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# The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

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An early sixteenth-century gondolier wearing sprang hose

From 'The Reconstruction of Tight-Fitting Textiles in Sprang Technique', presented by Dagmar Drinkler at the May MeDaTS meeting.

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## **Editorial**

The May meeting was yet another triumph, with some fascinating and spectacular material being presented. See below for a longer account.

In the past, speakers for MeDaTS meetings have been approached by the organiser on the basis of networks known to the committee. We have decided to broaden out potential catchment henceforth. Therefore, we invite members to propose papers or to suggest speakers for the Winter meeting, *Furs: Comfort and Luxury*, or for the meetings planned beyond.

The committee is still very much in need of your help. We all congratulate Alice on her Happy Event, while appreciating that it will reduce the time and energy she will be able to give the Society. The Program Secretary position remains unfilled. Similarly, I continue to need a replacement as editor. I repeat that it is a job that demands neither a high level of skill nor a great investment of time. If you have enjoyed the events the Society has staged and want them to continue, please consider making a practical contribution.

Please also help us by completing the questionnaire on page seven,

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

**TIMOTHY DAWSON**

## PAST CONFERENCES

### MeDaTS May Meeting

British Museum,  
22nd June 2013

I do not recall having attended a MeDaTS meeting that was not more or less fascinating, but this one was an eye-opener.

For me, the stand out paper was Dagmar Drinkler's offering on sprang, illustrated as it was not only with pictures of spectacular reconstructions, but physical samples the attendees could handle. A while ago a partner of mine who is a naturally talented textile worker, but also an inveterate dabbler had made a brief excursion into sprang before moving on to tablet weaving. It had struck me then that the technique had more potential, but what appeared in Dagmar's paper was astonishing. She showed that intricately patterned tight-fitting garments shown in sources from Ancient Greece to the sixteenth century which had always seemed a little fanciful, can be effectively replicated in sprang. Dagmar's talk made it seem remarkable that this astonishingly effective technique was not even more widely used.

With no one to speak in the more mundane subject of cloth legwear, I stepped in under the semi-facetious title of 'Trousers to Trousers in just a Thousand Years!' although a hastily contrived whistle-stop survey of the evolution from trousers to breeches and hose and back again, it did elicit some generous responses.

Beyond that have to admit that I have little recollection of the other presentations at the meeting. That is no reflection on their quality, but rather an indication of my own distraction between my paper and the sprang!

### International Medieval Congress

University of Leeds,  
1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013

As forecast in the last newsletter, this year's IMC had a lesser quantity of dress and textile papers than previous years. In fact, I must confess that of those there were I attended none, for the deficiency in that area was much more than compensated for by more potentially interesting papers in other areas than I can recall for years. I know there were other MeDaTS members there, so perhaps one of them might offer more of an insight.

## CONFERENCES FORTHCOMING

### North European Symposium for Archaeological Textiles XII

Hallstatt, Austria

21<sup>st</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Preliminary program is available at [http://www.nesat.org/hallstatt\\_xii/program\\_en.html](http://www.nesat.org/hallstatt_xii/program_en.html)



The reconstructed box sprang replicating the upper part of the hose shown on the cover.

## RECENT PUBLICATION

### ***Medieval Clothing and Textiles, 9***

Robin Netherton and Gale Owen-Crocker (eds)

Boydell Press 2013

£35.00 Hbk 170 pp, 11 b/w ills.

Once again Netherton and Owen-Crocker have delivered a fine collection of essays which make significant contributions to scholarship.

The first two articles, 'Bridal Gifts in Medieval Bari' and 'The Marriage of the Year (1028)' were of particular interest to me, as they looked at clothing in Southern Italy in the period when that region was still part of the Roman ("Byzantine") Empire, and extending in the former article into the Norman and Angevin eras that followed. These made available texts from inventories listing items of dress compiled in connection with weddings. These make a significant contribution to our knowledge of clothing in a period and era that was something of a cultural melting pot. The one reservation is to note that the authors could have been better acquainted with the Greek sources and terminologies. That would have afforded them more secure interpretations of a few things.

Venturing next to Ireland, Mark Zumbuhl considers the use of clothing as currency and gifts. The monasteries of England were more than just oases of prayer and contemplation, they were often hives of industry as well. 'Cistercian Clothing and its Production ...' looks at the manufacturing records for one abbey (Beaulieu in Hampshire) for one year, 1269–70, setting them in the wider context of the woollen textile and garment industry. The author (John Oldland) considers dyeing as well as the production craft itself.

'Clothing and Textile Materials in Medieval Sweden and Norway' analyses the relatively under-studied literary sources for textiles and dress in Scandinavia from c. 1200 to 1500. In addition to woven stuffs, it comes as no surprise to find that the trade in furs features prominently in the written material. Clothing is never a purely physical matter, and 'The Iconography of Dagged Clothing and its reception by Moralistic Writers' looks at the interplay between dress and social ideology. The final article in the volume also considers the social aspect of textiles. 'Domestic Painted Cloths in Sixteenth Century England: Imagery, Placement and Ownership' discusses the messages implicit in the complex interplay between the value of these everyday furnishings, the scenes they depicted and where they were employed in the domestic environment. This paper contains striking insights into the very different outlook brought to this type of interior design compared to today.

## MEDATS Future MEETINGS

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

**Spring 2014** *Furs: Comfort and Luxury.*

**Summer 2014** *The Fabric of Pageantry: Tents, Banners, Standards & Canopies.*

**Autumn 2014** *Working Textiles: Rope, Cordage, Packing Cloths & Industrial Fibres.*

**Spring 2015** *Interior Textiles: Drapes, Floor Coverings, Bedding & Upholstery.*



**MeDaTS Autumn Meeting and Annual General Meeting**  
**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013**  
**Stevenson Lecture Theatre, British Museum**

*Getting Dressed: The practicalities of putting on clothes.*

The presently confirmed speakers are Kathleen O'Neill, Sarah Thursfield and Jenny Tiramani.

The meeting will incorporate elements of demonstration as well as papers.

As is customary, the Annual General Meeting will precede the papers, from the opening at 9.30 to morning tea. The papers will take place from 11.00.

A booking slip may be found at the end of the newsletter.



An insight into how hose were supported in the fourteenth century.  
BNF ms. Lat. 757, f.286v. Kindly brought to my attention by Jane Bridgeman.