Lord's Mount B. on Tweed.

Report 1629 358.

H. M. APPLEYARD F.T.I.

Fellow of the Royal Microscopical Society

Textile Consultant: Microscopy and Fibre Identification

8 BRIDLE STILE, SHELF, HALIFAX, HX3 7NW Telephone: Bradford 677617

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Mr.J.Musty
Ancient Monuments Laboratory
Department of the Environment
Room 508 Fortress House
23 Saville Row
London W1X 2AA

Dear Mr Musty,

The following is my report on samples from Lord's Mount, Berwick on Tweed that I received from Miss Crowfoot.

Sample A weft — These are wool fibres of two types, i.e. mostly fine fibres with some coarse fibres having wide lattice type medullae. This suggests that they are from a double coated breed similar to the present day mountain breeds. There was also an indication that they could have been dyed, the brown colour was much deeper than an aging colour.

Sample A warp — The fibres in this yarn appear to be the same as in the weft.

Sample C warp — Wool fibres - mostly fine but with some of medium diameter

Sample C weft — Wool fibres but appear to be slightly coarser than the warp. Some of them are pigmented.

Sample D — Wool fibres very similar to those in sample A weft, ie. fine with some coarse with wide lattice type medullae. There was quite a bit of bacterial damage and insect damage, some root ends. These could possibly be dyed.

Sample E. — These were wool fibres but there was a considerable amount of damage, some fibres were broken right down to cortical cells.

Yours sincerely

H.M.Appleyard

Lord's Mount, Berwick on Tweed ? Early 15th-16th century

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A,B Two adjoining fragments of the same fabric. Wool, coarse fibred (see H.M.Appleyard, wool report), now brown, but originally red or brownish red, dye identified by Professor M.C.Whiting (University of Bristol) as madder used with an unidentified yellow dye. Yarns S spun in warp and weft, tabby, good even weaving, no selvedge preserved, counts 6/6, 6/7 per cm; one paired thread in the latter slightly finer system suggests this is more likely to be the weft; fabric has been fulled.

The fragments together make a wedge-shaped piece, torn down the middle, c.24.5 cm at widest end, c.7.0 cm at narrowest, one side c.21.0 cm long cut on cross, the other 13.5 cm, torn, with part of seam preserved, edge turned under showing holes three per cm. left by stitches; the sewing thread has disappeared, i.e. it was probably of vegetable fibre. The fulled surface is well preserved inside the seam, the upper surface of the cloth worn threadbare along the folded edge, showing that the piece was cut from a worn garment.

C One fragment. Fine blackish-brown wool (see wool report), hard fibred, worsted type, undyed. One yarn Z, strong, well spun, yarn diam.c.0.4-0.5 mm, the other also Z but more lightly spun; no selvedge preserved, but comparisons make it likely the lightly spun yarn is the warp (see below); weave an even 5-thread satin, count 36/25 threads per cm (fig.1).

The piece is rectangular, 22.0 X 10.3 cm, with three torn edges and the fourth turned under in a neat hem 3 mm wide, with stitch holes three per cm, the sewing thread again missing.

D One fragment. Wool, (see wool report) light brown, patchily stained, but no dye identified (Prof.M.C.Whiting). Yarns both S, weave tabby, count 6/6 per cm, probably fulled, but worn surface; very similar to A,B.

Irregular piece with all edges cut, overall measurement c.15.0 X 16.0 cm.

E One fragment. Wool, coarse fibred (see wool report), light brown. Yarns both S, weave tabby, count 6-7/5 per cm; simple selvedge with two paired warps; no sign of fulling.

Fragment c.20.5 X 6.5 cm, with one selvedge and other three edges torn.

The tabby weaves, A-B, D and E, could well be local domestic production; they are far coarser than the regular commercial broadcloths, of which a considerable number have now been examined from late 14th and 15th century dock levels at Baynard's Castle, and late 16th to early 17th century deposit at Southampton (report by John W.Hedges); these usually have Z spinning in warp and S in weft, a practice that facilitates the raising of fibres for fulling or napping.

The fine worsted satin, C, on the other hand, is a piece of highly skilled professional weaving. So far no examples of similar fabric have been described from England, though it is possible these may be found among church treasures. A blackish-brown wool satin frontlet is in the Statens historiska Museum in Stockholm, (no.23005.37) and two examples from Iceland, both 5-thread satin,

warp face, with selvedge preserved, counts 31-35/17-20 threads per cm, are described in a thesis by Mrs.Anne Kjellberg on late medieval vestments. Dr.Marta Hoffmann suggests that as England was famous for its fine wool and high class woollens, these worsted satins may have been of English manufacture, exported to Scandinavia.

Professor Carus-Wilson writes that there are records of considerable exports of English worsteds from the late 13th century. It was used extensively for (1) clothing, especially for hose, and for light summer clothing... the monks of Durham, Norwich, Worcester etc. all bought it for their summer clothing throughout the late 14th and 15th centuries, thoug they were constantly forbidden (e.g. by the chapters of the Black Monks) to use it on the ground, apparently, that it was too "fine".

(2) furnishing, especially for bed-spreads and bed-curtains ("beds"), wall coverings ("hallings"), and many other kinds of hangings and coverings. Many of these were embroidered... Worsted exports in the late 14th century, e.g. to Gascony, included red, white, blue, black, blue embroidered, rayed blue and white, rayed black and red worsted."

While the worsteds for clothing, particularly those for hose and the monastic ones, may have been lighter tabby weaves or twills, the fine worste satins are obviously particularly suitable for furnishing purposes, and as background material for embroideries.

I am grateful to Mrs.Kjellberg and Dr.Hoffmann for information about the worsted satins in Scandinavia, and to Professor Carus-Wilson for personal communications about the English worsted trade.

Elisabeth Crowfoot

Wool Report

H.M.Appleyard

A. Weft. Wool fibres of two types, mostly fine fibres but some coarse (B) fibres having wide lattice type medullae. Probably from a double coated breed similar to the present day mountain breeds. Probably dyed.
Warp. Fibres appear to be the same as in weft.

C. Warp. Fibres appear to be slightly coarser than weft; some are pigmented.
Weft. Wool fibres, mostly fine, but some with medium diamter.

D. Wool fibres very similar to those in A weft, with bacterial and insect damage. Possibly dyed.

E. Wool fibres, but with a considerable amount of damage; some fibres were broken right down to cortical cells.

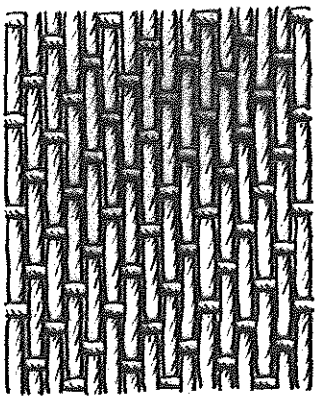

Fig.1. Diagram of 5-thread satin weave