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Editor's note

Once again, many thanks to all who have contributed notes, articles and news items to this issue of the Newsletter. Not for the first time it has been difficult to keep it to a manageable length: which suggests that leather studies are holding their own despite the financial constraints affecting all scholarly institutions (and even our members!) Some highlights are the 14th century glove described by Marloes Rijkelijkhuizen (we rarely hear much about gloves) and of course the unique 'piggy bank in a shoe' from Rotterdam. André Veldmeijer’s latest note on footwear studies in Egypt shows how, as well as Pharaonic, Roman and Coptic finds, material from the period of the Muslim caliphates is also now becoming available for study. Contributions for the next Newsletter (September 2013) are welcome, as always and if they can reach me by the first week of that month I’d be grateful.

Sue Winterbottom

2013 Spring Meeting and AGM

For this year's Spring Meeting we are visiting Somerset and staying in the Taunton area. The visit will take place between **Tuesday, 14 May and Thursday 16 May** (3 nights stay). We will travel down to Somerset on the 14th, meeting up for dinner. On the 15th we will be visiting **Clarks Shoe Museum** at Street and **Pittards** leather goods factory in Yeovil. On the 16th we will visit **Dunster Castle** (National Trust), which has some fine late 17th century gilt leather wall hangings. Full details of the programme will be circulated to members once they are finalised and posted on the ALG website. If you are intending to travel down to Somerset by car, please let me know, as we will need to arrange transport to, and between, the venues for those coming by train.

Diana Friendship-Taylor
(Meetings Co-ordinator, address on final page)

Annual General Meeting, 2013

This year’s AGM will be held on 15 May, 2013 at the **Clarks Shoe Museum**, Street, Somerset during our visit there.

Minutes of 2012 AGM

The minutes of the 2012 Annual General Meeting which was held at Abington Park Museum, Northampton can be found online in the Members’ section of the ALG website:

[www.archleathgrp.org.uk/members/AGMminutes.pdf](http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/members/AGMminutes.pdf)

Minutes of future meetings will also be available to read there.

2013 Autumn Meeting

This will be at the **Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology**, London WC1E 6BT

Date: **Tuesday 1st October**
Time: **10.00-13.00** followed by lunch somewhere nearby.

For directions, see:

[http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie/visit/#find](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie/visit/#find)

We will have exclusive access to the museum before the public arrive and the opportunity to see a selection of leather objects from the archives. In addition, André Veldmeijer will give a brief introduction to his recent research into leather artefacts from the collection. The collection conservator, Susi Pancaldo, will be available to discuss leather conservation.

They have a fantastic Egyptian leather/skin collection including Byzantine manuscripts, decorated 18th Dynasty leather, sandals and shoes of different periods, New Kingdom openwork loincloths and other fascinating objects. The collection is online, search for leather at:

[http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk/default.aspx](http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk/default.aspx)

Besides the objects on display they will bring out a number of items from the archives. If anyone coming is keen to see a particular artefact, please contact Susanna Harris (address on final page) who will see if we can request it.

Places are limited to 30, so please let Susanna know before late September if you are intending to come.
Two mystery objects and a calveskin glove: exceptional leather finds from Gorinchem, the Netherlands

by Marloes Rijkelijkhuizen

Introduction
In the late medieval city of Gorinchem, the Netherlands, several leather objects were found during excavations in the historical centre (excavation by Hollandia Archeologen). The site has housing structures attested from the 13th century onwards plus a horse mill that functioned from the second half of the 15th century until the beginning of the 19th century. The leather finds were mainly shoes and shoe-parts but also fragments of one or two purses, two sword scabbards, a knife sheath and a piece of a leather strap, possibly from horse-gear. The exceptional finds are two mystery objects from the second half of the 15th century and a glove from the late 14th century.

The mysterious objects
Two leather objects, similar in shape but of different sizes, are presently, due to the lack of a clear function, described as containers. The first and larger object (Fig. 1) is made of thick adult cow leather. In order to obtain a rectangular piece of leather, it was necessary to sew two pieces together. The leather was then folded lengthwise and the edges of the long sides were sewn together with a closed seam, resulting in a cylindrical tube-shaped object. The tube was somewhat flattened and divided into two longitudinal compartments, a narrow and a broad one, by a leather thong laced through both layers of the object. The container is at least 55 cm long, but is not complete and therefore the exact length is unknown. Whether the lower end was tapered and open or closed also must remain a mystery. The upper end is not complete, but several fragments show that a whip stitch was partially present, which could be part of some closing mechanism or an attached closing flap. A leather lace was probably present, based on the size of the stitching holes and the presence of a leather lace in the smaller object.

Though the exact shape and size of the smaller object cannot be determined, it must have had a length of at least 41 cm. It is probably made of two pieces of cowhide sewn together at one end. As with the larger example, the container was then divided into two compartments by a leather thong. The leather thonging is not present along the whole length of the object and is absent at the top end. On both sides, another leather thong was knotted behind the dividing row of thonging. Between the leather and the
thonging another piece of leather was included in the thonged seam, perhaps for strengthening and to prevent tearing. The purpose is unclear, but it could have also been used for suspension or attachment of the object. Because large parts of the object are missing, it is unclear if the container was larger at its upper end and tapered towards the bottom or if it was cylindrical. The width of both compartments could not be reconstructed. A leather lace was sewn to part of the top end with a whip stitch. This could be associated with a closing mechanism or closing flap.

A few similar objects, which have been identified as large containers, are known from literature. In the Netherlands, a fragment of a large container was found in Haarlem. The size of the fragment was 14 to 25 cm, but the overall size and shape is uncertain, though it was also made of thick leather (Goubitz 2007/2009). In London, three cylindrical leather containers recovered are dated to the second half of the 16th century. The largest container is 67.5 cm long and 15.5 cm wide. Two smaller containers are c. 29.5 cm long and 7.5 cm wide. A function as a container for weaponry such as swords, bow and arrow or a fire-arm was considered, but thought to be unlikely by the author because the containers were too short for arrows and not strong enough to hold heavy weaponry (Egan 2005). In Damascus several containers made of leather or a combination of wood and leather were recovered from the excavation of a specifically military context. These have been interpreted as quivers. The leather examples have a length of 29.6 to 43.8 cm (Nicolle 2011).

It is possible that the two objects from Gorinchem, although similar in manufacturing method and appearance, had completely different functions or different contents. It remains to be determined if these objects could in fact be used as containers, since in both cases the lower end is missing and we cannot be certain if it was open or closed. The ‘containers’ are dated to the same period as the horse-mill at the site. Could they be related to the horse-mill in any way? The narrow width of the second compartment of the large container and of both compartments on the smaller one suggests that a rope or perhaps a small pole could have been passed through. Use-wear on the larger object shows that it was curve shaped, perhaps by a rope. These observations provide a possible new interpretation of the ‘containers’ as an item of horse-gear: perhaps as a piece of a horse collar (Fig. 2), or a means of protecting the ropes connecting the horse collar to a mill beam. No similar finds however have been found so far.

A calfskin glove

Among the leather finds from a latrine originally used as a well, with excellent conditions for preservation of organic materials, was a right handed glove made of thin calfskin (Fig. 3). The pattern was cut from one piece of leather and sewn inside out with a closed seam (flesh-grain stitching). The flesh side of the leather faced inwards. The thumb was made from a separate piece of leather and is now missing. Only a few 14th century gloves are known, one example is from Switzerland (Volken & Volken 2006) and another from Sweden (Fredricksson & Zerpe 1982). From later periods more gloves are known (for example Groenman-Van Wateringe 1988; Schnack 1998; Egan 2005), yet gloves are still a rare find. In the Netherlands, the thumb of a glove was found in Kampen (Barwasser & Goubitz 1990) and goatskin gloves have been recovered at both Dordrecht (Goubitz 2008) and Middelburg (Goubitz 1994).

Leather gloves may have been used for different purposes, for example to warm or protect the hands but they could also function as status symbols. Gloves feature in paintings, especially from the 16th century onwards, often being worn by high-ranking individuals. It is unknown for what purpose this glove was used. The glove is too thin to have been used for heavy work and no
signs of abrasions are present. More research is necessary to shed light on its function and on the owners of gloves. This almost complete example provides a supplement to our knowledge on gloves from this period.

Acknowledgements
This article has been edited by Marquita Volken. I wish to thank the excavators and the people who helped me find references and alternative ideas on the function of the mystery objects or who sent me examples of excavated leather gloves. Thanks to Tim Hoogendijk, Toos Busch, Roy Thompson, Marquita Volken, David N icolle, Al Saguto, Arne Focke, Raf Timmermans.

References
Hoogendijk, T. forthcoming ‘Laatmiddeleeuwse bewoning op de locatie van het Bluebandhuis in Gorinchem’ in Hollandia Reeks.
Volken, S. & M. 2006 ‘Schuhe, Tasche und
The Stafford Shoe Window

by the Editor

Among the stained glass windows in the medieval church of St. Mary at Stafford is a modern one, by the artist David Gleeson, dedicated to the shoemakers of the town. I came across this on a visit last summer but unfortunately did not have my camera with me and so was unable to photograph it. However, it is shown on the church’s website: http://www.stmarysstafford.org.uk/Picture%20Gallery/pages/18%20Shoe%20Window.htm (reproduced opposite) and described thus:

It depicts the development of the footwear industry in Stafford through the ages and is rich in small detail which rewards close inspection. The design is innovative and the words “May your feet be shod with the gospel of peace” link the three panels, on a shoelace. The upper right panel lists names of shoe manufacturers associated with Stafford, many of which are but a distant memory. This window also incorporates fragments of the oldest glass in the church in its upper lights and was consecrated by the Bishop of Stafford in the presence of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh on 31st March 2006.

One nice detail is the inclusion of a lotus flower – representing the manufacturers Lotus Ltd, who dominated shoemaking in the town in the 19th and 20th centuries. In some respects it is difficult quite to make out the shoemaking activities depicted in the window and June Swann has kindly contributed this commentary on what is going on here and the accuracy of the representation:

“Man on left, who wears a vague imitation of an 18th century shoe looks as though about to slice off top piece on heel, which he wouldn’t do in that position without a leather waist apron (covering waist only) – a cobbler’s job. Either that or slicing welt in two for no good reason. Man in middle is handsewn shoemaker, pulling through to full extent of arms the two ends of thread (here invisible) with which he should be stitching on sole. Correctly has hand leather on his left hand but should have awl in his right hand, of which there’s no sign. No needles in his hands, hopefully, as the thread should have a bristle on each end - which could be equally invisible. The only time an English shoemaker used needles was for sewing together the parts of textile uppers, usually women’s work anyway. The work, i.e. shoe on last on his knee, is held in place by the stirrup, which should go across waist of sole (not obliquely across toe, which wouldn’t hold anything), and tightly anchored under the same left foot; here appears to be across both thighs, which wouldn’t work, but could probably hobble him.

I think it’s supposed to be a woman on the right (it’s always been a job for both sexes, apart from heavy bootmaking, and we can even do that in a...
Leather knife sheath from the Museum of London collection with impressed decoration on the front and back. 13th-14th century, found in Westminster.

Museum of London
Collections Online

For the past two years the Museum of London has been working on a major project to put its collections online. The present phase of the project ends on 31 March this year but by then almost 90,000 objects will have been added, all with dimensions and other details, and many with a colour image. Amongst the collections which are already available are post-medieval tokens, medieval pilgrim souvenirs, Roman coins and theatrical ephemera, as well as much, much more. However, I hope that members will be drawn to our collection of medieval and early post-medieval leather knife sheaths and scabbards (see below). This little-known collection forms part of the Museum of London's reserve collection (i.e. not its archaeological archive collection) and many of the pieces have not previously been published. The next target is to get the Museum’s reserve collection of medieval leather shoes online by the end of March. All these items and many more are available through the Museum of London’s website at:

http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/Collections-Research/Collections-online/

We are always keen to get feedback and also, of course, to know of any further information about our collections, so there is a ‘Comment on this object’ button if you want to add any information. Alternatively please feel free to email me at:

jkeily@museumoflondon.org.uk

Jackie Keily
New Project: Leatherwork from IFAO’s Mission to Fustat

by André J. Veldmeijer

Fustat lies south of modern-day Cairo, the biggest city in Africa with over 20 million inhabitants. Founded in 641 AD, Fustat was the capital of the Muslim province of Egypt during the Umayyad (661-750 AD) and Abbāsid caliphates (750-1258 AD) and under succeeding dynasties until general Jawhar, a Fātimid, took hold of it in 969 AD. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, it grew into a permanent city out of an Arab camp set up for the siege of the Byzantine Fortress of Babylon. After 969 AD the city, although no longer the capital, continued to flourish, in part due to trade in fine ware and glass. In 1175 AD it was destroyed for fear of capture by the Crusaders.

Over the years various teams have investigated the site but apart from some preliminary reports and an occasional specialist study no substantial synopsis has been published yet. The Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) began their research at Fustat, and more specifically the plateau of Istabl ‘Antar, in 1985 with three sondages to gain insight into the richness of the site. It was the first project in Islamic archaeology in this area of Fustat and eventually covered more than two hectares. The excavations continued until 2003 and were directed by Roland- Pierre Gayraud (Denoix, 2012). Due to the favourable conditions there was a wealth of finds made from organic materials, including a fairly large corpus of leather. Since 2003 the project has focussed on study of the information obtained from the excavations as well as on study of the finds. This really took off when Sylvie De-noix, director of scientific research of the same institute, took charge. Currently a plethora of specialists are studying, analysing and publishing the finds. Thus in 2012 a first, limited, assessment of the leatherwork was undertaken; currently study of the leather finds is almost completed.

As we know, there is a general lack of footwear studies from ancient Egypt but this is worsened by the fact that much material in collections lacks provenance, seriously hindering analyses. Thus, finds from sound scientific excavations are desperately needed, emphasising the importance of the Fustat corpus: it fills a gap in our knowledge on footwear (and leatherwork in general) throughout Egypt’s history. Although many of Fustat’s shoes and sandals are of known categories and types, the general lack of research makes the full study of the corpus of utmost importance if we are better to understand technological developments as well as changing preferences through time and space. Even though these shoes and sandals are often illustrated in books, this does not mean that they have been studied and published in detail. Several extraordinary items confirm the importance of this project. For Fustat itself the study is of importance too, since footwear has the potential to shed light on the society of the town (such as insights into health, prosperity and fashion). After all, footwear is, to certain extent, specific to a settlement.

Several published studies are of importance, despite the fact that many of the objects discussed are without provenance and dating: it is to be expected that the finds from Fustat will help clarify some of these finds. Among these is of course the excellent work on the footwear collection in the Louvre Museum by Montembault (2000). Comparison of material dated roughly to the same time will be possible, although some of it is greatly separated in space. Among such material is that from the Christian layers of Qasr Ibrim and the finds from the Coptic monastery of Deir el-Bachit (Veldmeijer, 2012). Footwear housed in the Coptic Museum in Cairo is important, but a first assessment of that collection will be done in the near future (see www.leatherandshoes.nl/coptic-museum/). Another source for comparison will be the finds from Antinopolis, which are partially published (Russo, 2008; Veldmeijer, in press). Excavations of this site, however, are ongoing with the expectation that more finds will be recovered. Equally important will be comparisons with material even further separated in time and space. For understanding the broader development of footwear (development and distribution of technology and shape) comparisons with finds outside Egypt will have to be part of the overall research. These include finds from Europe.

The study of the finds will be done within the framework of the Ancient Egyptian Footwear and Leatherwork Projects (AEFP and AELP respectively), see elsewhere in the aforementioned website. Moreover, the results will be consid-
ered within the framework of the mission’s objectives. Initial work will focus on the study of the objects. In a later phase, other object categories will have to be considered: footwear was not only made of leather, but of a variety of materials, such as wood and fibres. These should have been preserved, considering the favourable circumstances for preservation of organic materials. Moreover, the presence of tools might shed light on leatherworking and/or the production or repair of footwear. Textual evidence will be included in the final analysis as well as iconography and ethnography, if applicable. Experimental and ethno-archaeological investigations might help to elucidate the interpretation of the footwear and its dynamics in the broadest sense.

The work, which started in spring of 2012, includes a verbal description and full photographic record. Simultaneously, an assessment of conservation needs and first-aid conservation/consolidation as well as adequate storage will be made by the IFAO’s conservators in close collaboration with Lucy Skinner. The identification of the type of leather by chemical analyses and determination of its colour will be possible, as the IFAO has extensive labs (remember that in Egypt it is not permitted to take samples abroad). So, lists will be produced of those objects which have the potential to be sampled and investigated in more depth to conduct such research. In other words, the first focus will be on the manufacturing technology of the footwear, its shape, use/wear/repair etc., forming a basis for further research in the future.

References


Part of the large site of Fustat. The site is much threatened by illegal building, looting and rubbish dumping. This situation rapidly worsened following the Revolution of 2011.

Photograph by A.J. Veldmeijer. With thanks to the IFAO and MSA/SCA.
Exhibitions:

Shoemaking and sheepskin production in Portugal

A permanent exhibition has opened in the Municipal Museum at Almodôvar, in Southern Portugal, dedicated to the history and traditions of shoemaking in the area. From the late 19th century into recent times the town has been a centre for hand-made shoe production and many shoes, tools and photographs are on display: http://goo.gl/zLnqx

Franklin Pereira sent details of this exhibition, also of a museum commemorating tanning and the sheepskin trade in the municipality of Seia, in the high Serra da Estrela mountain range in the northeast of the country. This museum is housed in the primary school in the village of Vila Verde, a location known as the 'Terra de Samarreiros'. The Samarreiros, traditionally dealers in sheepskins, get their name from samarra, a word likely to be of Arab origin, and which in Portuguese was used for a sheepskin garment worn in rural areas. Franklin has recently translated the museum's leaflet into English, although no details seem to be available online.

Footwear in Ancient Egypt

A small, free exhibition will be held at the University of Leiden from 17 January to 15 May, 2013. It will feature actual shoe finds, reconstructions by Martin Moser and 20 text panels. It will be open during office hours at: Bestuursbureau, Oude UB, Rapenburg 70, Leiden. Please contact André Veldmeijer if you are thinking of visiting: if he is in Leiden he would be happy to meet you there.

Deutsches Ledermuseum, Offenbach: Exhibition extended until 1 September, 2013

An exhibition, centred around the conservation of some of the Museum's most spectacular leather objects, has been running since August 2012, when the 10th Interim Meeting of the ICOM-CC Leather and Related Materials Working Group was held there. Jutta Göpfrich has just informed us that the exhibition will now continue until 1 September. A beautifully illustrated catalogue, Wettlauf mit der Vergänglichkeit: A Race against Transience accompanies the exhibition and gives a detailed, behind the scenes account of the conservation of the 20 objects. There are also more general chapters, discussing some current topics in leather conservation. The catalogue is aimed both at professionals and at the general public: the Museum takes seriously its mission to make accessible to a multi-cultural society the rich and diverse cultural assets it contains.

Footwear is well represented (see the review by June Swann on p.16) but there are also, for example, a fireplace screen, a doll's parka made of fur, a sedan chair and a medieval 'Minne-Casket'. The book costs 25€, text is in both English and German and details (English) on how to order can be found on this web page: http://goo.gl/OA7zz

They want your shoes

Northampton Museum is looking to expand its world famous boot and shoe collection by appealing to the general public for gifts and bequests of footwear. They are looking for shoes that have an interesting story connected to them, shoes that have belonged to famous people, or shoes from famous designers such as Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen or Jimmy Choo. But in addition to this they are also asking for examples of non-designer contemporary footwear, shoe catalogues or any items relating to shoe retail (perhaps even those empty shoe boxes you have been keeping until you find a use for them?) You can read more about the appeal for shoes here: http://goo.gl/HSWK6

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Excavations:

Rare Roman basket and shoe in waterlogged pit

Diana Friendship-Taylor has sent details of an interesting group of finds recovered during excavations at Marcham in Oxfordshire by Oxford University's Department for Continuing Education and the Institute of Archaeology. An good account of the pit assemblage, which has some characteristics of a ritual deposit, can be found online at:

http://goo.gl/otkNZ

A late Roman jar was among the finds and the shoe (photo below) is also recognisable as a late type. Quíta Mould sends this further information about it:

"The shoe has a decorative false toe seam and on the basis of that feature it belongs to the Portchester-J style, as identified by Marquita Volken in her doctoral thesis. The style dates to the later third and fourth centuries and a small but growing number of examples have been identified in Britain in recent years. They have occurred, notably, in fourth century well fills in rural communities in the south-eastern counties (Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire) as well as Portchester in Hampshire and Ickham in Kent. An example from excavations at Skeldergate, York is the most northerly example from the country to date."

Further leather finds from the Roman Walbrook

Jackie Keily has supplied this link to information about major excavations now taking place along the course of the ancient Walbrook stream, which runs through the City of London:

http://walbrookdiscovery.wordpress.com/

Significant amounts of leather are being recovered from waterlogged dumps in an area close to where the Temple of Mithras was discovered by W. F. Grimes in the 1950s. Some of the finds can be seen in a very informative blog, The Walbrook Discovery Programme that the excavators are maintaining.

Coin hoard in a shoe

Carol van Driel-Murray has forwarded details of a spectacular recent find from Rotterdam of 477 silver coins inside a shoe, probably hidden under the floor of a house. The hoard is believed to date to around 1590, during the 80 Years' War with Spain (Dutch War of Independence) and along with Dutch coins there are also some from England and Spain. The find is estimated to be the equivalent of around two months' salary for a craftsman of that time, so it could represent someone's personal savings over a period. The coins are to be cleaned and examined further. More details can be found on this website:

http://www.rotterdam.nl/topvondst__schat_in_een_schoen

and film showing the discovery has also been posted on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3kxFMTZEA

The Marcham shoe after conservation (Photo from Oxford University Department of Continuing Education website)

The shoe as discovered. YouTube sequence from BOOR Archeologie Rotterdam
Conferences

At the April Conference of the Society of Leather Technologists and Chemists this year, Professor Yuko Nishimura of the Komazawa University in Tokyo is to give a lecture entitled "A social history of leather workers: An anthropological study of Japanese and British tanners." Accompanying Professor Nishimura is a Japanese tanner who still makes leathers by a traditional rice bran tanning process which dates back to the first millennium. The SLTC Conference will be held at the University of Northampton, Park Campus, on 27 April 2013 and a programme can be found here:
http://www.sltc.org/conference.htm

Book and Paper Conservation: Horn II conference - From Microorganisms to Mega-organisms, 23 - 25 April, 2014

A call for papers has gone out for this forthcoming conference at the European Research Centre for Book and Paper Conservation/Restoration in Horn, Austria. Suggested topics include the use of biocides and the monitoring of their effect on materials, bookbinding structures and the knowledge of them gained through conservation, storage strategies for digitised images and conservation strategies for digital archives themselves. The deadline for submissions is 31 April, 2013. Full details are here:
http://www.european-research-centre.buchstadt.at/

Courses

The Horn centre (see last item) will be running the following bookbinding-related courses in 2013:

1. Endbands in the bookbinding traditions of the East (May)
2. Deterioration of leather and parchment (July)
3. Asian bookbinding (September)
4. Microorganisms on books (September)

More details here:
http://www.buchstadt.at/Courses.164.0.html

Fish Leather Tanning
(Sigtuna, Sweden)

Lotta Rahme will be running another practical course from Monday, 20 May to Friday, 24 May 2013. She teaches traditional tanning methods using simple tools and natural materials. The course costs around £260 (2700 SKr) with an additional 400 SKr being payable for materials and for the book 'Fish Tanning and Sewing'. Full details, including how to contact Lotta about her courses, can be found using a link on the first page of the ALG website:
(www.archleathgrp.org.uk)

Who reads books anyway?

by Sue Winterbottom

Recently I was looking into the various sizes of Roman writing tablets in connection with a find of a possible leather document case from the Drapers' Gardens site in London (forthcoming publication by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.). Dr Roger Tomlin referred me to the 4th century wooden codices from the excavations at ancient Kellis (Ismant el-Kharab) in Upper Egypt. Some good photographs of these can be found online at:
http://monash.edu/library/collections/exhibitions/egypt/xegy.html#59

One inscribed board from a codex has on one side a Greek horoscope and on the other a Coptic text concerned with weaving (No.73 on that page). Here you can just make out the outline of a shoe or sandal sole, which has been drawn or scatched onto the wood (Fig.1 below). It takes up most of the width and about three quarters of the length of the board. Has this been used as a support whilst cutting out a leather sole? Or has someone used it to draw round a shoe for some other purpose?

I have tried to reproduce the visible outline in the drawing below. In places it consists of a double or even a triple line - a feature often seen on Roman waste from cutting out soles - although it is not possible to determine from the available photo whether these reddish lines are cut or inked. The exact shape and extent of the toe is also difficult to make out and on one side the outline of the tread appears to run off the edge of the board. This is a curious find, not least for the questions it raises about the value placed on such books at different times and in different circumstances.

A report on footwear (of basketry and leather)
from Kellis has been published (Bowen, 2002) but it makes no reference to the wooden tablet with shoe outline. A pointed sandal sole of a similar shape to the outline I have traced is illustrated however (Fig.2), and four cobblers are listed as tenants in one of the Greek papyri from the site. Most leather soles recovered from the site had been reused as door pivots!

References


Books and articles

Fish leather tanning and sewing with traditional methods by Lotta Rahme and Dag Hartman is now available in English. It can be purchased direct from the author by paying 230 SEK (approx. £22) plus postage (Europe 80 SEK - £7.60, outside Europe 90 SEK) to this PayPal account:

lottastannery@yahoo.se

Please don’t forget to send your name and address! More details about the book are available here:


but the company does not post items outside Scandinavia. You can read a review by June Swann on p. 15 below.

What price gilt leather?

A recently published article by Franklin Pereira discusses a contract, dated to 1525, between a painter in Córdoba and a gilt leather maker at the court of King John III of Portugal. The contract concerns the sale of a large quantity of gilt leather (guadamecil) items for the use of the king, including altar frontals, wall hangings and cushions all decorated in silver, gold and colour, with figurative schemes and scrollwork. The article appears in the University of Lisbon's online journal Medievalista, and can be reached from this page:

http://www2.fcsh.unl.pt/iem/medievalista/

The article is in Portuguese but the document itself is in Spanish and an extract is worth quoting, since those able to follow it will get a glimpse of the opulent nature of the consignment and the price paid for it:

"Sepan cuantos esta carta vieren como yo, Lorenzo Fernández, pintor, vecino que soy en Córdoba, en la collación de Santa Marina, conozco y otorgo que vendo a vos, Rodrigo Alonso, guadamecilerio del señor rey de Portugal, vecino de la ciudad de Lisboa que estades presente, nueve paños de guadamecí grandes de a treinta y dos piezas cada uno de oro y plata y colorado, y seis frontales de imagen con sus acenefas y piezas de brocado, y veinte y seis cojines colorados y de brocado con acenefas de oro y plata. Y vándovos todo lo susodicho por precio de treinta mil y trescientos y treinta maravedís de la moneda usual que vos el dicho Rodrigo Alonso me distes y pagastes por compra de todo lo que dicho es que vos vendo, y los yo de vos recibí y pasé de vuestro poder al mío, bien contados..."

The description of the wall hangings is interesting: these are in the form of 'nine large sheets, each made from 32 pieces decorated with gold, silver and colour'. As Franklin has pointed out elsewhere, the gilt leather wall hangings depicted in paintings of this period can clearly be seen to be made from rectangular sections, each corresponding to a single sheep skin. The detail from a painting by Grão Vasco, below, shows such a wall hanging:

Detail of Circuncisão/Circumcision. Grão Vasco, 1501-06.

Mark Burch and Phil Trevell with Derek Keene, *The development of early medieval and later Poultry and Cheapside, Excavations at 1 Poultry and vicinity, City of London*, MOLA Monograph 38, Museum of London Archaeology 2011, with CD, 365 page hardback, no ISBN no., but 'City of London 100023243-2011', Leather & Shoes by Alison Nailer, Patricia Reid with Penny MacConnoran, some colour photographs and drawings. This includes some very important early shoes (late Saxon to c970) with others 10th c. to c1150. They are described in 2 sections: under Leather & Skin trades (almost 3 pages) and in Appendix Leather & Shoes (about 7½ pages). Not all are illustrated. The CD catalogue 2, on a spot check, appears to repeat the same description without the illustration(s). There are also stray references in the text elsewhere. I found it very difficult collating the essential bits of this scattered information, especially with so few illustrations, not to mention the difficulty of finding dates for the period of each location.

**Perth High Street Archaeological Excavation 1975-1977 Fascicule 3, The Textiles and the Leather**; the leather by Clare Thomas and the late N.Q. Bogdan, Tayside & Fife Archaeological Committee, Perth 2012, 383 page paperback, ISBN 978 0 9561783 6 7; most of the leather is illustrated with drawings, everything listed. The Shoes begin p.147 and cover the period c1100-1350, with terminology drawings, 2-page Glossary, short notes on shrinkage, conservation and most importantly, with Helen Bennett on the yarns used: mainly wool (!) with a little silk for decoration. The animal species used here were identified, where possible, as cattle-hide for soles, and some goat, the bones of which were found in large numbers. The descriptions and catalogue appear to be comprehensive, described succinctly without the long-winded descriptions used by those who avoid shoe terms. The classification, as so often now, is by fastening, which can group totally different objects together. As so often with excavations of discarded shoes, most of these are totally worn out, having been repaired, extended, cut down and translated until little or none of the original survives; thus trying to put into types has resulted in at least one 'type' having only one example, when it is just another unrepeatable wreck. Nine pages of bibliography. Worth waiting for.

So far not archaeological (?), but as always with Lotta Rahme's books, lively and full of practical knowledge, her most recent English version, *Fish Leather, tanning and sewing with traditional methods*; with co-author Dag Hartman, 76 page hardback, published by Lottas Garfveri, Sigtuna, Sweden, ISBN 978-91-637-1661-4, many drawings and colour photographs. These include close-ups of the various gorgeous skins, diagrams of stitches, and how to make a leather button, as seen on medieval footwear (please note: these were then also called buttons). I hope the section on alum tawing, from prehistory onwards, will encourage archaeologists to look for more survivals than are currently reported. 3-page Bibliography. I suspect it could inspire more to attend her next school on 20-24 May this year. [Details of how to purchase this book are on p.14]

Brian Read *Hooked-Clasps and Eyes: a Classification and Catalogue of Sharp- or Blunt-Headed Clasps and Miscellaneous Hooks, Eyes, Loops, Rings or 'Toggles'*; Portcullis Publishing, Langport, Som. 2008, 238 page paperback, fully illustrated with drawings and photographs, ISBN 978-0-9532450-5-5. I was relieved to find it concerns what I have always called hooks and eyes, but decorated versions, rather than the strictly utilitarian ones on my clothes. Relieved, as I had been finding hook and eye fastenings on boots and shoes from at least 1376-1638, in spite of Read's statement that "the known record has no evidence for hooks... on
late medieval men’s boots or shoes, or women’s”. Something else for the archaeologists to look for in excavating leather, please, (don’t forget the possibly plainer ‘eye’) though conditions for the survival together of both metal and leather are unlikely to be good. Read begins with Roman.

Bernard Berthod has a welcome article on Papal Red, “Le rouge papal” in In Between: Culture of Dress between East and West, ICOM Costume Committee papers from the 2011 Belgrade Conference, published by the Ethnographic Museum, Belgrade, 2012, 202-208. ISBN 978-86-7891-061-6, 266 page paperback with colour photographs. The article, in French, with English and Serbian Abstracts, includes a section on papal shoes, beginning with the earliest, through the middle ages to the 1970 changes. Useful list of References.

Rainer Atzbach “The concealed finds from the Mühleberg-Ensemble in Kempten (southern Germany): post-medieval archaeology on the second floor” in Post-Medieval Archaeology 46/2 (2012) 252-280. This is the author’s latest in a series of papers on the leather and fur in this find of concealments which comprised a wide range of other objects (paper, coins, musical instruments, textiles, wood, metal), published by other specialists (Atzbach with Ingolf Ericsson edited the Bamberg conference papers on these, published 2005 as Concealed Finds from Buildings in Central Europe).

This article again reveals the lack of awareness or deliberate refusal to accept this practice in continental Europe. It concentrates on the large finds covering centuries of deposits, like Kempten (what Timothy Easton, working mainly in Suffolk, has long called ‘spiritual middens’). There is some discussion of possible origins of the practice, with descriptions of the main locations and a brief comment that ‘most concealments are of a more modest character’. ‘Ritual deposits’ he limits to prehistoric and Roman times but does admit that objects are still put under foundation stones. Please, if you use words in a specific way with restricted meaning, include your definition in a Glossary. It is only a few decades since I was maligned for calling concealed shoes a ‘Superstition’, and told the word was ‘Ritual’; now it appears to be ‘Magic’. Please note that Atzbach’s statement that I consider it a ‘secret magical practice’ is not true – the word ‘magic’ never having entered my head in this context.

Regarding the deposit of objects in churches, he does not mention that consecration of the altar requires a sacred relic deposited under it. I was amused to see he thinks the high proportion of children’s shoes concealed was due to lower infantile death rates, where I suggested parents are loathe to throw these shoes away, whether the child lives or not. Certainly, children’s shoes were the commonest saved by women (along with her wedding shoes) and given by descendants to Northampton’s shoe collection. He seems unwilling to accept that there could be many reasons for concealments - perhaps due to the small number of cases from which he draws his conclusions. I stress that each find must be considered on the evidence it provides, preferably with a wide knowledge of other superstitions connected with the objects concealed. And we already know that not all objects are provided by the occupants, so be wary of making that assumption. Three-page Bibliography, which should be useful for continental references we rarely see. Five of these pre-date the 1969 articles on concealed shoes by Ralph Merrifield and myself.
**ARCHAEOLOGICAL LEATHER GROUP**  
Treasurer's Report for the Year Ending  
31st December, 2012

**Income and Expenditure Account**

**Income**

<table>
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>(7 @ £12)</td>
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<td>Subscriptions in advance 2013/4 (21 @ £10)</td>
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<td>(1 @ £12)</td>
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**Surplus for year**  
**625.90**

**Balance**

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<tr>
<td>Surplus for year</td>
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<td><strong>Total Balance</strong></td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>Less subscriptions in advance</td>
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<td><strong>Balance as at 31st. December 2012</strong></td>
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</table>

Roy Thomson

Please note: Subscriptions run from 1 January each year. As in previous years the subscription for 2013 remains at £10 (£12 if paying by PayPal). If you have not yet renewed your membership for this year and would like to do so you can print out a form from the ALG website:  
http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/Joining.htm

and return it to Roy Thomson. Details of new or recent publications (your own or others’) for inclusion in the Group’s online bibliographies can be emailed to the newsletter editor:  
sue@suewinterbottom.freeserve.co.uk
The ALG Newsletters on CD

Fans of the Newsletter can now buy all back issues (up to and including the last one, for September 2012) in pdf format on a CD. This is priced from a very reasonable £5.00 (including UK postage and if paying by cheque) up to £7.50 if paying by PayPal and with overseas postage. You can order online by visiting this page:

www.archleathgrp.org.uk/collected_newsletters.htm

The first newsletter appeared in summer 1986. There was a break between 1991 and 1995, when a second series began which has continued up to the present day. The CD contains 43 issues — so a real bargain. One of the reasons for archiving them in this way is so that we can free up some space on the website for other future publications. Another reason, therefore, to obtain a permanent copy of the digital archive!

Archaeological Leather Group Committee 2012-13

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Newsletter 37 March 2013