

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

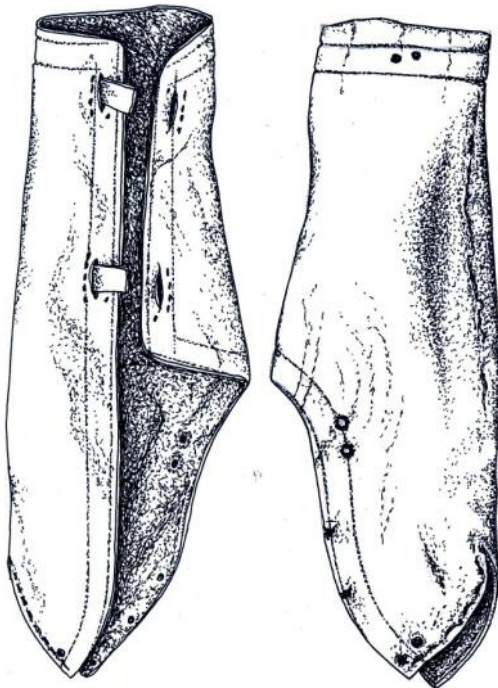


Fig. 1. Leather vambrace from Dordrecht. Collection Regional Archives Dordrecht. Drawing by Olaf Goubitz.



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:

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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.

Literature

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