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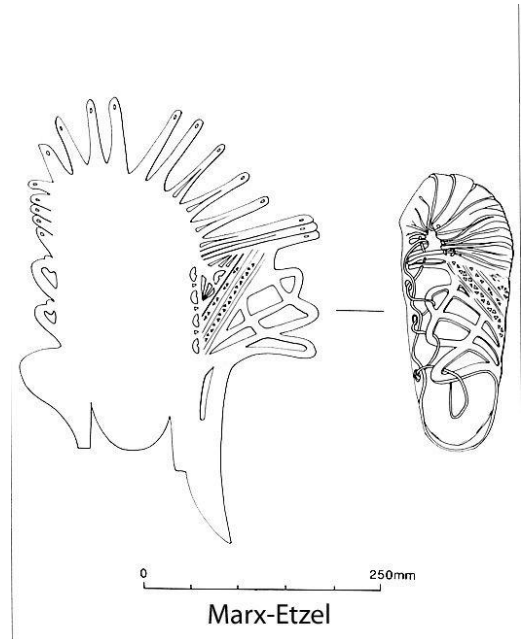


One Piece Shoes of the Bronze Age to the Roman Eras

Humans have required foot protection for millennia, and have found ways of covering their feet in ever-creative and innovative ways. The focus of this class will be the simple, yet elegant ways people made and wore shoes in the Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Roman Eras, encompassing Britain and Western Europe.

Chronology and Geography

The timeline for this class will encompass roughly 1450 BCE to the 4th in Roman Britain and the Celtic and Gallic cultures of mainland Europe. The main finds used as inspiration range from the finds at Vindolanda in the Northeast of England to sites across modern Netherlands and Denmark. Of course, one-piece shoes have been found across the European Continent, and the many options are exciting!



Shoe Styles and Terminology

For this class, our focus is one-piece leather shoes and their many variations.

Bronze Age Shoes are very simple, shaped generally like an oval or a “U” shape. They are sewn with a leather thong, often integral to the shoe, with a separate “lacing” thong.

Iron Age Shoes have no particular terms, other than that they are described as one-piece shoes with minimal decoration. Some of these shoes were literal ovals with lace holes cut along the perimeter. They are the precursors to later, more complex styles, but some elements of later styles began to be used (lacing tabs).

Caligae are defined as “strap work shoes/boots worn by the Roman military during the first century AD”. (van Driel-Murray 2001, 362) These shoes most often have integral soles PLUS added outsoles that are sewn and nailed in place.

Carbatinae are Roman-style low-profile shoes with integral soles. Sometimes the lace is integral to the shoe as well. Carbatinae often have decorative elements that include holes for laces and incised/stamped designs. They can be symmetrical or asymmetrical depending where

they were made and worn (Germanic styles tended toward asymmetry, where Brittonic and Italian styles were symmetrical).

Other footwear styles include full boots and slippers resembling modern flip flops or slides, which are super interesting, but we will not cover these today.

Making your own one-piece shoes

First, decide the time period and place you would like to portray. It is useful to consider the entire kit when making decisions about footwear.

Patterning

Using a diagram as a guide (I used the diagrams from [Archaeological Footwear: Development of shoe patterns and styles from Prehistory till the 1600s](#) by Marquita Volken), trace your foot onto a large sheet of paper. It takes some trial and error, and sometimes a couple of mock-ups to get the shapes and pattern accurate with the right fit. Take note of arrangement of heel and toe alignment. This will ensure the shoe doesn't sit incorrectly on the foot.

I make mock-ups in felt or scrap leather I can't use for anything else. I don't often use a last due to the nature of the shoe style, and because tabs are impossible to map out on a last. I've heard you can use denim scraps layered with duct tape to achieve an approximate leather thickness. Once the pattern works, I'm ready to make the final shoe. It is useful to keep in mind other footwear you will wear with these shoes such as socks or hose, as well as any insert you plan on using with the shoe. These things will affect the fit of your shoes.

Leather

The leather you choose for one-piece shoes should ideally be veg-tan cow leather. Experiments with making these shoes with 6 oz leather and 7-8 oz leather have been carried out, and while sewing 6 oz leather is less strenuous, the thicker 7-8 oz leather will be more durable and closer to the extant leather thickness. I've learned that acquiring shoulder leather is the best option for making shoes, as it is thicker and less stretchy than belly leather.

Tools

Leather shears or knife, X-Acto knives are great for cutting tiny details

Awl

Leather sewing needle or boar bristle needle

Waxed linen or hemp thread (thicker is better), artificial or genuine sinew

Leather stamps and mallet (optional)

Leather dye, if desired

Beeswax/tallow/bacon grease blend or Sno-Seal to seal leather against moisture

Optional: leather beveling tool

8. Dye your shoes if desired. I never do, but that is a personal choice.
9. Seal with leather sealant of your choice; I use a blend of beeswax and tallow, but I've heard some people use beeswax and bacon grease too. I warm mine slightly so that it spreads on like shoe polish.
10. You can explore sole options like the rubber crumble/barge cement treatment to help prevent slips on grass or slick surfaces.
11. Insole options: A simple solution is to trace around and cut out each foot with the same leather the rest of the shoe is made from and using those as insoles. Optionally, wool felt shoe inserts can also be added to improve comfort. I purchased mine from Amazon.

Bibliography/Resources

Goubitz, O. (2011). *Stepping through Time: Archaeological Footwear from Prehistoric Times until 1800*. Stichting Promotie Archeologie.

Volken, M. (2014). *Archaeological Footwear: Development of shoe patterns and styles from Prehistory till the 1600's*. Archetype Publications.

Websites:

(n.d.). *One-Piece Shoes, 1st-4th CE*. Farolfvs me Fecit--crafts of Late Antiquity/Early Middle Ages. <https://farolfus.com/>

Moser, M. (n.d.). *Researching and Recreating Historical Items*. Res Rarae. <https://www.resrarae.de/>

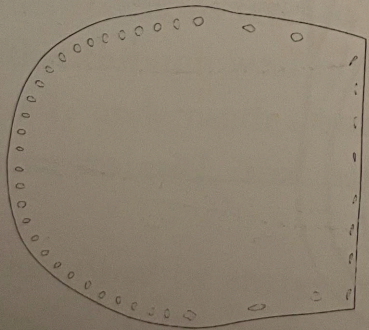
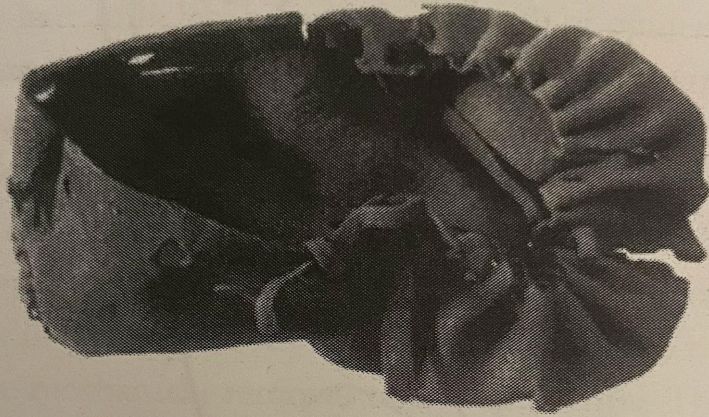
Video Links

Simple Leather Soles for Moccasins:  Simple Rubber Sole for Moccasins

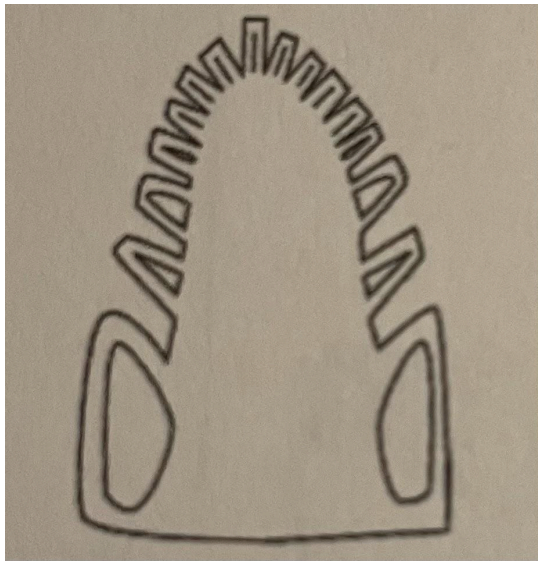
Shoe Inspiration

Bronze Age: Drenthe Shoe, dated approx. 1450 BCE,
Netherlands

*Fig. 6. Shoe with cutting pattern
from the Bourtangerveen, province
of Drenthe. Photo and drawing
IPP.*

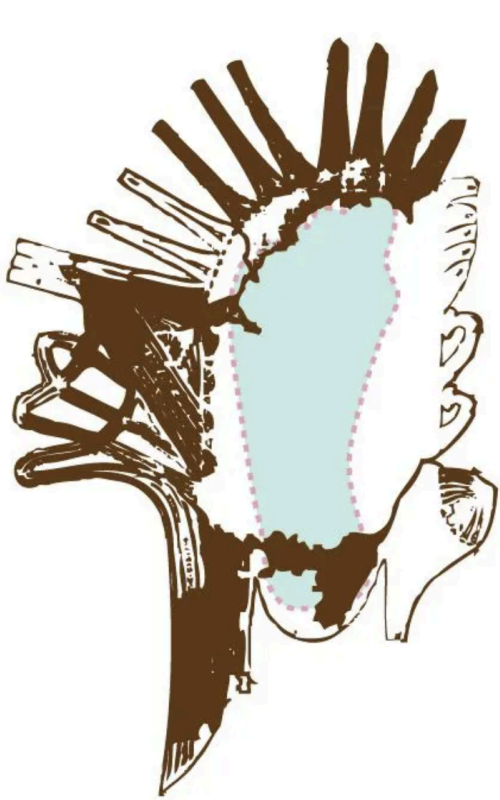
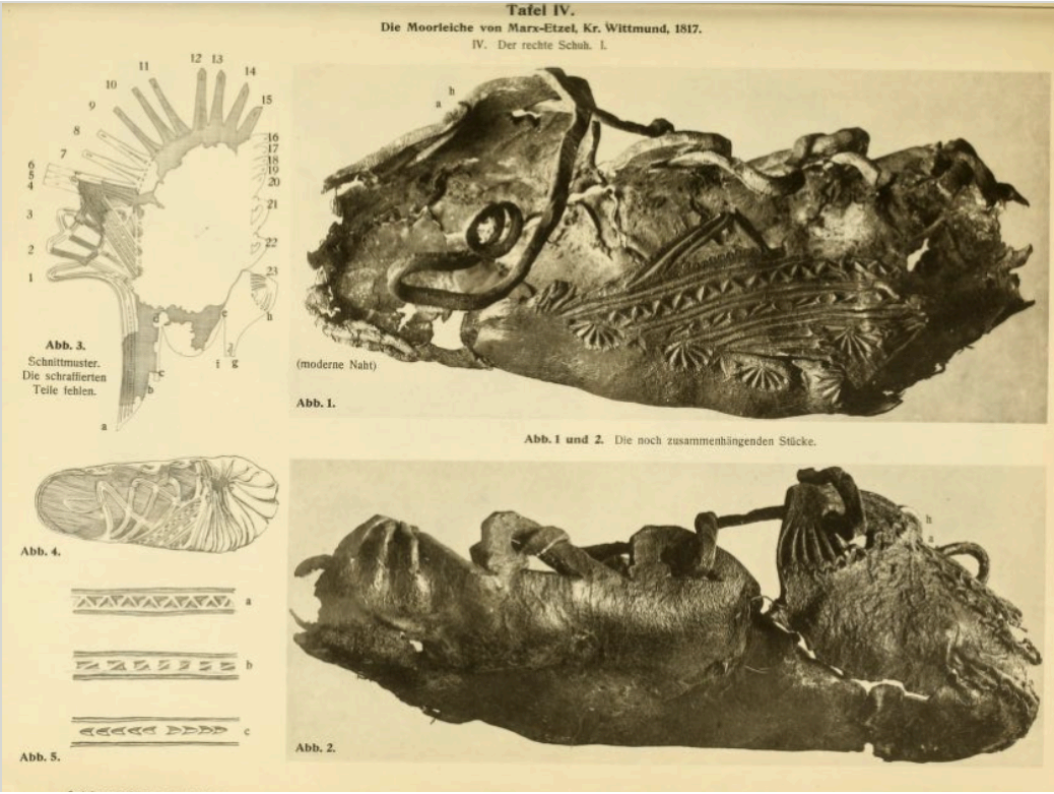


Iron Age: Smilde Shoe, dated approx. 1st century BCE to 1st century CE, Netherlands

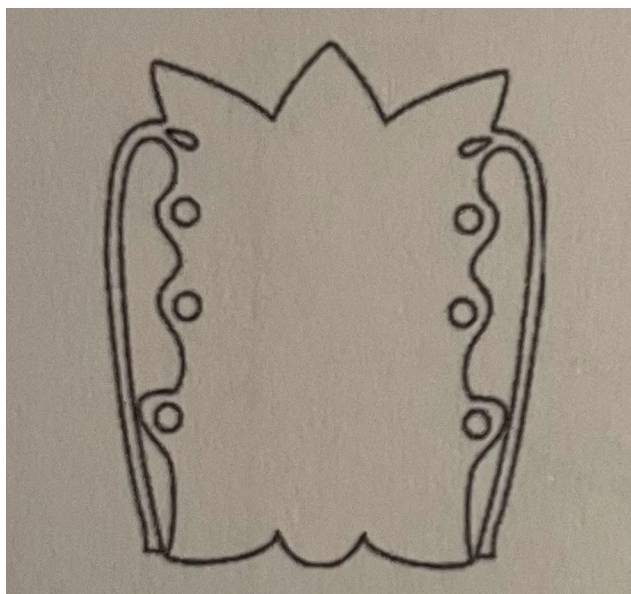
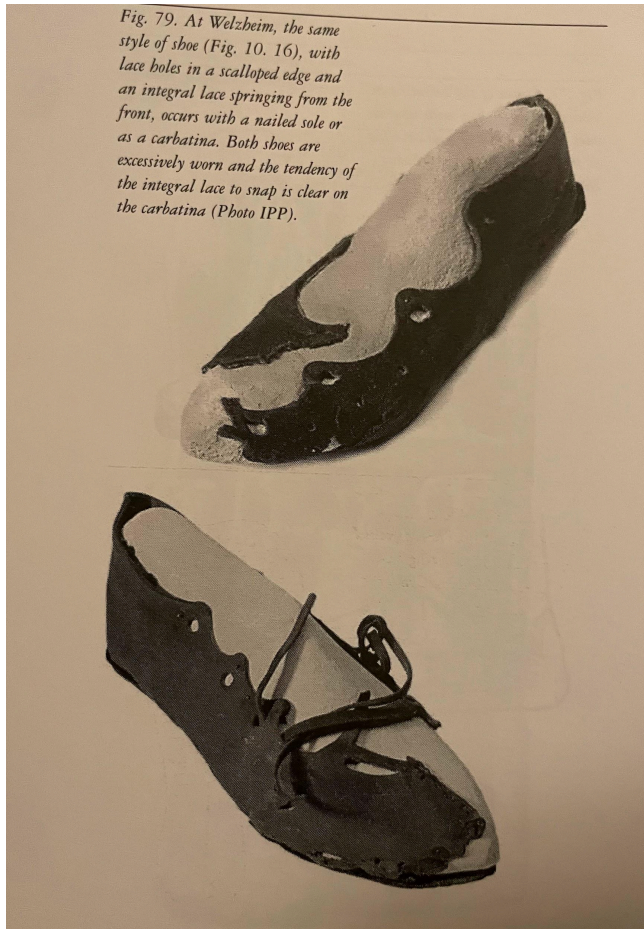


Layout of the shoe pattern

Roman Era: Marx-Etzel Shoe, dated approx. 3rd to 4th century, Denmark

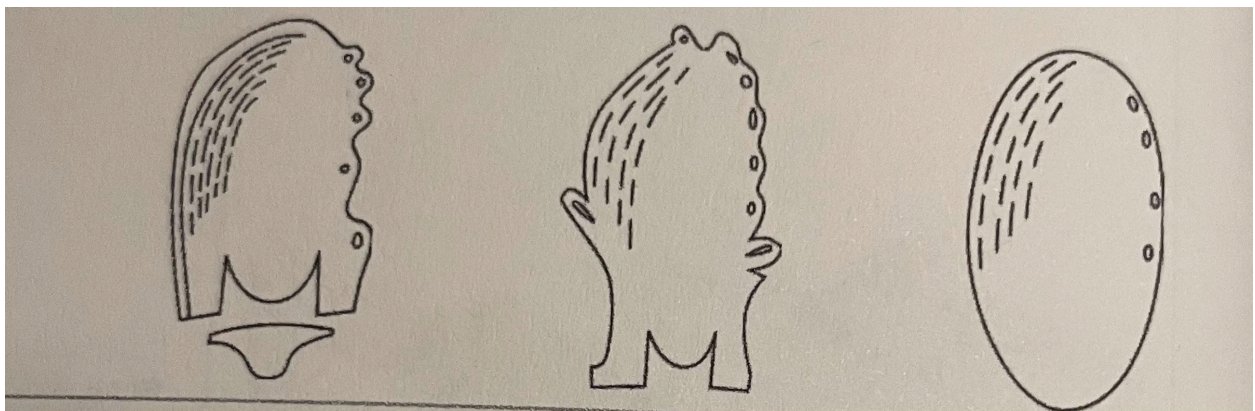


Roman Era: Geltsdale Shoe, dated approx. 3rd century,
Vindolanda, GB



Layout of the shoe pattern
I used "heart" shapes instead of
circular cutouts.

Roman Era: Damendorf/Wijster Shoe, dated approx. 4th century, Denmark



Pattern layout options. Note the originals above have “triangular” tabs.

One Piece Shoes, Sunna Regnbue

Link to Notes: <https://tinyurl.com/mr45yc6d>

