

## 500 AD Celtic-British Peplos

Under-tunic of plain woven linen

Peplos gown of plaid, plain woven, fulled wool; upper and lower edges bound with tablet woven bands.

Hair is worn loose or tied back.

Head coverings were not worn.

Shoes are of felted wool with tablet woven band across the instep.  
Leggings consisting of tablet woven leg bindings will be worn in the winter.

Accessories of tablet woven belt with metal buckle and ending; belt knife, keys, tweezers, shears, and thread box all hung by tablet woven bands from the belt; a tablet woven circlet for the head.

Jewelry include two pen-annular brooches; wrist clasps; earrings; and necklaces of glass beads.

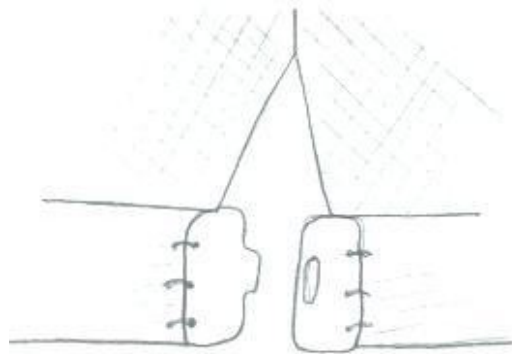


## GENERAL NOTES

Evidence about early Celtic-Roman clothing is limited by the fact that organic materials, such as fabric, decay relatively quickly. There is also a scarcity of accurate written descriptions of the clothing of that time or how they were constructed. There is not a great deal of pictorial evidence either. The conquest of the area by the Romans and their occupation, which followed, affected the civilization and culture to such an extent that the Celts followed the fashions in dress of the important families of the conquerors for centuries.

The under tunic should be made of either a very fine, lightweight wool or of linen, since linen was locally grown and preferred by the upper classes. The under tunic and peplos both are ankle length in keeping with similar gowns of the time worn by women in many cultures from earliest times and was clearly a feature of Vikings and Greco-Roman clothing for many centuries.

In warm weather the peplos gown would have been worn on its own, but in cold weather, or on special occasions, an under tunic would have been worn. The under tunic is most often shown in sculptures with a long, tight sleeve. Frequently the under tunic sleeves were left open along the lower edge of the seam to allow the hand to pass through. The sleeve was then edged with a cuff of tablet weaving the same width as the metal wrist clasp to which it was stitched. (Owen-Crocker, 41) The neck is usually round and occasionally there is a slit in the center front that is closed by a brooch. This brooch is of a different type than the two on the peplos. The under tunic is constructed in the manner of the shirts found at the Thorsbjerg Mose. I chose this method instead of the typical SCA T-tunic style because this way conserves cloth which would be a concern to someone who had to hand spin and weave their every piece of cloth.



The peplos gown is a tube of woolen fabric with brooches pinned at each shoulder for closure of the peplos yet leaves the arms uncovered. It would most likely have been tablet woven at the top edge, and possibly bottom edge, which then formed the warp to weave the rest of the fabric. (Owen-Crocker, 32) The peplos is girdled or belted at the waist with a tablet woven belt. The folds of the gown usually conceal the belt. The belt uses a metal buckle. Grave evidence shows that the belt tongue would always be pointing to the right. This garment was usually worn ankle length, although, if worn over an under tunic, it may sometimes have been worn calf length. The peplos gown would have been fastened at the shoulders with large brooches of identical or at least similar characteristics. The style of brooches worn seems to form a regional pattern. Quoit brooches were worn only south of the Thames and, like the equal armed brooch,

were known only in the earliest period. Radiate headed brooches, bird-shaped brooches, and inlaid brooches were largely characteristic of Kent. Cruciform brooches were particularly popular in Anglian areas; annular and pen-annular brooches were especially favored by the Northumbrian Angles. Saucer brooches were most popular in Saxon areas, as were disc brooches. Long brooches, in all their forms seem to have been fairly universal (Owen-Crocker, 27,28).

Women rarely wore veils but did frequently wear a tablet woven circlet around their hair. The circlet was commonly of red with gold brocading. The hair was worn loose or tied back. It could have also been plaited. There is no evidence of Anglo Saxon women wearing their hair up for metal hairpins have never been found in the quantity needed for that style. The women found in the Sutton Hoo site were all bareheaded (Owen-Crocker, 51).

Accessories are important in the Celtic-Roman ensemble. They actually help define the time period. The more accessories that are hanging from the belt, the earlier the period. The most common accessory was the knife, which was worn at the left hip and typically, had the blade up. Other items might include keys, tweezers, ear wax scoops, shears, cosmetic brushes, fire flints, and thread boxes (Owen-Crocker, 46).

Jewelry for this ensemble might consist of earrings which are hoops with glass beads suspended from them, and necklaces of glass beads and beads of amber, amethyst, or crystal. The necklaces are suspended between the shoulder brooches rather than around the neck. There is very little evidence of the use of finger rings. The main items of jewelry are the two brooches at the shoulder used to fasten the peplos. It is unknown how women kept their legs warm during this time. They may have simply added extra layers of gowns and petticoats, or they could have used some other method. They probably would have made use of short linen trousers and puttee type leg bindings that the men used. Shoes for this outfit would be of the turn shoe style that has flat soles, round toes, and come to the ankle. They are made by stitching with leather and fasten around the ankle with leather thongs.

Typical fabric colors worn during this time period were bright primary colors of red, green, blue, yellow, purple, and white. Typical materials used were spun hemp, linen and wool. Significant decorative motifs used during this time period included intertwining animals, birds, lizards, and snakes as well as spiral interlacing. Makeup was not used apparently.

## LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

### MATERIALS

#### PEPLOS

- 2 yards of 72" fabric or 4 yards of 36" fabric
- sewing thread
- bias tape
- trim as desired

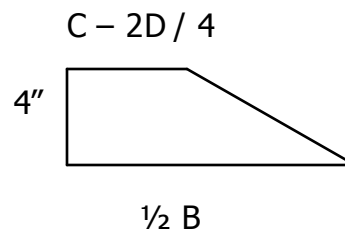
The peplos gown layout is non-essential since it consists of a piece of material 6 feet long by 5 feet wide. This makes the gown 1 1/2 times my width and long enough to go from shoulder to ankle with a generous amount of blousing. Since most material is not 72" wide, I chose two widths of 36" material and cut each 6 feet long.

#### UNDER TUNIC

- 3 yards of 60" fabric or 4 yards of 45" fabric
- sewing thread
- bias tape if not using a neck facing
- trim as desired

The front and back panels of a tunic work fairly well if they are as wide as the measurement between the points of the shoulders, plus seam allowances on both sides. The difference between the shoulder measurement and the chest measurement is made up in the side gores. Side gore length is determined by  $A - 1/2 E$ . There needs to be at least 4" of ease in the chest area. To determine the shape of the sleeve gores, the long edge is  $1/2 B$ . The top is 4" and the side edge is  $C - 2D/4$ . For each additional layer, add at least 2" per layer. The bottom of side gores can be as wide or as narrow as you like, but if they are too wide they will hang in deep folds rather than draping gracefully.

The sleeve gore looks like this:



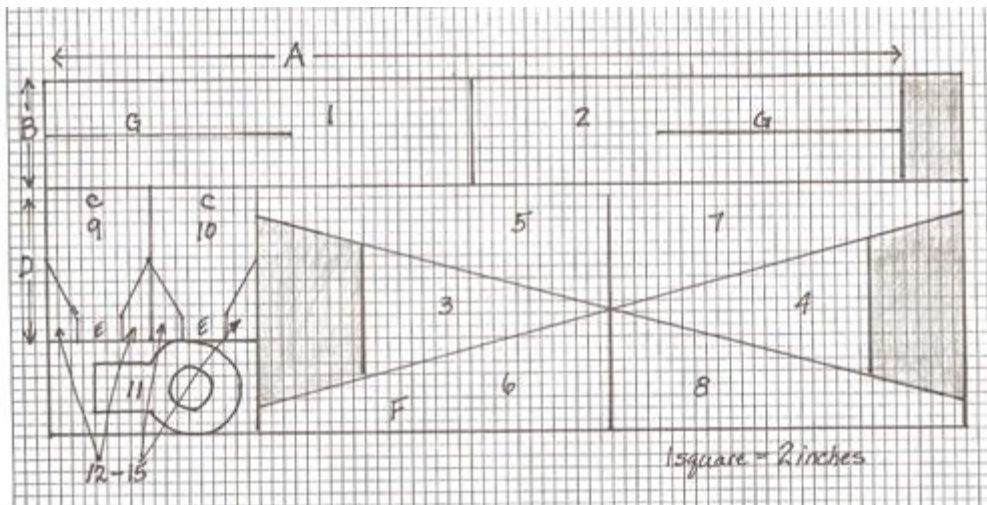
Sleeves should be generally 16" wide at the shoulder and may taper at the wrist. There needs to be at least 5" of ease in the garment's length to allow for the belt. The neck hole must either be big enough to fit over the head, or else incorporate a slit. A 24" circumference will fit all but the largest head, and a 16" hole with a 4" deep slit will also work.

The under tunic layout consists of a single layer of fabric 4 yards long and 45" wide. The layout for the fabric is, in my opinion, the style of layout used for most of the Middle Ages. There is little if any fabric waste. The front and back panels of a tunic work fairly well if they are as wide as the measurement between the points of the shoulders, plus seam allowances on both sides. There needs to be at least 4" of ease in the chest area. If half of this number is a significantly larger number than the shoulder measurement, go with the chest measurement and decrease the material in the shoulders gradually to compensate. Gores can be as wide or as narrow as you like, but if they are too wide they will hang in folds rather than draping gracefully. Sleeves should be generally 16" wide at the shoulder and may taper at the wrist. There needs to be at least 4-8" of ease in the length of the garment to allow for draping at the belt.

## MEASUREMENTS

_____ A = height + 5"	1-2 = main body
_____ B = bent arm length +1"	3-4 = front and back inset
_____ C = chest + 4"	5-8 = side gores
_____ D = shoulder width +1"	9-10 = sleeves
_____ E = sleeve width + 2"	11 = neck facing
_____ F = waist to floor + 5"	12-15 = underarm gusset
_____ G = A - 1/2 E	

W = width of material



## CONSTRUCTION NOTES

### General Sewing Tips:

- It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
- All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
- Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
- Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
- Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
- Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
- Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

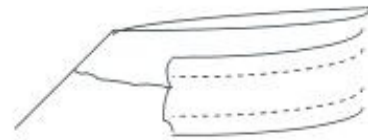
## SEWING DIRECTIONS UNDERTUNIC

### Step 1

Cut out all pieces and label for ease of identification.

### Step 2

Finish the neck edge by sewing in a facing tape of twill tape. Sew the tape to the raw edge of the neck and then fold under and stitch down with a small running stitch.



### Step 3

Attach the sleeve gussets to the sleeves.

### Step 4

Attach the side gores to the sleeves.

### Step 5

Attach the sleeves and side gore assembly to the body.

### Step 6

It should look like this if laid flat. This is a good time to iron out the seams if you haven't already done so.

Step 7  
Add any decoration such as embroidery, trim, etc.

Step 8  
Sew up the side seams. Seams should all be finished. Fold under the raw edges to the outside and hand stitch a running stitch down either side of the seam. Use a contrasting color so that the stitches show decoratively on the outside of the dress.

Step 9  
Hang the garment for at least a week. Two weeks would be better to let the dress stretch. Then mark the length and hem.

## PEPLOS

Step 1  
With right sides together, sew both sides together forming a tube.



Step 2  
Turn under raw edges to hem the top and bottom of the tube.



Step 3  
Hand sew tablet-woven trim to both top and bottom edges of the tube.

Step 4  
Fasten brooches at the shoulders.

