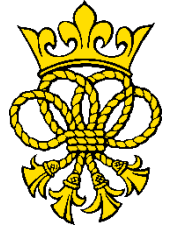




The Sealed Knot Society

DISPLAY DESCRIPTION



Fashion Parade

The Sealed Knot tries to portray the life and times of the Great Rebellion, also known as the English Civil War or the War of the three Kingdoms. Its members provide their own kit and equipment; many making their own clothes following research in 17th century clothing and Army lists of the period.

Only natural fibres were available, meaning clothes were made of linen, wool, or silk. Some cotton was available but was not in general use. Different grades of fabric were used and the finer the cloth the richer the wearers. You may be able to judge the relative wealth of the models by what they appear in. Leather was used for shoes but also clothing. Much research has been done on apparel of the 17th century; inspecting surviving clothes, portraits and prints of the period and looking at probate records and wills.

London, led fashion, the latest fashionable dress was expected at Court. The further away the more dated your clothes could be.

Starting with underwear. Men would wear knee length shirts with a split at the side to allow movement. women wore a shift or smock in linen, it goes from the neckline to mid-calf, there are long triangular gores at the sides to allow movement. Sleeves can be full or elbow length. Wealthy people would have many shirts or shifts to allow laundering; displaying fine white linen showed that you could afford servants to look after them. Relatively poor people would have more than one shirt or shift but of poorer quality linen. Men would wear collars or if elderly or scholars a ruff. Women wore linen coifs to cover their hair.

Both men and women would wear hose or stockings which could be knitted or made of cloth, linen or wool held up with garters. Leather shoes were worn, or men may wear boots if riding.

Women would wear a shaping garment called stays or a pair of bodies. These were stiffened with whalebone or bundles of grasses or reeds. They are surprisingly comfortable and do allow for free movement.

Outer clothes would be as fashionable as you could afford, the more tailored and better-quality cloth with more trimmings were an easy way to show off.

Fashions changed and there would be a range of styles for example men's breeches could be baggy, tapered to the knee or slim fitting. They would have pockets; I have seen a pair of breeches with 7 different pockets.

Doublets, as jackets were known as, also had different styles from doublets with a dip at the front to high waisted ones. They could be trimmed with lace or braid including gold or silver lace. Or the fabric could be slashed to show the fine lining underneath.

Large coats, cassacks or cloaks would be the outer layer.

Headwear was a definite display of status. Large, brimmed hats, possibly made with felt from imported beaver fur were the highest quality. Other hats could be knitted, sewn, or made of lesser quality fur.

Women could wear a kirtle with covered torso and lower body but by the 1640's most would wear petticoats - all skirts were known as petticoats - of wool, linen, or silk. There may have been pockets, but most women wore detachable pockets on a belt around their waists with slits in the petticoats to gain access to them.

Upper garments could be fashionable tailored bodices, or what was known as a waistcoat, a lined but unstiffened jacket. You can see examples of earlier waistcoats in museums with amazing embroidery, but by 1640's the basic waistcoat would usually be plain.

Women would wear their linen coifs, but they may also wear brimmed felt hats or hoods. Both men and women wore hats as it was the social convention to do so.

Make-up could be worn but it was often denounced by the church.

Some roles in society had a form of uniform such as scholars or the dress of the clergy. Again, status and belief would influence what was worn, though dark or black clothes were usual, with white collars/ruffs and cuffs.

Military wear would be similar to civilian clothes, although Army issues occurred where a coat, breeches and hat were given to the soldiers. These could be the same colour, the start of military uniforms. Army lists survive which give the accounts of those army issues.

Officers would wear their own clothes and could be very extravagant.

The Highland Scots Army which reached the Midlands would consist of a woollen bonnet, linen shirt which could be dyed yellow, a full plaid or great kilt, plaid hose, sporran, dirk, targe, and sword.