

# ANCIENT MONUMENTS LABORATORY

## REPORT

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CONSULTANT

**AUTHOR**

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**TITLE**

St. Augustine's Abbey, TEXTILE  
Canterbury

Textile

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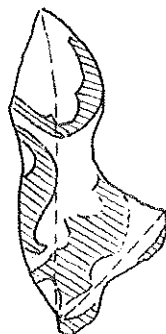
St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury

Fragment silk. 765664. Late medieval.

One fragment of embroidered silk, 4.0 X 1.5 cm overall, with 0.5-0.6 cm folded underneath on one long side of a roughly triangular piece, and 0.3 cm folded under on the adjoining edge (fig.1.). Both yarns silk, one system slightly Z spun (?warp), the other unspun, weave tabby, count c.52/26 threads per cm, taken as 26/13 on 5 mm., the colour now dark brownish, perhaps originally purple. There are remains of a surface pattern, all that can be seen suggesting a scroll with leaves; this is embroidered in couching, with a spun-gold (silver-gilt) thread, held down with rather coarse light-coloured unspun silk, perhaps originally yellow; the core of the laid thread has completely disappeared, suggesting that this may not have been of silk, but of some vegetable fibre such as flax. The couching threads are broken in many places, but can be seen here and there on the back of the fragment.

The shape of the fragment suggests the mitred corner of the border to a vestment or altar frontal; the couching continues under the turned-up edge, as would be natural in an embroidered ribbon, or strip cut from a larger area of embroidery, used for this purpose. The surface couching used here is the method seen on embroideries in England from the early 10th century onwards - for example the stole and maniples among the relics of St. Cuthbert at Durham (1). From the 12th to 14th centuries the more popular method of gold-work was underside couching (point couché rentré or retiré) in which no stitches can be seen on the surface of the gold threads (2). However, both types of couching did continue in use, and this cannot necessarily be taken to indicate an old embroidery re-used.

- (1) C.F. Battiscombe (ed.), The Relics of Saint Cuthbert at Durham, 1956, 381-394, Pis. A.VI-X.XII.
- (2) op.cit. 387; Mrs. Archibald Christie, Samplers and Stitches, 1946, 135-141.



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