

Square Necked Chemise By Leonore d'Scotia

The cut and decoration of the chemise can greatly enhance the look of one's garb. Square neck chemises, both decorated and undecorated are commonly seen in late SCA period portraits.

The cut and construction as described here is similar to two extant garments, one dated to the early 17th C and one to the early 16th C. The extant chemise dated to the early 17th C is thought to be Italian in origin and to have belonged to a woman. This garment is in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum and is described by Dorothy Burnham in "Cut My Cote". The 16th C chemise is thought to have belonged to Mary of Hapsburg. This chemise, dated to 1520 is in the National Hungarian Museum.

Basic square necked chemise:

- The **cutting layout attached** is for a basic square necked chemise with cuffed sleeves cut out of 3M of fabric approximately 115cm wide.
- The chemise front and back are cut the width of the fabric and 75 cm long. The front and back are gathered into 21 cm neck bands (finished).
- The sleeves are cut in rectangles 75 cm long and the width of the fabric minus 25 cm.
- The 25 cm strip off the sides of the sleeves is for cutting the two underarm gussets and neckbands and cuffs. The gussets are 25cm square.
- The front and back neckbands are pieces cut 24 by 8 cm to make finished bands 21 cm long and 2.5 cm wide.
- The neckband shoulders are pieces cut 31 by 8 cm to make finished bands 28 by 2.5 cm.
- The cuffs are pieces cut 27 by 6 cm to make finished bands 24 cm long and 1.5 cm wide. (This makes a band wide enough for most persons to fit their hand through.)

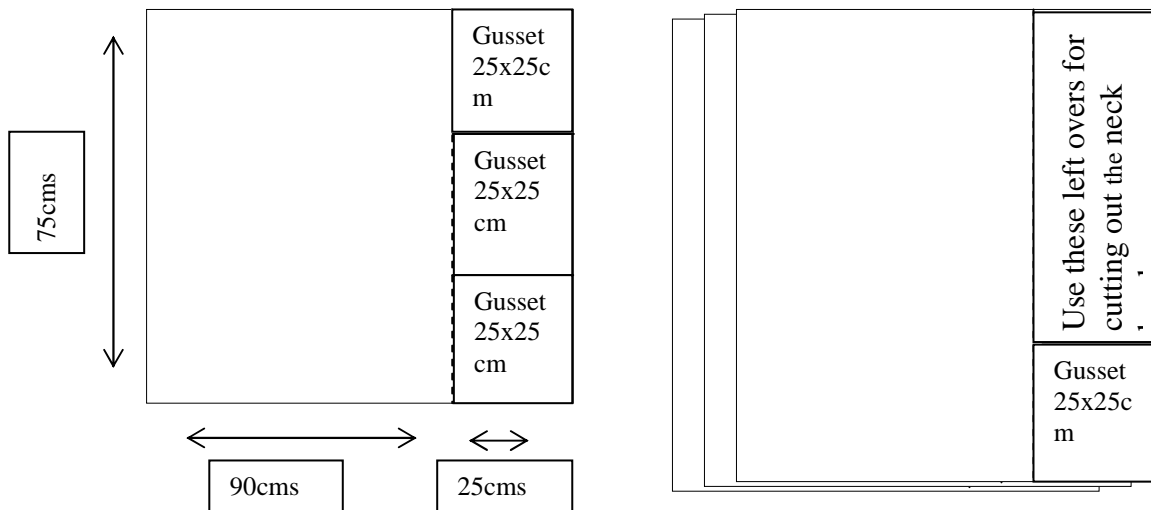
All seam allowances are 1.5 cms.

Supplies Needed:

1. 3M white or ecru linen (or cotton) thin enough to be comfortable wearing gathered under sleeves and bodice/jerkin
2. white thread
3. scissors (large enough and sharp enough to cut yardage)
4. sewing machine (unless prepared to handsew entire garment)
5. pins
6. needle
7. chalk or pencil for marking lines on fabric
8. tape measure or large ruler

Preparation:

1. Wash and dry fabric in the same manner you will wash and dry the finished chemise. The fabric will shrink and you want it to shrink now, before you have cut and sewed it up!!
2. Lay fabric out on large surface and cut out the pieces as shown in the cutting diagram. (Diagram nowhere near to scale!)



First of Four

Three of Four

Constructing Chemise:

Gather neck edges:

- Sew two lines of basting (the longest stitch length possible on machine) on the neck edge of each sleeve and body piece (1 cm and 2 cm from edge would be good).

Neck bands:

- Iron each of the 4 neck band pieces in half lengthways. The folded edges will be your finished neck edge, the raw cut edges will be attached to the tops of the sleeves and body pieces.
- Pull the gathers up on each sleeve and body piece to fit the length of the corresponding neck band and pin to the right side of only one edge of the folded band.
 - To do this open the folded band out flat and pin so that when the band will fold over and enclose the seam edges once sewn.
 - The two sleeve pieces, which are the smaller of the four large rectangles will be pinned to the **longer** two bands.
 - The body pieces, the larger of the four pieces, will be pinned to the **smaller** two bands.
- When you have pulled the gathers neatly to fit each of the bands and pinned them, sew the gathered pieces to the bands with normal stitch length and a seam allowance of 1.5 cm.
- Fold the bands over to enclose seam.
- Turn under raw edge of band and hand sew to line of machine stitching.
- Remove basting threads.

Neck Seams:

- Place one sleeve piece over one body piece right sides together.
- Sew the side edges from the bottom of the band for 10 cm down the raw edge.
 - Do not sew the bands in the seam.
- Being careful to keep right sides together, sew the other pieces to each other in the same manner, being careful to alternate sleeve and bodies. You will end up with a circle of fabric.

Gussets

- Place one point of a gusset at the base of one of the 10cm seams of the attached chemise pieces. Pin one edge of the gusset to one of the two raw edges at the end of the 10 cm seam and sew.
- Pin and sew the edge of the gusset to the raw edge remaining at the bottom of the 10 cm seam.
 - To make a neat join at each point of the gusset, take care to place the needle in the same hole as the final stitch at the point of the gusset and begin sewing from there.
- Now you have a gusset, one edge of which is sewn to a sleeve and one edge of which is sewn to the front or back. This is the beginning of one of the underarms of your chemise.
- Attach the remaining two sides of the gusset to the other side of the sleeve and the other body piece.
 - To make it clear which pieces to attach the remaining gusset seams to, put the chemise over your head and lay the sleeves over your arms. Pull the gusset around under the arm and place the point at the base of the 10 cm seam on the other side of the sleeve. It should be clear to you now, which raw edges to attach the remaining gusset edges to.
- Attach the second gusset to the base of the remaining two 10 cm seams.

Side and sleeve seams:

- Sew the side seams, right sides together from the base of gusset points to the hem.
- Sew the sleeve seams, right sides together from the base of the gusset points to the cuff edge.

Cuffs:

- Iron cuff bands in half lengthways.
- Open out the folded bands and pin the short edges of each band together to make a circle/tube.
- Sew two lines of basting threads around the bottom edge of each of the two sleeve tubes.
- Place the raw edges of the opened tube and gathered edge of sleeve right sides together (one inside the other).
- Pull up the gathers to fit cuff and pin.
- Sew the seam at normal stitch length.
- Turn the cuff over the raw edge.
- Turn under the raw edge of cuff and hand sew to sewing line.
- Pull out gathers.

Seam finishing:

The only raw edges left on the chemise will be the sleeve seams, gusset edges and bottom hem. You can finish the edges in any number of ways, such as overlocking or just sewing another row of stitching a short distance from the first.

Fitting and Changes

Cuff

The chemise as described is an average size, but some measurements should be checked first, such as the cuff. Make a loop 24cm around and pass your hand through it. This is the width of the cuff, and is identical to that on the chemise thought to have belonged to Mary of Hapsburg. You can adjust this smaller or larger, (remember to always add 3cm to the finished length for seam allowance), or make a cuff that fastens with a hook and eye or cord tie.

Neckband

If you would like to make the neckband to fit your bodice neck line, measure the neckline of your bodice and change the neckbands accordingly.

Viscount / Viscountess Sizing

If you are making the chemise for a person with a large chest or shoulders, you should measure the neckline to ensure the bands will make a large enough neckline. If the proposed wearer has very large shoulders and/or chest, you may need to sew the rectangles together at the neck with seams longer than 10cm, and increase the size of the gusset.

For any fitting dilemmas – feel free to contact me ☺

Leonore d'Scotia (Carolyn Fraser)

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