

The Medieval Dress and Textile Society

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Issue 100



Fiammetta Falchi with Guicciardini Quilt and its reproduction
Photo provided by Fiammetta Falchi.

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From the Chair

Welcome to the 100th edition of the newsletter! The Medieval Dress and Textiles Society has been going for thirty years, sending out three to four newsletters per year. Many of these have now been scanned and are available in PDF form on the website. The society has always been run by a committee of volunteers, many of whom are leaders in the study of medieval dress, textiles, and armour. Claude Blair, Frances Pritchard, Lisa Monnas, Jenny Tiramani, Elspeth Veale, Elizabeth Coatsworth and Gale Owen-Crocker, to name but a few. Many of you will recognise these historians and practitioners, and at least some of their publications likely grace your bookshelves. All these people have given their time to contribute to the dissemination of knowledge, whether it be in the lecture theatres of The Museum of London or the British Museum, special study days at local museums and collections, or (increasingly) via the power of the internet which has allowed for online conferences. The current committee continue this work and our membership extends further than it ever has with over 40 per cent living outside of the UK. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the committee officers for their hard work and you, the members, for enriching and expanding the conversations and study of Medieval dress and textiles.

Ninya Mikhaila, Chair 2023

Future Dates for Your Diary

21st April 2024 – Annual Conference: Fabric and Food, Food and Fabric – online

28th April 2024 – AGM – online

Further details to be finalised, please check the website for further information.

Learning Through Reconstruction, November 11, 2023.

A study day to be held at Lancaster Gate Hotel, 35 Craven Terrace, London, W2 3EL. 10am to 5 pm. 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.



The Cuthbert embroidery in progress. Photo A. Makin

**Dr. Alexandra Makin,
FSA, FRHistS**

The Re-construction of Early-medieval Embroidery: how making can inform our understanding of maker processes

Abstract: Analysing early medieval embroidery for its technical attributes and artistic style can tell us a lot about the construction, materials and influential motifs. Reading

contemporary documents and scholarly work can help us understand which fibres and designs were used, how the embroideries were utilized and what people thought about them. Early medieval sources and archaeological evidence can also shed light on the makers and equipment used. However, if we want to really understand the skill and mind sets of those who designed and made embroidery, we need to do as they did, as much as we are able within our modern confines. To do this we can re-create or make copies of surviving pieces using materials and equipment that are similar to those the original makers used. By doing so, we can enter their world, and experience, up to a point, their working methods and patterns, and understand the decisions they made and why. In turn, this can help us understand the wider implications of embroidery, how it was viewed and used across early medieval society. In this presentation we will explore how the speaker's experiences of re-creating and making copies of early medieval embroideries has informed her knowledge, understanding and research of early medieval embroidery.

Bio: Alexandra is a professional embroiderer, trained on the Royal School of Needlework's apprenticeship; textile archaeologist and scholar of the early medieval period (450-1100 CE), specializing in embroidery, PhD. At present she is the post-doctoral researcher for textiles of the AHRC funded Unwrapping the Galloway Hoard project, which is jointly run by the National Museum of Scotland and the University of Glasgow. Alexandra is particularly interested in the making, use and meaning of embroidery within early medieval society and what this can tell us about people and cultures. One of the ways in which she researches this is through the making / re-creation of early medieval embroideries using 'authentic' materials and equipment.

Dr. Tina Anderlini, CESCUM, Poitiers

What Can We Learn from the So-called St. Louis Shirt?

Abstract: The St Louis shirt is one of the most famous medieval garments. A few different patterns have been proposed since 1970, year of its last 20th century exhibition outside Notre Dame de Paris. In fact, its shape and its exact pattern were not known before March 2011. Examining the garment outside its heavy 19th-century reliquary in 2011, and again inside its new reliquary in 2013, proved that it was full of surprises, and extremely useful to the study of both undergarments and clothing. It helped to answer several legitimate questions: could it really be a 13th-century garment and why? Could have it belong to the Capetian saint, and why? What can we learn from the patterns of its time and of the sewing? The garment, and the few similar examples, have real historical importance, as well as major importance in the history of costume. The fact it is also a relic is another consideration, as the comparison with other textile relics seems to show some common aspects.

Bio: Tina Anderlini, Associate researcher Centre d'études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, Poitiers, PhD in History of Art (2003) at Bordeaux, after studying in Strasbourg (MA) and Lyon (DEA). Her university dissertations were about Burne-Jones. Having a lot of points of interest (from ancient Egypt to Pre-Raphaelites), she now works mainly upon medieval costume, as well as the representation and symbolism of costume in medieval art. She writes for magazines and academic publications, as well as participating in TV documentaries. She's the author of *Le Costume Médiéval au XIII^e Siècle* and one of the revisers of the new edition of *Le Costume Médiéval, 1320-1480*.

Lesley O'Connell Edwards, Independent Scholar

Knitted Liturgical Gloves: evidence revealed by reconstruction

Abstract: Knitted liturgical gloves were usually knitted to a fine gauge in silk and metal threads, and often ornately embellished. They were used in religious ceremonies by senior churchmen in the western Christian Church from the twelfth century onwards. A little work has been done on a few gloves, but until the *Holy Hands* project began in 2021 there has been no systematic survey.

Because no archival records exist concerning the construction of these gloves, it is necessary to utilise reconstruction to understand how they might have been knitted, including their knitted-in patterning, seen on the backs of the hands and the cuffs. Such reconstruction, by an experienced knitter, revealed the skills and expertise of the unknown knitters and the challenges they faced, allowed for tactile experience of knitted silk, and provided an estimate of timescale.

This paper will concentrate on two aspects: the recreation of selected cuff patterns, and that of the knitted-in medallions on the back of the hand. The former included detailed examination to chart the designs of the originals, in order to understand the practicalities of working these. The latter explored different techniques, and also enabled an understanding of the quantity of expensive metal yarn possibly needed.

Bio: Lesley O’Connell Edwards is an independent scholar researching the history of hand knitting, using archives and artefacts. She is part of the *Holy Hands* research project, which is the first (and only) systematic study of knitted liturgical gloves. Her other research interests include English working hand knitters and knitting in Tudor England.

Nina Manninen and Nana Asten

Reviving the Lost Wardrobe of Catherine Jagiellon: Insights from Written Sources in 1562-1563



Pendant re-created by Nana Asten

Abstract: This presentation focuses on the collaborative efforts of Nina Manninen and Nana Åsten to reconstruct wardrobes and artefacts of women in 16th-century Finland. Both individuals have a shared passion for historical re-enactment and bring unique expertise to the joint project.

Nina Manninen, a doctoral researcher in archaeology, gained insight into women's clothing during this period by studying their possessions, focusing on those of Catherine Jagiellon, Duchess of Finland. By reconstructing clothing items – which survive only in written documents – with as much historical accuracy as possible,

she supports her research and re-enactment activities. Similarly, Nana Åsten's

skills as a goldsmith and jewellery designer have enabled her to accurately reconstruct the Duchess' jewellery and metal artefacts. These reconstructions were valuable contributions to the project and meaningful additions to understanding this women's belongings.

This presentation will explore the collaboration between Nina and Nana and the benefits of combining research, experimental archaeology, and re-enactment. The reconstructions produced by these individuals provide accessible research results and serve as educational resources for the wider community. The presentation will highlight the meaning of historical accuracy in re-enactment and the value of research and reconstruction in bringing history to life - and vice versa.

Bios: Nina Manninen is a doctoral researcher from the University of Turku who specializes in archaeology, focusing on the material culture of women's clothing in 16th-century Finland. Her research employs meticulous reconstruction techniques to bring historical accuracy to clothing items that have predominantly survived only in written records.



Re-created outfit worn by Nina Manninen

Nina's passion for historical re-enactment drives her research. Her scholarly pursuits extend beyond the academic realm, as she shares her expertise through courses, lectures, and interviews, bridging the gap between academia and practical re-enactment. Nina's work manifests the synergy between rigorous research and immersive historical engagement. Her journey as a doctoral researcher showcases her unwavering dedication to preserving and bringing to life the rich history of 16th-century women through the lens of clothing and material culture.

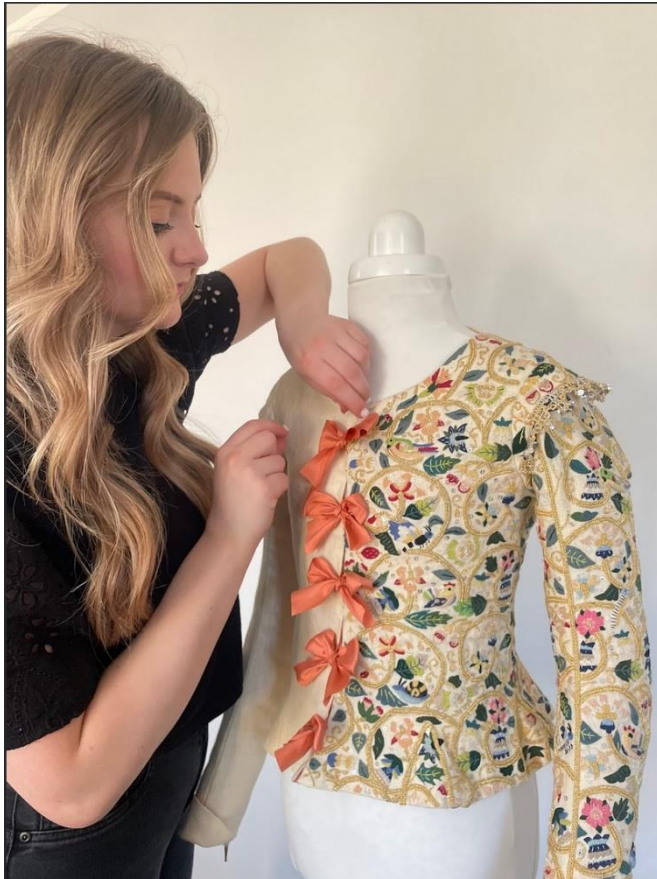
Nana Åsten's skills as a goldsmith and jewellery designer have enabled her to accurately reconstruct jewellery and metal artefacts. This commitment enriches her understanding and provides valuable educational resources for those interested in the history of 16th-century Finnish

clothing and material culture. Nana Åsten is a Bachelor of Jewellery Design from LAB University of Applied Sciences in Lahti. Due to her vast vocational studies in Ancient Crafts, she also has the basic skills in traditional metalwork, textiles, bone, woodwork and tanning. Her greatest passion is for historical jewelry from the Iron Age to the Renaissance. The main objective of her thesis project was to interpret the aesthetics of the Renaissance into small scale serial production using 3D modelling and traditional wax methods. After graduating she has continued deepening her knowledge in traditional goldsmith techniques as an entrepreneur and by working as a gold/silversmith in Kultakeskus Oy.

Beth Lacey

The Historical Reconstruction of Margaret Layton's 17th-Century Embroidered Jacket

Abstract: The Margaret Layton Jacket, held by the V&A, is an extremely important garment in the teaching of historical accuracy. When comparing 17th century portraiture and actual garments, there are only a few examples where a surviving garment is almost perfectly depicted in a painting. Within Margaret Layton's portrait, exact floral and animal motifs can be matched up to the surviving jacket, providing insight into the artistic licence incorporated by painters as they created both idealized and visual images of their sitters.



Beth Lacey with the jacket

My talk will discuss the research I conducted through museum archive visits as well as online resources, ensuring I sourced historically accurate materials mirroring those used in the original jacket. This will address how I overcame challenges sourcing these materials and the various samples I created to practise with the techniques and fabrics I was unfamiliar with. Furthermore, I will explain my making processes and historical techniques used on my jacket, most of which are exact to the original jacket, and my decision to only embroider half the garment.

Because the archived jacket is so fragile yet remains such an important garment which is studied by hundreds of people, one of my main goals for this project was to create a replica which exactly reflected the original. From the hand sewing techniques of the embroideries and materials, down to the exact ply of thread, this recreation of Margaret

Layton's Jacket can be viewed and studied by a wider audience, with less risk to the delicate original.

Bio: In 2023 Beth Lacey took on the challenge of historically recreating her winning garment for the Costume Society's Patterns of Fashion Competition. The stunningly intricate embroideries of the Tudor and Stuart eras have always been her favourite items of dress to study. When presented with the rare opportunity to dedicate four months of her life to recreating such a garment, she knew it was an opportunity she could not pass up. She is a Bournemouth Arts University graduate in Costume Making and the Costume Society's 2023 Patterns of Fashion Winner.

Instagram Portfolio is [@beth.lacey.costumes](https://www.instagram.com/beth.lacey.costumes)

Website portfolio is www.bethlaceycostume.com

Email: beth.lacey.costumes@gmail.com

Dr. Amy Miller & Alison Beadnell

Learning through Reconstruction: The 17th-Century Body

Abstract: As part of a wider project with the WEA we have been focussing on seventeenth-century fashion and exploring the synergies between the historical and material record. Although our larger project considers the evolution of the three key elements of dress across gender and the period (the collar, shirt, and doublet) this paper will specifically look at a

doublet in the collection of Claydon House, National Trust, that belonged to a member of the Verney family and dating from 1620. By combining our different approaches, marrying text and image with reconstruction, we are working towards an understanding of the textiles and technologies at play in the early 17th-century and how they shaped the masculine body, fashioning an ideal, but ultimately illustrating that the garment reveals the reality between the two.

Bios: Dr Amy Miller is a curator, lecturer and historian who specialises in the meanings of dress in the contexts of gender, economics and social hierarchies. Alison Beadnell is a fashion industry professional who specialised in pattern cutting and garment construction. She is also a materials anthropologist who brings an experimental archaeology approach to her research on the technologies and materiality of historical clothing.

Toni Buckby

"an unstitched coif..." echoes of creative freedom through contemporary embroidery practice

Abstract: This paper presents "an unstitched coif...", focusing on stitching as a physical and gestural conversation both within our contemporary communities of practice and with (usually) unknown historic needleworkers. It proposes that through communal embroidery practice, a collective body of knowledge can be built and the creative agency of past, present, and (possible) future needleworkers revealed.

Blackwork was a popular sixteenth and early seventeenth century embroidery technique, characterised by its use of black silk thread worked on white linen. Due to the high iron content of the mordant, many historic blackwork embroideries are in an advanced state of disintegration exposing the underlying designs. The sparse outlines and formal simplicity of these underdrawings reveal the creative freedom of the embroiderers, something easily observed when comparing embroideries with similar designs but worked in diverse techniques. However, the embroiderers' creative agency has typically been overlooked.

"an unstitched coif..." explores this absence through contemporary embroidery practice, inviting needleworkers to come together to stitch their own interpretation of a coif design (V&A, T.844-174), share their techniques, and reflect on their experiences. Over 140 embroiderers have taken part in the project. Diversity of background, experience, and skill was encouraged and has inspired a range of contemporary and historic interpretations.

Bio: Toni Buckby is a Sheffield based fine artist working with traditional textile techniques, experimental digital/electronics, and acts of collective making. Her work explores ideas of skilled practice, the value of labour, the visibility of authorship, and the creation and accessibility of practical knowledge. Specialising in fine hand embroidery, Toni is currently working on a PhD with Sheffield Hallam University and the Victoria & Albert Museum looking at how fine art practice can be used to investigate, reconstruct, interpret, and present fragile and inaccessible Blackwork embroideries.

Research Website: <http://blackworkembroidery.org>

Artist Website: <https://tonibuckby.com>

RECENT EVENTS

“From the House to the Museum: The Display of the Guicciardini Quilts from the 14th Century to Date” Online talk by Fiammetta Falchi, given 17th September, 2023. A link to the video of this presentation has been sent to members.

The Guicciardini Quilts, also known as the Tristan Quilts, are two 14th-century Italian padded embroideries depicting episodes from the Florentine manuscript *Tristano Panciatichiano*, a contemporary version of the deeds of Tristan. They are named after the Guicciardini family, one of the wealthiest and most prominent dynasties at the time of the Florentine Republic. Although there is no documentary evidence, an attentive reading of some of the family records might suggest that they could have been commissioned by the Gonfaloniere of Justice Luigi di Piero Guicciardini who was in charge of the Republic’s internal militia until the Ciompi Revolt on 21 July 1378.



Detail from the Guicciardini Quilt. Photo by Fiammetta Falchi

In my research, I sought to demonstrate that the two wall hangings were in fact displayed in Luigi’s stately house on the great hall’s walls to affirm his position and legacy, identifying himself with the legendary knight of the Round Table. When the insurrection turned into a temporary form of government by members of the city’s minor guilds, Luigi was removed from his office along with all the other members of the major guilds, his palace burnt down and his properties scattered for a few years. They are currently displayed at the Museum of Palazzo Davanzati in Florence and at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London who still keep them separate not just in space but also through the strikingly different interpretation and approach used by the two institutions.

In this talk, I reconstruct the history of the displacement and display of the Guicciardini and Tristan embroideries by making use of new archival research along with an analysis of the two museums’ displays and approaches. I aim to demonstrate why it is important to shift both the focus of academic literature and curatorial approach from the static and descriptive interpretation of the quilts as pieces of medieval textile. I argue that their meaning as objects of material culture has changed depending on their different uses from the sociohistorical context of 14th-century Italy to date, and these meanings are the focus of this presentation.

Fiammetta’s dissertation, *Same artwork, different stories. The display of the Guicciardini Quilts at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and at the Museum of Palazzo Davanzati in Florence.* 2021, Dissertation MA History of Art. Birkbeck, University of London is available on Academia - <https://www.academia.edu/66821746/>

BOOK - Le vêtement, un signe complexe dans la littérature, la culture et la société de l'Angleterre médiévale, Études Médiévales Anglaises 98 (2021-2) ed. by Tatjana Silec and Martine Yvernault. ISSN 0240-8805

This issue of the journal *Études Médiévales Anglaises* is devoted to dress. It contains five papers, three on Middle English literary texts, two on history; three in English, two in French. The Introduction, by Martine Yvernault discusses the theology of clothing from Adam and Eve's original nudity (garments being unnecessary since they were clad in grace) to their post-lapsarian clothing, through the garments of St Martin, Christ and the Virgin Mary. She points out that in the Middle Ages clothing was an essential ingredient in allegorical and moral texts and an important source of messaging in both art and narrative.

Daniel R. Pike, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: armed with virtues in the face of death', 13-54, uses texts that provide allegorical meaning to items of armour to interpret the Arthurian court's arming of Sir Gawain in the fourteenth-century poem, as providing one about to die with spiritual armour. Remaining armed as he journeys through bitter weather without shelter, Gawain's integrity is sustained, but is threatened when he is disarmed and wrapped in luxury garments at Hautdesert. He regains his earlier virtues on re-arming, but the wearing of the green girdle, given by the Lady, mars them. Receiving the girdle again from Bercilak, as a *memento mori*, not a love token, Gawain will be better prepared for a 'good death' when his time finally comes.

Tatjana Silec-Plessis, "'Not for a holyday honestly arrayed": the duplicity of Cleanness', 55-104, discusses the problematic poem *Cleanness*, a lesser-known work assumed to be by the poet of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Pearl*. A poetic sermon, an exercise in vernacular theology, the poem considers both bodily and spiritual purity and God's anger against those who are guilty of filth. The chapter examines the poet's use of clothing metaphors derived from the bible, particularly the parable of the man who came to the wedding feast dressed in his working clothes. The poet employs details of contemporary dress and aristocratic secular life to augment the biblical parable in order to present his allegory.

Laurence Doucet, 'Habits de Dieu, masques du diable? Les vêtements et les semblances de Merlin dans *Of Arthour and of Merlin* (*Histoire d'Arthur et de Merlin*), roman moyen-anglais du XIV^e siècle' 105-136, discusses the characterisation of Merlin in the verse romance also known simply as *Arthur and Merlin*. Merlin is a master of disguise, for himself and others – he can magically change faces and clothing - in addition to being a soothsayer and trickster. The article has few details about costume, apart from discussing an episode where a character is stripped of all clothing to demonstrate that she is a girl, who has been disguised as a male chamberlain. The relatively few occurrence of words relating to dress are listed in footnote 235 at p. 111.

Tina Anderlini, 'L'enjeu du costume dans l'Angleterre du roi Henry III', 137-198 begins with what she considers the feminisation of male garments, producing a unisex fashion during the long thirteenth century. In a wide-ranging article she discusses garments and their relationship to one another, their names, and the names of cloths, colours and furs, the role of linings and the prestige of multiple garments. Two appendices give material from original

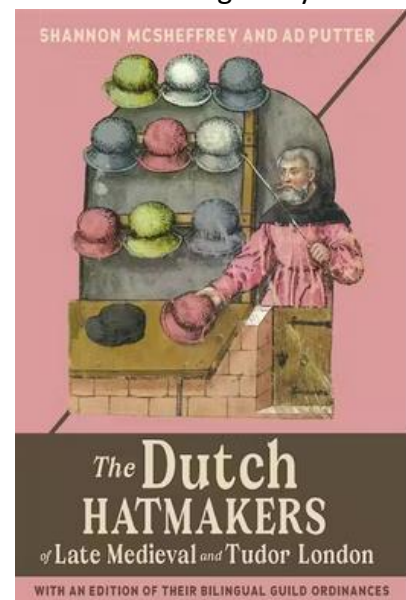
sources, in Latin, translated into French. 27 illustrations are available on the author's blog, but I was not able to access them on the address given. The author has instead supplied <https://parolesdarts.blogspot.com/2022/10/etudes-medievales-anglaises-lenjeu-du.html>, which does work.

Fanny Morasin, 'Of dresses and jewels: Ladies-in-waiting in early modern Europe. The case of Mary Queen of Scots' four Maries', (199-249) reveals the duties of the Queen's ladies in waiting in the formal dressing of the monarch's body, the way in which their own clothing was chosen to mirror hers and the importance of gift giving, especially of jewels and dress accessories as a reflection of status at a royal court. This fascinating article also does much more than this in examining the loyalties and personal sacrifices made by the four closest servants of Mary Queen of Scots.

GALE R. OWEN-CROCKER

BOOK - The Dutch Hatmakers of Late Medieval and Tudor London, with an edition of their bilingual Guild Ordinances, by Shannon McSheffrey and Ad Putter. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2023. This work is also available online.

This work is divided in two parts. The first part is an examination of the introduction of Dutch and Flemish style hat making into England. Some years ago it was thought that this first happened when when a hatters guild was founded in Norwich in 1543. This work takes that back at least a century, showing evidence of hatmakers born in the Low Countries, working in London in the 1430s. The tensions between stranger artisans and the London guilds is explored in some detail in the first three chapters, culminating in the 1511 agreement between the Haberdashers Guild and the Dutch hatmakers fraternity. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the manuscript ordnances and the linguistic differences of the two scribes involved. The final part of the book contains the actual text of the ordinances, the agreement with the Haberdashers Guild, and the oath of the Wardens of the Haberdashers.



PAT POPPY

EXHIBITION REVIEW

Painted Love: Renaissance Marriage Portraits, Holburne Museum, Bath. Ended 1st October 2023.

This small but well formed exhibition examined the way marriage portraiture reflected the complex politics of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe. In at least one case it brought together a couple, Richard Wakeman and his wife Joan, whose 1566 portraits by Hans Eworth,

had not been displayed side by side for over fifty years. Where it had not been possible to display the match to a portrait, a QR code gave access to the image. The exhibition included several portraits which had been in the stores of the galleries from which they were borrowed. The exhibition concluded with Nicholas Hilliard’s miniatures of Sir Thomas and Lady Catherine Gresley (c. 1574), which are encased side-by-side in a single jewelled gold locket, known as the Gresley Jewel.



Joan Wakeman 1566, by Hans Eworth

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITION

Holbein at the Tudor Court, Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace.



11th November 2023 to
14th April 2024

This exhibition showcases one of the most important surviving collections of his work, and includes drawings, paintings, miniatures and book illustrations. Celebrating Holbein’s artistic skill, it explores the career of the artist and the lives of those who commissioned portraits from him, bringing us face-to-face with some of the most famous people of 16th-century England.

Mary Shelton, later Lady Heveningham,
by Holbein(RCIN 912227) Royal Collection

MEDATS COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

President - Professor Gale Owen-Crocker - gale.owencrocker@ntlworld.com

Chairman –Ninya Mikhaila chair@medats.org.uk

Honorary Secretary - Heather MBaye, secretary@medats.org.uk

Treasurer – Linde Merrick, treasurer@medats.org.uk

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

Ticketing Secretary – Carole Thompson, carolethompson@live.co.uk

Events Secretary - Elizabeth McMahon, NedInthred@gmail.com

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

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

Webmaster – Challe Hudson, webmaster@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 dependent on whether the ticket can be resold or not.