

# In the closet with Jilly Cooper

With riding boots, racy dresses and Ascot-worthy hats, the author's style is bang on track Words and styling by Tricia Welch



“At Charles and Camilla’s wedding, the press wrote I looked like Hyacinth Bouquet”

Jilly, 74, is a journalist and author of best-selling novels including her latest *Jump!* She lives in Gloucestershire with her husband of 49 years, Leo, a dog and five cats. The couple have two children, Emily and Felix.

**How do you describe your style?**

Happily haphazard! For writing, I wear a jersey and trackie bottoms. When I go out, I dress up.

**What colours, shapes and styles suit you best?** Clothes that cling at the top but are loose on the bottom. I love neutrals and soft, pastel tones.

**Who is your style icon?**

Zara Phillips, Lady Helen Taylor and Joanna Lumley.

**Which celebrity’s wardrobe would you most like to own?** I’ve got a large bottom so can I have J-Lo’s?

**Do you have a beauty secret?** My daughter Emily who’s a make-up artist.

**How do you dress on “fat” days?** Smocks. I’ve always loved that look.

**Is there anything about your body that you dislike?** I have writers’ thighs from sitting down all the time.

**How long does it take you to get ready in the morning?** No time at all if I’m at home writing.

**Do you have a stylist?** Yes, my friend Mariska Kay.

**What is your current favourite outfit?** A leopard-print dress over black leggings and riding boots, and a blue cotton blouse and skirt by Anise.

**Is there an “old favourite” that you turn to in a wardrobe crisis?** A white dress by Mariska Kay.

**What is the oldest item in your wardrobe?** A 60s sweater from Biba.

**What is the one item of clothing you couldn’t live without?** My Uggs and Crocs.

**Have you ever made a fashion faux pas?** I was at a party and a lot of people were peering – I then

realised my dress was see-through.

**What is the most crushing remark anyone has made about your clothes?** At Charles and Camilla’s wedding, the press wrote I looked like Hyacinth Bouquet.

**What is your most successful party outfit?** A low-cut black dress with cross lacing down the front. It was a real “pulling dress”. I felt great in it.

**Do you own more day wear than evening wear?** Yes, but I do have lots of evening wear. I love dressing up.

**Do you have a favourite LBD?** A black silk/satin dress from Monsoon.

**Have you ever had anything made to measure?** Yes. A black velvet blazer and a blue striped silk blazer.

**Do you own anything vintage?** I’ve kept masses of my 60s clothes.

**What is your favourite designer and high-street shop?** Mariska Kay and Lindka Cierach for designer. On the high street, New Look and Monsoon.

**What is the most expensive item in your wardrobe?** A £600 coat bought for The Cheltenham Gold Cup.

**What is your best fashion bargain?** A New Look cardigan bought for £10.

**What is your sexiest outfit?** My leopard-print dress.

**Is your underwear frilly or sporty, matching or mismatched?** It’s a disgrace, dish cloth grey. My friend Moira bought me some new pieces after seeing my underwear drawer.

**How many handbags do you own?** Lots.

**Do you wear silver or gold jewellery?** I’m lucky. Leo buys all my jewellery.

**Do you wear diamonds?** Just my granny’s ring but I prefer pearls.

**Do you have a fashion address book secret?** Gray & Osbourn.

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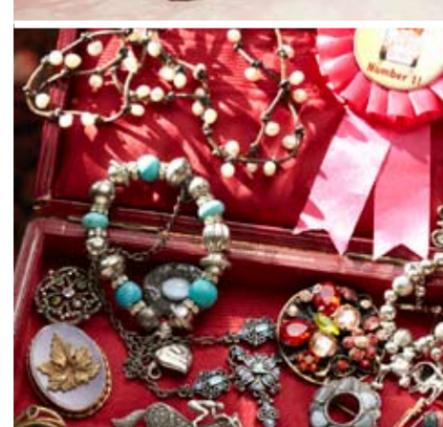
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*Jilly Cooper’s Jump!*, price £7.99, is published by Corgi. See Express Bookshop on page 82. Visit Jilly’s website on [www.jillycooper.co.uk](http://www.jillycooper.co.uk).



Facing page: Jilly wears her current favourite outfit, a leopard-print dress from her local department store, Cavendish House, over leggings and boots. The pendant was a gift from her husband Leo

This page, clockwise from top left: The writer wore this blue straw hat by Serena Holdsworth to Prince Charles and Camilla’s wedding, seen here with some of the fascinators she recently bought to wear at the races in Dubai

This £600 green check coat from Cousins in Cheltenham is Jilly’s most expensive purchase. She bought it to wear at The Cheltenham Gold Cup race

meeting when researching her latest novel *Jump!*

Jilly models a grey silk cashmere and chiffon blouse by Mariska Kay for Anise, teamed with black tailored trousers by Lindka Cierach

Jilly collects special keepsakes to celebrate the publication of her novels. This hand-knitted jumper by Karen Robertson was created for *Riders*, the tapestry-style stole by Karen Robertson was for *Appassionata*, while the handmade belt was made by one of Jilly’s biggest fans, Karina Gabler, to mark the launch of *Wicked*

“This jacket is so useful,” says Jilly of her made-to-measure

blazer, a blue striped silk jacket designed by Gloucestershire seamstress Carolyn O’Connell

Jilly says she prefers pearls to diamonds – “They’re so much more flattering”. Her jewellery box is filled with gems given to her by Leo. Most were bought from Heather Ross who has an antique shop near their home. The rosette was made to commemorate her new novel *Jump!*

The author has plenty of handbags and is particularly fond of whimsical designs. This dog bag by Radley is a favourite. The canvas horses tote, bought to mark the publication of *Jump!*, is from the Household Cavalry Museum