

Time Warp Textiles

The Historic Cloth Co-operative.

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Newsletter No. 7c

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These short newsletters are designed to fulfil two main purposes. Firstly; to briefly explain to those who don't already know the basic idea behind what Time Warp Textiles is and what it does. Secondly; to keep people up to date with current projects, any surplus fabric we may have available directly for sale from stock, along with mentioning textiles some of our members are hoping to put into production in the future.

The days of making reproduction historic clothes or costume from gaudily coloured nylon or polyester are hopefully long gone, and claiming something to be "authentic" simply because it's made of wool is no longer enough for many. To be truly accurate requires a good understanding of the archaeology and history of early textiles, and using all the available evidence to replicate types of cloth specific to different periods or places.

With a professional background in museum conservation/restoration, and having worked alongside two of the country's leading archaeological textile specialists I was unhappy to use any old remnant of fabric when it came to making reproduction clothing for myself or customers. Consequently I began looking into the practicalities of commissioning the production of accurately replicated period cloth made to my own demanding specifications. In many cases this meant working with primitive/minority breed farmers to obtain period type fleeces, different spinners capable of replicating period types of warp and weft yarn, natural dye studios capable of colouring with madder, weld, woad etc, and using specialist weavers to turn this yarn into cloth produced to the correct patterns of weaving and thread counts.

As other museums, theatrical costumiers and historical re-enactors I knew heard about this work, the numbers wanting to be involved in my project increased sufficiently to drive down average production costs to reasonable levels. A first trial project in the year 2008 raised a couple of thousand pounds from about two dozen participants proving the viability of the scheme. Out of the success and interest generated by this first project a second project quickly followed and Time Warp Textiles was created enabling us to offer a reproduction cloth weaving co-operative for a wide range of people involved with making replica historical clothing.

So how does a co-operative scheme differ from simply buying over the counter? Well, although we often have the last few yards of each previous production run for sale directly from stock, (current details are given later in this newsletter) what we produce is mainly bespoke by request, so you aren't restricted to choosing from a limited catalogue. If we don't have what you want in stock we discuss the costs and practicalities involved in producing it, and let others know what you'd like to see produced. If/when we have enough people interested in producing a selection of similar types of fabric to put together a financially viable project, then we commission our next batch of cloth. As production is paid for in advance by the participants of the co-operative we have minimal overheads, and relatively modest amounts of left over stock tying up our own capital. Consequently we can enable individuals to join together to each commission lengths of bespoke replica cloth that wouldn't otherwise have been economic for them to produce solely for their own needs.



The time taken to produce any particular order depends, to a large degree, upon generating enough interest in any type of cloth to make up an economically viable size of project. However, if you are ordering several dozen garments worth of cloth, either acting on behalf of many members within a large re-enactment society, or commercially as a producer or retailer of period costumes, your order may be large enough on its own. Alternatively, you could pay higher prices per yard to put a smaller or less popular project straight into production. Payment will only be collected once enough people have expressed an interest to make the next batch of cloth viable, so you won't be paying out years in advance only to find nothing is happening with your money. Only having collected in all the necessary money from each participant will the order then be confirmed with the suppliers.

Though my own area of expertise is in Early Medieval textiles, by using the knowledge of the whole co-operative we have produced woollen cloth suitable for periods ranging from Pre-Roman through to Tudor/Stuart. These have ranged from simple tabby weaves to complex rayed cloths and warp/weft faced broken twills, from narrow woven wingas (Saxon puttees) to broad-cloth widths and the selection continues to grow with every new participant who joins the co-operative. To date we have replicated more than two thousand five hundred yards of cloth in several dozen variations of hue, width, weave and finish, produced for private individuals across Europe, Australia and America, re-enactment societies, museums, academic establishments, along with Oscar/BAFTA winning TV, film and theatrical costumiers. A modest selection of these reproduction textiles can be seen in the commissions gallery on my web site.



Prices vary depending upon the complexity of the specific cloth you require, but also on the total length of any single type of cloth to be commissioned by all participating members of the co-operative. However, when we say our prices are competitive we genuinely mean this. This level of historical accuracy doesn't come cheap but compare our prices to anybody bespoke weaving anything vaguely comparable. Our prices would typically start upwards of £10/yd (single width) for replicating the simplest types of fabric. If you could be flexible and make use of a variety of types of cloth then let us know. We can offer small discounts to those happy simply to make up the quantities on other people's orders, rather than requesting something specific. The greater the quantity or variety of cloth you will take, the bigger the discount we may be able to offer.

A Boring bit of grey cloth?

To some yes, but look more closely. The colouration is purely natural, from un-dyed wool representative of the vast majority of early textiles. The yarn is a mixed blend of minority/primitive breed fleeces used to get a more historically correct distribution of fibre types from the soft and fine to the coarse and "kempy". The warp yarn has been "Z" spun, the weft yarn has been "S" spun. The sett of the weave has been regulated to around 20epi/18ppi and the cloth woven as a non-reversed 2-2 twill. So, whilst it may just look like a boring bit of grey cloth to some, to those who care or understand, it is a highly accurate recreation of a 10th century commonplace textile



The cost? Well as mentioned earlier, the price per yard to re-create this "museum grade" of replica cloth again would depend upon the total length of cloth in another order. However, with many people participating in our very first project it cost all involved just under £10/ yd (single width). Whilst inflation and the passage of time has pushed up prices, this is indicative of the prices we try to achieve by combining several small orders into one larger, more economic project and typical of our attention to detail when researching period textiles.

If any of the above sounds of interest to you then please get in touch. If you are unsure of what you need for a particular period we may be able to offer advice and could possibly help from fabric we already have in stock. If you are looking for something specific let us have as much information as you can and we'll discuss how we could best go about producing it for you.

Current News

Progress reports on our most recent and ongoing projects.

It is perhaps a sad reflection of modern society that it should be viewed as good customer service when people simply deliver what they agree to and do so on time and on budget. However after a couple of years of problems with being let down by previous suppliers, I have to say I've been pleased with my new producers.

Of the approx 250yds of cloth produced as trials this summer, the assorted basic diamond twill fabrics pretty much sold out immediately, and there's been a steady uptake of the russets. I've every intention to continue with these more economically produced "costume grade" replica fabrics as folk seem to like the fact that we are weaving replica historic fabrics for prices that are more or less in line with mass produced modern wool fabrics.

Nevertheless, I'm known for my obsessive and autistic attention to detail and love to go beyond what most accept as "authentic". To that end I was keen to push these new suppliers to see how far we could go in terms of producing replica cloth to my much more demanding "museum grade" standards. To that end I've been working for one person keen to very accurately replicate some of the fine sett Roman diamond twill textiles recovered from sites along Hadrian's wall. A customer who wanted a large quantity of fabric produced to the extra wide widths required to produce large seamless and hooded cloaks from one piece of cloth.

What is more, whilst concentrating on fine sett diamond twill fabrics I've finally been able to produce something I've wanted to do for myself for years. That is reproduce some of the fine luxury Viking age Birka twills, producing cloth at twice the warp count of most other replica diamond twills (as shown in the photo below comparing this with another manufacturers "replica" diamond twill). With warp counts approaching 20threads/cm, and which may just exceed this with a touch of shrinkage when first washed, these are certainly comparable with the majority, if not the very finest, of luxury twills excavated at Birka. What is more by getting spin directions and tension right this replica truly shows as a shadow texture pattern and does not have to rely on contrasting hues of warp and weft to highlight the weave, So where needed we've produced Z spun versions of otherwise S spun yarns made to different grist for warp and weft and done so in un-dyed natural white as I suspect most customers for such fabric will want to hand dye their own fabric.



If there's demand for more of these fine sett fabrics in the future, and if we can raise the funding I can commission another batch of these. However, I suspect they may be a one off project so if interested in these luxury textiles snap up what's left of them now before they're gone.

Notes about the accuracy of our grades of fabric.

Museum Grade Replica Fabrics - I appreciate the cost of these fabrics mean they won't appeal to everyone. However, if you are the sort of person who has a bookcase full of academic papers about period fabrics, attend specialist conferences about archaeological textiles and consider it perfectly normal to un-pick textile swatches to study the weave, count threads, look at the spin direction of yarns and try identify the fleece types or natural dye stuffs used in their manufacture I think you'll appreciate all the effort that's gone into these fabrics. Judged against such demanding standards I hope you'll feel the prices actually offer very good value to the most discerning of customers.

Costume Grade Replica Fabrics - I'm aware there's a significant demand from theatrical costumiers and historical re-enactors for affordable period costume that looks authentic to an audience who won't have the knowledge or inclination to subject the textiles to in-depth technical examination. To keep costs down when weaving replica fabric it is possible to use lots of subtle compromises that the vast majority of people would fail to recognise or understand. Even allowing for these "so called" compromises this grade of replica fabric doesn't ever use man-made fibres in the yarns, and the colours, patterns of weave and thread counts are all close representations of the archaeological or historical evidence. These are in effect what many other retailers to the re-enactment market are selling as "authentic" replica fabric. As I've found most museums are more than happy with these fabrics I'm inclined to think it's only my own autistic/obsessive nature and professional background that makes me pursue the higher grade of replica fabrics.

Modern fabrics - From time to time I occasionally stumble upon modern mass produced fabrics that I consider to be useful for period costumes. As these were not woven with historical costuming in mind they might not offer the same degree of accuracy as our bespoke woven textiles but do increase the variety and choice of fabric available whilst still meeting, and in many cases exceeding the authenticity regulations of most re-enactment societies.

As we do not carry standard stock products we cannot guarantee having specific items available at future dates. We do however, generate a steadily changing quantity of short lengths of "surplus" cloth left over from the end of each bespoke production run, the details of which are given below. As these can sell out quite quickly please e-mail to confirm current availability and verify an order.

If you don't see what you are looking for feel free to ask about what's involved in commissioning it's production as there may be others looking for the same things.

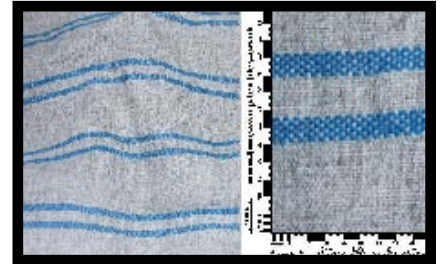
(Please note colours shown are only loosely indicative due to the difficulties of using flash photography to capture detail in woven textiles and also the variability of display settings between computer monitors.)

Museum grade fabrics in stock at the time of publication.

Type: Rayed wool cloth in hand dyed genuine woad yarns set against a background of undyed natural grey.

Batch Code: Mus12-05 Period: medieval

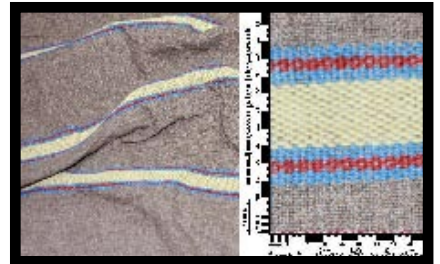
Width: nominal 68" Length: 10+yds Cost: £45/yd



Type: Rayed wool cloth in hand dyed genuine woad, madder, and weld yarns set against a background of undyed natural brown.

Batch Code: Mus12-03 Period: medieval

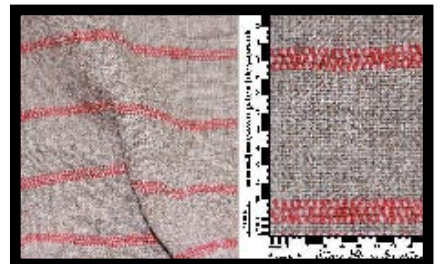
Width: nominal 64" Length: 10+yds Cost: £48/yd



Type: Early rayed wool cloth in hand dyed genuine madder yarns set against a background of un-dyed mid tone brown.

Batch Code: Mus12-04 Period: early medieval

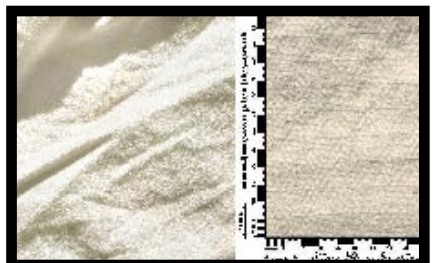
Width: nominal 64" Length: 5yds Cost: £45/yd



Type: Fine sett extra wide Z/Z 2-2 broken diamond twill in shadow patterned undyed natural white. (Birka type luxury Viking cloth)

Batch Code: Mus16-01 Period: early medieval

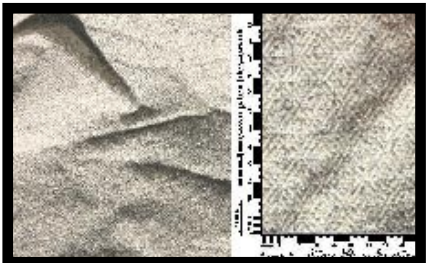
Width: nominal 84" Length: 10+yds Cost: £38/yd



Type: Fine sett extra wide Z/S 2-2 broken diamond twill in natural undyed pale grey and white

Batch Code: Mus16-02 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

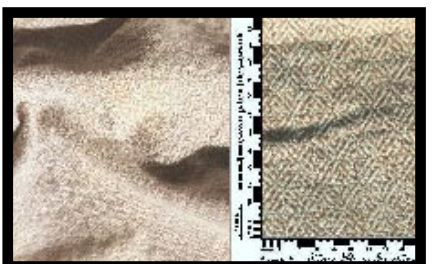
Width: nominal 84" Length: 8yds Cost: £38/yd



Type: Fine sett extra wide Z/S 2-2 broken diamond twill in natural undyed pale brown and white

Batch Code: Mus16-03 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 84" Length: 7yds Cost: £38/yd



Costume grade fabrics in stock at the time of publication.

Type: Pure wool medium weight (kempy fleece) pale biscuit brown
plain weave russet

Batch Code: Cos Cos16-01 Period: wide ranging

Width: nominal 60" Length: 10+yds Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool medium weight (kempy fleece) two tone medley grey
plain weave russet

Batch Code: Cos 16-02 Period: wide ranging

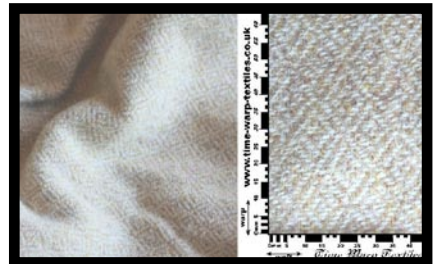
Width: nominal 60" Length: 10+yds Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool un-dyed 2-2 broken diamond twill in white and
beige

Batch Code: Cos16-03 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

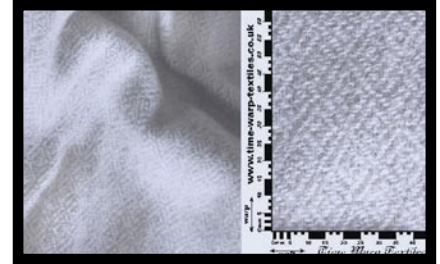
Width: nominal 60" Length: SOLD Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool un-dyed 2-2 broken diamond twill in white and pale
grey

Batch Code: Cos16-04 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 60" Length: SOLD Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool 2-2 broken diamond twill in ivory and oatmeal

Batch Code: Cos16-05 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 60" Length: last 3yds Cost: £60 total



Type: Pure wool 2-2 broken diamond twill in beige and pale grey

Batch Code: Cos16-06 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 60" Length: last 4yds Cost: £80/total



Costume grade fabrics in stock at the time of publication.

Type: Pure wool 2-2 broken diamond twill in two tone natural brown

Batch Code: Cos16-07 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

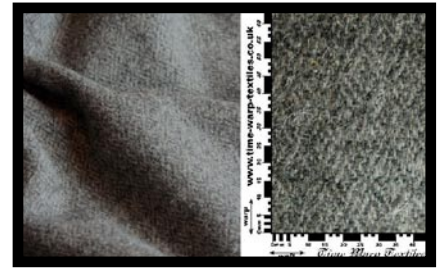
Width: nominal 60" Length: SOLD Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool 2-2 broken diamond twill in two tone natural grey

Batch Code: Cos16-08 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

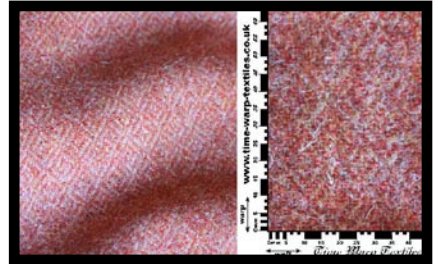
Width: nominal 60" Length: SOLD Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool 2-2 broken diamond twill in synthetic pseudo madder red

Batch Code: Cos16-09 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

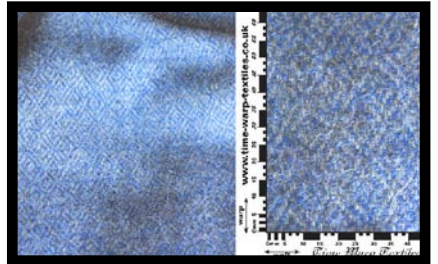
Width: nominal 60" Length: SOLD Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure wool 2-2 broken diamond twill in synthetic pseudo woad blue

Batch Code: Cos16-10 Period: Pre Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 60" Length: SOLD Cost: £60 total



Type:

Batch Code:

Period:

Width:

Length:

Cost:



Type:

Batch Code:

Period:

Width:

Length:

Cost:



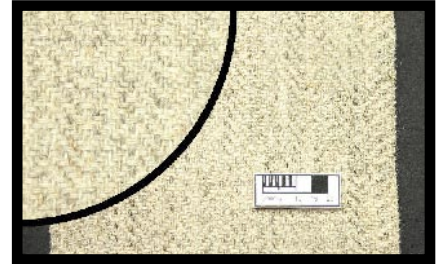
Costume grade fabrics in stock at the time of publication.

The following Wickelbander (leg wraps) have been produced in response to requests for an affordable, narrow woven improvement upon the blanket stitch edged strips of cut cloth used by many “Dark Age” re-enactors. To minimise costs we have had to accept a few more compromises in accuracy than our other costume grade fabrics, but these leg wraps are still more accurate than most described by others as “authentic” and greatly exceed the authenticity regulations of all major Viking/Saxon re-enactment groups.

Type: Un-dyed “Off-white” pure wool herringbone woven tape.

Batch Code: Period: Pre-Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 4” Length: SOLD OUT Cost: £3.50/yd



Type: Un-dyed “Off-white” pure wool herringbone woven tape.

Batch Code: Period: Pre-Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 3” Length: SOLD OUT Cost: £3.50/yd



Type: Un-dyed “Fair” pure wool herringbone woven tape.

Batch Code: Period: Pre-Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 4” Length: SOLD OUT Cost: £3.50/yd



Type: Un-dyed “Medium” pure wool herringbone woven tape.

Batch Code: Period: Pre-Norman Conquest

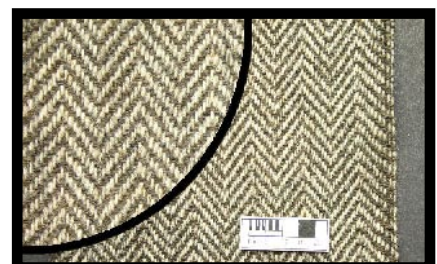
Width: nominal 3” Length: SOLD OUT Cost: £3.50/yd



Type: Un-dyed “Dark” pure wool herringbone woven tape.

Batch Code: Period: Pre-Norman Conquest

Width: nominal 4” Length: SOLD OUT Cost: £3.50/yd



Modern fabrics in stock at the time of publication

Type: Un-dyed linen (we usually have in store a varied and steadily changing mix of weaves, widths, weights and hues)

Batch Code: (varied types) Period: Wide ranging

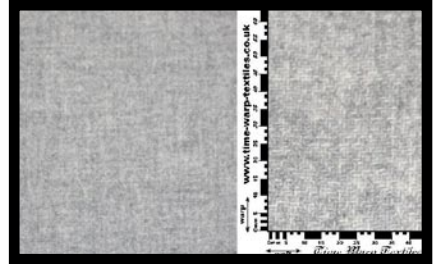
Width: nominal 60" Length: various Cost: typically £7-£14/yd



Type: Pure lambswool fine luxury lightweight tweed twill in natural off-white/pale grey hues

Batch Code: Mod10 Period: wide ranging

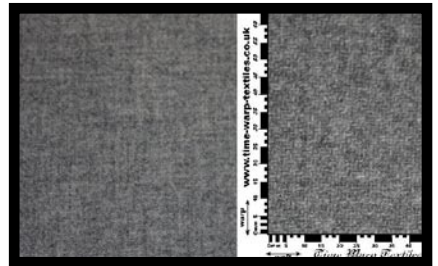
Width: nominal 60" Length: 10+yds Cost: £20/yd



Type: Pure lambswool fine luxury lightweight tweed twill in mid tone grey hues

Batch Code: Mod11 Period: wide ranging

Width: nominal 60" Length: 10+yds Cost: £18/yd



Type:

Batch Code:

Period:

Width: nominal

Length:

Cost:



Type:

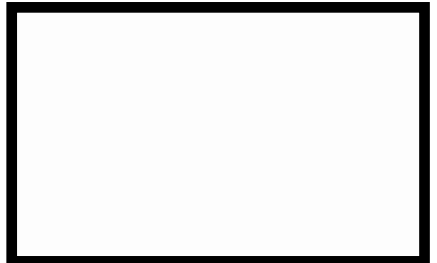
Batch Code:

Period:

Width: nominal

Length:

Cost:



Type:

Batch Code:

Period:

Width: nominal

Length:

Cost:



For the Future?

The following types of cloth are some of the requests that co-operative members have been asking about, some of which would be repeats of previously successful projects. We don't have quite enough interest to make their production immediately viable, but in many cases we are not far off. So, if you might be interested please let us know, the greater the interest the more viable production becomes.

Type: Medieval Rayed cloths with a variety of colours of un-dyed grey and brown stripes.

Type: Pre-Norman un-dyed 2-2 broken diamond twill linen.

Type: Medieval Rayed cloths with naturally dyed coloured stripes. (more costly to produce)

Type: Norman 2-1 twills in un-dyed greys and browns

Type: Medieval challis - ultra fine weave, very lightweight pure wool "wimple cloth".

Type: Tudor/Stuart russets with a fluffy dressed/fulled surface finish

Type: Early russets in varied natural un-dyed hues (used by peasants throughout most of history)

Type: Medieval "burel" (a cheap coarse cloth used by the lower orders of society)

Type: Pre-Norman un-dyed 2-2 broken diamond twills.

Type: Greenland Wadmaal (heavyweight viking 2-2 twill cloth)

Type: Samite, elaborate multi coloured silk weft faced compound twills (very costly to produce)

Type: Viking woollen sailcloth for use on replica longships and for replica tents

Type: Viking Birka twills (very finely sett 2-2 broken diamond twills)

Type: Tudor/Stuart bayes/sayes

Type: Pre-Norman herringbone twill winingas/leg-bindings (need huge minimum orders)

Type: "Celtic" checked cloths in natural un-dyed greys and browns

If we can raise all the necessary finances we can consider producing any type of period woollen cloth you might want. We now have a linen weaver within the group of suppliers we work with, so we can consider producing bespoke linen cloth, and although we have yet to commission any silk cloth I have been in negotiation with a specialist silk weaver about such fabrics. We have successfully undertaken our first experiments with a specialist dye firm to produce period dyed yarns (genuine hand dyed madder, woad etc.) for weaving authentically coloured cloth and are always looking out for additional spinners, weavers or other textile producers/suppliers capable of adding to the range of textiles we are able produce.

So if there's something you'd be interested in let us know, if others have been asking for the same thing we might have enough interest to make it's production viable. We don't necessarily need massive orders, as in some special cases we have been able to commission just a dozen yards without radically impacting on the cost per yard. Every case has to be judged individually but we do our best to please everyone.

If there is anything else you would like to know feel free to contact me on the e-mail address given earlier.

Aidan Campbell - Time Warp Textiles Cloth Co-operative

