

## **Basic Costume for New Members**

### **Introduction**

This booklet is intended to help new members of The Vikings assemble their first set of kit and costume. To that end this booklet contains descriptions and photos of 5 basic costumes from the 30 + that we recognize for the purposes of a Drengir assessment. Here you will find photos of our members dressed in the style of their choice. The pictures have been chosen on the basis of the general appearance and authenticity of the costume being worn. At the time of writing (Winter 2001/2002) we believe the images we have chosen to be in line with current archaeological thinking but we plan to re-issue this booklet whenever new evidence is forthcoming. Remember that it is just as easy to produce a good authentic costume as it is to produce an inauthentic one, but the authentic one will last you much longer.

### **What is a Basic Costume?**

A basic costume is one, which avoids all of the expensive (but understandably desirable) items such as expensive brooches, fancy helmets, swords or a ring shirt while allowing you to take a full part in our events.

Whichever costume you choose now or in the future certain rules must be followed and certain items are not permitted. These include:

- a) Roman, Post-Roman or later Medieval helms
- b) Plate Armour of any sort.
- c) Live-role-play type weapons.
- d) Knitted 'String' mail.
- e) Non-authentic footwear.
- f) Tartan of any description.
- g) Shields that are not round or kite shaped, or any made of Hardboard, Chipboard or MDF.
- i) Furry jackets or waistcoats.
- j) Body Armour made of Horn, Bone, Wood, Leather or any form of sheet metal.
- k) Overtly modern hairstyles must be disguised.
- k) Finally - All visible body piercings should be removed and all tattoos should be covered by costume or masking make-up.

### **Materials**

All of the clothing worn by our Brythonic, Norman, Saxon or Viking ancestors was produced from natural products, and we strive to re-create this in our re-enactments. Therefore all costume should be made from wool, linen or leather.

Overdresses and over tunics are best made from woollen cloth, or sometimes heavy linen. Under dresses and under tunics are usually made from linen although cotton is permitted due to reasons of expense. Cotton may NOT be worn as an over garment. Likewise trousers can be made from either wool or heavy linen. Cloaks are always made from wool and often lined with another layer of wool. Winningas are usually made from wool, as these are less prone to slipping.

All leather should be veg-tanned and **NOT** chromed. Men's (and women dressed as men) belts should be from 2cm to 3 cm wide and fitted with an authentic buckle, while women should wear belts of woven wool. Shoes are also made from veg-tanned leather but it is probably best if you seek help before starting a pair of your own. However, the evidence for garments made of leather (apart from shoes) is fragmentary in the extreme, so please do not make any as part of your first costume.

### **Pouches & Bags**

These should be made from a semi-circle of leather (about 20-30 cm in diameter) with the straight edges stitched together and then strung around the top with a leather thong. This is then suspended from the waist belt. If more space is needed there is ample evidence from our period for shoulder bags. These are about 15-30cm wide by 10-30cm deep and can be made from wool, leather or even heavy linen. A long shoulder strap is then fitted. Closure of the bag can be achieved by cutting one or two 'button holes' in the lid flap and then fitting a bone or wooden 'button', (a bit like an old fashioned duffel coat button) to the front of the bag.

One final point. Although these costumes are adequate for participation in shows, they are only intended to be beginners' costumes, and all of them will require a fair amount of work to pass a Drengir kit check.

### **Colours**

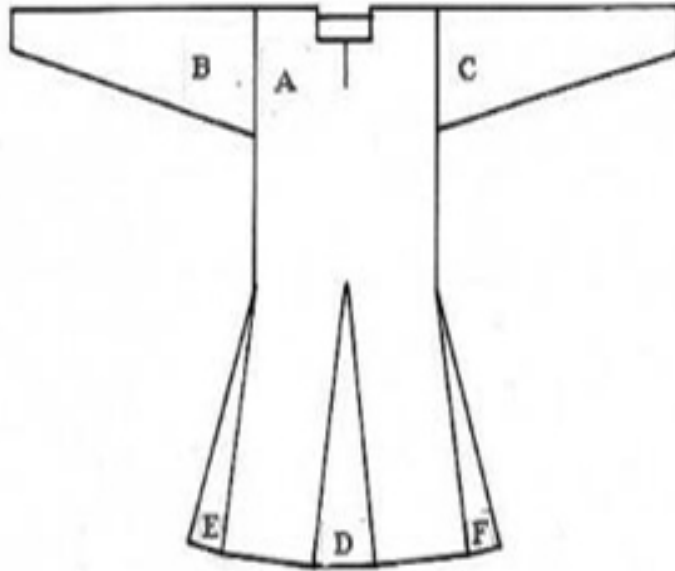
As a guide to help you when choosing materials or dyestuffs the colour chart below (which comes from Sweden) shows the range of colours that can be achieved with natural dyestuffs.



## Basic Costume Manufacture

### Tunics

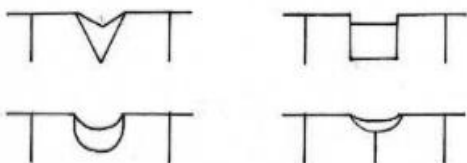
The manufacture of a simple tunic (or *Kyrtle*) is fairly straightforward as the following drawings show. The long illustration shows how all the pieces can be cut from a single bolt of cloth 24 inches wide. Next the pieces are sewn together following the pattern below. For a simple tunic ignore the two sections (front and back) labeled D.



For a typical Anglo-Saxon multi colours tunic the two D plus the E and F segments would be cut from a different bolt of cloth, and as a variation the sleeves could be same colour as the inserts.

Anglo-Saxon tunics should be made long enough to reach to below the knees even when belted. The sleeves should be quite tight at the cuffs but also be long enough to reach to at least the knees when pulled out. Extra width may also be allowed to accommodate armguards under the sleeves.

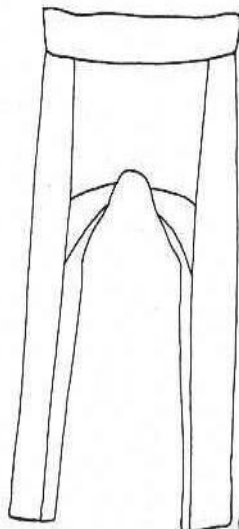
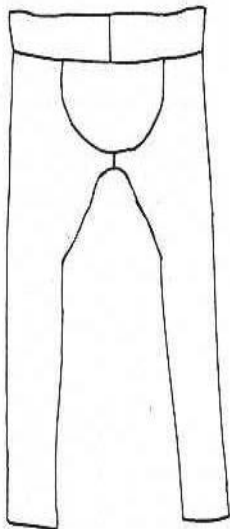
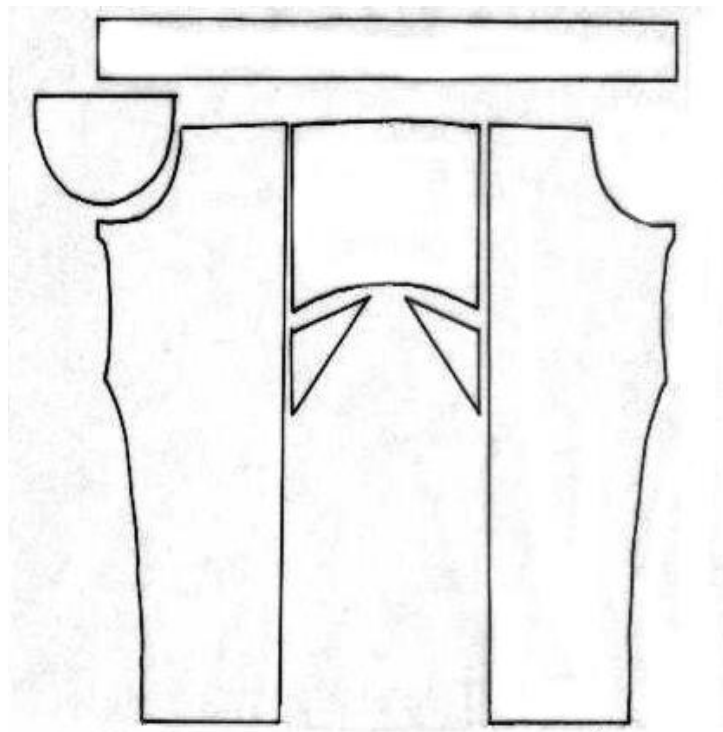
Viking tunics are normally of a single colour as well as being a little shorter in the body and having the arms end at the wrist. Instead of the wide vents they may have side splits running from the hem to just below the waist. Basic dresses are simply a tunic design extended to the ankle.



**Necklines.** The next illustration shows a variety of necklines suitable for dresses and tunics. The important thing to remember however is that if the neckline has a split this must be closed with ties, clothing hooks, a brooch or a hook and eye arrangement.

## Cloak

Given the British weather, a cloak is a useful addition to any costume. We usually make them from a large blanket with lining. However as this picture (taken from the Bayeux Tapestry) shows, it is probably more correct if it was a half-round shape. It is also useful for showing how the cloaks were worn. The left hand figure has a brooch visible on his right shoulder while the other appears to have one at his neck.



## Trousers

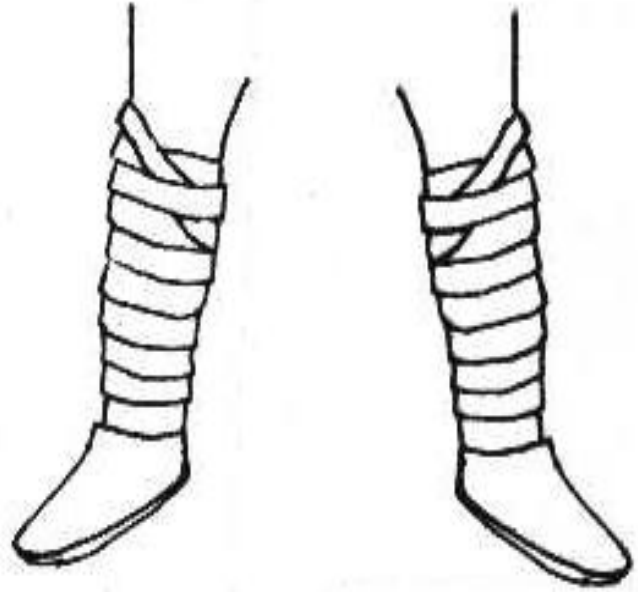
All warriors (except maybe the Brythons) need a pair of trousers of some description. A plain loose pair is best for a beginner since these will suit both Vikings and with some *winningas* (see next page) for Anglo-Saxons as well. The best way to make a pair of trousers is to take an old pair and use them as a guide, but for those who want to try from scratch a pattern is shown here.

Once you've got the bits cut out they go together as shown here. With a bit of effort this pattern produces trousers, which are strong and not prone to splitting at the crotch.

## **Winningas**

Leg Windings, Winningas, Puttees whatever the word it all means the same thing.

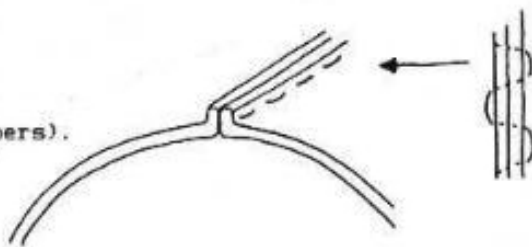
The distinctive lower leg garments worn by the Saxons. They should be made from a hemmed piece of woolen cloth (linen ones will slip down and trip you up) long enough to reach at least from ankle to knee with overlaps as shown in this picture. The tops can be tucked (as here) tied or even fixed with hooked tags.



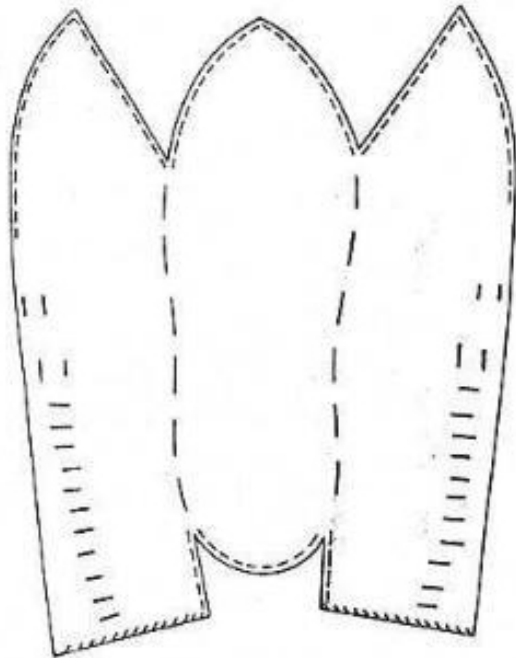
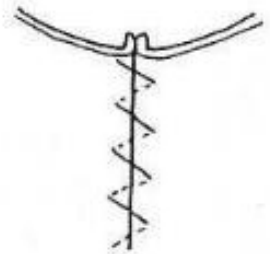
## **Shoes**

Although not absolutely necessary, a pair of authentic shoes completes the basic costume. The pattern overleaf is from Hedeby in Denmark and represents a simple one-piece shoe that you cut from a single piece of leather. With your sole and upper patterns, check that they will do for both feet. Mark out one for each foot from a suitable piece of leather, and cut out the various pieces. Pair the uppers and soles together, remembering to put the "shiny" side of the leather outwards and downwards. If chromed leather is being used, hide the chromed side inwards and downwards. Start the sewing at the heel triangle, and use saddle stitching. Sew up the short side first, and then sew round the long edge. You may have to pull the leather tight to ensure that they meet together at the side of the foot. A little extra material on these edges will ensure a good seam. When the sewing is completed and any excess leather is trimmed off, the shoe can be turned the right way round. Stiff seams can be rubbed with bees wax and hammered flat to prevent chafing. Toggles and laces can be added, but remember that they did not lace up boots and shoes as we do today. We tend to lace up a vertical arrangement of holes, whilst they thonged up a horizontal arrangement of holes or slits.

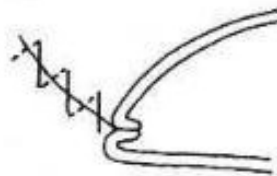
Seam on vamp (ridge on uppers).



Seam on heel.

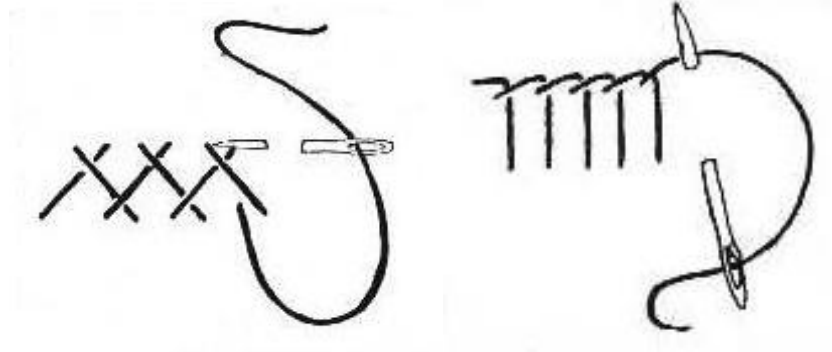


Sole-seam on shoes in one piece.



## **Decoration**

This is not really an issue for a basic costume but looking ahead slightly the following should be remembered. A simple design, perhaps a blanket, running or herringbone stitch in wool in a contrasting colour around the hem or neckline is a good start.



Herringbone Stitch

Blanket Stitch

When you come to consider a more up-market costume, the Saxons were famed for their embroidery, while the Vikings were fond of tablet-woven braid instead.

## **Finally**

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, the rest of this booklet is devoted to photos of members wearing basic kit for Vikings, Anglo-Saxons, Cymri and basic Female. Your group leader or group authenticity officer should be able to help you find places that sell the basic materials or even find suppliers who can sell the completed items. Provincial members should contact the provincial co-coordinator for more information.



## Basic Costume Guide No.1

### Viking

Firstly please note that this is not intended to be a definitive Viking kit guide. It is however intended to show what is required to play a full part in our combat displays. The basic items of costume required for a Viking warrior are as follows:

Under tunic (made from linen or cotton) longer than over tunic (Optional)

Over tunic (made of woolen cloth)

Trousers (wool or linen but **NOT** baggy Russ trousers)

Turn shoes

Plain leather belt with strap end

Primary combat weapon (Axe or Spear)

Head and hand protection plus a Shield



The member pictured here has a good basic costume. He is wearing a woolen over tunic edged with tablet braid fastened at the neck by a hook and eye, and a pair of trousers. He is armed with a short spear, a sheathed seax and a suitably rimmed round shield. He has a plain leather belt with a suitable strap end and a pair of simple turn shoes and on his head he is wearing a steel conical helmet with nose guard. Instead of the conical helm he could instead have either a fur-trimmed hat concealing a steel liner or even a helmet made entirely of hard leather. A metal helmet may not be archeologically correct for this class of warrior but they are compulsory for all combatants. The same applies to the gloves with hard leather backing that

he is wearing. For non-combatant men the same costume would be worn but without the weapons or armour protection



## Basic Costume Guide No.2

### Anglo-Saxon

Again this is not a definitive guide to Saxon costume. It is however intended to show what is required to play a full part in our combat displays. The society has published a much more detailed guide to Saxon costume and this should be available from your group leader or group authenticity officer. The basic items of costume required for a Saxon warrior are as follows:

- Under tunic (made from linen or cotton) (Optional)
- Over tunic (made of woollen cloth) with long sleeves pushed back
- Trousers (wool or linen but **NOT** baggy Russ trousers)
- Turnshoes
- Winningas (puttees)
- Plain leather belt with strap end
- Primary combat weapon (Axe or Spear)
- Head and hand protection and a Shield



The member pictured here has an excellent basic costume. He is wearing a woollen two-tone over tunic edged with tablet braid fastened at the neck by a hook and eye, and over his trousers he is wearing winninggas, which reach up to his knees. He is armed with a long spear, a sheathed seax and a suitably rimmed round shield, which also has a leather strap to enable it to be carried, slung over his shoulder. He has a plain leather belt with a suitable strap end and a pair of simple turn shoes and on his head he is wearing a woollen Phrygian cap under which is a steel liner. He could instead have either a conical helm with (or without) a nose-guard or even a helmet made entirely of hard leather. A metal helmet may not be archeologically correct for this class of warrior but they are compulsory for all combatants. The same applies to the gloves with hard leather

backing that he is wearing. For non-combatant men the same costume would be worn but without the weapons or armour protection.

## Basic Costume Guide No.3

### Brythonic Warrior

Firstly please note that this is not intended to be a definitive guide to Brythonic costume. It is however intended to show what is required to play a full part in our combat displays.

The basic items of costume required for a Brythonic warrior are as follows:

Under tunic (made from linen or cotton) (Optional)

Over tunic (made of woolen cloth)

Trousers (optional but **NOT** baggy 'Rus' trousers)

Turnshoes (Optional)

Plain leather belt

Primary combat weapon (Axe or Spear)

Shield

Head and hand protection plus a Shield.



The member pictured here has a good basic costume. He is wearing a woolen over tunic with a visible pattern in the weave, fastened at the neck by a hook and eye. He is wearing trousers (optional) and on his feet he is wearing a pair of simple turn shoes. His cloak has been wrapped over his shoulder and the belt fastened over the top. He is armed with a spear, a sheathed knife (not visible) and a suitably rimmed small round shield. He has a plain leather belt with a suitable strap end and on his head he is wearing a steel domed helmet. This is probably not archeologically correct for this class of warrior but some sort of head protection is compulsory for all combatants. He could instead have a conical helm with (or without) a nose-guard or even a helmet made entirely of hard leather. For non-combatant men the same costume would be worn but without the weapons or armour protection.



## Basic Costume Guide

### No.4 Norman Warrior

Firstly please note that this is not a definitive guide to Norman costume. It is however intended to show what is required to play a full part in our combat displays.

The basic items of costume required for a Norman warrior are as follows:

- Under tunic (made from linen or cotton) (Optional)
- Over tunic (made of woollen cloth)
- Trousers or Hose (wool or linen but **NOT** baggy Russ trousers)
- Turnshoes
- Winningas (puttees)
- Plain leather belt with strap end
- Primary combat weapon (Spear)
- Secondary combat weapon (Seax or hand axe)
- Head and hand protection
- Kite Shield



The member pictured here has a good basic Norman costume. He is wearing a woollen two-tone over tunic edged with tablet braid fastened at the neck by a small brooch, and over his trousers or hose he is wearing winningas, which reach up to his knee. He is armed with a spear, a sheathed seax and a suitably rimmed and decorated kite shield, which also has a leather strap to enable it to be carried slung over his shoulder. He has a plain leather belt with a suitable strap end and a pair of simple turn shoes and on his head he is wearing a steel conical helm with a nose-guard. He could replace this with hard leather 'Phrygian' cap, but **never** a Gjermundbu type helmet.

For combat he has a pair of gloves with hard leather backing that may not be archeologically correct but are compulsory for all combatants.

**Given their status as a military elite, non-combatant is not an option for Normans.**

## **Basic Female Costume** **Brythonic, Saxon or Viking**

Far more than for the men this is not intended to be a definitive costume guide. All of the races had their distinctive dress and the differences got greater as the wealth of the wearer increased. What is shown here is a basic low rank costume suitable for all races, one that can be worn as part of the living history display at all of our shows regardless of historical participants or timeline. Norman women do not have a low rank costume option because they are only present in this country as members of a military elite. Any women who are part of a Norman exhibit should dress as shown here but will represent impressed local Saxons. The basic items of costume required for a female villager are as follows:

Under dress (made from linen or cotton) (Optional)

Overdress made from woolen cloth

Head covering (scarf or wimple)

Turnshoes (Optional)

Woolen braided or tablet woven belt

Sharp working knife (Optional)

Domestic implements

The member pictured here has a good basic costume. She is wearing a woolen overdress



with coloured vents and a round neckline. The under dress is made of linen dyed a single pale colour and is fastened at the neck with a hook and eye (although ties would be equally acceptable). Around her waist she is wearing a woolen belt from which is hanging a variety of items including a knife, and on her feet she has a pair of simple turnshoes. On her head she has a tied linen scarf which fulfils both the Christian requirement for women to cover their heads in public, and keeps it out of the way while working around an open fire. A useful item not visible here would be a woolen or linen bag with a shoulder strap. Female combatants should wear the same basic costume as men of the same racial type.

## Credits

Most of the information in this guide has been taken from the Vikings Basic Kit Guide No. 1 published in 1990 and is reproduced here with permission. Special thanks are due to those who posed for the pictures, Alan Meek, Roger Barry, Geng, Bryan Betts and Carrie White.

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## Other Publications

Several other books are available from your Vikings group leader or provincial co-ordinator including:

Basic Kit Guide  
Anglo-Saxon kit guide  
Unearthing the Dark-Age Helmet  
Viking Saxon & Norman Shields  
Natural Dyes