CONTENTS

2-3 Editor’s note and Announcements

3-4 The 2013 Spring Meeting in Somerset

5-9 Article by Marloes Rijkelijkhuizen
Leather gloves and mittens: examples recovered from the Netherlands

9 Items spotted at Sandringham and Waterford
Subscription Reminder

10-12 Article by June Swann
Ptolemaic boots concealed in the Amenhotep II Temple, Luxor

13 Shoe Heaven at Southend; Vindolanda Revisited

14-15 Books

15 Contact details for the committee
Editor’s note

Hello again! Gloves feature prominently in this issue: we have an important study by Marloes Rijkelijkhuizen of archaeological survivals from the Netherlands as well as an account of the rainbow colours currently on display at the glove makers Pittards of Yeovil. Pittards was just one of the locations visited by ALG members during our Spring Meeting in Somerset this year. June Swann writes about an enigmatic find of Egyptian turnshoes from the Ptolemaic period (323BC-30BC) and would be interested to hear of other examples of concealed shoes from Greek, Roman or Dark Age contexts. Quita Mould, Jackie Keily and Roy Thomson all contribute items of interest from their travels in Britain and Ireland. Once again then, a full and varied issue of the Newsletter with something for everyone. All contributions for the March 2014 issue will be very welcome and if they can reach me by the first week of that month I’d be grateful.

Sue Winterbottom

Report on the 2013 AGM

This year’s Annual General Meeting was held at the Clarks Shoe Museum in Street, Somerset during our visit there in May. No Committee members were due to step down and the Committee remains as listed at the end of this Newsletter. Susanna Harris explained that, owing to a heavy workload in her new job, she would like to retire as Secretary next year. We are looking for someone to replace her, so do please get in touch if you would like to volunteer. We would also welcome new members to the Committee at any time; the potential number of Ordinary Members has now been increased to ten. Full minutes of the meeting can be read online here:

http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/members/minutes.htm

Forthcoming meetings

2013 Autumn Meeting

We will be visiting the Petrie Museum, University College London, on Wednesday 2nd October [please note the date change from that announced in Newsletter 37!] and will be able to view and discuss Egyptian leather objects not normally on display. This will take place from 10.00am-1.00pm, when the museum is normally closed to visitors. Members wishing to view more of the displays can continue to do so after lunch, once it has opened to the public. The Museum is in Malet Place, WC1E 6BT, and we will meet up just before 10.00 at the entrance. Please let Susanna Harris know if you are coming, if you have not already done so, as group visits are limited to 30. Susanna’s email address is on the final page.

2014 Spring Meeting

A visit to Oxford is proposed in late April/early May. A two-day visit has been suggested, taking in the Pitt Rivers and Ashmolean Museums, with the Bate Museum of Musical Instruments as a possible extra. The Pitt Rivers museum has wonderful ethnographic leather collections and is in the process of upgrading their displays. They have expressed an interest in consulting Leather Group members about this, and such discussions might well take place during the visit. The 2014 AGM will take place at one of the venues.

2014 Autumn Meeting

Leather in Warfare, Friday 14th to Saturday 15th November, 2014.

A screenshot showing some recent comments and photos on the ALG Facebook page, which Lucy Skinner set up in July this year.
This meeting, on the topic of leather used in warfare, will be hosted by the **Royal Armouries, Leeds**. A considerable time has elapsed since the publication of the seminal work on the subject **Leather and the Warrior** by John W. Waterer in 1981 and we think that many would now find it useful to hear about recent progress in research in this field. The Royal Armouries provides a wonderfully appropriate venue and a chance for those attending the day of lectures on Friday to view the collections on an informal basis on Saturday, should they wish. We hope to cover as wide a time range and as many aspects as possible in order to make an informative, thought-provoking day and provide an opportunity to meet others similarly interested in these uses of leather.

Arrangements are at an early stage so if you have been working on any aspect related to military uses of leather then Quita Mould (quita@onetel.com) and Jackie Keily (jkeily@museumoflondon.org.uk) would be very pleased to hear from you.

**An account of the 2013 Spring Meeting**

The ALG Spring Meeting was held in May and based in Taunton which provided a convenient starting point for a number of visits to places of ‘leathery’ interest in Somerset. We battled through some dreadful stormy weather to gather at the Old Bear Restaurant for a meal and were very pleased to welcome some new faces to the group, along with those of us who might be considered ‘regulars’ at ALG events. Our first visit was to The Shoe Museum at Street. The museum houses a wonderful collection of shoes together with a wide range other footwear-related items: buckles, fashion plates, showcards, hand tools, documents and photographs illustrating the history of the Clark family and shoemaking at Street which started in 1825 and continues today - although now, sadly, the shoes are manufactured abroad. While June Swann has been involved in advising the museum and cataloguing their ever growing collection for many years, the museum was a revelation to most of us and we hope to arrange a longer visit there in the future.

From Clarks we made our various ways (some of them not as direct as they might have been) to Yeovil and the firm of Pittards, who produce a range of products from fine leathers made from the chrome-tanned skins of ‘hair sheep’ from Ethiopia, believed to produce the highest quality hair sheep skins in the world. The skins of these sheep, which live in equatorial regions, have less sebaceous glands than ‘proper’ sheep and are very thin yet strong. Just in case you are wondering how you might recognise such a beast: a hair sheep looks just like a goat but the tail hangs down. Another handy tip for you picked up at Pittards: sheep have ears sticking up and tails hanging down while goats have ears hanging down and tails sticking up (except when they don’t) - this is better than Wikipedia isn’t it? After an introductory talk we were shown...
around the works where, unusually, not only goat and hair sheep skins but also cow hides are all tanned in the same building. Pittards began in the early part of the nineteenth century tawing skins for glove leather. They now specialise in the production of high specification leathers with many applications but are still known for their gloves: golf gloves, pilot’s gloves and (oh joy!) fashion gloves. Their display of fashion gloves in every desirable colour and shade, laid out like an artist’s paintbox, was too much for some us and examples will certainly be worn at the next winter meeting – so look carefully. We drove out into the countryside for our evening meal at the Rising Sun, a pub at West Bagborough at the foot of the Quantock Hills. The food was very good and the jam roly-poly pudding is fast becoming a legend.

We awoke to find that Taunton was awash with bunting and the centre of town cordoned off – no, surprisingly not in celebration of the ALG visit – but for a parade by the Royal Marines on their homecoming from a tour of duty in Afghanistan. We made our way around these di-

versions to Dunster Castle on the Somerset coast with its fine views out to the Bristol Channel. Dunster Castle, now in the ownership of the National Trust, contained many leather-related items amongst the furnishings including several sets of 17th and 18th century chairs with leather seats and backs, a screen, and magnificent late 17th century leather wall coverings. It was useful to view leather wall coverings and imitation leather wall coverings made of embossed paper hanging in adjoining rooms. Our advice was sought, and was gladly given, regarding the leather-covered seating in the gentlemen’s billiard room that was to undergo some refurbishment shortly.

It was a most interesting and highly enjoyable trip, skilfully organised by our Meetings Co-ordinator Diana Friendship-Taylor. I would like to thank her for all her hard work; thanks also to all who participated and particularly to Jackie Keily who took the photos.

Quita Mould

**Below:** Examining one of the leather wall hangings at Dunster Castle.

**Right:** One of a pair of gilt leather chairs in need of restoration.
Leather gloves and mittens – examples recovered from the Netherlands

by Marloes Rijkelijkhuizen

Introduction

Gloves and mittens are used for various purposes. Nowadays gloves and mittens are mainly worn for protection against the cold and are used by some professions such as doctors and dentists. In earlier periods gloves had a protective function but could also have a symbolic meaning when used to display social status, or as an indication of the profession of the owner or wearer.

Gloves and mittens can be made of various materials, such as metal, textile, leather, or a combination of these materials. This article presents leather gloves and mittens recovered from archaeological contexts in the Netherlands and shows the different uses of these items of apparel. Literature on archaeological leather gloves is scarce and few finds have been excavated and/or published. The recovered gloves presented here date from the late medieval to the post-medieval period, with the earliest examples from the 14th century.

Armour gloves and gauntlets

Armour was used in the medieval and post-medieval period for body protection during tournaments, one-on-one combat or warfare. Metal plate armour and flexible chainmail are well known, but less well known is the use of leather for body protection: for example, garments made from scales of thick or hardened leather (Puype & Stevens 2010). Protective clothing using a combination of metal and leather was also known. Linings and underclothes may have been made of textile or leather, but armour itself could have been made of hardened leather. Protection for hands usually consisted of metal gauntlets, which often had flexible finger protections (Puype & Stevens 2010). Leather hand protections were also probably used, possibly in combination with metal.

However, the archaeological evidence of leather armour is scarce. An example of leather armour from the Netherlands has been excavated in Leiden: an exceptional leather arm-piece or vambrace that was made from hardened leather by the cuirbouilli method. It was made of two layers of leather and had metal strips for extra protection (Brandenburgh 2006; experiments with cuirbouilli have been conducted by C. Dobson).

Two leather finger protection pieces, for the top of the finger, from the Statenplein site in Dordrecht are unique artefacts that provide new information on the use of leather for protection. The first finger protection (Fig. 1) consists only of the first two joints. Made from 5mm thick adult cowhide, the current length of the fragment is 75.5mm, the width of the finger part is 23-25mm. The middle of the fragment contains a circle shape, made by two half circular cuts, with a third half circle at the broken end. The diameter of the circle is c.17 to 18mm. The circular cuts were placed over the finger joints in order to improve the flexibility. The small hinge at the junction between the half circles is a weak point, as shown by the breakage at the second finger joint. Stitch holes are visible along the edge on the flesh side of the fragment; the corresponding holes on the grain side are contained in a channel and therefore protected from abrasion. The object was found in a landfill layer that was dated.

Figure 1. Finger protection from Dordrecht (left, flesh side; right, grain side). Collection: Regional Archives Dordrecht. Photograph: Roel Weenink.
between 1325 and 1400 A.D. The context could not be associated with a particular house or other structure (find number 2001.060.006).

The second finger protection (Fig. 2) is complete and measures c.165mm in length and 20-32mm in width. It is thinner than the first but also made from adult cow leather. There is a small half circle stamped through the leather at the first finger joint, two half circles stamped through at the middle joint and a larger semicircular cut into the surface of the leather at the knuckle. The flesh side has tunnel stitches around the edge. This finger protection was found in the same landfill layer as the first but near a house, and also dates to between 1325 and 1400. A large quantity of leather was in the vicinity of this house, possibly representing a leather worker’s waste (find number 9701.892.004).

The thickness and rigidity of these leather fragments indicate that they were intended as protection for the back of the fingers. According to Goubitza’s notes on the leather finds from this excavation, the pieces were sewn onto a glove made from thinner, more flexible leather. The exact use of these finger protections is uncertain; they could have been used for military equipment, as part of tournament gear or for specialised work applications. Why they were among the waste of a leather worker and their exact use requires further research, both on finger protectors and the other leather finds from Dordrecht.

**Early gloves and mittens - 14th century**

Much is still unknown about early gloves and mittens: where they were made, whether the raw material or the gloves themselves were imported and for what purpose they were used. Although historical sources show that gloves and mittens were known from earlier periods (Volken & Volken 2006), the oldest excavated examples from the Netherlands date from the 14th century.

So far three 14th century examples have been recorded: a calfskin glove from Gorinchem (Rijkelijkhuizen 2013), a mitten from Den Bosch (Rijkelijkhuizen, report in progress) and a goatskin glove from Hoorn (van de Walle-van der Woude 2006). All were made from one piece of leather with a separate thumb piece. The context for all three was not clear enough to provide any information on a possible function or social context.

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**Figure 2** Finger protection from Dordrecht (left, flesh side; right, grain side). Collection: Regional Archives Dordrecht. Photograph: Roel Weenink.

**Workmen’s mittens**

Gloves and mittens were also used to protect the hand from injury or from certain liquids or materials used by specific professions. Usually mittens, rather than gloves, were used for heavy work. Workmen’s mittens were made from thick adult cow leather and sometimes a second layer was added. Normally, one large piece of leather was folded to form the top and bottom sides; the thumb piece was separate. Only when the piece of leather was not sufficiently large...
Luxury gloves — Display of status and profession

Luxury gloves were used to display the status or profession of an individual, for example, episcopal or pontifical gloves. Gloves feature in paintings, especially from the 16th century onwards, being worn by high-ranking individuals. An example is the brewer Philips Denijs who was portrayed holding gloves (Fig. 4). Luxury gloves could be made of various materials or a combination of materials. Leather gloves were usually made of thin, supple leather such as deer, goat, lamb, sheep, or calfskin. Leather was used in combination with textile and embroidered cuffs. The archaeological record, however, only leaves us with the vegetable tanned examples, while the white tawed and chamois leather gloves disintegrate in the soil. The type of leather from the glove fragments remaining on archaeological sites is often difficult to identify.

The gloves recovered all have separate thumb pieces but sometimes also separate little finger pieces. This was visible on three of a total of six leather gloves found at Dordrecht, examined for this article (one glove was published in Goubitz 2008). It also occurs on the example of a glove from Switzerland (Volken & Volken 2006). When a separate (decorated) cuff was originally present, it is usually missing in archaeological finds. Well-made examples have fourchettes: small leather pieces that form the sides of the glove's fingers. A goat leather glove from Middelburg has the fourchettes and cuff still present (Goubitz 1994). One of the gloves from Dordrecht was recovered with the fourchettes.

A range of other professions could have used gloves — such as soldiers or doctors, to protect against disease. These gloves were probably made from other materials, such as textiles or non-vegetable tanned leathers. Falconry gloves or mittens haven’t been positively identified from archaeological finds in the Netherlands, though a find from Schleswig with a decorated band is interpreted as a falconry glove (Schnack 1998).

Three similar 16th century workmen’s mittens have been found in landfill layers at different locations in Amsterdam (Gawronski & Jayasena 2013: HE10-10-1, Herengracht 78, 16th century; WLO-155-89, Vlooienburg, 1592-1596; DIJ-14, Dijkstraat, 1500-1550). These workmen’s mittens could have been used in different trades where the hands must be protected from heavy duty work, cold, heat or certain materials.

During the 2011 excavations at Enkhuizen a double layered mitten was found (Fig. 3). The outer layer was made of cow leather and has one completion piece and a separate thumb. The inner layer was made of calfskin; two completion pieces and a separate thumb piece were present (identification and description by Ans Vissie & Els Winters). The leather was covered with a fatty substance and after decades still smells strongly of tar or a tar-like substance and suggests that this mitten could have been used in woodworking or at a shipyard. Tar or pitch was also used to waterproof leather, particularly for whaling or fishermen’s work (Marquita Volken, pers. comm.). The mitten was found in a refuse layer, dated between 1550 and 1585 (341-312; report in progress). A second workman’s mitten has been found at the same excavation site.

Figure 3. Workman’s mitten from Enkhuizen (left: outer layer of cow leather, right: inner layer of calfskin). Drawing by Ans Vissie & Els Winters, Collection: Archeologie West-Friesland.
Figure 4. Painting of Philips Denijs by Huig Pietersz Voskuyl, 1640. Photograph and collection: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

Certain activities to be conducted with gloves. On two gloves from Dordrecht, the index and middle finger tips were removed (one is published in Goubitz 2008). A glove with all the finger tips cut off has been found in Switzerland (Volken & Volken 2006).

Conclusions

Gloves and mittens are rare archaeological finds, due to different leather tanning processes, the use of textiles and the fact that these were not common items to own. It is still not known what the early 14th century leather gloves and mittens were used for, but their rarity suggests that these were expensive items. Leather armour is rarely found and the two leather armour finger protectors from Dordrecht provide us with new information. It is likely they were sewn onto more flexible gloves.

More research is necessary on leather armour and these finger parts. Workmen used mittens for heavy work rather than gloves. Thick adult cow leather or a double layer of leather provided enough thickness for protection in a work environment. Mittens could be used for different crafts, but the example from Enkhuizen was probably used for woodworking or at a shipyard.

High status and luxury gloves were made of thinner leather and in combination with other materials. Separate cuffs or fourchettes increased the quality of the gloves.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Marquita Volken for her expertise and for editing this article. And I would like to thank everyone who helped me find leather gloves and mittens and provided me with information, photographs, drawings and publications:

Ans Vissie, Els Winters, Christiaan Schrickx & Michiel Bartels, Archaeological Department Hoorn & West-Friesland (Archeologie West-Friesland).

Deborah Paalman, Mirjam van Oeveren & Roel Weenink, Regional Archives Dordrecht/Dordrechts Museum.

Ranjith Jayasena & Jerzy Gawronski, Municipal Archaeological Department of Amsterdam (Bureau Monumenten en Archeologie, BMA).

Christel Brandenburgh, Erfgoed Leiden.

Literature


Rijkelijkhuizen, M. 2013 ‘Two mystery objects
and a calfskin glove: exceptional leather finds from Gorinchem, the Netherlands', Archaeological Leather Group Newsletter 37, 3-6.


Sheaths on the pavement

On a recent visit to Waterford city in Ireland, I looked down at my feet and found some leather sheaths! Well, not really, but what I did find is one of a number of bronze plaques set in the pavement around the 13th century Reginald's Tower, which now houses the city's Viking Museum. The plaques each show a different type of artefact, such as combs or these sheaths. Waterford is another city that has produced a lot of well preserved archaeological leather, due to the waterlogged conditions. A new purpose-built museum close by contains the city's medieval collections. Further information about the museums can be found here:

http://www.waterfordtreasures.com/

Jackie Keily

Reminder—Subscriptions

ALG Membership runs for a calendar year, and subscriptions for 2014 will be become due on 1st January. The subscription remains at £10 and if you wish to renew your membership you can do so by going to this web page and printing out a form:

http://www.archleathgrp.org.uk/joining.htm

Quita Mould

Something for your next dinner party perhaps?

When setting the table for your next elegant soirée why not present your napkins in the manner of our own dear Queen? On a recent visit to Sandringham House we were thrilled to see the napkins on each place setting folded in the style of a fifteenth century turnshoe! The Queen and her family always use this table when in residence.

Quita Mould
Ptolemaic boots concealed in the Amenhotep II Temple, Luxor
by June Swann

These are discussed and illustrated by André Veldmeijer in an article published in 2011. Colour photos also appear on the Live Science website; one is reproduced below. The boots were found in the largest of 3 jars of Ptolemaic period in a narrow space bounded by mud-brick walls, one of which was not keyed into the construction and may have been built to contain the jars, perhaps with a burial. It would, of course, be unusual to find leather boots and shoes kept in such a container, though it is not unknown for them to be deliberately concealed with pottery (amongst other things) for ritual purposes, which the circumstances here suggest. See the bibliography below on shoes concealed in buildings and the Concealed Shoes Index in Northampton Museum. Amenhotep II (1425-1399 BC) predates these boots by some 1000 years (Ptolemaic Dynasty 332-30 BC).

The 7 low ankle boots are all of leather, probably bovine, some with traces of red colour. They consist of a vamp overlapped by the one-piece backpart, not stitched to the vamp, being joined only by the sole. This compares with surviving 19th-20th century South African velskoen (See William P. Lubbe, The Story of the Velskoen, Leather Industries Research Institute, South Africa 1971). They all fasten with tailed buttons slotting through a slit, also with tail, on the opposite side - so that the fastened button lies towards the outside of the ankle. They vary between 2 fastenings for the smallest to 6 for the largest. The 2 rows of tails would form a decorative feature. Forming a button from a strip of leather is one of the oldest ways of fastening footwear. Button boots are depicted from at least c1000 BC (on a rhyton from Iran, south of the Caspian, in Israel Museum) and are common in Persia (Pasagardae and Persepolis) 6th-5th centuries BC, in Greek contexts from Herodotus, to Sicily and 2nd century Pergamum, and in Rome 1st c. BC.

The Luxor find comprises a single adult boot with the vamp squashed flat by 2 pairs of children's, which appear in photographs to be of 2 sizes, found bound together with palm-fibre string. A separate pair of slightly larger adult size lay by the side - which to those used to seeing concealed shoes immediately suggests a 'family': father, mother and 2 children. Like the vast majority of concealed shoes, they are well worn, repaired and patched.

In Veldmeijer’s article the shoes are numbered 116 (right foot, Fig.3b) & 117 (left, Fig.3a), a pair and the largest of this group at 24 cm (9½ inch) sole length; 118 single adult 23 cm (9¾ in.) ; 119A child's, perhaps teenage, pair with 4 buttons 18cm (7¾in.); 119B child’s pair with 2 buttons, also “18 cm” (7¾in.). [Is 18cm a printing error for 10cm, since the photo on the Live Science website shows it as not much over half the size of 119A?]

116 & 117 have a conspicuous red rand, giving the appearance of stitchdown construction, that is, the upper turned out at the sole edge, with what appears to be simple running stitch, using, according to Veldmeijer, rawhide thong. But both upper and sole of both boots have patch repairs (attached under the rand on the upper), making original form of boot impossible to identify from photographs.

116 The toe patch extends about 1¼” on the big toe side, extending longer to cover little toe on outside. The patch on the back acts as a low outside counter, highest centre back and sloping to disappear under rand each side at side of waist. 6 pairs of button fastening. The sole narrows steadily from the footshape toe to heel, with patches shaped in an unusual way. On the inside edge the toe patch curves away to leave the big toe joint clear (near the area normally

needing repair first); similarly the heel patch is cut away on the same side at about 45°, leaving a long area free where today too many shoes put an arch support. In addition the outside corner of the toe appears to be worn away in a narrow strip with sinuous curved edge. Is it indeed wear, or was the patch just not wide enough, as neither sole of this pair shows any obvious signs of wear after patching? Nor is the sole shape a mirror-image match. Obviously never high quality.

117 has slightly less room at the toe, with patch on each side tapering to meet roughly in the middle, allowing toes to wear away both upper and rand there. Running stitch again secures patches to upper. A rectangular patch, extending about one third up the backpart, is secured by thread stitching on the three sides. The whole upper is crushed, obscuring most of the tailed buttons. Its sole has toe patch extending to big toe joint on inside, and slopes to back of outside joint on outside edge. The heel patch is shorter than on 116, and indeed of most heels, on the outside edge, and even shorter on the inside, again making a long gap under the arch.

118 The single adult boot has mere shades of fawn and light brown, and is shaped for R foot, with slight hint of a bunion on the big toe joint, and comfortable toe-spring. The vamp was squashed flat by the 2 pairs of children's inserted and pushed into the backpart, then tied tightly with string, slightly also compressing the sole across the waist. The vamp appears to be in better condition than the other adult shoes, with no visible holes or patches. The backpart clearly has a low outside counter, lasted in at the sole seam, and seemingly part of the original pattern. Sadly, with the only photograph of the toe obscured by the string still draped over it, the number of pairs of buttons is uncertain, but probably more than 3. The second button from the top is a replacement, with a wide V-shaped piece stitched to the original leather. The sole also has no patches, and has not reached the worn-out appearance of most discarded and concealed footwear.

119A Pair of child's or teenage boots. Sensible footshape toe, the left with a large patch stretching from near the big toe joint to cover outside joint, and a tight fit, with 5 impressions of straight, un-deformed toe ends visible. The backpart of both appear intact, with 4 pair of button fastenings. I have not been able to find a photograph of the sole.

119B Pair of child's. These are shown in one photograph together with 119A and the single adult 118, where this pair look considerably smaller than 119A, the teen pair. The sole seam indicates turnshoe construction. No patches are visible, and the 2 pairs of button fastenings too are intact. The left clearly shows the top button tail partly pulled through its slit, which shows no distortion, the knotted button still to be pulled through. The inside of the lower button tail reveals a flat thong (for the button on top), which would lie comfortably against the ankle, but it squeezes the tail, with the sides neatly folded in for a short distance each side, simple, but effective. A gain I found no view of the sole.

So, a very interesting set of variations on a single boot pattern. Comparing it with surviving contemporary footwear, which seems to have received less attention than finds of earlier Egyptian footwear, has so far produced few parallels. The same applies to the contemporary sculpture I have been able to find. Several features have parallels, even the tailed knotted button (2 on a gilt bronze horseman found in Athens Agora, of c275-225 BC, which K.D. Morrow says are unique, suggesting 'non Greek'3. See also Carol van Driel-Murray's 'late BC' fig. 10 no.3 and fig. 49 from Q asr Ibrim, Lower Nubia4, though this has a one-piece upper with inside side seam, like the later medieval pattern. She compares them to the 1st century BC-70s AD Roman boot from Mainz5 with tabs pulled through slits at centre front: an early version of the more sandalised Roman caligae of 1st century. The Luxor boots certainly invite comparison with Greek and Roman classical footwear, to be expected, considering Egypt's history in this Ptolemaic period.

Notes


5. Ibid, Fig.50 p.364.

**Concealed Shoes Bibliography**

by J. M. Swann:


(2002) 'Footwear for the Grave' in Archaeological Leather Group Newsletter 15, 3-4; also 'Shoes for the Dead', pp.1-3 in the same issue, by Véronique Montembault & Marquita Volken, give clues to other practices involving shoes.


Note: this volume included most of the papers given at the 2003 Bamberg Conference (same title) with 7 speakers describing finds from 8,10 & 12 Mühlberg in Kempten, according to their speciality (leather, textiles, coins, metals, wood, parchment & paper and musical instruments); no clear description of the concealments, other than 'in the filling between floors', which was said to be for insulation and/or to weight the floors. Other papers referred to finds from other parts of Germany, Austria, France and Switzerland.


by Ralph Merrifield:

(1969) 'Folklore in London Archaeology' in The London Archaeologist 1, No. 5 (Winter) 101-103. Note: this was published while my first article was at proof stage, and the ref. was added as a footnote.

(1987) *The Archaeology of Ritual & Magic*. London. Invaluable for showing the range of ritual practices associated with shoes etc.

by Rainer Atzbach:


(2006) and (2007) 'Late & Post-medieval Time Capsules: Archaeology from the Upper Stories' in Athena Review 4(3) and 4(4), 44-52 (mostly Mühlberg).


Note that none of these publications deals with the issue of the concealments, but only with the importance of the surviving objects and the information they provide.

**Also:**


In addition there are 2 comprehensive theses:

Evans, I. (2010) *Touching Magic: Deliberately Concealed Objects in Old Australian Houses and Buildings*. Doctoral thesis, University of Newcastle, NSW, Australia. Deals thoroughly with finds in Australia up to that date, and he is still recording (available online as a pdf)

Exhibitions

**Shoe Heaven** at Central Museum, Southend from 2nd February to 29th June 2013.

In May your two ALG correspondents took the opportunity to visit the seaside and went on a trip to Southend in Essex to enter 'Shoe Heaven'. The free exhibition comprised four display cases containing footwear drawn from the Southend Museum's collections. Billed as displaying shoes from Tudor times to the present day, the majority of the footwear on show dated from the late 19th and 20th centuries as is to be expected. Rather disconcertingly for your correspondents, styles they had proudly worn in their youth were included amongst these 'old curiosities'. Of particular interest was the high-legged boot recovered from the 16th century Gresham shipwreck from Princes Channel in the Thames Estuary (photo below).

The medieval period was represented, if rather sparsely, by a single turnshoe sole recovered from excavations at Southchurch Hall along with a reconstructed shoe rather better illustrating one of the shoe styles found there. You will be reassured to learn that the retail opportunities provided by the museum shop were not overlooked and we would like to share with you a wonderful souvenir of the exhibition that we both took home with us, also pictured. We are most grateful to Ken Crowe, Curator of Human History at Southend Museums for informing us about the exhibition and for his hospitality, including a very welcome cup to tea, during our most enjoyable visit.

Quita Mould and Jackie Keily

![Miniature shoe keyrings from the Southend Museum shop!](Miniature shoe keyrings from the Southend Museum shop!)

Vindolanda Revisited

When the ALG visited Hadrian's Wall in 2009, we heard that the Trust had received a grant to enlarge and refurbish the Museum. This has now been completed. When we visited earlier this year, we were gratified to see that leather had, for once, been given the predominant position. This decision is fully justified as this must be the largest and most varied collection of Roman leather we have.

Briefly, one enters the Museum between two walls of leather artefacts. Particularly striking is the case on the left which displays dozens of shoes of all types, styles and sizes: military boots, ladies’ sandals, children’s shoes. Turn and look up to be confronted by a large display case in which is mounted one of the famous chamfrons, together with a reproduction which makes its function clear. Behind that are two further cases with more horse gear, buckets, bags, belts, an archer’s thumb guard and tent panels. All these are in excellent condition, indicating that the method of conservation used at Vindolanda over the last thirty years or more deserves attention.

The whole collection is absorbing but thanks are due to the Trust for a dazzling assemblage of objects made from this extremely important material, too often found lying forlornly at the back of a display case. Well worth revisiting.

Roy Thomson

Part of a high-legged leather boot from the Gresham shipwreck. Photo by Jackie Kelly.
Book Review

by Quita Mould

The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade by Frances and Michael Holmes.
Norwich Heritage Projects, 2013. 262 pages, numerous black & white and colour illustrations.
ISBN 978-0-9566272-3-0 £12.50 (inc. P&P in the UK & N.I.) available from:
www.norwich-heritage.co.uk/publications/publications.shtml

This book captures the experiences of those who worked in the shoe industry in Norwich during the twentieth century. For the benefit of ALG members who may not be so familiar with the ‘darker recesses’ of England, Norwich is the county town of Norfolk (at the top of the bit that sticks out into the North Sea). The authors took on the project following the completion of their book on Norwich Pubs and Breweries; clearly they got their priorities right! It draws heavily on an oral project on the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade undertaken by the Costume & Textile Association from 2006 to 2008, and the memories and photographs of those who worked in the industry (and a few who still do) along with extracts from local newspapers. Colour photographs of shoes made in the city are sprinkled throughout, chiefly from the collections of the Bridewell Museum (part of Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service); the makers of the shoes and their date of manufacture are usefully provided.

The medieval history of shoemaking in Norwich is summarily covered in a paragraph and the early modern period fares little better. However, we learn that in 1792 James Smith established a shop and factory providing ready-made shoes in the city and, amazingly, what is left of the business is still trading today under the name of Start-rite. It was not until the 1840s that the trade significantly expanded, appearing to benefit from the decline of the local textile trade by using its former premises and skilled workforce. To begin with, much of the work was undertaken by outworkers in their own homes but with the introduction of increased mechanisation during the later nineteenth century and then with electricity to power the machines, the factories expanded. Population growth, providing a larger market and the coming of the railways, to help distribution, were factors in the expansion of the shoe industry and by 1913 Norwich had become the third largest centre of shoemaking in Britain, behind only Northampton and Leicester.

Norwich was renowned for producing high-quality footwear principally for women and children. Despite losing much of its export trade during the 1914-18 War and encountering many ‘local difficulties’, not least of which was constantly being bombed out of premises during that of 1939-45, the industry continued - hitting its greatest production in 1972 when 10.8 million pairs of boots and shoes were made. Sadly, the last quarter of the century saw the industry collapse. Other countries could now produce shoes more cheaply and respond to the demands of quickly changing fashions. Changes in the way shoes were retailed: no longer by independent shops but by large organisations with massive buying power, also made it difficult for the Norwich factories to compete and many were forced to amalgamate and eventually to close. Individual recollections of the happy days working alongside friends and neighbours in the shoe factories and the great sadness when they closed one by one makes for sad reading.

While many of the former factories are now converted into desirable homes, a handful of businesses remain in Norwich. Amongst the names you might recognise Start-rite continues designing footwear in the city though production has moved abroad and Bowhill & Elliott continue to make high-class slippers. Some ancillary trades have also clung on including a thriving little business that supplies wooden heels to small bespoke shoemakers. This book was kindly given to me by a Norwich man who is one of the few still supplying hand cut insoles to the trade and, since gaining a contract from Church’s of Northampton, he tells me he is very busy (at least for the present). While the book would have benefited from the attentions of an editor, who I am sure would have prevented the same anecdotes appearing in several chapters, for anyone interested in the twentieth century shoe industry and its sad decline I can highly recommend it.

Recent books

Offenbach 2012, ICOM-C.C LRM Postprints
Editors: Céline Bonnot-Diconne, Carole Dignard, Jutta Göpfrich
Publisher: ICOM-C.C (2013)
This book contains the papers presented at the 10th Interim Meeting of the ICOM-CC Leather & Related Materials Working Group which was held in Offenbach (Germany) from the 29th to the 31st of August 2012. The conference was organised at the Deutsches Ledermuseum Schoenmu-seum and brought together more than 85 participants representing 14 countries. The publication contains 18 papers and two posters, with illustrations in colour. It can be downloaded as a pdf file if you are a Member or Friend of ICOM.

**Women and families in the auxiliary military communities of the Roman West in the first and second centuries AD.** (University of North Carolina PhD thesis)

This work by Elizabeth Greene draws on the rich assemblage of men's, women's, and children's footwear from Vindolanda to investigate the nature and importance of family life in the Roman army in the first and second centuries AD. Other evidence for the presence of women and children, at a time when soldiers were not formally allowed to marry, is examined—from this and other sites in Britain and Germany. The book is available to read or download as a pdf online:

http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/etd/id/3711

At 389 pages the whole thesis would be a hefty read, but Appendices 1 (pp.264-287) and 3 (pp.300-306) deal specifically with the Vindolanda material and include catalogues of shoes, plans of their distribution within buildings and texts relating to wives and families from the Vindolanda writing tablets. Photographs of shoes appear in Figs. 9-15, 22 and 31, again towards the end of the book.

**ALG facebook page**

The ALG launched its [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ArchaeologicalLeatherGroup) page this summer as another means of sharing information about archaeological leatherwork and discussing it online. You are warmly invited to visit the page at:

https://www.facebook.com/ArchaeologicalLeatherGroup

and to ‘Like’ any of the content you find there. This will encourage contributions and raise the profile of the page. Many thanks to Lucy Skinner for setting up the page on behalf of the Group.

**Archaeological Leather Group Committee 2013-14**

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