

## The Coppergate sock

THL, Arina de Träntorp from Cynnabar

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The sock was described by Penelope Watson in an archaeological report published 1989 ("Textiles, Cordage and Raw Fibre from 16-22 Coppergate". Walton, Penelope. York Archeological Trust 1989). It was found in York and dated to the 10th century (Penelope Watson). The original is made with un-dyed wool, it is short, and has an edge done in wool dyed red with madder. It is described as either a short "shoe liner" with a red border, or a sock with a now lost sock leg in red. In Hansen's notation this stitch is known as a UU/OOO F2 technique(Carolyn Priest-Dormant).

Original sock, image from the museum webpage.



My socks



I have chosen to recreate the sock as a shoe liner, as it would fit a low shoe common at the time. There are additional finds from York where red has been used as an accent, so it is not impossible that the red rim is decorative. I also made a second sock to make a full pair, and they are made to fit my feet perfectly, while following the general shape of the Coppergate sock. The pictures of the Coppergate sock do not show exactly how the heel is done, and part of the heel is missing. I used the gradually declining heel, since it is a neat way to make a heel, and similar to how thumbs are added to mittens.

### **Material used for the reconstructions:**

I make my own needles for needle binding, except for a bone needle I bought several years ago, which is my favorite for very tight bindings. I prefer flat needles for the looser and more flexible techniques, since the shape of the needles stops the binding from getting too tight. My home made needles are made from oak, ash, lilac and bog pine. Lilac because it is a very soft wood when fresh, but dries to a very hard wood. Bog pine is pine wood that has been dyed red by being buried in the peat.

The yarn I used for the reconstruction of the Coppergate sock is yarn I spun myself from Swedish pälsfår wool. This is a breed developed from the European short tail sheep, which was common in Europe during early middle ages. The short tail sheep had both kemp and wool, like the Iceland sheep and the Norwegian spelsau, with the kemp being dark, long and shiny, and the wool light/white colored, shorter and more crimped. The Swedish pälsfår has only one fiber, which is more like kemp than wool, being curled rather than crimped, shiny, strong and evenly gray. It would be a good choice for a shoe liner, since the kemp is stronger than the wool, and will still keep your feet warm. For the rim I used a bought yarn which was color checked against madder dyed wool to ensure an accurate reconstruction. For more information about my wool and medieval wool, see my wool documentation.

#### Book references:

"Textiles, Cordage and Raw Fibre from 16-22 Coppergate". Walton, Penelope. York Archeological Trust 1989.

Medieval garments reconstructed, Norse clothing patterns. Lilli Franzen, Anna Nørgaard, Else Østergård. Aarhus University Press. 2010. A very good garment reconstruction book that has some very valuable insights in the actual making of the fabric and the wool qualities available to the people in Greenland.

"Primitive Scandinavian textiles, in knotless netting". Odd Nordland, Oslo university press. A somewhat old book with a lot of sound facts, but his theory of the needle binding technique is faulty, since he did not have access to the more accurate dating of the Åsle mitten.

#### Website sources:

Nålebinding Techniques in the Viking Age, 2001 Carolyn Priest-Dorman

<http://www.cs.vassar.edu/~capriest/nalebind.html>

This is a very good general overview of several needle binding stitches, it is made by a fellow scadian, and it is from this page I got the Hansen and the Hald classifications of the stitches. She has a nice bibliography for further reading.

Sources for the nomenclature- these books are part of Carolyn Priest-Dorman's excellent biography, and should be mentioned in full, as the source of the information I could get from her web page.

"Textiles, Cordage and Raw Fibre from 16-22 Coppergate". Walton, Penelope. York Archeological Trust 1989.

"Nålebinding: definition and description." *Textiles in Northern Archaeology: NESAT III Textile Symposium in York 6-9 May 1987*, Hansen, Egon H. ed. Penelope Walton and John P. Wild, pp. 21-27. London: Archetype Publications, 1990.