



# The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

Volume 5 Issue 2

[www.medats.org.uk](http://www.medats.org.uk)

May 2010



*Embroidery from an Altar Frontal: The Resurrection,*  
Italy, Florence, 14th century 1375-1400,  
Cleveland Museum of Art 1929.904

## IN THIS ISSUE:

<b>EDITORIAL –</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>OBITUARIES – SALLY ANN CHANDLER. CLAUDE BLAIR.</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>NEWS – REPRIEVE FOR THE TEXTILE CONSERVATION CENTRE.</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>EXHIBITIONS – TRISTRAM QUILT. THE MEDIEVAL WEDDING.</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CONFERENCES PAST – MEDATS SPRING MEETING. SPBS SPRING SYMPOSIUM.</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CONFERENCES FORTHCOMING – IMC, COSTUME COLLOQUIUM II.</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>NEW PUBLICATIONS – NOTICES, REVIEWS AND BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW.</b>	<b>9</b>
 <b>MEDATS</b>	
<b>FUTURE MEETINGS – MEDATS MEETINGS 2010–2011</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>COMMITTEE ADDRESSES</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>FUTURE MEETINGS – MEDATS SUMMER MEETING PROGRAMME AND BOOKING FORM</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>SUBSCRIPTIONS INFORMATION –</b>	<b>20</b>

## **Editorial**

It is a great blow to have to report that our illustrious President, Claude Blair, died in March. A less well-known member, Sally Ann Chandler., passed late last year. Obituaries appear below.

On a very much happier note, the Textile Conservation Centre has found a new home at the University of Glasgow. See below for more details.

**Maney Publishing** are having a promotion at present whereby if you go to the 'Top Articles' section on the *Costume and Textile History* web pages (URLs below) you can download some articles for free.

<http://maneypublishing.msgfocus.com/c/11nGhPUiyh4Tf3i>

<http://maneypublishing.msgfocus.com/c/11nGbdbOM4mU5mL>

To receive the newsletter as a colour PDF file electronically, e-mail me via [medatseditor@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:medatseditor@hotmail.co.uk).

Otherwise, information about MEDATS, and membership forms, may be had from the Membership Secretary, Carole Thompson, P.O. Box 65458, London SE7 9AR, or from the society website: [www.medats.org.uk](http://www.medats.org.uk)

**TIMOTHY DAWSON**

## **OBITUARIES**

### **Sally Ann Chandler**

Natural dyer, spinner and weaver. 1961 – 2009

MEDATS member and natural dye expert Sally Ann Chandler died just before Christmas last year from a condition brought on and aggravated by Swine Flu.

She was well known in both the world of natural dying and re-enactment, wherein she would produce cloth for the reconstruction of period clothes. Sally Anne had been introduced to me at Avoncroft building museum where she was demonstrating Mediaeval dying techniques on hand spun yarns. When in 2001 the Historic Royal Palaces decided to make an entire wardrobe of 17th Century clothes for a ten man interpretation project we chose Sally to dye the broad cloth for us. The results we

truly inspiring and the subject of a MEDATS paper given at Reading University. Sally continued to dye cloth for Historic Royal Palaces and much of the clothing worn by the Historic Kitchens team at Hampton Court Palace is made from cloth she produced. Once again a person with great knowledge is taken from us.

If she did not have a drop spindle in her hand it was probably because she was knitting something!

**Marc Meltonville**

**Claude Blair:**

Scholar, 1922 – 2010

Claude Blair was a founder member and first president of the Medieval Dress and Textile Society, and followed the progress of the Society with great interest. He was best known as a scholar of wide-ranging interests and achievements, and one of the foremost authorities on historic European metalwork, especially arms and armour. His first book, *European Armour circa 1066 to circa 1700* (1958), has yet to be superseded as the standard text on the subject.

Born in Lancashire 30 November 1922, he was educated at William Hulme's Grammar School, but the Second World War intervened before he could continue to university. He served in the Royal Artillery, but while stationed in Ireland was sent with colleagues to fetch the regimental beer supply. The truck in the back of which he was riding braked sharply so that Blair's leg was caught between two beer barrels, breaking it, so that he had to be invalided out of active service. He remained in the army, however, testing small arms, becoming an excellent shot and rising to the rank of captain.

In 1951 he joined the Tower of London Armouries, which housed the national collection of arms and armour. In 1956 he moved to the Victoria and Albert Museum, from where he retired in 1982 as keeper of metalwork, a position that reflected the depth and breadth of his knowledge. He believed strongly that museums should be powerhouses of scholarship, but should also communicate and educate. Blair had many interests besides arms and armour, but the chief of these was church monuments showing figures in armour. Early in his career he made a study of the medieval monumental effigies in the churches of Cheshire. Blair was elected a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1956, and in 1998 was awarded its highest honour, the gold medal.

He was involved in many other learned societies. He was editor of the journal of the Arms and Armour Society, from 1953 to 1977. In 1946 he joined the Monumental Brass Society, and, together with A. V. B. (Nick) Norman and a small group of others, he was responsible in 1979 for founding the Church Monuments Society, becoming its first president. Blair served on the Church of England's Council for the Care of Churches (now the Church Buildings Council) as a trustee of the Churches Conservation Trust. As a liveryman of the Goldsmiths' Company, he was much involved with a scheme to encourage the establishment of diocesan treasuries, where historic church plate can be seen by the public. For all this work with and for churches and cathedrals, Blair was awarded an OBE in 1994.

Blair's remarkable scholarly output included more than 200 books and articles. In 1998 he edited and contributed to the definitive work on the Crown Jewels. He was subsequently, in 2005, made a CVO. He set himself very high standards and also applied them to others, making no secret of his sadness at the trend in many leading museums of abandoning scholarship and publication. He ruthlessly criticised

initiatives on the part of learned societies that involved what he considered to be dumbing down.

His intellectual vigour and enthusiasm remained undimmed until the end. In 2009, he co-authored a book with Marian Campbell on the 19th-century fakes of medieval and Renaissance objects associated with the name of Louis Marcy (Oggetti D'arte Della Galleria Parmeggiani di Reggio Emilia). Over Christmas 2009, he completed his section of a new book on the Greenwich armouries (to be published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York), thereby achieving an ambition he had held for 50 years. He married his wife, Joan, in 1952, and she died in 1996. Their son, John, is professor of medieval history and archaeology at Oxford.

**John Cherry**

Compiled from the obituaries which appeared in *The Guardian* for Sunday March 13th 2010 by Sally Badham and in *The Independent* by Simon Tait on 26th March 2010.

## **NEWS**

### **Textile Conservation Centre adopted by Glasgow University**

The following press release was issued by the University on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2010

#### **New conservation centre preserves the fabric of the nation**

Preserving the fabric of the nation's treasures for future generations, a new textile conservation centre is to be established at the University of Glasgow. The Textile Conservation Centre Foundation (TCCF) and the University of Glasgow have agreed to found the new teaching and research facility – the only resource of its kind in the UK – in the University's Robertson Building.

Professor Nick Pearce, Director of the Institute for Art History and Head of the Department of History of Art, University of Glasgow, said: "This is a tremendous opportunity both for the University and also for the conservation profession in Scotland, the UK and internationally. Expertise, facilities and the wealth of the collections make Glasgow the ideal place for the kind of interdisciplinary research and study which the centre will promote."

Peter Longman, Deputy Chairman of the Textile Conservation Centre Foundation said: "There was such concern over the closure of the Textile Conservation Centre in Winchester that over the last 18 months we have been approached by several institutions anxious to work with us to continue aspects of its work. We have considered a number of options, but the combination of Glasgow with its world class University and History of Art Department and the unrivalled collections in and around the City proved an irresistible location. This is a unique opportunity to build on the UK's reputation in textile conservation training and related research; we look forward to contributing to its future success in Glasgow."

The new centre for Textile Conservation, History and Technical Art History will focus on multidisciplinary, object-based teaching and research that encompasses conservation and the physical sciences as well as art history, dress and textile history. It will be the first time that conservation training has been undertaken in Scotland and, combined with the University's recent developments in technical art history, the new centre will have national and international impact.



The new Centre will inherit existing library intellectual property and analytical equipment from the TCCF, so that staff and future students will be able to draw on the key physical and intellectual assets built up over more than 30 years. Students will also have the opportunity to work with some of the best textile collections in the world held by Glasgow Museums, the National Museums of Scotland and the University's own Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery. New academic posts will be created and the Centre will work closely with the Foundation to establish a global research network in textile conservation, textile and dress history and technical art history.

The first student intake is planned for September 2010 offering a 2-year Masters in Textile Conservation and a 1-year Masters in Dress and Textile History as well as opportunities for doctoral research. These new courses will join the existing Masters programme in Technical Art History, Making and Meaning, as part of the Centre. The Foundation is also offering a limited number of bursaries in the first years of the textile conservation programme and a fundraising campaign is already underway to raise further funds for the new development including additional studentships and new research projects.

Potential students who would like to receive updates on the development and course details should email Ailsa Boyd at the University of Glasgow at: [A.Boyd@arthist.arts.gla.ac.uk](mailto:A.Boyd@arthist.arts.gla.ac.uk).

**Further information:**

Martin Shannon, Senior Media Relations Officer  
University of Glasgow Tel: 0141 330 8593  
<http://www.textileconservationcentre.co.uk/news/>

## **EXHIBITIONS**

### **Another Tristram Quilt**

Museo Palazzo Davanzati, Florence  
Until June 24<sup>th</sup> 2010

The "Coperta di Usella", a counterpart to the Victoria and Albert's Tristram Quilt, held in Florence's Museo del Bargello, is presently on display in the Museo Palazzo Davanzati of its home city. The two quilts are known as rare surviving examples of all white figurative quilting attributed to a Sicilian atelier circa 1360-1400. They are regarded as key pieces in understanding the tradition of quilting from the Middle Ages to present day.

### **The Mediaeval Wedding**

Dick Institute, Kilmaronock  
11<sup>th</sup> September 2010 to 10<sup>th</sup> December 2010

This exhibition relates to the work of the Dean Castle Textile Team, Kilmaronock, who are creating a set of costume (working with a fashion student) replicating those portrayed on one of the museum's tapestries of c.1500, which depicts a mediaeval betrothal scene. They are also creating coats-of-arms cushions to be used along with the costumes for display and education, and re-storing our collection of Ayrshire Needlework baby robes. In addition, there are a range of smaller projects, such as making banners for community use. This project is supported by Maggie Dobbie, Textile Conservator who worked at the V&A for many years.

## CONFERENCES PAST

### MEDATS Spring Meeting

Victoria and Albert Museum,  
March 13<sup>th</sup> 2010

Your editor was absent on this occasion and unfortunately has had little information about how it went, but here is a precis of one talk.

#### **Jane Bridgeman, *Renaissance Transformations: Italian textiles & interiors***

In late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century Italy interiors could often be decorated with exceptionally lavish textiles for a special celebration, but in general public rooms in grand houses were left empty and bare until required. The concept of a fixed display in rooms designed for a particular function was not yet usual.

The most furnished (and private) room in any household was a bedroom. The bed itself unlike most other pieces of furniture was fixed. It usually had surrounding curtains hung from the ceiling, or from a *sparver*, or suspended canopy, and alternatively if a four poster a co-ordinating canopy and curtains. It might also be surrounded with large chests (*cassoni*), which also doubled as seats. These were also the only receptacles in which to store bedding, clothing and personal effects, wooden wardrobes and chests of drawers not yet having been devised for this purpose. Bedrooms could also be treated rather like private 'bed-sits' within a family palazzo that usually housed an extended family, sometimes of several generations.

Bedrooms provided for high-ranking guests could often be extravagantly appointed, but all the decoration was temporary. White silk damask seems to have been popular, perhaps because it was costly and thus impressive. For instance in a suite of five rooms provided for Princess Eleonora of Naples and her ladies when staying at the residence of the Cardinal San Sisto in Rome in June 1473, the princess' own room was hung with gold brocaded white damask. The bed had a *sparver* (suspended canopy) of white damask edged with gold brocade, and bolsters and one quilt were of the same textile with another quilt of gold brocaded crimson. Some years later in Mantua in July 1495, a bed, canopy and curtains as well as wall hangings of white damask were provided for the stay of the Ottoman ambassador.

For certain occasions gilded leather hangings, originally imported from Spain, were popular. Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, asked her father Ercole d'Este the Duke of Ferrara to send his stamped and gilded leather hangings to Mantua for use in her bedroom to celebrate the birth of her first son Federico in May 1500. She continued to use stamped and gilded leather hangings for over thirty years ordering them from Rome, Venice and Seville. In the meantime they became popular particularly in Lombardy and the Veneto. Examples are seen in Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, c.1530 (Uffizi, Florence).

Everyday dining, unlike sleeping, was a literally a moveable feast. Very often members of a family might eat in their private apartments, on terraces, balconies and even in corridors, making use of trestle tables and stools which were folded away and stored when not required. If a somewhat more formal ambience was required then a room might be decorated and furnished. Tapestries and hangings were suspended from just below the ceiling, and a long wide table set up with chairs and/or benches. A sideboard might be provided for serving. Tables were covered

with a tablecloth of heavy woollen cloth, or a table-carpet, at this date imported from Ottoman Anatolia. White linen tablecloths were laid on top of table-carpets when dining, sometimes two or three above each other, depending upon the number of courses. Examples are seen in contemporary painting, for example in Jacopo Bassano's *Supper at Emmaus* 1538, (Parish Church, Cittadella, Padua) or Lorenzo Lotto's *Portrait of a Venetian Family*, c. 1547 (National Gallery, London). They are often known as 'Holbein' or 'Lotto' carpets as they were frequently depicted by these two artists. Such imported carpets were used both for table-coverings, floor-coverings and also for draping over balconies internally and externally on festive occasions.

Wealthy households invariably had stores of textiles, particularly embroideries and appliqué work, as well as tapestries and carpets, which could be brought out for special events such as receptions and banquets, weddings and christenings. Plain black drapes, too, were absolutely necessary for mourning, and hung immediately after death. For instance, when her husband died, Virginia Malatesta, the daughter of artist Giulio Romano, purchased 27 *braccia* (15.66 m or nearly 16 yards) of black cloth to hang in the room where she received guests, and even the table-cover there was of black cloth (Daniela Ferrari, Giulio Romano. *Repertorio di fonti documentarie*, Roma Ufficio central per i beni archivistica, 1992).

A bare room could be quickly organised and transformed for a princely reception. Textiles were hung from hooks set round the walls just below the ceiling. A platform with a chair was created at one end and covered with carpets. The cloth of honour with its armorials was hung behind the chair and a canopy suspended above it from hooks set in the wall and ceiling. Wooden benches might then be brought in and placed in rows for visiting dignitaries, and often draped with fabrics or carpets and covered with cushions. All of this was placed in store when not required, rather like a stage-set for a theatre.

It is well known that tapestries were very costly, but sometimes embroideries could also be unimaginably expensive. In 1463, for instance, Ercole d'Este had purchased in Venice for the enormous sum of 9,000 ducats five dark blue velvet curtains each 10 metres (25 ft) long embroidered in gold, silver and silk and illustrating scenes from the thirteenth century courtly French poem the *Romance of the Rose*. These had been made in Bruges, and each came with its own purpose-made leather carrying cases. (See: Thomas Tuohy, *Herculean Ferrara. Ercole d'Este 1471-1505*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.220 & nt.171). To set this expense in context, at this date a professional man, a university professor for example might live comfortably on an annual salary of 70 ducats, whilst a *condottiere* or military commander beginning his career might earn 10,000 ducats.

## **Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, Spring Symposium**

Birmingham

March 27<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> 2010

Timothy Dawson presented a communication extending observations made in a past article which discussed evidence that the Eastern Roman Empire may well have been the most gender-equal society ever known prior to the twentieth century. The dress aspect lay in the observation that from Late Antiquity to the late eleventh century the primary regalia garment of Empresses was identical to that of the Emperors, thus providing one symbolic foundation for the authority of those Empresses who ruled in their own right.

## CONFERENCES FORTHCOMING

### International Medieval Congress

Leeds, UK,  
12<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2010

IMC 2010 commemorates the 550th anniversary of the death of Prince Henry 'the Navigator' by making 'Travel and Exploration' a special thematic focus. The voyages undertaken in the name of Henry exemplify many of the motives that had long driven people to travel and explore: the prospect of wealth, trade, and territory, knowledge and curiosity, piety and religious zeal, legends and external salvation.

The IMC seeks to provide a forum for debates on the motives, processes, and effects of travel and exploration, not only by Latin Christians in the so-called 'Age of Discovery', but across cultures, and throughout the medieval period and beyond.

Paper proposals will be closed by the time paper copies of this newsletter arrive (31<sup>st</sup> August), but session and roundtable proposals close on 30<sup>th</sup> September. See [http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/imc2010\\_call.html](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/imc2010_call.html)

Plans for next year's Congress are well underway. As in previous years, papers and sessions on all aspects of the study of the European Middle Ages are most welcome, in any major European language.

#### Further Information

24-hour Telephone: +44 (0)113 343 3614      Fax: +44 (0)113 343 3616  
E-mail: [imc@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:imc@leeds.ac.uk)      Web: [www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/index.html](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/index.html)

Future IMC dates are 11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

### COSTUME COLLOQUIUM II: Dress for Dance

Florence, Italy  
November 2010

The topics of **Dress for Dance** will include the following themes:

- History of dance costume for professional performance;
- Dress for traditional and ceremonial dance: costume as expressions of culture;
- Fashion and popular dance: relationship between popular music, new styles of dance and fashionable dress, past and present;
- Creating dance costume: designers, artists, artisans, stylists, tailors, seamstresses using traditional, experimental and/or contemporary materials and techniques;
- Historical dance re-enactment: getting the steps and the clothing right;
- Dance costume in museums and archives: collecting designs and surviving costume, conservation, display techniques;
- Documenting dance dress: dress as documents and documents of dress;
- Dance costume and artistic expression: their reciprocal relationship.

Promoters:

Romualdo Del Bianco Foundation; Friends of the Galleria Del Costume.

#### For further information:

E-mail: [dressfordance@costume-textiles.com](mailto:dressfordance@costume-textiles.com).

<http://www.costume-textiles.com/pages/page.asp?idcontent=80>



## NEW AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

### **Robin Netherton & Gale R. Owen-Crocker (eds.), *Medieval Clothing & Textiles*, volume 6**

Boydell Press, 2010

HB, 176pp, 4 colour & 34 b/w illustrations

ISBN 9781843835370

£30.00

Volume 6 in this acclaimed series continues the editors' mission to collect together the very latest medieval clothing and textile research across the disciplines, over different time periods and throughout Europe.

Subjects covered in the latest volume include archaeological research results and reconstructions from Latvia; embroidered parchments; the dress of medieval nuns; London textual culture; and many fascinating aspects of used clothing in late medieval London and Strasbourg.

MEDATS members may order with a **25% discount**, making the price £22.50 plus £3.00 postage in the UK (or £6.50 overseas). Order from the publisher Boydell & Brewer Ltd: 01394 610 600, [trading@boydell.co.uk](mailto:trading@boydell.co.uk) or PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF. Please be sure to quote reference code 10102. Offer ends 30 September 2010.

### **Timothy Dawson, 'The Monomachos Crown: Towards a Resolution', *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 2009**

The collection of eleventh-century enamel plaques depicting various figures including the Roman emperor Constantine Monomachos has been a matter debate since they were found in the early nineteenth century. (See page 20) Problems with their form, style of decoration and very identification as a crown have even led to the suggestion that they are a forgery. Building upon previous literature, this article presents a theory which may serve to resolve the issues surrounding the item. The article may be downloaded free from [www.byzsym.org/index.php/bz](http://www.byzsym.org/index.php/bz).

### **Maria Hayward, *Rich Apparel: Clothing and the Law in Henry VIII's England***

London: Ashgate 2009

Hardback, 448 pages, 26 b&w illustrations & 52 tables

£65.00

This volume is a work of rare intellectual quality and subtlety. Not in the least paradoxically, dress, the 'extended phenotype' par excellence, almost invariably tells us far more than the naked self, or indeed, any other possessions of a person, male or female, in a society: objectively, about his or her social status and wealth or poverty; and subjectively, about the way that he thinks about himself, wants to appear to others, his personal likes and dislikes as an individual and the extent to which he wants or feels obliged to conform to rules and conventions or not. There is a complex interaction of all these elements (and no doubt others I have overlooked) in one person's dress which varies according to time, place, person and position. From time to time there is another element in the mix: what the individual is obliged by law to wear or not to wear. This is the subject of Maria Hayward's wonderful book. These laws are usefully called 'laws of apparel', but more often 'sumptuary laws', a more portentous but less explicit term meaning really simply 'laws of consumption or things

consumed'. Often the subject of these laws in an English context is airily bandied about by 'historical costume' people, but the vague discussion rarely amounts to anything. It is otherwise with this book. Sometimes these laws are exhaustive and complete, as at various times in Chinese history, prescribing exactly what every person in society must wear, from hat to footwear, in terms of what must be worn, the shape of garment, material and, very importantly, colour, in association with rules relating to the body itself, as feet and hairstyle. At other times they are not all embracing, but very strictly enforced, as in the limitations on the wearing of imperial purple or the toga in the Roman Empire, or the notorious yellow star of David which Jews were obliged to wear at various times and places.

England did not much go in for such laws, for it was (almost) always a little less rigid and freer than many other places. Ironically, of course, the one period in English history when laws of apparel were passed was the latter part of the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century. (Likewise did the Tudors introduce torture anew for interrogation for alleged crime in the court of Star Chamber about 20 years after Fortescue's book!) It is that period, of Henry VIII's reign (1509-1547), and the Tudor penumbra around that period, commencing in 1485 and ending around the middle of the century, a little-studied period, with which the writer is concerned.

That the laws of apparel were largely unenforceable and rarely enforced is undoubted, although Maria Hayward, with characteristic thoroughness (but no pedantry) has unearthed one Chancery case emanating from Hastings of all places where a breach of the laws was mentioned, and another where the jurors in a case were themselves prosecuted – the classic soft target beloved of idle but mean-spirited law-enforcers (which they generally are)!

But even though not much enforced in the courts, the laws were very much enforced at court, just as much, much later, in the 20th century, without a single law, an unbelievably rigid dress code was enforced by King George V, (although it can be said in his favour that he grew flax on the Sandringham estate (and I think he supervised its growing quite personally) of a quality rarely grown in England in any century. ) Perhaps, therefore, it is not as surprising as it would otherwise be that the last statute passed, although more detailed and complete than the previous ones, did not even contain penalties for breach of the law!

The first 3 statutes of 1510, 14 and 15 provide penalties for breach, whereas the fourth and last of 1524 does not. This raises the (to me interesting) question of what actually is a 'law'. Such questions of course have been much discussed by legal philosophers and John Austin, in the early 19th century, in a generally accepted definition, described a law as 'a rule with a sanction for its breach.' In fact the Tudors, especially Elizabeth, were often simply shooting their mouths off about things of which they disapproved, written down on parchment, which looked like laws and had gone through all the formalities, but which were not laws at all. After Austin the lesson seemed learnt, until the British government of today or yesterday did precisely the same, passing a so-called law purporting to restore the national economy to health within a certain period, but with no sanction if that were not achieved. After several hundred years little has changed.

But it may not have mattered as much then as today whether a law was truly a law when the monarch still had within him a bit of divinity, for people might follow it as a matter of conscience. But often they would not, even then. Even things which were true laws could of course be unenforceable. But these laws of apparel were extremely complex with so many exceptions and defences that even today they

would be hard if not impossible to prosecute. For example, if your master gave you a present of a garment which you would otherwise be forbidden to wear that would be lawful. What a disproportion of time would be involved in unravelling the truth if that was asserted.

In this way the doughty Maria Hayward refuses to be put off as idler people might be and explores with immense thoroughness the way that, though generally unenforced and unenforceable, the laws were not ineffective in controlling dress, even of those to whom they did not actually apply. Thus, in the Church she gives anecdotal evidence of great fascination of an abbot able to order cloth of a considerable weight, (allowed by the laws of apparel to a gentleman but not lower down the social scale,) far outside the weight allowed to an ordinary monk, since the church, though exempt from the laws, followed the class-based legislation as a matter of practice and by analogy quite slavishly.

Not only does the author take us in detail through the 'classes' (starting with the monarch at the apex, and those around him, and going down to a point beyond which there were no relevant questions to solve) to which the laws do apply, but to the classes, groups, women, professions, townsfolk, to which they do not apply, examining the extent to which the laws were in practice applied, either voluntarily, or because professional societies and guilds have analogous rules or practices or because of social compulsion, like that by a husband over his wife.

In the period there is much medieval thinking and much early modern/renaissance thinking, not only between different people but in the one person. The ice of the quite rigid class system of the past (based on and justified by The Great Chain) (though even that was not quite as rigid as elsewhere in Europe) was cracking or becoming more porous, not least by the political weakening of the nobility and the strengthening of the 'middling sort' caused by the astute and deliberate policies of the Tudor monarchs. Cardinal Wolsey was the son of a Suffolk butcher, innkeeper and cattle dealer, Thomas Cromwell son of a fuller with a mill at Putney, St Thomas More grandson of a City baker (yes, baker not banker). These men, until they lost their heads, (Wolsey of course died just in time to avoid this) were the most powerful men in the kingdom apart from the king. The reformation and dissolution of the monasteries strengthened that tendency as did the early development of the city of London as a centre of manufacturing, trade and finance, and similar but smaller developments in other important towns.

So there were different hierarchies of class as between town and country, cutting across the traditional social structure, and those in the professions and trades, could cut across the traditional class hierarchy anyway. Some saw a confusion of classes, a mangle mangle where it (was) very hard to know who (was) noble, who (was) worshipful, who (was) a gentleman, and who (was) not. This made for further difficulties in the enforcement of laws of apparel. But, interestingly, the changes in society had, I think, a great bearing on changes in costume.

There was an increase in the importance of the idea of fashion and this interacted with more traditional styles, especially in the king's and upper class wardrobe, which could be enormous. The King had a vast collection of traditional, formal and fashionable clothes.

To prove her case the author adduces a massive body of evidence of clothes from written documents, wills, inventories, orders for goods, invoices, the royal wardrobe documentation, diaries, letters of a multiplicity of people of many classes in 'the great chain of being' which was an all pervading commonplace of life in the mediaeval and



Tudor world (and far beyond). It was a conservative, rigid view of the world and indeed the universe with a hierarchy starting with god, descending to the angels in their hierarchies, then men in theirs followed by animals in their hierarchies and at the bottom inanimate things like minerals and metals. And there are portraits - not as many as might be expected - and very few actual items of clothes surviving, for very obvious reasons - sadly, of course, nothing is as fugitive and ephemeral on the whole as dress.

Statistical conclusions are drawn, always with caution, especially where the sample is unavoidably small (however diligent the author) or where the treachery of language can mislead, and paintings, and drawings are looked at, with appropriate reserve, because artistic works have to be looked at in a different way from documents, for the intermediary artist is not just a recorder as the scribe or testator is. Of course, the Royal wardrobe is a great source of information. Interesting quotations from letters and books play their part. The evidence applies to London and the great cities but also all over the nation in town and country, like one I happen a little to know, Kings Langley.

The book is like a prism revealing through dress and the laws applying to it the rich texture of the reality and colour of the life of the country. This is not the old-fashioned (but still being written) history of glib generalisation, false glamour and prejudice dressed up as fact.

The author's protean eye sees an abundance of important historical and psychological facts emerging from the dress which her Tudor monarchs, subjects high and low, citizens, town and country folk, male and female, churchmen, professionals, dignitaries, guildsmen, servants and labourers both wore themselves and bequeath to others.

Bequeathing is an interesting process, for it shows not only what was valued but individual preferences for clothes. It also shows who were preferred beneficiaries, and the apparent great differences in preference as to favoured relatives and friends between men and women.

Although in my Alice in Wonderland opinion the book is grossly under-illustrated, it yet has that ability to set the imagination to work, visualising the RICH APPAREL.

Not only was there a great variety of fabrics in every way, types of cloth, types of weave, different fibres and patterns, from the humblest and simplest to the most amazingly luxurious and complex, but it was also a period of revolutionary change, I think, from the mediaeval to the modern world.

It may seem ironic that laws implying the static, stratified society implied by the 'great chain' should be passed at such a time but it is perhaps at such times that what is being lost (rather than what is being gained) is most obvious.

There was, of course, a rich mixture of motives for the laws, some moral, some self-interested, and an attempt to keep under control, away from chaos, the changes often largely caused by the actions of the legislating monarch.

The wool trade was of course tremendously important. And the English- look in fashion has always depended on fine wool fabrics. Part of the motivation for the laws of apparel was clearly protectionist to stop foreign competitive imports of both ordinary and exotic materials (except to the elite). (Another was the prevention of ruinous extravagance by those of big appetites but small means, 'beer money, champagne taste'.



There seems to me to be an important sub-theme to the book in the replacement in our period of the bright, often parti-coloured or rayed garments of the middle ages by clothes in which black played an important role as an indicator of serious money, serious character, usually worn with gold accoutrements, an elegant combination. I think this was a revolution; a revolution whose effect continues, when now in the heat of central Africa the serious and well off man will wear a dark business suit and 'sober suited' denotes a particular kind of person. The statistical, documentary evidence of black adduced by the author is remarkably abundant and portraits frequently show this. Though the origin of rich black was earlier in the rulers of Burgundy and then Spain, its adoption in England (as in the Netherlands) was surely due to the new middle class now in the money, but pious and sober unlike the 'frivolous' aristocracy.

John Gresham, merchant adventurer, very rich and successful business man, civic figure, is an example, chosen by the author as 'cover image'. The image he wanted to portray was a serious man without frivolity as well as a philanthropic one. Interestingly, as in these portraits was often the case, he holds in his hand a piece of written paper. It is intriguing to me that the bill of exchange, business letter or charter in his hand would have been written with an ink made of the same iron gall synthesis as would have been the basis of the black dye on his coat. (though this probably would have been improved with woad and madder and perhaps logwood as well). Is it fanciful to imagine a conscious or subconscious connexion in the mind of artist and his subject? Probably yes, though they would both have known the chemistry, for the ink was made at home by wife or female servant. The wealthy wife would also wear much black, and this likewise has ever since been a popular choice for the elegant woman. During the period the fashion in fur trimmings followed the black trend, for the preference changed from light to dark furs. And how interesting is the account of the furs used, from English squirrel, coney (rabbit), badger, fox, cat, lamb, stoat to arctic sable, then as now most expensive, and mink, and most exotic of all, lynx and leopard; albeit that then lynx was in fact part of the native fauna. As black took over both for men and women, white was a more and more popular co-ordinate, and that meant linen, bleached purest white, the finest from the Netherlands, the ordinary qualities from different parts of England. This was an expensive item, for it had to be snow white, either held in huge quantities in the Royal wardrobe or laundered with great frequency. There was not however an absence of colour, but one-colour took over from many-coloured clothes, with scarlet and crimson especially, dyed now with cochineal, quite newly and quickly getting to England from the warmer parts of the Americas and replacing, to a considerable extent, for the wealthy, madder and driving out kermes utterly.

Liveries were now preferred monochrome rather than parti-coloured or rayed, though the colour might be bright. But it seems reds were preferred to blues, for adults, perhaps not children and servants. Blue in England, I think as opposed to other countries in Europe seems often to be associated with the poor, woad dye being cheap, although blue velvets would be very beautiful. And velvet was coming in apace, a most expensive import, vastly out of kilter with other prices, even for the finest silks and satins. It was a true marker of wealth. And the laws were much designed to reduce imports of these foreign fabrics, and, hypocritically, to restrict their ownership to the high born.

The 'field of the cloth of gold' in English France, hard by Calais, recalls that English province, which seems to have been such an important entrepot for trade between England and the continent, a sad and perhaps important loss. And Lady Lisle, Honor,

wife of Calais's leading citizen, seems a regular shopaholic, on a par with Victoria Beckham, although a little posher.

For the person thrilled by metal threads and especially gold there is much of interest in the book. Henry's coronation coat contained no fewer than 15 different types of cloth of gold. That called 'tissue of cloth of gold' was the very best, reserved by the laws of apparel for the King alone. And accessories in gold were important and beautiful and frequent accompaniments of black and crimson. Henry VIII was especially addicted to it, either by vanity or as an expression of power and wealth. As the first man in England to wear silk hose, his were black silk combined with gold thread. And in 1515 he wore on board the new royal galley (named after his sister Mary), which he piloted, a sailor's jacket and trousers, but of cloth of gold!

Much silver thread was used as well. It had something of the pristine look associated with white linen. Combination, or union, cloth was also popular, at the top end gold and silk thread, and lower in the scale, linsey-woolsey, the combination of linen and wool, much used later by the American colonists.

The book is not only for the professional but the amateur as well, and moreover, in a multiplicity of disciplines and areas of enthusiasm as well. It is emphatically not just a book valuable for the historian of costume, fashion and art, but the historian of law, jurisprudence, philosophy, and the practitioner of social history; also, legislators, (not to be confused with lawyers!) and sociologists, not to speak of dyers, spinners and weavers, and students of their history.

Society described in such terms, I think, anticipates evolutionary ideas of the 17th century to the present (though in no way envisaging them) for all living things and people are connected in this world view, and develop, if not in time, at least in appearance and in space, from one to the other, between the lower to the higher, the similar closer to each other than the different, in the form of links of a chain or branches of a tree.

Though excellent the book is, of course, not perfect. As indicated before, I think there is not enough illustration. There were words I could not find in the glossary and sometimes two different words meaning the same are not listed separately but one after the other. This can mean that the second word is hard to find. There is also some confusion in terminology relating to lawyers, but not about law. Whilst beautifully written on the whole, there are some ugly sentences which an editor should have polished or excised and, as is the sad situation too often today, there are too many computer-caused typos.

I cannot see why imperial purple made from members of the whelk/murex family is written of as if it was currently used to dye purple when it was definitely not used after 1453, unless the author has found new undisclosed evidence.

Yet over all, the scholarship is superb, especially the mass of invaluable original texts. This is a book to be treasured!

Philip Harris

**Angus Patterson, *Fashion and Armour in Renaissance Europe: Proud Looks and Brave Attire***

London: V&A Publishing, 2009

HB, 112 p., 98 colour plates. Bibliography, index, glossary and timeline.

ISBN: 978-1-85177-581-1.

£19.99

Angus Patterson looks at armour and weaponry from approximately 1480 to 1620. Opening with a helpful timeline that neatly outlines the scope of his study, he compares images of armour and fashion from various dates and countries. The principal focus of the book is the 'often ignored element of fashion history', the nobleman's armour and weapons as clothing and accessories, as integral parts of his image. Patterson's protagonist is the young fashionable nobleman, used throughout the book as a means of educating the readers about the armour and arms that he would have worn, carried, and collected throughout his life. In his introduction, Patterson addresses misconceptions about the study of armour, declaring his intention to open up this discipline to a wider audience. To this end, the chapters that follow draw on a wide range of contemporary sources, such as tapestries and book illustrations, conduct manuals as well as the evidence that can be adduced from sumptuary law. Patterson intends to show how armour and weapons are not only about protection and intimidation, but about beauty and craftsmanship, and how they served to advertise and reinforce claims to social status. He addresses the obvious and, to our modern sensibilities, more worrying links between arms and armour and violence, locating the former within their original social and cultural setting, where martial arts were part of the syllabus of the Renaissance gentleman's education. Through such discussions, Patterson intends to move our understanding of arms and armour 'away from the Victorian armoury and nearer to the Renaissance wardrobe' (p.15), and showing us how clothing and armour developed together and were worn together. Patterson's consideration of displays of armour in the palaces of kings and nobles aims to rescue these key artefacts from misconceptions underlying Victorian curatorial practice, highlighting the more sympathetic and culturally informed approaches evident in present-day displays of armour, such as in the Victoria and Albert Museum's newly-opened Medieval and Renaissance galleries.

The overall structure of the book is sound. The introduction and the following chapters are broken down into smaller sections each with their own heading, which has the advantage of making the book more accessible to a reader new to this subject, as the text appears less dense. The use of the full-page 'boxes' in the introduction was a distraction from the flow of the main text; they would perhaps have been better placed between the introduction and the first chapter. However, they do give an excellent summary of the different kinds of armour for those readers new to the study of armour, and emphasise that there is no such thing as 'a suit of armour', building on the author's intention of address the myths and misconceptions. A smaller 'box', summarising the collections at the V&A, is small enough not to distract from the text proper, and lets readers know where they can visit many of the items appearing in the book, thus bringing the text to life. Each chapter begins with a short quotation from a Renaissance text, each of which emphasises the particular aspect of overall discussion in the corresponding chapter. It is a nice touch that enhances the Renaissance atmosphere that Patterson sustains throughout the book; my only concern is that the sources of each quote are not given until later in the chapter. I also felt the lack of a formal conclusion, as it would have maintained the balanced structure expected in an in-depth study of this kind, and summarised the many threads of argument for a younger or less knowledgeable reader.

The opening paragraphs of the introduction, focusing on Juan Pantoja de la Cruz's painting of the young Prince Philip Emmanuel of Savoy (c.1604), neatly summarize Patterson's analysis of the relationship between armour and clothing. The words and the image set the scene, and draw the readers into the Renaissance. The necessary explanations of the different armours and weapons are expressed in such a way as



to hold the interest of readers with different levels of knowledge of this subject – the basic information about armour and weaponry is accompanied by more in-depth commentary, such as the role played by weapons as 'instruments of power and works of art' (p. 10). I found the final point made in the introduction – that armour can be used to study clothing – particularly interesting.

Chapter 1 opens with a quote from *Galateo of Manners and Behaviours*: a Renaissance courtesy book (1558). It was written for the young gentlemen of his time, and supports Patterson's assertion that fashion was a 'young, rich man's game' (p.20). This in turn links to his discussion of sumptuary law (closely examined in this chapter in particular); Aileen Ribeiro makes a similar point that in the fifteenth century these laws 'tended to concentrate on the more outrageous aspects of male dress' (Ribeiro, p.58).

This chapter focuses on the designs and methods of making armour, and the importance of fashion to that process. Patterson's use of terms almost certainly already known to his readers, such as 'made-to-measure', emphasises the link between armour and clothing, as he discusses how tailors' masterpiece books contained examples of tournament dress to be worn over armour. The pattern book of the Italian Filippo Orsoni mentioned in the text and the accompanying illustrations is available in the V&A. Patterson's discussion of the changing fashions of clothing and armour is structured according to the time periods identified in the opening timeline. He describes the developing styles in careful detail. His use of sources (inventories, fiction, emblem books and herbals) emphasises the place of fashionable armour and clothing in the cultural life of Renaissance Europe. The accompanying images are equally diverse, including oil paintings, photographs from current collections, and images from books. The chapter ends with the comment that 'armour declined as fashionable dress', while weapons became fashionable accessories, thus maintaining 'the image of the man-at-arms', a remark that eases the reader into Chapter 2.

The second chapter focuses on weaponry, from swords to guns. Patterson begins again with an example of the fashionable gentleman, here the satirised Sir All in *New Fashions*, whose funeral is being attended by his tailors, armourers, goldsmiths, etc.; it is said that 'He Livd by them' (p. 56). The importance of these individuals and their work to the Renaissance gentleman is once again developed through the interplay of words and images. The idea of the young man dressed for war but never having been to war is here addressed through the references to the poet John Marston and the English defence expert George Silver. It does seem odd that, given his mention of Sir John Smythe's disdain for fashionable weaponry here (p. 69) Patterson did not also refer in Ch.1 to the criticism of decorative armour by experienced soldiers, as discussed in Sydney Anglo's *The martial arts of Renaissance Europe* (Anglo, p. 218).

Patterson again emphasises the difference between the perception of weapons now and in the Renaissance. Their value as a status symbol was such that they were decorated to reflect the said status of their owner, even as armour became less fashionable. This point is clarified by Patterson's use of formal portraits of gentlemen in civilian clothing but still armed; his discussion of the importance of the hilt, not the weapon, is particularly interesting.

Yet the social and legal complexities of civilians carrying ornate swords is as nothing compared to the problems presented by the advent of guns, at first too large to be fashion accessories. This discussion looks forward to the final chapter through the comments on the technical developments of the gun that appealed to collectors.



Patterson's opening comments about his wish to take armour out of the context of the static Victorian displays are realised in Chapter 3, which opens with examples of the importance of collecting in the Renaissance gentleman's life, with the emphasis on arms and armour. The visual and textual evidence for the extant collections of the Archduke Ferdinand and the Emperor Rudolph put the focus back on the interdisciplinary education of the Renaissance gentleman. The creation and maintenance of one's own armoury is here shown as an excellent opportunity to affirm one's own identity, and to impress visitors.

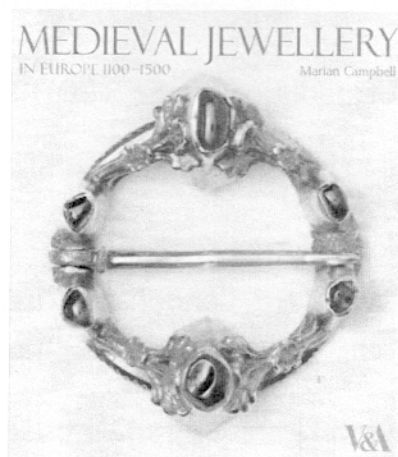
This chapter thus considers the various techniques used in the design of armour and weaponry, and how the craftsmen worked with their clients who collected their work. It ends on a discussion of the recurring theme of the relationship between art and violence, as Patterson again explains to his 21st century readership the Renaissance attitude towards their weaponry and armour.

Angus Patterson has built on a very long and rich tradition dating back to the time when these armours were worn and these weapons used, using sources from that period and much more recent critical and historical discussions. The publication of the book is of course timely, in terms of the opening of the new Medieval and Renaissance Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum – the press release for the opening actually mentions the publication of this book and others relating to the collections. Patterson's arguments that armour can be used to study dress, and that it influenced clothing, are new developments in both the study of armour and the study of clothing. I particularly enjoyed the way in which Patterson made small hints at potential areas of future research, either for himself to pick up in future publications, or for readers thus inspired to do more work in this area.

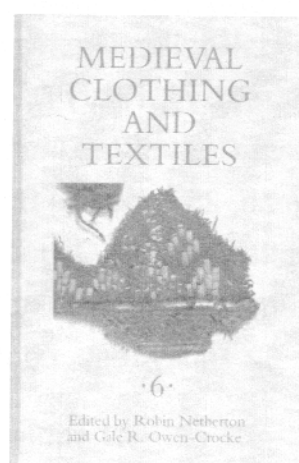
Kathleen O'Neill

## Books for Review

I have the following books available for review. I stress, however, the importance of ensuring the review gets to me in good time for the next issue, that is, no later than **August 20<sup>th</sup>**. Also, the tight financial situation means that the Society is not able to pay postage, hence, a book available for review will go to whosoever first gets me stamps to cover the postage. That is the monetary figure accompanying each title. Stamps from unsuccessful bids will be returned with the next newsletter.



Marian Campbell, *Medieval Jewellery in Europe 1100-1500*, v & A. £3.25



Robin Netherton & Gale R. Owen-Crocker (eds.) *Medieval Clothing & Textiles*, vol. 6, Boydell Press. £3.25

## MEDATS FUTURE MEETINGS

### Summer Meeting: May 15<sup>th</sup>

*Quilting, stuffing and stiffening:* see the following page for the programme.

### Autumn Meeting: October 16<sup>th</sup>

*Tapestries*

## 2011

### Spring Meeting: February

*Technology*

### Future topics

*Underwear/linens against the skin*

*Reconstruction, Re-enactment, Living History*

*Dyes*

*Dress and Textiles for Coronations*

## MEDATS COMMITTEE ADDRESSES

**President** - *Vacant.*

**Chairman** - John Cherry, 58 Lancaster Road, London N4 4PT.

**Honorary Secretary** - Karen Watts, Royal Armouries, Armouries Dv, Leeds LS10 1LT.

**Treasurer** - Jenny Tiramani, 47 Charles Square, London N1 6HT.

**Membership Secretary** – Carole Thompson, P.O. Box 65458, London SE7 9AR.

**Ticket Secretary**, – Bushy Westfallen, 146 Tilson House, Tilson Gardens, London SW2 4NA, e-mail: bushy.frocks@btopenworld.com

**Programme Secretary** – *Vacant. Could this be you?*

**Newsletter Editor** - Dr. Timothy Dawson, 45 Bismarck Drive, Leeds LS11 6TB, e-mail: medatseditor@hotmail.co.uk.

**Publicity Secretary** - Hilary Davidson, 72 Flaxman Road, London SE5 9DH

### Non-Executive Committee Members

Jane Bridgeman, 25 Granville Square, London, WC1X 9PD

Dr. Carol Chattaway, Bow Cottage, Millmead, Guildford, Surrey GU2 4BE.

Dr. Geoff Egan, Museum of London (SS), 46 Eagle Wharf Rd, London, N1 7ED.

Philip Harris, 32 Trinity Rise, London, SW2 2QR.

## **MEDATS Summer Meeting, 15 May 2010**

### **Stiffening, Stuffing & quilting: the extra dimension**

Courtauld Institute of Art, Strand, London WC2R 0RN

Tickets: MEDATS members 15.00; Students £10.00; Non-members at door £25.00

- 9.30      **Doors open: Kenneth Clarke Lecture Theatre**
- 10.30     Dr Timothy Dawson, MEDATS Newsletter Editor  
*Soft cargo: garments & accessories in the enduring Roman Empire*
- 11.00     Lisa Monnas, Independent Scholar  
*What is a pourpoint?*
- 11.30     Coffee. Seminar Room 1
- 12.00     Maria Hayward, Southampton University  
*The Rothwell Jack- cut, construction & conservation*
- 12.30     Discussion
- 13.00     Lunch** (not provided)
- 14.30     Hilary Davidson, Museum of London  
*A quilted fourteenth-century Spanish brial (gown)*
- 15.30     Tea. Seminar room 1**
- 16.30-    Claire Thornton, Historical Clothing Cutter  
*16th century stiffening & padding with linen, whalebone, pasteboard, felt & bents and padding with wool, cotton, horsehair, straw & bran*
- 16.30                  Discussion
- 17.00     End of day.**

---

### **Booking Form: MEDATS Summer Meeting**

**This Section Redacted**

This Section Redacted



The so-called "Crown of Constantine Monomachos", Budapest Museum