



## **NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

### **A guide to Regency era dating**

As the most-watched series in Netflix' history, *Bridgerton* continues to captivate audiences and has shone a spotlight on life in the Regency era – in particular, the fashion and the romance.

There was a lot to consider when dating in the Regency Era, from chaperoning and dowries to finding a suitor within your social spheres and most importantly, capturing their attention.

In the heart of Edinburgh's New Town, The Georgian House has been restored by the National Trust for Scotland to give a glimpse into life and the era of enlightenment, for those who could afford it.

Here, we speak to Dr Sheonagh Martin, Visitor Services Manager at The Georgian House, on dating in the Regency Era (early 19<sup>th</sup> century).

#### **Chaperonage**

"Dating was very public and women were chaperoned just about everywhere. A chaperone wasn't to encourage the relationship (like today's wingman/woman), their role was to keep an eye on both the male and female's behaviour. They were also intently listening in to conversations to determine if the couple were compatible.

"Chaperones tended to be a family member and they ultimately played a role in giving a relationship the green light. Or forbidding a marriage to go ahead."

#### **Georgian balls**

"Young, unmarried women were confined to the house and generally, women and men spent majority of their time apart.

"The winter months in Edinburgh were the highlight of the social season, with dances held in the Assembly Rooms. These weekly dinners and balls were one of the few occasions to meet a potential suitor. Choosing a dance partner was exciting and flirtatious, and couples danced together while being watched by others.

"There were protocols to follow – a man can only ask a woman to dance if he has been introduced to her and both of them had to wear gloves whilst dancing."

#### **Keeping up appearances**

"Families, like the Lamonts who lived in The Georgian House, had extravagant lifestyles and often lived beyond their means to maintain their place in the upper classes.

“No expense was spared when hosting for potential suitors for their daughter, with only the best beeswax candles on show and protective covers removed from the best furniture. The meal itself was a feast fit for kings and some of the dishes would have taken days to prepare.

“At the time, men that married beneath them would be shunned - so it was important to marry within your social sphere.”

### **Actions speak louder than words**

“When it comes to flirting, women and men found ways to communicate without using words. Women often let their fan do the talking and where you placed or how you carried the fan signalled a variety of different messages.

“Carrying your fan in your left hand, for example, meant that you wished to make the acquaintance of the person at whom you waved the fan, but drawing the fan across your forehead meant that you and your admirer were being watched by someone. Other messages included drawing the fan through your hand, indicating that you hated the person with whom you were conversing, whereas sliding or pressing the fan against your cheek signalled that you loved them.”

The Georgian House is currently closed to the public due to Covid-19 restrictions. To find out more about the house and the family that lived there, visit <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/georgian-house>.

**-ENDS-**

**Issued on behalf of National Trust for Scotland by Frame PR.**

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