

In “the Finest Australian Wool”: Foy & Gibson’s Healthy, Comfortable, Wool-Clad Bodies, 1900–1939

Lorinda Cramer 

Gender and Women’s History Research Centre, Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

From the late 19th century, when the Melbourne manufacturer and department store Foy & Gibson began to produce mail order catalogues for country customers, it recognised the potential to sell clothing made of Australian wool. This article explores how Foy & Gibson influenced consumer attitudes towards the natural fibre by encouraging them to feel wool as a next-to-the-skin experience. By focusing on underwear and swimsuits in the catalogues across the first three decades of the 20th century, it offers a historical counterpoint to promotional activities that continue into the present urging consumers to understand the benefits of wearing wool.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 8 April 2023
Accepted 13 August 2023

KEYWORDS

Wool; consumption; health; comfort; gender; Australian-made

When Australian Wool Innovation launched its Feel Merino campaign in 2020, the organisation challenged a “persistent and outdated misconception”: the feel of wool as itchy and suited only to very traditional uses. Framing wool as an innovative performance fibre in its aim to capture a share of the booming sports and athleisure markets, the campaign cast a spotlight on the natural fibre as “soft on your skin no matter the challenge”.¹ Feel Merino was the latest in a move that had intensified across the 20th century as mills, manufacturers, retailers and industry bodies sought to spark an awareness of wool’s diverse uses and superior feel, particularly against the emerging threat posed by synthetic rivals.² It is this “feel” of Australian wool and its uses that animates my discussion of the next-to-the-skin experience, a century before the Feel Merino campaign. I offer this historical counterpoint through a study of the woollen clothing produced by the Melbourne manufacturer and department store Foy & Gibson, to explore how consumer attitudes to wool were shaped in the decades before the enthusiastic embrace of artificial fibres.

CONTACT Lorinda Cramer  lorinda.cramer@acu.edu.au

¹“Feel Merino,” Australian Wool Innovation, <https://www.woolmark.com/performance/feel-merino/> (accessed 8 April 2023); Australian Wool Innovation, “New Marketing Campaign: Feel Merino,” *Beyond the Bale* 85 (2020): 6–8. For more on wool for athleisure wear, see Mark Abernethy, “Demand for Australian Merino Wool on the Rise, Thanks to the Athleisure Market,” *Australian Financial Review*, 12 June 2018, <https://www.afr.com/life-and-luxury/wool-is-fashionable-again-especially-in-the-gym-20180517-h1065k>. For a discussion of the rise of athleisure wear, see Jennifer Craik, “Feeling Premium’: Athleisure and the Material Transformation of Sportswear,” in *Fashion and Materiality: Cultural Practices in Global Contexts*, ed. Heike Jenss and Viola Hofmann (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 214–32.

²For a mid-century example: Melissa Bellanta and Lorinda Cramer, “‘Well-Dressed’ in Suits of Australian Wool: The Global Fiber Wars and Masculine Material Literacy, 1950–1965,” *Fashion Theory* (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2023.2228009>.

Foy & Gibson's mills—referred to as its “two miles of mills” a hundred years ago—dominated the inner-Melbourne suburb of Collingwood.³ Its slogan, “From the sheep's back to yours”, pointed to Foy & Gibson's use of Australian wool worked in these mills, then made into cloth and clothing to be sold from its flagship Smith Street store and, later, other stores in Melbourne and across Australia including Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.⁴ Many shopped in-store, but rural customers turned to Foy & Gibson's mail order catalogues from the 1890s and for decades to follow to make their selections.⁵ The astonishing array of goods illustrated in the catalogues' pages now provide a rich case study into the changing look, style and sartorial sensibilities of Australians, as clothing underwent a radical transformation towards more relaxed dress. They reflect strategies to entice consumers to Foy & Gibson's affordable but good-quality products.⁶ They capture the ways in which Foy & Gibson sought to educate customers on the benefits of wearing wool. The catalogues also reveal how Foy & Gibson encouraged a “Buy Australian” ethos and the promotion of homegrown wool in the period before and during the formation of the country's peak wool body in 1936, the Australian Wool Board—the forerunner to Australian Wool Innovation.

The historical parallels for consumers now and then to “feel merino” shapes the direction I take as I consider the artwork and language Foy & Gibson used to sell wool—Australia's “finest and purest”, in the 1925 winter catalogue's words.⁷ My exploration ranges across three decades, beginning at the turn of the 20th century and ending with the outbreak of the Second World War. Austerity measures and rationing would soon come into play, changing how consumers thought about and obtained clothes.⁸ I trace trends in the mail order catalogues' pages across these years, alert to gendered patterns. I do not attempt, however, to analyse the effectiveness of the promotional messages because that has been done before.⁹ My focus on garments worn directly against the skin—swimsuits and underwear for both men and women (though Foy & Gibson made many other clothes in wool)—helps me to tease apart the urging for consumers to feel wool as part of a sensorial experience materialised on the body.

³Foy & Gibson, *Two Miles of Mills* (Melbourne: Foy & Gibson, ca. 1922). History of Foy & Gibson: Annette Cooper, “Foy & Gibson: From the Sheep's Back to Yours,” *La Trobe Journal* 106 (2021): 6–22.

⁴Foy & Gibson, “*Gibsonia*” *Woollen and Hosiery Mills* (Melbourne: Foy & Gibson, ca. 1921), back cover.

⁵All Foy & Gibson catalogues referred to in this article are held by the University of Melbourne Archives (see also the business records: 1968.0005 and 2007.0062) and State Library Victoria. Many other Australian department stores produced mail order catalogues: Myer Emporium, Anthony Hordern & Sons, and Grace Bros among them. All sold wide-ranging woollen clothes and underclothes. The Myer Emporium also had its own wool mills that made “Myrall” brand underwear, suitings and more. Myer Emporium, *For Autumn & Winter 1927* (1927): 8, 86, 88, 94–5.

⁶Prices for women's clothing, for example, were described as “about half what similar goods made by dressmakers” cost. Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 20 (1902): 15.

⁷Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 71 (1925): inside front cover. Today's superfine merino is a luxury product, though the wool that Foy & Gibson sold in its clothes and underclothes was competitively priced. Its underwear in 1910 was “proved beyond a doubt to be equal to the best imported at about two-thirds of the price”. Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 38 (1910): 69.

⁸For example: Lorinda Cramer and Melissa Bellanta, “Clothes Shall Mark the Man: Wearing Suits in Wartime Australia, 1939–1945,” *Cultural and Social History* 19, no 1 (2022): 57–76; Robert Crawford, “Nothing to Sell?: Australia's Advertising Industry at War, 1939–1945,” *War & Society* 20, no. 1 (2002): 99–124.

⁹*The Draper of Australasia* provided “constructive criticism” on department store catalogues, including Foy & Gibson's: “Make the Advertising Pay,” *Draper of Australasia*, 30 April 1926, 160; “Make the Advertising Pay,” *Draper of Australasia*, 30 June 1927, 268; “Aggressive Sale-Time Advertising,” *Draper of Australasia*, 31 July 1928, 306; “Make Your Advertising Pay,” *Draper of Australasia*, 31 October 1928, 509.

This study is informed by the rich scholarship on advertising's connection with gender, modernity, consumer culture and the cycle of fashion.¹⁰ Even more, it considers the intersection between dress and its feel on the body. Two decades ago, Joanne Entwistle encouraged scholars to consider "dress as embodied practice".¹¹ As work on embodiment, materiality and our material worlds flourished, the focus on interactions between dress and the body as part of tactile, sensorial and affective experience grew. Such scholarship demonstrates how clothing is not simply worn but is felt, shaping our experience of the world.¹² As Rosie Findlay explains, for example, her awareness of her body is heightened when wearing leather pants, making her more conscious of how she moves: "Thus the materiality of the pants *changes* my experience of my legs," she observes, just as her "sense of being in the world and being myself within that world is in some way mediated by my clothes".¹³ Heike Jenss and Viola Hofmann would call this clothing's "intimate material role in the enactment and experience of the body and culture", whereby "feeling the imprint of fabrics and garments on the body" holds the potential to provoke "feelings of desire and excitement ... or experiences of discomfort, self-consciousness, or marginalization".¹⁴

Central to such work is the understanding that clothes are felt through touch, but also impacted by sight, cultural preconceptions, and psychological and social factors.¹⁵ Scholars have indeed investigated the feel—in this multidimensional sense—of synthetic clothes.¹⁶ Most recently, it has been used to shed new light on clothing waste, with Elyse Stanes and Chris Gibson considering the part feel plays in the cycle leading to polyester's discard.¹⁷ It is surprising then that historical scholarship on the feel of wool remains under-developed, particularly when scientific and consumer research now seeks to better understand attitudes to wool and its properties on the body by centring a wearer's relationship to the fibre.¹⁸ For Marie Hebrok and Ingun Grimstad Klepp,

¹⁰For example: Robert Crawford, "Emptor Australis: The Australian Consumer in Early Twentieth Century Advertising Literature," *Australian Economic History Review* 45, no. 3 (2005): 221–329; Robert Crawford, Judith Smart, and Kim Humphery, eds., *Consumer Australia: Historical Perspectives* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2010); Jackie Dickenson, *Australian Women in Advertising in the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Gail Reekie, *Temptations: Sex, Selling and the Department Store* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

¹¹Joanne Entwistle, "Fashion and the Fleishy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice," *Fashion Theory* 4, no. 3 (2000): 323–47.

¹²For example: Lucia Ruggerone, "The Feeling of Being Dressed: Affect Studies and the Clothed Body," *Fashion Theory* 21, no. 5 (2017): 573–93; Sophie Woodward and Tom Fisher, "Fashioning through Materials: Material Culture, Materiality and Processes of Materialization," *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty* 5, no. 1 (2014): 3–22.

¹³Rosie Findlay, "'Such Stuff as Dreams are Made On': Encountering Clothes, Imagining Selves," *Cultural Studies Review* 22, no. 1 (2016): 88–89.

¹⁴Heike Jenss and Viola Hofmann, "Introduction: Fashion and Materiality," in *Fashion and Materiality: Cultural Practices in Global Contexts* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), 1.

¹⁵Marie Hebrok and Ingun Grimstad Klepp, "Wool Is a Knitted Fabric That Itches, Isn't It?," *Critical Studies in Fashion and Beauty* 5, no. 1 (2014): 67–93.

¹⁶For example: Jane Schneider, "In and Out of Polyester: Desire, Disdain and Global Fibre Competitions," *Anthropology Today* 10, no. 4 (1994): 2–10; Susannah Handley, *Nylon: The Manmade Fashion Revolution* (London: Bloomsbury, 1999); Kaori O'Connor, "The Other Half: The Material Culture of New Fibres," in *Clothing as Material Culture*, ed. Susanne Küchler and Daniel Miller (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 41–60. For plastics more broadly, see Tom H. Fisher, "What We Touch, Touches Us: Materials, Affects, and Affordances," *Design Issues* 20, no. 4 (2004): 20–31.

¹⁷Elyse Stanes and Chris Gibson, "Materials That Linger: An Embodied Geography of Polyester Clothes," *Geoforum* 85 (2017): 27–36; Elyse Stanes, "Dressed in Plastic: The Persistence of Polyester Clothes," in *Plastic Legacies: Pollution, Persistence, and Politics*, ed. Trisia Farrelly, Sy Taffel, and Ian Shaw (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2021). For the feel of clothes more broadly, see Elyse Stanes, "Clothes-in-Process: Touch, Texture, Time," *Textile* 17, no. 3 (2019): 224–45.

¹⁸For example: D. P. Bishop, "Fabrics: Sensory and Mechanical Properties," *Textile Progress* 26, no. 3 (1996): 1–62; Maryam Naebe and Bruce A. McGregor, "Comfort Properties of Superfine Wool and Wool/Cashmere Blend Yarns and Fabrics," *Journal of the Textile Institute* 104, no. 6 (2013): 634–40; and Joanne N. Sneddon, Julie A. Lee, and Geoffrey N. Soutar,

appreciating the contours of this relationship involves looking beyond an aversion to wool as “itchy”, to recognise that its material properties are entangled with certain expectations and the cultural shaping of our senses.¹⁹ The layered relationship that existed between wool and the people who wore it therefore drives my discussion.

From Draper to Department Store

Foy & Gibson’s origins stretched decades before those in the early 20th century that form my focus. Encouraged by the explosive news of the Victorian gold discoveries of the mid-19th century, Irish-born draper Mark Foy sailed to Melbourne in 1858.²⁰ He first worked for the draper (and later department store) Buckley & Nunn in Bourke Street. Recognising the prospects for a store of his own on the goldfields, Foy opened businesses in central Victoria’s thriving goldfields towns.²¹ From a store in Castlemaine he sold butter, plus potatoes grown in nearby Lancefield.²² It was with his clothing and drapery store on Sandhurst’s (now Bendigo’s) major thoroughfare, Pall Mall, with partner Robert Bentley, however, that Foy experienced goldfields success.

Bentley and Foy, as the store was named, advertised extensively in the *Bendigo Advertiser*—almost daily from late 1867 on the newspaper’s front page. One advertisement that ran for three months captures key elements of the business: stock that moved quickly, keeping it “fresh, nice, and new”, “reasonable” if not “really low” prices, and gentlemen’s clothing made by the business’s “own tailors in Melbourne”.²³ In mid-1868, Bentley and Foy enlarged their store, selling “colonial-made suits” together with under flannels and Crimean shirts “made on Sandhurst”.²⁴ Crimean shirts, with their low, open neck, made excellent workwear, as diggers had discovered a decade before.²⁵ Some of Bentley and Foy’s stock came from well-known British textile manufacturing centres (foreign goods held cachet on the diggings), yet Australian-made goods held exciting potential. A new black silk produced from Queensland silkworms stocked by the store from November 1868 was evocatively described as “rich, thick, soft, like to the touch of the top of cream in a country dairy”. Bentley and Foy claimed to be “doing the largest trade between Melbourne and the Murray” by then.²⁶ Foy would use similar strategies when he returned to Melbourne shortly after: extensive advertising to keep his goods at the front of customers’ minds, a network of contacts to source quality overseas stock, and an interest in colonial manufacture.

“Exploring Consumer Beliefs about Wool Apparel in the USA and Australia,” *Journal of the Textile Institute* 103, no. 1 (2012): 40–47.

¹⁹Hebrok and Klepp, “Wool Is a Knitted Fabric That Itches, Isn’t It?,” 68.

²⁰Cecily Close, “Foy, Mark (1830–1884),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/foy-mark-3565/text5515> (accessed 8 April 2023). Other sources suggest that Foy arrived in 1859: “The History of Foy and Gibson,” in *Miss Smith Street* (Collingwood: Smith Street Traders’ Association, ca. 1950), 14.

²¹“Summer Fair,” *Gibsonia Gazette* (January 1927): 1; “Store Histories – Foy & Gibson Ltd.,” *Retail Merchandiser* (February 1966): 5.

²²“On Sale,” *Mount Alexander Gazette*, 28 October 1862, 3.

²³First appearing: “Summer Has Arrived,” *Bendigo Advertiser*, 4 November 1867, 1.

²⁴First appearing: “Commercial Intelligence,” *Bendigo Advertiser*, 13 May 1868, 1.

²⁵On diggers’ dress: Margaret Maynard, *Fashioned from Penury: Dress as Cultural Practice in Colonial Australia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 168–70.

²⁶First appearing: “Summer Having Now Fairly Set in,” *Bendigo Advertiser*, 17 November 1868, 1.

The partnership between Mark Foy and Robert Bentley dissolved in 1870. Bentley remained in Sandhurst with the business, while Foy opened a store in Collingwood.²⁷ By 1873, he sold silks from Spitalfields, East London, once the centre of the silk industry. He also described shawls “manufactured in Geelong from honest real wool, without cotton or shoddy mixture”. “Ladies,” Foy implored, “would you kindly call at my establishment and inspect these shawls?”²⁸ His growing interest in selling Victorian-manufactured goods in wool grew at the same time that Foy sought a wider customer base for his Collingwood store. In the *Weekly Times*, he alerted women across Victoria to his wares. Those who wished to see his fabrics could write to request samples. “Thus people residing in the country are placed in the same favourable position” as those in Melbourne, Foy assured.²⁹

Scotsman William Gibson entered as partner in 1883, with the store renamed Foy & Gibson. Though the partnership was short-lived—with Mark Foy handing control to his son Francis, before Francis left the business to open Mark Foy’s in Sydney—the name endured across decades to follow under Gibson’s direction. The 1890s witnessed enormous growth. A store opened in Perth in 1896. A new factory built in Collingwood manufactured socks and other knitted goods. Though the business considered itself “the largest manufacturers and the largest retail distributors in Australia” at the start of the 1890s, a London Office established in 1897 sourced stock from English and European suppliers.³⁰ The Eagley Mills began operating this decade, expanding the woollens produced to blankets and a wide range of cloths, just as Australian woolgrowers were hit by drought and low prices.³¹ Foy & Gibson’s mills, manufacturing a range of woollen products under the “Gibsonia” brand, continued to grow to “the biggest of their kind in the Commonwealth” in the 1920s.³²

“To make the type of woollen garments that can honestly be called first-class,” a booklet produced that decade explained, “the foundation must be good, sound wool.” It went on: “Of all the world’s productions in this valuable staple, Australia can claim the first place for quality”, referring to the dominant place the nation held in the global market as producer of the world’s finest wool.³³ Foy & Gibson knit Australian wool into hosiery and underwear, and sold it as yarn for home knitting. It produced 50 different cloths for men’s and women’s wear: velours, hapsacs, twills, check and fancy tweeds, heavier-weight cloths for coats and mantles, and men’s suitings in different weights for Australia’s varying climate.³⁴ By the end of the 1920s, Foy & Gibson used 2,900,000 pounds of wool per annum to produce an astonishing 8,100,000 miles of “Gibsonia” woollen and worsted yarns.³⁵ Three-thousand employees worked in the mills to manufacture these “all-Australian woollens, garments, and

²⁷Foy & Gibson, *Welcome to Foy's* (Melbourne: Foy & Gibson, 1963), 1.

²⁸First appearing: “Attractive Display of Drapery,” *Age*, 26 April 1873, 3.

²⁹First appearing: “To the Ladies of Victoria,” *Weekly Times*, 22 March 1873, 16.

³⁰Foy and Gibson’s Winter Fair,” *Argus*, 10 July 1891, 1; “Foy and Gibson’s Winter Fair,” *Age*, 10 July 1891, 1.

³¹David Merrett and Simon Ville, “Industry Associations and Non-Competitive Behaviour in Australian Woolmarketing: Evidence from the Melbourne Woolbrokers’ Association, 1890–1939,” *Business History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 517–18.

³²Foy & Gibson, *Two Miles of Mills*, 7.

³³Foy & Gibson, *Two Miles of Mills*, 7.

³⁴Foy & Gibson, *Two Miles of Mills*, 27.

³⁵Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue, Adelaide* (1929): 16c. (This Adelaide catalogue does not bear a print number; however, it is likely to be 46 given the Autumn and Winter 1930 catalogue is 48, and there would have been a Spring and Summer catalogue between them.)

fabrics”.³⁶ Though Foy & Gibson’s operations comprised far more than wool—as haberdashers, furriers, milliners, dressmakers, tailors, hatters, glovers, boot and shoe manufacturers, it also dealt in leather goods, household furniture and fittings, iron-mongery, ornaments and more—the natural fibre remained at the business’s core for decades.³⁷

“Australian Throughout—From Greasy Wool to Finished Article”

Wool was critical to Australia’s economy across these decades.³⁸ Formalising the promotion and protection of the natural fibre became increasingly urgent as substitutes developed. Some commentators remained unperturbed in the 1920s. “I have never been the least concerned as to the effect of manufacture of any substitute for wool,” one expert in 1927 explained, “and I do not believe that all the ingenuity of man will ever be able to evolve a substance which will even remotely resemble wool.”³⁹ Others would call this attitude “apathetic indolence”, arguing for Australian Government intervention in targeted research and development as “one of its prime duties”.⁴⁰ After years of discussion, a statutory body representing the nation’s woolgrowers, the Australian Wool Board, was established to spearhead wool promotion and coordinate scientific research.⁴¹

The first “man-made” fibres, cellulosic fibres made into rayon, had been introduced from the turn of the 20th century. Resembling silk, rayon flourished from the 1920s.⁴² Short-lived wool alternatives were also tested. Substitutes such as the Italian-developed “sniafil” and German-created “woolstra”, both incorporating wood fibres with wool, “displac[ed] wool to a considerable extent throughout the world” in the 1920s and 1930s, Australia’s textile trade journal announced.⁴³ Experimentation with wool substitutes grew further during the Second World War.⁴⁴ Japan, then one of Australia’s largest wool purchasers, attempted to overcome wartime shortages by testing a “wool” made from seaweed.⁴⁵ It also trialled another “revolutionary advance”: a wool alternative made from soybean.⁴⁶ The first true synthetic fibres, made from oil and coal products,

³⁶Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue*, Adelaide 48 (1930): inside front cover.

³⁷*The Companies Acts, Companies Limited by Shares, Memorandum and Articles of Association of Foy & Gibson Proprietary Limited* (Melbourne: Anderson, Gowan Pty Ltd, 1936), 3–4.

³⁸For a small sample of a much larger body of research, see Charles Massy, *The Australian Merino: The Story of a Nation* (North Sydney: Random House, 2007, rep. 1990); David Merrett and Simon Ville, “Accounting for Nonconvergence in Global Wool Marketing before 1939,” *Business History Review* 89 (2015): 229–53; Kosmas Tsokhas, *Markets, Money and Empire: The Political Economy of the Australian Wool Industry* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press, 1990); Simon Ville and David Merrett, “Too Big to Fail: Explaining the Timing and Nature of Intervention in the Australian Wool Market, 1916–1991,” *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 62, no. 3 (2016): 337–52.

³⁹Reviewer, “Wool at the Moment,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 2, no. 2 (14 April 1927): 106.

⁴⁰“The Wool Market,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 2, no. 1 (15 March 1927): 8–9.

⁴¹Australian Wool Board, *First Annual Report of the Australian Wool Board, Dated 31st July, 1937* (Canberra: L. F. Johnston, Commonwealth Government Printer, 1937), 5, 7. For Australian Wool Board wool promotional activities, see Tiziana Ferrero-Regis, “From Sheep to Chic: Reframing the Australian Wool Story,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2020): 48–64; Prudence Black and Anne Farren, “The Wool Industry in Australia,” *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, Volume 7, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands*, ed. Margaret Maynard (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2010), 100–5.

⁴²Donald Coleman, “Man-Made Fibres before 1945,” *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, Vol. 2, ed. David Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 942–44.

⁴³“News of the Day,” *Age*, 8 January 1926, 8; “New Textiles: Germany’s Substitutes,” *Sun*, 29 August 1934, 13; “Wool Publicity,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 10, no. 12 (15 February 1936): 550.

⁴⁴Madelyn Shaw and Trish FitzSimons, “Fabric of War: The Lost History of the Global Wool Trade,” *Selvedge* 90 (2019): 10–18.

⁴⁵“Wool’ from Seaweed,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 14, no. 1 (15 March 1939): 47.

⁴⁶“Synthetics versus Wool: Test Tube Challenge to Merino,” *Pix*, 11 December 1943, 27.

were produced in the 1940s, beginning with nylon. Polyester and acrylic entered the market shortly after.⁴⁷ These artificial fibres marked a turning point in what clothing was made from, with their popularity skyrocketing in the mid-century period.⁴⁸

Some, however, identified a bigger threat during the decades I discuss: not synthetics or wool alternatives but the production of “shoddy”. An inferior cloth to that made from virgin wool, shoddy was adulterated with reconditioned wool, wool waste or other matter.⁴⁹ The Union Knitting Mills in Coburg assured consumers of its exclusive use of virgin wool for underwear and swimsuits, doing so in response to “a great amount of material” that emerged in the 1930s sold as “All Wool”, though it was in fact “made from waste material”.⁵⁰ This example indicates the slippery use of the word “wool”. A call for legislation to protect the name emerged in an effort to prevent consumer deception, though debate raged over what could be included in a definition of “pure wool” or “all wool”.⁵¹ Taken literally, this definition might extend to low-grade cloth made from reclaimed wool including rags. It was therefore no assurance of quality when “wool” had the potential to be applied to the finest worsted cloths or the cheapest shoddy.⁵² The introduction of textile labelling legislation by state governments was a first step.⁵³ It took years, however, to be put into operation while the Australian Government amended customs regulations to introduce similar compulsory labelling for imported textiles.⁵⁴ In the meantime, the Australian Wool Board remained deeply concerned that consumers were “bewildered by the diversity” of available textiles and their fibre content.⁵⁵

Interest in promoting goods of local manufacture made from Australian wool grew from the turn of the century. The Sydney department store Gowing Bros encouraged its customers with the slogan “Australian Wool for Australian People”.⁵⁶ The Australian Knitting Mills promoted its Golden Fleece Underwear as “locally made for loyal Australians”.⁵⁷ Foy & Gibson dressed its windows with all-wool “Gibsonia” products to remind passers-by that “Australian made deserves your trade”.⁵⁸ It extended this message in its catalogues. Its goods (which were “made by Australians from the best Australian wool”,

⁴⁷Coleman, “Man-Made Fibres before 1945,” 933; Jeffrey Harrop, “Man-Made Fibres since 1945,” *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles*, Vol. 2, ed. David Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 950; “Product like Silk Made from Coal, Air, Water,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 14, no. 2 (1939): 58.

⁴⁸Regina Lee Blaszczyk, “Styling Synthetics: DuPont’s Marketing of Fabrics and Fashions in Postwar America,” *Business History Review* 80, no. 3 (2006): 485–528; Handley, *Nylon*; Schneider, “In and Out of Polyester,” 4.

⁴⁹House of Representatives, *Official Hansard*, No. 38, 20 September 1944, 1087. See also: Hannah Rose Shell, *Shoddy: From Devil’s Dust to the Renaissance of Rags* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

⁵⁰“Wool Adulteration: Practical Step by Manufacturer,” *Draper of Australasia* 39, no. 7 (1939): 72; “Union Knitting Mills,” *Draper of Australasia* 40, no. 10 (1939): iii. The Australian Wool Board’s first annual report recognised this problem: Australian Wool Board, *First Annual Report of the Australian Wool Board*, 6.

⁵¹“Name of ‘Wool,’” *Textile Journal of Australia* 14, no. 6 (1939): 254–55.

⁵²“Defining Pure Wool Goods,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 14, no. 6 (1939): 267.

⁵³For example, see Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, *Textile Products Labelling Act 1945*, <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/pdf/asmade/act-1945-13> (accessed 8 April 2023).

⁵⁴“Measures to Prevent Fraud in Woollens,” *Sun*, 20 April 1944, 2; “Wool Board Critical on Textiles Labelling,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 October 1952, 2; Australian Wool Board, *Annual Report 1952–53* (Melbourne: Australian Wool Board, 1953), 5, 8–9.

⁵⁵Australian Wool Board, *Annual Report 1950–51* (Melbourne: Australian Wool Board, 1951), 8.

⁵⁶For example, the Gowing Bros bill of sale and self-measurement form in the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, <https://collection.maas.museum/object/251548> and <https://collection.maas.museum/object/159874> (accessed 8 April 2023).

⁵⁷“Golden Fleece All Australian Underwear,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 2, no. 9 (15 November 1927): back cover.

⁵⁸“Empire Shopping Week in West Australia,” *Draper of Australasia*, 31 July 1930, 349.

Foy & Gibson assured) were “Australian throughout—from greasy wool to finished article”.⁵⁹ The catalogues encouraged consumers not simply to wear Australian wool, however, but also to think about the bodily experience of the natural fibre in order to better understand its health benefits.

Healthy in Wool

Wool-clad bodies were healthy bodies, or so Foy & Gibson’s catalogues promised. “Ideal underwear must be porous and absorbent,” the 1910 winter catalogue explained to women customers. “Our Natural Wool Underwear is noted for the high pitch of perfection to which these two points have been brought,” it continued, “thus giving free passage to all exhalations from the skin, a point most essential to the maintenance of good health.”⁶⁰ These exhalations might be bodily oils or sweat, though the suggestion that either of the women illustrated on the page might perspire seemed unlikely (see [Figure 1](#)). Both wore combinations: underwear joined at the waist. One stood with her hand gently on her hip, toes pointed in heeled shoes and body gently angled. The second—drawn in the distinctive s-shaped silhouette of that decade achieved through foundation garments that started low on the bust and pushed the hips back—displayed the combinations’ back.⁶¹ That wool was a healthy next-to-the-skin choice was critical in this body-hugging form, where the interface between flesh and fibre extended from neck to knee.

Wool encased much of the man’s body too. Illustrations of men’s “under pants” that extended to the ankle and buttoned at the fly appeared in the 1910 winter catalogue. “Singlets” also featured, though not as the sleeveless garment we now know but with sleeves to the wrist and a button placket at the neck.⁶² A sole figure modelled combinations (see [Figure 2](#)). His stance was strong and square, though the artwork feels surprisingly intimate. The state of undress reminds us that even though this first layer is “frequently forgotten precisely because it typically lies underneath everything else”, it is nonetheless valuable. “One has to make explicit opportunities to reflect on the daily practice of dressing, of routinely selecting and stepping into underpants, to probe the roles played out in this garment,” Prudence Black and colleagues assert.⁶³

The bodies illustrated in the 1910 catalogue became even more gendered in years to come, both in the way they were posed and as props were introduced: pipes and cigarettes

⁵⁹Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 67 (1923–24): 107; Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 38 (1910): 69; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 69 (1924): 125; and Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue, Brisbane* (1929): 35.

⁶⁰Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 38 (1910): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 39 (1910–11): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 41 (1911–12): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 42 (1912): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 43 (1912–13): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 44 (1913): 26. Men’s underwear was likewise described in these terms: Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 55 (1918–19): 73.

⁶¹Lydia Edwards, *How to Read a Dress: A Guide to Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 20th Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 123–27.

⁶²Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 38 (1910): 69.

⁶³Prudence Black et al., “What Lies Beneath? Thoughts on Men’s Underpants,” *Critical Studies in Men’s Fashion* 1, no. 2 (2014): 134. For more of the layers beneath, specifically singlets, see Jess Berry, “The Underside of the Undershirt: Australian Masculine Identity and Representations of the Undershirt in the ‘Chesty Bond’ Comic-Strip Advertisements,” *Critical Studies in Men’s Fashion* 1, no. 2 (2014): 147–59; Lorinda Cramer, “Rethinking Men’s Dress through Material Sources: The Case Study of a Singlet,” *Australian Historical Studies* 52, no. 3 (2021): 420–42.

Pure Natural Wool Underclothing.

In no garments worn by ladies is good fit so important as in Combinations; badly cut they are uncomfortable and spoil the fit of every garment worn over them; well cut they are easy and comfortable and the most satisfactory of all underwear.

Selling direct to the wearer we have learned just what is wanted in Natural Wool Garments, and special care has been taken to make them right in every detail, even down to the trimmings and buttons, and fit, shape and style are perfect.

The **Softness and Elasticity** make garments manufactured from it the Ideal Underwear for our variable climate, with the additional advantage that they never lose their shape or comfortable fit until completely worn out. Ideal underwear must be **porous and absorbent**. Our Natural Wool Underwear is noted for the high pitch of perfection to which these two points have been brought, thus giving free passage to all exhalations from the skin, a point most essential to the maintenance of good health. Another point is the **tendency of woollen goods to shrink**. This we have been at special pains to guard against, as every yard of our Natural Wool Web is thoroughly shrunk as soon as it leaves the weaving machine. Garments washed according to the following instructions are practically non-shrinking.

DIRECTIONS FOR WASHING.

Into two gallons of warm (not hot) soap water add one spoonful of cloudy ammonia. This will remove all grease and perspiration without rubbing. After lightly wringing, pass through two separate quantities of luke-warm water. Dry in the open air.

NOTE.—1. *Don't use Hot Water.* 2. *Don't Rub or they will shrink.*

Our Natural Wool Underwear is made in four weights, suited in every respect to the varying seasons of the year.

LADIES' COMBINATIONS.

B 1. Light Summer Weight.

	Short Sl.	Long Sl.
S. Women's	7/11	8/6
Women's	8/6	8/11
O.S. Women's	8/11	9/6

Ribbed Knees, closed, 2/- extra.
Smocked Knees, open, 3/- extra.
Smocked Knees, closed, 5/- extra.

B 2. Medium Winter Weight.

	Short Sl.	Long Sl.
S. Women's	10/6	11/6
Women's	11/6	12/6
O.S. Women's	12/6	13/6

Ribbed Knees, closed, 2/- extra.
Smocked Knees, open, 3/- extra.
Smocked Knees, closed, 5/- extra.

F. Heavy Winter Weight.

	Short Sl.	Long Sl.
S. Women's	12/6	13/6
Women's	13/6	14/6
O.S. Women's	14/6	15/6

Ribbed Knees, closed, 3/- extra.
Smocked Knees, open, 4/- extra.
Smocked Knees, closed, 6/- extra.

LADIES' VESTS.

B 1. Light Summer Weight.

	Short Sl.	Long Sl.
S. Women's	4/11	5/6
Women's	5/6	5/11
O.S. Women's	5/11	6/6

B 2. Medium Winter Weight.

	Short Sl.	Long Sl.
S. Women's	6/6	6/11
Women's	6/11	7/6
O.S. Women's	7/6	7/11

F. Heavy Winter Weight.

	Short Sl.	Long Sl.
S. Women's	7/6	7/11
Women's	7/11	8/6
O.S. Women's	8/6	8/11

N.B.—We make B 8 quality a heavier material if required.



LADIES' UNDERSKIRTS.

B 1. Light Summer Weight.

	Women's.	O.S. Women's.
Open	6/11	8/11
Closed	9/11	10/9

B 1. Light Weight.
Frill and Lace Edging.

	Women's.	O.S. Women's.
Open	10/9	11/9
Closed	13/9	14/9

LADIES' KNICKERS.

B 1. Light Weight.
Ribbed Knee Bands.

	Women's.	O.S. Women's.
Open	7/6	8/6
Closed	7/6	8/6

B 2. Medium Weight.

	Women's.	O.S. Women's.
Open	8/11	9/11
Closed	8/11	9/11



Closed Combinations.

LADIES' KNICKERS.

B 1. Light Weight.
Smocked Knee Bands, Edged Lace.

	Women's.	O.S. Women's.
Open	9/11	10/9
Closed	9/11	10/9

B 2. Medium Weight.

	Women's.	O.S. Women's.
Open	11/6	12/9
Closed	11/6	12/9



Infant's Night Dress.

FOY & GIBSON PROPRIETARY LIMITED, SMITH ST., COLLINGWOOD.

Figure 1. Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue 38* (1910): 69. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

for men, for example, redolent of masculine ease.⁶⁴ The gendering of the catalogues was further revealed in the ways they pitched their messages. The authors of sales literature believed that women consumed emotionally or were “always ready to devour bargain announcements”. Men, by contrast, made their selections rationally after asking “why”

⁶⁴For more on the gendered rendering of bodies in mail order catalogues, see Reekie, *Temptations*, 137–42.

Pure Natural Wool Underwear.

69

WE manufacture these Goods of the purest and best Wool obtainable. The garments are beautifully made, and if washed according to the instructions we supply, are practically non-shrinking. We recommend to those in search of perfect underwear, suited in every respect to the Australian climate, our Quality B2, which is equal in all points to any imported natural wool at twice the price.



Boy's Combinations.



Gentlemen's Pyjama Suit.



Boy's Singlet.



Knitted Wool Body Belt.



Gentlemen's Combinations

Our own
Manufacture
from start to
finish.

Proved
beyond a
doubt to be
equal to the
best imported
at about
two-thirds
of the price.

The Best
Underwear for
all seasons :
Spring,
Summer,
Autumn and
Winter.

Fits the body
with
every degree
of comfort.

Recom-
mended by all
the leading
Physicians.



Gentlemen's Singlet.



Gentlemen's Double-
breasted Singlet.



Gent's Under Pants.

Natural Wool Pants (as illustrated)—

	SIZES—SM. MEN'S. OS. EX. O.S. EX. EX. O.S.				
	Waist, 34in.	36in.	40in.	42in.	44in.
No. 59015. Quality B1—Fine ...	5/3	5/6	6/1	6/6	7/-
No. 59016. „ B2—Medium ...	6/6	7/-	7/6	8/-	8/6
No. 59017. „ B3—Heavy ...	9/-	9/6	10/-	11/-	12/-
No. 59018. „ B5—Extra Heavy ...	10/-	10/6	11/6	12/6	13/6
No. 59019. „ B2—Double Fronts ...	7/6	8/-	8/6	9/-	9/6

Men's Natural Wool Singlets, Long or Half Sleeves (as illustrated)—

	Chest, 34in. 36in. 40in. 42in. 44in.				
	No. 59020 Quality B1—Fine ...	5/3	5/6	6/-	6/6
No. 59021 „ B2—Medium ...	6/6	7/-	7/6	8/-	8/6
No. 59022. „ B3—Heavy ...	9/-	9/6	10/-	11/-	12/-
No. 59023. „ B5—Extra Heavy ...	10/-	10/6	11/6	12/6	13/6
No. 59024. „ B2—D'ble Breasted ...	7/6	8/-	8/6	9/-	9/6

Men's Natural Wool Combinations (as illustrated)—

	Chest, 34 in.	36 in.	40 in.	42 in.	44 in.
No. 59025 Quality B2—Medium—	12/9	13/6	14/3	15/-	15/9

Boys' Natural Wool Knickers—SIZES, Waist 26 28 30 32

No. 59026, Quality B2—Medium

Youths' Natural Wool Pants—Waist, 28 in. 30 in. 32 in.

No. 59027, Quality B2—Medium ... 5/6 6/- 6/6

Boys' Natural Wool Singlets, Long or Half Sleeves—(as illustrated)

SIZES	3	4	5	6	7	8	Youths.
No. 59028. Quality B2—Medium	3/3	3/6	3/9	4/-	4/3	4/6	5/-

Boys' Natural Wool Combinations, Long or Half Sleeves—(as illustrated)

SIZES	3	4	5	6	7	8
No. 59029. Quality B2—Medium	4/6	4/9	5/3	5/9	6/3	7/-

Men's Natural Wool Overshirts—No. 59080. Double-Breasted, button on shoulder, Quality B2, Men's, 14½ to 15½, 11/6; 16½ to 17, 12/3; 17½ to 18½, 13/-

Men's Natural Wool Pyjamas, SIZES 4 5 6 7

No. 59081 Quality B2— 19/- 19/9 20/6 21/6

Knitted Wool Body Belt, No. 59082, 1/9

Figure 2. Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue 38* (1910): 26, 69. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

they should purchase.⁶⁵ Men, but not women, were told in the 1910 catalogue that wool was “recommended by all the leading Physicians”, for example.⁶⁶ Later catalogues spoke

⁶⁵“Reason Why’ Copy,” *Draper of Australasia*, 31 March 1927, 115; Reekie, *Temptations*, 176.

⁶⁶Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue 38* (1910): 69; Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue 54* (1918): 81.

directly to male consumers. “Men!”, the 1935 autumn and winter catalogue prompted them, “You can’t afford to take risks! You must wear wool next to your skin.”⁶⁷

In other respects, however, the language used to underpin the health benefits of wearing wool underclothing crossed between men’s and women’s pages. Indeed, the *Draper of Australia* suggested that the best catalogues should identify “everything that can be said in their favour ... so that the reader has before her a word-picture of the garments as well as the illustrations”.⁶⁸ The prospect of “Better Health” for both men and women became more explicitly tied to what we now recognise as wool’s thermo-regulating properties in the catalogues across years to follow.⁶⁹ They counselled women that wearing all-wool undergarments kept the body “at a natural comfortable warmth; fresh air is transmitted evenly and regularly to the skin, perspiration is absorbed quickly, and there is far less likelihood of catching chill or cold”.⁷⁰ Men received similar advice.⁷¹ Wool prevented winter chills, though it was also “Healthiest for Summertime” and ideal for changeable weather.⁷² “Sudden cool changes do not affect wearers of All Wool Underwear so readily as those wearing other types,” Foy & Gibson assured its customers.⁷³

Foy & Gibson’s connection between good health and pure, natural fibres was not new to the 20th century. Linen underwear had been worn for health and hygiene reasons since the early modern period, linked with concerns around how often one should bathe the body.⁷⁴ By the final quarter of the 19th century, wool underwear was favoured as part of the rational dress movement advocated by doctors including Gustav Jaeger.⁷⁵ Jaeger promoted the health benefits of the natural fibre for the way “perspiration passes freely away through pure, porous wool”, unlike other cloths that “repress[ed] the exhalation”.⁷⁶ When wool underclothing was sold as hygienic but perspiration moved through it, proper washing was important. Jaeger and other proponents offered precise advice for doing so.⁷⁷ So did Foy & Gibson, with the catalogues stepping through the recommended process to “remove all Grease and Perspiration”. The purity of its wool was further underlined with the guarantee that “We Use No Chemical Processes which rob the Wool of its virtues”.⁷⁸ This pure, natural wool protected the body it hugged.

In the first decades of the 20th century, ideas around health, hygiene and the Australian body had also transformed with a growing interest in physical culture. The Women’s League of Health and Beauty peaked in popularity in Australia in the 1930s. The league’s

⁶⁷Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* (1935): 37.

⁶⁸“Monthly Advertising Review,” *Draper of Australasia*, 27 April 1912, 165.

⁶⁹Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 66 (1923): 94.

⁷⁰Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 67 (1923–24): 66; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 69 (1924): 73.

⁷¹Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 67 (1923–24): 106.

⁷²Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 77 (1928): 69; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 67 (1923–24): 67; and Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 69 (1924): 73.

⁷³Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 73 (1926): 76; Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 74 (1926–27): 76.

⁷⁴Susan North, *Sweet and Clean? Bodies and Clothes in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁷⁵Shaun Cole, *The Story of Men’s Underwear* (New York: Parkstone International, 2011), 52–53.

⁷⁶Gustav Jaeger, *Dr Jaeger’s Health Culture*, enlarged and revised ed., trans. and ed. Lewis R. S. Tomalin (London: Waterlow and Sons Limited, 1887), 117. Jaeger went further, insisting it was “not enough to wear wool next to the skin, and any other material over it”. Rather, only wool should be worn to permit exhalations when “the noxious portion of the exhalation settles in the vegetable fibre”. Jaeger, *Dr Jaeger’s Health Culture*, 118.

⁷⁷Cole, *The Story of Men’s Underwear*, 54.

⁷⁸Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 57 (1919–20): 77; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 80 (1929–30): 71; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue, Adelaide* 48 (1930): 64.

philosophy and exercise system set out to improve women's physical health, encouraging fitness and vitality as the foundation of beauty.⁷⁹ Similarly, the national fitness program saw physical activity and the culture of healthy bodies rise from the late 1930s for both men and women as part of a project of modernity.⁸⁰ Publications such as *Withrow's Physical Culture* magazine further encouraged movement and exercise. "Health is what makes perfect the physical in man and woman—the light step, the pink cheek, the pure skin, the clear eye, the sweet breath, the white teeth, the powerful grasp of the hand, the firm muscle and the perfect form," Walter Withrow described for readers.⁸¹

It was in this context that Foy & Gibson's swimsuits found a market connecting wool with a different kind of healthy body from that of underwear. "Diving, Plunging, and Dipping into the foaming waters of the surf gives one a rejuvenated feeling of glorious lively youth," a writer for the *Gibsonia Gazette* explained in 1926, describing Australia's growing adoration of sea bathing and beach culture as a site of healthy leisure.⁸² Foy & Gibson recognised the potential for making and selling swimsuits, as did plenty of others including those sold under the Speedo, Jantzen, Golden Fleece, Black Lance labels and more.⁸³ By the time Foy & Gibson's swimsuits were "used by leading life-saving clubs" in 1928, the surf lifesaver had solidified as a national icon.⁸⁴ The timing was critical occurring in the aftermath of First World War servicemen's return, some suffering ongoing physical or psychological trauma.⁸⁵ Australia's lifesavers represented what Kay Saunders has described as flawless heroes during a time in which Australia reeled and recovered from war.⁸⁶

Beach bathing was "the privilege of all and the monopoly of none", the *Gibsonia Gazette* declared.⁸⁷ Swimsuits illustrated against the backdrop of this democratic space at the water's edge confirmed this, as did the change in bathing wear. Pre-First World War bathing costumes for women consisting of loose, belted gowns that finished at the knee, with legs modestly covered by bloomers and knitted hosiery, and men's suits were in the Canadian style (Figures 3 and 4).⁸⁸ In years to follow, however, wool's elastic properties provided not only new ways of seeing the healthy body but also new ways of being healthy. Briefer knitted woollen swimsuits entered the market in the 1920s. A range of styles introduced in quick succession hugged the body tightly, revealing

⁷⁹Jill Julius Matthews, "They Had Such a Lot of Fun: The Women's League of Health and Beauty between the Wars," *History Workshop* 30, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 22–54.

⁸⁰Charlotte Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935–1960* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2011).

⁸¹Walter E. Withrow, "The Editor's Foreword," *Withrow's Physical Culture Magazine* (1920): 5.

⁸²Dame Fashion, "The Flight of Fashion, Month by Month, December 1926," *Gibsonia Gazette* 4 (December 1926): 6. The *Gibsonia Gazette* combined "home hints" with its catalogue pages. According to the *Draper of Australasia*, it was so strong in "the technique and essentials of good advertising" that they could "offer no suggestions for improvement". See "Make the Advertising Pay," *Draper of Australasia*, 31 May 1927, 228.

⁸³For example: Douglas Booth, "Swimming, Surfing and Surf-Lifesaving," in *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, ed. Wray Vamplex and Brian Stoddart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 231–54; Jennifer Craik, "Swimwear, Surf-wear, and the Bronzed Body in Australia," *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, Volume 7, Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands*, ed. Margaret Maynard (Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2010), 113–20.

⁸⁴Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 78 (1928): 81; Kay Saunders, "'Specimens of Superb Manhood': The Lifesaver as National Icon," *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, no. 56 (1998): 96–105.

⁸⁵Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996); Marina Larrison, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009); Saunders, "'Specimens of Superb Manhood'," 96–7.

⁸⁶Saunders, "'Specimens of Superb Manhood'," 97.

⁸⁷Dame Fashion, "The Flight of Fashion, Month by Month, December 1926," *Gibsonia Gazette* 4 (1926): 6.

⁸⁸Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 41 (1911–12): 15; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 43 (1912–13): 84.



Figure 3. Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue 41* (1911–12): 15 (detail). Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

its contours while exposing more of its flesh. By 1926, “Gibsonia” swimsuits included the men’s “Portsea” style, which was “secured by a patent belt”.⁸⁹ The belt held swimsuits firmly in place while wearers moved through the surf. This fixture was important when wet wool was known to sag. Belts featured on men’s and women’s styles across the decades to follow, encouraging active beach use, despite the catalogues’ illustrations,

⁸⁹Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue 74* (1926–27): 74.

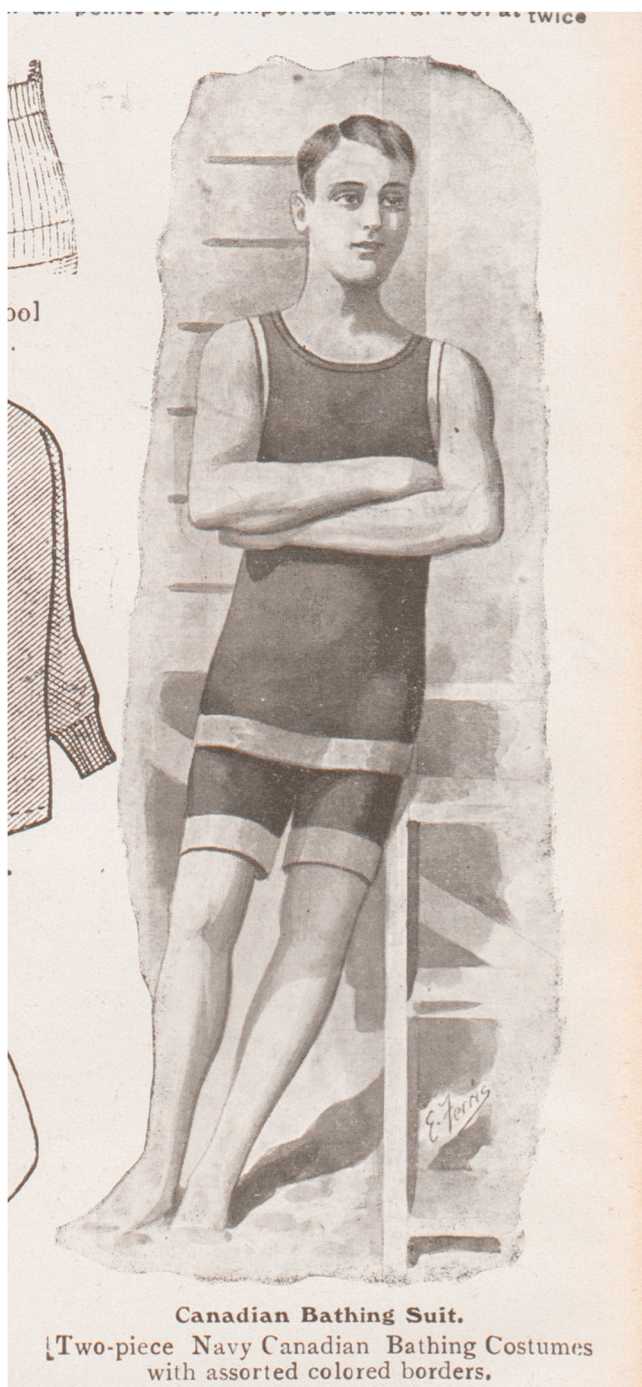


Figure 4. Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 43 (1912–13): 84 (detail). Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

28A Foy & Gibson Pty. Ltd. Smith Street, Collingwood

The Season's Smartest in Bathing Gowns

28A01—Joined Canadian Knitted Wool Bathers, trimmed jazz wool bands, belt and buckle, 22/6.

28A02—Smart Bathers, in woven wool, with shippings, joined Canadian: vieux-rose and black, jade and fawn, saxe and black, grey and orange, black and white, cinnamon and saxe, grey and red, 19/6; O.S., 21/-.

28A03—Woven Wool Bathers, joined Canadian: vieux-rose, black, cinnamon, jade, terra, red, saxe, navy, black: S.W., 11/9; W., 12/9; O.S., 14/9.

28A04—Smart Two-Tone Bathers, in woven wool: saxe and fawn, grey and vieux-rose, grey and orange, terracotta and fawn, 14/9.

28A05—Up-to-date 2-Piece Bathers, in woven wool, smartly trimmed, in saxe and fawn, vieux-rose and black, black and white, jade and black, 22/6; O.S., 24/6.

28A06—“Gibsonia” Woven-Wool Bathers, in two-tone effects, joined Canadian: saxe and fawn, navy and white, jade and black, vieux-rose and black: S., 14/4; O.S., 16/9.

28A07—Latest Style Joined Canadian Woven-Wool Bathers, inlet points, in contrasting colors: black and jade, saxe and fawn, grey and vieux-rose, cinnamon and fawn, grey and orange, grey and jade: S.W., 16/9; W., 17/9.

28A08—Smart Bathers, in knitted jazz wool, trimmed plain color, joined Canadian, belt and buckle, 25/6.

28A09—“Gibsonia” Knitted Wool Bathers, inlet colored bands, all colors, 22/6.

28A10—Latest idea in Ladies' Bathers, “Sunny Beach,” woven wool, two-piece garment; top in jade, saxe, henna or any color; knickers in navy, finished with belt and buckle, 17/9.

28A11—Smart Woven Wool Joined Canadian Bathers, trimmed contrasting colors, belt at waist: jade and black, saxe and fawn, henna and fawn, black and white, 19/6.

28A12—Woven Cotton Bathers, navy with colored bands, joined Canadian: S.W., 5/11; W., 6/11; O.S., 7/11; XOS., 9/11.

28A13—Smart Bathers, in woven wool, joined Canadian, small under-arm sleeves, trimmed narrow bands, in contrasting colors, 21/-; O.S., 22/6; henna, saxe, black, vieux-rose and jade.

Sent Freight Free to Any Address in Victoria

Figure 5. Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue 74* (1926-27): 28A. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

which contrasted beach experiences: women’s gentle movement unlike men’s action on the sand (Figures 5 and 6).⁹⁰

⁹⁰This corresponds with Reekie’s finding that men appeared active in mail order catalogues “in contrast to women who appeared to be almost exclusively creatures of leisure”. Reekie, *Temptations*, 140.

Foy & Gibson Pty. Ltd. Smith Street, Collingwood 74A

BATHING SUITS



7401A.—Men's "Gibsonia" All-wool Two-piece Bathing Costumes, with colored facings, no sleeves; chest 34, 16/-; 36, 17/-; 38, 18/-; 40, 19/-; 42, 20/-; 44, 21/-; 46, 22/6; 48, 23/6; 50in., 24/6; with sleeves, 1/3 extra.

7402a.—Men's "Gibsonia" "Portsea" Bathers, all-wool. An ideal garment for bathing and beach wear, consisting of a close-fitting combination and loose-fitting knickers, secured by patent belt; in royal and black, or black and white; no sleeves; 24, 18/-; 26, 19/6; 28, 20/3; 30, 21/-; 32, 22/6; 34in., 24/-.

7402a.—Men's "Gibsonia" Two-piece Wool and Cotton Cashmere Bathing Costumes, colored facings, no sleeves; or in joined style, as preferred by life-saving clubs; chest 34, 13/6; 36, 14/6; 38, 15/6; 40, 16/6; 42, 17/6; 44, 18/6; 46, 19/6; 48, 20/6; 50in., 21/6.

7403a.—Men's "Gibsonia" "Sandstroll" Bathing Costumes, with belt, all cotton, no sleeves; chest 34, 9/-; 36, 9/6; 40, 10/-; 42, 11/3.

7404a.—Men's "Gibsonia" "All-Cotton" Bathing Costumes, with belt, all cotton, heavy weave, in assorted colored bands on waist and leg; 34, 14/6; 36, 15/6; 38, 16/6; 40, 17/6; 42in., 18/6.

7406a.—Bathing V's, all sizes, 1/3.

7407a.—Men's Surf Shoes; sizes 5 to 11; 3/6 pair.

7408A.—Boys' Pure Wool Bathing Combinations, with assorted colored facings; sizes 22, 7/-; 24, 7/6; 26, 8/-; 28, 8/6; 30, 9/-; 32, 9/6.

7408A.—Boys' Canadian Bathing Costumes, in pure wool cashmere, and wool and cotton, with assorted colored facings; without sleeves. Also in cotton. Sizes 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32—pure wool, 10/-, 11/-, 12/-, 13/-, 14/-, 15/-; wool and cotton 8/9, 9/3, 10/-, 10/9, 11/6, 12/3; cotton, 4/6, 4/9, 5/-, 5/3, 5/6, 5/9. With short sleeves—in wool, 1/3 extra; in wool and cotton, 1/- extra.

7410A.—Men's Fine All-Cotton Bathing Costumes, two-piece style, with colored facings; 34, 6/3; 36, 6/6; 38, 7/3; 40, 7/9; 42, 8/3; 44in., 8/3.

7411A.—Men's All-Cotton Combinations; 34, 4/9; 36, 5/-; 38, 5/3; 40, 5/6.

7412a.—Men's Cotton and Wool Bathers, "Sunbath," two-piece, with patent belt, same style as "Portsea," No. 7404a; an ideal non-shrinking and hard-wearing garment; chest 34, 12/9; 36, 13/9; 40, 14/9; 42, 15/9.

7412a.—Boys' Cotton Bathing Combinations, plain navy, without sleeves; size 22, 3/3; 24, 3/6; 26, 3/9; 28, 4/-; 30, 4/3; 32, 4/6.

7413a.—Men's Wool and Cotton "Sunny-beach" Bathing Costumes, with belt; an ideal bathing and beach garment; no sleeves; size 34, 18/-; 36, 19/6; 38, 20/3; 40, 21/-; 42, 22/6; 44, 24/-.

7415a.—Boys' "Sunbath" Bathers; same style as Nos. 7403a and 7404a; the latest Bathing Costume. Sizes 22, 8/9; 24, 8/9; 26, 9/3; 28, 10/-; 30, 10/9; 32, 11/6.

Figure 6. Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue 74* (1926-1927): 74A. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

The swimsuits and underwear of these decades readily reveal why dress is referred to as our "second skin" for the way it skims the body or hugs it tightly, or as Jennifer Craik explains, "their shared proximity to the body". Craik goes on to clarify: "The difference

is that swimwear takes underwear into the public arena.”⁹¹ In connecting the idea of dress lying “at the margins of the body” to the social world, Joanne Entwistle suggests a “boundary”: one that is “intimate and personal”, but also located between the “individual and society”.⁹² This work has encouraged scholars to be attentive to “the way in which dress works on the body which in turn works on and mediates the experience of self”—a call now richly answered by scholars of dress and fashion.⁹³ For wool underwear and swimsuits to form part of the experience of health, and for them to mediate between wearers and the world, they needed to fit snugly yet comfortably—to move on and with the body, which is where my discussion now turns.

Comfortable in Wool

“In no garments worn by ladies is good fit so important as in Combinations,” the Foy & Gibson catalogues explained over a number of years: “Badly cut they are uncomfortable and spoil the fit of every garment worn over them; well cut they are easy and comfortable and the most satisfactory of all underwear.”⁹⁴ Clothes too tight, ill-fitting, stiff or scratchy affected their wearer in negative ways, perhaps all the more for underwear when it acted as a second skin; hence comfort, softness and elasticity were repeated as selling points for men and women across decades.⁹⁵ In particular, Foy & Gibson drew a direct line between the softness of its undergarments and use of superior wool, pledging “only the finest soft quality wools are used”.⁹⁶

Softness was a tactile experience felt between the fingertips and on the flesh, yet absent from the catalogues was what Gail Reekie describes as the “pleasurable sensual and visual experiences” experienced by in-store shoppers across this period. For delicate underwear, this meant handling the fine fabric then imagining its wear, amplified by “the sights, sounds, smells and sensory pleasures” of display spaces.⁹⁷ The catalogues hinted at sensual ease in a different way: through visual and linguistic aids. The 1923 autumn and winter catalogue depicted one woman reclining on a plush chair, her eyes closed in pleasure (Figure 7). It described the “Gibsonia” underwear that she (and other women illustrated on the page) wore as “woven from pure, fine, silky, soft, Merino Wool—its touch to the skin is delightful”, anticipating the tactile experience for customers.⁹⁸ This soft wool gently enfolded the body, enhancing its wearers’ comfort, which extended confidence in their fully dressed state.

As these dressed bodies moved in the world, growing numbers of increasingly uncovered beach-goers populated the beach. Those who supported women’s sea bathing had

⁹¹Entwistle, “Fashion and the Fleishy Body,” 334; Jennifer Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion* (London: Routledge, 1994), 136.

⁹²Entwistle, “Fashion and the Fleishy Body,” 327.

⁹³Entwistle, “Fashion and the Fleishy Body,” 334.

⁹⁴Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 38 (1910): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 39 (1910–11): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 41 (1911–12): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 42 (1912): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 43 (1912–13): 26; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 44 (1913): 26.

⁹⁵Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 55 (1918–19): 73; Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 77 (1928): 69; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 80 (1929–30): 47; Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 81 (1930): 34; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 82 (1930–31): 42; and Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 83 (1931): 24.

⁹⁶Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 73 (1926): 50; Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 74 (1926–27): 26. And a variation in Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 75 (1927): 22.

⁹⁷Reekie, *Temptations*, 83.

⁹⁸Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue* 66 (1923): 65.

FOY & GIBSON PTY LTD
COLLINGWOOD & FITZROY

"Gibsonia"
All Wool Underwear

Cosy & Stylish

6500 6501 6502 6503 6504 6505 6506 6507 6508

6500. — Cream Woven Wool Vest, low neck; rib sleeves or sleeveless. Fine—W. 8/6; O.S. 9/6; X.O.S. 10/6. Medium—W. 10/6; O.S. 12/-; X.O.S. 13/6.

6501.—Natural or Cream Woollen Vest. Fine—S.W. 9/6; W. 10/6; O.S. 12/-; X.O.S. 14/-; Medium —S.W. 13/6; W. 14/6; O.S. 16/-; X.O.S. 18/-; Heavy —S.W. 14/6; W. 15/6; O.S. 17/-; X.O.S. 19/-. Long sleeves, 1/- extra on above prices.

6502.—Natural or Cream Wool Knickers. Fine—Open, 11/-; closed, 12/-. O.S.: Open, 12/6; closed, 13/6. Medium: — Open, 14/6; closed, 15/6. O.S.: Open, 16/6; closed, 17/6.

6503. — Natural Wool Nightie. Fine, 26/-; O.S. 29/-. Medium, 40/-; O.S. 45/-. Cream—Fine, 31/-; O.S. 34/-. Medium, 36/-; O.S. 40/-.

6504.—Cream Wool Combs, low neck, sleeves or sleeveless. Fine—S.W. 13/-; W. 14/-; O.S. 15/6; X.O.S. 17/-. Medium—S.W. 16/-; W. 17/6; O.S. 19/-; X.O.S. 21/-.

6505. — Natural Camisole. Fine—Short sleeves, 7/6; O.S. do., 8/6; Long sleeves, 8/6; O.S. do., 9/6. Medium—S.S. 10/6; O.S. do., 12/6; L.S. 11/6; O.S. do., 13/6. Fine Cream —S.S. 8/11; O.S. do., 9/11; L.S. 9/6; O.S. do., 10/6. Cream—S.S. 10/6; O.S. do., 12/6; L.S. 11/6; O.S. do., 13/6.

6506. — Natural or Cream Wool Combs, low neck, sleeves or sleeveless. Fine—S.W. 13/-; W. 14/-; O.S. 15/6; X.O.S. 17/-. Medium—S.W. 16/-; W. 17/6; O.S. 19/-; X.O.S. 21/-.

6507. — Natural Wool Bloomers. Fine—9/6; O.S. do., 10/6. Medium, 13/6; O.S. do., 14/6.

6508.—Natural or Cream Wool Combs. Fine—S.W. 15/6; W. 16/6; O.S. 18/-; X. O. S. 21/-; Medium, Natural or Cream—S.W. 21/6; W. 23/-; O.S. 25/-; X.O.S. 28/-; Long sleeves, 1/- extra above prices.

“Gibsonia” Underwear is woven from pure, fine, silky, soft, Merino Wool —its touch to the skin is delightful—

“Gibsonia” there is a distinct health advantage.

A. Bowman

Figure 7. Foy & Gibson, *Autumn and Winter Catalogue 66* (1923): 65. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

been quick to point out that swimming in modest voluminous costumes was “an unseemly farce”. The heavy volume of fabric not only resulted in “a source of continual annoyance to the swimmer” but also clung dangerously when wet.⁹⁹ The search for

⁹⁹Walter E. Withrow, “Bathing Costumes and Bathing Customs,” *Withrow's Physical Culture* (January 1924): 11.

greater comfort on the sand and in the water drove rapid stylistic changes for wool swimsuits, aided by a new elastic stitch designed to hug the body when the suit was wet or dry. In 1930, Foy & Gibson launched its streamlined “Siren” swimsuit for women and men (Figures 8 and 9). The Siren costume came in two cuts, “speed” and “suntan”, the first designed for active use and the second for leisure. In whichever cut the Siren appeared, the catalogue assured purchasers that it gave “the close-fitting effect so desirable in a swimming costume, yet allowing perfect freedom of movement”.¹⁰⁰ Snug wool swimsuits continued to improve with the “Seafit” and the “Swift”.¹⁰¹ The “perfectly fitting” Swift swimsuit, knitted in a firm elastic ribbed stitch to “retain its shape through long wear”, was also “specially resistant to the fading properties of salt water and sun”.¹⁰²

By the end of the decade, swimsuit manufacturers such as Sutex began to incorporate “Lastex”—a rubber yarn—into its “perfect form fitting”, shiny, sleek new suits.¹⁰³ Swimsuits were no longer just about fit and freedom for their wearers; they were also about glamour. Jantzen tested new fabrics too, but announced it had “been successful in developing glamorous fabrics made from Australian wool”. In 1939, Jantzen announced in an industry journal: “It is the company’s prediction that wool, because of its many desirable qualities, will continue to occupy a place of importance in the swimming suit field.”¹⁰⁴ Foy & Gibson no doubt hoped the same, though in the decades to follow, swimsuits incorporating nylon, polyester and Lycra rose in popularity, overtaking wool’s elastic properties and offering a different experience of beach bathing for the body. Fabrics for garments worn at the crossroads of sports and leisure continued to transform in the pursuit of snug-fitting comfort. That manufacturers remain alert to the centrality of fabrics’ feel, and the experiences this quality opens for wearers, is seen today in the embrace of “feeling premium” in athleisure wear—and in Australian Wool Innovation’s response, urging those consumers to feel merino rather than synthetic alternatives.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

Foy & Gibson’s next-to-the-skin experience of wool had linked health and comfort to the “purest and best Wool obtainable” from the first years of the 20th century.¹⁰⁶ Its mail order catalogues continued to repeat variations of this wording across the decades that followed. Whether reading about “the purest Merino Wool”, “the finest Australian wool” or similar descriptions, consumers were aware of the excellence of the fibre Foy & Gibson spun into yarn in its mills, wove or knit into cloth, made into clothes, and then sold across the country.¹⁰⁷ The fineness and purity of this wool provided a critical dimension to its interface with the flesh.

Intimately hugging the body as underwear, Foy & Gibson’s wool was emphasised as maintaining health and protecting its wearers from outside (the weather) and internal

¹⁰⁰Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 82 (1930–31): 73.

¹⁰¹Foy & Gibson, *Christmas Bargain Carnival* (1935): 12.

¹⁰²Foy & Gibson, *Spring Catalogue* (1934): 28.

¹⁰³“Men’s Swim Suits,” *Draper of Australasia* 39, no. 6 (1939): 41.

¹⁰⁴“Jantzen Reports Many Changes in Swim Suits,” *Textile Journal of Australia* 14, no. 5 (1939): 221.

¹⁰⁵Craig, “‘Feeling Premium,’” 214–32.

¹⁰⁶Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 20 (1902): 52; Foy & Gibson, *Catalogue* 29 (ca. 1906): 58; Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 30 (1906–7): 59; Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 38 (1910): 69.

¹⁰⁷Foy & Gibson, *Summer Catalogue* 64 (1922): 78; Foy & Gibson, *Spring and Summer Catalogue* 78 (1928): 71; and Foy & Gibson, *Winter Catalogue* 83 (1931): 33.

Ladies' & Children's Bathing Suits, Caps, Belts & Shoes 49

"GIBSONIA" SIREN SWIM SUITS FOR LADIES.

You will experience greater comfort, because "Siren" Swim Suits have only one thickness at the hips, and "Siren" Swim Suits are the only bathers to have this feature—a feature that is protected by the Patents Act.

You will like the smartness of "Siren" Swim Suits. They are the very newest and in the latest colors.

"Siren" Swim Suits are closely knitted to the new elastic knit stitch; cut to "Speed" and "Suntan" styles; fit the body closely without the slightest tightness or hampering effect, and "Siren" Swim Suits are made solely of pure wool.

Be ready for the summer. Get your "Siren" Swim Suit now; plain or colored to select from. Made by Foy and Gibson, Smith-street, Collingwood.



4906.—New Style SPORTS OUTFIT. Vest and Shorts, in striped cambric. Attractive designs; blue, vieux rose, green, mauve. Price . 12/9 Ribbed Bathing Cap, 2/11.



4901.—Smart Style Finely Knitted Wool BATHERS, with collar. Navy and Jade, saxe and white or fawn, cardinal and beige, black and white. S.W. 18/9 W. . . . 19/6 O.S. . . . 21/- Rubber Cap, 3/11.

4902.—"SIREN" SWIM SUITS, made by Foy and Gibson. Closely knitted wool, with new free hips (patented) striped top. Jade and orange, black with cinnamon, sky, cardinal and fawn. Sizes, 34, 36 and 40in. Price . 19/11.

4903.—"SIREN" SWIM SUIT, knitted wool, with graduated stripes in skirt; black and royal, fawn and jade, jade and orange, red and fawn. 34, 36 and 40in. Price . 19/11. Rubber Cap, 3/6.

4904.—"SIREN" SWIM SUIT, in new style two-tone effect. Cardinal and Cinnamon, royal and sky, navy and jade, cardinal and maroon, black and gold. 34, 36, 40in. Price . 19/11. Rubber Cap, 3/11.

4905.—"SIREN" SWIM SUITS, plain color, closely knitted. Black, royal, jade, lemon, saxe, cardinal. 34, 36 and 40in. Oil Silk Cap, all colors, 1/11.



4907.—SMART STYLE ENSEMBLE BATHING SUIT, wool, cashmere finish, with star design on gown and coat. Jade, black, royal, lemon, cardinal, saxe. 37/6 S.W. . . . 39/6 W. . . . 41/6 O.S. . . . 41/6 Rubber Cap, 4/6.

4908.—WOOL BATHERS, cashmere finish, medium weight, with new style free hips. Black, saxe, jade, royal, lemon, cardinal . . . 14/11 34in., 15/11; 36in., 16/11; 40in., 17/9; 42in., 18/9; 44in., 19/9.

RUBBER BELTS.



4911.—Rubber Belts, all colors, 1/2, 1/3 and 1/11 each.

WATER WINGS.

4912.—Water Wings, for the beginner learning to swim, 1/11.

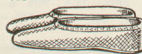
RUBBER POSIES.

4913.—Rubber Posies, pretty designs, 9d. and 1/2.

DIVING CAPS.

4914.—Oil Silk Diving Caps, all colors, 1/9. Rubber Helmets with chin strap, 2/11. Fancy Styles, 2/6 to 4/11. Black, with Cinnamon, Cardinal and Fawn.

RUBBER SHOES.



4915.—Rubber Bathing Shoes. Blue, red, Green and Pancy. Sizes 2 to 6, 3/6. Children's 2/11.



4909.—New Style ROMPER BATHERS, for small children. Plain top, with striped knickers. Red, saxe, 20in. . . . 3/6 Price . 22 and 24, 3/11. Wool tops, 2/- extra. Cap, 2/6.



4910.—CHILDREN'S KNITTED WOOL BATHERS, joined Canadian. Jade, saxe, cardinal, navy. 24in. . . . 6/11 26, 7/11; 28, 8/6; 30, 8/11 Cotton, saxe or navy: 24, 4/6; 26, 4/9; 28, 4/11; 30, 5/6 Rubber Cap, 3/6.

Figure 8. Foy & Gibson, Spring and Summer Catalogue 82 (1930-31); 49. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

(perspiration) forces. Indeed, this was nothing new, but it extended on understandings that had emerged the century before connecting pure, natural wool with a healthier body. That Foy & Gibson underlined the Australian origin of its wool aided customers

Swimming Suits for Men, Youths and Boys 73

THE "SIREN" SWIMMING SUIT.






"SIREN."
7301.—Fancy block stripe and plain skirt piece; all latest shades.

34	36	40	42	44
20/-	20/-	21/-	22/-	23/-

7302.—Boys' Bathers, one-piece, cotton; in plain navy. Very handy for small boys or river or baths wear.

22	24	26	28	30	32
3/3	3/6	3/9	4/-	4/3	4/6

7304.—Boys' Bathers, knitted; "SIREN." "Gibsonia" All-wool.

22	24	26	28	30	32
8/6	9/-	9/6	10/-	10/6	11/-

7306.—Two-tone, contrasting shades of black and royal saxe and royal, marone and navy, etc.

34	36	40	42	44
21/-	21/-	22/6	24/-	25/-

7303.—Boys' Bathers, "Wolycot," wool and cotton, in navy shade, with colored facings or colored band on chest; non-shrinking and splendid wearing garments.

22	24	26	28	30	32
9/6	10/-	10/6	11/-	11/6	12/-

"GIBSONIA" BATHERS.
7307.—Men's Bathers, "Gibsonia," elastic stitch, all pure wool, latest style, close fitting garments, giving the maximum of comfort; in shades of navy, black or saxe.

34	36	38
14/6	15/6	16/6
40	42	44
17/6	18/6	19/6

"WOLYCOT" BATHERS.
7308.—Men's Bathers, "Wolycot," wool and cotton; our own make. Chest Sizes—

34	36	38
12/6	13/3	14/-
40	42	44
14/9	15/6	16/3

Not Illustrated.
"GIBSONIA" BATHERS.
7309.—Men's Bathers, cashmere weave, "Gibsonia" all pure wool, with plain navy skirt piece and contrasting stripes on chest, either diagonal or horizontal. Splendid wearing and neat appearance. This is a popular bather for beach-goers.

34	36	38
16/-	17/-	18/-
40	42	44
19/-	20/-	21/-

"SIREN."
7310.—Self shades of navy, black, saxe, marone, cinnamon.

34	36	40
20/-	20/-	21/-
42	44	
22/-	23/-	

Bourke Street Melbourne **FOY & GIBSON Pty Ltd** Smith Street Collingwood

Mail Order Address - Collingwood N.S.

in conjunction with

MACLELLAN & CO., "THE BIG STORE," CHAPEL STREET, PRAHRAN.

Figure 9. Foy & Gibson, Spring and Summer Catalogue 82 (1930-31): 73. Foy & Gibson Catalogues, University of Melbourne Archives.

in understanding its beneficial material properties. In swimsuits, however, wool offered a different way of being healthy through an increasingly undressed state, exposing more of the skin to the sun, beach breeze and seawater. Those who wore Foy & Gibson's

swimsuits—or those of other brands—embraced beach culture in costumes that enhanced their engagement with leisured activity, promoted new ways of seeing men’s and women’s bodies, rethought notions of modesty, and opened up a new experience of wearing wool linked to a feeling of wellbeing, if not vitality.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work is an outcome of the Redmond Barry Fellowship, supported by the University of Melbourne and State Library of Victoria.

ORCID

Lorinda Cramer  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1330-8368>