

## **Museum of Costume, Bath**

In August 2006 our globe-trotting member, Patricia Newton-Howieson, visited one of the world's finest collections of fashionable dress & accessories, the Museum of Costume in Bath, England. The Museum focuses on fashionable dress for men, women and children from the late 16th century to the present day and has more than 30,000 objects in its collection. It includes an important loan collection of gloves belonging to the Worshipful Company of Glovers of London.

At the time of Patricia's visit a special exhibition of Rudolf Nureyev's on- and off-stage clothing, shawls and hats was showing. Although the flamboyant collection was displayed in a corridor the richness of the colours was not lost. [www.nureyev.org/actualite/display-nureyev-costume-bath](http://www.nureyev.org/actualite/display-nureyev-costume-bath)

Also on display were 80 dresses of the Museum's 400 by John Bates, the name behind the Jean Veron label of the 1960s and 70s. If retro design from this era interests you, the Museum's website has many images of his work.

Patricia was most impressed by a 17th century silk and lace long court dress in the collection which was still in immaculate condition. She also enjoyed a display of collars and cuffs that included a beautiful example of Spanish blackwork.

The Museum of Costume is housed in Bath's magnificent Assembly Rooms, next to the Royal Crescent and Circus in Bath's Upper Town.

These public rooms were purpose-built for an 18th century form of entertainment called an "assembly". Guests met to dance, drink tea, play cards and listen to music, or just walk about, talk and flirt.

There are four rooms: the Ballroom; the Tea or Concert Room; the Octagon Room (linking all the rooms), and a Card Room.

### **The Ballroom**

Dancing was very popular and balls were held at least twice a week, attracting 800 to 1,200 guests at a time.

The high ceiling provided good ventilation on crowded ball nights and windows set at a high level prevented outsiders from looking in.

To see these pictures and more, on a larger scale, go to the MOC website: [www.museumofcostume.co.uk](http://www.museumofcostume.co.uk)

### **The Tea Room**

This room was used for both refreshments and concerts. Tea was included in the price of a ball ticket. Sunday public teas cost sixpence per person for admission.

### **The Octagon and Card Room**

The Octagon Room links the Ballroom and Tea Room. Originally intended as a circulating space it could also be used for music and playing cards. On Sundays, when cards were not allowed, visitors could listen to the organ, which once stood in the musician's gallery

### **Getting there**

The Museum of Costume is open every day except Dec 25 & 26. Winter hours are shorter and the Museum is undergoing an extensive re-display between February and May 2007. Check in advance because the Assembly Rooms are only open to view when not in use for booked functions.

Admission on a Saver Ticket is £13.50, valid for 7 days and includes admission to the Roman Baths. If you are over 65 this reduces to £11.50.

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*Ballroom*

*Tea Room*

*From Patricia's sketchbook—  
alcove, Museum of Costume, Bath*

