

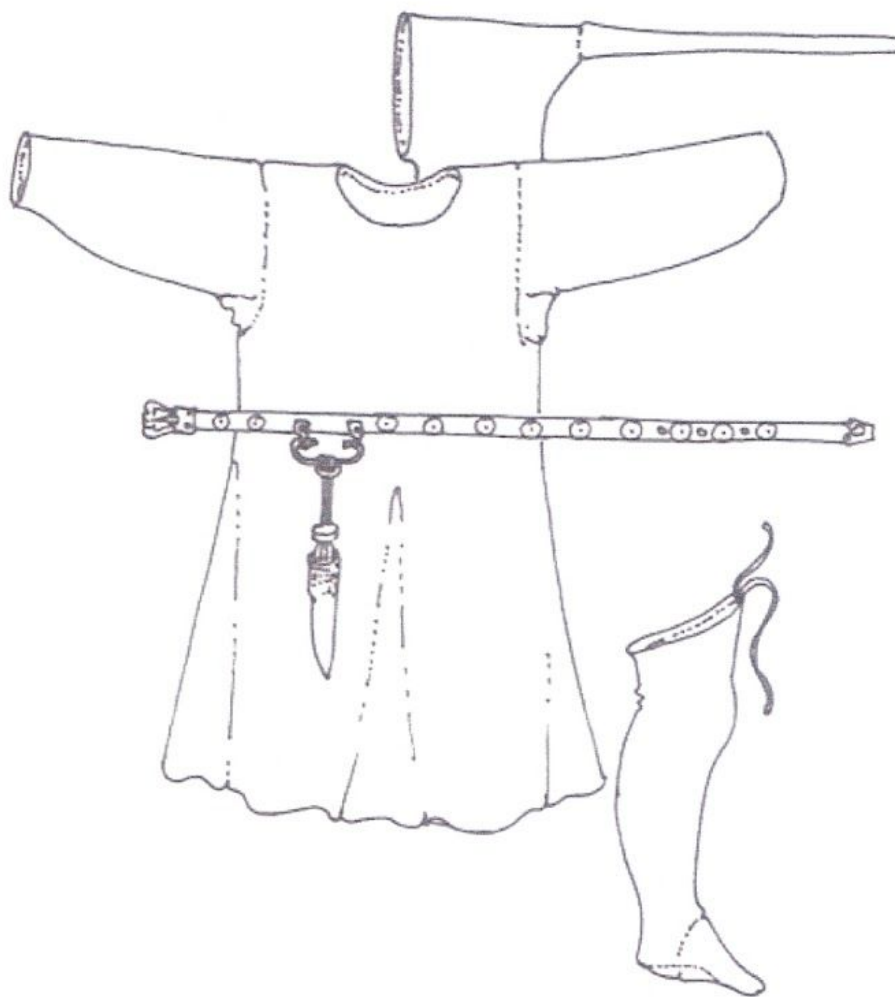


Authentic Patterns



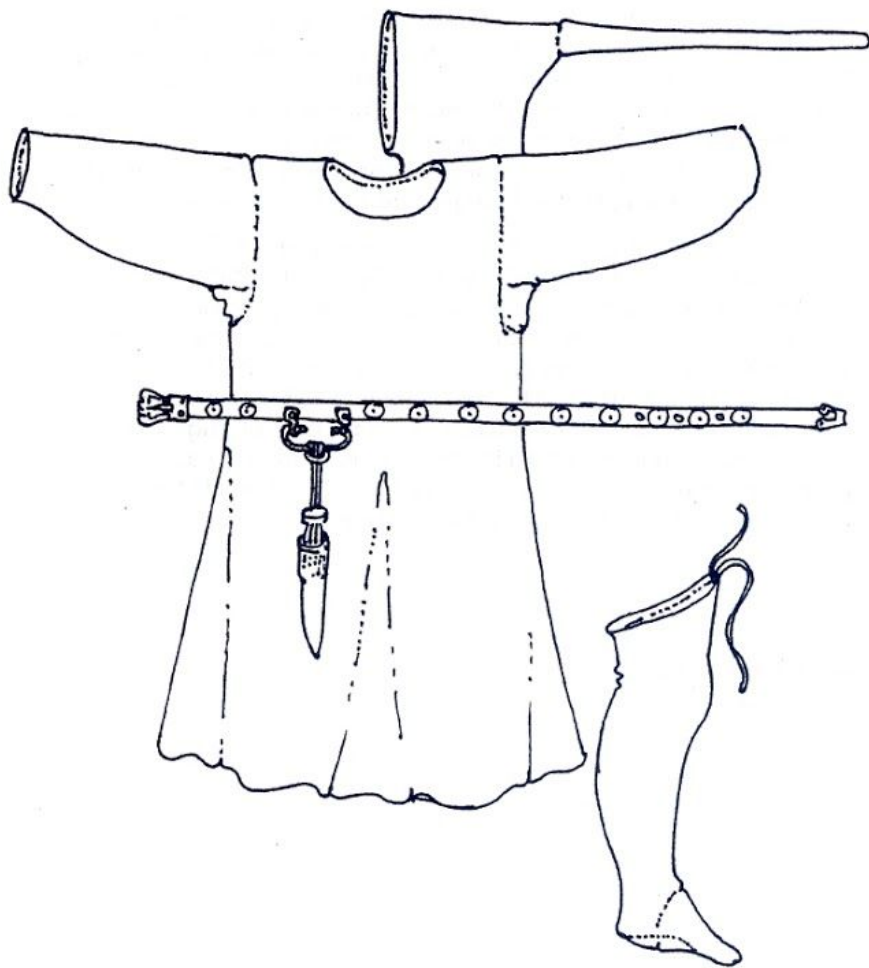
Trying to keep history alive.

A Hand Book of:  
*High Medieval Mens Dress*  
1200 - 1330.





# A HANDBOOK OF HIGH- MEDIIEVAL MENS DRESS 1200 - 1330



D.J. RUSHWORTH

## PREFACE

As always, I begin with a disclaimer: this is not an exhaustive, authoritative tome containing everything you need to know about High Medieval costume for men. This is a digest and a condensed guide to the dress of the common man of the period.

My target audience is that of re-enactors, live role players, costumiers and historical interpreters. Using this booklet, you can put together a decent, functional outfit that will not embarrass you or disappoint at a later date when you have done more research. It is a starting point, not an end. None the less, I have done my research thoroughly and can back every statement and illustration with a good reference from more than one source. I have been a re-enactor for 25 years and a costumier for 23 years and I have brought that experience to this work.

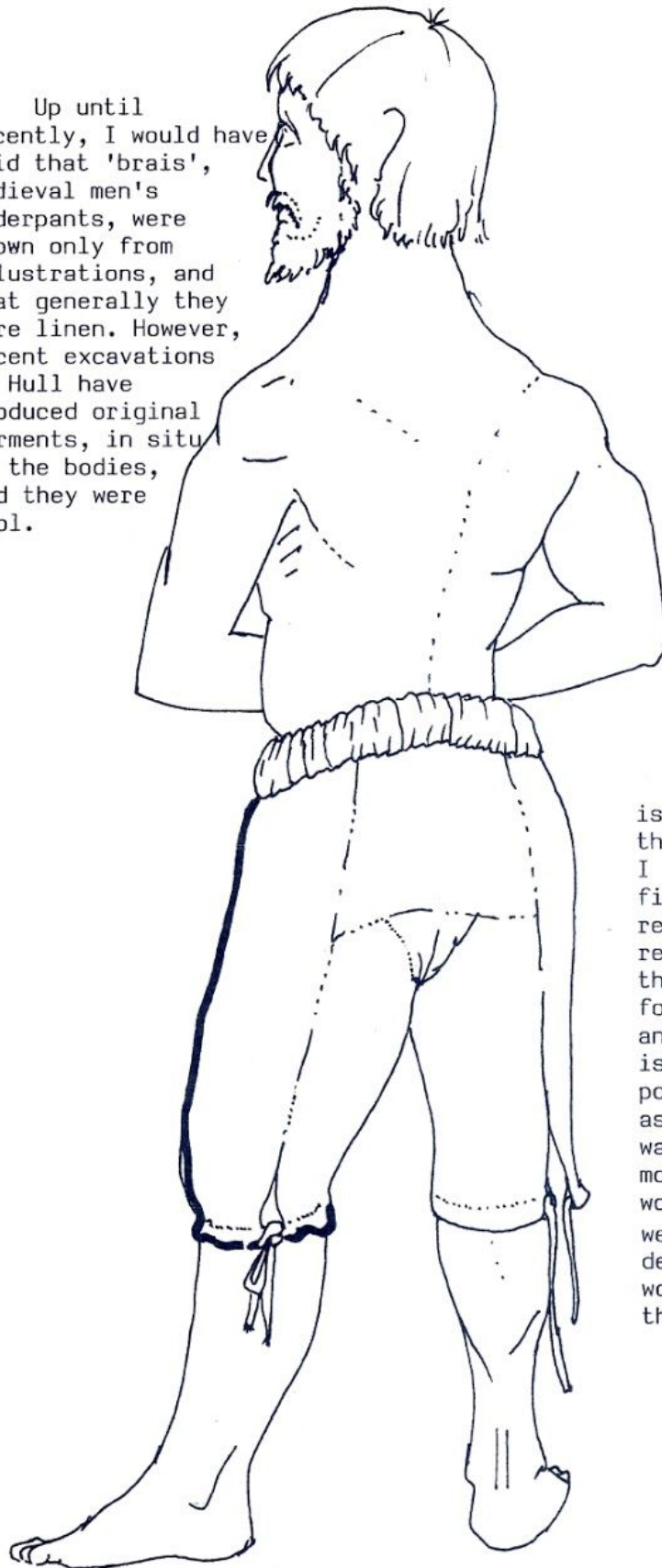
This booklet covers a wide period of time from the late 12th century to the early 14th. Tailoring was simple and class, geography and income had as big an effect on style, if not more, than chronology. People wore their parents' or even their grandparents' clothes, even at high rank, without looking old-fashioned. The big change in men's clothing comes with the adoption of full plate armour in the second quarter of the 14th century. But that is another story.....

D. Rushworth.  
2000 A.D.

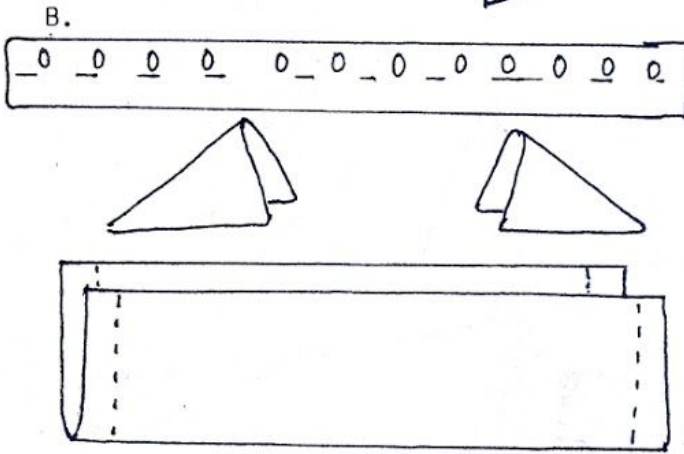
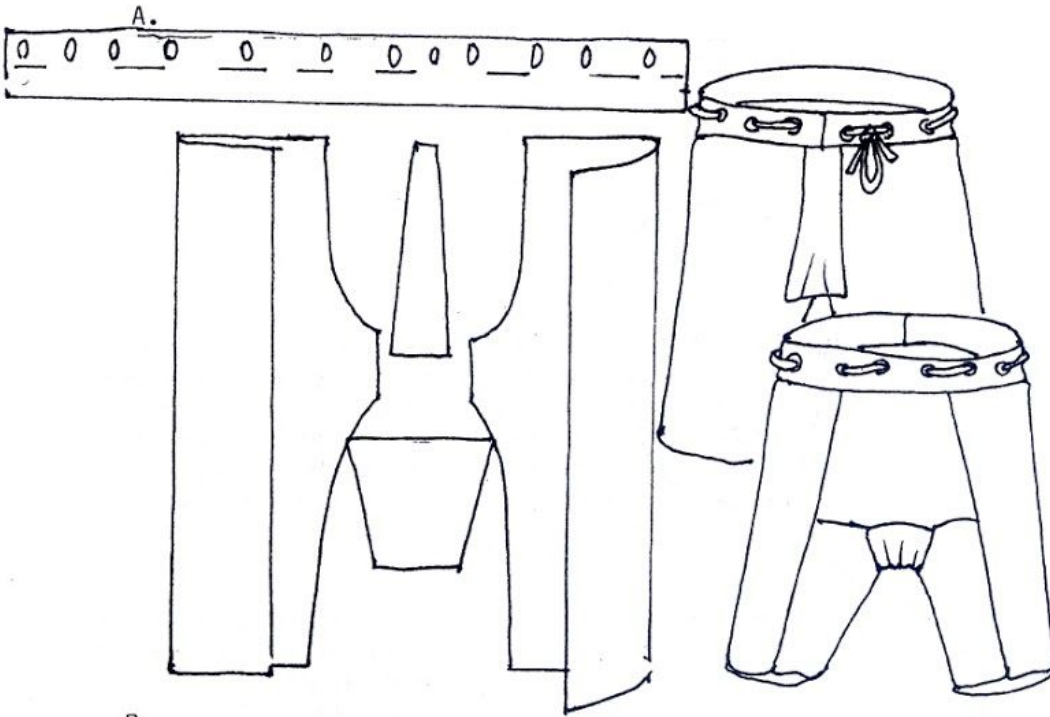


## BRAIS

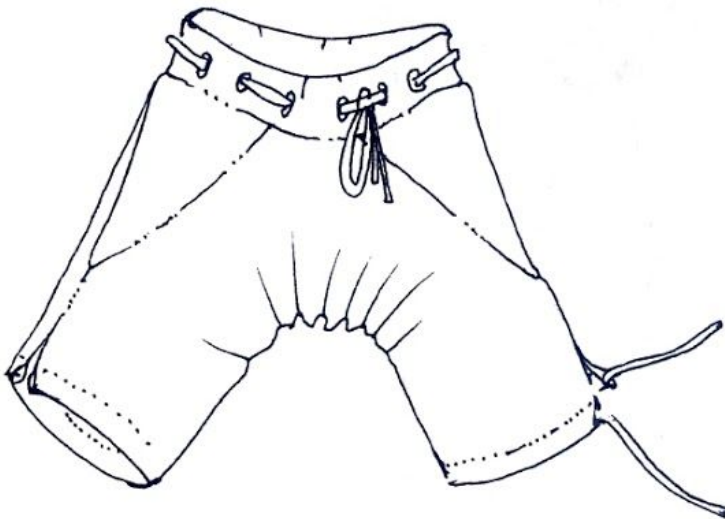
Up until recently, I would have said that 'brais', medieval men's underpants, were known only from illustrations, and that generally they were linen. However, recent excavations in Hull have produced original garments, in situ on the bodies, and they were wool.



So far, this is the limit to the information I have from this find. I would still recommend that modern re-enactors make theirs out of linen for reasons of comfort and hygiene. There is also a strong possibility that as the Hull site was originally a monastery that the wool cloth underpants were a penance, deliberately uncomfortable, worn to mortify the flesh.

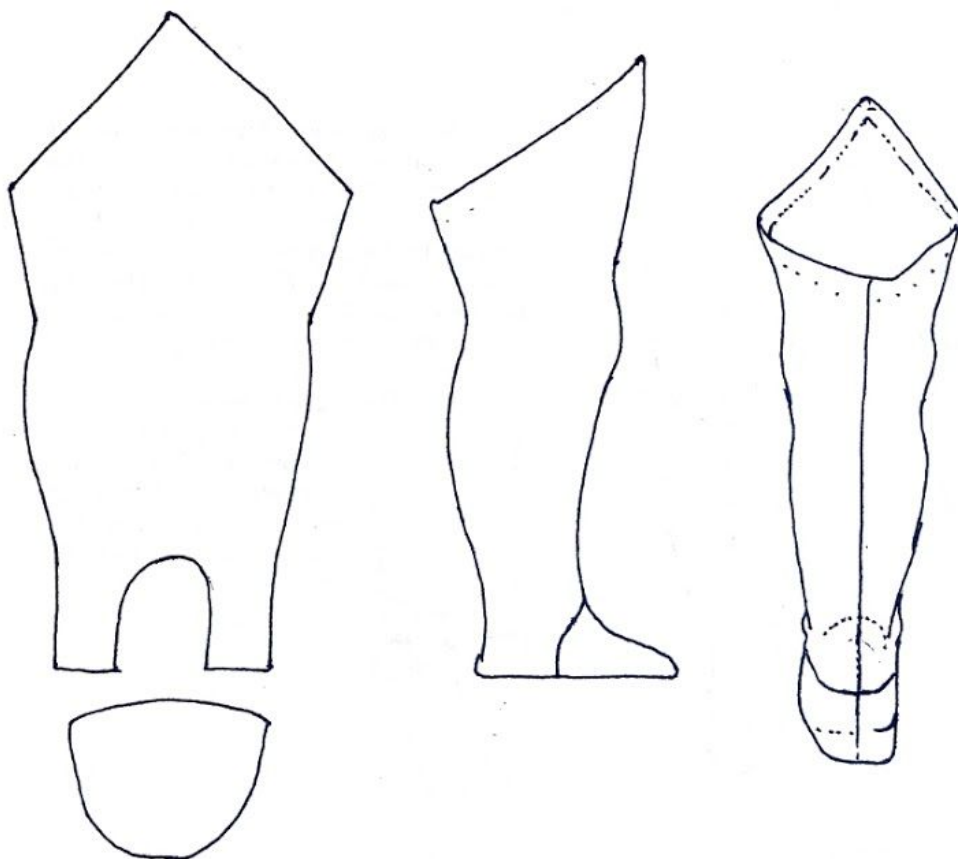


Until the publication of a pattern from the Hull finds, I will stick with my two best guesses: the old Thorsberg find pattern and the tube and gusset style that produces a finished garment very like that in original<sup>s</sup> book illuminations.

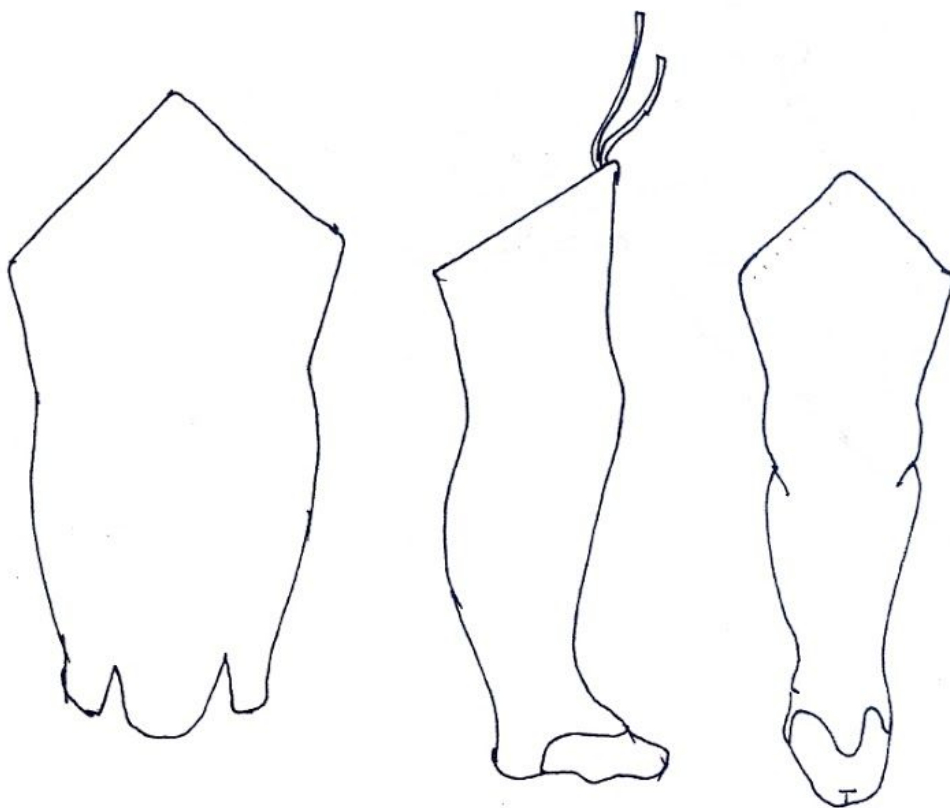




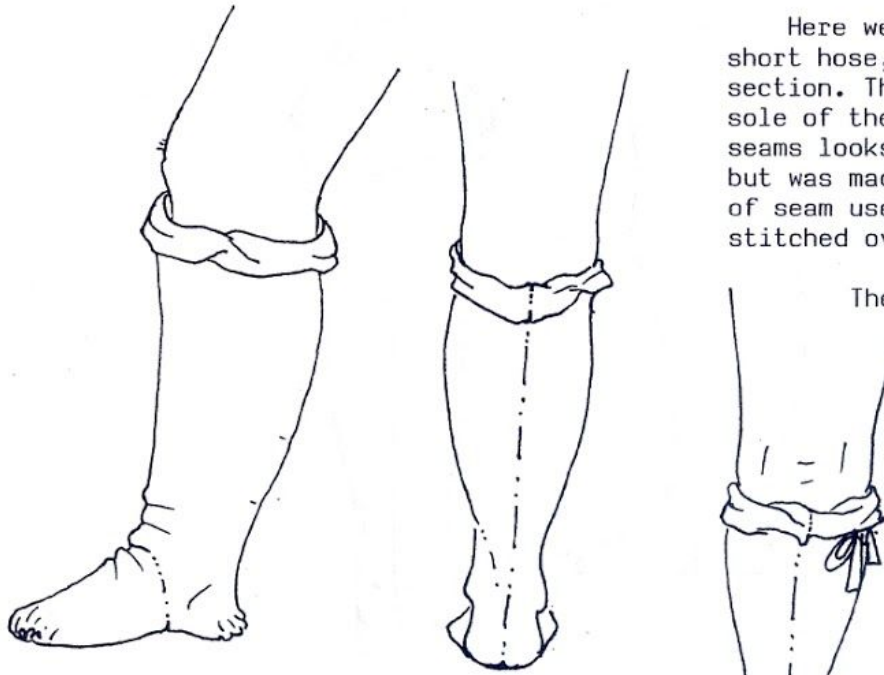




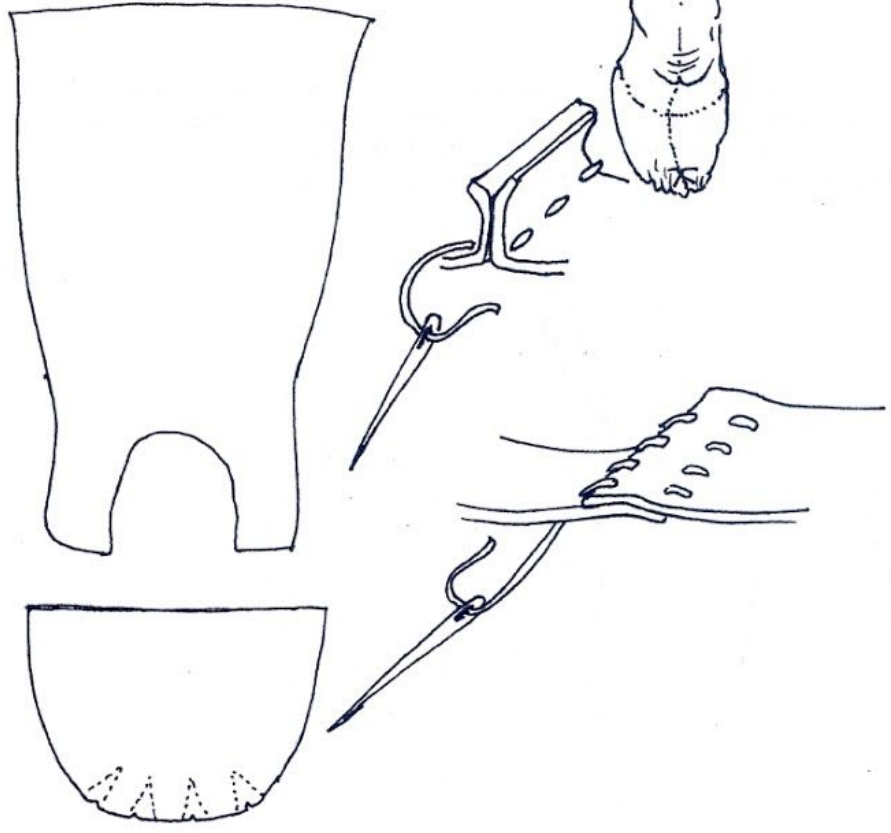
Surviving fragments from the London riverside digs and whole garments from Scandinavia give us a very clear pattern of two pieces: a leg section that runs down to cover the heel and a foot section covering the instep and sewn along the sole to the toe.



Here we have another look at short hose, particularly the foot section. This way of having the sole of the foot crossed by two seams looks uncomfortable to us, but was made workable by the type of seam used - a simple whip stitched overlap seam.



The other seam style, backstitched through the two layers with right sides together, was reserved for the seam up the back of the leg.

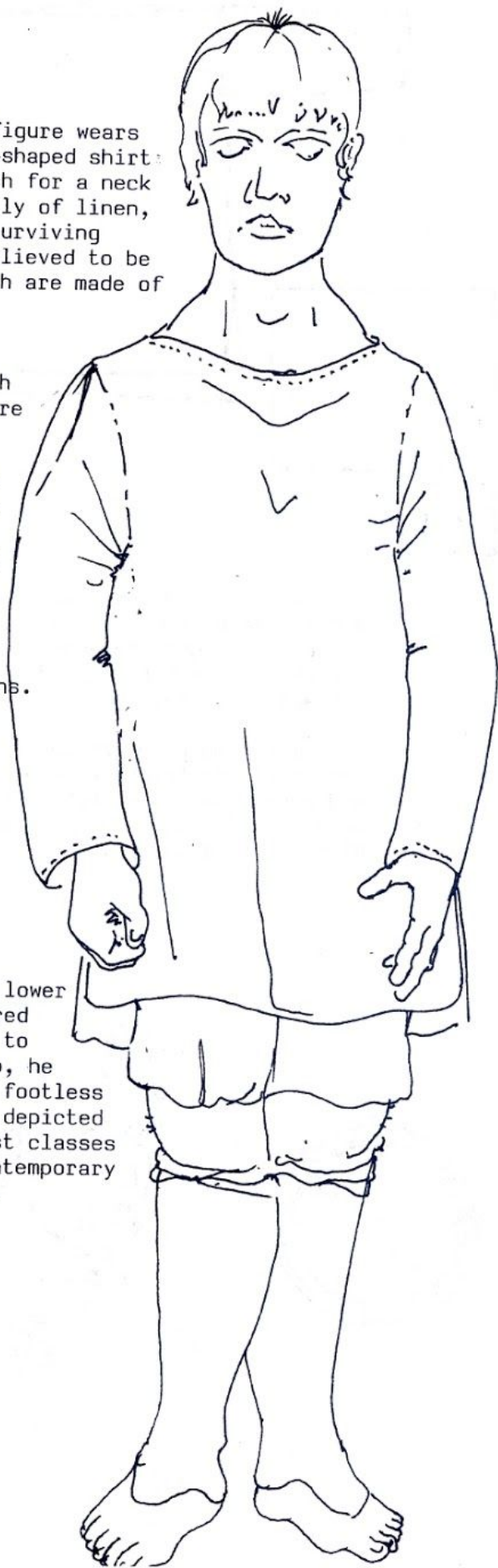


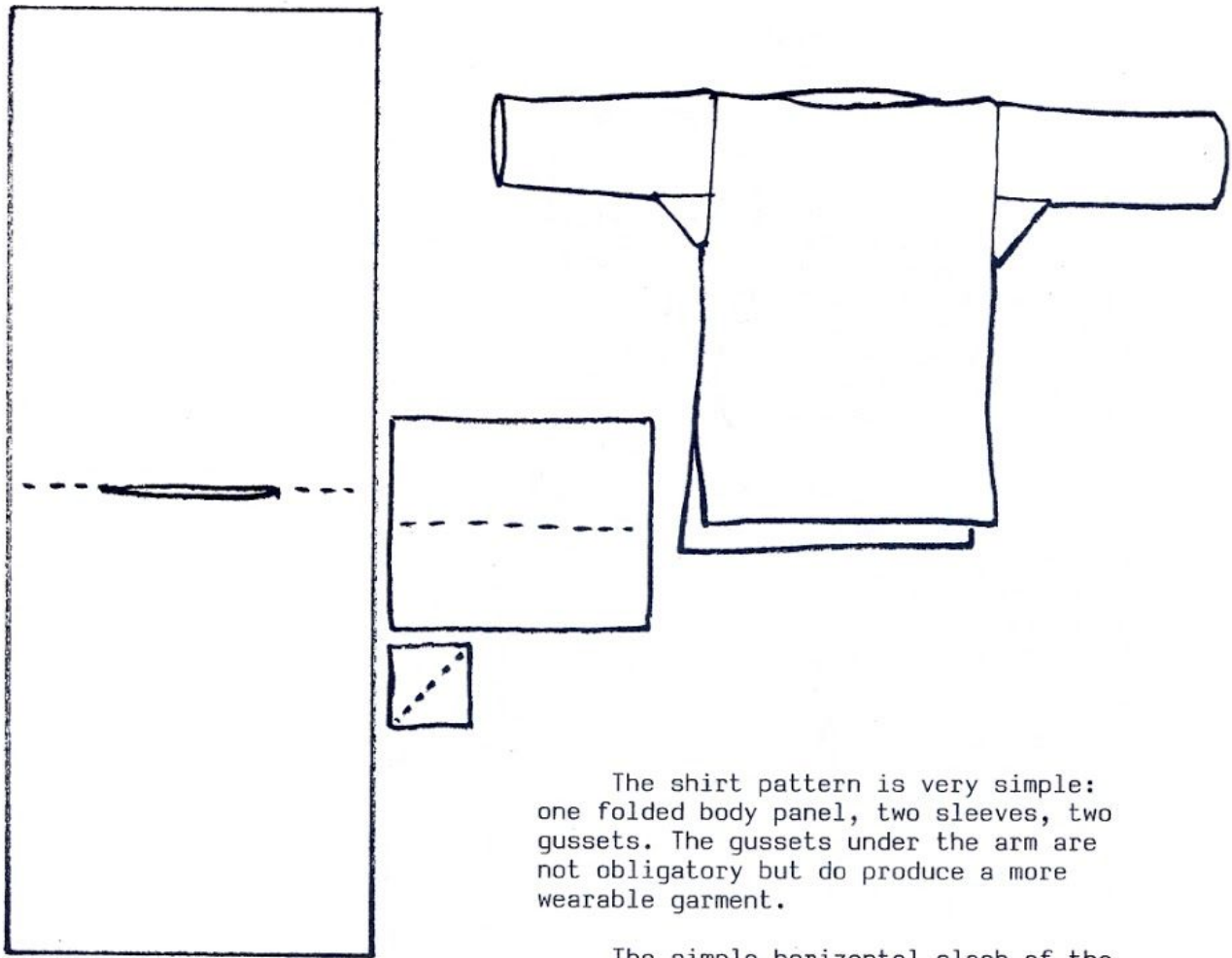
## SHIRT

This figure wears a simple T-shaped shirt with a slash for a neck hole. Usually of linen, there are surviving garments believed to be shirts which are made of wool.

Beneath the shirt are worn baggy open-kneed breeches or brais, of a type illustrated as peasant wear in original book illuminations.

On his lower legs, gartered at the knee to hold them up, he wears short footless hose, often depicted on the lowest classes shown in contemporary manuscripts.

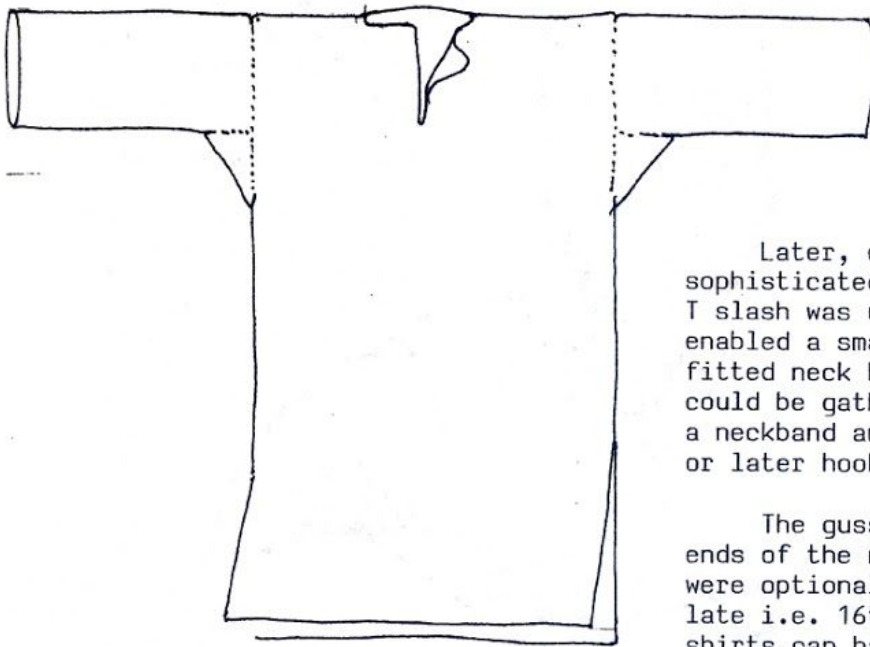




The shirt pattern is very simple: one folded body panel, two sleeves, two gussets. The gussets under the arm are not obligatory but do produce a more wearable garment.

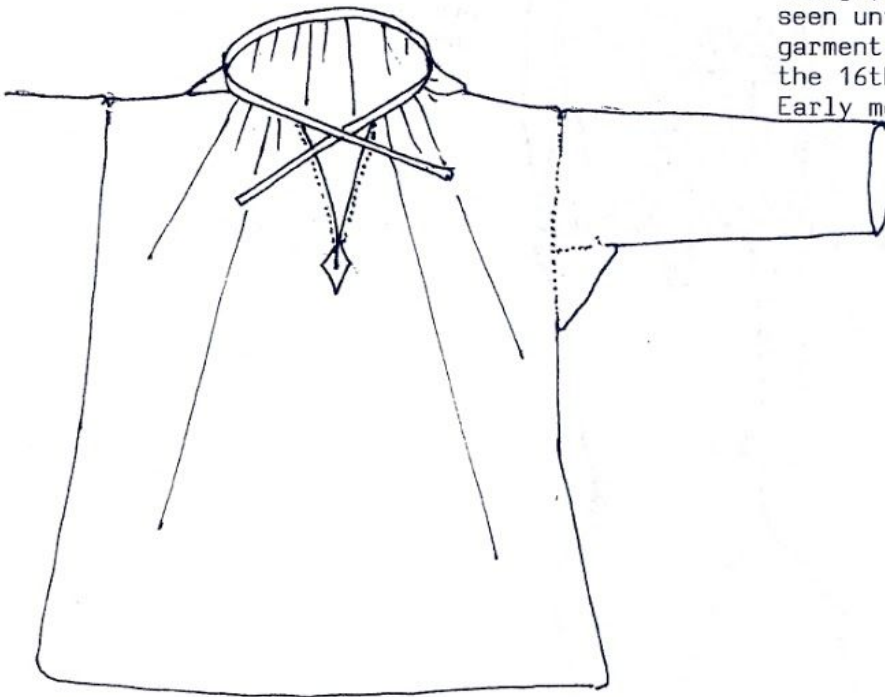
The simple horizontal slash of the neck could be folded over at the front and pinned with a brooch, a dress accessory still of importance in the High Medieval period.



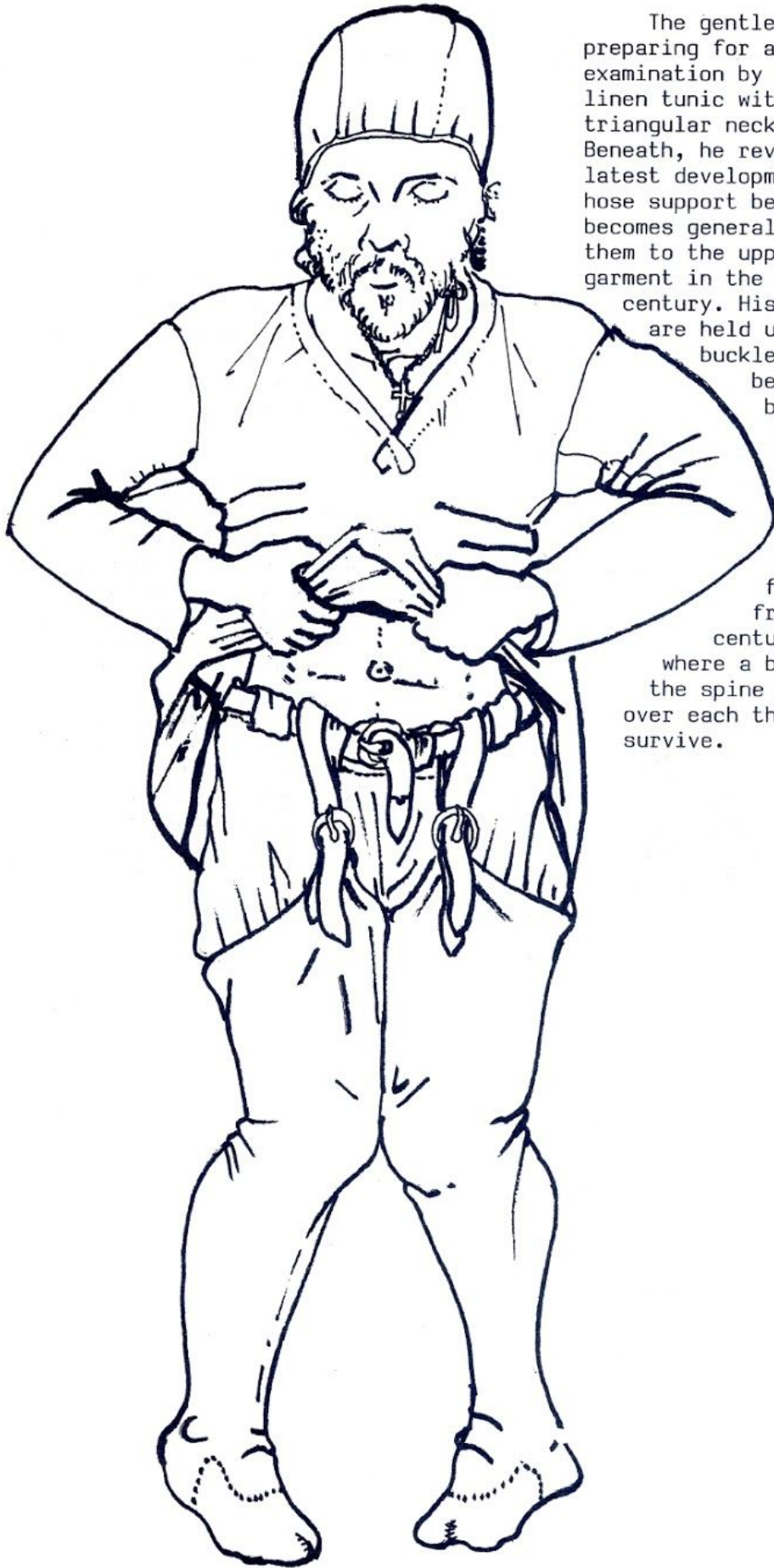


Later, or in more sophisticated areas, a T slash was used. This enabled a smaller, better fitted neck hole. This could be gathered into a neckband and tied shut or later hooked and eyed.

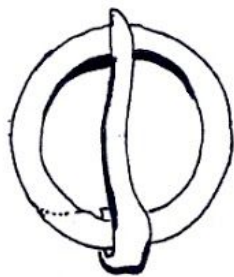
The gussets at the ends of the neck slash were optional. Even quite late i.e. 16th century, shirts can have gathered necks without the gussets. Shirts were undergarments and so kept simple in design, as they were not seen until they became a garment of display in the 16th century.



Early more elaborate garments tend to be linen tunics, not shirts.

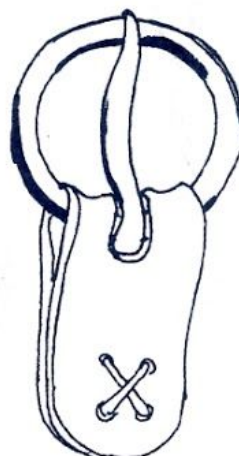
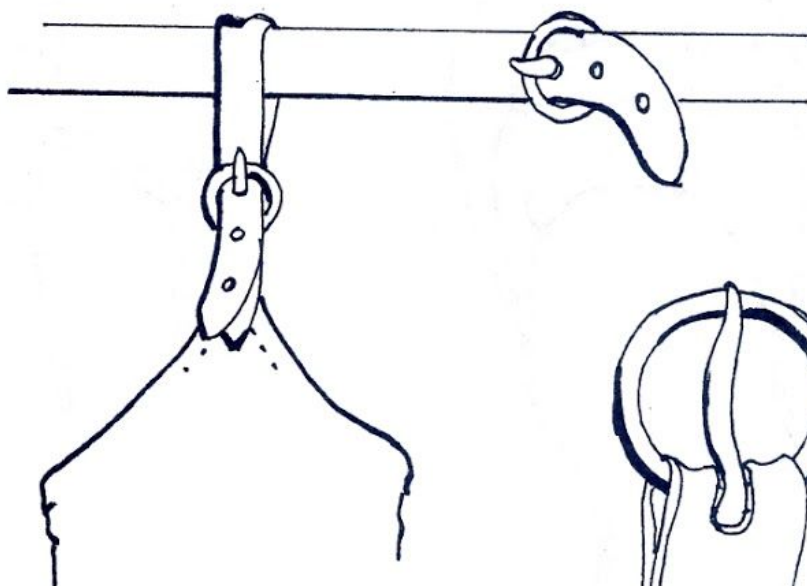
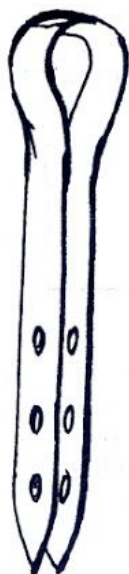


The gentleman here is preparing for a medical examination by lifting a linen tunic with a triangular neck opening. Beneath, he reveals the latest development of hose support before it becomes general to lace them to the upper body garment in the mid 14th century. His brais are held up by a buckled leather belt, and buckled leather straps hold his hose in place. The main evidence for this comes from early 14th century graves where a buckle over the spine and one over each thigh bone survive.

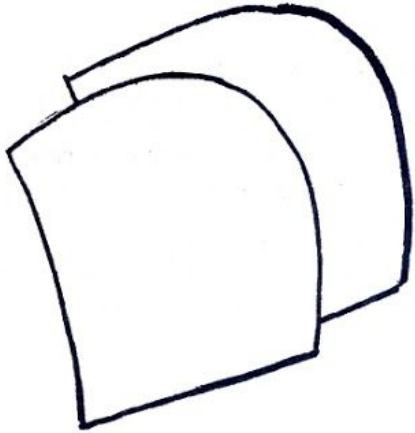


The buckles are always of this very simple style in iron or copper alloy. No strap ends seem to be present but as these straps and buckles would normally be covered, this may be no more than sensible economy.

However, the possibility has been mooted that these are in fact brooches and the hose were in fact pinned to the brais.

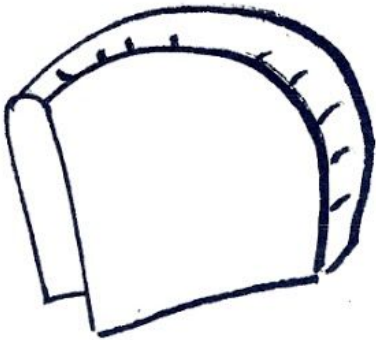


COIF

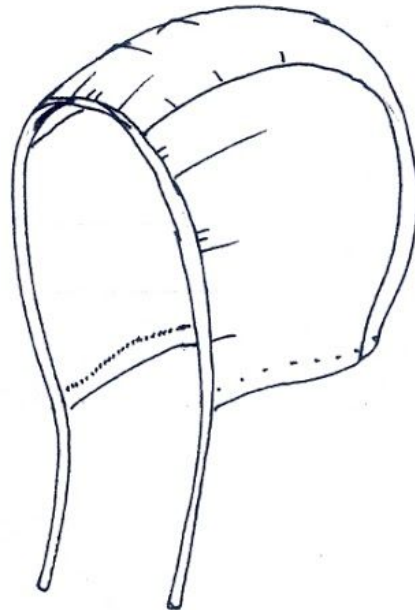
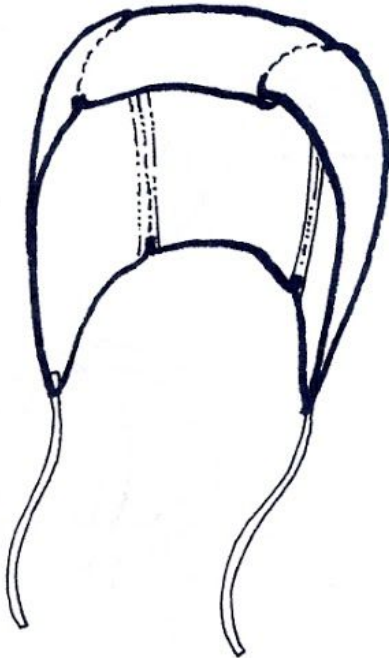


For a variety of reasons, 13th and 14th century men generally wore a coif as an auxiliary headcovering, even beneath a hood or a hat.

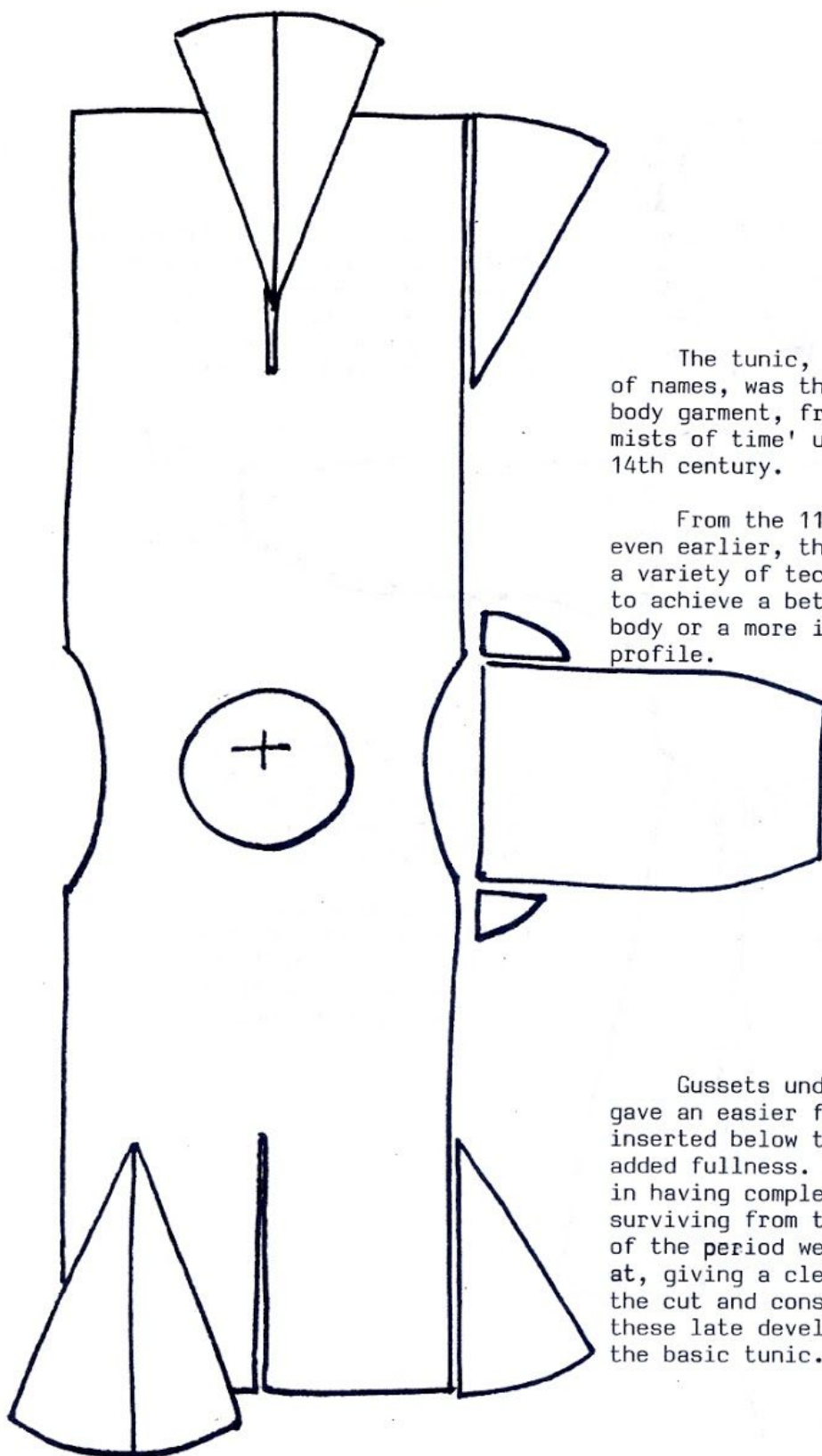
The design that I have found to work best, and agrees with carved and pictorial representations, is this three piece pattern here.



Some 13th century statues clearly show binding tape round the face opening that could extend to be used as tie cords beneath the chin.



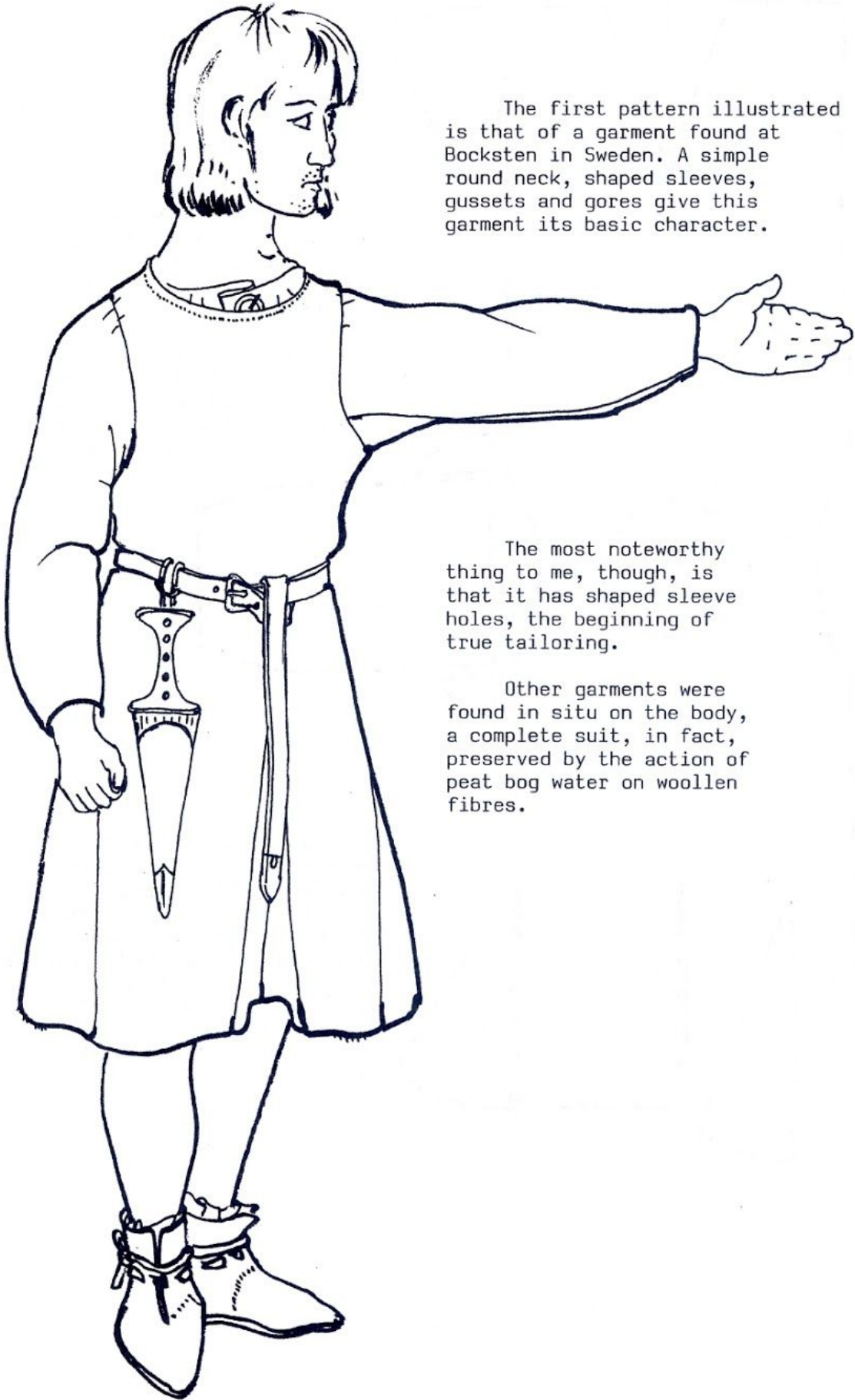


TUNIC

The tunic, under a variety of names, was the basic upper body garment, from the 'distant mists of time' until the early 14th century.

From the 11th century or even earlier, there had been a variety of techniques used to achieve a better fit to the body or a more interesting profile.

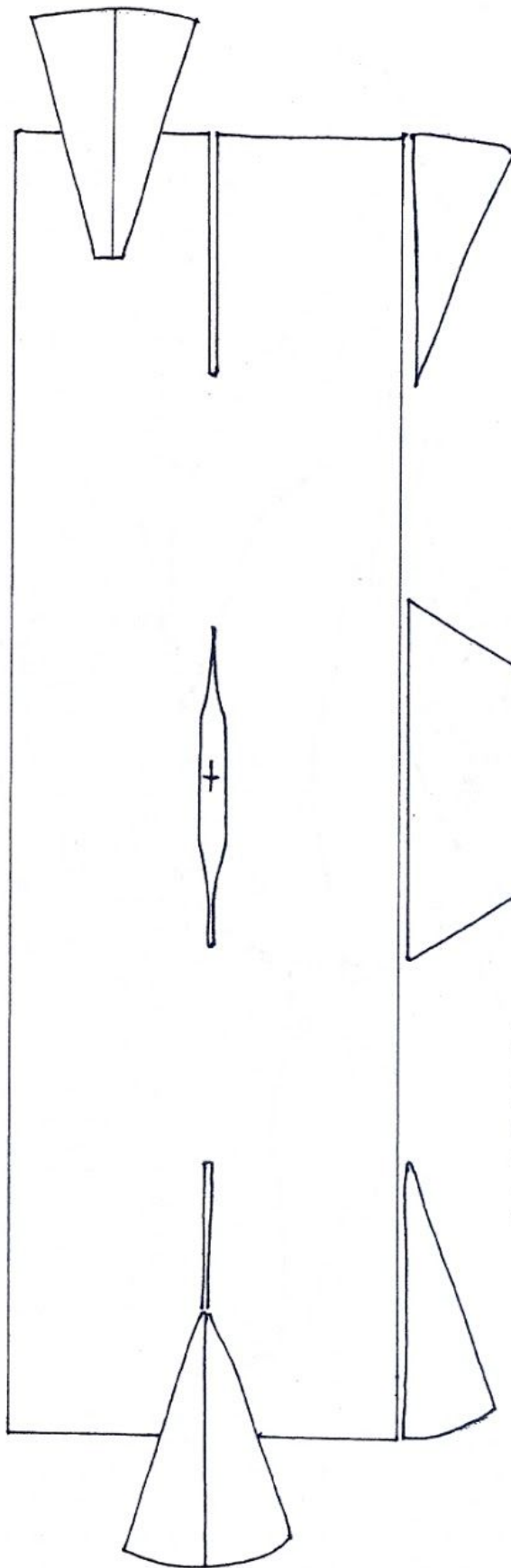
Gussets under the arms gave an easier fit and gores inserted below the waist gave added fullness. We are fortunate in having complete garments surviving from the latter part of the period we are looking at, giving a clear picture of the cut and construction of these late developments of the basic tunic.



The first pattern illustrated is that of a garment found at Bocksten in Sweden. A simple round neck, shaped sleeves, gussets and gores give this garment its basic character.

The most noteworthy thing to me, though, is that it has shaped sleeve holes, the beginning of true tailoring.

Other garments were found in situ on the body, a complete suit, in fact, preserved by the action of peat bog water on woollen fibres.

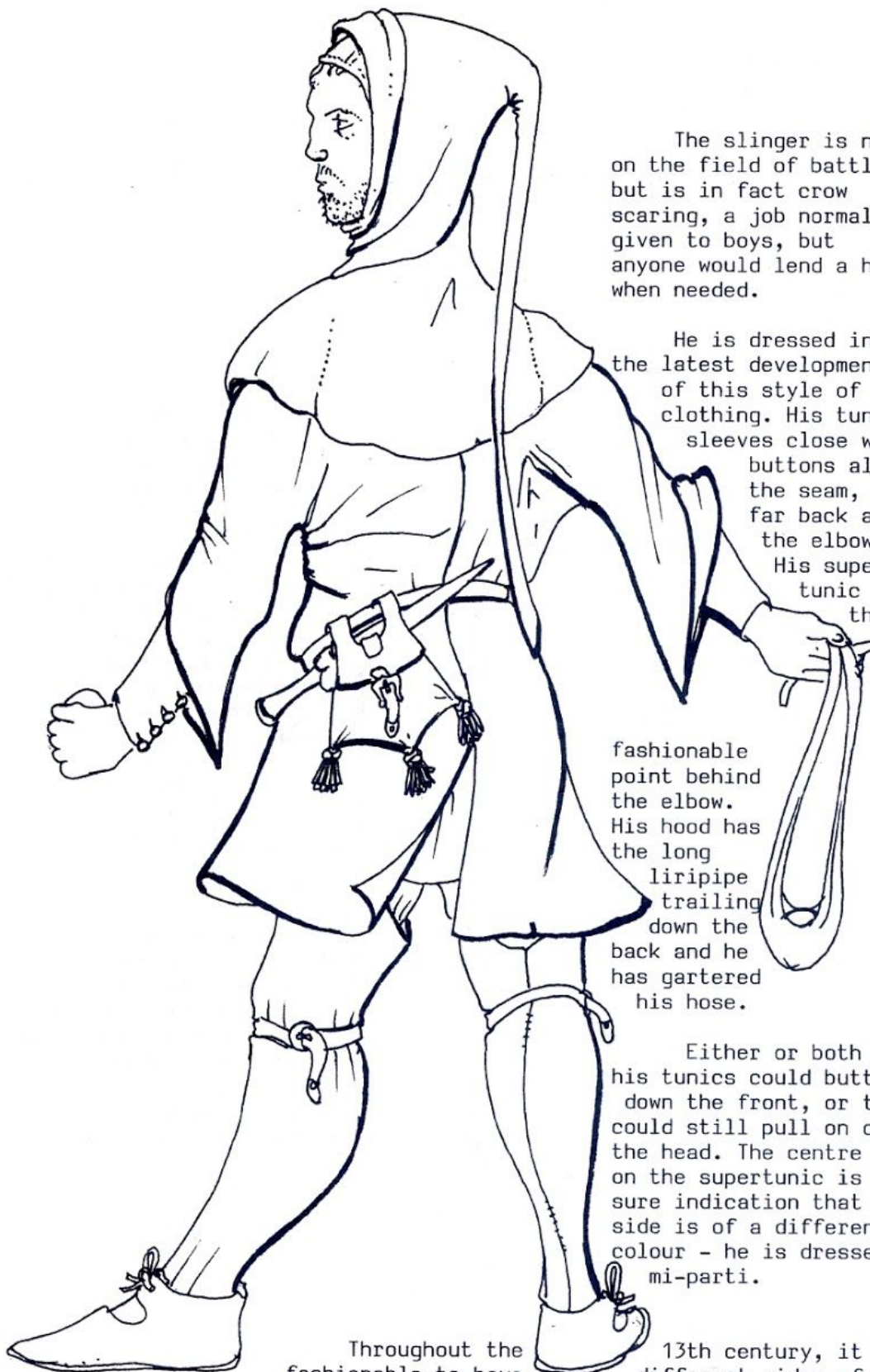


The tunic layout illustrated here was found at Krögelund.

Some of its features are very simple: the plain vertical slash for the neck hole, and the straight edge where the sleeve is sewn on. The construction of the sleeve, however, is an early attempt at shaping the sleeve to a bend at the elbow, giving a better fit to the arm.

Often, due to the state of preservation of these garments, it is not clear whether they are slit at the hem at the front, back or sides, the stitching having dissolved in the ground. All options are illustrated in contemporary art.

SUPERTUNIC AND HOOD



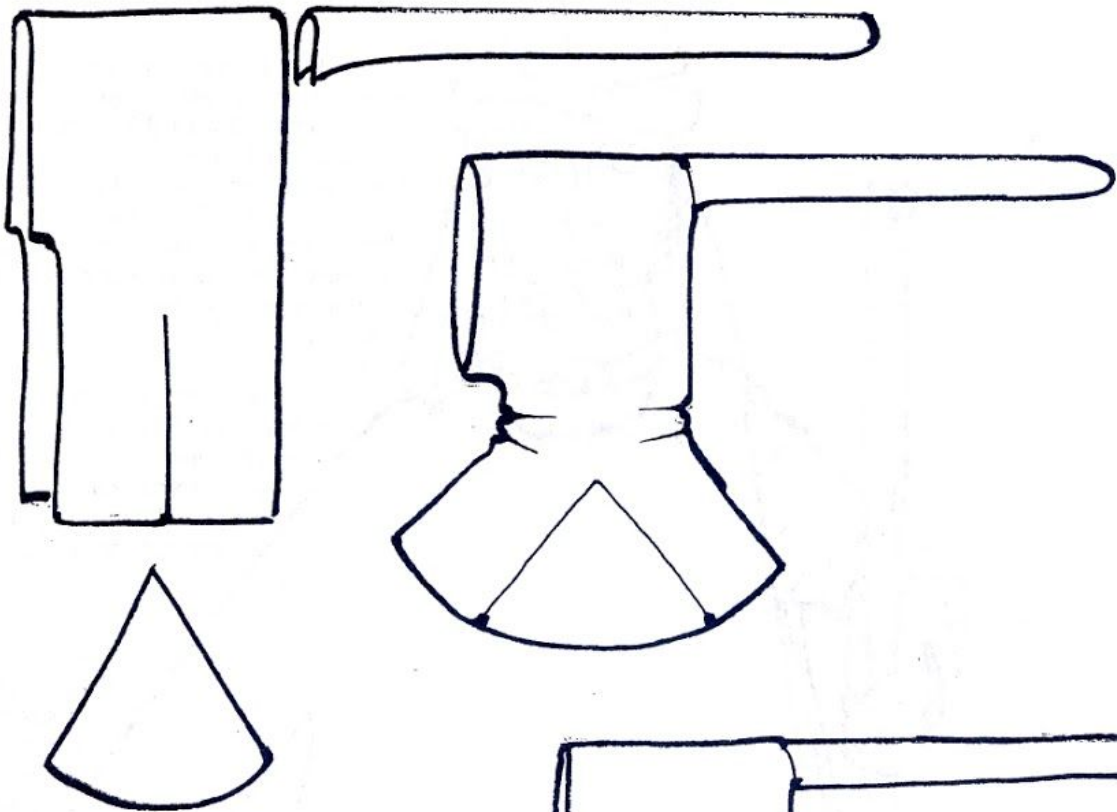
The slinger is not on the field of battle, but is in fact crowd scaring, a job normally given to boys, but anyone would lend a hand when needed.

He is dressed in the latest developments of this style of clothing. His tunic sleeves close with buttons along the seam, as far back as the elbow. His super-tunic has the

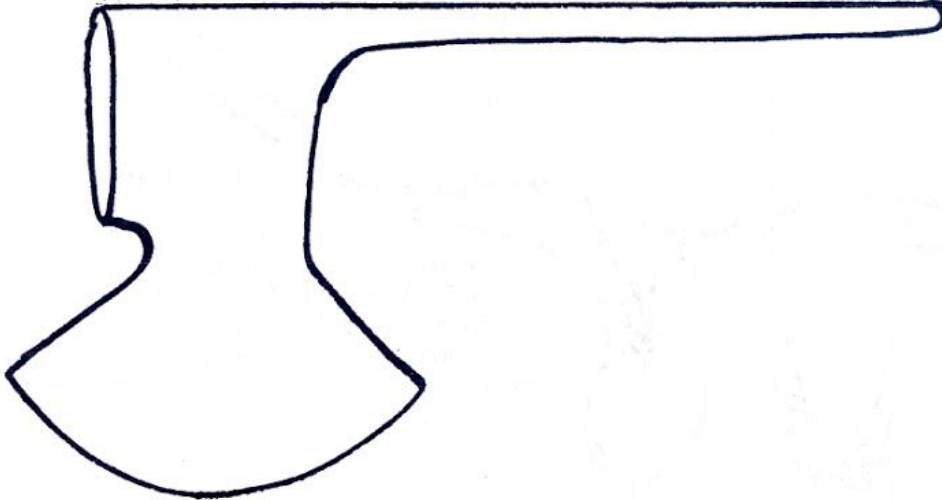
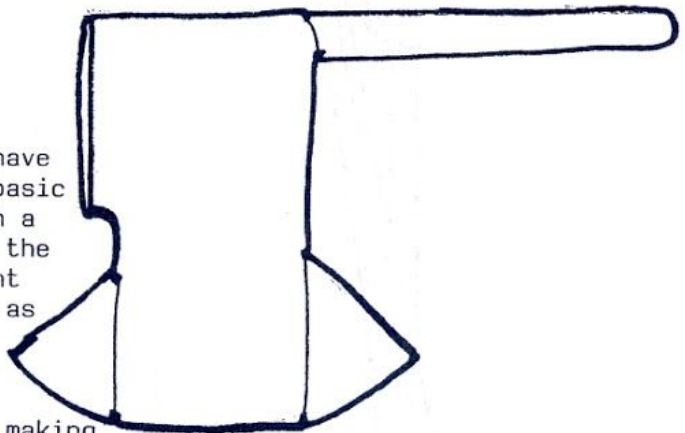
fashionable point behind the elbow. His hood has the long liripipe trailing down the back and he has gartered his hose.

Either or both of his tunics could button down the front, or they could still pull on over the head. The centre seam on the supertunic is a sure indication that each side is of a different colour - he is dressed mi-parti.

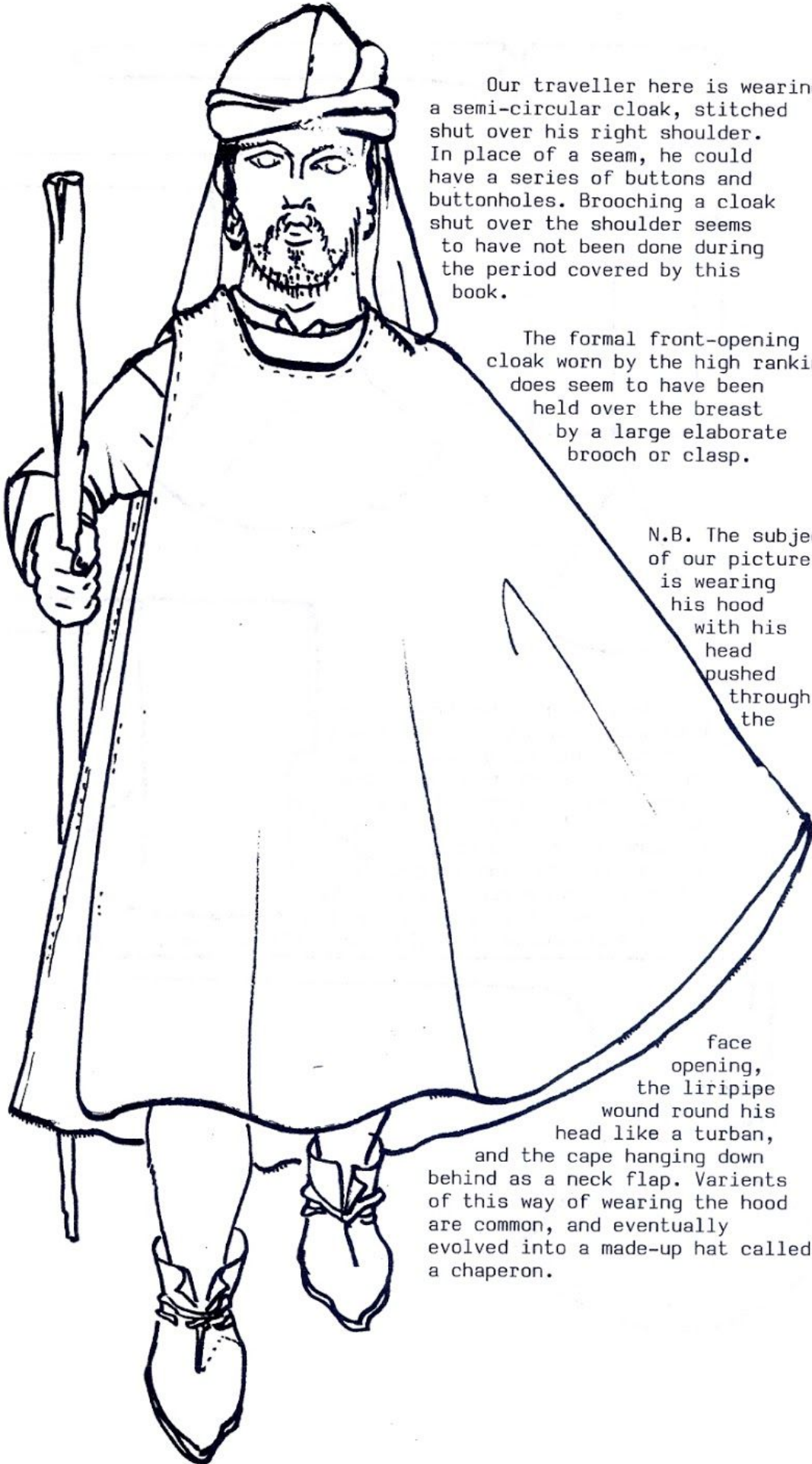
Throughout the 13th century, it was fashionable to have different sides of a garment in different colours, sometimes to the extreme of one side in a patterned cloth, the other in contrasting coloured plain cloth. Different legs of the hose could be different colours, any garment could be split. Many surviving garments are of one colour, however, so the fashion is not universal and may even have been limited by law.



Remains of a few hoods have been found, giving us three basic patterns: cut and shaped with a gore in the sides to broaden the cape; shaped by gores at front and back of the cape; or cut as two complete halves and seamed down the middle. This latter used more cloth than the other cuts but suits the making of the fashionable two colour mi-parti garment very well.



CLOAK

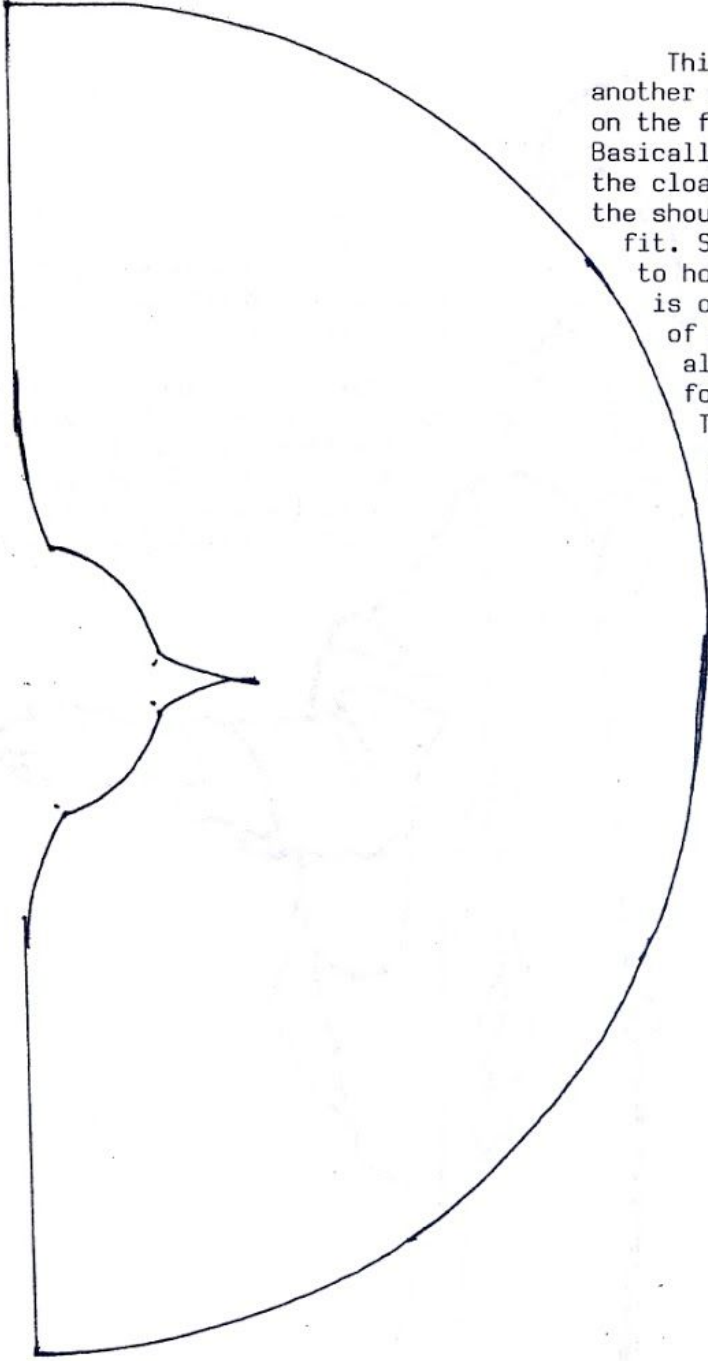


Our traveller here is wearing a semi-circular cloak, stitched shut over his right shoulder. In place of a seam, he could have a series of buttons and buttonholes. Brooching a cloak shut over the shoulder seems to have not been done during the period covered by this book.

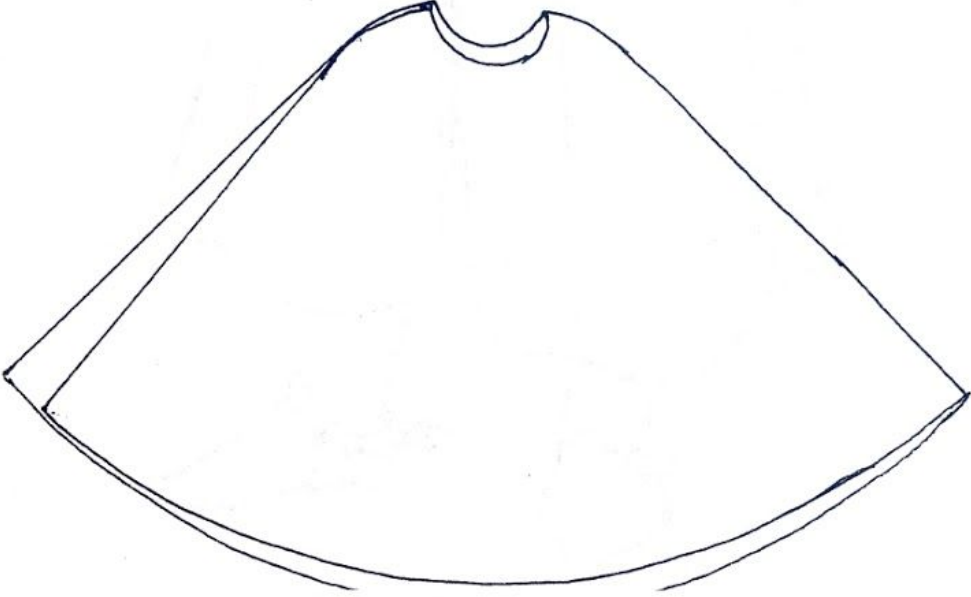
The formal front-opening cloak worn by the high ranking does seem to have been held over the breast by a large elaborate brooch or clasp.

N.B. The subject of our picture is wearing his hood with his head pushed through the

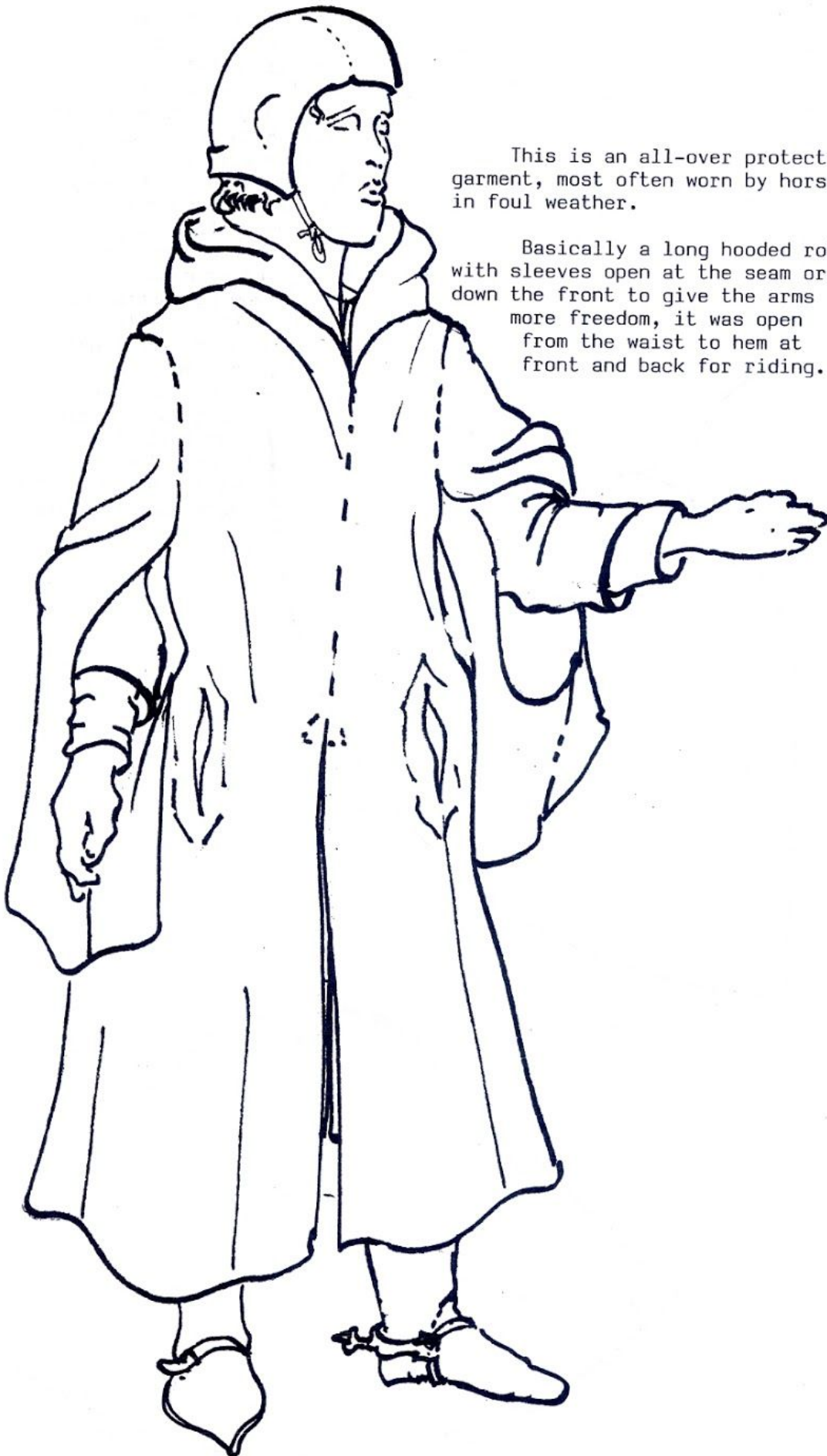
face opening, the liripipe wound round his head like a turban, and the cape hanging down behind as a neck flap. Varients of this way of wearing the hood are common, and eventually evolved into a made-up hat called a chaperon.



This cloak is another garment based on the finds at Bocksten. Basically a half circle, the cloak is tailored at the shoulders for a better fit. Sewn down the right to hold it closed, it is open down the rest of the length to allow free play for the right arm. The original is now reconstructed with a reinforce inside the right shoulder to secure the seam. The original was also carefully tailored to be a few inches or so longer at the back than the front.



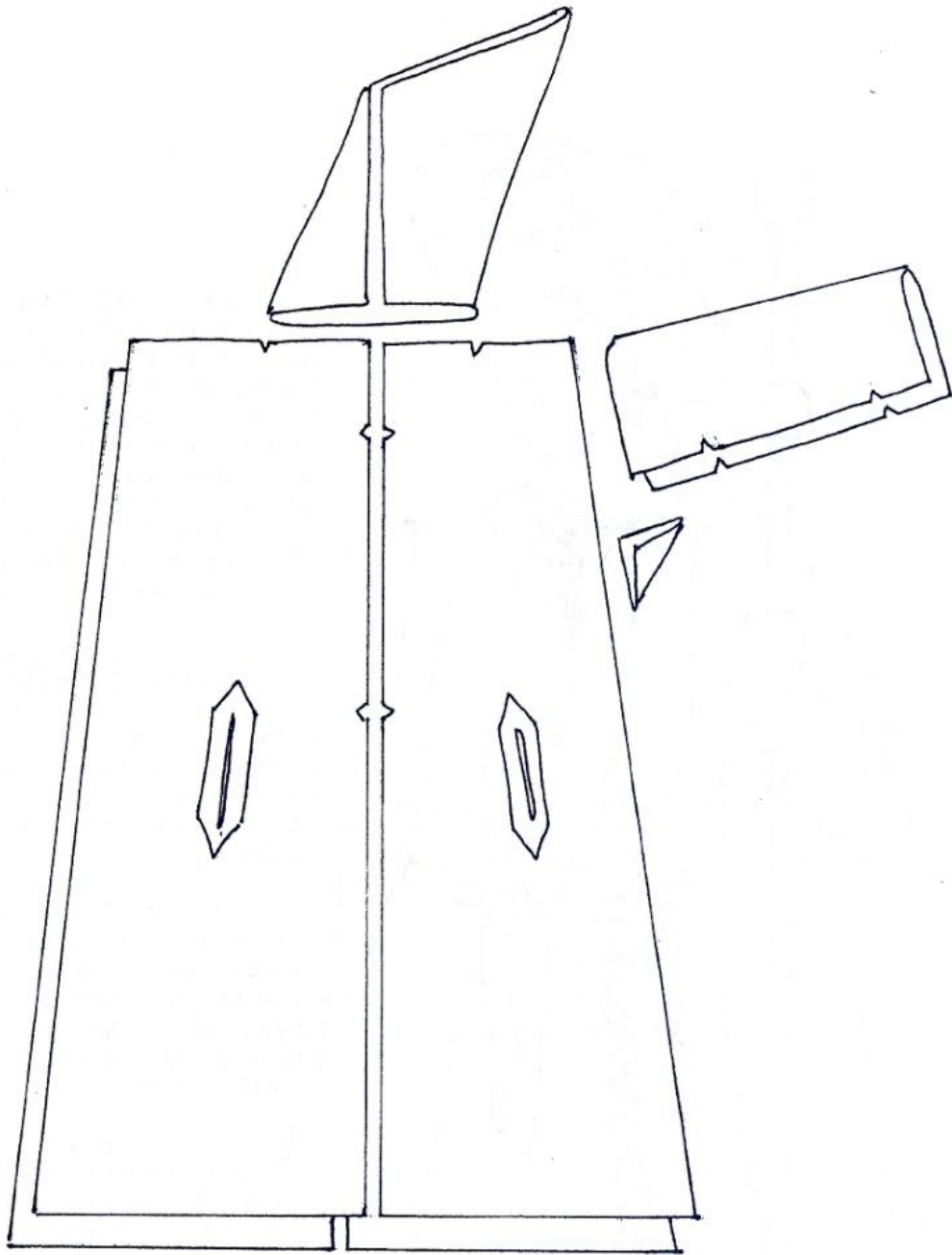
HEREGAUDE



This is an all-over protective garment, most often worn by horsemen in foul weather.

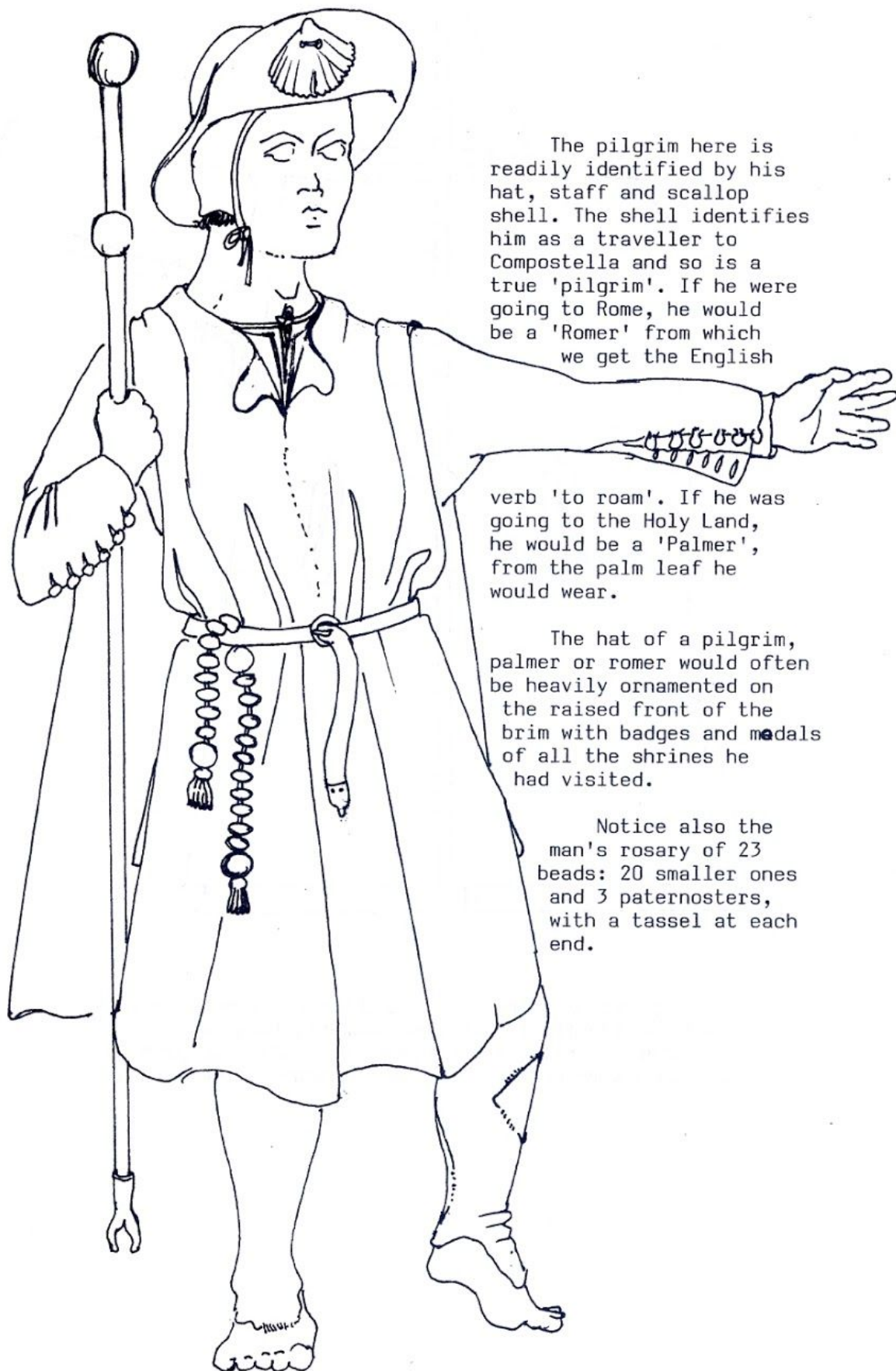
Basically a long hooded robe with sleeves open at the seam or down the front to give the arms more freedom, it was open from the waist to hem at front and back for riding.





Of particular interest are the two fitchets or pocket slashes at the front. Not true pockets, these are cut and faced slots to allow access to purse, knife and perhaps even sword worn beneath the all-encompassing heregaude.

HUKE

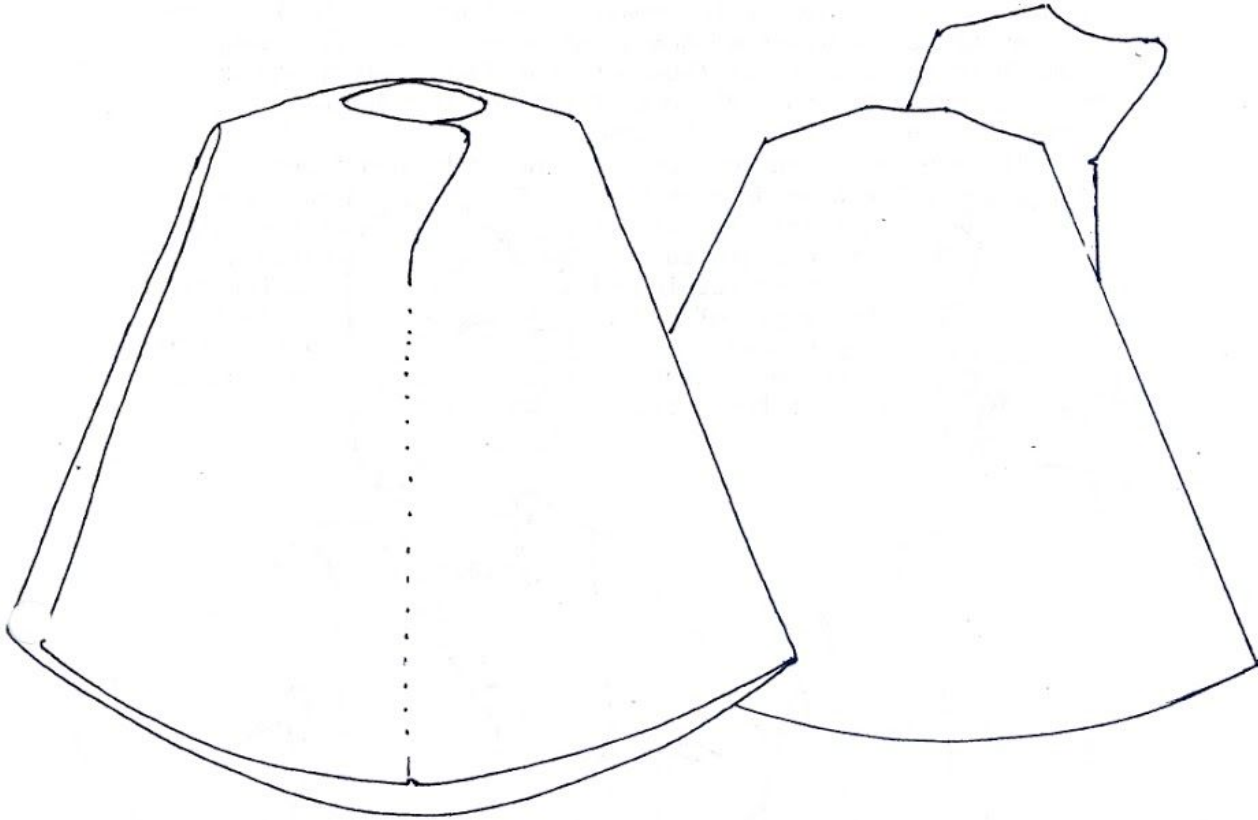


The pilgrim here is readily identified by his hat, staff and scallop shell. The shell identifies him as a traveller to Compostella and so is a true 'pilgrim'. If he were going to Rome, he would be a 'Romer' from which we get the English

verb 'to roam'. If he was going to the Holy Land, he would be a 'Palmer', from the palm leaf he would wear.

The hat of a pilgrim, palmer or romer would often be heavily ornamented on the raised front of the brim with badges and medals of all the shrines he had visited.

Notice also the man's rosary of 23 beads: 20 smaller ones and 3 paternosters, with a tassel at each end.



The huke was a simple poncho-like garment, seamed on the shoulders and loose down the sides. This one, with a seam centre front, has the typical lappets at the neck of most 13th century garments.

Hukes were a simple practical foul weather garment and could be worn loose, belted over the front panel, or tied, buttoned or hooked at the sides.

In the latter part of our period, they could be made in high status fabrics and richly lined in fur.

## GOWN AND SURCOTE

High status garments or formal attire was worn long, hemlines at mid-calf or as low as the ankle. The figure on the left wears an open or hanging-sleeved gown, buttoned at the side seams from thigh to hem. Copied from a German 13th century statue, this garment shows an early use of buttons and may have fastened down the front with them.

The sleeveless surcoat worn by the righthand figure is from roughly the same date in France.

garment, it buttons with a typical opening fashionable This style of neck, open, produces the seen on garments shut at the neck.

A pull-over at the neck diagonal at the time. if left lappet effect not fastened



The most common material for all garments was wool. This could be of native production as with the patterned worsteds, and heavily finished Loden-Melton type cloths. It could be imported from as far away as Syria as with some of the fine black satin-faced worsteds found at Birka, and dating from two centuries before the period discussed here.

Linen was used for tough outer garments as in gambesons, or for fine undergarments like shirts and brais. The process that gave a finer or coarser fabric, a whiter or duller thread was thoroughly understood and already of great antiquity.

Silk was expensive and hard to get, originating from the Byzantine Empire, Italy, and the Islamic East and the Mediterranean. But its high cost does not mean it was not worn. Gifts of multi-coloured, metal threaded, silk brocades were used as diplomatic levers by the Byzantine court, especially to loyal and victorious soldiers and friends in foreign courts.

Documentation makes it clear that silks were a major item of trade, and decorative elements in brocade have been found in the grave costumes of prosperous Eastern European peasants.

At this date the textile industry was of some antiquity and sophistication. Patterned cloaks, both in colour and weave, with tablet-woven borders using 90-120 tablets, have been found in Danish bogs dating to about 400 A.D. The same techniques were used to produce the applied borders and trims common on garments throughout the 13th and 14th centuries. Checked and striped clothes are among the most common textile finds in England, Germany and Denmark from this time.

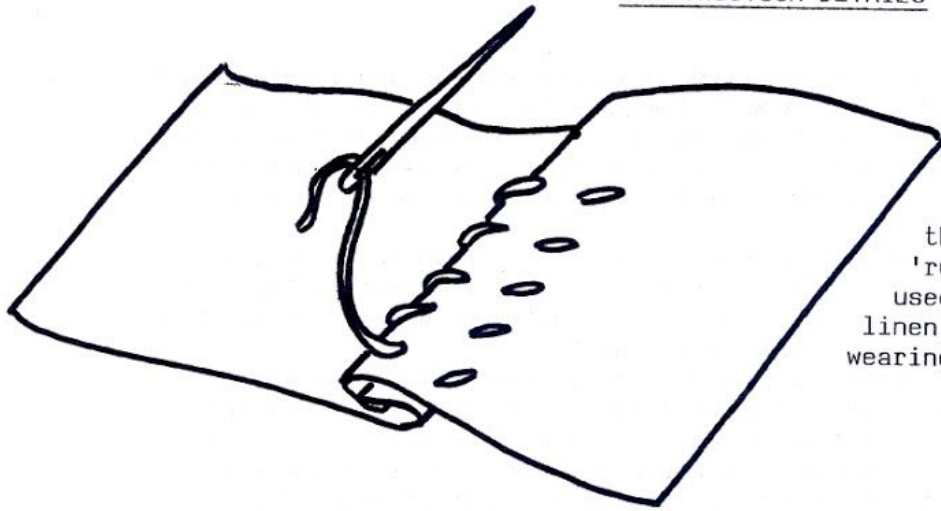
Exotic cloths were traded all over the known world and when finished cloths were not traded, fibres, dyestuffs and their mordants (fixing agents) were.

If the tailoring was simple, the textiles were not necessarily so. The lack of hot irons and general absence of linings, along with the use of easy-fraying worsted fabrics, led to a great deal of attention being paid to the construction and interior finish of seams.

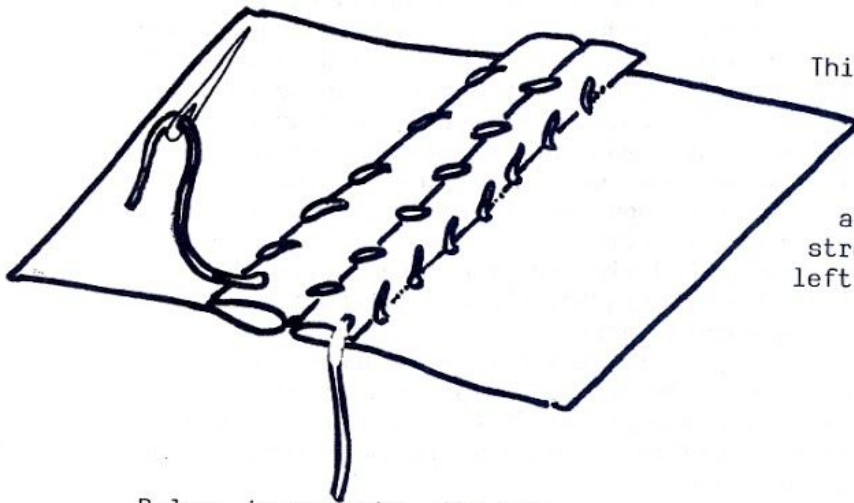
There is a popular misconception that woollen cloth in the past was dull and limited in colour. Finds of cloth and dyers' waste prove on the contrary that bright, deep and varied colours were available to even the ordinary people of this era. Imperial purple was limited by law in its applications, but this distinctive colour was only one shade of purple. Purple cloth dyed with lichen, berries, or overdyed with madder and woad was popular and readily available. Madder produced deep reds and Kermes, an insect dye, produced a cochineal-type scarlet. Weld or Dyers' greenweed produces a yellow so bright it looks fluorescent. Woad produces blues from deep indigo to light plunket. Combinations of these allowed skilled dyers to achieve almost any colour - for a price.

The meaning of undyed wool was a mark of servile status and avoided by free men and women. Hoden grey, a wool of mixed natural black and white fleeces, was the distinctive fabric of the villein, tied to the land by law and custom and only a little better off in many cases than a slave.

CONSTRUCTION DETAILS

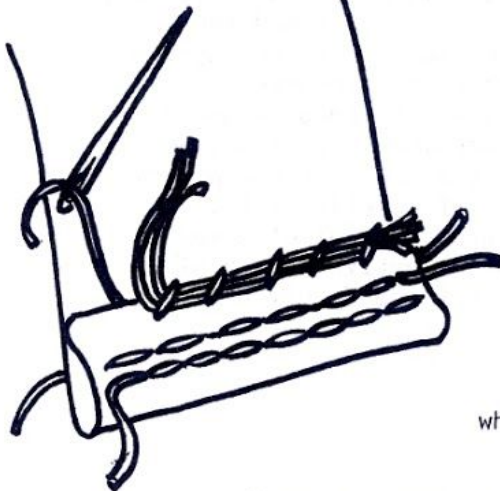


Here are illustrated two common seam finishes and two hem finishes. On the left, a standard 'run and fell', still used on cotton and linen, a low bulk, hard-wearing seam.

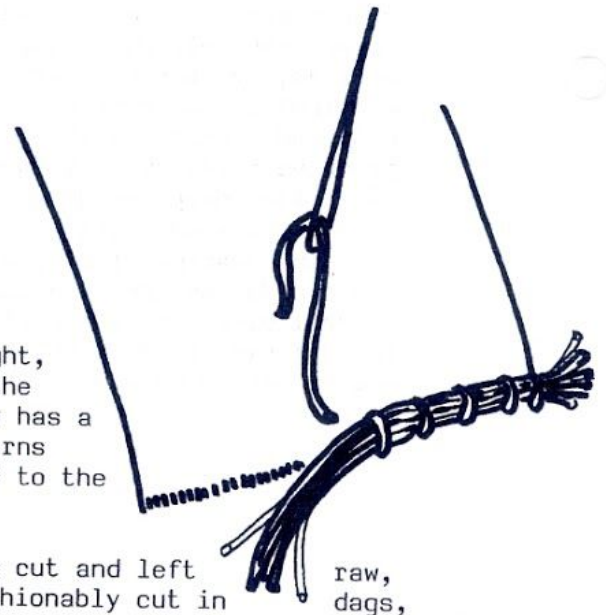


This is a simple seam with the seam allowance whip-stitched back. Again this gives a neat but also a stronger seam than if left.

Below, in one edge, the hem held back by two rows of double running stitch has the raw edge of the cloth covered by a bundle of yarn whip-stitched over.



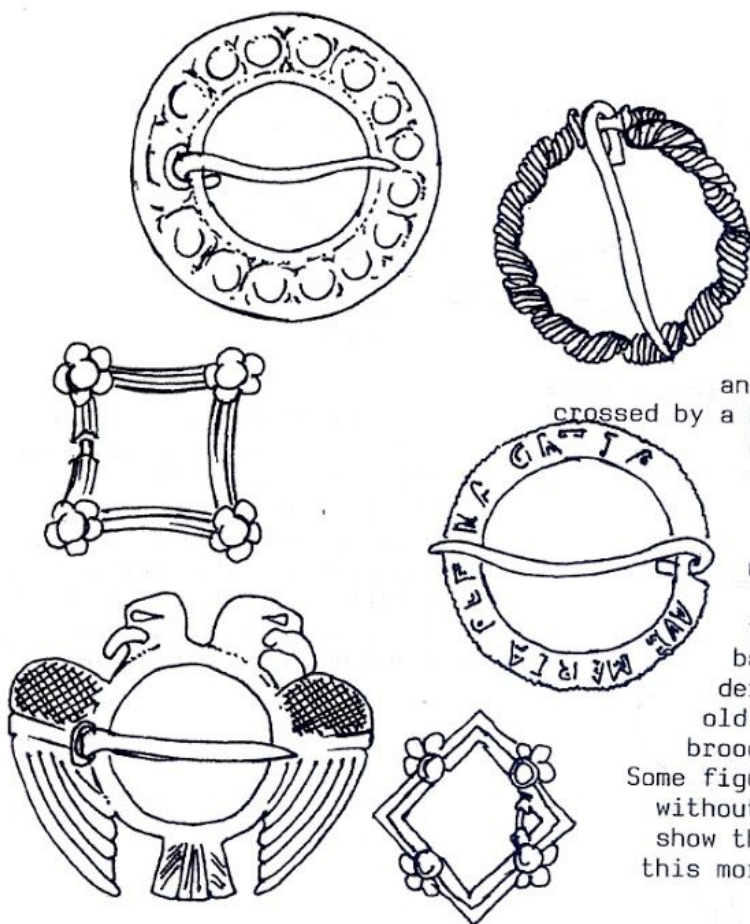
To the right, the edge of the cloth simply has a bundle of yarns whipped directly to the raw hem.



Heavily finished cloth could be cut and left especially if it was decoratively and fashionably cut in scallops or leaf shapes.

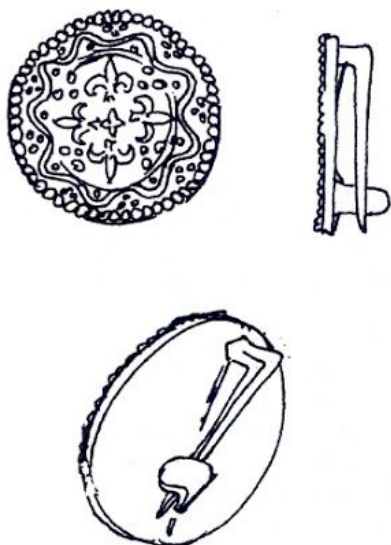
raw,  
dags,

BROOCHES

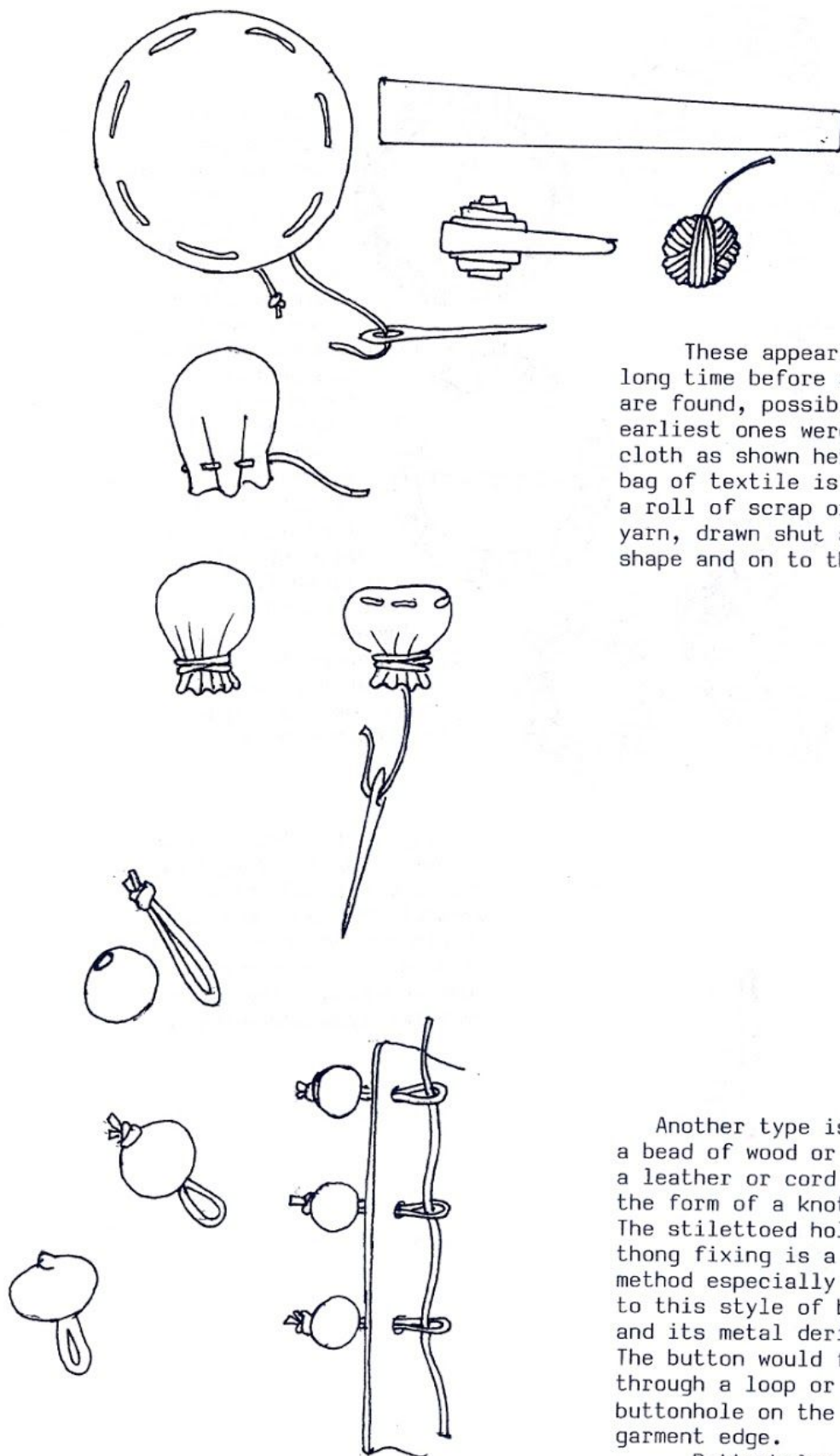


Despite the introduction of buttons sometime in the 13th century, brooches were still the most common garment closure, and the closed ring, crossed by a hinged pin is the brooch that is found most often. Made in a wide variety of materials and construction techniques, the basic principle derived from the old penannular brooch is the same. Some figures are drawn without the pin to show the seating of this more clearly.

Early in the 14th century a cast lead/tin alloy badge appears. Probably more decorative than functional, it mimics the cast Pilgrim badges that appear before the non-figurative secular type shown here.



## BUTTONS



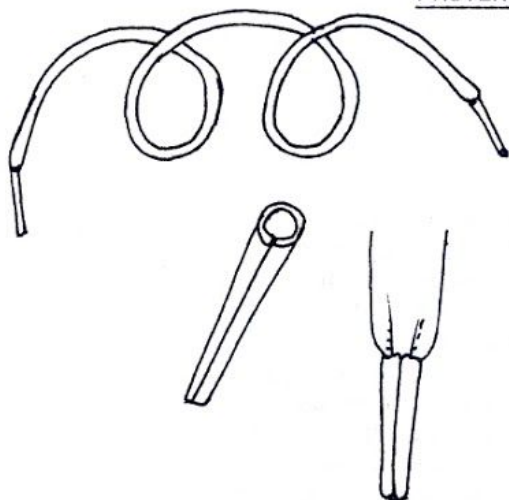
These appear in art a long time before actual examples are found, possibly because the earliest ones were made of cloth as shown here. A small bag of textile is stuffed with a roll of scrap or a ball of yarn, drawn shut and sewn into shape and on to the garment.

Another type is more like a bead of wood or bone, given a leather or cord shank in the form of a knotted loop. The stilettoed hole and thong fixing is a common method especially suited to this style of button and its metal derivative. The button would fasten through a loop or buttonhole on the other garment edge.

Buttonholes could be slashed and either simply whip-stitched round or finished with blanket or buttonhole stitch.

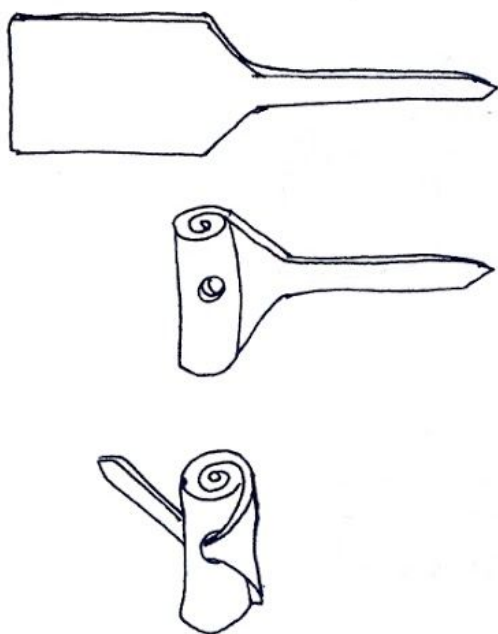


## FASTENINGS

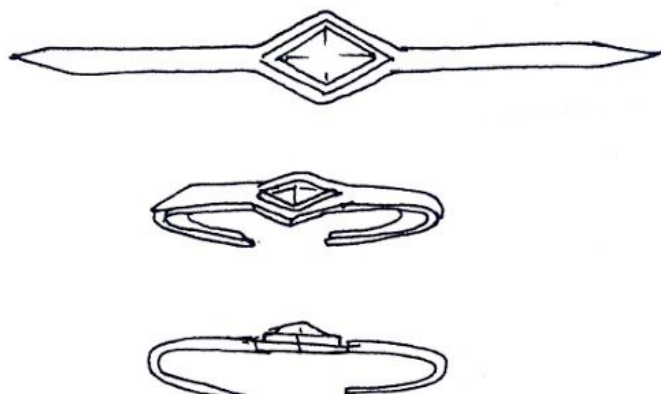


All through recorded history, simply tying a garment shut, or on, has been an option. From the late 13th century, metal tags called 'lace chapes' appear in the archeological record. Fitted to the end of leather or textile laces, the whole assembly was referred to as a 'point' or 'poynt'.

Generally speaking, the earlier the date at which the copper alloy fitting was made, the larger it was. Simply thin sheet metal wrapped around the end of a lace, they were made with a slight taper to facilitate passing through eyelets.



Leather toggles used to fasten shoes or close garments are found as early as Viking times. Made by rolling a T-shaped piece of thin firm leather, and passing the narrow end through a hole punched in the toggle head, they were very popular as a closure in the 13th century.



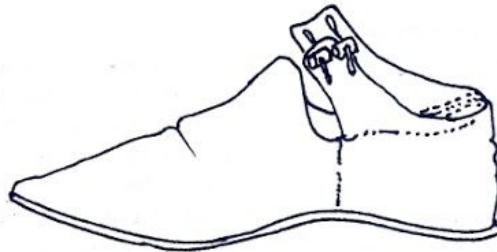
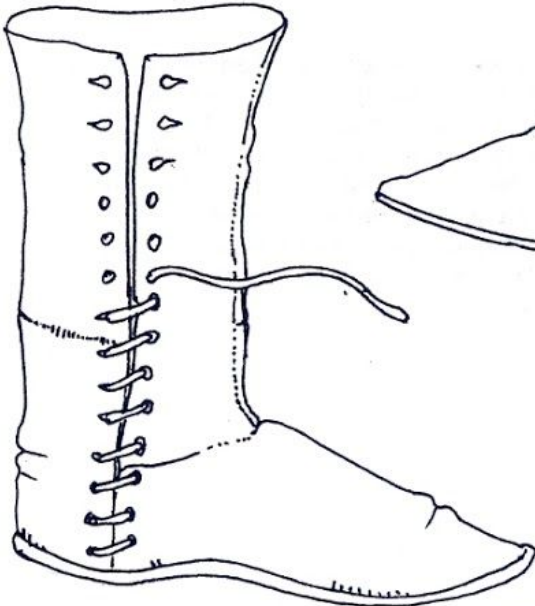
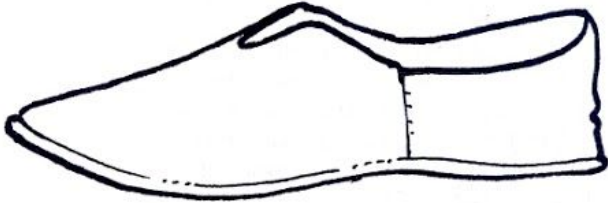
A little known variant on the brooch was the costume hook. Shaped very like a modern staple, double pointed, sometimes decorative, often plain, originals are found in a variety of metals, silver or copper alloys.

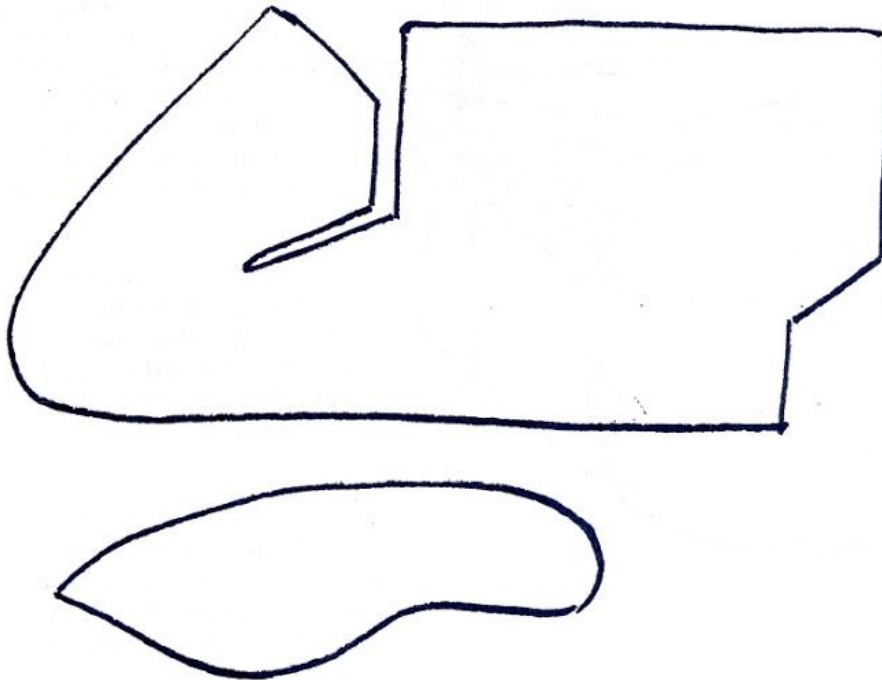
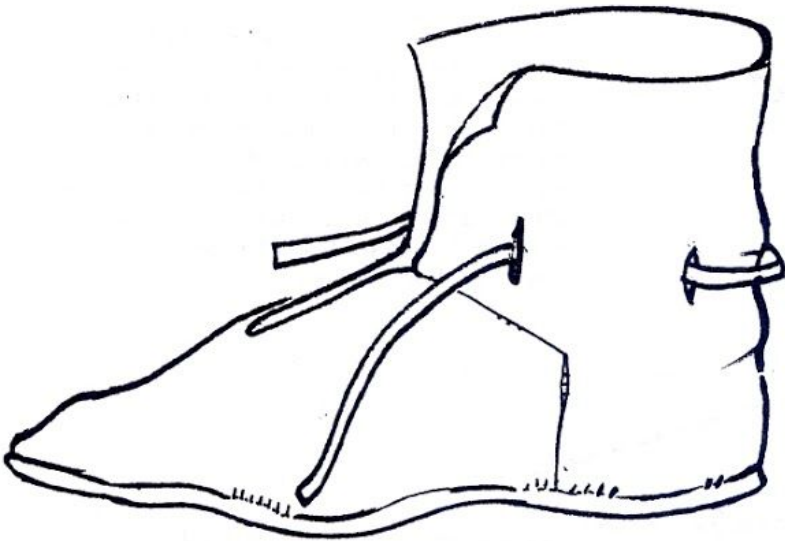
Both ends are simply hooked into the two opposing sides of the garment closure. Multiple dress hooks would look like very neat lacing from a distance or in a simple illustration.

BOOTS AND SHOES

Carvings and book illuminations of the 13th and early 14th centuries show a wide variety of styles in footwear. Low slip-on shoes, high boots, latchet shoes and practical boots are all in evidence.

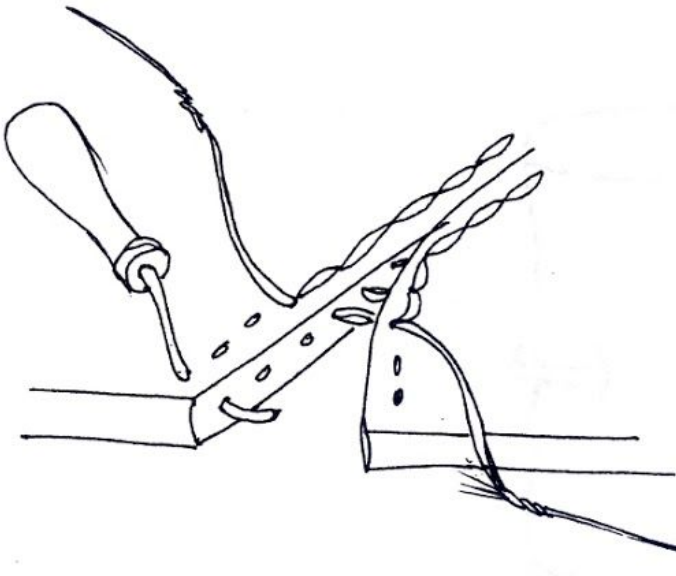
Surprisingly, finds of actual footwear show all these to have been based around one simple pattern.



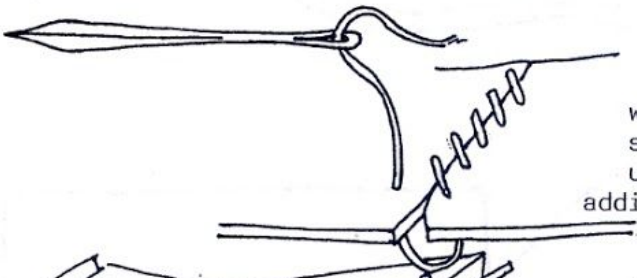


The archetype of all these styles has a one-piece upper, and a single piece sole, of the pattern illustrated. There are variations of this basic layout, but usually they are done in the cause of economy, using several pieces of leather to produce an upper of the same pattern as the one piece drawn here.

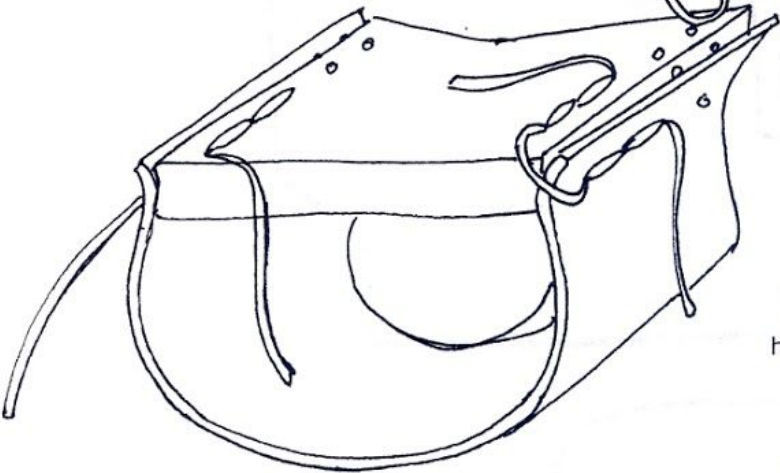
Unless it was a repair job, the sole was always a single piece. Both the upper and the sole were assembled inside out and only on completion was the shoe turned right side out, and so the type is given the name of 'turnshoe'.



Seams in the shoe uppers were normally butt-stitched, using an awl to produce the hole from flesh side to edge. The waxed linen thread would be twisted at each end on to a hog's bristle which acted as a thin flexible needle to lead the thread through the joles.

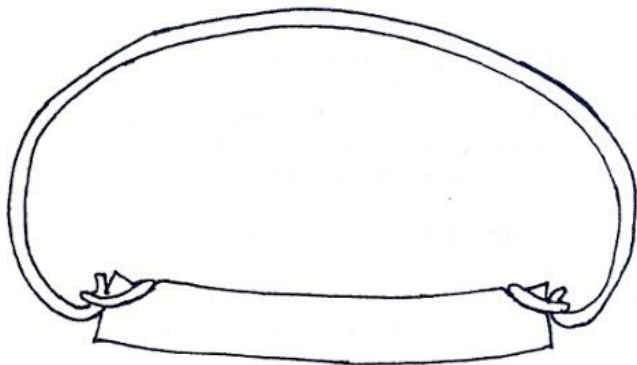


The binding seam drawn here done with a triangular section needle was used to attach small additions to the upper. Surviving leather needles from Medieval times are very like modern ones, but are made of bronze rather than steel.

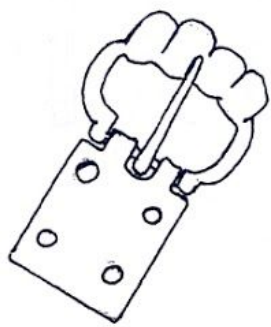
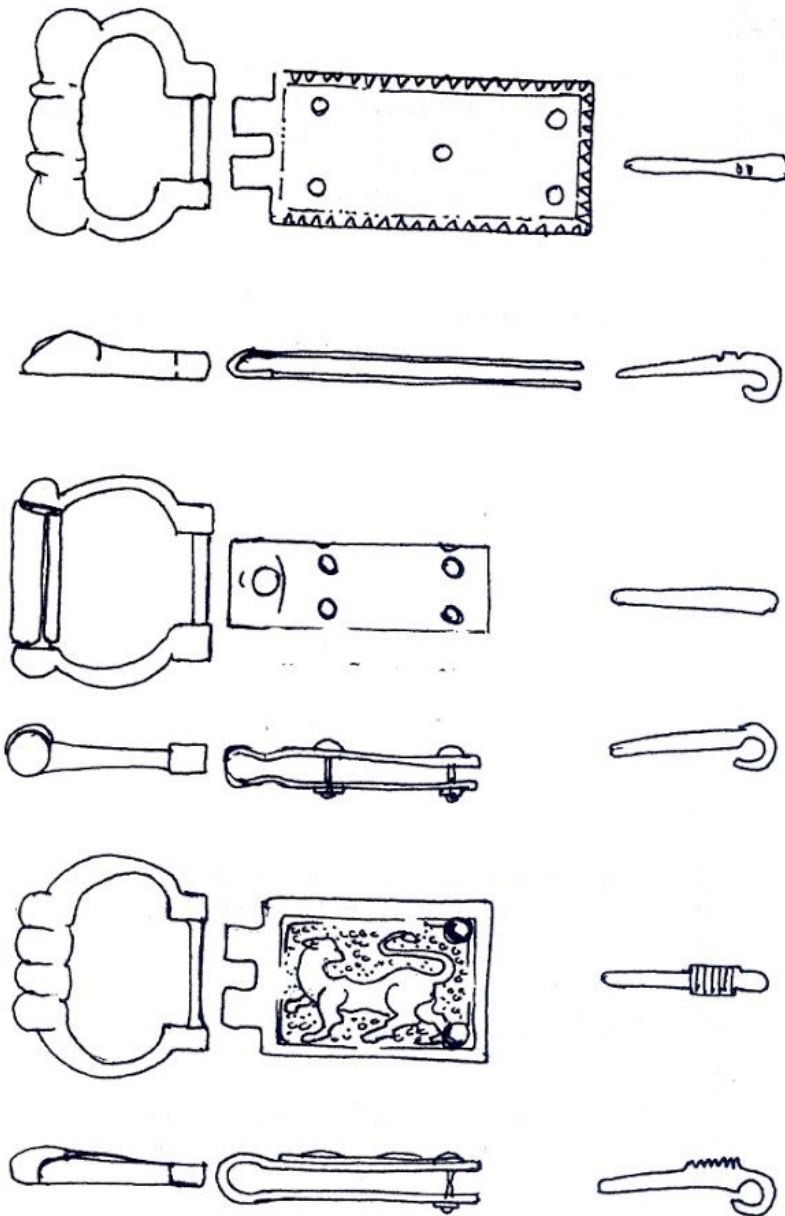


Soles were sewn on with this seam, flesh side of the leather out to the edge in the sole and flesh side through to grain or hair side, through the upper.

To do all this and allow the final turning of the shoe, vegetable tanned leather, well-soaked in water to render it flexible, was essential.



BELT BUCKLES



Belts were a very important part of everyday dress, not just from a practical point of view but also symbolic. Metal mounted belts were a mark of free status and military privilege. For the two centuries covered by this book, the illustrated buckles were the most common type. Cast copper alloy buckles were fitted to sheet metal buckle plates of a variety of styles. The buckle pin could be cast metal, cut from sheet or bent from wire. Buckle plates were invariably rivetted to the belt, which could be leather or tablet-woven thread - wool, linen and silk were all used for civilian and military belts.

BELT ENDS

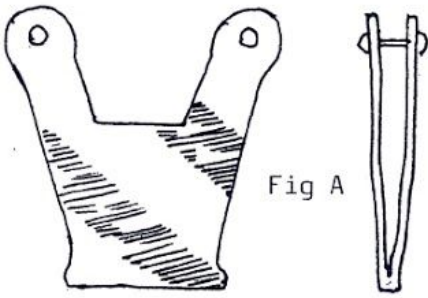


Fig A

Fig A-As well as a buckle, a belt usually if not always had a terminal, often called a 'belt chape'. This could be a folded strip of metal or a variety of more complex constructions:

Fig B - with soldered-in side pieces.

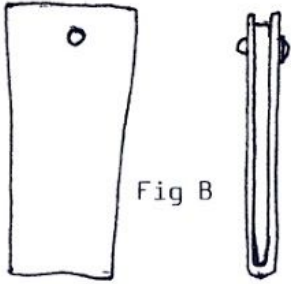


Fig B

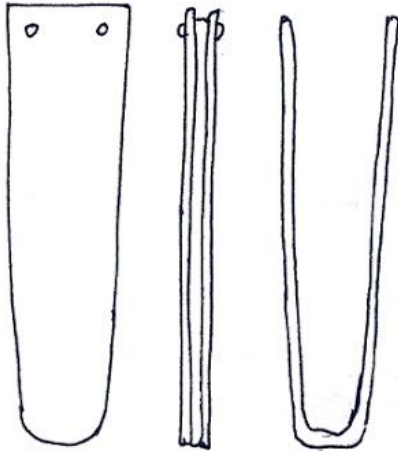


Fig C

Fig C - with a bent rod or sheet metal centre to a three-piece sandwich.

Fig D - with a cast centre layer.

Fig E - with a simpler three-part face, back and spacer plate design.

This is not an exhaustive list of possibilities, just the most common and most easily made.

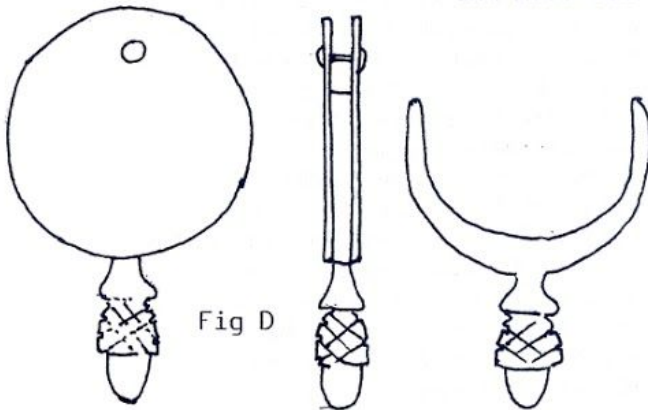


Fig D

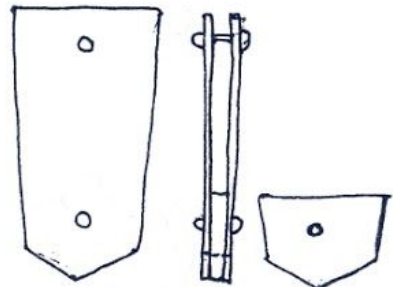
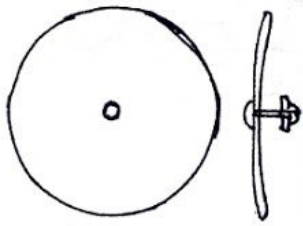
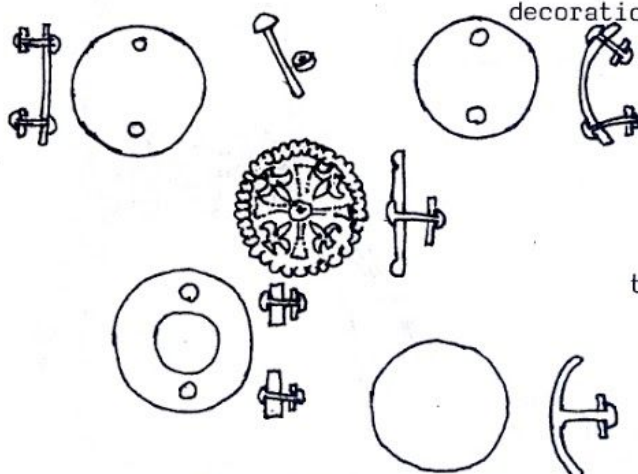


Fig E


## BELT FITTINGS




The belt itself could be decorated with tooled and dyed designs in leather, or woven designs in textiles. Both types could carry an array of studs and plates for decoration or function.



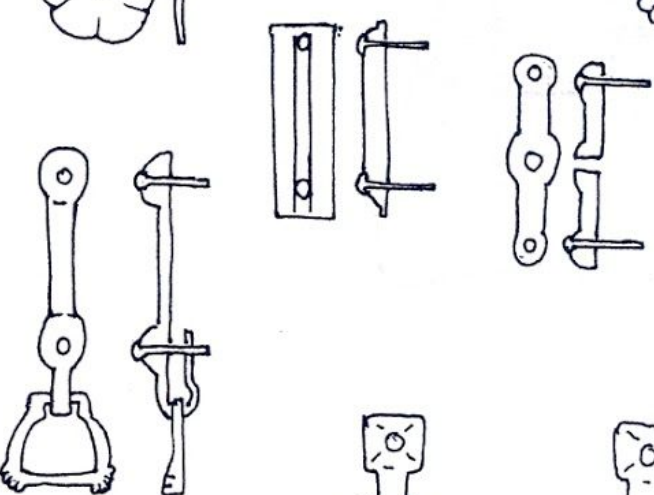
Generally the simpler designs are earlier and the more complex are later. The complex designs appear first in lead-tin alloy and later translate into copper alloy. Tin alloy fittings can be painted and copper alloy can be enamelled.



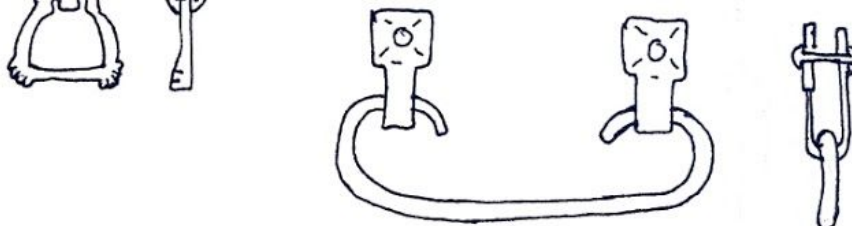
The long fittings with suspended loops are for ties from daggers, knives, purses and keys to loop to, and not fold or mark the belt.



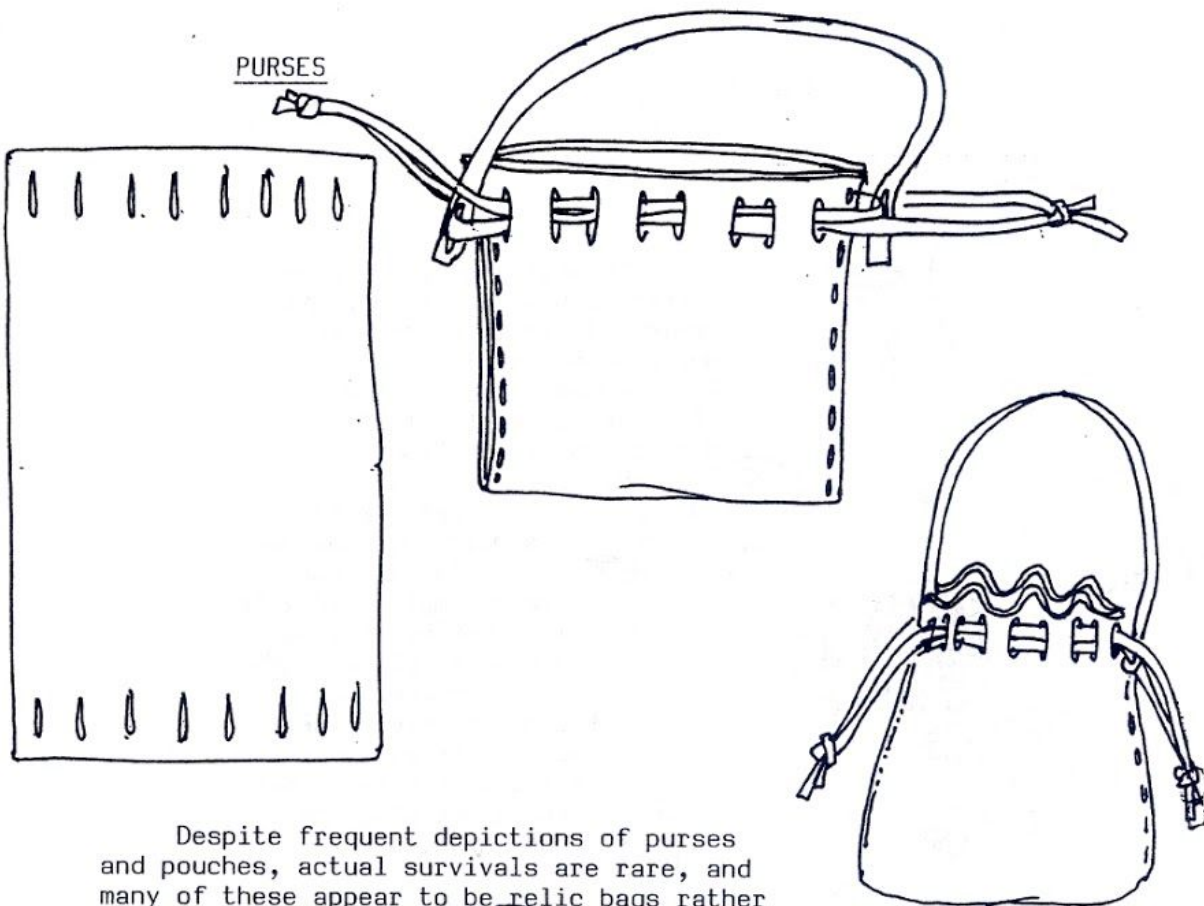
The round, ring and petalled belt mounts are generally considered to be decorative.



The bar type fittings appear on military effigies and probably have the purpose of stopping a heavily-laden belt from deforming i.e. a sword belt.



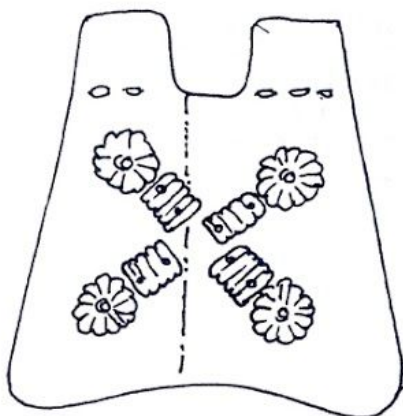
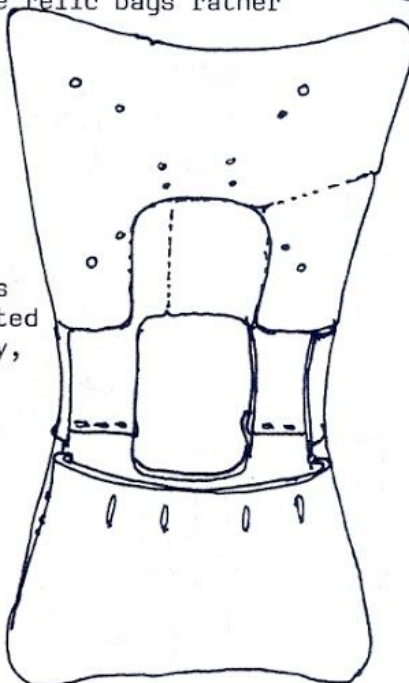
## PURSES



Despite frequent depictions of purses and pouches, actual survivals are rare, and many of these appear to be relic bags rather than items of wear.

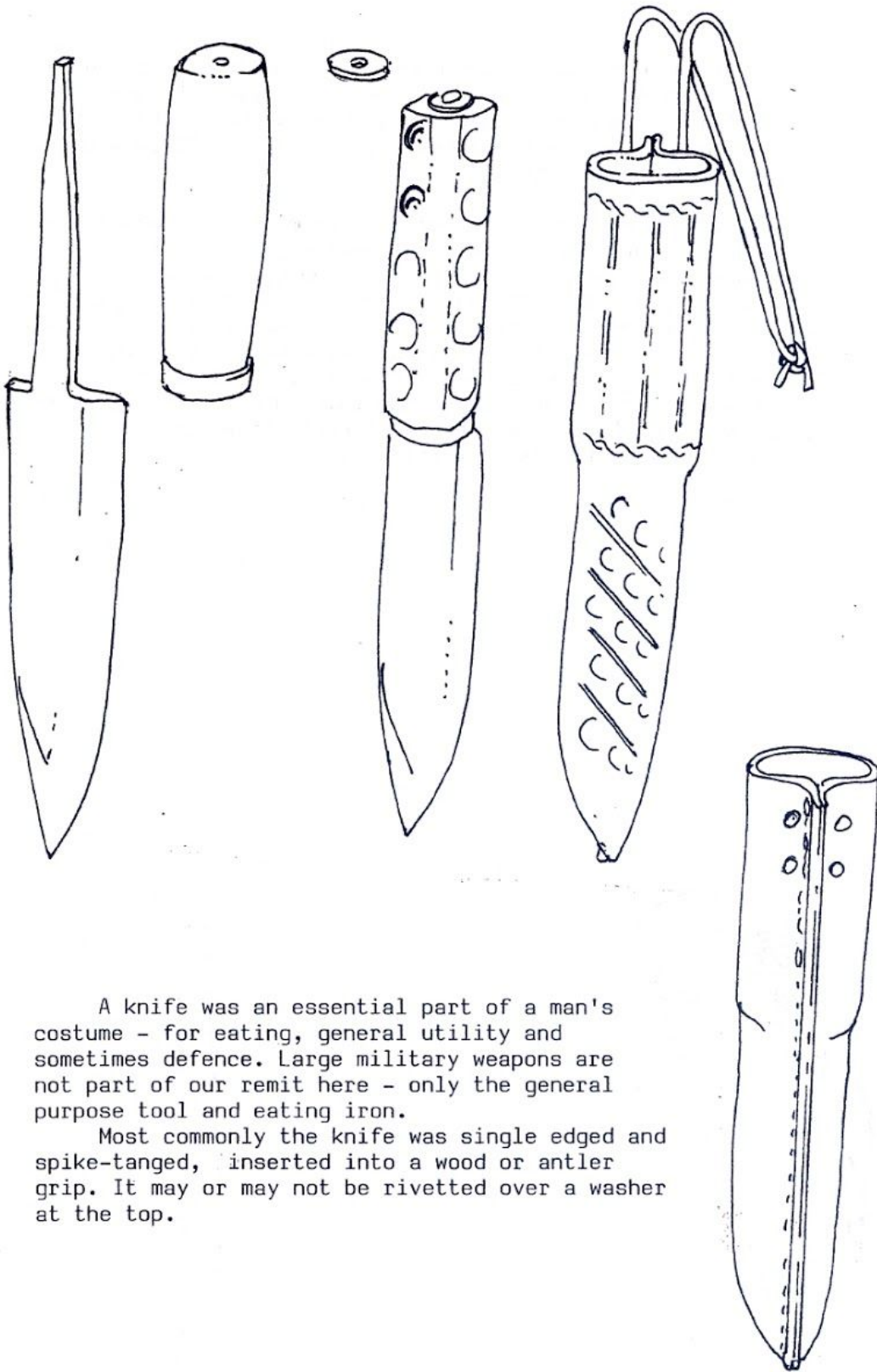
The most frequent survivor seems to be the simple drawstring bag in leather or textile, as illustrated at the top.

The belt-hung, front flapped bag shown here was found in London and is dated as being late 14th century, but resembles those illustrated in late 13th and early 14th century picture.





## KNIVES AND SCABBARDS

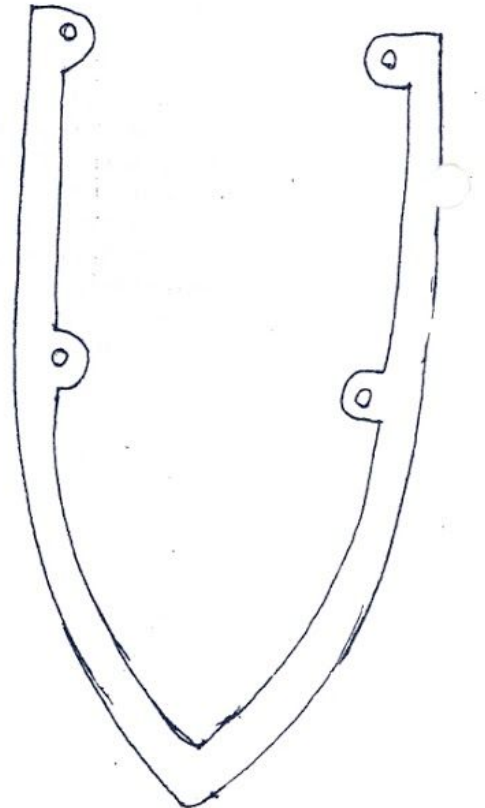
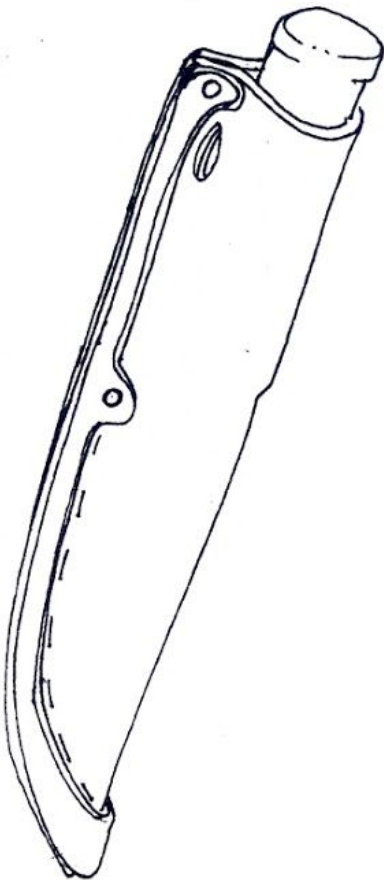


A knife was an essential part of a man's costume - for eating, general utility and sometimes defence. Large military weapons are not part of our remit here - only the general purpose tool and eating iron.

Most commonly the knife was single edged and spike-tanged, inserted into a wood or antler grip. It may or may not be rivetted over a washer at the top.

In England, a plain unmounted scabbard, seamed down the back and hung from a leather thong laced through four holes at the back, was the most common type. Usually this scabbard would be decorated with a tooled pattern and possibly colour staining.

In Scandinavia and Northern Germany, a metal-mounted sheath, very like the old scramsax style, is common in museum displays. Cut and folded from sheet metal, its construction is different to the old Viking type, but in appearance is very similar. Metal survives more readily than leather so its prevalence could be an accident of survival and more apparent than real. But it does have practical advantages and a handsome appearance, and given its geographical prevalence, it could be a genuine survival of the Viking tradition.



Suggested further reading

This is not an exhaustive list of reference but a guide to more detailed information:

Nockert, M.	Bockstensmannen och Hans Drågt	ISBN 9185720-30-5
Museum of London	Shoes and Pattens	ISBN 0-11-290443-2
"	Dress Accessories c.1150-1450	ISBN 0-11-290444-0
"	Textiles and Clothing c.1150-1450	ISBN 0-11-290445-9
Newton, S.M.	Fashion in the Age of the Black Prince	ISBN 0-85115-125-6
Recent Research in Archeological Footwear		ISBN 0950-9208
Whitehead, R.	Buckles 1250-1800	ISBN 1-897738-17X
Kendall, A.	Medieval Pilgrims	ISBN 85340-0067
Burnham, D.K.	Cut My Cote	Textile Dept, Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto
Grierson, S.	The Colour Cauldron	ISBN 0-9510132-11