

# Worshipful Company of Broiderers of Lochac

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Guild Newsletter, Issue 16 – November Crown 2003

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## From The Guildmaster

**G**reetings to the Company,

From Keridwen the Mouse, Guildmaster.

It was so good to see many of you at the Combined Guild Day. Thank you to everyone who taught, shared ideas or just listened. I'm sure we all left inspired to try something new. (Of course, actually starting the next project is another thing.)

At the Guild Event, Mistress Rowan presented the plans for the next Company project - the Company Banner. Many people have already expressed interest in participating and have received their kits from Rowan. I'd like to thank Mistress Rowan for her hard work and amazing organisational skills to get this started.

Many people have asked when the finishing date for the banner is. At the moment, not all the materials have been sourced, and not all the techniques have been tested, so we can't answer that question yet. If in doubt and you need a deadline, give yourself until Festival or Midwinter.

The nature of the banner is that it will continually change with the Company's members so in a sense it will never be finished. This project may take more than one year. It is more complex than previous projects.

Thank you to Jane of Stockton, Mistress Rowan, Aeron Lasair and Alarice Beatrix von Thal for helping to finish and attach the last few slips to the Royal cloaks. The cloak are not yet close for being finished, with I lot more embellishment still left to do from the original design. I'll keep in touch with the Regalia council and keep you informed of

what the company can do next.

Thankyou to the roving masters who have been about grading work for the members. Thank you to Catalina and Muirghein who judged the November Crown competition. The winner was Jane of Stockton by a very fine margin from Sabine d'Ricoldi da Forli. Both pieces looked fabulous.

This puts Jane firmly in the lead for this year's championship. There is one more competition to go, so nothing is certain until the last competition runs.

Good luck with all your stitch efforts over the holiday season, until we meet again at 12th Night. All your individual efforts combine to make this Company great.

mouse..

## Approaching Competitions

**Twelfth Night 04 (Krae Glas)** - Scandinavian Work

**Rowany Festival** - no comp, but Guild meeting, classes, show and tell

**May Crown ( Politarchoplis)** - Something New

**Midwinter** - Clothing - embroidery on outer garment (& LOG pouches)

**Nov Crown (Ildhafn)** - Specific pattern - interpret in any style

**12th Night 05** - Blackwork (all styles, or select one type?)(& LOG pouches)

## Book Review: "Art of Embroidery" by Lanto Synge

Review by Jane (of) Stockton  
([jane\\_of\\_stockton@webcon.net.au](mailto:jane_of_stockton@webcon.net.au))



My first comment is this, this is the most expensive book I have ever bought, but worth every cent (I paid \$A120 for it). This is the type of book that acts as a corner stone to a good specialised collection.

This is a new work, a descendent of his earlier work *Antique Needlework* published almost 20 years ago. Lanto Synge has had a long association with the Royal School of Needlework in London, so has had access to an extensive collection of needlework, both old and new. This access shows in the depth of styles and techniques covered in this book. This is an historical survey of embroidery through history and not a how-to book.

The book is arranged chronologically, beginning with a general introduction, then moving onto early needlework, Medieval, post-Medieval periods and then by century to the present day. There are side chapters on specific aspects of needlework, of particular interest to me is the chapter on Heraldic embroidery. There are also sections on costume, furniture, Chinese and Indian work.

Each chapter looks at the major stylistic movements of the time and puts embroidery within this as well as wider political, social, economic and religious contexts. For example the impact of the Reformation on embroidery was huge, due to the fact that the Church had always been a major customer for and receiver of commissioned embroidery works. There were also major stylistic changes in the designs and techniques used.

The vast majority of the illustrations are colour, with only a few black and white. There are images on almost every one of the 352 pages, with most having more than one image, in addition there are several full page images which give greater detail of selected pieces (there are even images in the bibliography and index!). In addition to the text and images, there are informative end notes (useful for further research), a 4 page glossary, bibliography, acknowledges for images and finally an index.

For those like myself with an interest in pre-17th century embroidery, a bit more detail. The chapters covering early, medieval, post-medieval and heraldic embroidery take up approximately 78 pages. Images of interest include: full page image of Coptic roundal (silk on linen), full page image of 13th Century German chasuble (good illustration of typical Germanic motifs used for many centuries), 12th Century English mitres (images in black and white), variety of 14th and 15th Century copes - Pienza, Bologna, Syon and Steeple Ashton Copes, mourning cape with heraldic design, 16th Century tent stitch French bed valances and great examples of various uses of heraldic display in embroidery.

### Why I Bought the book

My training and passion is history. I love it and that is reflected in my embroidery. My focus (as stated in my blog title) is historical styles and techniques. Because of where I live, I don't have access to any historical works in person, so I rely on books. So when a book like this one comes out, it goes to the top of my lust list. This book has lots of info and pics about a period that doesn't get covered much except in highly specialised books or journals or out of print works that I can't access.

As far as an "Aaahh" moment, it was seeing a whole chapter dedicated to heraldic embroidery. I am involved in the SCA and one of the main applications for embroidery in that context is in heraldic display in various forms. So any book that shows use of embroidery for heraldic display is going to get my attention!

So it was a combination of the above that finally pushed this one over the line. Don't get me wrong. I had to visit the book several times at the book shop before I bought it, but it is a solid bit of historical writing and that is something I am always interested in. On the whole my taste tends to run to about books, not how-to books. I tend to design my own stuff, and I like to be historically accurate as possible, so this sort of book is important in giving me data on which to base my own work.

## Details:

### *"Art of Embroidery: History of Style and Technique"* by Lanto Syngé

- Hardcover: 352 pages ; Dimensions (in inches): 1.29 x 11.26 x 9.04
- Publisher: Antique Collectors Club; (July 2001)
- ISBN: 185149359X

## Beginner's corner

Following is the first of a series of articles provided by Jane of Stockton – aimed at the beginner and introducing a range of different stitching techniques

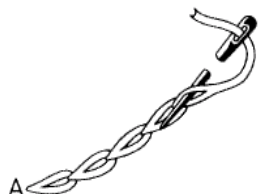
### Five Period Embroidery Stitches – Part I – Split Stitch

#### Background

Split stitch is one of the oldest, most widely used (both geographically and timeframe) and easiest embroidery stitches used in the period covered by the SCA.

Because split stitch follows a curve well, it is a good basic outlining stitch and can also be used as a filling stitch. The densely packed stitching can give an almost painting like effect.

This stitch produced what were acknowledged throughout Europe as the most magnificent embroideries of their times, the mainly clerical garments done in the "Opus Anglicanum" style.



**Figure 1**  
**Split stitch**  
**Technique**

To do this stitch, bring the needle through at A and, following the line to be covered, take a small back stitch so that the needle comes up through the working thread, as shown in the diagram.

When starting to learn this stitch, it might be easier to use what is called a "stab stitch" method. This means making a stitch (as in the first part of the above instructions), but while the needle is "underneath" the fabric, pull the thread all the way through. Then, bring the needle up through the working thread. You are basically doing the same as above, but doing it in two motions rather than one.

#### Periods and Cultures

This stitch was used widely by the following cultures (but not limited to), in the following circumstances:

- Anglo Saxon - Vestments, secular garments
- Norman - Vestments, Ceremonial garments, Bayeaux Tapestry
- Opus Anglicanum - Vestments, seal bags, wall hangings
- Tudor and Elizabethan – Secular embroidering gains popularity, (decline of use in religious settings due to Reformation and rise of Protestantism in England), wall hangings, secular garments, bed hangings, cushions, book bindings, book bags.

#### Materials

Split stitch can be done with just about an embroidery thread. It works particularly well with wool thread, but equally well with cotton and silk. When starting off, wool is a great way to begin. I would recommend something like Anchor or DMC Tapestry wool. It can be worked on a ground (your base fabric) of linen, cotton or wool. In period, wool on wool was fairly common, as was silk thread on a linen ground.

A quick word about colours. While loving the intertwined vines of nature, colour selection of threads was not necessarily naturalistic. As such, the stems of vines could be any colour, not just green. When choosing colours, keep in mind that dyes were made using natural products that were available and so colours tend to be muted to modern eyes. Having said that, brighter reds were available as were vivid blues.

#### Design Sources

One of the problems associated with research into textiles, is that very few textiles survive

today. Those that do tend to be ones that belonged to churches or royal or noble families, who had the means to protect what were in many cases family or national treasures. As such, we must turn to more permanent survivals, such as stonework, illuminated manuscripts, metal work etc.

### **Patterns to Practice With**

Below are two patterns based on period sources that I have put together for those who might like to try a simple design. When stitching, try outlining the pattern in a darker colour, and then filling with a lighter colour.

Either of the patterns below would make a lovely decoration for around a neckline, cuffs or possibly along the front edge of a cloak.



**Anglo-Saxon – Spiral vine based on an altar carving from the Church of St. Mary and St. Hardulph.**



**Norman – 12<sup>th</sup> Century**

# Scandinavian Embroidery

By Marienna Jensdatter (Maggie Forest)

*The topic of 'medieval Scandinavian embroidery' is obviously a rather wide one – as you'd expect.*

“Scandinavia”, geographically speaking, consists of the Scandinavian peninsula, i.e. Sweden and Norway these days and in period the southern parts were Danish. But in the SCA and in wider society, “Scandinavia” means something rather larger, perhaps really a cultural sphere (its inhabitants generally know this culture as ‘Nordic’), consisting of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Greenland, the Færøes, and sometimes Finland, plus of course tributary areas in period such as the Baltic areas, parts of Scotland, Ireland, and Normandy...

When researching these areas, consider how closely the cultural ties were at the time you're looking at – Iceland and the Færøes have always been very closely tied to Norway, but Ireland and Scotland have seemed to manage to absorb invaders fairly quickly. Finland has always been special – while the west coast became very firmly Swedish in that country's great expansion north during the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, ethnically and culturally the main part of it has always been very different from its western neighbours, and the Baltic countries have always been closer to Finland than Sweden, despite Swedish efforts to convince them otherwise.

Embroidery is an ancient art, and this is borne out in archaeology from very early on. The Nordic countries are very rich in finds from an early age, largely thanks to the Danes favouring burials in oak coffins, and also their later hobby of drowning people in bogs. But soil conditions have also helped – clay rich soils are common, and given added weight are quite good at locking out oxygen, that great feeder of textile-eating bacteria. Högom, Oseberg and Mammen are examples of burial mounds that have preserved textiles, embroidery included, thanks to the architect's ambitious sizing of the mound and the condition of the soil underneath.

An article of this format can only ever be an introduction to such a large topic. Therefore I have made no attempt at building an exhaustive overview, nor indeed to show examples from every time and place. Consider this instead an introduction – an appetizer if you like.

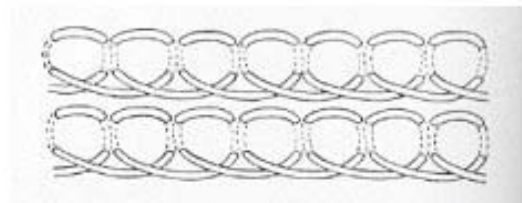
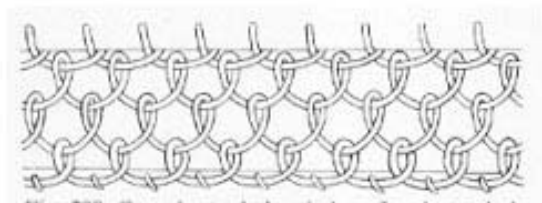
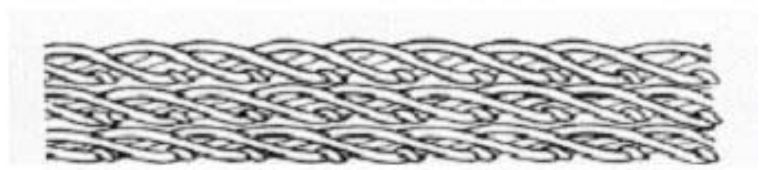
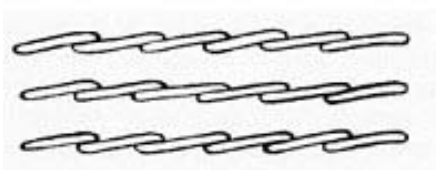
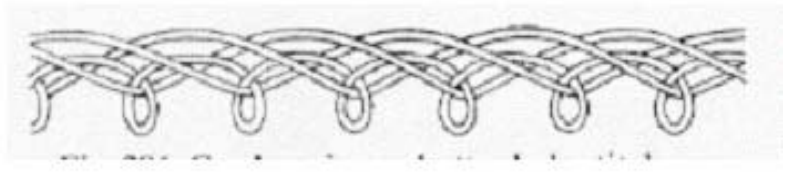
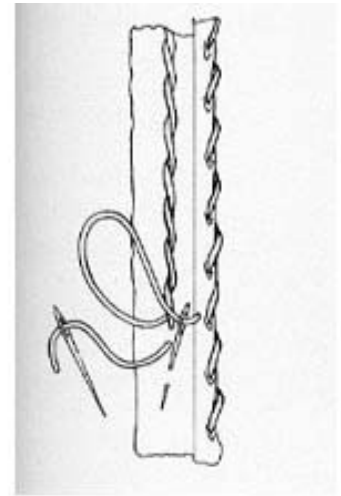
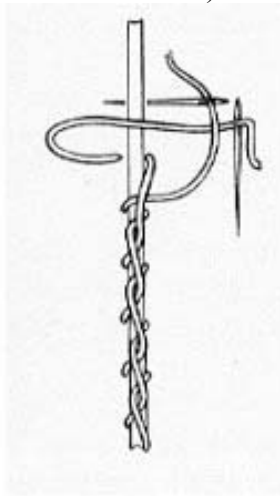
Below you'll find a selection of documentable stitches and styles sorted by time period. At the end of the article, I have included a bibliography, so that you can both study these examples further, and look for other ones.

## **Bronze Age and Iron Age (Migration/Vendel eras)**

From these earlier times, a surprising amount of decorative stitching has survived particularly in Denmark. Quite a few of these are used as decorative stitching, i.e. not necessarily embroidery per se. They make the functional decorative; holding a hem with button hole stitch, twining a contrasting colour through a running stitch seam. Marking the beginnings of a long tradition of embellishing the ordinary, these stitches very much belong in the tradition of embroidery.

Looking through Margrethe Hald's 'Ancient Danish textiles', we come up with the following stitches:

- Stem stitch
- twined stitches of various kinds
- button hole stitches (and detached button hole)



**Figure 1 - Decorative Stitches, Bronze and Iron Ages**



## The Viking Age

When we reach what is commonly called ‘the Viking era’, in other words the two hundred or so last years of the Iron Age before the region became Christian (and therefore intimately connected to Europe), embroidery remains

common. Examples of embroidery have been found in the towns of Birka, Lödöse, Lund and Hedeby, as well as in the burials of Oseberg and Mammen. The most common examples, and perhaps the most spectacular, come from Mammen, which is right on the tail end of the period.

The Mammen embroideries, which are present on several of the different fragments of textiles, are executed in stem-stitch, placed in close rows. There are several motifs – two spectacular border motifs (one acanthus, the other faces) and some individual animals (a ‘leopard’, a bird etc).

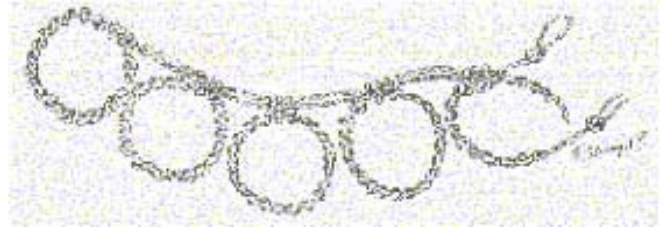


Figure 2 - Oseberg embroidery

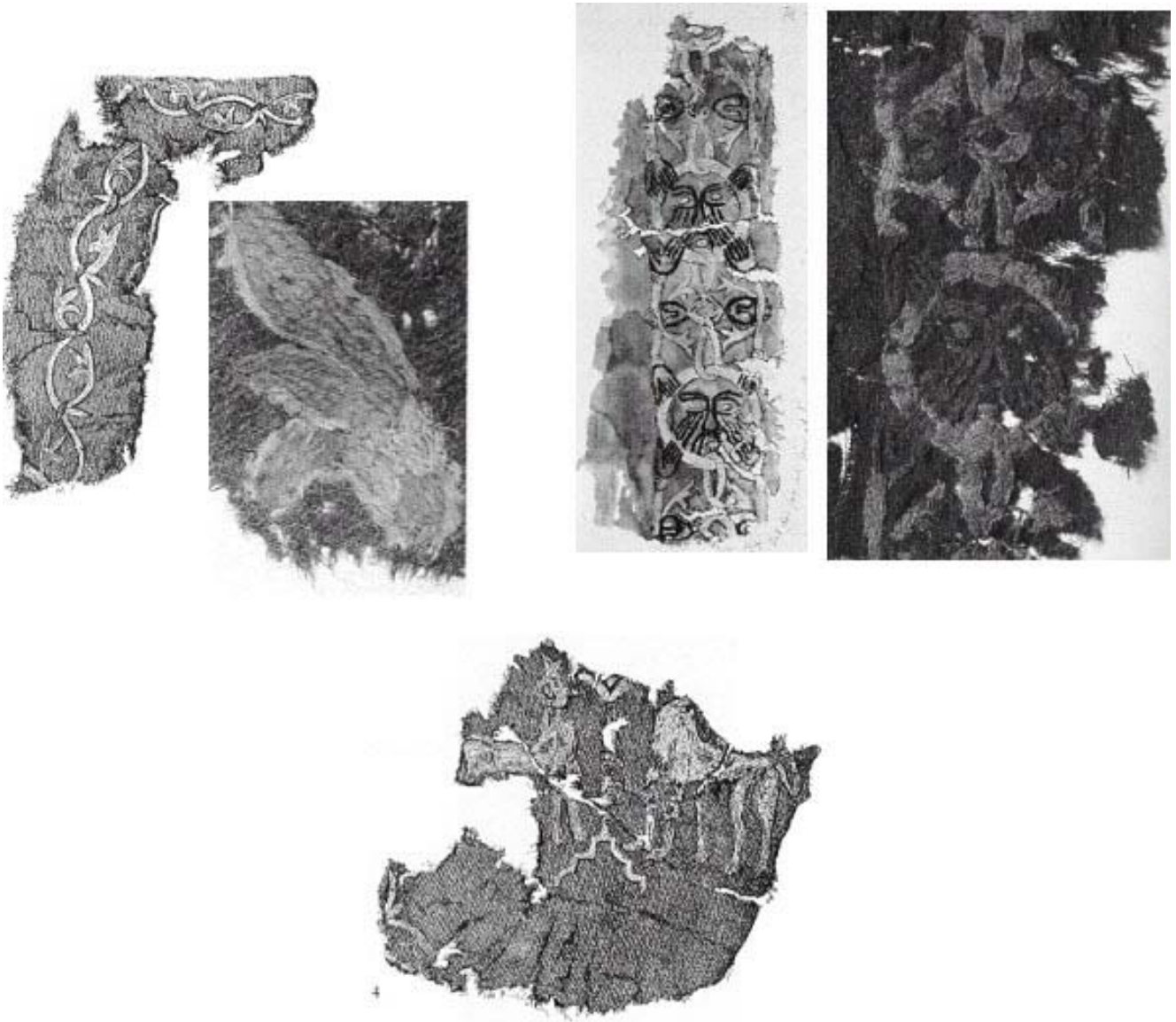
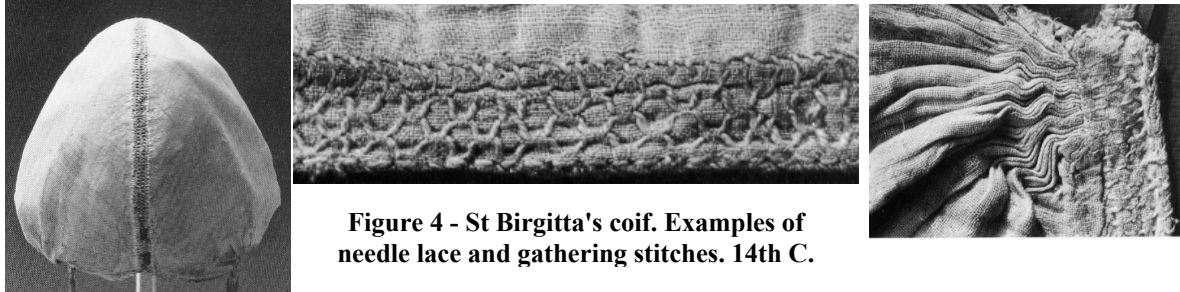


Figure 3 - Mammen embroideries

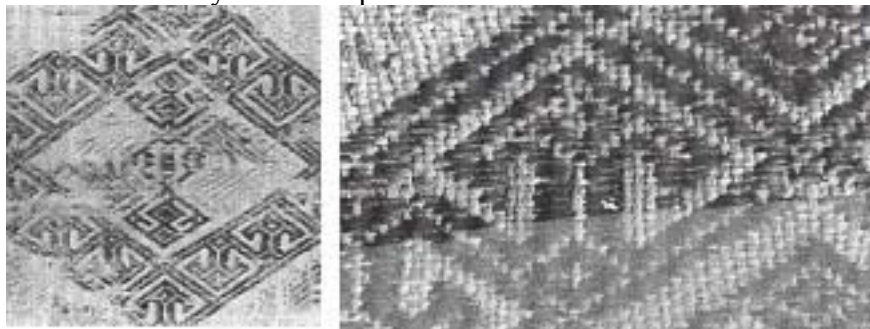
## **Medieval embroidery**

By the time we reach the Middle Ages proper (i.e. after the turn of the Millennium) there is a virtual explosion of embroidery. We get the large scale pictorial embroideries, such as the Høyland carpet and some of the Icelandic needle-woven work, small fine work such as the needle-lace on the Birgitta coif, and many examples of fine domestic ecclesiastical work closely related to the continental embroidery of the time.



**Figure 4 - St Birgitta's coif. Examples of needle lace and gathering stitches. 14th C.**

Needle weaving was quite common in the Norwegian/Icelandic sphere. Often these pieces were pictorial, such as the Høyland carpet, but geometrical patterns (easily executed in this style) were also common. The pictorial carpets are closely related to tapestries of the same period and indeed earlier (some very fine examples were found in the Oseberg burial from the early Viking Age). The Baldishol carpet is closely related to the Høyland example.



**Figure 5 - cushion from Skokloster**



**Figure 6 - Høyland carpet**



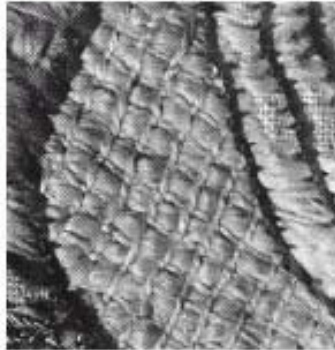
**Figure 7 - Baldishol tapestry**



Laid and couched work (Bayeux stitch) was still in use right up through the Middle Ages in Scandinavia. On the large scale, the Icelanders made some impressive hangings in this style, using wool on linen, but in the later part of the Middle Ages the method was also used for pictorial/ecclesiastical work in silk on silk or linen ground.



**Figure 7 - Antependium from Revkiahlid Church, Iceland**

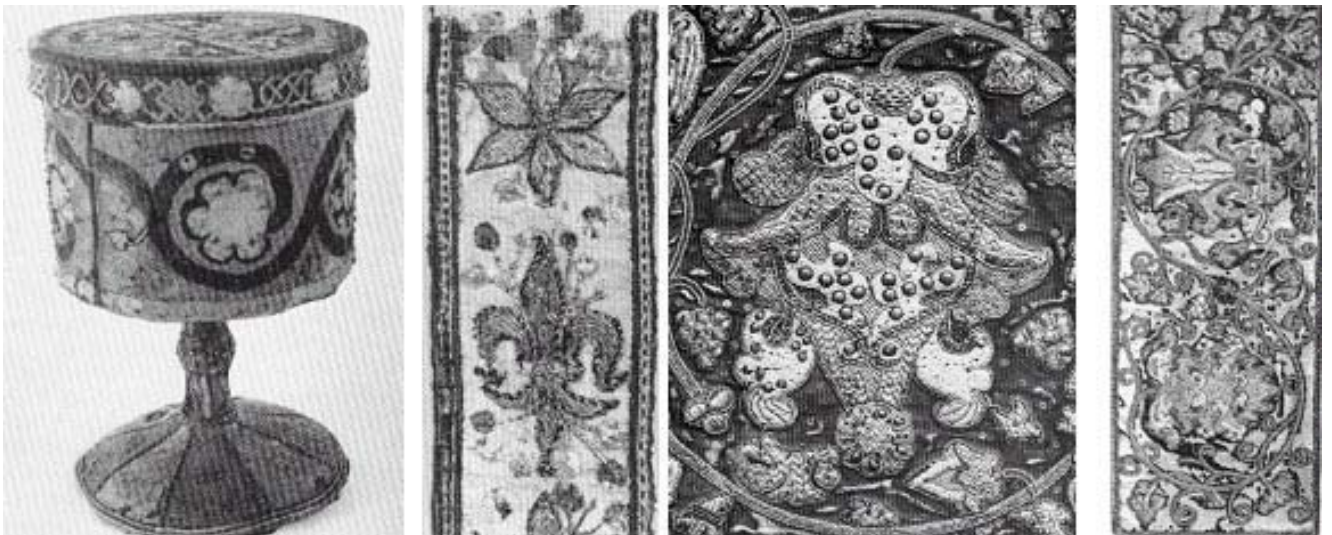


**Figure 9 - detail of figure 8**



**Figure 8 - edge of cope, Vallentuna Church**

Figures 8-9 show one of the many extant embroideries to have come out of the workshop of Albertus Pictor, who was a well-known artist painting church walls. He was also sometimes known as Albertus pearl-stitcher, as his workshop produced highly valued embroideries also. During the Middle Ages, two Swedish workshops became very well known. Albertus ran one, the other was the convent at Vadstena, where the Brigittine nuns created artistically innovative and technically superlative works.



**Figure 10 - Brigittine embroideries 15th C**

Scandinavian embroidery was executed in very similar stitches to work on the Continent. Examples exist of stemstitch, split stitch, laid work, brick stitch, satin stitch and long/short stitch, couching and underside couching, or nué and pearl stitching. There are also some unusual stitches preserved in extant pieces, such as velvet and loop stitching, and a form of long-armed cross stitch known as ‘twist stitch’ from the ground it was commonly worked on.

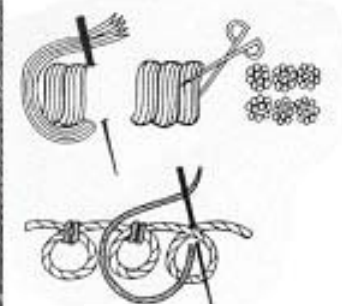


Figure 11 - velvet and loop stitch. Flisby church.



Figure 12- twist stitch. Antependium Fogdö church.



## Renaissance

By the time of the Renaissance (generally understood in the Nordic countries to occur in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century) Scandinavia had firmly joined the European sphere. Its nobles and rulers aspired to the same finery as their continental relatives, and while their contemporaries liked to comment on the “Barbarian North” and the amount of fur one needed to survive the climate, Nordic princes and nobles took great care to conform to Southern tastes and fashions.

Stitches commonly used in this period include cross stitch and black work stitches such as double running stitch and stem stitch.



Figure 13- cross stitch cushion. Söderdala Church.

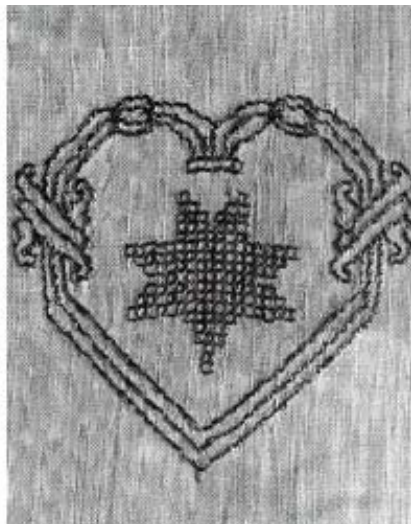


Figure 14 - details of a cloth made for Karin Gyllenstierna, probably in the 1560's.





## ***Related techniques***

### **Metal thread work**



During the Viking Age, in the so-called Eastern culture (Sweden, Finland and the Baltics), a form of metal thread decoration was relatively common. Agnes Geijer calls this technique ‘Passanterie’. It consists of drawn metal thread, shaped into motifs, sewn onto garments. Often these metal objects are found where the hem of an overgarment would be expected. A similar technique appears to be a form of couching, again with drawn metal thread.

The indigenous people of the North, the Saami, have a closely related traditional technique, known today as “pewter thread embroidery”. This is sewn onto leather objects with sinew thread. It very likely goes back to the interaction with the southern cultures as Sweden, Norway and Finland expanded Northwards, and trading made such metal threads available.



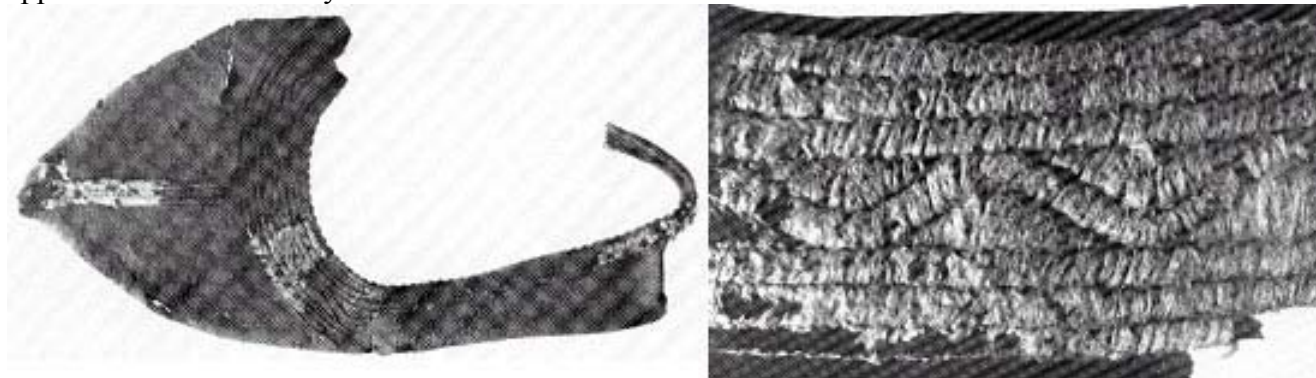
### **Appliqué/Intarsia**

There is a large number of appliqué cushions and coverlets extant in Scandinavia (Sweden and Norway). They are closely related to contemporary embroideries in style, and usually executed in wools with a couched outline of gilt leather strips. These coverlets have been made throughout our period and right up to the last century. This particular one, from Dalhem church, is dated to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.



## Leather decoration

In the excavations of the waterlogged environment at Bryggen, in Bergen, a large amount of leather was found. Interestingly, some of the shoes from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century were richly decorated with silk embroidery, stitched into incised lines in the leather. Done in bright colours, this represents a nice application of embroidery.



## Conclusion

This has been a very cursory look at types of embroidery made in what we tend to term ‘Scandinavia’ in period. I hope this has been sufficient to whet your appetite, and given you some inspiration to do more research. For even more examples, have a look at <http://www.historiska.se/exhibitions/textil/>

## Bibliography

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- ”Mammen: Grav, kunst og samfund i Vikingetid”. Ed. Mette Iversen. Jysk Arkæologisk Selskab, 1991. ISBN 87-7288-571-8. (*“Mammen: Grave, art and society during the Viking Age”*)
- ”Osebergdronningens grav, Vår arkeologiske nasjonalskatt i nytt lys”, Arne Emil Christensen, Anne Stine Ingstad and Bjørn Myhre. Schibsted, 1992, second edition 1993. ISBN 82-516-1423-6
- “Birka III, Die Textilfunde” Agnes Geijer. Stockholm 1938. (*“The grave of the Oseberg queen, our archaeological national treasure in new light”*)
- ”Margrete I, Regent of the North. Essays and catalogue from the exhibition “The Kalmar Union 600 years.” Ed. Poul Grønder-Hansen. The National Museum of Denmark, 1997. ISBN 87-89384-52-0
- “Prydnadssömmar under Medeltiden”, Anne Marie Franzén and Margareta Nockert (3rd Ed). Kungliga Vitterhets, Historie och Antikvitets Akademien 1997. ISBN 91-7402-274-1 (*“Decorative stitching during the Middle Ages”*)
- ”Den Ljusa Medeltiden”, The Museum of National Antiquities, Stockholm, Studies 4. 1984. ISBN 91-7192-601-1 (*“The luminous Middle Ages”*)
- ”Birgittareliker”, Aron Andersson and Anne Marie Franzén. Kungliga Vitterhets, Historie och Antikvitets Akademien 1975. ISBN 91-7192-214-8 (*“Brigittine relics”*)
- ”Tidens Tand” NESAT 5. Ed. Lise Bender Jørgensen and Elisabeth Munksgaard. Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi 1992. ISBN 87-89730-04-6 (*“The tooth of time”*)
- ”Tenstrådsbroderier”, Mona Callenberg. ICA bokförlag 1997. ISBN 91-534-1816-6 (*“Pewter thread embroidery”*)
- And the ”Bible”: “Medeltida Vävnader och Broderier”, Agnes Branting. ISBN 91-8789-628-1 (Facsimile) (*“Medieval weavings and embroideries”*)

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Guild Website <http://users.drak.net/needlework>

### **Historic Needlework List**

(For those who have e-mail.)

To subscribe mail

to: [majordomo@Ansteorra.org](mailto:majordomo@Ansteorra.org) with the message "subscribe h-needlework" or "subscribe h-needlework-digest" in the body of the message (do not include quotes).

To post messages to the HNW List:

mail to [h-needlework@Ansteorra.org](mailto:h-needlework@Ansteorra.org)

## **Worshipful Company of Broiderers List**

We have an email list for the purpose of discussing issues relating to the Guild in Lochac: to subscribe, send an email to [majordomo@sca.org.au](mailto:majordomo@sca.org.au). Leave the subject line empty and put "subscribe wcob" in the text of your message. Once subscribed, you can email your messages to [wcob@sca.org.au](mailto:wcob@sca.org.au)

## **From the chronicler**

Many thanks to the following for their assistance with the production of this newsletter -:

**Leonie de Grey** for technical assistance and for her patience in helping an incompetent technophobe learn how to PDF files, work Microsoft Word (which just ISN'T logical at all) and keeping me sane – Have a great time in the UK – I'll miss your expertise

**Baroness Marienna Jensdattur** – for her marvellous article on Scandinavian embroidery

**Jane of Stockton** – for supplying two excellent articles

And our Patron and Guild Mistress, both of whom are patient, helpful and always willing to supply any written info I need.

Don't forget – if you want to be assured of the swiftest method of delivery of the newsletter – you can always send me your email details and I'll send an electronic copy.

Morwynna



**IF UNDELIVERED**  
**Return to: 10 Bootle Place,**  
**Phillip, ACT 2606.**