The Corsetmaking Revolution

Your doorway to beautiful corsets

The New Corset Pattern Drafting Masterclass that enables EVERY corsetmaker to create the most unique, beautifully fitting corsets you’ve ever produced

- Why ignoring it will cost you years of effort
- Why using it will advance your skills faster than you ever thought possible, and…
- How to harness it, NOW!
About the author

Meet Cathy Hay

You would not expect a mathematician to be known for the design and careful construction of fine clothing and costume, but having this unusual background allows Cathy Hay to approach the subject from a new perspective.

Not only can her unique method of fitting allow her to construct breathtaking bespoke corsets for clients worldwide: her training as a teacher of Mathematics allows her to share her knowledge and her discoveries clearly and simply both on her websites and at costume makers’ events around the world.

Working in this way has enabled Cathy to identify the problems faced by those who wish to make fine corsetry.

Importantly, she discovered that it may not be the makers themselves that cause their creations to fail, but rather a lack of communication: experienced makers believe they must guard their "secrets" in order to stay in business, and new makers start out believing that they must learn everything alone by trial and error, wasting valuable time, money and effort.

By sharing knowledge and re-kindling the culture of apprenticeship in a modern, technological age, we can return to a world in which true craftsmanship is once again loved, appreciated and shared successfully for the greatest advantage to everyone.

Cathy began sewing at the age of fourteen and became professional ten years later, in 1996. She completed work for private clients in Britain and then spent a considerable period doing so in New England and around New York before returning to the UK in 2003 to continue bespoke work and set up her educational websites for other corsetmakers and costume makers.

Cathy lives with partner Demi and cats close to Nottingham, England.
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Introduction:

Corsets are boring!

Since corsetmaking became fashionable again around the turn of the new millenium, dedicated artists, seamstresses and engineers have been striving to fathom out these fascinating garments and recreate them anew for the twenty-first century.

Materials and patterns have gradually become more available, but we still struggle with a very small pool of very plain patterns.

I know this is going to sound controversial, and I’ll probably have a lot of people disagreeing with me, but let’s face it: when you’ve seen one modern corset, you’ve pretty much seen them all. **Corsets, in their present incarnation, are positively boring.**

The fitting dilemma

Meanwhile, consumer demand is growing. Clients, friends and corsetmakers themselves all want to be laced up in a beautiful, flattering, sexy shape… BUT unless you are a regular build, moderately busted and small in size, achieving a good fit is difficult at best.

A few commercial patterns can be found; a few real historical styles have been simplified, genericised, and made generally useable by small specialist pattern companies. But they DON’T WORK.

Ok, ok, I’ll admit it – they work *some* of the time. They work if you’re small. They work if you’re regularly sized. They work if you’re small busted.
But what about the rest of us? Can we really say that these one-style-fits-all patterns really work if they only work for some of us? If you don’t believe me, I’ve got two words for you. Custom overbust. If you felt the slightest frisson of dread, you know exactly what I’m talking about.

Here’s the rub: corsetmakers are trying to make BESPOKE corsets from GENERIC patterns. No wonder they find it hard to shoe-horn unique figures into these generalised styles!

The style dilemma

There’s another side to these boring, generic corsets too – there are so very few styles to choose from. It’s like bra shopping: if you find five bra styles you like in the size you need, you still try them on, right? You head for the fitting room because you know that some just won't work on you, regardless of the size on the label. So why do we assume that any old corset pattern will suit us and feel right?

For our more unique friends, bra buying is a nightmare. I’m a generic 34B, but I’ll never forget the first time I went bra shopping with my plus sized partner Demi.

See this, here? (I’m pointing at my left shoulder right now.) This is the shoulder she cried on in the fitting room of Britain’s biggest underwear retailer because neither of the TWO bras available in her size fit her properly… not because they were the wrong size, but because the shape, the cut, the style was wrong for her.

We know that one size does not fit all, but here’s the truth, for bras, for every garment we wear, and ESPECIALLY for corsets:

One STYLE does not fit all.
So let me ask you this…

- When we want an 1880s corset and we pick up the generic 1880s commercial pattern we know and love… why are we making fiddly adjustments to a generic pattern and expecting an easy, well-fitting, flattering result?
- When a client asks for a bespoke corset… why are we dusting off our generic corset drafting instructions and drafting the same thing with different measurements… and then settling for a mediocre result?

The corsets we could be making

Just take a look at the corset on this page. Right now, it’s sitting in a box, wrapped in tissue, on a shelf at Leicestershire County Council Museums Service. Why?

**Question:** When was the last time any of us made corsets that looked this good?

**Answer:** We HAVEN’T made any that look this good….. yet.

There is a vast sea of knowledge in our museums around the world, and we’re not using it.

Just let this sink in for a minute: every respectable Victorian woman wore corsets every day. Corsets for daytime; corsets for evening; corsets for riding; corsets for every activity and eventuality.

Corsets were a part of everyday life. They didn't just have to be "good enough" to be endurable for a night out or a weekend event; they had to last all day, every day, through every movement a woman made, from the finest ladies' silken flossed confection to the hardworking "Pretty Housemaid" corset that was a bestseller amongst ladies’ maids.
For those who could afford it, there were different types of corset for different activities – for riding, for visiting, for evening, for summer… those corsetmakers back then really knew what they were doing - they had to, to stay in business!

It makes obvious sense to go back to the source and really study in detail how those corsets worked back in the nineteenth century. By re-scaling their work to fit ourselves and others, we can begin to uncover the secrets of these gorgeous garments - and I believe it's essential to share this exciting opportunity with all of you so that we can work together to gain a real understanding of how to make beautiful, sturdy, "glove-fitting" corsets that are suitable for everyone, today.

And that's also the only way we're going to be able to start making corsets that don't all look the same. It’s time to stop being boring and start standing out from the crowd!

Taking corsetmaking to the next level

Some professional corsetmakers have already begun to discover this - you can't build a corsetmaking business on a single pattern; you need variety that provides something for everyone. And I don’t just mean an overbust and an underbust. One style does not fit all, any more than one size does.

This is somewhere we need to go as corsetmakers and costumiers. This is the next step in corsetmaking for the 21st century.

We need a wider range of styles to choose from, both for aesthetic purposes and to provide something that's suitable for everyone. In fact, we need to get the blinkers off and work out how to make any style. Excuse me ranting, but does that make sense?

There are so many drop dead gorgeous corsets in museums, so different from what we've got from major pattern companies, and we're not using them!!

But what if we could?

I think we've all been doing the corsetry equivalent of trying to make virtually the same style of bra in all our different sizes, imagining that
all women in a particular era wore exactly the same design, and we're getting spotty results at best. *Are we all wearing the same style of bra right now? Then why do we think they all wore the same corset?*

If we could choose from all the styles out there in the museum collections and draft *any* of them to size, we could create the most exciting breakthrough in the study of corsetry since we rediscovered corsets at all.

Am I making sense? That’s what this masterclass is about. It’s about freeing ourselves. It’s about making every extant corset in the world available for you to study, grapple with and reproduce.

It’s about raising the bar and making YOU a better corsetmaker. Let me show you how, with… (turn the page!)
The New Corset Drafting Masterclass

I’ve ranted long enough: let’s get stuck right in!

1 Choose a pattern

There are all sorts of wonderful places where you can find extant drawings and patterns of historic corsets.

- Books such as Norah Waugh’s *Corsets and Crinolines* and Jill Salen’s *Corsets* have the hard work done for you. These provide the patterns of many styles of extant corset.
- Google Patents is a surprisingly rich source of wild and wonderful ideas.
- … and of course, at www.FoundationsRevealed.com we’re pulling together as many historic corsets as we can from around the world and patterning them for you month by month… and by using these, you’re tapping into a resource that’s subscription-based – not available to everyone – to allow you to really develop ideas that’ll make your work stand out.
- Of course, you can also visit museums yourself and take patterns from the real thing. At Foundations Revealed you can find an article written for us by Jill Salen giving all the secrets of how she does this.

I invite you to experiment with many different styles and learn all you can as you begin to use this masterclass regularly, but for now, select a reasonably simple style with which to try the method out. I’ve chosen this one from *Corsets and Crinolines* to use as an example.
2 Take measurements

Taking measurements is a vital element in the creation of a perfectly fitting garment, and it’s imperative that you get it right – extra care at this stage can save you an extraordinary amount of time, effort and cost later.

I need you to make me a few promises:

1. Have these measurements taken by a professional and trusted tailor or seamstress. Measuring yourself is unlikely to give an accurate result. This is the best way to get it right. However, I have given full instructions below for a friend to measure you, in a worst case scenario.

2. You will be honest about your measurements. Telling little white lies will only result in a garment that does not fit. I can guarantee that you will not be satisfied with the resulting garment if you have not given your true measurements.

3. The measurements have been taken whilst you’ve been wearing what you normally plan to wear under the corset, as much as possible (a slip or thin, close-fitting t-shirt is fine but there’s no point measuring yourself whilst wearing a sweater.)

4. However, you will need to wear a well-fitting bra (unpadded) whilst you measure, since your assets will then be in a position that’s more reasonably similar to the finished, corsetted position!
Tie a string or ribbon around your waist, where you bend naturally – not too tightly, just snug, and horizontal. Remember to stand up straight (but not overly so) with your weight evenly distributed. Measure in centimetres if you can – they’re smaller and more accurate and they don’t carry such heavy meaning for most people. Additionally, they’re easier to work with when making small adjustments.

………… Bust (1) – measure horizontally around the fullest part of your bust along the nipple line, and straight across your back. It helps if you stand with your back to a mirror, with the person measuring you in front of you, so that they can see in the mirror that it’s straight across your back. Remember to lower your arms.

You may wish to be somewhat “squished” in order to give yourself extra cleavage. If so, squish your breasts with your hands as much as desired. Measure as best you can underneath your hands and straight around your back. Try it a couple of times to make sure you’ve got it right!

………… Front bust – Just the portion of your bust measurement from side seam to side seam, around the front. This will help you get the cup size/back size right. Obviously, “back bust” will be the whole bust measurement minus front bust.

………… Underbust to nipple (for discussion of bust gussets, later) (2) – Whilst still squished, measure vertically from your nipple to bra band, following the curve of your breast.

………… Nipple to nipple (3) – this is not used directly during the drafting process described below, but will be useful as a check.

………… Bust to waist (11)– measure at one side from the waist ribbon straight up to the level where you measured your bust.

………… Squished waist – Suck it in as far as you want the corset to suck you in. Measure your waist in this position. Alternatively, measure your natural waist and subtract the reduction you want to achieve – but don’t overdo it, there’s no point making a corset you’ll never wear!

………… Front waist – Just the portion of your waist measurement from side seam to side seam, around the front. Obviously, “back waist” will be the whole waist measurement minus front waist.

………… Upper hip (7) – measure horizontally around your hips, 3” below the ribbon.
………… Front upper hip – Similar to front waist, at upper hip level.

………… Lower hip (8) – Same again, 6” below the ribbon.
………… Front lower hip – Similar to front waist, at lower hip level.

………… Lap (9) – Sit up straight on a dining chair or similar. Measure from the top of your thigh straight up to the ribbon. When the draft is complete, ensure you check this length, so that the wearer can sit down in the finished corset!

………… Waist to base (10) – Measure vertically from the middle of the ribbon in front down to the point where you want the front point of the corset to end. You may also want to measure waist to base at the side and back, as well as waist to top, to help you get the top and bottom edges right.

Now check all the measurements again – I find this helpful when measuring clients, just to be sure!
3 Some important (but easy) calculations

It will help enormously to do these now, and have them ready when you look at the original pattern so that you can compare the two.

Since the pattern represents half of the body, from centre front to centre back, these half measurements will be very useful.

If you want the corset to meet at the back
- Half front bust
- Half front waist
- Half front upper hip
- Half front lower hip

If you want the corset to have the usual 2” gap at the back
- Half front bust
- Half front waist
- Half front upper hip
- Half front lower hip

For the three back measurements on the right, halve them THEN take away the inch.

4 Mark the existing pattern

Make a copy of your original pattern, one that you can scribble on. I’ll refer to this working copy as the “original” pattern throughout these instructions in order to distinguish it from the “new” pattern you’re drafting.

Enlarge it to full size for best results, but if you’re very precise and careful, this whole process can be done with a small scale pattern like those in Corsets and Crinolines. Keep in mind that a tiny mistake on a small pattern will enlarge into a very big mistake on your pattern, so be anally retentive in your precision when using these small scale drawings!

Mark out the major landmarks:

Centre front

Centre back (back edge of the corset – forget about the gap, you’ve taken account of that in the sums you just did). This should be parallel to the centre front.

Side – also a straight line parallel to the centre front and centre back, this is the point where the side seam lies. Your corset may not have a side seam (five piece patterns,
for example, will not), but you’ll still need to know where the side is in order to measure from it. You won’t necessarily be able to “find” the exact point where the side was intended to be – but you can decide, within reason, where you want your side to fall on the finished corset. Decide this now and mark the side line.

Waist – the narrowest part, at a right angle to centre front and centre back. On some historical corsets this may be a little challenging to mark exactly, but some detective work might help – on the diagram above there are two telltale eyelets close together at the centre back. Make a “best guess” if it’s not quite clear – between adjusting it to your measurements and fitting the mock-up, the exact point you choose will naturally become the waist.

Bust – parallel to the waist line, and at right angles to centre front and centre back. Look for the fullest point, and notice that the pattern edge may sink below the bust line at the side. This is fine.

Upper hip – parallel to the waist, and 7.5cm (3”) below it. Not necessarily the fullest point.

Lower hip – parallel to the upper hip, and 7.5cm (3”) below it. Not necessarily the fullest point. This will only be necessary on long line patterns – if the corset pattern is short enough that most or all of the pattern ends above the lower hip level, don’t bother with it.
Now look at the individual pieces of the pattern. When you draw the centre front and centre back pieces, you’ll be able to measure out from those nice straight lines at the centre front and centre back; the other pieces are more fluid at the edges, and could easily come out skewed. So it would be useful to rule a straight line down the middle of each pattern piece, which you can use as an anchor to keep the whole piece aligned correctly.

It doesn’t matter where these anchor lines are on the pattern piece, as long as they’re exactly vertical, parallel to the centre front and centre back and perpendicular (at right angles) to the bust, waist and hip lines.
You may already have one anchor line drawn in, where the Side line rules through one of the pieces. Meanwhile, some pattern pieces may already have a straight vertical edge of their own, like the centre front and centre back pieces have – these are helpful, use them instead of drawing your own anchor line, as long as they’re vertical!

In my diagram, you’ll notice that there are some helpful straight vertical boning channels, so I’ve used those as anchor lines. On the side back piece, I’ve ruled approximately down the middle.
5 Draw your own pattern framework

Now you’re going to draw the same framework of lines on a fresh sheet of paper, in the proportions you need to reproduce the pattern in your size.

The piece of paper will need to be wider than half your bust or hip measurement, and longer than the rough distance from your bust to lower hip (measure against yourself!) so that the pattern will fit on the paper.

1 First of all, draw the Side line down the middle of the paper and label it “Side”.
2 Then add the Centre Back down one side (the same side as on the original pattern). It should be parallel to the Side line, and plenty of distance away – remember you’ll want space between the pieces!
3 Add the Centre Front line down the other side in the same way. So now you should have three vertical lines, all parallel to each other.
4 Now add the Waist line, horizontal, halfway down the paper, and at right angles to the three vertical lines. Make sure it really is at right angles with a square, or use the corner and edges of a piece of A4 or letter size paper.

5 Measure up the Centre Back Line, starting at the place where the Waist line crosses it, and make a mark where your bust-to-waist measurement comes to.
6 Do the same on the Centre Front line, and join the two marks. Mark this new horizontal line “Bust.” Check to ensure it’s parallel to the waist line.
7 Now measure *down* the Centre Back line 7.5cm (3”) from the place where the Waist line crosses it, and make a mark.
8 Do the same on the Centre Front line, and join the two marks to produce the Upper Hip line.
9. Did you need the Lower Hip line on the original pattern? If you did, add this now, 7.5cm (3”) below the Upper Hip line. If you don’t need it, skip this step.

Notice how the distances between the lines you’ve drawn on the new paper may be differently distributed from the lines forming the framework on the original diagram – that’s fine, it’s part of the changes you’re making.

10. Finally, add the anchor lines – judge roughly by eye where these will need to be.
<table>
<thead>
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6 How to transfer the pattern

Let’s look at that original corset pattern once more, particularly the front waist section.

If we highlight the bits of the waist line that fall on the pattern pieces, can you see how the highlighted areas would add up to the HALF FRONT WAIST measurement of the original wearer?

Meanwhile, you took your front waist measurement, and you halved it in step 3, giving you the distance from the centre front to the side around your front, at the waist. So you need to distribute your front waist measurement on the new pattern in the same proportions as on these original pattern pieces.

If we can do this for all six measurements you worked out in step 3 - half front bust, half back bust, half front waist, half back waist, half front hip and half back hip - you’ll have the complete framework for your own version of the pattern.

7 Measure the original pattern

So let’s begin with the half front waist we’ve been looking at. Take the original pattern and measure the width of each piece along the front of the waist (ie from centre front to side along the waist line.) Mark these measurements in pencil on the
original pattern, just below the waist line on each piece. Notice how I’ve measured each side of the anchor lines separately: you’ll need to do the same.

If you’re using a tiny sized pattern, this will still work even though the pieces will only be millimetres wide. The proportions are the same whatever the size of the copy, but remember, be VERY precise if you’re using a tiny pattern, as small errors will enlarge into big ones!

Now add up all the widths of the pieces that you just found, and write down the total at the end of the waist line as shown. Put a box around it so it’s clear that this is the total front waist measurement of the pattern.

8 Convert into percentages

Now you’re going to write the width of each piece as a percentage just above the waist line on each piece. Why? If you know, for example, that the width of the front piece is 10% of the half front waist measurement, you can work out 10% of YOUR front waist measurement too, and transfer that to your own new pattern!

Here’s how to work out the percentages for each measurement:

\[
\text{Measurement} \div \text{Total written in the box} \times 100 = \text{Percentage}
\]

Round the answer to a whole number and write it above the line on the relevant pattern piece – include the “%” sign and write in pen so you don’t get your numbers mixed up.
Check that you’ve got it right by making sure all the percentages add up to 100%.
(You may have to fiddle it by one or two percent to make up for discrepancies where you rounded up or down.)

Now go back to step 7 and repeat this process for the half front bust, half back bust, half back waist, half front hip and half back hip. If you take each separately, you’ll find the process fairly simple.

Some pattern pieces don’t extend quite to the bust and hip lines – extend them (shown below in green) so that you can work out the percentages for them too. This isn’t an absolutely precise method to deal with this, but it’ll help you get it right enough to get you to the mock-up stage, when you’ll be able to tweak things to fit perfectly.
9 Draft the new pattern

Copy the percentages to the same places on the new pattern, above the horizontal lines, in pencil.

At the end of each line, put a total in a box, in pen – this time, the total will be your own half measurements as found in step 3, eg the half front waist in my example below.

Now you just need to fill in the measurements below the lines. If your first piece is 10% and your total is 60cm, then you’re looking for ten per cent of 60cm:

\[
\text{Percentage}^* \div 100 \times \text{total in box} = \text{Measurement}
\]

* Don’t use the percentage button on your calculator.
  If your percentage is 10%, just type 10.

Fill all of these measurements in, over the whole new pattern, in pen. Check your working by adding up the measurements and ensuring that for each front and back section of each line, you get the total in the box at the end of the line.
In order to get the exact total at the end of the line, you may have to adjust by a millimetre or two to compensate in places where you’ve rounded things up or down.

10 Measure out the new pattern

Now measure out these distances. For the front and back pieces, measure from the centre front and centre back lines and make a mark; for the other pieces, use your anchor lines as starting points to measure out each distance – now you’ll see why you needed them, and why you needed to measure each side of them separately.

Use whatever notation works for you to make sure you remember where the marks overlap each other and end up swapping places.

11 Draw in the edges

Referring to the original pattern, begin to draw in the curves that form the edges of the pieces. Be patient and remember how these pieces will have to fit together, one to the next.
You may find that the different proportions of your body have altered the shapes of the pieces significantly. If you’re coming out with ugly shaped pieces, consider “robbing Peter to pay Paul”: you can always take a little away from one piece at the front bust and add to another piece at the front bust, or vice versa. One caveat – only give and take within one section, say front bust, or back waist. Robbing from the back hip and giving to the front bust will destroy your perfectly measured proportions! Doing so between, say, front and back waist will skew the side seam and cause more problems than it solves. So stay within sections when begging and borrowing.

Aim to make the pieces closest to the centre front and centre back the most pleasing shape – these will be more on display than the pieces hidden under your arms.

Plus size patterns may come out with big, blocky pieces – since your draft doesn’t have any seam allowances yet, you can simply split pieces into two if you want to, perhaps down anchor lines, and beg and borrow as above to create curves. This may help in fact, giving you more seams where you can adjust the mock-up and accentuate your most beautiful curves!

There are other uses for the begging and borrowing technique too: some historic corsets have a very narrow centre front section, just big enough for the busk. Use this method to adjust the pattern to accommodate your busk perfectly, or to switch between a straight and spoon busk, perhaps.
12 Top and bottom edges

Again, refer to the original in order to help with the top and bottom edges, and use the waist-to-top and waist-to-bottom measurements and lap measurement as your guides.

When making the mock-up later, I recommend making the pieces too long, both top and bottom; draw in an idea of the top and bottom curve on the pattern and pieces by all means, but keep in mind that these will be much easier to make into a perfectly pleasing, undulating edge with a marker pen on the mock-up! You can then transfer those markings back to the pattern, and because the pattern only represents one side of the corset, the edge will come out looking symmetrical on the final garment.

If you’re making corsets for money, doing this with clients may seem unprofessional when you first consider it, but keep in mind that letting them tell you exactly how high or low the edge should be will be “all part of the service” to them, and a way of demonstrating the value of bespoke clothing!

13 Always use a mock-up

However clever one’s pattern drafting is, drawing curves based on a handful of measurements can only ever provide a reasonable approximation of the correct fit.
Making a mock-up of the final corset in sturdy yet inexpensive fabric such as cotton drill, and boning it as in the finished article, is ALWAYS ESSENTIAL in order to provide an opportunity to tweak a little here and a little there.

In no other way can you check the fit of your pattern completely, both around its circumference and up and down the torso.

Don’t forget to secure the bones tightly in the channels, both lengthwise and widthwise, to minimise wrinkling. I think you may be surprised at the resulting fit!
My Big Secret

Right from the time I started seriously making corsets, bridalwear and costume back in 1996, I’ve been a stand-out designer and seamstress.

- I’ve made clothes that continue to attract compliments and jealous jibes for their quality, inside and out…
- I’ve built a successful business based on being able to make my clients look and feel outstanding, not just “unique”…
- I’ve stood out at every event I’ve attended as a peerless costume artist…
- I’ve built a reputation based on always being relied upon to think differently, to innovate, and to take things a step further than the people around me.

Don’t get me wrong: I’m not telling you this to brag or try to impress you. I’m telling you this to stretch you and impress upon you that this is available to you too.

I don’t have any special powers; my artistic skills were considered below average at school; I didn’t even study fashion or costume at college – I was just another Maths teacher-to-be!

But I do have a big secret: a whole sewing box full of secrets, in fact. And hundreds of seamstresses, corsetmakers and costume makers whom I’ve taught and whom I now call my friends and colleagues are, even now, using these secrets to lift themselves and their abilities above the shoulders of the thousands of seamstresses around the world whom they compete with each day.

Even now, they’re realising their creative and artistic dreams – and for some, their dreams of owning and running their own successful businesses.

In this Masterclass I’ve tried to share some sense of the sheer creative momentum that our Big Secret is bringing us right now, today.

I’ve shown you…

- Why you can’t just stand still, making the same tired, plain corsets as everyone else is doing…
- Why a revolution in design is required in the world of corsetmaking…
- Where the resources are to help you do that…
- How to use those resources to make extraordinary corsets that will separate you from the pack and make you feel special and proud.
But making that leap from also-ran to outstanding is not easy – if it was, everyone would be doing it!

But here are three ways to make that jump:

1. You could commit your life totally to the art of corsetmaking, sacrificing time with family and friends to spend 12 or even 18 hours a day scouring the Web and buying every book you can find on corsetmaking, trying to assemble the skills that will make you stand out.

2. You can shell out big bucks to go on college courses – and still spend most of your time being groomed to become a little minnow in a big corporate fashion industry, where the sewing itself is considered to be a pesky manual labour, fit only to be farmed out to Third World factories.

3. Or you can get involved with a small but determined group of people who are totally committed to becoming better corsetmakers, lifting you head and shoulders above the hordes of seamstresses around the world who’ve jumped onto the corsetry bandwagon over the last few years.

For me it’s no contest. The first option is way too much to ask – corsets are just corsets, and life and family are just too precious to sacrifice for that. The second wastes your money and your time and leaves you with little more than a piece of paper and some fierce internal I-must-fit-in-programming that you don’t want.

It was when I decided to go with the third option – to develop my own network of unique, outstanding tools and advisors to help me tear through the fog of information and find the pivotal things I really needed to concentrate on – that everything changed for me. The same will undoubtedly be true for you.

As you may remember, it was in 2003 that I started blogging and sharing my sewing methods on the Internet. Now there are hundreds of thousands of seamstresses, corsetmakers and costumers sharing pictures and details of things they’ve made in forums and on blogs all over the Web. But there are so very many of them; it’s hard to cut through the overwhelming white noise of semi-useful information and find the people who really know what they’re doing and really have something of quality to teach the rest of us.
That was why, in November 2007, I opened a very special website called Your Wardrobe Unlock’d™. Through this site I’ve been able to share my own friends list – introducing readers to all the people I really admire and have learnt huge lessons from. Each month, we produce six new articles, Masterclasses and in-depth, step-by-step how-tos about all aspects of fine historical sewing.

Over the last two years, we’ve covered how you can…

- Bind your corset edges expertly to give a perfect result (especially early corsets with tabbed waistlines)
- Select the right fabric for the right project
- Create beautiful extras, like needlelace cuffs and miniature portrait jewellery
- Draft your very first corset pattern, baby step by baby step (this one’s enormously popular with Math-phobics!)
- Transform bargain basement second hand shoes into gorgeous Cinderella-like silk slippers
- Immediately identify projects and customers you should avoid like the plague, and why (clue: family members can be the worst!)
- Realise your creative dreams by learning how to tackle those really ambitious projects you aspire to

Members of the site have gone on to create extraordinary corsets, dresses, and even tailored suits that they never thought they had in them; some have gained the knowledge and confidence to start that business they’ve dreamt of or make an existing one into a successful venture that makes a real income (and most of all, makes them proud.)

Put simply, it is my burning mission to raise as many creative seamstresses as I can, as high as I can, and make you see what you’re capable of.

As I approach a major milestone birthday, I’ve realised that I can’t change the world alone. I can’t make the world beautiful and raise the value of craftsmanship back to where it should be on my own.
If we’re going to change the world we have to do it together. That means I have to share what I’ve got, spread it out and build a worldwide team who’ll make quality and craftsmanship really valued and important once again.

I am here to pass these skills on to you, and all I ask is that one day, you pass those skills on too. I don’t think I need to explain to you why, in a world full of plastic and mass production, we - you and I - must keep fine craftsmanship alive. And we can do that by re-kindling the spirit of old-fashioned apprenticeship with some very modern technology. So guess what…

My team and I have spent the last six months researching what you need to know, analysing what makes Your Wardrobe Unlock’d special and recreating a new site just for corsetmakers – and it’s ready to start revolutionising your sewing NOW!

And not only do you get to learn every secret… every insight… every trick of the trade…

You’ll ALSO get the chance to ask questions of our writers and contributors… get the answers you need… participate in competitions and challenges… be part of a community dedicated to excellence.

I’ve got a lot more to tell you about Foundations Revealed. But for now, all you need to know is this…

Foundations Revealed:
the Corsetmaker’s Companion
Launch Date October 15th, 2009
Hi Cathy

Well I have just shown my customer out the door. Tonight I did the final fitting on a longline underbust corset - my first commission. And we both cried!

But they were good tears. She is a lovely lady who has had a tough time and is finally focusing on herself. She tried the corset on and burst into tears! She said it was the first time she had felt like a proper woman in years. Which then set me off - I was already close to tears having spent all week panicking that she would try it on and it wouldn't fit and look awful :0)

I should have had more faith because it looked really good, my best so far. Not surprisingly, it was constructed using a wealth of your top tips and tricks. The darts for "mum tums" worked a treat...

So thanks (again)! The odd thing is I am grinning like a cheshire cat, not because the corset was correct, but the effect it had. Something I made did that. Really wasn't expecting it, I had only focused on scenarios where it went wrong. If ever you needed proof of the dramatic impact your website (and wisdom) has on amateur stitchers taking their first steps to becoming a pro then here it is. Because I have stopped pigeon stepping and am taking huge leaps and bounds and am loving every minute of it. I feel like there really aren't any limits anymore, all I have to do is keep pushing myself each day. I made a corset, it was well fitting and professionally made - no errors, no shortcuts or crappy "that will do" solutions. I would be happy for anyone to look it over with a microscope, because I made it right.

Just got to floss the boning channels, attach the lining, eyelets and binding and "ta da" my first professional commission is complete.

Hope I'm not pestering you - just really felt I owed it to you to share.

Laura :0)
On October 15th I will open the doors of a sewing school of which I’m enormously proud.

Look, there are plenty of people out there teaching you how to sew, how to cobble together your first corset, what spiral wires are for… I’ll leave that stuff to them.

We’re going to teach you the things that no-one else will: we’re going to break the advanced techniques down and show you

- Methods and patterns that are so beautiful and practical and so little used that they could change your work (and the world’s reaction to it) overnight.
- How to make a whole sampler of Victorian flossing patterns, recreating them as a reference guide for your work
- How to take corset patterns from real historical examples (we’ve got the best - Jill Salen, whose recent book Corsets has taken the corsetmaking world by storm – to show you how)
- Professional TV and film costume maker Jema Hewitt shares historical corsets from her personal collection – plus their patterns and the construction techniques to recreate them
- Find out once and for all what to charge for your work (I’ll share exactly how I charge for mine and why)
- Challenge yourself to think and grow by taking on our Pattern Challenges
- And of course, much, much more…

I aim for this to be the apprenticeship you always wanted, the education you wish you could have from the Victorian masters themselves. That’s a big mission, and I’d like to humbly ask you if you’ll help me to make it happen.

I don’t for a minute expect the writers coming up with all these killer classes, articles and tutorials to do it for free: they’re giving away their time and their trade secrets and it simply wouldn’t be fair to leave them empty-handed in return. In fact, the project would fail – they simply wouldn’t agree to be involved if there was no reward.

But I also want to make these tools as widely available as possible to people who are just starting out, who are
doing this for a fulfilling hobby, or who are only dreaming of business success at this stage.

On October 15th the door will open a crack to let those who are really committed to their corsetmaking to join Foundations Revealed and take the chance to become one of the best of the best. I want to keep these tools exclusive and keep the class small and friendly, but to encourage you to step through that door and be one of the select few, I’m going to make a very generous offer.

Membership of the site will be only US$9.97 per month for a limited time only, to allow those who really need to be a part of this project to take advantage of the opportunity, even if they are working with a limited income. They will also be able to get an even more discounted rate when signing up for six or twelve months.

And for those of you who are really serious and have an interest in more than just corsetmaking, there will also be a limited time opportunity to sign up to Foundations Revealed AND Your Wardrobe Unlock’d as a Combined Subscription, also at specially discounted rates.

If you’re lucky enough to become a member of this very special community, this will be one of the defining moments of your creative life.

So get to the site and sign up now, mark the date in your diary, and be ready to join the Corsetmaking Revolution at www.FoundationsRevealed.com at 10am EST on October 15th, 2009.

I look forward to sharing this wonderful, exciting, rewarding artistic journey with you!
Be part of the Revolution!

So tell me, what do you think of the Corsetmaking Revolution? I hope you’ll agree that this document was worth your time, was worth trying out, and that you got some value out of it.

But obviously, part of making this Revolution happen is sharing it, and enjoying the buzz of being part of something bigger.

So I hope you’ll do two things right now that’ll help spread the word and bring a little more fine craftmanship into people’s lives.

1. **Our recommend-a-friend tool** makes it really easy for you to tell your friends and spread the word. If you do so, I’ll send you a **Special Bonus… the Next Step in your drafting journey**, where I share details on how to expand what I’ve shown you here and incorporate bust gussets, hip gores or corded panels into your work.

2. Visit the blog and tell me what you think – and tell me what else you’d like me to share with you in the next couple of weeks to help revolutionise your corsetmaking.

Will you do that for me right now? Thank you!

And keep an eye on the blog over the next two weeks for more details about what we’ve got in store on the new site, and more valuable tips and tricks to help revolutionise your corsetmaking!

Best wishes to you, and may all your creative dreams come true!

**CATHY HAY**

Nottingham, UK
September 2009