



Martin Cizuk

New clothes for the Gunnister Man

In 1951 a body of a man was found during peat digging in a peat bog at Gunnister, Shetland Islands, Great Britain. Only hair, finger nails and almost dissolved bones was preserved from the body, but the clothing was very well preserved. The man had been wearing a shirt, breeches, coat and a jacket made from wool fabrics. His stockings, gloves, 2 caps and a small purse were knitted from woolen yarn. In the purse there was a silk ribbon and coins from the end of the 17th century AD, two Dutch and one Swedish of 1683, which date the find. The objects were transferred to Edinburgh, where parts of the costume have been on display in the National Museum of Scotland. Following a partnership agreement between Shetland Amenity Trust and National Museums Scotland in 2008, detailed studies were undertaken on all of the artifacts with a view to making a full set of replicas to coincide with the loan of the original Gunnister finds to the Shetland Museum and Archives this year.

Carol Christiansen at the Museum in Lerwick was responsible for the reconstruction of the costume. She did the selection of the right kind of wool from sheep on Shetlands. She conducts the production of the knitted garments and has done spinning and knitting. Lena Hammarlund, craftsman and textile researcher in Gothenburg, Sweden, was given the task to spin the yarn, hand weave and full the wool fabrics. Martin Cizuk, PhD-student at The School of Textiles, University of Borås, Sweden, has done the cutting and hand sewing of the garments. The success of the project is a result of a close cooperation between participants having different competences, deep knowledge of craft, and experience from the reconstruction of historical and archaeological textiles.

Many months of work were spent on the reconstruction of the Gunnister Man's suit. The project started with thorough studies and documentation at the museum in Edinburgh. Next step was the practical work: The wool was sorted, washed, carded or combed and spun. Several weaving, knitting, fulling and sewing samples were produced before the reconstruction of the clothes could start. All operations were carried out as close to the originals as possible.

On September 12, 2009, an exhibition opened at the Shetland Museum and Archives in Lerwick, where both the original findings and the reproductions are displayed. The publication is forthcoming.

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