Comment from the Author, 'Information about the 13th Century, newly retold; for all interested readers.'

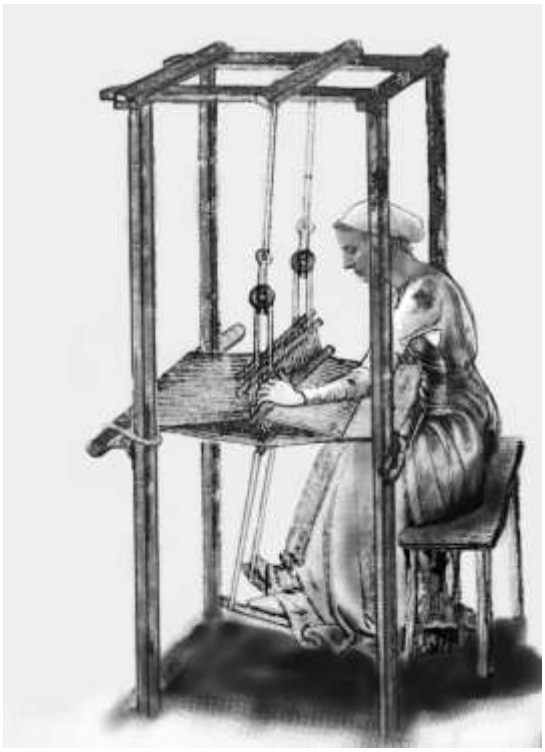
NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Issue Number XV. For Circa 1265 Dateline June the 6th 2023.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE. 'What did people wear in 1265?'

Part 1. A Brief Handbook on Women's Clothing.

Ever since becoming fascinated about the 13th Century and the story of the Battle of Evesham in particular, over the years the members of - Circa 1265 – a society to which I happily belong, have researched and amassed a considerable amount of data.



This encompasses both the well-known and the obscure. We have fitted facts which many current archaeologists and historians have brought to light, together with old information from previously written medieval sources, and assessed collections of artefacts from past centuries.

We have travelled far and wide to many museums and archaeological dig sites gaining additional data first-hand and talked to the women and men on-the–spot and had great fun doing it. Now we have reached the stage where museums contact us, so that we can help shed light on our chosen period for the public-at-large. We never stop learning. There is always something new to find out. There are experts and specialists a-plenty out there who can also tell us even more, of that I am certain. We are always keen to get things right and the subject matter is vast.

Overlooked artefacts and formerly obscure details when put together, help us extrapolate new data from them.

We also have many friends who are members of other excellent "living-history" groups and it is a pleasure to co-operate with them on the subject.

After over four decades of personal study on the topic myself; my friends and I really do appreciate the enormous amount of hard work that has been put in by the historians of the past, the many unsung archaeologists, museum staff and all the research colleagues who back them up. Without them to aid us all, the past would truly be nothing but a blank.

Strangely enough, that would have been the situation faced by the average woman or man living in the middle-ages. There was no real awareness of past historical detail by people at large. They bothered about the things that had a direct effect upon them, local rights, byelaws, charters and family roots and the like - which is very good for us. Pulling the many separate strands of such information together, the somewhat incomprehensible details of what we term "history" begin to make sense. Looking back and finding out about our ancestors can give us a fascinating insight into their way of life - so different to our modern world. We can never know everything, but we hope all our combined efforts have been able to provide a firm foundation upon which to start to get to grips with the history and lifestyle of the decades around the 1260's C.E. - Circa 1265.

Comment from the Author, 'Information about clothes in the13th Century. To start - How were they sewn together?'

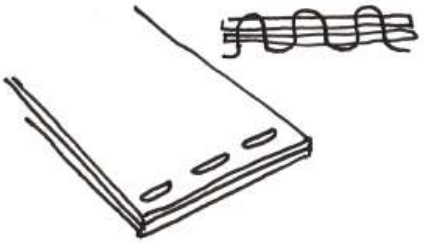
NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

'What did people wear in 1265?' - Let's start with the basics: **Seams**.

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265
Textile Seam Types

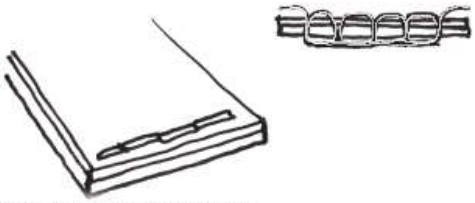
English Provenance

Commonest seam used



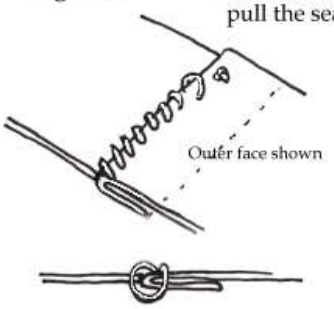
Seam with inside faces of cloth showing outermost. Sewn along seam with a simple running stitch. Once completed,, the garment was turned "right-way" out.

Flat overlapped cloth forming a double layer thickness. Edges overstitched. Often used on leg-hose seams. Especially under the sole of the foot.

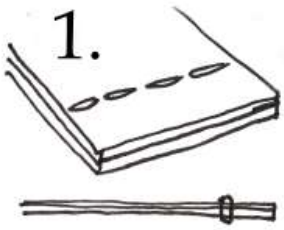


Cloth as above. Sewn with back-stitch. Likely to have been used around arm-hole seams. N.B. No examples yet found associated with thread intact - Only hole patterns.

Seam made with one flat and one folded cloth layer, butted together - Over-stitched to pull the seam tight.

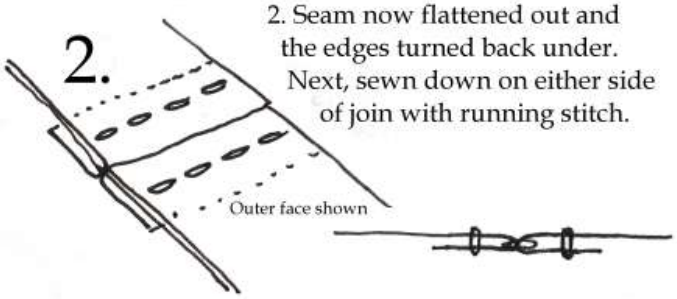


Two stage seam process;
1. Seam made with running stitch



This was a strong seam type used on more tailored items. Especially for body side-seams and for the rearmost vertical seam on hose.(Leg hose).

2. Seam now flattened out and the edges turned back under. Next, sewn down on either side of join with running stitch.



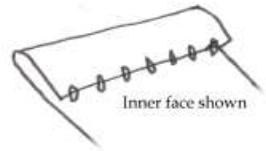
Interestingly: Cloths of linen and wool are found to have been sewn together using linen thread in the majority of cases.
Silk thread was used on silks - where visible, otherwise linen thread was still used.
A few woollen outer seams were overstitched using matching coloured wool, on occasion.

Comment from the Author, 'Information about the clothes worn in the13th Century. What Types of hems were used?'

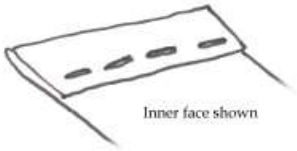
NEWES OF Pe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

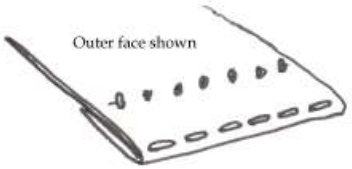
Textile Hem Types English provenance



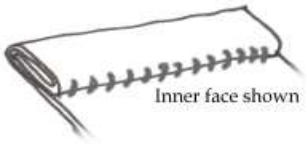
Single fold hemmed edge
sewn down with hem-stitch



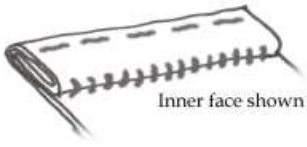
Single fold hemmed edge
sewn down with running-stitch



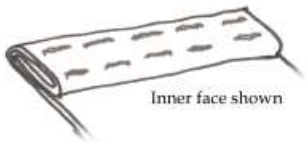
Single fold hemmed edge
sewn down with hem-stitch
and using running-stitch close
to the outer edge.



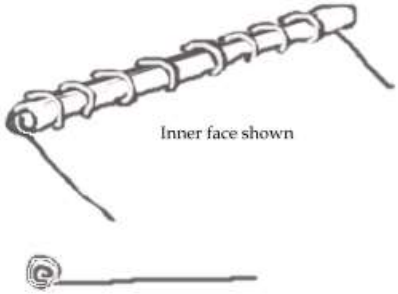
Double fold hemmed edge
sewn down with hem-stitch.



Double fold hemmed edge
sewn down with hem-stitch
and using running-stitch close
to the outer edge.

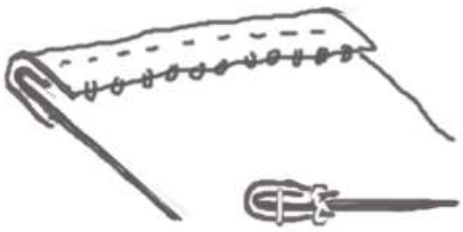


Double fold hemmed edge
sewn down with two runs of
running-stitch.



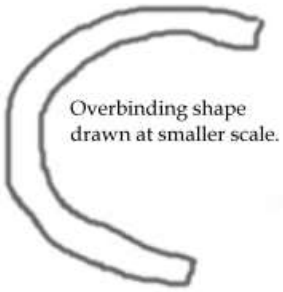
Rolled hemmed edge
sewn down with long
diagonal hem-stitches
wrapped around the roll.

This has been found on
a fine silken weave cloth
(most likely a rich lady's
veil - head covering.
The roll turned over was
minute! Only around about 1mm.
A hand-sewer's tour de force.



Single fold edge (3mm turn!)
With folded overbinding cover.
Sewn down with running stitch
along centre and finished with
hem-stitch to lower binding edges.

This has been found on
a woollen garment around
the neckline.
The overbinding was of silk
More often it would be of fine
linen. - Used to stop the wool
from irritating the wearer's neck.



Such curved neckline. overbinding
strips were often cut out in a
semi-circlar shape -before being
sewn in place on the garment
with the running-stitch.

The length along the curve
has to be adeqate
to cover the required exposed
neckline cloth.
Sewing pulls it into a near circle
and lessens wrinkles in the form.

Comment from the Author, "Information about the clothes worn in the13th Century, Woman's underdress."

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

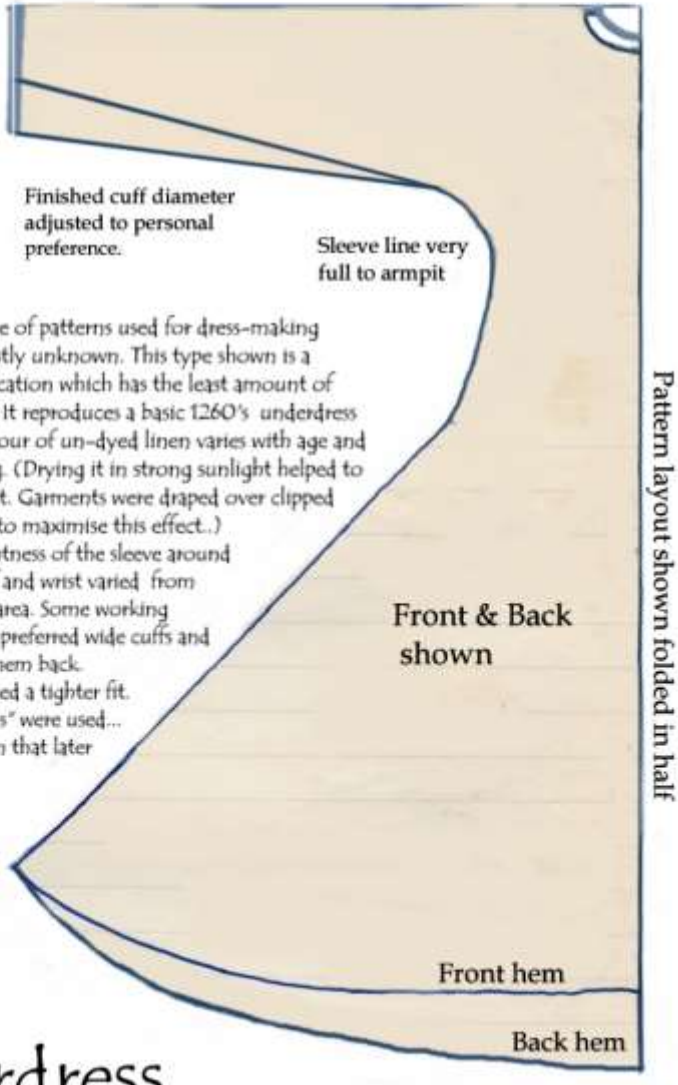
General wear day-to-day

The underdress was made up, cut-out from linen cloth and sewn together with linen thread. The cloth itself was woven on hand looms using hand-spun flaxen thread. In England this was washed and fully shrunken before use.
Cloth took a long time to make and was expensive. Most people only owned a minimal amount of clothing. This meant washing them was done less frequently than today.

Neck-line styles varied most were round openings with a small. front slit. Under dress necklines were not low-cut.

Marcher / Welsh dress often had a small "V" slit to the lower neck opening..

N.B. Check measurement
Length from side of neck
to wrist -with arm down by side.



The type of patterns used for dress-making are mostly unknown. This type shown is a simplification which has the least amount of sewing. It reproduces a basic 1260's underdress
The colour of un-dyed linen varies with age and washing. (Drying it in strong sunlight helped to bleach it. Garments were draped over clipped bushes to maximise this effect..)
The tightness of the sleeve around the cuff and wrist varied from area to area. Some working women preferred wide cuffs and rolled them back.
Most used a tighter fit.
"Buttons" were used... more on that later

Woman's Underdress

Comment from the Author, "Information about the clothes worn in the13th Century, Woman's gown."

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day

The Gown was a long woollen dress made almost to the same pattern as the previous garment. It was similar in most respects.

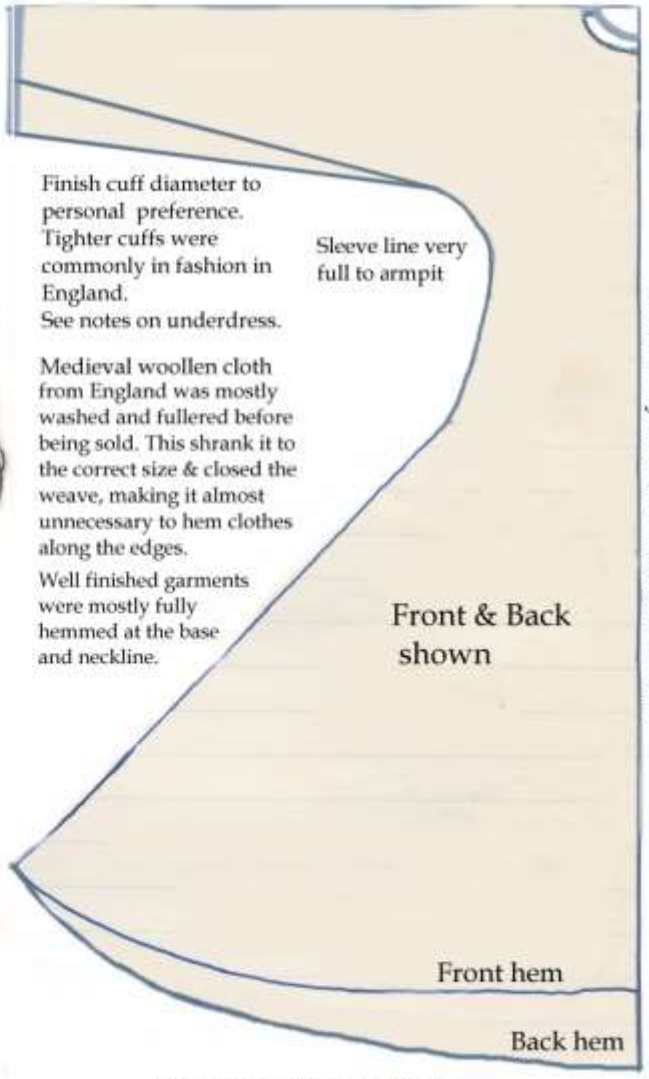
Neck-line styles varied most were round openings with a small. front slit. Dress necklines were not low-cut.

Marcher / Welsh dress often had a small "V" slit to the lower neck opening.. ....Wool cloth dresses could be finished with a fine cloth binding sewn over the neck edge. Linen and silk versions have been found.

N.B. Check measurement Length from side of neck to wrist -with arm down by side.

The Woman wears her hair in a linen net-bag called a crespine or caul. Welsh often wore no hair coverings.

The dress as worn in this fashion - folded over a hidden waist belt is a typical Welsh and Marcher mode of the 1260's. It was uncommon in the rest of Southern England.



Woman's Gown

Extra gores could be added for more lower skirt fullness.

Comment from the Author, 'Information about the clothes worn in the13th Century. Woman's over-tunic.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

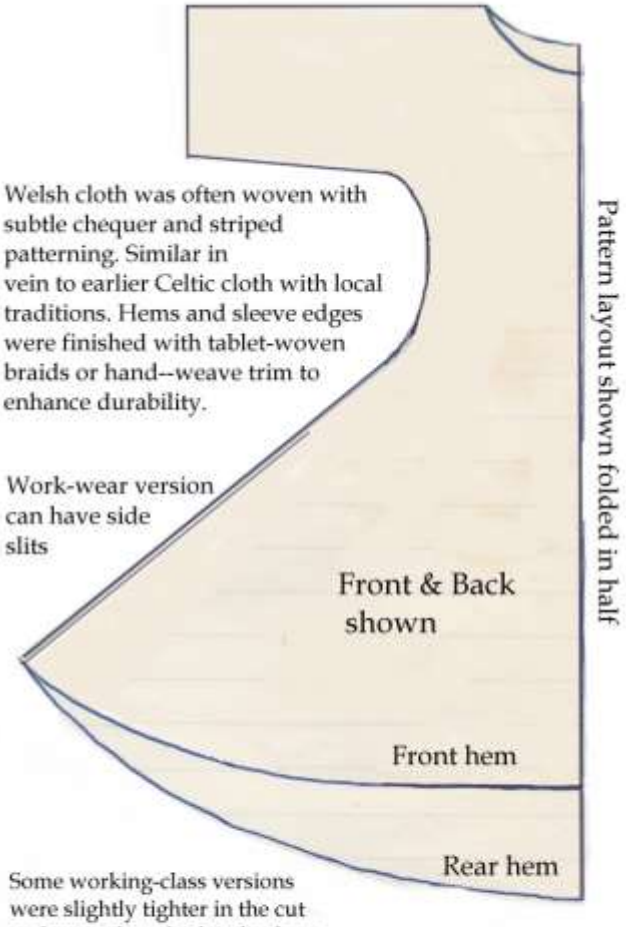
Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day

The Super-Tunic or Over-Tunic was a shorter woollen overdress which was worn on top of the linen underdress and woollen gown. Many versions existed - according to the wearer's rank.

Some would have been plain and basic, woven from homespn cloth.
Ladies from richer households had access to many types of cloth richly dyed and embroidered with patterning.
Horiontal stripes in women's clothing was not in fashion in the 1260's.

The Neck-lines on this garment were rounded and slightly lower than the underdresses.
Courtly versions were known to be embellished with high class embroidery work or gems upon cloth-of-gold.
Not for the average wearer.



Woman's Over-Tunic

Comment from the Author, 'Information about the clothes worn in the13th Century. Woman's sur-cote.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

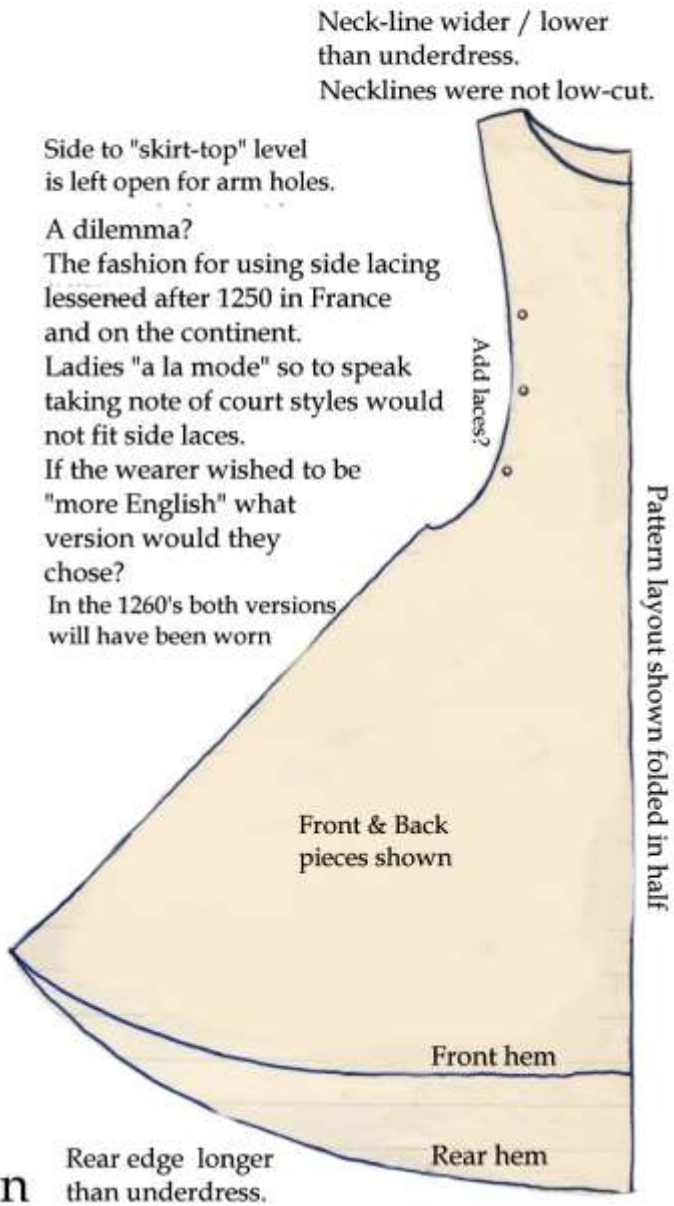
Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day

The Sleeveless Gown was worn over the linen underdress and most often also a woollen long sleeved gown with tight fitting cuffs. The cloth it could be made from was dependent upon the owner's income. Most commonly they were of wool.

The side arm holes being so large were sometimes cross-laced with thin leather thongs or woollen, linen or silken braided ties. Brassy lace chape ends were commonly used on these to aid in threading.
Fashions of the earlier 13th century caused outrage amongst churchmen - for tight lacing accentuated the female figure. These comments continued...

Woman's Sleeveless Gown



Comment from the Author, 'The cutting styles used in this period were changing and many variations existed.'

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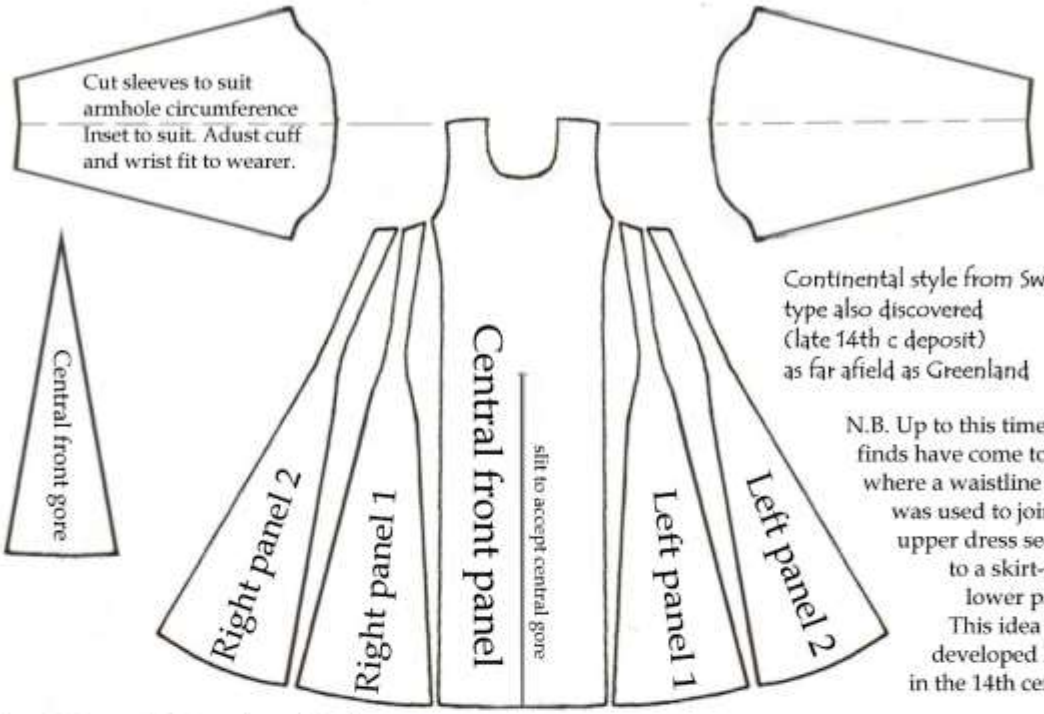
Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

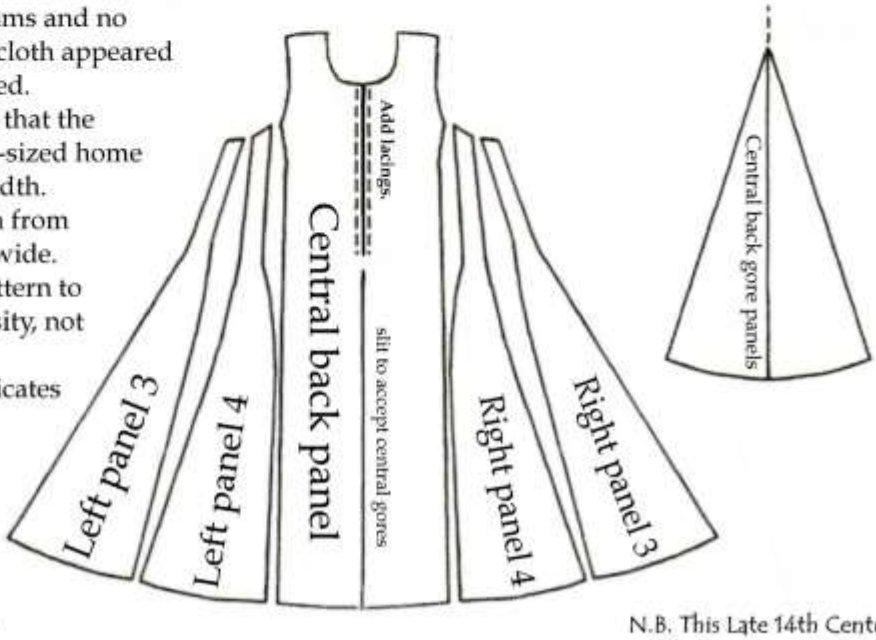
General wear day-to-day



Continental style from Sweden, type also discovered (late 14th c deposit) as far afield as Greenland

N.B. Up to this time no finds have come to light where a waistline seam was used to join an upper dress section to a skirt-style lower panel. This idea was developed later in the 14th century.

Although multi-panelled and seemingly "tailored" to fit. This garment was found to have poor seams and no lower edge hems. The cloth appeared not to have been fullered.
A conclusion I make is that the cloth was from a small-sized home loom with a limited width.
Such looms made cloth from approx 550 to 670mm wide.
Forcing this type of pattern to be utilised from necessity, not only by choice.
However it clearly indicates that this pattern type would also be understood and used in 1260's England.
Contact between England and the continent was frequent.



N.B. This Late 14th Century artefact was excavated at Herjolfsnes in Greenland. Almost identical versions have been found in Sweden in dig layers dated about 1235 C.E.

Woman's Long Sleeved Gown
Continental type found from 1235 to 1380's

Comment from the Author, 'This dress style being continental – and laced, may be yet another clerical "target".'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day

This long sleeved gown is made up from numerous tailored panels. To the front is 1 main front panel, and 1 central triangular gore insert , each side has four panels from armpit level to floor. The rear is 1 main centre panel and is inset with a further 2 triangular gores. Sleeves are inset to fit.

Swedish Provenance

Made of woollen cloth.
The upper sections are a tighter fit to the torso.This type of tailoring is obviously more complicated and has many seams. It requires a laced back-slit to the rear centre panel to enable the wearer to don it

Richer ladies may have used well-made versions of this. Properly seamed and hemmed with quality cloth, the amount of off-cuts would shout-out about conspicuous consumption.
The ladies at King Henry's court would probably have approved of this very continental style.

Known from finds dated 1235 C.E. to 1380 C.E.

Would the wearer need a maid servant?

A note on cloth, many English types were "Broadlooms". Famous across all of Europe for their width & quality. A massive drop in exports up to 1264, made people use more of it at home.

Cloth could not be dyed in Flanders because of this problem. In defiance, it became a "baronial" fashion in 1263 to use some cloth un-dyed.

Woman's Long Sleeved Gown

Comment from the Author, 'English women usually covered their hair when in public. This was considered normal.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day Ladies Head Coverings

Veil and Wimple as worn in the more formal way. The cloth used varied according to cost and buying power. Fine quality linens were favoured. For the rich, imported silks and cotton cloths were available. In coloured manuscripts of the 1250's & 1260's they are shown only White in colour.

(Finds from 1290 onwards confirm the use of dyed silk in pale pinks, mauves and very pale blue.)

Here the veil is worn around the shoulders.

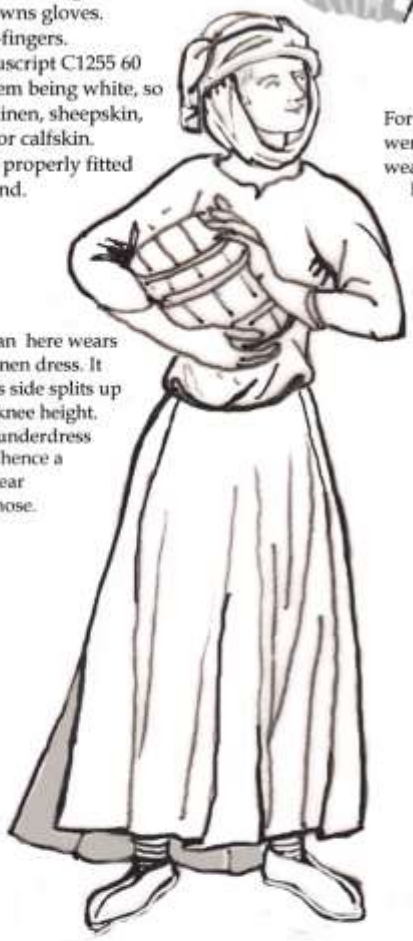
Hair worn in linen caul, crespine or hair-net. Made from a lightly plied double thread, looped & knotted to form an open mesh. Holes 3 - 5mm dia.

Colours:
Dk brown. Brown.
Lt Brown.
Golden Brown.
Yellow brown.
White.

Linen and silk thread versions have been found.

A version of a sun-hat. Probably plaited grass / straw covered with the veil cloth of white linen wrapped over it.

This farm working woman owns gloves. with five-fingers. The manuscript C1255 60 shows them being white, so Possibly linen, sheepskin, goatskin or calfskin. They are properly fitted to the hand.



The woman here wears a white linen dress. It clearly has side splits up to nearly knee height. No other underdress is shown, hence a need to wear short leg hose.

For country women there were many ways of wearing their headdress.

Plain cloth leggings or knee-hose

The hair-net is still worn beneath it.. Only the fringe hair and escaping straggles elsewhere show up.

Striped leggings or knee-hose

All head coverings made of separate cloths need to be pinned into place, The hair, brow fillets, or wire circlets covered over with linen /silk wrappings were ways of doing this.The tube hood or barbette were ideal foundations for securing the veil to.

Finds from London show some Tie-garters were specially woven. The small hanging tassels along the cord help to stop it coming unknotted. Some were made by simply cutting away a selvedge from a scrapped piece of cloth.

Tie-garter

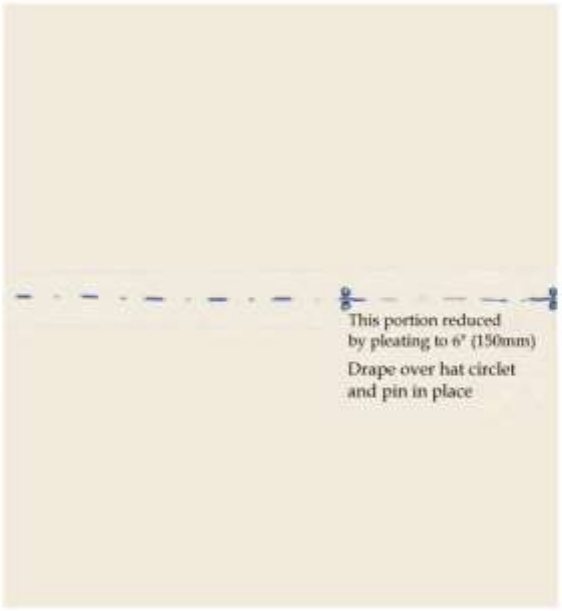
Straw hat covered with a knotted veil cloth

Comment from the Author. 'Headdress styles were worn according to personal taste, needs of work or fashion.'

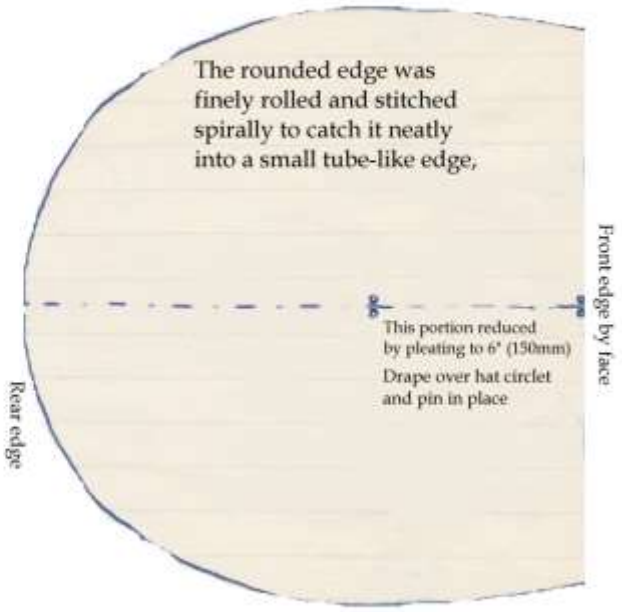
NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day Ladies Head Coverings

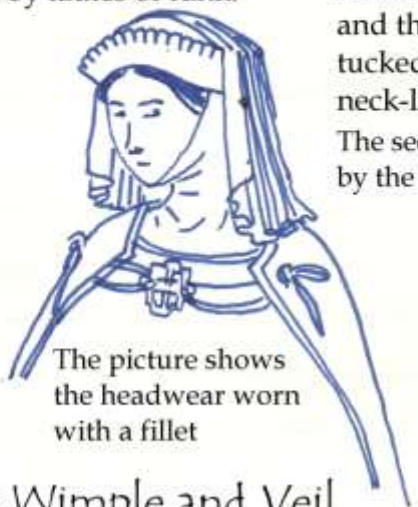


Veil / Headress of uncut cloth



Veil / Headress of cut cloth

The Veil was arranged in small pleats and then pinned in place over a brow circlet called a fillet, or else a"pill-box" style hat.
Veils were usually white and cut from very fine lightweight cloth. Linen was commonly used, or even silk by ladies of rank.



The picture shows the headwear worn with a fillet

The wimple was of a fine material usually white in colour, which was used to cover a lady's throat. It was stretched tightly under the chin, fastened together over the top of the head. Next, it was pulled and fastened around the back of the head and the lower edge was tucked smoothly into the neck-line of the dress.
The securing pins were hidden by the drapes of the Veil.

The wimple cloth shown is 42"x16" approx.
A fine and lightweight material was normally used. Linen or silk for the very wealthy

Wimple / Throat covering cloth

Ladies Wimple and Veil

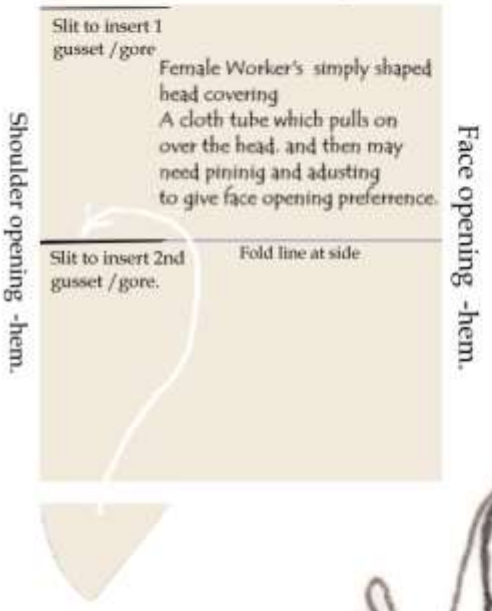
Comment from the Author. 'Somewhat slightly older, alternative modest fashions - but still worn in country areas.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

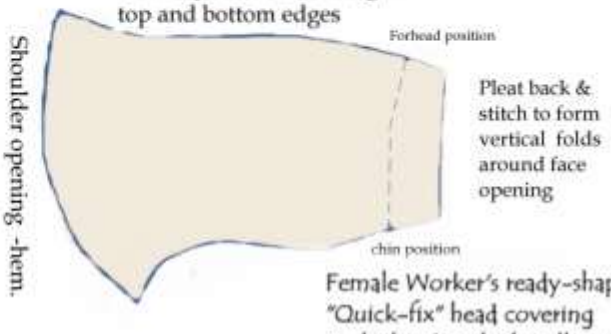
Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day Ladies Head Coverings

Lightweight linen cloth
1 piece and 2 gussets / gores.
insert centre gore & side gore
Sew up along left side.
Fold line is the right hand side.



Lightweight linen cloth
cut X2 pieces seam along
top and bottom edges



Pleat back & stitch to form vertical folds around face opening

Female Worker's ready-shaped "Quick-fix" head covering
A cloth tube which pulls on over the head. N.B. Allow for bulk of any hair style used.

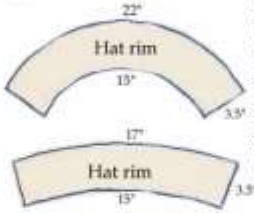
Veil & Wimple or tube-hood and Veil

Tube-hood (an older fashion-style) worn over shoulders or, if less cloth is used, tuck the lower-edge into the dress necklike.

The Barbette (made of linen) was placed under chin and then drawn up over the head and pinned together. Usually worn with a hat or a brow fillet.

Barbette
Lightweight linen cloth 1 piece

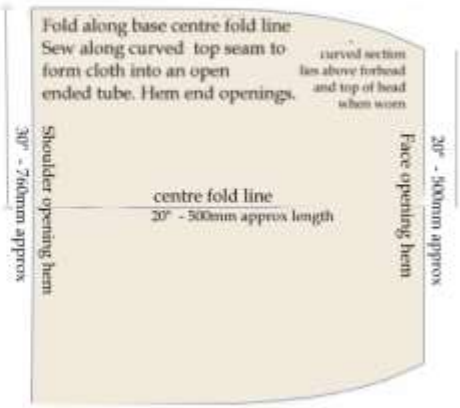
A typical lady's hat



Pieces vary according to the amount / style of pleating. Made of white linen. Reinforce rim with an internal core of stiffened material, such as glued linen or white Buckram / hessian.

Pleat the hat rim around the top edges.
Ensure the lower circumference measurement allows for head size & the thickness which may need to be added for the wearer's hair arrangements.

Lightweight linen cloth
1 piece



Comment from the Author. 'An unusual, although commonly used French work-clothes style worn in this period.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day French style Gown

A Gown with long sleeves which opened up along the inside seam is shown on continental manuscripts. The sleeves were unfastened and then drawn back to the rear and tied up in one, or more knots. Shown in instances of labouring work and domestic chores where the dress could become very wet.

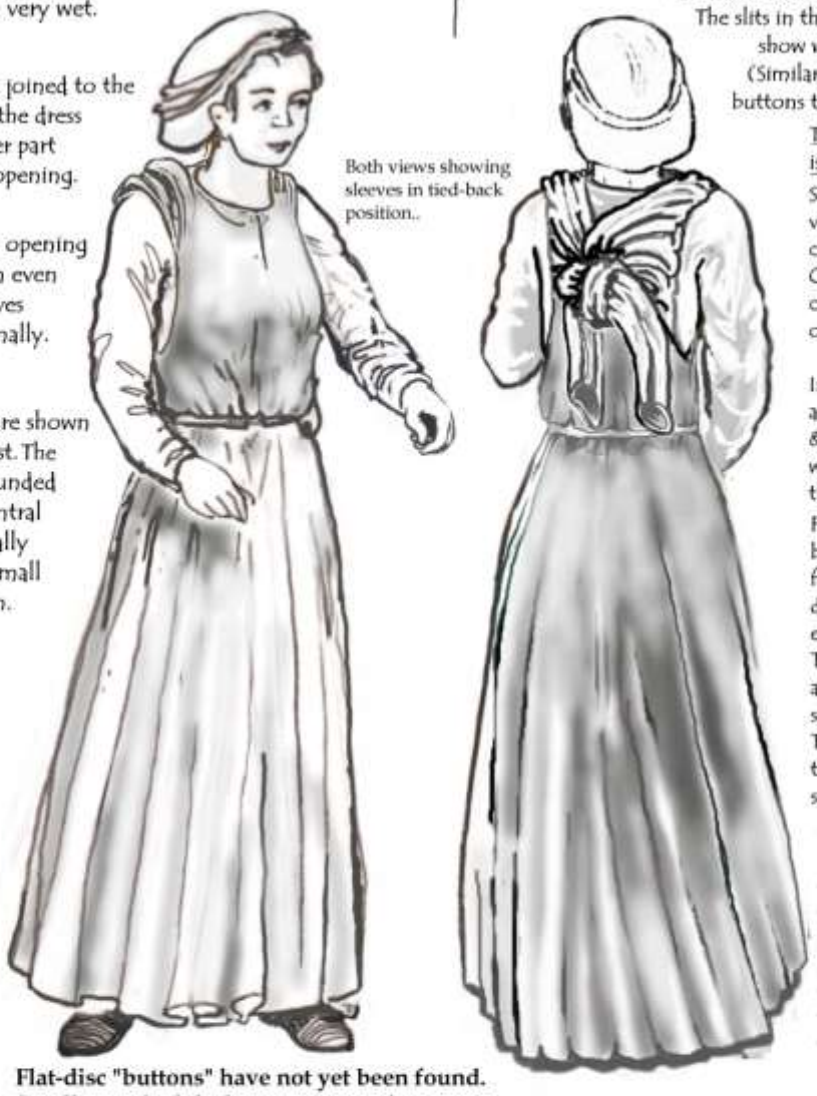
The sleeves are joined to the main body of the dress along the upper part of the sleeve opening.

The underarm opening is often shown even when the sleeves are worn normally.

These dresses are shown tied at the waist. The neckline is rounded with a long central front slit. Usually closed with a small circular brooch.

No veil is shown in these cases although hair-nets, cauls or crespines are still in evidence to keep the women's hair out of the way.

An alternative "French-style" neckline



Both views showing sleeves in tied-back position..

These over dresses appear in manuscripts around the 1250's and into later decades of the 13th C.

As no lacing or buttoning is shown, either or both are likely to have been used & colour matched to the cloth. The slits in the sleeves also do not show when worn normally. (Similar, later garments used buttons to close these seams.)

New notes on "ENGLISH BUTTONS"

The Button argument is finally solved.

Small buttons are often visible depicted at cuff closures at the wrists. On both male & female clothing from 1250 onwards.

In England buttons appear in drawings & on low-class wood carvings from the 1250's.

Finds of lost or discarded buttons have now been found in archaeological dig contexts with a known end-date of 1230.

They are not flat discs, but almost globular with a rear shank / shaft or cast loop. They are small & correspond to the size used for eyelet sewn holes.

There are more finds of lead-tin buttons dateable 1230 - 1270 than during 1280 - 1400.

There are 1/4 of the amount of copper / copper alloy type buttons from 1230 1270 and this is the version common later from 1280 - 1330.

It is highly probable that this dress style may also have been favoured by mothers needing to feed suckling children, but an enlarged neck-slit to the front of any dress wouuld also be needed for these circumstances.

Flat-disc "buttons" have not yet been found. Small round globular types were the norm. They can also be made from wooden beads, tiny pebbles wrapped in cloth and sewn up. Or made entirely of cloth.

The idea that something was "as cheap as a button" or "not worth a button" was common-place in 1265 (Gold, gilt or silver buttons were later items.)

Comment from the Author, 'The cloak was a garment worn by high and low, but the poor made-do with tatters.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

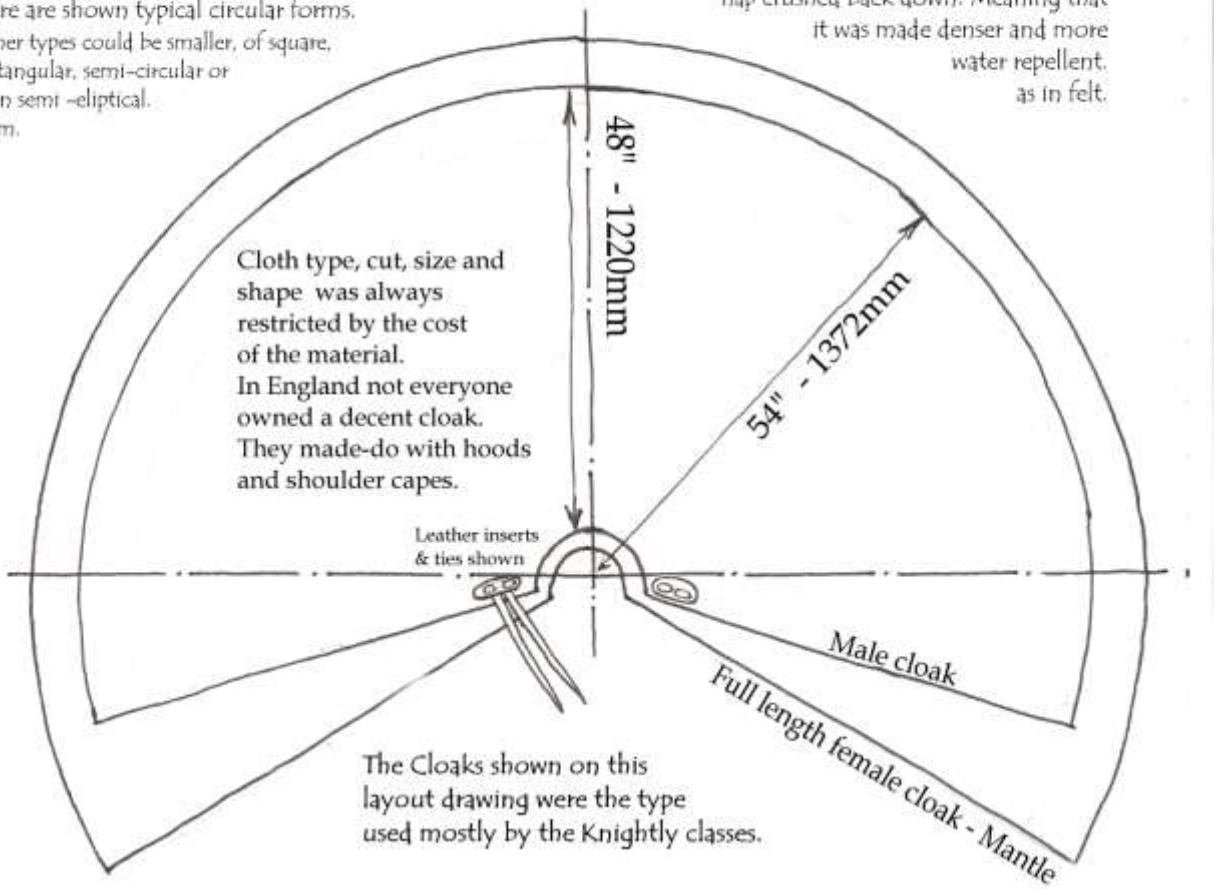
Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day

Used for warmth, shelter and also for showing status there were many types of cloaks. Items of clothing used since pre-classical times.
Here are shown typical circular forms.
Other types could be smaller, of square, rectangular, semi-circular or even semi -eliptical. form.

Mantles and cloaks

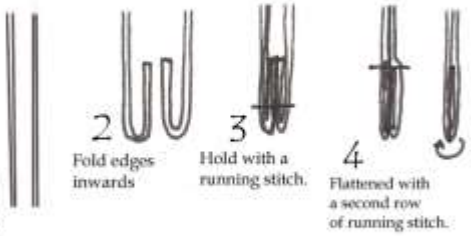
Cloaks were often made from well-fulled woollen cloth, or weaves which had been carded, combed and then had the raised nap crushed back down. Meaning that it was made denser and more water repellent. as in felt.



The Cloaks shown on this layout drawing were the type used mostly by the Knightly classes.

Teasled cloth was also used. Carded on one face only with the raised fibres then shorn for a high quality finish. Good clothing was sent off to be "revived" in this way. The process cleaned it and brought back the original colour.

Cloaks take a lot of hard wear. If they are made lined, joining and hemming can be acomplished as shown below.



To be worn properly cloaks were fastened together with cloak broches, roped-ties or leather thong ties. Tie holes should be reinforced. Use circular button-hole stich or Insert leather pieces sewn between the cloth of two-layer cloaks. These fastenings are by the front neck

Women's and Men's Cloaks

Comment from the Author, 'Purses were hung from waist belts. Worn on the left or right according to user's choice.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Clothes of the 13th Century Circa 1265

General wear day-to-day

Belts & Girdles were worn by all classes of society. The differences were in make & materials used. Some were tablet woven, hand-made at home and merely tied in place. Others were of expensive leather, properly tanned and finished with a belt buckle, metal mounts and even copper-alloy fittings such as purse hangers.

Wearing a purse, visibly on show,was a sign of wealth & prestige. It was a French and a "Marcher" fashion for both ladies and men. It was not thought a prudent option in large market towns or London. In the 1260's not to show a purse was largely due to fear of cut-purse thieves or robbery and lack of coin to place in one.

Women's Belts & Girdles.

Purse Hanger fittings for belts Circa 1230 to 1270

Copper alloy plates, bent to hold hanger -rod & riveted to belt.

This cheaper version has a plain bent bar used for the hanger.

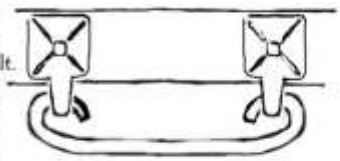


Plate bent around to be on both sides has one centre rivet.

Copper alloy strips, bent to hold finely cast hanger-rod & double riveted to a good leather belt.

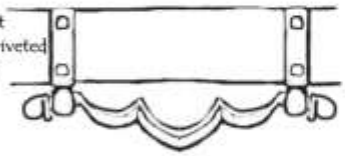


Plate bent around to be only halfway up the rear face has one lower rivet & a second upper rivet.

Barbette & fillet

Expensive cloak brooch.

1260's German female sculpture showing fur lined cloak and belted gown.

Barbette, fillet or "pie-crust" hat and hairnet / crespine.

1250's drawing after Mathew Paris of England. (With male captor omitted). Note belted waist over sleeveless gown.

1250's stone tomb carving note purse hanger, purse & knife in scabard are visible, hanging from belt with metal decorative embbellishments.

Comment from the Author, 'The clothes styles worn in this period were not "set in stone", many variations existed.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Earlier fashions from the 1200's still lingered-on well into the later decades of the thirteenth century. The terminology used for items left in wills was slow to change. New items did not readily appear. What did change was the better quality of English cloth and new colours to dye it.

What we would now term "the cycle of fashion" was altogether slower in pace amongst everyday working people. In general, in England and France it took up to fifty years for a brand-new "fashion" to become common-place. Also clothing was not always new. It was used, re-used and sold on to other owners. Not just once or even twice – but many times until the garment was utterly worn-out. Even after this, such cloth was used to patch other items. Ultimately off-cuts and final discards from linen cloth made their way to be found by archaeologists in middens. Wasteing cloth – no matter how poor it had become, wasn't an option for the members of medieval society.

The difference in appearance between high and low ranking persons was immediately apparent from the amount of clothing they wore, as well as by the quality and state of it.

Speaking of the middle years of the 13th century – before the main troubles of the Baron's war began, populations in the larger towns and city of London itself were beginning to be more prosperous. They presented themselves in clothing as good as they could afford. The famine year of 1257 caused severe hardship.

There were no official sumptuary laws in the 1260's as there were to be in the next century. It was simply a case that most commoners could not afford the luxury of high-class cloth or clothes.
Then, as now, there were always exceptions to rules regarded as being normal. Landed nobility would "gift" items of clothing to their servants, friends or members of other households on merest whim. A nearly-new dress or head-cloth often bedecked a maid and a slight smudge on a lord's new tunic, might see it bestowed on a keeper of the kennels – (which is as far down the pecking-order in a household as you could get). It's a certainty that after a day or two he would still look like a keeper of the kennels, but he could proudly boast about his lord's favour. The same thing holds true of other items, belts with fine buckles and fittings, costly knives and brooches were all items which were given away as gifts. Things which would be beyond the means of working people to buy under usual circumstances - Such items could also have been sold on.

Certain courtly fashions were quicker to take hold on the continent, this is true, but even Henry III's household were often subjected to what we would now call "cut-backs", mostly after he had rashly overspent his budget on favourite projects or given it away to his continental relatives. (This is not to say however, that these frugalities ever had a lasting effect on the King personally.)

Comment from the Author. 'Some women tucked their knife & scabbard in their leg hose, hidden by their dress.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Some comments on hose, the leg coverings commonly worn circa 1265.

Hose were basically wool cloth tubes – mostly made with an integral foot shape at the end. They were fairly close fitting to the shape of the leg and hose from the period were pretty flexible – almost elastic in the way they allowed the wearer's leg to bend normally.
Female hose seem always to have been made to fit and be worn up to around knee level only.
To get the best fit to the form of the wearer's leg, the cloth itself was bias cut. This added a lot more stretch as well. Most pictures and sculptures from the period very clearly display the fact that leg hose were mostly without visible wrinkles. The men's type were attached to the waist belt by ties or loops. The critical areas needing particular attention to measurement / or flexibility, are around the ankle; to enable the hose to take the size of the foot and also, (for the longer male version) the kneecap zone and the circumference of the top edge at upper thigh level.
Hose was made from the basic starting point of draping a piece of cloth with the weave laid out on the diagonal, (arranged on the bias) along the entire length of the leg. For women this was from knee to past the end of the toes. For men this was from high up on the upper thigh and then similarly past the toes.
Next the cloth is pulled around the leg, down to and over the ankle and then also wrapped around the foot. The cloth is marked off, allowing an excess for seams etc, then roughly cut to shape. Depending entirely upon the maker's variant (or mistakes); if and where needed, additional pieces or reinforcement patches are sewn in place after the main seaming has been carried out to help give the true shape of the leg and foot. This, in very basic terms gives hose having no front seam. The upper edge at the top of the leg opening was generally a double-fold hemmed finish.

Professional "hosiers" in large towns and London would have correct and fast ways of getting around cloth-cutting problems. In the real-world of the 1260's, hose making methods and patterns must have varied wildly for innumerable portions of hose-cloth have been excavated – all showing different variants, stages of wear and personal home-made repairs.
It is therefore true to say that any modern replica of sewn cloth which fits the leg and is comfortable to wear must be a valid re-creation. Hose were worn to destruction as all the evidence shows. If the feet areas were worn away, some men wore their hose rolled up around the ankles. Others converted them to a version having no true "foot" as such, only a strip under the sole of the foot like a stirrup. Images of ladies from the period show them wearing shoes and we cannot be sure as to whether poorer women in society also used knee-hose without feet sections in a similar way. Our best guess has to be that they made-do without any kind of hose at all.

From various reproduction versions we have found out some basic facts. The hand-spun wool used to make the yarns was from sheep of a long "haired" – i.e. long stapled – breed. These threads are in themselves more elastic, have more give to them, even before they are woven into cloth. Luckily, there are still rare-breed survivors from medieval stock. Now the popular breeds of British sheep produce fleeces with shorter, different fibres, thus modern wool cloth (unless made in the same original way) is not so forgiving and we have noted that reproduction wool-cloth hose quite frequently has an added bulk and a slightly more wrinkled appearance when worn.

Comment from the Author, 'The cloth made in England was famous and sought after throughout all of Europe.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the fibre types available in the 13th Century

The subject of spinning, weaving and cloth finishing is truly vast in scope. It is far too complicated a matter to put all of it into a simple description such as this. Therefore my aim in writing this section is not to teach anyone how to do things - you would need to find a weaving expert to do that; but it is to try and share a little basic information - for the benefit of general readers who may wish to find out more.
Cloth was generally able to be hand-made from three principle fibres in Britain during the 1260's. These were from two plants – Flax & Hemp, or using Wool from sheep fleeces.
Each sheep was sheared, not killed, and produced one fleece. A large bundle of fleeces were gathered together to produce a bale of raw wool, which was sewn up into a sack.
Each sack contained 255 or 256 fleeces. These weighed 26 stone; or if you like 364 lbs when full. Each fleece weighed about 1lb 6 ¾ oz. In the 1260's you could get hold of various types of wool.
A "good" quality woolsack cost £9.7s.6d (= 2,250d) & 1 fleece was 8 ¾ d. 1lb of wool cost 6 ¼ d.
A "medium" quality woolsack cost £6 (= 1,140d) a fleece was 5 ¼d. 1lb of average wool cost 4d.
A "locks" quality sack was £2.10s (= 600d) a fleece was 2 ¼ - 2 ½d. 1lb of poor wool cost 1 ¾d.

Other fibres were also used. Goat hair was another commodity which is mostly forgotten about. Goats are not sheared. They naturally shed hair around springtime. They were penned during this time of the year (in theory, that is,) and the shed hairs were collected twice over. The first collection gave coarse quality and the second, fine quality. It is different to sheep's wool and handling and spinning is quite difficult and more time consuming. Spun goat hair is quite thick. (Trying to keep a goat penned up must have been hell! They can eat their way out of - or jump over enclosures quicker than you realise.) However fine goat hair cloth is waterproof, heavy duty and very hard wearing. Some tents, heavy blankets and even cloaks were produced using it. Coarser cloth types were used as goods wrapping, burial cloths and "hairshirts". Goat hair cloth was known to be produced in Britain from the 7th to well-past the 13th century. It was cheaper than the wool equivalents, but had a downside… the hair used to make the thread often spins up better when it is unwashed and the cloth always tended to smell of goat… as you would expect.

Cotton fibres in the raw were imported into England during the 1250's and English weavers were beginning to test out its characteristics. Mostly, "Al-khatoun" (as some people badly miss-pronounced a stolen Arabic word) was used to stuff leather-faced gambesons or wool & linen-faced Aketons. This is a likely origin of the latter garment's "English" name. (It cost 1½d oz.)
By the 1260's cotton cloth as we understand it, was being imported from southern France and Spain. It was an exotic cloth which came to be sought-after for women's headwear. Mostly because it was new, lightweight and cheaper than silk. Some English weavers being "on-the-make" sold very, very fine white woollen cloth *as* cotton, in an effort to keep the real thing out of the market. Their product did in actual fact far outstrip cotton, it was described to be "as fine as silk".

Finally there is Silk. There was no *silk cloth* weaving at all done in England during the 13th century. All silks were imported during this time. (For more details please see the later addendum pages.)

Comment from the Author, 'My apologies to all weavers out there. This is a very condensed & potted description.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the weaving of cloth in the 13th Century

Having got the basic sources of fibres, they have to be turned into usable threads. (After several other treatments –type dependent, such as washing, blending, combing, carding – or bowing)
To produce yarns from wool or other fibres, they have to be twisted together and pulled-out to form a length of thread. In the 1260's there were no other ways of doing it other than hand-spinning with a drop-spindle, or hand guiding the fibres onto a form of early spinning-wheel. The latter speeded the process up, but was heavily criticised for years, for producing an inferior quality of thread. (This wasn't mostly the case, but helped to protect the home-made product.)

No matter, either way it has to be twisted. Early spinning wheel users from the 1250's -1290's were not forced by statute, to make thread in any particular way (i.e. direction of twist) it varied. Modern terminologies label twists as being "Z"-spun, or "S"-spun in type.

Z-spun merely means the twist of the yarn visually looks to go to the right /. The same direction as the axis of the letter "Z" itself. (The twist itself is anti-clockwise.)
S-spun merely means the twist of the yarn visually looks to go to the left \. The same direction as the axis of the letter "S" itself. (The twist in this case is clockwise.)

Combinations of differently twisted yarns produce different patterns, strengths & types of cloth. The number of strands – passed over or under in a repeated way also make additional changes to all aspects of a piece of cloth.

On the loom set-up itself, yarns hanging vertically (when on a vertical loom) are the "Warp".
On a modern 13th century (horizontal type) loom, the warp threads are laid out going outwards away in front of the weaver.
On either loom the threads that form the cross-wise parts of the fabric are termed the "Weft".
So, up and down / or front to back are the warp. Side to side are always the weft.

The weft has to pass under and over the warp threads, in order that it all holds together. Weaving in and out one strand at a time was a truly ancient manner of doing things.
(The general aspect of a narrow width loom can be seen in the picture on the front page.)
Upon looms multiple warp threads – or "ends" were able to be raised or lowered by means of moveable heddles / loops attached to raised shafts. These were controlled by foot pedals with connected straps. Doing this produced an opening, between one or more layerings of the warp, which weavers call the "shed".
Next, the weft thread is passed along sideways through the shed and when needed the weaver carefully beats it down to fit neatly alongside any previous weft threads already in position.
Next, by operating a foot plate or "treadle", the heddles and their attached warp layers, move either up or down. This action alternates the side of the warp which is presented. Changing the position of the shed opening.
Meaning each pass of the weft back and forth is on the opposite face of the warp lines. (1260's Looms could be set up to give four sheds & needed extra parts & treadles.)

Comment from the Author, 'All cloth made in England came in three main qualities. Fine, medium and coarse.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the weaves of cloth in the 13th Century

This sequence has now mimicked the ancient "in and out" hand weaving motion needed to make cloth, but it does so en-masse for an entire row of the weave. From now on the weaver repeats these actions until the cloth being worked is the length required, joining up new warp lengths when it becomes necessary and rolling the woven piece around a moveable bar at the loom front.

Cloth weaving cannot easily be described with words, the numerous variations in terminology quickly obscure the narrative. So, to over-simplify the matter, it is the different counts of threads which are grouped together from the vertical or horizontal direction – before the same pattern is repeated again - that changes the descriptions of the weave.

Cloth is often described as being a specific shed "Twill".
For examples: A 2.1 shed twill, a 2.2 shed twill, a 4.4 shed twill or even a 6 shed twill. (6 shed twills came about in 1310.)

A "Twill" is 3 or more warp threads and 3 or more wefts, in which each warp passes over (or under) 2 or more wefts - which are next (side-by-side) to each other, and which then pass over (or under) the next 1 or more weft threads. (Which is as clear as mud, I'm sure.)

By changing the thread counts, using differently spun yarn directions, thread thicknesses and thread colours, any initial cloth piece can be given an amazing possible number of varieties and coloured patterns. This was true in the 13th century, and it still is today.
Medieval cloth has a bewildering clutch of different names – which is why archaeologists revert to using modern terminologies. However, to get back to the point.

What types of cloth were used to make clothes & other items in 1265?

Not being too technical; commonly these were available:
Tabby cloth: The simplest cloth construction known, i.e. over, under; over, under… Formerly called "linen-weave". Now also being used for wool cloth. The most widely used, quickest to set up - and to weave variety. It came in all qualities, in plain un-dyed and dyed versions in wool and bleached and un-bleached flax and hempen cloths.

Comment from the Author, 'Some cloth was treated four times - by being teasled and then shorn at great cost!'

NEWES OF ye (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the cloth types available in the 13th Century

(2.1 twills had died-out in the early 13th century, both in England and elsewhere. Being more suitable to ancient weaving techniques than to horizontal looms, these relatively unbalanced materials were replaced by the preference for Tabby cloth; or, more likely, the need for speed!)

2.2 diagonal twill: A balanced weave known about since the iron-age throughout Europe. England produced fine versions of mixed Z/S spinning. These gave herring-bone, dog's-tooth and broken-lozenge type patterns. Both wool and flax could be used.

Four shed 2.2 diagonal twill: an up-to-date variety of the former. Woven on a horizontal loom, usually having four treadle plates. Often produced a diagonal well-patterned cloth.

Worsted: A 2.2 twill from Z-spun wool yarns. The wool fibres were combed before spinning which laid all the fibres in a parallel direction. When finished the cloth surface was also smoothed. They had a fine and noticeable diagonal surface pattern when left un-fulled.
These were a major English export from Yarmouth, indeed the cloth type may indeed have taken its medieval name from the village of Worthstede in Norfolk - It was certainly woven there.
(The cloth type itself had been famous long before the 13th century -since Saxon / Viking times.)
Worsted could be made to be extremely fine and these were said to be very flexible. The best was used for clothes, hose & summer gowns especially. Stiffer varieties had a shiny surface and these were used for furnishings; bed hangings, coverlets, wall hangings and what we would now call cushion-covers. Especially for the house-proud owner, they had gained a reputation for not allowing the dust to cling to them.
The un-fulled cloth variant was also cheaper……. (…..What's not to like? I'll take six!)

Broadcloth: As far as people in Europe were concerned, this was one of the most sought-after products from England. Woven on looms far wider than the average, there is evidence to suggest that one, two and even three weavers may have worked in conjunction with each other to pass the weft shuttle back and forth. This factor alone would make the cost of it escalate.
In the 12th century, broadcloth had been a plain and un-dyed product, which had to be exported to Europe for dyeing and to northern Italy for shearing; before being returned to Flanders and elsewhere for marketing. A very time-consuming and costly affair indeed. (Scurrilous commentators joked that English cloth finishers kept getting it wrong –cutting holes in it all!)
By the 13th century all of the finishing processes could be completed extremely well in England, but if the customer still wanted specialist dye colours, then for cheapness it was sent over to Flanders where a very deep dark blue – favoured by the French court, was readily available.
Otherwise after being woven and dyed, the cloth was fulled, teasled and sheared in England.
Naturally, this, like most English cloths was made in various qualities governed by wool type and the thread count per square inch.
Using modern measurements: Fine is 18 or 19 strands by 18 strands per cm approx. (48/48 per 1″)
Medium is about 14 or 15 strands by 15 strands per cm approx. (36/36 per 1″)
Coarse varied at around 10 strands by 10 strands per cm approx. (24/24 per 1″)

Comment from the Author. 'Samples of English Wadmal have turned up on waterfront digs even in Norway.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the cloth types available in the 13th Century

Scarlet: An extremely costly variant in the "fine" classification of "coloured-cloth". It was wool cloth, teasled and sheared up to four times. Contrary to the name, it wasn't specifically always produced in *that* particular colour. (The German cloth "Scharlachen" *was* a costly red velvet.) Although "Kermes", - called by the name "Grain" in England, was a truly costly dye-stuff that produced scarlet-red; this fabric was often a rich, deep green. A process needing multiple dye-baths of blue and yellow to achieve the wanted effect. (The Will Scarlet of mythical storylines about Robin Hood, may not have been wearing red at all – but green; or blue; or even yellow. One absolute fact remains however, the character portrayed was undoubtedly a flash-dresser with a lot of cash to spend on his clothes!)

Coloured cloth: was merely a generic name used for high quality wool cloth. It indicated specifically that the colour was dyed into the whole bolt of the cloth piece. – A uniform colour.

Going back down the scale of quality there were also:

Medleys: A generic name for cheaper cloth, in which the yarns were coloured by being dyed by each hank. The strength and colour of each batch was therefore subject to variation.
(These are probably the cloth types found by archaeologists which seem to have deliberate mottling effects left in the surface finish, which were not due to earth staining or degradation.)

Rays: Another cloth group name. Yet again the yarns used are hank dyed - by the batch load. In this case the weaving technique used and the warp set-up, was deliberately chosen to produce vertical stripes or horizontal bands of colour. It wasn't normal to fuller the piece, although some items with wider bands or stripes – done with thicker plies of yarn – could have these areas raised by teasling to produce textured, "fluffy" strips. (Quite a bold fashion statement in the 1260's.)

Serge: A wool cloth at this time with a cross-weave having a noticeable diamond or chevron patterning to its surface.

Tirreten: A mixed thread cloth with a linen / hemp (or very rarely a cotton) warp, and a good quality spun-wool / or wool clippings weft. It had a balanced weave with a density of around 8 – 10 strands to the warp and 8 – 9 strands to the weft per cm. (The weft was notably S-spun.)
It could be woven on a full width broadloom with two operators as it was noted for its use as coverlets, cloaks and even rugs. This was a popular cloth which continued in manufacture well into the 14th century. It was certainly available in striped colourways. Sir Bogo deClare (yep! That's his real name,) ordered 16 ells length of "Tirreten radiati" - striped Tirreten, which cost him 2s.2d per ell.

Burrel / Brunette: A dark brown fine to medium quality wool cloth. Very popular with all classes.
Plunkets: A range of very pale-blue, medium quality wool weaves were also popular cloths.

Comment from the Author. 'Linens of flax or hemp fibres had been commonly woven for centuries in Britain.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the cloth types available in the 13th Century

Beige: A cheap, mixed quality homespun wool cloth, usually left un-dyed in natural colours.

Frieze: A coarse wool fabric. Cheap certainly, but almost unwearable.
Wadmal: A Z-spun warp / Z-spun weft 2.2 twill of wool from double-coated sheep. (Both fine & Coarse fibres together.) Relatively rough to the touch although dense with 20 /15 strands per cm. Remnants are finds from dockside areas. London, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, King's-Lynn. Used mostly for cargo wrappings, in the same way as goat's-hair cloth. Not many takers for clothes!

Having dealt with the main wool cloths – and there are many more with obscure names – we can now move on to the Linens of flax and hemp fibre and their new rivals.

After growing the plants, there were numerous procedures which had to be carried out before any fibres were suitable to be used in the weaving process. Some required the use of copious amounts of water - and a strong constitution. (Like tanning methods for leather, the stink can be strong. Linen processors during these early stages were not very popular with other locals.)
After being woven most of these cloths were left in a raw griege (an untreated brown to grey to off-white) colour. For a smaller proportion of the pieces they were given a more expensive true-white, using bleaching agents or the action of bright sunshine and repeated washing. (This took a great deal of time - several months.) So, most people who could not wait that long, undertook the task of whitening their own linens.)
Naturally, the very next item described, disproves this generality. But I'm starting with the best…

Batiste: A semi-sheer, semi-opaque plain-weave linen fabric. Very lightweight, almost as expensive as silk. A speciality weave named after Jean Baptiste, a 13th century French weaver. This was imported via London and was usually sold only as a bleached white variety. Top quality.

Brychan: A dense Linen homespun cloth of a stiff and quite harsh quality. Used by Welsh of all classes as the over-sheet / coverlet on their rush strewn pallet-beds. A common item in Welsh houses which would have been popular with the Marcher-Welsh living near the border.

Cambric: A dense although lightweight Linen of woven flax with Z-spun thread with a balanced weave. Smoothed well, it had a hardwearing surface with a soft drape. In England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland it was produced in the whole variety of natural off-white or bleached white colours. Thought to take its name from a famous production centre – Cambrai, in France: but Cambrai became well known later in the 14th century. More likely Cambric is an English corruption of the Latin word Cambrenses, meaning "Welsh" crossed with the word Cymric – also meaning "Welsh".

"Chambray fabric". A generic term - as above. Most probably *another* English word-corruption, from dialect Norman-French "Chambrez" Private room. (The general population did not speak French, but merchants often spoke broken versions of many languages in the 13th century.)

Comment from the Author. 'Many of the early linen types and varieties have modern versions now, but in cotton.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning the cloth types available in the 13th Century


An example of a square veil arrangement worn with a hat

Lawn: A lightweight white linen.

Linens: Self-patterned cloths: Heavier duty linens with many variations in pattern visible on the smoothly finished surface. Herring-bone, dog-tooth, chequered, hexagonal, diagonals and lines were all woven.
Fancy borders and plain centres to the piece were also possible. These were almost always used as coverings, tablecloths, bed sheets & pillowcases. Many were treated to a smoothing process using a smoothing glass or polished bone tool. Methods which date back at least as far as the Viking period, if not earlier.

Huckaback: Similar to the linen cloth above but having no smoothing process done. Leaving a pronounced difference between the warp and weft faces which show on either side of the fabric. The overall look and finished effect is very much the same as any modern linen towelling cloth. In all probability this type *was* actually used for towels and napkins.
(This was their defined use in the 14th & 15th centuries – and has been ever since then.)

Couvre-chef or Kerchief cloth: A lightweight woven square of imported French cotton-cloth. A brand-new novelty in the 1260's.
(The linen weavers hoped the cloth would not become popular… Oops!)

Cendal or Sendal: Lightweight imported silk cloth. An expensive option for somebody.
(For more details concerning the varieties of silk, please refer to the attached addendum pages.)

Finally, apart from cloths there were many goods which were used as additions & adornments or were necessary to finish clothes.
These could be homemade anywhere in the many districts of England, but by 1250 the city of London had become the "de-facto" centre of professional industries for the making of "Narrow wares".

Narrow wares: These were the items which could be woven with various techniques such as: Finger looping, tablet-weaving, plaiting, braiding and tubular-braiding.
These occupations were in most cases the preserve of women. (In fact many of the above weaving types were ardently taken up as pastimes by wealthy women and the ladies of the royal court.)
The items produced for public sale by professionals included, colourful ribbons, braids, ornamental borders, laces, ties and narrow embroideries. (They varied from 4 to 54mm wide.)
They were worked in mixed threads, wools, silk threads and also gold or silver bound thread-work. The repertoire was amazing and the colours quite brilliant. The English were renowned for this type of delicate work – they would have been.
The art had been developing steadily since the 7th century!

Comment from the Author. 'Contrary to popular belief, there were some very fine colours available in 1265.'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Many women took great pride in having at least one dress item which had some decoration on it, even if it was only a modest ¼ " wide band around the top of a bag or small drawstring purse. Woven laces and ties were quite elastic and strong. Braids were hard-wearing. Tablet woven bands, apart from edge reinforcements, were also frequently used to make belts or strong straps for bags. A motif often found worked in tablet-weaving had squares alternating with crosses.

Concerning the colours available in the 13th Century

It is true that to a certain extent, the colours which were presented by any particular person on their clothes depended entirely on their rank in society. However, this wasn't down to set restrictions in the 1260's, but it *was* everything to do with affordability and access to the dye-stuffs or the cloth which was going to be made-up into the garments in question. Going away to visit a market might be a once a year affair. Some people never travelled and not everyone lived in a place such as London! Residents in towns had access to the odd "nyfle" or frippery, now & again. A working person in an out-of-the way village was unlikely to stumble across a rare and costly brilliantly-dyed silken fabric. It was even more unlikely that they could afford to buy it.
The average woman or man had to make-do with their lot. They had to use the cloth and clothes that were able to be made or obtained in their locality, but one should not assume that clothes were all poorly made because of this fact. Weavers were skilled at their art and took great pride in their work and what was produced was regulated by law, as to what was, or was not acceptable.

Many past historians regarded the 13th century as being a period of entirely drab-coloured clothes. Recent finds though, seem to indicate that was not always the case. (Careful experiments by some of our intrepid **Circa 1265** members - using original methods - have in fact proved that very pronounced and strong colours can indeed be manufactured in these old traditional ways.)

Great improvements had been made in the dyeing process using new mordants and with imported coloured minerals, barks, lichens, plant extracts and even imported mollusc dyes. (Archaeologists are still trying to find out what some of these substances are.)
To address the topic of Dyes would require a separate book… but here are a few basics on colours.

Wool came in many natural colours and most - if they had a distinct hue such as dark brown, pinkish-red, or very grey-white would remain that colour (un-dyed) in its cloth form.
Applying dye to these was considered wasteful as the colours always came out muddied.
These were the normal cheap colours.

Comment from the Author. 'Dyes were produced from natural ingredients. Stronger colours were expensive.'

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Black wool was highly sought after and was never mixed with other fibres. It commanded a premium market price. It was frequently used by monastic and military orders for habits & cloaks.

Colours that were commonly used are as follows: Greys, browns, beiges.
Light blues from woad.
Subtle pinks, peach, light yellows of various dye strengths, also orange-brown and brick-red obtainable from madder. (Rubina Tinctorum L. giving alizarin –from the root.)
Yellows from onion skins, or dyer's greenweed / broom (Genista Tinctoria L.) faded with use.

More expensive were: Stronger yellows from a commercially produced dye made from weld, (Reseda Luteola L. giving luteolin) which had better "light-fastness".
Mid-range darker blues, again from using woad. Indigotin is the colourant found in woad.
Cherry-red from brazilwood. (Heartwood from the Caesalpina tree family, used from the 1100's.)
Perse – which was a blue-green.
Lincoln green (from weld & woad). Kendal green (from broom & woad).
Rayed cloths: Blue and red, red and white, red and yellow, yellow and blue with added red stripes!

Very expensive came: Scarlet and red/purple, derived from kermes red. (Kermes vermillio)
Deep golden yellow. This was a two stage process – firstly using weld, then madder.

Extremely expensive dyes: Dark Blue as in French royal blue.
Outremer or Outremare Blue: Was a strong Azure blue from rare ground-down Azurite mineral from Northern Afghanistan, or lapis lazuli supplied from Egypt. Has to be leached strongly into another soluble mineral and then stained fast into the cloth.
Dark purples / Blue-violet from murex molluscs from the Mediterranean Sea were very, very rare.

Local versions of dyestuffs and methods of dyeing abounded. Dependent upon local plants, lichens, earths and the preferred mordant (fixing agents) used. Alum: Ammonia: Copper: Iron.
Despite having most mentions from the period, both woad and madder are the least found dyestuffs in the archaeological record from finds. (Another case of they shouldn't exist – but they certainly did!)
As far as indigo is concerned– it was definitely imported from India in the next century, but it was widely used in the Middle East long before then. The blue colour Indigotin is far stronger in Indigo and thus woad was to be disadvantaged. However there is a problem; woad & indigo proper can't be told apart by chemical analysis. The French King's favour for deep royal blue came about because of its depth of colour and the expense.
Woad had always been able to produce dark blue – so that was not a novelty.
Indigo or azurite derived blue dyes were exceedingly rare and truly, extortionately, expensive!
(Some azures and green colours could be obtained from mineral deposits in abandoned copper mines around Chester (owned by Prince Edward,) – however, these copper salt based dyes could be exceedingly toxic! So not for use on cloth to gain a strong colour. Very suitable for making paints and inks – just don't lick the brushes or the pen!)

Comments from the Author, 'Silk cloth imports started up in 1220's, but by 1250's were coming from Venice...'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

Issue Number XV. Addendum **For Circa 1265** **Dateline June 12th 2023.**

Concerning Silks in the 13th century.

Here is a very quick summary of general data, concerning Italian silks and cloth.

Before 1204 Byzantium was renowned as a centre of silk production. Most silks at this time were traded from here.

After 1204 Islamic Spain became a main producer.
The costliest cloths incorporated solid metal threads of Gold and Silver. Often used in church altar cloths, vestments and even burial robes. To cheapen these cloths (and to make them more wearable) thin metal leaf was now wrapped around linen thread cores to produce gold or silver threads that were lighter in weight.

Also gold leaf was applied to thin parchment or leather and then sewn down to produce the required shapes needed on fabric. This also continued to be used on banners & flags.

The incursions of the various "crusades" provided the opportunity to acquire looted silk cloths. However, trading contacts existed between the Islamic & Christian worlds, contrary to popular belief. Silks of many types were imported into northern Europe. Patterned silks came from production centres in what is now modern Iran. (English wool cloth went the other direction.)

Around the 1220's the supply of far Eastern silks was again obtainable. The huge distance trade routes were re-opened with China due to Mongol occupation and control over these vast areas. (They had eradicated the bandits!)

From the 1250's silk was actually woven in, and traded from, Venice.

By the 1260's silk was being woven in Lucca & traded from there in northern Italy.

It was at this point in time that silk cloths ceased being the sole reserve of King's, Churches & nobility. Silks were bought and sold in increasing numbers and so were also used by wealthy citizens.
- As one example; the London based "Paumer" family, who were merely brewers, possessed silks in their home.

Many plain coloured silks were available and were used as linings in garments by the richer members of European society

Around the 1250's, but no later than the 1270's, 'single' satins were introduced into England.
('Double' satins arrived slightly later and became noted in the late 14th century.)

Comments from the Author, 'How much? You must be mad…'

NEWES OF Þe (knowne) WORLDE

Concerning Silks in the 13th century – Continued.

'Full' silk velvet was made in the second half of the 13th century both in Spain & Italy. Only Kings & nobles who could afford it, purchased it. It appears as rare gifts in the 1250's. (It gets an English official mention in the Royal roll accounts later in 1279.)
In this form the cloth was rare but it was used for bed headboard covers & large bedspreads.
A headboard covering of full silk velvet listed on the royal account rolls cost 100s or £5!

Having a deep pile finish; when used for clothing it was regarded as being an extreme extravagance, for the cloth had to be cut and tailored and produced wasted off-cuts!

On the other hand;
'Half' silk velvets had also been developed sometime around the 1260's, & these were a cheaper version of the cloth which used linen or hemp for the weft which was concealed by a shorter silk pile.
Consequently this was just about half the price, but looked almost the same. Also now it was a cloth that was light enough to wear with some degree of comfort. It certainly produced the same gasps of surprised reaction from onlookers when worn made up as clothing! The early colours were deep red, (from kermes) dark blue from Outremer & a purple from imported lichen. So any of these were quite an astonishing fashion statement!

Supporting evidence for this also comes from surviving bills of sale & will bequests.
A Red velvet overdress would have cost £15 (if it was made from a 'full' silk velvet) but if it was made from 'half' silk velvet, then the buyer would only have paid £8 for the cloth. On the plus side the wearer could manage to walk around in it fairly easily! (Concerning rich cloths used by the FitzAlan household they would have been imported from northern Italy, via their family connections in Piedmont. Other noble families had their own trade connections or had to buy from London.)

Even so, some fabrics were far rarer. *Woven patterned silks* from unknown sources beyond the Outremer lands, (from the areas now called Iraq and Oman) were eye-wateringly expensive.

The cost of a cloak made from this material in 1262 was about £80. (This cost equates to being the same as an ultra-top quality "destrier" war-horse.) Using the lb weight of wool comparison from earlier in my writing at 6 ¼ d; being as there was 240d to the £, the cost of such a cloak would be a normal man's income for his entire life! Which puts such exceedingly rare items into their true perspective. (Access to these types of woven cloth increased dramatically in later centuries and they are then to be found in the archaeological record as beautiful remnants.)

Apart from being expensive, silk is very strong. Silks termed Lampas silks were extraordinarily hardwearing and pieces were in use for hundreds of years!
An ecclesiastic vestment over two hundred years old was listed in an inventory of items still in use when written about in 1245!

Comment from the Author. 'Sharing data, often highlights other possible interpretations which are also valid.'

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE

History is an ever-changing subject and always benefits, when more people who are interested in the lives of their ancestors take the first few enjoyable steps back into the past via what is now currently popularly known as "living-history". This helps to tell the story of the people of times past and enables a "snap-shot" comparison to be made between "then" and "now".

Perhaps not many people would bother about these things, is probably a first impression? In actuality we find quite the opposite. Most people, youngsters and "oldsters" alike are keen to learn about the past. Indeed it is the detail and immediacy of the experience which tends to enthral the members of groups such as ours and the general public who meet up with us.

All of a sudden they can more easily make a connection, the people of the past were in many ways just like them. Although our predecessors may have spoken or thought differently, they needed food, drink and shelter; to go about their work and enjoy themselves with their families when they could, no-less than we do today.

I personally term what we do as "retro-archaeology" which in many ways sums us up and must make us "retro-archaeologists". We work from what we know now, to try and recreate the past.

From there, for us in Circa 1265 it was only a short step to wanting to accurately re-create 13th century items, or (where that wasn't entirely possible) make similar modern copies which still portray things correctly. Using the idea that function most usually dictates form, and that therefore if an object does not work correctly (as should be anticipated) then there must be some detail which is not quite right; we have tried our utmost to replicate many 13th century items. Making actual objects (and finding out about the pit-falls and errors in trying to do it) also provides new information. Trying to master medieval arts & crafts *is* complicated, but rewarding.

Handling an item, looking at the article and then using it, even if it is a replica, gives a great insight -that becomes almost a revelation- concerning details often obscured, about people from our past. The members of Circa 1265, and numerous no-less dedicated members of other living-history and re-enactment groups merely try to show our versions – our current understanding of how that was done.

Critics may say that we can't possibly know if we have got things right. This is partially true, we aren't time-travellers. There will always be disagreements especially over interpretations of some things, for different people have access to different details. This should be a positive not a negative - for once again new information comes to light. However, overall our response has to be this. History books filled with dates, don't readily entice the modern audience and many people have lost touch with their past. Placed through the filter of modern entertainment values, "history" as displayed via the latest film and television is often debased and fictionalised to a much greater extent than any unwitting errors that we may have made. We are at least committed to try and get things right - for in effect, we *enjoy* tracking down the pieces of historical puzzles of our chosen periods. That is just one of the many reasons of why we do this.
To ***everyone involved***, my greetings, gratitude and undying thanks. A.Westmancoat. Circa 1265.

Comment from the Author. 'We need more information concerning the advent and introduction of knitting.'

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As general personal comments only:
Hosiery or knitwear as we understand it today – (although known about – for a certainty in Arabic regions and parts of Egypt - where woollen socks and caps have been found preserved,) - was it seems *exceedingly rare*. So much so, that it should be said to be non-existent in the British Isles during the period under examination.

This, it must be pointed out - until recently, was also thought to be the situation true of early "buttons". For until better documentation and find cataloguing came into use, such boring finds as cheap globular buttons went unrecognised & were classed as "decorative hanging ornaments".

In all reality the dearth of "knitted wares" is just as likely to be due to non-preservation in the general archaeological record. Any home-made item that could be unravelled, would certainly not have had any of its woollen yarn wasted – that would have been exceptionally unusual. Making yarns and threads by hand spinning was a time consuming effort. Also, wool costs were about 6 ¼ d per lb, (pound in weight) which was just for the raw wool itself, and that amount equates to the entire weekly income for a labouring man in the 1250's -1260's.

The similarity between simple knits and net-making is self-evident and the making of nets – including very complicated netting of extreme fineness used for women's headdress was commonplace in Britain. (The early knits were 2-ply worsted wools worked very noticeably in "an even stocking-stitch". These are trace items, caps and a child's jacket from 14th Century finds.)

My inference really is this; plain coloured items similar to those we would now term "woollen socks" should have been logically feasible. The ancestors, both Roman, Saxon and Norse also fully understood the process of weaving in the round, whereby a tube of cloth is woven, rather than a flat sheet of cloth done in a simpler vein. Tube-weaving must still have been known. Instead of producing a seamless dress, when scaled down, you have a woollen sock. It is not technically called knitting but can be achieved using netting needles. The name must surely be connected.

Some of the details on page 10 are based upon the two working women pictured on the front face of folio 18 (section 119) of the Shah Abbas / Cardinal Bernard Maciejowski Bible. (Now in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.) The bible noted was made in France. They are gleaning in a field and they wear leg coverings, presumably they are normal knee-high hose. They are subtlely striped, very thinly, in light and dark green, but here the pattern lines shown are not diagonal, they are horizontal. Which I understand means the cloth is unlikely to be cut on-the-cross (bias-cut). Consequently, I propose that they do look very much like knitted socks…

…Until we have better information, we have to revert to what is known and say that "knitted" woollen objects were still largely unknown in Britain.

Written & illustrated by A. Westmancoat. Member of Circa 1265. 12/6/23

Comment from the Author. 'Although women's clothing fashions were similar across Europe, there are many variants.'

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Odds and ends – bits of information

Clothing items were called "Wedes" using the Middle-English term of the time.
Items including clothes which were sold-on, (we term them second-hand,) were called "Otheres".

Cloth used on interior furnishings or décor were classed as being "Ostelments", but such items were only within the private buying reach of the very wealthy.

A gown in the 1240's – 1280's was basically just that, a long female dress; or the slightly shorter male version, worn as day-clothes by noblemen, merchants or the well-off when at home.
The "fashion" for wearing an entire outfit of one shade was just becoming known in the French royal and the Flemish ducal courts in the 1260's. It was then picked up by those who were among the very wealthiest of the English nobles who had extensive contact with relations and traders across the Channel.
(Thus by 1300 the term gown began to change its meaning to a set of matching clothes all in the one colour. The race to be visually included in a group at court had begun. Constantly changing these colours meant new clothes, expensive clothes, had to be bought – fashioned, to keep up. "Fashion" (as we know it) had arrived by the 1320's.)

The smooth wool broadcloth shown on the high-ranking lady pictured above, is the famously expensive and rare "Outremer" blue. Derived from azurite.

A Welsh lady with belted dress.

No head coverings.
A young English girl.

A Shropshire lady's tube headdress & veil.

An English neckline from Leicestershire
Circa 1260

Comments from the Author, 'I hope this information has sparked the interest of the general reader to read on…'

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Bibliography:

For superb original illustrations of 1250 - 60's data, try: **Pierpont Morgan Library. New York. The Maciejowski Bible.** Also, reproduced as **Old Testament Miniatures. London: Phaidon Press ltd. 1969. Introduced by Sidney G. Cockerell. ISBN 7148 1326 5.** Masses of relevant clothing data.

For brilliant and additional information direct from archaeologists (which focuses more on later centuries – due to the better survival rate of the cloth), read or buy a copy of:-

Textiles & Clothing 1150 – 1450 by Elisabeth Crowfoot, Frances Pritchard & Kay Staniland
A museum of London book by Boydell Press ISBN 978-1-84383-239-3.

For archaeological data on beads, belts, belt fittings, brooches, buckles, and strap-ends there are details a-plenty for the connoisseur within:-

Dress Accessories 1150 - 1450 by Geoff Egan and Frances Pritchard.
A museum of London book by Boydell Press ISBN 978-1-84383-351-2.

For archaeological data on knives and small-knife scabbards (both early and late) there are superb drawings and details of many London finds in:-

Knives and scabbards. Medieval finds from excavations in London by Jane Cowgill, Margrethe de Neergaard, and Nick Griffiths. An HMSO publication. ISBN 0 11 290440 8.

For ardent enthusiasts, the above volumes also have massive bibliographies which touch on these subjects and others spanning between the 7th to the 15th centuries.

For general written details of clothing through from the 6th - 15th century.

Se vêtir au Moyen Age. (Dress in the Middle Ages.)
By Françoise Piponnier & Perrine Mane. English translation = ISBN (0-300-06906-5.)

For the history leading up to the Battle of Evesham both extensive and general you may try:

The Baron's War (including the battles of Lewes and Evesham)
By William Henry Blaauw, esq, M.A. This work undertaken and written before 1844.
2nd edition. Published 1871 by Bell & Daldy, York St. Covent Garden. London.

It is of Victorian to modern readability (I have no idea if this is still in print anywhere. I have been informed that it is now readable "on-line".) His extensive research, (though superseded by modern tastes,) produces prodigious points of interest well worth following up. He took the trouble to sift through and translate many manuscript documents which are nearly impossible to get hold of even now. An excellent book with a list of full references, and footnotes to spare.

For modern reading and excellent information that gives a general overall view of the historical setting and military campaigns leading up to the battle of Evesham, try:-

Lewis and Evesham 1264-1265 (Simon de Montfort and the Baron's War.)
By Richard Brooks. ISBN 978 1 4728 1150 9 Osprey Publishing ltd. Published 2015.

NEWES OF þe (knowne) WORLDE is written & illustrated by A.Westmancoat.

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