

The French Hood – What it is and what it is not

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A note on language

The headdress we are discussing is commonly referred to as “the French hood”. This name is an English invention, possibly because the hood made its way to England from France, although it was likely introduced by Mary Tudor (Henry VIII’s sister), rather than Anne Boleyn.

This style of headdress was worn not just in France, but also very commonly in the Low Countries (Flanders, Belgium, etc). I have also seen portraits with very similar hoods worn in Austria. It is telling that there is no French word or phrase for “French hood”.

In this paper, I use the expression “French hood” for simplicity, but bear in mind that it is a misnomer.

French hood – what it is not

Identifying what the French hood is not is the easy part of this paper.

The popular depiction of French hoods is a rigid headdress with a crescent-shaped protrusion on top, often decorated with jewels. That is certainly how the French hood has been portrayed in movies – the examples below are screenshots from “The Other Boleyn Girl”, “Anne of a Thousand Days” and “A Man for All Seasons” respectively.

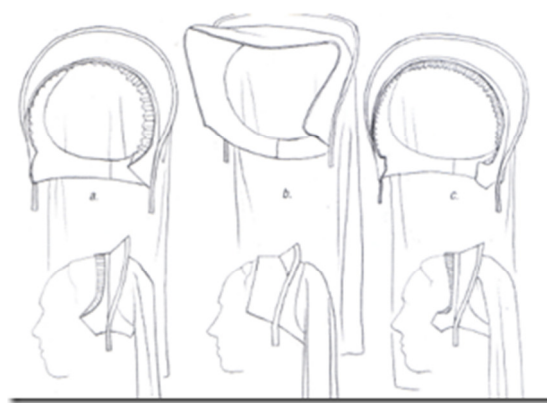


The popular costuming reference “Tudor Tailor” similarly presents the French hood as a one-piece headdress, featuring a rigid brim with a stand-up crescent, a veil/fall at the back and a pleated organza strip at the front.

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Note on images: Most images used in this paper are digital copies of artworks of long-dead artists and are therefore public domain. However, there are a number of photographs of funerary sculpture that are fundamental for this paper. I have contacted the photographers and have written permission from them to use the images for this purpose. Links to the source of the image are provided.

The pictures below are from page 149 of Tudor Tailor.



This is how the French hood has been commonly constructed in the SCA. I believe that construction is wrong and it is good to see that it is gradually changing.

How do we know that the popular reconstruction is wrong?

Contradicting evidence

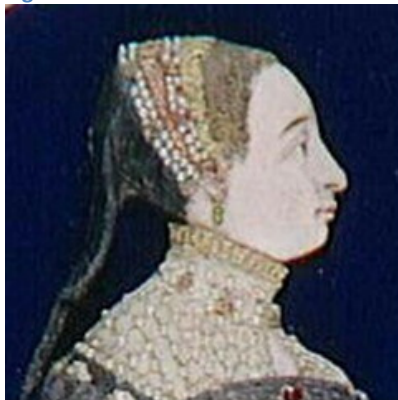
One of the problems of reconstructing from portraits is that we only see two dimensions. Headdresses are very three dimensional. We can't take the picture and rotate it to see the profile, to examine it in three dimensions.

It is necessary to find images or art forms that allow us to view the headdress from all dimensions.

IMAGES

All profile images of ladies wearing the French hood show that the hood sits flat on the wearer's head. Three examples are below. I have numerous other images. There is not a single image showing the stand-up crescent where the sitter is pictured in profile. They all show a multi-layered headdress.

Figure 1



Portrait de femme – c1550s

Figure 2



Mary Tudor, Queen of England 1553 - 1558

Figure 3

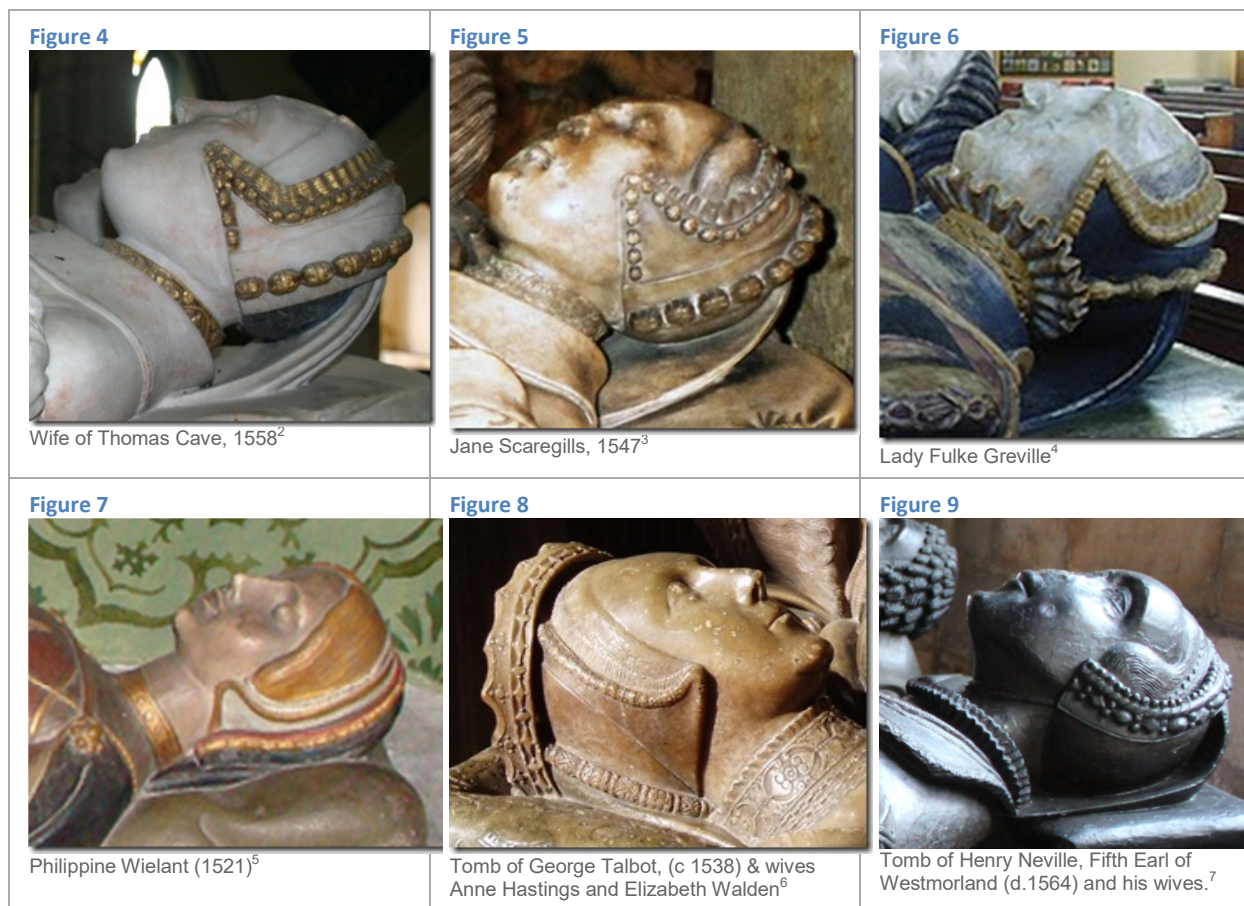


Anne de Bretagne, early 1500s

SCULPTURE

Being three-dimensional, sculpture, especially funerary sculpture provides the best visual evidence of French hood construction.

All show a flat multi-layered head-dress. Below are just some examples.



I have collected more than two hundred images of sculptures of women wearing French hoods. None show anything resembling a stand up crescent.

Impracticality

This is a less compelling reason than contradicting evidence, but the popular French hood construction is impractical. It is difficult to construct, once constructed, difficult to clean and involves attaching expensive jewelled billiaments to one hood/crescent, so they would not be interchangeable. The elements of the hood, made of expensive fabrics cannot be used with other hoods, styles cannot be altered.

² Photo by John Hawes - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnhawes/3208881545/in/pool-65944872@N00/>

³ Photo by Jean "the Church Explorer" - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/52219527@N00/2349709066/in/pool-65944872@N00/>

⁴ Photo by Aiden Thomson - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/amthomson/4401601501/in/pool-65944872@N00/>

⁵ Photo by Roel Renmans - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/roelipilami/3962594254/in/photostream/>

⁶ Photo by Aiden Thomson - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/amthomson/2885924006/in/pool-65944872@N00/>

⁷ Photo by Anothy Cairns - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/antonycairns/6036164863/in/pool-1253286@N23>

In early modern period rich fabrics were used sparingly, garments were worn in multiple layers and components are interchangeable between outfits (eg foreparts, sleeves).

The one piece construction of the French hood runs counter to that trend.

So what is a French Hood?

The easy answer is that it is a **multi-layered head-dress**, which sits flat on the wearer's head or is raised slightly by the hair. The "crescent" that we see is an optical illusion created by the multiple layers.

The harder questions are:

1. what are the layers? and
2. how are they constructed?

I don't believe there is one "right" way to construct a French hood. A close examination of images suggests that it was worn in many different ways. Furthermore, as one would expect, its form changes over the course of the late 15th and 16th century.

Not only are we working with a wide variety of styles and their evolution, there is also limited evidence available.

Wide variety of styles

There are numerous pieces of contemporary writing describing (and often mocking or condemning) the enormous variety of headdress styles and accoutrements. For example, Phillip Stubbes in his "Anatomy of the Abuses in England" (1583) condemns women's headdress in a passage which is useful for illustrating both the variety of styles and the richness of fabrics:

... on toppe of these stately turrets (I meane their goodly heads wherin is more vanitie than true Philosophie now and than) stand their other capitall ornaments, as french hood, hat, cappe, kercher, and suche like; wheof some be of veluet, some of taffatie, some (but few) of woll, some of this fashion, some of that, and some of this color, some of that, according to the variable fantasies of their serpentine minds. ...

They have also other ornaments besydes these to furnish foorth their ingenious heads, which the cal (as I remember) cawles, made Netwyse, to the ende, as I thinke, that the clothe of gold, cloth of siluer or els tinsell, (for that is the worst) whewith their heads are covered and attyred withall underneath their cawles maye appeare, and shewe it felse in the brauest maner. Soe that a man that seethe them (there heads glister and shine in such sorte) wold thinke them to have golden heads [and some weare Lattice cappes with three hornes, three corners I should saie, like the forked cappes of Popishe Priestes, with their perriwinckles, chitterlynges, and the like apishe toyes of infinite varietie

Similarly, Janet Arnold, in Queen Elizabeths Wardrobe Unlocked quotes 1589 letter, extracted at page 205 which also sheds light on the variety of styles:

"For the manner of their hoodes at the courte, some weare cripins some weare none. Some weare sattin of all collors with their upper border and some wear none.

Some of them weare this daye all these fashions, and the nexte without. So that I fynd nothing more certayne than their uncertaynte”

The 1591 play *Midas*, by John Lyly has another fabulously illuminating passage. One of the characters asks the other to describe the “purtances” (accessories) for women’s heads. The reply:

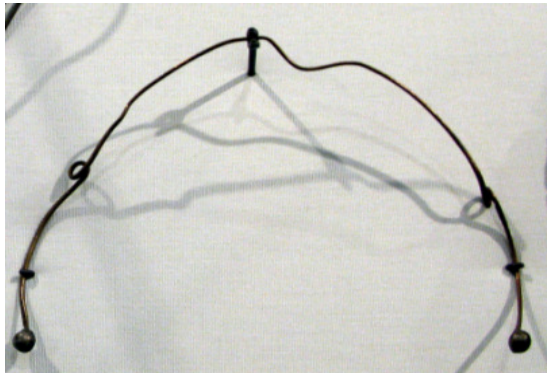
The purtenances, it is impossible to reckon them vp, much lesse to tell the nature of them. Hoods, frontlets, wires, caules, curling-irons, perriwigs, bodkins, fillets, hairlaces, ribbons, roles, knotstrings, glasses, combs, caps, hats, coifes, kerchers, clothes, earerings, borders, crippins, shadowes, spots, and so many other trifles, as both I want the words of arte to name them, time to vtter them, and wit to remember them: these be but a few notes.

On the one hand we have to see these pronouncements for what they are – the time honoured tendency of men to denigrate women by critiquing the perceived extravagances in their dress (while leaving the women little other scope for expressing their worth). On the other hand, they illustrate that we cannot assume that the French hood lacked the variety of constructions or styles that is attributed to headwear generally.

Limited evidence

While there is some evidence from images, statues and documents as to what may have made up a French hood, that evidence only allows us to draw inferences.

Previous versions of this paper referred to an extant wire at the Museum of London, which was labelled as belonging to a French hood.



Extant wire at Museum of London - NOT a French hood wire!

I was subsequently informed by Louise Pass via Facebook that the wire is an “ear iron” or oorijzer – worn in Flanders to secure or shape under-caps.

Examination of other examples of extant ear irons satisfied me that Louise is correct and this wire is mislabelled.

I am very grateful to Louise for her feedback.

With the wire eliminated, there is no known surviving extant French hood or any component of a French hood.

All this is to say that this paper attempts to describe some basic/essential elements of the French hood. It is not suggested that it cannot be worn differently, with or without some elements or with addition of others.

A word of caution – I am not aware of any reconstruction that is on all fours with mine.

There is, for example, an excellent reconstruction by Sarah Lorraine of Mode Historique⁸ -. While I agree with some elements of her reconstruction, I don't agree with her interpretation of the "paste", as well as some other elements (as you can see below).

There is also a great reconstruction of an early French hood by Mistress Clara van der Maes.⁹ It is persuasive, but is only applicable to early styles.

The upshot is – please don't take what follows as established truth.

Tracing the French hood elements

In order to identify the elements of the French hood, it is useful to trace its evolution and identify the various elements as they evolve. I attempt to do so below.

Note on nomenclature

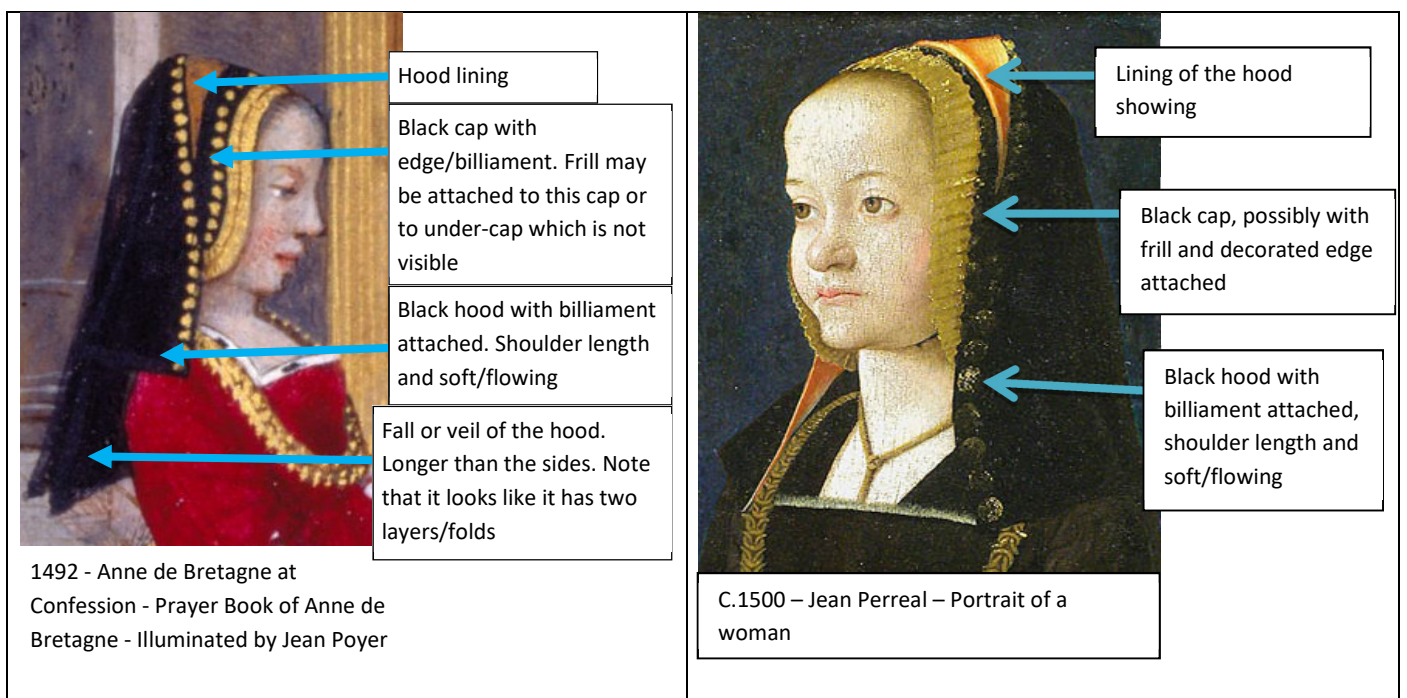
Care needs to be taken in naming the various elements, as nomenclature appears to be inconsistent and changes through the course of the century.

In the labels and discussion below, I use the words cap, bonnet or coif interchangeably.

I use the word "billiament" to refer to the decoration that is on the hood and "edge" for the decoration that is on the cap. The word "paste", which is found in some documents, is synonymous with "billiament", as discussed below.

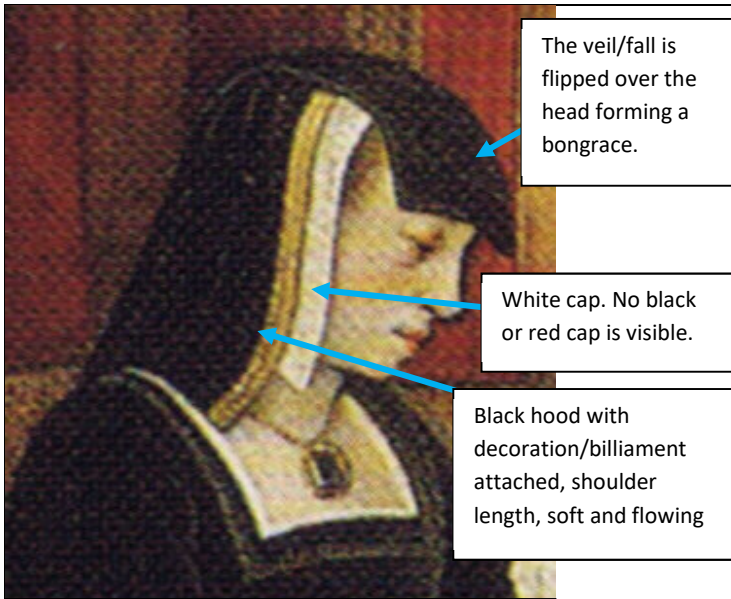
French hood circa 1500

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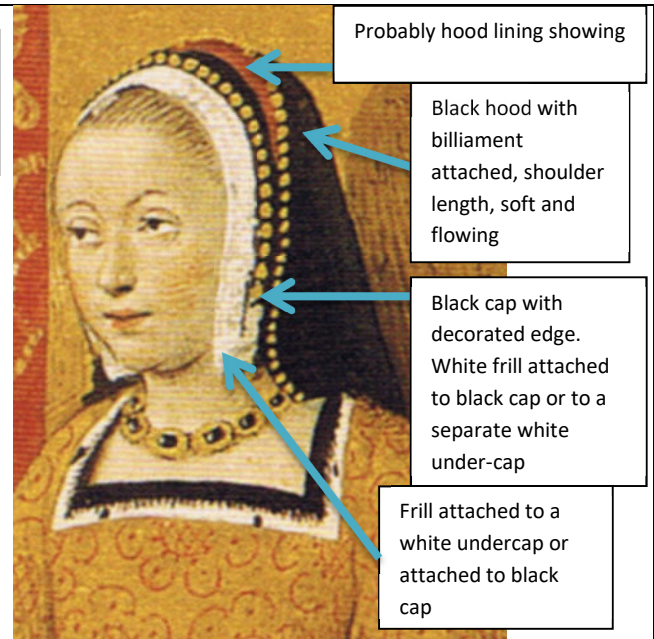


⁸ http://www.modehistorique.com/research/french_hoods/french_hoods.htm

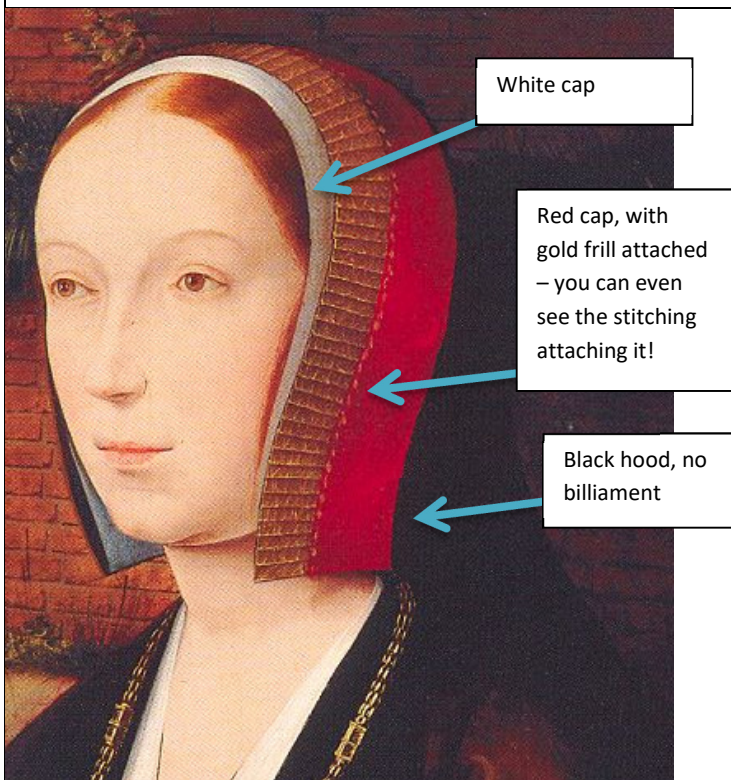
⁹ <http://dutchrenaissanceclothing.com/2016/12/formal-franco-flemish-hood-pattern/>



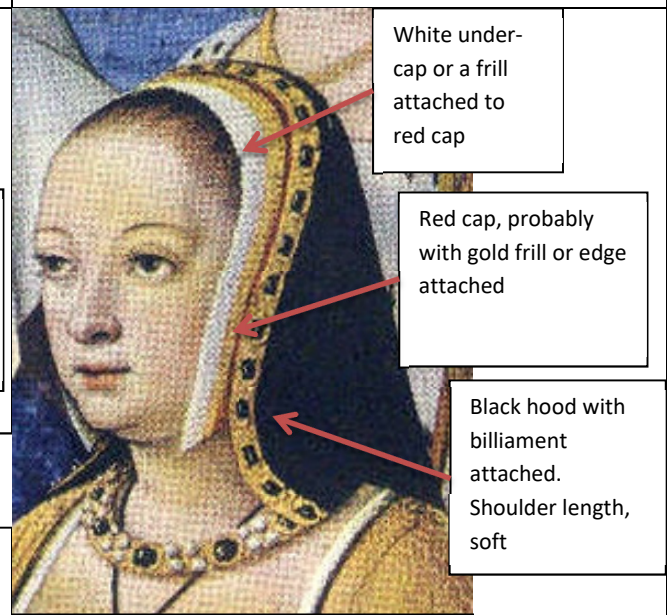
1504 (approx) - Epistres Envoyées au Roi - Anne de Bretagne



1504 (approx) - "Epistres Envoyées au Roi" - Anne de Bretagne probably by Jean



1505 - Portrait of a female Donor, by Jan Provost



1500-1508 - Hours of Anne of Bretagne by Jean Bourdichon

FRENCH HOOD COMPONENTS CIRCA 1500

So what we are seeing in this period is that the French hood consists of the following components:

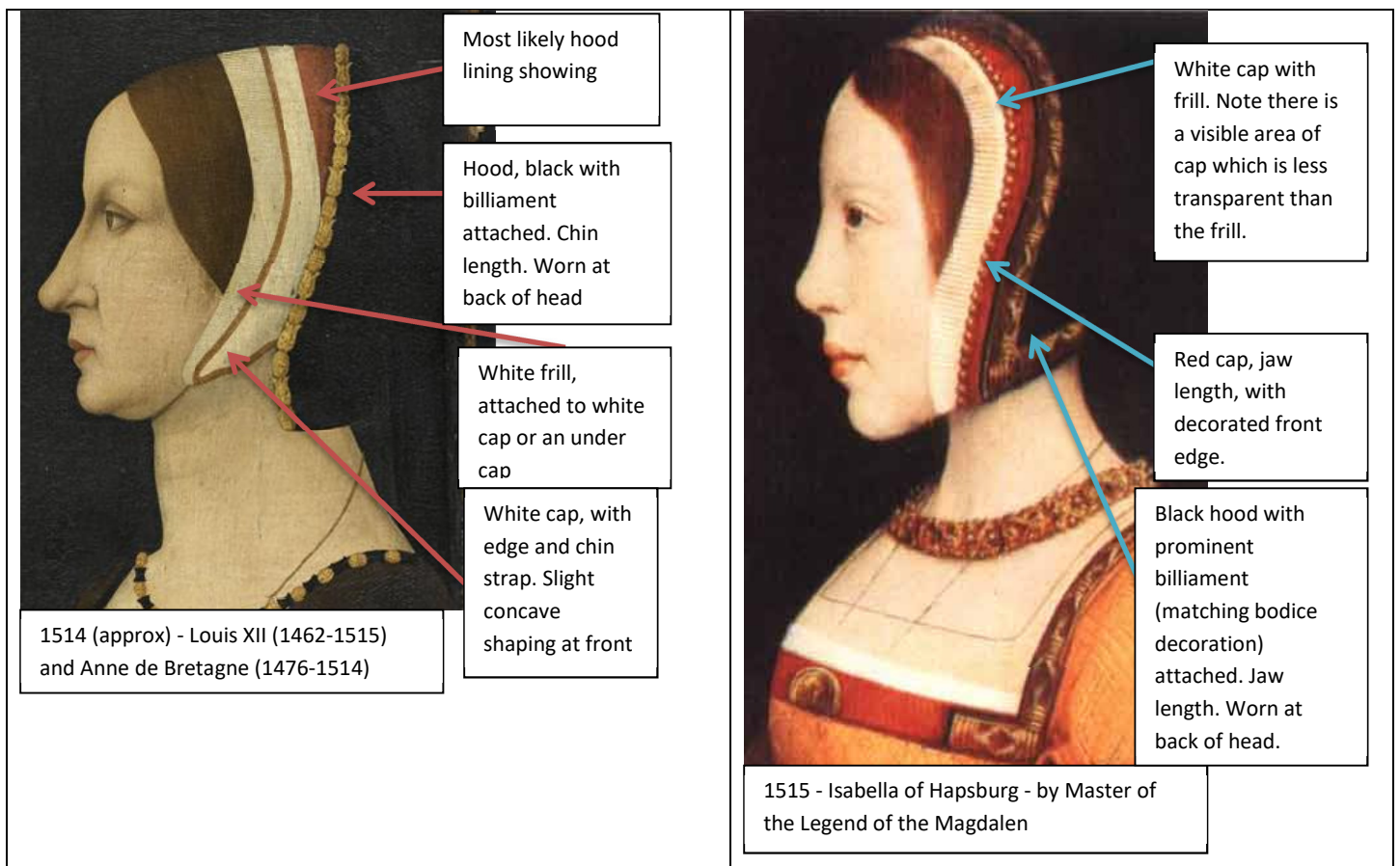
1. A white under-cap

- a. not always visible in the images, but likely worn;
 - b. sometimes with white frill at the front;
2. Second cap
- a. Black in the earlier images, later red;
 - b. About chin length;
 - c. Sometimes has a decoration along the front (“edge”);
 - d. Gold frill (quite wide in this period) is probably attached to this cap.
3. The hood
- a. Black in colour,¹⁰ lined in orange or red;
 - b. About shoulder length at the sides and flexible;
 - c. The “veil” or “fall” at the back is longer than the sides;
 - d. The veil or fall can be flipped over to wearer’s head to form a bongrace;
 - e. Often, but not always decorated at the front, with decoration “billiament” applied directly to the hood;
 - f. Sometimes worn with lining showing (when the second cap is not red). When the lining is showing it appears as a little wedge near the hood.

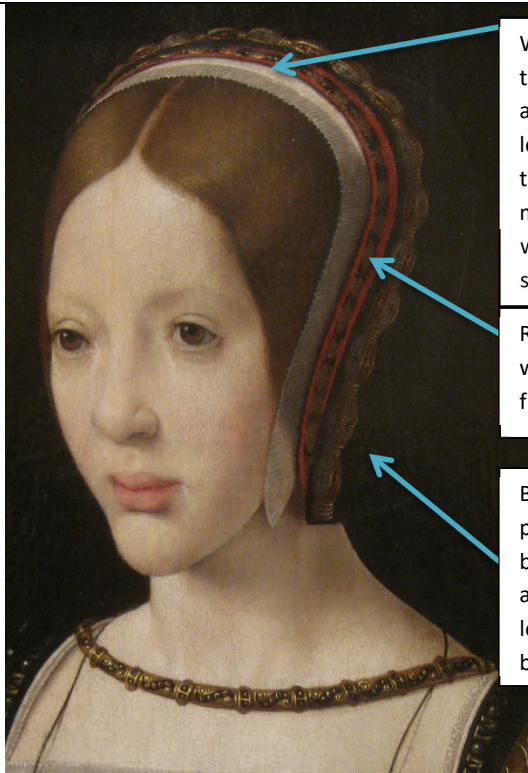
The French hood is worn so a little bit of hair is showing at the front.

French hood circa 1510 to 1530s

ANALYSIS OF IMAGES



¹⁰ There are several images of young children wearing a hood, very similar to the “French hood” which is not black in colour. The hood is always black for adults.

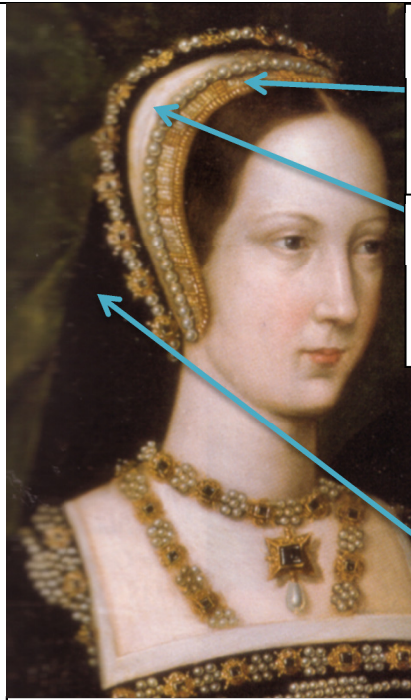


White cap. Note there is a visible area of cap which is less transparent than the frill. Frill may be part of white cap or separate, finer cap.

Red cap, jaw length, with decorated front edge.

Black hood with prominent billiament, probably attached. Jaw length. Worn at back of head.

1516 - Queen Eleanor of Austria by Mabuse



Jewelled cap or jewelled decoration attached to white cap. Looks to be embroidered in gold.

White cap with a pearl edge. Does not appear to have a chin strap.

Black hood, jaw length with jewelled and pearl billiament, matching bodice decoration and jewellery. Unclear if billiament attached to hood.

1516 - Attributed to Jan van Mabuse - Princess Mary Tudor and Charles Brandon



Hood lining or possibly another white cap

White cap of fine, semi transparent fabric.

An edge of fine, transparent fabric, possibly attached to white cap. Unclear if pleated.

Black hood, undecorated. Chin length. Worn at back of head.

1520 - Jean Perreal, Unknown woman, formerly known as Margaret Tudor

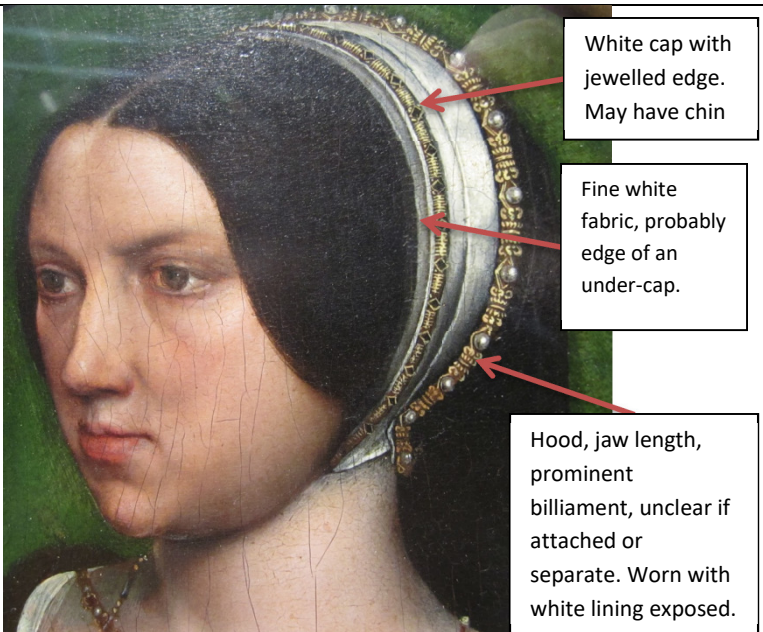
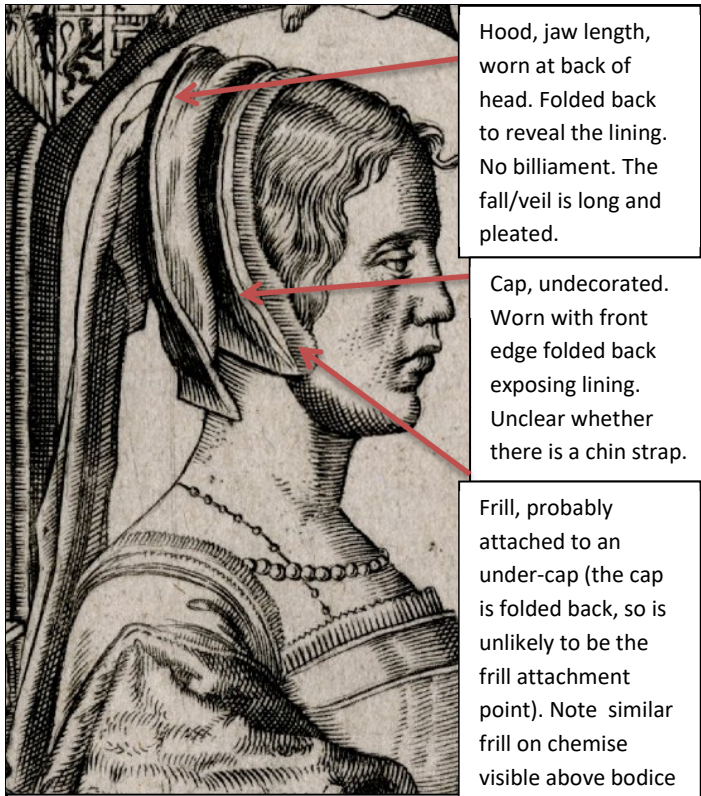


Cap, probably white.

Frontlet or "shadow" worn at front of head. Appears to be soft/flexible.

Hood with pleated veil/fall. Worn at back of head.

1520s (estimated) -tapestry of Isaac blessing Jacob, extracted from Le Costume Civil en France



c1528 - Elisabeth Donche by Ambrosius Benson
<http://zmkc.blogspot.com.au/2012/01/confessions-of-visual-illiterate-i.html>

1525 - Elizabeth of Austria -- engraving by Jacob Binck – at British Museum

FRENCH HOOD COMPONENTS 1510 - 1530

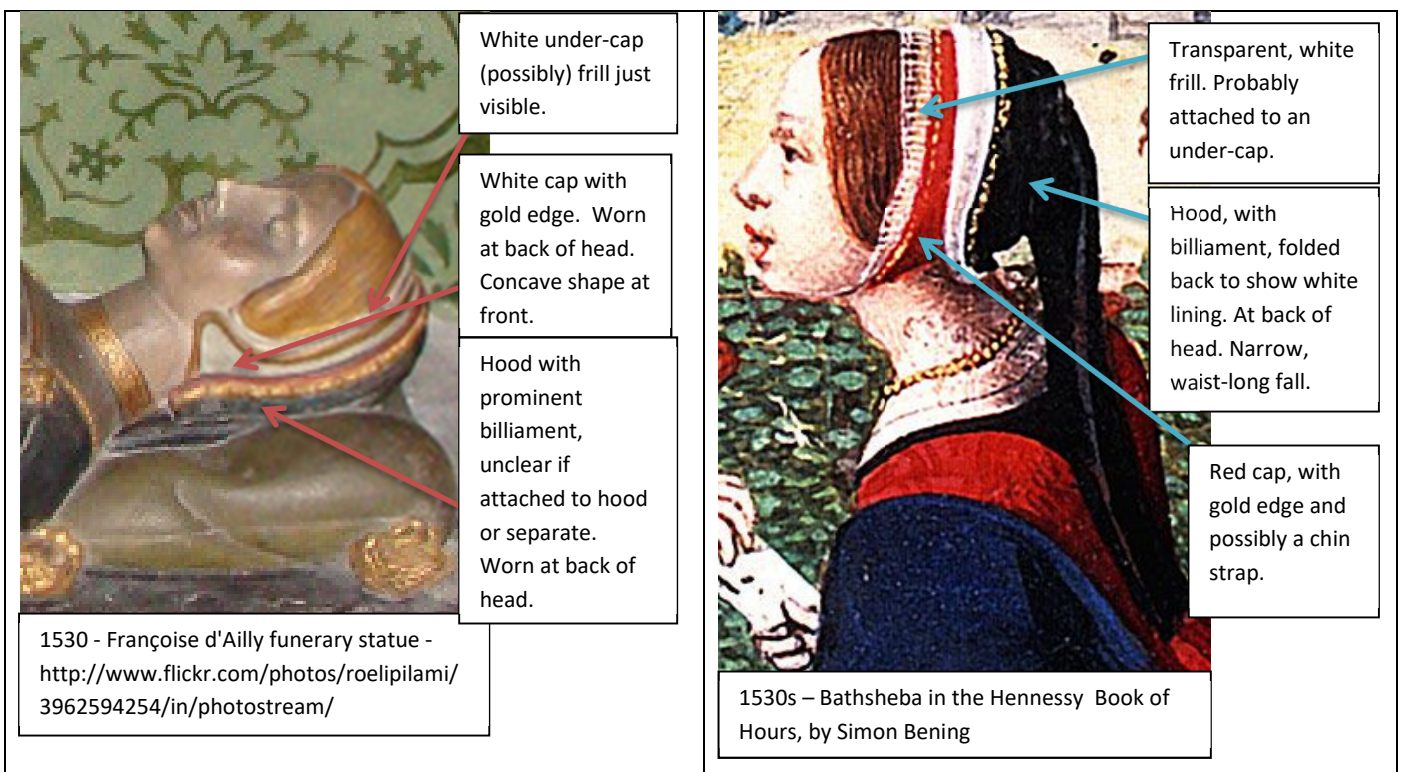
In this period the French hood transitions from the early form to the form that dominates the next two to three decades. Both the cap and the hood get shorter, more tightly fitting and worn further on the back of the head. The cap sometimes has a chin strap, presumably to secure the cap/hood combination as it sits far back on the head. A frontlet/shadow is sometimes worn. The veil/fall of the hood gets narrower and pleated. The hood billiament and cap edge, when worn, get more prominent.

1. A white under-cap
 - a. not always visible in the images, but likely worn;
 - b. has a white frill of fine fabric or a fine transparent layer of fabric that is visible beyond the second cap.
2. Second cap
 - a. Usually white or red in this period, but there are some examples of black;
 - b. About jaw length and sitting about half way back on the head;
 - c. Sometimes has a decoration along the front (“edge”);
 - d. Sometimes has a chin strap, presumably to secure the cap and hood (now worn at far back of head).
 - e. There are very few images in this period where there is a gold frill worn (it appears more common in the following decades);

- f. There is one example of a jewelled front or possibly a third cap worn (by Mary Tudor) but that is not typical.
3. The hood
- a. Black in colour, lined in orange/red or white;
 - b. About chin length at the start and jaw length at the sides by end of this period.
 - c. The “veil” or “fall” at the back is longer than the sides and becoming narrower and pleated;
 - d. The veil or fall can be flipped over to wearer’s head to form a bongrace¹¹;
 - e. Often, but not always decorated with a billiament, which is becoming more prominent. In the later images it is not clear whether the billiament is applied directly to the hood or is a separate piece;
 - f. Sometimes worn folded back, with lining showing.
 - g. The hood is worn far back on the head, with a lot of hair showing.
4. The frontlet or shadow
- a. A black piece of fabric, at this time rectangular, worn at the front of the head;
 - b. Primarily appears in portrayals of religious nature, widows/older women or funerary statues.¹²

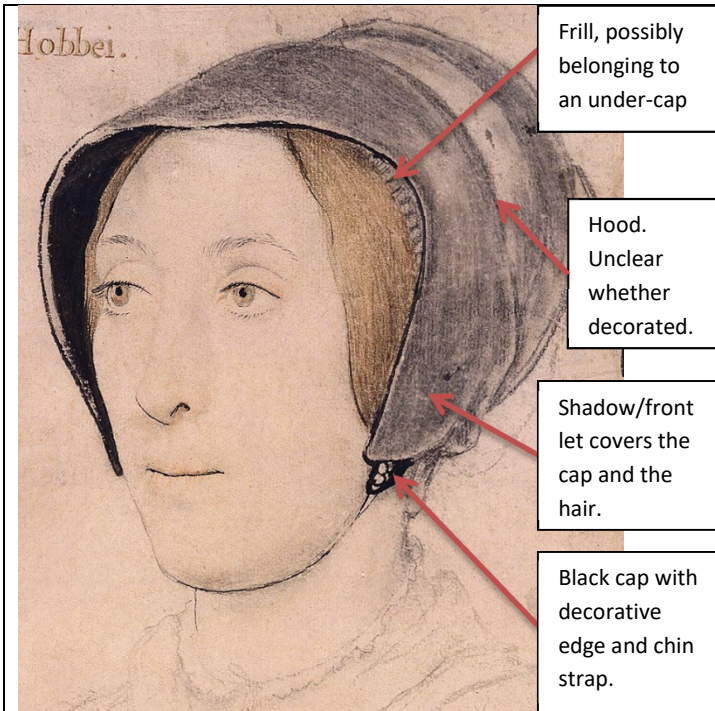
French hood circa 1530 to 1560s

ANALYSIS OF IMAGES



¹¹ I have not included these images above, but there are some showing the bongrace style. The style continues until the end of the century.

¹² Most images from this time show the shadow being worn over a hood that is more old style and covers most of the wearer’s head anyway. I wonder whether it is symbolic of modesty/propriety of the wearer rather than commonly worn as a functional piece at this time.



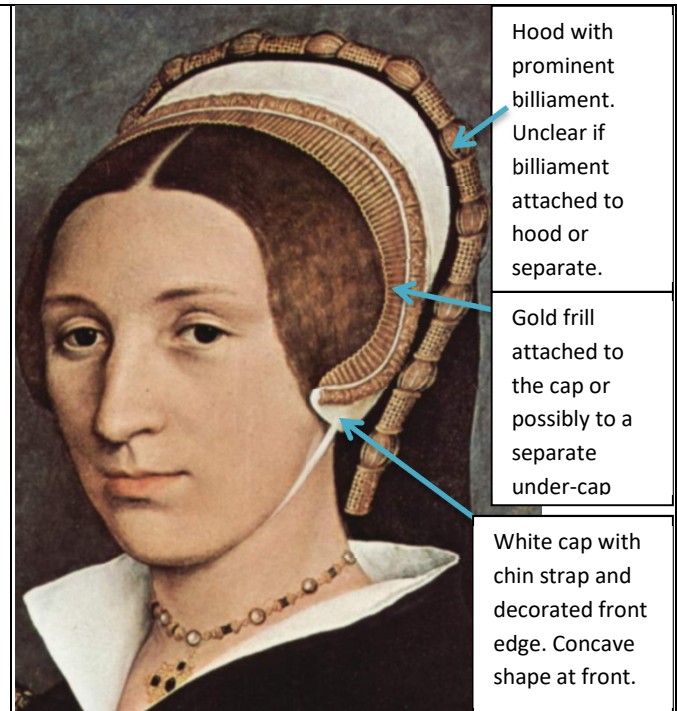
1536 - Lady Hoby by Holbein the Younger

Frill, possibly belonging to an under-cap

Hood. Unclear whether decorated.

Shadow/front let covers the cap and the hair.

Black cap with decorative edge and chin strap.



1540 (approx) - Holbein – thought to be Catherine Howard

Hood with prominent billiamant. Unclear if billiamant attached to hood or separate.

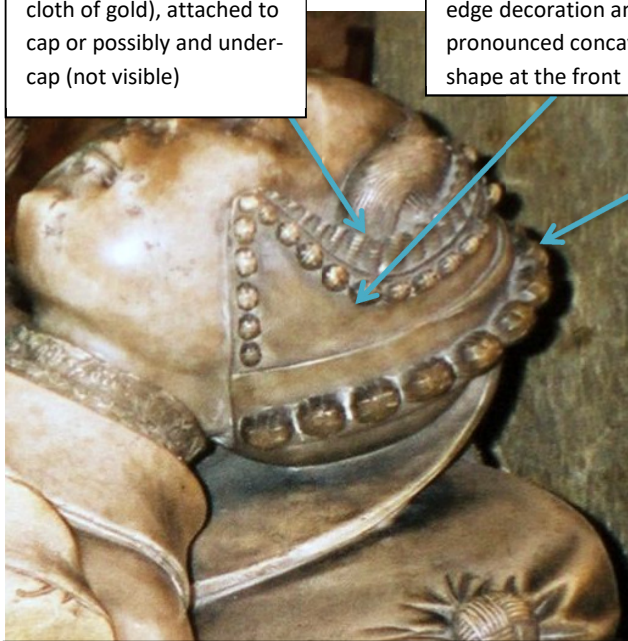
Gold frill attached to the cap or possibly to a separate under-cap

White cap with chin strap and decorated front edge. Concave shape at front.

Frill (texture suggests cloth of gold), attached to cap or possibly and under-cap (not visible)

Cap with prominent edge decoration and pronounced concave shape at the front

Hood, with a prominent billiamant. It is unclear whether the billiamant is an integral part of the hood or a separate piece. Front edge of hood is folded up to reveal the lining. The fall/veil of the hood is pleated.



1547 - monument of Jane Scaresgills - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/52219527@N00/2349709066/in/pool-65944872@N00/>

1555 – Mary Tudor

White cap with chin strap.

Hood with prominent billiament. It appears to be tied at nape of neck.

Black shadow/frontlet.

Fall/veil of the hood. Long. Not pleated. Brought over the head to form a bongrace, folded back over and pinned. Very common style in middle class French women in second half of 16th

Hood.

Shadow/frontlet.

Approx mid-16th century – Young woman - from Le Costume Civil en France page

Frill of cloth of gold. Probably attached to cap

Cap with decorated front edge. Sides shaped to a sharp angle.

Hood, folded up at the front to reveal the lining. With prominent billiament. Unclear if billiament attached to hood or separate item. Hood has a pleated fall/veil. Note that the part of hood holding billiament is raised over the level of the veil.

1558 – Elizabeth cave effigy - http://www.flickr.com/photos/sic_itur_ad_astra/5937627156/in/set-72157627225902074

FRENCH HOOD COMPONENTS 1530 - 1560

The components of the French hood remain essentially the same as in the prior period and there is little change in the shape and fashion of the hood through this time. The cap acquires a more concave shape and later a more angular shape by the end of the period. However, otherwise there is not much change in the French hood.

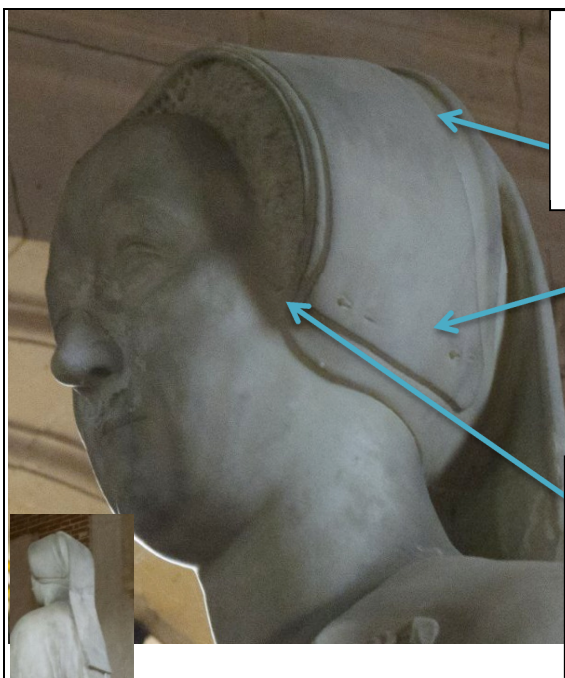
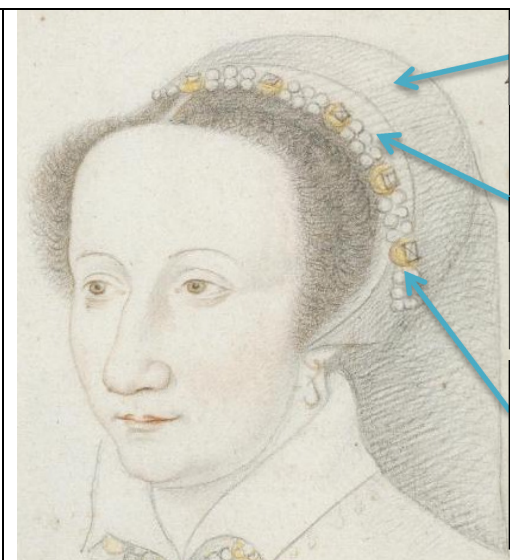
The cap is usually worn with a cloth of gold frill and sometimes with a chin strap. There is probably an under-cap that is not visible. A shadow is sometimes worn over the hood (and it can be shaped rather than rectangular). The billiaments are usually prominent. The hood is sometimes worn folded back to reveal lining and the fall of the hood is pleated.

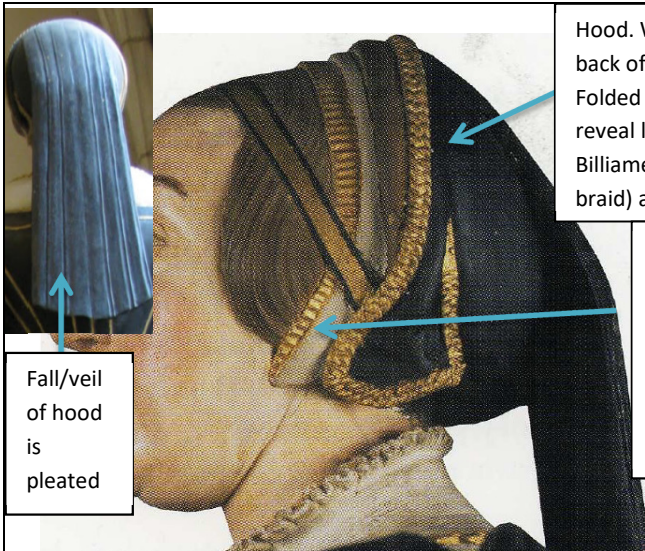
French hood circa 1560s to 1590s

It should be noted that, in France, the hood is abandoned by the upper classes through the 1560s. It continues to be worn by middle classes into the 1580s, usually without billiaments and in a bongrace style. Among the nobility it is occasionally worn by older women, usually in a modest fashion, with a shadow. Younger women wear jewelled caps or wear their hair uncovered, styled with jewels.

The hood continues to be worn in England until the end of the century.

ANALYSIS OF IMAGES

 <div data-bbox="646 801 817 1003"> <p>Hood, plain, without billiament. Unpleated fall/veil.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="662 1048 833 1238"> <p>Shadow pinned to the hood. You can see the pins!</p> </div> <div data-bbox="662 1249 833 1469"> <p>Cap, just visible under the hood. There is no frill or decoration.</p> </div>	 <div data-bbox="1348 801 1503 992"> <p>Hood, plain. Unclear if fall/veil is pleated.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1348 992 1503 1142"> <p>Frill, probably attached to a cap.</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1348 1153 1503 1344"> <p>Billiament worn separately, at front of hood!</p> </div> <div data-bbox="853 1355 1503 1444"> <p>Est 1560s - Jacqueline de Lustrac, dame de Caumont - http://cnum.cnam.fr/CGI/fpage.cgi?PFOLME3/84/100/158/0/</p> </div>
<p>1566 – Tomb of Diane de Poitiers - http://www.flickr.com/photos/41842369@N04/6233579996/</p>	




Fall/veil of hood is pleated

Hood. Worn at back of head. Folded back to reveal lining. Billiament (gold braid) attached.

White cap with gold frill attached. Unclear if there is a chin strap.

1571 – Funerary monument of Antoinette de Fontette (Musée des Beaux-Arts de Dijon)



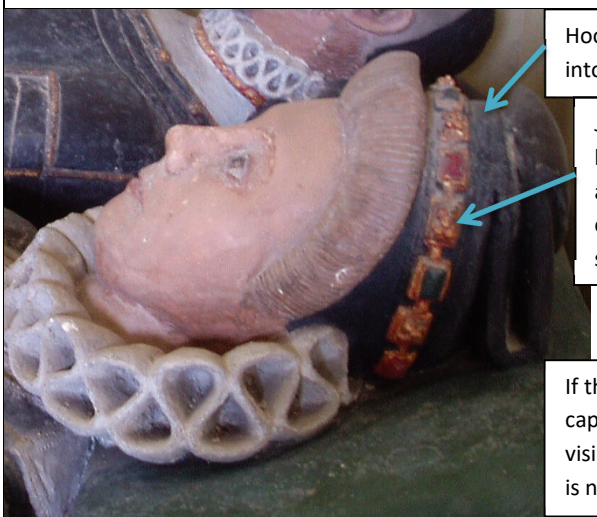
Under-cap, gathered at front, but without frill

Cap, plain

Paste or billiament not jewelled or decorated.

Hood, with pleated fall/veil

1571 - Dayrell tomb - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/erichardyuk/3473054249/in/photostream/>




Hood, veil folded into bongrace

Jewelled billiament. It appears to sit on a raised strip of fabric.

If there is a cap, it is not visible. There is no frill

1570s - John Fisher and his wife <http://www.flickr.com/photos/amthomson/363686075>



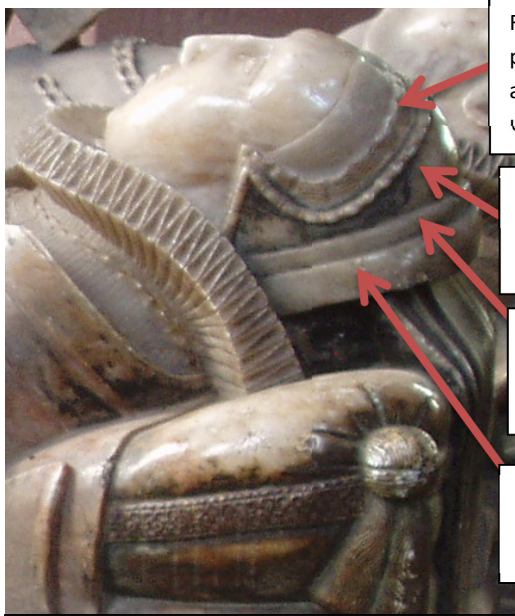
White cap, plain

Black cap or shadow worn under hood

Hood, plain

Paste or billiament. Unjewelled

1578 – Offley tomb - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/stiffleaf/458858>



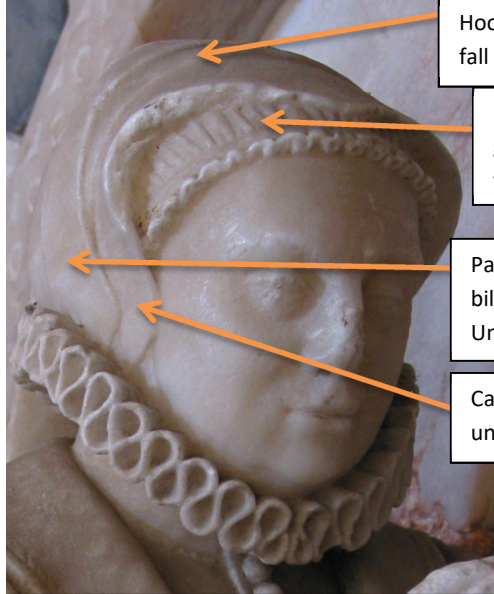
Frill, probably attached to under-cap

Cap with decorated edge.

Hood with pleated veil/fall

Paste / billiament, unjewelled

1580 - Fielding tomb - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/amthomson/7144302639/in/pool-65944872@N00/>



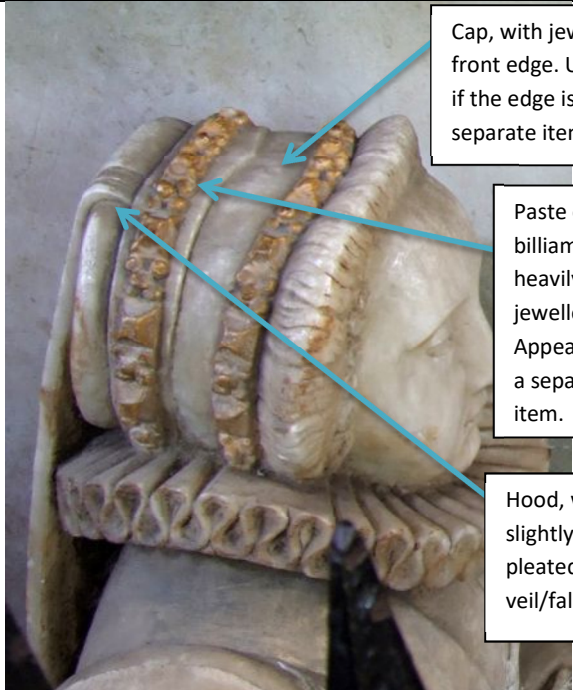
Hood. Shape of fall is unclear

Under-cap, gathered at front

Paste or billiament. Unjewelled

Cap, undecorated

1585 - Mary Perry - http://www.flickr.com/photos/oxfordshire_church_photos/346435463/in/pool-

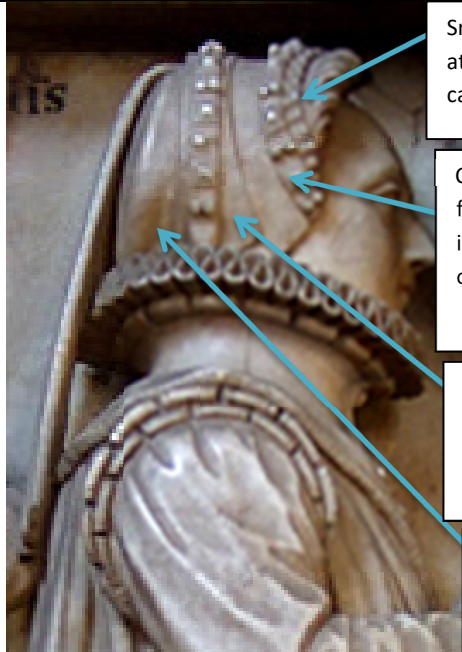


Cap, with jewelled front edge. Unclear if the edge is a separate item.

Paste or billiament, heavily jewelled. Appears to be a separate item.

Hood, with slightly pleated veil/fall.

1590 - Dormer Monument - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/erichardyuk/718595237/>



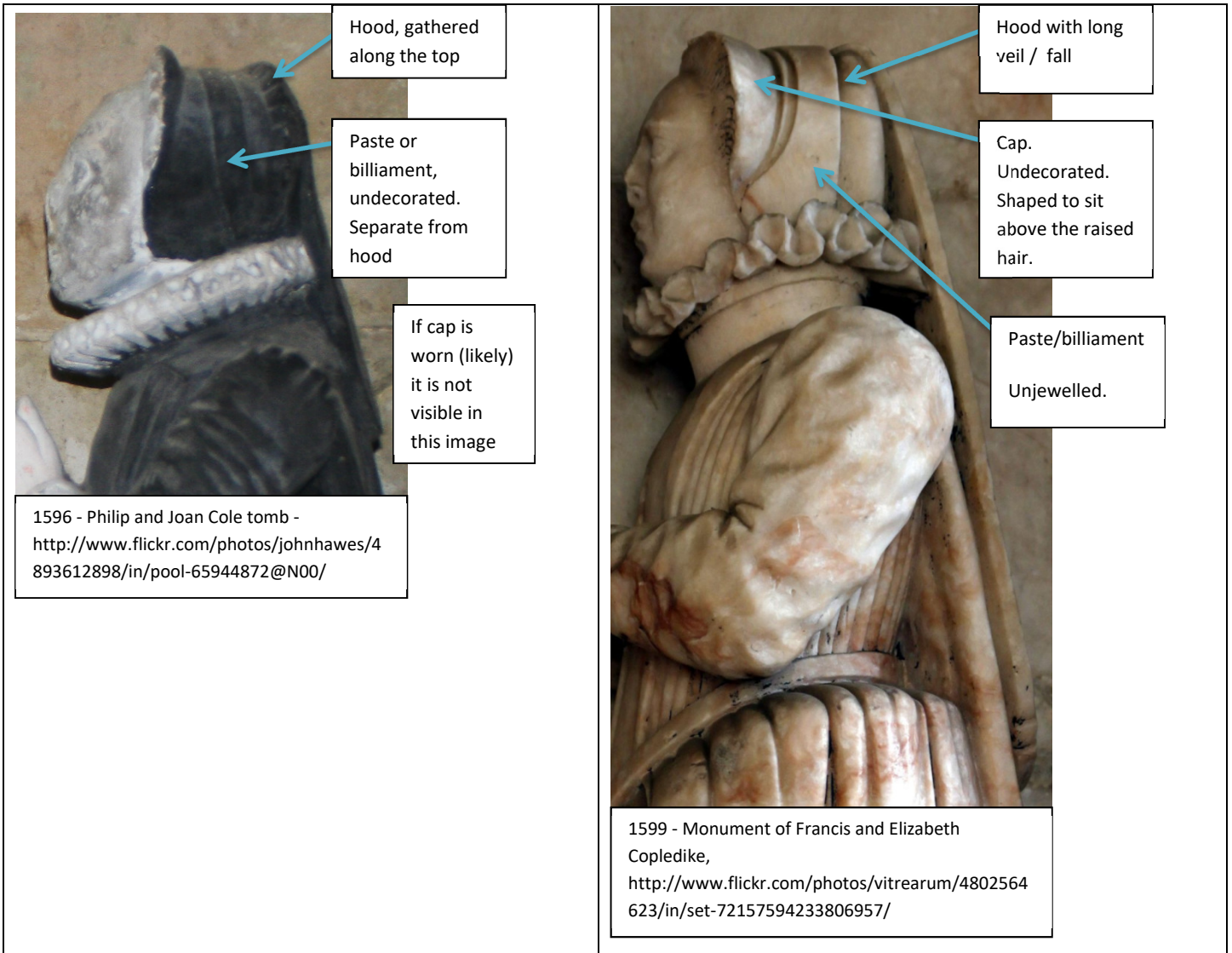
Small frill, probably attached to under-cap

Cap with jewelled front edge. Unclear if edge is separate or part of cap.

Paste / billiament, jewelled. Appears to be a separate item.

Hood with lightly pleated veil

1592 - Manwood (1525-92), funeral monument detail - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/chrisjohnbeckett/285804384/in/pool-65944872@N00/#/>



FRENCH HOOD COMPONENTS 1560s – 1590s

The elements of the French hood remain similar to previous periods, but their shape changes to accommodate changing hair styles. Towards the end of the century it becomes rare to have a front edge on the cap. When it is worn, it appears to be a separate piece, rather than sewn into the cap.

In the earlier periods it is unclear whether the paste/billiament is attached to the hood or whether it is a separate item. It now appears as a separate item, worn over the hood, regardless of whether it is decorated.

The bongrace style continues to be worn by middle classes in particular, although I've provided few images.

French hood elements and construction - discussion

The following elements appear to be present in a French hood throughout the 16th century, although not all of them are always worn:

1. White under-cap, sometimes with a white frill in front
2. Cap or bonnet, sometimes decorated with jewelled edge, sometimes attaching a gold frill. Occasionally worn with chin strap.
3. The hood, always black. Sometimes worn folded back to reveal lining
4. Billiament or “paste”, with or without jewels. Initially a part of the hood, later probably a separate item.
5. Shadow or frontlet. Usually worn pinned over the cap or hood. There are a few images of shadow worn under hood.

1. White under-cap.

The white under-cap is not always visible in images, but it can be clearly seen in many of the early images and in some of the later funerary effigies. It was likely always worn (if only because you would not want to be putting the cap/bonnet of expensive fabric directly onto your hair!).

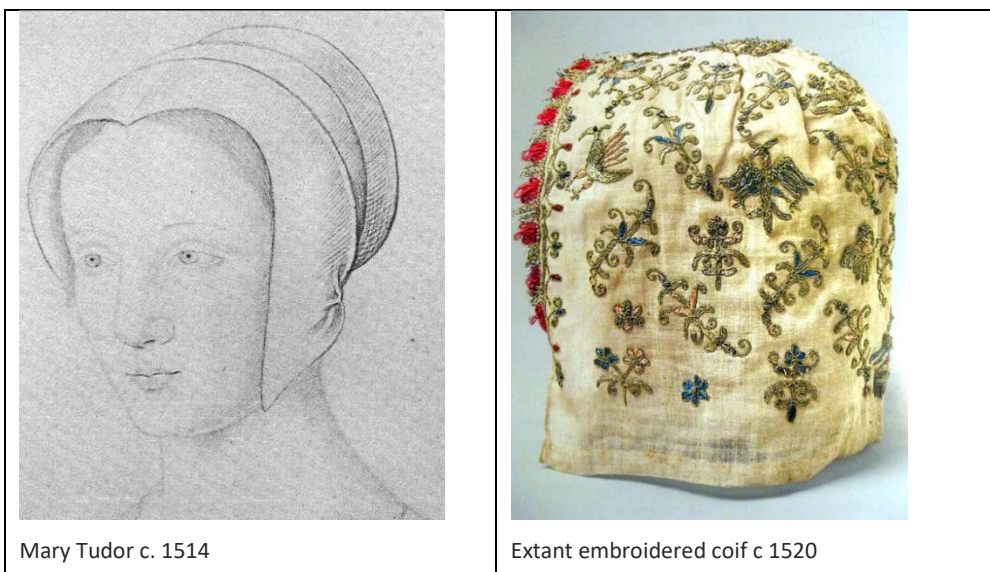
I conjecture that where there is a white frill that is visible in the hood, that frill is part of the under-cap and where the frill is gold, it is part of the cap/bonnet.

The Mary Perry monument, depicted above, suggests that the cap may have been gathered at the front to form the frill, although other constructions are also possible (eg fabric pleated separately and sewn onto the cap). There do not appear to be any surviving examples.

Construction of under-cap

There is no real evidence for construction of under-cap. Possibilities include constructing it in the same way as you would a coif – as in Janet Arnold 4 (please note that coif construction in Tudor Tailor is incorrect)

There are images of white caps, which may give a clue as to the construction.



2. A cap or bonnet, often decorated.

The second cap is the layer that is commonly mistaken for the “crescent” of the hood. It has the appearance of being made of silk, velvet or other rich fabric, usually white, black or red in colour. It is sometimes beaded or embroidered.

Apart from visual evidence, there are some references in period texts which suggest that a cap or bonnet was worn under the French hood.

Lady Jane, heading to her execution in 1554 was described by a contemporary as wearing a “*cappe lyned with fese velvett, and edget about with the same, in a French hoode, all black, with a black byllyment*”¹³

Hugh Latimer in a 1550 sermon lamented that women “*must wear French hoods, and I cannot tell you, I, what to call it. And when they make them ready and come to the covering of their head, they will call and say, "Give me my French hood, and give me my bonnet, or my cap," and so forth.*”¹⁴

The length of the cap and the shape of the front edge changes through the century, as illustrated above.

The cap often has a decorated or jewelled “edge.

In England, the wearing of a jewelled edge was restricted by sumptuary law 1533 c.5, which required that any man whose wife wears “*any Frenche hood or bonnet of velvett with any habiliment, past, or egge [edge] of gold, perle, or stone*” keep at least one horse of a particular quality.

It is not always clear whether the decorated edge is an integral part of the cap or is a separate piece that is pinned or basted on and therefore interchangeable. In the images I have, it appears that it is a part of the cap. The decorated front edge becomes uncommon in late in 16th century as women begin wearing their hair high at the front.

The cap sometimes has a chin-strap. The chin strap appears at the time when the cap and hood are sitting further back on the head and the billiments of the hood are becoming more prominent and heavier. It may be inferred that the chin strap has the practical purpose of holding the cap and hood on the wearer’s head.

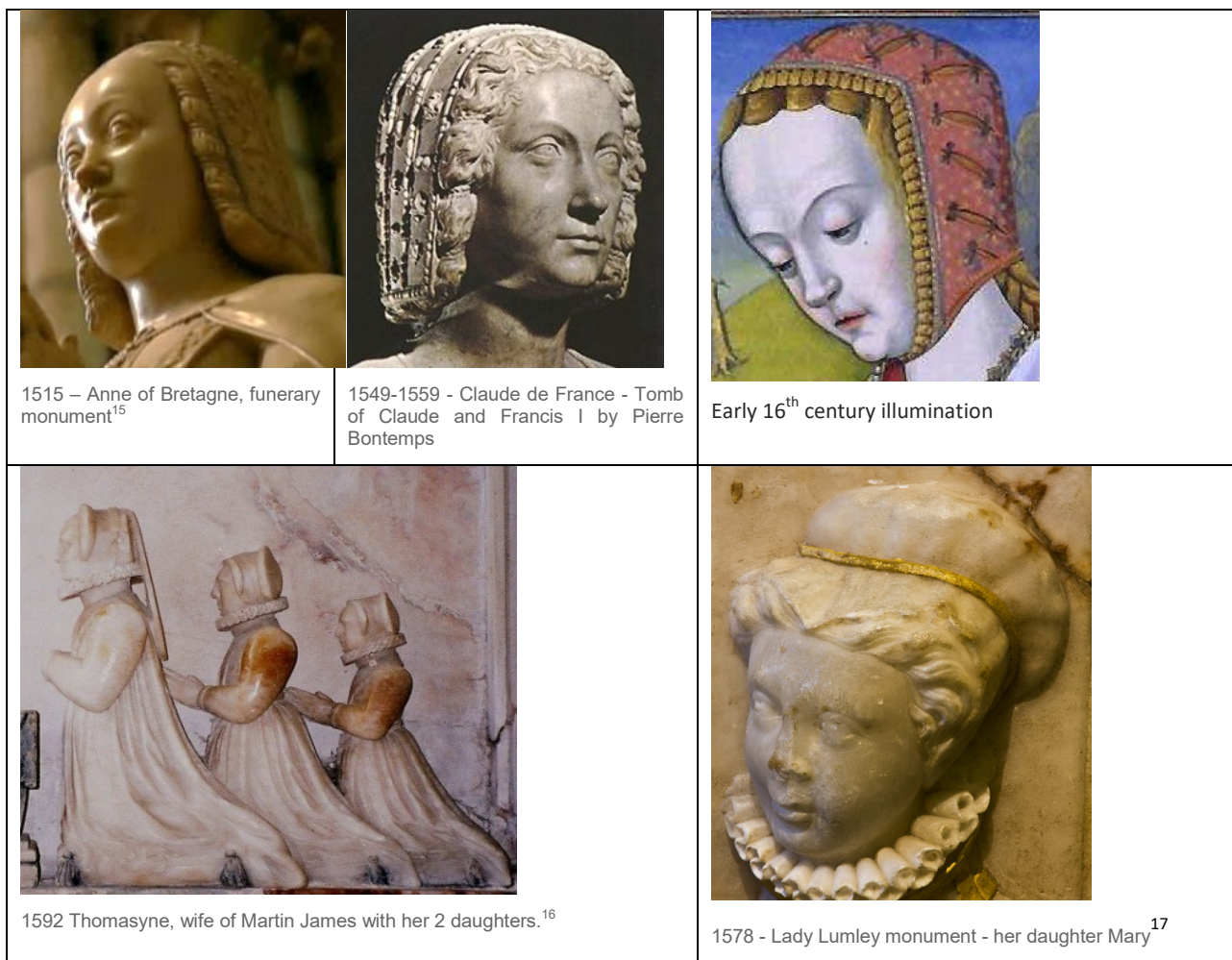
There is evidence that the **cloth of gold frill** is attached to this cap (Portrait of Female Donor and the engraving of Elizabeth of Austria are particularly instructive).

Construction of cap

The construction of the cap/bonnet is unclear. There are some images and effigies where the women appear to be wearing the cap without the hood over the top which may provide a clue about the possible construction.

¹³ <http://www.tudorhistory.org/primary/janemary/mary.html>

¹⁴ *Selected Sermons of Hugh Latimer*, Associated University Press, 1968, page 154. Available at <http://books.google.com.au/books?id=RRlj-PmKeEgC>



Mistress Clara van der Maes has reconstructed the early cap to the pattern of the extant embroidered coif, pictured in the under-cap section above and it works very well for the early version of the hood.¹⁸

I have previously reconstructed this cap as a circle sewn into the brim and I am now convinced that the reconstruction is wrong.

3. The hood

The shape of the hood changes through the course of the 16th century, however, it always sits in a round shape on the head, it has a fall or veil at the back and is always black in colour (for adults). Various wardrobe accounts suggest that the hood is made of velvet, silk, taffeta, satin and similar rich fabrics.

In the early 1500s, the hood is soft, with long sides and back (in French known as the “bavolet”) and a fall/veil at the back, falling to mid-back. The fall is occasionally pinned to wearer’s head to form a bongrace.

¹⁵ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/saskya/2512490333/>

¹⁶ <http://www.flickr.com/photos/52219527@N00/1158733885/in/pool-68315175@N00>

¹⁷ http://www.flickr.com/photos/sic_itur_ad_astra/6267782040/in/set-72157627225902074

¹⁸ <http://dutchrenaissanceclothing.com/2016/12/formal-franco-flemish-hood-pattern/>

The front edge of the hood is often, but not always, decorated with gold embroidery or border. More discussion under billiament, below.

As the century progresses, of the hood becomes shorter until it sits just below the wearer's ears, leaving the neck exposed. It becomes much more fitted/tight around the wearer's head. There is literary evidence to suggest that the hood sits tightly around the ears:

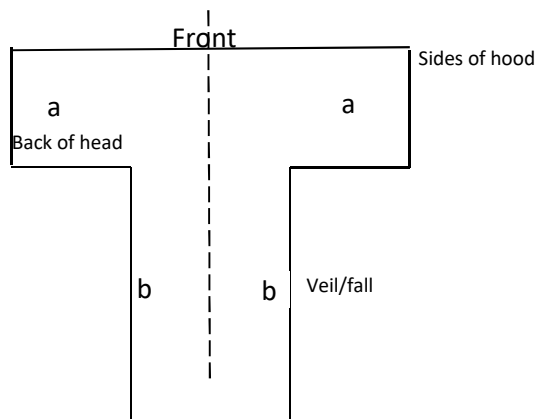
The 1581 satire by Barnaby Rich, titled "*Farewell to Militarie Profession*" mocks the woman-like attire and head-dress of a gentleman, dressed in a French fashion and says (about his head covering):

"Now if it were to defende the winde, or the coldnesse of the aire, my thinke a French hoode had been a great deale better, for that had been bothe gentlewoman like, and beng close pinde down about his eares, would haue kepte his hedde a great deal warmer"

The fall of the hood becomes narrower and, by mid-century, is often pleated. Narrow and pleated curtains of the hood and prominent billiaments continue to the end of the century in England. French ladies abandon the hood shortly after the middle of the century.

Construction of the French Hood

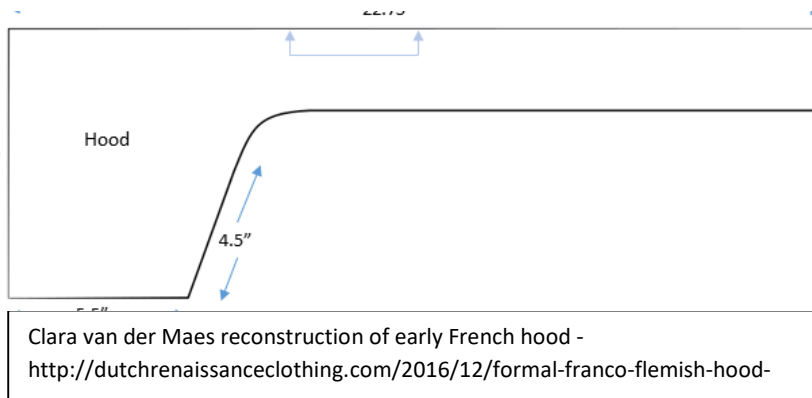
My construction of the the earliest French hood was essentially this:



Fold along dotted line, sew (a) together, sew (b) together. Clip the seams at the corner.

This worked reasonably well, except in the corner, which does not sit very well.

Mistress Clara van der Maes arrived at a slightly different construction, which is likely to solve the problem that I encountered.



I believe the later hood is an evolution on the early version. The part of the back of head becomes shorter, the front is sometimes shaped (and sometimes not). The veil/fall is sometimes narrower. Because the hood is now fitted around the head, some shaping on the sides and back of the head is necessary.

I am currently playing with fabric to arrive at a way to achieve veil pleating that is consistent with the appearance in effigies.

4. The “paste” or the billiament

The word “paste” often appears in connection with the French hood in the 16th century (see for example the sumptuary law quoted above). Sarah Lorraine of Mode Historique, cited above, interprets the word as a stiffened layer similar to a forehead cloth or front of a cap (the layer which I have interpreted as the cap/bonnet).

I have found two excellent, if very old, articles that trace the meaning of the word “paste”.¹⁹ They both opine that a paste is a decorative border, such as a bridal paste that was used at the time. Having looked at closer-ups of images of brides, I can confirm that they do wear a decorative, often jeweled border, not unlike a billiament of a French hood.

I therefore concluded that a “paste” is a decorative border, to which jewels and similar accessories may be attached. It is synonymous with the word “billiament” or habilliament (derived from the French word for dress or decoration).

It is not clear whether the paste or billiament is a separate item or part of the hood. In the early 16th century, the front decoration is clearly attached to the hood itself. Likewise, in the funerary effigy of Antoinette de Fontette from 1571, pictured above, the billiament (gold braid) is attached to the hood.

However, funerary statues from late 16th century show the paste as a separate piece, worn with or without jewels. The effigies in the mid-century are unclear.

There are contemporary writings and wardrobe accounts which support the proposition that the paste and the jewels worn with the paste were detachable and interchangeable.

For example:

¹⁹ Linthicum, C., 1931. *Cony Skins for Old Pastes*. *Philological quarterly*, volume 10, pages 84–87; Rev. T Medland, 1856. *Extracts from the Steyning Church-Book*. *Sussex Archaeological Collections, Relating to the History and Antiquities of the County VIII*, pages 132–141.

- the Inventory of Goods of Dame Agnes Hungerford, executed in 1523, lists among her possessions “*an egge of golde smythe wyrke for a past set with perle*”, and two “*egges of golde of damaske for the same past*”²⁰ The gold “edges” are listed as separate and interchangeable items to be worn with the “past”.
- Cambridge Records of Early English Drama volume 1 mentions a 1552 order for “*a frenche whoode of clothe of tysshewe with a byliment for the same*” (page 186).
- Wardrobe orders set out on pages 202 to 204 of Queen Elizabeth’s Wardrobe Unlocked (‘QEWU’) mention separate orders for habilliments and for hoods, suggesting that at least by the late 16th century these were separate items.
- In the dialogue in *The French Garden*, published in 1605 and referred to on pages 111 to 112 of QEWU, a lady commands her maid to put away “*my French whood and my Border of Rubies*”. The “border of rubies” may well be a jewelled billiament and is referred to as a separate item.
- In a 1589 will, Jane Harcourt bequeaths “*one Frenche Hood with the villament and carnott thereunto belonging*”²¹
- a 1580 contract for constructing a tomb of a gentlewoman and requires on the tomb “*a decent and p’fect picture or portraiture of a faire gentlewoman with a Frenche-hood, edge and abiliment, with all other apparell furniture jewells ornamentes and things in all respectes usuall, decent, and semely, for a gentlewoman*”²²

The view of the jewelled billiament as a separate item is supported by a mid-16th century sketch of Jacqueline de Lustrac, above, wearing the billiament in front of her hood – across the frill of the cap.

It would, I think, make sense for the lady to be able to wear the hood plainly or dress it up by adding an optional and separate decoration or jewelled billiament. There would be no need to have a separate hood for each decorative billiament and the precious jewels could be stored separately (and more securely).

5. The “shadow”

The final element of the French hood, worn occasionally, usually by older women, is the “shadow”. Janet Arnold cites a 1590s description on page 205 of QEWU referring to “*bone graces, shadowes, vailes or launes that women use to weare on their foreheads for the sunne*”

I have seen this item referred to as a “cornette”, but the use of this term may be misleading. During early 16th century the word “cornette” in French referred to the fall or veil of the hood. By early 1600s the word “cornette” is used for the rectangular piece worn on top of the head (which I have called the “shadow”).²³ Janet Arnold at page 203 of QEWU cites a definition of cornet as a “*coif with long ears, tyed under the chin, and hanging down deep to the top of the breast,*” which is clearly not the item we are talking about. So caution is needed with nomenclature.

²⁰ From account in *Archaeologia or Miscellaneous Tracts Relating to Antiquity*, page 369.

²¹ From the *Wiltshire Archeological and Natural History Magazine*, 1898, volume XXX, page 140

²² “The Brasses of England”, by Herbert W. Macklin quotes on page 10

²³ [Manuel d’archéologie française depuis les temps mérovingiens jusqu’à la Renaissance](#) – pages 21 to 23.

The shadow is usually worn over the cap, but may be worn under or over the hood. It is likely pinned to the layer underneath, is always black and may have a simple rectangular shape or (later in the century) a more complicated shape.