



ARCHAEOLOGICAL LEATHER GROUP NEWSLETTER

No. 33 March 2011

visit the ALG website at www.archleathgrp.org.uk

Editor's note:

Welcome to issue No. 33 of the Group's newsletter! After many months of hard slog by the editors, Roy Thomson and Quita Mould, the volume, *Leather Tanneries: the Archaeological Evidence* has now appeared in print. It contains many of the papers from the ALG's very successful conference in Walsall in 2008, which considered what excavators could expect to find if their trench contained part of a tannery or other skin-processing site. The book is a valuable addition to the ALG's list of specialist publications and the Group will be hosting another significant conference this year, which may lead to another.

All the details can be found in this newsletter, together with the usual mix of articles, reviews, news items and commentary. I hope everyone will discover something here they didn't know before!

Sue Winterbottom

17th Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting, held on 16th April, 2010 at **Moyse's Hall** Museum, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Present: Barbara Wills (Chair), Angela Karsten, Jackie Keily, Quita Mould, John Parrott, Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou, Roy Thomson, Pat Thomson, June Swann, Sue Winterbottom.
Apologies for Absence: Diana Friendship-Taylor, Susanna Harris, Alan Raistrick, Fleur Shearman.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting, which had been previously reported in the Newsletter, were approved.

2. Matters Arising
There were no matters arising.

3. Chair's Report

The Chair reported on a successful visit to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge. The Hadrian's Wall meeting in the autumn had proved to be a very useful and enjoyable extended visit to Birdoswald, the Roman Army Museum, Tullie House in Carlisle and Vindolanda. The Chair reminded members that the Committee welcomed suggestions for meetings and took note of the comment from June Swann that the September/October period could be a busy time for members.

4. Treasurer's Report

The accounts had been previously published in the Newsletter, showing an income during the year of £1482.15 and an expenditure of £498.86, giving a surplus of £983.29 and a balance at the end of the financial year of £3940.87. The Treasurer pointed out that £800 of the income consisted of a donation towards the publication of the "Have We Got a Tannery?" conference. Membership had increased again, to 56, with 17 members coming from 12 countries outside the UK.

As at 14th April, 2010, there was a sum of £4267.17 in the bank and 40 people had already renewed their subscriptions. The report was accepted.

June Swann asked about the £2 extra payment for using PayPal and it was explained that this covered PayPal charges.

5. Future Meetings

The Chair reported on a number of future possibilities for meetings.

- November 4th, 2010: **Cowley's Parchment Works**, Newport Pagnell. Members were urged to book as places were limited.

- Spring 2011: The German Leather Museum, Offenbach. A date was being sought to avoid the many Frankfurt Fairs. The proposal was to make a 2 day visit to this large museum, with the possible addition of a visit to a Roman site. It was noted that the Finds Group were organising a visit to Leiden at this time so there should be some liaison between the ALG and that Group, with a view to avoiding a clash of dates. Roy Thomson has made the preliminary investigations for the visit and Angela Karsten kindly offered to assist.
- Autumn 2011: The subject of the next Conference will be “Why Leather?” which will examine why leather is the chosen material under different conditions. Suggestions from the floor included the examination of materials which might replace leather in the future and the status of leather as a by-product. Roy Thomson offered to contact a materials scientist as a speaker. The next step is that Susanna Harris will make a call for papers.

6. Editor’s Report

The Editor had undertaken some research pertaining to the future appearance and content of the Newsletter. Suggestions for changes had been made, including that it should have a stiff cover and colour printing and more nearly approach the function of a journal. An extended discussion took place, initially before the Editor, who had been delayed by transport problems, arrived and then continued after.

The Editor had calculated that the costs would increase six-fold, taking into account both colour copying and postage. She has already upgraded her DTP software and had also looked at the cost and time implications of producing a web-based and/or email version.

Producing a web-based journal to current norms would require significantly more web space, at higher cost, than we need at present to archive relatively low-quality pdfs of the Newsletter.

The following points were made by the meeting:

- That the ALG needs a Newsletter to provide contact between members.
- It was believed that the Newsletter as it exists meets the group’s needs.
- The primary concern of the meeting was with content.
- Not all our members have email access or broadband.
- The costs outlined could be damaging for this relatively small group.

- If longer articles are submitted, these could take the form of Occasional Papers which could be purchased.

The conclusions reached were that the Editor should produce a piece for the next Newsletter [i.e. this one] to ask members if they wished for changes, with the proviso that they should be aware that this might involve greater costs and involve a larger editorial team. It was agreed that the Editor should be reimbursed for the upgraded software already purchased at a cost of £75.

7. Election of Committee

Two of the elected members of the Committee, Quita Mould and Fleur Shearman, have come to the end of their two year appointments.

Jackie Keily agreed to serve. Proposed by Roy Thomson. Seconded by June Swann.

André Veldmeijer, a co-opted member, is to be asked to become a full member. Proposed by Barbara Wills. Seconded by Quita Mould.

The Treasurer, Roy Thomson, was reappointed for a further year. Proposed by Barbara Wills. Seconded by Jackie Keily.

The Editor, Sue Winterbottom, was reappointed for a further year. Proposed by Roy Thomson. Seconded by Quita Mould.

8. Any Other Business

- Tanneries conference proceedings: Roy Thomson reported that the text was now with the publisher Archetype Books. They may ask for a financial contribution towards the cost of printing coloured illustrations. It was agreed that up to £1500 could be used for this purpose, in addition to the £800 already designated, on the understanding that support will be sought from other donors to reimburse this sum.
- Publications by members: Two members showed copies of their recent publications: *The Largest Tannery in the Kingdom* by John Parrott and *Tanning in Cyprus from the 16th to the 20th. Century* by Euphrosyne Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou.
- Sinew Cordage Objects: There was protracted discussion on the identity of the objects which appeared in André Veldmeijer’s Newsletter 31 article but without unanimous resolution.

The meeting closed at 12.45 pm.

Pat Thomson (*in the Secretary’s absence*)

2010 Autumn Meeting

In November last year a group of 15 from the Archaeological Leather Group visited Cowley's Parchment works at Newport Pagnell, Buckinghamshire. They were able to watch the production of high quality vellum for manuscripts, state documents and diplomas, by processes that have changed little since late antiquity. Jackie Keily, Fleur Shearman and Anne Suosilta have sent the accompanying photos. For those who were unable to join the visit, footage of parchment preparation at Cowley's works is shown as part of an excellent short video that can be watched online, called "Making Manuscripts". It can be found by searching for Cowley's from this page:

<http://www.getty.edu/art/>



Cleaning the stretched skin with a half-moon knife



Cowley's parchment works:
location by a water source



Measuring for a book page



Attaching a prepared skin to a frame to be dried and stretched



Rolls of parchment and trimmings

Conference Review

“Wrapping and Unwrapping the Body - Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives” at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, May 2010 and **“Wrapping Objects”** as part of the Theoretical Archaeology Group Conference held at Durham University, December 2009.

These two events brought together archaeologists and anthropologists to discuss wrapping materials and wrapping practices. Many of the papers focused on textiles but it was interesting to see leather and furs well represented, along with examples of metals and clay. Here I draw attention to the papers on animal skin products as these will be of interest to the readers of the ALG newsletter.

Peter Whitridge (Memorial University of Newfoundland) presented his research on wooden dolls as a feature of Inuit play and learning. These wooden dolls are ubiquitous finds at pre-contact Inuit sites of the past millennium and ethnographic evidence suggests they were clothed with tiny hide garments. He presented a number of clothed wooden dolls that have been excavated from sites in Newfoundland and discussed how playing with and dressing the doll was a way children learned about their world.

Santiago Riera (SERP - Universitat de Barcelona) presented the results of a research team investigating the archaeological and archaeobotanical data from a Late Bronze Age burial site, in the Cova des Pas, Menorca, Spain. Through micro-analysis it is understood that some of the corpses were wrapped in leather shrouds that were attached with ropes. Pollen analysis shows that plants were placed inside the shrouds close to the body.

Nancy Ukai Russell (independent researcher, California) presented a paper on baby-wrapping, looking at the technical and cultural diversity of carrying and wrapping infants. While most of her examples were of textile wrappings, she showed fur pouches used by the Inuit in the early twentieth century and speculated on the materials used for the earliest baby slings or carrying devices.

Vicky Gashe (KNH Centre for Biomedical Egyptology, University of Manchester) presented re-

search on the wrappings used in 25 cemeteries from the Badari region of Upper Egypt, dating from the Predynastic period to the end of the Old Kingdom (c 500BC – 2184BC). She identified three types of wrapping materials used in the graves: reed matting, animal skins and linen. From her results she suggested that animal skins were more common in the earlier periods and that despite linen being the most common type of dressing for the dead in Egypt it was usually accompanied by skins and matting.

Susanna Harris (Institute of Archaeology, UCL) looked at animal skins as body wrapping in Bronze Age Europe. She discussed the visual features of skins and furs and the methods archaeologists have used in understanding the role of skins in prehistoric Europe. Looking at the context provided by the skins present in the coffin burials of northern Europe and the Hallstatt salt mines, Austria, she contrasted the protective role of skins in a working environment with their role as large wrappings in burials.

Themes that came up in the discussion were the uses of wrappings to add value, to conceal the contents from view, to change the nature of the contents or to separate wrapped and unwrapped versions of the same contents. Hero Granger-Taylor suggested that special attention should be paid to the issue of bias when comparing archaeological sites due to the differential preservation of textiles, basketry and leather. In terms of understanding the context of these materials she also pointed out that burial wrappings may reflect practices of bedding used in life and contrasted the time required to produce textiles versus skins.

The sessions were co-organised by Susanna Harris (Institute of Archaeology, UCL) & Laurence Douney (Department of Anthropology, UCL) who are co-editing a book on wrapping to be published by Left Coast Press.

Susanna Harris

Forthcoming Events

Notice of Annual General Meeting, 2011

This year's AGM will take place during the visit to the Deutsches Ledermuseum at Offenbach on Friday, 1 April, 2011 at 2pm.

Nomination of Ordinary Committee Members for 2011-2013

There is currently space for one or more **“Ordinary Members”** to join the ALG committee and we warmly invite members to nominate themselves for this position. The committee meets twice a year and is involved in organising two annual meetings for ALG members, contributing and sourcing up to date items for the newsletter and encouraging research in areas of interest. The position is held for two years and nominations are considered at the AGM, but feel free to get in touch with one of the committee members (e.g. myself or the Chair) beforehand if you would like to discuss getting involved. We welcome your talents and enthusiasm! Contact details are on the final page.

Susanna Harris (Secretary)

Spring Meeting, 2011

The visit to Frankfurt/Offenbach, to see the Deutsches Ledermuseum and the Roman fort and museum at Saalberg is taking place between Thursday, March 31st and Saturday, April 2nd. There will be 14 of us attending and it should be a memorable outing, with the eclectic collections at Offenbach providing enough leather and shoes for all tastes.

Autumn Meeting, 2011

‘Why leather?’ - a one day conference at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL, London.

Thursday, 8 September 2011

Love it or loathe it, leather has played a fundamental role in the history of humankind. But why did and do people choose to use leather?

This conference brings together researchers to explore the science, craft and beliefs behind the use of leather, fur, parchment and rawhide. Topics include the physical properties of skins according to species and tanning process, medieval armour, South American codices, furs in Bronze Age Europe, scented gloves in Renaissance Italy, nineteenth century industrial machinery, Spanish wineskins, bespoke contemporary interiors and more.

The conference is hosted by the Archaeological Leather Group at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1H 0PY on Thursday 8th September 2011 from 10am to 5pm.

You are welcome to join us! The day costs £10 for students, £20 for ALG members and £25 for non-members. Tea and cakes will be provided.

Details of the day’s programme and abstracts of papers can be found on the Group’s website:

<http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/whyleather.htm>

To register, contact Jackie Kelly:

jkeily@museumoflondon.org.uk

Future meetings

Venues for the Spring and Autumn meetings in 2012 are still undecided and members are invited to suggest locations for these, whether in the UK or elsewhere. Is there a museum you have visited or would like to visit that has significant leather in its collections, or do you know somewhere where artisan leather is still being produced in quantity? We are always looking for new locations or, if there is demand, will happily revisit places that have hosted successful meetings in the past. An important consideration, of course, is that there will be room for a dozen or so of us and something to eat and drink nearby! If you have any ideas on the subject, please send them to Diana Friendship-Taylor (Meetings Co-ordinator) whose address is on the last page.

Two online resources for the conservation, handling and storage of leather

1. Canadian Conservation Institute Notes

<http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/crc/notes/index-eng.aspx>

The CCI Notes "offer practical advice about issues and questions related to the care, handling and storage of cultural objects". These are freely available in both HTML and pdf formats. The series is constantly expanding and the following deal with issues relating to leather, skin and fur:

N8/1 Removing Mould from Leather (1993)

N8/2 Care of Alum, Vegetable, and Mineral Tanned Leather (1992)

N8/3 Care of Mounted Specimens and Pelts (1988)

N8/4 Care of Rawhide and Semi-Tanned Leather (1992)

2. Skin and leather in cultural heritage

<http://skinheritage.blogspot.com/>

We have drawn attention before in the Newsletter to Lina Falcão's blog, which lists books and research papers relevant to the conservation and restoration of skin, parchment, leather and fur - as well as to the trades which use them as raw materials (saddlery, bookbinding, taxidermy, upholstery and many others). 55 publications are described in the Conservation section and many of her sections are well worth bookmarking if you have a specialist interest, as new entries are continually being added.

(information from Barbara Wills)

Some recent publications

Leather Tanneries: the Archaeological Evidence eds. Roy Thomson and Quita Mould, London, Archetype (2011)
ISBN: 9781904982616, Paperback.

This volume sees the publication of papers from **the Archaeological Leather Group's conference** at Walsall Leather Museum in 2008, entitled **"Have we got a tannery?"**. It will be welcome



Illustration - 19th cent. Native American Frame Drum with bison figure from the website of the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art. (reproduced in Lina Falcão's blog)

(and essential!) reading for all field archaeologists who think they have unearthed a tannery site, or indeed evidence for other forms of skin and hide processing. The book surveys the likely nature of this evidence from prehistoric to modern times and in places as far apart as the Moray Firth and central Sudan. More details are available on the Archetype website: <http://www.archetype.co.uk/>

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"Stepping across the Mediterranean: Conservation of a pair of Pontifical Sandals of the Thirteenth Century AD" by Anna Valeria Jervis, Maria Rita Giuliani, Marcella Ioele, Michael Jung, Marica Mercalli and Federica Moretti in Conservation and the Eastern Mediterranean: Contributions to the 2010 International Institute of Conservation Congress, Istanbul (2010) pp 113-119.

Abstract

"This contribution deals with a pair of historical leather shoes, well preserved and richly decorated with arabesque motifs, which belong to the municipal collections of Castel Sant'Elia (near Rome). The Latin word 'sandalia' usually refers to particular liturgical shoes worn by the bishop on special occasions. A few other examples from the same historical period have survived in different parts of Europe. These objects are considered an outstanding example of the cultural and artistic interactions between Sicily and Ayyubid Egypt in the thirteenth century. Both manufacturing technology and decoration are extremely refined and seem to descend from the Coptic tradition of shoe-making. Our

contribution will focus on the conservation treatment recently carried out together with scientific investigations and historical research. Choices and processes necessarily take into account their destination, as they will be exhibited in a new museum that the *Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro* is presently setting up.”

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The Carlisle Millennium Project.
Excavations in Carlisle, 1998-2001

vol. 1: Stratigraphy (by John Zant)
vol. 2: The Finds (ed. Christine Howard-Davis)
Oxford Archaeology, Lancaster Imprints 14 (2009), ISBN 978-0-904220-56-8 and 15 (2010), ISBN 978-0-904220-57-5 (£25 each)

A long time in the making, the Finds volume from these excavations includes reports by Quita Mould and Sue Winterbottom on the Roman and Medieval leather finds. This is the first major report on leather from Carlisle since 1991 and contains illustrations and discussion of shoes and waste leather from both periods, as of large portions of Roman saddle covers, 'horse bardings' and tents in a variety of designs.

At 936 pages, with another 514 on the accompanying DVD (vol.3), this book is the best guide now available to the staggering richness of artefacts and ecofacts of all categories from Carlisle, particularly from its waterlogged deposits.

The volume begins with a very welcome essay on the history and nature of occupation on the site, which includes part of a 1st-5th century fort overlain by tenements and ditches linked to the Norman and then 12th-14th century castles. This synthesis by Christine Howard-Davis shows how the finds evidence has been an indispensable plank in putting that history together.

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The Faddan More Psalter: a progress update by John Gillis and Anthony Read (National Museum of Ireland, Adobe PDF document)

This illustrated article summarises the work undertaken to date on the Fadden More Psalter, an 8th century leather-bound illuminated MS discovered in a peat bog in 2006. It can be **downloaded and printed out from the museum's website** by following a link on this page:

<http://www.museum.ie/en/list/projects.aspx>

A recent press release from the Museum adds further information. The style of the binding is now being compared to that of Coptic MSS from Egypt and fragments of papyrus were unexpectedly found in its lining, late in the conservation process. This raises tantalising questions about the influences at work on the development of the early church in Ireland. A documentary on the find and subsequent research was shown on **RTÉ in September (“Treasure from the Bog”)** and copies are available on DVD from the museum shop: <http://shop.museum.ie/> for €19.99.

The Psalter itself will go on display in June this year.

Press release:

<http://www.museum.ie/en/news/press-releases.aspx>

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North American Aboriginal Hide Tanning, The Act of Transformation and Revival by Morgan Baillargeon, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Mercury Series (2010)

We have been provided with the following description of the book, which is the result of the **author's research over 40 years interviewing traditional and contemporary tanners: “The introduction talks about Native (brain and smoked) tanning practices and tools used. Chapter 1, the Tanner as Artist, describes the process of tanning and its spiritual aspects. Chapter 2, Experimental Tanning, provides further details and variations on processes as experimented by the author. The next 12 chapters provide details on the tanning process as described by a different Native or Métis practitioner. Chapter 16 ends with The Chemistry of Tanning. There are 3½ pages of references at the end. Overall the book is richly illustrated with 178 images -- almost all in colour -- of the tools and different hides and tanning steps. Mr. Baillargeon was the instructor at the Canadian Conservation Institute's Hide Tanning Workshop which followed Symposium 2007 (there is a picture on the back cover of him during this workshop.)”**

The book contains step by step instructions in how to tan moose, buffalo, deer, elk, and caribou hide using traditional North American Aboriginal tanning techniques. A number of experimental techniques are discussed at length using bone, stone, shell, and wooden tools.

Leatherwork from Gebel Adda in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto

by André J. Veldmeijer

Introduction

Gebel Adda is located opposite the town of Ballana about five km south of Abu Simbel in Southern Egypt (or rather Lower Nubia), near the present-day border between Egypt and Sudan (Figure 1). It was a major urban centre from the late Meroitic Period until Medieval times (roughly AD 100-1600). The site was excavated by Nicholas B. Millet of the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) during the course of four campaigns between 1963 and 1966 and published in several preliminary reports. However, the objects from the excavations - most of which are housed in the ROM - have never been published. The current senior curator responsible for the Egyptian and Nubian collection at the ROM, Krzysztof Grzyski, has initiated the study and publication of the finds and invited me to study the leatherwork.

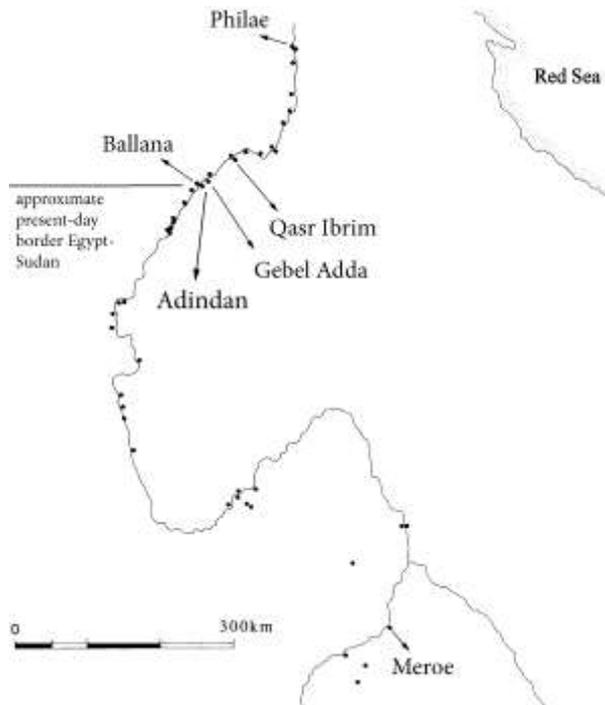


Figure 1. Map of the southern part of Egypt and northern part of present-day Sudan, showing Gebel Adda and other settlements mentioned in the text. (After: Welsby, D.A. *The Kingdom of Kush. The Napatan and Meroitic Empires*, 1996: 18).

ROM's Gebel Adda Leatherwork Collection

In August 2009 the study of the leatherwork in the ROM started, with a focus on the material recovered from Gebel Adda. During August-October 2010, the work was continued, focusing on taking measurements and photographing.

An entry in the collection's database might consist of several sub-numbered fragments and there are 1295 entries. Currently, an exact number of finds cannot be given but because the number of photographs is well over 3500 (average of two photographs per fragment), we can be sure the number exceeds 1700.

The Project

The first phase of the research focuses on the verbal description of the shape, construction, manufacturing technology (including stitching and seams), and decoration (such as motifs and colour), which provide the basic information that permits the initial analysis of the objects and their interpretation (second phase). Attention will also be given to the identification of the type of leather and the skin processing procedures (curing/tanning and their agents). The overall condition is considered, especially to see if the objects are in need of (emergency) conservation treatment. The finds will be analysed within the **expedition's theoretical framework, as well as within the framework of the Ancient Egyptian Footwear Project (AEFP) and the Ancient Egyptian Leatherwork Project (AELP).** For more information on both projects see:

www.leatherandshoes.nl

All fragments are photographed (obverse and reverse) with additional detail photographs and technical drawings made when necessary.

The Importance of the ROM's collection

Nubia's history is, in some respects, studied much more thoroughly than Egypt's. This is in large part due to the UNESCO campaigns related to the building of the Lake Nasser High Dam. The study of the finds, however, and especially those made of organic materials such as leather, has been largely neglected and thus our knowledge is rather limited. This makes the study of the ROM collection important in itself: the collection includes many extraordinary and spectacularly well-preserved objects, such as quivers, exquisitely made and decorated shoes and particular types of sandal (see below).

Perhaps even more important is the fact that, **due to the excavator's systematic way of work-**



Figure 2. **Artist's impression of a type of sandal** that is abundant in the Gebel Adda collection. Drawing by Mikko H. Kriek.

ing, we know exactly where the finds were recovered, which allows us to investigate various cultural aspects of the leatherwork based on its context. This is important because only through knowing their provenance is the archaeologist able to put the finds in a broader, socio-cultural perspective and investigate the symbolic meaning of an object and its production. In other words, the context can give information about the owner and the way he or she (and thus the society at large) valued the object. Moreover, the association with finds that are valuable for dating, such as pottery, help date the leatherwork more securely (although, to a certain extent, dating is possible with leather footwear too). This allows for the interpretation of the objects and their development over time.

Several studies of leatherwork, including footwear, are currently being carried out, which include the material that has been recovered during more than 40 years of excavations by the Egypt Exploration Society at Qasr Ibrim, a major settlement some distance to the north (currently visible as an island in Lake Nasser, see Figure 1). This allows for a detailed comparison and study of regional differences. Thus the Gebel Adda collection can play an important role in helping us understand the development of leather production in both Nubia and Egypt and the relationship between them.

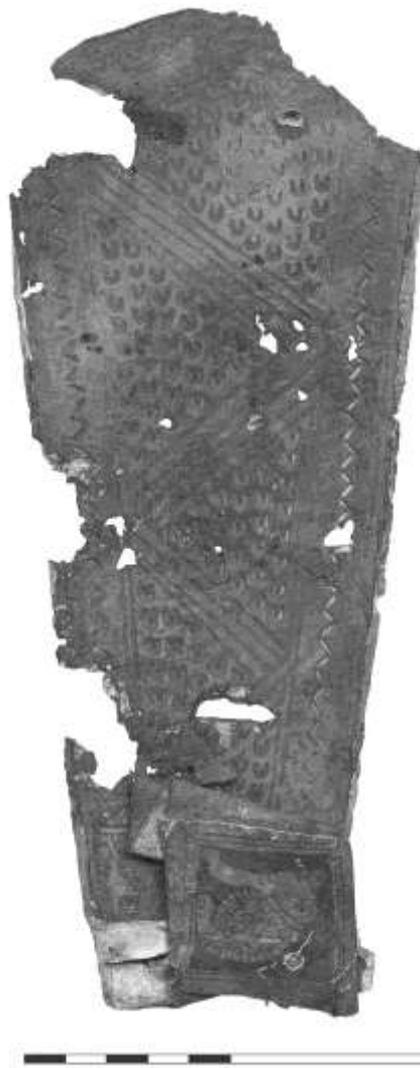


Figure 3. The dorsal surface of the sole is decorated with impressed motifs. One of the decorative elements that obscures the attachment of the back strap to the pre-strap is still intact, showing a frog (below). Scale bar in cm. Photograph by Erno Endenburg.



Figure 3. Enlargement

The Leatherwork: An Example

In Nubia and other parts of Africa, such as Ethiopia, sandals often - but not always, as the examples in the figures show - had a double front strap that runs between the first and second toe and between the third and fourth toe. The straps run under the sole through two holes that are situated next to each other (Figure 2) and comparable sandals are still being worn in Africa today. Although Roman sandals might have more than one hole at the front, the arrangement of two holes side by side, going straight through the sole, seems not to have been used by them. The find of such sandals at Didymoi might, therefore, point to local influence (whether Bedouin or Nubian). Egyptians never used a double front strap; instead, they only used a single strap - running between the first and second toe - to keep the sandal on the foot. It is interesting to see that sandals that are comparable in shape and other details sometimes have a 'Nubian' double front strap and sometimes the 'Egyptian' single front strap (Figures 3 and 4). It is not clear why, seemingly, the Egyptians never adopted the double front strap; possibly, this has to do with identification and/or a negative attitude towards the Nubians but the Gebel Adda finds could play an important role in our understanding of these differences. Although the double front strap is firmly established in post-Pharaonic times, tracing the start of this feature is more difficult. However, an example from the C-group horizon of Adindan (roughly synchronous with the period from the end of the Old Kingdom to the start of the New in Egypt, viz. about 2494-1550 BC) in the Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago suggests that it is an old tradition.

Sandals from Nubian contexts often have impressed motifs on the entire dorsal surface of the sole (Figure 3), which is a feature shared by post-Pharaonic Egyptian sandals. A more specific feature of Nubian sandals are decorative elements that are attached to the straps, on top of the foot, to hide the junction of the back and front straps (Figure 4). Usually these elements consist of openwork leather, occasionally including crosses but also *ankh*-signs and *was*-sceptres. At the back, the junction between the pre-strap and the back strap is sometimes hidden with nearly square elements that are sewn onto the straps (Figure 3). The surface of this might be decorated with painted motifs, but thus far only two are known from Gebel Adda. This example shows a frog, which is a popular motif in Mero-



Figure 4. Sandal with separate decorative element (openwork leather) that obscures the attachment of the back straps to the front strap. Note the less-abundant impressed decoration on the sole. Scale bar in cm. Photograph by Erno Endenburg.



Figure 4. Enlargement

itic times because frogs were a symbol of regeneration. Interestingly, not all sandals are equipped with these elements. Comparable decorated straps are known from the X-group horizon of Ballana (roughly AD 350-700), but these consist of leather openwork rather than painted motifs. Although impressed decoration occurs on several sandal-types, the decorative strap elements seem to occur on only one type of leather sandal; the study of the entire collection will have to show if this is really the case or not. The detailed analysis of the context might shed light on the reason of the presence/absence of these elements.

With thanks to Krzysztof Grzymiski, Bill Pratt, Jovanna Scorsoni, Mary Peever, Mikko Kriek and Erno Endenburg. I am grateful to Salima Ikram for comments and for correcting the English.

Note: this article was published earlier in slightly different form in the Newsletter of the Friends of the Royal Ontario Museum

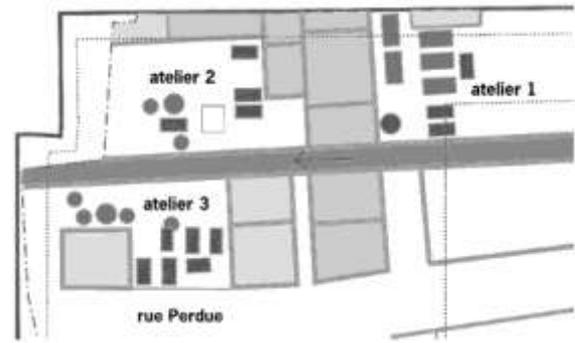
Tanneries then and now

Mike Shaw, the City Archaeologist at Wolverhampton, has sent us a link to a video on the French rescue archaeology website INRAP.fr which shows excavations in 2010 in the medieval city of Troyes:

<http://www.inrap.fr/newsletter/newsletter-89-.htm>

Three tanyards were uncovered, in an area of reclaimed marshland held by the nearby Abbey of Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains. Tanning and shoemaking are recorded there from the 12th century onwards and the film shows rectangular wattle-lined pits and barrel-lined tanks being excavated, on either side of a canalised watercourse. There are thick deposits containing quantities of trimmings and other manufacturing waste, together with pieces of shoes, belts and gloves. Further downstream carcasses of horses and donkeys were found dumped, raising questions of their connection with the tanning industry.

Opposite are some stills from the filmed report, showing a wood-lined pit, the waste leather dump and the remains of shoes and animal bones, much as *Leather Tanneries: the Archaeological Evidence*, would lead you to expect! (see p. 6 above.)



Tannery excavations at Troyes: *Service régional de l'archéologie (Drac Champagne-Ardenne)*

Meanwhile, Susanna Harris forwarded the trailer for a documentary called 'Living Skin' (*Jald Hayy*) about the lives of children currently living and working in tanneries in the heart of old Cairo, where there are still many slaughterhouses. The film was shown as part of the 2010 Abu Dhabi Film Festival. It shows how gruelling the job is and tells of the injuries and ill-health caused by unregulated exposure to hazardous chemicals. Since the boys are officially too young to be working they are constantly having to take measures to avoid the attentions of the police. It is well worth looking out for if it is ever circulated more widely.

You can see the trailer by searching from this page: <http://www.nme.com/movies/trailers/>



Still from *Living Skin* by director Fawzi Saleh

Latest on the Staffordshire find of Roman shoes

In the last issue of the Newsletter we reported the surprise find of a good collection of nailed and one-piece shoes during the excavation of a Roman well in rural Staffordshire. The site, at Tollgate Farm, lies beside a road linking the fort/town of Little Chester (Derby) to the auxiliary fort at Chesterton, near Newcastle-under-Lyne.

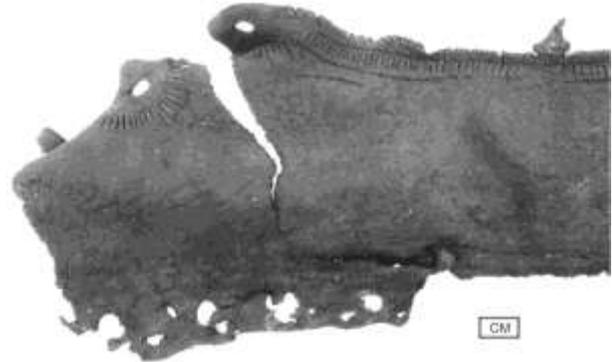
Photographs of some of the shoes can now be seen on the website of the Stoke-on-Trent Museum Archaeological Society:

http://www.stokearchaeologysociety.org.uk/html/tgfm_shoes.htm

The excavations, with illustrations of these and other finds, are also the subject of an article in this month's edition of *Current Archaeology* (No. 253 for March 2011). Information provided by Dave Thomas from the Stoke society, who also photographed the shoes.



Nailed sole from the Tollgate Farm well, showing the excellent preservation there.



Tollgate Farm: one side of a upper with rouletted decoration.



Tollgate Farm: one-piece shoe, with extensive repairs to the sole.



Book review

by June Swann

I am sorry that the only book useful to ALG members that has come my way is in Czech, which is not easy to interpret from a dictionary without a greater knowledge of the language than I have. As a tutor in the 1950s said to me: you can always look at the pictures, and that certainly applies to: Miroslava Stybrová, *Boty, botky, boticky, Dějiny Odívání*, Czech Republic 2010. This is a 248 page hardback with black and white or colour pictures on most pages, glossary (and drawing of man's and woman's shoe with terms), sources, bibliography and index. The author has been curator of the Shoe Museum in Zlín for many years, and it was available at the 6th triennial *Shoes in History* meeting last October. It covers the earliest then-known shoes (from Oregon) to the present day. A number of the illustrations will be familiar from other sources but there are also a lot from eastern Europe, which repay study. Petr Hlavaček, of **Zlín's Tomas Bata University, has worked on many shoes from archaeological sources and tested reproductions, such as that of the 'Iceman's, here illustrated.**

There is a brief look at ancient Egyptian and Coptic footwear, with more on Greek and Roman and a summary of the first information on **Old Moravia wear (that is, Zlín's region).** Unfortunately for non-Czech readers, dates are not immediately apparent on too many captions (nor in the Sources at back, especially of the **re-drawings, which also lack the artist's source**), and then searching the text may lead to uncertainty. What is immediately obvious is that one of the re-interpretation drawings of a medieval poulaine shoe with clog overshoe must be wrong (sadly not the first time for this illustration - the original is not clear), as the strap to hold the clog on is not where it is essential over the forefoot. But at last the much-reproduced painting of a shoemaker holding up a poulaine shoe has a date and source: 1378 in the north of

the Czech Republic. Indeed the whole book needs to be searched for new information, in spite of the obstacles for western Europeans. The Zlín Shoe Museum has been very good in publishing its shoe meetings in Czech and English; dare we hope for an English edition of this? Hopefully it will prove another book to encourage each country to study and publish its own footwear, with only occasional comparisons with the wider world.

The ALG Newsletter – looking forward

The Newsletter has existed in much its present form since February 1995. Lately, suggestions have been put forward as to whether this suits current times and technological possibilities. One idea is that we move towards an electronic version – either a PDF document (in the current or an improved layout) which is emailed to members to print for themselves, or an online version. A good example of the latter format, which would suit our purposes quite well, is the web-based *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter* :

<http://www.diaspora.uiuc.edu/newsletter.html>

A second idea is that we continue with hard copy but improve the print quality and appearance – a model suggested was the *Archaeological Textiles Newsletter* which has colour printing, a stiff cover in colour and a modern magazine format.

After quite a lengthy discussion at the last Annual General Meeting (see report on p.2) the feeling seemed to be that the Newsletter **continues to serve the Group's members quite well as it is.** The double-column format, though it is not well suited to being read on a computer screen does, however, represent a very economical use of space for a print version. Currently printing costs are low, less than £1.00 per copy for the last issue. Producing a newsletter designed for the web would mean redesigning the format to **make it 'screen friendly'** – not in itself a problem

but it would lead to a print version (if we continued to produce one) being a lot more expensive than now.

The committee were clear that some/many? members do still welcome a print version which arrives by post. It occurs to me though, on further reflection, that as the references we give for news items, publications, conferences and so forth tend increasingly to be to online sources, it must be annoying for members to have to type these manually into their browsers in order to follow them up. How much easier it would be if one simply had to click on a link in a PDF document in order to read more! It would not be difficult to produce a good quality PDF with active links, illustrations in colour and in a computer-friendly format which we could then email to members. Anyone wanting a hard copy version could then print it for themselves. A low resolution version, in black and white, could still be archived on the ALG website as currently.

Given that postage costs (and the number of overseas members to whom we post out copies) are increasing all the time, doing away with postage would help keep down membership costs for all. With our current software a good PDF version would be from 3 to 5 megabytes in size. In the case of a member having a slow internet connection, or none at all, we could still send out individual printed copies.

For the moment the format will stay the same but we would like to know your views for and against any of the ideas floated here; the committee will continue to discuss it further if it seems there is a consensus for change. Perhaps members would like to see less, rather than more, material from the internet creeping in!

Sue Winterbottom

The ALG online bibliography

A reminder that the group maintains an extensive bibliography of leather-related publications, which can be viewed online at:

<http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/biblio/algbibliog.htm>

Members are encouraged to add to it any relevant new (or, for that matter, old) publications they may come across, either by using the space provided on the subscription form when renewing their membership or by emailing them di-

rectly to the Editor or Treasurer. If you visit the web page you will find that there is a section dedicated to recent additions to the bibliography. It is worth checking this from time to time for any works you may not have come across.

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