

# 1575 AD Irish Leine and Overdress

Leine is of yellow linen.

Middle layer of under skirt made of gray linen.

Outer dress with fitted bodice and open front skirt made of blue linen.

Hair is up in a bun.

Head coverings for married women included the kerch or kerchief.

Shoes were hide currans or turn shoes worn with stockings.

Accessories include a belt, and pouch.

Jewelry consisted of torcs, bracelets, earrings, and rings.

I am wearing an airsaid, a woolen plaid, since I am Scots.



## GENERAL NOTES

Much of the information in this section came from Kass McGann's wonderful website. She is listed in the library of links at [www.caitlinsclothing.com/links](http://www.caitlinsclothing.com/links) .

In the Middle Ages, Ireland was the hinterland, the desolate island to which monks migrated to get away from the evils of the world. It was not a center of fashion or commerce. Even in remote Ireland, the clothing of other peoples influenced fashions. The léine (other historic spellings include léne, léinidh, lénni, léni, lenid, and the plural lénti) is the basic, linen unisex garb of the Celts, and was often worn under other clothes. Those with big, baggy sleeves date from the 1500s and later. They were similar to extant Italian and French houppelandes of the previous century. From stone effigies in Ireland, we know that at least the Anglo-Irish ladies of the 15th century wore the houppelande. Léinte in the 16th century were reputedly made with 25-35 ells of linen. The Irish seem to have modified the continental style to suit their own tastes. The pendulous and bagpipe sleeves were also an element of early 15th century Continental dress. The 16th century léine was a continuation of this trend.

Women wore the léine to ankle length. At home, in private, the léine was worn alone. The longer the length of the léine, the higher the wearer's status. A léine with a lot of fabric meant that the wearer could afford the fabric, and did little manual labor. Most léine were yellow and are referred to as the "saffron shirts". In their efforts against the Irish, the English imposed laws stating the maximum number of yards that could be used.

Over the léine was worn under skirts. The under skirt was made of linen or wool. It was full and gathered into a waistband. It was generally of ankle length. Multiple layers of skirts could be worn for warmth.

The outer layer of clothing was the overdress. It was also usually made of wool. The clothes greatly resemble many of the woolen gowns depicted on the Continent in the 15th century. It consisted of an un-boned bodice and skirt attached along a straight waist seam. The skirt is made of trapezoidal pieces of cloth sewn together and is gathered onto the bodice.

The bodice has side seams that slant backwards at an angle from the underarm to the lower back. There is a small standing collar that is only about 6" long and about 1" wide. It is anchored to the inside of the back piece by a larger piece of fabric to stabilize it. It does not wrap around to the sides or front of the neck.

The sleeves are of a uniquely Irish style. They are open at the bottom. The sleeves are only six inches wide and the length of the wearer's arm. The sleeves are fastened at the wrist edge with hooks and eyes.

It is not clear, but it appears that sometimes the dress was designed to not close completely and leave the léine exposed. There are lacing loops along the edges of the front bodice to allow for lacing.

Hair and head coverings are very hard to document. Unmarried girls wore their hair down and loose. It appears that perhaps for married women the hair was braided and wrapped around the head or gathered into a bun. Over this was worn the kertch. This is an article of the finest linen. It was usually 36 inches square, folded into a triangle and worn pinned to the hair, with the points tapering down the back. A simple cap or coif known as a mutch was also worn, sometimes under the kertch. Another style of hat that was depicted by Lucas De Heere in 1575 was a type of rolled hat. It looks like a roll of fabric tape that is then placed on the head over a short veil.

Women were often described as going barefoot. Otherwise, they wore the same shoes as men, the hide currans, or turn shoes, with stockings.

Accessories consisted of a belt with a hanging pouch.

When jewelry was worn it consisted of torcs, penanular brooches, bracelets, rings, and earrings.

The Book of Kells seems to indicate embroidery or woven borders at the neck, wrists, and hems. The embroidery could go from the chest to the knee in some cases. Léine may also have been striped.

Typical fabric colors worn at this time were bright. The léine is usually described as being gel, or bright which indicates pale yellow or light-colored linen. The over dresses were dyed yellow, indigo, red-orange, green, blue, red, and purple. The typical materials for clothing were linen and nettle cloth or hemp cloth, especially for the léine. These fabrics are incredibly durable, and wear very well. Outer dresses might also be made of wool.

# LÉINE

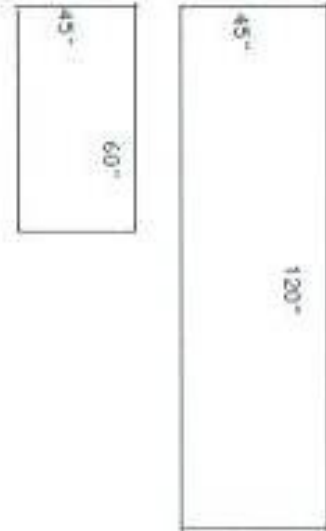
## TO MAKE THE LÉINE PATTERN

You will need a length of fabric twice as long as measurement 1. Cut this piece in half from selvedge to selvedge.

Plus, for the sleeves, you will need two lengths of material as wide as measurement 2 and at least as long as measurement 1. This will give you sleeves that hang down at least half way to the hem of your léine. I am 5' 8" tall and it takes 5 yards of fabric.

## MEASUREMENTS

- \_\_\_\_\_ Nape of neck to ankle + 1"
- \_\_\_\_\_ Arm length with bent elbow
- \_\_\_\_\_ Armseye measurement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wrist measurement / 2
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neck to shoulder measurement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Neck measurement + 1"



## LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS

### Step 1

Make pattern using directions above.

### Step 2

Cut out front and back body piece all in one.

### Step 3

Cut out two sleeves.

## CONSTRUCTION NOTES

### General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

## SEWING DIRECTIONS - LÉINE

### Step 1

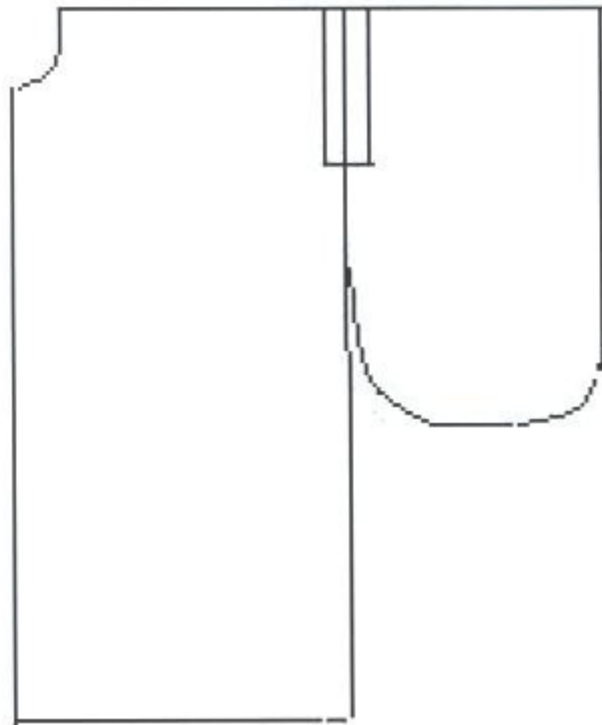
Press a crease in the center of the body fabric. Open out the fabric. Make a keyhole neck opening where the creases cross. See the "Geometric Construction of a Tunic" section for directions on how to make a keyhole facing if you don't know how.

### Step 2

With right sides together, stitch sleeve pieces to the front piece on both sides, from the top of the shoulder down to 1/2 of the armseye measurement. Stitch two sleeve pieces to the back piece in the same way. Press seams open.

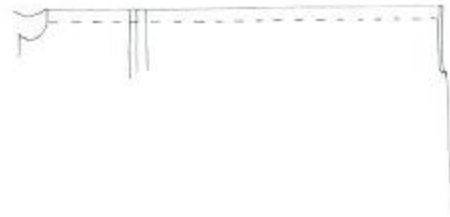
### Step 3

Hem the sleeve opening (2x the wrist measurement) at the wrist edge by turning 1/2 seam allowance under to the wrong side twice and top stitching. Repeat for each sleeve



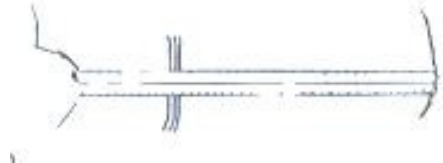
#### Step 4

With right sides together, match armseye seam and pin at that point. Pin the rest of the shoulder and sleeve top seam to neckline and out to edges. Stitch the seam from the neck to the outer edge with a 3/4" seam allowance. Repeat for other side and press seam open



#### Step 5

Fold 1/4" of the shoulder seam allowance under and press. Stitch this casing as close to the outer edges as possible on both sides of the original seam. Repeat for the other sleeve.



#### Step 6

Cut a 40" piece of cording for each sleeve. Thread the cord through the casing beginning from the sleeve edge. Pull some of the cording out the end at the neck edge. Insert cording back into the channel and work back down to the wrist edge. Even out the drawstring. Tie knots in each end of the cord string.



#### Step 7

Put on the léine as you would wear it normally. The shoulders will be large and droopy. Get a friend to help you gather this excess shoulder material by pulling the shoulder portion of the gathered seam up until the armseye seam hits the edge of your shoulder. Pin at that point. Repeat



#### Step 8

Lay the léine out flat and stitch across the casing at the pinned point on each seam. This holds the body pleating in the correct position, and lets the sleeve gathering be adjusted.

#### Step 9

Fold the léine together in half, right sides facing. From the top seam of one of the sleeves, measure in a distance of two times the wrist measurement. Starting here, stitch the front and back together, down along the sleeve, (you may wish to round off the seam along the bottom inside of the sleeve and trim off the excess) then down along the side of the léine. Repeat for the other side.

#### Step 10

Hem the léine.

## UNDER SKIRT and OVERDRESS

### PATTERN - OVER DRESS TO MAKE THE BODICE PATTERN

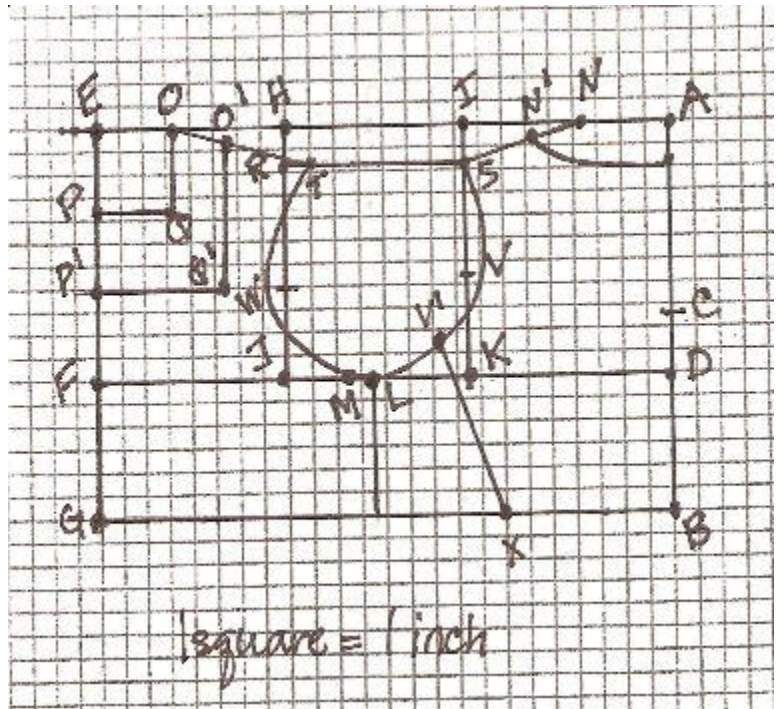
The following is used with the permission of Master Jose Felipe Francisco - Un Sastre de Madrid. It is a method of drafting using a system of drafting known as "Old Thirds."

#### Step 1

Start with a basic pattern block. See "Draft a Basic Pattern Block" for directions. To the basic pattern block make the following changes:

#### Step 2

B to X =  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the half-waist (note that when measured, the waist should have had ease included.) Women may also swing point B up by two finger widths for a better fit at the center back, but be sure that sufficient ease has been added to allow the chest to fit well. Also need to raise the shoulder slope; otherwise the shoulders will not fit well.



#### Step 3

F to Y =  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the half-waist measurement

#### Step 4

V<sup>1</sup> = top of the side back seam; three finger widths down from V.

#### Step 5

Connect X to V<sup>1</sup>. Measure the line and label its length on the parchment tape.

#### Step 6

Connect Y to V<sup>1</sup> making sure it is equal to line XV<sup>1</sup> and gently curve the line. For women it is necessary to curve this line twice; in on the lower half, and out on the

upper half of line XV<sup>1</sup>. This helps to shape the hollow that forms in this area when the bust is lifted with support garments.

#### Step 7

Connect Z to Y with a curved line. Point Y must be 90 degrees.

#### Step 8

Connect X to B with a slightly curved line. Make the curve 1/2 finger width up from B and 1/2 finger width down from X. Point X must be 90 degrees.

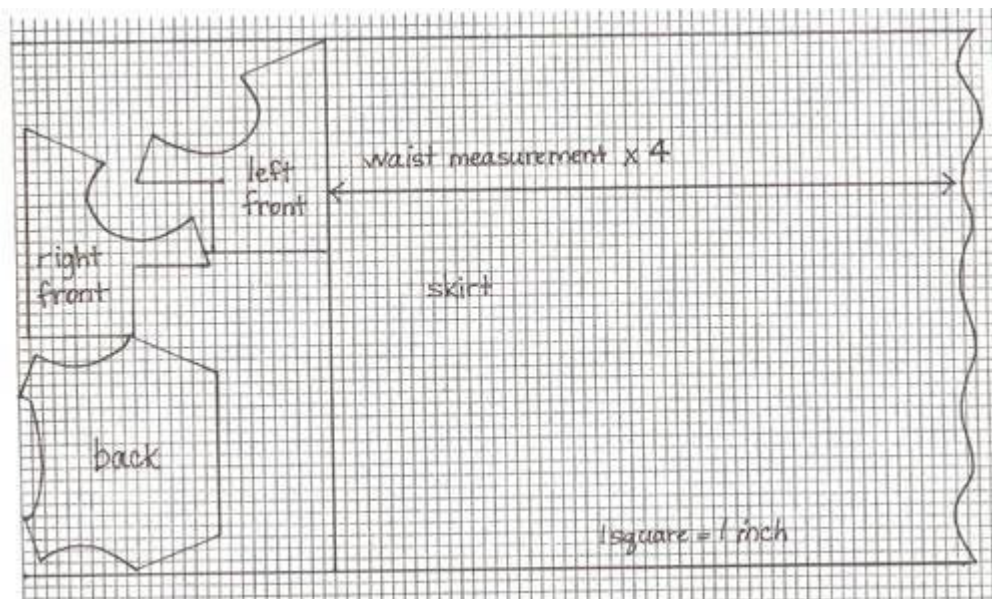
#### Step 9

To create the lower back of the bodice, mark B<sup>1</sup> at two fingers down from A. Move N three finger widths toward U. Mark this N<sup>1</sup>. Connect B<sup>1</sup> to N<sup>1</sup> with a gentle curve.

#### Step 10

To create the low squared neckline of the bodice, measure down from P the distance to desired depth of the neckline and mark it P<sup>1</sup>. Move O three finger widths toward R. Mark this O<sup>1</sup>. Square this line to match the OQ line. If the style calls for it, raise the center front of the bodice top in a curve.

## LAYOUT AND CUTTING DETAILS OVER DRESS LAYOUT



#### Step 1

Make pattern using directions above.

### Step 2

Cut out front and back bodice pieces along length of grain of fabric.

### Step 3

Repeat step 2 using canvas.

### Step 4

Repeat step 2 using lining fabric.

### Step 5

Measure from waist to floor and add 2" to measurement. Cut panels of skirt material straight across, from selvage to selvage, at that measurement. Cut at least four panels. The more panels the fuller the skirt.

## CONSTRUCTION NOTES

### General Sewing Tips:

1. It is very important to pre-shrink all fabric and trim. Treat the fabric as you would after the garment is complete.
2. All seams are to have 1/2" seam allowances.
3. Zigzag all edges to prevent raveling.
4. Backstitch 1/4" at the beginning and end of each seam to keep seam from coming out.
5. Pin pieces of fabric being sewn together before sewing to keep fabric from slipping and edges together while sewing.
6. Always put "right" sides of fabric together when sewing.
7. Mark "wrong" sides of material if necessary with a chalk pencil or soap as pieces are cut out.

## SEWING DIRECTIONS

### UNDER SKIRT

#### Step 1

Sew skirt panels, right sides together along selvages until you have two equal pieces. Sew the two large pieces together, leaving a gap of about 5" at the top to allow for the side opening.

### Step 2

Pleat the skirt into the bodice. Divide the total width of the skirt by 4, and then divide the bodice into 4 parts. Pin the skirt fourths to the bodice fourths so you know how much skirt material must be pleated into each bodice part. Divide the number of inches in the skirt width by the number of inches in the bottom seam of the bodice. No matter how you do it, pleating comes down to a matter of patience, trial and error.

### Step 3

Machine sew the pleats into place. Be careful to sew them to the bodice fabric only and not to the lining fabric. Trim seam to 1/4".

### Step 4

Press seam selvage up into the bodice. Turn under edge of bodice lining and hand sew to skirt seam, securing bodice to skirt and finishing bodice.

### Step 5

Hem bottom of skirt.

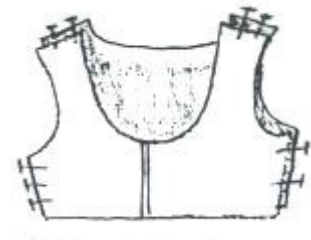
## OVER DRESS

### Step 1

Baste canvas to wrong side of fashion fabric.

### Step 2

With right sides of fashion fabric together, sew front and back shoulder seams, and side seams.



### Step 3

Repeat step 3 with lining fabric.

### Step 4

With right sides together, sew lining to bodice on each side of the front. **Do Not Sew Up Armholes.** Trim seams to 1/4" and snip corners.

### Step 5

Turn wrong sides together and press along seam line.

### Step 6

Machine sew a line 1/2" from both of the front edges. This provides a casing for the boning.

### Step 7

Using the casing line as a guide, place buttonholes about 1" apart down both sides of the side openings. Make sure they are offset.

### Step 8

Slide boning into casing along front seams.

### Step 9

Armhole Finishing - Turn both bodice lining fabric to inside and pin around armhole. You may need to clip the curve so it lies properly. Hand sew lining to bodice using small, hidden stitches.

