



The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

Volume 5 Issue 9

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MeDaTS Autumn Meeting:
Well Worn Weeds: Plant fibres worn next to the skin
October 27th at British Museum



5 steps of linen yarn production

After drying, the flax plant is transformed into yarn in five stages: (l-r) Pulled flax; Retted flax; Scutched flax; Hackled flax; Spun flax (yarn).

From <http://www.irish-genealogy-toolkit.com/flax-plant.html>

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EDITORIAL

The **Annual General Meeting** is upon us. The major item of business will be elections. Those present committee members who are willing to continue have been duly nominated thus:

Jane Bridgemen – non-executive member; John Cherry – President; Phillip Harris – non-executive member; Marc Meltonville – non-executive member; Carole Thompson – Membership Secretary; Jenny Tirmani – Treasurer pending replacement; Bushy Westfallen – Secretary.

The new proposed Chair is James Robinson, previously of the British Museum, now of the National Museum of Scotland.

As noted above, after long and exemplary service, Jenny Tirmani would like to step down, although she is willing to continue until a definite replacement is arranged. More urgently, as advertised in the last issue, replacements are needed for Hilary Davidson as Publicity Secretary and for myself as Newsletter Editor.

Nominations / volunteers please! To the Membership Secretary – Carole Thompson, 9 Fairthorn Road, Charlton, London SE7 7RL, carolefthompson@live.co.uk, **no later than September 26th**.

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

CONFERENCES PAST

International Medieval Congress

Leeds University, 9th – 12th July 2012

Of the three DISTAFF sponsored sessions, I only made it to one: 'Dress, Textile and Convention (or Not) I'. Of the three papers, I found the last, 'The pourpoint of Charles VI of France: structural details revealed' most interesting and impressive. The speaker, Tasha Kelly, had not only examined this fourteenth century garment in detail, but had made a replica which she brought along. The absence of any wadding under the lines of quilting stitch initially seemed odd, but less so in the light of her conclusion that it was a surcoat. Kelly has a substantial publication on the project forthcoming in *Waffen und Kostumekunde*

NEW AND FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

Encyclopedia of Medieval Dress and Textiles of the British Isles, c. 450–1450

Gale Owen-Crocker, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Maria Hayward (eds.)

Brill, Leiden 2012

ISBN 978-90-04-124356

€195.00 / US\$275.00 / £155.00 Hardback

691 pages, 36 colour plates, numerous line drawings and b/w photographs.

This is an eagerly-awaited volume, and justly so. The parameters of this project are necessarily vast. It could not be expected that a comprehensive realisation could be



Man wearing a *warnache*.
Detail from *the Gulbenkian
Apocalypse*, England c. 1260

achieved at the first essay, but this volume is an excellent start. As one would expect, it offers definition and descriptions of fibres, fabrics and other materials, manufacturing processes, tools and equipment, textile workers, dyestuffs, garments and accessories and other applications of textile. Yet it goes very well beyond those. Arms and armour as facets of dress are also covered. Commendably, the book further explores often-overlooked subjects relating to dress and textiles such as laundry, weights and measures, and events and activities in which textiles played very important roles.

An unexpected inclusion (even for me) is the section on re-enactment. Following close on the section on reconstruction as a technique for testing or exploring theories (of which, as many of you will know, I am very much in favour), such an extensive entry seems otiose. The inclusion of names and contact details of a very partial and random selection of historical recreation groups (some not "re-enactment" by any proper use of the term) manifestly without any consideration of their quality, or whether any of the groups are noteworthy for their contributions to the knowledge or profile of medieval dress and textiles of the British Isles is quite inappropriate. People engaged in reconstructive /

recreational activities ought to be judged on their individual merits, for very, very few such groups can be acknowledged as making any collective positive contribution.

Overall, the slightly disappointing aspect of the work is its treatment of clothing. It would benefit from a more incisive functional and typological categorisation of classes of clothing (at least in the index) than exists in this version. One omission which struck me was that I was unable to find any reference to the class of ample, open-sleeved over-garments, known in British Latin as *warnache*, which, as I observe in my forthcoming article 'There and Back again' (see the previous newsletter), some Europeans regarded as typically English from as early as the late twelfth century. There are also some seemingly strange inclusions in the encyclopedia, such as the section on the comb. Not an unimportant item, by any means, but the authors, in this case two of the editors, entirely fail to show a connection with dress and textiles to explain its presence.

These caveats should not be seen as in any way questioning the fundamental usefulness, indeed, necessity, of the encyclopedia as an essential reference.

Timothy

I have the following volumes in hand, and would expect to have reviews in the next edition. I will be happy to receive expressions of interest in reviewing them.

Troyes Memoire: the Making of a Medieval Tapestry

Tina Kane

Boydell and Brewer, Woodbridge 2010

ISBN 978-1-84383-570-7

£50.00 Hardback

196 pages, 8 colour and 8 b/w illustrations.

The Great Wardrobe Accounts of Henry VII and Henry VIII

Maria Hayward (ed.)

Boydell and Brewer, Woodbridge 2012

ISBN 978-0-900952-52-4

£25.00 Hardback

335 pages, no illustrations.

Medieval Clothing and Textiles 8

Robin Netherton & Gale Owen-Crocker (eds.)

Boydell and Brewer, Woodbridge 2012

£30.00 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-84383-736-7

An older volume still available from Brill is:

Textile Messages: Inscribed Fabrics from Roman to Abbasid Egypt

Căcilia Fluck and Gisela Helmecke (eds.)

Studies in Textile and Costume History, Volume 4

Brill, Leiden 2006

€166.00 / US\$231.00 / £130.00 Hardback

ISBN: 978 900414 95 64

Annual General Meeting and Autumn meeting:

'Well Worn Weeds: Plant fibres worn next to the skin'

27th October, 2012, Stevenson Theatre, British Museum

09.00 Doors open for Registration.

09:30 – 10.30 **Annual General Meeting (Members of Medats only)**

10:30 – 11.00 Morning tea (not provided) Great Court cafés

11:00 – 11:15 Welcome.

11.15 – 11:45 'Linen production in the Low Countries.'
Frieda Sorba

11:45 – 12:30 'All indecent!: 15th century linen underwear from Lengberg Castle,
East-Tyrol, Austria.'
Beatrice Nutz

12.30 – 14.30 Handling Session & Lunch (not provided)

14.30 – 15.00 'Documentary Evidence from Florence in the mid 15th century.'
Jane Bridgeman.

15.00 – 15.30 'Linen and the Plague: The medical beliefs surrounding linen in the
period prior to 1600.'
Susan North

15.30 – 16.00 Afternoon Tea (not provided) Great Court cafés

16.00 – 16.30 Session TBA

16:30 – 17:00 '15th and 16th century linens, Evolutions in Cut.'
Jenny Tiramani

17.00 End of meeting

Prices:

Members – £20 each;

Non-members – £25 each;

Students – £15 each;

Dual (1 member + 1 non-member booked together) – £40.

**Please note that due to a temporary change of address, tickets will
not be available until August 27th.**

After that date bookings and enquiries to the **Ticketing Secretary:** Bushy Westfallen,
146 Tilson House, Tilson Gardens, London SW2 4NA.
E-mail, bushy.frocks@btopenworld.com

MeDATS FUTURE MEETINGS

Your committee had a remarkable brain-storming session at it last meeting. As a result we now have a program to the end of 2014! Lately even more interesting ideas have been offered. So it goes like this:

Future topics

Spring 2013 – *Below the Knee: Patens, Shoes, Hose, Socks, and Garters.*

Summer 2013 – *Getting Dressed: The practicalities of putting on clothes.*

Autumn 2013 – *Furs: Comfort and Luxury.*

Spring 2014 – *The Fabric of Pageantry: Tents, Banners, Standards and Canopies.*

Summer 2014 – *Working Textiles: Rope, Cordage, Packaging Cloths & Industrial Fibres.*

Autumn 2014 – *Interior Textiles: Drapes, Floor Coverings, Bedding & Upholstery.*



A nasty case of fourteenth-century whiplash, evidently.
Chapel of Harewood House, Harewood, West Yorkshire.