

Horned Hennin



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Summary

What: A horned hennin - a millinery-style hat. This hennin has a wired buckram base, covered in red cotton velvet embellished with metal links and faux pearls, and is lined in synthetic silk.

When: The visual references I used were dated c.1400-1460

Where: I primarily focused on artwork by artists from the Netherlands and France.

Who: The majority of visual references I used to inform my design choices were of royalty and nobility.

Why: This time period appears to be an age of rapidly shifting fashions for women. There were a number of quite different headdress styles that appear popular, likely influenced by the very showy and extravagant Burgundian court.

How: With no extant hats from this period, I extrapolated construction methods from modern millinery and millinery evidence from later periods (within the SCA period.) I used a wired buckram form. I used a mix of machine and hand sewing, with hand-sewing representing all of the embellishment and finishing.

Extended documentation

What: A horned hennin

There are a number of hat styles depicted by painters from France and the Netherlands in manuscripts and portraits from the first half of the 15th century. While the truncated hennin (the “flower pot hat”) and the steeple hennin (the “pointy princess hat”) are seen repeatedly, there are also multiple visual examples showing multiple headdresses all worn at the same time - suggesting that multiple styles of hats may all have been popular at the same time. Some of these styles are even more elaborate than the steeple hennin, such as the forked hennin, the heart-shaped headdress, the cross-tree headdress, and the horned hennin, which I’ll be discussing here.

From visual examples (paintings and illuminations) it appears although many different hat styles were all in fashion at the same time, along with four distinct gown styles, there does seem to be some indication that not all hat styles were interchangeable.

I looked at six different hat styles, and looked for visual references showing them related to which gown style they were worn with. (On the same person, not in the same painting.)

	Horned hennin	Heart-shaped hennin	Padded roll	Truncated hennin	Steeple hennin	Forked hennin
Sideless surcote	×	✓	×	×	✓	×
Houppelande	✓	✓	×	✓	×	✓
Cotehardie	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	×
V-neck Burgundian gown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

There are other hat styles, but not prolific enough for me to include in my examination. While this chart does not mean the dress style was not worn with that hat style, it means I was not able to find a visual representation confirming it.

Historical milliner Kats Hats compares the Horned Hennin to the early headdress - the Cross Tree. Where the Cross Tree headdress has cauls which project to the sides, the ‘horns’ (which she refers to as “templettes”) are much more vertical. She also notes that in period this headdress was called the “Attor de Gibet”.

My horned hennin has a wired buckram base, is covered in red cotton velvet, is embellished with metal links and faux pearls, and is lined in a synthetic (polyester) silk.

Where & When: c.1400-1460 - France & The Netherlands

The visual references I used were dated c.1400-1460, and were credited to artists from France and the Netherlands. French artists depicted the horned hennin in paintings & illuminations dated 1405-1425, while artwork by artists from outside France were dated 1440-1460. This is not intended to be an exhaustive survey, but might suggest the evolution and dissemination of style.



The visuals I referenced showed a mix of horned hennins with white 'horns' and white veils, and hennins with coloured horns and white veils. The coloured horns appeared to be largely golden-tone and browns, but I also found other colours including red horns. In a brief survey of visuals, it appeared that all-white headdresses were depicted in images dated from c.1405-1455, while coloured horns were in images dated c.1400-1460. Again, this is not intended to be an exhaustive survey.

Historical milliner Kats Hats states that this style was known as "Attor de Gibet", and was Burgundian-French in origin, and echoed the style of headdress called the Cross Tree or "Gibbet". She notes that pure white horns were popular, but that sometimes gold, silver, or jewels embellished the horns. (Source: [Kats Hats](#))

This style was not relegated just to France and the Netherlands though, as evident in a Welsh effigy in St Mary's Priory Church, Abergavenny. The (renovated) effigy depicts William ap Thomas and Gwladys, from William's death in 1445. The church writes: "Sir William was a successful Welsh squire who fought at Agincourt with Henry V (where Gwladys' father, Sir David Gam, and her first husband, Sir Robert Vaughan, died). William (scion of the Herbert dynasty) was later knighted, became rich and powerful and built the Yellow Tower at Raglan Castle." (Source: [St Mary's Priory Church](#))

Carl Köhler writes that during the thirteenth century, French dress had taken the lead in fashion throughout western and central Europe, and was felt the most in England. National particularities were still relevant, and Germany, Italy, and Spain were more independent from French fashion. In England, men's fashion were strongly influenced by the Burgundian court. He also illustrates the horned hennin worn by a 15th century German woman, identifying the style as French in origins. (Source: [A History of Costume](#))

Who: Royalty and nobility

The majority of visual references I used to inform my design choices appear to depict royalty and nobility.



One example I referred to is the Portrait of Isabella of Portugal (wife of Philip III Duke of Burgundy). The Burgundian court during the fifteenth century is described as one of the most extravagant in all of Europe in a [Wikipedia article about Isabella](#). The [Met Museum](#) notes that the duchy was one of Europe's richest centres of cloth production during the 1400s, was a major trade hub, and attracted and supported many significant artists. While the large court was based in Brussels, the dukes liked to travel from residence to residence, so it's likely that this travelling and trade hub greatly impacted the influence of French fashion across other parts of Europe. While the "glitter of the fabulously wealthy" Burgundian court was so lavishly impressive that "other European rulers aspired to imitate it", not all courts were so influential. [In](#)

[Viewing Renaissance Art](#), Kim Woods relates that Louis XI, King of France from 1461-83 underestimated the importance of pomp and pageantry, and was upstaged by Philip the Good during his entry to Paris in 1461, although only a duke. With his lavish display, Philip was viewed as a ruler to "envy and respect".

There are also depictions of author Christine de Pizan in the headdress. While not royalty, she was the daughter of Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano (Thomas de Pizan) who was among other things, the court astrologer to the Councillor of the Republic of Venice and then the king's astrologer, alchemist and physician in the court of Charles V of France. At 15 years old, she married Etienne du Castel, a royal secretary to the court. Her early courtly poetry illustrated her knowledge of aristocratic customs and fashions. While she was not nobility, she certainly moved within courtly circles. (Source: [Wikipedia](#))



Historical milliner for Kats Hats writes that this hat was worn by the middle class, citing writer Christine de Pizan. I think that this may be in error; looking for more depictions of the hat with clear attributions to their wearer might determine that this was a style for the middle class rather than royalty and members of court.



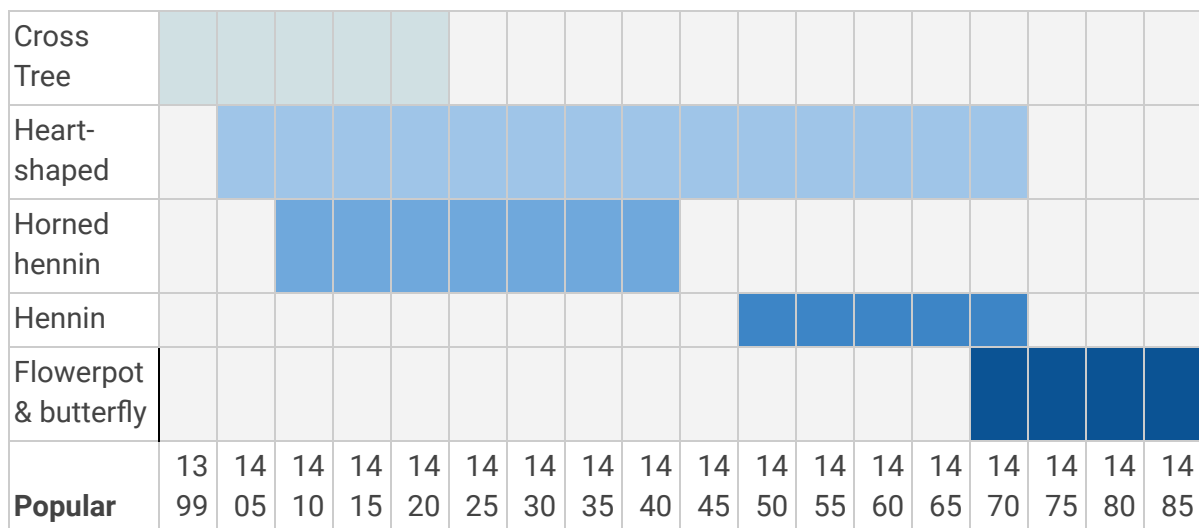
Additionally, there are several 'crowd scene' paintings that depict a number of people. Most of these depict daily life, such as a baptism and sport-hunting. In the Seven Sacraments Altarpiece by Early Netherlandish artist Rogier van der Weyden and his workshop, side panels depict the people who commissioned the

painting. Two coats of arms (likely those of the commissioners) are also included in the altarpiece, suggesting that the women wearing horned hennins are from nobility. (Source: [Wikipedia](#)) Bernard Gallagher proposes that one of the two women pictured in the horned hennins in the left panel of the triptych participating in the baptism is the godmother, possibly the Duchess of Burgundy, Isabella. The other woman he suggests is the artist's wife, Margaret. Bernard notes that she is wearing the same dress and horn hennin as the other portrait of her. (Source: [Exposition of the Arnolfini Portrait](#)) I would note that although the dresses are similar in colour, they appear to be different in the neckline and sleeve width.

Why: Variety and extravagance

I cannot say with any certainty why this style of hat was popular. However, this time period seemed to be an age of rapidly shifting fashions for women, with seemingly 'outrageous' headwear for nobility being popular (compared to depictions of common folk). It's possible that this was just another outlandish, impractical garment used to illustrate that a woman was fashionable and did not have to shield her face from the sun of working fields.

To illustrate the changing fashion, I referenced Kats Hats. She outlines an evolution of style:



(Source: [Kats Hats](#))

I did not confirm this timeline with visual references myself, it may be interesting in the future to look into this more, and confirm an evolution of style from earlier headdresses to the horned hennin. However, her timeline is not aligned with the 1400-1460 timeframe that I saw in portraits for the horned hennin specifically.

Carl Köhler writes that no aspect of a woman's closet underwent more changes at the beginning of the fifteenth century in France than her headwear. He identifies that French men's fashions also underwent a significant shift at this point, even more so than women's. (Source: [A History of Costume](#))

The horned hennin style itself evolved as well, Kats Hats reports that the horns (templettes) started large and pointed upwards from the sides of the head, but as the style evolved, the horns became smaller and angled towards the back of the head. Both styles still included the draped veils, though I noted that they too had variations - from a simple draped veil with a slight point at the front, to a more complex pinned and folded drape. Sarah Thursfield, author of [The Medieval Tailor's Assistant](#) shows two shapes as well, a broad style c.1430, and a tall style c. 1470.

Despite the evolution of style, it appears that it may not have been well-embraced by everyone. Kats Hats reports that “A holy Bishop preached from the pulpit about fashionable women resembling ‘Horned Snails’ and that women were ‘abusing their crowning glory by covering their hair’.”



How: Extrapolated methods from a variety of periods

Documentable construction methods

Unfortunately, there are no extant hats from this time period that I was able to find referenced. This means to develop a pattern and construction methods I had to extrapolate from modern methods along with methods from other periods where there is first-hand evidence (within the period examined by the SCA).

Another challenge is that even when there are extant medieval hats, museums and writers rarely share the detail about internal structure... they note the exterior fabric, the trim, and perhaps the lining, but rarely write what provides the shape for millinery hats.

Dressmaker hats do not have the same kind of internal structure as millinery hats. Modern dressmaker hats usually rely on interfacing for some shaping (like for brims), or are shaped entirely by the head (like a knit cap). Period dressmaker hats are similar (coifs) but when there is a likely supported structure (bonnet with a brim), this

too is rarely discussed through museums/books. I will not be discussing construction techniques of dressmaker hats here. (See: [Patterns of Fashion 3](#), page 15)

There are a few different ways of constructing hats with modern millinery.

1. The first method uses steam (or hot water) and shaping (and/or stretching) to turn a one-dimensional material into a three-dimensional hat. This is used with sinamay, wool felt, leather, and other materials. In modern millinery, these materials are often left uncovered - where the shaped material is the exterior of the hat. In period, this appears to be largely used as the interior shaping for the hat, based on examples I was able to find. (Not intended to be exhaustive.)

The possible pilgrim statue hat from Little Sampford Church, Essex, suspected to be dated c. 1305 is a hat with this structure. Marc Carlson reports that this hat was made of blue felted wool without seams on the crown. It has a separate brim, also presumably made with felted wool. This hat's brim was covered in cream tabby woven silk (in four sections) and had gold wire. The hat is lined in ivory tabby woven silk, and the same fabric lines the brim. The brim is bound with red satin woven silk, and accented with a silver and cream silk cord. (Source: [Hat from Little Sampford Cache](#))

A bonnet in Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion 3*, dated c.1567 is described having a pink silk taffeta brim lining, and fragments of felt and Rya wool. Arnold describes Rya wool as "very shiny and hard in texture", and identifies the "felt foundation" of the bonnet. In a detail photo of this hat, the stitching of the silk lining to the felt is visible suggesting that the lining was added in as the last step - similar to my method (described below) adding in a lining with visible stitches for easier laundering or replacement. (Source: [Patterns of Fashion 3](#), page 31)

There is a tall hat in *Patterns of Fashion 3* made with a similar technique - fabric over a felt base, lined with fabric. One is a "high crowned hat" with felt base and silk pile. The pile has worn away in many places, making it easier to see how the hat was made, c1560-1600. Another photo shows the felt base, and an interlining of coarsely woven linen, and lining of black silk. In the patterns section of this book, Arnold notes that the "felt foundation was moulded first, probably with steam over a wooden block. It is all one piece including the brim, and stiffened inside with some kind of glue. The brim is not interlined with linen. Another hat is "moulded from thick felt" and pinched and stitched to shape. (Source: [Patterns of Fashion 3](#), pages 32, 33 & 93)

2. The second method used in modern millinery to shape one-dimensional fabric into three-dimensional hats is making pattern pieces from buckram, wiring the buckram, and sewing it together.

One period example that I can find that may be using this type of method is the cap of maintenance from the Waterford Treasures Museum. Reportedly the hat was given to the mayor in 1536. It is described as a cap "made from red velvet, possibly

imported from Italy, that is embroidered with Tudor Roses and marguerites. It measures circa 116 mm in height by 397 mm in diameter and contains a strip of whale baleen near the top of the hat for additional support.” (Source: [Henry VIII's Cap of Maintenance](#))

My suggestion that this may be the method used is based purely on speculation. The hat is a three-piece pattern, with a band (with a slightly inverted cone shape), tip, and brim. While the extant hat is no doubt supported in the photo with museum supports, this style of hat would not keep this shape without internal structure. The use of baleen may be where a modern milliner would use wire.

Another hat that may be made in a similar method is from Janet Arnold's *Patterns of Fashion 3*, a hat “made of a pleated circle of brown corded silk which probably originally had a foundation of pasted paper or felt.” “Apparently this was removed for some reason and a wire framework was put in instead, probably in the eighteenth century.” The original hat is dated c. 1575-1600 and is lined in brown silk. A similar hat is shown as well, with a clearly circular top, described as a “patterned velvet pleated down over a hard foundation”. If, indeed the hat were made of pasted paper, or pasted and sewn flat felt, this would be a similar method to this second example. The wireframe structure which is a post-SCA period modification also aligns loosely with this method. Later in the patterns section of this book, she elaborates on the construction. “The brim is made of two layers of corded silk, without any stiffening.” “The hat is mounted on a wire frame to keep its shape. This appears to be of nineteenth century origin”, “Presumably this is a replacement for an earlier foundation, either of wire, which may have rusted away, or cardboard which may have been worm-eaten. Perhaps this was an early attempt at making a high crowned hat with soft pleats. Other hats of this period have bases of stiffened felt or layers of paper and card soaked in glue size, with the silk arrange in firm pleats on top.” The shape of this hat under the pleated silk, and without a brim... is the shape of a truncated hennin. (Source: [Patterns of Fashion 3](#), page 33 & 94)

In Ninya Mikhaila & Jane Malcolm-Davies' *The Tudor Tailor*, they show a 16th century wire stiffener for a woman's gable hood. For the construction of a gable hood, they recommend buckram for support, along with domette (to soften edges and padding) and two weights of millinery wire. They recommend the same materials for their Elizabethan hat with pleated covering. Although they do not specifically mention buckram as a stiffener for hats in extant examples, they do mention that “interlinings of canvas and buckram provide sufficient stiffening” for fitted bodices, and note that buckram “is frequently mentioned in association with women's clothing” in historical records. They go on to mention that buckram “was often stiffened with paste or glue”.(Source: [The Tudor Tailor](#), pages 22, 28, 135, & 146)

Another material that was used for millinery within the SCA period in the same method as wired buckram is birch bark. The 12th century hat from Masku, Finland is similar to the (11th century I think) Kaarina, Finland grave find hat. Researcher and costume maker Mervi Pasanen shows this lined with birch bark for structure. (Source:

[Mervi Pasanen](#)) I found in my own hat-making, that boiling birch bark was sufficient to make the material pliable to straighten and then the straightened bark could be curved and stitched into shape.

3. A third method used in modern millinery uses braided straw or other materials (like horsehair crinoline), winding and shaping the braid and stitching it together in place.

Unfortunately to date, I have not been able to find any SCA-period examples of hats constructed in this manner.

Documentable pattern drafting

I choose to present information on period construction methods first, as they largely inform the pattern drafting methods; I need to know how the hat will be constructed before I create the pattern.

For hats shaped of wet or steamed material (wool felt, leather, etc) the “pattern” is developed from the hat form the material is shaped/stretched over, pinned, and left to dry upon. The material shrinks to the form, and creates a stiffened shape. Additional stiffeners (glues) can be added to the interior, which is then lined. The glue often leaves a ‘cloudy’ residue, and can change the colour and texture of the material. A flat pattern is still needed to construct the lining and possible outer shell of the hat, but that is based on the shape of the hat form the original shape was created on.

For hats made of flat material, sewn to shape and wired, (along with dressmaker hats) a flat pattern is required for the stiff inner structure, the outer fabric, and the lining. The c.1565-1600 felt hat with a silk pile, c.1575-1600 silk hat and other hats shown in Janet Arnold’s *Patterns of Fashion 3* shows the same kind of (speculative at times, as not all of the hats are entirely preserved) patterns I’d use for modern millinery.

My pattern development

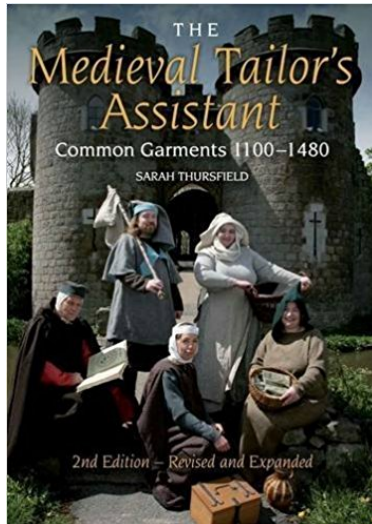
To create the pattern for the horned hennin I first looked at a number of different visual sources showing different styles of the headdress. I sketched out a number of different possibilities, looking at the styles which appeared to just be cones on the side/top of the head, but preferring the style which looked more like a cornucopia, with more complex curves.

My pattern is completely speculative, based on the shape of some of these images, and the limited detail available through paintings, which do not show the garment from all angles.



To develop the pattern I cut out pattern pieces from cardstock, taped them together, and tried them on. I adjusted, referencing the images, trimming, re-taping, and trying the pieces back on again.

I also referred to my go-to hatmaking book, [From the Neck Up: An Illustrated Guide to Hatmaking](#). Author Denise Dreher shows a pattern for a hat for a “late gothic woman” which is somewhat similar to the heart-shaped headdress I made previously, but did not include a pattern for this kind of hat.



[The Medieval Tailor's Assistant: Common Garments](#)

[1100-1480](#) also has two patterns for “Separate horns, 15th century”. One is the wider style that Sarah Thursfield identifies as popular c. 1430. The other is the “late style, c. 1470”. She recommends cutting the pattern out in buckram as individual pieces, and then cover and line the individual pieces. Then she recommends adding decoration, and sewing back and fronts together for each horn, binding the edges with velvet ribbon. To wear the pair of horns, she recommends using the fillet with the black loop as seen in many portraits with the truncated hennin. She suggests braiding hair (presumably into coiled side-buns), wearing the fillet, and then putting the fabric horns over the hair and pinning them to the fillet. Finally she suggests topping the

headdress with a veil.

I do not believe that this style is represented by the artwork I’m referencing. The Christine de Pisan paintings definitely do not show the black loop iconic for the fillet. In the portrait of *Isabella of Portugal* and one of the figures in the *Seven Sacraments Altarpiece*, the loop is visible, but with both of these figures a central space between the two horns is also visible - there is more than just bun-covers pinned to a headband. I didn’t use these patterns in the development of my own headdress.

My construction techniques

There is evidence from extant hats that glue-stiffened layers of paper, card, and wire used to support shapes of hats. There is also evidence of buckram and canvas stiffened with glue used for stiffening garments during the SCA-period. I choose to extrapolate this, and suggest that as Ninya Mikhaila & Jane Malcolm-Davies recommend, buckram and wire are suitable materials for period-informed millinery.

I anticipated wiring being difficult for the buckram layer of the hat if it were a single unit, so I created the two halves of the hat separately. Once they were sewn together and wired (sewn together partially by machine, wired by hand) I sewed them together.

The next step was cutting and sewing the “domette” (in this case I used 50/50 polyester/cotton quilt batting which was given to me by a friend) mostly by machine, and the outer fashion fabric (cotton velveteen recycled from a second-hand skirt) mostly by machine.



The centre top/gusset for this was cut on the fold, rather than cut in two pieces. I tried both on in order on the buckram, found they fit well, and then moved to embellishing the outer fabric.

I used faux pearls (in three slightly different sizes, only by circumstances rather than purpose) and square silver-plated brass links to embellish the hat. This was entirely a creative choice, as some of the images show white beads (presumably pearls) embellishing the hats along with other

beadwork. Some images also clearly show metal embellishments, while others are more simple. Very few of the references images show hats being embellished in the same way as another, so I speculate that this would be an individual choice for each lady.

Once the outer fabric was embellished to my satisfaction, in a geometric pattern (also related to the source images) I stitched the padding onto the buckram form, and returned the velvet cover to the padded hat. This I sewed down to the buckram as well folding the edge over the wire and into the hat interior. I used matching thread and did very small stitches on the right side.



From there I cut and sewed the lining (a synthetic silk left over from another project) by machine. I pressed down the face edge, and whip-stitched the lining in place to the fashion fabric on the inside of the hat. This technique is similar to period examples, and is used so that the lining (which is more likely to be soiled due to body and hair oils... not to mention cosmetics in my case) can be more easily removed and laundered or replaced. In modern millinery I would also add a sweat band into a hat, but given the shape, I opted not to include it in this hat.

My most obvious deviations from period examples are my choice of materials. While faux pearls were used in other parts of medieval Europe, I am unaware if this was also an embellishment used in 15th century France. In period, the choice for outer fabric would be silk velvet rather than cotton. Modern buckram is made of 100% cotton, while in period I believe this would have been made of linen. The lining for this hat is made of synthetic silk, while in period a silk lining would be used.

More details about the construction are on my blog:

<https://dawnsdressdiary.wordpress.com/2018/01/01/horned-hennin-version-2> Please note

that the garments I've worn with my headdress in the attached photos are not accurate for this style. At the time of writing this, I still haven't made an appropriate gown for this hat.

Wearing

Although some of the paintings show the small black loop which is common among paintings depicting the truncated hennin, from the fillet worn beneath it - not all of the depictions of this headdress include this loop. I have read in several places that many people suspect that this loop and fillet were used to better secure the hennin to the head, and to adjust it.

Since I shaped the hat to my own head, I find that it does not require additional support to wear comfortably and (reasonably) securely. Once the hat was complete, I finished the look with a white linen veil that I previously made. This is folded and pinned in place to create the soft "V" shape at the forehead.



References

Visual references



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