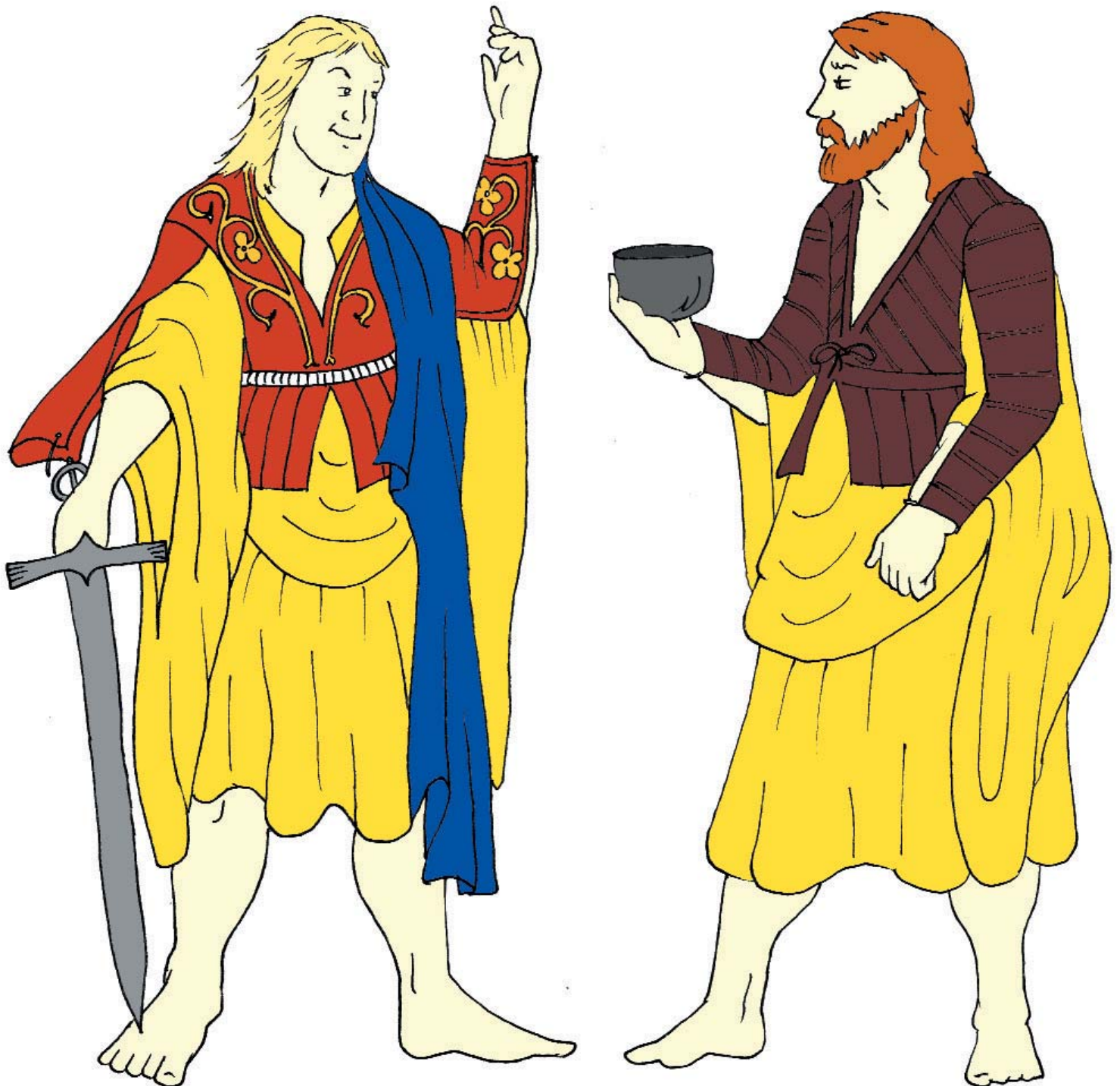


Men's Léine or Saffron Shirt



The Man's Léine

The man's léine in the 16th century is a confusing piece of clothing. It bears more resemblance to a Japanese kimono than to any Western European garment of the time period. Even the name *léine* is confusing.

Léine (pronounced LAY-nah) is the Irish word for shirt. In the ancient tales that were first written down in the 6th through 10th centuries, léine referred to a kind of tunic, sometimes without sleeves, sometimes with a large collar or hood. Today the word léine can mean anything from a T-shirt to a tuxedo shirt to an Irish speaker. It is a very non-specific term much like the Japanese term "kimono" which only means "thing to wear". "Léine" truly just means "shirt".

In the 16th century, the word léine came to be associated with voluminous smocks with pendulous sleeves. The word is used by English, French, and other writers, none of them native Irish. Therefore, we don't know what the Irish called this garment, and we take it as given that they called it a léine. However, that's not to say that they didn't call many garments by that same name.

Matter of fact, the pictorial evidence argues in favour of more than one garment being called a léine, or at least that there were regional differences. De Heere's illustrations and the "After the Quick" print greatly resemble each other. But Derricke's engravings show a different view. Where De Heere's kern wore voluminous ankle-length shirts, bloused to knee-length with long, pendulous sleeves that leave the lower arm bare, Derricke's engravings show narrower shirts that don't reach past mid-thigh with waist-length bag sleeves that stop at the wrist.

Upon closer inspection, we see that these two garments do not contradict each other but are rather variations on a theme. Perhaps the Ulstermen Derricke observed had a penchant for showing off their thighs (much like their Scottish cousins). And the Leinstermen De Heere drew preferred bare forearms and sleeves that flopped around their calves. Both are obviously ostentatious display, a trait for which the kern were renowned. The léine in this pattern is based upon the illustrations of Lucas De Heere and the After the Quick print.

The colour of léinte is another point of controversy. Often the foreign writers referred to the bright yellow dye used for these shirts and labeled them "saffron shirts" or "léine croich" in the native tongue. Whether the Irish themselves ever used this terminology is a mystery since we have no native accounts of the clothing of this period.

It has been posited that the Irish dyed their shirts with a native plant or lichen that produced a bright yellow dye and that saffron was not used at all. It has also been argued that Ireland traded heavily with Spain and saffron may have been even more available there than in England or that a native version of saffron grew in Ireland. Regardless of whether the yellow dye was from real saffron or not, the surviving illustrations invariably show the garment yellow. This may not indicate the statistical norm. There may have been far more white léinte than yellow. But seeing a yellow shirt was unusual for the English and other foreign writers, so these are the descriptions that come down to us today.

Many of these writers stated that the saffron shirt was a sign of high rank. However the number of yellow léine depicted make this statement unlikely. It is probably an assumption of an English writer convinced that such an expensive dye must have rank significance. This association of saffron with chieftain status has never been definitively proven.

Let us move now to the contemporary mentions of the man's léine:

The first mention of a saffron shirt comes from John Major's 1521 History of Britain and actually refers to the habit of the Highland Scots.

"A medio crure ad pedem caligas non habent, chlamyde pro veste superiore et camisa croco tincta, amiciuntur..."¹

"From the middle of the shin to the foot they do not have boots, they wrap a chlamys [Greek military cloak] around themselves in place of an upper garment and a shirt colored with saffron..."
- Latin translation by Abigail Weiner

All this tells us is that they were wearing a shirt dyed with saffron (*camisa croco tincta*). We will have to look further to discern what that shirt looked like.

The first picture in our study also dates to 1521 and is by renowned artist Albrecht Dürer. It is called by its caption "Here Go the Peasants in Ireland." Being that Dürer never visited Ireland, it is thought that he drew Irish pilgrims in the Low Countries where he was during that year. Why he calls them "peasants" or why they carry weapons is unknown. They could not have been Henry VIII's Irish troops since they did not leave England until 1541.



In this picture, much of what the men are wearing is covered by other garments. It appears that all the men are wearing knee-length tunics and are barelegged. However, the colour of the original indicates that none of these tunics are saffron-dyed.

Mairead Dunlevy in her book *Dress in Ireland* suggests that these are wool garments. They appear tan, light blue and brown. The jackets the younger men wear may be an early form of ionar. There is no indication of long, pendulous sleeves or yellow colour.

The first documentary evidence of the shape and character of the léine is a letter from Henry VIII to the town of Galway, 28 April, 1536:

Item, that no man, woman, or child, do wear in their shirts or smocks, or any other garments, no saffron, nor have any more cloth in their shirts or smocks, but 5 standard ells of that country cloth.²

An ell in England has been interpreted as around a yard and a quarter of cloth⁽³⁾. However, the width of an ell of linen may have been only 20"-27". Therefore, the léine was restricted to about 8 modern yards in length. Extrapolating to a modern fabric width of 57"-60", this would mean 2 2/3 yards to 4 yards in modern terms. This is the same amount used to make a common man's shirt in this period.

In a letter to Henry VIII's minister, Thomas Cromwell, dated 10 July, 1539, a Mr. Allen wrote:

...and that Art Oge O'Toole had sent to Gerald before Christmas a saffron shirte dressed with silke, and a mantell of English cloth fringed with silke.

An act of Henry VIII forbade any person in Ireland after 1 May, 1539 to dress their hair in the Irish fashion or to:

...weare any shirt, smock, kerchor, bendel [band or ribbon], neckerchour, moeket [bib or handkerchief], or linnen cappe coloured, or dyed with Saffron, be yet to use, or weare in any of their shirts or smocks above seven yards of cloth to be measured according to the King's Standard, and that also no woman use or weare any kirtell, or cote tucked up, or imbroydered or garnished with silke, or courched [overlaid, embroidered] ne layd with usker [usgar Irish for jewels], after the Irish fashion, and that no person or persons, of what estate, condition or degree they be, shall use, or weare any mantles, cote, or hood, made after the Irish fashion. ⁴

It seems that this cloth restriction was deemed too harsh for all classes of society. An Act of Parliament at Dublin in 1541⁵ limited the amount of linen cloth to be worn in the shirts of various classes thusly:

Noblemen	20 cubits (about 10 yards ⁽³⁾)
Vassal or horseman	18 cubits (9yds)
Kerne (turbarius) or Scot	16 cubits (8yds)
Groom, messenger or other servant of lords	12 cubits (6yds)
Husbandman or labourer	10 cubits (5yds)

The first pictorial evidence we have for the man's léine is from a print in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England. The picture is labeled "Irish Chieftains." No other copy exists and nothing is known about its origin. From other evidence it appears to have been drawn in the reign of Henry VIII. Some have conjectured that it depicts some of Henry's Irish recruits for his war with France in 1544. The details of this print are carefully drawn. A note on the border of the drawing claims that it was drawn from life as opposed to from memory (it is labeled: "after the quick" meaning "from life").

The men depicted in this print (two of which are reproduced here) are all wearing long tunics with wide hanging sleeves and short, elaborately decorated jackets (ionar). Some wear mantles (brat). All carry swords. All are similarly bare-legged and bare-footed. They represent Irish kern (catharnach) or non-professional infantry soldiers of the Tudor period. The tunics appear to be pulled up to knee-length and "bloused" over a belt. This would afford more freedom of movement to the legs. Additionally, even when the arms are down, the sleeve, though reaching the mid-calf in length, comes no lower down the arm than the elbow. This curious yet functional element will be seen again in later prints. Note that no gathers or pleats on the top of the arm are visible.





Chronologically next come prints by Lucas de Heere, a Dutch painter who lived in England from 1567 to 1577. His pictures are carefully drawn and provide good detail. Although he never visited Ireland, it is believed that he copied his figures from other documentary evidence that is no longer extant. For example, his kern seem to echo the poses and dress of the print in the Ashmolean Museum that was drawn from life by an unknown artist. Because of the similar level of detail in the women's clothing and how closely it resembles extant pieces, we can only assume that he had similar prints that have not surfaced.

His earliest print dates itself circa 1547; it is labeled "Irlandois et Irlandoise comme ils alloyent accoutreses dans au service de feu Roy Henry" (Irishmen and Irishwomen as they went attired in the reign of King Henry [VIII]). This illustration closely resembles the men in the print from the Ashmolean Museum. A metal gauntlet hangs from a lanyard around his neck. He holds a sword in its scabbard under his left arm and a dagger in its scabbard in his left hand. He is barefooted and bareheaded. Like the previous example, his tunic appears to be drawn up over a belt and pouched. It is also open in front, showing his upper chest. The sleeve ends almost reach his ankles yet the sleeves stop at the crook of the elbow. This time, the léine is clearly a yellow.

Jean de Beaugue, a French writer in his 1556 *L'histoire de la guerre d'Écosse* writes of the Scottish habit ten years later:

"Ils sont nuz fors que de leurs chemises taintes et de certaines couvertures legeres faites de laine, de plusieurs couleurs."

"They are nude except for their dyed shirts and certain light blankets made of wool of several colours."

This sounds very similar to what de Heere shows us.

William Good, a Jesuit missionary to Ireland and schoolmaster in Limerick, in 1566, wrote an account of Ireland which is incorporated in *Camden's Britannia*:

They generally go bare-headed save when they wear a head-piece, having a long head of haire, with curled Gleeves, which they highly value and take it hainously if one twitch or pull them. They wear linnen shifts, very large, with sleeves down to their knees, which they generally dye with saffron. They have woollen jackets, but very short; plain breeches close to their thighs; and over these they cast their mantles or shag-rugs, which Isidore seems to call Heteromallae, fring'd with an agreeable mixture of colours, in which they wrap themselves up and sleep upon the bare ground.

In the early 1950s, a set of six black and white prints of Irishmen and -women were found in the Cabinet des Estampes in the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. This collection, the "Recueil Herbier Ob. 14", was a number of engravings of men and women in their native dress. The book is believed to have been printed in Antwerp in 1570. Further details are not known.

The pictures are simple line drawings that match de Heere's and the After the Quick illustration almost exactly. Even the posed are largely the same. However, one of the six shows something different. One of the pictures labeled "Irdlandois armé en guerre" (Irishman armed in war) shows a léine *not* bloused over a belt. This is the only extant picture of one worn in this fashion. It reaches the ankles and is bell shaped. If this picture is reliable, it gives us much information on the shape and cut of the léine.



The next chronological evidence does not add significantly to our understanding of the léine shape and cut. It is a 1571 ordinance proclaimed at Limerick by Sir John Perot, President of Munster, which stated:

The inhabitants of cities and corporate towns shall wear no matles...irish coats, or great shirts, nor suffer their hair to grow glib, but to wear clerk's gowns, jackets, jerkins, and some civil garments...

The Highland Scots seem to have been following the same fashions. In 1573 Lindsay of Piscottie wrote of them:

"They be cloathed with ane mantle, with ane schirt saffroned after the Irish manner, going barelegged to the knee."

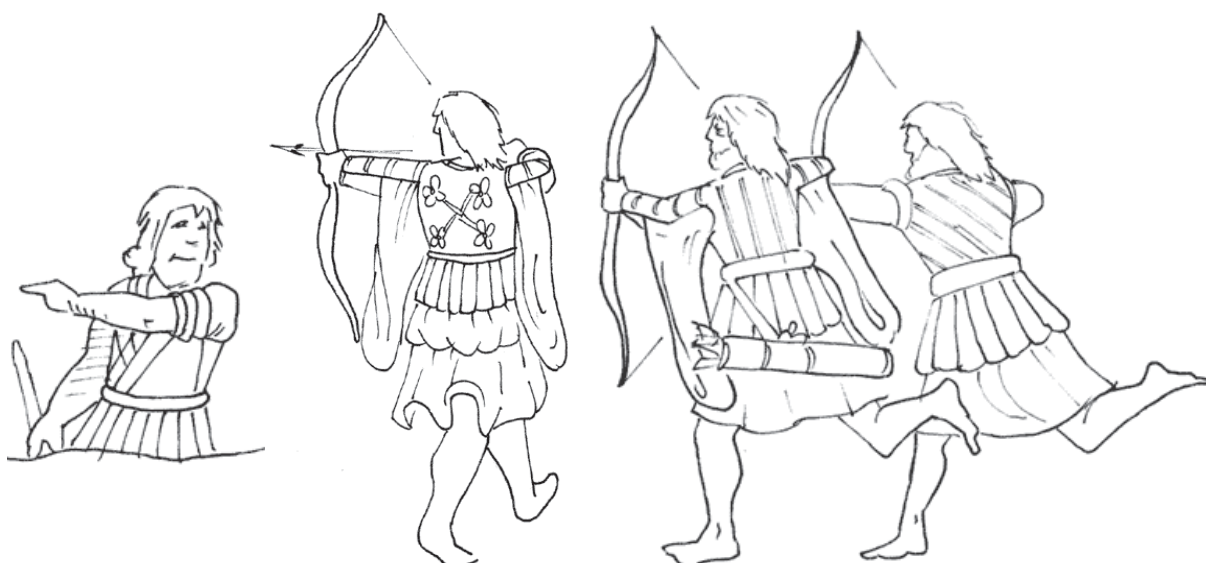


The next source is again de Heere prints. These date from 1575, but were likely based on early sixteenth century originals. They are drawn with more confidence. Perhaps the source works de Heere used were clearer. One of the men is reproduced at left. The same full man's tunic with pendulous sleeves and striped jacket is shown. The sleeves touch the calves in length but stop at the elbow in width. No gathering is evident on the sleeves.

An engraving in the first edition of Holinshed's Chronicle (published 1577) shows léine-clad Scots bow-hunting deer in the mountains (reproduced below). They wear the same elaborately decorated, short, leather jacket over long, full tunics. The tunics are obviously bloused over a belt. The sleeves dangle to the knees or calves, but do not come any lower on the arm than the elbow joint. This representation of hunters clearly demonstrates the reason for the sleeve

construction. The sleeves do not appear to hinder the bowman in any way. Neither do they appear to encumber the kern in the earlier prints. This was the Irish/Scottish way of making a fashion statement (and a statement of wealth as well) while not sacrificing functionality.

A curious variation appears if the figures are observed closely. The bowman at far right does not appear to have sleeves at all. At first this might be considered a mistake by the engraver. But the guide shown elsewhere in the picture (at far left in the illustrations below) also appears to have tight sleeves that are pushed well above his elbow and no hanging sleeves on his ionar. It is possible that these are Scottish only variations, but there is no evidence to prove or disprove this idea. Unfortunately, this is the only extant depiction of this anomaly.



For further information on the Highland Scots of this period, we turn to Bishop Lesley who in 1578 wrote:

"Vestes ad necessitatem (erant enim ad bellum in primis accommodatae) non ad ornatum faciebant...Reliqua vero vestimenta erant, brevis ex lana tunicella, manicis inferius apertis, uti expeditius cum vellent jacula torquerent, ac foemoralia simplissima indusia conficiebant, multis sinibus, largioribusque manicis foris ad genua usque negligentius fluentia. Haec potentiores croco alii autem adipe quodam, quo ab omni sorde diutius manerent integra illinebant: assuefacere enim se perperetuis castrotum sudoribus consultissimum putabant. In his conficiendis, ornatus aut artis omnino cura non videbatur neglecta, sequidem silo serico, viridi potissimum aut rubro, indusiorum singulas partes articiossime continuabant."

"Their clothing was made for use (being chiefly suited for war) and not for ornament...The rest of their garments consisted of a short woolen jacket, with the sleeves open below for the convenience of throwing their darts, and a covering for the thighs of the simplest kind, more for decency than for show or defence against the cold. They also made of linen very large shirts, with numerous folds and wide sleeves, which flowed abroad loosely to their knees. These, the rich coloured with saffron and others smeared with some grease to preserve them longer clean among the toils and exercises of a camp, which they held it of highest consequence to practice continually. In the manufacture of these, ornament and a certain attention to taste were not altogether neglected, and they joined the different parts of their shirts very neatly with silk thread, chiefly of a red or green colour."

Edmund Campion, another Jesuit, visited Ireland from 1569 to 1571. In a History of Ireland, printed in *Holinshed's Chronicles* in 1587, he says:

Linnen shirts the rich doe weare for wantonnesse and bravery, with wide hanging sleeves, playted; thirty yards are little enough for them. They have now left their saffron...

Despite this statement, we continue to hear about saffroned shirts.

About the same time as the Holinshed's engravings were being published, John Derricke was traveling in Ireland with Sir Henry Sidney and his son, Sir Philip. Not much is known of Derricke, but it is believed that he was indebted to Sidney for a cushy job at the customs house in Drogheda. His *Images of Ireland*, dedicated to Sidney and his son, was written in 1578, the year he left Drogheda, and published in 1581. The woodcuts were made after he left Ireland, presumably by an English artist to whom the outfits were described. The Englishmen are rendered well in these woodcuts, but less care is taken with the Irish forms. Nevertheless, these are our earliest first-hand accounts of Irish dress.

Derricke describes the shirts of the "Karne" in verse:

...the Karne
With writhed glibbes like wicked Sprits
With visage rough and stearne.
With sculles upon their poules
Instead of civil Cappes:
With speares in hand and swords by sides
to beare off after clappes,
With jackettes long and large
whiche shroude simplicitie:
Though spiteful dartes which their do beare
importe iniquitie.
Their shirts be verie straunge,
not reaching past the thie:
With pleates on pleates thei pleated are
as thicke as pleates maie lye.
Whose sleeves hang trailing doune
almoste unto the Shoe:
And with a Mantell commonlie,
the Irish Karne doe goe.
Now some emongest the reste
doe use an other weede:
A coat I meane of strange device,
which fancie first did breede,
His skirtes be very shorte
with pleate set thicke about
And Irish trouzes more to put
their strange protractours out.
Loe Lordynges here the draught
set out in open vewe:
For by instructions I am taught
false forgyneges to eschewe.



Though poorly drawn, Derricke's engravings show men's outfit similar to the ones we have seen already. The subject of the most carefully drawn of them is a courier delivering a message to an English lord (left). "Runners" were also members of Irish armies and would be dressed similarly to soldiers. The courier appears to be wearing close-fitting pants and shoes with his léine and ionar. In this illustration, one can see the "skirt" of the ionar laying over the lower half of the léine. In others of Derricke's engravings (below right), this skirt is depicted as a ruff, resembling a ballerina's "tu-tu". Despite the Osprey series' imitation of this fashion in its book on the Irish Wars, this ridiculous style never existed. Derricke was in Ireland — not his engraver. The engraver may have interpreted the Derricke's descriptions using shapes that were familiar to him.

Since the ruff was a common sight in the late 16th century, it is not surprising that he used this form to depict the frilled skirt of the Irish kern's jacket which he had never seen.

Derricke's engravings also do not coincide with his own descriptions of the kern. In his verse, he says that the léine sleeves "hang trailing doune almoste unto the Shoe." Yet not a single engraving of kern in his book show léine sleeves this long.

Also, the intent of Derricke's book was to make the Irish look as foolish (and therefore, in need of conquest) as possible. Derricke had a great deal of bias against the Irish and portrayed them badly on purpose to achieve political career gains. His engravings of the Irish are poorly made while the English are perfectly portrayed. This may also have been due to a lack of understanding on the part of the engraver. Sometimes his pictures even show the physically impossible, indicating that his engraver didn't understand what he was describing.



It has been put forward by McClintock and others that Derricke was simply depicting a Northern style. There are a number of reasons why this idea is erroneous. First of all, we don't know who was portrayed in the After the Quick illustration, de Heere's prints or the Recueil Herber examples. McClintock calls them Leinstermen, but this is purely conjecture. They could just have easily been from Munster, Connacht or the North. Also this postulate is contradicted by the engravings of Scotsmen in *Hollinshed's Chronicle*. Why would Ulstermen wear something different both from the South and Scotland? If anything, it would be expected that the Scots dressed more similarly to the Northern Irish since a strong relationship has existed between those groups dating back to the sixth century and continuing even today.

Moving on to another source who was also in Ireland at this time, but equally biased: Edmund Spencer, the poet, went to Ireland with Sir Henry Sidney in 1577 where he served in several political offices until the sack of Kilcolman during the Tyrone Rebellion around 1598. In 1596 he wrote a lengthy dialogue called *A View on the State of Ireland*, published in 1633. Unfortunately, it amounts to nothing more than a tirade on what is wrong with the Irish and how they "stole" all their devices from the Scythians, Spanish or English. It is to the Spanish he attributes the léine and says:

From them, also, I think, came saffron shirts and smocks, which were devised by them in those hot countries where saffron is very common and rife, for avoiding that evil which cometh by much sweating and long wearing of linen.

The also makes mention of a "quilted leather jack" worn by horsemen which he compares to a "player's painted coat". This may be the description of the ionar.

As late as 1592, the *History of the Gordons* mentions a "yellow warr coat" worn by the Scottish Highlander which sounds not unlike a léine:

...cloathed in a yellow warr coat (which amongst them is the badge of the Chieftaines or heads of Clans)...

Nicolay D'Arfeville writes about the Scots in *La navigation du Roi d'Écosse Jacques Cinquiesme du nom, autour de son royaume, etc.* (1593):

Ceux qui habitent la partie Meridional du Mont Grampius sont assez civils et traictables, et parlent le langage Anglois; mais ceux qui sont septrionaux sont plus rudes, agrestes et fascheux, (et) pour cette raison sont appelez sauvages. Ils portent comme les Irlandois une grande et ample chemise saffranée, et par dessus un habit long jusques aux genoux, de grosse laine a mode d'une soutane.

Those who inhabit the part South of Mour Grampi are civil enough and tractable, and speak the English language; but those who are Northerners are more rude,....., and for this reason they are called savages. Like the Irish, they wear a large and full saffroned shirt and below, a long garment to their knees, of thick wool in the manner of a "soutane".

To decrypt D'Arfeville's meaning, we can look to a similar quote from Fynes Moryson, secretary to the Lord Deputy of Ireland. A voluminous account of his travels is published in *An Itinerary*. In 1600 he writes:

The men wear long and large shirts, coloured with saffron, a preservation against lice, they being seldom or never washed.

...their linnen is course and slovenly. I say slovenly because they seldom put off a shirt till it be worne: and these shirts in our memory before the last Rebellion were made of some 20 or 30 elles, folded in wrinkles, and coloured with saffron to avoid lousinesce, incident to the wearing of foul linnen.

Ireland yields much flax, which the inhabitants work into yarne and export the same in great quantity. And of old they had such plenty linnen cloth, as the Wild Irish used to weare 30 or 40 Elles in a shirt, al gathered and wrinkled and washed in saffron, because they never put them off till they were worne out.

Martin's *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* published in 1703 states:

The first Habit worn by Persons of Distinction in the Islands was the 'Leni-Croich,' form the Irish word 'Leni,' which signifies a Shirt, and 'Croch' Saffron, because their shirt was dyed with that Herb. The ordinary number of Ells us'd to make this Robe was twenty-four; it was the upper Garb reaching below the knees; and was tied with a Belt round the middle; but the Islanders have laid it aside about 100 years ago.

This indicates that the saffron shirt was still being worn by the Highland Scots in the early 17th century. However since this account is written one hundred years after the fact, it cannot be relied upon as an accurate source.

However the sidebar notes on Speede's Map of Ireland from 1610 confirm Martin's *Description*:

The men wore linnen shirts, exceedingly large, stained with saffron, the sleeves wide and hanging to their knees, strait and short trusses (jackets) pleated thicke in the skirts, their breeches close to the thighs; a short skeine hanging point down before, and a mantle most times cast over their heads.

Luke Gernon's 1620 *Discourse of Ireland* describes Irishmen in great detail, but makes no mention of saffron shirts or linen great smocks. It is possible that it had gone out of use by this time.

Boullaye le Gouz was in Ireland less than two months in 1644 during the Parliamentary Wars. He visited towns in Leinster and Munster, but never went north of Dublin, so his tales of the North are heresay. However, he gives an indication that the saffron shirt had completely disappeared:

Those whom the English call 'Wild Irish' have for head-dress a small blue cap which stands up in front about two finger widths and, behind covers their ears and head. Their jacket has a long body and four skirts [in French 'basques.' This presumably means that the jacket had a skirt slit at the hips as well as behind] and their breeches are a pantaloon of white frieze which they call 'trews.' Their shoes, which they call 'brogues,' are pointed, with a single sole...For a mantle they have five or six ells of frieze which they wrap around the neck, the body and the head, for they never quit this mantle to sleep, to work or to eat. Most of them have no shirts...The Irish in the North have for clothing nothing but a pair of breeches, and a blanket on their back, without cap, shoes or stockings.

To summarize, it appears that the saffron shirt or léine crioch was a voluminous ankle-length linen shirt with pendulous sleeves that reached the knee or calf. Often dyed yellow and worn bloused over a belt, foreign writers assumed the colour was the mark of chieftains, but it is not known if this was true or an assumption on the basis of the expense of saffron with which they believed it to be dyed. The léine was most commonly worn with a short decorated jacket (ionar) and a woolen mantle (brat). The wearer usually went barelegged but trews were sometimes worn underneath it. The first mention of a saffron-coloured shirt appears in 1521 and the last in 1610. It is possible that the léine had smaller sleeves before the 1540s.

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2. Dunlevy, Mairead. Dress in Ireland. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1989
3. McClintock, Henry Foster. Old Irish and Highland Dress. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press, 1943.
4. Henry Foster McClintock. Handbook on the Traditional Old Irish Dress. Dundalk: Dundalgan Press., 1958.

Notes

1. From John Major's History of Britain, 1521, as quoted in McClintock.
2. From Maxwell's Irish History from Contemporary Sources, page 366, as quoted in McClintock.
3. "The clothing is a sort of frieze, of about twenty inches broad, whereof two foot, called a bandle, is worth from 3½ d to 18d. Of this seventeen bandles makes a man's suit and twelve make a cloak." Sir W. Petty's Political Anatomy of Ireland, chapter XII. A bandle is about half an ell, according to Luke Gernon, who wrote extensively about Ireland in 1620.
4. From a Collection of all the Statutes of in use in the Kingdom of Ireland, Dublin 1678.
5. Calendar of Carew MSS, 1515-1574, Vol. 1, page 180-183.

Credits

Thanks to Robert P. Davis for the illustrations and Technical Edit.

Man's Léine Instructions

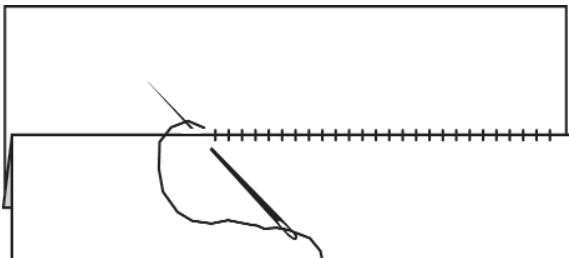
Please read all instructions before beginning. Reconstructing History Patterns are based on extant garments that often were not constructed like modern garments or costumes. As such, some of the assembly may seem counter-intuitive to experienced sewers. Therefore, reading the instructions thoroughly before cutting anything may avert problems.

Machine Sewing Your Léine

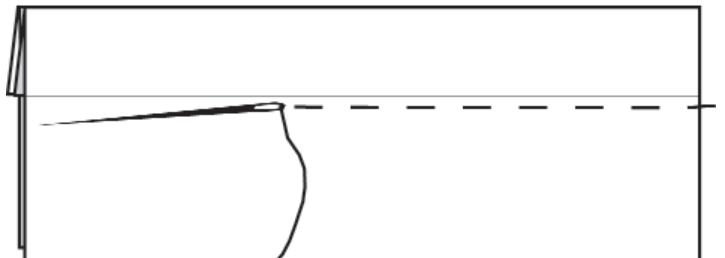
The men's Irish shirt known as the Léine was worn in Ireland in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. As such, it was entirely handsewn. This does not mean that you cannot sew a Léine on a sewing machine. Of course you can. These directions were written with the sewing machine user in mind. However since this pattern is based on historical garments that were not made in the same way we sew things today, some parts of the construction of the Léine may differ from other chemise patterns you have used in the past. Please read the directions carefully before you begin.

The léine in this pattern is largely based on the illustrations of Lucas de Heere, the engravings of Scots bow hunters in *Holinshed's Chronicle*, and the print in the Ashmolean Museum known as "After the Quick". It produces a voluminous ankle-length shirt that can be bloused over a belt to shorten it to the knees. From the evidence outlined in the historical notes, we believe this to be the most common appearance of the man's léine in the 16th and early 17th century.

No extant léinte survive, but french seams and flat-felled seams were used on shirts and shifts from the same period. These stitches work well on linen garments that are worn hard and washed often. If you are constructing the léine by machine, french seams are much easier to do. However, the simplest way is to french seam all the seams at once. Assemble the entire garment inside out (wrong sides facing wrong sides), and sew all the seams with a $\frac{1}{4}$ " seam allowance. Turn the garment so the inside faces out and complete the french seams.



Fell Stitch — used for hemming, finishing waistbands, sleeve linings, and collars. This is also the stitch used to finish flat-felled seams. Fold the raw edges of the top fabric under and make tiny, parallel stitches (similar to a whip stitch) along the edge of the fold, moving forward.



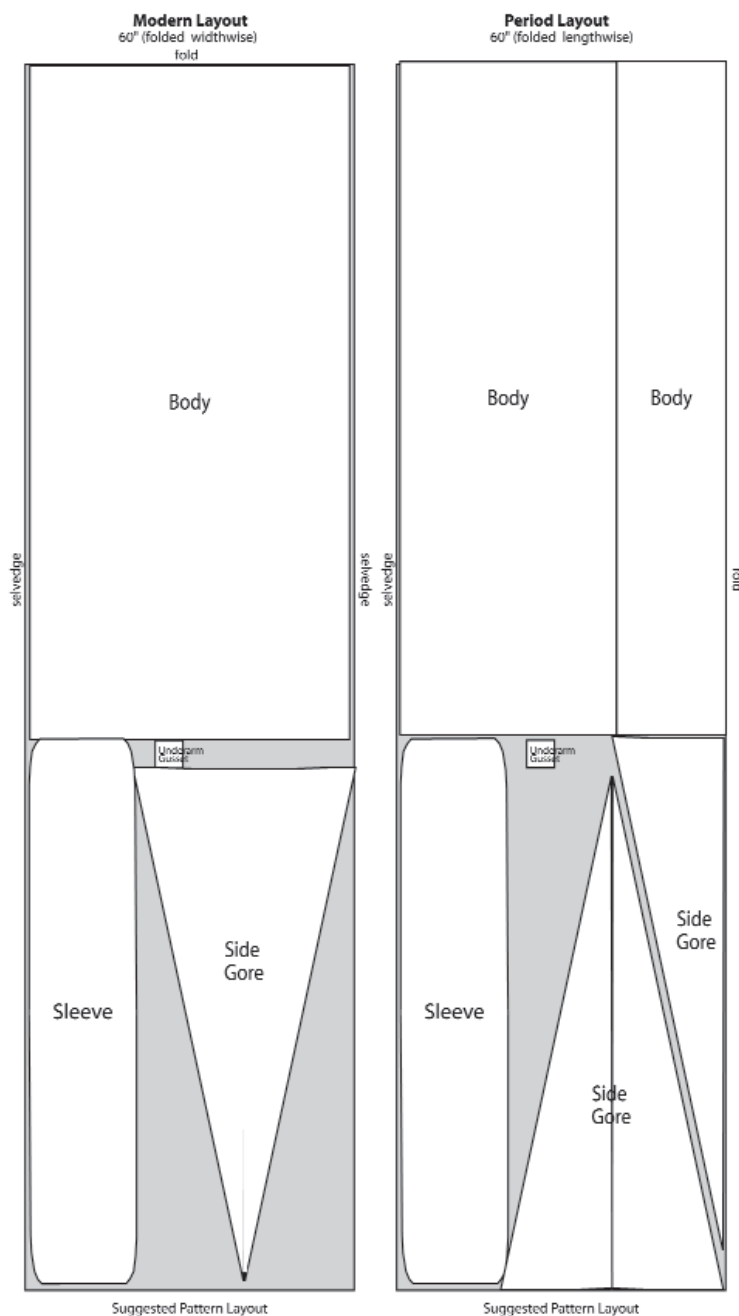
French Seam — used for seams prone to raveling. Sew the two pieces together, **wrong** sides to wrong side, with a running stitch $\frac{1}{4}$ " away from the edge. Turn the fabric inside out and press. On this side, make a running stitch below where you can feel the raw edge from the last step, effectively encapsulating the raw edges of the seam inside the seam.

Preparing Your Linen

Wash your linen well before constructing this léine. The garment requires linen with a great deal of drape. So before cutting, wash your fabric multiple times in hot water until the natural stiffness of the fabric is gone. If you wish to dye your léine after construction, make sure you use cotton or linen thread because poly or nylon will not take the dye.

Two versions of construction are given: **Period Widths** and **Modern Widths**. Before cutting, decide if you wish to imitate 16th century fabric widths or not. Using 16th century widths will add more seams, therefore making construction more time-consuming. However, if you are interested in “doing as they did”, using period widths can be very satisfying. Both Period Widths directions and Modern Widths directions can be performed with a sewing machine or by hand. The choice is yours.

If you wish to use Period Widths, follow the cutting diagram on the right. If you wish to use Modern Widths, follow the cutting diagram on the left. These layouts assume a linen width of close to 60” wide (as narrow as 57” will work with some tweaking). If your linen is much narrower than this, you will have to reposition the pattern pieces in a different way to make sure they fit.



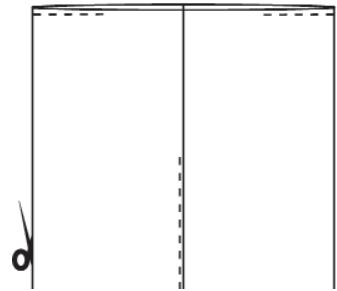
Body

Sizing

This pattern is sized to fit men up to six feet tall. If you are taller than six feet, add 2" to the Body piece length for every inch taller than six feet you are.

Period Widths

1. Cut three body pieces on both folds. Make sure you cut the pieces to the correct width AND length. The resulting pieces should measure 62" long by 20" wide.
2. Sew two of the pieces together along the long sides, stopping 11" from the top. This will be your neck opening.
3. Sew the third piece to the remaining long sides of the first two, forming a tube of linen. Sew these pieces all the way to the top.
4. Lay the linen tube flat with the neck opening on top and centered. Press it so that the sides are creased.
5. At the top, sew the two layers of the tube (the front and back of your garment) together, stopping 5" away from the center seam (the neck opening). This is your shoulder seam.
6. Slit the garment from bottom to top along the creases so you now have a front and back piece sewn together at the top.
7. Finish the neck opening with a small rolled hem.



For larger men

Cut four body pieces instead of three and follow the directions from step two. This means that you will not have to slit the sides open for the gores. Larger men may also want to make the neck opening lower. Simple snip the front slit until it is as low as you like it. Remember that it is easier to cut it lower than to fix it if it is cut too low.

Modern Widths

1. Cut two body pieces on both folds. Make sure you cut the pieces to the correct width AND length. The resulting pieces should measure 62" long by 30" wide.
2. Fold one of the body pieces in half lengthwise and make a slit from the top to a point 11" down the front of the piece. This will be your neck opening. Larger men may want to cut it slightly lower.
3. Lay the front piece and back piece on top of each other and line up the edges.
4. Sew the front piece to the back piece along the top edge, stopping 5" away from the neck opening.
5. Finish the neck opening with a small rolled hem.

Gores

This step is the same for modern and period fabric widths.

1. Cut two gores on the fold according to the pattern pieces.
2. Line up the bottom of the gore with the bottom of the front body piece and sew the gore to the front along the diagonal edge of the gore, stopping when you run out of gore.
3. Sew the other diagonal edge of the gore to the back in the same manner. Repeat for the other side of the body.

Sleeves

This step is the same for modern and period fabric widths.

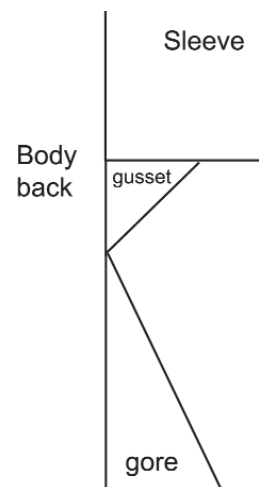
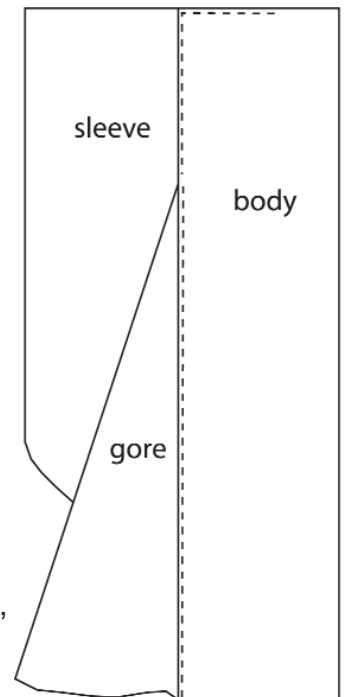
The length and width of men's léine sleeves vary in the different illustrations. Our pattern is for long, pendulous sleeves like those in De Heere's illustrations, Holinshed's woodcut of Scottish deer hunters, and the Irish kern in the "After the Quick" print. Our sleeves reach mid-calf in length, but barely cover the elbow in width. If you wish longer or shorter or wider sleeves, determine this before you cut the pattern pieces. ***If you wish longer or shorter or wider sleeves, you must determine this before you cut the pattern pieces.***

To Adjust Sleeve Length

Measure yourself from the nape of your neck across your shoulders and down your arm (slightly bent) to where you want your sleeve to end. Subtract 15" (half the Body piece width) from this number and cut your sleeve this wide. The pattern sleeves are 10" wide by 25" long and conform both to period linen widths and the size of léine sleeves in the period illustrations. But feel free to adjust them as you wish.

1. Cut two sleeves on the fold according to the pattern pieces. Sleeves can be made longer or shorter but should conform to the length of the sleeves in the period illustrations in the historical notes.
2. Fold the sleeve in half lengthwise and crease at the top. Align this crease to the shoulder seam on the body piece.
3. Sew one layer of the sleeve to the front body piece from the shoulder seam to the top of the gore. Repeat for the back.

Option: If you wish extra reinforcement, an underarm gusset can be inserted. Cut out two underarm gusset pattern pieces. Before sewing the sleeve to the body, sew one side of the underarm gusset to the sleeve at a point 7" down from the fold of the sleeve. Sew the sleeve and the gusset to the front of the body as if they were one. Fold the gusset in half diagonally and



sew the two remaining sides of the gusset to the back body piece and the back of the sleeve piece. This will provide an extra modicum of reinforcement at the arm.

5. Close the bottom of the sleeve by sewing front to back from the point where it attaches to the body (or gusset) to 12" down from the fold at the wrist opening.

The seam where the Sleeve meets the Body does not have to sit perfectly on the point of your shoulder. It is alright for it to sit partially down your arm. This gives the correct look and makes the garment easier to move in.

Finishing

Hem the wrist openings and bottom with a small roll hem.

Although it is not shown in Irish illustrations, the bottom and sides of the neck opening can be reinforced with gussets or stitching. Please see RH104, Shirts and Shifts, for directions.

To Wear a Léine

Period illustrations invariably show the léine bloused over a belt to knee length or higher. Put on your léine and a period-appropriate belt. Fasten the belt loosely so it sits on your hips rather than constricts your waist. Pull the léine up underneath the belt (as shown at right) until the bottom hem reaches your knees or higher if you so desire. Make sure the hem is straight and parallel to the ground. Fold this excess fabric neatly over the belt. Put on your lonar, cut your hair in a glib, grab your sword and go.

Embellishments

Period references to léinte mention seams adorned with silk. Bishop Lesley in particular wrote in 1578 that "they joined the different parts of their shirts very neatly with silk thread, chiefly of a red or green colour." See the historical notes for embellishment ideas.

There is no documentation to support embroidering Celtic knotwork animals and other motifs from the Book of Kells or other illuminated manuscripts on a léine. If you wish to construct a léine that is period appropriate, steer clear of these fantastical embellishments.

Credits

Thanks to Robert P. Davis for the illustrations and Technical Edit.



Men's Léine or Saffron Shirt

Included in Pattern:

Full size pattern for man's léine or saffron shirt with options for modern or 16th century fabric widths. Detailed instructions. Embellishment suggestions. Extensive historical notes.

Suggested Fabrics:

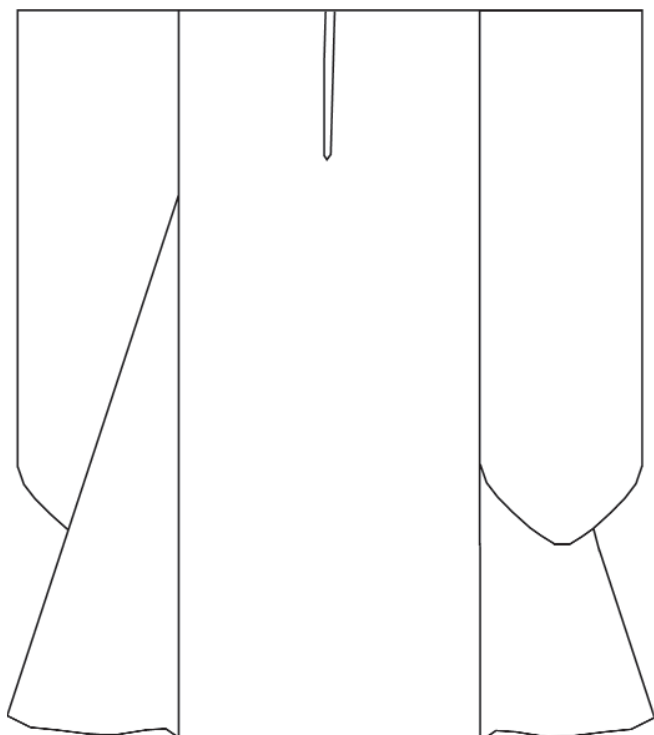
3-5oz linen, white, natural, half-bleached or yellow

Notions:

all: 40/2 linen thread or equivalent

Sizing: fits up to 55" chest with instructions to fit larger chests

Yardage Requirements: 4½ yards ~57" wide



Kass McGann is an historical clothing researcher specializing in Irish, Highland Scottish and Japanese medieval dress. For over a decade, she has studied extant garments in museums worldwide and made accurate replicas using only period-appropriate materials and handwork. She has given lectures all over the US and Ireland on studying and making replicas of historical clothing. She runs the website www.reconstructinghistory.com to educate the Internet public about historic clothing from all over the world.

She is an avid living historian and participates in reenactments of the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 20th centuries. She currently lives in Easton with her husband and two greyhounds.