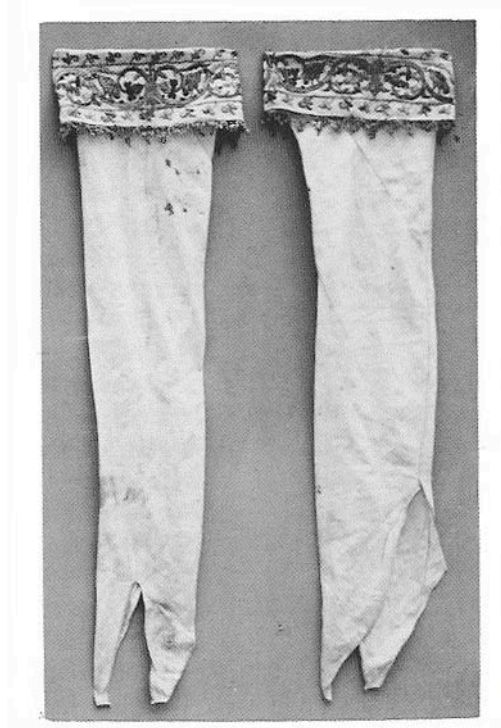


16th Century Italian Linen Hose

A&S Competition – June Crown AS XL



Captioned “White linen stockings, or hose, with tops embroidered with coloured silks and silver and gold metal thread. Possible made without feet, or removed because they were worn out. Italian, late sixteenth century. Metropolitan Museum of Art (Rogers Fund, 1910), New York”

¹

I. Background Information

The above hose shown in Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlocked inspired this project. Called hose during the 16th C², they were primarily made from woven silk, linen or wool cloth during the first half of the century. By the end of the 16th Century and beginning of the 17th C., silk knitted hose were common wear for the nobles, the professionals and the merchants.³

Arnold notes that “Henry Herne supplied the Queen with a few pair of silk stockings and numerous pairs of both double and single linen hose and cloth hose in regular delivery from the beginnings of the reign until 1577, when worsted knitted stockings from the silkwoman, Alice Mountague, supplanted the cloth variety in the Queen’s favour.”⁴

As seen in the quote above, there are two types of women’s linen hose. The single linen hose, would have been a single layer of linen. The double linen hose would have been

¹ Arnold, pg. 207

² Arnold, pg. 207

³ Mola, pg. 296

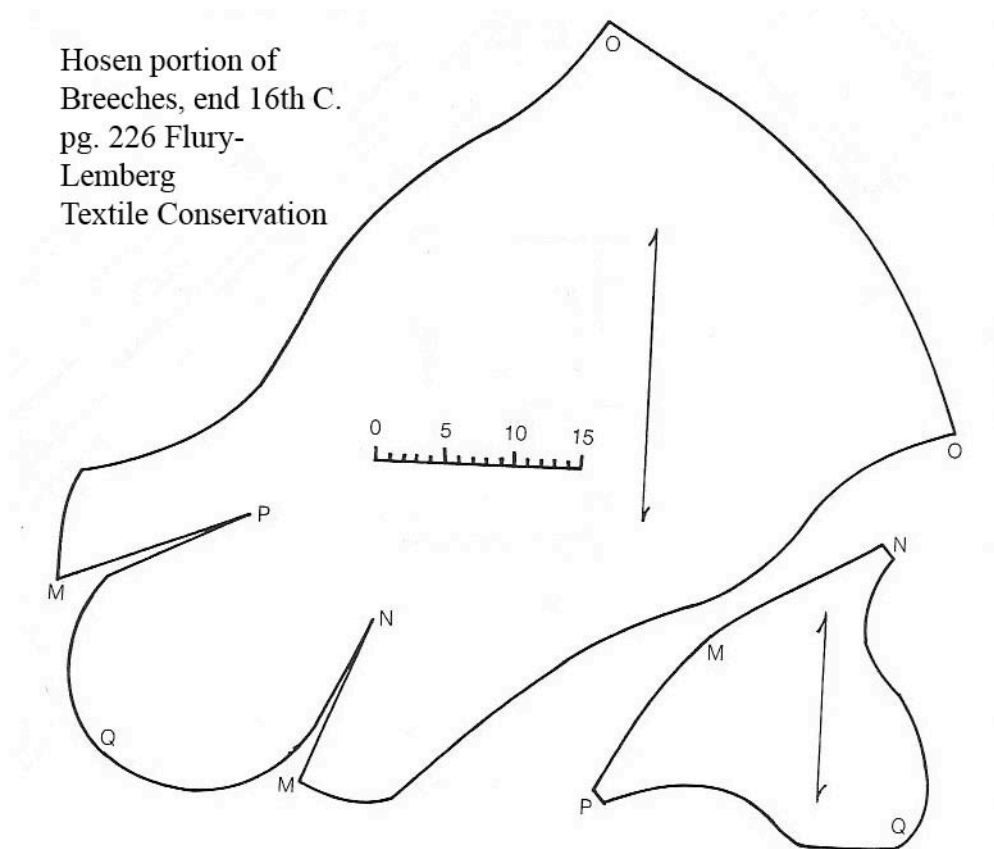
⁴ Arnold, pg. 206

lined with linen or silk. The ones shown above, were single linen. Arnold further notes that there is no reference to color for linen hose so she presumes that they were all white.

II. Fabric, Layout, and Construction

Arnold, notes that Henry “Herne made hose of both cloth and linen, cut on the cross to stretch around the leg,...”⁵ While they were made to stretch around the leg, they were not so tight as to be able to stay up by themselves. Hose were gartered just under the knee. It appears in the Arnold hose that the embroidery is on a “cuff” that comes down and covers over the garter. This was common for both the cloth and knitted stockings.

The leg of the hose, in Arnold, is one piece cut on the bias and extends out over the foot. The Flury Lemberg book has a pattern for a 16th C. hose with just this pattern, as shown below⁶. The foot pattern is also shown. These hose were made of a fulled wool.



In the HMSO book there is also a pattern for 16th C hose. The key difference is that the foot pattern is for a “soled” foot⁷.

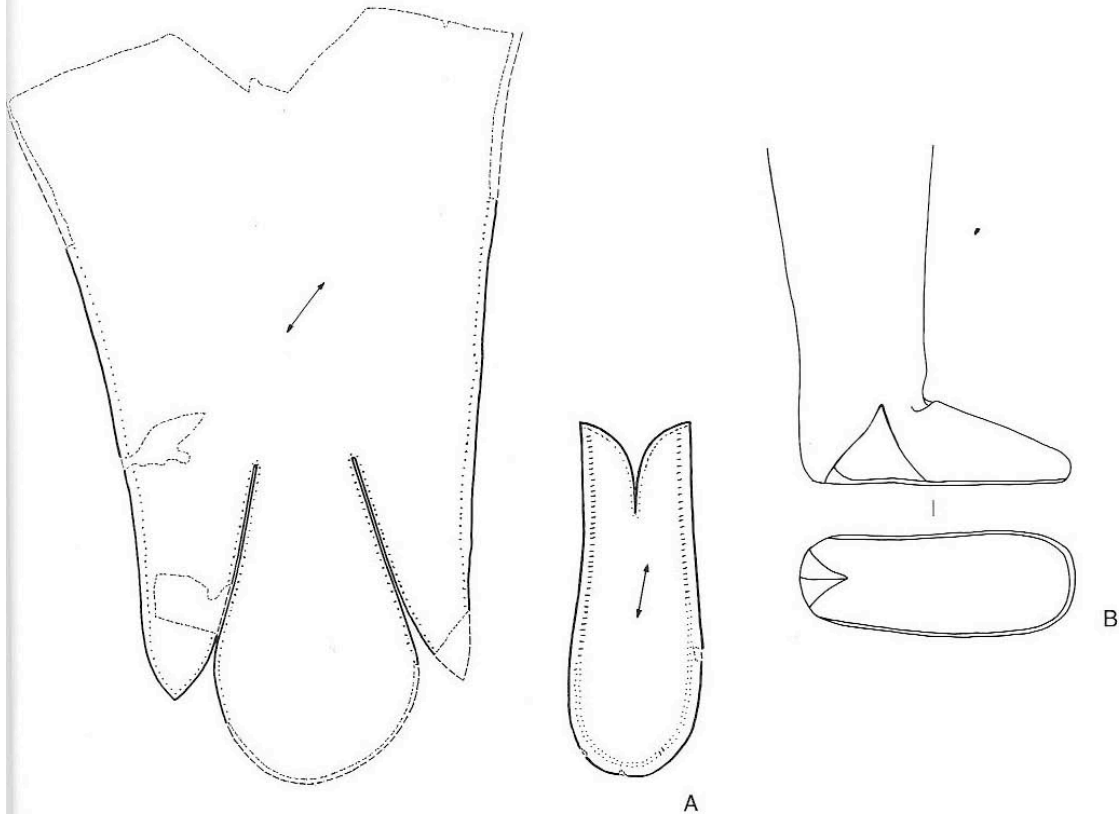
⁵ Arnold pg. 206

⁶ Items not relevant to the hose pattern have been removed from this scan.

⁷ Frick, pg. 303 “Calze” – soled hose for men.

Fig 169 Pattern of 16th-century hose from Finsbury, London, MOL Acc Nos 22404, A26578: (A) layout, scale 1:3, (B) hose reconstructed

16th C. Hose
HMSO Textiles and Clothing
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With these patterns in mind I worked to pattern hose for my legs. Working with the grain across the leg, it was relatively easy to achieve a similar pattern as in the Flury-Lemberg book as it was necessary when the closed tube reaches the foot to add slits to make the fabric lay across the foot. I then traced the pattern on handkerchief weight linen with sufficient room at the top for the decorative turn down and ensuring the grain lay across the hose.

Next I worked the embroidery (see section below) to ensure that I had sufficient to hold the cloth in a frame while working. Then the cloth was ironed and the hose cut out.

I choose to use linen thread to sew the hose. The HMSO book comments that linen thread was used for sewing linen clothing, was used in the workshops supplying the courts, and came in different thicknesses⁸. The thread was a 80/3 and the thickness of the thread approximates the thickness of the thread of the handkerchief linen used to make the hose.

⁸ HMSO, pg. 151

The HMSO book goes into great detail about how hose were sewn as there seems to be a special way of attaching the fabric of the foot to the leg. The fabric has the edges overlapped and then each edge is sewn down with a whipped stitch where the stitch is parallel to the fabric and the travel thread is perpendicular. The overlap is 4-7mm, the stitches 3 mm long and at 3-4 mm intervals⁹. On some of the finds, one edge was folded to give a bit of added strength. However, all of these comments refer to hose that were wool and thus fullled a bit which would further reduce fraying. The hose in the Flury-Lemberg also show an overlap with perpendicular stitching.

Regular seams were usually done in a running stitch. A back stitch was used on seams that were under pressure or used for shaping¹⁰. The HMSO book also further notes that in fragments of 16th C hose, they show the technique of reinforcing seams opened flat with a running stitch on either side of the seam that was worked through the outer fabric as well as the turned under fabric¹¹. As the fabric was on the bias and thus essential for shaping I opted to use a back stitch for the leg seam and then reinforce the flat seam.

For the hem, the HMSO book discusses single folded hems, double folded hems and rolled hems as well as the stitches used. It notes that single folded hems with a running stitch or with added top stitching was preferred for the tops of hose¹². I used a single fold hem with a running stitch. Then rather than top stitching 2 mm from the edge, I opted to instead use the addition of the lace and it being stitched down by a running stitch.

III. Decoration

There are numerous references in inventories and orders listing hose, but few with any details. One in 1568 and another in 1588 call for hose stitched or worked with silk at the tops.¹³ Arnold quotes one warrant “To henry herne oure hosier for making xv paire of Clothe hose stitched in the toppes & clockes with an Irishe stitche ...”¹⁴. It is unclear what they meant by Irish Stitch. Today Irish Stitch is another name for Florentine Stitch – an upright stitch on the front, angled on the back, worked over the same number of threads, but its start and stop points differ to give an uneven appearance.

There are other references to “silk worked clocks”¹⁵. While I chose not to embroider the “clocks” as there were none on the Arnold hose, embroidery would serve a two-fold purpose – decoration and reinforcement in this area of stress. In addition, it would disguise the stitching in the ankle section. It is not clear if the linen hose were

⁹ HMSO, pg. 155

¹⁰ HMSO, pg. 156

¹¹ HMSO, pg. 156

¹² HMSO, pg. 156-7

¹³ Arnold, pg. 208 and 209

¹⁴ Arnold, pg. 206

¹⁵ Arnold, pg. 209

embroidered at the clocks as most of the references are to knitted or cloth hose with worked clocks.

The decoration on the Italian linen hose shown in Arnold is similar to patterns in a number of the Modelbooks, what we would call pattern books, being published in the late 16th C. One such modelbook is Giovanni Ostaus' La Vera Perfezione dei Designo Per Punti e Ricami, and it is from this 1561 pattern book that I took one of the patterns on the page noted as XXXVI. The coiling pattern of stems and fruit or nuts was common and pervades much of the Elizabethan era embroidery through out all of Europe.

The hose in Arnold appear to be done with a number of the more common stitches in coloured silk threads. As stitches were not noted, I chose to use stem, split, long and short stitch, and French knots. The threads are multiple colors of silk and applied single ply. The Arnold hose were edged in metal threads in what appears to be bobbin lace. I chose a metallic content gold colored narrow lace made in a pattern similar to bobbin lace for the lower lace edging.

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