

Guest post by Greer Parker

My name is Greer Parker and I have recently completed a Fashion Curation master's degree at London College of Fashion. My placement at North Hertfordshire Museum was initially due to take place a year ago but had to be postponed due to Covid restrictions. The placement was funded by the Costume Society, allowing me to gain valuable hands-on experience of working with a museum collection, in this case shoes! My background is in historic dress research and production, so I have been able to bring my knowledge of historic dress to the project, whilst also getting the opportunity to work hands on with an historic shoe collection.

The North Hertfordshire Museum shoe collection is made up of men's, women's and children's shoes from the 18th century to the present day. The aim of the project was to update and upload the historic shoe collection to the online collection system, meaning objects that are rarely seen in person are now easily accessible to a much wider audience. To do this, I have spent the last six weeks condition checking objects, measuring, photographing and updating digital files. I completed the project by curating a temporary display cabinet inside North Hertfordshire Museum, to show my findings. Here visitors can see a selection of the more unusual and aesthetically pleasing items from the collection. These range from the diamante studded shoes of the 1920s, shoes made in miniature for infants, to 18th century dance slippers with 'gauche' (left) and 'droite' (right) written inside, to ensure they were worn on the correct feet. The oldest shoes in the display are small red infants shoes from the 1790s, it is always intriguing to see something made so long ago, not to mention something made so precisely in a miniature size.



The 1790 infant shoes

I have really enjoyed my time with the museum, gaining incredible experience of working with curators and a digital archiving system, along with the modern practice of blended working, both on site and from home.

Spectacular Shoes – Six weeks experience at North Hertfordshire Museum



Greer and her display

In the future I would love to continue working with historic dress collections, clothing is such an emotive link with the past. Knowing an object had a life before entering the museum, that it was worn and used centuries ago, this provides a tangible link with the past and a visual representation of our social history.



Greer's chosen shoes in their display case

Spectacular Shoes – Six weeks experience at North Hertfordshire Museum



A collection of dance shoes from the 1800s



A tiny pair of infant's shoes

Spectacular Shoes – Six weeks experience at North Hertfordshire Museum



An infant's shoe made of straw plait

You can start your search of the museum's online database on the link below.

<https://ehive.com/collections/4308/nherts>

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