A Gown of English Distinction

An English Burgundian Gown circa 1470-83

By Noble Sarah la Malade

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Shire of Roxbury Mill

Detail from “Confessio Amantis”, Possibly John Gower, England, perhaps London, ca. 1470 MS M.126 fol. 74v, Morgan State Library.

Synopsis/TLDR;

I have made today for this competition a full 1470-1483 English Burgundian ensemble, consisting of a linen shift, sidelacing silk taffeta kirtle with pearls on the neckline, and a wool worsted gown with a figured striped silk taffeta collar and cuffs, a white linen cap, and a red wool broadcloth open hood. All of these items have been 100% handsewn, using as period accurate materials and techniques as I could reasonably afford. The elements of this garb that I did not make include the pouch, demycent belt, and jewelry.

My main method of construction for the kirtle and the gown are based off of techniques observed from extant garments in the 16th century, as there are very few extants from the later half and third quarter of the 15th century, and there are little to no photos/digitization of the *insides* of such garments as to allow me to observe the construction methods at hand. As a result, I chose methods albeit outside of my intended period, but still historical techniques themselves, with the added benefits of these methods being a major timesaver, since they finished my seams while acting as the construction seam itself. As a note; the method of finishing my kirtle and collar was based on what I saw on the insides of a stole from the 14th century[1], where I believed I saw the inside edges of the stole being turned inward and the lining mounted with the edges also turned inwards, and then running stitched together. However, after further consideration and examination, as well as consulting outside sources, I have come to the conclusion that this lining is not original, but rather the work of a conservator placing a piece of stabilizing fabric on the insides with a running stitch. As a result, I can no longer vouch for the method of finishing I did on my kirtle and collar, as I can no longer 100% document it. I don't believe it is out of the realm of possibility for this method to have been used, but this warrants further research and study into the extants of the period.

[1] *Stole With Various Saints*. British, 14th Century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York, United States of America.

Fabrics

The fabrics for all of my garb are 100% natural fibers, as to keep as historically accurate and environmentally friendly as possible. The fabrics used for each piece are as follows:

- Tie on Cap: White Linen
- Red Open Hood: Wool Broadcloth
- Kirtle: Silk taffeta for fashion fabric, with a multilayered interlining consisting of Linen canvas, wool worsted, second layer of linen canvas, and a lighter linen exterior lining
- Gown: Grey-green lightweight wool worsted lined in white linen, with striped figured silk taffeta cuffs and collar

The Patterns

The patterns I used and modified are as follows:

- Linen Cap pattern based on "Reconstructing History 009 15th Century Women's Accessories: Proto-Coif"
    - Modifications: More length in the ties, and a larger turn-back 'hood'
- Open Hood Pattern based on "Reconstructing History 009 15th Century Women's Accessories: Open Hood"
    - Modifications: Added an extra gore in the back, shortened the overall length of the open hood in the shoulders, and added more width in the turn-back 'hood' element
- Kirtle pattern drafted myself
- Gown pattern based on "Tudor Tailor Early Tudor Woman's Gown: View A"
    - Modifications: Extra fullness and length in the train, took in the waist, added length in the straps, took in the sleeves, lowered the neckline, and self drafted the collar

The pattern for the gown has piecing at the sides, which by design of the Tudor Tailor pattern[2] is very similar to the piecing at the sides of the skirts of the gown of Mary of Burgundy[3] from 1475-1500. This is done to give the skirts optimal drape and fullness.

The collar pattern was based off of funerary brass memorials of the period, along with illuminations of the period which display a back view of Burgundian gowns. I choose the 'Peter Pan' like collar for my gown, as it shows up in numerous English examples, and is a good way for me to signify that my gown is English to onlookers (especially given my lack of hennin and butterfly veil).

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[2] Johnson, Caroline, et al. *The Queen's Servants: Gentlewomen's Dress at the Accession of Henry VIII*. pg 16, pg 35. Fat Goose Press, Surrey, 2011.

[3] *Gown of Mary of Burgundy*. Germanic (Burgundian), 1475-1500, Hungarian National Museum, Budapest, Hungary.

Construction

I shall break things down by item, for the sake of ease.

Linen Tie-On Cap

As there are no extant 15th century linen caps, I decided to mirror my construction based on the same principles and techniques observed in extant linen caps from the 16th century. The construction for this cap was rather straight ford; first, I finished all the edges of the garment, leaving the selvedge edges on the bottom of the ties as is for expediency sake. For the 'turn-back' flaps, starting at the hinge of where the cap itself met the flap, I ran very tight whip stitches, almost like finishing an eyelet. Then, on the flap itself, I began to hem in the opposite direction as the rest, so that when it's turned back, the hem appears consistent with the rest of the cap. Then, I whip stitched all edges together, stopping just short of where the top point of the cap would meet on the crown of the head. From there, I cartridge pleated the top of the cap in a circle, based entirely on extant linen caps from the 16th century[4] to allow an easing around the crown.

Left to Right:

Woman's Coif. English, late 16th–early 17th century, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, United States. Note the seam up the back of even whip stitches, and the circle of cartridge pleats around the crown.

Detail: L'Annonce aux bergers. Danse champêtre. Heures de Charles d'Angoulême, Folio 20V. French, late 15th century.

Red Open Hood

My open hood was very easy to whip up, done in an afternoon at the beach, sewing by the sea. Originally, this open hood had pink decorative buttonhole stitches around the edges, however my stitch quality was inconsistent, and so I took them out, and now prefer to simply wear it sans decoration.

[4] *Woman's Coif.* English, late 16th–early 17th century, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, United States.

Because of the fulled nature of the broadcloth used, there was no need to fell or hem anything, and as a result, the construction seams were done by a series of very small, scant, and tight whip stitches along the edges of the meeting fabric.

Open hoods were indeed worn with Burgundian gowns, usually by the middling to upper middling sort. Open hoods were also indeed worn in England, mimicking the fashions of the continent and of the earlier part of the 15th century; however it is very difficult to visually document them being worn with English-style Burgundian gowns. My main theory for this lack of visual evidence relies on the slightly untrustworthy nature of illuminations and other forms of visual evidence; from an outside eye, barring differences of the cut of the collar of said gowns, the main visual signaling of national origin for English women of this period was through the very distinct English forms of headwear, be it the English variation of butterfly veils, or the frontal veil theorized to represent widowhood[5]. In regards to illuminations, if they were created for the English audience in mind, the artist might be more inclined to display this form of distinct national headdress over any other, as to ingratiate themselves with their English patron, or to lend an air of familiarity to an English audience, and play into a sense of nationalism and national pride. It does appear to have been the 'uniform' so to speak for upper crust ladies, and thus, it would make these for this element of uniformity to carry over into visual depictions of said type of lady. It should also be noted how much the English mimicked and copied the style of the continent, Burgundy and France in particular, and thus it would make sense for middling sort to mimic the style of fashionable middling sort over there, were they most certainly *did* wear open hoods and liripipe hoods with Burgundian style gowns.

Open hoods and liripipe hoods were worn with the tie-on cap underneath, as shown below[6]. Speaking from practical experience, the under cap was likely worn to conceal hair and also provide an anchor to pin the hood to, concealed by the turn-back lappet, especially in the case of liripipe hoods with extra long liripipes, as they tend to want to fall off the head without being pinned in place.

[5] van Buren, Anne H and Wieck, Roger S. *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands* . The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, 2011.

[6] *The Book of Faiz Monseigneur Saint Loys, composed at the request of the Cardinal of Bourbon and the Duchess of Bourbonnois*. French. 1401-1500. 2829 folio 100r. Bibliothèque nationale de France.

The Book of Faiz Monseigneur Saint Loys, composed at the request of the Cardinal of Bourbon and the Duchess of Bourbonnois. French. 1401-1500. 2829 folio 100r. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Note the white underneath the hoods, displaying a small view of the linen cap underneath.

The Kirtle

This was the garment that required the most work and was the most time-intensive aspect of this entire endeavor. It is also the garment in which the most mistakes were made, both from a patterning/construction/structural aspect, and also from the historical accuracy/documentation front.

As previously stated under the Fabrics section, the bodice of this kirtle is made up of six different layers. They can be broken up into fashion fabric, interlining, and lining. The interlining was the most time-consuming element of this process, as the front bodice piece was all pad stitched together to marry the fabrics and to provide further stiffening. There is documentary evidence for interlining bodices of kirtles and gowns around this period in English history[7] with the use of buckram and canvas. I chose to go with the method of kirtle stiffening as described by Samantha Jean[8], a fellow historical costumer, and described to me by my friend Baroness Jane Fox (Mundanely Britney Mortenson), which entails pad stitching interlining 2 layers of linen canvas, sometimes between a piece of wool, as I chose to do. I decided to pad stitch in a particular pattern, mirroring the extant set of bodies of Pfaltzgräfin Dorothea Sabina von Neuburg[9] from 1598[10], with no pad stitching directly on the bosom itself, as to allow it to maintain a soft and natural swell (and save me time from having to do more pad stitching). While the Pfaltzgräfin bodies are well outside of my intended period, I still chose to use this placement method, as it saved time and was still very effective in terms of bust support.

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[7] Johnson, Caroline, et al. *The Queen's Servants: Gentlewomen's Dress at the Accession of Henry VIII*. pg 16, pg 19. Fat Goose Press, Surrey, 2011.

[8] Jean, Samantha. "Elizabethan-Early Jacobean Petticoat: Not Your Mama's Corset." *Elizabethan-Early Jacobean Petticoat: Not Your Mama's Corset*, 23 Aug. 2015, couturecourtesan.blogspot.com/2015/08/although-garment-has-been-finished-for.html.

[9] Arnold, Janet. *Patterns of Fashion: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women c1560 – 1620.* New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1985.

[10] *Pair of bodies worn by Pfaltzgräfin Dorothea Sabina von Neuburg*. Germanic. 1598 Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, Germany.

The pattern for my kirtle (and all of my bust supportive bodices/doublets) is constantly evolving as I become more skilled at patterning itself, and as I continue to lose weight. As a result, my old bodices are no longer fitting me, and my pattern continues to shrink. I have a very defined hourglass figure, which causes some difficulty in regards to bust supportive garments. The point at where my underbust becomes my bust is the point of most strain on my garments, and it the number one place of buckling under the stress of the sudden and great change in 3-dimensional shape and measurement. In this kirtle, that is no different. In this pattern, I chose to raise the neckline of the kirtle above where it is historically accurate for it to lie, to try and curtail unwanted attention and behavior. However, this choice, along with the choice to put a stirp of buckram down the center front to act as a pseudo-busk, greatly backfired; a combination of the kirtle still being slightly too large when fully laced, the high neckline, and the buckram, creates a perfect storm for epic buckling where the under bust meets bust. Luckily, the kirtle is designed for the express purpose of being *underneath* a gown, and is not supposed to be completely shown, so I can manage to hide the buckling portion from view.

In regards to construction, I worked on the interlining first, pad stitching the layers of the front bodice pieces together in a manner imitating the Pfaltzgräfin bodies.

Interlining layers basted together and then pad stitched for extra stiffness and bust support.

The interlining was cut without seam allowances. Next, I basted the linen lining onto the interlining, folding the seam allowances around the interlining. From there, I first sewed pearls to the silk taffeta fashion fabric along the neckline as seen in the numerous portraits of Elizabeth Woodville[11], the English Queen from 1465-1483. From there, I turned the seam allowances inward, and from there, topstitched with a running stitch along all the edges to secure it.

Elizabeth Woodville. British School. 1500. The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology, Queen's College, Cambridge, UK.

This method was based on what I observed on an extant stole from the 14th century housed in the Met; in a picture of said stole, you can see a series of running stitches marrying the lining with the exterior fabric. I took this at face value, and ran with it, deciding to experiment with this technique for this kirtle. I make it a point to try and experiment with all of my garb, challenging myself to learn a new technique for all of my pieces. However, ***I can no longer vouch for this method or its historical accuracy.*** After reviewing the images after the fact, and after I had already used this method on my kirtle, I began to have suspicions that what I was actually looking at was ***the work of a conservator, attaching a modern piece of stabilizing fabric to the extant garment.*** This was later confirmed to me by a conservator and fellow SCAadian, Baroness Anna Dokeianina Syrakousina (Mundanely Angela Costello-Perrone), who I thank greatly for her help in properly identifying this. However, all is now committed to the silk, and thus, it shall stay forever whether I like it or not.

From there, I whip stitched the pieces together at the shoulder straps and began work on the skirts. The skirt is just 2 simple rectangles, with the selvedge at the hem for efficiency sake. The skirts are box pleated, with the edges whip stitched together, with a small slit on both sides to allow ease of access. Next, I added lacing rings on top of the silk fashion fabric, as seen in many 15th century depictions of kirtles or laced gowns, sewn down in a 'Z' spiral lacing pattern, sewn down with two

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[11] *Elizabeth Woodville*. British School. 1500. The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archeology, Queen's College, Cambridge, UK.

strands of doubled thread per suggestion by Mistress Morgan Donner[12].

Master of the Baroncelli Portraits. *Saint Catherine of Bologna with Three Donors* . Bruges (made) 1470-1480, The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, UK. Note the lacing ring securing the gowns of both women, place on top of the exterior fabric in the case of the woman on the left.

My first time wearing the finished kirtle during my last fitting.

[12] Donner, Morgan. *Making 17th Century Stays - Historical Corsetry*, YouTube, 22 Mar. 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=77p_Csx2trA.

The Gown

The construction process for the gown followed a method found in extant doublets[13] in the 16th century[14], which involves turning the seam allowances of bot the fashion fabric and the lining inward, and then whip stitching these together as both a finishing and construction seam. Now, it may seem a great leap to choose a sewing technique of a vastly different period by 100+ years than my intended impression, however I chose this method for several reasons; 1) This method is a major time saver, as it both finishes your garment while also acting as the construction seam, 2) it *is* a historical method, and 3) barring further finds, digitization of the insides of the scant extants of the period, and more digging and research on my end, it is difficult to discern what *precisely* are the historically accurate construction methods for the late 15th century, hence, I went with this time saving historical method. I have not found the name for this method/stitch, but it does bare a striking resemblance to a method seen in the 18th and early 19th centuries, where the seam allowance of the fashion fabric and lining are similarly folded inwards, but instead of whips stitches, the needle works its way through the layers one at a time, crisscrossing, alternating each layer with each stitch. This stitch has been identified by Pernilla Rasmussen[15] as the 'English Stitch' in a tailoring book from 1824 by F. Heyder[16]. It is interesting to see the progression of this method from century to century, and how the method evolved. The body of the gown was made up in this fashion, including the neckline and hem of the sleeve (initially).

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[13] *Doublet.* Eastern European. 1600, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

[14] *Doublet.* European. 1580, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA.

[15] Rasmussen, Pernilla. *Skräddren, sömmerskan och modet: Arbetsmetoder och arbetsdelning i tillverkningen av kvinnlig dräkt 1770-1830* pg 188-189, Nordiska Museet Handlinger, 2010.

[16] Cox, Abby. Stowell, Lauren. "Historic Stitches and How to Sew Them." *The American Duchess Guide to 18th Century Dressmaking: How to Hand Sew Georgian Gowns and Wear Them With Style*, Page Street Publishing Co., 2017, p. 13.

Doublet. European. 1580, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA. Note the small whip stitches securing the pattern pieces, and also the tiny whip stitches on the edges of the tabs finishing the edges.

Doublet. Eastern European. 1600, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, New York, USA. Note the small stitches securing the lining to the exterior, particularly the small whip stitches at the edges of the tabs.

Next, I focused on the sleeves. I choose to have my cuffs be turn-back, as seen later in the 15th century and into the early 16th century, as well as in my intended impression period, albeit not as often. I chose to do this for the versatility of being able to have both long, seemingly untrimmed sleeves (especially for when I plan to eventually re-style and repurpose this gown for a 1480's Florentine giornea), which was also done during my intended impression period[17] [18] [19], but I have yet to see said sleeves with cuffs worn down in English depictions. I chose to have the sleeves closed at the wrist through eyelets and lacing; lacing at wrists was done in this period, particularly in menswear and in Italian style dress, so it would make sense for this method to be employed for wrist closure for women's wear as well.

Detail of Cuff Lacing on Effigy Said to Represent Either Gertrude or Grace Lacey, English, St. Andrew's Church, Prestwold, Charnwood, Leicestershire, © The Tudor Tailor, 1520.

This photo taken by the Tudor Tailor gives a visual as to how such lacing can be done in conjunction with turn-back cuffs. While it is out of my intended impression, I believe that this method could still be employed within the intended impression period, if not originating from it.

I worked eyelets on the wrists, spacing them in a spiral 'Z' formation. From there, I prepared the silk of the cuff, mounting it onto the linen lining of the sleeve, folding the seam allowances inward, and sewing it *solely* onto the linen layer, careful to not catch the wool with my needle with a running stitch. As previously stated, I can no longer vouch for this method using a running stitch, and now believe this would have either been done by a slip stitch or by whip stitches.

[17] *Margaret of York and Her Ladies at Prayer*. *Abbaye du Saint Esprit;* Oxford, Bodl. Lib,. MS Douce 365, Fol. 115 (detail). Ghent, 1476.

[18] *Jan de Witte and His Wife, Maria Hoose*. Triptych of Jan de Witte (wings); Brussels, Mus. royeaux des Beaux-Arts. Bruges, 1473

[19] *Virtues and the Vices in the City of Man*. St. Augustine, *Cité de Dieu;* Paris, BnF, MS fr. 18, fol. 222v (detail). Paris, 1471-72.

Brass Funerary Memorial of Isabella Boleyn, Blickling Church, Norfolk, United Kingdom 1485. This piece also displays distinctive 'turn-back' cuffs, as opposed to simply having fur trim along the cuffs. This follows suit with Northern European fashion circa 1483 to the early 16th Century, which among the various styles of sleeves fashionable also included straight sleeves with turn-back cuffs[20] displaying a contrasting fabric or a fur lining. I am of the belief that this idea was in practice for Burgundian gowns pre-1483 however, as I have noticed it in many different illuminations[21] [22] [23] and paintings[24], along with examples of these same sleeves with the cuff turned down, so the sleeves reach the fingertips, displaying the changeable and versatile nature of said sleeves.

The next bit of business had to do with the collar. The cut of the collar was influenced by illuminations and English funerary memorials like the one of Isabella Boleyn above, and the 'Peter Pan' cut. I found this style very charming, and very distinctly English, which would be the key for an observer to square this gown as English without wearing the English 'bonnet' or hennin and butterfly veil combo. The back of the collar is cut in alignment with numerous depictions of the back view of Burgundian gowns.[25] [26] [27]

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[20] Johnson, Caroline, et al. *The Queen's Servants: Gentlewomen's Dress at the Accession of Henry VIII*. pg 22, pg 48. Fat Goose Press, Surrey, 2011.

[21] *Jean de Courcy is led form the Forest of Temptation by the Seven Virtues from 'Chemin de vaillance',* Bruges, Master of the White Inscriptions, late 1470s, Royal MS 14 E II, f. 194r

[22] *Maximilian of Austria Presents the Collar of the Golden Fleece to a Nobleman, While Mary of Burgundy Presents a Collar to his Wife.*Diego de Valera, *Traité de noblesse;* New Haven, Yale Univ., Beinecke Lib., MS 230, fol.118 (detail). Bruges, 1481-82.

[23] *Caxton Presents the Book to Maraget of York.* Raoul Lefèvre, *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*; San Marino, Huntington Lib., Inc. 85076, fol. 1. Bruges, 1473.

[24] *Trial by Fire.* Justice of the Emperor Otto, Brussels, Mus. Royaux des Beaux-Arts. Dirk Bouts, Leuven, 1472.

[25] *Regnault de Montauban, rédaction en prose. Regnault de Montauban, tome 4, detail.* French, 1451-1500. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms-5075 réserve Folio 84v

[26] *Tristan welcomes the girl sent by Isolde from 'Tristian in Prose', detail.* Genève, 1470, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 189, f. 177v.

[27] *Jean de Courcy is led form the Forest of Temptation by the Seven Virtues from 'Chemin de vaillance', detail.* Bruges, Master of the White Inscriptions, late 1470s, Royal MS 14 E II, f. 194r

Right to Left:

Regnault de Montauban, rédaction en prose. Regnault de Montauban, tome 4, detail. French, 1451-1500. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms-5075 réserve Folio 84v

Tristan welcomes the girl sent by Isolde from 'Tristian in Prose', detail. Genève, Bibliothèque de Genève, Ms. fr. 189, f. 177v.

Jean de Courcy is led form the Forest of Temptation by the Seven Virtues from 'Chemin de vaillance', detail. Bruges, Master of the White Inscriptions, late 1470s, Royal MS 14 E II, f. 194r

These curious back views of the collar of these gowns allows us to glean many different details about the way they are cut. First, the collar appears to drape over the shoulders, in contrast to it simply being a trim applied to the neckline; this is also further made evident by looking to the point of this oddly shaped collar, which sometimes dips past and below the belt. While my collar does not go as far, I cut it this way because I was running on limited fabric yardage, and had to cut this collar twice, as the first time I cut it I did not cut it on the bias, and as a result it did not lay properly at *all*. I debated simply not having a collar at all, which was done in Burgundian gowns, after the style was first introduced in the Burgundian Duchess Margaret of York's court in 1473[28], however this would shift the intended locale of this project out of English territory, so I decided to try again and re-cut the collar, this time both in accordance with the curve of the neckline of the garment, and on the bias. The collar is interlined with two pieces of medium weight linen, cut without seam allowance, and from there are sandwiched between two layers of the same striped figured silk used in the collar, with the seam allowances turned inwards, and from there topstitched and secured with a running stitch. Once again, I must emphatically state that I can no longer vouch for this method using the running stitch in this fashion, and now believe that this would have been done using a slip stitch or a whip stitch. From there, I whip stitched the collar to the neckline, and *voila!* I have a complete gown!

[28] van Buren, Anne H and Wieck, Roger S. *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands*. Pg. 224 . The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, 2011.

Now, you may be wondering why there is no trim on the hem of the gown, as seen in the majority of continental illuminations. Well, further in the 1470's, pushing past 1473 a newer, more simpler style of gown was first introduced in Burgundian fashion, said to "... imitate the kirtle of countrywomen and young girls…" (van Buren, Anne H and Wiek, Roger S, pg. 224)[29], in which it became fashionable to shirk the traditional elements of Burgundian garb; collar, cuffs, and trimmed hem. This trend then migrated over to England and is seen particularly on funerary brass memorials[30] [31][32].

Left to Right:

Detail of Brass Rubbing: Thomas Peyton, Esq. English, Cambridgeshire, Isleham, UK. 1484. Rubbing by Kathleen H. Cairns. Spurlock Museum of World Culture at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, US.

Detail of Brass Rubbing: William Robins, Catherine and children. English, Hertfordshire, St. Albans, UK. 1482. Spurlock Museum of World Culture at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, US.

Detail from View of the Tomb of John Hertcombe and Catherine his Wife in Kingston Church Surrey. English. All Saints Church, Kingston Upon the Thames, Surrey, UK. 1488, sketch made in 1780. The British Library, London, UK.

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[29] van Buren, Anne H and Wieck, Roger S. *Illuminating Fashion: Dress in the Art of Medieval France and the Netherlands*. Pg. 224 . The Morgan Library & Museum, New York, 2011.

[30] *Detail of Brass Rubbing: Thomas Peyton, Esq.* English, Cambridgeshire, Isleham, UK. 1484. Rubbing by Kathleen H. Cairns. Spurlock Museum of World Culture at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, US.

[31] *Detail of Brass Rubbing: William Robins, Catherine and children*. English, Hertfordshire, St. Albans, UK. 1482. Spurlock Museum of World Culture at the University of Illinois, Urbana, Illinois, US.

[32] *Detail from View of the Tomb of John Hertcombe and Catherine his Wife in Kingston Church Surrey*. English. All Saints Church, Kingston Upon the Thames, Surrey, UK. 1488, sketch made in 1780. The British Library, London, UK.

I put lacing rings on the inside of the center front of the gown in a ‘Z’ spiral lacing pattern, however I found that this resulted in buckling in the garment, and choose instead to simply sew myself into the garment with neat and tidy whip stitches, a method of closure most certainly done within period.

Results

Lessons Learned

The primary lesson learned in this project is that it's okay to fail. I failed at many different steps in this project, and it taught me the valuable lesson of learning to give myself the space to fail, but still be able to learn from the process and be happy with what I *did* create.

Initially, I planned on having the proper hennin, prong, and veil structure worn by upper crust English ladies. But, I failed at this attempt. I choose to do a short cut, and not wire my hennin, which obviously did not work, and resulted in a concave and floppy structure, and I did not cut my veil properly, which resulted in a veil too narrow for the proper drape for the distinctive 'butterfly' veil. I decided to scrap the whole venture entirely, instead choosing to wear my tie-on cap and open hood, which while still appropriate, makes the whole ensemble less 'English-looking'. However, I know that while I *could* have remade my hennin and veil, it would have lead to an intense amount of stress and physical fatigue, and it was the more mentally and physically smart choice to accept things the way they are, and try again at another time without the pressure of a deadline or competition.

All in all, many lessons were learned in this endeavor, and it has armed me with new knowledge as to how to continue going forward, and what to do differently next time. I learned a valuable lesson in regards to documentation, and to not take my first impressions and deductions as gospel, and to take several passes over documentation to reaffirm or reassess my ideas. I look forward to my next attempt, and can't wait to try again!

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Pair of bodies worn by Pfaltzgräfin Dorothea Sabina von Neuburg. Germanic. 1598 Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, Germany.

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