

Tollgate Farm Leather

General Methodology

The leather was fully examined in the summer/autumn of 2016. The majority had been conserved by freeze-drying at the Conservation Laboratory at York Archaeological Trust (YAT). They had previously been allocated identifying numbers SA-SZ, TA-TZ and UA-UP. Two small boxes contained wet leather that was not conserved. The contents of these two boxes (named 'wet box 1' and 'wet box 2' for reference in the early stages of the work) are in self-sealing polythene bags. These bags were not separately numbered or otherwise identified. On examination the leather was grouped according to functional category and parts from the same item were reunited where ever possible. These items have been allocated a unique identifying group number (1-68) and have been given a written catalogue description accompanied by the existing photographic record where possible. The one exception being the large piece of sheet leather which was scanned and briefly assessed at the premises of YAT on 16th June 2011 during its conservation.

In the catalogue and any accompanying text:

All measurements are in millimetres (mm) and are taken from the conserved material unless stated otherwise.

Leather species were identified by hair follicle pattern using a low-powered magnification. Where the grain surface of the leather was heavily worn identification was not always possible. The grain pattern of sheep and goat skins are difficult to distinguish and have been grouped together as sheep/goat when the distinction could not be made. Similarly, the term bovine has been used when uncertainly arose between mature cattle hide and immature calfskin. Shoe bottom components and repairs are assumed to be of cattle hide unless stated otherwise.

Slightly differing methodologies were adopted for the study of the sheet leather, the shoe leather and the waste leather as dictated by the nature of the material being examined and are described below.

The footwear

Any shoe sizing has been calculated according to the modern English Shoe-Size scale, continental sizing is given in brackets. Sizing has been calculated from measurement of the insole of multi-part shoe bottoms or from the toe to the back seam of one-piece shoes. Any measurement taken from the sole is indicated in the accompanying catalogues. No allowance has been made for shrinkage unless stated otherwise. The shoe terms employed are those in common use in the archaeological literature; seams, constructions and nailing patterns are fully described by van Driel-Murray in Goubitz, van Driel-Murray and Groenman-van Waaterling 2001.

The shoe styles given are those in the classification and dating scheme of the primary cutting patterns for European archaeological footwear devised by Volken (2014) cross referenced with any earlier nomenclature where relevant.

Basic quantifications

It is difficult to be certain how many individual shoes are represented by the shoe parts recovered once they have become separated from their other components or are fragmentary and, while separated components have been re-united where ever possible, it has been necessary for the total number of shoes present to be estimated. For shoes of one-piece construction an estimation from counting the number of left and right back seams suggests that at least fourteen shoes are present

(toe areas were not used as these are under-represented being an area of heavy wear and consequently heavy fragmentation). Comparison of the heights of the back seam, length of the seat seam and the dimensions of any cut-out decoration has been used to ensure that delaminated fragments from the same shoe were matched where ever possible, ensuring that the individual shoes present were not over counted. The shoes of nailed construction were estimated from the number of toes and seats of insoles and soles, from this it is estimated that at least thirteen shoes were represented. It would seem from this that at least twenty-seven shoes were deposited in the well and were roughly equally divided between those of nailed and those of one-piece construction. The amount of fragmentation undergone, however, makes this likely to be an under representation of the number of individual shoes originally deposited.

The waste leather

The waste leather has been recorded by count. It has been classified as primary or secondary waste (Mould 2011: 33), the term shoemaking waste has only been used when pieces characteristic of that trade could be identified. The term scrap refers to pieces with all edges torn and no diagnostic features surviving.

References

- Goubitz, O., van Driel-Murray, C. and Groenman-van Waateringe, W. 2001 Stepping through Time. Archaeological Footwear from Prehistoric Times until 1800. Zwolle: SPA.
- Mould, Q. 2011 Have we got leather waste from a tannery? In R. Thomson and Q. Mould (eds.) Leather Tanneries: The Archaeological Evidence, London: Archetype Publications, 33-38
- Volken, M. 2014 Archaeological Footwear: Development of shoe patterns and styles from Prehistory till the 1600's, Zwolle: SPA-Uitgevers