

**A 13<sup>th</sup> Century English Lady's Ensemble**  
12<sup>th</sup> Night Costume Contest, AS XLIV  
Lady Eulalia Piebakere

This project represents my attempt at a complete court outfit that might have been worn by an English woman of status during the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. It consists of a linen shift (or smock), a linen gown (or cote), a brocade cyclas, cut wool hose with garters, headware (a hairnet, fillet, and barbette), and leather turnshoes.

### **Shift**

A shift is an undyed linen garment commonly accepted to have been worn by women as an underwear layer. I used white linen fabric, in keeping with period illustrations (see for example illustration 1). The cut of my shift is based on “Nockert Type 5” (a generalization based on several extant garments) – see illustration 2.

I joined the pieces together by machine and then finished the seams by hand with linen thread. The seam finishing technique I used is shown in Crowfoot et al. in figure 126 on page 156.

The finishing of the neck, sleeves, and hem on this garment is identical to that used on the gown – see next section for more details.

### **Gown**

The gown or cote is the main fashion layer worn by women during this period, and is typified by sleeves tight on the forearms and wide where they join the body, and a loose, flowing drape overall – see illustration 3 for a typical example from an English source. The cut of my gown is based on a surviving garment, St Claire of Asisi's gown (see illustration

4). I received help from Maitresse Katrine de Saint Brieuc in interpreting this garment and drafting a modified version of its pattern to fit me. My version deviates from the original slightly in the way everything comes together at the armpit.

My gown is made of blue linen. While this color would have been easily achievable on wool using period dyes, linen was rarely if ever dyed in period. Thus, the linen is essentially a substitute for a lightweight wool.

Again, the major joining seams on this garment were done by machine. Maitresse Katrine helped me serge the edges, and my intent was to hand finish all the seams. I ran out of time, though, and this part is still in process.

I finished the neckline using a narrow bias-cut facing held down with a double row of running stitch. This technique can be seen in Crowfoot et al figure 131 (p 159), and is practical, simple, and elegant. The hem and sleeve edges were finished with a simple hem stitch, which can be seen in Crowfoot et al figure 127 (page 157).

## **Cyclas**

Women are often shown in illustrations from this time period wearing a sleeveless overgown made of decorated fabric. See for example illustration 5, and Crowfoot et al figure 159 (page 182). I believe that this garment may have been made from costly imported silks, and was intended as a display of wealth. Elaborately patterned silks, including brocades, were available in England during the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, and “[w]ealthy citizens of London...bought Italian cloths. These were made up into furnishings and clothing.” (Crowfoot et al 89).

I selected a modern brocade (content unknown, although I suspect cotton) with a relatively simple repeating motif to stand in for a silk brocade. The cut I used for this garment was based on that of Herjolfsnes 37 (see illustration 6). Although this is a man's garment dated to a later time period (mid-late 14<sup>th</sup> century), it follows the conventions common to late 13<sup>th</sup> century garments in that it is composed of rectangular sections with triangular (or trapezoidal) gores, which would be simple to cut out without a pattern and tailor to the wearer.

Yet again, this garment was joined by machine. I finished the seams by hand using a simple felled seam. The neck was faced as in the gown, and I used the same technique to finish the arm holes (this is supported by Crowfoot et al on page 159). The hem was double folded and sewn with hem stitch.

I used linen thread for the hand finishing of this garment, although silk would be a more authentic choice per Crowfoot et al (p 152): "Silk thread is used for seams and hems on most surviving fragments of woven silk." I used linen thread as I am more familiar with working with it, and given that the garment itself is not made of silk I decided a substitution was appropriate.

## **Hose**

Little is known about women's hose in period, although an illustration in the Maciejowski Bible shows a woman with her skirt hiked up to show her hose (see illustration 7). The consensus among reenactors is that women wore knee-high hose held up with garters. As with men's hose, these are assumed to have been made from bias-cut wool and tailored to the wearer. (hight Broom, "Chosen Hosen")

Maitresse Katrine helped measure my legs and tailor my hose to fit. The pattern used differs from surviving period examples as they are made in three pieces with a sole on the foot rather than two pieces with a seam running along the underside of the foot; this is somewhat simpler to construct and a bit more comfortable to the modern wearer. On subsequent hose I would like to switch to the more period pattern.

The sewing and finishing on my hose was done by hand with linen thread. I used simple felled seams and a single-rolled hem on the top edge.

Purpose-woven garters are described in detail in Crowfoot et al (pages 142-144). These are narrow and may have been either tied or buckled. I have used some woven Central American belts (content unknown) that I happened to already have, as they are broadly similar to what I think period garters may have been like.

## **Headwear**

My headwear consists of a fillet, barrette, and hairnet. The fillet and barrette can be seen in numerous contemporary images, see for example illustrations 8 and 9. This same combination with something covering the hair is shown in illustration 10, and with a hairnet specifically in Crowfoot et al figure 116.

There are many interpretations of the fillet by modern reenactors, generally falling into pleated and ruffled. I have previously made a pleated version (which I have with me for comparison), and decided to try the ruffled (which is what I believe the Manesse manuscript depicts). I used a plastic canvas support covered with white linen, with a pleated band of white linen for the ruffles. This hat was entirely hand sewn with linen thread.

My barrette is made of white linen, hand sewn with white linen thread. Period illustrations show a very specific arrangement of the barrette, which I have had a hard time replicating. I found the photos and notes of Wendi Dunlap, aka Winyeva in the SCA, extremely helpful in deciding on the cut to use for this version.

Surviving hairnets and a plausible construction method are shown in Crowfoot et al (pp 145-149). Using several sets of directions posted by other reenactors online, I was able to make what I am calling my “compromise” hairnet. I used a modern netting set (which is essentially identical to period tools) and a dowel tied between two chairs. The method I used was essentially the same as period examples but with some deviations. I used black perle cotton as a substitute for silk, and a ribbon for the band rather than a purpose-made tablet woven or fingerbraided band. As this is my first hairnet, I made the holes much larger than in the period examples, and I constructed it in a rectangle rather than spirally. I used the same thread to tie the looped ends together at the base of the hairnet and to close up the sides to form a tube.

## **Shoes**

My shoes are simple pointed-toe turnshoes with a single piece for the upper. They are constructed of leather (the sole is elk hide, the uppers are type unknown) with waxed linen thread, and entirely hand sewn. They are based on manuscript images such as that shown in illustration 11, as well as surviving shoes detailed by Beatson and Carlson (see sources), such as those shown in illustrations 12 and 13.

Having never made shoes before, I relied on the directions by Beatson, Carlson, and William de Wyke (see sources), although I ended up deviating from period practice quite a

bit. I used a thinner leather for the soles and so punched holes all the way through rather than using the edge-flesh stitch used in period. Lacking lasts, I figured out the basic pattern and sizing my making a tape mock-up of my foot and working from there.

## **Final Comments**

This is the first time I have really tried to do a “skin out” outfit. The hose, shoes, and hairnet were all first-attempts, and the gown is the first time I have actually worked so closely from a surviving period garment. I found all of this work to be extremely satisfying, and I am pleased with how the outfit turned out overall. I hope that I can build on what I have learned with this project to continue to develop more authentic clothing and accessories for myself.

## **Sources**

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[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3e/Codex Manesse Die Winsbekin.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3e/Codex_Manesse_Die_Winsbekin.jpg)

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National Library of Scotland, "The Murthly Hours." ca. 1280, France. (Full-page miniatures illustrated in England ca. 1260-1280.) <http://www.nls.uk/murthlyhours/index.html>

University of Heidelberg, "Codex Manesse." ca 1304, Zurich.

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## Illustrations



Illustration 1: Birth of Samuel from the Maciejowski Bible. Note the white sleeves of their shifts visible.

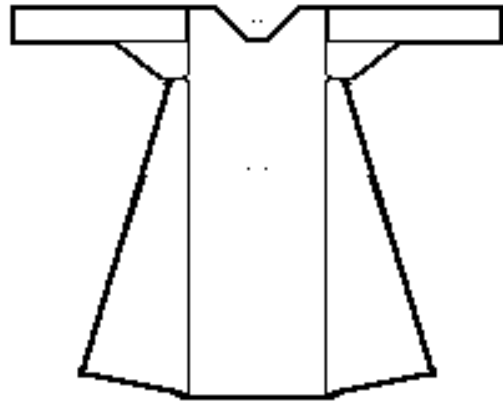


Illustration 2: Nockert Type 5  
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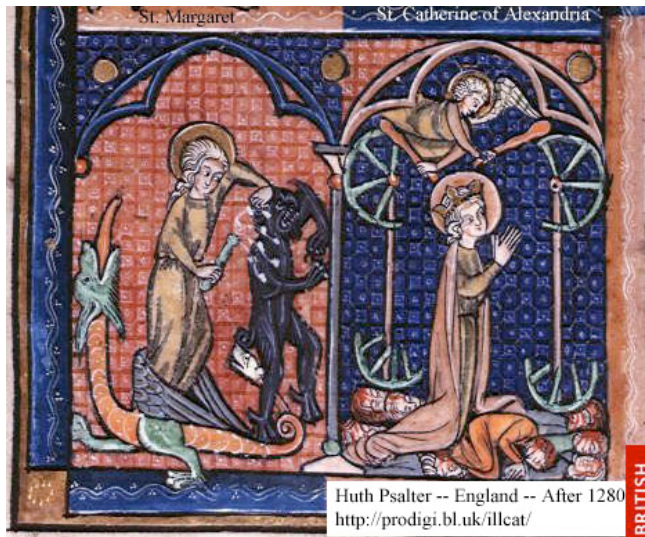


Illustration 3



Illustration 5, from the Codex Manesse  
(Zurich, ca 1304)



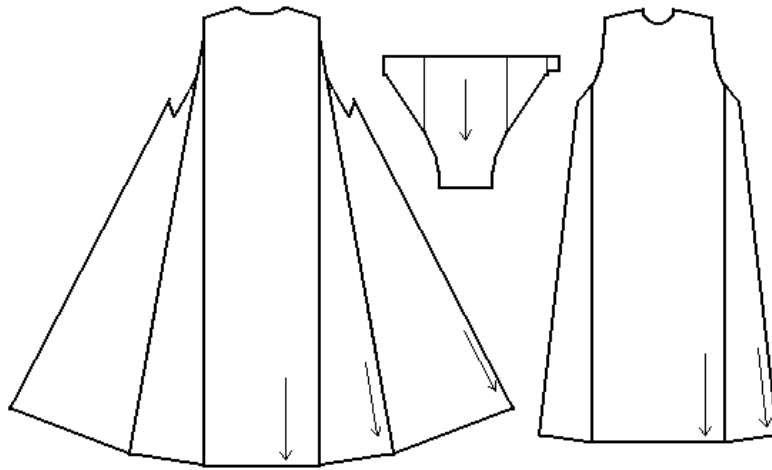


Illustration 4: St Claire of Asisi's gown, circa 1253. Image ©I. Marc Carlson.

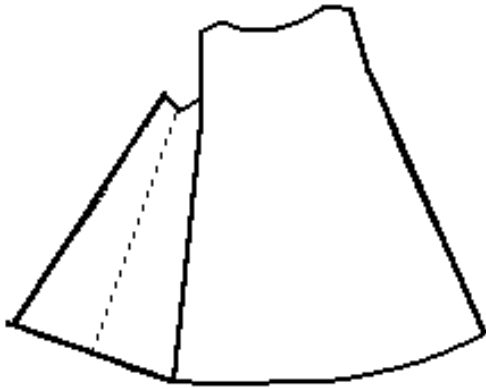


Illustration 6: Herjolfsnes 37, a man's garment dated to the mid-late 14<sup>th</sup> century. © I. Marc Carlson



Illustration 7: Ruth threshing (detail), from the Maciejowski Bible (France, ca. 1250).



Illustration 8, detail from the Manesse Codex

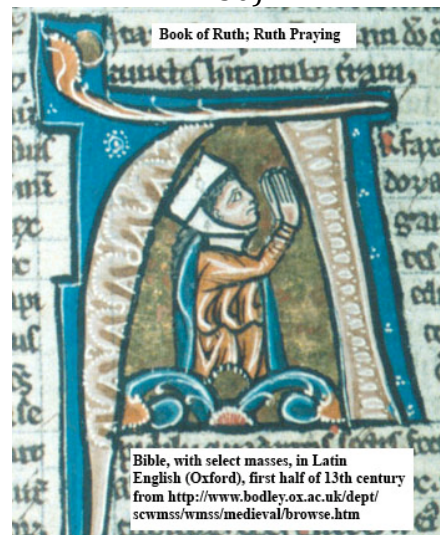


Illustration 9



Illustration 10, Detail from the Murthly hours,  
England/France ca. 1280



Illustration 12, listed under "1200-1300." © I.  
Marc Carlson



Illustration 11, manuscript detail  
(original source unknown),  
<http://www.gelfling.dds.nl/surcote.html>

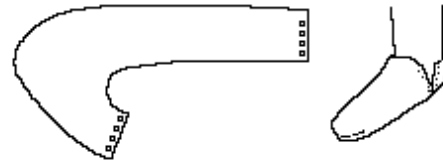


Illustration 13, dated 1200-1400. © I.  
Marc Carlson