



Sewing Bridgerton

Michelle Rowley chats with GBSB contestant Richy Wedge about the most exciting sewing social event 'on the ton' this year

Written by Michelle Rowley



(Above) Richy and Julia (@regencycouture) wearing self-made Regency Clothing at The Jane Austen Festival. (Left) Simplicity 9453



The Anstice, Telford: The beautiful venue for The Bridge Town Ball

Dearest Gentle Reader, It may have come to your attention that a much-loved Netflix series, which encapsulates the beauty of Georgian and Regency fashion, has captivated a legion of enraptured fans and contributed to the revival in puff sleeves, square necklines and empire line dresses. We are, of course, referring to the phenomenal success of Bridgerton, which is set to grace our screens again with the release of series three this May. We can't wait, can you?

Those with a love of Georgian or Regency fashion will recognise that the show's costume designer, Ellen Mirojnick, used a lot of creative licence in designing the jaw-dropping gowns, wigs, and cloaks that undoubtedly contributed to the show's success. Viewers couldn't get enough of the bejewelled ball gowns, embroidered waistcoats, velvet jackets and those Queen Charlotte wigs. Although not entirely historically accurate, they still beautifully evoke the glamour and opulence of two bygone eras.

HISTORICAL FASHION FANS

It was witnessing this creative play with historical costume that led GBSB series eight contestant and historical costume fan Richy

Wedge to organise the exciting Bridge Town Ball. "Several people had approached me about wanting to get into attending historical fashion balls, but they were a bit scared. I wanted to do it in a way that you didn't feel worried or pressured about doing it accurately, which is why I chose the Bridgerton style. It isn't truly authentic to the period but is a distinctive style," explains Richy. He admits that prior to the hit show he was fastidious about accuracy when sewing historical garments, but that the show made him see how fun it can be to play around with things. "Before I would never have

"It isn't authentic to the period but is a distinctive style"

overlooked anything! Now I will, and I like to play with modern fabrics and change up the styles to make things that suit me better."

His desire to put on a fun and inclusive historical costume

party for dressmakers, with "Pride not Prejudice" as the ethos, means that The Bridge Town Ball is an event not only for sewists with experience of historical costume making, but also for anyone who'd like to sew something with just a gentle nod to the Bridgerton style. It's an opportunity for people to sew (and get to wear!) a head-turning opulent Georgian gown if they wish, or an outfit they can wear every day.

"We'd like people to make something, but it doesn't have to be a complete outfit: it

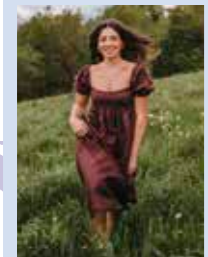


Richy in a self-made wool coat, linen breeches and silk waistcoat

PATTERNS WITH REGENCY ELEMENTS

Sew yourself a Regency-inspired dress with these patterns

Keep it simple with **Simplicity 9453**. The pattern has three dress views all perfect for everyday wear but view A, a square neckline maxi dress, would make a simple regency gown.



It's not called **The Daphne Dress** for nothing... Sewing Patterns by Masin's Bridgerton-inspired Daphne Maxi Dress is a high empire-waistline dress that epitomises the style.

New Look 6705 is a great beginner's pattern to sew a simple knee – or a calf-length empire-waist dress with a low, square neckline and short puffed sleeves.



Folkwear's **215 Empire Dress** gives you the option to sew a contemporary empire-waistline dress in various lengths or a traditional version with drawstrings.

Picture: Paul Carty @theregencyviking



Julia, of @regencycouture wearing self-made Georgian clothing, pierrot jacket with cape. (Below left) Nicky Carter pictured in Bath. (Above) Simplicity 9502 pattern

could be a bracelet, a headdress or a dress bought from a charity shop with trim added. We just want people to feel brilliant and not be judgemental of others," Richy explains. The 'we' he refers to is himself and fellow historical fashion enthusiast, and corset-making specialist, Nicky Carty. Richy and Nicky met via a historical fashion forum during lockdown and having formed a friendship, have gone on to organise The Bridge Town Ball together.

OPPOSING STYLES

The Bridgerton Look takes influence from the fashion from around the 1760s to 1820, incorporating the two opposing styles of the flamboyant late Georgian era and the more neo-classical and simple lines of the Regency period. While Queen Charlotte's opulent, embroidered corseted gowns, over panniers and bustles, embody the opulence of Georgian upper-class fashion, The

Featheringtons and The Bridgertons wear the simpler Empire-waist dresses that epitomise the Regency style. The shift from the stiff and exaggerated Georgian silhouette to the floaty *robes en chemise* of the Regency period came from the desire for a more natural and stripped back style following the French Revolution. The empire line dresses looked

more like an undergarment due to the very fine nature of the muslin used. "It was so light, we can't get anything close to it these days, perhaps a lawn or a voile is the closest," says Richy. To achieve the iconic

Regency look "you want two oranges on a plate!" says Richy, referring to the fashion for the bust to be separated and as high as possible.

For sewists wanting to sew a more authentic historical costume, Richy explains that undergarments are the most important part: "Most historical costumes start from the

"We just want people to feel brilliant and not be judgemental"

BRILLIANT BRIDGERTON PATTERNS

Join in the fun and start sewing your own Bridgerton-inspired gown. Here is our pick of the best patterns out there

McCall's 7493 includes a cropped jacket, floor-length coat and floor-length A-line square-neck line dress.



McCall's 81332 is the ultimate Bridgerton empire dress with a small train and includes a cropped jacket, much like those worn by Eloise.



Fancy whipping up a fabulous hooded cloak to make a mysterious entrance at the Bridge Town Ball? Then **McCall's 7886** is your faithful friend.



Simplicity 9502 has the looks of The Featherington Family (view A), Lady Danbury (B) and Eloise (C) all in one.

Simplicity 9521 has four options for sewing your own Queen Charlotte dress – choose your favourite and get sewing!



For those really looking to push their skills **Simplicity 8578** would be the ultimate pattern for creating a gown Queen Charlotte would envy.



inside and then work their way out." You need a chemise so that your stays or corset don't touch your skin. While petticoats give you the volume and stop the skirt from twisting around your ankles." If you're looking for historical accuracy, it's also important to consider your choice of fastenings, which were mainly drawstrings around the waist and neck. "A lot of the clothing was adjustable because you would have shared it with others, such as your sisters," explains Richy. "They used lots of buttons, mainly at the back, but they didn't have hook and eyes." He reiterates however that for The Bridge Town Ball anything goes. "If you want a zip in the back of your dress, put the zip in!"

LIFE IMITATING ART

Richy agrees that Bridgerton has influenced the Regencycore aesthetic populating both the high street stores and designer runways and thus new sewing pattern releases from independent and mainstream pattern companies.

The release of Bridgerton Series Three this year no doubt means our love of a Regency-inspired puff-sleeve and a square neckline is set to continue. "Probably not the Georgian look so much," smiles Richy. "It would be a challenge to fit that into everyday wear!"

For those sewists looking to learn more about Georgian and Regency costumes and are looking to develop their costume-making skills, they should get their hands on Lindsey Holmes' insightful book Making Georgian & Regency Costumes for Women.

THE BRIDGE TOWN BALL

All members of the sewing Aton are invited to craft their finest garments for this most joyous occasion. Will you join your hosts for this season's most unforgettable evening of dancing and merriment?

The event takes place 7pm – 11pm on Saturday 18th May at The Anstice, Park Ave, Telford TF7 5BB. Visit cheshirecorsetry.co.uk/the-bridge-town-ball-2024/ for more details and to book tickets.



Michelle Rowley (she/her) is a dressmaking tutor and writer with a love of fashion history. She lives in the Northwest with her family. See more @stitchywhitney.



Julia in her self-made Regency clothing. (Above) A Regency gown created by Richy, hand-made bonnet and Van Dyke chemisette