

Evesham 1265 – Kit guide for the 2019 festival, for women

By Deborah Lough

Introduction

What follows is a very basic guide to what women (or those portraying women) should wear around the Battle of Evesham event, set in 1265.

It is based on the available evidence of the period (of which there is quite a lot), and the idea is to allow people who normally specialise in a slightly earlier, or slightly later, period to move backwards or forwards in time without too much effort or expense.

I'm not going into massive detail – I'll suggest a couple of books / websites worth looking at at the end if you want to do some more detailed looking up yourself. But please be aware that as a professional historical costumer, I probably have access to additional resources.

Please also note that I'm not allowing for regional variations – obviously there would have been differences in what people wore based on where they were from, but they were not so pronounced for women as for soldiers. This broadly covers Britain in general.

I'm also not allowing for age. Obviously again, there would have been variation in what older women would have worn (as older people tend to stick to the clothes of their youths).

This guide applies to you whether you intend to remain only in camp, or whether you are going to be on the battlefield dressed as a woman.

(NB – regarding the latter - I'm not including anything on arms, armour, helmets, etc, because whether they are needed will be down to what you will be doing on the battlefield, and what your insurance / the organiser / your society requests. If you need information on styles of arms and armour, please refer to the men's guide.)

This guide does not apply to you if you are a woman who will be cross dressing as a man in all your interactions with the public. In that case, please see the men's guide.

Basic clothing

Starting at the bottom (garment wise, not class wise), all those portraying women should wear low ankle boots or shoes, a linen shift (aka chemise), a dress in wool or linen (silk only if of very high rank), and a headcovering. Half hosen, cloaks and hoods, and surcotes are optional, as are hats and hoods. Mittens and sock are an option too, but they should be naalbinded, NOT knitted.

I'll cover these in more detail below.

Boots and shoes

The boots and shoes are largely the same for women as for men.

These should all be low ankle style boots ideally not toggled closed but laced or buckled, they may be coloured suitable to rank portrayed and should reflect the rest of the clothing worn. Low cut shoes are more suited to higher ranks.

You should avoid completely both rubber 'grip' soles, and boots well above ankle height.

Ideally there should be no heel, but a completely flat sole (though again, if anybody's looking that closely...).

Colours should for most impressions should be natural, ideally brown, although dyed leather and decorated footwear is allowed, bear in mind it is of higher rank, and should match the rest of the clothing.

Pictures from the Museum of London.



Pattens

Pattens were worn from the 12th century to keep shoes out of the dirt and mud. At this date they would still be very simple. They weren't *that* common until later, so the Museum of London book speculates that they may only have been worn by the wealthy, but they are helpful in bad weather.

If you choose to wear pattens, they should have one solid wooden sole – no hinging, and they should have strapping over the toes only – not at the ankle.

Obviously, as they're more like mules than overshoes, they can slip off quite easily, so do take care walking in them, and don't wear them to go on the battlefield.

I couldn't find a decent historical image on a woman, so these are mine. I genuinely cannot remember who made them (I've had them for years).



Hosen

Hosen for women are different than those worn by men at the period. Women would have worn half hosen that tie above or below the knee with garters (a length of period tape, braid, or cord). Hosen of this type should be footed. They should be of one colour (unless of patterned cloth), and should be made from wool, or linen. Silk is reserved for the highest of ranks.

If you only have the male-style of single legged hosen that tie from a belt, that will be acceptable, as I'm fairly sure if somebody's looking that far up your skirt, you'll have bigger problems than the correct legwear.

It is also acceptable to wear two pairs - for example, one pair of wool, rolled down over the finer lower pair to offer some protection against mud etc. (If intending to do this it would be wise to consider the fit of footwear).

Period images are from a Belgian manuscript from later (c. 1350), but the principle is exactly the same. Modern picture is my copyright.



Shift / chemise / underdress

Should be of linen for most people – silk for the very, very highest in rank.

By this period it should be white or off-white – or natural unbleached linen coloured.

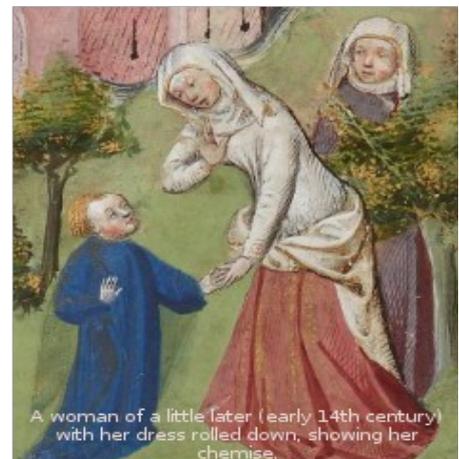
It should be floor length, or just shorter to prevent it trailing in mud.

Sleeves should be full length, and should have a simple hemmed edge, fitted quite close to the wrist – ideally there should be no drawstrings or gathering.

The neckline should be a basic T-shape, or a round or oval, or a 'V' shape. The neckline should also not have a drawstring or gathering.



A woman in bed in her chemise. 1250.



A woman of a little later (early 14th century) with her dress rolled down, showing her chemise.

Dress

Wool, heavyish linen or silk (the latter for high status only).

Dresses at this date were generally full skirted (the fullness created with gores / godets) and quite loose at the body and upper arm – the sleeves narrowing to be close at the wrist.

The dresses were usually belted up at this period – see later for belts, etc.

Necklines were generally high.

Less common, and for higher status women only, were wider sleeves – always worn with a tight and over long chemise sleeve, to create a wrinkled undersleeve effect (in this case the chemise would always be white linen).

There should be no side lacing, back lacing, or front lacing of the dress at this date (see note below on surcotes).



Veils and head coverings

All women of marriageable age should have their hair covered. (Effectively that means anybody older than their early teens).

Headdresses for this date vary a bit. The long, one piece veil is acceptable, as is the two part veil and wimple.

The barbette and fillet is also acceptable, having appeared in the late 12th century, and still being quite common – styles with an open or enclosed fillet section – and with or without (period) hairnets (though the hair should always be up with this sort of headdress).

Various types of headdress that wrap tightly around the head, with the hair up, are also acceptable, especially for women working in messy or dangerous environments, and are very common (I'll be wearing this kind of headdress for cooking and working over the fire).



Cloaks

Cloaks should be of wool, and ideally lined with either linen or wool.

Semi circular or rectangular cloaks are good for this date, and they should be closed with a period cloak pin.

Cloaks for women at this date should not have attached hoods of any kind.

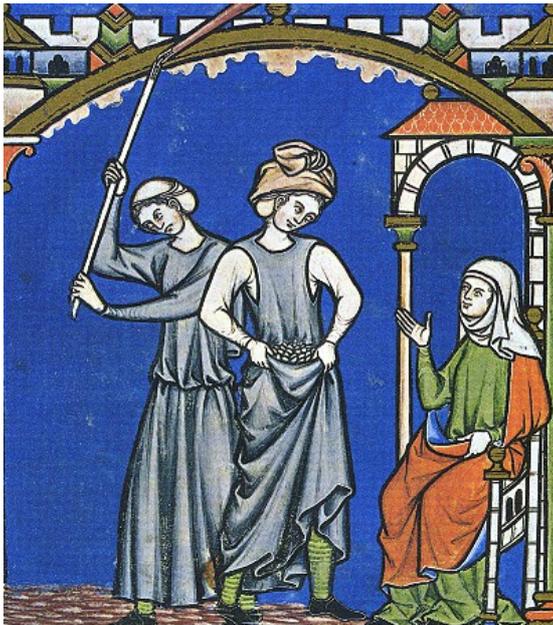


Surcotes

Surcotes (or surcoats) in this context are a civilian garment, like a sleeveless overdress, and should not be confused with the heraldic surcotes worn by knights.

These are the precursors of the later 'sideless' surcotes of the 14th and 15th centuries. But at this date they still have quite high armholes, and are quite plain. They can be of wool or linen, or silk for the very highest ranks.

NB – if you are migrating for this event from another period, and have a dress that laces up, a surcote is a good, simple, and quite cheap way to alter your kit so that it appears to be appropriate for the dateline.



Hoods and hats

Hoods should be separate to cloaks, as mentioned, and although they don't commonly appear on women in artworks around this time (probably due to them being less common because of veils and headdresses), it's a reasonable assumption that women would have worn them if out in bad weather. Therefore they're perfectly acceptable.

They should be of the standard non-liripiped version, or of the very early short liripipe (not longer than about six inches) type. There should not be any fastenings to them.



Hats for women at this date seem mostly to have been of straw (or rushes or similar), broad brimmed, and used to keep the sun out of the eyes. (Illustration c.1300).

Belts

Pretty much all dresses around this date are shown belted, or with a girdle. Belts can be of leather, or braid. The former should fasten with a period appropriate single looped buckle, and the latter can either tie, or fasten with a knot or buckle.

Belts are not seen worn over the surcote, only the dress, so if using a surcote, it may be possible to dispense with the belt altogether if your dress allows.

Pouches should not be worn on an outer belt. If you intend to wear a purse or pouch, it should be worn on the belt under the surcote. If not wearing a surcote, it should be worn on a second belt or girdle, under the top dress.

And finally...

I hope this guide - which is not meant to patronise - is helpful.

If you have any questions, or need any further advice, that's cool, I'll happily talk costume for ages – feel free to email me at: conquestlh@yahoo.co.uk Just give me a couple of days to reply!

Please Note: The Festival's Re-enactment Coordinator Howard Giles would like me to mention that it will be the responsibility of individual society Authenticity Officers to ensure that members adhere to this guide.

In the unlikely event of a dispute, the matter will be settled by the event organiser
We hope however that this kit guide won't present any problems and like last year all will run extremely smoothly and happily!

Have a fab time at the show!

Debbie

Suggested places to research:

Shoes and Pattens [book], by Francis Grew, Margrethe de Neergaard, Museum of London.
Bibliothèque Nationale de France (website - www.bnf.fr)
Bodleian Library (website - www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk)
British Library (website - www.bl.uk)

And of course, probably the biggest source for 13th century clothing – the phenomenal Maciejowski Bible (from which many of the above illustrations are taken).

