

Basic Markland Garb

Recommended Garb for Public Events

by
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One learns by doing the thing: for although you think you know it, you can have no certainty until you try. -- Sophocles



Illustration copyright Jan e Walker 1990

Introduction

These are the official Markland recommendations for clothing to be used at battles, parades, and other events which are open to the public. You are not required to have garb simply to be a member, and there are many non-public events such as feasts and fratricidal combats at which garb or costuming is encouraged but not necessarily controlled.

For public events, however, there is growing concern being given to maintaining a reasonably historical appearance. In most cases, the *Basic Clothing Standards* will be more than acceptable to all concerned, and using them as your guide is probably the easiest and least expensive way to keep your level of authenticity high.

These Standards cover common medieval clothing in a very general way, but the effect they give is a very typical medieval appearance. It is also a very flexible appearance, suitable to a number of different cultures across a time span of over 500 years. It is often possible to change from one nationality or time frame to another just by changing hats!

The descriptions and patterns for all garments and accessories are as accurate as possible while still applying to the widest possible span of time and place. Less common variations and exceptions to the rule have been omitted, as have some features which are still debatable or poorly documented. These guidelines, therefore, are not unwavering fact, but they are a good place to start for anyone dressing for the Middle Ages.

Men

TUNIC -- Knee-length or longer, except for some shorter Norse styles; flared with triangular gores at the sides and/or front and back. Sleeves are long and fit closely along the forearms. Generally, a wool tunic is worn over a linen undertunic. (Some Norse overtunics were shortsleeved.) The belt can be leather or fabric, either with a plain D-shaped buckle, or with a long fork in one end that ties through two slits in the other.

LEGWEAR -- Usually close-fitting--can be hosen, just thigh-length fabric tubes, or trousers; either can have full feet, or have stirrups, or be footless. Some Vikings and Slavs wore straight-legged trousers that ended at the ankle, much like modern trousers. Any type of trousers may have a drawstring waist of belt loops. Hosen are worn over Braies, short linen pants gathered and tied below the knee. A pair of strings

sewn at the waist of the braies tie to loops or holes at the top of the hosen to support them. Knee- or cross-garters may be worn.

SHOES -- Commonly leather and ankle-height (or a couple inches above), with a flat sole. Can be "slip-ons", buttoned or laced at the side, or drawstringed. Most had pointed toes, but Norse fashions included round toes.

Women

GOWN or DRESS -- Generally a linen underdress, ankle-length or longer, with long, snug sleeves, and gores to give flare and fullness. Remember that decent ladies exposed only the face and hands--no slit hems, plunging necklines, or gaping bodices, please! Women's hosen need only be knee-length.

Saxons: Unfitted overgown may be shorter, with untapered three-quarter-length sleeves.

Normans and French: Full-length overgown either unfitted or laced up the back, sleeves either long and snug or flared (later 11th to 12th centuries).

Norse: Various long aprons (see Accessories) worn over gowns which might have been pleated.

HEADCOVERINGS -- Women should cover their heads!! Norse women wear a kerchief knotted at the back or side. For other nationalities, the veil - a white linen oval about 22"x36" draped over the head and held with a narrow band.

Recommendations

You are strongly urged to use only LINEN and WOOL for all your clothes. These were by far the most common medieval fabrics, and they will far outperform any modern substitutes. It is safest to use solid colors, because it is uncertain just what sorts of patterns were used, and how often. Don't bother to pick a color scheme, and be aware that black is rather over-used these days. Unfortunately, most modern trims should be avoided, but cuffs, hems, and necklines can be decorated with bands of contrasting color of fabric. Embroidery should be well-researched, and appropriated to time and place (e.g., don't put Celtic designs on a Viking tunic).

Pre-wash your fabric! Ignore the "dry clean only" label - modern wools need a good thrashing in the machine (permanent press or gentle cycle) to give them the proper felted texture. Linen needs its cut ends secured against ravelling with a zig-zag stitch or a quick hem, then wash in on a normal cycle. Pre-washing shrinks the fabric at least 3 or 4 inches per yard (length and width!), so always buy extra. Iron well with steam just before cutting.

Hand sew visible stitching such as cuffs or hems. Really, take the time to finish your clothes with the old needle and thread, using a plain running stitch, backstitch, or whip stitch. It's easy, educational, and it really impresses the spectators. Don't leave raw or ragged edges because of the misconception that "medieval = crude". Anyone too poor to buy a new tunic would certainly take care of the old one!

Keep It Simple!

Avoid the urge to embellish your appearance with inauthentic things like vests, wide kidney belts, long flowing capes, daggers, armguards, square tied-on leggings, and boots (especially "apache" boots!). Many people unwittingly spoil their look by adding inappropriate items to what could otherwise be good garb. Cluttering pieces of mail and leather are simply fantasy, while fur--which was used in several ways in the Middle Ages--is frequently mis-used nowadays. So keep it simple! A tunic, hosen, and shoes may seem unexciting, but it is very easy and very medieval.

If you wish to wear something not included in the Standards, you may need to find evidence of its existence. (If someone in charge of an event disagrees with you, he does not have to prove you wrong--it is up to you to prove yourself right.) Use medieval illustrations and descriptions (these are "primary sources") whenever possible; some recent (last 15-20 years) secondary sources are pretty good, too, but most things written in the 19th and early 20th centuries are worthless for clothing research.

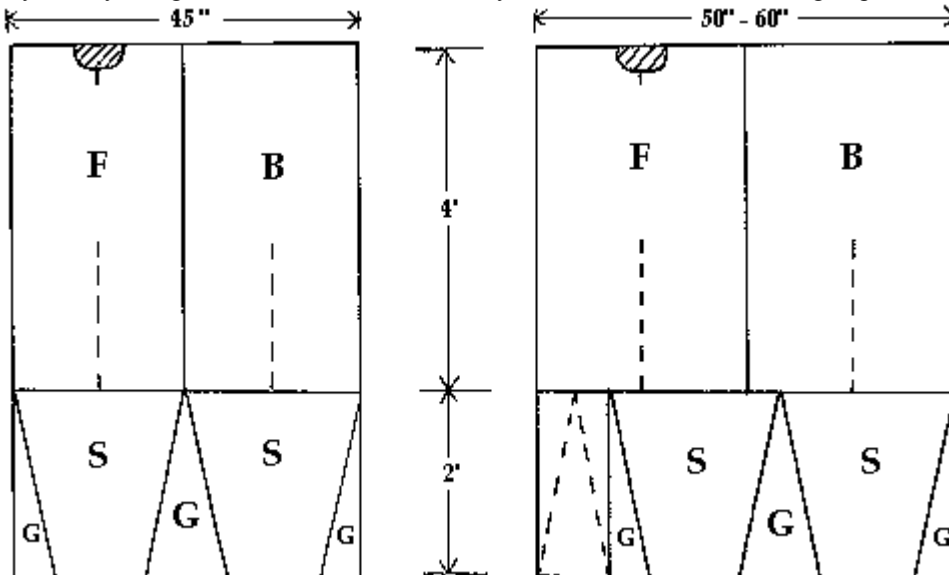
As you are getting your garb together, whether sewing or buying, TAKE YOUR TIME, and put some effort to get everything right the first time. Ask around for help with researching or sewing--there are plenty of experienced Marklanders who will be happy to lend a hand or a book. If someone does tell you that something of yours is wrong or inappropriate, don't assume he's an ignorant jerk (even if he acts like one!). Find a convenient time to talk to that person about your disagreement--Markland is supposed to be educational as well as fun, after all.

The *Markland Basic Clothing Standards* were designed to be Markland's official clothing guidelines for public events. This purpose was confirmed by vote of Council on April 1, 1989. There is no longer any need for new garb rules to be written for each event, and no need to give lengthy explanations of acceptable tunics or proper footwear. Event organizers and participants alike can simply refer to the Standards. As the Standards become more widely known and used, Markland's appearance at re-enactments and living history displays will become more and more authentic, with comparatively little effort. This sort of improvement is vital if Markland is to maintain its status and reputation as an educational organization.

These Standards were written, and are periodically updated, by Matthew Amt (Aelfic Guthredsson). Illustrations are by Matthew Amt or Jane Walker unless otherwise noted. The author can be contacted at: 9416 Rhode Island Ave., College Park, MD 20740-1639; phone 301-345-0582; email amtwalker@erols.com.

Tunic

The tunic is the basic men's garment, and it was common to wear a wool one over a linen undertunic. Your tunic should reach at least to your knees, and the skirt is flared with gores. The sleeves should fit fairly closely along the forearms, and can end anywhere between wrist and fingertips.

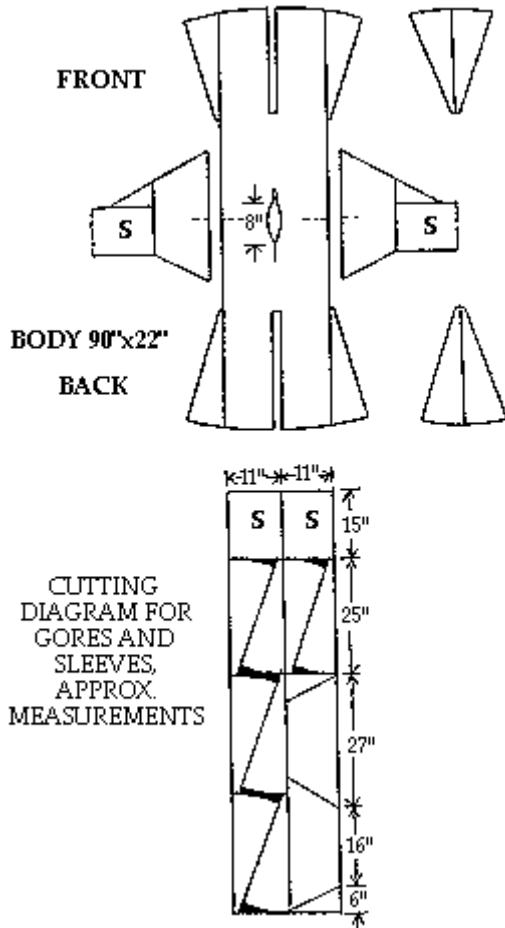


This first pattern is designed for 2 yards of 45"-wide fabric: 1 1/3 yards for the body, and 24 inches for the sleeves. Wrist measurement (narrow end of "S") equals the distance around your closed fist plus an inch for seam allowance. If your fabric is wider than 45 inches (most wool is), you can widen the body halves, but leave the sleeves 22 inches wide at the top unless you really need the space. The leftover fabric can become more gores.

To assemble, sew the body halves together only at the top, and cur the neck-hole out as small as possible--round, semi-circular, or square, with a short slit. Sew the 2 little gore halves (G) together to

match the shape of the big gore; sew the gores to either side of the back panel, or in slits at the center front and back. (It is even better to have gores in the center and at the sides.) You will probably need to trim the sleeves to fit closer along the forearm, but not too tight. Sew the sleeves to the body, centered on the shoulder seam. Finally, fold the whole thing in half (into a tunic shape), and sew each side from wrist to armpit to hem.

Kragelund Mose Tunic



This is a medieval tunic found on a body in a Danish bog. It was very ingeniously cut from 22"-wide wool, and therefore can be made from about 2 1/2 yards of 45"-wide fabric (get about 3 yards, at least 48" wide, and wash to pre-shrink). The narrow neckhole is slit front and back on the original. The use of gores to give fullness and the clever design to eliminate fabric waste are typical.

Assembly is about the same as for the first tunic, except that you must put each sleeve together before sewing it to the body. When the sleeve is in place and you are ready to sew wrist-to-armpit, stretch the back edge of the sleeve slightly as shown, to make up for the extra length given by the triangular gusset. The sleeves of the finished tunic do not lie flat!

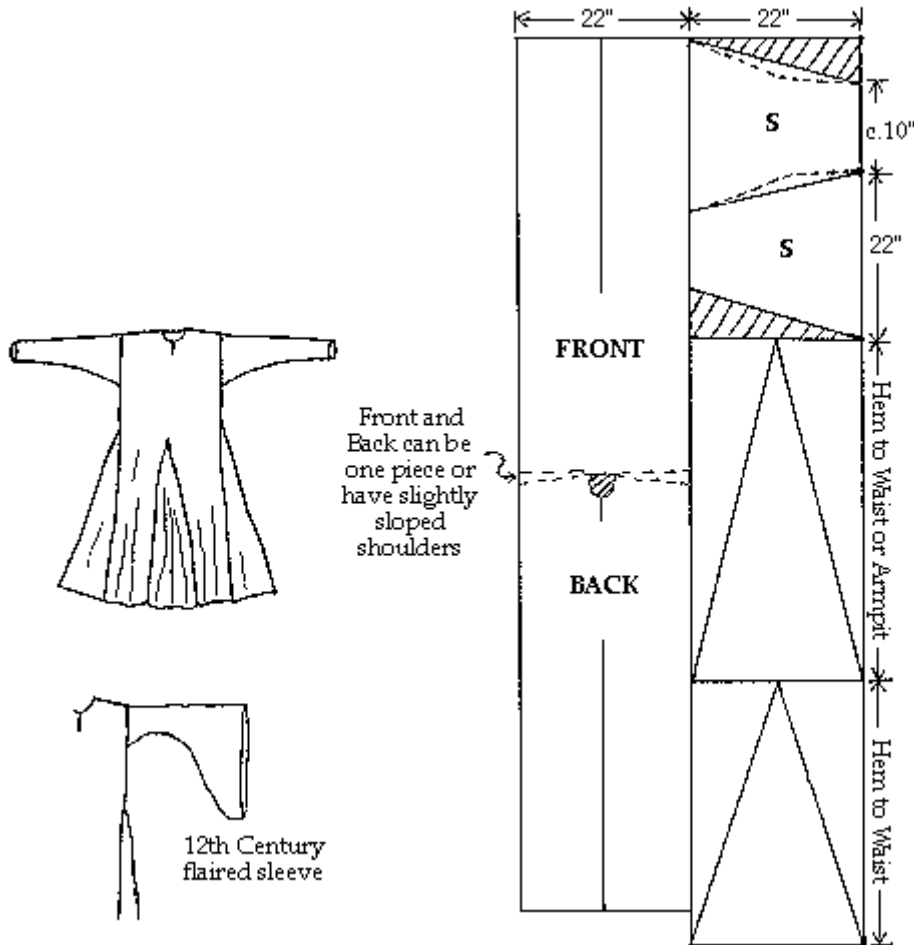
When assembling gores from halves, always sew together the 2 edges that are parallel to the selvedge edge of the fabric, not the diagonal edges.

Whatever tunic pattern you use, some variations are possible. Square gussets can be inserted under the arms to relieve tightness in the armhole or across the chest. The side gores can be extended up the armpits, or even to the top of the shoulder (behind the sleeve), which will widen the body. The front and back may be split from hem to crotch (in the middle of the gores, if any), but this might have been an upper-class feature.

Gown

The gown is just a full-length tunic for women. The front and back gores reach to the waist, but the side gores may reach to the armpits. The sleeves are made to fit the forearms, but the body is not shaped--there are no darts, gathers, or curved seams. Certainly the hem is not slit!

As with men's clothing, it was common to wear a wool dress over a linen underdress (shift or chemise), but women's fashions had a little more variation through time. Tenth and eleventh century Norse and Saxon dresses tended to be looser fit, bloused over the belt, and sometimes an extra overdress was worn, knee-length with shorter or unfitted sleeves. Norman styles were closer fit, so side gores should come only to the waist. In the twelfth century the overdress could be loose, or laced up the back or the sides to give a snug fit in the torso; flaired sleeves were common in the upper class. In the thirteenth century, everyone was back to a loose fit with tight sleeves, sometimes buttoned along the forearms.



Braies And Trousers

Braies are short linen trousers over which are worn the hosen (long stockings). No medieval braies are known to exist today, but illustrations show that they were somewhat baggy, with a sort of "diaper" effect in the crotch, and the knees were gathered and tied. There was presumably a drawstring at the waist, and sometimes it seems that the waist was made extra high, and the excess fabric rolled down over the drawstring. A pair of points (laces) sewn inside the braies and hanging out over a waist roll would make effective and comfortable suspension for one's hosen. Whether the waist is rolled or not, you will need some sort of points or loops to fasten the hosen.

At the outside of each knee, make a 4" slit (or leave the seam unsewn) and hem the edges. Gather the fabric to match the circumference of your leg just below the knee, and sew it to the middle third of a knee band or placket 36" long or more--the ends of the band serve as ties. (see fig. 4)

In the absence of any firm evidence, all braies patterns include some guesswork. Any of the styles shown here will have tied knees and a waist drawstring. Add 3 or 4 inches to the height of the waist if you want a waist roll.

Fig. 1. The first pattern is the basis for most post-medieval trousers, and can be made from about 1.5 yards of linen. Cut out 2 halves to the dimensions shown (a) and sew together from crotch to top (b). Open and refold into a trouser shape and sew the inseams (c).

Fig 2. The second pattern consists simply of 2 tubes and an 11"-square gusset. It uses about 1 1/3 yards of linen, and won't leave a lot of oddly-shaped scraps. Sewing a gusset between two tubes is much easier to do than to describe, but you may want some experienced help.

Fig 3. These last braies are based on traditional Lappland trousers. They take about 2 1/2 yards of linen, but are very easy to make. They also have the weird baggy crotch seen in medieval illustrations--you will never split it! If you want to experiment first, grab an old bedsheet and spend about 15 minutes making a mock-up.

Fig. ①

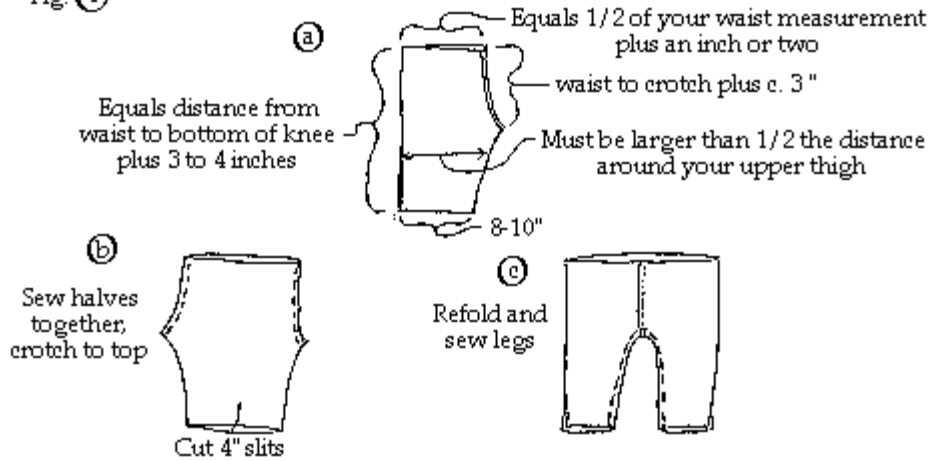


Fig. ②

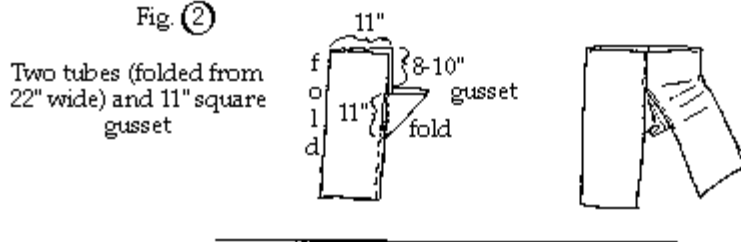


Fig. ③

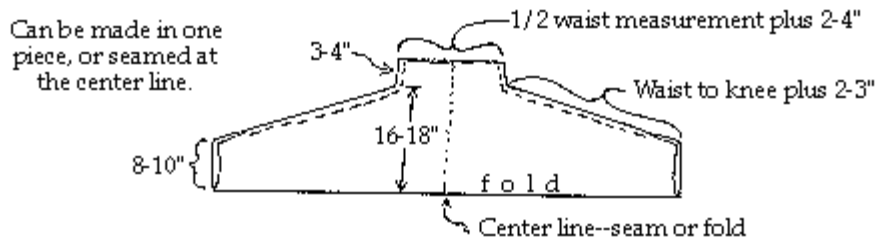
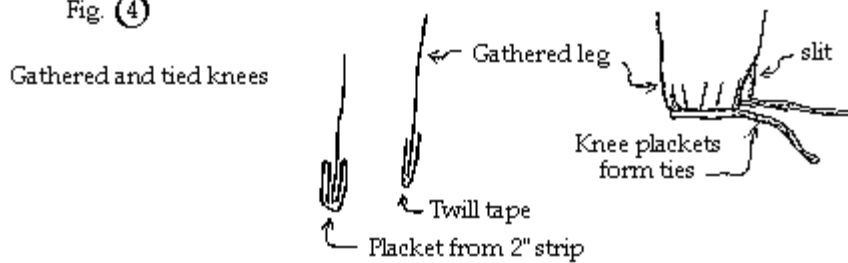


Fig. ④



Scandinavians and some Saxons wore trousers, which can be made from the braies patterns. Simply lengthen the legs and make them fit your legs (snug, but not tight). The waist can have a drawstring or belt loops, and feet can be added from the hosen pattern.

Hosen

The simplest hosen are just fabric tubes which fit the leg closely from crotch to ankle and have a lace or hole at the top to which the braies laces tie, and perhaps a stirrup under the foot. But hosen with feet were quite common, and are also warmer! Hosen are best made of wool and cut on the bias--diagonally across the fabric--which makes them surprisingly stretch and allows a tighter fit.

Start by making pattern pieces out of scrap fabric first, and fit them to your feet and ankles, making any necessary adjustments before cutting your good fabric. Be careful to leave the ankle large enough for your foot to go through, and remember that the long seam runs up the back of the leg.



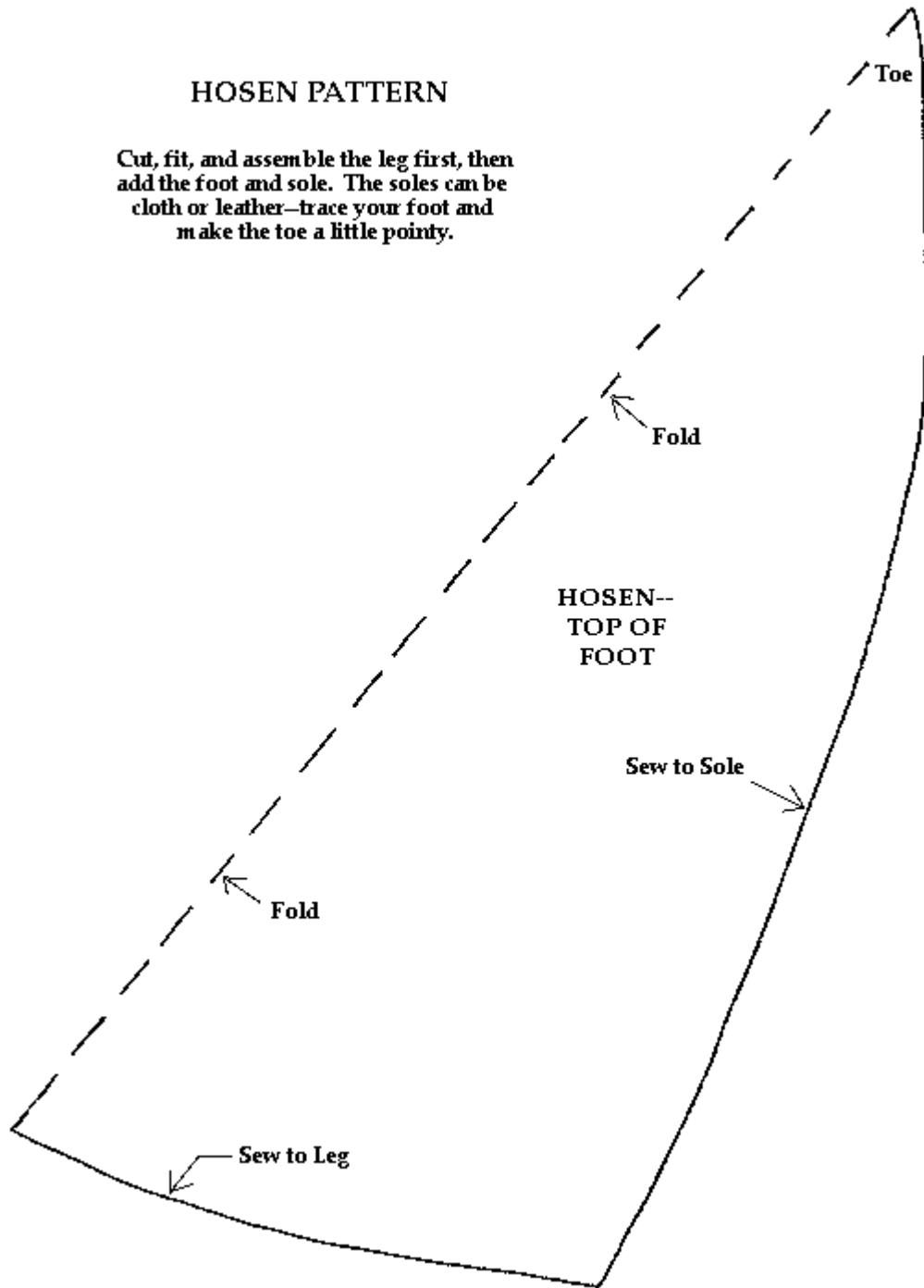
Hosen were most frequently worn with just the ties to the braies supporting them, but you may wear simple garters below the knee, or crossgarter (at least 9 feet long each) for Hastings era or before. Also in use were leggings much like World War I puttees: leather or fabric bands 3 to 4 inches wide and at least 12 feet long, wrapped spirally down your leg from knee to ankle. Do NOT use a square of something tied to your leg.

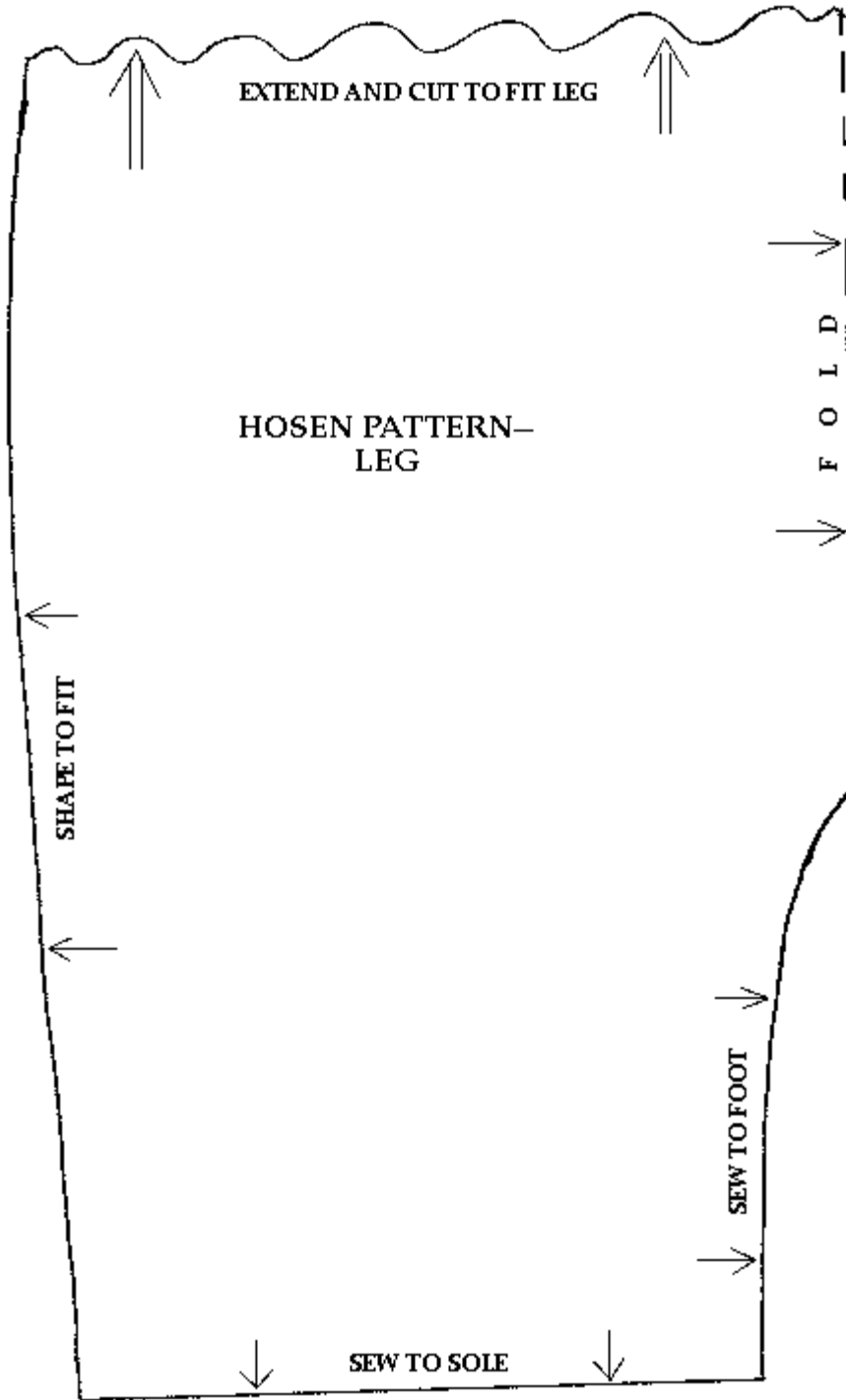
Ladies hosen need only cover the knee, where they are held up by knee garters or crossgarters.

You will need 1-1/3 to 2 yards of fabric for full-length hosen cut on the bias, depending on the length and thickness of your legs, and the fabric width. (i.e., if you are 6'2" tall with 26" thighs, 2 yards of 48"-wide fabric will do.)

HOSEN PATTERN

Cut, fit, and assemble the leg first, then add the foot and sole. The soles can be cloth or leather—trace your foot and make the toe a little pointy.





Shoes

Most medieval shoes were "turn shoes", sewn together inside out and then turned rightside out, to keep the stitching protected from wear. The sole is sewn to the upper with an edge/flesh seam: the stitch passes straight through the upper, then into the edge of the sole and out through the flesh (rough) side (fig 1.). The edges of the uppers can be butted together and sewn with an edge/flesh seam, or simple overlapped and stitched straight through.

FIG. 1

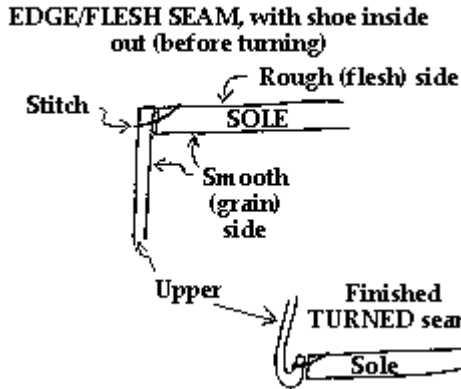
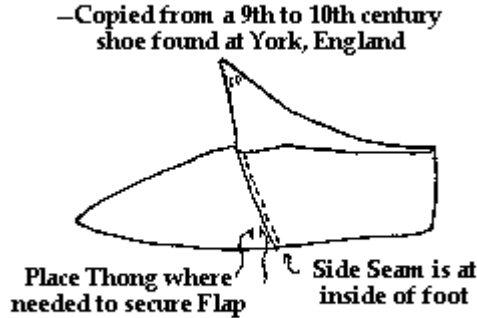


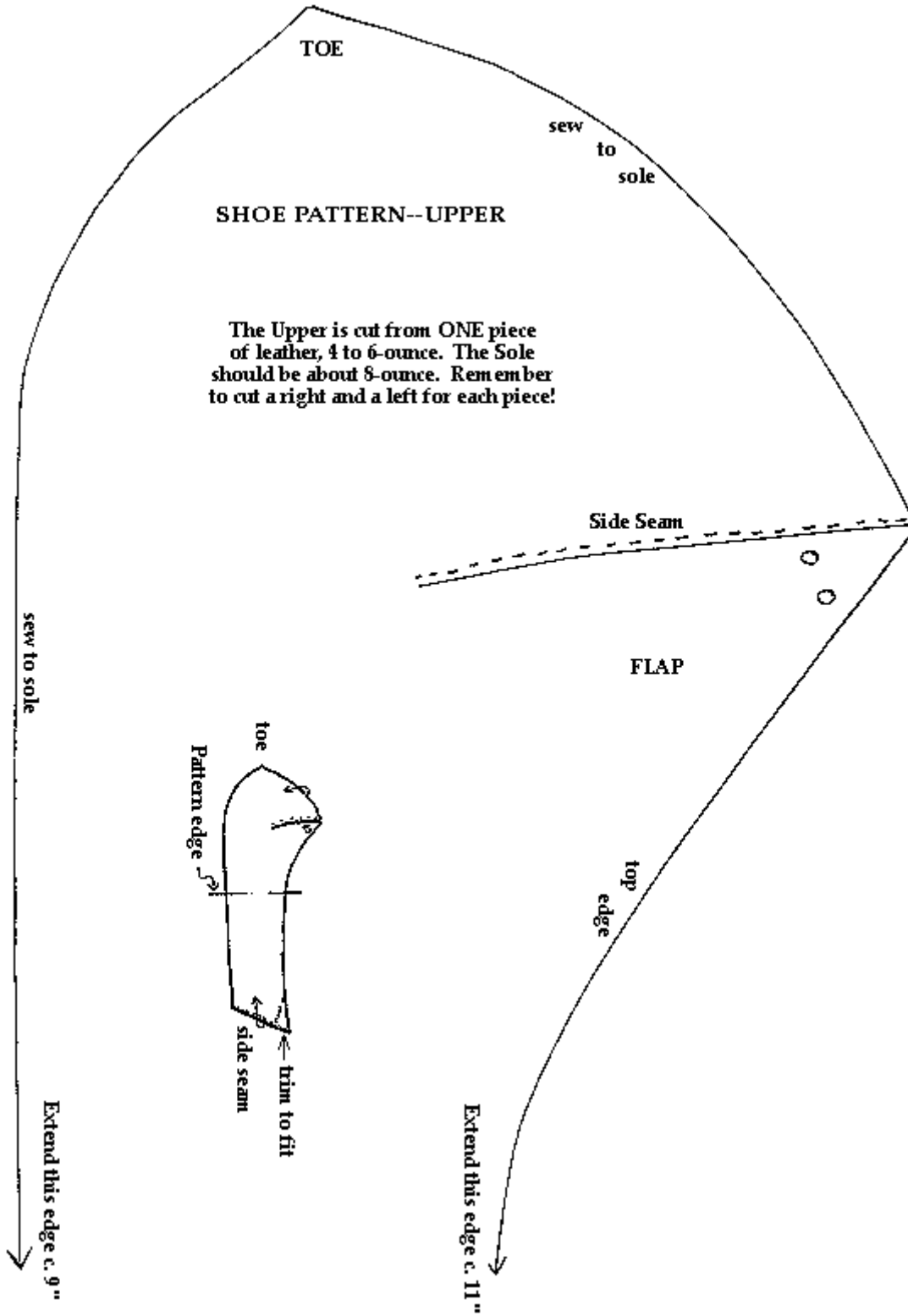
Fig. 2 The assembled Right Shoe



Like almost all shoes of the period, this pattern has an upper of one main piece with the seam on the inside of the foot; small inserts are added to close any gaps. The toe is pointed, and there can be an embroidered stripe running from the toe to the throat. Shoes were made with a right and left, and could be slip-ons or fastened with a drawstring.

Be sure to use a good topgrain leather, not a suede or thin garment leather. Vegetable-tanned leather is by far the best. (Ask a leather dealer or other knowledgeable person if you don't know what these terms mean!) Before doing any cutting, make a good working pattern out of scrap cloth and cardboard that fits your foot. The "seam allowance" around the bottom edge of the upper will be 1/4" to 3/8", but the sole should have NO seam allowance, since the upper is sewn against its edge. It will look very narrow.

When sewing the upper and sole together, start at the toe and sew the outside, then start again at the toe and sew the inside. Keep your stitches small and tight. A helpful trick is to contact-cement the pieces together first, then stitch them. (Glue alone will NOT hold the pieces together without stitching!) Also, you may wish to turn the shoe before sewing the side seam or adding any inserts. The shoe must be soaked in water for several hours before it can be turned. When the shoe has been turned and has dried completely, coat it with neatsfoot oil to make it waterproof and supple.



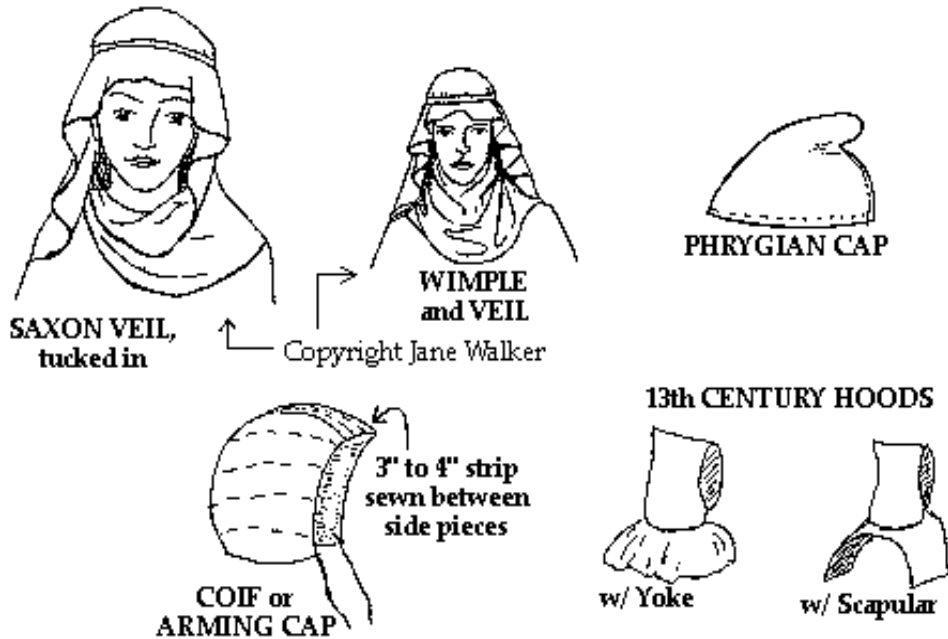
A FABULOUS website full of shoe patterns is at: <http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/shoe/SHOEHOME.HTM>--just be sure to read the Introduction first!

Headwear

Proper headwear is essential to socially acceptable clothing, especially for women. Usually a veil or coverchief is sufficient, simply a white linen oval draped over the head and secured with a narrow band or fillet. Saxon women wrapped the back end of the veil around the front of the neck, tucking it in at the back again--the veil needs to be at least a yard long for this. Fashionable Norman ladies and anyone from later years wore the veil loose over the wimple, a wide linen band wrapped under the chin and pinned at the top of the head. Norse women just wore a kerchief, knotted at the back or side.

Phrygian caps were very popular among Saxon men. In the 12th and 13th centuries, linen coifs or padded arming caps were in general use, and were worn under hoods and hats as well as alone or with a helmet. Norman men in the 11th century, however, appear to have gone bearheaded, though they probably wore padded caps beneath helmets or mail coifs.

Hoods have been discovered at the 10th century Norse town of Hedeby, but they don't seem to have been used by the rest of Europe until the 13th century. It was common just to pull a fold of the cloak over one's head when necessary.

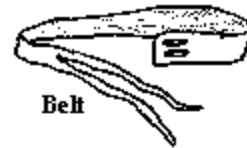


Accessories

Your belt may be leather or fabric, one to two inches wide, with a simple D-shaped buckle, preferably brass. Instead of a buckle you can cut 2 slits in one end of the belt, and cut the other end into a long swallowtail--the tails pass through the slits and tie. Keep the tooling to a minimum--straight lines, simple geometric patterns, or a bit of interlaced motif.

From your belt, or from the drawstring of your braies, hangs your pouch or purse. This is a drawstring bag of leather or cloth up to about 6" square, with a double drawstring. Vikings and early Saxons seem to have worn a more substantial pouch with a flap, and 2 belt loops on the back.

You may also wish to wear a knife, but be forewarned that correct belt knives are difficult to find, and most of those in use or available today are inauthentic. The typical Anglo-Norse scramasax-type knife had a single-edged blade about 3 to 5 inches long, with a cylindrical wood or bone grip



Markland Medieval Mercenary Militia

(NOT riveted) and NO GUARD. The blade was frequently "clipped", shaped much like a modern Barlow knife. Longer knives did indeed exist, but since it was common to carry one's spear in public, a "fighting" knife was much less practical than a small, utilitarian blade. The knife was carried on the hip (ONLY on the hip) in a leather sheath with enclosed half of the grip as well as the blade.

A cloak is just a blanket-sized rectangle or half-circle of heavy wool (the hood is not attached--see "headwear"). An old wool blanket with the texture of an army blanket (ie, not fuzzy) can be found in a thrift shop or surplus store, and the corners cut round on one side to make something like a half-circle. The cloak is pinned on the right shoulder by a brooch, a common type being the ring-shaped penannular.

Viking Options

Some Norse tunics had very tight cuffs--sewing a husband's sleeves shut each morning was a wifely duty! There may also have been overtunics with shorter wider sleeves.

Trousers were worn, generally of wool. Some were close-fitting and footed, others may have been more straight-legged, ending at the ankle.

Shoes tended to have round toes, but were otherwise the same as those found elsewhere.

Scandinavian women are believed to have worn an apron made of 2 narrow panels connected by shoulder straps - sewn to the back panel and pinned to the front. There is sketchy evidence for pleated, short-sleeved dresses, shawls, and other unusual garments.