

## Maternity Clothing and the SCA

I have been playing in the SCA for over 15 years. I am sure that during that time I had friends who were pregnant and had children, but I did not have any regular contact with them. So in true Scadian fashion, I researched what pregnant women wore during the Middle Ages. I looked at portraits and sculptures, I searched the web, I went to the babies at Pennsic class. I found a surprising lack of artwork other than the Virgin Mary nursing Jesus and only one class at Pennsic. So, after loaning my maternity garb to the second woman in the Barony of Tir-y-Don I conceived the idea for this class.

The most helpful information I found was very obvious, once you think about it. **Women have been having babies since the dawn of time and they dressed as was fashionable for their time period.** With that bit of wisdom in mind I set out to make early period maternity clothing, as was correct for my persona. I took my most comfortable t-tunic and made it larger, then I tried it on and decided I needed more room in the bust and somebody else had better pin my hem. Then I made enough garb to go to Pennsic 7 months pregnant and the Baroness of Tir-Y-Don. Half way through sewing, I decided I had better make my garb in a few larger sizes, as some of it was getting snug and I had better create a dress with front opening. Some of the sewing I did was to add parts to older clothing which still fit. For example if a skirt still fit (after moving a button) then I made a new top.



Unbelted Bog dress at Pennsic, 7 months pregnant



Franco-Flemish Alabaster 16th c.

### Sewing tips

One of the first hurdles I had to overcome was not being able to sew with a knit or elastic fabric, which is used in all current maternity wear.

#### Solution:

Bog Dresses are very comfortable and easy to make. It is a tube of fabric that it pinned at the shoulders and slit on the sides at the hem.

The bog dress is easy to let down for nursing as seen in the sculpture.

You may be pleasantly surprised at how long your regular garb will fit. Just make sure you try clothes on before you pack for an event.





## Italian Renaissance and Tudor

The green dress was a loan from a friend. She was a little bit taller and heavier than me, so it was a perfect fit. The dress is a single piece. The sleeves are sewn in to the body of the dress. As a result I am only wearing a single layer of fabric. It may not be a period solution, but Pennsic in August is hot.

I think this dress is from a mundane pattern, note the shaping over the belly. This is a maternity dress.

Many people recommend Italian Renaissance clothing, as it is only fitted at the bust line and does not require a corset. I did not find constricting clothing across my top to be comfortable during pregnancy.

## Misc. Information

The easiest way to make a T-Tunic which fits well and is comfortable during pregnancy is to add a center front gore. This simple alteration gives you more fabric to cover your belly, yet it still hangs nicely.

Make your garb out of a natural fiber, as pregnant women tend to be warmer than normal.

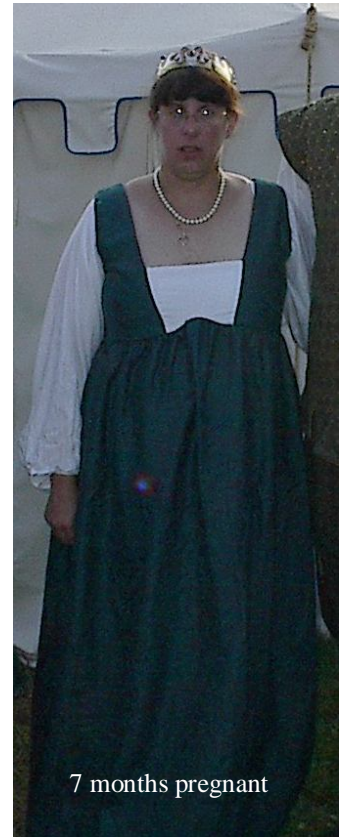
It has been my experience that people in the SCA turn more of a blind eye toward nursing in public, than the general public. If you want more privacy try a hood which falls past your chest or find the royal room.

I made a cloak which was longer in the front than in the back and it ended where my waist used to be. I was concerned that I would trip over my regular floor length cloak, since I couldn't see my feet.

When taking a baby to an event always pack an extra set of garb for both yourself and the baby.

Wear the most comfortable shoes you own, no matter what they look like.

More trim is always better.



*Madonna*, ca 1450-1460







7 months pregnant

## Sideless Surcoat and Cotehardie

I was very surprised at how well this combination worked. The Surcoat hide most of my belly until very late in my pregnancy. I switched to a chemise with a drawstring neckline when my black cotehardie no longer fit.

Cotehardies can be side, front or back laced. It is easy to loosen the laces, when you need more room.

### Nursing Solutions:

It is simple to slit your underdress from neck to waist and pin it shut at your neckline. The Surcoat will protect your modesty, as it will completely cover your underdress. If you are uncomfortable with an open fronted gown, a few hooks and eyes or a zipper can be used. When a baby is tiny you can slid her/him underneath the surcoat to nurse and peek down the neckline, if the baby is fussing about a blanket over the head.

The clothing I got tired of was the garb for nursing, as I did not make enough. I buttoned the front of my Cotehardies with any number of buttons from 3-10. The garb that worked the best had buttons to the waist.



## Later Period

The lady in this photograph assured me that she wore this dress throughout her pregnancy. She said the bottom lacing just rode on top of her belly and that it was comfortable. She said it was easy to nurse in, as she quickly unlaced her dress. Note the pretty pin which closes the neckline.

