

TITLE The identification of leather used in medieval shoes from DUA sites in London (including Baynards Castle and Billingsgate).

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ABSTRACT

The identification of type of leather used in medieval shoes from grain patterns.

KEYWORDS

Leather; calf, cattle, sheep/goat, deer; grain pattern, thickness; footwear; identification.

THIS REPORT IS LEVEL III

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The leather was identified from grain patterns where these were distinctive (LCC, 1981, 9-11; Reed, 1972, 25, 283-5). Leather was regarded as mature cattle hide if it was 4mm thick upwards. (LCC 1981, 4,5; Reed 1972, 285).

Many of the soles were worn, although seven did have a small area of grain pattern. Using the thickness as a guide most of them were found to be cattle hide. The reconstructed shoes caused a problem as it was impossible to measure the thickness of the soles, so these and some of the more worn examples have been described as calf/cattle as the original thickness is no longer clear. One sole was particularly thin (10.SH 74 [467] <166>) and has a grain pattern which suggested it was sheep/goat rather than calf, although both it and the associated upper were very worn.

Three pieces of upper were so worn as to have no surface with a grain pattern remaining, (22.SWA 81 [2078] <4649>; BWB 82 [161] <53>; BC 72 [55] <1669>). The uppers vary between calf and sheep/goat. No distinction has been made between sheep/goat and deer (Reed 1972, 285). Some of those described as sheep/goat may have been deer skin, but we are not yet certain of the diagnostic pattern for the latter. Two pieces of upper were thick and were possibly cattle rather than calf, (38. BC 72 [250] <4039>; BWB 83 [120] <54>).

References

Leather Conservation Centre, 1981 The Fibre Structure of Leather.

Reed, R., 1972 Ancient Skins, Parchments and Leathers. London.

1. BIG 82 [5078] <5789>, Period VII, c.1130. Shoe
sole - delaminated
upper - sheep/goat

2. SH 74 [513] <635>, Waterfront I, c.1140 Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (worn and delaminated)
upper - sheep/goat

3. SH 74 [451] <184>, Waterfront I, c.1140. Upper
sheep/goat

4. BIG 82 [4383] <5855>, Period VII, c.1130. Upper
sheep/goat

5. SH 74 [483] <640>, Waterfront II/III, c. 1170-1200. Upper
probably calf

6. BIG 82 [6332] <5858>, Period VIII, c.1150-1200. Shoe
main upper - calf
heel stiffener - sheep/goat?
band - sheep/goat?

7. BIG 82 [5418] <5866>, Period VIII, c.1150-1200. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf

8. BIG 82 [2575] <2281> Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (reconstructed, not clear)
upper - calf
band - too worn
thongs - too worn

9. SH 74 [386] <114>, Waterfront IV, c.1240-50. Shoe
sole - very worn and delaminated
upper - sheep/goat

10. SH 74 [467] <166>, Waterfront III, c.1210. Shoe
sole - sheep/goat? (very worn)
upper - sheep/goat? (very worn)

11. SH 74 [484] <457>, Waterfront III, c.1210. Upper
sheep/goat

12. SH 74 [484] <208>, Waterfront III, c.1210. Upper
sheep/goat

13. SH 74 [386] <138>, Waterfront IV, c.1240. Child's shoe
sole - calf/cattle
upper - sheep/goat? (very worn)

14. BIG 82 [4961] <2782>, Period IX, c.1200-50. Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (very worn)
upper - sheep/goat

15. BIG 82 [4961] <2776>, Period IX, c.1200-50. Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (worn and delaminated)
upper - sheep/goat? (very worn)

16. SH 74 [467] <159>, Waterfront III, c.1210. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
17. SH 74 [484] <245>, Waterfront III, c.1210. Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (worn, reconstructed)
upper - calf
thong - too worn
18. SH 74 [484] <246>, Waterfront II, c.1210. Shoe
sole - calf/cattle, grain pattern (worn, reconstructed)
upper - sheep/goat
19. SWA 81 [2056] <4537>, c.1270-1300. Upper
calf
20. SWA 81 [2022] <4910>, c.1270-1300. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
21. SWA 81 [2018] <393>, Child's shoe
sole - calf/cattle
upper - very worn
heel stiffener? - sheep/goat
22. SWA 81 [2078] <4969>, c.1270-1300. Upper fragment
upper - too worn
thong - calf
23. SH 74 [386] <113>, Waterfront IV, c.1240-50. Upper
calf
24. SWA 81 [2137] <4813>, c.1270-1300. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
25. BC 72 [250] <3771/1>, c.1330-40. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper pieces - calf/cattle
heel stiffener - calf
thong - not clear
26. BC 72 [250] <4053>, c.1330-40. Shoe
sole - calf
upper - thick calf, and one piece thinner
27. BC 72 [250] <3808>, c.1330-40. Child's shoe
sole - calf/cattle, grain pattern
upper - sheep/goat?
28. BC 72 [250] <4028>, c.1330-40. Child's shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
heel stiffener - sheep/goat?

29. BC 72 [250] <3698>, c.1330-40. Shoe
all parts calf, including probable top band
30. BC 72 [88] <3157>, c.1375-1400. Shoe with buckle
sole - cattle
upper - calf
piece with no stitching - sheep/goat
31. BC 72 [150] <3698>, c.1375-1400. Shoe
sole - cattle, grain pattern
upper - calf
strip - calf, finer
32. BC 72 [55] <1892>, c.1375-1400. Child's shoe
sole - cattle
vamp and quarters - calf
33. BC 72 [88] <3080>, c.1375-1400. Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (very worn)
vamp and quarters - calf
34. BC 72 [150] <3800> Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
thongs - worn, possibly calf
35. BC 72 [55] <1573/2>, c.1375-1400 Shoe
sole - cattle, grain pattern
upper - calf
heel stiffener - calf
thong - calf
36. BC 72 [88] <3076>, c.1375-1400 Shoe
sole - cattle
upper and strip - calf
37. BC 72 [79] <2496>, <2584>, c.1375-1400. Shoe - decorated
probably calf (worn very smooth)
38. BC 72 [250] <4039>, c.1330-40 Shoe
sole - cattle, grain pattern
upper - calf (thick)
thong - calf
39. BC 72 [79] <2585>, c.1375-1400. Child's shoe
sole - cattle, grain pattern
upper - calf
40. BC 72 [150] <3365>, c.1375-1400. Child's shoe
sole - calf/cattle (worn)
upper - sheep/goat
thong - calf
41. BC 72 [55] <1668>, c.1375-1400. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper fragments - calf
heel stiffener - calf

42. BC 72 [150] <3363>, c.1375-1400 Child's shoe
sole - calf/cattle?
upper - calf
strip - calf
43. TL 74 [414] <395>, G11 c.1380. Shoe
sole - cattle, grain pattern
upper - calf
piece with no stitching - calf (very fine)
44. SWA 81 [2105] <4620>, early C15. Shoe
sole - very worn and delaminated
upper - calf
45. TL 74 [368] <1307>, G15 c.1440. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf (very smooth)
46. TL 74 [452] <1980>, G15 c.1440 Shoe
sole - calf/cattle (worn and delaminated)
upper - calf
47. TL 74 [368] <1162>, G15 c.1440. Upper
large piece - calf
smaller piece - calf (finer)
48. TL 74 [368] <1325>, G15 c.1440. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf, thick
heel stiffener - calf
49. SWA 81 [2112] <4247>, early/mid C15. Upper
sheep/goat
50. TL 74 [275] <3241>, G15 c.1440. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
thong - calf
51. TL 74 [275] <3278>, G15 c.1440. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
heel stiffener - probably calf, very worn
52. TL 74 [368] <1494>, G15 c.1440. Child's shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf
53. TL 74 [275] <2010>, <2011>, G15 c.1440 Shoe
sole - cattle
Upper fragments - deer/sheep/goat?
54. TL 74 [275] <3324>, G15 c.1440. Shoe
sole - cattle
upper - calf (very worn)
pieces with thong holes - probably calf

BWB 83 [161] <53>, very worn, no grain pattern visible	Decorated fragment
BWB 83 [120] <54>, calf, very thick, just under 4mm	Decorated fragment
BC 72 [83] <2557>, calf	Upper
BC 72 [79] <2337>, calf	Decorated upper
BC 72 [79] <2338>, calf	Decorated upper
BC 72 [79] <2513>, sole - cattle upper - calf thong - calf	Child's shoe
BC 72 [79] <2581>, calf	Decorated fragment
BC 72 [79] <2582>. calf	Decorated fragment
BC 72 [79] <2583>, sheep/goat	Upper
BC 72 [55] <1669>, sole - cattle, grain pattern upper - too worn	Shoe
SWA 81 [2097] <4902>, sole - cattle upper - calf thong - calf heel stiffener - probably calf	Shoe
TL 74 [1955] <3293>, calf	Decorated fragment
TL 74 [275] <1834>, calf	Decorated upper
85. 289/12-13 calf	Decorated fragments