



MUSEUM OF LONDON

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TEXTILES and CLOTHING

1150–1450

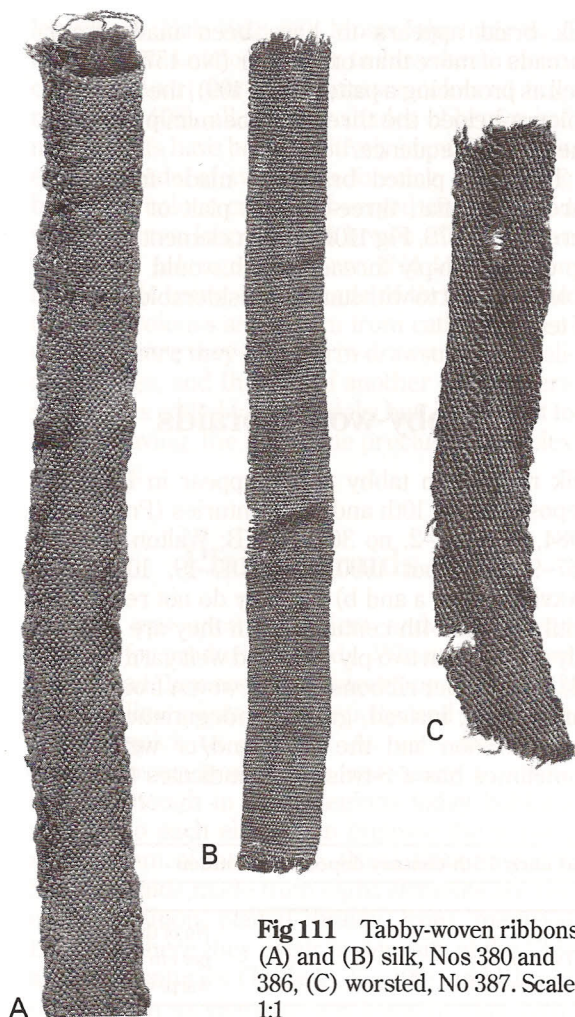


Fig 111 Tabby-woven ribbons: (A) and (B) silk, Nos 380 and 386, (C) worsted, No 387. Scale 1:1

ribbons have different places of origin, the earlier ones perhaps coming from small workshops situated in the Levant or central Asia, the later ones being locally produced in London from imported thread. As with other types of braid, worsted yarn was sometimes used instead of silk and one woven from single Z-spun worsted yarn, which was found in a late 14th-century deposit, is, like most of the silk ribbons of similar date, warp-faced (No 387, Fig 111C). No colour effects are visible whereas similar silk ribbons stitched to vestments show that many were made with multi-coloured stripes.

Some of the ribbons were used to bind cut edges. Two lengths are folded down the centre

and have stitch holes and traces of sewing thread along each side (Nos 384, 385); two others are stitched to the wrist openings of buttoned sleeves (No 216, Fig 144, No 219); and another to the edge of a leather pouch (No 383, Fig 130). Indeed, the use of this braid as a binding in the late 14th century appears to mark the beginning of a shift away from tablet-woven edgings.

Garters

By the second quarter of the 14th century garters had become a sufficiently conspicuous item of male dress to be satirised in contemporary art. An early 14th-century embroidered orphrey shows one of Christ's flagellators wearing a garter (Christie 1938, no 72; King 1963, 33, no 58) and many examples are depicted in the *Luttrell Psalter*, c.1325–35 (Fig 112). Shortly afterwards garters became enshrined in popular imagination by the creation of the Order of the Garter, sometime between 1347 and 1349 (Nicolas 1846, 124–30). In earlier periods diagonally wound or cross-garters, such as those depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry, were popular since they enabled loose leg coverings to be held firmly in place. Narrow lengths of cloth, usually between 75mm and



Fig 112 Man wearing bejewelled garters c.1325–35 (after the *Luttrell Psalter*, BL Add MS f.158b)



Fig 113 Garter, No 388, from a late 14th-century deposit. The straight edge would have been worn above the fringe. Scale 1:1



Fig 114 Detail of garter, No 390, from a late 14th-century deposit. Scale 2:1

100mm wide and generally woven from worsted yarn in four-shed broken chevron twill, have been identified as garters and are known from many north European settlements including 10th-century London (Pritchard 1984, 68–9, pl IIID). They appear to have been woven in long strips and then cut in two to provide a matching pair. Some of these, however, may have been used as leg bandages rather than as garters, and their width can be contrasted with the narrower garters, 18mm to 23mm wide, from 14th-century London. Despite the obvious interest taken in the colour and cut of hose in the 12th and 13th centuries, which is apparent from manuscript illuminations, little is known about what garters, if any, were worn at

this time. Their popularity in the 14th century, like that in the earlier Carolingian period, coincided with a shortening of men's tunics. Often slit in the front up to waist height (Newton 1980, 4), these caused the leg to be displayed more prominently than it had been for some centuries.

It is likely that women also wore garters which remained concealed beneath their full-length tunics. The excavation of the tomb of a Merovingian princess, possibly Queen Arnegunde, who was buried c.565–70 in the cathedral of St Denis, France, revealed that she was laid out wearing linen hose secured below both knees with leather cross-gartering garnished with silver buckles and strap ends (France-Lanord & Fleury

1962, 345, 354, fig 3; Werner 1964, 212–14, figs 11, 12).

Three purpose-made garters recovered from a late 14th-century deposit in London enable us to determine more precisely how they were made at this period. A long warp was set up on a narrow band loom. The best preserved of the London garters has 25 ends arranged in a sequence of four red ends, 18 black ends, three red ends (No 388, Fig 113). Fourteen of the black ends were entered through the heddles of the loom in pairs, which resulted in a stronger garter with a more elastic fit. When weaving commenced the weft passed backwards and forwards along one selvedge, but on the other side of the weft extended round a rod or cord beyond the web so that a fringe was created. After the full length of the garter was woven, the piece appears to have been left on the loom and the weft yarn, which remained attached to the last pick, was darned to and fro in the warp direction on the extended loops to the width desired for the scallop. The same length of thread was used for the next scallop by over stitching one edge of the completed scallop and then repeating the process previously described (Fig 115). The width and length of the scallops vary not only from garter to garter but also in the same piece, showing that it was done by eye without counting the threads. When the garter was worn the straight selvedge would usually have been placed at the top and the decorative

scallops below. Colour effects which are present on all three garters were created by grouping together a series of different coloured ends to form narrow stripes, which would have run horizontally round the leg. Neither the starting or finishing edge is preserved on these London garters and so it is not known whether they had elaborate fringes. This method of making garters was laborious and time consuming. Consequently, it became common in later centuries to make two garters at once by weaving a wider loompiece which was cut in half lengthwise and then finished by hand.

Not all garters were purpose made and strips of cloth were sometimes recycled as garters. Examples from the late 14th century include a piece of samite (No 336, Fig 76) and possibly some knotted selvages from woollen fabrics. The essential quality of all these pieces is that they are relatively strong.

Selected catalogue XIII

Last quarter 14th century

388 Dimensions: l c.270mm, w 22mm (including scallops 7mm deep)

Weave: tabby

Warp: (i) wool, red (madder), S-spun

(ii) wool, black (madder), Z-spun, 11–12 pairs per cm

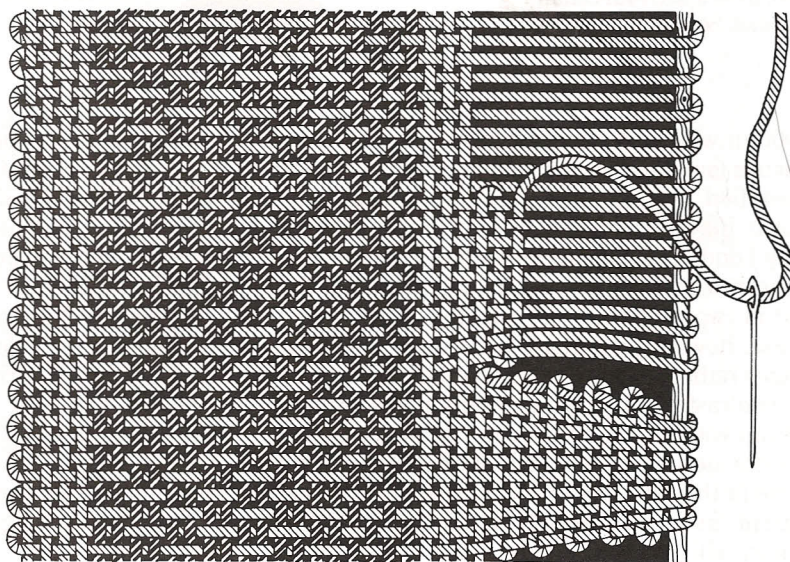


Fig 115 Method by which purpose-made garters may have been woven

Weft: wool, red (madder), Z-spun, 20–21 picks per cm

Pattern: 4 red ends, 7 pairs of black ends, 4 single black ends, 3 red ends, c.10 darned in red threads forming scallop

Fig 113

389 Dimensions: l 220mm, w 18mm (including scallops up to 10mm deep)

Weave: tabby

Warp: (i) wool, red, S-spun
(ii) wool, black, S-spun
10 ends per cm

Weft: wool, red, S-spun, 8–9 picks per cm

Pattern: 6 black ends, c.14 darned in red threads forming scallop

390 Dimensions: l 95mm, w 23mm (including scallops 8mm deep)

Weave: tabby

Warp: (i) wool, red, S-spun
(ii) wool, black, Z-spun, 10 pairs per cm

Weft: wool, red, Z-spun, 20 picks per cm

Pattern: 4 red ends, 10 pairs of black ends, 4 red ends, c.12 darned in red threads forming scallop

Fig 114

Hairnets

Hairnets were also made in London from imported silk thread (Dale 1932/4, 331). Four examples of knotted mesh hairnets have been recovered from excavations in the City: one from a late 13th-century deposit, two from deposits dating to the second quarter of the 14th century, and a small fragment from the late 14th century. The condition and size of the latest piece suggests that it was already old at the time of deposition. This accords with visual evidence which shows that hairnets with a small knotted mesh declined in popularity during the 14th century as female hairstyles changed to reveal more of the hair, although nets often continued to be worn over the back of the head. By contrast, when hairnets again became conspicuous in the latter part of the century their structure had altered and they appear to have consisted of a much larger, sturdier mesh to which jewels could more easily be attached.

Examination of the four hairnets, which are

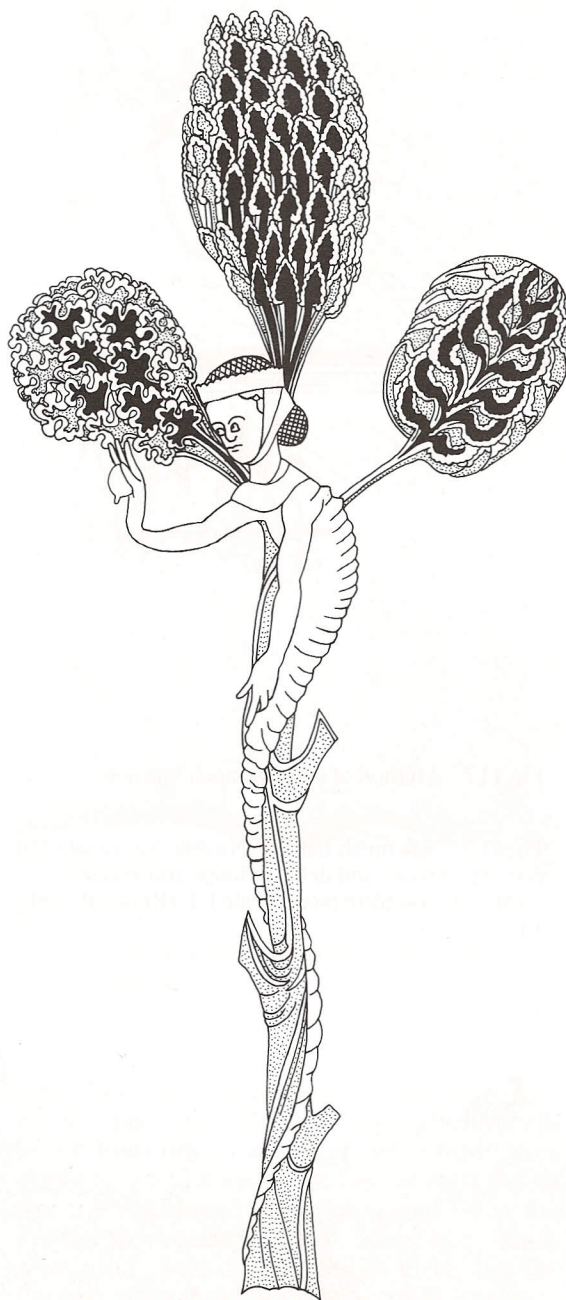


Fig 116 Typical female headdress including a hairnet c.1270–80 (after a prefatory miniature to a psalter, St John's College, Cambridge MS K 26 f.231)