

THE BRIDE WORE WHITE

200 YEARS OF BRIDAL FASHION AT
MIEGUNYAH HOUSE MUSEUM



CATRIONA FISK

THE BRIDE WORE WHITE:
200 YEARS OF WEDDING FASHION AT
MIEGUNYAH HOUSE MUSEUM

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Proudly Supported by a Brisbane City Council Community History Grant



Dedicated to a better Brisbane

QUEENSLAND WOMEN'S HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, 2013 ©

ISBN: 978-0-9578228-6-3

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are extended to Jenny Steadman for her vision and Helen Cameron and Julie Martin for their help and support during the process of preparing this catalogue. The advice of Dr Michael Marendy is also greatly appreciated. I also wish to express gratitude to Brisbane City Council for the opportunity and funding that allowed this project to be realised. Finally Sandra Hyde-Page and the members of the QWHA, for their limitless dedication and care which is the foundation on which this whole project is built.

FOREWORD

The world of the social history museum is a microcosm of the society from which it has arisen. It reflects the educational and social standards of historic and contemporary life and will change its focus as it is influenced by cultural change. Today it is no longer acceptable for a museum to simply exist. As Stephen Weil said in 2002, museums have to shift focus “from function to purpose” and demonstrate relevance to the local community.

The museum visitor has also changed. There is a demand for museums to engage with the visitor and to embrace a wider “ideas based” view of their collections rather than the old didactic ‘show and tell’ approach. The contemporary knowledgeable visitor wants to experience particular places and subjects in an individual way and has often done extensive online research into their area of interest.

The Queensland Women’s Historical Association strives to meet the contemporary demand by developing public awareness of the extent of our collection and an appreciation of the depth of the collection. To this end we have begun to make our collection available online and have engaged with local community groups to develop exhibitions and events that support their interests. “The Bride Wore White” was one of these community partnerships and its success means we can look forward to many more. This catalogue is, we hope, the first in a series. This catalogue aims to showcase significant wedding dresses from the collection in their historical contexts. It will be a reference point for scholars who wish to learn more about early bridal custom and fashion and is also a starting point for those wishing to research particular pioneering Queensland families. We would like to thank everyone involved in this project and look forward to publishing another section of the collection in the near future.

Jenny Steadman

Vice President, The Queensland Women’s Historical Association

INTRODUCTION

Miegunyah House Museum - owned and operated by the Queensland Women's Historical Association - occupies a plot of land in Bowen Hills that was first built upon in the mid-1800s. In 1871 the Perry family moved in to 'Folkestone' an existing house at the back of the site and in 1886 William Perry built Miegunyah for his son and new daughter-in-law. The Queensland Women's Historical Association (QWHA) was formed in April of 1950 at nearby Newstead House with the intention of promoting the history of Queensland and in particular the history of pioneering families and the women who ran them. Between 1950 and 1954 the Association decided to start collecting documents and objects that reflected changing lifestyles, particularly evident to the members in the early 1950s who were witness to the rapid change in domestic conditions and practices in the 20th century.

In 1966 the Association sought to move out from Newstead House which was being turned into a museum. In need of new premises to host the QWHA and its growing collection, they set about trying to raise the deposit required to purchase Miegunyah, which was otherwise destined to be destroyed and turned into a block of flats. Triumphant in their fundraising efforts, the Association purchased and opened the house in June 1968.

The Fashion and Textile collection has been with the QWHA from its early days at Newstead House. Some of these pieces have been in the hands of the Association for over 50 years. A number of the early 19th century garments in the collection were donated in the 1950s and '60s by the children and grandchildren of the women who wore them. Often the donated garment was handed down through the generations, interwoven with the history of some of Australia and Queensland's early migrant families, and donated to QWHA to preserve that connection between the object and the history of Queensland. This link is of particular relevance to the wedding fashion collection as highly symbolic special occasion wear - such as a wedding gown or a delicate veil - can span the generations from the roots of colonial families in Europe to 20th Century society, forging a link between the garment itself and the social history of Queensland.

Contributions have been made consistently to the fashion collection, starting from the early days of the QWHA and continuing to the present. In the 1990s a Queensland Government grant allowed for the collection to be moved into professional storage conditions with the installation of a cold storage room and compactors. As well as receiving the dedicated attention of the members of the association, the fashion collection has been the beneficiary of the efforts or researchers and professionals over the years, particularly of late with the expert conservation advice of Dr Michael Marendy.

The earliest costume item in the collection is a late 18th century ball gown while the latest are 1950s cocktail dresses and a 1980s bridal headpiece. The fashion and textile collection covers everything from lace fragments to evening gowns, from maids' aprons and children's shoes to professional and academic robes. Predominately focused on women's clothing there are nonetheless examples, such as the academic robes, of menswear. The collection is an eclectic mix of English, Australian and distinctly Brisbane stories attached to both formal and informal garments. Together they paint a picture of the many threads woven into the history of Queensland, its women and its sense of style.

THE BRIDE WORE WHITE

The inspiration and impetus for this catalogue came from an exhibition held at Miegunyah House Museum from 7th September to the 6th October 2013 called 'The Bride Wore White.' This exhibition was organized by the QWHA and curated by Julie Martin, a student from the Museum Studies program at the University of Queensland. 'The Bride Wore White' was the largest and most ambitious exhibition to date at Miegunyah, utilising both the interior rooms of the house and a dedicated exhibition space to showcase the wedding fashion collection. The rationale behind the exhibition was to illustrate the developments in bridal fashion in Australia and explore the connection between the



Miegunyah

house and weddings of the past. Using items ranging from a gentleman's top hat, trousseau accessories and wedding portraits to entire wedding outfits, the exhibition told the story of fashion and social history to visitors. These visitors were, as intended, a mix between members of the museum, newer and younger visitors with an interest in fashion, and a contingent of people with a professional interest in museum work. As such the exhibition reflected, as this catalogue does, the intention to simultaneously broaden the appeal of Miegunyah to new audiences and better serve the interests of the members that are the lifeblood of the museum.

In preparing the exhibition, curator Julie Martin crafted these words to explain its scope and purpose:

The white wedding seems a very traditional and familiar event in Western society, but many wedding traditions have relatively recent origins. Wedding fashion has evolved from simply wearing your best dress, to the highly recognisable bridal dresses of today in a little under 200 years, and this transformation provides a fascinating insight into women's history. The wedding dress and accoutrements are not only highly symbolic in their own right, but can speak volumes about social and economic conditions in Australia throughout the last two centuries. This exhibition shows how wedding attire has generally followed the fashion of the day with, of course, the added glamour of the bridal gown.

This volume is not just a catalogue of the exhibition, neither is it an exhaustive record of everything in 'The Bride Wore

White.' Although inspired by the exhibition, the scope of this catalogue draws from the whole collection and presents its own research and conclusions about the garments

CATALOGUE

The total fashion collection now contains well over 200 pieces. One of the strengths of the collection is the repository of bridal fashion. This catalogue is a collection of 60 objects, including wedding gowns, shoes, veils and a selection of photographs and printed materials. Together they give an insight into the changing bridal fashion of the last 200 years and into the story of the women that bought, stored and wore them.

Margaret Maynard, respected dress historian and authority on Australian dress and identity, highlighted that despite the robust cultural links between Britain and Australia, the colony developed its own relationships to and forms of dress. She further pointed out that there even developed some regional distinctions in dress between the various population centres of this vast country. Her work pinpointed the potential of collections like this, stocked as they are with the 'unspoken language'ⁱ of dress, to enlighten our understanding of social, economic, imperial and cultural historyⁱⁱ.

It is not possible, nor is it wise given the nature of this volume, to use this collection to construct a clear narrative or to determine characteristics of distinctly 'Queensland' style. Not all of the garments were made or worn in Queensland. Many were bought from or worn in Sydney or London. Others are not provenanced and of unknown origin. Instead it is the purpose of this catalogue to serve as a reference guide to the fashion and textile collection, to promote the value of this repository of design, family and social history that is underused and often underappreciated. Furthermore this publication is intended to mark the beginning of an era of renewed professionalism on the part of Miegunyah House Museum. The key aims of this drive will be increasing research and completing documentation of the collection to promote access by visitors of all ages, both in person and online. This untapped resource for scholars of fashion, social history, the decorative arts and the development of Queensland holds great potential for learning and research and we intend this publication to be merely the first in many steps on the journey to realising that potential.

Readers of this catalogue will find a selection from the QWHA fashion collection, ranging from the 1820s to the 1980s. They are presented in four main sections: wedding gowns and outfits; accessories including veils, headpieces and corsages; shoes and finally photographs and other paper materials. Objects have been selected that illustrate the strengths and breadth of the collection, certain stylistic developments in Western bridal fashion and the most interesting or well documented items in the collection. Read as a whole they represent a significant repository of design and the material culture, that is both the physical properties of the items and the social meaning imbibed into them by their wearers, associated with the tradition of wedding outfits.

Where possible dates and donors are attributed to the garments in question however many items in the collection do not have documented or proven attributions as wedding dresses. Rather they have long been considered part of the wedding collection by virtue of written or word of mouth association with wedding fashion. These associations speak to the assumptions about and interpretations of bridal fashion by earlier generations or Queensland women, namely the QWHA members themselves.

WEDDING DRESSES & OUTFITS



When attempting to compile any accurate picture of wedding fashion one is faced with not only the overwhelming bias towards high class, expensive gowns in surviving collections, but also the very real problem of what distinguishes a wedding dress from other forms of dress. Colour is not in itself indicative; while white, silver and white and silver combined have been popular bridal colours since the 18th Century they were also common colours for other formal occasions. Equally they were far from the only colour choices for brides, including during and after the Victorian period, which is usually pointed to as the period in which white became *de rigueur* for brides.ⁱⁱⁱ Throughout the period that this catalogue covers, not all white dresses were wedding dresses, neither were all wedding dresses white.

It hardly seems possible to discuss wedding dresses and the advent of the white wedding without reference to Queen Victoria's marriage in 1840. The young queen influenced wedding fashion for years to come. She acted both as a romantic, by dressing as a bride rather than monarch on the day, and as a leader, by choosing to promote British manufacturers for her dress, notably the Devonshire manufacturers of her Honiton lace veil and skirt. The wedding coincided with an increased interest in and discussion of weddings in newspapers. The ideal image of a bride was becoming increasingly important and the pressure to be up to date and yet demure grew. The dissemination of fashion was slower than it is today, amplified in Australia by the added complication of crossing hemispheres from the arbiters of taste in Paris and London. Nevertheless the impression created by this collection of dresses is that, on the whole, brides in Australia reflected the Victorian model of a bride.

Fashion being what it is, new trends and stylistic developments find themselves quickly showcased in bridal fashion. They're often exaggerated, an element that is especially notable in 20th century. Where formal, day and bridal wear used to sing off the same hymn sheet in much of the 19th century, the 20th century saw the complete divergence of day and bridal wear and a more marked difference between bridal and formal wear. Only in the latter part of the last century did the difference between formal and bridal wear become so exaggerated as to make a wedding dress significantly different from just your best dress. Today this has reached the extent that many wedding dresses are garments that could only be worn by a bride. This demonstrates the continuing social significance of

weddings, the decline in truly formal occasions in modern society, and the proportionally larger discretionary income available to modern brides.

Wedding dresses exist within the usual laws of museum fashion collections, with the sometimes random selection of what is kept and a bias towards the survival of rarely worn, high status garments. Yet at the same time they are subject to their own laws dictated by the unique symbolic resonance of a wedding outfit. Before the 20th century wedding gowns were frequently re-worn. Many brides, simply unable to afford the absurd luxury of a dress you only wore once, much less a white or cream one - as all but one of the wedding dresses in this chapter are - would re-wear their dresses for formal occasions, often altering them to adapt to the shifting winds of fashion. Since the 1900s fewer wedding dresses have been reused and storing wedding gowns became more common, taking them out of the cycle of use and thereby adhering to the adage of 'least worn, most surviving.'

What is unique about wedding dresses (and accessories) is that they can and often were kept and handed down to following generations of women, either for reuse or as a keepsake and family heirloom. These garments can be kept and cared for long after any expectation of their practical use has gone, as mementos of family and departed loved ones, or a wistful reminder of ones own youth and romantic history. They remind the viewer of vitality, beauty, and the romanticised ideal of marriage and at the same time of loss, the aging or death of an individual, and of the traditions and customs that have been lost to time. Robyn Healy, Associate Professor at RMIT's School of Fashion and Textiles, describes this phenomenon, particular to clothing displayed in museums, as 'an object haunted.' Something that prompts one to examine the meaning of what is absent, i.e. the living person, as a part of the object itself.^{iv} Emotion, sentimentality and a sense of belonging, things particularly hard to capture and record for posterity, can 'haunt' or be invested in wedding attire, thus extending their symbolic value beyond their use as a historical record of style.

The dresses presented here are mostly drawn from a small section of society. The nature of the QWHA and the fact that many donations came from the immediate social circle of the members amplifies the bias towards middle and upper classes that is common in costume collections. They represent a particular view of Queensland history.

By and large they favour the well off and well known: daughters, wives and mothers of the self-selecting pillars of an early Queensland society that can and occasionally does appear quite homogenous. The core of this collection represents overwhelmingly white, comfortable and Anglo-Saxon histories. They offer symbolic links to the history of the colonies and the process of establishing a new life in Australia. Equally they detail the subtleties of the relationship between this new life and the old one, exploring the interaction between the ‘dominant culture and the periphery.’^{vi} Looking back from our vantage point in our modern, prosperous nation the success of pioneering families can seem a foregone conclusion. However these garments have survived and are witness to the struggle to succeed and establish a new life, kept by generations of local families as a monument to that time and their origins.

FAMILY STORIES

Part of the reason many of these dresses were collected by Miegunyah House Museum is their connection to family stories of perceived significance. These dresses give insights into the people and relationships that are as much a part of the history of weddings as the garments themselves. The first example of this is the 1821 wedding gown merchant and businessman Russell Wilkins brought to Australia as a reminder of his beloved mother who wore it at her wedding. Russell, youngest of her eight children, enjoyed commercial and personal successes that ensured a large family and many descendants in Queensland to hand his mother’s dress down through the generations. The dress eventually found its way to this collection where it represents his story as much as it does his mother’s and the story of 1820s English style.

Others, like the front panel of Lizzie Plunket’s elaborate 1880s gown reflect the spending power of her family and the social context of her wedding. Her outfit was similar in style to that of her friend Evelyn Casey née Harris of Newstead House, seen in the picture opposite. Together the two wedding dresses give some indication of the extravagance, expense and romanticism of Australian society weddings that was at its most exaggerated in the

1880s^{vi}. Others still, such as Lady Ramsay’s mother’s wedding dress, paint more unusual pictures. In the case of this dress it is of a registry office wedding in the first decade of the 20th century. While civil registrars had been permitted to celebrate marriages since 1836 under British law and under Victorian State Law since at least the Marriage Act of 1890, the church wedding was still the most popular form of marriage, making this an interesting and unusual example.

While fashion history is obviously detailed in every fold and stitch of these garments, the family histories they tell are also an important facet to their historical significance.



1. **Miss Evelyn Harris on her wedding day 1888.**
From the collection of Newstead House



2. Wedding Dress 1821

Silk

Donated by Mrs M. Simmons

QWHA1978-82

This cream silk gown was worn by Rebecca Rusher at her wedding to John Wilkins in St Laurence, Berkshire on 11 April 1821. Her youngest son Russell Wilkins came to Australia in 1853 at the age of 16 and went on to establish a successful business in Queensland selling clothing, toys and other goods all across the state. Russell acquired his mother's wedding gown on one of his visits to England and it was eventually handed down to Russell's granddaughter who donated it to Miegunyah in 1978. Made and worn in England some 50 years before its passage to Australia, this garment illustrates the close ties between Russell and his mother and the connection between pioneer families in Queensland and their origins in England.

The high Empire waistline and decorated sleeves reflect the prevailing fashion of the day, commonly associated with the Regency period of the early 19th Century. The long sleeves and decorative bands at the bottom of the skirt are also typical of this style. This is the oldest wedding dress at Miegunyah, indeed one of the earliest garments in the collection, and represents the lighter, classically-influenced style of the period in contrast to the fuller skirts, natural waistlines and enlarged sleeves that typify fashions of the following decades.





3. **Wedding Dress c.1875-1885**
Ivory wool, lace, satin ribbon
QWHA94c-132

An ivory, one piece wedding dress with a fitted, long-line bodice and gathering at the centre back of the waist. Lace trimmings adorn the front opening and bottom of the bodice, which is fastened with hooks, and the cuffs are finished with lace edged tulle that flare out slightly to contrast the straight sleeves.

After the full skirts and crinolines of the 1850s and 1860s, the focus shifted on the back and led to the iconic bustle style of dress in the 1870s, with exaggerated backwards projection enabled by bustle pads, elaborate decoration and gathering of fabric across the back. This evolved into the style seen in this dress, with its tie back skirt joined to the bodice, which extends down beyond the hips in one smooth, seamless line. The focus of the dress remains on the gathering at the rear, contrasting the slim line of the front of the dress. The narrow style was emphasised by trimmings and decoration often arranged in horizontal bands, such as the ruching and piped edges on the front of this skirt. When combined with the overskirt, sometimes a separate piece or sometimes attached, it creates an apron front effect, known as a tablier^{vii}. The complex drapery and patterns necessary to create the features of this dress were made possible by the dissemination of the sewing machine from 1865, courtesy of Elias Howe and John Merrit Singer.^{viii}



4. Floral Wedding Dress c.1875-1885

Printed cotton, lace decorations
QWHA94c-063 a & b

A two-piece wedding dress of printed cotton with lace details at the cuff, high standing collar and on the gathering at the back of the skirt.

The long line, or curaise, bodice of this dress is extended down into a gathered overskirt emphasising the hips, a conscious echo of 18th century polonaise gowns. The folds of fabric at the rear would have been supported underneath and stood out at some distance from the waist, making it a focal point of the outfit. The narrow style of the underskirt is emphasised

by attached horizontal lines of gathered and pleated material, and vertical box pleats around the hemline.

Although white was a popular colour for wedding dresses and had become increasingly common, especially amongst the well off, throughout the later 19th century, coloured dresses such as this printed cotton example were not uncommon. Many factors such as expense, the age of the bride or their previous marital status could influence the choice of a coloured gown. Add to that the difficulty of keeping and washing white dresses and the fact that many wore their wedding dresses more than once and a coloured option seems far more practical than white. Despite the influence of Queen Victoria's white was not ubiquitous for wedding dresses as we imagine today.^{ix}



5. **Front Panel from skirt of Wedding Dress 1887**

Satin, beading, net
 Donated by the Power family
 QWHA1995

This is the decorative front panel from the wedding dress worn by Elizabeth Plunket at her wedding to Francis Isadore Power, who went on to become a prominent lawyer and, for a time, Minister of Justice, at St Stephens Cathedral 30th August 1887. As a prominent society wedding the event was attended by notables of 1880s Queensland Society. One such attendee was Miss Evelyn Harris of Newstead House, most interesting in this context given the long-standing connection between Newstead House and Miegunyah stretching from their time as residences to their current incarnation as historic house museums.



This panel fits into the front of the skirt portion of the dress, with side and hem panels overlaying it. The panel features heavy beading and pearls sewn onto netting that is attached to the silk foundation with large looping stitches, just visible on the edges of the image above.

A newspaper report describes the occasion:

The bride was given away by Mr. Virgil Power, on whose arm she leaned as she walked up the aisle, looking as charming a bride as Brisbane has seen for a long time. She wore a rich, cream corded silk trained robe, the train being finished with a thick double box-pleat round the edge; the right side and front of skirt was pearled in a most exquisite floral design, and the left side was completed by a wide scarf, pleated in at the foot of skirt; there were small sprays of orange-flowers gracefully disposed about the skirt and front of bodice, and a small spray also held the beautiful veil in place.

Queensland Figaro and Punch, 3 September 1887⁵

6. **Wedding Outfit c.1890-1900**

Silk brocade, tulle trimmings
QWHA93c-010

This dress, with its closely fitted bodice and long train at the back of the skirt, exhibits many features of evening dress fashion from the late 1890s period and the rise of La Belle Époque style. The train, emphasised by pleating around the back fastening and created by joined panels along the centre back seam, is in keeping with the fashionable profile of the time. The figure of the wearer would have been emphasised by the 22-inch waist, likely created by a boned corset, the slim front of the skirt and relatively low neckline.^{xi}



7. Wedding Dress c.1902-1908

Silk, embroidered floral decoration, silk thread pom-poms
QWHA98c-202

The high neckline of this gown, filled in with silk gauze, the high waistline and slim, sculptural line are classic elements of dresses from La Belle Époque, a phrase coined to represent the iconic French style of the Edwardian era. The skirt is straight and quite closely fitted, emphasising the taller, slimmer silhouette of the ideal Edwardian woman. The tulip shaped top layer of the skirt adds a gentle elegance to the outfit, an effect enhanced by the floral decoration. The shape also exemplifies the effect of the popular 'S' shaped or swan-bill corset of this period. This corset, theoretically supposed to allow more room for a woman's organs and spine than earlier Victorian corset shapes, was flat across the front and thrust the bust out and the hips backwards to create an elongated, exaggerated and S shaped female form.





8. **Wedding Dress and Jacket 1908**

Lace

Donated by Lady Ramsay

QWHA1996

This wedding ensemble was worn by Mabel Jane Mobberley, a schoolteacher, at her wedding to Frederick Richard Burley on 21st December 1908. The wedding took place at a registry office in Collingwood, Victoria. Frederick, in partnership with his brother Frank Arthur, went on to found Berlei, an internationally successful corset manufacturer. On his death in 1954 he left an estate of over £50,000.^{xii} Their daughter Janet Grace went on to marry James Ramsay and, after James was knighted and appointed Governor of Queensland, became Lady Ramsay.

This outfit dates from the same period as the previous dress, yet it appears stylistically very different. Particularly fine elements of this outfit include the bold floral pattern on the lace and the three quarter length sleeves, cut in a slit to the elbow so that they would fall straight down and hang perpendicular from the forearm when the elbow is bent. The light, floral lace of the dress and jacket would have been



worn over the corsetry and undergarments typical of the day. However it would still have presented a considerably more casual image than the full-length silk of the other Edwardian dress in our collection, having more in common with the tea or afternoon dresses worn in this period. We cannot know what influenced Miss Mobberley to choose this gown or whether its selection was motivated by personal choices or limitations. Given that the marriage took place at a registry office rather than a church and that Mabel was a woman with employment as a schoolteacher, we can speculate that such an outfit was considered suitable for this occasion where it might not be for the church wedding.

9. **Lace Wedding Outfit c.1900-1914**

Linen lace skirt, jacket and shawl
 Donated by Leslie McGregor
 QWHA1996

These three, lace garments form part of a wedding dress. Also in the collection is a portrait of the bride wearing this gown (p.59).

The skirt, jacket and shawl would have been worn over an underskirt and bodice, with a slight train in the skirt to match the shape of the lace. While they appear light and plain in their current form, it is likely the underskirt and bodice of the garment were of silk, crepe de chine or satin providing a more luxurious feel to the outfit. The lace combines floral medallions and curvilinear designs with a straight border at the hem and centre front of the skirt and hem and side of the jacket. This design reflects the popularity of curvilinear and natural patterns in the wake of the Art Nouveau movement.





10. **Silk Dress c.1910-1920**
Silk, lace, pearl beading
QWHA94c-062

This gown, featuring triangular decorative panels, straight sleeves and an ankle length skirt demonstrates hallmarks of the period from 1910 to 1920. In stark contrast to the S-bend shape, hobble skirts and extremely large sleeves typical of the earlier Edwardian period this garment focuses on a simpler cut using decorative elements such as the triangular cut panels and tassels, while allowing greater freedom of movement for the wearer. The pointed sailor collar was a trend that migrated from leisure and sportswear into a feature of children's and womenswear in the 1910s, going on to be particularly prevalent in women's clothing of the 1920s and 30s and experiencing resurgences in popularity throughout the 20th century. Some have argued that both the maritime flavour of these collars and the loosening of women's skirts in the later 1910s were a response to the importance of both the Navy and women in society during the hardships of the First World War.





11. **Silk Dress c.1920-1930**
Silk, beading

Dresses in Europe and the United States in the 1920s developed into a characteristic fashion colloquially known as 'flapper' style. This style is associated with drop-waist, much shorter tubular dresses with embellishments favouring strong geometric patterns. Flapper dresses were generally worn as evening gowns, associated in the popular imagination with the social whirl of the 'Roaring Twenties.' Wedding dresses of the period adapted this new fashion, with lower waists and shorter skirts becoming more popular, often with long trains attached at the shoulders. This dress is unlikely to be a wedding dress, it's silhouette and decoration are more typical of evening dresses from the second half of the 1920s. Of particular interest is the decoration, featuring floral motifs with geometric petals, as it reflects the contemporary Art Deco design movement, whose focus on bold geometric

designs and a considered simplicity was a reaction to the fussiness of prevailing fashions from before the social fault line of the First World War. This the garment is still of some value to the wedding fashion collection as it is evidence of what the collective consensus of the late 20th century, fuelled by depictions in popular culture, imagined the 1920s wedding dress to be.



12. **Cream Silk Dress c.1920-1935**

Silk, lace insets and sleeves
QWHA98c-011

A silk dress featuring unusual cut-out sections on the sleeves. The flare of the dress is created by bias cut silk panels that create a flowing skirt, the shape of which echoes architectural Art Deco lines and is common in 1930s evening dresses.





13. **Silver Brocade Wedding Dress 1938**

Silver brocade
QWHA2013-96

This dress with heart shaped neckline and long train was worn by singer and broadcasting star Miss Kathleen Dallon when she married Ralph Morton Williams in October of 1938. It was worn with a tulle veil and a petal shaped headpiece. A portrait of the wedding party is also in the QWHA collection and featured on page 60.



The train and line of covered buttons that are the highlights of this dress demonstrate, along with the pointed cuff of the sleeves and delicate gathering on the neckline, its origins in the period just before the outbreak of World War Two. This dress reflects the style of eveningwear of the interwar period; this is a break from earlier patterns of bridal fashion, which has previously more closely reflected daywear.^{xiii} The use of silver was particularly popular in the 1930s and 1940s, a resurgence of a wedding colour commonly worn by women before the elevation of the white wedding dress. Examples include the wedding gowns of Princess Charlotte in 1816 which was a metallic silver colour and the silver and white brocade of Mary of Teck's wedding dress in 1893.^{xiv}

A description of the evening in the newspapers of the day states that:

The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a frock of silver and white brocade fashioned with a heart shaped neckline, and trained skirt. The headdress of her tulle veil was arranged in petal effect to represent arum lilies which formed the sheaf she carried.

Sunday Mail, 1938.^{xv}



14. Silver Wedding Dress 1941

Silver Lamé
QWHA94c-130

This dress is cut on Grecian lines and made of floral patterned silver lamé. It was worn, along with the floral tiara on page 39, by Julia Winifred Gill at her wedding in 1941 to Mervyn Ernest Chivers. Also in the files of the QWHA is a cutting from *The Age* in 1941 which describes the outfit and features an image of Miss Gill wearing it.^{xvi}

Silver lamé was a fashionable material for wedding outfits in the 1920s-1940s. Although worn during the difficult wartime years this dress requires plenty of material for its long train and full-length sleeves with pointed cuffs. Fabric rationing did not come into full effect until the year after this wedding, although perhaps the difficulty of obtaining luxury fabrics helped promote the popularity of silver lamé.





15. **Lace Wedding Dress 1951**
Raschel lace

A full-skirted lace dress, fitted at the waist with long sleeves, a gauze cover at the neck and a small pointed lace collar. Worn by Mrs G. McDonald at her wedding on the 14th July 1952. A photograph of the bride in her wedding dress is featured on page 61.

The sheer size of the skirt of this dress and the amount of material involved is an indication of the hope of post-war prosperity in 1950s Australia. Six years after the end of the Second World War the memories of restrictions and fabric rationing that were instigated in 1942 were being erased. The elevation of a style that was based on larger skirts and tight fitted waists requiring much more material, instigated by the famous 'New Look' pioneered by Christian Dior in Paris in 1947, dictated wedding fashion of the decade.

16. **Wedding Dress and Jacket 1962**

Embossed Swiss cotton, pearl buttons
Kindly lent to the QWHA for 'The Bride Wore White' by Beverly Folliott

White cotton dress falling just below the knee, with pleats and piping around the waistline and fitted jacket with pearl buttons. Worn together they create a sleek, typically 1960s line. This dress was worn by Bev Folliott née Gardam at her wedding in October 1962. Bev, as one of the daughters of the Gardam family, is associated with the fabric shop and dressmakers Gardams which was a local institution in Brisbane for over 50 years.





17. Bridesmaid's Dress 1929

Silk georgette, hand painted spots
 Donated by Julia Bigge
 QWHA2013-95

A yellow georgette dress with hand painted polka dot decoration. The hemline of the dress has been altered creating one even length and there is a burnt orange coloured rosette at the base of the V shaped back. This dress was worn by Miss Judith Brown as bridesmaid at her sisters wedding. Portraits of Miss Brown wearing the dress are on page 58.

This dress was a fashionable garment, suitable for the wedding of a daughter from a prominent Queensland family. Both Judith and her sister were granddaughters of Sir Samuel Griffith. The dress now represents both the style of 1929 and the re-use and adaptation of special occasion dresses common at the time. The tubular shape of the bodice and low waistline demonstrate elements popular in evening wear in the later 1920s.



VEILS, HEADPIECES & ACCESSORIES



18. **Brock Hollinshead Family c. 1890s.**
State Library of Victoria.



Wedding fashion is, of course, about more than just the dress. In this chapter some of the bridal accessories from the collection are highlighted, including veils, headpieces and corsages. These accessories are often a vital indicator that an outfit was intended for a bride. Veils, though worn for many centuries by nuns and women both married and unmarried, have become inextricably linked in the last century with bridal wear. They are seen as a traditional symbol of modesty and purity, despite the fact that historically many brides did not wear them. For example in the first decades of the 19th century the fashion was for bonnets and floral arrangements to cover the bride's head rather than veils. However the concept of brides covering their heads with a veil can be traced at least as far back as the Roman era. Roman brides, perhaps in reference to the attire of priestesses, wore a coloured veil called the *Flammunen*, variously described as being flame-coloured, deep yellow, red or orange.^{xvii}

Symbols of luck, fertility, purity and love were also a large part of the language of a bridal outfit. Queen Victoria and her ever influential wedding outfit played a part in perpetuating these traditions. She wore sprays of orange blossom, signifying good fortune, about her dress and as a wreath to hold her Honiton lace veil in place. She is also credited with starting the tradition of royal brides carrying a sprig of Myrtle, a symbol of love and happy marriage, cut from her plant at Osbourne House, a tradition that has lasted up to and including Kate Middleton's 2011 wedding.^{xviii} Given the potency of the Victorian language of flowers it is not surprising that symbolic flowers, particularly the orange blossom, became almost indispensable parts of wedding attire. In the following pages are many examples of these features in bridal accessories, such as a wax orange blossom headpiece added to a piece of plain mosquito net to transform it into a veil for a wartime bride. There is also a wax stephanotis flower in a 1920s headpiece. Stephanotis is a star shaped Madagascan jasmine often known as bridal wreath, which gives some indication of its popularity in wedding floral arrangements. Aside from flowers other symbols, such as wearing horseshoes for luck in the mid-20th century, are commonly included in wedding attire.

Perhaps more so than whole wedding gowns, because they are easier to transport and care for, veils can be handed down as family heirlooms. Delicate, high quality lace can be expensive to acquire and lends a timeless grace to many wedding outfits. If the lace belonged to a female ancestor it

adds another level of symbolism to the outfit. Transported through time and across continents such heirlooms can provide a strong link, usually through the matrilineal line, to well-known families. This can be of particular importance to a bride who might not have or is about to give up their family name. Two excellent examples of veils handed down through generations are included in this chapter. These 19th century objects, adapted to different styles in later decades, are a constant link between generations and to some great family's stories.

FAMILY STORIES

Two veils in the QWHA collection, one of Brussels and one of Limerick lace, are connected to two men with a significant role in early Queensland and their family stories. Both from Lancashire, Henry Clifford Brock Hollinshead and Thomas Blacket Stephens came to and made successful lives in Australia in the 19th century. Their origins, one the second son of landed gentry and the other an industrialist (owning wool mills) whose property was overrun by a railway line, paint a picture of the make up of Queensland society in 1850-1900.

The Brock Hollinshead family veil, as a note from the donor explains, was much worn by women from this established Lancashire family.^{xix} Burke's Landed Gentry details their history and their seat of Hollinshead Hall in Lancaster, even tracing their line back to Henry II.^{xx} ^{xxi} As they were not in line to inherit, men such as Henry Clifford often took ship to the colonies to forge a successful life for themselves.



Arriving in Australia in 1878 he married Rachel Harkness Mackellar, daughter of J.P. and member of the Victorian Legislative Council Thomas Mackellar Esq, at St John's Pro Cathedral in Brisbane in 1890.^{xxii} The veil was donated by their daughter, Margaret Catherine Brock Hollinshead who received the veil from the family of her great aunt (sister of her grandmother Margaret Neville) Frances Mary Neville -the last bride to wear it - her daughters having not married.

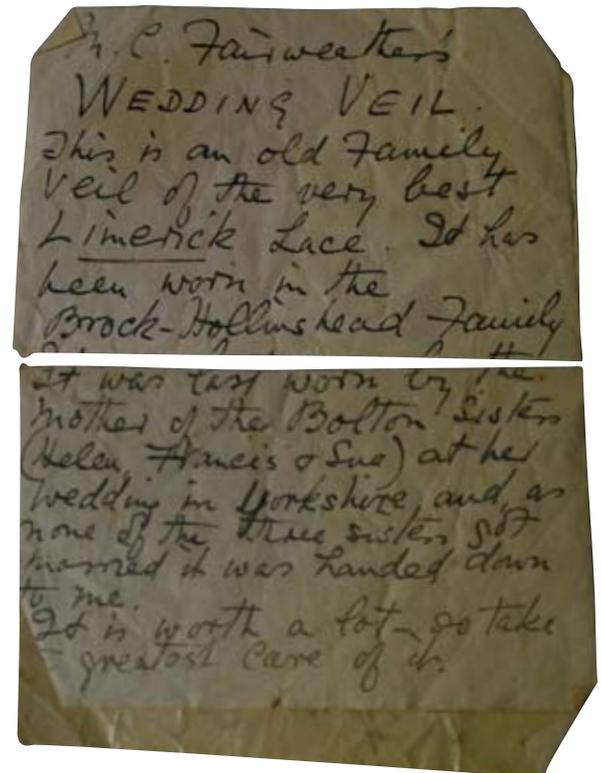
The Blacket Stephens Veil was first worn by Ann Conagh, who is thought to have bought it on the ship with her from Liverpool to Balmain, Sydney for her wedding to Thomas Blacket Stephens in 1856. While Blacket Stephens is best known to Queenslanders as a politician, businessman and one time owner of The Moreton Bay Courier, this veil has links to a more personal side of his life.^{xxiii} The story told by the family and detailed in a 1959 paper given to the QWHA by their granddaughter Ann Finlay, herself one of the brides to wear the beautiful Brussels Lace veil, is presented as a romantic one. Says Ann:

'Many times I have heard the romantic story of how he fell deeply in love with a pretty young woman with auburn hair and a lovely voice but she chose Thomas Connah to be her husband. Mr. Stephens is then quoted as saying: "Well if I cannot marry Emily I will wait for her daughter and marry her." A year later a daughter was born to Emily and Mr. Stephens immediately spoke of the child as his future bride. I have been told the little girl, Ann, often visited the mill with her mother and would be sat on the counter and given a handful of coins to play with by the man who was to become her husband.'^{xxiv}

Thomas Blacket Stephens left England in 1848 mere months after the death of Emily Connah née Wrigley, and just eight years later her daughter sailed to Australia to become his wife. From a modern, post-feminist perspective it is

19. **Thomas Blacket Stephens 1867.**

John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Neg:60029



20. **Photograph of note from collection**

tempting to see something unusual or slightly obsessive in his insistence, before the child was even born, that he would marry her daughter. However it is important to remember that notions of romance have changed dramatically in the intervening 150 years Equally the marriage would have provided a prosperous life for Ann, who had lost her mother at the age of 12, and opportunities away from the industrial north of 19th century England.^{xxv} Additionally the age difference, which was not so unusual then as it might be now, was not as great as it might seem at first telling. Thomas was just 16 when Emily chose to marry another and 17 when his future wife was born, and they were 19 and 37 when they wed.^{xxvi xxvii} They went on to have 12 children, eight of whom lived into adulthood. This story adds another layer to the history of the veil, as well as to the original marriage certificate which is featured in the final chapter. Thus it sparks the interest and the imagination, inviting speculation about the romantic history and character of the two people who signed that certificate.



21. **Brock Hollinshead Veil**
Limerick Lace
Donated by Ian Fairweather
QWHA69-225

This square veil belonged to Margaret Catherine Brock Hollinshead, who married James Fairweather in the early 20th century. Notes attached to the garment suggest it was a family heirloom worn frequently by women from the Brock Hollinshead family, presumably in 19th century.



22. **Blacket-Stephens Veil 1856-1958**

Brussels lace, satin headpiece, pearl beading
 Donated by Frances Finlay
 QWHA1968-330

Ann Connah first wore this highly decorative veil of Brussels lace on 10th July 1856 at her marriage to politician and proprietor of The Moreton Bay Courier, Thomas Blacket Stephens. Subsequently the veil was handed down through many generations and adapted for style of the day, worn for the last time by Frances Finlay on her wedding day in January 1958 who donated it to Miegunyah in 1968. See page 56 for images of two of the brides to wear this veil.

This veil in its current incarnation demonstrates both the beauty of the high quality lace and the adaptation of the garment for the style of the 1950s. The addition of a close fitting satin headpiece sitting across the crown of the head adds a mid-century feel to the Victorian family heirloom.





23. **Windsor Veil 1925**

Embroidered silk tulle, pearl beads, wax flowers

Donated the Windsor & District Historical Society

This veil was worn by Denly Rigby's mother at her wedding in Wantirna, Victoria in 1925.

This square tulle veil demonstrates the shift in bridal headwear fashion from the mid-1910s. The delicate coiffuring and ornate lace veils of earlier fashions are replaced by more voluminous veil, increasingly in silk tulle as this example is. This style created a wistful, wafting impression around the shorter dresses of the time. The headpiece of this veil features embellishments that would have sat low on the brow, highlighted by sprig of wax flowers on each temple. These decorative elements catch the tulle at the sides of the head, ensuring a close fit. This covered headpiece style is reflective of the trend for Juliet Caps in the 1920s, so called because of their evocation of 'Romeo and Juliet' and Renaissance style headdresses.

xxviii



24. **World War Two Veil 1942-1945**
Mosquito netting, wax flowers, wire

This unusual veil represents a specific moment in wedding fashion history, notable less for its beauty than the material and ingenuity of its construction. Mosquito netting, a utilitarian material not commonly used for clothing, is adapted into a fashionable veil with the addition of a wax floral headpiece.

Shortages, rationing, government regulations and the brief courtships of wartime all contributed to World War Two brides using great creativity and ingenuity to create their bridal ensembles. Many wedding dresses were worn multiple times. Others were made from recycled fabric such as bedspreads and curtains, or in the case of this veil, mosquito netting. The wax flowers on this headpiece appear to be much older than the 1940s, so it was probably borrowed from an older friend or family member, perhaps the bride's mother.

Julie Martin, Curator
'The Bride Wore White.'

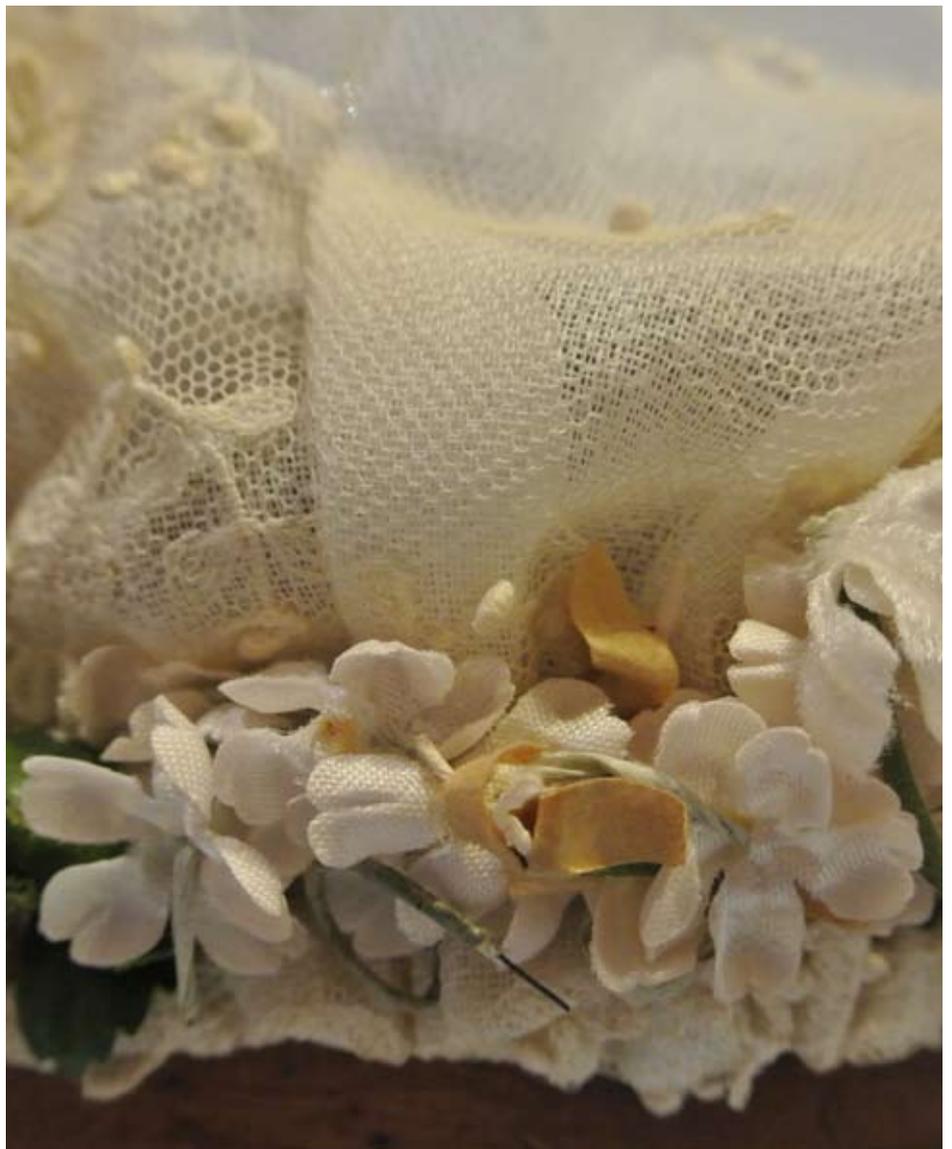


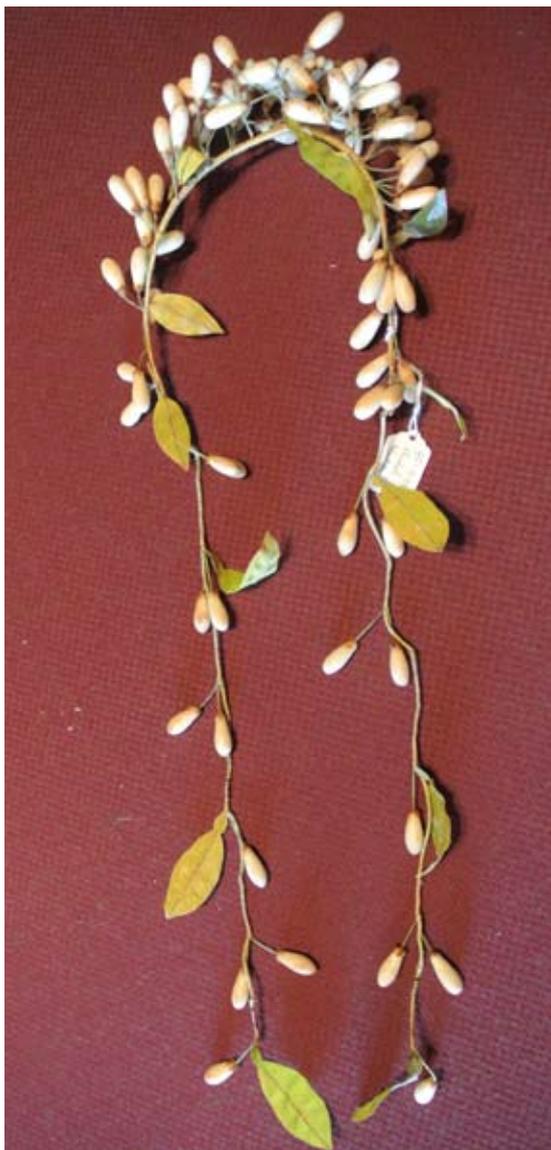


25. **Lace Veil c.1850-1950**
Needlework floral pattern



26. **Juliet Cap 1910-1930**
Net cap, fabric flowers
QWHA2013-99





27. **Floral Stephanotis Headpiece 1920**

Wax, cotton, wire
Donated by Judy Stanton
QWHA95-A034

28. **Groom's Buttonhole, Mother-of-the-Bride's Corsage 1920**

Wax, cotton, wire
Donated by Judy Stanton
QWHA95-A036&A035





29. Floral Tiara 1941

Wax, wire, mother of pearl

Worn by Julia Winifred Gill when she married Mervyn Chivers on the 28th June 1941. This tiara was worn with a silver lamé wedding dress, also in the QWHA collection (QWHA94c-120), over a tulle veil.

A newspaper report of the time described the bride's outfit as a:

Frock of silver lame cut on Grecian lines, with long train. Her tulle veil was caught with a coronet of orange blossoms, and she carried a trail of hyacinths, camellias and carnations.



The Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser 1941^{xxix}



30. **Wedding Headpiece c.1940-1945**
Silk, wax, wire

Worn by Winifred Smith, née Stewart in the early 1940s.



31. **Corsage c.1940-1945**
Silk, wax, wire

Bridal corsage belonging to Winifred Stewart.



32. **Headpiece c.1960s**
Satin, appliqué Guipure lace
QWHA2013-101



33. **Headpiece c.1980s**
Tulle, ribbon, wire, fabric flowers
QWHA2013-100





34. **Bridesmaid's Headpiece c.1950s**
Satin, jeweled hat pin, netting
QWHA2013-107



35. **Bridesmaid's Headpiece c.1950s**
Green velvet, netting
QWHA2013-106



³⁶ **Bridal Corsage 1908**
Wax, wire, cotton, paper

Worn in Derby, England in
1908.

³⁷ **Fingerless Bridal Gloves c.1950s**
Lace





38. **Corsage 1937**
Wax flowers, fabric leaves, wire
QWHA2013-104

Worn by Miss Gladys Richardson



39. **Buttonhole 1937**
Wax flowers, wire, silver foil
QWHA2013-102

Worn at the wedding of Miss Gladys Richardson



40. **Horseshoe 1937**
Satin ribbon, wax flowers, wire
Donated by Miss Gladys Richardson
QWAH2013-105





41. **Horseshoe 1937**
Satin ribbon, silver foil
Donated by Miss Gladys Richardson
QWHA2013-103



42. **Horseshoe mid 20th Century**
Satin ribbon, wax flowers, wire

SHOES



Shoes are a category of their own within fashion, symbolizing more than just an extension of an outfit or a mechanism for protecting the feet. Both practical and idealised, shoes protect the wearer from the ground while communicating many societal ideas about gender, power and sexuality, either by conforming to or subverting them.^{xxx}

The concept of wedding shoes furthers the idea of wedding clothing as a subtly distinct class. What distinguishes these shoes from all others is primarily the fact of their having been worn at a wedding. This suggests that the occasion confers a special significance on the garments worn. Just as the wedding dress could be a more practical colour or style and be re-worn on subsequent occasion, so some brides could and did choose to wear a walking shoe or boot for the ceremony. However any such examples are, by their practical nature, unlikely to survive constant use or be kept and donated to costume collections. Most provenanced wedding shoes, and all those presented in this chapter, are white or cream. Beyond the colour however they are indistinguishable from most formal fashions of the day, with potentially more modest styles depending on the time and the choice of the bride. The major stylistic touchstones in fashionable shoes for the period covered by this collection are the flat slipper of the first half of the 19th century, the revival of high heels and the resurgence of curved Louis style of heel shortly after that, and the shape and straps of 1920s footwear. The 9 shoes (7 pairs, 2 individual shoes) featured on the following pages reflect these changes and, although only one pair is linked with a specific wedding, give some idea of the type of footwear that brides may have worn.

FAMILY STORIES

As with the other constituent parts of a bridal outfit the shoes can act as a memento of the occasion and a symbolic link to previous generations. One such example is a single wedding slipper of the mid-19th century that research and a process of elimination has convincingly linked to the shoe detailed in QWHA records as the one worn at the wedding of Richard Bingham Sheridan to Adele Eulalie Mosse in Sydney in 1845. Sheridan, later an honorary Lieutenant Colonel of the Queensland Volunteer Force, arrived in Australia in 1842 and was a functioning part of colonial administration. He worked variously as a farm manager, customs collector, warehouse keeper, tide surveyor and water police magistrate in Sydney and Queensland.^{xxxix} He went on to become a minister and postmaster general, known for the instigation of public schools and opposing the abuse of Polynesian labourers and is a story of success from the history of both states.^{xxxii}

His granddaughter was no doubt aware of this significance when she donated the item to the QWHA in the 1950s. Together the Sheridans, with his Irish Catholic origins in County Mayo and Adele's descent from colonial gentry in Mauritius, illustrate the kinds of people that were found in the administrative classes of the colonies and went on to success in the newly established state of Queensland.^{xxxiii}
^{xxxiv} The object is therefore important as a representation of this social history, of its importance to the family, and as an example of the flat wedding slipper common in the first half of the 19th century.

43. **Wedding Slipper 1845**

White satin, cotton lining, brown leather sole, paper label

Donated by Mrs J. J. Stable
QWHA1955-1

This single wedding slipper is associated with the wedding of Adele Eulalie Mosse to Richard Bingham Sheridan in New South Wales on the 18th November 1845. Their granddaughter, Irene Lillian Bingham Sheridan, later Mrs J. J. Stable, inherited the shoe and donated it to the Queensland Women's Historical Society (an early name for the QWHA) in 1955.

The paper label indicates that the shoes were made by and purchased from an establishment at 25 Skinner Street London. Research done as part of this project suggests that the business in question may be Homan & Herne, a shoe and leather wholesaler occasionally known as Homan & Company. This firm is referred to in Post Office Directory's and the London Gazette at the address mentioned on the label.^{xxxv xxxvi} The firm is known to have exported shoes to Australia and the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney have a pair of similar white satin slippers from Homan & Herne in their collection.^{xxxvii xxxviii}

Slippers such as this were the preferred fashion in shoes from the early 19th century. The style originated in the general trend towards simpler, classically inspired fashion against the extravagance of the late 18th century. This style of shoe remained popular until the middle of the 19th century, by that point being mainly used for formal or special occasions, such as a wedding, because of their delicate nature, expensive material and poor durability. Similar wedding slippers exist in collections in Australia and the United Kingdom, including Queen Victoria's satin slippers from her wedding in the Northampton Museum & Art Gallery.





44. **Victorian Wedding Ankle Boot**
Satin, elastic gusset



45. **White Satin Shoes c. later 19th Century**
Satin

These white satin shoes have short, curved Louis heels, reflecting the return to heels after the reign of the slipper from earlier years. They also feature a Fenelon bow, the layered and multi-looped bow on the vamp of this pair, this decorative addition to shoes became extremely fashionable from the 1860s. Writing on the soles indicates these shoes were worn by Catherine Frost when she married Charles Skuthorp on the 6th October 1884 in Blackall.



46. **Beaded Shoes**
Satin, dark glass beading and glass buttons
QWHA2013-109



47. **Beaded Wedding Shoe**
Satin, glass beading



48. **Cream Shoes**
Linen, enamel daisies



49. **White Satin Shoes**
Satin, glass or paste decorative beads



51. **White Satin Shoes c.1920s**
Satin
QWHA2013-110



50. **Leather Shoes c.1920s**
Kid leather, metal buckles
QWHA2013-111



PORTRAITS, PHOTOGRAPHS & PAPER MATERIALS



Miegunyah has a long-standing connection with weddings. The house itself was built by William Perry for his son when he married Leila Markwell, then just 17 and fresh out of Brisbane Girls Grammar School, in 1885. Leila's wedding was not treated to a detailed description in the newspapers of the day like her contemporary Lizzie Plunket's wedding had been. She was the twelfth child of the nineteen born to John Markwell of Moorlands Villa and his three wives. Mr Markwell had been an immigrant to Brisbane on one of Dr Lang's ships *The Chasely*, and she was descended – on her mother's side - from George Edmonstone, one of the first settlers in Brisbane and member of the First Legislative Assembly. She was, it is clear, from a 'good' colonial family. However her father and mother died before her marriage and her stepmother had 5 unmarried, adult stepchildren as well as her own three young children to care for (the other 10 of John Markwell's children having died or been married off by then) The sparse description of her wedding, the lack of a surviving dress, and number of siblings has led some to speculate about the nature and financial implications of her marriage to William Herbert Francis Perry, given that her brother Edmonstone had recently entered into the Perry business partnership. We cannot know what the truth of her marriage to W. H. F. Perry, but what her story can definitely tell us is that families in their social strata maintained close connections.^{xxxix}

Since then the house has been associated with many more weddings, as a venue, as the family home of one or other of bride and groom, through the QWHA to the weddings of members' ancestors and , of course, to all the weddings at which material in the collection was worn.

One such occasion was in 1935 when Peggy Menzies held her wedding reception at Miegunyah, then her family home. The Courier Mail describes the house decked out for an evening of cocktails, supper and dancing in the drawing room with rows of coloured bulbs, tables adorned with jonquils, golden and white narcissus and golden gladioli in bronze and green bowls. The wedding was of such social interest to her contemporaries that crowds packed the church and earned the disapproval of the clergyman by standing on seats to get a glance at the bride and groom.^{xl}

This chapter details the photographs and paper materials related to weddings in the collection at Miegunyah today. While not technically part of the Fashion and Textile collection, these items can tell us an enormous amount



Leila Perry (nee Markwell)
(Source: QWHA Archives)

about the history of weddings and wedding fashion. When it comes to wedding photographs and portraits (terms used here to distinguish between modern photographs and posed portraits, often in a studio, popular in earlier generations) just the fact that they were taken indicates a wish to preserve for posterity the fashionable impression created by the couple on their wedding day. More than just an account of the happiness of the occasion or the religious and social connotation of the ceremony this desire indicates that the fashion on display had become an integral part of the occasion.

The visual content of the images provides a wealth of extra information about the bridal wear it depicts. In some cases, as with the portrait of Miss Kathleen Dallan and party, it contributes extra information about the appearance of the dress when worn and how the various accessories complimented it. The photograph shows how the fashionable cut of her wedding dress, which is evident when examining the garment, translated to the body of the wearer, how the shaping and material related to her height and figure. Fashion operates on many levels, the physical garment itself is only ever half the story. The total effect lives in the interaction between the piece of clothing and the body, between sight, touch and the imagination. Photographs can provide clues to these other levels, and to the implications the style and proportions of the dress have when worn.

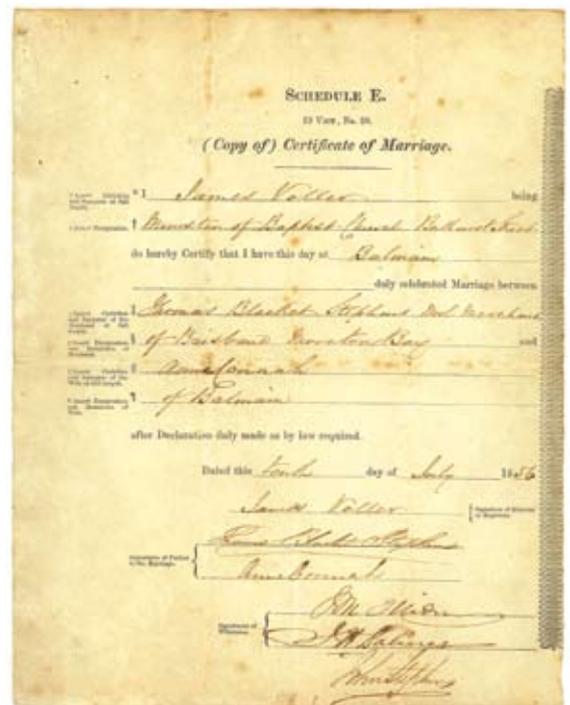
Portraits and photographs tell us things the garment itself often cannot, sometimes providing different information altogether. Examples featured in this chapter include the portraits of Miss Judith Brown in the yellow georgette bridesmaid's dress (QWHA2013-95) for her sister's wedding. The dress itself shows signs of alteration, particularly to the hemline, but the image details what the original style of the dress was. As well as the hemline, the addition of the hat and rolled neck scarf create a considerably more formal and modest impression than might be gleaned from examining the dress alone. The donor of these objects is also in possession of the wedding portraits of Evelyn Griffith, eldest daughter of Premier and Chief Justice Sir Samuel Griffith. Together these images connect the dress and portraits in the collection to this famous Queenslander through the maternal line, appropriately enough for a women's history association.

The two images of brides wearing the Blacket Stephens family veil (QWHA1968-330) are also examples of the invaluable information that photographs can provide about fashion. Much has been made in this catalogue of the symbolic link heirlooms such as this provide to the foundation of many well-known Queensland families. These images detail how this one veil has been adapted for two of the many weddings at which it has been worn. They simultaneously provide a link between them and highlight the changes in the fashion of each specific point in time. The marriage certificate of Ann Connah and Thomas Blacket Stephens, the wedding at which it was first worn, is not in itself evidence of any fashionable developments but represents the family stories the veil is invested with.

These photographs are also objects in their own right, with a value beyond that of the people they depict. The use of material, photographic technique, name of photographer, studio and style of presentation are evidence of the development and history of photography. Photography is a medium that has gone on to be closely associated with the construction and dissemination of the fashionable image in 20th century society. While not the focus of this study, it is worth considering the potential value of that interpretation.

Also included in this chapter are paper materials such as wedding invitations and place cards. The wedding traditions revealed by these few items may be strange to the modern eye, such as the 'shower evening' invitation which bears

little similarity to the bridal shower or bachelorette parties of today. Others, such as the formal wording of the wedding invitation, although today rarely sent out by just the father of the bride, are much more familiar. Like the rest of the objects featured in this catalogue they present snapshots of moments from the evolving history of wedding traditions and the continuing language of symbolism involved in this complex social institution.



52. **Wedding Certificate 1856**

Wedding certificate of Ann Connah and Thomas Blacket Stephens. According to family legend Ann Connah was the daughter of Emily Wrigley whom Mr Blacket Stephens had fallen in love with, when she married someone else he swore he would marry her daughter instead, a promise he fulfilled with this marriage in 1856.



53. **Wedding Portrait 1928**

Wedding portrait of Ann Stephens, granddaughter of Thomas Blacket Stephens, and Edmund Finlay on October 9th 1928.

Ann, at her wedding in 1928, wore a heavily beaded crepe de chine dress and her grandmother's Brussels Lace veil. Her dress, with its fashionable tubular silhouette, implies that Ann was keen to present herself as a fashionable, up to date bride of the 1920s. Her adaptation of the family veil is ingenious, providing both a connection to her grandmother who brought the veil with her when she sailed from Liverpool to marry Thomas Blacket Stephens and an up to date image. By attaching the veil at each side of the head with a sprig of flowers the veil creates the fitted head covering that symbolises veils of this period. The scalloped part of the veil that is on the bottom in the current 1950s form of the garment is spread across the head in this image, whereas the smaller floral edging that falls across the brow in the current form is on the front sides of the 1920s veil in the image.

54. **Wedding Photograph 1958**

A photograph of Frances Finlay on her wedding day on January 4th 1958, she is pictured wearing the family veil and standing with her mother Ann Finlay née Stephens.





56. Evelyn Griffith Leaving the Church after her Wedding
1894

Donated by Julia Bigge



55. Bridal Portrait of Evelyn Griffith 1894

Donated by Julia Bigge

Evelyn Griffith, eldest daughter of Sir Samuel Griffith, in her wedding dress for her marriage to Thomas Brown in 1894.



57. **Portraits of Judith Brown 14th November 1929**
Donated by Julia Bigge

Judith Brown in her bridesmaid's outfit, a yellow silk georgette dress with a low brimmed hat, at the wedding of her sister Jemima to George Cyril Larrit. Judith and her sister were daughters of Evelyn Griffith, whose wedding portrait is on the previous page. The dress itself (QWHA2013-95) is shown on page 27.

The dress is decorated with hand painted spots in even lines across the bodice and irregularly across the skirt and features a low waistline that falls at the hips. Also notable are the bare arms, flowing skirt and asymmetrical hemline. The uneven length of the skirt was a particular trend of the later 1920s, in contrast to the knee grazing length of flapper dresses, and foreshadows the return to floor length evening gowns in the 1930s. Interestingly asymmetrical skirts have recently seen a resurgence, taken to more dramatic lengths in the high-low hemline skirts and dresses since 2011. Showing once again that in fashion, as in life, new trends do not simply occur, they repeat. The dress also sports a train that reaches to the floor, attached at the waist by what appears to be a bow or

other decorative gathering of fabric. The hemline and train of this dress have been modified or removed from the dress sometime between this occasion and its donation to the QWHA. This, along with the straw cloche hat, rolled scarf collars and butterfly bow at the back of the skirt create a very different image than the dress in the collection, which is less formal and modest than it appears in this portrait.



58. **Wedding Portrait c.1900-1914**
Donated by Leslie McGregor

This wedding portrait shows the bride wearing the dress in our collection (shown on page 19), and provides clues as to the date it may have been worn. The designs in the lace of the skirt and jacket can be seen in this image, particularly the floral medallions and borders. The shape of her dress, the style of hair and tulle veil with forget-me-not garland, along with the style of her groom's suit, suggest a date around the turn of the century. The bride also carries a large bouquet with hanging ribbons, probably of satin, of a kind that was popular in the first decades of the 20th century.



59. Portrait of Wedding Party 1938

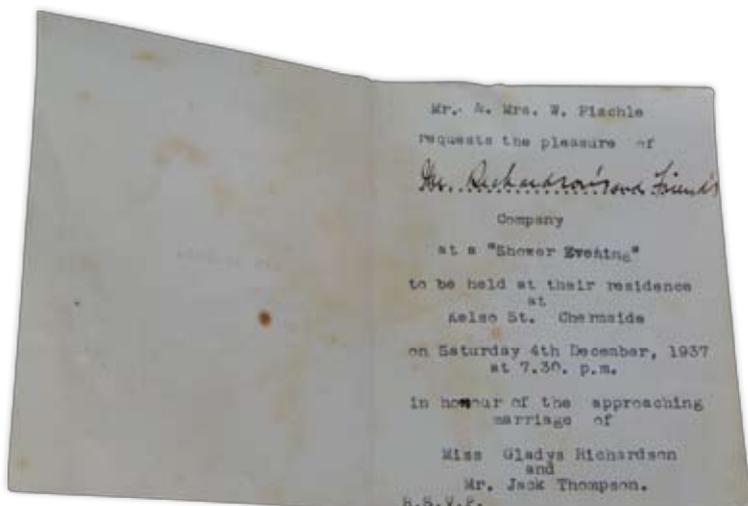
The bride, bridesmaid and what are almost certainly groom and best man at the wedding of Kathleen Dallon in 1938.

Despite the length of the dress (QWHA2013-96 shown on p.23) when examined in isolation, this wedding portrait indicates that Miss Dallon was not unusually tall, in fact she is the shortest in this group. Her bridesmaid, Patricia Ryan, displays the puffed sleeves and scooped neck popular in the late 1930s, particularly for daywear. Her large, wide brimmed hat is reflective of the increasing use of such headpieces in wedding attire for brides and bridesmaids.

60. Photographs of Mrs. G. McDonald and Wedding Party 1951

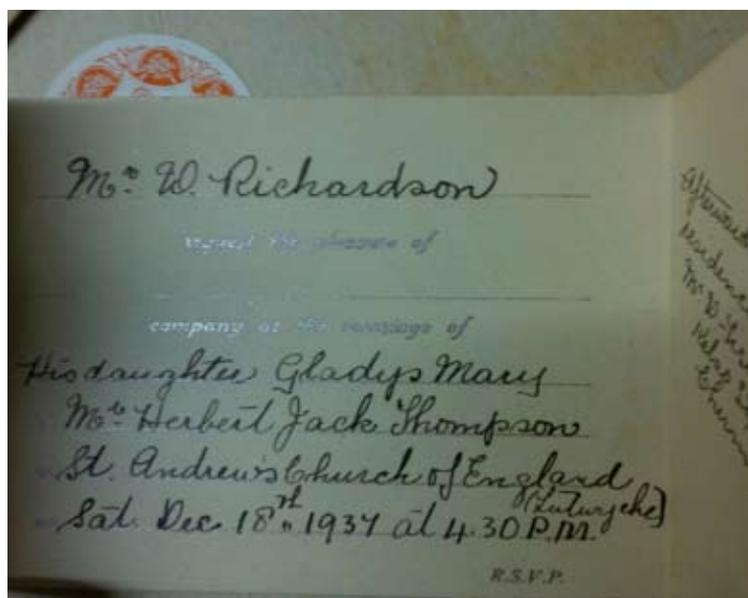
Mrs. G. McDonald wearing the wedding gown shown on page 25. Note that her bridesmaids' dresses have small pointed collars and pointed shoulders to match her gown.





61. Invitation to a 'Shower Evening' 1937

Written invitation to Gladys Richardson's wedding shower.



62. Wedding Invitation 1937

Invitation to the wedding of Gladys Richardson on December 18th 1937, sent by the bride's father Mr. W. Richardson.



63. Place Cards 1940-1945

Place cards for the Bride and Bridegroom from the marriage of Winifred Stewart. They are hand painted and depict two ladies in pink, mid 19th century gowns with full skirts.

LIST OF DONORS

Only a select number of the garments have fully provenanced backgrounds and associations with specific weddings. As is common in many house museums and volunteer run heritage associations the collection is a product of the social networks and dedicated interest of previous generations of members. On occasion this information is lost or misplaced and we cannot match the documentation with particular garments. For this reason the following list of donors who have given wedding items to the collection is included. The QWHA values these donations and wishes to recognise their contribution to the museum. Some of these objects are no longer in the collection, some we are seeking additional information on and many have not been matched with the correct donor. In the spirit of encouraging research and further study into this collection we include the uncensored list, hoping this will lead to more information and ultimately a stronger collection. If you have any additional information, particularly images, or a special interest in any of the items listed here or earlier in the catalogue that you wish to share please do not hesitate to contact Miegunyah.

Wedding slipper 1955-1

Donated by Mrs. J.J.Stable May 1955 with the information that it was worn by the donors grandmother, Mrs. Richard Bingham Sheridan circa 1845
Hist Haps ref: Newsheets – No.28,p.6 and No.32 p.6

Shoes – Wedding, pair, white satin – 1966-45AB

Donated by Mrs. K.G.Holland – Nov 1966 worn by donor at her wedding
Hist Haps No.85,p.5

Shoes, wedding pair, white, satin – 1967-66AB

Donated by Mrs. C. Bode August 1967
Wedding dress – white satin
Hist Haps No.90, p.12

Shoes, wedding – 1968-42

Donated by Mrs. M.A.S. Hutchins March 1968
Worn by Mrs. Hutchins (née Anderson) at her marriage to Samuel Sanders Hutchins in 1901
Hist Haps ref: No.92, p.8

Wedding Shoes

Worn by A. J. Mack 1865

Wedding veil – 1968-155

Donated by Mrs. L.W. Vines May 1968
Made for Mrs. Harley (Hanley) McKillop by her mother 1912, worn by Mrs. Hanley McKillop at her wedding.
Hist Haps ref: No. 93 p.13

Shoe, satin, wedding

Donated by E.G.Spence Sept 1968
Used May 1888 – worn by donors mother Lucy Davidson at her wedding with Dr. Wilton Love
Hist Haps ref: No.94 p.16

Wedding veil -1968-330

Donated by Mrs. Francis Finlay Nov 1968
Brussels lace
Worn by granddaughters and great granddaughters of Thomas Blacket Stephens and Ann Connah
- Gertrude Grimes married Stephen Stephens
- Ann Stephens married Francis Finlay
Hist Haps ref: No.95, p.13

Marriage Certificate

Ann Connah and Thomas Blackett Stephens. 1856. (see Stephens file)Married at the home of their cousin Edmund Blackett in Balmain, Sydney. Donated to QWHA 1958.

Wedding Photograph

Ann Stephens and Francis Edmund Finlay on their wedding day October 9th,1928. 'Photo is of heavily beaded crepe-de-chine frock and lace veil given to QWHA some time ago. The lace wedding veil and extra piece of lace belonged to my grandmother Ann Connah.' (Ann Finlay donor letter)

Nightdress

Belonged to Ann Finlays mother (with mother's hand made lace) Alice Gertrude Stephens made the lace and the nightdress. Pre 1900.

Blue Going away dress

Worn by the last bride to wear the bridal veil/dress at her wedding to Ross Hasking. Frances Ann Finlay was the last bride to wear the "Stephens Brussel lace veil" worn by Ann Connah. (donor letter)

Biscuit coloured frock – worn by Ann Finlay as mother of the bride at Frances Finlay wedding. Donated 1958. Donor letter dated Sept 16th and marked received by QWHA 29/6/1967

Shoes – wedding-1969-106

Donated by Mrs. C.W.D. Rankin June 1969
Hist Haps ref: No.97 p.13

Wedding dress

Fairweather, Brock-Hollingshead. Married 1912.
Hist Haps ref: Dec 1969

Wedding dress – 1911

Donated by Mrs. Love per Mrs. Tait
Made for donors mother, Florence Rathbone who married
Arthur Batten 1911

‘It was held in the garden of the home of the brides parents
at Mudgeeraba, Qld, 7th June 1911. The minister was
Presbyterian – Mr. Thomas McCourat of Boomingba.
Bridesmaid was Mabel Rathbone and the best man was
Julian Batten.

Handkerchief also made by the bride.

2 nightdresses made by the bride for her trousseau.

Hist Haps ref: 112 (? 111) p.10

Wedding dress – Mrs. Dive 1901

Worn by donors mother
Hist Haps ref: 111 p.10

Wedding Dress 94-c-125A 1890-1902

Mrs. Firth Edmonds. Top of wedding costume, with extra
bodice. Short panels at lower back. Lined with brocade.
Lace at collar and front panel. False cuffs at sleeve with
4 buttons. Coffee satin and lace. Twill lining. Self tailored
buttons with embroidery.

Hist Haps No.99 p.15

Wedding skirt – 94-c-125B (1890 – 1902)

Related to 94-C-125A Firth Edmonds.

Wedding dress

Mrs. Kelly Dec. 1975
Hist Haps 123 p.5

Wedding dress 1976-28

Donated by Miss Nola Gibson Wilde June 1976, worn by
Grace Pumfrey married at All Saints Church 14th July
1924

Reported in Qld Figaro Sat. July 19th, 1924 and the
Brisbane Courier Tues 15th July, 1924

‘Brocaded French crepe de chine dress being made on
straight lines. Double skirt was caught at the side by orange

blossoms. A semi train fell from the shoulders and was
caught at the back by a large butterfly bow of georgette.’

Wedding veil – Brussels lace.

Hist Haps ref: 125 p.7

Wedding gown- silk 1976-78

Per Mrs. J.Jillett Dec 1976, from Mrs. D.G.Henry.
Hist Haps ref: 127 p.5

Wedding dress - Satin - and veil – 1979-01

Donated by Mrs. P. Caulfield

Her mother’s dress, also one dance dress.

Hist Haps 136 p.5

Lace wedding dress 1981 -23

Mrs. Gaffney c.1940

Hist Haps 146.p.8

Lavender wedding dress.

Donor Letter says ‘This lavender wedding dress and the
yellow bridesmaids dress were presented to QWHA by
the McLeod family of Brisbane. Wedding frock worn by
Margaret Spiers married at Beith near Glasgow in 1852.
Yellow frock worn by her sister.
Newsheet 67 p.16

Wedding dress

Donated by Mrs. S.A. Ivarsson

Worn by Elsie Scott Ivarsson (née Jeffrey) married June
1947. Flowers at the neck

Wedding dress 1884 – Cream cashmere

Donated by Annie McGovern

‘Our mothers wedding dress 1884 made from cream
cashmere. Kept in good order 70 years and then lent to
an exhibition. Came back with perspiration stains and
cleaning fluid marks. Insect damage.’ Letter dated 8/2/1969
– Yeppoon

Hist Haps No. 96 p.7

Bridal Head Piece – 95 –AO34 - 1920

Donated by Judy Stanton

Wax Stephanotis with trails of leaves and buds 2 either
side.

95 AO34 Spray for Brides mother

95 AO34 Grooms button hole spray

Trousseau

Made by Helen Adams 1880. The Adams family migrated to Australia for health reasons. Mr. Adams had a chest condition. Helen Adams subsequently died in childbirth. The child was placed with Mrs. Clark and was to travel back to England with the father when old enough. Child died. Mother and child buried near gates of Toowong cemetery.

Wedding Dress – 95-c-144

24/3/1945

Long sleeve with train. Joyce Beryl Bassett married William Frank Gordon.

Wedding Invitation

Donor Cecil Ashburn

Wedding George H. Mark – Mary Treloar

Related dress – Riding Habit 1900 Mrs. J.A.Ashburn formerly Ida Thorn. Mrs. Ashburn was a niece of Mrs. George Harris. Ida Thorn made her debut at the first ball given by Gov. and Lady Bowen.

Wedding Dress

Donated by Leslie McGregor

Wedding Photograph

Donated by Leslie McGregor

Wedding Photograph

Mr. and Mrs. Hayes c.1917

Wedding dress

Donated by Mrs. R.D.Oakes and E.A.Eastman.

Belonged to Mrs. T. M. Barber daughter of Philip Silcock who came to Queensland in the ship “Ramsay” from Norwich in 1872. Married Annie Maria Porter. Her father was the architect of the Normal School. Miss ?Silcock was educated at Duporth School Oxley and married Thomas Barber of Rockhampton.

Hist Haps Feb. 1967 No.87 p.7

Wedding dress panel

Donated by Power family Power-Plunkett wedding 1887

Wedding Dress

Satin and lace, Mr. and Mrs. Howard.

Hist Haps No. 101 p.18

Wedding Dress

Mrs. Kelly 20th Century

Hist Haps No. 123 p.5

Wedding dress- 1978 - 82

Donated by Maida Simmons.

Rebecca Rusher married John Wilkins in 1821

Wedding dress- 93-C-011

Long silk gown. Unusual cut outs.

Wedding Dress - 93-C-012

McCarthy wedding dress

Wedding dress – 94C-127

1940's Heavy Ivory satin.

Wedding dress – 94C-130**Wedding dress – 94-C-132**

Ivory wool. (1870's?)

Bridal Veil – 95-S-033GC

Jocelyn Clarkson. Needle run lace on ivory tulle 168cmx168cm embroidered motif – spray of flowers in each corner.

PHOTO CREDITS

Beth Lismanis

p. 12 (left), 13, 14, 15, 16,17, 18 (top left), 19, 20, 21 (left),
22 (bottom left, right), 23 (bottom left), 26, 27, 31, 32, 33
(left), 34 (right) 35.

Julie Martin

p. 9, 12 (right), 16, 18 (bottom left), 21 (right), 22 (top left),
23 (top left, right), 24 (bottom right), 25 (bottom left), 28, 33
(right), 34 (bottom left), 36-45, 48-51.

Julia Bigge

p. 24 (left), 25 (top).

NOTES

- i. M. Maynard, *Fashioned from Penury: Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.
- ii. Maynard, p. 2.
- iii. E. Ehrman, *The Wedding Dress: 300 Years of Bridal Fashions*, V&A Publishing, London, 2011, p. 41.
- iv. R. Healy, 'The Parody of the Motley Cadavar: Displaying the Funeral of Fashion,' in *The Textile Reader*, J. Hemmings (ed), Berg, London, 2012, pp 91-92.
- v. Maynard, p. 3.
- vi. R. Clark, *Hatches, Matches and Dispatches: Christening, Bridal & Mourning Fashions*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1987, p. 11.
- vii. Clark, pp. 63-66.
- viii. J. Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes Through History 1500-1914*, National Trust Books, London, 1996
- ix. Other examples of coloured wedding dresses are featured in Ehrman, p. 60, 96 and 126.
- x. 'Orange Blossoms,' *Queensland Figaro and Punch*, 3 September 1887, p. 7.
- xi. The effect would not have been dissimilar, minus the puffed sleeves, to the c. 1893 evening dress from the London Museum documented by Janet Arnold on p. 42 of *Patterns of Fashion 2. Englishwomen's dresses and their construction. 1860-1940*, Macmillan, London, 2nd Edition, 1982. Note particularly the panelling of the train which is very similar.
- xii. A. Hyslop, 'Burley, Frederick Richard (1885–1954)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/burley-frederick-richard-9977/text16995>, accessed 29 October 2013.
- xiii. Ehrman, p. 101.
- xiv. See Ehrman for details of these royal wedding gowns.
- xv. 'Nuptial Mass Celebrated.' *Sunday Mail*, 2 October 1938, p. 27.
- xvi. 'Lame Gown Chosen,' *The Age*, 27 September 1941, p.4.
- xvii. L. La Folette, 'The Costume of the Roman Bride,' in *The World of Roman Costume*, J. L. Sebesta and L. Bonfante (eds), University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 2001, pp. 55-56.
- xviii. Ehrman, pp. 57-9.
- xix. Note that although the note says Yorkshire, the family actually originates from Lancashire and the wedding mentioned in the note took place in Blackburn, Lancashire. Given the changing borders of counties and the time and distance between that event and the author of the note, the mistake or misallocation is understandable.
- xx. It should be noted however that the Brock Hollinshead name came about as a result of the dying out of this direct male line of the Hollinshead side, the estate and name being inherited by a cousin William Brock, son of one Emma Hollinshead in the first years of the 1800s.
- xxi. J. Burke Esq., *Burke's History of the Landed Gentry or Commoners of Great Britain & Ireland*. London, England, Henry Colburn, p. 508.
- xxii. *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Colonial Gentry* [database on-line].
- xxiii. Original data: Sir Bernard Burke. *A Genealogical and*
- xxiv. *Heraldic History of the Colonial Gentry*, Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore, MD,
- xxv. USA, 1997. Vols. 1-2, pp. 14-15.
- xxvi. E. Reid, 'Stephens, Thomas Blacket (1819–1877)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/stephens-thomas-blacket-4644/text7665>, accessed 28 October 2013.

- xxvii. A. Finlay, Notes on Thomas Blacket Stephens, Queensland Women's Historical Association, 1959, p.4
- xxviii. Entry for Thomas Blacket Stephens, General Register Office: Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths surrendered to the Non-parochial Registers Commissions of 1837 and 1857; Class: RG 4; Piece: 1152, The National Archives, Kew, England, p. 109.
- xxix. Emily Connah, Death and Burial. Ancestry.com. West Yorkshire, England, Deaths and Burials, 1813-1985 [database on-line], Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. Provo, UT, USA, 2011. Original data: Yorkshire Parish Records, West Yorkshire Archive Service Leeds, England, p. 1.
- xxx. Although married 20 years after her birth in 1836, Ann Connah was still a month away from her 20th birthday at her wedding in 1856. Entry for Ann Connah, General Register Office: Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths surrendered to the Non-parochial Registers Commissions of 1837 and 1857; Class: RG 4; Piece: 1204., The National Archives, Kew, England, p. 49.
- xxxi. M. Fogg, Vintage Weddings: One Hundred Years of Bridal Fashion and Style, Carlton, London, 2011, pp 32-33.
- xxxii. 'Wedding. Chivers-Gill,' The Grenfell Record and Lachlan District Advertiser, 30 June 1941, p. 2.
- xxxiii. G. Riello and P. McNeil, 'A long walk: shoes, people and places', in Shoes: A History from Sandals to Sneakers, G. Riello and P. McNeil (eds), Berg, New York, 2006, pp. 2-30.
- xxxiv. For details of his various occupations in New South Wales and Moreton Bay inspect the Returns of the Colony at Ancestry.com. New South Wales, Australia, Returns of the Colony, 1822-1857 [database on-line], Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., Provo, UT, USA, 2010.
- xxxv. D. Jones, 'Sheridan, Richard Bingham (1822-1897)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sheridan-richard-bingham-4573/text7507>, accessed 26 October 2013.
- xxxvi. Her father's name was reported in an announcement of their wedding as the 'late Antoine Mosse Esq. of Mauritius.' The name indicates they may have been of French origins; Mauritius was under British Control under the terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1814 but retained the names and traditions that came from the previous century of French economic and political control. For a snapshot of the history of Mauritian immigration to Australia see 'History of immigration from Mauritius,' Museum Victoria, <http://museumvictoria.com.au/origins/history.aspx?pid=40>, accessed 25 October 2013.
- xxxvii. 'Family Notices,' The Morning Chronicle, 22 November 1845, p. 3.
- xxxviii. The Post Office Directory, 1841. Compromising, amongst other information, street directory, commercial directory, trade's directory ... 9Part 1 Street, Commercial, & Trades Directories), Kelly, London, 1841, p. 234.
- xxxix. The Small Edition of the Post Office London Directory, 1852. Comprising, amongst other information, official directory; commercial directory; court directory; parliamentary directory; postal directory; banking directory; &c, Kelly, London, 1851, p. 801.
- xl. 'Homan and Herne', The Sydney Morning Herald, 2 January 1846, p. 1.
- xli. H7428, Pair of wedding slippers of white satin, made by Herman & Horne, London, c.1845, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.
- xlii. This is further supported by other marriages in her family. Two of her stepsiblings married a brother and sister, and her brother William married his first cousin. This was far from unusual practice at the time and is a reminder of how social attitudes to marriage have changed since that time. Please see Leila Elizabeth Markwell's family tree (compiled by C. Fisk 2013) in the QWHA files for the details and sources of this family information.
- xliii. Muswellbrook Chronicle, 8 June 1935 and The Courier Mail, 6 June 1935, p.22

A Note on Genealogy

As part of this project genealogical research was undertaken to determine or confirm some of the family attributions and stories associated with the objects in the catalogue. Copies of much of this research, particularly into the Rusher, Markwell-Perry, Sheridan, Brock Hollinshead and Blacket Stephens families, will be handed over to the QWHA. Please consult their files if you wish to view any of this background information.

