

HIGHLAND WEDDING DRESS - #541



Photograph of this garment on page 24 of *Tartans* by Christian Hesketh, New York, Octopus Books, 1972.

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Author? Date?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Everything is wool, and all edges are finished. The color is orangish-red and greenish-blue tartan. The museum dates it to the late eighteenth century.

The jewelry, shift, etc. shown in photographs of the dress were not part of the original outfit.

Information provided by:

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness IV2 3ED

Phone: 011-44-463-237-114.

Curator: Catharine Niven

Assistant Curator, Social History: Margaret A. Macleod

PROVENANCE:

The dress was at the Queens Street facility of the National Museums of Scotland, and then was on exhibit at St. Margaret's Chapel, Edinburgh Castle. It is now on display at the Inverness Museum and Gallery. The garment was worn by Isabell Fraser of Kirhill, near Inverness.

BODICE:

The bodice is fitted and is made to be worn over stays. It meets in front without closures, and drops to a point in the center-front. The bodice is lined with home-spun linen, made from lint grown and spun at Kirkhill. There is a line of top stitching along the side front seam (which runs about mid-way between the center front opening and the side of the woman's body under the arm).

The bodice neck is quite low in front and rounded. It is cut square behind and a little low.

There is an under-bodice of plain material, which laces closed in front. The edges of the under-bodice are two inches in from the center front of the bodice. The edge of the under-bodice is probably stayed. An example of an under bodice with laces from the Snowhill Collection is illustrated on p. 46 of Nancy Bradfield's *Costume in Detail* (Boston: Plays Inc., 1968, 1981).

The bodice waist runs back until it reaches an inch from either side of the sack-back. Then it falls downward to a point at the center-back.

The sleeves are set in: There are two horizontal "shoulder" seams on each side of the bodice. From a hypothetical line at the top of the shoulder, the front seam is three inches away and back seam is two inches away. Each sleeve has one seam located under the arm.

The sleeve cuffs are triangular in style, with three pleats. They are narrow at the frong bend of arm, and wide behind the elbow. The cuff extends beyond the elbow in back and is

only stitched to the sleeve in front. This is probably similar to the cuffs on the jacket from the Snowhill Collection illustrated on p. 45 of Nancy Bradfield's *Costume in Detail* (Boston: Plays Inc., 1968, 1981).

MODIFIED SACK-BACK:

The sack-back is triangular. It extends from shoulder to shoulder at neck line. It is triangular, and narrows to a width of four inches at waist. On either side of the triangle there are two lines of top stitching, one at the edge and one about 2 inches in toward the middle. This gives the appearance of a pleat at either side of the triangle. The sack-back is sewn to waist of bodice, with just a sufficient drop to allow proper bending of woman wearing stays. It then falls to about 2" below the hem of the petticoat.

PLAID:

One end is self-fringed. It is a loom-width wide—approximately twenty to thirty inches. In one photograph it appears to be worn running from the back hem of skirt, over the left shoulder, under the right arm, over the left shoulder again, and the falling to mid-thigh. In another it appears to be worn starting about mid-calf in the back, up over the right shoulder and ending in front at about the right knee. Looking at it in the display, the curator estimates its length at 2.5 to 2.75 meters. [approx. 8-9 feet].

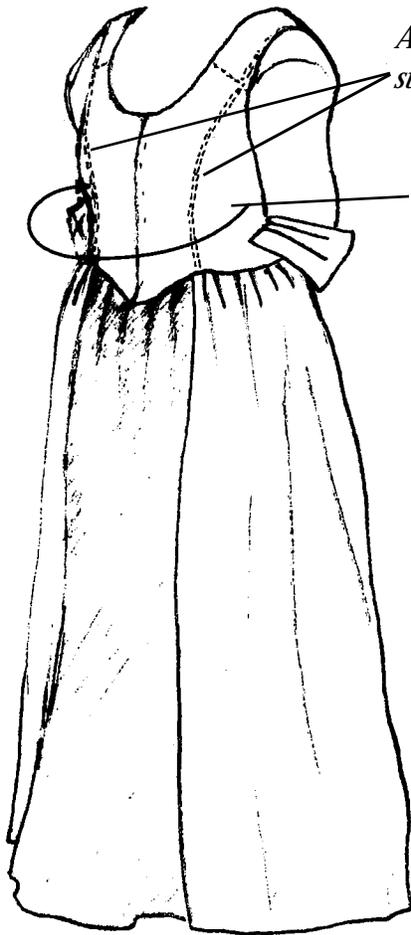
PETTICOAT:

It is pleated into the bodice, and ends in an opening in front, four inches wide. (The petticoat ends where the lacing holes begin in the under-bodice.) It is quite full, especially in the back, and also appears to be longer in the back than the front. This may be because it was worn with a false rump. The dress requires an under petticoat.

The Curator of Costumes, at the National Museums of Scotland hopes to send us Costume Information Sheet Number 4, "Dress in 18th Century Scotland." There is an imprint of the back of the dress in it (red on vanilla and not easy to see).

Rough Sketches showing stitching lines of tartan wedding dress.

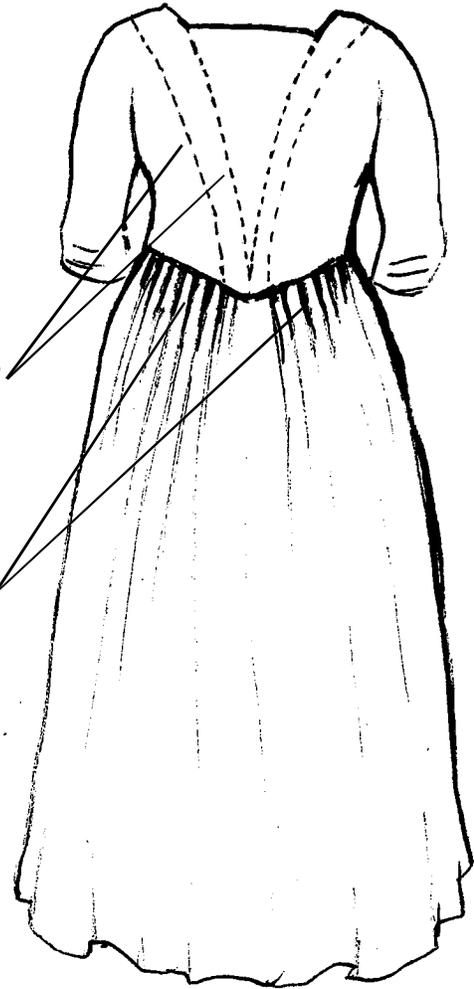
Front



Almost a double stitching line.

Neatly fitted bodice on side panels.

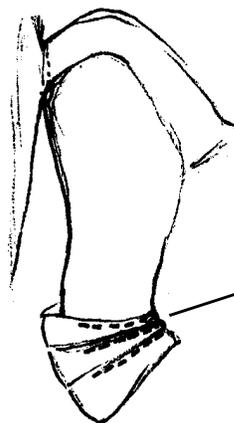
Back



Stitching lines give back pleat effect.

Gentle pleating from waist gives a type of kilt effect to the back of the dress.

Sleeve Detail



Front

Note: stitching is only part way along.