

Costumes

Costuming is essential for all who take part in a medieval fair. The personal fun and the special experience we offer others will occur as a result of wearing appropriate costume at official engagements. Our credibility depends upon us presenting ourselves with a historically correct costume, accessories and equipment as possible. A look of authenticity can be achieved easily and inexpensively.

There are innumerable reference books, illustrations, and films etc. that depict the various facets of Medieval life, ideas and customs. These may inspire you to dress in a particular style. If you haven't made up your mind or are thinking of changing, or adding to your existing costume, perhaps the following background information will help you.

The medieval period or Middle Ages is usually accepted as being in Western Europe between the 5th and 15th Century. (i.e. between Classical Greece and Roman and the Renaissance, or 475AD to 1475AD)

Some keywords associated with this period are Barbarians, Dark Ages, Romanesque, Early Christian, Byzantium, Christendom, Gothic, Normans, Franks, Monarchies, Crusades, Feudalism, Chivalry, Castles, and knights.

This period was much different than the one we live in today. It was characterised by almost total illiteracy and lack of communication between people, absolute deference to authority, particularly males, Lords and the church.

There was magic and superstition and hard and fast divisions in society where everyone knew their place. Each group or class had their own codes of behaviour and dress.

These class groups were:

- **The Church** – Bishops, friars, priests, monks, abbots, nuns, knight templars, and pilgrims
- **The Ruling Class** – Kings, queens, lords, ladies, nobles and knights
- **The Working Class** – Merchants, craftsmen, tradesmen, soldiers (mercenaries, and conscripts) peasants, entertainers, huntsmen, vagabonds, outlaws and gypsies

When choosing what style of costume to wear, it may be helpful to decide which medieval group appeals to you're the most. Do you see yourself as a Monk? Perhaps as Noble? How about a working class blacksmith? Whatever you choose you need to make sure the clothing is relevant and suitable for your activities. It is reasonably practical (eg. washable, not too hot or cold or heavy etc.) and interesting to look at.

For example:

A working class Foot Archer (conscript), around 1330, English / Welsh would wear

- **Outer-garments** – long sleeve, green and white tunic (half and half vertically), and from wool or linen with brown tunic/cloak or wool or linen for warmth
- **Under-garments** – Wool or linen singlet or underpants with brown or blue hose (substitute cotton or knitted fabric)
- **Headwear** – shoulder hood with lrypipe over white skullcap
- **Hairstyle** – medium length and no beard
- **Footwear** – soft leather ankle boots, with hard sole
- **Accessories and weapons** – Bracer, buckler, purse(s), six arrow in belt(s), 3' sword, longbow, 6' staff

You may find that you need two costumes eventually. One would be more practical and functional for daywear and associated activities, and another (perhaps more exotic, decorative and fanciful) for more special occasions and evening activities such as pageants, feasts and festivals.

We hope you will enjoy researching, discovering, making and assembling your costume. It will certainly enhance your enjoyment of the fair and become item of interest to yourself and others.

Please contact the committee if you have any further questions.

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