

The Railway Children

---

Design Book

A play based on Mike Kenny's  
adaptation of E. Nesbit's Children's  
Book

5428

BA Performance Costume  
Owen Scullion



# The Railway Children



## Contents

Contents Page	3
Concept Statement	4
Synopsis	8
Researching The Golden Age of Steam	10
Costume Research	16
Costume Development	22
Character Illustrations	32
Making Bobbie's Toile	50
Making Bobbie's Hat Toile	52
Bobbies Finished Toile	54
Making Bobbie's Costume	56
Bobbie's Final Costume	60

# Concept Statement

## The Railway Children

### ACTION

For this stage production I will be using Mike Kenny's stage adaptation which is in two parts. This play is based on E. Nesbit's much-loved children's classic "The Railway Children". This version, like the 1970 film, is a faithful adaptation of the book. This story is about a prosperous Edwardian family of five. Mother and Father and their three children live an extremely comfortable life in London in the early 1900s. After their father is arrested and imprisoned, Mother and the three children are forced into poverty in the small town of Oakworth in rural Yorkshire, where they live near to the railway. The children are unaware of what has happened to their father. Despite the hardships the children are happy. They become familiar with the passing trains, the workers at the train station and signal-box, and life in a small town. My production aims to give a tender insight into the worries and excitement of childhood. Mike Kenny's version of the story was first staged at the National Railway Museum in York in 2008 where a full-sized black, green and gold steam train graced the stage. Another major production of Kenny's play was staged at the former Eurostar platform at Waterloo Station in London in 2010. I envisage my version of the play being staged at the Museum of Scottish Railways in Bo'ness. In my adaptation a full-sized steam train from the museum will be used to enhance the production as in the 2008 and 2010 adaptations. My adaptation will tell the tale in the context of Edwardian Britain in the early 1900s before the First World War and will attempt to evoke the romance and nostalgia of the golden age of steam travel.

## The Railway Children

### THEMES

The play has a variety of themes. One of the main themes is about the importance of family love. In the story the children are transported to poverty in rural Yorkshire. Even though they are poor, the children are happy. They spend time playing together and going on adventures. Mother makes time to play with them and teaches them at home. The children find happiness in spending time with each other rather than in material comforts and think of their new life as an adventure rather than a setback. The children's adventures symbolise the idea that material wealth is not as important as family and spending time together. Facing life's challenges with courage is a central theme, like the time when the children risk their lives to rescue a boy from the tunnel and when they act with courage to avert a potentially fatal rail crash after the landslide. Another recurring theme is the importance of social conscience. The family refuse to let poverty weaken their social conscience. Not only does their mother take in a Russian political refugee but the children also redistribute goods to the station porter. Finally, the theme of kindness permeates the play. The kindness that the Old Gentleman shows to mother when she is ill and the kindness the family show to Jim when they take him in and nurse him after his accident in the tunnel are just a couple of the examples of this.

## The Railway Children

### PRODUCTION OBJECTIVES

I have chosen this project because of my love of steam trains and my nostalgia for the golden age of steam. My production is set in 1906 in Yorkshire, and I also want it to evoke the serenity of the Edwardian era in Britain. This era was a time when the strict and conservative code of conduct of Victorian society had become a bit more relaxed. It was also a time of peace sheltered between the Boer War and World War I. I want to take the audience on a sentimental journey back to 1906 to the zenith of steam. Staging the play at the Museum of Scottish Railways in Bo'ness will be the perfect setting for a story that is, in part, about the nostalgia and romance of steam train travel. The stage setting will seat the audience on raised seating on facing railway platforms between which the action will move back and forward. This traverse stage setting will help to give the production energy and momentum. A railway track will be set deep down between two railway platforms. Podiums will glide in and out on the track, providing a central stage space on which much of the play will unfold. This means the play can be performed in one adaptable setting. The landslide on the railway cutting will be represented by a tumbling heap of luggage. A station bridge will be placed at one end of the stage and a railway tunnel at the other. And of course, a full-sized steam train from the museum will enter from the tunnel to enhance the production and delight the audience. I want this production to take the audience on their own uplifting journey back in time to Edwardian Britain and the golden age of steam.

5775

4985

3097

## The Railway Children

### DESIGN OBJECTIVES

My costume designs will be historically accurate and will help to characterise the nostalgic Edwardian era for my production. My costume designs will use textiles, prints, embroidery and colours that are inspired by steam trains and the architecture of steam railways such as tunnels, viaducts and railway lines. They will also be influenced by Yorkshire, the county where the play is set.

1054

44

7810

## The Railway Children

### TRANSLATION OF THE DESIGN

I plan to use what I know about the characters and what I have learned from my costume research to plan my characters' costumes, hair, and accessories. I will also use my research into Yorkshire to inform my costume designs where appropriate. The Yorkshire countryside and the Yorkshire Moors will influence the colour palettes as well as steam trains and the personal traits of the characters.

1369

## The Railway Children

### CHOICE OF PERIOD, STYLE, AND FORM

Although the costumes will have an Edwardian look the use of prints, textiles and colours will not necessarily be confined to those seen in Edwardian times. This will allow me freedom to be creative in the use of fabrics and colours for costumes and accessories. The designs will reflect the railway theme as well as Yorkshire but remain Edwardian in terms of style.

3803

### The Railway Children

My play is based on Mike Kenny's adaptation of E. Nesbit's children's book "The Railway Children" which was originally serialised in The London Magazine in 1905 and published as a book in 1906. The play tells a beautiful and enduring tale of a family of five, Mother and Father and their three children who live an extremely comfortable life in London in the early 1900s. The children's names are Roberta (known as Bobbie), Peter and Phyllis. Father works for the government in the foreign ministry. Bobbie the oldest child is caring and responsible. Peter is the brave and intelligent middle child. Phyllis is the youngest child and has a sensitive and innocent nature.

5072

### The Railway Children

On Peter's birthday, Father receives unexpected visitors and then he leaves the house with them. He does not return. Father is taken away to prison, but the children do not know this. The family's life is disrupted after Father's mysteriously disappearance. Mother tells the children that Father is away on business and that they will be leaving their home and moving to a smaller house in the country. Their new home is a rundown cottage near a railway line and the children name it The Three Chimneys. Mother tells the children they will "play at being poor for a bit" and that they cannot move all their belongings to the new house. As a result, the children must adjust to lives of poverty from the comforts of their earlier middle-class lives.

0325

### The Railway Children

Mother works as a writer but struggles to make ends meet. In spite of these difficulties the children are happy. They become familiar with the passing trains, the workers at the train station and signal-box, and life in a small town. They spend time playing together and going on adventures. Mother makes time to play with them and teaches them at home. The children find happiness in spending time with each other rather than in material comforts and think of The Three Chimneys as an adventure rather than a setback. The children's adventures symbolise the idea that material wealth is not as important as family and spending time together. The children make the best of their situation by playing in the open fields and waving to the passengers on the trains as they pass by. They follow the trains to the station and befriend a man they see on the 9.15 train daily. They call him The Old Gentleman.

0363

### The Railway Children

When Mother gets sick the children ask The Old Gentleman for help. He sends money and medicine for Mother who accepts it even though it hurts her pride to take charity. Weeks later a Russian passenger named Mr. Szezcpany arrives on the train. No one in town can understand him but the children discover he speaks French. They bring him to Mother who also speaks French and discover the man has escaped Russia and is looking for his family. Mr. Szezcpany stays with the family at The Three Chimneys while he tries to find his own family.

6917

### The Railway Children

One day the children notice a landslide has obstructed the railway line. They hear the train coming and use their red-coloured petticoats like flags to warn the driver to stop the train. The train stops just in time, and no one is injured. The children discover that The Old Gentleman is a director of the railway company, and he honours them at a ceremony for the whole town to witness. The children tell the Old Gentleman about Mr. Szezcpany's situation and the Old Gentleman helps Mr. Szezcpany reunite with his family.

9090

### The Railway Children

Bobbie is reading a paper when she sees a headline about her father. She then learns from Mother that their father is not missing or away on business. He was arrested for being a spy. Mother believes a jealous colleague framed him. Even though Father has been wrongly accused of a crime, the greatest problem is not the injustice of it all but the fact that he is away from them.

9374

### The Railway Children

After this, the children notice a group of boys playing a paper-chasing game near the railway. The boys run into the railway tunnel, but one boy does not come out. The children discover that the boy has broken his leg in the tunnel. They help him get to The Three Chimneys where Mother cares for him. The young boy is named Jim, and he is the grandson of The Old Gentleman. Mother offers to care for Jim while he recovers. The Old Gentleman is grateful to Mother and the children for helping to nurse Jim back to health. Bobbie then tells the Old Gentleman about her father and his trouble in the hope that he will help to prove Father's innocence. Jim recovers and goes home. The children visit the railway again after a long absence to wave at the people on the train. The passengers wave back frantically, and Bobbie runs to the train stop to see what the matter is. Father steps off the train and is reunited with the family.

9733

### The Railway Children

The world of The Railway Children is portrayed as a good place despite bad things that might happen. When people help each other, it is out of a sense of loving-kindness. The idea of loving kindness is different from charity which is giving to someone who is less fortunate. Accepting charity can feel shameful because it means that a person cannot improve their own situation. Loving-kindness on the other hand comes from love and respect. It is something someone does to show appreciation rather than pity. It seems more honourable to accept an act of loving-kindness because it is an honour bestowed on a person and comes from respect and appreciation of the person.

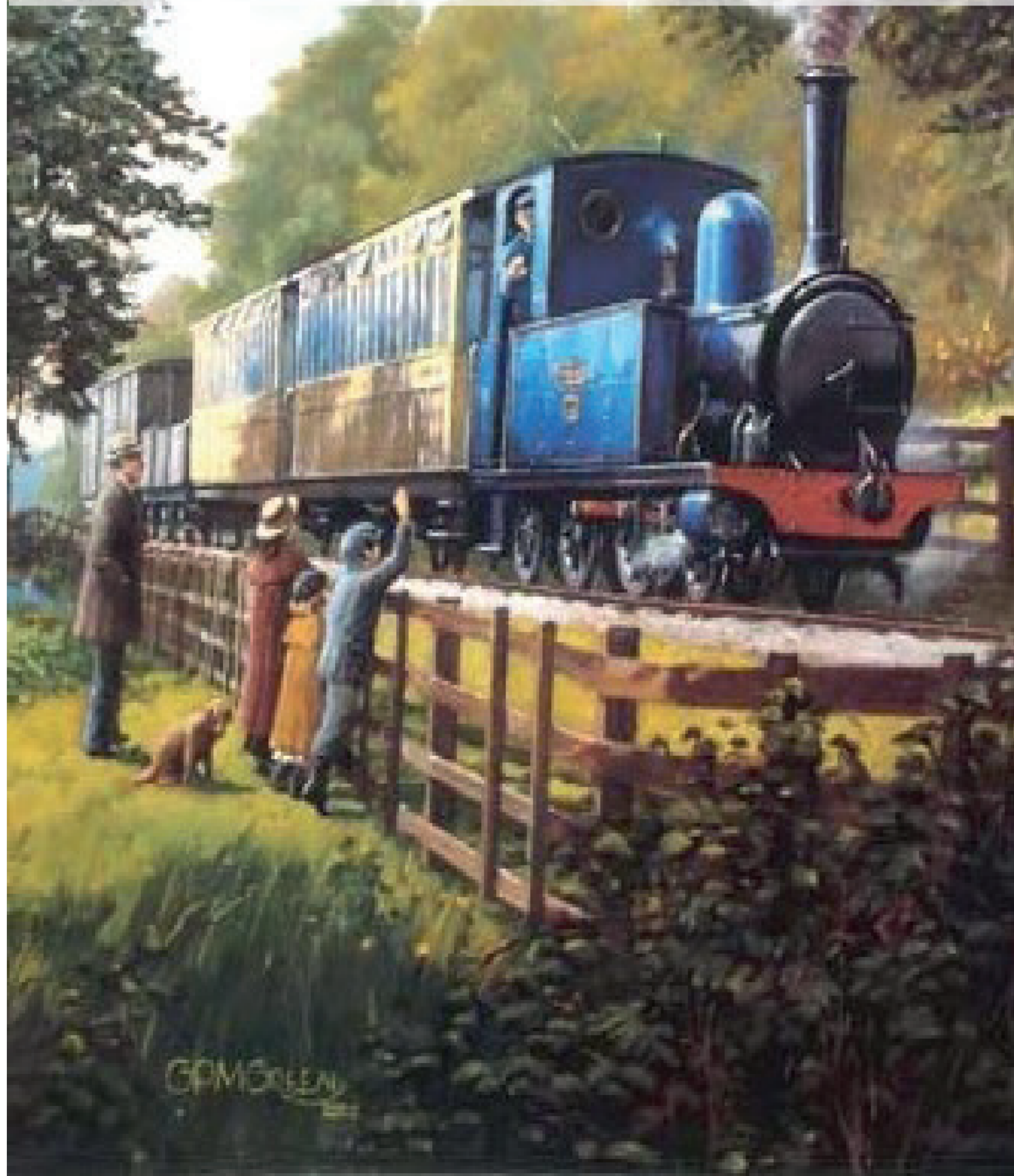
4185

### The Railway Children

My production of Mike Kenny's play is intended to tell a beautiful story in a wonderful way. I want my design to allow the nostalgic charm of Nesbit's original story to shine through. But I want my design to do more. I want it to evoke the romance and nostalgia of the golden age of steam travel as well as the Gilded Age of Edwardian Britain.

1693

# Researching The Golden Age of Steam



My production of *The Railway Children* will be based on Mike Kenny's stage adaptation of the play. His adaptation was first staged at the National Railway Museum in York in 2008 where a full-sized black, green and gold steam train graced the stage. Another major production of Kenny's play was staged at the former Eurostar platform at Waterloo Station in London in 2010. The stage setting sat the audience on raised seating on facing railway platforms between which the action moved back and forward. This traverse stage setting is the one I will use in my production of the play.



My version of the play will be staged at the Museum of Scottish Railways in Bo'ness. In my adaptation, a full-sized steam train from the museum will be used to enhance the production as in the Mike Kenny adaptations in 2008 and 2010. My adaptation will tell the tale in the context of Edwardian Britain in the early 1900s before the First World War and will evoke the romance and nostalgia of the Golden Age of steam travel.

Set Design

# The Edwardian Era



My production will evoke the romance and nostalgia of the Edwardian era. I will put the graphic work from the bridges and the tracks into my designs.



My design will also evoke the serenity of the Edwardian era in Britain



This is a very powerful image that I have used as inspiration in my costume design



The diamond pattern shown on this station bridge has also inspire my costume design.



The notable design of the railway viaduct has been an inspiration for my design work.



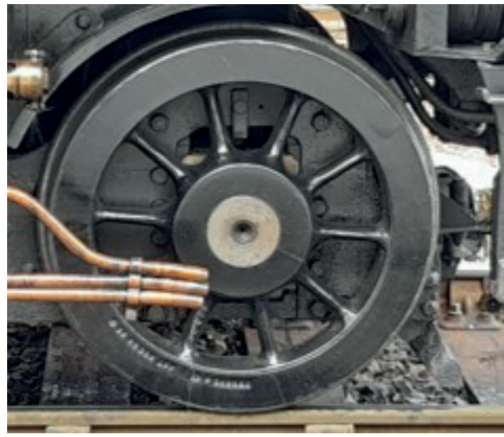
I have used parts from steam trains like this leaf spring to inspire my costume design.



The railway track is a strong image that has helped inspire my costumes.

Inspired by the Railway

# Inspired by the Railway



Various features of the steam train, such as the wheels have been an inspiration for my design work.



I will use various parts from steam trains like this steam train funnel to inspire my costume and accessory design.



The diamond pattern found on the platform bridges is also found on the upholstery on the seats in carriages and helped to inspire my costume design.



This is a very iconic image of vintage level crossing gates that I will use as inspiration in my costume design.



The rivets on the steam train have been an inspiration for my costume design for the play.

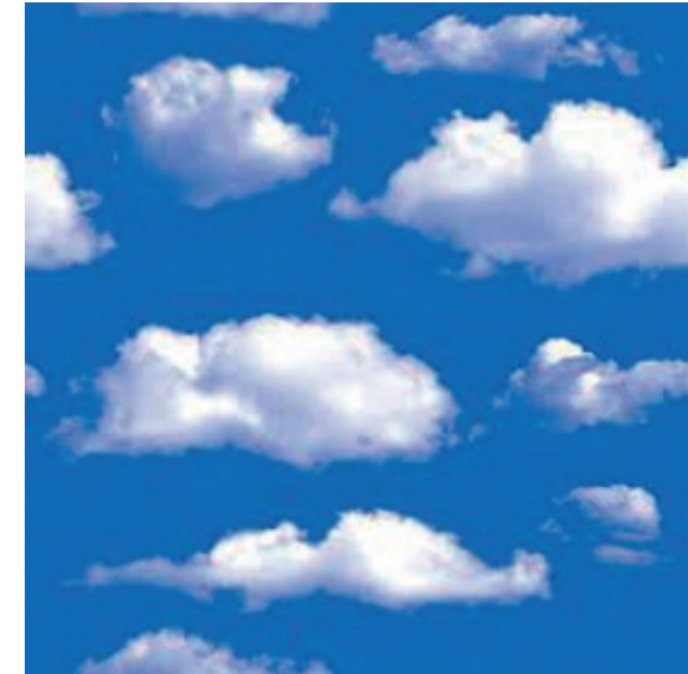


The railway signals were another source of inspiration for my costume design.



The white rose is the symbol of Yorkshire. White is also the colour of purity and virginity. The white rose has inspired my costume design.

The beautiful skies seen over Yorkshire have also been an inspiration for my costume design.



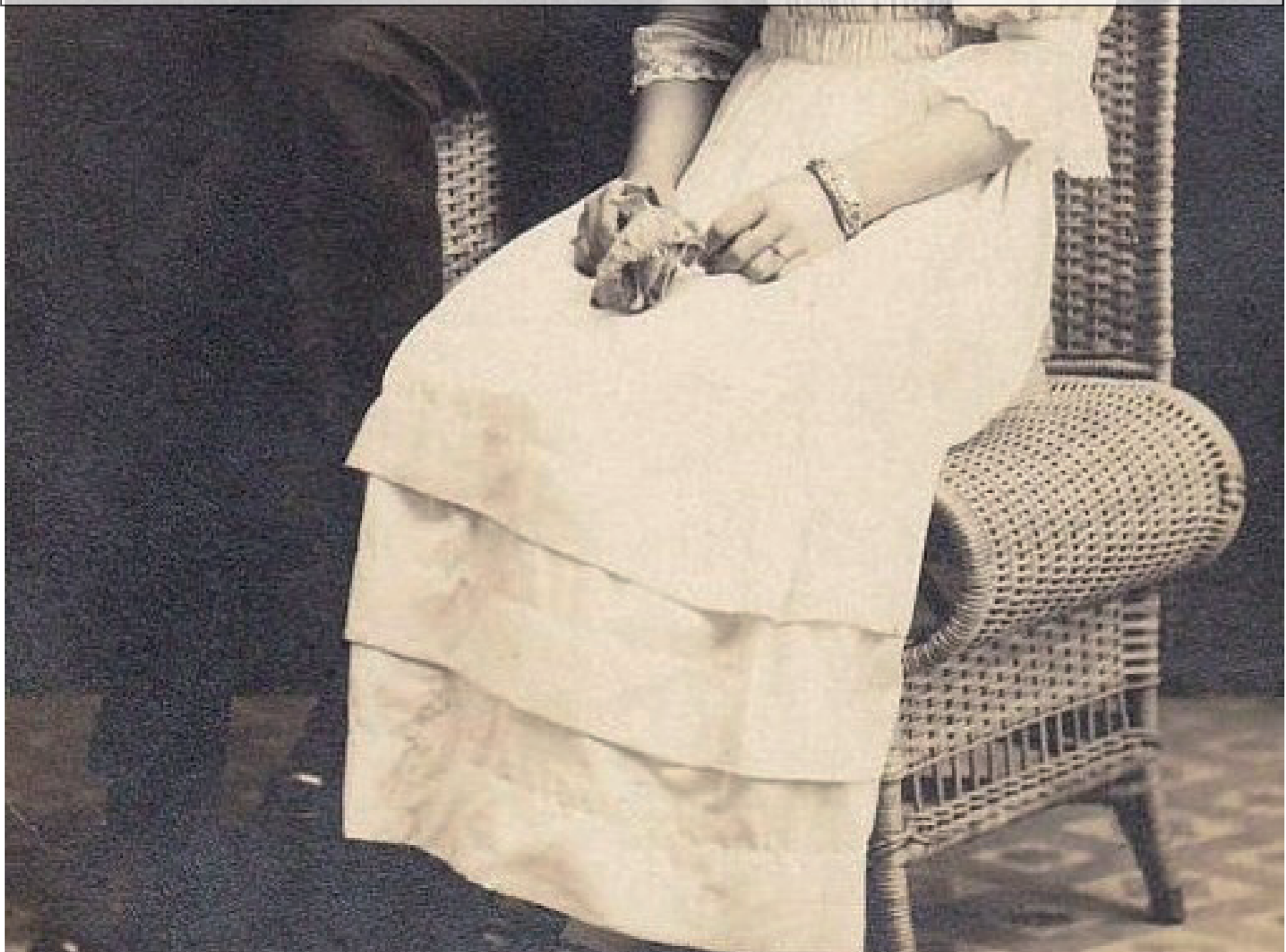
Mr. Perks brought Mother a bunch of sweetbriar, a wild rose, when she was ill. This has inspired my design.

# Inspired by Yorkshire





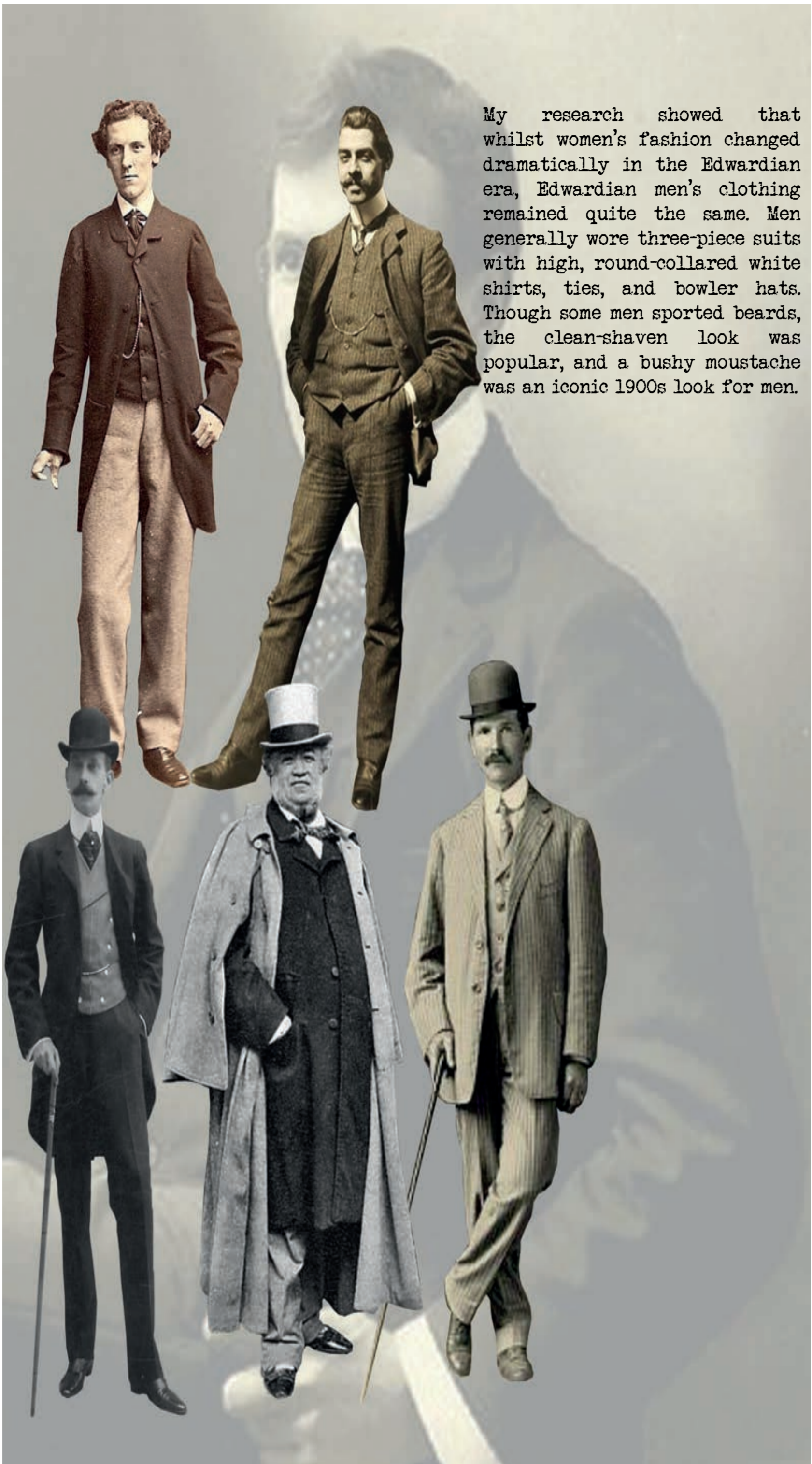
## Costume Research



My research showed that the well-dressed Edwardian woman was covered from the neck down. During the first decade of the 1900s, great differences in women's fashion emerged between the wealthy and the poor, and fashion among the higher classes was greatly influenced by the continent. Although Edwardian women's fashion was more lavish than Victorian fashion, collars remained high and sleeves long on clothing worn during the day.

## Edwardian Women's Costume

# Edwardian Men's Costume



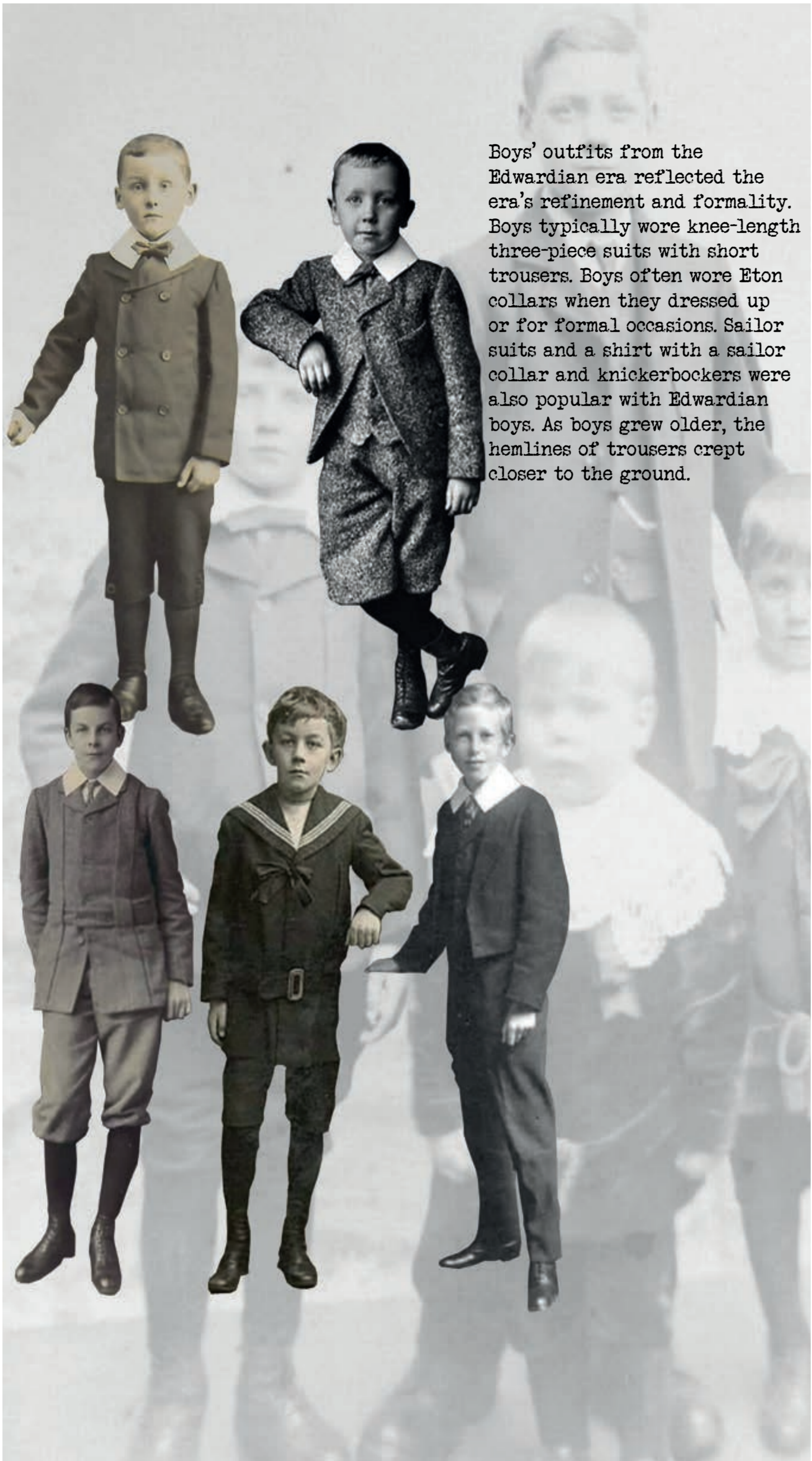
My research showed that whilst women's fashion changed dramatically in the Edwardian era, Edwardian men's clothing remained quite the same. Men generally wore three-piece suits with high, round-collared white shirts, ties, and bowler hats. Though some men sported beards, the clean-shaven look was popular, and a bushy moustache was an iconic 1900s look for men.

# Edwardian Girl's Costume

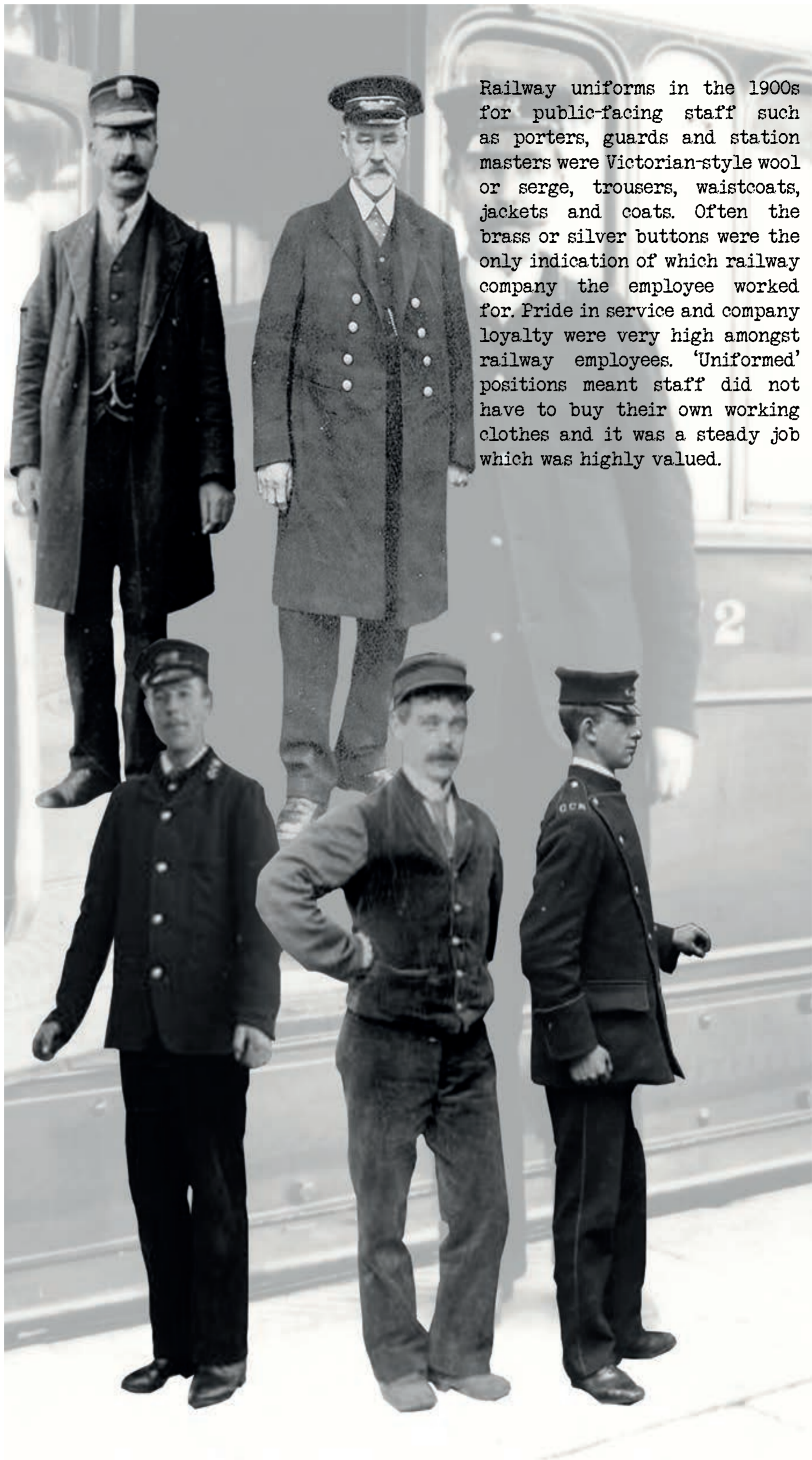


Young Edwardian girls wore light-coloured dresses with the waistline often at the hip. The dresses were knee-length, and lace trimmings at the hem were common. As girls grew older, the hemlines of dresses crept closer to the ground. Sailor suits were also quite common for girls. They wore black shoes or boots and black woollen stockings. When they became teenagers, they started dressing like adults.

## Edwardian Boy's Costume



Boys' outfits from the Edwardian era reflected the era's refinement and formality. Boys typically wore knee-length three-piece suits with short trousers. Boys often wore Eton collars when they dressed up or for formal occasions. Sailor suits and a shirt with a sailor collar and knickerbockers were also popular with Edwardian boys. As boys grew older, the hemlines of trousers crept closer to the ground.



Railway uniforms in the 1900s for public-facing staff such as porters, guards and station masters were Victorian-style wool or serge, trousers, waistcoats, jackets and coats. Often the brass or silver buttons were the only indication of which railway company the employee worked for. Pride in service and company loyalty were very high amongst railway employees. 'Uniformed' positions meant staff did not have to buy their own working clothes and it was a steady job which was highly valued.

## Edwardian Railway Porter's Costume



# Costume Development

## Bobbie

Bobbie is a twelve-year-old girl and the oldest child in the family. She is kind, caring, intelligent and very determined. She is like her mother and tries to do good things and keep a positive attitude despite living in poverty. She acts courageously when faced with danger and tries to help Mother in any way she can.

1742

## Phyllis

Phyllis is the family's youngest sibling. She is sensitive and innocent in nature. Phyllis and her siblings try to make the best of their poverty. She is eager to please Mother and keep the peace when her siblings squabble. She tries her hardest to be a helpful child.

5306

## Peter

Peter is a brave, optimistic and intelligent boy. He tries his best to help his sisters and Mother stay strong and happy in the face of adversity. Peter thinks quickly when faced with danger. Peter is conscious of the hardships of others and tries to bring joy to others.

0634

## Mother

Mother is kind, and generous to her children and will always help others in need. She is very protective and tries to hide the truth of their father's imprisonment from the children. She is a proud woman and does not want people to know how poor the family is.

4032

## Father

Father is an understanding and caring dad and a devoted husband who works for the government and is wrongly accused of spying. He is eventually released from prison after being wrongfully imprisoned.

1099

## Albert Perks

Mr Perks is a very nice, friendly and hardworking railway station porter. He is a poor man with a large family but is a proud man and does not want to rely on charity to make ends meet. He is popular with people in the village.

0874

## The Old Gentleman

The Old Gentleman is a director of the Great Northern and Southern Railway. He becomes friends with the children and is friendly, kind, helpful and just. He helps find Mr Szczepansky's family and eventually helps to free Father from prison.

2596

# Character Analysis

## Bobbie's Costume Development



I designed several costumes for Bobbie a twelve-year-old girl who moved from London to live in Yorkshire during the early Edwardian era. My research showed that children's clothing styles were simplified adult styles. Girls wore below-knee-length skirts or dresses, with black stockings and shoes or boots.

## Phyllis' Costume Development



Here you can see my designs for eight-year-old Phyllis based on my costume research for the Edwardian era. All of these designs show Phyllis wearing dresses in the styles worn by girls of her age in the Edwardian era. The dropped waistband was a popular look in this era.

## Peter's Costume Development



Here you see my designs for Peter. Young boys often wore long-sleeved shirts with shorts or knickerbockers. They often wore jackets and black stockings with shoes or boots. Sailor suits were also popular as were stiff Eton collars which they wore outside their jackets.

## Mother's Costume Development



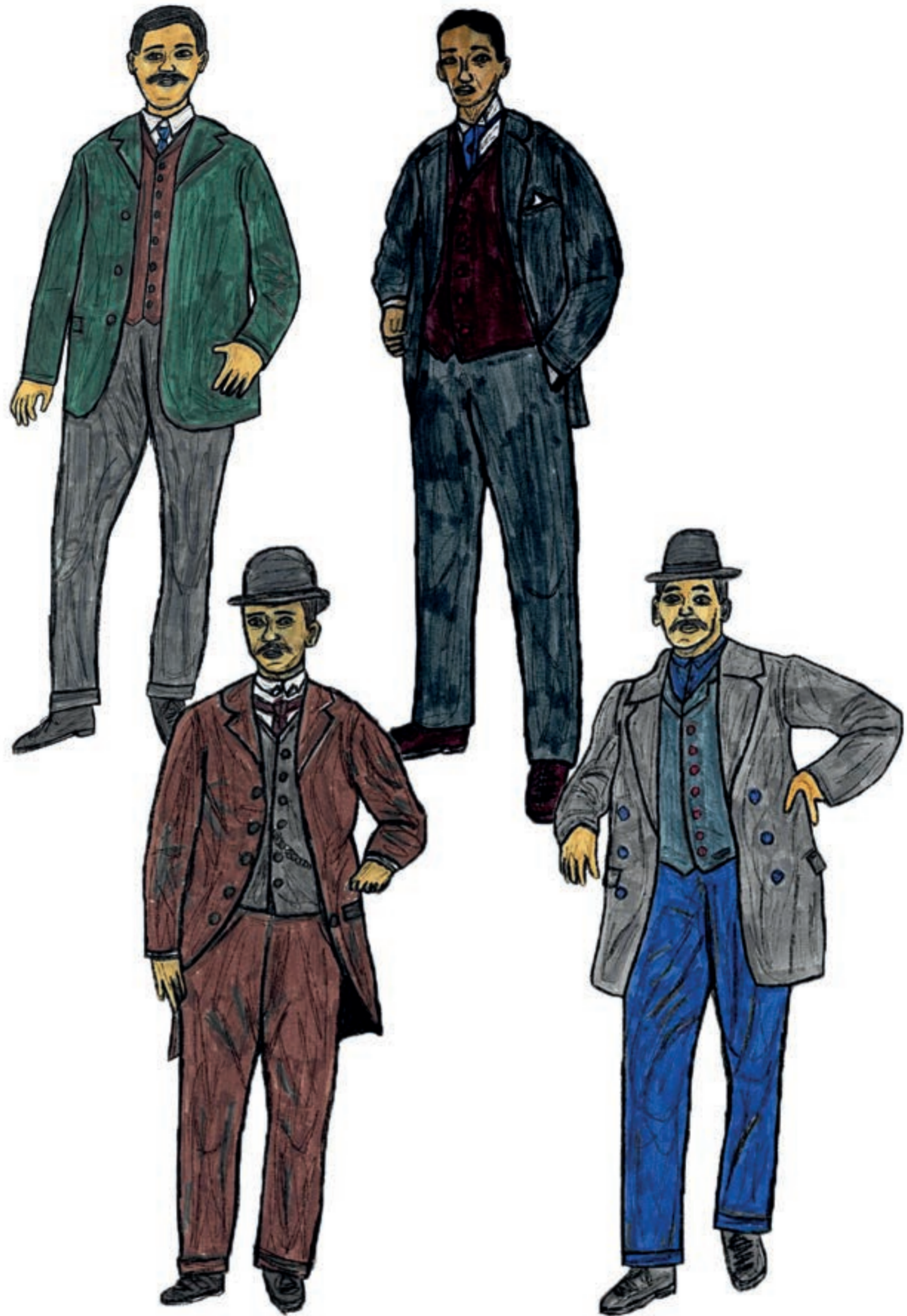
These are my design sketches for Mother. The Edwardian woman tended to be covered from the neck down. Women wore dresses or tailored suit dresses. They often preferred to wear a blouse and skirt around the house. High lace collars topped long-sleeved tops. Hemlines were full-length and tended to brush the floor.

## Mr Perks' Costume Development



Here you can see my development sketches for Mr Perks the station porter at Oakworth Station. In Edwardian times station staff would wear hard-wearing uniforms. They often wore sleeved waistcoats under their jackets. They also wore uniform caps and had an overcoat for winter days.

## Father's Costume Development



Here you see costume designs for Father. In the early 1900s, men generally wore three-piece suits with matching jackets, trousers, and waistcoats. Lapels tended to be small. They wore high, round-collared white shirts, and ties, and often wore hats. Though some men had beards, moustaches were more popular in the Edwardian era.

# The Old Gentleman's Costume Development



Here you see various sketches I have made for The Old Gentleman's costume design. One of the sketches shows him wearing an Inverness cloak that was often made from barathea or tweed. This style was fairly popular with men who lived in the countryside, like The Old Gentleman.



Here you can see some sketches of the various props needed for the production. I have included an image of the red warning flag that was made from material torn from Bobbie's red petticoat to alert the train driver about a landslide blocking the line.

# Props

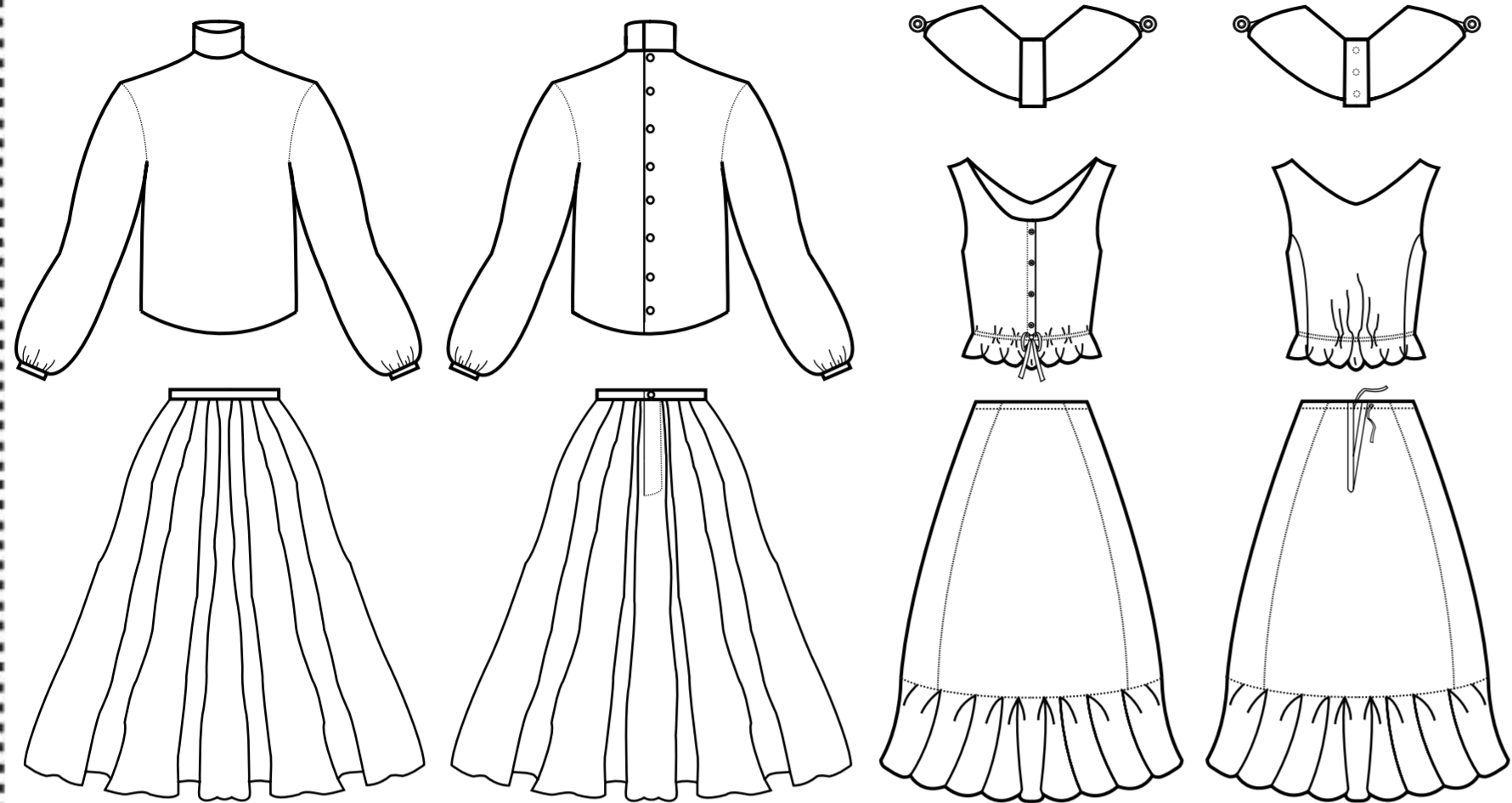




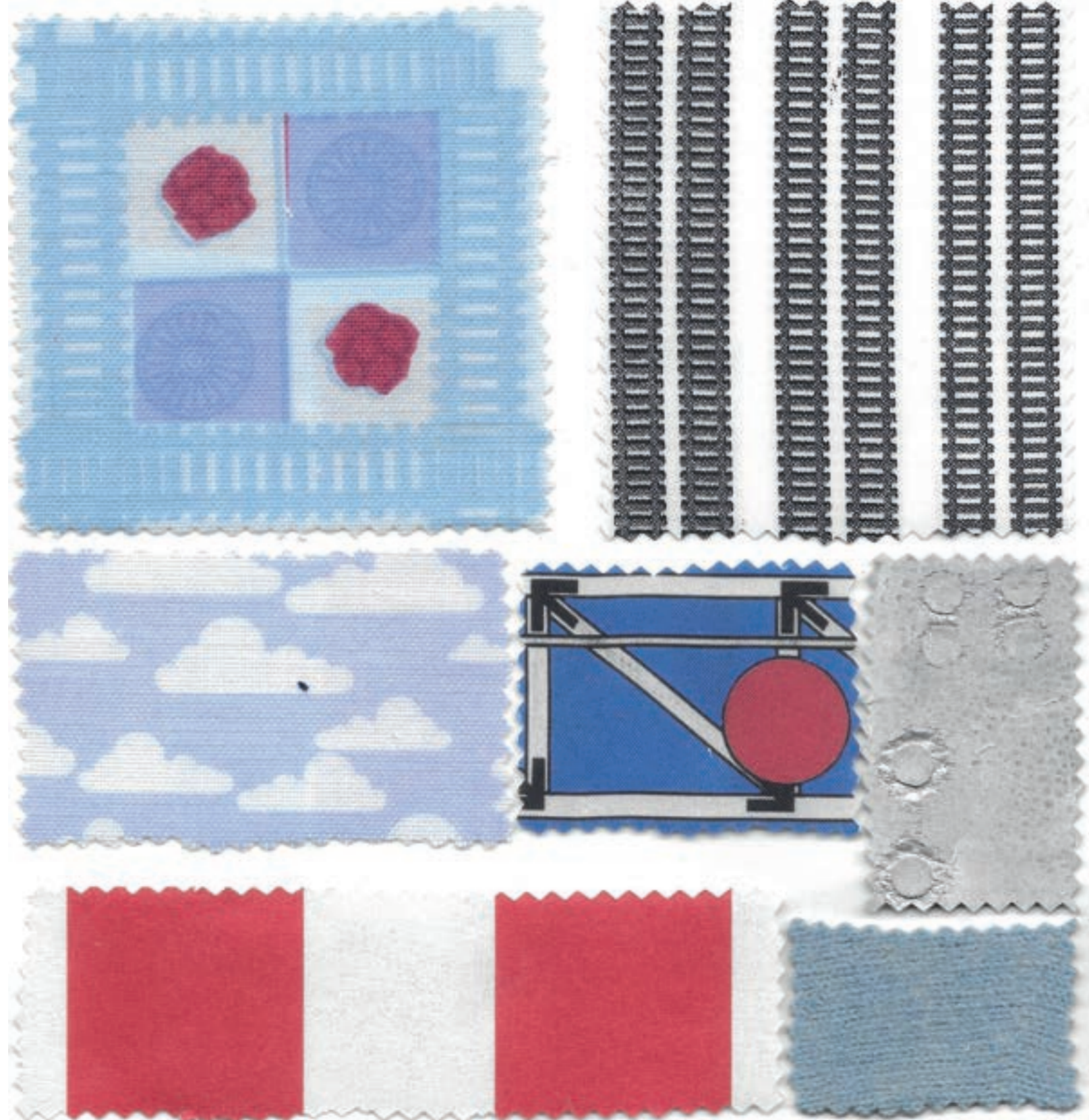
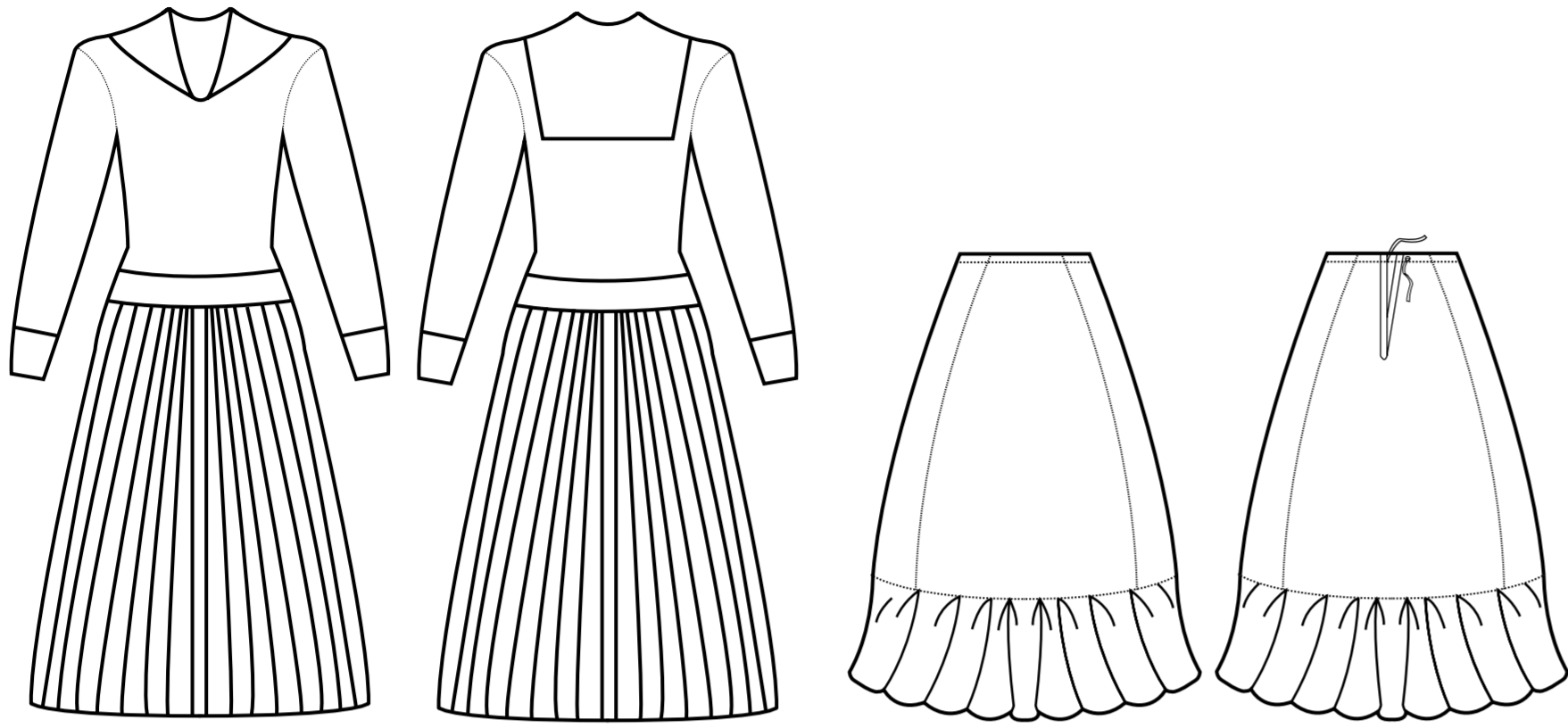
## Character Illustrations



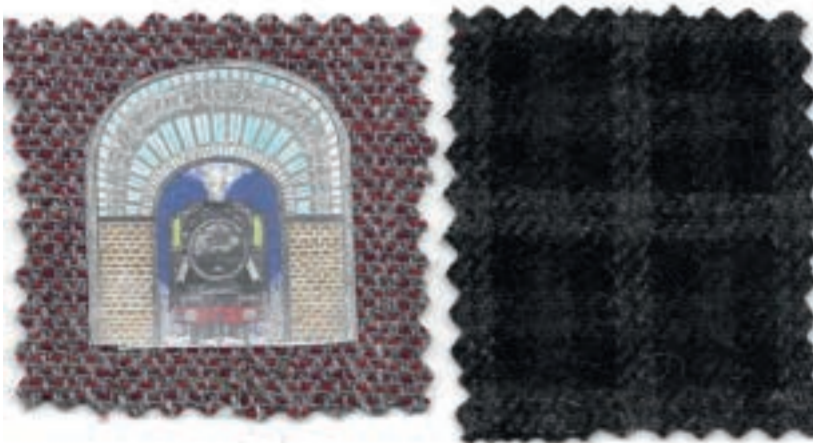
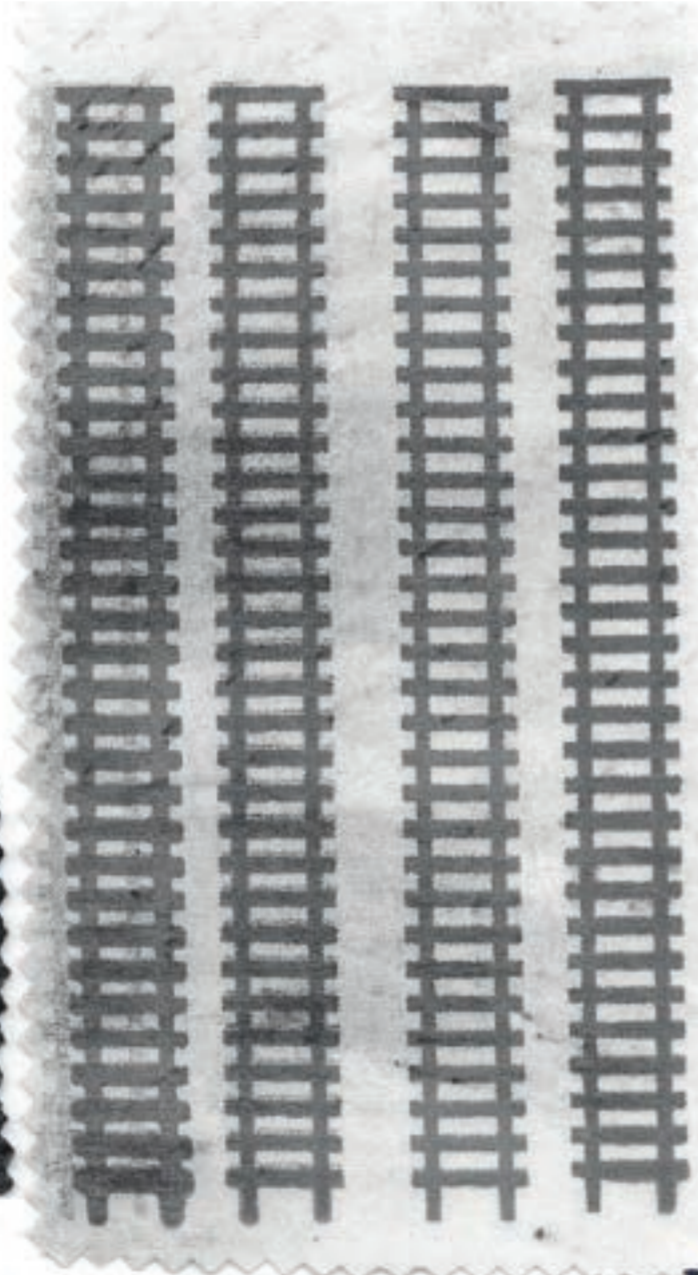
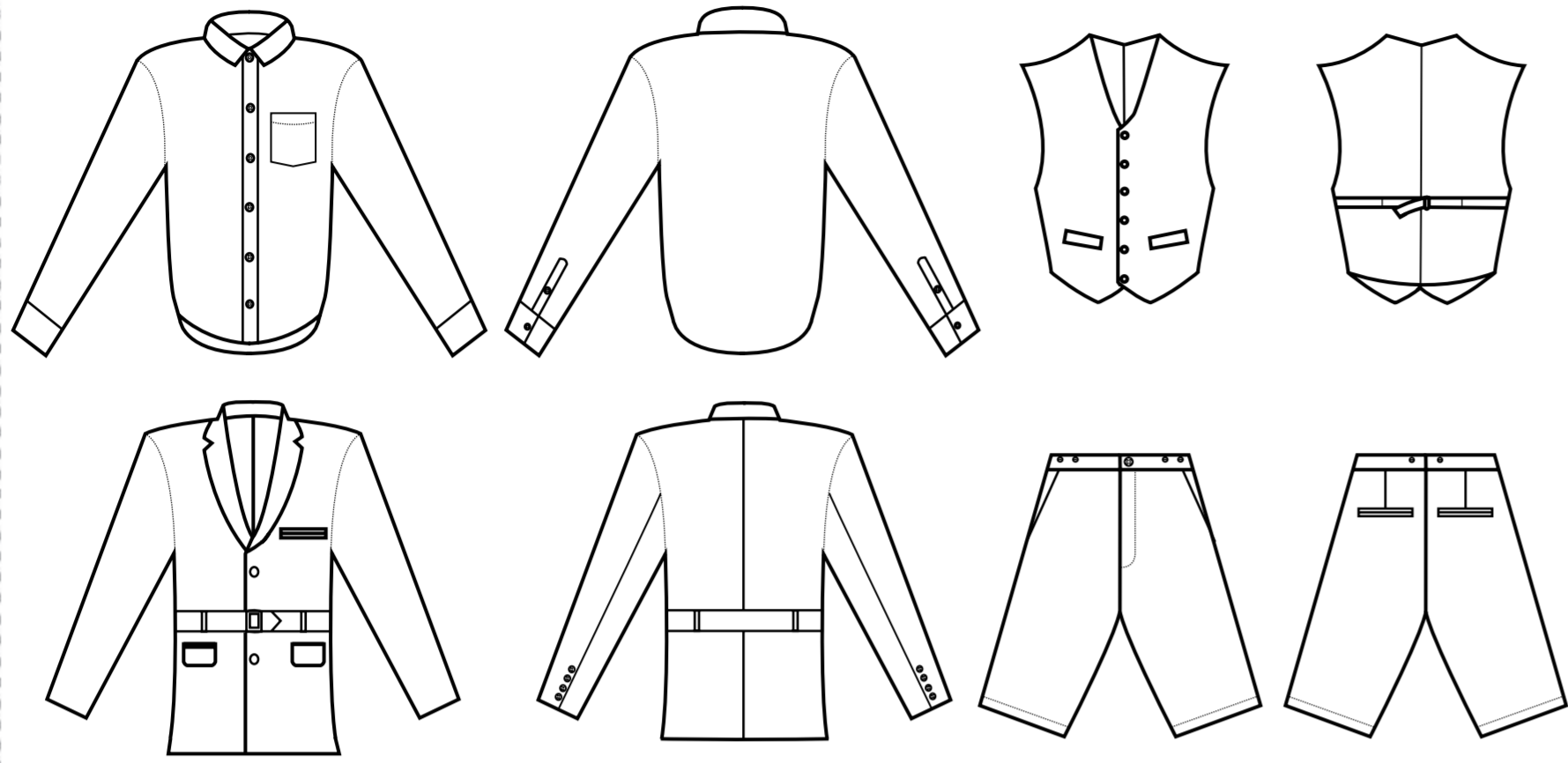
# Bobbie



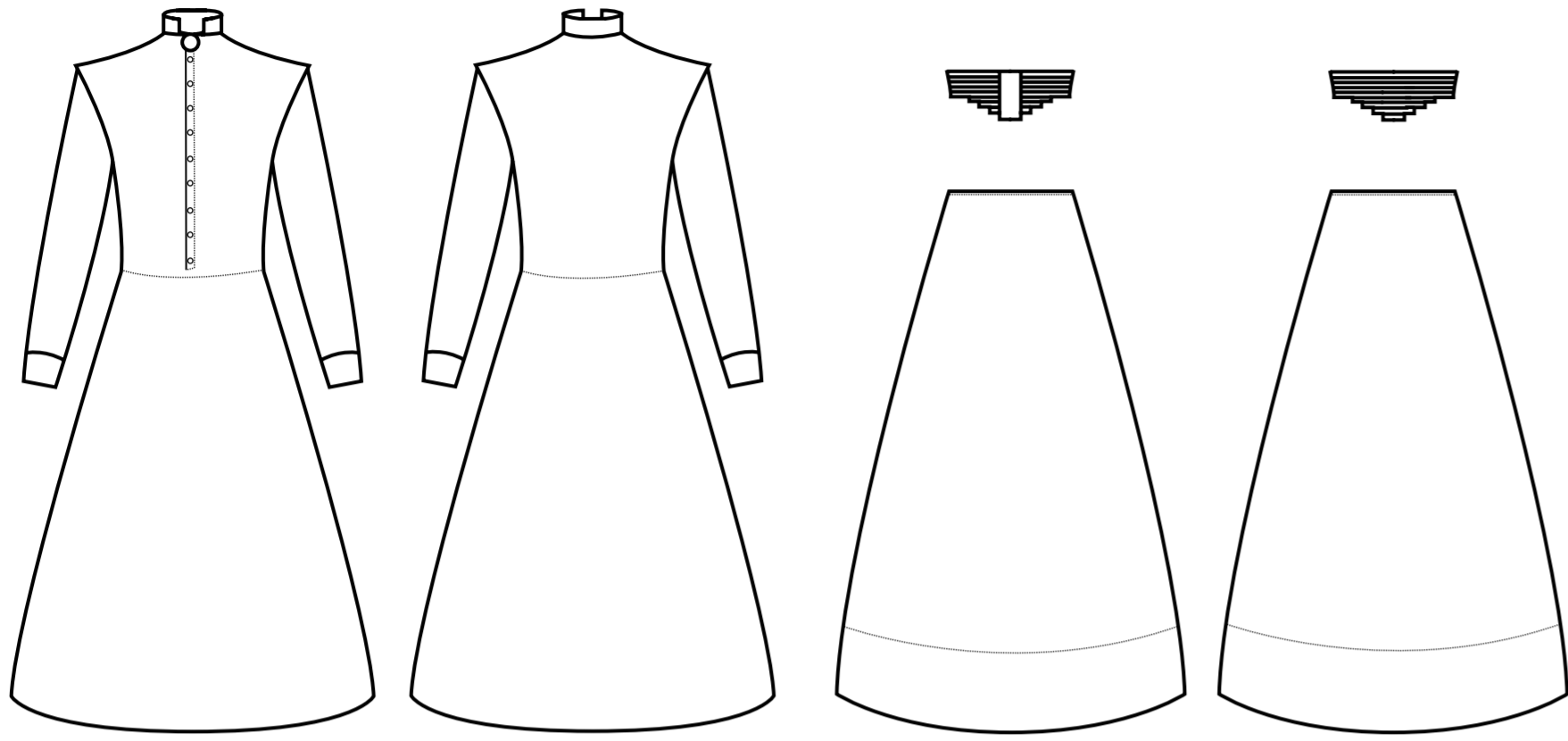
# Phyllis



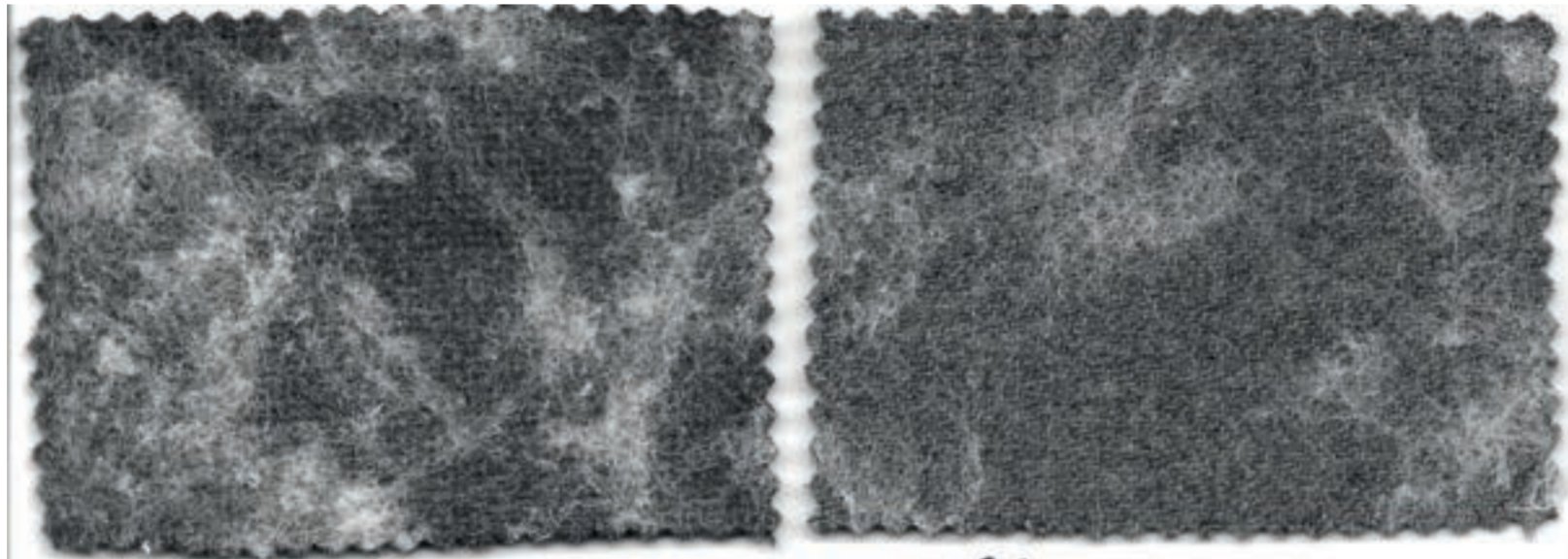
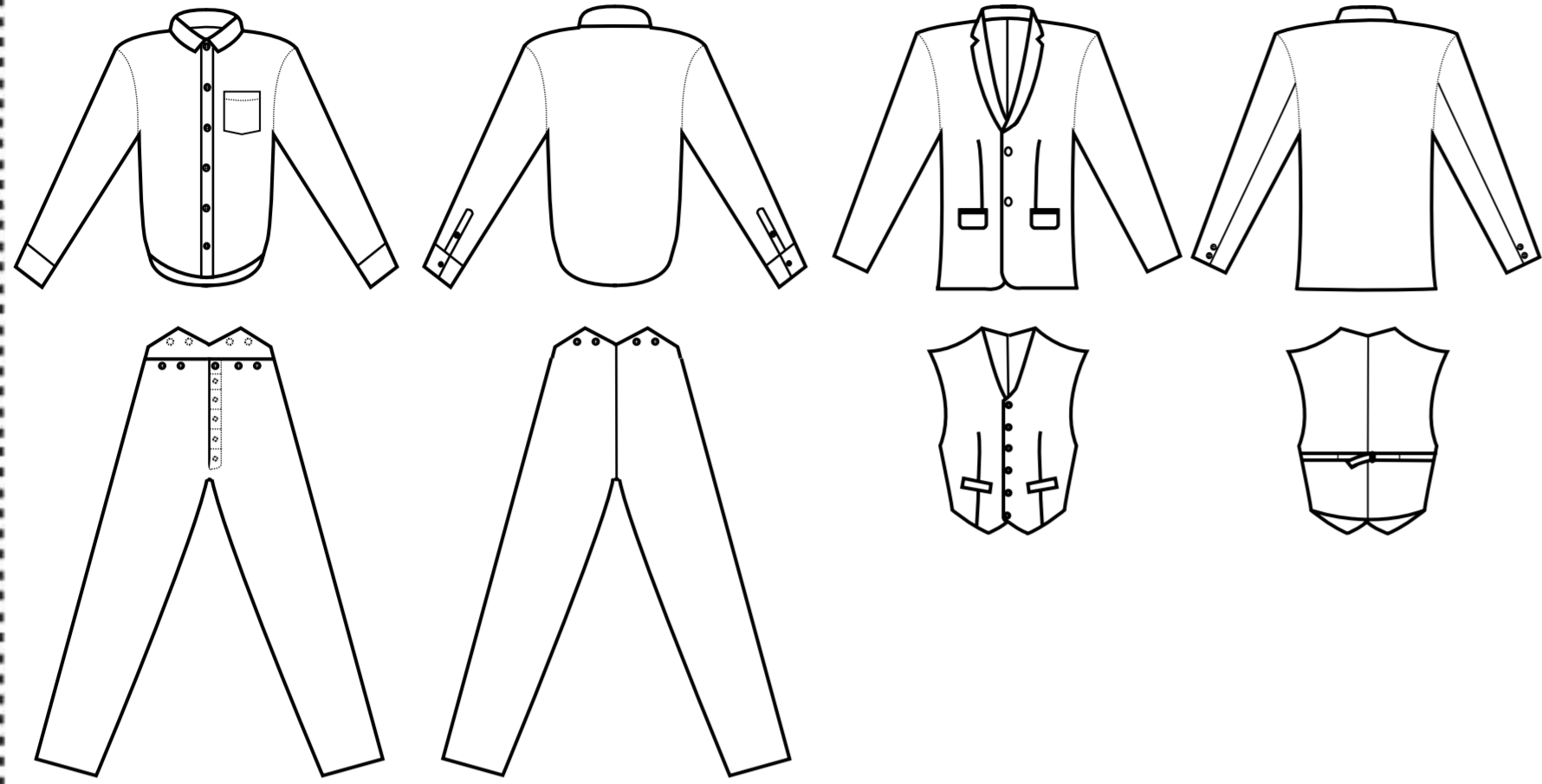
# Peter



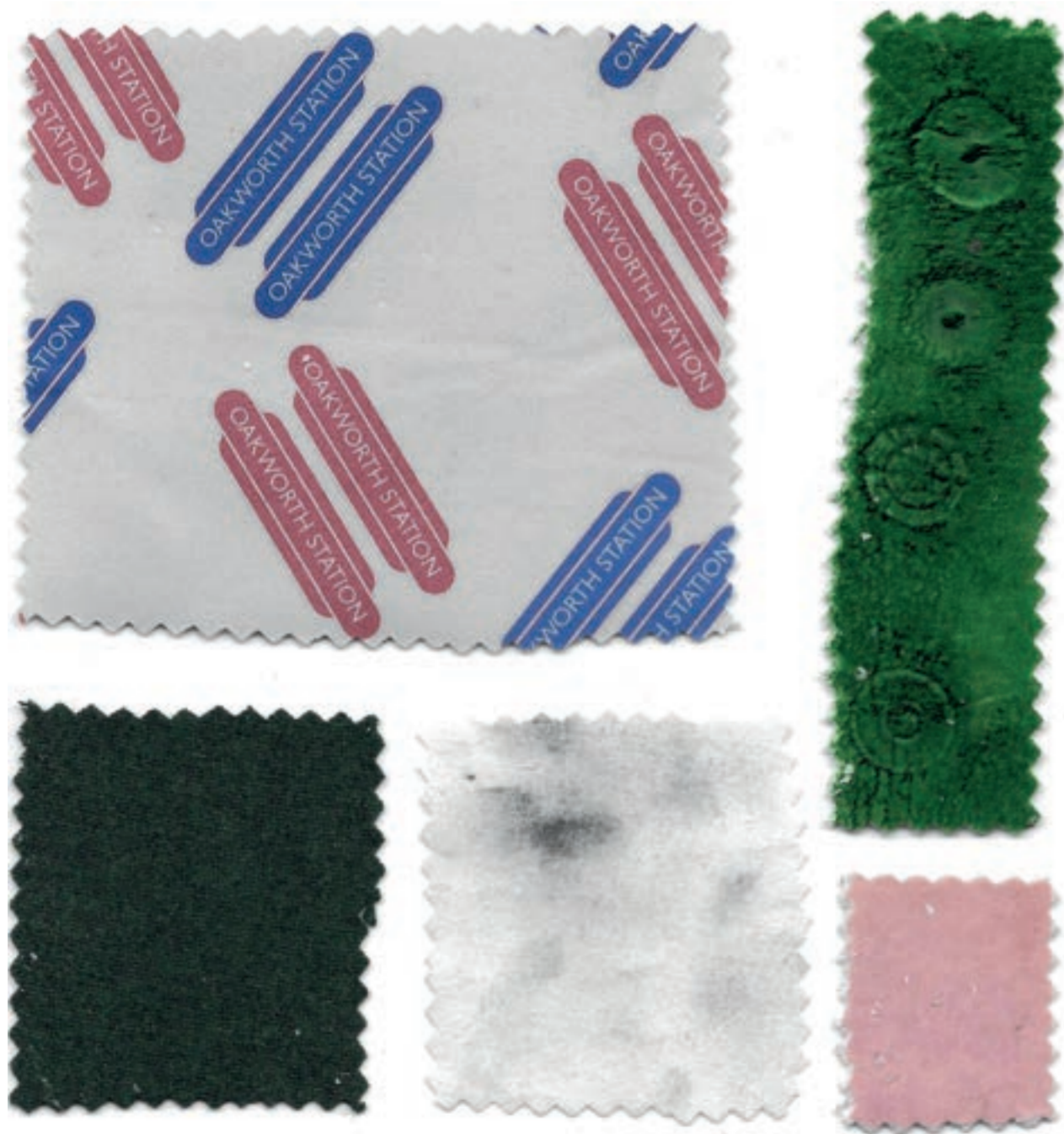
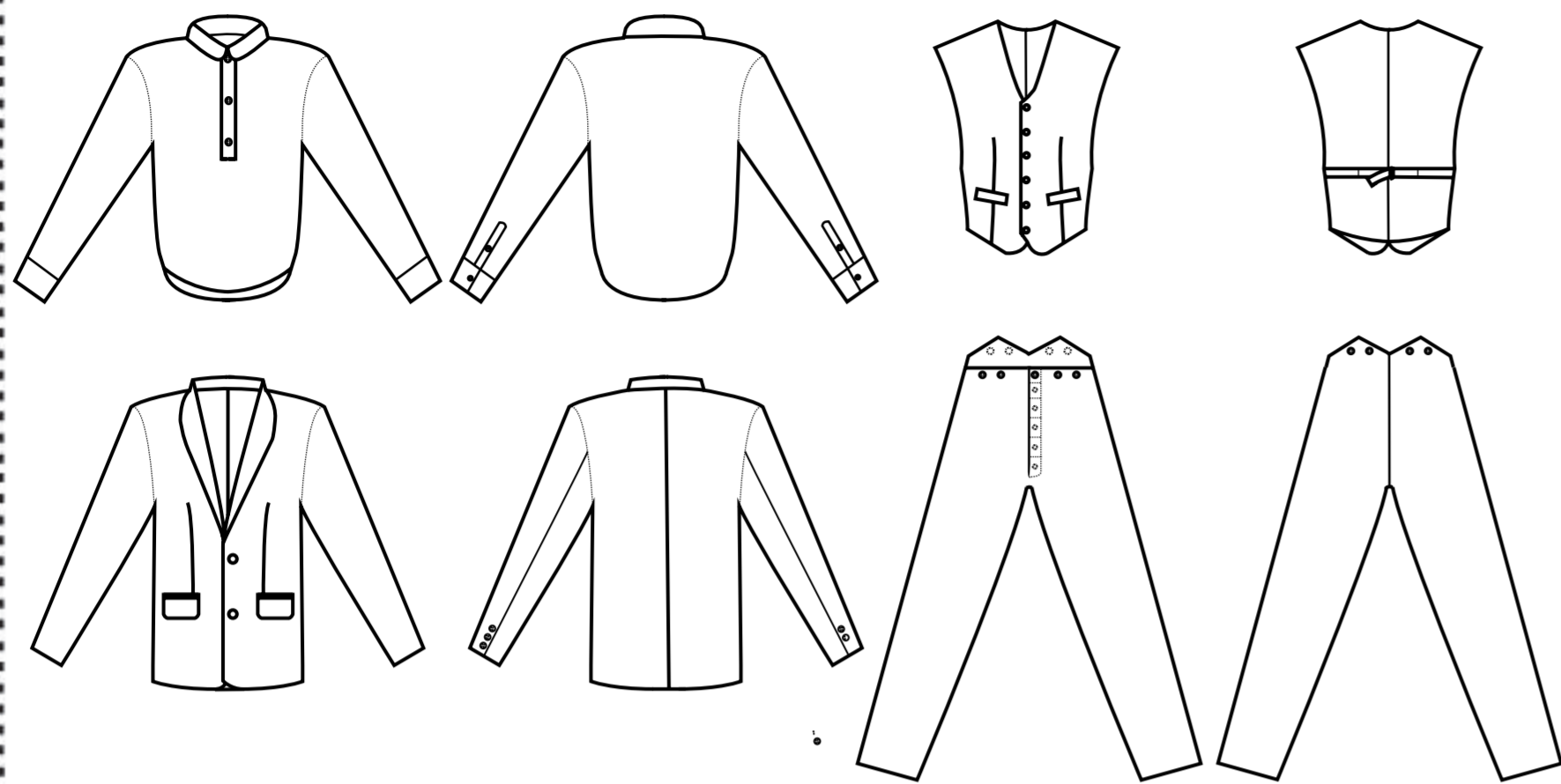
# Mother



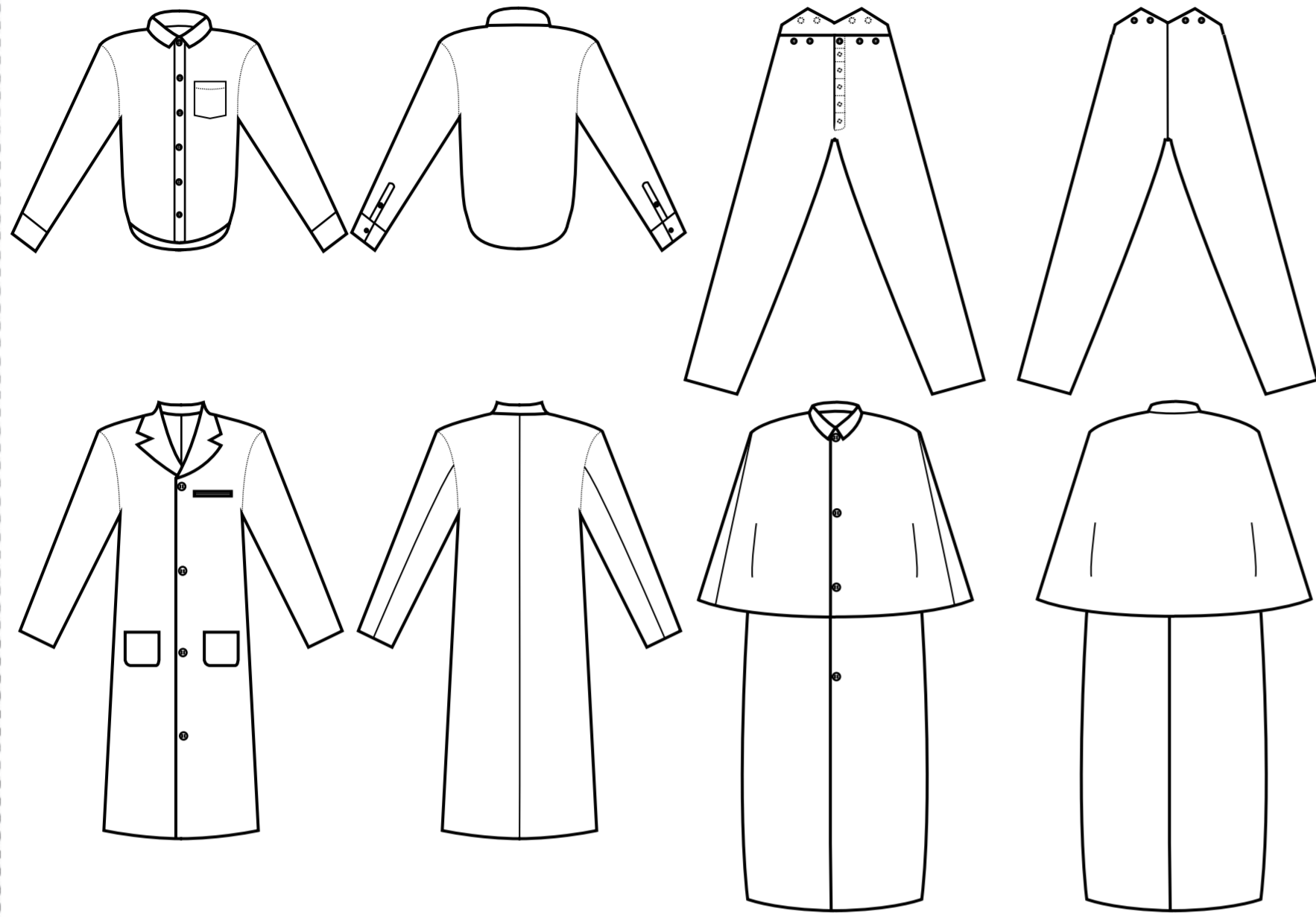
# Mr Perks



# Father



# The Old Gentleman





# The Cast





# Making Bobbie's Toile



I made a toile for Bobbie's costume before making the actual costume.

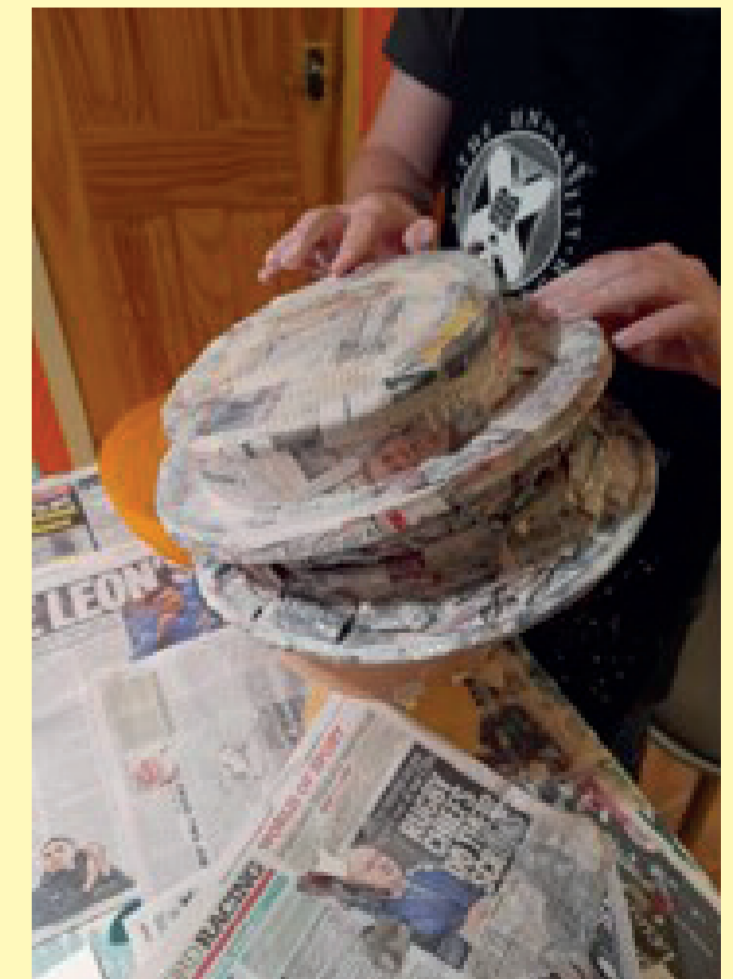




# Making Bobbie's Hat Toile



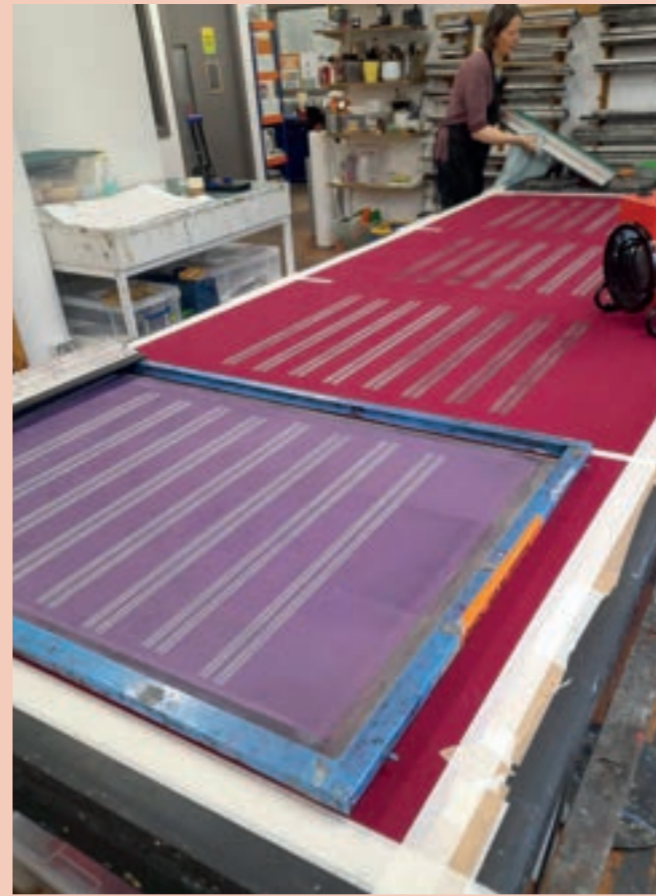
I made a prototype for Bobbie's hat before making the actual hat.



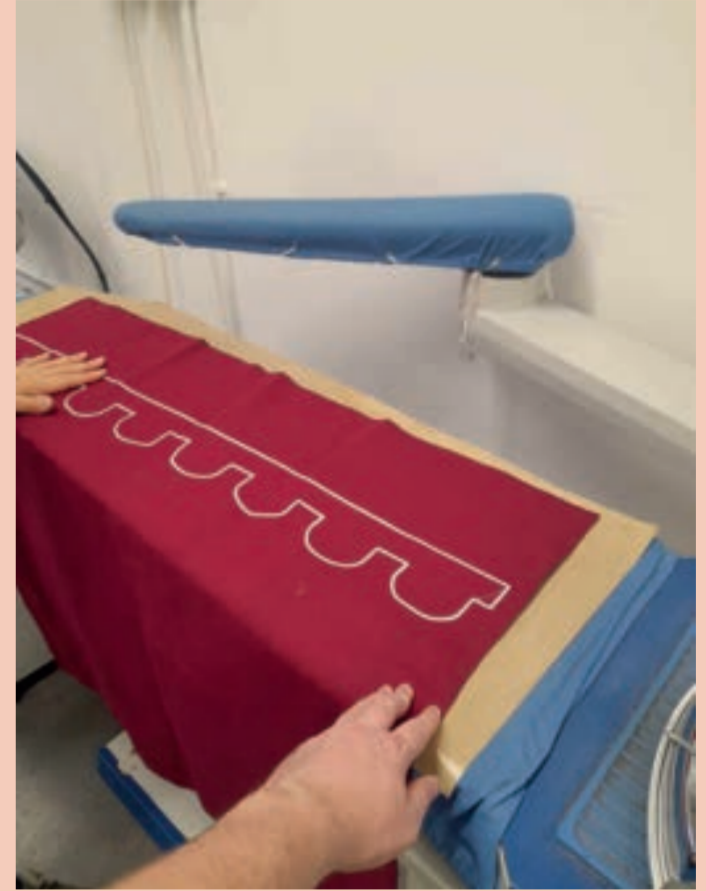


# Bobbie's Finished Toile

# Making Bobbie's Costume



These images show Bobbie's skirt and yoke being constructed and some of the processes used in their construction.



# Making Bobbie's Skirt and Yoke

# Making Bobbie's Petticoat, Flag and Hat



These images show Bobbie's petticoat, flag and hat being created and some of the processes used to create them.



These images show Bobbie's camisole and blouse being made and some of the methods used to make them.



# Making Bobbie's Camisole and Blouse

# Bobbie's Final Costume



# Bobbie in Rehearsal

These photos show Bobbie rehearsing a scene for my production of The Railway Children.

