The Liddell Hart Collection of Costume

Sir Basil Liddell Hart (1895-1970) was a military thinker and historian of significant influence in the 20th century. After serving as a soldier during WW1, seeing three tours of duty on the Western Front, Liddell Hart began to write on the subjects of military tactics and history. Works such as *Europe in Arms* and *Through the Fog of War* led to him being regarded as the foremost military critic in Britain between the Wars. As a military journalist he displayed unprecedented authority and insight into matters of command and defence, and was military correspondent for *The Times* from 1935 to 1938. Throughout 1935-7 he advised the Secretary of State for War, Duff Cooper. Although his ideas were discredited for a period around WW2, Liddell Hart remained throughout his lifetime a voice of authority on military matters, and a key figure in the intellectual life and society of Britain in his time.

During his lifetime, Hart collected two very different libraries. His military collection is now held at King's College, University of London. However, his other collection reflects his lesser known passion, a highly personal library of fashion, held at LJMU. This fashion archive was collected over many years as a result of an interest he shared with his wife, with whom he was a founder member of the Costume Society. Throughout his life Liddell Hart collected books and articles relating to the history of costume and its purpose in society. Sir Basil was referred to by James Laver in *Museum Piece* as one of the principal authorities on dress in England. Through a connection established by Charles Metcalfe, then head of the Department of Fashion and Textiles, Liverpool Polytechnic was offered Sir Basil's files of newspaper clippings and copies of his fashion essays by Lady Liddell Hart in 1977. LIMU was later able to purchase the book collection in its entirety from Sir Basil's son, Adrian Liddell Hart. The collection arrived at the Polytechnic in January 1978, just before the Liddell Hart Military Room was opened at King's College.

The Liddell Hart Collection is a highly individual fashion archive, containing not only works directly concerning fashion, but also on feminism, psychology of dress and the social scene and society at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century. It contains some delightful books of drawings by famous illustrators such as Charles Dana Gibson, Mars and Guillaume. There is a very good collection of ladies' periodicals, predominantly nineteenth century, which includes runs of *Belle Assemblee*; a rarely-found set of *Modern Society*; two copies of *Aglaia: Journal of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union*; and *Beeton's Young Englishwoman*, complete with the original free paper patterns. In addition there are runs of more recent publications such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. There are approximately 350 books in the collection, but it also contains scrapbook material of cartoons, poems and cuttings on modes and manners of the nineteenth century, folders of original early coloured fashion plates, paper patterns and many other interesting items, for example, copies of Sir Basil's own writings covering several years from 1947. It is of value to students and researchers across a wide range of disciplines.

Abrahams, E. B Greek Dress (1908) 391.009 ABR

Adburgham, A A View of Fashion, (1966) 391 ADB

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