



ARCHAEOLOGICAL LEATHER GROUP NEWSLETTER

39 March 2014

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



CONTENTS

- 2-3 Editor's note and Announcements
- 3 Review of the 2013 Autumn Meeting
- 4-5 *A prince of gilt leather in Córdoba* by Franklin Pereira
- 5-6 Recent books and an exhibition
- 7-8 Article by Marloes Rijkelijhuizen
A rediscovered leather vambrace from Dordrecht, the Netherlands
- 8-9 Article by Angela Middleton
A tale of reindeer hides, a storm, a wreck and an exhibition
- 9-10 *More about wrecks and hides*
by Angela Middleton and Serena Cant
- 10-11 Book Reviews by June Swann
- 11-12 *Visit to 'My Favourite Shoe' at the Royal Exchange, London* by Quita Mould
- 12-13 Subscription reminder; Contact details for the committee; Treasurer's report

Editor's note

Welcome to the first Newsletter of the new year. 2014 will see the group hold another wide-ranging conference, this time on the subject of the use of leather in warfare. Thanks should go to Quita Mould for the work she has put into developing this project and organising its delivery, in collaboration with the Royal Armouries in Leeds. Meanwhile, Susanna Harris has been co-ordinating work on publication of the papers from the 'Why Leather?' one-day conference, held in 2011. These will hopefully be available in summer this year. Jackie Keily is also to be thanked for taking over the circulation of notices to members *via* the all-ALG email list. If you don't use email, please make sure Jackie has your current postal address (see final page for how to contact her). All in all, then, a promising year ahead and one that demonstrates how active the committee continues to be. We welcome all contributions to the Newsletter, long or short, on the subject of archaeological leather and related matters. If you have any news to report, or queries you would like answering, please send them to me in time for the next issue, preferably by the second week in September.

Sue Winterbottom

Forthcoming meetings

At last, your chance to make a difference.....a museum of world renown invites ALG members to contribute toward the selection, interpretation and display of leather and leather-related objects in their care and offer suggestions for their contemporary collection policy to bring the new displays up to date:

2014 Spring Meeting and AGM

The ALG 2014 Spring meeting and AGM will be held on **Friday 25th April 2014** at the **Pitt Rivers Museum, located at the Oxford University Museum of Natural History**. This meeting is intended to be even more of a knowledge swap than usual as we have been invited to the museum to share our knowledge and offer advice on aspects of their displays. The day is being held as part of the VERVE project, a five-year project supporting, amongst other

things, vital conservation and redisplay of selected cases at the museum. We are grateful to Esther Cameron for liaising with the museum in arranging the day.

The Pitt Rivers Museum is located at Parks Road, Oxford, OX1 3PW. Please note, the entrance to the Pitt Rivers Museum is located at the far wall of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Visitors need to walk across the ground floor to reach it. For further directions go to:

<http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/pdf/PRMmap.pdf>

The day is being organised as follows:

10.00am Meet in the Blackwood Room at Pitt Rivers Museum for coffee and an introductory talk by Helen Adams, VERVE Project Curator and Engagement Officer.

10.30 Walk through the Court to look at saddles on display and the Lower Gallery to view existing display of leatherworking tools and the site of the new proposed leatherworking display case.

11.00 View a selection of leather objects in the Visiting Researchers' Room. These items will include leather objects previously on display and considered for inclusion in the new display and a pre-selection of additional items from the stores being considered for the new display. The items will include leatherworking tools, shoes and saddles as well as other more 'exotic' leather objects such as African skin-covered masks. The Museum is keen for ALG members to share their knowledge of these objects to help inform the new displays and their interpretation.

1.00pm Lunch (not provided) followed by AGM in the Blackwood Room.

2.30 Self-guided trail around the museum highlighting leather objects and tours of the conservation labs with Andrew Hughes, VERVE conservator (split into small groups due to space limitations).

3.30 Reassemble in Blackwood Room for final discussion, comments and questions.

4.00 Close

A number of informal events will be on offer for those members who will be staying in Oxford for the weekend and would care to join in. On

Cover photo: *The ALG 2013 Autumn Meeting at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, London. Photo by Susanna Harris.*

Saturday there will be an informal visit to the **Ashmolean Museum** followed, in the afternoon, by a walk to see the wonderful display of snake's head fritillaries in **The Meadow at Magdalen College** if they are obligingly in flower, or a visit to the **Botanic Gardens** if they are not. Similarly, we will arrange to meet up for supper at a restaurant on Thursday evening and again on Friday evening for those who would like to join us. Details of suggested places to eat on Friday lunch time, and the 'get-togethers' on Thursday and Friday night will be circulated to those who are interested in due course.

Please register your intention to attend the Spring Meeting by contacting Quita Mould (quita@onetel.com or Tel: 01366 384289) who will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding the meeting. More details of the museum can be found at:

<http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk>

2014 Autumn Meeting

The 2014 Autumn meeting/conference, entitled **Leather in Warfare** is being held at the Royal Armouries, Leeds and co-hosted by that august institution. We are most grateful to the Royal Armouries for their enthusiasm for the event; having them co-host it has allowed us to expand the programme significantly and widen the subject matter covered.

The meeting will be held in the **Bury Theatre** at the **Royal Armouries, Leeds, LS10 1LT** over two days on **Thursday 13th and Friday 14th November 2014** with a day and a half of lectures followed by a chance to explore the galleries.

Amongst the topics to be covered are Roman military equipment, Ayyubid and Mamluk armour, Japanese armour, English leather plate armour and armour fittings, archery equipment, leather horse armour, the clothing and equipment of a 17th century Swiss mercenary soldier who died on the Grand St Bernard Pass and individual case studies of items that you might not have thought of—including some 3rd century Roman armour of crocodile skin. Something for everyone!

The programme is being finalised at present. The cost of the two day conference will be £50, with a reduced rate for ALG members (£40), all are welcome to attend. Bookings should be made

through The Royal Armouries, who have dedicated a web page to the conference:

<http://goo.gl/KDaPxF>

It is possible to make a booking directly from that page or, alternatively, by email or telephone. Full details of the programme will be provided in our September Newsletter and will be placed on the ALG website as soon as they are available. In the meantime Quita Mould will be happy to answer any queries you may have about the event (quita@onetel.com or Tel: 01366 384289).

ALG now on Twitter



Following the success of the ALG Facebook page, which 195 people have 'liked' so far, Jackie Keily has now set up a Twitter account **@ArchLeatherGrp** where news of meetings and links to websites of interest can be posted. This is all helping to publicise the activities of the Leather Group and encouraging networking. Both sites are also a good way of circulating news and photos without continually bombarding members with emails—so do visit them from time to time to see what the talking points are.

ALG Autumn Meeting, 2013

a review by Quita Mould

The autumn meeting was held at the Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology in London, a rather hidden gem located within the environs of University College London at Malet Place, an alley opposite Waterstones Bookstore on Torrington Place. Though I was relatively familiar with that part of Bloomsbury I had no idea the museum was there before attending our autumn

gathering. The museum is open on Tuesdays to Saturdays, from 1-5pm and entrance is free – do take a look if you get the chance. Failing that the collection is available online:

<http://petriecat.museums.ucl.ac.uk>

It had been intended that André Veldmeijer would start our visit by giving a brief introduction to his recent research on leather artefacts from the collection but, sadly, he was not able to join us on the day. There was plenty on public view for us to enjoy, all manner of objects displayed in traditional mahogany cases, clearly labelled with provenance and dating – what a joy. In addition, Susanna Harris had arranged for a selection of items of ‘leathery interest’ from the reserve collections to be made available for our closer inspection and they were duly laid out for us.

A selection of footwear, pieces of ‘slit’ open-work loincloths and 18th Dynasty decorative appliqué leatherwork were subjected to our close scrutiny. It may surprise you that the items that provoked the widest discussion were, in fact, made of clay: a pair of tiny clay models of shoes, part of the grave goods placed with the body of a child excavated by Petrie at Mazghuneh in 1910-11 and dated to the Early Roman Period (c. 1st century BC). A photo appears opposite. These tiny shoes appear to have closed uppers and thick soles with heels! Pigment survived in places suggesting the soles were originally painted red and the uppers white. What a conundrum: heels in 1st century BC Egypt, we could hardly believe our eyes!

These little models had fascinated (not to say, worried) at least one of our number for several years and prompted the request to see them ‘in the flesh’ during our visit. If a hoax, then it had been carried out early on as the shoes are present in a photograph of the grave goods taken soon after excavation. It is to be hoped that this newsletter will in due course benefit from any further musings that may result from this close encounter.

Once again, I marvelled at the distances that some members had travelled in order to attend. It was wonderful to renew old friendships and swap news and views together following the visit. Many thanks must go to Susanna for arranging the meeting when already very busy settling into a new job. Her photo graces the cover of this issue of the Newsletter.



Petrie Museum: shoes UC16353. Copyright 2013, University College London, with permission to reproduce under Creative Commons license.

A prince of gilt leather passes away in Córdoba

by Franklin Pereira

It's sad to announce the passing away of a great creative artist, someone who has taken gilt leather to the summit of beauty and detail. Ramón García Romero, born 12 July 1941, suddenly fell and hit his head on the floor; he died the following day, 18 November 2013.

I met him on my second visit to Córdoba in 1992 where I visited his studio in a magnificent small palace in a narrow street near the Great Mosque. I had never seen such shining and intricate pieces of gilt leather! From then on we exchanged letters and I sent him some of my published materials on leather history. He later relocated to a huge palace, again in the old part of the city, that became the Museum of Leather Art. His amazing collection, some 50 years of work, became available there to the public, alongside explanations of the art of gilt leatherworking, focusing on its origins and development when the city was the capital of al-Andalus during the Umayyad dynasty (10th-11th century).

Ramón originally studied at the local Arts and Crafts School, which still runs a leather art course and became interested in leathercraft. At that time there was a revival, even a re-discovery, of medieval leather art and he studied further with his father-in-law Rafael Bernier, one of the artists associated with this revival in the early decades of the 20th century.

The motifs he used – the geometry of Islamic art, animals, birds and floral themes – are rooted

in the rich art of Muslim and Christian times, as appears on pottery, silks, marble and ivory carvings, paper, parchment and leather bookbinding. The artist gave new life to all these centuries-old motifs, breathing into them his imagination and the poetry of his spirit. It is a sheer delight to look closely and appreciate the quality of draughtsmanship, the harmonious use of colour and the superfine tooling. The braiding patterns, shining with silver foil, look like filigree and with such movement that they almost seem to fly out of the frame!

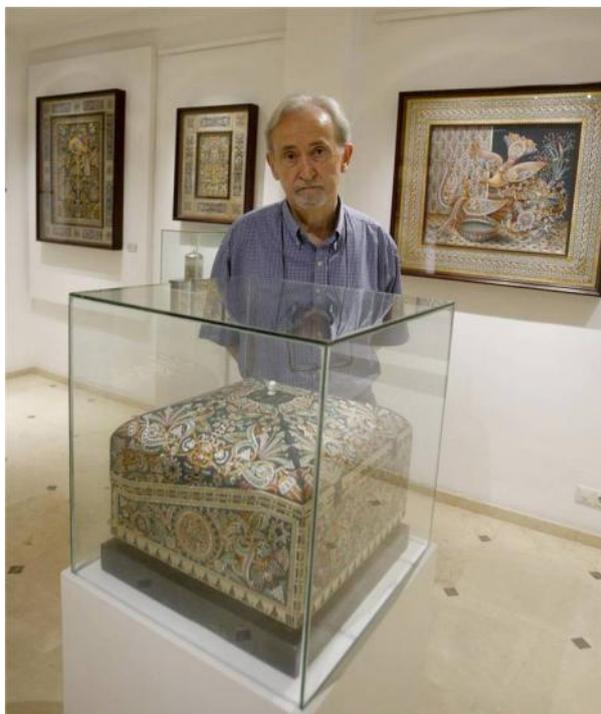
The Leather Art Museum/**Casa Museo Arte sobre Piel** is located at Plaza Agrupación de Cofradías, 2 - 14003 Córdoba (Spain). It's run by José Carlos, nephew of Ramón Romero. It has a website: www.artesobrepel.com and full details of opening times, with pictures of the exhibits can also be found at:

<http://www.artencordoba.com/MUSEOS/Museos-Cordoba-Arte-sobre-piel-galeria.html>

A short but fascinating online video shows Ramón Romero at work, together with a tour of the museum. This can be found at:

<http://www.visionesdeespaña.es/memoria-01.html>

(you will need to click on "Guadamecilero").



Ramón García Romero standing by one of his pieces, a coffer covered in gilt leather.

Pittards in Ethiopia

Last year's ALG Spring Meeting in Somerset included a visit to Pittards tannery in Yeovil, where we learned about the importance of their operations in Ethiopia - the main source of "hairsheep" leathers for high quality garment production. A fascinating article on the BBC website now tells the story of Pittards long involvement in Ethiopia and the current expansion of their factories and tanneries in Addis Ababa. These currently employ 1200 people, a number which is expected to increase to around 5000 within 5 years, and are a significant contribution to the country's developing economy:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24610075>

Thanks to Barbara Wills for sending this link.

Recent books

[Chasing Chariots. Proceedings of the First International Chariot Conference \(Cairo 2012\)](#) edited by André J. Veldmeijer & Salima Ikram, Sidestone Press, 2013.

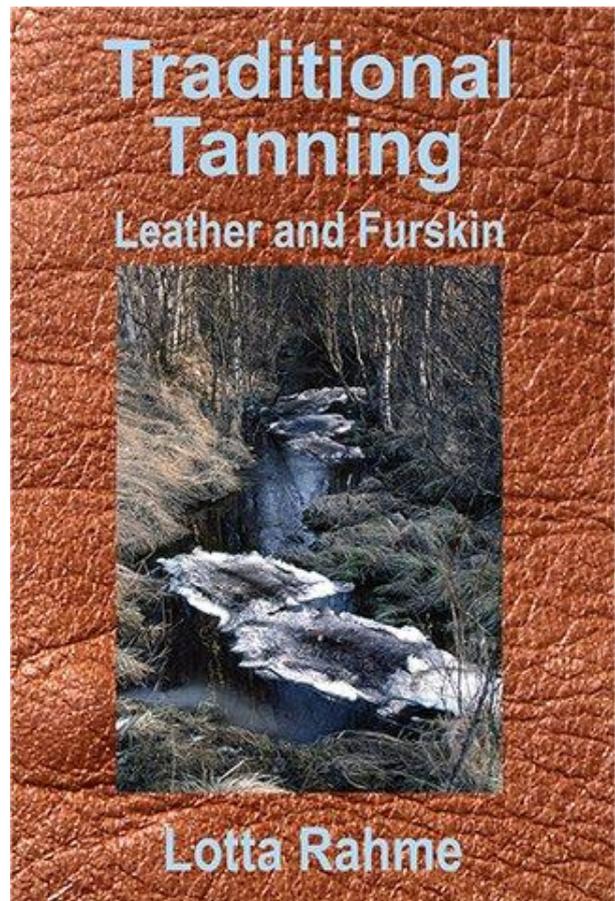
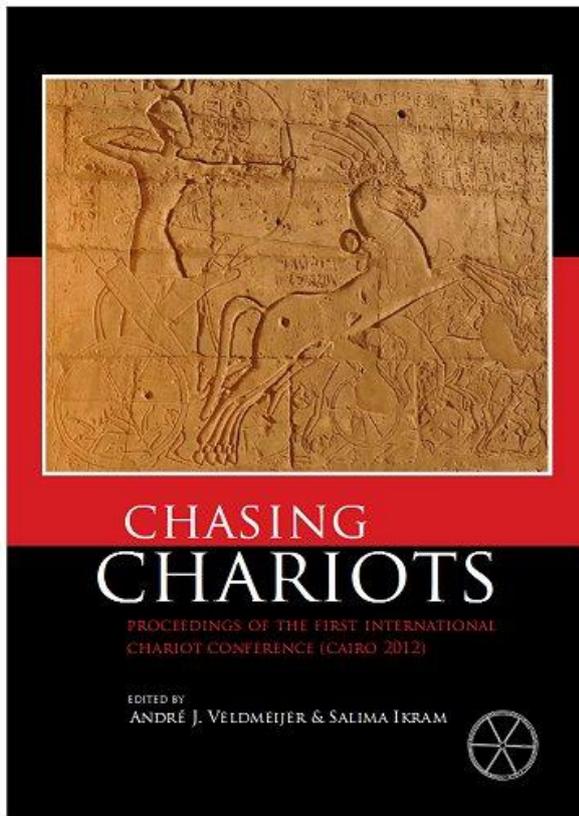
This volume is the result of a conference jointly organised by the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC) and the American University in Cairo (AUC) and held between between 30 November and 2 December 2012. The intention of the conference was to make a broad assessment of the current state of knowledge about chariots in Egypt and the Near East, and to provide a forum for discussion.

A wide variety of papers is included, ranging from overviews to more detailed studies focusing on a specific topic. These include philology, iconography, archaeology, engineering, history, and conservation. The book is of interest to scholars as well as anyone with an interest in ancient technology, transportation, or warfare.

A paper by Salima Ikram, André Veldmeijer and Lucy Skinner presents the first results of research into the Tano chariot (the leather casing and other trappings of a chariot, recently discovered in the Cairo museum), together with a report on its conservation.

The book can be read online for free, or purchased either in e-book or printed form:

<http://www.sidestone.com/books/chasing-chariots>.



Exhibition

Lost & Found: Roman shoe finds from Scotland.

The Dutch Leather and Shoe Museum (Waalwijk, Netherlands) is currently displaying a large and significant collection of Roman shoes from excavations at Camelton in Scotland. These are closely dated to 145-150AD (Antonine period) and include a wide variety of men's, women's and children's footwear. The exhibition runs until 11 May, 2014 and further details can be found here:

<http://goo.gl/ocZSes>

Traditional Tanning: Leather and Furskin by Lotta Rahme

This is a revised version and new translation of her earlier book, Skinn on pre-industrial tanning methods in the Nordic regions. The book contains sections on the history, methods and chemistry of traditional tanning. It also includes practical recipes using such agents as fish liver oil, rapeseed oil, bark and alum. It discusses which methods are best suited for various animal skins, from goat to ostrich and moose. It can be purchased on Lotta's website:

<http://www.lottasgarveri.se/Tanningbooks.html>



**NEDERLANDS LEDER
 & SCHOENEN MUSEUM**

HOME COLLECTIE **AGENDA** NIEUWS BEZOEKERSINFO JUNIOR GROEPEN ORGANISATIE CONTACT

Evenement

Titel:	Lost & Found - Romeinse schoenvondsten uit Schotland
Wanneer:	02.02.2014 - 11.05.2014
Locatie:	Nederlands Leder en Schoenen Museum - Waalwijk
Categorie:	Tentoonstellingen



A rediscovered leather vambrace from Dordrecht, the Netherlands

by Marloes Rijkelijhuizen

Introduction

Excavated leather armour finds are rare. Only a few leather protection pieces are known from the Netherlands thus far. These include a published find of a leather vambrace (forearm guard) dated to the 14th or beginning of the 15th century, excavated in Leiden (Brandenburgh 2006) and two finger protection pieces from Dordrecht, which were presented in ALG Newsletter 38 (September, 2013). Recently, a new leather armour piece has come to light at Dordrecht. This new discovery is actually an old find, excavated in 1997.

The vambrace from Dordrecht

The vambrace was found at the same site (Statenplein) as the finger protection pieces and is dated between 1250 and 1350 AD. A drawing was made at the time by Olaf Goubitz and was published in *Purses in Pieces* as an unknown object (Goubitz 2007, 110). It was recently redis-

covered by researchers from the Archaeological Service of Dordrecht and recognised as a leather protection piece for the forearm.

The vambrace was made of hardened leather and measures c. 22 cm in length. It was originally fastened by two straps, probably with buckles which were cut off, and formed a perfect fit for the forearm. A split near the elbow was partly sewn to fit around the elbow. Two parallel lines were impressed along the edges of the leather. Several holes in the leather probably originally contained metal nails or appliques. Other, smaller holes along the edge could derive from nails which had attached the vambrace to a mould during the drying process of the hardened leather - as in the reconstructed Leiden vambrace (Brandenburgh 2006).

The Dordrecht vambrace is comparable to that found in Leiden. The latter vambrace was made from two layers of leather and measures 28 cm in length. The two attachment straps and sewn

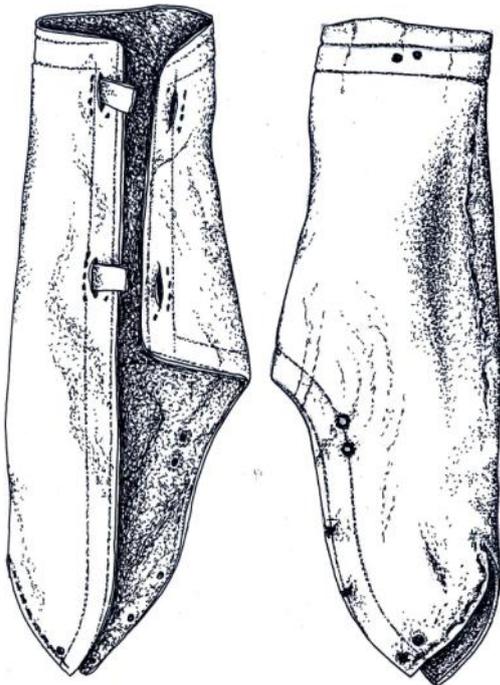


Fig. 1. Leather vambrace from Dordrecht. Collection Regional Archives Dordrecht. Drawing by Olaf Goubitz.



Fig. 2. Leather vambrace from Dordrecht. Collection Regional Archives Dordrecht. Photograph by Roel Weenink.

split at the elbow are both comparable to the example from Dordrecht. The vambrace from Leiden originally had metal decorative strips attached with nails to the leather (Brandenburgh 2006).

The vambrace from Dordrecht is one of two made from hardened leather that have been found in the Netherlands thus far. However, more examples could be discovered from new or earlier excavations.

Call for similar finds

I should like to request if anyone knows of similar finds or references to leather arm or finger guards of (hardened) leather could they please send details to:

marloesrijkelijkhuizen@hotmail.com

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Deborah Paalman, Marc Dorst, Mirjam van Oeveren & RoelWeenink; Regional Archives Dordrecht/Dordrechts Museum and Marquita Volken. The drawing is the work of Olaf Goubitz. Also thanks to Sue Winterbottom for editing.

Literature

Brandenburgh, C.R. (2006) 'Een zeldzame leren armbeschermer uit Roomburg' in C.R. Brandenburgh (ed.) Archeologisch onderzoek Roomburg 2003 (Bodemonderzoek in Leiden, vol. 17).

Goubitz, O. (2007) Purses in pieces: Archaeological finds of late medieval and 16th century leather purses, pouches, bags and cases in the Netherlands.

Rijkelijkhuizen, M. (2013) 'Leather gloves and mittens: examples recovered from the Netherlands', Archaeological Leather Group Newsletter 38, 5-9.

A tale of reindeer hides, a storm, a wreck and an exhibition

by Angela Middleton

A new permanent exhibition "The wreck of the *Metta Catharina* – an ordinary ship, an extraordinary story" opened in Spring 2013 at Mount Edgcumbe House, Cornwall. One could say the exhibition was only possible due to a storm but among leather enthusiasts it may also cause a storm.

In December 1786 *Die Frau Metta Catharina of Flensburg* (name variations include: Mette Catharina, Mette from Flensburg) was *en route* from St Petersburg to Genoa, when strong winds forced the ship to take shelter in Plymouth Sound. However, the anchor cable broke and the ship went down on Raveness Point. Luckily the crew of six escaped alive.

The ship lay undiscovered for almost 200 years. The chance find of an inscribed bronze bell led divers to the wreck of the *Metta Catharina* in October 1973. Members of the Nautical Archaeology Section of Plymouth Sound BSAC excavated the wreck until 2006, working in 30m depth, with limited visibility and often facing extremely difficult conditions.

The *Metta Catharina* is a brigantine and was built in 1782. The ship was designed so that it could hold a large amount of cargo but only needed a small crew to operate it. About three quarters of the ship survived and with it, its amazing cargo of reindeer hides. The hides were rolled up in the cargo hold and in remarkable condition. Each roll contained six hides. The hides vary in size, some complete with tails and heads. Some have a tanner's mark stamped on them and others have incisions of cross hatched lines. The leather is often referred to as 'Russian leather'. Russian leather is vegetable tanned and then curried using birch bark oil, giving it not only a distinct smell but also making it resistant to pest attack. Russian leather became a popular item for export in the 17th and 18th century. Attempts to reproduce it outside Russia failed and production remained in Russia. The cargo of the *Metta Catharina* never reached its destination in Genoa though.

Some of you may have heard of this fantastic find, and some of you may even have seen leather goods produced from some of the hides. The diving team sold hides and leather items produced from them to finance the excavation. You may think this is wrong or at least controversial. Well, yes, maybe. But if you excuse the pun: it is all above board. Unclaimed wrecks (where no owner comes forward) found in some parts of the West Country become the property of the Duchy of Cornwall, granted by the Crown. So, as Duke of Cornwall, Prince Charles granted the team a lease on the seabed allowing them to survey and excavate the site.

The exhibition at Edgcumbe House is aimed at adults and children alike. It gives an account of the discovery of the ship, informs about life on board an 18th century trading vessel and of course shows some of the fantastic finds from the wreck. Mount Edgcumbe House have also established a dedicated *Metta Catharina* research space to grant access to the archive and enable research. I am so pleased to see that the archive of the *Metta Catharina* has been made accessible and given a permanent home at Edgcumbe House. Let's hope other museums find this inspiring and widen their collection to include maritime sites. Now, who wants to come along for a visit?

To find out more, please visit:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/mettacatharina.html>

http://www.promare.co.uk/ships/Wrecks/Wk_Catharina.html



Drake's Island in Plymouth Sound—close to where the *Metta Catharina* went down. Photo from Wikimedia Commons.

<http://www.atheneenglish.com/2010/03/29/200-year-old-russian-reindeer-leather/>

More about wrecks and hides

by Angela Middleton and Serena Cant

Leather has always been a desirable commodity and was extensively traded. The story of the *Metta Catharina* inspired me to look into the subject in more detail. English Heritage's National Record for the Historic Environment (NRHE) contains a number of known wrecks involving leather and I am grateful to Serena Cant (English Heritage) for providing me with a list of 104 wrecks where hides are mentioned as cargo. The number is likely to be higher, as the cargo was not always noted. Quite a few of those wrecks are unsurprisingly associated with the meat and tallow trade. The NRHE record is available on **PastScape** (www.pastscape.org), which showcases the rich heritage and variety of the historic environment, making it available for public research. 37,000 wreck sites and documented wreck events are included. PastScape is updated each month with new research: in mid-March 2014 the 105th wreck with hides will go live – an Irish ship chased, captured and sunk by the Spanish between Land's End and the Isles of Scilly in a pre-Armada skirmish in 1588. She will be searchable in the Advanced Search by Monument Type=Wreck and date 1588. (To deter heritage crime, it is not possible to search for wrecks by cargo.) Some of the wrecks you may want to look up include the following:

Wooden sailing vessel (monument number: 1445825): The oldest wreck recorded to have carried hides is this wooden sailing vessel. It sank in 1273 or 1274 between Dover and Sandwich. Besides rabbit hides it also carried wax, oil, vinegar and tallow. For more information:

http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=1445825

Flemish cargo vessel (monument number: 1449054): This vessel was bound from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Flanders and stranded in 1323. It was broken up by Northumberland folk who stole the goods of wool and hides: For more information:

http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=1449054

Le Cristemesse: This English cargo vessel was on its way from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to York, in 1327 carrying victuals, military equipment, wine, hides and tallow. It got attacked by Flemish pirates and the crew abandoned the ship for fear of death. For more information:

http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=936583

Albany: This ship sank in 1887, whilst en route from Fray Bentos (a port in Uruguay) to Plymouth, with hides and horns on board. For more information:

http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=113761

I find these records extremely fascinating. Not only did traders of the time have to battle stormy seas but also pirates! And once the fate of a ship was sealed the fighting often continued over the wreckage and people tried to salvage whatever they could. Even after becoming wet, many of the commodities were too valuable to just leave lying around on the beach. It is very interesting too, that we can read about the monetary value of the stolen or wrecked goods. In that respect not much has changed over the centuries.

Book Reviews by June Swann



A book to treasure (mine is still in the sturdy carton it was posted in, within its own sturdy, gold-labelled red box) with introduction by the collector, Nazim Mustafaev and articles by Maria Koz'yakova and Raisa Kirsanova, is **Red Shoe**, published by Shoe Icons, Moscow 2012, in Russian and English. No ISBN number, but see www.shoe-icons.com. A 294-page hardback, with separate 38-page hardback *Index*, superb colour photographs from p. 49 to the end, the *Index* also fully illustrated. All red, it includes men's (ecclesiastic of course, but also football boots), women's, children's/babies', from c1750 to present, not in chronological order. Mainly European and USA by famous makers and designers but including their traditional footwear and extending through the Ottoman empire to the Far East. The order may frustrate research, but will enliven the dark winter days; a pleasure to turn the pages.

Also with a red cover, but more frustrating, Margo Gantz and Catherine Belanger with photographs by Lois Lammerhuber, **Musée du Louvre: Chaussures peintes, Painted Shoes, Calzados pintados, Gemalte Schuhe**, Edition Lammerhuber, Baden ISBN 978-3-901753-23-7, 2011. A heavy, 256-page hardback, requires table to work on, as many of the photographs are 2-page spread; all in colour they are large details of shoes from paintings c1280-1834 in the Louvre. Text in French, English, Spanish and German, with origin of paintings even more widespread. Index of the complete

paintings on p.238-250 with photographs (somewhat larger than postage stamp size) in roughly chronological order; sadly it does not include every page where each is mentioned. Many pages of paintings without number or caption. All will find a number of favourite boots and shoes, plus rather too many classical-style sandals and hose.

ICOM-CC Leather & Related Materials Working Group, ed. by Céline Bonnot-Diconne, Carole Dignard & Jutta Göpfrich, **Postprints of the 10th Interim Meeting, Offenbach, Germany 2012** published by ICOM-CC 2013, ISBN 978-3-9815440-1-5, 168 page paperback. It includes article on conservation of 12th c. pair of ceremonial sandals (*sandalia*) from Castel Sant'Elia, Italy, in fact one of three pairs similar to those which the abbot of Stavelot (Belgium) received in 1161. They have a slightly pointed toe, no heel, vamp and quarters incomplete, but consisting of perforated gilt leather underlain with blue silk, all decorated with silver dome-headed rivets in arabesque pattern; on low (about 1 inch/2.4 cm) tawed leather-covered cork platform sole, with hint of red silk to attach it or cover the edge. P.63-4 has technical description of a Coptic sole. Photographs on p.157-163, illustrating G.M. Zink's paper on conservation of wet leather from Schleswig, tantalisingly show shoes and soles of various dates from one-piece shoes to medieval cut-work from Elisenhof, with reference on p.163 to C. Schnack's 1992 article: *Die mittelalterlichen Schuhe aus Schleswig Ausgrabung Schild 1971-1975*.

On the history of shoemaking, we now have two more books: Mark Palmer, **Clarks, Made to Last: the story of Britain's best-known shoe firm**, Profile Books, London 2013, ISBN 978 1 84668 520 0. 398-page hardback, 16 pages of colour photographs (mostly advertisements but including a slipper, a shoe and a foot-gauge), many black & white photographs and drawings. Idiosyncratic index with indents in page-order instead of alphabetically and general advertising exaggerating the position of the company. Some of the history seems to be based on Tim E. Crumplin's PhD thesis (*Clark's Business History 1825-2003*). Note that John Thornton was Head of the Boot and Shoe Department, Northampton College of Technology 1948-74, not 1980s, an error that warns the reader. It would be more use at half the length without the adulation.

The second is, Frances and Michael Holmes, **The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade**, published by Norwich Heritage Projects, 2013, ISBN 978-0-9566272-3-0, 262-page paperback with colour and black and white photographs. There is a brief mention of shoemaking as one of the 130 trades there in the early 14th c. with reconstruction of c1300 market layout (shoemakers in south-east corner and in Gentleman's Walk, earlier Cordwainers Row, together with 'leather hosiers', which I hope someone will explore further). It moves swiftly on to 1792, their first certain mention of ready-mades [even though from 1229 to 1272 Henry III ordered nine towns and cities in turn, three times a year - but not including Norwich - to supply up to 345 pairs of shoes to give as alms to the poor]. The 1792 enterprise survives as Start-rite. The history of 30 other companies is also described, and three shops. As well as the customary pictures of factory outings, factories inside and out with workers operating various machines, some watched by members of the royal family or other celebrities, I am very pleased to see also tools, many machines and over 70 boots and shoes depicted: so rare in books on the industry (see *Clarks* above). Some 62 workers in the trade have contributed their memories. Complete with map showing position of the factories, boardroom portraits, glossary, 2-page bibliography and index, it is by far the most comprehensive book on a shoe town's history that I have so far found. Hopefully an example for others to follow.

A visit to 'My Favourite Shoe' at the Royal Exchange, London

by Quita Mould

One afternoon in late winter three ALG members ventured forth to the Royal Exchange in London to view this 'pop up' exhibition, described as 'showcasing leading shoe designers from the UK'. We had to be quick as it only 'popped up' from the 3rd to the 7th of February. It comprised three cases located at the back of a crowded restaurant area in the centre of the building, surrounded on all sides by prestigious retail outlets and, as we were visiting toward the end of a busy lunchtime service, it was all too easy to miss it in the general mêlée of diners, waiters and shoppers - and miss it we did. We were directed to the cases by a kindly security man who had watched us bumbling about from his position at the exit, possibly suspicious that we were part of a diversionary tactic for an intended shop raid.

Three companies, considered to be amongst the most exciting contemporary shoe brands and designers working in the UK at present, had contributed to the exhibition: *Harry's of London*, *Crockett & Jones* and *Pretty Ballerinas*. In order to illustrate how vintage shoes can inspire and influence contemporary designs they were invited to select a favourite shoe from the Northampton Museum and Art Gallery's shoe collection and pair it with one of their own current designs. *Crockett & Jones* chose two from their own back catalogue: a man's brown leather Derby shoe with a punched toe cap and a man's suede and leather Balmoral boot, both made during the 1920's-1930's. They were shown alongside an Oxford shoe with punched detailing and a Derby shoe fastening through five eyelets. Predictably, *Pretty Ballerinas* chose a white leather ballet shoe made by Columbano Porselli, of 9 West Street, London, between 1950-1970, shown with a flat shoe style called 'Marilyn' with an almond shaped toe and an upper of ivory coloured textile with flower decoration. *Harry's of London* selected two Native American Indian shoes: a Cree Indian leather and velvet (?) moccasin with beaded design dated to 1875-1900 and the other, a 'sueded' leather moccasin, made by the Blackfoot of Canada. One suspected both moccasins had been originally intended to be traded with the incomers rather than for local native wear.

These were shown alongside two styles of contemporary loafers.

This small exhibition was part of Northampton Museum & Art Gallery's 'Cinderella Syndrome' project, which is looking at ways to display footwear, not only old shoes in museums but also new shoes in shops. In an accompanying flyer they say that 'a successful formula for the display of shoes is yet to be realised'. This project was devised to examine different ways of displaying footwear and 'by taking shoes into new spaces we can change how people respond to them'. The Royal Exchange was one of these 'new spaces', surrounded as it was with upmarket shoe shops displaying their wares in the usual way.

I am not sure exactly how one can respond in a 'new way' to a shoe, with one possible exception.... The US Memorial Holocaust Museum records that 'visitors frequently report the sight and smell of the display of 4,000 victims' shoes is the most searing memory' of their visit. On loan from the State Museum of Majdanek in Lublin, Poland, these shoes represent only a tiny fraction of those found at Majdanek by Soviet troops who liberated the camp in 1944. Shoes and other leather goods were confiscated by the Nazis from their victims and were intended to be repaired or broken down to be recycled for other uses by those working in the camp. I imagine that looking at that display would certainly produce a response. I wish the NMAG every success in their search for interesting ways to display shoes. Personally I am happy to look at any shoe as long as it is accompanied with a label telling me something about it (if possible where it comes from, when it was made, and who might have worn it).

There is more about Northampton Museum's 'Cinderella Project' here:

<http://www.northampton.gov.uk/thecinderellasynndrome>

Reminder—subscriptions

For those who have not already paid, subscriptions to the Archaeological Leather Group for 2014 are now due. They remain at £10 for cheques drawn on UK banks and £12 via PayPal if we pay the costs at this end. Details of PayPal are on the website:

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

Earlier this year we moved house and my new address is: **29 Herne Road, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 4BS**

Telephone number and email are as before.

Many thanks in advance,

Roy Thomson, Treasurer

(Last year's accounts can be found on the next page).

Archaeological Leather Group Committee 2013-14

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(continued on next page)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL LEATHER GROUP
Treasurer's Report for the Year Ending 31st. December 2013

Income and Expenditure Account

Income

Subscriptions 2013 (52 @ £10)	520.00
(10 @ £12)	120.00
Subscriptions in advance 2014/15 (5 @ £10)	50.00
(6 @£12)	72.00
Donation	5.00
CD sales	<u>42.50</u>
	809.50

Expenditure

ALG Newsletter costs	104.58
Website costs	25.89
Paypal charges	<u>7.26</u>
	137.73
Surplus for year	671.77

Balance

Balance as at 31 st . December 2012	3887.23
Surplus for year	<u>671.77</u>
	4559.00
Closing cash balance	4559.00
Less subscriptions in advance	<u>122.00</u>
Balance as at 31 st . December 2013	4437.00

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