

MANUAL: Investigating, Dating and Documenting Garments.

PREPARATION

Give yourself plenty of space. Spread the garment carefully out on a table or clean flat surface, so it can be examined without putting undue stress on any part. Make sure your hands are clean, or wear clean gloves (essential if you are examining delicate, damaged or very old garments). Check that you are not wearing rings or bracelets that could catch and snag the fabric. If taking notes, use **pencil** only!

COMPLETENESS

How many parts are there to the garment? Do they all belong to the same ensemble? Are there obviously parts missing, such as belts, sashes, overskirts?

IDENTIFY THE FABRIC

See separate sheet on fabric identification. Be aware that there may be several fabrics in one garment, including the lining (almost always a different fabric from the outer layer), and trimmings.

INVESTIGATE FOR ALTERATIONS and STITCHING METHODS

Look inside the garment to see how it is sewn. Is it hand stitched, or machine stitched, or some of both? Sewing machines were only introduced in the mid 1850s, and not generally used until the mid 1860s, but even when the main seams, darts and other construction were machine stitched, lots of the finishings, oversewing, and application of trimmings continued to be hand stitched.

MACHINE STITCHING

The earliest machines produced a chain stitch, and garments with this type of stitching are likely to date from the 1850s and 1860s. The lock stitch machine (where both sides of the stitching look similar) was also in use by the 1860s. Machines were also developed in this decade which could sew on braid, do chain stitch embroidery, and produce pleated trimmings, which are much in evidence on garments from the 1870s.

If there is evidence of machine stitching in a garment which definitely dates from before the mid 1850s, it suggests a later alteration.

HAND STITCHING

Hand sewing in 18th century garments very much varied in quality according to what part of the garment it was used for. Seams of men's coats and especially women's gowns

were often sewn in a way that looks quite crude, with large stitches widely spaced. This was for ease of alteration, as the fabrics were so expensive. Stitching on linen underwear and on muslin dress accessories in contrast was usually exquisitely fine.

Linen threads, from very thick to very fine, were used for practically all hand sewing, although silk was used for sewing silk garments where it would show, for example top stitching, and for embroidery. Cotton sewing threads were not used until the 1820s, and did not become the norm until after the process of mercerization was discovered in 1844.

Even when machines were available, it continued to be customary (until the 1950s) to hand sew various garments, including women's underwear and babies' clothes, because this was considered more "refined". In 20th and 21st century couture it was, and still is, the custom to hand sew zips and hems, because it is considered to give a better finish.

ALTERATIONS

Alterations to a garment are indicated by lines of stitch holes suggesting previous stitching has been unpicked. Areas to investigate are the tops of skirts (suggesting waist enlargement, or re-shaping to bring up to date), bust darts, side seams and necklines. Because silk fabrics of the 18th and 19th centuries were highly prized, it was customary to re-make them over a long period of time. The brocades with large floral patterns of the 1740s can be found re-made in the 1780s and 90s, and plain silks of the 1860s–1880s were often re-worked and updated with the addition of sections of contrasting fabrics, such as velvet. Many girls' dresses of the mid-late 19th century were made from their mother's outmoded dresses.

Alterations to garments are especially common when there has been a major fashion change, especially to the waistline. Thus in women's dress there are many examples of 1780s gowns altered to have the raised waistline of the 1790s and onwards; often the pointed "tails" of the original bodice back still survive underneath the new waistline. Men's long waistcoats of the 1770s can be found that have been altered (often with most ingenious re-working of embroidered borders) to pass muster as the short, squared-off waistcoats of the 1790s and 1800.

There was a major fashion change in women's dress around 1867 when the crinoline frame was abandoned, and the bodice and skirt were joined at the waistline. Many dresses can be found with alterations to reflect this change, with re-pleated skirts, and rather makeshift waistbands (probably in the hope that all would be discreetly covered by a sash or belt).

FASTENINGS

Looking at the fastenings of a garment can help with dating. Eighteenth century women's garments as a rule had no fastenings at all, and how they held together is one of the great mysteries of dress history. If you find hooks or other fastenings, they are almost certainly later additions. Eyelet holes down the fronts are also usually suspect, and added

in the 19th century for fancy dress, though genuine 18th century ones occasionally can be found.

Large hooks and eyes, hand made of brass, were used to fasten men's coats in the later 18th century, and the waistband of women's dresses in the 1820s and 1830s, where they often look incongruous, being much heavier than the fragile dress fabric.

Small buttons covered with white linen, or made with linen thread, known as Dorset buttons, were used on women's white muslin dresses, underwear and children's clothes from about 1800 to the 1830s.

The zip fastener was patented in the early 20th century, but was not used for garments until the 1930s, and is rarely found before 1939. Early zips for dresses were quite heavy and had metal teeth. During WW2 and in the postwar austerity period, 1945-1952, they were often recycled by home dressmakers, as were buttons and other fastenings.

MAKERS' LABELS

These never appear in garments before the 1850s, although men's hats, and women's shoes and gloves occasionally have a stamped name or a paper label from about 1800.

Men's coats were traditionally marked with the tailor's label either sewn in the back of the neck, or (as is still done by bespoke tailors) inside the inside breast pocket. The labels of bespoke garments usually include the customer's name and the date, an added bonus.

Women's dresses were labelled on the dress band, sewn on the inside of the bodice waist, which was printed or woven with the dressmaker's name. The earliest examples of such labelling date from the late 1860s. Women's coats and mantles sometimes had labels at the back neck. In the 1920s and 1930s, especially in evening wear, a ribbon label woven with the dressmaker's or couturier's name was sewn into the side seam of the dress, sometimes at hip level, so it is wise to search the inside of garments thoroughly!

The vast majority of garments however, before the 1950s, have no labels.

DESCRIBING GARMENTS FOR DOCUMENTATION

It is helpful to start the record with a brief description, which summarizes the purpose and appearance of the garment. Include the name of the garment, (coat, dress, blouse), any qualifying description (day, evening, formal, uniform etc), its fabric, colour, and any outstanding features or decoration.

Then if wished, describe the garment in detail, following the **CHECKLIST** below.

- How many pieces is the garment cut in?
- Is it fitted, and how? (darts etc)

- Is it lined, and with what?
- Does it open front or back?
- How is it fastened?
- How is it decorated?
- Is there evidence of significant alteration?

For a **DRESS**, start at the neck and note:

BODICE: all of the above, plus: neckline, collar, sleeves, cuffs, applied decoration.

SKIRT: all of the above, plus: whether attached to the bodice or to a separate waistband, whether gathered, pleated, gored, or otherwise arranged, whether there are any pockets (usually let into the side seams), any tapes or hoops inside to arrange as a bustle or polonaise; hem treatment, applied decoration.

OVERSKIRT, SASH or BELT: construction, fastening, decoration.

For other garments, adapt the checklist, and add other elements as wished.

CONDITION, and CONSERVATION RECORD

Describe the present condition of the garment, using terms already used by institution (such as excellent, good, fair, poor etc.) and noting tears and holes in fabric, stains, areas of heavy soiling, areas of excessive wear, fading, missing buttons or fastenings. Make sure record is dated.

Note if any professional conservation has been carried out, or if any washing, cleaning or remedial treatment, such as securing loose or detached fastenings and trimmings, has taken place.

IDENTIFYING TEXTILES USED IN GARMENTS 1700-2000

WOOL. Most men's outerwear (apart from 18th century dress suits and suits from the late 1960s onwards) will be of wool, some women's 19th century dresses, and most women's 20th century tailored wear. Lightweight printed wools were fashionable for women's dresses in the early and late 19th century, and early 20th century.

Wool feels warm to the touch, is flexible and stretchy, and generally the fibres look "hairy" when examined closely.

Although the vast majority of garments made and worn in the 17th – 19th centuries would have been made of wool, this is not reflected in the garments that have survived. Apart from men's outerwear, wool is scarce in museum collections, probably because of its vulnerability to moth damage, and because of its value for recycling. Wool garments have always had considerable value secondhand and even when completely ragged could be sold to the shoddy merchants.

An allied animal fibre much used in the mid 19th century for women's dresses is **ALPACA**, the hair of a South American relative of the Llama. This was usually mixed with wool or cotton for ease of manufacture, and can be recognized by the springiness and lustre of the fabric, the visible long hairs coming from it, and the colour, which is usually muted, fawn, grey-green or grey-mauve, as alpaca does not take a strong dye.

LINEN. Used extensively for underwear and men's shirts before mass-production made cotton widely available in the early 19th century. Shirts, women's chemises, and baby's underwear continued to be made of linen until the 1870s. Linen was often used mixed with cotton or with wool in the 18th century to produce a more hardwearing fabric. Linen feels smooth and cool, and is recognizable by the very straight threads and extreme regularity of the weave. When pressed with a hot iron, it looks shiny and lustrous.

SILK. Always an expensive and prestige fabric, large quantities of silk garments survive in museums because it is the "best" and special-occasion clothing that families kept. Typical silk garments to be found are men's 18th century dress suits and decorative waistcoats, women's brocade, taffeta and moiré dresses of the 18th and 19th centuries, and silk crepe and crepe de Chine garments of the 1920s and 1930s.

Silk is naturally tough and hardwearing, so 18th century silks survived for decades, and can be found re-made into garments up to the 1890s. The chemical finishes applied to silks, especially lining silks, from the 1890s onwards, however, were very destructive, and caused the splitting and shattering of silk dresses and petticoats from 1890 – 1920 that presents such problems to museum staff today. Patterned silks, which dated quickly, have survived in museums in much greater quantity than plain silks, which could be recycled into children's dresses, linings etc.

Silk can be identified by its lustrous appearance, richness of colour (as it takes dye superbly) and lack of stretch (except for crepe weaves). It has a definite “feel”, rubbing silk between the fingers and thumb will feel slightly rough and “catchy”.

COTTON. Few cotton garments can be found pre the 1790s, but cotton was used mixed with linen as a cheap hardwearing lining fabric, which can be seen in the linings and backs of men’s waistcoats from the 1730s. Large amounts of cotton dresses for women and children, underwear and men’s shirts from the 19th and 20th centuries survive. Cotton differs from linen in appearance in that it has a less regular weave, the individual threads are less smooth and can look “fluffy”; it also feels warmer to the touch. Many qualities and varieties of cotton were produced, from the best Egyptian cotton, which was as smooth and lustrous as linen, to calicoes which feel coarse and rough, with characteristic flecks of black which are the residue of the cotton seeds.

MAN-MADE WOVEN TEXTILES, derived from cellulose.

The first to be used for dress was **RAYON**, patented in the 1890s, but not used for fabrics until after 1910. Knitted garments from rayon yarns were widely manufactured during World War 1, and woven textiles became popular in the 1920s, for dresses and underwear. Rayon is made from cellulose, and there are two types, viscose rayon (now known as “viscose”), which feels and handles like cotton, and takes dyes well, and acetate rayon, which more closely resembles silk, and was used for taffetas and linings. Rayon was marketed as “Artificial silk” or Art silk, and could have a very shiny, glossy finish.

MAN-MADE WOVEN TEXTILES derived from petrochemicals.

NYLON, ACRYLIC and POLYESTER are mid 20th century man-made fabrics produced from complex chemical combinations, many derived from oil. They all appear in garments from the early 1950s, usually under the brand names of their manufacturers, such as Terylene , Orlon, Crimplene and Courtelle, but since the 1970s the generic names nylon, acrylic and polyester have been used. Since garment labeling was introduced in the mid 1970s identifying the fabrics of garments has been made considerably easier.

MAN-MADE NON-WOVEN TEXTILES. These include **RUBBER**, and various **VINYLS and PLASTICS**, occasionally found in garments, especially rainwear and sportswear, but more often in accessories. Rubber was used as a coating for waterproofing first in the 1830s, but was notoriously unstable and survivals are extremely rare before the 1920s (except in military uniform collections). Plastics including vinyl were used from the 1950s (the famous Pac-a-Mac), but more frequently from the late 1960s.

OTHER ANIMAL or VEGETABLE DERIVATIVES used in dress include fur, felt, leather, feathers, hemp and ramie. The last two are vegetable fibres somewhat similar to linen, but hemp is coarser (it was mostly used for rope and string) and usually only used for heavy duty aprons etc, while ramie is a fine, silky, lustrous vegetable fibre that resembles fine linen.

There is also a huge category of **MIXED FIBRES**, which can cause considerable confusion when documenting dress. The mixture of fibre content in clothes of the 1980s onwards is very familiar, but it is less well-known that this was done extensively by manufacturers in the 18th and 19th centuries. The 18th century textile with a linen warp and cotton weft (sometimes called “Manchester Cloth”), can regularly be found used for the backs and linings of men’s waistcoats. Linen was also mixed with wool to make a hardwearing men’s suiting, and to make **FUSTIAN** for working dress. In the 19th century silk was mixed with wool to make hardwearing fabrics (**POPLIN** being an example) and with cotton to make inexpensive but rich-looking fabrics. Cotton would be used for the warp, for strength, and silk for the weft.

Very frequently when a textile is made with a warp and weft of different types of fibre, one will wear less well than the other, and splitting and evidence of uneven wear will result. So if you find a dress in which the fabric is splitting along the weave, or with worn patches such on the shoulders with one thread (usually the warp) showing prominently, this indicates a mixed fibre textile.

TEXTILE TERMS THAT DESCRIBE WEAVES, RATHER THAN FIBRES.

Descriptive terms often used for textiles include **SATIN, MUSLIN, VELVET, CREPE, BROCADE, NET, GAUZE**. These are however types of weave, and should always be qualified by the name of the fibre involved. For example, a fabric with a satin finish could be silk satin, cotton satin, wool satin, or polyester satin. Muslin is usually cotton muslin, but could be linen or silk muslin. Crepe fabrics, so fashionable in the 1920s and 1930s, were usually made of silk but could be wool, cotton or rayon, and today are usually polyester.

MAN-MADE FIBRES and the BRAND NAMES used 1950s – 1970s.

ACETATE

Derived from cellulose, and therefore related to viscose rayon, but produced through a different process. Known in the 1920s and 30s as Celanese, manufactured by British Celanese Ltd.

BRAND NAMES: Dixel, Lansil, Lancola.

TRIACETATE

Derived like acetate from cellulose.

BRAND NAMES: Tricel, Tricelon, Arnel.

ACRYLIC

Derived from petrochemicals and coal, acrylic fibres most closely resemble wool and are used extensively for knitwear.

BRAND NAMES: Acrilan, Courtelle, Orlon, Dralon, Novacryl.

ELASTOMERIC

Stretch yarns, derived from polyurethane, used in underwear, sportswear, hosiery and swimwear.

BRAND NAMES: Lycra, Spanzelle.

NYLON

Originally made from coal tar, now made from petrochemicals, Nylon was first manufactured shortly before WW 2, but was used entirely for industrial and defence purposes (in Britain, but not in the USA) until after the war. Since then, its uses have been numerous.

BRAND NAMES: Bri-Nylon, Blue C Nylon, Tendrelle, Celon, Enkalon, Perlon.

POLYESTER

Derived from petroleum products. The first polyester fibres were produced in 1941 in the laboratories of the Calico Printers Association in Accrington. It was then commercially developed by ICI Fibres Ltd. Polyester is extensively used both on its own to produce a hardwearing and easy-care imitation of natural fibres such as silk or wool, or blended with wool for men's suitings, or with cotton for shirts, children's clothes and bed linen.

BRAND NAMES: Terylene, Crimplene, Dacron, Trevira, Terlenka, Tergal, Diolen.

VISCOSE RAYON.

The first man-made fibre, derived from cellulose from wood pulp, known simply as "rayon" until the 1970s. It is probably the most widely used, both on its own, and mixed with both natural and other man-made fibres.

BRAND NAMES: Sarille, Vincel, Evlan, Fibro, Zantrel.

BOOK LIST

The following books are in my opinion the most useful for identifying and investigating dress from the 17th to the mid 20th century, and would form an excellent nucleus of a library for a museum with a dress collection. There is a huge range of books now available on fashion of the last 50 years, most of them dealing with the work of “celebrity” designers and couturiers.

Arnold, Janet: *Handbook of Costume*, Macmillan Ltd., London, 1973.

Though parts of this book are now very outdated, especially regarding the booklists, addresses of specialist suppliers, and gazetteer of collections, there is some good and useful information especially Chapter 2, *Dating Costume from Construction Techniques*, and Chapter 3, *Costume conservation, Storage and Display*. Unfortunately it has never been reprinted and updated.

Bradfield, Nancy: *Costume in Detail*, George G Harrap & Co Ltd., London

A careful and very illuminating examination of a range of women’s clothes from 1730 to 1930, together with contextual material. Most of the garments are from Charles Wade’s collection, formerly at Snowhill, now the property of the National Trust and stored at Berrington Hall near Hereford. It includes accessories and underwear, and is excellent for identifying construction techniques. Nancy Bradfield’s closely-observed drawings are a delight.

Hart, A and North, S: *Historical Fashion in Detail: the 17th and 18th Century*, V&A Publications, London, 1998.

Beautifully photographed details of men’s and women’s garments from the V&A’s collections, with a description of the whole garment.

Johnston, L: *Nineteenth Century Fashion in Detail*, V&A Publications, London, 2005.

Similar format as above.

Wilcox, C and Mendes, V: *Modern fashion in Detail*, V&A Publications, London, 2002.

Similar format as above, looking at 20th century garments (mostly women’s)

Baumgarten, Linda and Watson, John, with Carr, Florine: *Costume Close-Up, Clothing Construction and Pattern 1750 – 1790*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, USA, 1999.

An investigation of the cut and construction of a range of typical men's and women's eighteenth century garments, based on examples in the collections at Colonial Williamsburg.

Baumgarten, Linda: *What Clothes Reveal*, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation in association with Yale University Press, USA, 2002.

A perceptive examination of men's and women's clothing in the Colonial Williamsburg's collections, and exploration of what it reveals about America and Britain in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

Tarrant, Naomi: *The Development of Costume*, National Museums of Scotland in conjunction with Routledge, London and New York, 1994.

Wide-ranging survey of dress fashion, cut and construction, developing from the earliest known garments, including useful information on interpretation and display of dress in museums

Buck, Anne: *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*, BT Batsford Ltd., London, 1979.

Excellent and thoroughly researched survey based on pictorial and archive sources, and surviving garments, set in their social context.

Waugh, N: *Corsets and Crinolines*, Routledge/Theatre Arts Books, New York, 1993.

Originally published in the 1960s, this is still the most authoritative and useful survey of the supports that give fashions their shape, with illustrations drawn from museum specimens.

Mackenzie, Althea: *Shoes and Slippers, Hats and Bonnets, Buttons and Trimmings, Embroideries*, National Trust Enterprises Ltd., London, 2004.

A useful series of little books illustrating and describing accessories and dress details from the Snowhill collection, dating from 18th and 19th centuries.

BASIC COLLECTIONS CARE

Few of us working with dress collections in museums will be lucky enough to have adequate, let alone ideal, storage for our collections. Dress and textiles are very demanding of space, and need protection from so many environmental hazards, such as light, dirt, damp, insect infestation, etc., that they are seldom prime favourites with the museum authorities.

These notes will therefore offer advice at a fairly basic level, assuming that the collections you are working with are stored in a mixture of boxes and cupboards, probably cramped for space, and difficult of access for any sort of study or research purpose.

ACCESS.

There is little purpose to having a dress collection if no one can ever see it. Displays and exhibitions are one way of providing access, but involve a lot of work and considerable resources if done properly. Making selected items accessible to students and other researchers should be a simpler task, but the following rules should be followed for their care and safety.

- Plenty of table space should be available for laying items out
- Tables should be covered by clean cloths
- Gloves should be provided, and worn (either white cotton, but these soil very quickly and need washing, so probably more practical are the thin latex disposable ones used in archive departments.)
- Wearing chunky and possibly spiky rings and bracelets could be a hazard.
- Handling should be discouraged except for an absolute minimum.
- Pencils only, and absolutely NO food, drinks, sweets etc.
- The museum should formulate its own policy regarding photography.

HANDLING

Ways of carrying items between the stores and the study areas should be considered carefully. **DO NOT TRY TO CARRY TOO MUCH IN ONE GO.**

- Try to develop strategies to handle as little as possible.
- Large items should be supported in several places, or carried in trays.
- Large trays of moulded polypropylene, such as used in the food industry, are very useful for carrying shoes, bags, underwear etc.
- Small dress items can be stored in boxes on sheets of tissue, and then moved by lifting the tissue, not the item.
- Larger/heavier items can be stored/moved on sheets of clean thin calico.

STORAGE

Undoubtedly the best means of storage for costume items is to be laid flat, carefully padded with tissue, in sliding removable metal or plastic trays slotted into light and dust proofed cupboards. However, few if any publicly-funded museums are ever likely to afford this so the following advice is based on storage consisting of some wardrobes, some cupboards, some racking, and low financial resources.

Hanging storage. Only hang garments if they are really strong at the shoulders, and the weight of the rest of the garment is not going to distort the shape. Types of garments that can generally be stored safely on hangers include men's coats, some women's 18th and 19th century dresses, women's jackets, mantles and coats, most garments dating post-1920. Exceptions to the latter category are 1920s/30s (and later) women's beaded and bias-cut evening wear.

Dresses from the 1870s and 1880s with bustles and/or heavy trains will need extra support for these, if hung. A pole hanger, made from an aluminium tube with a hook at one end, and adjustable padded amatures to support the garment at various points, is an effective solution, but rather unwieldy.

If the dress skirt is not attached to its bodice, it can be hung from the hanger by tape loops, attached to seams or other strong points of the waistband, or from a well-padded skirt hanger.

Hangers. The shape and quality of the hanger is crucial if it is not to damage the garment. Most commercially-available hangers are far too wide for 18th and 19th century garments, and the ends can distort or damage the sleeves. The slope of the shoulders can also be quite wrong. It is best to start with a small plain wooden hanger, such as supplied for children's wear, and pad it well for the individual garment with polyester wadding, covered with a calico or Tyvek cover. Men's "wishbone" hangers can be used for menswear, especially overcoats, but the ends of the arms will probably need to be sawn off for 18th and early 19th century coats. Dry-cleaners' wire hangers should never be used!

Ideally all hanging items should be protected with a cover of thin calico or Tyvek (a non-woven waterproof and dust proof material resembling rather tough paper), but if space and financial resources make this impossible, try to do this for the most vulnerable items, such as white muslin dresses or ballgowns with delicate trimmings.

Box and Drawer Storage. Boxes should be made of acid-free materials, (not brown card), but these can be prohibitively expensive. If potentially acidic boxes have to be used, use plenty of acid-free tissue to line them, and change as soon as it looks discoloured.

Use appropriate sized boxes, so that items are folded as little as possible.

If a number of items are stored in one box, separate with tissue, and establish an order, (by accession number) which is listed on paper on top of the box, and on outside if room. If using drawers, be aware that wood (especially if new) contains high levels of acid and possibly pesticides as well, and needs sealing and buffer layers of tissue or calico. Metal drawers are preferable, if budget allows.

A good solution for protecting costume/textile items in drawers is to line the base with a thin calico sheet which is long enough to fold over the top as well, thus keeping out dust and preventing any bit of the garment being snagged by opening/closing the drawer. Hats and other hollow items need to be gently padded with tissue wads inside to keep their shape, and surrounded by more wads in boxes to prevent crushing.

Rolled Textile Storage. Most flat textiles and some costume items, for example shawls, are best stored rolled around a cylinder of some kind. The most easily obtained cylinders are brown cardboard ones which can be used but a good buffer layer must be provided between the cardboard and the specimen; thin aluminium foil can be wound tightly round the cylinder and then covered with several layers of tissue, keeping all as smooth as possible. Wind the fabric on the roll interleaving it with tissue paper. Then cover the roll with Tyvek, silicone paper or calico, and label with accession number. A photograph of the item attached to the outside of the roll aids identification and saves unnecessary handling.

MARKING

- Make sure that the method used to mark textile/costume specimens does not damage them, and is removable.
- Accession numbers written on thin nylon or polyester tape with marker pens (both available from Conservation Supply firms) should be sewn very lightly by one end in the most convenient place for easy access by staff. For hanging garments, the edge of the left cuff is a good place, assuming all garments are hung facing left.
- Position of accession number should be standard throughout collections.
- Items to which labels cannot be sewn should have acid-free paper or Tyvek labels.
- If an accession label has to be removed, for example if it is too obtrusive when item is on display, this should be carefully documented so that it can be replaced when the item returns to store.

ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

Few museums outside the Nationals have the luxury of air-conditioned storage areas. The following suggestions are basic, but will help.

Make sure you check through the storage regularly, especially for evidence of damp, moth and other insect infestation. Feathers and furs are particularly at risk from the latter and ideally should be stored in isolation from the rest of the collections and frequently checked.

Small thermo-hygrometers that measure temperature and humidity are easily obtained and will help in environmental checks.

Make sure any windows have substantial blinds which are kept down, and that lighting is switched off whenever staff are not using area.

Do not use polythene for storage of textiles, as it attracts dust, and being non-absorbent can allow build-up of damp and condensation. Acid-free tissue and thin scoured (well-

washed) calico are the best materials to use. Old cotton or linen sheets, if not too worn, are excellent.

Anthea Jarvis. 2009.

SUPPLIERS

Acid free tissue paper, silicone paper, Tyvek, storage boxes, cardboard tubes, marking tape and ink, thin latex gloves, conservation materials.

Conservation by Design Ltd,

Timecare Works, 5 Singer Way, Bedford, MK42 7AW

Tel. 01234 846300

www.conservation-by-design.co

Preservation Equipment Ltd,

Vinces Road, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 4HQ.

Tel. 01379 647400

www.preservationequipment.com.uk

Boxes

G Ryder & Co. Ltd.,

Denbigh Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK1 1DG

www.ryderbox.co.uk

Cotton calico, polyester wadding

Whaley's (Bradford) Ltd.,

Harris Court, Great Horton, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD7 4EQ

Tel. 01274 576718

www.whaleys-bradford.ltd.uk

John Lewis department stores (polyester wadding)

www.johnlewis.com

Thermohygrometers

Meaco Measurement and Control Solutions,

26 The Avenue, Basford, Newcastle, Staffs, ST5 0LY

Tel. 0845 838 6963.