

HATS, HEADDRESSES & HAIRSTYLES

Everybody over the age of twelve wore some kind of hat or headdress. This was a wise move in a country whose average summer daytime temperatures ranged from the mid 50's to 60's and rain was frequent. The hat helped to keep the head warm and dry. It also served the function of keeping the hair out of the way, of some importance in a time when regular haircuts were an indulgence of the rich. There were many styles of hat, but only the most common will be described here.

Coif

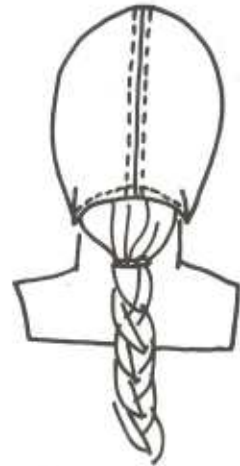
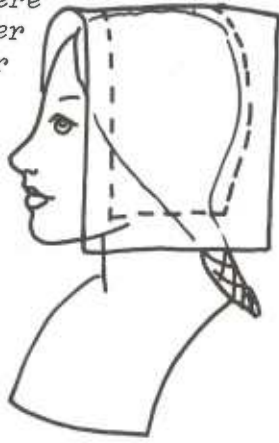
The coif, or biggins had been worn by people since the thirteenth century. It was used as an undercap and nightcap by all classes and both sexes during this period. Peasants wore it under a straw hat, mainly to keep the hair out of the eyes when working in the fields. Middle and upper class gentlemen wore it as a head warmer as much as anything else, especially the older men. During the day it was usually worn under a flat cap or a scholars biretta, a kind of squared off hat that later evolved into the mortarboard of modern times. At night, the coif would be worn as a nightcap, or a style like the crown of a bowler hat with the edge turned up would be worn instead.



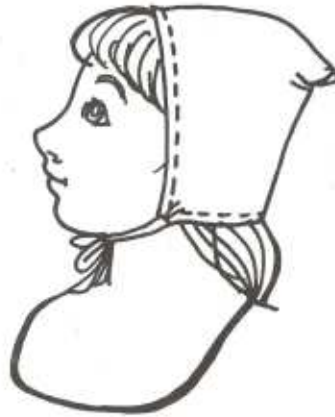
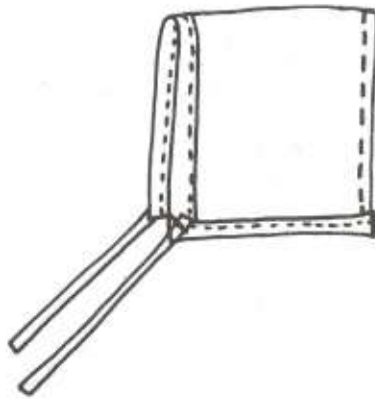
The coif is a very easy hat to make. Measure your head over the top from ear lobe to ear lobe and add 4". Cut a piece of muslin this length and half as wide and drape this over your head. Starting at the center of your forehead, pin the muslin so that it fits closely over the curve of your head straight back and down to the nape of your neck.

When this feels and looks right, take it off and sew along the pinned line. After removing the pins, turn the muslin $\frac{1}{2}$ " back around your face until it is about 1" back from your hairline, and sew. Turn under the remaining raw edge around the bottom, until it just still covers your ears and sew it at that point. Stitch ribbons or ties at the two corners so it can be tied under the chin, and it is done.

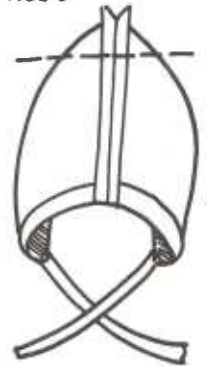
Pin down here
 sketch other
 lines after



An even easier coif or biggins that we call the Gnome Biggins takes the same rectangle of cloth and stitches it straight up the back. Hem the raw edges, sew ribbons or ties to the corners and it is done. This looks great on children. If the point bothers you, just tuck it inside and seam across the resulting triangle.



To take off
 point, sew
 here



Don't let the number of patterns presented here limit your creativity with coifs. Illustrated here are a few more ideas for you to experiment with.

