

1930's and 1940's Costume Sheet Ideas

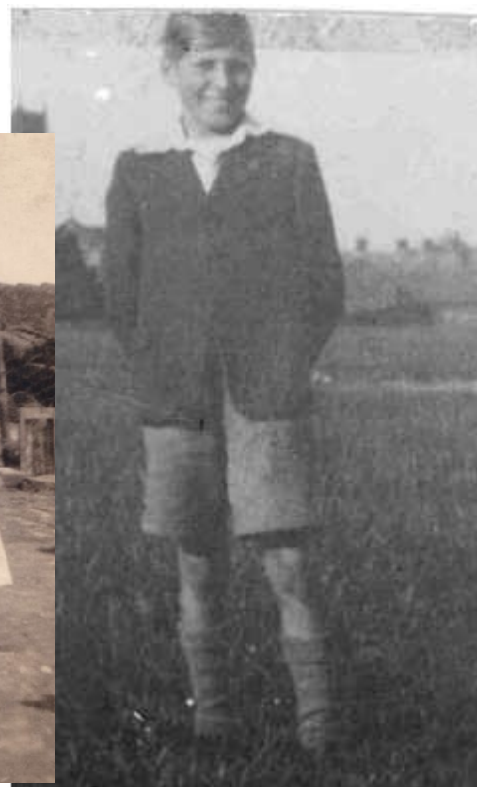
The Middlewich WW2 Weekend 18th and 19th September 2010

Utility designs followed the square shouldered and short skirted fashions of the war era whilst sticking to the strict regulations for minimal cloth usage. Buttons were limited and turn back cuffs were eliminated. Skirts some 19 inches from the ground were usual.

Fashion items that became popular were the wedge sole shoe, the turban, the siren suit and the kangaroo cloak. The turban equalised people of all sorts. It began as a simple safety device to prevent the wearer's hair entangling in factory machinery. It doubled as a disguise for unkempt hair which women had less time to attend to being so busy running homes, jobs and giving extra help wherever they could.



Children's wear were often hand me downs or made by relatives and mother's to patterns printed in the magazines and newspapers of the day. Girls often wore print dresses with hair tied back, quite often accompanied with a homemade cardigan. Boys wore shorts up to the teenage years and had a shirt with a woollen waistcoat or jacket.



Examples of late forties children's dress.

These wonderful fashion design pictures are from a 1946 Tailleur Luxe Trade Magazine. The magazine aimed to give general tailors an idea of a good fashion line of the day. This particular Tailleur edition contained 20 pages with 40 individual drawings. Each of these 12 plates below mostly show 2 versions of the same pattern cut - perhaps a jacket and skirt or dress and a full to knee coat using the same pattern cutting lines. These images truly illustrate fashion history of the 1940s.

1946 Tailleur Trade Fashion Plates Fashion Design Images 1



Hats and Hairstyles after 1945

1946



1946



1946



1947



1948



1949



Day Clothes 1938

In 1938 outfits had become square at the shoulder, with a fairly tight, natural waist and full, flaring skirt. Styles were varied and inspired by French designers like Elisa Schiaparelli and Gabrielle 'Coco' Chanel, and by what the film stars wore. Evening dresses were 'classical' in satins and sequins or 'romantic' with full skirts. Hats were still small and worn tilted over the eye. Men's suits had become much broader and more padded at the shoulder, with a long jacket and wide straight trousers. Narrow 'pin'-striped materials were popular. The soft felt hat generally replaced the bowler.

Clothes Rationing

The Second World War made the importation of cloth for clothing virtually impossible and so clothes rationing was introduced on 1st June 1941. Rationing books were distributed to every man, woman and child in Britain.

Clothing was rationed on a points system. Initially the allowance was for approximately one new outfit per year; as the war progressed, the points were reduced to the point where the purchase of a coat constituted almost an entire year's clothing allowance.

Inevitably styles and fashion were affected by the clothing shortages. Fewer colours were used by clothing companies, allowing chemicals usually used for dyeing to be used for explosives and other much needed resources for the war effort. Materials became scarce. Silk, nylon, elastic, and even metal used for buttons and clasps were difficult to find.

The turban and the siren suit became very popular during the war. The turban began life as a simple safety device to prevent the women who worked in factories from getting their hair caught in machinery. Siren suits, an all-enveloping boiler suit type garment, was the original jumpsuit. With a zip up the front, people could wear the suit over pyjamas making it ideal for a quick dash to the air raid shelter.



The end of clothes rationing finally came on 15th March 1949. Photographs Above: The turban



Day Clothes 1941 (left)

The lady's suit was designed in 1941 when materials were restricted because of war. Modelled on the soldier's battledress, the jacket is waist-length with flapped pockets. The line is still pre-war with its square shoulders, natural waist and flaring skirt. Hair was worn curled, sometimes in a long, eye-covering style. For comfort and warmth many wore 'slacks' and headscarves.

The man's suit has a new longer waist and fits more loosely. Sports jackets with contrasting trousers gave variety and economised on the 'coupons' that were issued to everybody when clothes were rationed.

Photographs Right and Below:
Kentwell Hall
WW2 Re-Creation.





"The New Look" 1947

In 1947 Christian Dior presented a fashion look with a fitted jacket with a nipped-in waist and full calf length skirt. It was a dramatic change from the wartime austerity styles. After the rationing of fabric during the Second World War, Dior's lavish use of material was a bold and shocking stroke. This style became known as the 'New Look'.