riders—especially prior to the 1830s—was imbued with admiration and anxiety, as it challenged fixed ideas of gender identity and social roles.

Among the ancient Greeks, the concept of women riding horses was considered as shocking and seductive, as it challenged their notions of gender identity (L'Allier, cited in Hacke and Carmichael 2024). This uncertainty was not only reflected in the attitudes of Greek society but was also clearly articulated in textual and visual forms. One of the most significant representations of this cultural tension can be found in the mythological figure of the Amazons—an imagined society of female fighters who challenged traditional notions of femininity by wielding weapons and riding horses. Such representations may reflect social fears and serves as a projection of the

idealised strength and autonomy that women might embody when freed from the constraints of conventional gender norms. The Greek Attic orator Lysias (c.445–c.380 BC), for example, articulates this concern in his *Funeral Oration*, where he addresses the cultural implications of female power and mobility, thus providing a perspective into the attitudes towards women's physical agency:

In ancient times were the Amazons, daughters of Ares, dwelling beside the river Thermodon; they alone of the people round about were armed with iron, and they were first of all to mount horses, with which, owing to the inexperience of their foes, they surprised them and either caught those who fled, or outstripped those who pursued. They were accounted as men for their high courage, rather than as women for their sex; so much more did they seem to excel men in their spirit than to be at a disadvantage in their form (Lysias 1930, 2.4).

Over the course of European history, the idea of female equestrians has been influenced by Greek tradition. This has persisted across centuries, shaping literary and cultural representations of women's engagement with horses. For example, in the early 18th century, the poet Richard Steele (1672–1729) reflected on this continuing cultural legacy in the issue of the *Spectator* magazine published on 29th June 1711. In this edition, Steele records a conversation with his friend, the writer John Hughes (1677–1720), who recounts an encounter with 'a little party of Horsemen'. What is particularly important in Hughes' account is his description of the scene, which reveals the gendered relationship of equestrianism during the period:

[O]n my nearer Approach, and as I turned my Eyes downward, a Part of the Equipage I had not observed before, which was a Petticoat of the same with the Coat and Wastecoat. After this Discovery, I looked again on the Face of the fair *Amazon* who had thus deceived me, and thought those Features which had before offended me by their Soft-ness, were now strengthened into as improper a Boldness; and tho' her Eyes Nose and Mouth seemed to be formed with perfect Symmetry, I am not certain whether she, who in Appearance was a very handsome Youth, may not be in Reality a very indifferent Woman (Steele 1711).

Hughes then describes the horse rider's outfit as an 'Amazonian Hunting-Habit for Ladies', a term that not only invokes the mythological figure of the Amazons but also serves to highlight the gendered nature of equestrian attire. In a particularly xenophobic note, Hughes claims that this style of dress, imported from France, 'sits awkwardly yet on our English Modesty'. His comment highlights the discomfort felt by some members of society towards foreign fashion, particularly those associated with women's physicality and autonomy. Hughes concludes his critique with a provocative suggestion: 'if the *Amazons* should think fit to go on in this Plunder of our Sex's Ornaments, they ought to add to their Spoils, and complete their Triumph over us, by wearing the Breeches' (Steele 1711). This statement captures the contradiction in the 18th-century attitudes towards women's equestrianism. While women might be permitted to ride horses, it was however expected that they should do so in female dress—clothing that preserved their perceived femininity and modesty.

Furthermore, female equestrians have been likened to 'Dianas', after the Roman goddess of the hunt, whose association with femininity and physical ability has long symbolised a delicate yet powerful balance between gender and strength (Munkwitz 2018). These two powerful female mythological figures—the Amazons and Diana—serve as symbols in the wide discourse of women's engagement with horses and hunting. Both challenge the traditionally masculine relationship between horses, hunting, and clothing, creating a space where women could assert their action and independence through their participation in these areas. The symbolic association between these figures and women's emancipation is significant; it suggests that women's involvement in equestrian activities is not a matter of gender, but rather of ability, skill, and competence. Over time, the historical association between these mythological women and real-life female equestrians can be interpreted as indicative of a shift in the discourse around women's empowerment and equality. The success of women in horse riding, as illustrated through figures such as the Amazons and Diana, thus speaks to a fundamental challenge to the gendered assumptions about who can succeed in such physically demanding activities.

Prior to 1870, women's involvement in sports was largely limited to activities that were considered recreational rather than competitive (Gerber, Felshin, Berlin, and Wyrick 1974, cited in Bell 2008). During this period, it was generally believed that humans had a limited amount of energy and using it for physical and intellectual activities simultaneously could be dangerous. For women, whose physical structure was thought to be 'periodically weakened' by menstruation, the risk was considered particularly severe (Park and Hult 1993). Despite widespread notions of 'female sex fragility', which were used to discourage women from engaging in physical pursuits, these ideas did not prevent them from participating in strenuous—and at times hazardous—activities. Horse riding, for example, involved not only the challenge of controlling an animal while riding side-saddle at speed, but also the physical effort of jumping over obstacles—which required considerable energy and skill.



Figure 1.1: Woman mounting a horse with the help of a groom. In *The Habit and the Horse: a Treatise on Female Equitation*, Mrs. J. Stirling Clarke 1857.

'From the 1830s onward...more women joined fox-hunting fields until they became a dominating force in the sport' (Munkwitz 2018, p.512). However,

this participation was largely restricted to upper-class women, who could afford the necessary resources—horses, saddles, and the elaborate clothing that came with it. A particular example of the social division characteristic of women’s equestrian engagements can be seen in the fashion of the 1840s, when women began wearing extremely long skirts while riding, thus needing assistance from grooms to mount or dismount (Figure 1.1). This reflected not only the complexity of the activity but also the high social status of the wearer, as it indicated that they could afford to employ servants (Clarke 1857 and Housden 2007).

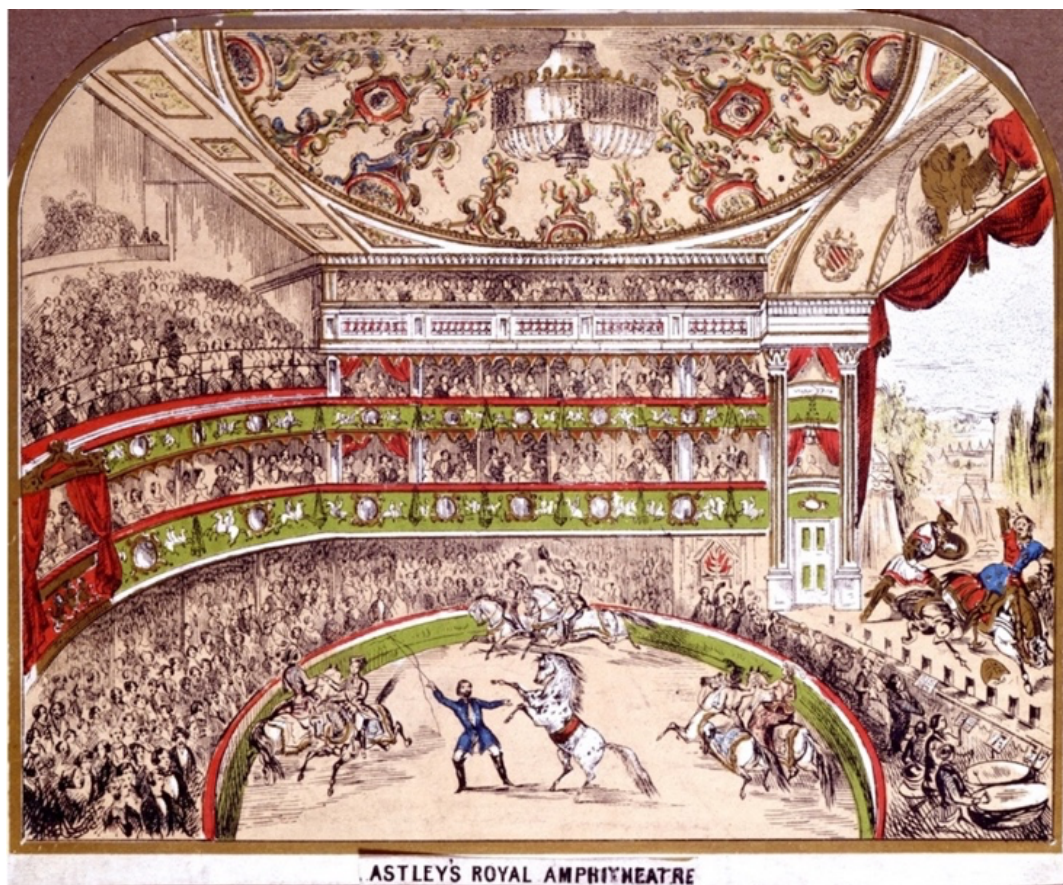


Figure 1.2: Interior view of Astley’s Royal Amphitheatre presenting women riding side-saddle. Unknown maker, 19th century. © Victoria and Albert Museum.

Further down the social hierarchy, however, women’s engagement with horse riding was also present in specific contexts, such as the circus. The modern circus, which appeared in England in the late 1760s under the innovative efforts of Philip Astley (1742–1814), introduced a form of performance where women on horseback could display remarkable skill and physicality (Forest

2020). Astley and his wife Patty were both expert riders who established a riding school in London in 1768, performing equestrian tricks on horseback (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2022). The image of female circus equestrians offers another route to investigate discourses of gender in the nineteenth-century, not least as a means in which the developments in sartorial practices were transmitted to other parts of British society (Figure 1.2).

In the context of horse riding, however, women's ability to perform at a high level occasionally allowed them to outperform men, as evidenced by a series of prints by Francis Calcraft Turner (1782–1846), created before his death in 1846.⁴ These three prints depict scenes of hunting, and a female rider on a side-saddle. In the second print a woman successfully overcomes obstacles, while a man to her right has already tumbled from his seat, and in the third a woman receives the brush at the kill, to the admiration of her fellow sportsmen (Figure 1.3). These prints not only challenge traditional gender roles but also illustrate a shift in attitudes towards women's capabilities in physical activities.



Figure 1.3: From the series *Hark Forward, Away!*. Francis Calcraft Turner, 19th century. Paul Mellon Collection, © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Accession Number: 85.1367.1.

The combination of the riding habit and the new saddle—featuring a third pommel, adapted to provide greater comfort and stability, which is explained in the next subchapter—offered women the opportunity to engage more fully in equestrianism. This development represents a social change, where the successful participation of women in horse riding came to represent a

⁴ 'F.C. Turner died in 1846, so this series must have been completed before mid-century'. [These] prints highlight a female rider in a sidesaddle...' (Munkwitz 2021, p. 122).

challenge to gendered assumptions about physical ability. The images and accounts of women proving their competence in this field reflect a significant change in attitudes towards women's empowerment.

Female equestrians played an important part in the redefinition of women's identities within a society firmly grounded in a patriarchal ideology that located male and female roles in separate spheres. In a period where gendered expectations were strictly defined, horse riding allowed women to claim their independence, challenging the conventional boundaries of femininity. The physical and social demands of riding—often performed in public spaces such as hunting fields—allowed women not only to engage in a highly skilled activity but also to assert themselves in environments typically dominated by men. This engagement with equestrianism provided a basis from which women could expand their participation in other forms of recreation and physical activity. By the late nineteenth-century, this increasing visibility in equestrianism would lay the foundation for women's involvement in other activities, such as cycling and tennis—sports that, in many ways, continued to challenge the norms of female physicality and social propriety.

Consequently, what emerges from this subchapter is that female horse riding was not just an isolated activity, but part of a larger cultural change that linked clothing, sport, and entertainment. The way women dressed for horse riding, with its requirements for modesty and mobility, was indicative of the tension between traditional expectations and evolving forms of feminine independence. These intersections of dress, physical activity, and social participation became crucial to the breakdown of rooted gender boundaries. They reflected an understanding of women's roles and capabilities, promoting a gradual but distinctive transformation in how women's physical presence and agency were perceived. Thus, the practice of horse riding emerged as an important context where women could challenge social norms, engaging in activities that were personally empowering and socially influential.

1.2: Gender and the side-saddle

Giraldus of Cambrensis (c.1146–c.1223), also known as Gerald of Wales, provides an early account of women engaging in equestrian activity, confirming in his *Topography of Ireland* that women were riding horses as early as the twelfth century (Figure 1.4); he notes that: 'The women, also, as well as the men, ride astride, with their legs stuck out on each side of the horse' (Cambrensis 2000, p.79).



Figure 1.4: Scene of two women riding astride, one pointing, and one blowing a horn. Queen Mary Psalter, c.1310–1320. © The British Library, Board Royal 2 B VII f. 197v.

This observation reflects the common practice of women riding astride alongside men. However, by the following centuries, it became increasingly rare for women to be depicted or allowed to ride in this way. Although there is evidence that early medieval women did indeed ride astride, a shift in social and religious attitudes gradually prohibited women from publicly adopting this position. By the beginning of the fifteenth century, the act of riding with one's legs 'straddled' was viewed as inappropriate and even immoral for women, who were now depicted in a more modest way in contemporary manuscripts (Almond 2009). It was believed that the physical contact involved in such a posture could provoke sexual stimulation, particularly through the proximity to a woman's genital area, thus leading to concerns over the potential encouragement of illicit desires. This belief, rooted in medieval notions of

chastity, was emphasised by the Catholic Church's persistent influence over social norms. The Church was particularly concerned that the act of riding astride could induce what it considered as 'unbridled lust', a fear that reflected anxieties regarding female sexuality and its regulation in a highly patriarchal society (Munkwitz 2022).

As a result, social pressures led to the development of a new mode of female equestrianism, one in which women were required to keep their legs closed while riding. This development reflected the tendency of restricting women's public behaviour to conform with ideals of modesty and sexual restraint. In response to these growing concerns, the side-saddle was introduced as a more 'appropriate' alternative for women who wished to ride. The side-saddle allowed women to mount a horse while ensuring that their posture adhered to these developing standards of propriety.

Although the side-saddle's exact origins are difficult to trace, it is believed that the practice was popularised in England by Anne of Bohemia (1366–1394), who brought the custom with her when she arrived to marry King Richard II (1367–1400) in 1382 (Bloodgood 1959). Anne's arrival at the English court marked the beginning of the side-saddle's more widespread use, further establishing the cultural norms of feminine modesty. The side-saddle was not simply a response to social pressures; it also represented a technological and design evolution in equestrian equipment. Over time, the side-saddle witnessed a series of modifications, with various adjustments made to improve comfort and control for women riding horses. Innovations in the saddle's design allowed women a greater degree of stability and safety while mounted, helping to relieve some of the physical strain involved in riding, while still adhering to the social expectations of the time.

The rise of side-saddles was not the only significant development in women's equestrianism; it was paired with the introduction of specialised riding clothes, most notably the so-called riding habit. A very early recorded reference to a riding habit can be found in the expense accounts of Elizabeth of York (1466–1503), wife of the English king Henry VII (1457–1509). These accounts, dated

26 November 1502, note that thirteen yards of black satin were ‘delivered to [the queen’s tailor Robert] Johnson, for a riding gowne for the Quene’ at a cost of 9 shillings per yard, which, in modern terms, is roughly equivalent to £300 per yard. The entry further specifies additional materials used in the garment’s construction, including an extra yard and a quarter of black velvet for the finishing of the cuffs, as well as seven yards of black buckram used to line the garment (Nicolas 1830, p. 68–69). This early reference reveals much about the nature of women’s clothing during this period, not least the fact that such garments were being produced by male tailors. The ordering of the riding gown by a male tailor—Johnson in this case—suggests that men had been responsible for the making of tailored riding garments worn by women of high status from at least the early sixteenth century. This practice would continue for several centuries, highlighting the longstanding role of male artisans in the making of women’s equestrian clothing.

The tradition of male tailors creating women’s riding habits persisted into the nineteenth-century. For example, George Walker (1781–1856), —a tailor in the early- to mid-nineteenth century—published several editions of *The Art of Cutting Ladies’ Riding Habits, Pelisses, Gowns, Frocks, &c. Also Ladies’ Chaise or Phaethon Coats, &c. &c.* In his works, Walker provided detailed instructions for pattern making and cutting for a variety of women’s riding garments (Figure 1.5). The decades between 1820 and 1860 were also a period of significant development in tailoring history, with the democratization of tailoring practices and the wide dissemination of garment patterns through books and magazines. This increased the availability of technical knowledge and marked a significant change in the practice of tailoring, making it more accessible to a wider audience. It is important to note that the development of bespoke tailored clothing for British women was not, as is often claimed, a ‘sudden development invented, as many dress histories imply, by the dress reform movements in the 1880s’ (Taylor 1999, p.31). Rather, this practice of bespoke tailoring for women had deep historical roots, extending back to the early modern period and continuing into the nineteenth-century.

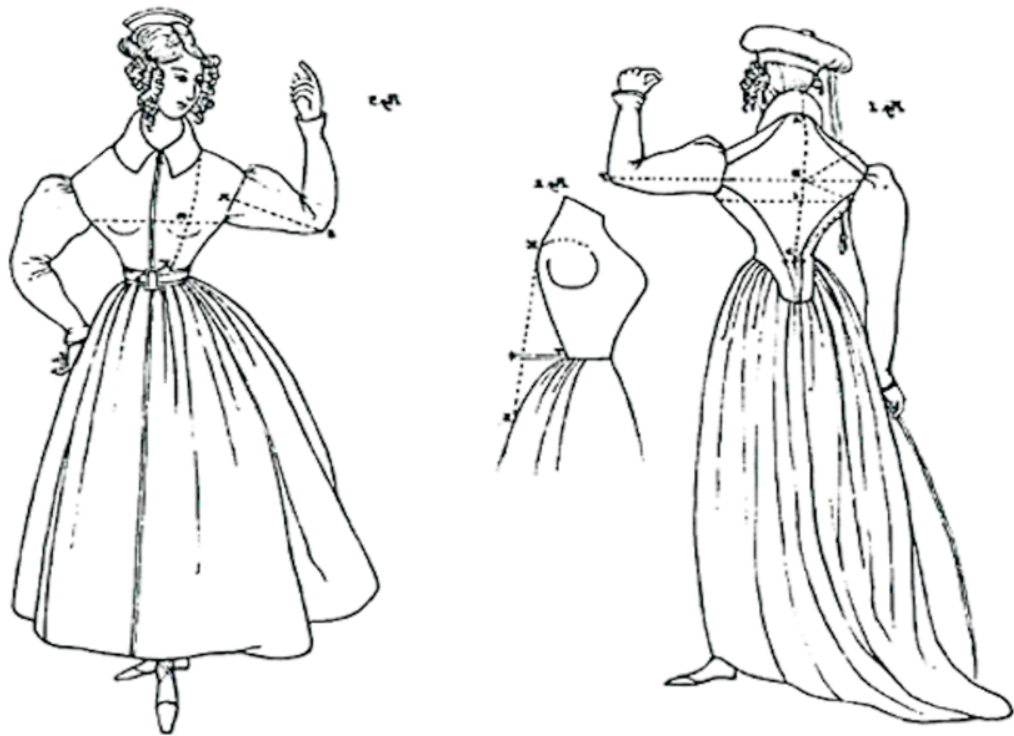


Figure 1.5: Taking woman's body measurement, Plate 16 and 17. In *The Tailor's Masterpiece*, George Walker 1835.

The term 'habit' to describe women's riding garments can be traced back to as early as the mid-seventeenth century. A notable early reference comes from John Evelyn (1620–1706), who in his diary entry for 13 September notes:

I presented his Majesty with a survey of the ruins, and a plot for a new city, with a discourse on it; whereupon, after dinner, his Majesty sent for me into the Queen's bed-chamber, Her Majesty and the Duke only being present. They examined each particular, and discussed on them for near an hour, seeming to be extremely pleased with what I had so early thought on. The Queen was now in her cavalier riding habit, hat and feather, and horseman's coat, going to take the air (Evelyn and William [1666] 1901, p.26).

This illustrates not only the use of the term in the period but also the sartorial significance attached to the riding habit, a garment clearly integral to the Queen's attire. By the late eighteenth century, when Jane Austen wrote the words '[h]er habit therefore was thrown off with all possible haste' in *Northanger Abbey* (Austen 2013 [1798], p.155), 'the word 'habit' had become synonymous with 'riding habit', and was used for travelling and walking as

well as riding' (Arnold 1999, p.22). Furthermore, in 1824, Sir Walter Scott reflected on the development of this distinctively feminine riding attire in his novel *Redgauntlet*, noting that in earlier times, women who adopted male dress wore 'just such hats, coats, and waistcoats as the male animals themselves made use of', lacking what he called 'the elegant compromise betwixt male and female attire which has now acquired, par excellence, the name of a 'habit'' (Scott 1824 [1897], p.330). His words illustrate the established association between the term 'habit' and women's riding dress during the early nineteenth century.

This growing cultural significance of the riding habit was paralleled by changes in horse riding practices and access. In the eighteenth century many private riding academies began to open their doors to the public, providing instruction to a wider clientele. This transition, which first took place in England, marked an important transformation in the social role of horse riding. No longer limited to aristocratic men or military training, equestrian education gradually became part of a more civilian and commercially oriented context. These changes laid the basis for developments in how women engaged with horse riding. As traditional forms of martial riding, such as *haute école*—which had been associated with military elites during the reign of Henry VIII (1491-1547)—declined in popularity in Britain, new opportunities emerged for women to participate in riding without the need for formal riding instruction. Riding and hunting began to take on new cultural meanings, framed increasingly around leisure and prestige rather than military preparation. Women were not only permitted but encouraged to ride, as equestrian skill came to symbolise refinement, status, and education. For upper-class girls, learning to ride was often a routine part of their education, typically taught at home by relatives or estate horsemen as part of the social training expected of young women in their class (Munkwitz 2024).

In a conversation with Sally Mitchell, curator at The Museum of the Horse in Tuxford, it was noted that the conventions surrounding how women rode were shaped by practical and cultural considerations. As women became more involved in horse riding, norms around their riding practices evolved

accordingly. Traditionally, women rode side-saddle on the left side of the horse. This positioning was influenced by the custom of being greeted from the right, which encouraged riders to turn their bodies away from their legs rather than toward them—turning the other way could risk unbalancing them. The tradition was also shaped by the fact that men typically wore their swords on the left side. When approaching from the front, this placed the sword opposite the woman, minimizing the chance of interference. When riding side by side, it also reduced the risk of the woman's skirt catching on the man's sword. By the early nineteenth-century, this was less of a concern, as swords were mostly worn only by soldiers, but the custom persisted. (Mitchell, personal communication, 3 March 2023).

While women participated in equestrian activities like riding and hunting up until the late 1700s, changes in gender norms, social values, and sporting practices started to limit their involvement after the early 1800s. One factor behind the decline in female participation in hunting was the transformation of the hunt itself. The slower-paced hunts of the eighteenth century had evolved into faster-paced chases by the early nineteenth-century, featuring more challenging jumps and obstacles (Munkwitz 2021). However, between 1820 and 1860, a shift began to occur in the social constraints imposed upon women, marking a significant period of change in the ways in which they engaged with the public sphere. This transformation became particularly evident, through their growing visibility in shopping and social activities, as well as horse riding in parks and the countryside. The emergence of tailored walking habits, alongside more established garments like the riding habit, reflects this transformation of women's roles and social expectations during this period (Taylor 1999).

In the first half of the nineteenth-century, the riding habit—associated with the leisure and physical activity of women in society—began to take on new meanings and social significance. It came to offer women opportunities for public engagement, particularly as it became closely linked to an important innovation in the construction of side-saddles: the introduction of the 'leaping head', or third pommel (Figure 1.6).



Figure 1.6: Third pommel or Leaping head, Position in Saddle. In *Horsemanship for Women*, Theodore H. Mead 1887.

This advance in saddle design, as Erica Munkwitz explains, fundamentally changed women's physical relationship with their horses, allowing for greater control and stability while riding:

The utilization of the third pommel ("leaping head") on sidesaddles gave women a much stronger position on horseback. By pushing her left knee and thigh up into the leaping head, and pressing the right leg and thigh down onto the upper pommel, and then pulling that leg backward on the saddle flap, a woman locked herself into position on horseback... Such innovations opened a new world of sporting opportunities for women by enabling them to gallop, jump, and hunt on horseback (Munkwitz 2021, p.142).

Girls were trained to ride side-saddle from an early age. However, as Mitchell explained, there were contemporary concerns that consistently riding on one side might lead to spinal curvature during development. In response, some

side-saddles were designed with a third pommel that could be unscrewed and repositioned on the right, allowing the rider to alternate sides (Mitchell, personal communication, 3 March 2023). The combination of the tailored riding habit with the newly developed saddle allowed women not only to participate in equestrian activities but also to engage in hunting. This development marked a significant departure from previous gendered restrictions in sporting life, enabling women to take part in activities once considered outside their territory (Munkwitz 2021). The tailored riding habit, in turn, was a garment that combined practicality and fashion. As Alison David argues, it was a statement of utility and an 'anti-fashion', blending masculine and feminine elements to create a garment that was both functional and elegant: 'masculine and feminine, practical yet alluring' (2002, p.179). This balance was evident in the garment's cut, construction, and silhouette—elements that were inspired by men's tailoring but adapted to suit women's needs and activities (David 2002). The tailored riding habit, therefore, serves as an example of how male bespoke tailoring techniques were adapted and incorporated into women's wear during this period.

In this context, the bespoke nature of these garments, tailored by male hands, provided a certain legitimacy and assurance. While these garments were designed to be functional, they were also presented as sophisticated and of high quality. They were not just practical; they carried with them the expertise and tradition of male tailoring, which had long been associated with skill and authority. This mixing of masculine tailoring with women's clothing allowed for the creation of garments that, while feminine in their fit and form, were embedded with the same technical expertise that had long been the hallmark of male attire.

Although 'female attendants were employed at many firms to assist and take measurements', they lacked the skill of a trained tailor (Munkwitz 2021, p.107). Had women been responsible for making these garments, the outcome would perhaps have been different. Women, traditionally less involved in bespoke tailoring techniques used for male attire, might have approached the riding habit with a greater emphasis on decorative aspects,

as their roles in garment making were typically more aligned with the construction of garments that prioritised aesthetics over functional demands of activities like riding. However, the involvement of male tailors—whose expertise was developed through years of experience creating men’s clothing—ensured that the riding habits were not only visually appealing but also functional, supporting women in their physical activities. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that many tailors used horse mannequins in their shops to test the fit of these garments (Figure 1.7), a practice described in *A Lady’s Horse*, 1859: ‘a model of a horse sculptured full-life size, [was] kept with bridle and saddle always on and in a part of [the] show-rooms ... so that ladies may mount and ascertain the correctness of the [riding habit] fit before the garment is quite finished’ (*A Lady’s Horse* 1859, p.14).



Figure 1.7: Horse mannequin behind John Redfern’s head used by women to try out riding habits, *L’Art et la mode*, 1885, Musée Galliera de la Mode de la Ville de Paris. In *The Mechanical Smile*, Caroline Evans 2013.

Therefore, it was this unique intersection of femininity and male-dominated craftsmanship that gave the riding habit its distinctive character, bridging the

gap between the traditional sphere of male sporting attire and the roles of women in public life. This research seeks to explore this adoption, adaptation, and the subsequent impact on the formation of new forms of female gender identity, a phenomenon that, as mentioned previously, I term 'cross-tailoring'. Through this approach, we can better understand how the construction of tailored garments not only facilitated women's participation in public life but also contributed to the creation of new forms of female gender identity.

To better understand the significance of this phenomenon, it is important to define what constituted a women's riding habit in the period under discussion, as it comprised more than simply a draped or pleated skirt and a tailored jacket. Riding habits were well-established garments in many women's wardrobes, and this type of attire was not limited to equestrian use—it could also be worn for 'traveling, walking, or as relaxed daywear' (Munkwitz 2021, p. 52). Typically, the outfit included a tailored jacket, a long skirt, a ruffled necktie, or cravat, along with specially designed shoes, gloves, and appropriate headwear.

The study of riding habits and their role in shaping social and gender identities has been a significant area of scholarly interest since the nineteenth-century, attracting the attention of commentators and researchers (see, for example: Giles 1887, Arnold 1995 and 1999, and Taylor 1999). Nevertheless, over the years, much of the academic focus has been primarily concerned with recording the historical development of the garment itself, specifically examining the changes in the materials used and the various construction techniques employed in the creation of this clothing. These studies, while very important in documenting the evolution of riding habits, have been criticised for their limited engagement with the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which these garments were worn. The tendency to focus narrowly on the technical aspects of the garments' style has, in many instances, led to an underexplored understanding of their deeper significance in relation to the roles women were expected to play in society during the period under investigation. Alison David, for example, argues that our understanding of nineteenth-century female equestrians can only be fully comprehended 'by

using a wide variety of sources including *carte-de-visite*, photographs, fashion journals, equitation manuals, and caricatures' (2002, p.180). While these sources are important, and this project certainly engages with several of them—such as fashion plates to demonstrate the evolution of the riding habit and frock coat during the period under investigation (see Chapter 3), and equitation manuals such as *The Habit and The Horse; A Treatise on Female Equitation*—this inevitably raises questions around the reliability and interpretative challenges posed by these surviving sources.

As Christopher Breward reminds us, there is a need for 'caution in using plates and fashion reports as evidence of anything other than propaganda for commercial concerns or carefully constructed escapist entertainment for readers' (1995, p.148). Breward's caution speaks to the limitations of using such materials as evidence of authentic social practices or lived experiences. Fashion plates and related media were frequently designed to serve particular agendas—whether promoting the latest trends or constructing idealised representations of femininity. Thus, while they offer valuable insights into fashion and visual culture, they must be approached critically, with an awareness of their potential to obscure or distort the realities of women's lives and identities in the period. The use of such sources requires scholars to navigate these complexities carefully, ensuring that they are not interpreted without critical reflection but understood in relation to the specific cultural and social contexts in which they were produced.

While the establishment of a historical context remains crucial for understanding the meanings of the riding habit, the thorough analysis of its cut and making, alongside an exploration of the relationship between clothing and the body, is equally important. My study builds upon previous works by drawing a detailed comparison between bespoke tailored women's riding habits and men's frock coats worn between 1820 and 1860—four decades that I argue were fundamental in the development of tailoring techniques and their subsequent democratisation (Figure 1.8).

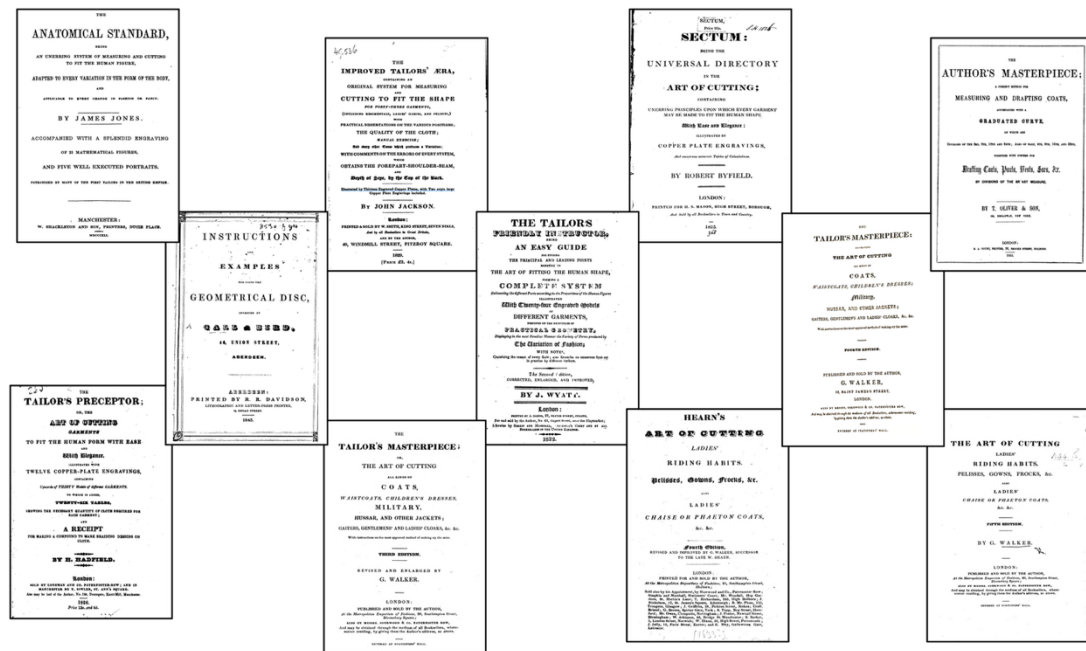


Figure 1.8: Examples of tailoring manuals published between 1820 and 1860.

This time frame represents a critical period in which the techniques of men's tailoring influenced women's dress, offering new possibilities in garment style and construction. By examining riding habits and frock coats, this research aims to show how these garments were designed to accommodate and enhance the physical movement of the body, which can be 'subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault 1991, p.136) through the specific tailoring techniques employed—a dynamic that, following Joanne Entwistle (2015), may also be understood in terms of Foucauldian biopolitics, where clothing becomes a site for the regulation and shaping of bodies within wider social systems. In other words, clothing is not just a matter of form or function but a technology of power—particularly relevant in the context of gender. In doing so, these garments reveal an embodied articulation of the body that goes beyond their materiality, making it possible to trace how they were intended to shape, constrain, and liberate the wearer.

This understanding of the body's interaction with clothing can only, I argue, be fully realised through the actual re-making of garments, as a means of exploring their functional and symbolic roles. To this end, my study employs a framework that integrates methodologies drawn from material culture, garment making, and embodied research. This interdisciplinary approach

enables a more detailed exploration of how the adoption of men's tailoring techniques in women's clothing helped negotiate the tension between restriction and freedom—physically, within the riding habit, and socially, as these garments symbolised changes in cultural attitudes towards femininity. In doing so, the research illustrates how this transformation in fashion practices reflected a larger social change in the perception and position of women in the public and private spheres. My thesis, therefore, poses the following two key questions:

- 1- How did bespoke tailoring techniques of cutting, shaping and making British upper-class men's frock coats influence the construction of women's riding habits between 1820 and 1860?
- 2- Can the concept of cross-tailoring help us to understand shifts in gender as it relates to power and female identity as reflected in early- to mid- nineteenth-century women's dress?

Chapter 2: Gender, body, and fashion

2.1: Discourses of gender

Binary division of gender can take several forms. The two halves can be seen to be equal but opposite, in a complementary relationship, as in the Ying/Yang [sic] symbol of Chinese philosophy. However, often the two halves will be typified as opposites and with the female in the inferior position. An example of this can be found in the nineteenth-century work of Paul Broca, who weighted male brains against female ones, and came up with some rather dubious conclusions about male superiority based on his findings (Cranny-Francis et al. 2003, p.2).

This chapter reflects on the persisting influence of the gender binary in shaping social understandings of masculinity and femininity, focusing on how these categories form individual identities and social systems. By examining these discourses of gender, the chapter explores how the binary model—rooted in the historical and cultural assumption of two distinct and opposing genders—continues to inform and regulate behaviours, and expectations. It considers how the gender binary overlaps with the assumption of heterosexuality, reinforcing traditional norms and limiting the range of acceptable gender expressions. Although the term ‘heterosexual’ may appear to describe a timeless category, it is important to highlight that it only emerged in the second half of the nineteenth-century. As explained by Jonathan Katz, the term heterosexual was ‘in the making from the 1860s to the end of the century. In late-nineteenth-century Germany, England, France, and Italy, and in America, our modern, historically specific idea of heterosexual began to be constructed’ (2007, p.51). Through this reflection, the chapter seeks to engage with the implications of the gender binary and the potential for rethinking these restrictive frameworks.

The discourse of gender plays an important part in shaping not only how we understand gender but also how we perceive and perform it in everyday life. Central to this discourse is the established binary framework of masculinity and femininity, which has structured social relations and expectations

historically in a variety of ways (Connell 1987). This binary model, which suggests that gender exists in two distinct and opposing categories—male and female—has become so deeply fixed in social, cultural, and institutional practices that it often appears natural and immutable. Yet, under this assumption lies a ‘web’ of historical, social, and cultural forces that enforce and challenge the boundaries of gendered identities. At the heart of the gender binary lies the assumption that masculinity and femininity are not only oppositional but mutually exclusive. This dualism shapes the way we understand individual identities, positioning men and women as representatives of two essential and contrasting forms of being. In this binary framework, men are expected to embody qualities associated with masculinity—such as strength, rationality, and dominance—while women are encouraged to embody qualities traditionally associated with femininity—such as nurturance, emotionality, and passivity (Aristotle, cited in Cranny-Francis et al. 2003). These expectations, embedded in social forms, guide the ways in which individuals express themselves, interact with others, and are perceived by society in general.

The origins of the gender binary as it is currently understood are often attributed to the philosophical and scientific developments of the Enlightenment (late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), which increasingly positioned binary categorisation as a way of organising the world: ‘Sex, as it has been seen since the Enlightenment—as the biological foundation of what it is to be male and female—was made possible by this epistemic shift’ (Laqueur 2003, pp.10-11). While a gendered division of labour existed before this period, these changes in thought laid the foundation for the codification of rigid distinctions between masculinity and femininity that continue to influence social expectations and gender roles (Whittle and Hailwood 2020). Philosophers, scientists, and religious leaders of the time worked to construct social gender as a fixed and biological fact, tightly linked to the idea of sex differences. This understanding positioned men and women not only as different in their roles and capacities but as naturally different. This binary logic extended into social and cultural systems, providing a framework for regulating behaviours and expectations based on one’s perceived gender.

Over time, this model became rooted in areas such as family structures, labour divisions, and educational practices shaping the development of various forms of social control.

The stability of the gender binary rests on its apparent simplicity and clarity. It provides a straightforward and easily recognisable framework within which individuals are expected to classify themselves and others as either male or female. However, this simplicity conceals the complexity of lived gender experiences and the social dynamics that shape them. By enforcing a strict separation between two opposing gender categories, the binary model fails to account for the multitude of factors—social, cultural, psychological, and historical—that influence gender and shape the boundaries between masculinity and femininity (Butler 1990).

The discourse of gender is closely tied to the idea of heterosexuality, which functions as a normative framework within the gender binary (Butler 1990). The assumption that heterosexual attraction is the natural orientation further establishes the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity, reinforcing the idea that these categories are mutually exclusive and define one another. In this framework, masculinity and femininity are not simply defined by oppositional characteristics but by their interdependence within heterosexual relationships. The roles and expectations placed on men and women, shaped by the discourse of gender, are intended to align with and support the heterosexual ideal. Men and women are not only expected to embody masculinity and femininity, respectively, but they are also expected to form heterosexual partnerships, where their gendered roles are reflected and reaffirmed.

One of the most common aspects of the gender binary is its capacity to regulate and control individuals' behaviours (Linda 2015). Men, women, boys, and girls form ideas about what the expected expressions of each gender should be. From an early age, children are socialised into this binary framework, learning what it means to be a boy or a girl through a range of cultural signals, including clothing and language. These signals teach children

not only how to perform their gender but also the consequences of failing to do so correctly. The rigid expectations of the gender binary create a system of rewards and penalties, in which conformity to gender norms is valued, and nonconformity is punished. This social pressure to fit in is particularly evident in areas such as education, where boys and girls are often treated differently based on their gendered behaviours. Boys may be encouraged to be self-confident and competitive, while girls may be expected to be caring and cooperative. These early lessons in gender attitudes have lasting implications for how individuals navigate the world as adults, shaping their choices, objectives, and relationships.

The gender binary also operates through institutions like the family, which has long been a primary site for the enforcement of gendered norms. Within the family structure, the roles of mother and father have historically been defined through the gender binary, with mothers traditionally occupying the role of supporter and carer while fathers serve as providers and authority figures. As Cranny-Francis et al. observe, 'the association of women with caring and nurturance (as of male with intellect and productivity) is persistent' (2003, p. 228). Similarly, Kathryn Gleadle notes that between 1800 and 1860 'women's mission was to preside over a loving home, whilst men were to brave the vicissitudes and demands of public and business life' (2017, pp.83-84).

Although this thesis does not undertake a sustained analysis of class, it is necessary to briefly consider how family structures in the nineteenth-century varied across different social groups—they often included servants, extended kin, and hierarchies not found in many modern families—in order to clarify how gendered expectations were differently embodied and expressed. As Leonore Davidoff explains:

The nineteenth century was the time when traditional social boundaries were being eclipsed by the rapid development of a market economy and creation of a 'class' society. All social relationships including gender divisions were affected by these changes. During this period, class designations came to carry

gender overtones. The status characteristics associated with *gentility*, for example, differed for men and women (1979, p.86-88).

While, in upper-class families, women were typically confined to the domestic sphere, managing the household and overseeing the moral upbringing of children, while men participated in public life and economic production, these women often did not perform the bulk of domestic or care labour themselves. Instead, this work was delegated to a staff of servants—most often working-class women whose own familial responsibilities were subordinated to the demands of their employers. In contrast, working-class and agricultural families had a more communal and pragmatic division of labour: both women and men worked to support the household; women might labour in factories, on farms, or take in laundry, in addition to raising children and managing the home. In these contexts, the gender binary remained influential, but necessity often blurred rigid divisions and family life was shaped more by economic survival than by conventional ideals. This division of work reinforces not only gender differences but also hierarchical relationships between men and women. While family dynamics are not static and can vary across cultures and time periods, the gender binary remains a dominant force in shaping expectations about family roles and responsibilities (Gleadle 2017).

Although my research does not focus on the study of contemporary gender dynamics, it is important to recognise that, despite the apparent permanence of the gender binary, it has increasingly become the focus of critical scholarly inquiry in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The binary system, which classifies individuals strictly as either male or female, has come under ever more scrutiny for its contribution in shaping identity formation. One of the most influential critiques of this system is Judith Butler's (1990) theory of 'gender performativity', which challenges the view of gender as fixed and rooted in biology. According to Butler, gender is not something one 'is', but something one 'does'—a series of repeated actions and performances that create and sustain the illusion of constant gender identities (1990). This view has been influential in feminist thought, as it challenges the rigid binary structure that traditionally shapes how gender roles are understood and performed.

Furthermore, feminist scholars have long critiqued the ways in which the gender binary system preserves patriarchal structures, particularly by positioning men as dominant and women as subordinate. For example, women are often discouraged from taking on qualities associated with masculinity, such as leadership and assertiveness, while men may be discouraged from expressing emotions or engaging in supportive activities traditionally associated with femininity. Simone de Beauvoir's work *The Second Sex* (2015) critiques the binary division between men and women, showing how women have been historically defined in relation and as subordinate to men, and how this positioning has contributed to their marginalisation and oppression. Her analysis laid the groundwork for later feminist critiques of the gender binary, highlighting how such categories are used to justify the subordination of women by positioning them as the 'other' in relation to the male norm. These theoretical perspectives offer a critical framework for interpreting how the appropriation of masculine tailoring techniques in women's riding habits may have disrupted normative gender expectations. They help frame how dress could function as a means through which gendered structures were reflected and contested in the four decades under investigation.

'It is fair to say that feminists everywhere seek a more substantial equality for women, and that they seek a more just arrangement of social and political institution' (Butler 2004, p.174). However, while feminism has played an important role in challenging the gender binary and supporting gender equality, the binary system remains deeply rooted in many aspects of society. As explained by Raewyn W. Connell 'the main axis of power in the contemporary...gender order is the overall subordination of women and dominance of men... It persists despite resistance of many kinds, now articulated in feminism' (2020, p.74). The persistence of gendered expectations in areas such as employment reflect the ongoing power of the binary model in shaping social norms. Moreover, the ways in which gender is often presented as a fixed and stable characteristic in cultural systems continue to reinforce the idea that masculinity and femininity are not just socially constructed but are biologically determined. As long as masculinity

and femininity remain framed as oppositional, the gender binary will continue to shape the ways in which individuals are expected to perform their gender and how they are perceived by others. The discourse of gender, shaped by the binary model, continues to influence a wide range of social interactions, from social relationships to political structures—as well as our interpretations of the past. The persistence of gender binaries poses lasting implications for individuals and society. By critically engaging with these discourses—particularly the historical ones, as this research proposes—we can begin to understand the ways in which gender is constructed and regulated. The gender binary is perhaps one of the most dominant and persistent structures within the discourse of gender. While it provides a simple framework for understanding and categorising human experience, it has and continues to reinforce social hierarchies, limit individual freedom, and preserve inequality. As we move toward a more inclusive understanding of gender, it is important to critically examine the ways in which the binary system has shaped and continues to shape our perceptions and behaviours.

2.2: Fashion, body, gender, and identity

The body moves through time and space with a sense of itself as gendered and this is the reason why the spaces of the public realm of work are experienced differently by women and men and why the presentation of the body through dress is also experientially different (Entwistle 2015, p.30).

Fashion, as an elaborate system of symbols and practices, is interconnected with the ways in which the body is perceived and experienced in relation to gender. The garments we choose to wear do more than simply cover the body; they intermediate and materialise gendered identities, shaping the individual's sense of self and how they are viewed by others. The body, clothed and adorned, is not a neutral 'instrument' but is frequently imprinted with meanings, performing gendered roles that are culturally constructed and preserved through the practice of dressing. The significance of fashion lies not only in its ability to emphasise bodily differences but also in how it expresses social and cultural values that are often mistaken for natural facts;

furthermore, clothing is an integral aspect of how we experience our bodies and express our identities, highlighting the profound connection between clothing and the formation of gendered identities (Entwistle 2000 and 2015). This understanding points to the function of fashion in constructing the very essence of social identity, where the body is not only a biological 'object' but also a social construct that is shaped by cultural codes, norms, and expectations. This connection between fashion and identity is particularly apparent in the ways that clothing becomes a site for the performance and regulation of gender, making it an essential framework through which to examine the connection of body and identity.

The body is not simply a passive object that is clothed by external influences; rather, the process of dressing actively shapes and transforms the individual's bodily experience and self-perception. So, Agnès Rocamora and Anneke Smelike's statement that the 'importance of dressing and clothing the body [is in its capacity to construct] one's identity' emphasises how clothing transforms the body into a place of cultural expression (2016, p.11). Clothing does not merely accentuate pre-existing differences in the body; it is a transformative practice, continually adding layers of meaning to the body. Furthermore, Anne Hollander (1993) affirms, dress plays a fundamental role in shaping our perception of the body, such that our interpretations and representations of the naked body are largely governed by established norms of clothing. Fashion is not merely about the visibility of the body but about the way in which this visibility becomes infused with a set of cultural meanings. These meanings, while intimately tied to the body through the clothing it wears, often function as accepted truths, making the socially constructed nature of gender invisible to the eye.

Consider the historical context of gendered fashion in the nineteenth-century, where the act of dressing played an important part in the construction of gender identities. By the 1820s, as the waistline in women's fashion began to lower, a new ideal of feminine beauty began to emerge with the appearance of the hourglass silhouette. The waist, emphasised in all aspects of dress, became a marker of beauty as well as social status (Bayle-Loudet 2015). This

ideal persisted for several decades before beginning to decline by the late 1860s:

By 1866 fashion had decreed that the fullness of the skirt should be gathered up somewhat at the back, and that an overskirt should be added to the full skirt. In 1868 the great expanse of the skirt narrowed considerably at the sides, giving a much straighter silhouette in front; the fullness now moved to centre back, where the primary shaping was provided by the bustle (Goldthorpe 1988, p.45).

In contrast, while men's clothing generally highlighted strength and authority, symbolising their public, active roles in society, certain subcultures—such as the 'swell' and the 'dandy'—challenged these norms through the display of fashion as a form of individual expression and differentiation. This is reflected in practices of figures like Beau Brummell, who dressed in '[a] happy compromise between the decorative outfits of the macaronis and the traditional austere English country gentleman look' (Vainshtein 2009, p. 14). Furthermore, between 1820 and 1850, critics portrayed the dandy as a symbol of a different form of masculinity—one based on excessive concern with appearance, the artificial styling of the male body through fashion, and insincere behaviour. This representation was seen as challenging traditional masculine values such as 'athleticism, sportsmanship, and sexual vitality' while also posing a threat to national identity (Finkelberg 2022). The bespoke tailored garments, which 'remained the norm for middle- and upper-class' men after the 1860s (Beward 1995, p.174), did more than express a particular aesthetic; they suggested associations with 'liberty, patriotism, virtue, enterprise, and manliness' (Steele 1985, p.52). These distinct sartorial codes—corsetry for women and tailored clothing for men—did not merely reflect bodily differences but constructed gendered identities, embedding the individual in a network of social expectations and cultural ideologies. Through these contrasting modes of dress, the boundaries of masculinity and femininity were not just visually marked but physically engraved upon the body, becoming so closely tangled with the self that they were often perceived as definite truths rather than cultural constructs.

In this sense, fashion plays a key role in regulating and producing gendered bodies. The layers of meaning that clothing adds to the body make gendered distinctions in dress appear natural, reinforcing the belief that gender is an essential, integral characteristic rather than a product of social influence: 'clothes draw attention to the sex of the wearer so that one can tell, usually at first glance, whether they are a man or a woman' (Entwistle 2015, p.140). The dominant cultural narrative that associates men with public power and women with private domesticity is not only reflected in the clothing they wear but is woven into the very structure of their garments, rendering gendered roles invisible and accepted. This invisibility of the constructed nature of gendered identities is a key mechanism by which social norms are preserved, with the body, through its dress, continuously performing functions that it has been conditioned to assume.

The body plays its role within a space shaped by culture and follows rules that are already in place, highlighting the embodied nature of gender identity and the ways in which our physical presence is always informed by the gendered norms that govern our lives (Butler 1988). The experience of space is integrally gendered, as the body's movement within public and private spheres is conditioned by a set of social expectations. These expectations are articulated and reinforced through clothing, which states how bodies should occupy space and be perceived by others. Men, for example, are often socialised to take up space in public settings, with their clothing and posture reflecting their entitlement to social and physical space. The suit, as the defining garment of masculinity, exemplifies this entitlement, with its tailored shoulders and structure creating an atmosphere of authority that indicates the wearer's capacity to navigate the public domain.

In contrast, women are in many cases conditioned to take up less space, with their movements often limited by clothing that emphasises modesty and passivity. However, this does not always mean that women's clothing made them occupy less physical space. For example, although the voluminous crinoline of the nineteenth-century—as Joanne Entwistle explains—was welcomed by many women for its freedom of movement, it also took up a

significant amount of space not only in public but also in private settings: 'it could be a fire hazard, since the skirt could swing quite freely, and that it was also difficult to control in high wind' (2015, p.155). As this observation suggests, rather than signifying power or freedom of movement, this garment often served to reinforce women's decorative, passive roles and restricted mobility. Even with its large size, the crinoline made certain activities difficult, subtly policing behaviour and reinforcing gendered expectations of grace and propriety (Figure 2.1). At the same time, the corset worked to constrain the body internally, symbolising control and modesty. Although the corset's restrictive nature is often emphasised, Valerie Steele argues that it also served as a tool of self-fashioning—shaping the idealised feminine silhouette and aligning the wearer's body with cultural ideals of beauty and femininity (2011). As Bayle-Loudet notes, 'the 1870s ... marked a turning point in the idea of [the corset], which became longer, but also significantly more rigid' (2015, p.164).



Figure 2.1: A Young Lady Struck by Lightning. In *The Danger of Crinoline, Steel Hoops, &c.*, Unknown 1858.

Furthermore, women's clothing during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was designed to reinforce the division between the domestic and public spheres. The long, flowing dresses and petticoats of the Victorian era symbolised women's limitation to the private sphere, where their responsibilities were seen as domestic and supportive. Public spaces, by contrast, were coded as masculine, and the male body, clothed in the sharp lines of the suit, was seen as occupying these spaces with confidence and authority. The body's experience of space, therefore, was always gendered, with men moving freely through public spaces while women's movements were constrained by their attire, limiting their participation in the public domain. However, the riding habit, as a functional form of dress, offered some women the capacity to challenge these spatial boundaries.

Fashion, then, has not only served to reinforce these gendered divisions but has also provided a site of resistance and subversion. Even during the period between 1820 and 1860, individuals found ways to challenge normative ideals through dress. Anne Lister, a landowner and diarist known for her masculine style of clothing, consciously used fashion to assert her identity and independence. Lister rejected conventional femininity in favour of dark, tailored garments typically associated with male attire—a choice that often drew public attention and critique. In her diaries, she remarked on the power of her appearance, noting, for example, that at the Danish court she presented herself dressed in a 'black satin gown... thin-need black silk stocking & silk shoes'. Yet this display came at a social cost: feeling out of place, she confided to her diary that 'it was a great gaucherie... I shall learn in time'. Having learned how to cut others socially, she now experienced what it meant 'to be cut...' (Liddington 2022, p. 75). This moment reveals her awareness of clothing as an instrument not only of self-expression but also of social navigation and defiance. Her example demonstrates that even in an era marked by rigid gender roles, fashion could be mobilised as a subtle yet potent form of resistance.

The significance of fashion in shaping and reflecting identity is further illustrated through modern interpretations of historical figures like Ann Walker,

a neighbour and eventual companion of Anne Lister. Walker's integration into Lister's household—moving into Shibden Hall in 1834—marked a significant shift in her public identity (Liddington 2022). This change is visualised in the BBC series *Gentleman Jack* (2019-2022), particularly through costume. During a research visit to the Bankfield Museum, in Halifax, I examined a riding habit created for the series by designer Tom Pye and worn by actor Sophie Rundle in her interpretation of Ann Walker (Figure 2.2). The garment references 1830s tailoring aesthetics while simultaneously evoking the symbolic significance of equestrian dress. Its close-fitting cut, fabric choice with a woolly texture, and the garment's silhouette—structured yet fluid—represent a contemporary visual narrative of strength and serenity, shaped for television audiences. In this way, the costume serves not only as a piece of period clothing but as a way in which modern viewers engage with early nineteenth-century femininity.



Figure 2.2: Riding habit designed by Tom Pye, made by Amanda Grange, hat by Sean Barret, worn by Sophie Rundle as Ann Walker in *Gentleman Jack*, series two 2022. © Bankfield Museum.

In this sense, fashion operates not only as an instrument for the enforcement of gender norms but also as a site for the resistance and subversion of those

norms. The body, clothed and gendered, becomes a site of constant negotiation, where cultural expectations are observed and challenged. As the body moves across different contexts, it does so with a socially constructed sense of identity, but it also carries with it the potential for transformation and reinvention: 'This is illustrated by the ways in which men and women experience the space of public realm differently... and this affects the ways in which the body is dressed and presented' (Entwistle 2000, p.336). Clothing is not just a way to conform to traditional gender expectations; it can also be a tool for reimagining and reshaping those expectations to reflect the changing nature of gender identities.

2.3: Cross-tailoring

This chapter introduces the term 'cross-tailoring', coined in this thesis, to describe the adoption and adaptation of tailoring methods to produce clothing that responds to the intersection of gender, the body and cultural expectation. In this thesis, the term refers to a form of dress that supports and expresses an active and independent femininity among early- to mid-nineteenth-century horsewomen.

Modern side-saddle riding, as a physically demanding activity, requires not only a specific set of skills but also an attire that achieves a balance between functionality and femininity. These demands have their origins in the context of the popularity of horse riding among women in the early 1800s, as a social activity and a beneficial form of exercise; the same period witnessed a corresponding evolution in women's riding habits. The early garments were not designed for participation in vigorous sport but rather intended to embody an image of acceptable femininity. Driven, however, by the change in what was considered an acceptable form of riding for women—no longer simply a leisure activity or hobby, but now much more a legitimate sport—a demand for more tailored clothing emerged to meet the needs of this more physical style of riding (Munkwitz 2021). This change in social expectations and practical need marked a key moment in the development of female equestrian

fashion, where clothing had to meet the physical demands of riding while also adhering to the social codes of femininity and elegance that determined what was considered appropriate riding dress for women. Furthermore, posture also played a significant part in the embodied performance of femininity, likely aided by the tailored construction of garments specifically designed for horse riding.

This was especially true when it came to the sport of hunting on horseback. Although 'wealthy women [had] been wearing personally fitted, tailored, woollen riding habits made by their husbands' tailors certainly from the seventeenth century' (Taylor 1999, p.31), when a '[g]eneral interest in hunting surged from the 1830s onward... [n]ew saddles and specialised riding clothes aided women in this endeavour, as did the shifting gender ideals in which hunting was no longer incompatible with respectable femininity' (Munkwitz 2021, p.124). A requirement for women's garments that could accommodate the physical demands of hunting on horseback presented a challenge for male tailors, as explained by George Walker in 1835:

In the Art of Habit Making, objections by some are raised against its study, because of the obscurity existing on the subject, and consequently by such they have been almost overlooked, and why? Solely because it has been deemed difficult of execution...Shall we give up then the construction of Ladies' Dresses only because it is not easy of attainment? (1835, pp.4-5).

One of the initial advances in the development of the tailored riding habit focused not merely on the aesthetic appearance of the woman but, more crucially, on her comfort and safety while riding. In 1827, Edward Stanley emphasised this concern, noting that '[g]reat care must be observed, that the Habit and under garments are particularly full and easy, in order that the Lady may be at perfect liberty, and not, in the most trifling degree, confined by them' (p.8). The women's garments worn for riding had to meet a range of practical demands, including accommodating the physical challenges created by the side-saddle, as well as resisting the environmental elements such as dirt and water. Male sporting attire, already designed with these specific needs in

mind, provided the template. The challenge in making them, as highlighted by George Walker's quote above, lay in adapting the cut of men's riding clothes to suit the female form while maintaining their practical functionality. Horse riding, being an outdoor activity, was one of the few contexts in which traditional feminine embellishments were entirely abandoned. In this case, neither end of the sartorial range—the practical masculinity nor the decorative femininity—was adequate; female riders had to find a middle path that emphasised simplicity, practicality, and functionality. 'They had to look like ladies while dressed like men' (Munkwitz 2021, p.107).

For the ideal fit of a riding habit, it was recommended that women should seek the expertise of a male tailor with experience in sporting garments, rather than a traditional female dressmaker (Munkwitz 2018). The growing demand for practical, tailored sporting attire for women led to the emergence of specialised male tailors who had become skilled in the specific sartorial requirements of riding habits. These tailors understood how to cut and construct garments that provided the necessary ease and comfort for riding, ensuring that they met the functional and visual needs of the wearer. As Mrs. J. Stirling Clarke noted in 1857:

In concluding... I would particularly impress upon the fair rider, the necessity for caution in the selection of her Habit-maker. Few tailors understand the peculiar cut of a well fitting Habit; so as to afford in the rise and fall of the female bust, that necessary degree of ease, where ease is indispensable (p.21).

Women's riding attire, though designed specifically for their needs, closely mirrored the garments worn by men, often distinguished from their everyday clothes by the use of lighter, more practical fabrics. As revealed by my own re-making of male and female garments, riding habits were cut and constructed along the same lines as men's garments, adapting male tailoring techniques to the female form. In essence, women's riding clothes copied elements of menswear but in a manner that respected the social codes of femininity, combining the utility of male bespoke tailoring and the modesty expected of women's dress. This integration was clearly expressed in the

response to the needs of the activity; it played an important part in the cultural shift about gender roles and expectations. As Erica Munkwitz highlights, this period saw a transformation in how horse riding and hunting was perceived, no longer being exclusively considered a masculine area but beginning to be recognised as suitable for women (2021). The tailoring of riding habits, therefore, can be understood as a vital part of these changes in gender ideals.

The garments, made by men using the bespoke tailoring methods designed to fit and enhance the male body, allowed women to participate in a masculine-coded space, while simultaneously performing their femininity in a socially acceptable manner. By adopting elements of men's clothing—particularly in terms of cut, structure, and practicality—women subtly appropriated aspects of male gendered performance and identity. In doing so, they not only asserted their right to engage in activities traditionally reserved for men but also challenged the rigid boundaries of gender through their sartorial choices. These riding habits became more than mere garments; they developed into symbols of women's negotiation with traditional gender norms, as they tried to create a space where femininity could coexist with the physical demands and competitive spirit of male-dominated activities. Through these crafted clothes, women were able to embody and perform a new, more fluid conception of gender that allowed them to participate in the masculine sphere of equestrian sports.

Chapter 3: Bespoke tailored garments, 1820 – 1860

3.1: Men's frock coats, 1820 – 1860

According to Edward B. Giles, writing in 1887, frock coats were widespread in the 1820s. Giles also highlighted that the advent of William IV (1830–1837) to the throne had no significant effect on the fashion of the period, and that general character of men's costume remained largely unchanged during the Victorian period (1837–1901)—‘although there have been continued modifications and variations in styles and details’ (p.67). Between 1820 and 1860, men's fashion changed only very gradually, a rate of evolution which was largely determined by the individual craftsmanship that dominated tailoring practices. Despite the social shifts that characterised this period—including significant advancements in science, industry, and commerce across Britain—the traditional craft of tailoring remained relatively unaffected by the technological transformations unfolding in other sectors. In this period of rapid industrialisation, the impact of mechanisation on the bespoke tailoring trade was initially minimal, as the very essence of the craft lay in the talent and skill of the individual tailor, whose attention to detail and personal expertise continued to define the construction of men's garments. Even the advent of the sewing machine—welcomed at the time as a revolutionary innovation in garment production—had only a limited effect on the techniques employed in the creation of bespoke tailored men's clothing. While the machine was celebrated for its efficiency and potential to alter production methods, it did little to disrupt the established norms of high-quality, handmade bespoke tailoring that characterised this period. Michael Zakim explains that ‘the division between ready-made and custom clothing made sense in the industrializing context’, highlighting how bespoke tailoring, despite the rise of mechanisation, remained distinct from mass-produced garments because of its emphasis on craftsmanship and individuality (1998, p.43).

Nevertheless, the introduction of mechanised sewing became increasingly relevant in contexts where large-scale production of identical items was

required. In these situations, the sewing machine was used to its full potential, enabling the mass production of standardised garments. The demand for uniformity in clothing led to the development of specialised machinery tailored to different segments of the clothing industry, and this quickly evolved into a distinct sector of the wider textile industry. In contrast, for the artisan committed to producing bespoke garments, the sewing machine's role remained limited. It was predominantly used for longer seams, such as those joining the back and sleeves, which could be executed with relative ease and efficiency. Yet, the finer details of the frock coat and other coat styles—such as the shaping of the fabric, the delicate stitching, and the finishing—continued to be performed by hand. This preserved the craft of bespoke tailoring, ensuring that the garment remained a reflection of the tailor's personal skill and the wearer's unique specifications. As Ronald Davis observes, this continuing reliance on manual craftsmanship in bespoke tailoring highlights the tension between technological innovation and traditional craft practices, a dynamic that persisted for much of the century (1994).

Although bespoke tailoring methods largely retained their traditional form between 1820 and 1860, significant developments nevertheless occurred in the construction and form of men's garments, most notably in the evolution of the frock coat. In the eighteenth century a practical single- or double-breasted coat with full skirt, flapped pockets and vent at the back was worn by men.⁵ However, it was not until the second decade of the nineteenth-century that the frock coat became firmly established as a key fashion item. As Christopher Breward notes, it was from 1816 that the frock coat began to emerge as an important style garment, 'derived from the military great coat, buttoned from neck to knee and decorated across the chest with frogging' (1995, p. 174).

⁵ Frock Coat: 'Suit coat of the 18th c. that was looser and shorter than dress coat. Single- or double-breasted, it buttoned to the waistline. At first it had a full skirt, flapped pockets, and a vent in back with two buttons at waistline, and a flap, turned down collar and no lapels...; the frock coat was important from 1816 until the end of the 19th c., after which it was worn by dignitaries and older men. The specific cut varied depending on the current fashionable silhouette, but the 19th c. coat always had a fitted waist attached with a waistline seam to a knee-length skirt that fell straight and met at the center front'. Charlotte Mankey Calasibetta, and Phyllis Tortora'. *The Fairchild Dictionary of Fashion*. 3rd ed. (New York: Fairchild Publications 2003, p. 94).

The following decade witnessed the introduction of a waist seam, which contributed to a more defined silhouette characterised by a suppressed waist and an exaggerated, fuller skirt (Figure 3.1). The insertion of this waist seam was largely driven by the practical need to support the increasingly voluminous skirt, which, due to its weight, placed considerable strain on the tailored upper half of the garment. This new hourglass shape, created by the waist seam and the skirt's fullness, persisted into the 1840s. This adjustment not only altered the garment's fit but also indicated a shift towards a more sculpted silhouette (Maclochlainn 2011).



Figure 3.1: 1826 frock coat. Costume Parisien (2447). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Thomas J. Watson, Accession Number: b17509853.

By 1840, tailors had further refined the frock coat's construction by introducing a side panel—also called 'sidebody'—which divided the armhole and was a feature originally seen in tailcoats of the 1830s (Davis 1994). The upper body of the frock coat was normally partially lined, although this lining did not always extend to the skirt. The front of the frock coat could be either 'single- or double-breasted, and the skirt about knee length', with pleated backs and concealed pockets, combining function and form (Waugh 1994, p. 113). Frock coats were mostly made from woollen fabrics, dyed in dark colours such as black, navy blue, green, or brown, which reflected the serious, formal nature of the garment. Lighter-weight linens were used to produce summer variations of the frock coat, providing a more breathable option for the warmer season.



Figure 3.2: 1834 frock coat. Costume Parisien (3208). © Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession Number: E.2004-1888.

The design of the frock coat in the 1830s marked a distinct change in the shaping of men's fashion, producing a close-fitting upper body that was emphasised by padding, which contributed to a rounded chest. The wide lapels—also called revers—were a defining feature of the coat, extending towards the sleeve seam in the early part of the decade although they gradually became narrower as the decade progressed, reflecting a subtle change in style preferences. The collar was high at the back and wide at the front, contributing to the overall sense of symmetry and balance in the coat. The sleeves, which were fitted closely to the arm, featured a gathered head—a detail that initially created a pronounced puffed effect at the start of the decade but gradually reduced as the years passed. The waistline was placed high on the body, accentuating the figure and contributing to the exaggerated, hourglass silhouette that characterised the frock coat of this period (Figure 3.2).

By the 1840s, however, the design of the frock coat began to change in response to the growing demands of fashion. The padding at the chest was reduced, leading to a less pronounced form, while the lapels, which had gradually become narrower throughout the 1830s, began to widen once again.⁶ This expansion of the lapels reflected the trend towards more expansive and dramatic lines that were emerging in men's fashion during this period. The sleeve head became less gathered, allowing for a smoother appearance. The waist, once placed high and fitted, was now lowered and softened, reflecting the growing preference for a more relaxed and less constricting silhouette (Figure 3.3).

By the 1850s, the frock coat had undergone further transformation. Although lightly padded at the chest, the overall structure of the coat became increasingly relaxed. The lapels, once wide, were now made narrower, contributing to a sleeker and more refined aesthetic. The waist and sleeves were relaxed further, with the waistline dropping and the sleeve shape losing

⁶ The haircloth interlining, 'sometimes called crinoline, is used as structural reinforcement of the chest canvas in the shoulder area... We know it began to be used about 1852 in the manufacture of ladies' crinolines, but it is not clear when it started to be used for men's clothing (Maclochlainn 2011, pg.54).



Figure 3.3: 1840-50 frock coat. © Europeana, Prato Textile Museum, Accession Number: FG.81.III.055.

its former structure. This resulted in a much less pronounced hourglass silhouette, which had dominated earlier styles. By the end of the decade, the frock coat had evolved into a looser, straighter garment, moving away from the structured and sculpted forms of the previous decades. As Christopher Breward notes, by the 1860s the frock coat 'had been accepted as formal wear and achieved its loose, straight, undecorated appearance' (1995, p.174), setting its place as the standard garment for formal occasions (Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4: c.1852 frock coat. © Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Accession Number: M.2010.33.8a-b.

3.2: Women's riding habits, 1820 – 1860

By the late 1700s, fashion plates of riding clothes were appearing in the most popular magazines alongside other female apparel. These images, often in expensive color, illustrated the popularity of park riding undertaken in fashionable locations with sometimes impractical clothing. As riding became popular as a social accomplishment and a healthful exercise for women, there was a corresponding transformation of female riding clothes (Munkwitz 2021, p.105).

Women's riding habits during the eighteenth century underwent a significant transformation, as the form of the garment began to adapt elements of the

male coat and waistcoat. This adaptation resulted in a tight-fitting bodice with a high waistline and a voluminous skirt, which produced a silhouette that would evolve throughout the nineteenth-century, undergoing modifications and improvements in response to changing fashion and practical needs (Figure 3.5).



Figure 3.5: c.1750-59 riding habit. © Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession Number: T.12-1957.

As with men's coats, the early years of the nineteenth-century saw little development in the style of women's outer garments. However, the very high waistline that had characterised the early years of the century gradually lowered, reaching its natural position by the 1820s (Figure 3.6). This development led to a move towards a more fitted upper body, with an

increasingly full bell-shaped skirt that reflected changes in women's fashion. The sleeves of the habit were long, and over the course of the decade, they evolved from a small puff at the shoulder and a fitted forearm to a full gigot sleeve, which tapered to the cuff. These changes highlight the evolving silhouette of women's fashion during this period that can be compared with the changes seen in men's frock coats over the same decades.



Figure 6: c.1820 riding habit. © Rijksmuseum, Accession Number: BK-VII-N.

The evolution of women's dress between 1820 and 1860, particularly the bespoke riding habit, reflects fashion style and the practical needs of women who were engaging in more physically demanding forms of horse riding. As these women's activities became more varied and strenuous, the design of the riding habit adapted accordingly. This is exemplified as early as 1827,

when Edward Stanley offered a practical suggestion concerning the length of the skirt: '[t]he Skirt to Riding Habit should not be too long, as there is a possibility of it getting between the Horse's fore-legs, or being blown across them, so as to check his action, and throw him down' (1827, pp.111-112). Stanley's advice emphasises the importance of practicality and safety in the design of the riding habit, acknowledging the need for a garment that allows for ease of movement and functionality while riding. Moreover, the practicality and comfort essential in the riding habit led to its adaptation for other forms of women's outdoor activity, such as walking and travelling. By the early nineteenth-century, the riding habit had evolved to be considered highly suitable for travel attire, because of its blend of function and elegance. As noted in *The Lady's Monthly Museum* of September 1808, '[h]abits are very appropriate for travelling costume and are at this period constructed with more than usual grace' (cited in Arnold 1999, p.22 and Housden 2007, p.13).

By the early 1830s, the gigot sleeve reached its extreme form in the riding habit, often accompanied by a dropped shoulder line (Figure 3.7). This dramatic sleeve style saw a reduction in puffiness during the second half of the decade, eventually settling into a more natural position by the end of the decade, though the dropped shoulder line persisted.

As the 1830s transitioned into the 1840s, the riding habit underwent further modifications. Jackets were designed to fasten at the neck, and the bodice was cut shorter, typically at waist level, with the overall shape becoming more fitted. The back of the garment kept a small tail. As in the previous decades, decorative elements drawing on military influence such as buttons and frogging continued to be used to embellish the garment. In addition, the skirt length of the riding habit increased, reaching nearly to the ground when the rider was seated on horseback. Throughout this period, wool remained the material of choice for riding habits; valued for its durability and warmth, it also ensured the garment's suitability for outdoor wear, because this was the same type of fabric used for men's coats.



Figure 3.7: 1835 riding habit. © Victoria and Albert Museum, Accession Number: E.1701-1963.

Fashion plates from the 1820s and 1830s already depict women wearing a top hat as part of their riding attire. However, the 1840s saw an interesting shift in the riding habit, which, as Penny Housden notes, ‘was considered to include a man’s top hat, with veil ... men’s collar and tie ... a masculine style of coat’ (2007, p.17). While earlier examples exist, Housden identifies the 1840s as the period in which the masculine hat became a more noticeable element of the riding habit (Figure 3.8).

As in the eighteenth century, the 1850s saw the return of riding habit jackets introducing longer, flared skirt panels. Additionally, larger, looser cuffs, reminiscent of those seen in the previous century were once again adopted.



Figure 8: 1843 riding habit. © Rijksmuseum, Accession Number: RP-P-2009-1521.

The predominant colours for riding habits during this period remained in the darker shades—black, navy blue, and grey—maintaining a sense of formality and seriousness that had characterised earlier decades (Figure 3.9). However, the discovery of ‘mauve dye’ by William Henry Perkin (1838-1907) in 1856 (Johnston 2008) brought a change in colour choices. As the decade progressed, lighter colours began to appear as fashionable alternatives to the traditional darker shades. The introduction of the crinoline in the mid-1850s, which radically changed the shape of women’s skirts, did not extend to the riding habit, as women did not adopt the crinoline for equestrian use. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that, on occasion, women would wear a crinoline under their riding skirt for formal photographs in a studio setting (Housden 2007).



Figure 3.9: 1850 riding habit. © The Claremont Colleges, Accession Number: fpc00356.tif.

Chapter 4: Methodological Framework

4.1: An innovative methodology using triangulation

This chapter outlines the primary methodological approaches employed in this research, providing a framework for the investigation of cross-tailoring in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. The methodology is rooted in qualitative, practice-related research, which is essential for expressing my observations about the construction of historical garments. Central to this investigation is the relationship between male and female garment construction during the period from 1820 to 1860, which works as the basis for exploring the connections between gendered clothing and the formation of discourses surrounding gender boundaries during this time. Through this framework, the chapter contributes to an understanding of dress history, emphasising the significance of historians' engagement with the re-making of historical garments and the history of clothing and fashion; as Jennifer M. Jones highlights, 'the history of clothing and fashion' is essential to historical scholarship (2013, p.122).

In the physical and geographical sense, 'triangulation' was a measuring technique used by navigators and surveyors to pinpoint a location from two or more different positions. Using this metaphor of exploration, triangulation is useful in helping to map the territory, locate one's position, and navigate toward new destinations. In qualitative research the term refers to a strategy that brings together multiple methods, perspectives, and forms of knowledge to explore research questions from different angles and to improve the validity of a study (Gray and Malins 2004, and Flick 2018). The fundamental methodology in this project is triangulation. I adopted this approach by employing three interconnected yet distinct methods: dress as an object of evidence, re-making as a research method, and embodied research as a process of knowing. This builds on the theoretical position established in '0.3 Role and purpose of the practice', where making and re-making are framed as a form of historical knowledge production rather than a representational or illustrative practice.

Triangulation also constitutes a strategic approach aimed at overcoming the individualistic biases associated with the limitations of singular methodologies (Denzin 2009). By creating this innovative methodological framework in this project, I was able to cross-validate findings to increase the credibility of the results. In this context, triangulation enhances methodological strength by integrating material culture studies, the making of historical garments, and embodied experiences of wearing clothes, thus offering a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Consequently, the project built a thorough understanding of gendered fashion. The triangulation approach, therefore, ensures that the research is not only more rigorous but also sophisticated in its interpretative depth, as each method informs and strengthens the others.

In defining my methodology, it is important to clarify what these methods are—and, equally, what they are not. Unlike approaches that engage with social or scientific measurements, this methodology does not focus on enquiry or statistical analysis. Instead, it offers a model that integrates dress history, the re-making of historical garments, and the relationship between the body and clothing. This framework is concerned with how garments function as social artefacts, how they shape and are shaped by the body, and how they are used to perform gendered identities. In this way, each method cannot be understood without reference to the others, creating an innovative and dynamic methodological approach.

The structure and format that emerged during the stages of this research inevitably influenced how I approached each of the methods and how my ideas and thoughts evolved during the period of study. It is also important to recognise that research is a dynamic and iterative process, one that may require revisiting earlier stages as new insights occur. As Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod note:

[A] researcher sometimes needs to move back and forth between two or more steps along the way. For example, while developing a specific plan for a project, a researcher might realise that a genuine

resolution of the research problem requires addressing a subproblem not previously identified. And while interpreting the collected data, a researcher may decide that additional data are needed to fully resolve the problem (Leedy and Ormrod 2015, p. 24).

The cyclical process of moving between practice, theory, and data collection is central to the methodological framework created here, as it allows for continual improvement and adaptation in response to emerging questions and findings. Thus, this research is approached through a reflective practice, where practice and theory inform one another. As Carole Gray and Julian Malins suggest, 'reflection-on-action is a particular activity of professional practitioners and involves thinking about what we are doing and reshaping action while we are doing it' (2004, p.22). This reflective process enabled me to adapt and refine this methodology as the research progressed, ensuring that each step is informed by critical engagement with theory and practice. The framework evolved in response to the complexity of the research, allowing for a better understanding of the intersections between dress, gender, and identity. The methodology can be visualised graphically as follows (Figure 4.1):

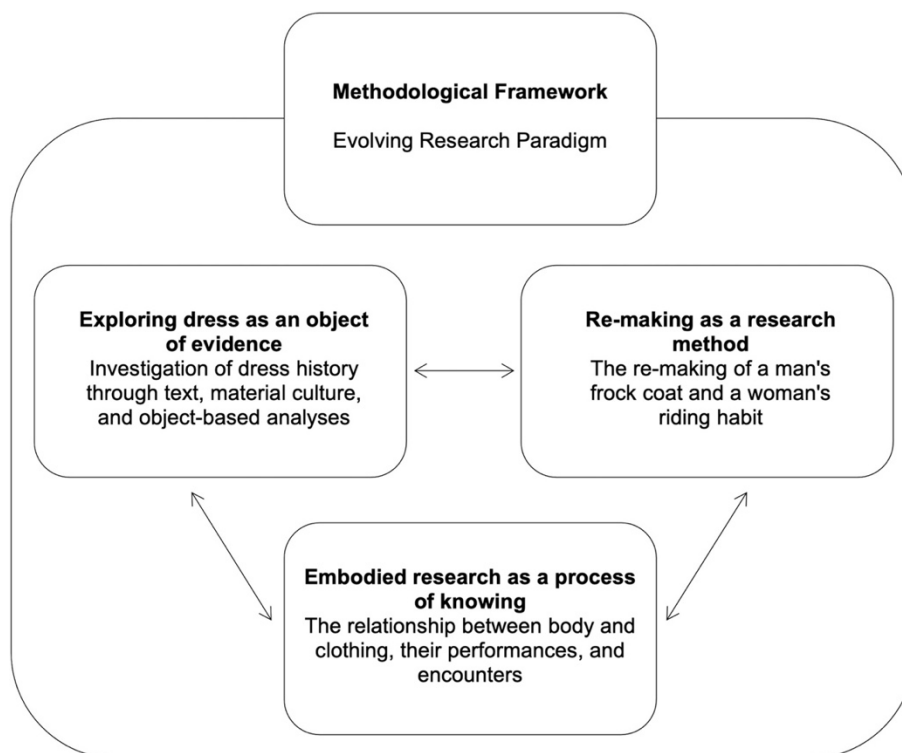


Figure 4.1: Methodological framework illustrating the structure of the research process.

4.2: Exploring dress as an object of evidence

Through the study of the differentiation of clothing we [can] embark upon the study of the differentiation of us. (Miller 2010, p.12).

The first approach used in this methodological framework is 'Dress as an Object of Evidence'. Material culture offers a way for exploring the complexities of human societies, serving as a study which can examine the beliefs, values, and behaviours through history. The objects that people create and the environments they live in are not merely functional or decorative; they are embedded with layers of meaning that reflect and shape philosophical, historical, economic, political, social, and cultural contexts. Through the study of material culture, we can engage with these objects to better understand how identities are formed and expressed within a society. By analysing the things people make, such as garments, tools, architecture, or art, we have access to a deeper understanding of how cultures construct meaning, negotiate their place within systems, and articulate their identities (Dant 2005, and Miller 1998 and 2010).

In order to re-make historical clothing through my first methodological approach 'exploring dress as an object of evidence', I use 'material culture' studies and 'object analysis' as primary theoretical and methodological frameworks. This approach provides a way of engaging with material objects not only as passive artefact but as active participant in the construction of historical narratives. The study of material culture 'is not only the most ancient of time's shapes; it is a tangible form of past time persisting in present time' (Schlereth 1985, p.24). Consequently, the lasting nature of material objects, which preserve and carry traces of past experiences, ideas, and practices, forms a connection between history and the present. Objects, therefore, can serve as a link across time, capturing the social and cultural context in which they were created and used, offering scholars a record for understanding the past.

The history and theoretical foundations of material culture studies are established within a wider range of scholarly disciplines. The connection of

social science, cultural studies, and humanistic disciplines has long been a place of thorough academic investigation, with scholars looking to understand the dynamic relationship between people and their material world. As Benjamin Whyman observes, this field 'combines sociological, anthropological and humanities research as a tool with which to analyse the biography of objects', effectively situating objects within a socio-cultural framework and acknowledging their role in shaping human experience (2019, p.20). This approach provides a general view of historical artefacts, emphasising not only their physicality but also their symbolic and social dimensions. By examining object as 'biography', we have a deeper analysis of people's life in the past. This view is integral to my approach, as it offers a method that explores the historical significance and cultural meanings implanted in the garments under investigation.

The interdisciplinary contributions of these various fields of study have been influential in shaping the development of this project. Material culture studies, with its emphasis on the materiality of human life, provides a critical framework for understanding the role of dress as a form of evidence. The study of dress, as a material object and a social artefact, demands an approach that is adjusted to its practical and symbolic dimensions. In this respect, I have drawn upon the work of key scholars such as Jules Prown and Valerie Steele, whose research on material culture has provided invaluable insights into the ways in which objects, including dress, embody social meanings and cultural narratives. Their work emphasises the necessity of examining objects not only in isolation, but in relation to the people and contexts with which they are associated. Furthermore, I engaged with the important research of Schlereth (1985), Miller (2005, 2008 and 2010), and Dant (2005), whose contributions have significantly advanced the theoretical and methodological tools available for conducting material culture analysis. These scholars have refined the ways in which we consider objects within their socio-historical contexts, urging scholars to think critically about the lived experiences embedded within material forms.

By combining this wide range of academic perspectives, I have followed a methodological approach that is grounded in established theory and adaptable to the specific demands of this research project. The interaction between theory and practice, combined with ongoing engagement with the discourse on material culture, has been crucial to the development of this framework. Thus, this method not only allows for a better understanding of the historical garments under examination but also contributes to the field of material culture studies, improving our knowledge of the ways in which objects shape and reflect human experiences across time.

Material culture has been a subject of research since the late nineteenth century. Early studies, especially those by sociologists and anthropologists such as Georg Simmel (1858–1918) and Franz Boas (1858–1942), laid the groundwork for considering objects and their relationship with culture. However, it was not until the twentieth century that ‘historians and some social scientists ... [began] to discover the potential [of material culture] in cultural analysis’ (Schlereth 1985, p.1). This shift in focus marked a significant development of the field, particularly with the emergence of more systematic methods for analysing physical objects within their cultural contexts. Pioneering contributions in the 1970s provided the initial framework for much of contemporary material culture analysis, with Edward McClung Fleming’s model process serving as a key milestone. Fleming’s approach, which remains influential today, ‘utilizes two conceptual tools—a fivefold classification of the basic properties of the artefact’ i.e., the history, material, construction, design, and function of the artefact, ‘and a set of four operations to be performed on these properties’. These operations, according to Fleming, are: 1. Identification (factual description); 2. Evaluation (judgement); 3. Cultural analysis (relationship of the artefact to its culture); and 4. Interpretation (significance)’ (Fleming 1974, cited in Esteale 1998, p.329).

Fleming’s model is critical in refining the work of Jules Prown, whose concept of artefact analysis has been fundamental in material culture studies. In the early 1980s, Prown further clarified the value of material culture as a unique mode of cultural investigation, emphasising that ‘material culture is singular

as a mode of cultural investigation in its use of objects as primary data, but in its scholarly purpose it can be considered a branch of cultural history or cultural anthropology'. He also stressed that 'material culture as a study is based upon the obvious fact that the existence of a man-made object is concrete evidence of the presence of a human intelligence operating at the time of fabrication' (2001, p.70). This definition of material culture is especially useful in the context of my first method, as it highlights the importance of objects as tangible evidence of past human activity. However, this statement also raises an essential question: how, precisely, can we extract cultural data from an object like a historical garment, which, though rich in material significance, may not instantly provide direct insights into the cultural behaviours that shaped its creation and use?

To help answer this question, it is useful to refer to Prown, who offers a framework for analysing material objects through three distinct stages: Description, Deduction, and Speculation. As Prown emphasises, these stages should be 'undertaken in sequence and kept as discrete as possible' (2001, p.79), ensuring that each phase maintains its analytical integrity. The first stage, 'Description', is, as the name suggests, concerned with providing a detailed, factual account of an object's physical attributes. During this stage, the researcher should focus solely on what is observed within the object itself, relying exclusively on 'internal evidence'. In doing so, Prown warns against the intrusion of subjective assumptions, or the imposition of conclusions resulting from external experience, advising researchers to maintain objectivity throughout this initial phase. This approach requires a systematic observation of the artefact and a strict focus on what can be analytically measured or visually detected. To facilitate this process, Prown recommends the use of tools, such as a tape measure, scale, or other suitable technical apparatus, to capture accurate data about the object's dimensions and properties. For artefacts that are decorated, it is equally important to document the details of the decoration, including patterns, motifs, and any other features that might contribute to understanding the object's cultural and historical significance. Following this, the researcher should proceed to analyse the shape, colour, light, and texture, paying careful attention to how

these physical characteristics might interact to express meaning or reflect cultural practices. Prown notes that, while thorough description is crucial, it is equally important to avoid overloading the analysis with excessive data, as 'too much can be almost as bad as too little' (Prown 2001, p.80). The key is to have a balance: enough detail must be gathered to provide a comprehensive understanding of the object, but without including unnecessary details that could confuse rather than clarify the artefact's significance.

The second stage of this analytical process, 'Deduction' involves a more sensorial and embodied approach, where the researcher engages with the materiality of the object, collecting data through physical interaction. This stage is characterised by a tactile examination of the artefact, where the researcher might lift, touch, or feel the weight of the object to gain insights into its material properties and intended use. In the case of a garment, for example, ideally, the researcher would wear the item to experience its fit, texture, and comfort. However, this form of interaction may not always be possible, particularly when working with historical artefacts that are often fragile or too precious to handle extensively, such as clothing. In such cases, the analyst must rely on their imagination and creativity to simulate the corporeal engagement with the object, employing a thoughtful and imaginative approach to connect the gap between the artefact and the embodied experience that it represents. Despite the limitations that happen from the fragility of the object, it is crucial that the researcher maintains an awareness of the restrictions of the artefact and their own position in the process of analysis. As Prown reminds us, 'just as the object is only what it is at the moment of investigation, and as such may be more or less different than what it was when it was made, so too the analyst is what he is at the moment of investigation' (2001, p.81). This reflection emphasises the idea that the object is not a static article but rather a dynamic one that may have changed over time, influenced by factors such as degradation, modification, or shifting cultural interpretations. Similarly, the researcher's own perspective is shaped by their current knowledge, experiences, and personal context, which may influence the way in which the object is understood. Therefore, it

is essential to remain conscious of how one's positionality and subjectivity might impact the interpretation of the artefact. The act of analysis is not only a process of uncovering the object's essential meaning but also a negotiation between the object's material history and the researcher's interpretation.

In addition to these considerations, Valerie Steele highlights an important aspect of 'Deduction' that Prown does not explicitly address: the comparative analysis of objects. Steele emphasises that while examining written and visual sources is essential for contextualising the artefact, it is equally important to compare the object with others that are similar in form or function. As she notes:

While it is certainly necessary to examine written (and visual) sources, it is also crucial to compare the artefact with others more-or-less like it. [Indeed,] Fleming...specifies that during the second operation, evaluation, it will be necessary to obtain external information by "comparisons with other objects" (Steele 1998, p.330).

This comparative method allows the researcher to situate the artefact within a network of objects, enabling a better understanding of its cultural, social, and historical significance. By considering how the artefact aligns with or diverges from similar objects, the researcher adds further insight into the particularities of its design, function, and meaning.

In the third stage of Prown's analytical framework, 'Speculation', the process changes from the experimental to the intellectual, as the observer uses their creativity and imagination to interpret the data gathered in the previous stages. At this point, the investigation moves 'completely to the mind of the perceiver' (Prown 2001, p. 83), a transition that requires the researcher to engage with the information at hand, drawing on their own critical thinking and intellectual capacity. This stage invites a more speculative approach of thinking, where the researcher moves beyond mere observation and begins to formulate questions that can frame hypotheses. As Prown suggests, these hypotheses are not speculative in an unsupported sense but are grounded in

the analysis already conducted. However, these proposed ideas must then be 'tested against external evidence', requiring the researcher to look for additional information to either confirm or challenge their initial thoughts (Steele 1998, p.331). As part of this transition, the researcher must develop a clear program of research that will guide the next steps of the inquiry. This involves identifying an academic framework for testing the hypotheses and ensuring that the questions formulated during the 'Speculation' phase are appropriately framed for practical investigation. Prown emphasises that this change should be methodical, as the investigation moves 'from analysis of internal evidence to the search for an investigation of external evidence' (2001, p.83). It is at this point that the researcher must extend the boundary of their investigation beyond the object, turning to external sources to gather additional evidence that will help validate or contest the hypotheses. This phase is crucial because the formulation of questions and theories occurring from the earlier stages of analysis is never limited to one single discipline or method. Rather, the researcher must draw upon a variety of interdisciplinary tools and approaches. As Prown notes, these questions 'involve techniques and approaches...[from] disciplines divided between the humanities and the social sciences' (2001, p.84), which may include fields such as social and cultural anthropology and social and cultural history. By integrating insights from these diverse academic areas, the researcher ensures that the investigation is sufficiently interdisciplinary and robust, enabling a deeper understanding of the object in its socio-cultural context. In this way, the researcher's ability to think critically and creatively is key in developing a research program that connects the internal evidence with external sources, improving the investigation and offering a more comprehensive understanding of the artefact in question.

Nevertheless, since its formulation, Prown's method of material culture investigation has been a subject of critical review. New models have been proposed with a specific focus on fashion. One of the most influential is the framework presented by Ingrid Mida and Alexandra Kim in *The Dress Detective* (2015), in which they replace Description, Deduction, and Speculation with Observation, Reflection and Interpretation. This revision

reflects a shift in focus towards a more subjective and interpretive engagement with objects, particularly garments, as part of the field of fashion studies. However, the adoption of these new titles has been contested. Some scholars have questioned the use of these revised categorisations, arguing that Prown's original stages offer a 'cyclical and flexible' approach and provides a more robust framework for engaging with material objects (Whyman 2019). Based on these observations, and the fact that 'object-based research begins by focusing entirely on its materiality and construction', I was convinced that Prown's methodology remained the most suitable approach for this project (Aspinall 2019, p. 11). This decision was a recognition that his approach offers the necessary means to investigate the relationship between material objects and their cultural meanings in the context of my research.

Once I had defined a methodology for extracting data from historical garments, I began to confront questions that are crucial to the process of formulating hypotheses and expanding the investigation to 'understand people through the medium of their things' (Miller 2008, p.300). Questions such as: Why did men's frock coats have an hourglass silhouette? Is there a relationship between the male silhouette and that of women's riding habits? What role did male tailors play in the creation of women's riding habits? These were fundamental in the exploration of gender boundaries during the period under investigation.

4.2.1: Examining frock coats and riding habits

In order to explore the techniques involved in bespoke tailoring, a selection of garments was identified across a number of institutions, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Museum of London and the Fashion Museum Bath.⁷ However, during the course of this research, all of these museums were in the process of relocating their costume collections, a situation that unfortunately resulted in the temporary closure of their study rooms for

⁷ At the time of submission of this thesis, the Museum of London was still closed for relocation and is scheduled to reopen in 2026 as the London Museum.

researchers. This challenge was intensified by the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The subsequent lockdown measures meant that access to these collections was restricted, requiring a rethink of time management and delaying the planned museum visits. As the lockdown gradually eased in the second year of studies, opportunities to revisit museum collections emerged, and relevant garments were subsequently identified in other institutions, including: Bankfield Museum, Glasgow Museums Collections, Manchester Art Gallery and The School of Historical Dress. The aim of these object analyses was to collect detailed data through the formal description of each garment, with particular emphasis on documenting the construction methods and specific design features. A significant portion of the research focused on examining elements that could potentially serve as key references for the re-making of a riding habit and a frock coat. These garments were studied with care, considering not only their tailoring techniques but also their fabric choices, decorative details, and other features that could inform the process of re-making, as well as social and cultural aspects of the period. Each garment was recorded, with museum references noted for each item. Permission was requested from the relevant institutions to draw, take notes and photograph the garments, these notes and images that were included in this thesis were used to support the visual analysis and provide a comprehensive understanding of the garment discussed (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Drawings of historical garments studied in the museum collections.

The photographs and descriptions of the garments examined in the museum collections are presented below, following the sequence in the table. Additional images and documentation of object analyses—including garment details not shown in this chapter—are available in Appendix 1.

Table 1: Garments examined during museum research visits

Description	Museum	Accession Number	Date
1. Double-breasted frock coat	Manchester Art Gallery	1951.346	1846
2. Double-breasted frock coat	Manchester Art Gallery	1952.215	1859
3. Double-breasted frock coat	The School of Historical Dress	N/A	c.1840–60
4. Woman's riding habit jacket	Manchester Art Gallery	1950.201	c.1840–60
5. Woman's riding habit jacket	Glasgow Museums Collections	E1974.33.1 (a)	c.1837–39
6. Woman's riding habit skirt	Glasgow Museums Collections	E1974.33.1 (b)	c.1837–39
7. Woman's riding habit jacket	Bankfield Museum	2023.36 (a)	2001-22
8. Woman's riding habit skirt	Bankfield Museum	2023.36 (b)	2001-22

1. Double-breasted frock coat



Figure 4.3: Man's wool double-breasted frock coat, 1846. Manchester Art Gallery, Accession Number: 1951.346.

Description and Key Features

'This coat was worn by Mr John Naylor (1813-1889) for his wedding in 1846. He built and lived in Leighton Hall in Welshpool' (Manchester Art Gallery, *Frock Coat*, accession number 1951.346, Accessed 23 December 2024). The garment is made of mid-weight navy-blue wool broadcloth fabric, lined with black twilled silk, except for the back. It features a diagonal slit pocket on the inside of the left front. The sleeves are long and fitted, lined with cream satin fabric, and each cuff fastens with two buttons. The coat is double-breasted with six buttonholes on each side and six silk-covered buttons at the front. The waist seam at the back is angled with two buttons, and there is a pleat at the skirt back with concealed pockets on each side. The back is constructed from two panels, running from the neckline to the hem, with a centre seam extending from the neck to the waist, creating a vent from the waist to the

hem. The coat features a regular-width, pointed, turned-down velvet collar. The skirt is divided into two sections: left and right. Dimensions: length 37.5" (95cm), waist 29" (74cm), sleeve length 26.5" (68cm), circumference at the hem 72" (183 cm).

2. Double-breasted frock coat



Figure 4.4: Man's wool double-breasted frock coat, 1859. Manchester Art Gallery, Accession Number: 1952.215.

Description and key features

'This coat was worn by the donor's father at his wedding in 1859 and it was presented by Captain H.E Okeover, Church Hill, Etwall' (Manchester Arts Gallery, *Frock Coat*, object record card 1952.215, accessed 26 June 2022). The garment is made of mid-weight black wool broadcloth fabric, lined with twilled silk, except for the back. The sleeves are lined with striped satin fabric. It is double-breasted with five buttonholes each side and six silk covered buttons at the front. The sleeves are cut into panels, long but not very fitted

and has a fake cuff. The waist seam at the back is angled with two buttons, and there is a pleat at the skirt back with concealed pockets on each side. The back is constructed in two panels, running from the neckline to the hem, with a centre seam that extends from the neck to the waist, creating a vent from the waist to the hem. The coat features a regular-width turned-down collar. The skirt is divided into two parts: left and right. Dimensions: length 46" (116cm), waist 41" (104cm), sleeve length 23.5" (60cm), circumference at hem approximately 72" (183cm).

3. Double-breasted frock coat



Figure 4.5: Man's wool double-breasted frock coat, c.1840–60. The School of Historical Dress, Accession Number: N/A.

Description and key features

'This coat has undergone some alterations, as it was used for theatrical purposes' (conversation with the school principal Jenny Tiramani, 5 January 2024). The garment is made of mid-weight wool broadcloth fabric; it is lined

except for the back. The sleeves are lined with white fabric. It is double-breasted with five buttonholes each side and six silk covered buttons at the front. The sleeves are cut into panels; they are long, relatively loose, and finished without cuffs. The waist seam at the back is angled with two buttons, and there is a pleat at the skirt back with concealed pockets on each side. The back is constructed in two panels, running from the neckline to the hem, with a centre seam that extends from the neck to the waist, creating a vent from the waist to the hem. The coat features a regular-width turned-down velvet collar. The skirt is divided into two parts: left and right. Dimensions: length 39.5" (100cm), waist 39.5" (100cm), sleeve length 24" (61cm), circumference at hem approximately 62" (156cm).

4. Woman's riding habit jacket



Figure 4.6: Woman's riding habit jacket, c.1840–60. Manchester Art Gallery, Accession Number: 1950.201.

Description and key features

The garment is made of mid-weight black wool broadcloth fabric, lined with silk twill that is stitched in a squared pattern across the bodice. The waist is long, featuring a pointed 'V' front, and fastens from the neck to the hem at the centre front. The garment includes a full basque at the waist with a pleat at the back, which is adorned with two decorative buttons. The long sleeves are finished with silk braid detailing at the cuffs, and the same braid trims the collar. Inside, there are two hooks for securing the skirt. Dimensions: length 28.5" (72cm), waist 26" (66cm), sleeve length 21.5" (55cm).

5. Woman's riding habit jacket



Figure 4.7: Woman's riding habit jacket, c.1837–39. Glasgow Museums Collections, Accession Number: E1974.33.1 (a).

Description and key features

This riding habit was owned by:

Janet Fraser [who] was the wearer of items in Glasgow Museums dress collection. Janet was born on 25 December 1806, the daughter of Angus Fraser, merchant, and his wife, Elizabeth Sutherland in Dornoch, Sutherland. Janet married Lewis Hoyes on 14 February 1838 at the Mount Parnasseus [sic] Estate, Grenada, with a marriage announcement appearing in the *Grenada Free Press and Weekly Gazette*. Hoyes was originally from Forres but had been living in the British Caribbean for many years employed as a merchant, plantation owner and agent, and Speaker of the House of Assembly, Grenada. The couple settled in Grenada, where Mrs Hoyes become involved in civic events, including presenting a set of colours to St Andrew's Regiment of Militia in January 1839. The couple's son, Lewis, was born in 1841. The family returned to Scotland in late 1842 to visit family and friends, where Janet's husband died on 5 December 1842. Now widowed, Janet, returned to Grenada to settle her husband's affairs and oversee the public auction of some of his goods. There their daughter, Elizabeth, was born in April 1843. Janet and her young family subsequently settled in Scotland. The Census for 1861 records them living with her brother, William, a banker and procurator fiscal, mother Elizabeth, and two unmarried sisters, Helen and Christina, in Dornoch. By 1871 Janet, Lewis and Elizabeth had moved to Edinburgh, where they are listed living in lodgings at 47 Great King Street in 1871. Ten years later, Janet, William, now a solicitor, and Elizabeth, were recorded living at 15 Nelson Street, Edinburgh, where Janet died on 14 December 1873, aged 66 (Glasgow Museums Collections, database biographical summary, accessed 12 June 2023).

This riding habit jacket is made of mid-weight dark navy-blue wool broadcloth. It features turned-down lapels, secured with a button. The jacket that is part of the riding habit fastens at the centre front with hooks and eyes. Diagonal rows of buttons run from the shoulders to the centre waist. The full-length gigot sleeves are pleated at the shoulders and fitted into cuffs, each adorned with two buttons. The waistline is slightly raised in a V-shape, with a small tail at the centre back. The jacket is lined in black silk and padded for structure

and has two hooks inside for securing the skirt. Dimensions: length 19.5" (50cm), waist 21" (53cm), sleeve length 23" (59cm).

6. Woman's riding habit skirt



Figure 4.8: Woman's riding habit skirt, c.1837–39. Glasgow Museums Collections, Accession Number: E1974.33.1 (b).

Description and key features

This skirt is the matching pair to the riding habit jacket described above. It is formed of a small bodice made of black silk, sleeveless with a very low, scooped front cut that sits below the bust, and it is fastened with a hook-and-eye at the back. The skirt is made of mid-weight dark navy-blue wool broadcloth attached to a raised waistline, flat at the centre front and pleated at the sides, with fullness at the back. It fastens at the waist with hooks-and-eye and features a wide train. Two thread bar loops at the back of the waist are designed to fasten to the corresponding hooks on the jacket. The bodice is lined with white cotton twill, while the skirt remains unlined. Dimensions: skirt length 53.5" (136cm), waist 21" (53cm), circumference at hem approximately 111" (282cm).

7. Woman's riding habit jacket



Figure 4.9: Woman's riding habit jacket, 21st century. Bankfield Museum, Accession Number: 2023.36 (a).

Description and key features

In 2022 Bankfield Museum in Halifax hosted the 'Costumes from Gentleman Jack' exhibition. A world exclusive of costumes by renowned designer Tom Pye made for the BBC and HBO television series *Gentleman Jack*. The 2022 exhibition featured over 30 costumes worn by the actors including Suranne Jones, Sophie Rundle and Gemma Whelan. The costumes were kindly loaned by Lookout Point Productions and were displayed with the assistance of Tom Pye'. The riding habit was worn in series two by the actress Sophie Rundle who played Ann Walker. This garment is made of mid-weight woollen-textured fabric and 'is made up of a separate skirt, jacket, shirt, stock and hat. The skirt has a long train designed so that it covered the legs when riding side-saddle (Bankfield Museum, *Costumes from Gentleman Jack – Online exhibition*, accessed 23 December 2024).

The jacket that is part of the riding habit fastens at the centre front with covered buttons. It has two darts at each side of the front and a roll-down collar with notch. Two pleats at the back with centre seam and gigot sleeves that are pleated at the top with velvet fabric cuff and three buttons for fastening. The garment is completely unlined and finished with overlock stitch. Dimensions: length 30" (76cm), waist 27.5" (70cm), sleeve length 30" (77cm).

8. Woman's riding habit skirt



Figure 4.10: Woman's riding habit skirt, 21st century. Bankfield Museum, Accession Number: 2023.36 (b).

Description and key features

This skirt is the matching pair to the riding habit jacket described above. It features a waistband fastened at the back with a hook-and-eye closure, along with three press-studs for additional fastening. The skirt is pleated at the waist. The front of the skirt is long, though considerably shorter than the back. The garment is unlined and finished with an overlock stitch. Dimensions: length

front 42" (107 cm), total length back 68" (173 cm), circumference at hem approximately 166" (421 cm).

4.3: Re-making as a research method

The re-making process developed over the course of the research project, progressing through iterative stages from initial experimentation to final garments. Rather than presenting the work strictly chronologically by year, the following sections organise the practice into two garment investigations—the riding habit and the frock coat—while highlighting the staged development of methods through the making process.

Before outlining the processes explored in this chapter, it is important to clarify that, while the re-making methods were grounded in historical research and observation of existing garments, certain practical tools used—such as the Garment Specification sheet and dot-and-cross paper pattern—represent a departure from early nineteenth-century tailoring practices. Specification sheets in the format used here are standard in contemporary garment production, providing a way to document measurements and construction details, but would not have existed in this form for tailors of the period (see Appendix 4). Similarly, dot-and-cross paper facilitated precise pattern drafting, whereas nineteenth-century tailors typically drafted directly onto fabric or used plain paper. These modern instruments were consciously adopted to support clarity, consistency, and documentation within a research context, reflecting my professional background in the fashion industry, where such methods are standard practice. Acknowledging these contemporary methods positions this work not as historical making, but as a process of re-making, shaped by the demands of contemporary academic practice and practical expertise. More images showing this process can be found in Appendix 4.

Building on this foundation the second approach that I employed in this methodological framework, 're-making as a research method', involves the 'process of doing, making and remaking, and reconstructing' historical dress

(Davidson 2019, p.1). Such an approach was adopted here as a means for identifying similarities and differences in the actual making of a tailored woman's riding habit and man's frock coat, thus enhancing our understanding of techniques used in the construction of the garments. When adopted by investigators, the re-making of historical clothing offers important possibilities of investigation that can produce unique and useful research insights, as outlined by Hilary Davidson:

A reconstructed piece of clothing can experiment with a garment's functionality or make a substitute object to stand in for an original one. Reconstruction can test and explore the processes involved in the construction of historical garments, elucidating the nature of spinning, weaving, cutting, pattern making, dying, embroidery, fit, wear, and other elements that contribute to a finished object and influence how it works in the social and cultural sphere (2019, p.12).

The approach can 'range from the use of a single layer of calico simply to test the construction of pattern shapes, to commissioning hand-woven silk satin, dyed with weld, for a gown lined with linen and stitched with silk and linen thread, in order to understand more fully the tailors' techniques' (Arnold 2000, p.39).⁸

4.3.1. Interpreting historical sources

My approach to re-making was dependent on the historical garments mentioned in the previous sub-chapter— 'exploring dress as an object of evidence'. In addition to the analysis of historical artefacts, modern photographs of garments in museum collections, and descriptions of coats by historic and modern writers were investigated. Two books written by the tailor George Walker (1781-1856) were fundamental in enabling me to reproduce garment patterns of a relevant date: *The Art of Cutting Ladies' Riding Habits*,

⁸ '...every pattern has to be tested and refined before it is ready. This is done by sewing a fabric prototype, called a toile, from the pattern. The process is called 'toiling'. Made in cheap fabric such as unbleached calico, the toile is placed on the mannequin or model to see how well it fits and is then adjusted to correct any failing. This process is called the fitting. The interface between pattern cutting, toiling and fitting is crucial...' (Evans 2021, pg.197).

Pelisses, Gowns, Frocks, &c. Also, Ladies Chaise or Phaeton Coats, &c. &c. (1835), and *The Tailor's Masterpiece: Containing the Art of Cutting and All Kind of Coats, etc.* (1838).⁹

One of the main challenges I faced during the re-making process was clearly understanding and following the instructions provided by Walker. The texts were written in the 1830s, and the language used at the time differs significantly from today's English. As a result, it was essential to read the instructions multiple times to ensure a precise understanding of the tailor's directions. This step was crucial to ensure that I could reproduce the intended garments construction methods. As Edward B. Giles highlights in his 1887 publication, *The History of the Art of Cutting in England*, a large number of tailoring manuals were published between 1820 and 1860, each offering different approaches to the art of tailoring. These books reflect the personal styles and methods of individual tailors, as each one developed their own distinct method of pattern making and garment construction. Faced with these many options, I chose to work with George Walker's books because of their detailed content. Unlike some other surviving manuals, which I found to be incomplete or lacking crucial information, Walker's books offer comprehensive instructions, including precise illustrations showing how measurements should be taken. These visual supports were especially helpful in understanding the detailed processes involved in the tailoring of re-made garments. Furthermore, Walker's publications were produced in the 1830s, which aligns with the period of some of the artefacts studied within the museum collections. The association of these books with the specific historical period being investigated makes them especially valuable as references, as they provide an authentic and thorough representation of the sartorial practices and bespoke tailoring techniques of the time.

⁹ 'There are several editions of George Walker's *The Tailors Masterpiece* and in the instructions and pattern layout for the riding habit in the 1838 edition he mentions style of 1817, 1827, 1834 and 1837, and gives the variations in sleeve styles' (Arnold 1999, p.22).

4.3.2 Pattern cutting and initial toile

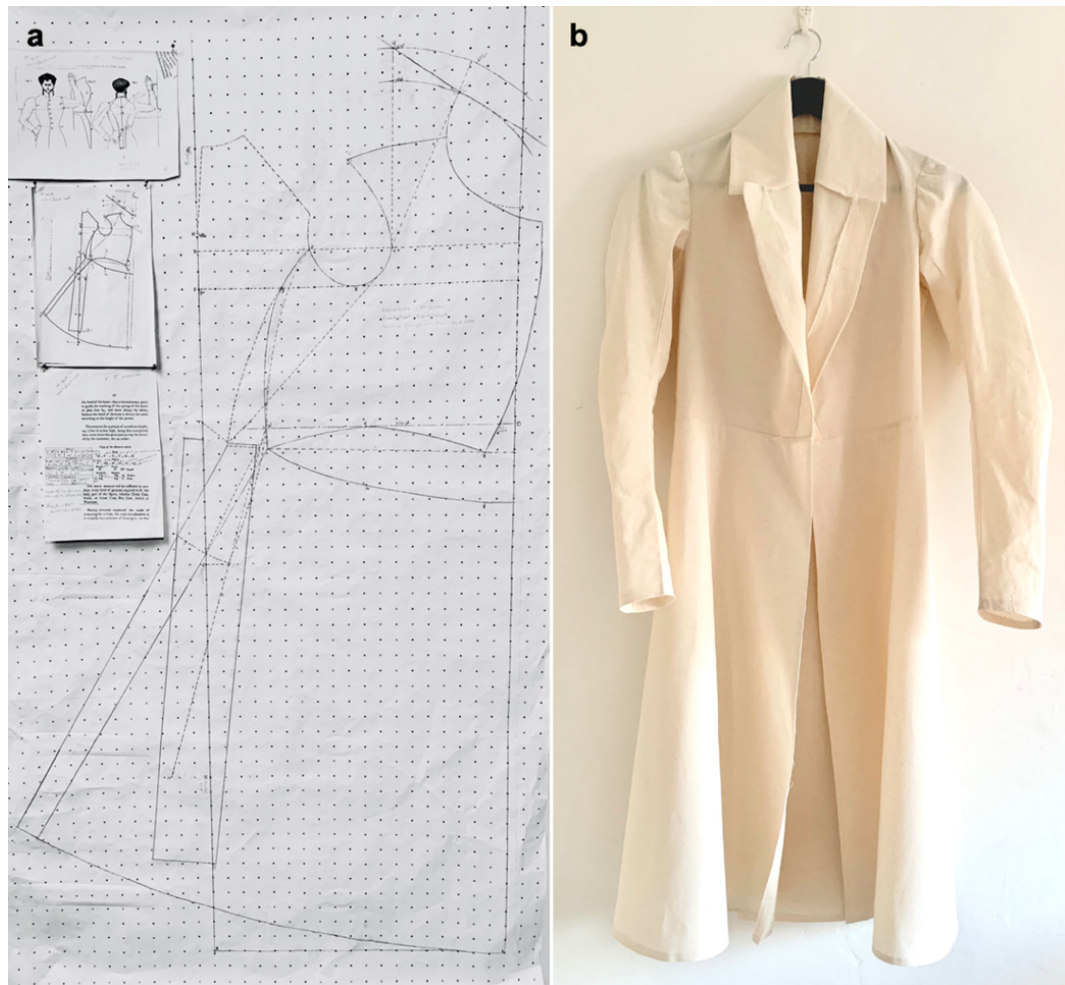


Figure 4.11: (a) Men's frock coat pattern; and (b) toile from the first year of research.

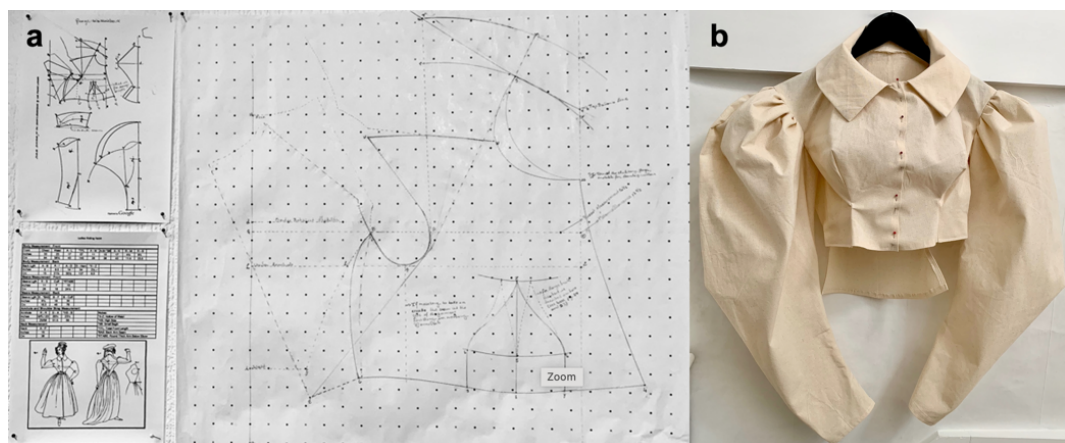


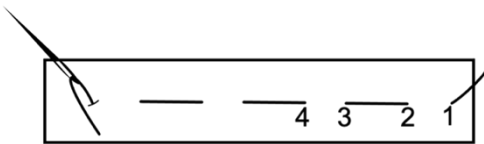
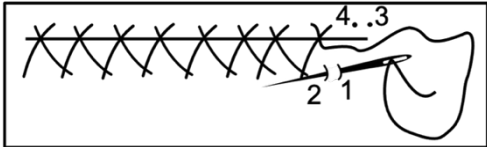
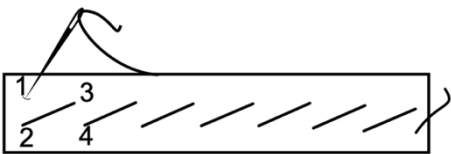
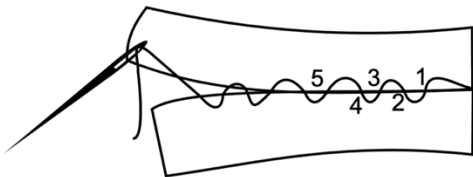
Figure 4.12: (a) Women's riding habit jacket pattern; and (b) toile from the first year of research.

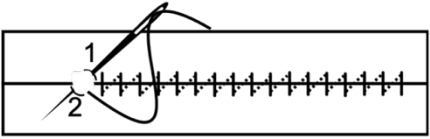
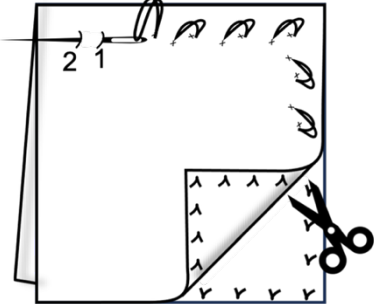
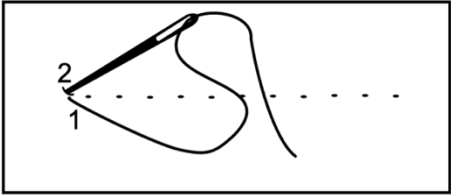
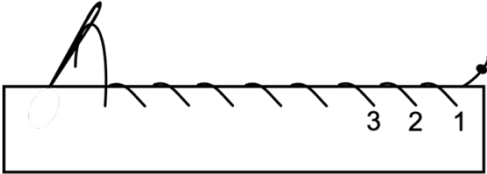
Using Walker's books—in parallel with the investigation of secondary sources—during the first year of research, I developed patterns and toiles for a frock coat and a riding habit jacket (Figures 4.11a–b and 4.12a–b). The initial step in developing the garment patterns was to undertake a close reading of the process described by George Walker. The pattern for both garments was drawn using the body measurements recommended by the author, which for a man is 'a person of a medium height, say 5 feet 8 inches high' (1838, p.22), and for a woman, 'a medium-sized person, say 5 feet 4 inches high' (1835, p.15). Walker details how a man's body measurements are taken over a coat worn buttoned at the front, while a woman should 'have on the same Corsets as she intends to wear with the garments you are taking measure for...[and]...should have on a close dress ...' (1835, p.4). The process of measuring is basically the same for both genders but with some variations, most evidently taking three additional measurements for women: one from the back of the neck to the nipple, the other from the back of the neck to the waist and front length. The pattern is drafted in the following sequence: starting with the back, front, sleeve, and collar.

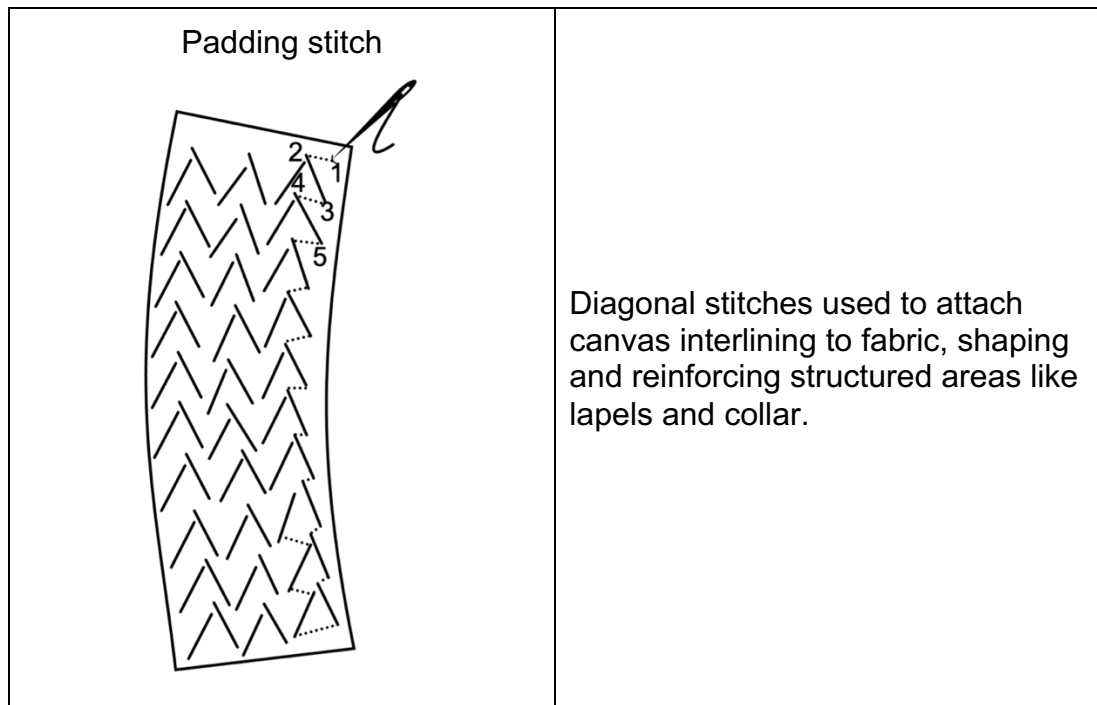
4.3.3. Skill development and technical preparation

Although I had introductory tailoring skills prior to the beginning of this project, the tailoring course I undertook at Newham College of Further Education played an important part in improving my abilities and progressing the development of the final garments. This course not only refined my technical skills but also allowed me to approach the practical aspects of this research with more self-confidence. During the course, I had the opportunity to create samples of various tailoring stitches and explore different methods of garment construction (see Appendix 2). The main general tailoring hand stitches used in this project are listed in the table below:

Table 2: Main tailoring hand stitches used in this project

Stitches	Description
Back stitch 	Strong stitch made by overlapping stitches backward to form a durable, continuous seam.
Basting stitch 	Long, temporary stitches used to hold fabric layers in place before permanent sewing.
Cross stitch 	Stitches crossed diagonally to form X-shape patterns, used for reinforcement, and keep seam allowances open inside the garment.
Diagonal basting stitch 	Temporary stitches sewn diagonally to hold canvas interlining in place before permanent sewing, and to secure curved or uneven fabric layers.
Drawing stitch 	Stitches used to join two double or turned-in fabric edges, creating the appearance of a seam. The thread is first loosely stitched and then pulled tight.

Felling stitch 	Small stitches used to secure a folded fabric edge flat against another layer, often used in hems or seams for a clean finish.
Marking stitch 	Temporary stitches used to transfer garment pattern markings to multiple layers of fabric.
Side stitch 	Very small stitches sewn close to the seam edge to join fabric layers without showing much thread on the right side.
Overcast stitch 	Stitches sewn to secure seam allowances and prevent the raw edges of the fabric from fraying.



These activities were fundamental for expanding my understanding of bespoke tailoring techniques. A valuable element of the course involved learning specific techniques of manipulating fabric to achieve the desired shape and structure in a garment. For example, techniques such as stretching and shrinking fabric in particular areas along the cutout pattern pieces, using an iron. These methods, which are fundamental to traditional bespoke tailoring practices, were especially useful in the construction of the final garments. The ability to control the fabric's tension and shape in this way proved critical for achieving the precise fit and structure required for the historical accuracy of the riding habit and frock coat. As part of the course's final assessment, it was required to produce a waistcoat (Figure 4.13). While the waistcoat is not a primary focus of this project, its creation was important in advancing my understanding of the internal construction of bespoke tailored garments. Through the process of making the waistcoat, I gained insights into key elements of garment construction, such as the placement of cotton tape in the front seams to ensure structure, as well as the complexities of lining construction. These techniques, while applied to the waistcoat, were transferable to the process of creating the frock coat and riding habit, as they provided a deeper understanding of how to structure and reinforce elements

of a tailored garment. Additional images documenting the making of the waistcoat can be found in Appendix 2.



Figure 4.13: Waistcoat produced for course assessment at Newham College of Further Education.

An important element in the creation of a bespoke tailored garment is the selection and use of appropriate tools. While I had some prior knowledge of these and already possessed a few examples, it was not until I undertook the tailoring course at Newham College that I gained a better understanding of all the essential tools that are required for high-quality tailoring. The course provided practical experience using a wider range of tailoring equipment, and, most importantly, it allowed me to develop the skills and confidence necessary to use them effectively. In addition to the practical experience gained through

the course, I have also drawn on information provided by modern tailoring books, such as *Classic Tailoring Techniques for Menswear* (Cabrera and Antoine 2015), *The Victorian Tailor: Techniques and patterns* (Maclochlainn 2011), *Men’s Garments 1830-1900: A guide to pattern cutting and tailoring* (Davis 1994) and *Men’s Tailoring: Bespoke, Theatrical and Historical Tailoring 1830-1950* (Conttenden 2019) to further improve my technique. These books offered insights into traditional and contemporary methods of garment construction, particularly in relation to achieving accurate finishing. The tools I used throughout this re-making, from the marking to the pressing equipment, proved to be indispensable for ensuring the accuracy and craftsmanship required in the making of the riding habit and the frock coat. Each one, whether it was a simple chalk marker or a specialised pressing ham, played an essential part in achieving the sharp lines and finishes that are characteristic of the nineteenth-century bespoke tailoring. The selection of tools, combined with a precise understanding of their use, brought the garments to life and ensured they met the high standards of the project. The main general tailoring tools used in this project are listed in the table below:

Table 3: Main tailoring tools used in this project

Tools	Description
Beeswax 	Used to coat silk thread for hand sewing to prevent knotting and tangling.
Hand needle 	Hand sewing needles, sizes 5 and 7. Size 5 is used for temporary stitches such as basting; size 7 for permanent stitches.

Point presser 	Wooden tool used for pressing seams and corners, especially in narrow or difficult-to-reach areas.
Ruler 	Essential for drafting patterns onto paper.
Scissors 	Sharp cutting tool used for cutting fabric during garment making.
Sleeve board 	Small ironing board used for pressing sleeves and narrow areas of garments.
Tailor's chalk 	Used to temporarily mark pattern pieces onto fabric for cutting and sewing.
Tailor's clapper 	Wooden block used after pressing to flatten seams and creases, helping them set sharply by retaining heat and steam.
Tailor's ham 	A firm, curved pressing cushion used to shape and press curves like darts and sleeves tops.

Tailor's Snips 	Small, sharp-pointed scissors used for cutting threads and making cuts in small areas of a garment.
Tape measure 	Flexible measuring tool used to take body measurements and to measure and mark pattern dimensions, especially curved lines.
Thimble 	Worn on the middle finger to protect it while pushing the needle through fabric.

4.3.4. Testing, prototyping, and preparation for final making

In addition to the toiles produced in the first year of study, a half-scale frock coat, and a half-scale riding habit jacket, as well as a full-scale frock coat sleeve, and full-scale women's riding habit gigot sleeve were made for the PhD Confirmation, held in the third year of study (Figures 4.14a–b and 4.15a–b). As outlined in the introduction, I began this project in September 2019, and on 23rd of March 2020, the UK government officially announced the first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. Consequently, prior to the confirmation, only the 1840–60 riding jacket and the 1859 frock coat had been studied at the Manchester Art Gallery, serving as primary references for the creation of the half-scale garments mentioned above. The construction of these garments proved to be an important exercise improving my approach to the making of the final frock coat and riding habit. Producing these prototypes provided knowledge of the technical and practical challenges that might occur during the re-making process, allowing me to identify potential issues and address these before continuing with the final garment construction. This enhanced

my understanding of the necessary garment construction techniques, thus informing and guiding the subsequent stages of this method.



Figure 4.14: (a) Half-scale man's frock coat; and (b) woman's riding habit jacket.



Figure 4.15: (a) Full-scale man's frock coat sleeve; and (b) woman's riding habit gigot sleeve.

Following the completion of the first stage in the methodological framework—the analysis of the garments discussed in the previous sub-chapter, ‘Dress as an Object of Evidence’—it became clear that the most effective approach to represent the four decades under investigation was to focus on a riding habit dating from 1837-39 in the Glasgow Museums Collections and a frock coat dated 1846 in the Manchester Art Gallery as the primary references for re-making the final pieces. Although the final garments incorporate elements from all the historical pieces studied across the various collections, these two artefacts were selected as the central references because of their exceptional condition and the preservation of details characteristic of bespoke tailoring from the period.

The next stage in the re-making of the frock coat and riding habit involved selecting the appropriate mannequins to achieve accurate garments. For the frock coat, a mannequin reflecting a modern body shape was chosen, as its silhouette closely aligned with those of the historical frock coats studied. The similarity in proportions between the mannequin and the garments ensured that the final re-making process would retain the intended fit of the original artefact. In contrast, the selection of a mannequin for the riding habit required more research, as early- to mid-nineteenth-century women’s silhouettes were significantly shaped by corsetry. Reproducing a woman’s riding habit on a mannequin with a modern body shape would have compromised the authenticity of the garment’s form and failed to provide meaningful data for the research. To address this issue, the Centre for Fashion Curation at the London College of Fashion provided a mannequin form that reproduce a woman’s silhouette of a Victorian woman. The measurements of this mannequin closely approximate those of the 1837–39 riding habit from the Glasgow Museums Collections, ensuring that the final garment could be made with an historically accurate fit that reflects a period woman’s body. However, the mannequin had no arms, and because the riding habit’s gigot sleeves have a distinctive shape—with pinch pleats at the sleeve head—it became necessary to create a pair of arms for it, in order to assess how the sleeves would sit and behave when the garment was dressed on it. (Figures 4.16a–b).

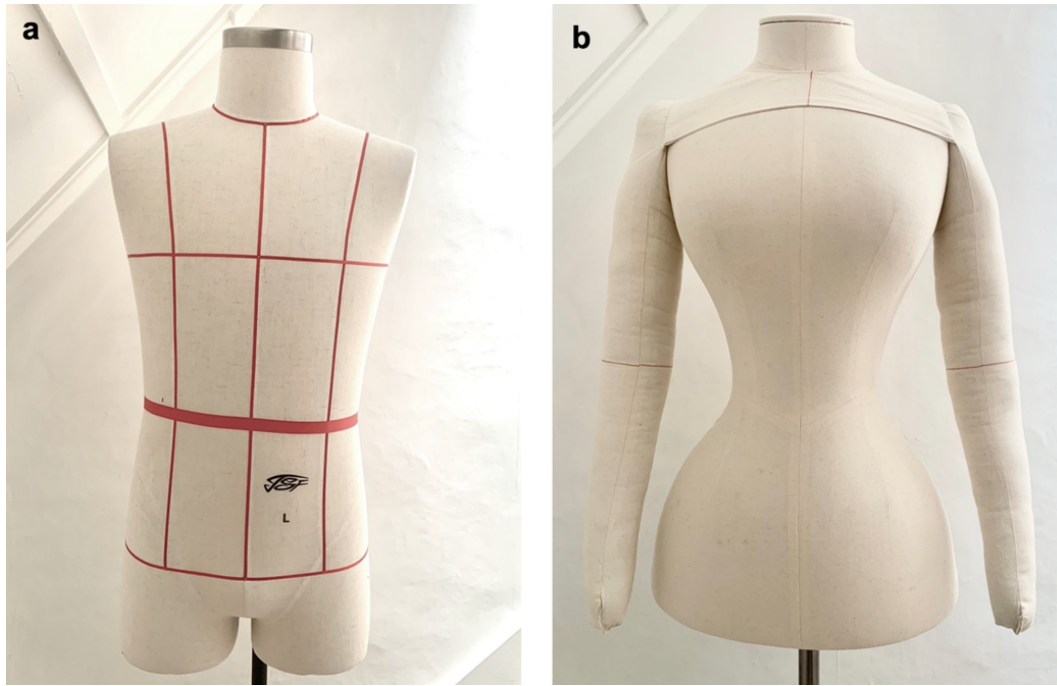


Figure 4.16: (a) Male mannequin used to make the men's frock coat; and (b) female mannequin used to make the woman's riding habit.

While the primary objective of this research was to investigate the phenomenon of 'cross-tailoring' between 1820 and 1860, I chose to start re-making with the creation of the riding habit because of its significance in relation to a key component of the research: the engagement with and interview of a modern side-saddle rider. This not only offered a vital source of practical understanding into the historical use of riding habits but also constituted a fundamental part of the investigation into the adoption and adaptation of male tailoring traditions within women's fashion. Consequently, the making of the riding habit was a crucial step in ensuring the realisation of the 'embodied research as a process of knowing' method as explained in the sub-chapter 4.4.

Using the data collected during the museum collection visits—photographs and notes—I developed specifications for the riding habit skirt and jacket, as well as for the frock coat, which are documented in the 'Garment Specification Sheet'. The process of recording essential information, including drawings of each garment and precise measurements, ensured that all design elements were considered. Additionally, this served as a reference throughout the re-

making process, minimizing the risk of forgetting key period features. The material research phase of the project was conducted in parallel with the making of the garments. While working on the physical process of re-making, I simultaneously undertook an investigation into the materials needed for their construction. To document this aspect of the research, I created a swatch book that catalogued the fabrics being considered for the re-making. This book included not only samples of fabrics that might be used for the outer garments but also those for the internal use, such as canvas, necessary to reinforce and structure them (see Appendix 3). By researching materials and sourcing fabric samples during the re-making process, I was able to identify and select fabrics and haberdashery that would most closely correspond to the historical garments. This process of material research in parallel with garment construction ensured that each element of the re-making was historically accurate as well as being reflective of the tailoring techniques of the period. At the same time, attention was given to how the garments were made, particularly in relation to stitching details and features such as internal pockets and sleeve heads. Once all preparatory steps had been completed—but before starting the actual garment construction—a notebook was introduced (Figure 4.17). This method of collecting data, developed alongside the use of photographs and videos to capture progress, were employed to document key moments in the development of the final patterns and the completed garments.

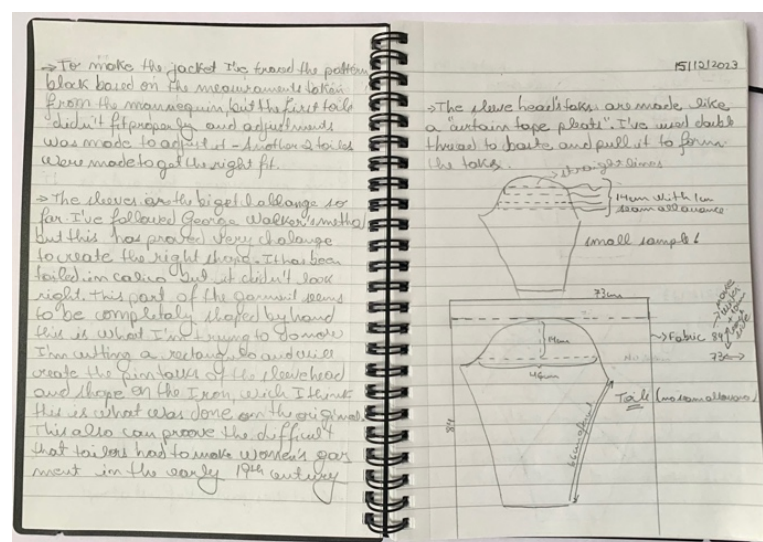


Figure 4.17: Notebook recording the process of making the garments.

4.3.5: Pattern development and toile: riding habit

As explained by George Walker, the body dimensions for the making of a garment were taken as a start from the centre-back, where reference points are marked. The measuring tape is then moved towards specific points at the centre-front, ensuring accurate measurements (Walker, 1835 and 1838). In the process of re-making the riding habit, I followed these guidelines while also examining their practical application through making. My first step was to follow the process outlined by Walker, adapting it to the dimensions of the mannequin. To begin, I marked the centre-back and centre-front of the mannequin, using red tape and green lettered stickers—A, B, I and D—to indicate the correct measuring points along the centre-front. Each measurement was recorded systematically, with the corresponding points highlighted with red tape to visualise the measurement process (Figure 4.18a–b).

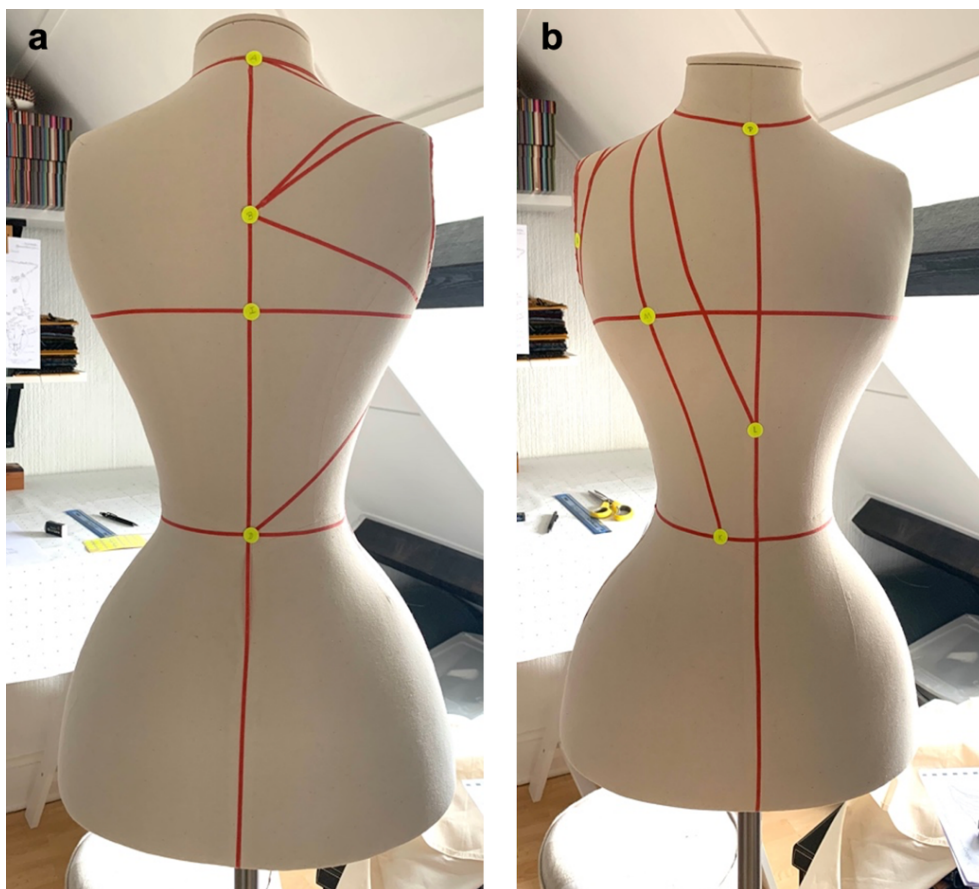


Figure 4.18: (a) Back view; and (b) front view of the measurement process on the female mannequin.

Stage 1. Tracing the pattern

With the measurements taken, I proceeded to create the garment pattern, using dotted-and-cross paper as the foundation for tracing the initial pattern block.¹⁰ At this stage, no detail were included into the pattern—this was an initial draft, intended to serve as a base upon which the garment could be further developed. The focus here was on creating a basic structure for the skirt and jacket that could later be adapted with additional details. I then transferred this draft onto another sheet of paper. At this point, I introduced the necessary features, such as a pleated skirt at the back of the jacket, along with the required seam allowance. George Walker's recommendation for seam allowance is to add one inch to the total measurements taken around the body. However, for the purposes of this project, I opted to trace the pattern using the exact measurements recorded from the mannequin, with the addition of one centimetre seam allowance, which is the standard in conventional patternmaking. This decision was taken in order to obtain a precise re-making of a historical riding habit, allowing for accuracy when compared to the garments examined in the museum collections. By referencing the data in the specification sheet, I was able to produce the first pattern, which was then prepared for toiling stage. This initial pattern served as the foundation for the subsequent fittings and adjustments.

I began the garment construction with the riding habit skirt, using the original skirt from the Glasgow Museums Collections—which included a bodice attached to it—as a reference see Figure 4.8 in Subchapter 4.2.1. Although the skirt's bodice was constructed from a lighter weight and thinner fabric than the main wool used for the rest of the garment, it played a significant part in influencing the overall fit of the riding habit's jacket. By addressing the skirt first, I could ensure that its construction would not accidentally distort or impact the final fit of the jacket, thus preserving the integrity of the garment's overall silhouette and ensuring the precision of the outcome.

¹⁰ The pattern block is a fundamental template used as the basis for creating the pattern of a specific garment (Aldrich 2004).

My initial attempt to reproduce the skirt's bodice involved copying the jacket block pattern and drawing the shape of the bodice directly onto it. However, this method proved inadequate for achieving the desired shape of the garment. It became clear that a more flexible approach was required to recreate this part of the riding habit. As a result, I turned to the process of draping, which allowed for a better and more precise manipulation of the fabric to achieve the correct form. The bodice in this part of the garment, was potentially included into the design to manage the significant load imposed by the full long wool skirt. This feature helps to evenly distribute the weight across the torso, with the shoulders providing support. This approach to making not only assists in maintaining balance and comfort but also ensures the integrity of the garment is preserved, even during the physical activity of riding, where the stresses on the garment are intensified. This aspect became even more apparent during the process of construction, as I began to understand the significance of the bodice in managing the heavy wool fabric. To begin the draping process, I first focused on creating the front of the bodice, which featured a 'U' shape. The shoulder seams were positioned deliberately lower down the front of the garment, a detail that helped to alleviate the pressure the heavy skirt would place on the shoulder seam (Figure 4.19a–b–c).

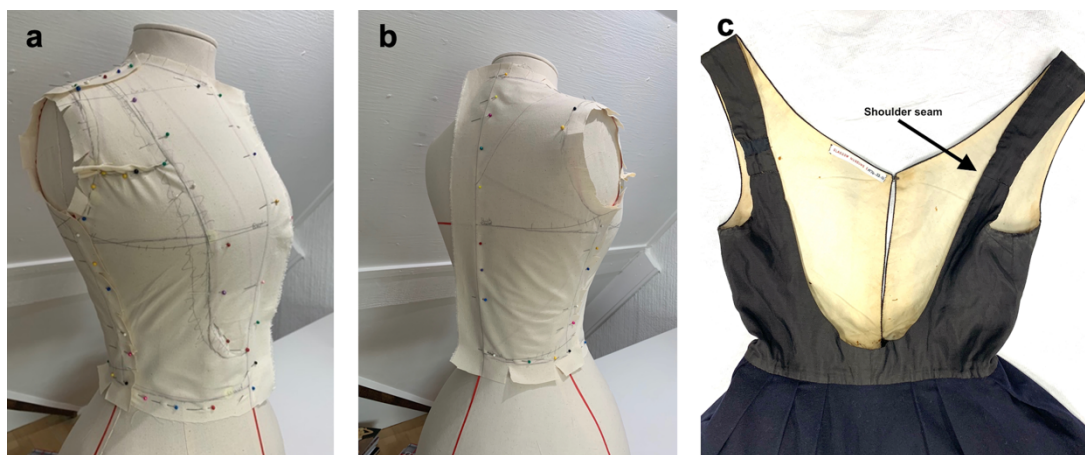


Figure 4.19: Bodice draping front; (b) bodice draping back; and (c) historical reference of the shoulder seam.

Once the front and back bodice sections had been successfully draped, I transferred the pattern to paper and added seam allowances. This allowed me to prepare the pattern for cutting out in calico fabric to create a toile for

fitting. However, before proceeding with the toile, I turned my attention to the skirt construction, as it was essential to complete its pattern before attaching the bodice. The skirt pattern was developed using George Walker's instructions. As with the other elements of the garment, it was essential to begin with a pattern block, ensuring that the basis of the garment was accurate. The process of creating this pattern was relatively straightforward, as the front and back sections were constructed precisely the same way, following Walker's systematic guidelines. According to the author, this pattern can be adapted for skirts that are either gathered or pleated at the waist, offering a degree of flexibility in its application. In his book, Walker outlines several variations of skirt styles, but for the purpose of this project, I used the version specifically recommended for a riding habit. Once the basic block pattern was completed, I transferred it onto a new sheet of paper and included the incorporation of pleats, as seen in the historical artefact (Figure 4.20a–b). Additionally, I paid attention to the waist opening of the skirt that is placed at the back. This opening plays a functional role, allowing the wearer to dress easily. The attention to these areas ensured that the skirt would align with the historical garment's construction.

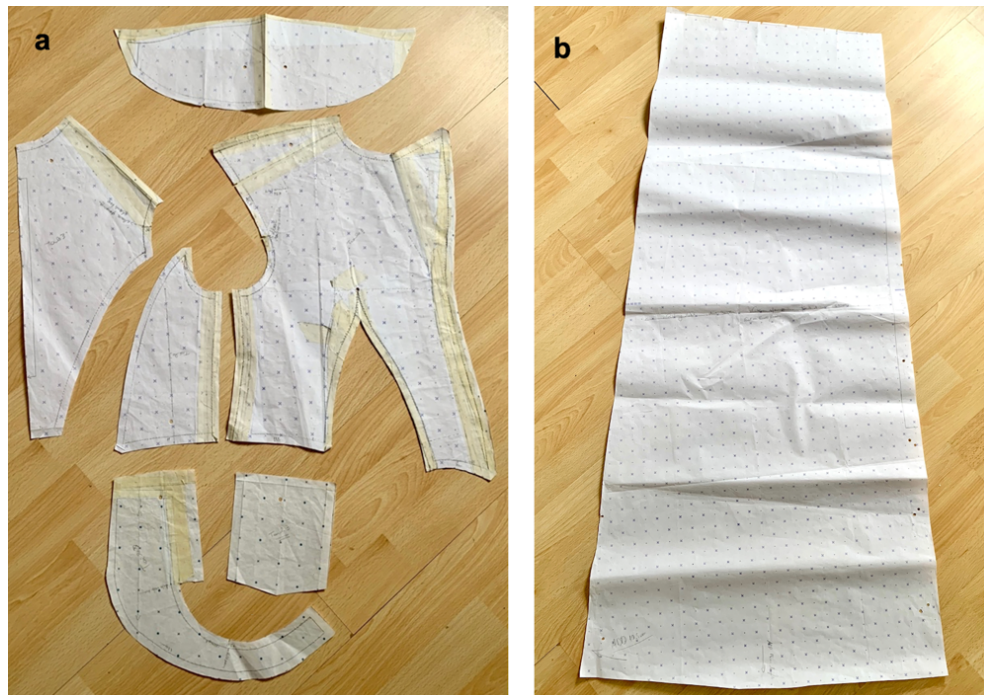


Figure 4.20: (a) Woman's riding habit jacket pattern; and (b) woman's riding habit skirt pattern.

Stage 2. Making the toile

The next stage involved creating a toile for the skirt. This was successfully made on the first attempt, fitting as anticipated and requiring no further alterations. However, the bodice required adjustments, particularly the shoulder strap, which was not positioned correctly. This discrepancy became apparent during the fitting, and the solution involved recutting the bodice in order to reposition the shoulder strap to its correct location, ensuring a better fit closer to that of the historical garment. The bodice was intended to be fully lined, while the skirt remained unlined, as per the original garment's construction. Once the necessary adjustments to the bodice were made, I cut out another version of the bodice, which was then attached to the skirt. This second toile was sufficient to approve this part of the garment, making it ready to be cut from the final fabrics (Figure 4.21).



Figure 4.21: Riding habit skirt toile.

With the work on the skirt completed, I turned to the making of the jacket's first toile. Using the same medium-weight calico fabric, I cut out the jacket for first fitting. Once the toile was constructed, I fitted the jacket's bodice on the mannequin to make adjustments. This initial fitting presented those areas that required further modifications, particularly around the shoulder, where the fit was not quite as precise as I had hoped. The shoulders, being one of the most important parts of a tailored jacket, needed attention to ensure the garment would sit correctly and allow for correct movement. In addition to the shoulders, adjustments were needed in other areas of the bodice to achieve precise fit. These adjustments were marked with pins and a pen, allowing for transfer of the changes onto the paper pattern (Figure 4.22). The pattern was rechecked ensuring all modifications had been applied. The process of fitting and adjusting, although time-consuming, is a vital part of creating a bespoke garment, and it was inspiring to see the pattern gradually come together.



Figure 4.22: Riding habit jacket toile with adjustments marked using pins and pen.

Following the revisions, I continued to make a second jacket bodice toile, which proved to be nearly perfect, needing only a few minor adjustments before the next fitting with wool fabric could take place. During this second fitting, modifications were made to achieve a more precise fit, particularly concerning the dart and armhole, both of which required adjustments to achieve the desired silhouette. Moreover, this second toile was useful for verifying parts, such as the proportions of the collar and lapel, ensuring they were consistent with the historical artefacts studied. The next stage involved further refinement of the jacket using wool fabric, which, while still serving as a toile, is much closer in texture and weight to the final material, allowing for a more exact representation of the finished garment.

The wool toile was completed, and at this stage, the jacket's small back skirt was also incorporated, bringing the piece closer to its final form. Some final adjustments were then made, including the removal of a few millimetres in certain areas to improve the overall fit and ensure that the garment reflected the historical reference (Figure 4.23a–b–c).

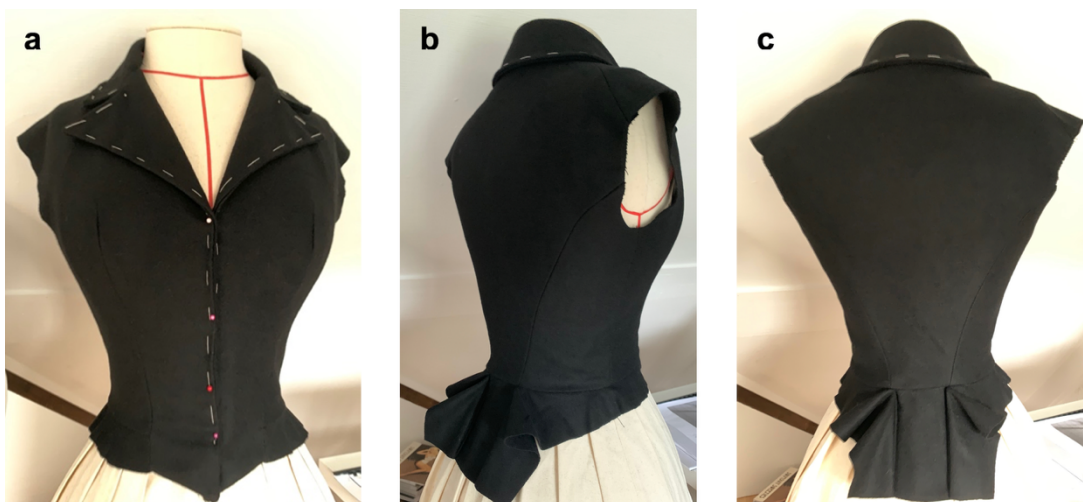


Figure 4.23: (a) Front view; (b) side view; and (c) back view of the wool riding habit jacket toile.

At this point, I moved onto creating the sleeves. The first attempt was to reproduce this with calico fabric. However, this part of the garment proved to be more challenging than the bodice, in particular the sleeve head. The original artefact had very tight gathering at the sleeve head, forming a series

of pinch pleats that were important to the garment's shape and silhouette (Figure 4.24). In my first attempt, I used the sewing machine to re-make this pleating effect, but the result proved to be unsatisfactory. The machine stitched pleats did not achieve the same tight gathering seen in the original, which led me to reevaluate my approach. The tightness of the pleats in the original garment was key to its aesthetic and simply machine gathering the fabric was insufficient. This needed further investigation of more traditional techniques for creating this type of pleat. I began exploring hand gathering methods in wool fabric rather than calico and experimented with different ways of working with the fabric to understand how the pleats were achieved.



Figure 4.24: Historical reference of the sleeve head.

A successful method was developed for the making of the sleeve in the final toile that involved a thorough approach. To start, I cut a rectangle of fabric that was wider and longer than the required sleeve width and length, providing sufficient excess for the pleating and gathering necessary to reproduce the

original sleeve construction. The sleeve pattern was then drawn onto the fabric, ensuring that the grainline and other key pattern markings were aligned.¹¹ Using tailoring chalk, I marked a series of vertical straight lines, spaced at 0.5 centimetres apart, across the top of the fabric. These lines served as a reference for the placement of the basting stitches, guiding the stitch location to ensure consistency throughout the pleating process. Once the chalk markings were in place, I proceeded with sewing the basting stitches using the lines as reference for establishing the space between them. These temporary stitches allowed for the gathering of the fabric at the sleeve head. The basting stitches were intentionally left slightly loose to enable better control over the gathering, ensuring that the fabric could be adjusted to create the tight pinch pleats characteristic of the original historical sleeve. After the basting stitches were in place, I gently pulled the threads, gradually gathering the fabric at the sleeve head to form the pleats (Figure 4.25a–b–c). The gathering process was delicate and required constant adjustment to ensure the pleats were even and evenly distributed. Once the fabric had been sufficiently gathered and the pleats were formed, I hand stitched the pleats in place, reinforcing the gathering and securing the pleats so that they would maintain their shape throughout the construction of the garment. This hand stitching was essential not only for structural integrity but also to achieve the pinch pleats seen in the historical garment. The combination of basting stitches and hand-stitching allowed for a level of control and precision that machine methods could not achieve. Once this process was completed, the sleeve head had to be redrawn before being cut out and attached to the jacket bodice. This process, while time-consuming, was necessary to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the sleeve's construction. The attention to detail in the gathering and pleating of the fabric highlighted the importance of traditional techniques in achieving the aesthetic of the garment. By the end of this method, I was able to complete a sleeve head that mirrored the original, with the pleats secured and the overall shape maintained, ensuring the

¹¹ Grainline: 'Woven fabric is made by interlacing threads at right angles to one another, evenly or in patterns. The lengthwise thread— [the warp] —runs parallel to the selvage (the finished edge along the length of the fabric at either end). The lengthwise of the fabric is called the straight grain' (Cabrera and Antoine 2015, p.65).

garment remained true to its historical reference. This was the final detail to be addressed before moving on to the next stage. With all aspects of the construction fully resolved and refined, I moved forward to the creation of the final garment.

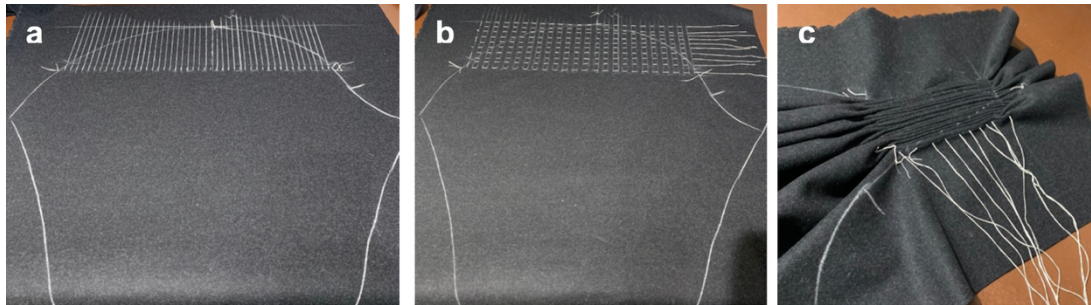


Figure 4.25: (a) Marking vertical lines using tailor's chalk; (b) applying basting stitches; and (c) gathering the sleeve head to form the pinch pleats.

4.3.6: The re-making of a riding habit

Stage 1. Preparing the fabric, transferring the pattern, and cutting out

To begin reproducing the 1830s riding habit, I first prepared the fabrics to be cut, a critical step in the garment-making process. Initially, I unfolded the fabric from its original packaging and allowed it to rest for 48 hours. This resting period is essential, as it enables the fabric to lose any stretch that may have occurred during production and folding, allowing it to return to its natural state. By doing so, I ensured that the fabric would not alter its dimensions once cut, thus preserving the accuracy of the pattern pieces. A second key step in this preparation process was to check the position of the fabric's grain. Ensuring that the fabric's grainline was straight was vital to avoid distortion in the final garment. As Cabrera and Antoine explain, this involves 'checking to see if the crosswise threads and the lengthwise threads [of the fabric] are running at right angles or perpendicular to one another' (2015, p.67). In this project, this alignment was carefully verified. Since the fabric required further adjustment, I proceeded to pin the fabric into a rectangular shape and steam-press it from the selvage edge to the fold until any ripples or distortions were eliminated. Once the main fabric, along with other materials such as the lining fabric, canvas, and tape which needed to be pre-washed for shrinking, had been

prepared, the garment was then cut out, starting with the skirt and followed by the jacket. This preparation ensured that all fabric components were in ideal condition and aligned correctly.

With the garment pattern pieces first transferred onto card paper, I then continued to trace these onto the fabric that had been previously prepared for cutting (Figure 4.26a–b).

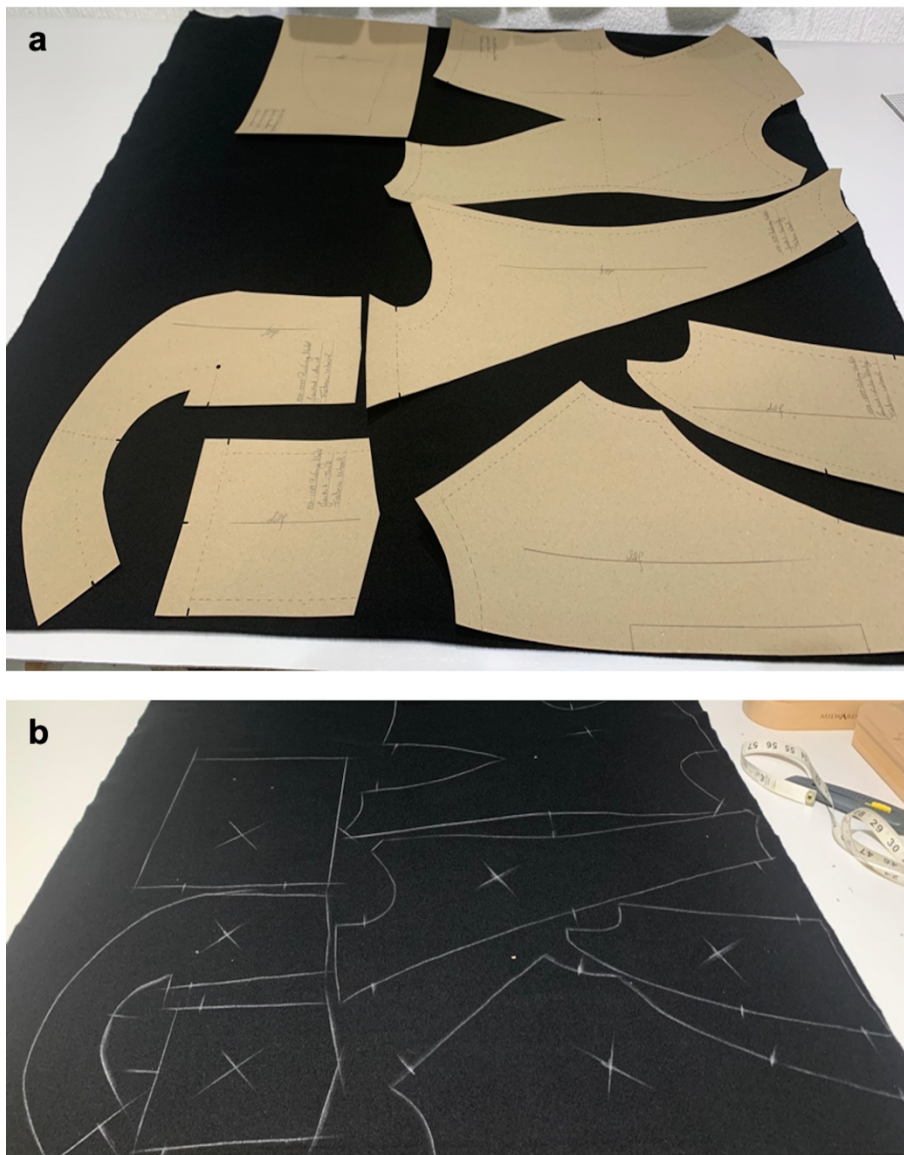


Figure 4.26: (a) Laying riding habit jacket pattern pieces onto the fabric; and (b) marking the pattern pieces on the fabric.

Following this, I prepared the sewing machine and selected the appropriate threads for the various stages of the garment construction. Although sewing

machines were not used by tailors during the period under investigation (See Chapter 3.1), I employed one in this project for practicality and time efficiency. For these machine-stitched sections, I opted for polyester thread—a modern choice made to ensure strength and durability in areas of stress, particularly in the riding habit worn during the side-saddle interview. While polyester is not a historically authentic material, it was selected alongside the use of a sewing machine as a practical solution within a contemporary making context. For the hand sewing, I used silk thread, which is commonly used in tailoring for its fine texture and smooth finish. Following traditional bespoke tailoring techniques and instructions given during the tailoring course at Newham College London, I beeswaxed the silk thread to ensure it would move more easily through the fabric, to create a smoother, more precise stitch. This process of ‘coating the thread for hand sewing ... prevents the thread from knotting and gnarling’ (Cabrera and Antoine 2015, p.8) and is an important step in ensuring that the hand sewing process runs smoothly. Once the thread was coated with beeswax, it was pressed between two layers of calico fabric to further refine its structure. ‘This process keeps the several strands, which constitute the thread, flat and uniform’ (ibid.), preventing any unevenness in the stitching that might compromise the finished garment. By taking the time to wax and press the thread, I was able to achieve a more precise and consistent result in the hand-sewn sections of the garment.

Stage 2. Re-making the skirt

Once the pattern pieces were cut out, I began the process of making the skirt. The first step involved making the bodice, both the outer fabric and the lining. After completing the bodice, I moved on to the skirt. I began by joining the front and back panels of the skirt, carefully aligning the edges. After this, I formed the pleats in accordance with the historical artefact, making sure that they were evenly distributed and sewn in place to create the desired silhouette. Once the pleats were set, I attached the skirt to the bodice. It is worth noting that, to the best of my ability, I have re-made the types of stitches used in the historical garments I have examined. This attention to detail is particularly evident in the stitching of the waistline, where the lining was stitched using black thread (Figure 4.27a–b).

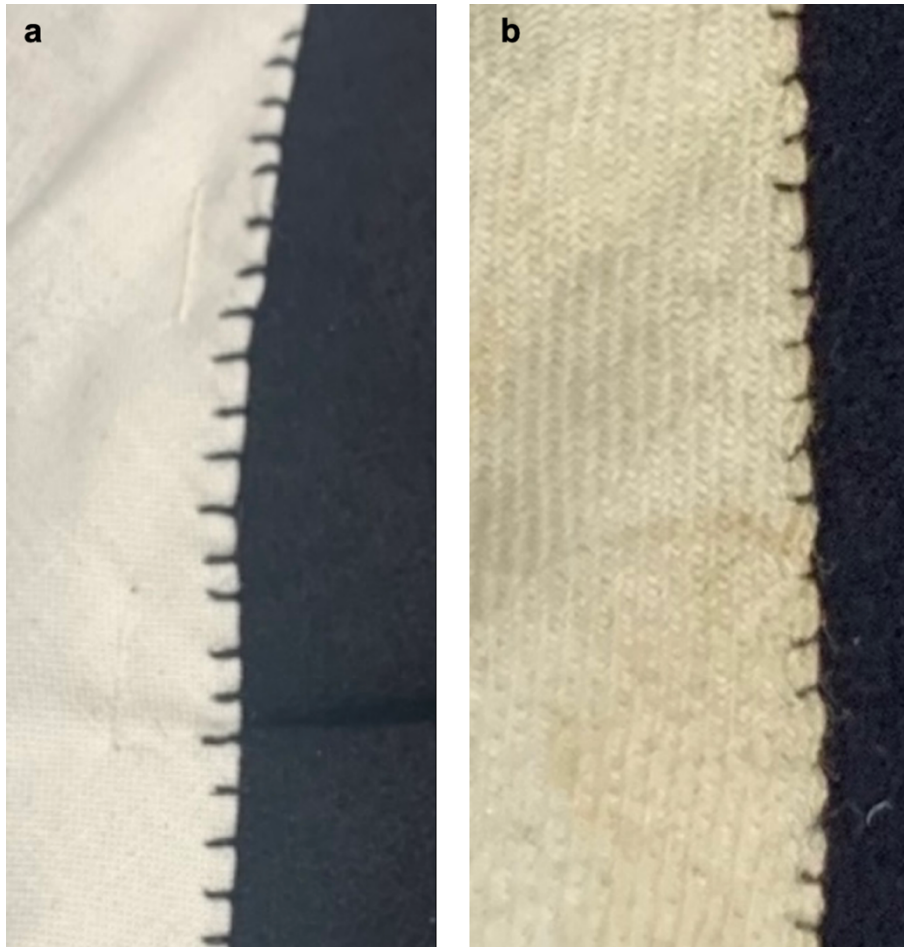


Figure 4.27: (a) Re-making skirt bodice stitches according to historical reference; and (b) historical reference of the skirt bodice stitching.

This specific stitching technique was a distinctive feature of the original garment, and I made it a priority to reproduce it as accurately as possible. This practice is an essential part of my research process, as the project aims to explore the use of male bespoke tailoring techniques in women's tailored garments during the period under investigation. By re-making these historical stitching methods, I am not only ensuring the authenticity of the garment but also contributing to a deeper understanding of the cross-tailoring between male and female bespoke tailoring practices in this historical context. To complete the skirt, a metal hook and eye were sewn onto the back, as seen on historical garment. The completed skirt is shown in Figure 4.28 (Figure 4.28). With the skirt complete, attention was turned to the construction of the riding jacket.



Figure 4.28: Completed riding habit skirt.

Stage 3. Re-making the Jacket

Prior to beginning the sewing of the jacket, the individual cut out pieces were shaped using the traditional tailor's pressing technique:

Pressing is an integral part of the tailoring process. Besides ridding the fabric of wrinkles, and producing neat, flat darts and seamlines, the iron is used in tailoring to gently shape the fabric. Using heat, moisture and pressure, fabric which is suitable for tailoring can be shrunk in some areas and stretched in others, so that it will hang most gracefully as a finished garment (Cabrera and Antoine 2015, p.11).

Once stretched and shrunk in the correct areas, I began the construction of the jacket with the creation of the front section, which required the incorporation of canvas to provide the necessary structure. The canvas was cut ensuring that it did not affect the bust area, a consideration essential because of the distinctive volume that this region required (Figure 4.29). This volume, typical of the period, was a result of the corset, which was important in achieving the desired hourglass silhouette. Consequently, the garment includes a pronounced dart in this area to follow the natural contours of the body. The canvas was then securely attached to the fabric using basting stitches and a basting thread made from 100% cotton. This type of thread can be easily broken and removed once the garment is completed. The technique for basting the canvas to the fabric required careful handling to prevent any puckering or misalignment of the materials. Once the canvas was basted in place, using cross-stitch, a length of tape was sewn along the edge where the lapel roll was to form, providing additional structure and definition to this area of the garment. This strip of tape was extended to the centre front and attached using a slip stitch. The placement of this tape was essential for achieving the crisp, tailored appearance characteristic of riding jackets from this period. With the front section now complete, I proceeded to join the side panels and back of the jacket, basting them together for the first fitting.



Figure 4.29: Cutting canvas to avoid affecting the garment bust area.

At the time of the first fitting, it became apparent that the side seams required taking in to achieve a better fit. This initial fitting is crucial to ensure the garment corresponds correctly to the body, as it allows for early detection of any fitting issues that need to be addressed before proceeding. Once the necessary adjustments were made to the side seams, I unpicked the basting stitches, then proceeded to sew the side seams and back by machine. With these adjustments complete, I moved on to the next stage, which involved attaching the front facing and inserting the boning. The front facing was only partially attached at this point, which allowed me to mark precisely where the boning should be placed. The boning was inserted into a casing made of a strip of tape, which would securely hold it in place (Figure 4.30a–b). This step was executed before the facing was fully attached to the front, ensuring that the boning was firmly fixed within the garment. This method of construction was important, as it allowed the boning to remain securely in place, providing

the necessary support while also ensuring that it would not be dislocated, even when the wearer was riding.

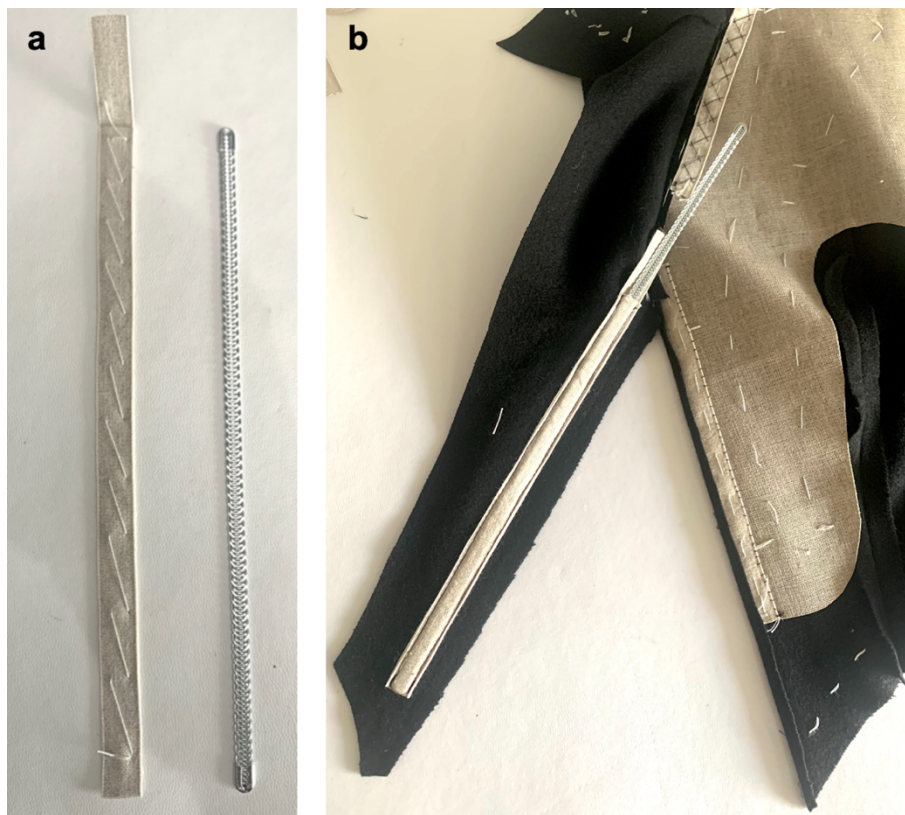


Figure 4.30: (a) Boning case and boning; and (b) inserting boning in the jacket.

The next step, before joining the front and back shoulder seams, was to attach the small skirt at the back of the jacket. With the garment fully opened, I basted the skirt to the bottom of the jacket (Figure 4.31). The skirt is characterised by pleats at the back, which is a distinctive feature of women's riding jackets from the period. A parallel can be drawn with the pleats on the skirts of men's frock coats. This cross-tailoring influence in style highlights the shared tailoring practices of the time, where certain elements, such as pleats, were normally used across men's coats and women's riding habits. These shared features suggest a common understanding of form and function in tailoring, regardless of gender. Once the skirt was securely attached to the jacket, I proceeded to join the front and back shoulder seams in preparation for the insertion of the collar.



Figure 4.31: The small skirt basted at the bottom of the jacket.

The collar preparation begins with the construction of the undercollar, which was cut from the main fabric, following the method observed in historical reference. The undercollar is composed of two pieces, which are joined at the centre with a seam. In a similar way, the canvas, which forms part of the undercollar, is also seamed at its centre using an overlapped join. Between the canvas and the fabric, positioned at both ends of the collar, is a bias-cut piece of linen interlining. The addition of the interlining serves to provide additional body and structure to the front portion of the collar, ensuring that it preserves its form and maintains a crisp, clean finish. These interlining pieces cover approximately half of the collar's length. Once the preparation phase is completed, the next step involves using a padding stitch to join the canvas and undercollar together. This hand-stitching process secures the layers of material and ensures that the undercollar holds its shape. After the padding stitching, the top, side, and bottom edges of the undercollar are trimmed to achieve a clean finish (Figure 4.32a–b). Following this, the undercollar is shaped using the iron and steam.

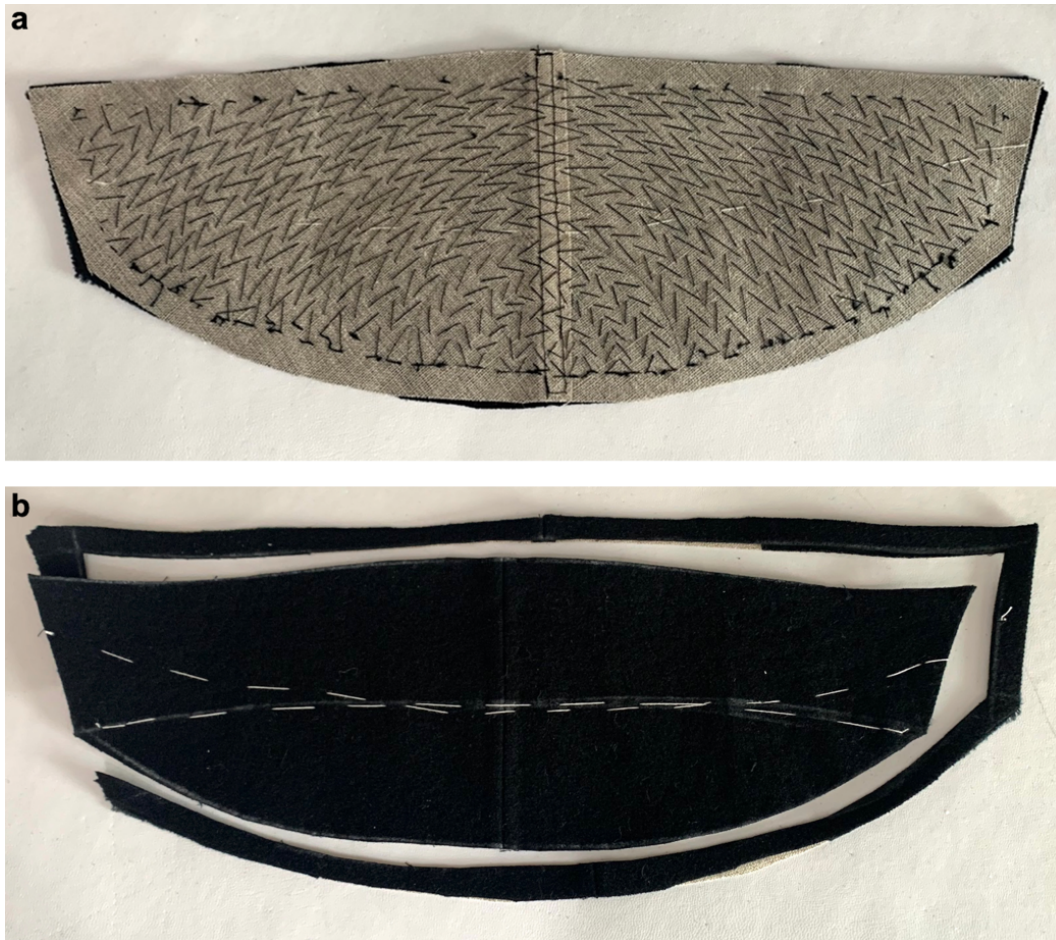


Figure 4.32: (a) Undercollar and canvas padding stitched together; and (b) top, side, and bottom edges trimmed.

With the undercollar now prepared and shaped, the focus shifts to attaching it to the neckline of the jacket. The process of attaching the collar to the neckline of the jacket is entirely executed by hand. To begin with, the jacket is placed on the mannequin to allow for accurate positioning of the collar. The undercollar is then basted onto the neckline base. Once this initial basting is completed, the jacket is removed from the mannequin and laid flat on the table, with the top collar placed beneath the undercollar (Figure 4.33a–b). At this stage, the top collar is basted onto the undercollar, ensuring alignment between the two parts. The edges of the top collar are then trimmed, leaving a seam allowance of approximately one centimetre, which is folded between the undercollar and top collar. Before the collar is completely sewn onto the neckline, the lining was prepared.



Figure 4.33: (a) Undercollar basted onto the neckline base; and (b) jacket laid flat on the table with the top collar placed beneath the undercollar.

In keeping with historical references, the lining was padded with a layer of wadding prior to being attached to the facing (Figure 4.34a–b). The process of padding the lining is also seen in men’s coat of the period, such as the frock coat. The padding improves the garment’s overall form and provides insulation. Once the padding has been applied to the lining and it is attached to the facing, the collar is then sewn onto the neckline. At this point, the two ends of the collar and the lining were left unfinished, as they will be completed during the final stages of the process.

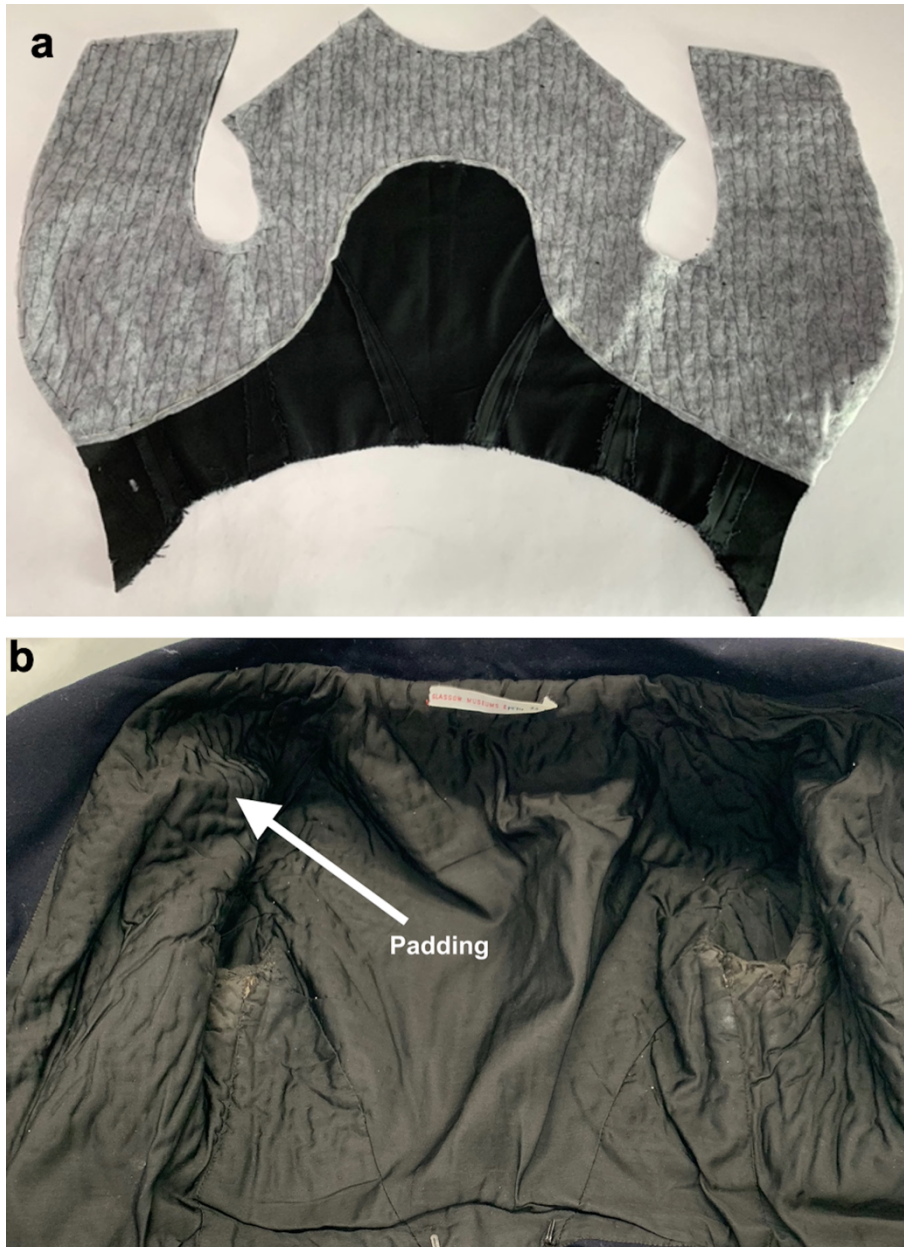


Figure 4.34: (a) Padding the lining with a layer of wadding; and (b) historical reference of the jacket lining padded with wadding.

The next step in completing the jacket was to insert the sleeves and finish the lining. As previously mentioned, the first task in constructing the sleeves was to cut two rectangular pieces of fabric, onto which the sleeve pattern was then drawn. Once the pattern was transferred, stitching marks were made to guide the construction. After this, a layer of linen interlining was basted onto the cuff area. The purpose of this interlining was to provide added structure and reinforcement to the cuff, particularly for the making of the buttonholes, which would be added later. Once the cuff was prepared the sleeve head pinch

pleats were created. As outlined earlier, vertical straight lines, spaced 0.5 centimetres apart, were drawn across the top of the sleeve head to serve as a reference for the location of the basting stitches. After the basting stitches were in place, the threads were carefully pulled to form the pleats. These pleats were then reinforced with silk thread to ensure they maintained their shape. Once the pinch pleating was complete, I redrew the sleeve shape, trimming the fabric excess. Next, the underarm sleeve seam was closed, preparing the sleeve for attachment to the jacket. With the sleeve now ready, the next step was to prepare the sleeve lining. Since the sleeve lining did not need to be cut larger than the outer sleeve, I followed the seam allowance and cut out the lining. As per historical reference, pleats were also created on the sleeve lining at the sleeve head (Figure 4.35a–b). Then the lining was prepared, the sleeve was attached to the jacket. The outer fabric of the sleeve was first sewn into place, followed by the lining, which was draped over the armhole seam providing a correct finish. With the sleeve now inserted, attention could turn to the next stages of the construction process, bringing the jacket closer to completion.

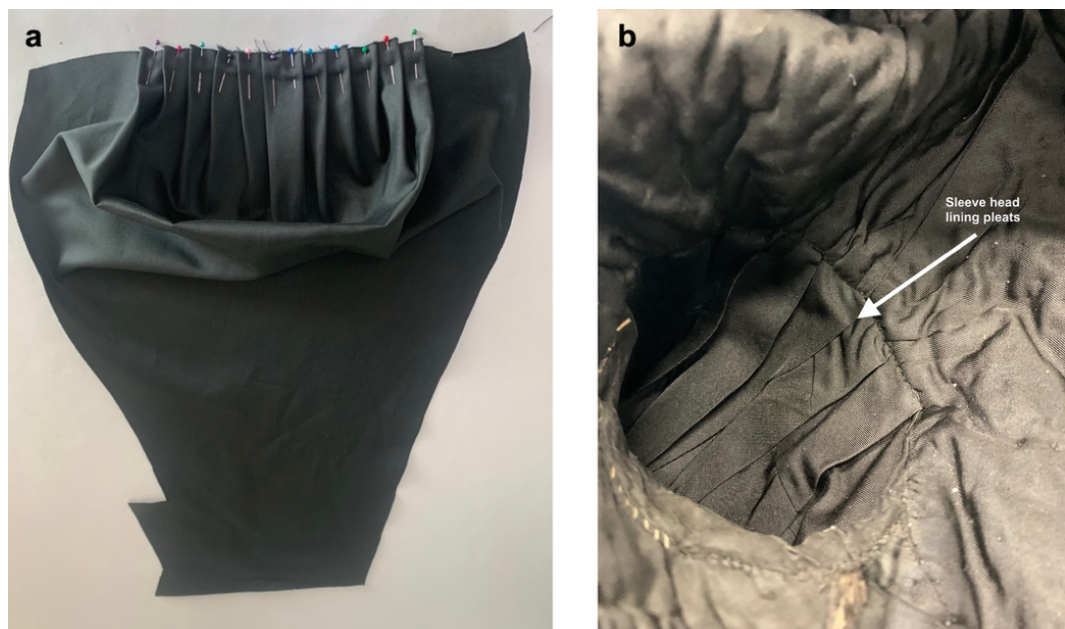


Figure 4.35: (a) Creating pleats on the sleeve head lining; and (b) historical reference of the sleeve head lining pleats.

To complete the jacket, the final job involved closing the lining. With the lining in place, attention turned to the remaining details that would bring the garment

to its finished state. The first of these final steps was to create the buttonholes on the cuffs, which were made by hand. Once the cuff buttonholes were completed, the next task was to add the buttons to the cuff and front of the jacket. In total, 13 buttons were attached to each side of the front, following the reference seen at the Glasgow Museums Collections. Additionally, two handmade thread loops were sewn onto the back of the jacket. These loops serve an important functional task, as they are designed to hook onto two corresponding hooks located at the back of the skirt. The purpose of these hooks is to support the weight of the skirt and keep the jacket in place, helping to maintain the overall structure and integrity of the riding habit. Finally, nine metal hook-and-eye fastenings were inserted inside the centre front of the jacket. These fastenings are strategically placed to enable the jacket to be securely closed. With these final touches completed, the riding habit was now finished, with the details contributing to its functionality and historical accuracy (Figure 4.36a–b).



Figure 4.36: (a) Front; and (b) back view of the completed riding habit.

4.3.7: Pattern development and toile: frock coat

As previously mentioned, the process of taking body measurements for the creation of a tailored garment in the period under investigation was largely the same for men and women. Therefore, for the re-making of the frock coat, I have used the method outlined in the previous sub-chapter: beginning with the dimensions taken from the centre-back, where key reference points are created (Figure 4.37a–b). The measuring tape is then moved towards specific points at the centre-front (Walker 1835 and 1838). The measurements taken were then registered in the notebook. The most challenging aspect in the re-making of this pattern was the creation of the balance dimension—also referred to as the shoulder strap. This measurement is essential for achieving the correct fit of the coat, as it influences the balance of the garment's shoulders. As the name suggests, the shoulder strap serves as the key point of balance, ensuring that the coat fits evenly across the wearer's upper body. Consequently, it was important to obtain a precise measurement, a task which required several trials to perfect.

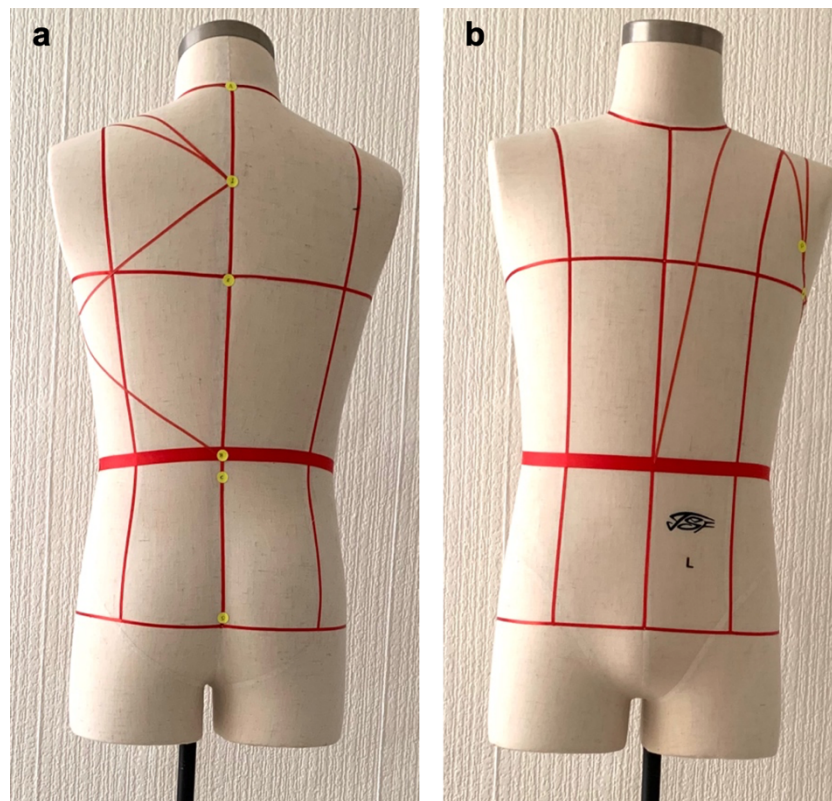


Figure 4.37: (a) Back view; and (b) front view of the measurement process on the male mannequin.

Stage 1. Tracing the pattern

George Walker notes that frock coats 'are proceeded with in the same manner as great coats, as to taking out the cloth, also the skirts are proceeded exactly upon the same principal...except without any increase of size, in fact the body part of the Frock is marked out to the same size as the Dress Coat', which had a cutaway skirt and was tailored to fit closely to the body, without any additional allowance (1838, p. 63). Thus, the block pattern for the frock coat began with the tracing of a pattern for a cutaway-skirt coat. Once the upper body and back sections were prepared, I then proceeded to create the frock skirt, following the method outlined by George Walker in the 'Directions to form the Fore Part of a Great Coat according to Plate the 6th' (1838, p.52). Once the block pattern was completed, I transferred it onto a new sheet of paper (Figure 4.38). I then added 1 centimetre seam allowance, before cutting the pattern pieces for the first toile.



Figure 4.38: Men's frock coat pattern.

Stage 2. Making the toile

On making the initial toile, it became evident that adjustments were needed, particularly to the back and shoulder seams. These areas were refined in the second toile; however, further adjustments were still required in the same regions. By the third toile, it became apparent that the addition of a side panel to the back was necessary to improve the fit. Drawing on historical references, I decided to incorporate this feature into the coat. As noted by R. I. Davis, by 1840, the 'sidebody panel' had been introduced into the frock coat (1994). This adjustment not only aligns with the tailoring practices of the period but also serves as a practical function in improving the garment's fit, contributing to the distinctive male hourglass silhouette that was characteristic of the period. In the fourth toile, additional modifications were required, specifically to the collar, lapel, and armhole, to ensure a more accurate fit. The fifth and final toile revealed that the pattern was now largely correct, with the only remaining adjustment being the addition of extra length to the skirt and sleeve. At this point, the pattern was considered ready for cutting on the final fabric. The toiling sequence is detailed below (Figure 4.39a–b–c–d–e).





Figure 4.39: (a) Front view, toile one; (b) front view, toile two; (c) back view, toile three; (d) front view, toile four; and (e) front view of toile five of the man's frock coat.

4.3.8: The re-making of a frock coat

Stage 1. Preparing the fabric, transferring the pattern, and cutting out

With the pattern approved and following the same process used for the riding habit, I transferred the pattern pieces onto card paper, cut them out using the same wool fabric selected for the riding habit (Figure 4.40), and stretched and shrank the fabric in specific areas along the cutout pattern pieces using the iron, as explained in the previous sub-chapter.



Figure 4.40: marking the pattern pieces on the fabric.

Stage 2. Re-making the frock coat

The internal structure of the frock coat differs from that of the women's garment. In the case of the riding habit, the technique of inserting canvas was adapted for the female form, with attention given to the bust area, which needed to be avoided for structural reasons. However, for the frock coat, the entire front of the garment is made with canvas to achieve the shape characteristic of the coat. An additional layer of canvas was applied to a small section of the front reinforcing the desired silhouette. This extra layer was then covered with Cotton Domette—also known as Flannel Cover Cloth—and

basted in position. Once these initial steps were completed, the layers of canvas and Domette were padding stitched into place (Figure 4.41).¹²



Figure 4.41: Frock coat front canvas view prepared with Domette and basted in position.

As with the riding habit, the basting process on the frock coat follows a specific sequence and direction, which is essential to prevent any puckering or misalignment in the garment. On the front lapel, the canvas was pad stitched using a specific construction process, as explained by Roberto Cabrera and Denis Antoine: ‘to give the lapel a soft natural roll, you should place the jacket on the edge of your work table, aligning the table edge and lapel roll line, and letting the lapel hang down’ (2015, p. 133). By following this method, the lapel does the necessary and desired roll. Once the padding stitch was completed, the excess canvas at the front and neckline was trimmed in preparation for the addition of a fabric tape. This tape, which covers the edge of the canvas, serves a practical and aesthetic function: it protects the wearer from the potentially irritating fibres of the canvas and ensures that the canvas remains concealed once the coat is finished (Figure 4.42a–b). This additional step is essential for getting a refined and comfortable garment. With these preparatory steps complete, the garment was ready for its first fitting. At this

¹² ‘A soft cotton flannel fabric...which is placed on top of the...[canvas] to prevent the stiff...fibres from scratching the wearer’ (Cabreara and Antoine 2015, p.9).

stage, the coat was without its skirt and sleeves, with only the front and back basted together. The coat was then fitted on the mannequin to review its overall shape and structure. During this fitting, it became clear that the only adjustment needed was to take in the centre back (Figure 4.43a–b).

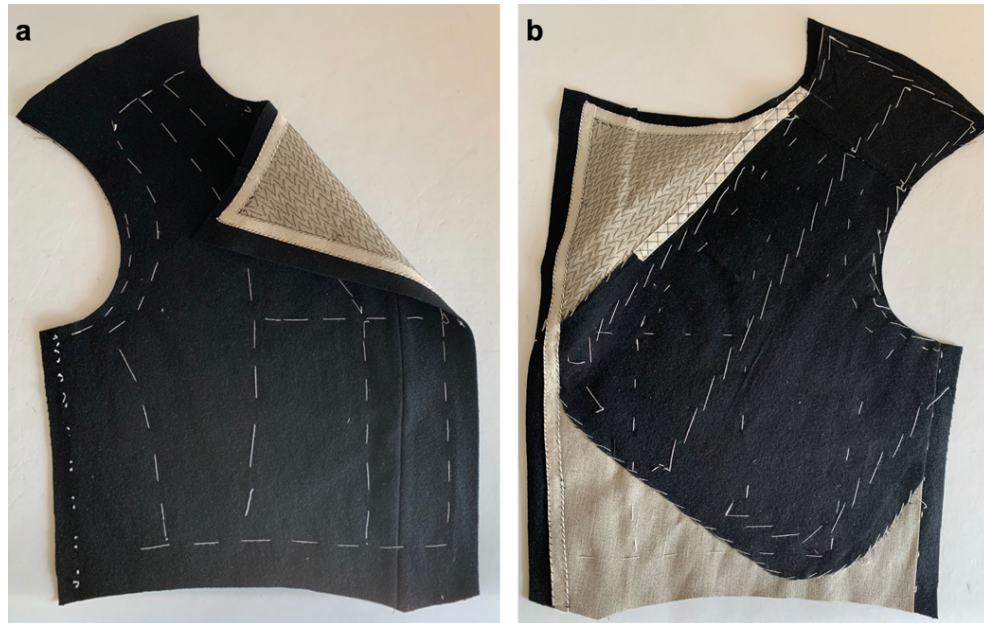


Figure 4.42: (a) Outside front of the frock coat; and (b) inside front of the frock coat.



Figure 4.43: (a) Front view of the frock coat; and (b) back view of the frock coat during the first fitting.

The next stage involved making the necessary adjustments to the upper part of the garment before proceeding to sew the pieces together. Once the fit was finalised, attention turned to preparing the lining. After cutting out the lining pieces, an internal pocket was added, as per the historical reference observed on the 1846 frock coat at the Manchester Art Gallery collection (Figure 4.44a–b). The front lining is made from the same fabric as the outer coat. The sidebody and skirt sections, however, are lined with the same fabric used for the riding habit lining. Unlike the riding habit, the back of the frock coat remains unlined, following historical practices that emphasised the lighter construction of the back. In contrast to the riding habit, where the front and back lining is padded with wadding, the frock coat's front lining remains unpadded. Only the side panel is padded. This reflects the slight differences in tailoring practices between the two garments, where the frock coat obtains its structure with the canvas and less padding. Once all the lining pieces were built, the next step was to join the lining to the front outer part of the coat. With the body and lining connected, attention then turned to preparing the collar.



Figure 4.44: (a) Internal pocket in the frock coat; and (b) historical reference of an internal pocket in a frock coat.

The preparation and making of the collar in the frock coat follows the same method as that of the riding habit. The process begins with the preparation of

the undercollar, which is created from two pieces, joined at the centre. A layer of canvas, similarly seamed at the centre, and a bias-cut piece of linen interlining is placed at both ends between the fabric and the canvas. These pieces are sewn together using padding stitches, and the edges are trimmed to achieve a precise finish. The undercollar is then shaped using the iron. With the undercollar prepared, the next stage involved making the top collar. The coat was first placed on the mannequin, and the undercollar was basted into position along the neckline, using the same technique previously described in the section of the riding habit (Figure 4.45). Once the undercollar was in place, the coat was removed from the mannequin and laid flat on the table, for sewing of the top collar. The top collar was trimmed, leaving a one-centimetre seam allowance for finishing. As with the undercollar, this stage was executed entirely by hand, in keeping with the bespoke tailoring methods.



Figure 4.45: Frock coat front view showing undercollar in place.

As mentioned above, in contrast to the riding habit, the back of the frock coat remains unlined. Following period practices a facing was therefore added to

finish the neckline. The facing was first attached to the shoulder seam of the coat's front lining. Once the top collar was completed, the facing then covered the lower edge of the collar at the back neckline. A significant difference between the women's riding jacket and the men's frock coat became apparent when comparing the size and form of their respective collars. The man's frock collar is notably large and upright, creating a distinct visual impact around the neck and shoulders, while the collar of the woman's riding jacket is relatively smaller and lies flatter against the shoulder line. This difference in design may not only be attributed to variations in fashion or function but may also reflect cultural differences, particularly in relation to gender boundaries and its association with dress (Figure 4.46a–b).



Figure 4.46: (a) Collar of a man's frock coat; and (b) collar of a woman's riding habit jacket.

After this process was completed, the coat was placed onto the mannequin for the next fitting. This fitting revealed that no further alterations were necessary, thus the attention was turned to preparing the armholes for the next stage: the insertion of the sleeves. In contrast to the riding jacket, which featured a single-piece sleeve lined with black fabric, the frock coat contains a two-piece sleeve lined with white fabric, following historical reference. After the sleeves were iron-worked and the under seams stitched, the hem and cuff-vent were marked on the right side of the fabric. In keeping with the technique used for the riding jacket, a bias-cut linen interlining was inserted

into the sleeve cuff. Prior to the placing this interlining was steamed and curved on the iron to ensure a smoother, more refined fall of the cuff-hem. Following this, the cuff interlining was basted onto the under seam, and the hem and vent were folded over the edges of the interlining. Using a diagonal basting stitch, these elements were fixed in place. The top seam of the sleeve was then closed in preparation for the insertion of the lining. Once the sleeve-lining was prepared, the sleeve and lining were laid on the table facing one another, ready for stitching. After the sleeve and lining were sewn together along the seam allowance, they were turned to the right side, with the lining now on the outside. The hem and vent were then finished, making the sleeves ready to be sewn onto the armhole. The technique of stitching the sleeves onto the armhole followed the same method used for the woman's riding habit jacket. This process begins from the inside of the garment, where the outer sleeve-head is first stitched into place along the armhole. Once the outer sleeve is attached, the sleeve lining is then positioned over the armhole, covering the seam for a neat finish (Figure 4.47).



Figure 4.47: Upper body of the frock coat showing completed sleeves.

The final stage in the re-making of the frock coat involved the introduction of the skirt. In preparation, two concealed pockets—one on each side, located within the back pleats—were inserted. These pockets followed the shape reference found in the historical garment. Once the pleats were marked and steam pressed, I cut two rectangular pieces of white lining fabric, each approximately 45 centimetres in length and 15 centimetres in width. The pocket layers were first sewn separately onto the pleat seam allowance, then closed to form the pocket bags. In my initial attempt at creating the pockets, I faced an issue. The waist seam of the frock coat has an angled line at the back, which required consideration when cutting the pocket bags. However, in my first version, the top of the pocket bag was cut straight, resulting in wrinkles at the back of the skirt. To correct this, the pocket bags were recut, ensuring that the top edge followed the correct angle to match the waist seam. This adjustment resolved the issue and allowed the pockets to sit correctly (Figure 4.48a–b). With these made, attention turned to the making of the full skirt.

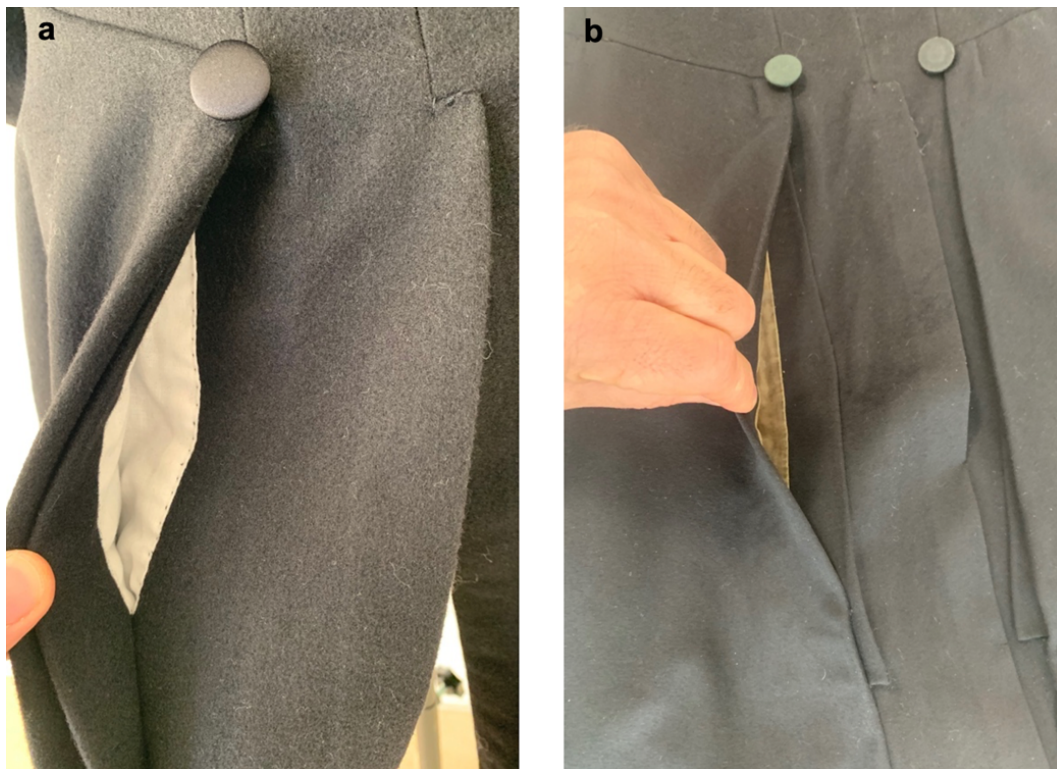


Figure 4.48: (a) Concealed pocket in the frock coat back pleat; and (b) historical reference of a concealed pocket in a frock coat back pleat.

The edge of the skirt was first attached to the edges of the pleats. Following this, the skirt was sewn into place along the waist seam, completing the connection between the lower and upper tailored section of the coat. With the back pockets in place and the skirt secured to the tailored upper body of the frock coat, the final step in the skirt's assemble was the lining. This was fixed at the front seam of the coat's outer skirt and then hand-finished at the waist seam and hem, ensuring a professional finish to the garment. With this stage completed, the coat was placed on the mannequin for a final fitting, which showed that no alterations were needed. The next step was marking for the areas for the handmade buttonholes. Once the front and cuffs were marked, the next step was to make the buttonholes and sew the corresponding buttons. After this the frock coat was considered finished (Figure 4.49a–b).



Figure 4.49: (a) Front; and (b) back view of the completed frock coat.

3.3.9: Reflecting on re-making the riding habit and frock coat

The remaking processes of the riding habit and the frock coat reveal the extent to which bespoke tailoring techniques were influential in shaping the physical and symbolic form of early- to mid-nineteenth century women's riding habits. This analysis begins not with abstract ideas of gender performance but with the tactile logic of the needle and iron, tracing how male tailoring methods were materially and methodically transferred, adapted, and recontextualised for the female body. As established in 0.3: *Role and purpose of the practice*, this mode of analysis treats making and re-making as a form of historical knowledge production (Dancouse 2006, Webster and Milne 2004), where meaning is generated through material engagement rather than simply extracted from surviving garments.

Within this framework, the act of re-making garments aligns with experimental and heritage approaches to making discussed by Coles (1973), Carrell (1992), and Mathieu (2002), where reconstruction is used as a method for testing historical interpretation through practice. Similarly, O'Neill's notion of 'reading through making' (2021) is used here, as the garments are understood through the process of their re-making, rather than as static evidence. At the same time, the adoption of male tailoring techniques into female dress can be read through Hartmann and Ostberg's argument that categories such as authenticity and craft are culturally constructed rather than inherent (2013), suggesting that what appears as 'masculine tailoring' is not fixed but reconfigured through practice. This is further elaborated by Hollander's emphasis on cloth and bodily articulation (1993), where form is not merely technical but produces meanings of gendered embodiment.

Some examples of this adoption lie in the use of canvas and pad stitching techniques in both garments. In making the frock coat, the fully canvassed front, reinforced with domette and shaped through pad stitching, gave the garment its structured shape—an element of men's tailored dress. When re-making the riding habit, this same technique was partially employed, with visible adjustments: the canvas was shaped to avoid the bust area while still

providing support along the lapel and front body. This application of form responds to the female body while maintaining the firm shape characteristic of men's tailoring. In this adaptation, the tailoring process becomes a site of negotiation—between bodily difference and stylistic convention—where traditional male techniques are adapted to accommodate a female body without losing their structural precision.

Similarly, the cutting process for the two garments relied on the accuracy of pattern translation, reinforcing the precision that bespoke tailoring demands. In both cases, I took care to balance the pattern before cutting—specially the shoulder strap measurement, which was crucial in maintaining the correct alignment of the garment. The riding habit's tailored jacket and the frock coat required shoulder shaping that would support the weight and fit of the garment over the torso. This tailoring process, which focusses on symmetry, stability, and silhouette, was lifted from the men's frock coat and applied to the riding habit, giving it a similar structure in that area.

The use of canvas and inner materials, such as the bias-cut linen at the collar and sleeve cuffs, exemplifies how elements were applied to the fabric to create a more defined shape and improve the garment's overall form. For example, the canvas of the frock coat's high-standing collar created a pronounced frame for the head and neck, signifying authority and upright posture in men's dress. The riding habit, while featuring a smaller and flatter collar, also employed canvas, pad-stitching, and linen reinforcement, though it did not create the same rigid neckline as the frock coat. Instead, the riding habit's collar provides a subtle and understated structure, maintaining some elements of femininity while still adopting and adapting elements of male tailoring, but without fully crossing into male sartorial territory.

The construction of sleeves and armholes in both garments also reveal the adaptation of tailoring techniques. The two-piece sleeve cut used in the frock coat, which allows for a more sculpted arm shape, was not used in the riding habit, which features a one-piece sleeve. While the sleeve heads of the frock coat are gathered and the riding habit's sleeves are pleated, the internal

structure in both garments follow a similar technique. This method ensures articulation of movement while preserving a defined silhouette. These methods highlight a shared emphasis on functional mobility within a tailored cut, reinforcing the connection between these garments not only in style but also in technique. Moreover, the methodical techniques of early nineteenth-century pattern cutting and the approach to fittings—such as the development of toiles, adjustments to side seams, and the addition of sidebody panels—demonstrate how the techniques of male tailoring influenced the development of the riding habit. Notably, the use of a sidebody panel in the frock coat, for example, was mirrored in the riding habit's bodice form. These shared choices reinforce a tailoring language that crosses gender, framing the female torso with the same panelled system as in the male version.

It is interesting to note that certain uses of internal support—such as boning in the riding habit—highlight a moment where techniques more commonly associated with traditionally feminine garments intersect with tailoring. Unlike the separate, hidden corset, the riding habit's boning is incorporated into the garment's structure, clearly visible in how the garment is made and serving a practical purpose in maintaining its shape. This integration reflects a hybrid approach to the construction: one that draws from masculine and feminine dress systems to create attire suited for appearance and performance. The resulting silhouette is not only shaped but intentionally formed to move beyond decorative limitation, suggesting a more engaged and purposeful connection with the female body.

By focusing on these technical aspects, we see that the process of adapting men's tailoring to the riding habit was not a superficial imitation but a material transformation. The bodily discipline encoded in the frock coat—through shoulder shaping, canvas, lapel rolling, and collar building for example—was strategically re-applied to serve a different kind of body. In this way, the act of cutting, shaping, and making becomes an active engagement with gendered norms: to tailor a woman's garment using men's methods is to materially rearticulate what that body can do, how it should appear, and what kinds of social spaces it can enter.

4.4: Embodied research as a process of knowing

The third approach that I am employing in this methodological framework is ‘embodied research as a process of knowing’. In this project, embodied research formed the basis for investigating the personification of social life to reveal the presence of bodies in relation to clothing, and the resulting actions, performances, and encounters between them. Furthermore, it aimed to investigate the ways in which practice as a process of knowing could ‘communicate’ the body within social environments. The re-making of ‘ephemeral garments...bridges the gap in embodied knowledge between scholars and craftspeople, between knowledge and making, and...between surviving sources and historical experiences’ (Bendall 2019, p.393).

The founding development of embodied phenomenology as an approach to research is frequently credited to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). His ideas have had an influence across various academic disciplines, such as social science and scholars engaged in the study of embodied cognition and perception. In his work, Merleau-Ponty argues that human understanding is basically rooted in the body, positing that our engagement with the world is always mediated by embodied perception rather than abstract reflection. He states that knowledge of the world, and indeed of ourselves, is not something that can be achieved through detached intellectual contemplation, but rather through the lived, sensory experience of sensing. According to him, this embodied process is the primary way through which we come to understanding reality, positioning the body as the means and the condition of possibility for all human knowledge. His phenomenological approach continues to offer insights into the relationship between perception, embodiment, and social understanding (Thanem and Knights 2019).

A growing number of social scientists have been investigating the potential of the body as a vital instrument in the research process, proposing new ways in which bodily engagement can inform and shape our understanding of social phenomena—for example: Engelsrude (2005) and Thanem and Knights 2019. This developing field of enquiry encourages scholars to reflect critically

on the various roles that our bodies play, not only as objects of study but also as active participants in the research itself. By considering how physical presence, movement, and sensation intersect with intellectual and emotional processes, a researcher seeks to explore the relationship between embodied experience and the generation of knowledge. Embodied method emphasises the importance of the body in the process of obtaining knowledge, focusing on how embodied experience can be understood and interpreted through direct corporeal engagement and action (Thanem and Knights 2019, and Leigh and Brown 2021).

Unlike more traditional forms of research methods, which often prioritize thinking or verbal processes, embodied research acknowledges the body as an active instrument for accessing a non-verbal understanding of the world, so rather than 'work[ing] alone using only books and notebooks as [a] tool, [e]mbodied research has its own requirements, of which the three most fundamental are *people, space and time*' (Coffey 1999, p.14). It involves engaging the body in ways that allow the researcher to connect with experiential data that might not be fully captured through language alone. In this qualitative approach, the body is not merely an object of study, but a vital instrument in which information is generated and understood. Using physical actions and movements, the researcher discovers insights that emerge from the body's interaction with its environments, revealing aspects of experience that remain beyond the reach of conventional analytical methods.

Thus, embodied research method is particularly suited to address the challenge of capturing and analysing knowledge that is expressed through bodily actions and experiences; in this way, 'the body [is] regarded as meaningful and as something that any subject can *recognize*' (Engelsrud 2005, p.269). This form of knowledge is often implicit and unacknowledged. It is the kind of data that does not appear through verbal articulation but is rather passed through automatic actions, behaviours, and physical engagement with the world (Engelsrud 2005). For example, bodily movements, habitual gestures, and intuitive responses are often performed without explicit thought or discussion. In this sense, embodied knowledge exists beyond the scope of

verbal or intellectualised understanding, making it difficult to access using traditional research methods that typically stress cognitive processes and verbal expression.

As outlined in the introduction, this project enacts embodied research through a collaborative engagement with professional side-saddle rider, Angela Wells, whose extensive embodied knowledge informs the practical investigation of the re-made riding habit. Rather than positioning the rider as a subject of observation, this approach frames her as an expert collaborator whose knowledge is integral to the research process. Her experience, combined alongside familiarity with historical equestrian costume through side-saddle classes and competitive practice, enables engagement with the riding habit as it is worn and performed. Instead of relying on observation alone, the methodology developed here generates knowledge through the collaborative process of riding, wearing, and reflecting on the garment in practice. Through this engagement, it is possible to better understand and interpret the embodied dimensions of dress and movement in relation to the riding habit. This creates a co-productive space of inquiry in which bodily experience, tailoring practice, and equestrian expertise contribute to the development of knowledge.

Her expertise lies in advanced side-saddle riding practice, with over 50 years of experience in the discipline, including engagement in competitive equestrian contexts where posture, balance, and body movement are essential. This embodied knowledge enabled a critical evaluation of the riding habit in motion, particularly in relation to how bespoke tailoring affects bodily alignment, restriction, and stability in the saddle. Rather than functioning as informal feedback, her input operated as embodied technical assessment, informed by decades of riding practice, and contributed to how the garment was interpreted in relation to historical tailoring. This supported the research by providing an experiential basis for understanding how dress shapes the relationship between body, movement, and gender.

The objective is not simply to observe, but to promote a deeper empathetic connection, allowing the researcher to experience, at least in part, the participant's embodied knowledge. This creates an improved understanding of the participant's lived reality—one that incorporates the physical and sensory dimensions of knowledge that are often overlooked in conventional research. Furthermore, embodied research offers a more holistic approach to understanding human experience, highlighting the vital role the body plays in shaping knowledge and insight. Additionally, this method of research can offer potential changes within the social sciences, arts, and humanities towards a greater emphasis on the body's function in shaping and influencing social and cultural life. By adopting an embodied approach, a researcher can turn their focus to how the body itself is integral to understanding human knowledge as 'our experience of life is inevitably mediated through our bodies' (Shilling 2012, p.24). In this project, the embodied approach encouraged a deeper exploration of how bodily movements and physical actions were central to social interactions and individual identities.

It is important to say that, within the field of academic research in art and design, particularly where influenced by cultural studies, there has been a growing emphasis on 'practice-based research', as explained by Ben Spatz: 'In England, practice-based masters and doctoral degrees in ... arts are now common' (Spatz 2015, p.226). This shift has encouraged an exploration of embodied methods of enquiry, in which a researcher draws on their own artistic practices and processes as essential components of their investigative approach (Leigh and Brown, 2021). By incorporating my practice and the embodied knowledge of a side-saddle rider within my methodological framework—as a tool and a site of knowledge—this approach has sought to challenge traditional, disembodied forms of research that often rely on abstract theorising or verbal communication. The adoption of embodied methods in this practice-related research provided an engagement with a deeper understanding between body and clothing. Through this process, the boundaries between mind, body, and my practice are continually negotiated, enabling a comprehensive and integrated form of knowledge production.

4.4.1 Body and clothing in motion

This exploratory study takes a qualitative approach to gather data and inform how the re-making and wearing of historical garments can be an important form of investigation—of the influence that clothing has on a living body, and of what this reveals about the social and cultural characteristics of women in the public sphere during the early- to mid-nineteenth century. Angela Wells, the interviewee, combined her knowledge and fifty years of experience in riding side-saddle to support my efforts to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between dress, body and gender (Figure 4.50). Additional materials from the study with Angela Wells—including photographs, the interview transcript, and ethical approval documents—can be found in Appendix 5.



Figure 4.50: Angela Wells—professional side-saddle rider on horseback.

Thematic analysis was employed as the method to analyse the interview data, an approach that enables the identification and interpretation of patterns or themes within data. However, to improve the depth and precision of this method and ensure it was aligned with the specific aims of the research, I

adopted a multi-stage analytical process. This involved dividing the analysis into distinct phases allowing for a more thorough and systematic engagement with the data. One key strategy in this process was the colour-coding of the emerging themes, which served to visually organise the data and make the thematic connections more apparent.

The first stage involved the identification and highlighting of relevant codes directly within the interview transcript, focusing on key words and phrases that seemed to capture significant insights. These preliminary codes were then reselected and refined, ensuring that they reflected the most significant aspects of the interview content. Once this coding was completed, the data were organised into a table, allowing for a clearer overview of the relationships between them. Following this, the individual codes were grouped into broader themes, which represented patterns and ideas across the data. These themes were then further developed and visually represented through colour-coded maps and a graphic, providing an intuitive way to illustrate the connections between the codes and themes. This visual representation not only assisted in the clarity of the analysis but also allowed for an interaction with the data, facilitating an exploration of the original concepts. The findings are presented and discussed in the sections that follow, where they are critically examined in relation to the research questions and theoretical frameworks. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interview data, uncovering the themes that emerge through this method of analysis.

Methodological approach to qualitative interview

I conducted a semi-structured interview with ten questions, divided into two sessions each lasting approximately one hour. The dates and times were booked according to the interviewee's availability. During the first session Angela rode a mechanical horse and answered the ten questions I posed. During the second session she rode a real horse and had the opportunity to contribute any information that had not been given during the first session, such as explaining the differences between riding a mechanical and a real horse while wearing the re-made of an 1830s riding habit that had been

produced for the research. Data was gathered via audio, video, and photography.

It was important to ensure that the interview felt relaxed and conversational, and there was a natural interaction between two people—the interviewer and interviewee—‘leading to negotiated, contextually based results’ (Fontana and Frey 2000, p. 646). Knowledge was produced between the interviewee and interviewer’s perspective making it unpredictable and perhaps surprisingly beneficial (Kvale 1996). Consequently, this gave the participant the opportunity to exercise some degree of control over the questions by changing the subject or specifying that she did not have enough knowledge about a particular topic to respond to particular questions (Rubin and Rubin 2005). In order for the interview to progress effectively and allow for an exploration of the embodied methodology of wearing a historical garment, it was important for the questions to remain open and non-directive, allowing the rider to express her own impressions and casually reflect on whether and how the riding habit influenced her experience of riding. Therefore, the interview was not driven in one specific direction of the study but instead allowed space for unexpected themes or insights to emerge, based on the rider’s embodied experience and spontaneous reflections. As explained by Annette N. Markham, following a strict procedure in an interview can obstruct progress towards an objective (1998).

Ethics

Ahead of the interview, ethical considerations were identified around possible sensitive and personal information that might be disclosed during the interview process. This also applied to the taking and using of photographs, videos and any other data collected. These would need the approval of the interviewee to be used throughout the thesis and in presentations and publications. As explained by Steinar Kvale: ‘Within some fields...it is mandatory to submit an interview project to an ethical review board before the investigation may be undertaken’ (2007, pp.24-25). Indeed, UAL required these considerations to be documented on an official form detailing the project: the University Research and Knowledge Ethics Sub-Committee

(RKEESC) reviewed and approved this. As it was necessary for the interviewee to ride a horse, a General Risk and Assessment Form was also sent to UAL for approval.

The interviewee was recruited as a volunteer and over the age of eighteen. Since Angela Wells' participation was made voluntarily, no payments were offered to her, and it was made clear that she could withdraw from the study at any time before the submission of the thesis without providing any reason. Moreover, the interview was designed to be an informal experience where the participant could feel relaxed and enjoy the experience.

In advance of the interview the participant received an information sheet detailing the research topic and the purpose of the study. Although emotional risks during the interview were recognised to be very small (if any) the NHS help line for mental issues was included in the document, as well as the details of who she should contact at the university in case of complaint. Attached to the document was a consent form that gave the interviewee the opportunity to agree or disagree with the study requests. An opportunity to ask any questions in advance was also provided. In addition, once the interview was over the interviewee received (via email) a copy of the interview transcript and a formal thank you email. To ensure the security of the recorded data, videos, photographs, and records were digitally encrypted as recommended by the university.

Mode of data analysis

An interpretative approach was employed to study the interview data, using thematic content analysis to examine and discuss the main themes that emerged in the ten semi-structured questions asked. Thematic analysis was selected as a method for extracting insights from the interview as it concentrates on finding and characterising 'implicit and explicit ideas within the data' (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012, p.10). The re-making and wearing of the garment in combination with thematic analysis offers the chance to explore new areas by reflecting on the diverse and detailed information extracted from the interview. 'This organized method enhances

the consistency and replicability of the findings, and it enables clear connections between the data, interpretation, and final conclusions. This ...approach ensures thoroughness and limits potential bias' (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell and Ranfagni 2023, p.2), at the same time it 'can be an essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality' (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.81). In this way the study captures the experience of a side-saddle rider to inform the relation between body and clothing.

Although thematic analysis is commonly applied to collection of data from multiple interviews, its adaptation for the analysis of a single interview in this project was a considered decision based on the specific aims of the research. There is ongoing debate concerning whether this methodology is best suited for single or multiple interviews. Some scholars, for instance, argue that thematic analysis is effective when dealing with multiple data points, as it allows for the identification of patterns and themes across a range of response (Zeidan 2024). However, Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, in their important 2006 article 'Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology', do not explicitly restrict its use to large collection of data. In fact, they emphasise the flexibility of the method, suggesting that it can be adapted to various research frameworks (2006). In this case, the decision to apply thematic analysis to a single interview was informed by the nature of the research question and the depth of insight taken from the interviewee experience. The interview provided data that was sufficiently complex to merit detailed thematic exploration. Also, the strength of thematic analysis lies in its capacity to identify and interpret patterns, meanings, and experiences within the data, which remains applicable even in the context of a single interview. By adapting the methodology in this way, I was able to extract key themes that explained the interviewee point of view while maintaining the rigour and systematic approach of thematic analysis. This adaptation ensured that the analysis remained thorough and focused, allowing for a detailed exploration of the specific relationship between the participant's lived experience and the research question. The use of thematic analysis for this single interview not only aligned with the project's objectives but also provided a framework for

finding insights that would have been less accessible through alternative methods.

Stage 1.

The first step to thematically analyse the interview data was to become familiar with the transcript by reading and re-reading it multiple times, as well as to take notes searching for frequent descriptions and ideas—similar or contrasting (Rubin and Rubin 2005). These were highlighted and combined together to generate codes. Notes can be found in the Appendices (Appendix 5).

Stage 2.

The codes were compiled (Appendix 5). The second step was to arrange these into possible main themes, that is, select pertinent codes extracted from the data to create themes concentrating the study at the level of themes rather than codes. A thematic map was created to find themes (Figure 4.51).

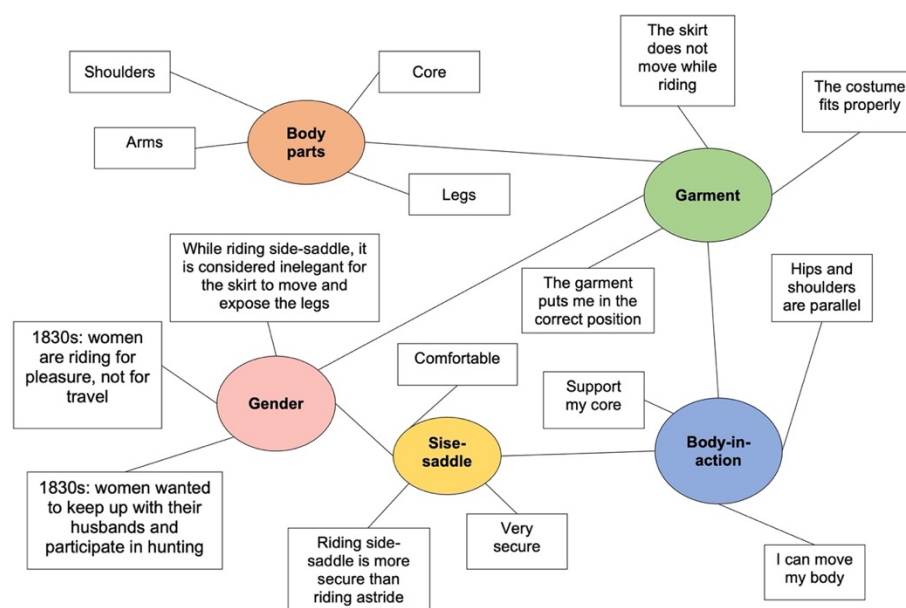


Figure 4.51: Map 1. Thematic map illustrating potential themes.

In essence this was the beginning of the data analysis considering ‘how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme’ (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.89). Themes are created by a thorough examination of the codes and should capture meanings that are connected to the study data as

well as research questions. Thematic analysis is flexible and allows the determination of themes in many ways, as long as the researcher is consistent in the method (Brown and Clarke 2006); at this stage the researcher's mind moves from a thorough examination of the codes to a more abstract analysis. In this project, significant themes have been created by capturing the idea of what the interviewee said about her experience wearing a riding habit and its relation to her body.

Stage 3.

Before refining the themes, a third step was created, that is, to revise the data and select extra codes that were related to the themes. In this phase it was determined whether the themes were appropriated for the study. The process used was grouping the themes with codes to produce a coherent clarification of the subject (Figure 4.52).



Figure 4.52: Map 2. Grouping themes with codes.

Stage 4.

The fourth step was to refine the themes. For this it was necessary to review the groups created in the previous phase and consider if they formed a logical pattern. It became clear that certain candidate themes were not truly themes, while others overlapped. At this stage, themes should contain cohesive and meaningful data, with easily distinguishable boundaries between them (Braun and Clarke 2006). The outcome of this improved process was illustrated in a thematic map (Figure 4.53).

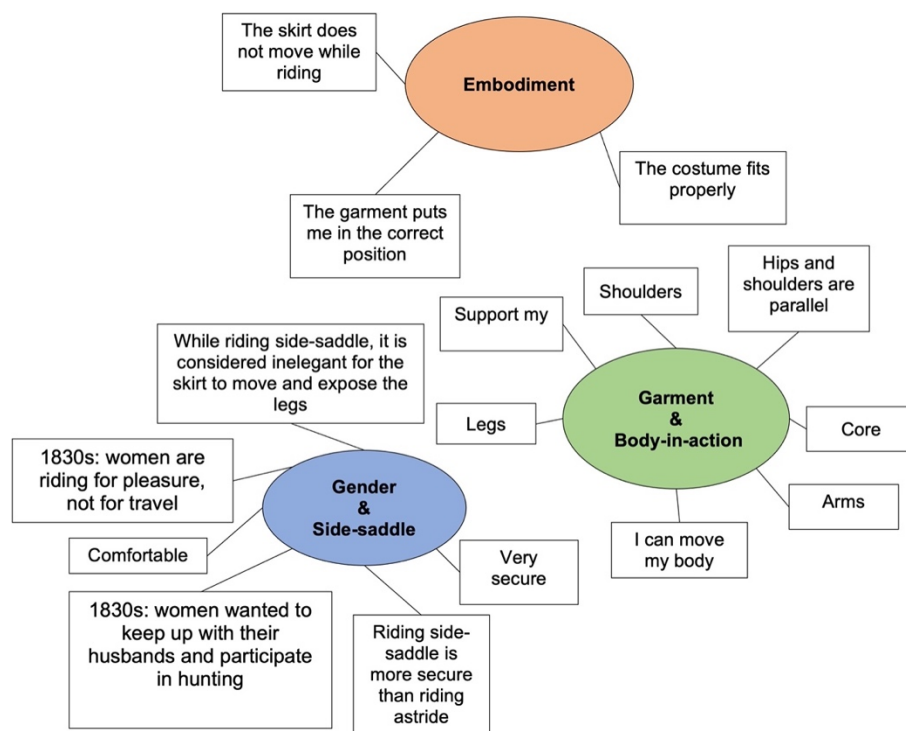


Figure 4.53: Map 3. Refining the themes.

Stage 5.

To create a thorough analysis of the data, it was necessary to review and refine the process created in stage 4. As explained by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006), at this step you evaluate if the specific themes align with the data and determine if the thematic map previously created truly represents the overall meanings presented in the data. So, the data was re-examined with two specific objectives. The first one was to determine if the themes were effective with the data set, and the next step was to encode any extra information into existing themes that were overlooked during previous

coding phases. So, the process was to ‘define and refine’ the themes; that is, identifying the important nature of each theme and understanding which part of the data each theme represents (Braun and Clarke 2006). The outcome of this improved process was illustrated in two thematic maps (Figure 4.54).

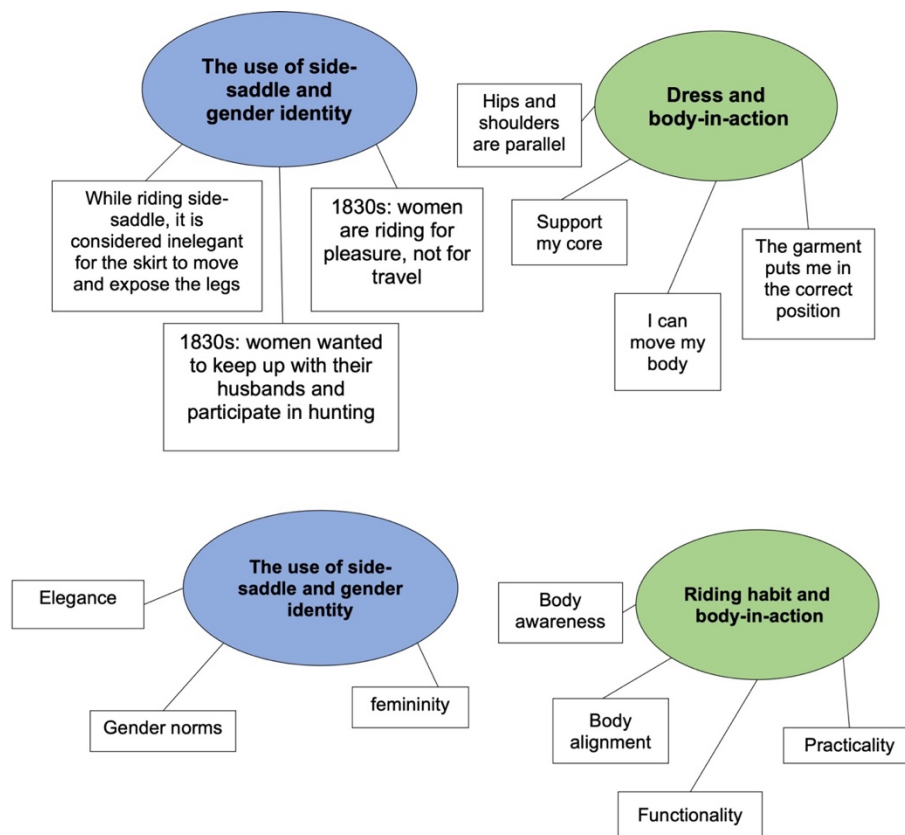


Figure 4.54: Maps 4 and 5. Defining and refining the themes.

Stage 6.

Figure 4.55 presents the themes and sub-themes identified through this overarching study involving body, garment and horse riding. (Figure 4.55). The most relevant themes and subthemes that emerged from the interview were selected based on their alignment with the thesis’s aims, objectives, and the research questions. My interest in this study was to analyse the cultural significance of the riding habit in relation to body. How did woman feel wearing a riding habit in the early- to mid-nineteenth century? What could the wearing of a re-made historical garment tell us about women’s empowerment, gender equality or inequality during the four decades under investigation? How do the interviewee’s descriptions of wearing the riding habit and her riding

experience relate to theoretical framework on embodiment, gender, and cultural practices?

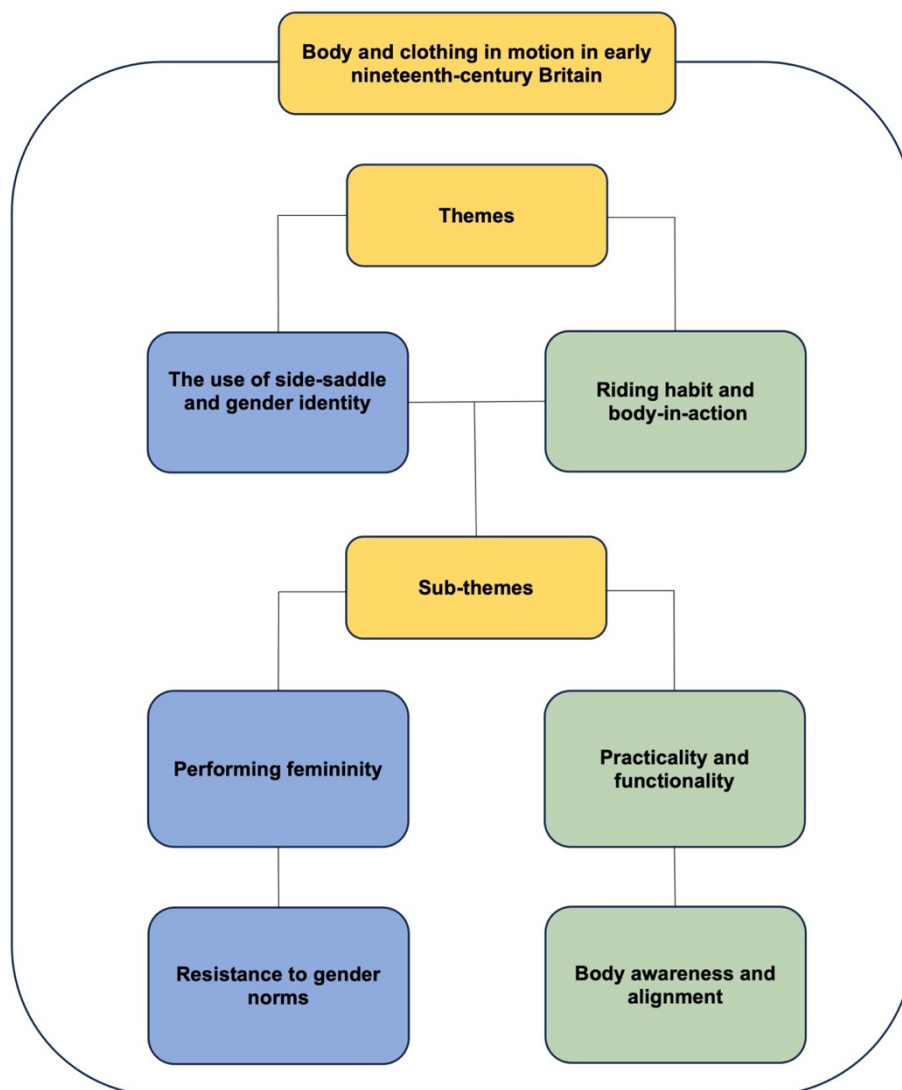


Figure 4.55: Graphic of themes and sub-themes.

In this step I analysed separately each of the themes and sub-themes created previously. At this point in the analysis, ‘identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about ... and determining what aspects of the data each theme captures’ is important (Braun and Clarke 2006, p.92).

Theme 1. The use of side-saddle and gender identity

This theme emerged from the side-saddle rider descriptions, revealing an interesting interaction between the side-saddle, gender norms, and her experience. The two sub-themes, ‘performing femininity’ and ‘resistance to

gender norms', are evident throughout the interview. 'Performing femininity' informs how the side-saddle was used to communicate or subvert traditional notions of femininity. Moreover, the interviewee describes how she embodies femininity through side-saddle riding. In the sub-theme 'Resistance to gender norms' the interviewee suggests resistance to traditional gender norms, as she mentioned the importance of being able to ride side-saddle rather than astride: 'I won a one-day-event against astride riders. I did everything with that horse because I felt so secure on him—he was a good horse, and he learned that he couldn't do anything to me, so we had a wonderful time together'. This answer suggests that the interviewee is not bound by traditional gender expectations, instead embracing the empowerment that comes with being a skilled side-saddle rider. However, in response to Question 1 she explained that she started riding side-saddle due to the elegant appearance of side-saddle riders in her local area. This emphasis on elegance may be an indication of agreeing with traditional femininity. The interviewee's language, such as 'beautiful', 'elegant', and 'lovely', reiterates the desire to embody feminine ideals. Additionally, the interviewee's emphasis on 'loveliness', 'elegance' and 'correct position' suggests the notion of performing femininity. The interviewee's narrative highlights the ways in which the side-saddle becomes a tool for performing femininity, with the horse serving as a support for demonstrating her sophistication and elegance.

In Question 2, the interviewee describes the experience of wearing a reproduction of an 1830s woman's riding habit as 'absolutely lovely'. The use of language, such as 'lovely', 'elegant', and 'delightful', highlights her enthusiasm for the garment, and the description of it as 'supporting my core' and promoting an 'effortless elegant look' further reinforces the emphasis on femininity. She goes further and highlights that the garment's ability to make her 'feel very elegant' and be put in the 'right position' suggest a desire to demonstrate femininity. The emphasis on the fabric of the garment as 'smooth' and the fact that the side-saddle material had a 'leather seat' rather than 'doeskin' material, was particularly felt while dismounting, implying a concern with preserving the illusion of elegance and sophistication. Throughout the interview, the use of language and the emphasis on the

horse's movement and the rider's posture reinforce the notion of the side-saddle as a tool for performing femininity. The descriptions of the garment as 'supporting' and 'enhancing' her body position, along with the emphasis on the 'correct posture' and 'balance' further emphasise not only the connection between the side-saddle, gender norms, and her experiences, but also how gender is performed through embodied practice.

The analysis of this theme is distinguished by the relationship between the side-saddle, gender norms, and the interviewee's experiences. The sub-themes are demonstrated throughout the interview, reflecting the interviewee's attempts to conform to traditional femininity while also resisting and negotiating social expectations.

Theme 2. Riding habit and body-in-action

The theme 'riding habit and body in action' emerged from the interview as the side-saddle rider mentioned her experience and observations about the riding habit in relation to her body. The two sub-themes, 'practicality and functionality' and 'body awareness and alignment' explore the practical and embodied aspects of side-saddle riding, with a focus on the relationship between the rider's body and the garment she wears. It also concentrates on the ways in which body and dress interact and influence each other and shape the overall experience of riding side-saddle.

The interviewee describes how the riding habit and the side-saddle work together to create a sense of security while riding; for example, when she says in response to Question 2 'it feels really good, it feels absolutely lovely, because the costume is fitting me where it needs to be, so, as a side-saddle rider I use my core, I lift and open my chest'. In Question 3 she goes further and highlights that the garment makes her feel 'elegant' and 'effortless' while riding, which is partly due to the habit's ability to support her core and help maintain good posture: 'this is what it's doing is supporting my core and so I immediately put myself in the correct position immediately'.

Throughout the interview, the interviewee draws attention to the sensations she experiences while wearing the garment and riding side-saddle. She describes feeling 'lovely' and 'elegant' while riding, and how the garment makes her feel 'lazy' because it does some of the work for her. For example, in response to Question 5 she says: 'It feels great, feels absolutely lovely, it puts me in the right position, in the correct position, so I'm feeling a little bit lazy actually because the garment is doing what the work that I should be doing'. During the interview, the use of language and emphasis on the practical and functional aspects of the riding habit reinforces the notion that the garment plays an important part on her performance and the body movement. For example, in response to Questions 7 and 9 she says that 'it supports me in all the right places' and 'doesn't restrict' movement.

Overall, this theme highlights the relationship between the side-saddle rider and woman's riding habit in relation to the body, demonstrating the ways in which the garment shapes and supports the body's movement and position while riding. Moreover, it is observed that the interviewee's description of wearing the garment emphasises the importance of body awareness and core engagement; for example, when she responds to Question 5 by saying that 'it really enhances what I need to be doing, which is sitting upright, which is using my core, engaging my core, and the garment aids all of those things ... it would be difficult to ride badly in this costume'. This suggests that the riding habit helped the interviewee to develop a greater sense of body consciousness, allowing her to move and ride more effectively. Such a response highlights the garment's potential not only as a physical support but as a structure that facilitates embodied practice and challenges the assumption that historical dress was restrictive.

Stage 7. Discussion

The interview themes illustrate a dynamic relationship between side-saddle riding, gender norms, and embodied experience. On one hand, the side-saddle acts as a tool for performing and reinforcing traditional femininity, with the riding habit becoming a symbol of grace, elegance, and propriety. On the other hand, it provides a space for resistance, allowing the rider to challenge

social expectations by demonstrating skill and physical ability in an environment that was male dominated in the early nineteenth-century. The 'riding habit and body-in-action' theme further emphasises this division by revealing how the embodied experience of side-saddle riding is deeply linked with the practical, functional aspects of the riding habit. The garment plays a critical role in shaping the rider's posture and movement, thus enhancing the physical and psychological aspects of the riding experience. Through this embodied interaction with the riding habit, the interviewee became more aware of her body, aligning it in ways that improve both the aesthetic and practical dimensions of her riding practice.

However, the exploration of historical riding habits and side-saddle practices requires further, more comprehensive theoretical discourse and elaboration on the questions they raise. For example: In what ways does the conception and presentation of the female body today differ from that of the early- to mid-nineteenth century? If such differences exist, what implications might they have for the study and analysis of the subject?

Nevertheless, this interview suggests that studying a historical reproduction of the riding habit and side-saddle riding offers a rich way to examine the connection of gender, embodiment, and identity. The rider's experience is not one of simple conformity to traditional gender norms but a negotiation of performance, resistance, and bodily consciousness. The riding habit and side-saddle, in their embodiment of femininity and functionality, serves as a space of gendered expression and empowerment, offering a way of reconciling social expectations with personal agency.

4.4.2: Riding habit, side-saddle, and embodiment

The notion that 'our bodies are not just the place from which we come to experience the world, but it is through our bodies that we come to be seen in the world' (Entwistle 2015, p.29) encourages a rethinking of the body's position within the lived experience. In this idea, the body exceeds its function as a simple instrument for physical engagement; it becomes, instead, the

channel through which we are recognised, understood, and situated within a social and cultural context. This double function of the body—as the site of experience and the means through which we are seen—emphasises the relationship between the individual and the external world. It suggests that we are not passive agents in the world but are continuously being shaped by, and reshaping, the way our bodies are sensed and perceived (Butler 1990, Foucault 1991, Merleau-Ponty 2012). At the heart of this idea lies the concept of embodiment, which refers not only to the physical presence of the body but also to how our physicality is informed by and informs social identities and relationships. Far from being a neutral or private space, the body is actively marked with social meanings that are shaped by cultural norms, historical contexts, and material circumstances. This process of marking occurs not just via the body's material form, but also through dress, which acts as an external form of identity, as explained by Julia Twigg: 'Clothes lie at the interface between the body and its social presentation, one of the ways whereby bodies are made social, given identity and meaning' (2017, p.78).

The bespoke tailored riding habit was not only a functional garment but also a cultural construct that played an important part in shaping and reflecting the embodied experiences of women in the early- to mid-nineteenth century. As a practice, riding side-saddle required a specific bodily posture, one that was facilitated through the wearing of the riding habit. This relationship between garment and bodily movement, as discussed in the interview analysis above, stresses how the riding habit was integral to the practicality and the cultural significance of side-saddle riding, enhancing the rider's posture while simultaneously reinforcing the cultural statement of femininity. The body, clothed in the riding habit, became a powerful embodiment of a woman's agency, enabling her to navigate and challenge social norms while maintaining her position within public and private spheres. In this way, the riding habit not only shaped personal and collective identity but also allowed the body to act as a dynamic force—engaging with the world and asserting individuality.

When we consider embodiment in this context, we recognise that the body is not a passive object, but an active participant in the construction of meaning. The notion of being seen through the body is not merely about visual perception; it also involves the ways in which the body asserts, expresses, and redefines identity through cultural codes. In the case of the riding habit, the body becomes a site of empowerment, marked by a combination of social codes: the upright posture required by the side-saddle, the balance maintained by the rider, and the attention to the aesthetics of the habit. This 'meticulous construction' of the body, far from being a restriction, becomes a means through which the woman states her presence and agency. She is not merely performing gendered expectations but actively shaping them, using her posture and the wearing of the riding habit to reclaim and redefine femininity. Drawing on Judith Butler's theory of performativity, we can see that the body, through its repeated actions and presentations, not only performs but also reshapes socially constructed identities (1990). The woman on the side-saddle, dressed in the riding habit, is performing and redefining her role in society—challenging and changing the way society looks at and judges her.

Moreover, the embodied experience of riding side-saddle—marked by its elegant balance, movement, and aesthetic precision—reveals the powerful ways in which the body becomes a site of visibility and expression. The physical posture, the bespoke tailored fit of the habit, and the distinctive way of sitting on the horse all contribute to the creation of a particular form of 'visibility'. This visibility, however, is not simply about being observed; but rather about defending women's presence and identity in ways that challenge and redefine the norms of gender and modesty. The side-saddle, in this sense, is not just a mode of riding; it is a visual marker that inscribes the body within a cultural and historical context, empowering the woman to navigate and command her space in society. In her precise, controlled movement, the woman's body on the side-saddle becomes a symbol of feminine strength and self-possession. The early to mid-nineteenth-century riding habit and side-saddle together represent a moment in history where the body is not merely a passive object to be judged but a way in which women engaged with the public sphere and stated their identity. The body, dressed in the riding habit,

is the means through which the woman actively interacts with society—by riding in parks and the countryside (Figure 4.56). It is also the way through which society comes to ‘see’ her. How her body is perceived—whether as a symbol of grace or power—is shaped by the cultural meanings woven into the act of riding and the purposeful construction of the riding habit itself.



Figure 4.56: Jim. Illustration by Phiz (Hablot Knight Browne), steel engraving for *Roland Cashel*, Chapter XXXV, ‘Miss Jemima Meek’, January 1849.

The body is not just the instrument through which we experience the world; it is the means by which we are seen, recognised, and positioned within the social order. The embodied experience of the riding habit and side-saddle provides a convincing example of how the body is simultaneously a personal site of engagement with the world and a public display that reflects social values. As demonstrated in the above interview analysis, the riding habit shapes the body’s posture, and the side-saddle reconfigures the relationship between body, movement, and visibility, highlighting the social dynamics that shape how we are seen. The analysis of embodiment via such historical perspective offers a better understanding of the ways in which body, dress, and social perception interconnect, and how these interconnections continue to inform contemporary understandings of identity and power.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

As noted in the introduction, this project began during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic—a moment that radically altered the way we engage with everyday life, particularly in terms of communication and access. With museums closed during lockdowns and forced to change to digital platforms, the project had to adapt to new limitations. Rather than functioning as a disruption that constrained the research, these conditions became part of the methodological development of the study, reinforcing the use of triangulation between digital archives, material analysis, and reconstructive practice. Despite the challenges, the constraints of the situation encouraged a creative approach to the research, which contributed to the successful completion of this project and supported the development of re-making as an adaptive research method grounded in working with limited and fragmentary access to material evidence.

This understanding of methodological adaptability also reinforces the theoretical position established in 0.3 *Role and purpose of the practice*, where making and re-making were framed as a form of historical knowledge making rather than a representational or illustrative practice. Within this framework, this process is not positioned as a means of recovering a fixed past, but as an interpretative and generative process in which knowledge is produced through material engagement. In this sense, the methodological constraints encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic further underscore the theoretical value of practice-related research, where making becomes a primary mode of inquiry rather than a supplementary method of illustration. This aligns with wider experimental and heritage-based approaches to making (Coles 1973, Carrell 1992, and Mathieu 2002).

Through the process of researching men's frock coats and women's riding habits—alongside the re-making process and the embodied relationship connecting body and clothing—this study explored the influences between the craft of bespoke tailoring and the ways in which dress can reinforce, or challenge gender narratives culturally assigned to women. This includes the

collaborative embodied contribution of a professional side-saddle rider, whose specialist practice provided a form of knowledge in which the riding habit could be tested in motion. Rather than functioning as participant observation, this interaction is understood as a form of co-produced embodied enquiry between practitioner, garment, and researcher. Her role also informed the refinement of the research questions, especially in relation to how bespoke tailored garments influence movement and femininity in historical riding contexts. The research followed a line of enquiry that aimed to make visible the boundaries of gender between 1820 and 1860. Using triangulation—bringing together material culture analysis, garment making, and embodied research as a process of knowing—the project accessed museum collections, generated data through the examination of historical dress, re-made an 1830s man's frock coat and a woman's riding habit, and used the physical experience of wearing the habit to examine how dress shapes a person's sense of self—and how that sense is perceived by others. In doing so, the study demonstrates that tailoring practices function not only as technical processes of making, but also as mechanisms in which gendered identities are produced, negotiated, and experienced through the body.

This methodological approach offered an innovative way of researching dress and gender, combining theory—as the framework through which we interpret, analyse, and communicate—with practice as a generative process that produces knowledge through action. Observing a historically riding habit enabled new understandings of dress in motion, 'revealing its motile and spatial qualities [of clothing worn] on a body in motion' (O'Neill 2021, p.295). For their part, the study of material culture and garment re-making demonstrated how techniques of male tailoring were adopted and adapted across gender lines—migrating from masculine to feminine dress—and how this facilitated modified experiences and performances of gender. This phenomenon, which I coined 'cross-tailoring', emerges in this study as an analytical framework developed through the interaction between bespoke tailoring, equestrian expertise, and material analysis for understanding how tailoring practices operate across gendered boundaries in nineteenth-century dress. It speaks to a form of self-determined femininity expressed by

nineteenth-century horsewomen, capturing the intersection of garment-making, gender, embodiment, and cultural expectations during the period under investigation.

Taken together, these observations demonstrate that the use of cross-tailoring not only draws attention to the technical skill embedded in bespoke tailoring but also reveals how its conventions were reinterpreted to accommodate the shifting cultural, social, and gendered dynamics that shaped fashion during a time of social change. This period was characterised by shifting ideas about gender and the role of women in the public sphere, all of which were mirrored in the clothes women wore, particularly in contexts that challenged traditional gender expectations, such as horse riding and hunting. Over these four decades, the making of women's riding dress became more than a functional adaptation of men's tailored garments; it emerged as a means of negotiating new expressions of femininity and women's presence in public sphere. The development of the riding habit was not only an evolution in garment construction but also a symbol of women's growing participation in activities previously dominated by men—a finding that reinforces the central argument of this thesis that tailoring practices participated in shaping, rather than simply reflecting, gendered identities in early- to mid-nineteenth-century dress. In this sense, embodied collaboration with the side-saddle rider is not supplementary to the methodology but central to how knowledge about tailoring, gender, and movement is produced in this thesis.

This sartorial fusion lies at the heart of this study, which was guided by two central questions: first, how did bespoke tailoring techniques of cutting, shaping, and making British upper-class men's frock coats influence the construction of women's riding habits between 1820 and 1860? And secondly, can the concept of cross-tailoring help us to understand shifts in gender as it relates to power and female identity as reflected in early- to mid-nineteenth-century women's dress? These questions guided the investigation into how the techniques of bespoke tailoring—historically associated with men's clothing—became integral to the redefinition of women's clothing, especially

in relation to corporeal activities of femininity. Together, they frame the study's contribution: that tailoring practices operated as processes in which gendered identities were shaped and reconfigured through dress. In what follows, I reflect on Chapters One to Four in relation to the overall aims and objectives of the research, focusing on their contribution to the development of this argument.

In Chapter One, *Contextualising the Study*, I set the stage for my research by analysing the historical and conceptual foundations through an exploration of early cultural and social attitudes toward women's equestrianism and dress. I examined how early evidence—for example, Giraldus Cambrensis' twelfth-century observations—demonstrated that women once rode astride, and how this practice was gradually redefined as improper because of the growing moral and religious anxieties around modesty and sexuality. This analysis illustrated how the introduction and popularisation of the side-saddle reflected ideas of femininity and bodily comportment. I also explored the emergence of the riding habit in this context, with a focus on its construction, materials, and its early commissioning by male tailors. In doing so, the chapter establishes the historical and conceptual foundations for understanding how tailoring practices became embedded in the making of women's equestrian dress.

It demonstrates that, while earlier scholarship has addressed either the symbolic meanings of women's garments or the technical aspects of historical dress, this study makes an original contribution by integrating these approaches within a practice-based framework, an area of research that is still developing within dress and material culture studies. By drawing on the work of Janet Arnold, Norah Waugh, and Erica Munkwitz, and by integrating this with insights from embodied research, the chapter demonstrates how the riding habit functioned as a site where traditional masculine tailoring was reinterpreted for the female form. A key contribution of this chapter is therefore the identification of riding dress as a site of technical transformation, where pattern cutting and construction practices reveal the intersection of gender, function, and materiality.

An important finding observed in this chapter is the extent to which women's equestrian clothing developed in direct response to changing notions of propriety, gender, and the female body. This points to the attire not simply as functional garments but as a material expression of cultural negotiations around gender identity. The historical development of the riding habit, including its tailored construction and silhouette, suggests that women's public engagement in activities like riding was made possible through forms of dress that simultaneously reinforced and redefined gender boundaries. This observation contributes to the aims of the research: to investigate how tailoring techniques shaped the relationship between clothing, identity, and gender. Furthermore, it also connects to my first research question, by beginning to identify how male tailoring practices were incorporated into the making of women's garments, and to the second, by demonstrating how these garments functioned as tools for negotiating shifting gender roles.

In Chapter Two, Understanding Discourses of Gender, I explored the interconnected relationships between fashion, the body, gender, and identity, in order to establish the conceptual framework through which tailored women's riding dress can be analysed. Informed by the work of theorists such as Joanne Entwistle, Anne Hollander, Judith Butler, and Agnès Rocamora, I examined how clothing not only reflects but also shapes the gendered experience of the body in public space. The chapter emphasised that dress is not a neutral covering but a performative means in which gender can be constructed and perceived. By outlining how cultural codes of femininity were reinforced and occasionally subverted through dress, this chapter offered insights into the conceptual functions of clothing, as in the example of the tailored riding habit and how it enabled women's participation in public life. The case of Anne Lister, whose masculine-influenced dress marked her resistance to normative gender roles, illustrated how clothing could be used to contest as well as comply with social expectations. Similarly, the analysis of Ann Walker's costume in the *Gentleman Jack* series underscored the significance of historically tailored dress in reimagining past gender identities for modern audiences. While the chapter focused primarily on upper-class men and women with access to bespoke tailoring and leisure activities, it also

pointed to the limitation of this study's scope in relation to class. This opens potential directions for future research, particularly in exploring how class influenced women's riding dress and how tailored garments may have revealed and obscured women's social status in public life.

In Chapter Three, *Bespoke Tailored Garments, 1820 – 1860*, I offered a detailed account of the development and transformation of bespoke tailored frock coats and riding habits in Britain between 1820 and 1860. The chapter demonstrated how the frock coat evolved gradually during this period, retaining its association with craftsmanship and formal male dress. It revealed key stylistic changes, such as the introduction of the waist seam, side panels, and changes in silhouette and padding, while emphasising that bespoke tailoring remained an area defined by manual skill and individual fit. In parallel, the chapter traced the evolution of the women's riding habit, which adopted structural and stylistic elements from men's tailoring—such as fitted bodices, military detailing, and durable wool fabrics—while accommodating the needs of the female form and the functional demands of equestrian activity. I discussed changes in sleeve styles, bodice shaping, and skirt length over these decades in relation to shifting fashion norms and practical considerations.

Although primarily descriptive, this chapter plays an important contextual contribution in the thesis by consolidating the material and technical groundwork necessary for understanding the wider implications of bespoke tailoring practices. It brings together historical and sartorial analysis that informs and reinforces the explanatory discussions developed throughout the thesis. It situates the garments within their historical moment and sets out the specific tailoring practices that are central to the research. In doing so, the chapter supports the thesis's reflections by helping to examine how bespoke techniques inform our understanding of gendered clothing in this period. It also contributes to the overall objective of combining material culture with embodied and technical analysis, by documenting how tailored garments reflected and responded to cultural and social shifts. This chapter does not offer an analytical interpretation of gendered identity, but it provides the

essential groundwork for the thesis's exploration of how women's clothing adapted traditionally masculine tailoring techniques. It helps to frame the final reflections on how these garments became vehicles for expressing changing notions of femininity in early- to mid-nineteenth-century Britain.

In Chapter Four, Methodological Framework, I established the practice-related framework that underpins this research, aligning with my overall aim to investigate how bespoke tailoring techniques shaped the making of women's riding habits in the period under investigation. In relation to my research questions, the methodology was designed to explore and support the technical processes of tailoring and the cultural meanings of these clothes. To meet the research aims and objectives, I adopted a triangulated methodological approach, combining:

- Object-based analysis, treating period clothing as historical evidence.
- Garment re-making, using bespoke tailoring techniques to understand its historical practices.
- Embodied research, exploring how the garments shaped physical movement and gendered presentation in space.

This innovative approach was created for its ability to draw connections between practices and theoretical frameworks, allowing tailoring to be understood as a technical craft and a cultural element. In doing so, the chapter made a methodological contribution by demonstrating how historical tailoring techniques can be critically examined through making, and how re-making can provide insight into the embodied experience of dress. A key finding from this chapter is that the act of re-making garments is not simply a reproduction of the past, but a way of interrogating how clothes shaped and reflected social norms around female identity. The methodology provided a means of asking not just how garments were made, but how they were worn, moved in, and perceived within social context. In terms of significance, the chapter supports the argument that tailoring was central to shaping gendered individualities. In this way, the methodology bridges technical dress history and questions of

identity and agency, contributing to the development of cross-tailoring as a framework for understanding how tailoring practices shaped femininity.

However, the approach of re-making historical dress presents some limitations that can benefit from further exploration and development, such as the absence of a formalised framework for evaluating the knowledge produced through the process of re-making. Although scholars such as Janet Arnold and Norah Waugh, whom I have used as references in this project, have in the past contributed to the study of re-making in dress history, there remains a gap in the theoretical and methodological language that defines how reconstructed garments should be interpreted as historical evidence. While the study of object analysis and material culture—such as the ones used in this methodology—in dress history has long benefited from an established structure, the experiential nature of re-making, which, as demonstrated in this research, is central to understanding the lived experience of historical garments, does not always fit into traditional scholarly approaches. As Hilary Davidson has noted, there is growing recognition of re-making as a valid form of academic inquiry, yet the field still lacks shared protocols, terminology, or analytical frameworks for evaluating knowledge produced through making (2019). This project contributes to that developing conversation by highlighting some of the practical and conceptual considerations involved in re-making, and by pointing to ways such knowledge might be more systematically interpreted and communicated. In doing so, it helps establish a foundation for more critically reflective practices, which subsequent studies can build upon to develop more formalised approaches and scholarship.

Building on the discussion above, important areas for further research emerge, including:

1. Defining best practices for re-making methods: as this methodology grows, there is a need for more standardised practices in garment re-making. Future studies could aim to clarify how recreated garments

can be interpreted, documented, and communicated within scholarly discourse.

2. Translating embodied knowledge into academic formats: The knowledge gained through the embodied act of re-making—how it feels, moves, or fits the body—holds valuable information but is often hard to translate into traditional academic formats. Future research should explore innovative ways of incorporating this embodied experience into written scholarship.

These questions and challenges highlight that while this methodology brings different visions into the study of historical dress, there is still work to be done in developing a comprehensive framework. It is important to consider that re-making historical dress is not merely about reproducing an object. Rather, it is about using the making process to explore and test theoretical ideas. This approach presents an exciting opportunity to uncover original evidence that challenges common assumptions about dress and fashion, while also contributing to ongoing debates around the value of re-making historical garments as a rigorous and reflective method of study.

Moving forward, I reflect on the next steps in my research journey. Building on the triangulated methodology developed in this thesis, I see significant potential to explore how clothing can continue to serve as an entry point to questioning gender identity and embodied experience—particularly through the act of re-making. By expanding on how practice can be meaningfully integrated with theory, further research can generate new forms of academic knowledge. The bespoke tailoring techniques examined here have functioned not only as historical subjects but also as theoretical tools. The act of making, when situated within a critical framework, becomes a way of thinking. Future research will continue to explore how these embodied, technical practices can be articulated alongside theoretical concepts from gender studies, material culture, and performance theory. As mentioned earlier, this intersection between doing and thinking, between the tactile and the conceptual, remains a generative and under-examined space in fashion and dress studies.

As this research has demonstrated, garments such as the women's riding habit operate as material evidence and symbolic agents, influencing and reflecting shifts in nineteenth-century gender norms. Further investigation into how clothing acts as a site of memory, negotiation, and social identity—particularly through re-making and embodied practice—can open new conversations within fashion history and gender studies. This can include integrating computerised techniques, as demonstrated by Alistair O'Neill in *Exploding Fashion*, where he combines aspects of contextual research—addressing the historical period of the clothing's design, the fashionable body, and expressions of gesture and pose—to inform the working process. This is followed by digital visualisation to illuminate the construction methods of surviving dress, and then by capturing and adding motion in a 'mocap' (motion capture) studio, turning the footage into digital coding (2021). The advent of Artificial Intelligence opens up new possibilities in which it can support the exploration of garment making or re-making beyond cut and construction, allowing for a further investigation into how garments were produced, and potentially revealing methods or materials that may not otherwise be easily identifiable—perhaps by analysing visual data such as historical images and paintings to help reconstruct patterns or garments shapes.

Other key questions I take from this work are: how can making as a research method be discussed in academic context without losing the unique details and understandings that practice provides? My research shows that the embodied, sensory knowledge gained through engagement with historical garments offers insights that complement traditional textual analysis. This knowledge can be validated and shared through documentation, reflective practice, and a dialogue that acknowledges the interpretative nature of re-making. What kinds of findings are produced through the engagement with historical garments, and how can these be validated, shared, and theorised? The findings produced are naturally experiential and embodied, revealing aspects of historical dress that are inaccessible through written sources alone. They are contextualised by situating practice within frameworks of material culture and embodied studies, as well as by acknowledging the interpretative decisions involved in re-making as part of the research process.

I am particularly interested in contributing to the ongoing conversation around the 'embodied turn' in fashion studies, and how re-making methodologies can be used not merely to recreate the past, but to critically reflect on it. Furthermore, I aim to reflect more critically on the limitations and challenges of 'triangulation' in qualitative research. While triangulation can help in understanding complex issues, it can also be time-consuming and may result in conflicting or confusing data due to the use of multiple methods. I also want to consider more critically the limitations and challenges of practice-based methods: the uncertainty involved in re-making when not all original details are available, the absence of the original body, and the gaps left by incomplete sources. Rather than seeing these as obstacles, I view them as productive tensions that require further methodological reflection, which improves the rigor of practice-related research.

The question of how such interpretative decisions are recognised and articulated within research becomes central here. By acknowledging these analytical acts, scholars contribute to more critically engaged scholarship. Central to this project is the contribution of cross-tailoring as a key interpretative framework, which connects the adoption of bespoke tailoring techniques across garments with the material and embodied production of gender. In this sense, the thesis makes a specific contribution to knowledge by demonstrating that historical pattern cutting and tailoring practices are not only technical procedures, but processes in which femininity is constructed, negotiated, and understood through dress.

Taken together, these findings position cross-tailoring as the central mechanism in which this thesis demonstrates how practice-related research in historical dress can generate new knowledge about gender, materiality, and embodiment. Ultimately, this research contributes to evolving discourse around practice as a rigorous form of scholarly inquiry. It invites a rethinking of how we construct knowledge in fashion history and how practice can operate not as an illustration of theory, but as a theory-generating process in its own right.

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Appendices

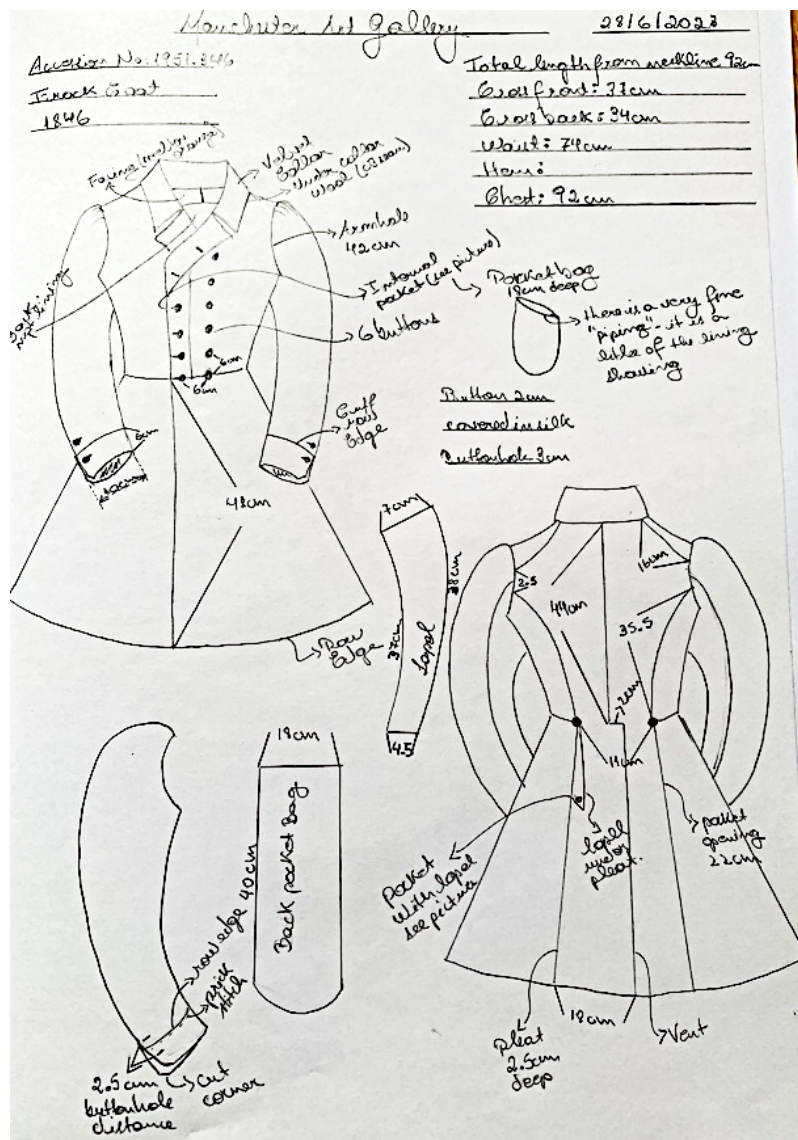
The following pages of this thesis contain the appendices, which are organised into sections. These sections include documents and materials related to the research process.

Appendix 1

This section highlights the data that I collected during the museum visit studies. It includes the drawings that I made with annotations of measurements and other information necessary for the making process. Also included are photographs of specific parts of the objects that were important for the re-making of the garments.

Manchester Art Gallery

Double breasted frock coat, 1846, accession number 1951.346.



Sketch: front, back and details



View of the back



View of the back concealed pocket



View of the front lapel



View of the front lini



View of the sleeve lining hem



View of the collar canvas



View of the back facing padding



View of the front lining padding



Taking measurement of the front lining padding length



Taking measurement of the hem



Taking measurement of the neck facing



Taking measurement of the back vent



Taking measurement of the cuff length



Taking measurement of the cuff width

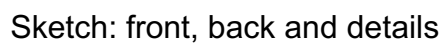


Taking measurement of the front dart



Taking measurement of the shoulder seam

Double breasted frock coat, 1859, accession number 1952.215.





View of the back



View of the front lapel



View of the back armhole and sleeve head seam



View of the upper section of the back vent



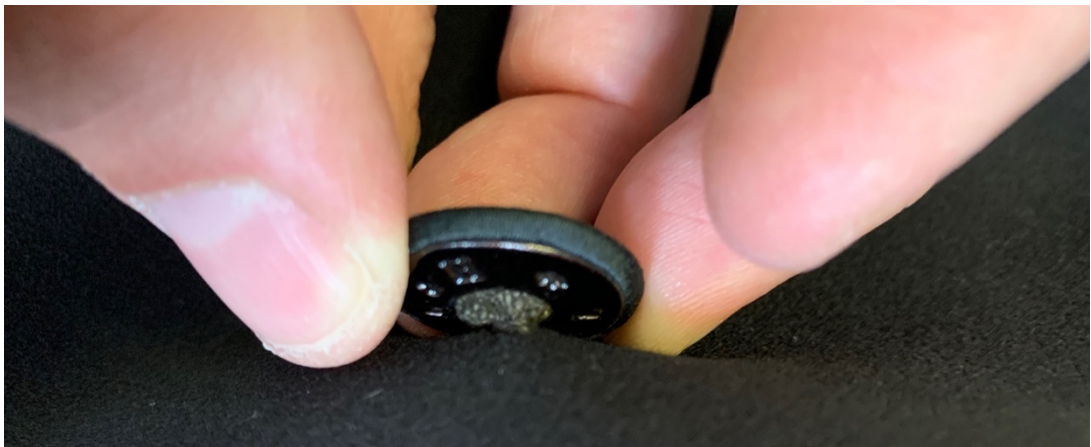
View of the under collar



View of the outside seam



View of the buttonhole



View of the button



View of the internal hem seam joining two fabric pieces



View of the lining



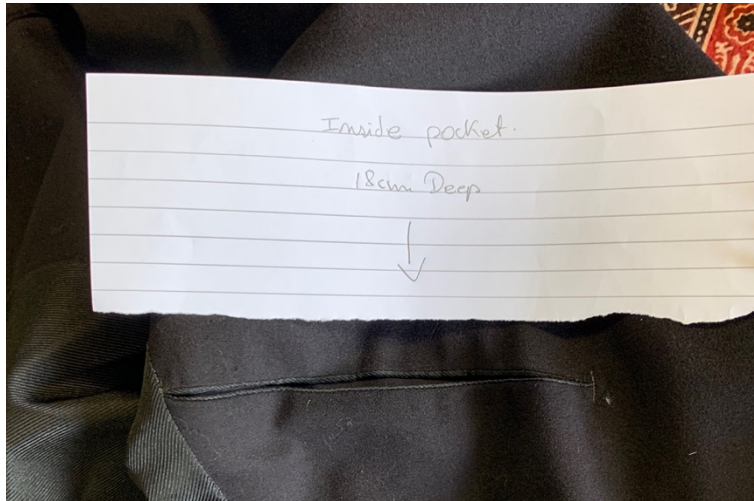
View of the upper internal section of the back vent



View of the sleeve lining hem



View of the internal seam



View of the internal pocket



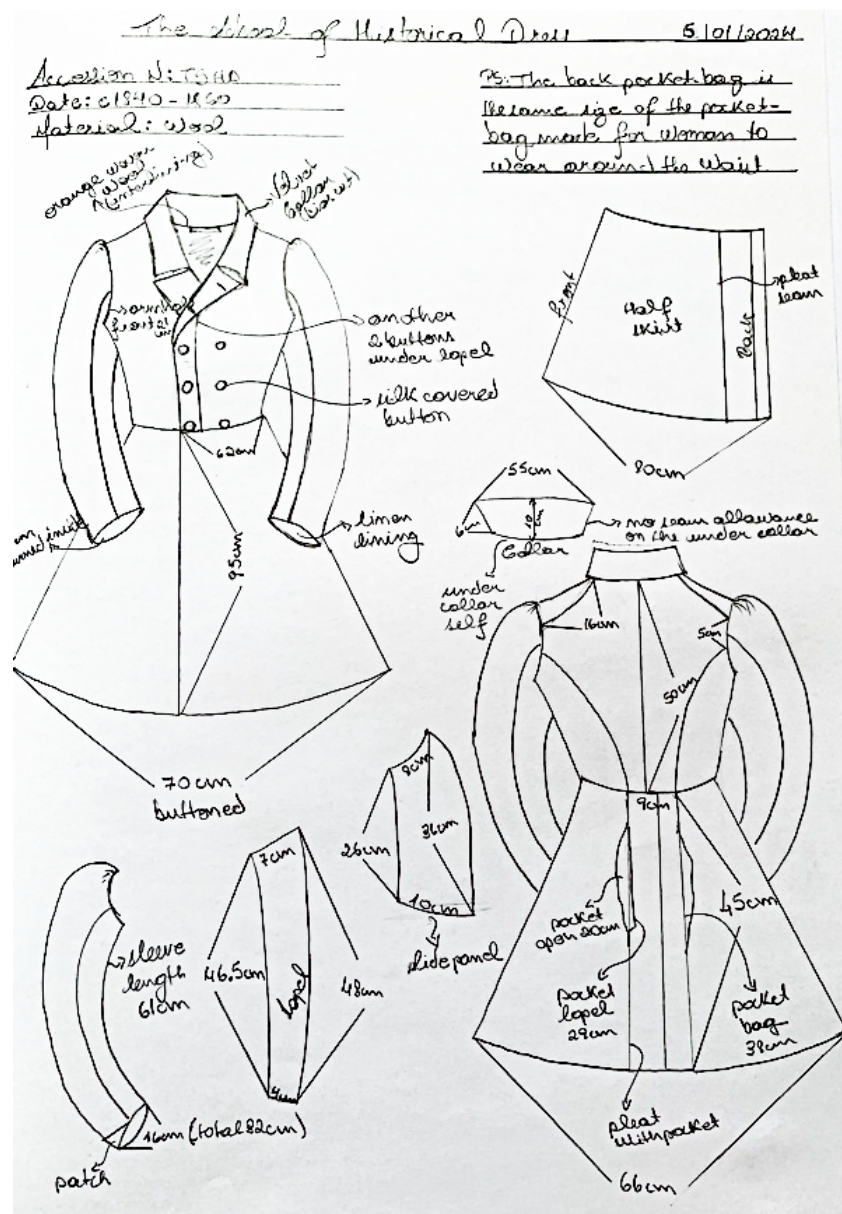
Taking measurement of the collar width



Taking measurement of the internal front waist

The School of Historical Dress

Double breasted frock coat, c.1840-60, accession number N/A.



Sketch: front, back and details



View of the back



View of the velvet collar



View of the under collar



View of the undercollar padding stitches



View of the padding stitches and buttonhole under the lapel



View of the sidebody



View of the back concealed pocket



View of the back concealed pocket linin



View of the skirt lining extending to the edge with no facing



View of the vent showing internal seam allowance



View of the stitches attaching the lining hem to the fabric hem



View of the back facing padding (overview)



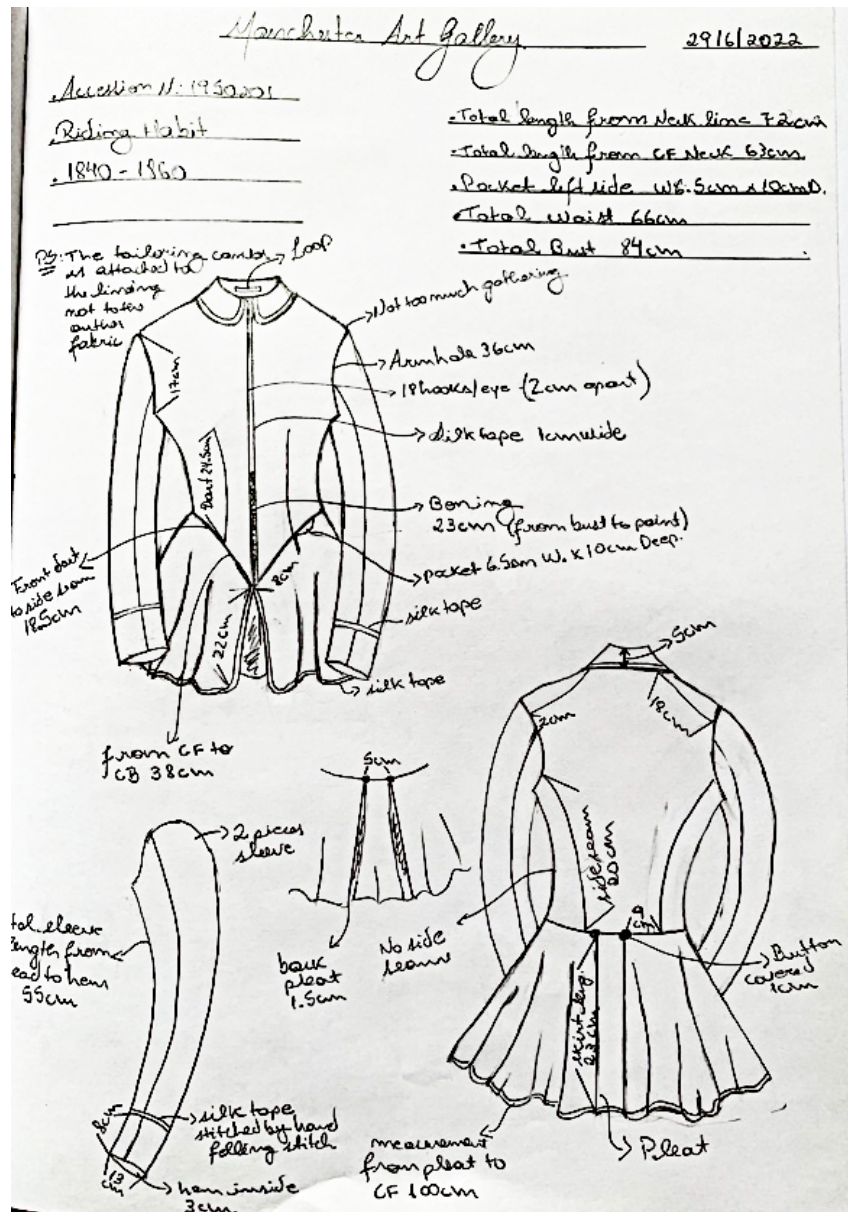
View of the back facing padding (detail)



View of the back facing padding (close-up)

Manchester Art Gallery

Woman's riding habit jacket, c.1840-60, accession number 1950.201.



Sketch: front, back and details



View of the back



View of the colla



View of the under collar



View of the sleeve



View of the armhole



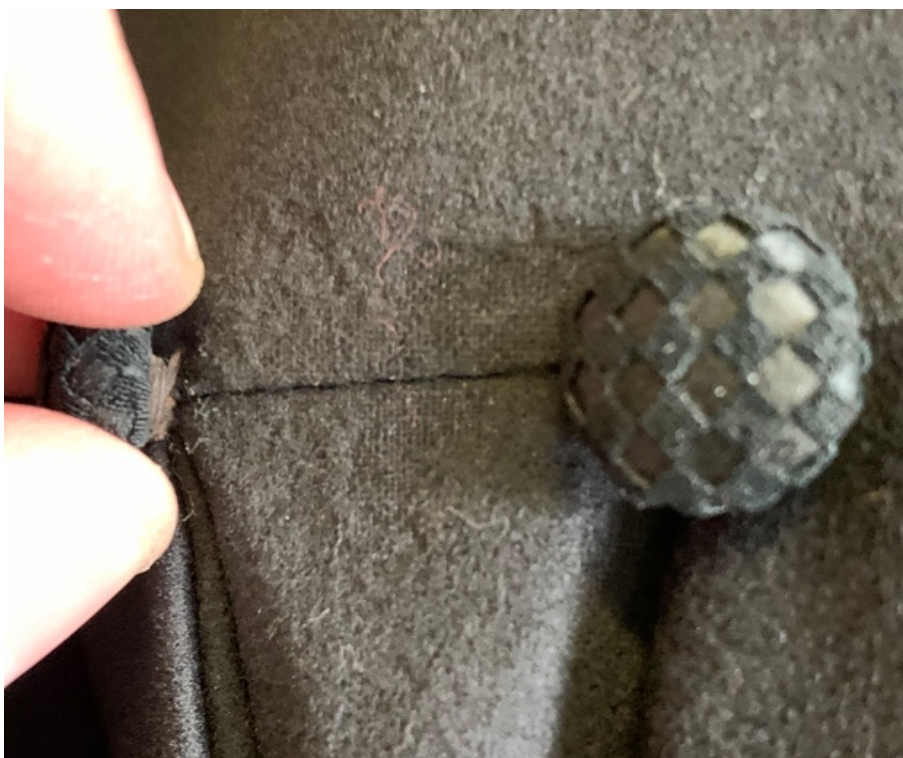
View of the sleeve lining



View of the waist seam pocket



View of the hook fastenings at the front



View of the buttons at the back waist seam



View of the fabric piece attached to the lining at the armhole

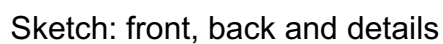


Taking measurement of the back pleat



Taking measurement of the cuff

(a).





View of the back



View of the back skirt pleat (overview)



View of the back skirt pleat (close-up)



View of the side of the back skirt



View of the fine piping detail at the skirt hem showing damage



View of the lapel fastening under the collar



View of the lapel fastened open



View of the lapel unfastened



View of the cuff with buttons and buttonhole



View of the sleeve lining



View of the armhole lining



View of the armhole lining showing damage



View of the front facing showing internal boning



View of the hook fastenings at the front



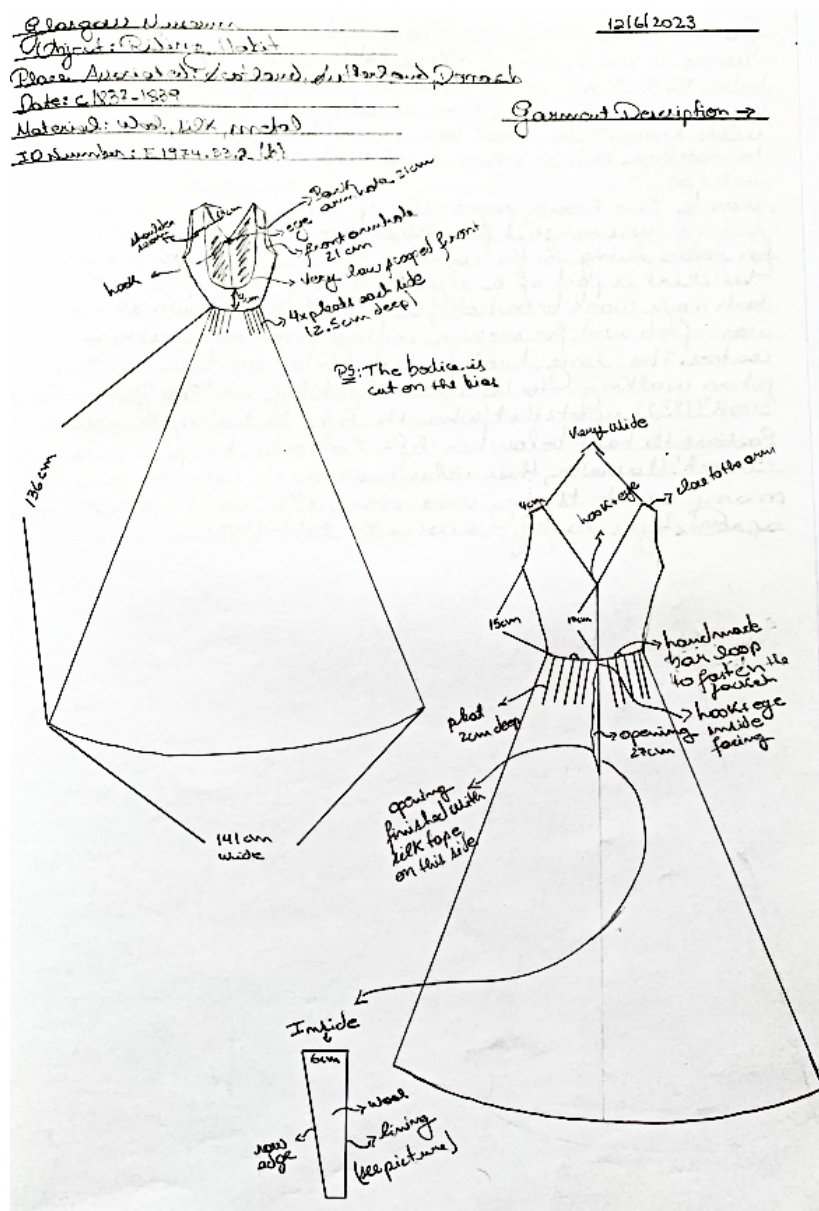
View of the hook fastenings at the inside waist seam



Taking measurement of the bodice

Woman's riding habit skirt, c.1837-39, accession number E1974.33.1

(b).



Sketch: front, back and details



View of the back



View of the skirt pleats



View of the front of the bodice



View of the bodice strap



View of the open back of the bodice



View of the inside front of the bodice



View of the accession number and eye fastening



View of the back opening with fabric tab



View of the lining of the fabric tab



View of the inside tape finishing the back opening



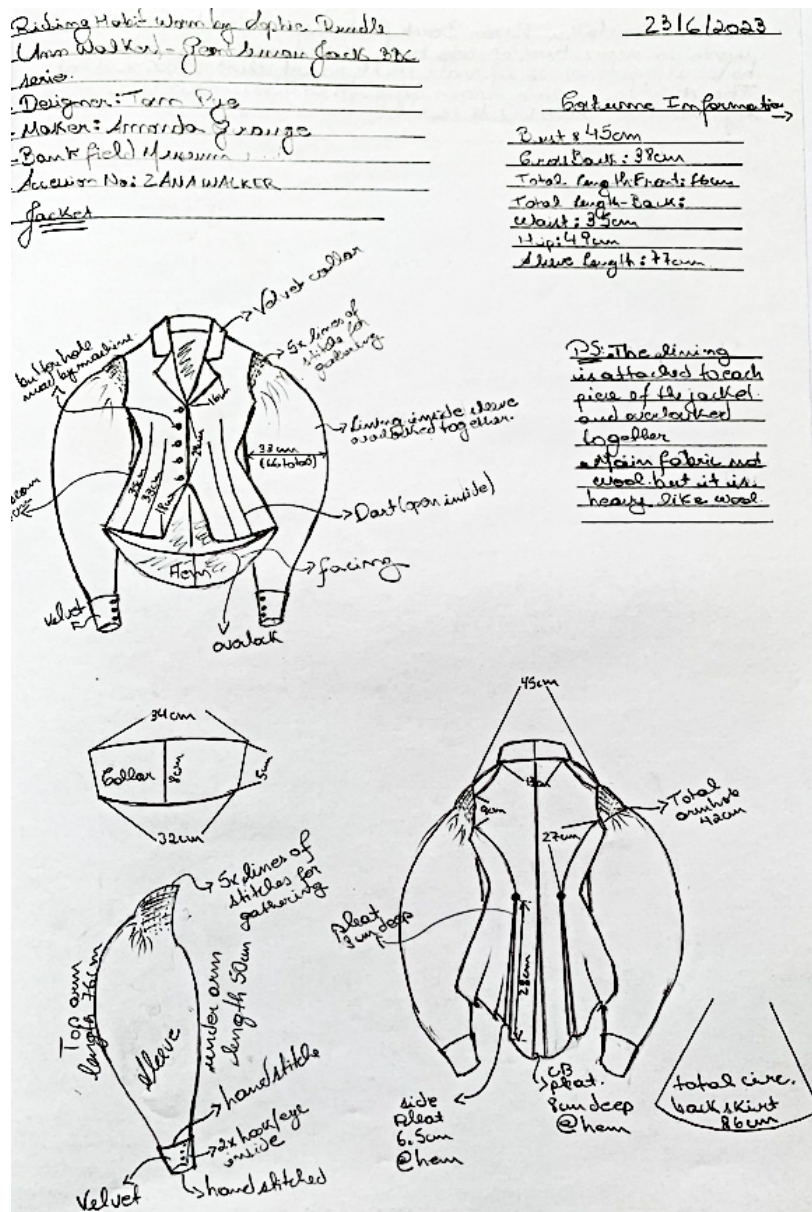
Taking measurement of the front of the bodice



Taking measurement of the back of the bodice

Bankfield Museum

Woman's riding habit jacket, c.2001-22, accession number 2023.36 (a).



Sketch: front, back and details



View of the front on the mannequin



View of the back on the mannequin



View of the back on the table



View of the shoulder and sleeve head pleats



View of the fastened cuff



View of the unfastened cuff



View of the back skirt pleat



Taking measurement of the back pleat at the hem



Taking measurement of the back pleat at the waist



Taking measurement of the bodice



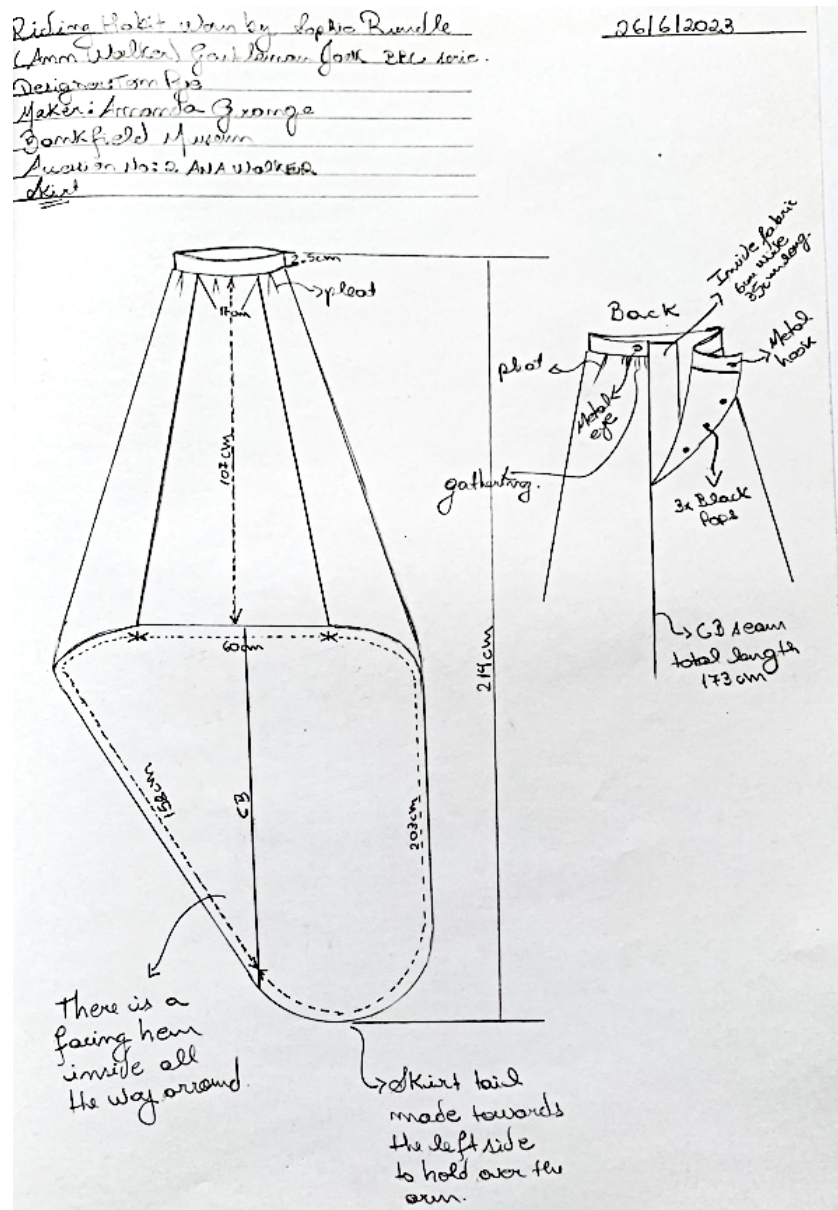
Taking measurement of the neckline from top neck to end of V-neck



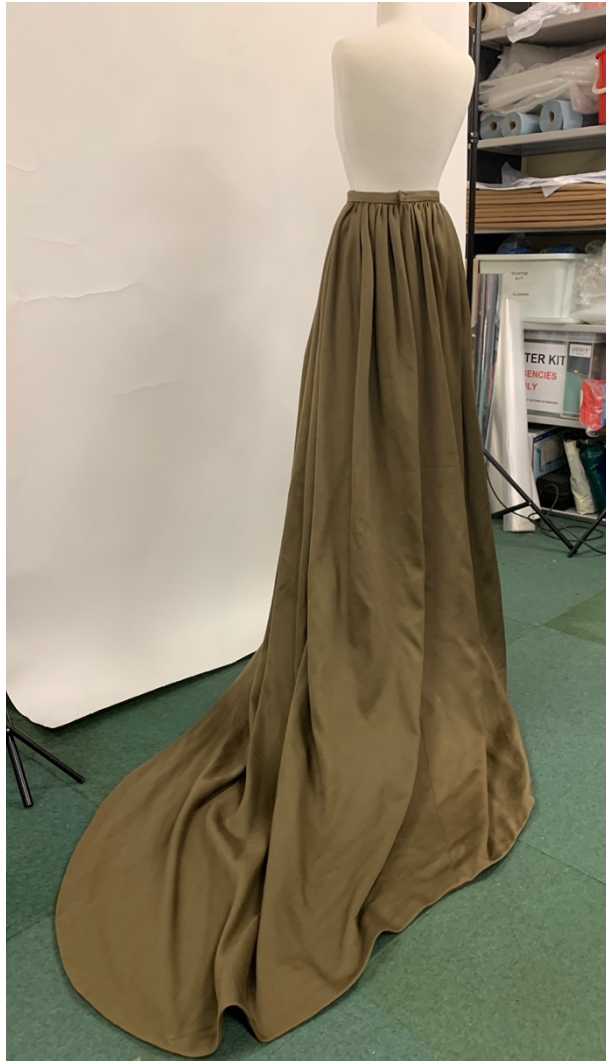
Taking measurement of the neckline across centre front

Bankfield Museum

Woman's riding habit skirt, c.2001-22, accession number 2023.36 (b).



Sketch: front, back and details



View of the back on the mannequin



View of the back opening with fabric tab and fastening



View of the front skirt pleats



View of the back skirt pleats



View of the outfit: skirt, jacket, and hat

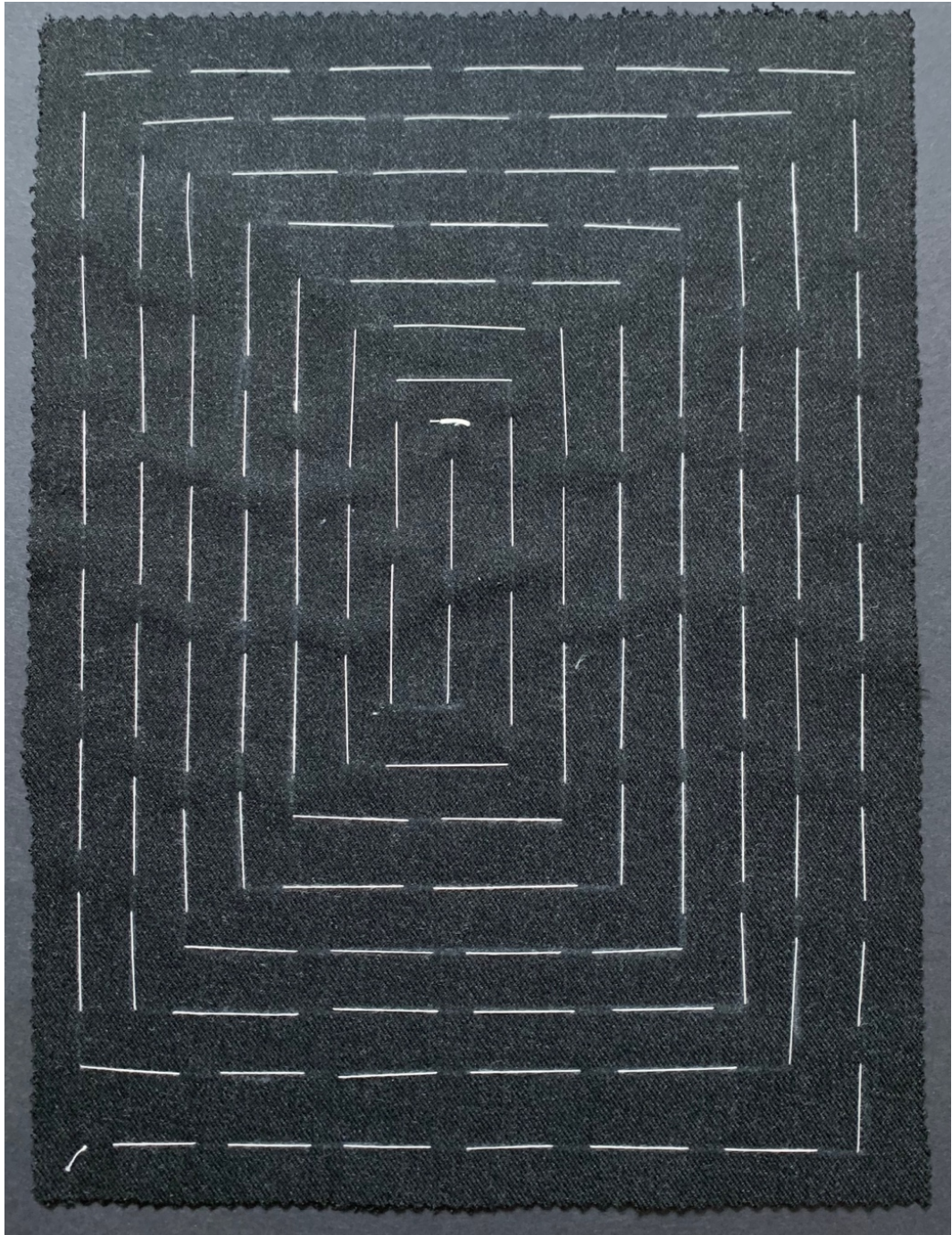


View of the character name label (Anne Walker) attached to the garment

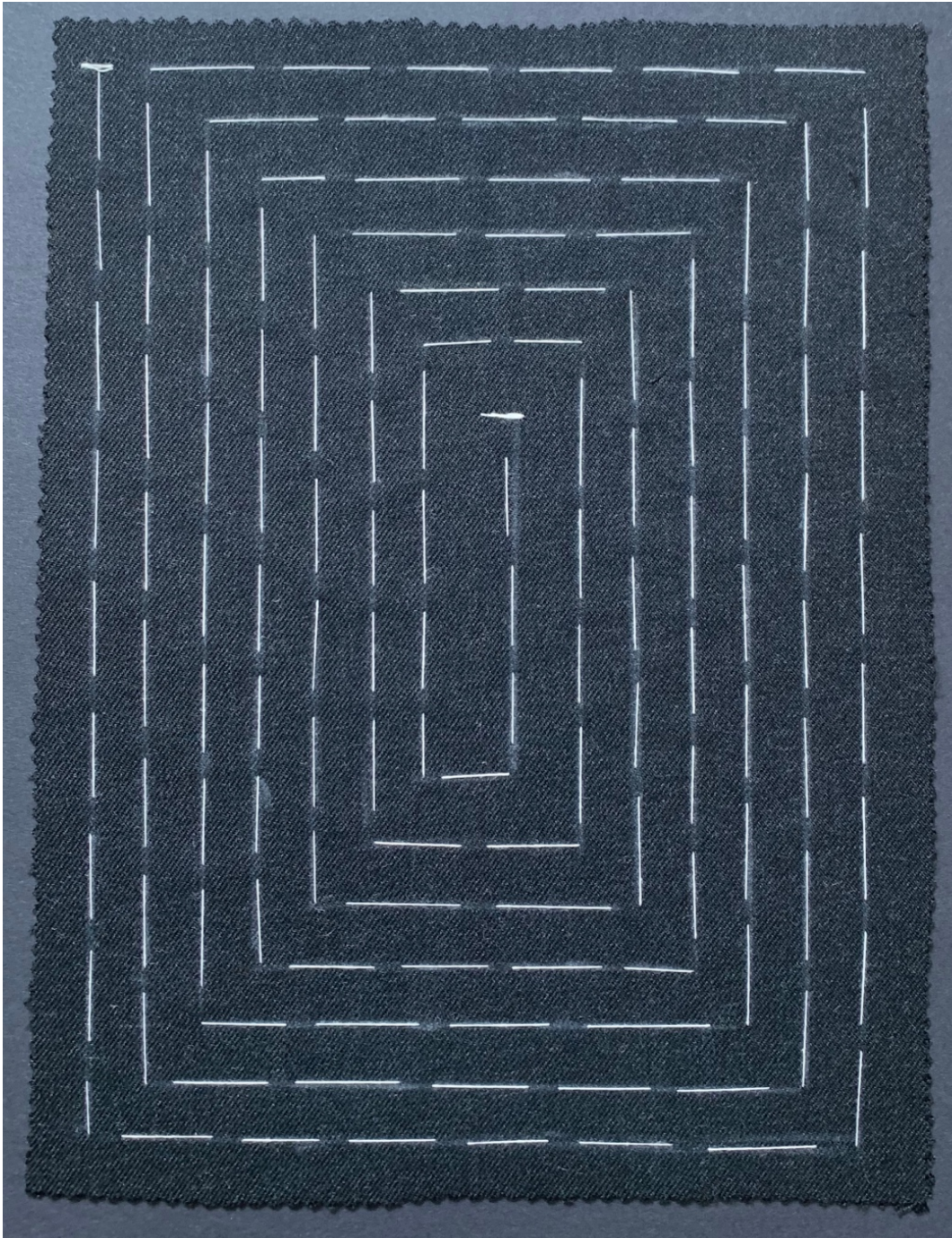
Appendix 2

This section highlights the samples I produced during the tailoring course at Newham College London. It includes bespoke tailoring stitches, tailored pockets, and the process of making the tailored waistcoat shown in the image in Chapter 4.

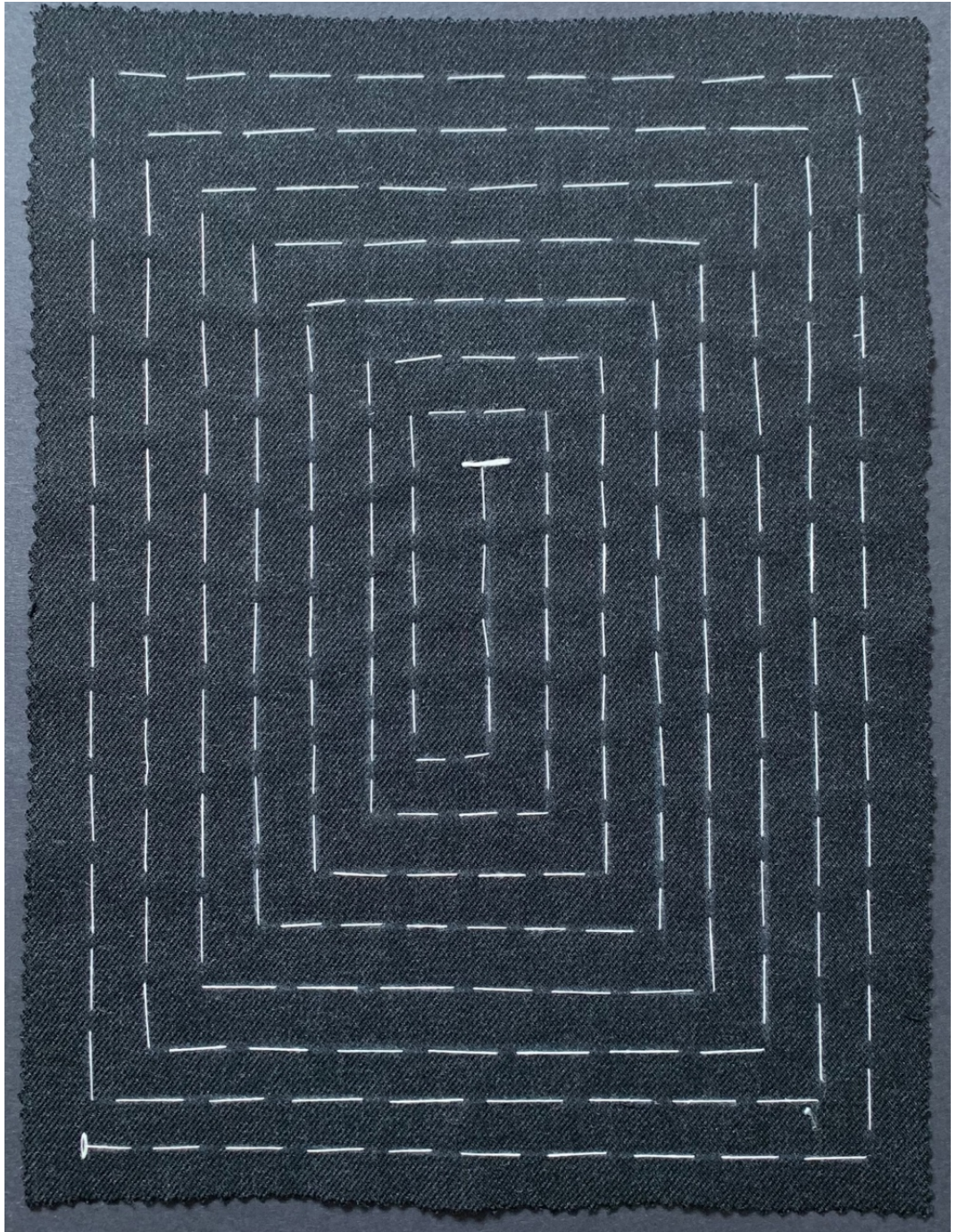
Bespoke tailoring stitches



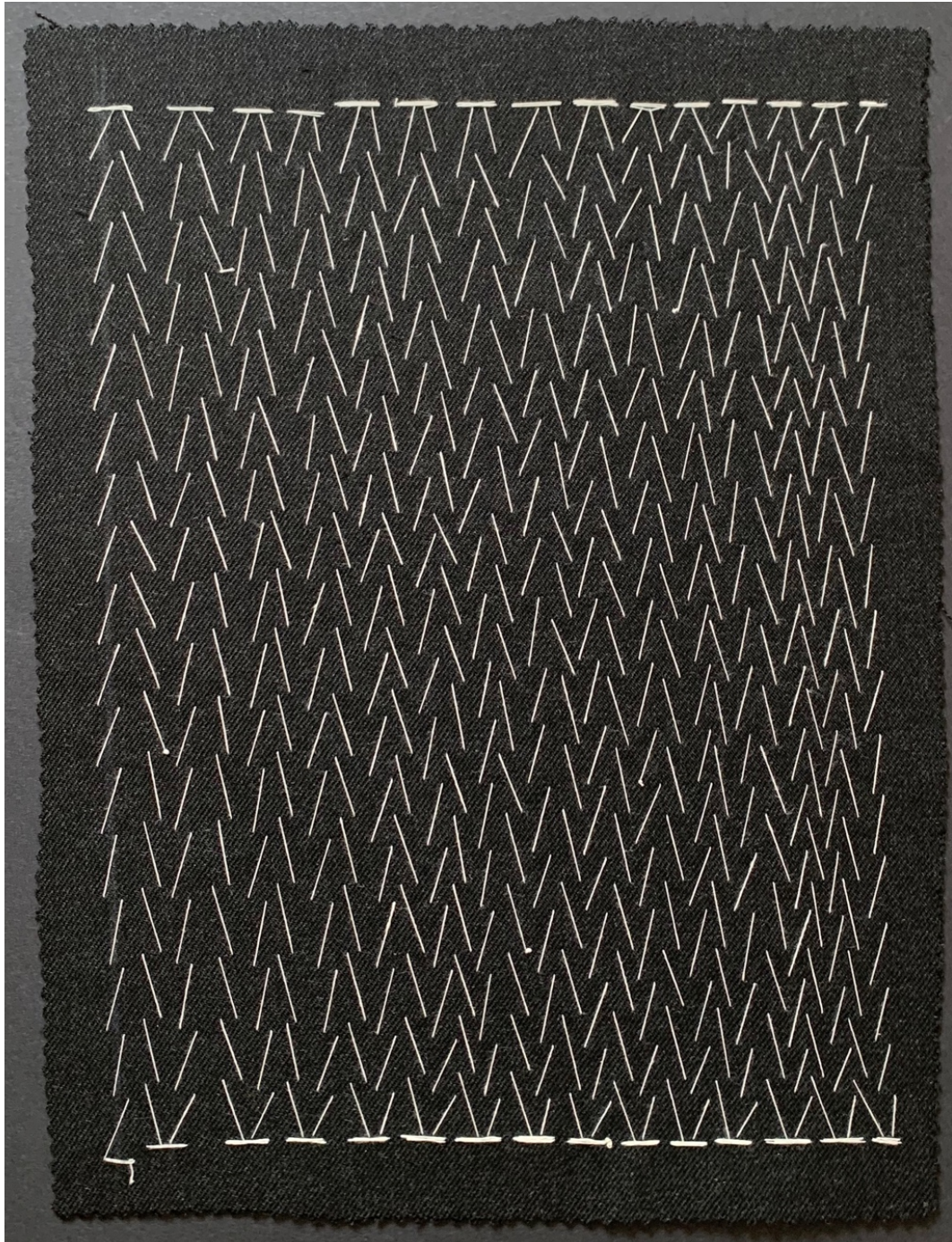
Sample: basting stitches



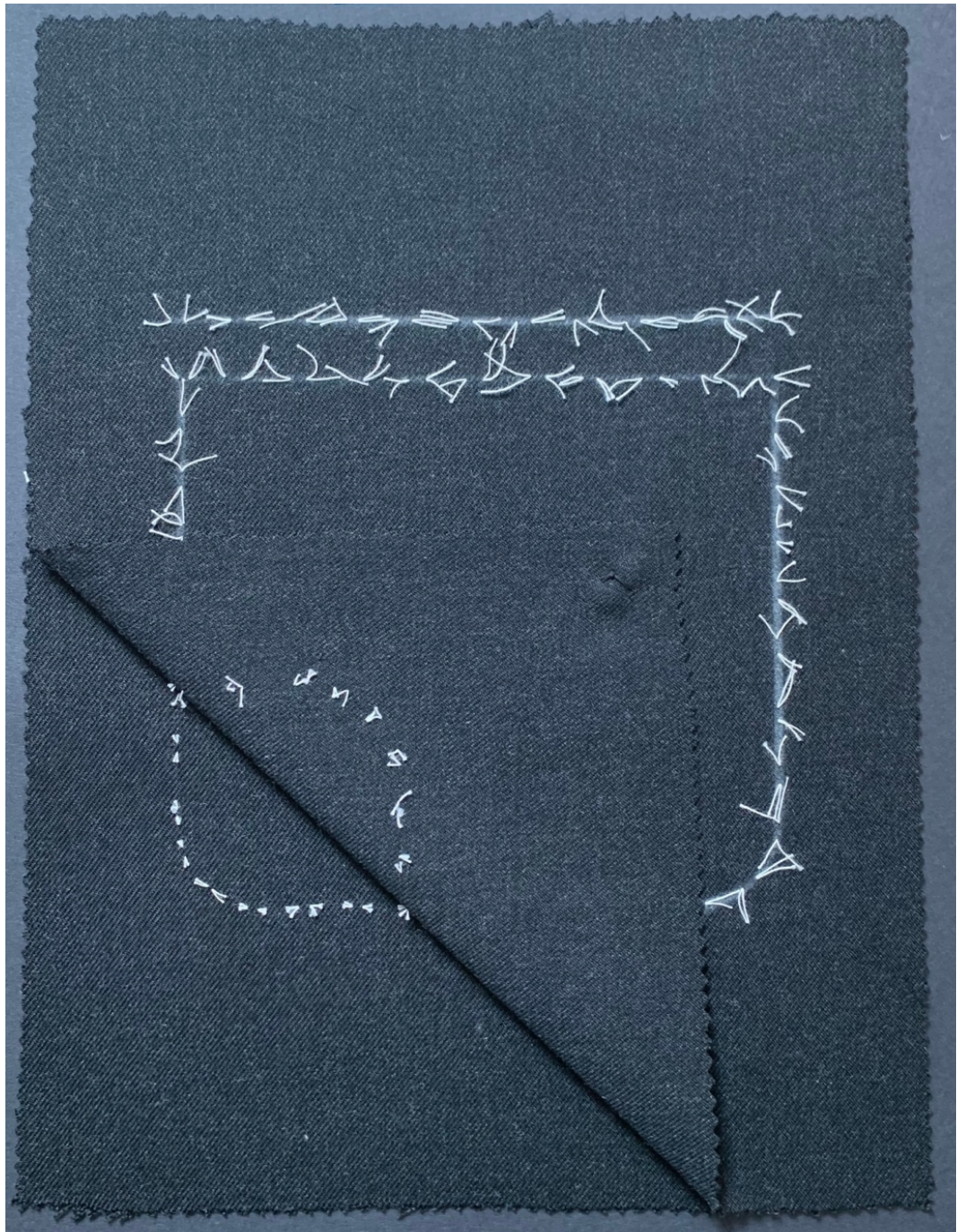
Sample: even basting stitches



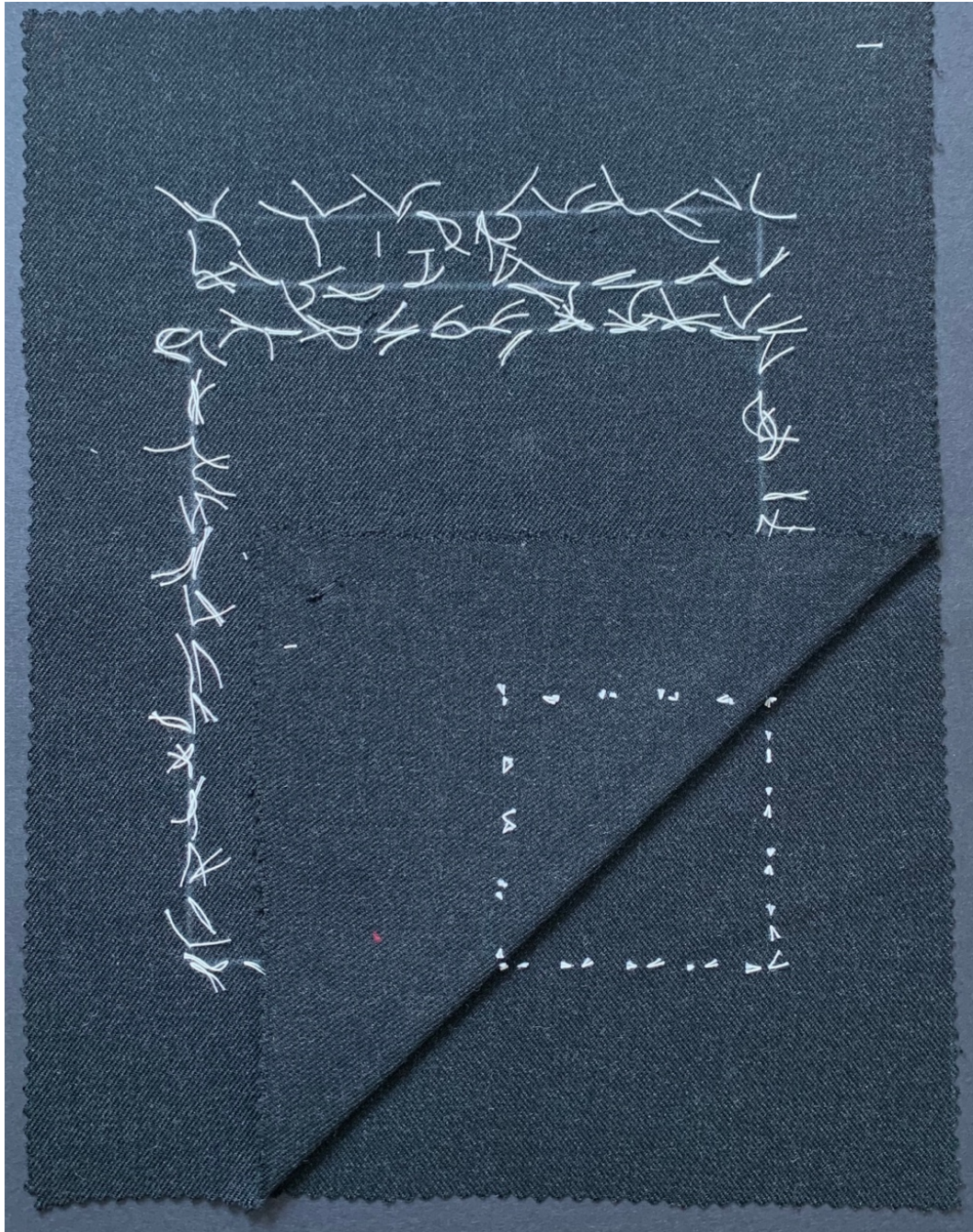
Sample: short basting stitches



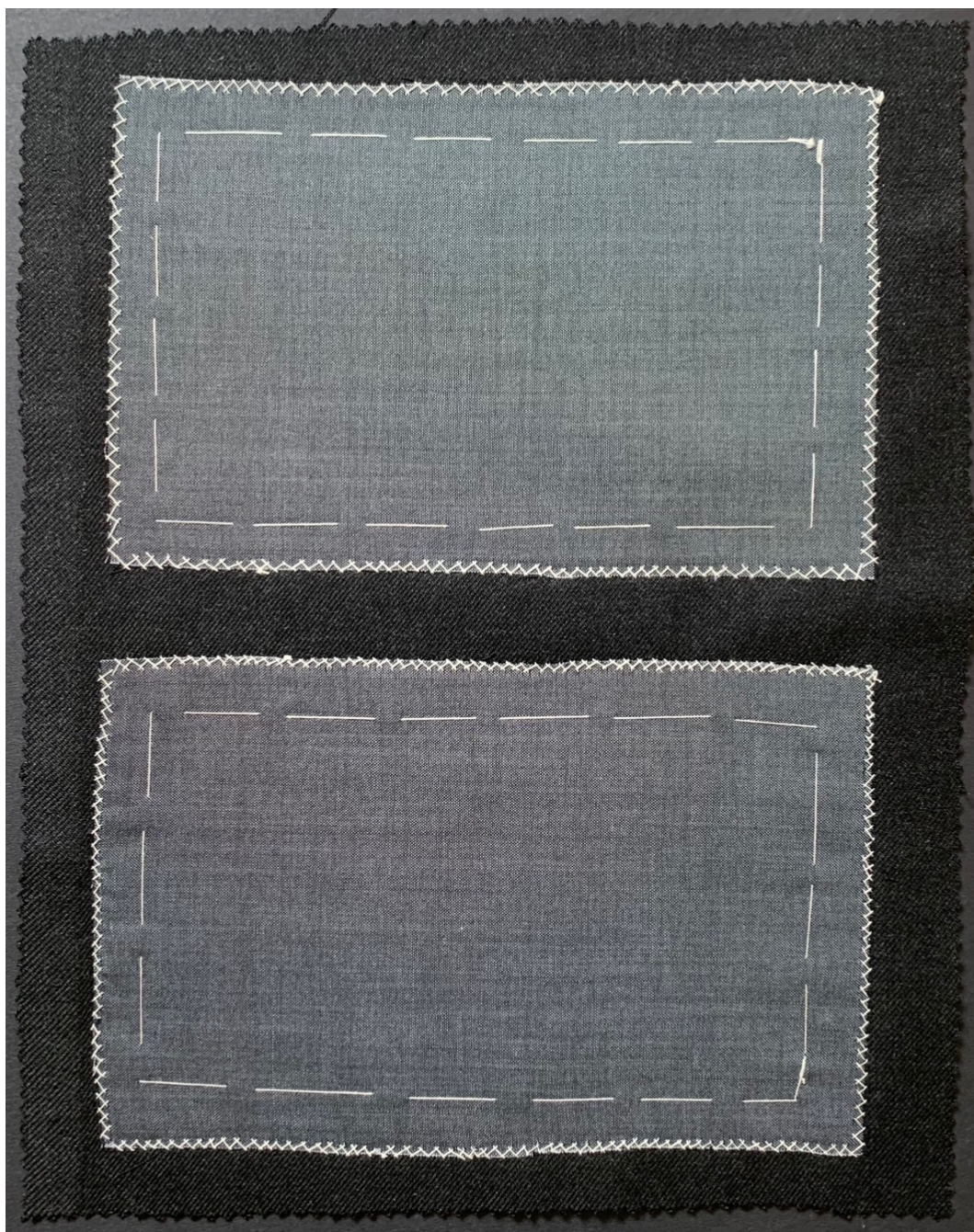
Sample: padding stitches



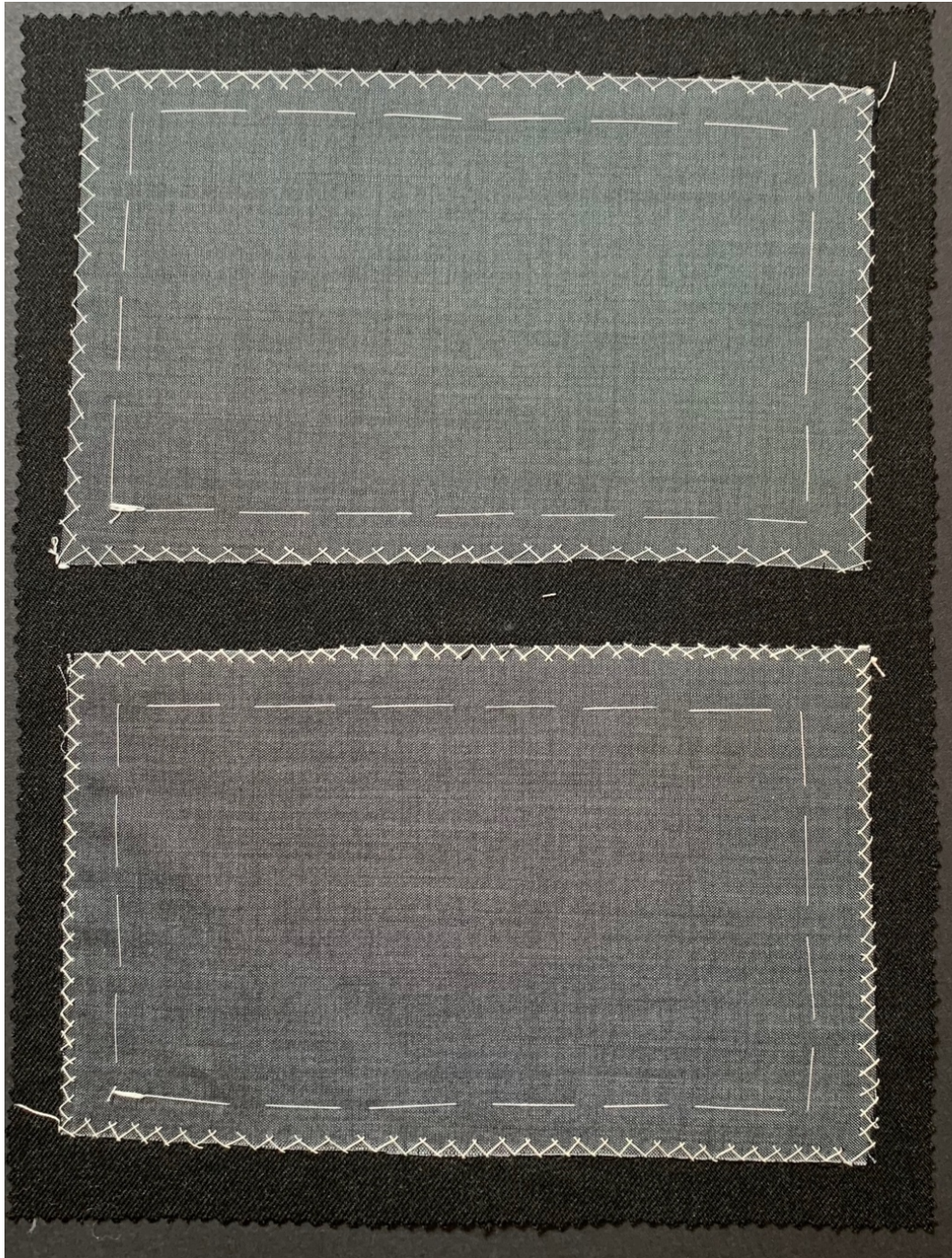
Sample: marking stitches



Sample: marking stitches



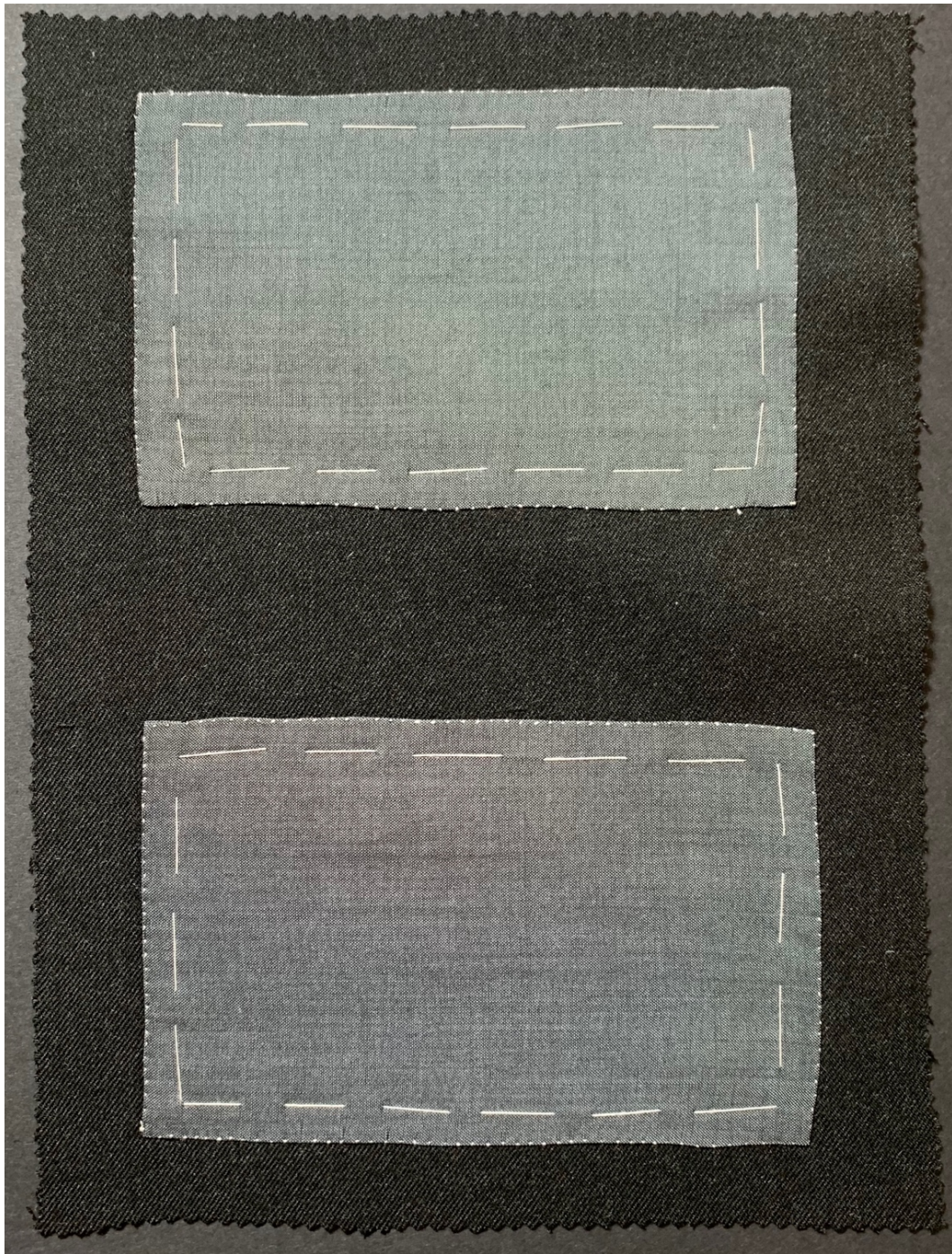
Sample: cross stitches



Sample: cross stitches



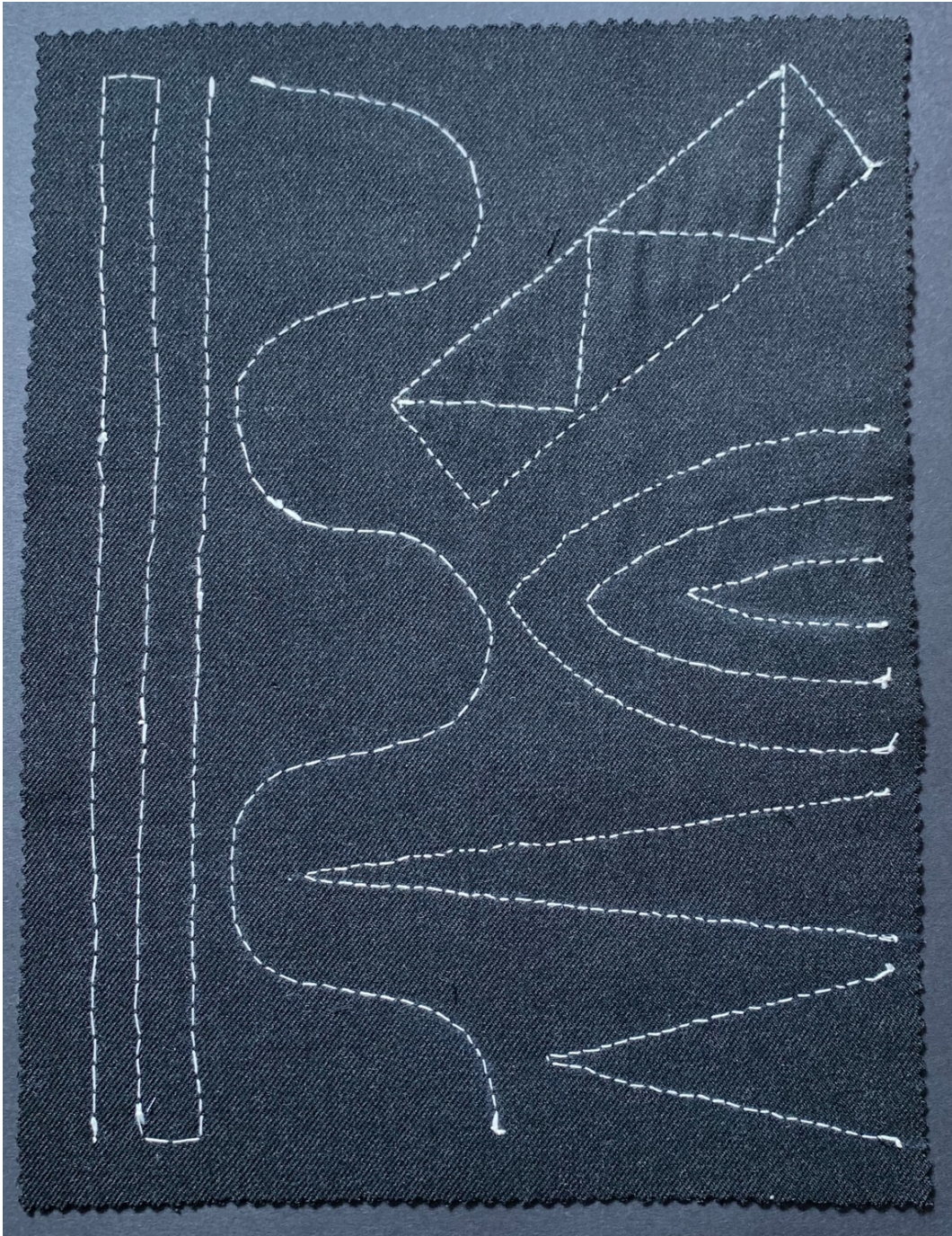
Sample: raw edge felling stitches



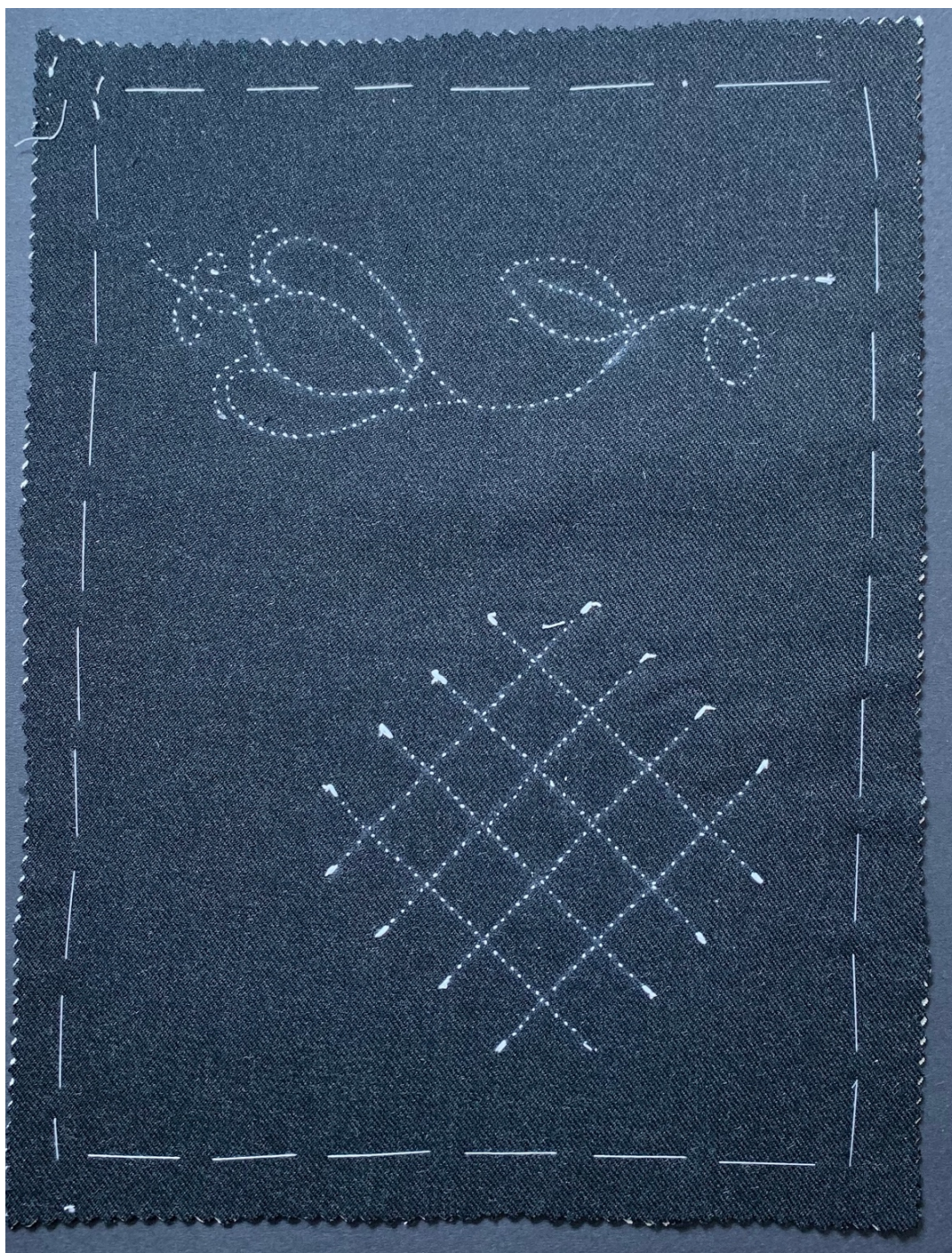
Sample: side stitches



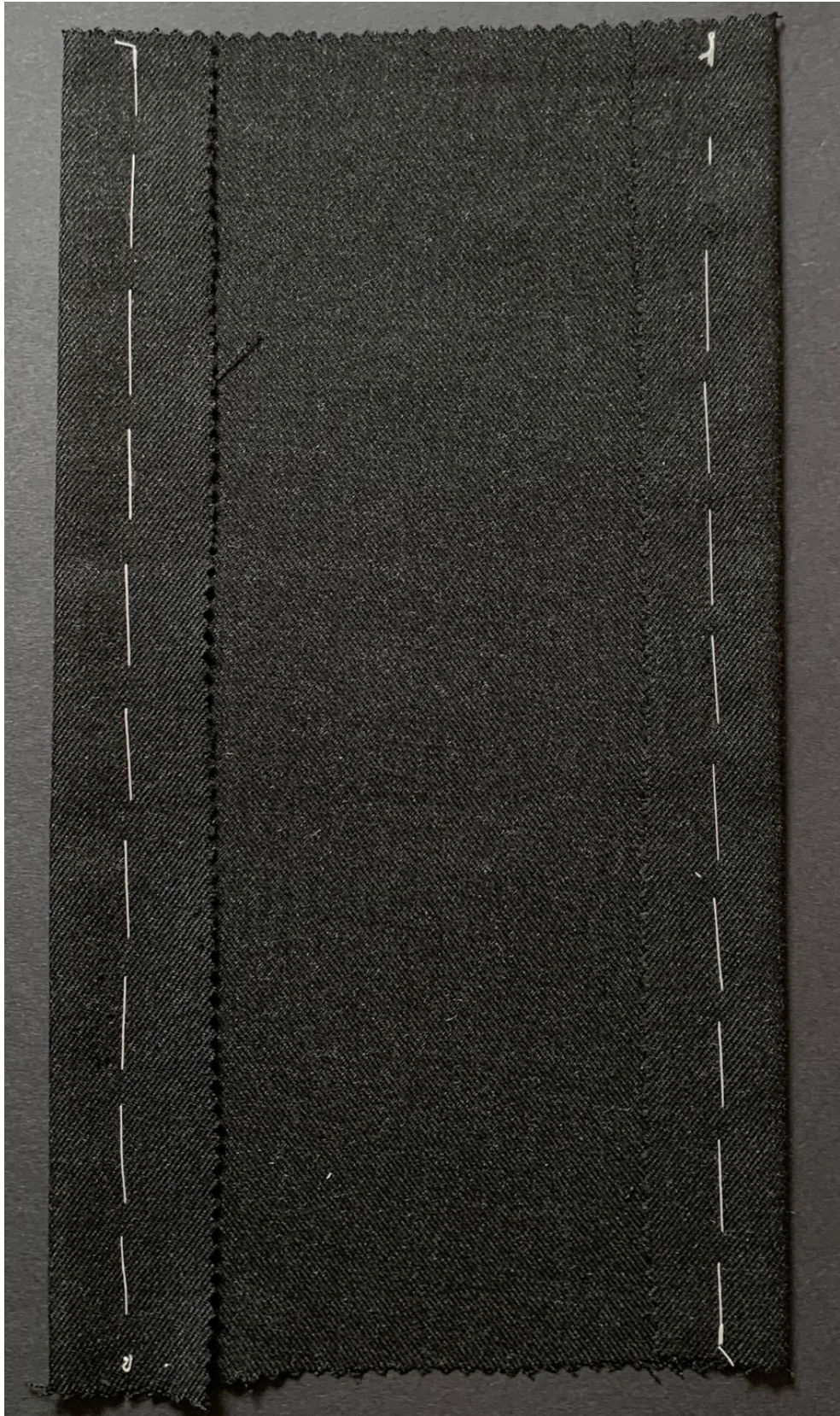
Sample: back stitches



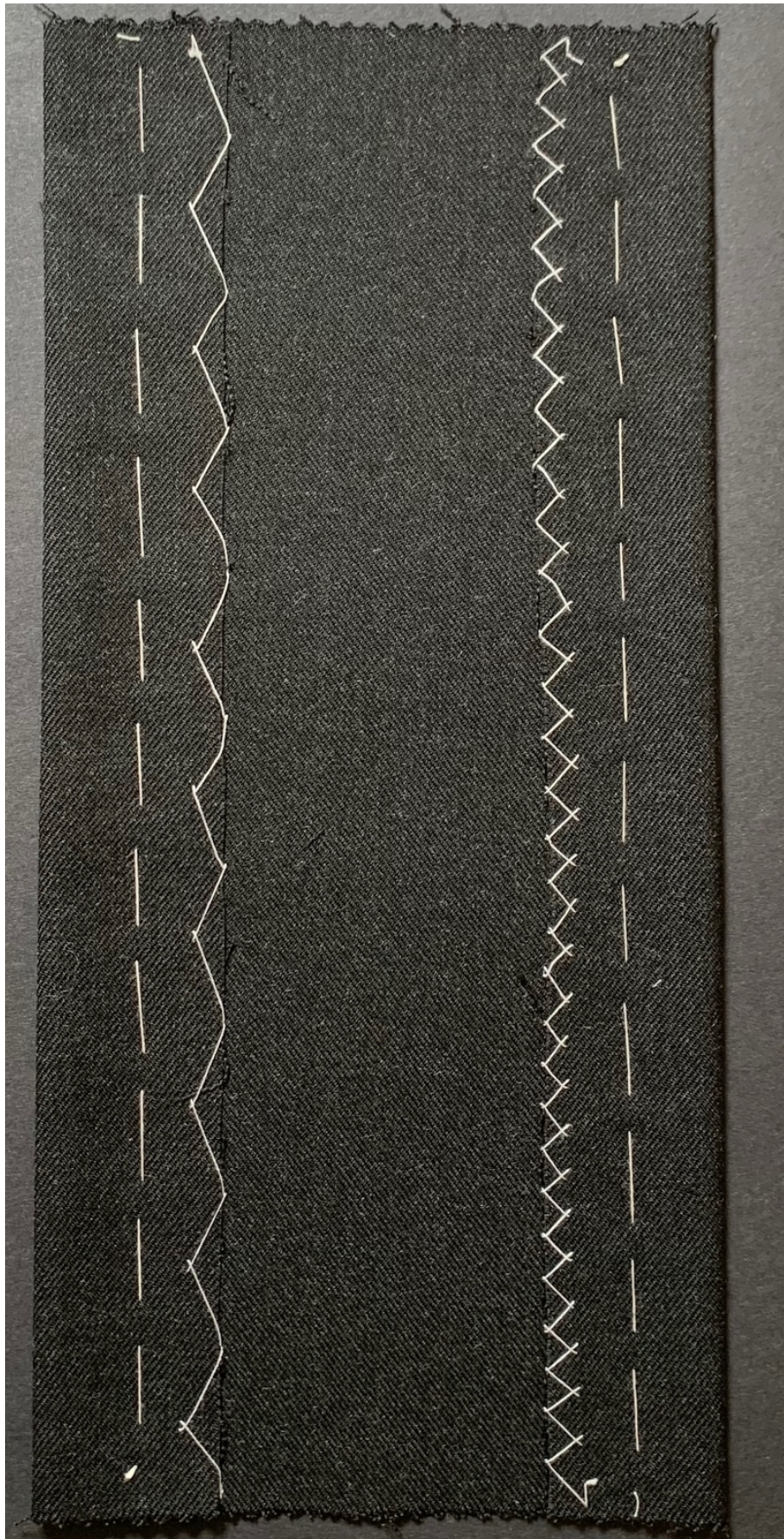
Sample: back stitches



Sample: prick stitches



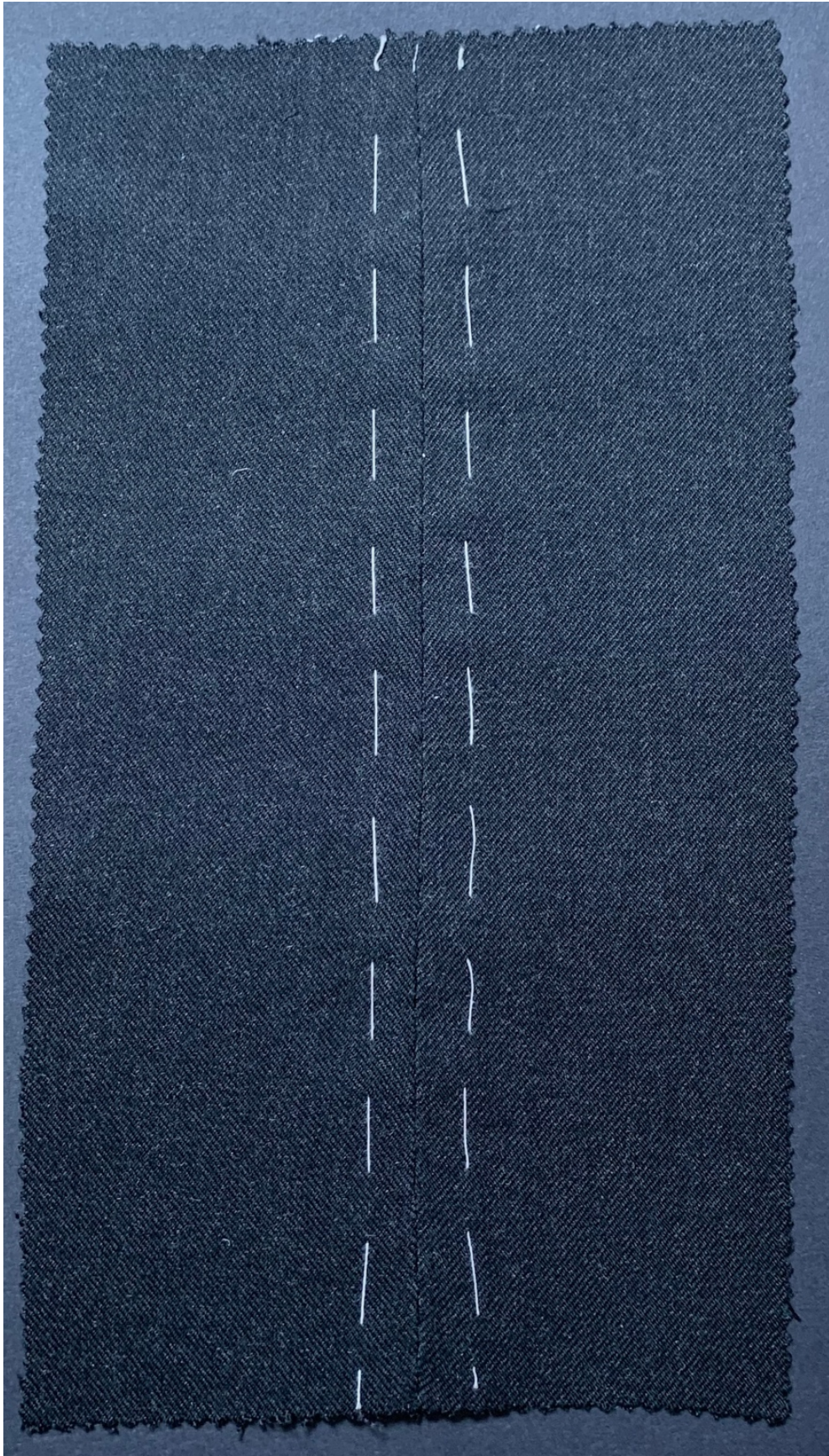
Sample: blind hem



Sample: cross-stitch hem



Sample: cross-stitch felling with lining over hem



Sample: draw stitch - backed

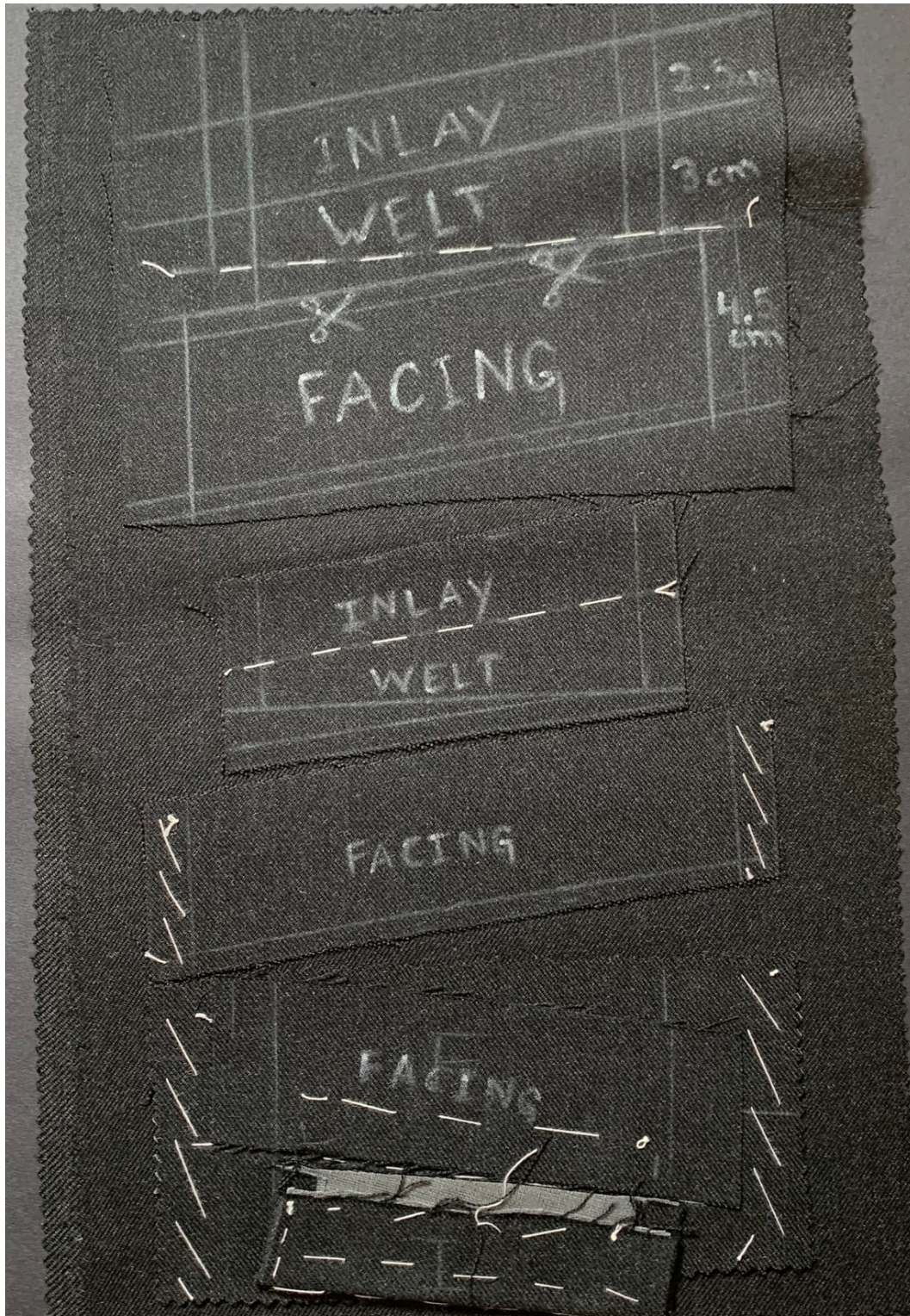
Tailored pockets



Sample: process of making double jet pocket



Sample: process of making double jet pocket with flap

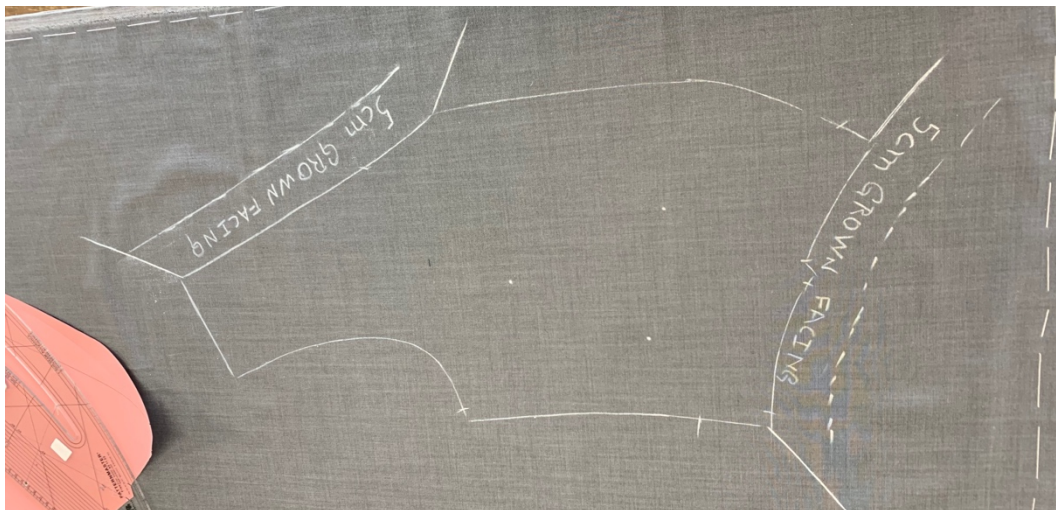


Sample: process of making welt pocket



Sample: welt pocket

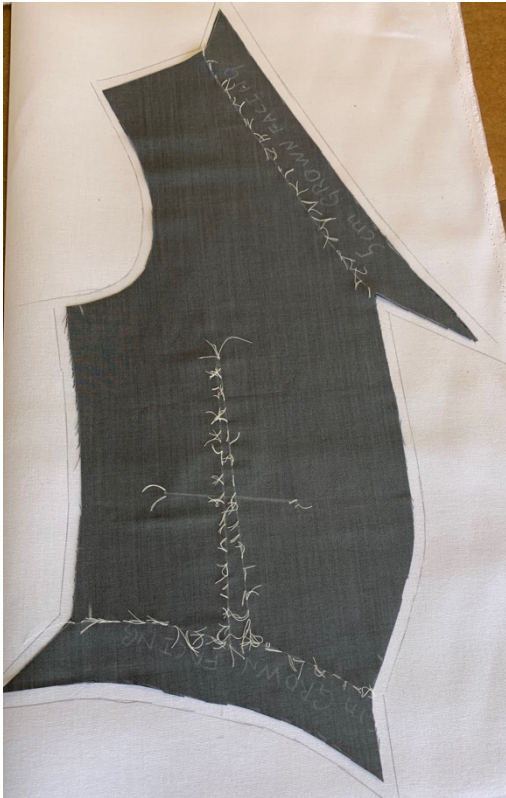
Process of making the tailored waistcoat



View of the front traced on the fabric



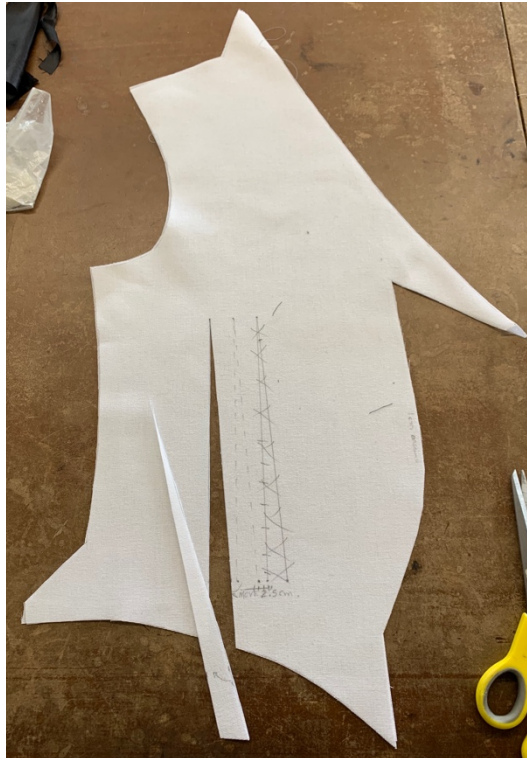
View of the front and facing traced on the fabric and marked with marking stitches



View of the front placed on canvas for cutting out the canvas



View of the front placed on lining for cutting out the lining



View of the dart preparation on canvas for sewing



View of the completed dart sewn on canvas



View of the right and left front prepared for construction



View of the front attaching the facing



View of the front with facing attached



View of the front left side showing the outside



View of the front left side showing the inside with lining



View of the back with bel

Appendix 3

This section highlights the materials I sourced for the making of the frock coat and riding habit. It includes fabric swatches, interlining samples, and haberdashery items.



View of the fabric swatches from The Historical Fabric Store – 1



View of the fabric swatches from The Historical Fabric Store – 2

Swatches

Main fabric	Supplier: The Historical Fabric Store		
	Website: www.thehistoricalfabricstore.com		
	Address: Sweden		
	Date ordered: 12/06/2022		
Medium Melton natural brown 100% wool	Medium Melton natural grey 100% wool	Medium Melton blue 100% wool	Medium Melton twills natural grey 100% wool
			
Medium Melton twills natural brown 100% wool	Medium Melton twills natural red 100% wool	Grey/black twill wool	Brushed doeskin Black 100% wool
			

View of the fabric swatches from The Historical Fabric Store – 3

Swatches

Main fabric

Supplier: AW Hainsworth

Website: www.awhainsworth.co.uk

Address: ivananoon@awhainsworth.co.uk

Date ordered: 05/12/2023

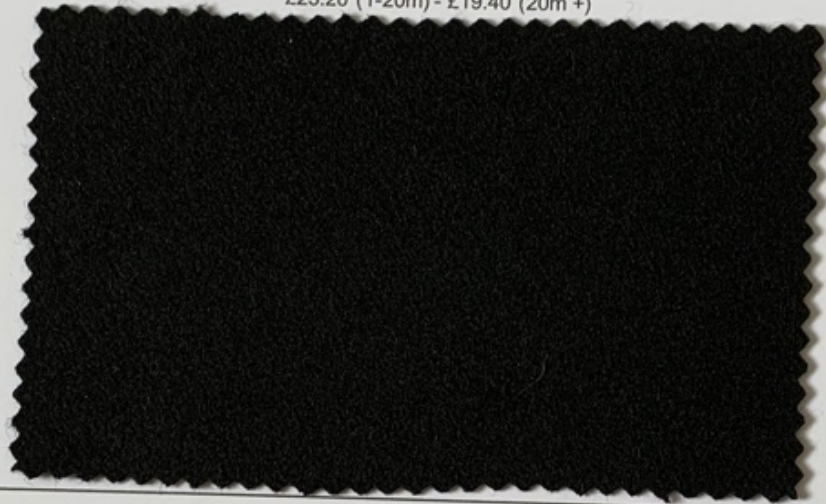
Black Overcoating

Hainsworth

Broadcloth True Heritage

90% wool 10%Nylon - 150cm wide

£23.20 (1-20m) - £19.40 (20m +)



Black

Hainsworth Barathea



View of the fabric swatches from AW Hainsworth – 1

Swatches

Main fabric	Supplier: AW Hainsworth
	Website: www.awhainsworth.co.uk
	Address: West Yorkshire
	Date ordered: 11/08/2023

Navy Hainsworth Broadcloth 
French Navy Hainsworth Broadcloth 

View of the fabric swatches from AW Hainsworth – 2

Swatches

Main fabric	Supplier: AW Hainsworth
	Website: www.awhainsworth.co.uk
	Address: West Yorkshire
	Date ordered: 11/08/2023

Black Hainsworth Broadcloth


Royal Navy Hainsworth Broadcloth


View of the fabric swatches from AW Hainsworth – 3

Swatches

Main fabric	Supplier: AW Hainsworth
	Website: www.awhainsworth.co.uk
	Address: ivananoon@awhainsworth.co.uk
	Date ordered: 05/12/2023
Black Hainsworth Vivid Hues Melton 100% Merino - 140cm wide £33.80 (1-20m) - £30.60 (20m +) 	
Black Hainsworth Pilot Cloth 100% pure new wool - 150cm wide £44.30 (1-20m) - £35.50 (20m +) 	

View of the fabric swatches from AW Hainsworth – 4

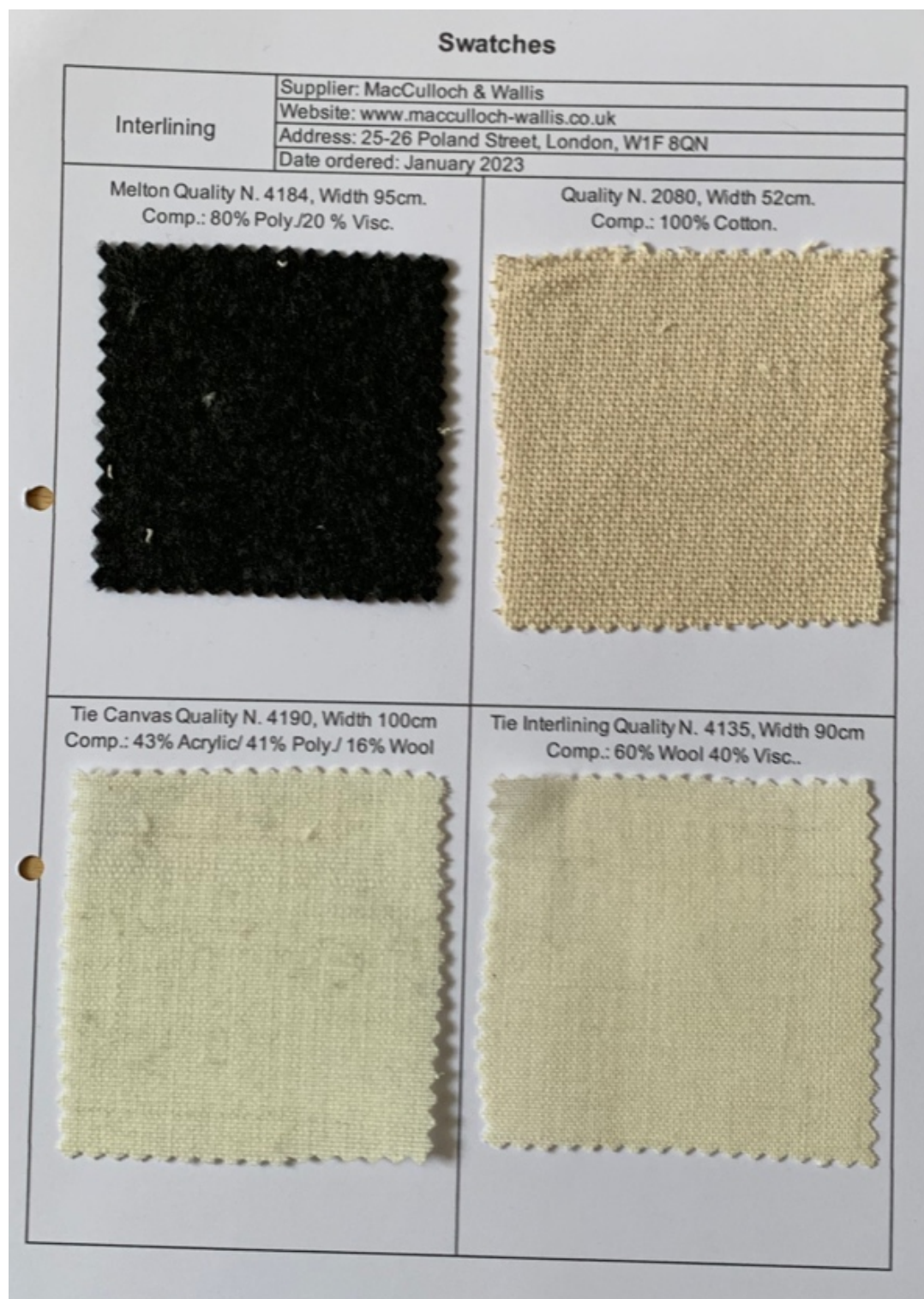
Swatches

Interlining	Supplier: WBL - Whales (Bradford) LTD		
	Website: www.whaleysltd.co.uk		
	Address: Harris Court, Bradford, BD7 4EQ		
	Date ordered: January 2024		
Holland Linen Black 132cm		Linen Collar Canvas Natural 61cm	
			
Domette Cotton Black		Valencia Linen Natural	
		 WBL WHALES (BRADFORD) LTD VALENCIA LINEN NATURAL SECTION H	

View of the canvas swatches from WBL Whales Bradford LTD

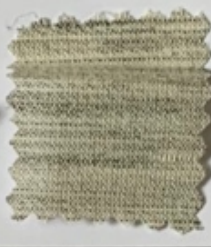


View of the lining swatches from WBL Whales Bradford LTD



View of the interlining swatches from MacCulloch & Wallis – 1

Swatches

Interlining & Canvas	Supplier: MacCulloch & Wallis		
	Website: www.macculloch-wallis.co.uk		
	Address: 25-26 Poland Street, London, W1F 8QN		
	Date ordered: January 2023		
Ref. 4186 French canvas 100% linen 	Ref. 4195 Linen chest canvas 84% linen 16% cotton 	Ref. 4160 Flat domette cotton 	Ref. 4180 Shoulder canvas 
Ref. 4181 Horse hair canvas 			

View of the interlining swatches from MacCulloch & Wallis – 2

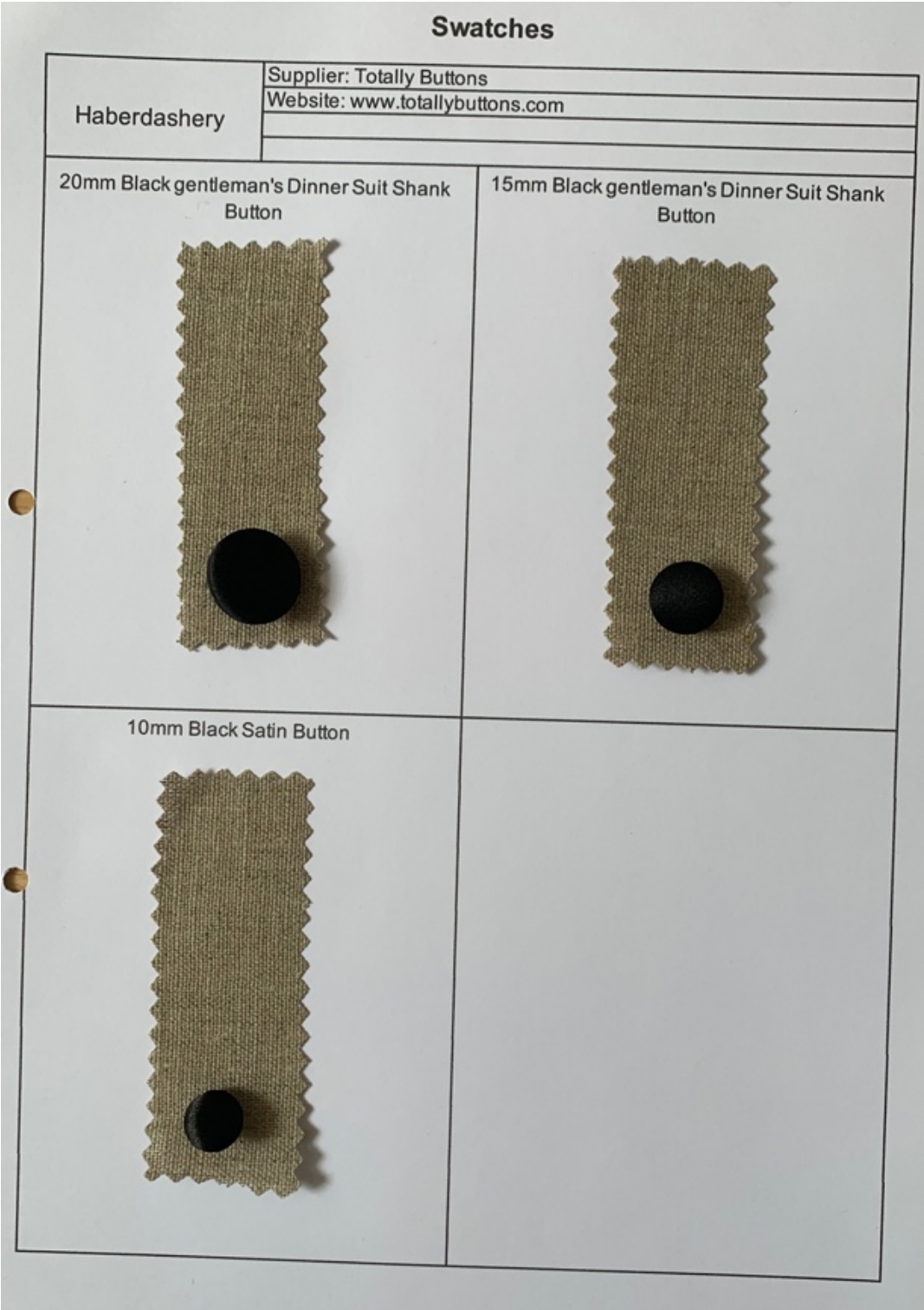


View of the interlining swatches and fastening from MacCulloch & Wallis

Swatches

Interlining & Canvas	Supplier: The Lining Company		
	Website: www.theliningcompany.co.uk		
	Address:		
	Date ordered: 05/12/2022		
Ref.559-50620 Black 60" heavy viscose twill lining 	Ref. 323-50421 heavy weftway satin viscose sleeve lining 	Ref. 055-01 Light khaki 32" cotton collar canvas 	Ref. 0524-01 Natural linen stay tape 13mm 
Ref. 054-01-18 1ply Stiffened 18" Natural Buckram Canvas 			

View of the lining, interlining, and tape swatches from The Lining Company

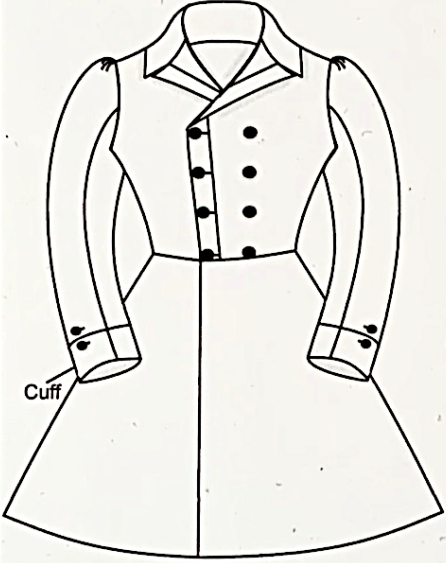
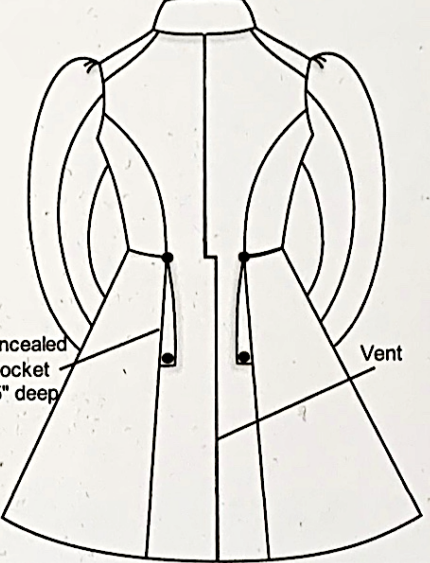


View of button samples from Totally Buttons

Appendix 4

This section highlights images of the process of making the frock coat and the riding habit that I produced for the research, including garment specification. These images were not included in the main text.

Frock Coat

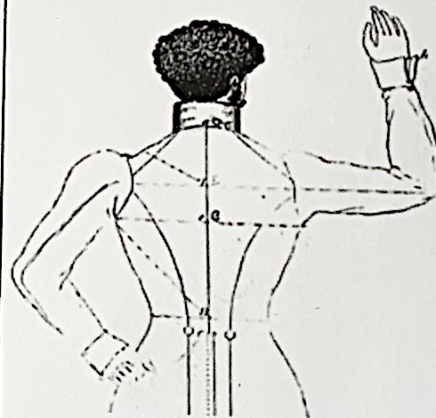
Garment Specification																					
Date: September 2024 Garment: Frock Coat																					
Front 	Back 																				
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Fabric & Haberdashery</th> <th>Quantity</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Main fabric</td> <td>158" (4 m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lining</td> <td>110" (2.8m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Canvas</td> <td>45" (1.14m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Holland linen canvas</td> <td>19.6" (0.5m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Domette</td> <td>39.4" (1m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wadding</td> <td>19.6" (0.5m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Linen tape</td> <td>78.7" (2m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buttons - large</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Buttons - small</td> <td>8</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Fabric & Haberdashery	Quantity	Main fabric	158" (4 m)	Lining	110" (2.8m)	Canvas	45" (1.14m)	Holland linen canvas	19.6" (0.5m)	Domette	39.4" (1m)	Wadding	19.6" (0.5m)	Linen tape	78.7" (2m)	Buttons - large	8	Buttons - small	8	Detail 
Fabric & Haberdashery	Quantity																				
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Linen tape	78.7" (2m)																				
Buttons - large	8																				
Buttons - small	8																				
Fabric Swatch																					
Main Fabric 	Lining 																				

View of the garment specification sheet – front

Garment Specification

Measurements							
Back	A - I 5"	A - E 9"	A - B 16.6"	A - C 18"	A - D 24.5"	A - Knee 39"	
Sleeve	I - Armhole 8 1/4"	I - Elbow 22"	I - Wrist 34"	K - K 13"	L: Biceps 13"	M: Arm Cir. 11.5"	N: Wrist 9"
Chest	E - E 39.5"						
Waist	O - O 33 1/4"						
Lapel	A - Front 23"						
Front Armhole	Bellow 'P' 13"						
Total Armhole	I - I 30.5"						
Balance	B - A 27.5	B - I 30.5					
Hollow	1.5"						
Neck	18"						

Directions to Take the Measure - The Tailor's Masterpiece by George Walker



Remarks

- 1 internal pocket on left side of bodice
- 2 concealed pockets located at the back pleats - one on each side of the coat skirt.

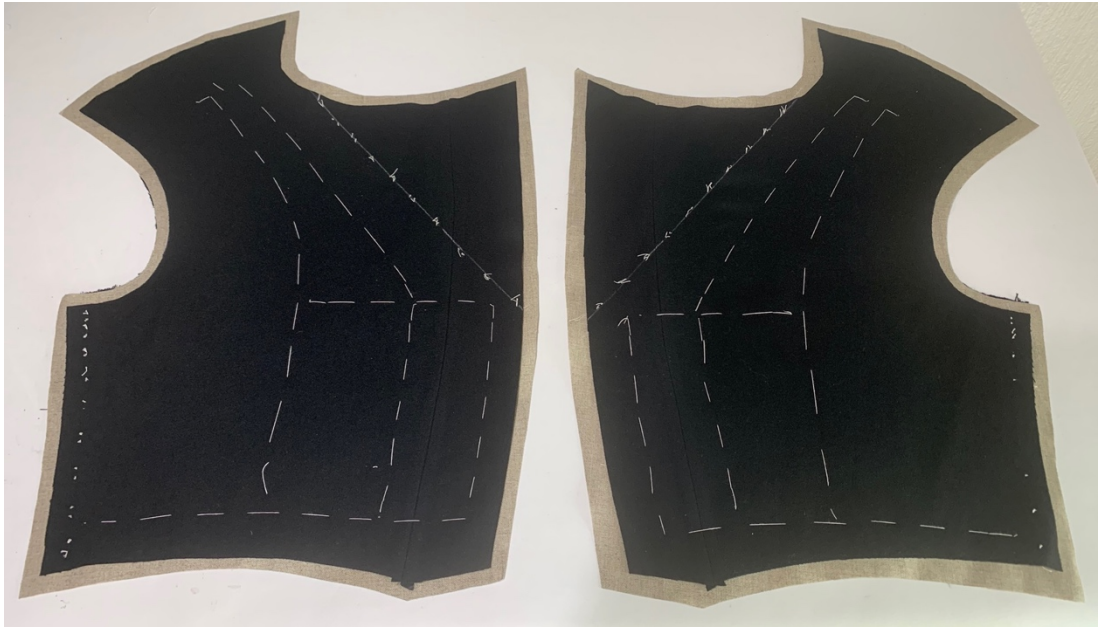
View of the garment specification sheet – back



View of the front canvas preparation



View of the front canvas with padding stitches



View of the front fabric with canvas basted



View of the front fabric with canvas basted and lapel pad stitched



View of the construction of the front internal pocket – 1



View of the construction of the front internal pocket – 2



View of the front with sidebody pad stitched



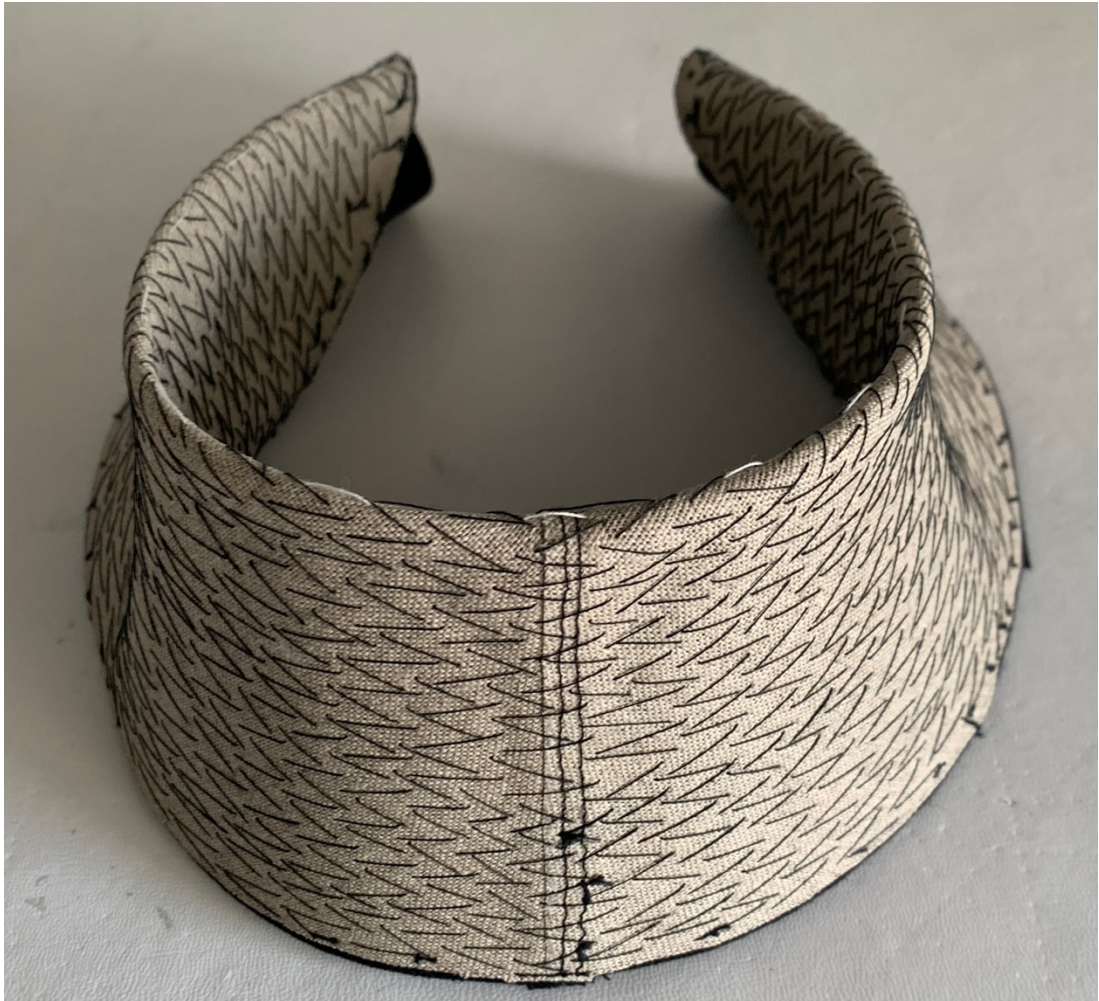
View of the front with sidebody lining



View of the undercollar and canvas preparation



View of the front undercollar, pad stitched, and shaped



View of the back undercollar, pad stitched, and shaped



View of the back neckline and shoulder facing



View of the sleeve preparation

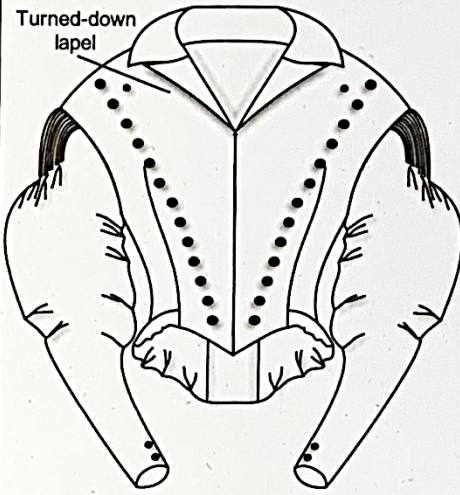
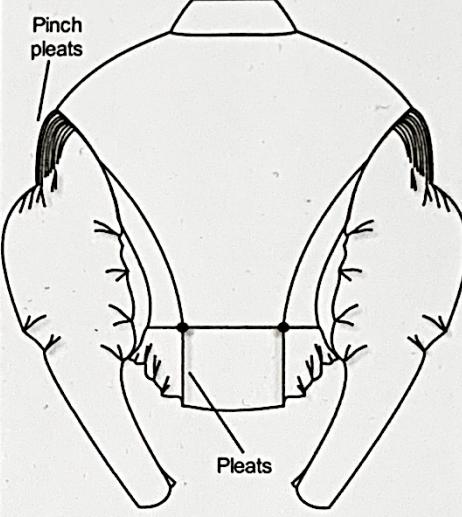
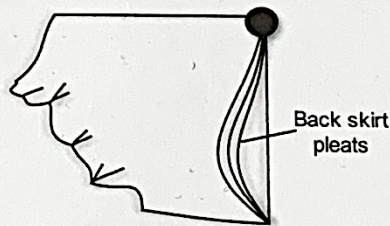


View of the sleeve preparation with lining



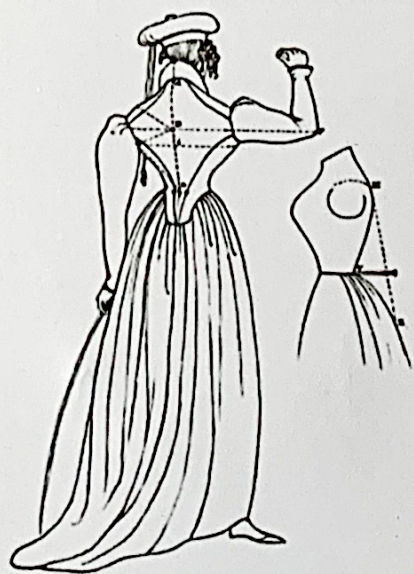
View of the concealed pocket preparation

Riding habit jacket

Garment Specification																							
Date: June 2024																							
Garment: Riding Habit Jacket																							
Front	Back																						
																							
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Fabric & Haberdashery</th><th>Quantity</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Main fabric</td><td>78.7" (2m)</td></tr><tr><td>Lining</td><td>59" (1.5m)</td></tr><tr><td>Canvas</td><td>45" (1.14m)</td></tr><tr><td>Holland linen canvas</td><td>19.6" (0.5m)</td></tr><tr><td>Domette</td><td>31.5" (0.8m)</td></tr><tr><td>Wadding</td><td>39.4" (1m)</td></tr><tr><td>Linen tape</td><td>78.7" (2m)</td></tr><tr><td>Buttons - medium</td><td>26</td></tr><tr><td>Buttons - small</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>Boning</td><td>1</td></tr></tbody></table>	Fabric & Haberdashery	Quantity	Main fabric	78.7" (2m)	Lining	59" (1.5m)	Canvas	45" (1.14m)	Holland linen canvas	19.6" (0.5m)	Domette	31.5" (0.8m)	Wadding	39.4" (1m)	Linen tape	78.7" (2m)	Buttons - medium	26	Buttons - small	6	Boning	1	Detail
Fabric & Haberdashery	Quantity																						
Main fabric	78.7" (2m)																						
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Buttons - medium	26																						
Buttons - small	6																						
Boning	1																						
																							
Fabric Swatch																							
Main Fabric	Lining																						
																							

View of the garment specification sheet – front

Garment Specification

Measurements							
Back	A - B 5"	A - I 8"	A - D 15"	A - Hem 54"			
Sleeve	B - Armhole 6"	B - Elbow 18"	I - Wrist 30"	R - S 11"	Cuff 7"		
Breast	I - I 34.5"						
Waist	D - D 23"						
Lapel	A - L 16.5"						
Nipple	A - M 12.5	M - Small 15.5"	A - K 20"				
Front Armhole	R - M 5"						
Total Armhole	B - B 23.5"						
Balance	D - A 22 1/4"	D - B 24 1/4"					
Neck	15"						
Hollow	2.5"						
Directions to Take the Measure - The Tailor's Masterpiece by George Walker							
							
Remarks							
• Turned-down lapel with a button for fastening.							

View of the garment specification sheet – back



View of the front fabric with canvas basted on the mannequin



View of the front armhole



View of the front fabric with canvas



View of the front fabric with canvas and tape at the front edge and lapel
folding line



View of the front fabric with canvas basted



View of the internal front and back joined at the sides, shoulders open for sewing



View of the external front and back joined at the sides, shoulders open for sewing



View of the front bodice on the mannequin without sleeves



View of the back bodice on the mannequin without sleeves



View of the armhole with canvas



View of the preparation of the front facing



View of the lining front and back joined at the sides, ready to be attached to the bodice



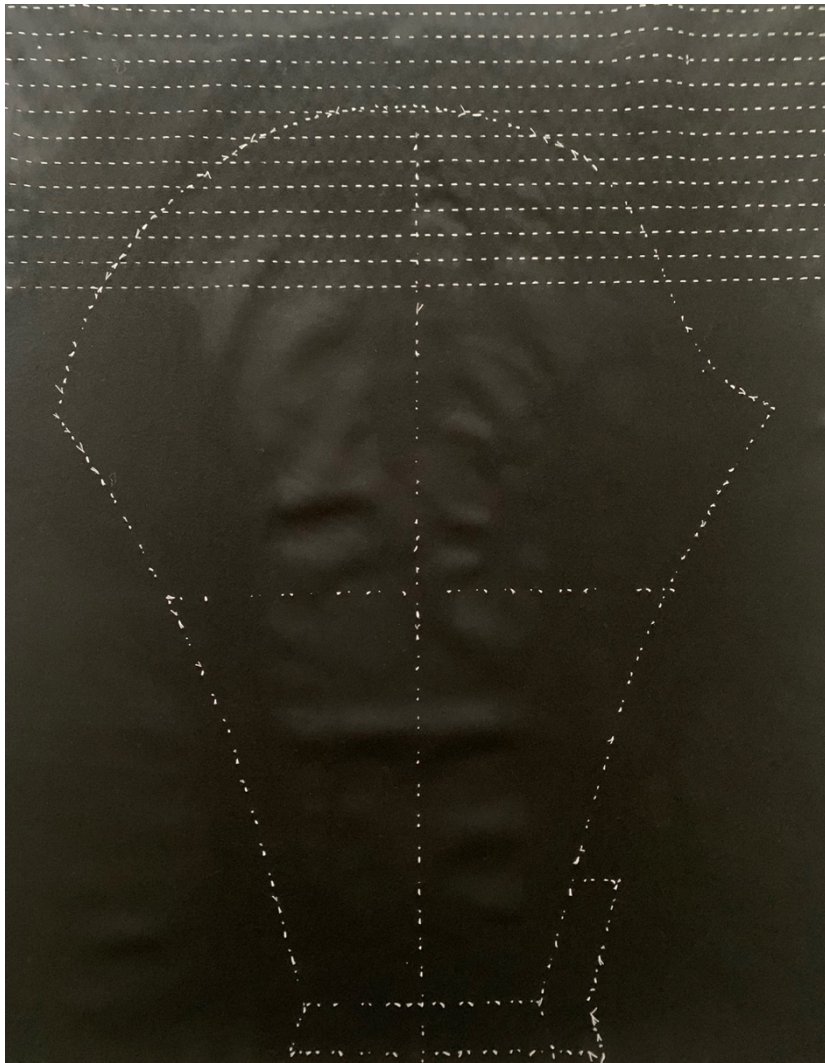
View of the undercollar and canvas preparation



View of the undercollar canvas prepared for pad stitching



View of the undercollar canvas pad stitched



View of the sleeve mark stitched on the fabric for construction



View of the cuff preparation, inside



View of the cuff preparation, inside



View of the preparation of the sleeve lining

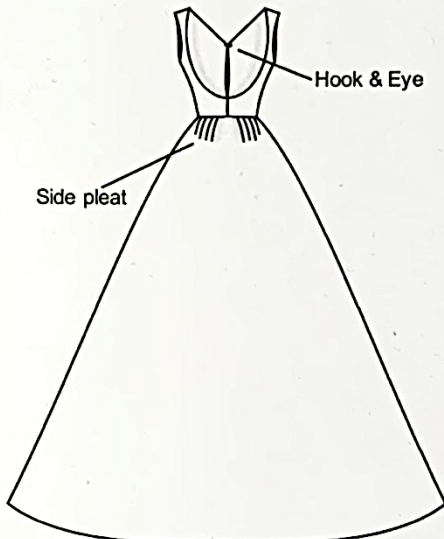
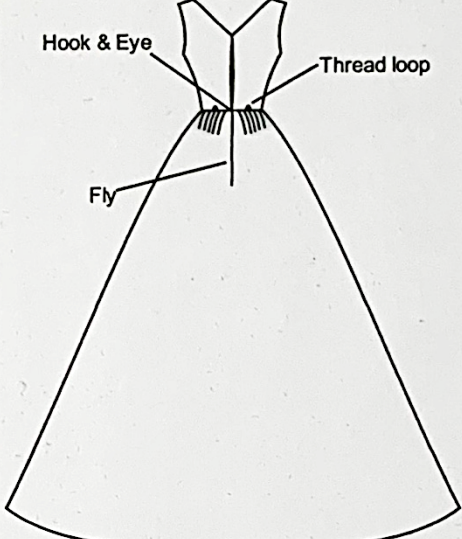
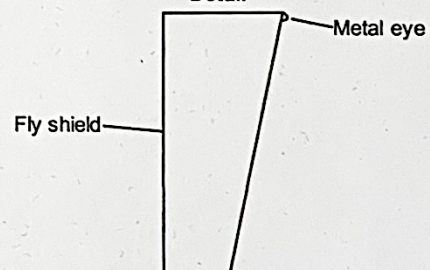
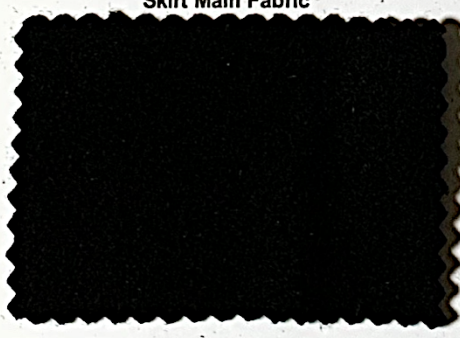
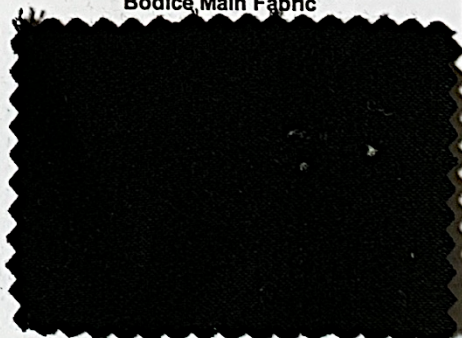


View of the armhole preparation to attach the sleeve lining



View of the armhole with domette before attaching the sleeve lining

Riding habit skirt

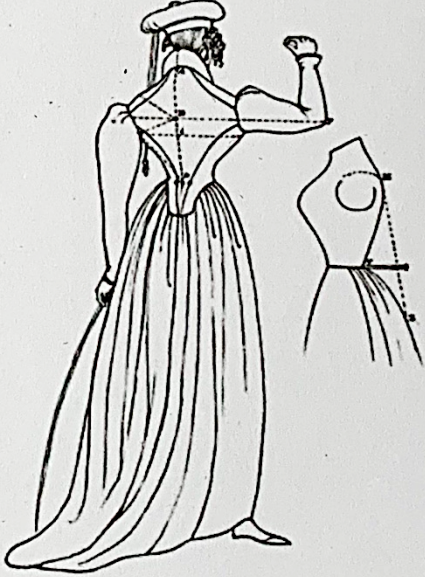
Garment Specification																									
Date: April 2024 Front 	Garment: Riding Habit Skirt Back 																								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Fabric & Haberdashery</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Quantity</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Skirt main fabric</td> <td>104" (2.64m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bodice main fabric</td> <td>19.7" (0.5m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bodice lining</td> <td>19.7" (0.5m)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Hook & Eye</td> <td>3</td> </tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Fabric & Haberdashery	Quantity	Skirt main fabric	104" (2.64m)	Bodice main fabric	19.7" (0.5m)	Bodice lining	19.7" (0.5m)	Hook & Eye	3															Detail 
Fabric & Haberdashery	Quantity																								
Skirt main fabric	104" (2.64m)																								
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Bodice lining	19.7" (0.5m)																								
Hook & Eye	3																								
Fabric Swatch																									
Skirt Main Fabric 	Bodice Main Fabric 																								

View of the garment specification sheet – front

Garment Specification

Measurements							
Bodice Length	15.5"						
C. Front Length	1.3/4"						
C. Back Length	18.5"						
Armhole	17.5"						
Waist	23"						
Skirt hem width	54"						
Skirt Length	51"						
Shoulder to hem	66.5"						

Directions to Take the Measure - The Tailor's Masterpiece by George Walker

Remarks
• The metal eye at the top of the fly shield is hooked onto a metal hook at the waistline of the skirt.

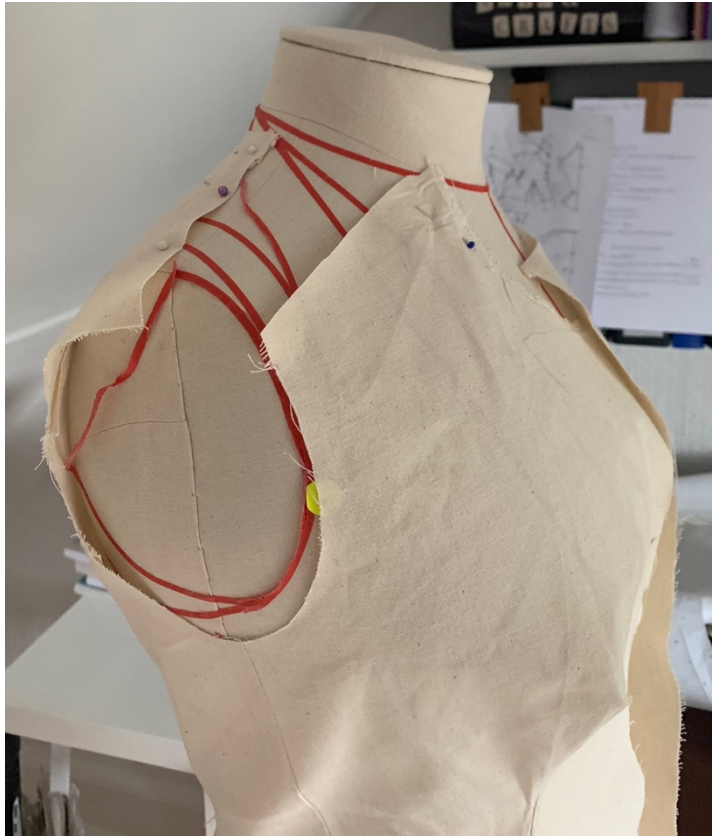
View of the garment specification sheet – back



View of the draping of the skirt bodice front



View of the draping of the skirt bodice side



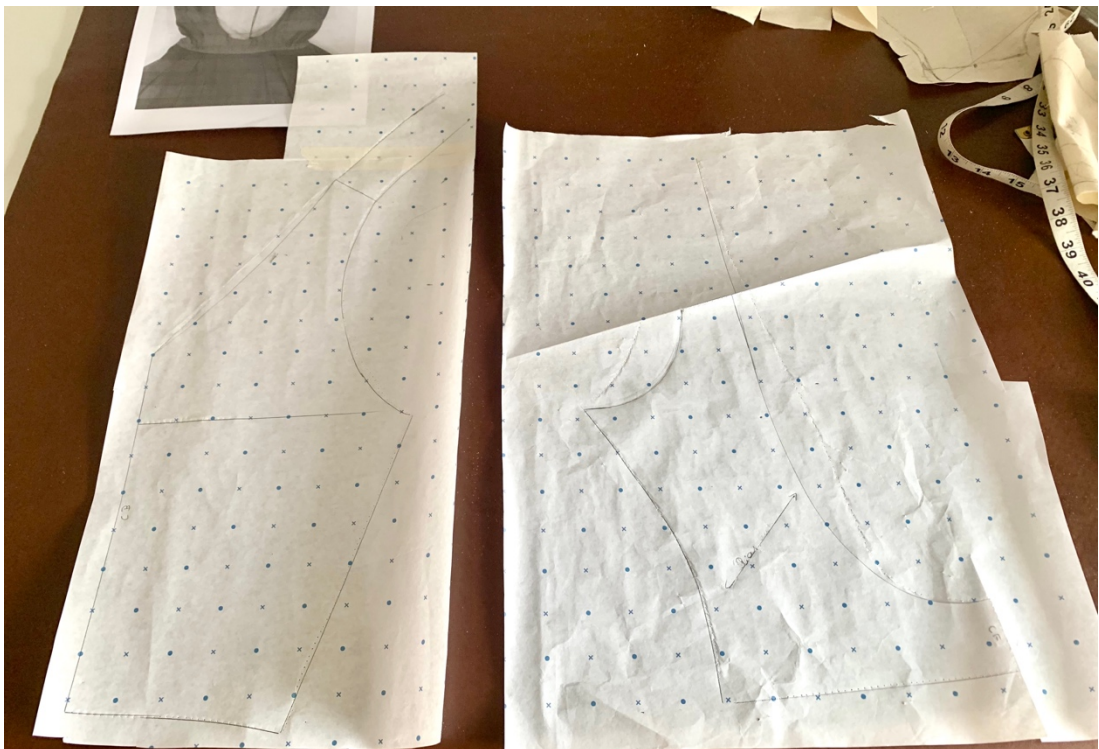
View of the bodice shoulder being extended



View of the bodice attached to the skirt with final adjustments



View of the front and back draped ready to be transferred to the paper



View of the front and back transferred to the paper

Appendix 5

This section highlights the data that I collected during the interview with Angela Wells. It also includes the full transcript of the interview, transcription notes, table of codes, and interview ethics form.



View of the side-saddle rider wearing the riding habit, front view



View of the side-saddle rider wearing the riding habit, back view



View of the front of the mechanical horse



View of the front of the side-saddle



View of the back of the side-saddle



View of the off side of the side-saddle (without flap)



View of the rider on the mechanical horse, front view



View of the rider on the mechanical horse, off side view (no flap)



View of the rider on the mechanical horse, back view



View of the rider mounting a real horse



View of the rider on the real horse, off side view (no flap)



View of the rider on the real horse, back view

Interview Transcript

PhD Candidate: Alberto Atalla Filho

Study title: Body and clothing in motion in early nineteenth-century Britain—a case study in culture and history.

Interview dates: mechanical horse 07/08/2024 — real horse 24/08/2024

Interviewee name: Angela Wells

Interviewee occupation: professional side-saddle rider with 50 years of experience.

Note: vocal disfluencies are not included in this transcript.

Question 1. Please could you explain in your own words why you prefer to ride a horse using a side-saddle rather than astride?

Interviewee: Okay, I started riding side-saddle because we had lots of enthusiasts around where I lived and it was a country lane and they would ride past and they looked so beautiful, so elegant, that I decided that I would follow them on my bike, which is what I did, and I just fell in love with it and was lucky enough there were local people who had horses and saddles, and I think they felt sorry for me because I was a little child of about 10 and so I was invited to have a go on the saddle and I just felt the loveliness of it all, the security—very secure—and I just felt it was just lovely and elegant. It felt so elegant to be on that saddle, on a beautiful horse, on a beautiful saddle, in a beautiful outfit, it was just beautiful. But I then later on in my life got a very, very difficult horse, who had put his last owner in hospital, and the owner before that in hospital, he was called Bolter and that meant he would just take off and you had no control over him whatsoever—I had no money; I gave him a home. I couldn't afford my own horse, I had no money, so I put my side-saddle on him, and I could suddenly start because you are more secure on a side-saddle, so I could then do anything with him when I hunted him. I won a one-day-event against astride riders. I did everything with that horse because I was so secure on him and

he was a good horse and he learned that he couldn't do anything with me, so we had a wonderful time together.

Question 2. Please take a few steps and describe how it feels to wear a copy of an early 19th century woman's riding habit?

Interviewee: It feels really good, it feels absolutely lovely, because the costume is fitting me where it needs to be, so, as a side-saddle rider I use my core I lift and open my chest. I'm an elegant rider, and I'm supposed to be effortless in my riding, so this enhances my effortless elegant look. However there's a lot going on underneath, like swans we have a lot going on underneath to control the horse and decide which pace they're doing and I'm free enough underneath where the skirt is for my legs to be able to do that, and that's what makes me feel really good in this habit, and the arms are just lovely, they are just lovely, I can move with this, I can move them where I would need to move them if I was jumping off, I was galloping or if I was walking, I can move them but I've got the support in the habit for my arms here and here [between elbow and wrist] and that's what I need.

Question 3. Does wearing the garment alter the way you walk or move your body? If so, please describe how and why?

Interviewee: Again, it makes me lift and open my chest and support my core, this is what it's doing is supporting my core and so I immediately put myself in the correct position immediately.

Question 4. On mounting your horse try to adopt the posture of the woman in the painting being shown to you. Please describe how your body feels in relation to your garment?

Interviewee: Okay, so when I'm mounting—I just mounted off of a mounting block and I've sat astride—so I've had to be quite inelegant, to lift up the garment to stop getting tangled up basically, whereas in that day I would have been lifted up and I would have arrived on the saddle, in the side-saddle position that I'm in now, so how

it made me feel a little bit cumbersome with just gathering up the fabric but that's only because I am aware that I was not being elegant, that's all, so but apart from that was lovely, I mean you know the top part was lovely just still lovely.

Question 5. Please ride for a few metres and describe how your body feels in relation to the garment?

Interviewee: It feels great, feels absolutely lovely, it puts me in the right position, in the correct position, so I'm feeling a little bit lazy actually because the garment is doing what the work that I should be doing. It would be difficult for me to ride badly in this garment; it really enhances what I need to be doing, which is sitting upright, which is using my core, engaging my core, and the garment aids all of those things so it would be—I was going to say impossible—it would be difficult to ride badly in this costume, it supports me so well, in all the right places, but allows me movement in my legs where I need it and also in my arms. I don't know if you notice it, this style allows me the correct movement in my arms with the support here—[wrist area]—where I need it, so if I had a strong horse who was really taking what's called a hold, he takes the bit in his mouth and he goes, I've got that support here, which I might need [the tight sleeve below the elbow you think gives you support] it does, it does. It's not too tight, it's just right, it's perfect. It gives me the support in my arm that I need but it also, I mean, it looks really elegant but here I've got the movement if I need it, if I want to start jumping, I've got that, and in the end this finishing— [sleeve-head]—just enough to give me that movement. If I wanted to jump this is the position— [bend the body at the waist]—I would adopt if I'm jumping, I would adopt this position, and this allows me to do that.

Question 6. Do you feel secure wearing this garment while riding side-saddle? Please describe why yes or no.

Interviewee: I do feel secure in this garment because, as I said, it supports me in all the right places. But it also allows me to move in all the right places - the arms, the support here [at the wrist], the movement here [at the waist], the support here in my core, which is very, very important for side-saddle rider, very important, so this is supporting my core for me but allowing me, because the support finishes high enough to allow me, to fold—[bend the body at the waist in preparation for jumping with the horse]—for my jumping or even just to keep in rhythm with my horse, it's finishes and stops in all the right places.

Question 7. Does the garment restrict your body movements while on horseback? If so, described why do you think this is happening.

Interviewee: Not really restrict but it holds me, it holds me up right, it holds me in for me to engage the core, so it doesn't restrict me, but it supports me rather than restrict so there's nothing I can't do in this garment, that I need to do, so, no it doesn't restrict but supports.

Question 8. As you dismount the horse describe how the garment feels in relation to your body? Does it restrict movement of your body while dismounting?

Interviewee: No, it doesn't restrict movement at all, it doesn't restrict it. I don't suppose it aids it really, but the fabric, the fact that the fabric is very smooth, on this seat, this is a leather seated side-saddle, and made my dismount very smooth, whereas actually, if I'd been on a doeskin side-saddle it would have been less smooth, it would have there would have been a little bit of friction which wouldn't have been quite so, so smooth, so I guess it did aid by, being this fabric, this wool fabric, I guess it did, it did.

Question 9. Please describe your experience of riding side-saddle wearing an early nineteenth-century woman's riding habit?

Interviewee: Okay, my experience has been a very positive experience and I consider myself very, very lucky to have had this experience and it's just, been lovely, it's been really, really lovely. It's been side-saddle, it's just been so side-saddle, so, so absorbed you know, side-saddle, side-saddle, side-saddle, it's been that which has been lovely and it really, really feels divine to wear it; fits in all the right places. It allows the movement in all the right places. It holds me in the correct position. It makes me feel very elegant and I just wish I'd had it before [laughs].

Question 10. Is there anything that you think has not been covered by this interview?

Interviewee: I think it's been lovely it's been such a lovely experience to wear [the garment]—really has been absolutely lovely, lovely, lovely, lovely, all of it just, to put on and to find that it fits. I mean nothing ever fits me, it is either too big or too long or two something, but it's lovely that it fits. It feels divine I mean, just to be riding in it, I'm just, I mean, I want to cry because I think of all the years, I've done it and I've I don't think I've ever worn anything so lovely; it is really lovely so thank you very much.

Interviewee: Just to say that the garment allows me to sit, and it encourages me, enhances me to sit in the correct position, which is the upright position my body over the horse. My hips and my shoulders are parallel with the horse I've got 2 legs on one side so the skirt allows my freedom of movement for my legs, so that's how it enhanced my whole body in this, and I think I said before that the way that the sleeves are made allows my arms to be in the correct position as well.

Interviewee: What I liked also about the garment and what added to the elegant picture is the fact that the fabric, the garment of the lower body, didn't move—what we call didn't move—and that means that as the horse moved the garment stayed where it was, so it's

not going to expose my legs. That's the whole point of it because it becomes very inelegant and very ugly if you see a garment moving exposing the legs that's not correct in side-saddle and wouldn't have happened.

Interviewee: [Explanation about the side-saddle leaping head] If we go back to Elizabethan times ladies are sitting here facing that way—[facing sideways]—two feet on the planchet— [a small footrest]—they are being led, they are a passenger on a journey. As the centuries go on, the ladies come this way, they start moving this way [facing forward]—; until we get the point where we have a pommel here—[in front over which the rider could hook the right leg]—and a pommel here—[to the right-hand side of the right leg]—no leaping head. 1830s they want to keep up with their husbands, they want to hunt, they are riding for pleasure, not as a journey and the leaping head is important: they are falling off when they jump. So, they introduce the leaping head and over the 1800s up to about 1900 this pommel—[to the right-hand side of the right leg]—disappears. Occasionally you will see a very old saddle and it's got a lump here—[where the previous right-hand side of the right leg pommel was]—and that means it's a very old saddle with the last, the last knockings of that old pommel, so now we ride, that's why I say this is a modern side-saddle it is 100 years old, but in side-saddle language it's still modern because it's got the two pommels, a fixed head and the leaping head, the leaping head for the jumping, the fixed head for everything else.

Interviewee: Empress of Austria, right, she introduced the leaping head in England. Yes, yes, another name is Catherine de' Medici another famous riding lady. So, Empress of Austria, mad keen on hunting, spent everyday hunting somewhere different in the UK, went to Ireland as well and introduced the leaping head because she wanted to jump. So, she was iconic in the invention

of that leaping head and the fast riding and keeping up with husbands.

Interviewee: [Riding a real horse]—Okay, I felt very at home riding in the habit on Kiwi even just, you know, just wandering around in the field it felt correct, everything felt correct. Made me feel that I was correct, it felt correct, and I wasn't expecting to feel so comfortable in it because it's a long time since he's had a side-saddle on him actually. I've been fiddling around in the field this week, but it just felt lovely, it just felt lovely, I felt very at home in it.

Interview transcript notes

Notes
Question 1 ○ The side-saddle is very secure. ○ The rider won a one-day event against astride riders.
Question 2 ○ The garment feels comfortable and holds the body in the right places. ○ While riding, the rider felt at ease wearing the garment. ○ The jacket sleeves support the arms.
Question 3 ○ The garment supports the core and positions the rider correctly.
Question 4 ○ The rider had to lift the skirt to sit on the saddle.
Question 5 ○ The garment helps riding. ○ The garment helps with posture.
Question 6 ○ The garment provides support in the right places.
Question 7 ○ The garment does not restrict movement, but rather holds the body in place.
Question 8 ○ The rider felt confident dismounting the horse because the saddle material is leather. With a doeskin saddle, the woolly fabric may 'hold' a little.
Question 9 ○ It was a very good experience wearing the early nineteenth-century replica of a riding habit.
Question 10 ○ The garment encourages the rider to sit in the correct position. ○ The skirt did not move while riding.

Interview table of codes

Codes
○ I can move my body
○ While on the horse back: inelegant the skirt to move
○ effortless elegant look
○ two feet on the planchet
○ moving this way— [facing forward]
○ security—very secure
○ support my core
○ more secure than astride
○ I do feel secure
○ costume is fitting me where it needs to be
○ it fits
○ core I lift and open my chest.
○ I'm free enough underneath where the skirt
○ core
○ it puts me in the right position
○ sitting upright
○ Hip and shoulder are parallel
○ arms
○ at the waist
○ allows me movement in my legs where I need it
○ bend the body at the waist in preparation for jumping with the horse
○ hips
○ shoulders
○ 2 legs on one side
○ enhanced my whole body
○ jumping
○ movement
○ little bit cumbersome
○ gathering up the fabric
○ enhances

○ fabric is very smooth
○ women want to keep up with their husbands
○ 1830s women are riding for pleasure
○ comfortable
○ garment allows me to sit
○ my body over the horse
○ The skirt does not move

Interview ethics and risk assessment forms

Ethics Form Application Appendix

Alberto Atalla Filho

2023 - 2024

DOS: Prof. Claire Wilcox

Supervisor: Jay McCauley Bowstead

ual: university
of the arts
london

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Research title, abstract and area of study

Title

Tailoring the past: the influence of bespoke tailoring techniques in shaping discourses of gender in Britain between 1820 and 1860.

Abstract

This project investigates how bespoke tailoring techniques of cutting, shaping and making British men's frock coats influenced the cut, construction, and silhouette of women's riding habits between 1820 and 1860. Through a combination of theoretical approaches and tailoring practices this project employs a methodological framework that argues for combining the study of material culture, garment construction and embodied research as a means for better understanding how women negotiated the tension between restriction and freedom within this specific time frame in the nineteenth century. Through an exploration of the adaptation of male bespoke tailoring for women's clothing, the research aims to determine if this contributed to the shift in cultural and social attitudes during the four decades under investigation; did the construction of garments contribute to a change in the perception of acceptable forms of femininity and the nature of the body?

Area of study

Cultural and Historical Studies

Study Information sheet

PhD research title: Tailoring the past: the influence of bespoke tailoring techniques in shaping discourses of gender in Britain between 1820 and 1860.

Study title: Body and clothing in motion in early nineteenth century Britain—a case study in culture and history

1. What is the purpose of this study?

This research project aims to explore how bespoke tailoring techniques used in historical clothing can expand our understanding of how women negotiated the tension between restriction and freedom in early nineteenth century Britain. Furthermore, it investigates if the practice of bespoke tailoring in womenswear between 1820 to 1860 contributed to a shift in cultural and social attitudes during these four decades.

The collaboration of a professional side-saddle horse rider in this study makes an important contribution to the methodological framework developed for the project. This will help inform an understanding of the relationship between body and clothing, revealing connections between body and identity in the period under investigation.

2. Who is conducting the study?

This study is being conducted by Alberto Atalla Filho, 4th year part-time PhD candidate at the London College of Fashion - University of the Arts London. The research project is supervised by Prof. Claire Wilcox (Director of Studies) and Jay McCauley Bowstead (Supervisor).

3. What will the interviewee be asked to do?

The interview will last a maximum of one hour. It will start with the interviewer giving a 10-minute presentation of the project. For the remaining 45-50 minutes the interviewee will be dressed in a reproduction of an 1830s woman's riding habit. During this time the interviewee will be asked 10 semi-structure questions about how her body and limbs interact with the garment before, during and after sitting side-saddle on horseback—using either a mechanical or live horse, as determined by The Side Saddle Association—as well as about the experience of riding side-saddle, her posture, etc. The interviewee or members of the Side Saddle Association will then be invited to make any additional observations.

4. Where will the interview take place and when?

The interview will take place at The Side Saddle Association at an agreed date and time. The interview will last a maximum of 1 hour.

5. Is there something that the Side Saddle Association and the horse rider should do before the interview?

They should read the participant information sheet to understand the aim and practicalities of the study: their requirement to wear a riding habit on horseback and the questions they will be asked. They should contact the interviewer with any comments or concerns. On reading and accepting the details of the information sheet, the participant should sign and date the form before returning it via email to Alberto Atalla Filho at

a.atallafilho0620201@arts.ac.uk, with an indication of suitable dates and times for the interview.

6. What will the participant get for participating?

With their permission, the participant and the Side Saddle Association will have their names credited in the final theses and their contribution acknowledged as an expert contribution to the research. The outcome of the interview will be shared with the participant and, should they wish, they will be informed of any future research that results from the study.

7. Is there any risk in taking part in this research?

The study will be undertaken at a professional establishment with a skilled rider. A risk assessment will be undertaken and the research will comply with all local and government guidance. The participant is free to stop the interview at any point that they feel physically or emotionally uncomfortable. Support for mental health issues can be found at the local NHS health helpline on: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline>.

8. For further question who should I contact?

For any further questions please contact Alberto Atalla Filho at a.atallafilho0620201@arts.ac.uk.

9. If I take part, can I change my mind later in the process?

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation. If you decide to withdraw from the study after the results have been submitted, however, it will not be possible to erase your individual data from the research project—the intention is to submit the final thesis during the first semester of 2026, but this timetable may change according to needs.

10. What is the information collected and how is it going to be used?

The name and contact details of both the interviewee and representative of the Side Saddle Association will be recorded on the consent form. This information will be used to communicate information related to the study. However, the researcher also may use these details for any follow-up requests for permission to use information in presentations and publications. These contact details will be stored securely and kept confidential in accordance with GDPR regulations and the UAL Guidance for Research Ethics.

The interview will be audio recorded, and this will be sent to the interviewee with any follow-up questions. Photographs and videos will be made by the researcher during the interview and may be included in the final PhD thesis

and, with the participant's permission, in presentations, exhibitions and publications (books, articles, websites, etc.).

All the data collected will be safely stored in encrypted and password-protected files on a laptop or hard-drive, never on the cloud, in line with UAL Guidance for Research Ethics. These also will be used only for the purpose set in this information sheet and will not be passed on to third parties. The physical copies of documents are going to be destroyed after the PhD programme being completed. Digitalized data, including consent forms with contact details, will be securely archived and password protected in line with UAL guidance.

11. Who should be contacted if the participant has a complaint?

If the participant is unhappy with any aspect of how the research is conducted, they should contact:

Secretary to the Research Ethics Sub-Committee

Research. 5th floor

University of the Arts London

1 Granary Square

London N1C 4AA

Email: researchethics@arts.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 207 514 2113

Semi-structured interview questions

1. Please explain in your own words why you prefer to ride a horse using a side-saddle rather than astride?
2. Please take a few steps and describe how it feels to wear a copy of an early nineteenth century woman's riding habit?
3. Does wearing the garment alter the way you walk or move your body? If so, please describe how and why?
4. On mounting your horse try to adopt the posture of the woman in the painting being shown to you (figure 1). Please describe how your body feels in relation to your garment?
5. Please ride for a few metres and describe how your body feels in relation to the garment?
6. Do you feel secure wearing this garment while riding side-saddle? Please describe why yes or no.
7. Does the garment restrict your body movements while on horseback? If so, describe why do you think this is happening.
8. As you dismount the horse describe how the garment feels in relation to your body? Does it restrict movement of your body while dismounting?

9. Please describe your experience of riding side-saddle wearing an early nineteenth century woman riding habit?
10. Is there anything that you think has not been covered by this interview?

Alberto Atalla Filho

PhD candidate at the London College of Fashion-UAL

E-mail: a.atallafilho0620201@arts.ac.uk

Consent Form for participation in a semi-structure interview

Please tick the appropriated box

Taking Part in the Project	Yes	No
I have read and understood the project information sheet that was given to me, and I had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview and the research and have had these questioned answered satisfactorily. (If you answer No to this question, please do not proceed with this consent form until you are fully aware of what your participation in the project will mean).	☐	☐
I agree to take part in the research project.	☐	☐
I understand that taking part in the project will include wearing a copy of an early nineteenth century riding habit and corset, walk few steps and ride side-saddle on a horse (mechanical or real).	☐	☐
I am going to be interviewed and the questions answered will be recorded and transcribed, video will be recorded, and pictures will be taken.	☐	☐
I understand that I am taking part voluntarily and that I can withdraw from the study at any time before the submission of the thesis (expected to be in the first half of 2026); I do not have to give any reasons why I no longer wish to take part and there will be no adverse consequences if I choose to withdraw.	☐	☐
I agree for the data collected (transcript, photos, and video) to be analysed and the outcomes to be used for the purpose of the research, including publication in the research final thesis, books, articles, presentation, and websites. I also understand that some of these materials may be included in the appendix of the final thesis.	☐	☐
I understand that I can contact the UAL staff if I have any concerns or further questions about this research.	☐	☐

I understand and agree that my name and words may be quoted as an expert in the field in the final research thesis, publications, reports, web pages, presentations and other research outputs.	☐	☐
I agree that the information I provide can be used legally by the researchers	☐	☐

Interviewee Details:

Name:

Email:

Date:

Signed:

Representative of The Side Saddle Association

Name:

Email:

Date:

Signed:

Researcher Details:

Name: Alberto Atalla Filho

Email: a.atallafilho0620201@arts.ac.uk

Date:

Signed:

Further information or questions should be directed in the first instance to
Albert Atalla Filho a.atallafilho0620201@arts.ac.uk

Additional information or complaints can be directed to:

College Research Degrees Sub-Committee (CRDSC)

lcfresearch@arts.ac.uk

or

Research and Knowledge Exchange Ethics Sub-Committee

(RKEESC)

researchethics@arts.ac.uk

PS.: A signed copy will be given to interviewee and one copy retained by the researcher.

General Risk Assessment Form

Id. Code:

College / Pro-Vice Chancellery	London College of Fashion	School / Dept.	
Name(s) of Assessor(s)		Location	
Date of Assessment		Review Date	
Risk Assessment of	Garment fitting and side-saddle horse riding.		

1. Description of task / activity / area

The task is an interview that will last a maximum of one hour. It will start with the interviewer giving a 10-minute presentation of the project. For the remaining 45-50 minutes the interviewee will be dressed in a reproduction of an 1830s woman's riding habit. During this time the interviewee will be asked 10 semi-structured questions about how her body and limbs interact with the garment before, during and after sitting side-saddle on horseback, in addition she will be asked about the experience of riding side-saddle and her posture. Either a mechanical or live horse, as determined by the Side Saddle Association, will be used for the interview. The interviewee and members of the Side Saddle Association will then be invited to make any additional observations. The study will take place during day light hours at a date and time as specified by the Side Saddle Association according with their availability. Risks are low.

2. Identification of hazards and risks

Identification of hazards and risks	Risk rating (with existing control measures)
1 Riding the horse wearing a long skirt while following health and safety regulations.	Low
2 Mount or dismount the horse while wearing tight and long clothing.	Low
3 The horse rider loses control of the horse, posing a danger to themselves and interviewer	Low

3. Existing Control Measures

1 The horse rider is a professional side-saddle rider who will follow the Side Saddle Association's health and safety procedures.

2 The horse rider is a professional side-saddle rider who will follow the Side Saddle Association's health and safety procedures.				
3 The horse rider is a professional side-saddle rider who will follow the Side Saddle Association's health and safety procedures and the interviewer will keep a safe distance from the horse as recommended by the Side Saddle Association.				
Are the control measures adequate?	Yes		No	

	Multiple deaths or over £1,000,000 in damage	Single death or over £100,000 in damage	Major injury or over £10,000	Lost time or over £1000	Minor injury or over £1000	Delay
Certain	Very High	Very High	High	High	High	High
Very likely	Very High	Very High	High	High	High	Medium
Likely	Very High	High	High	High	High	Medium
May happen	High	High	High	High	Low	Low
Unlikely	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Very unlikely	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low

4. Additional Control Measures Required

1 No additional measures required.				
2				
3				
4				
5				
Will additional control measures reduce the risk to an acceptable level?	Yes		No	

5. Actions

Action	Person responsible	Acknowledged	Time scale	Date completed
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Has a safe system of work been completed?	Yes		No	Not required

Risk assessment **completed** by.....(print name)..... (signature).....(Date)

Risk assessment **accepted** by (Manager).....(print name) (Signature)..... (Date)

Matrix Table explained

	Multiple deaths or over £1,000,000 in damage	Single death or over £100,000 in damage	Major injury or over £10,000	Lost time or over £1000	Minor injury or over £1000	Delay
Certain	Very High	Very High	High	High	High	High
Very likely	Very High	Very High	High	High	High	Medium
Likely	Very High	High	High	High	High	Medium
May happen	High	High	High	High	Low	Low
Unlikely	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Very unlikely	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low	Low

Action prioritisation table following a risk assessment (taken from Croner's risk assessment):

Risk Level	Action and timescale
Low	No further preventive action is necessary, but consideration should be given to more cost-effective solutions, or improvements that impose no additional cost burden. Monitoring is required to ensure that controls are maintained.
Medium	Efforts should be made to reduce the risk, but the cost of prevention should be carefully measured and limited. Risk reduction measures should normally be implemented within three to six months, depending on the number of people exposed to the hazard.
High	Work should not be started until the risk has been reduced. Considerable resources may have to be allocated to reduce the risk. Where the risk involves critical work in progress, the problem should normally be remedied as soon as reasonably practicable but within one to three months, depending on the number of people exposed to the hazard.
Very high	Work should not be started or continued until the risk level has been reduced. While the control measure selected should be cost-effective, legally there is an absolute duty to reduce the risk. This means that if it is not possible to reduce the risk even with unlimited resources, then the work must not begin or must remain prohibited.

Research Project Outline

Introduction

- 0.1 Introductory statement
- 0.2 Definitions of key terms
- 0.3 Aims, objectives and challenges
- 0.4 Background, critical review, and research questions
- 0.5 Practice-based, -led or hybrid?
- 0.6 Role and purpose of the practice
- 0.7 Self-reflection as practice-related researcher
- 0.8 Conclusion

Part One: Methodological Framework

- 1.1 Overview

- 1.2 Triangulation
- 1.3 Exploring dress as an object of evidence
- 1.4 Re-making as research method
- 1.5 Embodied research as process of knowing
- 1.6 Conclusion

Part Two: Contextualizing Male Fashion in Early Nineteenth Century Britain

- 2.1 Overview
- 2.2 Contextualizing male fashion in early nineteenth century Britain
- 2.3 Men's tailored garments between 1820 and 1860
- 2.4 Men's tailored frock coats between 1820 and 1860
- 2.5 Re-making an early-nineteenth-century man's tailored frock coat
- 2.6 Conclusion

Part Three: Women and Horse Riding in Early Nineteenth Century Britain

- 3.1 *Overview*
- 3.2 *Women and horse riding*
- 3.3 *The side-saddle*
- 3.4 Conclusion

Part Four: Contextualizing Female Fashion in Early Nineteenth Century Britain

- 4.1 Overview
- 4.2 Contextualizing female fashion in early nineteenth century Britain
- 4.3 Women's tailored garments between 1820 and 1860
- 4.4 Women's tailored riding habits between 1820 and 1860
- 4.5 Re-making an early nineteenth century woman's tailored riding habit
- 4.6 Conclusion

Part Five: Cross-tailoring in Early Nineteenth Century Britain

- 5.1 Overview
- 5.2 The influence of bespoke tailoring techniques in shaping discourses of gender in Britain between 1820 and 1860
- 5.3 Conclusion

Conclusion

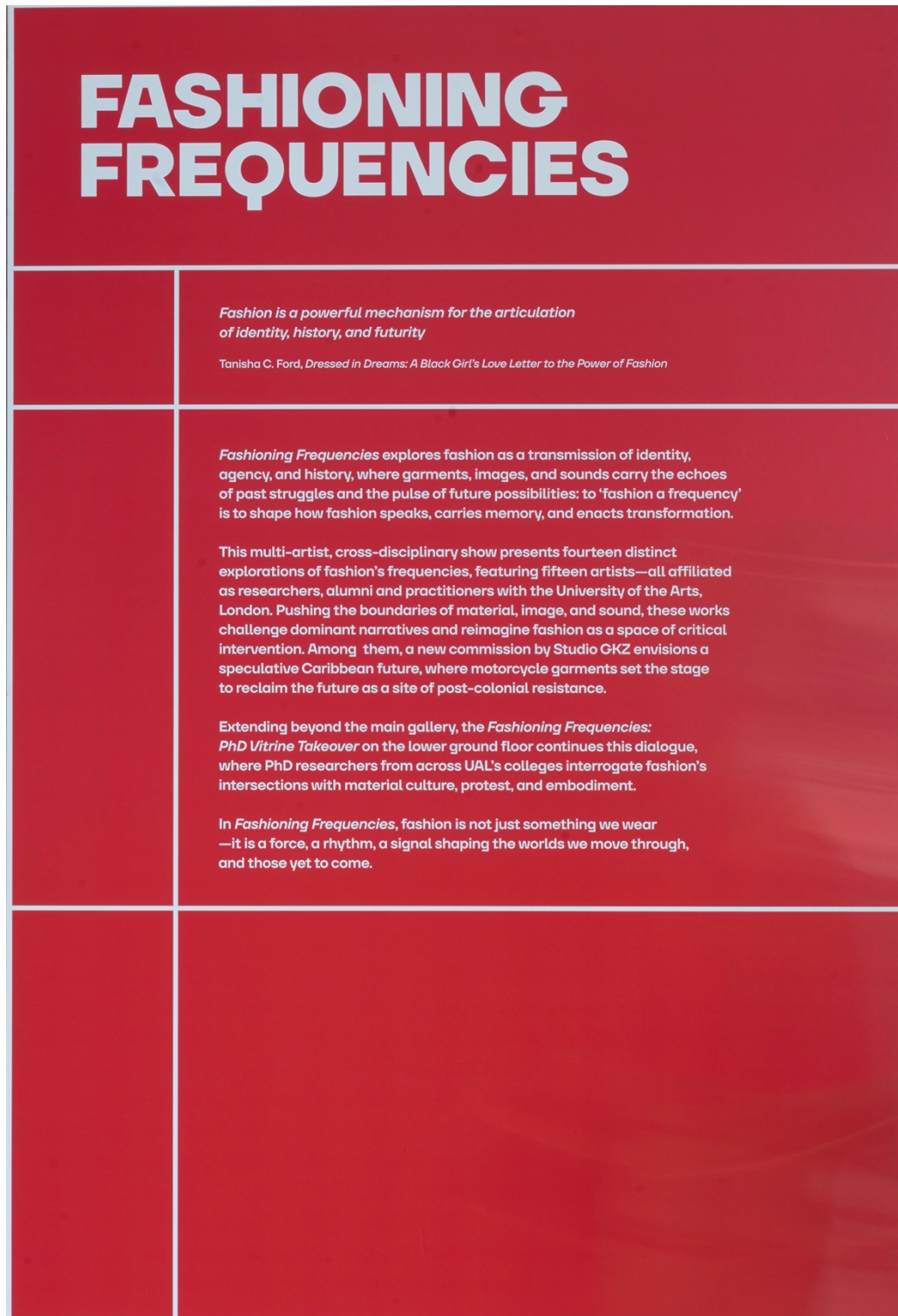
Bibliography

Appendices

List of Figures

Appendix 6

This section includes images from the exhibition *Fashioning Frequencies* at the London College of Fashion, which featured the frock coat and riding habit that I made as part of this project.



View of the exhibition label, general information

ALBERTO ATALLA FILHO

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

Alberto Atalla Filho examines the influence of bespoke British men's tailoring on the construction of women's horse riding habits between 1820 and 1860.

His work reveals how the adoption of frock coat techniques—alongside innovations in side-saddle design, enabled shifts in both mobility and self-presentation.

By merging masculine construction with feminine attire, these garments subtly challenged traditional gender norms, offering women new forms of personal and public expression.

Atalla Filho's research highlights dress as both a marker of gender identity and a site of negotiation, where convention and agency intersect in material form.

Tailoring the Past: Riding habit, skirt and jacket with frock coat, wool, 2024
Property of Alberto Atalla Filho

View of the exhibition label for the garments



View of the exhibition display – 1



View of the exhibition display – 2



View of the exhibition display – 3