



The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

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**Their Majesties admiring the results of Hampton Court Palace's
Tapestry Recolouration Project.**

(Photograph kindly provided by Kate Frame (Head of Conservation & Collection
Care, HRP.)

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Editorial

The Annual General Meeting ushered in some significant changes. After many years ably guiding the committee MeDaTS, John Cherry relinquished the Chairmanship, and stepped into the vacancy left by the death of Claude Blair as President. Claude himself had been Chairman before he became President, so it seems we now have a Career Path at the top of the committee. ;-) The latest person to place his foot on the ladder in taking over as Chairman is Geoff Egan.

The proposed increase the membership fees to £15 for individuals within Europe, £20 for households, and £30 for institutions and individuals outside the Europe was passed by the attendant membership without dissent. That should do much to arrest the slow erosion of our financial position that has been occurring for a considerable time.

One of the causes for concern in that area has been moves by the Courtauld Institute to dramatically increase their various charges for the use of their facilities. Appeals by the committee have fallen on deaf ears, and thus future meetings will be held elsewhere. At present there is no sign of a regular venue arising, so meetings will be itinerant for a while.

On happier notes, the Spring Meeting on 'Textile Technologies' promises to be outstanding, with no less than three eminent overseas speakers as well as our native experts. Our venue issues happily lead us to the Museum of London for that meeting, and look to take us to no less luminary a locale as the Globe Theatre for the Autumn Meeting on 'Reconstruction and Replication'.

To receive the newsletter as a colour PDF file electronically, e-mail me via medatseditor@hotmail.co.uk.

Otherwise, information about MEDATS, and membership forms, may be had from the Membership Secretary, Carole Thompson, **9 Fairthorn Road, Charlton, London SE7 7RL**, or from the society website: www.medats.org.uk

TIMOTHY DAWSON

NEWS

Update on the new Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History at the University of Glasgow

Following the closure of the Textile Conservation Centre in October 2009 by the University of Southampton, The Textile Conservation Centre Foundation and the University of Glasgow agreed to found a new teaching and research facility, The Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History, the only resource of its kind in the UK. This update gives the latest news on the development of the new Centre.

<http://www.tccfoundation.org.uk/>

<http://www.textileconservationcentre.co.uk/>

Three members of staff have recently been appointed to the new Centre for Textile Conservation and Technical Art History at the University of Glasgow and took up their posts in August: Frances Lennard, Dr Anita Quye and Sarah Foskett. They are joining Dr Erma Hermens from History of Art.

Erma Hermens leads the Technical Art History strand of the Centre and is the Convenor of the MLitt programme Making and Meaning: Approaches in Technical Art History. Trained as a paintings conservator and with a PhD in the history of art from Leiden University, she has organised several international symposia in this interdisciplinary field. She is chief editor of the new on-line edition of ArtMatters: International Journal for Technical Art History, funded by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation and to be launched this autumn.

Frances Lennard leads the Textile Conservation strand and convenes the MPhil Textile Conservation programme which is beginning in September 2010 with a full cohort of students from the UK and overseas. Until 2009 she was Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader of the MA Textile Conservation at the Textile Conservation Centre (TCC), University of Southampton. Frances has just completed a major collaborative project on tapestry degradation, that was funded by the AHRC. She has recently published a new book for Elsevier, Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice, co-edited with Patricia Ewer.

Anita Quye has been appointed Lecturer in Conservation Science and works with both Textile Conservation and Technical Art History. She was previously Principal Conservation Scientist in the Department of Conservation and Analytical Science at the National Museums Scotland. Anita has a wealth of experience working as a conservation scientist within museums and working collaboratively on research projects with institutions worldwide. Her main area of research to date has been in historic textiles and modern materials analysis.

Sarah Foskett is the Textile Conservation Tutor. She is from Glasgow Museums where she has been a textile conservator working on the Burrell Collection Tapestry Project. Before that Sarah was a textile conservator at the National Museums Scotland from 1995 to 2008. She trained at the TCC at Hampton Court Palace. Sarah is an accredited member of the Institute of Conservation and a committee member of the June Baker Trust.

New premises are being made ready for the Centre on Level 3 of the University's Roberston Building that will be shared by students on the textile conservation and technical art history programmes.

Object-based, interdisciplinary research will be an important aspect of the new

Centre which will bring together existing areas of expertise in conservation and technical art history. Glasgow's History of Art department, in collaboration with the TCC Foundation, has been awarded almost £100,000, over two years, by the Getty Foundation, to fund a Research Network in Textile Conservation, Dress and Textile History and Technical Art History. Frances Lennard and Erma Hermens will launch this international network in January 2011 with the aim of creating new collaborative research projects.

There are opportunities for PhD study in all subject areas covered by the new Centre, the first PhD students in textile conservation and dress history will begin their research in September 2010, joining several PhDs in Technical Art History.

Such has been the demand for the Textile Conservation programme and PhD places, it has been decided that the centre will not launch the third Masters programme, MLitt Dress and Textile Histories, until September 2011. The development of this programme is being led by Liz Hancock from History of Art, whose specialist areas of interest are decorative arts and design history, particularly furniture and furnishing textiles. The first students will begin on this programme in September 2011 and will share some teaching with the textile conservation students.

Students on all three programmes will gain enormously from the involvement of staff from Glasgow Museums, National Museums Scotland and other institutions within Scotland, and will have the opportunity to work with collections from local museums, including the University's own Hunterian Museum.

Those interested to know more about the Masters courses and PhD opportunities should email Ailsa Boyd at the University of Glasgow at: A.Boyd@arthist.arts.gla.ac.uk

Funds to support this exciting new development are being raised by the TCC Foundation. The Foundation's fundraising campaign, led by Nell Hoare, started in February 2010 and is already within £60,000 of its £650,000 target. If you would like to know more about the campaign and would like to support the fundraising effort please contact Nell at info@tccfoundation.org.uk.

Changes to Access to the Textiles and Fashion Collection at the V&A in 2011

The Victoria & Albert Museum is building a new Textiles and Fashion Study and Conservation Centre at Blythe House in Kensington Olympia which will open in late Summer 2013. Following a generous lead grant from the Clothworkers' Foundation it will be called "The Clothworkers' Centre for Textile and Fashion Study and Conservation". The development will include a spacious public study room for appointments, a seminar room and new, up-to-date storage for our outstanding collection of textiles and fashion.

The museum's textiles and fashion collection numbers some 104,000 individual pieces and because of its size we have to begin packing the collection for the move to Blythe House in March 2011. This will result in the closure of galleries and stores, and a suspension of appointments.

Suspension of Appointments

The textiles and fashion collection is curated by the Furniture, Textile and Fashion Department and the Asian Department.

We regret that from 1st March 2011 the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department cannot offer any appointments to study textiles or fashion. No Asian textiles will be accessible for appointments from 1st October 2011. We hope to resume our normal service in the new Clothworkers' Centre at Blythe House in October 2013.

Gallery Closures

The Textiles Study Room (Room 100). From 1st February 2011 access to some of the study frames will be limited. The Study Room will close on 1st March 2011.

The Carpet Gallery (Room 97) will close on 1st May 2011.

The remaining Textile Galleries (Rooms 95-9) will close on 31st October. However there will be limited access to some of the displays in Room 99 from 1st October.

We realise that this will be disruptive to your studies but please note that there are displays of textiles and fashion in the Tapestry Gallery, Medieval Galleries, British Galleries, the 20th Century Gallery, the Theatre and Performance Gallery, the Asian Galleries and the Recent Acquisitions Gallery.

During the period of refurbishment the V&A will hold two exciting textiles and fashion exhibitions – *Imperial Chinese Robes from the Forbidden City* (7th December 2010 – 27th February 2011), which will present for the first time in Europe the magnificent robes worn by the emperors and empresses of the Qing Dynasty; and *Yohji Yamamoto* (12th March – 11th July 2011), an installation based retrospective, which will be the designer's first solo exhibition in the UK.

The V&A's major exhibitions for 2011, *The Cult of Beauty: The Aesthetic Movement 1860-1900* (2nd April – 17th July 2011) and *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970-1990* (24th September 2011 – 8th January 2012) both include sections on fashion.

The V&A's Textiles and Fashion collections and the Asian textiles collection can also be accessed online through Search the Collections, where images and detailed information about many of the individual objects can be found. More object information entries and photographs are already being added as a result of a cataloguing project that is part of the Clothworkers' Centre development.

For information about further resources and other British collections of fashion and textiles, please visit the V&A website:
<http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/fashion/resources/index.html>

EXHIBITIONS

University of Leeds International Textile Archive

ULITA presently has on display for the very first time, and for a limited time, the Egyptian children's garments attributed to the thirteenth century discussed in MeDaTS Autumn Meeting of 2008. www.ulita.leeds.ac.uk

Victoria and Albert Museum

Imperial Chinese Robes from the Forbidden City (7th December 2010 – 27th February 2011) will open as usual in the temporary exhibition space in Room 40.

CONFERENCES PAST

MEDATS Summer Meeting

15th May 2010

Stiffening, Stuffing & quilting: the extra dimension

Claire Thornton, '16th century stiffening & padding'

In the Sixteenth Century, the style of men's and women's clothing often needed stuffing and stiffening to achieve their extreme shape.

A wide variety of materials were used, often several types within one garment. Wool and cotton were commonly used for quilting sleeves and doublets, providing warmth, protection, and not least a fashionable shape. Examples are an embroidered leather doublet with peasecod, 1585-95 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and a padded satin sleeve, 1580-1600, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nurnberg.

Linen was used as both padding and stiffening in many garments, as an interlining layer, or worked with horsehair in trunkhose. John Bulwers *Anthropometamorphosis* of 1653, describes hose stuffed with bran, and it is possible that straw could be used in the same way. *Vanity of Women*, Maarten de Vos, c.1600, shows a French farthingale, with obvious channels for whalebones or bents. These were also used in "bodies" or stays.

Whalebones, worked with paper and wire stiffen the linen supporter, 1590-1610, Victoria & Albert Museum.

The tailor's skill, along with any viable organic matter, produced some of the most remarkable three-dimensional shapes in clothing history.

MEDATS Autumn Meeting

9th October 2010

Tapestries

If anything could persuade one of the virtues of not being tied to one venue all the time, surely this was it! I will concede that a trip to Hampton Court Palace had novelty value for me, and who knows when or whether I would have visited otherwise, but I think that only the most jaded would have disdained opportunity to go again at no additional cost. Marc Meltonville did an outstanding job of organising the event, both in setting up the venue and assembling an eloquent and interesting panel of speakers.

Frances Lennard, 'Woven pictures; an overview of tapestry conservation'

Tapestry-woven wall-hangings are large and heavy and may have been hanging on display for hundreds of years. They are often very weak; recent research has demonstrated that they are more fragile than they first appear. Any breakdown in the structure affects the clarity of the image since the tapestry weaving technique creates the image and structure simultaneously. The pictorial role and the skilful weaving of tapestries puts them in the category of decorative arts, even fine art, so that the preservation of the image is often seen to be as important as that of the structure itself. This makes tapestry conservation a real challenge – and the sheer scale of the work makes it time-consuming and resource-intensive.

A variety of methods is used in Europe and North America to meet these challenges, as clearly demonstrated during research for the book, *Tapestry Conservation: Principles and Practice*, co-edited with Maria Hayward (Elsevier, 2006). While

methods of minimal intervention are used occasionally, this is a relatively unusual approach. The range of methods used to restore the image is extremely diverse and includes reweaving, support stitching, painting, embroidery and latterly even digital printing. The support and image reintegration functions are sometimes carried out simultaneously and sometimes separated. Recent research projects are helping conservators and custodians to gain a better understanding of the condition of tapestries and in the future may inform both preventive conservation standards and proactive conservation techniques, but the conservator's skill and judgement is still essential in determining appropriate treatments. Tapestry conservation is perhaps the most diverse area of textile conservation and serves to demonstrate the fundamental importance of context in selecting a treatment approach.

Kate Frame (Head of Conservation & Collection Care, HRP) 'Tapestry Revealed'

In April 2009 palace conservators launched their visitor show called 'Henry VIII's Tapestry Revealed' as part of Historic Royal Palaces' celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the throne. The aim was to raise public awareness of the important tapestry collections at Hampton Court Palace and beyond, their fragile state and the essential conservation work that goes into ensuring their survival. This show, which ended November 2010, was a ground breaking exhibition using innovative light technology on one of the palace's 16th century Tudor tapestries - *The Oath and Departure Eliezer* from the magnificent Story of Abraham series - to recreate its original colourful appearance.



The tapestry laid out in the enormous, high-technology cleaning rig.

This project was the product of five years of scientific study. In 2009, a University of Manchester PhD student sponsored by HRP completed her research creating the scientific data to recolour our chosen tapestry. This data was based on hundreds of colour measurements of the faded front and the well-preserved back of our chosen tapestry and, for comparison, from our modern samples dyed using authentic Tudor recipes (using a telespectroradiometer (TSR)). This data was converted digitally to add back the lost colour into an image of the tapestry which was then projected on to

the original hanging tapestry, to temporarily regain its original colourful appearance of nearly 500 years ago before its dyes faded, without any physical impact on the original fabric.

Until November 2010 visitors could view the show in the Queens' Guard Chamber of Hampton Court Palace. Five times a day the room would dim and Tudor music sounded to herald the show. A voiceover commentary told the story of the tapestry's significance, its history of deterioration and the needs for skilled and exacting conservation care. During the show the tapestry was gradually illuminated with the specially calibrated coloured light shining on to separate sections, temporarily returning the yarns to their original colours, creating a virtual restoration. At the back room there was an exhibition where visitors could learn about conserving tapestries and handle accurate replica samples of tapestries.

We have financed a film of *Tapestry Revealed* to show on our website in 2011 to ensure the legacy for the research and this unique show.

BYZANTINE AND OTTOMAN EMPIRES IN WORLD HISTORY

Istanbul Şehir University, Turkey, 21st – 23rd October 2010

I had never even heard of the World History Association, or even World History as a discipline, before being invited to speak at this conference. All very encouraging as it is sometimes hard to know whether anyone is reading what one publishes. World History is fairly recent field, mainly practised in the U.S.A. It is, one might say, and anti-specialisation discipline, concentrating on how societies, cultures and institutions interact and influence each other on an international scale. Plenary speakers reflected upon how most conventional Western history narratives often ignore the Roman Empire persisting through the Middle Ages (the so-called "Byzantine Empire") and the Ottoman Empire when discussing the transformation of the Western hemisphere through the later Middle Ages and Early Modern Era.

Although Judith Herrin, one of the most eminent Byzantinists around, I would highly recommend her recent book *Byzantium: the Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire*

- ~~Frances Richardson, *The Dominion of Women*~~
- Yolanda Llergo, Santiago Riera, Carmen Sánchez, *Excavations of the 10th Century in the Necropolis of the Dead Body and Related Textiles from the 10th Century*
 - Marianne Vedeler, 'New Light on Sewing in the 10th Century'
 - Irita Žeiere, 'Fragments of Male Clothing from the 10th Century in Latvia';
 - Helena Brezinová, 'Finds of Textiles from the 10th Century in the Production from a Major Excavation Site of Grand Moravia in Mikulčice (South Moravia, Czech Republic)';
 - Milena Bravermanová, 'The Newly Conserved and Determined Textiles from the Graves of Relatives of the Czech Rulers from St. Vitus Cathedral: the Romanesque Baptised Children's Garment and So-called *cruseler*';

asking farmers heading to market where they were going, and thinking that "Inna t'city" was what it was called!) I repeated a project pioneered in my first visit, in taking along one of my relevant historical outfits and getting a bunch of photographs in the Great Church. I confess that this time I forewent the other draw-card for medieval dress and textile enthusiasts, the Topkapi Palace, which has so many early Ottoman imperial robes.

The two disappointments of my trip were both textile related. I had hoped I could find some good fabric for future historical clothing projects, but while some fashionable Turkish curtain fabrics could just about pass for medieval patterns, the colours modern Turks favour are dreadful! (Brown, brown and yet more brown!) I took a trip to the Military Museum and found that the display I had especially gone to see, Ottoman imperial tents (hand sewn, of course, but also appliquéd and embroidered) was closed. There is not much other reason to go there, it is quite dire otherwise. On the happy side, though, I did find shops selling an enormously wider range of braids, and many in venerable patterns, than are readily available in this country, and at prices far cheaper than anything comparable here.

Timothy Dawson

CONFERENCES FORTHCOMING

North European Symposium For Archaeological Textiles XI

Esslingen, Germany

10th – 13th May 2011

NESAT XI is open to the public. However, please note that the number of participants is limited to 100 persons. You can find an online application form for the symposium on this website. http://www.nesat.org/m1/papers_engl.html

There are some very interesting papers advertised.

Programme: http://www.nesat.org/pdf/preliminary_program_nesatxi.pdf

List of abstracts: http://www.nesat.org/m1/abstracts_lectures.html

Papers falling within MeDaTS' parameters include:

- Elizabeth Wincott Heckett, 'The Lady of Cloonshannagh Bog: An Irish 7th Century AD Female Bog Body and the Related Textiles';
- Frances Pritchard, 'The Dublin Viking-Age Project: The Textile Programme';
- Yolanda Llergo, Santiago Riera, Carmen Subiranas, Joan Eusebi, Garcia-Biosca & Marina Miquel, 'The Potential Value of Pollen Analyses in the Study of the Dead Body and Related Textiles from a Catalan Medieval Royal Grave';
- Marianne Vedeler, 'New Light on Samite Textiles from Oseberg';
- Irita Žeiere, 'Fragments of Male Clothing in the 9th Century Bog Hoard in Latvia';
- Helena Brezinová, 'Finds of Textile Fragments and Evidence of Textile Production from a Major Excavation Site of Grand Moravia in Mikulčice (South Moravia, Czech Republic)';
- Milena Bravermanová, 'The Newly Conserved and Determined Textiles from the Graves of Relatives of the Czech Rulers from St. Vitus Cathedral: the Romanesque Baptised Children's Garment and So-called *cruselel'*';

- Maria Cybulska, Slawomir Kuberski, Ewa Orlińska-Mianowska, Jadwiga Chruszczynska and Jerzy Maik, 'Figural Embroidery from Tum Collegiate Church – Analysis, Reconstruction and Identification';
- Hanna Zimmerman, 'Five Early Medieval Caps from the Northern Netherlands';
- Beatrix Nutz, 'Bras in the 15th century? A Preliminary Report';
- Jerzy Maik, 'Gewebe in einem reichen Elbinger Haus (16. - 18. Jh.)';
- Nahum Ben-Yehuda, 'Textiles and Textile Production in 11th Century Troyes from Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki's Exegesis to the Talmud';
- Riina Rammo, 'Production of Clothing in a Medieval Village in Siksälä (Estonia)'.

International Edelstein Colour Symposium 2011: The Science and Art of colour

Shenkar College of Engineering and Design, Ramat Gan, Israel
February 27th – 28th 2011

This symposium will convene experts in their fields who will discuss the use of colour in modern design, urban lighting, architecture, painting styles, women's fashion, as well as the psychology and philosophy of colour. The nature of pigments and dyes, as detected by scientific methods, in use in historic paintings, medieval manuscripts, and ancient European textiles will also be presented.

The registration is now open. All the details regarding this symposium are available at its website address: www.edelstein-center.com/color-symposium

NEW AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

R. C. P. Pisani, M. Ciatti, S. Conti, M. G. Vaccari, *La "coperta" Guicciardini, Il restauro delle imprese di Tristano*

Florence, Edizioni Firenze 2010
ISBN 978-88-7970-467-0.

Following on from our recent meeting on quilted items, members may be interested to know of this recent Italian publication on one of the medieval "Tristan" quilts. The text is all in Italian with information on context, conservation and technical details, and the exhibition of the quilt. It is the exhibition book of a display of the object in the Palazzo Davanzati from April-July 2010.

Anna Nørgård, Else Ostergard & Lilli Fransen, *Medieval Garments Reconstructed: Norse Clothing Patterns*

Aarhus University Press, 2010.

Jon Thompson, Daniel Shaffer, Pirjetta Mildh, *Carpets and textiles in the Iranian World 1400-1700*

Oxford, University of Oxford 2010
Hb, 200 x 300mm 260 pages, more than 220 color and b/w illustrations
ISBN: 9781898113690 1898113696

Carpets and Textiles in the Iranian World 1400 - 1700 is a generously illustrated and meticulously produced compilation in revised form of the papers given at the

international conference at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford in August 2003, arranged by the May Beattie Carpet Archive and co-sponsored by the Iran Heritage Foundation, including the work of scholars from several disciplines whose expertise illuminates different aspects of the history of carpets and textiles in the Iranian sphere.

Dr. Jon Thompson, Prof. Walter Denny and Christine Klose address certain important theoretical questions relating to carpets in the 15th century and later. A paper by Jessica Hallett on Safavid carpets refers to original documents to survey the fashion in Portugal for 'oriental' carpets during the 16th and 17th centuries. Julia Bailey addresses the use of 'Kufic' design elements in Persian carpets and their representation in miniature paintings. Wider academic interest in textile themes is reflected in papers on the pan-Asian art historical background by Yolande Crowe, on Persian costume by Jennifer Scarce and the late Patricia Baker, on Safavid textiles by Mary McWilliams and Beata Biedronska Sota, on the use of fine goat hair in early Persian and Indian carpets and textiles by Steven Cohen, and on the Indian Ocean and international textile trade by Willem Floor and René Bekius. The book stands as a fitting tribute to the life and pioneering scholarship of May H. Beattie.

<http://www.iranheritage.org/newsflash/CTIW.html>

Frances Lennard & Patricia Ewer, *Textile conservation: advances in practice*

Oxford : Butterworth-Heinemann, 2010.

311 pp. col. ill.

ISBN: ebook: 9780080940762 0080940765

ISBN: hardcover: 9780750667906 0750667907

Series: Butterworth-Heinemann series in conservation and museology.

This volume demonstrates the development in the role and practice of the textile conservator and captures the diversity of textile conservators' work. This book focuses on the factors that have influenced development in textile conservation practice since the 1980s: the changing context, and an evolution in the way conservators think about objects.

Synopsis:

Textile Conservation: Advances in Practice demonstrates the development in the role and practice of the textile conservator and captures the current diversity of textile conservators' work. The book focuses on four major factors which have influenced development in textile conservation practice since the 1980s: the changing context, an evolution in the way conservators think about objects, the greater involvement of stakeholders, and technical developments. These are all integral to effective conservation decision-making.

Regula Schorta and Rainer Christoph Schwinges (eds.), *Fashion and Clothing in Late Medieval Europe/Mode und Kleidung im Europa des Späten Mittelalters*

Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg and Schwabe Verlag, Basel, 2010

243 pp., black and white and coloured illustrations, index.

From the 16th to the 18th November 2006 "Fashion and Clothing in Late Medieval Europe" was discussed at an international conference at the Abegg Foundation in Riggisberg in collaboration with the Bern University Historical Institute. These papers have now been published mainly in English, but some also in German and French with English abstracts.



The publication follows the three sectors of the conference program:

- The communicative relevance of specific articles of clothing
- The impact of social context on fashion and clothing
- The symbolic import of textiles, clothing and fashion

Seventeen papers primarily from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Since I was present at the conference I still remember some other well-presented papers which are not in the publication. There were also very lively (heated) debates at question time.

Rainer C. Schwinges and Regula Schorta's brief introduction 'Fashion and Clothing' interestingly posits several salient questions related to the study of European "Fashion" and "Clothing" in the Late Medieval period. They discern two approaches in present-day research methods as conceptual or material – one dealing with varying levels of social status and its representation, and the other with body and embellishment in anthropological and cultural terms. As for the limited extant examples they continue: "Indeed, textiles survive rarely, and profane dresses even less so. The practical and economic value they represent leads to their being used, and reused again – and if they are finally disposed of, the organic material has only very limited chances of preservation under European soil and climate conditions."

They stress that their point-of-view deals with present-day research in "German-speaking regions" and conclude that investigations dealing with extant objects inextricably need historians and restorers collaborating.



Other than the conference itself we were also treated to a visit of the Abegg Restoration Laboratory to see at firsthand several of the objects discussed. Another day we had a preview of the thoughtfully-planned exhibition for both adults and children at the Bern Historical Museum on "Charles the Bold (1433-1477): Burgundy in its Glory and Decline". www.bhm.ch/special-exhibitions

Great Britain was represented by MEDATS members Maria Hayward, Frances Pritchard and Naomi Tarrant. And June Swann gave the opening paper.

The entire list of the papers can be found on the Abegg Foundation website. www.abegg-stiftung.ch

A very enlightening conference and pleasurable hospitality of the Abegg Foundation.

Pictures: page 11, Margaret of Anjou. This page, Luigi II d'Angi.

Rosalia Bonito Fanelli

Janet Arnold, with additional material by Jenny Tiramani and Santina M. Levey, *Patterns of Fashion 4 : The cut and construction of linen shirts, smocks, neckwear, headwear and accessories for men and women, c.1540-1660.*

Pan Macmillan 2008,
Paperback £30.

This long-awaited book is of enormous interest and use to the practical maker of authentic historical costume, whether for the theatre, historical recreation or pageant, to the enthusiast, like me, of linen in all its guises, to the enthusiast of the technology

of fibre and fabric, the aficionado of underclothing in history and of dress accessories and small-wares, and, most obviously, to the general historian of dress, but equally to any historian at all.

This book, like the previous books on the series, is a wonderful resource of paintings (reproduced in colour in this volume) which show items in situ on the wearer, of multiple photographs of actual garments, and many patterns of garments and accessories. In addition to these pictures and patterns of items, usually or sometimes made of linen - shirts and smocks, ruffs and bands, wrist-wear, usually cuffs, as well as top hose, caps and coifs, and gloves, in their infinite variety of decoration, and drawings of whole garments and details of garments carefully made by Janet Arnold with remarkably detailed captions. It would be well to read the captions carefully, for they show much of what Janet Arnold was about. They show the care of her observation. As I grow older close observation is what I think most important, whilst not neglecting, as she never does, a broad vision as well. Whether the subject is natural history, art or science, the greatest gain is achieved by viewing the subject with the most careful scrutiny. There are also the valuable practical instructions on using the patterns for full size work and starching and setting linens, written by Jenny Tiramani with great clarity.

As well as the practical, there is an excellent potted history of the items and materials, trades, division of labour, division of the sexes and hardware involved in the making and maintenance of the objects discussed. In many cases the makers could rise from the lowest ranks of society to near the highest with rapidity, both by the money and contacts they made, although there were also many makers of gentile, aristocratic and even Royal stock, such as Catherine of Aragon.

Neckwear included both ruffs and bands. Ruffs form an important part of the book, often of the most staggering size and elaboration, and bands were often a rather more tasteful and restrained species of neckwear than ruffs, and thus were likely to be embroidered with white silk thread on white linen, forming a particularly sophisticated type of decoration. These were complemented by 'wristware' of varying degrees of elaboration.

The present book is entirely about white linen, the perfect whiteness of which is an important part of its *raison d'être*. Its contrast with richly coloured or black materials was part of its beauty. And its cleanness was a unique cleanness in an ensemble of clothes unless they were entirely new. The flax fibre needs to be bleached, for it starts not as white but of a beautiful grey, brown, cool 'blond' colour. The fibre or cloth was bleached in the sun for a period, with or without the addition of alkalis, usually potash. (Pliny writes of a product of the field poppy being used for bleaching) And there was no doubt much secrecy involved in methods used. This pristine whiteness was both very important and extremely expensive both to produce and maintain. There is an interesting engraving of bleaching fields, just north of the City of London wall near Moorgate (LVI). Such fields occupied a large amount of space in linen producing places, especially in the Netherlands. It is, of course, because of this use of fields or lawns that some of the finest quality linen cloths were called 'lawns'.

I think it is impossible to understand flax and linen properly unless you have actually grown and tried to process it, for only then do you realize that the fibre in the grasslike stem is not buried deep within it but virtually on the surface and that the fibre from one stem can produce fibre of every quality from coarse and strong to fine and delicate, for by hand you can draw out the threads finer and finer until they reach gossamer thinness. The 'dressing', treatment, needed, to produce different results in the fibre and fabric is of course a complex matter, requiring much beating, spinning

with the goey product of the seeds – linseeds or not.

In the new areas of expertise involving linen, and ruffs and lace and embroidery of linen materials, women often appeared as entrepreneurs in skills where men had predominated before. Mrs Plantin and her daughters were eminent examples. Emigrés from Paris to Antwerp in the mid 16th century, Christopher was a printer and bookseller and Jeanne Riviere, his wife and their daughters sold fine lingerie, and in their business in the space of about 20 years you can trace a good part of the evolutionary development of high quality linen goods.

The author makes much of how few original garments survive. Of course, this is always very much the case with clothes which are meant usually to be ephemeral and to wear out. With linen there are many special considerations. Shirts would often be worn both at day and night. The wealthier, even Henry VIII, would use worn-out day shirts as nightshirts. An especially fine, embroidered linen shirt might be bequeathed in a will. Unlike animal fibres linen would not be attacked by clothes moths, but on the other hand old linen clothes were in enormous demand for paper-making, for in the early period only linen and old linen at that, was used. I suspect that money would pass for old linen rag, though later the rag and bone man got his raw materials for the paper trade free. One way and another, scarcely any linen objects would survive. Yet linen was used to make the paper to circulate the very patterns with which its products were made.

Linen was used of course on a huge scale for underclothing serving the dual purpose of absorbing bodily sweat on the inside so that it did not damage the outside clothes, and of protecting the wearer from the dirt of the outer clothes, (they could not then be cleaned so readily) and the discomfort and chafing caused by them.

Because Janet Arnold died in 1998 at the too early age of 66, she was, alas, not able to finish this work herself, but Jenny Tiramani and Santina Levey have done a wonderful job in completing this book, and I am sure Janet would be satisfied with the result.

But I have one pedantic criticism, the spelling of 'sempstress' as 'semstress', which is a spelling, as well as being unacceptable in Britain, not highly regarded in the U.S. either!

Philip Harris

MEDATS Future MEETINGS

2011

Summer Meeting: Cancelled

The committee have decided to dispense with a Summer meeting as it would have fallen too close to the Spring extravaganza. The situation will be reconsidered for 2012.

Autumn Meeting: *Reconstruction, Replication, Living History.*

Date: mid- / late-October.

Probable Venue: Globe Theatre

Future topics

Underwear / linens against the skin.

Bast Fibres: Flax, Hemp, Nettle, broom.

Coronations and Investitures.

Dyes.

MEDATS Spring Meeting, March 5th 2011

Making it: Textile technologies in medieval Europe

Weston Theatre, Museum of London

10.00 Doors open

10.30 Welcome: Dr Geoff Egan and Hilary Davidson (MEDATS)

10.45 Professor Gale Owen-Crocker, university of Manchester

Continuity and Change: an Overview of Medieval Textile Production.

11.15 Ruth Gilbert, Independent Scholar and Weaver

Spinning technology in England in the Middle Ages (450–1500).

11.45 Coffee and demonstrations in the Activity Room

12.15 Alan Raistrick, Independent scholar

Revelations and Calculations: Developments in the Spinning Wheel.

12.45 Anna Nørgaard, Viking Museum, Roskilde, Denmark

The early medieval warp-weighted loom.

13.15-14.45 Lunch (not provided) and demonstrations in the Activity Room

14.45 Anton Reurink, Author, Historical Open Air Museum, Eindhoven, Netherlands

The Medieval Process from Wool to "Lakense stof" (broadcloth).

15.15 Kathrine Vestergard Pedersen (Brandstrup), University of Copenhagen

The Development of the Loom, 500 – 1500.

15.45 Tea and demonstrations in the Activity Room

16.15 Dr Nat Alcock, University of Warwick

Recreating the Medieval Weaver's House and Loom, Spon End, Coventry.

16.45: Discussion

17.30: Close

A DVD produced by Penny Walsh with images of medieval yarn and cloth production will be screened in the Activity Room during lunch and refreshment breaks.

Booking Form: MEDATS Spring Meeting

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