The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

June 2021 www.medats.org.uk **Issue 94**

An embroidered glove, c.1590. © Museum of Leathercraft 2021

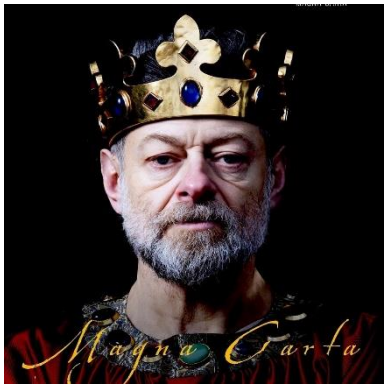
IN THIS ISSUE:

Forthcoming Zooms - King John's Clothes & Leather is Everywhere	2
Animals in the Bayeux Tapestry	3-5
Animal based metal threads: an overview of materials and manufacturing techniques in medieval Spanish, Italian and Middle Eastern textiles	5-7
Whaleboned Fashions: The use of whale baleen in clothing in sixteenth century England and France	8
Hundepanzer: A Brief Overview	9-10
Two exhibitions: The Field of the Cloth of Gold, and Becket: murder and the making of a saint	11
Committee Addresses	12

Forthcoming Zoom Chat. 4pm, Saturday 10th July 2021

King John's Clothes

In July 2020 Ninya Mikhaila was commissioned by Hawkwood International to make a reconstruction of the set of clothes worn by King John in his effigy of c1240 at Worcester cathedral. The garments form part of an exhibition in the USA on the Magna Carta, which opens on Friday 2nd July and runs through to January 2nd 2022 at the Museum of the bible in Washington DC. They are worn by Andy Serkis, who plays King John for a series of short films, and are also displayed on a mannequin in the museum. Join Ninya for an informal session via Zoom where she will share her research and making process and chat about the experience of making 13th century style garments. Image: Andy Serkis as King John.



Forthcoming Zoom Visit. 3pm, Saturday 16th October 2021

Leather is Everywhere

Join curator Victoria Green of the Museum of Leathercraft (formerly the National Leather Collection) for a talk specially tailored for Medats. The talk will be given online via Zoom and will include an introduction to leather, the museum collection, the work that they do, as well as a walk-through tour of the store rooms. For Medats, Victoria will focus on pre-1600s objects including gilt leather panels, gloves, shoes, religious dress and some highly decorative caskets. Tickets cost £5 per person, and will be sold via Eventbrite. The link for purchasing tickets will be activated on 16th August 2021 when it will also be sent to members and published on the Medats website. Right : A 14th Century reliquary. © Museum of Leathercraft 2021

Medats Annual Conference: Animals and Textiles, 8th May 2021

Below we have abstracts and illustrations provided by the speakers, from four papers given at the conference.

Animals in the Bayeux Tapestry

Gale R. Owen-Crocker

762 animals are depicted in the main register and borders of the 11th-century embroidery called the Bayeux Tapestry. They occupy most of the border areas, usually in pairs alternating with plants, also as individual space fillers, characters in Aesop's fables and in other scenes. They include tamed creatures: dogs, horses and hawks; farm animals; familiar wild animals; foreign, more exotic animals; and fantasy creatures such as senmurv, amphisboena and centaur.

Animals had long appeared in Anglo-Saxon art including embroidery and tablet weaving as well as metalwork, sculpture and manuscript illumination, but were usually stylised and of no recognisable species. The Bayeux creatures, in contrast, appear lively and naturalistic; but this apparent naturalism is illusion. Gait, pose and physical details are stylized. Proportions are unrealistic. These animals are heavily influenced by patterned woven silks, imported into England and elsewhere in western Europe from at least the seventh century. Particularly prevalent on silks are pairs of creatures flanking plants; and hunting scenes (echoed in the first appearance of the Tapestry's first protagonist Harold, on horseback with hawk and hounds).

Above: Doves bearing olive branches above the most extreme scene of slaughter. Photo: Martin Foys, The Digital Edition of the Bayeux Tapestry, with permission.

Rather surprisingly Bayeux's animals, and everything else, turn out to be created with templates. Birds' wings are the same shape as shields, indeed every curve of every creature can be paralleled by other images created with the same shaped template. The Bayeux makers regularly individualise animals, however. Paired creatures are embroidered in different colours; angle of limb, wing or head is slightly varied; rows of horses are each different in position and colour of body and tack.

The Tapestry used as models scenes from manuscripts in the libraries of 11th-century Canterbury. Specific horses, the border scene of scaring birds off newly-planted seed (taken from an illustration of Abraham in the Old English illustrated Hexateuch) and the scenario of the Norman pillaging (dependent on the preparation of a feast for honoured guests in the Hexateuch) are cases in point. The latter scene also borrows from the Roman Trajan's Column: taking the specific animals – ox, sheep, pig, and a pony with panniers standing alongside – from a temple sacrifice scene.

Above: Aesop's fable of 'The Fox, the Crow and the Cheese'. Photos: Martin Foys, The Digital Edition of the Bayeux Tapestry, with permission.

One question about the Bayeux animals is whether they have any significance in relation to the narrative depicted in the main register. Knowledge of the sources suggests some do: Normans invaders must be treated as honoured guests, but for the Anglo-Saxons giving their farm animals to feed the invading army is more like sacrifice; 'Abraham's seed' is all about dynasty: so was the Norman Conquest. The placing of two doves with olive branches ('doves of peace') over the bloodiest scene of the Battle of Hastings must be ironic. Herons or cranes, big birds highly prized by falconers, above the death in battle of King Harold's brothers, may indicate that here the Normans have scored a major coup. In Aesop's fables, animals represent human failings. It is easy to read some of the Tapestry's fables in relation to the main characters, for instance in 'The Fox, the Crow and the Cheese', which appears 3 times, the cheese, the prize, is England; Harold is the crow, gullible and susceptible to flattery; William of Normandy, the cunning fox, gets the prize in the end.

Animal-based metal threads: an overview of materials and manufacturing techniques in medieval Spanish, Italian and Middle Eastern textiles.

Scibè, C.[1], Solazzo, C.[2], Tosini, I.[3], Lam, T.[2], Vicenzi, E.[2] and González, M.J.[1]

[1] Fine Arts Department, University of Seville, C/ Laraña 3, 41003 Seville, Spain; [2] Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution, 4210 Silver Hill Road, Suitland, MD 20746, USA; [3] Scientific Laboratory, Opificio delle Pietre Dure, Viale F. Strozzi, 1 (Fortezza da Basso), 50129 Florence, Italy

Historically and generally known as "membrane threads", animal-based metal threads were very popular and widely used across European, Middle Eastern and Asian textile productions during the middle Ages. Their introduction represents a very important development in metal threads technology as well as in textile weaving. Indeed, they provide flexibility and lightweight in weaving, and a decrease in price compared to earlier metallic threads made of almost pure gold.

Animal-based metal threads can be classified in two main typologies according to the animal tissue used: skin-based metal threads and membrane-based metal threads. They were made by gilding/silver-coating animal skins (leather, parchment and vellum) or animal membranes (intestine, stomach, bladder, et.) with an adhesive medium (animal glue, egg white or the natural membrane exudate). These gilded tissues were then cut into narrow strips, which have been used either as flat strips (mostly in Asian production) or wound around a fibrous core (as in European and Middle Eastern production), most likely by a handmade process.

They were probably first manufactured in the Far East but became known as "Cyprus gold" possibly from passing through the ports of Cyprus, and spreading with the Levantine trade through the Byzantine Empire into Southern Europe, where first evidences date back to the 10-11th century in al-Andalus. During the 13th century, with the Mongol conquest of Persia,

the luxurious Cloths of gold, made by skin-based gold threads, spread to the Middle East and reached Western Europe at the beginning of the 14th century. Here, especially in Italy and Germany, their popularity and great demand promoted a local production of a less expensive imitation of gold threads, using membrane-tissue substrates coated with gilt-silver. From the 15th century onwards, apart from a few examples on early renaissance velvets, metal-coated organic-based threads were no longer produced in Europe.

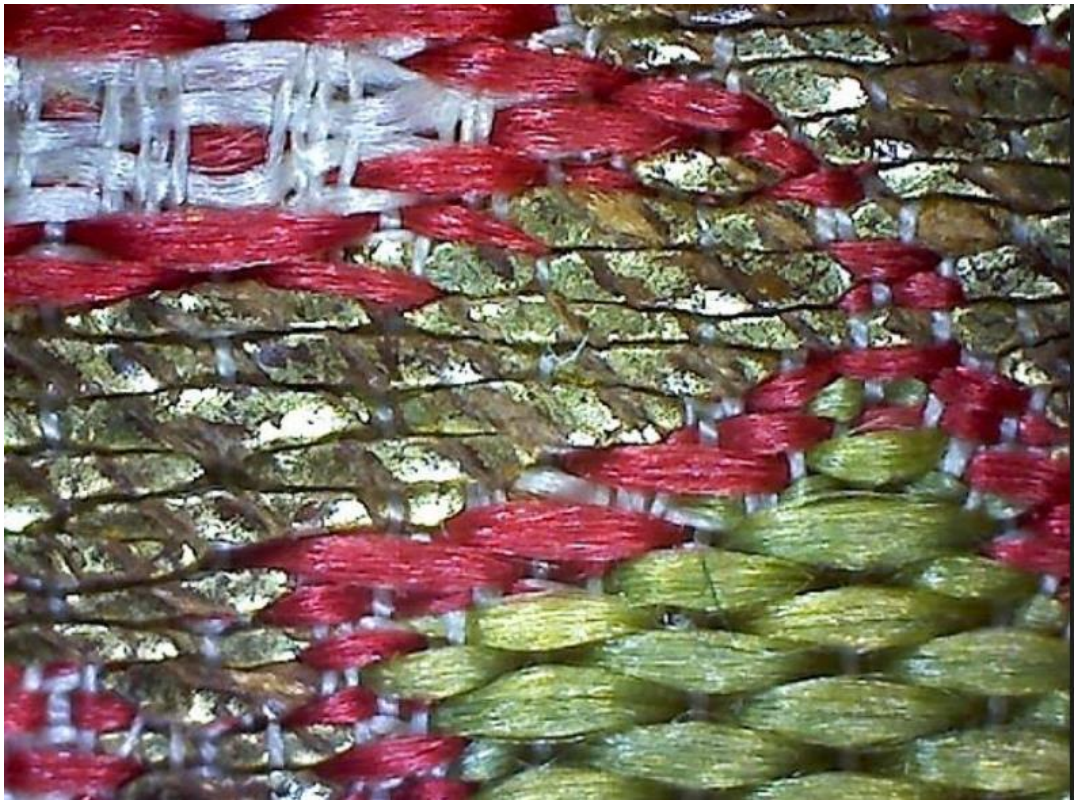


Image 1: Metal-coated skin-based thread wefts (magnified view). Textile fragments, Spain, 13th c.; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 1938-78-1. Image by Cristina Scibè, Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution.

The present work provides an overview of animal-based metal threads materials and manufacturing techniques as the result of the multi-analytical study of around a hundred samples**,** collected from textile objects ranging from the 11th/12th to the 15th century and ascribable to Spanish, Italian and Middle Eastern origin. Combining for the first time traditional microscopic techniques with proteomics, almost all the materials that made up the threads (fibrous core, the organic substrate and adhesive, and the metal coating) were characterized from a morphological and compositional point of view.

As a result, different production technologies have been identified within each typology of thread and the coherence of the analytical data achieved suggests that the attempt to assign them to different workshops could be possible. Thus, in regards to skin-based metal threads, the twist of the thread around the core and the core itself allowed us to distinguish European threads (Z-twisted around a single silk yarn core) from Middle Eastern ones (S-twisted around a 3-ply linen core). Moreover, the proteomics animal species identification of the substrate

and adhesive layer enabled us to clearly distinguish the Spanish manufacture (made by goat skin strips and egg white adhesive) from Middle Eastern ones (made by sheep skin strips and fish glue adhesive). On the contrary, no evident differences were appreciable between the Spanish and Italian membrane-based metal thread productions [1, 2].

Image 2: Metal-coated membrane-based thread wefts (magnified view). Textile fragment, Italy, 14th c.; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, 1902-1-329a. Image by Cristina Scibè, Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution.

The study of metal thread materials and manufacturing techniques could contribute to better date and geographically place textiles, however, due to the extensive trade of fabrics and raw materials, metal threads manufacturing centers may not necessarily correspond with textile weaving centers.

[1] Scibè, C., Solazzo, C., Tosini, I., Lam, T., Vicenzi, E., González López, M.J. Gilt leather threads in 11th-15th century textiles. *Proceedings of the 11th Interim Meeting of the ICOM-CC Leather and Related Materials Working Group, Parigi, 6-7 Giugno 2019*. ***2020****, p. 162-169.*

[2] Solazzo, C., Scibè, C., Eng-Wilmot, K. Proteomics characterization of "organic" metal threads - First results and future directions. *Research & Technical Studies Specialty Group Postprints. AIC 47th Annual Meeting, New England, 13-18 Maggio 2019.* ***2019****,* p. 78-82.

Whaleboned Fashions: The use of whale baleen in clothing in sixteenth century England and France

Sarah A Bendall, (Research Fellow at the Gender and Women's History Research Centre, Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Australian Catholic University)

During the sixteenth century the bodies of Europe's elites began to change in size and form as both men and women adopted wide starched ruffs and collars, ballooning sleeves, stiffened or bombast upper garments and puffy lower garments. This early modern aristocratic body was the result of many different ideas that emerged during the sixteenth century, such as self-control, civility and physical uprightness. Often overlooked in explanations of elite late sixteenth-century fashions is the availability of new raw materials that allowed artisans to fabricate clothing that portrayed these aristocratic ideals. This talk traced the emergence of baleen, an animal material derived from whales, in the wardrobe of elites during the sixteenth-century. It presented a case study of the wardrobe accounts of Queen Elizabeth I of England (r. 1558 –1603), as well as English state papers and other information gained from studies of the European whaling trade, to shed light on when, how and why this material was used in elite clothing production in England during the sixteenth century. Although Elizabeth I was not the first person to use baleen in fashion, by studying these records we can explore one example of how baleen was used in sixteenth-century clothing in England, its connections to continental styles and the effects that this material had on the queen's clothing.

It is no coincidence that as European mariners ventured further into the waters of North America and the Artic in search of whales, European fashions began to become more and more structured. By the middle of the sixteenth century large quantities of whale products were being imported into Europe from Newfoundland by Basque whalers. Although the English traded with Spain, it appears that inspiration for how to use whalebone came to England around 1580 via the French who had used this material in their court fashions much earlier. As the wardrobe accounts of Elizabeth demonstrate, the ability to render into material form those often-abstract ideals that dictated aristocratic appearances was also made possible by the knowledge of tailors, farthingale-makers and other artisans who developed ways to utilise the unique properties of baleen in their creations. The innovative use of whalebone in garments like those found in the wardrobe of Elizabeth I marked the beginning of the widespread use of this material in dress, as throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries baleen was used in a wide variety of garments and accessories. Recognising that fashions like those worn by Queen Elizabeth I would not have been possible without animal by-products like baleen can help us to not only appreciate the innovative developments of early modern artisans, but also to understand how fashion participated in one of the world's most profitable but destructive commercial industries from its very beginnings in the sixteenth century.

Hundepanzer: A Brief Overview

Jack Paltanen

The goal of this ongoing research project is a reproduction of a set of handstitched, reinforced linen dog armour to be modeled by Rosie the Boxweiler.

The eighteenth-century German philosopher Benjamin Hederich left us this definition of Hundepanzer: armour (or coat of plates) of boar-hunting dogs (lorica canum apros venantium). While a coat of plates uses small triangles of metal layered and stitched between layers of linen, these linen tanks (as they are also known) are made of layers of linen with stitched metal rings. The Hundepanzer under discussion are from 17th century Germany, specifically what was the territory of the Dukes of Saxe- Coburg. They are connected to Duke John Casimir, who lived from 1564- 1633. The Hundepanzer are currently held as part of the Veste Coburg Art Collections at the Fortress of Veste Coburg, in Coburg, Germany.

Photo 1: Rosie wearing the first mock-up, 2021. Photo courtesy of Pasi J Paltanen, used with permission. Copyright Blue Trillium Textiles, 2021

The idea of dog armour was not a new one by the beginning of the 17th century. Charles V, who was the Holy Roman Emperor from 1519-1556, had at least one set of plate and chain armour made for a dog by the 1540's. He also had a set of 12 hunting themed tapestries known as the Hunts of Maximillian made beginning in the 1520's, two of which include dog armour which looks like typical coats of plates.

The earliest image I have found of the Saxon style dog armour is a hunting scene by Frans Snyders from between 1625-1630. It is currently at the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston. The dog armour looks as if Snyders had heard about it, but not seen it.

While Wild Boar were hunted to extinction in England by the end of the 1600's, they can still be found in heavily forested areas of continental Europe. Boar hunting was a vicious, dangerous type of hunting, that quite often resulted in serious injuries or death to either hunters or hunting dogs.

Boars are smart, and the dogs who were trained to hunt them were no different. The types of dogs that were used for wild boar hunting in Germany were called Saupackers and are described by Alfons Diener Schonberg (The Weapons of Wartburg), as "a kind of particularly sharp and strong noble dogs that were designed to pack and pack the hunted and or wounded sow until the hunter approached to intercept
them."

Hundepanzer is based on a type of textile armour known as Eyelet armour. Eyelet armour consists of flat metal rings sewn in between or on top of, layers of linen or possibly hemp. The technique of layering linen with metal rings to provide flexible protection dates at least to the late 1400's and is mentioned in Oakeshott's book "European Weapons and Armour" under Eyelet Armour.

Photo 2: Materials testing. Top row: 9mm internal diameter metal rings stitched with 2/10 linen. Bottom row: 5mm internal diameter metal rings stitched with 2/10 linen. Both sample rows are stitched in a frame, sandwiched between 4 layers of 200 gsm linen. Photo by Jack Paltanen. Copyright Blue Trillium Textiles, 2021.

Thanks to Alfons Diener-Schonberg's fairly detailed description of one of the sets of dog armour, I have created a working pattern for the dog armour. Happily, my dog Rosie is about the right size, and after some persuasion modeled the first mock-up for me. Since the conference I have started tool and materials testing.

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Gold and Glory: Henry VIII and the French King

Hampton Court Palace - 20th May to the 5th September 2021.

An exhibition celebrating (a year late) the 500th anniversary of the Field of Cloth of Gold. The exhibition is taking place in rooms at Hampton Court Palace that were used by the mastermind of the event, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Key items will include the spectacular Stonyhurst vestments — woven from luxurious cloth of gold and selected by Henry for use at the religious services held near Calais and the Wolsey's Book of Hours. Also on display is a tapestry manufactured in Tournai in the 1520s. The richly woven textile depicts a bout of wrestling at the Field of Cloth of Gold, and includes a black trumpeter among the brace of royal musicians.

Painting of The Field of the Cloth of Gold c. 1545. © Royal Collection Trust / Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019

Thomas Becket: murder and the making of a saint

British Museum – 20th May to the 22nd August 2021

Again a year late for the actual anniversary, this exhibition commemorates the 850th anniversary of the death of Becket. The exhibition charts the rise of Becket from ordinary beginnings to one of the most powerful figures in England, through to his enduring but divisive legacy in the centuries after his death. The highlights of the exhibition include reliquary caskets and pendants, alabaster panels, pilgrim badges and manuscript illuminations, and an entire stained glass window on loan from Canterbury cathedral.

MEDATS COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

President - Dr Gale Owen-Crocker - gale.owencrocker@ntlworld.com
Chairman –Ninya Mikhaila, The Old Dairy, 2 Trowell Road, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8 2DF email - chair@medats.org.uk
Honorary Secretary - Christine Carnie, 14 The Granthams, Lambourn, Berkshire, RG17 8YF. Email - sempster.carnie@googlemail.com
Treasurer – Challe Hudson, 24 Milton Park, London N6 5QA. Email - treasurer@medats.org.uk
Membership Secretary – Linde Merrick, 37 Knox Green, Binfield, Bracknell, RG42 4NZ email -linde.merrick@ntlworld.com
Ticketing Secretary – Carole Thompson, 9 Fairthorn Road, Charlton, London, SE7 7RL email - carolefthompson@live.co.uk
Programme Secretary – Natalie Rachel Walker, email - info@natalierachelwalker.com
Newsletter Editor – Pat Poppy, 56 Wareham Road, Lytchett Matravers, Dorset, BH16 6DS, email newsletter@medats.org.uk
Publicity Secretary - Heather A. D. Mbaye, email - doctoraicha@gmail.com
Web master

MEDATS SUBSCRIPTIONS

Information about MEDATS and application forms may be had from the Membership Secretary, Linde Merrick, or from the society website: www.medats.org.uk.
Annual subscriptions (payable in pounds sterling only) run from 1st January – 31st December
£15 Individual members worldwide;[1]
(£6 paper newsletter surcharge for Europe, £9 for worldwide outside Europe)
£20 Households worldwide (2 members); [2]
(paper surcharges as above)
£10 Student members worldwide (with proof of status);
(paper surcharges as above)
£30 Institutions irrespective of location;
(paper surcharges as above)
Notes
1: Members may stand for office within the Society, vote in meetings and elections, and gain a discount on attendance at meetings. Within the UK the newsletter is usually available electronically as a PDF file to the recorded email address, or on paper by request.
2: One copy of the newsletter will be sent whichever mode is employed, but both named members enjoy the full range of rights and privileges.
Bank details: Lloyds TSB, 109 Finsbury Pavement, London EC2A 1LB
Account name: *Medieval Dress and Textile Society*
Sort Code: 30-95-74 Account Number: 24025468
To pay online via Paypal go to www.medats.org.uk

CANCELLATION POLICY FOR EVENTS

A full refund will be given if a cancellation is made 30 days or more before the event.
Refunds for cancellations made at shorter notice will be given on a discretionary basis dependant on whether the ticket can be resold or not. The final decision will be made by the treasurer.