

766396 Fragments including parts of a nailed shoe, left foot.

Shoe bottom. The main surviving part of the shoe is the multi-layered bottom which although now broken into two parts across the waist is more or less complete. It comprises an insole, one or more middle sections and sole; the heel stiffener also remains in situ.

A detached fragment of insole has some thonging at the inside joint. (base of great toe) on the flesh side showing where the upper was lasted over it and secured. On the opposite side of the bottom fragment the sole has worn away considerably at the inside joint and disappeared completely at the seat (the usual places of wear in a shoe). Heavy nailing remains in situ down the outside margin, down a central line and scattered over the tread (forepart). At the seat end where the sole has now worn away there is a filling strip but it is now loose and its position is not positive. Round this there are the lasting margin of the stiffener and traces of the upper. Overall length: c. 230mm.; width at forepart: c. 80mm.

(Draw from side and bottom)

Shoe upper. The remaining piece has a very irregular shape and is very deteriorated. One edge, length c. 50mm., is scalloped with grain/flesh holes, stitch length c. 5.0mm.; it is turned in and appears to be a complete edge originally joined to another section - it is not clear whether by a butted seam or a closed seam (face to face). A cut edge at right-angles to this one after c. 35mm. develops into a short strip 8.0mm. wide with a decorative end now broken but which originally continued as a strip. Presumably this formed part of an open work upper¹. It is not clear where the adjoining section fitted; if the seam described were a back seam then the pattern of the quarter becomes obscure since the large area of leather would be towards the front. Marked deterioration of an edge of an upper section usually indicates a lasting margin but unless in this example the upper has been cut away this again makes orientation difficult. Length: 165mm.; maximum width: 95mm.



Three other fragments do not seem to be part of the above shoe; two are rectangular, c. 55mm. x 42mm. and 52mm. x 41mm., and each has three cut edges but otherwise no identifiable features. The third fragment is triangular, 85mm. x 61mm. x 52mm.; the two longer sides are concave and each has an inscribed line parallel to it and 4.0mm. from it.

Two bottom laminae have many nail holes and thong slots indicating

(Housesteads - Leather - continued)

that they came from an interior bottom section. The larger one appears to be the toe end but it is very much broader than the toe of the shoe described above and would appear therefore to come from another one.

(Draw laminae)



Reference

1. "Leather found in Mediohogdum, the Roman Fort of Hardknott" by Dorothy Charlesworth and J. H. Thornton ("Britannia", Vol. 10 1973, pp. 141-152). This contains several descriptions and illustrations of shoes with cut out uppers; the Housesteads shoe could be similar to one of these.

Leather examined: 26.4.77

Report: 30.5.77

(J. H. Thornton)
