

# EDGE OF THE WILD

THE PUBLICATION OF THE MIDDLE-EARTH REENACTMENT SOCIETY

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## FROM THE EDITOR:

Greetings and welcome to the Autumn 2020 edition of *Edge of the Wild*! While the Great Plague of our times continues to keep our members apart, we have endeavored to provide our readers what we hope will be some useful insights into just what it means to “do Middle-earth”.

Our first ‘Third Phase’ issues centered around the pursuit of ‘trekking’ in an authentic yet comfortable manner, especially as pertaining to one’s traveling gear. With this issue, we turn to the items which create an ‘Outer Persona’—specifically, the clothing you use to let the world know that you are portraying an inhabitant of Tolkien’s Middle-earth, and not merely a character in a generic ‘fantasy’ or historic setting. As we will see, one of the keys to creating a quality Middle-earth impression is reliance on historical patterns and materials, while not being afraid to draw influence from disparate Primary World periods. We thank you for reading, and hope the following pages will provide you with much inspiration as the days shorten!

-A. HOLLIS

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“[Bilbo] took off his party clothes, folded up and wrapped in tissue-paper his embroidered silk waistcoat, and put it away. Then he put on quickly some old untidy garments, and fastened round his waist a worn leather belt. On it he hung a short sword in a battered black-leather scabbard. From a locked drawer, smelling of moth-balls, he took out an old cloak and hood. They had been locked up as if they were very precious, but they were so patched and weatherstained that their original colour could hardly be guessed: it might have been dark green. They were rather too large for him.”

- THE LORD OF THE RINGS,  
BOOK I, CHAPTER 1: *A WELL-PLANNED PARTY.*

# CLOTH, CLOTHING, AND COSTUMES OF MIDDLE-EARTH

A. HOLLIS

**I**n this article I will be providing a **thorough** analysis of the various textiles (and the specific garments made from them) which appear in Tolkien’s texts, in order to build a better mental picture of the ‘costume’ of his various cultural groups, which we hope may be useful to individuals interested in following MERS standards to create such a persona.

The inspiration for this essay came from the research of Dr. Marie Sørensen, who distinguishes between the ‘three Cs’ of the title as “the textile itself” (i.e. fabric), “the piece of clothing constructed from cloth”, and “the combination of clothing and ornaments”, respectively (1).

Although his point-of-view characters are often very observant, true to his “sketchiness” (2) when it came to describing details of Middle-earth, we are only told what a very few garments are made from. As many cultures keep sheep (including—but not limited to—the Folk of Hador, Men of Eriador, the Beornings, and the Rohirrim (3); Lake-men potentially, and Gondorians are a safe bet), **wool** is known throughout, and hobbits (at least) were familiar with felt (4).

**Linen** has somewhat fewer appearances, mentioned in connection with hobbits, a bandage worn by Gimli after the Hornburg—though it is unknown if this is Rohirrim-produced linen or something dwarf-made brought from home—and appearing several times in Gondor (5).

**Silk** is actually slightly better attested: Elrond

loans Bilbo a silk handkerchief, and Bilbo later wear a waistcoat made of silk. The fabric was definitely known in Gondor: while a working-class innkeeper may not have owned any, it was known to him; the King’s Letter sent to Sam in the early Fourth Age arrived wrapped in silk (6). This does not, however, mean that silk was necessarily being *produced* in Gondor; it could certainly have been acquired via trade networks from somewhere further South or East.

**Hemp** is never depicted in a primary text, but is used figuratively (“arm like ropes of hemp so strong”) in a First Age lay, and in describing the output of the Gamgee family’s ancestral village, “...known only locally for rope-making, and no tissues were produced there of any fibre softer than hemp” (7).

Although Middle-earth is home to numerous wild sources of vegetative fibers—such as willow, alder, linden, and nettle—long used by humans in our Primary World, none are specifically shown being utilized in Tolkien’s text. However, if one wishes for a solid example of wild-sourced cordage in Tolkien, only one extraordinary example exists – and not in a Drúedain, Dunlending, proto-Stoor, or any other ‘primitive’ culture context! As recent research has uncovered, the soft, strong, and silvery *hithlain* rope given to the Fellowship by the Galadhrim was in fact made “of the fibre under mallorn bark” (8)! Given the similar properties of the rope and the Galadhrim’s hoods and cloaks, it is possible that the Elves of Lorien made their clothing from this bast fiber as well...further proof that the *mallorn* was a remarkable tree indeed.

There is, however, one textile which is not allowed per MERS Standards. This prohibition comes directly from the Professor himself, who writes that Rosie Cotton's surname "*has of course in origin no connexion with cotton the textile material; though it is naturally associated with it at the present day...it is not intended that 'cotton' should be supposed to be known or used at that time.*" (9).

When it comes to the use of **leather** as a textile we have somewhat fewer examples, though they span a range of cultures, from peaceful hobbits and Tom Bombadil, to the Rohirrim and Dúnedain, as well as orcs (10). It should be noted that Frodo wears a "shirt of soft leather" beneath his *mithril* shirt, which would only be practical and comfortable with something like *braintan* - a shirt of full-grain leather, no matter how thin, would quickly begin to feel like a wearable sauna!

With these examples in mind, we may move on to our survey of garments to help contribute to our sense of representative costume for each of the various cultures thus described. It is worth pointing out that Tolkien did make a broad pronouncement about generalized male dress in the north, stating that they "would wear breeches, whether hidden by a cloak or long mantle, or merely accompanied by a tunic." However, he goes on to recognize that his story takes place over a large area and that much like our own history, "the 'dress' of various peoples, Men and others, was much diversified in the Third Age, according to climate and inherited custom" (11).



## Clothing and Costume of Hobbits

"tunic" (Sam's has at least one pocket), "shirt of soft leather" (mentioned once and then never again), "dressing-gown", "braces" (or American 'suspenders'), "breeches", "trousers" (with pocket), "woolen hose", "coat", "jacket", "waistcoat" (silk and wool) twice as "weskit", "belt", "scarf". Underclothes are potentially known per Sam's ambiguous "linen" (12).

Additionally, while "hobbits *seldom* wore shoes", we do know that the Hobbits of the Eastfarthing "wore dwarf-boots in muddy weather", and—despite what Peter Jackson would have you believe—hobbits were quite familiar with hats and caps (13)!

We also know that hobbits "dressed in bright colours, being notably fond of yellow and green", and in a letter written soon after the publication of The Hobbit, Tolkien gives Bilbo's clothing as "green velvet breeches; red or yellow waistcoat; brown or green jacket; gold (or brass) buttons" (14).

## Clothing and Costume of Dwarves

We have no fabrics mentioned for dwarves, and although we have fewer specific garments, we do have a larger variety of colors: "hoods" including blue, sky-blue, dark green, pale green, yellow, scarlet, purple, brown, grey, and white. While hoods have been around since at least the Iron Age, in a later draft Thorin's hood is specifically described as having a *liripipe*, an explicitly medieval style .

"cloaks" (separate from hoods), "coats", "jacket" (Thorin), "stockings", "dwarf boots". In terms of racial stylistic trends, beards are often forked and thrust through belts, which are often gold or silver (over half of Thorin's company). At the time of the War of the Ring, Gloin's garments were of "snow-white cloth", and he continues to wear a silver belt as well as

“a chain of silver and diamonds”. It should be noted that all the dwarves we encounter in Middle-earth are members of the Longbeard tribe, and so it is possible that the more eastern or western Houses have different manners of dress.

### **Clothing and Costume of Men:**

#### **Northern Dúnedain:**

Few details are known about the clothing of the Rangers of the North; as they are only depicted in the examples of Aragorn and the Grey Company. From these we have “high boots of supple leather” (see ‘Footwear of the Dúnedain’ in *Edge of the Wild* [Volume 5:Issue 2](#) for more about these), dark green or dark grey cloaks, possibly separate hoods, and a “rusty green and brown” palette (16). Due to the scanty nature of the text on this subject, much work by our members has gone into fleshing out these details into believable and practical outfits.

#### **Gondorians:**

Like their northern kin, the clothing of Gondor is not described in detail. Boromir provides our most complete description of a Gondorian’s clothes, and even it leaves much to be desired. He wears a fur-lined cloak, a “collar of silver with a single white stone”, and traveling boots. The guards of Minas Tirith wear “black and silver”, with a “short surcoat of black” upon which the Tree of Gondor is embroidered in silver. The elite citadel guards are similarly “robed in black”, though their surcoat displays the emblems of Elendil (the Gondorian tree in flower, plus a crown and stars) in silver. Beregond, a “plain man of arms” of the Citadel, is “clad in black and white”, while Denethor wears a “long black cloak”, the errand-rider Hirgon wears a “dark green” cloak, and Faramir and Eowyn wear “heavy cloaks”. A “long mantle of pure white” is worn by Ellesar

at his coronation, and Faramir’s late mother had a “great blue mantle of the colour of deep summer-night...set with silver stars about hem and throat” made for her, later described as a “robe”. As befits their woodland purposes of harrying the enemy, like the northern Dúnedain, the Rangers of Ithilien wear “green and brown of varied hues”, plus green gauntlets, hoods, and face masks; Faramir is later clad “all in green”. However, this color was not limited to Gondor’s Rangers, as the men of Pinnath Gelin, sent to bolster Minas Tirith from far western Gondor, are also said to be “green-clad” as well(17).

It is noted by our hobbit point-of-view character (Pippin) that the garments he wears in service to Denethor are “strange”, and based on Gondor’s frequent use of cloaks, robes, and mantles, plus its Mediterranean climate and ‘Byzantine’ character, it is possible that Pippin finds their garments strange as he is accustomed to more tailored clothing. This is not to say that we should picture Gondorians going about wearing Roman *togas*, but certainly something less fitted than breeches, shirts, jackets, and vests.

#### **Rohan:**

As the Riddermark is only visited at time of war, and practically zero time is spent with common people, we have a very incomplete view of what the Rohirrim wear. We know Eowyn wears a “white robe girt with silver” and Merry was given a “stout leather jerkin” to wear in Theoden’s service. In a 1958 letter, Tolkien describes the Rohirrim as “not ‘mediaeval’, in our sense”, but that “the styles of the Bayeux Tapestry (made in England) fit them well enough...” (18). From this suggestion, someone seeking to create a Rohirric impression might do well to research clothing of the later Anglo-Saxon period to base their kit upon.

### Northmen of Wilderland:

The only Man from central Rhovanion we ever meet is Beorn, whose clothing may or may not be representative of the larger Anduin culture as a whole. Despite a sample size of One, unlike most other Middle-earth characters we actually have a distinct image of Beorn. Thanks to Tolkien's uncharacteristically specific description, we know Beorn's "tunic" is 1) brown, 2) woolen, 3) sleeveless, 4) knee-length, and 5) unhemmed or fringed. (He also does not appear to wear pants.) This is his costume during high Summer, but clothing worn in colder seasons is unknown.

By the time Thorin's company reaches Laketown, no physical descriptions are being given. However, Tolkien's illustration of the setting provides a fascinating detail of northern Rhovanion headwear: plentiful pointed (conical?) hats, which appear to be worn by Men and Elves of the area (19).

### Drúedain:

Tolkien's most outwardly 'primitive' culture are embodied in Ghân-buri-ghân, who is "clad only with grass about his waist"; if we look to Stone and Copper Age textiles, we may see that such a 'grass skirt' need not be a crude garment. The only other item of clothing known to be worn by the Drúedain are "high buskins", a type of shoe which would be worn (in the First Age, at least) in rough country (20).

### Clothing and Costume of Elves:

Much like Gondorians, Tolkien's Elves get shortchanged in his descriptions of their clothing, which are chiefly described in terms of colors rather than specific garments. The Elves of Lorien wear "shadow-grey", and "white"; while those of Mirkwood wear "green and brown", light shoes, and belts (sometimes

with crystals). Lorien's elves wear "fur-cloaks", and fur-lined "jackets and cloaks" are provided by Elrond for the Fellowship's use.

We do know that Arwen wore a "cap of silver lace netted with small gems, glittering white" over her braided hair, as well as a belt of "leaves wrought in silver".

As a point of comparison, Legolas notes that Elladan and Elrohir's "gear" is said to be "less sombre" than that of the Grey Company" they travel with (21), a point which the developers of *Lord of the Rings Online* did not overlook:



### Tom Bombadil:

I am inclined to believe that *Tom Bombadil* (simply the Bucklandish name given to him by hobbits)—who is said to not leave his little country yet is known by various names by different races—appears to the viewer in a form which they would be most familiar. Therefore, his depictions in LR I:6-8 may be taken as indicative of hobbit (specifically Eastfarthing & Buckland) garments.

These elements include, a hat with tall crown and feather in the band, leather breeches, a blue coat (see hobbit jackets), a green girdle, green

stockings (see Sam's hose), and "great" yellow boots (similar to the dwarf-boots worn by Stoorish hobbits?) (22).

Tom's mate Goldberry's clothing seems perhaps less indicative of rustic hobbit-style, though no less pastoral; on a whole, Goldberry and her surroundings give the clear impression of "a local deity, whose power derives from nature". She wears two "gowns": one green ("like young reeds and shot with silver") and one silver; and pairs this with a gold belt (shaped like a chain of flag-lilies and set with pale blue of forget-me-nots), and a silver girdle (23).

### Clothing and Costume of the Enemy: Orcs

A few details of Saron and Saruman's various servants come to light to help us picture them better. At Cirith Ungol, Sam scavenges up an orkish uniform for Frodo to wear, consisting of long hairy "breeches", a dirty "tunic" (later called a "leather shirt"), and a black cloak. We also know that the orcs of Goblin-town put on "soft shoes" for quiet tunnel-running, while Isengard's Uruk-hai wear heavy iron-nailed shoes (24).

### The Haradrim:

Tolkien actually gives a decent number of details in describing Sauron-allied Southron warriors. Between Gollum's and Sam's descriptions, we can gather that they have long black hair which they braid with gold ornaments, wear gold rings in their ears, paint their cheeks red, wear "red" or "scarlet" cloaks or robes, gold collars, and are armored with an infamous "corslet of overlapping brazen plates" (25).

**With this information in mind, we would like to spotlight three of our core members, who will each explain what has gone into creating their Outer Persona.** ✨

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- (4) LR I:3
- (5) LR II:3; III:7; V:8; VI:4
- (6) TH 19; LR I:1; Adventures of Tom Bombadil #6; HoMe Vol 9: Ch XI—The Epilogue
- (7) HoMe Vol 3: The Lay of the Children of Hurin; HoMe Vol 12: Ch II—the Appendix on Languages
- (8) LR I:6; Volker, A. (2011). *Bast, rushes, nettles: textile material of the stone age*. Dithmarschen Museum for Archeology and Ecology; HoMe Vol 7: Ch XIII--Galadriel
- (9) *Nomenclature*, quoted in Hammond & Scull: Reader's Companion, p 612
- (10) LR II:6; I:7; V:3; VI:2; (11) Letters, No. 211
- Hobbits:** (12) LR II:3, VI:3; LR I:6; TH Ch 2; 1960 Hobbit; TH Ch 5, Letters, No. 27; LR I:1, I:5; LR II:3; TH Ch 6; LR I:6, I:8; TH Ch 6, LR I:1; LR VI:8, ATB #8; LR I:1, I:2, I:8, IV:1, VI:3; LR I:4; II:3; (13) LR Prologue; TH 2, LR Prologue, LR I:3, VI:6, VI:9; (14) LR Prologue; Letters, No. 27
- Dwarves:** (15) TH 1; The Orkney Hood; 1960 Hobbit; TH 2; LR prologue, Unfinished Tales Part IV, Ch 3—The Quest of Erebor; LR II:1;
- Dúnedain:** (16) LR V:2; II:3
- Gondor:** (17) LR II:2; V:1, V:4; V:1; V:4; V:3; VI:5; IV:4; V:4; V:1
- Rohan:** (18) LR III:6; V:3; Letters, No. 211
- Wilderland:** (19) TH Ch 7; 10
- Druedain:** (20) LR V:5; UT Part IV, Ch 1—The Druedain
- Elves:** (21) LR II:6; TH 8, II:3; II:1; V:2
- Bombadil:** (22) ATB Preface: footnote 4; LR II:2; I:6-7
- Goldberry:** (23) Greene, D. (1995). *Higher argument: tolkien and the tradition of vision, epic and prophecy*. Proceedings of the JRR Tolkien Centenary Conference 1992, 47-8; LR I:7-8
- Orcs:** (24) LR VI:2; TH 4; LR III:1
- Haradrim:** (25) LR IV:3-4

# DRESSING TÍRATHON TAURANDIR

G. LAMMERS

*“Aragorn ... went forth clad only in rusty green and brown, as a Ranger of the wilderness.” - Lord of the Rings II:3*



When discussing the materials that are the most prevalent (or useful) throughout The Lord of the Rings and its accom-

panying works, my head goes straight to those which have been time-tested and proven effective in my own life: the Linens, Wools, and Hides that are found in my longstanding Third Age Dúnedain Ranger kit. For this reason, we're going to break down what fabrics I use for what purpose(s), in what seasons, for which of my garments...and **why**.



We'll begin with the feet and work our way up. Footwear is arguably THE most important consideration to be made in any sort of trekking context. If you're doing serious backpacking, you need some serious hiking boots or you will be miserable; if you're doing serious distance-running, you need some serious running shoes. If you want to trek beyond the local Renais-

sance Faire, you need to think hard about your footwear. It also may be the most difficult decision you make, because there are not many options out there in the “historical shoe market” that are really designed to function for long periods or long distances, and many don't look the way someone starting in Middle-earth reenactment thinks they should look. I'm a big proponent of making your own, and of using legitimate leather soles on handmade turnshoes, but whichever route you go, I believe cowhide answers for both functions and following the research we have on Rangers' footwear. The MERS standards allow for *some* (though not all) modern tanning methods because of the lack of availability of other more authentic forms of cowhide that would work well for boots (i.e., bark-tanning), so I typically use commercially oil-tanned hides for this purpose. Additional water-repellent methods—such as waxing and further oiling of the material—is advisable.

Beneath my boots, I wear 100% wool knit socks in all three seasons I trek in (Fall, Winter, and Spring). They can still keep your feet warm when they are wet, so you don't take the same risks you would if you wore cotton. All the same, I still advise changing socks at night and drying your feet. (For my review of these socks, see our [Spring 2020 newsletter](#).)

Moving upwards, year-round I wear a pair of [Thorsberg](#)-patterned trousers made of a mid-weight 100% linen. They were hand-stitched by member-editor A. Hollis and have a hemp drawstring I braided myself. I don't wear wool pants for a few reasons, but mostly because of overheating when on the move. In the winter,

your legs are among the least concerning appendages because they are doing 90% of the work as you move about. Fingers and toes are far more likely to cause issues, so I stay lighter and ventilated on the legs and let my movement do the work. At night, less clothing is more when sleeping, so your body can heat itself and your bedding together, so heavy pants have never become a need for me. The bonus of using linen here is that you can bed down in your cloak/blanket with them off and they will easily and quickly air dry near the fire.

Beneath my linen trousers, I have two pairs of Braies, one of linen and one of wool broadcloth. Both are a bit later-period in pattern and more fitted because a) I'm not wearing chausses, so I don't need coverage down to my knees, and b) all the extra fabric of earlier-period loose chausses could cause bunching and discomfort beneath my well-fitted trousers. The wool Braies are used primarily in the winter or on cold nights, and the others for the fall and spring.



Moving to the torso, we have my tunic, which is a Nockert Type 1 with only two gores on the sides, hand-stitched in a medium-weight 100% linen. I stuck with two gores to conserve fabric,

and because the fashionably bloused four-gore tunics in-period would bunch uncomfortably if worn beneath some of the more fitted outer layers I use. This base layer garment HAS to be linen...it needs to breathe, be light enough to do hard work in, but be able to hang-dry easily and not cause me to freeze to death when it's damp. I have a second tunic of nearly identical construction and cut made of a medium weight 100% wool broadcloth which is reserved for very cold days in winter, but rarely for when on the move...body heat gets cooking quickly once you get moving.



Over the tunic I most commonly wear a Surcote split four ways, which provides a pleasant top layer for warmth, breaks up the silhouette nicely, and makes a huge distinction between “generic medieval” and “Middle-earth” with the right tones of Green and Brown. I have two

of these Surcotes: one of 100% wool broadcloth with a contrasting linen edging, and another that is a fairly heavy and robust 100% linen. The wool layer is used for slower, chilled days of wandering and watching, and nearly all the time during the winter. The linen Surcote more commonly allows the benefits of the silhouette breakup and Middle-earth cultural appearance during the warmer parts of the fore- and aft- seasons.

Atop all of this—though not at all times—is a deerhide Jerkin, brain-tanned by member-editor A. Hollis and stitched together by myself with a 100% linen lining. The jerkin is not intended to



be protective in function...any leather “armor” (short of heavily boiled and waxed contrivances which are thick and quite stiff) is actually quite hopeless against the point of a decently sharp blade. This garment is intended for

warmth and to protect the valuable torso garments from being shredded by thorns and other snags in the wilds. It is fitted quite closely, with the intent of keeping the layers beneath held close in to the torso to retain warmth. The material itself, brain-tanned buckskin, is porous and full of air pockets, which makes it a fantastic insulator. It is most often worn in the dead of winter, and in long hours spent watching in the chill of the day.

Lastly, the cloak and hood. These are imperative in a book-accurate depiction of an Aragorn-based Ranger, as he is said to have used these exclusively, rather than a blanket, all the way from Bree to Rivendell. Mine are made of a heavy wool melton, and are modeled after the pattern of the cloak and hood found on the Bocksten Man, though made longer so as to function better for bedding. These are the only cloak and hood that I carry in *any* season. If it’s too warm for them, they can be rolled and carried easily, and will be perfect for bedding. If it’s cold, they can be worn at all times. They are not always worn together...the cloak is often removed when on the move and worn in a horse-shoe roll to avoid overheating as the day wears on. It is important to find a pattern and configuration that allow you freedom of movement

while wearing the cloak, the ability to use it for warmth while walking if need be, and yet does not prevent you from accessing tools or weapons at a moment’s notice. I have found the Bocksten patterned cloak to be the only pattern that serves this need for me in a way that most closely fits the text. (For more details on my decision to use a Bocksten-patterned cloak, see our [Winter 2017](#) newsletter.)

There are many ways one can clothe a Ranger using historical precedent, but I have found this to be the most functional wardrobe I can manage that also fits the text. I hope some of this is able to help you along on your own journey. ✨



# DRESSING Ned HOUNDWOOD

E. BURTON

## Main garments:

Tunic – Ned wears a wool tunic in cool weather and a linen one in warm weather. Buttoned tunics are not mentioned in the text, but the buttons add a sort of ‘urban’ look to the garment, which helps visually separate Ned from the strange folk that roam the wild lands beyond Bree. The tunics are influenced by some of the Herjolfsnes finds (especially the sleeves) and the linen one uses the Bocksten gore arrangement.



Breeches – While Tolkien specifies that men in northern parts of Middle-earth wear breeches (Letters, No. 211), he does not describe such garments; Ned wears knee-length breeches based on an extant garment pattern in Patterns of Fashion 3: The Cut and Construction of Clothes for Men and Women c. 1560-1620:



## Undergarments:

Linen undertunic – Tolkien describes men in northern parts of Middle-earth wearing tunics (Letter 211), and while he does not mention the layering of tunics specifically, a wool outer tunic may be more comfortable and require less cleaning if a linen one is worn against the skin.

Linen drawers – While Tolkien does not seem to have had much to say about underwear, a pair of drawstring drawers, based loosely on late 14<sup>th</sup> century *braies*, seem to fit Middle-earth well enough.

Wool stockings – Breelanders are not described as wearing stockings, but at least two members of Thorin’s company wear them (The Hobbit, Chapter 2). Since dwarves pass through Bree (LR I:9), it is possible that Breelanders might be familiar with stockings as well.

Linen coif – Tolkien does not mention this medieval style of head covering, but it helps to hide a modern haircut!

## Outer garments:

Hood – A wool hood can provide a surprising amount of warmth in cool weather! The Breelanders are not described as wearing hoods, but the dwarves in Thorin’s company wear them (The Hobbit, Ch 1).

Hat – When working out-of-doors, a broad-brimmed hat to keep off sun and rain is a welcome piece of kit.

Turnshoes – Ned wears a pair of medieval high turnshoes made by Bohemond. (For my review of these turnshoes, see our [Summer 2016](#) newsletter). ✨

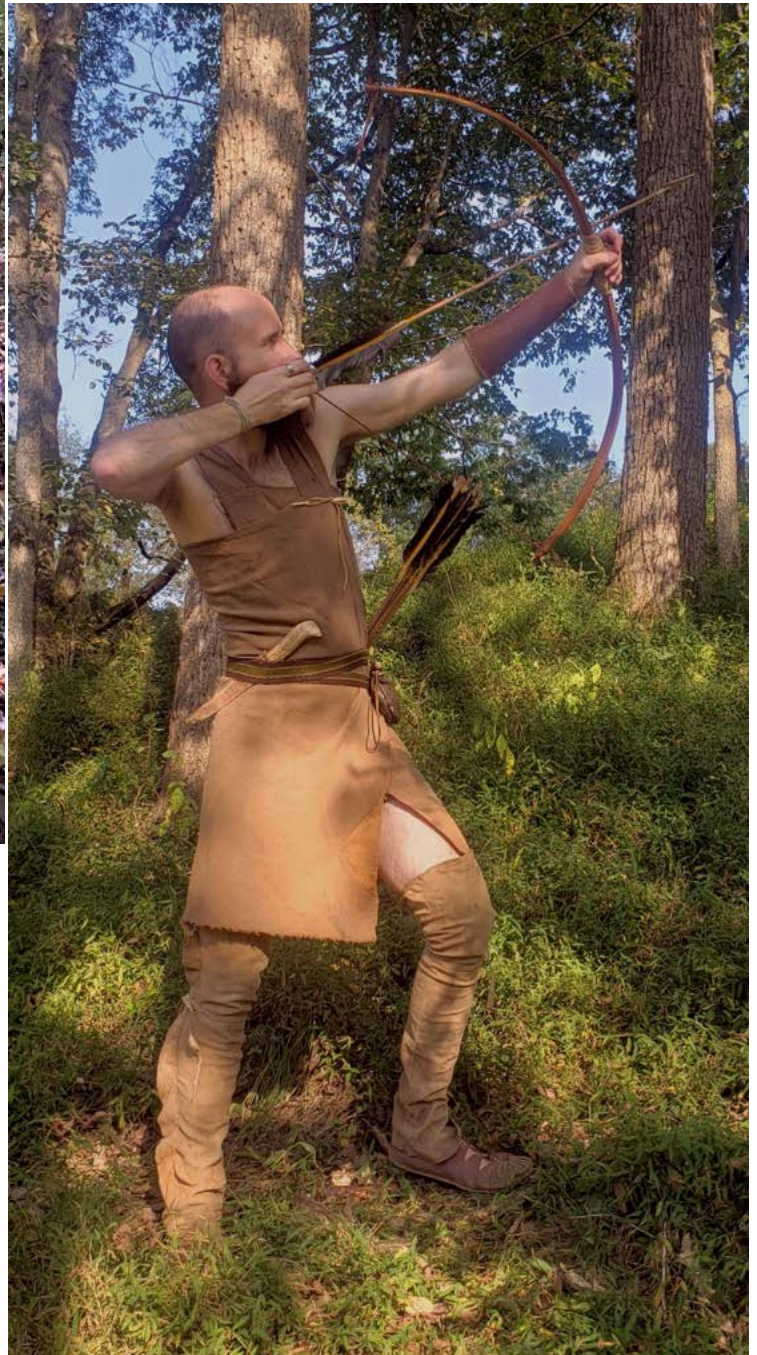




ABOVE: NED HOUNDWOOD,  
LATE THIRD AGE BREELANDER,  
VENTURES INTO THE  
CHETWOOD TO  
GATHER KINDLING.

BELOW:

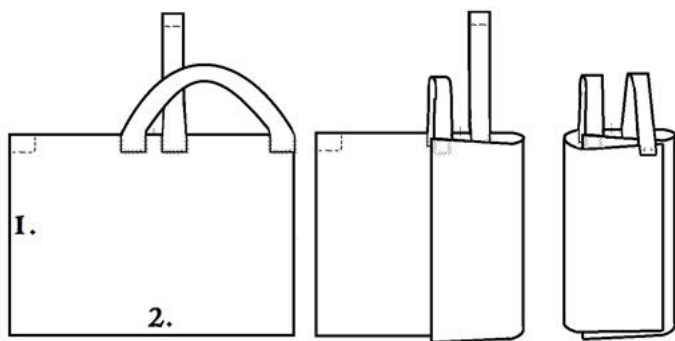
ΔISTAN SON OF ΔNSTEIG,  
LATE THIRD AGE BEORNING,  
TAKES AIM AT AN EAGLE TRYING TO  
POACH ONE OF HIS SHEEP.



# DRESSING AISTAN, SON OF ANSTEIG

a. hollis

**S**earching for my first Middle-earth persona many years ago, the Beornings of central Wilderland strongly appealed to me, due in large part to the details Tolkien included in his introduction of their chieftain. As mentioned earlier, the Professor dresses Beorn in a brown, wool, sleeveless, knee-length tunic, aligning neatly with what appears to have been the male uniform during the Nordic Bronze Age—as evidenced by the oak coffin men of Muldbjerg and Trindhøj and the bog body of Emmer-Erfscheidenveen. Such a tunic requires minimal sewing and can be made of only three pieces: “1” is the measurement from armpit to knee; “2” is approximately 140% of one’s chest measurement; the straps are measured over-the-shoulder. Unlike other potential personas, text-accuracy requires only a single garment and sewing is minimal, so whether you are on a budget or a novice tailor, a Beorning is a great option for newcomers to get a taste of Middle-earth ‘reenacting’.



However, I believe that some details of Beorn’s character served mainly to highlight his animalistic qualities, and as I sought to portray a ‘common’—or non-skinchanging—member of his local confederacy or chiefdom, I felt I had a little more freedom to dress somewhat more practically.

A woolen sash worn around the tunic is not mentioned in the text but helps keep the layers in place, and a belted loincloth worn under the tunic preserves modesty while allowing for the attachment of braintan leggings, perfect for protecting one’s lower half from thorns and brambles while traveling.

Additional garments to round out the wardrobe include duplicate tunics in linen (for humid summer) or varying weights of wool for cooler weather. A rush hat keeps the sun off the head, and a Skjoldehamn-type hood keeps the neck and shoulders warm or shaded, while in deep winter, a braintanned long-sleeved tunic cuts wind and conserves body heat nicely. Finally, leather ‘bog’ shoes work alone for three-season footwear, and can expand to accommodate felted boots during deep winter.



# ABOUT US

*The Middle-earth Reenactment Society is dedicated to the furthering of J.R.R. Tolkien cultural studies, within the framework of 'historical' reenactment. We exist to recreate the cultures of Middle-earth in both form and function, and to mold ourselves into peoples fitting to associate with and live as members of these fully-realized cultures. A part of the [middleearthbrangers.org](http://middleearthbrangers.org) Tolkien re-creation community, the Society publishes the online periodical Edge of the Wild, showcasing new research, methods, materials, and instructional articles, while meeting throughout the year at various sites deemed 'wild' enough to still capture the reality and imagination of the wild lands envisioned within the pages of Tolkien's works.*

*To subscribe to the newsletter and receive future issues of Edge of the Wild sent directly to your inbox, contact us at [Middleearthreenactmentsociety@gmail.com](mailto:Middleearthreenactmentsociety@gmail.com) or find us on Facebook as ['Middle-earth Reenactment Society'](#).*

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING  
SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE CONTACT  
US OR JOIN SOCIETY MEMBERS  
AT THE INAUGURAL  
WINTERNIGHT VIKING FESTIVAL IN  
COLUMBUS INDIANA OVER THE WEEKEND  
OF OCTOBER 31, 2020.

# SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP TIERS

To further promote our ideals of what constitutes high-authenticity in our ahistoric—but still historically-based—“Time Period”, we have created a set of tiers of membership to give both beginning costumers and seasoned re-enactors a path to follow towards better material culture creation and research, while creating extra bonuses for growth!

No matter your level of experience, we'd love to hear from you!

## TIER 1: THE SUBSCRIBER

If you receive our FREE quarterly newsletter, you are already a subscriber! Thanks for joining us on our adventure! *Edge of the Wild* is full of great information whether you are a Tolkien reader, history aficionado, OR you are beginning your journey into reenactment. Whoever you are: welcome!

In addition to the free newsletter, you will receive occasional mail regarding public events where the Society will be present so that you may attend and interact with our membership.



## TIER 2: THE SOCIETY MEMBER

*Member* is our first tier of direct involvement into MERS activity. Members have shown a move towards a Tolkien-minded kit by creating an ‘Outer Persona’ intended for use in the great outdoors built around a culture in Middle-earth. For Member-level kit, we do not require hand-stitching or 100% authentic fabrics, but it must still be functional. **What this means:**

- ◇ Fabrics should be at least 50% linen (blended with cotton, silk, ramie, or rayon—synthetic blends (polyester, nylon, acrylic, etc.) should not be used); woolens should be at least 70% wool (no more than 30% synthetic fibers) [Military surplus blankets are usually 70/30].
- ◇ Tools and weapons should be made of metal and wood (instead of foam).
- ◇ Modern clothing should not be visible
- ◇ Fore fire safety, leather items should be actual leather, not ‘vegan’ (petroleum-based) alternatives.
- ◇ No stiff leather body ‘armor’

We do not ask for a complete breakdown of kit items or references to the text, just a simple description of who you are and what you are pursuing, preferably accompanied by a photograph. No ‘interior’ items—such as camp tools and accouterments that would be found inside pockets or pouches—are required at this stage: the focus here at the beginning is purely on the ‘outer persona’.

### Benefits:

- ◇ Society Members will be listed on our website as such.
- ◇ Society Members will also receive special invites to attend public events where the MERS is being represented.

## TIER 3: THE TRAVELER-MEMBER

*Traveler-Members* have taken the initiative to flesh out a functioning kit based around a culture in Middle-earth **with an eye for authenticity**. They are working on assembling the tools and accouterments necessary for their chosen culture, and are fully dressed. They are working on avoiding visible machine stitching in their clothing, and are focusing on using their kit in a functional capacity. Kit is at least partially based on research. **What this means:**

- ◇ Minimal machine-stitching visible
- ◇ Head-to-toe period clothing constructed using materials either mentioned in Tolkien's text and/or were commonly used in pre-modern Europe (Linen, Wool, Hemp, Silk, Leather, etc.)
  - ◇ Per Tolkien's comments in *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings* (quoted in Reader's Companion (Hammond & Scull, 2014), cotton fabrics should not be used at the Traveler tier or higher.
- ◇ 50% of kit should be based on examples or patterns from the archeological/historic record
- ◇ 25% of kit should be documentable or explainable using Tolkien's texts.
- ◇ 25% of Kit should be explainable by practical use.
- ◇ Modern marks or brands are not visible on tools such as axes, knives, etc.
- ◇ Film-based interpretations of *specific material culture* are not present

To apply to be listed as a Traveler-Member, we do ask for a photograph and description of your kit with explanations of your reasoning for how you have chosen to equip and outfit yourself for your chosen culture.

Descriptions of outings (or photographs showing you in the field) are a bonus.

### Benefits:

- ◇ Traveler-Members will be listed on our website as such.
- ◇ They will also receive special invites to attend public events where the MERS is being represented, and may participate in public education at these events or pre-approved events the Society will not be present at (on a case-by-case basis).
- ◇ They are also free (and encouraged) to submit written materials of their own making for consideration to the editorial staff of our newsletter, *Edge of the Wild*. *These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be held onto for a period of time until an appropriate newsletter theme fits the article, or edited at our discretion (with the author's consent).*



## TIER 4: THE CONTRIBUTOR-MEMBER

**Contributor-Members** have reached a notable height of authenticity and functionality in pursuit of their chosen culture and persona(s). They have created a fully fleshed-out kit, including major elements as well as the minutiae of hand-stitching and ‘pocket trash’ appropriate to their persona. Their kit is based entirely on research, whether it be historical, Tolkien text-based, or (sparsely) conjectural through explainable logic and practicality in the historical-fantasy setting.

Applicants should have thorough lists of kit items and research materials/sources/documentation with photographs of kit to match, as well as evidence of real-world application and use of said materials in the wilderness spread across at least two nights.

### What this means:

- ◇ Machine stitching is not visible (preferably none present)
- ◇ Head-to-toe period clothing constructed using materials either mentioned in Tolkien’s text and/or were commonly used in pre-modern Europe (Linen, Wool, Hemp, Silk, Leather, etc.)
  - ◇ Per Tolkien’s comments in *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings* (quoted in Reader’s Companion (Hammond & Scull, 2014), cotton fabrics should not be used at the Traveler tier or higher.
- ◇ 50% of kit should be based on examples or patterns from the archeological/historic record
- ◇ 25% of kit should be documentable or explainable using Tolkien’s texts.
- ◇ 25% of Kit should be explainable by practical use.
- ◇ Modern marks or brands are not visible on tools such as axes, knives, etc.
- ◇ Film-based interpretations of material culture are not present
- ◇ Excepting safety supplies (ie. Medications, First Aid, and Water Purification supplies), Kit does not contain any hidden anachronisms (ie. Plastic bags containing foodstuffs, etc.)

### Benefits:

- ◇ Contributor-Members will be listed on our website as such.
- ◇ They will receive special invites to attend public events where the MERS is being represented, and may participate in public education at these events or pre-approved events the society will not be present at (on a case-by-case basis).
- ◇ They are also free, encouraged, and may be directly asked to submit written materials of their own making for consideration to the editorial staff of our newsletter, *Edge of the Wild*. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may be held onto for a period of time until an appropriate newsletter theme fits the article, or edited at our discretion (with the author’s consent).
- ◇ They are allowed to host official MERS-sanctioned, private, small-group wilderness events in their own local area. In addition, they will receive special invites to small-group society wilderness treks hosted by Society Officers and Newsletter staff.

## TIER 5: THE VENDOR-MEMBER

*Vendor-Members* have applied for membership not for their pursuit of a persona, but for their mastery of a certain craft that pertains to the pursuits of members and aspiring members. Vendor-Members have displayed not only abilities in craft, but a specific desire to craft custom items in their field that are fully-functional and directly relevant\* to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien.

- ◇ Vendor-Members are listed on our website along with examples of their work to supply those pursuing Society activities with the very best of accoutrements.
- ◇ They may also—depending on event rules—be given opportunities to display their wares at public events as a part of the MERS event presence.

\*These works do not include items made with inspiration from film or popular adaptations...only original and text-based craftsmanship will be considered.

