

# The Market Wallet

*A Canterbury Faire token inspired by Lady Jeneur le Geline*

## The Inspiration

At Festival AS50, Lady Jeneur le Geline ran a very interesting class on the market wallet, which inspired an idea for a most excellent, and relatively simple, Canterbury Faire giveaway. Lady Jeneur has kindly given me permission to plunder her documentation and patterns to produce this, huzzah!

At CF, we have done the common canvas tote bags with screen-printed logos a number of times, and they've always felt obtrusively mundane to me. When I saw the undeniably period market wallet and realised how easy they would be to produce, it seemed like a very good substitute. When THL Aveline Goupil put in a bid for Faire, I suggested a small market wallet as the token with possibly larger ones available for purchase. So umpteen metres of calico later....

## The History

Market wallets go by a number of terms: the Martebo sack, stuffed sack, shoulder sack, fussing (or fässing in post-period Swedish). These all refer to a simple rectangular cloth bag with a central slit, used for the carriage of small goods such as market items (whether for sale or purchased), books, food and so forth. They appear in pretty much unchanged form throughout Europe, including Scandinavia, from at least the 13th century, in illuminations of monks, pilgrims, labourers and washerwomen, right on up to 20th-century photos of travelling salesmen.

The depictions show the sacks typically carried around the neck and sitting forward over each shoulder, or slung lengthwise over one shoulder, but there are plenty of examples of the sack's transportational versatility with it variously shown tied to a staff, slung across a donkey, carried in one hand, flung over a tree branch. Even humanesque beasties found them handy!

## Making a Market Wallet

Looking at the proportions of the market wallets compared to the human carrying them provides an indication of the general size, with them appearing to be around 60-80cm wide by roughly 100-140cm in length. Different illuminations show two main approaches to the central slit, with one version running parallel to the long side (ie a horizontal slit) and the other crossing the short width of the fabric vertically.

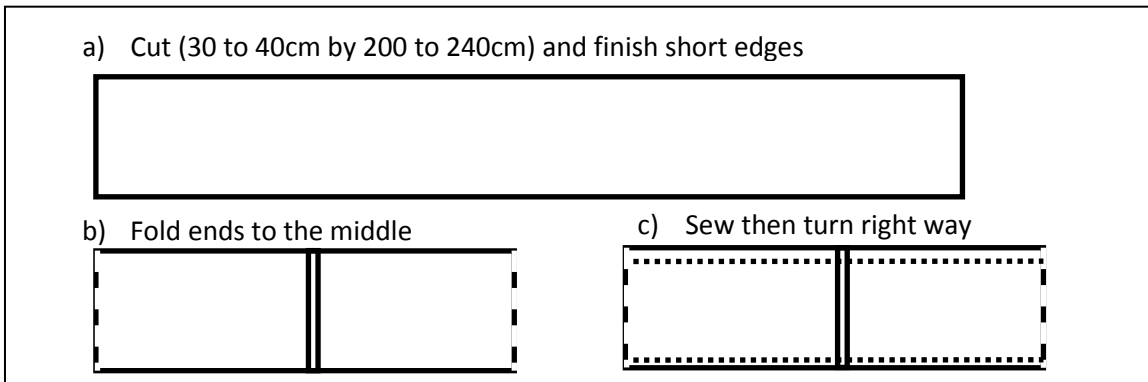
Lady Jeneur has examined a lot of different depictions as well as various patterns, and has identified six different variations. The one used for the CF market wallets is shown overleaf, along with one other.

The CF market wallets should be taken as just one small-scale model, based on 120cm-width fabric for the length and 20cm in width; or enough to carry a book, some papers, a cup or some fruit. Experimentation showed that it would still work slung over a shoulder. I decided to use this approach as I knew I could reduce a lot of work in producing 200-300 wallets by taking advantage of the natural selvages on 120cm-wide fabric to form a self-finished vertical central slit. So the CF wallets are around half the size of the period.

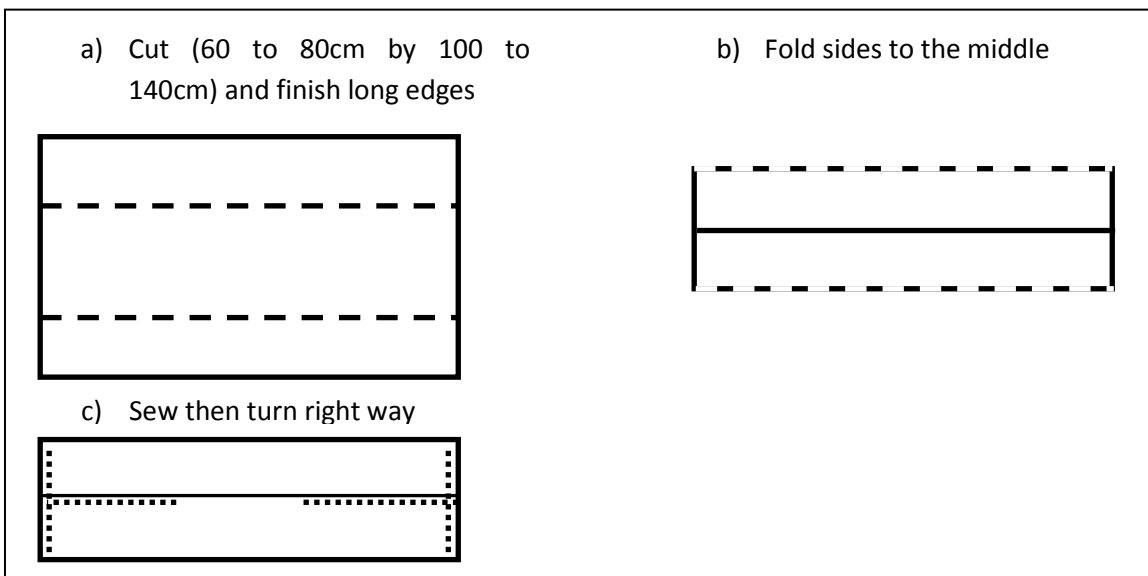
I used plain calico as an inexpensive material readily available in bulk. It's generally surmised that the period examples would have been made of linen, predominantly white/natural and (somewhat surprisingly) all undecorated.



The pattern used for the Canterbury Faire market wallet, using selvages for the short edges:



According to Lady Jeneur, based on the evidence currently available, a more common pattern appears to be this one, with a horizontal central slit:



Experimenting with the various patterns and sizes, Lady Jeneur recommends the above pattern as the best to use, because the slit position makes it easier to access items inside the sack. It also is more amenable to being twisted to secure the slit's closure when slung or carried.

#### References:

Out and About with all Your Stuff: <https://themedievalhunt.com/2015/03/03/out-and-about-with-all-your-stuff/>  
Teffania's page on market wallets: <http://teffania.blogspot.co.nz/2016/04/wallets.html>  
Whilja's Corner: Fässing – the Shoulder Bag: <https://whiljascorner.wordpress.com/2014/02/06/fassing-the-shoulder-bag/>  
Wallets and Shoulder-Sacks: <http://www.larsdatter.com/wallets.htm>

#### Illustrations:

(overleaf from top):

Martebo Sack: 14<sup>th</sup> C Sweden: <http://albrechts.se/carrysack-from-martebo/>  
Sack with book: 15<sup>th</sup> C France, Le Roman de la Rose, Bodleian Library: MS. Douce 195, fol. 086v, roll 175A, frame 64  
<http://bodley30.bodley.ox.ac.uk:8180/luna/servlet/s/521ezl>  
Sack onna Stick: 1470-1480 France Fortune and Poverty in De casibus (BNF Fr. 132, fol. 42v):  
<http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ConsulterElementNum?O=IFN-08101008&E=JPEG&Deb=4&Fin=4&Param=C>  
Sack over Shoulder: 16<sup>th</sup> C France: <http://visualiseur.bnf.fr/ConsulterElementNum?O=IFN-8100118&E=JPEG&Deb=5&Fin=5&Param=C>

Sack onna Stick: English Psalter 1265-1270: [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_50000\\_f013r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_50000_f013r)

Sack in hand: Boccaccio's Decameron, 1401-1500 France; Bibliothèque nationale de France:

<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7100018t/f485.item.zoom>

Sack inna tree: 1415-1430, France; Hours of Charlotte of Savoy; Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.1004, fol. 003v:

<http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/icaimages/1/m1004.003va.jpg>

Beastie with Sack: 1415-1430, France, Hours of Charlotte of Savoy; Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M.1004, fol. 39r:

<http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/icaimages/1/m1004.039ra.jpg>