Ballad Illustration Archive
Costume Book

By Megan Palmer Browne, with Charlotte Becker, 2014.

Key Features of Women's Clothing:
Long one-piece dresses, often covered with overgowns. Skirts became fuller over time, especially in the reign of Henry VIII. Sleeves also became fuller, becoming bell-shaped by the Tudor period. Earlier necklines were low and rounded; they gradually became square and then rose to create collars. Complex hoods gradually took on an arched shape, then moved to the back of the head, becoming rounder and smaller.

Key Features of Men's Clothing:
Tunics (if belted, always below the waist) and hose covered by overgowns, often floor-length. Later in the period, sleeves widened, tunics shortened and were covered with open doublets, then topped by short over-robes; loose breeches appeared over hose, and were sometimes paned and puffed. In Henry VIII's time, codpieces became fashionable. Long hair covered with caps gave way to shorter hair and hats.
Elizabethan

Key Features of Women's Clothing:
Gown separated into bodice and skirt; the bodice tapered, generally to a point, and the skirt took on an increasingly drum-like shape, supported by ever-larger farthingales (hoops). Skirts often parted to reveal embroidered foreparts. Sleeves fuller at top, often with “wings” around the shoulders; these widened into a “leg-of-mutton” style. Closed ruffs at the beginning of the period evolved into large, open, “cartwheel” ruffs. Hair was brushed upwards, at first from a middle part into a butterfly shape, and then straight and high over the forehead. Various rounded caps and hoods covered the back of the hair, sometimes ornamented with feathers.

Far left: An unknown lady wears a medium-sized closed ruff; a bodice with wings over wide, loose sleeves, and a partlet with a design matching the sleeves. Her skirt is bell-shaped. c. 1575-80.
Left: Detail from 20088. Our delightful fellow is flanked by two ladies in wide sleeves with wings, closed ruffs, and skirts parted to reveal decorative partlets.
Far right: an unknown lady wears a wide Spanish farthingale, wide sleeves, and closed cartwheel ruff. She carries a feathered fan. c. 1585.
Center: Countess Mary Sidney Herbert wears an open cartwheel ruff and hair brushed up in butterfly shape.
Right: detail from 20229. Queen Elizabeth wears a cartwheel ruff, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and bell-shaped skirt.

Key Features of Men's Clothing:
Doublet took on a pronounced “peascod” form; skirts shortened from Tudor times until they became tabs. Sleeves became fuller across the period. Sometimes a sleeveless leather jerkin, matching the doublet in shape, was worn over it. Breeches, also called trunk hose, took on increasing length and fullness, reaching from between halfway down the thigh to almost the knee. In the last decade of Elizabeth’s reign, they were still worn long but became tighter. Standing collars with small ruffs gave way to increasingly larger and more ornamented ruffs. Older men still wore gowns. Cloaks were half-length and worn over one shoulder; both low-crowned plumed hats and high-crowned loaf-shaped hats were popular.

Far left: Queen Elizabeth wears a narrow, conical bodice, a very large drum farthingale, and leg-of-mutton sleeves framed by falling sleeves. Her two-layered ruff is open very wide. Her hair is brushed up from the forehead and ornamented with jewels. She carries a folding fan. 1592.
Left: the Artichoke Lady wears a narrow, conical bodice over a large drum farthingale and leg-of-mutton sleeves with an open cartwheel ruff. She carries a feathered fan, because she’s almost—but not quite—as fashionable as the Queen.
Far right: an unknown lady wears a wide Spanish farthingale, wide sleeves, and closed cartwheel ruff. She carries a feathered fan. c. 1585.
Center: Countess Mary Sidney Herbert wears an open cartwheel ruff and hair brushed up in butterfly shape.
Right: detail from 20229. Queen Elizabeth wears a cartwheel ruff, leg-of-mutton sleeves, and bell-shaped skirt.

Sir Robert Dudley wears a leather jerkin over his peascod-shaped doublet. His breeches are full and fall to approximately mid-thigh. He wears a small ruff and plumed hat. 1560s.

Doublet and panned trunk-hose in which Don Garzia de Medici was buried at the age of 15 in 1562. The hose are silk velvet decorated with gold cord.

Sir Walter Raliegh is dapper in his full, lace-edged cartwheel ruff and his pointed beard. 1585.

Sir Henry Unton wears large closed cartwheel ruff, loaf-shaped hat with plume, and cloak thrown over one shoulder. 1586.

An unknown man wears a loose doublet with falling lace collar, very short hose with loose cannons (extensions of the hose), and wide-brimmed, tall-crowned hat. c. 1595.
Key Features of Women's Clothing:

Large cartwheel farthingales tilted up at the back, open ruffs edged with lace showing off very low-cut bodices, tight sleeves, and hair brushed straight up from the forehead and, often, decorated with jewels were de rigueur at Anne of Denmark’s court. When she died in 1619, farthingales promptly disappeared, and ruffs (remaining lacy) took on square edges. Cuffs were often tiered and lace-edged to match the ruffs. Skirts, after the farthingale disappeared, were bell-shaped and again parted to reveal a decorative forepart. Some ladies wore linen partlets to cover the space between low-cut bodice and ruff/lace collar.

Key Features of Men’s Clothing:

Early in the period, hose were very short and very full, and extended by tight, tubular cannions (sometimes matching, sometimes contrasting). Stockings were also worn. Later, trunk hose were again worn; they were longer and looser. Ribbons were often tied beneath the knee. In the 1620s, loose hose reaching below the knee became popular. Early on, doublets were fitted and ended at the waist; sleeves were tight. Sleeves gradually loosened and waistlines began to taper to a point. Unstarched ruffs and falling lace collars began to replace the large ruffs of the previous period. Cloaks, still worn over one shoulder, were popular; high-heeled shoes with rosettes and boots were both fashionable. Hats were mostly tall-crowned.
Key Features of Women's Clothing:
Both bodices and skirts became looser and less structured. Sleeves were full and rounded, and “virago” sleeves, where strips of fabric were gathered into puffs and tied at the elbow with ribbons, were popular. Shoulders became exaggeratedly wide. There was a movement towards “romantic negligence”; hairstyles softened into fairly natural up-dos with soft bangs, and flowing, single-colored fabric replaced elaborate embroidery. Collars were large flat lace, sometimes worn over the shoulders with corners pointing downward like shawls.

Lady Bowes wears a spangled yellow skirt and bodice nipped in at waist with long tabs below; virago sleeves, flat lace collar and cuffs, and hair pulled back in a natural style. 1630s.

Detail from 30099. A lady wears a bodice with tight waist and tabs below; virago sleeves, and perhaps spangles. Her bell-shaped skirt and squared-off ruff are of an earlier period—but the virago sleeves mark her as Caroline.

Queen Henrietta Maria wears a full-sleeved bodice with defined waist and a large lace collar draped over her shoulders. Her hair is pulled gently back and her bangs curl around her face. 1632.

Detail from 31272. A lady wears a bodice nipped in at waist with full sleeves and a falling lace collar; her skirt has relatively natural contours, and her hair is loose at the sides and pulled up in back.

Key Features of Men's Clothing:
Doublets were less fitted than in previous periods, and often sleeves were paned to show the fabric of the shirt beneath. They came in at the waist, and had flaps beneath which came to a point at the center of both back and front, or hung straight from the waist and were unbuttoned at the bottom. Breeches were cut straight to the knee and relatively loose with ribbons or fringe at the bottom. Boots came to replace high-heeled shoes, and were often turned down at the top. High lace-edged collars replaced the ruff, and hats were short-crowned, wide-brimmed, and often decorated with a plume.

Left: Charles I wears a paned doublet with ribbons at waist which comes down to a sharp point with an un starched falling ruff, loose breeches to the knee, also decorated with ribbons, lace-edged gloves, and boots with spurs. 1629.

Center: Doublet associated with Charles I (two views). It is paned to show the shirt beneath. It is tight at the waist, and comes down to a point at the front.

Right: Charles I wears a nearly identical outfit to the one at left, but note the more decorative shoulder rolls and the falling lace collar. 1631.
**Key Features of Women's Clothing:**

Bodices were cut off the shoulder and heavily reinforced to flatten the chest, creating an elongated shape. Linen collars were sometimes worn over the bodice to increase modesty. Sleeves became fuller to the elbow, sometimes ending there and sometimes 3/4 length. Skirts, generally matching the bodices in color and ornament, had a natural, flowing look and were more often worn closed than in previous periods. Hair was elaborately curled above both ears and worn up in the back.

*Left: King Charles II and his sister Mary dance at court. She wears an elongating bodice which matches her flowing, naturally-shaped skirt over a darker petticoat. Bodice and skirt are ornamented with lines of spangles. She wears a collar with a pin or jewel to cover her decolletage. Her hair is elaborately curled at the sides and pulled up in back. c. 1660.*

*Center: A green silk bodice decorated with spangles. Note the elongating, flattening shape and the fullness of the sleeves above the elbow. English, c. 1660.*

*Right: Detail from 31954. A woman wears an elongating bodice with elbow-length sleeves and a naturally-shaped skirt slightly open over a petticoat. Her hair is pulled up in back, and she wears a collar with a pin over her bodice. 1668.*

*Left: Lady Phillipa Staunton wears a satin bodice and matching skirt. The bodice is tight and off-the-shoulder, and the sleeves are very full to the elbow. Her smock peeks up over the bodice and also at her elbows. The lines of the dress follow the body much more than in earlier periods. Her hair is worn in two buns over her ears, and curls drip from the buns. 1668.*

*Second image: detail from 21712. A lady wears her hair gathered above her ears with curls dripping down. Her smock is visible under her bodice, and she wears a string of pearls.*

*Third image: green silk lawn bodice and skirt. The elongated bodice and the flowing skirt create a willowy silhouette. 1660s.*

*Right: detail from 31821. A man wears long hair, a short coat, and be-ribboned petticoat breeches. His companion wears a tight, low-cut bodice with full 3/4-length sleeves and a flowing skirt. Her hair is loose in front and pulled up in back.*

**Key Features of Men's Clothing:**

The parts of men's outfits became more uniform thanks to Charles II's requirements for what was to be worn at court: a coat (usually long and straight, though sometimes slightly flared), a waistcoat (usually reaching the waist, sometimes short and bolero-like), a cravat, breeches fastened below the knee (somewhat loose and getting tighter through the period), and a wig or periwig (usually long curled hair parted in the middle). Shoes with slight heels are more popular than boots. There is a lot of variety in hat styles in this period, but wide brims are particularly popular.

*From left to right: 1) A trendsetter wearing boothose with shoes. Also notice that he still wears a collar instead of a cravat. 2) Rhinegraves, which were similar to the petition breeches popular in the 1650s. 3) Another fellow in rhinegraves, 1665. 4) Loose "petticoat" or rhinegrave breeches along with a short waistcoat makes this fellow exemplary of the Restoration. (He isn't wearing a coat to indicate how informal pastoral life is!)*

*Some variations specific to the 1660s include the popularity of "rhinegrave" breeches (very full breeches, tied at the knee and sometimes worn with an overskirt, which went away by the 1670s), as well as the trend of wearing slouchy "boothose" with them (even though boots were not worn). Sometimes in the 1660s men wore both a collar and a cravat, but cravat alone was more standard by the 1670s. With the exception of these specific 1660s trends, it can be difficult to definitely distinguish men's Restoration style from their late Stuart/Georgian style.*

*From left to right: 1) James II's wedding outfit, which follows Charles II's court dress code to a T. 2) Dressed for court in the late 1670s. 3) This man wears a collar (instead of cravat) with a long, straight coat in the transitional 1660s-1670s style. 4) and 5) Same idea as third image, but showing slight variations in coat and shirt-cuff styles.*
Late Stuart / Georgian

Key Features of Women's Clothing:
A very common garment from the 1680s to 1690s is the mantua, which is essentially a simple bodice attached to a skirt (they are NOT separate pieces), but the skirt was often drawn back to reveal the petticoat (giving the skirt a two-layered, bustle-y look). The mantua bodice was sometimes worn with a stomacher, and often had frills around the neckline from the frock underneath.

In the early 18th century, “Sackback” gowns that are unfitted in the back and look like loose capes extending down the back from the shoulders. Skirts return to relative fullness, supported with hoops. Open-fronted bodices with “stomachers” or lacy panels at the front of bodices are fashionable, and necklines are generally low but not off the shoulder. Skirts can be worn closed (“round”) or open in the front to show the petticoat. Sleeves are usually fairly fitted but widen near the elbow to show the frilly, “wing-like” cuffs of her shift. Mob caps became the most common headgear.

Far left: a “sackback” gown showing the cut of the back.
Center: Another “sackback” gown with frilly sleeves of the shift showing, as well as an open skirt.
Left: detail from 31243. Cordelia wears a gown with frilly sleeves, a stomacher, and skirts pulled back.

Far left: A stomacher and very frilly sleeves below the elbow.
Center: Super sleeves, frilly frock showing around the neckline, and more accessorizing around the neck since there’s more room thanks to that low neckline!
Left: edges of shift pulled up around low-cut bodice.

Key Features of Men's Clothing:
Fitted waistcoats and a knee-length coat that would also be fairly fitted (fuller skirts were common at the beginning of the 18th century but got more fitted). Breeches are not puffy at all, and fasten below the knee. Cravats are pretty modest. Tri-corner hats are popular, and natural hair is often worn (though wigs are still quite popular until about 1720) brushed back from the forehead and tied at the nape of the neck.

In the 1680s and 1690s, breeches were still a little looser, but waistcoats and coats were somewhat fitted, and wigs were still common.
Key Features of Women's Clothing:
Though the popular silhouettes of each time period were basically followed by all but the most strict Puritan women, the colors were generally darker and more subdued (they did not, however, all wear black, since black dye was expensive). Ornamentation (such as embroidery or spangling) was reduced. Low-cut bodices were supplemented with partlets and collars; on the late end of our period, lace shawl-collars were popular. Dark hats or head-scarves were favored, and jewelry and hairstyles were subdued. On the whole, Puritan clothing is closer to Dutch fashion than to English.

An unknown woman wears a dark bodice and skirt, the bodice includes a panel with blackwork lace embroidery. Her neckline is high and her ruff relatively simple; she covers her fashionable hairstyle with a tall black hat. c. 1592.

Hester Tradescant wears a dark gown, shawl collar with lace accents, a cap matching her collar, and a tall black hat. Though her sleeves have some fullness, they are not elaborately puffed and tied as was fashionable at court. c. 1645.

Elizabeth Cromwell wears a dark, plain bodice over a white shift with a transparent falling collar. Her hair is covered with a dark scarf.

Detail from 31685. A woman wears a plain bodice with a very high, two-layered, lace-edged shawl collar.

Key Features of Men's Clothing:
Again, though basic features of male dress, like the length and shape of breeches and the cut of doublets or coats followed larger fashion trends, colors were subdued and ornamentation was muted: cuffs and collars were less elaborate, and the more audacious features of court dress were ignored. Puritan men wore their hair short, in direct contrast to the flowing locks of their less strict countrymen.

Clockwise from top left: Thomas Mockett in dark robes, simple collar, and cap, 1670. William Prynne, in dark doublet and lace-edged collar with shorter-than-fashionable hair, probably 1630s. Oliver Cromwell in armor, careless hair, and plain collar. Detail from 31683: perhaps a woodblock copy of the Cromwell portrait.