

Marcher Freeman

Information for new members of Marcher Freeman

14 & 15th Century Living History Group

Welcome to the group!

The aim of our Group is simple — we aim to portray as accurately as research and materials allow, the life and lives of people of the 14 - 15th Century, with the emphasis being towards portraying the lives of the ‘ordinary people’ and artisans .

The name Marcher relates to the lands adjacent to the Welsh / English Borders. *Wales and it's borders played an enormous role in the Wars, it saw fierce fighting, political intrigue and some of the most important figures of the time came from Wales and the border regions. We do not however intend to just concentrate on the “wars”. The Marcher Freeman Group is not just interested in the military aspects of life, far from it; all aspects of life in 14-15thC will be explored.*

Next, clothing, equipment, gear or as most people involved with living history call it - Kit! To do living history well you need to have the right kit. Wearing and owning the right kit gives you an insight to what it was like for the people who used to wear it day in day out.. It makes you feel part of the group and to be honest just feels plain “right”. These first bits of

kit don't need to be expensive to get, as you only really need the basics as stated in the Minimum Standards.

Don't panic when you see the Minimum Standards list, you will not be expected to turn up to your first event with everything. It's best to come along to an event and see what people are wearing. Don't be afraid to ask to have a close look at how it's made, what the fabric feels like, where they got it from etc. It's only by asking loads of questions that you will avoid making costly mistakes. Don't feel that you are making a nuisance of yourself, people into living history love talking about kit and clothes and it's just as enjoyable to us to be able to pass this information to a new member as it is to make and wear the kit at events. Also, if you feel you have some information that you can pass on to the group don't be shy, pass it on. We as a group are not just here to parade around at events; we are also about the research and increasing what is known about the border region.

Lastly, have fun. We are serious about our living history, but after all, it is our hobby and hobbies are meant to be enjoyable so we try to make things as fun as possible.

Marcher Freeman 14-15th Century Living History Group

Clothing Minimum Standards and Standards of Appearance

All items to be of appropriate 14th C design and construction relating to the status you wish to portray

Firstly, *do not panic* when you see the minimum standards lists. No one will be expected to have it all on the first or second event. Before starting construction and certainly before buying anything please ask a more experienced member about what you are considering. They may not have the answer themselves but they will be able to point you in the right direction. Nothing is worse than spending hours making something or spending money

buying an item to be told it's not right. To avoid this please ask someone if you are not one hundred percent sure.

The Standards of Appearance are guidelines to help you maintain a high standard when on show to the public. The public will try and catch you out if they see any modern items and besides which it just looks and feels wrong to have modern items visible in a 14-15th Century setting.

Women

One or two shifts of linen.

Kirtle of wool.

One Pair of leather turned shoes of correct 14-15thC English pattern.

One or two pairs of woollen half hose.

Linen head-dress.

Leather belt with correct buckle.

Purse or belt pouch.

Eating knife.

Wooden bowl for eating and/or drinking.

Drinking vessel.

Spoon of wood or pewter.

One blanket of wool with no labels or modern stitching visible.

Men

One or two pairs of linen brais.

One or two shirts of linen.

One pair of joined hose.

Sleeved doublet.

Belt with correct buckle.

One pair of leather turned shoes of correct 14-15thC English pattern.

Eating knife.

Wooden bowl for eating/and or drinking.

Drinking vessel.

Spoon of wood or pewter.

One blanket of wool with no labels or modern stitching visible.

Optional items for women

Finer quality woollen or silk sleeves with correct 14-15thC pins.

Wooden pattens.

Woollen hood either fur, linen or woollen lined.

A woollen gown.

Optional items for men

A pair of single leg hose. These are a good idea if you intend to fight. They are less prone to rip and are very comfortable especially on warm days when they can be rolled down or worn over joined hose for extra warmth on cold days.

I white linen shoulder bag.

Wooden pattens.

A woollen hood either fur, linen or woollen lined.

A woollen cloak.

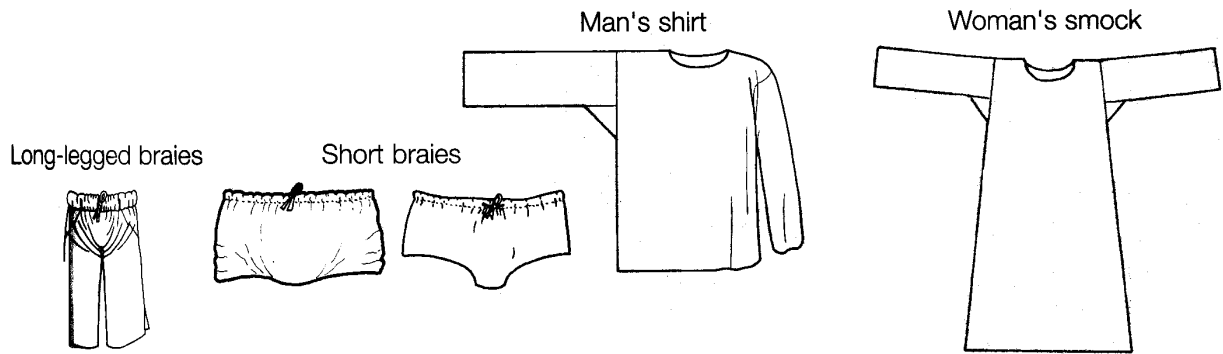
Linen pourpoint to be worn underneath a jack or on hot days instead of a doublet.

The doubling up of items like shirts, shifts and brais means that at events when the weather is suitable the item of clothing worn on the previous day can be washed and hung out to dry. The popular myth that everyone in the Middle Ages was dirty and smelly is wrong, and if the public can see clothing being washed it can go some way to help dispel that myth.

Under Clothing

Body linens

This is medieval underclothing, a layer of washable linen between the body and the outer clothes. Even if it can't be seen, the shirt or smock helps the other garments to hang well and will save on dry-cleaning bills. Medieval women wore nothing under the smock, but modern women must decide for themselves, bearing in mind that a bra will affect the line of the outer garment. Men should wear the appropriate style of braies, unless their outer clothing is long enough to keep everything covered even during active movement.

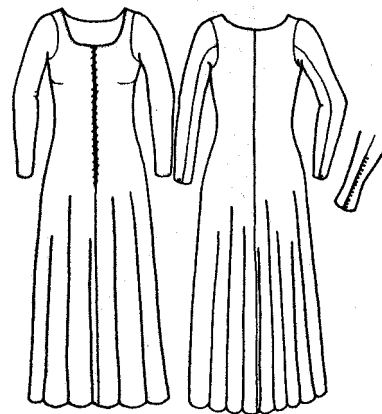
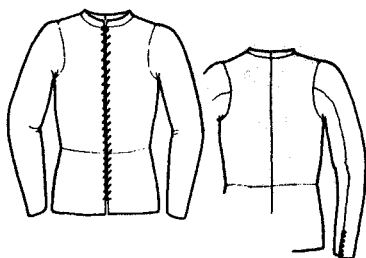


Main garments

This second layer is worn over the linens. Both men and women wore a cote of some kind from well before 1200 until about the mid 14th century, and it persisted even into the 15th century. About 1340 men started wearing the doublet, and by 1400 it was generally worn: the hose (see below) were fastened to it. The length of the doublet was related to the style of hose. By about 1370 women were wearing the kirtle, and it was widely adopted by the early 15th century. When working, men occasionally showed their doublets, but the kirtle was usually hidden.

Basic kirtle, later 14th century onwards

Basic doublet, mid 14th century onwards



Men's hose developed from short stockings to waist-high 'tights' (joined hose), while women's hose remained separate and much the same throughout the period. Joined hose tied to a short doublet, but many men went on wearing separate hose and a long doublet right through the 15th century.

Outer garments

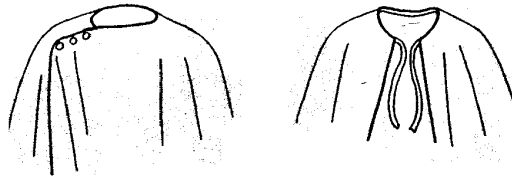
This is the third layer of the outfit and, together with the head-wear, the defining feature. Several different styles were in use at a time, and all but the very poorest people would have clothes for both working and best. Manual workers might remove the outer garment when working, but normally it would be kept on in public, or hitched up, or arranged to reveal the inner clothing.

Cloaks

Cloaks were worn throughout the period but are not essential for your outfit.

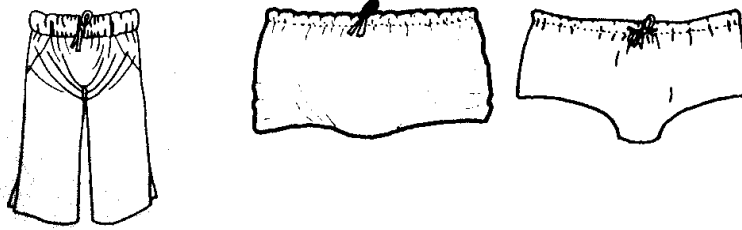
Cloaks were circular in shape with different shoulder styles and fastenings.

Cloak necklines and fastenings



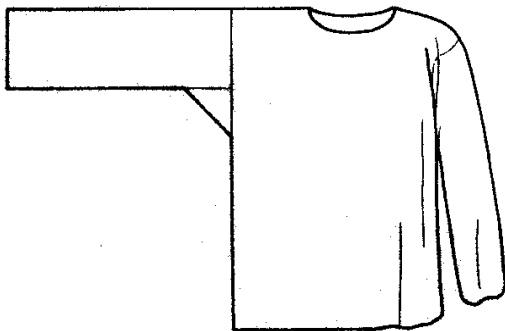
Men's Clothing

Brais



Fine linen with linen or leather waist cord. Easy to make, make sure the gusset is plenty wide enough to cover ones modesty if your hose rip. If you intend to wear single leg hose make sure legs are left longer. An easy method to make them is to use an old pair of baggy-ish boxer shorts and use them as a pattern. Make sure all exposed seams are hand sewn.

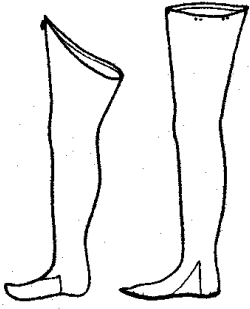
Shirt



Fine linen if you can get it. Cut a long rectangle as wide as your shoulders at the widest and as long as it needs to be to make the shirt come down to your mid thigh, back and front. Allow for seams. Cut slit for neck hole. Two tubes for sleeves and two squares of material for under arm gussets. The gussets go in to the shirt in a diamond shape and allow the arms to move freely. The neck can be either hooped, or a T-shape with either linen cord to fasten it or a small linen

button. All visible seams and hems to be hand stitched.

Hose



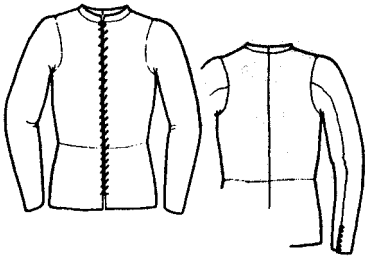
Strong finely woven wool with linen lining. Make sure the pattern is laid on the wool across the bias to maximise the amount of stretch. Get someone to pin the hose around your legs to get the shape and fit right. Making the compromise between the hose being fashionably tight and wearable can be difficult

Single leg hose

Legs shaped the same as joined hose. Pointed at the side to the doublet or pourpoint. Good for freedom of movement. Can be worn over joined hose in the cold either up or rolled down. Good in the summer where they can be rolled down.

Doublet

Basic doublet, mid 14th century onwards



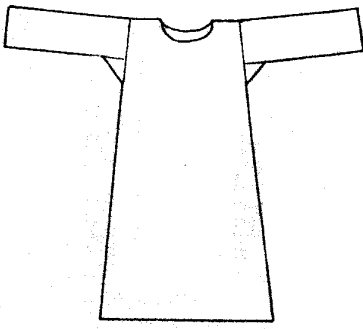
Good strong wool and linen. There are many patterns for doublets, plain sleeved, puffed sleeved, skirted, plain... Etc. Make the pattern in waste fabric to start with; you will need help with this to make sure you get the fit right. The fabric is cut with shaped seams to get the desired wasp waist shape with a good close fit. Line the doublet with linen.

You may wish to line the waistband where the point holes go with a double layer of linen for strength. Either points or buttons up the front. Doublets have quite high collars which should be fairly stiff but not uncomfortably so.

Women's Clothing

Shift

Long fine bleached linen item of clothing similar design to that of men's shirt with diamond arm gussets etc. Longer to mid ankle, lower cut round neck to be just showing above kirtle for modesty.

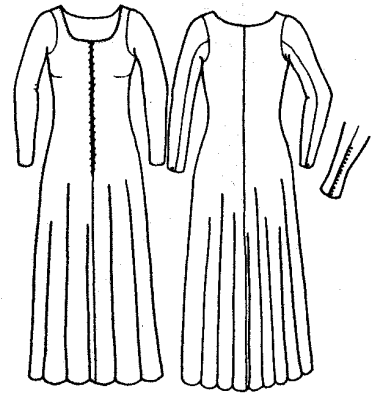


Kirtle

Fine woollen ankle length item with tight fitting short or long sleeves and laced up the front. Tight well fitting, made from six or eight panels of material, lined behind the front lacing holes for extra strength. Make in waste fabric first to get the fit right.

Extra sleeves can be made from a richer material, finer wool, brocade or silk depending on status. These are pinned over the kirtles sleeves for special occasions.

Basic kirtle, later 14th century onwards



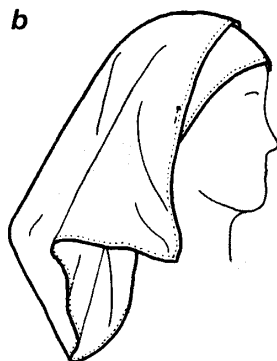
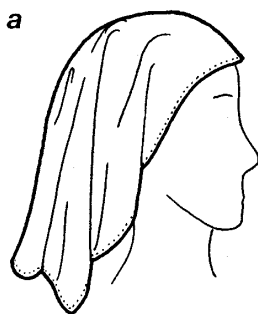
Half hose



Woollen footed hose that come up to just under the knee tied with wool, linen or leather.

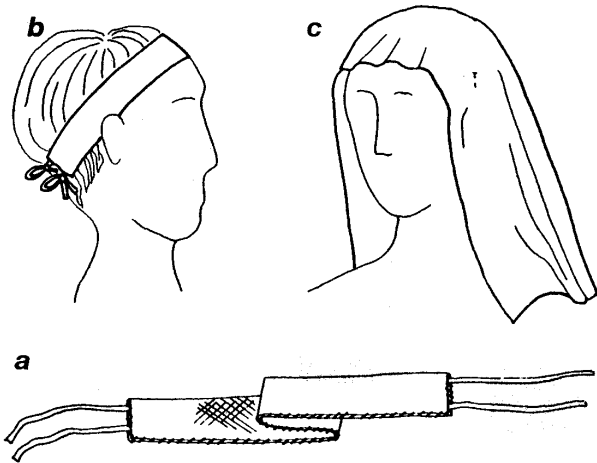
Head-dress

Fine linen to hide the hair and cover the women's modesty. Only young un-married women and prostitutes did not cover their heads. Alternative woollen hood is made from black or madder red wool. Women can also wear the same style hood as the men's.



a. This kerchief is 70 cm square. Knot two adjacent corners at the back of the head and allow the rest to fall back over the knot.
b. This kerchief is a rectangle, 70 cm by 120 cm. Knot the corners of a short end at the back of the head. Allow the rest to fall back over the knot then bring the end back up over the head, ensuring the back of the neck is still covered, and pin at the sides.

Fillet



A fillet is probably present in many head-dresses, even if it can't be seen. It can be an ornamental band, but here it is a functional one. It provides a foundation for outer layers. If you wear a fringe, use a fillet to hold it back under other head-wear. At its simplest the fillet can be a strip of linen tied round the head, but a made-up one is stronger.

a. The fillet. Cut a strip on the bias (for a better grip) about 10 cm wide and fold it lengthways. The band should not quite meet round the head. Turn in the edges and oversew all round, stitching two tape ties at each end.

b. Fillet in place.

c. This draped kerchief would be pinned to a fillet to keep it in place.

Shoes

These need to be of a type appropriate to the time period. The simpler designs can be made by yourself, or easily purchased from a specialist shoemaker. Simple turnshoes cover the widest timescale, but you may want something more fancy or perhaps a form of boot. Prices start at around £40 for a simple turnshoe. Generally, shoes have a single flat sole. This can be upgraded to have a low heel, which gives greater comfort & adds to grip on grass. For extra grip on grass during combat, low hob nails may be added, but these prove slippery on stone slabs! Also, some NT etc properties are unhappy about hobs on polished wooden floors. The internet & Authentic Markets will supply a wide range of designs & makers to choose from.

Belts

Thin leather belts with bronze, brass (bronze is preferable to brass) or pewter buckles and belt chapes. Designs vary and can be intricate. Tooled leather is common.

Many patterns for the above items exist commercially please check with a senior member to make sure the pattern is ok to use before buying cloth and starting. Unfortunately not all makers of patterns have the same idea as to what is correct or not, so if in doubt please check!

Standards Of Appearance

The woollen blanket that is listed in the minimum standards is not only for extra warmth on cold nights but it also can be used to cover modern “kit” such as sleeping bags and clothes that are left in the tent. Some people prefer to only sleep in 14-15th Century bedding. Ideally all modern equipment should be removed from the tents/event building when not needed and stored in either a “closed to public” tent/area or removed to cars etc.

Under no circumstances should modern kit be visible when on show to the public.

In the evenings when the public have left the site it is normal for everyone to relax and have a drink, it is much better and much more atmospheric to decant the drink into a 14-15thC vessel and drink from that rather than use bottles and cans.

The walking Christmas tree effect. It can be common to see re-enactors wearing all of their kit dangling from their belt. There is no pictorial evidence backing this up. It is rare to see anything other than purse/pouch and dagger hanging from belts and in many cases not even that. Keep items worn on the belt to a minimum; carry the kit in a linen bag, or your belt pouch/purse or keep it in your tent.

Military Minimum Standards

All items to be of appropriate 14-15thC design and construction relating to the status you wish to portray

Each man should aim to own the following and be familiar with their safe use and terminology.

Either an Ash or Yew self bow.

A linen arrow bag with practice arrows and at least one or two authentic arrows to show the public.

A side arm:- falchion or arming sword, blunt for practice use and sharp to show the public.

Buckler.

A sharp dagger.

A jack.

Sallet.

Bevor and/or maille standard.

Gauntlets or correct stout gloves.

Wooden staff.

Safety

Please read in conjunction with the Health & Safety / Procedures document.

Hand-to-hand

- i. Combat is for demonstration purposes only. Aggressive and antagonistic behaviour is not acceptable and will be dealt with in accordance of the Marcher Freeman Group rules of membership.
- ii. Participants accept full responsibility for their actions at all times. They must never enter into combat when not in full control of their faculties.
- iii. They must obey the orders of the officers *unless* it is clear to the combatants that it is unsafe to do so. If a dangerous situation is noted by a combatant they must stop all combat activity at once by shouting "HOLD!" and must notify an officer of the situation.
- iv. No one may enter into a combat activity unless they have been judged by a senior member of the Group to be safe and competent and that their weapons are checked to make sure they are safe, sound and fit for purpose.
- v. No burrs and sharp fragments on blunt weapons. No loose blades and fittings. Weapons must be maintained in a clean and safe manner and are the responsibility of the owner and more importantly the user of the weapon in combat. If in doubt do not use the weapon until a senior combatant has checked it.
- vi. Combat can only be carried out in a properly marked out area with no members of the public within the area and when the person responsible for first aid has been made aware that combat is about to take place.
- vii. A minimum of a sallet and good strong gloves to be worn by combatants during hand-to-hand combat.
- viii. No sharps to be worn within the marked out combat area.
- ix. All blows to be pulled.
- x. No head hits.
- xi. Thrusts to the body and limbs are considered unsafe.

- xii. During Marcher Freeman Group only displays, the public are to be made aware that combat is purely a representation of 14-15th Century combat practice. No falling over pretending to be dead.
- xiii. If we are attending an event organised by another group or Group the safety rules of the organising group will take precedence unless they directly contravene Marcher Freeman Group own safety rules.

Archery

- i. Do not point or shoot an arrow directly at a person.
 - ii. Never shoot an arrow when you cannot be sure where it is going to land.
 - iii. If another archer shouts "FAST!" hold your shot, remove the arrow from the string and lower the bow.
 - iv. Only shoot in a marked out safe area.
 - v. Inform the person responsible for first aid that you are commencing archery.
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Brief Chronology of the 15th Century

1413	Accession of Henry V.
1415	Battle of Agincourt.
1422	Accession of Henry VI Duke of Bedford regent.
1429	Joan Arc raises siege of Orleans. Henry VI crowned at Westminster.
1431	Joan of Arc burnt. Henry VI crowned in Paris.
1436	French recover Paris. Richard Duke of York lieutenant in France. Scotland at war with England.
1440	Eton College founded by Henry VI.
1444	Peace negotiations with the French.
1445	Henry VI marries Margaret of Anjou.
1447	Arrest and Death of Duke of Gloucester.
1449	War with France renewed.
1450	Duke of Suffolk impeached. Jack Cade's rebellion.
1453	Henry VI insane. Constantinople falls to the Turks.
1454	Richard Duke of York made protector. Henry VI recovers his senses at Christmas.
1455	First battle of St Albans won by York who becomes protector and Constable of England.
1458	Reconciliation of the Lords in London. Warwick at Calais.

1459	Yorkists defeated at Ludford. York escapes to Ireland.
1460	The Earl of March (Later Edward IV), Warwick and Salisbury invade England. Battle of Northampton. Henry VI taken prisoner. York claims the crown. Battle of Wakefield, York killed.
1461	Battles of Mortimer's Cross and St Albans. Edward IV proclaimed King 4 th March and crowned 28 th June. Battle of Towton. Henry VI and Queen Margaret flee to Scotland.
1462	Margaret invades Northumberland.
1464	Margaret seeks help from the French. Edward IV marries Elizabeth Woodville in private.
1465	Queen Elizabeth crowned. Henry VI captured and imprisoned in the Tower.
1468	Princess Margaret (Edward IV's sister) married in Bruges to Charles of Burgundy. Edward declares war on France. Warwick disgraced.
1469	Edward captured by Warwick at battle of Edgcote but is later released.
1470	Edward attacks Warwick and Clarence who escape to France. Warwick invades England. Edward flees to Burgundy. Henry VI restored. Sir T Mallory finishes Morte Darthur.
1471	Edward IV lands at Ravenspur 14 th March. Battle of Barnet, Warwick killed. Queen Margaret lands in England and is defeated and captured at Tewksbury. Her son Prince Edward is killed. Edward VI enters London 21 st May. Henry VI put to death. Caxton in service to the Duchess of Burgundy.
1472	Truces with Scotland and France.
1476	Margaret of Anjou handed over to France for ransom. Caxton sets up press in Westminster.
1478	Clarence attainted of treason and executed. Edward IV dies 9 th April. Edward V aged 12, Gloucester protector, later assumes crown as Richard III. Edward and Brother supposedly murdered in the Tower.
1484	Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, lands in Wales from France. Battle of Bosworth. Richard III killed. Richmond succeeds as Henry VII
1486	Henry VII marries Elizabeth of York.

1491	Henry VIII born
1492	Henry VII invades France. Columbus discovers West Indies.
1509	Death of Henry VII.

This is a very much-abridged chronology. The reality was much more complex and bloody.

Suggested Reading

Title and Author	ISBN
Medieval Military Costume Recreated in Colour Photographs. Gerry Embleton	1861263716
*The Medieval Soldier. Embleton & Howe	1859150365
Medieval Costume and Fashion. Herbert Norris	0486404862
The Wars of the Roses. Terence Wise	085045200
Wales and the Wars of the Roses. HT Evans	075091873X
The Pastons and Their England. HS Bennett	0521398266
Masters of Netherlandish Art – Rogier Van Der Weyden. Stephen Kenperdick	3829025718
The Paston Letters. Oxford World's Classics	0192836404
The Medieval Soldier in the Wars of the Roses. Andrew Boardman	0750914653
English Longbowman 1330-1515. Clive Bartlett	1855324911
*Sun of York. Ronald Welch	0192770985

* Books may be out of print; they are included because of the quality of information obtainable from them. You should be able to find them in libraries and possibly second hand bookshops.