

# SIMPLE STYLE

## BIG PANTS

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

If there is one reason it's good to be alive in these times, it's the return of big pants. Finally, it seems that everyone has shunned the thong – that punishing confection of string and miniscule triangle of fabric – in favour of knickers that cover your entire rear, not just parts of it. Pants which are roomy and comfortable, which, to quote my gran, “You know when you've got them on.” When Bridget Jones revealed her “absolutely enormous panties” to Hugh Grant's Daniel Cleaver character almost 18 years ago, thongs were at their zenith. Many a ‘whale tail’ peeped over waistbands of trousers. They were sold on the idea that thongs obliterated VPL, which forgets that big knickers do that job just as well, providing wrap-around coverage while they are at it. Even more galling is that men meanwhile were wandering about in comfortable boxer shorts.

It's hard to imagine now, but underpants haven't always been with us. Women didn't wear them until the end of the 18th century (their lower regions were swathed in layers of petticoats and skirts instead), and even then they were not as we now know them. Made of two separate legs joined at the waist (the origin of the phrase ‘pair of knickers’), they were open at the

crotch and reached to below the knee.

As weaving technology advanced and cotton became more widely available, underwear was mass produced and the gusset was introduced. By the 1920s, underpants – now called bloomers or knickers\* – had gradually reduced in size and ended above the knee. The arrival of

rayon, nylon and elastic in the 1940s and 1950s, allowed for body-hugging shapes, resulting in knickers that sat at the waist and ended below the buttocks. A particularly frilly pair caused a sensation when worn by tennis player Gertrude “Gorgeous” Moran at Wimbledon in 1949.

During the 1960s and 1970s as hemlines rose, hot pants arrived and trousers grew slinkier, knickers reduced in size accordingly. More styles were introduced until we arrive at the underpants smorgasbord that is today's lingerie department. M&S, that go-to destination for the seeker of reasonably priced underwear, lists 12 different options (including Brazilian, Miami, Tanga and French Knickers) and even has a ‘knickers guide’ for the confused (like us, to be honest).

None of which should phase us. As we now know, there is only one style that truly offers comfort and coverage: the ‘full brief’ or, as we know them ‘big pants’. And in these enlightened times this doesn't mean a baggy pair of charmless bloomers.

There are styles and shapes to suit the most discerning – even Kim Kardashian and Beyoncé are fans – and how comforting is that? **S**



*“There is only one style that truly offers comfort and coverage”*

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## THE UPDATE



**Cotton rich jacquard full briefs | £4**  
Timeless and comfy  
[marksandspencer.com](http://marksandspencer.com)

THE CLASSIC



**Lipstick red vintage wash high waist briefs | £28**  
Keep you well covered.  
[lesgirlslesboys.com](http://lesgirlslesboys.com)

TWO (KNICKERS IN A) TWISTS



**Daffodil yellow angled high waist brief | £35**  
An angular cut to contour the body.  
[rossellengland.com](http://rossellengland.com)

\* The word ‘knickers’ is a shortened version of ‘knickerbocker’, a type of loose trousers worn by the Dutch.