

**Navy/black wool late 14th c. hood with liripipe, and blue silk edging and  
buttonholes**

**Charlotte Zifcsak (Lady Mathilde)**

Northern Lights  
**March, 2004**

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## Summary

This is a mid to late 14<sup>th</sup> century hood, patterned based on finds from the London textile deposits, from Greenland, and from other textile finds. It is made with wool twill, lined in linen, and entirely hand stitched with silk thread. Like extant period hoods, the buttonholes were stitched with silk, and the buttons are hand made. Artwork of this time period often shows the tight fitting closed hood sported by men, but is surprisingly sparse in depictions of women. There are a few examples, and those, coupled with royal household inventories detailing the provisions of cloth for women's hoods, lead me to believe that for women, this type of hood was not so much a fashion garment, as one of necessity.

## Introduction

Hoods are ubiquitous in the art of the high Middle Ages. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a change took place in the fashions of Europeans: clothes got tighter, men's garments got shorter, and women started showing the shape of their bodies. Hoods were not excluded from this transformation. In earlier centuries, the common hood was a large, slip over the head garment, but in the mid 1300s there was a change:

John of Reading, whose *Chronica* is regarded as having been written between 1366 and 1369, described what he saw as innovation in 1365, and thought that it was not surprising that, in view of such insane frivolity, the Plague, which the English called the *Pokkes*, had returned. Hoods, he declared, were so minute and buttoned so tightly round the neck that they could hardly be pulled on to the head. Their liripipes were as thin as string, hanging down over their paltoks and other such extremely short closed woolen garments, sewn all over.<sup>1</sup>

## Materials and Techniques

- The body of the hood is twill wool, lightly fullered, and is lined in linen. The original hoods found in London and Greenland were all tabby woven cloth; however, wool twill was also a very common fabric discovered among the London textiles.<sup>2</sup>
- The pattern of the hood is based on several extant pieces. Several hoods found in Greenland have a particular design that matches that of an extant hood found in a late 14<sup>th</sup> century London deposit:

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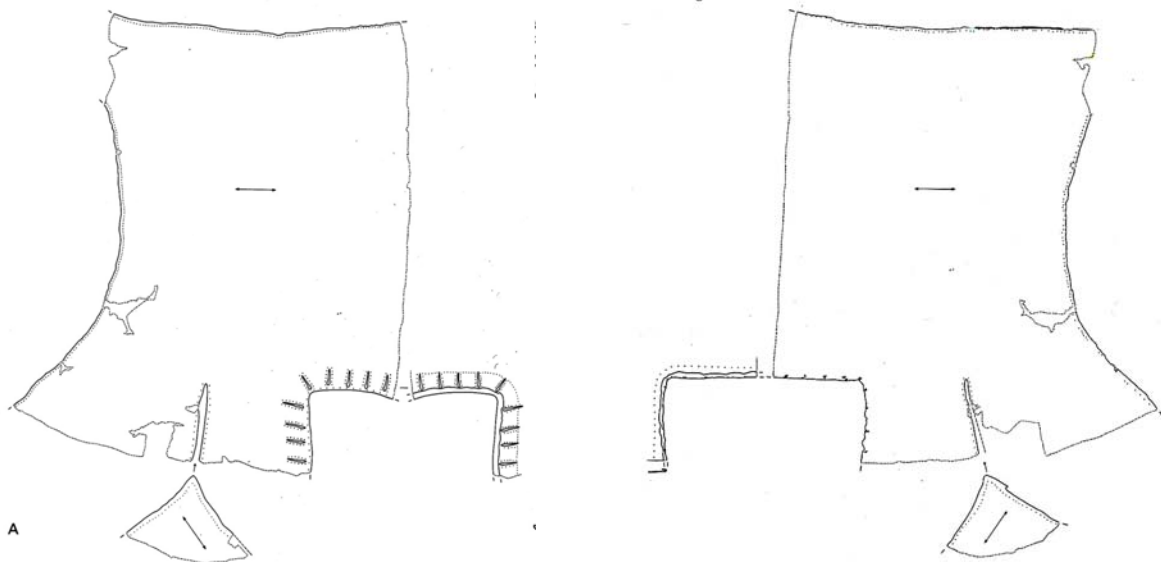
<sup>1</sup> Newton, pp. 53-54.

<sup>2</sup> Crowfoot et al, p. 27.

The late 14<sup>th</sup>-century deposit at BC72 yielded a damaged but almost complete hood, now in six pieces. It is of medium weight tabby-woven cloth, stained a dark brownish-black, which has not been tested for dyes. The two largest fragments are head sections, each later having had a large finger-shaped piece torn away from the front edge. This edge shows no evidence for a hem and so a strip including the hem may have been cut away; this also seems the case with the lower neck edge. Extra fullness has been achieved at this edge by insertion of two triangular sections (gussets) at each side, roughly below the ears. This form of construction is known from several excavated hoods dating to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, most notably two from Greenland, now in the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.<sup>3</sup>

As information on the London hood is quite complete, and it has buttons and buttonholes, I chose it as the basis for my pattern (Fig 1). The Greenland hoods demonstrate that the cutting on the London find was not an anomaly, and likely was a common method throughout Europe (Fig 2).

- The skirt of the hood is made large enough to encompass my shoulders with the addition of triangular gussets. I dropped the hem of the hood to hit just below my bust line for modesty and warmth. Looking again at the illustrations of hoods in this style, I believe it would have been more fitted around the shoulders. Next time I will try shaping the gusset seams for a more fitted look. As it is, this hood is practical, because both my husband and I can wear it.

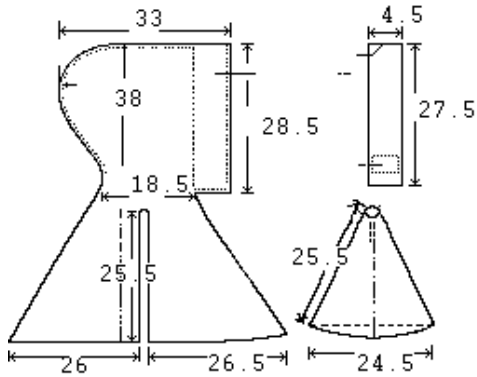


**Fig 1** Line drawing of remains of late 14<sup>th</sup> c. hood found in London<sup>4</sup>

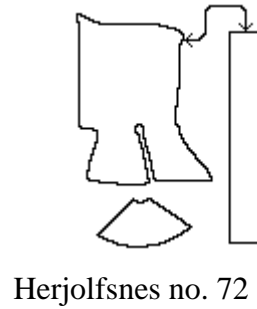
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<sup>3</sup> Crowfoot et al, pp. 190-191

<sup>4</sup> Crowfoot et al, pp. 190-191



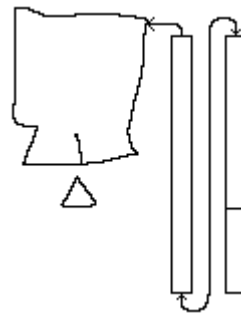
The Sunnfjord Hood



Herjolfsnes no. 72



Herjolfsnes no. 73



Herjolfsnes no.78



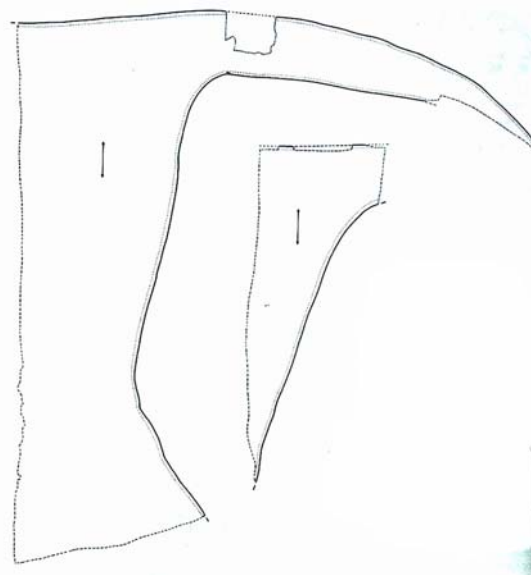
Herjolfsnes no.76

**Fig 2** Remains of Scandinavian hoods<sup>5</sup>

- The liripipes on many extant hoods were cut as a separate piece to save fabric, however, one example did have an integrally cut liripipe (Fig 3). I cut my example as one piece, although it is likely that one that long would have been cut in several pieces.

- I chose to join all major seams using a simple and common running stitch:

Today the most traditional form of seam is that where a line of stitching runs parallel with the two raw edges to be joined, and it has to be assumed that by the middle ages too this was the most usual method for joining textiles. Although a number of seams of this kind survive among the London textiles, the stitching threads have almost completely disappeared, leaving well-defined stitching holes. From this evidence



**Fig 3** Hood cut with liripipe<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Carlson [on-line]

<sup>6</sup> Crowfoot et al, p. 192.

it is possible to show that in the majority of cases a fairly fine *running stitch* was usual for holding the two edges together.<sup>7</sup>

As I have learned on other projects, this does not lend much strength to the seam, but my lining method helps to strengthen that join. Before I lined the hood, I protected the raw edges of the wool, and flattened the seams with the following treatment:

Added strength was given to these seams through the use of a row of running-stitches on each side of the seam, worked through both seam allowance and outer layer; parallel with and close to the seam (about 2-3mm). This held the seam allowances underneath flat...<sup>8</sup>

- Most references that I can find to lining a women's hood refer to the use of fur:

Agnes la Poullaine, whose duty it was to wash the king's head, was apparently the only female servant to be given livery; Kathelot the royal hatter does not seem to have received any. Agnes, like the male servants, was given marbre shortcloth, six and a half ells of it; her furs were *grosses popres* and a miniver hood-lining, so her services must have been rated higher than one would have expected...<sup>9</sup>

As I do not have fur available to me, I decided to line the hood with linen. There is evidence as linen being used on clothing as a lining material, so I consider it at least possible, if not likely, that a hood may have been lined in linen. According to Marc Carlson, on his website, "[the Uppsala gown] is made from gold fabric, a blend of gold and silk. It is made from four quarters, with no gores, and attached sleeves. From the waist up, it is lined in heavy linen. From the waist down, it is unlined."<sup>10</sup>

- Each piece of the lining is individually attached to the garment before they are attached to each other. When laying out my fabric, I cut the wool and linen as one piece. I basted each lining section to each main section, about 3 inches from the edges, to hold them together while stitching the seams. Once the seams were finished on the wool, while holding the linen out of the way, I used a running stitch in the ditch to attach half of each lining seam to the wool seam. I then folded over the remaining half of the seam over that running stitch, and whip stitched in place, attaching it to both the wool and the other lining piece.

I cannot clearly prove that my lining method was used in medieval hoods; however, there seems to be little proof of any particular type of lining method. I used a process which functionally gave the most strength and protection to the seams of the hood, as the lining is attached both to itself, and to the seams of the wool.

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<sup>7</sup> Crowfoot et al, p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>9</sup> Newton, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> Carlson [on-line]. Mr. Carlson's cites his source for the Uppsala gown info as Geijer, Agnes, Anne Marie Franzen and Margareta Nockert. *Drottning Margaretas gyllene kjortel i Uppsala domkyrka*. Stockholm: Kingl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien, 1994. [The Golden Gown of Queen Margareta in Uppsala Cathedral].

- The lining was attached to the wool around the face and front opening with *Grandeur* twisted silk, silk pearl #5, in a blanket stitch. I searched for a distinct period method to attach a lining to a garment in an opening or neckline, but could not find any specific information. I was also looking for a decorative stitch. A blanket stitch was known at the time, and in at least one pre-medieval instance was used on the raw edge of a wool garment.<sup>11</sup> I first turned the wool and linen seam allowances in towards each other, and worked the blanket stitch on top. The bottom hem was similarly treated, although with a running stitch in lieu of the decorative blanket stitch.
- The extant hood that I am using as my inspiration was buttoned up the front:

The most interesting aspect of the hood is the sequence of buttonholes under the chin. The remains of nine buttonholes are preserved, 12-13mm long. Both the facing and most of the stitching are now missing, while the stretched outside edge of the buttonholes presumably resulted from tension on the button stalks during wear.<sup>12</sup>

Other extant hoods had buttons, making it seem like a common occurrence: “This hood, which was similarly made from a tabby-woven cloth, originally had at least 17 buttons and, like the hood from London, has a slit for a gusset let into the lower edge at the side of the neck below the ears.” And:

In London, there are also fragments of another buttoned hood made from a tabby-woven cloth of medium weight. It has four buttonholes remaining, 13mm in length (the sewing thread and facing are again missing), and a gusset slit with traces of stitching. All these features are in almost exactly the same relationship to each other as on the more complete hood.<sup>13</sup>

The buttonholes are finished with *Grandeur* twisted silk, silk pearl #5, in a blanket stitch, also known as a buttonhole stitch. As in medieval examples, I cut the opening, then worked it with the stitches for protection. The stitches are set apart, at generally under a millimeter, as are the extant examples. The buttonholes were also placed relatively close to the edge of the cloth.<sup>14</sup>

- The buttons are self stuffed, made with the same cloth as the hood itself. I started with a square of fabric, and made a running stitch about halfway from the center to the edge. The method described in the *Textiles and Clothing* book uses a circle, however, I feel that cutting a circle takes longer than a square, ends up with more waste, and doesn't affect the shape of the end product. While pulling the running stitches tight, I fold and stuff the outer edges into the button itself, stitching it shut upon itself, shaping as I go along. Again, the method described in *Textiles and Clothing* does not fold the edges in, but allows them to hang out. The self-stuffing method does allow

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<sup>11</sup> Jones [on-line]

<sup>12</sup> Crowfoot et al, p. 191.

<sup>13</sup> Crowfoot et al, pp. 192-193

<sup>14</sup> Crowfoot et al, pp. 170-171.

for buttons of the same shape and profile as the actual extant buttons. All buttons shown from the London deposits are stitched to the edge of the fabric.<sup>15</sup>

### **Pictorial Evidence**

There are, actually, relatively few pictorial depictions of women wearing this style of hood. Most feminine hoods were worn later, and in the open style of the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. However, I have found enough examples to determine that they were worn, probably as a functional garment, and not as a fashion item that would be illuminated. Newton refers to hoods as garments that are included in the livery of the royal household, for women of varying ranks, all the way from the King's hatter, to the Queen herself. In addition to the example cited above of Agnes la Poullaine's livery, Newton describes how

Queen Philippa's Christmas suit was also of marbryn longcloth. It, too, was lined with trimmed miniver, and enriched with 106 ermine skins. But Philippa's dress included five ells of sanguine-coloured cloth, perhaps not too big a quantity to be accounted for by the four hoods lined with miniver which formed a part of her suit...<sup>16</sup>

They seem to be more of a necessity than a fashion item, by their lack of representation in artwork.

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<sup>15</sup> Crowfoot et al, pp. 169-172.

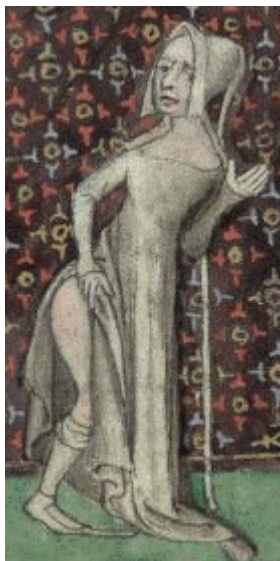
<sup>16</sup> Newton, p. 65.



**Plate 1** From the Tomb of Francois de la Sarra at La Sarraz. An example of a woman wearing a tightly fitted, buttoned hood, c. 1390



**Plate 2** A woman wearing a hood in a different way, mid 14<sup>th</sup> century



**Plate 3** Roman de la Rose, late 14<sup>th</sup> c. A woman with an open hood and long liri pipe.



**Plate 4** Lancelot du Lac, second quarter 14<sup>th</sup> c. The women are wearing what appear to be hoods. The dagging on the end is similar to that found on the men's hoods elsewhere in the manuscript.



**Plate 5** St. Ursula and Companions - Unknown. Lombardian, 1380.  
This woman appears to be wearing a hood on her head, with the  
liripipe coming towards her front and across her shoulders.

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Romance of Alexander

## List of Illustrations

- 1 *Tomb of Francois de la Sarra*, 1390 La Sarraz, France (Photo credit: Cohen, Kathleen. *Metamorphosis of a Death Symbol: The Transi Tomb in the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. University of California Press. 1973.)

- 2 *Romance of Alexander*, finished 1344. (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264 f. 59r)
- 3 *Roman de La Rose*. Late 14<sup>th</sup> c. (no other information available.)
- 4 *Lancelot du Lac*, Guenièvre et Bohort l'Essillié. Second quarter, 14<sup>th</sup> c. (France, Cote: Français 122, Fol. 146, accessed at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/scripts/ConsultationTout.exe?O=08100225>)
- 5 *St. Ursula and Companions*. Lombardian, 1380 (accessed at: <http://www.briaca.com/art/italycotte.html>)