

Easy Things to Wear at a Demo a.k.a. Lower Class Men's and Women's Clothing of around 1350

A few years ago we started doing the demo at Upper Canada Village with Sperry and his archery folks. His 'story' for the demo was that he was training archers to fight at Crecy (1346), where they would have a decisive effect for the first time. Constance, Dan and I were to be "camp helpers", demonstrating the making of food and feeding those on the field. So for practicality and 'believability', we really needed to be dressed as lower class folks, well behind the curve of fashion.

So I looked to the most famous early fourteenth century pictures of labourers: those in the Luttrell Psalter, which were drawn between 1320 and 1340. Since then, I have looked at illuminations in a number of other contemporary psalters (see bibliography), and they are, for the most part, reassuringly similar. Psalters weren't meant to be documents about fashion, but where they do show secular folks doing secular things they are considered likely to be a reasonably accurate, if somewhat rosy depiction of the peasants doing their thing. It is probably safe to say that in reality, peasants were likely to be less colourful, and less clean than those shown in the psalters, but it gives us a place to start.

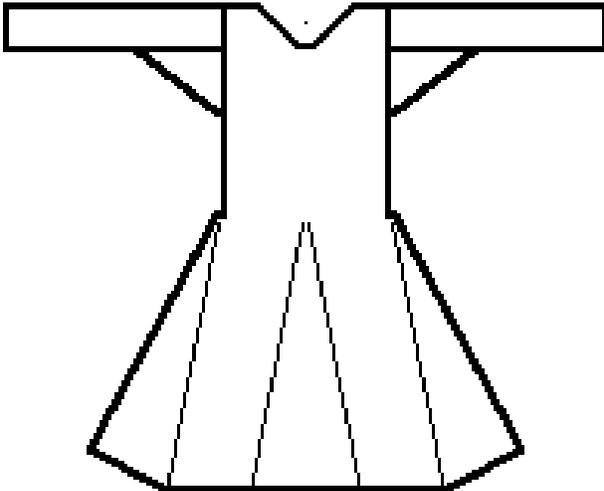


These images are from the Queen Mary Psalter

The Starting place: The T-Tunic

The T shaped tunic that is ubiquitous in history is also, thankfully, ubiquitous in SCA households as well. It makes a great starting point for our early 14th C portrayals. If you need a reminder about how to make a tunic I will recommend some sites in the Bibliography.

To remind us of their shape, here is a line drawing of a generic one, and a picture from the Luttrell Psalter



I have also included a page of line drawings of people from the Luttrell Psalter in the back of the package.

If you are going to make some tunics especially for this time period, here are some things to keep in mind:

Most visible necklines are rounded, fairly open from the neck, and without slits.

Most mens tunics are at least knee length before they are belted, some are calf length.

Most women's tunics are close to floor length before they are belted.

Sleeves fit fairly close to the arm, particularly at the wrist, but there are no signs of buttons or lacing.

Sleeves are always wrist length for women, usually wrist length for men.

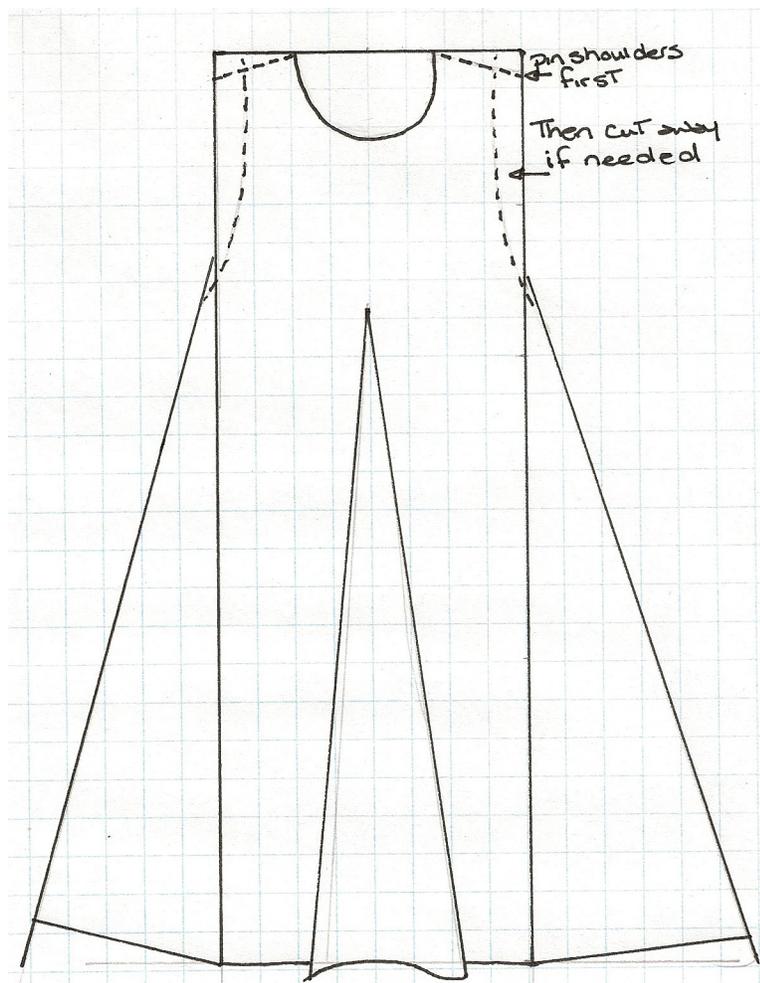
As the century progresses the tunics are fitted closer to the body, but there is still no sign of buttons or lacing on the working people, though some are seen on the gentry.

A Note on fitting: The middle of the century brings the development of the more modern fitted sleeve, and the beginning of tailoring though the body. If you would like more information on that, please look up Cotehardies online, and you will likely learn all you want to know. I don't believe that the workers of this time would have had time to fuss around with that yet, but it is not outside the realm of possibility.

A note on Fabrics: Most lower class folks would have clothes made out of domestically/home spun and woven linen and wool. They would likely only have one or two of either material, and they would have worn them for a long time and/or passed them down. They might have 'sheep coloured' (white-ish, grey, brown) wools, or they might dye them if they had dye stuffs available. Linen doesn't take dye very well, so it would likely be white-natural in colour. For more info on fabrics and dyes, see my website.

Since the demos are in the summer, and our summers are generally hotter than theirs were, we usually wear coloured linen tunics in place of wool ones.

This is a picture of a Cyclas, it is covered in the next section.



On beyond the tunic: Layers



Men: If you wish to wear layers, (and you might if it is early in the morning or after dark), generally you would just stack your tunics up. Sometimes a longer (mid calf length) one can be seen under a shorter (knee) tunic.

Sometimes similar length tunics are revealed through a slit in the outer most garment (see above) (Note- I haven't seen any of them sporting bare leg through the slits, though in one case his white linen undies and hose are exposed, more on that later!)

Sometimes the top most tunic has shorter (elbow length) sleeves than the under tunic (wrist length). In practice, if you are making a tunic as an over layer, make it a bit bigger than your regular pattern (1-2 inches) so that it will accommodate the first layer you have on without pulling too much. The extra ease will also keep you warmer if that is a concern.

Women: Women would also stack their tunics, but they also have an overgarment that is different from a tunic that is seen in a number of places. I am going to call it a Cyclas. This garment is sleeveless and the opening under the arms reaches to the bust or down to the waist. (In time and in the upper classes the top of this garment becomes smaller and the openings go to hip level and it gets called a sideless surcote. These are worn by Lady Luttrell in the Psalter).

The cyclas is easy to make from your tunic pattern- leave the sleeves off and try the garment on. in order to make it hang reasonably smoothly you will likely need to pinch up the shoulders. If your body panel is very wide relative to the width of your shoulders you may need to narrow it at the shoulder point, tapering this out to the bottom of the opening. (See the diagram on the preceding page.) I bind my edges with a narrow straight grain facing (usually cut from my selvedge), as shown on my web page.

Legs and Feet

I really do recommend everyone go and have a look at Master Emyrs Eustace's (called Broom) handouts on "Sherts, Trews and Hose" which can be found here:

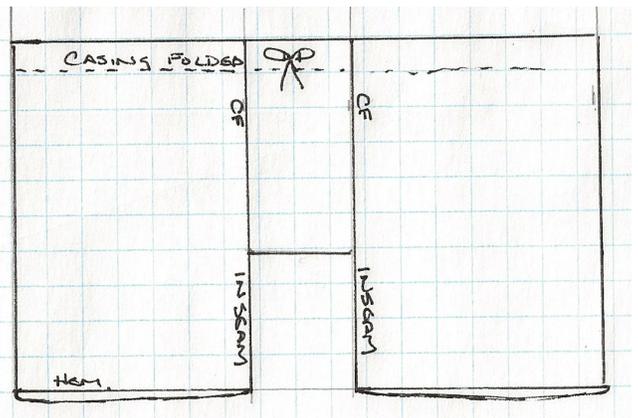
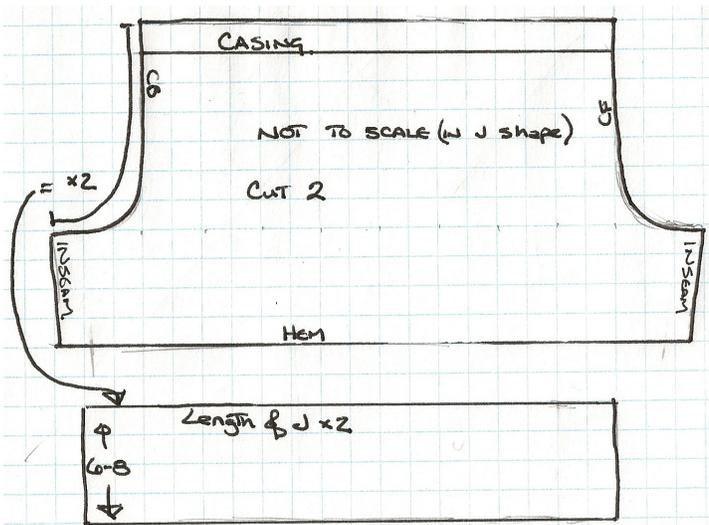
<http://www.greydragon.org/library/index.html>

I will have an older copy circulating so you can get the idea. He is "the" underwear Laurel from the Middle Kingdom, and has a lot of valuable information that I don't want to repeat in this handout. Go get it from the horse's mouth.

Men

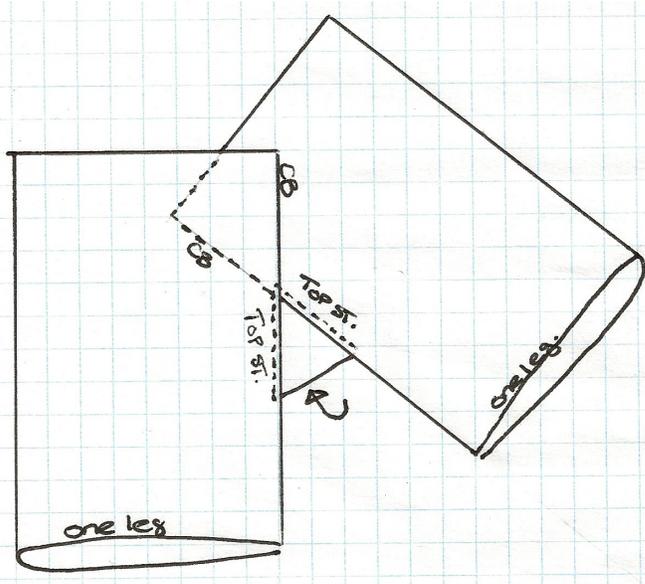
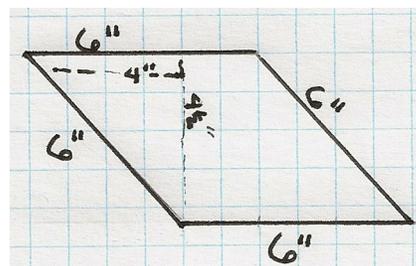
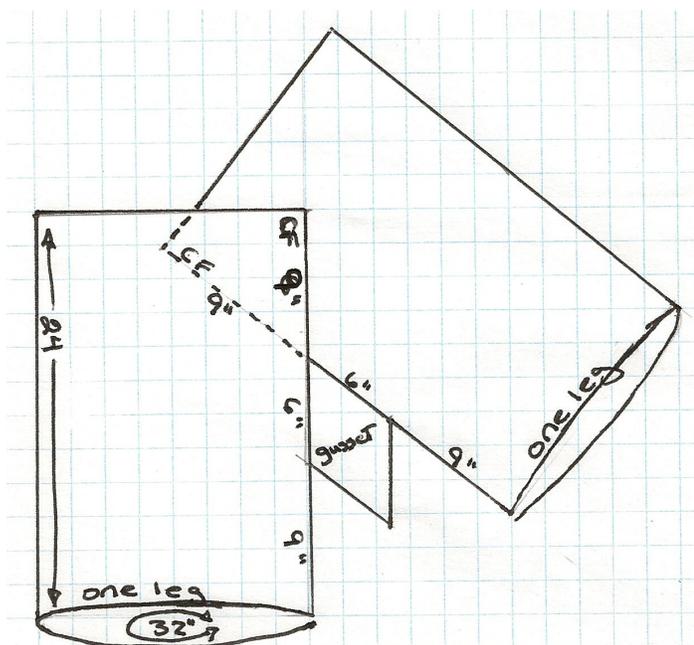
Although we don't often see them, you would likely have linen Braies, or 'boxer' shorts on under your tunics. There are a variety of ways to cut them, many of which Broom discusses in the above handouts. I have tried two ways with good success (one for each of my very differently shaped fellas).

Method one (almost certainly not period, but effective)



Take a pair of jeans, or dress pants and fold them so that the crotch seam is evident (it will look like a J). Trace that shape and a about 6" of the inseam and waist on to paper and add 2 inches to the height of the J (raise the waistband). Either do this twice or copy the first shape so that you have two. Measure the wearers thigh circumference and add 10 or so inches (measurement C). Spread the two j shapes apart until the inseams are apart by measurement C. Cut two. Measure the length of the two J shapes (measurement L). Cut a strip of cloth that is the length of measurement L by about 6-8" wide. Sew the inseams up, then sew the crotch seams to either side of your strip. YOU now have a huge pair of underpants. Fold the top 2 inches into a casing and thread with cord. Linen will gather easily and will not be a bulky as you fear, really! These undies work well if you are slim and/or have a waist. You can even tie your hose onto them- I sewed little ties onto the casing seam and put little holes in the top of the hose. He could keep these tied all day and only need to work the one drawstring at bathroom time.

Method two. (Wilhelm's method, which he sized for Dan when he was a bit smaller)



Cut two rectangles of cloth 32" by 24" (these are your legs)

Cut a rhombus shaped gusset to the size shown

Measure down 9" along one 24" long edge. Attach one edge of the gusset. Fold the rectangle in half and sew the the remaining 9" or so (making a leg) Take the other rectangle, measure down 9" on the 24" long edge. Attach the other narrow side of the gusset, and then fold the large piece in half and sew to form the other leg. You now have the front crotch and two legs complete. Sew the gusset up the open edges of the two legs to form the back crotch. Then sew from the top of the gussets to the top of the rectangles to form the centre front and back of the undies. Finish all your edges!

Once all the seams are sewn, I like to topstitch (by hand or by machine) the seam allowance of the gusset to the body of the underpants. This keeps your corners from popping out. Finish your top edge, then put button holes evenly around the top of the pants, I use about 22 holes, 3" apart. Weave a cord in and out of the holes for a drawstring. You will note that these are very long in the crotch when you put them on. You are meant to tie them, and then roll the waistband, pulling up the pants as you go. The rolled fabric keeps the cord from biting into your body, and it allows extra ease to come out when necessary for sitting etc.

Dan does not tie his hose to these undies- he is often too warm to wear them up- but it would be possible to tie them to the drawstring before rolling up the waist band. Or he could pin them to the legs of the braies.

Legs (Men):

Some figures do not seem to be wearing shoes or hose, though most pictures do not actually feature toes, so it is hard to tell if the artist simply 'forgot to add colour' to the hose, or if they are meant to be bare legged. Even if people had tougher feet back then, it seems unlikely that they would be using shovels without some foot protection. Most folks seem to be wearing something over their legs and feet, and often shoes are discernible too (more on those later).

I usually call these leg coverings hose. Broom likes Hosen. Some like Chausse (s), which is the french word for hose, and some feel it gave Chaucer (the writer) his name. Whatever you like to call them, at this time they were likely two separate, really long, sock like things that reached up to the hip where they joined onto something (a belt, the undies, or under tunic) to keep them up. Usually there would be some sort of garter (tie) under the knee to keep them up there too. They were made from woven wool, likely cut on the bias so they would stretch over the knee and fit snugly around the leg. Knitting was not yet used for sock type purposes.

Broom outlines a cunning way of making a duct tape pattern for hose- hey, what can't duct tape do! He has a link to another page that suggests making hose with a left and right side (seams up the centre front and back of the leg) and a sole. I don't think that having a seam up the front of the leg would be all that comfortable since it would reduce stretch over the knee, but it seems to work for him.

Reconstructing History (see shopping links below) has a pattern for Mens Accessories that includes patterns for hose, undies, hoods and coifs

I prefer to drape hose on a person, though it is a process that requires some time, patience, many safety pins and practice. I am willing to help people either one on one or in a group, please send me an email. I am preparing a separate document on how to drape hose, I will see when that gets done.

Alternately, you can buy hose ready made (see the Shopping section in the bibliography) from historical costumers.

If you are looking for quick "work arounds" there are a couple of suggestions that a man on a galloping horse won't notice. If you are short in the leg, you might be able to find women's opaque tights (either at a dance store or a fashion store) that will fit you (don't worry about squishing the package: carefully open the crotch seam while leaving then attached to the waistband- they are supposed to be divided there anyway). Same goes for Women's leggings, though these don't have feet, so you might want a higher boot to cover that fact up. If you are bigger you could try taking in a pair of sweatpants so they fit closer to the leg, and again have the higher boot to cover the lack of foot in the 'hose'

A note on garters:

Garters are simply straps that go firmly around the leg under the knee and above the calf to keep your hose from slipping down. This keeps the ease above the knee so that it can bend freely, and prevents "elephant ankles"- wrinkles in the hose above the shoe. These can be as simple as a strip of felted cloth tied in a bow, or an elaborately decorated leather strip with a buckle, and anything in between. I suspect that a truly busy peasant would have gone the simple fabric route, but he might have had embroidered or tablet woven garters for special occasions. There are very few shown in the manuscripts and those are just a line under the knee.

Shoes/boots:

Over half of the figures in the manuscripts appear to be wearing shoes that are clearly discernible from their hose, and most of those are black. This might be because they only used black dyed leather, but I suspect it was because the artist had plenty of black paint/ink. Most of the shoes close high on the foot, close to the ankle but not over it. Some appear to be pointed, but none outrageously so. There are a few depictions of boots that come up to mid calf, often on people riding or doing field work.

From the excellent book "Shoes and Pattens" from the Museum of London, and from Marc Carlson's website (see Bibliography), you can note that a number of shoe and boot types were worn at this time with variations in closures and precise cut. Most shoes were made as "turn shoes" (made inside out on a last, and then turned right way out to wear) by professional shoe makers. Although some shoes were likely made to measure, it would seem that made shoes were made to a basic shape and sold "ready to wear" though with fewer sizes than we can get today!

If you are cunning and have a well fitting hose pattern, you can use the foot portion of the hose to fashion shoes/slippers from soft leather or heavy wool. Or you can buy shoes from a number of vendors either at Pennsic or by mail order (see the shopping section). Shoes are undoubtedly one of the hardest parts of your kit to get right- you want to be comfortable, and you just can't get medieval shoes at the Bay!

Pattens

These are wood and leather platforms that are worn to protect your shoes (or hose) from the mud and stones. Generally, they are hinged under the ball of the foot and have a strap over the toe and a strap around the ankle. I have not yet seen any of these in the manuscript paintings, but it might be that this was too small a detail to paint in.

It is sometimes possible to find Birkenstock type sandals that are not completely dissimilar to the shape of pattens. When I don't want to wear my shoes I sometimes just wear these with my hose. It is not a perfect solution (and won't save you money if you wouldn't normally buy Berks), but if you like to wear Berks anyway it might solve your shoe problem.



Women:

We don't see very much of women's lower limbs in the psalters, sometimes not even their feet! Even Broom, who has spent considerable time looking for depictions of Women's underthings has had trouble coming to any conclusions about what was worn under their skirts.

I normally wear my modern undies (bra and panties) under my tunic since this is what makes me comfortable, and no-one will see it anyway. Some people like to wear bike shorts, or loose linen braies (like the men) under their skirts, to keep the legs from chafing. I find a judicious application of antiperspirant works for me in this regard. Some women have tried breast binding (Constance gave a class on this last year), but I have not tried it for a whole day under camp conditions, so I can't tell you how well that works from experience. I think much would depend on the support you require.

Legs and feet:

When you can see women's feet in the illuminations, they appear to be wearing something on them—sometimes it is clearly hose and then shoes, sometimes there is no colour change at the ankle and we are left to wonder if they are wearing boots, or hose without shoes. There is one woman feeding the hens and carrying her spindle that is obviously bare foot, but this may simply be that she is 'at home' as opposed to 'in the fields' where all the women appear to have shoes on.

I dislike wearing shoes without socks, so I have made knee length hose in the same style as a man, simply stopping them above the knee, and folding them over a plain cloth garter. Some people wear commercial knee socks, with or without a garter.

Shoes and patten information is the same as for men, though due to the length of our skirts, we can get away with a bit more. I have sometimes worn Isotoner type slippers as shoes inside or on dry days (or with pattens outside). Birk type sandals hide well under skirts and are comfortable for day at Pennsic with or without hose.



Headwear

Men:

There is a wide variety of headwear depicted in the manuscripts. Most things are clearly practical (a hat to keep the sun out of your eyes, a hood to keep you warm), but a few of the ways these items are worn clearly shows some scope for individuality. Men were not required to keep their heads and hair covered as women were, so you also see a number of mens hair cuts. It would seem that everyone in this time had curly or at least wavy hair-imagine!- and most wore it sort of bobbed at chin length. Or perhaps that is the only hairstyle the artists knew how to draw.....

Hoods:

I have a whole class on how to make hoods and I will have some patterns for sale at cost. Hoods were versatile garments. Worn "properly", with the hood up and the 'skirt' across the shoulders, they are cozy and warm, keeping out the wind and rain, or the sun off your face and shoulders. You can wear the hood pushed back, leaving the fabric to drape gracefully around your neck. You can turn the whole thing back to front and wear the hood down your front for a different look, or as a convenient pouch for cherries or other collected items. You can put the neck hole around your head and have the 'cape' portion face outwards like the archery master. You can put the face hole around your head and roll it up to make a floppy hat. You can even swing them around to scare off the birds. Forget cloaks that are bulky and constrict your arms- get a good hood, and layer your tunics and you are all set for the coldest camping event.

Hats:

The most common hat in the manuscripts seems to be the "Robin Hood" hat (see fig, 180) that is sometimes called a "Penis" hat (see fig 183) due to it's shape. The ones depicted in the manuscripts are generally brownish in colour, and may have been made from undyed brown sheep's wool, felted into shape. There are a few other other hats in the Luttrell Psalter. One is worn by the man sewing seeds (fig 186). It is also brown and likely felt, but cut differently than the "Penis' Hat. The others are similar in style to this one, but the bottom edge has not been turned up, so it just sits like a dome on his head (f. 59v, the swineherd)

Another book from the Museum of London called "Dress Accessories" suggests that hats would be adorned with Pilgrims badges of various types

To make: Get or make a Wool hat blank in the "hood" or "cone" shape (I think I might be doing an order soon, write me if you are interested) and flip up the edges to make the right shapes. Trim to suit you and add pins etc as desired.

Alternately, buy one ready made from Historic Enterprises or a couple of other places at Pennsic.

Then next most common hat (though it is not found in the Luttrell Psalter) is the linen coif (sometimes called an arming cap, I like to call them baby hats). This is a simple cap that can be made in two or three pieces that ties under the chin. They keep the hair organized, and the sweat off your hat, and keeps your hear out of your chain mail if you are militarily inclined.

Women:

Women in our manuscripts almost always have their hair bound up and covered in some fashion. Generally, the harder you were working, the more covered your hair was, which makes some sense really. It keeps it out of your face, and the work you are doing, and keeps your hair tidy and clean, at least from outside things. Veils keep the sun off your face and neck and out of your eyes.

Natural head shape:

How you dress your hair will affect how your veil will hang. Before 1300, the head shape under a veil was quite natural, hair was pulled toward the back of the neck and braided and/or coiled up in a netted bag or snood. Then pieces of fabric were applied in various ways to hold the snood on, and/or to cover and accessorize the hair/head. This style can still be seen in the Isabella Psalter, the earliest of our books (1308). Please see next page for drawing.

To do this: Get a hair net of some sort (these can be bought or made), and two strips of cloth folded to be 1-2 inches wide, and about 30" long. Get a net that fits your head and hair well- it should not be baggy and loose. Hair can be coiled loosely or braided before you put the net on, your choice. Loose hair can poke out and get messy, but braids reduce the volume of your hair. You can wrap your hair around a pair of socks to make it look fuller. Pin the top front of the hair net in place or have someone hold it while you get your fabric strips. One strip should go under your chin and be pinned neatly on top of your head or above one ear so that it will be covered by the second strip. The second strip goes around your head like a crown would and is pinned securely in place. If you wish you can put another piece of fabric over all of this and pin it to the strips.

The working women in the Luttrell Psalter also seem to have a fairly natural head shape under their veils, and we never see their hair. It is possible that they have their hair in a snood like in earlier times. It is possible that it is braided and coiled at the back of their heads. I suppose it is also possible that they were bald, but I don't think it is likely. Mostly they have simply wrapped their head in a length of cloth so that it drapes around their neck and fills in the neckline of their tunic. (see figs 176 and 177).

To do: Get a large rectangle (23" by 76", but it would really be better if it was a bit bigger) of linen, preferably with finished edges. Tie up your hair close to your head in whatever way suits you. Look at Figure 176. Cover your head with the cloth so that the long edge is at your brow line, with one short end hanging over each shoulder, one side much longer than the other. The short side should be just touching your shoulder (or a bit longer). Pull the corner that is in the back (that attaches to the long side that is behind you) down so that the fabric snugs up against your head, and the length is as shown in the picture. Wrap the long side of the fabric in front of you and up all the way around your neck, keeping it loose so the fabric settles around your shoulders. As the (now) short end comes in front of you, tuck it in to the first fold on the far side of your chin. Done!

In addition to the veil wrapped this way, a few of the women in the Luttrell psalter seem to be wearing a hood that is open down the centre front. I hope to have one of these this summer. Hoods are very useful (as we discussed in the men's section), and it would be nice to have one of this type. The pattern seems to be subtly different from the way I normally make hoods- just opening one down the front doesn't seem to cut it- it doesn't hang right.



Natural heads from Isabella Psalter, and Holkham bible

Side dressed hair

In the other three psalters I looked at (Queen Mary Psalter (1320), Smithfield Decretals(1370), Macclesfield Psalter (1330)), as well as the noble women in the Luttrell psalter, women were wearing their hair in the 'new style'- parted in the centre and braided at the temples. These braids were either folded in half to make what I usually call "Dog ears", or rolled up at the temples to make "muffins". Dog ears are usually worn exposed, with the back of the head covered. Muffins are usually covered with the veil wrapped and pinned over them to show the shape. Frequently a long wimple is worn to cover the lower chin, neck and upper chest. (see Front page)



1224500 www.fotosearch.com

Muffin Heads from the Queen Mary Psalter

Accessories to complete your outfit.

Men

Belts were sometimes seen (Figs 181-186) but were just as often hidden in the folds of the fabric. Some belts had a bit of a tail sticking out near the buckle (Fig 181), but this is the exception rather than the rule for working people.

Knives were hung from the belt in a scabbard, but most of the workers are not shown wearing one. It is unclear if this was because the artist didn't care to paint them, or if not everyone wore one all the time.

Pouches were sometimes shown, again, it is hard to tell if they were simply not drawn or if people didn't wear them all the time. Pouches could be a soft (fabric?) bag with a drawstring at the top, or a more structured (leather?) rectangle from the belt. none of them have visible closures.

Gloves are worn for rough work, and tucked in the belt when not in use. The gloves pictured seem to have a thumb and two large fingers (see figure 183 and 184).

Some of the men working in the kitchen in the Luttrell Psalter have a piece of cloth hung off their belt in front of them to act as an apron. They don't seem to wear aprons with strings in the way the women did, though I don't know why they wouldn't. Dan wears an apron with strings, but no smocking and it is very helpful.

Women

Some of the tunics appear to be belted but the only *picture* of a belt I have seen is the one shown in figure 176. This is also the only pouch I have seen on a woman, so perhaps the two things are related.

Aprons are a feature in a few pictures in the Luttrell Psalter and elsewhere. The ones in the Luttrell are smocked, and are quite pretty. The few I have seen else where are quite simple like the ones below from the Smithfield Decretals



Bibliography

Backhouse, Janet. Medieval Rural Life in the Luttrell Psalter. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000 ISBN 0-8020-8399-4

Brown, Michelle P. The World of the Luttrell Psalter. London: The British Library, 2006 ISBN 0 7123 4959 6

Crowfoot, Elizabeth: Pritchard, Francis: and Staniland, Kay. Textiles and Clothing c. 1150-1450. London: HMSO, 1992.

Grew, Francis and de Neergaard, Margrethe Shoes and Pattens. London: HMSO, 1988 ISBN 0-11-290443-2

Houston, Mary G. Medieval Costume in England and France. New York: Dover Publications, 1996 ISBN 0-486-29060-3

Psalters that I have looked at on line and in books:

In general, Wikipedia entries will have a link to online pictures of them, and failing that, Google images works well too. The only problem with Google images is that you don't usually get the folio (original page) numbers, which is frustrating when cross referencing. However, if you just want to keep me honest, it should work!

The Holkham Bible is a celebrated picture-book that relates biblical stories in Norman French, with the help of copious illustrations of everyday 14th-century England. It was originally intended as a visual aid for popular preachers, and now provides a fascinating glimpse of real life in the time of Chaucer.

Isabella Psalter: (BSB Cod.gall. 16) (BSB= Bavarian State Library, Munich)
Produced ca. 1303-1308, named for Isabella of France, who is herself depicted in it;

Luttrell Psalter: British Library, Add. MS 42130
Produced 1320-1340, commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell (1276-1345), a wealthy English landowner who lived at Irnham, Lincolnshire.

Macclesfield Psalter (Fitzwilliam Museum)
Produced around 1330, from the English region of East Anglia,

Queen Mary Psalter: (British Library MS Royal 2.VII)
Produced ca. 1310-1320, It was probably made in London, and possibly for Isabella of France, queen of Edward II of England

Smithfield Decretals (British Library Royal 10 E IV)
Text was begun in the Earth 14th c, but marginal decoration and scenes in the lower margins added by a different artist, probably on the request of John Batayle, a canon of St Bartholomew's at Smithfield in 1379

How to make a T-Tunic sites:

If you have not yet made a T tunic and need some direction, please follow the link for information on making a tunic, and a good primer on basic SCA garb from these web sites. These links show you how to make a good basic tunic that is fine for "most times in most places" which is great for the SCA! :

<http://www.virtue.to/articles/>

or use this article on how to make your tunic

<http://forest.gen.nz/Medieval/articles/Tunics/TUNICS.HTML>

Other useful web sites:

Marc Carlson's pages:

<http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/>

has links to all of his many many pages, particularly on Clothing and Footwear. Lots of good stuff here.

Lots of good links here too:

<http://www.greydragon.org/library/index.html>

The Underwear notes are there, but there is also info on Woodworking and Brewing.

Shopping!:

<http://historicenterprises.com/>

sometimes known as Black Swan. Great looking and wearing ready made costumes and accessories (hose, hats etc etc)

<http://www.armlann.com/>

Great shoes and leather goods

<http://www.nmia.com/~bohemond/>

Boots by Bohemond, Great shoes/boots/leather goods

<http://medievalshoes.com/>

shoes and knives

<http://www.reconstructinghistory.com/>

Patterns and finished goods

<http://www.fetteredcockpewters.com/>

Pewter badges, buckles and buttons made locally!

<http://www.billyandcharlie.com/>

Another great Pewterer