

Everybody enjoys looking at old photographs, and many are the laughs and smiles over changing fashions which accompany this pastime, especially as far as the hats of the ladies are concerned. Fifty years ago many of these creations were veritable flower gardens; the great thing seemed to be to get just as much trimming on to each headgear as possible and they were so big that it would have been impossible to get in and out of the cars of to-day. In those far off days most of the cars were of the open type, and when riding, or if the weather was windy, a veil was worn, fixed on the back of the hat and fastened round the wearer's neck to keep it from blowing off.

No doubt the late Queen Mary changed this fashion when coming to the throne, for she always wore a close fitting hat, which suited her admirably. With this new trend, so too was the veil worn the opposite way, made of very light weight net, covering the face. This almost disappeared with the 1914 war, which altered so many things in a short time, some never to return.

The early twenties saw the model known as the waste-paper basket, and although the styles were many and most quite pretty, they all would have made good baskets if turned upside down.

One of these in particular took my eye, worn by the girl with the curly hair. About this time we were becoming rather friendly so perhaps that is why I thought them pretty.

The next phase was that of the beret, which in various forms enjoyed quite a long life, and by this time it was also becoming an accepted thing for women to be seen out without hats, a thing unheard of in our grandparents' time. No doubt this was brought on largely by the change of hair styles, for by this period short hair and permanent waves had come to stay. Before this time ladies hairdresses were very few and far between, but now, here was a new and interesting career for young ladies and I believe that the establishments engaged in this business by far outnumber those which cater for men. How things have changed!

There are occasions on which all the ladies still wear a hat, but because their hair-do's are rather expensive, to be bare-headed or to use a light head scarf is by far the most common, and if it should come on to rain, most have a little plastic hat folded up in their handbag, and so you see the woman's crowning glory is still well looked after.

Men's fashions for the head have changed quite a lot too since I can remember. As with the ladies, many rarely use a hat at all, whereas one of my early recollections is of a gentleman who moved into the village, and for some time was referred to as the chap

without a hat. One day I remarked to my grandfather about the funny man who didn't wear a hat, his reply was, "Ah, he is just letting his brains cool down, you wait till we get a shower of snow and he'll be gone like the snuff of a candle." but he survived a good many winters apparently with no ill effect.

At that time the usual cap for both men and boys was the quartered "cheese cutter" with a button on the top, such as is worn now by a good many schoolboys, and I remember that the general stores in the Lower Green, always had a marvellous selection for both men and boys, the boys' costing sevenpence and the men's tuppence halfpenny.

In the summer time this same shop always carried a good stock of "strawyards". There were flat boaters for men and older boys to be worn on Sundays and high days, with the cheaper rush "Zulu" for work and play, these sometimes being sold for as little as fourpence. If you could pay a little more, then you sported a "panama", which to some extent are still holding their own.

I remember several elderly men in my young days who regularly wore a hard felt hat which was half top hat and half bowler, the latter two being still used on certain occasions, but the one in between which for some reason or other was known as a Muller Out Down, has completely disappeared, as also has the little flat one with the broad brim, once very popular with clergy.

One Christmas our Vicar no doubt had had one of these for a present and it came in for a close inspection by the choir boys, who found that the beautiful red silk lining could be partly removed. The Church being decorated for the festival meant that there were plenty of holly berries and leaves about, and so of course a few had to be placed inside the lining, then from a respectful distance the dear little fellows stood and watched him put it on his bald head. I wonder if choir boys will ever change!

The only other men that I know of who always had this style of black felt were the elderly inmates of the workhouse. These poor old fellows were otherwise easily distinguished from a cleric for with their flat hat, they had a grey jacket and corduroy trousers.

I suppose the trilby in different forms has enjoyed as long a run in our time as any common hat for men.

Commonsense has been more or less responsible for the introduction of the crash helmet now worn by motor cyclists of both sexes. This is one of the very few hats made for a definite purpose rather than something to look at, although some of these have remarkable designs and colours on them.

Shall we now go to the other end of the body and take a look at footwear? Here again, the changes that have taken place are surprising. At the turn of the century there were a number of people who still had their boots made for them by the local shoemaker and if you went in to the actual workshop you could see the lasts hanging from the ceiling, many of them made for individuals with special bumps on them for corns and bunions.

Boots for both men and women were far more common than shoes with country folk, mostly I think because wherever you walked the road and path surfaces were rough and uneven, and so the extra support given to the ankle was very welcome.

Generally speaking men's boots were done up with laces, and the ladies' with ten or a dozen buttons, which were so tight, that they had to be done up with a button hook, a little tool which at that time was a "must" in every household, but now the need for them seems to have gone entirely.

Some of these hooks were very elaborate affairs with grand ornamental handles to adorn the dressing table, while others, which did the job just as well, were made from stiff wire and sold very cheaply, or even given away with boot polish.

The use of rubber was very much in its infancy and again country people were slow in accepting it. They were far more used to leather with plenty of iron on the bottoms in the form of specks, studs and hobnails. Many still wear them now and would feel most uncomfortable without them.

In my young days, the men folk in winter wore heavy boots and leather leggings and a thing to be really proud about, was to own a pair made of genuine pig skin, and what a job it was keeping all this outfit clean. In wet weather it had to be dried, not too near the fire, and then cleaned and polished, finishing off with a coat of dubbin or grease to keep the wet out. Dubbin was a bought preparation for this job, but I remember a number of older men who would get a piece of rag and spread it liberally with lard or pork fat and then fold it into a pad, which when in use was warmed in front of the fire to make the fat run, and it was surprising, when made properly how long one of these pads would last.

What a difference in bad weather now! We all wear wellingtons, which slip on as boots and leggings in one operation, without any doing up and when they are dirty, just hold them under the tap and wash off, no drying, no polish and no dubbin. Just one of the things by which life is much easier.

By the end of the 14/18 war, many raw materials were in short supply, one of which was leather, and because of this, rubber, which

could be produced much more quickly became more widely used, and it was about this time that it definitely came into its own in the manufacture of footwear, soles and heels, which made repairs for the amateur fairly simple, but greatest of all as I have already mentioned that wet weather friend, the wellington, and for fine weather, the plimsoll, more popular with children.

In the last few years new materials and ways of construction have been introduced into the industry which has made the finished article to last longer without repair at a comparatively low price and many people now hardly ever think of having boots or shoes mended. In days gone by there were two snobs in our village as busy as they could be patching and mending, and most men could do a bit on their own at home. Now there is not one professional bootmaker and if you happen to have a pair of old favourites needing a half a sole or heel you have to take them into town, and as for having a patch put on the uppers, I haven't seen one for years.

The many styles for both men and women are constantly changing. Some time ago I was walking behind two young ladies that I knew very well. We were on soft ground, and in front of me appeared two rows of lovely holes, just right to plant cabbages in. On catching them up I said how much I liked their cabbage planting shoes. Oh, dear, what a mistake I had made! for I was promptly told that they were the latest stiletto heel, I must be more careful in future.

What of the socks and stockings that are worn inside the boots and shoes? These too have moved with the times, chiefly because of wonderful machines to make them and the new materials to make them of. There are still thousands of pairs of woollen socks knitted by hand, and for warmth and comfort they take some beating.

I wonder if anyone wears foot flannels, or toe rags now, in days gone by they were quite common with men who used very heavy boots. Their socks were made to finish at the instep, and each day they would have a clean square of flannel to put round their toes before pushing them into their boots. I have been told that they were most comfortable but as I have never tried them I had better say no more about them.

The women and children had very little choice in the matter of stockings, for there were only black and brown, some ribbed and some plain, until the advent of artificial silk, and then the black woollen ones for ladies disappeared as if by magic. These had their day, but now they have had to give way to the dainty nylon, or even bare legs. Whatever would great grandma say and think?

Of recent years the whole idea of dressing for warmth has changed. Very few people now put on layer upon layer of thick garments in

the winter, for even in this field science has played its part and taught us how to keep our body heat with light things, with far less restriction to movement. It was a long time before I tried a net vest. Now I have no wish whatever to go back to winter woollies. The same applies to our outer things, such as overcoats and mackintoshes. The old broadcloth and tightly woven fabrics, which were heavy and took ages to dry, have given way to lighter and more serviceable products, which no doubt do not last so long, but were far more easily manufactured, and at a price within almost everybody's reach.

Perhaps the greatest change and difference with clothes, now and years ago is the attitude of the two sexes generally. We now know what one another wears, for in the shops and stores everything is laid out for all to see and neither men nor women wear so many unnecessary pieces as they used. The outcome surely is better health and cleanliness and I feel far more common sense.

As with boots it is not often now that you see patched clothes. A few still make do and mend. In the past nearly everybody did and were thought terribly wasteful if they didn't. There are two reasons for these changes, one largely brought about by the other. In the first place most women who used to do the job as a matter of course, now have work and other interests outside the home and so have not got the time to spare. In the second place, because they have jobs where they earn extra money the whole family is able to be fitted out more easily with new things, which are always a pleasant change, and usually act as a good tonic.

Most of us have some old favourites in the way of a suit or frock which we hang on to as long as possible. To keep these in good order wonderful service is given by dry cleaners, who take your old friends for a day or two and back they come up like new, ready to do another turn.

Liveries and uniforms are still to be seen but there are nothing like the numbers in my younger days and what there are now are far more serviceable. The service man, except on ceremonial occasions has light soft things in which he can move freely. The policeman is not pestered with a stiff heavy tunic which fastened right up into the neck like the old time bobby was, and for some years when cycling he, like soldiers of that time had his legs bound up in yards and yards of serge puttees which, unless put on just so, could be most uncomfortable.

The postman summer and winter had to wear a heavy tunic which, with his oftⁿ weighty load of mail, must have been almost unbearable in hot weather. What a difference his light linen coat of to-day must be.

Quite a lot of big business firms supply uniform for their employees. We are all familiar with railway and bus men, and the men

who read our gas and electricity meters. We also expect a nurse wherever she may be on duty, to be dressed in a stiff frock and apron, with a distinguishing headgear, but the once familiar cap and apron, with morning and afternoon frocks of the maidservant has almost disappeared.

It is also getting to be a rare sight to see a private car driven by a uniformed chauffeur. It is true, most taxi drivers sport a peaked cap, but that is usually the limit of their conventional dress for most of the year. Some go a step further in the summer by putting on a dust coat.

I recently saw an old photograph on which I knew most of the people, the servants of a private household, the coachman and footman in short black jackets and top hats; the butler with his white front and tails; the page boy in tight trousers and a double row of brass buttons; four maids in long black frocks which trailed in the dust, with white caps and aprons; two gardeners with green baize aprons; and an odd man with nothing to denote his position.

A recent uniformed official, unknown to any in that picture except the page, who is now an old man, is the School Crossing Patrol, sometimes a man and sometimes a woman, who fulfil a most useful service in seeing children across the roads.

What a difference a uniform makes in the way of giving people a sense of authority, even if it is only a badge or an arm band.