

Sleeveless Wool Kirtle c. 1600

For an Englishwoman in 1600's London



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
This Item is...	3
Garment Inspiration & Historical Exemplars	4
Clues from the Inspiration Drawing	6
Clues from other images and portraiture from the period	7
Extant Garments	12
Design Decisions, Patterns, & Historical Accuracy	13
Materials	15
Construction Techniques	17
Bibliography	23
Images & Sources	24
Appendix A: Making up a Kirtle from Start to Finish	25
Cut Pattern Pieces & Prepare Flatlining	25
Assemble Bodice	25
Assemble Skirt & Attach to Bodice	26
Finishing	27
Appendix B: Dying Wool fabric using Cochineal & Madder	28
Preparing the Dye	28
Preparing the Fabric	29
The Dye Bath	30

This Item is...

A sleeveless cloth kirtle of red wool, inspired primarily by the drawing “Three London citizens and a Farmer” by Lucas de Heere as well as numerous other images of English and European women in late 16th century clothing.

The pattern, construction techniques, and materials in this garment are all historically accurate, or at least as plausible as we can manage today:

- The pattern was drafted using the Bara technique and patterns from Alcega’s pattern manual¹, as translated in *The Modern Maker Vol. 2*², with refinement based on other portraits and images from the era.
- The outer fabric is a midweight red wool dyed with a combination of cochineal and madder using historically accurate dyeing techniques. The interlining and lining are varying weights of undyed linen. The guards are of silk velvet, a period choice.
- It is sewn entirely by hand with period-appropriate silk thread, using historical seams and finishing techniques.

I was lucky enough to participate in a ‘Renaissance Red’ dyeing day at the home of Mistress Drea Leed in the summer of 2018 - relatively early in my SCA career. I’ve held approximately 3 1/2 yards of it in my stash for the past 5 years. I chose to finally cut the last of that precious, accurately-dyed fabric and use it for this garment.

¹ de Alcega, Juan, *Libro de Geometria y Traça*, Madrid, Spain 1589

² Gnagy, Matthew. *The Modern Maker, Vol. 2*

Garment Inspiration & Historical Exemplars

“Kirtle” is a name we give to the base supportive garment worn by women in the medieval and renaissance periods. The style changed over time, evolving from the long gored garments of the 14th century to a version with a waist seam and shaped skirts in the 1500’s. By the 1520’s, we see portraiture in England and across Europe showing a garment with a close-fitting, supportive bodice and long, gathered skirts, usually pleated in the back. Variations on the theme continue throughout the 1500’s and early 1600’s until they evolve into the separate stays and petticoats seen in later eras. Style details - the shape of the neckline, the location of the closures, lacing style and type (eyelet vs lacing ring vs hook) - tend to be different depending on region and date, but the core structure of the garment still holds true.

As there are few-to-no physical exemplars of these garments surviving from 1600, we must lean heavily on drawings and paintings from the era to determine what our hypothetical theater-goer might have worn. I am drawing inspiration for her garments primarily from a drawing, *Three London citizens and a farmer*, from ‘Description of England, Scotland, and Ireland’ by Lucas de Heere.

De Heere was a Flemish painter, poet and writer who lived from 1534 - 1584. In 1568 he became a refugee when the Dutch revolted against Phillip II of Spain after he attempted to suppress Protestantism. He went to France, working for Catherine de’ Medici, before traveling to England where in 1570 he was employed by Edward Clinton, 1st Earl of Lincoln, to paint a gallery depicting the clothing and costumes of various nations. He had an interest in ethnography, history, and geography, which was reflected in his various works. One of the most interesting, from a costume and clothing perspective, was *Théâtre de tous les peuples et nations de la terre avec leurs habits et ornemens divers, tant anciens que modernes, diligemment depeints au naturel par Luc Dheere peintre et sculpteur Gantois* (*Theater of all peoples and nations of the earth with their various clothes and ornaments, both ancient and modern, diligently depicted in nature by Luc D’Heere painter and sculptor from Ghent*). The full manuscript is available in digital form by the Library of the University of Ghent³, and includes alternative versions of the images in my inspiration drawing as well as numerous other drawings of everyday people in their usual dress.

³ D’Heere, Lucas. <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:000794288>, Accessed Feb 2024



Figure 1: *Three London Citizens and a Farmer*, from 'Description of England, Scotland, and Ireland' by Lucas de Heere, c 1570

Clues from the Inspiration Drawing

The kirtles are only partially visible in the drawing, but we still find some clues and hints in the images.

First, color. We can see that the underdresses of the three women visible in the drawing are distinct. The country woman on the right wears a garment dyed a more orange-red, while the “London Citizens” kirtles have more blue in their tone. In *The Typical Tudor* ⁴, it is hypothesized that the country woman is wearing a petticoat while the two Londoners are wearing kirtles.

This is borne out in the dyes - depending on the pH of the water used in the dye process, Madder tends to give a brighter, more ‘true’ red while cochineal can take fabric to a more pink or purple tone.⁵ Madder was a cheap and more plentiful option, while Cochineal and Kermes were insect-based and more expensive to produce. Cochineal was first introduced into Europe following the Spanish expedition to Mexico in 1518 and produced a deeper and longer lasting red than madder or kermes.⁶

Documentary data indicates that kirtles were more common than petticoats between the 1570’s and the 1590’s, and kirtles were made in “a variety of aspirational fabrics such as cloth, worsted and silk with very few in russet”⁷ - cloth and worsted being forms of wool. Six percent of kirtles documented had trims, described in the latter part of the 1500’s as ‘guards’, ‘lace’, or ‘welts’.

Examining the inspiration drawing, the woman on the far left has a kirtle with a plain center front and a single band of black trim on the bottom hem, while the woman to her right appears to have some kind of pattern or texture in the center front of her kirtle’s skirt and a double set of guards on her skirt - one thick and above it one thin. We cannot see the kirtle of the third gentlewoman.

⁴ Davies, Jane Malcom. *The Typical Tudor*, p 122

⁵ Dharma Trading, <https://www.dharmatrading.com/home/natural-dyes-101-with-cochineal-and-madder-root.html>

⁶ Roberts, Mike. “History of Cochineal Dye”, Cochineal History, <https://www.cochinealdye.com/html/cochineal-history.html>

⁷ *The Typical Tudor*, p 123

Clues from other images and portraiture from the period

With the limited information available in the inspiration image, we must look to additional resources to determine what kirtles may have looked like in the period.



Figure 2: Orazio Gentileschi, *The Lute Player*. c. 1612 - 1615, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

In Orazio Gentileschi's *The Lute Player*, we see a fantastic example of this style from the back. The garment laces spiral-style up the side-back. For added fun, the subject has skipped every other lacing hole. In the image you can see some wrinkles on the center front panel, and how the folds of fabric are pleated and gathered at different points to the bodice.



Figure 3: Marcus Geerarts the Elder, A Fête at Bermondsey (detail). C 1571. Private Collection, UK

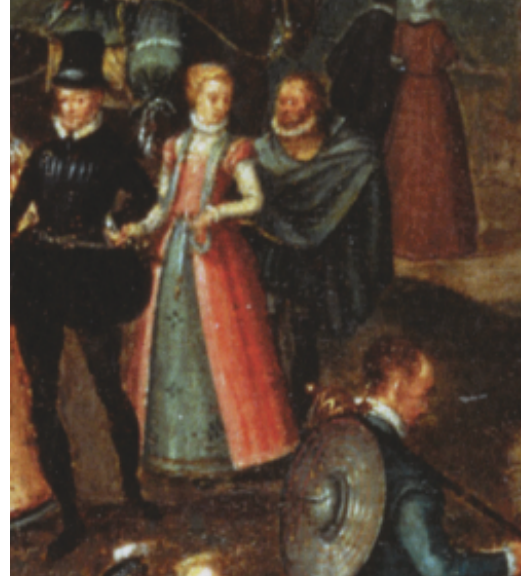


Figure 4: Marcus Geerarts the Elder, A Fête at Bermondsey (detail). C 1571. Private Collection, UK



Figure 5: Marcus Geerarts the Elder, A Fête at Bermondsey (detail). C 1571. Private Collection, UK

Marcus Geerarts the Elder's *A Fête at Bermondsey* gives additional suggestions of style details. In Figure 3, we see a woman wearing a slightly different style of open-skirted gown over a kirtle, in a style that would require the kirtle underneath to also have a square neck. The partlet worn by the woman in this figure (and in all the women depicted in this painting) is a rough match to the one seen in the inspiration sketch. The kirtle skirt trim is intriguing: instead of straight lines, it has a row of Charlie-brown style zig zags. Figure 4 shows a similar style gown as figure 3, with a square neck as well.

In Figure 5 we see a two-tone front-lacing garment with a square neckline, again worn with a partlet similar to the one worn in the inspiration image.

Additional insights can be gleaned from engravings and drawings by Marcellus Laroon⁸, with useful analysis performed by Sean Shesgreen⁹ who estimates the earliest set was made around 1620. They depict multiple female figures wearing gowns that fasten somewhere in the mid-torso, and in several the center front neckline of the garment worn beneath can be seen. A version of these images can also be found in *The Typical Tudor*¹⁰.



Figure 6: The Cries of the City of London, Marcellus Laroon.
Courtesy the London Sound Survey

⁸ *The cries of the city of London drawn after the life in 74 copper plates.*

⁹ *The criers and hawkers of London: engravings and drawings by Marcellus Laroon; edited, with an introduction and commentary by Sean Shesgreen*

¹⁰ *The Typical Tudor*, page 6

Some of the panels provide useful and specific details:



Kitchin=Stuff.



Hot Codlings.



*White Radish White
young Lettice.*



Buy my fine wash. Balls



Buy a fine Toast. Fork.



*Who buys my fine Lau=
=sage.*

In each, we see a set of garments that appear quite similar to or to be an evolution from the garments seen in De Heere's drawing. A gown or coat is worn partially open over an underdress with a horizontal neckline at center front and a tartlet with a band or ruff covering the upper chest.

We also can look to images from De Heere's other work, the aforementioned *Théâtre de tous les peuples...* for more useful insights.



De Here, Lucas. "Damoiselle et Senateur de Sene" (detail). Used with permission from Ghent University Library

De Here, Lucas. "Dame et Damoiselle Angloses" (detail). Used with permission from Ghent University Library

De Here, Lucas. "Un bourgeoisie et une merchant Angl" (details). Used with permission from Ghent University Library

In the first image, we see an upperclass woman of Sene wearing an open-front red gown over a blue kirtle with matching sleeves. Although I am focusing on English fashions, this image is useful to establish De Heere's style and level of detail - he is specific in his silhouettes and in displaying where garments open, fasten, and so forth. It is also useful in that it shows the center front of the garment hanging open, with what could easily be interpreted as hooks and eyes in a row down each side.

With the second image, we see two Englishwomen with some fascinating details. We see details of their partlets, worn open style, and that the smock on at least one of the Ladies is decorated with blackwork embroidery. Both of these women wear their gowns over a kirtle or dress which closes center front, rising in a gentle curve across the chest. The woman on the right has a sneaky pocket on her side, framed in black trim.

Finally, we see two images that feel like prototypes for the inspiration image. The woman on the left has a red kirtle with a single guard at the bottom, while the woman on the right has trim on her gray kirtle which might indicate a center front opening for the bodice, although the skirt has no such indication in the style of the second image of ladies.

Extant Garments



I am not aware of any extant kirtles surviving till today, but we do have a couple surviving garments from the era. One of the most notable and often-cited is the funeral dress of Eleonora of Toledo¹¹. This garment also displays a square center front neckline. It introduces an interesting detail in the skirt hem: A roughly 1 - 1 1/2 inch tuck in the fabric taken just above the guard and allowed to float on the outside of the garment. This tuck can be seen in some period images as well, sometimes floating to the inside and sometimes to the outside. The extant garment also gives a sense of proportion - garment waists were quite high by modern standards, sitting at the natural waist and making the skirts look even longer and fuller, while the dipped center front gave the wearer the appearance of a longer torso.

¹¹ Chenault, Jacqueline. Photos taken of the gown of Eleonora of Toledo on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2021

Design Decisions, Patterns, & Historical Accuracy

My pattern for this kirtle and subsequent design decisions are historically accurate, drawn from primary sources (extant pattern manuals, paintings, and illustrations) and supplemented by secondary sources (The Modern Maker for patterns and general tailoring technique, the Tudor Tailor/Typical Tudor for additional design and construction details).

Based on my research, highlighted previously, I chose to construct a sleeveless, square-necked kirtle with side laces and a pleated, shaped skirt. The bodice is interlined with linen canvas. The skirt is finished with an internal waistband and attached to the interlining for stability and support. This intriguing technique allows for some level of puffing and pleating while very securely attaching the skirt - it is fastened with three rows of stitching, one on the internal waistband, one in the front to keep the bodice laying properly on the skirt, and one on the inside to hold the lining in place.

The initial bodice pattern draft is based off of patterns from Alcega's *Libro de Geometria y Traça*¹², Freyle's *Geometria y Traça Para el Oficio de los Sastres*¹³, Burguen's *Geometria y Traça Perteneciente al Oficio de los Sastres*¹⁴, and Anduxar's *Geometria y Traza Pertinencientes al Oficio de Sastres*¹⁵, all three of which include some form of the *Cuerpo Bajo* or 'low body'. I drafted and refined my pattern using the Bara method outlined by Matthew Gnagy in *The Modern Maker, Vol. 2*¹⁶ and additional training and conversations with Gnagy.

After using these period techniques to establish the basic shape and proportions, I modified the neckline to create a 'v' in the back, as seen in earlier drawings by Holbein¹⁷, as well as

¹² de Alcega, Juan, *Libro de Geometria y Traça*, Madrid, Spain 1589

¹³ de Freyle, Diego, *Geometria y Traça Para el Oficio de los Sastres*, Seville, Spain 1588

¹⁴ de La Rocha Burguen, Francisco, *Geometria y Traça Perteneciente de los Sastres*, Valencia, Spain, 1618

¹⁵ de Anduxar, Martin, *Geometria y Traza Pertinencientes al Oficio de Sastres*, Madrid, Spain, 1640

¹⁶ Gnagy, Matthew. *The Modern Maker, Vol 2*. Charleston, SC 2018

¹⁷ Holbein, Hans. "Two views of a woman wearing an English hood". Collection of the British Museum, <https://www.bmimages.com/preview.asp?image=00031491001>

adjusting the pattern to allow for side lacing as seen in the portrait by Gentileschi referenced previously.

The outer fabric of the garment is a fulled wool hand-dyed with cochineal and madder by myself and a group of other dyers in the summer of 2018 using period-accurate techniques. It is interlined with heavyweight linen canvas and lined with an oatmeal handkerchief weight linen, similar to the unbleached colors that might have been available at the time. It is closed with eyelets along the lacing edges, held open with basic whip stitches in thread to match the dyed fabric.

The skirt is shaped, with its initial pattern also drawn from Alcega's patterns and pieced as seen in numerous examples from the era including the extant funeral dress of Eleonora of Toledo. It has a tuck taken, as seen in Eleonora's dress, but taken to the inside instead of the outside. Guards of black velvet decorate the skirt hem and conceal the tuck seam, as seen in the inspiration drawing from De Here.

All construction was done by hand, with silk thread, using historically accurate stitches as outlined in *The Tudor Tailor*, *The Typical Tudor*, *The Modern Maker Vol. 1 & 2* as well as personal training and interactions with Matthew Gnagy and similar sources.

Materials

I believe the materials used in this kirtle to be very accurate versions of period textiles, in some cases as close as I can get without investing in grassland, sheep, and a historically accurate loom to weave their wool. My materials include:

- Top Fabric: Red mid-heavy weight wool, hand-dyed with cochineal and madder, ~3 1/2 yards¹⁸
- Lining: Handkerchief weight linen in oatmeal, ~1 1/2 yards¹⁹
- Interlining: 8.5 oz linen in gray, aka 'Pluto' weight linen, ~1/2 yard²⁰
- Stiffening: 8.5 oz linen in gray, aka 'Pluto' weight linen, ~1/2 yard²¹
- Bones (for lacing edges only): Imitation whalebone²²
- Hem Stiffening: Heavyweight black wool melton, ~1/2 yard²³
- Hem Facing: Bias-cut silk taffeta, ~1/2 yard²⁴
- Thread: Red silk thread, T-46 weight²⁵
- Thread: Red silk thread, T-112 weight, also called buttonhole twist²⁶
- Lacing: Thin flat cotton tape in white²⁷
- Trim: Black silk velvet, ~ 1/2 yard²⁸

¹⁸ Source: Dyed by a group including Marguerite du Cheneau at Renaissance Red Dye Day with Drea Leed, 2018. Undyed wool sourced by Mistress Emma West, likely from her stash. For details of the dyeing process, see Appendix B: Dying Wool fabric using Cochineal & Madder

¹⁹ Source: Gray Lines Linen, NY

²⁰ Source: Gray Lines Linen, NY

²¹ Source: Gray Lines Linen, NY

²² Source: Burnley and Trowbridge, VA

²³ Source: AK Fabrics, NY

²⁴ Source: Stash, likely purchased from Mood or Gray Lines Linen both NY & online.

²⁵ Source: SIL Thread Inc., NY

²⁶ Source: SIL Thread Inc., NY

²⁷ Source: Stash, purchased at Fort Frederick Market Fair in 2023. Likely from Burnley and Trowbridge or a similar vendor.

²⁸ Source: Mood Fabric, NY

Other tools I used in drafting and construction are period, or reasonable mundane versions of period tools. These include:

- Scissors and thread snips
- Tailor's chalk (modern)
- Bara tapes
- Straight edges/yardsticks
- Needles (modern)
- Cotton basting thread ²⁹
- Sewing pins (modern)

²⁹ Source: SIL Threads, NY

Construction Techniques

This kirtle is constructed using a combination of methods sourced primarily from workshops with Matthew Gnagy/The Modern Maker³⁰, as well as techniques published by the Tudor Tailor in their books and patterns³¹. All sewing is executed by hand, with seam allowances of roughly 1 dedo (as indicated in the bara patterns).

Seams were generally sewn by first lightly pinning them together to prevent shifting, then basted with a thin cotton thread to secure the layers. They were sewn with silk thread, generally the thicker topstitch thread for areas that I expected to be under strain. Finally I pick stitched along each side of the seam to strengthen it and hold down the seam allowance. This technique varied a bit depending on the seam in question, but the general principles are used throughout the garment.

In the bodice, I built the interlining - pad stitching an additional layer of linen to the main piece to give it additional shape and structure - then flatlined it to the top fabric. I loosely basted the linings to keep them in position, then closed the back and shoulder seams. I finished the neckline, bottom edge, and shoulders.

The skirt panels were seamed together and then joined to the bodice with three rows of stitching - one along the internal waistband, fixing it to the interlining. A second along the bottom edge in the front, holding the skirt to the bodice bottom edge. A third line of stitches hold the lining down, covering the internal waistband and adding additional support for the skirt.

I added a wool strip to act as a hem stiffener to the bottom edge of the skirt, wrapping it in a facing of silk taffeta.

Lacing holes arranged for spiral lacing were first poked with an awl and then whipstitched open with buttonhole twist silk.

I took a small tuck in above the bottom hem to slightly adjust the length for my day-to-day wearing needs, and added silk velvet trim to conceal the tuck on the outside.

³⁰ Chenault, Jacqueline. Conversations and lessons with Matthew Gnagy. New York, NY and online, 2016 - 2024

³¹ The Tudor Tailor, The Typical Tudor, et al.

For a more detailed step-by-step guide to how I built this kirtle, please see the appendix as well as my time-lapse construction video, available here: <https://atelierdcheneau.com/documentation/kasf-2024/kirtle>



Cutting lining, with top and interlining pieces cut out and laid on top of lining fabric



Back canvas, with stay and boning tapes pinned in place



Sewing bone casings onto CF bodice canvas



Prepared back canvas basted to top fabric



Prepared front canvas basted to top fabric



Front bodice basting completed



Reducing armscye



Pickstitching along closed Center Back seam



Securing back waist seam allowance w/
herringbone



Neckline turned in



Basting the neckline



Felling the neckline into the bodice



Felling the neckline into the bodice



Joining long seams in skirt



Pickstitching skirt seams



Basting wadding into skirt



Sizing internal waistband



Pinning skirt to internal waistband



Skirt pleated to waistband basted into back bodice



Attaching waistband to bodice



Felling skirt to bodice on the outside



Securing center front seam allowance w/
herringbone stitch



Pinning the bodice lining to the center front



Securing bodice lining to bodice and skirt



Pickstitching along bottom bodice edge



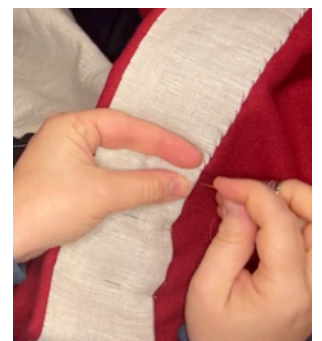
Refining hem edge



Pinning hem seam allowance around curved skirt stiffening



Felling the skirt hem facing to the skirt stiffening and seam allowance



Securing skirt facing around stiffening with a whip stitch

Bibliography

Chenault, Jacqueline. Conversations and lessons with Matthew Gnagy. New York, NY and online, 2014 - 2024

de Alcega, Juan, *Libro de Geometria y Traça*, Madrid, Spain 1589

D'Heere, Lucas. *Théâtre De Tous Les Peuples Et Nations De La Terre Avec Leurs Habits Et Ornemens Divers, Tant Anciens Que Modernes, Diligemment Depeints Au Naturel Par Luc Dheere Peintre Et Sculpteur Gantois*. Held by Univesiteit Gent, <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:000794288>, accessed December 2023

Gnagy, Matthew. *The Modern Maker: Men's 17th Century Doublets*. 2014

Gnagy, Matthew. *The Modern Maker Vol. 2: Pattern Manual 1580 - 1640: Men's and Women's drafts from the late 16th through mid 17th centuries*. 2018

Laroon, Marcellus. *The cries of the city of London drawn after the life in 74 copper plates*.

Natural Dyes 101 with Cochineal and Madder Root. Dharma Trading Company. <https://www.dharmatrading.com/home/natural-dyes-101-with-cochineal-and-madder-root.html>, accessed February 2024

Roberts, Mike. "History of Cochineal Dye", *Cochineal History*, <https://www.cochinealdye.com/html/cochineal-history.html>, accessed February 2024

Shesgreen, Sean. *The criers and hawkers of London: engravings and drawings by Marcellus Laroon; edited, with an introduction and commentary by Sean Shesgreen*. Stanford University Press, c1990

The Whole Art of Dying in Two Parts. Printed by William Pearson and sold by F. Nutt, near Stationers-Hall, London, 1705. Transcribed by Drea Leed. <http://www.elizabethancostume.net/dyes/artofdying.html>, Accessed February 2024

Davies, Jane Malcom and Ninya Mikhaila. *The Typical Tudor*. Fat Goose Press, 2022

Images & Sources

Chenault, Jacqueline. Photos taken of the gown of Eleonora of Toledo on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York, NY, 2021

Laroon, Marcellellus. *The cries of the city of London drawn after the life in 74 copper plates*. London, H. Overton 1711

Malcom-Davies, Jane and Ninya Mikhaila. *The Typical Tudor: Reconstructing Everyday 16th Century Dress*. Fat Goose Press, 2022.

Marcus Geerarts the Elder, *A Fête at Bermondsey* (detail). C 1571. Private Collection, UK

Orazio Gentileschi, *The Lute Player*. c. 1612 - 1615, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC

De Heere, Lucas. "Three London Citizens and a Farmer". *Description of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, c 1570

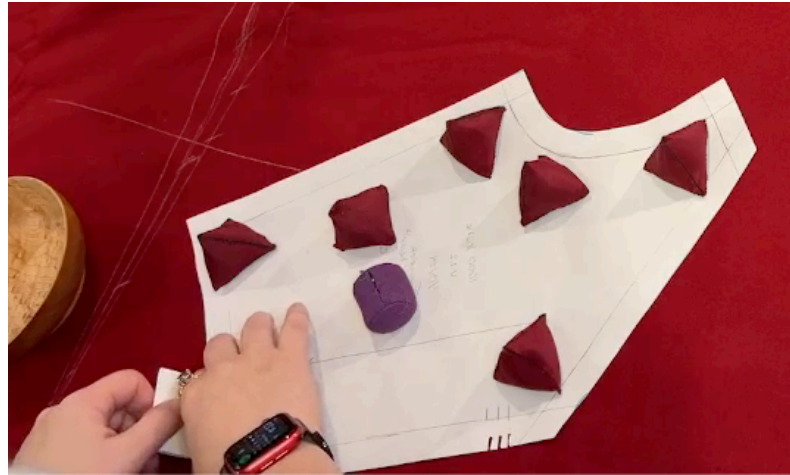
D'Heere, Lucas. *Théâtre De Tous Les Peuples Et Nations De La Terre Avec Leurs Habits Et Ornemens Divers, Tant Anciens Que Modernes, Diligemment Depeints Au Naturel Par Luc Dheere Peintre Et Sculpteur Gantois*. Held by Univesiteit Gent, <https://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:000794288>, accessed December 2023

Appendix A: Making up a Kirtle from Start to Finish

Note that this is my typical process to construct a kirtle. Steps may be executed in a different order on a particular garment.

Cut Pattern Pieces & Prepare Flatlining

1. Cut out all bodice pattern pieces in top fabric, interlining, and lining, being sure to add extra fabric for lacing opening fold-backs.
2. Cut 1 additional layer of front panel to roughly the width of the shoulder strap in interlining linen.



3. Cut strips of wool melton or linen and silk to stiffen skirt hem. Using steam and an iron, curve the strips.
4. Trim back and pad stitch front panel layers to front panel interlining/foundation to stiffen & add support.
5. Flat line prepared front foundation & back interlining pieces to top fabric. Treat as one piece moving forward.
6. Lightly baste lining pieces into place, leaving plenty of room at the seams for manipulation of seam allowance.
7. Clip the curves on the bottom edges of the bodice, fold up, and baste into place.

Assemble Bodice

8. Pin or base the center back right sides together and stitch. Press open. Pickstitch close to the seam along each side.

9. Pin or base shoulder seam right sides together and stitch. Press open. Pickstitch close to the seam along each side.
10. Use a straight-grain piece of interlining fabric or other tape to shrink the front of the armscye by gathering a small portion of the armscye (a solid pinch) into the tape. This makes the straps take on a 3-D shape and pulls the acute curve of the pattern out.
11. Hand-fell lining seams at center back and shoulder seams.
12. Finish neckline by clipping, folding over, basting, pressing, and then using a herringbone stitch to fasten into place. Fold over the lining seam allowance and fell the edge into place.
13. Finish the armscye in the same method: Clipping, folding over, basting, pressing, herringbone stitching in place, and then folding the lining seam allowance and felling into place. Another option is to encase the edge in a binding.
14. Add a small sewn bar tack across the front right angles and the center back to reinforce if needed.

Assemble Skirt & Attach to Bodice

15. Finish any skirt piecings, by first basting, then sewing the seam with a running backstitch, pressing the seams to one side and then pick stitching along the pressed seam allowance to hold it in place.
16. Sew the long skirt seams, leaving openings of 6-8 inches where the bodice laces.
17. Sew the skirt top edge to a strip of straight grain fabric or tape the width of the bodice, gathering where appropriate. This strip becomes the internal waistband.
18. Sew the internal waistband into the bodice, taking care that the bottom edge is hidden inside the bodice. It will come straight across the bodice center front dip but otherwise the edge of the tape remains in line with the folded bodice edge. Baste or pin and then sew into place with strong thread.
19. Working from the outside, fell the skirt to the bodice using very small stitches. These stitches may show.

20. Working from the inside, fell the lining to the skirt and bodice, taking care not to go all the way through to the outside of the garment.

Finishing

21. Finish the lacing edges of the garment, folding them around the edge of the skirt and following the same pattern of basting, herringbone stitching, and then adding the lining.

22. Mark or pin your eyelet positions. Sew eyelets, using an awl to poke a hole in the material and then whipstitching open with buttonhole twist thread.

23. Add hem facing to the bottom hem. Level and trim the edge to ensure it is even. Fold the seam allowance back. Take a wool strip that has been steam-curved and baste the folded seam allowance over the wider bottom edge and baste in place. Sew the facing fabric in place to cover the raw seam allowance edge. Wrap the facing fabric over the stiffener and carefully fell it into place with small stitches - these will show to the outside of the garment.

24. If the hem is too long, take a small tuck a short distance above the hem stiffening. The easiest way I've found for this is to draw a line evenly above the hem stiffening, then another line that is 1/2 of the amount to tuck above the first. Fold the skirt along the first line and sew along the second to form a tuck. Press the flap up or down as your needs dictate. This tuck can be taken to the inside OR the outside of the garment.

25. Add any trim as desired.

Appendix B: Dying Wool fabric using Cochineal & Madder

Saturday, June 30, 2018. A date to go down in the history books... or at least my history books. For it was on that day that a group of intrepid SCAdians gathered at the home of one Mistress Drea di' Pellegrini in Ponte Alto. We ground roots. We crushed insects. We mordanted our fabric after seaming yards and yards (and yards and yards) of it together into a continuous loop. And then we dumped the fabric into a giant pot with a wheel affixed to the top to keep the fabric continually moving through the dye, ensuring it would dye evenly. Finally, we rinsed and hung the lengths of fabric to dry in the sun.

Unfortunately, 2018 was relatively early in my journey in our Society. I had just begun to take my steps on the path of making and crafting in historically-accurate ways, and did not think to properly document all the stages of the process. Queries to the group involved indicate that no full records of the process remain.

However, there are some images from that day. With a bit of internet sleuthing and the help of the images, I've tried my best to reconstruct the process we used to dye the fabric that eventually became the top fabric for my kirtle.



I presume that many of the instructions used to direct the day originated from sources detailed on Elizabethan Costuming's Dyes page, particularly from *The Whole Art of Dying in Two Parts*, transcribed by Mistress Drea³².

All images used in the following documentation are used with the kind permission of Mary Dotson and Leesa Orton.

Preparing the Dye

Our first step was to prepare the madder and cochineal. They were purchased whole, so each needed to be ground by hand with a mortar and pestle before the dye mistress mixed them to get our

³² Transcription of *The Whole Art of Dying* as it appears on Elizabethan Costume, transcribed by Drea Leed/Mistress Drea. <http://www.elizabethancostume.net/dyes/artofdying.html>, accessed Feb 2024

desired color.

Preparing the Fabric

Participants brought different lengths of wool to be dyed. These were sewn together by machine to form a continuous loop of fabric and included the yardage which would eventually become my kirtle, courtesy of Dame Emma West's stash. My piece began as an off-white length of lightly fulled wool.



We then prepared the wool to receive the dye by mordanting it. In *The Whole Art of Dying*, for wool to be dyed red, it is indicated: "FOR every Pound of Stuff, hang rain or Running-water over the Fire, adding one third part of the Starch or Bran-water; put in two Ounces of Allom, one Ounce of Tartar, when it boils or froths, first skim it, then put in the Stuff, stir it very well about for an Hour, then take it out and rince it."³³

To do this, we threaded the fabric over the barrel of a device built by Mistress Drea based on period sources and positioned over a very large heated copper pot. As the handle rotates, it draws the fabric up and out, then allows it to fall back in on the other side. The continuous movement ensured that the fabric would be evenly coated.



³³ Elizabethan Costume *The Art of Dying*, Part II. Of the Dying of Wool, Woolen Clothes and Stuffs. <http://www.elizabethancostume.net/dyes/artdye1.html#part2>



After approximately an hour in the bath, we rinsed the fabric and then dried it. This step was all hands on deck as we wrung the massive lengths of fabric, wringing the length to get out as much of the liquid as possible with the help of a handy Marshal's staff.



The Dye Bath



Next it was time to get our red on. Unfortunately I do not have a record of the exact contents of this bath beyond knowing that we used cochineal and madder, both hand-ground in a mortar and pestle. I'm sure there were other chemicals in the mix, based on a brief perusal of the trusty *Art of Dying*. Of the many recipes listed to dye wool some form of red, one of them which uses both cochineal and madder says, "FOR every Pound of Wool take half an Ounce of Cochineal & half a quartern of Oatmeal or Wheaten Bran, having first dissolved it Eight days in Water that it may become sour, and when you intend to Dye, pour the Bran Water into the Kettle, and then (having the Night before dissolved the Cochineal in Warm Water) clap a good Fire under the Kettle to heat the

Liquor, and put it into it by little and little till there is no more of the Solution left, stirring it about all the while; when it begins to boil, then add a proportional quantity of Lye and pass the Cloth

through three times, or take half a quartern of wine Lees or Ashes which throw into the warm Suds, and pass the Goods through it till they have sufficiently taken the Dye.”

We kept the fabric moving in the dye pot using the wooden apparatus for the appointed amount of time (now lost to the ages, at least for me). At some point in the process we also added other items to the dye pot - ribbons, yarn, and other small sundry items.



Once the dye bath portion was complete (possibly after it cooled? I'm not sure), we rinsed the length of fabric in several barrels of clean water before hanging it to dry on a line between two trees in the backyard.

