

and scabbards, where the seam is either in the centre or to one side is found in the late 12th/early 13th century contexts from the Cork City excavations. Where decorated they are invariably stamped with heraldic style shields. One scabbard which unfortunately is unprovenanced displays a remarkable stamped decoration. This consists of a hunter or warrior with a long shield attacking a long tailed beast. The scabbard is side seamed perhaps suggesting a tentative date in the 11-late 12th century, though this date is purely arbitrary.

Miscellaneous

The remainder of the leather assemblage from this period consists of the usual array of belts, straps, handles, circular perforated discs, some harness material etc...

Post-Medieval Leather

The excavations which have so far revealed post-medieval finds are ones from Galway City and Dublin Castle. The finds from Galway are all dump material with only one complete vamp which is one with a central tongue extension, with two perforations for the attachment of two latches. The material from Dublin falls broadly into the late 16th to early 18th centuries, with the majority of finds coming from the 17th century moat fills.

The vast bulk of the material is footwear, almost all of which fall into the above category ie latchet fastened shoes with open sides. The stacked heels are either pegged together, nailed together or else affixed by a combination of both methods. The non-footwear material consists of a large number of belts and straps, and a small number of bags and back seamed scabbards which are undecorated.

An interesting aspect of this assemblage are the five spurs or spur fragments which have been found. All are from 17th century contexts and where the material type was identifiable it was found to be cattle.

This is a very general view of the current state of leather finds and research in the Irish context, and I hope that it may be of some interest to the readers of this newsletter.

Bibliography

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Northampton Museums Concealed Shoe Index

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In the 30 months or so that I have been dealing with Northampton Museum's concealed shoe index, 32 finds have been recorded - a fairly good average considering that we are in the main relying on other museums to:

- a. Know about our index.
- b. be aware of the concealed shoe superstition.

I believe that there are hundreds of concealed shoe finds every year that go unrecorded and that our one a month average is merely the tip of the iceberg. A recent article in *The Independent* concerning a possible shoe concealment in the recently discovered coal mine in Leicestershire (believed to be the oldest on record) mentioned our index and so far that has produced four non-museum responses. I am sure that many more will appear if we advertise in the relevant publications.

Of the 32 recorded concealments we have had since November 1988, one of the most interesting was from a toll house dated 1815 in Chiselden, Wiltshire. Here renovation work had revealed a brick-sided, L-shaped pit, dug into the chalk bedrock. This stood in an outhouse, which was later used as a toilet, beneath a concrete floor estimated to have been laid in the 1920's.

The pit was filled with a mixture of chalk rubble and artefacts including eleven shoes, mostly incomplete, but one woman's boot seemed to date to post 1885, one man's blucher (work) boot post 1900 and one child's boot, also post 1885. Perhaps this is a typical example of what Denise Dixon-Smith (in her article in the last ALG Newsletter) describes as a 'family' group. Along with the shoes, there were iron implements, including a flat iron, part of a frying pan, nails, and the blades of a large scraper and semicircular chopper. There were also five conkers and a stoneware ink or blacking bottle.

The earliest shoe recorded from the time I have been at the Museum was dated as being from the first half of the 17th century. It was brought to our attention via Chris Morris, Curator of Gloucester Folk Museum (who is also our most consistent supplier of finds) in May of last year and was actually found inside a lath and plaster wall in the

SPCK shop in Gloucester city centre.

The shoe is a child's of the open-side latchet-tie style, with the leather sewn flesh outermost. It had obviously been a good quality and probably expensive shoe in its time as it had an integral toe-cap and is fully lined.

There are no areas of England and Wales that are obviously absent in the Concealed Shoe Index but regrettably, Scotland and Ireland seem to be under represented but I think this is due to poor communication in the museum world. Of the 32 I have been personally involved with, we have had finds from Cornwall and Sussex, three from Northumberland, three from Wales and six from Gloucester, to name but a few. Another interesting statistic one can throw out from these finds concerns the location in which they are located in the buildings. Six were found in or around fireplaces or chimneys, but surprisingly four were recorded as being found in ovens.

Reasons for such high proportions of finds to be associated with fireplaces are covered in Denise's previous article and need not be repeated.

In March 1989 we received word from Bowes Museum in County Durham that a number of clogs had been found buried in a disused lead mine. One obviously thinks that boots and shoes would often be found lying casually in or around disused industrial sites, but here the finder is adamant that the clogs had deliberately been buried in a pile of rubble underground. He then goes on to suggest that this is a common occurrence in metal mines and can be linked to the domestic superstition of using the shoes as good luck charms.

Initially, we viewed this variation on a theme rather sceptically but two other reports have come in since then, both from museums, in which similar practices have been discovered. The most recent of course is the Leicestershire find (which I mentioned earlier as being reported in *The Independent*) which is important not only as it the oldest known mine but also because complete medieval costume (as well as the boots) has been discovered.

I personally have drawn no conclusions on the possibilities of shoes deposited in mines (or indeed any industrial findings) being purposely deposited for the same reasons as footwear hidden in domestic buildings. It seems likely however that people's superstitious nature would remain with them whether at home or at work, presumably more so at work where the danger is increased. It will be interesting to see if other shoes are brought to our attention from sites of industrial manufacture.

* See note on page 5.

Book Review

Arnold, Janet *Queen Elizabeth's Wardrobe Unlock'd*

Maney, Leeds, 1988

Price £75-00

With its 376 pages, 460 black and white illustrations and 16 in colour, this is the long awaited, definitive commentary on the inventories of Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe, on which the author has worked for eighteen years. It will remain the ultimate source of information on dress in the second half of the sixteenth century for many years. For the inventories include not only the Queen's wardrobe, but also her gifts to others: her servants, foreign knights and Mary, Queen of Scots. While the greater part of the book is obviously devoted to major items of dress, the splendid robes designed to dazzle her courtiers and foreign visitors (and all the known portraits of her are included, together with her contemporaries, with enlargements of the fine detail demanded by costume students), there are also sections devoted to accessories: jewellery, embroidery, hoods, gloves, fans, stockings and shoes.

The footwear will, of course, be of special interest to our readers, and the main section occurs on p.210-6, but there are also references on p.46-7, 105-6, 110, 206, and 326. So it takes time to locate all the references. The last page lists the pantobles in the 1600 inventory, though it would obviously have helped to have had all the original references.

The main section concerns the shoemakers and their work, and it is marvellous to have some information on the men involved (makers and a closer), their tools, and a tantalizing mention of two lasts in 1584. Does this imply that the Queen was already having her shoes made straights? The shoes appear to have been made a snug fit, for enough 'shooing horns' were bought to have one always to hand. And how economical the Queen was, in spite of opulent appearance, with a number of examples of translating or new vamping recorded - doubtless saving exquisite embroidered uppers and re-making in the latest style. How gorgeous some of the shoes were can only be guessed from the finely pinked shoes illustrated, though made for lesser mortals. But surely 306 with the large open side is post 1610, and the tunnel stitching mentioned in the caption was common to the end of the eighteenth century.