

# Cloaks

## Cloaks and mantles

The distinction between the two appears to be one of status. Mantles seem to have been largely worn for display, while cloaks were worn for protection, though not often illustrated.

The cloak was the commonest form of protection, used by all classes throughout the medieval period. By 1200 it was generally cut as a circle, but its size depended on the wearer's wealth or rank. A half-circle (Fig 3) was quite adequate for protection from the weather, but those in Figs 1 & 2 are ceremonial and therefore larger: common travellers' cloaks are rarely illustrated.

Neck finishes of cloaks can be difficult to make out in illustrations, and in some the neckline is simply hollowed out to fit round the shoulders (Fig 2). Where the hood is shown round the neck (Fig 1; *Gowns*, Fig 1) it is impossible to tell if this is separate, or part of the cloak. Some neck finishes and fastenings are shown in Fig 4.

## Materials

Use a densely-woven wool cloth or Melton for protection from the wind and rain. For a ceremonial garment use lighter, finer cloth.

All were normally lined: use loosely-woven wool for warmth. For a grand mantle use fur or silk, which will look impressive.

## Planning and cutting

Measure the required length for the cloak from the back neck. This measurement is the only one needed, and it can be adjusted to fit the cloth. For outdoor wear, make sure it is well clear of the ground. A good firm cloth needs no hem allowance as the curved edge can be left raw.

Lay out the unfolded cloth – the floor may be better than a table for this. Using tape measure and pins, mark the shape on the cloth. Chalk a final outline before cutting. Cut the lining like the outer layer.

Fig 3 shows a half-circle cloak, with a pieced hem for a cloak wider than the cloth. Fig 4 shows various neck styles.

Use the same planning method for larger cloaks.

For a three-quarter circle cloak plan a half-circle, as for Fig 3, and add two gores at the front, starting from the neck cut-out. Sew the gores with their bias edges to the selvages of the cloak.

For a full circle cloak, cut two half-circles with a join at the centre back. If your material has firm woven selvages these can be oversewn together to make the back seam (*Methods*, Fig 1). Make the radius of the neck cut-out about 10 cm.

Letters indicate joining points.

For abbreviations and symbols see p. 10.

1



2

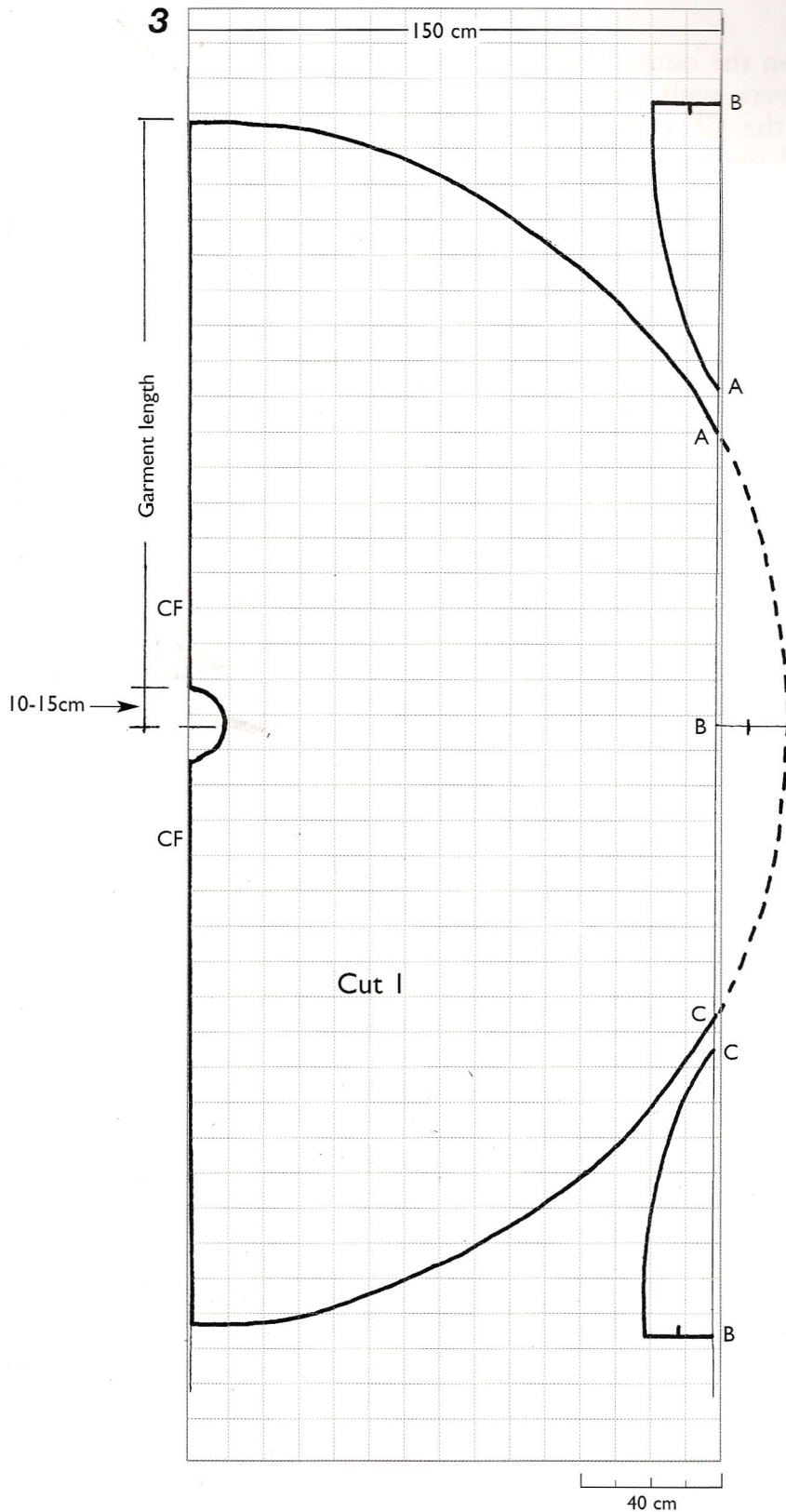


## 1. 1370-80, English

Cloak fastened on the right shoulder. The bulk round the neck is probably a hood. Possibly a mourner's cloak, which was ample, ankle length and always hooded. Cut from at least a three-quarter circle. (Mourner, tomb of Edward III, Westminster Abbey, London)

## 2. 1455, English

Ceremonial mantle worn by ladies from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century on. Corners on the front neck edges support the two brooch-like bosses, whose shanks are pushed through eyelets and the elaborate cord is threaded through the shanks. (Brass to Isabel Manfield, spinster, Taplow church, Buckinghamshire).



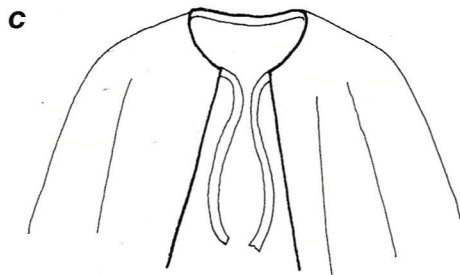
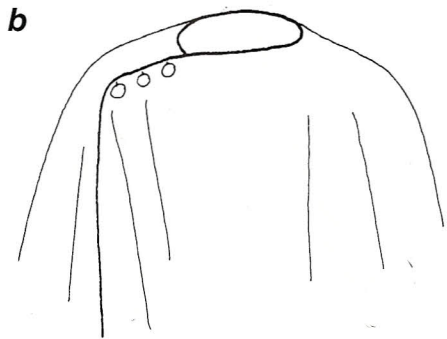
### 3. Basic half-circle cloak – pattern and layout

Lay out the cloth in a single layer, here shown on 150 cm wide cloth. Along one selvedge measure the Garment length, plus 10-15 cm for the neck, and mark the centre of the neck. From here measure out radially to mark the neck and hem curves, first with pins and then with chalk.

If the cloak length is greater than the width of the cloth, the back can be pieced as shown. Mark and cut the main part, then use the off-cuts to make the piecings, joining them selvedge to selvedge.

### Making up

Make up any piecings on the outer fabric and lining. Lay the two layers with wrong sides together, starting from the CF edges, pinning and tacking them round the neck. Turn in the edges on the CF and oversew or stab-stitch them together (*Methods*, Pl 1). Finish the neck in the chosen manner (Fig 4).



On the curved outer edge you can leave the lining loose. Woollen lining can be left raw, and trimmed shorter than the outer fabric. Silk or other light fabrics will need hemming. The lining may 'drop' below the outer edge as the garment stretches in wear, so trim if necessary.

### 4. Cloak necklines and fastenings

**a. Fastening for a ceremonial mantle.** You will need two metal bosses, like large shanked metal buttons, and heavy silk cord and tassels such as an old-fashioned dressing-gown cord, or a fancy curtain tie-back. Push the shanks of the bosses through eyelets made in the garment (*Methods*, Fig 16), put split rings or wire loops through the bosses and thread the cord through them.

**b. This men's style, from c.1350,** is suitable for three-quarter circle cloaks or larger. You will need three large buttons, self fabric or metal. These are fastened on the wearer's right shoulder (*Methods*, Figs 19-21).

**c. Simple neck finish** using the ends for fastening. Use a straight strip of cloth (spare selvedge is excellent), stitch it round the inside neck edge and leave the ends hanging as ties. The cloak neckline is often hidden by the cape of the hood.