

A Basic Tunic

by Mistress Margaret Bruce



Fig 2. Roger of Helmarshausen, Portable Alter for Abbey of Abdinghof, c. 1100



Fig 1. Detail from Calendar and Hymnal 11th C.

The tunic is a versatile garment worn throughout the Middle Ages. This garment often begins the kit for a new member in the Society for Creative Anachronism. Ranging from straight rectangles to the addition of gores for fullness at the hem, this garment is the foundation for almost any basic wardrobe across Europe from Roman times to the high Middle Ages.



Fig. 3 Herjolfsnes no 33

I would like to focus on the 11th Century shape for construction. People in period, as is true today, would have had varying ways to construct the same basic look. There is no one set pattern to accomplish this look. I prefer to use a pattern with a rectangular body, two gores on each side and sleeves. I've developed this pattern from Herjolfsnes nos. 33 and 34. I like this pattern because it adds some extra ease for movement. Many fighters in the SCA blow out the armpits of their tunics in the course of wielding a sword. Hopefully this pattern can help people head off that problem, look period, and know that the pattern for their tunic is based on an extant garment.

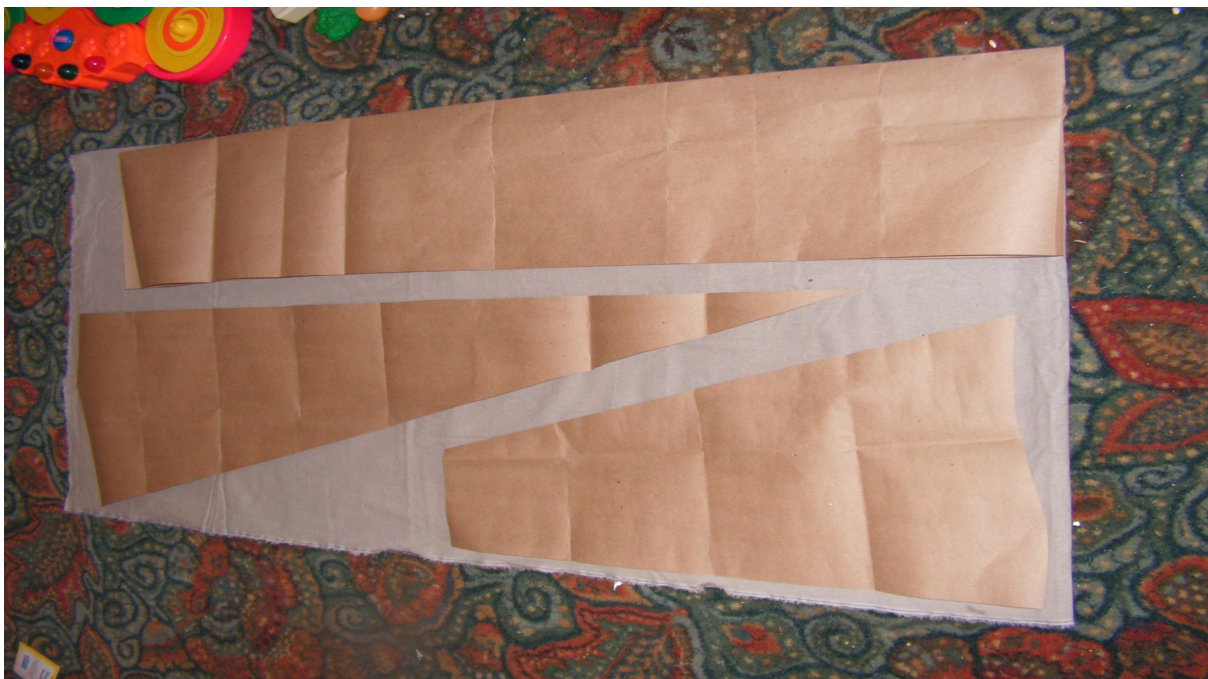
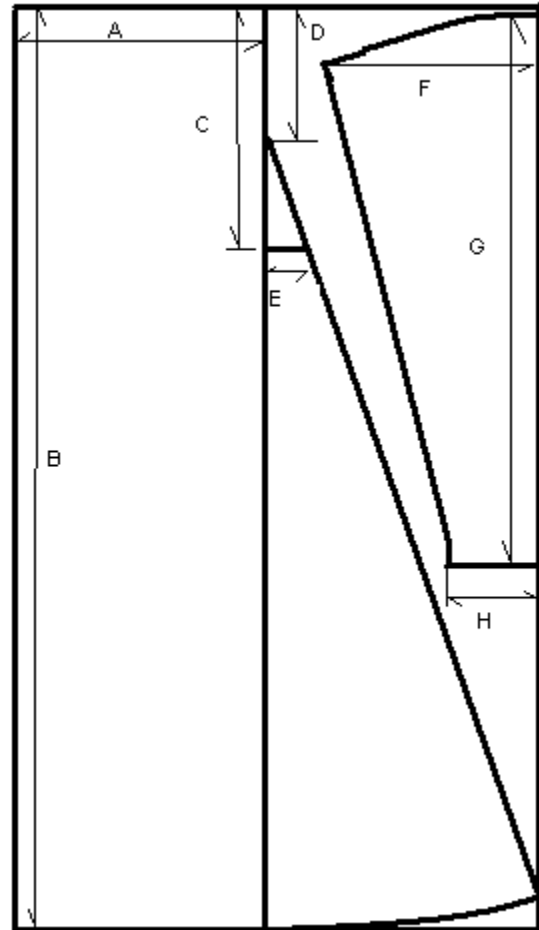
First some measurements need to be taken:

- 1.Shoulder to shoulder
- 2.Chest
- 3.Neck to desired length
- 4.Neck to waist
- 5.Sleeve length
- 6.Measurement around hand

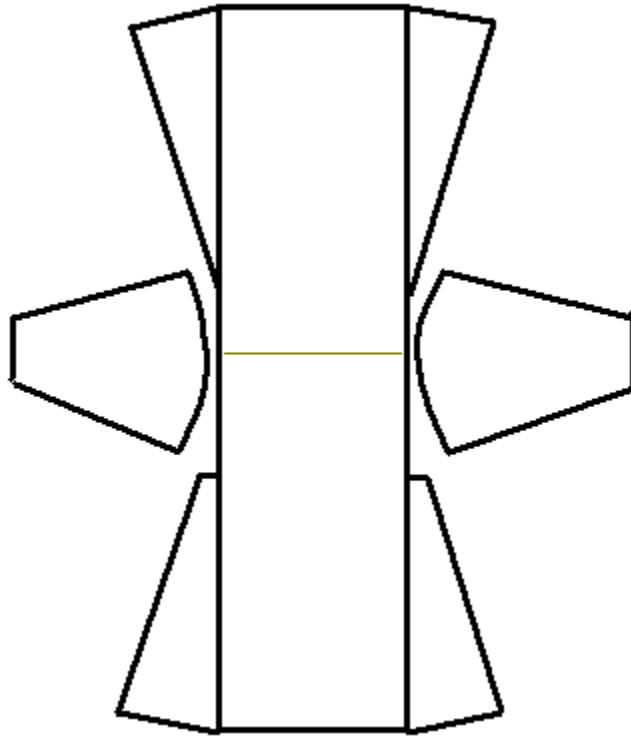
Now apply these measurements as indicated on the diagram to pattern paper:

- A. half of shoulder to shoulder (on fold when cutting)
- B. Neck to desired length (on fold when cutting)
- C. half of neck to waist plus two inches
- D. half of C
- E. Chest plus 4 inches divided by four then subtract A
- F. $(C + D + D + E)$ divided by two.
- G. Sleeve length
- H. measurement around hand or desired width of sleeve at wrist

The side gore pattern has a point for the back gore and is cut at E for the front gore. Cut out pieces and lay out on fabric allowing space between pieces for seam allowance. Cut out



all four side gores at once then cut two for front. Assemble as directed in diagram. Gores attach first, followed by seams up the sides. Sleeves are then assembled and set in.



Hem as desired. See Magic Neckline Trick handout to make pattern for neckline.

Fig.1 <http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/105x-calendar.html> Backhouse, Janet, D. H. Turner, and Leslie Webster, eds. *The Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art, 966-1066*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c. 1984).

Fig. 2
<http://www.uvm.edu/~hag/rhuddlan/images/1100-helmarshausen.html> Zarnecki, George. *Art of the Medieval World*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975.)

Fig. 3
<http://www.forest.gen.nz/Medieval/articles/garments/H33/H33.html> Chapter IV, The Costumes in Buried Norsemen at Herjolfsnes, by Poul Nörlund. Bind LXVII - Meddelelser om Grønland. Kommissionen for ledelsen af de Geologiske og geografiske undersøgelser i Grønland, Copenhagen 1924.
Bockstensmannen och hans dräkt, Margareta Nockert m.fl. Hallands läns museer, Halmstad och Varberg, 1997.

Bibliography

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Zarnecki, George. *Art of the Medieval World.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1975.)

See **General Costume Bibliography** for further research leads.

Also see the following for hand sewing guidelines:

Archaeological Sewing by *Heather Rose Jones*

<http://heatherrosejones.com/archaeologicalsewing/index.html>