

WINCHESTER EXCAVATIONS - 1949-60LEATHER

As they do not appear to have any identification numbers, the bags have been numbered arbitrarily as they have been taken out of the boxes.

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The numbers in brackets after "Cutting Scrap" indicates the approximate number of pieces in the bag.

A marginal asterisk indicates that a drawing is suggested.

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- (1) Upper and sole, very fragmentary, of a thonged turnshoe. The upper is better preserved on the left side and this together with the toe shape suggests it is a right foot. The right side is now missing (quite usual for the outside edge of the shoe) and there was an insert here as there is a cut edge from the centre of the instep to the lasting margin carrying an edge/flesh seam, stitch length c. 5.0mm., where this would have been joined on. The top of the left(inside) quarter is also missing but the upper was probably of the pre-Norman wrap-round pattern (no seams at the back of the heel).

The lasting margin, where it survives, is well defined and moulded inwards with creases, particularly at the toe, and large grain/flesh holes stitch length c. 7.5mm. The seat end turns up suggesting that the shoe may have been of the pointed V-back-sole pattern (where the heel seat of the sole turns up to become part of the upper, rather like some modern driving shoes and toddlers' shoes, again a pre-Norman type of N.W.European origin. L: c. 270mm.

The sole is delaminated at many places and in a very fragmentary condition, the seat having gone altogether. A rib remains on the flesh side (uppermost in the shoe) carrying the upper stitching holes, stitch length 7.5mm. matching those of the upper already described. Pieces of thonging remain in various places where repair patches have been added.

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(Draw upper from top and sole alongside showing seams)

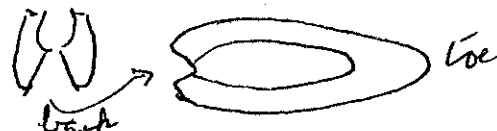
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- (2) Upper of a thonged turnshoe, one-piece pattern with quarters originally joined at the top of the back leaving a V-shaped gap below where the sole turned up to meet them. The shoe would have been very similar to a modern "casual" type with no instep or side fastening and one of the same type was found in the S. Corbier Tower excavations at York, 1965 (see Yorkshire Arch.J. Vol XXXIX pp.523-30).

The top edge of the quarters has the holes and scallops of over-stitching, stitch length 6.5mm. possibly indicating that a top-band was added.

The lasting margin is still moulded inwards with grain/flesh holes and creases between them, stitch length c. 10.0mm. A small piece of thong remains at the back of the right quarter where the sole turned up. The tops of the quarters backs were joined by a fine seam, probably of the "closed" type (face to face), stitch length c. 5.0mm. L (round the curve of the upper, toe-back): c. 280mm. The present size is c. 3 (adults')

(Draw to show back V and top)



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- (3) Fragments of upper and sole, some with thonging in situ (see 1. and 2.), also pieces of strap and thonging (c. 7.0mm. wide)
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- (4) Cutting scrap (V40), much of it triangular pieces with the characteristic concave cut edges of inter-section waste (as still found in shoe factories today); also skin offals, some with teats, and thonging. Some of the pieces have scored and curved lines on them suggesting that patterns were marked round before cutting and then there was a change of mind and replacing. There is also a fragment of upper with grain/flesh marginal stitching holes, stitch length 6.0mm. Probably goat or sheep skin
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- (5) Cutting scrap (53) similar to 4. and with some fragments of shoe parts from which other pieces have been cut. Also four pieces of wood/bone(?) and a small rectangular and curved fragment, c. 43mm. x 32mm, which may be burnt leather.
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- (6) Cutting scrap (12) of the usual shapes; the very thin pieces may be goat or sheep and the <sup>one</sup>/thicker piece cow-hide. No special features other than those already noted for scrap.
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- (7) Cutting scrap (16) from skins and possibly re-used parts of upper. One small pear-shaped piece c. 40mm. x 20mm. may be the waste from a decorative cut-out in an upper.
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- (8) Cutting scrap (16). One is the typical inter-section triangle and there is also a very distorted piece with cut edges which may be part of a sole or repair clump but there are no really identifiable features; these may have been masked by conservation. One piece, c. 160mm. x 20mm., appears at first to be a folded strip but its curvature along the apparently folded edge makes this supposition rather improbable and it is more likely to be a fragment which has delaminated except along an original edge where the tanning penetrated more deeply.

- (9) A large piece of skin, roughly diamond shaped, L (max.): 390mm. x W:295mm. Two of the ~~edges~~ are cut, smooth and concave, the others irregular suggesting that this piece is the corner or flank of a skin from which a section had been cut. There is also a slight indication of teats indicating a hind flank. Probably sheep or goat.

- (10) Shoe quarters and stiffener, probably left foot, from a thonged turnshoe, possibly of the wrap-round type. They are still moulded in their original shape and the lasting margin has part of the sole margin still thonged in position. The top edge of the quarters are cut without any indication of top-band attachment and slope downwards towards the front. The left side front edge may be a torn one (masked by conservation) but originally may have been a continuation of the vamp; the right side has a series of large holes, grain/flesh and stitch length c. 6.0mm. which have been pulled open by ~~stitches~~ or lacing, presumably to the corresponding vamp wing. Just <sup>below</sup> the top ~~each~~ edge <sup>each</sup> side there is a vertical slot, 10-11mm. long, opened towards the front where presumably a strap went through from the back of the heel inside and was then tied over the instep to keep the shoe on. This feature has been noticed in another shoe (see below ...) from these excavations.
- The stiffener is lasted in with the quarters but there is no over stitching along its top edge as this actually coincides with the top edge of the quarters instead of being placed just below it which is more usual. The lasting margin of quarters and stiffener is turned in as usual and well defined. It carries grain/flesh holes, stitch length 5.0mm., and the right side still has a fragment of sole attached by a serpentine thong.
- The fact that shoes wear away more at the outside corner of <sup>the</sup> heel and that early shoes with side lacing have this on the inside suggest that this is a left-foot shoe. The material, which is thicker than usual may be cow-hide. H(at back as crumpled): 75mm.

(Draw from the right to show sole fragment and lace holes)



- (11) Cutting scrap (3). One piece is a shank with some cut edges, probably goat or sheep; another is the typical inter-section triangle.
- (12) Cutting scrap (6) including triangular inter-section pieces, a skin edge and a small piece of upper with a thong in situ. The skin edge has a hole where the skin was tied or pegged out in drying

(13) Shoe fragments consisting of:

(a) a sole repair clump which was thonged on to the original sole, a fragment of which remains on the inside. Some thonging also remains, with the holes 10mm. to 20mm. apart. L:c.100mm. x W:c.77mm.

(Draw)

(b) Very fragmentary sole lamina with a lasting margin of an upper still thonged to it (this identification is not positive because of the deterioration); stitch length: 6.5mm.

(c) A roughly rectangular fragment, L:c.185mm. x W:c.80mm., which may be a part of an upper or cutting scrap from the shank of a skin; there are no really identifiable features.

- (14) Cutting scrap (10) and a piece of wood. One large piece, L:c.140mm. x W: 95mm. x T: 2.5mm., may be the shank of a skin; two probably original edges have no delamination since the tannin has penetrated from the edge, but the two cut edges have both delaminated since here the tannin has penetrated insufficiently from the surfaces of the skin. Another fragment has<sup>a</sup>teat indicating a hind shank.

- (15) Cutting scrap (c.20) including shanks and edges of skins and inter-section triangular waste. One heart-shaped piece, W: c.40mm., may be the waste from a decorative cut-out in a shoe or other article, or it may be a finished object in itself, but what this would be is not obvious.

(Draw the heart piece)

(16) Two fragments

(a) Cutting scrap showing skin edges and cut edges.

(b) A long piece of leather, goat or sheep, L:c. 380mm. x W: 40-60mm. and 70mm. at one place. One of the long edges has a scalloped seam, stitch length c. 4.5mm., so this may indicate that the piece was originally the top part of a long wrap-round shoe upper. The opposite edge has been cut with various curves presumably showing where other pieces have been taken from the quarters for another purpose. One of the short ends has an edge/flesh butted seam, stitch length 5.5mm. where it may have been joined to the vamp. The other end has a peak which has on one side c. 25mm. of original edge with stitch holes right through, stitch length 4.5mm.

The use and orientation of this specimen is very problematical.

(Draw to show seam)

- (17) Cutting scrap (c.40), a piece of bone and a tusk (?). Most of the scrap is inter-section cutting waste and some pieces have score marks

presumably where the pattern was marked round after first placing and then moved. Also a pear-shaped section c.40mm. x 30mm. which may be the waste from a decorative cut-out on a shoe upper; some thonging; a short piece of sole margin with marginal flesh/flesh holes, stitch length 6.5mm. for thonging to the upper; a small piece of upper lasting margin with grain/flesh holes, stitch length 8.0mm.

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(18) Cutting scrap (16), goat (or sheep) and cattle. The usual triangles, some with scored pattern lines and skin edges.

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(19) Cutting scrap (12). Some triangles and skin edges, pieces of thonging. Goat or sheep.

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(20) Cutting scrap (c.40). The usual triangles, some with pattern marking, and skin edges. A round-ended tongue, c. 50mm x 20mm. may be from a decorative cut-out; another rather larger tongue, W: 50mm., may be from a vamp throat (between the wings of the vamp).

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(21) Cutting scrap (21), mostly triangular inter-section waste. One piece has a skin edge and another could be the waste from a decorative cut-out.

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(23) A quantity of scrap including the fragmentary remains of two sole repair clumps, one with some thonging in situ. The more complete of the two clumps has grain/flesh holes round the forepart and across the waist, stitch length very variable but from 10mm. upwards

(Draw clumps showing thong)

The scrap seems to be both cattle and goat (or sheep) and includes the usual triangles and skin edges. One trapezoidal section, L:135mm. x W:50mm. may be part of a shoe upper but this is not certain. There are also two pieces of wood(?).

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(24) Cutting scrap (21). The usual triangles, skin edges and thonging; also some edge parings. Goat or sheep.

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(25) Cutting scrap (37). The usual triangles, skin edges and some parings. Some of the waste shows pattern marking lines and one piece may show re-use as there is a convex cut edge, a score line parallel to this and then a deep re-entrant cut where another piece has been removed. It may be a re-used piece of a shoe. A tongue, c. 100mm. x 60mm. is probably a cut-out from a vamp throat.

(Draw the waste piece described)

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- (26) Cutting scrap (6). As usual; two pieces are skin shanks each with a hole where the skin was pegged or tied out in drying after tanning. Goat or sheep.

- (27) Cutting scrap (1). A long piece, c. 310mm., from the hind shank as there is a teat on it. Probably goat. Delamination has begun from the cut edge but not from the original skin edge where the tannin would have penetrated more deeply.

- (28) Cutting scrap (24). The usual mixture of skin edges, inter-section triangles, parings. Some have scored trial pattern lines on them. Goat or sheep.

- (29) Cutting scrap (6). The usual mixture of skin edges, intersection triangles, parings and thonging; also two pieces of shoe upper lasting margin with stitch holes, stitch length 4.5mm.. The largest piece of skin offal, L: c.320mm. x W:c.135mm., (at the widest part) has a long concave cut edge suggesting that a one-piece wrap-round vamp and quarters upper has been cut from it. Goat or sheep.

- (30) Cutting scrap (6). Skin edges and shanks with the usual concave cut edges where sections have been cut out; one triangle.

- (31) Cutting scrap (4). Two of the pieces are larger than usual and have re-entrant cut edges where sections have been cut out near the edge of the skin. In one of them (Fig...) the shape and size reveals lack of economy in cutting compared with modern standards. There are score lines where trial positions have been marked. The other long section has a peg or string hole used in drying.



(Draw)



A small section has some unusual "teeth" marks in two areas near the the original edge. Are these the marks of pincers used for stretching or have they been acquired later?

(Draw)

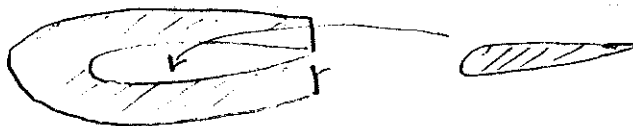


- (32) Cutting scrap (12) A mixture of skin edges and shanks and triangular inter-section waste. One of the triangles has two sets of "teeth" in it (see 31. above) along a cut edge and may indicate that the clicker (cutter) pulled the skin to increase its size a little so that another

section cut be fitted in. The marks are the same pattern as 31. Another piece is long and tear-shaped and may be the waste from the throat of a wrap-round upper (between the vamp wings).

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(Draw the waste to show teeth marks and the tear-shaped piece)




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(33) Cutting scrap (12). Small piece of intersection waste, skin edges and thonging.

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(34) Cutting scrap (20). The usual mixture of triangles, some with scored pattern lines, and skin edges.

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(35) A top-band or strip and some small scrap (5). The strip, L:160mm. x W:18mm, tapering to 9.0mm. at one end, is cut at both ends. Each long edge has an edge/flesh seam but they are different in character and stitch length: (a) markedly scalloped on the grain side (smooth) by overstitching, stitch length 4.5mm.; (b) less scalloped with the grooves less sloping, stitch length c. 5.0mm. There is no evidence of folding along the centre to indicate that the two edges were originally stitched together and the difference in stitch length precludes this. Seam (a) is of the type usually associated with a top-band or collar along the top edge of the quarters; it is found both on the top-band itself and on the quarters edge. The presence of seam (b) along the opposite edge may indicate that the strip was an inside top-band put in as a reinforcement with seam (a) joined to the top edge of the quarters and seam (b) lower down on the inside of the shoe and attached to the quarters by overstitching.

(Draw)  clip band

The fineness of the stitching suggests a later period than the other shoes examined.

One of the triangular cutting fragments has the teeth marks already noted in 31. and 32.

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(36) Thonged turnshoe, fragmentary, now in three pieces, and consists of upper (left side only) with fragments of the sole still attached by thonging and an indeterminate curved fragment; probably right foot. The upper is of heavy hide, presumably cattle, and was probably of the wrap-round type. The most interesting feature is a decorative

seam down the centre of the vamp from throat to toe consisting of two parallel rows of thonging, c. 4.0mm. apart (between centres) and stitch length c. 3.5mm. Details are masked by conservation. The front and top edges of the quarter are straight cut with no stitching. Fragments of sole remain thonged to the upper and the method of thonging is very clearly shown in serpentine loops, stitch length (hole-hole): c. 7.0mm.



(Draw)

At first sight there appear to be three sections joined together suggesting that the upper has a lining but this effect is due to the delamination of the upper into two layers at the edge. L: 215mm.

A smaller fragment may be a piece of sole with upper attached but it is not clear which piece is which. L: 105mm.

The third section is a long curved fragment, L: c. 185mm., with traces of stitch holes, stitch length 6.0-6.5mm. along the concave edge. It is a fragment of upper, now flattened, which originally may have been the curved lasting margin passing round the heel seat of the sole as a continuation of the other fragments.

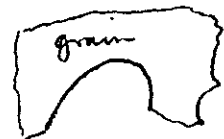
(Draw)

This upper/sole attaching seam appears to be of the "closed" type (face to face) each section have a grain/flesh seam, rather than the more usual type in which the upper is stitched to a rib raised on the flesh side of the sole (see 1.).

(Draw main sections both sides)

- (37) Cutting scrap (15). The usual mixture of skin edges and shanks (some with peg or tie holes), inter-section triangles, thonging and the edge of a sole(?), very delaminated, with stitch holes, stitch length 5.0mm., and thonging in situ. The largest piece of scrap from a shank shows where a left foot sole has been cut and the shape is very clear; width across the tread c. 65-70mm. suggesting an original length of sole of c. 180mm., 9's or 10's in modern children's sizes.

(Draw)

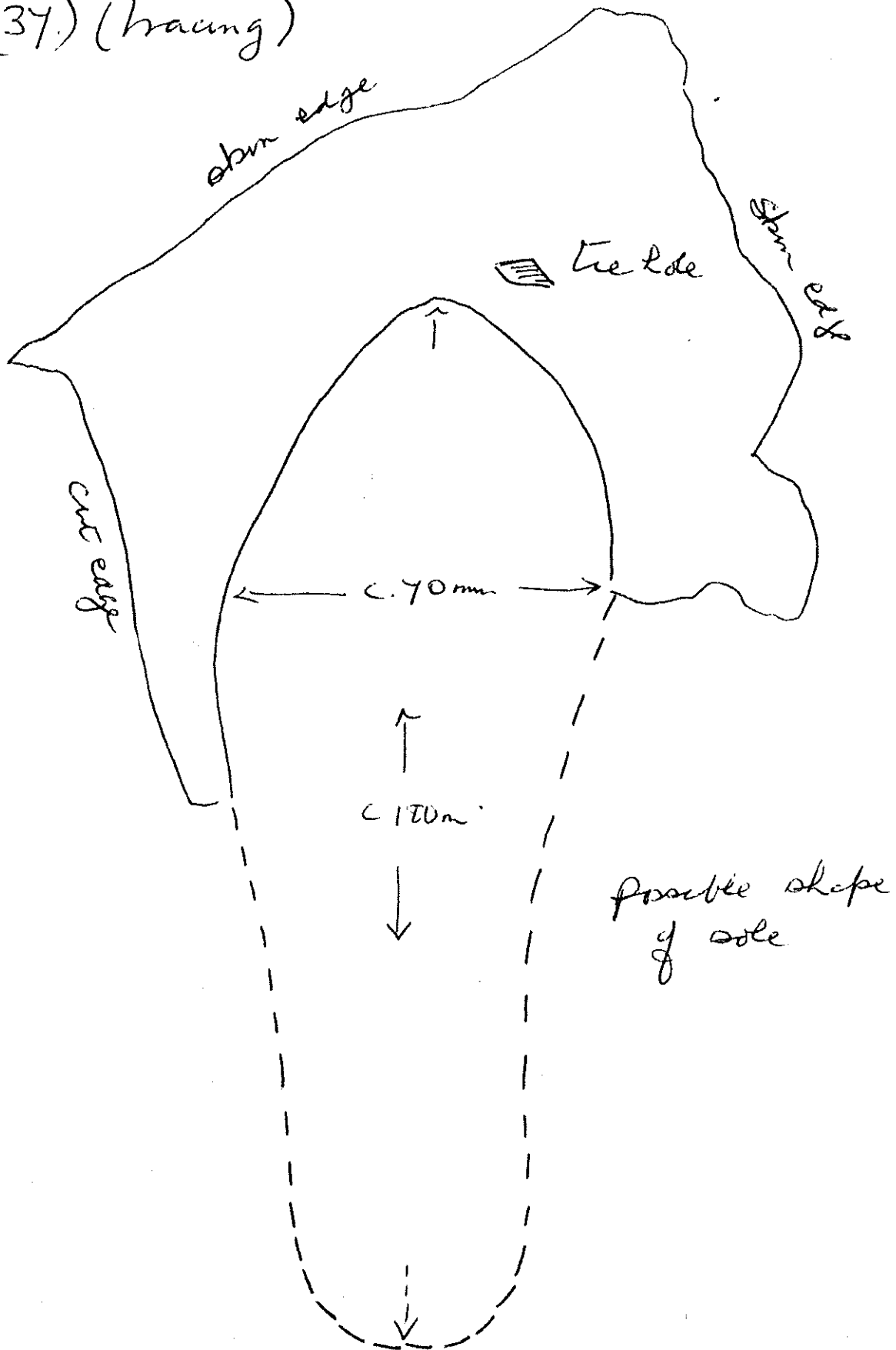


- (38) Cutting scrap (8). Shanks, skin edges, triangles. Tie or peg holes in some and also the teeth marks noted in 31., 32. and 35.

- (39) Cutting scrap (33). The usual mixture of skin edges and shanks, triangles (some with marking our lines). At least three have the teeth marks noted in 31., 32., 35. and 38, and in two cases these are near the



(37.) (Tracing)



original edge of the skin fragment suggesting that they may have *been* caused by the use of "toggles" (self-closing clamps or pincers) to grip the edges of the skin when pulled out for drying. There appear to be various animals represented - goat or sheep and cattle.

One piece of <sup>skin</sup>edge has a long concave cut edge, L: c. 260mm., where possibly a one-piece upper was cut out.

- (40) Cutting scrap (32), mostly quite small. The usual mixture of skin edges and triangles, some with pattern lines.

- (41) Cutting scrap (9) and a piece of wood. The scrap includes a long shank of goat/sheep, L: c. 300mm., with <sup>a</sup>long lenticular hole, L: c. 60mm., where it was pegged or tied out for drying after tanning. A rectangular piece, L: c. 105mm. x W: c. 80mm., may be an actual article or just inter-section scrap; the edges are all cut but there are no seams.

- (42) Cutting scrap (4) and a fragment of a sole repair clump. The scrap is as usual except for one large diamond-shaped piece, c. 215mm. x 90mm. which is larger than usual; the remainder consists of skin edges and triangles, some with pattern lines. The clump has grain/flesh thong holes round its curved edge, stitch length 8.0 - 12.0mm.; the rear edge is torn; the toe is rounded. Its shape and wear suggest it may have been attached to a right shoe.

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(Draw - grain up)

- (43) Cutting scrap (39), mostly small and consisting of skin edges (some with tie holes), triangles (with pattern lines) and thonging. One edge shows teeth marks (see 31., 32., 35., 38.)

- (44) Cutting scrap (44) and an acorn. A typical mixture of skin shanks (with tie holes) and edges, triangles and thongs.

- (45) Cutting scrap (25) and pieces of wood (5) (?bone). The usual mixture of shanks, edges, triangles (with pattern lines) and thongs. One tear-shaped piece is probably from a vamp throat.

- (46) Cutting scrap (5) and an acorn. Skin edges and shanks, one with a tie hole, and two small fragments.

- (47) Cutting scrap (24), mostly small, of the types already noted.

- (48) Cutting scrap (39). The usual mixture of shanks and edges, triangles, strips and parings; no thongs. At least three pieces show the teeth marks (see 31, 32, 35, 38, 43).

- (49) Cutting scrap (30). Skin edges and triangles, two with teeth marks, and possibly shoe fragments. Another may have traces of an edge/flesh seam along one edge but this is not certain as the apparent channelling and scalloping may be distortion of the skin edge. Both thick and thin fragments may indicate sole and upper leather scrap.

- (50) A skin shank and<sup>a</sup> large L-shaped piece from a shank. The longest side of the L-shaped piece is c. 350mm. x 100mm.; possibly a left hind leg or a right fore leg. A tie hole remains. Goat or sheep (suggest BLMRA examines this and some of the other specimens)

(Draw these pieces)

- (51) Cutting scrap (16) and a piece of bone/wood (?). Shanks, edges and triangles. A tear-shaped piece is probably from a vamp throat. The largest edge piece, L:c.320mm., <sup>has</sup> a concave cut edge showing where a section was cut out, about 40mm. from the skin edge at the closest point. One shank scrap has a tie hole.

- (52) Cutting scrap (20), mostly quite small inter-section waste and two quite long thongs, the longest c. 250mm. This one has been tapered at both ends ready for use in sole attaching; the other, now partly delaminated, L:200mm., is also tapered. One fragment has teeth mark very clearly marked near to one edge, the same pattern as on previous specimens (31, 32, 35, 38, 43, 48, 49). There is also a slight suspicion of a stitched edge here but this would only be possible if this piece came from a shoe itself and not ~~from~~ a skin as its triangular shape indicates. If it did come from a shoe the teeth marks might show where lasting pincers had been applied but on the basis of the evidence from the previous examples this would be very unlikely.

- (53) Cutting scrap (3) and two lumps of unidentified material (? dung), one with fibres attached. The scrap consists of two throat cut<sup>a</sup>outs and/skin edge. The fibres attached to the larger lump appear to be part of a twisted rope, possibly hemp or flax or other bast fibre (identify)

- (54) Shoe vamp, left side only, and three fragments, probably cutting scrap including a shank with a tie hole. The vamp has a well defined and turned-in lasting margin with thonging in situ passing through grain/flesh holes,

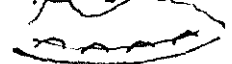
stitch length, c. 6.0mm., and creases in between the holes. Part of the original throat remains and there are traces of two raised decorative ridges radiating from the throat, one to the toe centre and one to the inside forepart. The central one is c. 4.0mm. wide, the side one is less definite but appears to be c. 5.0mm. wide. A shoe with similar vamp decoration was found on the St. Aldates site in Oxford and is dated early 9th century (illustrated on the front cover of: "Oxford, the city beneath your feet" by T. G. Hassall (Oxford Excavation Committee 1972) ). The ridges appear to be raised by embossing and not by stitching (see 36. above).

(Draw)

decoration



thonging




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(55) Cutting scrap (25), mostly triangles, some with pattern lines.

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(56) Cutting scrap (8), also two thongs and three fragments of a shoe. The scrap is as usual, one shank with a tie hole. One of the shoe fragments has a lasting margin with thong holes, stitch length 5.5mm., and two edges at about 115° with seams. The vertical seam (running to the lasting margin) has grain/flesh holes, stitch length 3.5mm., where it was joined to another section and the other edge, perhaps the top one, has the traces of over-stitching as used for a top-band, with scalloping, stitch length 4.5mm. Length of edge: 145mm. The other two shoe fragments are very thin and may be laminae; they have holes and may be part of an upper but this is not certain. In one case they correspond with those on the previous section, stitch length 5.5mm. (variable). Also <sup>three</sup> ~~a~~ pieces of wood.

(Draw a large section, flesh up to show seam)

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(57) Cutting scrap (6). Fairly large pieces of skin edge and shanks with ~~C~~ holes; also some triangles (goat/sheep) and one rectangular piece thicker than usual (3.0-4.0mm.), possibly from sole leather.

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(58) Cutting scrap (11). Inter-section triangles and skin edges. One triangle has <sup>a</sup> pattern marking line.

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(59) Sole of a thonged turnshoe, left foot. Worn away at toe, centre and outside (left) corner of seat - the usual place for left foot shoe. Delamination has taken place so that the upper attaching seam holes now penetrate right through the material but originally they were in ~~a~~ tunnels on the flesh side only (and still are in some places along the inside

right edge where less wear takes place in walking. The distance between the holes is 10.0 - 11.0mm. L: c.230mm.; W (forepart): c. 105mm.

The present size is about 13's, children's. The shape of the sole is typically Saxon.

(Draw flesh - inside - up to show seams)

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- (60) Skin belly edge and left hind shank, with two large teats. This piece is unusually long, L: c.700mm.; it tapers at the fore-end and broadens into the shank at the rear end. One of the long edges (left) is the original edge of skin and the opposite one is slightly concave and cut where the piece has been removed from the usable part of the skin. The width of the piece about half-way down is c.40mm. and there is what may be a pattern trial line towards the shank end. Fragments of skin edge examined previously have normally shown the shape of shoe sections which have been cut away but this appears to be the waste caused by squaring the skin as a whole before actual section cutting. On the other hand it might also have been produced when some large article other than a shoe was cut, e.g. a jerkin or a case. (It may be calf skin but check with B.L.M.R.A.)

(Draw?)

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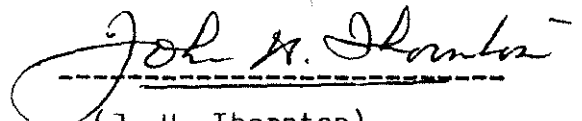
Additional note on no.54.

The St. Aldates shoe is described and illustrated in: "Archaeological Investigations in St. Aldates, Oxford" by Brian Durham ("Oxoniensia" Vol.XLII, pp.155-60, "Leatherwork" by J. H. Thornton). Many of the specimens there described have parallels with the present Winchester ones.

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(to be continued)

8.3.80

  
(J. H. Thornton)

11600 words