

Morlaggan Leather Report

Discussion

Clare Thomas

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1. Introduction

The leather (seen by specialist) consists of 259 fragments, and comprises 178 shoe parts, one belt, 61 scraps and 19 miscellaneous pieces. The shoes are all of riveted construction and most probably date from 1850 onwards. Only a very basic catalogue has been made; measurements and detailed descriptions have only been included for complete soles, foreparts and a few fragments of upper.

Shoes

The shoe parts include 112 sole fragments and 66 upper parts. Only four soles are whole, or nearly complete. The uppers are very fragmentary.

2.1 Construction

The shoes are of riveted construction, where rivets have been used to secure together upper, insole, midsole and outer sole. Upper components have been stitched together by machine, using lapped seams.

1.1.2 Soles

The soles are of multiple layer construction, with insoles, middle soles and outer soles. In a few examples, details of the middle sole are visible. Furthermore, most of the soles have had hobnails attached. The soles also had separate heels. These consisted of several layers or 'lifts' and were nailed to the outer sole.

2.1.3 Uppers

No complete uppers survive, only small fragments. However, it is clear that these were boots made up of several pieces; double stitching channels, with very tightly spaced stitching, indicate that uppers were stitched together by machine. Some quarters have been reinforced with heel stiffeners; one example also has a semi-circular counter and a vertical strip. (MOR 11 <210> [037]) Strips with lace holes, reinforced with metal eyelets, indicate that these boots had a central fastening. One example has two metal hooks above the lace holes. (MOR 11 <210> [037]) A few lace hole facings also survive. A short length of leather thong survives in situ on one example (MOR 11 <210> [037]) At least one example demonstrates how the upper was nailed to the sole. (MOR 11 <210> [037])

2.2 Shoe Styles

The soles have been divided into three groups, based on the shape of their foreparts, especially their toes. The most numerous (Toe Shape 1) consisted of 14 examples of slender foreparts with blunt, square toes. The next most common shape, with 8 examples, had a broad, rounded toe. (Toe Shape 2). Only two soles had an oval toe. (Toe Shape 2)

As no complete uppers survive, identification of styles is very difficult. The fragments with lace holes, for example no. 129 (<210> [037]), where one side of the front of the quarters with 16 lace holes is still attached to the sole unit, show that these were boots with central lacing. The presence of backseams shows that the quarters consisted of two pieces. (<281> [005] & <210> [037]).

Wear and Repair

The shoe components are all very worn. Only three complete or nearly complete soles survive; the remainder of the sole pieces are fragments of foreparts, waists or seats, or separate heels. Several of the foreparts consist only of the outer, nailed edge. Two clump, or repair soles, survive, one with the sole it had been added to. (MOR 09 <209> [023])

2.3 Sizes

Only four soles are complete enough for shoe sizes to be identified, and even these are approximate. Three of these were children's, ranging from a Child's 3 or 4 (Continental 19 or 20 ½) to a child's 8 or 9 (Continental 26 or 27). The fourth was an Adult 5 ½, (Continental 39) (MOR 09 <277> [002]; MOR 11 <210> [037] x4)

However, where possible, a distinction has been made between children's [Size (a)], youths' or small women's [Size (b)] or women's and men's shoes [Size (c)]. Thus, 16 sole fragments or top pieces have been assumed to have been children's. (MOR 09 <275>; <277> [002]; MOR 11 <210> [037] x 11; <212> [050] x 3) Similarly, six pieces might have belonged to youths or women with smallish feet. (MOR 09 <208> [022]; MOR 11 <210> [037] x 2; <212> [050] ; <211> [045] x 2) Fifteen items might have been adult women's or men's. (MOR 09 <208> [022] x2; <281> [005]; <280> [005]; MOR 11 <210> [037] x10; <212> [050]). Another item might have belonged to either youths or adults.

A comparison of Toe Shapes (see above) and size groups, shows that Toe Shape 1 was most commonly found in women's and men's sizes (11 examples), with only three from youths'/small women's. Toe Shape 2 occurred most frequently in children's sizes (6 examples), with only two instances in youths'/small women's. Toe Shape 3 only occurred in youths'/small women's sizes.

Toe Shape	Size (a)	Size (b)	Size (c)
Shape 1		3	11
Shape 2		2	
Shape 3	6	2	

2. Belt

A short fragment of a belt or strap survives. (MOR 09 <206> [002]). It consists of a strip of leather, of single thickness, with cut edges, and with a single hole for the pin of a buckle.

3. Scraps

Approximately 61 fragments have neither cut edges nor stitching. These are probably remnants of shoes.

4. Miscellanea

Another 19 items have traces of stitching but have no recognisable features which would indicate their use. Again, they may be from shoes.

5. Date

Riveted shoes are of 19th -20th century date. Brunel attempted this type of manufacture 1810 – 1815, but failed. The method was revived in Cricke's patent of 1853. Huge quantities of cheap working wear were produced from the late 1850's, and especially from the 1860's when there were machines to drive them, until the early 1920's, although some were made until the early 1950's. They were at their most popular from the 1880's until about 1920. (Information from Miss June Swann, 1989)

6. Origin

The shoes were riveted and sewn by machines. They were probably made in a factory. However, it is possible that they may have been made by a local shoemaker. For example, Singer treadles for sewing cloth were strengthened to sew leather by 1857. Such machines were operated by the late 19th century by any shoemaker or repairer. (Information from Miss June Swann, 1989)

The repair referred to above was almost certainly made locally, as only a small portion was patched.

7. Conclusion

This assemblage represents the remains of sturdy working shoes, worn by children, women and men. They almost certainly date from the mid 19th century onwards, and were probably made in a factory.

8. Glossary

Clump or clump sole – a half-sole added to a shoe, usually as a repair.

Forepart – the front of a sole.

Heel – a component added to the rear or seat end of the sole, originally for utility but then as fashion. It may consist of separate lifts. The bottom section which rests on the ground is called the 'top piece'.

Insole – the inside bottom part of a shoe on which the foot rests.

Lapped seam – two upper sections are overlapped and stitched together right through the full substance of both sections.

Middle or middle sole- an additional section placed between sole and insole.

Quarters – the sides of a shoe upper joining on to the vamp at the front and meeting each other at the back of the heel.

Seat – the rear end of insole or sole on which the heel of the foot rests.

Vamp – the front section of a shoe upper covering the toes and part of the instep.

Waist – the narrow part of the sole or insole under the arch of the foot.

References

Swann, J Information on riveted shoe construction in letter to Clare Thomas, October 1989

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Basic Catalogue

Clare Thomas

November 2011

Morlaggan 2009

<208> [022] Bag 1 of 3

1. Forepart of sole, multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets.
2. Waist section of sole, multi-layer construction, nails/rivets, in 2 pieces, not matching no. 1 but possibly matching no.3
3. Heel of sole.
4. Fragment of upper with lace holes
5. Fragment of upper with lace holes
6. Fragment of upper with lace holes

<208> [022] Bag 2 of 3

7. Large forepart of sole, multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets

<208> [022] Bag 3 of 3

8. Long, narrow forepart of sole, multi-layer construction with nails/rivets – possibly woman's or youth's.
9. Fragment of upper with lace holes and eyelets.
10. Strip of leather with nails/rivets.

<208> [005]

11. Toe of forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets. Detail of middle sole visible; also separate but joining fragment of insole.

<207> [005]

12. Fragment of upper?
13. Fragment of upper with lace holes.
14. Fragment of upper with lace holes.
15. Fragment of upper with lace holes.

<206> [002] St 3

16. Fragment of forepart of sole, possibly insole, nails/rivets.
17. Waist fragment of sole of multi-layered construction, with nails/rivets, good example of middle sole.
18. Fragment of forepart of sole, possibly part of 16.
19. Seat of sole, of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets.
20. Fragment of belt or strap of single thickness.
21. Scrap
22. Approximately rectangular strip.

<281> [005]

23. Large seat, waist and rear of forepart of sole, with heel, & part of quarters of upper.
Sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

<275> 'Under Rocks'

24. Seat & waist & top piece of child's sole, with nails/rivets.

<278> [005]

25. Very small fragment of upper with 2 lace holes.

<279> [005]

26. Fragment of sole with nails and corroded lump.

<277> [002]

27. Sole of multi-layer construction & heel – probably child's/youth's/small woman

<209> [023] S3 Bag 1 of 2

28. Fragment of forepart of sole.
29. Clump sole, matching 28.
30. Fragment of strip with nails.

<209> [023] Bag 2 of 2

31. Fragment of upper with lace holes with facing.

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<210> [037] Bag 1 of 9

32. Forepart of left sole of multi-layer construction, with middle sole with seam, and with nails/rivets.
33. Heel with nails/rivets.
34. Heel with nails, markedly tapered – woman's?
35. Heel with nails
36. Heel with nails
37. Seat of sole of multi-layer construction.
38. Fragment of upper with lace holes and hooks for laces.
39. Fragment of upper with lace holes.
40. Corroded lump, probably part of nailed sole.
41. -48. 8 sole fragments.

- 49 -55. 7 Small fragments of soles or uppers.

<210> [037] Bag 2 of 9

56. Child's seat & waist of sole & heel, with nails/rivets.
57. Forepart of sole of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets.
58. Fragment of forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

59. Forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

60. Toe of forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

61. Forepart of large sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

62. Fragment of forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

63. Sole fragment

64. Sole fragment, corroded, with nails.

65. Clump sole?

66-108. 42 scraps/offcuts

109.-121. 13 fragments of upper with lace holes and eyelets.

122-125. 4 fragments with cut edges.

126 -127. 2 heels with nails.

<210> [037] Bag 3 of 9

128. Complete child's left sole, of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets and part of heel, corroded.

<210> [037] Bag 4 of 9

129. Forepart of left sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets and with fragment of upper with lace holes attached.

130. Forepart of sole, probably right foot, probably matching 129, of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

131 – 133. Three fragments of upper with lace holes one with thong surviving.

134-135. Two fragments of lace hole facing.

136-137. Two stitched fragments, probably part of upper.

138. 1 scrap.

<210> [037] Bag 5 of 9

139. Fragments of child's boot, including heel, seat & forepart of sole, insole, middle sole, two fragments of upper with lace holes and other fragments.

<210> [037] Bag 6 of 9

140. Large forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

141. Large seat & waist of sole of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets and heel with iron reinforcing plate. Probably does not match 140.

142. Child's forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

143. Sole fragment, probably forepart, of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets.

144. Fragment of child's sole, either insole or middle sole.

145-150. 6 fragments of upper with lace holes and eyelets.

151. Small fragment of upper with lasting margin.

152-153. 2 small fragments with stitching channels.

154 -161. 8 scraps.

<210> [037] Bag 7 of 9

162. Forepart of sole of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets; corroded.

163. Seat & waist of sole and part of heel of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

164. Seat of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets and with heel.

165. Seat of sole and heel, with nails/rivets.

166. Heel

167. Heel of child's sole; nails.

168. Heel of child's sole; nails.

169. Seat or heel; nails.

170. Long, thin strip, probably offcut, not thong.

171-177. 7 scraps.

<210> [037] Bag 8 of 9

178 – 181. 4 heels

182-183. 2 parts of heels

184. Fragment of seat of child's sole of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets, and with heel; corroded.

185-188. 4 fragments of upper with lace holes.

189. Waist fragment of child's sole.

190. Small fragment of upper.

191. Scrap

192. Small scrap of upper.

193 – 195. Three corroded lumps, probably parts of heels.

196 – 198. Three corroded lumps

199. Small fragment of upper.

Also, piece of bone – horn?

<210> [037] Bag 9 of 9

200. Large sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets and with heel– probably man's.

201. Large seat of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets and part of heel.

202. Seat of child's sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets, heel and with part of quarters of upper with heel stiffener.

203. Seat of child's sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets, and with heel; similar to 202, but heel higher.

204. Heel

205. Corroded lump, probably part of sole.

206- 207. Two waist fragments of soles of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

208-2011. Three fragments of upper with lace holes and eyelets and one fragment of lace hole facing.

212. Fragment of upper with machine stitching.

213-219. 7 scraps, probably parts of soles.

<213> [101] Bag 1 of 2

220- 222. Three small fragments of soles.

<213> [101] Bag 2 of 2

223. Waist fragment of sole, of multi-layer construction, with fragments of upper nailed on.

224. Fragment of upper with lace holes and with machine stitching.

225. Fragment of upper with nail holes for attachment to sole.

226. Fragment of upper, possibly toe cap.

227. Fragment of upper, with machine stitching.

228. Fragment of upper, with machine stitching.

229. Corroded lump, probably part of sole.

230. Fragment of upper, possibly toe cap.

231. Fragment of upper with machine stitching.

232. Fragment of sole, possibly waist of middle sole.

233. Fragment of sole, possibly waist of middle sole.

234- 235. Two fragments of upper with machine stitching.

236. Stitched scrap.

237. Small fragment of upper.

238. Small fragment of sole.

<212> [050] Bag 1 of 4

239. Heel

240. Fragment of lasting margin of upper.

241 – 242. Two corroded lumps, parts of soles with nails/rivets.

<212> [050] Bag 2 of 4

243. Forepart of sole, of multi-layer construction, with nails/rivets.

244. Waist, rear of forepart and front of seat of sole.

245. Seat of sole & heel of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

246-252. 7 fragments of soles.

<212> [050] Bag 3 of 4

253. Forepart of child's/youth's/small woman's sole, of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

254. Small fragment of upper with lace holes and facing.

<212> [050] Bag 4 of 4

255. Forepart of child's sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

256. Seat of child's sole, possibly belonging to 255.

257. Child's heel, probably too small for 255/256.

<211> [045] S3

258. Forepart of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets.

259. Seat and heel of sole of multi-layer construction with nails/rivets – possibly same sole as 258 but no join.

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Shoe sizes & shapes summary

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Sole/Toe shape 1 – square

14 examples; 3 size (b) – youth/small women

8 size (c) – women/men

Sole/Toe shape 2 – oval

2 examples, both size (c) – women/men

Sole/Toe shape 3 – broad rounded

8 examples, 6 size (a) children

2 size (b) youth/small women