

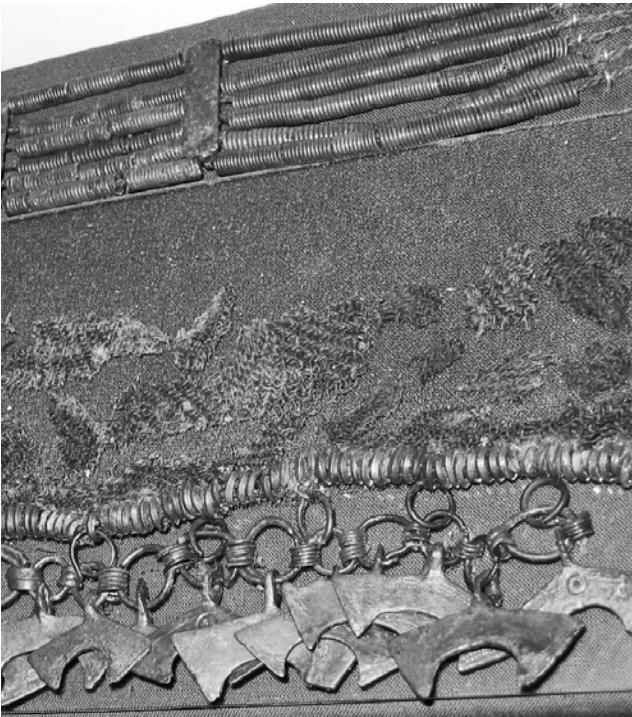


The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

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Edge of 9th century Latvian twill-woven shawl
with bronze ornament. Photo: Hilary Davidson

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MEDATS January 2007 NEWSLETTER

The next MEDATS newsletter is planned for January 2007. All copy to Andrea Kalvin before the first week of December, please, e-mail: andrea_kalvin@yahoo.co.uk or by post to address on page 9.

NEWSLETTER

Rising costs of printing and postage prompted the committee to try to distribute the newsletter in electronic form via e-mail and in the future making it downloadable from the website. Electronic distribution would not just cut down the cost helping to keep membership fees low but would speed up the actual process itself. Readers who would like to receive the newsletter via e-mail need to send their e-mail address to the editor, andrea_kalvin@yahoo.co.uk.

MEDATS LOGO

We have a new logo. It is an illustration by Christine Unwin based on a manuscript owned by the British Library (BL Add MS 10294, f.56). Many will recognise it from the title page of *Textiles and Clothing c. 1150 – c.1450* by Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard and Kay Staniland. We thought it encapsulates our Society, showing as it does two people in medieval attire sitting together talking. (The little dog is a bonus!). This volume is shortly to be republished, this time by the Museum of London. We are very grateful to Christina for allowing us to use her drawing for our logo and to Tracy Wellman, the Manager of Design at the Museum, for obtaining permission on our behalf for the use of the image

Christina worked as a field archaeologist before her present career as a graphic designer, illustrator and exhibition designer. Her image has also been printed for us onto A4 stationery, compliments slips, stickers and tickets, by the family-run firm, Dodds the Printers, in King's Cross, London.

christina@wave.demon.co.uk
www.dodds.demon.co.uk

ABSTRACT

The following is the abstract of the paper given by Julie Botticello at the March 2006 meeting, "Looping the Loops". Due to technical problems it could not be printed in the previous issue of the Newsletter.

Julie Botticello: *The Conservation of Two Tudor Woollen Flat Caps*

The project involved the conservation of two 15th century woollen flat caps, from the collections of the Cuming Museum, London. It was undertaken as part of the final year course work for a BA (Hons) in Conservation from Camberwell College of Arts in 2003, and entailed historical research and scientific analysis of the caps, as well as the implementation of a conservation treatment.

Research went into the provenance of the hats, the history of knitting and cap making in 15th and 16th century England and into the physical aspects of the hats as woollen knitted structures. The conservation treatment aimed to provide physical stability and aesthetic clarity for them to be appreciated and understood as hats, while acknowledging their importance as objects with histories and trying to maintain this evidence.

The treatment focused on stabilising the hats through surface cleaning, humidification, and the creation of a mount support system. Ethical issues also arose regarding the justification for such an interventive treatment. A minimally interventive approach was adopted, acknowledging that there was more to investigate and enabling the possibility of future examinations.

FUTURE MEETINGS

28th October at the Courtauld Institute of Art.
The Needle's Excellency: aspects of Western Medieval Embroidery

24th February 2007 at The Tower of London (Education Centre)
Civil dress on tomb effigies and brasses (1300-1500)

**N.B. This is a joint meeting with the Monumental Brass Society & The Church Monuments Society. There will be a restricted number of tickets due to venue needing to accommodate members of three societies. Only 27 are available to MEDATS members so please book well in advance if you would like to attend. Details of meeting will be published in the January Newsletter.

12th May 2007 at the Courtauld Institute of Art
Re-cycling Textiles in the Middle Ages

27th October 2007 Venue TBC. We are looking at a venue outside London
European Medieval archaeological textiles & dress

**N.B. This meeting has been changed from two days to one and now has a broader topical remit.

Proposed for 2008-2009. Dates to be fixed.

March 2008	Dress & Textiles for Formal Entries into cities
May 2008	Tapestries
October 2008	Jewellery and clothing
March 2009	Dress & Textiles during the reign of Henry VIII

The Development of Liveries and Uniforms in Europe before 1600

Carol Chattaway: *When a Livery is not a Livery? Distributions of Clothing at the late fourteenth century Burgundian court*

Dr Carol Chattaway provided a general introduction to the conference by raising a number of issues for consideration during the day. Drawn from a study of the annual household accounts of Philip the Bold, the first Valois Duke of Burgundy, these issues centred on three main questions. First, what exactly is livery? She suggested that the sort of criteria which might determine whether any given distribution of cloth, clothing or accessories should be so termed should include the size, occasions and regularity of distributions; the invariability of their colours or devices; and the nature of the contract covering them. Second, what was the purpose of livery? Apart from clearly distinguishing the wearers and their relationships, it could serve as a mutual support mechanism; a defensive, warning mechanism; a tool for military aggression; and visual propaganda for a political programme. Third, how and why did the nature and use of livery change and develop, at different paces in different places? Rather than being a matter of fashion, the reasons might include increased factionalism, particularly over political programmes, where more general support was sought, and particularly where the central authority was weak, and opponents clashed in border, neutral or disputed areas. In conclusion Dr Chattaway suggested that livery was not in itself dangerous, but was open to abuse and misuse, and so had suffered from 'bad press'.

Jane Bridgeman : *Some eye-witness accounts of early military uniforms in the Italian wars 1500-1530*

Eye witness accounts of the arrival of Louis XII of France in Milan in 1499, describe his guard of 300-500 men wearing livery with his personal device. This was usual at this date, and later - Francis I of France required his most high ranking courtiers, to dress in specific colours when accompanying him on a pilgrimage in May 1516. The use of a uniform colour for military clothing, however, may have begun when Venice enrolled men from the cities, towns and villages of its north Italian territory during the War of Cambrai (1508-1510).

Luigi da Porto in Vicenza reported in March 1509 that the commander of the Venetian forces, the condottiere Bartolomeo Alviano, insisted all new recruits be dressed in his livery colours of red and white. The cloth for the garments was paid for by the Venetian municipalities. While not unusual for a condottiere to dress his own men in his own livery, it should not have been the case that the citizens of a Republic – even its most humble farming recruits- wear livery. This suggests that the Doge and Senate must have authorized Alviano's request, and thus these Venetian troops might properly be described as in uniform rather than livery.

Jenny Tiramani: *Performers' liveries at the Courts of Elizabeth I and James I*

There are many surviving royal warrants for liveries of clothing given to the actors, musicians, fools and clowns who entertained Elizabeth and James, but there are far less visual sources extant, and no known surviving garments. Piecing together the evidence, the paper explored the material nature of these liveries, by showing examples of similar, surviving, sixteenth century garments from Dresden, Florence, Stockholm and Graz. The figure of William Somers, fool to Henry VIII, was the focus for part of the paper. He appears with Henry in a Psalter c.1540 wearing a knee-length, summer, green livery coat and in 1558-9 a livery warrant for 'iiij yards di Redd' [cloth] is granted to George Bright, Somers' own servant, 'to have a red cote', by Elizabeth I. Intriguingly, there is an surviving inventory, c.1602, of clothing belonging to the Admiral's Men theatre company which lists 'Will Somers cote' in a column headed 'Antik Sutes'. In a play of 1602 called 'The Second Part of Cardinal Wolsey' William Somers is a character, so this coat could have been an actual livery coat of Somers that survived from the mid-sixteenth century, or an early seventeenth century version of one. There is a 1615 engraving of Somers by Francis Delarum wearing a full-length coat, heavily guarded and decorated with slashing and this could even be a depiction of the way the actor appeared onstage in the 1602 play. As this example demonstrates, it is sometimes difficult to separate fact from fiction when studying the dress of performers.

COLLOQUIUM

The Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg and the Department of Medieval History at the Historical Institute of the University of Berne are organising an international colloquium to be held in Riggisberg (Switzerland) from 16 until 18 November 2006 on the subject of "Fashion and Clothing in Late Medieval Europe". Lectures will be presented in English and French. The number of participants is restricted and prior registration required. Applications will be accepted until 30 September. The program and registration forms may be ordered from info@abegg-stiftung.ch.

EXHIBITION

Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture

26 September 2006- 18 February 2007, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
The exhibition is accompanied by a symposium "Facing the Middle Ages" held on the 14- 15 October 2006. The symposium is free with museum admission and no reservation is required. For further details visit www.metmuseum.org or e-mail lectures@metmuseum.org.

VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM

INTRODUCTORY TOURS & GALLERY TALKS AT THE VICTORIA & ALBERT MUSEUM, SOUTH KENSINGTON SW7 2RL

If you have any questions about any of the events listed below, please call 020-7942-2211

Daily introductory tours:

These tours tell the history of the V&A and introduce a selection of its treasures.

Daily: 10.30 Introductory Tour
 11.30 Introductory Tour
 12.30 British Galleries Tour
 13.30 Introductory Tour
 14.30 British Galleries Tour
 15.30 Introductory Tour
Wed only 16.30 Introductory Tour

All tours last approximately one hour and start at the Meeting Point in the Grand Entrance unless otherwise instructed. If you are hearing impaired, please ask the Information Desk for the sound enhancement equipment.

Curator talks

Free talks take place on Thursdays at 13.00 and Sundays at 15.00. Talks explore the wider context and history of the objects on display and are led by V&A staff. Meet at the Meeting Point in the Grand Entrance.

Titles and names of speakers for each day of talks can be found by visiting What's On.

EVENTS

The Knitting and Stitching Show

12- 15 October 2006- Alexandra Palace, London

2- 5 November 2006- RDS Dublin

23- 26 November 2006- International Halls, Harrogate

These are events for anyone with an interest in knitting and stitching as the title suggests with supplies, workshops and textile art.

For further details visit www.twistedthread.com or e-mail mail@twistedthread.com

Ticket hotline: 01473-320-407

COLLECTION

This is a new feature of the Newsletter introducing textile museums and collections abroad, which our members could visit while travelling.

Az Esztergomi Bazilika es Kinostar

The treasury of the cathedral of the Primate of Hungary houses a collection of 400 pieces of sacred silver and artefacts, religious vestments and accessories, embroidery, lace and textiles dating from the 12th century to the 19th. The pieces are mainly Hungarian but German and Italian pieces are also shown. There is a book in English accompanying the exhibition.

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Recommendations and suggestions of other institutions abroad can be sent to Andrea Kalvin, please e-mail andrea_kalvin@yahoo.co.uk.

WEBSITE

www.meg-andrews.com

A new member of MEDATS, Meg Andrews sells antique costumes and textiles, 18th and 19th centuries, earlier if she can find them. She covers English Costumes & Textiles; Arts and Crafts, particular Artist Designer fabrics of the 19th and 20th centuries; Kashmir, Paisley & Other Shawls and Oriental Costumes and Textiles.

BOOK REVIEW

John Edmonds: *A Manual of 18th Century Textile Dyeing*

174 pages, 15 colour plates, coil binding. 6"x9", £25 plus £5 postage and packing.

One might reasonably ask what is the connection between the world of 18th century textile dyeing and medieval dress and textiles. My first intention was to research the dyestuffs and dyeing techniques used by professional medieval dyers and journeymen. However one quickly became aware of the dearth of authentic information pre-1600. The sad truth is that medieval dyers like other artisans did not write books to explain their mystery. The books that have survived were written by interested literary gentlemen with no pretensions of being practicing dyers. The evidence we have however includes European examples ranging from the Bayeaux tapestry to the Sicilian coronation robes, both of the 11/12 centuries. Then there are the medieval royal and ecclesiastical robes and of course the 15th century tapestries in Hampton Court, the V&A and elsewhere across Europe.

Happily by the 18th century books were being written by practicing dyers of varying experience. In France there was the attempt to approach textile dyeing more scientifically with state funding. However in the United States after independence, a number of professional dyers emigrated from Britain to the States and set up business there. One of the best known and most articulate was William Partridge. He states in the preface to his book (1) published in New York in 1823 that he is giving his recipes (or receipts as he calls them) to his new found compatriots to assist them in competing with the imported European textiles. These recipes of which there is about 170 were written specifically for practicing dyers. This was peer-review with a vengeance. He also states that he was willing at \$5 a time to match any samples sent to him and provide the matching recipe. His one regret was that he could not illustrate his Treatise with samples in colour. This was before colour photography and as he says the cost would have been prohibitive. From various sources, and the analysis of the dyes used in medieval fabrics, we have a fair indication of the dyestuffs which were available in Europe before 1600. In addition we know that actual dyeing methods changed little over several centuries. The scale of dyeing increased with the eventual introduction of printing. In studying and practicing medieval dyeing technology, it has been fruitful to work backwards like an archaeologist. One can easily exclude tropical dyestuffs which were not available before trade routes to the Americas and the East were established, or the use of chemicals or steam heating which remained undiscovered. Brazilwood is an interesting exception. This later came from America but was available in Europe in medieval times, from the Far East, presumably by the overland route.

At last it has been possible to do, at least in part, that which Partridge wanted to do, but which was impossible in 1823, namely to publish an illustrated version of his Treatise in colour. Unfortunately colour printing is expensive and even now forms a major part of the printing costs. This book with 174 pages is coil bound to open flat with modern instructions attached to each of Partridge's recipes.

This research has in turn enabled me to proceed to reconstruct medieval dyeing. In brief my conclusion is that with the restrictions which were inevitable before the 16th century

nevertheless the quality of the best textile dyeing bore comparison with the best of much later dyeing and is exemplified by surviving samples even after some 800 years. As Dr Peter Reynolds once said to me "We do not look down on the past, we look across to the past".

Reference:

William Partridge: A Practical Treatise on Dying of Woollen, Cotton and Skein Silk, 1823.

CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

As of the October meeting, there will be a change in the cost and benefits of student membership. A discount will no longer be available on the initial joining fee, and instead the first two meetings of the membership calendar year will be free to student members with NUS or ISIC cards.

MEDATS COMMITTEE ADDRESSES

This Section Redacted