The Details of English Fashions of the Sixteenth Century: Men's Clothing Examined by Decade

The shirt of the 1500s was full in the body, gathered into the neckline, sometimes with a narrow collar and sometimes into a scoop-neckline. The sleeves are unseen, but are probably either gathered into a small cuff or simply hemmed. Blackwork is not yet seen at the edges of men's shirts.

Breeches

Breeches of this decade continued to be the joined hose and codpiece of the fifteenth century.

Doublets and jerkins

Both doublets and jerkins are worn at this time. The doublet usually had a narrow standing collar, no more than 1" high, whereas the jerkin had a low, round neckline. Both had long skirts, extending to the knees, and both were simplify trimmed.

Sleeves

Sleeves are often difficult to see under the overgown, but appear to be of two common styles: either narrow but loose sleeves, or narrow to just above the elbow and full to the shoulder, possibly stuffed or padded to maintain a full shape. Sleeves usually matched the doublet or jerkin and were probably sewn into it.

Over garments

Finally, overgowns are seen in most portraits. These gowns fall either to mid-calf or to the ankles. They most often have very full, long sleeves, but occasionally, the sleeves are only elbow-length or are turned back over the elbows. The collar is turned back around the neck to reveal a different colored lining, which was sometimes fur.

The shirt of the 1510s remained very full in the body, but was gathered into a scoop neckline or a very narrow collar. The sleeves, when seen, now had a small ruffle at the wrist. When not seen, they likely had a narrow hemmed edge similar to that of the previous decade. Blackwork is not yet seen at the edges of men's shirts.

Breeches

Breeches remain difficult to see, however separate upper hose seem to have been introduced either during this decade or the following one. The illumination of Joseph and Potiphar's Wife (http://www.kimiko1.com/research-

16th/TudorMen/1510/JosephPotWifeD1.html), painted around 1515 in the Low Countries, shows a couple in varying states of undress. The man in the picture has separate upper hose of a different color than the lower hose, with a codpiece that matches the upper hose. Not enough of the breeches can be seen to determine if they were patterned more like braes or more like trunkhose of the later period, nor whether they were solid breeches or paned like later French hose. However, Henry VIII closely followed the fashions of the Continent, especially those of France, so it is likely that these separate upper hose were not long to be adopted in England as well.

Doublets and jerkins

The jerkin with a low square or round neckline and knee-length skirting continued to be worn. The doublet of the previous decade is seen less in portraiture of this decade. However, jerkins began to be decorated with embroidery or made of fine brocades.

Sleeves

Sleeves of this decade are not usually seen above the elbow as the sleeve of the overgown often covers them. In English portraiture, the under-sleeve was usually fairly narrow, but not tight, and typically matched the jerkin in color and trim.

Over garments

Finally, portraits show an overgown, usually as well decorated as the jerkin and with a fur collar, sometimes entirely lined in fur. The sleeves of the overgown were very full, but only covered the upper arms. A hanging sleeve is not usually visible in portraits, thus the gown sleeve likely ended at the elbow for most of this decade.

Images 1500s & 1510s



Henry VIII by an unknown artist, c.1509.

In this portrait, Henry is shown wearing a shirt with a scoop neckline, a jerkin, and a fur-lined overgown with full, long sleeves.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ec/Henry_VIII_%28reigned_1509-1547%29_by_English_School.jpg



Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, detail of a double wedding portrait attributed to Jan Gossaert, c. 1516.

The Duke is shown wearing a shirt gathered into a narrow collar, with ruffles at the wrists, an embroidered jerkin and matching sleeves, and a gold embroidered overgown with a fur collar.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/74/Mary_Tudor_and_Charles_Brandon2.jpg 4

Overview 1520s

Shirts, cuffs and collars

In the 1520s, the shirt was more typically gathered into a narrow collar of 1/2 to 1", often with blackwork around the collar and sometimes with a small ruffle of 1/4 to 1/2". The style of shirt gathered into a scoop neckline was now seen less often and the ruffles at the sleeves remained optional.

Breeches

Separate upper hose were now seen, coming to just above the knee. These breeches, called French hose, were paned and either lightly stuffed or not stuffed at all. The codpiece was still small.

Doublets and jerkins

Doublets were again seen in portraits with a small standing collar. Jerkins were seen with both square and round necklines. Doublets and jerkins were both made of fine brocades or decorated more heavily with embroidery of slashing.

Sleeves

Sleeves continued to be narrow but not tight, and usually matched the doublet or jerkin in color and decoration.

Over garments

The overgown continued to be worn in a style similar to the 1510s, but a second style of sleeve now appeared, slashed at the elbow so that the arm could come through it, with the bottom of the sleeve hanging behind the arm. Fur edgings or linings and fur collars remained popular.

Images 1520s



Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham by an unknown artist, 1520.

The Duke wears a brocade jerkin and a fur-lined overgown with slit sleeves that hang behind his arms.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/EdwardStafford.jpg



Detail of Sir Thomas Godsalve & his son John by Hans Holbein, 1528.

John wears a shirt gathered into a narrow, blackworked collar, a fur-lined doublet with matching sleeves, and an overgown with a fur collar and slit sleeves that hang behind his arms.

http://www.elizabethanportraits.com/ThomasGodsalve.jpg

The shirts of the 1530s were now typically gathered into a collar, which began to widen to an inch or more. Blackwork covered many of these collars and sometimes decorated the edges of the opening of the shirt as well. Small ruffles adorned the tops of many shirts, while larger ruffles at the wrists remained optional.

Breeches

French hose now rose to mid-thigh and were lightly stuffed. Codpieces began to be worn in larger sizes and were stuffed and decorated to match the doublet or jerkin and upper hose.

Doublets and jerkins

A combination of jerkins and doublets were now worn together. The jerkin now tapered into a U-shape in the front, extending down to the waist to show off the doublet beneath it. Skirting continued to be attached to the jerkin, but probably was not attached to the doublet beneath. The doublet, when worn beneath the jerkin, had either a standing collar of about 1" or a wide, boat neckline.

Alternatively, two doublets are often seen worn together. In this fashion, the under doublet was worn closed while the over doublet was worn open, usually to the waist. Both doublets had a small standing collar of about 1" and the over doublet had skirting, though the under doublet probably did not.

Sleeves

Sleeves continued to be worn narrow but not tight, but typically matched the under doublet in color and decoration rather than the over doublet or the jerkin.

Over garments

Finally, the overgown remained fairly unchanged, typically with full sleeves slit at the elbow for the arm to pass through and either edged or lined in fur.

Images 1530s



Henry VIII by Hans Holbein, c.1536.

The king is shown wearing a shirt with a high blackworked collar, an embroidered and slashed doublet worn over a matching jerkin with matching embroidered and slashed sleeves, and a fur-lined overgown.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6d/Hans_Holbein_d._J._049.jpg



Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk by Hans Holbein, 1539.

The duke is shown wearing a shirt with a high blackworked collar, a red doublet with matching sleeves worn under a fur-lined black doublet, and a fur-lined overgown.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a2/T homas_Howard%2C_third_Duke_of_Norfolk_by_Hans _Holbein_the_Younger.jpg 8

In the 1540s, the style of the shirt changed. Blackwork embroidery now decorated cuffs and collars as well as the ruffles at their edges, and was seen in the portraits of the courtiers more often than not. Ruffles were much larger and attached to both the collars and cuffs, extending as wide as 2". Alternatively, falling collars were introduced at this time. The falling collar was a wide collar folded over the collar of the doublet, graduating from less than an inch in the back to a point 2 to 3 inches over the collar in the front. Some falling collars, such as the one worn by Sir Thomas Gresham (http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/ThomasGresham.jpg), were decorated with blackwork embroidery, with tassels at the corners and ties at the throat.

Breeches

French hose were still worn from mid-thigh to knee-length, decorated to match the jerkin or doublet, and lightly stuffed. A codpiece of a larger size than earlier decades was also still worn, stuffed and decorated with slashings and embroidery.

Doublets and jerkins

As the decade progressed, the doublet had a standing collar more frequently than a boat-neck collar, and was worn less often with a jerkin. When worn with a jerkin, the skirtings were attached to the jerkin, when worn without, the skirtings were attached to the doublet. The skirtings began to shorten in this decade, often to mid-thigh, and were often attached straight at the waist, rather than pleated.

Sleeves

Sleeves continued to be worn narrow but not tight, but full, unstuffed sleeves were also introduced during the 1540s. Full sleeves were not usually slashed, but otherwise decorated like the narrower sleeves.

Over garments

The overgown continued to be worn as in previous decades, but as the decade progressed, the sleeves became less full and were no longer stuffed or boned.

Images 1540s



Unknown man by Hans Holbein, 1541.

This man is shown wearing the fashions of the earlier 1540s: a shirt with a high, blackworked collar with a small ruffle and plain cuffs, a pair of doublets with plain, full sleeves that match the underdoublet, and a fur-lined overgown.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/UnknownMan21.jpg



Edward VI by an unknown artist, c. 1546.

Edward is shown in the fashion of the later 1540s: a shirt with a small, plain ruffle at the cuffs and collar, kneelength paned breeches, a doublet worn alone, and an overgown with less full, unstuffed sleeves.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4f/Edward_VI_of_England_c._1546.jpg

Overview 1550s

Very few portraits exist from the 1550s in England, and even fewer exist of men. However, the following changes can still be seen in those portraits that exist.

Shirts, cuffs and collars

The ruffles at the wrists and collar continued to grow until they developed into a small ruff shape, such as that seen in the portrait of Gregory Fiennes (left). Collars and cuffs are now hidden by the outer garments, so their decoration can only be conjectured, but the edges Fiennes' ruffs are trimmed in gold work, suggesting the shirt is still decorated as well.

Breeches

French hose of the 1550s began to expand in width, becoming rounder in shape like those of the 1560s. Panes remained wide, but may have been gathered into the waist and leg bands as the lining beneath them was becoming less visible. The codpiece was still larger in size and continued to be heavily decorated as in previous decades.

Doublets and jerkins

The jerkin is rarely seen in this decade. In its place is the doublet with skirting that continued to shrink in width, showing off more of the breeches beneath. The skirting eventually split into tabs around the waist. The doublet collar grew in height across the decade so that the ruff of the shirt framed the face. The collar may have supported the ruff with a series of small tabs along its top edge, similar to those seen on Fiennes' sleeves.

Sleeves

Sleeves were again worn narrow, but now also began to appear tighter on the arm. Slashing, pinking and embroidery all decorated the sleeves. Small tabs at the wrist began to appear, often as added support for the ruffs worn at the wrists.

Over garments

The overgown continued to be worn, but the sleeves were increasingly replaced with half sleeves that were boned or stuffed so as to flare out away from the upper arm and taper back into the arm just above the elbow. During this decade, the Spanish brought the cape to England through King Phillip, but the gown continued to be preferred into the next decade.

Images 1550s



Sir Thomas Gresham by an unknown artist, c.1550.

Gresham still wears a shirt with loose, blackworked ruffles at the wrists, but he also wears a cape draped over his shoulders.

http://www.elizabethanportraits.com/ThomasGresham1.jpg



Detail of Mary Neville, Lady Dacre and her son Gregory by Hans Eworth, 1559.

Fiennes is shown in the style of the end of the decade. He is wearing a doublet with a high collar and tabs at the waist, slashed and decorated with rows of braid or lace, rounded breeches with a large codpiece, narrow, tight sleeves also slashed and decorated with rows of braid, and a fur-lined overgown with full, rounded half-sleeves, trimmed with fur and aglets.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/db/Mary_Nevill_a
nd_Gregory_Fiennes_Baron_Dacre.jpg
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While the shirt remains unseen for the rest of the century, it remained largely unchanged throughout, except to be decorated more and more heavily with blackwork embroidery. Falling collars are still seen, such as the collar from the portrait of William Brooke, Lord Cobham and his family, and usually embroidered with blackwork. Ties are still seen at the throat, though tassels at the corners of the collar are seen less often. Most portraits which show falling collars do not show the hands, making it difficult to establish if ruffles or ruffs were worn at the wrist when a falling collar was worn. On the other hand, portraits that show ruffs have ruffs at both the collar and wrists. Ruffs in the 1560s were usually 1 to 1 1/2" in width and either plain or trimmed along the edge with narrow white lace or a small edging of black embroidery. Starch was introduced in the middle of the decade, allowing ruffs to grow in size and shape throughout the following decades. However in the 1560s, the ruff continued to be relatively small and close to the face.

Breeches

French hose (breeches) were still worn to about the mid-thigh and lightly stuffed, with a round shape from waist to knee like a pumpkin (hence the modern term for them, "pumpkin-pants"). The panes were still wide, up to 4" wide, and were usually arranged so that the lining did not show between them. A codpiece was still worn, but it was beginning to shrink in size.

Doublets and jerkins

The doublet had now become very fitted, with a small point at the waist. When not covered with a cape or overgown, the shoulders are decorated like the waist, with small tabs of around 1" in depth or wide tabs or skirting of 3 to 4", sometimes with the small tabs attached at the edge as in the portrait of Anthony Browne, Viscount Montagu (left). During the 1560s, the jerkin reappeared, not made of the same cut and fit as the doublet, and similarly decorated at the shoulders and waist. The jerkin was most frequently slashed vertically from shoulder or mid-chest to nearly the waist, allowing the doublet beneath to show through. The tabs seen around the collar under the ruff became difficult to see as the ruffs flattened.

Sleeves

Sleeves were still worn mostly narrow and tight-fitting, most often pinked and slashed, paned, or banded in horizontal rows of trim. A second style of sleeve, looser around the upper arm but tapering in to the wrists, was also worn at this time. These tapering sleeves were usually worn loose or unstuffed. The tabs at the cuffs also become difficult to see.

Overview con't. & Images 1560s

Over garments

The overgown continued to be worn, either with the rounded half-sleeves or with tabs at the shoulders and sometimes with hanging sleeves that hang completely behind the arm. The later style was usually seen with a high, standing collar that flared out around the wearer. This second style of overgown may also have been a Dutch cape, a style of cape with sleeves, such as this cloak of Don Garzia de Medici (http://realmofvenus.renaissanceitaly.net/workbox/extmenclo3.htm). A variety of other cape styles were also worn at this time, the most popular being a simple half or three-quarters circle. Please see the website for more information about cape styles.



Detail of William Brooke, Lord Cobham and his family by an unknown artist, 1567.

The Baron is shown wearing a blackworked falling collar with ties at the throat.

http://www.elizabethanportraits.com/WilliamBrooke.jpg



An Unknown Man by Hans Eworth, 1567.

This man is shown wearing plain ruffs at the collar and wrists, with a doublet, pinked tapering sleeves, and an overgown or Dutch cloak with a high standing collar and hanging sleeves.

http://www.elizabethanportraits.com/UnknownMan16.jpg

Images con't. 1560s



Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montague, by Hans Eworth, c.1569.

The Viscount is shown wearing blackworked ruffs, a doublet with wide skirting edged in small tabs, a collar with tabs at the top, and a fur-trimmed overgown with rounded half sleeves trimmed in fur and aglets.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/02/Antho ny_Browne%2C_1st_Viscount_Montague_by_Hans_Ewort h.jpg



Thomas Wentworth, 2nd Baron Wentworth, by unknown artist, 1569.

The Baron is shown wearing ruffs with narrow lace at the edges, a light-colored slashed jerkin over a black or dark doublet, black breeches, and a black cape, probably only a half-circle.

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b8/Th omas_Wentworth%2C_2nd_Baron_Wentworth_from_NP G.jpg

The neck ruffs of the 1570s grew to be around 2" in height and 2 to 4" deep (away from the neck), while the wrist ruffs grew only slightly, to about 1 1/2" in width. As the ruffs grew in size, the figure eights of their folds grew as well. They continued to be worn plain or edged in lace or blackwork, but the width of the lace and blackwork began to expand as the decade passed. The portrait of Sir Edward Hoby and the portrait of Nicholas Hilliard both show the change in decorating ruffs. Falling collars, while still worn, were not nearly as popular as wearing a suit of ruffs.

Breeches

French hose also began to change in the 1570s. First, they rose in length, being now worn no longer than mid-thigh. Second, they changed shape, becoming more narrow at the waist and wider at the bottom. This would morph into a triangular or conical shape by the end of the decade. The panes began to narrow, usually being 2 to 3" wide, but still showed little or no lining. Very small codpieces were still worn, but they were now falling out of favor. Similarly, canions, tight fitting breeches that covered the gap between French hose and netherstocks, also began to appear, though they, too, were rare. Alternatively, Venetians began to be seen on the wealthy. Please see the website for more information about breeches styles.

Doublets and jerkins

Initially, the overall shape of the doublet remained the same, however, by the mid-1570s, men began padding the center of their doublets at the point, swelling out at the waist and tapering back in. This style was called "peascods," referring to the peapod shape it produced. Tabs at the shoulders and waist, when worn, were typically of the smaller variety, and tabs around the collar were still worn. Jerkins were again less frequently seen or were less distinguishable from the doublets.

Sleeves

Sleeves of the 1570s continued to either be narrow and fairly tight, or fuller in the upper arm and tapering into the wrist. However, the tapering sleeve of the 1570s began to be padded or stuffed. Tabs at the wrists were still worn.

Over garments

Fur-lined overgowns and various styles of capes were still worn, but over garments were less frequently seen in portraiture.

Images 1570s



Sir Edward Hoby by an unknown artist, 1577.

Hoby is shown wearing a ruff embroidered all over in blackwork.

http://www.elizabethanportraits.com/EdwardHoby1.jpg



Self-portrait by Nicholas Hilliard, 1577.

Hilliard is shown wearing a ruff with a wider lace edging.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/NicholasHilliard.jpg

Images con't. 1570s



Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester by an unknown artist, c.1575.

In this portrait, the Earl is shown wearing ruffs with narrow lace edging, a pinked doublet with small tabs, French hose with narrow panes that are beginning to take the more conical shape of the later 1570s, a very small codpiece, and an overgown or Dutch cape.

http://images.npg.org.uk/790_500/5/3/mw03853.jpg



Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester by an unknown artist, c.1575.

In this portrait, the Earl is shown wearing a finer suit of ruffs with lace edging, a pinked peascod doublet with small tabs at the shoulders, waist and collar, matching tapered sleeves with tabs at the wrists, matching French hose with narrow panes and the truly conical shape, and a very small codpiece.

In the 1580s, the neck ruff continued to flatten, narrow in width to about 1 to 1 1/2" in height, and widen in depth to extend out about 4 to 6" from the neck. This ruff was more of the plate-style ruff so commonly thought of when ruffs are mentioned. Men's ruffs were usually solid fabric, sometimes edged in lace or blackwork, but on rare occasions they were made solidly of needlework lace. The falling collar regained popularity, now heavily embroidered with black work and edged with lace or sometimes entirely made of lace, such as the collar on the first miniature of an unknown man below. As an alternative style, the falling collar could be stiffened and worn flaring out from the neck, such as this one worn by Sir Christopher Hatton. At the same time, wrist ruffs all but disappeared in the 1580s, being replaced by turn-back cuffs. These cuffs were decorated to match the ruff or falling collar.

Breeches

French hose continued to rise in length, most commonly worn very high on the thigh. Canions were most often seen, but occasionally French hose were worn with full-length hose beneath them, such as in the miniature of an unknown man (left).

Doublets and jerkins

In the 1580s, most doublets now demonstrated a narrow waist emphasized by the peascod-style padding and a longer point at the center front. The padding of the peascod double also became more pronounced. Doublets were frequently slashed and pinking, often in vertical or diagonal rows, and sometimes with horizontal bands of trim over it, such as seen worn by Sir Christopher Hatton (left). A design simulating woven ribbon was briefly popular at the end of the 1580s, such as that worn by the unknown man (left). Pickadills, or tabs, became very narrow or non-existent at the shoulders and about 1 1/2 to 3" in length at the waist. Jerkins were still rarely seen.

Sleeves

The narrow sleeves of the preceding two decades largely disappeared in this decade, being replaced instead by heavily padded sleeves. The tapered sleeve continued to be worn, but was now typically stuffed or padded into a fuller shape. Additionally, a wide sleeve, full at the top, widening to the elbow, and tapering to the sleeves, also stuffed or padded, was frequently worn.

Overview con't. & Images 1580s

Over garments

The narrow sleeves of the preceding two decades largely disappeared in this decade, being replaced instead by heavily padded sleeves. The tapered sleeve continued to be worn, but was now typically stuffed or padded into a fuller shape. Additionally, a wide sleeve, full at the top, widening to the elbow, and tapering to the sleeves, also stuffed or padded, was frequently worn. Over garments are seen more frequently in portraiture in the 1580s. Capes, of a variety of styles, are seen most often in portraits, but the occasionally fur-lined overgown, such as the one worn by Sir Christopher Hatton (left), are still sometimes seen, though usually by the older men of court.



Detail of Sir Christopher Hatton by an unknown artist, c.1585.

In this picture, Hatton is wearing a blackwork embroidered falling collar that has been stiffen and is worn standing up and flaring out away from the face.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/ChristopherHatton.jpg

Miniature of an Unknown Man by Nicholas Hilliard, 1588.

This man is shown wearing a falling collar and matching turn-back cuffs of lace.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/UnknownMan8.jpg

Images 1580s



Miniature of Sir Christopher Hatton by Nicholas Hilliard, 1588.

Hatton is shown wearing a stiffened falling collar trimmed in blackwork and narrow lace with matching turn-back cuffs, a peascod doublet with vertical slashings and horizontal bands of trim, matching wide sleeves and canions and coordinating French hose, and a fur-lined overgown. Note that the canions appear to be tucked into his netherstocks.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/ChristopherHatton1.jpg



Miniature of an Unknown Man by Nicholas Hilliard, 1588.

This man is shown wearing a plain, flat ruff with matching turn-back cuffs, a peascod doublet trimmed in the wovenribbon style with matching wide sleeves, coordinating French hose over full-length hose, and a plain cape.

http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/UnknownMan2.jpg

In the 1590s, ruffs became much less popular, overtaken by falling collars worn folded down over the doublet collar. When worn, ruffs often widened to about 2 to 4" in height, but narrowed in depth slightly, to about 4 to 6" from the neck. Ruffs, falling collars, and turn-back cuffs were commonly edged in lace or made entirely of lace, and blackwork embroidery became more rare.

Breeches

French hose continued to be worn very short, usually at or just above crotch level, and typically with canions worn under them. At the end of the decade and into the following, French hose began to lengthen to mid-thigh again.

Doublets and jerkins

The peasond style doublet began to fall out of favor in the 1590s. Doublets became somewhat looser, with a shorter point like in the 1560s. Jerkins began to be seen again, though not frequently. Pickadills, or tabs, remained narrow at the shoulders, but widened again at the waist to 3 to 5", and were often solid around the waist or split into very wide tabs.

Sleeves

Initially, sleeves were still very full and stuffed, but by the middle of the decade, sleeves became more narrow, though not as tight as the sleeves of the 1560s and 1570s, and were either lightly stuffed or not stuffed at all.

Over garments

Over garments are again seen less often, but are still seen on occasion, such as the cape draped around this unknown man.

Images 1590s



Miniature of an Unknown Man by Isaac Oliver, 1590.

This man is shown wearing a cape wrapped over his left should and under his right arm.

http://www.elizabethanportraits.com/UnknownMan13.jpg



The Browne Brothers by Isaac Oliver, 1598.

The brothers are shown wearing falling collars and turn-back cuffs edged in narrow lace, doublets with wide, split waist tabs and narrow shoulder tabs, plain, narrow sleeves, and French hose with canions.

(Not available as seen online. Black & white version available at http://www.elizabethan-portraits.com/BrowneBrothers.jpg)