

Labelling in this exhibition was so discreet that in some cases it was difficult to discern particular items. More detailed descriptions of obsolete garments such as fichu and lappet would have been useful. This need was particularly relevant in the underwear section where the significance of corset and stays could be illustrated with diagrams. How many children understand the purpose of a busk? How interesting to observe that stockings were pink or orange and decorated and that garters in 1880 were not grubby circles of elastic but patterned lengths of ribbon.

There were ladies' pocket books with fashion plates illustrated elaborate dresses ornamented with frills, feathers and jewellery and embellished hair styles. But a few items demonstrated the practical aspects of women's lives. There was a Redincote (riding jacket) from 1780, tailored in brown silk/wool lined with pale blue silk satin and a pair of sturdy low-heeled green lace-up shoes in Grecian style from 1815. Even one elegant high-heeled satin slipper had its matching clog and there was a patten – an overshoe based on a circlet of metal – which in 1800 would raise its wearer two inches above the mud.

Apart from several quilted and embroidered waistcoats which would have been stored for special occasions, there were few men's clothes on display. Some elegant tailed coats had ornamental rather than functional buttons, obviously an important feature. Were cream doeskin trousers in 1836 equivalent to black leather today? A Chapeau Bras of 1790 made of black silk shag was similar to that worn by Admiral Nelson. Silk cockades on the hat were not exclusive to the military.

In almost the final case of this fascinating exhibition was a collection of babies' robes and bonnets, passed down through the generations no doubt. But it was worth kneeling to examine the most interesting items of this section: a boy's dress in plain cream silk from 1770 and a small pair of breeches, shabby and in unbleached coarse cotton. How did they survive the wear and tear inflicted on them by a boy in 1830?

Music on the Ramparts

Ken Wraight

On Saturday, 6th June, English Heritage, in association with Dover District Council, staged this concert in the grounds of Dover Castle, with the Keep as a backdrop. Two Brass Bands and the Thanet Male Voice Choir presented a very full programme, including the '1812 Overture', complete with fireworks. They had to contend with a recalcitrant piano, some very indifferent amplification, not to mention a cold and misty night. Nevertheless they succeeded in producing a very enjoyable evening.

The audience was not large, no doubt affected by the weather but also by the pricing arrangements. Having paid £6.50 for admission one does not expect to pay another £2.50 to park the car. Not in Dover anyway!

'Music on the Ramparts' was a novel concept and one which is well worth repeating, perhaps a little later in the year – with darkness adding to the atmosphere – and with a free car park!