

The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

September 2022

www.medats.org.uk

Issue 97



Detail of Eliezer and Rebekah at the Well, from the Abraham Series of Pieter Coeck van Aelst

Royal Collection Trust/ ©Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2020. Photographer Bruce M White

IN THIS ISSUE:

Events Secretary vacancy	2
Clothing the Lost King - Chat	2
Learning Through Reconstruction study day	3- 7
Texts and Textiles in the Story of Tudor Art - Chat	7-8
Museum of London closure	8
Book - Textiles of Medieval Iberia: Cloth and Clothing in a Multi-cultural Context	8-9
Dressing for Success Mediaeval style – WECS study day	9-10
Conference. Leeds International Medieval Congress 2023	10-11
Exhibition - The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England	11
Exhibition – V&A touring exhibition	11
Committee Addresses	12

Message from the Chair – Events Secretary

Our Events Secretary Natalie Bramwell-Booth is reluctantly having to step down from the position with immediate effect due to health issues.

Natalie joined the committee in 2018 and shadowed Gale Owen-Crocker who had previously held the office. Since taking over in 2019 Natalie has organised several excellent events including the 2020 Textiles at Home conference at the Lancaster Hall Hotel in London and the 2022 Upcycling, Recycling, Remaking, Reimagining and Reusing conference, which was held online. Natalie is also a member of BAC Stitch, the Bacton Altar Cloth Study group (<https://bacstitch.org>), and is responsible for introducing 'Medats Chats' - regular informal online discussions on specific topics given by members. Natalie has organised the upcoming Learning Through Reconstruction study day which will take place again at the Lancaster Hall Hotel on Saturday 29 October. Her hard work in putting together a programme of seven diverse and interesting speakers for the upcoming study day has meant that the rest of the committee can easily ensure the smooth running of the event.

However, we do need to fill the position of Events Secretary as soon as possible and call upon the membership to consider stepping forward to fill the role. The office of Events Secretary requires someone with a broad interest in medieval textiles, preferably with connections to academics and specialists in the field, to organise one conference and one study day per year with the support of the rest of the committee. As with all committee members attendance at the AGM and committee meetings are also required, though these are now online rather than in person. Volunteers are essential to the running and survival of our society and the efforts of those who give their valuable time are greatly appreciated.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Natalie for the enormous contribution she has given Medats with her innovative ideas, her enthusiasm and commitment.

Upcoming MEDATS Chat

Ninya Mikhaila - Clothing the Lost King: reconstructing the wardrobe of Richard III, Sunday 6 November 2022, 4pm London time, via Zoom



Learning Through Reconstruction

MEDATS Study Day
Saturday 29th October 2022
10am - 5pm, Lancaster Hall Hotel
35 Craven Terrace, London W2 3EL
IN PERSON EVENT

(Image: historical garment reconstruction, sleeve detail. Photo credit: Ninya Mikhaila).

Booking for MEDATS members £44. The non-member price is £48. Tickets include a light lunch, tea and coffee.

We are pleased to announce that the following presentations will be part of our next Study Day.

Nancy Spies - Independent scholar

Putting Joseph Braun's Theory of Mitre Development to the Test

In 1907, Joseph Braun published his famous book, *Die Liturgisches Gewandung im Occident und Orient*, in which he included a chart and explanation for the early evolution of the mitre as he saw it. This evolution was posited as a linear one from one style of mitre to the next.

In writing her book on the origins and early development of the mitre, Nancy Spies noticed serious issues with Braun's chart and investigated them by employing experimental archaeology in the form of reproducing and experimenting with the mitre shapes in his chart. There were many questions answered during this process. Finally, a complete reevaluation of Braun's chart was possible. It shows that not only was the evolution nonlinear but that the styles were discrete entities bearing no relation to any of the other styles.

Gerald Livings - Independent Scholar

Clarifying and extending the typology of aiglets through a practical application of craft and experimental archaeology.

While substantial progress has been achieved in the research of clothing, textiles, and associated items over the last century, it is still the case that the body of research on the

manufacturing and use of aiglets remains rather impoverished. Even less has been preserved about the manufacturing processes for aiglets. This information has been lost.



Aiglet in construction. Photo: Gerald Livings

The author maintains that knowing how an item is manufactured may lead to a better understanding of its use and how it affects material culture. This lack of knowledge about the manufacturing processes used to make aiglets prevents us from determining their role in society. Because the current typology of aiglets has developed informally over time as researchers needed to extend the system of classification as they worked, an area of contradiction has become apparent. The current classification scheme is based on a combination of features that can be at the same time, excessively inclusive, and at the same time exclusive. This leads to ambiguity as the same aiglet can be determined to fall under different types from a lack of an adequate vocabulary. The goal of this presentation is to perform an overview of archaeological evidence, as well as to clarify and extend the typology of aiglets.

Sue Lamberton - Independent Scholar

Reproducing the Littlest Holes in History – the reconstruction of c. 13th- to 14th-century silk mesh hairnets

Sue Lamberton has been carrying out a programme of independent research into the lives and work of 12th- to 15th-century London and European Silkwomen. In conjunction with this investigation, she began teaching herself the silkwork techniques these women would have been instructing their apprentices in, from fingerloop braiding to silk monochrome and brocaded tablet-weaving. After viewing a number of net fragments from 13-14C silk hairnets at the Museum of London, she decided to add netting to her textile techniques arsenal. She used close in-person study of the surviving Museum of London net fragments, plus tools in their collection, as well as the embroidered fragments of the V&A Boch Collection and Sint Truiden Abbey, Belgium.



Photo: Sue Lamberton

She aimed to determine if a 21st-century silkwoman could acquire and develop a similar skill level to that of the women of 800 years ago, making some of the smallest known mesh size of 64 knots per cm², as found in the Sint Truiden net 102. Following the commission of reproduction netting tools based on Museum of London examples dated late 14th-century and, more importantly, a 0.7mm mesh gauge, as well as overcoming the challenge of misleading instructions, she has been able to re-

create this tiny mesh size and really experience the true nature of reconstructive experimental archaeology. She recently completed the main silk mesh body of a reconstruction of the red St Truiden fragment 107, ahead of working the embroidery.

Claire Frampton - Oxford University Gardens, Libraries and Museums.

Tactile engagement with embroidered museum artefacts: producing a tactile wall hanging with Braille

As an assessment piece for the qualification Skill Stage 3 Hand Embroidery online learning with School of Stitched Textiles, Claire Frampton designed and made a tactile wall hanging with Braille. It has seven sections, each relating to an embroidery technique showcased at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Period appropriate materials were used to reproduce historical techniques. The integrated text on each section gives information in Braille as well as text, part of an inclusive design aiming to encourage tactile engagement with embroidery techniques in the collections, where the artefacts are displayed behind glass. One section of



the wall hanging reproduces part of a wide sleeved tunic embroidered in silk, dated 1500. The image on the tunic is 'the Virgin and Child sit[ing] on a throne above St George killing the dragon' (information from gallery label, artefact number AN.1885.783), sewn in chain stitch. The item is in a display called 'The Coptic Church', part of the history of Egypt, in the gallery 'The Mediterranean World from AD 300'.

Photo: Stu Allsopp, Courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Tasha D. Kelly – Independent Researcher

The Case for a Frame: Building Silhouette with Padding and Quilting

In 2011, the author examined the small, red coat armour held in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Chartres, France, an ideal extant example of a style of martial coat worn by men-at-arms in late 14th-century France, though child-sized. She sought and found answers about how makers of the time period constructed complex and variably-curved and -sized padding and quilting that combined to form a 3-D silhouette impossible to make solely with tailoring. This led to insights about the use of a taut base layer and the order of operations when quilting over padding. Further examination of photographs of similarly-quilted garments extant across Europe dating between the second half of the 14th century to the end of the 15th century show evidence of using the same techniques, which this presentation will highlight and explain, along with visual aids in the form of quilting samples. Comparison between the red coat armour and photos of the Black Prince's coat armour, the Lübeck waffenrocks, and Diego Cavaniglia's giornea will show how to recognize this specific technique for building quilted garments.



Photo: Tasha D. Kelly

Jane Malcolm-Davies - The Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen

Data, disciplines and dress: establishing reconstruction as a scholarly research method

This paper explores a theoretical framework for the reconstruction of dress as a research method. It has been argued that 'experimental history' can draw upon similar methods to those used in experimental archaeology. However, 'researchers, curators and conservators



Aprons. Photo: Jane Malcolm-Davies

who have engaged in hands-on, experimental remaking of historical dress for decades have largely done so on an ad hoc basis'. (Hilary Davidson, *The Embodied Turn: Making and Remaking Dress as an Academic Practice*, 2019). For reconstruction to be a smart and scholarly research method, it must systematically employ well researched evidence from a variety of sources. The triangulation of data - well established in natural and social science - rigorously cross references evidence from a range of investigative methods. It produces a firm fix on the material under scrutiny and produces more credible results than those reliant on only one or two sources. The challenge is that different types of evidence demand specialist approaches, including quantitative and

qualitative methods, which are not the traditional tools of dress history. Accurate reconstruction also demands interdisciplinary collaboration: from the interrogation of fibres at the micro level to how garments were worn at the macro level. This calls for new ways of working with integrated methodologies in pragmatic multidisciplinary teams, which include experts from the humanities, sciences and craft.

MEDATS 15th Century Hats Study Group - Recreating the circa 1450 hat of Anne Beauchamp

In 2021 MEDATS members formed a group to delve into the evolution of 15th century women's headgear. This work informed and enhanced a garment reconstruction project by group members Jane Holland and Jane West initiated due to interest in wearing a reconstruction of the circa 1450 hat depicted on the figure of Anne Beauchamp, a weeper on the tomb of Richard Beauchamp in St Mary's, Warwick. They tackled the question of how to turn flexible, two-dimensional fabrics into a structured, three-dimensional hat. The creators will discuss the fabrication and learning process, show prototypes created, and model the finished result. Members of the research group will be available to answer questions about launching your own MEDATS Study Group.

Christina J Faraday - Texts and Textiles in the Story of Tudor Art

A MEDATS zoom Chat that took place on the 10th September 2022

Textiles were some of the most valuable objects in Tudor England. In artistic terms, they ranged from the most up-to-date and expensive examples of foreign expertise to the intimate and domestic creations of amateurs. Through the Sumptuary Laws, textiles also had a role in social stratification, helping to define people by status and income. Textiles played an

enormously important role in the artistic culture of the past, and yet only very recently has the discipline of art history begun to take them seriously as objects of study.

The evidence of tapestries at Henry VIII's court reveals a monarch keeping up with continental fashions. Henry owned a weaving of the famous Acts of the Apostles tapestry series, the original of which was designed by Raphael (1483-1520) for the Sistine Chapel. Further works by continental masters such as Bernaert van Orley (c.1487-1541) and Pieter Coecke van Aalst (1502-1550), for example the Abraham series still in the Royal Collection, [see cover image] show that modern and highly fashionable styles could be seen in England throughout the later sixteenth century. Nor were such works restricted to aristocratic audiences: tapestries were frequently hung in public places such as streets and churches for important state events, while household servants and craftsmen were regularly involved in the maintenance and repair of such high-value objects.

At a smaller scale, domestic embroidery offered women an opportunity for self-expression. Copying and adapting imagery from books, ballads and other prints, women engaged in a process of collection and collage echoed in other areas of Tudor culture too. Schoolboys were encouraged to keep a 'commonplace book' of pithy phrases from their readings, ready to be redeployed in their own compositions. Needlework was a similar, visual, inventory of pleasing and significant themes. Although a modern viewer might see this as 'copying', and therefore a far cry from the originality we expect of artists today, in fact the high value placed on combinatory and collage-like creation in the period reveals a very different understanding of authorship, one that privileged tradition over innovation.

For patrons, the issue of originality or celebrity authorship was less significant than details such as material, size and subject matter. Textiles had an enormously important role to play in distinguishing the finely-gradated ranks of Tudor society, through the Sumptuary Laws and proclamations that controlled the type, amount and colour of fabrics to be worn by different groups. Crimson, scarlet and blue velvet was reserved for Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Barons and Knights of the Garter, while purple silk was reserved for the royal family. At the other end of the scale, a proclamation of 1571 ordered every male over the age of 6 and below the rank of gentleman, to wear a flat woollen cap – a measure also intended to stimulate the wool trade in a decade when exports had hit a three-century low.

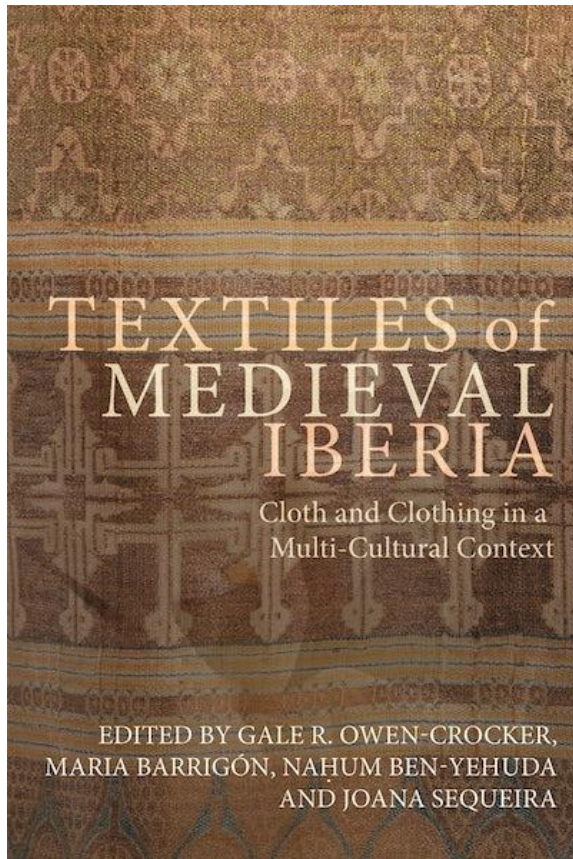
In my current project, a book for general audiences about the rich world of Tudor art, textiles will be central. Their importance for Tudor patrons urges us to reconsider anachronistic values imposed on the period by our modern obsession with portraits and easel painting. I hope to show that textiles had a vital part to play in the aesthetic culture of the Tudor age.

Museum of London closure.

The Museum of London's main site at London Wall will close as a visitor attraction in December 2022 in preparation for its relocation to West Smithfield. The Museum of London Docklands will remain open to visitors with a major exhibition Executions opening on 14 October 2022

<https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/discover/stitches-time-learning-through-remaking>

New Book



Textiles of Medieval Iberia: Cloth and Clothing in a Multi-cultural Context, Edited by Gale R. Owen-Crocker, María Barrigón, Nahum Ben-Yehuda and Joana Sequeira, Medieval and Renaissance Clothing and Textiles Series, 5 (Woodbridge, Boydell, September 2022). 416 pages, 67 colour, 6 black and white and 7 line illustrations. Hback £75.00/ \$115.00; E-book £19.99/\$24.99

The medieval Iberian Peninsula, encompassing various territories which make up present-day Spain and Portugal, was an ethnic and religious melting-pot, comprising Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities, each contributing to a vibrant textile economy. They were also defined and distinguished by the material culture of clothing and dress, partly dictated by religious and cultural tradition, partly imposed by authorities anxious to avoid

cross- ethnic relationships considered undesirable. Nevertheless, textiles, especially magnificent Islamic silks, crossed these barriers.

<https://boydellandbrewer.com/9781800106529/textiles-of-medieval-iberia/>

Dressing for Success Mediaeval style - WECS – West of England Costume Society Study Day

Saturday 15 October 2022 at the Bath & County Club, Queen's Parade, Queen's Square, Bath BA1 2NJ

Speakers:

Gale Owen-Crocker – From Folk-dress to Fashion: Clothing in the Middle Ages

Sarah Thursfield - Reproducing medieval garments -This lecture will show her reconstructions of early body garments together



Excavated Shoe from London. Metropolitan Museum. Public Domain

with the evidence which underlies them.

Rebecca Shawcross - Getting to the Point - This talk will explore medieval shoe fashions

Benjamin Wild – Thoroughly Modern .. Medieval? - This illustrated lecture considers the enduring appeal of medieval fashions on our modern wardrobes.

Further details at https://wofecostumesociety.org/events_21/99/details



The 2023 Congress will include a Special Thematic Strand – Networks and Entanglements. Please note the Call for Papers has now closed.

The Entanglements Making, Uses & Visualisation of Textiles in Early Medieval Society, 450–1100 CE, session at the 2023 International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, July 3–6, 2023

This session explores the entangled roles of textiles within early medieval society. Surviving early medieval textiles show that they were made from many fibres and material that all incorporated different meanings utilised by makers and user to send messages. Some, such as silk 'collected' multiple meanings as they were cut up and gifted across cultural and geographical territories, engendering them with enhanced provinces once they reached their final destinations/resting place. Others were used and reused until they were no longer viable pieces of cloth, dismantled or kept as near whole, donated and looked after as precious objects. Even after they ceased to be of practical use, fabrics could be given multiple entangled meanings and continue to be prized. Documentary source tell us how important these ethereal objects were, as forms of wealth, displays of social position, connections and entanglements of power across the secular and religious worlds. Textiles and their multiple meanings were so engrained within early medieval society that riddle and poems often used them metaphorically. This visualisation of textiles within art was not only illustrative but could

also demonstrate early medieval views of society and religion for example, skeumorphs gives us insights into cultural displays of contemplation and meaning.

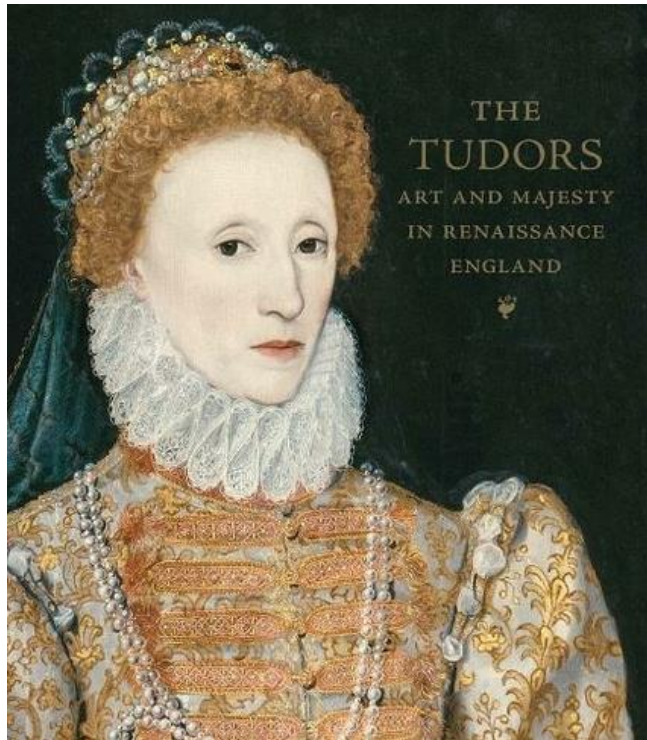
All this evidence demonstrates that textiles and early medieval society were deeply entwined, often bringing much of the then known, and unknown and spiritual together.

Exhibitions

The Tudors: Art and Majesty in Renaissance England

Met Museum, New York. October 10, 2022 – January 8, 2023

The Tudor courts were truly cosmopolitan, boasting the work of Florentine sculptors, German painters, Flemish weavers, and Europe's best armorers, goldsmiths, and printers, while also contributing to the emergence of a distinctly English style. This exhibition will trace the transformation of the arts in Tudor England through more than 100 objects—including iconic portraits, spectacular tapestries, manuscripts, sculpture, and armour—from both The Met collection and international lenders.



The catalogue by Elizabeth Cleland and Adam Eaker will be published on 25th October, Yale University Press, £50. ISBN 978-1588396921

V&A - A future exhibition.

The V&A is planning a touring exhibition of singular masterpieces of art in Medieval England c.1000 – 1500 from its collection. The exhibition will showcase some of these unique works of art alongside workshop products such as English Medieval embroidery and alabaster carving that formed the two most prolific art export markets for England in a truly international age. We will provide more information on this when it is available

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 - Heather MBaye, secretary@medats.org.uk

Treasurer – Linde Merrick, 37 Knox Green, Binfield, Bracknell, RG42 4NZ.
treasurer@medats.org.uk

Membership Secretary – Linde Merrick, treasurer@medats.org.uk

Ticketing Secretary – Carole Thompson, Appt. 8, Jeffries Lodge, 48 - 60, Footscray Road, Eltham, London, SE9 2SU. . carolethompson@live.co.uk

Events Secretary – Vacant

Newsletter Editor – Pat Poppy, newsletter@medats.org.uk

Publicity Secretary - Veronica Saenz, publicity@medats.org.uk

Webmaster – Challe Hudson, webmaster@medats.org.uk

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.