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### *It's About the Dress!*

Am I talking about the royal bride? Everyone else is. No, I'm talking about your dress for a major must-wear-a-hat occasion! So we are talking about a smart wedding, the stands of the Queen's Birthday Parade (Trooping the Colour), the royal or stewards' enclosures at Royal Ascot, Henley Royal Regatta and the like.

These are the times when you forget 'edgy' and go for full blown classic glamour. This does not mean dowdy or frumpy. It means elegant - and attention to detail. Think Carla Bruni-Sarkosy, Catherine Zeta-Jones or Princess Michael of Kent.

I have styled not only the bride but also the bridesmaids, mothers and aunties at a number of weddings over the years, and can therefore suggest the following with some authority.

There are some marvellous dresses around at the moment. Choose one to suit your shape and don't feel compelled to go for pastel shades unless they particularly suit your colouring. Black may be chic but remember it's also the standard for funerals and it is frowned upon at royal events.

I found a darling dress in an off-white crepe in Joseph last week (crepe is perfect because it does not cling). It has an inverted pleat falling from under the bust-line that softens the tummy and flattering sleeves reaching just below the elbow. And, it is very reasonable at £313.00.



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Hobbs has a range of sheath dresses, mostly around £130. A recent client of mine had both a memorial service and a 90th birthday party to attend.



We chose a sheath in soft black and grey fleck that would go from day into evening at now £99.00. It has a rounded neck, perfect for her slightly pear-shaped figure, and a structure under the bust creating an empire-line that flattered her waist.



It also had a matching jacket in the same fabric at now £84.00 so useful in our climate.

But remember, for royal events there is a dress code: avoid very short skirts (at Henley, the skirt should cover the knee!), narrow straps and fascinators since they are not considered to be a proper hat. There's no need to try too hard. Keep it simple. With the dress chosen, consider the hat. If you have a fairly simple line to your dress you can take a statement hat. Even if it is not a Royal event, avoid fascinators. They are oh I'm going to say it old hat! Consider carefully before choosing a very dark hat with a brim. The shadow across your face may not be flattering.

Tall and big girls can wear big brimmed hats. Smaller women should seek narrow brims - and wear them at an angle, never straight and never, ever on the back of the head.

Next, check your earrings. Long and dangly probably won't work! Dress your hair appropriately. Think of putting it up under the hat if it is long, or at a medium length, tuck it behind your ears. Short and curly hair can be styled around the hat. Keep your glasses simple - sunglasses similarly.

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The trend at the moment is for statement handbags, the bigger the better. But on this occasion, opt for a bag that doesn't dominate your look. A simple clutch or neat shoulder bag would be fine.

Wear the lightest denier tights or stockings. Few people have such perfect legs that they would look good on such a formal occasion. They also guard against blisters from new shoes.

If you are going to an event where there is an uneven surface - a race course, regatta or reception in a marquee in a garden or field - refrain



from wearing high spindly heels, however glamorous. You will just look silly when you get stuck in the turf. Consider a dressy wedge that gives stability, but avoid raffia or fabric, they will collect moisture! I love these DVF wedges at £260.00 as they are a neutral colour and have as I always point out "a nice finish."

Lastly, your make-up; I love Nars lip colours as I have introduced many of my clients to his many shades. One of my new favourites is called Frivolous, pictured below. The chances are you will have photographs being taken so keep it natural but use a strong lip colour. I suggest for this spring and summer tangerine coloured lip glosses, they work for a real lift and add plenty of mascara as I always say, three coats is my best rule.



Hope you have a Happy Spring!

*Patrick Swan*

*PS – Remember – 20% off for all returning shopping clients!*