

14th Century Cotehardie

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My poor husband. I always have the best of intentions to make him spiffy garb but usually end up throwing something together in the weeks before Lilies. I've developed a cotehardie pattern for him over the years which has made things easier. Since I had to be off of my feet for a couple weeks I decided to try to handsew a complete ensemble for him.

There are many excellent resources for designing this type of garb. Over the years I've taken several courses at RUSH and in my home barony on how to create this style of garment. Surviving textiles from Greenland and England help with selecting fabric, getting an authentic cut, and details such as stitches and buttons. Period artwork is also a great resource for seeing how all of the pieces fit together. Each of these resources has limitations but each is key in learning to reconstruct period clothing.

By cotehardie I mean a 14th century fitted garment. The persona wearing this garb is from mid 14th century Rothenburg in the Bavaria region of Germany. I tried to find details specific to that area but this style is truly "International." The high style often pictured in artwork such as the tomb cover at the St. Louis Art Museum (figure 1) is not what Josef wanted in this garb. He's a brewer and a fighter. He needs something sturdy and utilitarian and frankly he wasn't interested in wearing anything that tight through the hips. (Darn!)

Pattern

When I developed this pattern for Josef I started with 4 panels of sturdy fabric. I pinned and marked and tucked until we got something that fit well through the body. Developing the sleeve pattern took a little longer. At first, I made the wave at the top of the arm much too steep. I've used this pattern many times to make with same basic garment for him. It's been easy enough to change sleeves or length of the skirt to get it to make other styles of cotehardie. I even used it as the basis for his gambeson with *grande assilette* shoulders (like in the Charles de Blois pourpoint) though this did require a completely different sleeve pattern.



1. Tomb Relief.
Germany. 1370.
Sandstone
St. Louis Art Museum



2. A six-shed twill.
London. 1325 – 1350. 1:1

Fabric

The next step was to select fabric for this garment. I've made this pattern several times out of linen but I thought it would be more appropriate to make it out of wool. At my favorite fabric store I found a worsted wool in a herringbone pattern. The fabric was obviously intended to be used in a men's suit. They labeled it as 100% wool but I thought it might be a blend. I did the burn test and the bleach test and this lovely fabric acted like wool. In Textiles and Clothing (Crowfoot, plate 2a) has sample of zigzag patterned weave in worsted wool. (fig. 2)

The lining is a tabby woven linen also purchased from Fashion Fabrics.

Buttons

The buttons are made of leather disks covered with the same fabric as the rest of the garment. The larger buttons down the front also have a little cotton batting to make them more rounded.

Stitches

The stitches I used on this project was running, backstitch, and of course the buttonhole. (AAHHHHH) These stitches are amply illustrated in Textiles and Clothing. I used linen thread which had to be waxed to keep it from getting fluffy. I tried to use the running stitch in areas that do not get much pressure and the backstitch in areas that needed more strength.

Accessories

Hood –The pattern for the hood is derived from the hoods found in Greenland. (Ostergard, 203-218) This isn't a faithful copy any one of them. Basically, I cut out the main rectangle and started adding gussets until the cape was full enough. I had many odd pieces left over from making the hosen and was able to use selvage for the entire bottom edge. The seams are hand sewn with ordinary sewing thread.



3. Bestiary. Monkey Hunting. England. 1200. Pierpont Morgan Library.

Why is dark blue wool so difficult to find? All I wanted was relatively lightweight wool in a simple weave. I ended up with dark blue 100% wool crepe purchased online from Denver Fabrics. I know that crepe is not a period weave. It's essentially a tabby weave that has more tension on some weft threads than others. This leads to the random look of the surface threads. After washing and drying this fabric several times the surface fullled a bit so it looks a lot less like crepe. The stretchiness of this fabric is especially good for making hosen.

Hosen – The pattern for these hosen is based off of one I had previously made for the wearer. They are cut on the bias and attach in front to a drawstring on the braies. Since he would be wearing these with poulaines I needed to make feet. I tried to keep this simple.

Coif – Hand sewn out of linen.

Undershirt – Machine sewn out of linen. It's same pattern used above but cut slightly larger so that it can be easily pulled over the head.

Braies – Depending on time it's either machine or hand sewn braies based on a pattern taught to me by Ellien Chadeway. (It can also be found in Newman's Notes which is I think where she got it.) The pattern makes wonderfully roomy braies out of a simple fabric-saving rectangle of cloth. My one innovation is to take a notch away from the waistband of the fabric exposing the drawstring. That leaves a place to tie the hosen.

Accessories not made by me

Josef already had a pair of poulaine made by Bohemond which are perfect for this ensemble. There no separating Josef from his usual belt and pouch. He probably ought to be wearing either a wide hip belt with plaques or a narrow belt with a buckle.

Final Assessment

This was the first time I had hand sewn anything larger than a hat. It took much longer than I expected. Those damn button holes took two entire days. There were times when my hands ached worse than my feet. I think I might change the arm pattern a bit. There are some design issues that do not show up in a flexible fabric like linen but do with a firmer worsted wool.

cote-hardie

Obs. exc. Hist. Also 5 -hardy. [a. OF. cote-hardie.]

A close-fitting garment with sleeves, formerly worn by both sexes. □ □ a1450 Knt. de la Tour 159 There come in a yonge squier..and he was clothed in a cote hardy upon the guyse of Almayne. Ibid. 165 She clothed her in a cote hardy unfurred, the whiche satte right streite upon her. Ibid. 167 For to make her gentille, and smalle, and faire bodied, she clothed her in a symple cote hardye, not doubled. 1834 J. R. PLANCHÉ Brit. Costume 128 A close-fitting body garment, called a cote-hardie, buttoned all the way down the front and reaching to the middle of the thigh. 1860 FAIRHOLT Costume 96 The gentleman [temp. Edw. III.] wears a close-fitting tunic, called a cote-hardie, with tight sleeves. 1955 Oxf. Jun. Encycl. XI. 87/1 About 1500, men adopted the jerkin..in place of the cote-hardie. 1967 E. SHORT Embroidery & Fabric Collage ii. 38 The women of medieval England decorated their mantles and cotehardies with their husbands' arms.

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